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AMI VIVEKANANDA

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Helpful suggestions for improvement will be most welcome.

J. C. Palakkey

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL
Date.....
SWAKULAM.

PART I

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS

Narendra Nath Datta, later known as Swami Vivekananda was born in Calcutta on 12th January, 1863. Vivekananda belonged to an aristocratic Kshatriya family of Bengal.

His mother Bhuvaneswari Devi was a highly educated woman. It is said that she had been the constant¹ inspiration² of his life and work. She was a woman of great moral purity and possessed extra-ordinary memory.

1 Constant = unchangeable; fixed.

2 Inspiration = the act of inspiring or breathing in; Instruction or stimulation by a divinity

His father Viswanath Datta was a successful attorney³ at law. He had scholarly knowledge of English and Persian. He was famous for his compassion⁴ and intelligence.

Vivekananda inherited his extraordinary memory and moral purity from his mother and his intelligence and compassion from his father.

Spiritual subjects attracted him very early. It was a pleasant pastime for him to sit in meditation before the idols of Gods.

He had his early education at home. His mother was his first teacher. A relative of the family used to tell him stories from the great epics 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharatha'.

3 Attorney=one legally authorised to act
for another

4 Compassion = pity

At the age of seven he was sent to school. He was a clever and intelligent boy. He never forgot things which he had once heard. He took great interest in sports as well as his studies. He was liked both by his fellow-students and teachers. Vivekananda passed the matriculation examination from the Metropolitan⁵ Institute founded by Easwarachandra Vidyasagar.

After passing the entrance test in 1879, he joined the College. He passed F. A. in 1881 and B. A. in 1884. Then he joined the Law College. When he was studying for B. L. he felt spiritual urge. He discontinued his studies and decided to lead the life of a Sanyasin.

5 Metropolis = the capital of a country;
a chief centre

During this period his relatives and friends advised him to marry and lead a settled life. But he would not.

CHAPTER II

VIVEKANANDA FINDS HIS GURU

Vivekananda had a strong desire to test the validity⁶ of the spiritual teachings. He was for some time attracted by the Vedas spread by Brahmasamaj. But their ideas could not satisfy him. He continued his quest.⁸

Vivekananda met many religious leaders and asked them whether they had seen God. But their replies did not satisfy him. He was in search of a person who had seen God face to face.

6 Valid = to be legal; to be strong; having
sufficient strength or force

8 Quest = search

Vivekananda heard of the great saint Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He wished to meet him.

One day he went to Dekshineswar where the old sage lived. He asked Sri Ramakrishna his usual question, "Have you seen God?" To this Sri Ramakrishna replied, "Yes, my child, I have seen God as I see you, but more intensely⁹. I have talked to God but I have talked to God more intimately than I am talking to you." Vivekananda was very much impressed by this reply. He felt that he had at last found his Guru. Sri Ramakrishna had been longing to pour out his spirit into the breast of some fitted to receive his inner experiences and he found that

9 Intense = extreme in degree; deeply emotional

young Vivekananda was the one for whom he longed.

Soon several meetings between the two followed. Vivekananda felt that he was under a hypnotic¹⁰ spell when he was with Sri Ramakrishna. In the company of his great Guru, he felt that he forgot the whole world. He experienced a divine delight when touched by Sri Rhmakrishna. Vivekananda accepted Sri Ramakrishna as his spiritual Guru and used to meet him regularly.

It was during this period that his father died. The whole family burden fell on him. His friends and relatives did not help. But with his Guru's

10 Hypnotic = a sleeplike state in which the mind responds to external suggestion and recover forgotten memories.

blessings he did not find any difficulty in solving his domestic problems.

Vivekananda performed 'Sadhana' in the presence of his Guru for six years. He learnt the Hindu scriptures¹¹ Under the kind and vigilant¹² eye of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda realized the full import¹³ of the teachings of the Hindu scriptures and the validity of all forms of his discipline.

A few days before his Mahasamadhi Sri Ramakrishna called Vivekananda to his side. Sri Ramakrishna looked lovingly at Vivekananda and fell into Samadhi. Vivekananda felt inspired by

11 Scriptures = sacred writings of a religion

12 Vigilant = watchful; on the look out
for danger

13 Import = to imply: to make known

this 'drishti diksha'. When Sri Ramakrishna woke up from his meditation, he said, 'Today, I have given you my all and am now only a fakir, possessing nothing. By this power you will do immense¹⁴ good in the world and not until it is accomplished will you return'.

CHAPTER III

VIVEKANANDA AS A PARIVRAJAKA

After Sri Ramakrishna's passing away in August 1886, his disciples under the leadership of Vivekananda established a monastery at Baranagore and formed an order of Sanyasins dedicating their lives to the fulfilment of their Master's teachings.

14 Immense = that cannot be measured;

vast in extent

Swami Vivekananda left the monastery within two years and spent the next six years as a Parivrajaka. During this period he travelled all over India from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari. These wanderings enabled him to acquire an intimate knowledge of the social and economic conditions prevalent¹⁵ in the country. This gave him sufficient preparation to fulfil the role as a preacher, a prophet and a patriot.¹⁶ Vivekananda gradually made himself the 'Conscience of India, its Unity and its Destiny'.¹⁷ It is reported that in his wanderings Swami Vivekananda lived with Tilak at Poona. In their talks it was agreed that while Tilak would work for nationalism in the political field, Swami Vivekananda would work for nationalism in the religious field.

15 Prevail—to succeed; to gain the mastery

16 Patriot = one who truly loves and serves
his country

17 Destiny = unavoidable fate

CHAPTER IV

VIVEKANANDA AT KANYAKUMARI

Towards the end of 1892 Swami Vivekananda was at Kanyakumari. One night he swam from the main land to the Rock (Sri Bali Parai also called Vellipparai) lying in the sea some yards away from the main land. He sat on the rock in deep meditation for three days. During those meditations on that Rock he had a vision of India. The whole of India appeared to him as one holy land of various religions and persuasions,¹⁸ different languages and of innumerable customs and habits. Despite all these there appeared to him a basic unity. The elevation¹⁹ of the soul was the one life energy that had sustained²⁰ Bharat

18 Persuasion=act of persuading: settled opinion

19 Elevation=to raise to a higher position

all these thousands of years. Dharma held sway over the people. The country was happy and prosperous. Then the vision changed. He saw that the outlook on religion and life had changed. Material comforts had increased. They had become the objectives in life. Dharma decayed. Miseries followed. He saw people enveloped in ignorance. He saw them stricken with hunger, poverty and disease. The first part of the vision overjoyed him. As he saw the later portion tears rolled down from his eyes.

Wisdom dawned upon him on this Rock as knowledge dawned upon Buddha under the Boddhi Tree. It was this:- "India has seen many saints before me. They all looked upwards for

the attainment²¹ of the perfection of soul and were detached from the people. Our people whom we call ignorant we have neglected. This is a great sin which our country as a whole has committed. The service of a saint does not lie only in the uplift of the soul. It to-day lies in the uplift of the masses. To this task I shall be wed. Like the saints of old I should not be in the world and yet out of it. I should be of the world and in it. In this kind of service lies true religion. It knows no bounds. India can never be great unless we raise the poor. There is God in everyone of them. The best way to worship God is to serve them." Hence the rock became

21 Attainment = act of attaining; to reach or gain by effort; to arrive at

famous as Vivekananda Rock. It has become a place of pilgrimage.

To carry out his work, Swamiji continued his extensive travels. He carried with him in his travels both Thomas A Kempis's 'Imitation of Christ' and the Gita.

CHAPTER V

VIVEKANANDA GOES TO THE U. S. A.

In February 1893 at the request of his devotees and in response to the inner call Swami Vivekananda left for the United States of America to attend the Parliament of Religions. It was just prior to his leaving for the United States of America that he took the name of Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda reached Chi-

chicago, the venue²² of the Parliament of Religions one and half months before it was scheduled²³ to meet. It was only on reaching the United States of America that he came to learn that credentials²⁴ had to be presented to entitle any one to attend the Parliament as a delegate²⁵ of a recognised religion. Swamiji had no credentials with him.

The major portion of the meagre²⁶ sum which he had with him was spent within a few days after his arrival at Chicago. With a few to minimising the expenses, Swamiji decided to move to Boston and stay there till the day

22 Venue = the scene of an action or event: an appointed place for meeting

23 Schedule = arrange

24 Credential = giving a title to belief or credit

25 Delegate = to send as a representative

26 Meagre = lean; poor in quality; scanty

of the Parliament. At Boston, he met an old lady who volunteered to provide him with free boarding and lodging. She also introduced him to a Professor of the Harvard University. Swamiji talked with the Professor for nearly four hours. The Professor was impressed by Swamiji's profound²⁷ knowledge. He told Swamiji that he should definitely attend the Parliament of Religions and speak there. But Swamiji explained to him that he had no credentials with him. To this the Professor replied, "To demand credentials from you would be like demanding of the sun the authority which gave him the power to shine over the world."

The Professor himself was a member of the Credential Committee of the

27 Profound = intense; far below the surface

Parliament of Religions. He immediately contacted the Chairman of the Committee and made necessary arrangements to enable Swamiji to attend the Parliament. Swamiji had no money with him to buy a ticket to return to Chicago. The Professor himself purchased a ticket for Swamiji and gave it to him. He had also given him a few letters of introduction.

It was at night that the train reached Chicago. There was a great crowd at the station. He did not know the way to the Venue of the Parliament. In the hustle and bustle at the station Swamiji lost the letters of introduction which he had with him. He did not know where to go. So he decided to spend the night on the platform of the Railway station.

Next morning he began to walk along the strange streets of Chicago. He felt very tired and sat by the side of the road. All of a sudden a lady came out of a big Bungalow nearby and asked him whether he was a delegate to the Parliament of Religions. Swamiji told her all that had happened. Immediately the lady took him to her house and gave him food. When Swami Vivekananda was refreshed, she took him to the Hall where the Parliament was to meet. She contacted the authorities and made all necessary arrangements for Swamiji's stay there as a delegate.

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CHAPTER VI

AT THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

At last the Parliament met on 11th September, 1893. All the speakers at the Parliament, excepting Vivekananda had prepared their speeches before hand. But Swamiji made an extempore²⁸ speech. All the speakers had saluted the Congress as 'Ladies and Gentlemen'. But Swamiji began his speech with the salutation, "Sisters and brothers of America" No sooner had he uttered these words than the audience cheered him with a loud applause. All the previous speakers spoke of God as represented in their own religions. Vivekananda represented God as a Universal Being embracing all

28 Extempore = without preparation; on the spurt of the moment;

religions. He conquered the heart of the audience.

His speech at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago was a grand success. He removed through his speech many of the mis-conceptions which Americans had about India and Hinduism. His ringing words went deep into the hearts of the American people.

Vivekananda stayed in the United States of America for three years. During this period he delivered the message of Vedanta and universal religion. From the United States of America he sailed to England. After visiting England and the Continent, he returned to India in 1897 and received a hero's welcome.

CHAPTER VII BACK IN INDIA

Vivekananda's success abroad opened the eyes of his countrymen to his greatness. Wherever he went, people thronged in thousands to hear him. He visited all the important towns and cities in India and gave lectures. During his triumphal march from Colombo to Almora, he explained to the people the unifying principles of Hindu scriptures. He pointed out the causes of national decadence and suggested remedies. He strove hard to make his countrymen conscious of the greatness of their motherland. He asked his countrymen to shake off their inertia²⁹ and rejuvenate³⁰ themselves by the knowledge of science.

29 Inertia = without inherent power of moving; passive

30 Rejuvenate = to make young again

Vivekananda decided to form a mission to propagate³¹ the teachings of his great Guru Sri Ramakrishna. In 1899 he founded a Matt at Belur for the propagation of spiritual learning. The mission which he founded is known as "Sri Ramakrishna Mission".

Hard and strenuous³² work shattered his health. He undertook a second trip to the West in 1899 and returned after a year and a half. On return from his trip, he made a short tour in East Bengal and Assam. Thereafter he concentrated all his energies on organising the Ramakrishna Mission till his death at Belur Matt on 4th July, 1902.

31 Propagate = to pass on; to spread from one to another

32 Strenuous = vigorous; urgent

CHAPTER VIII

ANECDOTES ABOUT VIVEKANANDA

Vivekananda had a keen intellect. There are several anecdotes³⁵ about his instinctive quick-wittedness.

Once while he was still a boy he went to see a drama. As the drama was being staged, a policeman came with a warrant to arrest the man who was acting as the hero of the play. When the policeman approached the actor to arrest him, the spectators did not know what to do. Confusion prevailed over the scene. Then rose Vivekananda from his seat. In thunder-like tone he said to the Policeman, 'You have the power to arrest, the

35 Anecdote = Details of history hitherto unpublished; a brief account of any curious or interesting incident

man who is acting. But you have no right of power to interrupt³⁶ or disrupt the course of the drama or to insult the spectators. So you shall wait till the end of the drama to execute your order. Everyone in the audience was impressed by his words and agreed that what he said was just. The policeman immediately left the spot.

Once during his wanderings he met the king of Alwar. He had a debate with the king. The king told Swami Vivekananda that he never believed in idols and in the efficacy³⁷ of worshipping idols. Immediately Vivekananda looked round. He saw a picture of the

36 Interrupt = to break in upon: to obstruct

37 Efficacy = purport

Maharaja hanging nearby. He took it and gave it to the Dewan and asked him to spit³⁸ on it. But the Dewan hesitated. He was perplexed Swamiji again asked him to spit on it. Every one in the audience was agitated³⁹. When Swamiji compelled him to spit on the Maharaja's picture, the Dewan replied with obvious displeasure on his face. "What? Is this not the picture of the Maharajah? How can one spit on that?" Then Swamiji said, "You know that this is merely a paper and not the Maharajah. Still you believe that insulting the picture is equivalent⁴⁰

38 Spit = to throw out Saliva from the mouth

39 Agitate = to shake; to set in motion; to stir violently; to disturb; to excite

40 Equivalent = equal in value

to insulting the King. This picture makes you remember the king. Exactly in the same way, the worshippers see God through the idols.

Once he was travelling in North India by train in a third class compartment. He had nothing with him except his third class ticket and an ochre-cloak. A rich Bania was also there in the same compartment. He had a contempt⁴ for Sanyasins. He did not approve of sanyasa. According to him, there was no point in giving up the world. So he began to make merry at the expense of Vivekananda who had been starving the whole day. The Bania said, "It is only right that the sanyasin should starve". When the

41 Contempt = to disgrace; scorn

train reached a junction where they had to change trains they got down from the train. Swami Vivekananda sat on the platform. The Bania bought nice cakes and sweets and began to eat them. While eating he said to Swami Vivekananda, "Oh, Sanyasin, I earn money by doing hard work. So it became possible for me to buy sweets and eat them to my heart's content. You have given up the world and do not care to earn money. So you have to rest content with a parched⁴² throat, an empty stomach and a bare ground to sit upon." Even though Swami Vivekananda heard these insulting words, he was not moved. He looked on calmly.

42 Parch = make hot and very dry

Presently there appeared a person with a bundle and a pot in his right hand and a carpet on his left. He spread the carpet before Vivekananda and placed the things near it. The bundle contained sweets and cakes. He requested him to take the food. The Swami said, "I have never seen you before. It may be by mistake that you are inviting me to take the food".

The man replied, "You are the Swami I have seen". The Swami could not understand his words. Showing surprise, the Swami asked where he had seen him.

The man replied, "I am making sweets. While having my usual afternoon nap, I dreamt that Sri Rama was pointing you out to me. He told that he was pained that you had been starving from the previous day. Sri

Rama asked me in my dream to prepare instantly some cakes and go to the station with some sweets, nice cold water and a carpet. Thinking it only a dream, I slept again, but this time Sri Rama actually pushed me to get up and do as he said. I quickly prepared some cakes etc. Now kindly come and have your meal.”

With love and thankfulness beaming on his face Swamiji took the food while the Bania stood amazed. He felt that he had insulted the Swamiji and sought his forgiveness.

Swami Vivekananda's speeches and writings are widely read throughout the world. His famous books are “Rajayoga” and “Karmayoga”

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ndia, and so long
not forget the gr
eir forefathers, th
earth to destroy the

43 Degeneration = having departed from high qualities of race or kind

But he frankly admitted that, though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessing than religion, yet, at the same time there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has brought more peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered^{43 (a)} fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brother-hood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions than religion; nothing has deluged⁴⁴ the world with more blood than religion". But he explained that religion was not to be held responsible

43 (a) Engender = to produce; cause to develop

44 Deluge = a great overflow of water; flood esp. in the days of Noah

for the atrocities⁴⁵ committed in its name.

With all his praise of religion, Vivekananda stressed that it was not for empty stomachs. "First bread and then religion", was his advice. He used to say, "So long as even a dog of my country remains without food, to feed and take care of him is my religion and everything else is either non-religion or false religion."

Swamiji understood that the salvation of India lay in the education of her masses. "The education," he said "which does not help the common masses of people to equip themselves for the struggle of life, which does not bring out the strength of character, a spirit of a lion, is it worth the name?"

45 Atrocity = extremely cruel or wicked

Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs."

Swamiji was a champion of strength. He gave the people his message of strength, fearlessness, faith and courage, according to him "the quintessence⁴⁶ of the Vedas and the Vedanta lies in that one word—Strength." He used to say, "Strength is life — weakness is death. It is weakness which is the cause of all misery in the world."

Swami Vivekananda urged his countrymen to have faith in themselves, in their great past and in their glorious future. "Everything will come to you," he assured, "if you only have faith."

Swamiji was a great patriot. Even though he did not associate himself

⁴⁶ Quintessence = the most essential part.

with politics, he lived and died for India. India was his love. It is inseparably bound up with his love. He wanted every Indian to feel and proclaim, "I am an Indian—every Indian is my brother. The Indian is my life. Indian Gods and Goddesses are my God, India's Society is the cradle⁴⁷ of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven of my old age. The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good.

47 Cradle=bed in which a child is rocked

PART II

CHAPTER I.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ON VIVEKANANDA

“Rooted in the past and full of of pride in India’s prestige Swami Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life’s problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present. He was a powerful orator in Bengali and English and a graceful writer of Bengali prose and poetry. He was a fine figure of a man, imposing, full of poise and dignity, sure of himself and his mission, and at the same time full of a dynamic and fiery energy and a passion to push India forward.

He came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self reliance and some roots in the past. He attended the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, spent

over a year in the U. S. A., travelled across Europe, going as far as Athens and Constantinople, and visited Egypt, China and Japan. Wherever he went, he created a minor sensation not only by his presence but by what he said and how he said it. Having seen this Hindu sanyasin once, it was difficult to forget him or his message. In America he was called the 'Cyclonic Hindu.'

He was himself greatly influenced by his travels in Western countries. He admired British perseverance and the vitality and spirit of equality of the American people. "America is the best field in the world to carry on any idea" he wrote to a friend in India. But he was not impressed by the manifestations of religion in the west and his faith in the Indian philosophical and spiritual background became firmer. India, in

spite of her degradation, still represented to him the light.

RATIONAL RELIGION

He preached the Monism of the Advaita Philosophy of the Vedanta and was convinced that only this could be the future religion of thinking humanity. For the Vedanta was not only spiritual but rational and in harmony with scientific investigations of external nature. "This universe has not been created by any extra-cosmic God, nor is it the work of any outside genius. It is self-creating, self-dissolving, self-manifesting, one infinite existence, the Brahman". The vedanta ideal was of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature. To see God in man is the real God-vision. Man is the greatest of all beings. But the "abstract vedanta must become living-poetic-in everyday life. Out of hope-

lessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms and out of bewildering yogism must come the most scientific and practical psychology". India had fallen because she had narrowed herself, gone into her shell and lost touch with other nations, and thus sunk into a state of 'mummified' and 'crystallized' civilization.

Caste, which was necessary and desirable in its early forms, and meant to develop individuality and freedom, had become a monstrous degradation, the opposite of what it was meant to be, and had crushed the masses. Caste was a form of social organisation which was and should be kept separate from religion. Social organisation should change with the changing times. Passionately, Vivekananda condemned the meaningless metaphysical discussions

and arguments about ceremonials and especially the touch-me-notism of the upper castes. "Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking pot, and our religion is: 'Don't touch me, I am holy.'

INTERNATIONALIST

He kept away from politics and disapproved of the politicians of his day. But again and again he laid stress on the necessity for liberty and equality and the raising of the masses. "Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being. Where it does not exist, the man, the race; the nation must go." The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead." He wanted to combine

Western progresss with India's spiritual background. "Make a European society with India's religion." "Become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts."

Progressively, Vivekananda grew more international in outlook: 'Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no longer be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organisations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the

day. That shows soildarity. In science, everyday they are coming to a similar broad view of matter". And again: "There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial or national or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspirations must go on rising till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay the whole of life, within its scope."

All this fitted in with Vivekananda's view of the Vedanta Philosophy and he preached this from end to end of India. I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and wherever such an attempt

has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy or holiness the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one. "The fact of our isolation from all the other nations of the world is the cause of our degeneration and its only remedy is getting back into the current of the rest of the world. Motion is the sign of life."

LESSON OF UPANISHADS

He once wrote: "I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried—if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing."

Vivekananda spoke of many things but the one constant refrain of his speech and writing was 'abhay' — be

fearless, be strong. For him man was no miserable sinner but a part of divinity. Why should he be afraid of anything? If there is a sin in the world it is weakness. Avoid all weaknesses; weakness is sin, weakness is death." That has been the great lesson of the Upanishads. Fear breeds evil and weeping and wailing. There had been enough of that, enough of softness. "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, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean meeting death face to face."

He condemned occulticism and mysticism. These creepy things —

There may be great truths in them but they have nearly destroyed us. And there is the test of truth. Anything that makes weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison; there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity; truth is all-knowledgeThe mysticisms, in spite of some grains of truth in them, are generally weakening... Go back to your Upanishads, the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy. And part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things. Take up this philosophy. The greatest truths are the simplest things in the world simple as your own existence." And beware of superstition. I would rather see everyone of you rank-atheists than superstitious fools, for the atheist is alive, and you can make something of him. But if

superstition enters, the brain is gone, the brain is softening, degradation has seized upon the life..... Mystery-mongering and superstition are always signs of weakness."

So Vivekananda thundered from Cape Comerin on the southern tip of India to the Himalayas, and he wore himself out in the process, dying in 1902 when he was thirtynine years of age.

CHAPTER II

NETHAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE ON SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

NETHAJI WRITES:

"I cannot write, about Vivekananda without going into raptures. Few indeed could comprehend or fathom him—even among those who had the privilege of becoming intimate with him.

His personality was rich, profound and complex and it was this personality—as distinct from his teachings and writings—which accounts for the wonderful influence he has exerted on his countrymen and particularly on Bengalees. This is the type of manhood which appeals to the Bengalee as probably as none other. Reckless in his sacrifice, unceasing in his activity, boundless in his love, profound and versatile in his wisdom, exuberant in his emotions, merciless in his attacks, but yet simple as a child—he was a rare personality in this world of ours. And as Sister Nivedita has said in her book—“The Master As I saw Him” — “The queen of his adoration was his Motherland.” Have you read his tirade against the priests, the upper casts and the richer classes in his Epistles? It would do credit to the most radical socialist.

"Swamiji was entirely free from the slightest trace of what you may call spiritual cant. He could not stand even the sight of it. To the pseudo religious he would say, "Salvation will come through the football and not through the Gita." Though a Vedantin he was a great devotee of the Lord Buddha. One day he was speaking so enthusiastically of Buddha that somebody said 'Swamiji! Are you a Buddhist?' At once his emotions bubbled forth and in a choked voice he said "What? I a Buddhist I am the servant of the servants of the servants of Buddha! "Before Buddha he would humble himself to dust. Swamiji, frequently used to say, "The intellect of Sankaracharya with the heart of Buddha"—that is what we should aim at."

“Similarly, he was one day lecturing about Jesus when somebody put a question. At once he grew grave and serious and in sonorous note said “If I had been present at the time of Jesus of Nazareth, I would have washed his feet not with my tears but with my heart’s blood.”

“And his love for his downtrodden people! That was oceanlike. Do you remember that message of his, “Say brothers. “The naked Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother.” Say brothers, at the top of your voice—“India’s good is my good.” And pray day and night, Oh, thou Lord of Gowri, Oh thou Mother of Strength—take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness and make me a man.”

“Swamiji was a full-blooded masculine personality—and fighter to the core

of his being. He was consequently a worshipper of Shakti and gave a practical interpretation to the Vedanta for the uplift of his countrymen. "Strength. strength is what the Upanishads say,"—that was frequent cry of his. He laid the greatest stress on character-building.

"I can go on for hours and yet fail to do the slightest justice to that great man. He was so great, so profound, so complex. A yogi of the highest spiritual level in direct communion with the Truth who had for the time being consecrated his whole life to the moral and spiritual uplift of his nation and humanity, that is how I would describe him. If he had been alive, I would have been at his feet. Modern Bengal is his creation - if I err not.

Swamiji did not desire or attempt organisational work in the way Swami Dayananda or the Aryasamajists did. That may be a failing, but he used to say of himself, "Manmaking is my mission." He knew that if the country could make really great men, then organisation could be completed in no time. He took great pains to train his disciples and never attempted to cripple their individuality or curb their free-thinking. To this end he would not keep a disciple near him for a long period. He used to say that under the shadow of one big tree another big tree could not possibly grow. What a contrast with some of our latter-day great men who cannot tolerate independent thinking and who desire that we should mortgage our intellect at

their feet and permit them to do all the thinking for us."

Questions :

1. Give an account of the early days of Vivekananda.
2. Give an account of Vivekananda's education.
3. Describe Vivekananda's meeting with Sri Ramakrishna.
4. Give an account of Vivekananda's travels as a Parivrajaka.
5. Describe Vivekananda's experiences at Kanyakumari.
6. Give an account of Vivekananda's experiences in the U. S. A.
7. What are his teachings?



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