

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

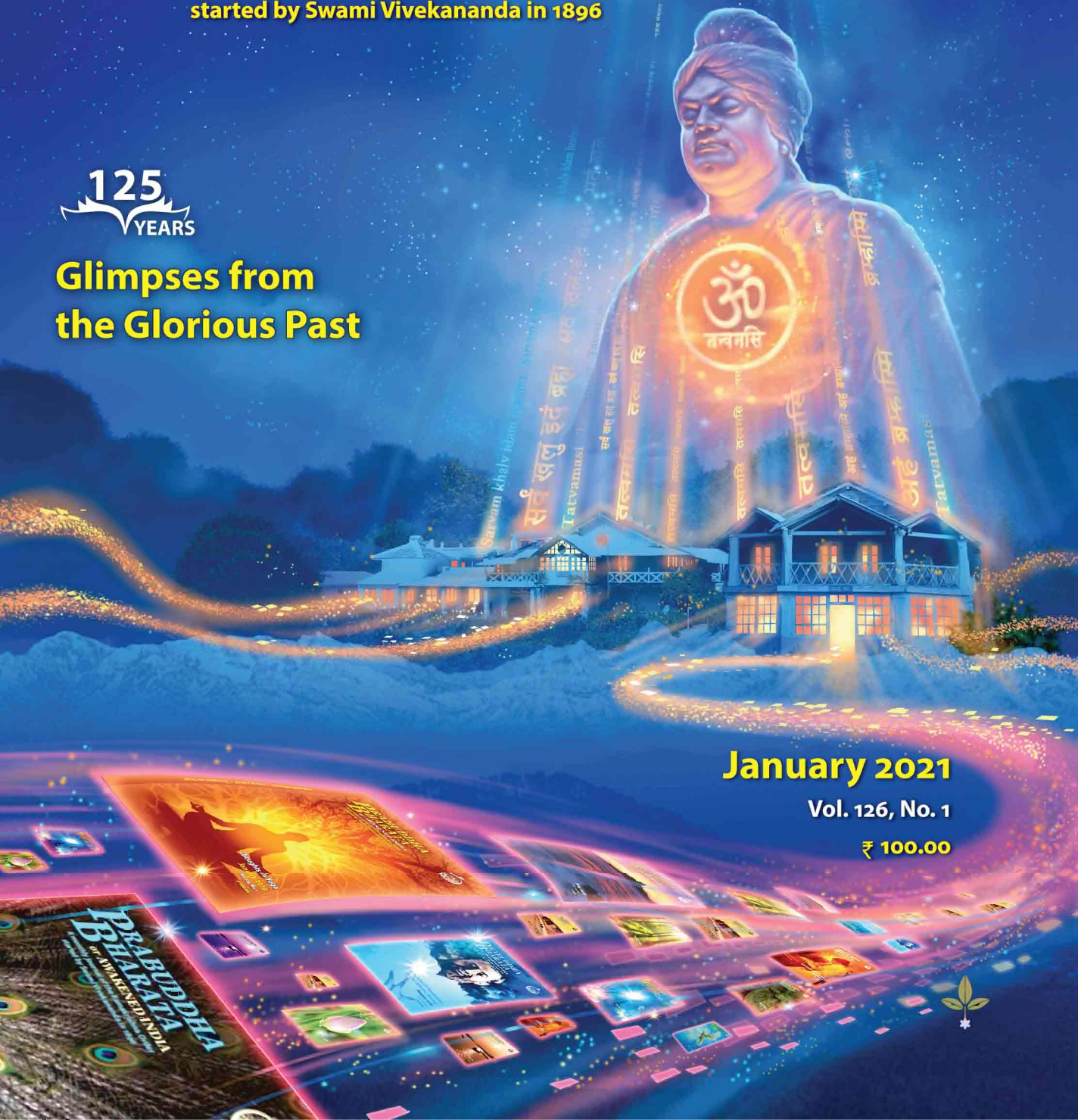
or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



125
YEARS

Glimpses from
the Glorious Past



January 2021

Vol. 126, No. 1

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THE ROAD TO WISDOM

Swami Vivekananda on Significance of Symbols-VII

Yet, all these forms and symbols are simply the beginning, not true love of God. Love we hear spoken of everywhere. Everyone says, 'Love God.' Men do not know what it is to love; if they did, they would not talk so glibly about it. The world is full of the talk of love, but it is hard to love. How do you know that there is love? The first test of love is that it knows no bargaining. So long as you see a man love another only to get something from him, you know that that is not love; it is shopkeeping. What is the difference between love and shopkeeping? The first test of love is that it knows no bargaining. Love is always the giver, and never the taker. Says the child of God, 'If God wants, I give Him my everything, but I do not want anything of Him. I want nothing in this universe. I love Him, because I want to love Him, and I ask no favour in return. Who cares whether God is almighty or not? I do not want any power from Him nor any manifestation of His power. Sufficient for me that He is the God of love. I ask no more question.'

The second test is that love knows no fear. So long as man thinks of God as a Being sitting above the clouds, with rewards in one hand and punishments in the other, there can be no love. Can you frighten one into love? Does the lamb love the lion? The mouse, the cat? The slave,



the master? Slaves sometimes simulate love, but is it love? Where do you ever see love in fear? It is always a sham. With love never comes the idea of fear. Think of a young mother in the street: if a dog barks at her, she flees into the nearest house. The next day she is in the street with her child, and suppose a lion rushes upon the child, where will be her position? Just at the mouth of the lion, protecting her child. Love conquered all her fear. So also in the love of God. Who cares whether God is a rewarder or a punisher? That is not the thought of a lover. ...Cast off all fear – though these horrible ideas of God as a punisher or rewarder may have their use in savage minds. Some men, even the most intellectual, are spiritual savages, and these ideas may help them. But to men who are spiritual, men who are approaching religion, in whom spiritual insight is awakened, such ideas are simply childish, simply foolish. Such men reject all ideas of fear.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 2, 46-8.

Our Inspiration



Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886)



Sri Sarada Devi (1853–1920)



Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902)

Teachings of the Holy Trio

What offering is required to attain to God? To find God, thou must offer Him thy body, mind and riches.

Accept adequate means for the end you seek to attain. You cannot get better by crying yourself hoarse saying, 'There is butter in the milk'. If you wish to make butter, turn the milk into curd and churn it well, and then you will get butter. So if you long to see God, practise Spiritual Sadhanas. What is the good of merely crying 'O God, O God!'?

Pray unto Him in any way you like. He is sure to hear you, for He can hear even the footfall of an ant.

God cannot be seen so long as there is the slightest taint of desire; therefore, have thy small desires satisfied, and renounce the big desires by right reasoning and discrimination.

— *Sri Ramakrishna*

('Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings'—'How to Realize God', *PB* January 1906)

*** **

Mother's words were very sweet. Those nectarine words ring in my ears even now. Once the Mother told me: 'My child, never sit idle: do something or the other. One must engage oneself in some work; otherwise nasty thoughts come and crowd the idle mind.' Mother told an old lady one day: 'If you see someone fallen on the path, you must help the person up. One must not leave a person who has fallen and simply walk away'...

The Mother was 'One whose self was merged in Sri Ramakrishna' (*Ramakrishnagata-prāṇā*). In her every action, word and thought, Sri Ramakrishna would invariably be there. The Mother would tell my grandmother: 'At every step in life, remember Sri Ramakrishna. Then, no difficulty will seem to be a difficulty to you. Whoever does not have difficulties in life? All those will remain. If anyone repeats His name and surrenders to Him, He will grant strength; misery and suffering will not leave their impress upon that person then.'

('Reminiscences of the Holy Mother' by Shiva Rani Sen, *PB* October 1976)

*** **

The power of meditation gets us everything. If you want to get power over nature, [you can have it through meditation]. It is through the power of meditation [that] all scientific facts are discovered today. They study the subject and forget everything, their own identity and everything, and then the great fact comes like a flash. Some people think that is inspiration. There is no more inspiration than there is expiration; and never was anything got for nothing. ...

Therein also you see the power of meditation—intensity of thought. ... Great truths come to the surface and become manifest. Therefore, the practice of meditation is the great scientific method of knowledge. There is no knowledge without the power of meditation. ...

Meditation consists in this practice [of dissolving everything into the ultimate Reality—spirit]. The solid melts into liquid, that into gas, gas into ether, then mind, and mind will melt away. All is spirit.

—*Swami Vivekananda*

('Meditation' by Swami Vivekananda, *PB* July 1955)



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COVER PAGE
Prabuddha Bharata, Mayavati

125 Years—Glimpses from the Glorious Past

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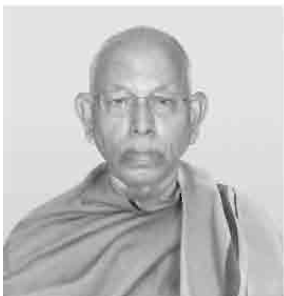


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Cover Description: This cover page is a humble attempt to depict the momentous idea of non-dualistic spiritual practice taught by Swami Vivekananda. The spirit of his teachings stand as a lighthouse on the serene Himalayan foothills at Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. It is spreading the golden light of Vedantic knowledge and guiding seekers of the Truth worldwide through the issues of *Prabuddha Bharata*.



**RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND
RAMAKRISHNA MISSION**
(The Headquarters)
P.O. BELUR MATH, DIST. HOWRAH
WEST BENGAL : 711202
INDIA

MESSAGE

I am glad to learn that the Prabuddha Bharata, which was started by Swami Vivekananda in July 1896, has entered its 125th year of existence and to commemorate this historical event, the Advaita Ashrama took the initiative to promote and create awareness among people in wider scale through various programmes. Also happy to hear that its special issue of January 2021 will be dedicated to this event on the theme 'Glimpses from the Glorious Past'.

While expressing his views on National Ideal, Swami Vivekananda said, "...What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion...That is what we want, and that can only be created, established, and strengthened by understanding and realising the ideal of the Advaita, that ideal of the oneness of all. Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith, faith in God—this is the secret of greatness..." On another occasion, in one of his lectures he expressed his view on language as, "Simplicity is the secret. My ideal of language is my Master's language, most colloquial and yet most expressive. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed..."

May this journal promote the age-old life-giving and elevating ideas and ideals of India, of the world and Sri Ramakrishna-Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi-Swami Vivekananda in the most expressive way!

May by the grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda the programmes and the publication be a grand success!

I convey my good wishes to all.

17 September 2020
Mahalaya and
Swami Akhandanandaji Jayanti

(Swami Smaranananda)
President



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Date : 04/08/2020

Benediction

I am delighted to know that a special issue of the 'Prabuddha Bharata' will be published in January 2021 to commemorate the historical event of its 125th year of existence. It was first published in July 1896 from Madras (now Chennai) by a group of admirers of Swami Vivekananda who inspired them to bring out a monthly journal for propagating "... the sublime and beautiful ideal of the Vedanta in as simple, homely, and interesting a manner as possible ..." Ever since its inception Prabuddha Bharata has been rendering this great service to the society. As such, it would be in the fitness of things that the theme of the special issue will be "Prabuddha Bharata - 125 Years: Glimpses from the Glorious Past". It is also a matter of great joy to note that the entire Prabuddha Bharata archive would be available online on Advaita Ashrama website, which will be accessible also through Mobile devices.

In 1896 in the 'prospectus of Prabuddha Bharata or Awakened India' it was written that this journal was meant for those who have "regard for the higher interests of life" and for the "youths who are misled by the glamour of materialism". Prabuddha Bharata archive will, therefore, be a priceless treasure to the readers in general and the scholars in particular. From now on it will be so easily available!

I pray to Sri Guru Maharaj for successful completion of all the programmes as chalked out by the Advaita Ashrama Team to promote the journal and take it to a wider audience.

Swami Vagishananda
(Swami Vagishananda)

To

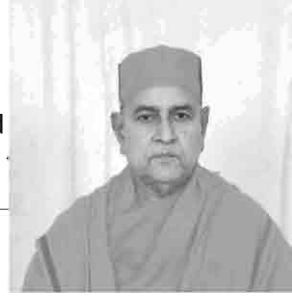
Swami Shuddhidananda Maharaj

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Message

It is a matter of great pride that the magazine 'Prabuddha Bharata' started by Swami Vivekananda, which is being published by Advaita Ashrama, is entering its 125th year. This is indeed a historical event which is being aptly commemorated by making available the entire Prabuddha Bharata Archives online for the benefit of people and bringing out two publications compiled from its articles along with utilizing the social media for spreading awareness about the magazine. I learn that the January 2021 special issue is being dedicated for this event.

One of the main purposes of the advent of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda was to bring to the masses the truths of God and religion in an easily understandable manner. God and Religion according to them were meant for all- to be practiced for their spiritual and material welfare. The Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission have been propagating these truths in diverse ways.

In addition to publishing vast literature, the Advaita Ashrama has been working tirelessly for spreading the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and Vedanta through the magazine Prabuddha Bharata for a long 125 years. I pray to Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda for their blessings for the success of the activities undertaken for celebrating this event and for the continued growth of the magazine. My blessings also to all the monks, volunteers, devotees and well-wishers of the Ashrama. May the Ashrama expand its activities, and inspire numberless spiritual seekers in the years to come.

8 August, 2020

Swami Gautamananda

(Swami Gautamananda)

Vice President,

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission



RAMAKRISHNA MATH

(The Headquarters)

P.O. BELUR MATH, DIST. HOWRAH

WEST BENGAL : 711202

INDIA

MESSAGE

6.8.2020

I am delighted to learn about the celebration of the 125th year of publication of *Prabuddha Bharata*, the English journal of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Started under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda in 1896, the journal was first published with the initiative of some inspired disciples of the great Swami in Madras. From August 1898 to March 1899 it was published from Almora, and from April 1899 onwards it is regularly being published from Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati.

The journal was named by Swami Vivekananda himself which means "Awakened India". With the intellectual awakening will come the realization of the lost glories of ancient Indian culture. Modern India is searching for its self-identity; only through a general intellectual awakening can the masses regain this identity.

On this special occasion, I respectfully remember the illustrious monks of the Ramakrishna Order, who served as the Editors of this journal and also significantly contributed to this noble cause.

I pray to the Holy Trio for the growing readership of *Prabuddha Bharata* and success of the celebration. As mentioned in the Rig Veda, "Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions."

Swami Prabhānanda

(Swami Prabhānanda)
Vice-President

Swami Shuddhidananda
Advaita Ashrama
Kolkata - 14



RAMAKRISHNA MATH (YOGODYAN)
(A branch centre of Ramakrishna Math, Belur)
7 Yogodyan Lane, Kankurgachhi
Kolkata 700 054, W. Bengal

1 August 2020

Dear Swami Shuddhidananda,

We are extremely happy to know that Prabuddha Bharata started by Swami Vivekananda in July 1896, has entered its 125th year of existence, and to commemorate this historical event Advaita Ashrama has planned a few programmes for promoting the journal and taking it to a wider section of readers.

You are planning to make (i) the entire Prabuddha Bharata archive available online on your website which will be accessible also through Mobile devices, (ii) bring out two publications compiled from Prabuddha Bharata articles, and (iii) also use the social media to make more and more people aware of the journal and its contributions.

In line with this we are happy to know that the January 2021 special issue of Prabuddha Bharata will be dedicated to the historical event "Prabuddha Bharata - 125 Years Glimpses from the Glorious Past."

We earnestly pray for the successful execution of the planned endeavours of Advaita Ashrama.

We also pray that the light of Advaita enkindled by Swami Vivekananda burns undimmed in Advaita Ashrama Mayavati and as to the Prabuddha Bharata It has the freedom to march ahead remaining within the guidelines of Swami Vivekananda.

With love and best wishes to you and your team members.

Yours affectionately,

(Swami Shivamayananda)
Vice-President
Ramakrishna Math and Mission

To

Swami Shuddhidananda

Advaita Ashrama,

5, Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata - 700 014, India.



RAMAKRISHNA MATH
(The Headquarters)
P.O. BELUR MATH, DIST. HOWRAH
WEST BENGAL : 711202
INDIA

Benediction

We are happy to learn that the 125th anniversary of the Prabuddha Bharata is fast approaching and steps are being to commemorate the event.

This journal was a dream of Swami Vivekananda. Sister Nivedita writes, 'The Swami (Vivekananda) had always had a special love for this paper, as the beautiful name he had given it indicated. ... The value of the journal in the education of modern India was perfectly evident to him, and he felt that his master's message and mode of thought required to be spread by this means as well as by preaching and by work.'

Not only did Swamiji suggest the name, its contents and even the cover designs were scrutinized and proposed by him. When it went out of circulation due to untimely death of Rajam Iyer, Swamiji took upon himself to find a suitable location and management for the journal's renewed life till perpetuity.

Having enshrined the Prabuddha Bharata at Mayavati in the Himalayas and in the abode of the Advaita Ashrama, Swamiji ensured, as it were, that the loftiness of the Himalayas and majestic equipoise of the *advaita* philosophy be reflected through this journal.

So, we are proudly convinced that *Prabuddha Bharata* or the *Awakened India* observing its 125th anniversary is but just a stepping stone on its path to many more such glorious anniversaries. It is as Swamiji says,

'Once more awake!

For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life

Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes for visions

Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!

No death for thee!'

Belur Math
11 August 2020

(Swami Suhitananda)
Vice President



RAMAKRISHNA MATH
(The Headquarters)
P.O. BELUR MATH, DIST. HOWRAH
WEST BENGAL : 711202
INDIA

MESSAGE

I am glad to know that ***Prabuddha Bharata*** is stepping into the 125th year of its publication and that a special issue will be brought out in January 2021 to mark this long journey of the journal.

Started at the behest of Swami Vivekananda, *Prabuddha Bharata* has a very special place among our publications. The sole aim of the journal is to disseminate the Vedantic truths and teachings of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and to awaken Indians to the glory of their rich spiritual heritage. Although one wishes that the reach of the journal could have been larger (it has now around 7000 subscribers), PB, as the journal is affectionately called, has maintained all along a high standard with regard to its content.

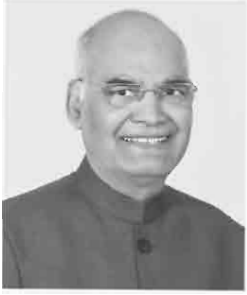
Swami Vivekananda with his deep spiritual insight had found that Vedanta alone can fully satisfy the religious hunger of the modern age. He, therefore, presented Vedanta as the Universal Religion. Towards the end of his series of lectures on *Practical Vedanta*, he described in glowing words the life-transforming power of the realization of one's true nature as Atman. We find these memorable words there: *"This is what I feel to be absolutely necessary all over the world. These doctrines are old, older than many mountains possibly. All truth is eternal.... Truth is the nature of all souls.... But it has to be made practical, to be made simple (for the highest truths are always simple), so that it may penetrate every pore of human society, and become the property of the highest intellects and the commonest minds, of the man, woman, and child at the same time."* Propagation of Vedantic truths in this manner is the task before the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

I convey my best wishes to the editorial board and all others involved in the publication of this important journal of the Ramakrishna Order, and seek the blessings of Swami Vivekananda on all of them.

Suvirananda

(Swami Suvirananda)
General Secretary

23 September 2020



**राष्ट्रपति
भारत गणतंत्र
PRESIDENT
REPUBLIC OF INDIA
MESSAGE**

I am happy to learn that Prabuddha Bharata, English monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Mission is celebrating its 125th Anniversary in 2021.

Prabuddha Bharata since its inception in July 1896 has lived up to the principles of Swami Vivekananda, the inspiration behind the publication. Through its numerous articles by stalwarts like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, S.C. Bose, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the journal has spread the message of India's ancient spiritual wisdom.

The uninterrupted journey of Prabuddha Bharata through the two World Wars, India's freedom struggle and the post-independence phase is indeed remarkable. The journal has constantly spread the message of peace, harmony while reiterating the concept of adhyatm (Spirituality) which has its roots in Indian heritage and culture. The principles of Advaita Vedanta and the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are the guiding light for the journal.

I convey my best wishes and congratulate Ramakrishna Mission on 125th anniversary of Prabuddha Bharata and hope that it would continue to tread on this path of keeping the spirit of spirituality and glory of Indian heritage alive. I wish them the very best in all their future endeavours.

(Ram Nath Kovind)

New Delhi
August 19, 2020



प्रधान मंत्री
Prime Minister



MESSAGE

It is heartening to learn that Advaita Ashrama is celebrating the 125th anniversary of '*Prabuddha Bharata*', an English journal of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Inspired by Swami Vivekananda, this journal was started in 1896. Between then and now, so much has changed, but there are two things that have stayed constant – the electrifying message of strength and service that Swami Ji gave us and the ever-increasing relevance of his legacy which is continued by institutions that Swami Ji established.

Throughout our history, we have seen great people from time to time. Through mass movements that they inspired, their work lives on. Swami Vivekananda is perhaps the most important of all such Indian personalities in the modern era. His work lives among us and is the lifeblood of our national aspirations.

Swami Ji understood the need for India to shake off its reluctance and claim its true place in the world. For this, he set about with two great goals in mind – intellectual rejuvenation and institutional rejuvenation. In the resurgence of our civilization over the past century, a large part of the credit goes to the seeds sown by Swami Ji.

'*Prabuddha Bharata*' is a fine example of Swami Ji's legacy of combining intellect and institutions. Therefore, this is indeed a special occasion and it is apt that Advaita Ashrama is bringing out a special issue titled '*Prabuddha Bharata – 125 Years: Glimpses from the Glorious Past*'.

Today, as a New India rises globally, our youth need the inspiring thoughts of Swami Ji more than ever. The initiative to publish the compilation will help the people, particularly the younger generations to imbibe the lessons of strength, fearlessness and selfless service.

Best wishes for the success of the 125th anniversary celebrations of '*Prabuddha Bharata*'.

(Narendra Modi)

New Delhi

भाद्रपद 13, शक संवत्, 1942

04th September, 2020

Swami Shuddhidananda

Adhyaksha, Advaita Ashrama

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West Bengal- 700014

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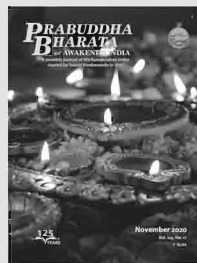
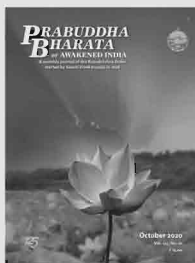
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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

प्रबुद्धाष्टकम्

January 2021
 Vol. 126, No. 1

Eight Verses on the 'Awakened'

Swami Japasiddhananda

- 1) शिवासेव्ये शैले तुहिनछदने देवभुवने
 मुनीनामद्वैते निहितमनसामाश्रमपदे ।
 पदं मायावत्यामकृत बुधपत्रं यदुदरे
 प्रबुद्धानां वाणी भवति भवतामिस्त्रहरणी ॥

The journal of scholars found residence in the serene Ashrama of ascetics who keep their mind in Advaita, located in Mayavati, in the mountain covered with snow which is the habitat of Lord Shiva, and the abode of gods. Within that is the message of the *Prabuddha* which dispels the darkness of transmigration.

[Here *Prabuddha* in *Prabuddhānām* denotes the awakened or enlightened men and women. It may also mean the issues of *Prabuddha Bhārata*, being the short form. The word *śiva* in *śivāsevyē* may mean the Lord Śiva, Goddess Pārvaṭī (when the word is taken in its feminine gender), or Swami Vivekananda who was Lord Vīreśvara of Kāśī incarnate, as per the visions of Sri Ramakrishna. Himalayan region is familiarly known as the realm of gods. Kalidasa, for instance, calls it देवभूमि। Vide Kumārasambhava, 5.45: पितुः प्रदेशास्तव देवभूमयः। (Malaviya. p.138)]

- 2) विवेकानन्दाद्यत् कलिमलहरं मासनियतं
 समारब्धं पत्रं रिपुरसगजात्माङ्कशरदि ।
 अवीच्यां चेन्नै पूरुदयपदमस्यात्र विपुला
 प्रबुद्धानां वाणी भवति भवतामिस्त्रहरणी ॥

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Initiated by Vivekananda in the year 1896, the monthly journal (*Prabuddha Bhārata*), is the destroyer of the impurities of the iron age (*Kali*). The city of Chennai in the South is its place of origination, and in it (in the journal) is found in abundance the message of the *Prabuddha* which dispels the darkness of transmigration.

[Sanskrit poets of yore gave dates of their compositions in a unique way which is followed till date. Words that represent the numbered things are chosen to denote the digits. Here रिपुरसगजात्माङ्कशरदि means 'in the year 1896'. रिपु=षड्विपवः six passions considered as foes, रस=नवरसाः the nine sentiments mentioned in the Sanskrit rhetoric, गज=अष्टदिग्गजाः the eight elephants believed to be supporting the four cardinal directions and the intercardinals, आत्मा=अद्वयं तत्त्वम् Self, the one without the second, अङ्क=चिह्न mark (these mark the year), शरदि=वर्षे in the year; in the year marked or denoted by these numbers. By convention, only the words that are too familiar are used in giving the numbers. Numbers in Sanskrit are counted from either sides. Here it is from the right to the left; 6,9,8,1, when read from the right to the left, gives 1896—the year of starting of the journal. Numbers should be decoded contextually; common sense too should be kept alive. The context here is the journal (*Prabuddha Bhārata*) initiated by Swami Vivekananda. Here रस may also mean the number six as it denotes the tastes enlisted in the Sanskrit culinary science (षड्विपवः). Common sense rules out the number six, as Swamiji was born in 1863; it would be improbable to assume '1866' as the launch date of the magazine. 'Ātmā' here is to be taken in the Advaitic parlance, given the Advaitic orientation of the inmates of the Ashrama mentioned in the earlier verse.]

- 3) अनन्ता वेदाज्ञाः स्मृतिषु विदिता नीतिनियमा
नवीना या विद्या विषय-सुख-विज्ञान-निगमाः।
ततो नीत्वा सारं वहति सुधियां साधु सदनं
प्रबुद्धानां वाणी भवति भवतामिहहरणी ॥

Infinite are the Vedic injunctions, the ethics and rules known through the Smritis, and the modern disciplines which are scriptures of science and joy related to the objective sense world. The message of the *Prabuddha* which dispels the darkness of transmigration collects the essence from all these (knowledge systems) and carries it to the noble household of the wise.

[The verse also may be taken as suggestive of enlightened readers: They are indeed noble and elite (or at least trying to be such) who receive the numbers of the journal in their homes]

- 4) द्विजं राजं श्रित्वा प्रथममभिसम्पादकमथो
स्वरूपानन्दं स्वामवति विरजानन्दमवनौ ।
ततः प्रज्ञानन्द-प्रभृति-यमिनो याऽर्थबहुला
प्रबुद्धानां वाणी भवति भवतामिहहरणी ॥

The message of the *Prabuddha* which dispels the darkness of transmigration, sustains in the world its flow that is rich in content by taking shelter with the wise Rajam, the first editor, then Swarupananda, Virajananda, and after that Prajnananda and other monks.

[Here the line of editors may be recollected which begins from B.R.Rajam Iyer, the first editor from July 1896 to June 1898, till his untimely demise.]

- 5) अगम्यादद्वैतान्मधुरसमनुष्ठानपरकं
पुराणादाचारं शिशुसुगमसारं सुजटिलात् ।
मनःशास्त्रं योगाज्जनसहकृदुच्चीय ददती
प्रबुद्धानां वाणी भवति भवतामिस्रहरणी ॥

The message of the *Prabuddha* which dispels the darkness of transmigration collects and distributes from the inaccessible Advaita the sweet and practical (precepts), moral codes from very intricate mythology, and from Yoga psychology, the essence of which would be easily comprehensible to even a child, and helpful to people.

[Journals of the Ramakrishna Order attempt to give the readers the best in all, in a way as lucid as possible. The vision and mission of Swamiji back this methodology. Swamiji wrote to Alasinga Perumal on 17 February 1896, from the U.S.A., well before the launching of the *Prabuddha Bharata*: 'The dry, abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms, and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work.' (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 5.104–5). An attempt is made to capture this spirit in the verse.]

- 6) मनो रुद्धा तत्त्वे श्रवणमननाद्यैर्निदधतां
मुखं पाठं मत्वा तदधिगमने व्यापृतधियाम् ।
धनं कीर्तिं शान्तिं सुखमथ समाप्तुं समुशतां
प्रबुद्धानां वाणी भवति भवतामिस्रहरणी ॥

[To whom is the journal *Prabuddha Bhārata* relevant is stated here:]

The message of the *Prabuddha* dispels the darkness of transmigration of those, who—(1) by means of hearing, reasoning, etc., concentrate the mind on the Ultimate Reality, after stopping it (from flowing out through the senses), (2) are occupied with the assimilation of what they study, by considering study as worship (or 'sacrifice'), (3) wish to possess wealth, fame, peace of mind, and pleasure.

[All can benefit from the journal—spiritual aspirants, students, teachers, and common people with diverse goals. The word 'अधिगमन' in 'तदधिगमने' retains the same form in the causative also, and hence, व्यापृतधियाम् can be construed to mean both the teacher and the taught. The word 'समुशतां' is the present participle in the genitive, of the second conjugation root वश कान्तौ 'to desire'. The root, though listed as Vedic, is often found in the classical literature too. 'पृथक् पृथगनुप्रासमुशन्ति कवयः सदा' says a verse in Udbhaṭālaṅkāra. Kerala-kalidasa writes: मुक्तिसाधनमुशन्ति यदेकं ज्ञानमेव तदभीप्सुरभीक्ष्णम् ।]

- 7) प्रतीच्याः प्राच्या ये रुचिररचना वेद्यवचनाः
तदीयैर्लेखैर्या नुदति मतिकार्षण्यमनिशम् ।

जगद्वन्द्या नन्द्या सदसदनुसन्धानविधया

प्रबुद्धानां वाणी भवति भवतामिहहरणी ॥

The message of the *Prabuddha* which dispels the darkness of transmigration alleviates intellectual poverty by the exquisite writings of the Western, and Eastern scholars who write exquisitely, and say what is to be known. The journal is fit to be adored and relished by all given that it scrutinises the right and wrong.

[The sentence is complex. The word for word meaning would be: Those who are in the West/ Those who are in the East/ Who/ of exquisite composition/ speakers of what is to be known/ by their/ writings/ which/ alleviates/ poverty of the intellect/ always/ Fit to be adored by the world/ fit to be relished/ by the way of contemplating on the right and the wrong/ of the Prabuddha/ utterance/ is/ destroyer of the darkness of transmigration.]

8) सरस्वत्याः सेवा यतिवरकृतात्मोन्नतिपरा

जगच्छ्रेयोहेतुः शरनयनभूवर्षविभवा ।

प्रभामाचन्द्रार्कं दधतु भुवि बोधं विदधती

प्रबुद्धानां वाणी भवति भवतामिहहरणी ॥

May the service related to language (i.e., publishing of the journal), started by the monk par excellence (Swami Vivekananda), having for its goal self-edification, a means to the well-being of the world, which has attained to the celebration of the 125th year (of its founding), sustain (its) flawless grandeur and glory until the sun and the moon last, by creating awareness in the world. The message of such *Prabuddha* dispels the darkness of transmigration.

[Swami Vivekananda set the twin ideals before the monks who wish to emulate the ideals lived by Sri Ramakrishna: 'For the liberation of one's own self, and the good of the world.' Therefore, all endeavours of the monks, inclusive of bringing out the monthly, revolve around these twin ideals.]

Here again, you find the poetic way of giving the dates: शरनयनभूवर्षविभवा means 'attained to the celebration of the 125th year'. शर=बाणाः five arrows of the cupid, नयन=नेत्रे two eyes, भू=भूमिः the earth, वर्ष=संवत्सरः year; the year marked by 5, 2, and 1 taken from the right to the left gives the number 125. विभव=celebration; 'that which has attained to the celebration marked by 125th year' is the sense.] ॐ

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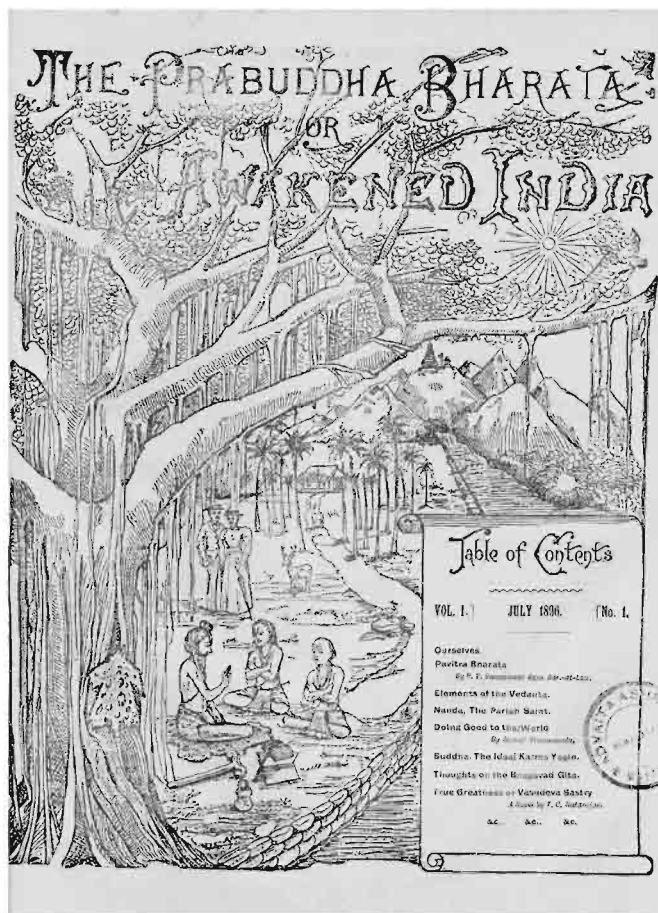
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Ourselves

(Originally published in the first issue of
Prabuddha Bharata, July 1896)

THE READY RESPONSE with which our prospectus has been favoured on all sides, the eagerness with which our movement has been welcomed, and the support that has been generously promised to us in several quarters, all show that the time is ripe for similar undertakings, that there is a real demand in the country for spiritual nourishment—for the refreshment of the soul. But a few years ago, the *Prabuddha Bharata*¹ or the *Brahmavadin* would have been utterly impossible. The promise of many a Western 'ism' had to be tried and the problem of life had itself been forgotten for a while in the noise and novelty of the steam-engine and the electric tram; but unfortunately steam engines and electric trams do not clear up the mystery: they only thicken it. This was found out, and a cry like that of the hungry lion, arose for religion and things of the soul. Science eagerly offered its latest discoveries, but all its evolution theories and heredity doctrines did not go deep through. Agnosticism offered its philosophy of indifference, but no amount of that kind of opium-eating could cure the fever of the heart. The Christian Missionary offered his creed, but as a creed it would not suit; India had grown too big for that coat.

Just then it was found, and here is the wonder of Providential disposition, that the eyes of the Western world were themselves turned towards India, turned, not as of old for the gold and silver she could give, but for the more lasting treasures contained in her ancient sacred literature. Christian Missionaries in their eagerness to vilify the Hindu, had opened an ancient



Prabuddha Bharata, July 1896 (First Issue Cover)

magic chest the very smell of whose contents caused them to faint. Oriental scholars, the Livingstones of Eastern literature, had unwittingly invoked a deity, which it was not in their power to appease. As philologists are succeeded by philosophers, Colebrookes and Caldwells give birth to Schopenhauers and Deussens. The white man and his fair lady stray into the Indian woods and there, come across the Hindu sage under the banyan tree. The hoary tree, the cool shade, the refreshing stream, and above all the hoarier, cooler and the more refreshing philosophy that falls from his lips enchant them. The discovery is published; pilgrims multiply. A Sannyasin from our midst carries

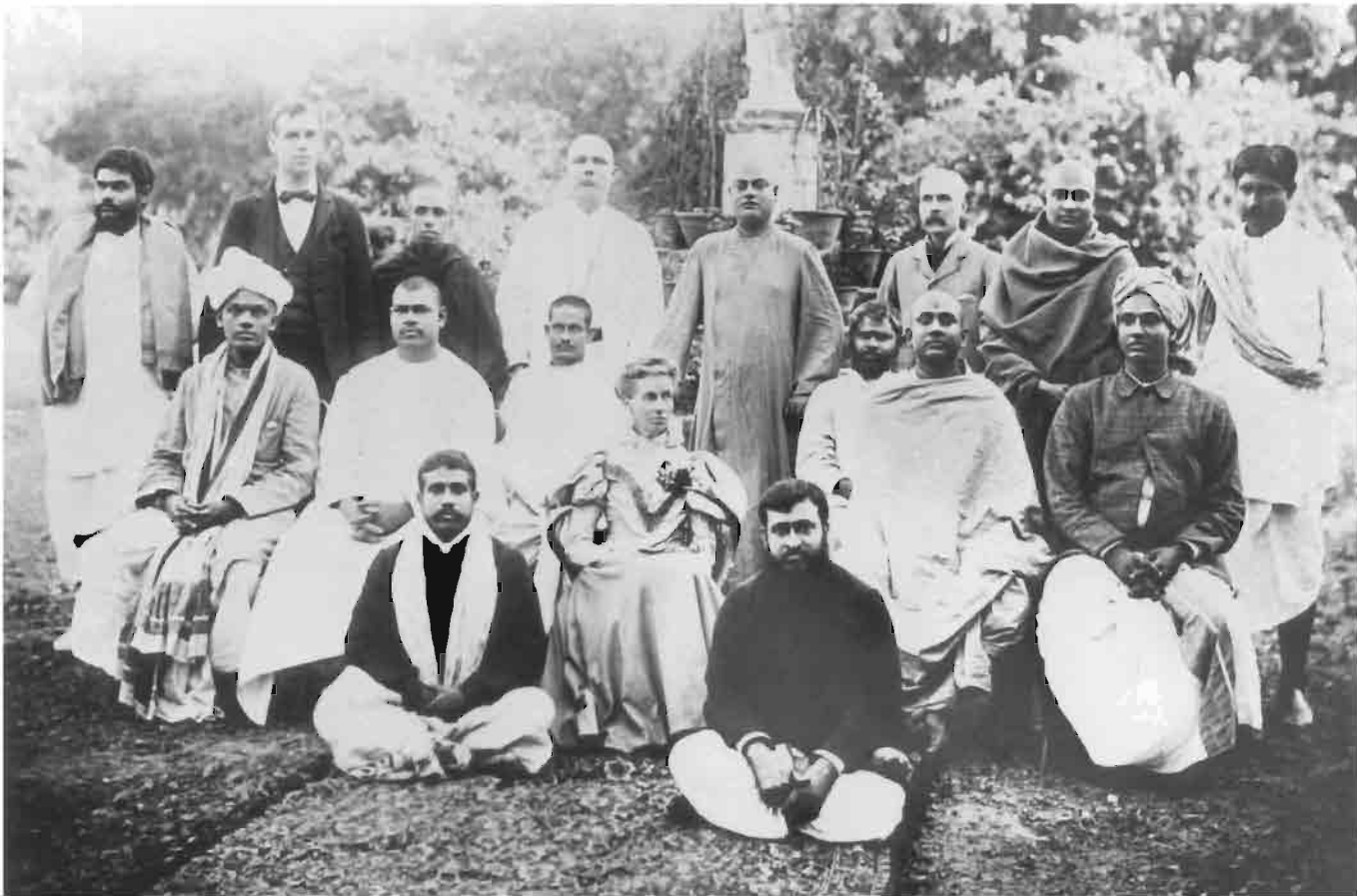
the altar fire across the seas. The spirit of the Upanishads makes a progress in distant lands. The procession develops into a festival. Its noise reaches Indian shores and behold! our motherland is awakening.

We all remember the story of the Sleeping Beauty—how she was shut up by enchantment in a castle where she slept a hundred years, how during that time an impenetrable wood sprang up around her, and how at last she was disenchanted by a fair young prince and married him. India may be likened to that Sleeping Beauty: she has slept very long indeed and thick forests of confusing creeds—social, political, and religious have grown up around her. The enchantment that sent her to sleep was Providence itself, the most mysterious of all kinds of magic. When she began to sleep, the fair young prince (the modern civilised world) now wooing her was not on the scene. At present however, the lover's suit is progressing, the thick forests are clearing away, and the marriage of the East and the West, which promises to come off in no distant date, will be one of the grandest, the most romantic and most fruitful marriages known to history.

The awakening we speak of, of which there is an abundance of symptoms on every side will however not be like that of an eagle, which rises from sleep with renewed vigour and strength to roam and to light, but that of a nightingale melting the hearers' hearts with its soft sweet melodies. Already the message of our motherland has gone to nations burning with social and political fever, and soothed them. To serve in the spreading of that message, and help in clearing away the haze that naturally prevails in our newly awakened country, after so long a sleep, will be the ambition of the Journal we have been enabled to bring into life today. The task we have set to ourselves is lighter than it

would otherwise be, as there are journals like the *Brahmavadin* already working in the field with wonderful results. Ours is only a humble attempt in the direction of these Journals and simplicity and fervour will be our chief aim. We have a great faith in the system of teaching principles by means of stories and indeed, as Swami Vivekananda wrote in his letter to us, 'There is a great chance, much more than you dream of, for those wonderful stories scattered all over the Sanskrit literature to be re-written and made popular.' For these stories are not like the unhealthy sensational, fifth-rate French novels of the day, the cobwebs spun by idle brains, but the natural flowers of great minds that could, from a Himalayas-like philosophic altitude take a sweeping and sympathetic survey of the human race. That is why they bear the stamp of immortality on them. Centuries rolled away before the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata appeared and centuries have yet to roll on before another of their kind can be made. They are not older than the mountains, but they will live longer than the mountains, and have more influence. One special feature of these stories is that they have a different meaning for every stage of human growth, and the ordinary man as well as the philosopher enjoys them, though each understands them in his own way. The reason for that is, that these stories were composed by men, far advanced in the ladder of human progress, some of whom, indeed, were on the top-most rung. Extracts and adaptations from these great books will be a chief feature of our Journal.

It is not however, intended to fill the whole Journal with stories only. Every issue will contain a number of articles on serious subjects; but care will be taken to make them simple and interesting, and the technicalities of metaphysics will be scrupulously avoided. We shall



At Gopal Lal Seal's Garden House, Cossipore, Kolkata, March 1897

Standing, left to right: Shantiram Babu, Mr Turnbull, Swami Prakashananda, Singaravelu Mudaliar (Kidi), Swami Vivekananda, Captain Sevier, Swami Shivananda, unidentified person. Sitting, left to right: Alasinga Perumal, Swami Ramakrishnananda, Swami Premananda, Mrs Sevier, Swami Adhutananda, Swami Turiyananda, G G Narasimhachariar. Floor, left to right: Unidentified person, Mr Harrison of Colombo

endeavour to act up, as far as we can, to the advice which Swami Vivekananda has kindly given us with regard to the conduct of the Journal—‘Avoid all attempts to make the Journal scholarly: it will slowly make its way all over the world, I am sure. Use the simplest language possible and you will succeed. The main feature should be the teaching of *principles* through stories. Do not make it metaphysical at all. ... Go on bravely. Do not expect success in a day or a year. Always hold on to the highest. Be steady. ... Be obedient and eternally faithful to


the cause of truth, humanity, and your country, and you will move the world. Remember it is the person—the life which is the secret of power, nothing else...’—and he has generously undertaken to contribute to the Journal as often as he can.

Though an organ of Hindu religion, the *Pra-buddha Bharata* will have no quarrel with any other religion: for, really speaking, all religions are simply different phases of the same Truth, different methods of approaching God. ‘I am in all religions as the string in a pearl garland,’

says the Lord. What humanity is to man, what existence is to living beings, that, Vedantism is to religions: it is their common essence, their inner unity, and as such, it can possibly have no quarrel with any of them—the whole has no quarrel with the part. On the other hand, it approves of the existing differences, and even welcomes their multiplication, so that no man might be left godless for want of a religion suited to his nature.

This Vedantic ideal of religious unity, or rather, of religious variety implies, not merely the spiritual growth of the individual from stage to stage but also the growth of society by the due co-ordination of creeds. The *Prabuddha Bharata* will deal with both the aspects of the ideal. The individuals make up the society, and the advancement of the former necessarily results in that of the latter. At the same time, society acts upon the individual, and conditions him. As the two are thus found to act and re-act on each other, it is necessary, that, side by side with the ideal of individual perfection, that of social perfection should also be presented. The ideal society, according to the Vedanta, is not a millennium on earth, nor a reign of angels, where there will be nothing but thorough equality of men, and peace, and joy—the Vedanta indulges in no such chimeras—but one, where religious toleration, neighbourly charity, and kindness even to animals form the leading features, where the fleeting concerns of life are subordinated to the eternal, where man strives not to externalise, but to internalise himself more and more, and the whole social organism moves, as it were, with a sure instinct towards God. This ideal will be steadily presented in these pages, but no attempt will be made to restore old institutions which have had their day, any more than to restore to life a dead tree.

Our object will be to present the ideal, which, fortunately, never gets too old, leaving everyone to seek his own path of realisation. The policy of breaking away from society and that of allowing it to grow of itself have, both of them their uses, and are equally welcome. But it is our firm conviction, that any real social advancement towards the ideal can only be effected by the example and teachings of men, who are intimately acquainted with the foundations of our society, or for that matter, any society whatsoever, who, by means of their own perfection, can understand the successive stages of human evolution as fully and as naturally, as the old man understands the child, the boy, and the adult, who know that, whether we will or no, the progress of the society as well as of the individual is always Godward, and know also that the means has always to be consistently subordinated to the end. Society is no toy and its architects cannot be ordinary men. The truest social reform has, at all times, come only from men, who strove to be good, rather than to do good, men from whose personal goodness sprang social advancement as naturally, as noiselessly, and as beautifully as the smell from the full blown rose.

Having thus far stated, at some length, the objects and methods of the present Journal, we leave it to our readers to judge for themselves how far they are right and deserve encouragement. The movement would not have sprung into existence but for the active support of some really great men. 'To work we have the right' and the fruits are cheerfully resigned to Him who guides all and Himself wants no guide. 

Notes

1. A name [*Prabuddha Bharata*] suggested by Swami Vivekananda which while it means Awakened India, also indicates the close relationship that exists between Hinduism and Buddhism.



Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Champavat District

Doing Good to the World

Swami Vivekananda

[This class lecture delivered in America was the first article of Swami Vivekananda published in *Prabuddha Bharata* in its first issue, July 1896]

OUR DUTY TO OTHERS means helping others; doing good to the world. Why should we do good to the world? Apparently to help the world, but really to help ourselves. We should always try to help the world, that should be the highest motive power in us, but, when we analyse it properly, we find that the world does not require our help. This world was not made that I or you should come and help it. I once read a sermon in which was said, 'all this beautiful world is very good, because it

gives us time and opportunity to help others'. Apparently, it was a very beautiful sentiment; but, in one sense it was a curse; for, is it not a blasphemy to say that the world needs our help? We cannot deny that there is much misery in it; to go out and help others is, therefore, the highest motive power we have, although in the long run, we shall find that it is only helping ourselves.

As a boy I had some white mice. They were kept in a little box and had little wheels made for them, and when the mice tried to cross the

wheels, the wheels turned and turned, and the mice never got anywhere. So with the world and our helping it. The only help is that you get exercise. This world is neither good nor evil; each man manufactures a world for himself. If a blind man begins to think of it, it is either as soft or hard, or cold or hot. We are a mass of happiness or misery; we have seen that hundreds of times in our lives. As a rule, the young are optimistic, and the old pessimistic. The young have all life before them, and the old are complaining; their day is gone; hundreds of desires, which they cannot fulfill, are struggling in their brain. Life is at an end for them. Both are foolish. This life is neither good nor evil. It is according to the different states of mind in which we look at the world. The most practical man would call it neither good nor evil. Fire, by itself, is neither good nor evil. When it keeps us warm, we say: 'How beautiful is fire!' When it burns our fingers, we blame the fire. Still, it was neither good nor bad. We use it, it produced in us the feeling of good or bad; and so also is this world. It is perfect. By perfection is meant that it is perfectly fitted to meet its ends. We can all be perfectly sure that it will go on, and need not bother our heads wanting to help it.


Yet we must do good; it is the highest motive power we have, knowing all the time that it is a privilege to help. Do not stand on a pedestal and take five cents and say, 'Here, my poor man,' but be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by giving to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed but the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect. All good acts tend to make us pure and perfect. What can we do at best? Build a hospital, make roads, or erect charity asylums. We may organise a charity and collect two or three million

dollars, build a hospital with one million, with the second give balls and drink champagne, and of the third let the officers steal half, and the rest finally to reach the poor, but what are these? One mighty wind in five minutes can break it all up. What shall we do then? One volcanic eruption can sweep away all our roads and hospitals and cities and buildings. Let us give up all this foolish talk of doing good to the world. It is not waiting for your or my help; yet we must work and constantly do good, because it is a blessing to ourselves. That is the only way we can become perfect. No beggar ever owed a single cent to us, we owe everything to him, because he has allowed us to exercise our powers of pity and charity on him. It is entirely wrong to think that we have done, or can do good to the world, or have helped such and such people. It is a foolish thought, and all foolish thoughts bring misery. We think we have helped someone and expect him to thank us, and, because he does not, unhappiness comes to us. Why expect anything? If we were really unattached, we should escape all this pain of vain expectation, and could do good work in the world. Never will unhappiness or misery come through work done without attachment. This world will go on with its happiness and misery through eternity.

There was a poor man who wanted some money, and, somehow he had heard that if he could get hold of a ghost or a spirit, he could command him to bring money or anything he liked; so he was very anxious to get hold of a ghost. He went about searching for a man, who would give him a ghost, and at last he found a sage, with great powers, and besought this sage to help him. The sage asked him what he would do with a ghost. 'I want a ghost to work for me; teach me how to get hold of one, sir; I desire it very much,' replied the man. But the sage said: 'Don't disturb yourself, go home.' The next day

the man went again to the sage and began to weep and pray: 'Give me a ghost; I must have a ghost, sir, to help me.' At last the sage was disgusted, and said: 'Take this charm, repeat this magic word, and a ghost will come, and whatever you say to this ghost he will do. But beware; they are terrible beings, and must be kept continually busy. If you fail to give him work he will take your life.' The man replied: 'That is easy; I can give him work for all his life.' Then he went to a forest, and after long repetition of the magic word, a huge ghost appeared before him, with big teeth, and said: 'I am a ghost. I have been conquered by your magic. But you must keep me constantly employed. The moment you stop I will kill you.' The man said: 'Build me a palace,' and the ghost said, 'It is done; the palace is built.' 'Bring me money,' said the man. 'Here is your money,' said the ghost. 'Cut this forest down, and build a city in its place.' 'That is done,' said the ghost, 'anything more?' Now the man began to be frightened and said: 'I can give him nothing more to do; he does everything in a trice.' The ghost said: 'Give me something to do or I will eat you up.' The poor man could find no further occupation for him, and was frightened. So he ran and ran and at last reached the sage, and said: 'Oh, sir, protect my life!' The sage asked him what was the matter, and the man replied: 'I have nothing to give the ghost to do. Everything I tell him to do he does in a moment, and he threatens to eat me up if I do not give him work.' Just then the ghost arrived saying, 'I'll eat you up; I'll eat you up' and he would have swallowed the man. The man began to shake, and begged the sage to save his life. The sage said: 'I will find you a way out. Look at that dog with a curly tail. Draw your sword quickly and cut the tail off and give it to the ghost to straighten out.' The man cut off the dog's tail and gave it to the ghost, saying, 'Straighten that out for me.' The ghost took

it and slowly and carefully straightened it out, but as soon as he let go, it instantly curled up again. Once more he laboriously straightened it out, only to find it again curled up as soon as he attempted to let go of it. Again he patiently straightened it out, but as soon as he let it go, it curled up again. So he went on for days and days, until he was exhausted, and said: 'I was never in such trouble before in my life. I am an old veteran ghost, but never before was I in such trouble. I will make compromise with you,' he said to the man. 'You let me off and I will let you keep all I have given you and will promise not to harm you.' The man was much pleased, and accepted the offer gladly.

This world is that dog's curly tail, and people have been striving to straighten it out for hundreds of years, but when they let go, it curls up again. How can it be otherwise? One must first know, how to work without attachment, then he will not be a fanatic. When we know that this world is like a dog's curly tail and will never straighten, we shall not become fanatics. They can never do real work. If there were no fanaticism in the world it would make much more progress than it does now. It is all silly nonsense to think that fanaticism makes for the progress of mankind. It is, instead, a retarding block, by making hatred and anger, and causing people to fight each other, and making them unsympathetic. Whatever we do or possess we think the best in the world, and those things we do not possess are of no value. So always remember this curly tail of the dog whenever you have a tendency to become a fanatic. You need not worry or make yourself sleepless; the world will go on. When you have avoided fanaticism, then alone will you work well. It is the level-headed man, the calm man, of good judgment and cool nerves, of great sympathy and love, who does good work. The fanatic has no sympathy. 

EDITORIAL

‘Awakening the World’ through an ‘Awakened India’

The title of this write-up may look paradoxical. How is India’s awakening connected to the awakening of the world? But this precisely is the goal of this journal, which has been serving humankind for the last 125 years without deviating from the core vision of its illustrious founder Swami Vivekananda. What was that vision? That vision was to carry the spiritual message of Bharat all over the world to enlighten the human race.

Swamiji himself was a ‘*buddha*’, an enlightened or spiritually *awakened* man. He awakened the world to the Vedantic message of ‘oneness of existence’ and ‘eternal freedom of the Soul’. And also, as Sister Nivedita aptly points out in one of her writings, he was a ‘condensed India’. Hence, at an individual level, it is appropriate to state that Swami Vivekananda himself represents the idea of ‘*Prabuddha Bharata*’, or ‘awakened India’; and the mission of this awakened India is to awaken the world. The glorious journey of this journal for the last 125 years is but the perpetuation of Swamiji’s lifetime mission which he proclaimed in the following words: ‘It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body—to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God.’¹

From the nation’s point of view, Swamiji envisaged a strong and resurgent awakened India flooding the world with her spiritual ideas, which he expressed in his reply to a public reception

given to him at Ramnad on 25 January 1897: ‘In this land are, still, religion and spirituality, the fountains which will have to overflow and flood the world to bring in new life and new vitality to the Western and other nations, which are now almost borne down, half-killed, and degraded by political ambitions and social scheming’ (3.148).

Prabuddha Bharata, Swamiji’s dream journal, stands for this idea of ‘Awakening the world’ through an ‘Awakened India’. Its singular purpose is to spread the life-giving message of Vedanta all over the globe and also to prepare every Indian to this enormous task by reminding her or him of the glorious spiritual heritage of India. The idea is that an ‘enlightened India’ will ‘enlighten the world’.

What is meant by ‘*Prabuddha Bharata*’?

Why Swamiji named this journal as *Prabuddha Bharata*? Though this pertinent question has already been answered by eminent monks and scholars, it is educative as well as interesting to find out its meaning in Sanskrit and how it is closely connected with the core ideal this journal embodies. In Sanskrit, the word *prabuddha* is derived from the root word ‘*buddh*’, which means understanding or comprehending. Prefixed with *pra*, it becomes ‘*prabuddha*’ which means a higher type of knowing or understanding endowed with elation, intensity, splendour, contentment, power, peace, and adoration or reverence.



*Swamis Prajnananda, Virajananda, Atulananda, Abhayanda, and others
in front of the newly constructed Prabuddha Bharata building, Mayavati, in 1914.*

In substance, '*prabuddha*' means 'enlightened'. And what does '*bhārata*' mean? Literally, '*bhārata*' means 'one devoted to the light of knowledge' or 'one who is engaged in the search of knowledge'. Historically, '*Bhārata*' is the name of the great land, today known as India, where such aspirants of knowledge resided. Thus, in a literal sense *Prabuddha Bharata* means 'one devoted to the light of knowledge becomes enlightened or awakened',

and in an historical or geographical sense, it means 'awakened India'. This journal justifies its name in both these senses, firstly because it is dedicated to the light of Self-knowledge resulting in spiritual awakening, and secondly because it stands for the idea of an 'awakened India' in the national and historical sense. In short, the journal and the meaning of its title—both are deeply rooted in eternal spiritual tradition of India.

A Buddhist Perspective of the term 'Prabuddha'

In the Buddhist tradition, the idea of enlightenment is conveyed through an important word: *Bodhi*. The term Bodhi is used both in Sanskrit and Pali, which means knowledge or wisdom, or 'the awakened intellect' of the Buddha. The verbal root of Bodhi is *budh* which means 'to awaken'. This term is used to denote the state of 'Nirvāṇa' or 'Prajñā', which is tantamount to the attainment of Buddhahood, explained as *samyak sambodhi*, the highest awakening which is exemplified by Gautama Buddha.

This state of enlightenment is graphically described in Buddhist literature. Sri R R Diwakar says that 'Infinite peace, a complete sense of fulfilment, full and clear knowledge of Reality and ineffable bliss may be said to be the characteristics of *Sambodhi*.'² He also opines that *Sambodhi* goes far beyond body-mind consciousness and is full of wakeful illumination. Buddha remained in the state of *Nirvāṇa* or *Nibbāna*, after the enlightenment. According to Ananda Coomaraswamy, an eminent scholar, *Nibbāna* is one of the many names for the goal and summum bonum to which all other purposes of Buddhist thought converge. In the *Milinda Panha*, an ancient Buddhist text, *Nibbāna* is compared to a glorious city, deathless, stainless, secure and undefiled, pure and white, ageless, deathless, calm, and happy. However, it is far from even heaven, which good men attain after death.³

The literal meaning of *Nirvāṇa* is 'dying out' or 'extinction', as that of fire. In the Buddhist tradition, the simile of a flame is employed in many places. Gautama Buddha says: 'The whole world is in flames. By what fire is it kindled? It is by the fire of lust (*rāga*), of resentment (*doṣa*), of glamour (*moha*); by the fire of birth, old age, death, pain, lamentation, sorrow, grief and despair it is kindled' (108). 'Nirvāṇa' is the

dying out or extinction of the flames of lust, hate, and glamour.

In this way, in Buddhist tradition, the word 'Prabuddha' indicates enlightenment signified by wakeful illumination and dying out of the flames of affliction. The mission of *Prabuddha Bharata*, from its inception in 1896, has been the dissemination of such exalted knowledge, which will make one 'Buddha' or 'Prabuddha'.

Awakened India

Swamiji has given a clear idea of a resurgent India, through which the world will be spiritually benefited. He said: 'Arise and awake and see her seated here on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was—this motherland of ours.'⁴ He believed in the immense inherent strength India has, not only to revitalise herself but also to guide the humanity towards the path of enlightenment. He would say that India should once again become awakened, not only for her own sake, but for the sake of the whole world.

The degenerate condition of India of his time did not unnerve him and make him a pessimist. Though pained to the core to see his motherland languish in darkness, he clearly saw the bright future. That's the reason why we find, 'in him everything is positive', as stated by Tagore.⁵ Being pragmatic in his approach, he studied the Indian situation objectively and came out with workable solutions to raise India from her state of downfall. He was optimistic of India's glorious future. He wrote to Shrimati Sarala Ghoshal, the Editor of *Bharati*:

O you of great fortune! I too believe that India will awake again if anyone could love with all his heart the people of the country—bereft of the grace of affluence, of blasted fortune, their discretion totally lost, downtrodden, ever-starved, quarrelsome, and envious. Then only will India

awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower and lower in the vortex of destitution and ignorance. I have experienced even in my insignificant life that good motives, sincerity, and infinite love can conquer the world. *One single soul possessed of these virtues* can destroy the dark designs of millions of hypocrites and brutes.⁶

Swamiji wanted Indians to become such *prabuddhas*, enlightened persons, to transform this country into AWAKENED INDIA, so that the world could be awakened. For this, one of the methods that he proposed and actualised was the publication of journals. He encouraged Alasinga Perumal and Dr M C Nanjunda Rao in this direction and the two journals came into existence, *Brahmavadin* and *Prabuddha Bharata*, the former in 1895 and the latter in 1896. In short, *Prabuddha Bharata* stands for Swamiji's vision of transforming India into a world teacher and bringing enlightenment to the human race.

Glimpses From the Glorious Past

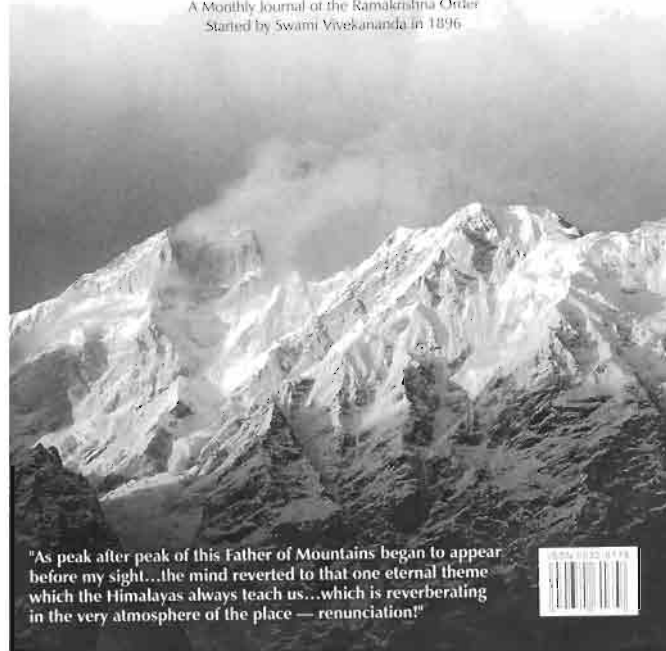
This special issue, being brought out on the occasion of the 125th year of *Prabuddha Bharata*, is dedicated to the numerous stalwarts who carried the burden of editing, publication, and distribution of this journal for the last 125 years. We present here to our readers the story of *Prabuddha Bharata*, a dear child of Swamiji, which is a saga of sweat and toil of monks and well-wishers who have contributed in several ways towards the uninterrupted dissemination of ennobling ideas through the medium of this journal. This special issue is meant for remembering all those pious souls who, out of their love for Swamiji and his mission, worked hard, sacrificing their personal interests for this longest running English magazine of India.


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PRABUDDHA BHARATA or AWAKENED INDIA

A Monthly Journal of the Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



We in this issue present to the readers a kaleidoscopic view of the great intellectual and spiritual treasure that *Prabuddha Bharata* has hidden in itself. 

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My Days in Mayavati

Swami Smaranananda

IN THE 1950s I was a Brahmachari at the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bombay (now Mumbai). In 1958 I was sent to Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta (now Kolkata), a branch of the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati (Champavat district, Uttarakhand). This gave me an opportunity to get transferred to Mayavati in 1961. I had always dreamt of living in the Himalayas and this transfer came to me as an unexpected boon.

Placed in the lap of the Himalayas, this Ashrama is a unique place from many points of view. But I am not writing on this aspect of Mayavati. This article is meant to write about various anecdotes related to Mayavati Advaita Ashrama during my stay there.

I was asked by Swami Gambhiranandaji, the then President of Advaita Ashrama, to go to Mayavati and help Swami Ananyanandaji, the editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* at that time. In April 1961, I started for Mayavati with Swami Gambhiranandaji. After staying for a day or two at Lucknow, we proceeded to Tanakpur, one of the railheads to Kumaon Hills.

In those days, only one bus ran in a day from Tanakpur to Lohaghat, from where we were to proceed to Mayavati. I queued up in the line for that *only bus* to Lohaghat, but, alas! When my turn came to get the ticket, the counter closed down. No more tickets!

Revered Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj is the President of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. A powerful speaker and a good scholar, Revered Maharaj has rendered service in several centres of the Ramakrishna Order.

Now we had no other way but to spend the day at Tanakpur with all our heavy luggage! Swami Gambhiranandaji persuaded the Manager of the bus service to run a second bus. He agreed on the condition that it could go only at 1.30 p.m., as the Tanakpur-Lohaghat road was running one way at a time. The bus left at 1.30 p.m. We reached Lohaghat only at 9 p.m. We dumped our luggage in a tea shop. In those days there were only 3 or 4 shops. We started walking, our torch throwing light on the way. It was pitch dark. This was my first visit to Mayavati. At one place, Swami Gambhiranandaji was a bit hesitant about the way. I asked him whether we had missed the way. He didn't reply!

We heard a voice calling us from behind: 'Swamiji, Swamiji!' Swamis from Mayavati had come to receive us early in the evening but had left after finding that we didn't turn up. They had left a boy at Lohaghat to accompany us, if at all a second bus came though they didn't expect it to! In the eerie silence of the forest, the boy's shouts did not disturb Swami Gambhiranandaji! At about 10.15 p.m., we reached Mayavati. All had gone to sleep. They were surprised by our calling and came down hurriedly!

Now, a word or two about Mayavati. In 1899, Captain Sevier and Mrs Sevier, disciples of Swami Vivekananda from England, started the Advaita Ashrama under his instruction and inspiration. Swamiji wanted to start an Ashrama in the Himalayas, purely dedicated to Advaita Vedanta. No ritualistic worship was to be allowed. When he was touring Switzerland, he

got this idea and told Capt. Sevier to see if they could accomplish it. They both came to India with Swamiji in 1897 and after spending some time at Almora, came to a tea garden, 50 miles from Almora, which was known as Glengyle Tea Estate, having an area of about 65 acres of mountain land situated at an altitude of 6300 to 7000 ft., commanding a wonderful view of the Kumaon forest hills and the Himalayas. Capt. Sevier purchased it from General W J McGregor, a retired British officer from the Bengal Staff Corps and developed the land into an Ashrama.

Capt. Sevier passed away at Mayavati in 1900. Swamiji visited this place in 1901 and stayed here for fifteen days. The monks named it 'Mayavati' (the earlier name being *māipeeth* or *māipatta*). Swamiji had sent Swami Swarupananda as the Head of the Ashrama. The editorial office of the *Prabuddha Bharata* was transferred to Mayavati from Almora. At first, the magazine was being managed at Madras. When the editor Rajam Iyer suddenly died in the year 1898, *Prabuddha Bharata* was shifted to Almora and afterwards to Mayavati.

Mayavati has come a long way in more than one sense. Electricity and telephone are available now. Many new buildings—an extension of Hospital buildings with more equipments, and a new guest house—with more capacity of accommodation for guests, beautiful 9 km tar road from Lohaghat built by the Government—all these have come up.

My first year (1961) at Mayavati was not eventful. Routine work was going on. But the much-awaited snowfall arrived rather early that year, on December 17 to be precise. It snowed continuously from noon to next evening—almost 30 hours. Nearly 20 inches of snow lay on all sides of the Ashrama. For most of us, who had come to Mayavati for the first time, it was exciting.

In early 1962, Swami Ananyanandaji, the editor, developed tooth trouble and had to go to New Delhi for treatment. He decided not to continue with his job at Mayavati. So Swami Gambhiranandaji, the President, asked me to return to Calcutta, carrying the files and papers of the *Prabuddha Bharata* office. I reached Calcutta on 16 January 1962 and learnt that Swami Shankaranandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, had passed away on 12 January 1962.

Before going further, I would like to record a few interesting incidents at Mayavati:

1. **Incident of Prof. Malkani:** In the summer of 1961, Prof. Malkani came to Mayavati intending to stay for 15 days. In the evenings, he would join us for walking. One day he told me: 'Swamiji, your plants are not so harmless as they appear to be.' I asked him with a smile: 'Why, what happened?' 'Well, I picked up a leaf for my flower vase, but it stung me', he said. I began to laugh. 'Could you not get any other better leaf or flower for the purpose? Actually, you have picked up a poisonous nettle, which is commonly found in the hills', I said.

2. **Visit of Sri C B Gupta, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh:** Sri C B Gupta, the then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, came to visit Mayavati with a big entourage. He was a devotee of Swami Vivekananda. As soon as he entered the Ashrama, he asked: 'Which is the room where Swamiji stayed?' He was shown a room on the first floor where Swamiji had stayed for the first six days. Later on, Swamiji had come down to the library room on the ground floor and slept near the fireplace as it was quite cold upstairs. It was the month of January in 1901, and there was a snowfall too. Anyway, Guptaji (as he was called) went straight upstairs and seeing the pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda in a room, he did a *sāstānga*



Mayavati Ashrama after Snowfall in Winter

pranām. The party left after dinner. During the visit, Guptaji promised to get the road from Lohaghat to Mayavati completed.

After a day or two, during the night reading class, Swami Gambhiranandaji said: 'Jairam (that is me) has arranged a shrine and Guptaji did a *sāstānga pranām* to Swamiji.' What he meant was that in the Advaita Ashrama no ritualistic worship is allowed. What I did was a violation of the rule! The very next day, I put the three holy pictures inside my suitcase!

3. '*Baraf girta hai*': It was 17 December 1961. We were having our lunch. A boy came running and shouted, '*baraf girta hai*—snow is falling'. We quickly mopped up our lunch and ran outside. Already the ground had turned white. Snowflakes, like loose cotton, were falling slowly. Everything was still. There was not a whisper, even from the trees. The snowfall continued till next evening—that is, for nearly thirty hours. And then the moon rose. It was a bright fortnight. What a wonderful scene! Everything was

dazzling white—even the trees. The entire landscape had turned into a fairyland.

But not all were happy. Manager Swamiji was worried about finding fodder for the cows. Another inmate, who had experienced many a snowfall, was apprehensive of severe winter months ahead. Nevertheless, we all rolled the snow over our badminton court and made a snowman of four-foot high. Swami Ananyanandaji,

utilising his artistic sense, gave the snowman eyes and a moustache, and thrust a flag in his hand with the inscription *Om tat sat!* And we went out with gumboots on. Our legs were making holes in the powdery snow. But, alas, in the midst of all these, the water supply had stopped. The water in the pipeline had frozen. So, water had to be rationed for the next few days!

4. ₹100/- **Prize**: This incident happened in 1963. In the hills, unless you know the way very well, there is always a possibility of missing it. It is not unusual to lose the way in the forests of hills. I will relate one such incident here.

Swami Chidatmanandaji, the *Prabuddha Bharata* Editor at that time and Swami Yogasthanandaji (Sanat Maharaj) were new to Mayavati. Moreover, during walks, they didn't go far away most of the time. An old gentleman, aged 72, had come from Calcutta. It was September 1963. Swami Chidatmanandaji suggested that we four might go to see the Lohaghat point, about 1½ mile from the Ashrama. I told that we all should take our umbrellas as thick clouds were

gathering. But Chidatmanandaji said it was not necessary. I took my umbrella and started walking at the slow speed of the old man from Calcutta. Halfway up it began to drizzle. Swami Chidatmanandaji said that along with Yogasthanandaji he would go to the Ashrama quickly as the way was known to him. Soon the drizzling developed into a downpour. In spite of that, the old man would not walk faster. As I was taking him, the two Swamis disappeared from sight. Finally, when I reached the Ashrama, I found to my surprise that the two Swamis had not reached yet. That was a clear indication that they both had missed the way. In the darkness and the rain, they were to be searched.

Two other Swamis were down with fever in the Ashrama. I sent two servants, but they went up a little and started shouting, 'Swamiji, Swamiji'! They were ineffective. So, I sent Hayat Singh, our compounder at the hospital, a crisis man. He went up the hill and, being an intelligent person—from the shouts of the Swamis—could locate that the two were at a place called 'old Dharamgarh', at a distance of two miles from the Ashrama! In the meantime, I too went up the hill and it was still raining. The time was already around 9 o'clock. I was worried. By then, Hayat Singh and the other two met me on the way. Hayat Singh suggested that I should go back to the Ashrama and send two persons with petrolmax light, while he would bring the Swamis slowly by another route. Finally, the Swamis, escorted by Hayat Singh, reached the Ashrama at 10.30 p.m., wet to the skin, with leeches on their legs and dead tired! The leeches were having a feast on their blood with great glee! I served them with hot coffee immediately. *Chapatis* were prepared for all and after eating, all of us went to bed! At midnight, it again started raining fiercely, and then continued for 2/3 days. Had the two Swamis not been detected, God

knows, what would have happened! Swami Chidatmanandaji gave a prize of ₹100/- to Hayat Singh, as it was he who could detect the place where the Swamis were!

5. Incident of a fawn: When I was working in the *Prabuddha Bharata* office, there was a small cubicle, covered with glass, facing the eastern side. One day, suddenly, I heard a piteous call from the slope in front. I looked up and found a fawn running frantically, being chased by two *malposhas* (an animal looking like a mongoose, but 3 times bigger, with sharp teeth). Suddenly the mother deer jumped in and ran away with her calf and the two *malposhas* ran away in a different direction. Indeed, a drama in nature was enacted before my eyes.

6. Innovative method of proof-reading: In those days, we used to get galley proofs (of the text matter to be printed in the *Prabuddha Bharata*) from Calcutta for our proof-reading. No computers in those days! It was arranged between the editor Swami Ananyanandaji and myself in this manner: Half of the proofs would be seen by him and the remaining half by me. After my proofreading, the editor Swamiji would see the proof and *vice versa*. If the editor found any mistakes which escaped my notice, that would be debited to my account. If I found any mistakes in the proofs which were not detected by him that will be debited to his account! This game ensured that the *Prabuddha Bharata* got published without any mistakes.

7. Birth Centenary of Swami Vivekananda: In 1963, the Birth Centenary of Swami Vivekananda was being celebrated in India and abroad. Why should the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama, so dear to his heart, do nothing about it? In early 1963, Swamiji's Birth Centenary was celebrated at Lohaghat Bazar, Lohaghat College, Champavat Tehsil, Almora, and in a college hall at Pithoragarh. A meeting was also held

at the Advaita Ashrama where distinguished persons from the town were present. In the meeting held at Almora too, prominent persons from the town gathered. All the meetings were well attended. The Mayavati Advaita Ashrama organised these in collaboration with the concerned people. Swami Chidatmanandaji's (the then Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*) presence helped us in this matter, for he was a good speaker in Hindi. Among others, myself, Br. Manmatha Maharaj, Swami Jyotirananda (Pankaj Maharaj, the doctor Swami) and Swami Ekatmanandaji were present.

At Lohaghat, the Principal of the Lohaghat College had arranged the function. The Swamis were given a rousing welcome by the students standing in line, blowing conches, and throwing flowers. The Principal Dr Ramdas was also a good artist. He had drawn pen pictures of Swamiji on blackboards and arranged them in the lecture hall beautifully. The other functions were also well attended. At the Lohaghat Bazar, Mohanlal Sahji spoke a few words, reminiscing Swamiji's visit to Mayavati in 1901. In all the meetings, Swami Chidatmanandaji spoke in beautiful Hindi. Thus, Swamiji's Birth Centenary was celebrated in Kumaon. Perhaps, such functions were arranged by the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati for the first time.

One fine morning, Swami Gambhiranandaji asked me: 'Well, how do you like the idea of going to Calcutta?' I replied: 'Maharaj, you know I like Mayavati.' Hearing this, Gambhiranandaji looked a bit sad. So I said: 'Maharaj, if my going to Calcutta, anyway, is essential, I will go.' That morning Br. Manmatha Maharaj (later Swami Satyavratanaanda) and I were about to leave for Champavat—of course by walk—for collecting money from Champavat Treasury, sanctioned by the Government for our hospital. When we came back in the evening, we came to know that Swami Gambhiranandaji had already

informed the Headquarters that I had agreed to go to Calcutta. So that was the end of my first phase of stay at Mayavati. But I left Mayavati only in July 1963, that too with permission from Gambhiranandaji, to go to Amarnath, Kedar-Badri, and thence to Calcutta. After this, for about eight years—that is, till 1971—I did not get any opportunity to visit Mayavati.

From 1969 to 1976, Swami Budhanandaji was the President of Advaita Ashrama. Earlier, from 1963 to 1969, Swami Chidatmanandaji was the President. In 1971, Budhanandaji requested me to go to Mayavati to organise the construction of a Kitchen Block at the Mayavati hospital, which would provide cooking facilities for the patients' attendants to be able to cook their food. In the hills, the people belonging to different castes would not eat what others had cooked. An engineer Brahmachari went with me. I went to Mayavati and stayed there for twelve or fifteen days.

In 1975, Swami Budhanandaji again requested me to go to Mayavati to organise the construction of a water reservoir with a capacity to hold 20,000 gallons of water, and also for some other works. Swami Budhanandaji could not go due to his ill health. Sri Mihir Gupta, a distinguished engineer, who was leading a retired life at the Ashrama, was requested to handle this work. This work began in April 1975 and ended in December 1975. Water was harnessed from a perennial spring in the deep forest, a mile away from the Ashrama.

During that period, once while going into the forest, I was looking for the Himalayan *tahr*, an endangered animal like a mountain sheep, but instead, we were surprised by the sudden appearance of two full-grown leopards. The incident took place like this.

One day, four of us—myself, two *paharis* (native residents), and a diploma-holder engineer


boy from Calcutta—went into the deep jungle, about a mile from the Ashrama, to measure the water output from two springs, to tap it and connect it to the reservoir that was being built. On the way, I asked the *paharis* where the Himalayan *tahr* stayed. While going, the *paharis* saw a mountain cavity formation. They threw stones at that, saying: '*tahr aisa jagah par rahta hai*—the *tahr* lives in such places.' They threw stones thinking that the *tahr* would come out, if it was there. But instead of the *tahr*, a full-grown leopard came out looking at us and growling angrily. For a moment, we were stunned, but went ahead and measured the output of water from those springs. While we were returning, one more leopard came out roaring—may be the male and the female!

I spent most of the year of 1975 at Mayavati. Two funny incidents of that period come to my mind. Swami Sarveshananda (Dr Winslow in his pre-monastic life) was staying at Mayavati at that time. Once I was reading *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita* (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, in English) with translation. There is a reference in it about Varāha Avatāra, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu as a boar, who after killing the demon Hiranyaksha continued staying on earth and was not willing to go back to his abode in Vaikuntha. The devas or gods met Lord Shiva to solve this problem. When Shiva went to meet him, the Varāha Avatāra was suckling the kids. Here was the problem for Sarveshananda: 'Suckling? Was the Varāha Avatāra male or female?' I had no answer to this question. Perhaps someone may explain!

On a *Shivarātri* day, Swami Sarveshananda also fasted along with other monastics. Next morning, the snow-peaks were shining in all their glory. We decided to go to Dharamgarh to see the whole range. Sarveshananda, too, wanted to go with us. After fasting, he was feeling weak; still he insisted on accompanying us.

After reaching Dharamgarh, he was standing, looking at the peaks and suddenly collapsed—perhaps blacked out. Some water was necessary. But nothing was available in the forest. One Subrata, a young man from Calcutta, was with us. I sent him to the Ashrama to bring some water. But he brought milk instead of water! In the meantime, Sarveshananda got up and said that his legs were wobbly and fell again. Anyway, we slowly made our way back to the Ashrama!

I conclude the reminiscences of Mayavati with a few words about Sri Mohanlal Sah. I remember him very well. He was then known as Sahji and was living in Lohaghat. He, as a young boy, had met Swamiji a number of times, both in Almora and Mayavati, which he has narrated in his reminiscences about Swamiji. In one of the programmes held at the Lohaghat Bazar in connection with the Birth Centenary Celebration of Swami Vivekananda, Mohanlal Sah spoke a few words reminiscing Swamiji's visit to Mayavati in 1901. In this function, Swami Chidatmanandaji, President, Advaita Ashrama, Swami Ekatmanandaji, Br. Manmatha Maharaj (later Swami Satyavratananda), and Swami Jyotirananda (Pankaj Maharaj, the doctor Swami) were present.

It is Swami Swarupanandaji who took Mohanlal to Mayavati. Since then, till his last day in the world, even in his late nineties, Mohanlal was very close to Mayavati Advaita Ashrama. When Swamiji visited Mayavati in 1901, Mohanlal did the works like composing and printing of Swamiji's articles. Thus, he became an inevitable part of the work at Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. Mohanlal lived at Mayavati until his elder brother passed away at Almora and his wife had to be looked after. So he shifted to Lohaghat. He was close to the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who came from time to time to Mayavati. We used to meet him at his house at Lohaghat, have tea and play Ludo with him. 

Prabuddha Bharata—March On!

Swami Chetanananda

PRABUDDHA BHARATA has been marching on for the last 125 years, overcoming many trials. This monthly English-language journal was started in 1896 in Madras (now Chennai) at the request of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji was then travelling and lecturing in the West and felt the need to propagate the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the eternal message of Vedanta, and the spiritual and cultural heritage of India. At that time there was no internet, radio, or television to disseminate ideas; instead, magazines, journals, newspapers, and books carried the message. For that reason, Swamiji started three journals during his lifetime: *Brahmavadin* (1895) and *Prabuddha Bharata* (1896) in English, and *Udbodhan* (1899) in Bengali.

The *Brahmavadin* was launched in Madras on 14 September 1895 as a fortnightly journal. After receiving two issues, Swamiji wrote from America to Alasinga Perumal, one of the editors: "The *Brahmavadin* ought in every number [to] write something on Bhakti or Yoga or Jnana. Secondly, the style is too stiff; try to make it a little brighter."¹ After one year, *Brahmavadin* became a monthly publication. Swamiji provided financial support, and also collected subscriptions so that it could stand on its own feet. On 23 March 1896 Swamiji wrote to Alasinga: "The *Brahmavadin* has very little chance in Europe or America on account of the long Sanskrit articles... The greatness of a teacher consists in the simplicity of his language. If you can write popularly on Vedanta, the

Brahmavadin will be popular here, else not. The few subscribers are only through personal regard for me."² Alasinga and Swamiji's admirers continued their support of *Brahmavadin* till 1914.

Swamiji was filled with ideas for regenerating India. For example, on 31 August 1894, he wrote to Alasinga and asked him to form a society to spread the message of Vedanta: "Give the society some non-sectarian name. I suggest 'Prabuddha Bharata'—*Awakened India*—and that name without hurting the Hindus will draw the Buddhists to us by the very name, [it] may mean *pra*—i.e. with, *Buddha Gotama*—Bharata, India, i.e. *Hinduism with Buddhism*."³ In July 1896 this idea took form as the journal *Prabuddha Bharata*, which was launched in Madras.

B R Rajam Iyer, the First Editor of Prabuddha Bharata

B R Rajam Iyer was born in 1872, in Batlagundai Village, Madurai. He earned his F.A. degree from Madurai College, and his B.A. from Christian College in Madras in 1889. He was a voracious reader and studied English literature, including Shakespeare, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, and George Eliot. He was profoundly influenced by these great writers. He did not merely confine himself to English literature, however, but also sought the wisdom of the Upanishads and Vedanta literature. In addition, he savoured the devotional poems and stories of



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Tamil saints and poets. In truth, his thoughts and writings were a harmonious blend of the East and the West. His passion for religion, philosophy, and literature can be vividly seen in his famous book *Rambles in Vedanta*, a collection of some of the many articles he wrote for *Prabuddha Bharata*.

In 1896 at the age of 24, Rajam Iyer, inspired by the ‘cyclonic monk’ Swami Vivekananda, became the first editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*. On 14 April 1896 Swamiji wrote to Dr Nanjunda Rao, the publisher of the journal: ‘Avoid all attempts to make the journal scholarly—the *Brahmavadin* stands for that. It will slowly make its way all over the world, I am sure. Use the simplest language possible, and you will succeed. The main feature should be the teaching of *principles* through stories. Don’t make it metaphysical at all.’⁴

Although Rajam Iyer was the first editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, he was not a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. He was inspired by Swamiji, but he had his own guru and he interpreted Vedanta in his own way.

Rajam Iyer edited *Prabuddha Bharata* from July 1896 until his death from Bright’s disease on 13 May 1898. The June 1898 issue was his last. Swamiji was then in Almora with Mr and Mrs Sevier, Sister Nivedita, and some monks. He was shocked to hear of Rajam Iyer’s sudden death at such a young age—he was only 26 years old. The publication of *Prabuddha Bharata* ceased for a short time.

Swami Swarupananda, the Second Editor of Prabuddha Bharata

Ajayhari Bandyopadhyay was born in South Calcutta on 8 July 1871. He was highly educated and well-versed in Sanskrit, English, and Bengali, as well as deeply spiritual, with strong morals. He and his friend Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyay started a Sanskrit school to teach the scriptures and philosophy. They also founded the Dawn Society to awaken Indian Nationalism, and along with it,

launched a monthly journal named *Dawn*. When Swami Vivekananda returned from the West in 1897, Ajayhari met with him and asked to become a monk. Swamiji tested him:

Ajayhari, will you be able to keep the hard vows of monastic life? At the guru’s bidding, you should not hesitate even to face a venomous snake or march into the line of a canon, even though you know that such an act would mean certain death. Not yielding to a life of ease and comfort, you will have to obey your guru unflinchingly. Lust and greed will have to be eschewed completely, down to the level of thought. All tender emotions will have to be crushed mercilessly. You will always have to remember that for a monk, ‘*Pride is like intoxication, love of fame is verily hell, and love of prestige like filth*.’⁵ (Italics for emphasis)

Ajayhari received sannyasa from Swamiji on 29 March 1898 at Nilambar Mukherjee’s garden house in Belur, becoming Swami Swarupananda. On that day, Swamiji was in a joyful mood and told his Western disciples: ‘We have made an acquisition today.’ On 11 May 1898, Swarupananda left for Almora with Swamiji and his Western disciples. While there, Swamiji heard of Rajam Iyer’s passing. Immediately he decided to revive the *Prabuddha Bharata* with the help of Swarupananda and Mr and Mrs Sevier. Swamiji said to Mr Sevier:

Sevier, you said you would work for the good of India. The climate of Bengal will not suit you. So why don’t you stay somewhere near Almora and undertake to conduct *Prabuddha Bharata*? The journal has got over three thousand subscribers. It was first printed on my advice and has gradually become a notable instrument for the dissemination of Vedantic knowledge. I don’t wish that it should be discontinued. And I am giving you a capable editor. Swami



Swarupananda has particular experience in that line, and with the help of yourself and Swami Turiyananda, he will easily be able to run it.⁶

Prabuddha Bharata slept for the month of July 1898 and was awakened in August. Swamiji wrote: 'Once more awake! No death for thee!'⁷ Swamiji's disciples immediately implemented his ideas. A printing press and materials were brought to Almora from Calcutta, and the August issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* was printed in Thompson House. Swamiji wrote an inspiring poem entitled 'To the Awakened India' that was published in that issue.

Prompted by Swarupananda, Sister Nivedita interviewed Swamiji on three occasions. These interviews were published in *Prabuddha Bharata* as the 'Reawakening of Hinduism on National Basis', in September 1898; 'On Indian Women—Their Past, Present, and Future', December 1898; and 'On the Bounds of Hinduism', April 1899. (These interviews were reprinted in the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Volume 5.)

During the first interview, Nivedita raised three vital questions.

Question: India has always had her deep inner life. Are you not afraid, Swamiji, that in attempting to make her active you may take from her, her one great treasure?

Answer: Not at all. The history of the past has gone to develop the inner life of India and the activity (i.e. the outer life) of the West. Hitherto these have been divergent. The time has now come for them to unite. Ramakrishna Paramahansa was alive to the depths of being, yet on the outer plane who was more active? This is the secret. Let your life be as deep as the ocean, but let it also be as wide as the sky.

It is a curious thing, that the inner life is often most profoundly developed where the outer conditions are most cramping and limiting. But this is an accidental—not an essential—association, and if we set ourselves

right here in India, the world will be 'tightened'. For are we not all one?

Question: Your last remarks, Swamiji, raise another question. In what sense is Sri Ramakrishna a part of this awakened Hinduism?

Answer: That is not for me to determine. I have never preached personalities. My own life is guided by the enthusiasm of this great soul; but others will decide for themselves how far they share in this attitude. Inspiration is not filtered out to the world through one channel, however great. Each generation should be inspired afresh. Are we not all God?

Question: Thank you. I have only one question more to ask you. You have defined the attitude and function of your movement with regard to your own people. Could you, in the same way, characterise your methods of action as a whole?

Answer: Our method is very easily described. It simply consists in reasserting the national life. Buddha preached renunciation. India heard, and yet in six centuries she reached her greatest height. The secret lies there. The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.⁸

In March 1899 the printing press was moved from Almora to the newly-founded Advaita Ashrama in Mayavati. Swami Swarupananda edited *Prabuddha Bharata* for eight years, and then, tragically, died from pneumonia at Nainital in 1906, at the age of 35.

We do not understand why Providence decreed that the first two editors of *Prabuddha Bharata* should die so young. At any rate, when one soldier dies on the battlefield, another takes up the banner and marches onward. Over the 125 years of *Prabuddha Bharata*'s history, we find that many learned and dedicated monks of the Ramakrishna Order carried the banner of Swamiji's cherished journal, with its inscription: 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.'

Mohanlal Sah, the Typesetter of Prabuddha Bharata

On 16 October 1970, when I was in Mayavati, I met Mohanlal Sah at Lohaghat. He was then 93 years old. He shared with me his reminiscences of Swamiji and the early days of *Prabuddha Bharata*:

I saw Swamiji four times. First I saw him in 1890 with Swami Akhandananda. At that time, I was living in Almora. Lala Badri Sah's younger brother was my friend and moreover we were related to them. Swamiji stayed with that family. My first impression of Swamiji was that he was like Buddha. He was wonderfully handsome.

Then in 1897 I saw Swamiji in Almora after he had returned from America. We walked two miles in procession to receive him and bring him to Almora. It was a grand reception and many people came. A meeting took place in the marketplace in front of Badri Sah's house. Swamiji stood on a high spot and gave a lecture. I was present but I don't remember what he said.

Again in 1898, Swamiji came and stayed at Thompson House; Nivedita and his other followers stayed in Oakley House. One day Swami Swarupananda asked me, 'Will you go with us to Mayavati?' I replied, 'I shall tell you tomorrow.' The next day, I agreed and left for Mayavati with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and Swami Swarupananda.

At that time there was a tea garden in Mayavati. I saw how they used to dry the tea leaves in the main house. That house was remodelled to make living quarters. Swami Virajananda set up the Master's shrine upstairs and it was decorated with flowers. Then in 1901 when Swamiji came to Mayavati, the Master's Puja was stopped.

When we heard that Swamiji was coming to Mayavati, Swami Swarupananda told me: 'Swamiji is coming, but what shall we feed him? Go to the village and find out what things are available.' It was winter and terribly cold. I went to a village on a distant hill and obtained raw plantains, the pith of the plantain tree (*Thor*), and some other vegetables. I cut them and helped the cook to prepare them.

Swamiji came and Virajananda attended him. For the first few nights, Swamiji slept on the upper floor, but it was too cold. So later on, he began to sleep near the fireplace on the ground floor.

I was then very busy with my duties. The Mayavati printing press was behind the Ashrama building, and I had to compose all the articles for the *Prabuddha Bharata* magazine on the press. I did not have much opportunity

to talk to Swamiji. He was always surrounded by distinguished people. One day I saw Swamiji pacing and lecturing in the library hall. Mother Sevier and others were listening quietly.

Swamiji wrote two articles in Mayavati—'Aryans and Tamilians' and 'Stray Remarks on Theosophy'. I composed those articles and took the proofs to him and he began to read them.⁹

I heard the following story from senior monks: During the First World War, there was a critical paper shortage and not enough paper could be found to print *Prabuddha Bharata*. The magazine was about to be discontinued. Swami Abhayananda (Bharat Maharaj) was then in Mayavati. He walked 50 miles to Tanakpur and then travelled by train to Lucknow. He bought paper there, then returned to Tanakpur by train. He put the paper on the back of the mule and walked back to Mayavati.

So many nameless dedicated monks and devotees have kept *Prabuddha Bharata* alive for the last 125 years.



In 1924, the printing of the journal was shifted from Mayavati to Calcutta for convenience. But the editorial department remained in Mayavati.

In India, especially in Bengal, magazines are born and die within a few years. As far as I know, no journal in India has seen its centenary, except for *Prabuddha Bharata* and *Udbodhan* founded by Swami Vivekananda, and *Vedanta Kesari*, an English monthly journal started in 1914 by Ramakrishna Math, Madras. *Prabuddha Bharata* is now 125, *Udbodhan* is 122, and *Vedanta Kesari* is 107 years old. Each of these has continued to carry the immortal message of Vedanta and Ramakrishna-Vivekananda all these years without break.

A Sweet Reminder

O *Prabuddha Bharata*, forget not that your founder blessed you with these immortal words: 'Resume thy march. Awakener, ever Forward! Speak thy stirring words. And tell the world: Awake, arise! Be bold.'¹⁰

Forget not that you were born to propagate the eternal message of the sages of India and the life-giving teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Thus only you can serve and inspire humanity.

Forget not to remind your readers these ancient *rik-mantras* of *charaiveti* (March On):

1. He who has made a long and wearisome journey acquires a grace incomparable. However important and great he might be, if he sits idle in this world, he is reduced to insignificance. He who walks endlessly has God as his comrade and co-traveller. Hence, O Traveller, march on.

2. A traveller's body blooms in grace and beauty. His soul becomes greater every day. Isn't that life's greatest achievement? As he marches along the open road, his sins are automatically destroyed and they fall dead. Hence, O Traveller, march on.

3. An idle man's fate sits idle too. When he

risks and stands upright, his fate also rises and stands up. As he lies down, his fate lies down with him. He who marches along has his fate marching with him. Hence, O Traveller, march on.

4. While he sleeps, it is Kali-yuga; when he merely awakes, it is Dwapara-yuga; as he stands up, it is Treta-yuga; but the moment he steps onward, there is Satya-yuga. Hence, O Traveller, march on.

5. To march along is to gain immortality; marching by itself is the sweet fruit of the journey. Look at the sun—the ever-glorious and eternal traveller, who once having started on his journey has never felt drowsy. Hence, O Traveller, march on.¹¹

So, *Prabuddha Bharata*—march on! ❧

Notes and References

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Mayavati and Its Message

Swami Bhajanananda

IT WAS IN THE Holy Mother's Centenary year [1953] that I first encountered *Prabuddha Bharata* at home. The journal had its subscriber even in that remote village. Although for a teenager understanding its articles, especially the editorials, was a tough nut to crack, there was something sublime about the journal which was at least partly due to the surrealistic view of Joyrambati on the pale greenish-yellow cover.

Of course, I could never foresee that one day I would be asked to go to Mayavati and take charge of the editing of the journal. When, however, that actually happened twenty-five years later, I was reluctant to go. One main reason for this was the intense cold of the place. Swami Madhavanandaji used to say, 'Mayavati has only three seasons: cold, colder, coldest!' For people who don't have much of adipose under the skin, Mayavati can create problems especially in the winter.

And winter was in full swing when I went to Mayavati. As Dhan Singh's truck carrying us droned up the winding path from Lohaghat, I could see on either side frozen pools of water fringed by wild roses. It had rained the previous days and water drops glistened on pine needles in the morning sun.

Mayavati is at an altitude of 6,500 feet. However, the Ashrama and its grounds are in

a crater-like valley with hills on three sides. The fourth side on the west opens out overlooking vast plains far below dotted with houses and farms and, beyond them, there looms in the horizon the spectacular range of snow-clad mountain peaks.

The main monastery building is more than a hundred years old. It originally belonged to an Englishman, General McGregor, who owned the tea estate, and the building itself was being used as a shed for curing tea leaves. When Swami Vivekananda visited Mayavati on 3rd January 1901, he must have found the building in that condition. Later on, it was converted into a two-storeyed house, but the upper floor is even now one single hall partitioned into rooms with wooden walls. The fireplace on the ground floor, near which Swamiji slept, was until recently used in winter. Though Swamiji stayed at Mayavati only for two weeks (from 3rd to 17th January 1901), his spirit seems to pervade the whole area, and there is no other centre in India where you are reminded of him in such an exclusive way.

What strikes a sensitive mind first in Mayavati is the intense silence of the place. It is not mere absence of noise (since people stay there, one may hear voices) but *a positive, perceptible silence*. And, beyond that silence, more sensitive minds may also tune in to the unbroken undercurrent of uncreated *dhvani* or subtle 'sound'—something like the background noise of the universe, the remnant of the Big Bang, discovered recently by astrophysicists—which is a part of the mystique of Mayavati. The room I stayed in had been

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Mother's Bungalow at Mayavati

used as a living room by several illustrious monks of our Order. It afforded a magnificent view of the snow-range. But it was also the coldest room in the building. A huge oak-tree nearby, under which Swami Turiyanandaji Maharaj used to meditate, ensured that the warmth of the sun never reached that room. A coal scuttle containing charcoal provided some heat. But the half-burnt charcoal gave off carbon monoxide which could produce severe headache, if not death, and so I rarely used the scuttle. On the second day of my stay, in the small hours of the morning, I was sitting in my room when a bird started singing quite near the window. Never had I heard such a melodious bird-song before. I came to know later on that the songster was the Himalayan Blackbird—a plain-looking thrush of the size of a Mynah (Starling), dark except for a patch of brown on the belly. His smaller cousin, the Magpie-robin (*Doyal* in Bengali), is one of the finest songbirds in the plains. The cheerful musical out-pouring of the bird helped to brace up my spirit considerably.

A little away from the main building where most of the monastic brothers live is another two-storeyed building (built in 1914 and opened by Sister Christine, an American disciple of Swami Vivekananda), which houses the editorial department of *Prabuddha Bharata*. The editor's



Mother Sevier outside her cottage at Mayavati

office is a small room with panes of glass on two sides, which not only let in the sun but also provide a fine view of forest-clad hills and valleys. One of these hills, known as Dharamgarh, is a place of interest to the followers and admirers of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji had expressed a wish to have a hermitage built there and spend his time in undisturbed contemplation. The other buildings in Mayavati are a two-storeyed guesthouse for lay visitors, 'the Mother's Bungalow' where Mrs Sevier used to stay, and the 25-bed hospital. The hospital, which treats more than 50,000 outdoor patients annually, completely free of charge, is well known in that area, and it is a moving sight to see the sick being brought on ponies and in improvised sedans from far off places including Nepal.

The area around the monastery was originally a tea estate and terraced for tea cultivation. Now, most of the terraces have been converted

into orchards and farms growing wheat and potato. These are surrounded on all sides by virgin forest. Most Indians will sadly miss here banana, mango, jack, coconut and other trees of the plains. The trees that are found here such as the oak, rhododendron, pine, cypress, and deodar have a distinctly 'foreign' look. Among these, the deodar (the India cedar) is undoubtedly the most graceful and useful tree. Its light, fragrant, fine-grained wood takes a good polish and is very durable. It is indeed the 'timber of gods,' which is what its original name *devadāru* really means.

Unlike tropical forests, which are made impenetrable by the tangled mass of low branches, creepers, and underbrush, Himalayan forests consist mostly of tall, stately trees without much undergrowth. Many bridle-paths and foot-paths crisscross the forests in and around Mayavati. Some of these paths look deceptively familiar, but if you follow them without a guide, you may get lost as in a maze. Formerly tigers used to roam freely in these forests. Now only leopards are left. In the evening, as darkness descends upon the forests, you can hear the growl of a hungry leopard on the prowl. Leopards have killed calves and dogs in Mayavati, sometimes in broad day-light. More dangerous than the leopard is the bear, a temperamental animal which may attack without provocation. Occasionally a bear may be found perched on an oak tree gorging on acorns. The forest also gives shelter to the large deer known as Barasingha, and the diminutive 'barking deer'. The latter, whose peculiar 'barking' can be heard at night, is perhaps a small antelope or mountain goat. Other than the two species of monkeys whose frequent forays into potato fields and orchards cause considerable damage to crops, there are also smaller mammals such as the civet cat, wild pig, weasel, porcupine, and flying squirrel.

Weasels are fond of the nectar of rhododendron flowers; once in a while, they steal into the apiary at night, topple the beehives and eat the honeycombs. The flying squirrel climbs a tall tree in a great hurry and, after reaching its top, glides down to a smaller tree, occasionally giving out a spine-chilling screech at night. With the exception of the Indian jungle fowl, the progenitor of the domestic fowl now reared all over the world, and the master songster the blackbird, all the other birds are local migrants. They go away in October and return in March-April.

Apart from the forest owned by the Advaita Ashrama, a large tract of the forest all around is also managed by the monks as the sole constituent members of the Mayavati Panchayat. The nearest village is four kilometres away, and the nearest railway station seventy kilometres away. Until India's border conflict with China in 1961, there were only bridle paths leading to Mayavati, and it used to take at least two days to traverse the distance from the railway station on horseback or on foot.

The area owned by the Ashrama was purchased by Swami Vivekananda's English disciples Captain J H Sevier and his wife Mrs Charlotte Elizabeth Sevier. Captain Sevier passed away in 1900 and in 1903 Mrs Sevier transferred the ownership of the place to the monks by executing a trust deed. She left for England for the last time in 1916 and passed away there in 1930. There is no inscription or monument in Mayavati, except the 'Mother's Bungalow', to commemorate the self-sacrifice of Captain Sevier and Mother Sevier. But those who have the heart to feel can find everywhere in Mayavati the imprint of the memory of a noble-hearted English couple who sacrificed their all for the *sake* of their Guru and his country. To borrow a few lines from the contemporary British poet, Stephen Spender,

Near the snow, near the sun,
 in the highest fields,
 See how these names are feted
 by the waving grass
 And by the streamers of white cloud
 And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
 The names of those who in their lives
 fought for life,
 Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.¹

It is well known that the Seiers bought the Mayavati estate at the explicit wish of Swami Vivekananda. What was Swamiji's idea in starting a monastery in this far off secluded place? It is clear that Swamiji had a definite plan, a clear dream about the future of Mayavati. What was that? And how far has Mayavati, during nearly a century of its existence, fulfilled that plan or dream of Swamiji? What exactly is expected of the inmates of this Ashrama? These questions used to recur in my mind all through my eight years' stay at Mayavati.

It is generally believed that Swamiji's main purpose in starting the monastery at Mayavati was to put into practice Advaita, the non-dualistic system of Vedanta. He himself clearly stated this point in a letter he wrote to Swami Swarupananda, the first President of the Advaita Ashrama, in March 1899:

To give this One Truth a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start this Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practised nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone.²

It is important to understand the practical implications, the actual possibilities, of the

above statement of Swamiji. In the first place, Advaita does not mean a mere system of philosophy, much less a creed or intellectual conviction or attitude. It is an incontrovertible direct experience of the non-dual, infinite Self, attained by following definite spiritual disciplines. There are several traditional paths to the attainment of this

experience. The Upanishads speak of a number of subjective-objective techniques called '*Vidyās*', and also the process of *neti, neti* (not this, not this). Then there is the *śabda-āparokṣa* doctrine developed by Sureshvaracharya and accepted by the Vivaraṇa school, according to which Vedānta *vākyas* (dictums) such as *tat tvam asi* have the inherent power to induce in a purified mind the direct intuition of Brahman. The Bhāmati school of Advaita emphasises the need for repeated practice of a higher type of meditation known as *nididhyāsana*. Later Advaita teachers admitted yoga techniques into the fold of Advaita. None of these techniques, however, are meant to be learnt from books. They are all to be learnt directly from a guru. But Swamiji is not known to have left explicit instructions for the members of Mayavati Ashrama to follow any particular method of getting direct transcendental experience of Advaita.

In the absence of such instructions, ordinary aspirants can follow only dualistic methods of attaining spiritual realisation. During the early years of the Advaita Ashrama even the practice of Japa with the help of rosary was frowned upon, but later on, the use of rosary was permitted. No ritual or religious ceremony is permitted at the Ashrama



Captain James Henry Sevier

(except the Viraja Homa, the fire ritual of Sannyasins). The Ashrama does not have a shrine. There is no external worship of images or symbols of God and, naturally, no *prasād* is available there. Even the act of *pranām*, or obeisance to God, or offering of flowers is not allowed in the Ashrama. It cannot be denied that, in view of the difficulties of maintaining ritual purity of body and clothes in that cold place, the prohibition of external worship is to some extent a blessing. But it would be too simplistic to equate avoidance of rituals with the practice of Advaita which is much loftier than that. Furthermore, the system of Advaita is so broad-based that it can accommodate at its lower tier any amount of rituals and images. As a matter of fact, the orthodox heads of the four *Mathas* established by Shankaracharya spend several hours every day in ritualistic worship.

Moreover, Swami Vivekananda wanted Advaita to be made practical not only at the mountain tops but in all walks of life, not only for the monk and the recluse but also for the fisherman, the lawyer, and the student—for everyone. In fact, making available to the common man the highest truths of Vedanta, which had till then been in the hands of a few privileged people, was one of the major achievements of Swamiji.

The system of Advaita developed by Shankara is based on three quintessential concepts: (1) the ultimate Reality is of the nature of (pure) consciousness, and it is one and infinite; (2) it appears as many owing to Maya, or cosmic ignorance; (3) the individual self is illusory. Of these, the last one is the least emphasised but, from the practical standpoint, is the most important concept. Shankara begins his monumental commentary on the *Brahma-sutra* with an explication of this concept of the illusoriness of the Jiva (individual self). The very first step in the practice of Advaita is to stop identifying oneself with one's body and mind and discover

one's true nature. For both these processes, it is necessary to encounter one's self in the depths of one's consciousness. This is difficult to do in the rush and hurry, din and bustle, of everyday life. It is in silence and solitude that man can encounter his self and discover the true springs of his existence. An advanced spiritual aspirant can create the interior silence and solitude wherever she or he is, but for most other aspirants, external solitude and silence are of great help. Here comes the importance of solitary places like Mayavati.

In the path of devotion, known as Bhakti Marga, God is regarded as the *object* of one's love and adoration, and hence attention is focussed on the *objective pole of experience*. Rituals and worship of images help in this process of objective concentration, and hence they are freely used in Bhakti Marga. But in Jnana Marga, one starts directly with the inner Self, and the emphasis is on the *subjective pole of experience*. In this path, rituals and images can divert one's attention from the Self to the non-Self, from interior encounter with the self to objective experiences which are not of much help in the realisation of the true nature of the Self. This is the rationale behind the prohibition of rituals and worship of images in Mayavati.

Silence and solitude were the primary consideration in Swami Vivekananda's choice of a place like Mayavati. He wanted to have a centre where spiritual aspirants could practise contemplation free from the distractions of the world. He also wanted that the centre should be in a cool place so that his Western followers could also stay there. This idea finally took a definite shape in 1896 when Swamiji was touring the Swiss Alps. There he told Mr and Mrs Sevier: 'O, I long for such a monastery where I can retire from the labours of my life. ... It will be a centre of work and meditation, where my Indian and Western disciples can live together.'³ Subsequently, Swamiji



In Front of the Main Building: From left: seated above: Swami Prakashananda, Swami Swarupananda, and Swami Sacchidananda; seated below: Mother Sevier, Swami Nirbhayananda, Swami Virajananda, Swami Vimalananda, and Brahmachari Amritananda.

expressed this idea in several of his letters to Alasinga, Mary Hale, and Lala Badri Sah of Almora.

Silence and solitude are needed not only for the followers of Advaita but also for those who follow the devotional path of contemplation. One of the definitions of religion that Swami Vivekananda has given us is: 'Religion is the eternal relationship between the eternal soul and eternal God.' In order to realise the eternal God, it is necessary first of all to discover the eternal soul, the true inner Self of a human being. Solitude helps us in this task and also in recovering the luminous cord of true Religion that is lost in the midst of the hundreds of sensual cords that bind us to the world. *Silence* and *solitude* have therefore been emphasised by spiritual masters in all religions, especially for monks.

Christian monasticism itself began in the

desert wilderness of Egypt. *Fuge, tace, et quiesce* ('solitude, silence, and quietude') was the watchword of the Desert Fathers. The Eastern Churches, which continued the original tradition, have a whole peninsula, with more than a dozen huge monasteries, entirely devoted to the contemplative life. The Catholic Church has several monastic Orders—Carthusian, Camaldoli, Trappist, and the like—which are exclusively devoted to the contemplative life. Even Ignatius Loyola, who founded one of the most active orders, the Jesuits, made it compulsory for his followers to withdraw periodically into 'Retreats' for meditation. In India, contemplation has always been the core, the very heart, of all Indian religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. And from time immemorial the Himalayas have given shelter to thousands of contemplatives and

seekers of Truth. By starting an Ashrama in the Kumaon area, Swamiji has only renewed the contemplative tradition in a modern setting.

Solitude is necessary not only for monks but also for lay spiritual seekers. Sri Ramakrishna used to advise his householder disciples to spend some days, at least three days or even a single day, in solitude now and then. According to him, this kind of occasional detachment from worldly cares and entanglements is necessary to foster discrimination and knowledge. And Swami Vivekananda says in his *Inspired Talks*:

Go into your own room and get the Upanishads out of your own Self. You are the greatest book that ever was or ever will be, the infinite depository of all that is. Until the inner teacher opens, all outside teaching is in vain. ... Books are useless to us until our own book opens; then all other books are good so far as they confirm our book.⁴

Meditation in solitude unlocks the hidden doors of the unconscious and revives the repressed memories of the past. It also enables you to encounter the ego and understand the masks it puts on, the houses of cards it builds and the innumerable other forms of self-deception. A man who has not confronted himself alone in solitude, who has not grappled with the demons of passions lying in hiding within him, cannot be trusted. Such a person cannot even trust himself. Exhortations such as 'Be fearless!', 'Have trust in yourself' will not work unless the root-causes of fear and insecurity are removed from one's mind.

And yet, there is nothing that many people dread more than confronting themselves. In fact, the vast majority of people are unconscious escapist: they are constantly trying to run away from their own true selves. They want to forget themselves by goofing around, watching TV, reading worthless novels, filling one's time with innumerable activities and so on. All these are signs of what Eric Fromm calls 'inner passivity'. In his

book, *The Revolution of Hope*, Fromm states: "The trouble is that most people who think that they are very active are not aware of the fact that they are intensely passive in spite of their "busyness".⁵ Without some stimuli from outside to trigger activity they are lost. If nothing is done, it is time to confront oneself which is to be avoided.

Another problem facing the modern man is the loss of identity and significance. In modern times a man's worth is judged by what he has—by the number of houses, cars, objects of enjoyments, security guards, and so on that he has—not by what he *is*. He himself is nothing. Or else he becomes a marketable commodity. A scientist, a writer, a musician, a football player, an actor, a handsome person—everyone sells himself or herself for money. As W H Auden has put it,

Well, you will soon
Not bother but acknowledge yourself
As market-made, a commodity
Whose value varies, a vendor who has
To obey his buyer.⁶

Unfortunately, in spite of all the money they earn, people feel themselves to be worthless and their lives meaningless. A third problem that modern man faces is loneliness. Of course, this problem has been with mankind from the beginning of creation. And he has been trying to solve this problem through marriage, through family life, through clubs, through social service organisations, and so on. But loneliness always persists. The husband and wife *stay* together but each *lives* in his own or her own world. As the title of David Riesman's well-known book, *The Lonely Crowd*, suggests, even when you are in a crowd, you feel lonely.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the cure of loneliness lies in solitude. The real cause of loneliness is one's alienation from one's own true Self, the Atman. The more one identifies oneself—with one's body, other people, and things, the greater becomes one's loneliness.

Loneliness disappears only when a person dives deep into her or his inner being and discovers one's true Self. This idea is expounded in a dramatic way in the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* (1.4.1–8). The Creator Himself, says the Upanishad, once felt lonely and created man and woman, and all male and female animals down to ants. But did He get happiness out of all this? No, He didn't. At last, He realised two things: (a) duality is the cause of all fear (*dvitīyād vai bhayam bhavati*); (b) the Atman, the true Self, is dearer than the son, dearer than wealth, dearer than all other objects.

The other problems of inner passivity and loss of identity and meaning mentioned above can also find their lasting solution only in the realisation of one's true Self, which is the source of all power, all bliss, all glory. It is in the depths of contemplation that man recovers his lost self-identity, dignity, and power. When the true Self, the Atman, is awakened in us, says Swami Vivekananda, 'power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come and everything that is excellent will come.'⁷

Self-knowledge through contemplation in solitude is the first blessing that Mayavati confers on those who are devoted to her. Another blessing that she confers is the opportunity to come into close contact with nature in all its virgin purity and unspoiled splendour. For a person with an awakened mind or at least the fresh, uncluttered receptive mind of a child, Nature can communicate many a lesson.

One of the important things we may learn from Nature is the *impersonal attitude*. For those who want to follow the path of Advaita, the cultivation of the impersonal attitude is an unavoidable necessity. Even for others, the impersonal attitude helps to keep one's cool in difficult situations. **And the impersonal attitude can be cultivated only by identifying oneself with Universal Life.** *Advaita is the identification of one's self with*

Universal Consciousness. But unless this is preceded by **experience** in identification of oneself with **Universal Life**, the Advaitic outlook would be nothing more than glorified solipsism. In the Vedas we can find this double identification. The Upanishadic sages first discovered **Universal Life** before they discovered **Universal Consciousness**.

Most of us get so wrapped up in ourselves, or get so emotionally involved in the lives of men and women, that we tend to **forget** that Life is much vaster than our petty selves. It may not be possible for us to talk to a tree as we talk to our friends, or smile at a rose as we smile at a child, but it is good to remember that there are other forms of life which have their own **ways** of expression. There is such a thing called **Universal Life** and we can feel it throbbing through all living forms. The well-known nature mystic Guy Murchie writes in his book *Song of the Sky*:

Put your ear close to the whispering branch, and you can catch what it is saying: the brittle twitter of dry oak leaves in winter, the faint breathing of junipers, the whirring of hickory twigs, the thrumming of slender birch clumps, the mild murmuring of the sugar maple.⁸

A person who identifies oneself with the Universal Life never feels lonely even when alone.

Sri Ramakrishna worshipped God as the Mother of the Universe. It may not be possible for us to have a direct vision of the transcendental form of the Divine Mother as Sri Ramakrishna had, but it is not difficult for us to see the working of a trans-human Mother Power everywhere in the world. For this, we have only to watch birds, cats, and other animals bring up their young ones at great self-sacrifice. The truth of the trans-human Mother Power was, however, brought home to me in an unforgettable way at Mayavati through the following incident.

At the ceiling above the verandah near my office a pair of swallows used to build their nest and

bring up their young ones. Swallows (*Ababil*, in Bengali and Hindi) spend most of their time on the wing, even feeding the young ones in mid-air. One fine morning I saw through the partly dosed door the two parent birds flying excitedly in long circles in front of their nest and chirping loudly. Over the years I had learnt what the chirp meant: it meant the parents' call to the young ones to jump out of the nest for their maiden flight. Soon, one by one, three chicks jumped out and started flying with their parents. There was still one more chick left deep in the flask-shaped nest; it was responding with a chirp but was not coming out. Nor would the parents leave that place. Finally, after nearly ten minutes, unable to resist the parents' call, the fourth chick also jumped out. But it could not fly. It spun like a top and parachuted to the floor of the verandah. I then saw why it had hesitated to come out: one of its wings was defective. It was a handicapped chick!

But the parents did not abandon the helpless chick. The mother bird would come down and feed it. After some time, frightened by some noise, the chick glided down into a deep gorge in front of the building. From there it went on sending out its chirping note. To my surprise, I saw the mother bird never forgot her young one. Every ten minutes or so she would sweep down into the gorge and feed the handicapped chick. This went on all through the day till dusk. That night there was a big hailstorm which must have killed the poor chick in the gorge. **Next morning**, I saw hailstones piled up everywhere, and all was quiet in the gorge.

The most spectacular sight in Mayavati is undoubtedly the view of the mighty snowpeaks of the Himalayas, which are some of the highest mountain peaks in the world, forming nearly four hundred miles of the horizon in a semi-circle. **On the Indian side of the Himalayas, the view extends from Chowkhamba (Badrinarayan) in the west to Pancha Chuli in the east, with**

Nanda Devi and Trishul in the middle. At dawn, as the first crimson rays of the sun fall on the peaks, **they become** ensheathed in an auburn veil; this soon turns into a purple glow, and within a short time all the peaks begin to shimmer in a cascade of golden rays. The scene is repeated in the reverse order at dusk.

For most Indians another unusual and unforgettable experience in Mayavati is snowfall. Unlike rainfall, which is so noisy and disturbing, snowfall is an incredibly silent affair. But for the gentle rustle of leaves caused by falling snowflakes, there is a hushed silence, and the sun or moon glimmering gently through the gauze of falling snow adds to the eeriness of the spectacle. After the snowfall the sight of houses, hills, valleys, and miles of forest covered by an endless sheet of snow, with the golden rays of the sun filtering in through the misty air, unrolling a million-spangled mantle under the sky, conjures up an altogether different world.

Spring creeps in reluctantly in April. The swallows with their joyful twittering are the first to herald the spring. Very soon rhododendrons begin to bloom everywhere, and the whole forest is ablaze with red flowers. The summer is usually brief and is soon overtaken by the rainy season. With the onset of the monsoon, the hills and valleys reverberate with the deafening roar of hundreds of waterfalls to which thousands of cicadas add their crazy din. Through all these changes we come face to face with the mystery of creation and the astounding fecundity, diversity, resilience, and dynamism of life. Every living being displays strength, the quality which Swamiji stressed most. You can't but admire the courage of the pear tree bearing silently the merciless onslaught of the hailstorm in spring which destroys almost all its newly opened delicate flowers.

One is reminded of the truth of the Japanese prayer: 'Give us the unchanging bravery of the

pine, that we too may face the storms of life unconquered and unafraid. Give us the courage of the plum to flower gloriously in the midst of bleak adversity. And give to us throughout the years the straight, tough fibre and resilience of the green bamboo.' A prayer of this kind is likely to well up spontaneously in our hearts in a place like Mayavati where, as Swami Vivekananda has stated, one can see *Virāt pūjā*, cosmic worship, going on with the varying rhythms of nature.

For nature-mystics Mayavati is a paradise on earth. Nature mysticism is not the artist's appreciation of the beauty of nature or the naturalist's love for nature. It is rather an intense form of communion with nature, in which you feel you are possessed by a mysterious Presence which blots out the past and the future and fixes your awareness to the living present; you directly perceive that you are a part of Cosmic Life throbbing through all beings all around.


The supreme mystic Sri Ramakrishna had this experience, perhaps of a higher order, in his childhood when he once saw a line of white cranes winging past a vast dark cloud. The intensity of feeling that this sight produced in him was so great that the child Gadadhar lost all consciousness of the outer world. In a far less intense way, many children and some adolescents may experience this form of communion occasionally. William Wordsworth has described it in his famous 'Ode' as follows:

There was a time when meadow,
grove and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and freshness of a dream.⁹

Most adults, for some reason or other, lose the faculty for this sublime experience. There are, however, a few adults who retain it, and they are the nature-mystics. The most well-known among them are Wordsworth, John Muir, and Richard

Jefferies. The great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore also undoubtedly belonged to this group. About his experience Tagore wrote:

One day, while I stood watching at early dawn the sun sending out its rays from behind the trees, I suddenly felt as if some ancient mist in a moment lifted from my sight, and the morning light on the face of the world revealed an inner radiance of joy. The invisible screen of the commonplace was removed from all things and all men, and their ultimate significance was intensified in my mind, and this is the definition of beauty.¹⁰

Mayavati stands as the living manifestation of this definition of beauty. In a shrinking world characterised by the dehumanisation of man, mechanisation of life, and depletion of the environment, Mayavati stands as a symbol of the Vedantic vision of non-dual Reality, spiritual fulfilment through contemplation, harmony with nature, and peace. 

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Lighter Times and Deeper Moments at the Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Atmarupananda

I HAD THE BLESSING of working on the *Prabuddha Bharata* from early 1977 to the end of 1981. Not as an Editor or a Joint Editor, but as an Assistant Editor, meaning really assistant to the editor. The local Kumaoni people had it right; in those days they called the person in my position Secretary Maharaj—which they pronounced ‘Sek-kuh-try Maharaj’—because the work was largely secretarial. I was a brahma-charin when I joined the staff, only twenty-six years old, and it was a dream come true. Looking back now, so many decades later and after so many life experiences, I can say that those five years were among my most memorable and most valuable. I am eternally grateful that they came during a formative period of my life.

A utopia? No. Life is difficult, wherever and in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. That is no different in an ashrama: people join an ashrama because they are imperfect. Practical difficulties, ordinary frustrations and irritations, interpersonal conflicts, individual weaknesses—all exist wherever there are people, including in ashramas. Luckily I understood during those years that there was something far more important, far greater to be experienced at Mayavati than whatever difficulties might have arisen. This was a unique opportunity, and I knew it. Indulge me as I remember those days and share a little of the life experienced there.

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Silence and Solitude

My first sight of the ashrama was dramatic. We came around one more of many curves on the winding road to Mayavati from Lohaghat, and there sat ‘*tiffin top*’, the gazebo by the side of the road from where one first sees the ashrama. I still remember the sight. It was cloudy and drizzling that day, the low clouds typical of the mountains together with the dense forest in all directions creating a beautiful but very isolated and lonely scene. On a distant promontory was the white-washed ashrama building, looking over the hospital building below, all surrounded by dense stands of live oak, Himalayan long-needle pine, deodar, and various other trees, no villages or human habitation for several miles.

Several years before, when I was a probationer (postulant) in Ganges Town, Michigan, the then General Secretary of the Order, Swami Gambhirananda, had visited us. Knowing that he had lived at Mayavati, I asked him about it: from my first days in the Order, I had been curious to learn all that I could about this unique ashrama. He told us about its solitude and the difficulty many monks had in adjusting, and added: ‘As for me, I can go happily for months without seeing another human face.’ And I thought, I believe I could, too. In fact, I had longed for a solitary life, and had even thought of joining the Carthusians or Camaldolese before finding the Vedanta Societies of the Ramakrishna Order.

But now as I finally saw my dream coming true—the Advaita Ashtama, Mayavati, sitting

there in the midst of the dark forest, completely isolated—I had a feeling of foreboding. Various people had told me how difficult the solitude could be. Swami Bhashyananda, head of the Chicago centre when I joined the Order there, had told me about his own visit to Mayavati as a young sannyasin, how after just three days there he became so unsettled by the solitude that he left prematurely. Could I adjust? I experienced a moment of terror. But there was now no turning back.

On reaching the campus, we were greeted by the Ashrama manager, Swami Satprabhananda, and I was given the room where Swami Vivekananda had spent his first few nights in January 1901¹ (which was to be mine for the next five years). I began to feel that, yes, I could do this. Indeed, I had wanted this type of experience since I was in the eighth standard, when I had read Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and decided that I would be a hermit philosopher when I grew up. Now it had come to me; a romantic dream had become a reality.

For those who visit Mayavati now, the scene is not as intense. In those days the 9-kilometre road leading from Lohaghat to the ashrama was dirt, a road which had been built just for the ashrama; it didn't go anywhere else. Mayavati is no longer as remote. The road is now paved, and tour buses bring tourists to the ashrama. At that time, the road stopped below the ashrama, out of sight; now it comes right up to the campus.

In those days, guests were rare. If we had five guests at a time, that was a big crowd. Usually, there was no one. There are now two large guest houses at the ashrama, accommodating as many as fifty people at once, plus hotels in Lohaghat for overflow. Back then, Sadhu (monk) guests were also rare. No wonder: it was difficult to get to Lohaghat, and then one had to walk the 9 kilometres from Lohaghat² at an altitude of 5,500 feet to the ashrama at 6,400 feet, causing one to

tire and get winded quickly. Commodious and comfortable monks' quarters have been built in recent years, allowing a regular stream of sadhus and brahmacharins to come on pilgrimage, even outside of the guest season.

Though a big truck could be hired in those days to take goods to the ashrama, the ashrama itself had no vehicle, and there was no such thing as a taxi in the whole area. A local devotee in Lohaghat, Dhan Singh, owned three heavy-duty trucks, and one of those could be used for carrying goods to Mayavati. Now taxis in Lohaghat and other towns and villages are plentiful, all vying for customers. Therefore, in the guest season, many people can hire a taxi and come to enjoy the ashrama's beauty and serenity.

In those days, *solitude* was the first thing one noticed about Mayavati. Second was the *majestic beauty*. Third was the *silence*. But the silence wasn't felt till evening when everyone would go to their rooms for meditation before supper, a silence I have rarely experienced anywhere else. Even nature would be silent. No sound, human or natural. One could hear one's own heartbeat until one became inwardly quiet, when even the heartbeat would be subdued. As one became accustomed to the silence, thoughts would stand out more clearly—there was nothing to distract from them—and that made them easier to observe and eventually to control. In time, a meditation on the silence itself became a wonderful practice.

It was there, in that silence, that I first understood that silence is the basic state. Sound arises out of silence, as a vibration set up in the ocean of silence; and thus sound is made of silence, a *ripple of silence*. Silence is then experienced, not as absence, but as infinitely rich, the source and foundation of all. This understanding was, and is, a wonderful way to convert one's experience of sound. Some years later, back in the US, when I would visit the Hollywood centre, I would walk

to a nearby highway interchange where there was a constant and heavy stream of traffic moving at high speeds. Listening to the loud whoosh of heavy traffic zooming past, I would try to enter an inner silence, which Mayavati had taught me. Paradoxically, the noise made it easy, and I could feel an inner silence in the midst of the noise outside, without contradiction, as if the two were intimately connected.

During certain seasons at Mayavati, the bell bird would migrate in, and would sing during the evening hours of meditation. 'Sing' isn't the correct word. It had a two-tone call—the higher first, followed immediately by the lower, 'ding dong'—that was as pure as the sound of a bell; 'ga sa' in Indian notation, or a major scale 'mi do' in Western notation. The two tones would be followed by a period of silence before it would sing again. Far from disturbing the silence, it emphasised the silence because of the purity of the bell-like tones, melting immediately into silence. I came to delight in the bellbird, as if it had come to help me in my meditation.

The Work

About a month before finishing the Probationers' Training Centre at Belur Math in March 1977, word came that I was being considered for the position at Mayavati. The requirement? Typing. Not two-finger pecking, but actual typing, which I had never learned. So I got an instruction manual and began to learn, spending all of my free time practising. When Swami Vandanananda, the then president of the Advaita Ashrama, came to talk to me two weeks before Training Centre course ended, I was able to say that I knew typing, by which I meant—but didn't say explicitly—that I knew which finger went on which key. Beyond that, it was just a matter of practising to improve speed and accuracy.

Once the Training Centre course was over, I travelled with the new editor—Swami Balaramananda—to Mayavati to begin work as his assistant. Before coming to the Training Centre, the work I had done as a probationer in America was physical work—constructing buildings, gardening, and farming. I felt starved for mental stimulation, for ideas, for spiritual inspiration. Training Centre fed those needs, and now the work at Mayavati continued to give what I craved. And it gave me for the first time a work into which I could immerse not just my physical energy, but primarily my intellectual energy. It was a Godsend.

It was the first time in my life that I had an office. Primitive by Western standards, it was utterly beautiful to me in its austere simplicity. Small—more like a walk-in closet—it felt not small but intimate to me, like my little working hermitage. Along one wall was a window—or windows, since it was made of many small panes—that stretched almost the length of the office. It overlooked the flank of the mountain and, in the distance, Dharamgarh—a mountain-top point from which we could get one of the most magnificent views of the snow-peaks anywhere in that part of Kumaon. There was no human habitation or human activity visible from the window.

I was still young enough that everything came as a new, fresh experience. Getting acquainted with all the little cabinets and drawers and boxes and folders, and the collection of tools that I would be using, I was once again the little kid that could get lost in wonder playing endlessly with his toys among the exposed roots of a big tree in the yard.

The editor was a perfectionist. Working with him, therefore, wasn't easy, but I learned much from him: care and accuracy in work, punctuality, putting work first when necessary. Of necessity, I also learned patience and how to keep



An Old Panoramic View of the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama Complex

quiet. He was a great researcher, having played a central role in the revision of the two-volume *Life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western Disciples. Indeed, one of my first assignments at Mayavati was to type the last pages for the final draft of the *Life*. From him, I learned a love for research, and methods of research. Though in school I had excelled at English grammar, I had never done editing. Being a perfectionist, Swami Balaramananda took great pains to teach me proper editing, which would serve me well for the rest of my monastic career.

The Beauty of Mayavati

The Advaita Ashrama sits on the side of a mountain at 6,400 feet elevation. Because of the altitude, the air is relatively thin, and in those days there were very few vehicles in the mountains, both factors allowing for crystal clear air, which

in turn brought a crisp clarity to the vistas. The skies in Kumaon are very dramatic, with changing cloud patterns and changing light. The forest is dense, with live oaks, rhododendron trees, deodars, and Himalayan long-needle pines being the dominant species. A delicious syrup and also jam could be made from the rhododendron flowers, with a taste like Hawaiian Punch.

Trees have personality, creating their own micro ambience. Groves of deodars—tall and stately Himalayan cedars—cast a dense, cool shade and carpet the forest floor with their fine needles. Considered sacred—‘deodar’ or ‘*devadāru*’ means ‘tree of the Gods’—they are the trees which local people hesitate to cut down. The Himalayan pines would also carpet the ground with their much longer needles, light brown in colour unlike the dark brown deodar needles; and the wind blowing through the pines would

make that wonderfully soft, soothing sound that quietens even agitated nerves. The shade in the pine groves would be light, unlike the dark shade cast by deodars; and the needles on the pines were a light green, compared to the dark green, almost black, of the deodars. The one created a stately, dignified, formal space—church-like; the other a nurturing, relaxing, motherly space.

The wildlife included the diminutive barking deer, *jerai* (a very large deer, also known as sambar deer), the small but very aggressive and territorial Himalayan black bear which could remove a person's face with one swipe of its claws, huge porcupines, feral swine, wildcats, langur and Hanuman monkeys, a wonderful variety of birds including the Himalayan magpie, wild chickens (the original undomesticated ancestors of domestic chickens), snakes, and leopards. There had once been Royal Bengal tigers, but they were hunted to extinction in this area by the time the British left India.

Speaking of snakes, from childhood I had been fond of them, and caught them as a child. Here at Mayavati, I would occasionally pick up a snake and show it to the local people to demonstrate that most of the local snakes were not poisonous. Like villagers around the world, however, they thought that *any* snake could be poisonous if it wanted to, so there were no *good* snakes to them. To prove their point, they would tell me about someone in the village who had been bitten by a snake: 'The man's brother immediately cut off the man's bitten finger, and that's what saved him'—proof enough for them that snakes are treacherous. 'But,' I asked, 'did the man show any signs of the poison?' 'No,' they would answer, 'because they cut off his finger immediately'. I tried to educate them so that they wouldn't kill every snake they encountered on sight. But my efforts came to nought. 'Nah nah, Maharaj, you know mantras and therefore they don't bite you,

but they will kill us!' I couldn't convince them otherwise. Even Hiyat Singh, a trusted worker who was fearless of bears, leopards, and men, would run when he saw me coming with an eight-inch long ring-neck snake in hand.

It was with Hiyat Singh one night that I saw two leopards in the woods between Lake Garden and Swarupananda Point, eating one of our dogs.

During the monsoons, which were very heavy in *Kumaon* from late June through early September, land leeches would come out from hibernation looking for blood. Though difficult to see amidst the dirt and leaves, a sharp eye could sometimes spot them on the pathways waiting for prey: shaped roughly like a worm, they would stand up on one end and gyrate like an unholy dervish, hoping to attach to an animal-human or other—passing by. They would then work their way up to flesh where they would attach and begin to suck blood until filled to satiety, like brown little balloons, when they would fall off and crawl to safety where they could digest their meal.

After falling off, the place where they had attached would continue to ooze blood because of the anticoagulant that they had injected, along with an anaesthetising agent that would prevent any sensation. Often during the rainy season, one or another of us would get up from evening meditation and find a small puddle of blood on the floor and blood on our cloth from a detached leech. Newcomers wouldn't feel anything when a leech would attach to their flesh. But after a few experiences with them, we would become so sensitive that we would feel for a split second a sensation of cold on one tiny point of skin, the size of a pin's head, where a leech had attached. It would only be momentary because the leech would immediately absorb warmth from the skin. Such was the mess they created, however, that we 'grew eyes' on our skin, watching for that split-second touch of cold.



Swarupananda Point at Mayavati

In those days, mosquitoes were rare, and even if a rare one landed on one's arm, they were so slow that they could just be brushed away before they could bite. Nowadays, due to global warming, mosquitoes have moved in.

The editor kept very strict office hours, but when my work was done at 5:00, there was still time to take long walks through the mountain forests before meditation. In those days, there were footpaths through the forest in all directions; nowadays several of them are overgrown and therefore inaccessible. There was the lower walk, known as Mother Sevier's walk, as she used it both for strolls and, when needed, as her path to the village of Lohaghat. There was the upper path that went past Ozone Point and high along the side of the mountain to Shetty Field, paths to Lohaghat Point and Dharamgarh, a path from Lake Garden to Swarupananda Point and on to Shetty Field, a path from the hospital down to the bottom of the mountain where Captain Sevier had been cremated in 1900, and many more.

I never tired of staring at the snow-peaks in the distance. When looking for land in Kumaon in the late 1890s for the proposed Advaita Ashrama, Captain Sevier had several criteria

that had to be met. One was a view of the snow-peaks. And indeed, from the Mayavati ashrama one can see a 200-mile stretch of snow-peaks from Panchachuli to Chaukhamba. From the top of the mountain, one can see the same plus another 200 miles of snow-peaks in Nepal, including the Annapurna range and Dhaulagiri.

A peculiar anecdote: back in the early twentieth century the famous artist Nandalal Basu went to Mayavati. There he told the monks that the best way to see the Himalayas was to stand facing away from them with legs spread apart, then to bend over at the waist and look at them through one's legs. That sounds absurd, but it works: one sees them more clearly. I think there are two reasons: 1. The legs frame the mountains, which does what a picture frame does and what a properly composed camera shot does—it focuses the eye and, more importantly, the mind on the essential, bringing it into prominence. 2. By looking upside down, the mind is shaken out of its habitual way of looking and sees freshly. Perhaps increased blood flow to the eyes and brain also helps. Whatever, it works.

Living in the Midst of History

The main ashrama building, the Prabuddha Bharata building where the editor and I had our offices, the paths and places in the forest—everything spoke of the history of the ashrama, the priceless heritage coming from the great souls who had lived there before my time including Swami Vivekananda himself and other direct disciples, Captain and Mother Sevier, Sister Nivedita, Sister Christine, Swami Atulananda, and a host of Swamis who had been editors and presidents and members of the ashrama, starting with Swamis Swarupananda and Virajananda. Working on the *Prabuddha Bharata*, we were conscious of the great heritage we had become privileged to join.

And the *Prabuddha Bharata* is not just one of many journals of the Ramakrishna Order. It is the pre-eminent organ of the Ramakrishna Order, the voice of the Movement established under the direction of Swami Vivekananda himself. That is a burden that every editor has to carry: every editor knows that the authorities pay attention to everything that is done in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, more than any other journal. Anything that is deemed in any way improper or even not quite proper is quickly addressed by the authorities. Other editors can relax a bit; not the editor of the *PB*, as it is affectionately known. That is the burden of history, the burden of heritage.

I was fortunate to live at Mayavati when I did. There were then still monks alive who had lived at Mayavati in the 1920s and 30s, monks who had known those who had lived there from the beginning. The oral tradition was still rich, stories were known and passed down. As time passes, more and more of that heritage is lost. What happened where and when, who did what where, even practical jokes that early Swamis had played on other Swamis at Mayavati—hearing such stories was so much a part of living at Mayavati that we never thought that this oral heritage could be lost. Surely stories are still passed down, but as generations pass, the stories lose detail, and many stories themselves are lost. Places like Ozone Point and Mother Sevier's walk are forgotten, no longer identified. But new generations will continue to come, and a new history will be made. Hopefully, the essentials of many old tales will survive.

I was also fortunate to begin my life at Mayavati working with Swami Balaramananda. He gave me a love for research, for history, also for getting the details right. After two years, his term was over, and he left Mayavati and was later made head of the Mauritius centre. There

he did wonderful work, inspiring many people—people I have met many years after he died, who still look to him as the one who set them on the straight and narrow path of spirituality.

A New Chapter

The new editor, Swami Bhajananda, came as Swami Balaramananda's successor in December 1978. His personality, manner of working, and way of life couldn't have been more distinct from Swami Balaramananda's. I was scheduled to take sannyasa in February 1979 and then to return to the USA, but the day the new editor arrived, I knew that I wanted to stay on at Mayavati. That very evening I went down to Lucknow, first by bus to Pilibhit and then by overnight train to Lucknow, where the General Secretary of the Order was visiting. He granted me permission to stay on at Mayavati, and thus began the next three years of my five years on the *Prabuddha Bharata* staff.

I was young and immature, still in my twenties, and hence unable to benefit from Swami Bhajananda's company as I would have liked. Yet he had a profound influence on my life. Deeply spiritual, meditative, and intellectual, he gave me the faith which has lasted over 40 years.

Some weeks after he arrived, he told me that he needed new shirts. I said that I would arrange for the tailor to come from Lohaghat for taking measurements. By this time, after two years at Mayavati, I had learned elementary Hindi, though in the ashrama we all spoke in Bengali. My Hindi 'teachers', however, were the local Pahari workers, most of whom were uneducated and for whom Hindi was a second language. So I had learned their poor Hindi in a still poorer way. But I was proud of the accomplishment nonetheless. Therefore, when the tailor came, I told Swami Bhajananda, who knew very little Hindi, that I would help him to communicate.

I told the tailor that the Swami needed two shirts, one short-sleeved and one long-sleeved. For some reason I couldn't understand, the tailor looked a little confused, and so I said twice more in Hindi: 'He wants two shirts, one short-sleeved and one long-sleeved.' The tailor repeated what I said, and departed. A week later the shirts were delivered. I took them to the editor, who opened the packet, and we both gasped when we saw that each shirt had one long sleeve and one short sleeve! What I had said, or what the tailor thought I said, or where the miscommunication lay, God only knows, but that was the last time I bragged about my language skills.


An interesting follow-up: seven years ago on a visit to Mayavati, I asked the hired workers about that tailor. It turned out that he afterwards renounced the world, became a traditional sannyasin, and became highly respected in those parts. He had died by the time I asked about him.

There were so many humorous incidents that happened during my time at Mayavati, but let me tell one more before concluding. One of the brahmacharins at that time became a dear and lifelong friend of mine—the late Swami Sadatmananda. Very intelligent and funny, he was a great mimic who could do routines from Charlie Chaplin films as well as Laurel and Hardy, routines he had memorised as a boy. One day after lunch, he, another brahmacharin, and I were standing in the portico just outside the main entrance to the ashrama building. Our talk turned to joking around, and that led to him imitating different members of the ashrama. 'This is Manager Maharaj', he would say, and then mimic the idiosyncrasies of the then manager Swami's speech and movements, while we two laughed and laughed. 'And this is President Maharaj', as he imitated the then ashrama president, Swami Ananyananda, a senior Swami. That too had us rolling in laughter. None of it was mean, but it

was making fun of senior Swamis, and we were young brahmacharins.

After we had laughed at his antics, the three of us decided to go to our rooms to rest. We stepped into the open door, and there was the President Swami standing just inside the door, pretending to be absorbed in a book. We walked as quickly as we could to the staircase and then ran upstairs, thankful that he said nothing. Once we were upstairs, of course, we laughed our hearts out again, but in truth, we were scared to death. To our relief, the good Swami never said a word about it.

Conclusion

To live at the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, and to work on the *Prabuddha Bharata* were among the greatest blessings of my life, together with initiation and sannyasa—yes, that great. Both the Advaita Ashrama and the *Prabuddha Bharata* had a special place in the heart of Swami Vivekananda, and to live at Mayavati and work on the *PB* was to live and work in the heart of Swamiji. What greater blessing, short of direct spiritual experience, could be asked for? My eternal gratitude goes to those who helped me get to Mayavati, to those from whom I learned at Mayavati, and to those who had patience with my shortcomings. And my eternal love to that blessed spot in the midst of the beautiful Kumaon Hills, and to the Kumaoni villagers who were such a delight, and whom I remember practically every day. And thank you, dear readers, for letting me share these sacred memories. 

Notes

1. Because of the cold, the Swami was moved downstairs to sleep near the fireplace after his first few nights there.
2. There was a shortcut at the beginning of the path, taking one directly from the bus stand uphill through the village of Phurti to meet the ashrama road about 5 km from the ashrama.



The Future of the Print Media

Swami Sunirmalananda

WE ARE NOBODIES to predict the future of anything, let alone of *Prabuddha Bharata*. We are no sooth-sayers. Yet there are certain developments in the world, which are leading to strange consequences and have been affecting millions already. All magazines and print media are included in this. It is about these developments that we shall speak here.

Digital or Print?

Should we print journals and magazines anymore? If yes, for how long? This is the fundamental question. The digital world is here. It is all set to be the future of the world. Paper may disappear

altogether, or so it appears. Already most of us use the pen only to sign. Developments are so rapid that almost all of the print media is suffering. In Europe and the West in general, many dailies and weeklies are given away for free now. In Western countries, it is not an uncommon sight to watch magazines and dailies being thrust on travellers and pushed into mailboxes of houses. Train and metro stations, at least in Holland if not elsewhere, have special places set for newspapers. Pick up a paper, read it, and just throw it away. This is a sort of promotion. Free distributors, canvassing for their dailies, stand in some important public places and try to push their free paper to anyone and everyone. Of the hundred who walk by, maybe one accepts a copy from the distributors; and people just throw these unasked-for magazines. Those days of a cyclist dropping the daily at your doorstep—it is history.

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This is the situation of print media in the West. Let alone print media, books, which are unbelievably costly outside India, are also not so much in demand. In fact, that is one of the reasons why people find it difficult to buy books and read. You may be interested to read a book, but the price will be terrible. Now, printed books suffer further because the digital world is offering a better environment for those few readers who are keen to read. One great development is, as we all know, all the books of the world, from the beginning till now, are being digitalised somewhere or other.

When it comes to India, books are still sold, and magazines and papers are still in great demand. The heated discussions about what this minister did or that party did has to continue. So newspapers are a must. The interest of the masses in politics, movies, and the like makes them keep the print media rich. Yet people devotedly buy and pay. This affects higher studies adversely. Studying higher forms of literature, reading spiritual magazines, and higher thinking—are limited to the minimum. So, book reading, especially religious and spiritual books, are not much popular. If you want to know Ramayana, you will watch Ramayana on TV rather than read the book. This is the idea.

All attention now is on the social media. Sensation from the social media gains the upper hand now. See some news, don't bother to read it if it is long, but share it. Most of the videos and posts on social media have a million clicks, not because people read them or watch videos, but because they share them. Having said that, a revival is definitely there amongst the Hindus, who have endured inhuman suffering in their own land for a millennium. They are becoming more and more devoted and interested in *Ramcharit Manas*, *Bhagavadgita*, and other sacred texts.

Yet the desire to know, the will to study

spiritual articles, books and scriptures, and to discuss spiritual matters and so on are not yet so strong—'lack of time'. Whatever knowledge comes now, has to come from the mobile phone. This is the situation. While outside India there is the liberal use of other instruments, bigger in size, easy to read and handle and so on, in India the mobile phone is the principal source of entertainment, business, office work, education, learning, information, contact—everything. It's the mobile world now. Thus printed books, magazines, newspapers, and the like are fast becoming outdated in the entire world.

Why Digital?

Print or digital? When it comes to digital, there are a few plus points. Digital media is less expensive both to the buyer and to the publisher. Firstly, print is expensive, postal charges are high, and the buyer finds it hard to afford. So digital is the easy way. Secondly, print takes a lot of physical space. Once read, a magazine becomes, generally, a clutter. I am not talking about spiritual magazines here. Books are heavy. To keep them means space. On the other hand, you can load a hundred huge books, even volumes of encyclopaedia, in your little apparatus rather than having a huge room filled with shelves and books. Thirdly, searching for information is absolutely the easiest in the digital way of life, whereas, to find out something from a book, it is real, real hard work.

Fourthly, the digital use of colours. Digital publications have tremendous amount of scope with respect to multimedia at no cost. Before the computer came, we did not know there were so many shades of colours at all. We only knew there were some red, blue, green, yellow, and so on. We came to know that there are numerous shades of blue, green, red, and the like, only with photo-shop and other programmes. Using these, digital

publications bring out the '*as it is*' image and video to the reader, supremely attractive, clear and beautiful, while print needs to be CMYK or some such limited thing. If the quality of the paper is not good, however beautiful your artwork may appear on your computer, it will look poor on paper. Colour printing on high quality paper is expensive. To keep your magazine affordable, you will not think of using expensive paper. This is one plus point of digital expression. Fifthly, a digital magazine has ample scope for providing multimedia to readers, whereas print magazine is just two-dimensional work.

What about the plus points of the print media? We must also 'be frank with' the digital universe with the presentation of some facts. We thought a lot of time could be saved by using the digital method, which did not happen. Just the contrary. We humans became busier. Nobody has time anymore. Secondly, physical space saving has been a myth till now. Even if the biggest libraries are shut down, even if you do away with all the books in your house, it doesn't seem to transform the world into a spacious universe. House prices were never scarier. Thirdly, financially the digital world has been no less a burden than the print world. The costs turn out to be almost the same, if not higher. Fourthly, health wise, the digital world has yet to prove itself to be absolutely safe, what with the 5G being questioned in some areas, and maybe we have 6G, 7G, or 8G to come soon. Who knows? When radium was introduced to the world, people thought they could apply radium to their faces to shine. So we don't know the effects of our dear mobile phones fully well still. So this much about the digital and the print worlds.

Has it helped?

We mentioned a few benefits of the digital world. All those benefits are excellent, but are they

permanent, is the point. Money, big house—nothing lasts. What is most important is the lessons we learn here on earth. And our own mental peace and health.

Does all the explosion of information, the tremendous amount of digital knowledge, bring peace to us? Are we peaceful? The digital world has taken away our thinking habit, our maturity, as it were. Instruments are instruments. Whether it is a book or a tablet, they are virtually inert. They become alive, so to say, in us, when we consume what they offer us, and digest the knowledge properly. Further, the knowledge-energy thus acquired must come out in the form of accomplishment or work on the positive side. It is then that books or digital instruments become truly useful.

Space saving, money saving, instantaneity, perfection in presentation, and such other secondary benefits apart, the digital world has not been a great promoter of studies. Whether it is a printed book or digital book, you must read. And more importantly, you must think. Otherwise, it is of little use. Reading is necessary. The habit of reading has slowly taken a backseat because of the scintillating and sensational social media. The reading habit woke up all on a sudden a decade or so ago, when Harry Potter books became extremely popular. Some thought that we are back to the study-habit days with this development. However, that wave came and went and it couldn't be sustained for long.

Now, social media is ruling the world, so to say. Instant information, instant news, instant videos—faster than the lightning flash—this is how things circulate over the Net. The negative point is, these 'shocking and big breaking' news items are soon forgotten because there's a fresh flood of so-called information. For instance, a young man was extremely irritated with some news item. He had commented on the news and

had shared with many. A few days later, someone asked him, 'What about the follow-up action to that news?' He did not remember which incident the questioner was talking about.

The attention of people, especially the younger generation, has become less and less. It has come to such a pass that people don't read even a big paragraph, let alone an article. In social media, they press the 'like button' seeing a photo, say, of a saint rather than read what's written below. And they don't forget to share the photo. Thus, intellectual and higher thinking are becoming affected adversely.

Some older generation may still insist on the print media. But the youth will not. Kindergarten children too are doing their house task or home work on tablets. So it's all leading us towards a digital revolution. In an experiment, children were shown typewriters and other 'ancient' apparatus and told to say something about them. They did not know what to say. That is, though the older generation may still want to hold a book and read, the young will be satisfied with the digital form only.

When you don't think and just react to any situation, information or command, what is that called? *Robotics*. The Digital world is manufacturing robots out of us!

The Tussle

It appears that the tussle between the print and the digital media and literature shall continue for some more days until everyone agrees and settles down to the digital way. At the beginning of the 19th century, scholars tried their utmost to assure everyone that the horse carriages are going to stay, despite the automobile hitting every little corner of the world. This assurance was similar to the one they gave in the beginning of the 21st century about the importance of printed material in a digital world.

But they themselves do not believe that print world will be there for long. Things are moving fast. We must settle down for the digital and accept the fact that there shall be less and less print and paper.

What is to be Done?

What exactly is happening when such earth-shaking changes come? What is changing? Let's see. We used to travel by bullock carts, then on horse-drawn carriages, and now we travel on flights. What has changed? We travel then and now, but the modes of transport have changed, and travel is faster. That is all. We are now able to personally travel and know the globe. So far so good. That experience is not everlasting memory. Our photos and videos may be the records that we had been to some place in the past. Other than that, nothing is of much importance. Spending money, vacationing, seeking 'happiness', saying 'enjoyed our trip' are all temporary. Coming to the older modes of travel, people of the bullock cart age lived happier lives with more rest and peace. No question of hurry to catch trains or flights. Unless and until there were wars, which have become extremely frequent, technical and devastating now, life was smooth-sailing then.

Now, what has changed from the palm-leaf days to the digital era? From just verbal knowledge, through writing, palm leaves, paper, print, and books to the digital, we have come a long way, but the basic thing, *acquiring knowledge*, is what is happening always, and should happen. Modes of transport are for travel; modes of literature are for knowledge. The instruments of communication may be varied—paper or tablet. The basic thing is gaining knowledge. While using the modern means of transport as well as the ancient we do the same thing, that is, travelling, we *don't* do the same thing using the

modern means of publication as we did with the ancient. That is, we read books in the past to gain knowledge, but we use the digital world, as we explained, chiefly concentrating on the social media, for sensationalism and not for gaining knowledge, deep thinking, higher life and so on. That is where the problem lies.

Do You See the Danger?

What is happening is this: with the digital world, we have more information stored outside of us than within us. We have more information than we can handle, organise, and make use of. We are confused. We are turning into robots. If you don't think, and just act as you are programmed, you are a robot. You are a machine. As we said above, social media gives us tremendous information, which is sensational always. That, however, does not lead us to seeking the Truth. We must study.

To study, we need books—either digital or printed or even palm leaf. The means is not important. But the main thing is to cultivate the reading habit.

Spirituality sees even matter (*jada*) as Spirit (*chaitanya*). Science sees even the Spirit (*chaitanya*) as matter (*jada*). The more our involvement in the world of technology and science, the more we tend to become machines instead of being humans or divine. Imagine, divinities becoming humans is itself a curse, and to become machines is hell. Using our brains, mind, and intellect is most important.

In order to remain human and to progress towards our essential spiritual nature, we need learning. We need to study. Knowledge is sacred. Knowledge does not just mean information, but thinking and practice. The thinking habit should be cultivated through study. Our elders taught us to read less and think more.

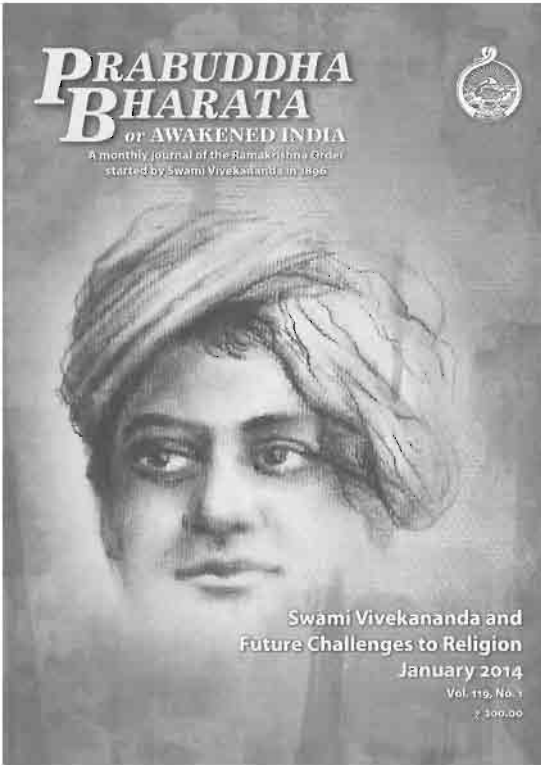
In the ancient times, for thousands of years,

eager students had no access to books or written texts. They heard and memorised what they heard. They transmitted this knowledge. Not a letter would be lost even after thousands of years. They struggled their utmost to gain knowledge, preserve it, and pass it on. Subsequently, there was writing. Further down still, we had the printed books and gaining knowledge became easier. But we thought less than we did in the past. With the digital information now, there is an explosion of knowledge. But we should know what to accept, how to accept, and make the accepted knowledge our own self. That is becoming difficult.

All this has led to agitated minds. We have come far away from those days when we could concentrate. Our lives are no longer simpler and our attention is less. Our concentration, which is the core of mental health, is less. This is a vicious circle. Lack of concentration is the reason why we don't read, don't appreciate books, and so on. Reading is a discipline, like physical exercise. We should read. Reading using a tablet or mobile phone is not bad, but holding a book to read is easier, and we can make notes also. In any case, reading is vital to mental development and concentration. Concentration, as all our spiritual masters unequivocally declare, leads to spiritual development.

The Future is Bright

When we were simple, our lives were simpler and our thoughts were simpler. There were problems, but our minds were in a better state. At least we did not have to rush through things. We did not have to sit in a remote Indian village and worry our heads out over a village murder in a remote country say Kazakhstan. The news did not travel so much. Thus there was a better, healthier mind, leading to a healthier body and society. Now we are running all the time, and our



minds are scattered. We need a healthy mind. What is a healthy mind? A concentrated mind is a healthy mind. The more our attention, the more our power of assimilation. Assimilation or digestion is more important than gathering bits of information. Assimilation also means converting that knowledge into life and character.

We must begin to concentrate. Many people think that they will 'meditate' to avoid stress, lack of concentration and so on. This 'meditation' is generally a disastrous attempt at concentrating the mind called *dhāraṇa* (holding the mind) and not *dhyana*, true meditation. Disastrous because after a few failed attempts, they give up. Therefore, we must begin from the beginning. You don't go to a gym and begin lifting a 100 pound weight. You will become ill. You must start with proper, simpler exercises and build up your muscles. Similar is the case with the development of the muscles of the mind.

Our scriptures tell us that we must begin with *yama* and *niyama*. That means, study, thinking, disciplining our system, and becoming ready with higher concentration. Books or digital, doesn't matter. The study is important.

There is an ocean of material. What to study? That is another question. Lasting spiritual literature is from the *avatars*, incarnations and illumined spiritual masters. They are for our regular, daily study. To keep the lamp of aspiration burning, we need *satsanga* or holy company. The best form of *satsanga* today is the spiritual magazine. *Prabuddha Bharata* is one bright example.

Prabuddha Bharata has a special blessing. It was founded by none other than the *Saptarshi* Himself. Shiva Himself has founded this magazine. It is not so much the letters printed on it as the spirit behind it that affects us positively. It is a dynamo of spirituality. Starting from the Himalayas, it has seen two world wars, Indian independence, cyclones, tsunamis, and so on and yet it is standing firm as a rock. This is the power of the grace of Swamiji. Now it has one more obstacle to cross over: the digitalisation of world knowledge. *Prabuddha Bharata* has already crossed this hurdle. How? It has been online for quite a long time. In the future, if there is any other mode of conveying the spiritual thoughts, that also shall be done. But *Prabuddha Bharata* of Swami Vivekananda must remain and shall remain.

The oldest journal of India today, *Prabuddha Bharata*, will continue and grow stronger by the day. If printing the magazine on paper is not needed, the concerned authorities will immediately think of other alternatives. But whatever the mode of expression, the journal shall enlighten the world for a long time to come. Paper or digital is just a small question for this journal.

Prabuddha Bharata is sure to bless every home it reaches, as it is one of the visible forms of Swami Vivekananda.



Valuing Life

Swami Satyaswarupananda

THE NATIONAL INFORMATICS CENTRE, New Delhi, has this to say about the Champawat District, the home of *Prabuddha Bharata*:

In this district 65 per cent of the area is under forest and net sown area is less than 10 per cent. Only about 9 per cent of the sown area is irrigated and agriculture is mainly rain fed. Consequently, it is at subsistence level and only traditional crops are grown. ... Around 82 per cent of workers are engaged in agriculture and there are negligible workers in household or non-household industry. On a very limited sown area a large number of people are dependent. ... A large number of males are serving in the armed forces of the country. The family economy is more or less dependent on the money order system. The females of the region have to look after their family. ... There are no small or medium scale industries in the region. As a result, majority of population of the youth are unemployed. ... The district is economically and socially backward with acute poverty and society ridden with outmoded traditions and even superstitions. ... The women suffer from all kinds of social disabilities, at the same time handling each and every responsibility of domestic work as well as collection of fuel and fodder and in large cases drinking water from distant places.

Compare this with what the eco-historian Ramachandra Guha has to say:

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The Central Himalayas is composed of two distinct ecological zones: the monsoon-affected areas at middle and low altitudes, and the high valleys of the north. ... Along the river valleys cultivation was carried out, limited only by the steepness of land and more frequently by the difficulty of irrigation. Two and sometimes three harvests were possible throughout the last [nineteenth] century, wheat, rice, and millet being the chief cereals grown. The system of tillage and methods of crop rotation bore the marks of the hillmen's natural environment. With production oriented towards subsistence needs, which were comfortably met, there remained a surplus of grain for export to Tibet and southwards to the plains. ... The absence of sharp inequalities in land ownership among the cultivating proprietors who formed the bulk of the population was the basis of solidarity within the village community. ... Village sites were usually chosen half-way up the spur, below oak forests and the perennial springs associated with them, and above the cultivated fields along the river bed. In such a situation all crops could be 'raised to perfection', a healthy elevated site was available for houses, and herds of cattle could be comfortably maintained. Until 1910 most villages came close to this ideal.

Henry Ramsay, who served as commissioner of Kumaon with distinction from 1856 to 1884, had described the hill cultivators—'having six months stock of grain at hand, and with their diets supplemented by fish, fruit, vegetables, and animal flesh'—as 'probably better off than any peasantry in India'. The Champawat district was, however, recently included in the pilot project of the *Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana*, the 'national equitable development programme', initiated



Sister Nivedita, Mrs Sevier, Abala Bose and Sister Christine at Mayavati



Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose at Mayavati

by the Union Planning Commission. This programme targets ‘pockets of high poverty and low growth’, the result of ‘existing barriers to growth and lack of infrastructure’.

Have the Kumaon hills, of which Champawat is a part, taken a significant downturn over the last hundred years? Or, has this region simply been deprived of the developments that have been taking place in other parts of India? Or, do our opening paragraphs merely reflect differences in the vision of development?

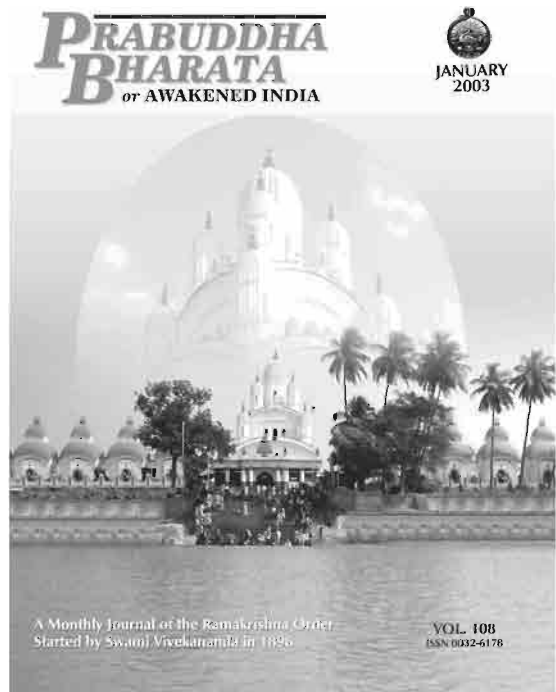
It would be difficult to substantiate the first conjecture. Since its designation as an independent district in 1997—it had earlier been part of Almora and then Pithoragarh district—the Champawat district has seen a marked spurt in urban growth centred around the towns of Champawat and Lohaghat. This growth is reflected in increasing urban construction and business activity. There has also been a significant improvement in rural housing. Despite the health care facilities in the district

being largely skeletal, the district’s crude death rate of 3.8 per thousand and the infant mortality rate of 30 per thousand live births are well below the national average of 9 and 72 respectively. The maternal mortality rate of 3 per thousand live births is also on a par with the national average, even though the district hospital lacks the services of an obstetrician. With an overall literacy rate of 71.6 per cent against the national average of 65.4 and a near-universal primary school enrolment, one would wonder if the district was as underdeveloped as it is made out to be. That things are not as well as the above statistics indicate, is suggested by nearly 40 per cent of the population being listed as subsisting below the poverty line. But economic indicators alone can be very misleading. A less noticed, but nevertheless important, piece of statistics is of the 61 totally uninhabited villages reported in the 2001 census. This is nearly 10 per cent of all villages in the district. And the other villages too have many empty households.


Permanent migration to urban areas or out of the district belies the value of the rich local Eco-diversity for residents of the district. The Kumaon region has been 'the epicentre of the *Chipko Andolan*, possibly the best known contemporary movement against the exploitation of forests by an outside agency'. Chipko, incidentally, is 'only one—though undoubtedly the most organized—in a series of protests against commercial forestry dating from the earliest days of state intervention'. These protests have been as much against exogenous commercial exploitation of the local forests as against the deprivation of the local populace from subsistence rights within the forests. The process started with the state demarcation of forest areas in Almora in 1875, and was accelerated by the declaration of all unmeasured land in the Kumaon district as 'district protected forest' (DPF) in 1893, and culminated in the carving out of extensive reserve forests from the DPFs in 1911. This alienated the hill people from the very forests they considered their own and deprived them of their major source of fuel and fodder as well as the minor forest produce and some of the water sources on which their livelihood was largely dependent. And this happened even as outside agencies exploited the forests for timber, resin, and other products, both legally and otherwise.

Chipko activism has checked the rampant destruction of the Kumaon ecosphere to a great extent. But this has not translated into equivalent socio-economic advancement of the hill people. The populace certainly deserves carbon credits for the forests it holds. But more important is the formulation and implementation of development plans that are sensitive as much to the environment as to human needs and aspirations.

Accessibility may be taken as a case in point. The Tanakpur-Tawaghat road, which is one of the two arterial links connecting Champawat to



the plains, has large stretches in a poor state of development and repair despite being declared a national highway for its strategic importance. Landslides often leave it unmotorable in the rainy season. This is a crucial bottleneck in the provision of basic infrastructure and services facilities, besides discouraging skilled professionals from continuing to reside in this area.

Local activism to get the concerned public works departments to ensure safe all-weather motorable road conditions has had little effect. Even the tragic landslide that crushed to death seventeen occupants of a state transport bus in July 2008 has failed to mend matters. This underscores the tragedy of much of the development effort across the globe: the undervaluation of human life and worth. If only we could learn to value human life a little more, we would inevitably be less dismissive of our ecological needs and more caring towards our flora and fauna. Nature, in turn, would recompense us adequately. 

Vivekananda as the Turning Point

Swami Shuddhidananda

Was Vivekananda's Appearance on the Scene of the World History a Turning Point?

THIRTY YEARS AFTER his birth, in 1893, Vivekananda had stormed the Western world with his groundbreaking ideas on religion and philosophy. With this had begun his epochal mission. He remarked in 1896 when he was in England: 'I will have a lot of difficult work to do in this life. Compared with the last time, there is much more to be done. ... This time I will work up to the very last moment! ... I have just begun my work; in America I have raised only one or two waves; a tidal wave must be raised; society must be turned upside down; *the world must be given a new civilisation.*'¹

In these words, we get some hints about Vivekananda's real identity and the mission he came to fulfil. There is a prophetic ring about them. What astonishes us most is the fact that the person who was talking about turning the society upside down and giving the world a new civilisation was not a politician, a statesman, a military leader, or a business magnet with huge material and human resources behind. He was a penniless monk, that too, belonging to a battered, beleaguered, slave nation—a nation at that time labelled to be the abode of heathens!

It was the middle of the nineteenth century. The vicissitudes of the civilisation of the

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time made it necessary for the emergence of a new spiritual wave. In response, a new spiritual wave did rise, of which Sri Ramakrishna was the centre, and Swamiji, his herald. Any discussion on Swamiji will remain incomplete without referring to the source of his power, Sri Ramakrishna, who was embodying in himself the new spiritual wave. Swamiji was his voice, his instrument. This new tidal wave of spirituality which Swamiji voiced forth has been since then silently influencing the lives of people everywhere. Was Swamiji's appearance on the scene of the world history then a TURNING POINT?

The Meaning of Turning Point

The term 'turning point' has been widely in use in different streams of human study and research.

It has been especially used by historians, apart from political scientists, social scientists *et al.* Even in individual lives, we find this term commonly used. Successes like getting a job, getting married, an acquaintance with a distinguished personality, or even disappointments like a failure of a marriage, losing a job and becoming a destitute, or death of a kin, may turn the course of a person's life—making the incident a *turning point*. The same thing may happen with regard to a group of persons, a society, a nation, a race, or the world. An event is said to be a turning point if it brings about a significant change, a paradigm shift, in a person's life, or in the collective life of human beings, or in the course of human history.

The well-known turning-point events of history can be broadly classified under the following heads: political, military, scientific, and ideological. When a stable political system of a society is disrupted by events threatening the very existence of that system, it may result in fundamental changes in the existing political outlook and ways of governance. The American Revolution, the French revolution, the Bolshevik revolution, and the dismantling of Soviet Russia are the instances of this kind. Alexander's expedition, the crossing of the Rubicon by Julius Caesar, the rise of the Mongols, the Islamic invasion of India, and the battle of Plassey are the instances of turning points brought about by military adventures. These were to alter the map of the world in new ways. Then there have been scientific and technological revolutions changing the face of civilisation altogether. Discovery of the wheel, the harnessing of the fire, Neolithic and industrial revolutions, discoveries of electricity, gunpowder, aeroplane, nuclear power, space flights, computer, and internet belong to this category.

The emergence of new worldviews (*weltanschauung*) constitutes the turning-point events

of the ideological kind, which result in a lasting change in the way human beings conduct themselves. In a very general way, we may say that the major worldviews in human history have been the gift of great philosophers and religions born at different junctures. We have, for example, the most ancient view of God, life, morality, and existence found in the Vedas; then there is the Zoroastrian view, the Old-Testament view, the Buddhist, the Christian, and the Islamic view. Each of these ideologies/religions has changed the course of human lives and has been responsible in drastic demographic alterations from time to time.

The founders of these religions came on the scene when the degenerating materialistic ethos of life took hold of the minds of the people. To counter this spell of degeneration, each appeared standing on the crest of a mighty spiritual thought-wave to regenerate humankind. Krishna, Buddha, Christ, or Mohammad—the appearance of each one of these persons has been a turning point in the history of the world. They were responsible in bringing about dramatic changes in human understanding about God, creation, and life. Each came and provided a worldview according to the need of the time, raising the spiritual quality of human life and civilisation by several notches.

Ideological turning points in the form of the birth of great religions are more fundamental compared to the other kinds. The former steers the course of the collective lives of the people from the 'inside', whereas the latter impact only on the 'outside'. The latter—the political and military milestone events—are often influenced by the former, the contemporary worldviews. But it is the physical events which usually grip our attention, whereas the various ideologies which steer the large sections of the human race from 'within' go unnoticed or unstressed. One

of the reasons for this is that the turning-point events of the political, military, or the scientific kinds bring about abrupt changes in society which is easily discernible to the gross eyes. Take for instance the present CORONA pandemic. It is clearly discernible that it has impacted the lives of the entire human race at present. But it takes a long period for the changes brought about by a new ideology or worldview to become noticeable.

In short, the turning point is about assigning importance to certain past events in history. An event will be a turning point in the true sense only if its impact lasts on the society over a long period of time resulting in dramatic changes in the collective lives of human beings.

Vivekananda as the Turning Point

Applying this yardstick to the event of Vivekananda's advent, can we say that his appearance on the scene of the world history is a TURNING POINT? It is only a little more than one-hundred and fifty years since he was born. Admittedly, it may be argued that this span of time is too small to gauge the influence of his life on human society. At the same time, there are enough evidences of the striking kind to prove the influence of his life and ideas on the world. He opened the floodgates of spiritual universalism, which has been guiding the world in a new direction. As stated before, the climacteric events of the ideological kind bring about a change in the people's life from the 'inside'. For instance, historically speaking, whenever the lives of the people in India plunged into the darkness of materialism and degradation, there arose great teachers who spread the message of Vedanta. Their influence has been silent and of the lasting kind, impacting the Indian society for several centuries, and even spilling over into distant lands.

The ideological and overall scenario in

nineteenth-century India and the world was pathetic to the extreme. India had sunk into the darkness of poverty—both material and ideological. She had, as if, lost her moorings. Gazing around in utter awe of the dazzling Western civilisation, she stood confused about her course of action. India was lost in the wilderness of degeneration, whereas the West was basking in the sun of striking material progress through science and technology. India had forgotten her spiritual roots, and West was strongly anchored in the materialistic ethos of life. Imperialistic enterprises, the subjugation of the foreign lands, exploitation, and strong religious dogmatism characterised the West. Racial fanaticism and bigotry were intense in the West.

In short, it was a period when the world had plunged in the darkness of wrong ideas and destructive worldviews. The forces making for differentiation and fragmentation of the human race were reigning supreme. The time was ripe for the stream of Universal Life to send forth a mighty spiritual wave of unification and integration. That wave appeared in the form of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. As stated before, Ramakrishna was the centre of this unifying force, and Vivekananda was his herald.

Ramakrishna's Predictions about Vivekananda

Right from his earliest meetings with Naren (later Swami Vivekananda), Ramakrishna had recognised him to be the person he was waiting for. Naren was then just in his early-20s. On different occasions, he had prophesied about what Naren was going to accomplish in future. When Naren visited Ramakrishna for the first time, the latter observed: 'I know you are that ancient sage, Nara, the Incarnation of Narayana, born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind.'²

The Life of Swami Vivekananda narrates:

One day Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room with Keshabchandra Sen, Vijaykrishna Goswami and other celebrated leaders of the Brahmo Samaj. Narendranath was also present. The Master, in an exalted mood, cast his eyes upon the Brahmos and then on Naren, and, as a picture of the latter's future greatness flashed before his mind, he was filled with tenderness for the disciple. After the meeting was over he said to some devotees, 'Well, if Keshab is possessed of one sign of greatness which has made him famous, Naren has eighteen such signs. In Keshab and Vijay I saw the light of knowledge burning like a candle-flame, but in Narendra it was like a blazing sun, dispelling the last vestige of ignorance and delusion' (1.88).

In those days of Keshab's immense celebrity, none could have spoken about Naren in this light without being labelled as insane! Ramakrishna could do that, because he was not guessing, but *seeing*.³

Further, in Cossipore garden-house, Ramakrishna declared: 'Naren will teach others.'⁴ Sometime before this, he had told Naren: 'My *siddhis* (powers) will manifest through you in time' (ibid.). A few days before he passed away, Ramakrishna transmitted his powers to Naren and said: 'O Naren, today I have given you my all and have become a fakir, a penniless beggar. By the force of the power transmitted by me, great things will be done by you; only after that will you go where you came from' (ibid.). After Naren had the experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi* for the first time, Ramakrishna told the other disciples: 'Naren will pass away only of his own will. The moment he realises who he is, he will refuse to stay a moment longer in the body. *The time will come when he will shake the world to its foundations through the strength of his intellectual and spiritual powers.* I have prayed that the Divine Mother may keep this realisation of the Absolute veiled from Naren. *There is much*



work to be done by him' (178–9). (Italics added for emphasis)

At the time when Ramakrishna passed these prescient remarks, many around him might have set these assertions aside, thinking these to be nothing more than the outpourings of his love for his dear disciple—and it was quite justifiable for them to do so. In those days there was nothing in the air to hint at the possibility of Naren having a momentous future of global dimension! But today, in retrospect, we wonder at Ramakrishna's remarks about him, every word of which has turned out to be true. Today, Vivekananda's life and achievements, and the worldwide impact of his universal ideas, are a matter of deep interest and lasting relevance to the human race, slowly gaining acceptance among the scholars as well as the laity. In the view of the renowned Indologist A L Basham, Vivekananda was the first Indian

religious teacher to make an impression outside India in the last one thousand years.

Impact of Vivekananda's Work

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, how Naren became Swami Vivekananda and stormed the Parliament of Religions in 1893 is a well-known story to be reiterated here. In the words of his great Master, he was to 'shake the world to its foundations' (ibid.). The West discovered the glory of the East, and India woke up from her long slumber. To put it in Vivekananda's own words, '... the world was to be given a new civilisation, a spiritual civilisation. 'This is the great ideal before us', he asserted, 'and everyone must be ready for it—the conquest of the whole world by India—nothing less than that, and we must all get ready for it, strain every nerve for it. Let foreigners come and flood the land with their armies, never mind. Up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality!' In the short span of nine years he sowed the seeds of this gigantic mission. He placed before the world a new framework of universal ideas based on Vedanta, and through that, he laid the foundation of a gradual and silent transformation of the human race from 'within'. The world was never to remain the same again. His ideological framework has been silently influencing human thought and actions everywhere. About the impact of his electrifying words and ideas on India and the West, the great French savant Romain Rolland wrote:

Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words! ...The storm passed; it scattered its cata-racts of water and fire over the plain, and its formidable appeal to the Force of the Soul, to the God sleeping in man and His illimitable possibilities! I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised, like Jesus above the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrandt's engraving:⁶ with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him back to life. ...

Did the dead arise? Did India, thrilling to the sound of his words, reply to the hope of her herald? Was her noisy enthusiasm translated into deeds? ... the Master's rough scourge made her turn for the first time in her sleep, and for the first time, the heroic trumpet sounded, in the midst of her dream, the Forward March of India, conscious of her God. She never forgot it. *From that day the awakening of the torpid Colossus began.* If the generation that followed saw, three years after Vivekananda's death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India today has definitely taken part in the collective action of organised masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty 'Lazarus, come forth' of the message from Madras.

This message of energy had a double meaning: a national and a universal. Although, for the great monk of the Advaita, it was the universal meaning that predominated, it was the other that revived the sinews of India.⁷ (Italics added for emphasis)

It is easy for us to discuss and study the impact of Vivekananda's life and ideas from a distance of more than a century and a half. But it demands an insight of no less than a prophet to precisely peep into the future and see how particular ideas assume concrete shapes. Swamiji clearly foresaw the way his ideas would transform the world in course of time. He had stated: 'I have given them [to the world] enough for fifteen-hundred years.'⁸ He came to give a new civilisation to the world, as stated before. To set his ideas in motion, he established an organisation and remarked: 'And now a vision comes to my mind! This Math shall become a great centre of learning and spiritual practices.' Then, turning to his disciple, he asked: 'What do you think of it?' The disciple respectfully expressed the doubt that this 'most excellent piece of fancy' would ever materialise! 'Fancy, do you say!' Vivekananda cried out, 'Hear me, O you of

little faith! Time will fulfil all my expectations. I am now only laying the foundation.'⁹ A few days later he again told his disciple: 'This Math will be the central institution for the practice of religion and the cultivation of knowledge. *The spiritual force emanating from here will permeate the whole world, turning the currents of men's activities and aspirations into new channels.* ... All these visions are rising before me' (ibid.). (Italics added for emphasis)

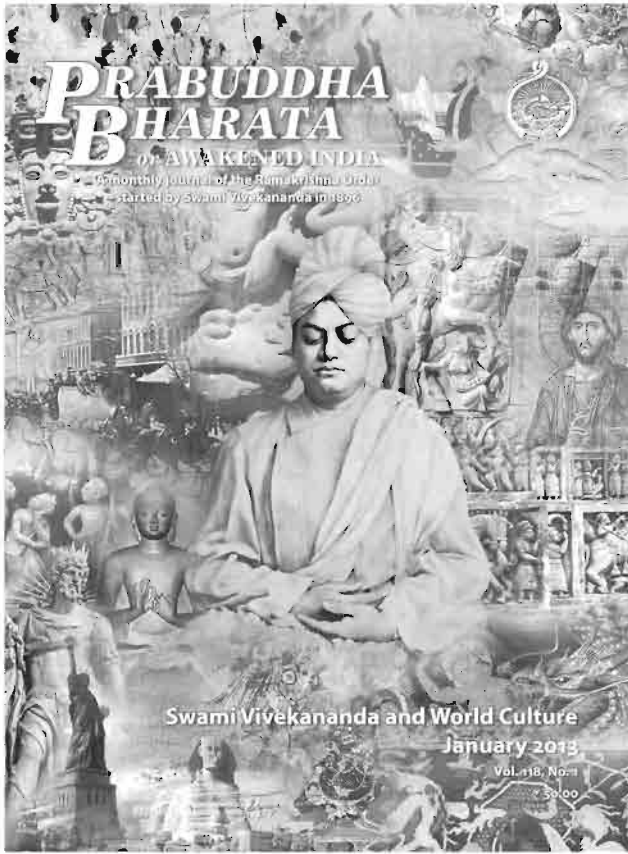
It is interesting to note the spiritual mission of Vivekananda in the contrasting milieu of the contemporary political and military animosity between nations. The wave of spirituality that had risen had to slowly make a way in and through the milieu of religious and political hatred of the time. The period was reflecting the fiercest struggle between the forces of fragmentation and the forces of unification. And the spiritual wave set in motion by the stream of Universal Life was functioning to peter out the forces of disintegration and destruction. It was silently moving ahead to bring about a unification of the world. As early as in 1897, Vivekananda had foreseen the need of international organisations and remarked: '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.'¹⁰ Within a few decades after that, there came into existence 'The League of Nations', which later became 'The United Nations'.

In and through all these struggles, the collective mind was slowly undergoing a change. About the impact of Vivekananda's ideas on the

West, Marie Louise Burke wrote: 'As I see it, his gigantic mission in America (and also, of course, in England) was to alter at its deepest source the whole thought-current of the Western people.'¹¹ Vivekananda had given a new turn to the global thought-current.

Finally, we have to note one important point. The turning-point events in the sphere of ideology are often seen to have their influence in silence, unlike the climacteric events in the military and political spheres, which are usually followed by violence and bloodshed. This is particularly true of India. The great turning-point ideologies emanating from India have been seen to influence the world imperceptibly, in silence. 'Our message has gone out to the world many a time, but slowly, silently, unperceived', Vivekananda remarked. '...The one characteristic of Indian thought is its silence, its calmness. At the same time, the tremendous power that is behind it is never expressed by violence. It is always the silent mesmerism of Indian thought. ... *Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world.* Silent, unperceived, yet omnipresent in its effect, it has revolutionised the thought of the world, yet nobody knows when it did so.'¹² (Italics added for emphasis)

This aforesaid observation of Vivekananda about the characteristic of Indian thought is precisely an observation about his own ideas and their influence. In the last one-hundred or more years, his thoughts have been silently revolutionising the thought currents of the world, yet nobody knows when it did, and who was behind it. It is the ideas that matter and not the person. 'My name should not be made prominent; it is my ideas that I want to see realised. ... Work for the ideas, not the person', said Vivekananda.¹³



PB January 2013

This has been the legacy of the greatest minds born in India from time immemorial.

March on

In 2021, when we look back at the course of the stream of collective human thought, we find its ingredients and colour changed to a great extent. A large section of the human society today is thinking and working to bring about the unification of the human race. This may not be discernible on the surface, but it is there. Undeniably, there is a long way ahead of us for the attainment of the ideal state of civilisation, and we need to march on. Our aim is to make a society where human beings would live in dignity

and respect, where the evaluation of the human beings would not be based upon what one possesses but upon the simple fact that one is a human being, the conscious reflector of the Divine, where the society would be freed from the scourge of poverty, malnourishment, gender discrimination, racial and religious hatred, hedonism, the exploitation of the women and the weaker sections of the society, and where the spiritually integral view of life would reign supreme, based upon the universal religion of Divine Love. The 125th year of *Prabuddha Bharata* is an important milestone in this journey initiated by Swami Vivekananda. PB

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Prabuddha Bharata—125 years: Glimpses of the Glorious Past

Somenath Mukherjee

Prelude

THE NAME SO FAMILIAR to us now had first appeared in Swami Vivekananda's mind for some other purpose. A little after he first inspired Alasinga Perumal to start a journal in Madras (now Chennai), Swamiji asked for more from his disciple on 31 August 1894: 'You now start a society and a journal and the necessary apparatus ... give the society one nonsectarian name. I suggest "Prabuddha Bharata", Awakened India—and that name without hurting the Hindu will draw the Buddhists to us by the very name, [which] may mean *pra*, i.e., with *Buddha*, Gotama; *Bharata*, India, i.e., Hinduism and Buddhism.'¹ The first journal with Swamiji's inspiration and blessings, the *Brahmavadin*, appeared in September 1895—with Alasinga Perumal as its owner-editor. Swamiji's other disciples in Madras were earnestly involved in the project. Within two months after Swamiji came from the West in mid-January 1897, Swami Ramakrishnananda went to Madras for propagating Vedanta work. Therefore, no other society, then or later, came up in Madras with the name as had been suggested by Swamiji. But the idea remained; and when a second magazine was thought of—'Prabuddha Bharata or Awakened India' surely became the obvious choice.

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Alasinga Perumal (1865–1909)

Now why a second magazine was thought of when there had already been the *Brahmavadin*? This was because despite being warmly welcomed by many people within India or even abroad, the deterrent in the magazine did not escape Swamiji's eyes: 'The *Brahmavadin* has very little chance in Europe and America on account of the long Sanskrit articles. You may as well publish it in Sanskrit.' Pointing out that profuse use of Sanskrit may benefit the Hindu as well as Western Sanskrit scholars—he added,



Dr M C Nanjunda Rao (1862–1921)

‘what does the average Western man know of your Hindu philosophy? Let only one article be scholarly if you please—the rest ought to be devoid of all Sanskrit terms and written in a very light style. My success is in my popular style, the greatness of a teacher consists in the simplicity of his language. If you can write popularly on Vedanta, *Brahmavadin* will be popular here, else not’ (ibid.). Such stiff writings in the *Brahmavadin* were also pointed out by Swamiji afterwards; maybe this was what welcomed the *Prabuddha Bharata* no more than two years since the former’s inaugural issue.

Things became evident in Swamiji’s letter to Dr M C Nanjunda Rao on 14 April 1896: ‘I received your note this morning. As I am sailing for England tomorrow, I can only write a few hearty lines. I have every sympathy with your proposed magazine for boys, and will do my best to help it on.’ This was followed by what the swami had in mind:

You ought to make it independent, following the same lines as the *Brahmavadin*, only making the style and matter much more popular. As for example, there is a great chance, much more than you ever dream of, for those wonderful stories scattered all over the Sanskrit literature, to be re-written and made popular. That should be the one great feature of your journal. I will write stories, as many as I can, when time permits. Avoid all attempts to make the journal scholarly—the *Brahmavadin* stands for that—and it will slowly make its way all over the world, I am sure. Use the simplest language possible, and you will succeed. The main feature should be the teaching of principles through stories. Don’t make it metaphysical at all. As to the business part, keep it wholly in your hands.²

This shows that for the second journal from Madras, Swamiji depended most on Dr Nanjunda Rao. Today while looking back at the glorious years of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, we need to know this man a little more; and a few lines from the preface of a book he wrote long back may help us:

In bringing out, at the request of many friends, the paper I read at the 76th Birthday Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, in this form, I have had to rewrite many portions and make many additions. In so doing I have had three objects in view: (1) to clear away some of the misconceptions that have gathered round the Vedantic idea of Mukti or Liberation by the study of the analyses of particular cases in the light of modern psychology and to show to the Indians, educated on Western line of thought, how and why it is the goal of human evolution; (2) to show that Sri Ramakrishna was one of those that has attained liberation; in other words, that he possessed the special characteristics and essential symptoms of Cosmic Consciousness as described by Western psychologist; and (3) to show that this attainment of Cosmic Consciousness, Supra-consciousness, Liberation or Mukti, by whatever name it may be called, is the basic truth of the teachings of all great religions and thus to

find a common platform on which 'a composite nationality in India, which the present generation is called upon to actualise in the social, economic and political relations of the country', can be built up and practically realised.³

Another early disciple of Swamiji, besides the legendary editor B R Rajam Iyer, had been closely involved when *Prabuddha Bharata* began its journey—he was Singaravelu Mudaliar, popularly known as Kidi. In his obituary note on 3 October 1901, the *Hindu* of Madras wrote: 'As the Manager of the *Prabuddha Bharata* Journal in the two years of its first regime, he in conjunction with the late Mr Rajam Aiyer, B.A., worked it up to advantage.'⁴

These two ardent disciples of Swamiji were of high personal distinctions. Nanjunda Rao was a physician and the chief medical officer of the City of Madras. Though a successful doctor, he had time for philanthropic work and had patriotic and religious inclinations. Singaravelu Mudaliar was a brilliant professor of mathematics at the Madras University and considered by many as a mathematical genius. The *Hindu* further wrote in the above obituary how the end finally came to Professor Mudaliar: 'Feeling for some days that his end was near, he cheerfully and completely disengaged himself from his little concerns and was quite prepared to meet his death in the old Prabuddha Bharata office on the 27th ultimo...' (ibid.).

About Rajam Iyer, the official biography of Swamiji reads: 'Another rude shock that the Swami had received since coming to Almora, was caused by the death of B. R. Rajam Iyer, Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, then published from Madras. Rajam Iyer was a gifted young man of twenty-six when he died. He was a true Vedantist and an ardent admirer of the Swami. Following his death in May 1898, the magazine had ceased publication after the June issue.'⁵ We may read about Swamiji's impact on the last two

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

"That which exists is one: sages call it variously

—*Rig-veda*, I. 164-46.

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The Brahmayadin, February 1912 issue

persons through the following lines written by P N Srinivasachari:

Here in Madras some of us were eye-witnesses of that great soul-making power of Swamiji. I know it myself. I am speaking of events which occurred sixty years ago. In 1893, before Swamiji went to America, he made two such souls in Mylapore. One of them was B. R. Rajam Iyer, the immortal author of *Rambles in Vedanta*.⁶ He saw him and he was made godly and he was spiritualized. The other was Singaravelu Mudaliar. Swamiji was very fond of him, He used to call him 'Kiddie'. At that time Singaravelu Mudaliar renounced the world, renounced his Professorship in the Presidency College and fell at his



G G Narasimhachar

feet. Such was the magnetic power of Swamiji, the magical soul-making, atman-making power of Swami Vivekananda. I saw it personally.⁷

Nevertheless, in an article on Alasinga Perumal in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, we found that ‘It was Alasinga who selected B R Rajam Iyer as the first Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, which was started in the year 1896 through the joint efforts of Alasinga, Dr Nanjunda Rao, and G.G. Narasimhachar.’⁸ Further information in the June 1898 number of the *Prabuddha Bharata*⁹ that Rajam Iyer’s writing in the early period of the *Brahmavadin* caught everyone’s eye obviously supports this claim.

The First Spell

Welcoming the *Awakened India* or *Prabuddha Bharata*, the *Indian Mirror* wrote a long editorial in advance on 14 June 1896. The prospectus of the new journal was also published in the *Mirror* on the same date, which declared that, ‘...in the midst

of ...revivalist stirring ...it has been arranged to start a journal devoted to our religion and philosophy and called the “*Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India*.” It will be a sort of supplement to the *Brahmavadin* and seek to do for students, young men and others, what that is doing so successfully for the more advanced classes.’¹⁰ The prospectus was published in many other Indian papers too. When the first number of the journal came out, the *Indian Mirror* wrote this on 19 July 1896:

The first number of the *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India* is out. Universalism is the creed of the new journal. The Editor says— ‘Though an organ of the Hindu religion, the *Prabuddha Bharata* will have no quarrel with any other religion, for really speaking, all religions are simply different phases of the same truth, different methods of approaching God. ... What humanity is to man, what existence is to living beings, Vedantism is to religions; it is their common essence, their inner unity. ... The whole has no quarrel with the part.’¹¹

A week back, on 12 July 1896, the *Mahratta* of Pune had also warmly welcomed the new journal:

We have received a monthly called the *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India*, published in the benighted presidency of Madras. The subscription is very modest only Rs 1/8. The front page is almost picturesque. ... The general get-up of the monthly is sufficiently attractive. A kind of staring earnestness pervades every page of *Awakened India* (ibid., 372).

The *Madras Mail*, an Anglo-Indian paper, welcomed the newcomer on 7 July 1896: ‘The *Prabuddha Bharata* or “*Awakened India*,” a monthly magazine conducted in English, is devoted to the spread of the doctrines of Hindu Religion and philosophy. The first number which is now issued to the public, contains a number of interesting contributions, of which two are from the pen of Swami Vivekananda.’¹² In October 1896 the *Journal of the Maha-Bodhi Society* wrote: ‘We

have received the first three copies of “Awakened India”, an interesting and instructive Journal published from Madras under the advice and guidance of Swami Vivekananda. We welcome our new contemporary, which is a notable addition to the theological and philosophical literature of the Hindus.’¹³ But before this, the enthusiastic support of the Maha-Bodhi Society was evident in what the *Indian Mirror* wrote on 22 July 1896:

Few Hindus have the catholicity to exhibit sympathy with the object of the Maha-Bodhi Society, and we think, Mr Dharmapala has taught them something of practical toleration by the following characteristic letter, addressed by him to the Projectors of *Prabuddha Bharata*—‘All hail to the *Prabuddha Bharata*. I send herewith one pound sterling in the name of the Mahahodhi Society for the *Prabuddha Bharata*. May its mellifluous fragrance purify the materialistic atmosphere of fallen India. Your efforts will be crowned with success, and *Prabuddha Bharata* will surely awaken the lethergetic sons of Bharatvarsha’ (ibid., 244).

However, on 4 July 1896 the *Brahmavadin* spelt out the primary ambition of the newborn Journal by quoting from its first issue:

It is mainly intended to awaken a lively interest in our religion amongst our young men. It will endeavour to present the sacred truths of Hindu Religion and the sublime and beautiful ideal of the Vedanta in as simple, homely and interesting a manner as possible, and amongst others will contain Puranic and classical episodes illustrative of those great truths and that high ideal. Philosophical Tales and Novels of modern type, short articles on Philosophical subjects written in a simple popular style free from technicalities and the Lives and Teachings of Great Sages and Bhaktas irrespective of caste, creed or nationality.’ The conductors of the journal have for their chief aim ‘simplicity and fervor’ and have priced it very low to place it within the reach of all. The first issue teems with interesting matter and we have no doubt that before long it will make its way in India and abroad.¹⁴



Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933)

During the first phase of the *Prabuddha Bharata* in Madras (now Chennai) its editor, B R Rajam Iyer, earned the admiration of all; and he still lives in the minds of people who know about this magazine. He was an extremely short-lived man, his obituary note in the *Brahmavadin* on 16 May 1898 reads:

We regret very much to have to announce the premature death of Mr B.R. Rajam Aiyer, B.A., the gifted and pious editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* at the early age of 26. ...In his death the cause of Vedantism has sustained a severe blow and it is much to be regretted that the *Awakened India*, of which he was the life and soul, is to be discontinued after a career of great usefulness these two years (ibid., 319).

The obituary had fleeting references to the departed Editor’s failing health, as also how his death would be an irreparable loss to the Tamil Literature. This was later stressed in a book too:



Thomson House, Almora, the Second Office of PB

An entirely different book in many respects is Rajam Iyer's *Kamalampal Caritram* or 'The Fatal Rumour'. The story was appearing in a journal by the name of *Vivekacintamani* between 1893–95, and in 1896 it was first published as a book. Its author, Rajam Iyer, who was perhaps the greatest Tamil prose-writer of the 19th Century. ... He began writing soon, and his interest in philosophy and journalism, as well as his broad, truly pan-Indian outlook, brought him into contact with Svami Vivekananda, who appointed him as editor of his *Prabuddha Bharata*. ... The life was like a short brilliant flash. But his novel remains. It has all the features of a young literary genius on the threshold of true creative writing. It was not by chance that Vivekananda appointed this very young Tamil Brahmin as the first editor of his important journal. Subrahmanya Bharati said that Rajam Iyer has achieved true greatness in the new field of Tamil prose, and N. Pichamurti, a well-known contemporary prose-writer and poet, says that *Kamalampal Caritram* is one of the peaks of Tamil prose, the first real novel in the language. ... Rajam Iyer has—for the first time in Tamil prose writing—created a number of characters which belong irrevocably to Tamil literature and will never disappear into oblivion. ... I think Rajam Iyer's book, being a classic, is still the best novel ever written in the Tamil language. And it is indeed good tidings that this great book is going to be published soon in English.¹⁵ ❧

(To be Continued)

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ON THE POEM 'TO THE AWAKENED INDIA'

To the Awakened India

Swami Vivekananda

Once more awake!

For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life
Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes, for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!
No death for thee!

Resume thy march,

With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the road-side dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words.

Thy home is gone,

Where loving hearts had brought thee up, and
Watched with joy thy growth. But Fate is strong
This is the law,—all things come back to the source
Their strength to renew.

Then start afresh

From the land of thy birth, where vast cloud-belted
Snows do bless and put their strength in thee,
For working wonders anew. The heavenly
River tunes thy voice to her own immortal song;
Deodar shades give thee eternal peace.

And all above,

Himala's daughter Umâ, gentle, pure,
The Mother that resides in all as Power
And Life, Who works all works, and
Makes of One the world. Whose mercy
Opes the gate to Truth, and shows
The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which leads to Infinite Love.

They bless thee all,

The seers great whom age nor clime
Can claim their own, the fathers of the
Race, who felt the heart of Truth the same,
And bravely taught to man ill-voiced or
Well. Their servant, thou hast got
The secret,—'tis but One.

Then speak, O Love!—

Before thy gentle voice serene, behold how
Visions melt, and fold after fold of dreams
Departs to void, till Truth and Truth alone,
In all its glory shines.—

And tell the world—

Awake, arise, and dream no more!
This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts,
Of flowers sweet or noxious,—and none
Has root or stem, being born in naught, which
The softest breath of Truth drives back to
Primal nothingness. Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.

This poem first appeared in the August 1898 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, the first issue published from Almora.

A Note on 'To the Awakened India'

Asim Chaudhuri

The above poem is Swami Vivekananda's contribution to the magazine *Prabuddha Bharata* in August 1898, when the magazine was transferred from Madras to Almora, and Swami Swarupananda became the editor.

An author and a well-known researcher on Swami Vivekananda, Asim Chaudhuri is associated with the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

When and how Swamiji got the inspiration to write such a poem is debatable. It was probably submitted in June or early July 1898, when he was travelling in northern India. The magnificent sight of the Himalayas could have stimulated him to put down in black and white the thoughts he had since he came back from his first tour of the West. What mission he

started single-handedly, he wanted his countrymen to join in.

In the poem, Swamiji is telling the people of India to awake again and tell the world the Truth, which the world direly needs. He has full faith in the country; it is not dead, only in deep slumber, needing rejuvenation. He wants India to resume the march it had once started, her stirring words gently and quietly engulfing the world. Also Swamiji refers to the occupied country, but tells his countrymen never to forget their heritage and start afresh with renewed vigour, even if they have lost their homes temporarily. They could draw their *strength* from the snow-clad Himalayas, their *resonant voice*, which awakens people to their own power from the murmuring Ganges, and their *peace* from the cool shade of

the Deodar trees. Swamiji is also asking his fellow countrymen to bow to the Mother, the source of his own strength, and who is behind everything that happens in the world. She shows us the truth, the Oneness, and gives us the strength and capacity to love.

Swamiji, in the poem, pays homage to our great seers by calling them 'the fathers of the race', and lauds them for telling everyone the Truth: 'It is but One', or '*Ekam sat viprā bahudbā vadanti*—that which exists is One; sages call It by various names'. He urges his countrymen not to tell the world to sleep and dream, but to tell it what the seers taught them about Oneness, which contravenes what good or bad Karma would bring to us. The Truth alone can teach us to love all people, all the time, and serve them unselfishly. ☸

A literary Approach to Swami Vivekananda's 'To The Awakened India'

Dr R Ramachandra

CAN ONE APPROACH this poem of Swami Vivekananda without paying attention to its unusual punctuation—a feature that perplexes even the most meticulous editors of anthologies and collections?¹ At the outset, let us set the original text as printed in the August 1898 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* (PB) alongside the version that appears in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (CW) and note down a few of the numerous deviations in this regard. The comparison is made not by way of disparagement, but

to register the reader's bewilderment on sighting the apparently 'eccentric' punctuation by the monk who declared that he was 'first and foremost a poet'.²

Stanza 7

Text, according to PB:

'Then speak, O Love! —' (Note the dash, in addition, the sign of exclamation)

CW version:

'Then speak, O Love!' (The dash is removed)

Stanza 8

PB: 'Of flowers sweet or noxious, — and none' (A dash follows the comma)

A former professor in the Department of English, University of Mysore, Dr R Ramachandra has authored six books both in English and Kannada.

CW: 'Of flowers sweet or noxious, and none'
(The dash is dropped).

Without making an exhaustive list of such deviations, it may be a good literary exercise to juxtapose the two variant versions of stanza five. First, from *PB*:

And all above,
Himala's daughter Umâ, gentle, pure,
The Mother that resides in all as Power
And Life, Who works all works, and
Makes of One the world. Whose mercy
Opes the gate to Truth, and shows
The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which leads to Infinite Love.

Now, the same lines from *CW*:

And all above,
Himala's daughter Umâ, gentle, pure,
The Mother that resides in all as Power
And Life, who works all works, and
Makes of One the world, whose mercy
Opens the gate to Truth and shows
The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which is to Infinite Love.

In quotation 1, letter 'w' is capitalised twice before the end of the sentence (Once after a comma, and again, after a period). Quotation from *Complete Works* changes these, prompted by grammatical sense, probably; prefers the word 'open' for its archaic form 'ope'. Also, changes in the wordings in the last lines are effected. Let us proceed to read the poem with the uneasy feeling that grammatical sense and poetical sense could be in mutual conflict.

Two quotations may help us to orient ourselves to Swamiji's poetry in general and 'To the Awakened India' in particular. The first quotation is from Prof. C D Narasimhaiah, a well-known writer and literary critic:

(Vivekananda) is more in the tradition of poet-teachers of the Vedas and Upanishads, the later Veerashaiva Vachanakaras and the Haridasas of

Karnataka, of the mystic poets of Maharashtra and Bengal, and, unlike any of these, made alive by the spirit of European science.³

Narasimhaiah's observation implies that Swamiji's poem is to be read more with the *ear* than with the *eye*. The other quotation is from the great novelist, Joseph Conrad's *A Personal Record*: 'The power of the sound has always been greater than the power of sense.'⁴

Now to listen a little to the poem: There is a tendency to describe the poem as a 'clarion call' to the youth of India. Clarion, essentially associated with war, sounds too loud in the context of the poem. The sharpness in 'Arise! Awake! and stop not until the goal is reached'⁵ is greatly diminished by the two single syllabled words 'once more' with which the poem opens: 'Once more awake!'

Swamiji knew that nations and civilisations, like individuals, slip away to sleep and even to death. But it is awakening time for India now. She has woken up many times from a sleep-state earlier, and the poet exhorts the nation to wake up yet another time in response to the expectations of the world 'in need'. India is variously referred to as 'Truth', 'Awakener' and 'Love' in this poem:

'The world in need waits, O Truth!'

'Awakener, /ever

Forward!'

'Then speak, O Love!—'

India is regarded as Divinity that guides the world. Its sleep-state was actually 'rest to lotus-eyes'. It is common knowledge that in the Indian consciousness lotus stands for 'vision' and spiritual awakening. In Indian literature, the term 'lotus-eyes' is employed to convey the idea of all-encompassing vision: '*Pundareekaksha*', '*Rajeeva Lochana*', '*Kamala Nayana*' (all names have one meaning, that is, one who has lotus eyes). Incidentally, lotus also symbolises rebirth or renewal.

A surprising element lies in the expression 'Daring yet'. There were visions earlier; but

greater, more astonishing visions are to unfold this time. There appears to be an oblique reference to the chakras/nerve-centres along the *Sushumna* in yogic literature where the nerve-centres are likened to lotuses of a varying number of petals. (One cannot forget that Swamiji was a yogi whose authoritative discourses on *Raja Yoga* continue to have powerful, and widespread appeal.) The ascent of Kundalini through the chakras marks the progress to higher levels of consciousness, and hence, '*visions daring yet*'. The call is for the awakening of national consciousness. One sees in this poem a bold identification of individual consciousness with national consciousness. The call then is for the awakening of national consciousness.

This awakening is to be effected inconspicuously, for all spiritual progress takes place invisibly, inwardly although steadily. So,

Resume thy march,

With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the road-side dust,
That lies so low.

It is the inwardness of the poem that accounts for the soft syllables and sibilant sounds that pervades the poem:

'and rest to lotus-eyes for visions'
'Peaceful rest, even of the road-side dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free.'

'Who works all works, and
Makes of one the world. Whose mercy
Opens the gate to Truth, and shows
The One in All give thee untiring
Strength, which leads to Infinite Love'

'The seers great whom age nor clime
Can claim their own, the fathers of the
Race, who felt the heart of Truth the same'

'Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts,
Of flowers sweet or noxious—and none'

And so on...

One of the effects of the repeated 's' sound in combination with soft syllables is that it creates a sense of sanctity. More than a clarion call associated with the war cry, the poem reminds one of the hymns that are sung in temples to wake up the deity. Purandara Dasa, a famous saint of Karnataka, in one such hymn says:

Wake up Hanumantha, how long would you sleep? There's much for you to do; you have to carry news of Rama's well-being to Sita; cross the ocean; bring the signet ring to Rama; vanquish the evil forces and bring back Janaki to Ayodhya; and so, how long would you sleep?

It's almost a re-enactment of Ramayana. It is a similar exhortation that we hear in 'To the Awakened India'. Also, we note that a whole past is assimilated in order to look forward to a glorious future:

The seers great whom age nor clime
Can claim their own, the fathers of the
Race, who felt the heart of Truth the same,
And bravely taught to man ill-voiced or
Well.

The allusion to 'the fathers of the / Race' points to mythical 'Sapta Rishis', the immortal wise Teachers from whom the descent of the human race begins. The poem does not relate ancestry or lineage to kings of military might but to a line of wise teachers; the descent of tradition is from teacher to teacher who will lead to



Swami Vivekananda: Analysis of His Thoughts on Human Development in India

Dr Anil Baran Ray and Dr Sukanya Ray

AS A PROPHET OF HUMANITY, what was Swami Vivekananda's mantra towards the development of human beings in India? The present article reflects on this question and offers an analysis of Swamiji's thoughts on human development in India.

Vivekananda's Rationale for Select Approaches to Human Development in India

All through his supremely active life, since the attainment of enlightenment from his Guru Sri Ramakrishna in his early twenties till his death at the age of thirty-nine on 4 July 1902, Swamiji worked incessantly for the development of humanity in the West and the East. Having preached his Vedantic ideas on the unity of mankind in the West from 1893 to 1896, he returned to India in January 1897 to work on the development of his beloved fellow Indians and his dearer-than-life-motherland India. The thought of lifting Indians and India 'was to him like the air he breathed'.¹

Human development, man-making,² as Swamiji said, was the task that he undertook in this connection. He aimed to do this with the dissemination of the Vedantic idea that *a human is Atman with infinite powers*, and he conceived

his task to inspire people in India to apply such Vedantic theory in practical situations of life and in relation with other human beings. Swamiji believed that only such a mantra given in earnestness could bring back strength to the lowly Indians and ensure a glorious future for India as a nation. This meant that the Vedantic approach leading to strength or, so to say, a combination of the 'classical approach' and the 'manliness approach' is what Swamiji wanted to highlight towards the human development in India in the days ahead, which is relevant in the modern times.

Why did the people in India need to embrace spirituality wholeheartedly? Swamiji's answer to this question was that it was so because spirituality alone could give a human in India the strength and vitality needed to develop one's true nature. To quote Swamiji: 'Each of us is heir-apparent to the Emperor of emperors; we are of the substance of God Himself. Nay, according to the Advaita, we are God Himself though we have forgotten our own nature in thinking of ourselves as little men.'³

Thus, the first necessity of human in India is to remind oneself of one's infinite nature and then to 'stand up, be active and strong' (3.167). Having thus developed oneself, one must also do one's best to bring out development in one's fellow beings, because human beings in essence are all one. Swamiji wanted such a Vedantic idea and its practical application to the development of strong and compassionate human beings in

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India. To quote Swamiji: 'I tell you ... that it is the one great life-giving idea [of Vedanta] ... which the mute masses of India want for their uplifting, for none can regenerate this land of ours without the practical application and effective operation of this ideal of the oneness of things' (3.189).

It stands to the credit of Swamiji that he turned the ancient Vedantic ideal of India into the modern and ever-relevant strength approach by re-orienting the ideal in the following terms: 'We have had weeping enough; no more is this time for us to become soft. This softness has been with us till we have become like masses of cotton and are dead. What our country wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist' (3.190).

The essential requirement towards the kind of strong spirit that Swamiji contemplated for the Indians was the latter's faith in themselves, faith that they were nothing but divinities. To restore the faith of these hapless people in themselves, to restore their human dignity so to say, was, therefore, the task that lay before all right-thinking Indians. Unfortunately, the educated people of India, observed Swamiji, 'with all their boasted education of modern times, shrank 'at once from the duty of lifting them up, these poor downtrodden people. Not only so, but I also find that all sorts of most demoniacal and brutal arguments, culled from the crude ideas of hereditary transmission and other such gibberish from the Western world, are brought forward to brutalise and tyrannise over the poor all the more' (3.192).

Turning the hereditary argument over its head, Swamiji contributed an idea which remains as relevant for the concept of social justice in the present times as it was at the time Swamiji spoke of it: 'Ay, Brahmins, if the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no more money on the Brahmin's education, but spend all on the Pariah. Give

to the weak, for there all the gift is needed. ... This is justice and reason as I understand it' (3.193).

Swamiji's remedy for eliminating the evil of hereditary inequality of Indians, his remedy indeed towards restoring the Indians' faith in themselves was Vedantic—to preach the Advaita Vedanta which tells us that the same Infinite Atman lives in every man and woman. As he put it: 'Ay, let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness or strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind every one, there is that Infinite soul, assuring the infinite possibility and infinite great and good' (ibid.).

Having stressed the Vedantic ideal and its role in rousing the human soul, the all-important addition that Swamiji made to it was that the ideal must be applied to the details of daily life. Vedanta, that is to say, must be turned into *Practical Vedanta* towards the realisation of its great ideal. He said in this regard: 'I only ask you to work to realise more and more the Vedantic ideal of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature' (3.196).

The Vedantic ideal of the inborn divine nature of a person and its realisation through faith, strength, and fearlessness represented respectively the Vedantic and spirit of strength approaches of Swamiji—a combination of which he articulated tirelessly towards the elevation or development of human beings in India.

Swamiji's Thoughts Vis-à-vis the Reform Approach

In drawing a comparison between the social reform approach of the Indian reformists and the Vedantic-cum-spirit of strength approaches as advocated by himself, Swamiji pointed out the areas where the former was deficient *vis-à-vis* the latter.

First, the reform approach was in the nature of dictation to society—‘this way thou shouldst move and not that’ (3.213). Second, the reform approach was critical, condemnatory, and even abusive of the orthodox and conservative sections of society. The result was that except for producing the most vituperative literature, little good was done to society. To lecture someone on the evils that exist in society and then leave him at that is like telling a drowning boy of the virtues of swimming when he is crying out pleading that he be taken out of the water first. Thus, Swamiji pleaded that India had enough of lectures, societies, and papers. What she badly needed indeed was people with love, sympathy, and the constructive method along with the zeal to put that method into action, that is to say, not criticism or condemnation but a helping hand to drag the drowning people of India out of their problems.

And along with lending a helping hand to the drowning people, they had to be given education to this effect that they were not really as helpless as they thought themselves to be. They had to be taught that they had the infinite powers of their own lying deposited in themselves. They had to bring those potential powers out. Swamiji asserted that every human being in India had to be taught to go to the very root of the matter, to the very basis of the soul, to the Atman. Thus one has to be brought up gradually to the highest ideal of development as a human being. Sri Rama’s bridge over the ocean was not built in a day nor was it built by the efforts of any single person. Every human being in India had to be inspired so that each one contributed one’s mite like the little squirrel that contributed its small quota of sand-dust to the building of Rama’s bridge. With everybody in India being inspired with the idea of realising this highest ideal and thus being induced to set oneself to the task of actualising one’s highest potential, all-round development of human beings



was bound to take place. In short, as Swamiji said that the development all the way up to the highest point had to come spontaneously from within everybody and not by way of any imposition or dictation from outside or above.

Apart from the tendency to dictate and condemn, the reform approach had problems on two other counts: one, such reforms touched only little bits; two, they touched only the first two castes, and not the people in general. ‘But that is no reformation’, Swamiji observed, ‘You must go down to the basis of the thing, to the very root of the matter’ (3.216).

Not reform from without but growth from within constituted the essence of Swamiji's Vedantic approach. Growth is best encouraged when an individual is not criticised or condemned but is encouraged by telling her or him in the fashion of great teachers of India such as Acharya Shankara, Acharya Ramanuja, and Sri Ramakrishna: 'O man, you have been good, but you can certainly be better now' or 'what you have done is good, but you can certainly do better' (3.219). As Swamiji observed, 'We must grow according to our nature' (ibid.) and any help that is offered or received must be in the form of sympathetic stimulation of spontaneously motivated growth. Swamiji went on to add that 'this is the first lesson to learn' (3.220).

His Plan of Campaign

Having postulated that his Vedantic and spirit of strength approaches offered the ultimate solution to the problems of development of human beings in India, Swamiji laid out his plan of campaign in India towards the realisation of his goal of human development.

First, he planned to tell every woman and man in India that spirituality formed the core of everybody's life in India. Spirituality or the doctrine that the *Atman* (the true Self of an individual) is one with the *Paramātman* (the supreme universal Self, eternal and infinite) is the most humane doctrine that has been laid down in the Upanishads. It simply means that a human is divine in the essential nature of one's being and that one has to do one's utmost to realise one's divinity with all the strength and powers of one's soul in this life and this world. With spirituality running in the blood of every Indian and with spiritual life forming the centre or the keynote of the music of national life in India, every Indian, indeed India herself, must seek to vitalise individual and national life through spirituality alone and not through social reform or politics. Indeed, social

reform or politics in India, to have any impact on the individual and society, must be preached through spirituality. 'In India,' Swamiji observed, 'social reform has to be preached by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring; and politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants—its spirituality' (3.221).

Thus, the first point in Swamiji's plan of campaign towards raising the people in India was to preach the truths of the Upanishads bringing spiritual knowledge of Oneness and strength and fearlessness to every Indian.

Swamiji's second point was to start institutions in India, so that with appropriate training received in these institutions, young preachers can start their preaching work towards the end as mentioned above. Swamiji firmly believed that with the spiritual knowledge of oneness, faith, strength and fearlessness honestly brought to the masses of India, the common masses who, on account of their sub-human existence for centuries as mere 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' (3.192) lost all faith in themselves, can be raised for certain. As Swamiji said:

It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want. And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison. ... truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating (3.224–5).

By man-making religion, Swamiji meant such stimulation to his countrymen as would enable them to have faith in themselves with the conviction that the *Atman* within them is *Paramātman* and thus lead them into constructive struggles towards the realisation of their real and highest nature in this life itself and would induce them to help fellow human beings to have the similar realisation.

'Be and make,' so to say, is the motto of man-making religion. By man-making education, Swamiji meant such stimulation to Indians as would enable them to assimilate ideas—spiritual and secular (the intellectual dimension), to acquire skill towards earning their living (the professional dimension), and above all, to build their character in terms of strength and fearlessness to engage in struggles of life as well as orientation to serve and sacrifice for the fellow human beings (the spiritual dimension).

Intent on building up the Indians as truly developed human beings, Swamiji urged them to manifest their inherent divinity in every movement of life by taking up the truths of the Upanishads and living up to them (3.225).

Swamiji identified three qualities as the defining characteristics of patriotism or love for India, namely, *intense feelings for the countrymen*, *indomitable will to serve them*, and *steadfastness in their development*. Having pointed out that in such a helpful approach to one's fellow beings in India lay the way to the development of human beings in India, Swamiji observed that if the national ship, in course of ferrying the millions of souls across the water to the other shore for centuries, had developed a leak here or there, the appropriate course of action was not to condemn in the fashion of reformists but to do one's best to plug the leak and keep it going. The important thing was not to let the people drown but to lift them up by all means.

Vedanta-Based Approach and Its Extent

Swamiji had to satisfy queries about the inclusivism of his Vedantic approach. He was asked if Puranists, Tantriks, and the Vaidikas could be brought within the fold of his Vedantic approach. His affirmative answer to this effect was that anybody who accepted the doctrine of the soul and believed that all powers, all purity, and all greatness were already there in the soul and

that the work of a person lay in bringing them out or in manifesting them was a Vedantist. He went on to observe that 'In the Atman they found the solution—the greatest of all Atmans, the God, the Lord of this universe, His relation to the Atman of man, our duty to Him, and through that our relation to each other' (3.331).

As to another query, whether he meant by Vedanta, Advaita or pure monism alone, Swamiji answered that while Advaitism was undoubtedly the Vedanta par excellence, Vedanta covered the grounds of qualified monism and dualism as well (3.230). Elsewhere, he says that 'my mission in life [is] to show that the Vedantic schools are not contradictory, that they all necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping-stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, the *Tat Tvam Asi*, is reached' (3.324). To substantiate this thesis, Swamiji held that the Upanishads had all begun with dualistic ideas and ended with a grand flourish of Advaitic ideas. He referred to the symbolical picture of two birds—one sitting on the lower branch of a tree and the other on the higher branch of the same tree—to show how the Upanishads, through this symbolical picture, gave the most perfect expression to the whole philosophy of the world as also to the whole dream of the Hindu ideal of freedom:

Upon the same tree there are two birds of beautiful plumage ... the one on the lower branch eating sweet and bitter fruits in turn and becoming happy and unhappy, but the other on the top, calm and majestic; he eats neither sweet nor bitter fruits, cares neither for happiness nor misery, immersed in his own glory. This is the picture of the human soul (3.235).

The message is that the human is *really* the higher bird, which one forgets and like the lower bird keeps pursuing the name, fame, and fortune, and enjoying, so to say, the sweet and bitter fruits of this life. After a while, as the 'lower bird' in

human looks up, one finds some light from the higher bird playing around one's own plumage. With the transformation thus begun in the lower bird, it goes nearer and nearer to the higher bird only to find itself melting away into the higher bird and disappearing altogether. The final discovery of the lower bird before it melts away into the higher bird is that 'He did not really exist; it was but the reflection of the other bird who was there: calm and majestic amidst the moving leaves. It was all his glory, that upper bird's. He then becomes fearless, perfectly satisfied, calmly serene' (3.236). 'In this figure', observes Swamiji, 'the Upanishads take you from the dualistic to the utmost Advaitic conception' (ibid.).

Swamiji's Stress on Self-faith, Strength, and Fearlessness

Since no literature had conceived the whole scheme of human development and painted the picture of the sublime in human more beautifully than the Upanishads, Swamiji based his basic approach to human development on Vedanta alone. But having done that, he transformed the classical philosophico-religious Vedantic approach into the contemporary and 'spirit of strength' approach. In lecture after lecture that he delivered in India, he spoke of *shraddhā* or faith in one's self, strength, and fearlessness. His constant refrain to his fellow Indians was: 'You must stand on your own feet. ... The true man is he who is strong as strength itself and yet possess a woman's heart. You must feel for the millions of beings around you' (3.448). We will quote extensively from Swamiji's own lectures to provide the best documentation of how he sought to infuse into Indians the spirit of strength and national vigour.

In the lecture delivered at Chennai on 13 February 1897 entitled 'Vedanta in its Application to Indian Life', Swamiji made the eloquent plea to

the young men of Chennai in favour of the cultivation of strength in the following words:

Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page. ... O man, be not weak. Are there no human weaknesses?—says man. There are, say the Upanishads, but will more weaknesses heal them, would you try to wash dirt with dirt? ... Strength, O man, strength, say the Upanishads, stand up and be strong. Ay, it is the only literature in the world where you find the word 'Abhihi', 'fearless', used again and again; in no other scripture in the world is this adjective applied either to God or to man (3.237).

Swamiji gave an example of what strength was like by citing the instance of a conversation between an old Indian Sannyasin and the great Emperor of the West, Alexander the Great. Almost naked and starving, the Sannyasin was profoundly learned all the same. Astonished at the wisdom of the Sannyasin, Alexander tempted him with gold and honour to come to Greece. With the Sannyasin spurning the Emperor's offer, Alexander threatened to kill him to which the man gave a characteristic reply: 'Who can kill me? Me you kill, Emperor of the material world! Never! For I am Spirit unborn and undecaying: Never was I born and never do I die; I am the Infinite, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient; and you kill me, child that you are!' (3.238). Having referred to this reply of the Sannyasin, Swamiji observes: 'That is strength, that is strength! And the more I read the Upanishads, my friends, my countrymen, the more I weep for you, for therein is the great practical application. Strength, strength for us. What we need is strength' (ibid.).

Despite the greatness of the Upanishads and its call to be free from bonds of nature and weakness, the Indians, Swamiji observed, remained weak for several reasons. First, they were lazy and negligent in their work. Secondly, they were intensely selfish and jealous of each other. Thirdly, their selfishness and jealousy made it impossible for them to unite.

Fourthly, disorganised as they were, they could not put up a united front against the foreign invading armies for centuries. Fifthly, they spoke of many things parrot-like but never followed them in practice. And behind all this lurked the physical weakness of the Indians. The first necessity, therefore, for the Indians, as Swamiji diagnosed it, was this: 'Our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. ... You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men' (3.242).

Having been physically strong, the young men of India, said Swamiji, will draw upon the Upanishads to fortify themselves with faith in themselves. They will repeat to themselves day and night the blessed words of the Upanishads to this effect: 'I am the infinitely powerful, infinitely pure and holy Atman'. He says, 'Me the sword cannot cut; nor weapons pierce, me the fire cannot burn, me the air cannot dry; I am the Omnipotent, I am the Omniscient' (3.244). Every young person of India, being fortified with strength and faith of Atman will say to oneself that there is nothing that one cannot do.

Swamiji brought these two conceptions—strength and faith—of Vedanta out from the forests and caves and put it to work, as he himself said, 'at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying' (3.245). His call was to everyone, every man and woman in every occupation of life. To quote Swamiji: 'Let everyone do what little he can. If the fisherman thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be better student. If the lawyer thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer, and so on' (ibid.).

Having been better human beings in this way, every Indian will look upon every man and

woman as a manifestation of God and serve the children of the Lord as Lord Himself. One will serve especially the Lord in the shape of the poor and downtrodden and consider oneself privileged for being allowed to serve the Lord in such shapes. And what will be the overall effect of such effort of Swamiji turning the 'Vedantic approach' into the 'Spirit of strength approach'? The result will be a better human being, a better society, better governance with all-round national vigour. And for all that, the additional gain will be the liberty of the individual (everyone will grow in her or his true nature) and the equality of all. As Swamiji put it candidly:

If you teach Vedanta to the fisherman, he will say, I am as good a man as you; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me as you have in you. And that is what we want, no privilege for anyone, equal chances for all; let everyone be taught that the divine is within and everyone will work out his own salvation (3.246).

And in the wake of such assertion came the assurance that showed how beautifully Swamiji harmonised his doctrine of Atman and his Vedantic and spirit of strength approaches. The key was the individual's belief in himself and the strength issuing therefrom: 'Whatever you believe, that you will be. ... All glory, power, and purity are within the soul already; ... All power is within you; you can do anything and everything. Stand up and express the divinity within you' (ibid.).

Steps Suggested for 'Man-making' in India

According to Swamiji, the basic problem in human-development as also in nation-building in India lies in the superimposed weakness among Indians. The people had been weakened over the last thousand years along the lines of



Swarupananda Kutia (Hut) at Mayavati Ashrama

religion, caste, race, and had also been weakened by negative thinking and lack of will power. Hence, for a solution to the problem, India had to go back to the roots and ‘strengthen the man’, as Swamiji puts it.⁴

In the perception of Swamiji, since ‘the Indian mind is first religious, then anything else’ (3.289), and since spirituality constituted the life-blood of Indians, the first effort towards strengthening the Indian mind had to begin with religion as the realisation of the divinity of human beings. His ideas in this regard were along the following lines:

- To bring out the gems of spirituality stored up in the scriptures such as the Upanishads.
- To release them from the possession of a few in the monasteries, caves, and forests.
- To translate them into the vernaculars from Sanskrit, which was inaccessible to the masses.
- To make the gems of spirituality (brought out in ways as mentioned above) the



Meditation Room at Dharamgarh, Mayavati

common property of all, of every man and woman in India; and to teach the masses the ideas of spirituality in the vernaculars, and also to encourage them at the same time to learn the Sanskrit language, because Sanskrit alone, Swamiji felt, can fortify education with culture.⁵

Swamiji clarified:

Teach the masses in the vernaculars, give them ideas; they will get information, but something more is necessary, give them culture. Until you give them that, there can be no permanence in the raised condition of the masses. ... The only safety, I tell you, men who belong to the lower castes, the only way to raise your condition is to study Sanskrit, and this fighting and writing and frothing against the higher castes is in vain, it does no good, and it creates fight and quarrel, and this race, unfortunately already divided, is going to be divided more and more. The only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the education which is the strength of the higher castes. That done, you have what you want (3.291).

Fighting among castes can only exacerbate the relations of castes and intensify the existing divide along caste line. The solution lies not in fighting, not in bringing down the higher castes but in raising the lower castes to the level of the higher castes by giving them appropriate education and culture. The onus in this regard is as much on the higher castes as on the lower castes. The Brahmins must open their treasury of virtue and culture and distribute their valuables to the lower castes. The lower castes must also be opening up. Given the complexity of this problem eating into the vitals of the Indian nation to this day, it will be benefitting to quote Swamiji's words as to its solution:

To the non-Brahmin castes, I say, wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every opportunity of fighting the Brahmin. ... Instead of wasting your energies in vain discussions and quarrels in the newspapers, instead of fighting and quarrelling in your own homes—which is sinful—use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brahmin has, and the thing is done (3.298).

Swamiji hoped that with the lower castes themselves working out their salvation by making efforts towards raising themselves up and with the Brahmins lending a genuinely helping hand towards raising the lower castes, it would be possible to reach an ideal solution to the caste problem in India.

Swamiji had a larger purpose behind preaching the cooperative relations between the castes in India. The purpose was to overcome the tensions and cleavages arising out of hierarchy and complexes inherent in the traditional caste system of India and ensure the unity and strength of India as a nation. He placed before us the ancient ideal, which is equally applicable to all castes in India. That ideal was Brahminhood—the realisation of Brahman, the real Self of all living beings.

Everybody in India, irrespective of the traditional caste she or he belonged to, had to make efforts towards the attainment of this ideal. Such was the original condition of the caste system in India, contended Swamiji. In the Satya Yuga, with everybody seeking enlightenment of Brahman, only the caste of Brahmins prevailed. Swamiji preached restoration of the ideal of Brahminhood to humanity in India in the interest of moulding India into a union of people whose ideal was directed to the attainment of oneness with their real Self. Swamiji claimed in support of such a contention that such was the end towards which the great souls like Acharya Shankara worked. To quote him:

They would sometimes get hordes of Baluchis and at once make them Kshatriyas, also get hold of hordes of fishermen and make them Brahmins forthwith. ... So, be you all Rishis and sages; that is the secret. What is meant by a Rishi? The pure one. Be pure first, and you will have power (3.296).

Such was the great ideal that Swamiji placed before India as the ultimate solution to her caste problem. He knew this goal had to be worked out through generations, but, meanwhile, with a great end before their eyes, the Indians should know that fighting among the castes would not do them any good except dividing, weakening, and degrading them all the more.

Swamiji disapproved of fighting and quarrelling not only over castes but also over the so-called racial division in India between the Aryans and the Dravidians. It was claimed that the Aryans who belonged to the North of India were different as a race from the Dravidians who belonged to the South. Swamiji laughed at such racial division of India which also involved a North-South regional divide. Denying any difference between the North and the South, except in language, Swamiji observed:



Vivek Sarovar, Lake at Mayavati, on the banks of which Swamiji walked in 1901

I do not see any other difference. We are so many Northern men here, and I ask my European friends to pick out the Northern and Southern men from this assembly. ... Do not believe in such silly things. There may have been a Dravidian people who vanished from here [the South], and the few who remained lived in forests and other places. It is quite possible that the language may have been taken up, but all these are Aryans who came from the North. The whole of India is Aryan, nothing else (3.292).

Swamiji rejected two other theories. The one claimed that the Aryans came from outside India or that they were not the original inhabitants of India. Swamiji pointed out that had it been so, the ancient scriptures of India must have mentioned this in some way or the other somewhere in their contents. But there was no reference to this in the scriptures of India which proved that such a theory was unfounded. The other theory was that the people belonging to the lower castes were all non-Aryans, that they were a multitude and that they lived as the slaves of the Aryans. Swamiji rejected this theory as illogical and irrational with an observation which deserves to be quoted for the sheer wit of it:

It could not have been possible in those days that a few Aryans settled and lived there [in India] with a hundred thousand slaves at their command. These slaves would have eaten them up, and made 'chutney' of them in five minutes (3.293).

Among other things that left Indians weak was the prevalent system of what he called negative education. Such education, Swamiji observed, had at best put some information into the brains of students, which, unfortunately for most students, remained undigested all through their lives. In place of such negative education, what was needed, said Swamiji, was a man-making education that gave the students 'life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas' (3.302). Without such man-making education producing character and enabling men and women to stand on their own feet, asserted Swamiji, there could not have been any salvation either for the Indians individually or for India as a nation collectively. His ideal as well as plan, therefore, was that 'We must have the whole education of our country, spiritual and secular, in our own hands, and it must be on national lines, through national methods, as far as practical' (ibid.).

Swamiji's plan involved the founding of an institution for training teachers who would preach religion and impart secular education to people. Such teachers would carry religion as also secular education to the doors of the people, making each Indian—man and woman—strong with knowledge and faith in themselves. India's future, said Swamiji, depends on the making of such men and **women in abundance**—human beings with **faith in themselves, with the** will to organise themselves and to co-ordinate their will powers and accumulate power therefrom.

'It is will that is the power', said Swamiji (3.299). With such an assertion, he gives us a clear inkling of his opinion as to the chief reason for the British conquest of India and as to the way to secure release from the British rule of India. To get the full psychological-cum-political significance of Swamiji's opinion, we should quote his words:

Why is it, to take a case in point, that forty millions of Englishmen rule three hundred millions of people here? What is the psychological explanation? Those forty millions put their wills together and that means infinite power, and you three hundred millions [of Indians] have a will each separate from the other. Therefore to make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organisation, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills (ibid.).


Swamiji went on to say that over the centuries the Indians had been kicked around by foreigners. The time had now come for the slaves to become masters. Indians should give up the slavish mentality and make Mother India the keynote of their life. To quote Swamiji's exhortation to this effect:

So give up being a slave. 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. ... and the first gods

we have to worship are our countrymen. These we have to worship, instead of being jealous of each other and fighting each other (3.300–1).

In brief, Swamiji's message was that instead of frittering away their energies into quarrels and fights over sects, faiths, castes, or races, the Indians, with the help of man-making religion and character-building education, and with the accumulation of power achieved from the organisation and coordination of wills, should develop themselves into strong and powerful individuals. With such individuals as her asset, India, he asserted, was sure to make great strides as a nation.

Conclusion

It follows from the analysis presented in this article that Swamiji's ideas in terms of the development of human as also the building of the nation in India were: (1) to stand up boldly and work out the Vedanta in every field of life, (2) to bring Advaita down from the spiritual plane into the material world for the sake of the sinking millions of India, and (3) to extend a helping hand to them with a feeling heart. As Swamiji said: 'Arise and **awake** and be perfectly sincere' (3.431). This was his mantra for the rising of Indians and India. 

Notes and References

1. Sister Nivedira, *The Master as I Saw Him* (Kolkata: Udbodhan, 2004), 40.
2. Vivekananda used the word 'man', not in a gender-specific sense but in a generic sense to mean human beings.
3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 3.160.
4. See 'The Future of India', the lecture delivered at Madras on 14 February 1897; *Complete Works*, 3.285–304.
5. 'Sanskrit and prestige go together in India', observed Vivekananda (3.299).

Prabuddha Bharata: 125 Years Young!

Dr Prema Nandakumar

WAY BACK IN THE closing decade of the 19th century, India lay prone for a millennium, trampled upon by foreign hordes, and had come almost to the brink of losing its past, its message of universal harmony, and its united endeavour to step towards the noons of the future. There were lone voices speaking helplessly of the past dawns, and these memories were becoming dim with the introduction of Macaulay's Minute. But that was the darkest period before dawn when a few hero-warriors of the spirit appeared as deliverers, defying all the calculations of the foreign oppressors who wished to wipe out India's priceless heritage based on *Sanātana Dharma*. The flag of Mother India was hoisted by the brave youth of the land. Foremost among them was Swami Vivekananda.

Swamiji's achievements in this sphere defy a complete enumeration. There was nothing big or small that did not shine brilliantly with his golden touch—even a Journal to be published in the English language, a language that was still a stranger to most of the population. But he never entertained any doubt regarding this aspect. When a few enthusiastic, educated young men in Chennai who were drawn to him, wrote to him to show the way to help India return to her ancient glory, prompt was his reply: 'Start an English journal!' Yes, this would re-educate the English educated Indians about their heritage, and they would carry the message all over India

that the nation was now awake, and would never allow its past to die. The future of the world was dependent upon *Sanātana Dharma*, the Eternal Religion, which has been saying from time immemorial in its sacred scriptures: '*Sarve janāḥ sukhino bhavantu*; may all be happy.' India will awake from its present stupor, and recognise the true treasures of the nation: not gold mines and precious stones but its priceless heritage of a unique culture, one that defies time and the forces of darkness, a *chiranjeevi samskriti*, the eternal culture!

Chennai proved to be the seedbed where events moved swiftly. At a time when communication between India and the West was not easy, planning for the journal was taken up, and the Swami's steady lessons of self-confidence found ready listeners. A Prospectus was sent to like-minded people. Welcome letters were received. The President of the Mahabodhi Society, H Dharmapala, even sent the first year's subscription of one pound with a blessing: 'May its mellifluous fragrance purify the materialistic atmosphere of the fallen India! Your efforts will be crowned with success and "Prabuddha Bharata" will surely awaken the lethargic sons of Bharata Varsha.' The journal came out in July 1896. The editor was the young writer, B R Rajam Aiyar.

There is a popular saying in Indian tradition: '*Śreyāmsi bahu vighnāni*; there will be many obstacles while doing good.' This especially turned out to be true for *Prabuddha Bharata*. Even as the journal was being received with widespread excitement, and was publishing enthusing information about Swami Vivekananda's victorious

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march, making Vedanta a household word in the West, the brilliant editor who had taken up the responsibility of giving a shape to the journal as advised by Swamiji, and was filling up the pages with significant articles as also coaxing others to take up their pens for this holy pilgrimage, Rajam Aiyar passed away at the very young age of twenty-six on 13 May 1898. The June issue carried the unhappy news and published articles in his memory. The July 1898 issue did not appear.

But Swamiji was an intrepid warrior in the battlefield of life. By now he had returned from America. As Sister Nivedita said, he had a special love for this journal that he had named, and was very happy at the way it was planned and being published. Immediately, he went to work. He asked his disciple, Captain J H Sevier to take up the task of publishing the magazine with Swami Swarupananda as the editor. *Prabuddha Bharata*, relocated thus at Almora where Captain Sevier lived, came out with the August 1898 issue, flagged off by Swami Vivekananda's poem, 'To the Awakened India':

Once more awake!

For it was sleep, not death to bring thee life,
And rest to lotus-eyes, for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth,
No death for thee!¹

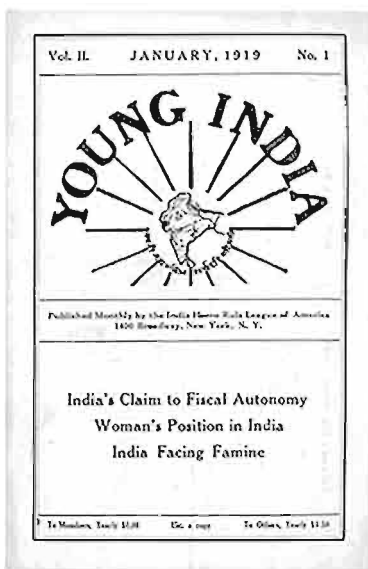
This blessings of the Swami that the journal be a '*chiranjeevi*; immortal' has borne fruit, and *Prabuddha Bharata* has been serving the world of serious and purposive Indian journalism in a very big way.

How has *Prabuddha Bharata* been a beacon for a century and more in a land where usually English journals do flash as meteors but are not able to sustain themselves for long? Even before *Prabuddha Bharata*, there were journals like *Indu Prakash*, *Haris Chandra's Magazine*, *Mookerjee's Magazine*, and *The Madras Review*. Idealists all over India, who had mastered the English

language because of the British thrust in English-oriented education, turned to publishing periodicals, hoping to educate their countrymen in gathering the new breeze from abroad, and also to strengthen themselves to face the foreigner. A millennium earlier, Sanskrit had been a common language for all India. Now the regional languages had made big advances. Presently, it appeared as though English could take the place of knitting the country together.

Already, the First War of Indian Independence referred to as the Sepoy Mutiny by the British rulers had sowed the seeds of patriotism in the Indians who had so far remained divided into various minor kingdoms and principalities. The public recognised a powerful weapon in the English language journals for spreading ideas quickly all over India at the same time. Mere rail traffic was enough for them to get these journals (most of them monthlies) to all parts of the country where they were read by educated Indians who translated the important features into the regional languages for publication. Most of these journals were brought out by idealists who could eke out some funds for them with great difficulty. Occasionally, there were intelligent patrons. Hence, no page was wasted in unnecessary news-talk.

The Mahratta founded by Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1881 was a political journal. It has survived to this day, but it is no more just a political quarterly, but an academic, peer-reviewed journal that deals with a variety of topics tuned to changing times like Ayurveda, Sanskrit, Mass Communications, and Hotel Management. For the rest, politically inspired journals like *Bande Mataram* (1906-10) and *Young India* (1919-31) could not go on because of British repression or lack of financial support. And yet these English journals had not been published in vain. As Rahul Sagar who has worked tirelessly in preparing a new database of pre-Independence



Bande Mataram

Weekly Edition.

PUBLISHED EVERY SUNDAY.

Price One Rupee.

Price One Rupee.

Vol. 6. CALCUTTA, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1907. No. 18.

OUR PICTURE GALLERY.



SRI. AUROBINDO GHOSE.

Indian periodicals from 1857–1947 rightly says:

The great purpose of these periodicals was to foster a national conversation about what kind of country and society India was and should become. Because they were published in the English language they could, and were, read throughout the country. Thus, they had an impact and a reach that could not be matched by vernacular periodicals.²

Politics apart, there were also English journals that chose certain areas of life for their major thrust: these included philosophy, literature, and India's religious heritage. Such journals have had a slightly better chance for survival thanks to the help of an institution or the Princely States. Of the journals completely devoted to philosophy, two readily come to mind: *Prabuddha Bharata* inspired by Swami Vivekananda and *Arya* (1914–21) edited by Sri Aurobindo. Their style of reaching out to the reader was quite different. Their major subjects were the Vedas, Vedanta, and the Bhagavadgita. Nevertheless, they have become reference-points for the common reader and researcher to this day. Both of them have drawn

copiously from the life-giving waters of *Sanātana Dharma*. Both have influenced generations of readers. *Prabuddha Bharata* continues to be published till today. As for *Arya*, almost all the essays published in it as serials have become classics such as 'The Life Divine', 'The Synthesis of Yoga', 'The Foundations of Indian Culture' and 'Essays on the Gita'.

Hence, today, in the publishing history of English journals in India, *Prabuddha Bharata* remains unique. Swamiji, when he gave the name, assured us that we were in awakened India already. A nation that was awakened will not go to sleep again. Some regular edu-

cation in their peerless past was all that was needed for Indians: their philosophy, literature, culture, and religious amity. Since their heart was in the right place when this much-needed, well-planned education was given in the manner it should be, the particles of rust present in the minds of Indians would be dusted away.

Swamiji was clear that this educational syllabus, though very serious in intent, would have to mix the elements properly in a journal that would please all age-groups. His advice was clearly listened to by the highly-educated young admirers in Madras: P Aiyasami, G G Narasimhacharya, B V Kamesvara Iyer, and B R Rajam Aiyar. Vedanta would be the central pole: human unity and religious tolerance would be an abiding oxygen; the spiritual heritage of India as hymnology, Shastras, Itihasas, Puranas, and folklore will be presented shorn of all hypocrisy and ambiguity. And, politics would have no entry into its sacred portals guarding the life-ennobling presence of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Sri Ramakrishna. In essentials, no editor has placed any drastic change in this policy until today. There lies the secret of *Prabuddha*

Bharata's endurance and the maternal way in which the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission have backed this journal.

For, every one of the issues is a lesson in self-control and endurance during each terrible trial. The journal was just five years old when there came the crucial test: the unexpected passing away of Swamiji. Yes, he had been ill but seemed to be recovering. On the morning of 4 July 1902, he had meditated for three hours and later in the afternoon had taken a class of three hours on Panini's grammar for the monastic students. He went out for a long walk in the evening. Then he meditated for some time and laid down on his bed before giving up his body. So young for our eyes and experience, but a *Sanātana*, eternal like Bhishma, he had withdrawn from the physical as though hearkening to the murmur of Mother Ganges flowing near the Belur Math.

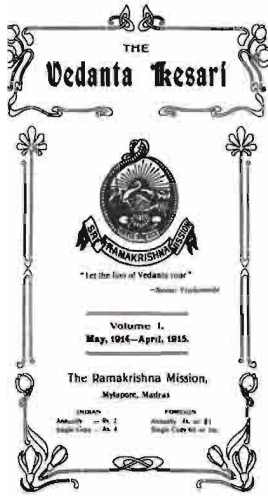
The July 1902 issue comes to the eager readers. And this news! The eyes of each reader of the journal, who may have known by now about the Swami's withdrawal, would have been moist as they began reading the 'In Memoriam' with a dignified statement: 'By the death of Swami Vivekananda, we have lost a dear friend, and suffered an irreparable loss.' 'Dear friend!' How very true! There are leading articles on the Swami from other well-known journals like *The Indian Nation*, Calcutta, *The Advocate*, Lucknow, and *The Tribune*, Lahore. In keeping with the ideals of Swami Vivekananda, karma yoga has no stopping. No time for tears but remembrance and moving forward! 'The Hymn of Creation' from Rig Veda is published in this issue: 'That vibrated motionless, one with its own glory.' Going through the issues down the century, one recognises this firm commitment to the Swami's hopes for a vibrant India that is already awake!

After the deeply sad announcement in two brief paragraphs that 'the Holy Mother, the

divine consort of Sri Ramakrishna, after her lifelong good services to the world, left the mortal regions in Mahasamadhi', the issue (August 1920), however, gives detailed information regarding the work done by the Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama in Allahabad, Puri famine relief work, explanation of Vivekachudamani verses (serial), and other topics on Vedanta and Indian culture.

This is a great lesson gained from the journal by awakened India, and the reason why the journal has been a meaningful part of our life. Again, though the originating spring is the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement, *Prabuddha Bharata* has not closed its doors for other areas of experience in philosophy, life, and literature. From the very first issue, it was made clear that Vedanta was the main portal. This was emphasised in the opening paragraph of the Prospectus issued some months before the publication of the first issue in July 1896, to assure the educated elite of India that the time had come to recognise the renaissance in Vedantic studies and one should firm up this interest as a permanent spring for the future generations:

In the wonderful disposition of Providence, it has been designed that truths revealed, perhaps for the first time to the sages of our country, and treasured up by them in a monumental form should cross oceans and mountains and spread among Nations utterly foreign to us both in their past and their present lives. The Kantian revolution in the Western philosophy, the outpourings of the Upanishads-intoxicated Schopenhauer, the abstruse metaphysics of the post-Kantians, the revival of Sanskrit study, the Theosophic Movement, the conversion and activity of Mrs. Besant, the remarkable lectures of Max Muller, the great Parliament of Religions and the timely appearance of Swami Vivekananda have all been unswervingly tending to the dissemination of those great truths, Kripananda, Abhayanaanda, Yogananda, and a whole host of converts to Vedantism are springing up



everywhere. Science itself has become a willing tool in the hands of our ancient philosophy. The word Vedanta is as familiar on the shores of Lake Michigan as on the banks of the Ganges.

The tightly worded Prospectus gained immediate listeners and *Prabuddha Bharata* was born. True to

these words, the journal has untiringly kept the flag of Vedanta flying. And Vedanta has so many mansions! Hence, the journal has given space to other philosophical thoughts from the West as well. All this, recorded by innumerable students of Vedanta and scholars from all over the world, carefully checked by a 'parampara' (tradition) of sannyasin-scholars (except for Rajam Aiyar) belonging to the Ramakrishna Order, has given a steady course for the journal.

The Prospectus itself is a study in humility. The journal would be 'a sort of supplement to the *Brahmavadin*' which was, of course, all Vedanta. *Brahmavadin* had been inspired by Swami Vivekananda and amid financial difficulties, had seen publication till 1914. However, the *Brahmavadin* turned out to be an inspiration to start the '*Vedanta Kesari*' which has now successfully completed 107 years of publication. Thus the idealism of Swami Vivekananda's admirers and disciples has been a steady glow in Indian journalism.

Prabuddha Bharata, from the first issue itself, learnt an important lesson from Swamiji. Tell meaningful stories to catch the readers young! If today, we proudly raise the flag of this magazine, it is mainly due to the story content in the early issues. Literally, a *Kathā-Sarit-Sāgara* (Ocean

of Stories) explaining philosophy, the yogas of karma, bhakti and knowledge in an easy manner to make people understand the great values of life! There was the never-failing granary of meaningful stories in the Mahabharata, and there was the rich folklore found all over India. As we move to the next issue, as we walk to the next year, as we gallop to the next decade, the art of story-telling keeps the readers bound to their journal which is a favourite of both young and older readers. These stories come as serials too!

The journal sees to it that *peace* is as much a reality as *war*. The First World War rages, but here we read quietly the epistles of Swami Vivekananda, Bhartrihari's *Vairāgya Shatakam*, translations from the Tamil saint-poet Tayumanavar (all of them serials) and just a reference to the Franco-German War in the brief section, 'By the Way'. No more.


A hundred years of *Prabuddha Bharata* later, we realise that the story-telling sessions have slowly receded to the background. One reason is that Indian children had now a variety of this genre available. A publication series like *Amar Chitra Katha* and monthlies like *Chandamama* gave a good fight to literature from abroad and educated them in their great past, a work that had been inaugurated by the *Prabuddha Bharata*. The success of Indian publishers of children's books is not this place to deal with, but it is enough to say that the time had come to make *Prabuddha Bharata* deal more with Indian philosophical writing, critical or creative, in a big way.

Let us take the beginning of the centenary year, January 1995. It is a special volume. A Sanskrit hymn to Sri Ramakrishna is followed by a delightful musical, 'The Universal Gospel'. Drawing the needed texts from world scriptures, with music by John Schlenck, this beautiful creation tells us the story of Sri Ramakrishna. One

could say, the sheer story-telling of the earlier issues that rang in 1896 (from the month of July) now gets to be innovative, a psychological realm of story-telling. Articles from Swami Bhuteshananda ('Spiritual Life for the Modern Age'), Swami Ranganathananda ('Living Vedanta'), Pravrajika Brahmaprana's sumptuous paper ('Vivekananda's Yoga Technology in a multimedia Age') and many more are all meant for adult readers. The traditional story-telling style of the Indian past has given place to the psychological-philosophical-technological age.

Would that mean science and spirituality will always have to be at the two ends of a pole? Not quite, if one goes by 'Labyrinths of Consciousness', an essay drawn from *The Telegraph*. There are further riches too in this centenary special issue. Rev. Ananda Maitreya, a doyen among scholars of the Theravada School and one who is also close to the Ramakrishna Movement is interviewed by Pravrajika Brahmaprana to understand how the East meets West in the contemporary world. There is a heart-warming tribute to Swami Vivekananda's impact upon the West by his Chicago speech, yet another musical hailing Swami Vivekananda: 'A Mission to the World'.

So, as we enter 2021, we realise that *Prabuddha Bharata* has succeeded in its mission of educating a few generations, and now there is no particular need to tell stories from the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Those who come to *Prabuddha Bharata* now readily understand their heritage, the unique *Sanātana Dharma* that has been able to illumine the entire world. The focus shifts to wider areas of achievement by the Indians and Vedanta-inspired personalities from the West. This is reflected in the Review Section which has, from the very beginning, been very educative for the reader. Since there is no 'finale' for a Vedantin's life, *Prabuddha Bharata*, coming

from Mayavati, Himalayas, continues to point out new pathways in Vedanta as also in civilisation. Indeed, it stands tallest not only in age and content but also in an optimistic view of life. *Awakened India?* 

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2. See <<https://www.firstpost.com/india/new-database-of-pre-independence-indian-periodicals-from-1857-1947-reflects-a-nation-forging-irs-identity-7748851.html>> accessed 02 November 2020.

Beat the Drum

Beat! Beat the drum!
Beat the drum of Victory!

Having vanquished the demon Fear,
and killed the reptile Lie,
We've embraced the Veda's path that
leads to Brahma-Knowledge.

Beat! Beat the drum!

Having bathed in the Sun's bright rays,
and basked in the light of Truth,
We've scared away the spectre Death
that takes so heavy a toll of life.

Beat! Beat the drum!

The crow and the sparrow are of us,
the sea and the mountain are of us;
'Tis ourselves everywhere we see,
and the heart dances with delight.

Beat! Beat the drum!

A free rendering by Prema Nandakumar of a Tamil song by Sri Subramania Bharati. This poem was originally published in January 1958 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

The Importance of Two-ness

Rajiv Malhotra

IN COMPUTER SCIENCE, the binary system with only two values (0 and 1) is sufficient to represent immense complexity—including pictures, videos, multimedia, and in fact, everything we can sense or conceptualise. Therefore, the expansion *Two* → *Many* is easy for us to understand: If two entities exist, we can understand how an infinite set of entities can be constructed out of them. Such is the power of two.

However, suppose we start with one entity, then how do we get two entities out of it? In Vedanta terms, the issue is to understand how *Advaita* → *Dvaita* comes about. In other words, how does multiplicity arise if the fundamental reality is One, and what is their relationship with each other? This has been the central debate in Vedanta among its various schools, the main ones being organised as Advaita, Vishishtadvaita, and Dvaita.

The Vedas say that reality consists of *pāramārthika-sattā* and *vyāvahārika-sattā*, the absolute and the relative realms, respectively. The key issue has been the relationship between them. If *pāramārthika* is the absolute reality, then what is *vyāvahārika*; how does it relate to *pāramārthika*, and why does *vyāvahārika* exist at all?

Confusion about Vyāvahārika

There are popular interpretations of Advaita claiming that only *pāramārthika* is real and *vyāvahārika* is an illusion; they translate Acharya

Shankara's word *mithyā* to describe *vyāvahārika*, as illusion, or falsehood. The proponents of this interpretation commonly say things like: The world is an illusion. Two-ness is an illusion in this view, because *pāramārthika* alone is real while *vyāvahārika* is false. On the other hand, the Vishishtadvaita school maintains that the one absolute Brahman *includes* multiplicity; this is also called qualified non-dualism. The Dvaita school holds that there are two realities with their own respective essences, but that one is absolute, and the other is dependent on it. Being dependent makes it relative but does not negate its existence. In other words, both are real, though one has a higher status as independent of the other.

The smile on a face is real but cannot exist independently of the face. However, the face exists even without the smile. One cannot say the smile is an illusion just because it is temporary and dependent on the face for its existence. Another analogy used is of the blue lotus: its blueness is a property of the lotus and depends on the lotus' existence, while the lotus can exist without necessarily being blue.

This discussion on the nature of 'two-ness' has been the centre-stage in Indian philosophical discourse for many centuries. My intention here is not to try to resolve this old debate. Rather, as an Advaitin, I find far too many confused and muddled teachers professing the illusory nature of *vyāvahārika* because they are unable to explain *mithyā* any other way and because this gives them a convenient escape from having to address the hard questions of our empirical world.

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I will divert briefly to tell a story that led me to investigate what I have called the sameness syndrome and its confusion among many of our spiritual teachers. This investigation led me to write the book, *Being Different*.

It was sometime in the early 90s that in a visit to Bangalore I was introduced to a young scholar. I was told that as an IIT graduate who had recently joined a famous ashrama as an *āchārya*, he would be the type of intelligent, scientific, and logical person who would understand the issues I was working on and that we ought to collaborate. I was hopeful for a productive meeting at the hotel I was staying at. When he arrived, we had barely introduced ourselves, and he started pointing out at a sign in the hotel and said: 'See that sign Om there, I don't believe in the Om sign because there should also be a Cross and a Crescent since they are all same.' I explained that *difference is a key attribute of the cosmos*, and that collapsing it into homogeneity was not only fake but also disrespectful of others.

We thus started on a wrong foot and the more I discussed with him, the more I realised that he was confused with the common misconception that everything is the same and that anything that shows the difference is a problem. So, I decided to respond to him in a kind manner and I asked him why he wanted to wear a particular robe and why not any other clothes. Also, I asked him why he follows a certain diet and lifestyle if everything is the same, or everything is illusory.

I find the kind of arguments he offered to be escapist because they are unable to distinguish between *vyāvahārika* and *pāramārthika*. Such proponents chant shlokas of the *pāramārthika*, but do it in the *vyāvahārika* context, which shows that they do not understand the relationship. I started telling the scholar that the shastras and the Vedic lifestyle require understanding the importance of differences in the *vyāvahārika*

realm, which is where we are situated. I offered the following examples:

- The theory of the *guṇas*—sattva, rajas and tamas—is applicable in the *vyāvahārika* realm; the *pāramārthika* realm is beyond the *guṇas*. One must become knowledgeable of this and live accordingly, and not negate the very basic teachings of our tradition.
- The science of Ayurveda, with the *doṣas* (physical defects) of *vāta*, *pitta*, and *kapha*, is in the *vyāvahārika* realm; only in the *pāramārthika* realm there are no *doṣas* and the issues we typically deal with in the world do not apply there. Escaping from difference is tantamount to negating Ayurveda.
- The *Varṇāśrama* system—the four *varṇas* and the four ashramas combined into a 4x4 matrix of 16 combinations—that structures our conduct, lifestyle, optimisation of dos and don'ts, are all in the *vyāvahārika* realm. In the *pāramārthika* or transcendent realm, one does not have these contexts and there is no need to follow the Dharma Shastras.

In fact, all the teachings in the Bhagavadgita, everything about karma and dharma, would be voided if one were to ignore the very existence of differences.

The Blunder of Sameness

The entire Dharmashastras are contextual and based on differences. The whole world of karma is dualistic—*there is a difference between right and wrong*. There is causation along with freedom of the individual to choose at each moment: we live in the world of causation if we are in the *vyāvahārika*. There are those who do not want to deal with the complexity of the *vyāvahārika* realm and hope to escape out of responsibilities, paradoxes, and challenges rather than facing them. This is escapism and world-negating and not what the Dharma teaches.

The entire Mahabharata is about Dharma v/s Adharma. If everything were the same because everyone is Bhagavan, and if everyone's actions are good and right because it is Bhagavan doing them, then why would Sri Krishna ask Arjuna to fight? Why would Sri Rama have to fight Ravana if everything were the same and Ravana was also ultimately the same essence as Sri Rama, and if in the end it does not matter because everything is *mithyā*? There would then be no message in *Itihāsa* (history or epics), and all our teachings would be dismissible as humbug.

The *puruṣārthas* of *kāma*, *artha*, and *dharma* involve living in the world of contextual differences that shift from one situation to the next. Yoga's ethics of *yama* (self-control) and *niyama* (discipline) are also dualistic—that is the nature of *vyāvahārika*. The very idea of *tapasya* or austerity is *vyāvahārika*. If everything is the same as everything else, why bother with *tapasya* and *yajna* or sacrifice?

The scholar got especially upset when I asked him the pragmatic but profound question: What is the reason to distinguish between eating prasada and any other food? This was a genuine question that an Advaitin should be able to address. After all, there could not be any essentially right or wrong thing to eat since fundamentally everything is the same, made of same elementary particles, and ultimately only consciousness. He angrily walked out of the meeting.

That scholar's way of thinking is a common confusion among a vast majority of Vedantins I have met, including many gurus. This has always been a profoundly serious problem for me. They do not feel comfortable criticising or negating anything or anyone. But such negation is important, for it is not criticism driven by personalities and ego, but by important and empowering interpretations of our major works for the followers. If negation were not important,

there would be no Ramayana or Mahabharata required as all persons and their actions would be considered fine.

Our tradition is based on logical arguments and debates. Acharya Shankara himself was so rigorous in negating and falsifying the opponent. If there is no such thing as falsity, that is, no such thing as a false statement, then the whole tradition of *pūrva-pakṣa*, argument of an opponent, would be rendered futile.

The argument for not accepting differences, for not wanting to falsify, is a recipe for Dharmic catastrophe. It would confuse our population about the importance of taking action, leading to further loss of *kṣatriyatā* (nature of a warrior). This is what I feel is so wrong with today's teachings of Vedanta by some teachers.

The Importance of Differences

The cosmos is built on diversity. Every *kṣaṇa*—moment in time—is distinct and no two moments are the same because there is a constant flux. Within any species, no two individuals are identical. The entire plant kingdom has immense diversity; be it oak trees or roses, each has multiple varieties and sub-varieties. Diversity is the basis of the cosmos and all manifestation of the 'One' is built on this principle. If one proposes that something is wrong with diversity, then one is saying the universe is fundamentally flawed.

The central idea should not be that homogeneity creates harmony but, *harmony exists only with diversity*. Harmony with diversity also means the need for mutual respect; one does not have to agree with everything the other person says.

People say that truth is one, hence we must accept whatever someone says. This is nonsense: *There is a difference between truth and truth-claims*. For the same patient (whose condition is the one truth), different doctors could have different truth-claims about the diagnosis. Likewise,

different religions assert different truth-claims about the nature of fundamental reality. Any religious tradition, including our own, any ideological position, makes truth-claims. Such claims are *subject to falsification* and that has always been an important pursuit by intellectuals. We debate each other's truth-claims. This is seen all the time among scientists, mathematicians, doctors—they look at the evidence, test them, and propose counter positions. Acharya Shankara and others after him, were vociferous debaters about the truth-claims of other schools of thought, even though the truth of ultimate reality is one. But I find many Advaitins, unfortunately, backing out of such engagements by using escapist arguments when faced with religious differences making conflicting truth-claims.

Strangely, many acharyas find it easy to disagree with rival Vedanta schools but are uncomfortable disagreeing with other non-Vedic religious claims such as those in Christianity and Islam. My sense is that as bookworms they have learned the old debates from Acharya Shankara's time, hence able to parrot them, but have not done enough *pūrva-pakṣa* of Abrahamic religions and cannot debate them well.

We are born in *vyāvahārika-sattā* and the path is lived here. The importance given to this realm as our ground for action is seen in the Upanishads—Brahman is embodied in the *vyāvahārika-sattā*. This profound life-affirming outlook requires us to understand the nature of multiplicity, complexity, and diversity.

The manifested world consists of the principle of causation. Every action is a karma that produces some effect, and no effect happens by itself without a corresponding cause. Understanding this karmic principle of causation is needed to be able to live a Dharmic life. The way to transcend from the *vyāvahārika* into the *pāramārthika* realm is not achieved by pretending that the

former is an illusion; the path requires one to *go through vyāvahārika* and not escape from it by running away.

The frequent advice given by Advaitins to *Kill the Mind* as the way to achieve moksha is commonly misunderstood because it suggests one could use anaesthesia to become unconscious and achieve moksha. This is ridiculous because the real meaning of such teachings is to achieve a state of conscious existence *beyond causation*. The ordinary mental state is imprisoned in causation, and this must be transcended. One's thoughts are usually being caused by previous thoughts; hence, there is a thought parade. The ego claims ownership of all activities including mental action, which creates karma and causes a reaction; this is the realm of causation.

Transcendence is a state beyond mental discursiveness. There are many techniques taught by our sages, where one can live within the *vyāvahārika* and become less and less subject to causation until one is functioning bodily but not causing any karmic reactions; only the effects of previous causes continue. There are prescribed paths which do not involve denying the *vyāvahārika* circumstances one is born into.

Differentiating between Bipolar and Bifocal

Most students of Vedanta I know slip down the slope of what I consider *two contradictory modes* of living—the ashrama mode and mundane life mode. When these individuals are in the ashrama, they speak of lofty *pāramārthika* concepts but the moment they drive out of the ashrama, they switch to the pragmatic mode dealing with the daily issues of the ego-centred world. I see this duplicity in many who claim to be following the path of Advaita. This leads to my differentiation between the *bipolar and bifocal modes of cognition*.



Acharya Shankara's Statue at
Adi Shankara Keerthi Sthambha, Kalady, his birth place

Bipolar is when one is fluctuating between two modes alternatively: from mode A to mode B and back to A and then again B. Mode A is one's dualistic life and mode B is the brief moments of meditation or in an ashrama immersed in talks of non-dualism. Switching between A and B is what I call as bipolar; it is a type of time-division multiplexing, where one is shifting back and forth between the two. Unfortunately, this does not solve the Advaitin's predicament. When the going gets tough in the *vyāvahārika* realm—that is, in mode A—one escapes into the *pāramārthika* realm, mode B, and once the problem is solved, one is back to 'enjoy life' in mode A.

The second way of cognising is what I call the *bifocal* way, that is, one sees *both realities at once*. One does not escape out of one mode to another but recognises both simultaneously. In

other words, *one consciously sees Bhagavan in the vyāvahārika scenario, and performs driven by the truth of the pāramārthika realm*. One consciously recognises all the *nāma-rūpa* (names and forms) as Bhagavan's manifestation. One knows the Absolute, while dealing with the relative world of actions and causation. One sees Bhagavan as the other person performing his role (whether *he* is self-aware of being Bhagavan or not), while also being fully aware of oneself as Bhagavan's role in the context. This is being bifocal, that is, there is one part of my cognitive lens that is *pāramārthika* and always fixed on it, and simultaneously superimposed on it. I enact in the *vyāvahārika* realm as the theatre of action.

To understand this, consider the following analogy: Suppose an actor A performs a role as a character B. On stage, he pretends to be B, but all the while he also knows that he is actually A. Similarly, I am fixed in my absolute essence as *sat-chit-ānanda* performing as an individual in this body; I engage and enact in the *vyāvahārika* realm and *simultaneously* I am aware that others are also the same *pāramārthika* essence performing different roles in the *vyāvahārika* realm. This interaction between various roles is what the Bhagavad-gita calls the interaction between various *guṇas*, which are manifestations of the same ultimate essence. We must understand dualism in this way and live this kind of bifocal life.

Nididhyāsana

I would like to conclude by discussing Acharya Shankara's teaching of three stages of practice—*śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*:

- *Śravaṇa* refers to receiving knowledge from the Vedic canon and understanding it with fidelity to the meaning of the concepts. Receptivity with an open mind is *śravaṇa*.
- *Manana* refers to the churning, debating, arguing, and deep thinking on the subject

and is an important part of our learning tradition. In both these, it is important not to let emotions distort the process of acquiring knowledge.

- *Nididhyāsana* is the transformation that follows both *śravaṇa* and *manana*. *Nididhyāsana* is not something which can be *done* i.e., there is no effort on the part of individual will because anything one does always produces an effect and keeps one in the world of causation. One cannot perform something to achieve transcendence from causation; one is already inherently transcendent. There is an absence of the I (ego) in focusing upon the object of contemplation. There is no *doing* of yoga and meditation for this.

Nididhyāsana is a doerless mode of spontaneous happening, and the practices are merely preparatory to lead to the non-doing. The paths are necessary but not sufficient because in the final stage, one must let go of all paths.¹

For instance, there are special mantras for replacing the discursiveness of the mind, and then the mantras themselves dissolve. Such a mantra leads to emptiness and pure consciousness without content. This is a way of doing *something* to lead to *non-doing*. Another way I was taught by my guru is to engage with every person with the bifocal lens, that is, to know that the interaction is with Bhagavan manifested as that person: You are Bhagavan, just like I am Bhagavan. This practice, which is an act of doing, wakes up automatically a new cognition, and this transformation cannot be caused or predicted and is a spontaneous cognitive shift. Nothing changes externally—the *vyāvahārika* world is very much a part of reality, but one is no longer bound by its causation.

This is why I chose the topic of two-ness for this article rather than one-ness which is so

common. I want to discuss what Advaita is *not*, and not merely parrot what it *is*. I do not come across conferences organised on two-ness by Advaitins, because most people are fixated on one-ness and this results in the same points being discussed again and again. In order to progress, it is important for Advaitins to discuss two-ness and the world of karma and dharma, and how this is related to the Absolute one-ness. Why and how has the One become the Two? Is there a genuine change or is it illusory? Is multiplicity built into the unity or something new brought in from elsewhere?

The junction between the *one-ness* and the *two-ness* defines how we function and this needs to become the crux of the conversations of Advaitins. Since two-ness is the platform to realise one-ness, an inquiry by Advaitins into the major yogic paths—karma, jñāna, bhakti—through a focus on two-ness can hold immense value for today's pursuits. One-ness is the goal of all these three major paths, but none of them, as seen in their major works, such as the Bhagavadgita for karma yoga, the Upanishads for the jnana yoga, and various *stutis* (hymns) for bhakti-yoga, call for world negation. Relooking and potentially recasting two-ness and the need for the bifocal lens in today's context, in each of these paths is important for Advaitins now more than ever. I hope this article provokes the Advaitins to these important conversations instead of discussing only the already known theories of one-ness. ❧

Notes and References

1. Adi Shankara's Vivekachudamani, verse 364 refers to nididhyāsana as being a hundred thousand times superior to manana, and manana itself being a hundred times better than śravaṇa. Current translation used is from Vivekachudamani of Sri Shankaracharya, translated by Swami Madhavananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2005), 138.



Moving Mountains: Swami Vivekananda's Himalayan Connections

Makarand R Paranjape

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (1863–1902) was one of the most powerful and influential makers of modern India.¹ Though there is scarcely an aspect of his dazzling but brief life of less than forty years that has not been studied, his Himalayan connections demand further exploration. Not only because his relationship with the Himalayas was complex, multi-layered, and enduring, but also because some of his major, life-changing spiritual experiences occurred in the mountainous heights of Uttarakhand and Kashmir.² This essay is an attempt to snapshot those crucial and

momentous events in the Swami's Himalayan sojourns because they continue to reverberate in the national consciousness to this date.

Devatātmā

In his 'Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda', K S Ramaswami Sastri recalls the nine days Vivekananda stayed at their home in Trivandrum (now Tiruvananthapuram) in December 1892. The Swami was accompanied by a Muslim attendant and, at first, himself taken for a 'Mohammedan'. Sastri was then fourteen years old.³

Sastri recalls how one morning, when he was studying from his textbook, Kalidasa's *Kumārasambhava*, Swamiji asked: 'Can you

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repeat the great poet's description of the Himalayas?' Sastri recited the verses, so well-known, that open the *Mahākāvya* (great poem):

अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशि देवतात्मा
हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः।
पूर्वापरौ तोयनिधी विगाह्य स्थितः
पृथिव्या इव मानदण्डः ॥

*Astyuttarasyaṁ diśi devatātmā
himalāyo nāma nagādhirājah;
pūrvāparau toyanidhi vigāhya sthitah
prthivyā iva mānadāṇḍah.*

The couplet may be roughly translated thus: in the northern direction, forming the heartland of Gods, stands the overlord of snowy mountains, Himalaya, like a measuring rod of earth thrust betwixt eastern and western oceans. [1.1]⁴

Pleased, Swamiji remarks: 'Do you know that I am coming after a long stay amidst the sublimity of the Himalayan scenes and sights?' So saying, he asks the boy to repeat the opening verse, this time also explaining its meaning. When Sastri does so, Swamiji says: 'That is good, but not enough.' Then, repeating the couplet in 'his marvellous, musical, measured tones', Swamiji explains:

The important words in this verse are *devatātmā* (ensouled by Divinity) and *mana-danda* (measuring-rod). The poet implies and suggests that the Himalaya is not a mere wall accidentally constructed by nature. It is ensouled by Divinity and is the protector of India and her civilization not only from the chill icy blasts blowing from the arctic region but also from the deadly and destructive incursions of invaders. The Himalaya further protects India by sending the great rivers Sindhu, Ganga, and Brahmaputra perennially fed by melted ice irrespective of the monsoon rains. *Mana-danda* implies that the poet affirms that the Indian civilization is the best of all human civilizations and forms the standard by which all the other human civilizations, past, present, and future,

must be tested. Such was the poet's lofty conception of patriotism.⁵

This extraordinary explanation not only underscores Vivekananda's great erudition and deep study of classical Indian literature, but, even more remarkably, his love of the Himalayas.⁶ Sastri reminisces: 'I felt thrilled by his words. I treasure them even to this day, and they shine in my heart even now with an undimmed and undiminished splendour' (ibid.).

The travels in the Himalayas that Swamiji mentioned to Sastri occurred earlier that year in 1890. After Sri Ramakrishna's death on 16 August 1886, Swamiji had stayed mostly at the Baranagore Monastery for two years, consolidating the order of young sannyasins (renunciates) that he founded. His itinerant days began in 1888, taking him all across the country, as a wandering monk. That year, he had reached as far as Rishikesh in today's Uttarakhand, but had to return because he contracted malaria. But in 1890, Swamiji again travelled extensively in the Himalayas, going on foot from Nainital to Almora, thence to Rudraprayag, Srinagar (Garhwal), Tehri, Mussoorie, then back to the plains via Rishikesh, Hardwar, and Dehra Dun.

So well-known was his love for the mountains that his standard biography *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples' devotes a whole chapter to Vivekananda's 'Wanderings in the Himalayas'.⁷ Eager 'to see the snow-capped Himalayas', he did not wish to tarry in the sacred city of Varanasi, predicting to his host, Pramadas Mitra: 'I am now leaving Kashi, and shall not return (here next time) until I have burst on society like a bomb-shell; and it will follow me like a dog.'⁸

From Nainital, Swamiji, accompanied by his brother monk, Akhandananda, planned to walk all the way to Badrinath. But they could not proceed beyond Karnaprayag. The region



Swami Akhandananda (1864–1937)

was famine-struck, with the onward roads closed by the government. Both Swamiji and Akhandananda fell ill, wracked by high fever and chills. Nevertheless, their party spent many memorable days in Chati, Alakananda, Tehri, Srinagar (Garhwal), Ganeshprayag, Rishikesh, and Hardwar, before doctors advised them to return to the plains, to convalesce in Dehra Dun.

There were two notable incidents in this period that bear emphasis. Towards the beginning of their Himalayan so-

journ, they stopped near a stream, in a place known as Kakrighat, about fourteen and a half miles from Almora by road. Under an ancient peepul tree, Swamiji sat totally absorbed in meditation. When he came back, he declared to Akhandananda: 'Oh, Gangadhar!⁹ I have just passed through one of the greatest moments of my life. Here, under this peepul tree, one of the greatest problems of my life has been solved. I have found the oneness of the macrocosm with the microcosm. In this microcosm of the body, everything that is there (in the macrocosm) exists. I have seen the whole universe within an atom.'¹⁰ This was one of his great realisations, jotted down in a fragment in Bengali in his notebook, translated later in the following fashion:

In the beginning was the Word etc.

The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the Universal

Soul in the Living Prakriti (Nature)—the objective universe. Shivā (i.e. Kali)¹¹ is embracing Shiva; this is not a fancy. This covering of the one (Soul) by the other (Nature) is analogous to the relation between an idea and the word expressing it: they are one and the same, and it is only by a mental abstraction that one can distinguish them. Thought is impossible without words. Therefore, 'in the beginning was the Word' etc.

This dual aspect of the Universal Soul is eternal. So what we perceive or feel is this combination of the Eternally Formed and the Eternally Formless (ibid.).

Priyanjali Bhalla, writing in the *Doon Mosaic*, refers to the above incident and says that it was during this period that Swamiji 'got enlightenment about the similarity between the macrocosm and the microcosm'. In her view: 'The spirit of the Himalayas helped Swami Vivekananda reach his climax of being a spiritual teacher.'¹² She also refers to his realisation of the unity between the macrocosm and microcosm, which would be a recurring theme in his teachings.¹³ For Bhalla, the sum of the Swami's teaching, whose secret he discovered in the Himalayas, is: 'Adjust the microcosm which is in your power to do, the macrocosm will adjust itself for you. All the power is inside you. Discover it, believe it. That's all you need to do' (ibid). Later, Swamiji would deliver his famous lecture on the same theme, 'The Cosmos: The Macrocosm', delivered in New York, on 19 January 1896, which I shall come to later.

During this period, Swamiji received a telegram from his brother informing him of the suicide of his sister. Some claim that this experience made him a champion of women's rights throughout his life. As Sister Nivedita puts it:

news reached him, of the death in pitiful extremity, of the favourite sister of his childhood, and he had fled into the wilder mountains, leaving no clue. ... it seemed that this death had inflicted on the Swami's heart a wound, whose

quivering pain had never for one moment ceased. And we may, perhaps, venture to trace some part at least of his burning desire for the education and development of Indian women to this sorrow.¹⁴

Though these wanderings in the hills suited him temperamentally, he was forced, as it were, to descend once more to the plains to engage with the toils and troubles of the suffering masses. Later, he remembered renunciation and freedom of the 'stern ascetics' of Hardwar and Hrishikesh:

I saw many great men in Hrishikesh. One case that I remember was that of a man who seemed to be mad. He was coming nude down the street, with boys pursuing and throwing stones at him. The whole man was bubbling over with laughter, while blood was streaming down his face and neck. I took him and bathed his wound, putting ashes (made by burning a piece of cotton cloth) on it to stop the bleeding. And all the time, with peals of laughter, he told me of the fun the boys and he had been having, throwing the stones. 'So the Father plays,' he said (159–60).

In the same spirit, later in life, he declared in his letter of 9 July 1897 to Mary Hale, one of his spiritual sisters: '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: and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.'¹⁵

Mayavati

Swamiji left for Western shores on 31 May 1893. Setting sail from Bombay (now Mumbai), he travelled through Colombo, Malaya, Hong Kong, Kobe, (overland through Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo) to Yokohama. There he boarded another ship, reaching Vancouver on 25 July. Then he rode a train that brought him to Chicago on 30 July. After his dazzling debut at the World's

Parliament of Religions on 11 September 1893, he lectured and travelled throughout the United States. He made two trips to Britain and the Continent in 1895 and 1896. Towards the end of the latter, he started his journey back to India, arriving in Colombo (Sri Lanka) to an ecstatic welcome on 15 January 1897. Swamiji's triumphal return to his homeland ended in Calcutta, his birth-city, where he founded the Ramakrishna Mission on 1 May 1897.

Almost immediately after, he repaired to the Himalayas to rest and recuperate in Almora. There he was received and welcomed in a moving Hindi oration offered by the prominent citizens of the region. Comparing him to Acharya Shankara, the 'Welcome Address' praised his work in spreading the authentic message of Hindu Dharma in North America and Europe. Hoping that Swamiji would establish an Ashrama in the Himalayas, it added:

We have heard with great pleasure that you intend establishing a Math (monastery) here, and we sincerely pray that your efforts in this direction be crowned with success. The great Shankaracharya also, after his spiritual conquest, established a Math at Badarikāshrama in the Himalayas for the protection of the ancient religion. Similarly, if your desire is also fulfilled, India will be greatly benefited. By the establishment of the Math, we, Kumaonese, will derive



Kakrighat, Almora, where Swamiji realised the Oneness of Macrocosm and Microcosm

special spiritual advantages, and we shall not see the ancient religion gradually disappearing from our midst. From time immemorial, this part of the country has been the land of asceticism. The greatest of the Indian sages passed their time in piety and asceticism in this land; but that has become a thing of the past (3.351-2).

Swamiji responded with equal enthusiasm and praise for his hosts in the hills:

This is the land of dreams of our forefathers, in which was born Pārvati, the Mother of India. This is the holy land where every ardent soul in India wants to come at the end of its life, and to close the last chapter of its mortal career. On the tops of the mountains of this blessed land, in the depths of its caves, on the banks of its rushing torrents, have been thought out the most wonderful thoughts. ... This is the land which, since my very childhood, I have been dreaming of passing my life in, and ... yet it is the hope of my life to end my days somewhere in this Father of Mountains where Rishis lived, where philosophy was born. ... the Himalayas always teach us, that one theme which is reverberating in the very atmosphere of the place, the one theme the murmur of which I hear even now in the rushing whirlpools of its rivers—renunciation!

सर्वं वस्तु भयान्वितं भुवि नृणां वैराग्यमेवाभयम्—
'Everything in this life is fraught with fear. It is renunciation alone that makes one fearless.' Yes, this is the land of renunciation.

Friends, you have been very kind to allude to an idea of mine, which is to start a centre in the Himalayas, and perhaps I have sufficiently explained why it should be so, why, above all others, this is the spot which I want to select as one of the great centres to teach this universal religion. These mountains are associated with the best memories of our race; if these Himalayas are taken away from the history of religious India, there will be very little left behind. Here, therefore, must be one of those centres, not merely of activity, but more of calmness, of

meditation, and of peace; and I hope some day to realise it (3.352-4).

We get a glimpse of his daily routine and activities from his letters written during this period. Writing to Doctor Shashi (Bhushan Ghosh) on 29 May 1897 from Almora, he says:

Here I feel that I have no disease whatsoever ... I feel very, very strong now. You ought to see me, Doctor, when I sit meditating in front of the beautiful snow-peaks and repeat from the Upanishads:

‘न तस्य रोगो न जरा न मृत्युः प्राप्तस्य योगाग्निमयं शरीरम्—He has neither disease, nor decay, nor death; for, verily, he has obtained a body full of the fire of Yoga’ (5.128-9).

Swamiji stayed on in Kumaon for two and a half months, returning to the plains on 8 August 1897. His English disciples, Capt. James Henry Sevier and his wife Charlotte Elizabeth Sevier, along with Swami Swarupananda, whom he had ordained into sannyasa, made Swamiji's dream of creating a Himalayan centre come true. Mr Sevier had served as a non-commissioned officer in the British Indian army before returning to England. He and his wife met Swamiji in London in 1895. The following year, they accompanied him on his continental journey in 1896. In July, recuperating in the Swiss Alps, Swamiji expressed his wish that he wanted to set up a spiritual retreat in the Himalayas.

The Seviars travelled with him back to India on the same ship from Naples. They rented a house near Almora, where Swamiji came to stay. Later, in 1898, they found a secluded tea estate at a height of 6400 ft, recessed in thicket of deodars, pine, and oak, affording spectacular views of the snowy mountains. Nine kilometres from Lohaghat in Champawat district, Uttarakhand, it is known as Mayavati. That is where the Seviars, along with Swami Swarupananda, founded the Advaita Ashrama on 19 March 1899.¹⁶

Swamiji, who could not be present at the inauguration of the ashrama, sent a powerful message on the 'Oneness of all beings' as a foundational truth, with its 'particularisation' being the aim of *sadhana* or spiritual practice: 'knowing Him—and therefore the Universe—as our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery and leads to Infinite Freedom'.¹⁷ For Swamiji, Advaita was the only system that gave 'man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain to Absolute Freedom' (ibid.). Hence Swamiji declared: 'Dependence is misery. Independence is happiness' (ibid.). The purpose of the Himalayan ashrama was to provide a place where these truths could be realised:

To give this One Truth a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start this Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practised nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone (ibid.).

Swamiji went on his second trip abroad from July 1899 to December 1900. So keen was he about his Himalayan retreat that on 27 December 1899 he wrote to one of his disciples, Sister Christine:¹⁸

I will buy a little place in the Himalayas—a whole hill—about say, six thousand feet high with a grand view of the eternal snows. There must be springs and a tiny lake. Cedars—the Himalayan cedar forests—and flowers, flowers everywhere. I will have a little cottage; in the middle, my vegetable gardens, which I will work myself—and—and—and—my books—and see the face of man only once in a great while.¹⁹

The following year, still in the US, it is likely that he was referring to Mayavati in his lecture 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?' delivered on 8 April 1900 at San Francisco:

But on the heights of the Himalayas I have a place where I am determined nothing shall enter except pure truth. ... There are an Englishman and an Englishwoman in charge of the place. The purpose is to train seekers of truth and to bring up children without fear and without superstition. They shall not hear about Christs and Buddhas and Shivas and Vishnus—none of these. They shall learn, from the start, to stand upon their own feet. They shall learn from their childhood that God is the spirit and should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Everyone must be looked upon as spirit (8.140).

Consequently, when Swamiji visited Mayavati in 1901, he criticised attempts to institute dualistic worship. Yet, those used to such modes of worship, continued with a small shrine to Sri Ramakrishna till March 1902. When it was removed, some were unhappy to be deprived of it. It is only when Sri Sarada Ma, Sri Ramakrishna's consort also known as Holy Mother, intervened in favour of unalloyed Advaita that the matter was resolved.²⁰

The Seiviers, at Swamiji's behest, also revived *Prabuddha Bharata*, the Ramakrishna Order's English journal, with Swarupananda as its editor. Originally published from Madras (now Chennai) since 1896, the magazine floundered in July 1898 with the untimely death of its founding editor, B R Rajam Iyer. Swamiji requested Capt. Sevier to assume responsibility of its publication. Mr Sevier bought a hand press, type, paper, ink, and all the necessary equipment from Calcutta (now Kolkata), transporting it all the way to Almora, from where the journal was revived in August 1898.²¹ Swamiji wrote a rousing poem in *vīra rasa* (the heroic mode),

‘To the Awakened India’, to commemorate this historic revival, linking it with the rebirth of India.²² From March 1899 the editing, printing, and binding of *Prabuddha Bharata* were done in Mayavati.

After Capt. Sevier died in October 1900, Swamiji came to Mayavati soon after his return to India to pay his respects to Mrs Sevier and see his dream ashrama. On 6 January, ensconced in the ‘very, very beautiful ... and simply exquisite’ environs, he wrote to Sara Bull: ‘The snow is lying all round six inches deep, the sun is bright and glorious, and now in the middle of the day we are sitting outside, reading’ (5.151–3).

In the same letter, he praised Mrs Sevier’s wonderful work: ‘Today I walked over the snow uphill about a mile, seeing Mrs. Sevier’s lands; she has made beautiful roads all over. Plenty of gardens, fields, orchards, and large forests, all in her land. The living houses are so simple, so clean, and so pretty, and above all so suited for the purpose’ (ibid.).

Mrs Sevier, whom he used to call ‘mother’, continued to stay at Mayavati for many years before returning to England. She passed away in 1930 at the age of eighty-three. Her remarkable story of dedication, idealism, sacrifice, and spiritual progress is told in *Mother of Mayavati: The Story of Charlotte Sevier and Advaita Ashrama* by Amrita M Salm (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, 2013). A luminous and inspiring personality, Swarupananda died young, before reaching the age of thirty-five.²³



(To be continued)

Notes and References

1. See my study, *Swami Vivekananda: Hinduism and India's Road to Modernity* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2020), where I demonstrate this at length. Swamiji's Himalayan sojourns have been recorded by Union Minister of Education, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, in his Hindi book, *Himalaya Mein Vivekanand* (New Delhi: NBT, 2016). In addition, there is a Doordarshan documentary worth watching on this subject: <<https://www.youtube.com/embed/FLVvW7Pebo>>.
2. Though Vivekananda's major experiences occurred in Uttarakhand and Kashmir, he also loved the Eastern Himalayas, the hill station closest to Calcutta being Darjeeling. He would retreat to the mountains, as his letters in March–April 1897 and April 1898 show, to rest and recuperate from the heat and toils of the cities. For instance, on 23 April 1897, he was writing to Swami Brahmananda that he had just returned from Sandakphu, the highest peak in the Singalila Ridge, West Bengal, near the Indo-Nepal border, Darjeeling district: ‘My health was excellent on my return from Sandukphu (11,924 ft.) and other places’ (https://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/vivekananda/volume_8/epistles_fourth_series/126_rakhal.htm). Future citations from www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info will be provided in parenthesis after the reference.
3. See His Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2017), 270–1. Also available at <https://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/reminiscences/098_ksrs.htm>. K S Ramaswami Sastri's father, K Sundarama Iyer's reminiscences were published in an article, ‘My first Navaratri with Swami Vivekananda’, which is available at <https://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/reminiscences/057_ksi.htm>.
4. Sourced from the English notes and commentary of Raghunath Damodar Karmarkar and S D Gajendragadkar's edition of *Kumarasambhava* (Bombay: Vishwanath and Co., 1923).
5. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, 271.
6. This incident is mentioned in ‘Himalayas—Not Ordinary Mountains, But The Divine Protectors of India’ by Pulkit Mathur: ‘when we read Swami Vivekananda's in-depth explanation of the verse, which goes much beyond the literal translation, the true spirit in which Kalidasa wrote the stanza, along with the Divine significance of the Himalayas as protectors of India's Vedantic knowledge, shines forth’ (<https://www.spiritualbee.com/posts/himalayas-divine-protectors-of-india/>).
7. <<https://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/>>

- swamieastwest/2_files/1-14.html>. Quotations and information in the next few paragraphs detailing Vivekananda's Himalayan sojourn in 1890 are from this source.
8. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 2 vols (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2004), 1.248.
 9. Gangadhar Ghatak (Gangopadhyay) was Swami Akhandananda's pre-monastic name. In those days, Swamiji too went by other names, including Vividishananda; Vivekananda became his stable name later.
 10. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.250.
 11. Original gloss in the biography: 'The reference is to the Tantrika conception of Kali embracing Shiva. Kali is the Mother of the universe, and Shiva, Her Divine Spouse.'
 12. See <<https://doonmozaic.com/vivekanandas-teaching/>>.
 13. Suchismita Sengupta Pandey also documents Vivekananda's Himalayan footprint in a series of articles in *The Pioneer*. See <<https://www.pioneeredge.in/swami-vivekananda-dehradun-swami-vivekanandas-footprint-garhwal-himalayas/>>.
 14. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him* (Kolkata: Udbodhan Office, 2004), 62. This source is abbreviated as *Master* in subsequent references.
 15. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.137.
 16. The ashrama, with its own printing press, library, museum, and charitable hospital. It was the first to publish Swamiji's *Complete Works*. Swami Satyapriyananda, editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* from January 1997 to December 1998, edited a volume on the history and early reminiscences of the ashrama in *The Charm of Mayavati Ashrama* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2004). Also see 'Remembering Vivekananda's affinity with Himalayas' by Vineet Upadhyay, *Times of India*, 11 January 2016 (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/dehradun/Remembering-Vivekanandas-affinity-with-Himalayas/articleshow/50537468.cms>). Also 'His deep spiritual connection with the Himalayas is memorable' by Jaskiran Chopra, *The Pioneer*, 5 July 2018, <<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2018/state-editions/his-deep-spiritual-connection-with-the-himalayas-is-memorable.html>>.
 17. *Complete Works*, 5.435-6.
 18. Christina Greenstidel (1866-1930) who met Swamiji in February 1894 in Detroit soon came under his spell. Recalling that first meeting she wrote: 'Never have I heard such a voice, so flexible, so sonorous. It was the voice of God to me! That range of emotion, that silvery music—I have never heard in any other. It was sheer music. ... It was the mind that made the first great appeal, that amazing mind! What can one say that will give even a faint idea of its majesty, its splendour? It was a mind so far transcending other minds, even of those who rank as geniuses. ... Its ideas were so clear, so powerful, so transcendental that it seemed incredible that they could have emanated from the intellect of a limited human being.' See *A Portrait of Sister Christine* by Pravrajika Vrajaprana (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1996), pg. 5. Sister Christine came to India in 1902 to work as a school teacher and social worker. After Sister Nivedita's death, she took charge of Nivedita Girls' School, Calcutta.
 19. *Complete Works*, 9.131-2.
 20. Swami Vimalananda wrote to the Holy Mother about his inner conflict, the conflict tearing his mind. She made her view amply evident in her letter of September 1902: 'The one who is our guru [Sri Ramakrishna] is an Advaitin. I can emphatically say that you are surely all Advaitavadins.' See 'Swami Vivekananda's Footprint on Uttarakhand Himalayas,' by Suchismita Sengupta Pandey, *The Pioneer*, April 13, 2018 (<https://www.pioneeredge.in/5427-2/>).
 21. See *The Charm of Mayavati Ashrama*, Ed. Swami Satyapriyananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), 87.
 22. See *Complete Works*, 4.387-9.
 23. Born on 8 July 1871, Ajay Hari Bannerjee met Swami Vivekananda April 1897, after the latter's return to Calcutta. The following year, in March 1898, he was ordained and given his monastic name. Vivekananda assigned him the task of teaching and mentoring Nivedita. He taught the latter the Bhagavad Gita. Swarupananda served as the founding president of the Advaita Ashrama as well as the editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*. He died in Nainital on 27 June 1906.

REFLECTIONS ON PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Electronic Media and the Future of Magazines

Swami Dayatmananda

(A former head of the Ramakrishna-Vedanta-centre of UK; presently staying at Ramakrishna Math, Halasuru, Bengaluru)

Incarnations and Media

VALMIKI WAS GIVEN the gift of poesy by Brahma to narrate the divine life of Rama.

Krishna and Arjuna chose the field of battle for the propagation of the *Bhagavadgita*. Vyasa-deva had endowed Sanjaya with the gift of seeing what was happening in the field of *Kurukshetra* and narrating it to the king Dhritarashtra. That today we have this divine *Bhagavadgita*, whose teachings have spread throughout the world, is due to that gift of Vyasa to Sanjaya.

Buddha and Christ had selected, trained, authorised, and commanded their disciples and associates to go and spread the divine Gospel throughout the world.

Sri Chaitanya spread the glory of God's name through the media of Nityananda and other disciples.

Sri Ramakrishna, specifically, brought along with him two apostles—M. [Mahendranath Gupta] and Swami Vivekananda—within the exclusive mission of propagating the divine wisdom based on his vast spiritual realisations throughout the globe. In order to accomplish this mission, M. was endowed with an extraordinary gift of memory and comprehension, which resulted in the composition of *Śrī Śrī Rāmākṣṇa Kathāmṛta* in Bengali, later

translated as *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

Swami Vivekananda was, especially, brought down from the indivisible realm of the Rishis. He was loved, transformed, and trained by Sri Ramakrishna for around six years, and endowed with the five graces of the *head* (of understanding), good *luck*, power of *oratory*, and a heavenly *voice* that filled not only the halls but also the hearts of his listeners, and the biggest *heart* to feel the whole world as himself.

What is the point of the above? Just this: *The propagation of the Divine message*.

It was the great Swami Vivekananda who started the glorious monthly magazine *Prabuddha Bharata*, which has been spreading the gospel of true knowledge unremittingly for the last 125 years. *Prabuddha Bharata* is well known throughout the world as the *most authentic* and *authoritative* magazine carrying the true message of Vedanta. Scholars and serious students of Vedanta would inevitably turn to this magazine for reference and authority.

The earlier teachers had no way other than passing down the divine message through the medium of voice or speech, that has to be carefully listened to (hence called *Śruti*), through the unbroken tradition of *Guru* (teacher or spiritual preceptor) and *Śiṣya* (student or disciple).

Then came writing and the propagators have laboriously written, got copies made, and spread the message. Then came the art of printing which has facilitated the spread of the divine Gospel even more extensively.

Now here comes the electronic media which is bringing the whole world together as one global village. For good or otherwise, the whole world is now thrown choicelessly into the world of electronic media, Internet and social media

like Facebook, WhatsApp, and the like. This is a novel phenomenon that could not be imagined even fifty years back. Inevitably, every phenomenon has both good and evil sides. It is up to an individual to choose wisely.

That's where a magazine can guide and help shape the opinions and thinking of many a perplexed individual.

Had Swami Vivekananda been living now, he would have been rejoicing to have this most effective media of propagating the life-giving message of Vedanta.

Advantages of Electronic Media

As mentioned earlier, we are at the beginning of the 21st century. The old society is slowly but inevitably transforming itself as the new information society.

Newspapers, journals, magazines, and the like, through the medium of the Internet, computers, and mobile phones, are spreading ideas, both good or evil at boggling speeds. But many of us are now becoming increasingly aware of the fact that not only the ideas are spreading, but also this media is now shaking the roots of every society and reshaping the patterns of thinking. In other words, it is transforming the very personality of the consumer.

Religious Magazines and Media

Now that the media has become a powerful instrument in moulding and shaping public opinion, religions can take advantage of the immense potential of the media in religious education and propagation. For the perplexed, Swami Vivekananda serves as a beacon light of wisdom and inspiration. He provides a holistic vision of life. His clarion call to humanity is to manifest the potential divinity dormant within each one of us, and the means to that goal is character-building and man-making education.

And that's where electronic media steps in. Electronic media is a very effective means for spreading the message of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Vedanta. Magazines have a very special role in propagating the life-giving ideas of religions that no printed book can equal. A magazine is designed to present many topics in a clear, short, but unambiguous manner suited to various levels of audience.

In this age of information overload, religious magazines like the *Prabuddha Bharata* and *Vedanta Kesari* can and are playing a very effective role in clarifying and guiding the perplexed humanity.

Advantages of an electronic magazine or digital format:

- Cut costs of printing.
- Helps to reduce the destruction of forests and environmental pollution.
- Can reach a much wider audience instantaneously transcending time and space barrier.
- Helps the producers learn about the choices of the readers and interact with them.
- Helps to choose appropriate content.
- Past issues can be archived and made available in a convenient manner.
- Content can be altered at any given time which cannot be done in the printed version once the issue goes to press.
- Contents of the electronic magazines could be much more than printed version. In a sense, online versions are flexible and almost have no limitations.
- Online magazines can have an unlimited number of readers.
- If the magazine is free, it can reach anyone with an appropriate connection instantaneously.
- There would be no geographical or time barriers, as it is always available across borders online.

- Magazines can be delivered in an attractive way which improves the usability taking advantage of the user experience.
- It is the most convenient way for the reader to buy and read at any time at any place.
- Readers can choose to read any article at any time at any place. They also have the choice of annotating and saving them for future reference.
- Buying a digital magazine is much more convenient than buying a printed one.
- An online magazine can be accessed at all times, even if the readers are not at home.
- Finally, it is reasonable to believe that, in the near future, all magazines, books, and newspapers will move to the digital format.

A Few Suggestions

I see no reason why an online magazine should exactly reflect the printed version. In fact, an online magazine should accommodate larger and flexible fonts. I come across many online magazines miserly with the smallest fonts and with an almost unreadable background. Why people should be so miserly passes my understanding!

Nowadays many people use E-Ink devices like the Amazon Kindle for electronic reading. These E-Ink devices are produced by many companies in varying sizes starting from 5 to 13.5 inches. On a large device, the reading is extremely comfortable. If needed, there are a plethora of settings to suit one's personal preference. At the same time, reading on these devices is much easier on the eyes because of the ambivalent light. And they can be, as I mentioned earlier, underlined, highlighted, and notes can be added for future reference.

So the question now: **Is print going out of date?** I do not believe it will take place anytime soon. There would be people who would prefer a physical, tactile sensation of handling printed physical books.

Suggestion to Our Editors

Many of our magazines have already adopted electronic media. But they have not changed the format of the online version from the printed versions. It would be well to make the online magazine with a bold and larger font. Researchers have identified some font families as being easier on the eyes to read.

Now to the Crucial Question

Would Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda adapt to this digital format? I have, absolutely, no doubt, that they would be the very first people to jump in and take advantage of the advances made in this digital age. *After all, it is the divine will that brought about this digital age for its own advantage!*

A senior Swami once remarked jokingly that last time Sri Ramakrishna had come with a stenographer. Next time He will come with a choreographer! Please do remember that real photographs of no incarnations are available till now excepting that of Sri Ramakrishna.

So that was the point of my referring to Ramayana and Mahabharata at the beginning of this article. Spread the divine message by taking advantage of all the available means.

Looking Back in Order to Look Forward

Swami Tyagananda

(Head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston, US)

The completion of 125 years is a significant milestone in a journal's life, and all who have worked for the *Prabuddha Bharata* (PB) in the

past as well those who continue to serve it today deserve our gratitude and appreciation. Even as we look back and celebrate the past, it is pragmatic and essential to plan for the future.

Way back in 1896, *PB* started out with a clear advantage—lack of competition, as there were hardly any English periodicals, in India or elsewhere, dedicated specifically to Vedanta. Being a journal in English, *PB* has always enjoyed another advantage, for English has become by far the most common language for global communication. Most educated people the world over understand English, even if everyone is not proficient in it. So *PB* can potentially reach a much larger geographical area than other regional language journals.

These advantages are, however, counterbalanced by two major challenges: one, there are a lot more Vedanta-related journals in English now than there were even a few decades ago, so the competition is fierce for subscribers, advertisers, and donors. Two, because there are readers in English throughout the world, it is difficult to accommodate the different interests of a staggeringly diverse readership with their own culture-specific needs.

Swami Vivekananda anticipated these challenges long before they were evident. He knew the value and power of focusing on a targeted audience. In trying to be all things to all people, if a journal strives to combine in its pages something scholarly for intellectuals, something folksy for devotees, and some stories to entertain children, the chances are the journal ends up satisfying nobody in particular. Such a trying-to-please-all policy betrays a lack of direction and vision.

For a Ramakrishna Order journal to stand out, it must be able to provide what other similar journals do not. The Order's journal must have a clear identity of its own that defines its vision

clearly and guarantees both trust and authenticity. The Order has not one but two English-language journals: *Prabuddha Bharata* (started in 1896) and the *Brahmavadin* (started a year earlier, in 1895, which reincarnated as the *Vedanta Kesari* in 1914). That complicates the situation a little.

From its very inception, the *Brahmavadin* focused its energy on providing a metaphysical and scholarly reading. That became its core identity. In contrast, *PB* started out originally with the idea of being a magazine directed towards the younger generation. Swamiji appreciated that focus. He did not want *PB* to be a clone of the *Brahmavadin*. He wanted *PB* to 'make its style and matter much more popular'. The 'main feature' of *PB*, Swamiji wrote in a letter, should be 'the teaching of principles through stories'. He warned, 'Don't make it metaphysical at all' and pointed to the great need of 'the wonderful stories scattered all over the Sanskrit literature, to be re-written and made popular' (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 5.107).

The original vision of *Brahmavadin* or *Vedanta Kesari* evaporated over the years. Scholarly articles on metaphysics are no longer its primary focus. Nor are the contents of *PB* any longer directed, as originally envisioned, exclusively towards the younger generation, providing material for popular reading. The clear distinction with which the two journals started no longer exists. The purpose, the mission, and the vision of the two journals look similar these days. They seem to be doing more or less the same thing and targeting more or less the same general readership in India and elsewhere.

Today when we celebrate *Prabuddha Bharata's* remarkable service and contribution in the past 125 years, it will be wise to have a plan going forward. How about reviving Swamiji's model? The two English-language journals of the Order can

work together and *complement* each other's efforts instead of *duplicating* them. If each of them cultivates a niche audience and has a clearly defined purpose, together they can become more relevant and meaningful.

It is difficult to know what Swamiji would have advised the two journals to do 125 years after their inception. We know at least what he wanted them to do 125 years ago.

Role of Prabuddha Bharata in the Ramakrishna Movement and Impressions of Prabuddha Bharata and Mayavati

Swami Muktidananda

(A Trustee of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysuru)

PRABUDDHA BHARATA, the oldest English Journal in India, has completed 125 years disseminating the truths of eternity in its relentless march. All through, the purpose of this journal has been that of an awakener, that is, it has been working to open up within human, a greater awareness of one's own worth, power, and divinity.

When the journal was brought into existence under the inspiring guidance of Swami Vivekananda, the world was at the threshold of a new age, and was experiencing a great awakening. As a result of new spiritual impulse transmitted by the great seer Swami Vivekananda, there was an

awakening of human souls on such a massive scale, unique in the history of India and of the world. That is why some of the historians have identified Swami Vivekananda as the brightest jewel of Indian renaissance.

Though the Journal had to face some hardships in its initial years, it succeeded in overcoming hurdles, when Swami Vivekananda took upon himself the responsibility of running the journal and, Swamiji looked into meticulous details of its publication thereof. However, the most decisive moment in the history of the Journal was when it was established in its present home in the sylvan surroundings of the Himalayas, which has since time immemorial been the heartland of gods and man's quest for the Ultimate Reality. The place which had previously been known as 'Mayeepat' was given the new name—Mayavati. It was Swami Vivekananda's great dream to have an Ashrama with a universal spiritual appeal in the lap of Himalayas which would be consecrated to the realisation and practicalisation of Eternal Truth—the Oneness of All Beings. Such a glorious broad-based vision of spiritual oneness conceived by Swamiji became concretised as 'Advaita Ashrama' in Mayavati which also became the Home for *Prabuddha Bharata*.

Prabuddha Bharata and Advaita Ashrama are thus two unforgettable chapters in Swamiji's life, forming profound spiritual legacies bequeathed by him. Swamiji's visit to Mayavati in the year 1901, during the turn of the century (1900–01) and his fifteen days' stay there is ever cherishable richest treasure of the Advaita Ashrama and Swamiji's palpable presence has invested the place with a rare sense of sanctity even today.

The mandate of Swami Vivekananda to *Prabuddha Bharata* has been to hold on to the Highest, and to be obedient and eternally faithful to the cause of Truth, humanity, and one's

own country. It is noteworthy that *Prabuddha Bharata* has taken up as its mission to fulfil the mandate of its founder and this sense of mission forms its perennial source of strength. It is a matter of great pride and satisfaction that the immortal teachings of Vedanta—the sacred treasure-house of the accumulated wisdom of the ancient saints and sages of India embodied in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda—are being stoutly and successfully preached through the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata* on behalf of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

Prabuddha Bharata has long been considered to be one of the best cultural magazines not only in India but throughout the world. Its lofty vision of spiritualisation of the human race is a potent force for universal upliftment. The journal considers as its special responsibility to disseminate the message of spiritual wisdom energised and adopted for modern needs by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and thus has been the mouthpiece of the Ramakrishna Movement ever since. Similarly, Advaita Ashrama has been the premier publication house of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta literature.

Situated at an altitude of 6500 ft. offering a most sublime view of the vast expanse of the snowcapped Himalayas—Mayavati, the home of *Prabuddha Bharata*, because of the profound solitude of the place, provides a unique opportunity for contemplation. Mayavati is considered as a place of *tapasya* or spiritual austerity. The unique Advaita Ashrama lifestyle and practice, designed by Swamiji for the realisation of the final spiritual goal of mankind to be one with



Captain Sevier's Bungalow (later used as a Guest House)

the universal Divine, has been kept alive even to this day. The pioneers who lived and developed Mayavati like Swami Swarupananda, Swami Virajananda, and others were great austere monks who led an enlightened life.

Mayavati and *Prabuddha Bharata* stand there flagging India's spiritual legacy, Swami Vivekananda's Advaita Vedanta of universal appeal, and the uplifting call of the Himalayas, being a spring board of spiritual knowledge, where hundreds of monks lived, studied, reflected, and contemplated over our ancient and modern scriptures and other great works that human intellect has produced. This is also indicated by the rich collection of unique books at Mayavati Advaita Ashrama library. Swamiji's great disciple Sister Nivedita, as also other eminent personalities like the great scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose were charmed by Mayavati and stayed there experiencing inner and outer silence. Recently, the 150 years old holy building of Advaita Ashrama sanctified by the stay of

Swami Vivekananda is conserved and restored and strengthened by the hard work of many monks and those labourers who had been working hard under the guidance of a team of experts in conservation.

Prabuddha Bharata and Mayavati portray the deepest spiritual vision of Swami Vivekananda, so much so that Swamiji at one stage of his life wanted to spend his last days in Mayavati in deep meditation and samadhi totally oblivious of the world.

The editorials and other enlightening articles of *Prabuddha Bharata*, providing spiritual food and satisfying the spiritual hunger of seekers the world over, is another important feature of this journal. It undoubtedly kindles a desire in the aspirants to visit Mayavati at least once. Before going to Mayavati, it is better if one goes through the book *The Charm of Mayavati Ashrama*, and especially imagine and visualise the narrative of Swami Vivekananda's fifteen days in Mayavati. One must stay quietly there with spiritual aspiration for few days and has to fine-tune one's mind to catch up the higher spiritual wavelengths of this charming place, to progress in one's inward spiritual journey.

Further, one can utilise one's stay here experiencing the mind getting free from all complexes so that 'Mayavati' can also mean to be a unique Himalayan adobe that releases one from the deluding power of Maya which is nothing but a wrong identification with body-mind complex that veils the experience of the divine within and without.

In these challenging times, what the world needs is a message of hope and strength derived from the ancient spiritual wisdom realised in the stillness of one's being. Mayavati affords such a unique opportunity to experience that stillness. *Indeed, it is a veritable spiritual paradise on earth.*

March On! Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Shuddhidananda

(Adhayksha, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati)

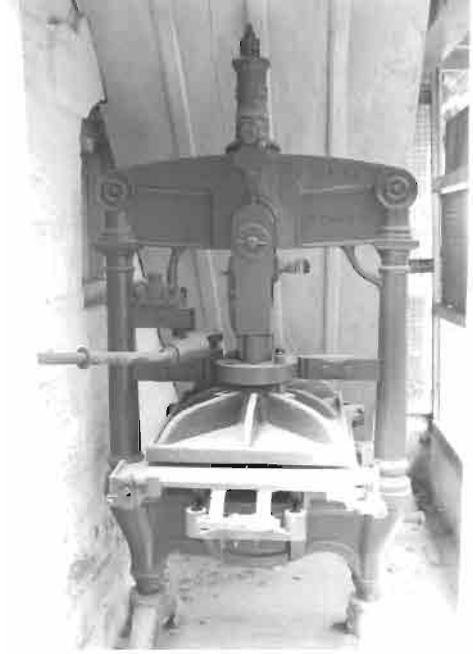
Ideas are power. This creation is an expression of ideas; it is concretised ideas. Just like the creation, human beings are also concretised forms of ideas. From the human point of view, ideas can be good or bad. Ideas that unify are good and that which create divisions are bad. Human society can be awakened and uplifted only by the universal and eternal spiritual ideas—ideas which unify, and that is Sanātana Dharma (Hinduism). Sanātana Dharma is 'Principle-based' and not 'personality-based'. According to it, the Supreme Principle is Brahman, which is superior to personalities or forms. Personalities appear and go; even incarnations come and go, the Principle remains, perpetually finding new expressions. Swami Vivekananda, like all his great predecessors, came to unleash the power of Sanātana Dharma ideas to bring unification and harmony in the world. This work he started on 11 September 1893, and it continues, and will continue, until 'the dawn of a new civilization', which he had referred to in one of his writings. For actualising this, he started the twin institutions of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Through these institutions is emanating the universal spiritual ideas, and its power, which is slowly permeating the world, 'turning the currents of men's activities and aspirations into new channels'.

Along with the twin institutions, he also started a journal, *Prabuddha Bharata*, which was close to his heart. The aim was to carry spiritual ideas to the doorsteps of the people. He knew well that the world as well as India can be saved


and awakened only through the power of the universal spiritual ideas. The very name chosen by him for the journal speaks volumes about his mission. He wanted to 'Awaken the Vishwa' through an 'Awakened Bharata'. First Bharata has to awaken, so that the Vishwa (world) wakes up. His mission, thus, extends from 'Prabuddha Bharata' to 'Prabuddha Vishwa'. In other words, it meant the conquest of the world by Bharata through her eternal spiritual ideas. *Prabuddha Bharata*, the journal, has been silently engaged in this work for the last 125 years.

We accept that *Prabuddha Bharata* is not a popular journal; but does popularity alone determine the success of an enterprise like this? Popularity may be one among the many factors, but it is not the sole factor. Even without being popular, an enterprise can be termed to be successful if it has been loyal to its founding principles, if it has stood the challenges and vicissitudes of time, and if it has served the purpose for which it was started. *Prabuddha Bharata*, in its chequered journey of 125 years, has been steadily working according to the principles laid down by its founder, Swami Vivekananda. It has not deviated from those founding principles, even in the face of challenges, criticisms, and temptations to gain instant popularity. This proves the journal's unflinching loyalty to the founding values. Often it has been accused of catering to the needs of only the intellectual elite. But the fact is that the journal is neither elitist nor has it played to the galleries. It is aligned to the principles laid down by its founder, and according to it, its main concern is to spread the eternal spiritual ideas of Sanātana Dharma, and work towards awakening humanity, which it has been doing with marked success.

Today the journal is 125 years young. It has just entered its youth and has a long way ahead. With its vitality and vigour intact, and backed



The Old Press at Mayavati

by the clear vision bestowed by its founder, it looks ahead into the coming centuries to play its role silently and yet aggressively. Swami Vivekananda himself has spoken of his ideas remaining active for 1500 years. And in the short span of 125 years, the journal has gathered in its bosom an invaluable treasure of knowledge. Some of the best minds of the country and the world have left behind their impressions on the pages of this journal. As such, it would not be an exaggeration to state that *Prabuddha Bharata* archives is one of the richest archives in the world related to spirituality and allied issues. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses', has been the contribution of *Prabuddha Bharata* to India and the world. And there is so much more for it to contribute! In silence, and out of popular sight, the journal has been successfully working, and will work, to awaken the world through awakening Bharata. March On! *Prabuddha Bharata*. 

REMINISCENCES OF SERVING IN PRABUDDHA BHARATA

My Blessed Days in Mayavati

Swami Shivaprasadananda

(Associate Editor: 1989 to 1998)

PRABUDDHA BHARATA's spiritual message has become identified with the idealism of Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati. That is—Spiritual Freedom, as expounded in the religion of Advaita Vedanta.

Swami Vivekananda said: 'Realize in your own life this knowledge of Brahman which comprehends all theories, and is the rationale of all truths, and preach it to the world. This will conduce to your own good and the good of others.'¹ Again in a poem, Swamiji exhorted: 'Awakener, ever Forward! Speak thy stirring words' (4.387).

Sri Ramakrishna also said: 'All one's confusion comes to an end if one only realizes that it is God who manifests Himself as the atheist and the believers, the good and the bad, the real and the unreal; that it is He who is present in waking and in sleep; and that He is beyond all these.'² No gainsaying, there is a big difference between deep meditation and our life in this mundane world!

My experience as a worker of *Prabuddha Bharata* at Mayavati is unforgettable. The time was mostly before computer came to the PB office. Monthly PB manuscripts had to be carefully

typed and sent to Kolkata. Never-failing postmaster, Keshab, was conveniently present. The Post Office was in the PB building itself; and the ever-cheerful 'Chandru', Dak-runner—came every day mostly on the footpath from Lohaghat to pick up mail and deliver.

My work at PB was not difficult, because the typewriter was good and occasional repairs were easy. I enjoyed the confidence of PB's editor and felt lots of satisfaction in editing sometimes 'impossible' articles for him. Out of kindness, he even suggested to me to write an article for PB's 'Centenary Issue' in 1996.

Probably, this fact is the single most important experience of mine working at *Prabuddha Bharata* over several years: it was a great thing in my life. God sometimes shows Himself to us in brief glimpses. That's Advaita: God in the small and the great, in good times and in bad, in the expected ordinary events and also in the unexpected.

Two instances come to my mind now, which I regarded as revelations from the High. Once the editor handed me an article received from South India saying, 'See what you think of it.' I couldn't grasp anything of the author's thought or position in the essay. There were big gaps in the development of paragraphs. I didn't say anything to Editor Maharaj, but kept the article aside; I thought I will have another look at it next day, or even later.

After a couple of days, suddenly the whole thing became clear! Out of the chaos of unconnected phrases came a clear picture of what the author wanted to say. Usually, the editor tries to respect the author's presentation, to the maximum, and avoids dubbing in new thoughts. Here it was impossible. If the article was to be used

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 7.195
2. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2004), 236

(and we needed articles) the thing would have to be completely recast. Doing so was risky for obvious reasons. We didn't know the person, and there was no scope for discussion, persuasion, or correspondence.

But, inspired by the vision of a potentially good article, I 'went ahead' and in a couple of days sent the revised article to the author with a letter offering an apology if I had done wrong, and left it to the author to decide what to do next. Surprise! A reply soon came that my work was more than alright—it was good! What a relief! I thought that the Lord was compassionate.

Another instance: A group of four or five devotees, mostly ladies, were walking up the hill from the Ashrama to visit the orchard, Swarupananda Point, and the like. It was their first visit. I was leading and talking a bit. One lady spoke: 'Maharaj, I have heard about the leeches and barking deer of Mayavati. I want to see a leech and a barking deer!' What could I say? It was April or May, before the rainy season—no leeches come out till the jungle is wet. And deer? It is broad daylight. No self-respecting barking deer will show himself to a group like this—moving around, making a lot of noise. Thus I explained.

This is the truth—hardly a few seconds passed when, looking down at my feet, I saw a lone leech moving across the dry leaves. I shouted: 'Look here! A leech!' Everybody came to see. A gully ran parallel to our pathway, caused earlier by rushing rainwater, just to our left. One could not cross it to the jungle on the opposite side, as it was four or five feet deep. Within a few more seconds, after seeing the leech, I thought (jokingly): 'Now I suppose we want to see a deer?' No sooner had the thought come to my mind than, suddenly, thirty or forty feet away, on the opposite side of the gully, a barking deer darted out from its cover of foliage, and giving a loud 'ARF' like a doggy, ran off as fast as it could.

How do such things happen? And why? Who knows? But it makes one think that *Mahāmāyā* is mysterious and by Thakur's Grace everything may be possible.

Most people, even perhaps most devotees, can hardly imagine staying at the home of *Prabuddha Bharata* at Mayavati and remaining in intense meditation. The fauna and flora of the Himalayan foothills are just too entrancing! We become lost in the 'beauty of Nature' and unconscious of the Atman-Brahman within.

But in fact, the world at the physical plane is unreal, that is, filled with uncertainty, and ever-dangerous to life and relations, ease and happiness. 'Only resting in Mother are we safe,' said Swamiji (*CW*, 8.253). He designated Mayavati as an Ashrama, 'for the practise and realization of Advaita'. After staying there, what may be our memories? *Everything is possible.*

My Association with Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Satyapriyananda

(Editor: January 1997 to December 1998)

I was posted sometime in 1992 to Advaita Ashrama in its Kolkata Branch to work as the City Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*. The job of the City Editor is quite simple. I had Sri Sushil as my assistant who did all the laborious manual work. The typed manuscripts from the Editor (then Swami Muktirupananda) would come by ordinary mail. The packet would contain a postcard which had to be posted back to Mayavati as the acknowledgement of the receipt of the packet. The manuscript would then be sent to General Printers for composing. The galley proofs would arrive from the press through a bearer and after corrections were marked by



Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata Branch

me, the bearer would take it back. My second task was to plan the insertion of advertisements. There were regular advertisers (quarter or half or full page; 3, 6, or 12 insertions in a year) on whom we depended for a bit of financial support. I would give the print order and the press would then go ahead to make the journal issues ready for despatch.

Now comes the third task. Depending on the arrival of fresh subscriptions, the subscriber database would be updated in a dBase III Plus program written in-house by one of my predecessors. That sometimes needed maintenance

which I would do myself. The labels would be generated and Sri Sushil would place the issue in a brown wrapper, paste the label on it—there was the system of franking in lieu of postal stamps—and bundle it for being taken to the Post Office in Entally (Area in Kolkata, where Advaita Ashrama is located) itself. Later, the journal had to be taken to the General Post Office which was a bit far away. But then this would be managed by the driver of the hand-driven cart.

The fourth job was to supply copies in lieu of missing issues. If anyone complained of non-receipt of the issue, at first the subscriber would be asked to wait for a few days. If required, a duplicate copy would be sent and quite often both the copies would reach the intended destination. At the end of the year, the advertisement copies would be sent with a bill for receiving payment and a fresh order for the next year. I would take about 50 copies of the journal by bus transport: 25 for the book sales section of the Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, and the rest for Reverend President Maharaj, Vice-Presidents, General Secretary and his four assistants, and some other monastic subscribers. The January issues were special and huge in size; so I could use a taxi to Belur Math for despatch.

Obviously, the *Prabuddha Bharata* section in Kolkata had a computer facility with DOS as the operating system and dBase for the label generation purpose. Microsoft Windows came in much later. It was before the publication of the special issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* in September 1993. Swami Muktirupananda was the Editor (1990–93). Special issues had more than the usual forty pages—running up to 250 plus. The Manager Maharaj had faith in me and thought of composing the matter in-house on the computer and he wanted me to do that only for that special issue. We were then using the DOS system. I used Word Perfect for typing the manuscript with

paragraph tags as required in Corel Ventura for the layout. The mirror image printing on tracing paper was done in the Ashrama's laser printer and sent to Gipidi Box Co. for final printing. It came out splendidly and that off-set printing continued for the subsequent issues as well, even till today, accommodating changes in the software and shift to Windows system. I used the iTrans program of Omkarananda Ashrama in the Himalayas for keying in the Sanskrit words. In the combined conversion mode we could get the diacritical font and the Sanskrit font. The Manager Maharaj's favourite was the font Palatino, which was a nice choice. I used the Font-monger program for designing the diacritical fonts. Years later, I used the same program for creating the fonts used in the Indus Valley Civilisation seals, which was required for an article in the special issue of January 1999.

Every January issue was a special issue. The 1995 January special issue was a great fun. Swami Atmaramananda, the editor, had sent out invitations for articles but not getting an adequate response, he invited a few more. And all of them responded, with the result that he had far too many articles to publish. At one point, I asked him whether there would be a last page for the issue or not. That *Prabuddha Bharata* issue ran to 416 pages.

In 1995 during Durga Puja time, Swami Atmaramananda came down to Kolkata for an eye check-up. The doctor asked him to go for a treadmill test. It turned out that he needed to have a bypass surgery. After the surgery, Atmaramananda stayed with us and depended on us for physical and mental support. That was when the January special issue of 1996 was going to be readied. He dictated the Editorial (though he asked me to write it, I did not agree) and it was keyed in by me.

In 1996 April, I was asked to go to Mayavati to take up the task of assisting the Editor in place

of Jyoti Maharaj (Shivaprasadananda). We took the Pentium Chip IBM computer with a laser printer in April 1996. Madhavachaitanya accompanied me. It all worked well in Mayavati and I could manage comfortably. As in Kolkata, the matter would be typed in Mayavati and printed on tracing sheet as a mirror image and sent to Kolkata by post with the acknowledgement postcard. Another Pentium Chip IBM computer and HP ScanJet 4C Scanner arrived in October 1998.

That day came in my life when I was asked to take over as the Editor from 1997. I felt nervous at the thought and began to sweat all over. Swami Mumukshananda, the Adhyaksha of Advaita Ashrama, then in Kolkata, came to my rescue by saying these encouraging words, 'where there is fear, there victory is for sure'. The Editorial of January 1997 was mine and the rest of the issue was prepared by Swami Atmaramananda, the out-going Editor. That was the tradition.

These days they plan what style the journal should have! We had no option other than *Madhukari Bhiksha*—receive whatever articles came by post: reject, or edit and key in. Swami Bhaswatananda (now in Germany) assisted me in the editing work. And thus it went on all through 1997 and 1998 until it was decided that I should hand over the Editorship to Swami Sunirmalananda (now heading our Netherlands centre) from 1999.

In addition to the work of editing, I spent my spare time dressing vegetables and lending a hand in cooking. Our dear Jyoti Maharaj (Shivaprasadananda, now in Chapra, Bihar) continued to stay. He was a very indrawn person, liked going through the woods, and during winter he used the spade to remove the snow carving out the path from the Prabuddha Bharata building to the Main Ashrama building. One day we had Viraja Homa before the fireplace. It was just the repetition of the holy mantras without any offering of oblations.



Mayavati Charitable Hospital

One day the inmates collected mushrooms with the intention of cooking them. I do not eat mushrooms. A doctor from Lucknow, who was serving in our hospital, cautioned that some mushrooms could be even poisonous. So I asked three more to join my team of those who would not eat mushrooms so that in the unfortunate eventuality, four of us remained for cremating the rest!! It was poisonous! Jyoti Maharaj and the doctor vomited profusely at night. One should have seen the anger on the face of the doctor!

I spent the first several months of 1998 going through the Mayavati Diary, a wonderful record of the events from the inception. I copied verbatim the essential portions right into the machine. Swami Rudratmananda helped me to

cover the period from 1949 onwards. I added portions which Swami Rudratmananda could not decipher. I spent seven or eight issues of the year by writing the editorial on 'Fixing the Mind on God', for I had to read the diary and prepare for the January 1999 special issue.

In September 1993, a special issue was brought out on the occasion of the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's participation in the Parliament of Religions. Again, in 1995, the Journal brought out a very well-appreciated special issue on the occasion of its own Centenary. The year 1997 occasioned several centenaries. In 1993, 1994, and 1996 also, the special issues were brought out as an annual feature. I was fortunate to be associated with all these issues.

Owing to uncertainty of electricity during winter, due to trees falling under the weight of the accumulated snow (though looking splendid) and rupturing electric cables, we had to procure a portable generator for *Prabuddha Bharata*. Also we got a Switch-mode Power Supply (SMPS) for the Computer.

A few memorable incidents are worth placing on record. When I took the 1993 September issue to Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, the then President of the Order, he pointed his finger at something on the front cover but left me guessing what had gone wrong. Never should the symbols of religions have been placed below the row of people walking in front of the Art Institute. When I took the 1995 January issue, his eyes widened seeing the '100' written on the cover page and he could not check himself and said: 'One Hundred!'

I shall conclude this write up with the appreciations received from some very eminent people arranged chronologically.

Mr P K Pal, Assistant Commissioner of Calcutta Police, in his letter dated 12.3.1997 writes: 'Your editorial of *Prabuddha Bharata* for March

1997 on “India on the World Map” is superb and encouraging. Since one hundred years, thousands of dedicated Swamis of Ramakrishna Math and Mission have been instructing the devotees and others relentlessly to understand and follow the Vedanta Philosophy properly and so conduct their religious lives. It has been amply explained that there is no peace or proper happiness without indulging in service and sacrifice.’

Dr R K DasGupta (of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata), wrote on 10 May 1998: ‘I read *Prabuddha Bharata* to which I am a subscriber, with great interest and I think it is making a great contribution to the world’s understanding of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and of Indian philosophy and literature in general.’

Mr Dallas A Jackson, Pacifica, California, in his email dated 10 July 1998, wrote a lengthy letter of appreciation: ‘This message is for the wonderful people who write the editorials and other articles in *Prabuddha Bharata*. My greatest respect, affection and thanks to the people who contribute to your magazine. This month’s (July 1998) issue as always, contains so much wonderful information, knowledge and insight. It seems that the Editorial always seems to contain information that is just what I need to read, at just the right time. In fact, the whole magazine seems to speak to me and gives me indescribable inspiration, comfort and joy. This short note is just to say “thank you”. I feel very much blessed to have come into contact with you. Thank you so much.’

Swami Ranganathanandaji wrote from Belur Math on 16 October 1998: ‘What you have done regarding Chicago lecture is perfectly all right. Let it come in 2 issues or even 3 issues, that doesn’t matter. Matter must come. Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta is bringing it out as a booklet also; that I have requested them. It will be sold separately, all over India. Let us see. I am

keeping fairly well. And the new (Editor) Swami will take over next year. I hope he will also continue your tradition of good articles and good editorials. *Prabuddha (Bharata)* is going on very well. Standard is quite good. I am happy to read many aspects of the January issue. I hope that you will be taking up some of the good works of the Mission somewhere in the country. With love and blessings for all of you.’

Glorious Immersive Experiences

Swami Satyamayananda

(Editor: November 2010 to July 2014)

Writing in the first person singular for *Prabuddha Bharata* is truly singular for me. Nostalgic memories of seeing a copy for the first time rushed in, after my eye caught a poster of *Prabuddha Bharata* at a Youth Convention. A strong sense of *déjà vu* swept over me as I lifted the monthly Journal, leaving me dazed for a while.

Two of Swami Vivekananda’s many cherished works were: The Ramakrishna Order, and this Journal. Little did I realise that my life would be inextricably linked to this innocuous looking Journal with its profound articles and its low-cost. It was the beginning of a wonderfully enriching journey, in which I was graciously given the opportunity to participate in Swamiji’s dreams.

Not long after when I decided to join the Ramakrishna Order, the obvious choice was Mayavati, home of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Sadly, then, I was informed that it was not possible, but one could join its publication wing at Advaita Ashrama in Kolkata. Someone holding aloft a copy of the *Prabuddha Bharata* would meet and escort me from the teeming Howrah Station to Belur Math. I smiled. At Advaita

Ashrama, I got a ringside seat of observing various stages of the Journal's publication and despatch. The almost religious duty of reading the journal every month continued but now I could do it without taking a subscription!

Advaita Ashrama was an ideal nursery for my temperament with its seriousness and camaraderie, hard-work and meditation, studies and relaxation, discipline and freedom, with learned and inspirational members living a simple life. When asked to write articles for *Prabuddha Bharata* by the Manager Maharaj, I remember rewriting, and re-editing it more than fifteen times! That was because of my veneration for the Journal. After this, writing became my new passion and led to my personality development by helping structure my scattered thought-processes on focused studies. My growing skills made the authorities assign me as City Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* in 1999.

In retrospect, every time I decided to seek transfer from Advaita Ashrama, for learning different set of skills in other Centres, something always tugged at me to stay put. This assignment lasted till the middle of 2008! And when I was least expecting and unwilling, the authorities, in the latter part of 2010, transferred me from the Probationers' Training Centre, Belur Math, to Mayavati as Editor. I was surprised at the amount of advice and praise received from many quarters. One of which was: *Anupaśya yathā pūrve*; consider, look at, how your former (Editors worked). It humbled and elated me to remember and be part of a long line of illustrious Editors and great souls who lived and worked for the Journal, started by Swamiji in 1896.

Finally, my old wish to be in Mayavati had materialised. The intense layers upon layers of spirituality, like the Himalayan ranges, is palpable here. It fuels every aspect of life: meditation, japa, work, interactions with others,

besides, of course, one's creativity. Here one's mental stamina peaks, like the Himalayas. It was amusing when friends and others would ask if there was difficulty in thinking new things every month. Even more amusing was when some of the Ashrama members would remark that they did not see me worming through books. When one has constant inspiration, one's life and experiences become a book and a source of insight and intuitions.

The mission of the Journal became mine. It gave a great fillip to my life and is a dominant factor even now and will be till I give up this body. Was not Swami Vivekananda, the Awakener of Bharata, as well as souls?

The cover of the Journal that I first touched had a picture of the lofty Himalayas rising tier upon tier from the hills below, as seen from the building that houses the Editorial Office. Little also did I know then that my personal journey, aided by *Prabuddha Bharata*, inexorably would also mirror that cover.

The Prabuddha Bharata Experience

Swami Madhurananda

(Associate Editor: 2008 to 2014)

There is a forty-metre walk from the Prabuddha Bharata building to the main building of the ashrama. It is surrounded by majestic trees, silhouettes of distant mountains, above usually a deep blue sky and below, as Swami Vivekananda wanted it, 'flowers, flowers everywhere', taken care of by a monk, a beautiful soul who has devoted more than thirty years to Mayavati's garden. Crossing at least thrice daily through such loveliness was a break for the mind, which was constantly immersed in the

meticulous work that the editing of *Prabuddha Bharata* demanded.

There was, however, one period of about two weeks, towards the end of January each year, when we were able to appreciate more of Mayavati's surroundings—by then we would be relieved from the mounting pressure of work that started four months earlier for the special issue of January, and also from the issue of February, which would invariably be delayed.

During my first two and a half years, *Prabuddha Bharata* carried a different theme every month, with the editorial, the leading article, and at least two of the other articles related to that theme. It was a well-thought modality that the then editor introduced for the first time in the magazine, but it required much more work for the whole team, especially for the editor himself. Even the cover, which was entirely designed by the associate editor, had to match the theme of the month—that involved finding an appropriate image, requesting its copyright permission, and producing the cover proper.

Our way of working was as follows: The filtering of write-ups was done by the editor, though several times he would give the associate some of them to approve or reject—in the case of the latter, explaining why the write-up was to be rejected. The next step was to verify that the article had not been published elsewhere and that there was no plagiarism in it. We would feature about seven or eight articles, depending on their length; the editor and I would each work on half of them from scratch and then revise what the other had done; the final touch was always done by the editor. There was a tradition of checking every single endnote reference, and by the time I joined, there were many scholarly articles with plenty of references; this was one of the tasks that consumed more time, as ensuring accuracy was a matter of maintaining the magazine's

prestigious reputation. With an improvement in the internet connection, this task became easier, as did other tasks such as sending the completed magazine to our branch in Kolkata, which until 2009 had been sent by regular post. The adverts are added in Kolkata by the production editor and the whole magazine is printed there.

We had a proofreader who was born in the US but lived in the UK for many years, and had also stayed in India for some time, so she was well acquainted with American, British, and Indian English. It enhances the quality of the magazine if a native English speaker does the final fine tuning of the entire work, because however good one's written English may be, a person whose mother tongue is English and is proficient in editing can deal with the subtleties and nuances of the language better.

Serving in *Prabuddha Bharata* is, for those who like studies on general culture, philosophy, religion, and spirituality, a highly rewarding activity, as one studies while one works. Creativity is also at play, not only for the editing but also because the associate editor has to design the whole magazine, find suitable images and photos to gracefully place at appropriate points of the articles, and take special care of the overall flow of text, readability, and aesthetic outlook of the main matter.

There is a saturation point though, which generally begins, according to each person, after three years of doing this challenging job, which has a monthly deadline. In the old days, the tenure of an editor used to be about three years, but for the assistant, it was as long as he could continue, provided there was a proper understanding with the editor. I had the blessing of assisting two upright editors with whom an excellent working relationship was developed, which is crucial for the final product of the journal, besides making life smoother at Mayavati. Thanks to that, we were able to produce

interesting theme-wise issues and the first full-fledged colour issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, for the 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda in January 2014—a two-hundred-page volume produced in art paper and carrying plenty of images of paintings and sculptures from different artists.

The associate editor also looks after the library of Mayavati, a work that pays off if one likes to be in contact with books. We used to curate the library by disposing outdated or unnecessary books and purchasing new ones during the yearly Delhi book fair, for which there was a fixed amount of money to be spent. Several of the books that were sent to be reviewed in the journal were also added to the collection. The different sections of the library were distributed at different places in the Prabuddha Bharata building and ashrama's main building, which made the work related to it cumbersome. Twice a year I used to fumigate all the volumes, which were about 13,000 then. The construction of a new building for *Prabuddha Bharata*, at the back of the old one, began during my last month in Mayavati, and from November 2017 a new library was created on the ground floor of this new building; all the books are now housed together in one place, a great development for sure. The enormous task of digitising the library's catalogues started around 2005 and was completed, with the help of many volunteers, by 2009 under the guidance of the then editor and three successive associate editors.

My room, small but sunny, was on the ground floor of the southwest side of the now old Prabuddha Bharata building. The toilet was outside, a few metres from my room; returning from the toilet at night I would sometimes flash a torch to see whether there were any animals below the hillside, which was nearby—the fence towards the hillside was broken then, so there was no protection from the jungle. I spotted

deer, wild boars, wild cats, and a few more. One night I saw two leopards walking below, at about twenty metres away from me; from then on, I was a bit more careful while going out to the toilet at night.

There were other 'charming' incidents of this type, like the snakes—though most of them are unpoisonous in this area—that used to enter the toilet, and the scorpions that came inside the room for a friendly visit; or the langurs, black-faced and grey-haired big monkeys, which used to find our bathing soap quite tasty; or the leeches in the rainy season—once I found one crawling on the top edge of the computer monitor, in the office on the first floor! But all these things, as impressive as they may sound, used to bring a smile to our faces, as they were part of the thrill of being in direct contact with the Himalayan wilderness. I used to remember Swami Ranganathanandaji's exclamation: 'live dangerously'. There was, however, one being that would not bring the smallest smile to anyone, and that was the *pissu*, a local flea, in the rainy season—its bite produces a big red pimple that strongly itches for about ten days, and it would generally bite several times in one part of the body.

There were also the fascinating experiences, of which much has been reminisced and published. Just to mention a few: the colourfulness and cuteness of a variety of migrant birds, particularly the bellbird, which emits a continuous and mystical calling sound throughout the night; the infinitely starry sky, the milky way, the moon—all shining through a limpid atmosphere at about 6,200 feet from sea level; and above all, the snow-clad peaks in winter, which though being just a combination of stone and ice—as we used to joke from an 'Advaitic perspective'—they nonetheless produced an elevating effect in the mind.

It used to snow once or twice a year; however,



Monks with the Snowman 'Thandananda' at Mayavati on 17 February 2013

till 2011 it did not snow for six consecutive years. During the winters of 2013 and 2014 we sculpted a snowman, which we dressed in gerua cloth with a *pagri* in the best Swamiji's style; we called it Swami Thandananda—*thanda* means cold. Our dogs used to bark at it unceasingly, bringing loud laughter to one and all. To keep alive the tradition of Mayavati, one or two days after the snowfall several monks, senior and junior, would have a snowball fight for some time. There was a congenial team of monks then. The guests' dining hall was contiguous to the monks' dining hall, and our laughter was frequently heard by the guests. Once a Western devotee, who came to Mayavati for the first time, and who probably thought that monastic life stands for long faces,

asked me: 'At breakfast, loud laughter came from your dining hall; at noon nonstop laughter; at night the same. What are you monks laughing about all the time?'

We used to play volleyball where the lake is today. It had been drained in the 1960s because during the rainy season it created a landslide and damaged Mother Sevier's bungalow below, as far as we have heard. Playing volleyball was a compulsory activity for all the staff, as it was a way to socialise and discharge 'excess of energy' accumulated during the day, and three or four sadhus would join the clash. In 2011 the lake was recovered as a large water reservoir, embanked with a thick plastic, and our game was over. But we did other kinds of physical exercises, without

which, doing only intellectual activity in Mayavati, can prove mentally taxing.

Several of the aspects of Mayavati we read in the reminiscences from senior monks are rapidly changing, for better or worse. The winters are not as severe as they used to be; the Himalayan peaks are visible mainly from October to March; for the rest of the year, except on very rare days, they are totally covered by mists and clouds. During the summer guest season, March to June, some impolite guests populated the premises of the ashrama with noise and nuisances, defeating the very purpose of having an ashrama in a secluded place. Some facilities improved—the supply of electricity, a relatively better signal for phone and internet connection, the availability of different necessary items from food to courier to computers to electric heaters, and many more—all these are making the work of the journal, the hospital, and the ashrama much more efficient and easier, while at the same time some of these things disturb the peaceful ambience when they are not used properly.

Still Mayavati remains a special place. Beyond the charm of the natural environment, to many of us the most appealing feature of Mayavati is the spiritual current perceivable all around; this current combines the remnants of the practices of thousand-year-old Himalayan sadhakas with the experiences left here by the great monks of the Ramakrishna Order, starting from Swami Vivekananda onwards. After staying for some years in Mayavati, one can experience at a deeper level a subtle connection with the whole world, with the whole of existence. Each tirtha, pilgrimage place, has its own characteristics; the experience of Oneness is the particularity of a prolonged stay in Mayavati.

My six years of service to *Prabuddha Bharata* have been some of the most memorable times of my life.

My Experience at the Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Divyakripananda

(Associate Editor: May 2014 to August 2019)

Once when someone asked Swami Vivekananda, after his return to India from the West, ‘Swamiji, why is it that in spite of their Vedantic thought the Hindus are idolaters?’ With flashing eyes, Swamiji turned on the questioner and answered, ‘because we have the Himalayas!’

Prabuddha Bharata is completing 125 years. It seems that Swamiji had brought the press at such a remote place for committing the monastic inmates to a high intellectual pursuit, creating an organisational platform for anyone around the globe to contribute dynamic solutions to the changing problems of the society, and simultaneously counterbalancing the otherwise sluggish nature of life there. While working at the PB office, it reminded me of *directly serving the cause that was particularly close to Swamiji’s heart*. Studying a variety of literature to analyse and compare different streams of thought, researching on the articles and their authors, writing reviews, developing creative designs—these all help develop a stronger spiritual conviction.

The persons in their middle age belong to a generation sandwiched between the previous generation with traditional outlook and the later generation with a liberal outlook. Especially those of us treading the path of spiritual seeking are often dealing with the two forces simultaneously—regressive and progressive. On a larger scale, institutions are also going through a similar changeover. And Mayavati Ashrama cannot stand exception to it. Since my posting there as an assistant in *Prabuddha Bharata* editorial office in May 2014 till August 2019, I got

the opportunity to stay and work for almost three years in the century-old PB building and to handle the antiques and old stationery items used by the great Editors and other monks of the past in their day-to-day office work. I could touch and feel many such 'ancient' objects and memories there. Then we had the newly constructed PB building inaugurated in October 2017. We were adapting to a similar transformation happening throughout the ashrama while holding on to the old legacy.


Mayavati offers a rare view of the extended Himalayan range from the ashrama corner. It was my favourite pastime to keep gazing at the long view of the snow-peaks and studying the names and other details of those awe-inspiring mountains. Winters were especially dear to me for this reason. Living in Mayavati, if one cannot steal some time for himself to go for solo walks or treks in the surrounding forest, then he misses the most precious treasure of the place—spending time in the woods, to watch the natural beauty of the Himalayan seasons, its flora and fauna, its wild animals and migratory birds. We directly see the wild animals there and also hear their different call-sounds. We feel tuned to the surrounding silence so much that a knock on the door can make us miss our heartbeat. Even a faraway noise feels like awfully disturbing, what to talk of the torture to the eardrums due to some loud conversation nearby.

The significance of such a place is seldom rightly understood by many. Our minds must be oriented towards respecting the sanctity and receiving with gratitude the vibes of the mountains. The envelope of peaceful nature is often overwhelming. Nature is our only best friend and we must make use of this friendship with humility and respect.

The challenging Himalayan life naturally reflects in the temperaments of the local people

and they should be admired for their tenacity. The only devotional activity at Mayavati is the singing of *Sri Ramanama Sankirtana* on every Eka-dashi. It was the tradition started by Swami Saradanandaji mainly for the local staff. When all used to gather in the room where Swamiji had stayed, and sing in chorus, then devotion would sneak in the otherwise dry atmosphere of the place. Swamiji's room was the place

around which every visitor's sentiments revolved.

Himalaya—the abode of pure white shining snows! The youngest among the mountain ranges of the world! Therefore, most attractive and dynamic yet engulfed in quietness, a perfect setup for the one who in the midst of intense activity seeks the greatest calmness, and in the greatest peace seeks intense activity. This combination of *sattva* and *rajas* is best suitable for modern times, giving the necessary enthusiasm in striving for knowledge and liberation, simultaneously taking our roots deeper through tranquillity for strengthening our philosophical foundation. But as the mountainous terrain has winding paths going up and down, so is the case of spiritual life. It is a continuous learning experience. Spiritual struggle is about de-hypnotising ourselves. Was this the main reason for Swamiji to inspire his disciples to start an ashrama in such a place? 



The New PB Office Building, Mayavati

Holy Mother: The Ideal of Indian Motherhood as Depicted in Prabuddha Bharata

Pravrajika Prabuddhaprana

OUR IDEA OF HOLY MOTHER has evolved in the past hundred years. Swami Vivekananda had written:

You have not yet understood the wonderful significance of Mother's life—none of you. But gradually you will know. Without Shakti (Power) there is no regeneration for the world. Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries?—Because Shakti is held in dishonour there. Mother has been born to revive that wonderful Shakti in India; and making her the nucleus, once more will Gārgis and Maitreyis be born into the world.¹

How this gradual understanding has come about is revealed in a perusal of articles about her in *Prabuddha Bharata*. This article traces this evolution of the understanding of Holy Mother as she is portrayed as an ideal for Indian motherhood in the *Prabuddha Bharata* from 1920 to 2020. Early articles begin with the idea that there are only a few known incidents in her life to speak of. It ends with regarding her as the 'Mother of the World' to whom belongs the stewardship of all beings.

Mothers Matter

At the present time, we are witnessing a re-grouping of countries, East and West. Most

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governments and government agencies seem to be becoming more autocratic, tending to *divide* people along racial, religious, and economic grounds. This is countered by movements at the grassroots that *unite* or connect people. Sister Nivedita, searching for factors that united India, thought that the high esteem in which mothers are held in India is a trait that Hindus and Muslims have in common. There are places where Muslim women are oppressed and abused,

which, however, is not *because* of Islam; but in spite of Islam. Mohammad had said: 'Paradise lies at the feet of your mother.'²

Lately, there appears to be a churning of the ocean of the world and mud is violently surfacing everywhere, even in the land of *ahimsā*, non-violence, to which people looked for the ancient values of peace and tranquillity, of knowledge and devotion. Where is the ambrosia that is supposed to be churned up? I would hold mothers, more than any political or social leader, responsible for today's disconcerting situation in society; mothers who no longer pass on their traditional values to their children.

In India, in the early 1900s, children learned religion, including its ethical and moral values, at home from their mothers, or they were sent to local religious teachers by the arrangement of their families. The Hindu *gurukula* system, Islamic madrasa, Parsi schools, Hebrew (Jewish) and Christian schools were options according to one's religion. In pre-Independence India, mothers began to be involved in the freedom movement and Swadeshi activities, gaining education for employment, and thus spending less time cultivating religious sentiments in their children at home.

The mother, in most countries, occupies the central position in the family and she plays a vital part in the preservation of culture, ethics, and morality. Throughout Indian history, there have been outstanding mothers who have created and preserved what we know today as Indian cultural values.

According to Lila Smriti Majumdar's article 'The Role of the Mother' in *Prabuddha Bharata* (March 1954): 'The mother is responsible for teaching her children honesty, integrity, truthfulness and morality, worship and prayer, forgiveness, warning against greed and lust, and also how to study and a regard for knowledge. She

teaches how to set goals and to work towards them. The faith of the mother is copied by her children as well as how to relate to other people. Upon mothers depends the future of society.'³

There were no articles about Sri Sarada Devi in *Prabuddha Bharata* in her lifetime. She foretold that people would understand her only after her demise. The notice of the Holy Mother's *mahāsamādhi* in July 1920, appeared in the August issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*. For the most part, it quotes Sister Nivedita's writing about Holy Mother: 'She is Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood.'⁴ In September 1920 two articles about her appeared. 'M.' wrote the first article on Holy Mother after her *mahāsamādhi*, in which he says:

Possibly it will take centuries to make out who and what the Holy Mother was. ... She was mother to all, irrespective of caste or creed, and as such her doors ... were always open to all her children, be they white or black, Hindu or Parsi or Christian. ... Every mother dearly loves her own son, but has anybody seen such ethereal love for the sons of *all* mothers?⁵

After a year's gap, in the year 1922, two articles appeared in *Prabuddha Bharata* about Holy Mother: One which (PB January 2022) had been written on the occasion of her birthday the previous year—21 December 1921, by 'Chaitanya'. In that article, he writes:

Fully conscious of the great purpose of her divine consort designed to achieve through her ... who wanted to resuscitate once more the ancient ideal of Indian womanhood in terms of modern exigencies. ... The heavenly virtues of ancient mothers, their great ideal of purity and saintliness, which are the resplendent beauty of their lives, unflagging determination and faithfulness with which they faced the diverse problems of the world.⁶

The other article 'The Indian Ideal of Womanhood' is in the April 1922 issue, written

by Dinesh Maharaj [later, Swami Nikhilananda]. It begins with Sri Ramakrishna's admonition of his disciple who admits he has trained himself to hate women. Sri Ramakrishna protests that she is to be regarded as the image of the Divine Mother and one should pay her honour and respect. Dinesh Maharaj says: 'This worship of women as the visible representative of Divinity forms a glorious chapter in the history of Indian civilisation. It is here alone, that every unknown woman, even a beggar of the street, is addressed as *mother* [viz. *Ma*].' ⁷ In fact, *Prabuddha Bharata* published an article (in June 2013) titled 'The Power of Addressing Women as "Ma",' in which it is suggested that it would act as a remedy to the evils of disrespecting women. ⁸

In the early twentieth century, Indian mothers came under the influence of conflicting ideals. This was very well pointed out in his article by Dinesh Maharaj. He writes: 'The womanhood of India has emerged from its narrow seclusion and is contributing its quota for the reawakening of the motherland. ... [However] mothers and sisters seem to be dazzled by the brilliance of Western womanhood. ... Western chivalry towards her womenfolk ... is not the worship of the mother in woman but the worship of her outward charm that finds a place in the hearts of men.'⁹ The writer contrasts Indian womanhood of an idyllic past when the daughters of India were 'the emblem of purity and sacredness ... [with] the modern women of the world, bold and assertive, who are elbowing their way to come to the forefront of society and fast taking the place of man in social service, state-craft and other spheres' (139).

Even as late as January 2004, an article appears in *Prabuddha Bharata*: 'Sarada Math: Why Not During Mother's Time' by Kumud Bandhu Sen, in which an interesting dialogue between Swami Yogananda and Girish Ghosh is narrated. Swami Yogananda quotes Swamiji and points out:

Motherhood represents the highest expression of womanhood, especially in India. It is an innate instinct in every woman, the signs of which might be discovered even in a little girl. In the West the whole structure of society rested on the wifehood of woman. But motherhood is the true expression of divine love, sublime, noble and broad as the sky. And various heterogeneous ideas and customs have been introduced into Indian society as a result of contact with various alien races and cultures. This has vitiated the true ideal of motherhood that always obtained in our society, and we have gradually drifted away from the moorings of our ancient ideal of individual and communal life. ¹⁰

Still it should be mentioned that in India the wife ideal is also represented by Sita, Savitri, and others, and in the West, the Immaculate Virgin or the mother of Jesus represents the ideal of the motherhood.

In the July issue of the journal as early as 1927, Ramananda Chatterji, the Editor of *The Modern Review*, in his article, 'Saradamani Devi', states that at the time of writing, no biography of Holy Mother was available, and that 'one had to be contented with the fragments of information that lie scattered about the life-story of Ramakrishna.'¹¹ It seems he requested the disciples of Ramakrishna and Saradamani 'to record the life and teachings of this great woman' (ibid.). Ramananda then proceeds to relate what is known to him of her life. It should be noted that this article about Holy Mother was published after a five year's gap.

Then there was a longer gap in the mention of Holy Mother in *Prabuddha Bharata* till 1953-4, the year of Mother's birth centenary. But even then, in one of the articles in March 1954, T S Avinashilingam, who wrote of Holy Mother's universal Motherhood regardless of caste, creed, and so on, also says that the 'Mother's life does not abound with many incidents.'¹²

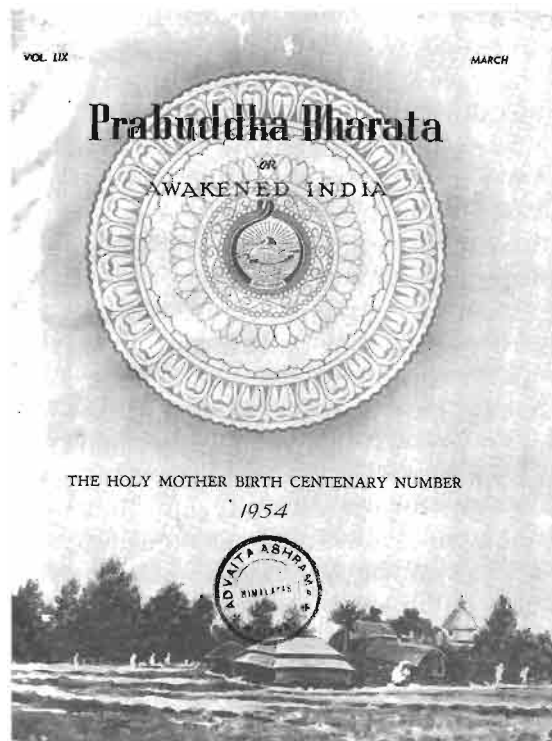
Reminiscences of the Holy Mother by her disciples began to be known and in the November 1953 issue, Kumud Bandhu Sen describes Mother's life in Kolkata and states that 'To her, all people—whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian—were equally dear.'¹³ Reiterating this sentiment, in the December 1953 issue, Hemanta Chandra Vedashastri in an article entitled 'Sri Sarada Devi—The Holy Mother' wrote: 'Like Sri Ramakrishna, she too was completely free from any trace of sectarianism or dogmatism.'¹⁴

In the March 1954 issue, the then Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, Swami Vandanananda, wrote of her unostentatious life, spent mostly in seclusion and the immeasurable depth of her personality, beyond the comprehension of many. She felt an infinite sympathy for the sufferings of others, and was the very embodiment of compassion, humility, patience, kindness, and forgiveness. The article was more about her ideal personality and did not touch much upon her divinity. In 'Notes and Conversations with the Holy Mother' in the May 1927 issue, she is referred to as the 'first and greatest disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and possessed of immeasurable spiritual power and wisdom.'¹⁵

From God-like to God

In an article in the March 1954 issue, titled 'The Holy Mother: As the Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Saw Her', P Seshadri Aiyar quotes what Swami Premananda wrote in a letter: 'The Holy Mother lives in Jayrambati, doing all the arduous works to teach the householders their duties. ... Carefully note her actions and learn how to shape your life. ... With what patience, endurance, and forgiveness does she live, doing all the duties of the mother of the house!'¹⁶

In the May 1953 issue, Henriette Girre's poem describes the turning point of Sarada Devi's life as the Shodashi Puja, after which she became identified as the Mother goddess. In the September



PB March 1954 (The Holy Mother Birth Centenary Number)

1953 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, the Reminiscences of the Holy Mother by Kumud Bandhu Sen describes how Holy Mother was completely identified spiritually with Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Yogananda says that after Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, she was continuously in a superconscious state for nearly two days in Vrindavan, after which 'all her sorrow and grief and her feeling of separation from the Master vanished.'¹⁷ Swami Yogananda also mentioned: 'We thought ourselves as helpless orphans [after the *mahāsamādhi* of Sri Ramakrishna], but the Mother's love became our sheet-anchor.'¹⁸

At first, among the disciples of Ramakrishna, it was Swami Vivekananda who made the others aware that the Holy Mother was not only to be regarded as the Guru's wife but the *Divine Mother herself*. In the May 1953 issue, Kumud Bandhu Sen continues his reminiscences. Listening to the dictation of a letter by Swamis

Brahmananda and Yogananda, the author realised 'that the work of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission everywhere and the activities of the great sannyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna even in far off countries, were lovingly guided and blessed by the Holy Mother. Her advice and decisions were sought and gladly accepted by these spiritual giants headed by Swami Vivekananda.'¹⁹

The Editorial of the March 2008 issue, 'Unfailing Wisdom' quotes Swamiji's words stating Holy Mother as the mother of the Ramakrishna Order: 'She [Sri Sarada Devi] is the protector, the nourisher, and the mother of the [Ramakrishna] *Sangha*,' [including the Ramakrishna Math, Sri Sarada Math, and their devotees].²⁰ She well knew that this *Sangha* would continue for ages to come and its ideas would spread from its headquarters in India to all parts of the world.

The Holy Mother lived for thirty-four years after Sri Ramakrishna. During this period, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission had become well established. And Swamiji contemplated that a nunnery should be established for disseminating this great ideal under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Mother. Sister Nivedita wrote in 'An Open Letter to Hindu Women':

Let Hindu mothers renew in their sons the thirst for *Brahmacharya*. Without this our nation is shorn of her ancient strength. No country in the world has an ideal of the student's life so high as this, and if it be allowed to die out of India, where shall the world look to restore it? In *Brahmacharya* is the secret of all strength, all greatness. Let every mother determine that her sons [and daughters] shall be great.²¹

After listening to Swamiji's plan of starting a women's Math with the Holy Mother as its centre, Swami Yogananda pleaded with Swamiji: 'Please do not bring Mother into public prominence now. Don't you remember the Master telling us that his body would not survive if we

preached him before the public? The same may be said in respect of Mother too.'²² So, this Math for women could not be started in her lifetime.

Furthermore, in an article in the March 1954 issue titled 'Sri Sarada Devi: A Centenary Tribute', Justice P B Mukharji says: 'Sarada Devi lives today in the minds of her many disciples ... and in the invisible bond of love and unity that pervades the Ramakrishna Order.'²³ Kalpalata Devi [later, Pravrajika Atmaprana] notes in 'The Life Divine', an article published in the March 1954 issue: 'When a disciple asked her the purpose of her outliving Sri Ramakrishna, she replied quietly: 'The Master left me behind to manifest the Motherhood of God to the world.'²⁴

'Holy Mother—An Ideal for Indian Women' by S N L Shrivastava also appeared in the March 1954 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*. He wrote: 'For generations to come, Indian girls and women shall learn from the life-story of the Holy Mother lessons in humility and modesty, chastity and devotion to God, self-abnegation and ungrudging endurance of pain and suffering, maternal love and selfless service. ... We find in Sarada Devi's life reincarnate all those ideals for which the greatest of Indian women stood for in the past.'²⁵ Until then, most people saw the Holy Mother only as a great woman.

In the same issue, Dr S C Chatterjee wrote in an article titled, 'Sri Sarada Devi, a Study in Holy Life': 'She is now commonly known as the Holy Mother because she exhibited in her life many of the great qualities which we attribute to the Divine Mother of the world.'²⁶ Abhaya Dasgupta wrote similarly in the April 1990 issue: 'Sarada Devi did not want anything for herself—not physical comforts, not reputation, honour or even recognition! Can an ordinary mortal show such selflessness? Even a mother wants some return from her children. Only the Mother of the World is an exception.'²⁷

When someone told Holy Mother not to allow a person near her because he was extremely impure, Holy Mother said: 'If my son wallows in the dust or mud, it is I who have to wipe all the dirt from off his body and take him to my lap.'²⁸

In the Editorial 'Holy Mother, A Confluence of Many Ideals' (December 2000), Swami Sunirmalananda concludes: 'She belongs to everyone. From the saint Saradanandaji to the dacoit Amjad, all can receive equal motherly affection from her.'²⁹

Abhaya Dasgupta, in the April 1990 issue further discusses Holy Mother as the Mother of the World (Jagaddhātri):

It is said that Goddess Durga came to the rescue of gods and goddesses when they were being harassed by the demons. According to Swami Vivekananda, Mother Sarada was *that* Durga, the living Durga, as he would call her. ... The struggle in modern times is in the realm of the mind. The world is again and again getting stained with blood because of conflicts between one country and another, one community and another. People are selfish, vain and jealous. There is no open violence, there is hatred in the heart which is more dangerous. ... So Goddess Durga had to appear this time, as an embodiment of tolerance, love and peace.³⁰

In the December 1994 issue, Swami Tathagatananda wrote about Holy Mother in his article 'Swamiji on Indian Women': 'In her motherhood we see the manifestation of a divine quality—self-forgetting and self-sacrificing love that knows no limitations. So Indians see every woman on earth—irrespective of her social status and age—as an embodiment of sweetness, ungrudging love, patience, forbearance, modesty, and such other divine qualities.'³¹ He explains an important point quoting Swamiji: 'According to the old Hindu tradition a child is born through prayer. "Those children that ... slip into this world just in a moment of inadvertence ... what

can we expect of such progeny? [These children] may be veritable demons—burning, murdering, robbing, stealing, drinking, hideous, vile'" (513).

The Editorial of the June 2013 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* does not shy away from addressing the current abuse of women in society. The editor, Swami Satyamayananda,

writes of the negative instinct that 'gives rise to uncontrollable aggressiveness, pugnacity, and lust and results in mind-numbing rapes and other forms of abuse that shock human conscience'. He concludes that it is the motherhood of Holy Mother that is 'what humanity needs in these times of great stress'. And he is hopeful that 'this will be the future path of humanity: the Mother path'.³²

When Holy Mother's disciple, Dr Kanjilal's wife requested Holy Mother to bless her physician son with success in his medical profession, she refused to do so. That would mean his sick patients would increase in number. She took the welfare of the larger community into account. Once, Brahmachari Rashbihari asked Holy Mother: 'Are you the Mother of all?' 'Yes', Mother replied. The inquirer pressed: 'Even of these lower creatures?' 'Yes', answered the Mother.³³ People are artificially divided into countries and communities and they become opposed to one another, thinking, "These are my people and



Holy Mother's Image at Joyrambati Temple

those are others'. Likewise, it lies with motherhood, the responsibility of uniting the country and the world by following the highest ideal of motherhood shown by Holy Mother. ❧

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Ideals of the Ramakrishna Movement in Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Satyapriyananda

The Ramakrishna Movement

THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT is a Movement bearing the name of Sri Ramakrishna, the *Yugāvatāra*, incarnation of the modern age. It is centred on Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, and his brother disciples; then it radiates; there is the *guru-śiṣya paramparā*, the generations of monks and nuns, lay devotees, admirers, well-wishers, and sympathisers. The movement consists of a central core of the inspiring divine personalities surrounded by: (i) monastics involved in Math activities, (ii) monastics and lay people involved in Mission activities, (iii) predominantly lay devotees involved in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prachar activities through several centres all over India. It further overflows and extends all over the globe with active spots, like sparks emanating from a blazing fire, radiating the spiritual energy. Several ignited souls all over the world are dedicated to the ideas and ideals of the originators of the movement but working individually, not coming into the limelight, quietly, imperceptibly, serving the immanent God according to their capacities and reaping spiritual benefits in the process.

Prabuddha and Bharata

‘Prabuddha Bharata’ or ‘Awakened India’ is a term which had no relevance in 1896, for India was then

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The emblem of the Ramakrishna Order designed by Swami Vivekananda, engraved above the entrance of the main temple at Belur Math

a slave nation without a backbone. The nation was aping the West, quite content to be ruled, and had lost faith in the Eternal Religion. Fascinated by the glamour of the Western nations and leaning towards Christianity, it was always pondering over one question: ‘What does the West say in this matter?’ There were hordes of invaders who had plundered this nation out of greed for her wealth. It had gone through two major invasions: a) by the Mughals who had looted the land of its wealth and destroyed her temples, and b) by the British who had come as the East India Company and stayed behind to rule over the land, grabbing what little remained to be looted and destroying the cultural and educational heritage of the land. ‘Prabuddha’ means ‘awakened’; how could one—and not definitely Swami Vivekananda—claim such a slave nation to be awakened? Swamiji had exercised the capacity to look into the future and see that the nation will become awakened.

The First Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, 1926

Swami Shivanandaji, the second President of the Ramakrishna Order, presented the Presidential Address in the First Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in April 1926, held at Belur Math, as reported in *Prabuddha Bharata* April 1926.¹ The ideas and ideals of the Ramakrishna Movement are found enshrined here:

As the very basis of the Math we find the following words of the Swamiji. 'This Math is established', said he, 'for the attainment of one's own liberation as well as to get equipped for the amelioration of the world in all possible ways by following the path laid down by Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Deva. Another Math working on this line will be established for women as well.' These pregnant words of Swamiji form the corner-stone, as it were, of the Math established by him. A proper understanding of these words, which mean much more than what appears on the surface, will supply the pivot of the entire organisation controlled and managed by the members of the Ramakrishna Order. ...

Humanity has never before seen another life like that of Sri Ramakrishna, synthesising the highest ideals of knowledge, devotion, work (selfless service), and yoga (meditation). Those only, who mould their lives after the perfect ideal of Sri Ramakrishna's character, can be truly said to represent the ideas of the Math. Therefore, Swamiji enjoined that the special aim of this Math would be the formation of character by combining the above-mentioned four paths, and that the spiritual exercises that would bring about such a synthesis would alone be accepted as the *sādhana* of this Math. 'Therefore', he (Swami Shivananda) said emphatically, 'everyone must bear in mind that a man who shows the slightest deficiency in any one of the above-mentioned ways has not been properly cast in the mould of Sri Ramakrishna's life. He who consecrates himself to the service of others does a nobler work than he who tries to work

out his own liberation.' This is really the special feature of this Math.

Swamiji set forth the ideal of his Math: Dedication of our life to the attainment of our own liberation as well as to the amelioration of the world at large—*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*. This is what he has chosen for us, the ideal of all ideals. One of his poems suggest his mode of work:

Be like the arrow that darts from the bow.
Be like the hammer that falls on the anvil.
Be like the sword that pierces its object.
The arrow does not murmur if it
misses the target.
The hammer does not fret if it
falls on a wrong place.
And the sword does not lament if it is broken
in the hands of its wielder.
*Yet there is a joy in being made, used and broken;
and an equal joy in being finally set aside.*

Second Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Convention, 1980

Swami Vireshwaranandaji, the tenth President of the Ramakrishna Order, presented the benedictory address in the Second Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Convention held in 1980, which was published in *Prabuddha Bharata*, April 1981.² He pointed out that the object of the Convention was the same as that of the First Convention held fifty-four years earlier, namely, 'to exchange ideas amongst the members, consolidate their faith in the ideal, and infuse new vigour into its practice, and further to strengthen the tie of fellowship and co-operation amongst themselves.'

Referring to the word 'Sangha', he said that, 'generally it is used to denote only the monastic organisation. I have used it to include the lay devotees also.' Comparing the condition of India

under foreign rule during the time of the first convention with the freedom enjoyed for the past thirty-three years, he said that, 'though in certain respects, conditions have improved, yet in many other directions the situation has rather worsened'. The reason for this is 'when degeneration and disintegration set in a civilization, they run their course to the extreme before they come to a halt and we are able to turn the tide.' 'To set things right again, we have to go back to religion in its true sense.'

Swami Vireshwarananda highlighted the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna:

1. 'That the aim of life was to realize God.'
2. 'That anyone could realize Him by following the right method.'
3. 'Religion meant realization or direct experience of the Ultimate Truth.'
4. 'That all religions led to God-realization, and that too through direct experience, which is the only proof that can be convincing to the modern scientific mind.'
5. 'He showed to the present acquisitive society that all this accumulation of wealth and grabbing of others' lands was 'vanity of vanities.'
6. 'That the same Atman existed in all, irrespective of their caste, creed or colour; behind the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the ignorant and the educated, and behind every man and woman to whatever race he or she belonged.'
7. 'He said, "serve *jīva* as Śiva", and that service to *jīva* with this idea would lead to realization. Thus he harmonized the centuries-old contradiction between work and worship; work can become worship, if it is done in the proper spirit' (ibid.).

Regarding the work for the upliftment of women and the establishment of Sri Sarada Math, Swami Vireshwaranandaji said: 'He (Swamiji) wanted a few educated women to take to the life of sannyasa and take control of the education of girls, so that they might be trained up as ideal women. ... You all know that such an organization as desired by Swamiji has already

come into existence and is working independently for the uplift of women in different parts of India' (ibid.).

Filled with the missionary spirit, the Swami further said that 'the universal message of Sri Ramakrishna is meant not only for India, but for the whole world'. He added: 'If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them. We have to raise the backward people culturally' (ibid.). He appealed to all the followers of Sri Ramakrishna to take to the rebuilding of the nation vigorously both individually and by organising more institutions like these in various parts of the country; for the work done by the monastics, though much in itself, is yet very little indeed compared to the needs of the country.

All India Youth Convention, 1985

The United Nations declared the year 1985 as the International Year of the Youth. The Indian Government declared that from 1985, 12th January (Swamiji's birthday) will be celebrated as National Youth Day. Belur Math called upon the youth of the nation to participate in the Convention to be held in December the same year.

Swami Gambhiranandaji, the eleventh President of the Ramakrishna Order, in his Inaugural Address (*Prabuddha Bharata*, April 1986) said that as opposed to the idea of passive spirituality, the Ramakrishna Order practised *dynamic spirituality* as self-evident from the several activities going all around even as one enters Ramakrishna Math campus. There is serenity as well as sublimity but not without dynamism.

He said that the ideal of the Ramakrishna Order is: '*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*; for one's own liberation and for the good of the world.' The expression 'good of the world' did not mean merely helping people out of compassion, but serving them as manifestations of God. Gambhiranandaji clarified:

This gave a new dimension to our idea of Karma-yoga, which is not mere social service, but a spiritual discipline undertaken for the purification of the mind, and consists in doing good to others as a dedication to God, without any idea of egoism. Sri Ramakrishna took this idea a step further, and moved it away from its dualistic basis to a non-dualistic foundation. God is not separate from the benefactor or the beneficiary, and one has not to offer the results of his work to God. On the other hand, in the idea of service enunciated by Sri Ramakrishna, one's work itself becomes worship. No selfish result accrues from this work, except spiritual progress.

...the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji were not meant as idle ideals, but ideals that had to be put into actual practice. And for this they depended mainly on young people. Sri Ramakrishna chose Narendranath and other young men for the propagation and actualization of His ideas. Swamiji also called upon the youth of India to take up his banner for their personal good, for the good of India, and for the good of humanity as a whole.

Before any politician thought about the masses and the women, Swamiji declared that India could not forge ahead so long as the masses and the women were not uplifted. And this had to be done through education and freedom of choice, without disturbing their inherent religious tendencies.

He has left his impression on various fields of activity, not by shunning religion but just by being religious. So, one of the tasks to be undertaken by you is the uplift of the masses and the women through education, without injuring their *dharma*. This education, again, must not be merely theoretical, but should be able to bring social and economic peace and development.

Swamiji said, 'I do not believe in a religion that cannot wipe the tears of a widow!' Then there are a lot of prejudices and wrongful practices like untouchability, casteism, etc. which

must be uprooted, not through any revolution but through an evolutionary process. Swamiji remarked that while other reformers work on the surface and achieve superficial results, he himself was 'a root and branch reformer'.

And that kind of reform comes from a deeper outlook on life as a whole which comprises both secular and spiritual improvement. Swamiji was angry at persons who in the name of religion would stand in the way of the people's economic upliftment. He went to the extent of declaring, 'You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita'. You have to build up your bodies and minds strongly on a basis of dynamic spirituality. He wanted 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist'.³

All-India Youth Convention, 1998

Swami Sunirmalananda's following report of the Convention held on 3 and 4 February 1998 was published in the June 1998 issue of *PB*:

The venue of the convention was Belur Math. The convention attracted 10,000 young men and women from all over India. Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, delivered the Benedictory Address. He reminded the younger generation that Swami Vivekananda had high hopes in them and that the world would be revolutionized by the youth. The revolution, however, was not any political revolution. It was the cultural, moral and spiritual revolutions that were needed. The youth have a great responsibility in bringing about the much-needed change in India. Just as a torn map was set right by a child by placing properly the torn parts of the picture of the man on the other side of the map, the nation also can be set right if individuals are set right. For this to happen, the young should be strong in character. On how to develop character he said, 'Each one of you must first of all give up negative thinking.... Have immense faith in your

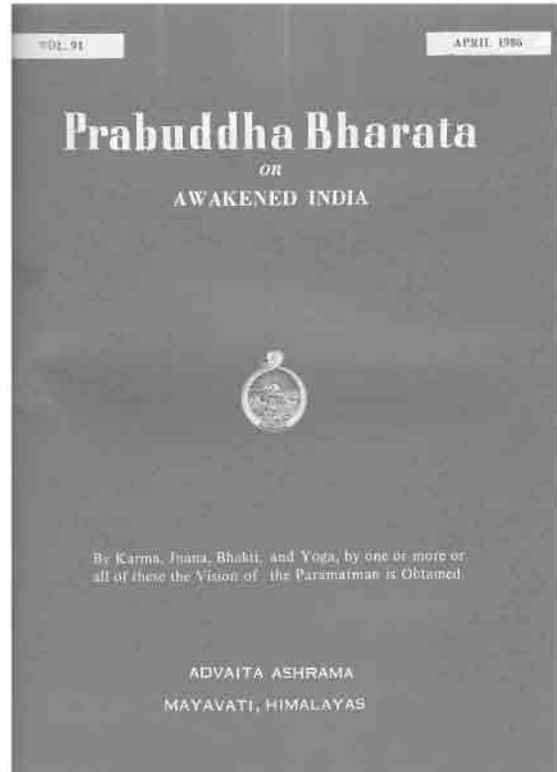
potential qualities. Forget all the past mistakes. Secondly, try to be as selfless as possible.' He fervently told the youth not to make Swamiji's advent go in vain. He called upon the youth to work for the good of the country in particular and of the world at large.

The Youth Convention was inaugurated by Swami Ranganathananda, the senior Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Mission. He inspired the youth to read the works of Swami Vivekananda, specially his Letters and Lectures from Colombo to Almora. These two books had inspired almost all the important leaders of the freedom movement during the pre-independent days. He spoke further about the deterioration in almost every field during the last fifty years though we got the much-coveted independence. The reason for such a downward trend is a lack of orientation. The orientation should come from no other quarter than Swamiji's works, because such a great leader as Swamiji was not born anywhere else. Swamiji's thoughts are like bombs. They will burst and destroy all vices. A new character frame has to be set up for the good of the world at large. This has to be done at the individual level by self-development, and at the collective level by spreading the message of Vedanta. We have both the capacity to do good and to do evil. Let us choose the path of good.⁴

All-India Devotees' Convention, 1998

More than 12,000 devotees participated in the All-India Devotees' Convention, held on the lawns of Belur Math on 7 and 8 February, 1998.

Swami Atmasthananda, one of the three Vice-Presidents, gave the Inaugural Address. He said that a devotee is one who is always absorbed in the Divine. This makes the lover imbibe the qualities of the Beloved. The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, true to the teachings of the Gita, have to be immersed in the thought of Sri Ramakrishna. It is not just voluntary contributions and rendering service to



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a little extent that count. What is important is taking the spiritual ideal to heart. Whatever be the status of a devotee, she or he can lead a devoted life; wherever one might be—in the householder's life or in the monastery—all can lead exemplary lives.

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prachar Parishads

'*Bhāva*' is 'ideal' in this context, '*pracāra*' is 'spreading' and '*pariṣad*' is 'congregation' or 'association'. So *Bhāva Pracār Pariṣad* is 'an institution or society, aiming at the spreading of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda message' everywhere. Though spreading of the message was going on even from the times of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna by both lay and monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, an association of all those like-minded people

committed to the ideals was a necessity, and 'Bhava Prachar Parishad' fulfilled that need.

After the Second Convention of 1980 above-mentioned, there was a Committee appointed by the Trustees called the 'Convention Follow-up Programme Committee'. Subsequently, the Board of Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math appointed another Committee entitled 'Sri Ramakrishna Bhava Prachar Committee' in place of the Convention Follow-up Programme Committee since dissolved vide Resolution No.11 dated 23 July 1981. Swami Atmasthananda was appointed the first Convener of Sri Ramakrishna Bhava Prachar Committee.

The first meeting of the Sri Ramakrishna Bhava Prachar Committee was held on 11 October 1981 at Belur Math. In this meeting, it was decided, among other things, (a) to circulate *Rebuild India*, a compilation of Swami Vivekananda's sayings about serving the masses, all over India in different languages; (b) to build a permanent exhibition on Ramakrishna Movement in or around Belur Math; (c) to appoint zone committees in different parts of India with heads of our centres and other monks as members, to inspire and guide the numerous private centres that are coming up everywhere. Five zones—Northern, Southern, Central, Western, and Eastern—were demarcated.

In the meeting of the Committee on 18 January 1982, the name of the committee was changed from 'Sri Ramakrishna Bhava Prachar' to 'Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prachar'. Additions were made to the previous programmes. It was decided to inform all our centres to hold youth conventions according to their capacities. All the initial plans of the Committee were carried out. By December 1984, almost all the regions of India had conducted youth conventions. A national youth convention was planned for December

1984 in Belur Math, but adverse circumstances postponed the convention to 1985. The term 'Parishad' came to be added in August 1985. The main activity, however, of Bhava Prachar Parishad was to bring together all the private ashramas and centres in various parts of India under one banner.

Several conventions were organised as listed below:

(i) **The First Convention, 1989:** Conference of the Parishad Conveners, Joint Conveners, and the monks associated with them.

(ii) **Second Convention of Bhava Prachar Parishads, held on 5-6 June 1998:** It was a part of the concluding ceremony of the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission. In the Benedictory Address, Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj said:

To carry on this work of spreading the message, what is necessary is that we must work in an organised way. Swamiji gave much emphasis on the power of organisation. Organised functioning is absolutely necessary to carry on the work effectively, with loyalty to the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna.

Secondly, Swamiji knew what the problems were at that time. These problems are still there more or less. Many more may crop up in future. We have to tackle them in the spirit and practical methods shown by Swamiji. All problems can be solved in the light of the life and teachings of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda emphasised that the leaders who are working to disseminate the message will have to be unselfish and do the work out of love for the ideals, love for the country and love for the world at large. The ideas have to be carried on by people who are unselfish and who work with the conviction of doing good to the world in the sense as Sri Ramakrishna wanted it. We must work with the faith that we are mere instruments in the hands of Sri Ramakrishna and also with the purpose of serving a world organisation.⁵

(iii) **Third Convention of Bhava Prachar Parishads, 2004:** Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's 150th Birth Anniversary was the occasion for holding this convention.

The Third Convention of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prachar Parishads was held on October 29 and 30, 2004 at the Cultural Hall of the Belur Math. This Convention was presided over by Swami Gahanananda, then the Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

(iv) **Fourth Convention of Bhava Prachar Parishads, 2011:** This two-day Fourth Convention was held on 12 and 13 February, 2011, at the Cultural Hall in the holy precincts of Belur Math, coinciding with the 175th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna and 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. There were three sessions including the Inaugural Session on 12 February and three sessions including the Valedictory Session on 13 February.

The Inaugural Session was presided over by Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, and was held from 9 am to 10 am. The Welcome Address was delivered by Swami Prabhananda, the then General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order. The Benedictory Address was delivered by Swami Atmasthanandaji.

(v) **Fifth Convention of Bhava Prachar Parishads, 2014:** After the closing celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's 150th Birth Anniversary in January 2014, as a part of Swamiji's Concluding Ceremony, the Fifth Convention of All-India Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prachar Parishads was held at Belur Math on the 16 and 17 June, 2014. There were discussions on the achievements and scope of Bhava Prachar Parishads and on Swami Vivekananda. In the Inaugural Address, Swami Smarananandaji, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, said:

Our Tenth President, Swami Vireswarananda Maharaj had advised long back that we must have three Orders. The first Order is of course of the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. The second Order is the nuns of the Sarada Math. And the third Order is the Private Ashramas and associations and members of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prachar Parishads. It all began in 1982 in a small way. But since then it has grown to a great extent, and as time goes on we find that more and more people are joining this Ramakrishna Movement.⁶

All-India Volunteers' Orientation Camp, 2014

An All-India Volunteers' Orientation Camp was held at Belur Math on 18 June 2014, in which about 2400 volunteers associated with Belur Math and branch centres participated.

In the Inaugural Address, Swami Divyananda dealt extensively on the attitude of an ideal volunteer. He said:

Volunteers should be resourceful. By resourceful I mean that they should have the knowledge of the Ashrama. They should know the topography of the Ashrama premises. At the same time, they must know the monastic members of the Ashrama.

Disciplines, self-control, self-respect, dignity of labour, self-sacrifice are the values that should be imbibed by our volunteers.

Volunteers are expected to have an exalted character, so that anyone coming near them can understand that here is a person embodying lofty ideals. Each volunteer must grow a habit of reading Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature every day. ... If we read the life of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi then we will get the strength and spirit to serve. The work that the volunteers are doing is actually the worship of Guru Maharaj. This is to be kept in mind that we are very fortunate to worship Guru Maharaj by serving others. Guru Maharaj is the *kartā*, and we are His instruments.

International Conference, 2014

An international conference was organised on 27 and 28 January 2014 on 'The Universal Significance of Swami Vivekananda's Life and Message in the 21st Century'.


His Excellency Shri M K Narayanan, Governor of West Bengal, said in his Inaugural Address as follows:

Swamiji was our foremost Upanishadic seer. His message was universal and meant for all people without any distinction of caste, creed, race or gender. What he made ordinary mortals realise was that man had within himself a divinity which is a source of infinite knowledge and boundless joy. First, he is a humanist and a true liberal—a deeply religious person and yet a modernist in outlook. He was one who believed in the concept of universal religion. Second, his message for humanity was harmony—harmony of religions, harmony of the East and the West, harmony of religion and science. Third, he was an educationist above all and an epitome in his words, 'education is the manifestation of perfection already in man'. Fourth, his idea of service of God in man—an idea imbibed from his Master—which contains the essence of his wisdom and predicates how this can bring about a transformation in relationships among human beings. Fifth, his agenda was comprehensive; his purpose revolutionary. His path was harmonising the essence of all religions, and turning this perception into a social reality.⁷

Prabuddha Bharata: 125 years

Prabuddha Bharata as a journal has done yeoman service in narrating these ideas and ideals as well as describing the activities of the Ramakrishna Movement through several articles. The period 1997–98 was the Centenary year of the Ramakrishna Mission and several articles representative of the Mission's work in India were published. From time to time, special issues on the occasion of the silver, diamond, golden, platinum, and centenary, as well as those of the 125th, 150th, 175th

year commemorating significant events have devoted space to discuss the ideas, ideals, and goals of the Movement. Several articles have also appeared on the specific topic of the Ramakrishna Movement in its various aspects.

The enormity of the task compels us in all humility to provide the link to the Ramakrishna Order's webpage where further information can be gleaned in this age of digital communication: <https://belurmath.org/activities>. The activities can be broadly grouped under the major headings: *lowest level*: gift of food, clothing, shelter, relief, and rehabilitation; *next higher level*: saving life through hospitals, dispensaries, and so on; *still higher*: educational and technical institutions of a wide variety; and the *highest*: spiritual mentoring, publication of books and journals, counselling, and the like. 

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Scientific and Rational Thinking Depicted in Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Atmapriyananda

‘My life’s work’—Swami Vivekananda

DESCRIBING HIS ‘life’s work’, Swami Vivekananda wrote as follows:

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

understand who have attempted it. The dry, abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life’s work.¹

He also wrote in the same vein: ‘I want to give them dry, hard reason, softened in the sweetest syrup of love and made spicy with intense work, and cooked in the kitchen of Yoga, so that even a baby can easily digest it’ (ibid.). It is now well known that the result of Swamiji’s efforts in

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this direction is his books on the four Yogas, his immortal gift to humanity: *Jnana Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, and *Raja Yoga*.

Swami Vivekananda's Emphasis on Rational and Scientific Temper: 'Reason and Religion'

Swamiji was one of the rare spiritual geniuses among the modern religious teachers who emphasised rational and scientific temper in the sphere of spirituality and religion which is traditionally considered a matter of 'faith'—faith in the Guru, faith in the scriptures, and faith in the tradition. He showed how *reason* and *faith* are not opposed to each other. In fact, it is the reason that reinforces, fortifies, and deepens spiritual perceptions in a practitioner. He himself relentlessly pursued rational and scientific thought, trained his disciples and followers along these lines, and insisted time and again that religious and spiritual *intuition transcends reason but does not contradict it*. In his famous lecture on 'Reason and Religion' (*Complete Works*, 1.366) delivered in England, Swamiji raises an interesting question of whether religion should be subjected to the same principles of scrutiny by which secular sciences are tested. In the same vein, he adds that religion may claim superiority as dealing with transcendental matters and hence cannot be examined by the same yardstick.

Differing from such a claim made by religion, Swamiji asserts:

'People who deny the efficacy of any rationalistic investigation into religion seem to me somewhat to be contradicting themselves. ... Whether we declare it boldly, clearly, or not—it is evident that here we appeal to reason. ...

'What do I mean by reason? ... The first principle of reasoning is that the particular is explained by the general, the general by the more general, until we come to the universal. ... So

the particulars are to be referred to the general, the general to the more general, and everything at last to the universal, the last concept that we have, the most universal—that of existence. Existence is the most universal concept. ...

'Therefore, as I have already pointed out, knowledge is more or less classification. There is something more. A second explanation of knowledge is that the explanation of a thing must come from inside and not from outside. ... And this is one of the features of science which I mean to apply to religion. In this religions are found wanting and that is why they are crumbling into pieces. Every science wants its explanations from inside, from the very nature of things; and the religions are not able to supply this. ...

'Another idea connected with this, the manifestation of the same principle, that the explanation of everything comes from inside it, is the modern law of evolution. The whole meaning of evolution is simply that the nature of a thing is reproduced, that the effect is nothing but the cause in another form, that all the potentialities of the effect were present in the cause, that the whole of creation is but an evolution and not a creation. ... It is unnecessary to seek for any cause outside. ...

'... what we see in the universe as the essential unity of things. To my mind, if modern science is proving anything again and again, it is this, that we are one—mentally, spiritually, and physically. ... We are absolutely one; we are physically one, we are mentally one, and as spirit, it goes without saying, that we are one, if we believe in spirit at all. This oneness is the one fact that is being proved every day by modern science' (1.367–73).

We may summarise the above arguments of Swamiji succinctly in the form of three clear principles which are common to both science and religion. These are:

- (i) The Classification Principle,
- (ii) The Generalisation Principle, and
- (iii) The Unification Principle.

These three principles form the bedrock on which the citadels of both science and religion have been built and wherein both of these great disciplines, vital to human life and existence, converge. Swamiji spoke about this convergence, this meeting of science and spirituality, reason and religion in his lectures on *Jnana Yoga* and prophesied that this will be the future religion of thinking, rational humanity: 'Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out, we may be sure that it will be for all times and peoples. This is the one way that will prove acceptable to modern science, for it has almost come to it' (2.140).

Prabuddha Bharata in Relentless Pursuit of Scientific and Rational Thought as Envisioned by Swami Vivekananda

Prabuddha Bharata, an English journal started by Swamiji in 1896, has been pursuing his vision in promoting through its pages scientific and rational thought and creating a blend of what he called 'natural and humanistic sciences' in his conversations with Sir Jamshedji Tata when they were travelling in the same ship to Chicago in 1893. Within six years of starting this journal, christening it *Prabuddha Bharata*, and writing a wonderful poem in English in the form of benediction to its onward march that has remained steady, unfaltering, and indefatigable over 125 long years, Swamiji passed away in *mahasamadhi* in 1902. He said that although he chose to cast off his mortal frame as one would a worn-out garment, he would not cease to work, but inspire men everywhere until the whole world would realise its Oneness with God.

Within four years of *Prabuddha Bharata's* birth in the lap of the Himalayas as *Umā Haimavati* (Parvati) did, there came a series of revolutionary discoveries in science, especially in



Physics, which completely revolutionised Physics and one's conception of the physical universe at the macrocosmic level of celestial bodies and the microcosmic level of atomic and subatomic particles. These discoveries have deep philosophical implications which are being discussed, debated, and volumes are being written even today. Redefining the role of the 'observer' in any act of observation as a 'participator', the probabilistic interpretation of quantum mechanics with which even Einstein could not reconcile as it militated against his bias towards determinism as fundamental (he famously said 'God does not play dice!' leading to Niels Bohr to quip 'you

cannot dictate to God what He should do!’), are some of the philosophical concepts which are bringing physical science rapidly closer to philosophy and religion. In fact, Arthur Eddington, a hard-core astrophysicist and a contemporary of Einstein, towards the end of his famous book *The Nature of the Physical Universe*, devoted a full chapter on the profound connection between science and mysticism.

Examples of Articles and Papers Published in Prabuddha Bharata Depicting Scientific and Rational Thought

We give below some examples of articles and papers published in *Prabuddha Bharata* right from its inception up to the present day showing how scientific and rational thought has been depicted in the articles and papers published uninterruptedly in *Prabuddha Bharata* during its triumphal march of 125 years. These have been divided into four groups/generations (each spanning about 30 years) as shown below. This list is not exhaustive but only representative.

Group I (1899–1931)

1. ‘Science Metaphysics and Natural Law’ by Dr Janes Lewis G., (1899 Jan, Feb)
2. ‘The Scientific Basis of Religion’ by Swami Abhedananda (1900 July)
3. ‘Science and Religion: Views of Lord Kelvin and His Critics’ (1903 July)
4. ‘Science and the Future & the Future of Science’ by Swami Pavitrananda (1931 July)

Group II (1932–60)

1. ‘Relativity and the Hindu Conception of God’ by Swami Jnaneswarananda (1938 Aug)
2. ‘Science and Civilization’ by Mitra Chuni-lal (1941 Oct)
3. ‘Science and Religion’ by Swami Pavitrananda (1946 Nov)

4. ‘Physics and Metaphysics: A Vedantic Approach’ by Dr Pravas Jivan Chaudhury (1949 Jan)

5. ‘Vedanta as a Scientific Philosophy’ by Dr Pravas Jivan Chaudhury—I, II, III (1960 Feb, April, June)

Group III (1961–90)

1. ‘Science and Philosophy’ by Parihar Prithwi Singh (1964 Apr)
2. ‘Rational and Non-rational Elements in Religious Experience’ by Prof. Shrivastava Sheo Narayan Lal (1968 May)
3. ‘Science and Spirituality’ by Swami Tapasyananda (1968 Nov)
4. ‘Science, Philosophy and Religion’ by Dr P Nagaraja Rao (1970 June)
5. ‘Science and Religion’ by Swami Ranganathananda (1977 June—Oct)
6. ‘Science and Human Development’ by Dr M Lashmi Kumari (1987 Apr)

Group IV (1991–2020)

1. ‘Science During the Past Millennium: A Survey’ by Dr N V C Swamy (2000 May)
2. ‘Philosophy of the Physical Sciences’ by Dr N Mukunda (2007 Sept, Oct)
3. ‘The Philosophy of Mathematics’ by Swami Sarvottamananda (2007 Sept, Oct)

Sample Analysis of the Above Articles Published in Prabuddha Bharata

Even a quick analysis of all these sample articles to show the scientific and rational thought process depicted in them is a stupendous task and the space constraint will prevent us from going for it. Hence, we would take up just one or two articles from each of the Groups I—IV to illustrate how *Prabuddha Bharata* has been consistently publishing articles depicting scientific and rational thought.

From Group I:

It is important to remember that the articles in Group I came at a critical juncture (1899–1931) that marked the rise of a new physics engendering a new worldview by the triumphant march of a rapid succession of astounding discoveries that revolutionised our conceptions of the nature of the physical universe.

(I.1) 'The Scientific Basis of Religion' by Swami Abhedananda (1900 July)

Some significant insights from this article are reproduced below:

Science asserts that there is one reality, and that that reality is manifested in the universe in various forms. It teaches us that there is one life principle manifested in all the various forms of nature that we call living. Herbert Spencer says: 'Matter, motion and force are not the reality, but the symbols of reality.' Moreover, he says in his 'Psychology': 'The same reality is manifested objectively and subjectively.' The same reality expresses in the objective world as *matter*, in the subjective world as *mind*. One is the basis and the many are nothing but the expressions of that one. ... Is there any religion which teaches unity in variety? ... if we read the writings of the ancient sages of India we find many expressions which describe in the simplest possible language that unity in variety. ... The philosophy of these ancient seers accepts all the truths that have been discovered by science, and all that may be discovered in future. It has room for them all. At the same time, it claims that that truth which science calls 'unknown and unknowable' can be realised. It is more than known and knowable; it is the nearest to our hearts; it is nearer than the mind, nearer than the intellect, nearer than the body, nearer than the senses. ... We shall not have to go outside of this universe to find that Truth. If we look within, we shall find it there. ... The world now needs a scientific religion. It needs the supremacy of reason over blind faith. It needs a religion which will teach, with science, unity in variety, and which will accept all

the conclusions at which modern science has arrived, ... a religion that can include them all, and one which harmonises with science, philosophy and metaphysics.

(I.2) 'Science and the Future & the Future of Science' by Swami Pavitrananda (1931 July)

To appreciate the scientific and rational approach of this *Prabuddha Bharata* Editorial of July 1931 by Swami Pavitrananda at a critical juncture when, as stated before, a series of path-breaking discoveries were taking place in rapid succession revealing newer layers of our understanding of the physical universe, we need to have a quick look at these discoveries that took place during the period 1897–1928. These are chronologically listed below.

1897: J. J. Thomson's discovery of the first sub-atomic particle, electron.

1900: Max Planck's *Quantum Theory* leading to the birth of quantum mechanics.

1905: Albert Einstein's *Theory of Special Relativity* that revolutionised our concept of space and time.

1911: Ernest Rutherford's discovery of the nucleus in an atom.

1913: Neils Bohr's formulation of the theory of atomic structure.

1916: Albert Einstein's *Theory of General Relativity* that gave new insight into gravitation as an effect of the curvature of space-time.

1920: Ernest Rutherford's discovery of the proton.

1925: Wolfgang Pauli's work on spin theory and quantum theory, the Exclusion Principle and later the discovery of the neutrino in 1931.

1926: Erwin Schrödinger's famous Wave Equation opening up a fascinating study of Wave Mechanics.

1927: Werner Heisenberg's Uncertainty (or Indeterminacy) Principle and formulation of Quantum Mechanics.

1928: Paul Dirac's prediction of anti-matter in the universe and the positron.

In this era of the rapid emergence of revolutionary ideas in Physics, Swami Pavitrananda addressed certain fundamental questions with regard to science and religion besides making some bold assertions indicative of the scientific spirit of inquiry bequeathed to *Prabuddha Bharata* by Swamiji, as for example: 'If the light of science has exposed many dark alleys and corners of religion, we should feel not the least sorry for it, for *there can never be any fear from knowledge, the danger is from ignorance.*'

Swami Pavitrananda quotes statements of some of the greatest scientists of all time like Albert Einstein who said that 'all the finer speculations in the realm of science spring from a deeper religious feeling and that without such feeling they would not be fruitful' and also of Arthur H Compton who spoke about 'a directive intelligence directing the evolutionary process towards some definite end'. Then he boldly asserts that these statements need not make us 'feel flushed' for religion will never be sustained by any scientific discovery, for 'real religion springs from a deeper source, and it is only moved by sheer necessity that man launches into a quest for the Great Unknown and begins his search for God.'

From Group II:

'Vedanta as a Scientific Philosophy' by Dr Pravas Jivan Chaudhury—I, II, III (Feb, April, June 1960)

This series of three articles by Dr Pravas Jivan Choudhury is another great example of how *Prabuddha Bharata* cultivated scientific and rational thought over the decades. These three papers are of high academic standard. In the first article Dr Chaudhury clearly states that the object of this essay is to present that 'kind

of scientific philosophy that arises out of critical and constructive reflection, in the spirit of science' upon 'the philosophical creed of science'. This again is discussed as comprising three stages, corresponding to the three stages of reflection carried on in the philosophical creed of science.

In the second paper of this series, there is a masterly analysis of the following six characteristics of the 'spirit of science': '(i) an urge for a wider or a more inclusive comprehension of the phenomena; (ii) an active search for bold and abstract theories in place of older mechanical models and causal hypotheses; (iii) its recasting of the natural language into an artificial or idealised one, more suited for scientific purposes; (iv) an admission of an element of contingency or historicity in nature, of fallibility in scientific endeavour, and of incompleteness of the scientific worldview; (v) an effort to sublimate individual points of view or relativity into a universal outlook on nature; (vi) its deontological standpoint.'

The third paper throws light on the 'relation between this philosophy to traditional mysticism' and 'to our cultural disciplines'.

The vast range of topics covered and the depth of analysis are indeed a good measure of the *Prabuddha Bharata's* tradition of scientific and rational thought through the decades.

From Group III:

'Science and Spirituality' by Swami Tapasyananda (1968 November)

In this short and succinct piece of writing, Swami Tapasyananda makes a rationally convincing analysis of how science and spirituality, once considered antagonistic, are converging through the realisation that both these fields of human endeavour are 'in search of Truth and admittedly its votaries'. But on the question of

what does Truth consist in, there are differences between science and spirituality. Whereas for science Truth is always 'measurable, a spiritual seeker will speak of Truth as 'Immeasurable'. Swami Tapasyananda, in his inimitable style of precision coupled with perspicuity, states: 'Spirituality is the sensitiveness of the mind to the Infinite and Absolute Being, and will include all those attitudes and responses springing from this sensitiveness.' He utters the following words of reconciliation and synthesis between these two great disciplines of human endeavour through a wonderful assertion:

Science has to step down from the pontifical seat of infallibility and omniscience, and recognise that it can possibly deal with only a cross-section of reality, the measurable, where its methods are largely applicable and can obtain results of great practical importance to life. It has to recognise the validity and importance of the sense for the Infinite and the Absolute and find in that sense the call of the 'within' or 'background' which its symbolic equations as well as the common sense world of sounds, colours and touch alike point to, but cannot penetrate. In this analysis, science and spirituality are both *valid responses of the human mind*, and the mutual hostility which some ascribe to them is to be attributed to immaturity of thought or to pet prejudices contracted from past experiences. There is nothing standing in the way of a scientist from being a spiritual seeker and vice versa, except perhaps temperament and education.

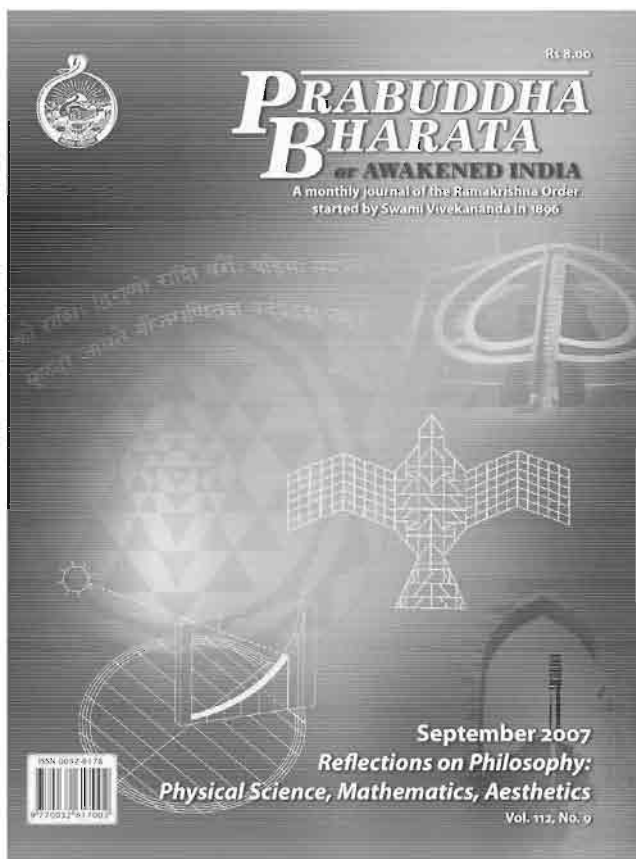
From Group IV:

Under this Group, apart from a fairly comprehensive review article by Prof. N V C Swami published in *Prabuddha Bharata* May 2000 issue, there are two brilliant articles, one by Prof. N Mukunda, a physicist from Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru and Swami

Sarvottamananda, a computer scientist from Ramakrishna Mission's Deemed University at Belur Math in West Bengal. We will attempt to present excerpts of some insights from these two articles to show how *Prabuddha Bharata's* more-than-a-century-old tradition of promoting and presenting scientific and rational thought through its pages is still vibrant.

(IV.1) 'Philosophy of the Physical Sciences' by Prof. N Mukunda (Sept, Oct 2007)

In his account of the beginnings of science and philosophical thinking, Prof. Mukunda goes back to Greek times to discuss rationalism and empiricism. He traces the whole history of the major creative period lasting about four hundred years which began with Thales of Miletus and included, among many renowned thinkers, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Euclid. After contrasting the rationalist philosophy with the empiricist approach—rationalists holding that 'knowledge of Nature does not require observation and it is attainable through reason alone' (Plato) and the empiricists asserting that knowledge comes ultimately from experience of phenomena and not from reason, Prof. Mukunda goes on to trace the emergence of modern science in Europe during the Renaissance, the contributions of Galileo and Newton, Copernicus and Francis Bacon—leading to how the philosopher of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, created a philosophical system to explain or justify the Galilean-Newtonian approach by distinguishing between *a priori* and *a posteriori* forms of knowledge and between two kinds of statements, *the analytic* and *the synthetic*. Physical sciences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are then discussed elaborately, which include the particularly revolutionary ideas of quantum theory and relativity, a subtle



reinterpretation of Kantian ideas in the mid-twentieth century in the light of biology, and the theory of evolution by natural selection, the fascinating work of Konrad Lorentz. A few insightful statements from this paper by Prof. Mukunda are worthy of being quoted here:

We both recognise the existence of limits of validity for every physical theory or body of laws, even for those yet to be discovered; and admit that future experience can always lead to unexpected surprises. In this important sense, Nature is inexhaustible; we will always be learning from her. The lack of finality of every physical theory in this sense means that we can only continually increase the accuracy of our

description of the phenomena of 'the real world out there', but can never say we have been able to describe them exactly as they are, or have reached true reality.

(IV.2) 'The Philosophy of Mathematics'
by Swami Sarvottamananda
(Sept, Oct 2007)

This is another insightful paper published in *Prabuddha Bharata* in recent times (albeit more than a decade ago) wherein Swami Sarvottamananda discusses the nature of mathematics and mathematical entities, relationship between physics and mathematics, the mathematical method, propositional logic, number theory, set theory, zeno's paradox, geometry, mathematical logic, and the concepts completeness and consistency, Godel's theorem, wrapping up his discussion with a philosophical note on mathematics, mind, and maya.

Conclusion

We have thus tried to show how *Prabuddha Bharata* has remained singularly committed to preserving, promoting, and protecting the culture of serious scientific and rational thought reflecting critical discernment in its publications since the very inception for nearly one hundred and twenty-five years. We may be sure that *Prabuddha Bharata* will dedicatedly pursue this goal in future too, true to the vision of its founder, Swami Vivekananda, who pioneered the science-spirituality-religion-philosophy confluence and prophesied that this confluence will be the new *weltanschauung* for thinking and rational humanity of the future. PB

Reference

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.104.

Prabuddha Bharata—A World Perspective

Swami Atmajnananda

THE TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE gained by people, both through lectures and writings, becomes history and marks the march of humanity against the vicissitudes of life. *Prabuddha Bharata* is a persistent document of the various facets of the human mind and its understanding of religion and culture.

Voice of Freedom

Swami Vivekananda was passionate about spreading the message of strength and *abhih*, fearlessness. While his primary stress was on awakening the Indian people who had succumbed to the tyranny of several invading forces for centuries, his was a *global perspective* wanting the amelioration of all people irrespective of race, nation, colour, or religion. Religion had to be extricated from the dross that it had accumulated over the centuries, reducing it to a 'kitchen religion' and be made a means for making everyone free.

Vedānta, as perceived by Swamiji, was the most logical conclusion to all human aspirations and being universal, it must be broadcast to all. To this effect, Swamiji had envisaged publishing journals in English and the vernaculars during those days when social awareness and a global perspective were minimum even among the intellectuals. Boundaries between religions and countries had disappeared for him. He had

approached Sri Ramakrishna asking if God can be seen and soon metamorphosed into a saint who saw God in every human being. To serve the living God, the needy, the sick and hungry was his religion. Breaking open the manacles of ritualistic religion, he elevated it into a worship of the 'kingdom of heaven' in all. From his writings and talks, it is evident that he was a Vedāntin first and was ever eager to make it the most practical and universal religion. Only in it did he see the possibility of skirting the dualistic encumbrances of rituals and sectarian approaches. It is this practical Vedānta that he wanted to make popular in the world through journals and publications.

Swamiji wanted a resurgent India that is prosperous and self-sufficient, showcasing to the world that religion is not to be blamed for the evils in society. He was never tired of pointing out the positives that have shaped this nation for ages. He said:

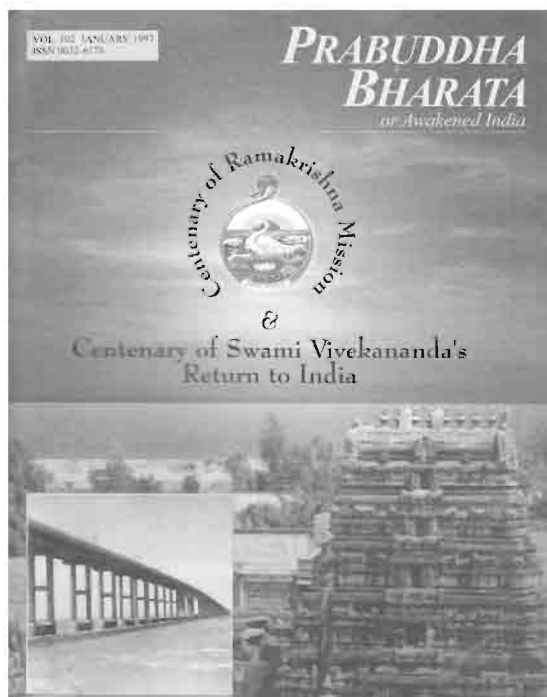
My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide.¹

Voice of Vivekananda

With this intention in mind, Swamiji started *Prabuddha Bharata*, a journal to disseminate Vedāntic knowledge.

True to the ideals set forth by Swamiji, the journal has been promoting the twin ideals of *śivajñāna*, knowledge of God, and *jīvasevā*,

A former Editor of *Viveka Prabha*, the Kannada monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Atmajnananda is presently the Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh.



PB January 1997 Issue

service of human beings, through its articles and has enhanced the understanding among humans and nations. This work has been done unstintingly without any fanfare or advertisement since its inception. Sustained work is hard to recognise, like the unpretentious dewdrops that go unnoticed every morning. Yet, it is worthwhile to look back and peruse the numerous articles that have appeared in the journal to document the role of *Prabuddha Bharata* in shaping world thought.

In her article in *Prabuddha Bharata* (January 1997) on 'Alleviating Spiritual Poverty: The Work of the Ramakrishna Mission in America', Pravrajika Vrajaprana² rightly points out the *invisible service* of the monks who nurture spiritual activities and write words of inspiration for spiritually hungry souls whose faces they will never see. She calls it a distinct melody line in a graced harmony of work and worship that addresses the hunger of the soul, the thirst for a meaningful existence. She writes: 'According to

U.S. News and World Report, "A series of recent studies have found people less committed to particular denominations, more eclectic in their religious views, (are) more tolerant of other faiths and more focussed inward on their own spiritual journeys and on meeting their own personal needs".³ Quoting extensively from the studies on modern trends in North America and the problems being faced as mentioned by the *Generation X* author Douglas Coupland, she concludes:

For over a century the truth of the divinity of the soul, the oneness of existence, the value of unselfishness and compassion over greed and ignorance and cruelty has gradually sunk into the collective consciousness of this immense land. For a century the message has been spoken and written and discussed in myriad ways, and like a potent acid, it has been etching its way into the hearts and minds of the population (215).

Swamiji wanted a healthy exchange of ideas between the East and the West. He knew very well that both societies had manifested Truth in different ways and a forum to bridge them was needed. He wanted to give the ideas to the people and let them work out the details. He said that the ideas that he has given to humankind are enough for a thousand and five hundred years! He was well aware that he had not much time and wanted to put his mission on a firm footing. He initiated this process by starting journals and was eager that they spread well. The Life of Swami Vivekananda records:

The three magazines that had been started either under the auspices of or under the direct control and guidance of the Swami and conducted by his brother-disciples and his own disciples, did a large amount of educational work in India and abroad. These magazines were the *Brahmavadin* of Madras, *Prabuddha Bharata* of Almora and subsequently Mayavati, and *Udbodhan* of Calcutta. They spread far and wide the teachings and ideas of Shri Ramakrishna and the Swami.

They made known, vindicated, and interpreted the thoughts and ideals of the ancient Indian sages and philosophers. They published reports of the activities of members of the Order, and also brought out their writings and lectures.⁴

Vedānta Takes Ground

Documenting the growth and influence of Vedānta movement in America, Sister Amiya wrote ('Vedanta in Southern California,' *PB*, January 1948):

Many distinguished people came from different parts, among them college professors, scientists, physicians, and businessmen. Of the scientists who came the name of Joseph Kaplan should be mentioned as one of the outstanding young Physicists of America today. The names of Frederick Manchester and Percy Houston should also be mentioned, for, as college professors and scholars of English, their help in the translation of several of the scriptures has been invaluable. Dr Manchester's main contribution in this field was his work with Swami Prabhavananda in the preparation of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the *Upanishads*. Dr Houston was the first president of the Society when I was incorporated in 1934. Later came Gerald Heard, who studied under the tutelage of Swami Prabhavananda, and finally received initiation from him in 1941. ... It was through Mr Heard that Christopher Isherwood and Aldous Huxley came. ... Each of them has contributed much to the work of the Ramakrishna Mission, inasmuch as, through their writings, they have interested a vast number of people in Vedānta who might otherwise never have heard of it.⁵

She also documents in the same article, the donation of more than a quarter of million dollars by Mr Spencer Kellogg and the starting of the Ashrama at Santa Barbara. It is remarkable to note that a steady development of the Vedānta movement was happening in the West and living a spiritual life was becoming more common than formal religious affinity.

The Vedānta movement in America came with its bundle of difficulties caused by a lack of understanding of the total commitment to spirituality that it demands. Vedānta is a way of life and a means to manifest the innate divinity in each one of us. This concept was something new to the Western people. Swamiji had repeatedly emphasised the non-dogmatic stand of Vedānta, projecting it as the most logical conclusion to the human search for Truth and as a universal religion. The Vedānta movement was based on this premise and hence attracted followers of all faiths and cultures. However, there was always an attempt to combine the mundane with the divine! It makes it interesting to read the outcomes of such an adaption of Vedānta to a different culture. Sister Amiya continues, in her article, to give instances of humour that came about from such acculturation.

At one time an extremely wealthy widow of uncertain age offered to build a million dollar temple for the Swami (Prabhavananda) if he would only teach her the secret of rejuvenation. At another time a young man came and offered the Swami his castle and entire estate in England, because he thought he wanted to become a monk. A little while later he came again, and asked the Swami to find him a beautiful young wife—one who would be interested in Vedānta of course (23).

Mouthpiece of Vedānta

Prabuddha Bharata had a very important role to play during the initial decades of spreading of Vedānta in the West. It was the mouthpiece of the fledgeling Ramakrishna Mission and often voiced opinions of national interest, catering to the intellectual minds, asserting Indian values and spirituality.

We must remember that when the journal was started, India was under British rule and a strong movement for freedom was brewing



Temples of the Vedanta Society of Southern California at Hollywood and Santa Barbara

in every part of the country. Illustrious editors of the journal like Swamis Swarupananda, Prajnananda, Ashokananda, and others were not afraid of reporting and commenting on the national heroes of those times and correcting their flawed appraisals of the Mission at times. To illustrate this point, let us see the June 1916 issue which reports on 'Vedanta in America', reacting to the criticisms of Lala Lajpat Rai and Prof. Benoy Kumar Sirkar:

This nationalism not only diverts all our collective energies from the real organising focus of our spiritual mission, but also places at a discount that ideal of renunciation which forms the real background and setting for the Indian ideal of service. And secondly, let us ask what amount of co-operation and help the Ramakrishna Mission receives from those of our countrymen who are eager to see the ideals of Swami Vivekananda worked out in India and abroad. Swamiji made his appeal not to any particular sect and section of the public, for his programme was essentially a programme of nation-building. His spiritual ideal accepted all faiths and creeds and his scheme of work excluded no sphere of our collective activity. ... He did his own part of the duty, but have his countrymen as yet done their part of it?⁶

Let it be understood that we have nothing but sincere enthusiasm for such a scheme of an Indian mission to the West. ... But before we go to organise any cultural expedition outside India on such a scale, is it not necessary to see whether we have first organised our own culture within India? If India still

speaks to us in confused voices, will she speak better to others outside? (114)

Studying the meeting points of the East and the West through the works of Wordsworth, Emerson, Dr Guthrie and others, Dr Arthur Christy writes in the May 1934 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*: 'The best of Vedāntism is in the thought of the American people. ... When there are souls in the West capable of taking the same rank as the great souls of India, they will have a clear perception of their recognition and of their kinships.'⁷

Quoting Swami Gnaneshwarananda, Swami Sarveshananda writes ('How does the Ramakrishna Movement Grow?', *PB*, January 1997):

The great historic blunder of Columbus, that gave America to the modern world, is very suggestive to me. It is a symbol of a cultural marriage of the East with the West. That unity had to take place through the medium of America. That is why Columbus discovered America instead of India. Also, India and America occupy just the opposite sides of the globe. They are geographically antipodes. To me this is significant. You know, when the two opposite ends of an electric battery meet, they manifest tremendous energy. So, when modern America is united with ancient India, by assimilating the

best of each other's culture, a tremendous civilization will be the result. The Vedanta movement, to my mind, is the pioneer in this great achievement.⁸

The Vedānta Bridge

Various conventions and meets were organised on a regular basis by the American centres to foster understanding and strengthen the intercultural exchange. Sarveshananda writes in the same article:

In 1933, he (Swami Gnaneswarananda) organised a Convention of American-based Swamis at the time of the second Chicago World's fair and the 40th anniversary of the advent of Vivekananda in America. ... For the centenary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna in 1936, he organised an elaborate programme in which most of the Swamis of the other centres throughout the United States took part. Among the attractions were lectures, a large banquet, and a public performance given by the Swami's music classes. The swamis attending the celebrations were Akhilananda, Vividishananda, Paramananda and Nikhilananda. The guest speakers at the public banquet held at the tropical room of the Medinah Club were Rev. George Lake of the Liberal Catholic church and Dr Preston Bradley, a pastor of the Peoples' Church of Chicago. For this centenary, the Swami wrote and published the first short English biography of Ramakrishna to appear in the U.S.A. This little masterpiece is entitled, *Ramakrishna, the Man and the Power* (102–3).

In accord with Vivekananda's hope for 'annual' conferences of his monastics throughout America, Swami Bhashyananda convened the first two major efforts in this direction: in 1976, a 'Convention' in Ellicottville, New York, attended by nine Swamis of our Order plus about 350 devotees; the second, in 1987, at 'Ganges' with all the American Swamis represented, plus two from Europe, and Swami Ranganathananda from India, plus about 800 devotees. Then in 1993, just before the centennial of the Chicago



Vivekananda Retreat at Ganges, Michigan, US

World's Parliament of Religions, our Centre, now headed by Swami Chidananda, convened a third assembly: a Conference of the Heads of Centres at 'Ganges'. These three assemblages have been landmarks for the work in America and incidentally for Chicago (110).

The entry of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda into Western minds has led to a lot of churning and a better understanding of the former's contribution to Vedānta philosophy itself and to humanity at large. Reinterpretations of the Vedāntic thought in the American context have been happening and the sheer freedom of expression that Ramakrishna-Vivekananda has exemplified has been liberating to the doctrine bound Westerners of the last century to a large extent. Dr M Sivaramkrishna rightly points out in the August 2004 issue ('Ramakrishna Vedanta Movement in the West: New Interfaces and Challenges'):

Obviously the role of the Ramakrishna Vedanta movement has been to steer clear of all the fads gaining ground in this ethos. Neither esoteric nor messiah-based, it advocated the way of Vedanta not theorized and mystified but lived in the lives of Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Vivekananda. By the 1960s, when the 'Eastern masters made a concerted push' the Ramakrishna Vedanta movement was a

quietly authoritative and authentic one. ... The quiet but crucial role of Ramakrishna Vedanta in ushering this new renaissance can hardly be exaggerated. As Carl T Jackson, the cultural historian of oriental religions in the USA has declared, 'One hundred years in the United States has given the movement a visibility and degree of acceptance unequalled by any Asian group.' Identifying the reasons, he says, 'the Ramakrishna movement's obvious commitment to present Vedanta at a high level, the swamis' strong intellectual qualifications, and an ecumenical attitude toward other religious bodies have won over most critics.' Finally, 'predicting' the future he says, 'As a pioneer in paving the way for introduction of Asian religious perceptions in the West, the Ramakrishna movement may be said to stand on the edge of one of the "megatrends" of modern history.'⁹


Dr M Sivaramkrishna makes a valid observation when he says: 'The challenge here is to respect the autonomy of Western interpretations and not overly "Hinduize" Ramakrishna, however dominant Hindu paradigms and symbolic forms are in his life and message' (ibid.).

Hail Vivekananda

Ramakrishna Vedānta has fulfilled the aspirations of many Westerners and made them re-think on the archetypes of existence, comfort and sense gratification. An ache that was bothering them seems to have been assuaged by the intuitive experiences of Sri Ramakrishna that cannot be categorised under any of the existing religious phenomena. Richard R Erickson, in this article ('The Continuing Value of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda to the West', PB, January 1997) says:

The rational thinkers of the modern world need rational arguments to reveal the deficiencies of their education and world-view. It takes a giant like Vivekananda to pull off the blinders even

for an instant and make them question what they have been trained to see and not-see. Across the span of 100 years, Vivekananda is still planting seeds in the soil of desert hearts, and those hearts are blooming desert flowers and becoming green. There are few teachers who can rival the eloquence and efficacy of Swamiji's teachings to the West. ... It is only after Vivekananda has blasted away the blinders of an 'educated' soul that such a soul stands a chance of perceiving the glory of Ramakrishna Himself.¹⁰

The call has been given. The flag of harmony and assimilation of different cultures and races has been hoisted and the human race has been given a chance to rise to the occasion. The future lies in our hands; let us shape it so that the future generations may hail us as pathbreakers. The torch of *Prabuddha Bharata* is alight, leading the way from darkness to light; to make us let go pettiness and cling no more to 'me' and 'mine'. Let us all march on to realise this supreme goal of human life and be free forever. 

Notes and References

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Vivekananda through the Early Pages of 'Awakened India'

Swami Atmashraddhananda

Starting of Three Magazines in the 1890s

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA inspired the founding of three magazines: a Bengali journal named *Udbodhan* (started in Kolkata in 1899), and two English ones: *Brahmavadin* (in 1895) and *Prabuddha Bharata* (in 1896). He also gave vital guidance and decisive ideas for running these magazines through his letters, interactions, and also by contributing his articles, travelogues, and transcripts of his lectures. It is historically significant that both the English magazines were launched in Madras (now Chennai), and while *Prabuddha Bharata* is now published from Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati in Uttarakhand, and the *Brahmavadin*, in its reincarnation as *The Vedanta Kesari* (since 1914), from Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai, in Tamil Nadu. All the three magazines continue the mission of spreading Vedanta philosophy in all its aspects in the light of the universal teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. It is no small achievement that all the three magazines have crossed a century and a quarter of their publication and are doing well. What an extraordinary accomplishment!

Swamiji, an extraordinary communicator that he was, motivated, inspired, and guided

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his young followers, disciples, and brother-disciples to broadcast the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Vedanta and of a resurgent India among all who aspired towards a nobler and higher view of life. Swamiji's interest in the magazine work can be gauged by the fact that he wrote to Alasinga Perumal, who enthusiastically worked as the editor-owner for *Brahmavadin* in its initial years, on 8 August 1896 from Switzerland: 'Let this paper be your Ishtadevatâ ['chosen spiritual ideal'].¹ What a way of elevating the work of running a magazine to a spiritual practice! Not only this, Swamiji also worked hard to get funds as well as subscribers for all these magazines.

Swamiji's Literary Presence in the Three Journals

Swamiji was a spiritual giant with a burning passion to serve humanity and was especially committed to awaken India from her long slumber and restore her position in the comity of nations. Besides, he was a literary genius from whose versatile pen emerged thought-provoking articles, inspiring letters, and poignant poetry. His charming personality and spiritual eminence can easily be seen in his writings and speeches.

Swamiji travelled extensively from India to America, Europe, and then came back to India. This was some 120 years ago when today's flying facilities were yet to be discovered and commercialised. It was indeed a stupendous achievement in itself. Swamiji wrote a fairly large memoir in Bengali describing his sea voyage during his second visit to the West. Written in Bengali, in a refreshingly new language and style, these memoirs are a treasure house of Swamiji's vast knowledge of various countries, their history and customs, and contain many insights about human nature as well. Perhaps it would not be a bad idea to produce a film on what he has written there and may be called 'A Sea Voyage with Swami Vivekananda!' It would surely be a great work of his deep understanding and observations in the form of a film. (Its English translation is in the seventh volume of the *Complete Works*, titled 'Memoirs of European Travels'.)

Besides, as he travelled, he constantly preached through conversations, personal and newspaper interviews, public lectures, writings, and letters written to his brother disciples, admirers, co-workers, and others. Swamiji's literary output is truly stupendous, to say the least, besides abounding in such deep thoughts and insights that the passing of a century has in no way reduced their power and charm.

Today we have Swamiji's *Complete Works* in nine volumes which contain his writings, letters, and transcripts of lectures and interviews. The compilation of these works of Swamiji, however, took years of painstaking and meticulous efforts by Swamiji's disciples, monastic and lay, in India and the West (especially in America and England). It required much hard work to collect, arrange, proofread, and publish this valuable treasure. Originally the *Complete Works* was published in four volumes in 1906 and over the years as things kept emerging, more volumes were added. Ninth volume was released by the President of India in 1997 in a public function held in Kolkata.

Initially, many of what form the contents of the *Complete Works* appeared either in *Brahmavadin* or *Prabuddha Bharata*. Here we will gleam through some of the early issues of the *Prabuddha Bharata* (shortened to *PB*) picking up the precious gems of Swamiji's lectures and writings published in it. Of course, not all contents of the *Complete Works* were first published in *PB* or *Brahmavadin*. Most of these were never published in either *PB* or *Brahmavadin*. But Swamiji, as he guided the fledgling magazines, did send some of his writings to the magazines he had started. In a letter to Alasinga Perumal from New York dated 30 July 1895, published in *PB* July 1977, he wrote: 'Spread the name of God, and do not talk a word against the social evils and traditions. The "song of the sannyasin" is my first contribution to your journal.'²

On the Footsteps of Swamiji in Prabuddha Bharata

The *Prabuddha Bharata* was started at the behest of Swami Vivekananda in July 1896 in Madras by his 'Madras boys' with B R Rajam Iyer as its first editor. ('Madras boys' is a term used by Swamiji in one of his letters. Other names included in

'Madras Boys' are Alasinga Perumal, Singaravelu Mudaliyar, G G Narasimhachariar, G Venkataranga Rao, D R Balajai Rao, Dr M C Nanjunda Rao, M Rangacharya, G A Natesan, G Subramania Aiyer, C P Ramaswamy Iyer, V Krishnaswamy Iyer, P R Sundaram Iyer, and others). They all played an important role in carrying out Swamiji's ideas into reality, to whatever extent they could.

We will take up *some* of these early publications of Swamiji in PB between 1896 and 1922. All these are from Swamiji's pen, or transcripts or notes of his lectures. Right in the first issue of the PB published in 1896, one finds transcripts of two lectures delivered by Swamiji in America; titled 'Doing Good to the World' and 'Buddha, the Ideal Karma Yogin'. Rather short in size, both of them are now a part of *Karma Yoga* (published by the Advaita Ashrama). These were the first glimpses of Swamiji's lectures and writings in PB. As they are the *first* glimpses, let us cite from them, in parts. Says Swamiji in 'Doing Good to the World':

This world is neither good nor evil; each man manufactures a world for himself. If a blind man begins to think of it, it is either as soft or hard, or cold or hot. We are a mass of happiness or misery; we have seen that, hundreds of times in our lives. As a rule, the young are optimistic, and the old pessimistic. The young have all life before them, and the old are complaining; their day is gone; hundreds of desires, which they cannot fulfil, are struggling in their brain. Life [is] at an end for them. Both are foolish. This life is neither good nor evil. It is according to the different states of mind in which we look at the world. The most practical man would call it neither good nor evil. Fire, by itself, is neither good nor evil. When it keeps us warm, we say: 'How beautiful is fire!' When it burns our fingers, we blame the fire. Still it was neither good nor bad. We use it, it produced in us the feeling of good or bad; and so also is this world. It is perfect. By perfection is meant that

it is perfectly fitted to meet its ends. We can all be perfectly sure that it will go on, and need not bother our heads wanting to help it.

Towards the end of his lecture on 'Buddha, the Ideal Karma Yogin', Swamiji says:

I will tell you in a few words about one man who carried it (Karma Yoga) into practice. That man was Buddha. He is the one man who ever carried this into perfect practice. ... He was the first great reformer the world ever saw. ... He works best who works without any motive power. Neither for money nor anything else, and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as to transform the world. That is the very ideal of Karma Yoga.

In the second issue of PB (August 1896), we find a passage from Swamiji's lecture delivered in America, titled 'What is Duty?'. This one-page extract illustrates the idea of duty by the well-known story of a Sannyasin, who acquired some power through his austerity, but had to learn lessons in humility, selflessness, and devotion from a common housewife and later from a butcher. In the beginning of the lecture, Swamiji discusses the idea as to what is a duty. He says: 'To make an objective definition of duty be entirely impossible. ... There is only one idea which is universal for all mankind, of any age or sect or country, and that has been summed up in the Sanskrit aphorism, "Do not injure any being; non-injuring any being is virtue; injuring any being is vice."'

Interestingly, the same issue cites a writing of Swamiji from the *Brahmavadin* about his visit to Professor Max Muller. It describes Swamiji's visit and later interactions and conversations in Swamiji's own words. Obviously, Swamiji was deeply appreciative of Max Muller's vast scholarship, dedication, and his large-heartedness. He wrote: 'Max Müller is a Vedantist of Vedantists. He has, indeed, caught the real soul of the melody of the

Vedanta, in the midst of all its settings of harmonies and discords—the one light that lightens the sects and creeds of the world, the Vedanta, the one principle of which all religions are only applications.’

In one small writing of Swamiji titled ‘Is Vedanta Pessimistic?’, published in *PB* in September 1897, Swamiji makes a beautiful observation about Vedanta: ‘The Vedanta system begins with tremendous pessimism and ends with real optimism. We deny the sense optimism, but assert the real optimism of supersensuous. Real happiness is not in the sense, but above the senses and it is in every man.’

Swamiji’s incisive analysis of various ideas about the Self or Atman in his lecture titled ‘The Atman’ was published in *PB* in its October 1896 issue. A passage from it will give the reader an idea of what Swamiji said:

What is the bondage? The necessity of being born and the necessity of dying. Even the highest gods die ... Those who do good works in this world and help others, but with an eye to reward, hoping to reach heaven or to get the praise of their fellow-men, must when they die, reap the benefit of those good works—they become these gods. But that is not salvation; salvation never will come through hope of reward. Whatever man desires the Lord gives him. Men desire power, they desire prestige, they desire enjoyments as gods, and they get these desires fulfilled, but no effect of work can be eternal. The effect will be exhausted after a certain length of time; it may be aeons, but after that it will be gone, and these gods must come down again and become men and get another chance for liberation. ...

All this universe is the reflection of that One Eternal Being, the Atman, and as the reflection falls upon good or bad reflectors, so good or bad images are cast up. Thus in the murderer, the reflector is bad and not the Self. ...The whole of this universe is one Unity, one Existence, physically, mentally, morally and spiritually.

There are other lectures of Swamiji dealing with different aspects of Vedanta philosophy published in various issues of *PB*. Some of these were published when Swamiji was alive, and some posthumously. These include: ‘The Philosophy of the Atman and the Soul’ (*PB* January 1898), ‘Cosmology’ (*PB*, April 1903), ‘Steps of Hindu Philosophic Thought’ (*PB* October 1903), ‘A Study of Sankhya Philosophy’ (*PB* January 1904), ‘Bondage and Freedom’ (*PB* January 1905), ‘The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion’ (*PB* October, 1907) and ‘Religion, Its Methods and Purpose’ (*PB* July 1912). These lectures show Swamiji’s vast understanding of spiritual truths and how to realise them. For instance, in his lecture on ‘Cosmology’ (*PB*, April 1903), Swamiji says:

Here are two worlds, the microcosm, and the macrocosm, the internal and the external. We get truth from both of these by means of experience; there are internal experience and external experience. The truths gathered from internal experience are psychology, metaphysics, and religion; from external experience, the physical sciences. Now a perfect truth should be in harmony with experiences in both these worlds. The microcosm must bear testimony to the macrocosm, and the macrocosm to the microcosm; physical truth must have its counterpart in the internal world, and the internal world must have its verification in the outside.

All these lectures find their place in the *Complete Works* now.

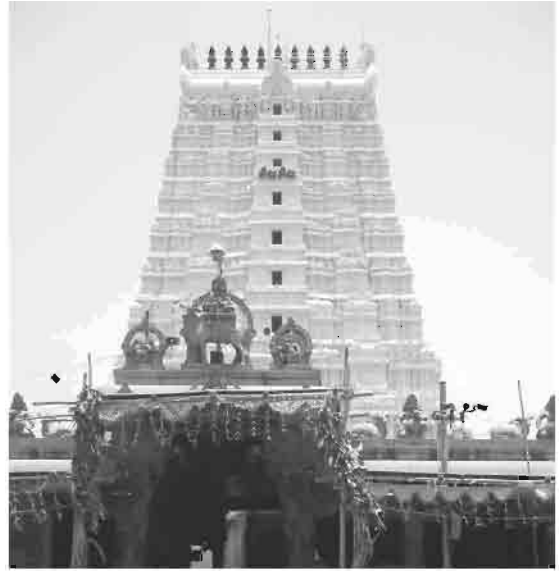
Swamiji’s Nationalistic Lectures in Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Vivekananda’s return to India from his historic mission to the West was marked by unprecedented welcome. He landed in Colombo on 15 January 1897 and was accorded a magnificent welcome by the residents of Colombo which consisted of decorating the roads with flowers and festoons and presenting him a

welcome address at a public meeting. Swamiji gave his first public address in the East there. Later he spoke at Jaffna and other places in Sri Lanka before landing at Rameshwaram where he was welcomed by the Raja of Ramnad himself at the seashore. Swamiji spoke at the Rameshwaram temple, and later at Ramnad, Paramakudi, Kumbhakonam, Madurai, and finally at Madras (now Chennai) before proceeding to Calcutta (now Kolkata). His fiery lectures roused the national consciousness by pointing out the eternal message of India and her heritage rooted in Sanātana Dharma. His lectures inspired the Indian masses to fight for freedom from the British colonial rule and develop love for India. Three of these nationalist lectures were published in *PB*. Here are excerpts from two of these lectures: 'Sages of India' and 'Vedanta in Its Application to Indian Life'. In 'Sages of India' (*PB* March 1897), Swamiji says:

In speaking of the sages of India, my mind goes back to those periods of which history has no record, and tradition tries in vain to bring the secrets out of the gloom of the past. The sages of India have been almost innumerable, for what has the Hindu nation been doing for thousands of years except producing sages? I will take, therefore, the lives of a few of the most brilliant ones, the epoch-makers, and present them before you, that is to say, my study of them.

In the first place, we have to understand a little about our scriptures. Two ideals of truth are in our scriptures; the one is, what we call the eternal, and the other is not so authoritative, yet binding under particular circumstances, times, and places. The eternal relations which deal with the nature of the soul, and of God, and the relations between souls and God are embodied in what we call the Shrutis, the Vedas. The next set of truths is what we call the Smritis, as embodied in the words of Manu, Yājñavalkya, and other writers and also in the Purāṇas, down to the Tantras. The second class



Ramanathaswamy Temple at Rameshwaram

of books and teachings is subordinate to the Shrutis, inasmuch as whenever any one of these contradicts anything in the Shrutis, the Shrutis must prevail. This is the law. ... As for general directions, the Shrutis are enough; for spiritual life, nothing more can be said, nothing more can be known. All that is necessary has been known, all the advice that is necessary to lead the soul to perfection has been completed in the Shrutis; the details alone were left out, and these the Smritis have supplied from time to time.

In 'Vedanta in its Application to Indian Life' (*PB* March 1897), Swamiji said, in part:

We think many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it. First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are bold words; but I have to say them, for I love you. I know where the shoe pinches. I have gained a little experience. You will understand the Gita

better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little of strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men. Thus we have to apply these to our needs.

What is significant to note here is that all these were published almost a month or two after they were delivered in Madras in February 1897. That speaks quite well of the efficiency and hard work of the editorial team of those days which had no such facilities as the Internet, soft copies, and digital technology!

Swamiji's Poems in Prabuddha Bharata

Students of Swami Vivekananda's life know that Swamiji was an accomplished poet whose poetry was filled with deep pathos, profound mysticism, and devotion. These poems are a delight for a poetry-lover and a spiritual seeker. Swamiji's first poem that appeared in *PB* is a call to 'awaken' Awakened India itself. *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India*, as stated earlier, was started in Madras in 1896. Due to various reasons, the magazine was shifted to Almora in Kumaon Himalayas in 1898. In a letter published on 28 June 1898, to the Editor of 'The Hindu', Swami Sadananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, wrote:

Sir,

May I request the favor of your kindly allowing me, through the medium of your widely read paper, to announce the fact that Prabuddha Bharat or The Awakened India will not be discontinued as stated in its last issue, but will henceforth be published in an improved form from the Ramakrishna Math, Almora, Kumaon, N.W.P., under a new management of which the head is the illustrious Swami Vivekananda, who will be one of the regular contributors to its pages.

The first issue is expected to appear on or about the 1st August next.

Almora, 19th June.

Sadananda³

Swamiji wrote a beautiful poem invoking the purpose for which the *Prabuddha Bharata* or 'Awakened India' was started. Let us look at some of the stanzas from the poem, 'To the Awakened India':

Once more Awake!

For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life
Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes, for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!
No death for thee!

... And tell the world—

Awake, arise, dream no more!

This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts,
Of flowers sweet or noxious,—and none
Has root or stem, being born in naught, which
... Or, if you cannot, dream then truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.

Besides this, three other poems of Swamiji were published in *PB* in its early years. *PB* issue of January 1900 carried a poem of Swamiji titled 'Peace'. First two stanzas of the poem read thus:

Behold, it comes in might,
The power that is not power,
The light that is in darkness,
The shade in dazzling light.
It is joy that never spoke,
And grief unfelt, profound,
Immortal life unliv'd,
Eternal death unmourn'd.

'The Cup' is an excellent piece of poetry on the idea of Karma and *Swadharma*, one's own duty; it was published posthumously in January 1913 issue of *PB*. (Interestingly, this poem was a part of the English literature syllabus of

Bangalore University some two decades ago.)
The full poem reads thus:

This is your cup—the cup assigned to you
from the beginning.
Nay, My child, I know how much of that dark
drink is your own brew
Of fault and passion, ages long ago,
In the deep years of yesterday, I know.
This is your road—a painful road and drear.
I made the stones that never give you rest.
I set your friend in pleasant ways and clear,
And he shall come like you, unto My breast.
But you, My child, must travel here.
This is your task. It has no joy nor grace,
But it is not meant for any other hand,
And in My universe hath measured place,
Take it. I do not bid you understand.
I bid you close your eyes to see My face.

The last of these poems appeared in *PB* July 1912 issue. Titled 'My Play is Done', it was written in the Spring of 1895 in New York. It speaks of Swamiji's deep longing for freedom and spiritual experience. It is addressed to the Divine Mother to whom he prays to show Her benign face and bestow high spiritual state to him. In part it reads:

I long, oh, long to return home!
Mother, my play is done.
You sent me out in the dark to play,
and wore a frightful mask;
... Where children dream bright, golden dreams,
too soon to find them dust,
... I go adrift and know not whither.
Save me from this fire!
... Let never more delusive dreams
veil off Thy face from me.
My play is done, O Mother,
break my chains and make me free!

Of course, Swamiji wrote a number of other poems in English and Bengali and composed a

few Sanskrit hymns, which are all in the *Complete Works* now. They are all suffused with mystical wisdom and pathos of a poet.

Swamiji's Other Writings in PB

Obviously, this article cannot put together all that was published from Swamiji's pen in those early years of *PB*. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that *PB* carried Swamiji's letters, unpublished notes of class talks, translations of his writings in Bengali, and an interview that gave the fledgling journal a strong philosophical ground. A cursory view of these will give an idea of what Swamiji wrote and said:

First, Meditation should be of a negative nature. Think away everything. Analyse everything that comes in the mind by the sheer action of the will. Next, assert what we really are—existence, knowledge and bliss—being, knowing, and loving. Meditation is the means of unification of the subject and object ('Jnana Yoga', *PB* April 1914).

Numbers do not count, nor does wealth or poverty; a handful of men can throw the world off its hinges, provided they are united in thought, word and deed,—never forget this truth. The more opposition there is, the better. Does a river acquire velocity unless there is resistance? The newer, and better a thing is, the more opposition it will meet with at the outset. It is opposition which foretells success. Where there is no opposition, there is no success either ('The Indian Problems and Its Solution', *PB* March 1922)

After all, it is only Mother's play. Nothing serious after all. What could move the Almighty? What made Mother create the universe? She could have no goal. Why? Because the goal is something that is not yet attained. What is this creation for? Just fun. We forget this and begin to quarrel and endure misery. We are the playmates of the Mother ('Mother Worship', *PB* October 1919).

Then it was that Shri Bhagavan Ramakrishna incarnated himself in India, to demonstrate what the true religion of the Aryan race is; to show where amidst all its many divisions and offshoots, scattered over the land in the course of its immemorial history, lies the true unity of the Hindu religion, which by its overwhelming number of sects, discordant to superficial view, quarrelling constantly with each other and abounding in customs divergent in every way, has constituted itself a misleading enigma for our countrymen and the butt of contempt for foreigners; and above all, to hold up before men, for their lasting welfare, as a living embodiment of the Sanātana Dharma, his own wonderful life into which he infused the universal spirit and character of this Dharma, so long cast into oblivion by the process of time ('Hinduism and Sri Ramakrishna', *PB* April 1914).

Many wonderful institutions and customs, and many wonderful manifestations of strength and power it has been my good fortune to study in the midst of the various races I have seen, but the most wonderful of all was to find that beneath all these apparent variations of manners and customs, of culture and power, beats the same mighty human heart under the impulsion of the same joys and sorrows, of the same weakness and strength ('India's Message to the World', *PB* December 1905).

Under the title 'Epistles of Swami Vivekananda III', there are a couple of letters of Swamiji. Addressed to various people at different points of time and written mainly from the West, these letters contain some of his oft-quoted words. Here are some excerpts from *PB* January 1913:


Try to be pure and unselfish—that is the whole of religion.

My children, the secret of religion lies not in theories but in practice. To be good and to do good—that is the whole of religion. Not he that crieth 'Lord', 'Lord', but he that doeth the will of the Father.

You will be pleased to know that I am also learning my lessons every day in patience and, above all, in sympathy. I think I am beginning to see the Divine, even inside the high and mighty Anglo Indians. I think I am slowly approaching to that state when I would be able to love the very 'Devil' himself, if there were any.

Conclusion

This is only a brief survey of Swami Vivekananda's writings in the early issues of *Prabuddha Bharata*. What is interesting about Swamiji's writings is that they do not seem to age at all! More than a century has passed without diminishing the force of his ideas and the charm of his expressions! After all, Swamiji was a mouthpiece of the Eternal Religion. As Sister Nivedita wrote in her famous and trenchant introduction to the *Complete Works*:

In the four volumes of the Works of the Swami Vivekananda which are to compose the present edition, we have what is not only a gospel to the world at large, but also to its own children, the Charter of the Hindu Faith. What Hinduism needed, amidst the general disintegration of the modern era, was a rock where she could lie at anchor, an authoritative utterance in which she might recognise herself. And this was given to her, in these words and writing of the Swami Vivekananda.⁴ 

Notes and References

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First Editors of Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Madhurananda

EDITORS MAKE A JOURNAL, and a journal does make editors. This inspiring symbiosis has also occurred between *Prabuddha Bharata* and many of its editors. Except for a few, the majority of *Prabuddha Bharata*'s editors did not have previous experience in editing, much less in publishing a magazine. But after working for some time on this unique magazine, they found themselves manifesting their best through editorials, diverse write-ups, and the presentation of valuable articles. Even those who did have previous experience in editing found themselves transformed, just to say, by running a journal that has a character of its own.

Swami Vivekananda had the world mission of interpreting and broadcasting the profound ideas of Vedanta, as exemplified in and interpreted by the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. He did that in several ways; one of them was to reach people at large through the written word. Journals were, at that time, not only one of the best ways to spread a message, but they also functioned as a cohesive factor among the members of an organisation. Swamiji, therefore, created a journal in English called *Brahmavadin*, based in Madras (now Chennai), which, though fulfilling his purpose excellently, was more of a scholarly type of journal. He wanted the ideas of Vedanta to reach the masses as well, and he expressed this to several of his followers. So when

he received a proposal to inspire and guide another cultural and spiritual journal that catered mainly the youth, he was all for it. The proposal came from a group of his admirers in Madras, voiced by Dr M C Nanjunda Rao.

After such encouraging words, the search for a capable editor began. An essay written by B R Rajam Iyer, a young man from Madras, which appeared in an issue of *Brahmavadin* during 1895, caught the attention of the group of organisers.¹ They offered this youth to become the first editor of a new journal, which would be called *Prabuddha Bharata*, Awakened India, a name suggested by Swami Vivekananda.

B R Rajam Iyer

In the first issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, Rajam Iyer presented the credo on which the new magazine would run:

We have great faith in the system of teaching principles by means of stories and indeed, as Swami Vivekananda wrote in his letter to us: 'There is a great chance, much more than you dream of for these wonderful stories scattered all over the Sanskrit literature to be rewritten and made popular.' ...

It is not, however, intended to fill the whole journal with stories only. Every issue will contain a number of articles on serious subjects; but care will be taken to make them simple



A former Associate Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, Swami Madhurananda is now serving in Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati.

and interesting, and the technicalities of metaphysics will be scrupulously avoided. We shall endeavour to act up, as far as we can, to the advice which Swami Vivekananda has kindly given us with regard to the conduct of the journal: 'Avoid all attempts to make the journal scholarly; it will surely make its way all over the world, I am sure. Use the simplest language possible and you will succeed. The main feature should be teaching of *principles* through stories. Do not make it metaphysical at all.' ...

Though an organ of Hindu religion, *Prabuddha Bharata* will have no quarrel with any other religion; for, really speaking, all religions are simply different phases of the same Truth, different methods of approaching God.²

As a new journal, *Prabuddha Bharata* did not have enough material from quality writers; therefore, every issue would carry some talk or lecture by Swami Vivekananda and the rest would be, almost entirely, Rajam Iyer's articles written under different pseudonyms.³ In several issues, he did not write an editorial in order to give room to Swamiji's longer lectures or other material related to him. For example, the issue of December 1897 only featured part of Swamiji's famous Lahore lecture on Vedanta. Of course, the magazine was just fourteen or sixteen pages then.

The content of Rajam Iyer's writings was full of patriotic fervour and criticism of Christian missionaries, the ruling British government of India, and a materialistic way of life: all that with certain moderation, and generally in line with Swamiji's ideals. He also offered thoughtful discussions on Vedanta. His style may at times look verbose to present-day eyes, as he would take long roundabouts to express an idea. It has to be considered, however, that broadly this was the style of writing in those days; besides, he also singlehandedly had to fill up all the pages of the new magazine. In this sense his contribution was remarkable. As a result, *Prabuddha Bharata*

became a great success, for it gathered around 1,500 subscribers right at the beginning, which grew to 4,500 by the end of the first year, making it one of the most widely circulated journals of its time.⁴

The June 1898 issue featured, in place of the editorial, along obituary of Rajam Iyer. It is mentioned in it that he died from Bright's disease at the early age of twenty-six, leaving a widow behind. The September 1900 issue includes a long poem 'In Memoriam' of him. That Rajam Iyer was a lover of English poetry and a serious student of Vedanta philosophy is reflected in many of his writings for *Prabuddha Bharata*, which were subsequently brought out in the form of a book titled *Rambles in Vedanta*.

Swami Swarupananda

After the sudden demise of Rajam Iyer, *Prabuddha Bharata* officially closed.⁵ Swamiji promptly requested his disciple Captain John Henry Sevier, who had come from England together with him, to take the responsibility of publishing *Prabuddha Bharata* from Almora, and he added: 'I am giving you a capable editor. Swami Swarupananda has particular experience in that line,⁶ and with the help of yourself and Swami Turiyananda, he will easily be able to run it.'⁷ Captain Sevier agreed to act as manager, and he also met all the expenses related to the purchase and transport of the hand-press, type, paper, and other materials needed. Thus Swarupananda became the editor of a journal that had started independently and now became an official journal of the incipient Ramakrishna Mission. From then onwards,



all the editors of *Prabuddha Bharata* would be monks of the Ramakrishna Order.

Due to this shifting of management and place of printing, the issue of July 1898 was not produced, but from August 1898 till today, *Prabuddha Bharata* has been published monthly uninterruptedly, in spite of two world wars and three large-scale local wars, among other hindrances. In his first editorial, Swarupananda explains:

The management under which *Prabuddha Bharata* will henceforth appear, pretends to no higher ideal than was set up for its conduct in the first issue of the journal (July 1896). It will strive to maintain the paper on the same lines as have been so admirably followed for the last two years, with only such additions and alterations as growing needs require.

And the 'growing needs' actually demanded a more peaceful place to conduct the magazine. Together with the Seviars, Swarupananda went in search of a better location around Almora. Finally, after a long search, a beautiful tea estate was found and acquired by Captain Sevier. A large two-storeyed tea godown made of stone and wood was converted into the living quarters of a new ashrama, and the press was shifted there from Almora. From March 1899 the editing, printing, and binding of *Prabuddha Bharata* was done in Mayavati, with no modification of the magazine's style and design, except for the cover. In August 1900 Swamiji wrote from New York to one of his disciples: 'Tell Swarup [Swarupananda] that I am very much pleased with his conducting of the paper. He is doing splendid work.'⁸

From August to December 1898 Swarupananda wrote five lucid editorials, but from January 1899 till July 1904 there were no further editorials in *Prabuddha Bharata*; there were instead several articles and small write-ups without the author's name, or sections like 'News

and Notes' and 'Correspondence', which were supposedly written by him. It should also be considered that besides being the editor, Swarupananda was the president of Advaita Ashrama as well. He also engaged himself in activities like educating the hill people in modern methods of cultivation through the two schools he opened at Mayavati and Shore village, disseminating secular and spiritual knowledge in Nainital and Almora—150 km and 127 km away from Mayavati respectively—providing health services through the creation of the charitable dispensary at Mayavati, collecting and publishing Swami Vivekananda's works in booklet form, and preparing the material for the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. The journal also helped him to acquire funds for all these activities, which from time to time he would carefully report in *Prabuddha Bharata*.

In January 1901 Swami Vivekananda visited Mayavati for fifteen days. There is no record of any particular instructions given by Swamiji to Swarupananda regarding the journal, but it seems there were not many, because after Swamiji's visit there was almost no change in *Prabuddha Bharata* till July 1904, when the journal underwent a major upgradation. A portion of the 'Manager's Notice' of that month's issue states:

Prabuddha Bharata goes to its readers this month with new features.

Its content has been increased by two pages and enlargement of its columns.

The fresh variety of reading matter introduced are:

'Occasional Notes' by the editor.

The Sanskrit page, generally a beautiful hymn or a devotional passage from the shastras, with English translation.

Extracts from the English literature: passages from the writings of masters or notes about them, and usually a high-class poem.

Some space (no more than two columns) will be devoted every issue to queries and answers by readers.

The 'Occasional Notes' worked more or less as the present-day editorial, though from time to time they would also introduce the articles featured in that issue or address other general topics. The Sanskrit page with translation into English is a section that has been continued almost uninterruptedly till present, albeit with different designs. This general pattern for *Prabuddha Bharata* established by Swarupananda continued unmodified for many years.

Regarding contents, the main features were the publication of excerpts from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, under the caption 'Leaves from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*', and Swami Vivekananda's lectures and writings. Swami Virajananda and Sister Nivedita regularly contributed worthy articles as well.

Swarupananda's style of writing resembles Swamiji's style of lecturing, but with the thoroughness that the written word demands, which Swarupananda managed quite skilfully. He started dealing mainly with spiritual topics and gradually introduced a variety of themes that ranged from scientific to cultural and social, the latter always with a patriotic flavour. Overall, he possessed a combination of very unusual qualities: previous experience and proficiency in editing, writing, and structuring a journal, together with the capacity to transmit between lines, when the topic required, his deep spiritual realisations.

Though the circulation of the journal increased under Swarupananda, he felt that some spot closer to human habitation would make the printing work and distribution easier. Let us remember that in those days everything—type, ink, paper, binding material, and all the paraphernalia that old hand-presses needed—had to come to Mayavati by mules, and the same mode

of transportation was employed for the several thousands of copies that had to be distributed. On 6 June 1906 Swarupananda left Mayavati in search of a different place located around Almora or Nainital. On the way, he got soaked in the rain and became quite ill with cold and fever, which gradually turned into pneumonia. On 27 June, at the age of thirty-eight, he left his body in Nainital.

Swami Virajananda

After the demise of Swarupananda, Virajananda was appointed both president of Advaita Ashrama and editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*. He had already contributed to the magazine by writing



valuable articles and by gathering subscriptions during a ten-month tour in different parts of North and West India in 1901–02.

Virajananda continued in the same lines set by Swarupananda, not only for *Prabuddha Bharata*, but he was also able to complete the mammoth task started by his predecessor of compiling and publishing *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, then in five volumes. He then embarked on another huge endeavour: compiling and editing the material for *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western disciples, which he gradually published in four volumes. He gave priority to these activities because, as time has proved, these two works have not only shaped the consciousness of modern India, but are still exerting their subtle work around the world. Though he was an indefatigable worker, it is natural that he did not have the same amount of time to write for *Prabuddha Bharata* as he did before.

Swami Madhavananda, a later president of Advaita Ashrama, stated in the 1945 Golden Jubilee Number of *Prabuddha Bharata*: 'Sister Nivedita was a regular contributor, and wrote, besides other valuable articles the "Occasional Notes" since the premature death of Swarupananda in 1906 till her own untimely death in 1911.'⁹ Most probably Virajananda did not write the 'Occasional Notes' of 1912–13 either, as he was too busy with other activities—these 'Occasional Notes' were no longer than one and a half pages, being those of 1912 extremely simple and those of 1913 carrying a style close to one of his successor, but there is not enough evidence to ascertain their authorship. Under the able guidance of Virajananda, however, the circulation of the magazine increased still more.¹⁰

The second volume of the biography on Swamiji was printed in 1913. After that Virajananda felt the need to retire into solitude, and the then secretary of the Order Swami Saradananda allowed him to do so, provided he would continue to write Swamiji's biography. 'To this Virajananda readily agreed. Though he was technically relieved of the responsibilities of Advaita Ashrama, yet he had to assume the responsibility of the President of the Ashrama, with Swami Prajnananda, his successor, taking advice from him on all matters. He was also to continue as the keeper (Manager) of the Prabuddha Bharata Press.'¹¹

As editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, there is not much material to analyse Virajananda's writing style. Moreover, Mother Sevier used to edit many of his writings once he took charge of Advaita Ashrama. We know from his previous writings that he was very faithful to Swamiji's idea of using simple language to express the lofty ideas scattered in Vedic literature—remarkable for those days was his series 'Women in Ancient India'.¹² Unlike his predecessor and successor,

Virajananda was not a trained editor but a self-made writer—he was, above all, a meditator, a yogi of profound experiences as well as an extraordinary karma yogi. It is interesting to note in this regard that a monk who was not a man of letters, as the expression goes, has been the greatest contributor to the literature related to Swami Vivekananda. Virajananda has produced the source material from which all subsequent books and research on Swamiji have been based upon. Our eternal gratitude to him!

Swami Prajnananda

The year 1914 marked a new momentum for *Prabuddha Bharata*. As the journal entered its nineteenth year of existence, the editorial office and the printing press, together with the editor's and press



staff's quarters, were shifted to a new building constructed exclusively for that purpose. The efforts of previous editors and managers had placed the magazine in good financial conditions, as the whole cost of the construction, except for a small donation, was borne by the Prabuddha Bharata Office.¹³ Though the shifting was done step by step during the first months of the year, Prajnananda writes in his first 'Occasional Notes' as an editor:

Prabuddha Bharata is being provided this month with a separate office building of its own, erected in a nice decent style close to the Advaita Ashrama here at Mayavati. Supplied thus with the implements of modern journalism even in this Himalayan seclusion on the conning tower, as it were, of the moving thought life of India and abroad, let the *Prabuddha Bharata*, month after month diffuse that light of guidance.¹⁴

Prajanananda had previous experience in editing: He edited the Bengali monthly *Udbodhan* for some period, when he wrote in its pages a series of illuminating articles on the Indian problems styled "Bharater Sadhana".¹⁵ In *Prabuddha Bharata* he introduced a section of about two and a half pages written by him and named 'On the Conning Tower', which was devoted mainly to social issues, clarifications of different kinds, general opinions on articles, events, and so forth. Though by now the magazine had a good number of contributors—many from outside India—articles without the author's name would be sporadically featured. There is no concrete proof of who wrote those articles, but the 'In Memoriam' in Prajanananda's honour stated that 'he conducted the *Prabuddha Bharata* for a period of four years at a high standard and most of the highly intellectual articles which appeared in its pages proceeded from his masterly pen' (120).

His 'Occasional Notes' were presented in long paragraphs and with a manly tone all through. He had been a freedom fighter before joining the Ramakrishna Order,¹⁶ so it is but natural that in a magazine like *Prabuddha Bharata*, which is as spiritual as cultural, several issues related to civilisational clashes were regular in his first writings; moreover, it was the time of the First World War. Still, his writings were intellectual and quite appealing.¹⁷ Gradually, especially by the end of his tenure, his 'Occasional Notes' became deeply spiritual, based on Swami-ji's teachings and often soaring to the heights of Advaita Vedanta—an example of an editor whose already good writings evolved still more by editing *Prabuddha Bharata*.

On 17 February 1918, Prajanananda left Mayavati to undergo treatment in Kolkata. Un- timely, on 20 April of that year, he left his mortal body due to heart failure¹⁸—he was only 39 years old.

Swami Raghavananda

Brahmachari Sitapati, sometimes also called Sitaraman, who later became Swami Raghavananda—received the vows of Brahmacharya from Virajananda on 11 October 1910 in Mayavati, and after the latter retired to write Swami Vivekananda's biography to another building in Mayavati, Sitapati was his constant helper. Though this may indicate that he was trained before assuming the role of editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, it still would have been a challenging task to succeed a brilliant editor like Prajanananda. One should try, however, not to compare writings, as each editor may have a style that can find its suitable audience.

Raghavananda displayed in his 'Occasional Notes' elaborate and scholarly discussions on Vedanta, which denotes a wide and sound knowledge of the subject.

It has to be considered, that all these early monastic editors were in their thirties when they took charge—Raghavananda was just thirty years old when he became the editor. They had bubbling energy, and that also during an intense period in Indian history—the last period of the British Raj in India was a highly conflicting time; it is understandable that when they got a chance, all that young blood came out to denounce in a loud voice many social transgressions. After some years, when the circumstances of life can make a person more judicious and balanced, the way of behaving, talking, and even writing changes; and that is what happened to Raghavananda. In 1923 he was posted for three years to the US, and after coming back to India, his way of writing, as far as can be found in a few articles and reminiscences published later in *Prabuddha*



Bharata, changed thoroughly—it became quite accessible, with a focus mainly on religion and spirituality, and having even a touch of sweetness, as if he were an altogether different writer.

It has to be acknowledged, nonetheless, that Raghavananda followed well the journal's pattern and was able to obtain some good articles. These, together with unpublished material on or by Swami Vivekananda and occasional articles by direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, maintained the standard of the journal.

Swami Yatiswarananda¹⁹

From January 1922 there was an important shift in the design of the magazine and steadily in its content too. The paper size was reduced from double crown (20 x 30 inches) to demy (18 x 23 inches), and the text was now presented in one column, looking more like a book than a magazine, though it was of course very readable in demy size paper. This design continued till December 1928. A few more scholarly articles were included. Published and unpublished material by Swami Vivekananda continued to be a regular feature. A graphic of a mountain was introduced in the cover as well. But the most important move, taken with the approval of Belur Math, to improve the physical quality of the magazine and its distribution was the shifting of its printing to a press in Kolkata—the last issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* printed at Mayavati was December 1923.²⁰

There was a notable shift of tone in the 'Occasional Notes', in which one can observe the beginning of a style of writing that would become consolidated in many future books of Swami



Yatiswarananda, the new editor. Building on a variety of well-known concepts from psychology, philosophy, and religion, the editor used to bring the minds of the readers to the truths of Vedanta, emphasising the need for introspection and self-analysis. His writings have a connecting link from beginning till the end, which indicates a clear flow of thoughts and their appropriate expression. His words run gentle and precise, which makes the reading quite appealing, specially to the rational and intuitive mind.

Yatiswarananda had a firm attitude in denouncing wrongdoing and unhealthy trends in modern society, but he never fell into the common mistake of many preachers of different religions who resort to racial, ethnical, or religious controversies to trace the cause of all local or world problems. As a consequence, his books are, even today, well sold and appreciated by people of different cultures, effecting Indian spirituality to shine everywhere. In brief, while reading Yatiswarananda's 'Occasional Notes' in *Prabuddha Bharata* one can experience one's higher intuition being charmingly stimulated.

Swami Vividishananda

Brahmachari Bhava-chaitanya, who would later become Swami Vividishananda, acted as manager of *Prabuddha Bharata* from 22 June 1920, probably for about two years. Before becoming the new editor, he wrote some articles for the magazine and also worked in Mayavati ashrama as an accountant, cashier, postmaster, and in other jobs. This is mentioned because before assuming the role of the editor, he had already lived for more than four years in Mayavati, a place that has a



definitive effect, according to one's personality, on the minds of its residents and, consequently, in their writings as well. In the case of Vividishananda, he seems to have imbued some of the qualities of his predecessor, as his writings were also well balanced, presented in a moderate tone, with clear and uncomplicated ideas.

Vividishananda's 'Occasional Notes' began in the issue of January 1925. By now the unpublished material on Swami Vivekananda had started to reduce, and towards the end of Vividishananda's tenure, the number of subscribers decreased²¹—the reasons may not have to do directly with his writings or editorship and are impossible to assess at present. From January 1926 there were no more 'Occasional Notes'; instead, there was a write-up without the author's name but with a different title every month, which was understood to be the editorial—from 1927 that write-up carried a subhead 'By the Editor', which made it more clearly identified as an editorial. It was placed after the main article, which would invariably be related to either Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, or original works of or about monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. This pattern would continue for many years.

Swami Ashokananda

There are two versions regarding which month in 1926 Swami Ashokananda became the editor: one says in June, though his first editorial appeared in August;²² the other, that he became editor in September.²³ Before that, he was in Mayavati for a few months, posted by Belur Math but not as an editor.



From 1927 the number of contributors from other countries started to increase again, and from 1929 the size of the magazine's paper was considerably enlarged, from demy to royal (20 x 26 inches), giving room for much more material²⁴—this size has remained till present. The two-column design came back, and there was a simple but elegant drawing on the cover. Also from 1929, the special issues of January started carrying some photographs at the end, an experiment that had been done earlier with less number of photographs.

From the beginning of 1929 till the end of 1930, there was an intense exchange between Ashokananda and Mahatma Gandhiji—the former, based on Swami Vivekananda's ideas, condemning the latter's economic programme—one writing in *Prabuddha Bharata*, the other rebutting in his journal *Young India*. Though totally against many of Gandhiji's policies, Ashokananda expressed great admiration for that noble soul, and it seems that he even cried when Gandhiji was assassinated.²⁵ All this may appear anecdotal today, but it reflects the spirit of that period, of which *Prabuddha Bharata* was a mirror.

Ashokananda was instrumental in providing the information that Romain Rolland finally used for his books on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. It was a collaborative task that lasted for four years.²⁶ Romain Rolland became a regular contributor of articles to *Prabuddha Bharata* from 1928 to 1931.

Ashokananda is considered by many as one of the most successful editors and writers of *Prabuddha Bharata*. It may be relevant, therefore, to reproduce here a first-hand account of his method of writing:

I would let my mind gather around one subject, and I would dwell on it. Then I would think of an opening sentence. In the morning when I woke up I would go at once to my desk and

start writing. I would write on and on until the editorial was finished. It would then be about twelve o'clock noon. I would have lunch with the other swamis, and in the afternoon I would read over what I had written. Only a word here and there would need changing. I would send the manuscript (of five or six thousand words) just as I had written it to Calcutta. The galley proofs were sent to Mayavati for correction. The page proofs were corrected in Calcutta.²⁷

One may be surprised by the length of some editorials then, and the fact is that the 'Occasional Notes' or editorials have, till today, oscillated between newspaper-sort-of and article-sort-of write-ups, a particularity of the unique-sort-of magazine that *Prabuddha Bharata* is.

Around Ashokananda's time, the need for an assistant editor became more prominent. It was a work that used to be handled by volunteers, either monks or guests, and consisted mainly of typing articles and editorials. Gradually, the assistant started proofreading the final material and performing other related jobs as well, and it became the exclusive job of a monk.²⁸

Ashokananda's editorials carried original ideas presented in a forceful language. He dealt mostly with the burning issues of pre-independent India, though of course through Swamiji's perspective. Let us remember that he, as well as the next editor, had to face one of the most convulsive periods in human history, as it was the years before the Second World War, a period of dramatic social upheaval and ideological change in the whole world. India in particular started to dream more concretely of a possible independence from the British Raj.

A few of Ashokananda's editorials, however, were related exclusively to philosophy. In them one can find the seeds of what in the future would become his hobby horse—he is known for his masterly exposition of Vedanta, particularly the Advaita philosophy.

Swami Pavitrananda

Swami Pavitrananda came to Mayavati in March 1925 and served in different departments. He later became the manager of Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, and came back to Mayavati at the beginning of October 1930 to take charge as editor from January of the next year.²⁹



Like his predecessor, Pavitrananda's editorials were concerned mainly with the social and cultural issues of his time, in India and the world. The treatment of those topics, however, was totally different from any previous editor. We find in his writings, first-hand information, often quite detailed, of the topics he discussed, possibly because by then several monks of our Order were working in different countries and would report in detail to him. He had been in close contact with many of them, or perhaps due to the introduction of radio in India by the end of 1920s, which provided a faster, sometimes real-time transmission of facts and events. Together with this, Pavitrananda had the special gift of being able to 'join the dots', to link all that information in a masterly way, to thus reach thoughtful and accurate conclusions.

He hardly used generalisations, but if he had to denounce something or point out social wrongdoings that needed attention, he would provide precise information and pinpoint where exactly the problem lay. For example, a topic that has been extensively discussed by the majority of editors of *Prabuddha Bharata* is 'India and the West'. Pavitrananda would not just criticise 'Western culture' in a generalised way, but he would detect the root of a problem coming from that culture—whether it was the blind acceptance and application of Darwin's theories or Freud's conclusions, or the

consequences of dehumanised industrialisation and consumerist life, or the like—and then carefully analyse and try to find concrete solutions, which would be based either on the spiritual tradition of different religions and cultures or, primarily, in Swami Vivekananda's principles and ideas. He would employ the same treatment when he dealt with the then excruciating problems of India, such as rural development, caste or religious conflicts, an increase of agnosticism in urban society, and many more. He would seldom blame a particular group or vent personal feelings, rather he would devote his gifted analytical mind to search for the very root of a social problem and find realistic solutions.

One can argue that Pavitrnananda was an extremely intelligent writer only for intelligent audiences, but this way of addressing social, economic, national, cultural, or even religious issues is far more effective at the time of trying to correct or improve a given situation. Many of his writings related to particular problems that happened ninety years ago remain to a great extent current, both for India and other countries as well. In addition, his language was by no means complex—no use of impressive words, a discrete use of adjectives, and the precise and convincing tone of an analyst, who at the same time does not stop with a mere analysis but always presents poignant and useful conclusions.


The issues of August and September 1931 carried an original article—an English translation from German—of Dr Carl G Jung, which was published two years later in one of his books. It is not known who was instrumental in obtaining an article from a world-renowned psychologist, but for a cultural and spiritual journal belonging to a religious organisation, this was an extraordinary achievement.

By the mid-1930s *Prabuddha Bharata* reached, thanks to the dedicated contribution of each successive editor, a level of excellence that gave this cherished journal the distinguished name and prestige that it carries even today.

Final Note

At the request of the current editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, who wanted a research done on this particular topic for the special issue of January 2021, an attempt was made here to analyse only some of the editorial aspects of the first generation of editors who developed from scratch a journal that has achieved such a high international standard.

Given the distance of time, it is not possible to conduct an in-depth research on the entire work of editors who lived many decades ago. However, the challenges of the work, then as today, have not changed significantly. The task of soliciting and selecting articles, editing and verifying the information presented is enormous. A good editor, therefore, may not always be a good writer of editorials, but still can do a commendable job for the purpose of the journal.

Moreover, to scrutinise the literary works of monks who have built up Ramakrishna Order and to whom we owe so much is a delicate task. India and the world have drastically changed in the last one hundred years, so the different editors' opinions should be taken in context, with an understanding of not only the historical situation they were immersed in but also to form a picture of the spirit of their times. For this reason, we have focused mostly on the salient qualities in the writings of each editor and, as far as possible, their contribution to the magazine in a general way. Above and beyond the writing of articles and editorials is, of course, the life of a monk, and there is no doubt that the lives of this first golden generation of editors of *Prabuddha Bharata* have been outstanding being in contact with the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. 

Notes and References

1. See 'Farewell', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 2/12 (June 1898), 135.

2. B R Rajam Iyer, 'Ourselves', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1/1 (July 1896), 2.
3. See 'Farewell', 135.
4. See 'Retrospect', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1/12 (June 1897), 132.
5. See 'Farewell', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 2/12 (June 1898), 135.
6. Before joining Swarupananda had been the first editor of a successful magazine based in Kolkata, named *Dawn*.
7. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 2 vols (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), 2.351.
8. *Complete Works*, 8.530.
9. Swami Madhavananda, 'Mayavati, the Home of *Prabuddha Bharata*', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 'Golden Jubilee Number' (May 1945), 9.
10. Swami Abjajananda, trans. Chhaya Ghosh, *Monastic Disciples of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2003), 90.
11. *The Charm of Mayavati Ashrama*, comp. and ed. Swami Satyapriyananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), 122.
12. Swami Virajananda, 'Women in Ancient India', *Prabuddha Bharata*, (October 1900 – June 1902).
13. See *The Charm of Mayavati Ashrama*, 169.
14. 'Occasional Notes', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 19/1 (January 1914), 3.
15. 'In Memoriam: Swami Prajnananda', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 23/5 (May 1918), 120.
16. See *The Charm of Mayavati Ashrama*, 133.
17. Mayavati Diaries, entry of 11 September 1914: 'Sri Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] has written a letter to Prajnan Maharaj praising him for the nice articles he has been writing in the paper.'
18. See *The Charm of Mayavati Ashrama*, 135.
19. Discrepancies regarding the exact period of editorship of an editor may occur because some researchers count from the moment he took charge, while others from the first issue that carried his 'Occasional Notes' or editorial, which generally do not coincide. In this paper the first criterion has been used, though in some cases there is not enough evidence to prove one or the other—in such cases the information published in *The Charm of Mayavati Ashrama* was used as reference. With regard to Yatiswarananda, we reproduce some entries from the Mayavati Diaries that may help clarify the point. 29 May 1921: 'S Raghavananda's term of office of editorship expires in this month. He hands over the charge to Swami Yatiswarananda and decides to go on a pilgrimage to Amarnath.' Entry of 23 August 1924: 'Suresh Maharaj [Yatiswarananda] has received a letter from Mahapurushji asking him to start for Bombay as early as possible.' Entry of 28 August 1924: 'Suresh Maharaj left Mayavati for Bombay at 8.30 a.m.'
20. For references regarding the many inconveniences of printing at Mayavati, see *The Charm of Mayavati Ashrama*, 169–70.
21. Mayavati Diaries, entry of 4 October 1926: 'A letter from Bhupen M. [Swami Pavitrnananda, the manager of Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata] indicated the steady fall in P.B. subscribers number & so there was a lively discussion among us about increasing the size of P.B.—whether it is desirable to increase the size, as already settled, under such circumstances.' Entry of 3 November 1926: 'Bhupen M. has sent two designs for P.B. cover & a few sample cover papers.'
22. See Sister Gargi (Marie Louise Burke), *A Heart Poured Out: A Story of Swami Ashokananda* (New York: Kalpa Tree, 2003), 107.
23. Mayavati Diaries, entry of 14 July 1926: 'It was decided that Jogesh M. [Swami Ashokananda] will relieve Dwijen M. [Swami VIVIDISHANANDA] by taking charge of P.B. from September next.'
24. The intense discussions about enlarging the size of *Prabuddha Bharata* started in 1926, as it transpires from many entries in the Mayavati Diaries. Belur Math had finally approved the change, but due to economical and probably other reasons it was not made effective till the first issue of 1929.
25. For a detailed account of this exchange of ideas between Ashokananda and Gandhiji, see *A Heart Poured Out*, 103–15.
26. See *A Heart Poured Out*, 107–8.
27. *A Heart Poured Out*, 115.
28. From the 1990s onwards, when the composition and design of the magazine was done in computer at Mayavati, the assistant worked almost at a par with the editor, becoming thus an associate editor from January 1914.
29. Mayavati Diaries, entry of 1–2 October 1930: 'Bhupen M. [Swami Pavitrnananda] occupies the Editor's Room in the P.B. Office today. He will take charge of P.B. from Jan.'

Writings of the Direct Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna in Prabuddha Bharata: A Brief Survey

Swami Mahayogananda

WHAT A LEGACY! 125 years of the message of Awakened India! In these halcyon pages, how many sacred writings have appeared, alongside philosophical musings, Sanskrit hymns, reviews of books, reports of relief activities, and reminiscences of great souls. Many writings from the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna have also appeared in these pages—of course, from Swami Vivekananda himself, and from twelve other Direct Disciples (granting that recorded conversations, later printed, can count towards this number). In this article, we will briefly examine the scope of these writings from Swami Vivekananda's brother disciples.

The scope of materials is large and falls into different categories: articles written for publication in the journal; translations of writings from Bengali; excerpts from books; letters (both written in English and translated from Bengali); and recorded conversations. We may also differentiate between materials published while the authors were still living, and those published after their passing away.

Many of the materials have later been published in books. But there are also materials which have not been published elsewhere, are no longer in print, or are not widely known. These deserve our special attention.

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The Great Master

The life and message of Sri Ramakrishna are of paramount interest for seekers of God-realisation in the present age. The Master's own disciples' words about him are of particular value. Though they ring many of the same notes, at the same time, each disciple had his own unique relationship with and understanding of the Master. A brief review of some of their remarks can inspire us, and should compel us to study these writings in their entirety. Some common themes emerge: Sri Ramakrishna's purity, non-sectarianism, renunciation, compassion, and emphasis on harmony; his divinity, the impossibility of truly understanding him, and the benefit of contemplating on him.

At the beginning of his letter to Romain Rolland, Swami Shivananda writes (*PB* March 1930):

I have not yet come to a final understanding whether he was a man or superman, a god or God Himself. But I have known him to be a man of complete self-effacement, master of the highest renunciation, possessed of the supreme wisdom and as the very incarnation of Love; and as, with the passing of days, I am getting better and better acquainted with the domain of spirituality and feeling the infinite extent and depth of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual moods, the conviction is growing in me that to compare him with God, as God is popularly understood, would be minimising and lowering his supreme

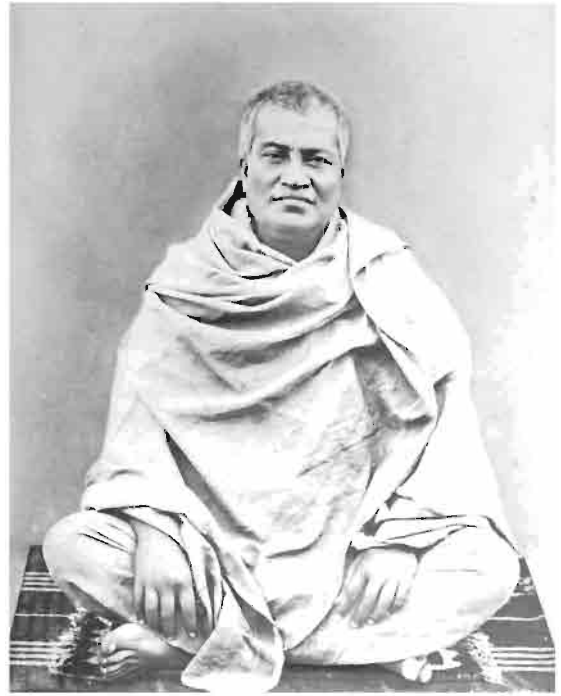
greatness. I have seen him showering his love equally on men and women, on the learned and the ignorant, and on saints and sinners, and evincing earnest and unceasing solicitude for the relief of their misery and for their attainment to infinite peace by realising the Divine. And I dare say the world has not seen another man of his type in modern times, so devoted to the welfare of mankind.¹

Swami Premananda describes his Master as the very embodiment of harmony—‘The one grand austere Sādhana of India throughout the ages has thus fructified, has thus reached its highest fulfilment in this ocean of synthesis, which is Sri Ramakrishna’—and delineates his abhorrence of sectarianism, reminding followers of Sri Ramakrishna that they ought to take great care to avoid it:

He had not the slightest desire of founding a sect or the like. What need has he of a wall or a fencing—he, who has transcended the bondages of conventional religions, who has realised the Ātman, who is a paragon of Divine Love? Do you know when sects are created? It is when the heart is full of weakness, fear, and hatred. Know it for certain that the fate of our organisation will be sealed when the idea of forming a sect will have crept into it. India has come to such a pass because of this sectarianism. The waters of little ponds and puddles become dirty but the flowing waters of rivers are never polluted. Beware of fanaticism. It must not enter our organisation. ‘We are followers of Ramakrishna’, ‘There is no salvation except through Ramakrishna’, ‘Hence you should worship Ramakrishna’, ‘Ramakrishna is the greatest of Avatāras’—never lay hands on another’s faith by such nonsensical talks.²

He goes on to conclude his article with these stirring words:

So forget everything else and completely immerse yourselves in the thought of the Master. The Lord is not a subject for idle talks. He is to be realised. We must get Him anyhow. He must



Swami Shivananda (1854–1934)

be made our own in this very life, at any cost. There is no other way to permanent peace for the suffering humanity except through God-realisation. He alone is the solace of our burning heart (632).

Swami Ramakrishnananda makes note of his guru’s renunciation:

In these days there is no chance for anyone to gain esteem without wealth. Wealth makes even a fool a Pandit. Wealth makes impossible, possible. So wealth is worshipped everywhere today. But Sri Ramakrishna came to show that wealth was the root cause of all evil. ... It is because of his extreme renunciation of wealth that the wealthy regarded themselves as blessed by serving him and spending money for him. Wealth comes of its own accord to him who renounces—this fact is proved in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.³

In Swami Akhandananda’s reminiscences, we read this touching example of Sri Ramakrishna’s compassion for all beings: ‘The Master would never use any carriage but a second class one of



Swami Premananda (1861–1918)

a particular owner, because his horses were stout and strong. The Master would become restless if the horses were whipped; he would exclaim, “Oh, they’re beating me!” So whenever the owner heard that Paramahansa Dev was to go, he would send the best horses, so that they would not require any whipping and would be running at ease.”⁴

Strict Vedantins hold liberation from *samsāra* (the cycle of birth and death) as their ideal, and strive to attain it as soon as possible. But Sri Ramakrishna taught his inner circle differently—as revealed in this conversation related by Swami Turiyananda:

Once when I told him that my life’s ideal was to attain Nirvāna, he reproved me for entertaining such a low ideal. He said, “The granny likes the play to go on.” I said to him: ‘But what of that? Why should I play?’ He at once rebuked me saying: ‘Bah! How selfishly you talk! The whole bliss is in the continuance of the game.

The granny dislikes those players who prefer to loiter about her. But she stretches forth her hand to one who after a vigorous play comes back to touch her. Haven’t you noticed how, in a game of dice, the expert player sometimes gives up an invulnerable position willingly? He plays again and by a few masterly throws of the dice gets back to his former position.’

I asked him if this was possible. He answered: ‘Yes, quite possible through the grace of the Mother. Must not a man believe in the infinite power of God?’⁵

Like Swami Premananda, Swami Turiyananda also reminds those who follow in their footsteps to take care to develop a harmonious and all-rounded religious life:

Those who profess to be the children of Sri Ramakrishna must have Yoga, Bhakti, Karma, Jñāna, nay, everything. For, Sri Ramakrishna stands for the synthesis and harmony of all religious paths. The spiritual growth of a person following a particular line was the rule in the past. But now one should have an all-round development combined with a magnanimity of heart to tolerate others (112).

How can we describe the infinite? Sometimes, poetry is more effective in giving hints about that which cannot be described. Swami Abhedananda’s poetic gifts enabled him to express for all time a universal vision of his master, and to present a profound attitude of devotion to him. It is almost certain that the English translation given of his *aṣṭakam* was also penned by the poet:

विश्वस्य धाता पुरुषस्त्वमाद्योऽव्यक्तेन रूपेण तत् त्वयेदं।
हे रामकृष्ण त्वयि भक्तिहीने कृपाकटाक्षं कुरु देव नित्यम्॥

Thou art the first cause
The Lord as well;
Pervading all Thou art,
Thy state none can tell.
Oh, Ramakrishna! ever cast Thy glance of grace
On him, who hath not devotion’s trace.⁶

How does that ‘glance of grace’ manifest? Swami Subodhananda reveals one way it expresses itself—through the Master’s intense prayer for his devotees:

The Master said, ‘Afterwards, many more devotees will come and they will be spread out all over the world.’ He also said, ‘For those who will be inspired by the life and message of this place [meaning himself], it will be their last birth.’

The Master prayed: ‘O blissful Mother, saviour of the lowly! Your children do not see you, but please look after them. Please cast your gracious glance upon them. O Mother, this is my heartfelt prayer: May everything that is inauspicious become auspicious for your children by your grace.’⁷

The Mother

Sri Ramakrishna was utterly dedicated to the Divine Mother of the universe. His *Gospel* is replete with prayers to, conversations with, songs about, and discussions on Mother. So it is no wonder that his disciples would also reflect deep devotion for the Divine Mother, and counsel us to cultivate devotion and surrender to Her. We can feel the power of their realisation still reverberating in the following words of Swami Trigunatitananda:

It is Mother that is the living principle in our life. Call Her as He, She or It, whatever you will; it is Mother that guides our life. We are under Her care. She is the support of our life, hidden and secret. We talk of Her, but we do not know Her. She is in our every act—behind our every heart-beat. But why can’t we know Her? ...

As soon as we turn our attention to the pleasures of the senses, our body, this lump of flesh, Mother is gone. Though She is behind everything, She is thus lost to our view. We thus lose Mother by our negligence. So let us forget everything else; let all our thoughts go to Mother! Let all our time and energy be devoted



Swami Subodhananda (1867–1932)

to Her; and we shall in no time get Her and know the mystery of Mother’s play.⁸

Sri Ramakrishna wanted his disciples to accept the Divine Mother and rely fully on Her as he did. Swami Ramakrishnananda explains why:

Sri Ramakrishna used to think of the Divine Mother as his real mother. Just as the child is unwilling to leave the lap of its mother, so also he was loath to leave his Mother. Day after day he used to stand before the Divine Mother and get lost in Divine bliss and he knew for certain that there was no place in this world except the feet of his Divine Mother where such great bliss could be had. That is why he liked so much to take the aspirants after bliss to the feet of the Divine Mother.⁹

Swami Turiyananda, though philosophically a strict Vedantin, also displayed a remarkable mood of complete surrender to Mother in his life and counsel:



Swami Turiyananda (1863–1922)

If Mother comes of Herself to dwell in the heart, all troubles end,—otherwise it is difficult to achieve anything by one's own effort. But why should Her grace descend unless one surrenders one's heart and soul? If She is found but once, one cannot any more lead a worldly life. She alone is seen even in the world. Then it is clearly felt, 'Thou art work, Thou art religion and non-religion'—the secret has been discovered. It is then clearly seen that She has become everything. There is nothing except Her, so all troubles end. Call on Her, meditate on Her day and night, while you eat and sleep, rise and sit. Why not do it with all your heart once? You will then find that everything has become easy. Call on Her without intermission.¹⁰

In a similar vein does Swami Abhedananda remind us:

The Divine Mother is all in all. We live and move and have our existence in that Divine Mother. Who can live for a moment if that eternal energy ceases to manifest? All our mental

and physical activity depends on Her. She is doing whatever She wants to do.¹¹

And what then will be our attitude to Mother? Abhedanandaji reveals his own mood in his famous hymn to Sri Sarada Devi:

प्रकृतिं परमामभयां वरदां नररूपधरां जनतापहराम्।
शरणागत-सेवक-तोषकरीं
प्रणमामि परां जननीं जगताम्॥

O, Prakriti, Supreme! in human form,
Bestower of boon and Bliss!
Distress of souls removest Thou,
And grantest them content and peace.
Thy servants who surrender all to Thee
Of fear, them, Thou makest free.
O, Great Mother of the world,
Be my salutations ever to Thee.¹²

Swami Saradananda's Magnum Opus

The deeply reflective and discerning portrait of Sri Ramakrishna painted by Swami Saradananda in his *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Līlā Prasāṅga* is of inestimable value for students of the great master's life. Two translations are available to us. The first, appearing in 1952, is written in poetic, Victorian English, and the second in 2003, in contemporary English.¹³ Over 40 instalments of the book also appeared in English in the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata*, from 1915 to 1944, and significantly, the first 10 of these are Swami Saradananda's own translation—or rather, we should say, 'recreation'—for a closer study of these passages reveals that the author only loosely followed the Bengali original in his English rendering. Interestingly, he has significantly abridged certain portions, while expanding others; it is these expanded passages which should be of special interest to serious students of the *Līlāprasāṅga*. Three such passages are reproduced here.

About Sri Ramakrishna's mother Chandramani Devi, he writes:

[The villagers] found in her the mother, who was ever careful to look after the comforts of even the lowest of them, and would sacrifice her time and what little she had to feed and clothe them whensoever they were ill or in want. The children of the neighbourhood engaged her special attention and their mothers found in her always such ready sympathy, that they would assemble in her hut in their leisure moments and would seek her advice and help in their troubles. Her great mother-heart made her the centre of a large family, as it were, in the village. The elderly ladies of the neighbourhood felt themselves attracted towards her as to their own daughters. And to those who were equal to her in years she had in her heart such genuine friendship that they longed to be in her company always.¹⁴

Swami Saradananda had extensively researched his master's life, so we can imagine that when he began to translate his work into English, new aspects of the subject would have come before his mind's eye. Also, he was surely keeping in mind the Western reader when penning this 'translation'.

He presents a stirring picture of pilgrimage in the India of yore when discussing the journey taken by Sri Ramakrishna's father Kshudiram:

It is impossible to realise in these days of hurry and bustle, the joy that used to thrill the pilgrim's soul in India, in olden times. The mild climate of the country, the beautiful scenery that confronted him at every step, the life in the open air face to face with nature and with all ideas of responsibility that troubled and worried him at home dropped for the time,—all combined to bring home to his mind a sense of freedom which he had not tasted since his days of childhood. The shackles of artificiality which grow round one as one advances in years used to drop off one's soul on such an occasion, and the spirit asserting itself over matter made one think deeply on the whence, why and wherefore of all



Swami Saradananda (1865–1927)

human affairs. Again the uncertainty of getting much of the creature comforts of life and the dangers that beset the roads, brought the idea of man's helplessness and the wisdom of dependence on the Lord, into the pious mind, which seldom experienced that before in the safe surroundings of its daily life amongst friends and relations. Thus a deep sense of calm and repose used to pervade the mind of the pilgrim, as he wended his way slowly, day after day, to realise the fulfilment of the long-cherished desire of his heart. And thus rivers and rocks, and shrines and images of a long-standing antiquity, nay the very stones and the dust of the pilgrimage, used to be idealised, worshipped and surrounded with a bright halo by the mind of the faithful devotee.¹⁵

It is widely believed that Sri Ramakrishna could not, or could barely, read. Even in the *Lilāprasāṅga*, scarce attention is given to the young Ramakrishna's reading ability. But in Saradanandaji's English presentation, he sets this misperception to rest, with a delightful description of Gadadhar's schooling:



Swami Trigunatitananda (1865–1915)

It was the custom in Hindu families to make the little boys learn the genealogical table of their forefathers and little verses in Sanskrit in salutation to various gods and goddesses. They were told, besides, stories from the two great national epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata even before they were formally initiated in the mysteries of the three R's. And little Gadadhar had not only learned these things from his father's lips but could also repeat verbatim

some portions of the Bengali version of the epics by simply hearing his father reading them, even before he learned his alphabets [sic]. And we can well imagine how eagerly he looked forward to the time when he would be able to read the sacred epics himself like the rest of the family. He mastered the alphabets quickly and made such strides after joining the school that in less than a year he was able to read the Bengali version of them, as well as all the other Bengali books that he could lay his hands on. Indeed, from that time forward he dived deep, daily, into those sacred books, the fountainhead of every Indian inspiration of later times, and the poet in him pondered and brooded over the noble characters and their doings in such a way as to make of them living and moving personalities around him. His powerful imagination would at times spread its golden wings over immense gaps of time and space and carry him over to the doors of the palaces at Ayodhya or at Hastinapur to witness the magnanimous deeds of Rama, his faithful Sita and his devoted brother Lakshmana or the noble doings of the five Pandava brothers. Thus passed the days of our little Gadadhar, after he joined the school, with

absorbing interest in the Sacred Books and the characters contained therein, and they helped to educate and mould his young mind and heart rapidly and in accordance with the old Indian ideals, even from these days.¹⁶

Advice for Monks

Sri Ramakrishna's disciples knew that their master has opened the gates of liberation to all, and their teachings reflect this. He also took great pains to establish a high ideal for monastics; two articles appearing in *Prabuddha Bharata* may be of particular interest to them. Swami Subodhananda reminds monks of the foundation of monastic life:

Sanyasa is the renunciation of all selfish motives and desires. Before I explain what Sanyasa is, I should speak to you about Brahmacharya; for unless the latter is realised, no Sanyasa or renunciation is possible. The observance of Brahmacharya requires strict regulations of one's diet, habits and thoughts. Of all the injunctions prescribed for this stage, the greatest stress is laid by the shastras upon the complete mastery of the sexual instinct. Nothing should be sensed or acted by the aspirant which might directly or otherwise tend to arouse the animal in him or her. In this way one is directed to bring one's mind under full control. He who is not a slave to his senses and mind, but on the contrary has made them his slaves is a true Brahmacharin. All the religions of the world preach this Brahmacharya and Sanyasa, both of which have one and the same end in view, namely to lift the mind up from all sensual concerns towards God. When the mind reaches God it enjoys divine bliss.¹⁷

Swami Trigunatitananda describes the thrilling culmination of a spiritual life founded in chastity:

We have been born again and again, but what have we done to raise ourselves, to become divine? We have run again and again after these sense-enjoyments and suffered untold miseries. But never mind, it is never too late to mend.

A moment's sincere resignation of oneself and everything one possesses, at the feet of the Lord is quite sufficient to ensure this. Yes, it must be sincere. This single act will revolutionise one's whole outlook on life. One will no longer see men and women as such but as divinities. The hellish idea of sex and all sense of worldly enjoyments will appear stale or vanish altogether, and instead will be found a joy infinitely superior in blessedness. The world as it is, is full of misery, but it lies within the power of each man and woman to transform it into all bliss. Every man is God, every woman is none else but the Divine Mother. Change thus your present outlook on life and the kingdom of Heaven is now and here. Brahmacharya is at once the means and the goal of life.¹⁸

Parting Words

Devotees of Sri Ramakrishna may take the following assurance from Swami Vijnanananda to heart:

This question rises in my mind—where shall I go after the body's fall? About this Mahapurush Maharaj said, 'We all shall go to the Ramakrishna world. There we shall live in the blessed company of the Master.' To be with the Master means to me to think of him constantly and not to forget him even for a moment. When the mind dives deep in him and does not forget him even for a moment, wherever we may be we are in the Ramakrishna world.¹⁹

What nectarine blessings are raining down on seekers of truth, through the pages of *Pra-buddha Bharata*, dedicated to the spiritual awakening of humanity! This brief survey gives us a taste of the divine nectar flowing from the awakened ones. Let us drink deep of this nectar to quench our thirst, and march onward towards the Goal Supreme.

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Swami Vijnanananda (1868–1938)

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A Manual for Enlightened Debate: Swami Swarupananda's Rejoinder to Professor Fraser in Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Chidekananda

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA used to extol the practical benefits of realising the highest Advaitic truths: 'If the student thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better student. If the lawyer thinks he is the spirit, he will be a better lawyer, and so on.'¹ According to Swami Bhajananda, what Swamiji meant is that when one realises oneself as the spirit, then one's egocentric actions get transformed into divine-centric actions. Divine-centric activity manifests great power. The truth of this statement can be seen in Swami Swarupananda's writings in *Prabuddha Bharata*. Swarupananda was a monastic disciple of Swamiji and the second Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* from 1898 to 1906.

In the first part of this article, we will show how Swami Swarupananda revealed himself to be an enlightened scholar in the modern age. We will specifically analyse Swarupananda's article entitled, 'Swami Vivekananda: A Rejoinder', which was a reply to an article written by Professor J Nelson Fraser entitled 'Swami Vivekananda: A Criticism', published in the *Hindustan Review* and *Kayastha Samachar* in January 1903. Swarupananda's masterful rebuttal to Fraser's criticisms first appeared in the February 1903 issue of the *Hindustan Review* and was later reprinted in the April 1903 issue of *Prabuddha*

Bharata. This led Fraser to write a reply to the Editor of the *Hindustan Review* and *Kayastha Samachar* (March 1903), in which he accepted the logical strength of Swarupananda's rejoinder and conceded that his [Fraser's] own arguments and conclusions were flawed. He wrote to the Editor of the *Hindustan Review*:

Dear Sir, I write to acknowledge the force of the rejoinder which Swami Swarupananda makes in your February article to my article on Swami Vivekananda. It is clear that I did not do him justice. ... I seem to have been mistaken.²

How often do we see an academic scholar admit his mistakes in a public forum? It is all too common for a scholar, in the face of strong criticism, to double down on their original assertions, no matter how ridiculous their claims may be. In the second part of this article, we will explore the ancient enlightened form of debate known as *vāda* in the Nyāya Sūtras exemplified by Swarupananda.

Professor Fraser's Main Criticisms of Swami Vivekananda

Professor Fraser makes six different arguments about Swamiji: (1) Vivekananda did not support 'social reform'; (2) he did not advocate 'industrial development'; (3) he did not engage in 'political agitation'; (4) he taught that the world was an illusion, and for this reason, did not encourage involvement in the world; (5) he

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did not take seriously the plight of the poor in India; (6) he was not fit to hold the position of a Vedāntic Missionary in the West.

What was Swarupananda's Methodology in Refuting Fraser's Criticisms?

Even before addressing any of Fraser's arguments, Swarupananda initially establishes a tone of scholarly objectivity throughout the article. First, he attacks the sources which Fraser relied on in writing his critique. Fraser's sources were limited to: '(1) the compilation of a few press notices of the Swami's work, (2) a brief, sketchy (probably a reprint of a newspaper) article on him by Sister Nivedita, (3) only three of his speeches on purely spiritual subjects, (4) his reply to the Madras address, and the (5) translation of a fragment of his writing in Bengali.'³

Second, Swarupananda refrains from engaging in *ad hominem* or personal attacks on the Professor's character, and instead affirms his intelligence: 'One wonders how the *learned Professor* could consent to call a publication like this a 'biography', and then seriously undertake to traverse the views contained in it' (*italics added for emphasis*). Here, Swarupananda subtly poses a rhetorical question to undermine the credibility of the Professor's arguments and conclusions based on his sources, while also acknowledging Fraser's scholarship. Next, Swarupananda affirms the Professor's sympathetic heart towards Indians: 'One expected a better judgment from Professor Fraser. But we shall not quarrel with him, for we find a note of genuine sympathy for Indians in his paper. We shall proceed at once to lay before him the other side of the picture which he should have seen before writing his article' (*ibid.*).

Here, Swarupananda acknowledges Fraser's 'genuine sympathy for Indians', but also expresses disappointment with his sources. Swarupananda's *impersonal-personal tone* is especially striking because his guru Vivekananda had just passed

away a few months earlier. Indeed, it would have been natural for Swarupananda to attack Fraser's motives or intelligence if he were writing his rebuttal from an egocentric position.

Swarupananda's Reply to Each of Fraser's Criticisms

Argument Number One: Swamiji did not teach Social Reform

The first argument which Fraser makes against Swamiji is that he did not teach social reform. Swarupananda rebuts Fraser's argument with Swamiji's own words: 'To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only in little bits. I want *root-and-branch reform*' (*emphasis added*).⁴ Swarupananda then elaborates the concept of 'root and branch reform' by quoting Swamiji: 'Our God is the cooking-pot, and our religion is, "Don't touch me, I am holy". If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in the lunatic asylum. ... This state of things has first to be thrown overboard, and then we must stand up, be active and strong' (3.167). ... 'The fact is that we have many superstitions, many bad spots and sores on our body—these have to be excised, cut off and destroyed' (3.279). During the late nineteenth century, reform movements—like the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj—had advocated for the abolishment of child marriage, the caste system, purdah, ban on female education, ban on widow remarriage, and so on. Though Swamiji was sympathetic to many of these movements, he felt that the solutions did not go far enough to address the root cause. For example, regarding the issue of women's reforms, Swamiji felt that the only true solution was to educate and empower women so that they could decide what is best for themselves: 'Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are

necessary for them. In matters concerning them, who are you' (6.115).

Next, Swarupananda acknowledges that Swamiji did not seek to abolish the caste system, but instead sought to remove any special privileges given to the higher castes: 'Men must form themselves into groups, and you cannot get rid of that. Wherever you go, there will be caste. But that does not mean that there should be these privileges. They should be knocked on the head' (3.245–6). Swarupananda then further quotes Swamiji's plan for elevating the masses and lower castes to the state of Brahminhood: 'If the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no more money on the Brahmin's education, but spend all on the Pariah. Give to the weak' (3.193). ... 'Teach the masses in the vernaculars, give them ideas; they will get information, but something more is necessary; give them culture' (3.291). Again, Swamiji's idea of caste was rooted in the 'potential divinity of soul'. He believed that once the masses were given the proper education and culture, then India's greatness would once again manifest: 'They were great, these ancients, but we want to be greater. They did great work in the past, but we must do greater work than they. They had hundreds of Rishis in ancient India. We will have millions—we are going to have, and the sooner every one of you believes in this, the better for India and the better for the world' (3.284). Swarupananda further adds: 'The above extracts, only a few among many, will show that the Swami was not silent on "social reform".'⁵ Here, Swarupananda concludes his rebuttal of Fraser's argument without overstating the obvious. It is like an effective lawyer in a jury trial case. He takes the jury to the door, but then the jurors should apply their own critical faculty to open the door themselves.

Argument Number Two: Swamiji did not support industrial development

Professor Fraser's second argument is that Swamiji did not support 'Industrial Development' (ibid.). Swarupananda understands when to emphasise and when to quickly rebut with a light touch. Here, Swarupananda deftly shows the absurdity of this argument: 'As to "industrial development", no better proof of his interest in the subject can be adduced than his incorporating it as one of the objects of the Ramakrishna Mission of which he was the founder' (ibid.).

Argument Number Three: Swamiji did not teach 'political agitation'

Professor Fraser next faults Swamiji for not teaching 'political agitation'. Here, rather than spending much time on why Swamiji did not provoke others to engage in 'political agitation', Swarupananda applies a dual-pronged approach: on the one hand, he takes Professor Fraser to task for even making such a claim, yet at the same time, he uses such a language so as not to make Fraser defensive: 'As to "political agitation", it is amusing that the Swami should be taken to task by the learned Professor for leaving it alone. The disingenuousness here betrayed by Prof. Fraser makes one wonder if he has not been long enough in the land to know the Indian idea of the relation between Sannyasins and politics, and (what is more interesting) the Government view of the same' (ibid.). Interestingly, Swarupananda uses a light tone to playfully yet effectively chide the Professor, in a single sentence, for feigning ignorance of the fact that monks do not traditionally engage in politics.

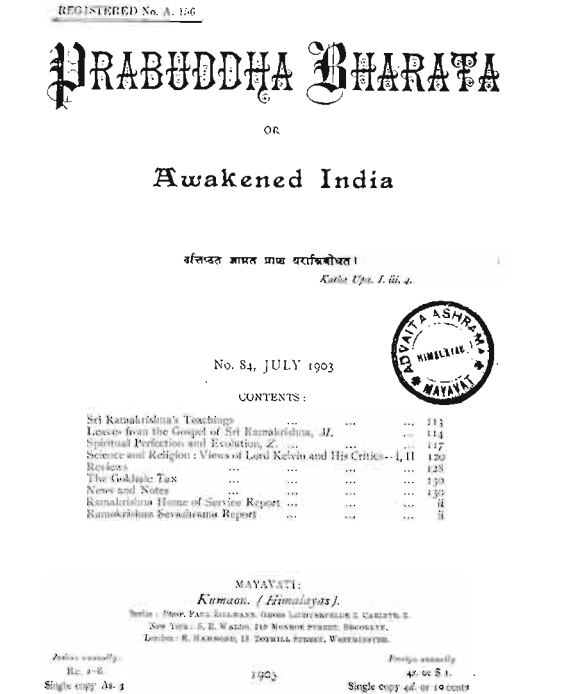
Argument Number Four: Swami Vivekananda believed and taught that the world is an illusion

Sometimes, in debates, the opponent may imply a criticism, but not express it directly. The next argument which Fraser makes is an implied one: that Swamiji believed and taught that the world is an illusion. Fraser argues, 'if we are considering refined Hinduism, the faith of the

cultivated classes, we may regard it as tending to one type, and that type, which was accepted and defended by the Swami, is the monism of the *Advait* philosophy. According to this view, the world of sense is a disturbance in the infinite silence of God; a thing in itself trivial and unreal, and in its relation to man a mere hindrance which closes the path of freedom and salvation. ... The Swami often remarks that politics form the prevailing interest of the West, as religion that of the Hindus. But if the world is an illusion, politics can never be of much interest' (66–7).

How does Swarupananda rebut this argument? Here, Swarupananda demonstrates his mastery over logic as he quickly identifies the implied argument and then logically rebuts it with Swamiji's own words. He first quotes Swamiji's definition of Maya as an eternal contradiction that man has to live with: 'It [this world] is a mixture of this existence and non-existence. ... Thus we find that Maya is not a theory for the explanation of the world; it is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction, that everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction, that wherever there is good, there must also be evil, and wherever there is evil, there must be some good, wherever there is life, death must follow it as its shadow, and everyone who smiles must have to weep, and vice versa.'⁶

After defining Maya, Swamiji then raises a rhetorical question and answers it himself: 'Shall we not work to do good then? Yes, with more zest than ever, but what this knowledge will do for us is to break down our fanaticism' (2.101). But what are the means for this? Swarupananda then quotes the crest jewel of Swamiji's teachings: "The Vedanta, therefore, as a religion must be intensely practical ... intense activity, but in the midst of it, eternal calmness (2.291–2). ... These conceptions of the Vedanta must come



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out, must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor man' (3.245).

Swarupananda brilliantly understands that he does not have to do much here except let Swamiji speak for himself. He aptly pieces together Swamiji's words in a logical sequence in order to give his response to the Professor's unjustified claim. Thus, he indirectly points out Fraser's lack of scholarly rigor without explicitly stating it.

Argument Number five: Vivekananda was not sufficiently concerned about the poor in India

Next, Professor Fraser makes light of Swamiji's feelings about the poverty of India: "The poverty of India gives the Swami less disquietude, though he complains in one place, somewhat rhetorically that "India is populated by 300,000,000 of

beggars". I doubt, however, if the Swami, on the whole, thought this much of an evil.⁷

Here, Swarupananda's divine-centric style, as opposed to ego-centric style, is put on full display. Rather than attacking or ridiculing the Professor for his uninformed critiques, he takes the higher ground and appeals to Fraser's moral conscience: 'His want of information here has led Professor Fraser to do a cruel injustice to the Swami. No son of India felt for the poor more than he did. ... We are sure if Professor Fraser had a little knowledge of the man he sat down to criticise, he never would have accused the Swami of want of feeling for the poor' (69).

Swarupananda then proceeds to quote from Swamiji's speech at the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893, to attack the hypocrisy of the Christians who are more interested in erecting churches in India than in feeding the poor: 'You Christians, who are so fond of sending out missionaries to save the soul of the heathen—why do you not try to save their bodies from starvation? ... You erect churches all through India, but the crying evil in the East is not religion—they have religion enough—but it is bread that the suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats. They ask of us for bread, but we give them stones. ... I came here to seek aid for my impoverished people, but I fully realised how difficult it was to get help for heathens from Christians in a Christian land.'⁸

In stark contrast to the work of merely erecting churches, Swarupananda then describes the practical service of the poor that is being performed by the monastic organisation founded by Swamiji: 'No religious ceremony or celebration is held in the monastery founded by him [Home of Service at Benares and Kankhal] but the poor are fed with an attention and care which they do not hesitate to proclaim they have not anywhere else.'⁹ Swarupananda then concludes this argument by noting

Fraser's failure in his scholarly duty to consult the relevant sources of information: 'We need say no more on this subject, for we believe that *Professor Fraser is wrong not in his heart, but in his judgment*, namely, in undertaking to criticise a man without caring to obtain all the available information about him' (ibid.) (emphasis added).

Argument Number six: *Swami Vivekananda was not fit to hold the position of a missionary to the West*

Fraser questions the ability of Swamiji to hold the position of a missionary to the West because he does not like Swamiji's statement that 'part of the Sunday School education for children here consists in teaching them to hate everybody who is not a Christian, and the Hindus especially'. Here, Swarupananda playfully jabs Fraser that authorities of greater stature than he have endorsed Swamiji: 'We need not happily trouble to vindicate the Swami's position, even though it is questioned by the learned Professor. That position has long been founded on the rock of unanimity of greater authorities on the matter than Professor Fraser, both Western and Eastern' (ibid.). Swarupananda then crescendos his rebuttal with a prediction about Swamiji that has actually come to pass: 'At the risk of being charged with using extravagant language we make bold to state that the Swami's mission to the West is destined to stand as a landmark in history, at least of modern India' (ibid.).

Analysis of Swarupananda's Effective Argument

How did Swarupananda persuade Professor Fraser to see the flaws in his own argument and publicly acknowledge them?

Swarupananda was able to effectively argue and rebut Professor Fraser's claims by using an ancient enlightened method of debate known as *vāda*¹⁰ in the *Nyāya Sūtras* and which Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan has characterised, in more recent

times, as the 'progressive discovery of truth'.¹¹ This enlightened style of debate is a masterful methodology which has been used by great Vedāntic teachers of both the past and present, including Acharya Shankara and Sri Ramakrishna.

What is the difference between ordinary debate and enlightened debate?

The Nyāya school of Indian philosophy distinguishes three kinds of debate: *vāda*, *jalpa*, and *vitanda*. *Vāda* is the style of debate in which both parties aim to arrive at the truth. *Jalpa* is a debate in which both parties aim to win. *Vitanda* is a debate in which one party aims only to refute the opponent's position without defending any position of his own.¹² If we apply this standard to ourselves, we will probably find that we mostly either debate for the sake of winning (*jalpa*) or for the purpose of refuting the other person (*vitanda*). Enlightened souls, however, will debate solely for the sake of discovering truth (*vāda*).

Dr S Radhakrishnan aptly summarises Acharya Shankara's use of the *vāda* methodology for convincing his opponents in philosophical debates: 'He destroyed many an old dogma, not by violently attacking it, but by quietly presenting something more reasonable which was at the same time more spiritual too.'¹³ Dr Radhakrishnan continues:

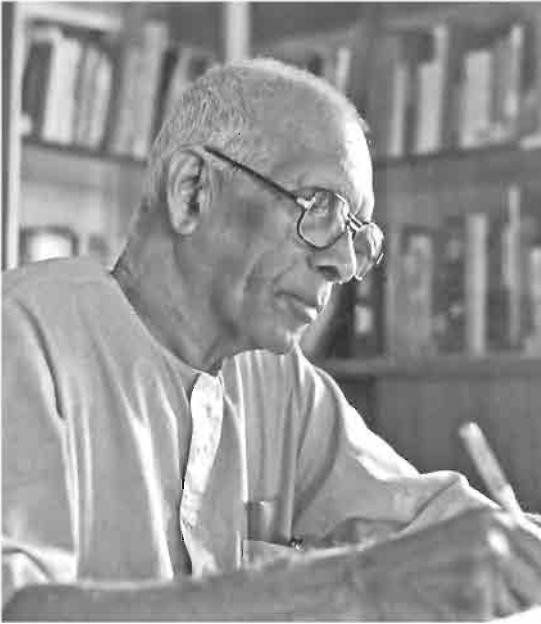
This method is best described as the 'progressive discovery of truth' because it is critical and dialectical. He passes in review the position taken up by other systems and criticises them after expounding their standpoint in full, with an expertness and impartiality which the very upholder of the system cannot do. In the process of the criticism, he never fails to note the varying fullness, the philosophical worth and the logical acumen of other systems. The lower is criticised in the light of the higher in which it finds its fulfilment (*ibid.*).

The method of the 'Progressive Discovery of Truth' contains the following seven key elements:



**Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975),
the Second President of Independent India**

First, we should listen to and understand the other person's arguments without bias, and then restate the arguments to the opponent's satisfaction. Second, we should establish an impersonal-personal tone at the outset of the debate. Third, we should apply the impersonal-personal approach to understand the opponent's motives. If we determine that the opposing party is sincere but misguided, then we should try to identify what is correct in the opponent's position before correcting his arguments. Fourth, we should avoid using the 'appeal to authority' fallacy¹⁴ as both parties may not agree upon the reliability of particular sources. Fifth, we should try to rebut or weaken the opponent's claims in the most efficient manner. Sixth, if the argument appears absurd on its face, then we should dismiss it in the most efficient manner. Seventh, we should utilise the platform to emphasise the strong points of our argument.



Swami Ranganathananda (1908–2005)

What is the necessity for the 'Progressive Discovery of Truth' methodology in modern times?

In this modern age of 'identity politics'¹⁵ and 'cancel culture',¹⁶ an unfortunate consequence has taken place: namely, the loss of healthy debate. Nowadays, whether it is in the realm of politics, religion, or the like, people prefer to join a particular movement or group and demonise the opposing parties as evil without even listening to their arguments. The culture of identity politics does not permit parties with differing viewpoints to discuss their views and live together harmoniously.

Swami Ranganathananda, the thirteenth President of the Ramakrishna Order, commented on the rise of intolerance and the lack of a healthy debate:

Today we try to impose an idea by the force of the sword and not by an appeal to the intellect and understanding. Most politicians today try to appeal to the feeling and not to the understanding. At its best, it no doubt produces the loyalty and deep enthusiasm for a cause; but at

its worst, it expresses itself in fanaticism and mutual destruction.¹⁷

He then provides us with the solution to this problem—namely, to appeal to the opponent's intellect:

But the most enduring appeal is that which affects the intellect, the mind of a people, and which, through its inherent truth and beauty, gradually penetrates to the heart, producing deep convictions and rational faiths. This method has been tried by very few in the world, and amongst those who have tried, and tried successfully, one is [Acharya] Shankara. Usually, the masses can be appealed to through their emotions only. But Shankara is an exception to this general rule: though an intellectual of a rare order, he has appealed to both the heart and the intellect of men. We have in Shankara a great intellectual and at the same time one who commanded the emotional allegiance of the masses (ibid.).


How did Sri Ramakrishna employ the method of the 'Progressive Discovery of Truth'?

Much emphasis is usually given to Sri Ramakrishna's ability to convince spiritual aspirants through his spiritual power and experience. Much less attention has been given to his power of logical and rational reasoning, and his ability to come down to the level of his audience and elevate them—without relying on any external display of his spiritual power. In a unique question and answer session at Nanda Bose's House on 28 July 1885, Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated his logical skills when imparting spiritual teachings. He employed the Socratic Method¹⁸ to further stimulate the critical faculties and also the latent spiritual tendencies of his questioners in order to help them to continue to grow in line with their own tendencies.¹⁹

Conclusion

In brief, we have discussed how Swami Swarupananda applies the *Enlightened Debate* methodology to effectively rebut Professor Fraser's

criticisms and to prove to Fraser that he had failed to apply due diligence in his research before writing his critique. Crucially, Fraser must also be credited for retracting his criticisms on Swami Vivekananda in the light of Swarupananda's rebuttal and publicly acknowledging that he was mistaken. This reflects the Professor's open-mindedness and integrity.²⁰

Let us try and practise these principles of *enlightened debate* in our own lives. If we feel that the person with whom we have a disagreement is in the wrong, we should put aside our own preconceived notions and listen to the other person's point of view. If we still see things differently, let us first restate and acknowledge the other person's position to his satisfaction before replying. Finally, in our response, let us make sure that we do not engage in personal attacks, and do show respect for the other person. 

Notes and References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 3.245.
2. Professor Nelson Fraser, 'Swami Vivekananda: Prof. Fraser's Letter', *Prabuddha Bharata* (May 1903), 89.
3. Swami Swarupananda, 'Swami Vivekananda: A Rejoinder' (Reprinted from the *Hindustan Review* and *Kayastha Samachar*, Allahabad, February 1903. Reply to Mr Fraser's paper 'Swami Vivekananda: A Criticism'), *Prabuddha Bharata* (April 1903), 66–9.
4. *Complete Works*, 3.213.
5. 'Swami Vivekananda: A Rejoinder', 67.
6. *Complete Works*, 2.97.
7. 'Swami Vivekananda: A Rejoinder', 68–9.
8. *Complete Works*, 1.20.
9. 'Swami Vivekananda: A Rejoinder', 69.
10. The *Nyāya Sūtras*, in brief, describe three types of debating styles: (1) *vāda* or honest debate, (2) *jālpa* or bad debate, and (3) *vitanda* or wrangling debate which is defined 'as a debate where no counter-thesis is established. In other words, the debater here tries to ensure victory simply by refuting the thesis put forward by the other side.'
11. P Nagaraja Rao, *Introduction to Vedānta* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1958), 58.
12. Edited by Major B D Basu, I.M.S., Vol. VIII, *The Nyāya Sūtras of Gotama* (Allahabad: Sudhindranatha Vasu, 1913), 14.
13. *Introduction to Vedānta*, 58.
14. <<https://www.logicallyfallacious.com/logical-fallacies/Appeal-to-Authority>>. Appeal to Authority is defined as: 'Insisting that a claim is true simply because a valid authority or expert on the issue said it was true, without any other supporting evidence offered.'
15. <<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/identity-politics>>. *Identity politics* is defined as 'political activity or movements based on or catering to the cultural, ethnic, gender, racial, religious, or social interests that characterize a group identity.'
16. <https://www.dictionary.com/e/pop-culture/cancel-culture/?itm_source=parsely-api>. Cancel culture refers to the popular practice of withdrawing support for (canceling) public figures and companies after they have done or said something considered objectionable or offensive. Cancel culture is generally discussed as being performed on social media in the form of group shaming.
17. Swami Ranganathananda, *Eternal Values for a Changing Society*, 4 vols, 6th Edition (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidyan Bhavan, 1993), 98.
18. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic_method>. The Socratic method (also known as method of Elenchus, elenctic method, or Socratic debate), is a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue between individuals, based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presuppositions. The Socratic Method is considered as one type of methodology in the *progressive discovery of truth*.
19. For further discussion on this matter, please see the article entitled *A Day in the Life of Sri Ramakrishna* which appears in the July 2020 issue of *Vedānta Kesari*.
20. In addition, it must be taken into account that some of Swami Vivekananda's teachings including the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* and also *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western Disciples were not available when Fraser wrote his critique at the end of 1902.

Concept of Education as Presented in Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Shantivratanaanda

PRABUDDHA BHARATA, an esteemed magazine started by Swami Vivekananda, has played a significant role in reconstructing the society by offering noble ideas. The concepts covered by the magazine on religion, philosophy, education, Vedanta, culture, and the like are noteworthy. *Prabuddha Bharata* published its first article on education in 1904. Since then, the journal has published many scholarly articles on the meaning, scope, and objectives of education and also on the educational philosophies of different scholars.

Education is Not Merely for Breadwinning

In the present-day society, we observe that education has become a means for breadwinning, achieving social status, and earning money, which is unfortunate. The term 'education' comes from a Latin word '*educare*' which means 'to bring forth'. However, at the present time, we have indeed moved away from what education truly is or what education should be. As a result, we now face numerous problems both at the individual as well as social levels. There is no denying the fact that increasing literacy, which we have equated with education today, has not necessarily resulted in a decrease in crimes. On

one hand, we have had rapid improvements in literacy and material conveniences for daily life, thanks to modern technology. But at the same time, we also witness an equally rapid decline in social values and an increase in turbulence among the individuals.

A renowned scholar and educationist, Prof. T M P Mahadevan points out in the article 'The Philosophy of Education' (*PB*, August 1952): 'A major flaw in our present education is that it contributes very little to the flowering of an integrated personality. Learning a number of subjects with an eye on passing an examination is almost the whole of education as we know it.'¹ In the olden days, education was sought for the wholesome training of the personality, so as to understand the truth of life and realise the supreme knowledge for eternal freedom and absolute bliss. But as we all know, our present education system has been reduced to be merely a means of getting jobs.

Recently, there was an advertisement in a newspaper noting the need for engineers with a starting salary of ₹8000/-. But the same company had also mentioned that they need carpenters, plumbers, and masons with the starting salary of ₹25,000/-. Though we cannot generalise this, it is a fact in many instances. The founder president of the Indian Medical Association, Thrissur, Dr A R Poduval in his article 'The Realities of Modern Education' (*PB*, March 1935) discusses this problem. He says that with our modern

Swami Shanrivarananda is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order serving in Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysuru.

education system, the problem of unemployment has increased. Almost every educated person desires to have a government job, but hardly a few succeed in getting it. The intention of most of the job-seekers to get an easy-going secure job has resulted in a serious unemployment problem. The author points out how a farmer's son wants to be an officer, an artisan's son wants to be a government employee, and so on. Due to this, there is an unhealthy competition and as a result, many arts and skills of the older generations are dying out.

If we take the case of a goldsmith, or a carpenter, or a mason, or a potter, or any such class of artisans, we find that the glamour of a Government job has blinded them. Also instead of teaching their sons improved methods of their original craft, they make hectic efforts to procure for them such jobs as a clerkship, a police-constable, or even a petty peon in an office. Within a generation or two, the craft of the artisan would become extinct. There are no Government jobs for the succeeding generations of these handicraftsmen, and having by this time, practically divorced themselves from their hereditary trades, they are let out to float in the world, among the mass of floatage of the unemployed.²

While discussing the problems of modern education, Dr Poduval shares the predicament of a farmer:

There are in that building, two of my children, soft-handed and educated. There is no job for either of them. They are not wanted in any Department. The boy has adopted the usual 'Style' of the educated folk, and does not know the difference between a bullock and a buffalo. The girl is a bit costlier in her costumes, and has not learnt the use of a broom-stick. In a year or two, I shall be too old to do any work. We are too poor to engage workmen on any scale. And my educated children have learnt to take a distinct dislike to such manual labour as agriculture demands (146).

While mentioning the drawbacks of the modern education system, Swamiji remarked: 'Goodness gracious! What a fuss and fury about graduating, and after a few days all cooled down! ... At last, they cannot keep the wolf from the door! What does it matter whether this higher education remains or goes? It would be better if the people got a little technical education so that they may find work and earn their bread instead of dawdling about and crying for service.'³

Dr Poduval also mentions that the present education system has become a costly affair. However, we cannot deny that the modern education has many positive sides also.

What is Education?

The meaning and facets of education are well discussed in an article 'Ideals of Education' published in June 1912 by an anonymous author. Here the author analyses education from the Vedantic point of view. Education is derived from the Latin word and its meaning is 'to draw out' or 'to draw forth'. The author opines that education is a process and not an end in itself. It is a process by which something is drawn out. That something is 'our true individuality'. So, education should help a human being to know her or his real nature. Here we may remember that Swamiji defined education on similar lines: 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection which is already in man' (4.358).

The author also discusses the *subject matter* of education. Basically, there are two types of knowledge: one is secular and the other is spiritual.



Dr A R Poduval (1884–1940)



Swami Vireshwarananda (1892–1985)

Secular knowledge is about the empirical world, while spiritual knowledge is about our intrinsic nature. The author lays bare an effective comparison between these two aspects of education:

The one is open to doubt and readjustment; the other is a state of awareness, a state of conviction in feeling. The one is fixed in the realm of probability—for theories and even established laws are subject to the changes that occur in the wake of increasing discovery; the other is fixed in the realm of changeless spiritual actuality. The one is busy with the definition of matter; the other is busy with the realisation of the spiritual foundation of consciousness. The one is physical, the other spiritual. The one deals with the discovery of physical facts; the other deals with the realisation of spiritual realities. The one is subject to change; the other is established in the domain of infallible reality. The one deals with the revelation of parts, the other with the revelation of the Unit Whole.⁴

In the article ‘Some Views on Education’ (PB June 1921), Swami Vireshwarananda dwells on education according to Swami Vivekananda. He makes an interesting point that education is ‘...preparation for life. With the ancient Hindus, it was not only a preparation for this life but also for the life to come.’⁵ He also notes that education in ancient India was complete in itself. It gave importance to both secular and spiritual aspects of life. Modern education, on the other hand, gives importance only to the former, while completely neglecting the latter. That is one of the biggest drawbacks of present education, due to which we are facing several problems both in individual level as well as collective level. The author also makes an interesting observation that modern people state that the ancient education system gave importance to spiritual knowledge and neglected the secular part. But this is far from reality. Our ancient education system gave equal importance to both and hence in ancient times, there was a great development in the material sciences too. However, due to the continuous invasions from outside forces, our progress was hampered and we lost many of our accomplishments.

Even from the oldest Upanishads we learn that the students were taught various other branches of knowledge also. From the conversation between Narada and Sanatkumara in the Chhandogya Upanishad we find that mathematics, politics, astronomy, logic, science, fine arts etc. formed parts of the curriculum. The Hindus had made great progress in all these subjects. But unfortunately owing to unfavourable historical circumstances the progress of the nation was arrested and no more development was made in these sciences (ibid.).

Sir Brajendranath Seal (‘Indian Education, Past and Future’, PB, October 1926), while articulating his views on education, makes a

notable point that Indian education system had several unique features. The students had to take three vows during their education, namely, *the vow of chastity, the vow of poverty, and the vow of labour*. The vow of chastity was useful in controlling the mind and its instincts. It checked the students' mind from impurities and craving for luxuries. It also made the student practice *rita*, the truth. The vow of poverty disciplined the young mind and trained it to lead a simple life. The pupil would be free from covetousness and luxuries, and hence the mind would become ready to receive the knowledge imparted by one's teacher. With such disciplines of character-building, the student's mind would not be distracted but concentrated on learning various subjects. So, in the ancient Gurukula system, in approximately 13 to 15 years, the student was able to study many subjects. Simple living and high thinking were the goals of every student in the Gurukula. The vow of labour prepared students to be independent and trained them to recognise the dignity of labour. Due to this, maintenance of the Gurukula also became easy due to the fact that a strong bond of mutual trust was created between the students and their teachers.

The ancient education system prepared an individual at the physical, mental, ethical, and spiritual levels. It transformed a student into a responsible citizen of the motherland by imparting country's culture and traditions which have come down from generations. The education was free and each teacher took the individual responsibility of every student, something which is unique in a Gurukula system. Mr Seal argues that after repeated invasions, though our education system had dwindled, there was still a notable percentage of students in the Indian traditional schools. He gives a statistic that though for a hundred years there was a planned destruction of our ancient education system,



Sir Brajendranath Seal (1864–1938)

around thirty percent of boys were enrolled in the traditional schools in 1815.

Also our ancient system was in no way inferior to the modern education system, nay, it was even better. Brajendranath Seal clarifies:

The [Indian] Astronomy and Mathematics were not less advanced than those of Tycho Brahe, Cardan and Fermat; the Anatomy was equal to that of Vesalius; the Hindu Logic and Methodology more advanced than that of Ramus, and equal to Bacon's; the physico-chemical speculations on combustion, heat, chemical affinity, clearer, more rational, and more original than those of Van Helmont of Stahl; and the Grammar, whether of Sanskrit or Prakrit, or of the Semitic tongues, the most scientific and comprehensive in the world before Bopp, Rask and Grimm.⁶

Brajendranath Seal refutes the idea that our ancient education system focused only on individual liberation. He points out how it also tried to teach social ethics. In every student,



T. M. P. Mahadevan (1911–1983)

our ancient education instilled a *universal approach* which called one to pray for the well-being of others and of every creature in the fourteen worlds—*Lokā samasthā sukhino bhavantu*, a teaching that taught the students to feel oneness with every creature on this earth.

Salient Features of Our Ancient Education System

The noted Indian historian and nationalist, Dr Radha Kumud Mukherjee discusses the salient features of Indian ancient education system in his article that appeared in the *Prabuddha Bharata* in March 1934, titled 'Ideals of Ancient Hindu Education'. He points out how ancient Indian education system was better than the modern education system. The main reason being that the Gurukula system was the outcome of a system of life, whereas the present education system is like a factory manufacturing a single product on a large scale. The Gurukula system gave personal attention to each student and it helped every individual to grow. In contrast, the present system has failed to understand that *every individual is unique by nature*, and hence, this mass educational system will not work. To make it more clear, the author gives an example of a hospital where every patient is diagnosed and gets treatment according to her or his disease:

Modern Universities are like factories providing for mass production in education, turning out standardized products mostly devoid of any special genius. Such a system is based on a radical error which ignores the natural

differences of individuals and artificially and mechanically forces them into a class for purposes of a uniform treatment. The absurdity of this position may be understood if a uniform treatment is meted out to patients in a hospital irrespective of differences of their diseases and their remedies.⁷

The author also gives the example of Nalanda University and explains that the education taught there was not just for a livelihood, rather it was intended for pursuit of truth.

Drawbacks of Our Present Education System

T. M. P. Mahadevan ('The Philosophy of Education', *PB*, August 1952) remarks that our present education system has been narrowed down to bread-winning and has neglected the building of a personality or character. So, there is a substantial increase in literacy rate all over the world with an increase in social evils too. That is because, 'A major flaw in our present education is that it contributes very little to the flowering of an integrated personality. Learning a number of subjects with an eye on passing an examination is almost the whole of education as we know it.'⁸

One of the major drawbacks of our present education system is its foreign nature. *Every education system should be based on one's own culture*. The present education system in India, however, was developed by British and after making negligible corrections, we are still following it. As a result, Indians are moving away from their indigenous culture. Sri Mahadevan writes:

The present-day education in India has no basis in the indigenous culture; those who receive the modern education in India become, usually, foreign in outlook and thought, and they become misfits to the society and family they come from.⁹

Naturally, the question arises in our mind as to what education really is or how it should be imparted to the students. The answer is, education, in general, is the assimilation of knowledge through focussed study leading to competence in one's chosen area, greater self-belief, and stronger moral values. But of late, this broader approach has been replaced by one where education entirely has become a means to the attainment of power, wealth, and comfort, which is unfortunate. The author says:

The equipment, the efficiency, or the preparation for life has been understood by ninety per cent of people as putting one on the way of making a living in life. Again, the making of a living in life involves a selfish view of one's own aggrandizement in place of a wider outlook which ought to be the aim of true education. According to this view, the individual is shaped and moulded to fit him into some business by means of which he may acquire money, position, and power in life. Therefore, when the question of educating a person is under consideration, the man-making factor is overlooked.¹⁰

Instead, just one aspect of education, namely, 'literacy' is equated with the whole of education. As an indication of this accepted perception, the Merriam Webster dictionary defines education as 'the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning in schools'. Another dictionary states that being 'educated' is the gaining of competence in a specific field of study in an educational institution. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it is this narrow approach of seeing 'education' solely as 'academic/literary competence' that has led to many of the problems seen in today's society.

There is also another danger. A purely utilitarian view of education, which is the main reason for the present popularity of subjects like science and economics, is neither a healthy nor

a desirable view. The object of education is not to produce mere technicians and wage-earners. There is a higher purpose that education should never lose sight of.

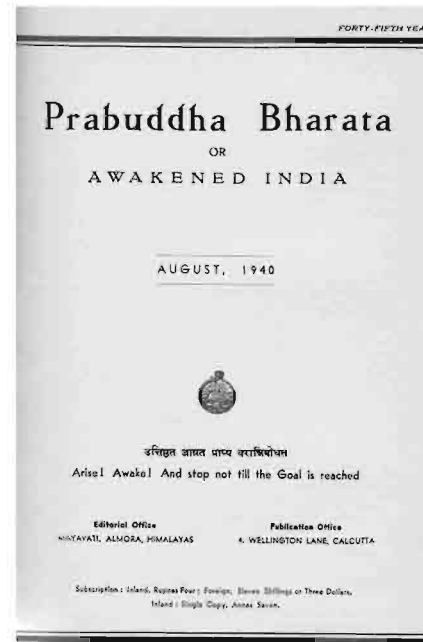
Complete Education

Prof. S Sivaraman, while discussing his ideas on education in his article 'Education for Building a Greater World' (PB, August 1940), defines education as

a 'preparation for complete living'. He opines that the complete living includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life. So, education should equip a student to enrich himself in all these realms. He says that the Western education system has given importance to physical and mental sides and neglected the ethical and spiritual sides. As a result, there is an excitement in social life, unhealthy competition in economic life, and short-sighted egoism in politics. Hence, the consequences in physical, mental, and ethical realms of life are far from satisfactory.

The East has always laid emphasis on the spiritual side of the life not neglecting other aspects. According to S Sivaraman, complete education, for the better world, lies in,

the re-building of a greater world, where the body should be developed to its fullest health and strength, the mind should be trained to think clearly and originally, the emotions



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should be directed towards the love of the beauty which delights through an ideal and the good which enriches the harmony between the self and the not-self; and the spirit should shine forth in the outer world through harmonious thought, word, and action. Then this world will be a heaven where men and women struggle not for the narrow satisfaction of desires, which aim at aggrandisement in externals and toil, not in weariness and strife, but where men and women realize an ever-growing happiness and peace through clear thought, ideal art, abidingly delightful emotion, and wisely planned action yielding harmony.¹¹

Education in Ramakrishna Mission schools

In an article on 'Ideals in Education' (*PB* June 1929), the author (anonymous), a former student of one of the schools run by Ramakrishna Mission, says that 'it is a home before it is a school'. He points out that generally in outside schools, academics play an important role and hostels attached to these have an insignificant role in the education process. But in Ramakrishna Mission schools, it is quite the opposite. He says:

In other educational institutions in our country, the school properly as it is called, plays the more important part, and hostels, if there are any, attached to the school, have very little influence on the collective life of the school. Schools are started first and hostels are added afterwards. This seems the natural order. But in our school the growth has been in the reverse way and it is not by accident.¹²

He also says that it is the ancient Gurukula system that is followed in Ramakrishna Mission schools. Here they try to build or create 'an ideal home' rather than set up a place for mere instruction and examination. This is not merely a place for students to learn what they did not know, rather it is a workshop 'where they learn

to behave as they did not behave in the past.' It is an institution meant for building the character of every student. The salient feature of a Ramakrishna Mission school is that here the son of a farmer, the son of a businessman, or the son of a wealthy person—all live together and no distinction is made among them. Here students are trained to learn every aspect of work, which enables them to be independent in their lives and respect the dignity of labour.

What education is and what education should be can best be understood in Swamiji's words: 'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and *by which one can stand on one's own feet*.'¹³



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Hinduism and Prabuddha Bharata: United Colours of Faith on the Canvas of Awakened India

Dr Satish K Kapoor

HINDUISM, traditionally known as *Sanātana dharma* or ‘eternal faith’, presents a kaleidoscope of colours on the canvas of life—the red of passion, as in *bhakti yoga*; the orange or golden yellow of dispassion, as in monastic orders; the yellow of intellect and action, as in *karma yoga*; the green of equipoise, as in *raja yoga*; the blue of wisdom, as in *jnana yoga*; the indigo of psychic ability, as in *kundalini yoga*; the white of purity, peace and truth, as in all spiritual disciplines; and shades of grey, as in philosophical systems that do not see any objective proof of the supreme being or of man’s subjective link to divinity.

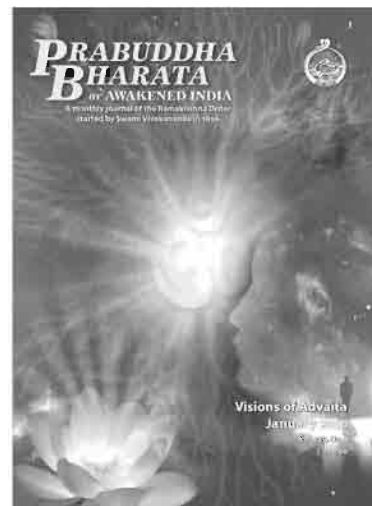
Historically, Hinduism has periods of bright reds and beaming pinks, of blues and yellows, as also of blacks and greys, marked respectively by spiritual efflorescence, intellectual growth, and lack of sheen due to accretions of ages, foreign invasions, and religious onslaughts.¹ But the pure spirit of Hinduism blossomed like the white lotus in the dark waters of outdated beliefs and practices, and the challenges of change from time to time.

Prabuddha Bharata or ‘Awakened India’, the monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order, has

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not only been unfolding these colours in their various hues, tints, and shades, but also keeping high the torch of the wisdom of sages, seers, and enlightened souls belonging to different traditions, through its long and meaningful history, spanning 125 years. It has brought about a spiritual renaissance by serving humanity, the nectar of life-giving, all-encompassing, and practical philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, as taught by the holy trio—Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836–86), Ma Sarada Devi (1853–1920), and Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), and their worthy disciples. True to its name, it has ‘worked to open up within man a greater awareness of his own worth and power, dignity and divinity’, and remained faithful to ‘the cause of truth, humanity and country.’² It has chartered a dynamic view of life as expressed in an apophthegm of *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, which is translated thus:

One who lies down is *Kali*,
 One who awakes is *Dwāpara*
 One who stands up becomes *Tretā*,
 And one who moves on
 realises the *Satya Yuga*.
 Therefore move on.



The Beginnings

The prospectus of *Prabuddha Bharata* laid down its objective of popularising ‘the sacred truths of Hindu religion and the sublime and beautiful ideal of the Vedanta in as simple, homely and interesting a manner as possible’, not for personal gain, but for the spiritual upliftment of humanity, caught in the mire of materialism. To this effect, the journal was to carry the Puranic and classical episodes delineating the eternal truths, philosophical tales, and short articles on philosophical subjects, and the lives and teachings of great sages and *bhaktas*, irrespective of their caste, creed or nationality, since they were ‘and ever will be the beacon lights of humanity.’³ The prospectus and subsequent publication of the journal were welcomed by the press due to their non-sectarian outlook, noble mission, and futuristic vision.⁴

In its first editorial, titled ‘Ourselves’, the objectives of *Prabuddha Bharata* (PB) were made more clear, and a plan to simultaneously realise the Vedantic ideals of ‘individual perfection’ and ‘social perfection’ was mooted. The grand success of Swamiji at the World Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893, and during his subsequent sojourns in America and Europe, was noted with pride. Referring to the new wave of resurgence, it wrote: ‘A San(n)yasin from our midst carries the altar fire across the seas. The spirit of the Upanishads makes a progress in distant lands. The procession develops into a festival. Its noise reaches Indian shores and behold! Our motherland is awakening.’⁵ The awakening which the editorial spoke of was not like that of an eagle ‘which rises from sleep with renewed vigour and strength to roam and to fight but that of a nightingale melting the hearers’ hearts with its soft, sweet melodies’ (ibid.). Since awakening ensues at the level ‘on which consciousness dwells,’⁶ *Prabuddha Bharata* intended to elevate the consciousness of people from physical to

divine level, so that they could transform themselves, and become the catalysts of social change.

In its December 1896 issue, *Prabuddha Bharata* carried a front-page article titled ‘Hinduism and Religious Evolution,’⁷ in which it classified religion into four groups—the religion of fear; the religion of love for earthly rewards or heavenly enjoyment; the religion of love, without bargaining; and the religion insisting on wisdom as an end in itself. As one grows in spiritual consciousness, one step leads to another. The article described Hinduism as ‘one of the most comprehensive and most highly evolved religions, ... the religion of that highest of philosophies—the Vedanta’ (ibid.). Alluding to its assimilative character, it claimed that if Christ had been born in India, he would have found a place in the list of *avatars* or incarnations of God on the earth. Mary of Catholicism in the south, has ‘almost become Mariamai’. Miran of Nagore (Tanjore district) ‘is already the common property’ of both the Hindus and the Muslims.

The fisherman that prays to the ocean God, for the safety of himself and his new boat, with liquor bottle and camphor, has religious kinship with the *rishi* who prays on the banks of the Sindhu (the Indus) saying, ‘O God grant light unto me, illumine my mind as the sun, Thy viceroy, illumines the world’, the same mantra that ages ago our ancient fathers uttered on the monarch of mountains (ibid.).

Another article in the same issue exhorted Indians to be aware of their spiritual greatness. It argued that while adherents of ‘foreign faiths’ were claiming divine origin for their scriptures, there was not a single passage in them that could not be found in the sacred texts of India. The Vedas say: ‘the scriptures are infinite.’ It implies that ‘everything is a scripture which gives a clue to the knowledge of the Supreme Being and of the state to come after this life.’⁸

To begin with, the motto on the masthead of *Prabuddha Bharata* was derived from the *Taittiriya Upanishad* which says: '*Brahmavid-āpnoti param*; he who knows the Supreme [Brahman] attains the highest.'⁹ But when the journal was revived in 1898, it used an inspiring epigram of the *Katha Upanishad*: '*Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata*; Arise! Awake! [Realise your divine nature.] And stop not till the goal is reached.'¹⁰ The reason for changing the motto was to redeem people from sloth so that they could fulfil their *dharma* of life with self-confidence. Swamiji expressed his elation at the revival of *Prabuddha Bharata* by writing an inspiring poem which appeared on the first page of the first issue of the revived magazine. It reads inter alia:

Once more awake!
For sleep it was, not death to bring thee life.
Anew and rest to lotus-eyes for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits,
O Truth!
No death for thee!
Resume thy march,
With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the roadside dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold, and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words.¹¹

India in 19th Century

The 19th century India looked like a mummy of a civilisation once rich in all aspects of human activity. Religion had degenerated into dogmas and unnecessary ceremonialism. Dazed by the glare of Western culture, people were becoming mimetic and artificial, losing contact with their rich heritage. The higher values of life, like simplicity, renunciation, benevolence, and contentment were fast diminishing.¹² All this threw a challenge to the contemporary society, and brought about a resurgence of the Hindu spirit through religious stalwarts and social

reformers. In the inimitable words of the English historian Percival Spear: 'If Ram Mohan Roy was the mind, Dayananda the physical arm, Ramakrishna was the soul of the new India.'¹³

Swamiji, the chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, came to be known as a 'Cyclonic Hindu' or 'Prophet of the New Age' due to his successful mission to the West, his unbound love for India and countrymen, his humanitarian concerns and his universal outlook. He founded the Ramakrishna Mission on 1 May 1897 with a twin motto: '*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*; for one's own liberation and for the welfare of the world.' The Mission marked the convergence of revivalist, non-revivalist, conservative, radical and other streams of social reform prevalent in India. It was the fulfilment of the Indian renaissance that began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833).

Quintessential Hinduism

Through its editorials and articles, *Prabuddha Bharata* has provided a true image of Hinduism bereft of the 19th century stereotypes, such as, it is 'pure paganism' full of barbarous practices; it is a syncretistic mix-up of various thought-systems; it negates social values and is devoid of any positive content; and so on. Swamiji proved through his lectures in the West, as reported in American and English newspapers, and reproduced thereafter in *The Brahmavadin* (presently, *The Vedanta Kesari*) and *Prabuddha Bharata*,¹⁴ that Hinduism—the 'mother of religions'—has a catholic vision, sublime metaphysics, ennobling ethics, and a monotheistic base. Its acceptance of the unity of life, harmony with science, recognition of reason's limitations, stress on spiritual experience, non-dogmatism, and spirit of tolerance make it a unique faith. Its keynotes are *samyama*, supreme self-restraint, *sadvichāra*, positive thoughts, and *samanvaya*, harmony.

Hinduism is so broad and comprehensive that it eludes all definitions.¹⁵ One can find in it different forms of belief, ranging from strict monotheism and plain henotheism to a wide variety of polytheism, pantheism, animism, and fetishism. It offers various methods for the realisation of truth in accordance with the mental make-up of persons: *Jnana yoga* for the intellectual; *Bhakti yoga* for the emotional; *Karma yoga* for the active; and *Raja yoga* for the meditative. *Prabuddha Bharata* rightly observed in an editorial in 1896: 'Hinduism is a realization from beginning to end, it is philosophy applied.'¹⁶

Hinduism deals with both *vyāvahārika* and *pāramārthika*—the empirical and the transcendental—dimensions of life. It recommends the path of *dharma* (righteousness) instead of *adharma* (unrighteousness); of *nivritti* (quiescence), instead of *pravritti* (worldly pursuits); and of *shreyas* (the good) instead of *preyas* (the pleasant) to achieve the higher goals of life, as suggested in the Upanishads. Arnold J Toynbee's view in his monumental work, *A Study of History*, that Hinduism lacks 'the absence of feeling', and is dominated by the intellect, does not hold ground, as shown by Debiprasad Bhattacharya in an article in *Prabuddha Bharata*.¹⁷

Hinduism is not a religion in the Semitic sense of the term with a founder or prophet, one particular god, or one holy book. It cannot have a central organisation like other religions because it is not a fixed revelation but a vibrant tradition that has evolved with time. *Prabuddha Bharata* wrote in this context: 'Hinduism is one of the finest and most coherent growths in the world. Its disadvantages arise from the fact that it is a growth, not an organization, a tree, not a machine.'¹⁸ It does not quarrel with any dimension of truth. Science, philosophy, mysticism, art, literature, and other disciplines have flourished under its umbrella without an impediment.

To confine such a wide-ranging tradition to a set of dogmas, would only destroy its ever-pulsating nature that has helped it to survive for millennia. The journal asserted: 'With all our hearts, we believe, that there is no other religion in the world that embodies so much of the eternal truth as this of the Vedas' (ibid.). But it regretted that Christian missionaries were misrepresenting Hinduism apart from using dishonest means to convert people.

Prabuddha Bharata made some concrete suggestions to fortify Hinduism, like, supplementing 'religion by public spirit', educating not just one class or community but everyone, cultivating scientific temper, forming voluntary social institutions to help the poor, the sick, the old, the women, and the forlorn, and energising the Indian culture by viewing things 'in their wholeness' and from fresh perspectives. It made a plea for making Hinduism aggressive internationally, by sending out missionaries abroad and accepting converts (ibid.). All these seem to have made a deep impression on the minds of people. Sister Nivedita (Margaret Elizabeth Noble, 1867–1911) noted before her demise that 'Hinduism is fit to pass through the ordeals of the Modern Transition'.¹⁹

Hinduism is often blamed for the evils of caste and untouchability. Swamiji sarcastically remarked that religion had been reduced to 'Don't-touchism' in his time: 'Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking pot.'²⁰ Yet he was not against the institution of caste but the evils that had crept into it. It may be mentioned that caste, a term of foreign origin, denoting inequality among human beings, is not sanctioned by the Vedas or other scriptures. It has been denounced by enlightened Hindus from Acharya Shankara and exponents of the Bhakti movement to social reformers of the 19th century, down to Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948),

the makers of the Indian constitution, and the present-day faith-leaders. The original *varṇa vyavasthā* or social class system was based on a scientific division of work in society. However, in course of time, the system degenerated and caste based on equality gave way to caste based on birth without the requisite traits.²¹

While delineating the role of Hinduism in the 'one world' ideal, Brahmachari Turiyachaitanya argued that Hinduism does not belong to a particular class or group of people, but to the entire humanity. 'It is not a religion but *Religion itself*'. It is *Mānava dharma*, 'a synthesis of the religious strivings of the whole of mankind, comprising men and women with different needs and in varying stages of development.'²² How true!

Hindu fundamentalism is a contradiction in terms, since Hinduism permits everyone to worship God in whatever way or form one likes, or in not believing in God at all. It does not speak of a single path to the divine, practice blasphemy, or believe in eternal damnation. Hindu rulers of medieval India were not 'guilty of crimes in the name of religion.'²³

Hinduism presents an integral and holistic view of life which is not antagonistic to nature. It celebrates human relationship with the primaeval elements and the cosmic forces in the form of the sun, the moon, stars and planets, through prayers, feasts, fasts and festivals. Environmental protection is integral to Hinduism. The *rishi* of *Bhūmi sūkta* pays homage to the mother earth in sixty-three verses, and explains right in the beginning that it is sustained by truth, eternal order, consecration, penance, knowledge and sacrifice.²⁴ The environmental crisis is caused by 'the corruption of human consciousness'. The survival of humankind depends on progress 'in synergetic relationship with the universe', as envisioned by the Vedic rishis.²⁵

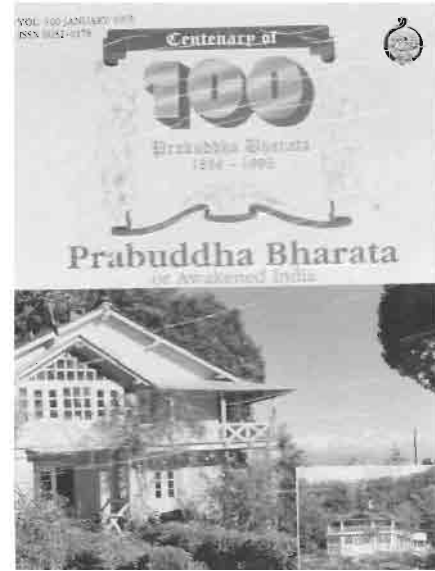
The Vedantic idea of unity in diversity was

emphasised in the very first editorial of *Prabuddha Bharata*, which clearly stated thus: "Though an organ of Hindu religion, the *Prabuddha Bharata* will have no quarrel with any other religion: for really speaking, all religions are simply different phases of the same Truth, different methods of approaching

God.' Vedanta, being the common basis of all religions, cannot have a dispute with any of them, 'the whole has no quarrel with the part.'²⁶

Dialogue and Amity

Dialogic theology can bring about amity and understanding among religions. A meaningful dialogue can deepen one's awareness of the Reality perceived by others. The era characterised by the Latin phrase '*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*', meaning, there is no salvation outside the church', has come to an end. Swami Vivekananda and other eloquent speakers like Virchand Gandhi (1864–1901) and H Dharmapala (1864–1933) proved during the sessions of the World Parliament of Religions, 1893, that non-Christian religions were not comprised of debased ideas, as generally believed, but contained eternal truths.²⁷ Ela Wheeler Wilcox (1850–1919), a contemporary American poet and journalist (who later contributed articles to *Prabuddha Bharata*), conceded that a liberal era had dawned as orthodoxy had allowed people of different



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faiths to interact 'without attempting to sever off their heads or burn them alive' (991).

The post-World War II period was marked by growing disapproval of the New Reformation Theology of Karl Barth and the Christian Realism of H Richard Niebuhr. The new hermeneutic engaged scholars in interpreting the Gospel according to the existential conditions. Alongside the revival of older traditions (inspired by A N Whitehead's works) and the growth of critical orthodoxy (exemplified in the works of A C Outler and Gordon Kaufmann) developed new trends, trying to readjust the Gospel Truths with the changing social realities. Gradually, the course of religious dialogue changed from exclusivism to inclusivism to pluralism. 'But pluralism itself now appears rather contradictory and irrelevant when viewed within the one religious history of humanity, and the one divine economy of salvation for all the human beings', argues Fr John B Chethimattam.²⁸ The solution lies in accepting the Vedantic view of the oneness of existence and the quintessential unity of all faiths. When the 'One' alone shines in everything, multiple forms denote only differences in name and form. Vedanta accepts all spiritual endeavours as valid ways to reach the Supreme being. The unitary vision of the Divine is explained by Sri Krishna thus: '*Mayi sarvamidam protam sūtre maṇigāṇā iva*; all this (worlds and beings) is strung on me like pearls on a string.'²⁹

The attitude of *Prabuddha Bharata* towards different religions has been marked by respect and understanding, not mistrust or hostility, in line with the Vedic saying: '*Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*'; Truth is one but sages call it differently.³⁰ This is evident from the fact that it has carried editorials, articles, comments, and book-reviews on different religious traditions, without prejudice.³¹ Recognising religion as

a spiritual, moral, and social force, it has promoted inter-religious understanding and eschewed controversies as far as possible. It has awakened people 'to the most important value of existence—sanity, nay spiritual consciousness'.³²

Although *Prabuddha Bharata* has shown a broad catholic outlook, it has simultaneously tried to restore the lost dynamics of Hinduism by sensitising people to the religious and cultural heritage of India. It has followed the ideal of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, which says inter alia: '*Satyam vada, dharmam cara ... Swādhyāya-pravacanābhyām na pramaditavyam*; speak the truth; practice righteousness ... Do not be careless about learning and teaching'.³³

The success of *Prabuddha Bharata* has been as much due to the spiritual ardour and erudition of its successive editors and the support of its patrons and contributors, as it has been due to the invisible spirit of Swami Vivekananda that seems to be guiding its destiny. By emphasising the culture of soul-consciousness, holding onto the highest truth, responding gracefully to negative attitudes in theological matters, promoting social cohesion, reflecting on the vital problems of life (like the crisis of character or ecological imbalance), and adhering to the Vedantic ideals of renunciation and service, *Prabuddha Bharata* has ushered the divine spirit in mundane affairs, and given wings to the human mind, so that it remains engaged in the twin tasks of self-development and the welfare of humanity, as envisioned by its founder. *The process continues.* ❧

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Ideas on History and its Evolution as Depicted in Prabuddha Bharata

Dr Jayasree Mukhopadhyay

THE *Prabuddha Bharata*, an organ of the Ramakrishna Order, is one of the oldest English journals published in India by the Indians. It is the brainchild of Swami Vivekananda who gave the name 'Prabuddha Bharata' or 'Awakened India'. Since its inception in July 1896 under the editorship of B R Rajam Iyer, it has crossed almost 125 years of its glorious career, rendering Vedantic knowledge and spiritual ideology to the innumerable, far and wide. Throughout this long period, it has published a wide variety of articles on different subjects and has maintained a high intellectual standard and distinctiveness. It focuses mostly on Indology, spirituality, and human values. Among the

varied subjects finding expression in this journal, 'History' is one of the choicest themes. The present article particularly tries to highlight the 'Ideas on History and Its Evolution as Depicted in *Prabuddha Bharata*'.

The course of history is often determined by great personalities. A human being is the pivotal factor in the writing of history, but time and space are also essential requisites. Analysis can be mono-factorial, bi-factorial, or multi-factorial. It can be made at both macro and micro levels. Though history is comprehensive, it is often classified into different categories and sub-categories. More and more attention is now given towards 'total history'. From some important articles of *Prabuddha Bharata*, we get immense light on notions of history and its evolution.

In every epoch, history re-examines the past

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in order to create the future. The Editorial of November 1966 with the caption 'History Repeats Itself' makes a striking comparison between two remarkable missionaries of ancient and modern times, one of Christianity and the other of Hinduism, namely, St Paul and Swami Vivekananda. 'Both were fired by a divine will to undertake their respective missions and both were able to alter the course of world history.'¹ But 'in immensity and proportion,' Swamiji's task 'appeared to be more difficult'. He had to fight against 'stubborn intellectuals' and 'political materialism' (446–7). Both tried to reveal eternal principles, but they followed different courses because of 'different historical perspectives' (447). 'If one had been a martyr to the cause of world Christianity, the other was a martyr to the altar of world's harmony' (448). The Editorial cites Romain Rolland, who signifying great repetition of history, describes Sri Ramakrishna as 'the younger brother of our Christ'² and Swami Vivekananda as 'St Paul of this Messiah of Bengal'.³ Rolland even goes further and compares Swamiji with St Christopher—'the carrier of men'.⁴ Indeed, Swamiji as a spiritual teacher studied the religious history of the world empirically and propagated the message of truth, harmony, and tolerance to reshape the human mind.

Swamiji was not a formal historian, yet he was more than that. He was a true interpreter of history with an analytical mind and philosophical insight. The Editorial of August 2005 issue takes a look at nationalist historiography in the context of Swamiji's views on history writing. A believer in *atma-shakti*, the power of the Self, Swamiji exhorted some youths of Alwar in February, 1891 to 'learn accuracy,' 'study and labour' and write 'our history on a scientific basis' in order to revive India's glorious past and awaken nationalist consciousness in the people. Though Europeans wrote a biased history of India, they showed 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. ... *It is for Indians to write Indian history.*'⁵ He strongly emphasised in this context the need for 'true national education' (ibid.). In reality, the Swadeshi Movement witnessed during its tenure a bold National Education Movement in Bengal, under control and supervision of the nationalists, with the leadership of Satis Chandra Mukherjee (a classmate of Narendranath [premonastic name of Swamiji]) through *The Dawn* magazine and the Dawn Society.⁶

The above-mentioned Editorial gives a critical account of Indian historiography coming from different schools of historians including Imperialists, Nationalists, Marxists, and Subalterns. It, however, does not mention Cambridge School discourses. It evaluates accurately the importance of Swamiji's discourses which are 'in the form of broad outlines and generalizations unlike the "fragmentary" analysis of the Subaltern Studies'.⁷ Swamiji worked out specific programmes to enable the subalterns (the masses) alter power equations, and 'this he put in a language that the subaltern could understand' (406). He foresaw a power struggle of *varnas* in future. The Editorial aptly condemns Subaltern Studies as being 'elitist' in academic historiography.⁸ We may find this elitist approach also in Marxist and Cambridge historiographies, which normally make a foregone conclusion to attack the Nationalist historiography.⁹ And thus, Swamiji's exhortations on writing national history becomes much more relevant today than before.

In his 'Historical Evolution of India' (*PB*, December 1918), Swamiji has analysed different phases of Indian civilisation in politico-cultural perspectives. He describes how ancient people of India through attempts for material

development and internal growth discovered science and religion. They evolved geometry and arithmetic, astronomy and chemistry, medicines and metallurgy, verses and music. The analytical power and poetic imagination were two internal causes that made up the 'the Hindu race' and formed 'the national character'.¹⁰ The ancient Indians developed arts and sciences including the realities of domestic life and pushed forward their imagination from the 'sensuous' world to the 'super-sensuous' platform. 'Many forms of religion and society must have been left behind in the onward march, before we find them as depicted in the scriptures, the Vedas' (270).

Swamiji has duly asserted the point that in the process of Aryanisation, assimilation and absorption of multiple forces cannot be denied, including Dravidian and Aboriginal. In the evolution of Indian history races, rituals, customs, ceremonies, caste system, battles, dynastic clashes, philosophical speculations—all had their own space. From early times, two trends went on side by side—one for imperial supremacy and material comforts, and the other for religious pursuit and philosophical growth.

Swamiji examines how the caste system grew into an institution, and how the triangular fight among proponents of ceremonials, philosophy, and materialism has come down to us unresolved. In the Mahabharata War, Lord Krishna, a Kshatriya, emerged as the Prophet of India and through his sermon in the *Gita* 'opened the gates of spiritual knowledge' (hitherto confined to the Brahmanas) to all others (271). But Krishna did not resolve the social problem. The struggle between priestly and royal classes became acute in the 6th century BCE, when Lord Buddha, another man of royal blood, preached his assimilating religion, attacked sacrifices and ceremonials, and initiated monastic organisation. Though Swamiji did not mention Lord Mahavira's name,

the latter too, coming of the royal family, began his protest movement against Vedic rituals in the same age. For the time being, Vedic religion lost its earlier splendour. The supremacy of Buddhism witnessed simultaneously the process of Magadhan imperialism, particularly under the Mauryas. But the extreme adaptability made Indian Buddhism lose its individuality, and its populist character made it unfit to cope with the intellectual forces of the mother religion in a few centuries.¹¹ 'A renaissance India' subsequently emerged, and diverse sects and doctrines gave rise to religio-intellectual movements of Kumarila Bhatta, Acharya Shankara, Acharya Ramanuja, and other Bhakti saints (8–9). But with the coming of Europeans, India was again faced with 'a period of confusion'. Swamiji painfully writes that under the British rule, the Indians had 'feeble tones of a terrorised people' (10).

Swamiji was always conscious of India's rich cultural heritage having intrinsic elements of strength, nobility, and truth, which protects itself from the onslaughts of other thought currents across the centuries.¹² In this context, mention may be made of Swami Satswarupananda's detailed analysis in his editorial on 'History of the Vedantic Thought' (*PB* October 1936). The Vedanta is the outcome of the Vedic philosophies found in an unadulterated form in the Upanishads. These Vedic philosophies are not merely based on human intelligence or reason, but on 'intuitive visions of truths perceived by the Self'.¹³ The Vedic rishis got visions of the One Ultimate Reality or Brahman from different perspectives and composed marvellous hymns and verses. They left it for the future generations to explain their ideas by removing doubts and misunderstandings. It is these later rishis who took the responsibilities for the exposition of Vedic philosophies by making *Sutras* and *Bhashyas* (680–1). Different, even contradictory, systems

of thought gradually developed of which *Uttara Mimāmsa* (*Brahma-Sutras*) or Vedānta is the most remarkable. The famous Vyāsadeva, who arranged and divided the Vedas and authored the Puranas and the Mahabharata, also interpreted the Vedic philosophies through his outstanding *Vedānta-Sutras*. As Swami Satswarupananda writes, it is 'the highest intellectual synthesis ever made and presented to the world so briefly and so clearly' (682). Vyasa's chief aim was to give a true interpretation of the Vedic philosophy of *Advaita* (Monism). But his second aim was to make a vehement attack on Kapila's *Sāṅkhya* philosophy.

In the history of Vedānta, the next landmark was reached by Acharya Shankara, who by his sharp intellect gave a systematic rationalistic exposition of *Advaita* philosophy through his excellent commentary on *Brahma-Sutras*. His superb explanation of *Brahman* and *Maya* or 'Being' and 'Becoming' has made him the greatest exponent of Vedānta philosophy.¹⁴ Post Shankara period witnessed attacks and counter-attacks giving rise to varied schools of thought of which the prominent are *Bhedābheda-vāda* (Unity-cum-Difference theory) of Bhaskara, Yādava, and Nimbarka (729–31); *Viśiṣṭādvaita-vāda* (Qualified Monism) of Acharya Ramanuja; and *Dvaita-vāda* (Dualism) of Acharya Madhva.¹⁵ After centuries of wrangling between the Shankarites and non-Shankarites, we understand Acharya Shankara all the better, as pertinently observed by the writer. In the cultural history of India, Vyasa and Acharya Shankara held a unique position (790).

The construction of history is based on appropriate utilisation of varied sources—literary and archaeological, both indigenous and foreign. Oral history including myths and legends has become important of late in historical understanding. They are complementary and

supplementary to one another. The historicity or historical actuality of the primary sources is crucial for having a proper view of the past. Swamiji writes: 'Even if the historicity of the whole thing (Puranas) is proved to be absolutely false today, it will not in the least be any loss to us. Then what is the use of so much historical research, you may ask. It has its use, because we have to get at the truth; it will not do for us to remain bound by wrong ideas due to ignorance.'¹⁶

The fundamental aim of history as a discipline is to find out the truth, the actuality. Dr Pareś Nath Mukherjee in his article (*PB*, July 1964) warns that facts are to be handled carefully, otherwise 'history may be dangerous and destructive'. A 'certain amount of detachment and a spirit of saintliness are needed to handle them properly to the best advantage'.¹⁷ 'Historical thinking' is more imperative than 'historical learning'.¹⁸ He emphasises the need for integrity and character of the historians who are to discover the past in its totality with glory and darkness, achievements and failures.¹⁹ But his view that 'a true historian should be completely detached and impartial' is rather unrealistic (309). The 'objectivity' of history is very often blurred by the 'subjectivity' of the historian. The historian often manipulates evidence and plays fast and loose with the truth according to her or his own free will.

This point has been duly stressed by Dr Stanley Maron in his article (*PB*, November 1953) where he states that history 'reflects the personal interests of the historian' and that 'themes of historical studies will vary'.²⁰ He logically demonstrates that 'causality' as a criterion should be replaced by 'relevancy' in historical analysis (443). Maron rejects both cause and effect relations and theory of general laws in historical discourses. A historian, like an artist, 'takes up his materials and then puts them together in a way which, he

feels, expresses most suitably what he wants to see expressed'. He selects 'only those elements' which he considers 'most relevant to the event in question'. The degree of 'relevancy' determined by the space at his disposal, therefore, becomes more important than 'causality' in history writing. 'This renders all history partial and biased, but that is unavoidable' (444–5). We may recall in this context the comment of American historian Carl Becker in 1932: 'All historical writing, even the most honest, is unconsciously subjective.'²¹ Later the postmodernists also acknowledge 'subjectivity' in history writing. But 'subjectivity is a potential opportunity' allowing 'scholars with new interests and loyalties' to 'take history writing in innovative, exciting directions' as championed by William Katerberg in support of 'subjectivity' in history.²²

Regarding historicity, scholars often give greater importance to archaeology than literature, particularly in the construction of the history of early periods.²³ Archaeological sources can be dated and they are free from interpolations or modifications. In the Indian context, many of our ancient texts, Vedas, Epics, Puranas, Jatakas, and the like have often been disparaged as simple poetic imaginations. But even if we accept them as imaginations, we must remember that they certainly reflect the actuality to a large extent. We get valuable information from them in constructing our ancient past. The tremendous influence that the Epics and Puranas cast over the Indian population cannot be denied.

V B Athavale has made an appreciable attempt to find out the historicity of some places mentioned in the *Ramayana* based on Vedic, Epic, and Puranic literature (*PB*, August 1954). As Valmiki's *Ramayana* cannot be properly dated and as some names are wrongly interpreted, many deem this epic as mythology. Athavale strongly asserts that names like *Gridhra*, *Riksha*,

Vānara, and so on were contemporary family (tribal) names. He tries to identify geographically many important places of the epic like *Panchavati* without ambiguity.²⁴ He also determines the Rama period, Janaka-Yajnavalkya period, and Pandava period based on genealogical descendants of the royal families of Kosala, Hastinapura, Mithila, and Magadha. His conclusions regarding dates, for example, Rama period around 3900 BCE and Pandava period around 3000 BCE (429–30), may be challenged, but his serious attempts at the historicity of the *Ramayana* is commendable.

Highlighting the correlation among history, science, and myth, Germain Bazin comments that myth establishes unity between distant past and present humanity (*PB*, March 1968). It 'has a profound reality, greater than that of history. ... It is by destroying time that the myth protects man from his own destruction.' Flowing down from the past, the myth 'is the threshold through which man passes from the visible to the invisible, from this world of appearances, where everything is changing, to the hidden world of mother forms.'²⁵ Thus myth plays a crucial role in understanding human civilisations.

Pijush Kanti Roy in his micro-study on Sri Ramakrishna's photographs (*PB*, January, 1991) has made a serious attempt to find out the names of the photographers and the custodians of the original photographs. His article, apart from historical importance, has immense value for the devotees of the Master. As Aldous Huxley comments, 'for the first time in history, we know how an incarnation of God looked.'²⁶ Roy refers to six photographs of which the first three are commonly seen: (i) taken at Lily Cottage of Keshab Chandra Sen at a festival on 21 September 1879, (ii) taken in the Bengal Photographers' Studio at Bowbazar²⁷ on 10 December 1881 at the request of Surendranath Mitra, and (iii) taken at

Dakshineswar in October, 1883 (or 1884) as he was seated on the western terrace of the Radhakanta Temple (see adjacent photo). This third photograph was the result of the sincere efforts of Bhavanath Chatterjee, an ardent devotee of the Master, along with his friend Narendranath Datta (later Swami Vivekananda). All the three photos show the ecstatic mood of the Master, and the third one is the most popular picture adorned by millions in India and abroad and worshipped in shrines and households. Sri Ramakrishna himself touched it to his head several times when he first saw it and remarked: 'This represents a high yogic state. This form will be worshipped in every home as time goes on.'²⁸ This was taken by Avinash Chandra Daw of Bourne and Shepherd Company, Chowringhee, Calcutta. The fourth and fifth photographs were taken after the *Mahāsamādhi* of the Master.²⁹ Roy mentions an uncounted sixth picture taken during his lifetime, which was destroyed.³⁰



The impact of religious ideas and personalities in determining the course of history is often ignored or belittled in general narratives, particularly those written by Marxist writers. This leads to a skewed view of history as rightly observed by Swami Sandarshananda in his article (*PB*, August 2005). He raises questions on the meaning and importance of history in which 'man' should be first understood. He shows the limitations of the materialistic interpretation of the history of Karl Marx who never attempted to make an in-depth study of religion and religious personalities.³¹ Sandarshananda writes that 'to understand India, one has to acquire a clear idea regarding her spiritual heritage.'³² Religion should be judged by the saints and seers, and not by the priests who used it as a tool for selfish ends. Characters of Sri Krishna, Lord Buddha, Sri Ramakrishna, and others are to be properly evaluated in historical analyses.

Both Swamiji and Arnold Toynbee, among others, overwhelmingly acknowledge Sri Ramakrishna's immense contributions to humankind by his unique personality (487–8). On Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji has said: 'He had lived in one life the whole cycle of national religious existence in India.'³³ Sandarshananda quotes Swamiji's prophecy on the rise of the toiling masses and mentions how modern India neglects his 'formula for social regeneration' resulting in baneful consequences.³⁴ He concludes his article with Swamiji's call for bold men and women who would stand up on their own feet and dare know the Truth. 'That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical' is Swamiji's realisation.³⁵ It is not without reason that Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar describes the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement 'as a new and distinct product of Creative India ... endowed with a virility and creativeness all its own.'³⁶



Notes and References

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28. Ibid., 58; Swami Vidyatmananda, 'Concerning the Photographs of Sri Ramakrishna', Vedanta Society of Los Angeles, *Vedanta and the West*, No. 172.
29. These photos can be seen in some old books of the Ramakrishna Order.
30. Pijush Kanti Roy, op.cit., 53.
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The Universality of Vedanta as Expressed in Prabuddha Bharata

Dr KV Raghupathi

IT IS A MATTER of great pride and joy that *Prabuddha Bharata*, started in 1896 by Swami Vivekananda with the motto of spreading the Vedantic thought, culture, and values is celebrating 125th anniversary. One hundred and twenty-five years is not a small period. It is easy to start a journal but running it for such a long period is a Herculean task. There lies the real challenge. Sustaining the journal without break and without diluting its ideals is indeed commendable and exemplary. Since it was started by no less than a great spiritual personality than Swamiji, it obviously had such a longevity.

In all these years, the journal has maintained its objectivity and excellence without compromising its standards and values. While upholding the Vedic values, the journal at the same time, has accommodated multiple views, comparing and contrasting the Vedic thought with the other Western intellectual thoughts. This speaks of the catholicity of the journal. In the following sections, an attempt is made to examine four articles that had appeared in the previous issues to show how the journal has stood for *objectivity, innovation, openness, and eternal values*.

I

In the article 'Vedanta after Ramakrishna-Vivekananda'¹ (PB January 1999), Dr M

Sivaramakrishna has examined the question of whether today's Vedanta is just the same as it was thousands of years ago or different. The article evaluates the contribution of the three personalities, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swamiji to the progress of Vedantic thought. The author says that Vedanta is no longer the same after Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. It has been transformed for the good of many as the lifestyles have changed. He says: 'The past tense is now the present continuous in the grammar of spirituality. Retaining the core, a new idiom is forged' (262). 'This Vedanta', according to him, 'has gone through the phases of admiration, through close scrutiny to thoughtful absorption' (262). The Vedantic experience, however, is never closed. It is open, hence, it is *apaurushya*, eternal. This is the most remarkable feature of Vedanta; it has remained open forever.

Also, Dr Sivaramakrishna argues that Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji have infused new blood into Vedantic experience. To the subjective experience, the duo has added a new idea of socialism and humanism, a new equation to the old: 'Socialism without spirituality is fatally toxic; spirituality without a social base just and equitable is not even opium it is alleged to be!' (263). Socialism is used in the sense of making it open to all, so that anyone can have an access to it, but the experience of *Atman-Brahman* is purely subjective. This paradox ever remains in Vedantic experience. In short, the author says: 'Vedanta after Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is an

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open text as a process but a closed one in its productive result—the awareness of the perfection already in us’ (263). Vedanta after Ramakrishna-Vivekananda has become global, undermining asymmetric ignorance and contending faith. The author asserts that Vedanta offers no models as every approach is a model for the subject that could be trodden and vibrates endless equations of faith.

Vedantic wisdom and experience are full of paradoxes, bifocal. The *Purusha*, that is *Atman-Brahman*, is static and at the same time dynamic; it becomes dynamic when it is in contact with *Prakriti*. Also, it is both *nitya* and *lilā*; *Purusha* is *nitya*, *Prakriti* is *lilā*. But without *Prakriti*, *Purusha* remains insignificant. So in the case of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, the Holy Mother is the centrality without whose presence the other two would remain powerless. Here, in this modern sense, Vedanta is neutralised by freeing it from being gender-biased. The presence of Sri Sarada Devi makes ‘Vedanta feminine without being effeminate; manly without being mannish’ (264). The author says: ‘She is, above all, a miracle of successful management, she managed to emerge as a pervasive paradigm for the irrepressible (and often corrigible) energies of women’ (264).

II

In the article ‘Vedantic Idealism and Marxian Materialism’² (*PB*, December 1959), R Prabhakar says both Vedanta and Marxism are fundamentally opposed to each other in their perspectives about society. The author states that the concept of *Maya* embedded in Vedantic thought is fundamentally unacceptable to Marxian ideology because the latter believes in the reality of the world and nothing exists beyond it. Its fundamental philosophy is to establish an egalitarian society, a classless society wherein all live and share the wealth on the rule of work without

hierarchy. But, communism suffers from inner contradictions. In the so-called communist countries, the hierarchy very much exists; equality and classless society are a far-fetched reality.

In fact, life itself is full of contradictions. Society is inherently contradictory. Contradictions are ubiquitous and inevitable in existence and ‘evolutions take place by the clash of opposites, through the unending cycle of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis’ (512). Marxian dialectics itself is akin to *Maya*, says the author. Swamiji asserts in his thought-provoking address on ‘*Maya* and Illusion’: ‘These tremendous contradictions in our intellect, in our knowledge, yea, in all the facts of our life, face us on all sides. ... This is the law. ... And this is *Maya*.’³ *Maya* is not merely a metaphysical idea or concept, inherent in cosmology or theology. Swamiji rightly attributes *Maya* to the very fact of living. He says:

Thus we find that *Maya* is not a theory for the explanation of the world; it is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction, that everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction, that whenever there is good, there must also be evil; and wherever there is evil, there must be some good; wherever there is life, death must follow as its shadow; and everyone who smiles will have to weep, and vice versa ... whenever there is the power of producing a smile in us, there lurks the power of producing tears, wherever there is the power of producing happiness, there lurks somewhere the power of making us miserable’ (2.97).

Prabhakar also argues in his article that dialectical materialism and the class war only revealed these contradictions. Marx did not attempt to predict the antithesis of communism in dialectical materialism; he did not say that this *antithesis* of communism would become *thesis* once again in the cyclical process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Communism alone

cannot be treated as the end of all. Prabhakar says that a Vedantin may not accept the Marxian interpretation of history. To a Vedantin, the contradictions given by Marx would only demonstrate the 'play of *Maya*', though Marx would have rejected any such interpretation. The Vedantin may not accept the Marxian dialectic; at the same time, the Marxist may not accept the concept of *Maya*. Prabhakar says there is a common assumption to these fundamentally opposed ideals: they both accept that contradictions are woven into the very texture of the universe, whether these contractions are the result of the 'dialectical process' or the 'play of *Maya*'. How are these contradictions resolved? To this question, Prabhakar says, Marxism has no definite answer. Marx did not attempt to predict the course of the dialectical process beyond the establishment of communism.

Prabhakar further says that Vedanta provides an answer for all these fundamental contradictions, and shows a final synthesis. But, this can never be achieved so long as we function on the plane of *Maya*, affirms the author. Contradictions constitute the essence of *Maya*. When we apparently solve a problem, it only reappears in another form. It is the fundamental nature of existence. Whenever we attempt to solve a problem, it arises in another form in some other place. Swamiji remarks: 'We cannot add happiness to this world; similarly, we cannot add pain to it either. The sum total of the energies of pleasure and pain displayed here on earth will be the same throughout' (I.112). If this is the case, should we stop fighting against problems? Should we remain quiet and let the problems take their own shape? Such an attitude is not the answer. It will further aggravate the problems. To quote Swamiji again: 'The answer is, in the first place, that we must work for lessening misery, for that is the only way to make ourselves happy. ...

In the second place, we must do our part because that is the only way of getting out of this life of contradiction' (2.99).

III

In the article 'Vedanta and Communism'⁴ (PB, September 1945), Swami Sharvananda traces the history of civilisation through various phases that finally culminated in communism, which is the rise of the working-class called proletariat. This is akin to the rise of the labour class in India, which could not escape the repercussions of Bolshevik Russia in the form of labour movements, Kisan (Peasant) movement, and such others. Swamiji predicted all this. He also asserted that a new India should arise from the farms and market places, from labourers' grovelling huts and coolies' miserable dens. All this has become a reality in India in the latter part of the twentieth century.

But there is a danger in this movement. If the labour rises as a labour and is devoid of spiritual culture, it would get buried under the debris of materialism and in that case, old India will die and in its place would be born a new hybrid India (254). It is a great loss not only to India but also to the entire world. India's contribution to humanity is the spiritual culture like the science of the West. Hence, Swami Sharvananda argues that to save India the lower classes must be enlightened with the spiritual culture of the Vedas. For this, the upper classes must be ready to sacrifice in educating the lower classes and for their material prosperity, besides their spiritual growth, culture, and religious understanding. Then only we can hope for a glorious future. In short, *the spiritual culture of the Vedas should finally awaken the spiritual consciousness in the lower classes*. This spirit of Vedanta, Sharvananda says, is in full accord with the spirit of modern communism or socialism. Vedanta emphatically

declares that all men and women are equal; divinity dwells in each one of them. Hence, all distinctions and differences visible on the surface are superficial. Vedanta in this sense is real communism or socialism. Also, this affirmation of equality in Vedanta is much clearer than what is professed in communism or socialism.

Swami Sharvananda admits that there is a great difference in the fundamentals between the Vedantic outlook of human society and that of communism. He says: 'The latter tries to base its principles on the physical aspects of life, the former bases itself on the eternal spiritual verity of the *atman*' (255). All men and women are not actually equal at physical and intellectual levels. It is far from the truth. Men and women are of different physical calibre and intellectual capacities. If physically and intellectually strong rule over the weak, it is the law of the jungle. If the spiritual base of life is taken out, then no law can alter it. 'So, communism or socialism (which) denies the spiritual verities of life and tries to base its pseudo-philosophy on a purely economic, social, or political basis, is bound to fail in the long run' (255).

The real equality of men and women, Sharvananda affirms, is in the spiritual plane. It is because all men and women are of the same *Atman*, they can easily cultivate virtues. All ethical philosophers have repeatedly emphasised this. As our sense of the beautiful and good is innate and fundamental, the moral development of humans must lie in the progressive realisation of the good. Vedanta identifies the good with the true and the beautiful, *Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram*. If, on the other hand, we try to base our moral principles purely upon an economical or utilitarian basis, it can neither ennoble our moral nature nor refine our ethical sense. The greatest moral men and women of the world are saints and sages, and not politicians or businessmen. Further, Sharvananda asserts that a society which

is loose in moral disciplines and is cut away from ethical moorings is bound to lapse into barbarity in the long run. Therefore, he argues that we should stop imitating the communist countries, and instead turn to the *Upanishads* for light and lead, and show to the world a new type of communism or socialism, which alone can save humanity from lapsing back to barbarity. This way, the lower classes can be uplifted and saved.

IV

In a stimulating and thought-provoking lecture delivered on the 'Universality of the Vedanta Religion' in Madras (PB, October 1906)⁵, Swami Abhedananda, one of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna rightly articulated that the people of India care more for spirituality than anything else. Indeed, spirituality is the essence of our life. He said: 'It is a part of our soul. We cannot give it up. The moment we give it up, we will be dead' (186). 'Our treasure and wealth' and our emancipation lie 'not in politics or in social reform' (186). These spiritual ideals 'first arose from the heart of India and then travelled westward and eastward' even before the Christian era. The great preachers 'went out of India to distant lands to preach the gospel of Truth. They never carried swords or guns, but they spread and scattered the goodwill and peace and love wherever they went' (186). That is the uniqueness and beauty of Vedanta.

Vedanta says knowledge is of two kinds. One is objective. It deals with the combination of material particles known as the phenomenal world. This is one half of the universe. The other half is a subjective phenomenon. One is objective knowledge, while the other is a subjective experience. When these two are combined, grand wisdom is grown which is unlimited by time and space and that wisdom may be called Divine Wisdom or eternal wisdom. 'That unlimited wisdom is

the beginning and end of the whole universe' (187), says Swami Abhedananda. That wisdom is both outside and inside; it is everywhere. That wisdom itself is in ourselves. 'In fact', he says, 'our souls are manifestations of that infinite wisdom which is the foundation and the end of all phenomenal existence' (187). This *being* is no different from the *Atman-Brahman*. 'Therefore, the essence of religion and philosophy of the teachers of Vedanta is that existence and intelligence are one and the same. They are inseparable, and therefore, absolute existence and intelligence must be the foundation of this whole universe; and therefore, it is called *Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahman*' (187). This *Brahman* is the beginning, middle, and end of all relative existences. It is called by different names. Plato called it 'the good'. Herbert Spencer called it 'The Unknown of the Unknowable', and Emerson called it 'Over-Soul'.

When this is realised, we understand that the infinite wisdom (*Atman-Brahman*) and our individual souls are the same and not different. Then, we can easily understand the ideals of sectarian religions, and it is possible for us to reconcile all these conflicting ideas and there will be no more quarrels. The difference is only in name. But these different names do not change the nature of absolute wisdom. The ignorance of it leads to fanaticism. Swami Abhedananda affirms that this fanaticism leads to all kinds of diabolical violence in the world. All the sectarian religions indulged in violence in the past and demolished Hindu temples through fanaticism and spirit of zeal to propagate their faiths, but the Hindus have always practised toleration. Vedanta accepts the fundamental principles of all religions. It does not deal with doctrines and dogmas but it gives spiritual laws and spiritual experience. According to Swami Abhedananda, Vedanta 'is not only a philosophy, but also a religion' (188).



Swami Abhedananda (1866–1939)

Vedanta accepts dualities. It accepts Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Advaita. These different sects were formed to suit the different temperaments of people. All these sects ultimately accept that there is *Brahman* that has become both *chit*, sentient, and *achit*, non-sentient. The idea of separation or the idea of division exists so long as we are limited by time, space, and causation. *Maya*, as Swami Abhedananda says, is a relative existence. It means time, space, and causation. It is not an absolute illusion. It means phenomenal existence or conditional existence. This conditional existence is possible only in time, space, and causation. This idea—'We live and move and have our being in God' was expressed in Vedanta centuries before Christ. It is expressed in the *Upanishads* thus: 'That from which everything


comes into existence, in which everything exists, into which everything returns.' So our being depends upon the Supreme Being. This is the ideal goal of our religion as also of all the religions of the world. The existence of truth, Swami Abhedananda says, is in perfect harmony with reason, science, and philosophy (190).

As far as creation is concerned, Vedanta rejects the theory of special creation as propounded by some religions. The creation, Vedanta says, is the gradual evolution of the eternal energy which is all-pervading and remains unmanifested at certain times and then manifested itself into various names and forms. This conception of evolution gives foundation to the religion of Vedanta which is universal and its universality consists of that harmony that exists between itself and all sciences and philosophies of the world. The modern theory of evolution beautifully explained by Herbert Spencer is not dissimilar to the ideal theory of evolution given by Kapila at least seven centuries before the Christian era. Kapila, in this sense, may be called the Herbert Spencer of Ancient India, says Swami Abhedananda.

Swami Abhedananda also brings out another feature of Vedanta which affirms its universality: it has never had any founder. He says: 'A religion, which needs a founder, which is built upon the personality of a founder cannot exist beyond his life, and therefore cannot be universal; and if the founder is one-sided it can never be unlimited' (191). Vedanta says that we are the children of Immortal Bliss. Therefore, we do not fear eternal hell-fire. It is a blasphemous thought to call ourselves sinners and are damned ever as some occidental religions profess. Our strength lies only in truth. Such is the grandeur of the universal religion of Vedanta. Towards the end of the lecture, Swami Abhedananda gives a clarion call to all those assembled: 'Awake, arise and take the banner of this

universal religion and go from land to land and preach the gospel of truth, to enlighten the minds of thousands and millions of men who are waiting to receive you as their own saviour' (191).

V

Summing up, in all the four articles taken up for close reading, we discern the catholicity of Vedanta in its pristine beauty. Indeed, the Upanishads form the foundation for all philosophies, religions, and theories in the world. All philosophies and religions that came later and identified with the personalities have reiterated and re-emphasised the essence of Upanishads. In fact, the origin of all Indian philosophical theories finds their echo in the Upanishads. The Upanishads are not intellectual doctrines, not conceived in intellect, but based on *anubhūti* or spiritual experience. The truth is fundamentally verified in subjective experience. It can never be proved nor testified employing logic and reason. The highest value of all values is the realisation of truth in all its grandeur. The wisdom codified in the Upanishads can justify any intellectual theory, its existence, and its limitations. Even the Western philosophical theories can be interpreted from the standpoint of the Upanishads. Ultimately, the Truth alone prevails. This is the greatness and the universality of the Vedanta. 

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Women and Their Empowerment— Prabuddha Bharata's Saga of 125 Years

Prof. Sumita Roy

Background: Role of Prabuddha Bharata in Structuring a Canon

WOMEN HAVE BEEN foregrounded significantly in the Sarada-Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Tradition and this forms an integral part of its canon. Envisioned by its pioneering exponent Swami Vivekananda, *Prabuddha Bharata*, which was to articulate the emerging global thought in conjunction with this Tradition, has played a vital role in structuring this canon giving centrality to women for more than a century.

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The Tradition, illumined by Sri Ramakrishna *līlā*, exhibited a decisive role for women illustrative of gender neutrality and gender mainstreaming. Be it Dhani Kamarini's precedence in giving *bhiksha*, alms, mother Chandramani whom he venerated lifelong, the temple of Rani Rashmoni as his *līlākshetra*, divine playground, guru Bhairavi Brahmani who declared his inherent divine potential, and disciples such as Gopaler Ma, Gauri Ma, Golap Ma, Yogin Ma, foremost among them being his divine consort, Saradamani Devi whom he worshipped as goddess Shodashi to set an entirely new precedent of an immaculate marital relationship founded on mutual respect—there are many inspiring examples of women as central to the revival of ancient Indic wisdom

that the Master was orchestrating. And above all, his lifelong devotion to Divine Mother Kali established the efficacy of divinity as Shakti.

These got reinforced by Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, empowered by the responsibility that Sri Ramakrishna gave her before leaving this world, overruling her initial self-doubt about what a 'woman' could achieve. History is a witness to the fact that her long spiritual ministry and a sizeable list of disciples show a job well done. Her experiences have highlighted the merging of dualities like secular and sacred, divine and human, low and high; her blurring of religion, race, and caste distinctions are potent tools of empowerment—*asserting without aggression is her way*.

Swamiji added his mite by talking about Indian women in his lectures abroad: for example, 'Women of India', 18 January 1900, California (*PB*, January 1928),¹ and 'Indian Women', 17 December 1894, Cambridge Massachusetts (*PB*, September 1995).² He also articulated his priority for an organisation for women. Many of his Western disciples like Margaret Noble (later Sister Nivedita—dedicated to India), Charlotte Sevier (remarkable for her role in *Prabuddha Bharata* and Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati), Sara Bull, Josephine Macleod, Sister Christine ('Memoirs of Sister Christine', *PB*, March 1931) and numerous others illumine the portrait gallery of women who have contributed to the Tradition.

Writings about all these aspects from scholarly, analytical, devotional, and other perspectives dot the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata* from its inception. C T K Chari's 'The Spiritual Ideal of Womanhood', Chandrasekhar Aiyar's 'The Characteristics of Indian Womanhood' (both in March 1954 issue) and many such landmark articles have found their way into the journal down the ages and we can gauge their value under the following specific heads.

Evolution of Women's Position from Ancient Indian Culture to the Present

In today's 'post-feminist era', gender sensitisation courses in search of material will find valuable resources in the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata* talking about the position, role, and responsibilities of women from pre-Vedic times.

A series of articles entitled 'Women in Ancient India' by Swami Virajananda in 1900 (October, December, and subsequent issues) talks about 'women who excelled in every branch of knowledge and art and science, as can be illustrated from the *Srutis*, *Smritis*, *Itihasas*, and *Puranas* ... [they] were the product of an age which sanctioned and helped the education of women and afforded the same advantages for their enlightenment and growth as to the other sex'.³

'Women in the Vedas' by A C Bose expands the above by saying: 'One cannot contemplate without surprise the strange fact that some three to four thousand years ago women should have been so brilliant and noble and should have lived in a society which held them in such tender respect...'⁴ The same issue has many articles such as Basana Devi's 'Great Women of the Vedic Times', V M Apte's 'The Glory of Indian Womanhood in the Rig-Veda', R R Diwakar's 'Women in the Upanishads', P S Sastri's 'Two Women Thinkers of the Upanishadic Age', M A Rukmini's 'Glory of Womanhood in the Upanishadic Age', Kalidas Nag's 'Indian Women Through the Ages', and Chintaharan Chakravarti's 'Position of Women in Hindu Rituals'.

In an article on 'Women's Place in Buddhism and Jainism' (*PB*, October 1938), A S Altekar writes: 'Buddhism declared that womanhood was no bar to salvation and Svetambara sect concurred with the view. ... The career of preaching and evangelising that was thus opened before women by Jainism and Buddhism attracted a large number of talented ladies,

who distinguished themselves as teachers and preachers.’⁵ The same scholar speaks about ‘Women’s Place in Hindu Religion’ (*PB*, June 1938) where the major thrust is on emancipation through knowledge of the principles of Hinduism which would make women ‘much better representatives of our culture and religion than what men are today.’⁶

Among the many articles written by Sister Nivedita is ‘Woman in Modern India’ (*PB*, March 1928) where she says that ‘the greatness of Indian women must be the cry of Indian men,’⁷ reiterating the stance of the Indian social reformers of the 19th century who spent much effort in giving women a distinct voice. This crusade continued in the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

Socio-Spiritual Role Models

A culture founded on Mother Goddess worship has many role models and both the spiritual-religious as well as the socio-cultural dimensions of it are articulated through *Prabuddha Bharata* articles.

For instance, the Goddess Kali as a model of inclusivity is suggested by Geeta Mellen in her article ‘About Kali Pujas’ (*PB*, October 1995): ‘Looking at her fierce image many can’t see the loving Mother encompasses both good and bad. Nothing is to be rejected as not part of God. The essence of Kali is transformation. Loving her transforms our lives.’⁸

Some interesting contributions in March 1954 on the divine feminine are Kshitish Chaudhuri’s ‘Mahamaya,’ Jitendra Nath Banerjee’s ‘Some Aspects of Sakti Worship in Ancient India,’ and C Sivaramamurti’s ‘Thought on Devi in the Bliss of Mental Adoration.’

Characters from *Itihāsa* such as Draupadi are depicted as models in articles such as Koral Dasgupta’s ‘Draupadi: A Complex Journey through Dharma, Status and Power’ (November 2015).

Bhakti movement finds its way in articles such as A V Rao’s ‘Women Saints and Mystics,’ Swami Paramatmananda’s ‘Andal—The Divine Bride and Mystic Nun’ (both in March 1954), Subhadra Desai’s ‘Women Seer-Saints of India and their Songs’ (May 2014).

Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi has been a role model of the Sarada-Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Tradition from its initial years. In the September 1920 issue, her Mahasamadhi was announced in an article entitled ‘The Holy Mother’ where a brief sketch of her life was given. One of the early contributions on Holy Mother was a serialised piece ‘Reminiscences of the Holy Mother by a lady disciple’ (*PB*, January, March, May, July, September 1928).

The March 1954 issue was Holy Mother’s birth centenary special. In addition to its editorial: ‘Sarada Devi—The Holy Mother,’ it had Swami Vivekananda’s article ‘On the Holy Mother,’ Swami Saradananda’s ‘The Spiritual Union of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother,’ Swami Virajananda’s ‘My First Visit to the Holy Mother,’ Sister Nivedita’s ‘Sri Sarada Devi—The Holy Mother,’ Swami Vishuddhananda’s ‘Memories of the Holy Mother,’ and articles by Upadhyaya Brahmabandhava, Ramananda Chatterjee, Nihal Singh, Saila Kumar Mukerjee, Kalpalata Devi, S Muttulakshmi Reddi, Yamunabai Hirlekar, P B Mukherjee among others which brought out different dimensions of the Holy Mother’s life and message—a model worth emulating even in the 21st century. Her 150th anniversary special issue will be listed later.

For the birth centenary of Sister Nivedita, *Prabuddha Bharata* published in February 1968, Swami Vireshwarananda’s inaugural address delivered on 28 October 1967.⁹ In the following issue was published an article ‘Sister Nivedita: The Rebel Child of a Great Master’ by Sanat Kumar Rai Choudhury. Her 150th anniversary

was marked by a special issue 'Sister Nivedita: Offered to India' (January 2017). A recent article by Swami Atmapriyananda, 'Sister Nivedita—Her Understanding of Swami Vivekananda' (*PB*, February 2019) succinctly establishes her as an inspiring role model: 'Sister Nivedita contributed immensely to creating a blend of the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of India—its mysticism and inward contemplative approach—energised and reinforced by the dynamism and creativity of modern science and technology of the West.'¹⁰

Many other eminent women find their way into the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata*: Somenath Mukherjee's 'Kate Tannatt Woods: The Chosen Woman of her Century' (November 2018), to name just one.

Global Women's Movement and Its Impact in India

Feminism as a movement appeared on the world stage in the late 19th and early 20th century, is gradually acquiring an Indian colour. Carol Flinders in 'Spirituality and the Women's Movement' (*PB*, September 1996) suggests: 'Today's women's movement can quite likely regain much of its momentum, its authority, its strength when it reconnects with its spiritual roots and core.'¹¹ Taking instances of this from Clare of Assisi, Theresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, Draupadi, and Mahatma Gandhi, she chooses, '[Gandhiji's] Satyagraha ... not because it is the womanly thing to do, but because it is the supremely human thing to do' showing that the global Movement is proceeding towards gender neutrality rather than 'victim consciousness' dominating women's thoughts and actions (*ibid.*).

Chetana Mandavia's 'Feminism—Ideologies and Needs' (*PB*, January 1996) about the evolution of the feminist movement, depicts the changing women's status and freedom in society by concluding, 'Spiritual unfoldment is real

freedom. Manifest her true identity as *Shakti swarupini*...'¹², thus reiterating the spiritual leanings of a culture which sees this global movement also in spiritual terms.

Meera Chakravorty's 'Feminism and Spirituality' (*PB*, December 1994) sketches a rhetorical blueprint: '...feminism should not be mere assertion of rights. ... It should be concerned with more central questions: How do women perceive themselves in relation to others in society ... make relevant their experiences in society ... their social and moral responsibility? Would not their experiences provide humankind with a higher self-understanding?',¹³ answers to which would pave the way towards empowerment.

Empowerment of Women

The concept 'empowerment of women' has been a popular nomenclature for decades. Though pioneered by the social reformers of 19th-century Indian renaissance, the concept found wider engagement more than a century later with declarations such as 'women are the custodians of culture'.¹⁴ Another significant debate is contained in Swami Gambhirananda's 'Women's Right for Scriptural Study and Spiritual Life' (*PB*, April 1989).

Over the decades, *Prabuddha Bharata* articles paint an emerging picture of the empowerment of women. Though the initial decades did not have much written about or by women, we find many pieces by Sister Nivedita such as 'The Modern Education of the Oriental Woman' (November 1928), 'Education of Indian Women', 'Open Letter to Hindu Women', 'Women and the Arts' (all in 1929).

Education is an important aspect of empowerment: 'Uneducated women cannot take an intelligent part in public affairs of social and political importance', says D K Karve's 'Women's Education in India' (*PB*, March 1931).¹⁵

The January 2004 special issue commemorating Sri Sarada Devi's 150th birth anniversary is a document of empowerment which ushers in the millennial perspective. Its editorial 'Ripples in Stillness' talks about many traits of the Holy Mother that are empowering. Some of the other articles are Swami Chetanananda's 'The Greatness of Misery', Swami Atmapriyananda's 'Sarada Devi—The Gentle Power', Swami Adiswarananda's 'The Embodiment of Divine Grace', Swami Abhiramananda's 'The Wisdom of Holy Mother', Swami Brahmeshananda's 'Purity Incarnate', Swami Sandarshananda's 'Holy Mother—Some Glimpses', Swami Nityasthananda's 'Concealed Greatness', Swami Atmashraddhananda's 'So Simple, Yet So Profound', Swami Satyamayananda's 'The Solution to the Growing Malaise of Our Times', Pravrajika Akhandaprana's 'Mother's Last Words: Most Primordial, Most Modern', Pravrajika Madhavaprana's 'Mother Today', Philip Rosoff-Horne's 'A Prolegomenon to Devotion', C S Ramakrishnan's 'The Spotless Autumnal Moon—Sri Sarada', Sumita Roy's 'Learning "Soft Skills" from the Life and Message of Holy Mother', Asim Chaudhuri's 'Sri Sarada Devi—The Eternal Mother', Prema Nandakumar's 'The Paramahansa's Child', NVC Swamy's and Heisnam Jina Devi's joint authorship 'Holy Mother as Guru', Prabhushankara's 'Adored by Countless People'. A topical and relevant addition is 'What Appeals to Me in Holy Mother', which carries shorter articles on the subject from sixteen of her Western and Eastern admirers.

Taking charge of their own growth and progress, making their own decisions with autonomy were some of the parameters of empowerment spelt out by Swami Vivekananda. Sonal K Amin's 'Women—Guardians of Values' (PB, February 1996) maps this: 'Today if culture and civilization is to be saved, if all that is valuable in our traditional Indian life is to be saved,



Sister Nivedita with Saralabala Devi

women must take some hand in leading society' for which 'She has to learn to be herself, to manifest her own divinity and give to society what she alone can give'.¹⁶

Examples of empowerment can be found in articles such as Kaila Meyer's 'Spirituality in Old Age', Carol Lee Flinders' 'A Path for all Seasons', Prema Nandakumar's 'My Religion: A Scaffolding for My Temple', Shrubha Mukherjee's 'No "Space" for God' (all in January 2015 issue). Kamala Jaya Rao's 'Laughter as Sadhana' (January 1998) gives another dimension to the subject.

An interesting article by Patricia E West, 'As Conflict Escalates, What Can Be Done Now?' (*PB*, August 2015), put forward a 'positive paradigm reality map ... a versatile self-awareness tool with which to teach the basics of leading an integrated, self-responsible life'—all these being very crucial to individual empowerment by self-effort.

Women Contributors of Prabuddha Bharata

As a visible manifestation of empowerment, women have contributed articles on numerous topics of human interest to *Prabuddha Bharata*, not specifically for women alone. Often nothing other than the name indicates their gender even in contributors' introduction; *this reiterates the tradition's assertion that intellectual and spiritual dimensions do not necessarily require gender segregation*. The year 1928 for instance, has articles by Sister Nivedita on 'Obedience and Discipline' (April), 'Etiquette, Eastern and Western' (May), 'Duty to Motherland' (August) in addition to the ones mentioned earlier.

Many nuns as well as other women have contributed articles to *Prabuddha Bharata* on spiritual, philosophical, psychological, devotional, social, cultural, scientific, economic, topical, and general areas: to list just a few: Pravrajika Vivekaprana's 'The Journey Within' and Pravrajika Vrajaprana's 'Vedanta in Cyberspace' (January 1998), Pravrajika Brahma-prana's 'Yoga Therapy of Compassion' (February 2014) and 'The Vedic Rishi Ideal: Its Re-emergence in Contemporary Western Spirituality' (January 2015), Pravrajika Shuddhatmaprana's 'Swamiji's Influence on the Religion of the Future' (January 2014) and 'Monasticism for the Future' (January 2001), Pravrajika Ishtaprana's 'The Sri Sarada Devi Ashrama of South Africa' (May 2015).

Other women scholars from different parts of the world have also written well researched pieces

on topics pertaining to a variety of subjects: Suruchi Pande's 'The Birds of Sri Ramakrishna: The Swan' (March 2016), 'The Vulture' (September 2015); Diane Marshall's 'Unpublished Lecture of Swami Vivekananda in Washington DC' (June 2016); Bhaswati Bhattacharya's 'The Diseases of Modern Life and the Ayurvedic Approach' (May 2015); Lakshmi Ramakrishnaiyer's 'Role of Reason in Vivekananda's Philosophy of Religion' (January 2014); V Vasanthakumari's 'Acharya Shankara: Delineator of India' (April 2014); Rhyddhi Chakraborty's 'Business and Ethical Leadership' (June 2014); Kiran Ramachandran Nair's '*Arthashastra* and the Foundation of Political Communication' (January 1998); Sumita Roy's 'Indian Philosophic Prose in English: A New Historicist Perspective' (January 2004); Nalini V Dave's 'Indian Management for the Future', Gayatri Devi Vasudev's 'Astrology: the Science of the New Millennium', Aparna Chakravarti's 'The Future of Music' (all in January 2001 issue) to just list a few.

Comparative studies such as Sreemati Mukherjee's 'Sri Chaitanya as Affect and Epistemology in the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*' (November 2016), Rita D Sharma's 'Religion vs Spirituality: A Hindu Perspective' (January 2015), Arpita Mitra's 'Ramakrishna and Vivekananda: Two Teachings or One?' (January 2014), add to the above illuminating perspectives.

Towards Gender Parity

Sri Kumud Bandhu Sen's 'Sarada Math: Why Not during Mother's Time?' (reprinted from the December 1952 in 2004, Holy Mother's 150th anniversary issue) reminds us of Vivekananda's dream of establishing a women's Math before that for men. The authority for women which he visualised seems to become concretised in the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

In an article on 'Women and Progress' (*PB*,

March 1954), Sarasvati Chennakesava suggests: 'Now in every field, be it spiritual life, or politics or social life, or academic life, we have shining examples of Indian womanhood.'¹⁷

Kiran Ramachandran Nair in 'Development Dilemmas and Inequalities—the Gender Conflicts' (PB, September 1995) says: 'No nation can achieve true development without women taking their rightful place beside their male counterparts. ... India has excellent women in almost all walks of life ... [it is] men who must be gender-sensitised.'¹⁸

Shyamolina Datta's 'Psychological Problems of Indian Youth' (January 2015), Elizabeth Usha Harding's 'Sisters and Brothers of the Forest' [about *adivasis*] (October 2015), reflect examples of gender neutrality.


Special issues like January 1997 (100 years of Vivekananda's return to India) and January 1999, (centenary of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati) have as good a representation of women contributors as men. In January 2000 issue, far-ranging responses from young women and men on 'What Do World Youth Want?' is another example.

Conclusion

The plethora of articles in *Prabuddha Bharata* about, for, and by women would need a wider canvas than this to do justice. Hidden in this plenitude of writings by people from different parts of the country and the world, are gems ranging from material for research on Women's Studies to spiritual elevation, and also from psychological and social dimensions of gender issues to the gradual transition of women from the private to the public spheres of activity through a sizeable and proactive participation.

What is attempted here is a glimpse of only a few of the treasures pertaining to women and their empowerment scattered in the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata* down the ages that the

interested can delve into, both in its physical and digital *avatars*.

It is hoped that this brief sketch signals the rich feast of articles in the future 100 years of *Prabuddha Bharata*. 

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The Harmony of Asian and Western Philosophies in Prabuddha Bharata

Jeffery D Long

Harmony Across Worldviews: A Consistent Theme

SINCE ITS FOUNDING in 1896, at the request of Swami Vivekananda himself, a consistent theme of the articles in *Prabuddha Bharata* has been the harmony Asian and Western, or 'Eastern' and 'Western,' philosophies. Harmony, of course, is a central theme in the Vedanta tradition of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. Sri Ramakrishna has said of the ultimate Reality as it is described by the world's religions:

I have found that it is the same God toward whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. You must try all beliefs and traverse all the different ways once. Wherever I look, I see men quarrelling in the name of religion ... But they never reflect that He who is called Krishna is also called Śiva, and bears the name of the Primal Energy, Jesus, and Āllāh as well—the same Rāma with a thousand names. A lake has several ghāts [places where there are steps which lead down to the water]. At one the Hindus take water in pitchers and call it 'jal'; at another the Mussalmāns [Muslims] take water in leather bags and call it 'pāni.' At a third the Christians call it 'water.' Can we imagine that it is not 'jal,' but only 'pāni' or 'water'? How ridiculous! The substance is One under different names, and everyone is seeking the same substance; only climate, temperament, and name create differences. Let each man follow his own path. If he sincerely

and ardently wishes to know God, peace be unto him! He will surely realize Him.¹

Along similar lines, Swamiji has said: 'The ultimate goal of all mankind, the aim and end of all religions, is but one—re-union with God, or, what amounts to the same, with the divinity which is every man's true nature. But while the aim is one, the method of attaining may vary with the different temperaments of men.'²

Pravrajika Vrajaprana has employed the image of a jigsaw puzzle to illustrate this same concept of harmony: not that all religions are the same, but that they are complementary:

The world's spiritual traditions are like different pieces in a giant jigsaw puzzle: each piece is different and each piece is essential to complete the whole picture. Each piece is to be honored and respected while holding firm to our own particular piece of the puzzle. We can deepen our own spirituality and learn about our own tradition by studying other faiths. Just as importantly, by studying our own tradition well, we are better able to appreciate the truth in other traditions.³

What all these teachers of Vedanta have affirmed of the world's religions or spiritual traditions is equally true of the world's philosophies. What we often refer to in the Vedanta tradition as the harmony of religions (*dharma-samanvaya*) might better be referred to as the harmony of world views (*darśana-samanvaya*). Dharma, often translated, albeit imperfectly, as religion, involves a whole way of life, including—but not limited to—the worldview in terms of which that way of life makes sense. However, while

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there can certainly be disagreement in the area of practice—over what people should do—most of the time, these disagreements are rooted in a divergence of worldviews: of philosophies. It is in the area of philosophy that the conflicts across traditions are the sharpest. It is therefore in the area of philosophy that it is most urgent that we find harmony: that we might alleviate the conflicts which arise when one worldview clashes with another. *Prabuddha Bharata* has been a leading light in this promotion of harmony across philosophical and cultural boundaries.

Examples of the Teaching of Harmony Across Worldviews from Prabuddha Bharata

Prabuddha Bharata's commitment to harmony, particularly between Western and Asian world views, can be traced to the inception of this journal, in the 1890s. For example, there is an 1899 piece called 'A Western Philosopher', which focuses on the teaching of the ancient Greek thinker, Epictetus. Numerous aphorisms attributed to Epictetus, a prominent adherent of the Stoic school of philosophy, could well have been uttered by the Buddha, or the sages of the *Upanishads*. As the article explains, several systems of ancient Greek philosophy, including Stoicism: '...avowedly owed much to the East, and it is quite possible that all Greek thought at this time was influenced, through Persia, by India.'⁴

In the February-March 1912 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, F J Alexander writes about 'A Westerner's Experience in Hinduism'. This was very soon after Swamiji's missions to America, and just a few months after the passing of Sister Nivedita, an early Western Hindu. Alexander writes that Swamiji has been able to open the minds of Westerners to the depths of Hinduism. It became possible because of Swamiji's ability to act as a bridge between traditions, by integrating

the best of both Western and Hindu thought into his teaching. He writes:

It has been said that Hinduism offers no opportunities for the man of a practical turn of mind, that the philosophy of the Vedanta is diametrically opposed to the Western consciousness of life. After deep study of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda one learns that their lives were of enormous practicality and that both were learned, not only in religion but in many other ways. ... It is because of the synthetic genius of Vivekananda that a Westerner can hope to understand India and Hinduism and be taken into the fold of Ramakrishna.⁵

A piece in the January 1915 issue points to affinities between the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and that of the Shakta tradition of Hinduism:

The real trend of his teachings was toward a new cult of *Shakti* or power which all the world ir-respectively is welcome to practise if qualified to ... The very quintessence of Nietzscheism is the worship of *Shakti*. Everything else, his science, his art, his philosophy, merely joins its note to that anthem of worship. Nietzsche was not a truth-seeker or a philosopher; he was through and through a worshipper. It mattered not a whit to him as to what truth in itself was. To him truth only bore derived values. Truth and untruth, good and evil, are principles of valuation created out of the supreme necessity of worshipping *Shakti*. So in understanding the doctrine of Nietzsche, its real groundwork, we have to fall back on his fundamental conception of *Shakti* or power.⁶

The article goes on to describe Nietzsche's concept of the 'superman', a concept with affinities to Sri Aurobindo's conception of the Supermind, by which the Absolute transforms the human being into a divine being. The article concludes, however, that Nietzsche has erred in locating the source of the higher being towards which humanity aims to evolve in biology. Later movements, such as that of the Nazis, would transform this into a violently racist concept, according to which

certain groups of human beings, despite their fundamental similarities to all other humans, are inherently superior. The 'superman' rather involves a *transformation of consciousness*, as the article states:

Nietzsche made his mistake therefore in accepting biology instead of psychology as the foundation of his system. What distinguishes a man from a beast is his conscious effort for self-realisation, and the more he succeeds in this effort the more he finds that his self is not an isolated, individual unity set completely apart from other selves to be coerced into submission for the sake of its realization through increasing power. On the contrary, he discovers in the course of his self-realisation that the power to *coerce* submission has to be transfigured into the power to *inspire* willing submission and that there is a gradual coalescence of his own pursuit of self-realisation with that of others, suggesting more and more clearly the ultimate truth that the self is in reality one, though appearing refracted as many with the evolution of organisms and that the totality of power to be acquired through self-realisation belongs to this highest phase of unity (8).

Another Western figure whose thought is covered in the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata* is the English poet, Robert Browning. In 'Philosophy of Life in Browning's Poetry', from the July 1919 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, Mitra Dayamaya writes of the message of hope in Browning's works. This is not a naïve hope, but a hope that is fully aware of the temporary and limited nature of all of the goods of this material world, 'that in an ultimate analysis, beauty and love and hope slip away through the fingers and only the higher essence of them remains'.⁷ Browning's hope is that of one who has felt the disappointments of life, who has realised that the superficialities of life are not ultimately satisfactory. 'And if this pessimism reaches down into the very core of things, it will not be satisfied with anything short of an immediate consciousness of their right existence and its truth and joy, Sat, Chit, Ananda, yea, in this very

existence of ours bound up as it is with the barriers of time and its associates' (ibid.).

The harmony that Dayamaya sees between Browning's thought and that of India rests in the fact that the limited human condition he describes, and the yearning he evokes for its transcendence, is something universally felt.

Browning has and yet will have many hearers both in the East and West when he sings of our hopes remaining vital and completed in a subtler and more transcendent form, in the end, as suddenly, the worst will turn the best to the bravest and the black minute of painful dissociation from our physical bodies is over and we meet with our fulfilment of love and joy, clasping them at our heart and with God leaving the rest (159).

Moving forward in time to the February 1955 issue, in the wake of the Second World War and the achievement of India's freedom in 1947, the theme of harmony between 'East' and 'West' yet remains a strong one for *Prabuddha Bharata*. In an in-depth editorial titled 'Philosophy, Morality, and Religion' (PB February 1955), the editor explores the relationship among philosophy, morality, and religion in a universal fashion, not confined to the history of either India or the West, but invoking both in the process of analysing which of these three is the most fundamental. The editor concludes that it is religion, rooted in the personalities of great beings who come into the world precisely to establish principles as needed at a given time:

Religion as the revelation of truth and its manifestation of ways and means for taking man to it is the creator of laws. And this revelation comes down to the earth through these perfected souls who are its best media, which fact justifies the common identification of religion with personalities like Buddha and Christ. It is these commissioned personalities that bring about changes in the moral laws or in emphasis on some of them rather than on others, according to the peculiar needs of time, place, and person. So we

see morality adjusts itself to the needs of religion and not *vice versa*. ... As in this visible world the perfected souls are the meeting-points of change and changelessness, as they are ever conscious of their identity with changelessness and its sporting as ceaseless changes, they are the persons who show humanity the paths leading to the goal, which are known as religion or religions. It is for this reason, religion owes its allegiance to these persons only, and not to any set of laws, which are their discoveries in and proclamation to the changing world, having no validity beyond.⁸

The resemblances and harmonies between Indian and Western thoughts are not only to be found in the works of recent authors, or in general principles shared by both traditions, but also even in the ancient period. This is highlighted, for example, in the article 'Philosophy of the Rig Veda,' by Prof. D P Joshi in the July 1956 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*. Prof. Joshi notes the similarities between the creation of the world from the body of the Cosmic Man in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* of the *Rg Veda* and the creation of the world from the body of the dragon, Tiamat, by the Babylonian creator deity, Marduk, as well as the creation of the world from the body of a dismembered giant, Ymir, in ancient Norse religion.⁹

In a similar vein, in a piece entitled 'Western Philosophy and the Educational Values Implicit Therein,' published in the July and August 1959 issues, P S Naidu notes the correspondences between the thought of Plato and the Sāṅkhya philosophy of India:

A notable contribution of Plato to the general theory of education was his tripartite analysis of the inner nature of man, and the subsequent enumeration of the three functions of the soul. The correspondence between the Platonic conception of the vegetative, impulse, and rational elements of the soul and the *triguṇa* theory clearly formulated by Kapila-muni and developed further by Śrī Kṛṣṇa is striking. ... Plato went to the extent of saying that the attainment of this balance should

be a major objective of higher education. This balance, called justice in Platonic terminology, is the high watermark of virtuous life.¹⁰

In 'Philosophy and Science,' by Amalendu Chakravarti, published in the July 1967 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, the author briefly traces the history of the relationship between philosophy and science in the West, concluding that the sundering of these two from one another has led to a host of pernicious consequences, and that reconciliation between them is not only desirable, but also necessary to human survival:

If we are to save our souls, we must find a new human order where we do not reduce the human individual to a mere object of investigation, but recognize him as a subject of freedom. We must make the basic concepts of our civilization illumine, guide and mould our new life. We must not allow the values of spirit to recede beyond the horizon of man. We must strive to be human in this most inhuman of all the ages.¹¹

Though Chakravarti does not mention Vedānta specifically in this context, one can perhaps gather from the fact that this article was published in *Prabuddha Bharata* that he conceived of Vedānta as, perhaps, playing some role in the re-integration of science and philosophy, the relationship between the two being a prominent theme of Swamiji's thought. Certainly, as a holistic way of approaching life, Vedānta can be seen as supporting, and indeed as *being*, such an integral mode of thinking. The key would be to avoid turning Vedānta into another warring *-ism*, or ideology, claiming to be the only valid way to the ultimate goal.

In 'Philosophy: Theory and Practice,' S S Ragavachar compares and contrasts Western and Indian philosophies (Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu) regarding the question of the relationship between practice and contemplation. Ultimately, Ragavachar finds the strongest integration of the

two in the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. What is particularly noteworthy about Ragavachar's article, in terms of the harmony of 'East' and 'West', is that he does not simply identify practice or action with the West and contemplation with India, as one might expect, but recognises that the dynamic of contemplation and practice is present in both traditions.¹² Similarly, in 'Philosophy and Life', by K B Ramakrishna Rao, published later the same year (*PB*, November 1972), the pull between science and spirituality is recognized as being present in many cultures:


Any civilization, be it Indian or alien, modern or ancient, as long as it is aware of the dialectics of wisdom acting from within, keeps its adventures of science or reason within bounds. Philosophy is another name for this dialectics, and it directs actions of man from the deep depths of spiritual intuition to make life in this world worth living by not only advancing knowledge—the method of science—but by redeeming man from his position in the natural scheme of things, that is, as an animal, and elevating him from his naturalness of sheer animality to the dignity of a divine person so much above and beyond man as a physical or physiological phenomenon.¹³

Coming closer to the present time, in the June 2005 issue, Dr Lekshmi Ramakrishnaiyer presents a clear and compelling overview of the 'Western Philosophic View of Religious Language'. She discusses the ways in which religious language has been conceptualised by such Western thinkers as John Hick: as analogy, as symbol, and as something non-cognitive (that is, not literally true or false, but evocative of the experience of the sacred). She concludes that there is a close affinity between these various ways of understanding religious language and that of Sri Ramakrishna:

As Sri Ramakrishna says, 'No one can say with finality that God is only "this" and nothing else.'¹⁴ Though not definitive, religious statements can act as ladders for people groping

in worldly darkness to reach trans-empirical heights.¹⁵

Conclusion

More examples can certainly be cited, but the articles mentioned here are a good representation of the theme of harmony between East and West as it has been found in the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata* in the one hundred and twenty-five years of its existence. This journal has thus continued to propagate Swamiji's inspiring vision of universal harmony, and of a world in which sectarianism, bigotry, and fanaticism are things of the distant past. 

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The Study of the Upanishads in Prabuddha Bharata

Dr Chetana Mandavia

PRABUDDHA BHARATA, a monthly English journal started in 1896 by Swami Vivekananda, has completed its 125th year. Some of the greatest minds of India and the world have written on Indian and world culture as well as on spirituality and philosophy in this journal. Swamiji was a great exponent of Vedanta Philosophy and as a result, the spiritual thoughts of Swamiji have their moorings on the sublime, profound, lofty, and soul-stirring philosophy of the Upanishads. Naturally, over the years, a number of scholarly articles on Upanishads, articulating their principles and underlying philosophy, have been published in the journal. It is immensely rewarding to have a glimpse of them.

Hence, an attempt has been made here to offer a gist of some representative and exhaustive articles encompassing topics like introduction, basic principles, spirit, substance, goal, charm as well as the appeal of the Upanishads. And also, their application in day-to-day life, the methods of their study, substantiation of their principles with the new scientific innovations, their contemporary relevance, and how they offer a foundation for framing educational policies are dealt with. An article also describes the composition of mind as elucidated by the Upanishads. A whole gamut of Vedantic thoughts and a clear perception of Upanishadic principles permeate into the reader's mind through

these articles. Let us dive deeper into the ocean of these wonderful and thoughtful articles published in *Prabuddha Bharata* and emerge out with precious gems of Upanishadic wisdom to enrich, enlighten, and empower our spiritual life.

1) Swami Nikhilananda: 'An Introduction to the Study of Upanishads', in 3 parts—May, July, and August 1949

Swami Nikhilananda, a renowned monk of the Ramakrishna Order who was the Minister-in-Charge of the New York Vedanta Society, presents the history of Vedic literature leading to the genesis of Upanishads. Both chronologically and thematically they come at the end (*anta*) of the Vedas, so they are also called Vedanta. Also, in them, the Vedic wisdom reaches its culmination. What precedes them are the hymns and chants of the four Vedas: *Rg*, *Sāma*, *Yajur*, and *Atharva Veda*, collectively known as the *Samhitās* (collections). These are followed by the *Brahmanas*, a set of ritual instructions having principally to do with the sacrifices offered to the gods, followed by the *Āranyakas*, conveying the spiritual meanings of these hymns and rituals.

The Upanishads constitute profound and sincere search into the nature of Reality, as they confer understanding and relationship among *jiva* (individual soul), *jagat* (world), and *Ishwara* (God). They also describe creation, preservation, and ultimate dissolution of the universe, and the changes and modifications of nature (*Prakriti*). There are 108 Upanishads and Acharya Shankara

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Swami Nikhilananda (1895–1973)

has commented upon eleven of them. The author acknowledges Acharya's immense contribution as the remover of misconceptions in the Vedantic texts and the giver of consistent rational and scholastic interpretations supported by his own profound spiritual experiences. Nikhilananda has cited the example of King Janaka to highlight the influence of *Kshatriyas* on the teachings and

teachers of the Upanishads. He concludes that *Brahmavidyā*, the knowledge of Brahman is not the prerogative of any race, country, or period; it is the universal truth that is the common essence of all religions and faiths.

2) P Nagaraja Rao: 'The Spirit and Substance of Upanishads', July 1992

Describing the Upanishads as the quintessence of the Vedas and the embodiment of metaphysical doctrines, the author presents various views on the Upanishads as extolled by some distinguished writers such as the Spanish writer Mascaro, Schopenhauer, Max Muller, Dr Deussen, Yeats, Eglinton, in addition to Acharya Shankara and Swami Vivekananda. The author remarks that though the principal ten Upanishads differ in length, tone, style of composition, and method of exposition, fundamentally they all represent a quest for the 'Real', the Absolute Reality.

These are some of the declarations from various Upanishads: 'In the Infinite is happiness, so one must desire to obtain Infinite' (*Chhandogya*, 6.1.3); 'there is no way, other than the realisation of the Infinite, to end our sorrows'

(*Shvetashvatara*, 3.8); 'the knowledge of the Real frees us from all fear and secures for us bliss' (*Taittiriya*, 2.4.1) and 'the spiritual realisation of the Real results in the transformation of our consciousness' (*Mundaka*, 2.2.9). Thus, the Upanishads teach the unity of all Existence (*Chhandogya*, 6).

However, the author also shows how the modern scholars deviate from Upanishadic views like the stress on illusionism and pantheism by Dr Deussen, and the pronouncement of the world as the manifestation of the Infinite by Tagore. He also refers to the concept of the Lord as the inner ruler as cited in *Brihadaranyaka*, adding that *Kathopanishad* (1.2.23) acknowledges God's grace as a prerequisite for self-realisation. Besides, a profound presence of *bhakti* element is discerned in *Shvetashvatara* Upanishad.

3) Nolini Kanta Gupta: 'Readings in the Upanishads', July 1934

In this thoughtful paper, the author beautifully explains the symbolism in the Upanishads. He gives an example from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* which speaks of the several lights that help one's perception, like the sun, moon, fire, Word, and Atman. The Atman is All-Knowledge. The Sun symbolises the sense-perception, which is the initial light. In a more developed stage, the sun sets and the moon rises, symbolising the mind. It is then the mental knowledge, the light of reason, intelligence, reflection, and imagination that govern our consciousness. When the moon sets, the fire is kindled, which is the symbol of realisation.

The Word symbolises the revelation, covered by a luminous clothing—*hiraṇmayam pātram*. When this last veil dissolves and disappears, when utter silence, absolute calm, and quietude reign in the human consciousness, and when no other lights trouble or distract our attention,

there appears the Atman in its all effulgence. That is when we stand face to face with the source of all lights, the light of the Self and realise that we are that Light. How beautiful, appropriate, and revealing this teaching is!

4) Gobinda Gopal Mukherjee: 'The Goal of Upanishads', September 1945

In his highly philosophical article, the author explicitly elucidates the spiritual goal quoting from various Upanishads. Brahman, the immutable, is our goal. That is to be pierced through, with the help of this mighty weapon, the Upanishads (*Mundaka*, 2.2.3). He further specifies the nature of Brahman as narrated in *Taittiriya* Upanishad (2.1). It is *Satyam*, Truth; *Jñānam*, knowledge; and *Anantam*, Infinite. These are not the adjectives but point to the very nature of Brahman. Explaining the inadequacy of intellect in perceiving and realising the nature of Brahman, the author stresses the development of intuition, a unitive faculty bringing about such a synthesis.

To comprehend the Reality with its inherent fullness and richness, we must undergo metamorphosis and transformation into the whole. Its richness cannot be fathomed, since measure itself is essentially a feature of Maya. That is why *Purusha* is described as the one having sixteen parts or *Kalās* in the *Prashna* Upanishad. After the development of all the *Kalās* or parts of our being, we become fit to merge in the Absolute.

In a nutshell, the author stresses the necessity of acquiring absolute knowledge and not a relative one. Such knowledge can only be that of the supreme Brahman; for only in the Brahman is utter freedom and spontaneity. From illumination to expansion, and subsequently, to identification with the Absolute—these are the broad steps indicated by the Upanishads. The result of this *sādhana* in the words of the Upanishads would be 'the untying of the knots of the heart

and annihilation of all the bondages of *karma*'. That is the goal, as indicated by the Upanishads.

5) C S Ramakrishnan: 'The Charm of the Upanishads', June 2003.

C S Ramakrishnan, a profound scholar and a former editor of '*Vedanta Kesari*', Chennai, states that the charm of Upanishads lies both in the challenging philosophy of non-dualism they teach and also the poetic manner in which the teaching is imparted. He gives a beautiful example from *Cbhandogya* Upanishad. The rishi Uddalaka asked his son Shvetaketu to break a fruit of a banyan tree, which revealed the presence of extremely small seeds. Nothing was observed inside the seed when the son followed the father's instruction to break one. Then the father explained that though invisible, the subtle essence of the banyan tree was already present in the seed. It is in subtle essence that all things have their existence. Exhorted the father: 'That is the Truth. That is the Self. And Shvetaketu, *tat tvam asi*, That thou art' (6.12.1-3). Very appropriately the author remarks: 'To sip even a few drops of Upanishadic wisdom is to make ourselves *amritasya putrāb*, the children of immortality. Upanishads invite us to lead a full life, and bring us *abhyudaya* (material prosperity) and *nibhṛeyasa* (spiritual fulfilment), enabling us to approach Reality through objective and subjective ways.' Eulogising Upanishads, the author adds that since they reveal the highest Truth and confer wisdom to live a meaningful and fulfilling life, they are the fountainhead of infinite charm.

6) Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya: 'The Way in the Upanishads', March 1948

In this thoughtful article, the author points out the practical approaches one needs to develop to imbibe those shining truths enshrined in Upanishads. Realisation of the Ultimate Reality is a herculean task; it is repeatedly stressed in

all Upanishads that without the transmutation of our present nature, nothing can be achieved. The *Chhandogya* Upanishad (3.14.1) demonstrates the method: *śānta upāsita*, one must cultivate tranquillity. The author profusely quotes from various Upanishads wherein the stress is given on *tapas*, *brahmacharya*, *satya*, and *samyag jñāna*, the right knowledge for the realisation of Atman. *Svādhyāya-pravachana* (self-study and discourse) accompanied by the right conduct and truth (*ṛta* and *satya*), outer and inner control (*dama* and *śama*) must be pursued scrupulously. This is the Upanishadic way of spiritual practice as discussed by the author.

7) T M P Mahadevan: 'The Synthetic Method of the Upanishads', July 1938

In this article, the author discusses in detail the subjective and objective methods to arrive at the philosophical conclusions with appropriate examples and concludes that the Upanishadic method is the synthesis of the two. According to him, the objective method is employed to differentiate Brahman from the external world; and the subjective method is used for analysing the sheaths encasing the Self.

8) R Srinivas Iyengar: 'Education in the Upanishads', August 1948

This article is an analysis of Education in the Upanishads, commendably done by the author. He has carefully selected specific verses from different Upanishads and has suggested that based on the Upanishadic concepts, present-day educationists can form a sound education policy rooted in Indian culture, yet relevant to modern times. For instance, the *Kathopanishad* (3.3-4) says: 'Know the Self as the Lord of the chariot, and the body as the Chariot; know the intellect as the charioteer, and the mind as the reins, the senses as the horses and the sense-objects as their

tracks. The enjoyer is the individual self yoked with the body, the senses, and the mind.'

The author prudently proposes that the inter-relationship sketched in the above two verses can be the basis of the concept of development of the 'integrated personality of the child'. It suggests the soundness of the pedagogical precept that 'self-expression should follow upon self-awareness'. An idea of great educational value is again exhibited in *Taittiriya* Upanishad (1.3.2), which states: 'The teacher is the forepart; the disciple the hind-part; knowledge is the middle part, and the exposition (of the scriptures) is the link or the connection between the preceptor and the pupil.' The teacher and the taught are conceived as correlates of knowledge, which is the basis of correlation. What a wonderful idea of great didactic value! A recipe for the cultivation of memory is found in this verse from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*: 'Purity of intellect is the outcome of purity of food; and firm, steady memory is the outcome of the purity of intellect.'

9) Swami Bhavyananda: 'Present-Day Problems and the Upanishads', July 1978

In his thought-provoking and very inspiring article, Swami Bhavyananda, who was the minister-in-charge of the UK centre of the Ramakrishna Order, offers an in-depth analysis of lack of moral and ethical values of the people living in the materialistic world and narrates how the solution for the present-day problems is offered in the subtle philosophy and lofty idealism of the Upanishads. According to him, though humankind has evolved and prospered materially and scientifically, it has yet to see the pinnacle of true growth, prosperity, contentment, and fulfilment.

The author then proceeds to offer the only and viable solution as offered in Upanishads: to be spiritual, that is, to dive deep beyond the intellect and reason. Such an effort brings about

the inner transformation of human. The seeming contradictions merge into the life of the spirit. The Upanishads are intended to make us realise this intuitive knowledge, underlines the author. Simplicity and purity are essential for taking up this journey because a pure mind has the capacity to turn all the energies of both body and mind in the direction of the Divine Self within.

10) Swami Atmapriyananda: ‘The Appeal of the Upanishads Today’, July and August 2003

In the present era of globalisation, the global trend is seeking unity and uniformity in everything, ‘seeking and finding *uni-verse* in this apparent *multi-verse*’ in the words of the learned author of this article, who is the Pro-Chancellor of the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute, Belur Math. The author verifies this statement by presenting in detail the recent innovations in physical, biological, psychological, and engineering fields, including computer sciences, information technology, and artificial intelligence. The scientists are attempting to unify differential forces in their respective fields to discover a *Theory of Everything* (ToE) that may present a unified view of the Reality, but have not been successful so far. However, Upanishads have searched a unifying principle by exhorting to go deeper into one’s personality through subjective analysis.

Then, the author illustrates the analysis of human personality, as done by the Upanishads. Accordingly, the fundamental Atman principle (the essence of personality) manifests itself as five different layers or *kośas* (concepts of *ātman*): *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya*, and *ānandamaya*. The *ānandamaya ātman* is the last layer attained by a fitting disciple after rigorous spiritual disciplines.

Next, the author states that the four scientific fields of research mentioned above are

related to the four corresponding layers of human personality: (1) the physical with the *annamaya ātman*, (2) the biological with the *prāṇamaya ātman*, (3) the psychical with the *manomaya ātman*, and the (4) intellectual with the *vijñānamaya ātman*. The universe is manifested as the microcosm and the macrocosm. Thus, all four individual layers or *kośas* (microcosm) have their universal counterparts (macrocosm). *Ānandamaya ātman* is always universal and does not have a microcosmic counterpart. The author makes it explicitly clear that when we realise ourselves as conscious entities, conditioned though by the individual layers like *annamaya* and *prāṇamaya*, we realise that all the organs, mind, and intellect are impelled by a single Consciousness Principle, which moves and animates us, the individuals. That is the Atman. The same reality is called from the objective side as ‘Brahman’ and from the subjective side as ‘Atman’.

Further, the author deliberates on the three bodies of human beings: the gross, the subtle, and the causal (*sthūla*, *sūkṣma*, and *kāraṇa śarīra*) which are the respective media of experience for our waking (*jāgarita*), dream (*svapna*), and dreamless sleep (*susupti*) states. Profusely quoting from different Upanishads, the author states that the Upanishads present Brahman as that Supreme Reality which transcends all phenomena, yet underlies as their background. Matter, life, mind, and intellect, which are the subjects of investigations of different scientific disciplines, are but various aspects of Brahman which pervades and controls them.



Thus, putting the whole perspective of scientific disciplines vis-à-vis that of Upanishads in the light of individual and Universal Consciousness, the author emphasises the tremendous appeal of the Upanishads today for they deal with 'an individual' and her or his daily life and experiences. The Upanishads, therefore, are meant for everybody who is anywhere, in whatever state or station in life. That is why their philosophy is universal. When 'I' realise that the contradictions arise because of my identification with the three states, and my real Self (Atman) is absolutely dissociated from the three bodies, three states, and five layers of consciousness, realisation dawns on me that 'I am, in reality, Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute (*sat-cit-ānanda-svarūpa*)'.

Upanishadic Philosophy thus grows out of everyday perception and experiences. Since it transcends all empirical knowledge, it is not restrained by time, space, or causality. This is the only philosophy by which the whole universe can be united or globalised. It is rational in its approach and embraces the whole of existence. This is the appeal of Upanishads today, as proved by the author, who also points out that the 'Theory of Everything', that the scientists all over the world are seeking today, is the Self-knowledge as enumerated by the Upanishads.

11) U A Asrani: 'The Wisdom of the Upanishads in the Light of Modern Science', October 1980

In this beautiful article highlighting the false ego as the root cause of all psychosomatic diseases, the author tells that Upanishadic methods like chanting Upanishadic mantras, reading, and reflection on the mantras and *Mahāvākyas* and practising meditation assist in mental relaxation, thereby conferring tranquillity and offering a permanent cure to such diseases. The

author adds that the scientific investigations have concluded that egoism seems incompatible with the very design of nature. This is what the Upanishads proclaim in their teachings, that the individual ego does not exist in reality. Thus, modern science conforms to the philosophy of the Upanishads.

12) Chinmoy Chatterjee: 'Upanishadic Conception of Psychology', February 1954

This article nicely deals with the differential approach of Eastern and Western Psychology concerning mind or *manas*. Western Psychologists are interested in understanding the functions of the mind and the factors affecting it, whereas the thinkers of the Upanishads were interested to know about the composition of the mind or *manas*, as they called it. Mind or *manas* in the Upanishads is the internal organ endowed with the qualities of cogitation, desire, determination, conviction, doubt, patience, modesty, talent, and fear. It is also described as the resultant of the food digested.

Conclusion

To conclude, these lucid and enlightening articles in *Prabuddha Bharata* analysing the Upanishads emphasise that we need not look to the sky for the bright light, as the glorious light of consciousness is within us. Their approach is scientific. There is no exaggeration in stating that even a cursory study of the Upanishads is bound to change our thinking and way of living. They point to the possibilities and opportunities that await us in the spiritual realm. The exhaustive range of themes, treatment of the subject matter and layout as well as the presentation of different topics related to Upanishads in these articles speak volumes about the high standard of *Prabuddha Bharata* and its role in disseminating the Truth.





Youth and Erosion of Values: A Study in Prabuddha Bharata

Shruba Mukherjee

LET'S BEGIN WITH some statistics.

- According to India's Census 2011, youth (15–24 years) in India, constitutes one-fifth (19.1 per cent) of India's total population. India is expected to have 34.33 per cent share of youth in total population by 2020.

- As per 'World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision', Population Database of United Nations Population Division, India has the world's highest number of 10 to 24-year-olds with 242 million, despite having a smaller population than China, which has 185 million young people.

- According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), over 40,000 juveniles were caught across the country in 2017 for their alleged involvement in various

offences with 72 per cent of them belonging to the age group of 16 to 18 years.¹

- The number of juvenile offenders, who have studied up to matriculation and higher secondary levels, rose from 4,244 in 2016 to 6,260 in 2017—a difference of over 32 per cent (ibid.).

- At 35.2 per cent, national capital Delhi has the highest percentage of crimes committed by the juveniles in 2017. And some of them committed heinous crimes like murder (46 cases), rape (132), and robberies (320) (ibid.).

- In the matter of suicides, youth (18 and above, below 30 years) is one of the most vulnerable groups with 33 per cent share of the total police recorded suicide cases.²

Why Do We Do What We Do?

Should we consider the most dynamic section of our population as a source of concern and not

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as a beacon of hope? Following the Athenian philosopher Plato, should we also lament that today's youth have no respect for the elders or for the law or moral virtues?

A section of experts have indeed put the blame on the youth themselves—this generation is always looking for shortcuts, they are averse to hard work, reluctant to take responsibilities, lack loyalty, so on and so forth. But when it comes to suggesting a permanent cure for this malaise, most of their theories fall short of expectations, as they only focus on making changes in the external sense. As a result, the solutions, which they suggest, are either temporary or they beget a new set of problems. For example, many of the developed countries have succeeded in eradicating poverty and illiteracy, but these changes have also directly or indirectly intensified problems like loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

Prabuddha Bharata, however, has tried to take the bull by the horns. This monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order, which was started by none other than Swami Vivekananda in 1896, has analysed the problems of youth from various dimensions. A series of articles written by senior monks, sociologists, and academicians has got at the root of the problem by asking this question: *why do we do what we do?* The answer to this question has actually set the stage for a discussion on values. The authors have also highlighted how the neglect of the higher spiritual dimension and lack of harmony between the individual desires and social obligations, have led to increasing waywardness in the young generation. With strong empirical evidence, they have proved that Swamiji's prescriptions for the youth of setting a goal in life, having *śraddhā*, faith in themselves, *self-discipline*, and *selfless service* are more relevant today. A combination of all these qualities is perhaps the only way to transform the vulnerable youth into a valuable asset for our nation.

Are We Not What Our Values Are?

In his essay 'Emergence of Values Through Human Interactions' in March 1998 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, Prof. Ashwani Kumar asks: 'Are we not what our values are?' Seeking to analyse the reasons behind the thought and action of every human being, he raises five questions: (a) What is a value? (b) Why we value what we value? (c) What is the significance of values in our interactions with the external world including other human beings? (d) How does a value affect the quality of our existence? (e) Who is the valuer?

According to Prof. Kumar, evolution is the only criterion by which queries relating to values can be answered. He points out: 'In the beginning of human evolution, we had to compete with the wild animals for our survival. ... So there is in us an ancient deep layer of mind which is cruel, aggressive and selfish, very unmindful of the right of other life-forms to coexist. Gradually, during the next stage of evolution, we began to observe that though birds and animals loved their mate and offspring as much as we love ours, yet the environment, birds and animals cooperated for preservation/survival.'³

Once we took note of this matter, our mental horizons began to expand and we came to feel the need for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in our conduct. The author has identified this as the second layer of the mind, which is very thin and fragile. Then comes the third layer, where the noble feelings of our mind try to unfold when we allow them to do so. The author further asks:

It is the nature of human consciousness to be creative and to expand holistically. ... Through creativity and holistic expansion of human consciousness, our Cosmos expects us to proceed further. Therefore, we must ask ourselves: can we as human beings conceive and identify ourselves with such values, which are

life-enhancing, not only outwardly, but inwardly too? (ibid.).

An equally passionate appeal for nurturing higher values in life also comes from Dr Anil Baran Ray, a professor of Political Science (*PB* August 2000), when he says that values play a key role in helping the human being to 'build a bridge' between his lower needs and the higher ones. He has used the term 'values' as the alternative for expressions like 'virtue' or words like 'ideal' or 'goal'. What 'value' essentially implies is a positive approach to life. 'If we take the harmony between life and living as the essence of value approach, it follows that values are not merely ideas concerned with the oughtness of life, not merely what ought to be, but also what needs to be actualized in life in the interest of harmonious living', he says.⁴

Elaborating on this point in his article 'Values: Their Significance', Dr Ray writes that apart from satisfying the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter, human beings also have an innate desire for self-improvement. Following the holistic view of life as envisioned by our ancient sages, he concludes: 'It is all right for us to live our life in our own way so long as we fulfill some social obligations, for society has made it possible for us to live and enjoy life' (ibid.).

Since man's existence is inseparable from that of the society, ancient Indian ethos has recognised fivefold debts or obligations of the individual to the society. Quoting from the *Yajur Veda* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, Dr Ray says that these are our debt to the gods (*deva ṛṇa*), the sages (*ṛṣi ṛṇa*), ancestors and parents (*pitṛ ṛṇa*), humanity at large (*nr ṛṇa*) and the sub-human world (*bhūta ṛṇa*).

Where Does the Problem Lie?

So where does the problem lie? Has the present generation not been made aware of the

importance of higher values in their lives or has the search for 'a good life' weaned them away from 'Truth, Beauty, Goodness'?

In an editorial titled 'Youth and Religious Faith' (*PB*, April 1993), the editor Swami Mukti-rupananda says that the behaviour of the youth reflects the prevailing virtues or their absence. The problem of youth has its deep roots in the society and culture in which they are born and brought up, and thus if they lack purity and character, the elders have to take their share of the blame.

The youth is a 'formidable tumultuous energy', which has to be harnessed and handled prudently. 'Youth represent freshness, inquisitiveness, thirst for knowledge and vigour. ... When they believe in a cause, good or bad, they unquestioningly give up their lives for it. Whether political leaders, or religious, or just reformist "do-gooders", all first try to win over the young people. Youth followed the call of Buddha, Jesus, Socrates, Plato, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji', the editorial says.⁵

But since the youth have impressionable minds and are malleable in nature, they have also marched behind the world's notorious despots and fanatics, and wreaked havoc. The reasons for the increasing waywardness among the youth have to be found in the 'polluted atmosphere of homes, educational institutions, the party-machinery in politics, avarice in government and last but not the least, power and political motivations in organised religions' (ibid.).

'The vulgar films they go to see, the sensuous literature they dip into, the inflammatory speeches they hear, the erotic advertisements and magazines they read, all mirror the decaying state of our environment. In addition to these are the host of other problems: mounting unemployment, lack of opportunities, nepotism, the unabashed game of money-grabbing and

enjoyment of social power and politics,' the editorial says (ibid.).

Youth and Religion

But can religion play a role in instilling self-restraint and discipline among the youth and guide them to lead a harmonious life, especially, when there is a growing scepticism about religion, and aversion to all kinds of religious practices?

The above editorial has looked out for reasons as to why young people are averse to religion. The first reason is the gap between preaching and practice. They see people accept religious principles, but do not practise them. Secondly, the youth are not allowed to question deeply into theology, and the meaning of rituals and ceremonies are not properly explained to them. They also think that religion has got nothing to do with this world, its hopes, poverty, injustice, and misery. They have witnessed and felt bitter about how organised religions have divided the world into rival camps. Young people are convinced that modern scientific discoveries have shattered the ideals of religions along with their theologies. They are attracted by the enjoyments and the flash of the glamour of the world. Wealth, power, and fame are more fascinating than the spiritual pursuits, which ask them to give up attachment to these.

But history shows that ever since human beings set their foot on this earth, they have never felt satisfied with anything. They set a goal, achieve it, and then again dream of something else. This shows that they are always searching for everlasting bliss and peace. Freedom alone fulfils that unceasing quest. And only a spiritual life can guarantee this freedom, the editorial says, explaining why religion will never be wiped out from the world.

'Freedom is the breath of life. As long as the idea of freedom remains, so long religion too,

will be. ... Religion, like a kind mother, takes every person from where he is and gently shows the way to transform his lower nature into a higher one,' the editorial says (ibid.). Institutionalised religions also serve a noble purpose as they are means suited to different minds to attain that coveted freedom or God-realisation. Lastly, the editorial points out that science and religion are not opposite forces, but are moving towards the same goal of oneness. 'Is religion,' asked Swamiji, 'to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of Religion?' And he answered: 'In my opinion this must be so. ... If a religion is destroyed by such investigation, ... the sooner it goes the better.'⁶

Dr S Radhakrishnan in his book 'Religion and Society' also argues in favour of giving a 'deep spiritual impulse' to the new world order to give it unity and a rational basis.

Thus, the concept of development in the new world order should be wide enough to cover a human being in all dimensions. Swami Prabhānanda, in his article 'The Youth and National Development' in the special issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* commemorating the Year of the Youth (December 1985), opines that the proper utilisation of youth power can only be possible if development is perceived as an integrated process with 'simultaneous and proportionate emphasis on the physical, mental and spiritual growth of man'.⁷ The swami further says: 'Socialisation from childhood into adulthood, inclusive of character development, gainful employment, suitable development of their spirit and opportunities for community service, etc. as well as organising the youth, needs an integrated strategy for youth programme' (ibid.).

As part of this strategy, he has suggested a youth movement with a driving ideology of rebuilding a glorious India and propagating her lofty ideals; a charismatic and dynamic leader and a programme relevant for today's youth for alleviating the wretched conditions they are in. But the challenge of organising such a movement can be met only if the youth develop their physical, mental, and spiritual potential. And this will be possible only if they can tread on the path shown by Swamiji. One of the greatest teachings of Swamiji is that one can find all the strength and succour that one needs in oneself, in one's true Self, the Atman. But to access this inner source of power, one must have *śraddhā* or faith in oneself. He says:

If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which foreigners have now and again introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith.⁸

Therefore, this Shraddha is what I want, and what all of us here want, this faith in ourselves, and before you is the great task to get that faith. Give up that awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that lack of seriousness. Give that up. Be strong and have this Shraddha, and everything else is bound to follow (3.320).

In his article, 'Youth Problem and Swami Vivekananda' Nabaniharan Mukhopadhyay (PB, December 1985) says that if the youth of this country can acquire this seriousness coupled with faith in themselves, they will not fritter away their energies in frivolities or violence, but will equip themselves with courage and moral qualities and give their best to the country.

In fact, at least a section of today's youth is seeking a way to come out of the turmoil that



they are going through and is ready to receive the message of Swamiji with all earnestness. *Prabuddha Bharata* has published a series (October 1996; February and March, 1997) of question-answer sessions conducted by Swami Nikhileshwarananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order. The questions put to him by students of various institutions of Uttarakhand show that the young people are no longer passive witnesses to the situation around them. The questions are on a wide range of issues—how to increase self-confidence, will power, ways to control anger and negative thoughts, how to stop the exploitation of women and protect their rights, and so on. There are questions even on how to make the mind pure and what the art of living is.

A school student from Pithoragarh asked the swami to throw some light on the values of successful living and how to practise these values in the day-to-day life. In his answer to this question, Swami Nikhileshwarananda explains *Pancasila*, a group of five basic virtues: *self-control*, *self-knowledge*, *self-confidence*, *self-reliance*, and *self-sacrifice*. He says that sacrifice does not necessarily mean that one should give up the world and take to monastic life. What is intended is the sacrifice of the selfish ego, so that one becomes an enlightened citizen and lives with peace of mind, in harmony with others.

Swami Paramarthananda also expressed his confidence that the negative thinking and pessimism among the youth were just passing phases ('Ramakrishna Math and the Youth'; A Dialogue with Swami Paramarthananda, *PB*, July 1998) 'The youth is quite responsive,' he says and particularly mentions the tremendous zeal among the young members of the Vivekananda Study Circle, Hyderabad, to participate in various social service related activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and also to follow the life-giving messages of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swamiji.


In his benedictory address (the text published in *Prabuddha Bharata*) at the Youth Convention, organised as part of the centenary celebrations of Ramakrishna Mission in 1998, Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji, the then President of the Order, exhorts the youth to develop character so that the nation is put on the right track:

How to develop character? Each one of you must first of all give up negative thinking. Stop thinking that you are weak and helpless. Have immense faith in your potential qualities.

Secondly, try to be as selfless as possible. Try to serve others around you wholeheartedly, with the idea that your country's future depends on all of them. Dedicating yourself

for the service of others is the best way to serve yourself and the nation. This is the path Swamiji wanted our younger generation to choose for the upliftment of India.⁹

After his return from the West, Swamiji gave his clarion call to the youth of India in his inspiring speech 'My Plan of Campaign' delivered at the Victoria Hall, Madras (now Chennai) on 9 February 1897: 'My friends, my plan is to start institutions in India, to train our young men as preachers of the truths of our scriptures in India and outside India. Men, men, these are wanted; everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionised.'¹⁰

The future of India as a nation will depend on how effectively the Indian youth can respond to this clarion call. 

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Nivedita's Gift

Gitanjali Murari

THE WORD 'Indophile' is defined as someone who loves India, Indian culture, cuisine, religions, its history and its people. In contemporary times we hear of such Indophiles, foreigners who visit India frequently, who 'can't have enough of it', and even some who have made India their home. To most Indians the latter class appear as oddities, gratifying no doubt, yet incomprehensible. Who in their right mind would exchange a life, guaranteeing a certain level of material comfort, a society where the rule of law is applicable to all citizens irrespective of their status, is of homogenous culture and thereby more easily manageable, for one that is replete with bewildering contradictions? Even as an Indian citizen, born, brought up and living in India, the Indian way of life can be quite difficult to fathom. It's not only the obvious and extreme economic disparities, but also the conflicting social behaviours, beliefs, and value systems across the length and breadth of the country that can befuddle the modern mind.

Imagine then the shock, cultural and emotional, that Margaret Noble, an Irish-born Englishwoman, must have received on first encountering an undivided India in 1898. Not merely the severe heat, the lack of proper hygiene, the teeming multitudes in a vast country speaking different languages, but the contradictions mentioned earlier, must have affected her viscerally. For these contradictions were so alien to her worldview, an educationist in the Western



mould, and above all, India was a colony of the British empire, and she, Margaret belonged to the ruling class. Yet Margaret, who later became Nivedita, grew to love India like no other foreigner could, and came to understand the life-current of India like most Indians today cannot.

To read her words, to study her life, is to dive below the surface turbulence in Indian society into the very depths of the energy that has been flowing quietly from one age to the next, and become connected with an India that is at once enigmatic and simplicity itself. Her beloved master, Swami Vivekananda, welcomed her to India with just one condition—not a word of

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condemnation—and took her on a grand tour, introducing her to various aspects of the country's life hitherto unperceived by most foreigners. Her first year on Indian soil was full of anguish and turmoil as Swamiji compelled her mind to open itself to new ways of seeing, to understand the infinitude quality of reality, to view India, not from the standpoint of an Englishwoman, the ruling class, but from that of the native whose heart beats to the silent drum of an ancient civilisation.

When at last Nivedita gave herself over, she immersed herself in Indic history and philosophy, keenly observing the social mores and customs of the day, and tracing their cause back in time, gave herself a full understanding of the present situation. Free from prejudice, her fine mind with its exceptional focus unearthed treasure after treasure, rich seams formed by the amalgamation of thoughts and ideas from close and afar that had taken seed and flourished in a land already fertile with Upanishadic wisdom.

The glimmer of this wisdom she saw everywhere. She saw it in the fields, in the places of worship, and even in the frantic pace of cities. She saw it in the women, the children, the men, all struggling in their own way to reclaim and sustain their identities under a foreign rule. And most of all, she found it in the homes, families holding on to the scriptural values century after century.

Nivedita was able to accomplish this monumental attitudinal shift by following in the footsteps of the *guru-shishya* tradition—'For the greatest energy is imparted by the sense of working for the glory of another (guru).'¹ This quote is an extract from her 'Papers on Education—I, II, III' (published in *Prabuddha Bharata* from February to June 1911), and is a comparison of the Indian education model with the one she had been groomed in. Her educationist's heart soon found similar elements in both, but with

a significant and subtle difference. In laying stress on preparing the mind for education and learning, which comprised of the knowledge funds available to its society, the occidental formal education largely ignored another element, namely, the prepared mind directing itself towards and submitting to its ideal. This, according to Nivedita, was the highest element. When absorbed in the in-depth study of a specific discipline or in absolute obedience to the Guru, the mind subjugated itself to the sole and ultimate purpose of its existence.

When this highest element did reach fruition amongst certain minds in the West, it was purely by accident. Whereas she found in the *gurukulas* of the past—that since the training of attention had been the goal of education—the focussed mind easily found its ideal and surrendered to it completely.

Nivedita asserted that this highest element must be revived so that the Indian mind could once again become concentrated upon solving the Indian problem. The native people must find their own solutions and for this, education, both big and small, had to be made available to all, irrespective of caste, creed or gender, rich and poor alike. For, as she put it unequivocally: 'There is but one imperative duty before us today. It is to help on Education by our very lives if need be' (84).

'...by our very lives if need be.' Such a bold sentiment can emerge only out of deep love that is both reverential and compassionate. In her keen assimilation of India's intricate social fabric, Nivedita perceived a unique and simple wholesomeness running like a gentle subterranean stream through all mundane activities. On a visit back to England for the purpose of raising funds for her fledgeling Calcutta school, she spoke thus of her Bengali neighbours: 'If they had fruit, they would share it with me. If I expected guests, they would provide the repast,

and I rarely knew even the name of the giver. I need not tell you that in deeds like these a very sweet relationship is created.'²

She went on to make a fervent appeal to her fellow Englishmen to treat India, not as a colony to be exploited, but as a place to serve, for in rendering service to India, they would be truly serving England's interests. The prestige of the English race, she said, would be raised not through tyrannising the subjects but through acts of noble self-sacrifice, and thus England's flag would fly much higher, an inspiration to the entire world.

According to Nivedita, whether in the country of one's origin or in a distant land, wherever one may be, 'there is no possibility of true work, no shadow of a possibility of a great life' (96), unless one became united with the people, making one's home in their midst. The following vivid description is a striking example of her complete oneness with the spirit of India. 'A picture comes to me of a night scene in the Himalayas,' she writes, 'at a turn in the road, the great trees sweep aside a little to make room for a tiny hamlet at their foot. Here in the open shop of the grain dealer, round a little lamp, sits a group of men, and amongst them is a boy reading earnestly from a book. It is the Ramayana' (100).

In uniting herself with India, Nivedita wholly subsumed her own personality into that of the national life. Not just the social aspect, but also arts and politics received an impetus from her tremendous energy. 'She was a veritable live wire',³ Shri Aurobindo, the famous nationalist and philosopher, said of her. Nivedita was convinced that Indian Art had to be revived for the Indian spirit to be revived. To this end, she urged local artists to take up Indian themes rather than Western ones, to stir up the soul of India through artistic renditions of her strengths that she seemed to have long forgotten. It is due

to Nivedita's herculean efforts that E B Havell and Abanindranath Tagore, the founders of the Bengal School of Art, turned to age-old Indian painting techniques, eschewing the more popular British or 'company' style.

In a similar manner, she encouraged the political movement to free India from British rule, speaking against unjust laws at public forums and using her exceptional writing skills to voice her criticism of the government. Many a time, her fearless outspokenness created difficulties for her with the authorities but such was the nobility of her character that the government refrained from punishing her. The national leader Rash Behari Ghosh declared in 1912: 'If we are conscious of a budding national life at the present day, it is in no small measure due to the teaching of Sister Nivedita.'⁴ In London, she came to be known as the 'champion for India,' an English lady who embarrassed her peers by speaking in favour of native subjects.

In offering her heart to India, Nivedita came to be at an extraordinary position. Her Irish genes, fired with her love for her new homeland, provided her with tremendous zeal, grit, and incisive thinking that was both motherly and unsentimental. The mother in her would not brook criticism of 'her people' from an outsider, and yet that same clear gaze recognised the many flaws and weaknesses in her adoptive land, her tireless spirit constantly working to weed them out gently as it were from the roots.

On a visit to America, she spent some time at the Hull House in Chicago and longed to replicate its model in every *basti* of India. Situated in the middle of a Chicago slum, the Hull House was a large set of buildings, 'which include a lecture hall, a gymnasium, a workshop, a concert-room, a school, and a host of other things.'⁵ There was a nursery as well for working women who could leave their infants in safety there and

collect them at the end of the day. The buildings also accommodated a working women's hostel, besides a restaurant that provided nourishing food at a low cost.

Nivedita observed that America's principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, put into practice in all sincerity at the Hull House, granted the poorest and the weakest that basic right to human dignity so fundamental to the progress of any society. If this spirit of 'service to mankind' and 'brotherhood' could be brought to India and if it could be combined with the highest ideal of Vedanta that 'Man is God', she was certain that all weakness, all fear and hatred would vanish from the sacred land. Like calling upon her children at twilight to return home, Nivedita called on the East and the West, untroubled by the paradoxes, perceiving the two as necessary currents complimenting and supporting each other. Conscious of their interdependence, she made every effort to bridge the gulf so that both sides could develop an appreciation for the other that went far beyond being mere utilitarian.

Although she admitted that the condition of Indian women was far from satisfactory when compared to their counterparts in the West, that Indian women were not yet in a position to adapt to the modern world, she held the firm belief that it was their natural proclivity towards self-effacement, sacrifice, and infinite patience, which, unknown to them, had nurtured within a deep reservoir of strength, and when the time came, like lionesses, they would overcome the inevitable challenges of changing times and lead the way to their own emancipation.

Nivedita's prediction has indeed come true. She would have been delighted at the strides taken by the Indian woman of today. Women have broken out of their shackles of their own accord and from the humblest peasant to the most accomplished scientist, they are passing the

baton of change from one generation to the next, leading by example.

It is therefore not surprising that Nivedita's insightful observations on Indian women were in stark contrast to their single tone representation of the oppressed, helpless victim as understood by the West. She spoke of the all-loving and accomplished housewife of Bengal; the strong determination of the women of Maharashtra equal to any of those in the West; the flaming courage of the woman of Rajasthan who would follow her husband into battle or the funeral pyre; the delicate, feminine girls of Gujarat; the women of Madras adhering painstakingly to their religious traditions in order to achieve a union with their spiritual ideal; and the learned and astute matriarchs of the Malabar who controlled both home and estate, the inheritance passing from mother to daughter rather than to the son. Of the Muslim women, she said: 'We may penetrate the Moslem zenana, to find the same graceful Indian womanhood, sometimes clad in the sari, sometimes in the short Turkish jacket, but ever the self-same gentle and beautiful wifehood and motherhood.'⁶

Everywhere Nivedita looked, she discerned the overriding principle of Motherhood dominating every aspect of Indian life. At home or at the temple, in the shops and establishments, in farms and in schools, during festivals and functions, whatever be the place or occasion, invariably it was the Divine Mother invoked in her various forms. Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, Annapurna of food, Durga of courage, Kali of manliness, and so on. In her lecture on Kali and her worship, Nivedita said: 'For India, there is one relationship that makes the home—that makes sanctity—that enters into every fibre of the being, and it is not Fatherhood. What wonder that in India God's tenderest name is that of the Mother?'⁷

It was this ideal of motherhood, she declared, this renunciation of self-indulgence every Indian woman strove to attain that made her worthy of worship. 'It is to women, then,—who have wielded with such power those great impulses of purity, renunciation, and spirituality upon which the India of today is built—it is to these that must be committed those other ideas of strength, freedom and humanity, which are to prove the legacy of this age to the world.'⁸

Nivedita's concern for the people was as maternal as that of any ordinary mother anxiously watching over her young ones, gently urging them to manifest the extraordinary qualities that only her tender eye could discern. At the same time, in serving these children she left no stone unturned, suffering acute deprivation that caused her health to break down. 'My life is given to India,' she said, 'in it I shall live and die.'⁹ And at the young age of forty-four years, she passed away, leaving us with a priceless gift. This then is her legacy, of *how to love India*. It behoves us to borrow her gaze, for applying a mind which is a product of a largely Western education to understand India's problems will only yield a halfway solution. But in growing Nivedita's heart within us, we will be able to look beyond the problems and sense the life-current running unhurriedly and silently through the veins of the nation, nourishing it in infinite ways.

We must listen to its whisper, which when heard with this new understanding, will galvanise us to act, not from a rush of heady emotions, but from a clear awareness born out of an all-sacrificing love. For in perceiving and acknowledging this spiritual current, we will understand ourselves better, our journey over centuries better, and this, as in Nivedita's case, will help us to find our individual strengths—resulting in *true work and a great life*—one that will transform

into a continuous blessing. This promise of a blessed life, Nivedita asserted, is the outcome of every real 'play' that is characterised by selflessness and joy. It is the manifestation of the Divine Play at a human plane as discerned by our ancestors.

In studying her life in India, it is easy to draw the conclusion that Nivedita was more than an Indophile, more intensely Indian than even the most populist patriot. In a letter dated 27 June 1899, she expressed this wholehearted wish: 'And so I lay one flower of love and worship at the feet of the Motherland. May she receive many of her alien-born children as she has received me! May she bestow on them even some little of that undeserved Motherhood and bounty that she has bestowed on me!'¹⁰



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All the Colours of the Rainbow

Srinjay Chakravarti

THE WORD ‘*Avatāra*’ is usually translated from Sanskrit as ‘incarnation’, but it is also interpreted as ‘manifestation’ or ‘appearance’ of a deity or God.

Some time ago, in an article, Swami Ritānanda mentioned that: ‘The Sanskrit word “*Avatāra*” is derived from the root (*dhātu*) “*ṛ*” meaning “to descend”. So, “*Avatāra*” means one who has descended. But in the pages of ontology, the word “*Avatāra*” means only the Incarnation of God.’¹

As the embodiment of God, a deity, or a divine being, the word ‘*Avatāra*’ is linked to the Sanskrit word ‘*avataran*’, which means ‘descent’. God (or the Goddess), therefore, descends on earth in human form as an *Avatāra* through His (or Her) mysterious power. Swami Vivekananda, in his famous paean to Sri Ramakrishna, referred to him as ‘*Avatāra Varīṣṭhāya*’—the greatest of all *avatāras*, the highest spiritual ideal with the maximum possible expression of divinity in a human being in this age.

Why is This So?

The answer can be easily found in the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata*. Swami Bhuteshananda wrote in an article in the journal: ‘His [Sri Ramakrishna’s] uniqueness lies in the fact that nowhere in the history of religion has there been an instance of one individual practising different faiths and realising in his own life the truth that all of them lead to the *one* principle. It is

irrelevant whether Sri Ramakrishna is accepted as an Incarnation or a prophet.’²

Again, in the same essay, we find: ‘How shall we refer to him? ... No adjective can fully describe him. People see him from different angles. ... In him are all the colours of the rainbow’ (141). Indeed, as Swami Bhuteshananda says, Sri Ramakrishna embodies the entire spectrum of spiritual thoughts and practices. And it is only an *Avatāra* who can do so.

As a monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order, it is but natural that *Prabuddha Bharata* in the 125 years of its existence, has also encompassed the entire gamut of religious and spiritual thought. We can even say that it leaves no aspect of human existence untouched, especially all that is ennobling, glorious, and sublime. In its pages, too, are resplendent ‘*all the colours of the rainbow*’.

As Prof. B N Sikdar highlighted in his survey of 100 years of the journal: ‘I have chosen to tell the long story—possibly the longest—in the history of Indian journalism’, underscoring that it is ‘...of great historical importance and has a perennial value.’³

In the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata*, we repeatedly find articles and essays that depict Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation of God and the highest spiritual ideal of our age.

Saviour of Our Time

‘Sri Ramakrishna is a unique personality in human history ... an epoch-maker in the field of spirituality and remains a marvel in the history of religions even today’, wrote Swami Vireshananda in the journal.⁴

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Earlier, an editorial by Swami Bhajanananda in the journal (March 1979), while delineating the concept of Avatārahood in respect of Sri Ramakrishna, had observed: 'Sri Ramakrishna is now being accepted as an Incarnation of God not only by the thousands of his followers, but also by a large number of other people in different parts of the world, among whom may be counted several eminent thinkers and famous men.'⁵ But it is not easy to understand the concept of Avatārahood. As the editorial went on to add: 'The mystery that surrounds the real nature of Sri Ramakrishna is ultimately bound up with the mystery of Incarnation' (ibid.).

Why is this phenomenon so difficult to understand? Swami Samarpanananda explained it thus: 'The divine Incarnation, as explained in devotional literature, is the phenomenon of God manifesting himself in human form, taking the help of his own inscrutable veiling power called *maya*. So, the very nature of an Incarnation makes it virtually impossible to know him. The very power that enables the divine to incarnate on earth conceals the Incarnation's divinity from ordinary people. This is the paradox.'⁶

Asserted Swami Vivekananda: 'It was the Lord alone, the deliverer of the message of the Gita ... He Himself has come as Sri Ramakrishna.'⁷ Swamiji gave one reason why he worshipped Sri Ramakrishna as the greatest of all Avatāras as follows: 'Such a unique personality, such a synthesis of Jnana, Yoga, Bhakti, and Karma, has never before appeared among mankind' (ibid.).

No wonder Swami Nikhilananda observed in 1944: 'The latest one to indicate India's time-honoured spiritual heritage was born slightly over a hundred years ago. ... The spiritual culture of India for the last three thousand years has been incarnated through him. ... Shri Ramakrishna is indeed the saviour of our time.'⁸

Swami Ramakrishnananda, one of the direct



disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, in his article on Sri Ramakrishna, explicitly expressed the verity that the Master is the spiritual ideal of this age and none but God incarnate. He adduced various kinds of evidence—nay, we would say different kinds of proof—of Sri Ramakrishna's Avatārahood. 'The Divine Mother, the sportive Kālī', he wrote, 'incarnated in the form of Sri Ramakrishna to give to her innumerable children knowledge and devotion.'⁹

Swami Ramakrishnananda further wrote: 'In this age, in which great soul is this power of the Lord to be found, taking shelter at whose

feet man will be able to cross the ocean of life?' (69). What is this power of the Lord? He explained the concept of *Avatāra* thus: 'Man cannot help admitting that he in whom this Power [the Power of Time] is manifest to a great extent is an Incarnation of God' (ibid.).

In a similar vein, Swami Virajananda asserted in another article while referring to Sri Ramakrishna, 'Well may he be regarded as a manifestation of Divinity.'¹⁰ And why should Sri Ramakrishna be regarded as the greatest of the Avatars? One answer to this is found in Swami Virajananda's essay: 'He was the cord that threaded into a single garland all the highest spiritual ideals of the past and the present alike!' (150).

Swami Prakashananda expressed this slightly differently: 'Many God-intoxicated souls and sages came to bless us with their message and presence, but none was greater in divine manifestation than he who came as Sri Ramakrishna.'¹¹

It would be misleading, however, to think that it was only monks of the Ramakrishna Order who regarded the Master as God-incarnate. Several world-renowned thinkers and savants echoed this viewpoint. Some were circumspect, such as Count Hermann Alexander Graf von Keyserling, a Baltic German philosopher from the erstwhile Russian empire. Yet, he was compelled to acknowledge that Sri Ramakrishna '...does indeed stand for something eternal.'¹²

What the Earl of Ronaldshay had to say is interesting: 'The narrative of his life and teaching recalls inevitably the emotional figure of Chaitanya. Like the great Vaishnava saint of Nadia, he gave vent to his pent-up feelings in song and dance.'¹³ Although he viewed Sri Ramakrishna as just a 'saint', by drawing parallels with Sri Chaitanya, the Golden Avatāra of the Kali Age, the Earl implicitly acknowledged him as a modern Messiah, an Avatāra.

No such dubiety, however, assailed E C Brown,

who in a lecture at San Francisco described Sri Ramakrishna as 'one of the greatest Incarnations of God.'¹⁴ Many times God has visited this planet of ours in human form; His last manifestation of power and blessedness appearing in the form of this God-intoxicated soul, Sri Ramakrishna ... the last great Incarnation of God' (179–81).

Spiritual Ideal of the Age

But why is Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna the spiritual ideal of our times? Why is he considered the Yuga-Avatāra, the Incarnation of our Age? As Swami Vireshananda has explained: 'He upheld the pristine and noble path of spirituality advocated by the Upanishads in ancient times.'¹⁵ And this explains the enduring appeal of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. Or, as Dr M Sivaramakrishna described him, 'Ramakrishna, peerless exemplar of the core of Hindu religious philosophy.'¹⁶

'India's contribution through Sri Ramakrishna towards the formation or rather the restoration of such a spiritual outlook of man, and towards giving a spiritual orientation to human life, is important and significant,' wrote Swami Mumukshananda, and 'These experiences of Shri Ramakrishna have resuscitated not only Hinduism but other religions too.'¹⁷

Swami Virajananda summed up the Master's speciality in this manner: '[That] He could illumine and elucidate abstruse truths of philosophy and religion and satisfy the hunger and thirst of hundreds of parched-up souls by the nectar of his simple sayings which even a child could understand is indeed a wonder.'¹⁸

'The greatest of Indian sages of modern times' was how V C Seshacharry described Sri Ramakrishna, and went further to say that '...the sublime life-history of the Messiah of the Age—Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna... and his gospel of universal strength and peace and love' shall provide solace to countless people.'¹⁹

The Messiah and His Mission

The particular relevance of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings in this age of science and technology, which is also an age of widespread nescience, immorality, and venality, was inimitably summed up by Dr M Sivaramakrishna: 'Ramakrishna's dialectic is peculiarly synergetic and is free from preference for the simplistic resolution. ... Ramakrishna's forte is not conceptual but experiential and therein lies the uniqueness of the relation between Ramakrishna and "science".'²⁰

In Swami Virajananda's view: 'To sound the trumpet note of peace among the warring sects, by his own living example, was the grandest mission of Sri Ramakrishna's life.'²¹

R E R Lees, an officer of the Indian Police Service (IPS), wrote: 'Ramakrishna was a man uncontaminated by the worldly things that constituted the world of his time. His life was a great demonstration that even in this age, cluttered with evil and financial dependency, divine realisation can be attained by one whose religious devotion is sincere and whole-hearted.'²² Lees also lauded '...the directness and simpleness of his philosophy and the broad and completely unsectarian spirit which pervades it' (ibid.).

This is a vital point, and E C Brown further exemplified it thus: 'The great outstanding purpose of Sri Ramakrishna's advent as the Divine Incarnation of this age was that he came to show that the paths of all men lead to the same goal and the same Divine Self dwells within the heart of all.'²³

Swami Vireswarananda summed this up as: 'One great legacy of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world is broad-mindedness in religion. ... He could realise that there cannot be any religious formula to suit all men but that everyone must be the architect of his own religion. So the greater the number of sects, the more the chances of people getting a religion.'²⁴

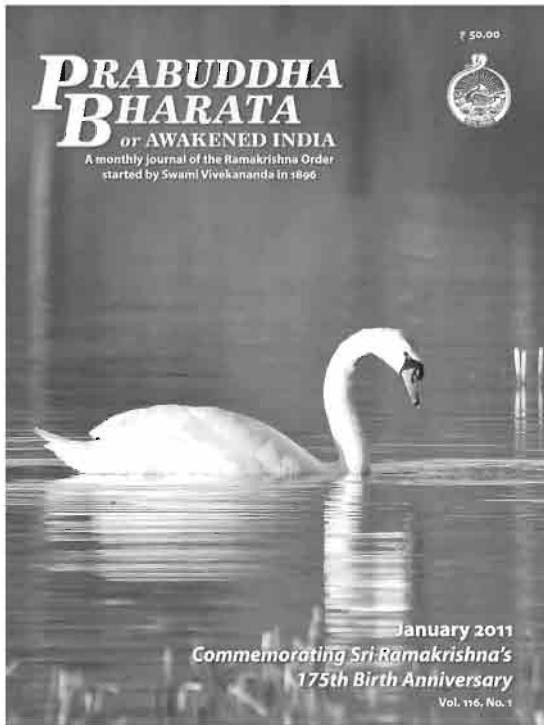
Swami Saradananda added another dimension to this by writing: 'Has the world ever before witnessed the play of the mighty spiritual force which has been gathered and transmitted by him to his disciples.'²⁵

Father Francis X Clooney shed light on another aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's life and mission in a very interesting manner with his delineation of '*bhāvamukha*', that liminal zone where 'the divine source floods forth into the multiplicity of experiences, thoughts, things...'²⁶ 'I am, as you know, a Jesuit and a Catholic priest, a devotee of Jesus Christ, not of Ramakrishna,' he wrote. 'Nevertheless, Ramakrishna's life and its message echo in my life... What is the significance of such echoes, such illuminations across religious boundaries?' (260). Father Clooney further wrote about Sri Ramakrishna: '...the mission given to him, why he was to remain on the "edge" between the finite and the infinite...' was that 'His "mission" was to dwell at that crucial meeting point of the divine and human where all experiences begin, and to make known in the world—using the concrete resources of his own life—what it means to be religious and conformed to the divine' (256).

Not just his sayings and teachings, therefore, but his life itself, the way he lived it, was Sri Ramakrishna's mission. The message he gave us was manifold and the reason for this astounding multifarity was that as Swami Vireswarananda says, '...to this man religion was not a mere dogma or theory but a reality that could be felt or sensed, if you like to say so, just like anything of this world'²⁷

The Master and His Message

'The great message of all the Divine teachers and prophets is—you are Divine and you can become Divine in consciousness,' wrote Swami Prakashananda.²⁸ According to V C



Seshacharry: *'The message of Sri Ramakrishna Deva, briefly told, is one of intense light and love, of infinite harmony and toleration, and of selfless service and sublime renunciation.'*²⁹ In Swami Shuddhananda's point of view:

It appears to us that we can derive two most important lessons from his life and teachings. The first is that religion does not consist in theorising, in mere intellectual assent to certain doctrines however profound, nor to the mere scrupulous performance of certain ceremonials, however salutary and instructive they may be in themselves, neither in controversial proficiency, nor in the profession of secret occult wisdom, nor in a particular manner of eating and drinking. It really is in realisation in one's heart of the living God. ... The other great message to which we have referred is that all religions are true; they are, as it were, so many paths to reach the same goal.³⁰

Swami Nikhilananda expressed this thus: 'Another important message of Sri Ramakrishna to the world torn asunder by religious bigotry is the

harmony of religions.' This was partly because, as he said: 'Sri Ramakrishna experienced the unity of Existence, which is a unique contribution of the Hindu spiritual culture.'³¹

Swami Gambhirananda highlighted another important element of Sri Ramakrishna's message: 'Thakur said that discrimination between what is real and what is unreal, between things permanent and transient, is to be observed.'³²

'Another knotty point on which the life of Sri Ramakrishna throws a flood of light is the relative claims of faith and reason', pointed out Swami Vireswarananda.³³

Trailokyanath Sanyal, the singing apostle of the New Dispensation Church of the Brahmo Samaj, made some interesting observations in this context: 'The manifestation of the devotional aspect and the ideal of the Motherhood of God which is seen nowadays in Brahmo Samaj is mainly due to Paramahansa Ramakrishna. ... Many know that the worship of God as the Mother and the use of easy and colloquial language in worship and prayer which Keshub adopted of late was the result of his coming in contact with this great soul.'³⁴

Not everyone does, or can, recognise Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation of God. Yet, even those who do not accept this can never deny the yardstick generally attributed to the American philosopher William James (1842–1910): 'The greatest use of a life is to spend it on something that will outlast it.'³⁵ It is in this that Sri Ramakrishna's triumph, the consummation of his victory over the forces of evil and wickedness, lies—the ever-expanding empire of his goodness, virtue, and piety, his divine mission and message, his ennobling ideals and principles of action.

'The impetus he has given to society by his life is sure to be of immeasurable social significance. Considering the conditions of the age, its corruptions, one can fairly judge that it will be a long

time, probably centuries, before we can have any idea of its influence' (Swami Vireswarananda).³⁶ This is a hallmark of an Avatara, for '...it is only for an Incarnation to give a thorough push to the entire social system' (Swami Samarpanananda).³⁷

Sri Ramakrishna and India's Resurgence

'The Indian philosophers have given a sacramental and spiritual interpretation of life and the universe, as opposed to the merely mechanistic and secular one', wrote Swami Nikhilananda in the journal.³⁸

Sri Ramakrishna's life was the acme of this realisation. For, as Swamiji explained, the Master propounded and revived in modern times '...the noblest philosophy of unity man ever had—the Advaita Vedanta'.³⁹

In spreading the Vedantic ideal, 'India has a definite message for the world', Swami Nikhilananda iterated. 'This is our responsibility, for India is the last great hope of humanity. May we not fail humanity in this hour of crisis.'⁴⁰

As Dr Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty put it, '*India will become what it has forgotten to be, the Advaita Ashrama... of the entire world.*'⁴¹

One reason for the descent of God in the form of Sri Ramakrishna was to awaken India into the spiritual light. 'By the touch of his feet lifeless India has awakened purer than ever, and has become the pride and hope of the world; that, thanks to his embodiment in human form, man has become an object of worship to gods even', wrote Swami Saradananda.⁴²

The salvific power of Sri Ramakrishna, therefore, is not limited to his homeland but will inevitably illumine the entire world, given that this is the era of globalisation. In disseminating the sublime message of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ma Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, *Prabuddha Bharata* has played a catalytic role. And the manner in which it has done so, and is doing now as well—without

being sentimental, trite, or jejune—will verily make India the ideal of the world.

According to Dr Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty: 'It will be a world in which there will be peace and concord, for people will see, understand, and interact with each other from a deeper level. It will become the Advaita Ashrama, the house where humanity will live in unity and brotherhood.'⁴³

The way in which this divine message is permeating across the world, we can now say with conviction—125 years after the journal was launched by Swami Vivekananda—'*Prabuddha Bharata, Udbuddha Vishwa*' ('Awakened India, Inspired World').



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Prabuddha Bharata on India and Indian Nationalism

Dilip Dhopavkar

IN THE LAST 125 years, in *Prabuddha Bharata*, the issue of Indian nationalism has been reflected by many eminent authors. Their articles are in response to the issues prevalent at that time. A bird's eye view covering the period from 1910s to 2000, reveals a range of reflections which can be classified broadly under two headings, namely, (i) The identity of the Indian nation until the year 1947, and (ii) The reconstruction of the Indian nation after independence in 1947.

The Identity of India

After Swami Vivekananda's monumental work of spreading the message of the Vedanta and establishment of the Vedanta societies across America, there was certainly a change in the way the Western World judged India. The earlier biases were not visible any more. The respect shown to the Indians in America was palpable. Vincent Smith's observation that India is underestimated by the world, not because of her lack of achievements but because of the ignorance the world has about India, began to fade in the early 20th century. In this connection, we quote from Lala Hardyal in the report 'India in America' (*PB*, November 1911):

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America is always on the alert for a lesson in religion from a Hindu. The cultured classes always imagine that every Hindu is a yogi, or thought to be one. There is a keen and growing interest in Hindu thought. Many earnest inquirers wish to quench their thirst for the ideal at the fountain of Hindu philosophy. Many rich and educated ladies affect to be enamoured of the Hindu religion and burn incense before the statue of the Buddha placed in their drawing rooms. Several American ladies have even adopted Hindu names and dedicated themselves to the Vedantik propaganda.¹

Although this view of Lala Hardyal is an anecdotal one, we can see the beginning of the change in the attitude towards India. However, this should not be construed as the beginning of the formation of the national identity.

Cultural Nationalism

The question of national identity was still not acceptable to all. There was a belief that India was never a nation. Those who have this belief say, it was under the British rule that the people of India understood the idea of a nation. Before the advent of the British, it was a hotchpotch of many ethnicities, cultures, races, creeds, castes, religions, and languages. There was never a consciousness of one nation among the Indians. The origin of this belief was due to the blind acceptance of the idea of nationhood as set by the Westerners, since according to them, the political and territorial idea of nationalism was valid and the idea of 'cultural nationalism' was something to be rejected.

Even in the 1920s, the debate around the idea of political nationalism must have been prevalent. We see an attempt to refute the 'political nationalism' and uphold 'cultural nationalism' in the article 'India Hitherto a Nation' written by Pramathanath Bose (PB, June 1929). He says: 'There are three fundamental unities which in varying degrees of preponderance underlie the conception of nationhood, viz., geographical, cultural and political.'² According to him, cultural nationalism is equally valid. He further writes that the Aryans had a clear concept of the land they lived in as captured in the following Sanskrit verse: '*Gange ca Yamune caiva Godāvari Sarasvati, Narmade Sindhu Kāveri jalesmin sannidhim kuru*; O Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri—please be present in this water.' This is a verse to be recited while taking bath.

The author writes: 'The catalogue of sacred places which are resorted to by all Hindu pilgrims was expanded so as to embrace those of the South such as Kanchi (Conjeevaram) and Ramesvara, and that of sacred mountains was enlarged so as to comprise Mahendra (the Eastern

Ghats) and Malaya and Sahya (the Western Ghats). Reformers like Shankaracharya and Chaitanya made a tour of the whole of India, and the former emphasized his idea of its unity by establishing *Maths* in the north (the Himalaya, Jyotir Nath), the south (Sringeri), the east (Govardhan at Puri), and the west (Sarada at Dwaraka)' (ibid.). They are the sacred pilgrimage centres for all Hindus spread all over India. Moreover, the deities such as Rama, Krishna, and Shiva are worshipped all over India; they are not confined to their places of birth only. Similarly, the Vedas are studied and considered sacred all over India. Thus there is indeed a consciousness among Indians that there is a bond which is religious or cultural in nature. This is what is called *cultural nationalism*.

It must be noted that the above article is based on the theory of the so-called movement of the Aryans from outside India and also from North India to South India. The Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) was an almost established theory among the thinkers of those times. Today however AIT has lost much of the sheen as new pieces of evidence and the analytical tools invalidate this theory.

Refutation of the Unacceptable Comments of the Historians

The Western scholars of Indian History—both cultural and political—had spread the belief that the Indians had no achievements to their credit. Such historians or cultural critics were famous and respected for their excellent work. Prof Max Muller, Sir Vincent Smith, and Mathew Arnold were the authorities and the people inclined to believe them for their erudition. But they also made mistakes in judging Indians. Thus, we see an attempt by Indian national leaders to bring about the solidarity among the Indians by reminding them of their past glory

and achievements. Their method was to reject the false claims that undermined the feeling of nationhood among the Indians. In this regard, Haripada Ghoshal writes in his article, 'India's Secular Achievements' (*PB*, October 1926):

Western scholars are apt to say that the philosophical temperament of the Indians was in the main responsible for their utter neglect of worldly concerns. They affirm that the Indian people never played a prominent part in the history of the world. ... They believe that life in India moved in a narrow groove, that the circle of political existence in India was small, and thus the Indians did not possess all those qualities which gain for a nation its permanent place in the history.³

The author quotes from the lines of a poem of Mathew Arnold,

The East bowed low before the Blast
In patient, deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again (*ibid.*).

Such a gloomy poem agrees with the early belief formed by reading the history of India, which gives an impression that the Indians are the nation of losers. This dogma must be falsified. Thus, Haripada Ghoshal sets out to enumerate the achievements of Indians. First, he refutes the charge that the Indians were isolationists. He gives the quote of Vincent Smith on Chandragupta Maurya: 'The existence of these elaborate regulations is a conclusive proof that the Maurya empire in the third century BCE was in constant intercourse with foreign states and a large number of strangers visited the capital on business' (*ibid.*).

Chandragupta's empire extended over the entire North India and a large part of Ariana (a district of wide extent between Central Asia and the Indus River, comprising the eastern provinces of the Achaemenid Empire that covered

the whole of modern-day Afghanistan, as well as the easternmost part of Iran and up to the Indus River in Pakistan).⁴ Ashoka, his grandson, further extended the empire to include the whole of southern India except the extreme south. Pataliputra, the capital of Magadha, became the centre of international trade and India became the first power of the world. *Arthashastra* and *Sūkra Nīti*, the treatises on the administration, moral rules, social customs and institutions, geography, mineralogy, botany and zoology, were written in those times. Bindusara received an embassy from the king of Egypt and had correspondence with Antiochus of Syria. Ashoka sent ambassadors to Syria, Lanka, Egypt, Macedonia, Epirus (southern Europe), and Kyrene (a part of Greece). In post Ashokan times, until 250 CE, there was a thriving trade by sea and land with West Asia, Rome, Greece, and Egypt. The time period from 300 to 650 CE was a period of exceptional intellectual activity. This article also quotes from Prof. Binoy Sarkar's writing:

It was a new India, this India of the Guptas—a new stage, new actors, and what is more, a new outlook. Extensive diplomatic relations with foreign powers, military renown, of *Digvijaya* at home, overthrow of the barbarians on the western borders, international trade, maritime activity, and a unique social transformation—all these ushered in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era a thorough rejuvenation and a complete overhauling of the old order of things in Hindustan' (*ibid.*).

We witness outstanding achievements of Indians in mathematics, metallurgy, medicine, astronomy in this period.

Prof Sarkar observes, 'To every orthodox European scholar, philosophy as well as general civilisation begins with Greece and in the textbooks of history of human culture, it is the precursor of Plato and Aristotle that are described as the first seers of truths and civilisers

of mankind; other systems of thought and discoveries of doctrines being roughly classified as 'Oriental' pre-economic, pre-political and hence not the worth the trouble and pains of an investigator (ibid.).

The laudable attempt to construct a national identity by invoking the glorious past, which was unknown to the common man, took place in the pre-independence days. It was important to awaken the self-esteem of Indians by educating them about the wonderful historical achievements of their own ancestors. By invoking the past excellence, it was thus possible to make the Indians conscious of the possibility of the glorious future, because what was possible in the past will surely be possible in the future also.

This same thread continues even after independence in 1947. The tone of the reflections of the authors of *Prabuddha Bharata* shifts. Now the tone is one of rebuilding modern India as an organically grown nation from its past. The past is not ignored, but the baton is picked up from the past and carried to construct a modern nation. And who can be the best guide to carry out this work other than Swami Vivekananda!

Reconstruction of Modern India

What is the rationale of assuming that Swamiji is the perfect guide for building the modern nation? The Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* gives a brilliant answer in his editorial, 'India needs Vivekananda Ever More' (PB, January 1972):

Swami Vivekananda was a worker at foundations: a root and branch reformer as he himself characterised once. It demands an intimate knowledge of the roots and branches of the national tree before one can lay a claim to be such a reformer. The roots of an ancient nation like India go deep into its historic and prehistoric past. They are a tangle of vitally living and dead and rotting roots. Only a man who has relived the entire national past and embodies

it in himself can undertake to spare the living and shear off the dead roots. The society and the people, their beliefs and aspirations, their achievements and weaknesses represent the branches of the national tree. A theoretician cannot sort out the deadwood from the living branch, but a man who has been a 'field-worker'—one who has lived and moved in the society, associated and identified himself with the members— can do that. Swami Vivekananda was such a man.⁵

One might wonder whether in the National Tree are there any branches that have become deadwood, a burden for the evolution of our nation? Indeed, there is a lot of deadwood which needs to be cut forthwith. Swamiji did not hesitate to boldly declare the deadwood which includes the following:

Jealousy and Disunion: He thundered, 'That (jealousy) is a national sin with us, speaking ill of others and burning at heart at the greatness of others.'⁶ The pain became sharper when he saw that the Westerners were mostly free of this vice.

Laziness and Insincerity: He wrote from America: 'Do you mean to say that I am born to live and die one of those caste-ridden, superstitious, merciless, hypocritical, atheistic cowards that you find only among the educated Hindus?' (5.96).

Two great evils: The trampling of women and inhuman treatment of lower classes are the two great evils of Indian society. Swamiji denounced in strong words the hypocrisy of Indians for their mistreatment of women and for keeping the masses in ignorance.

The uniqueness of choosing Swamiji's idea of India as a basis for the reconstruction in preference to modern concepts such as socialism, liberty, freedom, or human rights, must have relevance and merit. Otherwise, there is a danger of getting swept away emotionally because of our reverence to him. The answer comes from Sister Nivedita. The editor writes:

Writing the insightful 'Introduction' to the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Sister Nivedita lists the three 'formative influences that went into the determining of his vision', 'the three notes that mingle themselves to form the music of the works of Vivekananda'.

First comes the literary education of the Swami in Sanskrit and English. Thereby he earned the historical perspective and saw the contrast between India and the West. Second, in order came the Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, who in his brief life 'lived the five thousand years of national spiritual life and so raised himself to be an object lesson for future generations'. These two equipped Swamiji with the authentic clinical knowledge to distinguish the dead and the diseased from the living and the vital roots of the national tree. The last formative influence was the Motherland. He wandered throughout India—from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari—unlike a globe trotter who took a vanishing railway view of the country—mixing with masses, the poor and the illiterate, the rich and the learned, studying, learning and teaching. He saw India as she was and is, and so grasping in its comprehensiveness the vast whole, of which his master's life and personality had been a brief and intense epitome.⁷

These are the three lights burning within the single lamp which India by his hand lighted and set up for the guidance of her own children and of the world in the few years of work between September 19, 1893 and July 4, 1902.⁸

Swamiji's idea of going back to the Upanishads is not easily understood by all. It is too radical or dogmatic, say the modern intellectuals. How can the Upanishads which are the ancient repositories of knowledge be relevant in the modern context? The question is superficially legitimate. A curious and honest intellectual has to go back to Swamiji's exposition of the Upanishads for the answer.

The backbone of rebuilding a nation is the education imparted to the children and the

youth. Swamiji had great expectations from the young. The education must be comprehensive, and not merely the collection of skills. In the words of Swamiji: 'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.'⁹ Note he doesn't say intellect is sharpened. A cursory look at the education of today will not convince us that it forms a character, increases the strength of the mind, and expands the intellect uniformly in all. The editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* observes (Editorial: March 1988):

The 1985 report of the National Policy of Education, regrets that despite the fact that 'education is the highest budgeted expenditure after Defence' in India, students produced are 'without a sense of self-confidence and pride in their nation'. Many of them know not that 'as Indians they have a great deal in their past and present'. The primary responsibility for this sordid state of affairs squarely be laid on the syllabus which emphasises more on non-Indian ideas and less on the history and greatness of Indian heritage, and also on the makers of syllabus who have ignored the global relevance of our ancient heritage and national culture.¹⁰

We go back to Swamiji again.

Nearly a century ago Vivekananda cautioned the Indians, 'Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, deluge the land with a flood of spirituality', and said that 'this spirituality in a certain sense will have to become the new order of the society'. He knew that 'That society is the greatest where the highest spiritual truths become practical'. He cautioned that if India ever tried to replace the spiritual backbone with politics, she will be extinct in three generations (89).

What are the practical implications of such an education? A sceptic might complain that this type of education is dogmatic; it is in direct contrast with the modernity and will result

in undermining the scientific temper which is so necessary today. The Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* answers:

The combination of 'scientific temper' and 'spiritual values' ... is possible only in the background of Vedanta philosophy. The new holistic approach of modern physics accepts no distinction between matter and mind. ... This approach obviously stands incompatible with the ideas of the eternal separation between sinner man and the Perfect God, between believers and non-believers, between matter and mind, which are fundamental to semitic religious thought (87).

There must be some concrete steps which are practicable and should fit into the educational programmes of the schools and universities. Here are the practical suggestions given by the Editor:

Three ideas clearly emerge from these reports (of the Education Commission 1964–66). First, the need of training the teachers, 'the educators of the new order', of whom Vivekananda dreamt. Some voluntary organizations have done commendable job and have maintained, with a band of highly accomplished and dedicated teachers, outstanding institutions of repute. The second is the need of immediate introduction of graded topics on spiritual values. Vivekananda said, that the religion of Vedanta is the very core of education. The universal aspects of Indian culture and its modern relevance should be included in the curriculum of a compulsory study. When ideas will be available to the students, the desired effect will not be far off. The third is the provision for spiritual training through meditation or prayer or regular classes on these aspects of Indian culture. Today universities have indoor stadia used for sports and game, and also for social functions by college bodies. Physical culture is a must for all students, but what we also need today is a moral-spiritual gymnasium, a 'purity drilling' place attached to all educational institutions for regularly exploring the spiritual reserves of individual students, under the guidance of capable teachers who have got, in the words of Alvin Toffler, 'the

white-hot experience that transforms our life'. Vivekananda had in mind such a temple of universal prayer when he said, 'We must have a temple. ... We will make it a non-sectarian temple, having only OM as the symbol, the greatest symbol of any sect and at the same time the different sects should have perfect liberty to come and teach their doctrines, with only one restriction, that is, not to quarrel with the other sects' (89).

Swamiji not only talked about Vedanta but he also effectively showed that it is possible to make it intensely practical in everyday life. This was his greatest contribution born out of his intense love for his motherland, India.

The above review covers a period of 90 years, from 1910 to 2000. There is a positive note at the end. We see the favourable change happening in India in many respects. Swamiji had prophesied the regeneration of modern India and it is indeed a satisfying experience of the last few years. ☞

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Chronology of Important Events in the History of Prabuddha Bharata

1. **September 1895** — Publication of the first issue of *Brahmavadin*.
2. **14 April 1896** — Swami Vivekananda's Letter to Dr M C Nanjunda Rao:

'I received your note this morning. As I am sailing for England tomorrow, I can only write a few hearty lines. I have every sympathy with your proposed magazine for boys, and will do my best to help it on. You ought to make it independent, following the same lines as the *Brahmavadin*, only making the style and matter much more popular. As for example, there is a great chance, much more than you ever dream of, for those wonderful stories scattered all over the Sanskrit literature, to be re-written and made popular. That should be the one great feature of your journal.

'I will write stories, as many as I can, when time permits. Avoid all attempts to make the journal scholarly — the *Brahmavadin* stands for that — and it will slowly make its way all over the world, I am sure. Use the simplest language possible, and you will succeed. The main feature should be the teaching of principles through stories.

'Don't make it metaphysical at all. As to the business part, keep it wholly in your hands. "Too many cooks spoil the broth." In India the one thing we lack is the power of combination, organisation, the first secret of which is obedience.'¹

3. **July 1896** — Publication of the first issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* in Madras (now Chennai).
4. **14 July 1896** — Swamiji's letter to Dr M C Nanjunda Rao:

'The numbers of *Prabuddha Bharata* have been received and distributed too to the class. It is very satisfactory. It will have a great sale, no doubt, in India. In America I may get also a number of subscribers. I have already arranged for advertising it in America and Goodyear has done it already. ... One point I will remark however. The cover is simply barbarous. It is awful and hideous. If it is possible, change it. Make it symbolical and simple, without human figures at all. The banyan tree does not mean awakening, nor does the hill, nor the saint, nor the European couple. The lotus is a symbol of regeneration' (5.108).

5. **22 September 1896** — Swamiji's letter to Alasinga Perumal:

'You are very welcome to publish the Jñāna-Yoga lectures, as well as Dr. (Nanjunda Rao) in his *Awakened India* — only the simpler ones. They have to be very carefully gone through and all repetitions and contradictions taken out. I am sure I will now have more time to write. Work on with energy' (5.115-6).

6. **May 1898** — Death of B R Rajam Iyer, the first editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*.
7. **June 1898** — Discontinuation of the publication of *Prabuddha Bharata* in Madras.
8. **July 1898** — No issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* this month; transfer of *Prabuddha Bharata* office from Chennai to a rented house at Almora called 'Thompson House'.
9. **August 1898** — Publication of the first issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* in a new garb from Almora, with Swami Swarupananda as the Editor.

10. **27 February 1899** — The Sale Deed of Mayavati property was done in Favour of Captain Sevier.
11. **19 March 1899** — Swami Swarupananda and Mr and Mrs Seviars moved into the new premises in Mayavati.
12. **28 October 1900** — Death of Captain Sevier.
13. **3 January to 18 January 1901** — Swami Vivekananda's visit to Mayavati Ashrama.
14. **22 May 1912** — The foundation of the *Prabuddha Bharata* building was laid.
15. **2 April 1914** — *Homa*, fire ritual, was performed on the completion of the construction of the PB building.
16. **7 April 1914** — Printing Press was moved to the new PB building.
17. **1 April 1919** — Mayavati Post Office opened in a room in the *Prabuddha Bharata* building.
18. **May 1920** — Shifting of the Publication Department of Advaita Ashrama from Mayavati to Kolkata.
19. **January 1922** — Change in size of the paper of the magazine from Double Crown size paper to Demy size (192 pages in 1900 to 288 pages per year in 1921, and 480 pages in 1922).
20. **January 1924** — Shifting of the Publication work of *Prabuddha Bharata* to Kolkata, while the Editorial Office continued in Mayavati. The January 1924 issue came out from Gouranga Press in Kolkata.
21. **January 1929** — Change in size of the paper of the magazine from Demy size to Royal size (626 pages in the year 1929).
22. **February 1936** — Sri Ramakrishna Birth Centenary Issue
23. **May 1945** — Golden Jubilee Number of *Prabuddha Bharata*
24. **March 1954** — The Holy Mother Birth Centenary Number
25. **May 1963** — Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Number
26. **1965** — 75th year of *Prabuddha Bharata*
27. **December 1986** — Sri Ramakrishna's 150th Birth Centenary and Ramakrishna Sangha (Order) Centenary Number.
28. **September 1993** — Special issue on the occasion of the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's participation in the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago, in September 1893.
29. **September 1993** — Typing of the manuscripts and page make-up for *Prabuddha Bharata* started in Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata. The printing of the journal was done in an offset press in Kolkata.
30. **1995** — 944 pages in 1995, the Centenary year of *Prabuddha Bharata*
31. **January 1995** — Special Issue on the occasion of the Centenary of *Prabuddha Bharata*
32. **April 1996** — A Pentium Chip IBM computer with laser printer was brought for the *Prabuddha Bharata* office in Mayavati.
33. **October 1998** — Another Pentium chip IBM computer and a HP ScanJet 4C scanner arrived in Mayavati for use in *Prabuddha Bharata* office.
34. **1999** — Introduction of the Internet facility in Mayavati.
35. **January 1999** — Special Issue on the occasion of the Centenary of Mayavati Advaita Ashrama.



Madras, February 1897. Standing, left to right: A few children, Alasinga Perumal, J J Goodwin, M N Banerjee, and other local devotees. Sitting on chairs, left to right: Tarapada (an outside Sadhu), Swamis Shivananda, Vivekananda, Niranjanananda, and Sadananda. Front row: (second) Biligiri Iyengar, (fourth) M C Nanjunda Rao.

36. **January 2004** — Holy Mother's 150th Birth Anniversary Celebration Number
37. **2007** — Introduction of a different cover in 4 colours every month.
38. **January 2013** — Swamiji's 150th Birth Anniversary Celebration Number
39. **January 2014** — Swamiji's 150th year Celebration Number in full colour pages printed in art paper for the first time (200 pages).
40. **January 2017** — Sister Nivedita's 150th Birth Anniversary Celebration Number
41. **22 October 2017** — Opening of the New Building accomodating *Prabuddha Bharata* office and the Library.
42. **January 2021** — *Prabuddha Bharata* 125 years Celebration Number.



References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.107.

Editors of Prabuddha Bharata

and Their Tenure in Office



B R Rajam Iyer
(July 1896 – June 1898)



Swami Swarupananda
(August 1898 – July 1906)



Swami Virajananda
(August 1906 – December 1913)



Swami Prajnananda
(January 1914 – May 1918)



Swami Raghavananda
(June 1918 – December 1921)



Swami Yatiswarananda
(January 1922 – December 1924)



Swami Vividishananda
(January 1925 – December 1926)



Swami Ashokananda
(January 1927 – December 1930)



Swami Pavitrananda
(January 1931 – December 1934)



Swami Maithilyananda
(January 1935 – December 1937)



Swami Tejasananda
(January 1938 – December 1939)



Swami Vipulananda
(January 1940 – December 1941)



Swami Gambhirananda
(January 1942 – December 1944)



Swami Yogeswarananda
(January 1945 – December 1947)



Swami Brahmamayananda
(January 1948 – December 1949)



Swami Vandanananda
(January 1950 – December 1954)



Swami Satswarupananda
(January 1955 – December 1956)



Swami Nihstreyasananda
(January 1957 – December 1958)



Swami Ananyananda
(January 1959 – December 1961)



Swami Chidatmananda
(January 1962 – December 1963)



Swami Kirtidananda
(January 1964 – December 1965)



Swami Adiswarananda
(January 1966 – July 1968)



Swami Buchananda
(August 1968 – December 1968)



Swami Rasajnananda
(January 1969 – December 1970)



Swami Tadrupananda
(January 1971 – December 1976)



Swami Balaramananda
(January 1977 – February 1979)



Swami Bhajanananda
(March 1979 – December 1986)



Swami Jitatmananda
(January 1987 – December 1989)



Swami Muktirupananda
(January 1990 – December 1993)



Swami Atmaramananda
(January 1994 – December 1996)



Swami Satyapriyananda
(January 1997 – December 1998)



Swami Sunirmalananda
(January 1999 – December 2001)



Swami Yuktatmananda
(January 2002 – December 2004)



Swami Satyaswarupananda
(January 2005 – October 2010)



Swami Satyamayananda
(November 2010 – July 2014)



Swami Narasimhananda
(August 2014 – July 2020)

Note: The period of tenure in office of the Editors given above is based on the names mentioned (slips pasted or printed) in the yearly volumes of the *Prabuddha Bharata* preserved in Mayavati Library, as there was no mention of the Editor's name in the earlier individual issues.

REPORTS

Headquarters

Durga Puja was celebrated at Belur Math from 23 to 26 October with due solemnity. The Puja was held in the Sri Ramakrishna Temple instead of in the pandal and the public was not allowed inside the campus due to the Covid-19 situation. The Puja was, however, telecast live as in previous years and a few lakh devotees watched it over the television and Internet.

Sri Jagdeep Dhankhar, Governor of West Bengal, visited Belur Math on 24 October.

News of Branch Centres (in India)

Durga Puja (in the image) was celebrated from 23 to 26 October at 27 centres, namely Antpur, Asansol, Barasat, Bilaspur, Contai, Cooch Behar, Dhaleswar, Ghatshila, Guwahati, Jalpaiguri, Jamshedpur, Jayrambati, Kailashahar, Kamarpukur, Karimganj, Kasundia (Howrah), Lucknow, Malda, Medinipur, Mumbai, Patna, Port Blair, Rahara, Shella (under Sohra / Cherrapunjee), Shyamsayer (Bardhaman), Silchar, and Varanasi Advaita Ashrama.

Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysuru launched on 26 September a programme to distribute 25,000 saplings and Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature to the general public.

The molecular laboratory of the hospital at **Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban** received a certificate of accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) on 12 October.

Smt. Baby Rani Maurya, Governor of Uttarakhand, visited **Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati** on 19 October.

A bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda, installed by **Ramakrishna Math, Halasuru** at a prominent location on the premises of Bengaluru



Swamiji's Statue unveiled at KSR Bengaluru City Railway Station

City Railway Station (also known as Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Railway Station), was unveiled on 26 October. A video of Revered Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, giving words of blessings was played on the occasion. Sri D V Sadananda Gowda, Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers, inaugurated an exhibition set up near the statue.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Visakhapatnam conducted an essay competition for college students on the topic 'Swami Vivekananda's Vision of a New India'. The competition was conducted online in July 2020 due to the lockdown restrictions. In all, 230 essays were received both in English and Telugu. After due evaluations, cash and books were awarded to 12 participants as prizes. Each participant was issued a participation certificate and a book of Swami Vivekananda. The Prize distribution function was held on Sunday, 25 October 2020.



Inauguration of Vivekananda Dialysis Centre at Kankhal Sevashrama

Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Chennai is distributing 630 tablet computers, with necessary software installed, to the students of its residential high school and polytechnic college thus enabling them to attend classes online in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In response to a call from the NITI Aayog, Government of India, to observe **Rashtriya Poshan Maah** (National Nutrition Month), our 55 branch centres spread over 21 states/union territories conducted several programmes in the months of September and October 2020.

Ramakrishna Math, Jamtara celebrated its centenary on 1 November with special worship and inauguration of the newly built kitchen-cum-dining-hall block, named Shivananda Prasad Bhavan.

Sri Badal Patralekh, Agriculture Minister, Government of Jharkhand, participated as the chief guest in the workshop on farming held at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi Morabadi** on 12 November.

On the occasion of its centenary, **Ramakrishna Math (Gadadhar Ashrama), Kolkata** conducted special worship and devotional music on 17 November.



Relief by Karimganj Centre on Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2020

The new dialysis unit at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kankhal** was inaugurated on 19 November.

The annual convocation of **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI, deemed university)**, Belur Math was held on the university's Belur campus on 26 November. Degrees and diplomas were awarded to 289 candidates from Belur, Narendrapur, and Ranchi campuses of the university. Owing to the pandemic, most students attended the programme online. Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, who is also the Chancellor of the university, addressed the convocation through a recorded video.

The new multipurpose hall and dining-hall on the Nagachi campus of **Ramakrishna Math, Ramanathapuram** were inaugurated on 27 November. The campus is located at a distance of 15 km from Ramanathapuram town and lies on the way to Rameshwaram.

Values Education and Youth Programmes

Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi conducted 18 online workshops on values education in

October. In all, 291 principals and 1,537 teachers from different parts of India attended these workshops. The centre also conducted 13 online workshops on values education from 30 October to 24 November. In all, 1,024 teachers from different parts of India attended these workshops. It also held two webinars on the same subject on 27 and 28 October in which 111 principals and vice-principals took part.

Ramakrishna Math, Madurai conducted a values education programme for teachers on 23 September in which 103 teachers from two schools took part.

Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad conducted an online contest on the booklet *The Ideal Woman* on 15 November in which 6,882 students from all over the country participated.

News of Branch Centres (outside India)

Durga Puja (in the image) was performed at Durban (South Africa) centre, Lusaka (Zambia) centre, Mauritius Ashrama, and 14 centres in Bangladesh, namely Baliati, Barisal, Chandpur, Chittagong, Comilla, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Habiganj, Jessore, Mymensingh, Narayanganj, Rangpur, and Sylhet, and at the Narail sub-centre of Jessore Ashrama.

Sri Vikram K Doraiswami, High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh, and other dignitaries attended Durga Puja at **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Dhaka** on different days of the Puja.

The new Vivekananda Hall at **Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Dublin, Ireland**, was inaugurated on 28 October.

Relief

1. **Covid-19 Relief:** Some of our centres in India and four other countries continued their Covid-19 pandemic relief work. Details of their work are given below. **India:** (i) **Kerala: Thiruvalla**



Covid-19 Relief by Asansol Centre

centre distributed 70 kg flour, 70 kg pulses, 35 kg cooking oil, 14 kg assorted spices, 35 kg sugar, and 9 kg tea leaves among 35 families in Thiruvalla from 13 to 15 October. (ii) **Uttar Pradesh: Vrindaban** centre distributed 1,250 kg rice, 1,250 kg flour, 500 kg pulses, 250 litres cooking oil, 250 kg salt, 125 kg sugar, 50 kg milk powder, 250 packets of tea leaves, 250 face masks, and 1,000 bars of soap among 250 families in Vrindaban from 19 to 25 October. (iii) **West Bengal:** (a) **Asansol** centre distributed 500 kg flour, 100 kg pulses, 120 kg soya chunks, 100 packets of health drink, 100 kg detergent powder, 200 face masks, and 200 bars of soap among 100 families in Paschim Bardhaman district on 1 October. (b) **Darjeeling** centre distributed 1,720 kg rice, 172 kg flour, 89 kg chira (rice flakes), 64 kg sattu (gram flour), 193 kg pulses, 89 kg soya chunks, 172 kg salt, 9 kg turmeric powder, 172 litres cooking oil, 172 packets of biscuits, 89 kg sugar, and 172 bars of soap among 185 families in Darjeeling district from 8 to 24 November. (c) **Malda** centre distributed 1,353 kg rice, 451 kg flour, 346 kg pulses,



Relief by Limbdi Centre on Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2020



Relief by Pune Centre on Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2020

90 litres cooking oil, 555 saris, 251 sets of children's garments, 451 face masks, and 451 bars of soap among 451 families in Malda district on 12 and 15 October. (d) **Sarisha** centre distributed 7,106 plates of cooked food, 320 saris, and 169 sets of children's garments from 19 to 23 October. **Bangladesh: Bagerhat** centre distributed 300 kg rice, 60 kg pulses, 60 kg potatoes, 30 litres cooking oil, and 60 kg salt among 60 families in Bagerhat district on 28 November. **Fiji: Fiji** centre served 8,400 meals to students from September to November. **South Africa:** (i) **Durban** centre, along with its sub-centres, served cooked meals to 1,100 people and distributed 2,144 kg rice, 1,072 kg pulses, 7,504 kg potatoes, 5,360 kg onions, 1,072 kg sugar beans, 1,072 kg maize meal, 536 kg rava (semolina), 536 kg macaroni, 536 kg vermicelli, 107 kg assorted spices, 1072 kg salt, 2,144 litres cooking oil, 1,072 litres milk, 1,072 kg sugar, 1,072 packets of tea bags, 1,072 bottles of jam, packets of soup powder, bars of bathing soap, laundry soap, and tubes of toothpaste among 1072 families in November. (ii) **Phoenix** centre distributed 6,730 kg rice, 300 kg flour, 650 kg maize meal, 720 kg fortified cereals, 200 kg rava, 4,060 kg pulses, 10,942 kg assorted vegetables, 380 kg noodles, 260 kg assorted spices, 1,170 kg salt, 2,721 litres cooking oil, 1,180 cans

of tinned food, 105 kg soup powder, 68,500 tea bags, 1,520 kg sugar, 870 litres milk, 350 kg milk powder, 90 kg biscuits, 10,150 breakfast cereal packets, 400 tins of jam, 120 litres fruit juice concentrate, 480 cakes, 276 packets of snacks, 120 packets of cooked meals, 72 sweet preparation packets, 1,400 matchboxes, 600 tubes of toothpaste, 1,840 bars of soap, 600 adult napkins, 100 face masks, 280 litres household cleaner, 200 sponges, 200 assorted garments, and 20 pairs of shoes in November. The centre also distributed a litre of milk and a loaf of bread each to 11 families thrice a week. Further, the centre's clinic sponsored 22 dialysis sessions for two patients and provided counselling service to healthcare professionals and workers. **Zambia: Lusaka** centre distributed 600 kg powdered maize, 45 litres cooking oil, 60 kg salt, 120 kg sugar, 60 packets of washing powder, and 60 bars of soap among 60 families in Lusaka in November.

2. **Cyclone Relief: Tamil Nadu:** In response to Cyclone Nivar that hit the coastal areas of the state on 25 November, the following centres conducted relief work: (i) **Chengalpattu** centre accommodated 40 persons in a local school in Chengalpattu district from 24 to 27 November and provided food, biscuits, water, and milk to them and also arranged medical help. (ii)



Cyclone Relief by Chennai Student's Home



Distress Relief by Bagda Centre

Chennai Students' Home centre distributed 184 kits (each kit containing 1 kg rice, 1 kg rava, 1 kg flour, 1 kg vermicelli, 3 kg pulses, 1 kg fried gram, 1 litre edible oil, 1 kg salt, 400 gram assorted spices, 2 kg sugar, 1 bar of soap, 1 bar of detergent, 1 tube of toothpaste, and 1 toothbrush) among affected families in Chengalpattu district on 29 November.

3. **Cyclone Rehabilitation: West Bengal:** (i) As a part of the Cyclone Bulbul rehabilitation project, **Belgharia** centre inaugurated a hostel cum shelter house, bore a submersible pump and handed over 26 houses to the afflicted families at G Plot, Sundarban, South 24 Parganas district on 18 October. (ii) **Manasadwip** centre distributed 23 asbestos sheets, 8 GI pipes, 20 bamboo poles, 7900 bricks, 2040 cft red sand, 160 cft white sand, 1125 cft stone chips, 475 bags of cement, 45 cft wood, 258 iron rods, 17 windows, and 18 kg binding wire from 23 September to 26 October among afflicted families in South 24 Parganas district to help them repair and renovate their houses that had been damaged by Cyclone Amphan. In all, the centre has helped to repair and renovate 215 houses.

4. **Fire Relief:** (i) **India: Arunachal Pradesh:** A house was burnt down in a fire accident in Aalo on 3 October. **Aalo** centre distributed 1 handi, 1 bucket, 2 mugs, 7 bowls, 1 sauce pan, 1 kadai, 2 ladles, 7 plates, 7 jackets, 7 shirts, 7 trousers, 6 belts, 7 blankets, 15 notebooks, 9 pens, 9 pencils, 6 sharpeners, and 6 erasers to the affected family on 3 October. (ii) **Bangladesh:** In a fire accident at the municipal market of Gendaria, Dhaka, 14 families lost all their belongings. **Dhaka** centre distributed 38 blankets, 16 dhobis, 14 saris, 70 kg rice, 14 kg pulses, 42 kg potatoes, 14 kg salt, and 7 litres of cooking oil to them on 27 November.

5. **Winter Relief:** The following centres distributed blankets and winter garments, shown against their names, to needy people: (a) **Asansol:** 500 blankets from 13 to 23 November. (b) **Chandigarh:** 100 blankets on 14 November. (c) **Indore:** 700 blankets on 8 November. (d) **Naora:** 590 blankets on 27 November. (e) **Puri Mission:** 300 blankets from 24 to 28 November. (f) **Rajarhat Bishnupur:** 300 blankets from 28 to 30 November. (g) **Rajkot:** 226 sweaters on 20 and 21 November.



Health Awareness Programme by Khetri Centre

6. Distress Relief: The following centres distributed items, shown against their names, to needy people: **India:** (a) **Asansol:** 820 saris and snacks on 18 October. (b) **Bagda:** 100 saris, 50 lungis, 500 shirts, and 500 trousers on 3 and 4 October. (c) **Balaram Mandir,** Kolkata: 120 saris, 120 sets of children's garments and snacks on 18 and 24 October. (d) **Bamunmura:** 328 saris and 46 dhottis from 9 to 17 October. (e) **Baranagar Math:** 30 dhottis, 447 saris, and 423 sets of children's garments on 15 October. (f) **Barasat:** 88 dhottis and 286 saris on 16 and 21 October. (g) **Bolpur:** 525 saris on 19 October. (h) **Chandigarh:** 100 kg rice and 700 packets of biscuits on 14 November. (i) **Contai:** 1,000 shirts from 7 to 13 November. (j) **Dibrugarh:** 300 saris on 11 October. (k) **Gadadhar Ashrama,** Kolkata: 100 saris from 16 to 22 October. (l) **Gurap:** 25 dhottis, 200 saris, 126 sets of children's garments, 150 face masks, and 500 hand sanitizer bottles from 9 to 22 October. (m) **Guwahati:** 210 saris on 17 October. (n) **Headquarters** (through Nabadwip Ashrama): 100 children's garments and 50 saris on 17 and 18 October. (o) **Indore:** 350 saris and 40 kg sweets on 8 November. (p) **Jalpaiguri:** 500 saris on 17 and 18 October. (q) **Kasundia,** Howrah: 200 saris and 100 shirts on 18 October.

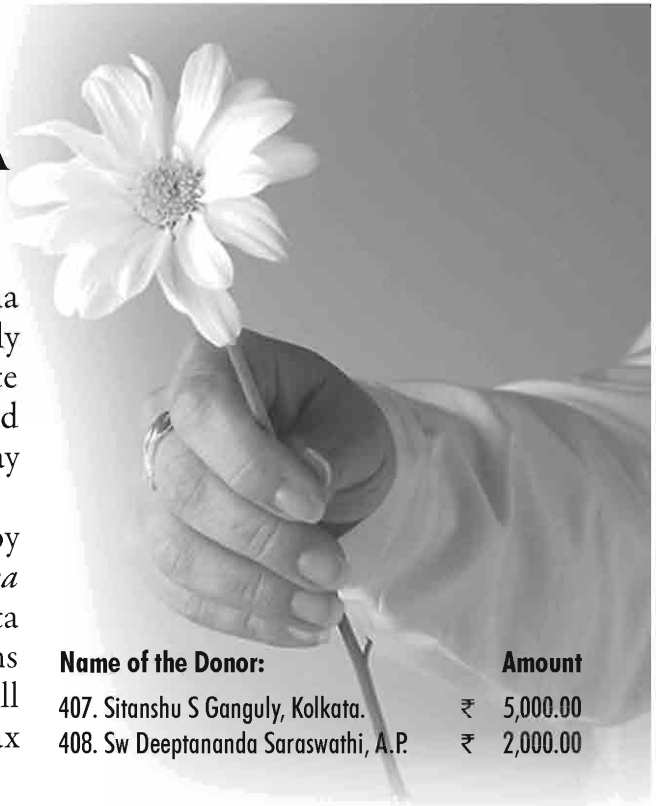
(r) **Manasadwip:** 3,500 saris in September and October. (s) **Mekhliganj:** 400 saris from 5 to 30 October. (t) **Naora:** 1,650 saris, 50 dhottis, 1,576 shirts, 710 trousers, and 866 skirts from 15 to 21 October. (u) **Rajarhat Bishnupur:** 300 saris and 300 packets of sweets on 17 and 18 October. (v) **Salem:** 90 lungis, 90 shirts, 90 saris, 90 in-skirts, 90 blouse pieces, 188 towels, 8 sets of children's garments, 188 kits (each kit containing 2 bars of soap, 1 bar of detergent soap, 1 tube of toothpaste, 1 toothbrush, 1 bottle of coconut oil, 1 packet of glucose), sweets, and snacks on 30 October and 1 November. (w) **Silchar:** 700 dhottis and 3,450 saris from 4 to 20 October. (x) **Taki:** 330 saris, 50 lungis, 25 dhottis, and 60 sets of children's garments from 18 to 23 October. (y) **Vrindaban:** 440 kg rice, 440 kg flour, 110 kg pulses, 110 kg cooking oil, 220 kg salt, 110 kg sugar, 22 kg tea, 44 kg milk powder, 220 bottles of hair oil, and 220 bars of soap on 23 November. **Bangladesh:** (a) **Bagerhat:** 240 saris on 19 October. 16 saris, 6 dhottis, and 3 lungis on 16 November. (b) **Baliati:** 33 saris, 5 dhottis, 4 lungis, 16 shirts, 6 sets of ladies' garments, and 80 children's garments from 7 to 30 October. (b) **Chandpur:** 350 saris in October. 222 saris in November. (d) **Dinajpur:** 605 saris in October. (e) **Rangpur:** 300 saris, 1,200 kg rice, 300 kg pulses, 300 litres oil, and 300 kg salt on 20 October. **Zambia:** **Lusaka:** 100 kg powdered maize to an orphanage on 2 October, and another 100 kg on 4 November.

7. Economic Rehabilitation: Under self-employment programme, the following centres distributed necessary items, shown against their names, to poor and needy people in their respective areas: **India:** (a) **Limbdi:** 1 tricycle in September. (b) **Taki:** 5 rickshaw-vans on 21 October. **South Africa:** **Phoenix:** 1 sewing machine in October. A wheelchair each to two needy patients in November. PB

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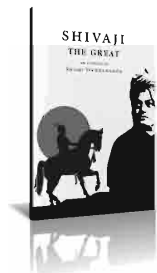


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AS VIEWED BY

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



Pages: 104 | Price: ₹ 45
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Shivaji was one of those national leaders whose stature can be compared with only a few in human history. His name evokes in us the spirit of valour, fearlessness, and energy, and above all, love for one's Motherland and Dharma. Swami Vivekananda had great admiration for him. His legacy as an ideal human being, an ideal king, a relentless nation-builder, and an ideal servant of his subjects will inspire generations of humanity to come. Deeply rooted in his own Dharma, and yet with widest sympathies for other religions, he was duty bound to protect his Dharma against the onslaughts of bigoted invaders. This was the striking feature of his character. He became a legend during his lifetime, and this legend keeps growing, even after three centuries. *Shivaji the Great* presents to us Swami Vivekananda's views about this great national leader. Advaita Ashrama is pleased to bring out this book and hope that it will inspire the youth of today with pride in their motherland.

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By Swami Tattwananda



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In the Upanishads we find—in some parts—the highest abstract truths presented through stories and dialogues. The author, Swami Tattwananda, a disciple of Swami Shivananda, has taken some of the finest stories scattered in the pages of the Upanishads and presented them here, with slight adaptation. This adapted or slightly fictionalized version of the stories, with the core message intact, makes it easy for the readers to grasp the significance as well as the central message of the stories.

Naishkarmyasiddhih

By Sri Sureshvaracharya

Translated by S. S. Raghavachar



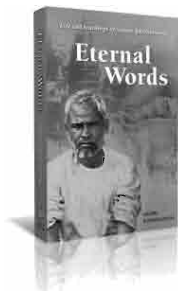
Pages: 288 | Price: ₹ 210
Packing & Postage: ₹ 50

Naiṣkarmya-siddhi is a treatise on Advaita Vedanta written by Sureśvara, one of the direct disciples of Ādi Śaṅkara, in approximately the 8th Century CE. It comprises 423 verses divided into four chapters and deals with the method of Advaitic realization through (1) removal of ignorance, (2) distinction of the self and non-self, and (3) an in-depth analysis of the mahāvākyam 'tat tvam asi' ("Thou art That"). The book was first published by the University of Mysore in 1965, but has been long out of print. We are grateful to the University of Mysore for granting us permission to publish the book in its present form.

Eternal Words : Life and Teachings of Swami Adbhutananda

Swami Siddhananda

Translated by Swami Sarvadevananda



Pages: 316 | Price: ₹ 100
Packing & Postage: ₹ 50

In order to understand the transformative power of an incarnation, it is essential to read and learn about the lives of their inner companions. Although Swami Adbhutananda, also known as Latu Maharaj, was a direct disciple of Thakur, unfortunately very little is known about his early life except that he was born in a poor family and basically illiterate. However, by his Guru's grace and own self-effort, Latu Maharaj became a Knower of Brahman.

These conversations, transcribed by Swami Siddhananda, reveal the essence of spiritual life for sincere spiritual practitioners of all denominations. Entitled *Satkatha*, these were originally published serially in the Bengali monthly magazine *Udbodhan* during Latu Maharaj's lifetime. In 1964, these articles were compiled and published into a Bengali book with the same title.

Swami Sarvadevananda, the Minister-in-Charge of the Southern California Vedanta Society, has taken great pains to translate *Satkatha* from Bengali into English. We hope that this book will inspire readers to practice Sri Ramakrishna's and Latu Maharaj's teachings in their daily lives.



TO

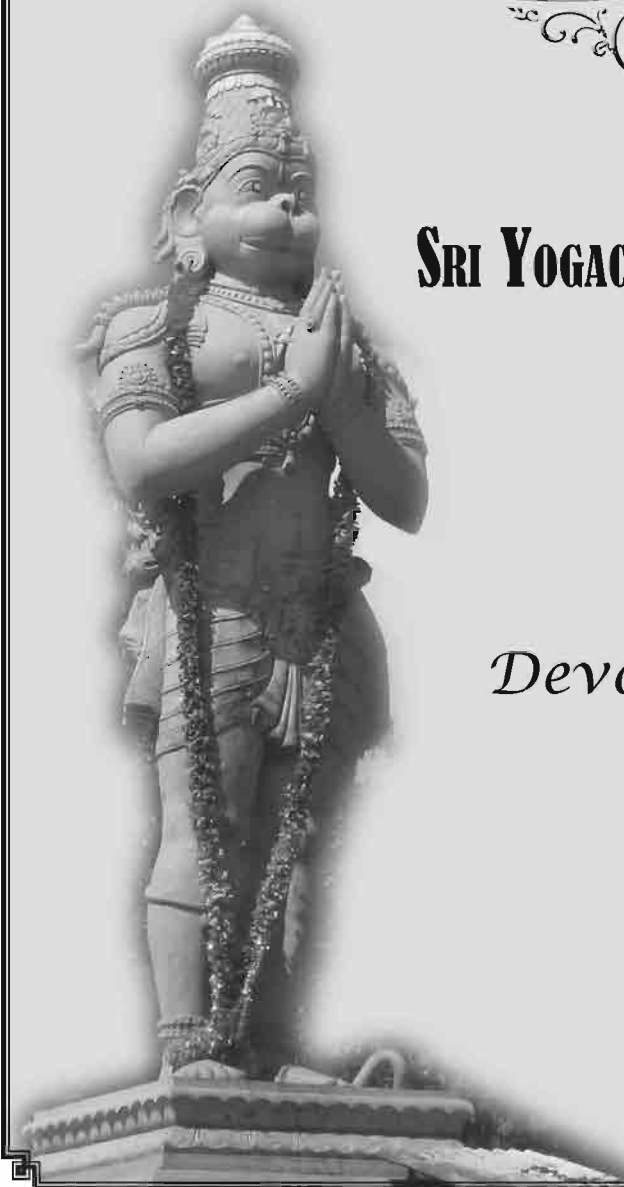
SRI YOGACHARYA B.K.S. IYENGAR



Devoted Students

—CAROLYN BELKO

SAN DIEGO, USA




*Dear Ma,
Thank you for wonderful Darshan.
With loving pranams,*

*Ferdos, Valerie, Nahid and Tamara
Trabuco Canyon, USA*






—  —

“Shri Ramakrishna was a wonderful gardener. Therefore he has made a bouquet of different flowers and formed his Order. All different types and ideas have come into it, and many more will come. Know each of those who are here to be of great spiritual power. Because they remain shrivelled before me, do not think them to be ordinary souls. When they will go out, they will be the cause of the awakening of spirituality in people. Know them to be part of the spiritual body of Shri Ramakrishna, who was the embodiment of infinite religious ideas. [Y]ou may go round the world, but it is doubtful if you will find men of such spirituality and faith in God like them. They are each a centre of religious power, and in time that power will manifest.”

Swami Vivekananda [referring to his brother disciples]

—  —

*With loving pranams from your
Dedicated Servants.*

—Singapore Devotees

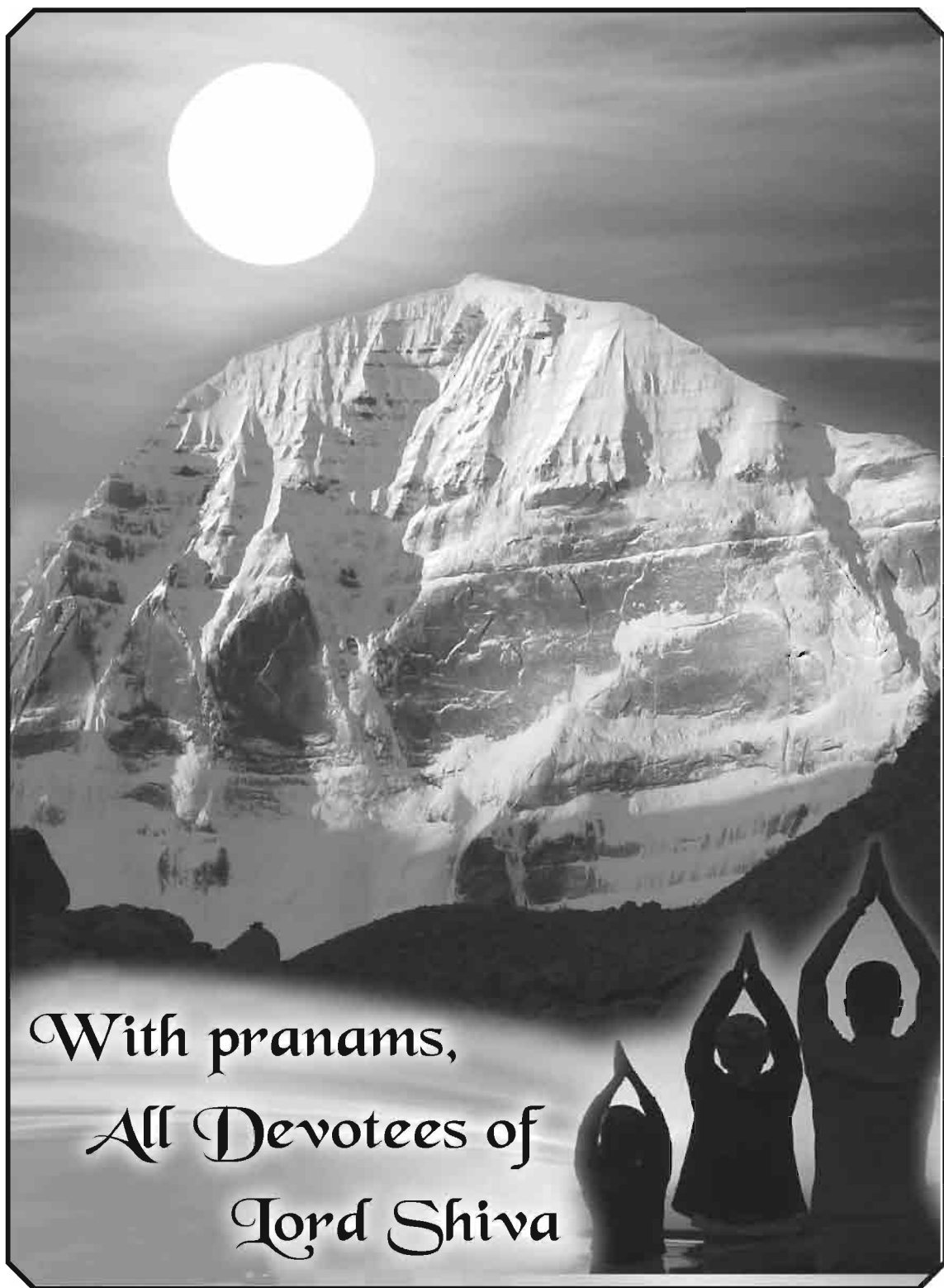
Who is the best devotee of God? It is he who sees, after the realization of Brahman that God alone has become all living beings the universe, and the twenty-four cosmic principles.

—Sri Ramakrishna



**Happy New Year from the
DC DEVOTEES**







“Do not fear, my child. Always remember that the Master is behind you. I am also with you. As long as you remember me, your mother, why should be frightened? The Master said to me, ‘In the end I shall certainly liberate those who come to you.’ ”

—Holy Mother Sree Sarada Devi



Swami Prabuddhananda
(1929–2014)

—Devotees of Northern California

Unselfishness is more paying,
only people have not the
patience to practise it.

—*Swami Vivekananda*—



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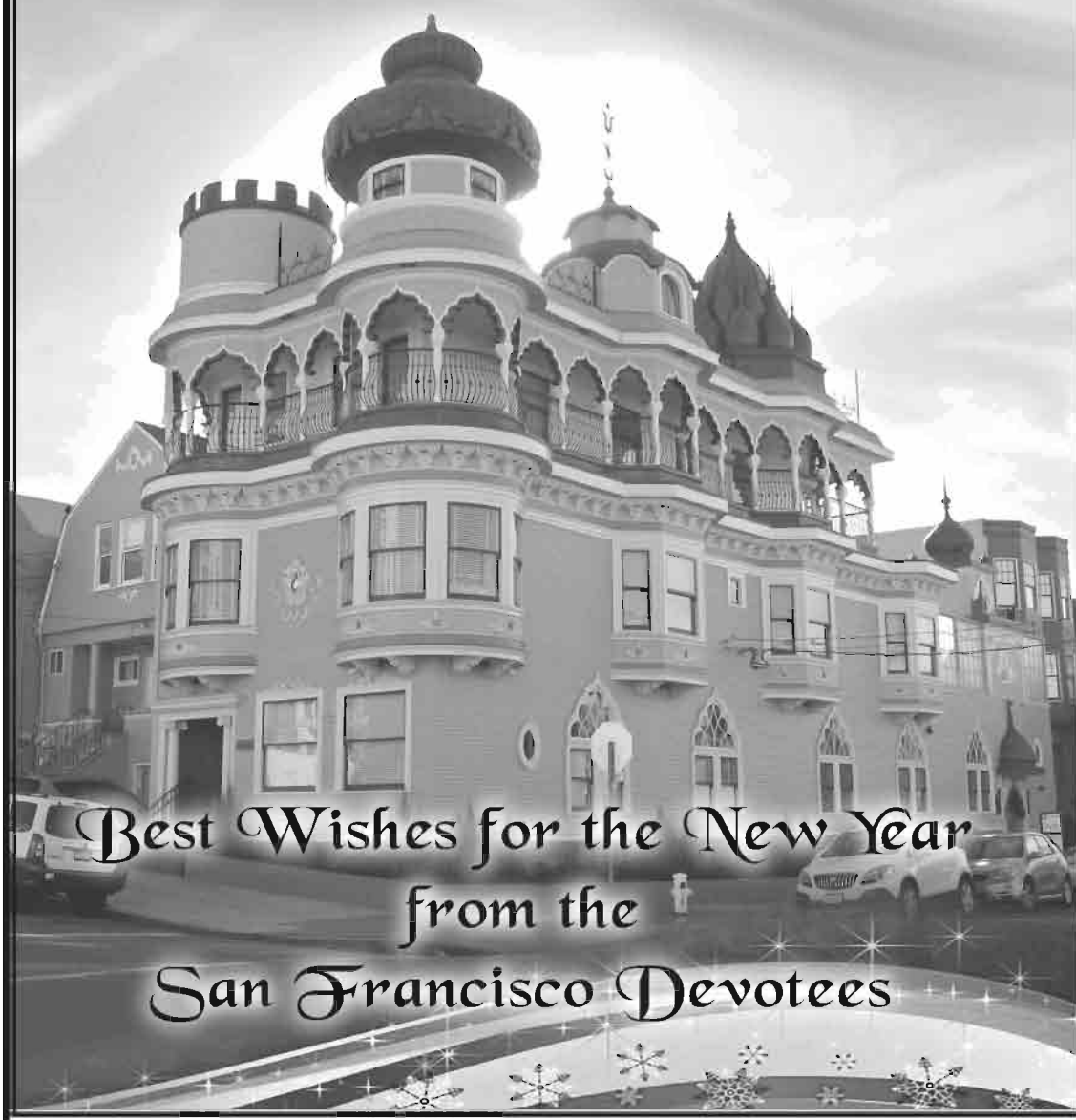
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"Believe me, if there is the least tinge of selfishness in building this temple, it will fall; but if it is the Master's work, it will stand."

— Swami Trigunatitananda



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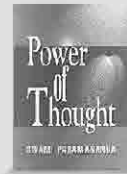
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An Appeal

Centenary Celebration of Ramakrishna Math (Gadadhar Ashrama)

1920 – 2020

Dear Devotees of Ramakrishna Sangha,

Ramakrishna Math (Gadadhar Ashrama), a legendary monastery of the Ramakrishna Sangha situated in the southern part of Kolkata, is **on the threshold** of celebrating its centenary in 2020.

The then Vice President of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, Srimat Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj (Mahapurush Maharaj), founded this Ashrama with his divine touch on the 17th of November 1920, in the near proximity of Adi Ganga and Sri Sri Kali Temple of Kalighat. The Ashrama was also blessed on different occasions by other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna including Swami Brahmanandaji, Swami Saradanandaji, Swami Subodhanandaji and Swami Vijnananandaji.

Sri M. (Master Mahasaya), the author of Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita, used to stay in this Ashrama for meditation and japa. While on her sick bed, the Holy Mother expressed her delight to hear that this Ashrama would be established on the banks of the Adi Ganga near the Shaktipeeth known as Kalighat. Above all, the holy relics of Sri Sri Thakur are treasured in this ashrama.

Sri Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, a local resident and relative of Shri Balaram Bose, lost his only son named Gadadhar prematurely. The Ashrama was named in the memory of Gadadhar. Though Belur Math did not initially agree to accept, later on by Holy Mother's grace, Belur Math accepted the Ashrama.

Apart from the performance of daily puja, nitya bhoga, and religious discourses by eminent speakers, this Ashrama has been doing charitable activities including providing a free coaching centre, Computer training Centre, well equipped library, and a Homeopathy Charitable dispensary run by qualified Doctors etc.

Unfortunately we had to postpone this grand celebration until next year due to the pandemic. To commemorate the centenary celebration of this legendary monastery, we will be publishing a centenary Souvenir 'GADADHAR', which will depict the importance of Gadadhar Ashrama.

To make the centenary celebration a success, I appeal to all devotees to donate generously. May Thakur, Ma, Swamiji bless you all.

Swami Amalatmananda
Adhyaksha



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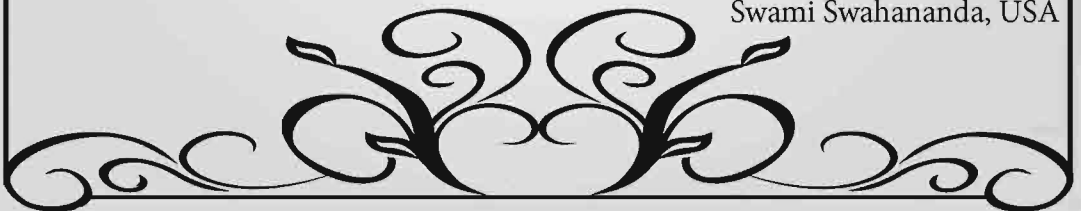


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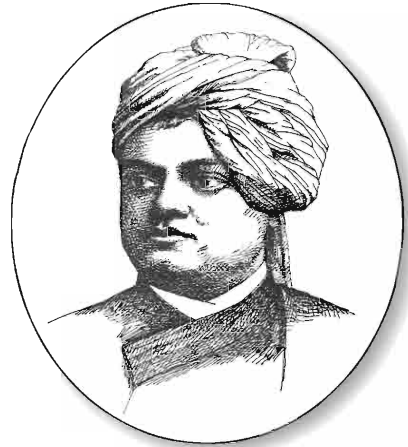
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We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

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Swami Vivekananda

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Swami Nirvanananda, Vice-President (1966-1984)
Ramakrishna Math And Ramakrishna Mission

Question: How can one easily realise God ?

Answer: The day one can love his friend and foe in the same light, he can easily realize God

—Srimat Swami Nirvananandaji Maharaj

This answer was given by Revered Maharaj in his room at Belur Math in 1971, in response to the question by my mother, a disciple of Swami Nirvananandaji.

With sastanga pranams from his Anonymous Disciple

RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

(TENTH PRESIDENT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH & RAMAKRISHNA MISSION)

In a general way of speaking, by 'dharma' we mean all our popular customs, rituals and festivals, going to temples and on pilgrimage, and observance of some religious vows, etc. Those who do not observe them we call irreligious. But truly speaking, these do not constitute the essence of dharma. What then is true dharma? According to Hindu scriptures, the attainment of Self-knowledge is dharma. Mere observance of popular customs can lead us nowhere.

Those who aspire for spiritual life will need to acquire a few things at the very outset; otherwise religion cannot be practiced properly. These are the fourfold means of attaining knowledge. In other words, certain spiritual virtues are necessary, such as control of the mind, control of the senses, withdrawal of the self, forbearance, self-settledness and faith. It is essential to have these basic virtues, particularly 'shraddha' or faith. Without faith in the teachings of the scriptures or in the words of the Guru, we can achieve little in spiritual life. Among the other things needed, one is the discrimination between the real and the unreal. God has given man the power of discrimination with the help of which man advances spiritually. When we realise with the help of discrimination that this world is not real, then our mind will be spiritually inclined. Then, if we do not completely give up from our minds cravings for enjoyable things here and hereafter, and unless we have in our minds dispassion for such things, it is extremely difficult to live a spiritual life. Lastly, we need *mumukshutvam*. It means longing for liberation or yearning for the vision of God. This is absolutely essential. Only when one is endowed with all these qualities, is it possible to lead a spiritual life.

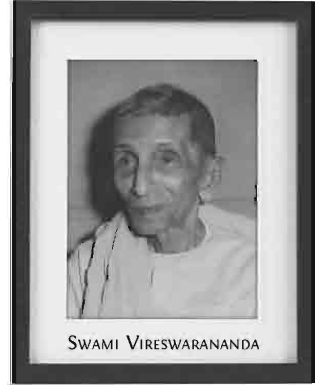
Many aspirants complain that they cannot practice japa and meditation because the mind is fickle. Well, that is exactly the point! It is for making the unsteady mind steady that japa and meditation are practiced. The mind can be steadied by practice and dispassion, as Bhagavan Sri Krishna taught in the Gita. 'Practice' means that you will have to sit for spiritual disciplines daily at regular hours, repeating the name and meditating, irrespective of the inclination of the mind. As you sit, the thought of God may not be in your mind or the mind may be restless—let it be. You have to go on practicing. Through repeated attempts you will eventually succeed. As many times as the mind strays away, that many times the mind will have to be redeemed and made to concentrate on the Chosen Ideal. This precisely is practice without which no progress can be made.

No one knows when death will come. 'Whoever remembers Me at the moment of death he realizes Me.' (Gita. 8.5). Here, Bhagavan says that when you go to fight, you do not know when you will die. For this reason, remember Me always and fight. Both the things must be done simultaneously. This applies to us too. While performing our duties in the world and doing all types of works, we have to remember God always. So japa has to be practiced to the extent possible, for in Japa itself there is all strength. When the power that is in the Mantra is manifested, one sees God. The more Japa you do the better. Holy Mother has said that by 'performing Japa one can become spiritually illumined; nothing else is needed.'

Source: "Religion and Spiritual Life", Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi (1992)

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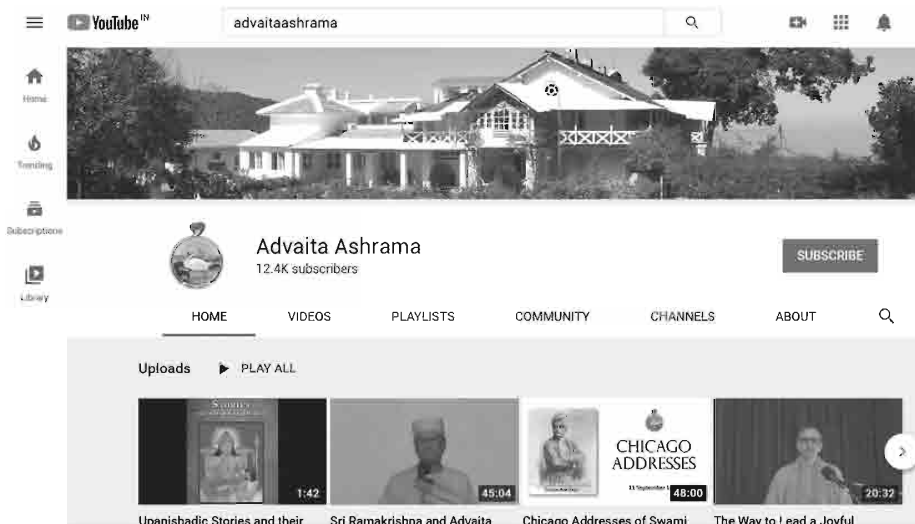


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“You only need one thing: God’s name. Keep it with you always.

You may not see him, but you can be close to him (through His name). There are many other things in the books that may help some people but I don’t know about these things,

I just know God’s name.”

Swami Gitananda

An appeal to the Sannyasis of the Ramakrishna Math, the Sannyasinis of Sri Sarada Math and the devotees and admirers of Srimat Swami Gitanandaji Maharaj to share reminiscence, photos, videos, letters or any relevant material on Most Revered Maharaj with the Birth Centenary Celebration Committee at this email id: swgitananda100@gmail.com

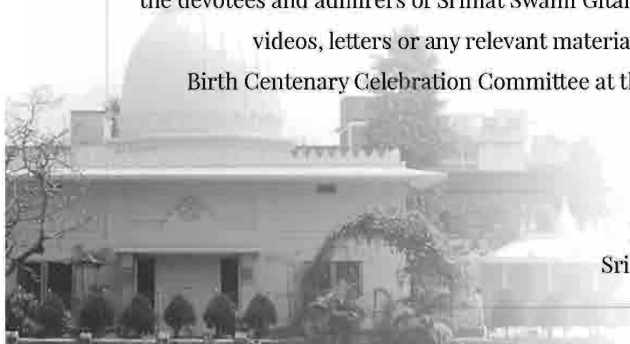
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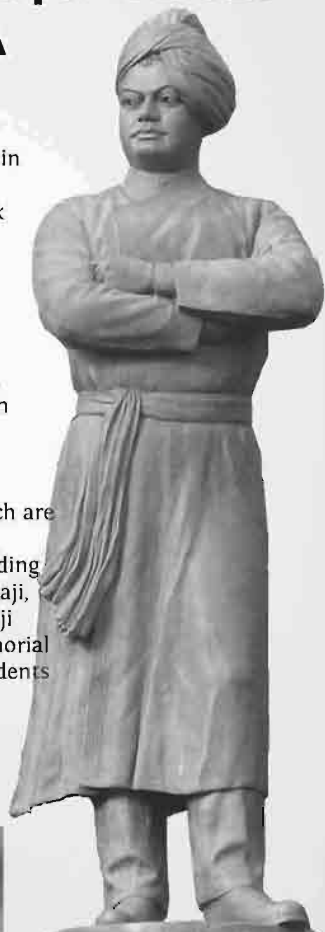
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- ❑ Established Vivekananda History Fund in Dhaka University and Jagannath University at Dhaka.
- ❑ Created the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Fund for Vivekananda Scholarship in South Africa and Zambia.



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PILGRIM'S GUIDE TO THE HOLY TRIO IN KOLKATA



A Day in the Life of Holy Mother 11

A young vagabond named Chandra Mohan Datta came to Udbodhan Publication Office one day looking for work. He sat on the outside veranda and learned that Udbodhan House was an office of the Ramakrishna Mission and some monks lived there. Chandra asked a worker, 'May I meet the head of this centre?' The worker replied, 'Please come. The Mother has asked me to take you to her.' Chandra was a little perplexed to learn that women also lived in this Mission Office. However, he went to the upper floor to see Holy Mother. Chandra recalled: 'At the first sight of the Mother, I felt that she was my own. Her eyes were so calm, as if compassion were dripping from them. I bowed down to her and she blessed me by touching my head. She inquired about me in detail—my name, where I lived, who else lived with me, and so on.' The simple-natured Chandra opened his heart to Holy Mother, describing his pain and agony, his brother's ill-treatment of him, and how he was desperately looking for a job. The Mother listened to his story and then asked affectionately: 'Are you ready to do any kind of work or would some kind of works affect your prestige?' Chandra replied: 'I shall



Swami Saradananda

be doing my Mother's work. Where does the question of prestige come in?' Pleased, the Mother said: 'Some of my monastic children and a few women live in this house. We need someone to do our shopping. My son Sharat decides whether to give an appointment. Go with Mohan and meet him.' Mohan said to Saradananda: 'Maharaj, the Mother has sent this gentleman to you. She has mentioned

that if you consider it necessary, you may appoint him to do our shopping.' Smiling, Saradananda said: 'Whom am I to appoint? You have already come to me with an appointment letter.' He then said to Kishori, another worker: 'You said that you needed another person to help. Train this young person to serve that purpose.' Chandra was hired to buy groceries every morning with Mohan and to pack and sell books published by Udbodhan Office.

Whenever there was a festival in one of the Ramakrishna ashramas, Chandra carried books to sell from a stall. Thus he was instrumental in spreading the Master's message and increasing the income of the Udbodhan Publication department. Mother later initiated him and sanctified his rosary. She also asked him to do some small errands for her. One day she said to him: 'Do you know why I have some of my work done by you? When I am no more, the memory of all this work will bring solace to you.'

In loving memory of Dr. Rina Bhar —Dr. Gopal Chandra Bhar



*The best guide in life is strength. In religion,
as in all other matters, discard everything
that weakens you, have nothing to do
with it.*

—Swami Vivekananda

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