



LETTERS FROM **VIVEKANANDA**

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1888

Note: Before leaving for the U.S.A. Swamiji used to change his name very often. In earlier years, he signed as Narendra or Nar-en; then for some time as Vividishananda or Sachchidananda. But for the convenience of the readers, these volumes use the more familiar name of Vivekananda.

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India  
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1888.1—SIR¹

Vrindaban,
12th Aug., 1888.

DEAR SIR,

Leaving Ayodhya I have reached the holy Vrindaban, and am putting up at Kâlâ Bâbu's Kunja. In the town the mind feels contracted. Places like Râdhâ-kunda, I have heard, are delightful; but they are at some distance from the town. I have a mind to proceed very shortly to Hardwar. In case you have any acquaintance there, you would be doing me a great favour if you would kindly write him an introduction for me. What about your visiting this place? Please reply early and oblige.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1888.2—SIR²

Vrindaban,
20th Aug., 1888.

DEAR SIR,

An aged brother-disciple of mine who has just come back to Vrindaban after visiting Kedarnath and Badrinath met Gangadhar. Twice did Gangadhar ascend up to Tibet and Bhutan. He is in great happiness and felt overwhelmed and wept at the meeting. He spent the winter at Kankhal. The Karoâ (waterpot) you gave him, he still keeps with him. He is coming back and is expected at Vrindaban this very month. So in the hope of meeting him, I postpone my going to Hardwar for some days. Please convey my deepest respects to the Brahmin devotee of Shiva who is with you and accept the same yourself.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1. These letters are translated from Bengali letters written to Pramadas Mitra of Varanasi, an orthodox Hindu, for whose profound erudition and piety Swamiji had the highest regard. These letters are most interesting being written (except the last) at a time when, after his Master's passing away, Swamiji was leading a wandering monk's life. In the early days he used to sign his name as Narendranath, though his now famous name, Vivekananda, is printed in all these pages for easy comprehension

2. See Note above.

Salutation to Bhagavan Ramakrishna!

The Baranagore Math,
19th Nov., 1888.

RESPECTED SIR,

I have received the two books sent by you and am filled with joy to read your wonderfully affectionate letter which betokens your broad, generous heart. No doubt, it is due to good merit of my previous births that you show, sir, so much kindness to a mendicant like me who lives on begging. By sending your gift of the “Vedanta”, you have laid under lifelong obligation not only myself but the whole group of Shri Ramakrishna’s Sannyasins. They all bow down to you in respect. It is not for my own sake alone that I asked of you the copy of Pânini’s grammar; a good deal of study, in fact, is given to Sanskrit scriptures in this Math. The Vedas may well be said to have fallen quite out of vogue in Bengal. Many here in this Math are conversant with Sanskrit, and they have a mind to master the Samhitâ portions of the Vedas. They are of opinion that what has to be done must be done to a finish. So, believing that a full measure of proficiency in the Vedic language is impossible without first mastering Panini’s grammar, which is the best available for the purpose, a copy of the latter was felt to be a necessity. The grammatical work Mugdhabodha, which we studied in our boyhood, is superior in many respects to Laghukaumudi. You are yourself, however, a deeply learned man and, therefore, the best judge we can have in this matter. So if you consider the Ashtâdhyâyi (Panini’s) to be the most suitable in our case, you will lay us under a debt of lifelong gratitude by sending the same (provided you feel it convenient and feel so inclined). This Math is not wanting in men of perseverance, talent, and penetrative intellect. I may hope that by the grace of our Master, they will acquire in a short time Panini’s system and then succeed in restoring the Vedas to Bengal. I beg to send you two photographs of my revered Master and two parts of some of his teachings as given in his homely style compiled, and published by a certain gentleman—hoping you will give us the pleasure of your acceptance. My health is now much improved, and I expect the blessings of meeting you within two or three months...

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1. See Note page 4.

Baghbazar, Calcutta,
28th November, 1888.

DEAR SIR, (Shri Pramadadas Mitra)

I have received the book of Pânini which you so kindly sent me. Please accept my gratitude for the same.

I had an attack of fever again—hence I could not reply to you immediately. Please excuse. I am ailing much. I am praying to the Divine Mother to keep you happy physically and mentally.

Your servant,
Vivekananda.

² See Note page 4.

1889

1889.1—SIR¹

Victory to God!

Baranagore,
4th Feb., 1889.

DEAR SIR,

For some reason I had been feeling today agitated and cramped in my mind, when your letter of invitation to the heavenly city of Varanasi reached me. I accept it as the call of Vishveshvara. (The Lord of the Universe, or Shiva, as installed in the leading temple of Varanasi or Kashi.) I am going now on a pilgrimage to the place of my Master's nativity, and after a sojourn of a few days there, I shall present myself to you. He must be made of stone whose mind does not melt at the sigh of Kashi and its Lord! I feel now much improved in health. My regards to Jnanananda. I am coming as soon as I can. It all depends ultimately on Vishveshvara's will ... More when we meet.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1889.2—M__

Auntpur,
7th February, 1889.

DEAR M__,

Thanks a hundred thousand times, Master! You have hit Ramakrishna in the right point.

Few, alas, few understand him!

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

PS—My heart leaps with joy, and it is a wonder that I do not go mad when I find anybody thoroughly launched into the midst of the doctrine which is to shower peace on earth hereafter.

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

1889.3—SIR

Baranagore,
22nd February, 1889.

DEAR SIR, (Shri Pramadadas Mitra)

I had intended to go to Varanasi, and I planned to reach there after visiting the birthplace of my Master. But unluckily on the way to that village I had an attack of high fever followed by vomiting and purging as in cholera. There was again fever after three or four days—and as the body is now so weak that I can barely walk even two steps, I have been compelled now to give up my previous intention. I do not know what is God's will, but my body is quite unfit for treading on this path. Anyway, the body is not everything. Recovering my health after a few days here, I entertain the hope of visiting you there. The will of Vishweshwara, the Lord of the universe, will prevail—whatever that may be. You also kindly bless me. My respects to you and brother Jnanananda.

Your servant,
Vivekananda.

1889.4—SIR

Baghbazar, Calcutta,
21st March, 1889.

RESPECTED SIR, (Shri Pramadadas Mitra)

It is several days since I received your last letter. Please excuse the delay in replying, which was due to some special reasons. I am very ill at present; there is fever now and then, but there is no disorder in the spleen or other organs. I am under homeopathic treatment. Now I have had to give up completely the intention of going to Varanasi. Whatever God dispenses will happen later on, according to the state of the body. If you meet brother Jnanananda, please tell him not to be held up there in expectation of my coming. My going there is very uncertain. My regards to you and Jnanananda.

Yours sincerely,
Vivekananda.

1889.5 — SIR¹

Shri Durgâ be my Refuge!

Baranagore,
26th June, 1889.

DEAR SIR,

For sundry reasons I have been unable to write to you for long, for which please excuse me. I have now obtained news of Gangadhar. He met one of my brother disciples, and both are now staying in the Uttarakhand (the sacred Himalayas). Four of us from here are in the Himalayas now, and with Gangadhar they are five. One brother-disciple named Shivananda came across Gangadhar at Srinagara on the way to holy Kedarnath, and Gangadhar has sent two letters here. During his first year in the Himalayas, he could not secure permission to enter Tibet, but he got it the next year. The Lamas love him much, and he had picked up the Tibetan language. He says the Lamas form ninety per cent of the population, but they mostly practice Tāntrika forms of worship. The country is intensely cold — eatables there are scarcely any — only dried meat; and Gangadhar had to travel and live on that food. My health is passable, but the state of mind is terrible!

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1889.6 — SIR²

Victory to God!

Baghbazar, Calcutta,
4th July, 1889.

DEAR SIR,

It pleased me highly to know all the news in your letter yesterday. You have asked me to request Gangadhar to write to you, but I see no chance thereof, for though they are sending us letters, they do not stop anywhere for more than two or three days and therefore do not receive any of ours.

Some relative of my former life³ has purchased a bungalow at Simultala (near Baidyanath). The place being credited with a healthy climate, I stayed there for some time. But the summer heat growing excessive, I had an attack of acute diarrhoea, and I have just fled away from the place.

Words fail to describe how strong is the desire in my mind to go to Varanasi and have my soul blessed by meeting you and sojourning with you in good converse, but everything rests on His will! I wonder what linking of heart existed between us,

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

2. See Note 1, p. 4.

3. The life he has renounced.

sir, from some previous incarnation that, receiving as I do the love and affection of not a few men of wealth and position in this city of Calcutta, I am apt to feel so much bored by their society, while only through one day's interview my heart felt charmed enough to accept you as a near relative and friend in spiritual life! One reason is that you are a favoured servant of God. Another perhaps is:

तच्चेतसा स्मरति नूनमबोधपूर्वं भावस्थशिनो जिननान्तरसौहृदानि ।¹

I am indebted to you for the advice which comes from you as the outcome of your experience and spiritual practice. It is very true, and I have also found it so very often, that one has to suffer at times for holding in one's brain novel views of all sorts.

But with me it is a different malady this time. I have not lost faith in a benign Providence—nor am I going ever to lose it—my faith in the scriptures is unshaken. But by the will of God, the last six or seven years of my life have been full of constant struggles with hindrances and obstacles of all sorts. I have been vouchsafed the ideal Shâstra; I have seen the ideal man; and yet fail myself to get on with anything to the end—this is my profound misery.

And particularly, I see no chance of success while remaining near Calcutta. In Calcutta live my mother and two brothers. I am the eldest; the second is preparing for the First Arts Examination, and the third is young.

They were quite well off before, but since my father's death, it is going very hard with them—they even have to go fasting at times! To crown all, some relatives, taking advantage of their helplessness, drove them away from the ancestral residence. Though a part of it is recovered through suing at the High Court, destitution is now upon them—a matter of course in litigation.

Living near Calcutta I have to witness their adversity, and the quality of Rajas prevailing, my egotism sometimes develops into the form of a desire that rises to plunge me into action; in such moments, a fierce fighting ensues in my mind, and so I wrote that the state of my mind was terrible. Now their lawsuit has come to an end. So bless me that after a stay here in Calcutta for a few days more to settle matters, I may bid adieu to this place for ever.

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतपिठं समुद्रमापः प्रवशिनृत्तिदवत् ।

तदवत्कामा यं प्रवशिनृत्तिं सर्वे स शान्तमिप्नोति न कामकामी ॥²

Bless me that my heart may wax strong with supreme strength Divine, and that all forms of Mâyâ may drop off from me for aye: “We have taken up the Cross, Thou hast laid it upon us and grant us strength that we bear it unto death. Amen!” —Imitation of Christ.

I am now staying in Calcutta. My address is: c/o Balaram Babu, 57 Ramkanta Bose's Street, Baghbazar, Calcutta.

1. Kalidasa's *Shakuntalam*, Act V: “It must be the memories, unwittingly recalled, of affinities firmly established in previous incarnations through depths of heart.”

2. The Gîtâ, II.70: “Not he that lusteth after objects of desire but he alone obtaineth peace in whom desires lose themselves like river-water flowing into the ocean but leaving it unaffected and unmodified in spite of constant accession.”

All Glory to God!

Baranagore, Calcutta,
7th Aug., 1889.

DEAR SIR,

It is more than a week since I received your letter, but having had another attack of fever, I could not send a reply all this time, for which please excuse me. For an interval of a month and a half I kept well, but I have suffered again for the last ten days; now I am doing well.

I have certain questions to put, and you, sir, have a wide knowledge of Sanskrit; so please favour me with answers to the following:

1. Does any narrative occur about Satyakâma, son of Jabâlâ, and about Jânashru-ti, anywhere else in the Vedas excepting the Upanishads⁴?

2. In most cases where Shankaracharya quotes Smṛiti in his commentary on the Vedânta-Sūtras, he cites the authority of the Mahâbhârata. But seeing that we find clear proofs about caste being based on qualification both in the Bhishmaparva of the Mahabharata and in the stories there of the Ajagara and of Umâ and Maheshvara, has he made any mention in his writings of this fact?

3. The doctrine of caste in the *Purusha-Sukta* of the Vedas does not make it hereditary — so what are those instances in the Vedas where caste has been made a matter of hereditary transmission?

4. The Achârya could not adduce any proof from the Vedas to the effect that the Shudra should not study the Vedas. He only quotes “यज्ञेऽनवकल्पः”⁵ (Tai. Samhita, VII. i. 1. 6) to maintain that when he is not entitled to perform Yajnas, he has neither any right to study the Upanishads and the like. But the same Acharya contends with reference to “अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा”⁶, (*Vedânta-Sūtras*, I. i. 1) that the word अथ (Ath) here does not mean “subsequent to the study of the Vedas”, because it is contrary to proof that the study of the Upanishad is not permissible without the previous study of the Vedic Mantras and *Brâhmanas* and because there is no intrinsic sequence between the Vedic Karma-kânda and Vedic Jânâna-kânda. It is evident, therefore, that one may attain to the knowledge of Brahman without having studied the ceremonial parts of the Vedas. So if there is no sequence between the sacrificial practices and Jnana, why does the Acharya contradict his own statement when it is a case of the Shudras, by inserting the clause “by force of the same

3. See Note 1, p. 4.

4. Shankarâchârya in his commentary on the *Vedânta-Sūtras*, I. iii. 34-37, interprets the aphorisms to prove that Upanishadic wisdom was imparted to Janashruti and Satyakama, only because they were not Shudras, as borne out by actual texts. But as these texts are doubtful even after Shankaracharya's explanation, Swamiji wants to be referred to other similar Vedic texts.

5. “The Shudra is not conceived of as a performer of Yajna or Vedic sacrifices.”

6. “Now then commences hence the inquiry about Brahman.”

logic”? Why should the Shudra not study the Upanishad?

I am mailing you, sir, a book named *Imitation of Christ* written by a Christian Sannyasin. It is a wonderful book. One is astonished to find that such renunciation, Vairâgya, and Dâsya-Bhakti have existed even among the Christians. Probably you may have read this book before; if not, it will give me the greatest pleasure if you will kindly read it.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1889.8—SIR¹

Baranagore,
17th Aug., 1889.

DEAR SIR,

You have expressed embarrassment in your last favour for being addressed reverentially. But the blame attaches not to me but to your own excellent qualities. I wrote in one letter before that from the way I feel attracted by your lofty virtues, it seems we had some affinity from previous births. I make no distinction as to householder or Sannyasin in this, that for all time my head shall bend low in reverence wherever I see greatness, broadness of heart, and holiness—Shântih! Shântih! Shântih! My prayer is that among the many people embracing Sannyâsa nowadays, greedy of honour, posing renunciation for the sake of a living, and fallen off from the ideal on both sides, may one in a lakh at least become high-souled like you! To you my Brahmin fellow-disciples who have heard of your noble virtues tender their best prostrations.

About one amongst my several questions to which you sent your replies, my wrong idea is corrected. For this I shall remain indebted to you for ever. Another of these questions was: Whether Acharya Shankara gives any conclusion regarding caste based on Gunas as mentioned in Puranâs like the Mahabharata. If he does, where is it to be found? I have no doubt that according to the ancient view in this country, caste was hereditary, and it cannot also be doubted that sometimes the Shudras used to be oppressed more than the helots among the Spartans and the negroes among the Americans! As for myself, I have no partiality for any party in this caste question, because I know it is a social law and is based on diversity of Guna and Karma. It also means grave harm if one bent on going beyond Guna and Karma cherishes in mind any caste distinctions. In these matters, I have got some settled ideas through the grace of my Guru but, if I come to know of your views, I may just confirm some points or rectify others in them. One doesn't have honey dripping unless one pokes at the hive—so I shall put you some more questions; and looking upon me as ignorant and as a boy, please give proper replies without taking any offence.

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

1. Is the Mukti, which the Vedanta-Sutras speaks of, one and the same with the Nirvana of the Avadhuta-Gitâ and other texts?

2. What is really meant by Nirvana if, according to the aphorism, “Without the function of creating etc.”² (ibid., IV. iv. 7), none can attain to the fullest Godhead?

3. Chaitanya-deva is said to have told Sârvabhauma at Puri, “I understand the Sutras (aphorisms) of Vyasa, they are dualistic; but the commentator makes them, monistic, which I don’t understand.” Is this true? Tradition says, Chaitanya-deva had a dispute with Prakashananda Sarasvati on the point, and Chaitanya-deva won. One commentary by Chaitanya-deva was rumoured to have been existing in Prakashananda’s Math.

4. In the Tantra, Acharya Shankara has been called a crypto-Buddhist; views expressed in Prajnâparamitâ, the Buddhist Mâhâyana book, perfectly tally with the Vedantic views propounded by the Acharya. The author of Panchadashi also says, “What we call Brahman is the same truth as the Shunya of the Buddhist.” What does all this mean?

5. Why has no foundation for the authority of the Vedas been adduced in the Vedanta-Satras? First, it has been said that the Vedas are the authority for the existence of God, and then it has been argued that the authority for the Vedas is the text: “It is the breath of God.” Now, is this statement not vitiated by what in Western logic is called an argument in a circle?

6. The Vedanta requires of us faith, for conclusiveness cannot be reached by mere argumentation. Then why, has the slightest flaw, detected in the position of the schools of Sâṅkhya and Nyâya, been overwhelmed with a fusillade of dialectics? In whom, moreover, are we to put our faith? Everybody seems to be mad over establishing his own view; if, according to Vyasa, even the great Muni Kapila, “the greatest among perfected souls”,³ is himself deeply involved in error, then who would say that Vyasa may not be so involved in a greater measure? Did Kapila fail to understand the Vedas?

7. According to the Nyaya, “Shabda or Veda (the criterion of truth), is the word of those who have realised the highest”; so the Rishis as such are omniscient. Then how are they proved, according to the Surya-siddhânta, to be ignorant of such simple astronomical truths? How can we accept their intelligence as the refuge to ferry

2. जगद्व्यापारवर्जं प्रकरणादसंनहित्वाच्च — “Having regard to the context which ascribes the threefold function relating to the universe only to God, and because the fact of their conscious mental distinction comes between that function and their liberated state, we have to conclude that the state of final liberation or Mukti in the case of men is devoid of the capacity to create, preserve, and dissolve the universe.” So if this capacity is reserved only for God, what is meant, Swamiji asks, by saying that in Nirvana the human merges completely into the Divine? We must remember that many of the questions here reflect the intellectual stages through which Swamiji was reaching out in those days towards that plenitude of Vedantic wisdom which was his in future years. We also find a glimpse of those processes through which his intellect was growing towards a fuller understanding of our ancient scriptures and customs.

3. Kapila is so spoken of in Shvetâshvatara Upanishad, V.2 In his commentary of *Vedanta-Sutras*, II. i. 1, Shankara doubts the identity of the Vedic Kapila with the Sankhyan Kapila.

us across the ocean of transmigratory existence, seeing that they speak of the earth as triangular, of the serpent Vāsuki as the support of the earth and so on?

8. If in His acts of creation God is dependent on good and evil Karmas, then what does it avail us to worship Him? There is a fine song of Nareshchandra, where occurs the following: “If what lies in one’s destiny is to happen anyhow, O Mother, then what good all this invoking by the holy name of Durgā?”

9. True, it is improper to hold many texts on the same subject to be contradicted by one or two. But why then are the long-continued customs of Madhuparka¹ and the like repealed by one or two such texts as, “The horse sacrifice, the cow sacrifice, Sannyasa, meat-offerings in Shrāddha”, etc.? If the Vedas are eternal, then what are the meaning and justification of such specifications as “this rule of Dharma is for the age of Dvāpara,” “this for the age of Kali”, and so forth?

10. The same God who gives out the Vedas becomes Buddha again to annul them; which of these dispensations is to be obeyed? Which of these remains authoritative, the earlier or the later one?

11. The Tantra says, in the Kali-Yuga the Veda-Mantras are futile. So which behest of God, the Shiva, is to be followed?

12. Vyasa makes out in the Vedānta-Sūtras that it is wrong to worship the tetrad of divine manifestation, Vāsudeva, Sankarshana, etc., and again that very Vyasa expatiates on the great merits of that worship in the Bhāgavata! Is this Vyasa a madman?

I have many doubts besides these, and, hoping to have them dispelled from my mind through your kindness, I shall lay them before you in future. Such questions cannot be all set forth except in a personal interview; neither can as much satisfaction be obtained as one expects to. So I have a mind to lay before you all these facts when presenting myself to you, which I expect will be very soon, by the grace of the Guru.

I have heard it said that without inner progress in the practice of religion, no true conclusion can be reached concerning these matters, simply by means of reasoning; but satisfaction, at least to some extent, seems to be necessary at the outset.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1. Madhuparka was a Vedic ceremony, usually in honour of guest, in which a respectful offering was to be made consisting, among other dainties, of beef. The text which Swamiji partially quotes forbids such food. The full text means that in the Kali-Yuga the following five customs are to be forsaken: The horse sacrifice, cow-killing ceremonies, meat-offerings in Shrāddha, Sannyasa, and maintaining the line of progeny through the husband’s younger brother in case of failure through the husband.

1889.9—SIR²

Baghbazar, Calcutta,
2nd Sept., 1889.

DEAR SIR,

Some days ago I received your two kind letters. I am very much pleased to find in you a wonderful harmony of Jnana and Bhakti. Your advice to me to give up arguing and disputing is very true indeed, and that is really the goal of life for the individual—“Sundered are the knots of the heart, torn off are all his doubts, and the seeds of his Karma wear off, when the sight of the Transcendent One is gained.” (Mundakonapanishad, II. ii. 8.) But then, as my Master used to say, when a pitcher is being filled (by immersion), it gurgles, but when full, it is noiseless; know my condition to be the same. Within two or three weeks perhaps, I shall be able to meet you—may God fulfil that wish!

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1889.10—SIR³

Baghbazar,
3rd Dec., 1889.

DEAR SIR,

I have not heard from you for a long time, I hope you are doing well in body and mind. Two of my brother disciples are shortly leaving for Varanasi. One is Rakhai by name, the other is Subodh. The first-named was beloved of my Master and used to stay much with him. Please recommend them to some Satra (house of alms.) during their stay in the city, if you find it convenient. You will hear from them all my news.

With my best regards and greetings.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

PS—Gangadhar is now proceeding to Kailas. The Tibetans wanted to slash him up on the way, taking him to be a spy of the foreigners. Eventually some Lamas kindly set him free. We obtain this news from a Tibet-going trader. Gangadhar's blood won't cool down before seeing Lhasa. The gain is that his physical endurance has grown immensely—one night he passed uncovered on a bed of snow, and that without much hardship.

2. See Note 1, p. 4.

3. See Note 1, p. 4.

1889.11—SIR¹

Baranagore, Calcutta,
13th Dec., 1889.

DEAR SIR,

I have all particulars from your letter; and from Rakhal's which followed, I came to know of your meeting. I have received the pamphlet written by you. A kind of scientific Advaitism has been spreading in Europe ever since the theory of the conservation of energy was discovered, but all that is Parinâ mavâda, evolution by real modification. It is good you have shown the difference between this and Shankara's Vivartavâda (progressive manifestation by unreal superimposition). I can't appreciate your citing Spencer's parody on the German transcendentalists; he himself is fed much on their doles. It is doubtful whether your opponent Gough understands his Hegel sufficiently. Anyway, your rejoinder is very pointed and thrashing.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1889.12—SHRI BALARAM BOSE²

Glory to Ramakrishna!

Baidyanath,
25th December, 1889.

DEAR SIR, (Shri Balaram Bose)

I have been staying for the last few days at Baidyanath in Purna Babu's Lodge. It is not so cold, and my health too is indifferent. I am suffering from indigestion, probably due to excess of iron in the water. I have found nothing agreeable here—neither the place, nor the season, nor the company. I leave for Varanasi tomorrow. Achyutananda stopped at Govinda Chaudhury's place at Deoghar, and the latter, as soon as he got news of us, earnestly insisted on our becoming his guests. Finally, he met us once again and prevailed on us to accede to his request. The man is a great worker, but has a number of women with him—old women most of them, of the ordinary Vaishnava type... His clerks too revere us much; some of them are very much ill-disposed towards him, and they spoke of his misdeeds. Incidentally, I raised the topic of ___. You have many wrong ideas or doubts about her; hence I write all this after particular investigation. Even the aged clerks of this establishment highly respect and revere her. She came to stop with ___ while she was a mere child, and ever lived as his wife... Everyone admits in one voice that her character is spotless. She was all along a perfectly chaste woman and never behaved with ___ in any relation but that of wife to husband, and she was absolutely

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

2 Translated from Bengali.

faithful. She came at too early an age to have incurred any moral taint. After she had separated from __, she wrote to him to say that she had never treated him as anything but her husband, but that it was impossible for her to live with a man with a loose character. His old office-bearers too believe him to be satanic in character; but they consider __ a Devi (angel), and remark that it was following her departure that __ lost all sense of shame.

My object in writing all this is that formerly I was not a believer in the tale of the lady's early life. The idea that there might be such purity in the midst of a relation which society does not recognise, I used to consider as romance. But after thorough investigation I have come to know that it is all right. She is very pure, pure from her infancy—I have not the least doubt about it. For entertaining those doubts, you and I and everyone are guilty to her; I make repeated salutations to her, and ask her pardon for my guilt. She is not a liar.

I take this opportunity to record that such courage is impossible in a lying and unchaste woman. I have also been told that she had a lifelong ardent faith in religion also.

Well, your disease is not yet improving! I don't think this is a place for patients unless one is ready to spend a good deal of money. Please think out some judicious course. Here every article will have to be procured from elsewhere.

Yours affectionately,
Vivekananda.

1889.13—SIR³

Baidyanath,
26th Dec., 1889.

DEAR SIR,

After a long attempt, I think, I am now in a position to present myself before you. In a day or two I take myself to your feet at holy Kashi.

I have been putting up here for some days with a gentleman of Calcutta, but my mind is much longing for Varanasi. My idea is to remain there for some time, and to watch how Vishvanâtha and Annapurnâ⁴ deal it out to my lot. And my resolve is something like “either to lay down my life or realise my ideal”⁵—so help me the Lord of Kashi.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

3. See Note 1, p. 4.

4. Shiva and His Divine Spouse as installed in Varanasi.

5. “शरीरं वा पातयामि मन्त्रं वा साधयामि।”

Allahabad,
30th Dec., 1889.

DEAR SIR,

I wrote in a letter to you that I was to go to Varanasi in a day or two, but who can nullify the decree of Providence? News reached me that a brother-disciple, Yogen by name, had been attacked with smallpox after arriving here from a pilgrimage to Chitrakuta, Omkarnath, etc., and so I came to this place to nurse him. He has now completely recovered. Some Bengali gentlemen here are of a greatly pious and loving disposition. They are very lovingly taking care of me, and their importunate desire is that I should stay here during the month of Mâgha (Jan.-Feb.) keeping the Kalpa vow². But my mind is very keenly harping on the name of Varanasi and is quite agog to see you. Yes, I am going to try my best to slip away and avoid their importunities in a day or two and betake myself to the holy realm of the Lord of Varanasi. If one of my monastic brother-disciples, Achyutananda Sarasvati by name, calls on you to enquire of me, please tell him I am soon coming to Varanasi. He is indeed a very good man and learned. I was obliged to leave him behind at Bankipore. Are Rakhal and Subodh still there in Varanasi? Please inquire and inform me whether the Kumbha fair this year is going to be held at Hardwar or not.

Many a man of wisdom, of piety, many a Sâdhu (holy man) and Pundit have I met in so many places, and I have been very much favoured by them, but “भनिनरुचिर्हि लोकाः—Men are of varying tastes”—Raghuvamsham. I know not what sort of soul-affinity there is between us, for nowhere else does it seem so pleasing and agreeable as with you. Let me see how the Lord of Kashi disposes.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

My address is:

C/o Govinda Chandra Basu, Chauk, Allahabad.

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

2. Special ablutions and worship regularly performed in that holy confluence—a very solemn and sacred practice.

1889.15 — SHRI BALARAM BOSE³

Glory to Ramakrishna!

Allahabad,
30th December, 1889.

DEAR SIR, (Shri Balaram Bose)

Gupta left a slip when coming and the next day a letter from Yogananda gave me all the news and I immediately started for Allahabad which I reached the day after, to find that Yogananda had completely recovered. He had chicken-pox (with one or two smallpox rashes also). The doctor is a noble soul, and they have got a brotherhood, who are all great pious men and highly devoted to the service of Sâdhus. They are particularly anxious that I pass the month of Mâgh here, but I am leaving for Varanasi... How are you? I pray to God for the welfare of yourself and your family. Please convey my compliments to Tulasiram, Chuni Babu, and the rest.

Yours affectionately,
Vivekananda.

1889.16 — SIR⁴

Simla (Calcutta),
14th July, 1889.

RESPECTED SIR, (Shri Pramadadas Mitra)

I was very glad to get your letter. In such circumstances many give the advice to incline towards the worldly life. But you are truthful and have an adamant heart. I have been highly comforted by your encouraging and cheering words. My difficulties here have almost come to a close — only I have engaged the services of a broker for the sale of a piece of land, and I hope the sale will be over soon. In that case, I shall be free from all worry and shall at once go straight off to you to Varanasi.

Your servant,
Vivekananda.

³ Translated from Bengali.

⁴ Translated from Bengali.

1890

1890.1 — FAKIR¹

Allahabad,
5th January, 1890.

MY DEAR FAKIR²,

...A word for you. Remember always, I may not see you again. Be moral. Be brave. Be a heart-whole man. Strictly moral, brave unto desperation. Don't bother your head with religious theories. Cowards only sin, brave men never, no, not even in mind. Try to love anybody and everybody. Be a man and try to make those immediately under your care, namely Ram, Krishnamayi, and Indu, brave, moral, and sympathising. No religion for you, my children, but morality and bravery. No cowardice, no sin, no crime, no weakness—the rest will come of itself... And don't take Ram with you ever or ever allow him to visit a theatre or any enervating entertainment whatever.

Yours affectionately,
Vivekananda.

MY DEAR RAM, KRISHNAMAYI, AND INDU,

Bear in mind, my children, that only cowards and those who are weak commit sin and tell lies. The brave are always moral. Try to be moral, try to be brave, try to be sympathising.

Yours,
Vivekananda.

1890.2 — SIR

Salutation to Shri Ramakrishna!

Allahabad,
5th January, 1890.

MY DEAR SIR, (Sj. Balaram Bose)

I am very sorry to hear of your illness from your kind note. The gist of the letter I wrote to you about your change to Baidyanath was that it would be impossible for a man of weak and extremely delicate physique like you to live in that place unless you spent a good deal of money. If change be really advisable for you, and if you have deferred it so long simply to select a cheaper place and that sort of thing, it is certainly a matter of regret... Baidyanath is excellent so far as the air is concerned, but the water is not good, it upsets the stomach. I used to suffer from acidity every day. I have already written you a letter; have you got it, or finding it a bearing letter,

1 Translated from Bengali.

2. Shri Yajneswar Bhattacharya.

have you left it to its fate? In my opinion, if you have to go away for a change, the sooner the better. But, pardon me, you have a tendency to expect that everything should fit in exactly with your requirements, but unfortunately, such a state of things is very rare in this world. “आत्मानं सततं रक्षेत्— One must save oneself under any circumstances.” “Lord have mercy”, is all right, but He helps him who helps himself. If you simply try to save your purse, will the Lord arrange the change for you by drawing on His ancestral capital? If you think you have so much reliance on the Lord, don’t call in the doctor, please ... If that does not suit you, you should go to Varanasi. I would have already left this place, but the local gentlemen would not give me leave to depart! ... But let me repeat once more, if change is actually decided upon, please do not hesitate out of miserliness. That would be suicide. And not even God can save a suicide. Please convey my compliments to Tulasi Babu and the rest.

With best regards,

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1890.3 — SIR¹

C/O Babu Satish Chandra Mukherji, Gorabazar, Ghazipur,
21st Jan., 1890.

DEAR SIR,

I reached Ghazipur three days ago. Here I am putting up in the house of Babu Satish Chandra Mukherji, a friend of my early age. The place is very pleasant. Close by flows the Ganga, but bathing there is troublesome, for there is no regular path, and it is hard work wading through sands. Babu Ishan Chandra Mukherji, my friend’s father, that noble-hearted man of whom I spoke to you, is here. Today he is leaving for Varanasi whence he will proceed to Calcutta. I again had a great mind to go over to Kashi, but the object of my coming here, namely, an interview with the Bâbâji (Pavhâri Bâbâ, the great saint.), has not yet been realised, and, hence the delay of a few days becomes necessary. Everything here appears good. The people are all gentlemen, but very much Westernised; and it is a pity I am so thoroughly against every affectation of the Western idea. Only my friend very little affects such ideals. What a frippery civilisation is it indeed that the foreigners have brought over here! What a materialistic illusion have they created! May Vishvanâtha save these weak-hearted! After seeing Babaji, I shall send you a detailed account.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

PS—Alas for the irony of our fate, that in this land of Bhagavân Shuka’s birth, renunciation is looked down upon as madness and sin!

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

1890.4 — SHRI BALARAM BOSE²

Ghazipur,
30th January, 1890.

REVERED SIR, (Shri Balaram Bose)

I am now stopping with Satish Babu at Ghazipur. Of the few places I have recently visited, this is the healthiest. The water of Baidyanath is very bad—it leads to indigestion. Allahabad is very congested. The few days I passed at Varanasi, I suffered from fever day and night—the place is so malarious! Ghazipur has a very salubrious climate—specially the quarter I am living in. I have visited Pavhari Baba's house—there are high walls all round, and it is fashioned like an English bungalow. There is a garden inside and big rooms and chimneys, etc. He allows nobody to enter. If he is so inclined, he comes up to the door and speaks from inside—that is all. One day I went and waited and waited in the cold and had to return. I shall go to Varanasi on Sunday next. If the meeting with the Babaji takes place in the meantime, all right, otherwise I bid him good-bye. About Pramada Babu's place I shall write definitely from Varanasi. If Kali Bhattacharya is determined to come, let him do so after I leave for Varanasi on Sunday, but he should rather not. After a few days' stay at Varanasi, I shall start for Hrishikesh. Pramada Babu may accompany me. Please accept all of you my cordial greetings—and blessing to Fakir, Ram, Krishnamayi, etc.

Yours affectionately,
Vivekananda.

PS—In my opinion, it will do you much good if you come and stay for some time at Ghazipur. Here Satish will be able to secure a bungalow for you, and there is a gentleman, Gagan Chandra Ray by name, who is the head of the Opium Office and is exceedingly courteous, philanthropic, and social—they will arrange for everything. The house-rent is fifteen to twenty rupees; rice is dear, and milk sells at sixteen to twenty seers a rupee; all other things are very cheap. Besides, under the care of these gentlemen, there is no chance of any difficulty. But it is slightly expensive—it will cost over forty to fifty rupees. Varanasi is horribly malarious. I have never lived in Pramada Babu's garden. He likes to have me always in his company. The garden is indeed very beautiful, richly laid out, spacious, and open. This time when I go, I shall live there and report to you.

² Translated from Bengali.

1890.5 — SIR¹

Ghazipur,
31st Jan., 1890.

DEAR SIR,

It is so very difficult to meet the Babaji. He does not step out of his home; and, when willing to speak at all, he just comes near the door to speak from inside. I have come away with having just a view of his garden-house with chimneys tapering above and encircled by high walls — no means of admittance within! People say there are cave-like rooms within where he dwells; and he only knows what he does there, for nobody has had a peep. I had to come away one day sorely used up with waiting and waiting, but shall take my chance again. On Sunday, I leave for holy Varanasi — only the Babus here won't let me off; otherwise all my fancy to see the Babaji has flattened down. I am prepared to be off today, but anyhow, I am leaving on Sunday. What of your plan of going to Hrishikesh?

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

PS — The redeeming feature is that the place seems healthy.

1890.6 — SIR²

Ghazipur,
4th Feb., 1890.

DEAR SIR,

Received your kind note, and through supreme good fortune, I have obtained an interview with Babaji. A great sage indeed! — It is all very wonderful, and in this atheistic age, a towering representation of marvellous power born of Bhakti and Yoga! I have sought refuge in his grace; and he has given me hope — a thing very few may be fortunate enough to obtain. It is Babaji's wish that I stay on for some days here, and he would do me some good. So following this saint's bidding I shall remain here for some time. No doubt, this will give you also much pleasure. I don't mention them in a letter, but the facts are very strange indeed — to be disclosed when we meet. Unless one is face to face with the life of such men, faith in the scriptures does not grow in all its real integrity.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

2. See Note 1, p. 4.

To Balaram Bose:

Glory to Ramakrishna!

Ghazipur,
February 6, 1890.

RESPECTED SIR,

I have talked with Pavhari Baba. He is a wonderful saint—the embodiment of humility, devotion, and Yoga. Although he is an orthodox Vaishnava, he is not prejudiced against others of different beliefs. He has tremendous love for Mahâprabhu Chaitanya, and he [Pavhari Baba] speaks of Shri Ramakrishna as “an incarnation of God”. He loves me very much, and I am going to stay here for some days at his request.

Pavhari Baba can live in Samâdhi for from two to six months at a stretch. He can read Bengali and has kept a photograph of Shri Ramakrishna in his room. I have not yet seen him face to face, since he speaks from behind a door, but I have never heard such a sweet voice. I have many things to say about him but not just at present.

Please try to get a copy of Chaitanya-Bhâgavata for him and send it immediately to the following address: Gagan Chandra Roy, Opium Department, Ghazipur. Please don't forget.

Pavhari Baba is an ideal Vaishnava and a great scholar; but he is reluctant to reveal his learning. His elder brother acts as his attendant, but even he is not allowed to enter his room.

Please send him a copy of Chaitanya-Mangala also, if it is still in print. And remember that if Pavhari Baba accepts your presents, that will be your great fortune. Ordinarily, he does not accept anything from anybody. Nobody knows what he eats or even what he does.

Please don't let it be known that I am here and don't send news of anyone to me. I am busy with an important work.

Your servant,
Vivekananda.

³ Translated from Bengali.

Ghazipur,
7th Feb., 1890.

DEAR SIR,

I feel very happy to hear from you just now. Apparently in his features, the Babaji is a Vaishnava the embodiment, so to speak, of Yoga, Bhakti, and humility. His dwelling has walls on all sides with a few doors in them. Inside these walls, there is one long underground burrow wherein he lays himself up in Samâdhi. He talks to others only when he comes out of the hole. Nobody knows what he eats, and so they call him Pavhâri (One living on air.) Bâbâ. Once he did not come out of the hole for five years, and people thought he had given up the body. But now again he is out. But this time he does not show himself to people and talks from behind the door. Such sweetness in speech I have never come across! He does not give a direct reply to questions but says, "What does this servant know?" But then fire comes out as the talking goes on. On my pressing him very much he said, "Favour me highly by staying here some days." But he never speaks in this way; so from this I understood he meant to reassure me and whenever I am importunate, he asks me to stay on. So I wait in hope. He is a learned man no doubt but nothing in the line betrays itself. He performs scriptural ceremonials, for from the full-moon day to the last day of the month, sacrificial oblations go on. So it is sure, he is not retiring into the hole during this period. How can I ask his permission, (Evidently for a proposed visit to the saint by the correspondent, Pramadadas Mitra of Varanasi.). for he never gives a direct reply; he goes on multiplying such expressions as "this servant", "my fortune", and so on. If you yourself have a mind, then come sharp on receipt of this note. Or after his passing away, the keenest regret will be left in your mind. In two days you may return after an interview — I mean a talk with him ab intra. My friend Satish Babu will receive you most warmly. So, do come up directly you receive this; I shall meanwhile let Babaji know of you.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

PS—Even though one can't have his company, no trouble taken for the sake of such a great soul can ever go unrewarded.

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

1890.9—SIR²

To Balaram Bose:

Glory to Ramakrishna!

Ghazipur,
February 11, 1890.

RESPECTED SIR,

I have received your book. In Hrishikesh, Kali [Swami Abhedananda] has had a relapse and is again suffering from what seems to be malaria. Once it comes, the fever does not easily leave those who have never had it before. I too suffered the same way when I first had the attack of fever. Kali has never had the fever before. I have not received any letter from Hrishikesh. Where is... ?

I am suffering terribly from a backache which began in Allahabad. I had recovered from it some time back, but it has recurred. So I will have to stay here awhile longer because of my back and also because Babaji [Pavhari Baba] has requested it.

What you have written about uncooked bread is true. But a monk dies that way, not like the breaking of a cup and saucer. This time I am not going to be overcome by weakness in any way. And if I die, that will be good for me. It is better to depart from this world very soon.

Your servant,
Vivekananda.

1890.10—SIR³

Ghazipur,
13th Feb., 1890.

DEAR SIR,

I am in anxiety to hear of your illness. I am also having some sort of a pain in the loins which, being aggravated of late, gives much trouble. For two days I could not go out to meet Babaji, and so a man came from him to inquire about me. For this reason, I go today. I shall convey your countless compliments. "Fire comes out" that is, a wonderful devotion to Guru and resignation are revealed; and such amazing endurance and humility I have never seen. Whatever good things I may come by, sure, you have your share in them.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

² Translated from Bengali.

³ See Note 1, p. 4.

1890.11—SIR¹

Ghazipur,
14th Feb., 1890.

DEAR SIR,

In my note of yesterday I perhaps forgot to ask you to return brother Sharat's letter. Please send it. I have heard from brother Gangadhar. He is now in Rambag Samadhi, Srinagar, Kashmir. I am greatly suffering from lumbago.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

PS—Rakhal and Subodh have come to Vrindaban after visiting Omkar, Girnar, Abu, Bombay, and Dwarka.

1890.12—SHRI BALARAM BOSE²

Salutation to Bhagavan Ramakrishna!

C/O Satish Mukherji,
Gorabazar, Ghazipur.
14th February, 1890.

REVERED SIR, (Shri Balaram Bose)

I am in receipt of your letter of contrition. I am not leaving this place soon—it is impossible to avoid the Babaji's request. You have expressed remorse at not having reaped any appreciable results by serving the Sadhus. It is true, and yet not true; it is true if you look towards ideal bliss; but if you look behind to the place from which you started, you will find that before you were an animal, now you are a man, and will be a god or God Himself in future. Moreover, that sort of regret and dissatisfaction is very good; it is the prelude to improvement. Without this none can rise. He who puts on a turban and immediately sees the Lord, progresses thus far and no farther. You are blessed indeed to have that constant dissatisfaction preying upon your mind—rest assured that there is no danger for you... You are a keenly intelligent man, and know full well that patience is the best means of success. In this respect I have no doubt that we light-headed boys have much to learn from you... You are a considerate man, and I need not add anything. Man has two ears but one mouth. You specially are given to plain-speaking and are chary of making large promises—things that sometimes make me cross with you, but upon reflection I find that it is you who have acted with discretion. "Slow but sure." "What is lost in power is gained in speed." However, in this world everything depends upon one's words. To get an insight behind the words (specially, with your economical

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

2 Translated from Bengali.

spirit masking all) is not given to all, and one must associate long with a man to be able to understand him ... Religion is not in sects, nor in making a fuss—why do you forget these teachings of our revered Master? Please help as far as it lies in you, but to judge what came of it, whether it was turned to good or evil account, is perhaps beyond our jurisdiction ... Considering the great shock which Girish Babu has received, it will give him immense peace to serve Mother at this moment. He is a very keen-witted person. And our beloved Master had perfect confidence in you, used to dine nowhere else except at your place, and, I have heard, Mother too has the fullest confidence in you. In view of these, you will please bear and forbear all shortcomings of us fickle boys, treating them as if they were done by your own boy. This is all I have got to say. Please let me know by return of post when the Anniversary is to take place. A pain in the loins is giving me much trouble. In a few days the place will look exceedingly beautiful, with miles and miles of rose-banks all in flower. Satish says he will then send some fresh roses and cuttings for the Festival... May the Lord ordain that your son becomes a man, and never a coward!

Yours affectionately,
Vivekananda.

PS—If Mother has come, please convey to her my countless salutations, and ask her to bless me that I may have unflinching perseverance. Or, if that be impossible in this body, may it fall off soon!

1890.13—GUPTA³

Ghazipur,
14th Feb., 1890.

MY DEAR GUPTA, (Swami Sadananda)

I hope you are doing well. Do your own spiritual exercises, and knowing yourself to be the humblest servant of all, serve them. Those with whom you are staying are such that even I am not worthy to call myself their humblest servant and take the dust of their feet. Knowing this, serve them and have devotion for them. Don't be angry even if they abuse or even hurt you grievously. Never mix with women. Try to be hardy little by little, and gradually accustom yourself to maintaining the body out of the proceeds of begging. Whoever takes the name of Ramakrishna, know him to be your Guru. Everyone can play the role of a master, but it is very difficult to be a servant. Specially you should follow Shashi. Know it for certain that without steady devotion for the Guru and unflinching patience and perseverance, nothing is to be achieved. You must have strict morality. Deviate an inch from this, and you are gone forever.

Yours affectionately,
Vivekananda.

³ Translated from Bengali.

1890.14 — SIR¹

Victory to the Lord!

Ghazipur,
19th Feb., 1890.

DEAR SIR,

I wrote a letter to brother Gangadhar asking him to stop his wandering and settle down somewhere and to send me an account of the various Sadhus he had come across in Tibet and their ways and customs. I enclose the reply that came from him. Brother Kali is having repeated attacks of fever at Hrishikesh. I have sent him a wire from this place. So if from the reply I find I am wanted by him, I shall be obliged to start direct for Hrishikesh from this place, otherwise I am coming to you in a day or two. Well, you may smile, sir, to see me weaving all this web of Mâyâ—and that is no doubt the fact. But then there is the chain of iron, and there is the chain of gold. Much good comes of the latter; and it drops off by itself when all the good is reaped. The sons of my Master are indeed the great objects of my service, and here alone I feel I have some duty left for me. Perhaps I shall send brother Kali down to Allahabad or somewhere else, as convenient. At your feet are laid a hundred and one faults of mine—"I am as thy son, so guide me who have taken refuge in thee." (An adaptation from the Gitâ, II. 7.)

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1890.15 — AKHANDANANDA

Salutation to Bhagavan Ramakrishna!

Ghazipur,
February, 1890.

BELOVED AKHANDANANDA,

Very glad to receive your letter. What you have written about Tibet is very promising, and I shall try to go there once. In Sanskrit Tibet is called the Uttarakuru-varsha, and is not a land of Mlechchhas. Being the highest tableland in the world, it is extremely cold, but by degrees one may become accustomed to it. About the manners and customs of the Tibetans you have written nothing. If they are so hospitable, why did they not allow you to go on? Please write everything in detail, in a long letter. I am sorry to learn that you will not be able to come, for I had a great longing to see you. It seems that I love you more than all others. However, I shall try to get rid of this Maya too.

The Tāntrika rites among the Tibetans that you have spoken of arose in India

1. See Note 1, p. 4.

itself, during the decline of Buddhism. It is my belief that the Tantras, in vogue amongst us, were the creation of the Buddhists themselves. Those Tantrika rites are even more dreadful than our doctrine of Vâmâchâra; for in them adultery got a free rein, and it was only when the Buddhists became demoralised through immorality that they were driven away by Kumârila Bhatta. As some Sannyasins speak of Shankara, or the Bâuls of Shri Chaitanya, that he was in secret an epicure, a drunkard, and one addicted to all sorts of abominable practices—so the modern Tantrika Buddhists speak of the Lord Buddha as a dire Vamâchâri and give an obscene interpretation to the many beautiful precepts of the *Prajñâpâramitâ*, such as the *Tattvagâthâ* and the like. The result of all this has been that the Buddhists are divided into two sects nowadays; the Burmese and the Sinhalese have generally set the Tantras at naught, have likewise banished the Hindu gods and goddesses, and at the same time have thrown overboard the Amitâbha Buddha held in regard among the Northern School of Buddhists. The long and the short of it is that the Amitabha Buddha and the other gods whom the Northern School worship are not mentioned in books like the *Prajnaparamita*, but a lot of gods and goddesses are recommended for worship. And the Southern people have wilfully transgressed the Shâstras and eschewed the gods and goddesses. The phase of Buddhism which declares “Everything for others”, and which you find spread throughout Tibet, has greatly struck modern Europe. Concerning that phase, however, I have a good deal to say—which it is impossible to do in this letter. What Buddha did was to break wide open the gates of that very religion which was confined in the Upanishads to a particular caste. What special greatness does his theory of Nirvana confer on him? His greatness lies in his unrivalled sympathy. The high orders of Samadhi etc., that lend gravity to his religion are, almost all there in the Vedas; what are absent there are his intellect and heart, which have never since been paralleled throughout the history of the world.

The Vedic doctrine of Karma is the same as in Judaism and all other religions, that is to say, the purification of the mind through sacrifices and such other external means—and Buddha was the first man who stood against it. But the inner essence of the ideas remained as of old—look at that doctrine of mental exercises which he preached, and that mandate of his to believe in the Suttas instead of the Vedas. Caste also remained as of old (caste was not wholly obsolete at the time of Buddha), but it was now determined by personal qualifications; and those that were not believers in his religion were declared as heretics, all in the old style. “Heretic” was a very ancient word with the Buddhists, but then they never had recourse to the sword (good souls!) and had great toleration. Argument blew up the Vedas. But what is the proof of your religion? Well, put faith in it!—the same procedure as in all religions. It was however an imperative necessity of the times; and that was the reason of his having incarnated himself. His doctrine is like that of Kapila. But that of Shankara, how far more grand and rational! Buddha and Kapila are always saying the world is full of grief and nothing but that—flee from it—ay, for your life, do! Is happiness altogether absent here? It is a statement of the nature

of what the Brahmos say—the world is full of happiness! There is grief, forsooth, but what can be done? Perchance some will suggest that grief itself will appear as happiness when you become used to it by constant suffering. Shankara does not take this line of argument. He says: This world *is* and is *not*—*manifold* yet one; *I shall unravel its mystery—I shall know whether grief be there, or anything else*; I do not flee from it as from a bugbear. I will know all about it as to the infinite pain that attends its search, well, I am embracing it in its fullest measure. Am I a beast that you frighten me with happiness and misery, decay and death, which are but the outcome of the senses? I will know about it—will give up my life for it. There is nothing to know about in this world—therefore, if there be anything beyond this relative existence—what the Lord Buddha has designated as *Prajñâpâra*—the transcendental—if such there be, I want that alone. Whether happiness attends it or grief, I do not care. What a lofty idea! How grand! The religion of Buddha has reared itself on the Upanishads, and upon that also the philosophy of Shankara. Only, Shankara had not the slightest bit of Buddha's wonderful heart, dry intellect merely! For fear of the Tantras, for fear of the mob, in his attempt to cure a boil, he amputated the very arm itself! One has to write a big volume if one has to write about them at all—but I have neither the learning nor the leisure for it.

The Lord Buddha is my Ishta—my God. He preached no theory about God-head—he was himself God, I fully believe it. But no one has the power to put a limit to God's infinite glory. No, not even God Himself has the power to make Himself limited. The translation of the *Gandâra-Sutta* that you have made from the *Suttanipâta*, is excellent. In that book there is another *Sutta*—the *Dhaniya-Sutta*—which has got a similar idea. There are many passages in the Dhammapada too, with similar ideas. But that is at the last stage when one has got perfectly satisfied with knowledge and realisation, is the same under all circumstances and has gained mastery over his senses—“ज्ञानवज्ज्ञानवृत्तात्मा कूटस्थो वज्रितन्द्रयिः” (Gita, VI. 8.). He who has not the least regard for his body as something to be taken care of—it is he who may roam about at pleasure like the mad elephant caring for naught. Whereas a puny creature like myself should practice devotion, sitting at one spot, till he attains realization; and then only should he behave like that; but it is a far-off question—very far indeed.

चनिताशून्यमदेन्यभेक्ष्यमशनं पानं सरदिवारपि
 स्वातन्त्र्येण नरिक्शा स्थतिरिभीर्नदिरा श्मशाने वने।
 वस्त्रं कपालनशोषणादरिहति दगिवास्तु शय्या मही
 संचारो नगिमान्तवीथिषु वदिं क्रीडा परे ब्रह्मणा॥
 वमिानमालम्ब्य शरीरमेतद्
 भुनक्त्यशेषान्वपियानुपस्थितान् ।

1. In his anxiety to defend the purity of the Vedic religion against the excesses of Tantrikism, which as capturing the rank and file of his countrymen, Shankara neglected the problem of the latter, stigmatised as Shudras by the Vedicists. This is perhaps the meaning of Swamiji. It seems he could never forgive Shankara for applying in his commentary on the Brahma-Sutras the old logic of forbidding Vedic rituals to the Shudras to the more modern question of their right to higher modes of worship (Upâsanâ) and knowledge (Jnâna) of the Jnâna-kânda.

परेच्छया बालवदात्मवेत्ता
योऽव्यक्तलङ्घिगोऽननुपक्तबाहयः ॥
दगिम्बरो वापि च साम्बरो वा
त्वगम्बरो वापि चदिम्बरस्थः।
उन्मत्तवदवापि च बालवद्वा
पश्चाच्चवदवापि चरत्यवन्याम्॥
(*Vivekachudmani*, 538-40)

—To a knower of Brahman food comes of itself, without effort—he drinks wherever he gets it. He roams at pleasure everywhere—he is fearless, sleeps sometimes in the forest, sometimes in a crematorium and, treads the Path which the Vedas have taken but whose end they have not seen. His body is like the sky; and he is guided, like a child, by others' wishes; he is sometimes naked, sometimes in gorgeous clothes, and at times has only Jnana as his clothing; he behaves sometimes like a child, sometimes like a madman, and at other times again like a ghoul, indifferent to cleanliness.

I pray to the holy feet of our Guru that you may have that state, and you may wander like the rhinoceros.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1890.16—SIR²

Victory to the Lord!

Ghazipur,
25th Feb., 1890.

DEAR SIR,

The lumbago is giving a good deal of trouble, or else I would have already sought to come to you. The mind does not find rest here any longer. It is three days since I came away from Babaji's place, but he inquires of me kindly almost every day. As soon as the lumbago is a little better, I bid good-bye to Babaji. Countless greetings to you.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

² Translated from Bengali.

1890.17 — SIR¹

To Balaram Bose:

Salutation to Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna!

Ghazipur,
February, 1890.

RESPECTED SIR,

I have received an anonymous letter which I have been unable to trace back to the gigantic soul who wrote it. Indeed, one should pay homage to such a man. He who considers a great soul like Pavhari Baba to be no more than water in a hoof print, he who has nothing to learn in this world and who feels it a disgrace to be taught by any other man—truly, such a new incarnation must be visited. I hope that if the government should discover the identity of this person, he will be handled with special care and be placed in the Alipore garden [zoo]. If you happen to know this man, please ask him to bless me, so that even a dog or a jackal may be my Guru—not to speak of a great soul like Pavhari Baba.

I have many things to learn. My master used to say: “As long as I live, so long do I learn”. Also please tell this fellow that unfortunately I do not have the time to “cross the seven seas and thirteen rivers” or to go to Sri Lanka in order to sleep after having put oil in the nostrils.

Your servant,
Vivekananda.

PS—Please have the rose-water brought from Ishan Babu’s [Ishan Chandra Mukherjee’s] residence if there is delay [in their sending it to the Baranagore Math]. The roses are still not in bloom. The rose-water has just been sent to the residence of Ishan Babu.

1890.18 — SIR²

Victory to the Lord!

Ghazipur,
3rd March, 1890.

DEAR SIR,

Your kind letter comes to hand just now. You know not, sir, I am a very soft-natured man in spite of the stern Vedantic views I hold. And this proves to be my undoing. At the slightest touch I give myself away; for howsoever I may try to think only of my own good, I slip off in spite of myself to think of other peoples’ interests. This time it was with a very stern resolve that I set out to pursue my own good, but I had to run off at the news of the illness of a brother at Allahabad! And now

¹ Translated from Bengali.

² Translated from Bengali.

comes this news from Hrishikesh, and my mind has run off with me there. I have wired to Sharat, but no reply yet—a nice place indeed to delay even telegrams so much! The lumbago obstinately refuses to leave me, and the pain is very great. For the last few days I haven't been able to go to see Pavhariji, but out of his kindness he sends every day for my report. But now I see the whole matter is inverted in its bearings! While I myself have come, a beggar, at his door, he turns round and wants to learn of me! This saint perhaps is not yet perfected—too much of rites, vows, observances, and too much of self-concealment. The ocean in its fullness cannot be contained within its shores, I am sure. So it is not good, I have decided not to disturb this Sâdhu (holy man) for nothing, and very soon I shall ask leave of him to go. No help, you see; Providence has dealt me my death to make me so tender! Babaji does not let me off, and Gagan Babu (whom probably you know—an upright, pious, and kindhearted man) does not let me off. If the wire in reply requires my leaving this place, I go; if not, I am coming to you at Varanasi in a few days. I am not going to let you off—I must take you to Hrishikesh—no excuse or objections will do. What are you saying about difficulties there of keeping clean? Lack of water in the hills or lack of room!! Tirthas (places of pilgrimage) and Sannyasins of the Kali-Yuga—you know what they are. Spend money and the owners of temples will fling away the installed god to make room for you; so no anxiety about a resting-place! No trouble to face there, I say; the summer heat has set in there now, I believe, though not that degree of it as you find at Varanasi—so much the better. Always the nights are quite cool there, from which good sleep is almost a certainty.

Why do you get frightened so much? I stand guarantee that you shall return home safe and that you shall have no trouble anywhere. It is my experience that in this British realm no fakir or householder gets into any trouble.

Is it a mere idle fancy of mine that between us there some connection from previous birth? Just see how one letter from you sweeps away all my resolution and, I bend my steps towards Varanasi leaving all matters behind!...

I have written again to brother Gangadhar and have asked him this time to return to the Math. If he comes, he will meet you. How is the climate at Varanasi now? By my stay here I have been cured of all other symptoms of malaria, only the pain in the loins makes me frantic; day and night it is aching and chafes me very much. I know not how I shall climb up the hills. I find wonderful endurance in Babaji, and that's why I am begging something of him; but no inkling of the mood to give, only receiving and receiving! So I also fly off.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

PS—To no big person am I going any longer—“Remain, O mind, within yourself, go not to anybody else's door; whatever you seek, you shall obtain sitting at your ease, only seek for it in the privacy of your heart. There is the supreme Treasure, the philosophers' stone and He can give whatever you ask for; for countless gems, O mind, lie strewn about the portals of His abode. He is the wishing-stone

that confers boons at the mere thought.” Thus says the poet Kamalākānta.

So now the great conclusion is that Ramakrishna has no peer; nowhere else in this world exists that unprecedented perfection, that wonderful kindness for all that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for man in bondage. Either he must be the Avatāra as he himself used to say, or else the ever-perfected divine man whom the Vedānta speaks of as the free one who assumes a body for the good of humanity. This is my conviction sure and certain; and the worship of such a divine man has been referred to by Patanjali in the aphorism: “Or the goal may be attained by meditating on a saint.” (Patanjali’s aphorism has “Ishvara” in place of “saint”. Nārada has an aphorism which runs thus: Bhakti (Supreme Love) is attainable chiefly through the grace of a saint, or by a bit of Divine Grace.)

Never during his life did he refuse a single prayer of mine; millions of offences has he forgiven me; such great love even my parents never had for me. There is no poetry, no exaggeration in all this. It is the bare truth and every disciple of his knows it. In times of great danger, great temptation, I wept in extreme agony with the prayer, “O God, do save me,” but no response came from anybody; but this wonderful saint, or Avatara, or anything else he may be, came to know of all my affliction through his powers of insight into human hearts and lifted it off—in spite of my desire to the contrary—after getting me brought to his presence. If the soul be deathless, and so, if he still lives, I pray to trim again and again: “O Bhagavan Ramakrishna, thou infinite ocean of mercy and my only refuge, do graciously fulfil the desires of my esteemed friend, who is every inch a great man.” May he impart to you all good, he whom alone I have found in this world to be like an ocean of unconditioned mercy! Shāntih, Shāntih, Shāntih.

Please send a prompt reply.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

1890.19 — SIR¹

Victory to God!

Ghazipur,
8th March, 1890.

DEAR SIR,

Your note duly reached met and so I too shall be off to Prayag. Please write to inform where you mean to put up while there.

PS—In case Abhedananda reaches your place in a day or two, I shall be much obliged if you will start him on his way to Calcutta.

Yours etc.,
Vivekananda.

¹ Translated from Bengali.

1890.20 — BALARAM BABU²

To Balaram Bose:

Ghazipur,
March 12, 1890.

BALARAM BABU,

As soon as you get the railway receipt, please send someone to the railway warehouse at Fairlie Place (Calcutta) to pick up the roses and send them on to Shashi. See that there is no delay in bringing or sending them.

Baburam is going to Allahabad soon. I am going elsewhere.

Vivekananda.

PS— Know it for certain that everything will be spoiled if delayed.

1890.21 — SHRI BALARAM BOSE³

Glory to Ramakrishna!

Ghazipur,
15th March, 1890.

REVERED SIR, (Shri Balaram Bose)

Received your kind note yesterday. I am very sorry to learn that Suresh Babu's illness is extremely serious. What is destined will surely happen. It is a matter of great regret that you too have fallen ill. So long as egoism lasts, any shortcoming in adopting remedial measures is to be considered as idleness—it is a fault and a guilt. For one who has not that egoistic idea, the best course is to forbear. The dwelling-place of the Jivâtman, this body, is a veritable means of work, and he who converts this into an infernal den is guilty, and he who neglects it is also to blame. Please act according to circumstances as they present themselves, without the least hesitation.

—“The highest duty consists in doing the little that lies in one's power, seeking neither death nor life, and biding one's time like a servant ready to do any behest.”

There is a dreadful outbreak of influenza at Varanasi and Pramada Babu has gone to Allahabad. Baburam has suddenly come here. He has got fever; he was wrong to start under such circumstances... I am leaving this place tomorrow... My countless salutations to Mother. You all bless me that I may have sameness of vision, that after avoiding the bondages which one is heir to by one's very birth, I may not again get stuck in self-imposed bondages. If there be any Doer of good and if He have the power and the opportunity, may He vouchsafe the highest blessings unto you all—this is my constant prayer.

Yours affectionately,
Vivekananda.

² Translated from Bengali.

³ Translated from Bengali.

1890.22—ATUL BABU¹

Ghazipur,
15th March, 1890.

DEAR ATUL BABU, (Atul Chandra Ghosh)

I am extremely sorry to hear that you are passing through mental afflictions. Please do only what is agreeable to you.

—“While there is birth there is death, and again entering the mother’s womb. This is the manifest evil of transmigration. How, O man, dost thou want satisfaction in such a world!”

Yours affectionately,
Vivekananda.

PS—I am leaving this place tomorrow. Let me see which way destiny leads!

1890.23—AKHANDANANDA²

Salutation to Bhagavan Ramakrishna!

Ghazipur,
March, 1890.

BELOVED AKHANDANANDA,

Very glad to receive your letter yesterday. I am at present staying with the wonderful Yogi and devotee of this place, called Pavhariji. He never comes out of his room and holds conversations with people from behind the door. Inside the room there is a pit in which he lives. It is rumoured that he remains in a state of Samadhi for months together. His fortitude is most wonderful. Our Bengal is the land of Bhakti and of Jnana, where Yoga is scarcely so much as talked of even. What little there is, is but the queer breathing exercises of the Hatha-Yoga—which is nothing but a kind of gymnastics. Therefore I am staying with this wonderful Raja-Yogi—and he has given me some hopes, too. There is a beautiful bungalow in a small garden belonging to a gentleman here; I mean to stay there. The garden is quite close to Babaji’s cottage. A brother of the Babaji stays there to look after the comforts of the Sadhus, and I shall have my Bhikshâ at his place. Hence, with a view to seeing to the end of this fun, I give up for the present my plan of going to the hills. For the last two months I have had an attack of lumbago in the waist, which also makes it impossible to climb the hills now. Therefore let me wait and see what Babaji will give me.

My motto is to learn whatever good things I may come across anywhere. This leads many friends to think that it will take away from my devotion to the Guru.

¹ Translated from Bengali.

² Translated from Bengali.



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