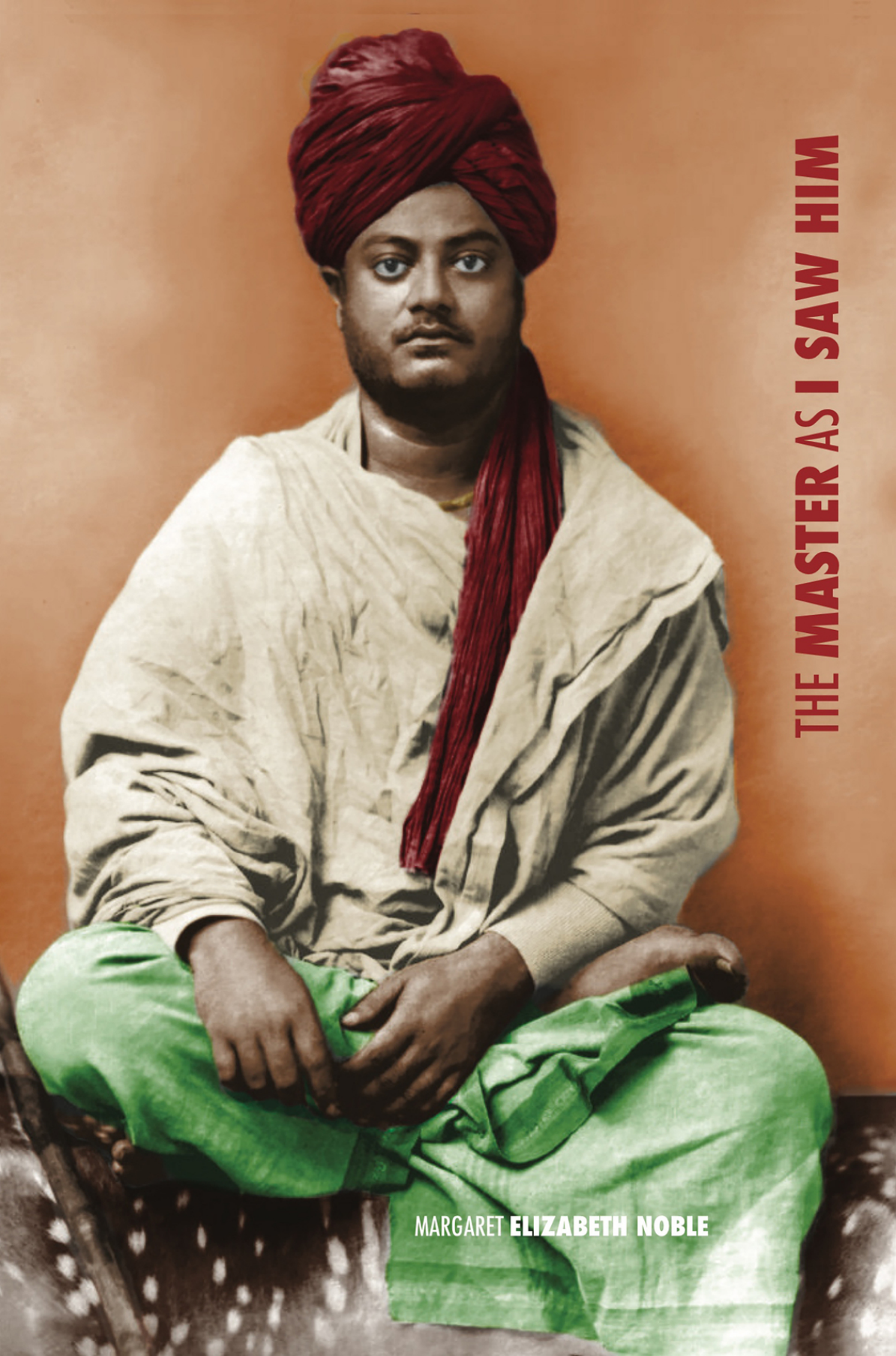

THE MASTER AS I SAW HIM

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THE **MASTER** AS **I SAW HIM**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A WORD TO WESTERN READERS

A Word to Western Readers

From the close of the era of the Buddhist Missions, until the day when, as a yellow-clad *Sannyasin**, the Swami Vivekananda stood on the platform of the Parliament of Religions in the Chicago Exhibition of 1893, Hinduism had not thought of herself as a missionary faith.

Her professional teachers, the Brahmins, being citizens and householders, formed a part of Hindu society itself and as such were held to be debarred from crossing the seas. And her wandering *Sadhus*†,—who are, in the highest cases, as much above the born Brahmin in authority, as saint or incarnation may be above priest or scholar,—had simply not thought of putting their freedom to such use.

Nor did the Swami Vivekananda appear at the doors of Chicago with any credentials. He had been sent across the Pacific Ocean, as he might have wandered from one Indian village to another, by the eagerness and faith of a few disciples in Madras. And with American hospitality and frankness he was welcomed, and accorded an opportunity of speaking.

In his case, as in that of the Buddhist missionaries, the impelling force that drove him out to foreign lands was the great personality of One‡ at whose feet he had sat, and whose life he had shared, for many years. Yet, in the West, he spoke of no

* Sannyasin: A monk who has renounced the world in service of God. Sanyasins usually belong to an order and are initiated into spiritual practices by a guru. They are given a title such as "Swami", which means one who has complete control over himself-his senses, thoughts and deeds.

† Sadhu : A saintly person who is on the quest for God.

‡ Here Sister Nivedita is referring to Swami Vivekananda's guru Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

personal teacher; he gave the message of no limited sect. "The religious ideas of the Hindus" were his theme at Chicago; and similarly, thereafter, it was those elements which were common to, and characteristic of, orthodox Hinduism in all its parts, that formed the burden of his teaching. Thus, for the first time in history, Hinduism itself formed the subject of the generalisations of a Hindu mind of the highest order.

The Swami remained in America until August of the year 1895, when he came to Europe for the first time. In September he found his way to England, and a month or so later, he began teaching in London.

THE **MASTER** AS **I SAW HIM**

Chapter I
In London, 1895

It is strange to remember, and yet it was surely my good fortune, that though I heard the teachings of my Master, the Swami Vivekananda, on both the occasions of his visits to England, in 1895 and 1896, I yet knew little or nothing of him in private life, until I came to India, in the early days of 1898.

For as the fruit of this want of experience I have it, that at each step of his self-revelation as a personality, my Master stands out in my memory against his proper background, of Indian forest, city, and highway,—an Eastern teacher in an Eastern world.

Even in far a-way London indeed, the first time I saw him, the occasion must have stirred in his mind, as it does in mine, recalling it now, a host of associations connected with his own sun-steeped land.

The time was a cold Sunday afternoon in November, and the place, it is true, a West-end drawing room. But he was seated, facing a half-circle of listeners, with the fire on the hearth behind him, and as he answered question after question, breaking now and then into the chanting of some Sanskrit text in illustration of his reply, the scene must have appeared to him, while twilight passed into darkness, only as a curious variant upon the Indian garden, or on the group of hearers gathered at sundown round the *Sadhu* who sits beside the well, or under the tree outside the village-bounds.

Never again in England did I see the Swami, as a teacher, in such simple fashion. Later, he was always lecturing, or the questions he answered were put with formality by members of larger audiences. Only this first time we were but fifteen or sixteen guests, intimate friends, many of us, and he sat amongst us, in his crimson robe and girdle, as one bringing us news from a far land, with a curious habit of saying now and again "Shiva! Shiva!" and wearing that look of mingled gentleness and loftiness, that one sees on the faces of those who live much in meditation, that look, perhaps, that Raphael has painted for us, on the brow of the Sistine Child.

That afternoon is now ten years ago, and fragments only of the talk come back to me. But never to be forgotten are the Sanskrit verses that he chanted for us,

in those wonderful Eastern tones, at once so reminiscent of, and yet so different from, the Gregorian music of our own churches.

He was quite willing to answer a personal question, and readily explained, in reply to some enquiry that he was in the West, because he believed that the time had come, when nations were to exchange their ideals, as they were already exchanging the commodities of the market.

From this point onwards, the talk was easy. He was elucidating the idea of the Eastern Pantheism, picturing the various sense-impressions as but so many different modes of the manifestation of One*, and he quoted from the Gita and then translated into English: "All these are threaded upon Me, as pearls upon a string."

He told us that love was recognised in Hinduism as in Christianity, as the highest religious emotion.

And he told us,—a thing that struck me very much, leading me during the following winter to quite new lines of observation,—that both the mind and the body were regarded by Hindus as moved and dominated by a third, called the Self.

He was describing the difference between Buddhism and Hinduism, and I remember the quiet words, "the Buddhists accepted the report of the senses."

In this respect then, Buddhism must have been in strong contrast with modern agnosticism, whose fundamental suspicion as to the subjective illusion of the senses,—and therefore of all inference—would surely bring it more into line with Hinduism.

I remember that he objected to the word "faith," insisting on "realisation" instead; and speaking of sects, he quoted an Indian proverb, "It is well to be born in a church, but it is terrible to die there."

I think that the doctrine of Re-incarnation was probably touched upon in this talk. I imagine that he spoke of Karma, Bhakti, Jnana, as the three paths of the soul. I know he dwelt for a while on the infinite power of man. And he declared the one message of all religions to lie in the call to Renunciation.

There was a word to the effect that priests and temples were not associated in India with the highest kind of religion: and the statement that the desire to reach Heaven was in that country regarded, *by the most religious people*, "as a little vulgar."

* Here Sister Nivedita is referring to the One God, an infinite ocean of consciousness, who, according to Vedanta philosophy, is manifesting Himself as this variety of Creation.

He must have made some statement of the ideal of the freedom of the soul, which brought it into apparent conflict with our Western conception of the service of humanity, as the goal of the individual. For I remember very clearly that I heard him use that word "society" for the first time that afternoon, in the sense that I have never been quite sure of having fully understood. He had, as I suppose, stated the ideal, and he hastened to anticipate our opposition. "You will say," he said, "that this does not benefit society. But before this objection can be admitted you will first have to prove that the maintenance of society is an object in itself."

At the time, I understood him to mean 'humanity' by 'society,' and to be preaching the ultimate futility of the world, and therefore of the work done to aid it. Was this his meaning? In that case, how is one to reconcile it with the fact that the service of humanity was always his whole hope? Or was he merely stating an idea, and standing aside to give it its full value? Or was his word 'society,' again, only a faulty translation of the curious Eastern word *Samaj*, coloured, as that is, with theocratic associations, and meaning something which includes amongst other things, our idea of the church?

He touched on the question of his own position, as a wandering teacher, and expressed the Indian diffidence with regard to religious organisation, or, as someone expresses it, 'with regard to a faith that ends in a church.' "We believe," he said, "that organisation always breeds new evils."

He prophesied that certain religious developments then much in vogue in the West would speedily die, owing to love of money. And he declared that "Man proceeds from truth to truth, and not from error to truth."

This was indeed the master-thought which he continually approached from different points of view, the equal truth of all religions, and the impossibility for us, of criticising any of the Divine Incarnations, since all were equally forthshinings of the One*. And here he quoted that greatest of all verses of the Gita: "Whenever religion decays and irreligion prevails, *then I manifest Myself*. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the firm establishment of the truth, I AM BORN AGAIN AND AGAIN."

We were not very orthodox, or open to belief, we who had come to meet the Hindu Yogi, as he was called in London at that time. The white-haired lady, with the historic name, who sat on the Swami's left, and took the lead in questioning him, with such exquisiteness of courtesy, was, perhaps, the least unconvention-

* The One Supreme God, who resides in all.

al of the group in matters of belief, and she had been a friend and disciple of Frederick Denison Maurice. Our hostess and one or two others were interested in those modern movements which have made of an extended psychology the centre of a faith. But most of us had, I incline to think, been singled out for the afternoon's hospitality, on the very score of our unwillingness to believe, for the difficulty of convincing us of the credibility of religious propaganda in general.

Only this habit, born of the constant need of protecting the judgment against ill-considered enthusiasm, can, as I now think, furnish any excuse for the coldness and pride with which we all gave our private verdicts on the speaker at the end of our visit. "It was not new," was our accusation, as one by one we spoke with our host and hostess before leaving. All these things had been said before.

For my own part, however, as I went about the tasks of that week, it dawned on me slowly that it was not only ungenerous, it was also unjust, to dismiss in such fashion the message of a new mind and a strange culture. It occurred to me that though each separate *dictum* might find its echo or its fellow amongst things already heard or already thought, yet it had never before fallen to my lot to meet with a thinker who in one short hour had been able to express all that I had hitherto regarded as highest and best. I therefore took the only two opportunities that remained to me, of hearing the Swami lecture, while he was still in London.

The feeling that great music wakes in us, grows and deepens with its repetition. And similarly, as I read over the notes of those two lectures now, they seem to me much more wonderful than they did then.

For there was a quality of blindness in the attitude I presented to my Master, that I can never sufficiently regret. When he said "The universe is like a cobweb and minds are the spiders; for mind is one as well as many": he was simply talking beyond my comprehension. I noted what he said, was interested in it, but could pass no judgment upon it, much less accept it. And this statement describes more or less accurately the whole of my relation to his system of teaching, even in the following year, when I had listened to a season's lectures; even, perhaps, on the day when I landed in India.

There were many points in the Swami's teachings of which one could see the truth at once. The doctrine that while no religion was true in the way commonly claimed, yet all were equally true in a very real way, was one that commanded the immediate assent of some of us. When he said that God, really Impersonal, seen through the mists of sense became Personal, one was awed and touched

by the beauty of the thought. When he said that the spirit behind an act was more powerful than the act itself, or when he commended vegetarianism, it was possible to experiment. But his system as a whole, I, for one, viewed with suspicion, as forming only another of those theologies which if a man should begin by accepting, he would surely end by transcending and rejecting. And one shrinks from the pain and humiliation of spirit that such experiences involve.

It is difficult at this point to be sufficiently explicit. The time came, before the Swami left England, when I addressed him as "Master." I had recognised the heroic fibre of the man, and desired to make myself the servant of his love for his own people. But it was his *character* to which I had thus done obeisance. As a religious teacher, I saw that although he had a system of thought to offer, nothing in that system would claim him for a moment, if he found that truth led elsewhere. And to the extent that this recognition implies, I became his disciple. For the rest, I studied his teaching sufficiently to become convinced of its coherence, but never, till I had had experiences that authenticated them, did I inwardly cast in my lot with the final justification of the things he came to say. Nor did I at that time, though deeply attracted by his personality, dream of the immense distance which I was afterwards to see, as between his development and that of any other thinker or man of genius whom I could name.

Referring to this scepticism of mine, which was well known at the time to the rest of the class, a more fortunate disciple, long afterwards, was teasing me, in the Swami's presence, and claiming that she had been able to accept every statement she had ever heard him make. The Swami paid little or no attention to the conversation at the time, but afterwards he took a quiet moment to say "Let none regret that they were difficult to convince! I fought my Master for six long years, with the result that I know every inch of the way! Every inch of the way!"

One or two impressions, however, stand out from those first discourses. Christianity had once meant to me the realisation of God as the Father. But I had long mourned over my own loss of faith in this symbolism, and had desired to study its value as an idea, apart from its objective truth or untruth. For I suspected that such a conception would have its own effect on the character and perhaps on the civilisation of those who held it. This question, however, I had been unable to follow up, for want of material of comparison. And here was one who told us of no less than five systems of worship, founded on similar personifications of the divine idea. He preached a religion which began with

the classification of religious ideas!

I was very much struck, further, by the strangeness, as well as the dignity, of some of the Indian conceptions which I now heard of for the first time. The very newness of these metaphors, and of the turn of thought, made them an acquisition. There was the tale, for instance, of the saint who ran after a thief, with the vessels he had dropped in his terror at being discovered, and cast them all at his feet, crying, "O Lord, I knew not that Thou wast there! Take them, they are Thine! Pardon me Thy child!" And again, of the same saint, we heard how he described the bite of a cobra, when at nightfall he recovered by saying "A messenger came to me from the Beloved."

There was the inference, again, that the Swami himself had drawn from the mirage in the desert. Fifteen days he had seen it, and taken it always to be water. But now that he had been thirsty and found it to be unreal, he might see it again for fifteen days, but always henceforth he would know it to be false. The experience to which such achievements had been possible, the philosophy that could draw some parallel between this journey in the desert and life, were such as it seemed an education to understand.

But there was a third element in the Swami's teaching, whose unexpectedness occasioned me some surprise. It was easy to see that he was no mere lecturer, like some other propounders of advanced ideas whom I had heard even from the pulpit. It was by no means his intention to set forth dainty dishes of poetry and intellectuality for the enjoyment of the rich and idle classes. He was, to his own thinking at least, as clearly an apostle, making an appeal to men, as any poor evangelical preacher, or Salvation Army officer, calling on the world to enter into the kingdom of God.

And yet he took his stand on what was noblest and best in us. I was not thinking of his announcement that sin was only an evil dream. I knew that such a theory might merely be part of a cumbrous system of theology, and no more a reality to its elucidator than the doctrine that when a man steals our coat we should give to him our cloak also, was to ourselves. The thing that I found astonishing was a certain illustration urged by him. His audience was composed for the most part of fashionable young mothers, and he spoke of their terror and their flight, if a tiger should suddenly appear before them in the street. "But suppose", he said, with a sudden change of tone, "suppose there were a baby in the path of the tiger! Where would your place be then? At his mouth — any one of you — I am sure of it."

These, then, were the things I remembered and pondered over, concerning the Swami, when he had left England, that winter, for America,—first, the breadth of his religious culture; second, the great intellectual newness and interest of the thought he had brought to us; and thirdly, the fact that his call was sounded in the name of that which was strongest and finest, and was not in any way dependent on the meaner elements in man.

Chapter II
The Swami Vivekananda in London — 1896

The Swami returned to London, in April of the year following, and taught continuously, at the house where he was living with his good friend, Mr. E.T. Sturdy, in S. George's Road, and again, after the summer holidays, in a large classroom near Victoria Street. During July, August, and September, he travelled in France, Germany and Switzerland, with his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, and Miss H. F. Muller. In December, he left for India, with some of his disciples, by way of Rome, and arrived at Colombo, in Ceylon, on January the 15th, 1897.

Many of the lectures which he gave during the year 1896, have since been published, and in them, all the world may read his message, and the interpretation by which he sought to make it clear. He had come to us as a missionary of the Hindu belief in the Immanent God, and he called upon us to realise the truth of his gospel for ourselves.

Neither then, nor at any after-time, did I ever hear him advocate to his audience any specialised form of religion. He would refer freely enough to the Indian sects,—or as I would like to call them, 'churches,'—by way of illustration of what he had to say.

But he never preached anything but that philosophy which, to Indian thinking, under-lies all creeds. He never quoted anything but the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. And he never, in public, mentioned his own Master, nor spoke in specific terms of any part of Hindu mythology.

He was deeply convinced of the need for Indian thought, in order to enable the religious consciousness of the West to welcome and assimilate the discoveries of modern science, and to enable it also to survive that destruction of local mythologies which is an inevitable result of all world-consolidations.

He felt that what was wanted was a formulation of faith which could hold its adherents fearless of truth. "The salvation of Europe depends on a rationalistic religion," he exclaims, in the course of one of his lectures; and again, many times repeated, "The materialist is right! There is but One*. Only he calls that

* According to Vedanta philosophy, the entire phenomenal Universe comprising living-beings (Sanskrit: chetan), and matter (Sanskrit: jad), emanates from one ocean of conscious-

One Matter, and I call it God!"

In another, and longer passage, he describes the growth of the religious idea, and the relation of its various forms to one another. "At first," he says, "the goal is far off, outside Nature, and far beyond it, attracting us all towards it. This has to be brought near, yet without being degraded or degenerated, until, when it has come closer and closer, the God of Heaven becomes the God in Nature, till the God in Nature becomes the God who is Nature, and the God who is Nature, becomes the God within this temple of the body, and the God dwelling in the temple of the body becomes the temple itself, becomes the soul of man. Thus it reaches the last words it can teach. He whom the sages have sought in all these places, is in our own hearts. Thou art He, O Man! Thou art He!"

He always considered, for his own part, that his greatest intellectual achievement during this period had consisted in his lectures on Maya, and it is only by reading these carefully, that an idea can be formed of the difficulty of the task he undertook, in trying to render the conception in modern English. Throughout the chapters in question we feel that we are in presence of a *struggle* to express an idea which is clearly apprehended, in a language which is not a fit vehicle for it. The word is wrongly understood, says the Swami, to mean 'delusion'. Originally it meant something like 'magic,' as "Indra through his *Maya* assumed various forms." But this meaning was subsequently dropped, and the word went through many transformations.

A milestone in the series of conceptions that finally determined its meaning is found in the text, "Because we talk in vain, and because we are satisfied with the things of the senses, and because we are running after desires, therefore we, as it were, *cover this reality with a mist*." Finally the word is seen to have assumed its ultimate meaning in the quotation from the *Svetasvatara* Upanishad. "Know Nature to be Maya. And the mind, the ruler of this Maya, as the Lord Himself." "The Maya of the Vedanta," says the speaker, "in its latest development, is a simple statement of facts — what we are, and what we see around us."

But that these words are not intended as a definition will be seen by anyone who reads the whole of the lectures on Maya for himself. It is there evident that the word does not simply refer to the Universe as known through the senses, but also describes the tortuous, erroneous, and self-contradictory character of that knowledge. "This is a statement of fact, not a theory," says the Swami,

ness, called God. Both matter and living beings are but differing modes of vibration of this extremely subtle substrate of consciousness.

"that this world is a Tantalus' hell,—that we do not know anything about this Universe, yet at the same time we cannot say that we do not know. To walk in the midst of a dream, half sleeping, half waking, passing all our lives in a haze, this is the fate of every one of us. This is the fate of all sense knowledge. This is the Universe".

We see here, as in many other of his interpretations, that an Indian word is incapable of exact rendering into English, and that the only way of arriving at an understanding of it is to try to catch the conception which the speaker is striving to express, rather than to fasten the attention on a sentence or two here or there. By Maya is thus meant that shimmering, elusive, half-real half-unreal complexity, in which there is no rest, no satisfaction, no ultimate certainty, of which we become aware through the senses, and through the mind as dependent on the senses. At the same time—"And *That* by which all this is pervaded, know *That* to be the Lord Himself!"

In these two conceptions, placed side by side, we have the whole theology of Hinduism, as presented by the Swami Vivekananda, in the West. All other teachings and ideas are subordinated to these two. Religion was a matter of the growth of the individual, "a question always of being and becoming."

But such growth must presuppose the two fundamental facts, and the gradual transference of the centre of gravity, as it were, out of the one into the other,—out of Maya into the Self. The condition of absorption in Maya was "bondage" in the Eastern sense. To have broken that bondage was "freedom" or *Mukti*, or even *Nirvana*. The path for the would-be breaker of bondage must always be by seeking for renunciation, not by seeking for enjoyment. In this matter, the Swami was, as he said himself, only echoing what had been the burden of all religions. For all religions, Indian and other, have called a halt in the quest for pleasure. All have sought to turn life into a battlefield rather than a ball-room. All have striven to make man strong for death rather than for life.

Where I think that the Swami perhaps differed somewhat from other teachers was in his acceptance of every kind of mastery as a form of renunciation. Towards the end of his life I told him that 'renunciation' was the only word I had ever heard from his lips. And yet in truth I think that 'conquer!' was much more characteristic of him. For he pointed out that it was by renunciation, that is to say, by sustained and determined effort, by absorption in hard problems through lonely hours, by choosing toil and refusing ease, that Stephenson, for instance, invented the steam-engine. He pointed out that the science of medicine

represented as strong a concentration of man's mind upon healing as would be required for a cure by prayer or by thought. He made us feel that all study was an austerity directed to a given end of knowledge. And above all, he preached that character, and character alone, was the power that determined the permanence of a religious wave.

Resistance was to his mind the duty of the citizen, non-resistance of the monk. And this, because for all the supreme achievement, was strength. "Forgive," he said, "when you also can bring legions of angels to an easy victory." While victory was still doubtful, however, only a coward, to his thinking, would turn the other cheek.

One reads the same lesson in his Master's story of the boy who for twenty years worked to acquire the power to walk on water. "And so," said a saint, "you have given twenty years of effort to doing that for which others give the ferryman a penny!" The lad might have answered that no ferryman could give his passengers what he had acquired by twenty years of patient striving. But the fact remains that to these teachers, supremely sane, the world's art of navigation had its own full value and its proper place.

Years afterwards, in Paris, someone approached him with a question as to the general history of the development of Indian ideas on these subjects. "Did Buddha teach that the many was real and the ego unreal, while Orthodox Hinduism regards the One as the Real, and the many as unreal?" he was asked. "Yes," answered the Swami, "And what Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and I have added to this is, that the Many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the same mind at different times and in different attitudes."

Gifted to an extraordinary degree with a living utterance of metaphysics, drawing always upon a classical literature of wonderful depth and profundity, he stood in our midst as, before all, the apostle of the inner life, the prophet of the subordination of the objective to the subjective. "Remember!" he said once to a disciple, "Remember! the message of India is always '*Not the soul for Nature, but Nature for the soul!*"

And this was indeed the organ-note, as it were, the deep fundamental vibration, that began gradually to make itself heard through all the intellectual interest of the things he discussed, and the point of view he revealed. Like the sound of the flute, heard far away on the banks of some river in the hour of dawn, and regarded as but one amongst many sweet songs of the world: and like the same strain when the listener has drawn nearer and nearer, and at last,

with his whole mind on the music, has become himself the player — may have seemed to some who heard him long, the difference between the life of the soul in Western thinking and in Eastern.

And with this came the exaltation of renunciation. It was not, perhaps, that the word occurred in his teachings any oftener than it had done before. It was rather that the reality of that life, free, undimensioned, sovereign in its mastery, was making itself directly felt. A temptation that had to be fought against was the impulse to go away, and bind upon oneself intellectual shackles not to be borne, in order to be able to enter in its fullness upon the life of poverty and silence.

An occasion came, when this call was uttered with great force. Some dispute occurred in the course of a question-class. "What the world wants to-day", said the Swami, — the determination to "throw a bomb," as he called it, evidently taking sudden possession of him, — "What the world wants to-day, is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder, and say that they possess nothing but God. Who will go?" He had risen to his feet by this time, and stood looking round his audience as if begging some of them to join him, "Why should one fear?" And then, in tones of which, even now, I can hear again the thunderous conviction, "If this is true, what else could matter? *If it is not true, what do our lives matter?*"

"What the world wants is character," he says, in a letter written at this time to a member of his class. "The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love — self-less. That love will make every word tell like a thunder-bolt. Awake, awake, great souls! The world is burning in misery. Can you sleep?"

I remember how new to myself at that time was this Indian idea that it was character that made a truth tell, the love expressed that made aid successful, the degree of concentration behind a saying that gave it force and constituted its power. Thus the text 'Consider the lilies, how they grow,' holds us, said the Swami, not by the spell of its beauty, but by the depth of renunciation that speaks in it.

Was this true? I felt that the question might be tested by experience, and after some time I came to the conclusion that it was. A quiet word, from a mind that put thought behind language, carried immediate weight, when the same utterance from the careless, would pass by unheeded. I do not know a stronger instance of this fact than a certain saying that is recorded of the Caliph Ali. Many have heard, and none surely without emotion, the words of the Lion of Islam, "Thy place in life is seeking after thee. Therefore be thou at rest from seeking after it!" But never, until we relate them to the speaker, four times

passed over in the succession to the Caliphate, never until we know how the man's whole life throbs through them, are we able to explain the extraordinary power of these simple sentences.

I found also that an utterance consciously directed to the mind, instead of merely to the hearing, of the listener, evoked more response than the opposite. And having begun to make these psychological discoveries, I was led gradually to the perception that if indeed one's reason could, as one had long thought, make no final line of demarcation as between mind and matter, yet at least that aspect of the One-substance which we called Matter was rather the result of that called Mind or Spirit, than the reverse. The body, not the will, must be regarded as a bye-product of the individuality. This in turn led to the conception of a consciousness held above the body, a life governing matter, and free of it, so that it might conceivably disrobe and find new garments, or cast off the form known to us, as that form itself casts off a wounded skin. Till at last I found my own mind echoing the Swami's great pronouncement on immortality, "The body comes and goes." But this ripening of thought came gradually and did not complete itself for many months.

In the meantime, as I look back upon that time, I feel that what we all really entered upon in the Swami's classes was not so much an intellectual exposition, as a life of new and lofty emotions,—or, as they would be called in India, 'realisations.'

We heard the exclamation, in describing the worship of God as a child, "do we *want* anything from Him?" We bowed to the teaching that "love is always a manifestation of bliss," and that any pang of pain or regret was therefore a mark of selfishness and physicality. We accepted the austere ruling that any, even the slightest, impulse of differentiation, as between ourselves and others was 'hatred,' and that only the opposite of this was 'love.' Many who have ceased to believe in the creed of their childhood have felt that at least the good of others was still an end in itself, and that the possibility of service remained, to give a motive to life. It is strange, now that ten years have passed, to remember the sense of surprise with which, holding this opinion, we listened to the decorous eastern teaching, that highest of all gifts was spirituality, a degree lower, intellectual knowledge, and that all kinds of physical and material help came last. All our welling pity for sickness and for poverty classified in this fashion! It has taken me years to find out, but I now know, that in train of the higher giving, the lower must needs follow.

Similarly, to our Western fanaticism about pure air and hygienic surroundings, as if these were marks of saintliness, was opposed the stern teaching of indifference to the world. Here indeed, we came up against a closed door, and had no key. When the Swami said, in bold consciousness of paradox, that the saints had lived on mountain-tops "to enjoy the scenery," and when he advised his hearers to keep flowers and incense in their worship-rooms, and to care much for the purity and cleansing of food and person, we did not understand enough to connect the two extremes. But in fact he was preaching our own doctrine of physical refinement, as it would be formulated in India. And is it not true that until we in the West have succeeded in cleansing the slums of our great cities, our fastidiousness is very like the self-worship of the privileged?

A like fate awaited our admiration for such saints as knew how to order their worldly affairs with conspicuous success and prudence. True spirituality was indifferent to, nay contemptuous and intolerant of, the things of this world. This message the Swami never mitigated. In giving it, he never faltered. The highest spirituality cannot tolerate the world*.

We understood clearly enough that these were the ideals of sainthood only. We were learning chapter after chapter of a great language which was to make it easy for us to hold communion with the ends of the earth. We gathered no confusion as to those questions which concern the life of citizenship and domestic virtue, and form what may be regarded as the kindergarten of the soul. The idea that one country might best advance itself by learning to appreciate those ideals of order and responsibility which formed the glory of another was in no wise discredited. At the same time we were given, as the eternal watchword of the Indian ideals, "Spirituality cannot tolerate the world*." Did we, in contradiction, point to monastic orders, well-governed, highly organised, devoted to the public good, and contrast our long roll of abbots, bishops, and saintly lady-abbesses, with a few ragged and God-intoxicated beggars of the East? Yet we had to admit that even in the West, when the flame of spirituality had blazed suddenly to its brightest, it had taken their form. For those who know the land of Meera Bae and Chaitanya, of Tukaram and Ramanuja, can hardly resist the impulse to clothe with the yellow garb the memory of S. Francis of Assisi also.

In one of the volumes of the English translation of the 'Jataka Birth-Tales', there occur over and over again the words "*when a man has come to that place where he dreads heaven as much as hell*"—and I do not know how the realisation

* Soliloquy: The act of speaking to oneself without addressing a listener.

that the Swami's presence brought could be better described. Most of those who listened to him in London, in the year 1896, caught some glimpse, by which they were led to understand a little of the meaning of the eastern longing to escape from incarnation.

But master of all these moods and dominating them, was one that had barely been hinted at, in the words "If this is true, what other thing could matter? If it is not true, what do our lives matter?"

For there was a power in this teacher to sum up all the truths he himself had come to teach, together with his own highest hope, and to treat the whole as a mean bribe, to be flung away fearlessly, if need were, for the good of others. Years after, this spoke more clearly in the indignant reply with which he turned on some remark of my own, "Of course I would commit a crime, and go to hell for ever, if by that I could really help a human being!" It was the same impulse that spoke also, in his constant repetition to some few of us, as if it had a special bearing on the present age, of the tale of that Bodhisattva, who had held himself back from Nirvana till the last grain of dust in the universe should have gone in before him to salvation.

The friend, who afterwards called me to her side in India, chose a certain evening in London, when both the Swami and myself were her guests for an hour, to tell him of my willingness to help his work. He was evidently surprised, but said quietly, "For my own part I will be incarnated two hundred times, if that is necessary, to do this work amongst my people, that I have undertaken."

And the words stand in my own mind beside those which he afterwards wrote to me on the eve of my departure, "*I will standby you unto death*, whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta, or remain in it. The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back. Even so are the words of a man."

But these references to the Swami's own people were merely personal, and as such were strictly subordinate. In his classes, in his teachings, his one longing seemed to be for the salvation of men from ignorance. Such love, such pity, those who heard him never saw elsewhere. To him, his disciples were his disciples. There was neither Indian nor European there.

And yet he was profoundly conscious of the historic significance of his own preaching. On the occasion of his last appearance in London, [at the Royal Society of Painters in Watercolours, on Sunday afternoon, December the 15th, 1896] he pointed out the fact that history repeats itself, and that Christianity had been rendered possible only by the Roman Peace. And it may well have

been that the Buddha-like dignity and calm of bearing which so impressed us, were but the expression of his far outlook and serene conviction that there would yet be seen a great army of Indian preachers in the West, reaping the harvest that he had sown so well, and making ready in their turn new harvests, for the more distant reaping of the future.

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