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started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

AUGUST 2005

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| Traditional Wisdom 399 | 'Bande Mataram': In Historical Perspective 427 <i>Dr Satish K Kapoor</i> |
| This Month 400 | |
| <i>Editorial:</i> History Writing and Nationalism 401 | History, Religion and Humanity 429 <i>Swami Sandarshananda</i> |
| <i>Prabuddha Bharata</i> –100 Years Ago 407 | The Leaf and the Leaping Fire 433 <i>N Hariharan</i> |
| Reflections on the Bhagavadgita 408 <i>Swami Atulananda</i> | Glimpses of Holy Lives 439 |
| Swami Vivekananda's Nationalism ... 413 <i>Sunil K Sengupta</i> | Reviews 441 |
| Bankimchandra: Development of Nationalism and Indian Identity ... 418 <i>Dr Anil Baran Ray</i> | Reports 446 |

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Cover: The Renovated Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House and Cultural Centre; inset: Swamiji's Birthplace

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत ।

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Vol. 110

AUGUST 2005

No. 8

→ Traditional Wisdom ←

BHĀRĀTĪYATĀ: INDIAN NATIONALISM

उत्तरं यत्समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रेश्चैव दक्षिणम् ।
वर्षं तद्भारतं नाम भारती यत्र सन्ततिः ॥

To the north of the seas and south of the Himalayas is the land of Bhārata, peopled by the descendants of Bharata. (*Vishnu Purana*)

If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *Punya Bhumi* ... 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. (Swami Vivekananda)

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up
into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depths of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
into the dreary desert of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee
into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
let my country awake. (Rabindranath Tagore)

I live for India's freedom and would die for it, because it is part of Truth. Only a free India can worship the true God. I work for India's freedom because my *swadeshi* teaches me that being born in it and having inherited her culture, I am fittest to serve *her* and *she* has a prior claim to my service. But my patriotism is not exclusive; it is calculated not only not to hurt another nation but to benefit all in the true sense of the word. India's freedom as conceived by me can never be a menace to the world. (Mahatma Gandhi)

☪ This Month ☪

Historiography has long been an ideologically contested territory and the meaning and connotations of the term *nationalism* are also hotly debated. The editorial, **History Writing and Nationalism**, takes a look at nationalist historiography in the context of Swami Vivekananda's views on history writing.

Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago features a rejoinder to Sir Francis Young-husband's misrepresentation of Swamiji's views on the Indian national ideal, and a report on J C Bose's research on plant life.

In his **Reflections on the Bhagavadgita** this month, Swami Atulanandaji sums up Sri Krishna's discourse on bhakti yoga. With this we conclude the present series comprising the 'middle hexad' of the Gita devoted to bhakti.

Few Indian leaders would be unacquainted with the 'nationalist orations' of Swami Vivekananda. But a non-partisan appropriation of his ideas and plans is less common. Sunil K Sengupta's essay **Swami Vivekananda's Nationalism** is a brief but balanced survey of Swamiji's ideas on Indian nationalism. The author, a retired administrator, had been a guest lecturer in journalism at Calcutta University.

The intellectual ferment in nineteenth-century Bengal was a key element in the crystallization of the consciousness of modern Indian nationalism, and Bankimchandra Chatterjee, the father of the 'historical novel' in Bengal, was an important protagonist of this development. **Bankimchandra: Development of Nationalism and Indian Identity** explores the evolution of the idea of

nationalism in Bankimchandra's works, his conceptualization of the motherland as Goddess, and his call for a militant spirit that had an immediate impact on the course of Indian nationalism. Dr Anil Baran Ray, the author, is Professor of Political Science, Burdwan University.

'Bande Mataram': In Historical Perspective is a brief reappraisal of some of the controversies surrounding India's national song, 'Bande Mataram', by Dr Satish K Kapoor, Director, Centre of Historical Studies, Lyallpur Khalsa College, Jalandhar.

The impact of religious impulses and religious personalities in shaping the course of history is often lost sight of in general narratives of political or social history, more so when Marxist perspectives provide the theoretical framework. That this leads to a skewed view of history is highlighted by Swami Sandarshanandaji of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar, in his article **History, Religion and Humanity**.

The Leaf and the Leaping Fire is a fascinating retelling of the *Bhagavata* story of the unworldly devotion of the gopis for Sri Krishna which stood in sharp contrast to the dry ritualism of their husbands. It goes without saying that the gopis were blessed, but our narrator, Sri N Hariharan of Madurai, discovers several other morals in the story—a presentation for Krishna Janmashtami.

In this month's **Glimpses of Holy Lives** we have a profile of the fourteenth-century sage Vidyaranya, whose many-sided genius not only guided the formation of a strong state but also set a personal example of dharmic living culminating in sannyasa.

History Writing and Nationalism

EDITORIAL

While at Alwar during his *parivrajaka* days, Swami Vivekananda happened to speak to a group of young men on the importance of the study and writing of history. He exhorted:

Study Sanskrit, but along with it study Western science as well. Learn accuracy, my boys. Study and labour, so that the time will come when you can put our history on a scientific basis. Now, Indian history is disorganized. It has no chronological accuracy. The histories of our country written by English writers cannot but be weakening to our minds, for they tell only of our downfall. How can foreigners, who understand very little of our manners and customs, or our religion and philosophy, write faithful, unbiased histories of India. Naturally, many false notions and wrong inferences have found their way into them. Nevertheless the Europeans have shown us how to proceed in making researches into our ancient history. Now it is for us to strike out an independent path of historical research for ourselves; to study the Vedas and the Puranas and the ancient annals of India; and from this to make it our life-work and discipline to write accurate, sympathetic and soul-inspiring histories of the land. *It is for Indians to write Indian history.* Therefore set yourselves to the task of rescuing our lost and hidden treasures from oblivion. Even as one whose child has been lost does not rest until he has found it, so do you never cease to labour until you have revived the glorious past of India in the consciousness of the people. That will be true national education, and with its advancement a true national spirit will be awakened.

One need not be conversant with the theoretical perspectives in academic historiography to recognize in the aforementioned counsel a call for nationalist history. A review of this statement in its historical context as also against the background of the plural world of competing histories generated by diverse intellectual thought currents can, however, be

very instructive. This is especially so when contemporary curricular history texts in Indian schools have literally been turned into battlegrounds by conflicting political ideologies.

Historiography in Swamiji's Time

The latter half of the nineteenth century was a time when history as a discipline was crystallizing into the forms that we know today. More specifically, it was moving from the early Enlightenment tradition to the age of empiricism or positivism. While the primacy of reason had been taken for granted with the turn of Enlightenment, early Enlightenment historians in the West—Vico, Voltaire, Hume, Robertson and the like—tried to see the unfolding of a teleological plan in history, a plan of continuous cultural improvement. This is what Kant called universal history. To Voltaire history was the 'teaching of philosophy by example' and Hegel called these exemplars 'world historical people'—the Greeks, Romans and Germans—who dominated each successive stage of development.

The positivists, led by Auguste Comte, wanted to study society and history scientifically, just as scientists were studying nature. Empiricism was characterized by the use of all possible documentary evidence and the critical questioning of texts to arrive at an 'authentic' account of 'how things actually were'. Otto Ranke's *History of the Latin and Teutonic People* (1824) and the twelve-volume *Cambridge Modern History* (1902-10) edited by Lord Acton typified this process, although Chinese historians had recognized the centrality of evidence at least a hundred years before Ranke and Islamic historians were well aware of Vico's concept of the stages of development.

For all their advocacy of empiricism, the main impulse for these nineteenth-century

histories was nationalism, even as the ferment of revolution on the European continent was carving out new nation states from old monarchies and the concept of nations and nationalities was taking a concrete intellectual and social shape. Thus T B Macaulay's *History of England* not only defended Anglican religion, institutions like the British Parliament and Victorian traditions but also combined the stress on national uniqueness with a xenophobic contempt for non-English peoples and religions (like Catholicism).² J R Greene's *Short History of the English People* that Swamiji reputedly mastered in three days prior to his B.A. examinations was also written on similar lines. Nationalist history writing on 'rigorous' and 'scientific' lines was intellectual de rigueur in Europe of Swamiji's times. Swamiji's study of Comte's logical positivism has been pointed out by his biographers. He emphasized this need for a *critical scientific attitude, organized presentation of data, and chronological accuracy* to his Alwar audience. But he had other reasons too for emphasizing nationalist history writing.

James Mill had set the tone for Indian history writing with his *History of British India* (1817), where he periodized Indian history into the Hindu, Muslim and British periods—a schema that has still not died, though the nomenclature has now been replaced with the terms Ancient, Medieval and Modern, the judgemental implications of which are less obvious. Mill was unequivocal about the immorality and despotism of Indian 'civilization' and though Islamic civilization was 'comparatively superior' to the Hindu, till the arrival of the British India had been 'condemned to semi-barbarism and the miseries of despotic power'. Mill was of the opinion that the Hindus had no sense of history (this argument also rears its head occasionally even now) and that their culture was stagnant: 'From the scattered hints, contained in the writings of the Greeks, the conclusion has been drawn that the Hindus, at the time of Alexander's inva-

sion, were in a state of manners, society, and knowledge, exactly the same that [sic] in which they were discovered by the nations of modern Europe.'³

Mountstuart Elphinstone's *History of India* (1841), which remained the standard college text for several decades, and which Swamiji had read even before his First Arts examination, announced in its preface: 'If the ingenious, original and elaborate work of Mr Mill left some room for doubt and discussion, the able compositions since published ... may be supposed to have fully satisfied the demands of every reader.'⁴ E B Cowell's introductory notes, however, would not have appeared very flattering to Hindus: 'I need hardly say that the history of ancient India is almost exclusively mythic and legendary—the ancient Hindus never possessed any true "historical sense"'. 'The "Mahometan period" / Cowell continues, 'is of a very different character. Here we have authentic contemporary records—we deal with flesh and blood, not shadows' (vii). In asking the Alwar youths to use the Vedas, Puranas and annals as *source material* for the reconstruction of India's past, Swamiji was therefore looking to flesh the ghostly shadows that had so repelled Cowell—an endeavour that has been carried out with much success by subsequent historians.

Nationalist Histories

If Mill's history was a 'justification' of British imperial conquest and Elphinstone's an essentially colonial overview of the history of a British colony, V A Smith's *Oxford History of India* (1911) and the five-volume *Cambridge History of India* (1922-37) were fresh attempts at justifying British rule in India in the face of mounting opposition from Indian nationalists. In the words of R C Majumdar, Vincent Smith 'never concealed his anxiety to prove the beneficence of the British Raj by holding before his readers the picture of anarchy and confusion, which, in his view, has been the normal condition in India with rare intervals.'

The inevitable moral was: 'Such is India and such it always has been till the British established a stable order.'⁵

Such opinions also stemmed from a spirit of nationalism, only this nationalism was British and not Indian. Contemporary historians like Tapan Raychaudhuri have pointed out that such histories continue to shape contemporary British opinion of its colonial past despite mounting academic evidence against such colonial views. Thus a contemporary British student is likely to argue strongly for the British sense of justice and equity, while Bankimchandra, who himself functioned as a deputy magistrate, could cite any number of instances of Britishers in India treating themselves as 'beyond the common law'. Evidently, some men were 'more equal than others'!

Nationalist history writing has not been the sole preserve of the British; nor even of imperial powers with strong national identities like Germany and France. In the US, Frederick Turner and James Robinson pioneered the writing of a 'New History' that argued for a distinct American spirit, which was not explained through European perspectives. This concept is even now echoed in the rhetoric of US politicians. In the South American continent too there has been a recent call for *historia patrias* ('national history') 'to unite the present population in common bond with the past'.

Swami Vivekananda was one of the first persons to stress the need for writing Indian national history as seen through Indian eyes. In a conversation with Priya Nath Sinha he said, 'A nation that has no history of its own has nothing in this world. ... We have our own history exactly as it ought to have been for us. ... But that history has to be rewritten. It should be restated and suited to the understanding and ways of thinking which our men have acquired in the present age through Western education.'⁶

It is evident that national history is history with a purpose. It tries to capture the

ethos, values and traditions that give a nation its identity. It reconstructs the past as the foundation of the present, the wellspring from which contemporary society derives its inspiration and vitality. It helps build a 'national consciousness' and creates a desire to recapture 'past glory'. It points to the 'lessons' that can be derived from a nation's past and which can be used to constructively guide national policy. It sees politics and governance as goal-directed (and therefore ethical) activities and so reminds citizens, bureaucrats and politicians of their responsibility and duty to the nation.

In the passage cited at the beginning, Swami Vivekananda briefly outlines the *purpose* that he envisioned for Indian national history: one, it was to rescue the lost and hidden treasures of past Indian civilization; two, it would revive the glorious past in the consciousness of the people; and three, it would awaken the national spirit and thus make for true national education. Obviously, to Swami-ji such history was essential to the making of an Indian nation, and would propel the fledgling Indian nationalism that was yet to take off.

The Making of a National History

The multi-volume *Cultural Heritage of India* (presently in six volumes) conceived during the centenary celebrations of Sri Rama-krishna's birth (1936) and published by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture was one pioneering effort at an overview of Indian culture. Another concrete response to Swami-ji's call came in 1944 with the formation of the Bharatiya Itihasa Samiti (Academy of Indian History) at the initiative of K M Munshi. The Samiti, which was soon subsumed under the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, went on to bring out the eleven-volume *History and Culture of the Indian People* under the general editorship of R C Majumdar. The editor's preface set out the plan as it differed from the then standard *Cambridge History of India*:

It has been hitherto customary to divide Indian history into the Hindu, Muslim and British pe-

riods. ... But it can hardly be regarded as equitable. Looking at the matter from a broad standpoint, it would be difficult to maintain that the 4,000 years of pre-Muslim India, of the history and culture of which we possess a definite knowledge, though in brief outline, should rank in importance as equal with that of the Muslim period of about 400 or 500 years, or the British period of less than 200 years. ... After all, the contribution of different ages to the evolution of national history and culture should be the main criterion of their relative importance. ... There is, no doubt, a dearth of material for the political history of ancient India, but this is to a large extent made up for by the corresponding abundance for the cultural side. Taking everything into consideration we ... have allotted nearly half of the entire work to the Hindu period.

In his foreword to the volumes, Munshi summarized the problems with the then available Indian histories:

The treatment of the British period in most of our histories ... reads like an unofficial report of the British conquest and of the benefits derived by India from it. It does not give us the real India; nor does it present a picture of what we saw, felt and suffered, of how we reacted to foreign influences, or of the values and organizations we created out of the impact of the West. ...

Generation after generation ... were told about the successive foreign invasions of the country, but little about how we resisted them and less about our victories. They were taught to decry the Hindu social system; but they were not told ... how its vitality enabled the national culture to adjust its central ideas to new conditions.

Readers were regaled with Alexander's short-lived and unfruitful invasion of India; they were left in ignorance of the magnificent empire and still more enduring culture which the Gangetic Valley had built up at the time. Lurid details of intrigues in the palaces of the Sultans of Delhi—often a camp of bloodthirsty invaders—are given, but little light is thrown on the exploits of the race of heroes and heroines who for centuries resisted the Central Asiatic barbarians when they flung themselves on this

land in successive waves. Gruesome stories of Muslim atrocities are narrated, but the harmony which was evolved in social and economic life between the two communities remains unnoticed. ...

The multiplicity of our languages and communities is widely advertised, but little emphasis is laid on certain facts which make India what she is. Throughout the last two millennia, there was linguistic unity. Some sort of *lingua franca* was used by a very large part of the country; and Sanskrit, for a thousand years the language of royal courts and at all times the language of culture, was predominant, influencing life, language, and literature in most provinces. ... Aryan, or rather Hindu culture (for there was considerable Dravidian influence) drew its inspiration in every successive generation from Sanskrit works on religion, philosophy, ritual law and science, and particularly the two epics, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, and the *Bhagavata*, underwent recensions from time to time [*sic*], and became the one irresistible creative force which has shaped the collective spirit of the people (9-10).

Munshi also pointed out that the conception of India as a 'mystic land' without any significant 'imperialism of the militaristic political type' was a myth. The successive kingdoms of the Mauryas, Satavahanas, Guptas, of Harsha, of the Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas, Palas, Parmaras, and Cholas in ancient India were all witness to significant political and military activity. The Delhi Sultans and the Mughals in medieval India also had large empires and the Maratha dominion was by no means inconsiderable. He also noted the need to reduce the role of alien invasions (like that of Mahmud of Ghazni) in the history of India 'to its appropriate proportions' (11).

He finally reiterated the fact of continuity of Indian culture since ancient times and exhorted: 'A post-mortem examination of India's past [as done in the case of Egypt, Greece or Rome] would be scientifically inaccurate. ... The modern historian of India must approach her as a living entity with a central continuous urge, of which the apparent life is a

mere expression' (12).

Problems of Nationalist Historiography

Interestingly, since the 1960s Indian historiography (as also the Indian Historical Congress) came to be dominated by writers using Marxist methodologies, with D D Kosambi's *Introduction to the Study of Indian History* showing the way. This group of scholars found several propositions of the nationalist historians problematic. The shift in focus to the 'glories' of ancient India was seen as a right-wing Hindu revivalist stance. With their material base, Marxist methodologies can at best be used to deconstruct religious positions, and so any glorification of religious culture could not be acceptable to Marxist historians. The dialectics of class struggle also could not privilege the class cooperation posited by the nationalists as an essential ingredient of the nationalist movement. Thus R S Sharma's work on the shudras 'helped to expose the seamy exploitative undersides of ancient Indian civilization' and the idea of the 'Gupta Golden Age' was also undermined.⁸

There was a reaction from Islamic scholars too. According to Sumit Sarkar of the Marxist school,

After the massive research of the 'Aligarh School' the counterposing of a 'good' against a 'bad' Muslim king, an Akbar against an Aurangzeb, is no longer felt to be a necessary task for secular-minded medieval historians. Themes like technological change, surplus appropriation, have come to be considered far more significant, and tolerance or intolerance are seen as determined not by the personal catholicity or bigotry of rulers but primarily by material, especially political, pressures and relationships' (ibid.).

Forty-three years after the publication of A L Basham's *The Wonder That Was India* (1954), a second volume written by S A A Rizvi was introduced under the same name. This volume, though purportedly the history of India between 1200-1700 CE, is essentially Islamic Indian history of this period.⁹

With the break-up of the European communist states Marxist ideology lost much of its appeal. Indian Marxist historians—now styled the 'progressive group'—too started looking for fresh theoretical perspectives. The 'Subaltern Studies' collective has been one such important fresh effort at historiography.¹⁰ It characterizes nationalist history as bourgeois elitism and aims to explore the '*politics of the people* ... the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and intermediate strata in town and country'. It points to the '*failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the nation*', and aims to reveal patterns of domination and subjugation, for 'there were vast areas in the life and consciousness of the people which were never integrated into their [the nationalist elite's] hegemony.'¹¹

What Would Swamiji Have Said Now?

Swami Vivekananda was explicit about the plurality of histories. During the conversation with Priya Nath Sinha cited above, he remarked: 'Of course, we have no history exactly like that of other countries ... [but] we have our own history exactly as it ought to have been for us.'¹²

Instead of the Marxist dialectics of class struggle revolving around control of the means of production, Swamiji posited a power struggle of the varnas that involved patterns of dominance and subjugation based on the possession of knowledge (both esoteric and mundane), military capability, economic potential and mass solidarity. He was able to apply this paradigm to analyse virtually any social situation.

Swamiji's disquisitions on the oppression and deprivation of the marginalized sections of society—the 'silent masses'—are too well known to need restatement, as is his remarkable insight about their rise to power. His discourse, however, takes the form of broad outlines and generalizations unlike the 'fragmentary' analyses of the *Subaltern Studies*.¹³ More importantly, he worked out

programmes—with specific material, intellectual and spiritual content—to enable the subaltern alter the equations of power; and this he put in a language that the subaltern could understand. The historians of the subaltern, unfortunately, write with a ‘Western academic, postmodernistic, counter-establishment’ audience in mind, and in so doing have created their own ‘elitist’ niche in academic historiography. If anybody is likely to find it difficult to reach out or relate to them, it is the subaltern!

Sarkar laments the ‘Decline of the Subaltern in *Subaltern Studies*’. He is also concerned about the emergence of ‘a tendency to define such communities principally in terms of religious identities’. Swami Vivekananda never tired of reminding his audience that religion is the core of Indian culture (and his ‘Indian’ here was not synonymous with ‘Hindu’) and any authentic study of the Indian ‘mentality’ can hardly afford to ignore this fact. Contemporary international politics is a strong reminder of the fact that religion is a very important determinant of international relations, criticisms of Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* notwithstanding. The naivety of Sarkar’s remarks are only a reflection of the inadequacies of contemporary Indian historians in critically evaluating the religious elements in history. Small wonder that an overwhelming bulk of the critical studies on Indian religious history in general and Hinduism in particular is still being generated by Western scholars. Lucien Febvre, one of the founding fathers of the very influential *Annales* school of French historiography that initiated the ‘history of mentalités’, had observed that ‘the worst kind of anachronism was psychological anachronism’. To study the history of any religion, one therefore needs to be trained in the psychology constitutive of that discourse, and this is one area where our academics may well be helped by a bit of critical reflection.

Finally, let us go back to the Alwar talk one last time. The history that Swamiji wanted to be written for India was to be *accurate, sym-*

pathetic, and soul-inspiring. Accuracy was to be determined by documentary evidence and critical analyses.¹⁴ That Swamiji’s sympathies were hardly with the ‘elite’ needs no reiteration, but his humanist concerns were certainly not restricted to the Indian subaltern alone. As for inspiration, it may not be unwise to re-examine the history of our own souls and the ideologies that propel them. ~

Notes and References

1. His *Eastern and Western Disciples, Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 2000), 1.271-2.
2. Both Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Swami Vivekananda were later to point out this double-faced character of nationalism.
3. Cited in Arvind Sharma, *Hinduism and Its Sense of History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 37.
4. Mountstuart Elphinstone, *The History of India* (London: John Murray, 1911), ix.
5. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, 11 vols., Gen. Ed. R C Majumdar (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1990), 1.39.
6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.365-6.
7. *History and Culture of the Indian People*, 1.23.
8. Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 38.
9. It may be noted in fairness that the representation of Islamic themes in the *Cultural Heritage of India* series is quite small. In Volume 4, on ‘Religions’, for instance, only three of forty-six essays are devoted to Islamic issues.
10. It made its debut in 1982 before the break-up of the USSR but after the Naxalbari movement had been suppressed.
11. *Subaltern Studies Reader*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), xiv-v.
12. CW, 5.365; see also CW, 4.399-400.
13. This is not to suggest that ‘total’ history is likely to be any less ideologically conditioned than ‘fragmentary’ history.
14. See CW, 7.362 ff.

Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago

August 1905

Colonel Francis Younghusband's Rede lecture at Cambridge on 'Our True Relationship with India' has naturally evoked much interest in this country. He quoted Swami Vivekananda in support of his thesis. He said: 'The Swami Vivekananda, on his return to India from a mission to America, said: "Political greatness or military power is never the mission of the Hindus. But there has been the other mission given to us, to accumulate, as it were in a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race, and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on the world whenever circumstances are propitious. ... India's gift to the world is the light spiritual." We British were driven to India for nothing better than trade, but having gone there we found ourselves the means of affording a highly spiritual people the opportunity to develop their peculiar genius, just as the Jews were allowed to develop their special gift under the *Pax Romana*. During the last three-quarters of a century there had been a marked quickening in the religious life of the people, resulting in such movements as the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and others. By preserving order, by giving the people of India full opportunity to develop along the line most natural to them, and by ourselves giving them practical examples of well-worked-out lives we should best help the spiritual-minded, gentle Hindu.'

Of the rejoinders to the above, pointing out the true attitude of the Swami towards the question, the best we have seen is that of the *Indian Social Reformer*. We reproduce the following lines from our contemporary: 'As for our spiritual gifts, we do not know that material environment is a fact in their development. We wish Sir Francis had left the Romans alone. We do not think that their treatment of the Jews is the noblest episode of their history. Nor can we say that British rule has produced many saints—martyrs being deterred by the Penal Code—in India. Sir Francis has totally failed to understand Swami Vivekananda. He seems to regard the Swami as advocating asceticism and renunciation. We knew him personally and there was never a more fiery patriot than he in all India. By spirituality he always meant the power "to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield". It was his maxim that slaves can never be spiritual. And in private and in public he used often to address his countrymen as "slaves". To him spirituality was necessarily incompatible with the absence of absolute freedom. Social freedom, religious freedom, political freedom, these were all the foundations on which spirituality was reared. If Sir Francis Younghusband had studied the political causes and effects of Christianity more closely than he seems to have done, he would have spoken with more hesitation of the development of the spiritual gifts of the Indian people. History shows that religious reform has always been the precursor of political revolution. Nothing is more likely to ensure material and moral salvation to the India people than the purification of their religions. Swami Vivekananda perceived this and he constantly spoke of true religion as being dynamic.'

—from 'Occasional Notes'

Dr J C Bose is reported to have sent in a paper on his independent researches in plant-life to the Royal Society of London, and it is to be shortly published in the proceedings of that Society. Dr Bose's discoveries regarding response of matter to electric fans and wireless telegraphy. Dr Bose has demonstrated in his paper that trees and plants are not only organic entities, but have a life like animals. He has found that plants have heart and nervous system, and consequently feel pleasure and pain, for feeling is concomitant with the nervous system.

—from 'News and Miscellanies'

Reflections on the Bhagavadgita

SWAMI ATULANANDA

Chapter 12 (*continued*)

17. He who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, and who has renounced good and evil—he who is thus full of devotion is dear to Me.

He does not rejoice on attaining what is desirable. He does not fret on being burdened with the undesirable. He does not grieve on having to part with a beloved object. He does not desire the unattained. But we must understand that when it is said he does not rejoice on attaining what is desirable, it does not mean the indifference of an inert object, or the callousness of an ungrateful person. The meaning is not that he remains miserable, dull and indifferent under all these conditions. No, it means that he is always in the state of *ananda*. He enjoys constant bliss. Peace and contentment are his constant condition. His mind does not get blown over with a little good fortune and then sink in despair when something disagreeable happens. He is always calm and peaceful and happy. And even should there be a little disturbance of the surface mind, that disturbance does not penetrate deeply; it does not affect the real consciousness, the inner being of the man. His anger is surface anger; his sorrow is surface sorrow. Inwardly such a man is at perfect peace. He may watch the play of his surface mind, he may even make a show of being affected, but the real man is not touched. He may hiss, as Sri Ramakrishna used to say, but he never hurts. There is no venom, no spite, no malice in his anger. For in reality he does not care. He only keeps up a little semblance of harshness in self-protection, to prevent the evil of the world from entering into his soul and to be delivered from the foolishness of man.

Such semblance we often misinterpret. We judge the saint by our own standard. Because *our* mind reacts and because we become identified with the reaction, therefore *we* conclude that it is so with all men. The outward phase, the appearance, may be the same, but there is a world of difference in the inner consciousness. Two men may react. Both may show great anger. But in the case of the one the anger is a semblance, a play, or a weapon, controlled and used for a purpose, while the anger of the other is the transformation of the entire man; it is total identification; it is self-forgetting; it is becoming anger personified. The difference is enormous, but in our ignorance we regard them alike. And still, do we not see this practised daily? The mother scolds the child. She looks very angry, she threatens and even punishes. But in her heart is only love, and behind the mask of anger lingers the smile. Sri Ramakrishna tells the story of a boy who was frightened by his own father wearing the mask of a tiger head. The mother told the child not to be afraid, that it was only his own father. But the child still continued to cry at the top of his voice. Then the father took off the mask and he consoled the boy by putting the mask into his hands. The boy then understood the whole trick and he was no longer frightened by it.

Even such is our case. We see the mask of anger or some other undesirable quality in the saint. But we forget that behind the mask resides the true man, the loving heart of the yogi. For the true yogi never hates, no matter how

angry or cruel or unjust he may appear to us. Deep within his heart is love and compassion and goodwill for all men. It is well to understand this. For judged from our clouded and worldly understanding, no saint, no yogi, no incarnation of God would escape our adverse criticism. Flaws we will find in every life, because our life is faulty. We are imperfect and therefore we cannot understand perfection. The boy did not know the mask and therefore he saw the tiger. But when we ourselves rise above joy and sorrow, good and evil, hatred and desire, then we will understand the play, because then we ourselves will be perfect.

The bhakta who is so dear to the Lord, embraces every one in his love. He has no axe to grind. He loves, because it has become his nature to love. He can follow Jesus' command: 'Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you.' He knows that through love everything is conquered. 'Not by hatred is hatred appeased,' said Buddha. Love alone conquers. Blessed is such a life. It is a life hidden in God or hidden in the Atman, a life hidden in love. Buddha names it *brahmavihara*, the joy of living in Brahman. To point out the path towards such a life is the object of all scriptures; to that goal leads the teaching of the true guru, no matter to what religion he belongs. Buddha said: 'Deceive none, hate none, injure none. Love all creatures, even as a mother loves her only child. Extend your love in all directions, east, west, north, south, above and below, without bounds or obstacles. Keep your mind active in the constant exercise of universal goodwill. Practise it, while standing, or sitting, or walking, or lying down, till sleep overtakes you. Thus, man becomes perfect.' Love is joy; love is bliss; love is truth. It is the highest state of consciousness. That love is Brahman. It is the essence of everything around us. It is the joy that is at the root of all creation. To quote Tagore's beautiful expressions on love:

There is a secret relation between us and the entire universe. We miss that relation when our consciousness is clouded with desires and egotism.

Love is the ultimate meaning of every thing around us. It is not a mere sentiment; it is Truth. It is the white light of pure consciousness that emanates from Brahman. So, to be one with this *sarvānubhūh*, this all-feeling Being who is in the external sky, as well as in our inner soul, we must attain to that summit of consciousness, which is love: 'Who could have breathed or moved if the sky were not filled with joy, with love?' It is through the heightening of our consciousness into love, and extending it all over the world, that we can attain *Brahma-vihāra*, communion with this infinite joy.¹

It is through love alone that we can know each other or anything. For the essence of everything is the Spirit. And the Spirit we can know only through love. It is only through love that we can have perfect knowledge. Love penetrates beyond the surface. It gets right at the essence of things. It is this bond of love that binds the whole universe together. There is a secret relation between us and the entire universe. We miss that relation when our consciousness is clouded with desires and egotism. But when the soul is washed pure from these limitations, then she rejoices. Then she realizes her kinship with all. Then, the universe is filled with song and joy. Then everything is filled with ananda, bliss. The whole universe vibrates with joy. *That* is the bliss of union with God. That is the annihilation of the little self, the mingling of the self with the All, the birth of a new consciousness, the freedom of nirvana.

The sage realizes his union with all existence. He finds his larger Self in the universe; he realizes the perfection of unity. His whole being opens out into a luminous consciousness of the All. His existence translates itself into a radiant joy and an overspreading love. He is conscious of his own immortality. To

quote Tagore again:

The spirit dies a hundred times in its enclosure of self; for separateness is doomed to die, it cannot be made eternal. But it never can die where it is one with the All, for there is its truth, its joy. When a man feels the rhythmic throb of the soul-life of the whole world in his own soul, then he is free. Then he enters into the secret courting that goes on between this beautiful world-bride, veiled with the veil of the many-coloured finitude, and the Paramatman,

the bridegroom, in his spotless white. Then he knows that he is the partaker of this gorgeous love-festival, and he is the honoured guest at the feast of immortality. Then he understands the meaning of the seer-poet who sings, 'From love the world is born, by love it is sustained, toward love it moves, and into love it enters' (113).

And now Sri Krishna continues in the next two verses:

18. He who is the same towards friend and foe, and also in honour and dishonour, the same in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, and free from attachment;

19. He, with whom praise and censure are both alike, who is silent and contented with everything, who is homeless and steady-minded—he who is thus devoted to Me is dear to Me.

How strongly are we here reminded of the words of Jesus: 'Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, not yet for your body, what you shall put on.'² And again: 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay His head' (8.20). 'Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey' (10.9).

This is the holy life of the sannyasin, whose soul is raised beyond the realm of matter. Friends and foes even the holiest man will have. Jesus was nailed on the cross by his enemies. Krishna was assailed by his foes time and again. Buddha had his detractors. But they blessed their enemies. The holy man feels no animosity towards anyone. He knows that it is through ignorance that man is hostile towards him. 'Father, forgive them,' was Jesus' prayer, 'for they know not what they do.' Lord Chaitanya embraced the vicious brothers who came to abuse him. Friend and foe are the same to a godly man, and also honour and dishonour. Not that he will engage in dishonourable dealings, not that he will act so that people are justified in dishonouring him, but if

doing what he considers right people criticize from their worldly standpoint, when he is blamed for doing what he considers to be his duty, then he remains unmoved just as he remains unmoved when he is praised or honoured.

Shukadeva, the son of the world-renowned pundit and sage Vyasa, remained perfectly calm and unmoved when he met with disrespectful treatment at the court of King Janaka. And just as unmoved was he when the king bestowed on him the greatest honour, when the king gave him a princely reception.

Cold and heat, pleasure and pain come to everyone. But the sannyasin realizes that these conditions belong to the body, and takes refuge in the Spirit. These conditions do not affect him. He is contented with everything. Any food or dress or habitation he accepts without murmur or complaint. He knows when to be silent. He is full of devotion. His thought is steadily fixed on the supreme Reality.

And now, to conclude the topic, Sri Krishna says in the last verse of this chapter:

20. Those who follow this immortal Dharma (teaching) as declared (by Me) and who are possessed with faith, regarding Me as the supreme goal—such devotees are exceedingly dear to Me.

The enumeration, of the various attributes of the true sannyasin, commenced in verse fifteen, is concluded. The example is held before us. We know now who is dear to the Lord. We know what to do to become His beloved bhaktas. Exceedingly dear to the Lord is the devotee who follows this immortal teaching with absolute faith, regarding Him as the supreme goal of life. Faith conquers all obstacles; faith gives endurance, patience and perseverance. Armed with unshakable faith, the bhakta rests in supreme love, which is identification with the Deity.

Wonderful is this teaching, which makes man immortal. It is hard to follow, very hard, but great is the reward for the successful. It means eternal union with the Supreme. Such a yogi is exceedingly dear to the Lord. Jesus said: 'For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother' (12.50). And if we love God, then we will gladly follow his teaching. 'If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.'³ That is the reward.

We do not realize what a happy life the religious life really is. It is the happiest life, because it is the truest life. And it is the fullest life, the most natural life. Our true nature is godly. We are the divine spark that rests in the Absolute. The realization of that fact is true religion. Our real Being is *ananda*, blissful. To be religious is to be ourselves. That is what we want. That is what the whole world is striving for—to know and to be itself. We do not beg for any favours, we do not want to surpass others, to push ahead and obtain that which others cannot have. We demand our own, what is ours by birthright, what is the birthright of all, and which is obtainable by all. Our

nature is bliss. Therefore we want bliss. We do not want to get it from anybody or from anywhere. We want to realize it in ourselves. We are not working for the salvation of our poor little souls. We want to be what we are. A king has a right to be a king. When he fights for his kingdom he fights for his own. That is what he wants and that is what he is entitled to. And so we want *our* own. We have awakened from the dream of delusion. We want to be fully awake and stay awake. That is the religious life. We want to sing with Ramprasad: 'My sleep has been broken. I am not going to sleep any more. Now I am awake! I have given back sleep unto Thee, O Mother! And sleep have I lulled to sleep forever.'

No one will know the blessedness of such a life until he tries it. Those who try realize that only one thing matters in life. And that is the search for our transcendental Self. And when that has once become our firm conviction, then we will never swerve from the path. We will never stop until the goal is reached. Then one becomes *sthitaprajna*, the man of steady resolve. 'Let the sages praise or blame, let the goddess of fortune smile or frown, let death come today or let it come in a hundred years, he indeed is the steady man who does not swerve one inch from the path of Truth.'⁴

That steadiness we want. We have started out. We want to reach the end of our journey. We want to reach the highest summit. Then, when we have reached that summit in samadhi, life is changed. We have seen the Lord and that vision will be with us always. Everything then will be as if covered by the Lord. Through matter we will see the Spirit.

We are the divine spark that rests in the Absolute. The realization of that fact is true religion. Our real Being is ananda, blissful. To be religious is to be ourselves.

After having had the vision of God the bhakta calls out: 'O Lord! You have blessed me with Your vision and have sent away all my troubles; You have thrown a charm over my soul. Beholding You as the Reality, this world has become beautiful. All grief is gone. Wonderful, infinite is the universe made by You. Behold! Your beauty shines in everything.'⁵

~ ~ ~

With this chapter ends the second section of the Gita. The great paradox, God personal and God impersonal, has been explained. The bhakta and the jnani have met on the highest summit, where God is seen as the innermost Reality in man, as the Consciousness in nature and also as the beloved Lord of the devotee.

The jnani cries out in ecstasy:

No sun, no shine, no moon, no charm;
Time, space and all is but shadow.
The whole Universe moves,
And passes off like a magical picture.
On the obscure sky of the mind,
World and creation spring up.
Nothing here my dear,
But vain, vain imagination;
Now and no more.
It bubbles up, it floats;
And it vanishes yet again.
Lo! All, all is but play;
On the unceasing current of vain ego.
No more! Stop, stop current!
Off with the gloom.
Let the shadow vanish;
Let the Infinite be infinite, Reality real.

Oh, how blissful, beyond expression.
Comprehend it, if you can.⁶

And the bhakta, thirsting for God with all his soul and heart, cries out to the Divine Mother, as did Sri Ramakrishna: 'Hurry, Mother! Hurry, O my heart's ease! My life and soul! Mount for once my heart's altar! I shall gaze at You to my heart's content. You know all, Mother—how miserable it is to live in this world. But I endure everything, simply looking at Your face. I beseech You, O my dearest Mother! O my joy! My bliss! Appear and illumine for once Your child's heart!'⁷

That is the beatific vision, that is realization, that is freedom. Towards that freedom we are all aiming. And the greater the longing for freedom the quicker will it be attained. It matters not which path we travel by; love, devotion, work, wisdom—all lead to the one Atman, to the supreme Being who is the Soul of our soul, our very inner Being. ~

References

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sāadhanā* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 107.
2. St Matthew, 6.25.
3. St John, 14.23.
4. Bhartrihari, *Nīti Shataka*.
5. See 'Ma', *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, 11 March 1885.
6. Based on Swami Vivekananda's poem 'Samadhi'.
7. See *Kathamrita*, 9 May 1885.

स वै पुंसां परो धर्मो यतो भभिरधोक्षजे । अहैतुक्यप्रतिहता ययाऽऽत्मा सम्प्रसीदति ॥

The highest duty of man consists in doing that which generates devotion to the Supreme Being—devotion which is motiveless, which is unyielding to any obstacle, and which fills the heart of man with peace after erasing all the body-based instincts and tendencies.

अकामः सर्वकामो वा मोक्षकाम उदारधीः । तीव्रेण भभियोगेन यजेत पुरुषं परम् ॥

But the one Being to be adored with intense devotion by all—whether they be devoid of all desires, or whether they be desirous of all enjoyments, or whether they be seekers of moksha—is the Supreme Person, the one God of all.

—*Bhagavata*, 1.2.6, 2.3.10

Swami Vivekananda's Nationalism

SUNIL K SENGUPTA

Swami Vivekananda's intense love for and sense of pride regarding his country has often been misconceived and misinterpreted. A prophet of Vedantic universalism has been presented as a national chauvinist. Not that such interpretation has always been intentional. With his encyclopaedic knowledge, Swamiji has often treated issues from different angles at different times and in different contexts. Citing an instance will be pertinent. Once after completion of a lecture while in the West, Swamiji was requested by some in the audience to repeat it for their benefit, to which he replied, 'I can, but it will not be the same as before.' A wonderful remark made by Josephine MacLeod throws light on this multifaceted personality of Swami Vivekananda: 'The thing that held me in Swamiji was his *unlimitedness*. I never could touch the bottom—or top—or sides. The amazing size of him!'¹

Love for India

Swami Vivekananda's love for his country and people knew no bounds. All his close disciples, Eastern and Western, friends and acquaintances, have testified to this. In conversations with his closest disciples or in private gatherings, 'India' came up again and again. Often the very mention of the word *India* aroused such intense feeling in Swamiji that he would go on speaking for hours about his country. One of Swamiji's closest American disciples, Sister Christine, recalls that in such discussions on India 'everything concerning her became of interest—became living—her people, her history, architecture, her manners and customs, her rivers, mountains, plains, her culture, her great spiritual concepts, her scriptures' (151). The tone and tenor

of Swamiji's voice itself was enough to make listeners immediate converts to the cause of India: 'Our love for India came to birth, I think, when we first heard him say the word, "India", in that marvellous voice of his. It seems incredible that so much could have been put into one small word of five letters' (ibid.). Says Sister Nivedita: 'Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed. ... Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. ... And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness.'²

In his reminiscences Nagendranath Gupta, a college-mate of Swamiji's who maintained close contact with his friend till his last, observes: 'His country occupied a great deal of his thoughts and conversation. His deep spiritual experiences were the bedrock of his faith and his luminous expositions are to be found in his lectures, but his patriotism was as deep as his religion.'³ Josephine MacLeod, who loved to call herself a friend of Vivekananda's, recalls: 'And I like to be in India, remembering once when I asked him, "Swamiji, how can I best help you?" his answer was, "Love India!"' (243).

To Vivekananda love for India meant love for the countless downtrodden masses of her people—a love that developed during his long years of wandering as a monk throughout the length and breadth of his country. He could never forget the suffering millions of his countrymen even while living in comparative comfort in America and England under the loving care of his disciples and admirers. On being asked by an English friend how his liking for his motherland was after four years' experience of the luxurious, glorious, power-

ful West, Swamiji's reply was: 'India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy; it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha.'⁴ Vivekananda conceived the details of his working plan for raising the downtrodden masses of his country while living abroad: "'The work! The work!'" he cried. "How to begin the work in India! The way, the means!" ... Certainly before he left America, the way, the means, and the method were clear in every detail.'⁵ Vivekananda never believed that political emancipation by itself would solve the problems of the masses of India: 'I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for.'⁶

Did not Swamiji resent and express his disapproval of the Anglo-Saxon domination and exploitation of the Indian people? Sure he did. The fearless monk that he was, he has been heard expressing his strong resentment and frustration at the foreign occupation of his country: 'Do you think that a handful of Englishmen could rule India if we had a militant spirit? I teach meat-eating throughout the length and breadth of India in the hope that we can build a militant spirit!'⁷ But such resentment of the English rulers of India did not stand in the way of his loving the English people and admiring the English nation: '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 heartbeat of the nation was, and the more I loved them. There is none among you here present, my brothers, who loves the English people more than I do now.'⁸

Constructive Patriotism

Swami Vivekananda's way of serving his nation was different. Says Nivedita: 'He was a

worker at foundations. He neither used the word "nationality", nor proclaimed an era of "nation-making". "Man-making", he said, was his own task.'⁹ There were points of difference between his own scheme for the good of India and those preached by others. About those who sought to bring about a mere revival and restoration of the Indian past, Vivekananda states clearly: 'Like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt, their interest in India is a purely selfish one. They would fain see again that India of their books, their studies, and their dreams' (240). What he wanted was that a new state of things must grow—from within. So he preached only the Upanishads, and of the Upanishads it was only that one idea of strength. And he believed that strength came through education.

Swami Vivekananda's ideas on national issues are best expressed in his 'Lectures from Colombo to Almora' delivered on his return from the West in 1897. The most inspiring message Swamiji reserved for Madras, where in his very first lecture he divulged his 'plan of campaign' for the sole duty of raising the masses of India. He gave a call to his nation: 'Go back to your Upanishads—the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy ... The truths of the Upanishads are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand.'¹⁰ Swamiji knew that in order to achieve their all-round well-being the common people must get back their lost individuality and assert their manhood: 'For centuries people have been taught theories of degradation. They have been told that they are nothing. The masses have been told all over the world that they are not human beings. ... Let them hear of the Atman—that even the lowest of the low have the Atman within, which never dies and never is born ... immortal ... the all-pure, omnipotent, and omnipresent Atman! Let them have faith in themselves' (3.224). This remained the principal campaign theme of Vivekananda's lectures on his return from the West: 'Let man re-

member his true nature, divinity. Let this become a living realization, and everything else will follow—power, strength, manhood. He will again become MAN. And this he proclaimed from Colombo to Almora.¹¹ Nagnendra Nath Gupta has wonderfully summed up Vivekananda's contribution to his country: 'For his countrymen he has left [a] priceless heritage of virility, abounding vitality, and invincible strength of will' (19).

National Love and Vedantic Universalism

Swamiji's stress on the immortality and oneness of all souls, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex, leads to the concept of Vedantic universalism. It is also the basis of all morality: 'The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers ... but that you and I are really one.'¹² Vedanta also stands for doing away with any special privilege, and this Swamiji stressed: 'I have the same God in me as you have in you. And that is what we want, no privilege for any one, equal chances for all' (3.246).

Politics was neither a choice nor a priority for Vivekananda: 'Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas' (3.221). His spiritual message for uplifting the downtrodden people of the country also included selfless service to suffering humanity, which, according to his guru Sri Ramakrishna, is worship of the jiva as a representative of Shiva. Service to or worship of the jiva is thus linked to the Advaitic stand on the divinity of all souls. Selfless service also calls for renunciation, another ideal preached in the Upanishads, which also Swamiji stressed. If ever any conflict arose between Swamiji's love for Advaita sadhana and service to suffering humanity, he would not hesitate to opt for the latter. One recalls his famous statement: 'I have lost all wish for my salvation. ... And may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls.'¹³

With his heart bleeding for the poor and downtrodden masses of India, Vivekananda gave a stirring call to his countrymen, especially to the youth: 'For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote—this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race—"everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything." All other gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all round us, the Virat? ... and the first gods we have to worship are our countrymen.'¹⁴

Vivekananda's call was essentially the highest and loftiest Vedantic message of renunciation and service to humanity looking upon them as representatives of God. Romain Rolland paints a beautiful picture of Vivekananda delivering this address: 'I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised, like Jesus above the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrandt's engraving [an allusion to Rembrandt's famous engraving, *The Resurrection of Lazarus*]; with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him to life.'¹⁵

Response to His Call

Awakening did take place and the dead did rise, though not exactly in the manner envisaged by Vivekananda. A large band of young men trained in the highest Indian spiritual values did not immediately gather round Swamiji to carry forth the message of Vedantic humanism for the material and spiritual uplift of the downtrodden people of India. This task had to wait until the establishment of the monastic sangha, the Ramakrishna Order, for which Swamiji prescribed '*Atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha*; For the liberation of one's own self and for the welfare of the world' as the ideal. Meanwhile, Vivekananda's burning patriotic call inspired some of the cream of the youth, especially of Bengal, to dedicate their lives to the cause of freedom of their motherland from foreign yoke through

organized revolutionary activity. Sister Nivedita, with her fiery Irish spirit, was deeply involved in the movement headed by a select section of Bengali intellectuals. Three years after Vivekananda's demise a national upsurge took place against the partition of Bengal which heralded the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi. Many of the freedom fighters who emerged on the scene after Vivekananda's departure openly acknowledged the inspiration they received from Swamiji's speeches and writings. One may recall Gandhiji's statement that his love for India increased a thousandfold after reading Swamiji's books.

Patriotism v Chauvinism

But, was Swami Vivekananda a national chauvinist? He was undoubtedly a great patriot, but his patriotism never went to the length of so clouding his vision as to make him forsake rationality and fall into the trap of fanaticism. We may recall Swamiji's perception of the nature and character of the Indian nation:

Race, religion, language, government—all these together make a nation. The elements which compose the nations of the world are indeed very few ... compared to this country. Here have been the Aryan, the Dravidian, the Tartar, the Turk, the Mogul, the European—all the nations of the world, as it were, pouring their blood into this land. Of languages the most wonderful conglomeration is here; of manners and customs there is more difference between two Indian races than between the European and the Eastern races.¹⁶

Clearly, Vivekananda stands for a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural Indian nation, expressing her unity through immense diversity. That Vivekananda was proud of this pluralistic cultural heritage of India is evident from Sister Nivedita's memoirs of her master: 'For what, he would ask, had been the England of Elizabeth in comparison with the India of Akbar?'¹⁷

Swami Vivekananda's love for India did not deter him from criticizing the various weaknesses and irrational customs and prac-

tices in her social and family structures. For instance, he was extremely critical of the existing caste divisions in Hindu society, where an individual's caste was eternally dependent on his birth, creating a great divide between the so-called privileged and under-privileged castes. It was a distorted version of the original idea of caste, or *jati*, according to which caste was determined by a person's individual propensities and qualifications, and where 'variety does not mean inequality, nor any special privilege.'¹⁸ The sin of 'don't-touchism'—an offshoot of the distorted caste system—and lack of freedom and education for women, both of which seriously jeopardized the cause of social uplift, also came in for his sharp criticism. However, these criticisms were not in the form of condemnation, as Sister Nivedita tells us: 'He was hard on her sins ... but only because he felt these faults to be his own.'¹⁹

Chauvinism involves overzealousness with unbridled condemnation of opponents. Swamiji disapproved of any overzealous movement that ran the risk of ending up in fanaticism. 'Such is the testimony of history against every fanatical movement, even for doing good. I have seen that. My own experience has taught me that. Therefore I cannot join any one of these condemning societies.'²⁰ Sister Nivedita recalls an incident throwing light on Swamiji's anti-chauvinistic vision of nationalism. On the day after her initiation at the monastery she was asked by him 'as to which nation she now belonged to'. In reply the young English disciple was exuberant in narrating 'with what a passion of loyalty and worship she regarded the English flag, giving to it much of the feeling that an Indian woman would give to her *Thakoor*'. At that moment Swamiji kept mum. Many weeks later he exclaimed: 'Really, patriotism like yours is sin! All that I want you to see is that most people's actions are expressions of self-interest, and you constantly oppose to this the idea that a certain race are all angels. Ignorance so determined is wickedness!'²¹ Vivekananda would

never allow his high spirituality, anchored in Vedantic universalism, to be 'twisted to the profit of purely animal pride in race or nation, with all its stupid ferocities'.²²

Swami Vivekananda has himself clarified his stand on more than one occasion. When the news of his grand success at the Chicago Parliament of Religions reached India, it created a great outburst of joy and national pride. Some people tried to profit from his work in the West. When Swamiji came to know of this he vehemently protested and warned that 'no political significance be ever attached falsely to any of my writings or sayings. What nonsense!'²³ Again, he said: 'God and truth are the only politics in the world, everything else is trash' (5.96). Vivekananda made his life's mission quite clear: 'I know my mission in life, and no chauvinism about me ... What country has any special claim on me? Am I any nation's slave?' (5.95).

Swami Vivekananda: World Citizen

Vivekananda belonged to the entire humanity. He was a prophet of universalism: 'Everything must be sacrificed, if necessary, for that one sentiment, *universality*. Whether I live or die, whether I go back to India or not, remember this specially, that universality—perfect acceptance, not tolerance only—we preach and perform' (6.285) Long before the world community conceived the idea of the League of Nations, not to speak of the United Nations, Swamiji said: 'Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no more be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organisations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows the solidarity' (3.241). Here Swamiji means Vedantic solidarity, the oneness of mankind.

Vivekananda's Vedantic universalism, however, embraces all nations, religions,

sects, castes—the entire spectrum of diversities forming a symphony, as it were. Romain Rolland wonderfully sums up his genius: 'In the two words, equilibrium and synthesis, Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. ... He was the personification of harmony of all human energy.'²⁴ ~

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Bankimchandra: Development of Nationalism and Indian Identity

DR ANIL BARAN RAY

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-94), the master litterateur of Bengal, called the 'emperor of literature' mainly for his novels, was an essayist par excellence as well. Among the numerous essays and satires that he produced, quite a few focused on political themes and issues. Bankimchandra's political ideas can be gleaned from those essays and satires as also from his novels such as the *Ananda Math*. Drawing upon such sources, the present article proposes to reflect on Bankimchandra's concept of nationalism in terms of its sources and nature as also its characteristic contribution towards the development of the Indian identity.

Bankim's Nationalism: Its Sources

As regards the sources, Bankimchandra acknowledged the influence of English utilitarianism and French positivism on his political thought but asserted all the same his independence of them by critiquing them where they, in his opinion, deserved such criticism. As a philosophy, utilitarianism sought to judge all actions and policies, particularly governmental, in the light of the ability or utility of such policies and actions to promote the good of the greatest number of people. Such a philosophy, Bankimchandra reasoned, was flawed on two counts. First, it was not, ethically speaking, a foolproof philosophy. The Indian ideal, as laid down in its ancient scriptures, of doing good to *all*, which found expression in the following pronouncement of the rishis—'*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah; sarve santu nirāmayāḥ; Sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantū mā kaścit duḥkhabhāḥ bhavet*. May all be happy; may all be free from disease; may all realize that which

is good; may none be subject to misery'—was, to Bankimchandra, an infinitely better ideal in terms of both religion and ethics than that which utilitarianism gave to mankind.

Bankimchandra's second objection was rooted in the ground reality prevailing in India of his times. Whatever be the exhortation of English political philosophies such as utilitarianism, the British government of India, had its own primary interests—such as augmenting its own exchequer—and could not be expected to go to any great length in doing good to a subject people. It was a better policy, therefore, for Indians to rely on their own strength in terms of generating national awareness, preparing the people for struggle and the self-sacrifice required for such struggle, and curtailing their dependence on the government as an agency for promoting general welfare. It was from such a conceptualization of politics that Bankimchandra criticized the politics of verbosity—of talks without constructive work—that was in vogue in India during his time. He detested such politics and criticized it on the following counts with a view to giving it a *more constructive* orientation: First, the prevalent brand of politics was city-centric, mainly confined to a few cities like Calcutta. Second, it was confined to the upper stratum of society—the city-bred leaders and their followers. Third, its discourse was conducted in the English language, be it through the press or on the platform. Fourth, its activities were, more often than not, one-shot affairs, ending either in passing resolutions in annual sessions and begging the British government for some favour or other or in writing articles in newspapers mildly

chiding the British administration for some omission or commission on their part. Such politics, far from doing any good to the people actually alienated them. It widened the gulf between the city and the country, between the educated and the uneducated and between the English-speaking leaders and the masses.

Bankimchandra's scorn for the politics of verbosity can be seen in the following passage from his *Kamalakanta*: 'Some think that by droning they will deliver the country—gathering boys and old men together at meetings they drone at them. ... Others again are not given to this—they take up pen and paper, and drone, week after week, month after month, and day after day.'¹

What is the alternative to verbosity—'mere droning', as Bankimchandra calls it? The answer that Bankimchandra gives reveals his attitude to the prevailing brand of politics as also his concept of nationalism, which he later articulated more fully. To quote Bankimchandra: 'Let me tell you the truth ... you know neither how to gather honey nor how to sting—you can only drone. There is no sign of work to go with it—only droning, day and night, like a whining girl. Reduce your verbosity in speech and writing, and give your mind to some work—then you will prosper.'

By advising his countrymen to 'gather honey or sting', Bankimchandra meant to say that without a grim resolve and the attendant struggle they could not really hope to get any concrete benefit from the foreign government of India. The people of India had to fend for themselves. The country had to be regenerated and towards that end the kind of effete politics that was in fashion in those days had to be discarded in favour of a new sense of nationalism and a new brand of politics in which the new mantra would be identity, unity and strength.

Constituent Elements of Nationalism

Bankimchandra held that Europe came up by virtue of its nationalist fervour and as-

serted that India could also be raised if it could be sufficiently charged with nationalism. The problem with India was that nationalism in its European sense, as the political expression of the distinctiveness of a people living within a certain geographically defined territory and united by race, religion, language, tradition, heritage, and culture, was something foreign to her. Neither of the two essential constituent elements of nationalism—the identification of the individual with the political community to which he or she belonged and the differentiation of the concerned political community from other political communities—was historically present in India.

As for the first element, the Aryans of India were originally one single community with members having an identity of interests with each other. As their number increased and as, in course of time, they became dispersed all over the multifarious parts of India, they became differentiated in respect of territories as also in respect of languages and sects which, in turn, brought about differences in terms of tradition, heritage and culture. With differences on so many counts being a pronounced fact of life in India, there was no sense of national unity in the sense in which that term was understood in Europe.

The Indians were deficient in the second constituent element of nationalism as well. They not only did not have a sense of emotional oneness as members of one single entity, they also failed to develop a sense of differentiation of interests from the communities that were not Indian. The European communities that developed as nations were so actuated by their sense of differentiation from other nations that they were always ready to promote, and often did actually promote, their own interests at the expense of other nations. In contrast to the Europeans, the Indians could not go for the throats of other nations and promote themselves at the expense of others. They were not sufficiently hostile to other nations, even to those who invaded their

country, occupied it and ruled over it.

There were three reasons for this. First, the governing in India had traditionally been the preserve and special province of the caste of warriors (kshatriyas) and the other castes had kept aloof from it, with the result that people as a whole never presented a united front to a foreign invading army. Second, the people of India were not bothered about who ruled so long as those who ruled did it well. Good governance, and not independence, was what mattered to them. Third, the religious attitude of the Hindu people of India stood in the way of their cultivating a sense of hatred and hostility to foreign people. They believed that God was the indwelling spirit of all beings and that the distinction between a foreigner and a native was artificial. To cultivate hatred towards one just because he hailed from a different land or belonged to a different race was to insult the God within him. As a result of such a religious attitude, resulting in an inability to differentiate themselves politically from others, the Indians failed to counter the foreign invading nations. To quote Bankimchandra, 'Muslim kings followed Hindu kings, and the people did not object—for the Hindu, Hindu and Muslim were equal. An English king followed the Muslims, and people did not object.... For the Hindu had no hatred for the Englishman on the ground of his different race.'²

Nationalism in Context

Now, the task for Bankimchandra was to so charge the Indians that they became imbued with a sense of nationalism in the aspects of both identification and differentiation as referred to above and developed themselves as a nation vis-à-vis other nations, particularly the English. How he went about this task is discussed below.

Bankimchandra knew that Europe was essentially political in character while India was intrinsically religious in nature and that the best and most efficacious way to move India and Indians was to appeal to the religious

nature and sentiment of Indians. From this general truth Bankimchandra came to the conclusion that the most efficient way to instill in Indians a sense of nationalism was to mix it with religion, not as it was popularly understood, but as it could be. In order to appreciate how exactly he used religion to serve his purpose of rousing nationalism among Indians, it will be in order to explain first what he meant by religion by referring to the new interpretation that he gave it. Bankimchandra took Auguste Comte's prescription, as offered in the latter's philosophy of positivism, that the 'human deity' be worshipped, but did not take Comte's reasons for such prescription. Comte argued that since God could not be seen but only imagined and that since He was extra-cosmic and superior to humanity, *man* should devote himself rather to the worship of concrete humanity than an abstract God. Unlike Comte, Bankimchandra did not want to make a distinction between abstract God and concrete humanity. He wished to combine the *abstract* and the *concrete* by observing that God was the inmost essence of all human beings and that 'worship' of the one was worship of the other as well. Having made God and humanity *one*, Bankimchandra *next* observed that the *dharma* of man lay in his attainment of full humanity through the cultivation and harmonious development (*anushilan*, as he termed it) of all his physical and mental faculties as also through the performance of dutiful actions in the selfless spirit of Krishna, who, in Bankimchandra's opinion, represented the best example of full humanity in respect of both *being* and *doing*. Bankimchandra then went on to assert that *man* attained his full 'maturity' when, having developed himself after the *anushilan dharma*, he directed his devotion to God. God was in all beings. Therefore, devotion to God meant progressively extending one's love for oneself and one's family to one's community to one's country and finally to whole of humanity or the entire human race. Love for the whole humanity, how-

ever, was an ideal very difficult to realize in actual practice and so Bankimchandra advised his countrymen to take love for one's country as the highest religion. As he put it, 'Considering the condition of mankind, love of one's own country should be called the highest *dharma*' (199).

Religion of the Motherland

Bankimchandra had a purpose behind his preaching that love for the country or patriotism constituted the highest religion. But for such a theory, he could not inspire his countrymen to achieve that identification between the individual and his country which constituted the first essential element of nationalism. The religious theory of patriotism found its fullest bearing in another new coinage offered by Bankimchandra to this effect: that the motherland was every Indian's mother herself, that she was a goddess to be worshipped, and that in such worship of the goddess or deity of Mother India lay the highest religion of the people of India. In putting forth his observation that the motherland that was India was every Indian's mother and goddess as well, Bankimchandra asserted that such a goddess should be viewed as the combination of the three goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati, with Durga symbolizing national valour and conquest of evil, Lakshmi symbolizing plentifulness of national wealth and prosperity, and Saraswati symbolizing the abundance of the nation's learning, knowledge and wisdom. Such an imagery found its most beautiful illustration in the song 'Bande Mataram' (Hail Motherland), which Bankimchandra composed in 1875³ and later incorporated in his novel *Ananda Math* (The Abbey of Bliss), first published in 1882.

'Bande Mataram' presents the core of Bankimchandra's thoughts on nationalism on three counts: 1) It exhorts the Mother's children—the people of the country—to think only of their motherland as their mother; 2) It exhorts them to view their 'motherland-

Mother' as their be-all and end-all:

Thou art knowledge, thou art conduct,
thou art heart, thou art soul,
for thou art the life in our body.
In the arm thou art might, O Mother,
in the heart, O Mother, thou art love and faith,
it is thy image we raise in every temple.⁴

3) Since the Mother represented the essence of the beings of her children, it was the sacred duty of all her children to give themselves up to the service of the Mother, to dedicate themselves to the Mother and sacrifice their all for the Mother. All in all, Bankim was making the point that the national self being the same as the divine Self, it was prior to the individual self and that it is only by raising his self to the level of the national and divine Self that the individual could realize his best self—his *purna manushyatva* (full humanity). We have already said that Bankimchandra identified the attainment of *purna manushyatva* as the goal of religion. Now, in bringing about a synthesis of the individual self and the national self through the concept of the 'motherland-Mother', Bankimchandra brought his philosophies of religion and nationalism to converge at a single point.

This point needs some elaboration. Bankimchandra's purpose in initiating his countrymen with the mantra of *bande mataram*, in presenting before them the vision of the motherland as maternal and divine power, and in asking them to worship such a Mother with their lifeblood and with all that they could offer to her in worship was to tie his countrymen up with the same thread of nationality and give them thereby a sense of unity around a common concept. Bankimchandra was keenly aware of the fact that India was a diverse land and that his countrymen suffered from differences and conflicts issuing from the multiplicity of castes, communities, languages and religions. In order to find unity in the midst of such diversity, Bankimchandra gave his countrymen a mantra, to overcome thereby their differences and find in the same motherland-Mother the identification of their inter-

ests. After all, a mother could not but be well-meaning to her children and the children therefore must find their highest fulfilment in love for the motherland-Mother. Bankimchandra's purpose was to inspire and teach his countrymen. It was his way of asking them to overcome their differences, find their commonness in the Mother and be a nation.

Commenting on the uniqueness of Bankimchandra's teaching on this aspect of religion-based patriotic nationalism, Sri Aurobindo observes:

The new intellectual idea of the motherland is not in itself a great driving force; the mere recognition of the desirability of freedom is not an inspiring force. ... It is not till the motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-absorbing passion for mother and her service, and patriotism that works miracles and saves doomed nations is born. To some men it is given to have that vision and reveal it to others.⁵

Militant Nationalism: Struggle and Sacrifice

It has been observed by some that Bankimchandra's exhortation to his countrymen to raise the Mother's 'image in every temple' (last line in stanza 4 of Aurobindo's translation of 'Bande Mataram'), did not move the anti-idolatrous sections of the people of India.

Such an objection is really misplaced. The song has to be taken in its spirit. The image that Bankimchandra presents in the song is really symbolic of certain qualities (pursuit of creative energy, wealth and prosperity, knowledge and enlightenment, devotion and dedication, and so on) he wanted his countrymen to cultivate. It is from such a perspective that he designated his theory of *dharma* as *anushilan dharma*. Through *anushilan*, the people of India, each one of them, must try to attain their *purna manushyatva* and then use it for the

attainment of India's *manhood* in terms of wresting its freedom from the conquerors. Indeed, the third stanza of 'Bande Mataram' is the most revealing of Bankimchandra's views that India must wrest her freedom by armed means. Here Bankimchandra candidly gives his countrymen a call to arms, making the point that with so many of her children rising in arms, the motherland-Mother would be strong enough to drive out the armies of her enemies. To quote the stanza:

Terrible with the clamorous shout
of seventy-million⁶ throats
and the sharpness of swords raised
in twice seventy-million hands,
who sayeth to thee, Mother,
that thou art weak?

Holder of multitudinous strength,
I bow to Her who saves,
to her who drives from her
the armies of her foemen—the Mother.

The theme of a national militia or national liberation force, first spoken of in 'Bande Mataram' finds its fullest elucidation in the novel *Ananda Math*, by all reckoning a parable of patriotic nationalism and revolt. In it Bankimchandra unhesitatingly designates the national militia as the '*santan* army'⁷ and states that, composed of the all-sacrificing 'children of the Mother', the *santan* army's only goal or mission was to free the motherland-Mother from foreign bondage and stage a revolt or wage a war for the same. Bhabananda, a leading member of the *santan* army, put forth its all-sacrificing character when he formulated his observation that the *santans* recognized no other mother except the motherland in the following words: 'We have neither mothers nor fathers, neither brothers nor friends, neither wives nor children, neither any home nor any land. We have only one Mother.'⁸

The *santans* had a very clear conception of what the motherland-Mother was like in ancient times, what she was reduced to at the present time and what the *santans* would make of her in the future. To quote from the

Ananda Math:

Mahendra [a new recruit] is led into the forest in the 'Ananda Math' (The Abbey of Bliss) where he meets Satyananda, the leader, who takes him inside the temple. There Mahendra finds an image of a mother-goddess—'a beautiful, shapely, bejeweled image of Jagaddhatri'—in a chamber. Mahendra asks, 'Who is she?' The ascetic Satyananda, explains, 'Mother. What she once was.' Then Mahendra is led into another chamber where he finds an image of the dark and dreadful Kali. The ascetic exclaims, 'Look, what Mother has come to.... Kali, the dark mother. She is naked because the country is impoverished. The country has now been turned into a cremation ground, so the mother is now garlanded with skulls.' Finally, as Mahendra is led into yet another chamber through a tunnel, 'suddenly the light of the morning sun touches their eyes. Sweet songs of birds are heard from all directions. Here they see a golden image of a goddess stretching her ten arms, looking radiant in the tender light of the morning. The ascetic bows down before the image, and says, 'There is she, what Mother will become.'⁹

In such a perception of the history of the motherland as the Mother, one can see the reason why the *santans* took to arms: the Mother must be rescued from all the misery, denudation, degradation and decay she had been subjected to by foreign conquerors and given back all the wealth and prosperity, wisdom and enlightenment, glory and grandeur that she once had in abundance.

In thus charting the course of national struggle for freedom, Bankimchandra sought to give direction to the future national revolutionaries of India on two counts: 1) that they must take to armed struggle against their foreign subjugators; and 2) that in order to succeed in the struggle for liberation of the country from foreign enemies as also in the post-liberation efforts towards the reconstruction of the country, all concerned must take the vow of self-denial, always holding the ideal of *purna manushyatva* and the interests of the nation above their individual interests.

Asserting National Identity

Bankimchandra gave his countrymen a mantra as also the benefit of a vision. He showed them the way to achieve oneness between their individual interests and the interests of the national community to which they belonged. Having thus taught them the first key element of nationalism, he also taught them the other element, that is, their sense of differentiation from other nations, particularly the English, which, by virtue of its being the ruler of India at that time, was a source of great concern to Indians.

Bankimchandra held that as an ancient nation with thousands of years of history, culture and heritage, Indians had legitimate reasons to be aggrieved about their being dominated by the English, but they did not have to waste their energy in hurling abuses at the English. On the contrary, they should give a positive direction to their sense of national bitterness by engaging in constructive competitiveness with the English in different spheres of life and try to be equal, if not better than them, in those spheres. So long as the sense of hostility to the English acted as a spur to Indians to bring about their self-development and development as a nation, Bankimchandra considered it to be a positive development and wanted its continuation.

In consonance with such a stand, Bankimchandra made Satyananda declare on the battlefield that he would keep on fighting till the country was completely free from foreign hands: 'I shall strengthen the Mother by drenching the soil of my country with the enemy's blood.'¹⁰ In keeping with such a stand, again, Bankimchandra made fun of some British characters in his novels—of Captain Thomas, for example, in the *Ananda Math*. His purpose was to boost up the national morale. The lampooning of British characters was a means towards that end. Courage and fearlessness in the character of Shanti, a disguised female member of the *santan* army, presented in contrast to the infirm character of Thomas,

captain of the British forces that were sent to crush the revolt of the *santans*, assumes a significance of a different order. Mark the words of Shanti, as spoken to Thomas: 'I had a monkey in my home. It died recently. Will you stay where it lived? I shall put a chain around your waist. We have plenty of bananas in our garden.'¹¹ And who can forget his sarcastic criticism of those Britishers who were opposed to the Ilbert Bill¹² in the form of that masterly satirical piece titled 'Bransonism'?¹³

Not just in his novels and essays, but in his professional and personal life too Bankimchandra, despite his deputy magistrateship under the British government, was not afraid of taking on offending Britishers, if occasion so demanded. During his posting at Khulna, Bankimchandra suppressed not only the river dacoits but also the tyrannical British-born subjects.¹⁴ Even C E Buckland, who as one-time boss of Bankimchandra in the British administration was not too fond of Bankimchandra's fierce sense of independence and self-respect as an official, acknowledged his courage in the memoirs that he authored of the British administration in Bengal.¹⁵ Perhaps the most outstanding example of Bankimchandra's challenging a Britisher as a means of upholding his own self-respect, and *national* self-respect as well, took place in Berhampore on 15 December 1873, when he was serving there as a deputy magistrate. To quote the report of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*: 'Bankim was returning from his office that day. The bearers of his palanquin carried it through a cricket ground where Lt.-Col. Duffin and some of his friends were playing cricket. The Colonel abused the bearers and asked Bankim to come out of the palanquin. Bankim got out of the palanquin and tried to pacify the angry Colonel. But Duffin who was in a state of fury gave a violent push and "chastised him with blows".'¹⁶ Bankim brought a criminal suit against him which caused great sensation in the little town of Berhampore. The next lines of the report are revealing of Bankimchandra's stand on up-

holding the dignity of the self and the nation: 'Some of his [Bankim's] well-wishers advised Bankim to withdraw the case against Duffin but Bankim, unwilling to compromise with his honour and self-respect, insisted on an unqualified apology which Duffin finally offered in an open court.' The incident created a sensation not only in Berhampore, as mentioned above, but elsewhere as well. The unqualified apology offered by Duffin enhanced not only the dignity of Bankimchandra himself but the dignity of his countrymen as well.

Indeed, Bankimchandra was not afraid of playing up the fact of *differentiation* of Indians from the British, if that fact could serve the purpose of enhancing the self-respect and pride of Indians. He did it himself and through his example encouraged other Indians to do the same, particularly if such exercises provided a spur to Indians to develop as a nation.¹⁷

In brief, Bankimchandra's thesis on nationalism was this: In order to be a nation, the Indians needed the religion of love for the country translating into fellow feeling for one another as also a sense of constructive differentiation from other peoples and nations.

Inclusive Nationalism

To sum up, this essay shows that in both aspects of the concept of nationalism, namely, identification and differentiation, Bankimchandra has been a constructive thinker. He gave us a common basis of Indian national identity and cautioned us against playing up our lesser identities around *caste*, *community*, *language*, *region* and *faith*. In doing so, he laid the first systematic foundation of nationalism in India.¹⁸ Before him, the thoughts on nationalism were sporadic and effusive, with the national feeling expressing itself in college debating societies, in the National Mela (started in Bengal in 1866) and in newspapers and journals such as the *National Paper* (first circulated in Bengal in 1866).¹⁹ In systematizing the thoughts on nationalism through the concept

of motherland-Mother, Bankimchandra gave it the first-ever theoretical foundation.

Bankimchandra's concept of religion as the attainment of full humanity through the cultivation and harmonious development of all human faculties, a novelty in itself, left its mark on the thinking of stalwarts such as Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda. Indeed, Rabindranath's concept of *atmashakti* and Swamiji's concept of 'man-making'²⁰ bear the imprints of Bankimchandra's concept of *purna manushyatva*. Sri Aurobindo's *Bhavani Mandir* was clearly a product of the inspiration he received from Bankimchandra's *Ananda Math*. And that Bankimchandra inspired many revolutionaries of India to embrace the gallows with 'Bande Mataram' on their lips is a well-documented fact of history. Many have spoken against his theory of religious nationalism and criticized him for his failure to maintain the distinction between religion and politics, without realizing that, to him, the whole of life was religion and as per such a perception and philosophy of life, man's spiritual and temporal lives were incapable of being distinguished. As Bankimchandra himself observed, 'They form one compact whole, to separate which into component parts is to rend the entire fabric.'²¹

Bankimchandra's problem, however, was that at times he was a little too aggressive in his pronouncements on nationalism and that some of the characters in his novels occasionally made observations on other communities that were not in the best interests of communal harmony.

Indeed, Bankimchandra has been charged with communalism and Muslim-baiting by some critics. Bankimchandra's defence is that his views on the issue should not be derived from his novels. Novels depict fictional situations and characters and are not necessarily representative of an author's views on a particular subject. His essays, asserts Bankimchandra, are more representative of his views in this regard. 'India could not de-

velop truly as a nation so long as there was not equal and simultaneous improvement in the conditions of Hashim Sheikhs and Rama Kaibartas of the country,' observes Bankimchandra in an essay.²² Only a man passionately committed to nationalism and an Indian identity, as distinguished from communal identity, could make such an observation. ~

Notes and References

1. *Bankim Rachanabali* (Kolkata: Sahitya Samsad, 1401 BE), 2.85. See also Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Sociological Essays*, trans. S N Mukherjee and Marian Maddern (Calcutta: Riddhi-India, 1986), 49. Bankim's distaste for the politics of agitation that comprised verbosity, prayer and petition can also be seen in his satirical piece entitled 'Politics' included in *Kamalakanta*, in which he designated such politics as 'politics of the dog'. 'Give me alms', he said, was at the heart of such politics. It arose from a sense of weakness, which Bankimchandra despised. See *Bankim Rachanabali*, 2.82-3.
2. *Sociological Essays*, 188.
3. *Bankim Rachanabali*, 1.23.
4. Stanza 4 of the song as translated by Sri Aurobindo.
5. Sri Aurobindo, *Rishi Bankimchandra*.
6. With reference to the mention of this particular number, some have felt that Bankimchandra's call to arms was limited to Bengal only. Truly, Bengal's population in the 1870s was seventy million, but Bankimchandra's appeal was undoubtedly to the whole country. Those who are familiar with his essays such as 'Bharatbarsha Paradhin Keno?' ('Why is India Dependent?'), 'Bharatbarsher Swadhinata o Paradhinata' ('India's Independence and Dependence') will accept that Bankimchandra's thought was in terms of the whole country, though, as a Bengali writing in the Bengali language, his appeal was directed for obvious reasons to Bengali people first.
7. A secret organization with a strict code of conduct whose members took vows of forsaking all worldly pleasures until the liberation of the

- country, to forget caste distinctions, to stay on the battlefield till death and to accept death for any violation of the *santan* codes.
8. See Sisir Kumar Das, *The Artist in Chains: The Life of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee* (New Delhi: New Statesman, 1984), 133. See also 'Amar Durgotsab' in *Kamalakanta, Bankim Rachanabali*, 2.71-2.
 9. *The Artist in Chains*, 134.
 10. See *Ananda Math*, 4.8, in *Bankim Rachanabali*, 1.787.
 11. *Ananda Math*, 3.2, in *Bankim Rachanabali*, 1.759.
 12. The Bill proposed to give the native magistrates the jurisdiction to try British subjects of European origin as well.
 13. Branson was a European member of the Calcutta Bar who led the opposition against the Bill. See *Bankim Rachanabali*, 2.30-4.
 14. One such subject torched a village by using a rogue elephant. Bankimchandra showed the courage of arresting the revolver-wielding tyrant and in the process made his countrymen proud of him.
 15. *Bengal under Lieutenant Governors*, Calcutta, 1902.
 16. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 15 January 1874, as reproduced in *The Artist in Chains*, 54.
 17. See Bankimchandra's essay 'Jatibaira' in *Bankim Rachanabali*, 2.809-10.
 18. That the credit on this count belongs rightly to Bankimchandra and not to any politician or social reformer is a point very effectively made out by Sri Aurobindo in *Rishi Bankimchandra* in the following words: 'And when posterity comes to crown with her praises the Makers of Modern India, she will place her most splendid laurel not on the sweating temples of a place-hunting politician nor on the narrow forehead of a noisy social reformer but on the serene brow of that gracious Bengali who never clamoured for place or for power, but did his work, even as nature does, and just because he had no aim but to give the best that was his, was able to create a language, a literature and a nation.' See also Sri Aurobindo, *Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram).
 19. Among other works with a bearing on this point, readers would be well advised to look particularly into the rich collection of essays titled *Bankimchandra: Essays in Perspective* (Calcutta: Sahitya Akademi, 1994) ably edited by Bhabatosh Chatterjee. M K Halder in his *Foundations of Nationalism in India* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1989) credits Bankimchandra with laying the foundation of nationalism in India but all the same traces the genesis of the partition that followed in the wake of the independence of India to his writings. Sudipta Kaviraj in his *The Unhappy Consciousness* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1995) acknowledges Bankimchandra's contribution towards the formation of the nationalist discourse in India, but argues that Bankimchandra suffered from an unhappy consciousness due to his liminal failure to resolve satisfactorily the contradiction between 'autonomy' and 'modernity'. Perspectives are varied, and along with them the praises and criticisms of Bankimchandra which throw up the all-important point that he remains as relevant and as throbbing with life today as he ever was, and that the need for studying him in depth remains as acute today as it ever was.
 19. Bimanbehari Majumdar, *History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1934), 412.
 20. As Swamiji himself said to Hemchandra Ghose, a young revolutionary of Bengal fighting for the freedom of India, who met him in Dhaka on 3 and 4 April 1901: 'Man-making is my mission of life. Hemchandra! You try with your comrades to translate this mission of mine into action and reality. Read Bankimchandra and emulate his *desha-bhakti* and *sanatana dharma*.' See Bhupendranath Datta, *Swami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet* (Calcutta: Nababharat, 1993), 165.
 21. 'Dharmatattva', Appendix II, in *Bankim Rachanabali*, 2.610.
 22. 'Bangadesher Krishak' in *Bankim Rachanabali*, 2.250.

‘Bande Mataram’: In Historical Perspective

DR SATISH K KAPOOR

The fatwa issued sometime back by Mufti Abdul Quddus Rumi excommunicating fifty-four Muslims and nullifying their marriages for describing ‘Bande Mataram’ as a patriotic song (‘not un-Islamic’) is unfortunate and betrays an insularity of outlook.

Bande mataram, literally, ‘Mother, I bow to thee’ was the soul-stirring slogan of Indian revolutionaries during the struggle for freedom against the British Raj. It forms a part of a song which appears in Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s (1838-94) famous novel *Anandamath* (Abbey of Bliss), published in 1880. It uses the idea of Mother (in her forms as goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati) as a veritable metaphor for the motherland (India).

The symbol of mother occurs in all religious traditions. Even God has a mother, says a Serbian proverb. ‘Forsake not the law of thy mother,’ says the Bible.¹ The Quran enjoins upon believers to be kind to their mothers as they bear children ‘with suffering’ and bring them forth ‘with suffering’.² When Hazrat Jahma solicited the Prophet’s guidance in the matter of joining him in jihad, the latter asked whether his mother was alive. On getting a positive reply, the Prophet admonished: ‘Return to her and devote yourself to her service, for Paradise lies under her feet (*Ibn majah, nasai*).’

In the Hindu tradition, the mother represents the primordial Energy that lies at the root of existence. The *Devi Mahatmya* says that God reveals Himself in the form of mother and that all women are but His forms (*striyaḥ samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu*). The land of one’s birth is also regarded as one’s mother (*mātr̥bhūmī*) and so deserves to be revered like her in corporeal form. Bowing before the ‘mother’ is thus an ideal and not an idolatrous act.

During the anti-imperialist struggle,

‘Bande Mataram’ fostered national unity. It also came to be used as a form of greeting and salutation. Uttered at a high pitch, sometimes accompanied with the cry of *Inqilab zindabad!* (‘Long live the revolution!’) it inspired millions of countrymen to bear the blows of police lathis and make supreme sacrifices without demur. Some revolutionaries kissed the gallows with *Bande mataram!* on their lips and a copy of the Bhagavadgita in their hands. Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) and Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928) named their nationalist papers *Bande Mataram* to turn them into powerful organs of mass protest against the Raj.

When Bengal was partitioned by Lord Curzon (1859-1925) in 1905, the streets of Calcutta resounded with cries of *Bande mataram!* and thousands marched to the townhall to undertake the vows of swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods. While it became the mantra of the nationalists it was the bugbear of the British bureaucracy, which considered sloganeering with *Bande mataram!* as a sign of revolt. In subsequent years, the British government dubbed people agitating anywhere as *Bande-mataram* people. When Bampfylde Fuller, Lieutenant-Governor of the newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam banned the shouting of the slogan, Sarojini Bose (wife of Tara Prasanna Bose) publicly pledged that she would not wear gold until the government withdrew its circular in this respect. A European club in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, was attacked by a mob on 31 May 1907 after a white man thrashed a boy for shouting *Bande mataram!* Badges with the slogan inscribed on them were worn by students in schools, workers in factories, and women at home and in public places. In organized gatherings, the entire poem of ‘Bande Mataram’ used to be sung

(often in the tune set by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in 1882) with folded hands before a symbolic portrait of Mother India.

Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) wrote that the song 'Bande Mataram' had converted the people to the religion of patriotism. It was the rallying cry of Ghadr nationalists. *Bande mataram!* resounded in the Central Legislative Assembly on 8 April 1929 when Sardar Bhagat Singh (1907-31) and Batukeshwar Dutt threw a bomb to protest against the passage of the Public Safety Bill and Trade Disputes Bill. Surya Sen (1894-1934) a Bengali revolutionary of the Chittagong group proclaimed a Provisional Revolutionary Government while chanting *Bande mataram!*

'Bande Mataram' was first sung at the annual session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in 1896. The tradition continued till about 1930 when some Muslims objected to it. When the party came to power in six of the eleven provinces of British India in 1937, the song acquired the status of national anthem to which the Muslim League protested vehemently, describing it as 'positively anti-Islamic' and 'idolatrous in its inspiration and ideas' in a resolution passed at Lucknow.

In October 1937, while the Congress was willing to restrict the recitation of the song to the first two stanzas 'as they did not contain any phrases or references which were likely to cause offence to anybody', the League wanted to give it a complete burial. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) emphatically told Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) that the Congress could not compel a large number of people to abandon what they had come to treasure for so long.

The Constituent Assembly preferred the totally non-controversial song 'Jana-gana-mana' as the national anthem of India. However, 'Bande Mataram', as the national song, was to have an equal status with it. Although Bankim's composition is not officially sung it continues to be sung at patriotic gatherings with the same enthusiasm.

'Bande Mataram', being part of India's national heritage, should not be a point of controversy as that may lead to unsavoury developments.

References

1. Proverbs, 6.20.
2. Quran, 46.15.

In the vicissitudes of these days when questions regarding Swaraj, Boycott and National Education are being discussed from different view-points, we feel it a great pleasure to bring to the notice of our readers the publication of a very important work from the Udbodhan Office of the Ramakrishna Mission. ... *Bharate Vivekananda [Lectures from Colombo to Almora]*. ... the Swami's lectures in India are not mere replies in the strict sense of the term but thoughtful messages of hope and benediction to his countrymen about the grand mission which India is destined to fulfill in the near future. ...

'My plan,' says the Swami, 'is to follow the great ancient masters' ... Even politics has to be cast in our own national mould. It must be preached to the masses and preached through religion as the sages did in the days of yore. 'The words of Sree Krishna must be brought to their political use.'

But how is this to be done? How politics is [*sic*] to be preached through religion? The Swami answers it in the following words: 'Slaves must become great masters. [So give up being a slave. For the next fifty years this] alone shall be your keynote—this, our great Mother [India]. ... The first of all worship is the worship of the *Virat*—of those all around us. ... These are all your gods—men and animals; the first gods you have to worship are *your own fellow countrymen*'—and the Salvation of India will be at your command.

—'Bharate Vivekananda' (editorial), *Bande Mataram*, 20 September 1908

History, Religion and Humanity

SWAMI SANDARSHANANANDA

Introduction

'History repeats itself' is a cliché. But the expression will never lose its meaning completely and become redundant. History does repeat itself and stay in gear, not as often described by social scientists, but through the advent of individuals of remarkable character from time to time. Historians have probably committed a glaring mistake in not giving adequate consideration to these 'manifestations of Power' while offering their interpretations and, thereby, failed to recognize the fact that they are the brightest stars in the darkest of nights in history, aiding lost souls in the navigation of the ocean of life's miseries. Their selfless characters and exceptional sacrifices set them on the crests of the waves of Time.

However, one sometimes wonders what really makes history so important and meaningful. Is it merely certain facts and dates accurately collected with regard to human civilization that lends history its extraordinary significance? Or, is it the lessons that history serves that makes it indispensable? Again, if history is the true story of humankind told in a chronological manner, where does man stand in his true glory amidst the parade of events? History also unobtrusively gathers accretions over the centuries which are imperceptibly converted into myth. Under the circumstances, it is but natural that a probing mind would explore answers to such questions, especially when one finds some people quoting history in support of their follies.

Karl Marx and Interpretation of History

History is interpreted variously in the light of disparate opinions, each clashing with the rest. Nonetheless, the truths which it

nurses within its bosom are simple and abiding. Civilizations rise and fall but man's nature remains unaltered in essence. Therefore, without understanding man first one can hardly make a faithful appraisal of history, for man is the central character of all the shifting scenes on earth. Theorizing about history only demonstrates our limitation all the more because history primarily concerns itself with extraneous changes—which are only outer effects of the perpetual inner battle man wages against the odds he faces within—showing scant interest in their real causes. Octogenarian British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm's remark during his recent visit to India is interesting: 'Traditional political history is superficial, and in the long term, less relevant'.¹ ('Tackling terrorism,' he says, 'calls for cool heads and not hysteria.')

The Non-material Element in History

Most scholars forget that every man is a bit of a mystic who sets himself apart from other living beings, because he 'seeks by contemplation to become closer to God and to reach truths beyond human understanding'. Man has an inherent awareness which convinces him that his own power is negligible compared to the power of nature controlled by a transcendental Being who is unknown and unknowable. He knows that the scope of reasoning is too limited for knowing that transcendental Being. Swami Vivekananda observes:

The field of reason, or the conscious working of the mind, is narrow and limited. There is a little circle within which human reason must move. It cannot go beyond. Every attempt to go beyond is impossible, yet it is beyond this circle of reason that there lies all that humanity holds

most dear. All these questions, whether there is an immortal soul, whether there is a God, whether there is any supreme intelligence guiding this universe or not, are beyond the field of reason. Reason can never answer these questions. What does reason say? It says, 'I am agnostic, I do not know either yea or nay.' Yet these questions are so important to us. Without a proper answer to them, human life will be purposeless. All our ethical theories, all our moral attitudes, all that is good and great in human nature, have been moulded upon answers that have come from beyond the circle.²

Perhaps, Karl Marx too commits the same mistake. In spite of his immense sincerity in making an objective assessment of history and in exploring historical avenues in order to bring about a change in the lot of the suffering multitudes, he misses this vital point. He fails to recognize that religion is the well-spring of human emotions and the most potent influence that motivates man to grapple with his worst adversary, greed. He did not think that the goal of civilization and the goal of religion were the same; nor did he accept that 'unity in variety, and not uniformity, is the pattern of world culture', of which morality is the basis and spirituality the end. This is why Marx's philosophy, by its very lack of sensitivity to the mentality of the people it was concerned with, could never enjoy the success he wished for it.

Every human activity is psychosomatic in nature; considering man's physical needs without taking cognizance of the demands of his mind is futile. Man is an essentially spiritual being and religion is essentially spirituality. But in holding that religion has a merely psychedelic effect on man, Marx fails to see the fact that nothing could permanently wean man from religion. Although he borrows substantially from Hegel he never accepts his view that the *spirit* of man propels the development of history. He holds that 'matter, not spirit, is the driving force' of history. By ignoring the deeper, spiritual element in the brotherhood of man, Marx unwittingly relegated

his doctrine to the level of a mere intellectual thesis instead of making it 'scientific' for pragmatic pursuance.

The Failure of Material Dialectics

Marx is a 'revivifier of materialism, giving it a new interpretation and a new connection with human history.' Applying Hegelian dialectics he puts forward his deterministic view of the philosophy of history with regard to feudalism, capitalism and socialism. He thought socialism once established would provide 'human happiness more than either feudalism or capitalism have done.' Unfortunately, it has worked contrarily. 'Marx's doctrine of a classless society, somewhat loosely phrased, was taken seriously by Lenin, who, while trying to put it into practice, made the breath-taking statement that he had no objection to the extermination of three-fourths of the world's population, provided the remaining one-fourth were converted to Marxism.'³

The recent history of socialism is well known. How socialist societies rising in revolt against their own governments exposed its weaknesses is also evident. States adopting socialist principles for progress were found to be economically lacking and required a shift from this ideology. Their conservative socialism isolated their people from the rest of the world. Under its spell, the toiling masses were not given their due, let alone the respect they deserved. Thus Marx's view was myopic and restricted to the condition of society during his time. Bertrand Russell points out in his *History of Western Philosophy*: 'Considered purely as a philosopher, Marx has grave shortcomings. He is too practical, too much wrapped up in the problems of his time. His purview is confined to this planet and, within this planet, to Man. Since Copernicus, it has been evident that man has not the cosmic importance which he formerly arrogated to himself. No man who has failed to assimilate this fact has a right to call his philosophy scientific.'⁴

Marx never gave serious thought to 'ethi-

cal and humanitarian reasons' for the uplift of 'wage-earners', who happened to be the largest in number and constituted the lowest stratum of society. Unable to recognize how inextricably religion was linked to humanity, he condemned it in the harshest of terms and, eventually, made place for a sort of political as well as economic superstition, under the sway of which the state became an instrument of oppression, enjoying power and resources absolutely unimpeded. In this context, Nirad C Chaudhuri's comment in his book *A Passage to England* is worth mentioning: 'The man who described religion as the opium of the people never tried to define what kind of dope political and economic dogmas were, because he was interested in popularization of a particular drug of his own.'⁵

Locating Genuine Equality

The history of religion is the history of struggle between priests and prophets. The priests try to monopolize power and knowledge, depriving the other classes. They want to put chains on the feet of people in order to enjoy uninterrupted supremacy. Swami Vivekananda points out that, in the history of the Jews, with the advent of Jesus the same chain was transferred to the priests themselves; and the masters became the slaves. He says,

The culmination of the struggle was the victory of Jesus of Nazareth. This triumph is the history of Christianity. Christ at last succeeded in overthrowing the mass of witchcraft. This great prophet killed the dragon of priestly selfishness, rescued from its clutches the jewel of truth, and gave it to all the world, so that whosoever desired to possess it would have absolute freedom to do so, and would not have to wait on the pleasure of any priest or priests.⁶

Marx's worst mistake lies in the fact that he talks of religion and priestcraft in the same parlance without making an in-depth study of the former vis-à-vis the latter. He does not know that true religion is a science which can

work miracles within man, shaping good character by means of a spontaneous process of sublimation of evil tendencies. So, unmindful of its blessings, he remains oblivious of the importance of universal brotherhood, irrespective of people's socio-economic and political conditions, for the accomplishment of a healthy human society, and thereby unconsciously encourages a rigorous bartering process between the rich and the poor with regard to distribution of the proceeds of production. Rightly does Swami Satprakashananda point out: 'As long as greed dominates the minds of the people, as long as sense-desires provoke them, wants will multiply, competition will become keener, and the conflict between the employer and the employed will grow increasingly severe.'⁷ It does not strike Marx that man's soul is the most useful book to read before searching for a solution to human suffering, that man's external behaviour is a mere reflection of his internal nature. Unless that is purified, man often turns 'into a clever animal capable of exploiting the world.' The 'equality' spoken of in socialism cannot come from any artificial means enforced on society. Says Swamiji:

How will a man know he is equal with all? He must have a strong brain, a clear mind free of nonsensical ideas; he must pierce through the mass of superstitions encrusting his mind to the pure truth that is in his inmost Self. Then he will know that all perfections, all powers are already within himself, that these have not to be given him by others. When he realises this, he becomes free that moment, he achieves equality. He also realizes that every one else is equally as perfect as he, and he does not have to exercise any power, physical, mental or moral, over his brother men. He abandons the idea that there was ever any man who was lower than himself.⁸

History Takes a Different Course

In fine, notwithstanding his best intentions, Marx could scarcely reach beyond the fringe of human problems. He was undoubt-

edly concerned about the plight of the 'have-nots', but the course he chose to proffer them socio-economic salvation needs some rectification. This has been proved by the events of the last two decades, with capitalism usurping even the strongest bastions of socialism. This supposedly impervious social barrier has also become porous to capitalism today because of the latter's resilience and innate power of penetration. Hence, when its liberal principles are utilized in conformity with a democratic system, with religion, philosophy, science, art, literature and the like contributing freely, we achieve a society vibrant with life and spirit—pure blood flowing, as it were, through its sinews.

Marx is gradually petering out of our minds since his contribution was too partial, and parochial. He was unable to read history in its true perspective and understand that 'one-sidedness is the bane of the world.' He lost sight of the fact that capital playing freely in the global market makes for a strong economy catering to the needs of the people; and that with a debilitated economy no altruistic service is possible, contingent as it is upon situations over which man has no control. For instance, the aftermath of the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean called for rehabilitation expenditure on a scale that could not have been met without surplus financial reserves.

History shows that progress demands a combination of physical activity and mental serenity. But Marx's lack of vision deprives him of the larger perspective of history. To quote Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta:

Marx was a large-hearted philanthropist and a grand visionary who deeply felt the sufferings of the poor people as few thinkers have done, and dreamt in a grand way of ameliorating their condition. But he was an incomplete and unscientific thinker, because whenever he had

to explain how the desired transformation would be consummated, he fumbled. If I can borrow Dantesque phraseology, I must say that Marx contemplated three stages: First, the feudal-capitalist Inferno; the second stage will be the socialist Purgatorio, where the united struggle of the proletariat would eliminate the idle rich and establish the socialist state which would purge away profiteers and rebels, and this would lead to the stateless, classless self-administered communist Paradiso, where, Engels assures us, the state would 'wither away'. But a state that has seized power by violence naturally refuses to wither away except before a show of superior violence, and what is worse, far from uniting, the liberated workers of the world are ranged in different camps, each anxious to eliminate difference by violence, and all swearing by Marxism, which, as Bernard Shaw pertinently pointed out, has become a religion which it is difficult to regard as reasoned philosophy.⁹

(To be concluded)

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1. *The Week*, 9 January 2005, 73.
2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.181.
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5. Nirad C Chaudhuri *A Passage to England* (London: Macmillan, 1959), 199.
6. CW, 8.94.
7. Swami Satprakashananda, *The Universe, God and God-realization* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2004), 25.
8. CW, 8.94.
9. *Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism*, 158.

Even the sceptical historian develops a humble respect for religion, since he sees it functioning, and seemingly indispensable, in every land and age. ... Heaven and utopia are buckets in a well: when one goes down the other goes up; when religion declines Communism grows.

—Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History*

The Leaf and the Leaping Fire

N HARIHARAN

The Genealogy of Desire

There is a certain notorious lineage down which the vice of wickedness runs, like a strand with unbroken continuity. The progenitress of the lineage is, of course, Avidya (primal nescience). She is a past-master in the art of obfuscation. She delights in eclipsing the non-dual Spirit, effectively camouflages the Truth of the oneness of existence and dopes beings by throwing on them a thick shroud of non-apprehension of the spiritual Truth.

Like mother, like son. The offspring of Avidya is Ahankara (ego). He is a chip off the old block and, in doing mischief, not a whit inferior to his ruthless mother. Causing distortion of the spiritual Truth and projecting fantasies are child's play for him. Causing a spell of universal misapprehension is his forte. He is an adept in causing finitude, individuation, and cleavage in the Spirit, which is really infinite, unitary, undifferentiated, and impartite. He creates an illusion of multiplicity on the non-dual Spirit. Under his potent illusion-causing power, the oneness and unity of the Spirit get splintered into a breath-taking diversity of *nama-rupa* (names and forms). He is, in fact, the axle on which the wheel of empirical delusion revolves.

Once the non-dual Spirit is camouflaged and a staggering skein of *nama-rupa* takes over, the birth of Kama (desire) from Ahankara is logical and inevitable. Kama wilts and withers on the terrain of non-dualism but thrives in the soil of pluralism. He flourishes in an ambience where a plethora of sense delights presents itself and does its job of enticement. Kama seduces and enthralls the whole world with his blandishments. The atrocities he perpetrates are quite serious and an offence

against spiritual verity. The more one comes under the dominion of Kama, the farther one moves away from the Divine. The Lord is so appalled by his capacity for mischief that He uses a couple of choice—but significant—epithets for him: *mahāśanaḥ* ('mighty devourer') and *mahāpāpmā* ('worst sinner').¹ Desire is a mighty devourer as his appetite is unappeasable and grows with whatever he feeds on. His sin is horrifying too, as he is guilty of the heinous crime of spiritual decimation of his victims. Scriptures are never tired of characterizing him as the villain in the drama of the soul's spiritual evolution.

The Dissolute Son

Desires are of various sorts. There is, first of all, the all-too-common desire for sense enjoyments. Weakness for sense pleasures is the Achilles' heel of human beings. Kama brings the vast majority of humanity under his thumb by dangling before them the bait of varied sense delights here and now on the terrestrial plane. Second, there is, for a small minority, the thirst for post-mortem felicities in heaven. Kama does not spare them. He catches and entangles them in his dragnet by pandering to their craving for celestial pleasures. He generates in their minds an insidious addiction to Vedic ritualism, which is believed to be the passport to the post-mortem joys of heaven.

Thirst for terrestrial sense pleasures is bad enough but yearning for post-mortem felicities is worse. The former is a drag on spiritual progress, as it deflects one's orientation away from the Divine. The seekers of sense pleasures are conscious of their foibles and, in their inner minds, rue their fate in having fallen into their stranglehold. They know for

certain that in the spiritual realm they are outcasts because of their addiction to earthly sense delights. The lovers of post-mortem bliss in the hereafter are, on the other hand, guilty of a double crime. They are guilty of both turpitude and hypocrisy—turpitude because of their relish for heavenly delights, albeit post-mortem, and hypocrisy because of their pretensions to spiritual impeccability. By choosing to chase the impermanent raptures of heaven, they jettison the spiritual goal of God-love and God-vision. They miss the spiritual goal no less than the unabashed devotees of the sublunary sense delights.

The tragedy is that they mistakenly consider heavenly bliss as the apex of the spiritual pyramid. They refuse to acknowledge that what they are pursuing is not the immortal bliss of God-experience but only evanescent thrills of a higher order in the celestial regions. Again, they refuse to accept that in the purely spiritual realm where God-vision is the desideratum they are persona non grata. They pose as genuine spiritualists and entertain a sense of superiority and condescension which they hardly have the right to. Their obsession with ritualism and the benefits it is supposed to confer on them clouds their spiritual vision and erects an impenetrable barrier to God-vision. They are so puffed up with pseudo-spiritual pride that even when God, in His flesh and blood, appears before them, they fail to recognize Him. Their blind addiction to ritualism is so shocking that the Lord inveighs against them in strong terms:

O Arjuna! There are people who delight in the eulogistic statements of the Vedas and argue that the purport of the Vedas consists in these and nothing else. They are full of worldly desires; paradise is their highest goal; and they are totally blind in a spiritual sense. They expatiate upon those florid Vedic texts which describe the means for the attainment of pleasure and power, which provide attractive embodiments as the fruits of actions, and which are full of descriptions of rites and rituals (through which these fulfilments are obtained). In the minds of

these votaries of pleasure and power, addicted to enjoyments of the above description, steadfast wisdom (capable of revealing the Truth) is never generated.²

Love without Formalism

Dry ritualism, bereft of an iota of God-love, is a spiritual liability. The sorry plight of confirmed ritualists is graphically portrayed by the *Bhagavata* through a concise tale of surpassing charm.³ The story depicts one of the less known sports of the Lord. It is in fact a vivid portrayal of the sharp contrast between self-centered ritualism and self-giving devotion and demonstrates the fact that while the frenzy of ritualism blocks spiritual vision, the upsurge of unmotivated love of God identifies the Divine, though appearing in a human garb, with a sure eye.

Brewing a Plan

Vrindavana, a jewel of a place on earth, is glowing with ravishing beauty that morning. The golden orb of the rising sun with its lambent rays, the warbling notes of the cuckoo, the hum of buzzing bees, the soft, gurgling sound of a nearby rivulet, the frolicking fawn, the dancing peacock—all make the place a veritable paradise on earth. No wonder the innate wanderlust in Krishna is tickled. A strong urge to go out on a merry jaunt with his cowherd companions sweeps over Krishna, who has a robust zest for life. Next moment, he is out on the lush meadows of sprawling Vrindavana with his elder brother Balarama and his retinue of cowherd friends.

Normally Krishna, a great lover of good food, made it a point to carry with him a variety of items consisting of rich delicacies, including milk and butter. Today, however, he sallies forth without carrying any victuals, apparently in a fit of forgetfulness. But whatever Krishna does or does not do has a certain purpose. His act of not carrying anything to eat is no exception. Even as he sprints spiritedly with his friends on the verdant landscape of

the wooded groves, he waxes eloquent over the selfless service-mindedness of the large trees, which live for others (*parārthaikāntajīvitān*) and, themselves enduring the cruel vagaries of the shifting seasons, shield others from the fury of wind, rain, heat and cold (*vātavarṣātapahimān saḥanto vārayanti naḥ*). This praise is not an empty tribute uttered casually on the spur of the moment. It acquires, as we shall see, a special significance when related to the later happenings in the unfolding drama.

As the day advances, Krishna's cowherd friends become weary and feel the pinch of hunger. As was their wont, they report their gnawing hunger to Krishna and Balarama, begging them to get them something to eat. They say in piteous tones, 'O Rama! O Krishna! We are distraught with hunger. Please do something to assuage it.' The psychological moment for Krishna to stage His sport has arrived. He already has a fascinating plan up his sleeve which he orchestrates in order to convey a couple of spiritual messages.

Now, with a view to blessing the pious wives of a group of brahmanas (*bhaktāyā viprabhāryāyāḥ prasīdan*), Krishna says, 'Friends! Certain brahmanas who are well versed in scriptural lore are performing a sacrifice with the desire of attaining heaven (*svargakāmyayā*). Hasten to them and beg food of them. Do not forget to mention that you have been sent by Krishna and Balarama.' As instructed, the cowherd boys rush to the brahmana sacrificers and petition them for food. They prostrate themselves before the brahmanas and with folded hands say, 'O Bhūmidevas (gods on earth)! We have arrived here as commanded by Krishna and Balarama to beg food from you. They are tending the cattle not far from here. They are as hungry as we are. Please give us some food.' The brahmanas pretend not to hear the appeals of the cowherd boys. They give no reply at all, either positive or negative. They maintain a wilful silence that speaks volumes for their ritualist arrogance.



Vain Ritualism

The *Bhagavata* gives a graphic picture of the brahmanas when it says, '(They are) confirmed ritualists aspiring for short-lived heavenly enjoyments and childishly silly in outlook though considering themselves to be wise elders (*ksudrāsā bhūrikarmāṇo bālīṣā vṛddhamānīnaḥ*).' To cold-shoulder an *atithi* with a piercing verbal shaft and turn him away is bad enough as it violates the basic norms of hospitality. But to maintain a disdainful silence in the face of appeals by the *atithi* is the height of discourtesy. The negative reception has, at least, the merit of extending the basic courtesy of acknowledging the presence of the *atithi*. But wilful silence is an inexcusable insult as it ignores the *atithi* as a non-entity.

The *Bhagavata* vividly portrays the heights of insolence to which the unabashed vanity of the ritual-mad can soar. The magic

name of Krishna, which touches emotional chords universally, fails to have any effect on the brahmana ritualists, obsessed as they are with their selfish ends. Their ritual-ridden minds are the rocky ground on which the tender sapling of devotion to God fails to sprout. Ostrich-like they persist in their ritualistic routine and miss the Divine that walks before their very eyes, as it were. To quote the *Bhagavata*: 'These men of perverse intelligence, entrenched in the pride of their brahmanahood arising from their identification with the body, could see nothing but an ordinary man in Krishna, who in reality was the supreme Brahman and the worshipful Mahavishnu incarnate (*Tam brahma paramam saksad bhagavantamadhokṣajam; Manusyadrṣtyā duṣprajñā martyātmāno na menire*).'

Overpowering Love

The cowherd boys, smarting under the slight they suffered at the hands of the proud brahmanas, return to Krishna and report what

transpired. Krishna, far from being offended, smiles away the impudence of the brahmanas. He asks the cowherd boys to approach the wives of the brahmanas and beg from them. He says, 'Announce our arrival (of Balarama and me) to the wives of the sacrificers. They whose minds are ever centred in me will give you food to your heart's content.' Accordingly, the cowherd boys go to the brahmanas' wives, after paying obeisance to them, inform them of the presence of Krishna and Balarama at a spot close by. They describe how hungry all of them are and beg food of them.

The moment the brahmana wives hear of the presence of Krishna nearby, they are in a whirl of excitement. They have already heard a lot about the divine exploits of Krishna and their minds have been ravished by the charming stories of his divine sports. Such stories had whetted their eagerness to see the divine boy (*Śrutvācyutamupāyātām nityam tad-darśanotsukāḥ; Tatkathāḥṣiptamanaso babhūvur-jātasambhramāḥ*). In striking contrast to the shocking callousness of their husbands, who were immured in the smug cocoon of ritualistic ardour, a spirit of love and solicitude for the starving children wells up in the minds of the womenfolk. Hurriedly they repair to the place where Krishna is, carrying with them plenty of delicious foodstuffs of different varieties, just as rivers rush towards the ocean (*samudramiva ninnagāḥ*).

Breaking the stiff opposition of their kinsmen, the womenfolk, overpowered by the delirium of their love for Krishna, make haste to the spot where Krishna is. There they see him, the divine boy, and Balarama, his elder brother. They take in his beauty through their eyes to their hearts' content and mentally embrace him. Intending to judge, perhaps, the depths of their love for him, Krishna admonishes them for their unseemly haste even as their spouses were in the middle of their sacrificial performance. He urges them to return to their homes and help their husbands complete their sacrifice.



The One Real Goal ...

The brahmana wives humbly submit that they have betaken themselves to Krishna's holy feet with rock-like faith in their power of sanctuary. Their words clearly imply that forsaking their spouses and leaving them in the middle of the sacrifice for any mundane reason would certainly be a grave dereliction of duty and constitute a transgression of dharma, but renouncing all—including the dearest kinsmen—for the sake of achieving the one real goal of life—attaining the Divine—certainly did not amount to faithlessness, much less an offence against dharma. Their forceful arguments and piteous appeals indicate that when one has to choose between the worldly call of mundane duty and the divine call of spiritual redemption, one should unhesitatingly choose the latter. The women argue that their desertion of their spouses and other dear ones is only for the sake of achieving the status of proximity to Krishna (*sāmīpya*).

Krishna's answer to their logic is a pithy expression of a pivotal tenet in the doctrine of devotion. He says: 'Physical contact is not needed for the growth and fulfilment of spiritual love. Keep your mind fixed on Me always and you will attain Me before long (*Na prītaye'nurāgāya hyaṅgasaṅgo nṛṇāmīha; Tanmano mayi yuñjānā acirānāmāvāpsyatha*).' True spiritual life demands less the snapping of physical ties with the world than a mental frame of detachment and renunciation. Divine life is more a matter of mental attunement to God than of corporeal connection. The physical tenement in which the soul resides should be a tool that aids the mind's absorption in God. So when it ceases to serve its spiritual purpose, or even proves a hurdle to spiritual progress, discarding it is the only way out. Underscoring this point, the *Bhagavata* says: 'There was, however, one woman who had been sternly debarred from going to Krishna. She, through meditation on Him, clasped the Lord in her heart in the form she had pictured Him therein from what she had heard of Him

and, in the process, abandoned her body which was but a product of karma (*Tatraikā vidhytā bhartrā bhagavantam yathāsrutam; Hydopaguhya vijahau deham karm-ānubandhanam*).

The brahmana wives of the story are justly considered true models of real devotion. Their yearning for the Divine is too intense to be described in words.

... and the Way to It

It is significant that the episode of the supercilious brahmanas is preceded by Krishna's praise of the inert trees for their spontaneous benevolence and followed by his bestowal of grace on the brahmana womenfolk for their motiveless devotion to Him. The shocking self-conceit of their husbands with all its luridness repels one when it is juxtaposed between the selfless altruism of the subhuman trees and the self-giving devotion of the unlettered women. The ugliness of self-serving ritualism becomes all too obvious when it is sandwiched between self-abnegating altruism and self-effacing devotion.

Now it is the turn of the brahmanas to repent and utter abject words of self-reproach. Obsessed with the outer shell of dry ritualism, they have missed the inner kernel of true devotion. When they contrast their own penchant for punctilious ritualism with the unearthy devotion (*bhaktimalaukikim*) of their wives, they are filled with shame. They lament their utter bankruptcy of God-love in spite of their high birth, profound scholarship, rigorous austerity, encyclopaedic knowledge and dexterity in action. In their inner minds they are even envious of their wives! They exclaim, 'Look at the boundless devotion of our womenfolk to Krishna, the World Teacher, by virtue of which they have been able to cut asunder Death's stranglehold called attachment to home! (*Aho paśyata nārīṇāmapi kṛṣṇe jagad-gurau; Durantabhāvaṁ yo'vidhyanmrītyupāśān gṛhābhīdhan*).' A sense of guilt and shame rangles in their hearts when they realize that for

all their imperfections such as lack of formal purity, education, austerity and knowledge, their wives are actually far ahead of them in spiritual evolution purely by dint of their motiveless devotion. They realize that begging food from them was purely a piece of play-acting by Krishna, the Ever-fulfilled, and himself the bestower of moksha. They realize their blunder in getting entangled in the wheel of incessant karma when they offer their obeisance to Krishna, 'by whose maya, we are caught up in and overpowered by adherence to ritualistic disciplines (*yanmāyāmohitadhiyo bhramāmaḥ karmavartmasu*).'

One would be tempted to jump to the conclusion that the dyed-in-the-wool ritualists are finally reformed and have turned into consummate bhaktas. But then, are such remorseful admissions proof enough? The *Bhagavata* suggests that their conversion is superficial. True devotion knows no fear. 'But these brahmanas, though repentant of their disrespectful conduct towards Krishna and though anxious to meet him, did not do so out of fear of Kamsa (*Iti svāghamanusmṛtya kṛṣṇe te kṛta-helanāḥ; Didṛkṣavo'pyacyutayoḥ kaṁśād bhītā na cācalan*).' The proof of true bhakti is in its total freedom from all limitations of fear and shame. Sentimental tears of remorse cannot substitute for upswelling tides of devotion. True devotion is not a mushroom that pops up on the morrow of a rainy day anywhere and everywhere; it is the rarest *kalpa vriksha* that grows only on the well-prepared mental soil watered with Divine grace.

The True Sacrifice

It might sound far-fetched, but a verse from Shankaracharya's *Vivekachudamani* employs the imagery of sacrifice so adthat it serves to tellingly illustrate the plight of the desire-ridden devotees of karma: 'The mental sheath is the sacrificial fire. The five sense organs are the priests. They pour into the fire the oblations of the sense objects. The various

desires are the fuel. With these the mental sheath brings about this world (*Pañcendriyaiḥ pancabhīreva hotṛbhiḥ pracīyamāno viśayājayadhārayā; Jāḥvalyamāno bahuvāsan-endhanairmanomayāgnirvahati prapañcam*).⁴

By engaging in sacrificial rites, which involve the pouring of oblations into the fire, the brahmanas of the *Bhagavata*, it would appear, orchestrate their own predicament. Being sense-bound, they pour the oblations of sense stimuli into their restless minds. The leaping fire of mental agitation rages with redoubled fury luring them deeper into the meshes of desire-prompted karma. The leaping fire can be regarded as the emblem of self-centered ritualism. If that is so, what can truly symbolize self-giving devotion? The Lord has indicated in the Gita that He is pleased with even a leaf offered with sincere love. 'Whoever makes an offering to Me with devotion, be it a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water—that devout offering made by a pure-hearted man I accept with joy (*Patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati; Tadaham bhaktyupahṛtamaśnāmi prayatātmanah*).'⁵ The Lord has proved this by gladly accepting a particle of a leaf that lay stuck inside the *akshaya patra* of Draupadi, His staunch devotee, when the Pandavas were living in the forest. The leaf, then, can be the symbol of true devotion. The contrast between self-giving devotion and self-centred ritualism can be figuratively spoken of as the contrast between the leaf and the leaping fire. And the moral of the *Bhagavata* story is that in the contest between the two, the humble leaf wins.

References

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2. *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā*, trans. Swami Tapasyananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1992), 59.
3. Bhagavata, 10.22-3.
4. Shankaracharya, *Vivekachudamani*, 168.
5. Bhagavadgita, 9.26.

Glimpses of Holy Lives

Vidyaranya: The Forest of Wisdom

The history of medieval India has traditionally been termed the Muslim period in Indian history. Not only did this period see the rise to power of Muslim kings and chieftains and the steady expansion of their political dominions, but it also saw the spread of Islam among the masses and the flowering of Islamic art, architecture, literature and popular culture. Among the few areas that provided a notable exception to this trend was the state of Vijayanagara in South India; and one name that is inextricably linked with its foundation is that of Madhavacharya or Vidyaranya.

Madhavacharya was no ordinary political leader. In his *History of Dharmashastra*, P V Kane writes:

Madhavacharya is the brightest star in the galaxy of dakshinatya authors on dharmashastra. His fame stands only second to that of the great Shankaracharya. He had a most versatile genius and either himself wrote or inspired his brother Sayana and others to write voluminous works on almost all branches of Sanskrit literature. As an erudite scholar, as a far-sighted statesman, as the bulwark of the Vijayanagara kingdom in the first days of its foundation, as a sannyasin given to peaceful contemplation and renunciation in old age, he led such a varied and useful life that even to this day his is a name to conjure with.

Foundation of the Vijayanagara Empire

Harihara and Bukka, the founders of the fourteenth-century Vijayanagara kingdom, belonged to a family of five brothers, all sons of Sangama, and were in the service of the Kakatiya king Prataparudra II of Warangal. When the latter was defeated by the forces of Muhammad bin Tughlaq in 1333 CE, the two brothers escaped to Kampili. In 1336 Kampili too fell to the Sultan's forces and both Hari-

hara and Bukka were taken to Delhi as captives. They managed to find favour with the Sultan by embracing Islam, and when the southern territories of the Sultanate rose in revolt they were deputed by the Sultan to subdue the mutineers. Back on the banks of the Tungabhadra they happened to meet Madhavacharya, and it was this meeting that changed the course of history in South India.

Madhavacharya convinced the brothers to return to Hinduism and set up an independent kingdom. Readmission of apostates was not a common Hindu practice in those days. Madhavacharya had to convince his own guru, Vidyatirtha, the head of the Shankara Math at Sringeri, about the necessity of the reconversion for the sake of saving the Hindu dharma and thus secure his approval. Harihara further affirmed his faith by undertaking the rule of the new kingdom in the name of Sri Virupaksha, to whom all the land south of the Krishna River was supposed to belong. He also adopted the name of Sri Virupaksha as his insignia for authenticating all state documents, a practice that was kept up by his successors.

The fledgling state was centred round the fort of Anegondi on the northern bank of the Tungabhadra. As the fort had been overrun twice recently, Vidyaranya advised Harihara to build a new capital on the opposite bank near the temple of Virupaksha, surrounded by the Hemakuta, Matanga and Malayavanta hills. This was to be the famous city of Vijayanagara or Vidyanaagara (in honour of Vidyaranya). Its foundation coincided with the coronation of Harihara I on 18 April 1336. Vidyaranya's wisdom is also reflected in Harihara's efforts to build up a strong state free of internecine quarrels. Thus the *vijayotsava*, vic-

tory celebrations, in 1346, to mark the annexation of the Hoysala territory and extension of the empire from 'sea to sea' was held at Sringeri in the presence of Sri Vidyatirtha, and attended by all the four brothers of Harihara, as well as the chief relatives and lieutenants of the king. The Vijayanagara kingdom was marked by active interaction with non-Indian states through ambassadors, the most remarkable being the embassy to the Ming ruler of China. The state also allowed its Muslim subjects freedom of religious expression, was sensitive to their sentiments, and allowed for their recruitment in the army.

A Versatile Genius

This remarkable rajarshi, who was to help bring into being this important state and set the tone for its sagacious policies, was himself born to Srimati and Mayan in very humble circumstances in 1295 CE. His younger brothers, Sayana and Bhoganatha, were to become important scholars in their own right—the former famous for his commentaries on the Vedas and the latter as a court poet. Madhava mentions Vidyatirtha, Bharatitirtha, and Srikantha as his teachers, of whom Vidyatirtha was his principal spiritual guru.

The remarkable range of issues that Madhava-Vidyaranya brings his erudition and insight to bear upon is testimony to the versatility of his genius and the extensivity of his concerns. His writings touch upon a whole range of socio-political, cultural and philosophic themes, all with a pragmatic concern. *Parashara Madhaviya*, his commentary on the *Parashara Smriti*, remained the most important compendium on social rules, religious customs, and law in South India, right into the modern times. His *Kalanirnaya*, is especially useful in timing ritual procedures. That Madhavacharya was himself a specialist in Vedic rituals is evidenced by Sayanacharya, who calls him *mahā kratūnām āhartā*, the performer of great Vedic yajnas. The *Jaiminiya Nyayamala Vistara*, his treatise on the Purva Mimamsa

school of Vedic exegesis, also endorses this fact. The yajnas of Madhavacharya were accompanied by generous donations, *mahādāna*, which included *tulāpuruśadāna*, the gift of precious metals equivalent to one's weight.

The *Madhaviya Dhatuvritti*, a commentary on Panini's *Dhatupatha*, and *Sangītasara* reveal the sweep of Vidyaranya's interests. But he is most remembered for his expositions on Advaita Vedanta. His texts in this genre include the *Vaiyasika Nyayamala Vistara*, *Vīvarana Prameya Sangraha*, *Panchadashi*, and *Jīvanmukti Viveka*. Two other works that have been associated with his name (although this claim has been contested) include the *Shankara Digvijaya* and the *Sarva Darshana Sangraha*.

For the last several years of his long life of ninety, Vidyaryanamuni himself presided as the Acharya at the Sringeri Math. It is not very clear when he had his sannyasa. But in guiding the course of the empire as minister to the first two Vijayanagara sovereigns, in setting the trend for the dharma of the people as the raja-kula-guru, and in leaving an indelible impression on the Indian philosophical tradition with his erudite writings, Vidyaranya had accomplished more than what anyone can hope to achieve in one life.

The Indian tradition speaks of the four ashramas as four divisions of life, each with its specific duties. Vidyaranya excelled in all of these. Single-minded in his pursuit of learning, exceptionally skilled in his handling of state affairs, accurate in his disquisitions on the highest spiritual truths and, in the last years of his life, established in the highest ideals of renunciation, Vidyaranya could justly declare: 'The yogi who is satisfied with the nectar of knowledge and has thereby accomplished his tasks, has got nothing else to achieve; if he has any, then he is not a knower of Reality', even as Sayanacharya was saluting him 'for his mastery in worldly pursuits, for the respect he commanded from the highest in society, and for his emancipation of the masses through wise guidance.' ~



Reviews



*For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA
publishers need to send two copies of their latest publications.*

The Fundamentals of Advaita Vedanta.
K Narain. Indological Research Centre,
B34/115 Sukulpura, Durgakund, Varanasi 221 010. 2003. xii + 311 pp. Rs 395.

The Advaita philosophy propounded by Adi Shankara continues to stoke the spirit of intrepid students of philosophy in both the hemispheres of the globe. Though a large number of books have been written on the system including outstanding works by Dr S Radhakrishnan, Prof. M Hiriyanna, Dr T M P Mahadevan and others, not many of these works give a direct, traditional, textual interpretation of the system and its evolution during the post-Shankara period with references and quotations from the original Sanskrit texts. The present book is the result of an attempt to fill this gap.

The author divides the work into thirteen chapters, each dealing elaborately with the different philosophical topics related to Advaita Vedanta. Minute details related to the main topics are systematically arranged and elaborated under various sub-topics and this enhances the usefulness of the work for serious readers. The author's views and assertions are ably supported by references from the original Advaitic texts. Dr Narain's study effectively establishes the logical invincibility and supremacy of the Advaita *siddhānta* drawing upon a vast mass of Vedantic literature, both Shankarite and post-Shankarite, and can well serve as a textbook for higher classes in our universities. It is difficult to find a contemporary work that has better interpreted and presented the intricacies of Shankara's Advaita Vedanta in such a simple, lucid and direct style.

In the introduction, the author has given a brief survey of the Shankara school of Vedanta and its vast literature, and a summary of Advaita philosophy. The next three chapters deal with such topics as 'Criterion of Truth', 'Nature and Orders of Reality' and 'The Nature of Falsehood'. The author's presentation of the five definitions of falsehood (*mīthyātva*) put forward by the Advaita school, the

objections raised against these definitions by the exponents of the Dvaita school like Madhvacharya, Vyasa-tirtha, and Jayatirtha, and their refutation by the post-Shankara Advaitins like Madhusudana Saraswati, Chitsukhacharya and others is truly admirable.

One of the most remarkable parts of the work is the fifth chapter, dealing with the Advaita epistemology, which is an important area of difference of views between the three schools of Vedanta, namely, Advaita, Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita. After giving a masterly and comprehensive exposition of the Advaita theory of knowledge concluding with a brief analysis of the concept of self-validity (*svataḥ-prāmāṇya*), the author takes up the question of false knowledge (*avidyā*). The most elementary understanding of *avidyā* is that it is the natural incapacity of man, with his limited power of cognition, to comprehend the eternal, absolute Reality (Brahman). It accounts for the otherwise inexplicable appearance of the world, which is actually unreal. Taking a leaf from Eleatic dialectics, the Advaitins adopt a unique process of ratiocination while explaining the phenomenon of *avidyā*: the process of *adhyāropa* and *apavāda*, superimposition and eventual sublation. The author's treatment of the seven different theories of *adhyāsa* (*khyāti*, or false apprehension) is truly revealing. The views of Yogachara, the Shunyavadins, Mimamsakas, Naiyayikas, Sankhyas and Vishishtadvaitins are taken up, culminating with an incisive analysis of the *anirvacaniya-khyāti* of Advaita, with references not only from the commentaries but also from such important post-Shankarite works like the *Advaitasiddhi*, *Ishtasiddhi*, *Vivarana-prameya-sangraha* and so on.

One of the most significant remarks about *avidyā*, which would perhaps have been an appropriate conclusion to this chapter, occurs in Shankara's commentaries: '*Satyāmeva ca naisargikyām-avidyāyām loka-veda-vyavahārāvātāra iti tatra tatrāvocāma*'. We said in the respective contexts that all social and Vedic behaviours crop up only when the

beginningless nescience is taken for granted' (*Brahma Sutras*, 3.2.15).

Those who want to get a comprehensive idea of *avidyā*, *ajñāna* and *mūhyātva* should read these words of Shankara side by side with those of Nrisimhashrama in his *Vedānta-tattva-viveka*, in which he says: 'Anādi upādānatve sati jñāna-nivartiyam ajñānam, nikhīla-prapañcōpādāna-brahma-gocaram eva ajñānam. Though materially without beginning *ajñāna* is eliminated by knowledge, and it has Brahman, the material cause of all creation, as its witness.'

In the next three chapters Sri Narain gives a detailed account of the Advaitin's refutations of various objections: the *svarūpa-vāda* of the Sankhyas and Dvaitins, the *anyonyābhāva* of the Dvaitins, the *vaidharmya-vāda* of the followers of Kumarila Bhatta, and finally those raised by the proponents of *bhedābheda*.

An important aspect of Advaitic metaphysics, namely, 'The Concept of God (Īśvara)', is elaborately dealt with in the ninth chapter. Some who have tried to comprehend the Advaitic view of God with the help of Thibaut's introduction to his own translation of Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutras* have built up the mistaken view that the great commentator has deviated from the true meaning of Badarayana's aphorisms. They argue that as the Upanishads, the *Brahma Sutras* and the Bhagavadgita all maintain the same philosophical world view, Ramanuja and Madhva are more realistic and loyal while presenting the position of God in Vedantic literature. This view has led to another misconception, that Shankara's Advaita is a complete denunciation of the qualified aspect of Brahman. But in reality Shankara only professed that the nature of Saguna Brahman is *vyāvahārika* (phenomenal) and not *pāramārthika* (absolute). The *pāramārthika* Reality is, according to Advaita, Truth Absolute, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, eternal, ever free, all-pervasive, subtle and pure as Sarvajnatman says in his *Sankshepa-shariraka* (1.173).

God, or Ishvara, as Sri Narain argues, 'is the only aspect of Reality that is within the comprehension of the human intellect' (215). The views of Madhva and Ramanuja have been effectively refuted by post-Shankarite Advaitins in the *brhat-prasthāna-traya* of the *Chitsukhīya*, *Khandana-khanda-khadya* and *Advaitasiddhi*. Ramanuja, Madhva and other thinkers belonging to the Dvaita tradition could not accurately grasp the essence of

Advaita metaphysics because, much like the later German idealists like Immanuel Kant, they could not appreciate the difference between *vyāvahārika/prātibhāsika* and *pāramārthika* levels, which is possible only if one accepts *adhyāsa*, or superimposition.

The tenth chapter deals elaborately with the 'Philosophy of Individual Soul', an important topic in any work on Advaita. The various views on the relationship between the individual soul and Brahman are brought forth and discussed in this chapter. The *avaccheda-vāda*, the *pratibimba-vāda*, the Vivarana view, and the views of Sarvajnatman and Vidyananda are also discussed. Furthermore, the various theories with regard to the number of soul(s) like the *ekajīva-vāda* (doctrine of one soul) and the *anekajīva-vāda* (doctrine of plurality of souls), and the three theories relating to the question of the soul's dimension(s), namely, the *aṇu-parimāṇa-vāda* (that the soul is of atomic dimension), the *madhyama-parimāṇa-vāda* (according to which it is of the dimension of the physical body) and the *vibhu-parimāṇa-vāda* (which says that the Atman is all-pervasive) are also elaborately dealt with.

The conclusion of the above-mentioned chapter is commendable. The author asserts that because in Shankara's philosophy (the *vyāvahārika* view — *Reviewer*) 'Īśvara is different from jīva, there is no problem in assuming Him as the Lord and the individual as the servant' (245). Again, according to the author, there are 'two types of relations between the jīva and Brahman. First, the relation of part and whole by which is comprehended the ontological truth of the appearance of the individual soul (jīva) from Brahman caused by Ajñāna or Māyā ... and, secondly, the one as expressed in such forms as the ruler and the ruled, the master and the servant ...' (ibid.). This may not be acceptable to many scholars of either Advaita or Vishishtadvaita. The views expressed above would reduce Vishishtadvaita to an aspect of Advaita and can be appreciated only at the experiential level by an aspirant and not necessarily by the protagonists of particular schools of philosophy.

The last three chapters include the 'Philosophy of World', 'The Summum Bonum and the Means' and the author's 'Concluding Remarks'. In his concluding remarks Sri Narain reminds those who approach and study Advaita as a philosophical system that 'Śankara's Vedānta is essentially a philosophy of liberation having salvation of the individ-

ual soul as its chief objective ...' (288).

The past requires contemporary reinterpretation. In the interest of continuity of the Advaitic tradition, it is desirable that some modern thinker appear to review the past of our metaphysical tradition and enable the new generation of scholars to get an idea of our intellectual heritage. Ever since the appearance of Swami Vivekananda in America as an exponent of Advaita philosophy, there has been a steady increase in the demand for its exposition in English and other European languages. The works of Indian writers like Radhakrishnan, Hiriyan, Mahadevan, Dasgupta, and others perhaps served the purpose to some extent. But except Hiriyan, the rest only partially fulfilled Swamiji's call to synthesize the best of traditional scholarship with the modern Western critical approach. Many Indian writers of Vedanta in English, devoid of first-hand knowledge of the original Sanskrit texts, were only eager to find parallelisms in Western thought like comparing Ramanuja with Spinoza or Kant with Shankara.

The author's erudition is apparent throughout the book. The volume will be useful to those interested in learning the fundamental metaphysical doctrines of Advaita Vedanta. A detailed bibliography and index given at the end further enhance the usefulness and accessibility of the work.

Swami Tattwamayana
Editor, *Prabuddha Kerala*

Divine Light. S K Das. New Age Books, A44 Naraina Phase I, New Delhi 110 028. E-mail: info@newagebooksindia.com. 2002. xix + 186 pp. Rs 250.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say '*Jato mat tato path*', meaning 'As many creeds so many paths.' In this book we get a glimpse of so many different types of yoga practices, all leading to Self realization, that the truth of the above saying comes to mind time and again. The word *yoga* is derived from the root *yuj*, meaning 'joining together': joining the human consciousness to the divine Consciousness, or the individual self to the supreme Self. This is the aim of yoga. But yoga has been defined in various ways. Maharshi Patanjali defines it as *chitta-vritti nirodha*, cessation of the functioning of the mind. Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita says evenness of mind is yoga. Yoga also means concen-

tration of mind or one-pointed attention. It is also a general synonym for all types of sadhana, or religious practice, for the attainment of the Supreme—bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, karma yoga and so on. But yoga specially means union with the higher Reality through certain physical and mental disciplines.

The book under review begins with prayers culled from the Vedas and Upanishads and the utterances of great saints. This reveals its spiritual theme. It deals not only with scholastic theories but also suggests practices. The first part of the book gives an account of important yoga systems and esoteric techniques. The second part contains invocations and other miscellaneous matters related to yoga.

In the first part, the author starts with the aim of life. The aim of human life is different from that of animal life. Man cannot be satisfied only with self-preservation and procreation. He wants to know himself. That is the teaching of all the Upanishads: 'Know thyself.' The practice of divine life is religion. *Religion* literally means 'joining together again'. The objective of all religions is to join the individual self with the universal Self. The preparation for this inward journey consists of (a) good health, (b) good conduct, (c) brahmacharya or celibacy, that is, discipline of the senses, (d) concentration of the mind by regular practice of yoga, and (e) cultivation of dispassion. The author points out that yoga is not only a view of life, it is a way of life and a means to liberation.

In this book we get a list of twenty-one different types of yoga. Each yoga has been described in short. The author starts with karma yoga, or yoga of selfless action. He discusses the three types of action—*sanchita* (accumulated), *prarabdha* (ready to produce result), and *kriyamana* (under performance)—and shows that by selfless action one can stop the effects of the *sanchita* and *kriyamana* actions, and thus be free from the cycle of birth and death. He has only to suffer the results of *prarabdha* so long as his present life continues. The four ashramas, or stages of life, and the duties specific to each have been explained.

Bhakti yoga or the path of devotion is variously classified: *apara* (lower) and *para* (higher); *ragatmika* (with free flow of emotions) and *vidhiwadiya* (following rules and regulations); *sakama* (with some motive) and *nishkama* (without any motive); *vyabhicharini* (not one-pointed) and *avyabhicharini* (one-pointed). The author also discusses the three

types of bhakti, the four types of bhaktas, the five kinds of emotions, the ten stages and nine modes of devotion, and the sixteen limbs of puja.

Other disciplines follow. Japa yoga is repetition of the divine name (orally or mentally), with intense devotion and without expectation of results. Dhyana yoga deals mainly with meditation, showing the different steps and ways of meditation suggested by the different tantras. Ajapajapa yoga is the repetition of *so'ham* or *aum* with the inhalation and exhalation of breath. A diagram illustrates the spread of the *aum dhvani*. Samarpana yoga is the practice of self-surrender. The author quotes from the *Yoga Sutras* and the Gita as well as from Christian and Islamic texts to show the importance of self-surrender. Purna yoga, dealt with in the next chapter, is very similar to samarpana yoga. However, this yoga demands total dependence, without even the slightest tinge of ego consciousness. In this respect, it is considered higher than samarpana yoga. Sahaja yoga, or 'easy sadhana', is simply thinking of God or repeating 'Aum shanti' or just leaving off all thought and being in a void for one or two minutes every three or four hours, as the situation permits. Hatha yoga, according to the author, is preliminary to Patanjala yoga. Various asanas prescribed by this yoga have been explained with the help of sketches. Certain hatha yoga techniques like *neti*, *dhauti*, *basti*, *nauli*, and *trataka* also find mention.

Patanjali's ashtanga yoga being one of the most important yogas, it has been dealt with in detail. As the name suggests, this yoga has eight parts: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi. Each part, along with its subdivisions, is explained in detail. In fact, what we understand by the Yoga school of thought in Indian philosophy is based on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, though the author does not mention this fact.

Jnana yoga is the path of knowledge. The author calls it 'Yoga of Will'. It is the yoga of union or identification with the absolute Existence. Shankaracharya's Advaita Vedanta is the foundation for this yoga. Discrimination, detachment, discipline of the mind and body, and an intense urge for liberation are the preparatory steps for this yoga.

The author has added many other yogas: vichara yoga, anapanasati yoga, turiya yoga, shabda yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, tantra yoga and so on. Among these, anapanasati yoga was taught by Bhagavan Buddha. Here one is sup-

posed to concentrate on the flow of breath to empty the mind of all other thoughts. Like Patanjali, Buddha also prescribed an eightfold path for the highest wisdom. Tantra yoga also has been elucidated in great detail, with various explanatory diagrams and yantras. Among the contemporary theories of yoga, we find the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi (along with a life sketch) and the Transcendental Meditation of Mahesh Yogi.

The second part of the book deals with various types of prayers and several miscellaneous topics related to spirituality. These are for actual guidance to aspirants who want to follow the path of yoga. The purpose of the book is not only to acquaint people with the various systems of yoga but also to inspire them to follow the path of yoga, selecting one that suits them most. In this, the author does appear to have been quite successful, for while reading the book one also feels like trying.

In each chapter the author has substantiated the theories with quotations from different religions. This indeed reveals his scholarship, though at times too many quotations make the reading tedious.

Dr Krishna Verma

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Sri Ramakrishna the Saviour. *Swami Gabhirananda*. Ramakrishna Math, PO Vyttila, Kochi 682 019. E-mail: *rkmkochi@vsnl.net*. 2002. xv + 116 pp. Rs 50.

The book, says the publisher, is 'an attempt to highlight the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, confirming them by Vedantic texts. This is a Souvenir or Memento issued in aid of The Ramakrishna Math, Vyttila in Kochi, Kerala, started in October 1999'.

As such this is unlike many souvenirs—with an extremely elegant and attractive get-up, it is in fact a compendium of the essentials of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta arranged thoughtfully—so that it is meant to be (and is) more than a mere memento. In the first section, the reader is given a glimpse of 'Essential Vedanta' packed into nineteen verse selections. The second section contains extracts from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and the third section presents the most representative pieces from the *Bhagavata* in which we find the lifestyle of a jnani expounded by Sri Krishna and Sri

Shuka. The culmination and concrete demonstration of all the truths in these three sections is the fourth entitled 'The Blessed One Bears Witness', which presents fascinating and extremely well-chosen extracts from Sri Ramakrishna's *Gospel*. The voice and vision of Ramakrishna's eminent disciple Vivekananda too find a place in a section rightly called 'Let us Listen!' Obviously, the book reflects both the 'past' and the 'present' of the perennial truths of a pragmatic spirituality.

It seems to me that, in its own way, this book is an illustration of Swami Vivekananda's tremendous observation that Ramakrishna's life and message are luminous commentaries on the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. It is this perception that seems to me to underlie the contents and format of this very valuable book.

One is grateful for this little lamp, which anyone who cares for a balanced life of inner and outer harmony should keep by the bedside and dip into. It is sure to quench our thirst and quicken our awareness.

Dr M Sivaramkrishna

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Value Orientation & Modern Society. *Dr Prabhakar Bhattacharyya.* Mrs Swagata Bhattacharyya, 17 Roy MCLB Street, Serampore 712 201. 2002. 119 pp. Rs 100.

The steep decline in values in both private and public life is a fact of contemporary ethos. The paradox of highly educated people occupying important positions getting caught for corruption is a feature regularly reported in the media. This is a very complex, often baffling phenomenon, analysed by many. Professor Bhattacharyya's book is a welcome addition to the existing studies. 'Value orientation is one of the best methods of Human Resource Development. Human beings are potential resources and need to be developed systematically. Cognitive abilities, acquired personal traits, social attitudes and work competence are the factors involved in Human Resource Development,' he says.

Professor Bhattacharyya explores relevant issues in four closely reasoned and clearly discussed chapters. After a bird's-eye view of values in modern society, we are given valuable insights in the succeeding three chapters on value orientation, so-

cial change, and current social problems. Finally we have a closely reasoned 'Philosophical Enquiry into Value Orientation'. Concluding remarks provide a retrospect. A specialist in social psychology and comparative religion, the professor is aware of the complexity of the subject but, by and large, avoids abstractions. For instance, his analysis of terrorism, the organized crime of the underworld compounded by the drug menace, consumerism and disintegration of family stability, and women's subjection to meaningless gender bias shows how concerned and clear he is in not only diagnosing social ills but offering pragmatic suggestions for developing our family, profession, nation and society. A related aspect is the discussion of the role of the mass media.

In short, with its balanced, clear analysis allied with practical perspectives, and a useful bibliography, the book is a valuable study about the complex and extremely vexing problem of values and their progressive erosion in contemporary ethos.

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Goswami Tulsidas' Vairagya-Sandipani and Glory of Ram's Holy Name. *Trans. and comp. Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.* 36A Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg, PO Ayodhya 224 123. 2003. iv + 101 pp. Rs 101.

This useful selection from Tulsidas is divided neatly into two major sections with added appendices and comments. The first section is on *Vairagya-Sandipani* or 'Renunciation-Kindler', a major Tulsī text. The second section contains selections from the *Vinay Patrika*, *Gitavali*, *Kavitavali*, *Dohavali* and *Ramcharitmanas* to capture the 'Glory of Ram and His Holy Name'. A section from the *Ramottaratapini Upanishad* presents Rama mantras as representing the Absolute.

The author has systematically rendered the lyrical Hindi original into simple but very effective English that will help the reader get to know the importance of Tulsidas's writings containing an 'ocean of devotional and philosophical wisdom which have a broad sweep and fathomless depth'.

Dr C S Shah (late)

Aurangabad

Reports

New Mission Centre

A new branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission has been started in **Aurangabad**, Maharashtra. Its address is: **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama**, Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg (Beed Bypass), Aurangabad, Maharashtra 431 005 (Phone: 0240-2376013; E-mails: *rkm_aurangabad@sancharnet.in*; *ramakrishna_abd@yahoo.com*). Swami Vishnupadanandaji has been appointed head of the centre.

New Math Sub-centre

The Vedanta Society of Kansas City, USA, has been made a sub-centre of the Ramakrishna Math under Vedanta Society of St Louis. Its address is: **Vedanta Society of Kansas City**, 8701 Ward Parkway, Kansas City, Missouri 64114, USA (Phone: 1-816-444 8045; E-mail: *vskc@netzero.net*).

Largest Vivekananda Statue Unveiled

After Kolkata, Raipur happens to be the only place where Swami Vivekananda spent a considerable period of time at one stretch. Swamiji spent two years of his adolescence, from 1877 to 1879, in this city with his family in a house located somewhere in the vicinity of Buda Talab, now known as Vivekananda Sarovar, near the Budeshwar Shiva temple.

In April 2005, the Government of Chhat-

tisgarh and the Municipal Corporation of Raipur paid homage to the memory of Swamiji by installing a magnificent statue of his in the middle of Vivekananda Sarovar. It was unveiled by Sri A B Vajpayee, former Prime Minister of India, on 16 April 2005, amidst a huge gathering of important dignitaries and the general public.

The 60-ton cement concrete figure—the largest statue of Swami Vivekananda in meditation posture—was created by Mr J M Nelson, the renowned sculptor from Bhilai. It is 31 feet tall and sits on a 6-foot high, 22 square-foot platform engraved with Swamiji's most inspiring utterances. The monument cost Rs 10 lakh to build.

News from Branch Centres

Swami Shivamayanandaji, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated a new pre-primary school at **Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Bankura**, on 16 May.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Guwahati, conducted a medical camp during Ambubachi Mela at the Kamakhya temple from 22 to 25 June in which 3,523 patients were treated.

A class XII student of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar**, stood first in this year's all-India medical entrance test of Banaras Hindu University.

Relief and Rehabilitation

Ramakrishna Mission Calcutta Students' Home, Belgharia, distributed 7,035 garments among 1,222 poor families of 39 villages in Medinipur, Nadia and North 24-Parganas districts. The centre also provided building materials for 35 more houses to people rendered homeless by the recent storm in Nadia and North 24-Parganas. ~

