CHAPTER VIII
THE PLAN OF WORK

I am grateful to the lands of the West for the many warm hearts that received me with all the love that pure and disinterested souls alone could give; but my life's allegiance is to this my motherland, if I had a thousand lives, every moment of the whole series would be consecrated to your service, my countrymen, my friends!

For, to this land I owe whatever I possess, physical, mental and spiritual, and if I have been successful in anything, the glory is yours, not mine. Mine alone are my weaknesses and failures, as they come through my inability of profiting by the mighty lessons with which this land surrounds one, even from one's very birth.

I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy or holiness—the result has always been disastrous to the seceding one.

To my mind, the one great cause of the downfall and the degeneration of India was the building of a wall of custom—whose foundation was hatred of others—round the nation, and the real aim of which in ancient times was to prevent the Hinds from coming in contact with the surrounding Buddhistic nations.

A bit of public demonstration was necessary for Guru Maharaja's work. It is done and so far so good.

I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.
I believe in God and I believe in man. I believe in helping the miserable; I believe in going to hell to save others.

India has suffered long, the religion eternal has suffered long. But the Lord is merciful. Once more He has come to help His children, once more the opportunity is given to fallen India to rise. India can only rise by sitting at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. His life and his teachings are to be spread far and wide, are to be made to penetrate every pore of Hindu society.

My master used to say that these names, Hindu, Christian, etc. stand as great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man. We must try to break them down first. Well, we will have to work hard and must succeed.

That is why I desire so much to have a centre. Organisation has its faults, no doubt, but without that nothing can be done.

Sankaracharya had caught the rhythm of the Vedas, the national cadence. Indeed I always imagine that he had some vision such as mine when he was young, and recovered the ancient music that way.

But finally the Parliament of Religions opened and I met kind friends who helped me right along. I worked a little, collected funds, started two papers, and so on. After that I went over to England and worked there. At the same time, I carried on the work for India in America, too.

My plan for India, as it has been developed and centralised, is this; I have told you of our lives as monks there, (in India) how we go from door to door, so that
Vivekananda Temple

The Shri Ramakrishna Temple at the Belur Monastery
religion is brought to everybody without charge, except, perhaps, a broken piece of bread. That is why you see the lowest of the low in India holding the most exalted religious ideas...But ask a man, “Who are the English?” — he does not know. “Who governs you?” “We do not know.” “What is the Government?” They don’t know. But they know philosophy. It is a practical want of intellectual education about life on this earth they suffer from. These millions and millions of people are ready for life beyond this world—is not that enough for them? Certainly not. They must have a better piece of bread and a better of rag on their bodies. The great question is how to get that better bread and better rag for these sunken millions.

First I must tell you, there is great hope for them, because you see, they are the gentlest people on earth, not that they are timid. When they want to fight, they fight like demons. The best soldiers the English have, are recruited from the peasantry of India. Death is a thing of no importance to them. Their attitude is, “Twenty times I have died before, and I shall die many times after this; what of that”? They never turn back. They are not given to much emotion, but they make very good fighters.

Their instinct, however, is to plough. If you rob them, murder them, tax them, do anything to them, they will be quiet and gentle, so long as you leave them free to practise their religion. They never interfere with the religion of others. “Leave us liberty to worship our Gods, and take everything else.” That is their attitude. Touch them there, trouble starts. That was the real
cause of 1857 Mutiny—they would not bear religious repression. The great Mohammedan Governments were simply blown up because they touched India's religion.

Now there is no reason why they should suffer such distress—these! Oh, so pure and good!

No national civilisation is perfect, yet, give the civilisation a push, and it will arrive at its own goal; don't strive to change it. Take away a nation's institutions, customs and manners, and what will be left? They hold the nation together.

But, here comes the very learned foreign man, and he says, "Look here, you give up all those institutions and customs of thousands of years, and take my tomfool tin pot and be happy." This is all nonsense.

We will have to help each other.

And that strikes to the heart. The people come to know it.

Well, then, my plans are, therefore, to reach these masses of India.

Now, you see, we have brought the plan down nicely on paper; but I have taken it, at the same time, from the regions of idealism. So far the plan was loose and idealistic. As years went on, it became more and more condensed; I began to see by actual working its defects and all that.

What did I discover in its working on the material plane? First, there must be centres, to educate these monks in the method of education... In India, you will find every man quite illiterate, and that teaching requires
tremendous centres. And what does all that mean? Money. From the idealistic plane you come to everyday work. Well? I have worked hard for years in America, and two in England...There are American friends and English friends who came over with me to India, and there has been a very crude beginning. Some English people came and joined the Orders. One poor man worked hard and died in India......I have started the Awakened India (Prabuddha Bharat-monthly)......I have a centre in the Himalayas......I have another centre in Calcutta.

The same work I want to do on parallel lines, for women.

That part has to be accomplished.

My idea is to bring to the door of the meanest, the poorest, the noble ideas that the human race has developed both in and out of India, and let them think for themselves. Whether there should be caste or not, whether women should be perfectly free or not, does not concern me.

“Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being.”

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble idea to the door of everybody and then let men and women settle their own fate.

Look at that handful of young men called into existence by the divine touch of Ramakrishna’s feet. They have preached the message from Assam to Sindh, from the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin. They have crossed
the Himalayas at a height of twenty-thousand feet over snow and ice on foot, and penetrated into the mysteries of Tibet. They have begged their bread, covered themselves with rags; they have been persecuted, followed by the police, kept in prison, and at last set free when the government was convinced of their innocence.

A movement which half a dozen penniless boys set on foot and which bids fair to progress in such an accelerated motion—is it a humbug or the Lord's will?

I have been criticised from one end of the world to the other as one who preaches the diabolical idea that there is no sin! Very good. The descendents of these very men will bless me as the preacher of virtue, and not of sin. I am the teacher of virtue, not of sin. I glory in being the preacher of light, and not of darkness.

Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got.

I don't feel tired even if I talk for two whole nights to earnest enquirers; I can give up food and sleep and talk and talk. Well, if I have a mind, I can sit up in Samadhi in Himalayan cave. Why then don't I do so? And why am I here? Only the sight of the country's misery and the thought of its future do not let me remain quiet any more even Samadhi and all that appear as futile even the sphere of Braham with its enjoyments becomes insipid! My vow of life is to think of others'
welfare. The day that vow will be fulfilled, I shall leave this body and make a straight run up!

Going round the whole world, I find that people of this country (India) are immersed in great Tamas (inactivity), compared with people of other countries. On the outside, there is a simulation of the Sattwa (calm and balanced) state, but inside, down—right inertness like that of stocks and stones. What work will be done in the world by such people?...So my idea is first to make the people active by developing their Rajas, and thus make them fit for struggle for existence. With no strength in the body, no enthusiasm at heart, and no originality in the brain, what will they do, these lumps of dead matter!

By stimulating them, I want to bring life into them; to this, I have dedicated my life. I will rouse them through the infallible power of Vedic mantras. I am born to proclaim to them that fearless message "Arise, Awake!"

Social life in the west is like a peal of laughter, but underneath it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface; really, it is full of tragic intensity. Now here (in India) it is sad and gloomy on the outside, but underneath are carelessness and merriment.

I have never spoken of revenge: I have always spoken of strength.

Now my own desire is to rouse the country—the sleeping Leviathan, that has lost faith in its power and makes no response. If I can wake it up to a sense of the
Enternal Religion, then I shall know that Sri Rama-
krishna’s advent and our birth are fruitful. That is the
one desire in my heart; Mukti and all else appear of no
consequence to me.

My hope is to see again the strong points of India,
reinforced by the strong points of this age; only in a
natural way. The new state of things must be a growth
from within.

So, I preach the Upanishads. If you look, you will
find that I have never quoted anything but the Upani-
shads. And of Upanishads it is only that one idea,
strength. The quintessence of the Vedas and Vedanta,
all lies in that one word. Budha’s teaching was non-
resistance, or non-injury. But I think this is a better
way of teaching the same thing......My own ideal is that
saint whom they killed in the Mutiny and who broke his
silence, when stabbed to the heart, to say, “And thou
also art He.”

But you may ask what is the place of Ramakrishna
in this scheme?

His is the method, that wonderful unconscious
method! He did not understand himself. He knew
nothing of England or the English, save that they were
queer folk from over the sea. But he lived that great
life and I read the meaning. Never a word of condem-
nation for any! Once I had been attacking one of our
sects of Diabolism. I had been raving on for three hours,
and he had listened quietly. “Well, well!” said the old
man as I finished, “Perhaps, every house may have a back
doors, who knows?”
It is not for me to determine in what sense is Sri Ramakrishna a part of this awakened Hinduism. I have never preached personalities. My own life is guided by the enthusiasm of this great soul.

Vedanta is the one light that lightens the sects and creeds of the world, the one principle of which all religions are only applications. And what was Ramakrishna Paramahamsa? The practical demonstration of this ancient principle, the embodiment of India that is past, and a foreshadowing of the India that is to be, the bearer of spiritual light unto nations.

The other day when I installed Sri Ramakrishna on the Math grounds, I felt as if his ideas shot forth from this place and flooded the whole universe, sentient and insentient. I, for one, am doing my best, and shall continue to do so... Sankara left the Advaita philosophy in the hills and forests, while I have come to bring it out of those places and scatter it broadcast before the work-a-day world and society.

This Math that we are building will harmonise all creeds, all standpoints. Just as Sri Ramakrishna held highly liberal views, this Math too will be a centre for propagating similar ideas. The blazing light of universal harmony that will emanate from here will flood the whole world.

Through the will of Sri Ramakrishna, his Dharmanikshetra sanctified spot has been established today. A twelve years’ anxiety is off my head.

You see only a little manifestation of what has been done by our labours. In time the whole world must
accept the universal and catholic ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and of this, only the beginning has been made. Before this flood, everybody will be swept off.

That activity and self-reliance must come in the people of the country in time I see it clearly. Ever since the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, the eastern horizon has been aglow with the dawning rays of the sun which in course of time, will illumine the country with the splendour of the midday sun.

It is my opinion that Sri Ramakrishna was born to vivify all branches of art and culture in this country (India).

If but a thorn pricks the foot of one who has surrendered himself to Sri Ramakrishna, it makes my bones ache; all others I love. You will find very few men so unsectarian as I am, but you must excuse me, I have got that bit of bigotry. If I do not appeal to his name, whose else shall I? In this birth, it is that unlettered Brahmin who has bought this body of mine for ever.

This boy born of poor Brahmin parents, is literally worshipped in lands which have been fulminating against heathen worship for centuries. Whose powers is it? It is none else than the power which was manifested here as Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Here has been a manifestation of an immense power, just the very beginning of whose workings we are seeing; and before this generation passes away, you will see more wonderful workings of that power. It has come just in time for the regeneration of India.
It seemed that we were going to change the theme in our national life, that we were going to exchange the backbone of our existence, as it were, that we were trying to replace a spiritual by a political backbone. If it all could have succeeded, the result would have been annihilation. But it was not to be. So, this power became manifest. I do not care in what light you understand this great sage, it matters not how much respect you pay to him, but I challenge you with the fact that here is a manifestation of the most marvellous power that has been for several centuries in India. Long before ideas of universal religion and brotherly feeling between different sects were mooted and discussed in any country in the world, here in the sight of the city of Calcutta had been living a man whose life was a Parliament of Religions, as it should be.

Such a hero has been given to us in the person of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. If this nation wants to rise, take my word for it, it will have to rally enthusiastically round his name.

It does not matter who preaches Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, whether I or you or anybody else. But, him I place before you for the good of our race, for the good of our nation. One thing is sure that it was the purest of all lives that you have ever seen, or, let me tell you distinctly, that you have ever heard of. Within ten years of his passing away, this power has encircled the globe. Judge him not through me. I am only a weak instrument. Let not his character be judged by seeing me. It was so great that if I, or any other of his disciples
spent hundreds of lives we could not do justice to a millionth part of what he really was.

I, through the grace of God, had the great good fortune of sitting at the feet of one, whose whole life was an interpretation of the underlying harmony of the Upanishadic texts; whose life, a thousandfold more than whose teaching, was a living commentary on the texts of the Upanishads, was, in fact, the spirit of Upanishads lying in a human form. Perhaps, I have got a little of that harmony.

Jnanam is all right but there is the danger of its becoming dry intellectualism. Love is great and noble, but it may die away in meaningless sentimentalism. A harmony of all these is the thing required. Ramakrishna was such a harmony. Such beings are few and far between; but keeping him and his teachings as the ideal, we can move on.

God, though everywhere, can be known to us in and through human character. No character was ever so perfect as Ramakrishna, and that would be the centre round which we ought to rally; at the same time, allowing everybody to regard him in his own light, either as God, Saviour, teacher, model, or great man, just as he pleases.

My hopes of the future lies in the youths of character — intelligent, renouncing all for the service of others, and obedient — who can sacrifice their lives in working my ideas and thereby do good to themselves and the country at large... If I can get ten or twelve boys with
the faith of Nachiketa, I can turn the thoughts and pursuits of this country in a new channel.

I once met a man in my country whom I had known before as a very stupid, dull person, who knew nothing and had not the desire to know anything, and was living the life of a brute. He asked what he should do to know God, how he was to get free. "Can you tell a lie?", "It is better to tell a lie than to be a brute, or a log of wood. You are inactive; you have not certainly reached the highest state, which is beyond all actions, calm and serene; you are too dull even to do something wicked." That was an extreme case of course, and I was joking with him; but what I meant was that a man must be active, in order to pass through activity to perfect calmness.

Sometimes, I feel a desire to sell the Math and everything and distribute the money to the poor and destitute... When I was in the western countries, I prayed to the Divine Mother, "People here are sleeping on a bed of flowers, they eat all kinds of delicacies, and what do they not enjoy? while people in our country are dying of starvation. Mother, will there be no way for them?" One of the objects of my going to the West to preach religion was to see if I could find any means for feeding the people of this country...I see as clear as daylight that there is one Brahman in all, in them and in me,—one Shakti dwells in all. The only difference is of manifestation... After so much austerity, I have understood this as the real truth—God is present in every Jiva; there is no other God besides that; "Who serves Jiva, serves God indeed."
This body is born and it will die. If I have been able to instill a few of my ideas into you all, then I shall know that my birth has not been in vain.

I was born for the life of a scholar—retired—quiet—poring over my books. But the mother dispenses otherwise, yet the tendency is there.

Today, the Americans, out of love, have given me this nice bed and I have something to eat also. But, I have not been destined to enjoy physically, and lying on the matteresses only aggravates my illness, I feel suffocated as it were. I have to come down and lie on the floor for relief.

I do not see into the future; nor do I care to see. But, one vision I see clear as life before me: that the ancient Mother (India) has awakened once more, sitting on her throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than ever.

My teaching is my own interpretation of our ancient books, in the light which my Master shed upon them. I claim no supernatural authority.

1899—A very funny thing happened today. I went to a friend’s house. He has had a picture painted, the subject of which is Sri Krishna addressing Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Sri Krishna is standing in the chariot, holding the reins in His hand, and preaching the Gita to Arjuna. He showed me the picture and asked me how I like it. “Fairly well,” I said. But as he insisted on having my criticism on it, I had to give my honest opinion by saying, “There is nothing in it to commend itself to me; first, because the chariot of the time of Sri Krishna was
not like the modern Pagoda-shaped car, and also there is no expression in the figure of Sri Krishna. The kings never used to fight in pagoda-chariots. There are chariots even today in Rajputana that greatly resemble the chariots of old.

"See the chariots in the pictures of Grecian mythology. They have two wheels, and one mounts them from behind; we had that sort of chariot. What good is it to paint a picture if the details are wrong? An historical picture comes up to a standard of excellence when, after making proper study and research, things are portrayed exactly as they were at that period. The truth must be represented, otherwise the picture is nothing. To paint a really good picture requires as much talent as to produce a perfect drama."

"Sri Krishna ought to be painted as He really was, the Gita personified; and the central idea of the Gita should radiate from His whole form as He was teaching the path of Dharma to Arjuna, who had been overcome by infatuation and cowardice." So, saying, I posed myself in the way in which Sri Krishna should be portrayed and continued, "Look here, thus does he hold the bridle of the horses, with their forelegs fighting the air and their mouths gaping. This will show a tremendous play of action in the figure of Sri Krishna. His friend, the world-renowned hero, casting aside his bow and arrows, has sunk down like a coward on the chariot, in the midst of the two armies. And Sri Krishna, whip in one hand and tightening the reins with the other, has turned Himself to Arjuna, with his childlike face beaming with
unwordly love and sympathy, and a calm and serene look, and is delivering the message of the Gita to his beloved comrade."

"Aye, that is it; Intense action in the whole body, and withal a face expressing the profound calmness and serenity of the blue sky. This is the central idea of the Gita - to be calm and steadfast in all circumstances, with one's body, mind and soul centred at His hallowed Feet!"

Everyone says that the highest, the pure truth, cannot be realised all at once by all, that men have to be led to it gradually through worship, prayer and other kinds of prevalent religious practices.

He who has faith has everything, and he who lacks faith lacks everything. It is faith in the name of Lord that works wonders, for faith is life and doubt is death.

- Sri RAMAKRISHNA.

I have experienced in my insignificant life, that good motives, sincerity and infinite love conquer the world.

- SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.
CHAPTER IX
SECOND VISIT TO AMERICA
AND THE PARIS CONGRESS

June, 1899 - It took us two days to get out of the Hooghly.

Our ship reached the sea.

There fell upon my ears the deep and sonorous music of commingled male and female voices, singing in chorus the British national anthem, "Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves!" Startled, I looked around and found that the ship was rolling heavily, and brother T - holding his head with his hands, was struggling against an attack of sea-sickness.

In the second class two Bengali youths were going to the West for study. Their condition was worse. One of them looked so frightened that he would have been only too glad to scuttle straight home if he were allowed to land. These two lads and we two were the only Indians on the ship - the representatives of modern India!

In the night of the 24th June, our ship reached Madras. Getting up from bed in the morning, I found that we were within the enclosed space of the Madras harbour. Within the harbour the water was still, but without, towering waves were roaring, which occasionally dashing the harbour-wall, were shooting up fifteen or twenty feet high into the air and breaking in a mass of foam. In front lay the well-known Strand Road of Madras. Two European
police inspectors, a Madrasi Jamadar and a dozen constables boarded our ship and told me with great courtesy that "natives" were not allowed to land on the shore, but the Europeans were...; but the Madrasis had asked for a special permission for me. By degrees the Madrasi friends began to come near our vessel on boats in small groups. As all contact was strictly forbidden, we could only speak from the ship, keeping some space between. I found all my friends - Alasinga, Biligiri, Narasimhachary, Dr. Nanjunda Row, Kidi, and others on the boats. Basketfuls of mangoes, plantains, cocoanuts, cooked rice-and-curd, and heaps of sweet and salt delicacies, etc. began to come in. Gradually the crowd thickened - men, women and children, and boats everywhere. I found also Mr. Chamier, my English friend who had come out to Madras as a barrister-at-law. Ramakrishnananda and Nirbhayananda made some trips near to the ship. They insisted on staying on the boat the whole day in the hot sun, and I had to remonstrate with them, when they gave up the idea.

As the news of my not being permitted to land got abroad, the crowd of boats began to increase still more. I, too, began to feel exhaustion from leaning against the railings too long. Then I bade farewell to my Madrasi friends and entered my cabin. Alasinga got no opportunity to consult with me about the Brahmanad and the Madras work; so he was going to accompany me to Colombo. The ship left the harbour in the evening, when I heard a great shout, and peeping through the cabin window, I found that about a thousand Madrasi men, women and children who had been sitting on the harbour walls, gave this farewell shout when the ship started.
It took us four days to go from Madras to Ceylon. That rising and heaving of waves which had commenced from the mouth of the Ganges began to increase as we advanced, and after we had left Madras, it increased still more. The ship began to roll heavily, and the passengers were terribly sea-sick, and so were the two Bengali boys. One of them was certain he was going to die, and we had to console him with great difficulty, assuring him that there was nothing to be afraid of, as it was quite a common experience and nobody ever died of it. The second class, again, was right over the screw of the ship. The two Bengali lads, being "natives," were put into a cabin almost like a blackhole, where neither air nor light had any access. So the boys could not remain in the room and on the deck the rolling was terrible. Again, when the prow of the ship settled into the hollow of a wave and the stern was pitched up, the screw rose clear out of the water and continued to wheel in the air, giving tremendous jolting to the whole vessel. And the second class then shook as when a rat is seized by a cat and shaken!

This was monsoon season. The more the ship proceeded, the more gale and wind she had to encounter. The Madrasis had given plenty of fruits, the greater part of which and the sweets and rice-and-curd, etc. I gave to the boys. Alasinga had hurriedly bought a ticket and boarded the ship barefooted...Editor of the Brahmadadin, Alasinga, a Mysore Brahmin of the Ramanuja sect, had brought with him with great care, as his provision for the voyage, two small bundles, in one of which there was fried flattened rice and in another popped rice and fried
peas! His idea was to live upon these during the voyage to Ceylon, so that his caste might remain intact. However, one rarely finds men like our Alasinga in this world—one so unselfish, so hard-working, and devoted to his Guru, and such an obedient disciple is indeed very rare on earth. A Madrasi by birth, with his head shaven so as to leave a tuft in the centre, barefooted, and wearing the dhoti, he got into the first class. When hungry, he chewed some of the popped rice and peas!

Alasinga did not feel sea sick. Brother T. felt a little trouble at the beginning but was then all right. So the four days passed in various pleasant talks and gossip.

Once I was preaching at Anuradhapuram (Ceylon) among the Hindus—not Buddhists—and that in an open maidan, not on anybody’s property, when a whole host of Buddhist monks and laymen, men and women, came out beating drums and cymbals and set up an awful uproar. The lecture had to stop, of course, and there was the imminent risk of bloodshed. With great difficulty I had to persuade the Hindus that we at any rate might practise a bit of non-injury (Ahimsa) if they did not. Then the matter ended peacefully.

Our Colombo friends had procured a permit for our landing. So we landed and met our friends. Sir Coomara Swami is the foremost man among the Hindus. Mr. Arunachalam and other friends came to meet me. After a long time, I partook of millagutawny, and the king cocoanut. They put some green cocoanuts into my cabin. I also visited the monastery and school of our old acquaintance, the Countess of Canovara.
Alasinga returned to Madras from Colombo, and we also got on board our ship, with presents of some lemons from the orchard of Kumaraswamy, some cocoanuts, two bottles of syrup, etc.

The ship left Colombo in the morning of 25th June (1899). Owing to the rolling of the ship, most of the passengers were suffering from headache. A little girl named Tootle was accompanying her father. She had lost her mother. Our Nivedita became mother to Tootle. Tootle was brought up in Mysore with her father who is a planter. I asked her, "Tootle, how are you?" She replied, "This bungalow is not good and rolls very much, which makes me sick." To her every house was a bungalow!

After six days' journey had been prolonged into fourteen days, and our buffeting by terrible wind and rain night and day, we at last did reach Aden. Near the Island of Socotra, the monsoon was its worst. The captain remarked that that was the centre of the monsoon, and that if we could pass that, we should gradually reach calmer waters. And so we did. And the nightmare also ended.

In the evening of the 8th July, we reached Aden. I had visited the town last time. Aden is a very ancient place... Our ship is now passing through the Red Sea.

The very name of the Red Sea strikes terror—it is so dreadfully hot, specially in summer. But fortunately we did not experience so much heat. The breeze instead of being a southwind, continued to blow from the north, and it was the cool breeze of the Mediterranean.
On the 14th of July, the steamer cleared the Red Sea and reached Suez. The Suez Canal is now the link between Europe and Asia.

This is a very beautiful natural harbour, surrounded almost on three sides by sandy mounds and hillocks, the water also is very deep. There are innumerable fish and sharks in it.

As soon as we heard of the sharks moving about behind the ship - I had never an opportunity to see live sharks - we hastened to the spot. But our friends, the sharks, had moved off a little. We were watching - half an hour, three quarters, we were almost tired of it when somebody announced - there he was. Casting my eyes, I found that at some distance, a huge black thing was moving towards us, six or seven inches below the surface of the water. The huge flat head was visible. A gigantic fish.

One of the second class passengers, a military man, found out a terrible hook. To this, they tightly fastened two pounds of meat with a strong cord, and a stout cable tied to it. About six feet from it, a big piece of wood was attached to act as a float. Then the hook with the float was dropped in the water. We in eagerness stood on tiptoe, leaning over the railing and anxiously waited for the shark. Suddenly, about a hundred yards from the ship, something of the shape of a water carrier's leather bag, but much larger, appeared above the surface of the water. The shark rushed close by and put the bait into his jaws and tilted on his side - pull, pull, forty or fifty pulled together. What tremendous strength the
fish has, what struggles he made! He turned and turned in the water. Alas, he extricated himself from the bait! The shark fled, getting rid of the hook. And he was tiger-like, having black stripes over his body like a tiger.

There, another huge flat-headed creature! Moving near the hook and examining the bait, he put it in his jaws. He turned on his side and swallowed it whole leisurely. When about to depart, immediately there was the pull from behind! "Flat-head" astonished, jerked his head and wanted to throw the bait off, but it made matters worse! The hook pierced him, and from above, men young and old began to pull violently at the cable. There, about half the shark's body was above water. Oh, what jaws! The whole of it was clear of water. Now he was set on the deck. What a big shark! And with what a thud he fell on board the ship! The military man with body and clothes splashed with blood raised the beam and began to land heavy blows on the shark's head. I had my meal almost spoilt that day - everything smelt of that shark.

The Suez Canal is a triumph of Canal engineering; it is also a thing of remote antiquity. By connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, it has greatly facilitated commerce between Europe and India. Now comes the Mediterranean. It marks the end of Asia, Africa and of ancient civilisation. We now enter Europe. The borders of this Mediterranean were the birth place of that European Civilisation which has now conquered the world.

The ship touched Naples, we reached Italy. The capital of Italy is Rome - Rome, the capital of that ancient
and most powerful Roman Empire. After leaving Naples, the ship called at Marseilles, and thence straight at London.

ENGLAND

Wimbledon: 3-8-99 – We are in at last. Turiyana-nanda and I have beautiful lodgings here... I have recovered quite a bit by the voyage... It is nice and warm here; rather too much, they say. I have become for the present a Sunyavadi, a believer in nothingness or void! No plans, no after-thought, no attempt, for anything; Laissez faire to the fullest!!!

What is this osteopathy? Will they cut off a rib or two to cure me? Not I, no manufacturing from my ribs, sure! Whatever it be, it will be hard work for him to find my bones. My bones are destined to make corals in the Ganges.

I am going to study French... but no grammar business.
I expect to be in New York in a few weeks, and don’t know what next.

No one ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English; but the more I lived among them and saw how the machine was working - the English national life, - and mixed with them, I found where the heartbeat of the nation was, and the more I loved them.

AMERICA

The Americans’ kindness to me is past all narration; it would take me years yet to tell how I have been treated by them, most kindly and most wonderfully.
**Ridgely Manor (N.Y.) 14-9-99** – I have simply been taking rest at the Leggett's and doing nothing. Abhedananda is here. He has been working hard.

**N.Y.: 22-12-99** – I had a slight relapse of late, for which the healer has rubbed several inches of my skin off. Just now I am feeling it, the smart.

I had a very hopeful note from Margo (Margaret E. Noble)... I am grinding on in Pasadena! hope some result will come out of my work here. Some people here are very enthusiastic; The Raja-Yoga book did indeed great service on this coast. I am mentally very well, indeed; I never really was so well as of late. The lectures for one thing do not disturb my sleep, that is some gain. I am doing some writing, too. The lectures here were taken down by a stenographer, the people here want to print them.

Slowly as usual plans are working, but Mother knows as I say. May She give me release and find other workers for her plans! I have made a discovery as to the mental method of really practising what the Gita teaches, of working without an eye to results. I have seen much light on concentration and attention, and control of concentration which if practised will take us out of all anxiety and worry. It is really the science of bottling up our minds whenever we like. Mrs. Legget is doing well; so is Joe; I, they say, I too, am. Maybe they are right. I work anyway and want to die in harness; if that be what Mother wants, I am quite content.

**Los Angeles: Dec. 6, 99** – If I did not break my heart over my people I was born amongst, I would do it
for somebody else. I am sure of that. This is the way of some, I am coming to see it. We are all after happiness, true; but that some are only happy in being unhappy - queer, is it not?

There is no harm in it either, except that happiness and unhappiness are both infectious. Ingersol said once that if he were God, he would make health catching, instead of disease, little dreaming that health is quite as catching as disease, if not more!

12-12-99 - My mistakes have been great, but everyone of them was from too much love. Would I never had any Bhakti!

I went years ago to the Himalayas, never to come back; but my sister committed suicide, the news reached me there, and that weak heart flung me off from that prospect of peace! It is the weak heart that has driven me out of India to seek some help for those I love, and here I am! Peace have I sought, but the heart, that seat of Bhakti, would not allow me to find it. Struggle and torture; torture and struggle!

Yet let the world come, the hell come, the God come, let Mother come, I fight and do not give in. Ravana got his release in three births by fighting the Lord himself! It is glorious to fight Mother.

Los Angeles: 23-12-99 - I am all right. The wheel is turning up. Mother is working it up. She cannot let me go before Her work is done.

Los Angeles: 27-12-99 - I am much better in health - able enough to work once more. I have started
work already, and have sent to Saradananda (Belur Math) Rs. 1,300/- already........I shall send more, if they need it..............Poor boys! How hard I am on them at times!

Well, they know in spite of all that I am their best friend.

I am at my best when I am alone. Mother seems to arrange so. Joe (Miss Josephine Macleod) believes great things are brewing in Mother's cup; hope it is so.....I can only say, every blow I had in this life, every pang, will only become joyful sacrifice if Mother becomes propitious to India once more.

The Raja-Yoga book seems to be very well-known here......

Joe has unearthed a magnetic healing woman. We both are under her treatment. Joe thinks she is pulling me up splendidly. On her has been worked a miracle, she claims. Whether it is magnetic healing, California ozone, or the end of the present spell of bad karma, I am improving. It is a great thing to be able to walk three miles, even after a heavy dinner.

It is exactly like Northern Indian winter here, only some days a little warmer. The roses are here and the beautiful palms. Barley is in the fields, roses and many other flowers round about the cottage where I live. Mrs. Blodgett, my host, is a Chicago lady. Fat, old and extremely witty. She heard me in Chicago and is very motherly......I shall be very happy if I can make a lot of money. I am making some.
Los Angeles: 17-1-1900 - I have been able to remit Rs. 2,000/- to Saradananda with the help of Miss MacLeod and Mrs. Leggett. Of course, they contributed the best part. The rest was got by lectures......

I am decidedly better in health. The healer thinks I am not at liberty to go anywhere I choose; the process will go on and I shall completely recover in a few months...... I am here principally for health......

Now it occurs to me that my mission from the platform is finished.

Los Angeles: 15-2-1900 - Going to San Francisco next week.

Pasadena: 20-2-1900 - I have lost many relatives, suffered much, and the most curious cause of suffering when somebody goes off is the feeling that I was not good enough to that person. When my father died, it was a pang for months, and I had been so disobedient.....I was in the glare, burning and panting all the time......My life is made up of continuous blows, because of poverty, treachery and my own foolishness!

California: 21-2-1900 - Wordy warfares, texts and scriptures, doctrines and dogmas - all these I am coming to loathe as poison, in this my advanced age.

San Francisco: 2-3-1900 - I am busy making money only I do not make much......I have to make enough to pay my passage home at any rate. Here is a new field, where I find ready listeners by hundreds prepared beforehand by my books.
San Francisco: 4-3-1900 - My health is about the same; don't find much difference; it is improving perhaps but very imperceptibly. I can use my voice, however, to make 3,000 people hear me as I did twice in Oakland, and get good sleep too after two hours of speaking.

San Francisco: 7-3-1900 - I am so so in health. No money. Hard work. No result. Worse than Los Angeles. They come in crowds when the lecture is free—when there is payment, they don't.

Almeda Calif: 20-4-1900 - A kind lady has given me a pass up to New York to be used within three months. The Mother will take care of me. She is not going to strand me now after guarding me all my life.

Almeda Calif: 30-4-1900 - Sudden indisposition and fever prevent my starting for Chicago yet. I will start as I am strong for the journey......

Almeda Calif: 2-5-1900 - I have been very ill, one more relapse brought about by months of hard work.

New York: 11-5-1900 - I have been much censured by everyone for cutting off my long hair.......I had been to Detroit and came back yesterday. Trying as soon as possible to go to France, then to India......

Los Angeles: 17-6-1900 - Kali worship is not a necessary step in any religion. The Upanishads teach us all that there is of religion. Kali worship is my special fad. I only preach what is good for universal humanity. If there is any curious method which applies entirely to me, I keep it a secret and there it ends. I never taught Kali worship to any body......
Religion is that which does not depend upon books or teachers or prophets or Saviours, and that which does not make us dependent in this or in any other lives upon others. In this sense, Advaitism of the Upanishads is the only religion. But, Saviours, books, prophets, ceremonials, etc. have their places. They may help many, as Kali worship helps me in my secular work. They are welcome.

I have worked for this world all my life, and it does not give me a piece of bread without taking a pound of flesh.

New York: 18-7-1900 - I stayed in Detroit for three days only. It is frightfully hot here in New York. Kali (Abhedananda) went away about a week ago to the mountains. He cannot come back till September. I am all alone, and washing; I like it.

New York: 24-7-1900 - I am to start on Thursday next, by the French steamer La Champagne.

New York: 25-7-1900 - I am starting for Paris tomorrow.

PARIS

Paris: 25-8-1900 - Now I am free, as I have kept no power or authority or position for me in the work. I also have resigned the Presidentship of the Ramakrishna Mission.

I am so glad a whole load is off me, now I am happy.

Paris: 28-8-1900 - I am trying to learn French. Some are very appreciative already.
I have not had much time to think of the body. So it must be well.

We have an adage among us that one that has a disc-like pattern on the soles of his feet becomes a vagabond. I fear I have my soles inscribed all over with them!.....It was my cherished desire to remain in Paris for some time and study the French language and civilisation. I left my old friends and acquaintances and put up with a new friend, a Frenchman of ordinary means, who knew no English, and my French, well, it was something quite extraordinary!

I had this in mind that the inability to live like a dumb man would naturally force me to talk French, and I would attain fluency in that language in no time. But on the contrary, I took to a tour through Vienna, Turkey, Greece, Egypt and Jerusalem!

I had three travelling companions - two of them French and the third, an American. The French male companion was Monsieur Jules Bois, a famous Philosopher, and literatuer of France; and the French lady friend was the world-renowned singer Madamoiselle Calve. I had previously been acquainted with her.

Madame Sarah Bernhardt, the foremost actress in the West, has a special regard for India. She told me again and again that our country is "very ancient and very civilised." One year she performed a drama touching on India, in which she set up a whole Indian street scene on the stage - men, women and children, Sadhus and Nagas and everything - an exact picture of India! After the performance she told me that for about a month she had
visited every museum and made herself acquainted with the men and women, and their dress, the streets and bathing ghats and everything relating to India. Madame Bernhardt has a desire to visit India.

Mademoiselle Calve will not sing this winter, and is going to temperate climates like Egypt, etc. I am going as her guest. Calve has not devoted herself to music alone; she is sufficiently learned, and has a great love for philosophical and religious literature.

She was born amidst very poor circumstances. There is no better teacher than pain and poverty! That extreme penury and pain and hardship of childhood, a constant struggle against which has won for Calve her victory, have engendered a remarkable sympathy, and a profound seriousness in her life.

Western music is very good; there is in it a perfection of harmony, which we (Indians) have not attained. Only, to our untrained ears it does not sound well, hence, we do not like it and we think that the singers howl like jackals. I also had the same sort of impression, but when I began to listen to the music with attention and study it minutely, I came more and more to understand it, and I was lost in admiration.

What is meant by bath in the West? Why, the washing of face, head and hands, i.e. only those parts which are exposed. A millionaire friend of mine once invited me to come over to Paris - Paris, which is the capital of modern civilisation - Paris, the heaven of luxury, fashion and merriment on earth - the centre of arts and sciences. My friend accommodated me in a huge palatial hotel,
where arrangements for meals were in a right royal style, but for bath-well, no name of it. Two days I suffered silently - till at last I could bear it no longer, and had to address my friend thus: "Dear brother, let this royal luxury be with you and yours! I am panting to get out of this situation, such hot weather, and no facility of bathing; if it continues like this, I shall be in imminent danger of turning mad like a rabid dog." Hearing this, my friend became very sorry for me and annoyed with the hotel authorities, and said, "I won't let you stay here any more, let us go and find out a better place."

Twelve of the chief hotels were seen, but no place for bathing was there in any of them! There are independent bathing-houses, where one can go and have a bath for four or five rupees. Good heavens! That afternoon I read in a paper that an old lady entered into the bath-tub and died then and there! Whatever the doctors may say, I am inclined to think that perhaps, that was the first occasion in her life to come into contact with so much water, and the frame collapsed by the sudden shock!! This is no exaggeration.

No nation in the world is as cleanly in the body as the Hindu who uses water very freely.

France - a picturesque country, neither very cold nor very warm, very fertile; weather neither excessively wet nor extremely dry. Sky clear, sun sweet, elms and oaks in abundance, grasslands charming, hills and rivers small, springs delightful. Excepting some parts of China, no other country in the world have I seen that is so beautiful as France......The rich and the poor, the young and the
old, the fields, the gardens, the walks, so artistically neat and clean - the whole country looks like a picture. Such love of nature and art have I seen nowhere except in Japan.

We had two other companions on the journey as far as Constantinople - Pera Hyacinthe alias Mons. Loyson and his wife.

One special benefit I got from the company of those ladies and gentlemen was that except the one American lady, no one knew English and consequently somehow or other I had to talk as well as hear French.

From Paris our friend Maxim had supplied me with letters of introduction to various places, so that the countries might be properly seen. Maxim is the inventor of the famous Maxim gun - the gun that sends off a continuous round of balls, and is loaded and discharged automatically, without intermission. An admirer of India and China, Maxim is a good writer on religion, philosophy, etc. Having read my works long since, he holds me in great - I should say, excessive admiration.

The tour programme was as follows: from Paris to Vienna and thence to Constantinople, by rail; then by steamer to Athens and Greece, then across the Mediterranean to Egypt, then Asia Minor, Jerusalem, and so on.

Paris, in the year 1900 was the centre of the civilised world, for it was the year of the Paris Exhibition and there was an assemblage of eminent men and women from all quarters of the globe. The master minds of all countries had met in Paris to spread the glory of their respective countries by means of their genius. From among that
white galaxy of geniuses, there stepped forth one distinguished youthful hero to proclaim the name of our Motherland - it was the world-renowned scientist Dr. J. C. Bose. Alone, the youthful Bengali physicist, with his galvanic quickness charmed the Western audience with his splendid genius. Well done, hero!

I took a round over the Paris Exhibition - that accumulated mass of dazzling ideas, like lightning held steady as it were, that unique assemblage of celestial panorama on earth!

In this Paris Exhibition, the Congress of the History of Religions sat for several days together. At the Congress, there was no room for the discussions on the doctrines and spiritual views of any religion; its purpose was only to enquire into the historic evolution of the different forms of established faiths, and along with it other accompanying facts that are incidental to it. Accordingly, the representation of the various missionary sects of different religions and their beliefs was entirely left out of account in this Congress. The Chicago Parliament of Religions was a grand affair and the representatives of many religious sects from all parts of the world were present in it. This Congress, on the other hand, was attended only by such scholars as devoted themselves to the study of the origin and history of different religions. At the Chicago Parliament the influence of the Roman Catholics expected to establish their superiority over the Protestants without much opposition, by proclaiming their glory and strength and laying the bright side of their faith before the assembled Christians, Hindus, **Bauddhas**, Mussalmans and other representatives of the world religions and publicly expos-
ing their weakness, they hoped to make firm their own position. But the result proving otherwise, the Christian world has been deplorably hopeless of the reconciliation of the different religious systems: so the Roman catholics are now particularly opposed to the repetition of any such gathering. France is a Roman catholic country; hence, in spite of the earnest wish of the authorities, no religious congress was convened on account of the vehement opposition on the part of the Roman Catholic world.

The Congress of the History of Religions at Paris was like the Congress of Orientalists.

From Asia only three Japanese Pandits were present at the Congress. From India, there was the present writer.

The conviction of many of the Sanskrit scholars of the West is that the Vedic religion is the outcome of the worship of the fire, the sun and other awe-inspiring objects of natural phenomena.

I was invited by the Paris Congress to contradict this conviction, and I promised to read a paper on the subject. But I could not keep my promise on account of ill health and with difficulty was only able to be personally present at the Congress where I was most warmly received by all the western Sanskrit scholars whose admiration for this scribe was all the greater, as they had already gone through many of my lectures on the Vedanta.

At the Congress, Mr. Gustav Oppert, a German Pandit, read a paper on the origin of Salagrama-Sila.

He traced the origin of the Salagrama worship to the emblem of the female generative principle. According
to him, the Siva Lingam is the phallic emblem of the male, and the Salagrama of the female generative principle. And thus he wanted to establish that the worship of the Siva Linga and that of the Salagrama—both are but the component parts of the worship of Lingam and Yoni!

I repudiated the above two views and said that though I had heard of such ridiculous explanations about the Siva Lingam, the other theory of the Salagramasila was quite new and strange, and seemed groundless to me.

I also said that the worship of the Siva Lingam originated from the famous hymn in the Atharva Veda Samhita sung in praise of the Yupastambha, the sacrificial post. In that hymn a description is found of the beginningless and endless Stambha or Skambha, and it is shown that the said Skambha is put in place of the eternal Brahman. As, afterwards, the Yajna (Sacrificial) fire, its smoke, ashes and flames, the Soma plant and the ox that used to carry on its back the wood for the Vedic sacrifice, gave place to the conceptions of the brightness of Siva’s body, his tawny matted hair, his blue throat, and the riding on the bull of the Siva, and so on. Just so, the Yupa-Skambha gave place in time to the Siva-Lingam, and was deified to the high Devahood of Sri Sankara. In the Atharva Veda Samhita, the sacrificial cakes are also extolled along with the attributes of Brahman.

In the Linga Purana, the same hymn is expanded in the shape of stories, meant to establish the glory of the great Stambha and the superiority of Mahadeva.
Again, there is another fact to be considered. The Bauddhas used to erect memorial topes consecrated to the memory of Buddha; and the very poor, who were unable to build big monuments, used to express their devotion to him by dedicating miniature substitutes for them. Similar instances are still in the case of Hindu temples in Banaras and other sacred places of India, where those who cannot afford to build temples, dedicate very small temple-like constructions instead. So, it might be quite probable that during the period of Buddhistic ascendency, the rich Hindus, in imitation of the Bauddhas, used to erect something as a memorial resembling their Skambha, and the poor in a similar manner copied them on a reduced scale, and, afterwards, the miniature memorials of the poor Hindus became a new addition to the Skambha.

One of the names of the Buddha Stupas (memorial topes) is Dhatugarbha, that is “metal-wombed.” Within the Dhatu-garbha, in small cases made of stone, shaped like the present Salagrama, used to preserve the ashes, bones and other remains of the distinguished Bauddha Bhikshus, along with gold, silver and other metals. The Salagrama-silas are natural stones resembling in form these artificially cut stone-cases of the Bauddha Dhatugarbha, and thus, being first worshipped by the Bauddhas, gradually got into Vaishnavism, like many other forms of Buddhistic worship that found their way into Hinduism. On the banks of the Narmada and in Nepal, the Buddhistic influence lasted longer than in other parts of India, and the remarkable coincidence that the Narmadeswara Siva-lingam found on the banks of the Narmada and hence so called, and the Salagrama-silas of Nepal, are
given preference by the Hindus to those found elsewhere in India, is a fact that ought to be considered with respect to this point of contention.

The explanation of the Salagrama-sila as a phallic emblem was an imaginary invention and, from the very beginning, beside the mark. The explanation of the Siva-lingam as a phallic emblem was brought forward by the most thoughtless and was forthcoming in India in her most degraded times, those of the downfall of Buddhism. The filthiest Tantrika literature of Buddhism of those times is yet largely found and its rites practised in Nepal and Tibet.

I gave another lecture in which I dwelt on the historic evolution of the religious ideas in India, and said that the Vedas are the common source of Hinduism in all its varied stages, as also Buddhism and every other religious belief in India.

I said a few words on the priority of Sri Krishna to Buddha - that the worship of Sri Krishna is much older than that of Buddha, and if the Gita be not of the same date as the Mahabharata, it is surely much earlier, and by no means later. When the Gita notices the doctrines of all the religious sects of the time, why does it not, I asked, ever mention the name of Buddhism?

After the lecture, many present expressed their opinions for or against the subject, and declared that they agreed with most of what I had said, and assured me that the old days of Sanskrit Antiquarianism were past and gone and the views of modern Sanskrit scholars were largely the same as those of mine.
And what your European Pandits say about the Aryans' sweeping down from some foreign land, snatching away the lands of the aborigines and settling in India by exterminating them, is all pure nonsense, foolish talk! Strange that our Indian scholars, too, say amen to them; and all these monstrous lies are being taught to our boys! This is very bad indeed.

I am an ignoramus myself. I do not pretend to any scholarship; but with the little that I understand I strongly protested against these ideas at the Paris Congress.

I have been talking with the Indian and European savants on the subject, and hope to raise many objections to this theory in detail when the time permits.

**Paris** – Now I am staying on the sea coast of France. The session of the Congress of History of Religion is over. It was not a big affair; some twenty scholars chattered a lot on the origin of the Salagrama and the origin of Jehovah, and similar topics. I also said something on the occasion.

**Paris 9-1900** – The body is somehow rolling on. Work makes it ill, and rest makes it well – that is all. Mother knows...Nivedita has gone to England. She and Mrs. Bull are collecting funds.

**Paris 14-10-1900** – I am staying with a famous French writer, M. Jules Bois. I am his guest. As he is a man making his living with his pen, he is not rich, but we have many great ideas in common and feel happy together.
He discovered me a few years ago and has already translated some of my pamphlets into French.

I shall travel with Madame Calve, Miss MacLeod and M. Jules Bois, I shall be the guest of Madame Calve, the famous singer.

We shall go to Constantinople, the Near East, Greece and Egypt. On our way back, we shall visit Venice.

It may be that I shall give a few lectures in Paris after my return, but they will be in English with an interpreter...

I am sending all the money I earned in America to India; now I am free, the begging monk as before. I have also resigned from the Presidentship of the monastery.

M. Jules Bois is very modest and gentle, and though a man of ordinary means, he very cordially received me as a guest into his house in Paris. Then, he was accompanying us for travel.

In the evening of October 24, 1900 the train left Paris. The night was dark and nothing could be seen. Monsieur Bois and myself occupied one compartment, and early went to bed. On awakening from sleep we found we had crossed the French frontier and entered German territory. I had already seen Germany thoroughly.

The whole day the train rushed through Germany, till in the afternoon it reached the frontiers of Austria, the ancient sphere of German supremacy, but now an alien territory.

In the evening of October 25, the train reached Vienna, the capital of Austria. There were few passen-
gers, and it did not take us much time to show our luggage and have it passed. A hotel had already been arranged for, and a man from the hotel was waiting for us with a carriage: we reached the hotel duly. It was out of question to go out for sight-seeing during the night; so the next morning we started to see the town.

Vienna is a small city after the model of Paris. The thing most worth seeing in Vienna is the Museum, specially the scientific Museum, an institution of great benefit to the students. Three days in Vienna were sufficient to tire me.

On the 28th Oct., at 9 P. M., we again took that Orient Express train, which reached Constantinople on the 30th. These two nights and one day, the train ran through Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria.

Formerly, I had the notion that people of cold climates did not take hot chillies, which was merely a bad habit of warm climate people. But the habit of taking chillies, which we observed to begin with Hungary and which reached its climax in Rumania, Bulgeria, etc. appeared to me to beat even the Madrasis!

The first view of Constantinople we had from the train. At the station we had great trouble over our books. Madamoiselle Calvc and Jules Bois tried much, in French, to reason with the octroi officers, which gradually led to a quarrel between the parties. The head of the officers was a Turk and his dinner was ready, so the quarrel ended without further complications. They returned all the books with the exception of two which they heldback. They promised to send them to the hotel.
immediately, which they never did. We went round the town and bazar of Stamboul, or Constantinople.

Beyond the Pont, or creek, is the Pera or foreigner’s quarters, hotels etc. whence we got into a carriage, saw the town and then took some rest. In the evening, we went to visit Woods Pasha, and the next day, started on an excursion along the Bosphorus in a boat. It was extremely cold and there was a strong wind. So I and Miss M got down at the first station. It was decided that we would cross over the Scutari and see Pere Hyacinthe. Not knowing the language we engaged a boat by signs merely, crossed over and hired a carriage. On the way, we saw the seat of a Sufi Fakir.

We had a long talk with Pere Hyacinthe about the American colleges, after which we went to an Arab shop where we met a Turkish student. Then we returned from Scutari - we had found out a boat but it failed to reach its exact destination. However, we took a tram from the place where we were landed, and returned to our quarters at the hotel at Stamboul. The Museum at Stamboul is situated where the ancient harem of the Greek Emperors once stood. We saw some remarkable sarcophagi and other things, and had a charming view of the city from above Tophaneh. I enjoyed taking fried chick peas here after such a long time, and had spiced rice and some other dishes, prepared in the Turkish fashion. After visiting the cemetery, we went to see the ancient walls. Within the walls was the prison - a dreadful place. Next we met Woods Pasha and started for the Bosphorus. We had our dinner with the French Charge d’Affairs and met a Greek
Pasha and an Albanian gentleman. The police have prohibited Pere Hyacinthe's lectures. So, I too could not lecture. We saw Mr. Devanmall and Chobeji—a Gujarati Brahmin. There are a good many Indians here, Hindustanis, Mussalmans, etc. We had a talk on Turkish Philology and heard of Noor Bey, whose grandfather was a Frenchman. The women here have got no Purdah system and are very free. We heard of Kurd Pasha, and the massacre of Armenians.

At 10 in the morning, we left Constantinople, passing a night and a day on the sea, which was perfectly placid; by degrees, we reached the Golden Horn and the sea of Marmora. In one of the islands of the Marmora, we saw a monastery of the Greek religion.

While out in the morning on a visit to the Mediterranean Archipelago, we came across Professor Liper, whose acquaintance I had already made in the Pachiappa College at Madras. In one of the islands, we came upon the ruins of a temple, which had probably been dedicated to Neptune, judging from its position on the sea-shore. In the evening, we reached Athens, and after passing a whole night, under quarantine, we obtained permission for landing in the morning. Port Peiraeus is a small town, but very beautiful. From there we drove five miles to have a look at the ancient walls of Athens which used to connect the city with the port. Then we went through the town; the Acropolis, the hotels, houses and streets, and all were very neat and clean. The place is a small one. The same day, again, we climbed the hillock and had a view of the Acropolis, the temple of the Wingless Victory,
and the Parthenon, etc. The temple is made of white marble. Some standing remains of columns also we saw. The next day, we again went to see these with Madameisselle Melcarvi, who explained to us various historical facts relating thereto. On the second day, we visited the temple of Olympian Zeus. Theatre Dionysius etc., as far as the seashore. The third day, we set out for Eleusis, which was the chief religious seat of the Greeks. Here it was that the famous Eleusinian Mysteries used to be played. The ancient theatre of this place has been built anew by a rich Greek. The Olympian games too have been revived in the present times. At 10 A.M. on the fourth day, we got on board the Russian Steamer, Czar, bound for Egypt. After reaching the deck, we came to learn that the steamer was to start at 4 P.M. — perhaps, we were too early or there would be some extra delay in loading the cargo. So having no other alternative, we went round and made a cursory acquaintance with the sculpture of Ageladas and his three pupils, Phidias, Myron and Polycletus, who flourished between 576 B.C. and 486 B.C. Even here, we began to feel the great heat. No ice was available in this steamer. From a visit to the Louvre Museum in Paris, I came to understand the three stages of Greek art.

**Paris: 14-10-1900** - We shall leave Paris for Vienna on the 29th.

**Port Teuflick: 26-11-1900** - The steamer was late, so I am waiting. Thank goodness, it entered the canal this morning at Port Said. That means it will arrive some time in the evening if everything goes right.
Of course, it is like solitary imprisonment these two days and I am holding my soul in patience.

But they say the change is thrice dear. Mr. Gaze's agent gave me all wrong directions; in the first place, there was nobody here to tell me a thing, not to speak of receiving me. Secondly, I was not told that I had to change my Gaze's ticket for a steamer one at the agent's office, and that was at Suez, not here.

It was good one way, therefore, that the steamer was late. So, I went to see the agent of the steamer and he told me to exchange Gaze's pass for a regular ticket.

I hope to board the steamer some time tonight. I am enjoying the fun immensely.

One must love all. No one is stranger. It is Hari alone that exists in all beings. Nothing exists without Him. Never think that you alone have true understanding and that others are fools.

― Sri RAMAKRISHNA.

Soil

Say, brother, "The soul of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good," and repeat and pray day night "Oh, Thou Lord of Gouri, O, Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me O, Thou Mother of Strength, take away my unmanliness, and make me a man",

― SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.
CHAPTER X
THE LAST DAYS

Belur Math: 11-12-1900 – I arrived night before last. Alas! my hurrying was of no use. Poor Captain Sevier has passed away, a few days ago; thus two Great Englishmen gave up their lives for us, the Hindus. This is martyrdom if anything is.

He was cremated on the banks of the river that flows by his Ashrama, a la Hindu, covered with garlands, the Brahmans carrying the body and boys chanting the Vedas.

Dear Mrs. Sevier is calm. I am going up tomorrow to pay her a visit.

15-12-1900 – Three days ago, I reached here. It was quite unexpected, and everybody was so surprised.

26-12-1900 – I am going to Mayavati tomorrow.

Mayavati: 6-1-1901 – The first day’s touch of Calcutta brought the asthma back; and every night I used to get a fit during the two weeks I was there. I am however very well in the Himalayas.

It is snowing heavily here, and I was caught in a blizzard on the way; but, it is not very cold; all this exposure to the snows for two days on my way here seems to have done me a world of good.

Today, I walked over the snow uphill about a mile.

The snow is lying all round six inches deep, the sun
is bright and glorious, and now in the middle of the day we are sitting outside reading, and the snow all about us! The winter here is very mild in spite of the snow. The air is dry and balmy, and the water beyond all praise.

**Belur Math: 26-1-1901** – I went to see Mrs. Sevier in Mayavati. On my way, I learned of the sudden death of the Raja of Khetri. It appears he was restoring some old architectural monument at Agra, at his own expense, and was up some tower on inspection. Part of the tower came down, and he was instantly killed.

**Dacca: 29-3-1901** – My mother, aunt and cousin came over five days ago to Dacca, as there was a great sacred bath in the Brahmaputra river. Whenever a particular conjunction of planets takes place, which is very rare, a huge concourse of people gather on the river at a particular spot. This year, there has been more than a hundred thousand people; for miles the river was covered with boats.

The river, though nearly a mile broad at the place, was one mass of mud! But, it was firm enough, so we had our bath and puja and all that.

I am rather enjoying Dacca. I am going to take my mother and other ladies to Chandranath, a holy place at the eastern-most corner of Bengal.

I liked East Bengal on the whole, the fields, I saw were rich in crops, the climate also in good, and the scenery on the hill-side is charming. The Brahmaputra valley is incomparable in beauty. The people of East
Bengal are a little stronger and more active than those of this (West Bengal). It may be due to their taking plenty of fish and meat. Whatever they do, they do with great persistence. They use a good deal of oil and fat in their food, which is not good, because taking too much oily and fatty good produces fat in the body.

About religious ideas, I noticed the people are very conservative, and many have turned into fanatics in trying to be liberal in religion. One day, a young man brought to me in the house of Mohinini Babu at Dacca a photograph and said, "Sir, please tell me who he is. Is he an Avatara?" I told him gently many times that I knew nothing of it, when even on my telling him three or four times, the boy did not cease from his persistent questioning. I was constrained to say at last, "My boy, henceforth take a little nutritious food and then your brain will develop. Without nourishing food, I see your brain has become dried up." At these words, the young man may have been very much displeased. But, what could I do? Unless I spoke like this to the boys, they would turn into madcaps by degrees.

People may call their Guru an Avatara; they may have any idea of him they like. But, Incarnations of God are not born anywhere and at all seasons. At Dacca itself, I heard there were three or four Avatars!

The women are very nearly the same everywhere. I found Vaishnavism strong at Dacca.

Going so far, I could not return without visiting the birthplace of such a great soul as Nag Mahashaya. His
wife fed me with many delicacies prepared with her own hand. The house is charming, like a peace retreat. There I took a swimming bath in a village pond. After that, I had such a sound sleep that I woke at half past two in the afternoon. Of the few days, I had sound sleep in my life, that in Nag Mahashaya’s house was one. Rising from sleep, I had a plentiful repast. Nag Mahashaya’s wife presented me a cloth which I tied round my head as a turban and started for Dacca. I found that the photograph of Nag Mahashaya was being worshipped there. The place where his remains lie interred ought to be well kept. Even now it is not as it should be.

Even while living the life of a householder, Nag Mahashaya was more than a Sannyasin. This is very uncommon; I have rarely seen one like him.

Decidedly, without a shadow of doubt, Nag Mahashaya was the living personification of humility in the play of Sri Ramakrishna’s divine drama on earth...Sri Ramakrishna used to speak of Nag Mahashaya as a “flaming fire.”

All the characteristics of the highest type of Bhakti spoken of in the scriptures have manifested themselves in Nag Mahashaya. It is only in him that we actually see fulfilled the widely quoted text.

नृणाद्रि सुनीचेन तरोरि सहिष्णुना ।
अमाणिना मान्देन कीठीय: सदाहरि: ॥
Blessed indeed is East Bengal to have been hallowed by the touch of Nag Mahashaya’s feet!

How can ordinary people appreciate a great man like him? Those who had his company are blessed indeed.
The land that has produced a great soul like Nag Mahashaya is blessed and has a hopeful future. By the light of his personality, Eastern Bengal is radiant.

There in East Bengal, they used to make such fuss about my food and say, "Why should you eat that food or eat from the hands of such and such?" — and so on. To which I had to reply - "I am a Sannyasin and a mendicant friar and what need have I to observe so much outward formality with regard to food etc. Do not your scriptures say - "चोर्माणुरूर्षी चृतिमिति देवेच्छकलादिपि" "One should beg one's food from door to door, aye even from the house of an outcaste."

The Shillong hills are very beautiful. There I met Sir Henry Cotton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam. He asked me, "Swamiji, after travelling through Europe and America, what have you come to see here in these distant hills?" Such a good and kind-hearted man as Sir Henry Cotton is rarely found. Hearing of my illness, he sent the Civil Surgeon and inquired after my health morning and evening. I could not do much lecturing there, because my health was very bad. On the way Nitai served and looked after me nicely.

Kamakhya is the land of the Tantras. I heard of one "Hankar" Deva who is worshipped there as an Avatara. I heard his sect is very widespread. I could not ascertain if "Hankar" Deva was but another form of the name of Sankaracharya. They are monks — perhaps, Tantrika Sannyasins. Or perhaps, one of the Sankara sects.

Math: 15-5-1901 — I have just returned from my
tour through East Bengal and Assam. As usual, I am quite tired and broken down.

**Belur Math, : 14-6-1901 -** At Shillong, the hill sanatorium of Assam, I had fever, Asthma, increase of albumen, and my body swelled to almost twice its normal size. These symptoms subsided, however, as soon as I reached the Math. It is dreadfully hot this year, but a bit of rain has commenced, and I hope we will soon have the monsoon in full force. I have no plans just now except that the Bombay Presidency wants me so urgently that I think of going there soon.

**Belur Math, : 5-7-1901 -** My health has been and is very bad. I recover for a few days only; then comes the inevitable relapse. Well, this is the nature of the disease anyway.

Assam is, next to Kashmir, the most beautiful country in India, but very unhealthy. The huge Brahmaputra winding in and out of mountains and hills, studded with Islands, is, of course, worth one’s while to see.

**Belur Math, : 27-8-1901 -** My health is getting worse, in fact everyday...

I am in a sense a retired man; I don’t keep much note of what is going on about the Movement.

**Belur Math, : 7-9-01 -** It has been raining here day and night last three days. Two of our cows have calved.

Well, about the rains - they have come down now in right earnest and it is a deluge, pouring, pouring night and
day. The river is rising, flooding the banks; the ponds and tanks have overflown. I have just now returned from lending a hand in cutting a deep drain to take off the water from the Math grounds. The rain water stands at places some feet high. My huge stork is full of glee and so are the the ducks and geese. My tame antelope fled from the Math and gave us some days of anxiety in finding him out. One of my ducks unfortunately died yesterday. She had been gasping for breath more than a week. One of my waggish monks says, "Sir, it is no use living in this Kaliyuga when ducks catch cold from damp and rain, and frogs sneeze!"

One of the geese was losing her feathers. Knowing no other method, I left her some minutes in a tub of water mixed with mild carbolic, so that it might either kill or heal - and she is all right now.

**Belur Math: 8-11-1901** - I have been ever since my trip to East Bengal almost bed-ridden. Now I am worse than ever with the additional disadvantage of impaired eyesight.

**Banaras Cantonment: 10-2-1902** - Mr. Okakura (of Japan) has started on his short tour. A very well educated rich young man of Banaras, with whose father we had a long standing friendship, came back to this city yesterday. He is especially interested in art, and spending purposely a lot of money in his attempts to revive dying Indian arts. He came to see me only a few hours after Mr Okakura left.

He is just the man to show him artistic India (i.e.
what little is left) and I am sure he will be much benefited by Okakura's suggestions. Okakura just found a common terracotta water-vessel here used by the servants. The shape and the embossed work on it simply charmed him, but as it is common earthenware and would not bear the journey, he left a request with me to have it reproduced in brass. I was at my wit's end as to what to do. My young friend comes a few hours after and not only undertakes to have it done, but offers to show a few hundreds of embossed designs in terracotta infinitely superior to the one Okakura fancied. He also offers to show old paintings in that wonderful style. Only one family is left in Banaras who can paint after the old style yet. One of them has painted a whole hunting scene on a pea, perfect in detail and action!

I may shift from this place very soon.

**Banaras Cantonment: 18-2-1902** - If in this hell of a world one can bring a little joy and peace even for a day into the heart of a single person, that much alone is true; this I have learnt after suffering all my life; all else is mere moonshine.

**Belur Math: 21-4-1902** - The plan of going to Japan seems to have come to nought.

**Belur Math: 21-4-1902** - I am getting on splendidly, they say, but yet very weak and no water to drink. Anyhow the chemical analysis shows a great improvement. The swelling about the feet, and other complaints have all disappeared.

**Belur Math: 15-5-1902** - I am somewhat better,
but, of course, far from what I expected. A great idea of quiet has come upon me. I am going to retire for good—no more work for me.

If ever a man found the vanity of things, I have it now......This is the world, hideous beastly corpse. Who thinks of helping it is a fool! But we have to work out our slavery by doing good or evil. I have worked it out, I hope. May the Lord take me to the other shore!

To set the work going, I had to touch money and property, for a time. Now I am sure my part of the work is done, and I have no more interest in Vedanta or any philosophy in the world or the work itself. I am getting ready to depart to return no more to this hell, this world,

Even its religious utility is beginning to pall me. May Mother gather me soon to Herself never to come back any more!

I have given up the bondage of iron, the family tie. I am not to take up the golden chain of religious brotherhood! I am free, must always be free, I am as good as retired. I have played my part in the world.

I had a message from India to the West, and boldly I gave it to the American and English peoples.

I have worked my best. If there is any seed of truth in it, it will come to life. I am satisfied in my conscience that I did not remain an idle Swami. I have a notebook which has travelled with me all over the world. I find these words written seven years ago—“Now to seek a corner and lay myself there to die!” Yet, all this Karma remained.
Through Maya all this doing good etc, came into my brain - now they are leaving me. I long. Oh, I long for my rags, my shaven head, my sleep under the trees and my food from begging! Never before in my life I realised more forcibly the vanity of the world.

I have roused a good many of our people; that was all I wanted. Let things have their course and Karma its way. I have no bonds here. I have seen life and it is all self - life is for self, love for self, honour for self, everything for self. I look back and scarcely find any action I have done for self; even my wicked deeds were not for self. So I am content...........I have seen the truth. - let the body float up or down, who cares?

Oh, the grief! If I could get two or three like me, I could have left the world convulsed.

It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body - to cast it off like a disused garment. But, I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere.

It seems there is no more strength left to bear the burden of work and responsibility. Rest and peace for the few days that I shall yet live. Victory to the Guru! Victory to the Guru! No more lectures or anything of that sort. Peace!

Let me die a true Sannyasin, as my Master did, heedless of money, of women, and of fame!

Do you think that there will be no more Vivekanandas after I die!...........There will be no lack of Vivekanandas, if the world needs them.........Know for certain
that the work done by me is not the work of Vivekadanda, it is His work—Lord’s own work! If one Governor-General retires, another is sure to be sent in his place by the Emperor.

“As the birds which have slept in the branches of a tree wake up, singing when the dawn comes, and soar up into the deep blue sky, so is the end of my life.”

I have had many difficulties, and also some very great successes. But all my difficulties and sufferings count for nothing, as I have succeeded. I have attained my aim. I have found the pearl for which I dived into the ocean of life, I have been rewarded. I am pleased......

I see the cloud lifting, vanishing, the cloud of my bad Karma. and the sun of my good karma rises, shining, beautiful and powerful.

I think I am beginning to see the Divine, I think I am slowly approaching that state when I shall be able to love the very “Devil” himself, if there were any.

At twenty years of age, I was the most unsympathetic, uncompromising fanatic; I would not walk on the footpath, on the theatre side of the streets in Calcutta. At thirtythree, I could live in the same house with prostitutes and never would think of saying a word of reproach to them......My power of work is immensely increasing and becoming immensely effective. Some days I get into a sort of ecstasy. I feel that I must bless everyone, everything and embrace everything, and I do see that evil is a delusion. I bless the day I was born. That Love Infinite
that brought me into being has guarded every one of my actions good or bad; for what am I, what was I ever, but a tool in His hands? for whose service I have given up everything, my beloved ones, my joys. He is my playful darling, I am His playfellow.

There is neither rhyme nor reason in the universe! What reason binds Him? He the playful One is playing these tears and laughers over all parts of the play! Great fun; great fun.

It is a funny world, - and the funniest chap you ever saw is, He - the Beloved Infinite! Fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood - a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world! Isn’t it? Whom to praise, whom to blame, it is all His play. They want explanations, but how can you explain Him? He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason, but this time He won’t find me napping.

Beyond, beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the “Love”, the “Beloved”, Aye, “Saki”* fill up the cup and we will be mad."

I am more calm and quiet now than I ever was. My boat is nearing the calm harbour from which it is never more to be driven out. Glory, glory unto Mother! I have no wish, no ambition now. Blessed be Mother! I am the servant of Ramakrishna. I am merely a machine. I know nothing else. Nor do I want to know. Glory, glory unto Sri Guru!

* A Persian word for a wine-cup bearer.
Mother is becoming propitious once more... Mother is doing Her own work; I do not worry now. Moths like me die by the thousand every instant. Her work goes on all the same. Glory unto Mother! Alone and drifting about in the will-current of the Mother, has been my whole life...

I am happy, at peace with myself, and more of the Sannyasin than I ever was before. Memories of long nights of vigil with Sri Ramakrishna under the Dakshin-eshwar Banyan tree are waking up once more. And work? What is work? Whose work? Whom shall I work for?

I am free. I am Mother's child. She works, she plays, why should I plan? What should I plan? Things came and went, just as She liked, without my planning. We are Her automata. She is the wirepuller.

I have bundled my things and am waiting for the great deliverer.

I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan tree at Dakshineshwar. That is my true nature. Works and activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions. Now I again hear his voice; the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking - love dying, work becoming tasteless - the glamour is off life. Now the voice of the Master calling: "I come, Lord, I come." - "Let the dead bury the dead, follow thou Me." - "I come, my beloved, I come."

Yes, Nirvana is before me. I leave none bound, I take no bonds.
I come, Mother, I come, In Thy warm bosom.

I feel freedom is near at hand.

I am the infinite blue sky; the clouds may gather over me, but I am the same infinite blue.

These tinpots of bones and foolish dreams of happiness and misery - what are they?

My dreams are breaking. Om Tat Sat!

Black and thick are the folds of sinister fate. But, I am the master. I raise my hand, and lo, they vanish! All this is nonsense and fear. I am the Fear of fear, the Terror of terror. I am the fearless secondless One. I am the Ruler of Destiny, the Wiper - out of fate. Sri Wah Guru!

All is good! Nonsense. Some good, some evil. I enjoy the good and I enjoy the evil. I was Jesus and I was Judas Iscariot; both my play, my fun. All is good!... Come good, come evil, both welcome, both of you my play. I have no good to attain, no ideal to clench up to, no ambition to fulfil. I, the diamond mine, am playing with pebbles, good and evil, good for you, evil, come; good for you, good, you come too. If the universe tumbles round my ears, what is that to me? I am Peace that passeth understanding. I am beyond, I am Peace!

I am being lifted up above the pestilential miasma of this world's joys and sorrows; they are losing their meaning. It is a land of dreams; it does not matter whether one enjoys or weeps; they are but dreams, and as
such, must break sooner or later...Life is but a dream! I am attaining peace that passeth understanding, which is neither joy nor sorrow, but something above them both... Now I am nearing that Peace, the eternal silence. I preached the theory (of Vedantism) so long, but Oh Joy! I am realising it now. Yes, I am. “I am free.” “Alone, alone, I am the One without a second.”

As the dawn heralds the rising sun, so unselfishness, purity righteousness precede the advent of God.

- Sri RAMAKRISHNA.

The blissful winds are sweet to us,
The seas are showering bliss on us,
May the corn in our fields bring bliss to us,
May the plants and herbs bring bliss to us,
May the cattle give us bliss,
O, Father in Heaven, be Thou blissful unto us!

- SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
The wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma, the lotus of Bhakti and the rising sun, of Jnana. The encircling serpent is indicative of Yoga and the awakened Kundalini Shakti, while the swan in the picture stands for the Paramatman. Therefore, the idea of the picture is that by the union of Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga, the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.

(Once Sri Ranadaprasad Das Gupta, an expert artist and the founder President of the Jubilee Art Academy, Calcutta, called on Swamiji with a disciple of the latter. Then, Swamiji had the design which he had sketched for the seal of the Ramakrishna Mission brought, showed it to Ranada Babu and asked his opinion on it. The artist at first could not catch the significance of the picture and asked Swamiji to explain, which Swamiji did.)