REPLY TO THE ADDRESS OF WELCOME AT RAMNAD

At Ramnad the following address was presented to Swami Vivekananda by the Raja:

His Most Holiness,

Sri Paramahamsa, Yathi-Râja, Digvijaya-Kolâhala, Sarvamata-Sampratipanna, Parama-Yogeeswara, Srimat Bhagavân Sree Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Karakamala-Sanjâtha, Râjâdhirâja-Sevitha, SREE VIVEKNANDA SWAMI MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HOLINESS.

We, the inhabitants of this ancient and historic Samasthânam of Sethu Bandha Rameshwar, otherwise known as Râmanâthpuram or Ramnad, beg, most cordially, to welcome you to this, our motherland. We deem it a very rare privilege to be the first to pay your Holiness our heartfelt homage on your landing in India, and that, on the shores sanctified by the footsteps of that great Hero and our revered Lord—Sree Bhagavân Râmachandra.

We have watched with feelings of genuine pride and pleasure the unprecedented success which has crowned your laudable efforts in bringing home to the master-minds of the West the intrinsic merits and excellence of our time-honoured and noble religion. You have, with an eloquence that is unsurpassed and in language plain and unmistakable,
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proclaimed to and convinced the cultured audiences in Europe and America that Hinduism fulfils all the requirements of the ideal of a universal religion, and adapts itself to the temperament and needs of men and women of all races and creeds. Animated purely by a disinterested impulse, influenced by the best of motives and at considerable self-sacrifice, Your Holiness has crossed boundless seas and oceans to convey the message of truth and peace, and to plant the flag of India's spiritual triumph and glory in the rich soil of Europe and America. Your Holiness has, both by precept and practice, shown the feasibility and importance of universal brotherhood. Above all, your labours in the West have indirectly and to a great extent tended to awaken the apathetic sons and daughters of India to a sense of the greatness and glory of their ancestral faith, and to create in them a genuine interest in the study and observance of their dear and priceless religion.

We feel we cannot adequately convey in words our feelings of gratitude and thankfulness to your Holiness for your philanthropic labours towards the spiritual regeneration of the East and the West. We cannot close this address without referring to the great kindness which your Holiness has always extended to our Raja, who is one of your devoted disciples, and the honour and pride he feels by this gracious act of your Holiness in landing first on his territory is indescribable.

In conclusion, we pray to the Almighty to bless
your Holiness with long life, and health and strength to enable you to carry on the good work that has been so ably inaugurated by you.

With respects and love,
We beg to subscribe ourselves,
Your Holiness' most devoted and obedient Disciples and Servants.

Ramnad,
25th January, 1897.

The Swami's reply follows in extenso:

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were, from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, and of work, India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the preverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward
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powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite
giant is rising to her feet.

Your Highness and gentlemen of Ramnad, accept
my heartfelt thanks for the cordiality and kindness
with which you have received me. I feel that you
are cordial and kind, for heart speaks unto heart
better than any language of the mouth; spirit
speaks unto spirit in silence, and yet in most unmis-
takable language, and I feel it in my heart of
hearts. Your Highness of Ramnad, if there has been
any work done by my humble self in the cause of
our religion and our motherland in the Western
countries, if any little work has been done in rousing
the sympathies of our own people, by drawing their
attention to the inestimable jewels that, they know
not, are lying deep buried about their own home—
if, instead of dying of thirst and drinking dirty
ditch-water elsewhere, out of the blindness of igno-
rance they are being called to go and drink from the
eternal fountain which is flowing perennially by
their own homes—if anything has been done to rouse
our people towards action, to make them under-
stand that in everything, religion and religion alone
is the life of India, and when that goes India will
die, in spite of politics, in spite of social reforms, in
spite of Kubera's wealth poured upon the head of
every one of her children—if anything has been done
towards this end, India and every country where
any work has been done owe much of it to you,
Raja of Ramnad. For it was you who gave me the
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idea first, and it was you who persistently urged me on towards the work. You, as it were, intuitively understood what was going to be, and took me by the hand, helped me all along, and have never ceased to encourage me. Well is it, therefore, that you should be the first to rejoice at my success, and meet it is that I should first land in your territory on my return to India.

Great works are to be done, wonderful powers have to be worked out, we have to teach other nations many things, as has been said already by your Highness. This is the motherland of philosophy, of spirituality, and of ethics, of sweetness, gentleness, and love. These still exist, and my experience of the world leads me to stand on firm ground, and make the bold statement that India is still the first and foremost of all the nations of the world in these respects. Look at this little phenomenon. There have been immense political changes within the last four or five years. Gigantic organisations undertaking to subvert the whole of existing institutions in different countries and meeting with a certain amount of success have been working all over the Western world. Ask our people if they have heard anything about them. They have heard not a word about them. But that there was a Parliament of Religions in Chicago, and that there was a Sannyâsin sent over from India to that Parliament, and that he was very well received, and since that time has been working in the West, the
poorest beggar has known. I have heard it said that our masses are dense, that they do not want any education, and that they do not care for any information. I had at one time a foolish leaning towards that opinion myself, but I find experience is a far more glorious teacher than any amount of speculation, or any amount of books written by globe-trotters and hasty observers. This experience teaches me that they are not dense, that they are not slow, that they are as eager and thirsty for information as any race under the sun; but then each nation has its own part to play, and naturally, each nation has its own peculiarity and individuality, with which it is born. Each represents, as it were, one peculiar note in this harmony of nations, and this is its very life, its vitality. In it is the backbone, the foundation, and the bedrock of the national life, and here in this blessed land, the foundation, the backbone, the life-centre is religion and religion alone. Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition of immense wealth poured in by trade, of the power and spread of commercialism, of the glorious fountain of physical liberty; but these the Hindu mind does not understand and does not want to understand. Touch him on spirituality, on religion, on God, on the soul, on the Infinite, on spiritual freedom, and I assure you, the lowest peasant in India is better informed on these subjects than many a so-called philosopher in other lands. I have said, gentlemen,
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that we have yet something to teach to the world. This is the very reason, the raison d’être, that this nation has lived on, in spite of hundreds of years of persecution, in spite of nearly a thousand years of foreign rule and foreign oppression. This nation still lives; the raison d’être is, it still holds to God, to the treasure-house of religion and spirituality.

In this land are, still, religion and spirituality, the fountains which will have to overflow and flood the world, to bring in new life and new vitality to the Western and other nations, which are now almost borne down, half-killed, and degraded by political ambitions and social scheming. From out of the many voices, consonant and dissentient, from out of the medley of sounds filling the Indian atmosphere, rises up supreme, striking, and full, one note, and that is renunciation. Give up! That is the watchword of the Indian religions. This world is a delusion of two days. The present life is of five minutes. Beyond is the Infinite, beyond this world of delusion; let us seek that. This continent is illumined with brave and gigantic minds and intelligences which even think of this so-called infinite universe as only a mud-puddle; beyond and still beyond they go. Time, even infinite time, is to them but non-existence. Beyond and beyond time they go. Space is nothing to them; beyond that they want to go, and this going beyond the phenomenal is the very soul of religion. The characteristic of my nation is this transcendentalism, this struggle.
to go beyond, this daring to tear the veil off the face of nature and have at any risk, at any price, a glimpse of the beyond. That is our ideal, but of course all the people in a country cannot give up entirely. Do you want to enthuse them, then here is the way to do so. Your talks of politics, of social regeneration, your talks of money-making and commercialism—all these will roll off like water from a duck's back. This spirituality, then, is what you have to teach the world. Have we to learn anything else, have we to learn anything from the world? We have, perhaps, to gain a little in material knowledge, in the power of organisation, in the ability to handle powers, organising powers, in bringing the best results out of the smallest of causes. This perhaps to a certain extent we may learn from the West. But if any one preaches in India the ideal of eating and drinking and making merry, if any one wants to apotheosise the material world into a God, that man is a liar; he has no place in this holy land, the Indian mind does not want to listen to him. Aye, in spite of the sparkle and glitter of Western civilisation, in spite of all its polish and its marvellous manifestation of power; standing upon this platform, I tell them to their face that it is all vain. It is vanity of vanities. God alone lives. The soul alone lives. Spirituality alone lives. Hold on to that.

Yet, perhaps, some sort of materialism, toned down to our own requirements, would be a blessing to
many of our brothers who are not yet ripe for the highest truths. This is the mistake made in every country and in every society, and it is a greatly regrettable thing that in India, where it was always understood, the same mistake of forcing the highest truths on people who are not ready for them, has been made of late. My method need not be yours. The Sannyasin, as you all know, is the ideal of the Hindu’s life, and every one by our Shâstras is compelled to give up. Every Hindu who has tasted the fruits of this world must give up in the latter part of his life, and he who does not is not a Hindu, and has no more right to call himself a Hindu. We know that this is the ideal—to give up after seeing and experiencing the vanity of things. Having found out that the heart of the material world is a mere hollow, containing only ashes, give it up and go back. The mind is circling forward, as it were, towards the senses, and that mind has to circle backwards; the Pravritti has to stop and the Nivritti has to begin. That is the ideal. But that ideal can only be realised after a certain amount of experience. We cannot teach the child the truth of renunciation; the child is a born optimist; his whole life is in his senses; his whole life is one mass of sense-enjoyment. So there are childlike men in every society, who require a certain amount of experience, of enjoyment, to see through the vanity of it, and then renunciation will come to them. There has been ample provision made for them in
our Books; but unfortunately, in later times, there has been a tendency to bind every one down by the same laws as those by which the Sannyasin is bound, and that is a great mistake. But for that a good deal of the poverty and the misery that you see in India need not have been. A poor man’s life is hemmed in and bound down by tremendous spiritual and ethical laws for which he has no use. Hands off! Let the poor fellow enjoy himself a little, and then he will raise himself up and renunciation will come to him of itself. Perhaps in this line, we can be taught something by the Western people; but we must be very cautious in learning these things. I am sorry to say that most of the examples one meets nowadays of men who have imbibed the Western ideas are more or less failures.

There are two great obstacles on our path in India, the Scylla of old orthodoxy, and the Charybdis of modern European civilisation. Of these two, I vote for the old orthodoxy, and not for the Europeanised system; for the old orthodox man may be ignorant, he may be crude, but he is a man, he has a faith, he has strength, he stands on his own feet; while the Europeanised man has no backbone, he is a mass of heterogeneous ideas picked up at random from every source—and these ideas are unassimilated, undigested, unharmonised. He does not stand on his own feet, and his head is turning round and round. Where is the motive power of his work?—in a few patronising pats from the English
people. His schemes of reforms, his vehement vituperations against the evils of certain social customs, have, as the mainspring, some European patronage. Why are some of our customs called evils? Because the Europeans say so. That is about the reason he gives. I would not submit to that. Stand and die in your own strength; if there is any sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death. These unbalanced creatures are not yet formed into distinct personalities; what are we to call them——men, women, or animals? While those old orthodox people were staunch and were men. There are still some excellent examples, and the one I want to present before you now is your Raja of Ramnad. Here, you have a man than whom there is no more zealous a Hindu throughout the length and breadth of this land; here, you have a prince than whom there is no prince in this land better informed in all affairs, both oriental and occidental, who takes from every nation whatever he can that is good. “Learn good knowledge with all devotion from the lowest caste. Learn the way to freedom, even if it comes from a Pariah, by serving him. If a woman is a jewel, take her in marriage even if she comes from a low family of the lowest caste.” Such is the law laid down by our great and peerless legislator, the divine Manu. This is true. Stand on your own feet, and assimilate what you can; learn from every nation, take what is of use to you. But
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remember that as Hindus everything else must be subordinated to our own national ideas. Each man has a mission in life, which is the result of all his infinite past Karma. Each of you was born with a splendid heritage, which is the whole of the infinite past life of your glorious nation. Millions of your ancestors are watching, as it were, every action of yours, so be alert. And what is the mission with which every Hindu child is born? Have you not read the proud declaration of Manu regarding the Brâhmin, where he says, that the birth of the Brahmin is—"for the protection of the treasury of religion". I should say that that is the mission not only of the Brahmin, but of every child, whether boy or girl, who is born in this blessed land—"for the protection of the treasury of religion". And every other problem in life must be subordinated to that one principal theme. That is also the law of harmony in music. There may be a nation whose theme of life is political supremacy; religion and everything else must become subordinate to that one great theme of its life. But here is another nation whose great theme of life is spirituality and renunciation, whose one watchword is, that this world is all vanity and a delusion of three days; and everything else, whether science or knowledge, enjoyments or powers, wealth, fame, or name, must be subordinated to that one theme. The secret of a true Hindu's character lies in the subordination of his knowledge of European sciences and learning, of
his wealth, position, and name, to that one principal theme which is inborn in every Hindu child—the spirituality and purity of the race. Therefore, between these two, the case of the orthodox man who has the whole of that life-spring of the race, spirituality, and the other man, whose hands are full of Western imitation-jewels but has no hold on the life-giving principle, spirituality—of these, I do not doubt that every one here will agree that we should choose the first, the orthodox, because there is some hope in him—he has the national theme, something to hold to; so he will live, but the other will die. Just as in the case of individuals, if the principle of life is undisturbed, if the principal function of that individual life is present, any injuries received as regards other functions are not serious, do not kill the individual, so, as long as this principal function of our life is not disturbed, nothing can destroy our nation. But mark you, if you give up that spirituality, leaving it aside to go after the materialising civilisation of the West, the result will be that in three generations you will be an extinct race; because the backbone of the nation will be broken, the foundation upon which the national edifice has been built will be undermined, and the result will be annihilation all round.

Therefore, my friends, the way out is that first and foremost we must keep a firm hold on spirituality—that inestimable gift handed down to us by our ancient forefathers. Did you ever hear of a country
where the greatest kings tried to trace their descent not to kings, not to robber-barons living in old castles who plundered poor travellers, but to semi-naked sages who lived in the forest? Did you ever hear of such a land? This is the land. In other countries great priests try to trace their descent to some king, but here, the greatest kings would trace their descent to some ancient priest. Therefore, whether you believe in spirituality or not, for the sake of the national life, you have to get a hold on spirituality and keep to it. Then stretch the other hand out and gain all you can from other races, but everything must be subordinated to that one ideal of life; and out of that a wonderful, glorious, future India will come—I am sure it is coming—a greater India than ever was. Sages will spring up greater than all the ancient sages; and your ancestors will not only be satisfied, but I am sure, they will be proud, from their positions in other worlds, to look down upon their descendants, so glorious, and so great.

Let us all work hard, my brethren, this is no time for sleep. On our work depends the coming of the India of the future. She is there ready waiting. She is only sleeping. Arise and awake, and see her seated here, on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was—this motherland of ours. The idea of God was nowhere else ever so fully developed as in this motherland of ours, for the same idea of God never existed anywhere else.
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Perhaps you are astonished at my assertion; but show me any idea of God from any other scripture equal to ours; they have only clan-Gods, the God of the Jews, the God of the Arabs, and of such and such a race, and their God is fighting the Gods of the other races. But the idea of that beneficent, most merciful God, our father, our mother, our friend, the friend of our friends, the soul of our souls, is here and here alone. And may He who is the Shiva of the Shaivites, the Vishnu of the Vaishnavites, the Karma of the Karmis, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jina of the Jains, the Jehova of the Christians and the Jews, the Allah of the Mohammedans, the Lord of every sect, the Brahman of the Vedantists, He the all-pervading, whose glory has been known only in this land—may He bless us, may He help us, may He give strength unto us, energy unto us, to carry this idea into practice. May that which we have listened to and studied become food to us, may it become strength in us, may it become energy in us to help each other; may we, the teacher and the taught, not be jealous of each other! Peace, peace, peace, in the name of Hari!
REPLY TO THE ADDRESS OF WELCOME AT PARAMAKUDI

Paramakudi was the first stopping-place after leaving Ramnad, and there was a demonstration on a large scale, including the presentation of the following address:

SREE MAT VIVEKANANDA SWAMI

We, the citizens of Paramakudi, respectfully beg to accord to your Holiness a most hearty welcome to this place after your successful spiritual campaign of nearly four years in the Western world.

We share with our countrymen the feeling of joy and pride at the philanthropy which prompted you to attend the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago, and lay before the representatives of the religious world the sacred but hidden treasures of our ancient land. You have by your wide exposition of the sacred truths contained in the Vedic literature, disabused the enlightened minds of the West of the prejudices entertained by them against our ancient faith, and convinced them of its universality and adaptability for intellects of all shades and in all ages.

The presence amongst us of your Western disciples is proof positive that your religious teachings have not only been understood in theory, but have also
borne practical fruits. The magnetic influence of your august person reminds us of our ancient holy Rishis whose realisation of the Self by asceticism and self-control made them the true guides and preceptors of the human race.

In conclusion, we most earnestly pray to the All-Merciful that your Holiness may long be spared to continue to bless and spiritualise the whole of mankind.

With best regards,

We beg to subscribe ourselves,
Your Holiness' most obedient and devoted DISCIPLES and SERVANTS.

In the course of his reply the Swami said:

It is almost impossible to express my thanks for the kindness and cordiality with which you have received me. But, if I may be permitted to say so, I will add that my love for my country, and especially for my countrymen, will be the same whether they receive me with the utmost cordiality, or spurn me from the country. For in the Gita Shri Krishna says—men should work for work's sake only, and love for love's sake. The work that has been done by me in the Western world has been very little; there is no one present here who could not have done a hundred times more work in the West than has been done by me. And I am anxiously waiting for the day when mighty minds will arise, gigantic spiritual minds, who will

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be ready to go forth from India to the ends of the world, to teach spirituality and renunciation—those ideas which have come from the forests of India and belong to Indian soil alone.

There come periods in the history of the human race when, as it were, whole nations are seized with a sort of world-weariness, when they find that all their plans are slipping between their fingers, that old institutions and systems are crumbling into dust, that their hopes are all blighted, and everything seems to be out of joint. Two attempts have been made in the world to found social life; the one was upon religion, and the other was upon social necessity. The one was founded upon spirituality, the other upon materialism; the one upon transcendentalism, the other upon realism. The one looks beyond the horizon of this little material world and is bold enough to begin life there, even apart from the other. The other, the second, is content to take its stand on the things of the world and expects to find a firm footing there. Curiously enough, it seems that at times the spiritual side prevails, and then the materialistic side—in wave-like motion following each other. In the same country there will be different tides. At one time the full flood of materialistic ideas prevails, and everything in this life—prosperity, the education which procures more pleasure, more food—will become glorious at first and then, that will degrade and degenerate. Along with the prosperity, will
rise to white heat all the inborn jealousies and hatreds of the human race. Competition and merciless cruelty will be the watchword of the day. To quote a very commonplace and not very elegant English proverb, “Everyone for himself, and the devil take the hindmost”, becomes the motto of the day. Then people think that the whole scheme of life is a failure. And the world would be destroyed, had not spirituality come to the rescue and lent a helping hand to the sinking world. Then the world gets new hope and finds a new basis for a new building, and another wave of spirituality comes, which in time again declines. As a rule, spirituality brings a class of men who lay exclusive claim to the special powers of the world. The immediate effect of this is a reaction towards materialism, which opens the door to scores of exclusive claims, until the time comes when not only all the spiritual powers of the race, but all its material powers and privileges are centred in the hands of a very few; and these few, standing on the neck of the masses of the people, want to rule them. Then society has to help itself, and materialism comes to the rescue.

If you look at India, our motherland, you will see that the same thing is going on now. That you are here today to welcome one who went to Europe to preach Vedanta, would have been impossible had not the materialism of Europe opened the way for it. Materialism has come to the rescue of
India in a certain sense, by throwing open the doors of life to everyone, by destroying the exclusive privileges of caste, by opening up to discussion the inestimable treasures which were hidden away in the hands of a very few who have even lost the use of them. Half has been stolen and lost; and the other half which remains, is in the hands of men who, like dogs in the manger, do not eat themselves and will not allow others to do so. On the other hand, the political systems that we are struggling for in India, have been in Europe for ages, have been tried for centuries, and have been found wanting. One after another, the institutions, systems, and everything connected with political government have been condemned as useless; and Europe is restless, does not know where to turn. The material tyranny is tremendous. The wealth and power of a country are in the hands of a few men who do not work, but manipulate the work of millions of human beings. By this power they can deluge the whole earth with blood. Religion and all things are under their feet; they rule and stand supreme. The Western world is governed by a handful of Shylocks. All those things that you hear about—constitutional government, freedom, liberty, and parliaments—are but jokes.

The West is groaning under the tyranny of the Shylocks, and the East is groaning under the tyranny of the priests; each must keep the other in check.
Do not think that one alone is to help the world. In this creation of the impartial Lord, He has made equal every particle in the universe. The worst, most demoniacal man has some virtues which the greater saint has not; and the lowest worm may have certain things which the highest man has not. The poor labourer, who you think has so little enjoyment in life, has not your intellect, cannot understand the Vedanta Philosophy and so forth; but compare your body with his, and you will see, his body is not so sensitive to pain as yours. If he gets severe cuts on his body, they heal up more quickly than yours would. His life is in the senses, and he enjoys there. His life also is one of equilibrium and balance. Whether on the ground of materialism, or of intellect, or of spirituality, the compensation that is given by the Lord to every one impartially is exactly the same. Therefore we must not think that we are the saviours of the world. We can teach the world a good many things, and we can learn a good many things from it too. We can teach the world only what it is waiting for. The whole of Western civilisation will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. It is hopeless and perfectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword. You will find that the very centres from which such ideas as government by force sprang up are the very first centres to degrade and degenerate and crumble to pieces. Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble.
into dust within fifty years, if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground and make spirituality the basis of her life. And what will save Europe is the religion of the Upanishads.

Apart from the different sects, philosophies, and scriptures, there is one underlying doctrine—the belief in the soul of man, the Atman—common to all our sects; and that can change the whole tendency of the world. With Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists, in fact everywhere in India, there is the idea of a spiritual soul which is the receptacle of all power. And you know full well that there is not one system of philosophy in India which teaches you that you can get power, or purity, or perfection from outside; but they all tell you that these are your birthright, your nature. Impurity is a mere superimposition, under which your real nature has become hidden. But the real you is already perfect, already strong. You do not require any assistance to govern yourself; you are already self-restrained. The only difference is in knowing it or not knowing it. Therefore the one difficulty has been summed up in the word, Avidyā. What makes the difference between God and man, between the saint and the sinner? Only ignorance. What is the difference between the highest man and the lowest worm that crawls under your feet? Ignorance; that makes all the difference. For inside that little crawling worm is lodged infinite power, and knowledge, and purity.
the infinite divinity of God Himself. It is unmanifested; it will have to be manifested.

This is the one great truth India has to teach to the world, because it is nowhere else. This is spirituality, the science of the soul. What makes a man stand up and work? Strength. Strength is goodness, weakness is sin. If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the Upanishads, bursting like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word, fearlessness. And the only religion that ought to be taught, is the religion of fearlessness. Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. And what causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature. Each of us is heir-apparent to the Emperor of Emperors; we are of the substance of God Himself. Nay, according to the Advaita, we are God Himself though we have forgotten our own nature in thinking of ourselves as little men. We have fallen from that nature and thus make differences—I am a little better than you, or you than I, and so on. This idea of oneness is the great lesson India has to give, and mark you, when this is understood, it changes the whole aspect of things, because you look at the world through other eyes than you have been doing before. And this world is no more a battle-field where each soul is born to struggle with every other soul, and the strongest gets the victory and the weakest goes to
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dead. It becomes a playground where the Lord is playing like a child, and we are His playmates, His fellow-workers. This is only a play, however terrible, hideous, and dangerous it may appear. We have mistaken its aspect. When we have known the nature of the soul, hope comes to the weakest, to the most degraded, to the most miserable sinner. Only, declares your Shastra, despair not. For you are the same whatever you do, and you cannot change your nature. Nature itself cannot destroy nature. Your nature is pure. It may be hidden for millions of aeons, but at last it will conquer and come out. Therefore the Advaita brings hope to every one and not despair. Its teaching is not through fear; it teaches, not of devils who are always on the watch to snatch you if you miss your footing—it has nothing to do with devils—but says that you have taken your fate in your own hands. Your own Karma has manufactured for you this body, and nobody did it for you. The Omnipresent Lord has been hidden through ignorance, and the responsibility is on yourself. You have not to think that you were brought into the world without your choice, and left in this most horrible place, but to know that you have yourself manufactured your body, bit by bit, just as you are doing it this very moment. You yourself eat; nobody eats for you. You assimilate what you eat; no one does it for you. You make blood, and muscles, and body out of the food; nobody does it for you. So you have done all the time.
One link in a chain explains the infinite chain. If it is true for one moment that you manufacture your body, it is true for every moment that has been or will come. And all the responsibility of good and evil is on you. This is the great hope. What I have done, that I can undo. And at the same time our religion does not take away from mankind the mercy of the Lord. That is always there. On the other hand, He stands beside this tremendous current of good and evil. He the bondless, the ever-merciful, is always ready to help us to the other shore, for His mercy is great, and it always comes to the pure in heart.

Your spirituality, in a certain sense, will have to form the basis of the new order of society. If I had more time, I could show you how the West has yet more to learn from some of the conclusions of the Advaita, for in these days of materialistic science the ideal of the Personal God does not count for much. But yet, even if a man has a very crude form of religion and wants temples and forms, he can have as many as he likes; if he wants a Personal God to love, he can find here the noblest ideas of a Personal God such as were never attained anywhere else in the world. If a man wants to be a rationalist and satisfy his reason, it is also here that he can find the most rational ideas of the Impersonal.
REPLY TO THE ADDRESS OF WELCOME AT SHIVAGANGA AND MANAMADURA

At Manamadura, the following address of welcome from the Zemindars and citizens of Shivaganga and Manamadura was presented to the Swami:

TO SRI SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Most Reverend Sir,

We, the Zemindars and citizens of Shivaganga and Manamadura, beg to offer you a most hearty welcome. In the most sanguine moments of our life, in our wildest dreams, we never contemplated that you, who were so near our hearts, would be in such close proximity to our homes. The first wire intimating your inability to come to Shivaganga cast a deep gloom on our hearts, and but for the subsequent silver lining to the cloud our disappointment would have been extreme. When we first heard that you had consented to honour our town with your presence, we thought we had realised our highest ambition. The mountain promised to come to Mahomet, and our joy knew no bounds. But when the mountain was obliged to withdraw its consent, and our worst fears were roused that we might not be able even to go to the mountain, you were graciously pleased to give way to our importunities.
Despite the almost insurmountable difficulties of the voyage, the noble self-sacrificing spirit with which you have conveyed the grandest message of the East to the West, the masterly way in which the mission has been executed and the marvellous and unparalleled success which has crowned your philanthropic efforts have earned for you an undying glory. At a time, when Western bread-winning materialism was making the strongest inroads on Indian religious convictions, when the sayings and writings of our sages were beginning to be numbered, the advent of a new master like you has already marked an era in the annals of religious advancement, and we hope that in the fulness of time you will succeed in disintegrating the dross that is temporarily covering the genuine gold of Indian philosophy, and, casting it in the powerful mint of your intellect, will make it current coin throughout the whole globe. The catholicity with which you were able triumphantly to bear the flag of Indian philosophic thought among the heterogeneous religionists assembled in the Parliament of Religions, enables us to hope that at no distant date you, just like your contemporary in the political sphere, will rule an empire over which the sun never sets, only with this difference, that hers is an empire over matter, and yours will be over mind. As she has beaten all records in political history by the length and beneficence of her reign, so we earnestly pray to the Almighty that you will be spared long enough to
Reply to Manamadura Address

consummately the labour of love that you have so disinterestedly undertaken, and thus to outshine all your predecessors in spiritual history.

We are,
Most Revered Sir,
Your most dutiful and devoted SERVANTS

The Swami's reply was to the following effect:

I cannot express the deep debt of gratitude which you have laid upon me by the kind and warm welcome which has just been accorded to me by you. Unfortunately I am not just now in a condition to make a very big speech, however much I may wish it. In spite of the beautiful adjectives which our Sanskrit friend has been so kind as to apply to me, I have a body after all, foolish though it may be; and the body always follows the promptings, conditions, and laws of matter. As such, there is such a thing as fatigue and weariness as regards the material body.

It is a great thing to see the wonderful amount of joy and appreciation expressed in every part of the country, for the little work that has been done by me in the West. I look at it only in this way: I want to apply it to those great souls who are coming in the future. If the little bit of work that has been done by me receives such approbation from the nation, what must be the approbation that the spiritual giants, the world-movers coming after us, will
get from this nation? India is the land of religion; the Hindu understands religion, and religion alone. Centuries of education have always been in that line; and the result is, that it is the one concern in life; and you all know well that it is so. It is not necessary that every one should be a shopkeeper; it is not necessary even that every one should be a schoolmaster; it is not necessary that every one should be a fighter; but in this world there will be different nations producing the harmony of result.

Well, perhaps we are fated by Divine Providence to play the spiritual note in this harmony of nations, and it rejoices me to see that we have not yet lost the grand traditions which have been handed down to us by the most glorious forefathers of whom any nation can be proud. It gives me hope, it gives me adamantine faith in the destiny of the race. It cheers me, not for the personal attention paid to me, but to know that the heart of the nation is there, and is still sound. India is still living; who says she is dead? But the West wants to see us active. If they want to see us active on the field of battle they will be disappointed—that is not our field; just as we would be disappointed if we hoped to see a military nation active on the field of spirituality. But let them come here and see that we are equally active, and how the nation is living and is as alive as ever. We should dispel the idea that we have degenerated at all. So far so good.

But now I have to say a few harsh words, which I
hope you will not take unkindly. For the complaint has just been made that European materialism has well-nigh swamped us. It is not all the fault of the Europeans, but a good deal our own. We, as Vedantists, must always look at things from an introspective viewpoint, from its subjective relations. We, as Vedantists, know for certain that there is no power in the universe to injure us unless we first injure ourselves. One-fifth of the population of India have become Mohammedans. Just as before that, going further back, two-thirds of the population in ancient times had become Buddhists, one-fifth are now Mohammedans. Christians are already more than a million.

Whose fault is it? One of our historians says in ever-memorable language: Why should these poor wretches starve and die of thirst when the perennial fountain of life is flowing by? The question is: What did we do for these people who forsook their own religion? Why should they have become Mohammedans? I heard of an honest girl in England who was going to become a streetwalker. When a lady asked her not to do so, her reply was, “That is the only way I can get sympathy. I can find none to help me now; but let me be a fallen, downtrodden woman, and then perhaps merciful ladies will come and take me to a home and do everything they can for me.” We are weeping for these renegades now, but what did we do for them before? Let every one of us ask ourselves, what have we learnt; have we
taken hold of the torch of truth, and if so, how far
did we carry it? We did not help them then.
This is the question we should ask ourselves. That
we did not do so was our own fault, our own Karma.
Let us blame none, let us blame our own Karma.

Materialism, or Mohammedanism, or Christianity,
or any other ism in the world could never have
succeeded but that you allowed them. No bacilli
can attack the human frame until it is degraded and
degenerated by vice, bad food, privation, and ex-
posure; the healthy man passes scatheless through
masses of poisonous bacilli. But yet there is time to
change our ways. Give up all those old discussions,
old fights about things which are meaningless, which
are nonsensical in their very nature. Think of the
last six hundred or seven hundred years of degra-
dation, when grown-up men by the hundreds have
been discussing for years whether we should drink a
glass of water with the right hand or the left,
whether the hand should be washed three times or
four times, whether we should gargle five or six
times. What can you expect from men who pass
their lives in discussing such momentous questions
as these, and writing most learned philosophies on
them! There is a danger of our religion getting
into the kitchen. We are neither Vedantists, most
of us now, nor Paurânic, nor Tântrics. We are just
"Don't-touchists". Our religion is in the kitchen.
Our God is the cooking-pot, and our religion is
"Don't touch me, I am holy". If this goes on for
another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum. It is a sure sign of softening of the brain when the mind cannot grasp the higher problems of life; all originality is lost, the mind has lost all its strength, its activity, and its power of thought, and just tries to go round and round the smallest curve it can find. This state of things has first to be thrown overboard, and then we must stand up, be active and strong; and then we shall recognise our heritage to that infinite treasure, the treasure our forefathers have left for us, a treasure that the whole world requires today. The world will die if this treasure is not distributed. Bring it out, distribute it broadcast. Says Vyāsa: Giving alone is the one work in this Kali Yuga; and of all the gifts, giving spiritual life is the highest gift possible; the next gift is secular knowledge; the next, saving of life of man; and the last, giving food to the needy. Of food we have given enough; no nation is more charitable than we. So long as there is a piece of bread in the home of the beggar he will give half of it. Such a phenomenon can be observed only in India. We have enough of that, let us go for the other two, the gifts of spiritual and secular knowledge. And if we were all brave and had stout hearts, and with absolute sincerity put our shoulders to the wheel, in twenty-five years the whole problem would be solved, and there would be nothing left here to fight about; the whole Indian world would be once more Aryan.
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This is all I have to tell you now. I am not given much to talking about plans; I rather prefer to do and show, and then talk about my plans. I have my plans, and mean to work them out if the Lord wills it, if life is given to me. I do not know whether I shall succeed or not, but it is a great thing to take up a grand ideal in life and then give up one's whole life to it. For what otherwise is the value of life, this vegetating, little, low, life of man? Subordinating it to one high ideal is the only value that life has. This is the great work to be done in India. I welcome the present religious revival; and I should be foolish if I lost the opportunity of striking the iron while it is hot.
REPLY TO THE ADDRESS OF WELCOME AT MADURA

The Swami was presented with an address of welcome by the Hindus of Madura, which read as follows:

MOST REVERED SWAMI,

We the Hindu Public of Madura beg to offer you our most heartfelt and respectful welcome to our ancient and holy city. We realise in you a living example of the Hindu Sannyasin, who, renouncing all worldly ties and attachments calculated to lead to the gratification of the self, is worthily engaged in the noble duty of living for others and endeavouring to raise the spiritual condition of mankind. You have demonstrated in your own person that the true essence of the Hindu religion is not necessarily bound up with rules and rituals, but that it is a sublime philosophy capable of giving peace and solace to the distressed and afflicted.

You have taught America and England to admire that philosophy and that religion which seeks to elevate every man in the best manner suited to his capacities and environments. Although your teachings have for the last three years been delivered in foreign lands, they have not been the less eagerly devoured in this country, and they have not a little
tended to counteract the growing materialism imported from a foreign soil.

India lives to this day, for it has a mission to fulfil in the spiritual ordering of the universe. The appearance of a soul like you at the close of this cycle of the Kali Yuga is to us a sure sign of the incarnation in the near future of great souls through whom that mission will be fulfilled.

Madura, the seat of ancient learning, Madura the favoured city of the God Sundareshwara, the holy Dwadashantakshetram of Yogis, lags behind no other Indian city in its warm admiration of your exposition of Indian Philosophy and in its grateful acknowledgements of your priceless services for humanity.

We pray that you may be blessed with a long life of vigour and strength and usefulness.

The Swami replied in the following terms:

I wish I could live in your midst for several days, and fulfil the conditions that have just been pointed out by your most worthy Chairman, of relating to you my experiences in the West, and the result of all my labours there for the last four years. But, unfortunately, even Swamis have bodies; and the continuous travelling and speaking that I have had to undergo for the last three weeks make it impossible for me to deliver a very long speech this evening. I will, therefore, satisfy myself with thanking you very cordially for the kindness that has been
shown to me, and reserve other things for some day in the future, when under better conditions of health, we shall have time to talk over more various subjects than we can do in so short a time this evening. Being in Madura, as the guest of one of your well-known citizens and noblemen, the Raja of Ramnad, one fact comes prominently to my mind. Perhaps most of you are aware that it was the Raja who first put the idea into my mind of going to Chicago, and it was he who all the time supported it with all his heart and influence. A good deal, therefore, of the praise that has been bestowed upon me in this address, ought to go to this noble man of Southern India. I only wish that instead of becoming a Raja he had become a Sannyásin, for that is what he is really fit for.

Wherever there is a thing really needed in one part of the world, the complement will find its way there and supply it with new life. This is true in the physical world, as well as in the spiritual. If there is a want of spirituality in one part of the world, and at the same time that spirituality exists elsewhere, whether we consciously struggle for it or not, that spirituality will find its way to the part where it is needed, and balance the inequality. In the history of the human race, not once or twice, but again and again, it has been the destiny of India in the past to supply spirituality to the world. We find that whenever either by mighty conquest or by commercial supremacy, different parts of the world
have been kneaded into one whole race, and be-
quests have been made from one corner to the other,
each nation, as it were, poured forth its own quota,
either political, social, or spiritual. India’s contri-
bution to the sum total of human knowledge has
been spirituality, philosophy. These she contribut-
ed even long before the rising of the Persian Empire;
the second time was during the Persian Empire; for
the third time, during the ascendency of the Greeks;
and now for the fourth time during the ascendency
of the English, she is going to fulfil the same destiny
once more. As Western ideas of organisation and
external civilisation are penetrating and pouring
into our country, whether we will have them or not,
so Indian spirituality and philosophy are deluging
the lands of the West. None can resist it, and no
more can we resist some sort of material civilisation
from the West. A little of it, perhaps, is good for
us, and a little spiritualisation is good for the West;
thus the balance will be preserved. It is not that
we ought to learn everything from the West, or that
they have to learn everything from us, but each will
have to supply and hand down to future genera-
tions what it has, for the future accomplishment of
that dream of ages—the harmony of nations, an
ideal world. Whether that ideal world will ever
come I do not know, whether that social perfection
will ever be reached I have my own doubts; but,
whether it comes or not, each one of us will have to
work for the idea as if it will come tomorrow, and
as if it only depends on his work, and his alone. Each one of us will have to believe that every one else in the world has done his work, and the only work remaining to be done to make the world perfect has to be done by himself. This is the responsibility we have to take upon ourselves.

In the meanwhile, in India there is a tremendous revival of religion. There is danger ahead, as well as glory; for revival sometimes breeds fanaticism, sometimes goes to the extreme, so that often it is not even in the power of those who start the revival to control it when it has gone beyond a certain length. It is better, therefore, to be forewarned. We have to find our way between the Scylla of old superstitious orthodoxy, and the Charybdis of materialism—of Europeanism, of soullessness, of the so-called reform—which has penetrated to the foundation of Western progress. These two have to be taken care of. In the first place, we cannot become Westerns; therefore imitating the Westerns is useless. Suppose you can imitate the Westerns, that moment you will die, you will have no more life in you. In the second place, it is impossible. A stream is taking its rise, away beyond where time began, flowing through millions of ages of human history; do you mean to get hold of that stream, and push it back to its source, to a Himalayan glacier? Even if that were practicable, it would not be possible for you to be Europeanised. If you find it is impossible for the European to throw off
the few centuries of culture which there is in the West, do you think it is possible for you to throw off the culture of shining scores of centuries? It cannot be. We must also remember that in every little village-god, and every little superstitious custom, is that which we are accustomed to call our religious faith. But local customs are infinite and contradictory. Which are we to obey, and which not to obey? The Brâhmin of Southern India, for instance, would shrink in horror at the sight of another Brahmin eating meat; a Brahmin in the North thinks it a most glorious and holy thing to do—he kills goats by the hundred in sacrifice. If you put forward your custom, they are equally ready with theirs. Various are the customs all over India, but they are local. The greatest mistake made is that ignorant people always think that this local custom is the essence of our religion.

But beyond this there is a still greater difficulty. There are two sorts of truth we find in our Shâstras, one that is based upon the eternal nature of man—the one that deals with the eternal relation of God, soul, and nature; the other, with local circumstances, environments of the time, social institutions of the period, and so forth. The first class of truths is chiefly embodied in our Vedas, our scriptures; the second in the Smritis, the Purânas, etc. We must remember that for all periods the Vedas are the final goal and authority, and if the Puranas differ
in any respect from the Vedas, that part of the Puranas is to be rejected without mercy. We find, then, that in all these Smritis the teachings are different. 'One Smriti says, this is the custom, and this should be the practice of this age. Another one says, this is the practice of this age, and so forth. This is the Achâra which should be the custom of the Satya Yuga, and this is the Achara which should be the custom of the Kali Yuga, and so forth. Now this is one of the most glorious doctrines that you have, that eternal truths, being based upon the nature of man, will never change so long as man lives; they are for all times, omnipresent, universal virtues. But the Smritis speak generally of local circumstances, of duties arising from different environments, and they change in the course of time. This you have always to remember, that because a little social custom is going to be changed you are not going to lose your religion, not at all. Remember these customs have already been changed. There was a time in this very India when, without eating beef, no Brahmin could remain a Brahmin; you read in the Vedas how, when a Sannyasin, a king, or a great man came into a house, the best bullock was killed; how in time it was found that as we were an agricultural race, killing the best bulls meant annihilation of the race. Therefore the practice was stopped, and a voice was raised against the killing of cows. Sometimes we find existing
then what we now consider the most horrible customs. In course of time other laws had to be made. These in turn will have to go, and other Smritis will come. This is one fact we have to learn, that the Vedas being eternal will be one and the same throughout all ages, but the Smritis will have an end. As time rolls on, more and more of the Smritis will go, sages will come, and they will change and direct society into better channels, into duties and into paths according to the necessity of the age, and without which it is impossible that society can live. Thus we have to guide our course, avoiding these two dangers; and I hope that every one of us here will have breadth enough, and at the same time faith enough, to understand what that means, which I suppose is the inclusion of everything, and not the exclusion. I want the intensity of the fanatic plus the extensity of the materialist. Deep as the ocean, broad as the infinite skies, that is the sort of heart we want. Let us be as progressive as any nation that ever existed, and at the same time as faithful and conservative towards our traditions as Hindus alone know how to be.

In plain words, we have first to learn the distinction between the essentials and the non-essentials in everything. The essentials are eternal, the non-essentials have value only for a certain time; and if after a time they are not replaced by something essential, they are positively dangerous. I do not
mean that you should stand up and revile all your old customs and institutions. Certainly not; you must not revile even the most evil one of them. Revile none. Even those customs that are now appearing to be positive evils, have been positively life-giving in times past; and if we have to remove these, we must not do so with curses, but with blessings and gratitude for the glorious work these customs have done for the preservation of our race. And we must also remember that the leaders of our societies have never been either generals or kings, but Rishis. And who are the Rishis? The Rishi as he is called in the Upanishads is not an ordinary man, but a Mantra-drashtâ. He is a man who sees religion, to whom religion is not merely book-learning, nor argumentation, nor speculation, nor much talking, but actual realisation, a coming face to face with truths which transcend the senses. This is Rishihood, and that Rishihood does not belong to any age, or time, or even to sects or caste. Vâtsyâyana says truth must be realised—and we have to remember that you, and I, and every one of us will be called upon to become Rishis; and we must have faith in ourselves; we must become world-movers, for everything is in us. We must see Religion face to face, experience it, and thus solve our doubts about it; and then standing up in the glorious light of Rishihood each one of us will be a giant; and every word falling from our lips will carry behind it that infinite sanction of security;
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and before us evil will vanish by itself, without the necessity of cursing any one, without the necessity of abusing any one, without the necessity of fighting any one in the world. May the Lord help us, each one of us here, to realise the Rishihood, for our own salvation and for that of others!