SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Swami Vivekananda.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

A STUDY

BY

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PREFACE

In presenting this book to the public, I must thank all those who have helped me in one form or another. My heart-felt thanks are due to those saintly co-workers and followers of Swami Vivekananda whose untiring efforts have brought into existence a vast and ever-growing literature on the subject Mr. Nanasahib Pusalkar of Erandol has been kind enough to place at my dispo al a number of rare and valuable books for which my thanks are due to him. My friends Messrs Bhausahib Oak, S. V. Kelkar, Haribhau Tulpule, D. K. Sathe and last but not the least Mr. S. V. Ranade and Mr. Trimbakrao Pandit have rendered valuable help from time to time. The Proprietor, the Manager and the staff of the Chaupaty Printing Press have materially contributed to the successful accomplishment of my labours.

D. V. ATHALYE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

No Indian of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries attained, at the early age of thirty, so great and so world-wide a fame as Swami Vivekananda. The activities of politicians and reformers, social and religious, generally expand from the local to the provincial thence to the national, and at long last, if at all, to the international sphere, all this process absorbing years of plodding so that when honours come, old age has already taken away half their zest. The career of Swami Vivekananda resembled the sudden rise of a comet, attracting the attention of half the world by its dazzling splendour. At an age when most of those who, destined by right of inherent capability to attain eminence in public life are found trudging along the thorny paths of public life, he stood before the world-platform of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago as the God-sent representative of Hinduism. "I came, I saw, I conquered"—never was this laconic utterance of Cæsar more

literally true than when by one speech he stormed the assembly hall at Chicago and then like a triumphant general marched from one end of the United States to the other, with the victorious banner of Hinduism on his shoulder. Commencing thus his life-work on an international platform and on an international basis, he condescended, as it were, to the task of working on the soil of his Motherland. "Truth is my God and the Universe my country." "I belong as much to the world as to India."—such was his general attitude. Withal he was a patriot and he loved his Motherland, the home of "philosophy, spirituality and ethics and of sweetness gentleness and love," with a tenderness and devotion all his own and while engaged in converting the West to his philosophy was all along conscious that "one blow struck outside India is equal to a hundred thousand struck within." And when after consolidating his work in the West, he returned to India in 1897, the whole nation stood as one man to welcome him and the triumphal march from Colombo to Almora can only be described as historic ! What was the secret of this success ? How could a despised heathen move like a king in the glorious West, admired by all, revered by many and accepted as Teacher by a chosen few ? Was it, as was uncharitably suggested, merely his eyes and not his ideals that "led captive the silly American women" ? Or was his success the inevitable result of the magnificence of his personality, the magnitude of his message and the immense void in the spiritual life of the West, due to the growth of militant rationalism and irreverent scientific spirit ? Was the tremendous enthusiasm roused by him in India merely a passing phase

in a fitful steam of national life, a nation's reward to one who flattered her abroad and thus raised her credit to some extent or shall we attribute some deeper signifi-cance to this appreciation whose intensity even the lapse of one full generation has not abated and which falls to the lot of prophet, a seer or a national deliverer? These are the questions that occur to the thoughtful mind on a study of the career of Vivekananda and our answer, to be satisfactory, must be conceived and delivered in true scientific but nevertheless reverent spirit after an exhaustive analysis of the forces that made Vivekananda and the forces that he set himself to conquer.

Of the two sides of the Swami's work—the national and the international—it is the national which engages most the attention of his Indian admirer and it must be confessed that even his international work has too often been evaluated in the narrower terms of Hindu nationalism. It would be ridiculous to measure the work of the Swami by the number of monasteries he founded, of the relief-works he organized, of the lectures he delivered or of the young men he initiated into *Sanyasa*. It is not thus that a great man's work is to be appraised. The foremost service rendered by the Swami to his mother-country was by demonstrating in his own life that even in these days of science and materialism, Hinduism could walk with her head erect and hold her own when it came to joinining issues with any of the votaries of philosophical agnosticism. He proved beyond all shadow of doubt that Vedanta, the essencs of Hinduism, was the greatest ally of science and research and that a man could be a devout student

of science without in the least losing his religion. Here was a country, flooded with the purely rationalistic literature of the West for nearly eight years, a country where reformer after reformer stood up to sing the glory of reason and liberty to the disparagement of purity and devotion, here was a country where of late, atheism had become almost fashionable and liberalism of mind had become synonymous with agnosticism, where the patriot started his campaign of national awakening with the denunciation of his religion, as if loyalty to the religion of the past and the present meant disloyalty to the great cause of national freedom. This deification of reason and the glamour of science had for a time thrown into shade India's proudest treasure, her religion and her spirituality and it was reserved for the Swami to demonstrate to the satisfaction of sceptics and materialists that there was something in the culture of India that can impress the western people, that a perfectly rationalistic frame of mind could yet be reconciled with ideas of God and of salvation, and that patriotism and religion can stand together on the identical ground of service, sacrifice and self-surrender.

Another service for which the Swami's name would be honoured even by generations yet unborn is the masterly exposition of Hinduism that we find in his speeches and writings. Every century, every age has its own peculiar ways of thinking and the first duty of every new religious thinker in India has been to restate the glorious tenets of the Vedas in the language of the people of his times. Vyasa, Baudhayana, Sankara, Vidyaranya and many others have rendered this signal service in their own times. As compared to theirs, the

task of Vivekananda was immensely more difficult. In the first place, he came after centuries of intellectual lull and stagnation. Then again, quite a new civilization had recently invaded the country and captured the minds of half the intellectual society. The old landmarks were swept off. Ancient traditions were almost completely effaced. To restate the ancient metaphysical thought of India in terms of modern science and philosophy and in a language which any college student can understand—that was the life-work of the Swami Vivekananda. It would however be a mistake to suppose that he was a mere intellectual medium for the Sanskrit thought to be put into English. His restatement of Hinduism was very often the reinterpretation, the amplification and sometimes even the correction of the old thought. To the study of the ancient Shastras, he brought a mind modern in its tendencies and sympathies, a mind enriched by the stores of the western learning and trained in the intelleetual gymnastics of European thought. Such a mind could hardly fail to compare, to analyze, to test, to criticize, to reject, to harmonize; all this the Swami did. He was no mere commentator like Sayana. And so we have been privileged not only to understand the ancient Hindu thought as it was but also to study it in its bearing to the problems of modern times and to the scientific and philosophical thought of modern Europe.

Nor was the Swami a mere intellectual and spiritual map, picturing on the same level mountains and plains, rivers and oceans. His restatement and reinterpretation of Hinduism was never a piece of mere literary workmanship. It was part of a crusade and as such

it was bound to emphasize essentials and reject non-essentials. He wanted to set in motion certain currents of thought and hence while he wes willing to display all the richness of the pharmacopœia of Indian thought, he prescribed only select medicines. The accretions that have gathered round the Hindu civilization have been the despair of all reformers. Centuries of political social, intellectual and spiritual revolutions have left their impress upon the thought, habits, life and institutions of the people and the actions and interactions of these forces over endless varieties of time, space and circumstances have conspired to render confusion worse confounded. To wade through this vast region of puzzles and contradictions and select with unerring instinct only the life-giving thoughts, theories and ideals is a task that demands complex powers of the brain. No mere scholar or philosopher could do that. It requires not only the precise analysis of a philosopher but also the bold sweep of the historian, the patience and intellectual detachment of a scientist, the vision and farsight of a statesman and above all, the wisdom and knowledge of human nature that belongs to the social legislator. The intellectual vitality and versatility of the Swami were unlimited and they eminently fitted him for a task which was nothing short of stupendous. It is in a sense easy to pick up a few ideas of one's own liking and try to force them on society; that requires only missionary persistence and missionary Zeal. But to examine the vast tangle of past and present thought and its manifestations in the form of customs and social institutions and then to lay one's finger on the thread that runs through all the complexities is not

easy. All honour to Swami Vivekananda for having not only restated and reinterpreted Hinduism but also for having emphasized the life-giving truths preached by the sages of the Upanishads, at a time when India is in danger of mistaking the non-essentials for the essentials of religion.

Even after this separation of essentials from non-essentials is effected, the residue of life-giving theories and practices in Hindu religion is by no means small and would suffice to create huudreds of inimical sects and sub-sects, who in the narrowness of their fanaticism are likely to emphasize the non-essentials of the essentials of the Mother Faith. The mission of Vivekananda was not to multiply strife but to minimize it; not to increase sects but to diminish their number and reduce their friction; not to set one sect at war with another but to weld all into one by the common bond of loyalty to Religion andthe country. The Swami recognized, and wisely recognized the immense diversities of temperaments, tendencies and surroundings and was willing to accommodate as many sects as could afford to live under the big sheltering bunyan of the Vedas. But he knew that there was such a thing as unhealthy sectarianism. The first duty of every seet should be to tolerate and respect every other sect and to be ready to act in union with the others in the interests of the country and the religion. All these various sects are but different regiments in the army of Hinduism. To succeed they must be loyal to the banner and to the cause; and in the opinion of the Swami, one of the causes of the downfall of India was the non-observance of this elementary rule. Once sectarianism is allowed to run amok,

there is no end to the misfortune of India. But bury it two hundred fathoms beneath the deep, and you see an India recreated, reunited and rejuvenated. That and nothing short of it was the Swami's ambition.

Therefore the one absorbing passion of his life was an unceasing search for the common basis of Hinduism, and herein he affords a refreshing contrast to the founders of the three Samajas—the Brahmo Samaj the Arya Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj. The Swami recognized the necessity of emphasizing the principles of unity instead of disunity, of harmony and not of discord. He wanted all the Hindu sects to unite in one common love for the Vedas. Dwaita, Vishishtadwaita, Adwaita, the worship of Shiva, Vishnu, and of all the three hundred and thirty million gods of Hindu mythology—all these, he thought, could be reconciled if only every sect continued to ackowledge the Vedas as the supreme authority in matters religious. To the mind of the Swami, the Vedas formed not merely a link with the hoary past; they contained the germ of every mighty, spiritual thought conceived and systematized in India. All Hindu spiritual thought could be traced back to the master minds of the Upanishads. The Swami, therefore, wanted, to restore the Vedas to their original prestige. The Vedas should cease to function as nominal authorities for customs and traditions, rituals and ceremonials. His intimate knowledge of the doctrines of the various sects enabled him to see how far they agreed and where they must agree to differ; and though unfortunately he was not spared long enough to continue his researches in this direction, he has left sufficient material to enable his followers to finish the work of uniting all the Hindus in a living loyalty to the religion of the Vedas.

What, it might be asked, was the object of the Swami in his restatement of Hinduism and its reinterpretation, his emphasis on the essentials of the Mother-Religion, his eagerness to infuse a spirit of harmony and concord in all the warring sects of Hinduism and in his attempts to discover the common basis for all the sects and sub-sects that have sprung from the original religion and have lived and thrived to this day? Was it a mere love of peace and amity that characterizes many a well-meaning pandit or was this passion for unity and harmony only a means to an end still more characteristic of the man and his mission? To the Swami, Hinduism never appeared as a set of truths or theories having no connection whatever with the vicissitudes of the people at large. While he could revel at will in the contemplation of Hinduism abstract, he was temperamentally more interested in Hinduism concretized, in Hinduism as it is unfolding itself in the pages of history. And if he wanted religious unity and harmony, it was not to score a point in dialectics, it was not to perfect a theory or complete a curve in metaphysical graphs, but to consolidate the influence and extend the power of the Hindus. It will thus be seen that the patriotism of the Swami was but another name for his love of religion. He found no way of regenerating India but by preaching her religion to the world; and he found no way of effectively preaching Hinduism but by regenerating the country. This interdependence of the condition of the country and the condition of her religion developed both the religious zeal and patriotic fervour of the Swami. In the Swami's dictonary, both these were synonymous terms.

To make Hinduism aggressive, to make it dynamic was the mission of the Swami. He was not content with the static condition of Hindu religion and society. He was determined that Hinduism shall no more receive kicks from foreign adventurers and proselytizers. So far as he was concerned, India was no longer to be a recruiting ground for more militant faiths. Nothing pained the Swami so much as the reckless conversion of the people under the Mahomedans and the systematic efforts for the proselytization of her people by the Christian missionaries. Are the children of the Vedic sages fit only to be toys in the hands of the scheming missionaries of rival religions? Is this a spectacle which the leaders of the Hindu spiritual thought should witness with equanimity, with hands folded? Buddha comes and converts sixty percent of the population to his faith. Islam can boast of seven crores of Mahomedans in seven centuries. Even the Christians can carry on their conversions at the rate of one thousand Hindus per week. What is the Hindu society doing all the while? How dare a foreigner come and take away your sons and daughters, your brothers and sisters to his camp? Such was the faith of the Swami that he was optimistic enough to hope that a day would dawn when the whole of India would once more become Aryan. He knew the importance of numbers and was conscious of the fact that "every man going out of the pale of Hinduism is not only a man less but an enemy the more", Such conversions also bespoke an uttter lack of organization on the part of the Hindus. It was the considered opinion of the Swami that Hinduism must not only begin to reconvert people but also to

proselytize—the word to be understood in its highest and best sense—consistently with her doctrine of universal toleration.

It was the weakness of the Hindu social organization that enabled the foreigner to make inroads into the religious solidarity of the people; and the only way to prevent him from so doing is to improve the material and spiritual condition of the masses. The Swami's heart was as tender as butter and at the sight of the misery of the Indian masses, he shed tears. At the sight of their misery and destitution, all his Vedantic pride melted away and he refused to take shelter behind specious theories of Maya and Karma but immediately set himself to devise remedies for the removal of that misery. Then he cared neither for Vedanta nor for salvation but would spontaneously say "May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries that I may worship the only God that exists, the 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 of of all species, who is the special object of my worship." It was this delicate humane element in his personality and teaching that added to the lustre of Swamiji's Advaita. "I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth." And his public career was one long search for this piece of bread to the orphan's mouth, to the hungry or Daridra Narayana.

How wonderful was his love for the poor! For them as we have seen, he was prepared to forego his own salvation! He never insulted them by offering them religion. A hungry stomach, he said, must be fed first

before spiritual knowledge could be imparted. Poverty and spirituality could ill go together and in all his schemes of Indian regeneration, the material well-being of the poor formed an important part. He wanted the poor to enjoy life a little and thus become fit to receive the glorious message of the Vedanta. He wanted to set in motion a machinery that would bring noble ideas to the doors of the poorest of the poor and leave them free to solve their own problems. But though thus impatient for the material and spiritual upraising of the masses, he was the very antithesis of a fanatic. Fanaticism, the swami thought, worked more evil than good and his ideal, to which he was true, was the intensity of a liberal man. He therefore, discountenanced those methods which sought to find a short cut by pulling down the upper classes in the interest of the lower. He did not want to lower the Brahmin but to raise the Sudra. He wanted a process of levelling up and not of levelling down. He wanted the spirituality, intellectuality, culture and learning of the Brahmin to act on the masses, humanizing their instincts, elevating their minds infusing the refinement of the intellectual and moral aristocracy of the Brahmin into the democracy of the Sudra. That in his opinion was the only way. He knew the dangers of crushing the intellectual and cultural aristocracy of the land under the dead weight of numbers which was the only strong point with the masses. It might temporarily push the backward clases into prominence and might help them in their material advance; but it would forever cripple India intellectually and spiritually and render her unfit for the grand work of the regeneration of mankind.

The conflict between nationalism and internationalism has been so universally recognized that the natural expansion and imperceptible merging of the Swami's national ideal into the international is likely to appear a little incongruous. It is only a narrow nationalism that is exclusive. It is only purely political nationalism solely bent on and principally organized for a ruthless commercial exploitation of the other nations of the world that is unfit thus to meet humanity on a common platform of brotherhood. Such was never the Swami's ideal of nationalism. To a friend, proud of the riches and splendour of London, the Swami once said "you have blasted other cities to make this city of yours great". He did not want the nationalism of India to shed rivers of blood in trying to civilize other nations of the world. That is the way of Europe,—to plunder other countries, to trample them under iron heels and in the act of that unholy pillage and inhuman massacre to civilize them,—not consciously and deliberately but only indirectly and incidentally. India cares neither to spread her empire nor her commerce at such a tremendous cost to her neighbouring countries. India wants to *give* only, she cares not to *take* anything from others. Said the Swami, "To revive our own country is a small matter; I am an imaginative man, and my idea is the conquest of the whole world by the Hindu race. There have been great conquering races in the world. We also have been great conquerors. The story of our conquest has been described by that noble Emperor of India, Asoka, as the conquest of religion and spirituality. Once more the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life." "I am

anxiously waiting for the day when mighty minds will arise, gigantic spiritual minds who will be ready to go forth from India to the ends of the world to teach spiri tuality and renunciation, those ideas which come from the forests of India and belong to Indian soil alone."

It will thus be seen that from the position of an aspirant for spiritual truth, the Swami progressed by a series of most natural and inevitable steps to that of a world Teacher. Is there God in this world? How to account for the terrible misery and inequality of life? Is there a higher life? Is there hope for mankind? These were the questions that confronted the Swami in his youth. Like so many others, he did not shirk them. Like so many others, he did not try to forget them in a whirl of sense enjoyments. Like so many others, he did not seek to find their counterpoise in the pursuit of worldly greatness or of the phantom of reform. "If this is true, what else does matter? If this is not true, what do our lives matter?" This was the spirit in which he approached these questions. He would go to the logical length in trying to solve these problems. After years of doubting and searching and meditating, he was blessed with the required solution. But he was not content. He wanted all others to know how these problems are solved. He wanted to proclaim the Truth. In his search of the necessary materials, in his search for the wherewithal to start a machinery for the propagation of spiritual ideas, he travelled all over India. But the very gospel he found was of such an all-embracing nature, that the moment an opportunity presented itself to him, of carrying that gospel to England and America, it seemed

most natural that his work should so expand and that the whole trend of the western thought, philosophical and metaphysical, vaguely pointed to something like the Swamiji's message as the fulfilment of all its unconsci ous and unguided efforts. So we see in studying the development of Swamiji's personality and life-works that so far as the Swami was concerned, the words, national and international, bore identical meaning, tha when he was working in America and England, his work in India was growing apace and that when on his return to India he commenced in right earnest the work in and for the land of his birth, he was in truth labouring for the far-off seekers after Light in Europe and America.

So far we have traced the development of those forces that facilitated the work of the Swami. But all these favourable opportunites would have failed to accomplish the result had the central figure of the Swami been wanting. How often do we attribute a particular result to the cumulative action of certain forces, invincible in their working and irrepressible in onward progress? In the superiority of our scientific analysis, we try to eliminate altogether the element of personality through which alone Providence work, out His results. In tracing the growth of the Maratha power, for instance, we talk a lot of nonsense about national characteristics and all that, little dreaming but for the gigantic personality of Shivaji, all this theoreticaily perfect chain of cause and effect would simply have been nowhere. Let us not forget the great truth that God effects His designs—feebly echoed in the accumulated favourable circumstances—through deputies specially commissioned by Him for the purpose.

The catalogue of Swamiji's great qualities of the head and the heart would be a very long one. Yet, it can be safely asserted that it was not a particular quality nor a combination of a number of great qualities that stood him in good stead. It was the man behind and not his qualities that impressed people most. It is said that the best poetry suggests something not explicitly expressed by words and that, that something constitutes the essence, the very soul of poetry. It would be a mistake to suppose that wonderful eloquence of the Swami reinforeed by his equally wonder ful genius and scholarship brought success to his mission. Great as were these qualities, they merely introduced the man. No doubt they made his task easy but the accomplishment of his purpose rested on qualities not so showy. These were the immense catholicity of his mind and message and the singular peace and blessedness that his look, words, manner and life revealed and which he imparted to all those who came into contact wlth him. There have been souls equally pure and unselfish, equally gifted with the ambition of ameliorating society, of leading mankind to the land of happiness. But they wanted to foist on mankind their fads and by their intense fanaticism succeeded in bringing misery to those very persons whom they wanted to help. Possessed of the driving power of a fanatic, the Swami had, what fanaties can never lay claim to, an extremely liberal spirit. In this world of narrow vision, where each society, each sect, each party, each religion thinks and feels and acts as it were in water-tight compartments, the catholicity of the Swami came refreshing as the morning dew. He was a patriot of patriots, yet something more; he was

the orthodox of orthodox, but something more; he was a reformer but had something which the reformer lacked. He was a greater Christian than Christians, a greater Buddhist than Buddhists, a greater Hindu than Hindus. Christians liked his love and reverence for the founder of their religion. "Had I lived", said he on one occasion, " in the days of Christ, I would have washed his feet, not with my tears but with my heart's blood." Once asked whether he was a Buddhist, he replied "A Buddhist! I am a servant of the servant of Buddha." This reverence for all the great men produced by mankind, this acceptance of all that has been great and good and pure in the thoughts and deeds and dreams of mankind, this readiness to keep his head and heart open to all the stimulating influences, past, present and future, astonished all. Scientists and philosophers found the Swami as great a votary of science and philosophy as they were. Democrats and socialists found in the Advaita of the Swami a greater conception of democracy and socialism than theirs. Whoever turned to the Swami found his ideals and aspirations already a part of the Swami's ideals and aspirations. And this all-embracing, all-absorbing catholicity of mind opened for the Swami the hearts of those with whom he came into contact and pointed to mankind an ideal it has yet to aspire after.

Another quality which impressed the children of the restless and materialistic civilization of Europe and America was the singular peace and blessedness of the Swami's mind. His purity and unselfishness form, no doubt, part of this peace and blessedness.

but the part can never be the whole. Modern life invitably tends to restlessness. Man now a days lives more in the future than in the past and the present. Greatness of life is supposed to consist in the attainment of—or rather in constantly striving after but never attaining —some material prize, the appetite for which grows with feeding and man has to bring all his faculties, good and evil,—more evil than good,—to bear upon that effort Such a life ean end only in disappointment and misery, for, the ratio between a man's desires and his material possessions is always constant. The western nations aim at extracting the maximum in point of pleasure and power out of this life and so in spite of their apparent success and prosperity are more and more restless and discontented. The wealthiest, the mightiest and most prosperous people there are exactly the people most miserable. The Swami's singular peace and blessedness of mind was not lost over them. They discovered that the greatness of a life does not consist in hiding the the petttiness of the soul under heaps of magnificent trappings but in discarding all the adventitious accompaniments of life so that the soul should shine in all its glory. They discovered that the greatness of life consists not in the greatness of material possessions but in the memory of great deeds done and in the consciousness that a great life is being lived. They discovered that the man who cares not for the morrow and trusts in God is a greater benefactor of mankind and gets in return more peace and happiness than the man who has no such faith, no such reliance on Divine Guidance and whose weapons of success are nothing but craft, cunning and diplomacy. And this discovery must have in-

creased their respect for the Swami and for his cause. In these day of vain strivings, vain attainments and vain disappointments, mankind stands sorely in need of moral and spiritual gaints, every day and every moment of whose lives would serve as a reminder to all of their own great nature and would stimulate the moral consciousness of people engrossed in winning the material prizes of life. In spite of the efforts of missionaries to spread the gospel of Christ by distributing gratis crores of copies of the Bible, mankind is found to be increasingly receeding from the life of purity and devotion and at such a time, more than at any other, the world is in need of Vivekanandas, the embodiments of the Scriptures of thc world, whose daily and hourly actions are guided, not by expediency but by the highest ethical and spiritual laws. Thank God, mankind can at least recognize the Man of God when he comes and pay its homage to him. The secret of the Swami's success in the West is due to the operation of this simple law.

The greatness of the Swami was no one-sided greatness. He was not a mere man of thought. He was not a mere man of action. He was not a mere man of emotion. He was at once a man of thought, action and sentiment. Read the lives of the Bhaktas, the God intoxicated, the spiritually-minded people. Their whole life is one continuous efford to elevate and purify sentiment. Ask them for arguments and theories and they will simply laugh at you. They will tell you that the religion of the heart recognizes no fealty to intellect. Ask them to be active in the interests of society. The only activity they are familiar with is the ceaseless

chanting of the name of the Lord. They care nothing for sciences, arts, philosophies, metaphysics, they care absolutely nothing for the complex problems that confront the society of their times. They are Godmen no doubt but they are fit only to be worshipped from a distance. Then there are the rationalists, the philosophers, the scientists who look upon life merely as a perpetual exercise for the intellect. They would laugh at Bhakti and the devotional element in human character. They consider that to be the root cause of all superstition. Everything that smells of ignorance, faith or superstition is anathema to them even when it tends to check evil impluses and passions and keep them within the bounds of morality. They declare that reason is an enough basis for morality and care not for the morality that is supported by the threat of eternal damnation. Mankind owes a deep debt of gratitude to these votaries of the Goddess of Reason. But while these men have developed their head, they have neglected their hands. They too, like the Bhaktas, are incapable of action. Thought is great, emotion is great, but what are they, singly or in combination, to society unless they be supplemented by action ? Hitherto the men of action, with rare exceptions like Cæsar and Napoleon, have been impervious to the influence of thought or emotion. These captains of men and affairs pick up an idea or two that is floating, as it were, in the intellectual atmosphere of their times and then they give all their energy to the working out of that idea. We see what this tremendous concentration in action results in, how it electrifies the masses and leads them to the performance of great deeds. Whatever the place of these

men of action in history, to contempories they appear as giants and their reward is out of all proportion to their emotional and intellectual endowments. We have seen how these three types of men are severally developed. We are, of course, talking of supreme development of these forces and not of any mediocre development as is found in the average man. Emotion, thought action, even when developed singly, leads to mighty results. But occassionally we are privileged to witness instances of men, who are great, not only in one but two or even all the three elements of human greatness; and then the power of the man is simply irresistible. Plato Aristotle, Kant were mighty men of thought. Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose too is a chip of the same blockt Caesar and Napoleon were as great as Aristotle or Kan. in intellect; and their giant intellect they harnessed to action and that is why the lapse of centuries notwithstanding, their names are still green in the pages of history. This unique combination of thought and action, of a mighty brain coupled with an equally mighty driving power has been the secret of the unique achievements and popularity of Lokamanya Tilak. But though of mighty intellect and of mighty organizing powers the Lokamanya was no Bhakta. He proved himself to be a man of high sentiment and mental refinement no doubt but the supreme qualities of the heart,—tenderness, pathos, humility and love, he lacked. These Mahatma Gandhi possesses in an abundant measure. He has not the limitless ratiocinating power of the Lokamanya but he is equally great as a man of action and refuses to find solace in solitude and prayer,

If in the light of this analysis, we consider the personality of the Swami, we shall have some idea of its unique magnitude & unique grandeur. "Nature moulded him of clay of which she is most sparing." Great as a man of emotion, great as a man of thought, the Swami was equally great as a man of action. He combined in himself all the elements of greatness and this very magnitude of his endowments gives us some idea of the magnitude of his mission. It was not for nothing that Providence endowed him with its choicest gifts in such lavish proportion. The regeneration of India and through her, the regeneration of the world,—this was the dream of the Swami and this was what he was sent on earth for. "I feel myself to be the man born after many centuries ; I feel that India is young." These words of the Swami reveal to us the infinitude of his aspirations and the infinitude of his hopes. The appearance of such a man in India at this critical time in her history proves that Providence has not forgotten her ; and if Swamiji's work is to be continued, India cannot do better than cherish his noble example and message. Though dead, the Swami still lives in our midst and will continue to live so long as his message is remembered. In these days of tall talk and small performances, it is something to come across a message whose freshness no lapse of time will wither and whose greatness is commensurate with the greatness of the life behind it.

The message of Swami Vevekananda is simple but encouraging. He has no patience with the weak-minded, the pessimistic class of people. He was the

champion of the idea of strength, the apostle of the message hope. "Have strength, he used to say. 'strength to think independently, strength to speak boldly, strength to act firmly. Slavery of thought, he detested. He was impatient of intellectual thraldom. Never believe but test always that is what he said. "Forget not that the Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Each soul is (potentially) divine. Only in the case of many, the divinity is concealed. Just kindle the Divine Spark and you can become anything. Never go to the wall and weep like a woman, never even if the whole world be against you; never even if mountain-high difficulties are to be encountered. Difficulties are but the helping hand of God. Bear the buffets of Nature cheerfully Follow the will of God. Obey it faithfully and never reluctantly. He is leading you to the goal. What if the path be not strewn with roses. Rather consider life to be a battlefield. And woe to him who comes here with a craven heart. Be strong. Strength is life, weakness is death. Concentration even in wordly affairs is a kind of "tapasya", even greatness in secular matter a spiritual asset. Shun not society; serve it heart and soul. Social service is equivalent to Divine worship. Lead society forward. Forget differences, never emphasize them. He is the true leader of men who can give them some positive ideas. Life is short; life is fleeting. Death is knocking at the door. Be ready to face it at any moment but so long as life endures, let it be consecrated to self-elevation, social service and Divine worship."

CHAPTER II

NARENDRANATH

True democrat that he was, the Swami Vivekananda was no believer in the doctrine of heredity. He held that while the transmission of some physical characteristics from father to son and through him to the grand son was possible, the moral and intellectual equipment of every soul was the result of his own endeavours in a previous incarnation and a favourable or unfavourable moral and intellectual atmosphere contributed very little to the formation or development of the pesonality. He pointed to the vast intellectual and moral gulf that separated every great man from his parents on the one hand and children on the other. He proudly cited instances of several Negroes who, without the least benefit of heredity assimilated all the education that a 'superior' race could impart. While one may freely admit that both the parents and children of the heroes and heroines of history were all ordinary people, still this fact does not strike at the root of the doctrine heredity and even the Gita declares that a *yogabhraṣhta* seeks for his *reincarnation*, a *family distinguished for holiness, righteousness* and God-devotion. Believers in the doctrine of heredity might discover some common traits between the Swami and his immediate ancestors. Swamiji

though he never followed the legal profession, was, throughout his short career distinguished for his legal acumen; and law was the hereditary profession of his family for three continuous generations. Vishwanath, the father of the Swami, Durgacharan Dutta, his grand-father and Rammohan Dutta, his great-grand-father were all lawyers. Another remarkable point to be noted is that, like the Swami, his grand-father, Durga-Charan too, had renounced the world in the prime of his life.

Though a Sanyasin, the Swami was not a Brahmin but a Kayastha by caste. When some carping critics of the Social Reform party called him a Sudra and challenged him to prove by what authority a Sudra could become a sanyasin, the Swami, who, when sometimes mistaken for a Negro in the United States of America and hence refused admittance to the hotels never once opened his lips in correction of the mistake, silenced his critics by declaring that he was a Kshatriya. "I trace my descent to one, at whose feet every Brahmin lays flowers when he utters the words *Yamaya Dharmarajaya chitra guptaya Vai namah* and whose descendants are the purest of Kshatriyas. If you believe in your mythology, let the reformers know that my caste, apart from any other services in the past, ruled half of India for centuries. If my caste is left out of consideration what will there be left of the present day civilisation of India? In Bengal alone, my blood has furnished them with their greatest philosopher, the greatest poet, the greatest historian, the greatest archaeologist, the greatest religious preacher; my blood has furnished India with the greatest of her modern scientists."

"In human society, too much wealth or too much poverty is a great impediment to the higher development of the soul. It is from the middle classes that the great ones of the world come." This statement of the Swami is completely borne out by history. It is true that modern democracy has produced scores of politicians and millionaries, who from a life of stark poverty and destitution have risen to the topmost ring of the ladder through sheer will-power and brilliance of intellect. But it may be confidently asserted that the life of stark poverty and destitution, if it involves, as it generally does, the ruthless trampling under foot, of sentiment or refinement can not be expected to produce a moral or spiritual giant. The Dutta family in which the Swami was born on January 13th 1863, was a respectable and cultured family. Vishwanath Dutta, the son of a sanyasin and the father of a sanyasin, was himself a sanyasin in spirit and mental out-look. He was a man of prodigious brain power, of wide reading, a scholar in the real sense of the word. He was distinguished by his knowledge of law and for his lordly style of living. His heart was as great as his head. He was a great giver and a very hospitable host. His eldest son Narendranth, (familiarly called Noren), the future Swami Vivekananda was immensely proud of his father and said on one occasion. "Wherever my father's blood went, there was greatness". The career of Vishwanath Dutta was cut off at a time most inconvenient to his growing family. Like many other optimistic or spiritual natures, he was heedless of the future and his sudden death reduced his wife and children from a state of comparative luxury to that of poverty and starvation.

Who can however say what share it had in moulding the spiritual character of his eldest son ?

It has been said that the virtues of the parents of great persons shine with the reflected glory of the virtues of their illustrious offsprings and that biographers, anxious to idealize everything connected with their heroes too often invest their parents with qualities to which they can not by any possibility lay claim. The general truth of this remark must not blind us to the sterling qualities of men and women who in the obscurity of every-day life display qualities even superior to those of persons who, by a favourable combination of circumstances are fortunate enough to be pushed into fame. To such hearts of pure gold, we must ever pay homage. But our homage is, a thousand times more devoted if such persons are most intimately related to men whose lives and achievements are a national treasure. To this class belongs Bhuvaneswari, the mother of Swami Vivekananda. It was her proud privilege to give birth to, nurse during infancy and guide during boyhood and early youth the spiritual conqueror of America. "No man was ever great who did not literally worship his mother". Narendranath's worship of his mother was as much due to his loving nature as to the marvellous qualities with which she was endowed. Unlike most women, Bhuvaneshwari was gifted with uncommon intellect. Her son once complained that he had to read Macaulay's History of England three several times before he could memorize it while his mother could repeat any song after hearing it only once. The Swami declared that he owed his intellectual life to his mother. He frequently spoke of her and at the end of a

lecture in America on "The Ideals of Indian Women" "he paid his filial homage to his own mother as having enabled him to do the best he had done, by her life of unselfish love and purity that caused him by his very inheritance to choose the life of a monk. "It is the bitterest element" says Lord Morley " in this vast irony of human life that the time-worn eyes to which a son's success would have brought the purest gladness are so often closed forever before success has come." This misfortune did not fall to the share of Bhuvaneshwari. She was, however destined to experience another misfortune, equally bitter and which longevity almost surely brings to a parent, the early death of her son. We need hardly add that the grief, overwhelming though it was, was borne with dignity and resignation.

And what shall we say of Noren? It is a pity that though the element of history in biography is greatly developed, that of poetry is undeservedly neglected. While we know the details of the magnificent deeds of great men from their biographies, and sometimes even of their whims and hobbies, the poetry of their childhood is forever lost to us. The only childhood that has been to a certain extent chronicled is that of Lord Krishna; and see how many generations of poets have loved to linger on the petty details of that life! In the early life of the Swami Vivekananda, how fondly do we recall the fact that two nurses, instead of one, were required to look after him in his infancy! With what an amused smile do we learn that his naughtiness could be tamed only by the penalty of the water-tap! How reverentially do we listen to the story of the future Swami Vivekananda giving as a boy, to wandering sadhus

whatever he had in his hand or on his body and being consequently locked up in a room on the occasion of the visits of such beggers for fear he would throw away his gold ornaments or part with his newly-purchased "dhoti". What a significance do we attach to his destruction af the image of Rama on learning that Rama was guilty of the (to him) unpardonable fault of having a wife! We love to collect little bits of such incidents from out a period of life naturally dedicated to playing and seek to measure the spiritual height of Noren the child or to trace, in true psychological manner the spiritual development of our hero. Vain might be our effort and meagre the materials but nevertheless the mind fondly persists in seeking for some promise of the Swami Vivekananda in the child Noren.

Coming to more prosaic matters, we find that after a course of Vernacular instruction, partly at school and partly at home, Noren joined the Metropolitan Institute, Calcutta, at the tender age of seven. Nine years later, he passed (1879) his Entrance examination. Noren could surely have completed the course of secondary education earlier, had he not been required to spend two fruitful years (1877 and 1878) of his life out of school at Raipur in the Central Provinces. There was also another reason. For some years he was a victim of chronic dyspepsia and his general health suffered very much and he became pale and emaciated, Noren's attention to his school books was, at best, perfunctory. But so wonderful was his memory that one hour's daily study usually sufficed ro take him to the top of the class. Nor was he first in his studies only. He excelled

in everything. He loved boyish pranks no doubt but instinctively knew where to draw the line between culpable and innocent mischief. He was bold and aggressive. But in his bold and aggressive spirit, there was nothing repulsive. On the contrary, it was mellowed by suavity of character. It was this quality which endeared him to his school-mates as well as his neighbours and other friends of his family. The catalogue of his accomplishments even as a school-going boy is by no means inconsiderable. He excelled in music, he excelled in games, he excelled in the culinary art. He loved cricket, rowing and fencing. He revelled in amateurish dramatic performances. There was nothing too great or too small from which he did not extract fun and pleasure. Whether it was playing with his pigeons, mice or rabbits or whether it was playing with the magic lantern, he gladly put the best part of his energy in the occupation. Nor was he content with play or his school lessons. The dawn of intellectual life was slowly coming over him and in the leisure of Raipur, he found his father a most congenial intellectual companion. It was his conversations with his father that introduced him to higher intellectual life. His intimate contact with his father's capacious mind broadened his outlook, developed his powers of argumentation and had on the whole, a most stimulating effect upon a mind which had already begun to feel the ferment of thought.

In 1879, Noren passed his entrance examination and joined the General Assembly's Institute, one of the oldest colleges in Bengal. He passed his First year Arts examination in 1881 and his B.A. examination in

1884. Under normal circumstances he would have passed his law examination in 1886, but the year in which he should have taken the law degree and started practising as a lawyer, he renounced the world and became a monk. His ablities were of the highest order, the examination results were in his days liberal enough and it would have been quite easy for him to pass in the first division. But his attention to his college books was quite perfunctory and he never had any higher ambition than that of passing. However, he invariably succeeded in securing for himself a good second class. It should be noted that practically during the whole of his college career, he was a constant visitor to Dakshineshwar and latterly he spent more of his time with Sri Ramkrishna than at home and college together. Nor was this all. Being a man of versatile tastes and accomplishments, there were numerous other calls upon his time and whatever success he got at the University examinations was the result of snatches of study at odd intervals. Altogether, examinations and their preparations were an extremely unimportant episode of his college life which was mainly utilized in (1) garnering that vast knowledge of philosophy, history and literature which was, in his later years, the astonishment of Western intellectuals, (2) a synthetic and comprehensive study of Hindu religion at the feet of Sri Ramkrishna and the enjoyment of all sorts of innocent pleasures and cultured forms of amusement.

Noren's temperant was a curious blend of worldly and unworldly qualities. He was a Bhogi and Yogi in one,

In their higher manifestations, the qualities of a Bhogi enable a man to earn world's sweetest prizes, success, wealth and fame; in their lower manifestations they qualify him for squeezing the maximum amount of pleasure out of this fleeting life. To the Bhogi, life is a beautiful garden and the chief and fit occupation of a man is an endless plucking of its fairest flowers. The why and the wherefore of life, its tremendous mysteries and its still more tremendous responsibilities are alike foreign to his nature. He lives in the day and in the moment engrossed in charming trifles and in the fickle and decoying joys of the pleasures of the senses. Considered apart from its concomitant pitfalls, there is nothing blame worthy in the life of ceaseless pleasure except that it dwarfs and enervates the intellect and makes a man oblivious of the higher needs of his nature. On the contrary there is a certain engaging element in the cheerfulness and light-heartedness that are the reward of such Bohemian life. Noren was the prince of Bohemians. He sang with "full-throated ease" and under the care of trained musicians, he became an expert both in the science and the art of music. This, together with his proficiency in every kind of game, indoor and outdoor, introduced him to a far wider circle of a people than is generally the case with the average college-student. Such a wide and varied company could not, of course, be select. Even at best, it consisted of purely wordly natures attracted to Noren by his accomplishments. The first thing that struck Ramkrishna Paramahamsa with regard to the friends who accompanied Noren on the occassion of his first visit to Dakshineshwar was their spiritual incompatibility with his

future disciple. It was a curious back-ground for the intensely spiritual Noren. The all-sided accomplishments that endeared Noren to his merry friends served a great purpose in his life and that was to provide recreation to a soul deeply engrossed in the fatiguing task of solving the mystery of human life. The momentum of his thought and the struggles of his higher spiritual nature would have shattered his constitution had not God Almighty in the supermacy of His wisdom gifted him with qualities calculated to recoup for the nervous and vital energy spent in the great spiritual effort.

That Noren did not succumb to the subtle and unhealthy influences of the motley company that surrounded him showed the innate strength of his character and the powerful urge with which his spiritual instincts were hurrying him to a life of exalted thought and actions. Here was a lad brought up in the midst of purely worldly-minded natures, himself the scion of a wealthy and aristocratic family. But neither habit nor example could keep his mental vision chained to worldly life; it soared higher and higher regardless of the sorroundings that sought to drag it down. Even before the spiritual ideal had dawned upon him with perfect clearness, even before he visited the master and decided to surrender all his worldly dreams at the altar of spirituality, even during the acutely tormenting period of scepticism and agnosticism with its tendency to cynicism, even then, Noren cultivated those two qualities which are the *sina quo non* of higher spirituality, *viz*, asceticism and Brahmacharya. The natural impulses of Noren were emphatically not ascetic. But he was a lad of inflexible will. He regulated his

diet and often slept on bare ground. He practised strict Brahmacharya-purity in thought, word and deed. He kept his company and kept his purity. He withstood every temptation that sought to blast his spiritual future and when on one or two occasions, deliberate attempts were made to break his purity, he stood the test with a strength which is the surest sign of Divine Grace.

It was this sure spiritual instinct for Brahmacharya that prompted Noren to resolutely set his face against the projects of his marriage that were now and then mooted ever since he passed his Entrance Examination. Those were days of early marriages, his father was a distinguished citizen of Calcutta and naturally many offers of marriage came. Then, from the stand-point of his father, there was another reason, the health of Noren. As a result of repeated attacks of malaria, Noren, who, as we have already seen, long suffered from chronic dyspepsia began to show symptoms of diabetes, which has been described as the scourge of his family, many members of its having died of it. Anxious to check the serious moods of Noren, his father encourged him into habits and accomplishments calculated to divert his thoughts into lighter channels. It was partly with this object that he got Noren trained as a musician. It was with this object in view that he tried to get Noren married. But Noren knew that once he was married, "everything would be over with him." As an ambitious and enterprising youth whose quest of the "Treasure Island" was just begun, he was unwilling to limit the possible sphere of his activities by accepting proposals which might as well wait.

In the lives of small men, in the lives of great men, there are occasions which determine, good or evil, the whole course of future activities. These are the turning points in the career of the person and on the successful or unsuccessful turning at these points depends his or her future weal or woe. What is the life of every man and woman but the detailed history of about a dozen such moments, small moments, no doubt, but moments big with Fate ? One such moment had come for Noren. On the luck of some Calcutta bride depended the inauguration or indefinite postponment of a vast religious movement. Gibbon tells us how when Mahomed, the Prophet of Islam was compelled at dead of night to fly for safety from Mecca and was forced to hide himself in a mountain-cave where he was tracked by his relentless enemies, it was a providential spider's web that led his pursuers to believe that the place was unoccupied. An insignificant spider stood between Mahomed and his enemies, saved his life from their lances and enabled him to write thirteen centuries of world's history. In the case of our hero, his marriage was planned and planned and again frustrated and frustrated, many times the opposition coming from Noren himself. At last his opposition was conquered, and he yielded to the pressure of his father and mother by the alluring prospect of education at an English University out of the munificent sum to be received as dowry when, as fates would have it, his father suddenly died of heart disease.

It is thus that destiny helps or thwarts us. What at that time was a blow to Noren, helped him ultimately

by preventing him from giving to family what was meant for mankind. True, even after his father's death, there were scores of fathers of eligible brides who would have been but too glad to claim him as their son-in-law and whose help or influence would have extricated him from those financial embarrassments which perpetually harassed him. But then, the sudden death of his father, the sudden transition from affluence to dire poverty and the growing contact with Ramakrishna Paramahamsa created a change in his mentality which ever kept at an arm's length the question of marriage. The one moment when the lure of worldly ambition and the youthful joy at the prospect of foreign travel and education had conquered his opposition was gone, fortunately enough for him.

The question of marriage formed only a part of the larger question,—the course of his future life. Was his life to be dedicated to the service of God and man or was the pursuit of higher spiritual knowledge to give place to a semi-worldly and semi-patriotic or semi-religious life? Was he to be great in the accepted sense of the word or was he to set every precedent at nought and carve out a spiritual career for himself? Was family, money, social position with a pinch of patriotism or religious fervour to be the goal of his super-abundant energies, or was everything to go before the call of the Divine? The question is of absorbing interest to the student of human psychology and most puzzling to one who is called upon to answer it. Nowhere is compromise more tempting than in this case when the antagonism between the higher and lower life is sought

to be reconciled by the partial acceptance of both. The conventions of society create for us certain so-called duties which flatter our sense of self-importance and recognition of which undoubtedly helps us in the earlier stages of our moral and spiritual growth. To fulfil the expectations entertained by his family and friends is naturally the ambition of every youth. When to this inborn sense of obligation are added the uncertainties risks and dangers inevitable in the life spiritual, one can understand why the bravest spirits quail and hesitate before taking what appears to be a leap in the dark. Then there is the lure of fame. Conscious of his powers and conscious of his potentialities, it is not at all surprising that Narendranath often pictured for himself the career of a leader of men, on whose words hung thousands of people and whose presence was a signal for tumultuous applause. Those were the days of infant public life in India, and the young men of those times had not witnessed the right royal honours meted out to Lokamanya Tilak or Mahatma Gandhi. But there were others, lesser lights, no doubt, but men who by their supreme power had lent grandeur to a career of public usefulness. Such were W. C. Bonnerjee and Keshab Chandra Sen, the idols of the Calcutta youth and the giant mind of young Noren naturally looked wistfully to the eminent position they occupied. When however he went to Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, before the simple grandeur and magnificent purity of that life, the attraction of every greatness tempered with an alloy of worldliness began to fade and he more and more and gravitated to the spiritual life, which involved the renunciation of ambition, the renunciation of all that the world prizes most.

And yet so slow and almost imperceptible was the process of transformation and so tremendous the difficulties, part of them heaven-sent and part but the result of his own kind and noble feelings that it was years before Noren did ultimately renounce the world. Noren first met the Master in 1880, his father died in 1884, he passed his B. A. examination in 1884 and under normal circumtances would have passed his B. L. examination in 1886, the year of the Maha-Samadhi of the Master. While taking lessons at the feet of the saint of Dakshineshwar, he was also engaged in taking lessons at the Arts and Law colleges in such subjects as Literature, Science, Philosophy and Law. The greatness of a life is not to be measured by the readiness with which an ideal is accepted but by the eagerness with which a man throws himself into it once its acceptance is decided upon.

The key to Noren's power and personality lay in his wonderful intellect. He impressed his contemporaties with his marvellous memory, his restless analytical power and his wonderful power of poetic imagery. These qualities were supported by a versatility and intellectual vitality such as is rarely met with. What struck fellow-students most was his immense power of concentration which made him oblivious of all external surroundings almost at a minute's notice. His intellectual self-confidence, sometimes mistaken for egoism by superficial or unkind observers gave him a hold over all with whom he came into contact. Thus intellectually endowed, Noren was not likely, like the proverbial book-worm to bury his head in his text books. It was only the approach of the annual or biennial examination

that stimulated Noren's acquaintance with his text-books; and then his labours were prodigious. For the major part of every night, he kept himself awake. Such feverish activity for about a month secured for him a second class and then he would again lapse into his customary amusements. He was an omnivorous reader of news-papers and magazines and a very close student of contemporary thought and movements. His usual speed of perusing an abstruse philosophical treatise was forty to fifty pages per hour.

Though a keen student of history and literature, his mind was chiefly attracted to philosophy and it was here in his academical career that he laid the foundations of that vast philosophical knowledge that stood him in good stead in Europe and America. He mastered all the philosophical thought of Europe from the days of Plato and Aristotle right up to those of Herbert Spenser. His intellectual intrepidity and independence enabled him to put every system under the powerful microscope of his analytical faculty and he found no rest till he had examined it from every point of view. The philosophy of Herbert Spenser in particular, he subjected to a very close analysis and he sent him on to England the results of his analysis and was rewarded with a very kind and a very encouraging reply. It is no wonder that a lad of such promise struck his professor of philosophy as something of a prodigy. Nor did Noren confine his attention to Western philosophy only. His proficieney in Sanskrit enabled him to study the Hindu Philosophy from the original text-books. It is said that he started with a little prejudice against the Hindu philosophy as being too old

to stand the test of modern science. What was his astonishment when he found that in the matter of scientific exactitude, the Indian systems were in advance of the Western and that the Indian systems need not in the least be afraid of the progress of science!

His devotion to history and literature was second only to his passion for philosophy and metaphysics. His soul recreated with history and literature after it had every day wrestled with philosophy and metaphysics. Literature is the store-house of every nation's ideals and Noren being of an idealistic turn of mind naturally imbibed all that was best in Bengali, Sanskrit and English literatures. The dictional simplicity of Wordsworth, together with his spiritual elevation captivated his heart. We do not know how the Sanskrit poets impressed him. He appears to have preferred the poetry of Valmiki to that of Vyas. Artificiality of every kind, he detested and he considered that the literary tastes of Bana and Jayadeva were perverted and a sure sign of the intellectual decay of the nation. His proficiency in history, ancient and modern, European as well as Indian wil- strike every one who reads his lectures. His powerful imagination helped him to discover several of the missing links in the evolutionary history of ideals, systems institutions and societies. To him history was not a record of the deeds, misdeeds, we should say, of Princes and Noblemen. It was something more, something quite different. It was the cumulative thought and constructive work of the race. It was this conception of history that led him to declare that even in centuries of politica degradation, India had a history to be proud of, in that her spiritual faculty was ceaselessly active. His know

ledge of history was of immense use to him in England and America. It also helped him in the great task of national reconstruction.

No account of Narendranath's collegiate days and spiritual struggles would be complete without a reference, howsoever passing, to the dire days of poverty (about two years) through which he and his family passe- consequent on the sudden death of his father. Vishwanath Dutta, though he lived in the world was never of it and inspite of the success he attained at the bar does not appear to have made any adequate provision for the family. His lordly style of living and his generous and obliging nature account for the smallness of his bequest. Perhaps, like many other persons with an optimistic frame of mind, he hoped that everything would go on well and the penalty for his improvidence would never come. He had every reason to hope—how slender such hopes—that he would be able to live the alloted span of life and initiate his eldest son into the mysteries of the legal profession, which would secure for him a fair income. Had Vishwanath Dutta lived only for four or five years more and had Noren been a worldly-minded and worldly-wise youth, things would never have assumed the dark aspect that they actually did; for, in that case, the father would have had the satisfaction of firmly planting his son on the professional *gadi* before his death. But all this was not to be. Destiny had ordained that Narendranath should taste of the bitter cup of poverty. It might be asked "what would Narendranath have done had his father lived, say, for half-a-dozen years more ?" Such a question is easier put than answered. Perhaps, Noren would

never have become a monk. As we know, his father just before his death had planned for him a brillant marriage and Narendranath had consented to marry, being allured by the prospect of education at an English University. Perhaps he might not have married, something might have prevented his father from getting Noren married and one day, Narendranath might have given him a slip and renounced the world. As it is, we are prouder of Narendranath for having found courage enough to renounce the world when his family was in poor circumtances than we should have been, had he left the world without, figuratively speaking, a wrinkle on his brow. For we must never forget that whatever financial difficulties beset Narendranath were bound to be short-lived and that, not only success but the highest worldly suceess was in the palm of his hand and that if he renounced the world, his renunciation had nothing in common with that of those storm-tossed, ship-wrecked crew, on whose life, the word 'failure' is writ large. He renounced the world, with joy, not sorrow, with hope and not despair, for an entrance into a higher life and not merely as an exit from a life of woe and misery. That, on occasion of this purely voluntary and joyful renunciation, he could keep in the background the beloved faces of mother, brothers and sisters, all of whom from a worldly stand point still required his assistance only adds to the significance of the step taken by him.

The full story of his unspeakable misery and of the heroic measures adopted to fight with it cannot be fully known. We can have just a glimpse of it from the following passage:—

"Even before the period of mourning was over" says the Swami Vivekananda, "I had to knock about in search of a job. Starving and bare-footed, I wandered from office to office under the scortching noon-day sun with an application in hand, one or two intimate friends accompanying me sometimes. But everywhere the door was slammed in my face. The first contact with the reality of life convinced me that unselfish sympathy was a rarity in the world,—there was no place in it for the weak, the poor and the destitute. Those who, only a few days ago would have been proud to help me, now turned their face against me, though they had enough means at their disposal. Sometimes, when I found that there was not enough provision for the family, I would go out, telling my mother that I had an invitation and would remain practically without food. My rich friends sometimes requested me to come to their homes or gardens and sing songs with which I had to comply. But I always kept my woes to myself. Nor were they inquisitive except one or two. Only one got information about my real state and put me under a deep debt of gratitude by sending my mother anonymous donations."

Narendranath made very brave efforts to extricate the family from its difficulties. Though often tempted to renounce the world, he determined to stand by his family until some provision could be mode for its maintenance. Neither he nor his Master ever encouraged a man to renounce the world if he had not fulfilled family obligations. "To forego your favourite desire for the welfare of those that depend upon you is no small sacrifice." Such was the advice which he gave

in 1895 to a friend. In his own life, he was true to his advice. He worked as a teacher in one of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's schools, then gave up the job for another where he received a slightly higher salary. For some time he served in an attorney's office. He also translated some English books. In these and other days, he tried to keep the wolf from the door. To add to his misfortunes, he was dragged in a law-suit with some relatives over the possession of the house in which he lived. "Be a hero to your enemies" was Noren's motto. He allowed no perverted doctrine of non-resistance and spirituality to come in the way, fought to the bitter end and ultimately won the suit. All this meant struggle. When the family prospects brightened up a little, he held himself free to renounce the world. Till then, he was at the helm.

Every adversity which does not overpower us is a blessing in disguise. Poverty makes one either cynical or doubly tender, it either blunts the edge of feelings or sharpens it. It ennobles, humanizes and democratises its victim. It brings out all his spiritual fire. Not only are the "poor in spirit" blessed but also those who are poor in pocket, if only they know that in poverty they have their highest spiritual asset. Poverty came to Noren aud changed his whole out-look on life. He knew by personal experience the world as it really is and fortified by his intellectual conviction and the Master's example, he became ready to renounce the world at the earliest opportunity.

With this general account of the family life and school and college days of Narendranath, we now proceed to describe his spiritual struggles, *Sadhana* and success.

CHAPTER III

THE GODWARD QUEST

Who does not feel a thrill of joy, not unmixed with fear and trepidation at the sight or contemplation of an extraordinarily intelligent youth, in whose heart the warm blood has infused hope and expectation; whose education has freed his mind from the trammels of tradition and convention and who has already begun to measure the good and evil in his society not from the standpoint the past gencration has bequeathed him but from the one which his budding, throbbing life with all its accompanying idealism and untutored enthusissm has planted into his youthful breast? What is the progress of society and civilisation but the handiwork: the thought-projection, as it were, of about a dozen or score young men of exceptional endowments who in each generation veered round the social angle of vision to their own? Literature, Science, Philosophy the march of Democracy—all owe whatever life they have to a handful of young giants, who, in the spring of their life dreamed dreams which in five, ten or fifty years, they converted into hard fact. On the one hand we see a social order standing erect and impregnable, claiming the right of occupation from times immemorial

exacting homage and acquiescence from millions of respectable persons, and apparently all-powerful and certainly in no mood to make room for innovatars of any kind; on the other side, we see a handful of beardless boys whose chief sport is to scale the walls or blow up the fortifications of ignorance, superstition, iniquity or injustice and invigorate society by the refreshing breeze of knowledge and reformation. New problems speedily arise and newer giants soon after, to tackle with them; thus the endless wheel turns on. Society and civilisation are entirely the fruit of the labour of these 'young' men who chose to live, not as the pall-bearers of a funeral but as the upholders and creaters" of their age. All honour to them and their work.

But the ways of nature are ever wasteful! It seeks to bring about transformation by 'demoralizing' as it were, an entire generation of young men, in order that a Vivekananda may he born! Vivekananda, or Narendranath as we call him at the age of eighteen or seventeen was one of those youths of the Calcutta University whose 'liberated' intellect had ceased to believe in the gods and demi-gods of Hindu orthodoxy and whose pet topic of merriment was the wild inconsistencies and improbabilities of the Puranic mythology —misnamed, ancient Indian History. At the dawn of early manhood, he apparently passed through the same process of thought which 'corrupts' morally and intellectually thousands of young men and which ends by making them undisguised materialists, scoffing sceptics, rank atheists or doubting agnostics; yet how different was the result in the case!

And the reason is not far to seek. The atheism which overtook Narendradath was an inevitable and an initial step in his moral and intellectual growth. It was the first giddy step of a slightly inebriated, because enfranchised, intellect. It was the first result of the impact of new thought against the old old petted notions. It was not the "atheism which is unto death" but the "atheism which is the very life-blood of all true faith." Prof. Max Mullar describes this atheism as the power of giving up, what in our best, in our most honest moments, we knew to be no longer true; it is the readiness to replace the less perfect, however dear, however sacred it may have been to us, by the more perfect, however much it may be detested, as yet by the world. It is the true self-sacrifice, the truest trust in truth, the truest faith, without that atheism, religion would long ago have been a petrified hypocracy, without that atheism, no new religion, no reform, no resuscitation would ever have been possible, without that atheism no new life is possible for any one of us."

One characterestic of this higher atheism is its thorough-going nature, its incessant thirst for further developments, its endless readiness to travel over, undaunted and undismayed the thorny and weary path of intellectual search and its preparedness to make any sacrlfices, so the truth is discovered. To travel over, undaunted and undismayed the thorny and weary path of intellectual search is itself a penance of the highest kind. It is easy to scoff at the innumerable superstitions that have grown out of the inevitable alliance between

the highest ethical and metaphysical conceptions on the one hand and incorrect geography, fanciful history and cruel elementary science on the other. In the very circumstances under which religions in ancient times originated and developed, such an alliance was inevitable; and with the first flush and consciousness of knowledge a young man of to-day, who almost in spite of himself is heir to the wonderful scientific discoveries of modern science is apt to dismiss all ancient learning with one impatient gesture. He renounces not merely what is crude or wrong in his ancient learning but also what is true and life-giving and the result of such a wholesale and senseless condemnation of the past is rank atheism.

If Narendranath did not succumb to this subtle psychological process, the credit of it is due to, not merely to his intellectual balance but mainly to his innate moral refinement and sensibility which, as it were shrank from the head-long plunge into the depths of atheism or agnosticism. He must have instinctively felt that "while the old leaves, the leaves of a bright and happy spring are falling and all seems wintry frozen and dead within and around us, there is and there must be a new spring in store for every warm and honest heart." For years the mind of Narendranath was wavering between belief and non-belief. He examined not only the foundations of belief but the limits of non-belief also. He was constantly weighing pros and cons, balancing mutually destructive arguments and theories. Strictly speaking we may say, Narendranath neven even for a moment subscribed to atheism. 'Atheism' is a condition of thought which is pronouncedly static. It never

alters, grows and develops. It is the negation of movement and progress. Such a crystallization of thought in a set and dogmatic groove, never belonged to Narendranath. Like the sky-lark of the poet, he daily flapped his wings in new and unexplored heights. The mental attitude of Narendranath in his college days can best be described as 'discontented and dynamic agnosticism'. He must have been profoundly influenced by the iconoclastic fervour of Huxley's agnosticism and the profound logic of Spencer's doctrine of the Unknown and Unknowable. From these contemporary writers he imbibed that impassioned and yet impartial scientific and philosophical spirit which we find manifested in all his later speeches and writings. While Narendranath was a student at college, the thunders of Huxley—"The substance of matter is a metaphysical unknown quality of the existence of which there is no proof;" "There is no evidence of the existence of such a being as the God of the Theologians;" "Thorough-going rationalism categorically denies that the supernatural or the infinite, whether it exists or not, can be the subject of human knowledge." "We can have scientific or real knowledge of phenomena only and that so far as what may lie beyond phenomena is concerned,—God, immortality &c.—there is no evidence either to affirm or deny anything."—these had created quite a flutter in the dove-cots of Christian orthodoxy and if we were allowed to vary the metaphor, became the foot-board for the giant mind of young Narendranath to take leaps into the region of higher philosophy and metaphysies. At a time of life when the process of thought stands in urgent need of clarification, it is a great thing to come into contact

with master minds who have already tackled the problem according to their lights and have accomplished good deal of the journey. A careful student of the philosophical lectures of Swami Vivekananda will have noticed how wonderfully suggestive they are of writers like Huxley and Spencer whose arguments they demolish with so much force and completeness.

But where the future Vivekananda parted company with thinkers like Huxley was that while the latter glorified matter to the utter neglect of that which originated matter, Narendranath struggled to seek that something which he felt was outside matter. Men like Huxley and Tindal with their positivist cast of intellect were content to be lost in the contemplation and glorification of matter. Huxley while he declared "I neither affirm nor deny the immortality of man" did not hesitate to admit that that immortality was not "half so wonderful as the conservation of force or the industructibility of matter. The mind of Narendranath was not so irrevocably lost to the admiration of matter as to be unmindful of the Great Unknown Cause. His eventual unsatisfaction with Huxley and men of his ilk though tormenting to him at first paved the way for his spiritual progress. Even in his days, the philosophical reaction against Herbert Spencer had set in by the perception that the canons of evidence required in physical science must not be exalted into universal rules of thought. This must have given a pause to Narendranath. Western writers openly began to say "The Physicist relies on *the validity of his perceptions of physical facts; but the saint and the theologian are no less entitled to rely* on the validity of their moral and spiritual experiences.

In each case the data rests on an ultimate basis undemonstrable indeed to any one who denies them except by the continuous process of working out their own proofs." How the protagonists of this reaction singularly failed to develop this argument and how at last they lapsed into the eternal argument of blind faith need not be discussed here. It is sufficient for us to note that the point was not lost on Narendranath and that in his earlier relations with Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, it must have occured to him again and again, forming as it were a bridge to connect his mind, already conversant with Western thought with the far higher thought bequeathed to us by Ancient Hinduism.

The 'theism' of Huxley never advanced beyond the recognition of passionless impersonality of the Unknown and Unknowable which science shows everywhere underlying the thin veil of phenomena. Here Huxley has without knowing it, unconsciously taken a step to the Vedantic ideal through sheer intellectual analysis. Narendranath's approach to the Vedanta was accomplished not merely by the intellectual process but the ethical as well. What occured to Balfour, occured to to him "If agnosticism or naturalism be true; or, rather, if it be the whole truth, then is morality but a bare catalogue of utilitarian precepts; beauty but the chance occasion of a passing pleasure; reason but the dim passage from one set of unthinking habit to another. All that gives dignity to life, all that gives value to effort, shrinks and fades under the pitiless glare of a creed like this; and even curiosity, the hardest among the nobler passions of the soul must languish under

the conviction that neither for this generation nor for any that shall come after it, neither in this life nor in another will the tie be entirely loosened by which reason, not less than appetite is held in hereditary bondage to the service of our material needs."

He clearly saw that Naturalism with all its implications was not a creed that could satisfy the craving of his soul. It might for the nonce satisfy the search for the Truth; but what about the search for the Beautiful and the search for the Good which equally with the search for the Truth formed part and parcel of his noble nature? Was he to remain content with the partial satisfaction of his intellect while his heart was still wrestling with the ethical problems of his higher spiritual nature? Was he to stifle all the cravings of his poetic nature and rest content with the Beautiful as is only painted in dull and dead matter? If matter was so beautiful, how much more would be the spirit, supposing it did exist? This was a point at which European scientists and philosophers ceased to be of use and where, perhaps only poets like Shelley, Browning and Wordsworth gave him a little helping hand. Narendranath was thus practically thrown upon his own resources now and it was at this point of the his intellectual and moral development that he, in despair, tried to see if the living representatives of his ancient religion would or could give him some guidance. Diligent, long and painful was the search; but it failed. And when Narendranath found that even the venerable Debendranath Tagore was a *sadhaka* and not a *siddha*, we can well imagine how dispirited he must have been.

It was only when he sought Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, that he at last got what he wanted.

We have it on the authority of Doctor Sir Brajendra Nath Seal that by the time Narendranath had fairly well advanced in his intellectual search after the Truth he was called upon to struggle in an ethical sense; and it was this moral struggle that must have first received the help of Sri Ramkrishna Paramahamsa. Says the learned Doctor, "The sovereignty of Universal Reason, and the negation of the individual as the principle of morals were ideas that soon came to satisfy Vivekananda's intellect aud gave him an assured conquest over scepticism and materialism. But this brought him no peace. The conflict now entered deeper into his soul; for the creed of Universal Reason called on him to suppress the yearning and susceptibilities of his artistic nature and Bohemian temperment. His senses were keen and acute, his natural cravings and passions strong and impetuous, his youthful susceptibilities tender, his conviviality free and merry. To suppress these was to kill his natural spontaneity—almost to suppress his self. The struggle soon took a seriously ethical turn, reason struggling for mastery with passion and sense. The fascinations of the sense and the cravings of a youthful nature now appeared to him as impure, as gross and carnal. This was the hour of the darkest trial for him. His musical gifts brought him associates for whose manners and morals he had bitter and undisguised contempt. But his convivial temperament proved too strong for him.

"He confessed that though his intellect was conquered by the Universal, his heart owned the allegi-

ance of the individual Ego, and complained that a pale, bloodless reason, sovereign *de jure* but not *de facto* could not hold out arms to save him in the hour of temptation. He wanted to know if my philosophy could satisfy his senses, could mediate bodily, as it were, for the soul's deliverance; in short, he wanted a flesh and blood reality, visible in form and glory; above all, he cried out for a hand to save, to uplift, to protect, a *sakti* or power outside himself which could cure him of his impotence and cover his nothingness with glory a *guru* or master, who by embodying perfection in the flesh would still the commotion in his soul."

Thus, just as his search for the Truth led him to the baffling border-land between agnosticism and theism, where he could neither say 'yes' nor 'no', where he could neither proceed further unaided nor could give up the search as hopeless or useless, so also his search, unconscious to be sure, for the Beautiful brought him face to face with problems, which the humdrum mind takes no notice of but which the highly refined mind ceaselessly grapples with, till victory is won. Perfect purity of thought or in other word, the nervous assimilation of the ideal of Brahmacharya requires herculean efforts and Narendranath constantly felt the need of a "hand to save, to uplift, to protect" in the hour of trial. Here the discipleship of Sri Ramakrishna brought him instantaneous relief. The blessed Presence of the Master, the contemplation of his life of purity and devotion were of immense help to him in the earlier stages and must have saved him from many a pitfall. The remarkable story is told of how when once his mind was slightly off the balance, he

diverted the whole chain of his thoughts by touching live coals and thus deliberately burning his skin. Such intrepid pursuit of the ideal of purity and the constant companionship of Sri Ramakrishna ultimately brought victory for Narendranath who quickly found out that what is required for the attainment of purity is not the giving up of the search of the Beautiful but only changing its direction. To train, control and regulate our thought-currents in our efforts to visualize the Beauty and Grandeur of the soul is certainly a far nobler quest. "What after all is the beauty in the human face, in the sky and in the moon but the partial apprehension of the real all-embracing Divine Beauty?"

Then there was the third quest, the quest of the Good. Here Narendranath was, from the very first on far firmer ground. It is the dream of every well-trained, intelligent and ambitious youth to fight with the misery and oppression he sees around him and establish so far as it may lie in his power, the rule of virtue and goodness. In the social, political or other fields, every young man feels a tremendous load of misery and oppression and Narendranath like so many other undergraduates of the Calcutta University must have repeatedly resolved to contribute his mite to the general work of uplift. Even had he not met Sri Ramakrishna, he would, after settling in life have been a distinguished social or political or even religious leader. But his contact with Sri Ramakrishna changed in this case, as in others, the very direction of his efforts. The master simply would not allow him to become anything superficial; and Narendranath's search after the Good

was transformed into a close investigation of the eternal problem of good and evil. As fates would have it, it was at this critical time, that the death of his father plunged him from a life of comparative affluence into a life of stark poverty and destitution; and his investigation of the problem of misery, as it had a personal element in it, was naturally thorough. Such an inquiry was bound to engender the spirit of true *Vairagya*,—renunciation. And there is a world of difference between the motives and methods of a reformer who, as the poet says, is armed with this sword of renunciation and those of another whose social work is but the projection of his untutored though benevolent ego.

Thus the three great quests—the quest of the Truth, of the Beautiful and of the Good—led Narendranath slowly and unconsciously to the final quest, the quest of the Infinite. The quest of the Truth led him to the confines of the Infinite, the quest of Beautiful led him to sublime ethical heights, the quest of the Good engendered in him deep and invulnerable renunciation. Each of these quests suggests in a way the quest of the Infinite. For the quest of the Truth by proving how illusory all preception and knowledge born of the senses and of the mind is, prepares the mind for that perception and knowledge wich is independent both of the senses and of the mind. The quest of the Beautiful by proving how contemptible is every beauty born of matter, longs for that higher beauty of the spirit, the perception of which is rendered possible only for a mind which has purified itself of all dross; and lastly the quest of the Good, by proving how good and evil—as ordinarily under-

stood—are eternaly conjoined, the obverse and reverse of the same coin, seeks to find a haven for the spirit in a spirit of detachment, which while certainly not neglectful of the misery to be found all round, has found the true way of eradicating it by willing reliance on the laws spiritual. The quest of the Truth has led scientists and philosophers like Huxley and Spencer almost to the confines of the Infinite, The quest of the Beautiful has led poets like Shelley and Wordsworth to the same destination; and the quest of the Good has led reformers like Buddha to an appreciation of the Infinite. In the case of Narendranath, his triple quest of the Truth, the Beautiful and the Good took him a long way towards the realisation of his goal. But it was his privilege not thus to stumble upon a dim realisation of the Infinite but to start directly and intrepidly upon its quest, which is the highest inquiry, the human mind can undertake.

An idea of the intensity of Narendranath's *sadhana* can be formed by the contemplation of the fact that his period of discipleship hardly exceeded six years. He first met the Master in 1880 and in 1886, when barely twentythree he attained *Nirvikalpa-Samadhi*. The ancient Romans were wrong in discouraging youth, which is the one priceless asset of a man, in matters spiritual as well as temporal. Whatever pure, whatever noble, whatever good lingers in man in life's downward journery is entirely the result of the aspirations of his youth. Experience and maturity of intellect are no doubt the gift of middle-age, but the spark of genius or the spark of divinity refuses to be ignited in a body not young. Buddha, Christ, Shankaracharya, Dnyaneshwar

Ramdas. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, all had attained spiritual perfection before they were thirty or thirty-five; and though, some of them, like Buddha and Ramdas, died quiet old, the years they were fortunately spared for, were devoted to the salvation of society. Their own salvation, they attained in the prime of youth.

Sri Ramakrishna used to describe two classes of spiritual persons,—the *Mukta* or liberated and the *Nitya-siddha* or ever-free and according to him, Narendranath belonged to the latter class of persons who do not require to be liberated because they are never caught in the net of Maya and who abide in the world for the good of other men, for teaching the Truth tc others." Sr. Ramakrishna once said,—"I can know the good signs about a man by looking at his eyes and brow. The eyes of Yogins have a peculiar look,—those that in previous incarnations passed their days in communion with God. In the case of some, it seems as if they have just left the seat for divine contemplation!" Such were the eyes of Narendranath and at his first sight, Sri Ramkrishna was "surprised to find such a spiritual man coming out of the material atmosphere of Calcutta."

We can form some idea of the spiritual momentum of Narendranath's youthful mind from the following picture he has given of the early days of Sri Ramakrishna but which applies to him with equal force :—

"There are moments into our life, when tired of all the ratiocinations of dull and dead logic, tired of plodding through books which after all teach us nothing, the

heart of our hearts sends out a wail at times: "Is there no one in this universe who can show me the light? If Thou art, show light to me! Why dost Thou send so many messengers and not Thyself come to me? If Thou art the God of man and woman alike, why comest Thou not to Thy child and see if he is not ready? To us all come such thoughts in moments of great depression. But such are the temptations surrounding us, that the next moment we forget. For the moment, it seemed that the doors of heaven were going to be opened, for the moment it seemed, as if we were going to plunge into the light effulgent, but the animal man again shakes off all these angelic visions. Down we go, animal man once more, eating and drinking and dying and drinking and eating and dying again and again. But there are exceptional minds which are not to be turned away so easily which, when once attracted can never be turned back whatever the temptations in the way, which want to see the Truth knowing that life must go. They say, let it go in a noble conquest and what conquest is nobler than the conquest of the lower man than this solution of the problem of life and death of good and evil?"

Narendranath succeded because he undertook the Godward Quest with the iron determination of one who prizes the Truth above life. "If this is True, what else does matter? If This is not true, what do our lives matter?"

CHAPTER IV

REALISATION

We now come to the most beautiful, most poetic and most instructive part of the life of Narendranath. If we leave aside the first seventeen years of his life which after all are only of secondary importance to us, we can divide the career of Swami Vivekananda in three distinct parts. The first commences with his first visit to Sri Ramakrishna in November 1880 and ends with the Mahasamadhi of the Master in August 1886. The second opens with the establishment of the monastery, covers a period of full seven years and ends most appropriately with the Parliament of Religions at Chicago; and the last, with which we are all familiar comprises the public activities of the Swami from 1893 to 1902. The first was a period of inspiration, the second of experience and the the third and last of work, national and international. And to the student of the life of the Swami nowhere is the poignancy of disappointment keener than in the paucity of the materials available for the interpretation of the first part of his life, of those six years of inspiration, of spiritual fervour and of spiritual illumination. Here was a life lived in the hourly and daily company of persons many of whom

have risen to fame. The tantalizing sweetness of the fragments of that life which have been supplied to us only whets our appetite and gives rise to the wish that some *Indian Boswell had exhaustively recorded for the* benefit of the world those scenes of *ecstacy* and divine fervour of which Narendranath was for a period of six years the central figure. Another thought that occurs to the student of Narendranath's life is the magnitude of the spiritual gift made by Sri Ramakrishna to him. Superficial readers of the life and works of Vivekananda dazzled by the splendour of his eloquence, the freshness and originality of his thought, the charm of his personality and the epic magnificence of his achievements are likely to run away with the idea that in the moulding of Narendranath, Ramakrishna had very little share. They hardly know that great as was the contribution of the Swami in the making of his own personality, the share of Ramakrishna was greater still. As a matter of fact the chisel of Sri Ramakrishna was incessantly at work for full six years, shaping and reshaping the future Vivekananda. To vary the metaphor, though in Ramakrishna Vivekananda and Co. the junior partner had invested a substantial capital, it was insignificant, almost nothing when compared to that of Sri Ramakrishna.

At first sight the help of a spiritual guide in the Godward journey appears to be somewhat superflous; and yet whoever has successfully accomplished that journey without such a help ? "In the vast majority of cases" says the Swami Vivekananda," such help is absolutely necessary. When it comes the higher powers and possibilities of the soul are quickened, Spiritual life is

awakened, growth is animated and man becomes holy and perfect in the end." Where to find such a guide ? "It is a mysterious law of nature" continues the Swami that as soon as the soul earnestly desires to have religion, the transmitter of the religious force *must* and does appear to help that soul. To the human soul, the lotus of whose inner holy shrine is already quick with life, the light which causes the beautiful opening out of this lotus comes always from the good and wise teacher. And how to serve such a teacher ? "Without faith, humility, submission and veneration in our hearts towards our religious teacher, there can not be any growth of religion in us; and it is significant that where this kind of relation between the teacher and the taught prevails, there alone gigantic spiritual men, are growing; while in those countries which have neglected to keep up this kind of relation, spiritual men become almost an unknown quantity. Religion, which is the highest knowledge and highest wisdom cannot be bought, nor can it be acquired from books. You may thrust your head into all the corners of the world, you may explore the Himalayas, the Alps and the Caucasus, you may sound the bottom of the sea and pry into every nook of Tibet and the desert of the Gobi, you will not find it anywhere until your heart is ready for receiving it and your teacher has come. And when that divinely appointed teacher comes, serve him with child-like confidence and simplicity, freely open your heart to his influence and see in him God manifested. Those who come to seek truth in such a spirit of love and veneration, to them the Lord of Truth reveals the most wonderful things regarding Truth, Goodness and Beauty."

It was hardly possible for Narendranath, whose *restless* and inquisitive agnosticism had, as we have seen nothing in common with the shallow scepticism of thoughtless youth and which in truth was but the yearning on the intellectual plane of his spirit to find its Haven, it was hardly possible for this religious aspirant to escape coming within the orbit of a saint living next door to Calcutta. Their meeting was inevitable and once they met, what followed was also inevitable. The first three meetings were of a purely preliminary character. To Sri Ramakrishna the very first meeting at Dakshineshwar was "as a lightning flash of memory and recognition." "My boy, my boy, at last you have come. Why did you not come early?" these were the words that greeted Narendra as soon as he had finished the song he was requested to sing. The recognition, the exclamation and the query must have astonished other visitors of the place as it undoubtedly astonished Narendra. But instead of being favourably impressed, he was rather repelled at what he considered to be the strangeness of Sri Ramakrishna's conduct. Nor was he prepossessed in Sri Ramakrishna's favour when the latter took him alone to another room, fed him inspite of all protests and with his own hands with fruits and sweets and said "you are the ancient Sage Nara—the incarnation of Narayan—born to remove the misery of mankind." What did it all mean? In his proudest moments of self-esteem, Narendra had hardly thought of himself in that light. And to receive this compliment, if a compliment it was, from an utter stranger was to him baffling in the extreme; and the

only way he could explain the conduct of the Master was by questioning the sanity of his mind.

All this naturally repelled Narendranath who regarded intellectual self-possession as one of the primary qualities of a man. There was however another aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's conduct which captivated his heart and drew him almost inspite of himself to the Master; and that was the unaccountable, wonderful and infinite love of the Master for him. Narendranath possessed in a very striking measure the quality of winning the love of others. But on the very face of it, this love of the Master belonged not to this world but to the next. Narendranath instinctively recognized the difference between the love of the worldly men and the love of this "brain-sick" man. And it was this baffling and simultaneous attraction and repulsion that drew him again about a month later to Dakshineshwar.

What happened at this meeting Narendra never forgot. It proved to him that whatever else the Master was or was not, whether he accepted Ramakrishna or not, whatever their future relations, the Saint of Dakshineshwar must surely be the possessor of immense supernatural power. Otherwise how could he have asked him the question referred to in a previous chapter "My boy, do you see a light, a jyoti, when you close your eyes at bed time? Narendra replied in the affirmative and described his daily experience. "I thought so" remarked Sri Ramakrishna "it is only the *dhyana-siddhas* who see that light." Narendranath was at that time impressed more with the question than with the significance attached by the Master to the daily visitation of the

light. He had never described this experience to anybody. In fact, he had never attributed the least significance thereto and had thought that everybody had similar experience. Now for the first time he learnt that it was a rare and peculiar phenomenon and he wondered how the Paramahamsa came to know about it. He felt sure that the Master, far from being a lunatic, possessed wonderful insight into men and things.

While he was revolving such thoughts in his mind the Master quietly came to where he was seated and muttering something, placed his hand on Narendra's chest and his right foot on Narendra's shoulder. This action of the Master produced a strange effect on Narendra. He felt he saw the whole universe including himself and all the persons and things in the room whirling and whirling, as if being shattered to pieces and then merging he did not know where. He felt afraid and cried out "what are you doing to me ? I have parents at home." The Master laughed and said " All right ! No more of it now" and he passed his hand on Narendra's chest. Immediately Narendra came back to the normal plane and saw every thing just as it was before. The little incident probably proved the turning point in Narendra's relation with the Master. Of course he could not at that stage of his acquaintance with Sri Ramakrishna realize that the Master wanted simply to test his spiritual advancement and see whether he was fit for Samadhi. The Master was quite satisfied. He was convinced of the correctness of his first impression of the spiritual preparedness of Narendranth. And Narendra who had till now prided upon his strength of will had

to admit that there was something superior, something mysterious and indefinable in this apparently brain-sick, half-clad priest and attracted by his love, he determined to fathom the mystery and know the truth.

When he visited the Master on another occasion the latter in a trance touched his person and immediately Narendra again lost all bodily consciousness. While Narendranath was in this condition, the Master asked him several questions about "his antecedents and whereabouts, his mission in this world and the duration of his mortal life."

Narendranath now determined to place all his spiritual doubts before the Master. In his characteristic style he thus describes his visits to Sri Ramakrishna. "I heard of this man and I went to see him. He looked just like an ordinary man with nothing remarkable about him. I thought, 'can this man be a great teacher?' I crept near to him and asked him the question, which I had been asking others all my life time. 'Do you believe in God, Sir?' 'Yes' he replied. 'Can you prove it, Sir'? 'Yes' 'How?' 'Because I see Him just as I see you here only in a much intenser sense!' That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. I began to go to that man day after day and I actually saw that religion could be given. One touch, one glance can change a whole life.

It should be noted that even when convinced of the spiritual powers of the Master, Narendranath was in no hurry to sacrifice his reason at the altar of Faith. The

world is full of sceptics and agnostics who, the moment they find that a Sadhu can read their thoughts or predict the future, or can cure by one word of blessing some incurable disease, are prepared to gulp down anything and everything that is taught to them. These are no real sceptics and materialists. Their faith is of as little value as their want of faith. In the poverty of their thought they believe that whoever can work one miracle even if it be a wretched feat of jugglery possesses mastery over Nature and has already seen God. They forget that power over matter can never prove the realisation of the spirit. Any rogue of a juggler can cheat them, and so they career, perhaps changing their guru every year until one day they find themselves spiritual bankrupts. Narendranath did not belong to this class. He was proud of his intellect and the independence and self-reliance of his thought. Even when towards the end of his period of discipleship, he clung to reason with persistence and tenacity. He recognized indeed that reason has its limits and that religion commences precisely where reason stops. At the same time he held that superconscious experiences can never contradict the workings of the intellect. "Real inspiration" he declared "never contradicts reason but fulfils it." "We must take up the study of the superconscions state just as any other science, reason we must have to lay our foundation, we must follow reason so far as it leads and when reason fails, reason itself will show us the way to the highest plane."

Such a man was not likely to surrender his intellect to any one, however exalted, for the very simple reason

that to him the surrender of intellect was tantamount to the surrender of honour or the surrender of personality. Sri Ramakrishna applauded Narendra the more for his sturdy independence. He used to say "when peasants buy bullocks, they first try to find out whether they have any mettle or not. This they can easily know. They have merely to twist the tail of the animal. Those that are sheepish will offer no resistance and continue to be down on the ground. But the few that have some grit in them will as if angry at the liberty taken, at once jump up and offer resistance. It is only such bullocks that are purchased by the peasants. Narendranath is the bullock of the latter class. He has true mettle in him. What can little things, soft and loose, like popped rice put in milk, do ?"

The history of the progress of Narendranath from iconoclastic agonisticism to the heights of the Advaita philosophy as also of his acceptance of Shiva, Krishna and Kali is unfortunately very imperfectly known. In this case, as in many others we are served only with occasional glimpses and are left free to make up the rest of the mental picture hy drawing upon our own imagination,—not a very safe guide in such matters. The conventional orthodoxy of Narendranath was we learn replaced early in his collegiate days by a sort of philosophical agnosticism. But then we are told that under the inspiration of the Brahmo Samaj, he came to believe in Personal God. Our mental confusion is worse confounded when we are confronted with the fact that as late as 1884, he was carefully studying the principles of Western atheism and all this while continuing his

weekly pilgrimages to Dakshineswar. The motto of Sri Ramakrishna's life was "Reason is weak: Faith is omnipotent": and Narendranath took years before he could be persuded to accept it. Narendranath's youthful conception of God as some beneficent deity possessing the attributes of love and justice must have been radically modified by the terrible privations which were his daily lot after the death of his father. He must have been thus forced to choose between atheism and all it means and a god who is as much a Protector as a Destroyer. It was this line of reasoning that must ultimately have led him to accept Kali; but how he rebelled at every stage of the surrender! From the Brahmo Samaj he had inherited a deep dislike of imageworship. His English education had shattered his faith in all the gods and demi-gods, of Hindu mythology. The ironies of fate however led him to a *guru* who was never tired of worshipping images and to whom Rama and Krishna were the very highest incarnations of God. As Narendranath's consciousness of the feebleness of reason grew, his hatred of image-worship became preportionately less intense: and as regards Rama and Krishna he began by accepting them as symbols of certain divine attributes and ended by accepting a position which appears to be very little removed from the orthodox one. In March 1885 on one occasion he thundered against the Hindu doctrine of Divine incarnations and shattered to pieces all the orthodox arguments on the point. In October of the same year we find him partially accepting the orthodox position when he declared in the course of a discussion that "he looked upon the Master as a person who is *like* God" and

that he offered him "worship *bordering* on divine worship." It was in 1886 that he finally accepted the doctrine of incarnations. Lastly his attitude towards the Advaita philosophy underwent a remarkable change. He began by laughing at what he called the extravagances and heresies of Advaita. "Can frail human beings" he asked "presume to claim identity with God? He could never be persuded to seriously discuss the question. "How can that be?" Said he. "This jug is God, this cup is God, whatever we see is God and we too are God! Nothing can be more preposterous." How strange that a man who thus scoffed at Advaita should some years after be its most eloquent exponent!

Let it not be imagined that the intellectual conviction of Narendranath was the sole thing which the Master aimed at during the six years of the former's discipleship. Intellectual conviction comes to many but only to the chosen few is it given to lead a life based on those convictions. Character, purity, renunciation—without these there can be no spiritual life worth the name and in these matters the Master found Narendranath wonderfully responsive. His head rebelled, but his heart never. Instinctively as it were, Narendra recognized the glory of the life of asceticism, of purity, and renunciation. Adept that he was in suiting his teaching to the spiritual needs of his disciples, the Master reserved for Narendranath the highest truths and ideals. He was particular that the innate purity of Narendranath's mind should not be defiled by long and frequent contact with men of the world like Girish Ghose, however high their faith in himself (the Master) might

have been; and Narendra appreciated the extra care the Master took to keep his mind uncontaminated. He implicitly and zealously practised all the different sadhanas recommended by the Master. The innate purity and idealism of his mind must have found a congenial atmosphere for self-fulfilment when it came into continued contact with the "spotless holiness, deep unspeakable blessedness, childlike peacefulness and consuming all-absorbing love of God" of the Master. It is a great thing in life and at its most formative and impressionable period for a man to have, as it were, at his beck and call, and embodied in flesh and blood, the nearest approach to moral and spiritual perfection. True, intellectually, Narendranath was still wavering. True, he had not yet finally determined to cut off the golden chains of home and family; he had yet kept his law-books and was reading them off and on; his family people though somewhat afraid had not yet lost all hopes and were still picturing to themselves a greatness for Narendra which was purely secular. All these things are true and yet it is equally true that the heart of Narendranath was irrevocably lost-if lost it could be called-to Ramakrishna and in the temple of that heart, only the purest, only the most sacred emotions played the music of the soul. Nor was it only the life of pure and holy emotions untranslated into action. In the company of Sri Ramakrishna, Narendra learnt the secret of coordidating action with thought and emotion. In his case, thought and action had already been brought into line with the spiritual ideal and what remained was only the intellectual conviction. Narendra the monk was fashioned long before Narendra the philosopher,

Chroniclers of the life of Gautama Buddha have left us poetic and fanciful descriptions of how goblins and celestial damsels tried long and tried in vain to disturb his concentration when the Lord was absorbed in deep meditation. In truth it is not necessary for goblins and nymphs to leave their favourite haunts for the purpose of preventing an earnest soul from successfully seeking the truth. There are temptations and terrors enough and to spare in this world of Maya to deflect spiritual aspirants from their path; and in a strictly psychological sense, the career of almost every earnest soul under the Sun is generally more or less a downward journey, a record of battles fought and lost, so wonderful is the enchantment of this mother-siren, Maya. To mention only one of these innumerable temptations, the genial temperament of Narendranath together with his manifold accomplishments brought him into contact with all sorts of persons. Men who attach very little importance to their moral development are not very particular about that of their friends. It is no wonder that on one or two occasions they created situations for Narendranath critical in the extreme; and it was his own power of self-control as well as the shield of Divine Grace that enabled him to emerge unscathed out of these fiery ordeals. It is such rare moments on whose fate hangs the fate of our own life that really reveal the strength or weakness of our *punya* accumulated in the course of previous incarnations. Narendranath who was born to save others, naturally saved himself on these occasions. Something always held him, as it were, and enabled him to tread swiftly and tread surely the path that was full of pitfalls.

Never did the flame of his purity shine brighter than in those trying years–1885 and 1886—when, on account of the premature death of his father he had to taste of the bitter cup of poverty. His temper was soured and the bitterness of his heart could, on occasions, ill brook the conventional songs praying and praising the Almighty for his grace and love. On such occasions he took a perverse delight in calling God's Grace and even His existence into question. He had carefully studied leading books on philosophical atheism and it was easy enough for him to silence his friends by quoting arguments in support of his disbelief. This lent colour to the rumour that Narendra had turned Atheist and those who know with what fatal facility rumours are distorted in circulation will not be surprised to learn that some of his nearest friends gradually came to disbelieve even his purity. So they gave him up for lost and their desertion at this critical time so exasperated Narendra that he took no trouble to correct their wrong impression. But though Narendranath was thus undeservedly blamed by the world, the Master never lost his faith in the purity of his chosen disciple. All the garbled reports about his conduct that reached Daksineswar were received by the Master most coldly. And when Bhavanath, one of his disciples said to him "I could never imagine that Narendra could sink so low" the Master sharply replied "Hush, you fool ! that can never be. Mother herself will protect Narendra." Such was the great faith the Master reposed in the purity of Narendranath.

This faith of the Master in his innate purity and future greatness supported Narendranath in all the trials

of his youthful life. For next to self-confidence, which Narendra possessed in an abundant measure, there is nothing which stimulates the energies of a man so much as the confidence which others repose in him. By the deep love which he felt for Narendra the Master literally made him his slave. His words of unstinted praise acted on him as a spur to the Great Ideal. The Master would contrast the greatness of Narendra with that of others by using his favourite simile of a lotus. He likened others to lotuses of five, ten or twenty petals. But Narendranath was a thousand petalled lotus. According to the Master, if the spiritual flame in the hearts of Brahmoes, like Keshab Chandra Sen burnt with the brightness of one candle, that in the heart of Narendranath shone like the meredian Sun. The very sight of Narendra was sufficient to put him in mind of the Brahman; and on one occasion he said "when Narendra is among the audience a great wave of strength and courage comes over me." As Narendra came increasingly to understand the Master, he realized that these words were not idle compliments but were a kind of prevision of his own future greatness; and thinking thus he must have felt it safe to open his mind to the influence of the Master. Then there was the Master's great love for him. It is true that in the early stages of their acquanitance, Narendra could not understand its real significance. He had dismissed it as one of the innumerable oddities of the Master. But love is too sacred, too noble a thing to be dismissed with an impatient gesture. It asserrs itself. It fails not to reveal its intensity even to the casual observer. Narendra occassionally chaffed the Master

and told him that this infatuation would send him to the fate of Jada Bharata. But in the heart of his heart, he realized that this was a love, the holiest of the holy, because it was based on no worldly tie. Whoever can resist the compelling force of true love? Whoever has failed to respond to its noble call?

Fulfilment and not superimposition was the method of the Master's teaching. It was his invariable practice to first ascertain the spiritual level and tendencies, the domestic surroundings and other particulars of those who sought spiritual training at his feet. He always evinced a tender solicitude for the requirements or difficulties of those who cultivated intimate spritual relations with him. He was their friend, guide and philosopher. Excepting where principle or discipline was concerned he was the very incarnation of charity, forbearance and a spirit of accomodation. He taught as he talked. It was the teaching by the direct or conversational method. He disliked mere discussions. Withal he was an intellectual giant and could easily overwhelm the professional disputant. His arguments were clothed in felicitous illustrations drawn from every-day life and carrying at the same time a force and conviction all their own. In conversation with the visitors and disciples, he naturally took the lead and the contribution made to it by the others was mostly by way of stimulating his inspiration and eloquence. When a disciple of the type of Narendranath was in an aggressive mood he would listen to him long and patiently and then spring on the disputant's back with the unerring swiftness of a horse-trainer. With a remark or two he

could give a new turn to the discussion and throw a flood of light upon the point at issue. Or he would break in a song quite in the midst of a heated discussion and lift the disputants up to a world of ecstacy and devotion that looked down on knowledge and scholarship. He was a *guru* in the real sense of the term; but how unpretentious and childlike was he in his simplicity. If he did not meet Narendra at Dakshineswar, he did not hesitate to go to the city (Calcutta) and find him out. *Gurus* there are,—unfortunately too many in this world, but he alone is a *guru* who shows greater anxiety for the spiritual welfare of his disciple than the disciple himself and who is prepared literally to run after him and force Religion, if need be, into his rebellious heart almost at the point of the can and yet with a love which is the exclusive privilege of a mother.

How marvellous was the spiritual insight of the Master. At the very first sight of Narendra, hs knew that *his man* had come. He instantly saw the spiritual preparedness of Narendra. He saw that Narendra was devoid of the body consciousness. He saw spirituality radiating from the countenance of Narendranath; and all this when the latter had approache d him in an extremely sceptical mood and was yet under the spell of Western rationalism ! Again and again would the Master point to the symmetry, grace and beauty of Narendra's features, and declare that they were the features of a Bhakta; and yet from the very beginning, he encouraged him to study Advaita philosophy, for that was the path already mapped out for him by Providence;—who can understand the seeming contradiction, yet inner harmony of these utterances ? Narendranath openly laughed at

the 'absurdities' of Advaita which he would not condescend even to examine seriously; and knowing this mental attitude of Narendranath, the Master used to say "You may not like Advita texts, but surely you do't object to read them out to me for my own benefit".

And thus it went on for months and months together. Days of storm and stress were followed by moments of illumination and spiritual insight. Here is a strange experience as described by Narendranath himself. "One evening, after a whole day's fast and exposure to rain, I was returning home with tired limbs and jaded mind when I was overpowered by exhaustion and sank down on the outer plinth of a house on the road side. I can't say whether I was insensible for a long time. Various thoughts crowded upon my mind and I was too weak to drive them off and fix my attention on a particular idea. Suddenly I felt as if by some Divine power the coverings of my soul were removed one after another. All my former doubts regarding the co-existence of Divine justice and mercy and the presence of misery in the creation of a Blissful Providence were automatically solved. As I proceeded homewards, I found that there was no trace of fatigue in the body and the mind was refreshed with wonderful strength and peace. Henceforth I was perfectly deaf to the praise and blame of worldly people. I was convinced that I was not born like humdrum people to earn money and maintain my family, much less to strive for sense pleasures".

While Narendranath was thus blessed with one spiritual experience after another, the shadow of a new misfortune began to fall over his mind. About the middle

of 1885 the Master's health collaspsed and before long it was certain that howsoever life might be sought to be prolonged by proper nursing and proper medical treatment, there could be no doubt that the end was approaching. This was a new menace to Narendra. He was looking forward to a fairly long period of spiritual discipleship. But now this disease of the Master seemed incurable. The doctors gave no hopes. Narendranath found that the Master himself was conscious of the approaching end and was preparing for the Great Departure by conferring his final spiritual grace upon his favourite disciples. Curiously enough, he, the darliag of the Master was apparantly omitted from the list. On January 4th 1886 he thus unburdened his mind to a brother disciple. " I saw him yssterday and told him everything. I said, 'Every one has been satisfied. Give me some realisations. Why should I alone go unblest ?' The Master said, 'settle your home affairs and come to me, you shall have every thing—what do you want !' I replied 'I want to remain immersed in Samadhi for three or four days at a time; only occasionally coming down to eat a little !' He said ' This is nothing ! There is yet a higher state than that. Have done with home troubles. You shall realize a still higher state than Samadhi.' I went home this morning. They all began to rebuke, saying' What is this ? You are wandering like a vagabond. The law-examination is drawing near and you are not making any preparation'. I then went to my study at my grand-mother's. But when I tried to read, a great fear seized me as if reading was a terror ! My heart began to struggle within me, and I wept as I had never wept before.

Then away from the books I ran.—I ran along the streets and I did not know where my shoes slipped from my feet! I ran by a straw-rick and was covered by straw and thus reached Cassipore. Shankaracharya says that human birth, desire for liberation and the intimate contact of a man of realisation, these things can be acquired only through a great *tapsya*. I thought I had gained all these three. But my soul knows no rest. I have no taste for the world." Days passed in this all-consuming spiritual restlessness, bringing nearer and nearer the moment of realisation.

The one thing that encouraged Narendranath to continue his visits to Sri Ramakrishna during the first few months of their acquaintance was the latter's perfect familiarity with the superconscious regions of knowledge. Narendra had gone to the limits of his intellect and had learnt to his cost that it led to nowhere so far as the search of God was concerned. He realized that there were stronger arguments to disprove the existence of God.than to prove it. He was convinced that if a way there was of solving the mystery of this world, it must be discovered not in the intellect but somewhere else. If God exists, if God loves man and is the author of his being, surely He must have kept the key of His knowledge with man. Thinking thus, he instinctively felt that Samadhi or superconsciousness must be that key, and that religious yearning and religious sadhana was but another name for so moulding the forces of the body and the mind as to equip the latter for Samadhi at the right moment. Sri Ramakrishna's frequent immersions in Samadhi

must have interested him deeply and he must have been astonished the more when he realised that most of these Samadhis were involuntary. The sight of Narendra, the hearing of some devotional song or the narration or recollection of some incident in the life of some saint was, in the case of the Master, enough to kindle the fire of Samadhi. Narendra was convinced that the secret of the spiritual illumination of the Master lay in these Samadhis, in the course of which the Master came face to face with truths that were beyond the ken of ordinary mortals; and he persistently begged the Master to give him a pass port, as it were, to the Land of Divine Truth and Divine Bliss. The Master said, "Allright, let me get better and I will satisfy you." But Narendra was too impatient. He said, "But, Sir, if you don't get better ?" The Master was amused at what he no doubt regarded as the littleness of Narendranath's faith, for had he not, time without number told him that the very purpose of his own birth was the spiritual guidance o his pet disciple ? Would he pass away without fully accomplishing that pupose ?

One evening when Nerendranath was meditating in a recumbent posture in the garden-house of Cassipore, he suddenly felt the presence, as it were, of a dazzling light at the back of his head. It was not *a* light but THE light, the light of knowledge and Eternal Bliss. The loss of consciousness, the loss of individuality and the cessation of all bodily functions, all this unmistakably pointed to Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Narendra was taken unawares; nor had his friends in the room the least idea of what had happened. The sharp cry of Narendra, " Oh

Gopal Da where is my body, where is my body ?" at once roused them to the danger of the sitution. Yet none suspected that the unaccountable suspension of all his bodily functions had any thing to do with Samadhi. All took it for some mishap bound to culminate in death. They therefore shook Narendranath furiously. They tried artificial respiration and some of them ran upstairs to where the Master was lying and described his condition. The Master quietly replied " Don't be anxious. He has teased me enough to reach that stage." These assuring words gladdened their hearts and they all now waited till Narendra would come down to the plane of consciousness. When that happened, with an inexpressible joy beaming on his countenance he ran upstairs and silently fell at the feet of the Master. The Master blessed him and said, "Now Mother has shown you all. For the time, I lock up the treasure and keep the key. When you will have finished Mother's work, you shall have it again."

So within less than six years since his first visit to the Master, Narendranath had attained the acme of his ambition. He was barely twentythree. He had practically renounced home and family and with the end of the period of his sadhana, he was free to do Mother's work. Attention to the Master's rapidly failing health was however his first duty and when the Master passed away in August of the same year, Narendranath had to consolidate the Master's work by putting heart into the wavering band of his brother-disciples and establish the monastery. Soon after a great restlessness invaded his mind. He longed to leave the scene of his early life. He longed to break the golden chain of attach-

ment to his *gurubhais*. He longed further to taste the bliss of samadhi. For this triple reason, he left Calcutta and wandered all over India for a number of years, trying all the while to find out the Mother's work for which he was born. That however is a long story which we have to reserve for chapter next.

CHAPTER V

THE WANDERING MONK

Go forward without a path,
Fearing nothing, caring nothing,
Wander alone, like the rhinoceros.
Even as the lion, not trembling at noises,
Even as the wind, not caught in a net,
Even as the lotus-leaf unstained by water,
Do thou wander alone like the rhinoceros.

Dhammapada

In the last chapter, we had an occasion to complain of the paucity of materials available for the interpretation of the first and most beautiful part of the life of Narendranath. The materials available for the study of the second period of his life commencing with the Mahasamadhi of the Master and covering a period of seven years are more meagre still. The life of Narendranath at the feet of the saint of Dakshineshwar, his financial troubles and domestic difficulties. his years of doubt and years of inquiry and then the period of illumination and of spiritual ecstacy-all this, his friends and associates, at least have known but too intimately; and from the day, America placed the crown of popularity on the Swami's head at the Parliament of

Religions, all his life had been lived in the full blaze of publicity. But this intervening period of seven years nearly half of which he passed in deliberate detachment from the friends of his youth, is an obscure chapter in the life of the Swami; and this is the more regrettable, because it was *the* formative period in the life of Vivekananda, the apostle of Neo-Hinduism. At the Parliament of Religions, he emerges from his obscurity, perfectly "chiselled and modelled." His genius had expanded; his message was ripe for delivery. Swami Vivekananda, the accomplished philosopher, the subtle metaphysician, the ardent patriot and the zealous reformer was quite a different person from the enthusiastic Narendranath, the favoured disciple of Sri Ramakrishna; and from the glimpses we are privileged to have of his *parivrajaka* days we see how bit by bit he was gaining in strength until one day in 1893, he burs on the Western society with the force of a thunder bolt.

From the day of the Mahasamadhi of the Master to about the middle of 1888, the Swami was practically stationed at Barangore (Calcutta) nursing the newly established Math with all that care and patience which an infant institution invariably requires. He then proceeded on a pilgrimage to Benares, Ayodhya, Agra, Lucknow Brindavan, Hathras, Hrishikesha whence he returned to Calcutta in November (1888). In 1889, he seemed to have visited only Gazipur and Allahabad. The first four months of the following year (1890) he spent at Gazipur in the company of Pavari Baba. Thence he went to Benares. But he had to return to Calcutta al-

most immediately on account of the death of Balaram Bose, the chief supporter of the Math. In July 1890, he finally left the Math and returned to it only after his return from the West in 1897.

The one reason that held the Swami to the Math was his loyalty to the memory and wishes of the Master. He felt that "his behest on me was that I shall devote myself to the service of the band of all-renouncing devotees founded by him and in this I have to persevere come what may". But the other forces which were pulling his mind in another direction proved too strong for him. Not only the Swami but many of the brother-monks also felt an inexplicable and irresistible attraction for the life of an itinerant monk. So the Swami thought that there must be something behind this roving instinct. Perhaps it might be the wish of God and of his Master that he and his gurubhais should add to their spiritual illumination by coming into contact with the Men of God scattered over the different parts of the country. Then there was the unanswerable argument of giving up even this last and golden tie and attachment. If every bond is to be cut asunder, why not cut also this golden thread of monastery? Even this bond is unreal. Again why should he consider himself to be indispensable to his comrades? Was it his power that was protecting and guiding them? No, it was the Master's. And will not the Master look after his companions even if he left them? Let them be a bit self-reliant in the management of the Math. Thinking thus, the Swami determined to leave Calcutta and wander about, visit holy place and practise austetities.

There was another reason which must have, though sub-consciously, influenced his decision. His family people were living at Calcutta and their continued distress was too much for the Swami to bear. In one of his letters (4th July 1889) he described the state of his mind as terrible. "I have been vouchsafed the ideal Shastra. I have seen the ideal man; and yet fail myself to get on with anything to the end:—this is my profound misery. And particularly I see no chance of success while remaining near Calcutta. In Calcutta, live my mother and two brothers. I am the eldest, the second is preparing for the First Arts examination and the third is young. They were quite well off before; but since my father's death, it is going very hard with them even having to keep fasting at times. Living near Calcutta, I have to witness their adversity and the quality of *rajas* prevailing, my egotism sometimes develops into the form of a desire that rises to plunge me into action. In such moments a fierce fighting ensues in my mind."

He was not content with his *sadhana*. He was not content with his realisation. He wanted to go to Benares. He wanted to scale the Himalayas and practise the severest forms of austerities. मंत्रं वा साधयामि देहं वा पातयामि was his vow! And his parting words when he left Barangore in July 1890 were "I shall not return until I acquire such realisation that my very touch will transform a man." Before leaving the monastery he visited the Holy Mother and sought her blessings. She asked him to see his mother.* The Swami replied, "Mother, you alone are my mother", and like Buddha of old, went away with a heavy but

determined heart. No weakness must turn him from the venture on which he had set his heart.

His ambition was to practise the severest forms of austerities in the Himalayas, and gain the highest illumination within the reach of a mortal. To walk on foot, to live on what chance might bring and then inspite of hunger and fatigue to keep the mind constantly on the wing, was itself a very severe type of austerity. Sometimes the Swami would take a vow of not touching a coin, sometimes he would resolve never to ask for his food but take whatever was voluntarily offered to him. All this meant physical hardship. Nevertheless, with an ever-buoyant spirit, the Swami went on practising austerities. At Almora, Shri Nagar and Hrishikesha he sought the deepest solitude and there meditated profoundly on the verities of eternal life. But under the weight of bodily fatigue his health gave way at Hrishikesha. He was attacked by a very malignant type of fever. Profuse perspiration, ebbing pulse and coldness of limbs unmistakably pointed to the approach of the last hour. But just at the criticle moment, a sadhu came, gave him honey and some medicine and so brought him back to life.

It was during the hours he lay perfectly unconscious and apparently half-dead that the Swami had a vision which convinced him that, not meditation but service of mankind was the God-appointed goal of his life. This vision confirmed the impulse for work which he felt while meditating in a cave at Almora. All doubts were now dispelled. He would now no longer seek the exhilerating solitude of the mountain-peaks but would

come down to the plains and work for and amongst the people. Spiritual vision and considerations of health thus combined to bring him back from solitude. Three month's stay at Meerut restored him to his former health and then he commenced his long; long journey to Rameshwar and Kanyakumari.

It was no mere shrine-hunting, bead-counting orthodox kind of pilgrimage on which the Swami started. To the Swami this was one grand opportunity for a synthetical study of Hindu society, culture, traditions, customs and manners. It was one grand opportunity not only for the monk in him but also for the poet, the scholar, the antiquarian, the artist, the sociologist and the mystic in the Swami. These thirty months of travel are a great landmark in his life. Of these more than twelve were spent in Gujarat and Kathiawar, nearly eight months in South India, four or five months in Rajputana and about three months in Bombay and Maharashtra. From Meerut, the Swami went to Delhi, thence to Rajputana, thence to Gujarat and Kathiawar; thence to Central India; thence to Bombay where he arrived in the last week of July 1892. Jaipur, Mount Abu, Ajmere, Khetri were among the most important places in Rajputana visited by the Swami. Ahmedabad, Wadhwan. Limdi, Bhavnagar, Junagadh, Bhooj, Veraval, Patan, Porbunder, Dwarka, Mandvi, Palitana, Baroda—these were the principle places in Gujarat and Kathiawar which he visited. From Baroda in Gujarat he went to Khandwa in the Central Provinces where he stayed for three weeks. Bombay, Poona, Mahabaleshwar and Kolhapur seem

to be the only places in Maharashtra, the Swami cared to visit. From Kolhapur he went to Belgaum in October 1892. In the course of the next six or seven months, he visited Goa, Bangalore, Mysore, Cochin, Trivendrum, Madura, Rameshwar, Kanyakumari, Ramnad, Pondichery, Madras and Hyderabad. From Hyderabad he returned to Madras in February or March 1893. On May 31st 1893, he left Bombay *en route* to Chicago.

Whichever city or town the Swami chose to visit, his 'plan of campaign' was always the same. If he carried any introductory letter with him, he walked straight to his destination, met the gentleman to whom the letter was addressed and who invariably was some distinguished citizen of the place and within the course of half-an-hour, so impressed was his host with the eloqeuence and learning of the young Bengali monk that what was a friendly duty when the letter of introduction was presented quickly became both a pleasure and a privilege. Even when he was not armed with any such letter; it did not take him long to be 'discovered' by some leading citizen of the place he visited. His princely bearing regal air, piercing eyes and shining countenance would have attracted attention and curiosity anywhere; and when such a personage started begging at the door for alms what person could withstand the sudden rush of wonder and curiosity? A slight conversation would convince him that the beggar was no ordinary friar but a genuius, and a scholar. So instead of serving him with alms, he would request the Swami to stay with him. Thus the great presence of the Swami together with his conversational powers at once made him a welcome guest at all places. A day or two perhaps, the host would spend

in taking his guest's measure; and when with the lapse and converse of every hour, his veneration for the Swami increased, he invited the local magnates to correct or confirm his impression. And then for a few days, the never-ending stream of visitors was amply rewarded with the never-failing stream of conversation. Here and there the Swami encountered visitors, who, either through pride or through perversity were not willing to surrender. They showed fight. But how soon the thrashing argument or crushing retort make them repent of their hardihood! Philosophy, history, metaphysics, science literature, art, every conceivable subject seemed to be no only perfectly familiar to the Swami but on every one he had something original to say. If however the Swami was a conqueror, he was a benevolent one and though to critics and sceptics he would occasionally reply with flashing fire, still there was nothing personal in his retorts, And when his erstwhile opponents capitulated, he treated them with a kindness and a grace that entirely won their hearts. Nor was the Swami great only as a teacher. He was extremely lovable as a companion. His wit, humour, gaiety and love of fun and laughter made him extremely companionable. It was impossible to feel dull in his presence. He had a way of drawing people to him and making them his willing slaves. He was almost always prevailed upon to extend the duration of his stay. The parting was many times accompanied by a request to accept substantial sums of money. But the Swami would not so much as touch a coin. A new pair of sandles, a new piece of *gerrua* cloth, a staff, such were the presents the Swami occasionally accepted. The Maharaja of Mysore pressed him to accept rich

presents but could presuade him to accept no better present than a non-metalic *hooka*. A second class railway ticket to his next halting place was generally the present the Swami welcomed. And so faithfully did he keep his vow of not touching a coin that he could visit the sacred shrine at Cape Comorin only by swimming across the stream which was full of shar ks. He had no copper coin to pay the ferry-man.

Let it not be supposed that the Swami's ' tramp ' from ' Hoogly to Tampraparni ' was as confortable as a bed of roses and that in all these eventful years, he had nothing to do but to move from one palace to another and discourse on religion. There were occasions when, instead of being served with alms, he was rudely asked to walk away. Some gave him to understand that their house was no place for sadhus and thieves. They probably thought that there was not much to choose between a sadhu and a thief. Sometimes people used to visit him, hear his discourses, and go away without asking him if he wanted food. Once he was so much exhausted that he fell senseless on the road-side and he was wakened by a shower of rain which not only restored him to consciousness but also refreshed him. There have been occassions when a chance offer of food has saved his life. Refering to this period of his life, the Swami says:-

"Many times, I have been in the jaws of death, starving, foot-sore and weary; for days and days I had had no food and could walk no further; I would sink down under a tree and life would seem to be ebbing away. I could not speak. I could scarcely think. But at last

the mind reverted to the idea, " I have no fear, nor death; never was I born nor dead. I never hunger nor thirst. I am It. I am It. The whole of nature cannot crush me. Assert thy strength, thou Lord of Lords and God of Gods. Regain thy lost empire. Arise and proceed and stop not" And I would rise up, reinvigorated and here am I living today,"

Let those who blame the Swami for occasionally accepting the hospitality of princes and noblemen just think of this other side of the picture.

In the opinion of some critics, as the Swami had renounced the world, it was not proper for him to accept the hospitality of Rajas and Maharajas. As we have seen, in his earlier wanderings, especially in the thinly populated places in the extreme north, the Swami lived on begging, and sometimes he even took vows of not eating any food which was not offered to him. When he came down to the plains, the doors of the richest and the greatest were opened for him and it would have been nothing short of prudery on the part of the Swami not to have accepted the hospitality thus offered. To shun the rich because they are rich is no part of a monk's religion. Being sure of his renunciation, he had nothing to be afraid of the rich ; and the greatest proof of the Swami's unworldliness is that when he could count princes and noblemen among his disciples, he never opened his mouth even for the cause and went to America with a few hundred dollars which were spent long before the Parliment of Religions assembled. During the whole of his life, Swamiji lived like King Janaka or the immortal Suka-Deva. He shunned neither povertly nor pelf,

Where princely hospitality was devoutly offered to him, why should he not have accepted it? According to Emerson, It is the most natural thing in the world for really great persons to seek the company of those who are great in some walk of life or other. "I do not wonder" says he "that these men go to see Cromwell and Christina and Charles the Second and James the First and the Grand Turk. For they are in their own elevation, the fellow of kings and must feel the servile tone of conversation in the world. They must always be a godsend to princes, for they confront them, a king to a king without ducking or concession and give a high nature the refreshment and satisfaction of resistance, of plain humanity, of even campanionship and of new ideas. They leave them wiser and superior men." And it was with the object of making Indian princes and noblemen wiser and better in the interest of the country that the Swami consented to accept their hospitality. "Don't you see," said he to a friend" how much more profitable it is to change the mind of a prince than of dozens of ordinary persons?"

While travelling in India, Swamiji frequently begged for food, though as we have already remarked, there were occasional ascetic moods when he would eat nothing which was not voluntarily offered. Many must have asked him why he, an intellectual giant should have taken to this humble mode of maintaining himself when he could easily have earned his bread by delivering spiritual sermons. What answer the Swami gave to those inquiries we do not know. He has however partially expressed his views on the subject for the benefit of an

American admirer. "It is" says the Swami "a question of the mind. If the mind anticipates and is affected by the results that is bad, no doubt. If you should put a hundred dollars on that table for me and should expect me to thank you for it, you should take it away. I would not touch it. My living was provided for before I was born. Whatever belongs to a man, he will get." This explanation requires some amplification. In the first place, the life of a monk is dedicated to two objects, the realisation of self and the service of mankind; and as the first duty of a monk is non-attachment, it is most desirable that he leads a roving life. Such a life is in the very nature of things inimical to a steady and regular employment. Besides what occupation is there for which a true servant of mankind can accept payment? Wherever he turns he hears the echo of one sound DUTY. There is not a single occupation in this wide world, worth following, out of which an utterly refined and spiritual nature can extract personal benefit. It is because man is selfish and regards others only as instruments of self-aggrandizement that by following, say, the medical, the legal or the literary profession, he earns money. Had he consulted the highest ideal, he would have served his fellow-countrymen gratis. The only excuse for begging should be the nobility and general usefulness of the life so led. And when a monk or spiritual aspirant is leading such a life of exalted emotions aad endeavours, it is not he but the man who serves him with alms who is the real beggar. It will thus be seen that, not begging but the motive behind it, if it is ignoble, that is to be condemned. Ordinary conceptions of selfrespect and personal independence are

applicable only to humdrum people and not to those who never draw a breath for themselves and whose whole life is pervaded with holiness. Such people are not bound by the conventions of society, They are above the laws of society.

In the course of his wanderings, Swamiji had not lost entire touch with his brother-monks and on several occasions he had desired or accepted some of them as his companions, It was probably his communication or contact with them that was responsible for Swamiji's involuntary return to Calcutta on more occasions than one. For left to himself, the Swami would not have returned and on more than one occasion he had left the *math* with the declaration that he would never return or return only after a very long time. He soon discovered that in the establishment of the *Math* he had created a Maya -a bond of attachment-for himself and at Meerut on his return from the Himalayas he decided not to allow any of his *guru-bhais* to accompany him. He expressly told them that he preferred to be left alone and for some time would not like to meet them. But their love was superior to their obedience or discretion and at Delhi Jaipur, Porbunder and Bombay, some of them not only saw but met the Swami to his great annoyance. When thus accosted, the Swami would refuse to recognize them and though at last he relented and spoke a few, cheering words, he failed not to solemnly warn them not to seek him any more. This anxiety to avoid persons whom he loved most tenderly shows how in the more advanced spiritual life, every bond has to be mercilessly severed. "The greatest weakness often insinuates itself as the greatest good and strength." But the Swami

was equal to every kind of spiritual struggle. It is pathetic to contemplate how, in the deepest solitude of the Himalayas, the news reached him of the sad death of his sister under circumstances sadder still, and how instead of succumbing to the temptation of returning to Calcutta, he sought deeper solitude to practise austerities. It was only at Madras when he somehow felt that his mother was either ill or no more that he put himself in voluntary communication with those he knew and loved. No doubt his relatives and companions must have lamented his decision but knowing that a deeper purpose was behind it, they accepted and understood his decision while deploring it.

The Swami was a constant learner. The natural bias of his mind was more for scholarship and meditation than for propaganda and organization. During all these years of travel and obscurity, the Swami had a unique opportunity for study. The book of India was open before him and he was at once an imaginative and critical observer. Possessed of a glorious imagination which dwelt in the past with the ease and familiarity of the present, the Swami revelled in the endless panorama of Indian history with the ecstacy of a born historian. The gradual colonisation of this vast country, the slow developement of her material resources, the working of her introspective mind, the growth of her civilisation, the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires, the still more wonderful rise and fall of religious sects and philosophical systems, the invasion of foreigners, the clash of civilasations, the insidious process of decay and disintegration, the endless series of reverses all this was as familiar to him as the streets of Calcutta. In one day

or one hour, he could transport his mind from country to country and could, almost simultaneously hold converse with Asoka, Akabar, Shankaracharya and Chaitanya. When such a gifted mind intently studies the art, the cities, and the ancient and maedival monuments of Indian history, it is bound to deduce conclusions far beyond the reach of mere students of history. Great as a student of art, the Swami was greater still as a student of sociology; and never had the immense varieties and diverse grades of Hindu society been analysed by a more penetrating sociologist. He subjected the traditions, beliefs and institutions of all the different parts of India to a rigid and scientific scrutiny. He absorbed all the historical and biographical lore of the places visited by him and studied it in relation to the culture of the race. He came into intimate contact with the leaders of society in all the walks of life. His contact with numerous intellectually and spiritually great persons helped to lead his mind to new and untrodden lines of thought and investigation. It will thus be seen that during all these wanderings, nature, art, society and history as also his contact with eminent leaders of thought and of society helped the Swami to widen the range of his knowledge and make him intimately acquainted with the real condition of the land of the Aryas.

Nor was Swami neglectful of books. He sought scholars wherever he went and was never too proud to learn from them. His intimate knowledge of Jainism Buddhism and Mohommedanism must be attributed to this eagerness to take advantage of every opportunity for philosophical and theological study. It was also during this period of his life that he acquired that inti-

mate knowledge of the argumentative intricacies of the various philosophical sects of Hinduism which we see mirrored in his lectures. He studied Panini at Jaipur and Patanjali at Khetri. At Porbunder, in the congenial and stimulating companionship of the late Mr. S. P. Pandit, the famous Sanskrit scholar, he spent many months in the study of the Vedas and other sacred Sanskrit books. Though he valued realisation more than mere erudition, his mastery of the intellectual weapons of offence and defence and his proficiency in philosophy, theology, metaphysics and science was unquestioned and these seven years of quiet, freedom study and travel contributed not a little to that mastery and proficiency.

Modern studentship is a mere intellectual process. In ancient India, the pursuit of knowledge being identical with the pursuit of spirituality, not only resulted in loftier aims and aspirations but tended to perfect the brain which is the instrument of knowledge. "Brahmacharya" says Mr. Arabinda Ghose, "and *sattvik* development created the brain of India; it was perfected by yoga." Swamiji held that "The power of mind arises from the control of the forces of the body. The idea is to conserve and transform the physical into mental and spiritual energies. The dread danger lies in spending the forces of the body in wanton and reckless pleasures and thus losing the retentive faculties of the mind." It goes without saying that the Swami was possessed of the fire of Bramacharya. Though there was an undercurrent of strong *rajasic* element in him, his nature was predominantly *sattvik*; and under Sri

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, he had attained proficiency in yoga. Therefore we can easily imagine what a wonderful brain power he had. The most striking characterstic of the Swami as a student was his tremendous power of concentration. When reading or thinking he was quite oblivious of his surroundings, and it was with great difficulty that he could be made aware of the entrance into his room of a visitor. No subject however abstruse was too difficult for him. At Jaipur as we have seen, the Swami started the study of the Sanskrit grammar. The old-fashioned pandit who had undertaken to initiate the Swami into the mysteries of Sanskrit grammar could not explain the introductory *sutras* of Panini with sufficient perspicuity; and when the Swami teased him with questions, he lost his temper and tauntingly remarked that the Swami was too dull to understand the intricacies of Sanskrit grammar. But the Swami was equal to the occasion and locking himself up in a room for three or four hours, he so mastered the *sutras* that when he repaired to the Pandit and told him how he interpreted them, the Pandit simply marvelled at his genius. Verily, the Swami was an ideal student.

The condition of India during this period (1886–1893) was certainly not calculated to rouse the Swami's enthuiasm. The Social Reform movement, thanks to the controversies in connection with the Age of Consent Bill had succeeded in attracting to itself the attention of the intelligentsia of the country. Never during the preceeding thirty or forty years had the claims of Social Reform, so called, been advanced with so much fanati-

cism or examined with so much vehemence. The exaggerations of the reformers, their lack of moral back-bone the narrowness of their creed, all this was little calculated to win for the movement the sympathy and support of earnest parties. "Are we not fit for political reforms" thundered the late Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, "Because our widows remain unmarried and our girls are given in marriages earlier than in other countries and because our wives and daughters do not drive about with us visiting our friends?" On the one hand this over-emphasis of zealous reformers on trivial matters roused the ire and opposition of the equally zealous politician, who, in consequence tried his best to thrust the Social Reform movement into the back-ground. On the other hand, the neglect by the reformer of the masses and his confinement of his programme and propaganda to the upper classes and the educated few brought for him the criticism of men like the Swami who instinctively knew where the shoe pinched. Though naturally the Swami was not drawn to the contemplation of the political problem, still his great heart enabled him to agree with the general analysis of the politictan. It was the poverity of India that drew Dadabhai Naoroji out of academical and business activities and made him devote his energies to the uplifting of his countrymen in the political field. What Dadabhai Naoroji *learnt* after a patient study of economics and of Indian administration, the Swami *saw* in his intimate contact with the life of the poor. So deep an impression did the "spectre of hunger" produce on the Swami, that he felt that unless the problem of poverty was solved satisfactorily, it was futile to preach spiritualIty to the generality of the Indian public. His

scheme of imparting secular education to the poor in addition to spiritual knowledge was essentially based on the recognition of this terrible evil. Indeed, we might say that the Swami was the first champion of primary education in India. His ambition was to bring into existence an organization that would bring noble ideas to the doors of the poor and then leave them to solve their own problems. The condition of the masses and the strange mental attitude of the classes must have occasionally made him despair of the future of India.

But the Swami was a man of faith. He had faith in himself, faith in his master, faith in the future of the country. He knew that men like Ramakrishna Paramahamsa are not born in vain. He knew that the wave of spiritual awakening of which the Master was the originator was destined to deluge the world. His interpretation of Indian history showed him how the stream of spirituality in this land of the gods was unbroken, how centuries of poverty as well as centuries of prosperity alike had produced spiritual giants in the country. Even in the present condition of political serfdom, unparalleled in the history of man, he saw possibilities of the spiritual conquest of the world by India. "Let the Persian, the Greek the Arab, the Englishman, march his battalions and link different nations of the world, the energy and sprituality of India is ready to flow along the new-made channels into the veins of the earth". It was this glowing and growing conviction that sustained him in the contemplation of the poverty and downfall of India; and the greater her present misery, the greater and stronger was his conviction that she was the chosen

land of God. In his Indian travels, he saw poverty, degradation and misery, no doubt. But he also saw: what to a man of his type must we have been a source of great hope, that the heart of India was sound; that India had not lost her spiritual instinct; that even beneath the crust of the superstition of the uneducated and the scepticism of the educated Indians, lie hidden nuggets of spiritual gold; and that the whole problem of India is not a search for fresh fields and pastures new for her national endeavour but to dig a bit deeper this same mine of gold and have her wish accomplished.

How wonderful, this march of the Swami from one end of India to the other, now the honoured guest of a Raja or a Maharaja, now living in the family of a scavanger, today starving and tramping, tomorrow surrounded by every comfort, yet affected neither by the one nor by the other. To live in a palace dreaming and talking of the poor or in a poor man's hut to devise schemes of how India can have many more palaces! To walk till the body drops down through sheer exhaustion and then on an empty stomach to sit down for meditation for hours together! To captivate the heart—shall we say the head also—of some city by the native force of his genius and personality and then to avoid fame, leave the place and go to another with a changed name! To cross swords with the perverse, the haughty or the sceptic and to preach the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna to the devout! To spend sleepless nights in visions of India's future glory or in tears and sorrow at her frightful poverty! To travel all over the country! without touching money and with only a copyof the

Gita and a photo of Sri Ramakrishna as hissole belongings! To challenge hunger and thurst and weariness to cool the ardour of his soul in his attempt to discover the mission of his life! Oh, the vicissitudes, the ecstacy and the romance of that life!!!

How Swamiji went to America and what work he did at the Parliment of Religions will be narrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

A striking figure, clad in yellow and orange, shining like the Sun of India in the midst of the heavy atmosphere of Chicago, a lion head, piercing eyes, mobile lips, movements swift and abrubt, such was my first impression of Swami Vivekananda. Monk they called him, not unwarrantably, but a warrior-monk was he and the first impression was of the warrior than of the monk. For he was off the platform and his figure was instinct with pride of country, pride of race, the representative of the oldest of living religions and by no means inclined to give step as though the hoary faith he embodied was in aught inferior to the noblest there. India was not to be shamed before the hurrying arrogant West by this her son. Purposeful, virile strong, he stood out, a man among men, able to hold his own.

Annie Besant

On his return from the West (1897), the Swami made the following exhortation to the young men of Madras. "Faith, faith, faith in yourselves. faith, faith, in God that is the secret of success. If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty million gods of your mythology and still no faith in yourselves, there is no hope for you. Have a tremendous faith in yourselves, like the faith I had when I was a child and which I am working out now." It is small wonder that with his uncommon ability and enthusiasm the Swami should as a boy have shown remarkable self-confidence. Moreover, Sir

Ramakrishna's words of unstinted praise and his prophesies of the future greatness of Narendranath had their own share in stimulating all the faculties of our hero. In the formative period of his life, the Swami's mind as we have seen, oscillated between two visions of greatness the one material and the other spiritual. Dreams of wealth, power and fame constituted the former while the latter was coloured with the longing for renunciation. When finally he accepted the monastic life, the hankering after wordly greatness naturally ceased. The old struggle was over but its place was almost immediately taken by a new one. Now his ambition was to lose himself in meditation and prayer in some secluded cave in the Himalayas. But the words of his Master, "You are destined for something higher than even Nirvikalpa Samadhi. You are to do Mother's work" were still ringing in his ears and his mind was torn between a natural desire to fulfil his Master's last expressed wish and the intense desire of cutting off every bond—even the golden bond of the service of the .country and of mankind—and devote him-self to unremitting meditation. His almost fatal illness at Hrishikesha gave him a glimpse of the Mother's mind and he decided to obey Her Voice and to do Her Behest. Since then he uncomplainingly gave himself up to work. But just as it was the Mother who had determined, almost against his wishes, that he should work so all the particular direction of that work too he would leave to that same Divine guidance. In this condition of mind, he travelled all over Rajputana, Kathiwar, Gujarat, Central India, Maharashtra, and Karnatak and then went to the extreme South. He studied the

social, religious and economic condition of India, mixed with all sorts of people, lived with the prince and the peasant discussed the present needs of the country with the originators of thought and the leaders of society. He arrived at certain definite conclusions. He even made certain plans and projects. But in the absence of the Divine Voice he felt that all plans and preparations were a mere groping in the dark. It was perhaps at Porbander that he heard that a Parliment of Religions was going to meet in America, and his first impulse as well as the considered opinion of his admirers was that he should attend the session of the Parliment as the representative of Hindulsm. But he was in no hurry and was willing to leave everything to destiny to plan and execute. He continued to move from place to place as unconcerned as ever without so much as lifting his little finger in an effort to facilitate his voyage. His vision was expanding, his general plans for the uplift of India were maturing and his personality was developing. But the first step was yet undetermined. God or in other words Destiny must force his hands. The circle of admirers was increasing and everywhere everyone struck with Swamiji's genius, eloquence and personality asked him, "Well, Swamiji, why don't you go to America and represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions?" And the Swami's reply would always be, "No, not yet."

It was at Madras that the devoted admirers that daily gathered round him insistently urged him to attend the Parliament of Religions. They even started collecting funds and when the first five hundred rupees were

collected, laid the sum at the Swami's feet. What must have been their surprise when instead of accepting the sum, the Swami quietly asked them to give it away in charity. They were speechless with wonder. "What a strange monk" they thought. The Swami told them that he was waiting for commands from Above and that he had no mind to undergo the perils of the enterprise until he had positive proof that the Mother wanted him to go to America. "I am determined" he said "to force the Mother's will."

Again they pressed him to grant them permission to find the sinews of war. The Swami consented but asked them to tap only the poorer class of people. If he went to America, it was only for the poor of India, and as the representative of the poor, he would have money only from the poor. Of course his direction was not literally obeyed. It serves however to illustrate the psychology of the Swami's mind.

The commands from Above which the Swami was waiting for so long were at last received in the form of a dream in which the Swami saw his *guru* Sri Ramakrishna walking from the sea-shore right upto and into the waters of the sea and calling all the while the Swami to follow him. Now he felt quite certain that it was his *gurudeva* who was guiding him with invisible hands. It was not his ego which prompted him to go to America, nor the foolish fancies and fickle enthusiam of a handful of devoted admirers. He would be borne across the ocean by the grace of his *guru*. He was an instrument in the Hand of the Almighty.

This reliance on invislble guidance and super-conscious inspiration, is, not doubt, a fruitful source of error and mischief in cases where the spiritual nature is but half-developed. Rationalists like Gibbon have seen in such messages and visions, nothing more than the subconscious reflection of the conscious workings of the mind. If however such a child-like surrender of one's will to Divine guidance results in the complete effacement of the individual's ego, if it produces burning faith faith and unwavering heroism, such a surrender is highly to be commended. It saves a man from the innumerable pit-falls to which cocksure and perverted egoism invariably leads him. Care must however be taken that the dictates of such an inspiration never run counter to the process of reasoning. The conscious and the super-conscious must never contradict each other.

The Swami left India on May 31st 1893 and reached his destination *via* Japan about the middle of July. The novelty of the scenes the varying beauties of nature, the first contact with different peoples and different civilisations must have enlivened the six weeks of the continuous voyage and charmed a mind, child-like in the enjoyment of everything new. The Swami possessed not merely the curiosity and freshness of mind of a child but the inquisitiveness of an ardent traveller and the insight, grasp and originality of a gifted scholar. He was an ideal traveller and his magnetic presence picturesque dress and 'tiger-like carriage' made him, turn where he would, a centre of attraction. Except for the worry of keeping and using things, which to a *pari-*

vrajaka must have proved quite an ordeal, he might be said to have passed these fifty odd days very pleasantly indeed.

Of this period of comparative leisure, not many letters are available. But even the very few that we have, do not fail to reveal the man. As nation after nation passed before the Swami in true Kaleidoscopic manner, it was quite impossible for him to forget his fallen country ; and every achievement of China, Japan or America served only to rouse his patriotic envy. In a letter from Yokohama, the Swami writes :—

" Come, be men ! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad, See how nations are on the march. Do you love your country ? Then come and let us struggle for higher and better things. Look not back, but forward. India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand of her young men,—men, mind and not brutes, How many Madras is ready to supply, to struggle unto life and death, to bring about a new state of things, —sympathy for the poor and bread for their *hungry* mouths enlightement to the people at large—and struggle unto death to make men out of them who have been brought to the level of beasts ?"

The last sentence proves how Swamiji was alive, even in those early days of his public career to the ecnomic and educational problems of his mother-country. His joy at the achievements of Japan is reflected in the following passage :—

"The Japanese are one of the cleanest people on earth Everything is neat and tidy. Their streets are nearly all broad, straight and regularly-paved. Their little houses are cage-like and their pine-covered ever-green little hills form the back-ground of almost every town and village. The short-statured, fair-skinned, quaintly-dressed Japs, their movements, attitudes, everything is picturesque, Japan is the land of the picturesque. Almost every house has a garden at the back, very nicely laid out according to Japanese fashion, with small shrubs, gross-plots, small artificial waters and small stone bridges.

"The Japanese seem now to have fully awakened themselves to the necessity of the present times. They have now a thoroughly organised army, equipped with guns, which one of their own officers has invented and which is said to be second to none. Then they are continuously increasing their navy. I have seen a tunnel nearly a mile long bored by a Japanese engineer.

"The match-factories are simply a sight to see and they are bent upon making everything they want in their own country. There is a Japanese lines of steamers flying between China and Japan which shortly intends running between Bombay and Yokohama. The modern rage of progress has penetrated even the priesthood. Numbers of our young men should pay a visit to Japan every year."

These are no doubt the first impressions of a sympathetic observer proud of the material achievements of at least one Asiatic nation, of a mind constantly engaged in

making plans about the material as well the spiritual happiness of India. In the brief period of a few days the Swami could not be expected to discover the other side of the Japanese progress, nor her failure while imbbing Western civilisation to steer clear of the evils of the Western materialism. Inspite of her rapid and astonishing progress, Japan has *not* written a new chapter in civilisation, nor even revised old ones. We are however more concerned here with the Swami's thoughts than with Japanese defects.

The following extract from one of his early American letters testifies to the tenderness of Swamiji's heart ;—

" Yesterday Mrs. * * * the lady superintendent of the women's prison was here. They do not call it prison but reformatory here. It is the greatest thing I have seen in America. How the inmates are benevolently treated, how they are reformed and sent back as useful members of society ;—how grand, how beautiful, you must see to believe. And, oh, how my heart ached to think of what we think of the poor, the low in India. They have no chance, no escape, no way climb up. The poor, the low, the sinner in India have no friends, no help.- they can not rise, try however they may. They sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showering upon them by a cruel society. and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too are men ; and the result is slavery."

When, soon after reaching Chicago, the Swami presented himself at the Information Bureau of the Parliment of Religions and announced himself as a representa-

tive of Hinduism, he was asked to produce his credentials. But he had none. The necessity of arming himself with this formality had never occured to him and as a result, the doors of the Parliament were closed to him. He was mortified. Not that the Parliment of Religions was everything, Not that he could not start his work in some other way. But representation and success at the session of the Parliment was a great strategic point in the campaign comtemplated by the Swami and to be required to surrender that point was a great humiliation. Nor was this all. America was found to be a costlier country than was imagined and the purse of the Swami was not long. The Swami had based all his hopes on his success at the Parliment. But the Parliment was not to meet till after the first week of September. This meant another month and a half a period long enough for, any man out of pocket and without any definite prospect of acquiring money, to spend in a foreign country. Then too the poor-laws of the Western countries prohibit door-to-door begging. The intellectuel leaders and the industrial magnates of the country had as usual, gone to summer resortsand in their absence it was impossible for the Swami to undertake a lecturing tour. The only thing he could do was to ask for money from Madras and this he immediately did.

All these difficulties considerably disheartened the Swami. In an "autobiographical mood," he thus wrote (August 20th, 1893) to a Madras friend :—

"I have been dragged through a whole life full of crosses and tortures ; I have seen the nearest and the dearest die, almost of starvation. I have been ridiculed,

distrusted and have suffered for my sympathy for the very men who scoff and scorn. Well, my boy, this is the school of misery, which is also the school for great souls and prophets for the cultivation of sympathy, of patience and above all of an indomitable iron will which quakes not even if the universe be pulverized at our feet."

But though disheartened, he had not lost all hopes and even in the depth of that momentary gloom, he thus cheers up his friends and enjoins them to dedicate their lives to the service of their country and religion :—

Have faith in the Lord. Feel for the miserable and look up for help—*it shall come*. I have travelled twelve years with this load in my heart and this idea in my head. With a bleeding heart, I have crossed half the world to this strange land, seeking for help. The Lord is great. I know He will help me. I may perish of cold or hunger in this land but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor the ignorant and the oppressed. Go now this minute to the temple of Partha-Sarathi and before him, who was friend to the poor and lowly cowherds of Gokula, who never shrank to embrace the pariah Guhak, who accepted the invitation of a prostitute in preference to that of the nobles and saved her in His incarnation as Buddha, yea, down on your faces before Him, and make a great sacrifice, the sacrifice of a whole life for them, for whom He comes from time to time, whom He loves above all the poor, the lowly, the oppressed.

" Hundreds will fall in the struggle, hundreds will be ready to take it up. I may die here unsuccessful, another will take up the task. You know the disease, you know the remedy, only have faith.

"A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternl faith in the Lord and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the down-trodden will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up, the gospel of equality.

"I must try to the end and if I die of cold or disease or hunger here, you take up the task. Holiness, sincerity and faith. First I will try in America, and if I fail, I will try in England; if I fail there too, I can go back to India and wait for further commands from on High."

The wet blanket of diffIculties was soon lifted from the Swami's spirits and by the merest accident he was enabled to accomplish his immediate objects—an economical life till the session of the Parliament and an admission to that session as a representative of Hinduism. Learning that Boston was both a cheaper and more learned city than Chicago, the Swami decided to stay there for some time. While travelling to Boston the Swami accidently made acquaintance of an old lady. The conversation that followed greatly interested the lady and when she learnt that the Swami was a monk and had no particular destination in Boston, she cordially invited him to partake of her hospitality. "In the depressed state of his finances" the Swami readily accepted the invitation and felt it to be a God-send. He had an "advantage of living with her in saving for some time the expenditure of £1 per day" while she had the "advantage of inviting her friends over there

and showing them a curio from India." All this was certainly humiliating. "Starvation, cold, hootings in the streets on account of my quaint dress, these are what I have to fight against. But, my dear boy, no great things were ever done without great labour."

It was at the house of this lady that the Swami met Dr. Wright of the Harvard University. The learned doctor at once recognized his worth and interested himself on the Swami's behalf. It was through Dr. Wright's influence with Dr. Barrows that the technical difficulty was got over and the Swami was duly installed as a delegate at the Parliament of Religions.

The Parliament of Religions, like the League of Nations, was indeed a very grand conception. That the ablest and choicest representatives of all the different Faiths under the Sun should meet in a friendly spirit to discourse upon all that is best and permanent in every Faith was itself an achievement, novel and unique in the history of the world. Where the representatives of every religion were required to interpret its doctrines in a responsible, constructive and non-contentious spirit in the presence of the ambassadors of other Faiths, it was natural that the discussions were carried on in a spirit agreeble to all alike. On such an occasion, the appeal is naturally made, not to the blind belief in some texts or personality but to reason and to the highest emotions to which a human being is susceptible. No wonder that on such occasions. the essentials of religions are discovered to be fundamentally indentical, tradition and fanaticism give way to a spirit of broad-mindedness and

and friendliness, all aggressive spirit is merged in mutual recognition and esteem, controversy, the bane of politics and religion is hushed to silence and the whole atmosphere tends to produce toleration, catholicity, and mutual appreciation.

A temporary awakening of these exalted emotions and sentiments is not of much use. The new spirit must abide, It must not be put on, like the levy-dress, only for the occasion. Being part of the World's Fare, the Parliament of Religions was more of a demonstration than a conference with a definite programme before it. No resolutions, no plan of future work, no scheme for the betterment of mankind or for the mitigation of the religious feuds,—the proceeding of the Parliment seem to be perfectly barren. Speakers were expected merely to delight the audience with high-sounding phrases. It was a most interesting sight, no doubt, this concentration of the ecclesiastical talent and oratory of the world in the majestic hall of Chicago. But we search the proceedings jo the Parliament in vain for any indication of a deeper spirit at work. The Parliament failed to produce any substantial results for the very simple reason that no such results were intended to be accomplished.

It has been said that thongh the Parliament of Religions might not have bequeathed any plan of work, still the birth of the idea of a universal religion is a glorious contribution of the Parliment to the sum-total of the religious aspirations of mankind. The credit of popularizing the idea of a universal religion forming the base of all religions of the world can be more appropriately

claimed by the Theosophical Society founded about fifteen years before the first session of the Parliament of Religions. A universal religion in the sense of one church dominating over or guiding the religious activities and aspirations of mankind is an impossibility. To admit that the ethical and in part the spiritual foundation of all religions is identical is one thing; to urge that the spiritual ideas, mythologies and rituals of all the different religions can be so combined as to produce one religion is another. So innumerable are the sects and subsects in each religion, so hopelessly antagonistic are they to one another, so inextricably are they bound to local traditions, ideas, conditions and personalities that there can no more be one religion than there can be one country or one kingdom. And why run after the phantom of an imaginary consummation when the past history of mankind, every instinct of man, every law of nature is against such a possibility? Unity or identity does not necessarily mean harmony. If, instead of pursuing a mirage, leaders of different religions try to bring about real good-will among contending sects and Faiths on the basis of a frank recognition of their diversities, they would be conferring a blessing on mankind. Whether a Parliament of Religions is the most effective way of doing this need not be discussed; but it was in this spirit that the Swami valued the work of the Parliament of Religions. Said he:—

"The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to the law of growth.

"If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world, it is this. It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of his resistance, 'Help and not Fight' 'Assimilation and not Destruction' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension'."

The succeses of the Parliamant and the success of the Swami are two different things. The latter in no way depends on the former. As a matter of fact, the Parliment of Religions, judged by its permanent contribution to the world of thought, was a signal failure. But the Swami was a grand success from his very first appearance. And of that first appearance the Swami has left us an eloquent description:—

"On the morning of the opening of the Parliament, we all assembled in a building called the Art Palace, where one huge and other smaller temporary halls were erected for the sittings of the Parliament. Men from all nations were there. From India were Mr. Muzumdar of the Brahmo Samaj and Nagarkar of Bombay, Mr. Gandhi representing the Jains and Mr. Chakravarti representing Theosophy with Mrs. Annie Besant. Of these Mazoomdar and I were of course old friends, and Chakravarti

knew me by name. There was a grand procession and we were all marshalled on to the platform. Imagine a hal below and a huge gallery above, packed with six or seven thousand men and women representing the best culture of the country and on the platform learned men of all the nations of the earth. And I, who never spoke in the public in my life to address this august assemblage! It was opened in great form with music and ceremony and speeches; then the delegates were introduced one by one, and they stepped up and spoke. Of course my heart was fluttering and my tongue nearly dried up; I was so nervous and could not venture to speak in the morning. Mazoomdar made a nice speech, Chakravarti a nicer one and they were much applauded. They were prepared and came with ready made speeches. I was a fool and had none, but bowed down to Devi Sarasvati and stepped up and Dr. Barrows introduced me. I made a short speech. I addressed the assembly as, 'sisters and brothers of America' A deafening applause of two miniutes followed and then I proceeded and when it was finished, I sat down almost exhausted with emotion. The next day all the papers announced that my speech was the hit of the day, and I became known to the whole of America. Truly has it been said by the great commentator Shridhara मूकं करोति वाचालम् who maketh the dumb a fluent speaker., His name be praised',

The speech was a short dissertation on religious toleration and its enemy, religious fanaticism. Having thanked the 'sisters and brothers' of the youngest civilised nation 'in the name of the most ancient order of the monks in the world,' the Swami said:—

"I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnants of the Israelites. I am proud to belong to a religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation."

Having thus established the claim of Hinduism as the most catholic religion under the Sun, the Swami concluded :--

"Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant fanaticism have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. But their time is come; and I fervently hope and the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all the persecutions with the sword or of the pen and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal"

The principal contribution of the Swami to the Parliament of Religions seems to be his paper on Hinduism. This paper, smaller in length though it is than many of Swami's lectures, deserves all the praise that has been bestowed upon it. It is comprehensive, epigrammatical, sublime and eloquent. Every sentence is surcharged with thought. The patriot in the Swami is

never in the back-ground and to a nation regaled with ludicrous stories of Hindu idolatry the Swami bluntly says:—" From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy of which latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion "

The Swami could well afford to own all the anomalies that have crept into Hinduism because he was intensely conscious of its sublimity and vitality. "There religions " said he " now stand in the world which have come down to us from time prehistoric—Hinduism Zoroastrianism and Judaism. But while Judaism failed to absorb Christanity and was driven out of its place of birth by its all-conquering daughter, and a handful of Parsis is all that remains to tell the tale of their religion, sect after sect arose in India and seemed to shake the religion of the Vedas to its very foundations, but like the waters of the sea-shore in a tremendous earthquake it receded only for a while, only to return in an all-absorbing flood, a thousand times more vigorous and when the tumult of the rush was over, these sects were all sucked in, absorbed and assimilated into the immense body of the Mother Faith."

Even in this, his almost first literary effort, we meet with indications of his passion for discovering the common basis of Hinduism. His attitude towards the present day missionaries of Christanity was quite aggressive and in discussing idolatry, he showed how even

the Protestant Christians could not escape it. But his general attitude towards idolatry was neither argumentative nor psychological but essentially ethical "The tree is known by its fruits. When I have seen amongst them that are called idolators, men, the like of whom in morality, spirituality, and love, I have never seen anywhere, I stop and ask myself 'can sin beget holiness'?

Equally characteristic was his reference to the Buddhists and the Jains, whom he could not forget even in this very small survey of Hinduism. "The Buddhists and Jains do not depend upon God; but the whole force of their religion is directed to the great central truth in every religion, to evolve a God out of man. They have not seen the Father, but they have seen the Son. And he that hath seen the Son hath seen Father also".

Theology, mythology, history, philosophy,—whatever the theme, the Swami strode over the entire realm of the subject with the ease of Titan. Here is a specimen of his intellectual sweep;—

"The relation between Hinduism and what is called Buddhism at the present day, is nearly the same as between Judaism and Christanity. Jesus Christ was a Jew and Shakya Muni was a Hindu. The Jews rejected Christ, nay, crucified him and the Hindus have accepted Shakya Muni as God and worshipped him. But the real difference between modern Buddhism, and what we should understand as the teaching of Lord Buddha lies principally in this; Shakya Muni came to preach nothing new. He also like Jesus came to fulfil and not to

destroy. Only in the case of Jews, it was the old people, the Jews, who did not understand him. While in the case of Buddha, it was his own followers who did not realise the import of his teachings".

What however captivated the imagination of the American public was the grandeur of the Swami's vision and his capacity to probe deep into the innermost recesses of the human heart. "Is man a tiny boat" says he "in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions,—a powerless, helpless wreck in an ever-raging, ever-rushing uncompromising current of cause and effect; a little moth placed under the wheel of casuation, which rolls on, crushing everything in its way and waits not for the widow's tears or the orphan's cry? The heart sinks at the idea. Yet this is the law of Nature. 'Is there no hope? Is there no escape?' was the cry that went up from the bottom of the heart of despair. It reached the Throne of Mercy and words of hope and consolation came down and inspired a Vedic sage and he stood up before the world and in a trumpet-voice proclaimed the glad tidings 'Here ye children of bliss immortal, even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One, who is beyond all darkness, all delusion; knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again.' 'Children of immortal bliss' what a sweet, what a hopeful name! The Hindu refuses to call you sinners! Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Come up, Oh lions, and shake off the delusion that you are

sheep. You are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal."

Who can fail to be roused and elevated by the grandeur of such sentiments? The dazzling intellect, the shining purity and the roaring faith of the Swami carried everything before it. He became the idol of the American public; and while delegates and representatives of other religions quietly returned to their countries after the session of the Parliament of Religions was over, of the Swami's great career, that Parliament was only a *nandi*, a prelude. In the chorus of that [illegible] he began his work. His path was now strewn with heaps of roses. "It was roses, roses all the way"

CHAPTER VII

AT WORK

Vivekananda came to us with a message. "I do not come to convert you to a new belief," he said. "I want you to keep your own belief. I want to make the Methodist a better Methodist, the Presbyterian a better Presbyterian, the Unitarian a better Unitarian. I want you to live the truth to reveal the light within your own soul." He gave the message that [illegible] of the man of business, that caused the [illegible] and think: that gave the artist [illegible] that inbued the wife and mother the husband, the father, with a larger comprehension of duty,

Mrs. E. W. Wilcox.

With the commencement of his work in America, the last period of Swamiji's life begins. It was a period of nine years only, five of which he gave to the West, the remaining four years being devoted to India. Out of these five years of work in the West, about three years and four months were spent in the United States of America, full one year was given to England and the remaining eight months were occupied by the Continental tour and by voyage and travel from place to place. Though the Swami gave nearly four months to Paris, in considering his work in the West, it is sufficient if we concentrate our attention upon his activities in the United States and England.

These five years of propaganda in Europe and America do not form one unbroken period. Swamiji shifted his centre of activities from America to England, England

to India and from India back to America from time to time. From July 1893 to August 1895, he lived and worked in the United States. Then he went to England *via* Paris and returned to New York on December 6th 1895. On April 15th, 1896, he again left New York for consolidating his work in England where he stayed for about six months. He also gave nearly a couple of months to Switzerland and Germany. On December 16 th 1896 he sailed for India returning to London *en route* to the United States on July 31st, 1899 after an absence of nearly two years and a half. On this occasion, his halt in London was limited to a couple of weeks. On August 16th, 1899 he sailed for the United States where he worked for about eleven months On July 20th, 1900 he left America and sailed for Paris where he stayed for a little less than three months. Thence he started (24th October 1900) for Constantinople, Thence he went to Athens and from Athens to Egypt. In Egypt, he suddenly changed his plans and started for India where he reached early in December 1900.

It will thus be seen that the Swami lived and worked and preached in the West for full five years. No estimate of his Western work should ignore the shortness of his stay and the paucity of the materials with which he had to work. In fact, he worked single-handed, without money, without friends, without influential backing. He had to make money, find friends, create influnence for himself. All this meant tremendous work. This work sapped his vitality but he heroically continued the work inspite of his physical ailments. He gave more of his 'heart's blood' to America and England then to India where naturally his task was simpler.

Swamiji's Western work can be divided into three parts (1) Work in the United States 1893–1895 (2) Work in the United States 1899–1900 (3) Work in England 1895–1896.

"Did the Swami start work with any preconceived plan?" We think not. His scope of work widened as his opportunites increased and opportunities came to him unsought. Just as he went to the United States without making the least effort, so also his work there increased naturally and spontaneously. The rousing reception given to him by the American public at the Parliament of Religions, the charm of his personality, the grandeur of his character, the flame of his patriotism the depth of his learning and the catholicity of his outlook made him the man of the hour at the sessions of the Parliament; and when to those qualities he could add wit, humour and a sonorous eloquence, he could not escape being 'lionized.' Probably his very first speech at the Parliament brought him a dozen invitations from wealthy citizens of Chicago and New York. The nicest the choicest and the most fashionable houses were now opened to him. With one step, he entered the very heart of the American Society. Lawyers, Doctors, authors, scientists, philosophers, poets, artists all alike were drawn to this new messenger from the Orient. Wherever the Swami turned, he met with smiling faces, cordial welcome and heartfelt hospitality. In the midst of all this diversion, the Swami did not forget his mission and in the informal conversations with the *elite* of the American society, he did not fail to preach his doctrines.

Our next picture of the Swami is that of a lecturer. America is a land of lectures and lecture bureaux. A

popular orator can expect to earn thousands by lecturing from one end of the country to the other. The services of the Swami were availed of by several lecture-bureaux some of which were roguish enough and had no difficulty in taking undue advantage of Swamiji's guilelessness. In some of his most popular lectures, the Swami earned as much as $2,000 dollars *i.e.* Rs. 7,500 in one hour but was paid only 200 dollars! The Swami hated money, but he felt it wise to be financially independent at least in the earlier days in America. But as he was averse to selling spiritual knowledge he generally made money by delivering lectures on secular subjects only. His discourses on religion were free. He visited and lectured at almost every important city in the Eastern and Mid-western states. His object was not only to become financially independent but to save some money for carrying out his plans in India. "Money can be raised in this country by lecturing for two or three years" said the Swami in one of his letters. Inspite of the public appreciation of his lectures the Swami found the whole affair 'thoroughly uncongenial and demoralising.'

The Swami also found that "he could not speak to promiscuous audiences on the topics nearest to his heart and the life of ceaseless change was too strenuous for a contemplative nature like his own." So he preferred to lecture at clubs, churches and in the drawing-rooms of persons interested in Vedanta. True to his Indian instinct he sought rather the personal contact with aspirants after the Truth than general lectures to crowded audiences. Even when he spoke before "promis-

cuous audiences" he never failed to hold at the end of the lecture an informal reception to enable him to get better acquainted with his hearers.

The Swami was more attentive to the substantial part of his work than the ornamental and the demonstrative. He never cared for newspaper fame. "All this newspaper blazoning" said he in one of his letters "is nothing. I ought to be able to leave a permanent effect behind me when I go. *Men* are more valuable than all the wealth of the world." With this object in view he "broke himself loose from personal and public invitations" and established himself at New York. He hired "just an ordinary room on the second floor of a lodging house" and announced that he would hold classes and deliver lectures there free of charge. "The classes began in February 1894 and lasted till June. They were held nearly every morning and on several evenings in each week." What he said of his classes in England was equally true of his classes in the United States "Bands and bands come and I have no room for so many; so they squat on the floor, ladies and all. I tell them to imagine that they are under the sky of India, under a spreading bunyan and they like the idea." "These classess and lectures, were attended by the most intellectual people and advanced thinkers" in America and the subjects of discourses were anything but light and demanded severe concentration on the part of his hearers. He also gave practical lessons to advanced students in meditation. His discourses on Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Raja-yoga published in book-form popularised his message and were of great help to the

students of Hinduism. The logical development of the classes was the 'Vedanta Society of New York' established early in 1896. The aim of the society was to stimulate the religious instincts of its members by enabling them to apply the truths of Vedanta to their individual faiths. It was a non-sectarian body and was fortunate enough to have for its President Mr. Francis H. Leggett an influential citizen of New York.

"In the course of his five year's propagandistic activities in the West, the Swami had to cross swords with many a cross-grained opponent. A memorable occasion has thus been graphically described by one of his disciples :—

"The so-called Free-thinkers, embracing the atheists, materialists, agnostics, rationalists and all those who, on principle are averse to anything that savours of religion, thought that this Hindu monk was an easy match for them and that all his theology would be crushed under the weight of Western civilisation, Western philosophy and Western Science. So sure were they of their triumph that they invited him in New York, to lecture before their society, anxious to show their numerous followers how easily religious claims could be refuted by the powerful arguments of their logic and pure reasoning. I shall never forget that memorable evening when the Swami accepted the challenge and appeared single-handed to face the Matadors of Materialism, all arrayed with their heaviest armour of law, and reason and logic, and common sense of matter, and force, and heredity, and all the stock phrases calculated to awe and terrify the ignorant mass. Imagine their surprise and

consternation when they found that, far from being intimated by these big words, he proved himself a master in wielding their own weapons and as familiar with the arguments of materialism as with those of the Advaita philosophy. With an irresistible logic he demonstrated that their knowledge proved itself incorrect not by comparison with knowledge which is true, but by the very laws upon which it depends for its basis; that pure reasoning could not help admitting its own limitations and pointed to something beyond reason; and that rationalism when carried to its last consequences must ultimately land us at a something which is above matter above force, above sense, above thought and even consciousness and of which all these are but manifestations."

Swamiji's work in England followed much the same course as his work in the United States. The Swami was inclined to hope that his work in England was more satisfactory than anywhere else and that "if I should die tomorrow, the work in England would not die but would go on expanding all the time." This hope was the natural reaction of his first prejudice against England. In the beginning of his London life he frankly contrasted the English civilisation with the American to the detriment of the former. "I find" said he "the American mind peculiarly susceptible to new ideas; while in England, civilisation is older, it has gathered many accretions as the centuries have rolled on. In particular whoever deals with the English in ideas has many prejudices that need to be broken through." Two or three characteristics of the Englishman however impressed

him sufficiently to produce a change in his opinion. The first, of course, was the steadfastness of the English which came as a welcome contrast to the fickle American. In the opinion of the Swami it was the steadfastness of a determined nature. The Englishman might have his 'skull a little thick,' he may not accept a new gospel without undue hesitation, but he inherits cultural traditions extending to many centuries. While on the contrary, Uncle Sam was a cultural upstart. What struck the Swami most was that while in the United States, he was slandered from city to city in the course of his lecturing tours, in England not a breath of slander sought to soil his name and hinder his work. On his return to India, he frankly admitted his changed attitude towards John Bull. "No one ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English. But the more I lived among them and mixed with them, I found where the heart-beat of the nation was, and the more I loved them' Perhaps he also realized that the English have one priceless asset while the youthful American nation has yet to establish credit in the historical market. His London life opened his eyes to the vastness of the achievement of England. "This British Empire with all its draw-backs is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas." "I mean to put my ideas" continues the Swami "in the centre of this machine, and they will spread all over the world." If the Greeks could "overwhelm the Roman Empire with their ideals" how much more possible is it for India to "conquer her conqueror" intellectually, culturally and spiritually! Perhaps by this moral conquest of Eng-

land by India the Swami hoped for a relaxation of the political grip in which England holds India. It will, however, have to be admitted, that though a subject nation far advanced intellectually can sufficiently impress the conquering nation, no Imperial power has slackened its political hold over countries merely out of gratiutde for cultural acquisition. Greece might have conquered Rome. But though the Roman consul, general or Dictator, was fond of writing Greek poetry and discussing Greek philosophy, the moment any political matter came for consideration, he was his old self again, anxious to prove that he was still a Roman of Romans. Even if India as much impresses the intellect of England as it already has done that of Germany, Imperial England would continue her time-honoured tradition of keeping Indians as hewers of wood and drawers of water. Morever India can never hope to conquer England in the sense in which subject Greece conquered Rome. The Roman master was far backward in literature and arts when compared with the subject Greek. This cannot be said of the Englishman who, excepting religion and philosophy is fully equal and in many respects undoubtedly superior to the Indian. And as regards Swamiji's belief that the work in England was solid and bound to expand, what is the experience of the last thirty years? While, in the able hands of Swamiji's lieutenants, the work in the United States is growing apace, the impression which Vivekananda produced in England has been almost obliterated. India looks more to the United States than to any other foreign country for assimilating her spiritual doctrines. As for England, neither her commercial nor imperialis-

tic instincts quite harmonize with the acceptance of India's message and the stir created by the Swami's two visits was more the effect of his magnificent personality than that of any genuine desire of understanding the Spiritual Truths discovered by ancient India.

Swamiji's second visit to America was undertaken more for health than for propaganda. But the enormous popularity of the Swami gave him no rest. And with the improvement of health in the salubrious climate of California, it was inevitable that work should tempt and claim him. He lived in California, for about six months (December 1899 to June 1900) in the course of which period he delivered about one hundred lectures. On 20th July he sailed for Paris from New York to attend the Congress of the History of Religions. On October 24th, he left Paris on a Continental tour and in December 1900 reached India.

Under the orbit of Swamiji's special influence came hundreds of persons whose spiritual instinct was awakened by his preachings and personal example and who commenced some kind of Sadhana under his direct or indirect supervision. An Indian disciple of the Swami once asked him "Well, Swamiji, how many disciples have you in the West ?

Swamiji :—A good many.

Question ;—Two or three thousand ?

Swamiji :—May be more than that.

Question :—Are they all initiated by you with Mantrams ?

Swamiji :—Yes,

Question :—Did you give them permission to utter *Pranava* (Om) ?

Swamiji :—Yes,

Question :—How did you, Maharaj ?

Swamiji :—My disciples are all Brahmins ! I quite admit that none except the Brahmins has the right to *Pranava*. But the son of a Brahmin is not necessariiy a Brahmin. The Brahmin caste and the Bramanya qualities are quite different.

The *New York Herald* mentions some of his intimate disciples in the following manner :—

"There can be no question that the Swami is securing an influential following. Some of those who are his pupils are wellknown in the city. Among the names of those recorded at the Swami's house were Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett, Madame Anotinette Sterling, Dr. Allen Day, Miss Emma Thursby Prof. Wyman and Mrs. Ole Bull.'! Special mention must also be made of Miss S. E. Waldo who was of immense use to the Swami during the whole of his stay in America and who conducted his Raja Yoga classes in his absence. Mr. J. J. Goodwin, who worked as a stenographer to the Swami, fell instantly under the influence of his spirituality and became his lifelong disciple. There were three persons who were initiated by the Swami in Sanyasa in the United States. A distinguished Frenchwoman, Madame Mane Louise accepted Sanyasa under the name of Swami Abhayananda. A Russian Jew named Leon Landsberg became known as Swami Kripanand : and Dr. Street took the name of Swami Yogananda. Then we must not forget to men-

tion Miss Christina Greenstidle and Miss Margaret Noble who later came to be known as Sister Christine and Sister Nivedita respectively. It was Miss Henrietta Muller's money which made possible the purchase of the Belur lands. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier substantially contributed to the purchase of the land at Mayavati. It was the financial backing of these wealthy Americans that encouraged the Swami in his plans. The list of Swamiji's disciples is a long one and incomplete. It is the acquision of such men and women for the cause that establishes the greatness of the Swami as a Master and proves the inherent worth and utility of his gospel.

The difficulties in the way of the Swami were enormous. His very simplicity and other-worldliness was one of his greatest difficulties. A loving, trustful nature, a mind accustomed to rely more on Providence than on subtlety and cunning, a temperament that always sought to appeal to the highest instincts in men instead of to mercernary considerations, a naturally contented mind, given more to meditation than to action,—was not calculated to overcome the difficulties inherent in the mission. The Swami was aware of these defects, from a purely worldly standpoint, in his character. "Had I been a hypocrite" he was once heard to exclaim "I could have commanded far greater success." Cruelty, craft and intrigue, in a word, a readiness to use men and women as pawns in the game of ambition—that constitutes the very soul of worldly success. Then there was the money difficulty. Even the Swami came to realize that for success in propaganda, religious or political, money is required. He could, he used to say, revolu-

tionize the world if he had only twenty million dollars. When the Swami left India in May 1893, he had hardly twenty thousand, on which he could rely! To aspire to convert the West on four or five thousand rupees is nothing short of madness. Fortunately the tremendous success of the Swami at the Parliament of Religions secured for him the help of numerous wealthy persons and with their help and the money earned by delivering lectures on secular subjects, the Swami was not only able to commence work but also to send some money to India for establishing centres for work in this country. The Swami's success in America roused a wave of enthusiasm in India ; but how many purses were opened to aid the cause of which every Hindu professed to be proud ? When some of his countrymen criticized the Swami for accepting animal food when in America, he naturally felt disgusted with those of his countrymen who were willing to claim the success of the Swami as national, who were willing to allow the Swami to send money to India and start work here but who never for once thought that it was their bounden duty, when the Swami had, on his own responsiblity started his work under favourable auspicies, to back him up with a long purse. It never occured to anyone of the great leaders of those times to collect a couple of lakhs and send the money to the Swami for putting his work on a sound basis ; and the result was, not only was the enthusiasm of the Swami somewhat damped by money difficulties but he had actually to spend part of his energies in finding money and overstraining his nerves in the double task of propagating his ideas and finding the wherewithal to create a machinery for consolidating and starting his work.

This neglect of the Swami by his countrymen is more culpable than the campaign of slander and malice which harassed him for the better part of two years in America and of which the object was to blacken the Swami's character and thus effectively nullifying his influence and popularity with the general public. His principal detractors were the Christian missionaries. " There is not one lie imaginable " said the Swami on his return from the West " which these missionaries did not invent against me. They blackened my character from city to city, poor and friendless though I was in a foreign country. They tried to oust me from every house, and to make every man who became my friend, my enemy. They tried to starve me out." When persons deal with utter strangers in the name of religion in such mean and cowardly way, one can but exclaim in the words of the poet :—

" And much it grieved my heart to find,
What man has made of man !"

But this persecution, these libels, these unexpeeted difficulties in his way served but to draw all the gold in the character of the Swami. He never condescenced to engage in a personal and acrimonious controversy with persons whose only weapon was stiletto and mask. The Swami knew that truth, love and purity are bound to triumph ultimately and he had patience enough to wait.

But neither the simplicity and poverty of the Swami nor the persistent abuse of himself and of his cause by those who were interested in crushing him down were really his chief difficulty. That difficulty lay in the intellectual

ethical and spiritual limitations imposed upon the Western world by their past traditions, natural eviron-ments, unparalleled prosperity and unlimited material success. We shall presently have an occasion of dis-cussing the favourable influences and tendencies that helped the Swami in his spiritual mission. But these tendencies were remote tendencies operating on and influencing only a few of the best minds in England and the United States. But these countries, as a whole, were under the spell of Mammon-worship and even the higher intellect of those countries aimed rather at cater-ing to the requirements of politics, militarism and com-merce. Scientists and philosophers who should have placed before themselves the goal of leading man Godward and solving the mystery of life had ranged themselves on the side of the politicians of the realm and were absorbed in the inglorious task of making their countries richer and more powerful at the expense of others; while the generality of the educated public was, intellectually and spiritually in a complacent mood. They had placed all the ideals, ambitions and dreams of mankind on the pedestal of uncertain and imperfect intellect. They had ruled faith out of order and every-thing that appealed to the higher instincts of man was ruthlessly brushed aside. The intellectual and spiritual complanency of England and America is incompatible with a yearning for higher wisdom and vision and no message from India has any substantial chance of success unless and until the whole outlook of these nations undergoes a revolution by some sudden shock that would make the minds of the people introspective. In a sense, the very powerful hold of these nations on the external world is inimical to the development of their introspective faculty.

There were however certain circumstances which in a measure helped the Swami in his mission. The study of Sanskrit in the West, though undertaken at first mainly from philological reasons soon opened for Western Savants a vast unexplored field for investigation and in the course of half a century the civilisation of ancient Aryans in India and their studies into the region of philosophy had already extorted the admiration of those who were in touch with contemporary researches. This at once lifted the reputation of India and even in the disheartening circumstances of political bondage, educated Indians came to find that however despised they might be in the civilised nations of the West, there was at least one field of knowledge where their equality with if not supremacy over the Western nations was ungrudgingly admitted. The establishment of the Theosophical Society, a few years before the Parliament of Religions might or might not have added to the prestige of Hindu religion and philosophy ; for in the earlier stages, Theosophy had her own defensive battles to fight and before it could add to the prestige of Hindu metaphysics, it had its own prestige to establish and consolidate. But the very circumstances which favoured the establishment of the Theosophical Society contributed to the success of the Swami. And these were the accumulated result of the peculiar development of Europe since Martin Luther shook the spiritual conscience of Europe to its innermost depth. The first of these was the discovery that reason had its own limitations and could not be trusted to entirely guide the activities of human beings. The wonderful discoveries of physical sciences and their application to the wants of men and nations had no doubt

intoxicated Western minds, but when the very leaders of scientific thought had to admit their own limitations and the imperfections of their discoveries, many people found in these admissions but the confirmation of their instinctive belief that spirituality was after all higher than materialism and that no material power can supplant the spiritual without which man is as helpless and as useless as an animal.

It was however not in this negative manner only that science has helped the cause of Vedanta. It has directly contributed to the popularity and reception of the Hindu spiritual message by the very close affinity the discoveries of science bear to the axioms and postulates of Hindu Metaphysics, "Of all the scriptures of the world," says the Swami "the Vedanta is the one scripture the teaching of which is in entire harmony with the results that have been attained by the modern scientific investigations of external nature. The conclusions of modern science are the very conclusions the Vedanta reached ages ago; only in modern science they are written in the language of matter. I have myself been told by some of the best Western scientific minds of the day, how wonderfully rational the conclusions of the Vedanta were. I know one of them, who scarcely has time to go out of his laboratory, but who yet would stand by the hour to attend my lectures on the Vedanta; for, as he expresses it, they are so scientific, they so exactly harmonoize with the aspirations of the age and with the conclusions to which modern science is coming at the present time, I need not tell you, men from the Madras University, how the modern researches of the

West have demonstrated through physical means, the oneness and solidarity of the whole universe; how, physically speaking, you and I and the sun, moon and stars are but little waves or wavelets in the midst of an infinite ocean of matter; how Indian psychology demonstrated ages ago that, similarly, both the body and mind are but names or wavelets in the ocean of matter, the *samashti*; and how going one step further, it is also shown that behind that idea of unity, the real Soul is one." It is not therefore surprising that the highest, the most rational, the most receptive because least prejudiced minds of Europe and America welcomed Vedanta and set themselves to see what the ancient Hindu philosophy had to say on the tremendous social and ethical problems facing before them.

Let us for instance briefly refer to the attitude of Vedanta towards Western Ethics. "The rational West is earnestly bent upon seeking out the *raison d'etre* of all its philosophy and its ethics; ethics cannot be derived from the mere sanction of any personage, however great and divine. Such on explanation of the authority of ethics no more appeals to the highest of the world's thinkers." Nor is utilitarianism a very rational or satisfactory background, for it leaves the fundamental question of the 'why' almost untouched. "And where is that eternal sanction?" asks the Swami "to be found except in the only Infinite Reality, that exists in you and in me and in all, in the self, in the soul? The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality." What again is the ideal of modern democracy and even socialism but a faint echo of the

ideal of divine and universal freedom inculcated by the ancient Aryan philosophy? "In and through all the literature voicing man's struggle towards freedom, towards universal freedom, again and again you find the Indian Vedantic ideals coming out prominently. In some cases the writers do not know the source of their inspiration, in some cases they try to appear very original, a few there are, bold and grateful enough to mention the source and acknowledge their indebtedness to it" When Vedanta thus meets the requirements of modern scientists, moralists, philosophers and democrats, it is no wonder that it should have found vogue among Englishmen and Americans who are discontented with the present order of things in society and in learning. It was on the basis of this discontentment and disillusion that Swamiji built his work.

The people who more or less came under the Swami's influence can be divided into three or four classes. Foremost among them were the progressive thinkers, the scientific and philosophical minds, men of first class brain power whose enfranchised intellect worshipped Truth above everything else and who were eager to accept it from what ever quarter it came. Such men are extremely few in every society but it is exactly these people on the direction of whose thoughts depends the direction of the civilisation of the country. The silent revolution in thought brought about in a country takes some time before it is perfectly visible and it is yet too early to analyze Swamiji's influence on contemporary thought in England and the United States. But that his influence was felt and that the leaders of science and philosophy

received many useful hints from him has been generally acknowledged. Then comes the class of those earnest souls, miscalled agnostics and atheists whom the Christanity of the day had failed to influence. As the Swami pointed out "In America one-third of the people are Christians but the rest have no religion, that is, they do not belong to any of the sects, but amongst them are to be found the most 'spiritual' persons." Hundreds of such persons were spiritually refrested at the message of the Swami and had the Swami been more worldly-minded, he would certainly have made them Hindu. But that was not his ambition. To take each man where he stands and from thence to give him a push,—that was the ideal of the Swami. Then came the class of of those pious Christians who were liberal-minded enough to open their mind to new influences. The class of such persons is bound to be smaller than the preceeding one but in this class stood some of the very able and zealous exponents of the Christanity. Swamiji has told us that the "biggest guns of the English church told me that I was putting Vedantism into the Bible." We have ample evidence to believe that this was no idle compliment and though for obvious reasons such persons could not openly stand for the Swami they exercised a very heathful influence of the general attitude of the public. The last and largest class, the generality of the public, though unable by its very nature to understand the full significance and implications of the Swami's gospel were most favourably impressed with the culture, the eloquence, the learning and the sanitliness of the Swami. Though the opinions of such persons are nowhere recorded like votes, yet the general esteem

in which a person, a sect, a nation is held in foreign countries is the accumulated result of the random impressions gathered by persons belonging to this class. And the decrease in one year in missionary funds by as much as one million pounds is a significant tribute to the impression Vivekananda was able to produce over the general public who, inspite of the missionary propaganda felt convinced that a country which could boast even of one Vivekananda was not quite in need of spiritual guidance from christian nations.

This then was the work of our first great ambassador to the West during the last century. But this was not all his work. His services to the Mother-land were more brilliant than even his mission to the west. But before we turn to that noble theme, we must review howsoever briefly his more important and philosophical discourse in the west ; and this we propose to do in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FOUR YOGAS I.

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.

—*Swami Vivekananda*—

Being the disciple of one, who in his spiritual experiences had discovered the fundamental unity underlying all religions, it is no wonder that the Swami was singularly broadminded in his attitude towards other religions. According to the Swami the very existence of so many faiths is itself a proof of their necessity and he went to the extreme length of declaring that the "greater the number of sects, the more chance of there is of people getting religion". "I am glad" continues the Swami "that sects exist. If you and I were to think exactly the same thoughts, there would be no thoughts for us to think. It is tha clash of thought, the differentiation of thought, that awakens thought. Whirls and eddies occur only in a rushing, living stream. There are no whirlpools in stagnant, dead water." For one sect or religion to claim monopoly of Truth is as ridiculous as the "part claiming to be the whole". "Think" said he "of little

sects, born within a few hundred years, out of fallible human brains making this arrogant claim of knowing the whole of God's infinite truth. Think of the arrogance of it." Religions, according to him are not contradictory but supplementary. Each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the universal truth and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth. System after system arrises each one embodying a great idea and ideals must be added to ideals. And this is the march of humanity. Man never proceeds from error to truth but from truth to truth, from lesser truth to higher truth. Through high philosophy or low, through the most exalted mytnology or the grossest, through the most refined ritualism or arrant fetishism, each sect, each soul, each nation, consciously or unconsciously is struggling upward towards God every vision of truth that a man has, is a vision of Him and of none else. If, therefore one religion is true, then all religions must be true. "I accept' declared the Swami "all religions that were in the past and worship them all. I shall go to the mosque of the Mahomedan. I shall enter the Christian's Church and kneel before the Crucifix. I shall enter the Buddhist temple where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu. Nor is this all. I shall keep my heart open for all the religions that may come in the future. Is God's book finished ? Or is it still a continnous revelation, going on ? We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future."

It was therefore natural that the idea of a Universal religion found no favour with the Swami. He believed that all the religions are differing forces in the economy of God, working for the good of mankind and that not one can be dead, not one can be killed. The Swami had several occasions of publicly discussing the question in England and America and every time, he emphatically declared that a Universal religion was both impossible and undesireable. "How can that be?" asked the Swami. "Is there one universal philosophy? Not yet. Each religion brings out its doctrines, and insists upon them as being the only true ones. Is there a mythological similarity, any mythological harmony, any universal mythology aceepted by all religions? Certainly not. "The same is the case with rituals. There are immense varieties of races, traditions and civilisations which no single religion could represent. But there are certain fundamental ideas and truths underlying all religions; and these the Swami said were best expounded in Hinduism. Another characteristic of Hinduism is that it makes provision for temperamental diversities such as no religion does. Therefore, according to the Swami, though no religion can become a universal religion in the literal sense of the term, Hinduism, by right of its all-comprehensive nature is the *nearest approach* to a universal religion, if the expression universal religion is taken to connote the fundamental principles of religion as distinguished from the bewildering details due to diversities of time, place and circumstances. It was this religion which the Swami preached in England and America. His motto was " Do not destroy, do not pull down, but build. Help if you can;

if you cannot, do not injure. Say not a word against a man's convictions. Take man where he stands and from thence give him a lift." The Swami did not preach Hinduism to Christians. He preached them Vedanta so that they might be better Christians. He taught the fundamentals, the life-giving principles only, of Hinduism to the Christian nations.

"What I want to propagate" said the Swami "is a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds. It must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic and equally conducive to action. To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is *my* ideal of religion. And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call *Yoga*,—union. To the worker, it the union between men and the whole humanity, to the mystic, between his lower and higher self; to the lover between himself and the God of love and to the philosopher, it is the union of all existence."

Fortunately for us, the Swami has written or spoken on every one of these Yogas at sufficient length with his usual clearness, directness and eloquence; and a lover of Hinduism or a child of this venerable faith need not go to any other book for a proper understanding of Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga, Jnyna-Yoga. That Swamiji discoursed on these subjects before Western audiences does not in the least detract from their usefulness. On the contrary, their utility is enhanced because in the surroundings in which these subjects were expounded, the Swami had not only to be more than ordinarily perspicuous but had to explain Vedanta in terms of Western scientific and philosophical

thought, thus making it easier for the English-educated Indians to understand and appreciate them. We propose in this chapter and in the next to dwell on some of the points suggested by a careful study of these discourses and this we shall try to do as far as possible, in the language of the Swami himself.

The swami did not burden his lectures on Karmayoga with abstruse theories. Karma-Yoga he pithily described as the science of unselfishness. Now unselfishness is likely to exist even in frankly agnostic natures and in fact that is the one great achievement of Buddhism,—separation of ethics from all metaphysical background. "The watch-word of all well-being," says the Swami, "of all moral good is not I, but thou. Who cares whether there is a heaven or hell, who cares if there is a soul or not? Here is the world and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did and struggle to lessen it, or die in the attempt." This, however should not be understood to mean that the Swami, even for this gospel of Karmayoga was neglectful of metaphysics or that he considered that the highest ethics and the highest metaphysics cannot be reconciled. "My idea" says he "is to show that the highest ideal of morality and unselfishness goes hand in hand with the highest metaphysical conceptions and that you need not lower your conception to get ethics and morality, but on the other hand, to reach a real basis of morality and ethics, you must have the highest philosophical and scientific conceptions." According to him, the principal qualification for a Karma-Yogi—indeed for every religious aspirant is a large heart. "Intellect is almost nothing. It is the heart that is of

most importance. It is through the heart that the Lord is seen. It is feeling that works, that moves with speed infinitely superior to that of electricity or anything else. Feel like Christ and you will be a Christ; feel like Buddah, and you will be a Buddha. It is feeling that is life, the strength, the vitality without which no amount of intellecttual activity can reach God."

The Swami must have found it very difficult to make his audience appreciate the power of work without motive of work without attachment. What is simple and axiomatic to a Hindu is a puzzle to a Western mind. "Without attachment, without motive, how can we work?" That was the question repeatedly put to him. The Swami's reply to it was that, in the first place the world does not really require us. It is only we who think that if we are not at the post of work the world will go to pieces. "Do not mix in the fray. Hold yourself as a witness and go on working. The greatest weakness often insinuates itself as the greatest good and strength. It is weakness to think that any one is dependent on me and that I can do good to another. This belief is the mother of all attachment and through this attachment comes all our pain. When you have trained your mind and your nerves to realize this idea of the world's non-dependence on you or anybody, there will be no reaction in the form of pain resulting from work." Considered from this stand-point, what we call duty is not only a delusion but a share also. "What is duty after all?" asks the Swami," it is really the impulsion of the flesh, of our attachment. It is a sort of chronic disease. When attachment becomes chronic, we baptize it with the high-

sounding name of duty. Those who want to become Karma-yogis must throw overboard this idea of duty. Be not compelled. Everything that you do under compulsion goes to build up attachment."

Proceeding, the Swami asks, what is the end of work?" "The vast majority of people" he replies "believe that there will be a time when this world become perfect, when there will be no disease, no unhapiness, or wickednees,,. This is a very good idea, he admits, a very good motive power to inspire and uplift the ignorant. "But," he declares, "a perfect life is a contradiction in terms." "How can it be, seeing that good and bad are the reverse of the same coin? No permanent or everlasting good can be done to the world. The sum-total of the good things in the world has been the same throughout in its relation to man's need and greed. Take the history of the human race as we know today. Do we not find the same pleasures and pains, the same differences in position. Are not some rich, some poor, some high, some low, some healthy some unhealthy? So far as history is known, it has always been the same. Yet, at the same time we find that running along with all these incurable diflerences of pleasure and pain, there has ever been a struggle to alleviate them. Every period of history has given birth to thousands of men and women who have worked hard to smoothe the passage of life for others. But how far have they succeeded? We can only play at driving the ball from one place to another. We take away pain from the physical plane and it goes to the mental one.

All ideas of making the world perfectly happy may be good as motive powers for fanatics; but we know that fanaticism brings forth as much evil as good."

Since, therefore, all work against evil is more educational than actual, it behoves us, as we value our own salvation, to work in the spirit of service, or worship. "When work will become worship, nay, something higher, then will work be done for its own sake. When service becomes the motive of work, then all patronizing airs will be cast off." "Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say there, my poor man' but be grateful that the poor man is there so that by making a gift to him, you are able to helf yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world and thus become pure and perfect. No beggar whom we have helped has ever owed a single cent to us. We owe everything to him, because he has allowed us to exercise our charity on him."

The last point in favour of non-attachment is that we cannot do good without at the same time doing some evil; so that if we want to escape the effects of evil done by us, we must be prepared to surrender the effects of the good done by us. Work in a spirit of detachment leaves behind it no trail, either of good or of evil. "There have been sects in this world, who have preached slow suicide as the only means to get out of this world, because if a man lives, he has to kill poor little animals and plants or do injury to something

or someone. But the true solution is found in the Gita. It is the theory of non-attachment. Know that you are separated entirely from this world and that whatever you may be doing in it" is not for your own sake. This will atonce bring peace and contentment.

The gospel of Karma-Yoga is the gospeal of action; and in this age action is more appreciated than worship or meditation. This is the age not so much of the brain and of the heart as of the hands and feet. In these days, man is more impervious to sentiment or emotion and is more indifferent to philosophy and metaphysics than he ever was. He works and can understand the gospel of work and a religious reformer must take note of such men and women and provide a religious path for them. This, the Swami has done in his discourses on Karma-yoga." All knowledge "says the Swami," spiritual or secular is in the human mind," and as knowledge is the goal of man, Karma-yoga seeks to discover the method which will "bring out the power of the mind, which is already there, to waken up the soul " This method is, in one word unselfishness " Love, truth, and unselffishness are not merely moral figures but they form our highest ideal, because in them lies such a manifestation of power. All out-going energy, following a selfish motive is frittered away. It will not cause power to return to you, but if restrained, it will result in developement of power. This self-control will tend to produce a mighty will, a character which makes a Christ or a Buddha." The way, therefore, in incessant and unselfish work. " The ideal man is he, who in the midst of the greatest silence and solitude, finds intensest

activity and in the midst of intensest activity finds silence and solitude." "Calm on a fiery steed" that was how Napolean once ordered his statue to be prepared and one may say that this pithy sentence sums up the ideal of a Karma-yogi.

The gospel of Karma-yoga is a gospel of optimism. It has no room for and no patience with the slough of despond. "The eternal law" says the Swami, "is that no one can get anything unless he earns it. Our Karma determines what we deserve and what we can assimilate"; and since "we are responsible for what we are," being the cumulative produce of "our feelings and actions, our curses and blessings," it follows that "whatever we wish ourselves to be we have the power to make ourselves."

It has been said that the gospel of Karma-yoga is a fit gospel for finite minds but would ill suit temperaments which hanker after the Infinite. It is however only in the earlier stages of the practice of Karma-yoga that the sense of the finite pervades the mind. As selfishness gradually gives place to love, the mind loses its baser element and its outlook begins to be coloured with the glow of the Infinite. In fact love and unselfishness can not be understood or appreciated by a mundane type of mind. It is the etherial mind, the mind which is capable of soaring to the regions of the Infinite that can truly practise unselfishness. With the growth of unselfishness and love, the dividing line between the Finite and the Infinite disappears. "Real existence, real knowledge and real love are eternally connected with one another the three in one; where one of them is, the others also

must be. They are the three aspects of the one without the second-the Existence-knowledge-Bliss.

Like Lokamanya Tilak, the Swami considered the Gita to be a gospel of Karma-yoga. "This is the central idea in the Gita-work incessantly but be not attached to it." In another place he says, "Gita teaches Karma-yoga. We should work through concentration (yoga). In such concentration in action, there is no conciousness of the lower ego present. The Western people do not understand this. They say that if ego is gone how then can a man work ? But when one works with concentration losing all conciousness of himself, the work that is done will be infinitely better. To work without motive, to work unattached brings the highest bliss and freedom. This secret of Karma-yoga is taught by the Lord Krishna in the Gita."

On one point however, the Swami differs from Mr. Tilak. We have all read of Mr. Tilak's insistence on work being done even by man who has attained the Highest. The Swami is emphatically of opinion that work by one who has had supreme realization is an impossibility. "The highest man" says he "*can not* work for there is no binding element, no attachment no ignoa rance in him. It is in ignorance that struggle remains. Real theists could not work, We are atheists more or less. The greatest men in the world have passed away unknown. The Buddhas and the Christs that we know are but second-rate heroes in comparison with the greatest men of whom the world knows nothing. Silently they live and silently they pass away. They are the pure *sattviks*, who can never make any stir but only melt

down in love. They are too near the Lord to be active and to fight, to be working, struggling, preaching and doing good, as they say, here on earth to humanity. The active workers however good, have still a little remnant of ignorance left in them. When our nature has yet some impurities, then alone can we work. In the presence of an ever-active Providence who notes even the sparrows fall, how can he attach any importance to his own work ? Will it not be a blasphemy to do so when we know He is caring for the minutest thing in the world. We have only to stand in awe and reverence, saying 'Thy will be done'."

In his own person, the Swami represented the ideal Karmayogi, eloquently described by Lokamanya Tilak in his Gita-Rahasya. But the personality of the Swam was not one-sided. He was at once a Karma-yogi, a Bhakta, a Yogi and a Jnani. It was true that, in him Jnana predominated over Bhakti. But all the same, he was a great Bhakta. His estimate of himself in this respect is remarkable. Comparing himself with Sri Ramkrishna, he once said "He was all Bhakti without but within, he was all Jnana; I am all Jnana; without but within my heart. it is all Bhakti,"

Great as a Bhakta, the Swami was greater still as a Jnani. In this youth, he once complained that his mind was less susceptible to Bhakti than that if some of his *guru-bhais*, whom he named. As a potriot from the national stand-point, he preferred the robust strength of Advaita to the tender pathos of dualism and a personal God, "I know what grandeur, what oceans of love, what infinite ecstatic blessings and joy there are in the

dualistic love theories of worship and religion. Bu this is not the time with us to weep, even in joy; we have had weeping enough. No more is this the time for us to become .soft. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, giagantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and seerets of the universe, even if it meant going down to the bottom of ocean and meeting death face to face; and that can be only created, established and strengthened by undertaking and realizing the ideal of Advaita." On another occasion, he declared that what India wanted at present was the worship, not of the flute-playing Krishna of Brindaban but Krishna, the preacher of the Gita. It is always very hazardous to analyse the spiritual tendencies of a complex personality like that of the Swami. But the impertinent man who will venture to attempt the task will, perhaps find that, in the Swami, it was the Jnani who predominated, then came the Karma-yogi, then Raja-yogi and last the Bhakta. Even in his marvellous discourses on Bhakti-yoga, we find more the close and critical analysis of a metaphysician than the abandon of a God-intoxicated Bhakta. In these lectures, though perhaps not quite at his best, the Swami is certainly at home.

The definitions of the Swami are always luminous and his definition of Bhakti-yoga is at once luminous and penetrating. "Bhakti-yoga" says the Swami "is a real genuine search after the Lord, a search beginning, continuing and ending in love." In another place, he defines Bhakti as "a series or succeesion of mental

efforts at religious relization beginning with ordinary worship and ending in a supreme intensity of love for the Ishwara."

Even after the Swami had accepted Ramakrishna Paramahamsa as his Master, his attitude towards the worship of Krishna and Kali was for a long time rebellious. It was probably towards the end of the Master's life that the Swami's views on this point underwent a a radical change. Neither the lectures of the Swami nor any account of his life afford any satisfactory clue to this change. And when the Swami himself has told us that it was a secret that would die with him, we might as well give up the attempt to solve the mystery. Says he "How I used to hate Kali and all her ways. That was the ground of my six years' fight-that I would not accept Her. But I had to accept Her atlast..... No, the thing that made me do it, is a secret that will die with me. I had misfortunes at that time..... It was an opportunity.....She made a slave of me. These were the very words-' a slave of your and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa made me over to Her..... strange, he lived only two years after doing that and most of the time he was suffering. Not more than six months did he keep his own health and brightness."

How unreservedly the Swami accepted the love of the Gopis as the last word in Bhakti can be seen from the following ecstatic description of the grandeur and spiritual significance of the Gopi episode:—

"Ah, that most marvellous passage of his (Krishna's) life, the most difficult to understand and which none ought to attempt to undestand untill he has become

perfectly chaste and pure, which none can understand he who has become mad with, and drunk deep of the cup but of love. Who can understand the throes of the love of Gopis, the very ideal of love, love that wants nothing, love does not even care for heaven, love that does not care for anything in this world or the world to come. And here, my friends, through the love of the Gopis has been found the only solution of the conflict between the Personal and the Impersonal God. People with ideas of sex and of money, and of fame bubbling up every minute in their heart, daring to criticise the love of the Gopis. That is the very essence of the Krishna-incarnation. Even the Gita, the great philosophy itself, does not compare with that madness."

This is the language of unalloyed Bhakti, of a man who, times without number danced with Sri Ramakrishna and his devotees to the accompaniment of *tampura* and *mirdanga* singing "Dive deep, dive deep, dive deep, O my mind into the Sea of Beauty."

We are not therefore surprised to find the Swami owning his allegiance to Bhakti by pointing to "the significant fact that spiritual giants have been produced only in those systems of religion where there is an exuberant growth of rich mythology and ritualism. The dry fanatical forms of religion which attempt to eradite all that is poetical, all that is beautiful and sublime, all that gives a firm grasp to the infant mind tottering in its Gord-ward way,—the forms which attempt to break down the very ridge-poles of the spiritual roof, and in their ignorant and superstitious conceptions of truth try to drive away all that is life-giving, all that furnishes the formative mater-

ial to the spiritual plant growing in the human soul, such forms of religion too soon find that all that is left to them is but an empty shell, contentless frame of words and sophistry, with perhaps a little flavour of a kind of social scavengering or the so called spirit of reform".

One wants something more definite from an authority like the Swami on this difficult problem. The question that exercises the Hindu of today is how far can the ancient mythology be expected to satisfy the thinking mind and act as a basis on which to build the superstructure of Bhakti. Can history and mythology be reconciled? If so, how? Can a mere acceptanne of the ancient Hindu mythology as allegorical be of much help for a devout temperament? These are some of the questions that demand an answer and on these the guidance of the Swami would have been invaluable.

Every kind of pure love was to the Swami a manifestation of the spirit of Bhakti. "Wherever there is any love, it is He the Lord is present there. Where the husband kisses the wife, He is there in the kiss. Where the mother kisses the child, He is there in the kiss. Where friends clasp hands, He the Lord is present as the God of love. When a great man loves and wishes to help the man-kind, He is there, giving all his bounty out of His love to mankind. Wherever the heart expands, He is there manifested."

In the opinion of the Swami "of all renunciations, the most natural is that of the Bhakti-yogi." Here there is no violence, nothing to give up, nothing to tear off, as it were, from ourselves, nothing from which we have, violently to separate ourselves,; the Bhakta's

renunciation is easy, smooth, flowing and as natural as the things around us. When the Moon shines brightly all the stars become dim, and when the Sun shines, the Moon herself becomes dim. The renunciation necessary for the attainment of Bhakti comes in as naturally as, in the presence of an increasingly stronger light, the less ones become dimmer until they vanish away completely. So this love of the pleasures of the senses and and of the intellect is all made dim and thrown aside and cast into shade by the love of God Himself. Forms vanish, rituals fly away, books are superseded. Nothing remains to bind him. A ship, all of a sudden, comes near a magnetic rock and its iron-bolts and bars are all attracted and drawn out, and the planks get loosened and freely float on the water. Divine grace thus loosens the binding bolts and bars of the soul and it becomes free. The Bhakta has not to suppress any single one of his emotions, he only strives to intensify them and direct them to God."

"What after all is really required of us in this Yoga, is that our thirst after the beautiful should be directed to God. What is the beauty in the human face, in the sky, and in the Moon? It is only the partial apprehension of the real all-embracing Divine Beauty. The man who has entered into the inner shrine of the Para-Bhakti alone has the right to say that all forms and symbols are useless. He alone has attained the supreme state of love commonly called, the brotherhood of man. The mighty ocean of love has entered into him, and he sees not man in man but beholds his Beloved everywhere. Through every face shines to him his Hari. The light in

the Sun or the Moon is all His manifestation. Wherever there is beauty or sublimity, to him it is all His. Such Bhaktas are still living; the world is never without them. Such, though bitten by a serpent, only say that a messenger came to them from their Beloved."

In passages iike these, we see not the rigid and analyt sing philospher but the soft Bhakta, who has, in his personal life, experienced all the ecstacy, the depth, the tenderness and the pathos of Bhakti.

With respect to Karma-Yoga and Bhakti-yoga,it might be said that however unfamiliar the themes might have been to the average Westerner, a Hindu was perfectly at home with them. But in the case of Raja-yoga, excepting a hazy belief in a series of yogic practices leading to samadhi, even the devout and well-read Hindu can boas- of very little knowledge. There is-there was, we should say—on the contrary a fixed belief in the minds of the English-educated people that Raja-Yoga could not stand the test of modern psysiology and modern psychology. It was the glory of the Swami to have shaken this belief to its fonndations. When even "the leading psysiologist in America has been charmed with my (i.e. Swami's speculations" we can readily imagine what an impression they must have created upon the educated Hindus. The greatest obstacle to the acceptance of Raja-yoga was what the Swami called the "scientific superstition." "As there is a religious superstition, so also there is a superstition in the matter of science. If a man quotes a Moses, a Buddha, or a Christ he is laughed at. But let him give the name of a Huxley, a Tyndal or a Darwin, it is swallowed without salt. That was a

religious superstition and this is a scientific superstition. Only in and through that superstition, came life-giving ideas of spirituality; and in and through this modern superstition came lust and gold,"

But the disease of unbelief was not confined to the victims of scientic superstition. The great scientic minds of the country, the leaders in the domain of science themselves showed a degree of prejudice that did little credit to their scientific genius which, above everything else must always be openminded and impartial. "Since the dawn of history various extraordinary phenomena have been recorded as happening among human beings. Surface scientists unable to explain them strive to ignore their existence. (But) for thousands of years (these) phenomena have been studied, investigated and generalized, the whole ground of the religious faculty of man has been analyzed and the practical result is the science of Raja-yoga." Like every other science, this science of Raja-yoga must be approached with true reverential spirit. Only those who are willing to give years to its study can hope to make some progress. The rest can merely hear lectures and satisfy their shallow curiosity. They are free to do that but have no right to say that t heir fitful practice leads to no solid results. "I know" says the Swami "very little of this* science but the little that I gained, I worked for thirty years of my life. It took thirty years to learn it, thirty years of hard struggle. Sometimes I worked at it twenty hours out of twenty-four, sometimes I slept only one hour in the

* "This science" here might refer to "Raja-yoga" or more generally to "The science of the "Powers of the Mind."

night. Sometimes I worked whole nights. Sometimes I lived in places where there was hardly a sound, hardly a breath. Sometimes I had to live in caves. And yet I know little or nothing I have barely touched the hem of the garment of this science. But I can understand that it is true, vast and wonderful."

The aim of Raja-yoga is the actual perception of spiritual truths and the attainment of liberation by the method of concentration. No man can be religious without the perception of spiritual truths. "What right has a man to say that he has a soul if he does not feel it or that there is a God if he does not see Him ? If there is a God, we must see Him, if there is a soul we must perceive it." How ? The answer is concentration. There is no limit to the powers of the human mind. The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated. When they are concentrated, they illumine. The powers of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrateing rays of the Sun, so will the concentrated mind penetrate its own secrets." This being the goal, Raja-yoga does not ask us what our religion is. It is sufficient that we are human beings. The study of the external nature is an endless task. But the study of the internal nature is comparatively easy. Europe in her impatience to understand and conquer the external nature has quite forgotten to pay attention to the internal nature and so has failed to notice the unlimited powers of the mind. The Swamil frequently dwelt on the extraordinary powers latent in the human mind. "This mind is part of the universa

mind. Each mind is connected with every other mind. And each mind, wherever it is located, is in actual communication with the whole world."

This opens the door for any number of miracles. In his luminous discourses, the Swami pointed out how hypnotism, faith-healing and christian science are but distant echoes of the sublime laws of Raja-yoga and pointed out the dangers of falling a victim to them. "The goal of every soul is freedom. Instead of leading towards that, every will-current from another, in whatever form it comes, either as direct control of the organs or as forcing to control them while under a morbid condition only rivets one link more to the already existing heavy chain of bondage of past thoughts, past superstitions. Therefore use your own minds, control body and mind yourself and remember that until you are a diseased person, no extraneous will can work upon you."

The attitude of the Swami was equally emphatic regarding the prostitution of yoga to miraculous (i.e. supernatural) performances. "Different powers" he says "will come to the yogi and if he yields to the temptations of any one of these, the road to his further progress will be barred." Freedom or a absolution and not the acquisition or miraculous powers is the goal; the yogi ought therefore to turn his back on them. It is only a vulgar mind that delights in gathering pebbles while the diamond of realisation is in its grasp. The possession of miraculous powers and the possession of spirituality are two quite different things and though uncultivated minds are apt to mistake the former for

the latter, the student ought to discriminate between the two.

The key to Raja-yoga is presented in the following passage ;—

" In an ocean, there are huge waves, like mountains then smaller waves and still smaller, down to little bubbles but back of all there is the infinite ocean. The buble is connected with the infinite occan at one end and the huge wave at the other. So one may be a giagantic man, and another a little bubble, but each is connected with that infinite ocean of energy, which is the common birth-right of every animal that exists. Starting as some fungus, some very minute microscopic bubble, and all the time drawing from that infinite store-house of energy, a form is changed slowly and steadily until in course of time, it becomes a plant, then an animal then man, ultimately God.This is attained through millions of aeons, but what is time ? An increase of speed, an increase of struggle is able to bridge the gulf of time. A man may go on slowly drawing in this energy from the infinite mass that exists in the universe and perhaps he will require a hundred thousand years to become a Deva and then perhaps five hundred thousand years to become a still higher being and perhaps five-millionns of years to become perfect. Why is it not possible with sufficient effort, to reach this very perfection in six months or six years ? All beings will at last attain to that goal, we know. But who cares to wait all these millions of aeons ! Why not reach it immediately ? In this body even, in this human form ? The whole science of yoga is directed to the end of teaching men how, by intensifying the

power of assimilation, to shorten the time for reaching perfection, instead of slowly advancing from point to point, and waiting until the whole human race has become perfect. All the great prophets and seers of humanity, what did they do? In one span of life they traversed the whole length of time that takes ordinary humanity to come to perfection. They have no thought for any thing else, never live a moment for any othe r idea and thus the way is shortend for them. This is what is meant by concentration, intensifying the power of assimilation and Raja-yogo is the science which teaches us how to gain the power of conce ntration.',

Raja-yoga, thus, is the science of bridging the gulf of enternity by the practice of concentration leading to Samadhi. It is impatient of mere reason." The fleld of reason or of the conscious workings of the mind, is narrow and limited. Every attempt to go beyond is impossible, yet it is beyond this circle of reason that there lies all that humanity holds most dear. Kant has proved all doubt that we can not penetrate beyond the tremendous dead wall called reason. But that is the very first idea upon which all Indian thought takes its stand and dares to seek and succeeds in finding something higher than reason, where alone the explanation of the present state is found. That is the science of religion, nothing else.',

In Chapter next, we deal with Swamiji's thoughts on the fourth and the greatest of all yogas—the Jnana-yoga.

CHAPTER IX

THE FOUR YOGAS II.

We are dying of thirst, sitting on the banks of the mightiest river. Here is the Blissful Universe, yet we do not find it. The longing for this Blissful Universe is in all hearts. It has been the search of all nations and is the one goal of religion.

Swami Vivekananda.

Swamiji's discourse on "The Necessity of Religion" is the most appropriate preface to his lectures on Jnana Yoga. In this lecture he has shown how religion has been a tremendous factor in the history of individuals and societies alike. To a civilisation based on the glorification of matter; he points out that "Man is not to regard nature as his goal but something higher." "It is good" says he "and very grand to conquer external nature but grander still to conquer our internal nature. It is grand and good to know the laws that govern the stars and planets; it is infinitely grander and better to know the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will of mankind." He shows how the senses are too limited and the body too weak to express or understand the Infinite and how the human mind, to learn religion, has to come face to face with certain facts by virture of its capacity to transcend "at certain moments," not only the limitations of the senses but also the power of reasoning. He declares that religion must be studied on a broader basis

than formerly and that all narrow, limited, fighting ideas of religion have to go. To the materialist who holds that religion is an exploded factor, he points out. " To me, it seems that spiritual ideal have just begun to grow. The power of religion, broadened and purified, is going to penetrate every part of human life. So long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few, it was in temples, churches, books, dogmas, ceremonials. But when we come to the real, spiritual, universal concept, then and then alone will religion become real and living." and he winds up with an appeal for amity and good-will between different faiths as also between spiritualists and scientists, " What is needed is a fellow-feeling between different types of religion, a fellow-feeling which springs from mutual esteem and mutual respect. And above all, this is needed between types of religious expression, coming from the study of mental phenomena, and those expressions of religion whose heads are penetrating more into the secrets of heaven, though their feet are clinging to earth I mean, the co-called materialistic sciences. To bring about this harmouy, both will have to make concessions. sometimes, very large, sometimes painful but each will find itself the better for the scienific and more advanced, in truth. And in the end, the knowledge which is confined within the domain of time and space will meet that which is beyond them both, where the mind and senses cannot reach, the Absolute, the Infinite, the one without a second."

While preaching Vedanta, the Swami met with three different types of Western objections, more or less explicit. ', If ' I am He ' he accepted, what becomes of my

individuality?" This was the first objection. To this, Swamiji replied "we are not individuals yet. We are struggling towards individuality, and that is the Infinite. He alone lives, whose life is in the whole universe. The history of the world shows that those who never thought of their little individuality were the greatest benefactors of the human race; and that more men and women think of themselves, the less are they able to do for others." Then there was the second objector, "what is the utility of this knowledge?" To which the Swami proudly replied "Utility is not the test of truth. Suppose there is no utility, will it be less true?" And then, softening down a little, he added "Happiness, we see, is what every one is seeking for. No happiness was ever found in the senses. Happiness is only found in the spirit. Therefore, the highest utility for mankind is to find this happiness in the spirit."

"Is it pracetical?" asked the third critic, who plumed himself on his practicality. "Can it be practised in modern society?" Pat came the crushing retort. "Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern Society has to pay homage to truth or die. Societies should be moulded upon truth; truth has not to adjust itself to society. If such a noble truth as unselfishness cannot be practised in society, it it better for a man to give up society and go into the forest. What good is it to talk of the superiority of your Western institutions, if you cannot make Truth square with your society? What is the good of this boastful talk about your grandeur and greatnes if you stand up

and say, 'This is not practical.' Is nothing practical but pounds, shillings and pence? That society is the greatest where the highest truths become practical."

Having thus cleared the ground, the Swami discoursed in various lectures on the several aspects of Vedanta and explained the leading doctrines of ancient Vedanta in modern philosophical language. The leonine ease with which he marshalled his arguments at once prove his complete mastery over Vedanta and allied subjects. Lord Balfour thus describes the equipment which a modern theologian must have :—

"With the growth of knowledge, Theology has enlarged its borders until it has included subjects about which even the most accomplished theologian of past ages did not greatly concern himself. To the Patristic, Dogmatic and controversial learning which has always been required, the theologian of today must add knowledge at first hand of the complex historical, antiquarian and critical problems presented by the Old and New Testaments and of the vast and daily increasing literature which has grown up around them. He must have a sufficient acquaintance with the comparative history of religions; and in addition to all this, he must be competent to deal with those scientific and philosophical questions which have a more profound and permanent bearing on Theology even than the results of critical and historical scholarship. Whether any single individual is fully competent either to acquire or successfully to manipulate so formidable an apparatus of learning, I do not know."

Had Lord Balfour come into intimate contact with the Swami, he would have known of at least one individual

who could "successfully manipulate this formidable apparatus of learning." Students of the lectures on Jnana-yoga of the Swami need not be informed of his complete mastery over every conceivable subject directly or indirectly related to the Vedanta philosophy.

Though Swamiji was an out-and-out Advaitin, he never liked 'text torturing' and was convinced that the Upanishads were neither wholly Dualistic nor wholly Monistic. His considered opinion was that Dualism, Qualified Monism and Monism are but "different conceptions leading to the final conclusion that both Dualistic and Monistic conceptions are necessary for the evolution of the mind." When it was pointed out to him that he preached too much of Advaita and to little of Dualism, he replied that he did so "not as a sectarian but upon universal and widely acceptable grounds." "I do not mean to preach Advaitism or Dvaitism or any other *ism*. The only *ism* that we require now is this wonderful idea of the soul, its eternal might, its eternal strength, its eternal purity, its external perfection." He said "I know what grandeur, what oceans of love, what infinite and ecstatic blessings and joy there are in the Dualistic love-theories of worship and religion." But he was firmly of opinion that this is not the time for us to weep even in joy. No more is this the time for us to become soft. He knew that Dualism was inevitably the religion of the masses, as it was religion concretized. But he always insisted upon the fact that Dualism through a necessary stage in the spiritual progress was an earlier stage and always stood on a lower pedestal than Advaitism. Dualism is a religion of fear and supplication; Advaitism

is a religion of hope and self-reliance. Dualism is exclusive and fanatical; Advaitism is the most tolerant of all faiths. Dualism makes room for sin and repentance; Advaitism teaches that the very idea of sin is blasphemous and that man should always be put in mind of purity and not sin. Dualism is based on the unphilosophical doctrine that good and evil are separate entities; Advaitism preaches that good and evil are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Dvaitism shrinks from the question about the origin of evil and evades its answer by taking shelter in the doctrine of 'Lila'; Advaitism squarely faces the problem and solves it by preaching the wonderful doctrine of Maya. The Dualist has no satisfactory answer to the formidable Buddhistic theory known as *Kshanika Vijñana Vāda*, while the Monist has vanquished Buddhism even on the ground of this "most rigourously and logically worked-out" theory. We can thus easily understand why the Swami holds that 'to teach Dualism was a tremondous mistake.' Swamiji held that "Advaitism is the fairest flower of philosophy and religion that any country in any age has produced. In Advaitism human thought attains its highest expression and even goes beyond the mystery which seems to be impenetrable." It is such a pity that "very few ask for the Truth, fewer still dare to learn the Truth and fewest of all dare to follow it in all its practical bearings."

Many people expressed the fear that the doctrine of Advaita might be perverted to encourge immorality. Swamiji proved how Advaita is the only sound basis of morality. Not only is Advaitism sound on the ethical

side but it is equally so on the scientific side. Advaitism has nothing to fear from modern scientific thought of which it is in advance in many respects. On the metaphysical and religious plane, there is nothing so convincing and soothing as Advait. "When this is understood, it changes the whole aspect of things; this world is no more a battle-field, where each soul is born to struggle with every other soul; it becomes a play-ground where the Lord is playing like a child and we are his play-mates." Thus the whole outlook of a man on life is changed. Advaitism is pre-eminently a religion of hope and self-reliance. It does not throw the responsibility upon others. It creates no satans. It tells you that your future is in the palm of your hand. "As you sow, so you reap." "Man is the architect of his own destiny."

According to the Swami, more than once in the history of India, Advaitism has saved the country from rank materialism. Buddha and Sankaracharya were in his opinion two of the greatest exponents of Advaita ever born. Only Buddha emphasized the ethical side of the doctrine while Shankaracharya laid stress on its intellectual side. The Swami represented in his own person, both the ethical and intellectual aspects of Advaita, the "heart of Buddha and the intellect of Shankaracharya." And the Swami hoped that just as Advaita has more than once rescued India from moral disasters, so now it was destined to save Europe and America from the same danger of materialism. It was from this standpoint that the Swami viewed the new religious movement in the West of which Sri Ramakrishna was the real originator and he a 'nominal' protagonist.

Swamiji's restatement of the theory of reincarnation is equally convincing. He has nothing but ridicule for those who, believing that they are the outcome of nothing, seek to prove that they will live in eternity hereafter. To them, Swamiji said " What comes out of zero will go back,, not to eternity but to zero." The only serious objection advanced against the theory in the West was " How is it that if we had past births, we have no memory of those births ? Swamiji asks these people, " Have you got the memory of your babyhood ? It is simply unmitgated nonsense to say that our existence depends upon our remembering it " Having thus demolished the arguments of his Western opponents, the Swami proceeds to give positive proofs in support of the theory. " No other theory " he says " except that of reincarnation accounts for the wide divergence that we find between man and man in their powers to acquire knowledge.' Fresh knowledge can be acquired only by referring new observations to past experience; and if a child is born with what they call, *tabula rosa*, it can never gain any kind of intellectual knowledge. We are afraid of death, ever a little chicken just out of an egg. A duckling takes to water without learning to swim. We dignify these and other involuntary acts with the name of instinct. But what is instinct but involved reason, the degeneration of our past actions ? Again, " all the actions which are now instinctive can be brought under voluntary control." Those who say that this knowledge is transmitted to us through heredity assume that " mental experience can be recorded in matter." What proof can they advance in support of this gratuitons assumptions ? It is certainly far better and more satifactory to

admit the theory of reincarnation, than talk of the capacity of matter to record mental impressions.

The theory of reincarnation is a theory of hope, of self-reliance and self-help. It never lays blame at the door of God for all the iniquities of this world. It never creates a satan to account for our lapses. What we are is the result of our own past actions and we have only to put forth proper efforts to change our condition. This theory is quite in harmony with the spirit of modern democracy and is a great consoling factor in adversity. It warns to wicked and the sinful; consoles the miserable and encourages the virtuous and the good.

The theory of reincarnation does not stand merely on intellectual conviction and proofs. When a man who has controlled his senses, purified his mind is swiftly proceeding godward, he is blest with the memory of his past lives. Such men have existed and do still exist, On their transcendental experience depends the truth of this theory. Having seen how many millions of times they were fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, they realize that the world is a stage, and they actors, coming and going. To them this is not a mere figure of speech but a valuable personal experience. It is only to such souls that "the idea of non-attachment comes with the power of thunder," It is only such souls that can "stand as heroes and smile when the world frowns upon them.' It is only such souls that can stand up and say "I care not for thee, even, O, Death what terror hast thou for me ?"

The grandest contribution of Hinduism to the philosophy and metaphysics of the world is the 'doctrine' of

Maya. In three lectures, 'Maya and Illusion,' 'Maya and the Conception of God,' and 'Maya and Freedom,' the Swami has briefly analyzed the conception of 'Maya.' In these lectures, Sister Nivedita feels that there is an evident struggle to *express* in suitable words an idea which is clearly *understood*. We differ from this view. These three lectures might not be as excellent in form, unity and method as, for instance, the lecture on "The Freedom of the Soul" or "The Absolute and the Manifestation." But the idea itself is most clearly expressed. Not even in the pages of Shankaracharya can we find greater clarity of thought and lucidity and brevity of expression. The very division of the subject into three lectures, each approaching the problem from a fresh stand point bears tribute to the genius of the Swami.

The word 'Maya' says the Swami is generally and incorrectly used to devote illusion or delusion or some such things. The oldest idea of Maya that we find in Vedic literature is the sense of delusion. But then the real 'theory' had not been reached. In the hands of the Buddhists, the word Maya became very much like what is called Idealism and that is the meaning that is now generally given to the word. When the Hindu says that the world is Maya, at once the people get the idea that the world is illusion. This interpretation has some basis, as coming through the Buddhistic philosophers because there was one section of philosophers who did not believe in the external world at all. But the Maya of the Vedanta in its last developed form is neither idealism nor realism. Nor is it a theory. It is simply a statement of the facts—what we are and what we see around us.

Maya is a statement of the fact of this universe, of how it is going on. Maya is not a theory for the explanation of the world. It is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction, everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction, that wherever there is good, there must also be evil, wherever there is evil, there must be some good, wherever there is life, death must follow and everyone who smiles will have to weep and whoever weeps must smile also. Nor can this state of things be remedied. The Vedanta (from this standpoint) is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. All sense enjoyments, all intellectual enjoyments, all the enjoyments of which the human mind is capable are within Maya, within this net work out of which we cannot get. All religions are more or less attempts to get beyond Maya or Nature. Beyond this Maya of the Vedantic philosophers, we find something which is not bound by Maya and if we can get there, we shall not be bound by Maya. What you call matter or spirit, or mind or anything else, the fact remains the same, we cannot say that they are we cannot say that they are not. We cannot say they are one, we cannot say, they are many. This eternal play of light and darkness indiscriminate, indistinguishable, inseparable is always there. A fact, yet at the same time, not a fact; awake and at the same time asleep. We are born in this Maya, we live in it, we think in it, we dream in it. We are philosophers in it, we are devils in this Maya, we are Gods in this Maya. Stretch your ideas as far as you can, make them higher and higher and higher, call them infinite or by any other name, even those ideas are within this Maya. The whole of human knowledge is

generalisation of this Maya, trying to know it as it appears to be. This is the work of Nāma, and Rupa. Everything that has form, everything that calls up an idea in your mind is within this Maya, for everything that is bound by the laws of time, space and casuation is within Maya.

Swamiji's study of ancient Hindu philosophy was not merely theoretical. It was also addressed to practical ends. If Hinduism is to become a power, if Hinduism is out to conquer other lands, if Hinduism is to organize, consolidate and expand itself, the first essential requisite is that we all must cease to think and act in terms of the sect. Everyone to whatsoever school of thought he belongs must work for the common end. There are one hundred and one sects and subsects of Hinduism. Can they be wiped off? Can they be consolidated into one? No, answers the Swami, that is both impossible and undesirable. "Sects, as a matter of course must exist; but what need not exist is sectarian quarrel," This the Swami thought could be accomplished by emphasizing and exploring the common bases of Hinduism. And on this common platform, the Swami wanted the Conservatives and the Liberals, the Old Type and the New Type to shake hands. Every Hindu, says the Swami believes in the following principles, to whatever sect and subsect he belongs:—

(1) The Vedas are the eternal teachings of the secrets of Religion. They are without beginning, without end coeval with Nature and form as it were the last court of appeal in all our spiritual differences. Out of these eternal books has come everything that we possess today, good, holy and pure.

(2) Nature or Prakriti is infinite. The whole of nature exists, then it bocomes finer, then subsides and then after a period of rest, as it were, the whole thing is projected forward only again to break into pieces, to become finer and finer until the whole thing subsides and again comes out. Time, space and casuation are all within this nature. This wave-like motion (of involution and evolution) has been going on, even before time began, through eternity and will remain for an infinite period of time. Other races of the world believe that this world was created only so many thousand years ago and is going to be destroyed eternally on a certain day.

(3) The other races of the world believe that the human soul has been created along with this universe, just out of nothing. All Hindus hold that man is not only a gross material body, not only that within this (body) there is, the finer body (सूक्ष्मशरीर) but something beyond—the Atman or the Jiva who works on the body or on the external world through the internal instrument (अंतःकरण).

(4) The belief in reincarnation runs parallel with the doctorine of the eternity of the human soul. The human soul, which has neither beginning nor end, which knows not what death is, inhabits body after body, until it becomes free, not to be born again.

(5) All powers, all purity, all greatness is in the soul. Even in the lowest worm that crawls under your feet, all the eightfold powers of the yogi are already existing. Power, Purity and Perfection is in the soul already. The only difference is the veil (आवरण) that has been

cast over it. Once the veil is removed, the soul attains to purity and its powers become manifest. The grandest discovery in the realm of spirituality is that all Hindus hold that the soul is by its nature pure and perfect, infinite in power and blessed. Only according to Dualists this natural blissfulness of the soul has become contracted by past bad work and will through the Grace of God again open out and show its perfection, while according to the Monists, it is the veil of Maya that causes us to think that the soul has lost its powers. The powers are in truth there, fully manifest. The goal of the soul is freedom.

(6) All the sects in India believe in God. The Dualists believe in a personal (सगुण) God, God as the Ruler, the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of this Universe. The Advaitists would not give him any qualities except three,—सत्, चित् and आनंद. The Upanishads penetrate still further and say nothing can be predicated of It except नेति, नेति. According to the Dualistic sects,the individual souls remain as individnals throughout and God creates the Uuiverse out of preexisting material only, as the efficient cause. There is the eternal God, eternal nature and also an infinite number of eternal souls. The विशिष्टाद्वैतीs say "God being the cause of the projection, the continuance and the dissolution of the Universe, the cause must be present to produce the effect. If God is the cause of the Universe and the Universe is the effect, it follows that God has become the Universe. If souls are the effect and God the cause, God has become the souls. Each soul is a part of God. Just as I have this body and this body covers the soul

and the soul is in and through this body, so this whole Universe of infinite souls and Nature forms as it were the body of God. Just as the human soul is the soul of the human body and mind, so God is the Soul of our souls. In the Dualistic view, each one of us is an individual, eternally separate from God and Nature. In the विशिष्टाद्वैत view, we are individuals, but not separate from God. We are like little particles floating in one mass and that mass is God. We are all in Him. And yet, between man and man, man and God, there is a strict individuality, separate and yet not separate.

Then the question comes " Can Infinity have parts ? What is meant by parts of infinity ? Infinity cannot be divided ; if it could be divided, each part would be infinite; and there cannot be two infinites Thus the conclusion is reached that infinity is one and not many and that one Infinite Soul is reflecting itself through thousands and thousands of mirrors, appearing as so many different souls. It is the same Infinite Soul, which is the background of the Univers that we call God. The same Infinite Soul also is the backgroud of the human mind, which we call the human soul. This is the Advaitist's position.

(7) Hegels' one idea is that the Absolute is only chaos and that the individualized form is greater, the world is greater than the non-world, the संसार is greater than salvation. All Hindu sects however agree in declaring that every manifestation, what we call evolution is vain, a vain attempt of the Unmanifested to manifest itself. This leads to renunciatton.

(8) All Hindu sects unanimously declare that religion is to be realized. Religion in India means realisation and nothing short of it.

These then are the eight points on which all Hindus—whatever their sect or subsect agree and Swamiji as a practical exponent of Neo-Hinduism emphasized them. There was also another direction to which his practical genius was applied and that was the applicability of the truths of Vedanta to every-day life. No doubt, Karma-yoga deals mainly with these issues. But there are several aspects of the question which have to be examined in the dry light of philosophy and which, as it were furnish a philsophical back-ground to the Yoga of Action.

The two questions which we touched at the beginning of this chapter " What is the utility of Vedanta ?" " Is Vedanta practical ?" are at bottom identical. The utility of Vedanta would be great if it can be applied to practical life to a considerable degree. " The Oneness of the universe, the omnipotence and Omnipresence of the *Atman* are all nice theories no doubt " says the average man "but of what use are these nice theories in every-day life ?" To which the Swami answers " True, if it be absolutely impractical, no theory is of any value whatever, except as intellectual gymnastics. The Vedanta as a religion must be intensely practical; we must be able to carry it out in every part of our life. The ideals of religion must cover the whole field of life;" But he warns his hearers that the " Vedanta, though it is intensely practical, is always so in the sense of the ideal. *It does not teach an impossible ideal and is always high enough for an ideal.*" And

this Vedanta declares the Swami "can be carried out in our every-day life, the city life, the country life, the national life and the home life of every nation." "Not only can this be realized in the depths of the forests or caves but by men in all possible conditions of life."

Here a very interesting question naturally suggests itself, on which, however we are unable to get any clear guidance from the Swami. The real question is "Is it easier to realize these truths in the depths of the forest or in every day life.?" In our opinion, the insistence laid on the forest life as the most appropriate place for spiritual realisation is due to the fact that society life was not found to be sufficiently responsive to spirituality. A highly developed spiritual soul can of course defy surroundings and assert himself. But for others the struggle seems to be almost vanquishing. Emerson thus graphically describes the all-conquering evil that surrounds every aspiring soul in modern society and compels him to surrender. "The virtuous young man, on entering life, finds the way to lucrative employment blocked with abuses. The ways of trade are grown selfish to the borders of theft and supple to the borders of fraud. Has a man genius and virtue? The less does he find them fit for him to grow in and if he would thrive in them, he must sacrifice all the brilliant dreams of boyhood and youth as dreams: he must forget the prayers of his childhood; he must take on him the harness of routine and obsequiousness. The sins of our trade belong to no class, to no individual. One plucks, one distributes, one eats. Everybody partakes, everybody confesses, yet none feels himself accountable. Even by coming out of trade,

you have not cleared yourself. The trail of the serpent reaches into all the lucrative professions and practices of man. Each has its own wrongs. Each finds a tender and intelligent conscience a disqualification for success. Each requires of the practioner, a certain shutting of the eyes, a certain dapperness and compliance, a sequestration from the sentiments of generosity and love, a compromise of private opinion and lofty integrity. Suppose a man is so unhappy as to be born a saint, with keen perceptions but with the conscience and love of an angel and he is to get his living in the world. He finds himself excluded from all lucrative works."

According to the Swami, the following are some of the directions in which Vedanta can be applied to every day life :—

(1) The essence of Vedanta, after all its ramifications and intellectual gymnastics is that the human soul is pure and omniscient. Hence the Vedanta teaches men to have faith in themselves first. Not believing in the glory of the soul is what Vedanta calls atheism. All powers in the world are already ours. Do you know how much energy, how many powers are still lurking behind that frame of yours? Behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness. Everything is ours already. —infinite purity, freedom, love and power,

(2) Everything that makes for oneness is truth. Love is truth because love binds, love makes for that oneness.

(3) Faith in yourself means faith in all, because you are all. Love for yourself means love for all because you are all one.

(4) Where is there a more practical God than He whom I see before me, a God Omnipresent, in every being, more real than our senses? The only God to worship is the human soul, in the human body. This is the most practical of all worship.

These four points form as it were the very essence of Jnana-yoga. They remind us of our innate purity, innate power, innate blessedness. They remind us of the ever-forgetten fact that "I and my neighbour" are but one and not two. They proclaim, not simply the duty, but the inevitibility of "doing good" to others, because in doing good to others, we are helping our own selves. They are thus the strongest argument for ethics, for social reform and uplift. They form as it were a bridge between mere Jnana and social service; and lastly they form another bridge between Jnana and Bhakti by declaring that Love is Truth and Truth is Love. They tell us not only what the ideal is but the means by which that ideal is to be realized. "Fill yourself" says the Swami "with the ideal. All your actions will be magnified, transformed,deified by the very powers of thought." And Jnana-yoga is nothing but the science of this pure, exalted and all-powerful thought.

CHAPTER X

BACK HOME

Thus, student and citizen of the world as others were proud to claim him, it was yet always on the glory of his Indian birth that he took his stand. And in the midst of the surroundings and opportunities of princes, it was more and more the monk who stood revealed.

Sister Nivedita

Swamiji was never a politician. And yet his contribution to that national sentiment which is directly allied to politics was remarkable. In the present advanced stage of our national life, one has to strain his imagination to conceive with what difficulty and on what slender resources, the far-sighted leaders of this country nurtured the tender plant of patriotism during the three or four decades preceeding the advent of this century. There was, of course, one school of patriotism which took its entire inspiration from Western History and Western Liberalism. But there was another, led by more sagacious leaders, which sought whatever inspiration it could get from Hindu History and Hindu Religion. It is interst-ing to recall with what ecstacy we used to read the praise of Shakuntala by Goethe, the tribute to Vedanta by Max Muller or the eulogy of the Upanishads by Schopenhauer. Some odd reference to the law of gravita-

tion in Bhaskaracharya or to the theory of Ether or of evolution in some book of philosophy thrilled us with joy and pride. It seemed as if our capacity in every walk of our national life was perpetually challenged and that our first and foremost duty was to assert our worth, past or present, twice, thrice, a hundred times. That was why even such a petty thing as the success of some brilliant Indian at the I. C. S, examination or at the Mathematical Tripos was sufficient to quicken our pulse. That was why our hearts swelled with pride at the recognition in the West of the poetical merit of Toru Dutt and of Mrs. Naidu, of the scholarly researches of Doctor Bhandarkar and Lokamanya Tilak, and of the oratorical talents of Keshab Chander Sen and Surendranath Banerjea.

Of those Indians who have lived in the West for some considerable time, none have achieved greater renown in their respective domains than Mr. Bhise—known in America as the Hindu Edison—Sir Jagadish Chander Bose, Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda. The achievements of these four intellectual giants have lifted the name of India in civilised world and have reacted on the national consciousness to a remarkable extent. The tremendous impression made by Swamiji at the Parliament of Religions and the magnificient success of his subsequent labours sent a wave of joy and pride all over India. Public meetings held all over the country testified to the growing conviction that the "success of Vivekananda has given almost a new lease of life to Hinduism," and that "a nation which can produce a Vivekananda, who imparts a new turn of

thought to a people in the forefront of modern civilisation must yet have much vigourous life before it." If we can compare things spiritual with things military, we can say that the triumphant lecturing tour of the Swami created as great an impression in India as the victories of Napoleon in Italy did in Paris. To continue the same comparison, we may say that they created for the Swami the popularity in India which the Italian victories earned for Napoleon. The Swami was repeatedly requested to return to India, where he was told that the work of religious reconstruction was awaiting him. But the Swami who knew his misson better, was not likely to leave away his Western work so well-begun, unorganized. It was only towards the close of 1896 that he decided to return to India, left London on the 16th of December, boarded a steamer at Naples on the 30th of the same month and reached Colombo on January 15th, 1897.

The magnificent reception accorded to the Swami from one end of the country to the other opened for him a vista of opportunities for carrying out his long-cherished ideas about national reconstruction. His stirring addresses to the huge crowds that besieged him everywhere prove refreshing when contrasted with contemporary speeches of Congressmen and Social Reformers. While the Congress leaders were laboriously proving India's capacity to absorb more political rights or were plaintively setting forth the grievances of the people, humbly and respectfully requesting the Government to 'give' 'give' and 'give,' every page of the Swami's lectures breathes India's capacity to be the teacher and uplifter of mankind. "It would be a great pity" says the

Swami "if the treasures in the brains and hearts of the yogins were not brought out to become the common property of all not only in India but they must be thrown broadcast all over the world. In this land, religion and spirituality are still the fountains which will have to overflow and flood the world, to bring in new life and new vitality to the Western and other nations which are now almost half-killed by political ambitions and social intrigues. The world will die if this treasure is not distributed." His addresses from "Colombo to Almora" are not only a monument to his oratorical powers. They are a mine of philosopical thought popularly and many times poetically expressed. They give us Swamiji's vision of the past greatness of India, his analysis of her present distressed condition and his plans for future regeneration. They inspire and instruct the young and old alike. He welcomed the wave of enthusiasm that swept over the land. "That is what is required," he used to tell his audiences, "tremendous enthusiasm. Only make it permanent." The Swami was fitted in every way to harness this enthusiasm and turn it to account. "I welcome the present religious revival and I should be foolish if I lost the opportunity of striking the iron while it is hot."

But though the Swami was convinced that it would be foolish if he lost the opportunity of striking the iron while it was hot, Destiny which has been so strangely working against India and which snatched off Lokamanya Tilak and Mr. C. R. Das at a time of supreme need that same Destiny crippled the activities of the Swami by persistent attacks of exhausting maladies. It may

be said that during the four years Swamiji lived in India (Jan. 1897–June 1899 and December 1900 to July 1902), he was hardly well for three continuous months. In May 1897 he had to retire to Almora in response to urgent medical advice. Hardly had he returned after some ten weeks, when he was again attacked with fever. In December of the same year, he had to cancel his projected tour in Gujarat and other parts of the Bombay Presidency. He himself wrote (April 1899) to an American disciple that "Two years of physical suffering have taken away twenty years from my life." Diabetes, asthama and fever combined to sap his vitality. Nor was the life he led since 1880 much condusive to sustained vigour. No doubt cheerful spirits and physical exercise helped him considerably. But the long continued life of intense thinking and intense feeling was bound to take its toll one day. Swamiji's severe austerities in his *parivrajaka* days was another factor that worked against him. He himself was conscious of this. He once advised a friend not to practise intense austerities "Don't ruin" he said "your health by practising austerities, but try to profit by our experience. We have subjected ourselves to extreme austerities. But what has been the result?—the impairing of our health in the best years of our manhood from which we all are suffering." Lastly, on the top of this all, came the drain on his physical resources by his incessant work in the West, ever since September 1893. Another man in his place would have sunk under this tremendous weight even earlier. As it was, Swamiji bravely fought with illness for a very considerable time. Probably a life of intense austerities

and concentration is inimical to longevity and that may be why Dnyaneshwar and Shankaracharya and many others were cut off in the prime of life. Even Sri Ramakrishna left this world when only fifty.

On the 28th February 1897 Swamiji was presented with an address by the citizens of Calcutta. The physical and intellectual strain of one month and a half was too much for him and on medical advice, he relinquished for the time the idea of propaganda tour and went to Darjeeling. He returned for some time to Calcutta but again left, this time to Almora, where he rested for two months and a half. In August, he visited several places in the Punjab. September he gave to Kashmere. In November and December he visited Sialkot, Lahore, DehraDun, Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Khetri, Kishangarh Ajmere, Jodhpur, Indore, Khandwa and Rutlam. From the middle of January 1898 to about the middle of March he lived at Calcutta. The next few months were spent at Darjeeling, Naini Tal, Almora, and Kashmere. He returned to Calcutta on October 18th. In December, he went to Baidyanath for a change. His health in the early summer was very bad. He had already decided to go to the West to recoup his health. Accordingly he left Calcutta on June 20th 1899. Though health was his primary consideration, he could not help working also. From the West, he abruptly returned to India in December 1900. His health was by now completely ruined. During the next eighteen months, his condition grew from bad to worse. Excepting a visit to Eastern Bengal and Assam and a visit to Buddha Gaya and Benares, Swamiji was practically a prisoner in the Math and its neighbourhood.

It will thus be seen that owing to serious and recurring ill-health, Swamiji could not carry out his long-cherished ideas regarding the up-lift of the Mother-land. He himself once summed up his needs by saying that he wanted two thousand young men and thirty crores of rupees to set India on her feet. As it turned out, the Swami hardly got one hundred young men and ten lakhs of rupees for his work. To collect men and money, what was required was a two or three years' tour throughout the length and breadth of the country immediately on his return from the West in 1897, when his fame was at its highest and when as he put it, the iron was hot. But this was rendered well-nigh impossible by his physical ailments. When we remember that even in the great year 1921, when India was considered to be within sight of the millennium, not more than a hundred thousand young men had, for the time joined the field, we can see how difficult it would have proved even for the Swami enlist as many as 2000 young men in 1897, men who would not only work for an year or two, but would dedicate their life to the cause of the Mother-Religion. But the Swami was a worker of miracles, and seeing the missionary Zeal Buddha was able to rouse over two thousand years ago, Swamiji's ambition cannot be considered to have been very extravagent. As regards money it is humiliating to find that the purchase of lands at Belur and Mayavati was rendered possible, not by the generous response of the public, but by the munificence of foreigners like Miss Muller, Mrs. Ole Bull and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. The Swami counted numerous Rajas and Maharajas among his admirers. The Maharajas of Khetri, Kashmere, Mysore and Ramnad were his personal friends.

The descendants of a hundred ancient kings had washed and wiped and worshipped his holy feet and yet it is painful to find that throughout his public career he received more help from foreigners than from the sons of the soil. Nor had the Swami that deftness which is required for collecting big sums of money. Like that of his illustrious countryman Doctor Rabindranath Tagore, his mind was cast in too big a mould to be able to under-stand the petty art of collecting money. He was a *Tyagi* and the contact of money always filled him with a kind of loathing. We are not therefore surprised to find that the sums he was entrusted with for the cause were almost nothing as compared to the tremendous impression he produced wherever he went. The Swami was too noble a soul to exploit such impressions. On his voyage from Japan to Chicago in 1893, the Swami had as a fellow-traveller Sir J. N. Tata, multi-millionaire and philanthrophist, who was profoundly impressed by the magnificent personality of the Swami. With a pinch of worldliness, the Swami could easily have made him a "bridge of Gold." But the Swami, true disciple of Sri Ramakrishna that he was, would not dream of stooping even "to conquer." Once when eight hundred rupees were sent ro him for the expenses of an intended journey, the Swami, though in indifferent health, actually went to the house of that wealthy friend and returned half the amount. "We are Fakirs! What shall we do with so much money?" said he. And yet it will have to be admitted that no single Indian leader in Swamiji's days was able to collect as much money for the public cause as Swamiji, inspite of his temperamental disqualifications was able to do by sheer force of his personality.

One of the greatest, and in a sense, the most important, task to which the Swami applied himself in India was the training of half-a-dozen or dozen Western disciples, who had specially come over to India for the purpose. This great experiment though it had not as long and as comprehensive a trial as one would have wished, succeeded in sufficient measure to make further experiments and success possible. Had it failed, it would have meant, howsoever noble and elevating the message of Vedanta might be, still it was not of universal application but only suited to the particular soil of India. Its failure would have proved the cultural incompatibility between the East and the West instead of pointing out to the fundamental and basic unity underlying the seeming contrariety between the two. This would have meant a death-blow to all projects of India's spiritual expansion, and would have considerably crippled all the activities of Swamiji's coadjutors in England and America. No doubt the initial difficulties that met the Swami and his disciples were formidable and Swamiji's "assaults upon the deep-rooted preconceptions, social, literary and artistic" of his Western disciples produced "intensity of pain" making this informal "schooling often disagreeable to the taught," But in the end, the "blindness of a half-view" on the part of the disciples was done away and the "partial presentments" of the Eastern and Western stand-points stood "rationalized and accounted for."

Another struggle which engaged the Swami during his sojourn in India was the conversion of his own *guru-bhais* to his own view-point. Their outlook was purely

individualistic while the Swami considered it to be the mission of his life "to create a new order of Sanyasins in India who would fling away their own Mukti in order to be of help and service to others." This difference is as old as time itself. It can be otherwise expressed by asking whether religion exists for society or has a separate existence for itself? Is religion the hand-maid of society? Should the religiuos sentiment assume different forms to suit the varying needs of society or is religion an independent sovereign who may or may not help society? It is very difficult to satifactorily answer this question in times when the needs of the society are pressing and the number of true workers for the society is meagre. But considered apart from its relations to the present day, it may be said without fear of contradiction that social service is *a* sadhana only and not *the* sadhana. All work, all prayer is spiritually useful only to the extent that it reacts on the mind and purifies and elevates it. If the repetition of the sacred name of God in the seclusion of a Himalayan cave purifies the mind of all dross, it is as helpful spiritually as the saving of a life in famine or an epidemic. It is not to be supposed that the Swami was unaware of all this. There was a time in his own life, when his inclinations were strongly individualistic but since 1891, his outlook is markedly national, his *mantra* being बहुजनहिताय, बहुजनसुखाय. His *gurubhais*, though perhaps not quite convinced in the beginning decided never-the-less to loyally co-operate with the Swami in his great experiment.

The third important task that engaged the attention of the Swami was the training of the new disciples.

The Swami was a strict disciplinarian and though he was unconventional enough to admit into the Math, after proper trial, a person whose past life might not have been quite religious, still in the formulation of the rules for the new disciples, he was very careful and in their enforcement, strict. Though fond always of making very big plans, the Swami was possessed of a quality which mere plan-makers are generally devoid of,—love of details. No doubt owing to his failing health, he had to call Swami Saradananda from America to help him in organizing the Math and its activities. But in the general superintendence of his beloved organisation he was all eyes—and also all heart. For he had a way of endearing himself to the humblest and most timid disciple. He knew that unless an atmosphere of love and amity was established, mere discipline was bound to degenerate into something mechanical. अन्नदान, विद्यादान, ज्ञानदान - all these दानs must be, the Swami felt, the specia feature of the Math. He wanted not only Vedanta but also Grammar, Philosophy, Arts, Sciences, Literature, Rhetoric, English, Hindu Law to be studied at the Math, which in course of time must become a seat of learning.

The organisation of the Math, the starting of various centres of work, the conducting of periodicals and publication of books, the opening of relief works in famine-striked or plague—affected areas,—all these were different chains in the grand work of uplifting India and through her, the world. "We shall sound the drum of Advaita in the heart of every home, in the fields, and in the market place, in the hills and in the plains! Be my helpers all of you. To work! To work!"

But though the Swami was calling others to work, he himself was perhaps consciously, perhaps unconsciously, slowly preparing himself to retire. His growing ill-health might have contributed to this mood. But it seems clear that the Swami had a prevision that his work was nearing end. As early as August 23rd, 1896 we find him writing from Switzerland, "I have begun the work. Let others work it out. *I am getting ready to depart*, to return no more to this hell, this world. × × × I am as good as retired. *I have played my part in the world.*" Again in June 1898 he writes, "An idea was burning into my brain,—to start the machine for elevating Indian masses and that I have succeeded in doing to a certain extent. *I feel my task is done.* At best, three or four years of life is left. I must see my machine in strong working order and then knowing for certain that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep without caring what will be next." It seems therefore that the growing obscession for solitude that possessed him ever since April and May 1898 was not a sudden or accidental development but part of the process of "getting ready to depart." At Almora, in Kashmere, where the Swami went nominally to take rest and recoup his health, this absorpsion in thought was very frequent. He would leave his disciples in the mornings and return late in the evenings. Or he would go away for days together with strict injunctions not to be followed. His mystic experiences at Amarnath and Kshir Bhavani helped to intensify his introspective moods. "Ever since my return from Amarnath" he used to say "Siva himself has entered into my brain. He *will not* go."

When somebody remarked that there was a clot of blood in his left eye, he said "It might be due to my practising intense *tapasya* at Kshir-Bhavani." Thus from may to September 1898, he passed through such a variety of stormy spiritual experiences, that when he returned from Kashmere to Calcutta in October, he was more ill and physically depressed than ever.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "There is only a little film of ignorance in his (i.e. Noren's) mind. My Mother has kept it there, that her work may be done. It is as thin as a tissue paper. It may be rent at any moment." It appears that this thin film of ignorance was rent during the course of his meditations at Kshir-Bhavani. On his return from Kshir-Bhavani he said "No more is Hari Om. It is all Mother now. I have been very wrong. Mother said to me. 'What if unbelivers should enter My temples and defile My images. What is that to you ? Do you protect Me ? Or do I protect you ?' *So there is no more patriotism.* I am only a little child." It was quite natural that the Swami should commence to think less of work and more of Mother as the shadow of death began to fall on his mind. It was necessary for him to withdraw his mind altogether from work. How could he do it unless he felt all work, however noble and patriotic as insignificant ? Even before the Swami had this mystic experience at Kshir-Bhavani, even before he went to Amarnath, the mere thought of death was enough to drive away all petty thoughts of work and this world from his mind. "When ever Death approaches me" he said (July 22nd, 1898) picking up peebles in his hand, "all weakness vanishes.

I have neither fear nor doubt, not thought of the external. *I simply busy myself making ready to die.* I am as hard as that" and the stones struck one another in his hand—"for I *have* touched the feet of God." To one who has tasted of the Bliss Divine, mundane matters, however noble in other respects are bound to appear contemptible.

For several months after these mystic experiences Swamiji continued to be ill and it was thought that a long sea-voyage, change of surroundings and Western climate would accomplish what even trips to Kashmere and other health resorts in Northern India had failed to do. So on June 20th, 1899 he left India and went to England and U. S America. Knowing as he did that the end was approaching, he must have utilized—perhaps planned—this visit to give the last finishing touches he was able to do to his work in England and America. When he abruptly returned to India in December 1900, he realized that the end was very near.

His health was rapidly declining. June (1902) closed and found him more meditative than before. A few days before the Mahasamadhi, he said "I am making ready for death ! A great tapasya and meditation has come upon me and I am making ready for death.', What this "making ready for death" really meant we can perhaps never know. The Swami never wanted to die ailing and in bed like humdrum people. Being of a poetic and romantic temperament he had often pictured for himself a death on the Himalayas and by the side of Mother Ganges. "When my time comes," he said several years before his death "I shall like to go up the

mountain and there by the Ganges lay myself down and with water singing over me, I shall go to sleep and above me will tower the Himalayas." The Swami wanted to die the death of a Yogin. He wanted to breathe his last while in a state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. And this "making ready to die" was nothing more nor nothing less than preparatory essays in *dhyana* and *dharana*, leading up inevitably and at proper time, to Samadhi, the highest state of contemplation. In August of 1898, he had received the Grace of Amarnath, not to die till he himself willed it. So we find the Swami a few days before the memorable July 4th, 1902 consulting the Bengali almanac and possibly selecting a day for his Nirvana.

On Friday, July 4th, 1902, he got up some what early. He took tea and spent some time in conversation. From 8 a. m. to 11 a. m. he meditated with closed doors. The meditation over, he sang a sweet song on Shyama (Kali). Then he took his meals in company of the other members of the Math. Then the Swami discussed the meaning of a verse in Yajur Veda. From 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. he taught Laghu Kaumudi to the disciples. Then he went out for a long walk. On return, after some talk with the monks and kind inquiries about all, he retired to his own room and sat in meditation, facing the Ganges. Swamiji was doing *Japam* and directed the Brahmacharin who was in attendance to do the same and sit outside the room. About three-quarters of an hour later, he called the Brahmacharin and asked him to fan his head. In the meanwhile he had laid himself down on his bed. About an hour later, "his

hand shook a liitle. Then came two deep breaths" and all was over. He entered into Maha-Samadhi at about ten minutes past nine.

Thus died Swami Vivekananda, the apostle of Neo-Hinduism. He was running his fortieth year. His yogic death reminds us of the deaths of Sri Rama-Krishna Paramahamsa, Sri Dnyneshwar, Sri Ramdas and several other saints. It also puts us in mind of the following immortal lines in the Gita:—

प्रयाणकाले मनसाऽचलेन भक्त्या युक्तो योगबलेन चैव ।
भ्रुवोर्मध्ये प्राणमावेश्य सम्यक् स तं परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥
यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति विशन्ति यद्यतयो वीतरागाः ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण प्रवक्ष्ये ॥

सर्वद्वाराणि संयम्य मनो हृदि निरुध्य च ।
मूर्ध्न्याधायात्मनः प्राणमास्थितो योगधारणाम् ॥
ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन्मान्मनुस्मरन् ।
यःप्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥

CHAPTER XI

THE PATRIOT SAINT

"They talk of patriotism. I believe in patriotism and also have my own ideal of patriotism. Three things are necessary. First, feel from the heart. What is in the intellect? It goes a few steps and there it stops. But through the heart comes inspiration. Love opens the most impossible gates. Do you feel that millions of your countrymen are starving to-day and have been starving for ages? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud? Does it make you restless? Has it made you almost mad? Are you seized with that one idea of misery? That is the first step to become a patriot. You may feel; but have you found any way out, any practical solution, some help to bring people out of this living death? That is not all. Have you got the will to surmount mountain-high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you sword in hand, would you still dare to do what you think is right? If you have these three things, each one of you will work miracles."

—*Swami Vivekananda*

Patriotism without religion is essentially vulgar; religion without patriotism is generally inert; the one corrects the other and the two in combination are quite irresistible. Who is a patriot-saint? The heart of a patriot-saint burns with a two-fold fire,—the fire of patriotism and the fire of Divine Worship. A patriot-saint loves his country because he loves his religion and he loves his religion because he loves his country. A patriot-saint

finds no better way of loving his country than by serving his religion and cannot better love his religion except by serving his country. To a patriot-saint, the service of his country is not only *a* sadhana but an almost *indispensable* sadhana. The ego of a saint is merged in the universe while that of a patriot-saint is merged in his country. A patriot-saint differs from a patriot in many respects. "My country, right or wrong"—that is the attitude of the average patriot; while that of a patriot-saint transcends such petty prejudices and considerations and soars into the region of the sublime and the Infinite. Strictly speaking, a patriot-saint is a contradiction in terms and hence an impossibility but as a matter of fact, we see men like Vivekananda and Arabindo Ghose, who, left to themselves would hardly have felt, thought or worked in terms of country but whom the extraordinary circumstances of the country have thrown out of their rightful sphere and whose pure gold of *sattvika* temperament, has thereby been, to a considerable extent, alloyed with the baser metal of patriotism.

Though Swamiji was a saint first and a patriot afterwards, in the evolution of his personality we find the worship of the Motherland claimed his allegiance earlier than the worship of his religion. Like all undergraduate students of Western political liberalism, the Swami—then only Narendranath Dutt—had drunk deep of the cup of modern democracy, with its emphasis on liberty and equality and his youthful patriotism must have been deeply coloured with these ideas. But being of an introspective turn of mind, he was more attracted by

the work of Ram Mohan Roy, Kesub Chandra Sen and Devendra Nath Tagore than that of W. C. Bonerjee and Surendra Nath Banerjea. Then came the long period of his discipleship of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa which radically altered his whole outlook on life. Naturally, therefore, his ideal of patriotism underwent some change. He began to interpret Indian History from quite a new standpoint. To understand aright Vivekananda the patriot, to understand the full significance of his national activities, we must look for the inner springs of his thoughts on the present and hopes for the future. But these, in their turn, depend upon his glowing vision of the past. Nowhere, except in the pages of Shrijut Arabindo Ghose do we find such boldness, vastness and novelty of outlook.

The Swami never agreed with those who with seeming wisdom urge men and women to concentrate attention on the present and the future to the neglect of the past. "Why look to the past ? Why dream ? Have we not already enough work to do ?" The Swami could never appreciate this matter-of-fact attitude. On the contrary he asked his countrymen to "look back, as far as you can, drink deep of the eternal fountains that are behind and after that look forward, march forward and make India brighter, greater, much higher than she ever was" for "out of the past is built the future." One reason why Swamiji insisted on frequently looking back was that he did not agree with the view of those who said "Alas! we have no history!" Swamiji emphatically believed that we *have* history, more glorious than that of any of the

Western nations; only we have to rewrite it "to suit the understanding and ways of thinking" of our educated people. To him the word 'India' was the holiest of the holy and its utterance sent thirlls of joy and pride in his mind. "If there is any land on this earth" said he in his first pubiic lecture in India (1897) "that can lay claim to be the blessed *Punya Bhumi*, the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all the land of introspection and of spirituality,—it is India. Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth; and hence have proceeded the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth, East or West North or South."

Let us now see what Swamiji thought of the history and civilization of ancient India. (1) He believed that India was the oldest living nation on earth—at once the oldest and the youngest nation. (2) He held that India had grappled most with problems of the metaphysics and even in other branches of knowledge, the sum total of India's contribution to world civilization is, race for race, the largest. (3) Though India has been the greatest civilizing force known to history, still it has been her privilege to do all this noble work without shedding a single drop of blood. India has never been a conquering race. (4) Not only has she not invaded foreign countries

but has never persecuted people of other faiths who made India their home. Her spirit of toleration has no second. (5) Her vitality is wonderful. Seven centuries of foreign invasions have not succeeded in crushing her exuberant activity in matters spiritual. (6) India has perfected the science of ethics and religion and has taught man how to become god. (7) In India religion has been carried to the doors of the poorest of the poor. India has organized a most effective system of imparting universal religious education. In some respects, however ancient India did not make much progress and her record is considerably poorer than that of modern Europe. (*a*) India did not develop the spirit of political democracy. (*b*) Though every freedom was given to the development of religion, no such freedom was allowed to society to grow. (*c*) India was too fond of the deductive sciences and did not pay sufficient attention to the inductive sciences. It will thus be seen that the Swami was not a blind admirer of India's past. He never allowed his judgment to be warped by pride or prejudice. Knowing full well the grandeur of ancient Indian history and civilization, he could afford to acknowledge the existence of certain defects in the national character. We propose in this article to discuss some of the ideas suggested by the above analysis and to show how Swamiji's thoughts meet the requirements of Indian Nationalism of to-day notwithstanding the fact that they were expressed nearly thirty years back.

The one thought that swelled the heart of the Swami with pride was the wonderful vitality of this most ancient race and country. To him, India was not only the oldest

but the youngest nation alive. "I feel that India is young" said he on one occasion. Not only is India young and full of promise and vitality, but through all the political vicissitudes, she has been so. At no period of history, has her spirituality ebbed. There is a marvellous continuty in her spiritual life during all these shining centuries. Few passages even in the Swamiji's orations will match the epic grandeur of the following:—

"Here (*i.e.*, in India) activity prevailed when Greece did not exist and Rome was not thought of, when the very fathers of modern Europeans lived in forests and painted themselves blue. Even earlier, when history has no record and tradition dares not peer into the gloom of that intense past, even from then, until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it and a peace before it. We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race and that blessing is on our head and therefore we live. There was a time, when at the sound of the march of big Greek battalions, the earth trembled. Vanished from off the face of the earth, with not even a tale left behind to tell, gone is that ancient land of the Greeks. There was a time when the Roman Eagle floated over everything worth having in the world; everywhere Rome's power was felt and pressed on the head of humanity, the earth trembled at the name of Rome. But the Capitoline Hill is a mass of ruins and the spider weaves its web where Cæsars ruled. There have been other nations equally glorious that have come and gone, living a few hours of exultant and exuberant dominion and of a wicked national life and vanishing like ripples on

the face of the waters. But we live and if Manu comes back to-day he will not find himself in a foreign land."

The vitality of India was not merely the inglorious vitality of sterility and inaction but a vitality accompanied by and in a measure due to ceaseless activity both in the production of ideas as well as in their propogation inside India and outside. Ideas travel from one country to another in three different ways: either with the "blast of war-trumpets and the march of embattled cohorts" or with merchandise or with missionaries. The success of a great military or industrial country does indeed indirectly benefit another that has fallen under its influence by bringing the latter into contact with the thought and institutions of the successful country and thus stimulating its own thought and activities. There is, however, no glory in tyrannizing over or impoverising other countries and indirectly throwing the seeds of civilization on their soils. Indian thought has permeated the world only by the missionary zeal of its people. "Slowly and silently, as the gentle dew that falls in the morning, unseen, unheard, yet producing a most tremendous result has been the work of this calm, patient, all-suffering spiritual race upon the world of thought." According to the Swami:—

"In the history of the human race, not once or twice, but again and again; it has been the destiny of India in the past to supply spirituality to the world. Wherever either by mighty conquest or by commercial supremacy, different parts of the world have been kneaded into one whole race, each nation, as it were, poured forth its own quota, either, political social or spiritual. India's

contribution to the sum-total of human knowledge has been spirituality, philosophy. Before Buddhism Vedanta had penetrated into China, into Persia, and the islands of the Eastern Archipelago. Again, when the mighty mind of the Greek conqueror had united the four corners of the then known world, then rushed out Indian spirituality and the boasted civilization of the West is but a remnant of that deluge. Now from ocean to ocean run the roads of England and we find again India reviving and ready to give her own quota to the progress and civilization of the world."

This is indeed true and every Indian is proud of India's achievements. It is also great thing that India has not spread her gospel with fire & sword. But there is nothing to be specially proud of the fact that India has never been a conquering race. As a historical fact, we admit it But we cannot take it to mean that "political greatness or military power has never been the mission of our race and it will never be." On the contrary, it will be the business of India of tomorrow to see that the existence of spirituality is compatible with the co-existence of political greatness or military power. In ancient India there was martial spirit, enough and to spare, but the thinness of the population coupled with the vastness of the country kept people contented with their borders. The native fertility of the soil was enough to feed and clothe one hundred generations of growing population. The restlessness of Imperialism is solely due to hunger which means over-population and limited space. England and Japan have imperialistic views because in these countries the produce of the land is not commensurate with the needs

of the people; while the United States of America, which can easily accomodate six times the present population and is self-contained industrially and in agriculture is never so unhappy as when she has to rule over some other country. The India of tomorrow dare not neglect politics: she will have to grow into a military power; and when she does so, she will find that political power can exist side by side with sterling spirituality.

It was the settled conviction of the Swami that India has played and is qualified to play only the spiritual part in the brotherhood of nations and that the sooner educated Indians realized this the better for them and for the country. To them, he said, "A stream is taking its rise, away beyond where time began, flowing through millions of ages of human history; do you mean to get hold of that stream and push it back to its source, a Himalayan glacier?" "For good or evil, the religious ideal has been flowing into India for thousands of years; for good or evil, we have been born and brought up in the midst of these ideas of religion, till they have entered into our very blood and tingled with every drop of blood in our veins. Can you give up such religion without rousing the same energy in reaction?" "This continent is illumined with brave and gigantic minds and intelligences who even think of this infinite universe as only a mud-puddle. Beyond and still beyond they go. Time, even infinite time, to them is non-existent. Space is nothing to them. The characteristic of my nation is transcendentalism, the daring to tear the veil of the face of nature and have at any price a glimpse of the Beyond."

According to the Swami, religion is the characteristic not only of India but of Asia. "Asia produces giants in spirituality just as the Occident produces giants in politics, giants in science." The voice of Asia is the voice of religion, the voice of Europe is the voice of politics"; and following the reasoning of the geographical school of historians, he attributes this difference in mentality to the difference in geographical surroundings of the ancient Aryans in India and those of the ancient Greeks to whom Europe owes her entire culture. Surrounded by all that was beautiful, sweet and tempting in nature, blessed with an invigorating climate, the Greek undertook the study of the macrocosm, of the outer infinite. But the Indian Aryan living in a "vast continent, with its mountain-tops going beyond the clouds, almost touching the canopy of heaven, (with its) rolling deserts of miles upon miles and the interminable forests and gigantic rivers rushing down into the sea' was not content,like the ancient Greek "with the ripples of the waterfalls, the songs of the birds and the beauties of the earth, sun, moon and stars." His mind became introspective. He wanted to study the inner infinite. Kingdoms may succeed kingdoms; empires may follow empires,—all that was nothing to him. He was not dazzled by human power, glory and wealth. He looked with contempt on these things of the world and so wanted to "see something that changed not, something which dieth not, something which in the midst of this world of misery and death is eternal, blissful and undying."

It is easy to attribute exaggerated importance to the influence of geographical conditions. Canada and the

United States of America possess as vast and as grand a geographichal environment as India but we don't find introspection, spirituality or world weariness among the characteristics of the Americans. Things are often co-existent without mutually acting as cause and effect; and the special stress laid by the Swami upon this aspect of the Hindu genius is likely to create an erroneous impression that he was blind to the other departments of national activities in ancient India. How erroneous that impression is, we shall presently show. In the meanwhile, we cannot but reproduce a picture of ancient India by Sri. Arbindo Ghose to the appreciation of which the reader has already been prepared by the glowing description by the Swami of her inexhaustible spirituality :—

"Spirituality was, indeed, the master-key of the Indian mind. But this was not and could not be her whole mentality, her entire spirit. When we look at the past of India, what strikes us next is her stupendous vitality her inexhaustible power of life and joy of life, her almost unimaginably prolific creativness. For three thousand years at leastshe has been creating republics, kingdoms and empires, philosophies and cosmogonies and sciences and creeds and arts and poems and all kinds of monuments and temples and public works, laws and codes and rituals, systems of yoga, systems of politics and administration, arts spiritual and arts worldly, trades, industries and fine crafts,-the list is endless. She creates and creates and is not satisfied and is not tired. She expands too outside her borders; her ships cross the ocean and the fine superfluity of her wealth brims over to Judæa and Egypt and Rome; her colonies spread her arts and epics and creeds

in the Archipelago; her religions conquer China and Japan and spread westward as far as Palestine and Alexandria. Her colossal literature was not confined to philosophy and theology, logic and rhetoric, drama and poetry, medicine and astronomy; it embraced all life, politics and society, all the arts from painting to dancing everything then known that could be useful to life or interesting to human mind. It is a great error to suppose that spirituality flourishes best in an impoverished soil with the life half-killed and the intellect discouraged and intimidated. It is when the race has lived most richly and thought most profoundly that spirituality finds its heights and its depths and its constant and many-sided fruition. The European eye is struck in Indian spiritual thought by the Buddhistic and illusionist denial of life. But it must be remembered that this is only one side of its philosophic tendency which assumed exaggerated proportions only in the period of its decline. The Indian mind is not only spiritual and ethical but intellectual and artistic also. Its real key-note is the tendency of spiritual realization, not cast at all into any white monotone, but many facetted, many-coloured, as supple in its adaptability as it is intense in its highest pitches. The note of spirituality is dominant, initial constant and always recurrent. But this spiritual tendency does not shoot upward only to the abstract, the bidden and the intangible; it casts its rays downward and outward to embrace the multiplicity of thought and the richness of life."

Superficial readers of Swamiji's lectures are apt to think that while Swamiji harped only on Indian spiritua-

lity and Indian sufferings, the vision of Arabindo Ghose could visualize a time when India was not only a great spiritual power but a temporal one also and when in addition to her philosophy and religion she could boast of trade, industries, colonies, empires and all the other accompaniments of a great political power. But this is a great mistake. Swamiji's vision soared as high as that of Arabindo Ghose and even when he had less benefit of antiquarian research, on little scraps of information, he outlined a theory which though undoubtedly filled in greater detail by subsequent writers has never been radically modified. Impatient critics have evidently misunderstood the bearing of many of his remarks, when the Swami said "This is the most suffering and the most subjugated of all the historic lands of the world.' "This big gigantic race had to grapple with some of the greatest problems of misfortunes, dangers and vicissitudes such as never fell upon the head of any other nation of the world." "They never coveted that which belonged to any one else and their only fault was that their lands were so fertile and so tempted other nations to come and despoil them. They are contented to be despoiled"—he was only referring to the period of degradation, which, according to the Swami, roughly commenced soon after the establishment of Buddhism as the predominant faith in India; and even here, it was not a separate and independent statement of the Swami but only part of his argument that at no period in the history of India has the chain of spiritual continuity ever been broken and that even in times when according to our crude conception of history, India was politically sunk to the lowest ebb, the tide of her spirituality was

always rising, ever expanding. But this cannot by any means be stretched to mean that India was always a political or national cripple whose sole role in history was to be tossed from one subjection to another. India was never a soft supple country where the foreigner could march from one end to the other without opposition; and the remark of the Swami' "The West says, show your power by doing; India says, show your power by suffering" surely does not mean that India has no power of doing. It can only mean that while doing was not tabooed, India attached greater importance to suffering. But surely suffering or in other words renunciation is no equivalent to being trampled under the iron heels of foreign invaders. The truth is that the ancient *Varnashram* system encouraged different and seemingly contradictory ideals in the race. While it is impossible for one community to cultivate qualities that would at once develop spiritual peacefulness, martial restlessness and capitalistic greediness, the wonderful division of the people into compartments, apparently water-tight, each enjoined upon to follow ideals which to others would have meant ruin, has been responsible for the keeping alive and the harmonious working of the ethical, martial and industrial ideals at one and the same time. The highest ideal was undoubtedly the ethical; but the assignment of the highest positon to the ethical and spiritual ideal, far from having any prejudicial effect upon the other two, tended rather to keep them along healthy lines. This juxtaposition of different ideals has been the greatest contribution of India to world civilization and whenever the Swami pays his tribute to the ethical ideal, he should never be supposed to have been

forgetful of the other phases of India's history; and this can be clearly seen from the following extract from one of his letters:—

"Of all the causes which have worked for the present state of human civilization from the ancient times, the commerce of India is perhaps the most important. From time immemorial, India has beaten all other countries in point of fertility and commercial industries. Up till a century ago, the whole of the world's demand for cotton cloth, jute, indigo, lac, rice, diamond and pearls used to be supplied from India. No other country could produce such excellent silk and woollen fabrics like Kincop, etc. as India. Again India has been the land of various spices as cloves, cardamom, pepper, nutmeg, mace, etc, Most people are ignorant of the extent to which the opulence of ancient countries like Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome owed to Indian commerce. After the downfall of Rome, Baghdad, Venice, and Genoa became the chief marts of Indian commerce. When the Turks closed the trade-routes to India for the Italians, Columbus, a Genoese, tried to explore a new route to India. When the Portuguese discovered a new route to India doubling Africa, the fortune of India smiled upon Portugal; then came the turn of the French, the Dutch the Danes and the English."

If India had such inexhaustible resources enabling her to carry on, for centuries together, a very lucrative export trade it is inconceivable that she should have allowed foreigners to monopolize her export and import trade to the detriment of her own interests;

and the very fact that India had a large export and import trade implies that she had no inconsiderable mercantile marine and that emigration and colonization were not unknown to her. Such a complex network of industries and commerce implies also a magnificent organizing capacity. Though the Swami sometimes deprecated organization in matters religious as calculated to result in a struggle for dominion, he was always alive to the value and necessity of organization in secular matters. He deplored the present unorganized—disorganized-condition of the country and attributed India's downfall principally to this reason.

Just as the ancient Indian share in world commerce was not passive but thoroughly active, so also her share in the export trade of ideas was essentially active. To a certain extent ancient Hindu civilization might have spread to adjoining countries as an inevitable result of the mutual contact brought about by trade. But India was not content with this passive contribution to world culture; she must needs invite the neighbouring peoples to share with her the Kingdom of Heaven. In ancient India, the work of thinking out ideas and of distributing them proceeded side by side. There were men engaged in the all-absorbing task of discovering truths; at the same time there were others whose enthusiasm carried these truths over hills and plains and across rivers and lakes. They talk of political democracy, of educational democracy. India of old, specialized in religious democracy; and once this missionary zeal was aroused, it was impossible to keep it within the four borders of the land. It had to expand, cross the oceans and frontiers and

reach all the parts of Asia. "It is no new thing that India should send forth missionaries," the Swami used to tell his interviewers in the West. 'Expansion is life contraction, death.' When Indians ceased to expand and began to lead the life of *Kupa-mandukas*, their doom was sealed; and if India of to-day wants to live, the only course for her to follow is to "expand".

And yet, the Swami declared, India is the most tolerant country in the world. "Throughout the vistas of the centuries of our national life this one idea 'एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति' comes down gaining in volume and fulness till it has permeated the whole of our national life, till it has mingled in our blood, and has become one with us. We love that grand truth in every vein; and our country has become the glorious land of religious toleration. There is tremendous religious persecution in every country. It struck me more than once, that I should have to leave my bones on foreign shores owing to the prevelence of religious intolerance. Outcasting in its most horrible forms would often come down upon the head of a man in the West, if he dared to say a word against his country's accepted religion. Some of the biggest professors in the West are arrant cowards and dare not say for fear of public opinion, a hundredth part of what they hold to be really true in religious matters. The little toleration that is in the world, the little sympathy that is yet in the world for religious thought is practically here. It is here that Hindus build temples for Mahomedans and Christians; nowhere else." It was India and India alone that could shelter the homeless and persecuted Parsis. It was India and India

alone where even the atheistic Jains could live and thrive unmolested by the society or the ruling power in the land,

But though every liberty was given to religious thought to grow society which is to be benefited by the religious thought was shackled with innumerable restrictions as a result of which there was no social development worth the name. There was an over-emphasized tendency to consider life as a mere instrument, a pawn in the hands of religion with no seperate existence for itself. No doubt the doctrine of *Purushartha*–Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha considerably mitigated the severity of religious obligations and was in healthy contrast to the preachings of Buddhism–renunciation and renunciation alone, regardless of individual fitness or development, still that doctrine only worked in the world of thought and did not materially influence or lessen the dictatorship of religion even in the trivial functions of life. Turn where we like, every detail of our life seems to be pre-thought-out for us, leaving practically very little scope to individual discretion, originality or initiative. The result has been that social life has been reduced to the dulness and uniformity of a machine. This domination of religion over social matters cannot be reconciled with the instinct of democracy and the individual freedom which democracy stands for. The Swami laid his finger on this weak spot of ancient Hindu society. "The Hindu must not give up his religion" he said "but must keep religion within proper limits and and give freedom to society to grow. Liberty is the first condition of growth. Your ancestors gave every liberty

to the soul and religion grew. They put the body under every bondage and society did not grow. The opposite is the case in the West—every liberty to society and none to religion. The present Hindu society is organized only for spiritual men and hopelessly crushes out everybody else. Why ? Just as our religion takes in all, so should our society." "To advance towards freedom physical, mental and spiritual, and help others to do so is the supermost duty of man. Those social rules which stand in the way of the unfoldment of this freedom, are injurious and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. Those institutions should be encouraged by which men advance in the path of freedom. It is this freedom and boldness of his outlook and his capacity to be in tune with the spirit of the times that has made Vivekananda, the prophet of India of to-day. Before Hindu religion can be expected to live and thrive the Hindu society, through which alone Hinduism can manifest itself, must live and thrive and this is possible only if the Hindu society adapts itself to present day requirements and conditions. This means the destruction of all crystallized institutions of the society and the discouragement of all those ideas that tended to kill the natural freedom of the society; and as a patriot the Swami has rendered inestimable service to the Motherland by drawing attention, to this drawback in her ancient organization, with a view to enable the present generation to steer the course of their activities in the right direction.

Swamiji's remarks about the non-existence of a true democratic form of Government in ancient India are equally illuminating. The Indian politican, anxious to

meet the interested arguments of the English bureaucrat, essays to prove the existence of democracy in ancient India by taking refuge in such statements as "Yudhisthira visited the houses of Vaishyas and even Sudras in Varanavata," "the subjects of Ayodhya were praying for the istallation of Ramachandra to the regency and even criticized the conduct of Sita and secretly made plans for the bringing about of her exile." Such statements however, do not lead us very far. True, an occasional King Vena was done to death by his subjects; but one swallow *does not* make the summer. No doubt "the voice of the ruled cannot be said to have been totally unrecognized in ancient India. The Greek travellers and others saw many independent and small states scattered all over the country and there cannot be the least doubt about it that the germ of self-government was at least present in (the even now existing) village *Panchayat*." While conceding all this, Swamiji held that the germ remained forever the germ. The seed though put in the ground never grew into a tree. The idea of self-government never passed beyond the embryo state of the village *Panchayat* and never spread into society at large.' In Swamiji's opinion, the very existence of god-like kings like Yudhisthira, Ramachandra, Dharmasoka was prejudicial to the true growth of democracy. "The hand of him who is always fed by another, gradually loses its power. His power of self-preservation can never become fully manifest. Being always governed by god-like kings, to whom is left the whole duty of protecting and providing for the people, they (people) can never get any occasion for understading the principles of self-government." Another reason, more potent

still, was the natural appropriation of the legislative function by the *rishi*. "There are laws laid down in the minutest details for the guidance of different departments of government, the collection of revenue, the management of the army, the administration of justice, punishments and rewards. But at the root of all, is the injunction of the *rishi*,—the word of divine authority, the revelation of God coming through the inspired *rishi*. Under the circumstances, it is never possible for the people to acquire any sort of education, by which they can learn to combine among themselves and be united for the accomplishment of any object for the common good or by which they can have the concerted intellect to conceive the idea of popular rights or by which they can be fired with the aspiration to gain the right of representation in the control of State revenues and expenditure. Why should they do such things ? Is not the inspiration of the *rishi* responsible for their prosperity and progress ?" India can never become a democratic nation merely by attempting to prove the existence of a democratic form of government in ancient times. We must frankly admit the true state of things at least to ourselves, before we can expect to evolve democratic *institutions*.

While it is easy to agree with Swamiji's general analysis of the two glaring shortcomings of ancient Hindu civilization, his opinion that the Hindu mind is pronouncedly deductive and not inductive, will, we are afraid, not carry conviction to all. "The Hindu mind" says the Swami "was ever deductive and never synthetic or inductive. In all our philosophies, we find hair-splitting

arguments, taking for granted some general proposition but nobody ever asked or searched the truth of these general propositions. Therefore, independent thought, we have almost none to speak of and hence the dearth of those sciences which are the result of observation and generalization." The Swami attributed this lack of inductive spirit to two causes; the heat of the country forcing people to prefer rest and contemplation to activity, and secondly the aversion of the Brahmin community—the only community fitted to carry on induction—to journeys or voyages to distant lands. Neither of these reasons seems to be very convincing. We have already dwelt on the fallibility of theories based on geographical environments and as regards the reluctance of the Brahmin to travel very far,—how can we make such a statement in the face of the fact that there was a very strong missionary spirit at work in ancient India? The enormous prosperity of the country together with her skill in arts and industries conclusively proves that she was not at all lacking in an active, inductive, and a truly scientific spirit; and her failure to cultivate Chemistry and Physics in their modern form cannot be an argument to prove that the spirit itself of induction and of scientific research was absent. In another place, Swamiji has himself, to a certain extent, modified his own position and has declared that in certain respects ancient Indian scientific thought was in advance of the modern. "The minds of the people" says the Swami "from whom the Vedas came, were intent upon following principles, discovering principles. They had no time to work upon details or to wait for them; they wanted to go deep into the heart of things. Something beyond

was calling them, as it were and they could not wait. Scattered through the Upanishads, we find, that the details of subjects which we now call modern sciences, are often very erroneous but at the same time, their principles are correct. For instance, the idea of ether which is one of the latest theories of modern science is to be found in our ancient literature in forms much more developed than in the modern scientific theory of ether to-day. There are theories in the Vedic philosophy about the origin of life on this earth very similar to those which have been advanced by some modern European scientists." It is clear that mere deduction would not have carried Indian thinkers so far. The mistakes in their researches are due to the fact that they were working at the foundations and without any of the facilities of a modern scientist. But the scientific *spirit* was there, there could be no mistake about it. No nation can be great in agriculture industries and arts, without possessing the scientific spirit. It may be that in the general wreck and confusion of the last one thousand years, much of the inductive knowledge as applied to practical life was hopelessly lost. When the history of ancient India comes to be written in its real perspective, it will be seen that India was as great in induction as in deduction and that in her case, knowledge was not for the amusement or elevation of the few but for the good and well-being of the many.

But these are trivial matters of detail. The one theme which thoughts and hopes of the Swami reverted to again and again, was the magnificent contribution of India to world-civilization, her tremendous vitality, her

superb spiritualistic bent of mind, her passion for purity and simplicity and her inexhaustible material resources. With such materials to work upon, the Swami was prepared to face any number of national calamities without the slightest diminution of his faith in the ultimate destiny of the Motherland. The progress of democracy, the march of science—he welcomed, for he knew that true democracy and true science was never inimical to true spirituality. In a sense he even welcomed the present political subjugation of India. It might have weakened, disunited, disorganized and impoverished the country. But it had stirred India to her innermost depths. "It is against the big tree that the great wind strikes. When there comes affliction in the heart, when the storm of sorrow blows all around, and it seems that light will be seen no more, when hope and courage are almost gone, it is then, in the midst of this great spiritual tempest, that the light of the Brahman within gleams."

CHAPTER XII

PAST AND PRESENT

Thou blessed land of the Aryas, thou wert never degraded. Sceptres have been broken and thrown away, the ball of power has passed from hand to hand, but the vast mass of the people habeen left to pursue its inevitable course, the current of national life flowing at times slow and half-conscious, at others, strong and awakened. I stand in awe before the unbroken procession of scores of shining centuries with here and there a dim link of chain, only to flare up with added brilliance in the next, and there she is walking with her own majestic step, my mother-land,—to fulfil her glorious destiny, which no power on earth or in heaven can check,—the regeneration of man the brute into man the God.

Swami Vivekananda

'The heart of Buddha and the intellect of Sankara' was Swami's ideal of a spiritual hero and in his own person he might be said to have realized it to a very great extent. His realisation of the Absolute and the Superconscious was facilitated by a mighty intellect which absorbed all the knowledge of science and philosophy almost at a glance. But he was no dry Vedantin, splitting hairs and weaving cobwebs about Maya and Brahman. There was a strong spring of feeling in him; and like that of Buddha, it was used more for realizing his oneness with the suffering world than with the Great

First Cause. The Bhakta, technically so called and the Karma-yogin are both gifted with a sensitive, delicate and tender heart, which is soft as butter and which melts at the slightest mention or sight of misery. But while the emotion of a Bhakta is consumed in weeping and wailing for God, the great Karmayogin equally gifted with a tender heart reserves all his tears not so much for God as for God's creature, man. The intense patriotism of the Swami was not the cold, calculating, worldly-wise and selfish prtriotism of a politician but the flery, ever-brooding, never-calculating, selfless patriotism of a prophet or a martyr. He knew no rest and could find no solace in the Vedanta, so long as India continued to remain a land of poverty and ignorance. Once (1897) at Calcutta he was expounding the intricacies of the Vedas and the Vedanta to a disciple when a friend interrupted him and asked him what good was Vedanta when the spectre of starvation was stalking abroad : and at the friend's forceful picture of the deep misery of the poor and the helpless, Swamiji actually began to shed tears. In the course of his Indian wanderings nothing so impressed the Swami as the chronic poverty and the limitless ignorance of the masses, and the seed of patriotism sowed in the years of his college career was literally watered by this intimate contact with the actualities of the situation. Great as a world-teacher, Swamiji is, to his country-men greater still as a patriot and a nation-builder. We have already seen how glowing his vision of the Past was. But he was no idle brooder. If his mind, again and again dwelt on the Past, it was only to enrich the present and prepare for the Future. He valued the Past because he had greater

hopes of the Future. The Future can only be built on the facts of the Present and the hidden tendencies of the Past. And this brings us to the Swami's thoughts on the Present.

The Swami was a man of varying moods and all these have been faithfully mirrored in his speeches and writings. He inveighed against caste in one place; again, at another he pronounced caste to be a most wonderful institution. He sometimes talked of priest-craft and the tyranny of priests: he was however of opinion that the Indian priest-hood was the poorest and hence the best of all the priesthoods. He declared that not India alone but the whole world was his country; yet in the heart of his heart he had a separate niche for India and all his public activities were carried on with an eye to their effect on India. He strongly criticised the social reformers; in his own person, he was a great social reformer. He did not like organisation; his whole public career was spent in starting an organisation for the uplift of India, Europe and America.

In truth, these are not contradictions but different aspects of the same idea. He, who would discuss questions from different view-points is likely to make apparently contradictory statements. But the Truth is large enough to accomodate all these. So regarding the miserable condition of India, we get two different expressions of opinion from the Swami. The appalling poverty of the masses, the misdirected endeavours of the educated classes, the general lack of Shraddha throughout the land, the Universal poverty, squalor, darkness and

hideousness', the ever-recurring visitations of famines and epidemics these and several other causes would move his heart and he very frequently shed tears of sorrow and despair. As the same time in the depth of this despair the vision of the glory of ancient India would flash before his mind. "This is the ancient land, where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country, where first arose the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, the existence of an immanent God in Nature and man and whence like tidal waves spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world." He would remember, how even in days of dire distress, India has clung to spirituality as a baby to its mother's breast." He would think of the immense vitality of the race and the continuity of its spiritual thought and life and exclaim, "No! India still lives, India is young" If years of travelling in India brought home to his mind the terrible poverty and ignorance of the masses, they also demonstrated to him the possibility, nay, the certainty of good days coming to India owing to the fact that her spirituality is, even in these days of rank materialism very much alive.

According to the Swami, India's degradation commenced some time after the advent of Buddhism. He was of opinion that the conquest of Vedic Hinduism by agnostic Buddhism was less owing to the doctrines and personality of Gautam Buddha than to the "temples that were built, the idols that were erected and the gorgeous ceremonials that were put before the nation". Before the onslaught of these dazzling accompaniments of Buddhism, the little fire-places of the old religion

could not hold their own. The missionary zeal of the followers of Buddha, their impatience with the qualitative standard of propaganda, their neglect of or hostility to Sanskrit, the barbaric hordes that subsequently invaded the country,—all this made confusion worse confounded and the seed of degradation sown during all these centuries of turmoil and confusion has produced such a tangle of cultural anarchy that the history of India during the last twelve hundred years is a reconquest of the country by the ancient Faith. Shankara and Ramanuja have been two of the foremost regenerators of modern Hinduism. But India's misfortune did not end here. The Mohomedans snbjugated the greater part of the land over which they ruled for well-nigh seven or eight centuries. Then came the Englishman and he too has had his share of despoiling the land. No country in the world has been called upon to face such odds for a period of nearly two thousand years; and the wonder is that after the calamities of twenty centuries, the culture and civilisation of the people still survives, and the country is ready to start a new race again, almost as if nothing very serious has happened to her.

"But why should Hinduism have tolerated the inroads and encroachments of indigenous Buddhism and foreign Mahomedanism and Christanity? Why did India sell her liberty to races who had no permanent interest in her welfare? In a word, what is the reason of her downfall?" The question has been variously answered. The Swami's contribution to the solution of this question is at once original and convincing. "There was a

time in India" says the Swami "when Dharma was compatible with Mukti. There were worshippers of Dharma such as Yudhishthira, Arjuna, Karna side by side with aspirants of Mukti such as Vyasa, Suka, Janaka. On the advent of Buddhism, Dharma was entirely neglected. In the hey-day of Buddhistic supremacy thousands of sanyasins lived in every monastery; then it was that the country was on the verge of ruin. The Hindu scriptures say, No doubt, Moksha is far superior to Dharma, but Dharma should be finished first of all. Non-injury is right. Resist not evil is a great thing, but the Shastras say 'Thou art a householder, if thou dost not return an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, thou wilt verily be a sinner.' Heroes only enjoy the world;—show your heroism. Do your *Swadharma*, this is the truth of truths. The Europeans never took the words of Jesus Christ seriously. Always of active habits, being possessed of a tremendous *rajasik* nature, they are gathering with great enterprise and youthful ardour the comforts and luxuries of the different countries of the world. And we are sitting in a corner, bag and baggage, pondering on death, day and night. What does Buddha or Christ prescribe for the man who neither wants Moksha nor is fit to receive it? Nothing. There is no way shown how you may enjoy the world a little for a time. Not only all openings to that are hermetically sealed to you, but in addition, there are obstacles put at every step. It is only the Vedic religion which lays down rules for the four-fold sttainment of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Buddha did ruin us. Kumarilla again brought into currency the Karma-Marga and Sankara and Ramanuja

firmly reestablished the Vedic religion, harmonizing and balancing Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Thus the nation was brought to the way of regaining its lost life; but India has three hundred million souls to wake and hence the delay."

According to the Swami, the first thing that we should learn from the Westerners is to introduce a pinch of materialism in our social ideals, our society, in his opinion being organized only for spiritual people. "Some sort of materialism" says he "toned down to our own, requirements would be a blessing to many of our brothers who are not yet ripe for the highest truths. This is the one mistake made in every country and in every society and it is greatly regrettable that in India, where it was always understood, the same mistake of forcing the highest truths on the people who are not ready for them has been made of late. The sanyasin is the ideal of Hindu life; but that ideal can only be realised after a certain amount of experience. There has been ample provision made for this in our books, but unfortunately in later times there is a tendency to bind every one down by tremendous spiritual and ethical laws for which he has no use. Hands off! Let the poor fellow enjoy himself a little and renunciation will come to him of itself."

Another defect of the Hindu society on which the Swami unerringly laid his finger was the extraordinary importance attached to non-essentials of religion and the extreme neglect of its cardinal truths. The glorious religion of the Vedas is almost wholly forgotten and its

place has been usurped by local customs and ceremonies to which the people seem to be addicted with the unreasoning obstinacy of fanatics. There is also the tendency to regard certain observances, ceremonials and rituals almost as religion to the utter oblivion of the fact that these are but the kindergarten of the infant human mind and are of use only in proportion to their capacity to awaken the yearning for God. The Swami deprecated both these tendencies which in their essence spring from the same cause. "There are two sorts of truths" he used to say "the one that deals with the eternal relation of God, soul and nature; the other with local circumstances, environments of the time, social institutions of the period and so forth:" and that the true path of progress requires the Hindus to be "Conservative Liberals;" Conservatives as regards the fundamentals of Hinduism but progressives as regards their willingness to modify customs and institutions to suit the varying requirements of society. If society is to grow, if individuality in men and women is to be encouarged, if the impact of other races and nations is to draw all our resourcefulness, if a proper distribution is to be effected of all the amenities of social life, the one thing necessary is to freely and frankly admit that a change here and a change there in the vast and complex machinery of Hinduism means no danger to the religion itself. "Let us be as progressive as any nation that ever existed, and the same time as faithful and conservative towards our traditions as Hindus alone know how to be. In plain words, we have first to learn the distinction betweeen essentials and non-essentials." In a vast country, where every village can boast of separate code of forms and ceremonies with

perhaps a separate village god, this insistence on the essentials of religion is necessary to keep people from relapsing into the ruts of local and provincial particularism; and religious progressiveness must undo the mischief which geographical distance is likely to make. But this is not all. As remarked above, there is the other spirit at work, due not so much to geographical isolation as to the decay of intellectual vigour of the race. The Swami knew it was merely temporary. It was rather the stunning of the mental faculties, a temporary suspension of the intellectual functions of the race and not decay. In days gone by, when the intellectual and spiritual lustre of the Aryan forefathers of modern Hindus was undimmed, they discovered science after science built up theory after theory, soared with the wings of vision to the regions of the Infinite, expanded the limits of human knowledge, laid bare the secrets of nature and made them accessible to human intellect and amenable to human control. Then came the second period of the preservation, the consolidation and the reiteration of all that was best in the old thought and its practical application to the needs of society. In this period the exuberance of the vital and creative faculty abated somewhat but still the race us a whole was perfectly vigourous and intensely active. Last of all has come the era of intellectual deterioration, of mental inertia and stagnation, of parrot-like repetition of old ideas and their perversion and misapplication to the social life of the day. Perhaps the great Vidyaranya was the last of the band of those intellectual giants whose achievements have cast a halo of grandeur around Hinduism. The domination of India by the Mahommedans might have been the

immediate cause of this disintegration and decay, but the process must have started even earlier. The Swami was intensely mortified at the spectacle of the lineal descendants of the *rishis* of old toying with culture and spirituality. "Give up" he said "all those old discussions, old fights about things which are meaningless, which are nonsensical in their very nature. Think of the last six or seven hundred years of degradation, when grown-up men by the hundreds have been discussing for years, whether we should drink a glass of water with the right hand or the left, whether the hand should be washed three times or four times, whether we should gargle five or six times. What can you expect from men who pass their lives in discussing such momentous questions as these and writing most learned philosophies on them. There is the danger of our religion getting into the kitchen. We are neither Vedantists, most of us now, nor Puraniks, nor Tantriks. We are just 'Don't-touchists.' It is a sure sign of the softening of brain when the mind cannot grasp the higher problems of life; all originality is lost and the mind has lost its strength, its activity and its power of thought and just tries to go round and round the smallest curve it can find This state of things has first to be thrown overboard, and then we can stand up, be active and strong."

It was not so much intellectual decay as loss of moral faith, that according to the Swami has brought about our downfall and made us hewers of wood and drawers of water among the nations of the world: and in Swamiji's opinion, if we could but reinstate that faith in its pristine sanctuary, we shall be our great selves again

physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually. With his unerring instinct for generalisation the Swami summed up all the present evils of the country in one phrase lack of *shraddha*. Do we want political rights? Are we anxious to work out the social problem? Are Indian industries to be made prosperous? Are we ambitions of raising our motherland to the level of England and America in point of material greatness? The key to the solution of all these problems lies in that one word-*shraddha*. Restore the *shraddha* of ancient times and again you will find healthy blood coursing through the veins of the body politic. The Swami regarded himself as a pioneer, as a man working at the foundations. His one exhortation to the nation was "make men" and he declared all the problems of the country would be solved in a minute. How are men to be manufactured? By giving them *shraddha*. "To preach the doctrine of *shraddha* or genuine faith" says the Swami "is the mission of my life. Infinite faith begets infinite aspirations. In the days of Vyas and Arjuna—the days when all our sublime doctrines of humanity were preached—India had plenty of spirituality, so much so that her spiritual greatness has made India the greatest nation of the existing races of the world. Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith faith in God,—this is the secret of greatness. If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which foreigners have now introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves and stand up on that faith and be strong. What did I learn in the West, and what I see behind those frothy sayings of the Christian sects

repeating that man was a fallen, a hopelessly fallen sinner? There I saw that inside the national hearts both of Europe and America, resides the tremendous power of men's faith in themselves. An English boy will tell you 'I am an Englishman ; I can do anything.' Can our boys say the same thing here ? No, nor even the boy's fathers, We have lost faith in ourselves." While we in the height of our perverted pride consider ourselves still to be *sattvik*, the Swami considered all this to be nothing but *tamas*. "Do you think" said he "that one who does not exert himself at all, who only takes the name of Hari shutting himself up in a room, who remains quiet and indifferent even when seeing huge amount of wrong and violence done to others before his very eyes, possesses the quality of *Sattva* ?" And according to him, the real need of the times is an immense rousing up of the *rajasik* energy of the race which will enable us to make even greater conquests, material and spiritual than those our forefathers were privileged to do.

We have already discussed the mental and moral decay of the present times. The Swami was an all-round thinker and in his analysis of the situation, he omits nothing. If our brain is weak, if we lack faith, lack ambition, lack love of the great and sublime, he knew it was greatly due to the physical weakness which foreign domination, harmful social institutions and growing poverty have brought on us. "A sound mind in a sound body" is not only a school-boy maxim. It contains the experience of nations and of centuries. We cannot conceive of a great, liberated and world-conquering India of tomorrow with her young men pale and emaciated,

"This physical weakness" says the Swami "is the cause of at least one-third of our miseries. We are lazy; we cannot work; we can not combine; we are intensely selfish; not three of us can come together without hating each other. That is the state in which we are,—hopelessly disorganised mobs, fighting each other for centuries as to whether a certain mark is to be put on our forehead this way or that way. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it. First of all our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends. You will be nearer to heaven through foot-ball than through the study of the Gita. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little of strong blood in you, with your biceps, your muscles a little stronger."

Physical strength, intellectual strength, moral strength,—that is what the Swami wanted his countrymen to acquire. In addition to the causes detailed above, there is another which is, as it were, eating into our very vitals and preventing us from being our own selves,—the system of Western education. The Swami was perfectly alive to the dangers inherent in an outlandish system of imparting secular education and secular education alone, to the children of the soil. He saw very little good in it and described it as one almost wholly a system of defects. It was nothing but a 'perfect machine for turning out clerks.' The Swami thought that he owed nothing to his *alma mater*, the University of Calcutta. All his knowledge was wholly the result of his own study at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. "What we need is

to study, independent of foreign control, different branches of the knowledge that is our own and with it the English language and Western science and technical education," that may help to develop the resources and the industries of the land." Western science coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto and shraddha or faith in ourselves"—that was his conception of education. It will thus be seen that Swamiji's conception of education was very near to that of the National education of today; and he insisted that education must always come through men of renunciation. He bewailed the prevailing misdirection in education which far from being beneficial has done incalculable injury to the country by perverting the mentality of the educated classes and separating them, in outlook and habits from the masses whose representatives they ought to become. In his opinion no country could thrive where the masses and the classes live and think and work in water-tight compartments, and the result has been that the educated classes living in isolation from the masses are becoming more and more westernized while the masses precluded from getting the benefit of constant contact with the leaders of society tend more and more to sink into ignorance and superstition.

Though the Swami never liked any political capital to be made out of his success in England and America and though on one occasion he emphatically denied that he was a politician or a political agitator, still there is ground to believe that his sympathies were entirely on the side of the leaders of the Indian National Congress. "I cannot claim" said he to an English Press Representative "to have given much attention to the Indian National

Congress movement; my work is in another part of the field. But I regard the movement as significant and heartily wish it success." He however disliked the petitioning methods of the Congress. "Why should" he said "the leaders clamour at the top of their voices' Alas, India is going to ruin day by day! Oh English rulers, admit our countrymen to the higher offices of the state, relieve us from famines and so on, thus rending the air day and night, with the eternal cry of 'Give' and 'Give'?" He was for a policy of self-reliance which in those days was very much at a discount and admired those very few Indians like Lokamanya Tilak, who in those unregenerate days were trying to infuse it into politics. The greatest proof of the Swamiji's wide sympathies is to be found in his eager contact with the political leaders on the occation of the Calcutta Congress of 1901. He might not have bequeathed to us the ideal of an independent and self-governing India. But the ideal he has inculcated and preached—India, the spiritual guide and Teacher of the world—was no less inspiring and probably included a politically self-reliant and self-respecting India. He was fully alive to the immense influence of the government of a country over its people. "Race, religion, language and Government, all these together make the nation," said he in a lecture at Madras, and though he specially devoted his own attention only to one of these four factors, he was in full sympathy with workers labouring in other nation-building fields. To the tremendous economic drain from India to England and its baneful effects on the material happiness of the children of the soil, we find no explicit reference in all his writing and speeches. Yet it is impossible to be-

lieve that the Swami, who, as shown in the last chapter, strikingly interpreted the prosperity of foreign nations as due to the monopoly of trade with India during the last three hundred years was ignorant of so elementary a fact. However his references to England and to British rule are always friendly, as befitted a world-worker who had risen high above the political quarrels, to him petty. He dwelt more on the benefits and opportunities of the British rule than on its concomitant evils. "The present Government of India" says the Swami "has certain evils attendant on it and also there are some very great and good parts in it as well. Of highest good is this, that after the fall of the Pataliputra Empire till now, India was never under the guidance of such a powerful machinery of Government as the British, wielding the sceptre throughout the length and breadth of the land. And under this Vaisya supremacy, as the objects of commerce are being brought from one end of the world to another, so at the same time, as its natural consequence the ideas and thoughts of different countries are entering and forcing their way into the very bone and marrow of India; and as a result of the action and the reaction between her own national ideals on the one hand and the newly introduced strange ideals of foreign nations on the other, she is slowly and gently awakening from her long sleep." These were, in his opinion the two great benefits of the English rule and in the opportunity which that rule gave to India for spreading her spiritual gospel to the distant quarters of the globe, the Swami saw tremendous potentialities for the future.

The Swami was no politician but a reformer all-round. The politician works on the materials in hand; the re-

former tries to improve the quality of his material. How to manufacture men in India was the problem that absorbed the Swami's attention. In a moment of extreme pessimism, he said that India was inhabited only by women and eunuchs. He admitted that though the Hindu was an ideal father; son, husband, brother and friend, he was *not an ideal citizen*. He lacked the faculty of thinking for the country. He had yet to learn the secret of organisation and concerted action. And his letters to his gurubhais and Indian disciples are full of exhortations to cure themselves of these national failings. "The faculty of organisation" says he, "is entirely absent in our natures; but this has to be infused. The great secret is,—absence of jealousy. Be always ready to concede to the opinions of your brethren and try always to conciliate. Cultivate the virtues of obedience. No centralisation is possible unless there is obedience to superiors. No great work can be done without this centralisation of individual forces. Be the servant of all and do not try in the least to govern others. That will excite jealousy. Jealousy is the bane of our race." Another weak point in the organisation of the English educated people is their indifference to strict integrity in business matters. The Swami was, no doubt, indifferent to money. But he was particular that public money should be spent with the greatest care. "Hindus" says he "have a peculiar slovenliness in business matters, not being sufficiently methodical and strict in keeping accounts. All combined efforts in India sink under the weight of one iniquity. We have not yet developed strict business principles. Business is business in the highest sense and no friendship or 'eye-shame', should be there."

It will thus be seen that Swamiji's analysis of the defects of the present Hindu Society is searching and fairly exhaustive. His frequent enlogies of the past achievements of our forefathers and his severe condemnation of our defects prepare the way for a brief analysis of his plans and projects for the regeneration of the Motherland. This we propose to do in chapter next.

CHAPTER XIII

PLANS AND PROJECTS

Therefore, my plan is to start institutions in India, to train our young men as preachers of the truths of our Scriptures, in India and outside India. Men, men, these are wanted: everything else will be ready but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionized. A pure and strong will is omnipotent. Preach, preach unto the world the great truths of your religion; the world waits for them. The masses have been told all over the world that they are not human beings. Never were they allowed to hear of the Atman! Let them hear of the Atman,—that the lowest of the low have the Atman within, the all-pure, omnipotent and omnipresent Atman! Let them have faith in themselves, for that makes the difference between the Englisman and you. What we want is strength. Believe in yourselves. Make your nerves strong. It is man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories we want. It is man-making education that we want. Go back to your Upanishads. Take them up, live up to them and the salvation of India will be at hand.

Swami Vivekananda

One of the greatest defects even of many highly cultured minds is the incapacity to and impatience of sustained concentration. In their eagerness to rush to action, they neglect thought which is the mother of all action. An

aimless or self-satisfied never-ending process of thought might perhaps not be of much good to society. It is however equally certain that the mighty revolutions witnessed and experienced by mankind have been the product of a patient and laborious process of thought. Who can truthfully say that the Reformation in Europe and the French Revolution were solely guided by men of action? Was not Shankaracharya as mighty in thought as in action? Did not Buddha give years of his life to contemplation before he undertook to help the suffering world? "A more unselfish and untiring worker is beyond our sanguinest imagination, yet who had harder struggles to realise the meaning of things than he? Working out details of an already laid out masterly plan may not require much concentrated thought to back it but great impulses are only transformed great concentrations. The greater the work, the more must be the power of realisation behind." It might be argued that Buddha saw the great Truth in a flash and that might be the experience of poets, to whom inspiration comes spontaneously or of great scientists in whose "mental atmostphere higher truths have flashed like sudden floods of light, which they had only to catch and formulate." Such inspirations and flash-lights frequently came to the Swami also but in every case "devout contemplation and constant study is at the root of all illumination." The magnificent achievements of the Swami were the natural fruit of years of contemplation; and the grandeur of the former is but the reflection of the latter. We therefore make no apology in taking the reader with us to collect those gems of thought scattered throughout the writings and speeches of the Swami. We shall thus be in

a position to understand the plans and projects of the Swami. Many of these he did not live to carry out. It is therefore all the more necessary to study his plans and projects in order that posterity might carry out the wishes of the Swami whose memory it cherishes with unbounded reverence.

Swamiji's plans and projects can be summed up under the following heads :—

(1) Spiritual conquest of the world by a regenerated India.

(2) Regeneration of India by means of the elevation of the masses through the efforts of the educated classes.

(3) Restatement and reinterpretation of Hinduism.

(4) Propaganda and a central organisation to guide it.

(5) Reconstruction, reorganisation and overhauling of Hindu Society.

The key to all his thoughts about the regeneration of India was the uplift of the masses. His travellings all over India had given him a knowledge of the poverty and misery of the masses such as mere arm-chair statisticians could hardly hope to rival. He was impatient of a religion that neglected to solve the poor man's problem. "More bread, more opportunity for everybody" was his motto. "However sublime be the theories, however well-spun may be the philosophy, I do not call it religion so long as it is confined to books and dogmas." He admitted that "no religion on earth preached the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism and no religion treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in

such a fashion as Hinduism" This picture is certainly overwrought and in throwing the responsibility of the poverty and starvation of the masses on the much-abused shoulders of Hinduism, the Swami seems to have unconsciously shut his eyes to the tremendous economic drain causing the languishing alike of agriculture and industries. In one of his American letters he contrasts the condition of the poor in the United States with the poor in India. "If anybody is born of a low caste in our country, he is gone forever, there is no hope for him. There are possibilities, opportunities and hope for every individual in this coutry. Today he is poor, tomorrow he may become rich and learned and respected." But such a favourable emvironment for the lowest man to rise to the topmost rung in the ladder of social position is not to be had in every Western country and is due more to the wonderfully advantageous industrial, agricultural and mineral resources of the United States than to the nature of the country's social or religious organisation. A couple of hundred years before, India was equally or more priest-ridden and caste-dominated and yet the poor man ate better and clad better than he does to-day. Education then was not as general as it is now; nor were the crafts and industries of the land dependent upon literacy. And the educated men today *are not* the richest class of people. If these points be considered it will be seen that the lament of the Swami should, more appropriately have been directed more to the dearth of opportunities for Indians to expand commercially, industrially and in agriculture than to the iniquities in the social fabric and the narrowness that has crept in the Sanatana religion. It will be seen that our point of disagreement with the

Swami is more in the *manner* of expressing his idea than as to the necessity of educating and uplifting and where necessary 'enfranchising' the masses. There can be no two opinions about the ever deepening poverty of the masses, about the need of universal elementary education, about the necessity of educated classes leading the movement of the education and uplift of the masses. "Let each one of us" says the Swami "pray day and night for the down-trodden millions of India. I am no metaphysician, no philosopher nay, no saint. But I am poor, I love the poor. Who feels for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken forever in poverty and ignorance? They cannot find light or education. Let us unite our wills in continued prayer for their good."

When the disease is well diagnosed, no expert is required to prescribe the medicine. Even an ordinary reader of the above analysis by the Swami of the condition of the masses will pronounce education to be the panacea for all their ills. If at all the Swami required any key to the solution of the problem, he had it in the work of a brother-sanyasin in Rajputana. "There is one Sanyasin" says he "belonging to the *Kachu Panthis* or independents, who has been instrumental in the establishing of hundreds of schools and charitable asylums all over Rajputana. He has opened hospitals in forests, and thrown iron bridges over the gorges in the Himalayas, and this man never touches a coin with his hands, has no earthly possession except a blanket and begs his bread from door to door." What this one *Kachu Panthi* did independently and of his own volition, the Swami wanted to get done by thousands of

Sanyasins with a central organisation to guide them. The Swami set his heart on the education of the masses, on the eradication, in a general way, of the evil of illiteracy! He was probably the first champion in India of primary education.

In a letter (dated June 23, 1894) to H. H. the Maharaja of Mysore the Swami thus unfolds his plan of universal primary education:—

"The great difficulty in the way of educating the poor is this. Supposing even your Highness opens a free school in every village, still it would do no good, for the poverty in India is such that the poor boys would rather go to help their fathers in the fields, or otherwise try to make a living, than come to the school. Now if the mountain does not come to Mahomed, Mahomed must go to the mountain. If the poor boy cannot come to education, education must go to him. There are thousands of single-minded, self-sacrificing sanyasins in our own country, going from village to village, teaching religion. If some of them can be organized as teachers of secular things also, they will go from place to place from door to door not only preaching but teaching also. Suppose two of them go to a village in the evening with a camera, a globe, some maps etc. They can teach a great deal of astronomy and geography to the ignorant. By telling stories about different nations, they can give the poor a hundred times more information through the ear than they can get in a life-time through books. This requires an organisation, which again means money. Men enough there are in India to work on this plan, but alas! they have no money."

This plan would be certainly more economical than the conduct of primary schools all over the country which means an expenditure of seven crores of rupees. But even apart from the difficulty of harnessing wandering sanyasins to this work, it lacks all the advantages which a regular course of education at a primary school is likely to give. Though the Swami was sure that occasional doses of knowledge of astronomy, geography, and history would be more advantageous than a regular course at a primary school, still it is clear all would not agree with his opinion on this point. An ability to read and write enables a man to develop his knowledge and efficiency at any place and at any period of his life without being required to depend upon teachers. Moreover education after the Swami's plan, however health-giving it might be to the man who has already settled in life, would not have increased even by an *iota* the opportunities for betterment of worldly prospects of any of those villagers who wanted to carve a career for themselves. However, we must remember that at a time when neither the Government nor the national leaders were making any efforts to universalize primary education, the plan of the Swami labouring as he was under handicap both of men and money, appears to be calculated to do at least something towards the solution of the problem.

About this time (May-June 1894) the Swami was so much enamoured of this plan, that every other was dismissed as being of subsidiary importance. To a disciple he writes (May 1894) in the following strain:—

"Printing magazines, papers, etc., are good, no doubt, but actual work, even if infinitesimal is better than eternal scribbling and talking. Get some money, buy a

magic-lantern etc., hire a hut and go to work. Magazines are *secondary*, but this is primary. You must have a hold on the masses."

It is therefore with no little surprise that we find the Swami reversing a few months later the above instructions :—

"I have given up at present my plan for the education of the masses. It will come by and by. What I now want is a band of fiery missionaries. We must have a College in Madras to teach comparative religions, Sanskrit, the different schools of Vedanta and some European languages. We must have a press and papers printed in English and the Vernaculars."

Though in a letter written (1897) to a distinguished Indian lady, the Swami has detailed his original plan, still we do not know what efforts he made to push that plan to the forefront.

Perhaps he thought or found that for *his* plan, the old-fashioned Sadhus would not do. "We have to make and manufacture such sadhus. So I always say some young men with burning patriotism and renunciation are needed." With such men at our beck and call "what we have to do is to establish a *Math* in every town and in every village." "Start a big *Math*" said he to a disciple "in the heart of Calcutta. A well-educated *Sadhu* should be at the head of that centre and under him there should be departments for teaching practical science and arts with a specialist sanyasin in charge of these departments."

So his letters, lectures, writings and conversations were full of his intense longing to have *men* for his cause. As compared to the difficulty of getting men,

even the difficulty of getting money was nothing. "Money is not needed. Money is nothing. For the last twelve years of my life I did not knew where the next meal would come from. Money and everything else *must* come. Where are the men? That is the question." "What I want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which dwells a mind of the same material of which the thunderbolt is made; strength, manhood, *Kshatra-Virya + Brahma-Teja.*" He was not satisfied with having a dozen or score such men, but wanted a "hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor, the fallen and the down-trodden."

On January 3rd, 1895 we find the Swami writing in the following strain :—

"After taking a far and wide view of things, my mind has now been concentrated on the following plan. First it would be well to open a theological college in Madras and then gradually extend its scope; to give a thorough education to young men in the Vedas and the different Bhashyas and Philosophies, including a knowledge of the other religions of the world. At the same time a paper in English and the Vernacular should be started as an organ of the College."

Again on November 20th, 1896, he writes in a still more optimistic view:—

"My present plan of work is to start two centres, one in Calcutta and the other in Madras, in which to train up young preachers. I have funds enough to start the one in Calcutta, which being the scene of Sri Rama-

krishna's life-work demands my first attention. As for the Madras one, I expect to get funds in India."

"We will begin work with these three (the third in the Himalayas) centres; and later on, we will get to Bombay and Allahabad. And from these points, if the Lord is pleased, we will invade not only India but send over bands of preachers to every country in the world."

It was characteristic of the Swami that in building up these grand plans and projects for the permanent welfare of his country, he did not despise what others would have called 'petty' humanitarian works of which no record is kept in the history of the nation and whose return is but a word of thanksgiving and gratitude from the person, nursed, clad or fed. The Swami found in this humanitarian work a magnificient opportunity of training his disciples and making them realize that religion has to do more with the heart than with the head. Lecturing, he said, was *not* the crying need of India. There is religious knowledge enough and to spare throughout the length and breadth of this land. What is needed is the practical application of religion to the wants of society so that a healthier, stronger race may grow up to bear the banner of Hinduism. "Don't you see" said he to a disciple "why I am starting orphanages, famine-relief works etc.? Don't you see how Sister Nivedita, an English lady, has learnt to serve Indians so nicely by doing even menial works for them? And can't you, being Indians, similarly serve your own fellow-countrymen? Go, all of you, wherever there is an outbreak of plague or famine or wherever the people are in distress and mitigate their sufferings."

More characteristic still was the beautiful way in which he linked this kind of work with the highest, that of imparting spiritual knowledge. Both proceed from the same spirit of service, both are humanitarian, both are unselfish. The difference lies in the degree of their usefulness. To nurse a needy man in sickness or to feed a hungry mouth is service no doubt. but the benefit it confers lasts only for a short time. To save life is nobler still. But neither the appeasing of a day's hunger nor the saving of a body for a few years benefit a man as much as the imparting of knowledge to him. If secular knowledge is imparted, that enables him to earn his own bread. But for his eternal happiness what is most required is the gift of spiritual knowledge. The gift of spiritual knowledge, the gift of secular knowledge, the gift of life and the gift of food are gifts in descending order of importance; but they are all gifts and none is to be despised, "The *tapas* and the other hard yogas that were practised in other yugas do not work now. What is needed in this *Kali Yuga*, is giving, helping others, *Danam*," *Jnana-dana*, *Vidya-dana*, *Jiva-dana* *Anna-dana*. And the Swami who exhorted the people "in the land of charity to take up the energy of the first charity, the diffusion of spiritual knowledge" was never tired of hoping that a day would come when the "*phen* or the conjee strained off from the cooked rice, in the Belur Math *Anna-satra*, draining into the Ganges would turn its water white."

The Swami wanted the lecturing and missionary propaganda to be supplemented by propaganda through the press. Though his dream of conducting a daily paper devoted to Vedanta remained a dream only, still he suc-

ceeded in running three monthly magazines, the Brahma-Vadin, the Prabuddha Bharata and the Udbodhan. He also wanted to start others in Tamil, Telgu, Canarese, etc. He wanted to make these magazines not only popular but magazines of research and scholarship also and as preparatory to the study of those publications that he expected to send out from his central organisation.

In this repect his own lectures, discourses and class-talks formed the nucleus of the series of books of research and scholarship. Though the earlier speeches of the Swami are hopelessly lost to us, still since the time the services of the "faithful Goodwin", were secured for him, the wealth of Swamiji's thoughts has been preserved for us in the most satisfactory form and probably it was the wealth of these thoughts which impressed the Swami himself and frequently prompted him to write 'something big' on Vedanta philosophy. The Swami's impetuous temperament was not suited to the toils of an author. He could meditate for hours together. But pen was hardly the thing to keep pace with the velocity of this thoughts. Besides the sympathy or antagonism of an audience acted like a tonic on him and drew out mighty thoughts from the innermost chamber of his brain. The solitude of a scholar's studio does not vibrate with that subtle sense of attraction or repulsion without which men of Swamiji's stamp are not sufficiently spurred to deliver their message. But at the sight of the immense wealth and variety of his thoughts, the Swami thought it would be best if it could be presented in a finished and logical form. The hurry, excitement and occasional im-

provision of a lecture-room has its own disadvantages. But how and when to write the proposed book was the question. On 21st September, 1894, he writes :—"I have not been able to write a line yet for my proposed book." Soon he gets despondent and in another letter says "I am writing no book on Hinduism just now. I am simply jotting down my thoughts. I do not know if I shall publish them. What is in books? The world is too full of foolish things already." This pessimism was probably due to the hurry of the moment or tiredness of the nerves. Proably about this time the scope and the subject-matter of the proposed book were not determined Gradually however the idea came to him. On May 6th 1895, he writes. "Now I will tell you my discovery. All of religion is contained in the Vedanta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedanta philosophy, the *Dwaita*, *Vishishtadwaita*, and *Adwaita*. There are three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each is necessary. This is the essential of Religion. The Vedanta applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India, is Hinduism. The first stage is Dwaita, as applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe, is Christanity; as applied to the Semetic groups, Mahomedanism. The Adwaita as applied in its Yoga perception form is Buddhism etc. Now by religion is meant the Vedanta; the applications must vary according to the different needs, surroundings, and other circumstances of different nations. Although the philosophy is the same, the Saktas, Shaivas etc., apply it each, to their own special cults and forms. I wish to write a book on the subject." Again a few months later "I am busy writing something big on the Vedanta philosophy. I am busy collecting passages from the vario us

Vedas bearing on the Vedanta in its threefold aspects. You can help me by getting someone to collect passages bearing on first the Advaitist idea, then the Vishishta dvaitic and the Dvaitist from the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Upanishads and the Puranas. It would be a pity to leave the West, without leaving something of the philosophy in book-form." Unfortunately, however, owing to pressure of work, the idea could not be carried out. But the Swami did not altogether give it up and on his final return to India now and then talked of retiring from all his public activities to the Himalayas and devoting the evening of his life to the writing of books.

Though the Swami was not able to keep anything systematic behind, still his numerous lectures and writings, we are fortunate to possess contain within them hundreds of original ideas which bespeak the depth of his learning, the grasp of his intellect and the wonderful analytical and synthetical powers of his mind. They are the result of nearly twenty years' research, close application and comparative study. His illuminating remarks on the evil introduced by decadent Buddhism, the absorption and assimilation of diverse races, into the fold of Hinduism, and on the centuries-long struggle between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas show the sweep of his mind whose penetrating powers never fail to bring out striking and often convincing opinions regarding the ancient, maedival and modern history of India. It may be, that here and there the Swami has jumped to conclusions on too slender a basis but on the whole it will have to be admitted that the Swami has given us a new conception of the history of India

and whatever one might have to say regarding certain details in his picture no one will seriously dispute at once the fidelity and the grandeur of the picture. Similarly his interpretation of Vedanta in terms of modern science and European philosophy strikes the reader as a magnificent attempt at harmonizing the three and his lectures on Jnanayoga bristle with original thought-provoking view-points which the student of philosophy cannot afford to pass by. See with what ease and readiness the Swami silenced the European scholar at the Paris Congress of the History of Religions with respect to the origin of *Shiv-lingam*: how he repudiated the phallic origin of the worship of *Shiv-lingam* by tracing it to the "famous hymn in the *Atharva Veda Samhita* sung in praise of *Yupastambha* the sacrificial post. In that hymn, a description is found of the beginning-less and end-less *Stambha* or *Skambha* and it is shown that the same *Skambha* is put in place of the eternal Brahman. As afterwards the Yajna fire, its smoke, ashes and flames, the Soma-plant, the ox that used to carry on its back the wood for the Vedic sacrifice,—gave place to the conceptions of the brightness of Siva's body, his yellow-matted hair his blue throat and the riding on the bull of Siva—just so the *Yupa-skambha* gave place in time to the *Shiv-lingam* and was deified".

Again, see how in the midst of his preoccupation and public engagements in the United States, the Swami finds time to put the cosmology and eschatology of the Vedanta on a scientific basis. It is impossible to quote the whole of his analysis here. But from the following it will be seen how alert the Swami was in reinforcing ancient Indian lore with modern science and philosophy.

Mr. * * (a distinguished electrician) was charmed to hear about the Vedantic *Prana* and *Akasha* and the *Kalaps* which according to him are the only theories modern sciece can entertain. Now both *Akasha* and *Prana* again are produced from the cosmic *Mahat*, the Universal mind, the Brahma or Ishvara. Mr. * * thinks he can demonstratc mathematically that force and matter are reducible to potential energy. I am to go and see him next week to get this new mathematical demonstration."

These and numerous other ideas bequeathed to us by the Swami justify his following remarks—

"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. The abstract Advaita must become living, poetic; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical Psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may understand it. That is my life-work."

It is such a pity that the Swami did not live sufficiently long to carry out these and other plans and projects His short life was, as it were a half finished beautiful picture. Nevertheless we cannot be too grateful to the Swami for having planned and projected the entire regeneration of the motherland and the recon-

struction of the Hindu Society along lines sketched in this and the preceeding two chapters. Let us fervently hope and pray that the noble work commenced by the Swami and faithfully continued by his gurubhais and disciples will, in fulness of time be completed by another and more long-lived Vivekananda.

CHAPTER XIV

SWAMIJI AND SOCIAL REFORM

Oh Anglicised India! Do not forget, child, that there are in this society problems, that neither you nor your Western Guru can yet grasp the meaning of.....much less solve.

Swami Vivekananda

The Social Reform movement, so-called, has been fortunate enough to secure, in the course of its chequered course, help from all quarters. Anxious to divert the minds of the educated people from legitimate political aspirations, high-placed Government officials in the nineteenth century always sang the paeans of Social Reform. The Christian missionary, with his own axe to grind was always enthusiastic in pointing his finger of scorn at the weak points in Hindu society. The educated Brahmin, who had drunk deep at the fountain of Liberty and Equality was always the first to recognize the evils that have crept into the Hindu social organism and try his best to remedy them. The zealous non-Brahmin of to-day finds on the platform of Social Reform, a convenient opportunity of having a fling at the hated Brahmin. To quite a different class belonged men like Swami Vivekananda, Lokamanya Tilak and several others who though reformers were not fanatical, iconoclastic or revolutionary in their aims and methods.

The stagnant condition of the Indian civilisation during several centuries has given rise to a number of Social evils which by their very accumulation impressed the imagination of the first generation of English educated Indians. But these evils are neither more pressing nor more hideous than those which during the last three centuries have accompanied the rapid growth of European power and culture. The first duty of every country is to strengthen its position and consolidate its influence amidst neighbouring groups of nations with a view to safeguard its political liberty which is the mother of all social well-being. Where this liberty is wanting the duty of the people lies in recovering it from those into whose hands it has fallen. But the Indian leaders in the first half of the 19th century failed to take note of this cardinal principle and the country, instead of pining for its lost independence was applauding the English as deliverers. Howsoever natural such an attitude might have been owing to the chaotic condition of things just before the British Conquest, it cannot be two much deplored; for, relieved of the cares and responsibilities of political and international questions, the new leaders of the country attended to the next best thing, the condition of their society In this attitude they were encouraged by their English and Anglo-Indian masters as well as by the zealous missionaries. Add to this, the tendency of a fallen nation to belittle its own worth and admire the customs manners, thoughts and institutions of the rulers. Knowing that they were a mere handful in the midst of crores of Indians, the English believed that unless they maintained very high prestige among Indians, the

political domination of India was an impossibility and hence they tried to appear to us at their best,—strong masterful, gifted with all the qualities of greatness. They were demigods amidst a race of mortals, giants ruling over pigmies and the very limited intercourse Indians were permitted to have with them, completely concealed from us their short-comings. It is not surprising that in the psychological situation detailed above, Indian leaders, cut off from the moorings of national traditions, mistook the unreal for the real, the accidental accompaniment for the substance. Conscious of their impotence and anxions to lift up the country to a high level, they could think of only one way, the complete Westernisation of India. English habits, even English diet, must they thought be adopted before we could think of replacing the English Bureaucrats. Ladies must learn, widows must remarry, castes must go,—all because we must be equal to our rulers in efficiency and strength. These early English educated leaders advocated Social Reform with the same object with which Japan nearly seventy years back, threw away her crude military weapons in favour of modern instruments of destruction. In short, love of imitation, loss of individuality, the glamour of the English civilisation and a fierce desire to get rid of India's inferiority ushered the era of Social Reform in India.

It will however have to be admitted that along with these "de-orthodizing" tendencies, there were higher, nobler, broader influences at work. The very fact that India was thrown into intimate contact with a civilisation

so different from hers, with different institutions and ideals was bound to create a kind of intellectual stir in the minds of the thoughtful. The liberalizing tendencies of Western thought, together with its emphasis on liberty and equality were bound to react on old effete notions of social solidarity and raise ugly and uncomfortable questions for complacent and unprogressive orthodoxy. The gospel of political liberty that so enchanted the first few generations of English educated Indians was destined to awaken longing for social equality. The introduction of machinery had revolutionzed all industry in Europe and what was brought about in Europe by slow and successive stages during the eventful decades of the nineteenth century was suddenly, as is were transplanted in the Indian soil. An ancient social order which with much patchwork had preserved its integrity during twenty or thirty centuries found itself confronted by a new political gospel, a new industrial organisation, a new social ideal and knew not whether to bless or curse these nor how to adjust itself to this unaccustomed atmosphere.

It must be owned that, leaving a few honourable exceptions here and there, the expenents of this new gospel were puny and insignificant people unfitted in every way to shoulder the burden of Social Reform. Vehicles of gigantic impulses as they were, they had feet of clay and hence they were incapable of leading a true and national movement of Social Reform. Their first and greatest mistake was that by their narrow and fanatical way of preaching Social Reform, they at once alienated the sympathy of political reformers like Lokamanya Tilak and religious leaders like Swami

Vivekananda. Exception has been taken by some of these to Swamiji's strong criticism of the Reformers in one of his Madras lectures. They have sought to tone down the rigour of that criticism by declaring that it was merely an "outburst of temper." No doubt the little feeling that was introduced into that lecture was the result of the intimidating way in which the Reformers of Madras invited the Swami to join them. But the opinions there expressed are in no way at variance with the sentiments uttered by the Swami in other places and on other occasions, both *before* and after that sudden "outburst of temper." And why should we attribute other reasons to Swamiji's attitude when the explanation can found in the very psychology of the reform movement which was not only neglectful of but in several respects hostile to religion? Was it ever possible for a man like the Swami, who considered every question from the standpoint of religion and spirituality, to ever agree with views expressed by men who cared very little for religion and spirituality and who wanted to base their entire movement on materialistic and utilitarian grounds? We are not therefore at all surprised to find in Swamiji's lectures and writings direct attacks on the Reformers and their methods. We propose to examine some points suggested by the discourses in the following few pages.

Swamiji's oppsition to the Social Reform movement of his days was determined by fundamental considerations. Who was the Social Reformer? He was generally the product of the Western system of education. Swamiji knew that the education we have been receiving

is negative. It has taught us that we are nobodies. We have learnt only weakness. Being a conquered race we have brought ourselves to believe that we are weak and have no independence in anything. That is why we have lost *Shraddha*. It is by losing this ideal of *Shraddha* that the country has gone to ruin. *Shraddha* "must be brought back once more to us, the faith in ourselves must be reawakened and then only all the problems which face our country will be solved."

It was this *Shraddha* which the Social Reformer essentially lacked. Indeed the whole movement of Social Reform was based on this want of faith and a frank admission that our society was full of abuses. With his mind full of love and pride for the past, Swamiji would even prefer the old orthodox bigot to this new reforming fanatic. Replying to the address of welcome at Ramnad, Swamiji said—

"There are two great obstacles to our path in India, the Scylla of old orthodoxy and the Charybdis of modern European civilisation. Of these two, I vote for the old orthodoxy, The orthodox may be ignorant, he may be crude, but he has a faith, he is a man, he stands on his own feet; while the Europeanised man is a mass of heterogeneous ideas picked up at random, unassimilated, undigested, unharmonized. What is the motive power of his work?—

A few patronizing pats from the English. His schemes of reform, his vehement vituperations against the evils of certain social customs have as the mainspring, some European patronage. Why are some of our customs called evil? Because the Europeans say so. That is about the reason he gives. I would not submit to that."

Indeed, to Swamiji's mind materialism, Western Education and Social Reform were almost convertible terms. The over-emphasis of the reformer on social questions was due to (1) an imperfect understanding of the past course of Indian History (2) an unwarranted belief that evils are almost confined to India and that the Western societies are on the whole free from them (3) the belief that he was starting some new work, not previously conceived by any Indian during the last two thousand years and more and that on the execution of this work depended the material welfare of India. This position the Swami could not by any means accept. He frankly told the reformer that he was not the saviour of the country that he claimed to be. Others, far greater, had been working for the reform of India during the last many centuries. "Did India ever stand in want of reformers? Do you read the history of India? who was Ramanuja? who was Sankara? who was Nanaka? who was Chaitanya? who was Kabir? who was Dadu? who were all these great preachers one following the other, a gallaxy of stars of the first magnitude? Did not Ramanuja feel for the lower classes? Did he not try all his life to admit even the Pariah to his community? Did he not try to admit even the Mahomedans to his own fold? Did not Nanak confer with Hindus and Mahomedans and try to bring about a new state of things? They all tried and their work is still going on. The Social Reformer must never suppose that it is he alone that has started to bring liberty or equality or happiness to the poor and the oppressed. One may ask, 'what difference does it make? Let the reformer who is sacrificing something

think he is doing something new.' But unless the reformer understands the psychological and historical continuity of the work, he would not be able to grasp the scope of his work or its limitations. "You must go down to the basis of the thing, to the very root of the matter. The solution of the problem is not so easy as it seems. It is a vast one. Be not in a hurry, this problem had been known several hundred years. Today is it the fashion to speak of Buddhism and Buddhistic agnosticism. Little do they dream that this degradation which is with us has been left to us by Buddhism."

Unless, therefore, the reformer recognizes that this twenty centuries old problem has been grappled with by mightier men than himself, unless he studies the way in which that problem has been faced by predecessors, his solution is bound to be imperfect and even wrong. And the first thought that would occur to a reformer on a sympathetic study of the past is that religion and social reform could not be divorced. As the Swami aptly said "meddle not with so-colled Social Reform for there cannot be any reform without spiritual reform first." That is the key to Swamiji's thoughts. "Preach Social Reform through religion". "I have seen that I cannot preach even religion to Americans without showing them its practical effect on social life. I could not preach religion in England without showing the wonderful political changes, the Vedanta would bring; so in India, Social Reform has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants, its spirituality."

The Swami claimed himself to be not only a reformer but a greater reformer than any of the

Social Reformers. "To the Reformers I will point out, that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits; I want root-and-branch reform. Where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform, I believe in growth. I do not dare to put myself in the position of God and dictate to our society "This way thou shouldst move and not that' I simply want to be like the little squirrel in the building of Rama's bridge, who was quite content to put on the bridge his little quota of sand-dust. That is my position. This wonderful national machine has worked through ages. This wonderful river of national life is flowing before us. Who knows and who dares say whether it is good and how it shall move? Thousands of circumstances are crowding round it, giving it a special impulse, making it dull at one time and quicker at another? Who dares command its motion? Feed the national life with the fuel it wants but the growth is it own."

In other words, it is not the Reformers who have to think out certain reforms for the society at large. The necessity for reform has to be felt and unless those who have to feel that necessity are thoroughly awakened it is useless even for a few thoughtful people to apply abstract ideas of liberty, justice or equality to certain grades of society and accomplish their reform irrespective of their apathy. Reform is not a medicine to be injected into the body politic; rather it is the process of supplying the fundamentals of life to the nation at large. When a seed is sown in the ground, it is our

duty only to supply light, air and water to the seed which then will grow by virtue of its inherent law of growth. The Swami refused to recognize the right of the Reformer to think out what reform is needed for the nation. "The whole problem of Social Reform" says the Swami "resolves itself into this:—where are those who want reform? Make *them* first. Where are the people? The tyranny of a minority is the worst tyranny that the world ever sees. A few men who think that certain things are evil will not make a nation move. Why does not the nation move. First educate the nation. Creat your legislative body and then the law will be forthcoming. First create the power, the sanction from which the law wil spring. The kings are gone; where is the new power of the people? Bring it up. Therefore even for Social Reform, the first duty is to educate the people."

The result of this concentration of the reformatory will in a handful of educated persons has been that problems that touch the upper two classes have gained undue prominence and that too in the name of the nation at large. "Most of the reforms that have been agitated for during the last century have been ornamental. Every one of these reforms only touches the first two castes and no other. The question of widow remarriage would not touch seventy per cent of the Indian women and all such questions only reach the higher castes of Indian people who are educated at the expense of the masses."

Shortsighted, patronizing, fanatical ways of reforming others in the end do more harm than good. When

in the West, the Swami had carefully studied the history of the abolition of slavery; and he was thoroughly convinced that it only intensified the misery of the slaves. No greater upheavel for the establishment of right and liberty can be imagined than the war for the abolition of slavery in America. And what has been its results? The slaves are a hundred times worse off to-day than they were before the abolition. Before the abolition, these poor negroes were the property of somebody, and as properties they had to be looked after, so that they might not deteriorate. To-day, they are the property of nobody. Their lives are of no value. They are burnt alive on more pretences that is the effect of such violent taking away of evil by law or by fanaticism."

Swamiji's ideal in Social Reform was the intensity of a fanatic plus the 'extensity' of a liberal man. The fanaticism of reformers is due in great measure to their ignorance of the purpose of reformation. They do not know that "the sum total of the good things of the world has been the same throughout in its relation to man's need" and that things do not grow better, but we grow better by the changes we make in the things. This conviction can only come to the liberated intellect. But this conviction in prejudicial to enthusiasm which must be supported by a noble and tender heart to which the very sight of misery is unbearable. The fanaticism of our reformers is also due to an incorrect estimate of the condition of Indian society as compared to European society. "Here the earth is soaked sometimes with widow's tears; there in the West, the air is rent-

with the sighs of the unmarried. Here poverty is the great bane of life; there the life-weariness of luxury is the great bane that is upon the race. Evil is everywhere-it is like chronic rheumatism. Drive it from the foot, it goes to the head, drive it from there, it goes somewhere else. It is a question of chasing it from place to place; that is all. Our philosophy teaches that evil and good are eternally conjoined, the obverse and the the reverse of the some coin. Nay, all life is evil. No breath can be breathed without killing some one else. Not a morsel of food can be eaten without depriving some one of it. All this work against evil is more subjective than objective, more educational than actua-however big we may talk.

One of the greatst services rendered by the Social Reform school which Swamiji has criticized with so much bluntness is their championship of the cause of women and here they had Swamiji's full sympathy and support. Swamiji held that though in modern Hinduism which is largely Puranik i.e. post-Buddhistic in origin, the status of woman became somewhat inferior, the pristine Aryan ideal of womanhood was distinctly higher. He wanted the women themselves to solve their problems. "Our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education." He wanted that they should not be married at a tender age. He wanted them to intensify the ideal of chastity. "Studying the present needs of the age it seems imperative to train some of them in the ideal of renunciation. so that they will take up the vow of life-long.virginity. Along with this they should he taught sciences and other things which

would be of benefit not only to them but to others as well." In the course of his residence in America what struck the Swami again and again was that while well-educated men could be found in plenty in India who would be a match for well-educated Americans, one would scarcely find anywhere women like those in America. At the same time he was candid enough to tell American women that while he would very much like Indian women to have their intellectuality, mere intellectuality was not the highest good and morality & spirituality were the things for which Indians strove more. It will thus be seen that Swamiji was a discriminating supporter of every reasonable movement for the progress of women, and the only difference—by no means small—he had with the Reformers was that while their educational ideals were purely secular those of the Swami were predominatingly spiritual. As in every other case, the Reformers wanted Indian women follow in every respect the pattern of Western women. But Swamiji wanted them to absorb whatever was good in the Western ideals and methods without losing the good national characterestics they already possess.

Swamiji's attitude towards caste has been much misrepresented. From the very first he seems to have kept an open mind on this question and the hatred of caste which he might have inherited from his association with the Brahmo Samaj seems to have considerably cooled down in later days. His position, even in the early part of his public career was that caste had nothing to do with religion and that caste could very easily be destroyed without in the least harming the

Hindu religion. He blamed the leaders of Social Reform for confounding both these together and visiting the evils of caste on religion. "Beginning from Buddha down to Rammohan Roy, every one made the mistake of holding caste to be a religious institution and tried to pull down religion and caste together, and failed." This attitude left him free to bless or ban caste. In 1893, he wrltes:—

"In spite of all the raving of priests, caste is simply a crystallised social institution which after doing its service is now filling the atmosphere of India with its stench and it can only be removed by giving back to the people their lost social individuality. Every man born here, knows that he is a *man*. Every man born in India knows that he is a slave of society. With the introduction of modern competition, see how caste is disappearing fast! No religion is neccssary to kill it. No man is prohibited from doing anything he pleases for his livelihood and the result is neck and neck competition and thus thousands are seeking and finding the highest level they were born for, intead of vegetating at the bottom."

When Swamiji wrote these lines, probably he had not visualized to himself all the implications of neck and neck competition. He had still the glamour of Western Civilisation on his mind. Three year's contact with the glorious West disillusioned him and replying (1897) to the address of welcome at Madras, he said:—

"Competition, cruel, cold and heartless is the law of Europe. Our law is caste, the breaking of competi-

tion, checking its forces, mitigating its cruelties, smoothening the passage of the human soul through this mystery of life."

On another occasion, referring principally to this Institution he declared:—

"Let me take this opportunity of telling you, my country-men that in comparing the different races and nations of the world I have been among, I have come to the conclusion that our people are on the whole the most moral and the most godly and our institutions are in their plan and purpose, best suited to make mankind happy. I have seen castes, in almost every country in the world but nowhere is their plan and purpose so glorious as here. If caste is thus unavoidable, I would rather have a caste of purity and culture and self-sacrifice than a caste of dollars"

This is emphatically the language of one who has begun to admire caste. "Therefore our solution of the caste question" the Swami continues "is not degrading those who are already high up, is not running amuck through food and drink, is not jumping out of your own limits to have more enjoyment but it comes by every one of us fulfilling the dictates of our Vedantic religion by our attaining spirituality and by our becoming the ideal Brahman in whom worldiness is altogether absent and true wisdom is abundantly present." Again on another occasion, the Swami says:—

"What is the plan? The ideal at one end is the Brahman and the ideal at the other end is the Chandala and the whole work is to raise the Chandala up to the Brahman."

In these resonant words of wisdom and insight the Swami has pronounced the idealistic aspect of the caste problem It was a pity that the Swami who was capable not only of striking a sublime note but also of working out ideas in all their infinitiçimal details was cut off too early before he could leave us a clear cut solution of the problem of Caste. No doubt in the "Conversations and Dialogues" we come across a passage wherein the Swami says:—

"We have to redivide the whole Hindu population grouping it under the four main Castes of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, as of old. The numberless modern subdivisions of the Brahmanas that split them up into so many castes, as it were, have to be abolished and a single Brahmana Caste to be made by uniting them all. Each of the three remaining castes also will have to be brought similarly into single groups as was the case in Vedic times."

The chief difficulty however lies in the practical application of this principle; and while reducing it to practice we cannot overlook the fact that these subdivisions were not only intentional but had some very definite principal behind them. As has been well said "When the idea first of scrutinizing the purity of men's descent and then of reckoning a particular occupation as the badge of the result of that scrutiny had once pervaded Indian society they were pushed to their logical conclusion with a most Hindu-like disregard of practical consequences." It is the fashion to say that Buddha abolished caste in ancient India. The truth is that while the influence of Buddhism has negatively been instru

mental in weakening the rigour of Caste, Buddha and his followers neither upheld caste nor abolished it. Where, as in Ceylon and Tibet they found caste non-existent, they did not introduce it: while in India they kept it in the main just as it was. In the propagation of his anti-Brahmanic Faith, naturally Buddha and his followers sought more recruits in other castes and to that extent their influence certainly grew and this no doubt had some effect upon the caste system in its actual working. After Buddhism, the Mahomedan rule also further weakened the rigour of caste. But the greatest blow delivered to it was under the British rule by the rapid industrialisation of the country. When once the allocation of different professions to different sections of the community is given the go-by and every man is free to follow whatever profession he chooses fifty percent of the *raison de'tre* of caste disappears. The cultivation of certain mental and moral qualities, the observance of a certain set of traditions, the maintaining of a certain degree of culture and the pursuit of a definite set of professions,—these were the four bases on which the ancient caste system was built and when partly by circumstance and partly by effort, one after another of these bases is removed, the mere preservation of caste in its crystallized and effete form is of no national use. So either we have to abolish the caste system as the Reformers would have us do or we must strengthen though ameliorate it and there is evidence to assert that Swamiji belonged to this latter class of people. How to strengthen, preserve and ameliorate caste and at the same time rid it of its anamolies, inequities and extravagences, was the problem that occupied the attention of the Swami. Owing to his early death however tha-

problem was left in the same incomplete state in which many others also were left.

In conclusion, we may say that the ideal type of reform the Swami wanted contained in it two elements: discriminating but enthusiastic respect for and attachment to the past as well as readiness to absorb new ideals and methods and throw away whatever had become lifeless and degenerate in the social organisation of the people. The Swami stood for the brotherhood of man,—not in the Western, political sense only but in the broader, Vedantic sense. Therefore, his approach to Social Reform problems was always through Vedanta or religion. Therefore he was not content with merely bringing about a particular change in society but was careful to emphasize the ideal also. The average reformer is content with the change and has no thought for the ideal. But as Emerson says "no change of circumstances can repair a defect in character. We boast our emancipation from many superstition but *if we have broken any idol it is through a transfer of the idolatry.*" Swamiji as a Social Reformer, stood for universal-secular and religious-education. He stood for equal rights, equal opportunities for all. He stood for progress all round. He stood for the assimilation of all that is good in Western civilisation. And while he stood for the adjustment of our social institutions to the changed economic and political environment, he insisted that Social Reform should not be brought about at the cost of our religion, or in other words, at the cost of all the great and good things we have inherited from the ancient *rishis*