

Vedanta

425 MAY - JUNE 2022

The Release of Philosophy
Pramathanath Mukhopadhyaya

Third Order of Vedanta
Gargi



Divine Wisdom

Illustrated Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna - 22



When all teeth fell

Let me tell you a story. A man used to celebrate the Durga Puja at his house with great pomp. Goats were sacrificed from sunrise to sunset. But after a few years the sacrifice was not so imposing. Then someone said to him, "How is it, sir, that the sacrifice at your place has become such a tame affair?" "Don't you see?" he said, "My teeth are gone now."

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Swami Vivekananda and His Scientific Approach to Religion -1

Speaking about the history of civilization Swami Vivekananda once said, '...the history of civilization is the progressive reading of the spirit into matter.' (CW: 8.429) He used a scientific approach to understand the truths of religion just as a scientist would use it to discover the truths underlying the material universe. A scientific attitude is a logical thought process that involves the concepts of: 1. Methods of science; 2. The science of science; and 3. A scientific temper.

What is "Scientific temper" or Attitude? It involves four stages. Stage 1: Observation and identification of problems. Stage 2: Formulation of Hypotheses. Stage 3: Experimental Verification in which same results are obtained in repeated experiments. Stage 4: Establishment of laws or theories.

Swami Vivekananda in his "Raja Yoga" says that the above principles are not only observed in the external world but also in the internal world. Reality is 'One'. 'Internal World' being only the finer aspect of the 'External World' which is gross. He says in his preface that, "It is not a sign of a candid or scientific mind to throw overboard anything without proper investigation. Surface scientists, unable to explain various extraordinary mental phenomena, strive to ignore their very existence." (CW: 1.121) In the same book he admits as a true scientist, "What little I know I tell you. So far as I can reason it out I will do so, but as to what I do not know I will simply tell you what the books say. It is wrong to believe blindly. You must exercise your judgment and reason, you must practice, and see whether these things happen or not. Just as you would take up any other science, exactly in the same manner you should take up this science for study." (CW: 1.134) (To be continued)

The Release of Philosophy - 2

Pramathanath Mukhopadhyaya

Tyranny of Science Gone

The gain of Philosophy and the stock of true human knowledge has been twofold. The chief gain has, of course, been that the tyranny of scientific absolutism is now gone. The human spirit of enquiry is now breathing free. Matter no longer is there with its noose around its neck. As to the other point that matter is an illusion, or that the sensed and perceived world is merely an appearance, it must be recognized that indications are there which suggest that all may be Maya. But here again science should not be dogmatic and say something outside its brief. The question of the reality of the world must as yet be left an open question, and one upon which Science as science should not claim to have the final say. So long as Science was arrogant, it required Philosophy to play second fiddle to it. Now that Science is modest, it may feel that it had no right to demand of Philosophy its vassalage, and may now return the deed of its self-surrender which it had not rightfully in its possession.

That the world may be a Maya is not a new revelation in Natural Philosophy. Herbert Spencer was commonly looked upon as the best exponent of the philosophical creed of the older generation of physicists, and his philosophy certainly did not make matter and motion the first principles. The world is the transfigured projection of an unknowable Being, an inscrutable Power. If we but put the Brahman of the Indian Upanishads for this inscrutable Power, and the transfigured projection of that Power for Maya, then it does not appear to be a far cry from this sort of scientific agnosticism or 'realism' to the ancient doctrine of Maya. Brahman, however, is not the unknown and inscrutable Being or Power. It is certainly unmeasured and immeasurable, undefined and indefinable,

undivided and alogical. But it is not merely the hidden but the patent Wonder: not merely the transcendent but also the immanent Being or Power. But let us not pause over this. Among physicists themselves there were some who possessed the 'X-ray vision' to penetrate the hard *ensemble* of scientific facts and laws, deductions and explanations and get at the kernel of truth, the foundations of the edifice of Science. They found not only that Science proceeded upon limitation of the given data, but upon not actually given but manipulated and prepared data—that the basic elements of scientific construction were largely, if not exclusively, conceptual moulds and convenient fictions only. Some cautious minds had even suspected that the Law of Causation, the Principles of the Uniformity of Nature, the Conservation of Matter and Force, and so forth might not after all be absolute and unquestionable.

Nevertheless, the facts and principles of Science, the methods and results, the spirit and outlook of Science were, and still to some extent are, the models to which all facts, and the like, must conform. New Science has ceased already to pitch its demands too high, and sundry orders of phenomena are already seceding from the empire of physical and mathematical science and declaring their independence and domestic sovereignty. And Philosophy ought to take, if she has not taken already, the lead in this movement. She must declare that she has a subject-matter which is not covered by the Science Group, and that her method of doing her job has not been and cannot be assigned by science. It is now felt that Philosophy must be more scientific and Science must be more philosophical. Truth cannot be partitioned between Science and Philosophy; nor can the apprehension and appreciation of truth be cut in halves and each half reserved for each of the two disciplines.

The time has now arrived when it should clearly be recognized that there is an aspect of the universe of experience which is

amenable to scientific treatment, to which the logical operations of definition, measurement, classification and deduction are applicable; and this aspect embraces not only the so-called realm of matter, but also those of life and mind. There is a great deal of truth in the assertion that the trend of modern philosophy is to find that mind is less mental and matter is less material than they were formerly supposed to be. There is now hardly any room for doubt that between matter and mind or between matter and life there is not only community of essence, but also community of natural governance. Science cannot be denied jurisdiction over these.

But it has further to be recognized that there is also an aspect of experience which is transcendental in the sense of being ultra-scientific, and which is not capable of being defined, measured, classified and explained in the sense that scientific entities are. And these two aspects are not in regions isolated from each other. Every scientific entity, for example the orbital motion of an electron, or the excitability of a plant tissue, presents a measurable and therefore scientific aspect, and a non-measurable or ultra-scientific aspect. In every actual measurement of a given fact or event, a residuum of the unmeasured always remains. No solution is absolutely without a precipitate which has not dissolved. The unmeasured and unexplained dislodged from one position is certain to reappear in a subtler and perhaps more complex form in another. It cannot be pretended that the modern physics of the constitution of the atom and quantum phenomena has laid the science of the universe on simpler and more understandable lines. The theory of hyper-spaces, of space-time, and so on has not presented a picture of simplicity at the background of the riddle of the universe.

Pictorial Thinking

To speak in terms of aspects is only pictorial thinking, but it does sometimes help us, when we may be thinking and talking analytically, to put our exhibits in a convenient way. It does not explain the whole or the parts and their correlation to say that the whole presents the aspects A, B, C, any more than the classification of a number of things into certain groups explains the things or their affinities. But then classification serves a purpose. And so does analysis in terms of aspects. It has the advantage of riveting us to the indivisible unity of the whole.

Now, the universe presents four aspects. First, there is the aspect of what we may call the whole and the fact. The whole of experience is always beyond measure and logical appreciation. The measurable and understandable order is ever imbedded in an unmeasurable and un-understandable whole. The actual fact of an event, again, in its concreteness baffles every measure and attempt at analysis. It is amenable to scientific treatment only after the paring off of all the irrelevant details. Second, there is the aspect of the as yet unmeasured but measurable order in experience. It is this which makes it possible for science to possess an ever expanding frontier. Thus some of the frontiers of the previous century have been pushed considerably back in the present. The twentieth century need not stop where the last century had to stop. There has been remarkable extension in the knowledge of great things and small. The universe in the atom as well as the island universes beyond our galactical system are now being scientifically surveyed and mapped. There has been extension in the fields of life and mind phenomena also. We now know more about the cell, its nucleus and fertilization; and more about subnormal and abnormal psychology relating to parapsychic phenomena. The subconscious mind, the potentialities of the mind hitherto unsuspected or disbelieved, the dynamism of the mind and its action and reaction on the dynamism of matter, all

these are better exhibited, if not better understood, today than they were yesterday. The humility of new science is not due to the fact that it is better informed today in such matters than old science, but to the fact that it knows that it does not know in matters in which old science thought or pretended to think that it knew.

Third, there is an aspect of facts or events, not merely biological and mental but also physical, which is open indeed to observation, and also to some extent to experiment, but not, at least to the same extent, to treatment by the methods of measurement and calculation. There may be an incalculable factor, an element of idiosyncrasy or choice or whatever else we call it, in the behaviour or phenomena. The jumping of an electron in its orbit may or may not in the final analysis present such a factor. But it remains as yet doubtful that any so-called physical event, outside the abstract and prepared treatment by the methods of Science, will ever be completely pressed into the moulds of any deterministic equations or formulae. It may after all possess a character of unaccountable indeterminateness. In the reign of law and order, it may bear at the centre of its being an ineffaceable right to be free and to choose in the face of all the tyranny of natural necessity. With regard to life phenomena and mind phenomena, a *prima facie* case has always existed that they involve an incalculable factor, a suggestion of something free and spontaneously choosing its line of action. And the burden of proof is on the determinist to show that freedom or spontaneity in these groups of facts is but Maya in the same way as the onus is on the scientific mechanist to show that the spontaneity in radioactive phenomena or the discontinuity in quantum phenomena is only seeming.

Fourth, there is that growing body of the so-called facts and laws which have passed muster in Science. This does not mean that the cases are closed and cannot be reopened. They are always being

reopened, and there is no prospect of finality ever being reached. And further it should be remembered that even the best attested facts and laws in Science are determined and determinable only with reference to some conventional frames of reference, making certain elements in the concrete situation relevant, and the rest, however important from other standpoints, irrelevant. For example, in dealing with the mutual attraction of the earth and the moon, we may regard each as a perfectly rigid sphere with its mass concentrated at its centre. But the actual concrete situation is evidently vastly more complicated. Scientific statements are thus in the nature of approximations. Again, in making its deductions, Science has to rely on certain principles of a comparatively fundamental character such as universal causation, uniformity of Nature, and so forth which are not self-evident propositions, but are only postulates requiring examination.

Probability and Fixity

Some of the front-rank scientists themselves are now perceiving that some of these principles may have their absolute dominion challenged. The very keystone of the scientific determinism of the last century and also of the present is universal causation. But this keystone is now found to be neither granite nor ferro-concrete, but sandstone with holes and fissures in it. Not only what are called 'emergent' events are now pressing themselves more and more strongly into acceptance, but the fixity of the chain of causal concatenation itself (that *A* must be followed by *B*, *B* must be followed by *C*, and so on; that for a given effect there must be a given cause and no other, and so on) is now found to be loose as soon as we descend from that plane of totals and averages to that of the single bits of events such as the quantum phenomena. Whether the single pulse of event *A* will be followed by *B* or by *C*,

is a question of probability; all that we can say in a given instance is perhaps this that *A* is more likely to be followed by *B* than by *C*. Under certain circumstances, we can calculate the relative probability.

When, however, we come to deal with facts or events in groups and consequently with statistical averages, we come to the region of uniformity and fixity. Thus an average particle in a heated gas or liquid conforms to a determinate plan or law of conduct, which need not mean that any individual particle in the swarm also rigidly conforms to it. By taking averages, even facts that are believed to be extra-physical may present a character of determinateness, enabling us to draw graphs of their behaviour and formulate laws pertaining to them.

In the case of the emergent phenomena and the 'personal factor' and eccentricity of every phenomenon, there has been, and there will always be, a difference in outlook among scientific men and philosophers. According to some, the domain of mechanistic determinism must remain unchallenged in so far as the physical order of facts at least is concerned. The spontaneity of radioactivity and the jumping of the electron in its orbit, for example, must have their adequate and sufficient physical reason, which we at present happen not to know, but which we may know tomorrow. The emergent variation in the germ-cell which results in the development of a new species of plant or animal may defy the scientific principle of sufficient reason today, but tomorrow even it may fall in with the body of facts that have been accounted for. On the other hand, there are others who would place not only the vital and psychical facts beyond the pale of absolute mechanistic determinism, but would claim even for the so-called physical phenomena some latitude of spontaneity and indeterminateness. Moreover, it has to be noted that the outlook of new science on such postulates as universal causation, together with some of its latest

findings in the region of quantum and atomicity, radio-activity, and so on, have a clear tendency to favour the latter attitude of mind.

Interwoven

For my own part, I believe that the determinate and the indeterminate, the accountable and the unaccountable, the measurable and the unmeasurable are interwoven together in every bit of event, material, vital and mental; that these distinctions are themselves pragmatic and conventional. Matter is matter only in accordance with a certain frame of convention, only with respect to certain uses and habits of acting and reacting and experiencing centres such as we are. Apart from such frames of reference and possibly with respect to other appropriate frames of reference, a particle of sand, for example, may be a living and thinking centre. Scientific relativity should no longer preclude the possibility that it may be so. However that may be, we should now clearly recognize that the scientific explanation of any event, even in the so-called physical realm, on deterministic lines must be in the nature of asymptotic approximation. The net of scientific calculus has an ever-widening spread and its meshes are becoming finer and finer, but the actual concrete fact, whether small or great, both exceeds its utmost spread and slips through its finest meshes. Neither the whole nor the point-event as such can be gripped by the pinchers, and any object can be so gripped only after it has been trimmed to convenient proportions by a pair of analytical scissors.

It has been said that modern science shows the world of experience to be an illusion. Some have even used the Hindu term Maya. But Maya fundamentally means 'what measures'. The unmeasured and unmeasurable Reality finitizes and measures itself in and as the things and events of the world, but it ceases not to be itself in the manifold of centres thus evolved and evolving. For this

reason, every object, great or small, presents one aspect in which it can be scientifically measured and logically appreciated, and another in which it exceeds the foot-rule and eludes the logical apparatus. Its determinate and necessary 'self' is imbedded in an essential background of indeterminateness and freedom. What is but an appearance is the Mayik aspect that it is finite only and not infinite, that it is determined only and not free, that it is passing only and not enduring or independent of space-time reference, that it is dead and unconscious only and not in substance life and consciousness. It is veiled experience to know the measured and conditioned only apart from the unmeasured and unconditioned—to fail to realize that even a particle of dust is Sachchidananda Brahman as Power to variously posit itself in space-time and other relations. As the Veda says in mystical language: 'It has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet; it unfailingly pervades all, and yet exceeds all by the measure of ten fingers.' The world is appearance as long as the veil is on. It is real when the veil is off. Then all is Real and All is Brahman. And this *All embraces the Appearance* also. For Reality as Power both is and appears.

Science thus covers not the Whole of Reality, but relates to certain aspects of it. It relates to the realm of Maya in the sense of what is measured. And it has its method of doing business. Philosophy must address itself to the Whole, and for this purpose must have a method of its own. Science with a truer appreciation of its limits and an ampler vision of its possibilities is coming to realize this. This has rendered a better understanding between the two possible. And with better understanding and co-operation, the release of Philosophy from an unjust vassalage has now become possible. The release will mean the resurrection of the Spirit of freedom and joy—Lila and Ananda—buried in the heart of all things—even matter.

(Reprinted from Prabuddha Bharata, November-December 1931)

The Third Order of Vedanta

Gargi

The Western Vedanta movement is very young as religious movements go. One can say, I think, that it has been active for about one hundred years, and one hundred years is a short time for an ancient religion to find the right forms of expression in relation to the deep-flowing traditions and needs of an adopted culture. Yet nowadays nothing moves or develops slowly, and a century or so today is equivalent to many centuries in an earlier age. So there has been ample time for the Vedanta movement to have developed certain distinctive patterns and modes. I would not say that these patterns have become set or crystallized. Most of them are, perhaps, trends rather than patterns, but though they are still fluid, some of them seem destined for permanence. This paper is concerned with one of these more stable and definite trends—one which is, I believe, bound to become a vital, indeed, an essential, characteristic of modern Vedanta. (I should say here that I do not think this trend is peculiar to the West; it will, I believe, become exceedingly important in India also. But in this article, I shall concern myself only, or primarily, with its Western—and particularly its American—aspect.)

What I have in mind is the emergence of a new type of spiritual aspirant—a type or class that constitutes what I would like to call the Third Order of Vedanta. Let me explain my use of this term. I have borrowed it from the Third Order that was established by Saint Francis of Assisi in the early part of the thirteenth century. In founding this Order, the great saint was responding to the pleas of a large group of men and women who longed to join one or the other of his monastic orders, either the First Order, that of monks (Friars), or the Second Order, that of the nuns (Poor Clares). But it so happened that these people had work to do in the world—duties

which, as St. Francis would have said, were God's will for them, or, as a Hindu might say, were their *svadharma*, their true metier or calling in life, not easily, or properly, laid aside. He could not, on the one hand, allow them to abandon their genuine responsibilities; and, on the other hand, he could not, or would not, discourage their equally genuine spiritual fervour and desire to embrace a disciplined monastic life. The problem was real and perplexing. Saint Francis told his supplicants that he would give the matter thought. This he did, and out of that thought, which was prayerful and characteristically compassionate, was born the Third Order.

A Rule was drawn up, according to which the members of this order took vows to lead an ascetic and holy life, dedicated to religious pursuits and to helping the poor. They lived both in spirit and in fact like monks and nuns, with the exception that they continued to fulfil their obligations in the world and to work at their chosen trade or profession, giving in charity whatever money they did not use for their simple needs. It was these people—these holy men and women—whose lives inspired and gave meaning to the phrase 'in the world but not of it'.

If we think of such a way of life in connection with Vedanta, we find that the Third Order of Vedanta is actually, though not officially, existing. The Vedanta societies in America have many members who, though nominally in the world, live a life bordering on monasticism. Indeed, this rapidly growing group of men and women seem to be not only members of a Third Order but—and this may be the same thing—examples of the 'new type' of spiritual aspirant that was mentioned by Swami Vivekananda. One day one of Swamiji's non-monastic disciples, Sharatchandra Chakravarty, had begged of him, 'Bless me, sir, that I may attain to the knowledge of Brahman in this very life', and Swamiji, placing his hand on the disciple's head, replied, 'Have no fear, my son, you are not like

ordinary worldly men—neither householders nor exactly Sannyasins—but quite a new type.¹ I may add here, rather parenthetically, that when he was in America Swamiji gave the vows of brahmacharya to a number of men and women without expecting them to live in monastic communities, but, rather, to support themselves or, as in the case of Miss Sarah Ellen Waldo—Sister Yatimata—to live on a private income. Were not these freelance brahmacharins also a 'new type'? And can we not say they were, in a sense, members of a Third Order?

At one time, and for a lack of a better term, I thought one could call the intermediate class of spiritual aspirants who abound in Western Vedanta societies 'semimonastics'. But many people, including myself, disliked that term, as the prefix 'semi' has an implication of inferiority about it, a comparative tone. And that will never do: the very last thing semimonasticism is is a class better or worse than some other class. It is a class in itself, with its own standards and its own greatness, and it should not be compared to either monasticism or householderism. So, the 'semimonastic' needs a name of his own. After considerable thinking and consultation, the word *mahavir* was hit upon. As you know, Mahavir was one of Hanuman's names, and it means 'great hero'. I thought that it was a fine appellation for the type we are considering, and so for the purpose of this paper, at least, I shall use it interchangeably with 'semimonastic' and thereby hope to counteract that offensive 'semi'.

Now, who is a *mahavir*? A Vedantic *mahavir* is a man or a woman who is unmarried, lives a life of strict brahmacharya, is an initiated disciple of a swami of the Ramakrishna Order, has renounced all worldly pursuits as such, cares nothing for worldly enjoyments or honours, lives simply, and has dedicated his energy, his time, and his heart to the realization of a spiritual ideal, and, as well, to the welfare of his fellowmen.

In what respect, then, is the *mahavir* not a monastic? In what respect is he (I shall often use the pronoun 'he' throughout this paper, with the understanding that it means both 'he' and 'she')—a new type? In two respects: first, he does not live in a monastery, and second, he earns his own living, plans his own day. He is not, in other words, a cenobite—one who belongs to a monastic community and follows its routine.

To avoid confusion, I should perhaps point out here the fairly obvious fact that it is not possible in the West to live as do the wandering monks in India. The Western monastic must either live in a monastic community, earn his own living, or be arrested for vagrancy. There are no other practical choices. Further, in the Western Vedanta societies that are affiliated with the Ramakrishna Order, monastics are as a rule required to live in recognized monasteries or convents. Thus, in these societies—and it is these societies that concern us here—the freelance, informal renunciate is not officially recognized as a bona fide monastic.

In India the *mahavir* (though not so called) is, I understand, becoming a recognized, though perhaps not common, type. In an article that appeared in a 1973 issue of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, Swami Budhananda wrote:

Hinduism does not look with much favour on *anashramis*, those who neither enter the responsible householder's life through sacramental marriage nor renounce the world formally and become monks and nuns. But Hinduism sanctions what is known as *naishthika-brahmacharya*, or avowed celibacy while living in the world, for both men and women. On all hands it is acknowledged that their lives are even of a more difficult type than those of monks and nuns.²

As I say—such people are 'great heroes'; and their lives are difficult indeed—and this the world over. Let us consider how,

generally speaking, the American *mahavir* lives. As I have already mentioned, he will lead a life of total chastity—in thought, word and deed. Yet, unlike the cenobitic monk, he is unshielded from temptation; his mind alone is his armour and his fortress. His work—in an office, school, hospital, or wherever—throws him into unavoidable contact with the opposite sex. His protection is not readymade for him; he must build his own walls and keep them in good repair and free of chinks. In this respect, he must be exceptionally vigilant and strong; he must have the strength to resist, the strength to stand on his own feet against the powerful current of the world, which includes, of course, the current of his own worldly tendencies, all ready at a moment's notice to take torrential form.

On his own and exposed to danger, the young semimonastic must live a sort of island life in the midst of a raging sea. He will avoid worldly lures and worldly distractions, 'innocent' though these may appear. Further, while he won't let himself be trampled on in his job or profession, he himself will trample on no one; he will have no worldly ambition whatsoever. The primary joys of his heart lie in the functions of the Vedanta Society to which he belongs—in the lectures, the classes, the talks with swamis, the pujas, and the golden hours in which he meditates or is able directly to serve God by participating in the work of the society. But none of these joys can he so much as hint at to his fellow job-holders in the Western world; that world considers him peculiar enough as it is.

In addition to his efforts to live a chaste and restrained life, the semimonastic practises poverty. Not only does he live as simply as possible, but, generally speaking, he has no economic security. Unless he works like everyone else, he will simply die of starvation, for if he is able-bodied, he cannot legally or in decency go on public welfare. But while he must earn his living in one way or another,

at the same time—no matter how much he earns—he spends upon himself as little as possible, often living very austere indeed. The rest he gives to the service of God.

Obedience, or at least the strict observance of certain rules and disciplines, is the third condition of the semimonastic. Whom or what does he obey? What Rule does he observe? Since the Third Order of Vedanta has no organization, it has no official Rule; yet there is one person whom the semimonastic recognizes as being in a position to guide him and lay down the law for him—the law that he follows to the letter. This is his spiritual teacher, his guru. The guru's word is the semimonastic's Rule, and obedience to it is, of course, of the utmost importance in this difficult way of life, where the pitfalls are as numerous as craters on the moon, the road unmarked and rocky, the sidetracks many and alluring, and the scope for self-deception vast.

Now, a question arises at this point. If the *mahavir* has renounced the world, if he has dedicated his life to a spiritual ideal, if he is bent on practising chastity, poverty, and obedience, then why on earth does he not enter a monastery? Why does he undertake a more difficult kind of life in which his vows and commitments are exposed on every side to erosion and assault? This is, I believe, a very pertinent question, for in the answer to it lies the justification for, and meaning of, the Third Order of Vedanta.

There are, in fact, a number of answers. A young man or woman may, for instance, be the sole support of his or her parents, or have other dependents who genuinely could not get along without financial help. If such a person should join a monastery or convent, it would cause true hardship to others—not just emotional upheavals, but true physical hardship. As is well known, Sri Ramakrishna was much opposed to anyone's renouncing an obligation (particularly to one's parents) before it had been fulfilled.

One legitimate reason, then, for an unmarried spiritual aspirant not to join a monastic community is his duty to his dependents.

Another reason lies in the requirements of some monasteries themselves. The monasteries of the Ramakrishna Order (and, as I have said, it is these with which we are here concerned) can accept only those applicants who can meet certain qualifications of age, education, and health. If one is average or if one's state of health would impose a burden on the monastic community, then it is better all around that one forget the whole idea of cenobitic life in Vedanta and go one's own way—'alone like the rhinoceros'. Again, there is the rhinoceros temperament—a natural and intense aversion to the restrictions, tensions, and trials of continual group living, whatever one's age, education, or state of health.

But the most important reason of all for choosing a semimonastic life is, I believe, an individual's drive to develop through unremitting, single-minded practice an exceptional talent or to follow a profession that demands intense training and full-time attention. Such drives can be very strong indeed, amounting to inherent and very real obligations, and until they are fulfilled, they will come in profound conflict with cenobitic monastic life. But while such persistent drives can be the bane of more or less cloistered monasticism, they can be the *mahavir's* glory. Indeed, the life of one who develops an individual talent or special ability and who transforms the pursuit of that talent or ability into a spiritual practice, offering, for instance, its fruits to God, is in itself a life of unique importance. It reveals in its unfoldment its own justification and significance. Such a life cannot be characterized in negative terms—as, on the one hand, unmarried or, on the other hand, nonmonastic. No, the *mahavir* who is making his own unique contribution to the world, however slight, is, as I said earlier, a

positive type in himself; he is undertaking his own form of hard spiritual discipline and following his own valid way of God.

Like the monks of the Ramakrishna Order, the *mahavir* has a great twofold purpose—to work for his own liberation and for the welfare of the world. But in some areas of service, the semimonastic is in a more advantageous position to fulfil the latter part of this injunction than is the monk or the nun who in many respects lives a restricted life. This is, I believe, particularly true in the present age and will be even more true in the age to come, for the varied, broad, and far-flung service of the Vedantic *mahavir* is, and will be, imperative to the welfare, indeed the survival, of the world.

Let me try to say very briefly why I think this is so. It would seem that we are only just now entering the new order of civilization for which Swami Vivekananda came, and though the future keeps changing shape as we hurtle toward it, I think certain of its features are clear enough to warrant a few generalizations.

One may say quite boldly, for instance, that the twentieth century has marked the beginning of what can be called the Age of Man—the man, that is, who has no special rank or privilege, who lives his life from beginning to end without making a ripple in the ocean of history and who dies without a headline. He is the man whose numbers compose the masses and who, throughout the entire history of civilization up until the present century, has never been considered a real person with legally assured economic, political, or social rights and liberties. I need not take time here to enumerate the many popular revolutions this century has seen. Throughout the world the common man has arisen in a body, the power of the privileged few has been lessened, colonial strongholds have been broken, governments whose primary motive is the welfare of the people have been struggling into being everywhere. Poverty, oppression, exploitation—all these yokes, once taken for granted as

the natural lot (or, in India, the *karma*) of the masses, are today looked upon by increasing numbers of people as ugly, inhuman and, above all, potentially dangerous blots on civilization.

This world, whose parts have become so tightly, intimately, and intricately interwoven, has become intensely sensitive to every cry of pain or hunger; any quiver of its delicately balanced mechanism might easily set off the ultimate explosion. Thus, if only for self-protection, many men have become acutely conscious of their responsibility to their fellowmen. But to be less cynical about it, I think a new and genuine sense of compassion also has entered the world, and as the common man reaches upward to freedom, many others out of justice and fellow-feeling want to help him. In any event, the upward movement of the common man characterizes the present age, and I do not believe there will be any stop to it until each individual is assured a decent, economically and politically free way of life—a life abounding with opportunity for both work and play. There will be no stopping, but the way will be long, and even with our burgeoning miracles of technology, the task will be enormous. Further, when the desired result has been achieved, to maintain it will require constant and perpetual mutual help between nations and peoples—and this on a global scale.

The wave that has been set in motion will alter the face of civilization in ways we cannot even guess. But we can guess that it will, indeed must, alter man's attitude toward himself, his world, and his fellowman; for its successful and relatively peaceful progress will require a new world outlook, a new psychology, a new religion.

As though by cosmic plan, this new religion has already entered the world along with the wave of popular revolution. If this is the Age of Man, it is also and, I believe, necessarily, the Age of Spirituality. Or, to put it more graphically, it is the age in which the

whole world will be engulfed and swept upward by what Swami Vivekananda called 'a huge spiritual tidal wave'.

As Swamiji so often pointed out, there is no other way for mankind to find a measure of peace and freedom than for man to reconstruct his vision of man. There are two basic views of man: one, as a psycho-physical entity; the other, as Spirit. If man's freedom and dignity on every level are the goals of the present age, then it is essential that humanity learns to see itself as primarily spiritual. The oppression of the weak by the strong is an inexorable law on the biological and psychological levels; here there is no possibility of universal freedom. No matter how cleverly nations dream up and carry out well-intentioned political and economical systems, this fact remains: the strong body and mind will always control and oppress the weak body and mind. As long as man thinks of himself as predominantly a psycho-physical being, his culture will be governed by this law. It is the law of the jungle, and in the present age its working seems particularly ferocious.

On the one hand, the common man is pushing up from below with tremendous force; on the other, he is being pushed down from the top with an equally tremendous force. As Swamiji once prophesied, the resulting tumult is great and widespread. Nor have the implements of destruction ever been more sophisticated, subtle and diabolical than they are today. And rapidly they are becoming more so. Moreover, the techniques that are being developed for keeping track of, influencing, and manipulating human beings are terrible in their possibilities. Indeed, the strong could acquire the power of gods, and when such power is combined with jungle morality, the result could only be wholesale disaster. It sometimes seems that large sections of human society are bent on achieving that end.

Swami Vivekananda's reiterated solution to this state of affairs is well known; over and over he insisted that man look upon himself and others as Spirit—as infinite and eternal Spirit. This outlook was, to his mind, the only basis for true brotherhood, true morality, true service—the only solid rationale for cooperation and mutual help rather than competition and struggle for dominance. Again and again, he said that the teachings of Advaita Vedanta, spread far and wide and practised by men and women, even by children, were the only hope for the modern world. But let me quote from Swamiji himself. The following is from a lecture he gave in London in 1896:

Build up your character, and manifest your real nature, the Effulgent, the Resplendent, the Ever-pure, and call It up in everyone that you see. I wish that everyone of us had come to such a state that even in the vilest of human beings we could see the Real Self within, and instead of condemning them, say, 'Rise, thou effulgent one...and manifest thy true nature. These little manifestations do not befit thee.' This is the highest prayer that the Advaita teaches....All these ratiocinations of logic, all these bundles of metaphysics, all these theologies and ceremonies, may have been good in their own time, but let us try to make things simpler and bring about the golden days when every man will be a worshipper, and the Reality in every man will be the object of worship.³

Here enters the *mahavir*. Living a pure life, imbued with the conviction, and perhaps in some cases with the realization, that man in all conditions, in all his ways of thought and action, is through and through Spirit, is God Himself playing the part of the great and the lowly, of the man who needs help and of the man who gives it—these semimonastics, like drops in that 'huge spiritual tidal wave', will pour over the whole world. Dedicated to Swamiji's ideal of *karma yoga*, endlessly varied in ability, talent, and inclination, they will undertake all types of work, bringing the highest philosophy

of Vedanta—the philosophy of the Upanishads—from the forest into the marketplace, just as Swami Vivekananda wanted. They will bring it into public and private schools, into universities, into libraries, into hospitals, into business, into law courts, into journalism, into all branches of the arts and every discipline of science, and they will bring it as well into all departments of government, at home and abroad. Many fields of service, both in underdeveloped countries and in so-called developed but partly rotting countries, will be open for perhaps generations to come. Indeed, the opportunities for service are endless in number and variety because the need for mutual help among all the people of the world is a dominant characteristic of this Age of Man. Swami Ranganathananda expressed this peculiarity of the present age in one sentence: 'The only valid form of interhuman relationship today is service, and not exploitation.'⁴

Swami Vivekananda inaugurated a new type of monasticism in India whereby the monk, heretofore devoted solely to spiritual practice proper—that is, to practices such as meditation, japa and formal worship—would plunge also into all kinds of humanitarian service, looking upon man as God. So, too, by his emphatic and universal teaching of *karma yoga* as a direct path to liberation, Swamiji opened a way for his 'new type' of spiritual aspirant. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, the semimonastic will in some respects be in a position to carry humanitarian activity even further than the monastic. For one thing, the number of semi-semimonastics will be very large, whereas the flaming core of pure monasticism is, and perhaps should always be, relatively small. Moreover, the training of the semimonastic in his chosen field will generally have been prolonged and intensive; further, his independent way of life will enable him to permeate—one might say, infiltrate—society from

top to bottom and in any capacity he chooses. He or she can go anywhere and do anything.

Generally speaking, his influence will be more or less indirect; in some cases, however, he could work directly to spread the teachings of Vedanta. For instance, a Swami who has worked in America suggested to me that in the present shortage of Indian Swamis available for Western work, well- trained Western semimonastics could form and support new Vedanta study groups in cities and towns where there are no established Vedanta societies. But whether the semimonastic directly encourages and directs Vedantic study or not, wherever he lives, whatever he does, his influence will be bound to touch the lives of others. Cumulatively, that influence will lift the whole world into a higher level of thought—the only level from which it will be possible to solve the multifarious and all too inflammable problems of this age. 'Perfect sincerity, holiness, gigantic intellect, and an all-conquering will. Let only a handful of men work with these, and the whole world will be revolutionized.'⁵ Thus Swami Vivekananda wrote, and his semimonastics—his *mahaviras*—as well as his monastics, are such men and such women.

He seems to have had both types in mind when he said in America:

'The real Sannyasin lives in the world, but is not of it....Live in the midst of the battle of life. Anyone can keep calm in a cave or when asleep. Stand in the whirl and madness of action and reach the Centre. If you have found the Centre, you cannot be moved.'⁶

I should perhaps say something here about householders, for I seem to have excluded them from the Third Order. Yes, if the Third Order consists of unmarried people, then it doesn't include householders. But householders, as I understand it, constitute an order of their own, with unique responsibilities and duties that not only are essential to the welfare of society but are a form of yoga

and a path to the highest realization. On the other hand, I do not think these categories of spiritual living can be rigid. If husband and wife can both dedicate themselves to a spiritually directed service of humanity, then they are Third Order people. I have in mind Captain and Mrs. Sevier, who cut all their ties and devoted themselves to Swamiji's work. They wanted, in fact, to take vows of *sannyasa*. But generally speaking, the responsibilities of marriage constitute a different kind of austerity and way of spiritual life—not a superior or inferior way, just a different way—and that way is not what this paper is about.

There is a good deal more to say in regard to the Third Order—both as it is today and as it may become in the future. For instance, in this brief paper I have not touched at all upon Vivekananda-inspired organizations in India, which are dedicated to the upliftment of the country. Such organizations provide marvellous opportunities for service, not only for householders but for *mahaviras*. Indeed, the channels into which Third Order energies could be poured are worldwide and of all kinds and sizes. One might say, moreover, that many an altruistic organization would be benefited and made more effective by the spiritual ideals the Third Order would infuse into it.

But I think I have said enough. I shall close by mentioning just very briefly the question of organization, which may have arisen in the minds of some of you. It is not a pressing question. Most of the semimonastics with whom I have discussed it have expressed a hearty, one might say passionate, dislike of organization in connection with their spiritual life and their individual commitment to service. That dislike is, indeed, one reason many of them have chosen not to join a monastery or convent. Some do not, in fact, want to be labelled at all. Whether there is any practical need for semimonastics to form an organization or belong to one, I do not

know. Perhaps there is: it is possible that the *mahavir's* derring-do and independence, admirable though those qualities are, may be overconfident. Most, if not all, spiritual aspirants need support, encouragement, training and guidance for a long time, and an organization headed by the Ramakrishna Order would serve that need, particularly when the going gets rough and the guru is no longer tangibly present.

But however that may be, organized or not, named or not, the new class of spiritual aspirants is not a dream or an idea for some future time. It is a present fact: its members are with us on all sides, and as though to meet a demand that is very great, very urgent, they are increasing in number all over the world. Hundreds of young men and women are hearing the call of Swami Vivekananda, hundreds are inspired to renounce worldly life and to serve man, each in his or her own unique and invaluable way. Thus, it seems beyond question that Swamiji's 'new type' of spiritual aspirants is here not only to stay but to grow lustrous and strong, fulfilling a very vital function in a very needful world.

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India and France

Louis Renou

From the end of antiquity until modern times, France, like the whole of Europe, lived on certain ideas of India handed down by Greek and Roman writers. Gradually, these ideas had resulted in a somewhat fanciful picture of India as the country of marvels, the originator of which had been Ctesias, Artaxerxes' Greek physician.

There was hardly any direct contact of importance until the sixteenth century. A French missionary of the thirteenth century, Jourdain de Severac, may be mentioned. In the seventeenth century we find less shadowy personalities, such as Tavernier, who paid five visits to India; Bernier, who studied customs and habits attentively; and others. Their profuse accounts do not lack references to the civilization and ancient monuments of the country, but none of them made any real contact with what, following the Greeks, we call 'the wisdom of India'. None of them was in a position to see, even without reading them, religious or profane writings. In the Middle Ages, the Indian fables of the *Panchatantra* were extraordinarily widely known; in oral or written form they found their way into most Western literatures, but they were transmitted first of all in a Pahlavi, and later, in Arabic and Persian versions. The Sanskrit original was still unknown, and when in the seventeenth century, La Fontaine, our greatest fabulist, said that he had drawn many of his fables from those of the Indian sage Bidpai or Pilpay (possibly meaning Vidyapati), it was in fact an Arabic intermediary, the *Book of Kalilah and Dimnah*, which provided his material; he could have no suspicion of the existence of a Sanskrit collection.

In the eighteenth century, the mystery of ancient India came very nearly to being pierced, and the good fortune of the discovery might well have fallen to a Frenchman. In France, the atmosphere was favourable for oriental research. Grouped around the *Encyclopaedia*,

an active band of writers and philosophers had resolved to attack the Church's pretensions. They wanted to prove that other peoples had had 'revelations' (*shruti*, as you would say), like the Hebrew-Christian people, and at an earlier date; and that those peoples had had religious experience at least as valid as that in which Christians claim a monopoly. The Church on its side sought to defend itself with the same weapons: it wished to prove that the oriental religions were not ancient and that, in any case, they were tainted with idolatry. In short, on both sides, India was, first and foremost, a pretext for religious controversy.

Fortunately, the zealous missionaries from Europe sent to southern India were often occupied with more disinterested aims and took a more objective view of matters than that prompted by the general instructions given them. For instance, several French Jesuits of the so-called Maduran Mission in the eighteenth century had a fairly exact knowledge of Sanskrit. Father Pons wrote a Sanskrit grammar in Latin, translated the *Amarakosha*, and sent a considerable consignment of manuscripts to Paris. That was the first collection of Sanskrit writings established in a Western library. Father Coeurdoux was one of the first to recognize the kinship of Sanskrit with our classical languages. The discoveries of these obscure precursors, however, remained unpublished or lost in little-known publications; only a faint echo of them reached Europe; minds were not yet ready to receive the lessons of the East.

Chance, too, favoured a few travellers. The astronomer, Le Gentil, who visited Pondicherry, gained useful information about Indian astronomy from meeting a Tamil scholar, Maridas Poulle. This same scholar, who had translated into French the *Bhagavadam*, a Tamil adaptation of the *Bhagavata-Purana*, was also in touch with a historian of Central Asia, De Guignes. Thanks to the passages in the *Bhagavata* dealing with the historical dynasties, the *surya-vamsa* and *soma-vamsa*, De Guignes was able to outline, for the first time, a picture of the ancient history of India. Admittedly, his picture was not free from

serious mistakes, but it was difficult to do better with the only available resources. As my friend, Jean Filliozat, has shown, an important discovery, with which William Jones is generally credited, was due to De Guignes. As early as 1772, he recognized in the name of Chandragupta Maurya (which the Tamil text reproduced in the form of Sandragouten), the Sandrakottos mentioned by the Greek historians, the man who had freed India from the dominion of Alexander's successors. As you know, that identification is the keystone of Indian chronology in the earliest periods.

Another traveller, Anquetil-Duperron, set out for India in 1754, at the age of twenty, alone and without an official mission. His object was to rediscover the *Vedas* and the sacred writings of ancient Persia. A firmer and more courageous determination than his has seldom been encountered, but he succeeded in only half of his task. He could not extract from the Brahmins the sacred language, the secret of which they guarded jealously; he could find no means of learning Sanskrit. Failing the *Vedas*, he was able to obtain the Persian translation of the *Upanishads*, of which, fifty years later, he was to publish a Latin version. For long, until the time of Deussen, that version was the fullest, if not the most accurate. As you know, it was through that translation that Schopenhauer came into contact with Indian thought, which decisively influenced his life and work. By that time, however, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the study of the Indian language and civilization had already had its official beginning with the work of Wilkins and Jones.

In France, however, Anquetil's discoveries were overlooked or challenged. 'A prophet is without honour in his own country', as we say. The text of the *Zend-Avesta*, which he had brought back from the Parsee communities in Bombay, was considered to be a forgery. Furthermore, although the authentic manuscripts of the *Veda* had been deposited in the Royal Library (the present *Bibliothèque Nationale*) since 1731, the *Veda* had remained a dead letter in France as everywhere else in the West. Our great writer of the time, Voltaire, who was keenly

interested in Indian religion and philosophy, doubted the existence of the *Veda* and was easily duped by a missionary of the time, the author of a fake entitled *Ezour-Veidam*. He still believed that Sanskrit (*Sanskretan* or *Sanskroutan*, as it was then called by French writers) was a document.

At the time when the study of India began in Europe with Wilkins and Jones, and, shortly afterwards, with Colebrooke, it was England which was to derive most advantage from the excellent work of these pioneers, particularly as France, following the unfortunate wars of the eighteenth century, lost almost all her political possessions in India. Nevertheless, from 1800 on, France tended to become the centre for Oriental study. The preparation of an inventory of the Indian manuscripts that were being accumulated in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* was begun. The *Asiatick Researches*, published in Calcutta, were immediately translated into French, as were the works of Wilkins and Jones. The Germans, Klaproth, Lassen (the founder of Indian studies in Germany), the Schlegel brothers, both in different ways students of India, and lastly Bopp, who was to originate the study of comparative grammar, all came to Paris.

The *Asiatic Society* of Paris was to be the first established in Europe, some years before London's. The first chair of Sanskrit instituted in the West was that at the *College de France*. It was first held by Chezy, who learned Sanskrit by himself, evolving a grammar and a dictionary for his own use, and who was to be the first to translate and publish *Shakuntala* in France. The moving account in the preface to his book, of his difficulties and his reward when he was at last able to decipher the glorious lyrical stanzas of the Indian drama, should be read. In spite of his merits, however, Chezy was only an amateur. A great philologist was needed to establish the study of Sanskrit on a firm footing. Such a philologist was found in Eugene Burnouf, who succeeded Chezy in 1832.

Burnouf's name is less known in France and the world at large than that of Champollion. The interpretation of the writings of ancient

India is not so spectacular as the deciphering of hieroglyphics or cuneiform; it is not so definitely the speciality of one man or a small group of men. On reflection, however, it demands still wider and more varied gifts. Burnouf, who was also the true founder of Avestic philology, must be acknowledged as the originator of the scientific study of Buddhism. At the age of only twenty-two, in his *Essai sur le Pali*, written in collaboration with Lassen, he showed that Pali was a language derived from Sanskrit by a strict process of evolution. His *Introduction a l'histoire du buddhisme indien* is even more important. It may be said to have opened up for us the whole literature of the *Mahayana*; it is still useful for consultation today.

However, Burnouf did not entirely fulfil his destiny. He died at the age of fifty and left behind an extraordinary accumulation of unpublished writings as evidence of the fruitful fields into which his research and teaching were leading him. His classes on the *Veda* had gathered around his Chair the vital forces of contemporary Indian study—from France, Regnier, who was to be the earliest editor of *Pratishakhyas*; and Barthelemy Saint Hilaire, who, in 1855, was to describe the *Sankhya* in detail for the first time. Among Germans, it is enough to mention the names of Roth, Goldstucker and Max Müller.

If Burnouf had lived longer, and had not, from excessive modesty, stood aside in favour of certain of his colleagues or pupils, he would have had the distinction of publishing the *Rig-Veda*, and possibly of translating it, and would certainly have done it better than the worthy Langlois was able to do. His scrupulously careful philology did not prevent him from appreciating the human grandeur of his mission. In his inaugural lecture, he said: 'It is India, with her philosophy and myths, literature and laws which we shall study in her language. It is more than India; it is a page from the story of the origins of the world, of the primitive history of the human mind, which we shall try to decipher together.' The excellent *Histoire de la litterature hindoustanie* by Garcin de Tassy also appeared about the same time as Burnouf's

works; it is another book which marks an epoch in the literary history of India and, in many respects, is still unsurpassed.

It is difficult today, in our drab world, to imagine the atmosphere of enthusiasm and youthful ardour in which the development of Indian studies proceeded. The scientific interest in India coincided with the Romantic movement and was imbued with the enthusiasm as well as the naivety and excesses of that period. It is not enough to say that it coincided with Romanticism; it was an aspect of it. After the rediscovery of antiquity in the sixteenth century, there followed, as it were, a second Renaissance, the rediscovery of the East. It was thought that the mysterious beginnings of mankind had at last been reached; it was believed that the first halting utterances of the primitive mind were revealed in the earliest writings and earliest speculations. M. Raymond Schwab rendered a real service to learning in our country in a work, combining charm and erudition, in which he outlines the early stages of Indian studies and the deep influence which they had on French writers in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century.

It is often thought that oriental studies began in Germany, because it was there, we are told, that the ground was best prepared for them. Certainly, it is undeniable that the mystical and sentimental foundation of oriental studies and, in particular, of Indian studies, is more obvious in Germany than elsewhere. It was in Germany that the work of the English scholars immediately found the widest audience, in the first place with Herder and Goethe, and later with the Schlegels, Humboldt, Schopenhauer and many others. Romanticism with an Indian bias or romantic Indian studies, as you prefer, awoke memorable echoes there. Although *Shakuntala* was translated into English by William Jones, the reputation of the drama in the West was possibly established less by that translation than by the famous lyric in which Goethe spoke of it: *Willst du die Blüthe des Fruens, die Früchte des späteren Jahres....* But it is too much to hold, like Winternitz and others, on such a basis, that there is a permanent, inherent affinity

between the Indians and the Germanic peoples. The well-known orientalist, Von Schroeder, wrote: 'The Indians are the romanticists of antiquity, the Germans are the romanticists of modern times.' And, as common features, he quoted pantheism, *Weltschmerz*, and the love of nature. But those are features found in all the countries touched by the Romantic movement, in France or Italy just as much as in Germany.

There are not a few writers in France, and often writers of considerable importance, who have expressed sentiments concerning India which reflect that spiritual communion to which the Germans lay claim. What must be admitted is that such French evidence is usually rather later than that of the Germans, just as the Romantic movement in France developed later than in Germany. The testimony is nonetheless instructive. The three principal French poets of that period, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Alfred de Vigny, were interested in different aspects of Indian thought and disturbed by the unknown world that was opening up before them. In all three, the idea of an individual soul informing the universe, the aspiration towards an indefinable divinity, the urge to expression sometimes in the form of a hymn, and sometimes in the epic, are all features connecting them by instinct with ancient India. Hence their wonder when they made acquaintance with the great Sanskrit writings in translation.

Several times Vigny describes his emotion, in his *Journal d'un poete* and in his *Letters*. In his *Cours familier de litterature*, Lamartine acknowledges *Shakuntala* as 'a masterpiece of both epic and dramatic poetry, combining in one work the essence of the pastoral charm of the Bible, of the pathos of Aeschylus and tenderness of Racine.' There is justification for the view that Lamartine's poems represented a sort of intuition of the Vedic hymns, with which he could not then have been familiar—an exact comparison drawn by Jules Lemaitre, a critic of the end of the century. As for Victor Hugo, he is often full of respect, an even *Panic* respect, before the literary monuments of India, that race of gods and those vast epics, in which he sensed a universe fashioned in his proportions, or rather to his disproportionate

immensity. One of the poems of the *Legend of the Ages*, called *Supremacy*, is a free development of the narrative portion of the *Kena-Upanishad*. In it we see the gods urging their own best—Vayu, Agni, and Indra—to learn the nature of the mysterious power of the Brahma. They try, and the Brahma tests each in turn, showing them a blade of grass and challenging them to destroy it. The following is the passage relating to Agni in the simple terms of the Sanskrit original:

Tad abhyadravat-tam-abhyavadat ko'sity-agnir-va aham asmity-abravat-jataveda va aham asmiti. Tasmins-tvayi kim viryam-ityapidam sarvam daheyam yad idam prthiyvam iti. Tasmai trnam nidadhau- etad-daheti. Tad-upapreyaya sarva-javena tan-na sasaka dagdhum....

This is what the passage becomes in Hugo's colourful and somewhat grandiloquent version:

Le dieu rough, Agni, que l'eau redoute, Et devant qui medite a genoux le bouddha, Alla vers la clarte sereine et demand:—Qu'es-tu clarte?—Qu'es-tu toimeme? lue ditelle. —Le dieu du Few. —Quelle est ta puissance? —Elle est telle Que, si je veus, je puis bruler le noirci Les mondes, les soleils et tout. —Brule ceci, Dit la clarte, montrant au dieu le brin de paille. Alors, comine un belier defence une muraille Agni, frappant du pied, fit jaillir de partout La flamme formidable, et, fauve, ardent, debout, Crachant des jet de lave entre ses dents de braise, fit sur l'humble crouler une fournaise; Un soufflement de forge emplit le firmament.

The red god Agni, the dreaded of water, before whom Buddha, kneeling, meditates, approached the serene radiance and asked, 'What art thou, radiance?' 'What art thou?' Came the reply, 'The God of Fire.' 'What power is thine?' 'It is such that, if I will, I can burn the sky to blackness, burn worlds, and suns, burn all.' 'Burn this', said the radiance, showing the god a wisp of straw. Then as a ram will batter down a wall, Agni beat his foot and all around struck forth the dreadful flame; he stood in glowing tawny light, spewing through burning teeth great lava streams, and poured a furnace flame upon the puny straw; the heavens were filled with a great forge's roar.

The great historian of the Romantic period, Michelet, no less poetical than these poets, in 1863 came upon the *Ramayana* in the Fauche's mediocre translation. In this connection he wrote, in his fine book *La Bible de l'humanite*: 'That year will always remain a dear and cherished memory; it was the first time I had the opportunity to read the great sacred poem of India, the divine *Ramayana*. If anyone has lost the freshness of emotion, let him revive it in the *Ramayana*, let him drink a long draught of life and youth from that deep chalice.' Again, in his book on *La femme*, with all its brilliant immaturities, Michelet advises a young woman who has just learned the joys of love to have *Shakuntala* read to her (there is no doubt that that play was held in high esteem). 'I leave her fortunate lover the delight of reciting *Shakuntala* to her in some flowery bower', he says, and he thinks it possible to sum up the essence of Indian thought, the *satyasya satyam*, in a short phrase, an *upanishad*: 'The Veda of Vedas, the secret of India is this—man is the eldest of gods; the word created the world.'

Blazac, the great novelist of the same period, introducing one of his favourite characters, Louis Lambert, in the novel of the same name, makes him say this:

It is impossible to call in doubt the fact that the Asiatic scriptures were anterior to our Holy Scriptures. Anthropogony drawn from the Bible is only the genealogy of one swarm from the human hive which found a resting place between the mountains of the Himalayas and those of the Caucasus. The sight of the swift regeneration of the earth, the miraculous power of the sun, first witnessed by the Hindus, suggested to them the gracious conceptions of happy love, fire worship, and the infinite personifications of reproductive forces. Those magnificent images are not found in the writings of the Hebrews.

Victor Cousin, a philosopher who was widely celebrated at the time, made it his duty to assist the dissemination of Indian philosophy so far as he could; and the famous physicist, Ampere, wrote to Hugo: 'Indian philosophy will occupy the attention of our century and those

following, as much as Greek philosophy occupied the sixteenth century.'

This enthusiasm, which naturally was not free from misunderstandings and ingenuousness, was to endure for most of the nineteenth century, taking the most varied forms. At the beginning of the century it was mystical with Ballanche, who, in his *Essai sur les institutions sociales*, demanded that Latin should be replaced in primary education by the oriental languages. In his *Genie des religions*, Edgar Quinet, half-historian, half-mystic, wrote:

When human revolutions first began, India stood more expressly than any other country for what may be called a declaration of the Rights of the Being. That divine Individuality, and its community with infinity, is obviously the foundation and the source of all life and all history.

In his *Discours sur les revolutions de la surface du globe*, the naturalist, Cuvier, uses more scientific terms in his attempt to demonstrate the support found in the ancient writings of India for hypotheses regarding the nature of primitive man and the antiquity of human habits. Later on, Gobineau made a scientific claim when, in his *Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines*, he attempted to restore the concept of a pure Aryan race, for which purpose he naturally employed the testimony of the Indians of the Vedic Age. We know only too well what tragic impetus Gobineau's doctrines gave to German racialism.

To understand the causes of that enthusiasm, it is first of all necessary to remember that in a short space of time, scarcely more than a few decades, a series of most important Sanskrit works were introduced into France in translations: firstly, there was the complete *Rig-Veda* translated by Langlois (completed only very shortly after the beginning of Wilson's translation); the *Ramayana* translated by Fauche; most of the *Mahabharata*, also translated by Fauche, who was likewise responsible for the whole of the *Kalidasa* and several other literary texts; the *Laws of Manu* translated by Loiseleur-Deslongchamps, not to mention the *Saddharma-pundarika* and the *Bhagavata-Purana*

translated by Burnouf. With the exception of the three last mentioned, these translations are very indifferent; they are what used to be called, like certain ladies, 'pretty but unfaithful'. With all their faults, however, they had a stimulating influence and, taken together, they form a much more substantial body than the contributions added by later generations.

At that time there was constant contact between writers, artists, and men of science. Learning had not yet assumed that sometimes frightening aspect which today too often discourages the non-specialist. Any cultivated reader could profitably follow the work of scientists. The Duc d'Orleans, Louis Philippe, later to be king of France, was the President of the *Societe Asiatique* and gave lectures on the value of oriental studies. In the literary salons the best brains met; we may mention Mme Cuvier's salon, frequented by Burnouf, and that of Mary Clarke, the wife of Jules Mohl, who, for years, was to be the Secretary of the *Societe Asiatique*. Rammohan Roy's visit to Paris, in 1832, roused intense sympathetic curiosity.

Gradually, however, excitement subsided. The advances of science made the public distrustful. France's growing disquiet at the German threat unjustly created a certain distaste for the Orient, of which Germany had been the herald.

However, the decline in enthusiasm was offset by a truer understanding. Towards the end of the century, the religious historian, Renan, reviewed calmly and justly the progress made over a long period. He defended the primacy of the Bible and affirmed that oriental literature could be appreciated only by scholars; he criticized the alleged resemblances between the legend of Buddha and the life of Jesus. In another passage, however (perhaps a remnant of Romanticism), recalling Burnouf's teachings—for Renan too had been one of his pupils—he said of the writings of ancient India: 'There is not one of those works in which I have not found more philosophic elements than in all the writings of Descartes and his school.'

One poet carries on from another. Lecomte de Lisle, a belated Romantic, was to compose a Vedic prayer for the dead and a poem to Surya. It was a survival of Lamartine, inspired not so much by deep feeling as by a taste for the exotic. Exoticism, continually nourished by travellers' tales and popular literature, now tended to take the place in writers of the concern with spiritual things which had inspired the Romantics. Mallarme, a poet of the end of the century, and highly reputed, wrote Indian fables in which he adapted in his own way stories which had already been translated from Sanskrit into French. For instance, he gave an abbreviated version of the story of *Nala and Damayanti*, adorned with precious conceits and embellishments of style to give it what he believed to be an oriental atmosphere.

Pierre Loti, another descendant of Romanticism, was to write travel books on India under the title of *L'Inde sans les Anglais*. There is a fair proportion of the morbidly picturesque in that work, but there is also, here and there, a note which may be sincere, as when he says: 'It is to India, the cradle of human thought and prayer, that I go to ask peace from the guardians of Aryan thought; I beg them to give me belief in an indefinite survival of the soul.' Another poet, Jean Lahor, who was steeped in Indian pessimism and, as it were, intoxicated by the idea of *nirvana*, wrote an *Histoire de la litterature hindoue* with, it must be admitted, more lyrical feeling than competence. More recently, another poet, Maurice Magre, like many others, has fallen under the spell of Buddhism spiced with an admixture of theosophy. More impressive is the admiration inspired in Rodin by the discovery of the temples of pre-Muslim India.

We must go back for a summary survey of the progress of French learning after the death of Burnouf. For about twenty years scholarship marked time, in spite of two or three productions of great merit. In Germany this period between 1850 and 1870 was decisive, tremendous progress being made in most branches of Indian studies.

It is only in the years immediately following the war of 1870, with the desire for regeneration called forth by defeat, that we see a brilliant

resumption of study in our country. The establishment of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* at the Sorbonne was intended to give France a research institution comparable with the seminars which had been the strength of the German universities. Valuable philological work, Kaccayana's Pali grammar translated by Senart and the *Bhaminivilasa* translated by Bergaigne, date from that time. Barth's description of the *Religions de L'Inde*—merely an item for a dictionary—is an attempt, which has not yet been improved upon, to summarize the whole religious development of the country, omitting no factual detail and yet, with all that detail, preserving the synthetic character of the work. Even today this handbook can still be usefully consulted. Barth, who wrote no other book or lengthy article, had an unusual and, one might also say, paradoxical career: by nothing more than summarizing and carrying on an active correspondence from continent to continent, he was able for forty years to exercise a sort of supervisory direction over our studies. All writers were concerned and anxious to submit the results of their work to him.

Bergaigne's magnum opus, *La Religion vedique d'apres les hymnes du Rgveda*, also dates from the eighties. It may be considered today that there is an arbitrary element in that work and that it is based on philological material to some extent outdated. Nevertheless, it remains the only comprehensive and systematic attempt up to our time to grasp the very foundations of the speculative philosophy of the *Veda*, the essence of the thought of the old *rishis*. The romantic ideal of the primitive *Veda*, a sort of spontaneous adoration of natural phenomena, gives place to a learned religion, in which the mythical element is explained through ritual. The study of the heroic epochs of India thus loses its chief stronghold, but it must be allowed that the new interpretation appeals less to the imagination than the old. Since the time of Bergaigne, no other writer had had the courage to admit the undoubted beauties in the *Veda*.

On the other side of Vedic literature, Paul Regnaud, who also did good work in the field of poetics, explained how the Upanishads were

the preparation for the systematic philosophy of the *Darshanas*. Bergaigne's disciple, Victor Henry, continued the learned tradition of Vedic studies.

On the other hand, Senart carried on the tradition of Burnouf. In his book on Buddha, he endeavoured to show how much of the legend had become attached to the biography of the founder. He demonstrated that those legends were partly of Vedic origin and partly common to Hinduism. The same scholar was also responsible for a great edition of the *Mahavastu*, which is still unsurpassed. Although he possibly gives too large a place to personal conjecture, Senart provides an example of the way in which the critical restoration of a text transmitted in imperfect form may be undertaken, in that particularly ill-defined linguistic region represented by 'Mixed Sanskrit' or 'Hybrid Sanskrit'. Lastly, a further and most important contribution made by this scholar is the first great interpretation of the body of Ashoka's inscription, following the work of the first decipherers. All the considerable work which has been done in this field has consisted mainly of improving Senart's recensions and interpretations.

Lastly, a few years before his death in an accident, Bergaigne had had time to mark out a course which was to have pregnant consequences. French penetration into IndoChina had made possible the discovery of a vast quantity of epigraphic literature in Sanskrit in that country. Bergaigne began to classify it with a view to publication and, after his death, his work was completed by Barth and Senart. These old writings are evidence that Indo-Chinese civilization was derived from India, and that Brahminic culture flourished in Indo-China in the first centuries of our era. This fact, important in itself, fell within the framework of still wider research, largely the work of French savants. Sinological research had taken a completely new lease of life at the end of the century with Chavannes, who was to be followed by Pelliot. Fifty years earlier, French scholars had been responsible for the discovery of the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims,

Fa-hien and Hiwen-Tsang, of inestimable value for the study of Indian history.

The sinologists' work on Buddhism in the Far East, and the expeditions to Central Asia (the most famous was that which went to Tuen-Hwang in 1908, its full harvest has by no means yet been garnered)—the ultimate object of all that activity, whether conscious or not, was to restore India to the central place in Asiatic history, as the link between the great civilizations and the leaven of culture. The basis of the idea of Greater India, on which emphasis is so rightly laid by U.N. Ghoshal and other Indian scientists, was to a large extent laid by these exploring scholars, ceaselessly devoted to the task of discovering the ancient history of India from the starting point of China, Tibet, or South-East Asia. The attraction of the North West Frontier regions, through which all the invading hordes had passed, can be similarly explained. Foucher's research on *L'art greco-bouddhique du Gandhara* introduced a new chapter in the history of art, to be supplemented later by his study of Buddhist iconography.

The third generation of French students of India is represented by Foucher, Finot and Sylvain Levi. Foucher, the only surviving member of the group, is not only noted for his archaeological work and for his historical research concerning North-West India in Indo-Greek and IndoScythian times; he is also a philologist familiar with the methods of the *shastra*, and with a thorough knowledge of the *nyaya* and *kavya*. Thanks to his elegant style, he was master of popular exposition. Finot, who died in 1935, made his reputation by the careful editing of texts and learned studies of Sanskrit epigraphy in Cambodia. He was a conscientious scholar, careful not to deal in hypotheses or make statements unsupported by textual evidence.

Sylvain Levi, who also died in 1935 and who will probably be remembered by many of you, was the most famous of our research workers since Burnouf. His written works are as spacious as they are varied, and yet by no means give a complete picture of him as man or scholar, nor of the charm and critical alertness of his mind, his

linguistic gifts and his qualities of heart. Only the dullest could be unresponsive to his glowing personality and inspiring ideas. How can I sum up in a few words his contribution to our knowledge? His early career seemed to foreshadow that of a classical student of Indian civilization, with the *Theatre Indien*, the first attempt to give a complete description of Sanskrit drama from the point of view of dramatic theory, dramatic practice, and literary history. Secondly, there was the small book on the *Brahmanas*, the legacy of Bergaigne's ideas. In that book, Sylvain Levi showed that the only true divinity in those texts was sacrifice and that a sort of 'totalitarian' doctrine (as we should call it today) had been built up around and for sacrifice. Sylvain Levi's expedition to India in 1897 overshadowed the famous expeditions of Buhler, Peterson and Kielhorn in the importance of manuscripts discovered, as the German, Leumann, himself admits. Thus, by force of circumstances as well as by vocation, Levi became the historian and philologist of Buddhism.

The importance attributed to Buddhism is a characteristic of French scholarship as a whole. It may be considered exaggerated: Indian humanism is in no way connected with Buddhism, and Indian spiritual philosophy has few links with it. So far as antiquity is concerned, however, it is only through an interest in Buddhism that the history of India can be profitably approached and that India can be drawn out of her 'splendid isolation'. This was Sylvain Levi's primary concern. Thus, he was led to begin the study of Buddhism in the North on a comparative basis, that is, by dealing concurrently with Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese. This method bore fruit in India itself in the work of P.L. Bagchi, who was Sylvain Levi's favourite Indian pupil, and in that of many others. In France the work was continued, in particular, by Przyluski, who died prematurely some years ago. He had endeavoured to trace the *Legend of the Emperor Ashoka* from Indian and Chinese sources, and also to define the development of the Buddhist sects in his book on the *Council of Rajagriha*.

Other aspects of Indian studies were not neglected, however. Masson-Oursel summarized the *Histoire de la Philosophie Indienne* and laid the foundation for a comparative study of philosophy in which, for the first time, oriental thought took its rightful place. Lacote studied with exemplary care the Nepali and Kashmiri version of the *Brihatkatha*, in an attempt to fix the shifting image of Gunadhya and the original *Brihatkatha*. In linguistics, at the instigation of Breal in the first place and later, and principally, of Meillet, French learning bore comparatively rich fruit. The application of the method of comparative study to Indian languages has proved fruitful since Jules Bloch first described the structure of a modern language in his book *La formation de la langue marathe*, or, at a later date, traced the whole development of the languages derived from Sanskrit in his general treatise, *L'indou-aryen du Veda aux temps modernes*.

I do not wish to deal in detail with the work done. Elsewhere I have given a summary of other works. Probably these works are not comparable, either in number or in the wide scope of many of them, with those produced by German scholars. Indian studies in Germany, however, inspired from the earliest days by the fever of Romanticism, were always effectively supported by the Government. Up to the war, Sanskrit was taught in all German universities. In our country, efforts have been made in vain to secure for oriental studies an adequate number of Chairs, made ever more necessary by the growth of research. During the last century an attempt was made by Victor Duruy, a Minister of Education, to introduce the rudiments of Indian history into the syllabus of secondary schools. He failed. Almost all work is still concentrated in Paris. At the Sorbonne, there is a Chair of Indian Literature. At the *College de France*, there is the Chair of Sanskrit which was held by Burnouf, Bergaigne and Sylvain Levi. Lastly, at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes*, several posts known as *directions d'etudes* are connected with the study either of Indian philology or the history of religions.

Outside Paris, there is only one Chair of Sanskrit and Comparative Grammar (to use the now very much outdated title) at Lyons. Very recently, one might almost say, surreptitiously, a Chair of Oriental Philosophy has been established at Lille. The *Institut de Civilisation Indienne*, founded at the Sorbonne in 1928 under the honorary presidency of Emile Senart, is not an independent teaching establishment. It is a working centre for those interested in India, preferably in the 'classical' aspects of Indian civilization. It is the scene of many of the lectures and courses provided by the University or the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes*. In it we have a valuable library consisting mainly of gifts or purchases from the private libraries of Senart, Finot, Sylvain Levi and Krishnavarma. The Gaekwar of Baroda's donation enables us to maintain our collections, or at least to supply the most immediate needs. For a long time we have been organizing weekly lectures, in which we deal with problems of Indian study likely to attract the interest of a wider public than the private courses.

What can we do for young people in our country who wish to devote themselves to such study? The French Far Eastern College has its own needs and its own difficulties. It is often but a *pis aller* for the young student of Indian civilization. Today, when the scholars of Germany are—regrettably—reduced to silence, and Great Britain is only just beginning to reconstitute its staff of scientific workers, France might be in a favourable position, if the State understood how valuable may be the study of the fundamental culture of a people representing one-sixth of the population of the world. Cultural centres should be established in Calcutta and Madras, for example. Students from France would then be initiated in the work in India itself, and scholars from our country would cooperate with yours; in return, French teachers would deal with Western civilization. Why should not France create in India, as she has done at such expense in Rome, Athens and Cairo, research institutes which would yield results at least equal to those of such renowned institutions?

We talk of closer links between India and France, speeches are made on the subject, yet nothing ever results. At the time of the *Mahabharata*, when the heroes had made eloquent speeches, they went on to action. The germ of closer relations is nevertheless present in the growing number of personal contacts. Let Indian assistants be attached to our universities and French assistants to yours. Let us exchange intellectual workers and we shall no longer need to talk about the value of closer links between the peoples.

However, we are no longer in the Romantic days, and we shall not return to them. I have referred to the sort of cleavage there is between science and culture. Even a highly cultivated man can no longer be asked to follow the advances of modern chemistry. And the same is true in its own proportion as regards Indian studies. In France, however, the effect of the cleavage, if it exists, is reduced because in our country—more, I believe, than elsewhere—the scholar has been careful to adapt the products of his knowledge to the requirements of a fairly large public. Popular textbooks and more or less useful treatises on the history of India, civilizations and religions abound. France is, however, the country of harmonious syntheses (at least it has been said so often that I am beginning to believe it). Without too great a sacrifice of accuracy, our scholars find a means of interesting more than the small public of specialists. The works of Weber, Pischel and Otto Franke, admirable as they are, are scarcely readable. All of Burnouf's and Senart's work, and much of Sylvain Levi's can be read by a person of culture. The *Histoire du Nepal* holds the attention like a good novel, and its author, who wrote *L'Inde et le monde*, that truly romantic book, with a sort of lyrical frenzy, dreamed of ending his career with a collection of Indian fairy tales for French children. Bergaigne was tempted to prepare a poetical version of *Shakuntala*. Senart described *Les castes de l'Inde* with elegance for the readers of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. In this way, some degree of contact has been preserved with that anonymous mass of readers in which a vocation may one day come to light.

Such contact should not, however, be sought at the expense of truth. It is always, to some extent, an abuse of power to give a decision on doubtful questions to the uninitiated public, particularly in a subject such as Indian studies, where so many problems await solution. It is all a question of proportion, however. What is frankly dishonest is to use India and Indian spiritual philosophy for the construction of idle and extravagant theories for Western illuminati. It must be admitted that in the abundance of its philosophical systems and the strangeness of certain concepts, Indian thought offered some temptation in this respect. The Neo-Buddhist sects and theosophical movements, which have multiplied so rapidly in the West, originated from Indian images and ideas in a more or less distorted form. The success of the lucubrations of such men as Rene Guenon—those self-styled revelations of the Tradition which he believed is confided to him—are a sufficient indication of the danger. Such people claim to draw a distinction between the official or university study of Indian civilization, concerned, we are told, with grammar, and a type of Indian study which alone can penetrate the essence of things. Actually, it is a type of Indian study followed by superficial travellers or journalists, when it is not simply the work of exploiters of the public's credulity, who imagine that they are teaching an ignorant audience about *Vedanta*, *Yoga*, or *Tantrism*.

All that is of little importance. Ultimately only honest and conscientious work survives. A useful, and possibly the most useful, part of such work is the translation of Indian writings. In the last century and a half, many Sanskrit works have been translated into French. But there are few which do not require retranslation, either because the versions are inaccurate or because, being too accurate or not sufficiently skilful, they have failed to popularize the original and have thus not achieved their purpose. I shall not dwell on such inadequacies and gaps. I shall simply mention here that *Shakuntala* and the *Mrichchakatika* have been staged in France several times, not unsuccessfully, in spite of indifferent performance. A well-known poet,

Gerard de Nerval, assisted in the adaptation for the stage of the *Little Clay Cart*.

Apart from Sanskrit works, very little—too little—has been done to make familiar in French the best of the Tamil writings as well as those of Hindi, Bengali or Marathi. We shall soon have a partial translation of the works of Tulsi Das. So far as contemporary work is concerned, rather more has been done, but not nearly enough. Several books by Dhan Gopal Mukherji, Sarat Chandra Chatterji and, recently, a sociological novel by Mulk Raj Anand, *Coolie*, have found readers in our country and have enjoyed success. Efforts in the last thirty years have naturally been concentrated on the works of Rabindranath Tagore, in whom we have appreciated the faithful reflection of all the tendencies of the Indian mind. Much of his work has been translated into French; a fine poet, Pierre Jean Jouve, assisted by Professor Kalidas Nag, has translated *The Swan*. Andre Gide, one of the foremost writers of our time, and himself a Nobel prize-winner, has translated *Post Office* and *Gitanjali*. In his preface to the latter, he says, 'I have spent a much longer time translating certain of these poems than Tagore spent writing them. It seemed to me that no thinker of modern times deserved more respect, I might almost say devotion, than Tagore. I took pleasure in humbling myself before him as he had humbled himself to sing before God.' One of our recognized critics, Thibaudet, also greeted *The Home and the World*, when it was published in French, with resounding praises.

Indian mystical theology found a genuinely interested mind in the philosopher Bergson, who tried to define the characteristics of Indian mysticism in contradistinction to Christian mysticism. Bergson was familiar with the ancient writings in the English versions, while for modern movements he referred to the works of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, which have been translated into French, as have the works of Aurobindo, Gandhi and a few others, in the last few years.

The names I have just mentioned prompt a reference to their biographer, Romain Rolland. Romain Rolland did more than anyone

to disseminate the doctrines of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in the Western worlds. He was able to link them with the doctrines of ancient India from which they are derived and, through them, to popularize Indian thought. Those lyrical works, to which may be added the same author's book on Gandhi, are in the tradition of romantic writings. It is particularly owing to them, I think, that Romain Rolland has been regarded in India as the most representative of contemporary French authors. In fact, his career shows this paradox: that he has been recognized almost everywhere as a great European writer, without being recognized in France as a great French writer. He lacked the gift of style and a certain indefinable feeling for proportion, I might almost say, tact, which would have enabled him to claim the title. In the present connection, however, it is true that Romain Rolland has been the most successful worker, in the spiritual sphere, for a closer union between India and France. I can find no more fitting close to this study than to evoke his memory.

Not only is France, like all other Western nations, a civilized country from the material points of view, as much as, and possibly more than any other, it is a country in which intellectual values, the heritage of classical antiquity, and Christianity have been preserved with their pristine force. In spite of decline, France is a home of literature, art and philosophic thought. How could she fail to acknowledge the splendour of Indian culture, as she did previously, when the treasures of India's past first met her gaze?

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Experience is the only source of knowledge. In the world, religion is the only science where there is no surety, because it is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always, however, a small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion. As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ. They are all similarly constituted and similarly situated. Their experience is the same; and this becomes law.

In the church, religionists first learn a religion, then begin to practice it; they do not take experience as the basis of their belief. But the mystic starts out in search of truth, experiences it first, and then formulates his creed. The church takes the experience of others; the mystic has his own experience. The church goes from the outside in; the mystic goes from the inside out.

Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science, because he reads the wrong book — the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion, because he too reads the wrong book — the book without.

Swami Vivekananda

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All science has its particular methods; so has the science of religion. It has more methods also, because it has more material to work upon. The human mind is not homogeneous like the external world. According to the different nature, there must be different methods. As some special sense predominates in a person — one person will see most, another will hear most — so there is a predominant mental sense; and through this gate must each reach his own mind. Yet through all minds runs a unity, and there is a science which may be applied to all. This science of religion is based on the analysis of the human soul. It has no creed.

No one form of religion will do for all. Each is a pearl on a string. We must be particular above all else to find individuality in each. No man is born to any religion; he has a religion in his own soul. Any system which seeks to destroy individuality is in the long run disastrous. Each life has a current running through it, and this current will eventually take it to God. The end and aim of all religions is to realise God. The greatest of all training is to worship God alone. If each man chose his own ideal and stuck to it, all religious controversy would vanish.

Swami Vivekananda

