FIRST PUBLIC LECTURE IN THE EAST

(Delivered in Colombo)

After his memorable work in the West, Swami Vivekananda landed at Colombo on the afternoon of January 15, 1897, and was given a right royal reception by the Hindu community there. The following address of welcome was then presented to him:

SRIMAT VIVEKANANDA SWAMI

Revered Sir,

In pursuance of a resolution passed at a public meeting of the Hindus of the city of Colombo, we beg to offer you a hearty welcome to this Island. We deem it a privilege to be the first to welcome you on your return home from your great mission in the West.

We have watched with joy and thankfulness the success with which the mission has, under God’s blessing, been crowned. You have proclaimed to the nations of Europe and America the Hindu ideal of a universal religion, harmonising all creeds, providing spiritual food for each soul according to its needs, and lovingly drawing it unto God. You have preached the Truth and the Way, taught from remote ages by a succession of Masters whose
Lectures from Colombo to Almora

blessed feet have walked and sanctified the soil of India, and whose gracious presence and inspiration have made her, through all her vicissitudes, the Light of the World.

To the inspiration of such a Master, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Deva, and to your self-sacrificing zeal, Western nations owe the priceless boon of being placed in living contact with the spiritual genius of India, while to many of our own countrymen, delivered from the glamour of Western civilisation, the value of our glorious heritage has been brought home.

By your noble work and example you have laid humanity under an obligation difficult to repay, and you have shed fresh lustre upon our Motherland. We pray that the grace of God may continue to prosper you and your work, and

We remain, Revered Sir,
Yours faithfully,
for and on behalf of the Hindus of Colombo,
P. Coomara Swamy,
Member of the Legislative Council of Ceylon,
Chairman of the Meeting.
A. Kulaveerasingham, Secretary.

Colombo, January, 1897.

The Swami gave a brief reply, expressing his appreciation of the kind welcome he had received. He took advantage of the opportunity to point out
that the demonstration had not been made in honour of a great politician, or a great soldier, or a millionaire, but of a begging Sannyāsin, showing the tendency of the Hindu mind towards religion. He urged the necessity of keeping religion as the backbone of the national life, if the nation were to live, and disclaimed any personal character for the welcome he had received, but insisted upon its being the recognition of a principle.

On the evening of the 16th the Swami gave the following public lecture in the Floral Hall:

What little work has been done by me has not been from any inherent power that resides in me, but from the cheers, the goodwill, the blessings, that have followed my path in the West from this our very beloved, most sacred, dear Motherland. Some good has been done, no doubt, in the West, but specially to myself, for what before was the result of an emotional nature perhaps, has gained the certainty of conviction, and attained the power and strength of demonstration. Formerly, I thought as every Hindu thinks, and as the Hon. President has just pointed out to you, that this is the Punya Bhumi, the land of Karma. Today I stand here and say, with the conviction of truth, that it is so. If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed Punya Bhumi, to be the land to which souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home,
the land where humanity has attained its highest
towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity,
towards calmness, above all, the land of introspec-
tion and of spirituality—it is India. Hence have
started the founders of religions from the most
ancient times, deluging the earth again and again
with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual
truth. Hence have proceeded the tidal waves of
philosophy that have covered the earth, East or West,
North or South, and hence again must start the wave
which is going to spiritualise the material civilisa-
tion of the world. Here is the life-giving water
with which must be quenched the burning fire of
materialism which is burning the core of the hearts
of millions in other lands. Believe me, my friends,
this is going to be.

So much I have seen, and so far those of you
who are students of the history of races are already
aware of this fact. The debt which the world owes
to our Motherland is immense. Taking country
with country, there is not one race on this earth to
which the world owes so much as to the patient
Hindu, the mild Hindu. "The mild Hindu" some-
times is used as an expression of reproach, but if
ever a reproach concealed a wonderful truth it is
in the term, "the mild Hindu", who has always
been the blessed child of God. Civilisations have
arisen in other parts of the world. In ancient times
and in modern times, great ideas have emanated
from strong and great races. In ancient and in
modern times, wonderful ideas have been carried forward from one race to another. In ancient and in modern times, seeds of great truth and power have been cast abroad by the advancing tides of national life; but mark you, my friends, it has been always with the blast of war trumpets, and with the march of embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood. Each idea had to wade through the blood of millions of our fellow-beings. Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. This, in the main, other nations have taught; but India has for thousands of years peacefully existed. Here activity prevailed when even Greece did not exist, when Rome was not thought of, when the very fathers of the modern Europeans lived in the forests and painted themselves blue. Even earlier, when history has no record, and tradition dares not peer into the gloom of that intense past, even from then until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it, and peace before it. We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we live.

There was a time when at the sound of the march of big Greek battalions, the earth trembled. Vanished from off the face of the earth, with not even a tale left behind to tell, gone is that ancient land of the Greeks. There was a time when the
Roman Eagle floated over everything worth having in this world; everywhere Rome's power was felt and pressed on the head of humanity; the earth trembled at the name of Rome. But the Capitoline Hill is a mass of ruins, the spider weaves its web where the Caesars ruled. There have been other nations equally glorious that have come and gone, living a few hours of exultant and of exuberant dominance, and of a wicked national life, and then vanishing like ripples on the face of the waters. Thus have these nations made their mark on the face of humanity. But we live, and if Manu came back today he would not be bewildered, and would not find himself in a foreign land. The same laws are here, laws adjusted and thought out through thousands and thousands of years; customs, the outcome of the acumen of ages and the experience of centuries, that seem to be eternal; and as the days go by, as blow after blow of misfortune has been delivered upon them, such blows seem to have served one purpose only, that of making them stronger and more constant. And to find the centre of all this, the heart from which the blood flows, the mainspring of the national life, believe me when I say after my experience of the world, that it is here.

To the other nations of the world, religion is one among the many occupations of life. There is politics, there are the enjoyments of social life, there is all that wealth can buy or power can bring,
there is all that the senses can enjoy; and among all these various occupations of life, and all this searching after something which can give yet a little more whetting to the cloyed senses—among all these, there is perhaps a little bit of religion. But here, in India, religion is the one and the only occupation of life. How many of you know that there has been a Chino-Japanese war? Very few of you, if any. That there are tremendous political movements and socialistic movements trying to transform Western society, how many of you know? Very few indeed, if any. But that there was a Parliament of Religions in America, and that there was a Hindu Sannyásin sent over there, I am astonished to find that even the cooly knows of it. That shows the way the wind blows, where the national life is. I used to read books written by globe-trotting travellers, especially foreigners, who deplored the ignorance of the Eastern masses, but I found out that it was partly true and at the same time partly untrue. If you ask a ploughman in England, or America, or France, or Germany to what party he belongs, he can tell you whether he belongs to the Radicals or the Conservatives, and for whom he is going to vote. In America he will say whether he is Republican or Democrat, and even knows something about the silver question. But if you ask him about his religion, he will tell you that he goes to church, and belongs to a certain denomination. That is all he knows, and he thinks it is sufficient.
Lectures from Colombo to Almora

Now, when we come to India, if you ask one of our ploughmen, "Do you know anything about politics?" He will reply, "What is that?" He does not understand the socialistic movements, the relation between capital and labour, and all that; he has never heard of such things in his life, he works hard and earns his bread. But you ask, "What is your religion?" He replies, "Look here, my friend, I have marked it on my forehead." He can give you a good hint or two on questions of religion. That has been my experience. That is our nation's life.

Individuals have each their own peculiarities, and each man has his own method of growth, his own life marked out for him, by the infinite past life, by all his past Karma as we Hindus say. Into this world he comes with all the past on him, the infinite past ushers the present, and the way in which we use the present is going to make the future. Thus, everyone born into this world has a bent, a direction towards which he must go, through which he must live, and what is true of the individual is equally true of the race. Each race, similarly, has a peculiar bent, each race has a peculiar 
\textit{raison d'être}, each race has a peculiar mission to fulfil in the life of the world. Each race has to make its own result, to fulfil its own mission. Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was, and, mark my words, it never will be. But there has been the
other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate, as it were, into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race, and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on the world, whenever circumstances are propitious. Let the Persian or the Greek, the Roman, the Arab, or the Englishman march his battalions, conquer the world, and link the different nations together, and the philosophy and spirituality of India is ever ready to flow along the new-made channels into the veins of the nations of the world. The Hindu's calm brain must pour out its own quota to give to the sum total of human progress. India's gift to the world is the light spiritual.

Thus, in the past, we read in history that whenever there arose a great conquering nation uniting the different races of the world, binding India with the other races, taking her out, as it were, from her loneliness, and from her aloofness from the rest of the world, into which she again and again cast herself, that whenever such function has been brought about, the result has been the flooding of the world with Indian spiritual ideas. At the beginning of this century, Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher, studying, from a not very clear translation of the Vedas made from an old translation into Persian, and thence by a young Frenchman into Latin, says, "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of
my life, it will be the solace of my death.” This great German sage foretold that “The world is about to see a revolution in thought more extensive and more powerful than that which was witnessed by the Renaissance of Greek Literature,” and today his predictions are coming to pass. Those who keep their eyes open, those who understand the workings in the minds of different nations of the West, those who are thinkers and study the different nations, will find the immense change that has been produced in the tone, the procedure, in the methods, and in the literature of the world by this slow, never-ceasing permeation of Indian thought.

But there is another peculiarity, as I have already hinted to you. We never preached our thoughts with fire and sword. If there is one word in the English language to represent the gift of India to the world, if there is one word in the English language to express the effect which the literature of India produces upon mankind, it is this one word, “fascination”. It is the opposite of anything that takes you suddenly; it throws on you, as it were, a charm imperceptibly. To many, Indian thought, Indian manners, Indian customs, Indian philosophy, Indian literature, are repulsive at the first sight; but let them persevere, let them read, let them become familiar with the great principles underlying these ideas, and it is ninety-nine to one that the charm will come over them, and fascination will be the result. Slow and silent, as the gentle dew
that falls in the morning, unseen and unheard, yet producing a most tremendous result, has been the work of this calm, patient, all-suffering, spiritual race, upon the world of thought.

Once more history is going to repeat itself. For today, under the blasting light of modern science, when old, and apparently strong and invulnerable beliefs have been shattered to their very foundations, when special claims laid to the allegiance of mankind by different sects have been all blown into atoms and have vanished into air—when the sledgehammer blows of modern antiquarian researches are pulverising like masses of porcelain all sorts of antiquated orthodoxies—when religion in the West is only in the hands of the ignorant, and the knowing ones look down with scorn upon anything belonging to religion, here comes to the fore the philosophy of India, which displays the highest religious aspirations of the Indian mind, where the grandest philosophical facts have been the practical spirituality of the people. This naturally is coming to the rescue, the idea of the oneness of all, the Infinite, the idea of the Impersonal, the wonderful idea of the eternal soul of man, of the unbroken continuity in the march of beings, and the infinity of the universe. The old sects looked upon the world as a little mud-puddle, and thought that time began but the other day. It was there in our old books, and only there that the grand idea of the infinite range of time, space, and causation, and above all,
the infinite glory of the spirit of man governed all the search for religion. When the modern tremendous theories of evolution and conservation of energy and so forth are dealing death blows to all sorts of crude theologies, what can hold any more the allegiance of cultured humanity but the most wonderful, convincing, broadening, and ennobling ideas, that can be found only in that most marvellous product of the soul of man, the wonderful voice of God, the Vedanta?

At the same time, I must remark that what I mean by our religion working upon the nations outside of India, comprises only the principles, the background, the foundation upon which that religion is built. The detailed workings, the minute points which have been worked out through centuries of social necessity, little ratiocinations about manners and customs and social well-being, do not rightly find a place in the category of religion. We know that in our books a clear distinction is made between two sets of truths. The one set is that which abides for ever, being built upon the nature of man, the nature of the soul, the soul's relation to God, the nature of God, perfection, and so on; there are also the principles of cosmology, of the infinitude of creation, or more correctly speaking—projection, the wonderful law of cyclical procession, and so on—these are the eternal principles founded upon the universal laws in nature. The other set comprises the minor laws, which guide the working
of our everyday life. They belong more properly to the Purânas, to the Smritis, and not to the Shrûtis. These have nothing to do with the other principles. Even in our own nation these minor laws have been changing all the time. Customs of one age, of one Yuga, have not been the customs of another, and as Yuga comes after Yuga, they will still have to change. Great Rishis will appear and lead us to customs and manners that are suited to new environments.

The great principles underlying all this wonderful, infinite, ennobling, expansive view of man and God and the world, have been produced in India. In India alone, man has not stood up to fight for a little tribal God, saying, "My God is true and yours is not true; let us have a good fight over it." It was only here that such ideas did not occur, as fighting for little gods. These great underlying principles, being based upon the eternal nature of man, are as potent today for working for the good of the human race as they were thousands of years ago, and they will remain so, so long as this earth remains, so long as the law of Karma remains, so long as we are born as individuals and have to work out our own destiny by our individual power.

And above all, what India has to give to the world is this. If we watch the growth and development of religions in different races, we shall always find this, that each tribe at the beginning has a god of its own. If the tribes are allied to each
other, these gods will have a generic name, as for example, all the Babylonian gods had. When the Babylonians were divided into many races, they had the generic name of Baal, just as the Jewish races had different gods with the common name of Moloch; and at the same time you will find that one of these tribes becomes superior to the rest, and lays claim to its own king as the king over all. Therefrom, it naturally follows that it also wants to preserve its own god as the god of all the races. Baal-Merodach, said the Babylonians, was the greatest god; all the others were inferior. Moloch-Yavah was the superior over all other Molochs. And these questions had to be decided by the fortunes of battle. The same struggle was here also. In India the same competing gods had been struggling with each other for supremacy, but the great good fortune of this country and of the world was that there came out in the midst of the din and confusion, a voice which declared एकं सदिशं बहुधा षडन्ति —“That which exists is One; sages call It by various names.” It is not that Shiva is superior to Vishnu, not that Vishnu is everything and Shiva is nothing, but it is the same one whom you call either Shiva, or Vishnu, or by a hundred other names. The names are different, but it is the same one. The whole history of India you may read in these few words. The whole history has been a repetition in massive language, with tremendous power, of that one central doctrine. It was repeated
in the land, till it had entered into the blood of
the nation, till it began to tingle with every drop
of blood that flowed in its veins, till it became one
with the life, part and parcel of the material of
which it was composed; and thus the land was
transmuted into the most wonderful land of tolera-
tion, giving the right to welcome the various
religions as well as all sects, into the old mother-
country.

And herein is the explanation of the most remark-
able phenomenon that is only witnessed here, all
the various sects, apparently hopelessly contradictory,
yet living in such harmony. You may be a
dualist, and I may be a monist. You may believe
that you are the eternal servant of God, and
I may declare that I am one with God Himself; yet
both of us are good Hindus. How is that possible?
Read then एक सद्विश्रावे बहुधा बदलति —“That which
exists is One; sages call It by various names.”
Above all others, my countrymen, this is the one
grand truth that we have to teach to the world.
Even the most educated people of other countries
turn up their noses at an angle of forty-five degrees
and call our religion, idolatry. I have seen that;
and they never stopped to think what a mass of
superstition there was in their own heads. It is so
still everywhere, this tremendous sectarianism, the
low narrowness of the mind. The thing which a
man has, is the only thing worth having; the only
life worth living is his own little life of dollar-
worship and mammon-worship; the only little possession worth having is his own property, and nothing else. If he can manufacture a little clay nonsense or invent a machine, that is to be admired beyond the greatest possessions. That is the case over the whole world, in spite of education and learning. But education has yet to be in the world, and civilisation—civilisation has begun nowhere yet. Ninety-nine decimal nine per cent of the human race are more or less savages, even now. We may read of these things in books, and we hear of toleration in religion and all that, but very little of it is there yet in the world; take my experience for that. Ninety-nine per cent do not even think of it. There is tremendous religious persecution yet, in every country in which I have been, and the same old objections are raised against learning anything new. The little toleration that is in the world, the little sympathy that is yet in the world, for religious thought, is practically here, in the land of the Aryans, and nowhere else. It is here that Indians build temples for Mohammedans and Christians; nowhere else. If you go to other countries and ask Mohammedans, or people of other religions, to build a temple for you, see how they will help. They will instead try to break down your temple and you too, if they can. The one great lesson, therefore, that the world wants most, that the world has yet to learn from India, is the idea, not only of toleration, but of sympathy. Well has it
been said in the Mahimnah-stotra: "As the different rivers, taking their start from different mountains, running straight or crooked, at last come unto the ocean; so, O Shiva, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead unto Thee." Though they may take various roads, all are on the way. Some may run a little crooked, others may run straight, but at last they will all come unto the Lord, the One. Then and then alone, is your Bhakti of Shiva complete, when you not only see Him in the Linga, but you see Him everywhere. He is the sage, he is the lover of Hari, who sees Hari in everything and in everyone. If you are a real lover of Shiva, you must see Him in everything, and in everyone. You must see that every worship is given unto Him, whatever may be the name or the form; that all knees bending towards the Kaaba, or kneeling in a Christian church, or in a Buddhist temple, are kneeling to Him, whether they know it or not, whether they are conscious of it or not; that in whatever name or form they are offered, all these flowers are laid at His feet, for He is the one Lord of all, the one Soul of all souls. He knows infinitely better what this world wants than you or I. It is impossible that all difference can cease; it must exist; without variation life must cease. It is this clash, the differentiation of thought, that makes for light, for motion, for everything. Differentiation, infinitely
contradictory, must remain, but it is not necessary that we should hate each other therefore; it is not necessary therefore that we should fight each other. Therefore, we have again to learn the one central truth that was preached only here, in our Motherland, and that once more has to be preached from India. Why? Because, not only is it in our books, but it runs through every phase of our national literature, and is in the national life. Here and here alone, is it practised every day, and any man whose eyes are open can see that it is practised here and here alone. Thus we have to teach religion. There are other and higher lessons that India can teach, but they are only for the learned. The lessons of mildness, gentleness, forbearance, toleration, sympathy, and brotherhood, everyone may learn, whether man, woman or child, learned or unlearned, without respect of race, caste, or creed. “They call Thee by various names; Thou art One.”
VEDANTISM

The following address of welcome from the Hindus of Jaffna was presented to Swami Vivekananda:

SRIMAT VIVEKANANDA SWAMI

Revered Sir,

We, the inhabitants of Jaffna professing the Hindu religion, desire to offer you a most hearty welcome to our land, the chief centre of Hinduism in Ceylon, and to express our thankfulness for your kind acceptance of our invitation to visit this part of Lanka.

Our ancestors settled here from Southern India, more than two thousand years ago, and brought with them their religion, which was patronised by the Tamil kings of Jaffna; but when their government was displaced by that of the Portuguese and the Dutch, the observance of religious rites was interfered with, public religious worship was prohibited, and the Sacred Temples including two of the most far-famed Shrines, were razed to the ground by the cruel hand of persecution. In spite of the persistent attempts of these nations to force upon our forefathers the Christian religion, they clung to
their old faith firmly, and have transmitted it to us as the noblest of our heritages. Now, under the rule of Great Britain, not only has there been a great and intelligent revival, but the sacred edifices have been, and are being, restored.

We take this opportunity to express our deep-felt gratitude for your noble and disinterested labours in the cause of our religion in carrying the light of truth, as revealed in the Vedas, to the Parliament of Religions, in disseminating the truths of the Divine Philosophy of India in America and England, and in making the Western world acquainted with the truths of Hinduism and thereby bringing the West in closer touch with the East. We also express our thankfulness to you for initiating a movement for the revival of our ancient religion in this materialistic age, when there is a decadence of faith and a disregard for search after spiritual truth.

We cannot adequately express our indebtedness to you for making the people of the West know the catholicity of our religion, and for impressing upon the minds of the savants of the West the truth that there are more things in the Philosophy of the Hindus than are dreamt of in the Philosophy of the West.

We need hardly assure you that we have been carefully watching the progress of your Mission in the West, and always heartily rejoicing at your devotedness and successful labours in the field of
religion. The appreciative references made by the press, in the great centres of intellectual activity, moral growth, and religious inquiry in the West, to you and to your valuable contributions to our religious literature, bear eloquent testimony to your noble and magnificent efforts.

We beg to express our heartfelt gratification at your visit to our land and to hope that we, who, in common with you, look to the Vedas as the foundation of all true spiritual knowledge, may have many more occasions of seeing you in our midst.

May God, who has hitherto crowned your noble work with conspicuous success, spare you long, giving you vigour and strength to continue your noble Mission.

We remain, Revered Sir,
Yours faithfully,

* * *

for and on behalf of the Hindus of Jaffna.

An eloquent reply was given, and on the following evening the Swami lectured on Vedantism, a report of which is here appended:

The subject is very large and the time is short; a full analysis of the religion of the Hindus is impossible in one lecture. I will, therefore, present before you the salient points of our religion in as simple language as I can. The word Hindu, by which it is the fashion nowadays to style ourselves, has lost all its meaning, for this word merely meant
those who lived on the other side of the river Indus (in Sanskrit, Sindhu). This name was murdered into Hindu by the ancient Persians, and all people living on the other side of the river Sindhu were called by them Hindus. Thus this word has come down to us; and during the Mohammedan rule we took up the word ourselves. There may not be any harm in using the word, of course; but, as I have said, it has lost its significance, for you may mark that all the people who live on this side of the Indus in modern times do not follow the same religion as they did in ancient times. The word, therefore, covers not only Hindus proper, but Mohammedans, Christians, Jains, and other peoples who live in India. I, therefore, would not use the word Hindu. What word should we use then? The other words which alone we can use are either the Vaidiks, followers of the Vedas, or better still, the Vedantists, followers of the Vedanta. Most of the great religions of the world owe allegiance to certain books, which they believe are the words of God, or some other supernatural beings, and which are the basis of their religion. Now of all these books, according to the modern savants of the West, the oldest are the Vedas of the Hindus. A little understanding, therefore, is necessary about the Vedas.

This mass of writing called the Vedas is not the utterance of persons. Its date has never been fixed, can never be fixed, and, according to us, the Vedas
Vedantism

are eternal. There is one salient point which I want you to remember, that all the other religions of the world claim their authority as being delivered by a Personal God or a number of personal beings, angels, or special messengers of God, unto certain persons; while the claim of the Hindus is that the Vedas do not owe their authority to anybody, they are themselves the authority, being eternal—the knowledge of God. They were never written, never created, they have existed throughout time; just as creation is infinite and eternal, without beginning and without end, so is the knowledge of God without beginning and without end. And this knowledge is what is meant by the Vedas (Vid to know). The mass of knowledge called the Vedanta was discovered by personages called Rishis, and the Rishi is defined as a Mantra-drashtâ, a seer of thought; not that the thought was his own. Whenever you hear that a certain passage of the Vedas came from a certain Rishi, never think that he wrote it, or created it out of his mind; he was the seer of the thought which already existed; it existed in the universe eternally. This sage was the discoverer; the Rishis were spiritual discoverers.

This mass of writing, the Vedas, is divided principally into two parts, the Karma Kånda and the Jnåna Kånda—the work portion and the knowledge portion, the ceremonial and the spiritual. The work portion consists of various sacrifices; most of them of late have been given up as
not practicable under present circumstances, but others remain to the present day in some shape or other. The main ideas of the Karma Kanda, which consists of the duties of man, the duties of the student, of the householder, of the recluse, and the various duties of the different stations of life, are followed, more or less, down to the present day. But the spiritual portion of our religion is in the second part, the Jnana Kanda, the Vedanta, the end of the Vedas, the gist, the goal of the Vedas. The essence of the knowledge of the Vedas was called by the name of Vedanta, which comprises the Upanishads; and all the sects of India, Dualists, Qualified-Monists, Monists, or the Shaivites, Vaishnavites, Shâktas, Sauras, Gânapatyas—each one that dares to come within the fold of Hinduism, must acknowledge the Upanishads of the Vedas. They can have their own interpretations, and can interpret them in their own way, but they must obey the authority. That is why we want to use the word Vedantist instead of Hindu. All the philosophers of India who are orthodox have to acknowledge the authority of the Vedanta; and all our present-day religions, however crude some of them may appear to be, however inexplicable some of their purposes may seem, one who understands them and studies them, can trace them back to the ideas of the Upanishads. So deeply have these Upanishads sunk into our race that those of you who study the symbology of the crudest religion of the Hindus
Vedantism

will be astonished to find sometimes figurative expressions of the Upanishads—the Upanishads become symbolised after a time into figures and so forth. Great spiritual and philosophical ideas in the Upanishads are today with us, converted into household worship in the form of symbols. Thus the various symbols now used by us, all come from the Vedanta, because in the Vedanta they are used as figures, and these ideas spread among the nation and permeated it throughout, until they became part of their everyday life, as symbols.

Next to the Vedanta come the Smritis. These also are books written by sages, but the authority of the Smritis is subordinate to that of the Vedanta, because they stand in the same relation with us as the scriptures of the other religions stand with regard to them. We admit that the Smritis have been written by particular sages; in that sense they are the same as the scriptures of other religions, but these Smritis are not final authority. If there is anything in a Smriti which contradicts the Vedanta, the Smriti is to be rejected—its authority is gone. These Smritis, we see again, have varied from time to time. We read that such and such Smriti should have authority in the Satya Yuga, such and such in the Tretâ Yuga, some in the Dwâpara Yuga, and some in the Kali Yuğa, and so on. As essential conditions changed, as various circumstances came to have their influence on the race, manners and customs had to be changed, and these Smritis, as
mainly regulating the manners and customs of the nation, had also to be changed from time to time. This is a point I specially ask you to remember. The principles of religion that are in the Vedanta are unchangeable. Why? Because they are all built upon the eternal principles that are in man and nature; they can never change. Ideas about the soul, going to heaven, and so on, can never change; they were the same thousands of years ago, they are the same today, they will be the same millions of years hence. But those religious practices which are based entirely upon our social position and correlation, must change with the changes in society. Such an order, therefore, would be good and true at a certain period, and not at another. We find accordingly that a certain food is allowed at one time and not another, because the food was suitable for that time; but climate and other things changed, various other circumstances required to be met, so the Smriti changed the food and other things. Thus it naturally follows that if in modern times our society requires changes to be made, they must be met, and sages will come and show us the way how to meet them; but not one jot of the principles of our religion will be changed; they will remain intact.

Then there are the Purānas. पुराण परमकृत्याम्—which means, the Puranas are of five characteristics—that which treats of history, of cosmology, with various symbological illustration of philo-
Vedantism

sophical principles, and so forth. These were written to popularise the religion of the Vedas. The language in which the Vedas are written is very ancient, and even among scholars very few can trace the date of these books. The Puranas were written in the language of the people of that time, what we call modern Sanskrit. They were then meant, not for scholars, but for the ordinary people; and ordinary people cannot understand philosophy. Such things were given unto them in concrete form, by means of the lives of saints and kings and great men, and historical events that happened to the race, etc. The sages made use of these things to illustrate the eternal principles of religion.

There are still other books, the Tantras. These are very much like Puranas in some respects, and in some of them there is an attempt to revive the old sacrificial ideas of the Karma Kanda.

All these books constitute the scriptures of the Hindus. When there is such a mass of sacred books in a nation and in a race, which has devoted the greatest part of its energies to the thought of philosophy and spirituality (nobody knows for how many thousands of years), it is quite natural that there should be so many sects; indeed, it is a wonder that there are not thousands more. These sects differ very much from each other in certain points. We shall not have time to understand the differences between these sects, and all the spiritual details about them; therefore, I shall take up the common
grounds, the essential principles of all these sects, which every Hindu must believe.

The first is the question of creation, that this nature, Prakriti, Mâyâ, is infinite, without beginning. It is not that this world was created the other day, not that a God came and created the world, and since that time has been sleeping; for that cannot be. The creative energy is still going on. God is eternally creating—is never at rest. Remember the passage in the Gita where Krishna says, “If I remain at rest for one moment, this universe will be destroyed.” If that creative energy which is working all around us, day and night, stops for a second, the whole thing falls to the ground. There never was a time when that energy did not work throughout the universe, but there is the law of cycles, Pralaya. Our Sanskrit word for creation, properly translated, should be projection, and not creation. For the word creation in the English language has unhappily got that fearful, that most crude idea of something coming out of nothing, creation out of non-entity, non-existence becoming existence, which of course, I would not insult you by asking you to believe. Our word, therefore, is projection. The whole of this nature exists, it becomes finer, subsides and then after a period of rest, as it were, the whole thing is again projected forward, and the same combination, the same evolution, the same manifestations appear, and remain playing, as it were, for a certain time, only again
Vedantism

to break into pieces, to become finer and finer, until the whole thing subsides, and again comes out. Thus it goes on backwards and forwards, with a wave-like motion throughout eternity. Time, space, and causation are all within this Nature. To say, therefore, that it had a beginning, is utter nonsense. No question can occur as to its beginning, or its end. Therefore, wherever in our scriptures the words beginning and end are used, you must remember that it means the beginning and the end of one particular cycle; no more than that.

What makes this creation? God. What do I mean by the use of the English word God? Certainly not the word as ordinarily used in English; a good deal of difference. There is no other suitable word in English. I would rather confine myself to the Sanskrit word Brahman. He is the general cause of all these manifestations. What is this Brahman? He is eternal, eternally pure, eternally awake, the almighty, the all-knowing, the all-merciful, the omnipresent, the formless, the partless. He creates this universe. If he is always creating and holding up this universe, two difficulties arise. We see that there is partiality in the universe. One person is born happy, and another unhappy; one is rich and another is poor; this shows partiality. Then, there is cruelty also, for here the very condition of life is death. One animal tears another to pieces, and every man tries to get the better of his own brother. This competition,
truelty, horror, and sighs rending hearts day and night, is the state of things in this world of ours. If this be the creation of a God, that God is worse than cruel, worse than any devil that man ever imagined. Ay! says the Vedanta, it is not the fault of God that this partiality exists, that this competition exists. Who makes it? We ourselves. There is a cloud shedding its rain on all fields alike. But it is only the field that is well-cultivated, which gets the advantage of the shower; another field, which has not been tilled or taken care of cannot get that advantage. It is not the fault of the cloud. The mercy of God is eternal and unchangeable; it is we that make the differentiation. But how can this difference of some being born happy and some unhappy be explained? They do nothing to make out that difference! Not in this life, but they did in their last birth, and the difference is explained by this action in the previous life.

We now come to the second principle on which we all agree, not only all Hindus, but all Buddhists, and all Jains. We all agree that life is eternal. It is not that it has sprung out of nothing, for that cannot be. Such a life would not be worth having. Everything that has a beginning in time must end in time. If life began but yesterday, it must end tomorrow, and annihilation is the result. Life must have been existing. It does not now require much acumen to see that, for all the sciences of modern times have been coming round to our help, illus-
Vedantism

trating from the material world the principles embodied in our scriptures. You know it already, that each one of us is the effect of the infinite past; the child is ushered into the world, not as something flashing from the hands of nature, as poets delight so much to depict, but he has the burden of an infinite past; for good or evil he comes to work out his own past deeds. That makes the differentiation. This is the law of Karma. Each one of us is the maker of his own fate. This law knocks on the head at once all doctrines of predestination and fate, and gives us the only means of reconciliation between God and man. We, we, and none else, are responsible for what we suffer. We are the effects, and we are the causes. We are free therefore. If I am unhappy, it has been of my own making, and that very thing shows that I can be happy if I will. If I am impure, that is also of my own making, and that very thing shows that I can be pure if I will. The human will stands beyond all circumstances. Before it—the strong, gigantic, infinite will and freedom in man—all the powers, even of nature, must bow down, succumb, and become its servants. This is the result of the law of Karma.

The next question, of course, naturally would be: What is the soul? We cannot understand God in our scriptures without knowing the soul. There have been attempts in India, and outside of India too, to catch a glimpse of the beyond by
studying external nature; and we all know what an awful failure has been the result. Instead of giving us a glimpse of the beyond, the more we study the material world, the more we tend to become materialised. The more we handle the material world, even the little spirituality which we possessed before, vanishes. Therefore, that is not the way to spirituality, to knowledge of the Highest; but it must come through the heart, the human soul. The external workings do not teach us anything about the beyond, about the Infinite, it is only the internal that can do so. Through soul, therefore, the analysis of the human soul alone, can we understand God. There are differences of opinion as to the nature of the human soul among the various sects in India, but there are certain points of agreement. We all agree that souls are without beginning and without end, and immortal by their very nature; also, that all powers, blessing, purity, omnipresence, omniscience are buried in each soul. That is a grand idea we ought to remember. In every man and in every animal, however weak or wicked, great or small, resides the same omnipresent, omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul, but in the manifestation. Between me and the smallest animal, the difference is only in manifestation, but as a principle he is the same as I am, he is my brother, he has the same soul as I have. This is the greatest principle that India has preached. The talk of the brotherhood of man becomes in India the brother-
Vedantism

hood of universal life, of animals, and of all life down to the little ants—all these are our bodies. Even as our scripture says, "Thus the sage, knowing that the same Lord inhabits all bodies, will worship every body as such." That is why in India there have been such merciful ideas about the poor, about animals, about everybody, and everything else. This is one of the common grounds about our ideas of the soul.

Naturally, we come to the idea of God. One thing more about the soul. Those who study the English language are often deluded by the words, soul and mind. Our Atman and soul are entirely different things. What we call Manas, the mind, the Western people call soul. The West never had the idea of soul until they got it through Sanskrit philosophy, some twenty years ago. The body is here, beyond that is the mind, yet the mind is not the Atman; it is the fine body, the Sukshma Sharira, made of fine particles, which goes from birth to death, and so on; but behind the mind is the Atman, the soul, the Self of man. It cannot be translated by the word soul or mind, so we have to use the word Atman, or as Western philosophers have designated it, by the word Self. Whatever word you use, you must keep it clear in your mind that the Atman is separate from the mind, as well as from the body, and that is Atman goes through birth and death, accompanied by the mind, the Sukshma Sharira. And when the time comes that

33
it has attained to all knowledge, and manifested itself to perfection, then this going from birth to death ceases for it. Then it is at liberty either to keep that mind, the Sukshma Sharira, or to let it go for ever, and remain independent and free throughout all eternity. The goal of the soul is freedom. That is one peculiarity of our religion. We also have heavens and hells too; but these are not infinite, for in the very nature of things they cannot be. If there were any heavens, they would be only repetitions of this world of ours on a bigger scale, with a little more happiness, and a little more enjoyment, but that is all the worse for the soul. There are many of these heavens. Persons who do good works here with the thought of reward, when they die, are born again as gods in one of these heavens, as Indra and others. These gods are the names of certain states. They also had been men, and by good work they have become gods; and those different names that you read of, such as Indra, and so on, are not the names of the same person. There will be thousands of Indras. Nahusaha was a great king, and when he died he became Indra. It is a position; one soul becomes high and takes the Indra position and remains in it only a certain time; he then dies and is born again as man. But the human body is the highest of all. Some of the gods may try to go higher and give up all ideas of enjoyment in heavens; but, as in this world, wealth and position and enjoyment
Vedantism

delude the vast majority, so do most of the gods become deluded also, and after working out their good Karma, they fall down and become human beings again. This earth, therefore, is the Karma Bhumi; it is this earth from which we attain to liberation. So, even these heavens are not worth attaining to.

What is then worth having? Mukti, freedom. Even in the highest of heavens, says our scripture, you are a slave; what matters it if you are a king for twenty thousand years? So long as you have a body, so long as you are a slave to happiness, so long as time works on you, space works on you, you are a slave. The idea, therefore, is to be free of external and internal nature. Nature must fall at your feet, and you must trample on it, and be free and glorious, by going beyond. No more is there life; therefore, no more is there death; no more enjoyment; therefore, no more misery. It is bliss unspeakable, indestructible, beyond everything. What we call happiness and good here, are but particles of that eternal Bliss. And this eternal Bliss is our goal.

The soul is also sexless; we cannot say of the Atman that it is a man or a woman. Sex belongs to the body alone. All such ideas, therefore, as man or woman, are a delusion when spoken with regard to the Self, and are only proper when spoken of the body. So are the ideas of age. It never ages; the ancient One is always the same. How did It come
down to earth? There is but one answer to that in our scriptures. Ignorance is the cause of all this bondage. It is through ignorance that we have become bound; knowledge will cure it, by taking us to the other side. How will that knowledge come? Through love, Bhakti; by the worship of God, by loving all beings as the temples of God. He resides within them. Thus, with that intense love will come knowledge, and ignorance will disappear, the bonds will break, and the soul will be free.

There are two ideas of God in our scriptures; the one, the personal, and the other, the impersonal. The idea of the Personal God is that He is the omnipresent creator, preserver, and destroyer of everything, the eternal Father and Mother of the universe, but One who is eternally separate from us and from all souls; and liberation consists in coming near to Him and living in Him. Then there is the other idea of the Impersonal, where all those adjectives are taken away as superfluous, as illogical, and there remains an impersonal, omnipresent Being who cannot be called a knowing being, because knowledge only belongs to the human mind. He cannot be called a thinking being, because that is a process of the weak only. He cannot be called a reasoning being, because 'reasoning is a sign of weakness. He cannot be called a creating being, because none creates except in bondage. What bondage has He? None works except for the
Vedantism

fulfilment of desires; what desires has He? None works except it be to supply some wants; what wants has He? In the Vedas it is not the word "He" that is used, but "It", for "He" would make an invidious distinction, as if God were a man. "It", the impersonal, is used, and this impersonal "It" is preached. This system is called the Advaita.

And what are our relations with this Impersonal Being?—that we are He. We and He are one. Every one is but a manifestation of that Impersonal, the basis of all being, and misery consists in thinking of ourselves as different from this Infinite, Impersonal Being; and liberation consists in knowing our unity with this wonderful Impersonality. These, in short, are the two ideas of God that we find in our scriptures.

Some remarks ought to be made here. It is only through the idea of the Impersonal God that you can have any system of ethics. In every nation the truth has been preached from the most ancient times—love your fellow-beings as yourselves—I mean, love human beings as yourselves. In India it has been preached, "love all beings as yourselves"; we make no distinction between men and animals. But no reason was forthcoming; no one knew why it would be good to love other beings as ourselves. And the reason, why, is there in the idea of the Impersonal God; you understand it when you learn that the whole world is one—the oneness of the universe—the solidarity of all life—that in hurting
any one I am hurting myself, in loving any one I am loving myself. Hence we understand why it is that we ought not to hurt others. The reason for ethics, therefore, can only be had from this ideal of the Impersonal God. Then there is the question of the position of the Personal God in it. I understand the wonderful flow of love that comes from the idea of a Personal God, I thoroughly appreciate the power and potency of Bhakti on men to suit the needs of different times. What we now want in our country, however, is not so much of weeping, but a little strength. What a mine of strength is in this Impersonal God, when all superstitions have been thrown overboard, and man stands on his feet with the knowledge—I am the Impersonal Being of the world! What can make me afraid? I care not even for nature's laws. Death is a joke to me. Man stands on the glory of his own soul, the infinite, the eternal, the deathless—that soul which no instruments can pierce, which no heat can dry, nor fire burn, no water melt, the infinite, the birthless, the deathless, without beginning and without end, before whose magnitude the suns and moons and all their systems appear like drops in the ocean, before whose glory space melts away into nothingness, and time vanishes into non-existence. This glorious soul we must believe in. Out of that will come power. Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong
Vedantism

you will be; if you think yourselves impure, impure you will be; if you think yourselves pure, pure you will be. This teaches us not to think ourselves as weak, but as strong, omnipotent, omniscient. No matter that I have not expressed it yet; it is in me. All knowledge is in me, all power, all purity, and all freedom. Why cannot I express this knowledge? Because I do not believe in it. Let me believe in it, and it must and will come out. This is what the idea of the Impersonal teaches. Make your children strong from their very childhood; teach them not weakness, nor forms, but make them strong; let them stand on their feet—bold, all-conquering, all-suffering; and first of all, let them learn of the glory of the soul. That, you get alone in the Vedanta—and there alone. It has ideas of love and worship and other things which we have in other religions, and more besides; but this idea of the soul is the life-giving thought, the most wonderful. There, and there alone, is the great thought that is going to revolutionise the world and reconcile the knowledge of the material world with religion.

Thus I have tried to bring before you the salient points of our religion—the principles. I have only to say a few words about the practice and the application. As we have seen, under the circumstances existing in India, naturally many sects must appear. As a fact, we find that there are so many sects in India, and at the same time we know this mysteri-
ous fact that these sects do not quarrel with each other. The Shaivite does not say that every Vaish-
navite is going to be damned, nor the Vaishnavite that every Shaivite will be damned. The Shaivite
says, this is my path, and you have yours; at the end we must come together. They all know that
in India. This is the theory of Ishta. It has been recognised in the most ancient times that there are
various forms of worshipping God. It is also recognised that different natures require different
methods. Your method of coming to God may not be my method, possibly it might hurt me. Such an
idea as that there is but one way for everybody is injurious, meaningless, and entirely to be avoided.
Woe unto the world when everyone is of the same religious opinion and takes to the same path. Then
all religions and all thought will be destroyed. Variety is the very soul of life. When it dies out
entirely, creation will die. When this variation in thought is kept up, we must exist; and we need
not quarrel because of that variety. Your way is very good for you, but not for me. My way is good
for me, but not for you. My way is called in Sans-
krit, my “Ishta”. Mind you, we have no quarrel
with any religion in the world. We have each our
Ishta. But when we see men coming and saying,
“This is the only way”, and trying to force it on us
in India, we have a word to say; we laugh at them.
For such people who want to destroy their brothers
because they seem to follow a different path

40
Vedantism

towards God—for them to talk of love is absurd. Their love does not count for much. How can they preach of love who cannot bear another man to follow a different path from their own? If that is love, what is hatred? We have no quarrel with any religion in the world, whether it teaches men to worship Christ, Buddha, or Mahomet, or any other prophet. "Welcome, my brother," the Hindu says, "I am going to help you; but you must allow me to follow my way too. That is my Ishta. Your way is very good, no doubt; but it may be dangerous for me. My own experience tells me what food is good for me, and no army of doctors can tell me that. So I know from my own experience what path is the best for me." That is the goal, the Ishta, and, therefore, we say that if a temple, or a symbol, or an image helps you to realise the Divinity within, you are welcome to it. Have two hundred images if you like. If certain forms and formularies help you to realise the Divine, God speed you; have, by all means, whatever forms, and whatever temples, and whatever ceremonies you want, to bring you nearer to God. But do not quarrel about them; the moment you quarrel, you are not going Godward, you are going backward, towards the brutes.

These are a few ideas in our religion. It is one of inclusion of every one, exclusion of none. Though our castes and our institutions are apparently linked with our religion, they are not so. These institutions have been necessary to protect us
as a nation, and when this necessity for self-preservation will no more exist, they will die a natural death. But the older I grow, the better I seem to think of these time-honoured institutions of India. There was a time when I used to think that many of them were useless and worthless, but the older I grow, the more I seem to feel a diffidence in cursing any one of them, for each one of them is the embodiment of the experience of centuries. A child of but yesterday, destined to die the day after tomorrow, comes to me and asks me to change all my plans; and if I hear the advice of that baby and change all my surroundings according to his ideas, I myself should be a fool, and no one else. Much of the advice that is coming to us from different countries is similar to this. Tell these wise- acres: “I will hear you when you have made a stable society yourselves. You cannot hold on to one idea for two days, you quarrel and fail; you are born like moths in the spring and die like them in five minutes. You come up like bubbles and burst like bubbles too. First form a stable society like ours. First make laws and institutions that remain undiminished in their power through scores of centuries. Then will be the time to talk on the subject with you, but till then, my friend, you are only a giddy child.”

I have finished what I had to say about our religion. I will end by reminding you of the one pressing necessity of the day. Praise be to Vyâsa,
Vedantism

the great author of the Mahâbhârata, that in this Kali Yuga there is one great work. The Tapas and the other hard Yogas that were practised in other Yugas do not work now. What is needed in this Yuga is giving, helping others. What is meant by Dâna? The highest of gifts is the giving of spiritual knowledge, the next is the giving of secular knowledge, and the next is the saving of life, the last is giving food and drink. He who gives spiritual knowledge, saves the soul from many and many a birth. He who gives secular knowledge opens the eyes of human beings towards spiritual knowledge, and far below these rank all other gifts, even the saving of life. Therefore, it is necessary that you learn this, and note that all other kinds of work are of much less value than that of imparting spiritual knowledge. The highest and greatest help is that given in the dissemination of spiritual knowledge. There is an eternal fountain of spirituality in our scriptures, and nowhere on earth, except in this land of renunciation, do we find such noble examples of practical spirituality. I have had a little experience of the world. Believe me, there is much talking in other lands; but the practical man of religion, who has carried it into his life, is here and here alone. Talking is not religion; parrots may talk, machines may talk nowadays. But show me the life of renunciation, of spirituality, of all-suffering, of love infinite. This kind of life indicates a spiritual man. With such ideas and such
Lectures from Colombo to Almora

noble practical examples in our country, it would be a great pity if the treasures in the brains and hearts of all these great Yogis were not brought out to become the common property of every one, rich and poor, high and low; not only in India, but they must be thrown broadcast all over the world. This is one of our greatest duties, and you will find that the more you work to help others, the more you help yourselves. The one vital duty incumbent on you, if you really love your religion, if you really love your country, is that you must struggle hard to be up and doing, with this one great idea of bringing out the treasures from your closed books, and delivering them over to their rightful heirs.

And above all, one thing is necessary. Aye, for ages we have been saturated with awful jealousy; we are always getting jealous of each other. Why has this man a little precedence, and not I? Even in the worship of God we want precedence, to such a state of slavery have we come. This is to be avoided. If there is any crying sin in India at this time it is this slavery. Every one wants to command, and no one wants to obey; and this is owing to the absence of that wonderful Brahmacharya system of yore. First, learn to obey. The command will come by itself. Always first learn to be a servant, and then you will be fit to be a master. Avoid this jealousy, and you will do great works that have yet to be done. Our ancestors did most wonderful works, and we look back upon their work

44
Vedantism

with veneration and pride. But we also are going to do great deeds, and let others look back with blessings and pride upon us, as their ancestors. With the blessing of the Lord every one here will yet do such deeds that will eclipse those of our ancestors, great and glorious as they may have been.
REPLY TO THE ADDRESS OF WELCOME AT PAMBAN

On the arrival of Swami Vivekananda at Pamban, he was met by His Highness the Raja of Ramnad, who accorded him a hearty welcome. Preparations had been made at the landing wharf for a formal reception; and here, under a pandal which had been decorated with great taste, the following address on behalf of the Pamban people was read:

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HOLINESS,

We greatly rejoice to welcome Your Holiness with hearts full of deepest gratitude and highest veneration—gratitude for having so readily and graciously consented to pay us a flying visit in spite of the numerous calls on you, and veneration for the many noble and excellent qualities that you possess and for the great work you have so nobly undertaken to do, and which you have been discharging with conspicuous ability, utmost zeal, and earnestness.

We truly rejoice to see that the efforts of Your Holiness in sowing the seeds of Hindu philosophy in the cultured minds of the great Western nations are being crowned with so much success that we already see all around the bright and cheerful aspect of the bearing of excellent fruits in great abund-
ance, and most humbly pray that Your Holiness will, during your sojourn in Āryāvarta, be graciously pleased to exert yourself even a little more than you did in the West, to awaken the minds of your brethren in this our motherland from their dreary lifelong slumber and make them recall to their minds the long-forgotten gospel of truth.

Our hearts are so full of the sincerest affection, greatest reverence, and highest admiration for Your Holiness—our great spiritual leader, that we verily find it impossible to adequately express our feelings, and, therefore, beg to conclude with an earnest and united prayer to the merciful Providence to bless Your Holiness with a long life of usefulness, and to grant you everything that may tend to bring about the long-lost feeling of universal brotherhood.

The Raja added to this a brief personal welcome, which was remarkable for its depth of feeling, and then the Swami replied to the following effect:

Our sacred motherland is a land of religion and philosophy—the birthplace of spiritual giants—the land of renunciation, where and where alone, from the most ancient to the most modern times, there has been the highest ideal of life open to man.

I have been in the countries of the West—have travelled through many lands, of many races; and each race and each nation appears to me to have a particular ideal—a prominent ideal running through its whole life; and this ideal is the backbone of the national life. Not politics nor military
power, not commercial supremacy nor mechanical genius, furnishes India with that backbone, but religion; and religion alone, is all that we have and mean to have. Spirituality has been always in India.

Great indeed are the manifestations of muscular power, and marvellous the manifestations of intellect expressing themselves through machines by the appliances of science; yet, none of these is more potent than the influence which spirit exerts upon the world.

The history of our race shows that India has always been most active. Today, we are taught by men who ought to know better that the Hindu is mild and passive; and this has become a sort of proverb with the people of other lands. I discard the idea that India was ever passive. Nowhere has activity been more pronounced than in this blessed land of ours, and the great proof of this activity is that our most ancient and magnanimous race still lives, and at every decade in its glorious career seems to take on fresh youth—undying and imperishable. This activity manifests here in religion. But it is a peculiar fact in human nature that it judges others according to its own standard of activity. Take, for instance, a shoemaker. He understands only shoemaking and thinks there is nothing in this life except the manufacturing of shoes. A bricklayer understands nothing but bricklaying and proves this alone in his life from day to day. And there is another reason which explains
this. When the vibrations of light are very intense, we do not see them, because we are so constituted that we cannot go beyond our own plane of vision. But the Yogi with his spiritual introspection is able to see through the materialistic veil of the vulgar crowds.

The eyes of the whole world are now turned towards this land of India for spiritual food; and India has to provide it for all the races. Here alone is the best ideal for mankind; and Western scholars are now striving to understand this ideal which is enshrined in our Sanskrit literature and philosophy, and which has been the characteristic of India all through the ages.

Since the dawn of history, no missionary went out of India to propagate the Hindu doctrines and dogmas; but now a wonderful change is coming over us. Shri Bhagavân Krishna says, "Whenever virtue subsides and immorality prevails, then I come again and again to help the world." Religious researches disclose to us the fact that there is not a country possessing a good ethical code but has borrowed something of it from us, and there is not one religion possessing good ideas of the immortality of the soul but has derived it directly or indirectly from us.

There never was a time in the world's history when there was so much robbery and high-handedness, and tyranny of the strong over the weak, as at this latter end of the nineteenth century. Every-
body should know that there is no salvation except through the conquering of desires, and that no man is free who is subject to the bondage of matter. This great truth all nations are slowly coming to understand and appreciate. As soon as the disciple is in a position to grasp this truth, the words of the Guru come to his help. The Lord sends help to His own children in His infinite mercy which never ceaseth and is ever flowing in all creeds. Our Lord is the Lord of all religions. This idea belongs to India alone; and I challenge any one of you to find it in any other scripture of the world.

We Hindus have now been placed, under God's providence, in a very critical and responsible position. The nations of the West are coming to us for spiritual help. A great moral obligation rests on the sons of India to fully equip themselves for the work of enlightening the world on the problems of human existence. One thing we may note, that whereas you will find that good and great men of other countries take pride in tracing back their descent to some robber-baron who lived in a mountain fortress and emerged from time to time to plunder passing wayfarers, we Hindus, on the other hand, take pride in being the descendants of Rishis and sages, who lived on roots and fruits in mountains and caves, meditating on the Supreme. We may be degraded and degenerated now, but however degraded and degenerated we may be, we
can become great if we only begin to work in right earnest on behalf of our religion.

Accept my hearty thanks for the kind and cordial reception you have given me. It is impossible for me to express my gratitude to H. H. the Raja of Ramnad for his love towards me. If any good work has been done by me and through me, India owes much to this good man, for it was he who conceived the idea of my going to Chicago, and it was he who put that idea into my head and persistently urged me on to accomplish it. Standing beside me, he with all his old enthusiasm is still expecting me to do more and more work. I wish there were half a dozen more such Rajas to take interest in our dear motherland, and work for her amelioration in the spiritual line.
ADDRESS AT THE RAMESWARAM TEMPLE ON REAL WORSHIP

A visit was subsequently paid to the Rameswaram Temple, where the Swami was asked to address a few words to the people who had assembled there. This he did in the following terms:

It is in love that religion exists and not in ceremony, in the pure and sincere love in the heart. Unless a man is pure in body and mind, his coming into a temple and worshipping Shiva is useless. The prayers of those that are pure in mind and body will be answered by Shiva, and those that are impure, and yet try to teach religion to others, will fail in the end. External worship is only a symbol of internal worship; but internal worship and purity are the real things. Without them, external worship would be of no avail. Therefore, you must all try to remember this.

People have become so degraded in this Kali Yuga that they think they can do anything, and then they can go to a holy place, and their sins will be forgiven. If a man goes with an impure mind into a temple, he adds to the sins that he had already, and goes home a worse man than when he left it. Tirtha (place of pilgrimage) is a place which is full of holy things and holy men. But if
holly people live in a certain place, and if there is no temple there, even that is a Tirtha. If unholy people live in a place where there may be a hundred temples, the Tirtha has vanished from that place. And it is most difficult to live in a Tirtha, for if sin is committed in any ordinary place it can easily be removed; but sin committed in a Tirtha cannot be removed. This is the gist of all worship—to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.

A rich man had a garden and two gardeners. One of these gardeners was very lazy and did not work; but when the owner came to the garden, the lazy man would get up and fold his arms and say, "How beautiful is the face of my master", and dance before him. The other gardener would not talk much, but would work hard, and produce all sorts of fruits and vegetables which he would carry on his head to his master who lived a long way off. Of these two gardeners, which would be the more beloved of his master? Shiva is that master, and this world is His garden, and there are two sorts of gardeners here; the one who is lazy, hypocritical, and does nothing, only talking about Shiva's
beautiful eyes and nose and other features; and the other, who is taking care of Shiva's children, all those that are poor and weak, all animals, and all His creation. Which of these would be the more beloved of Shiva? Certainly, he that serves His children. He who wants to serve the father must serve the children first. He who wants to serve Shiva must serve His children—must serve all creatures in this world first. It is said in the Shâstra that those who serve the servants of God are His greatest servants. So you will bear this in mind.

Let me tell you again, that you must be pure and help any one who comes to you as much as lies in your power. And this is good Karma. By the power of this, the heart becomes pure (Chittashuddhi), and then Shiva who is residing in every one, will become manifest. He is always in the heart of every one. If there is dirt and dust on a mirror, we cannot see our image. So ignorance and wickedness are the dirt and dust that are on the mirror of our hearts. Selfishness is the chief sin, thinking of ourselves first. He who thinks, "I will eat first, I will have more money than others, and I will possess everything", he who thinks "I will get to heaven before others, I will get Mukti before others", is the selfish man. The unselfish man says, "I will be last, I do not care to go to heaven, I will even go to hell, if by doing so I can help my brothers." This unselfishness is the test of religion. He who has more of this
unselfishness is more spiritual and nearer to Shiva. Whether he is learned or ignorant, he is nearer to Shiva than anybody else, whether he knows it or not. And if a man is selfish, even though he has visited all the temples, seen all the places of pilgrimage, and painted himself like a leopard, he is still further off from Shiva.