THE VEDANTA IN ALL ITS PHASES

(Delivered in Calcutta)

Away back, where no recorded history, nay, not even the dim light of tradition, can penetrate, has been steadily shining the light, sometimes dimmed by external circumstances, at others effulgent, but undying and steady, shedding its lustre not only over India, but permeating the whole thought-world with its power, silent, unperceived, gentle, yet omnipotent, like the dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unnoticed, yet bringing into bloom the fairest of roses—this has been the thought of the Upanishads, the philosophy of the Vedanta. Nobody knows when it first came to flourish on the soil of India. Guess-work has been vain. The guesses, especially of Western writers, have been so conflicting that no certain date can be ascribed to them. But we Hindus, from the spiritual standpoint, do not admit that they had any origin. This Vedanta, the philosophy of the Upanishads, I would make bold to state, has been the first, as well as the final, thought on the spiritual plane that has ever been vouchsafed to man.

From this ocean of the Vedanta, waves of light from time to time have been going Westward and Eastward. In the days of yore it travelled West-
ward and gave its impetus to the mind of the Greeks, either in Athens, or in Alexandria, or in Antioch. The Sânkhya system must clearly have made its mark on the minds of the ancient Greeks; and the Sankhya, and all other systems in India, had that one authority, the Upanishads, the Vedanta. In India, too, in spite of all these jarring sects that we see today and all those that have been in the past, the one authority, the basis of all these systems, has yet been the Upanishads, the Vedanta. Whether you are a dualist, or a qualified monist, an Advaitist, or a Vishishtâdvaitist, a Shuddhâdvaitist, or any other Advaitist, or Dvaitist, or whatever you may call yourself, there stand behind you as authority, your Shâstras, your scriptures, the Upanishads. Whatever system in India does not obey the Upanishads cannot be called orthodox, and even the systems of the Jains and the Buddhists have been rejected from the soil of India only because they did not bear allegiance to the Upanishads. Thus the Vedanta, whether we know it or not, has penetrated all the sects in India, and what we call Hinduism, this mighty banyan with its immense, almost infinite ramifications, has been throughout interpenetrated by the influence of the Vedanta. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we think the Vedanta, we 'live in the Vedanta, we breathe the Vedanta, and we die in the Vedanta, and every Hindu does that. To preach Vedanta in the land of India, and before an Indian audience,
The Vedanta in all its Phases

seems, therefore, to be an anomaly. But it is the one thing that has to be preached, and it is the necessity of the age that it must be preached. For, as I have just told you, all the Indian sects must bear allegiance to the Upanishads; but among these sects there are many apparent contradictions. Many times the great sages of yore themselves could not understand the underlying harmony of the Upanishads. Many times, even sages quarrelled, so much so that it became a proverb, that there are no sages who do not differ. But the time requires that a better interpretation should be given to this underlying harmony of the Upanishadic texts, whether they are dualistic, or non-dualistic, quasi-dualistic, or so forth. That has to be shown before the world at large; and this work is required as much in India as outside of India; and I, through the grace of God, had the great good fortune to sit at the feet of one whose whole life was such an interpretation, whose life, a thousandfold more than whose teaching, was a living commentary on the texts of the Upanishads, was in fact, the spirit of the Upanishads living in a human form. Perhaps I have got a little of that harmony; I do not know whether I shall be able to express it or not. But this is my attempt, my mission in life, to show that the Vedantic schools are not contradictory, that they all necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping-stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, the
Tat Tvam Asi, is reached. There was a time in India when the Karma Kânda had its sway. There are many grand ideals, no doubt, in that portion of the Vedas. Some of our present daily worship is still according to the precepts of the Karma Kanda. But, with all that, the Karma Kanda of the Vedas has almost disappeared from India. Very little of our life today is bound and regulated by the orders of Karma Kanda of the Vedas. In our ordinary lives we are mostly Paurânikas or Tântrikas, and, even where some Vedic texts are used by the Brâhmins of India, the adjustment of the texts is mostly not according to the Vedas, but according to the Tantras or the Purânas. As such, to call ourselves Vaidikas in the sense of following the Karma Kanda of the Vedas, I do not think, would be proper. But the other fact stands, that we are all of us Vedantists. The people who call themselves Hindus had better be called Vedantists, and, as I have shown you, under that one name Vaidantika, come in all our various sects, whether dualists or non-dualists.

The sects that are at the present time in India, come to be divided in general into the two great classes of dualists and monists. The little differences which some of these sects insist upon, and upon the authority of which want to take new names, as pure Advaitists, or qualified Advaitists, and so forth, do not matter much. As a classification, either they are dualists or monists, and of the
sects existing at the present time, some of them are very new, and others seem to be reproductions of very ancient sects. The one class I would present by the life and philosophy of Râmânuja, and the other, by that of Shankarâchârya.

Ramanuja is the leading dualistic philosopher of later India, whom all the other dualistic sects have followed, directly or indirectly, both in the substance of their teaching, and in the organisation of their sects, even down to some of the most minute points of their organisation. You will be astonished if you compare Ramanuja and his work with the other dualistic Vaishnava sects in India, to see how much they resemble each other in organisation, teaching and method. There is the great Southern preacher Madhva Muni, and following him, our great Chaitanya of Bengal, who took up the philosophy of the Madhvas, and preached it in Bengal. There are some other sects also in Southern India, as the qualified dualistic Shaivas. The Shaivas in most parts of India are Advaitists, except in some portions of Southern India, and in Ceylon. But they also only substitute Shiva for Vishnu, and are Ramanujists in every sense of the term except in the doctrine of the soul. The followers of Ramanuja hold that the soul is Anu, like a particle, very small, and the followers of Shankaracharya hold that it is Vibhu, omnipresent. There have been several non-dualistic sects. It seems that there have been sects in ancient times which Shankara's move-
ment has entirely swallowed up and assimilated. You find sometimes a fling at Shankara himself in some of the commentaries, especially in that of Vijnâna Bhikshu who, although an Advaitist, attempts to upset the Mâyâvâda of Shankara. It seems there were schools which did not believe in this Mayavada, and they went so far as to call Shankara a crypto-Buddhist, Prachchhanna Baudhâ, and they thought this Mayavada was taken from the Buddhists, and brought within the Vedantic fold. However that may be, in modern times the Advaitists have all ranged themselves under Shankaracharya; and Shankaracharya and his disciples have been the great preachers of Advaita, both in Southern and in Northern India. The influence of Shankaracharya did not penetrate much into our country of Bengal, and in Kashmir and the Punjab, but in Southern India the Smârtas are all followers of Shankaracharya, and with Banaras as the centre, his influence is simply immense, even in many parts of Northern India.

Now both Shankara and Ramanuja laid aside all claim to originality. Ramanuja expressly tells us he is only following the great commentary of Bodhâyana. —“Ancient teachers abridged that extensive commentary on the Brahma-sutras which was composed by the Bhagavân Bodhayana; in accordance with their opinion,
the words of the Sutra are explained.” That is what Ramanuja says at the beginning of his commentary, the Shri-Bhāshya. He takes it up and makes of it a Sankshipta, and that is what we have today. I myself never had an opportunity of seeing this commentary of Bodhayana. The late Swami Dayânanda Saraswati wanted to reject every other commentary of the Vyâsa Sutras except that of Bodhayana; and although he never lost an opportunity of having a fling at Ramanuja, he himself could never produce the Bodhayana. I have sought for it all over India, and never yet have been able to see it. But Ramanuja is very plain on the point, and he tells us that he is taking the ideas, and sometimes the very passages, out of Bodhayana, and condensing them into the present Ramanuja Bhashya. It seems that Shankaracharya was also doing the same. There are a few places in his Bhashya which mention older commentaries, and when we know that his Guru, and his Guru’s Guru, had been Vedantists of the same school as he, sometimes even more thorough-going, bolder even than Shankara himself on certain points, it seems pretty plain that he also was not preaching anything very original, and that even in his Bhashya he himself had been doing the same work that Ramanuja did with Bodhayana, but from what Bhashya, it cannot be discovered at the present time. All these Darshanas that you have ever seen or heard of are based upon Upanishadic authority. When-
ever they want to quote a Shruti, they mean the Upanishads. They are always quoting the Upanishads. Following the Upanishads there come other philosophies of India, but every one of them failed in getting that hold on India which the philosophy of Vyasa got, although the philosophy of Vyasa is a development out of an older one, the Sankhya, and every philosophy and every system in India—I mean throughout the world—owes much to Kapila, perhaps the greatest name in the history of India in psychological and philosophical lines. The influence of Kapila is everywhere seen throughout the world. Wherever there is a recognised system of thought, there you can trace his influence; even if it be thousands of years back, yet he stands there, the shining, glorious, wonderful Kapila. His psychology and a good deal of his philosophy have been accepted by all the sects of India, with but very little differences. In our own country, our Naiyāyika philosophers could not make much impression on the philosophical world of India. They were too busy with little things like species and genus and so forth, and that most cumbersome terminology, which it is a life's work to study. As such, they were very busy with logic and left philosophy to the Vedantists, but every one of the Indian philosophic sects in modern times has adopted the logical terminology of the Naiyāyikas of Bengal. Jagadish, Gadādhar, and Shiromani are as well known at Nadia as in some of the
cities in Malabar. But the philosophy of Vyasa, the Vyasa Sutras, is firm-seated, and has attained the permanence of that which it intended to present to men, the Brahman of the Vedantic side of philosophy. Reason was entirely subordinated to the Shrutis, and as Shankaracharya declares, Vyasa did not care to reason at all. His idea in writing the Sutras was just to bring together, and with one thread to make a garland of the flowers of Vedantic texts. His Sutras are admitted so far as they are subordinate to the authority of the Upanishads, and no further.

And, as I have said, all the sects of India now hold these Vyasa Sutras to be the great authority, and every new sect in India starts with a fresh commentary on the Vyasa Sutras according to its light. The difference between some of these commentators is sometimes very great, sometimes the text-torturing is quite disgusting. The Vyasa Sutras have got the place of authority, and no one can expect to found a sect in India until he can write a fresh commentary on the Vyasa Sutras.

Next in authority is the celebrated Gita. The great glory of Shankaracharya was his preaching of the Gita. It is one of the greatest works that this great man did among the many noble works of his noble life—the preaching of the Gita, and writing the most beautiful commentary upon it. And he has been followed by all founders of the orthodox
sects in India, each of whom has written a commentary on the Gita.

The Upanishads are many, and said to be one hundred and eight, but some declare them to be still larger in number. Some of them, are evidently of a much later date, as for instance, the Allopanishad, in which Allah is praised, and Mohammed is called the Rajasullâ. I have been told that this was written during the reign of Akbar, to bring the Hindus and Mohammedans together, and sometimes they got hold of some word, as Allah, or Illa in the Samhitâs, and made an Upanishad on it. So in this Allopanishad, Mohammed is the Rajasulla, whatever that may mean. There are other sectarian Upanishads of the same species, which you find to be entirely modern, and it has been so easy to write them, seeing that this language of the Samhitâ portion of the Vedas is so archaic that there is no grammar to it. Years ago I had an idea of studying the grammar of the Vedas, and I began with all earnestness to study Pâñini and the Mahâbhâshya, but to my surprise I found that the best part of the Vedic grammar consists only of exceptions to rules. A rule is made, and after that comes a statement to the effect, “This rule will be an exception.” So you see what an amount of liberty there is for anybody to write anything, the only safeguard being the dictionary of Yâska. Still, in this you will find, for the most part, but a large number of synonyms. Given all that, how easy it
is to write any number of Upanishads you please. Just have a little knowledge of Sanskrit, enough to make words look like the old archaic words, and you have no fear of grammar. Then you bring in Rajasulla, or any other Sulla you like. In that way many Upanishads have been manufactured, and I am told that that is being done even now. In some parts of India, I am perfectly certain, they are trying to manufacture such Upanishads, among the different sects. But among the Upanishads are those, which, on the face of them, bear the evidence of genuineness, and these have been taken up by the great commentators and commented upon, especially by Shankara, followed by Ramanuja, and all the rest.

There are one or two more ideas with regard to the Upanishads which I want to bring to your notice, for these are an ocean of knowledge, and to talk about the Upanishads, even for an incompetent person like myself, takes years, and not one lecture only. I want, therefore, to bring to your notice one or two points in the study of the Upanishads. In the first place, they are the most wonderful poems in the world. If you read the Samhita portion of the Vedas, you now and then find passages of most marvellous beauty. For instance, the famous Shloka which describes Chaos—तम शासीलमस्यागुटम्भो एता—"When darkness was hidden in darkness," so on it goes. One reads and feels the wonderful sublimity of the poetry. Do you mark this, that
outside of India, and inside also, there have been attempts at painting the sublime. But outside, it has always been the infinite in the muscles, the external world, the infinite of matter, or of space. When Milton or Dante, or any other great European poet, either ancient or modern, wants to paint a picture of the infinite, he tries to soar outside, to make you feel the infinite through the muscles. That attempt has been made here also. You find it in the Samhitas, the infinite of extension, most marvellously painted and placed before the readers, such as has been done nowhere else. Mark that one sentence तम भासीतः तपस्सा गृहम् and now mark the description of darkness by three poets. Take our own Kālidāsa—"Darkness which can be penetrated with the point of a needle"; then Milton—"No light but rather darkness visible", but come now to the Upanishad, "Darkness was covering darkness" "Darkness was hidden in darkness". We who live in the tropics can understand it, the sudden outburst of the monsoon, when in a moment, the horizon becomes darkened and clouds become covered with more rolling black clouds. So on, the poem goes; but yet, in the Samhita portion, all these attempts are external. Like everywhere else, the attempts at finding the solution of the great problems of life have been through the external world. Just as the Greek mind, or the modern European mind, wants to find the solution of life and of all the sacred problems of Being by search-
ing into the external world, so also did our fore-
fathers, and just as the Europeans failed, they failed
also. But the Western people never made a move
more, they remained there, they failed in the search
for the solution of the great problems of life
and death in the external world, and there they
remained, stranded; our forefathers also found it
impossible, but were bolder in declaring the utter
helplessness of the senses to find the solution. No-
where else was the answer better put than in the
Upanishad: श्यो वाचो निक्ते अभाव य मनसा सह।—
"From whence words come back reflected, together
with the mind"; न तत्र चक्षुंगच्छ्रति न वाणगच्छ्रति।—
"There the eye cannot go, nor can speech reach."
There are various sentences which declare the utter
helplessness of the senses, but they did not stop there;
they fell back upon the internal nature of man,
they went to get the answer from their own soul,
they became introspective; they gave up external
nature as a failure, as nothing could be done there,
as no hope, no answer, could be found; they dis-
covered that dull, dead matter would not give them
truth, and they fell back upon the shining soul of
man, and there, the answer was found.

तमेवै काञ्च आटमानम् अन्य वाचो विमयम्।—"Know
this Atman alone," they declared, "give up all other
vain words, and hear no other." In the Atman they
found the solution—the greatest of all Atmans, the
God, the Lord of this Universe, His relation to the
Atman of man, our duty to Him, and through that our relation to each other. And herein you find the most sublime poetry in the world. No more is the attempt made to paint this Atman in the language of matter. Nay, for it they have given up even all positive language. No more is there any attempt to come to the senses to give them the idea of the infinite, no more is there an external, dull, dead, material, spacious, sensuous infinite, but instead of that comes something, which is as fine as even that mentioned in the saying—

न तत्त्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रारकं नैमा विचुतो भाति कृतोदयमयशि।
तचेष भातिमनुभाति सवं तत्त्व भासा सवंभिधं विभाति॥

What poetry in the world can be more sublime than this! "There the sun cannot illumine, nor the moon, nor the stars, there this flash of lightning cannot illumine; what to speak of this mortal fire!" Such poetry you find nowhere else. Take that most marvellous Upanishad, the Katha. What a wonderful finish, what a most marvellous art displayed in that poem! How wonderfully it opens with that little boy to whom Shraddhā came, who wanted to see Yama, and how that most marvellous of all teachers, Death himself, teaches him the great lessons of life and death! And what was his quest? To know the secret of death.

The second point that I want you to remember is the perfectly impersonal character of the Upanishads. Although we find many names, and many
speakers, and many teachers in the Upanishads, not one of them stands as an authority of the Upanishads, not one verse is based upon the life of any one of them. These are simply figures like shadows moving in the background, unfelt, unseen, unrealised, but the real force is in the marvellous, the brilliant, the effulgent texts of the Upanishads, perfectly impersonal. If twenty Yâjnavalkyas came, and lived, and died, it does not matter; the texts are there. And yet it is against no personality; it is broad and expansive enough to embrace all the personalities that the world has yet produced, and all that are yet to come. It has nothing to say against the worship of persons, or Avatârs, or sages. On the other hand, it is always upholding it. At the same time, it is perfectly impersonal. It is a most marvellous idea, like the God it preaches, the impersonal idea of the Upanishads. For the sage, the thinker, the philosopher, for the rationalist, it is as much impersonal as any modern scientist can wish. And these are our scriptures. You must remember that what the Bible is to the Christians, what the Koran is to the Mohammedans, what the Tripitaka is to the Buddhists, what the Zend Avesta is to the Parsis, these Upanishads are to us. These and nothing but these, are our scriptures. The Puranas, the Tantras, and all the other books, even the Vyasa Sutras, are of secondary, tertiary authority, but primary are the Vedas. Manu, and the Puranas, and all the other books are to be taken so far as they agree with the
authority of the Upanishads, and when they disagree they are to be rejected without mercy. This we ought to remember always, but unfortunately for India, at the present time we have forgotten it. A petty village custom seems now the real authority and not the teaching of the Upanishads. A petty idea current in a wayside village in Bengal seems to have the authority of the Vedas, and even something better. And that word "orthodox", how wonderful its influence! To the villager, the following of every little bit of the Karma Kanda is the very height of "orthodoxy", and one who does not do it is told, "Go away, you are no more a Hindu." So there are, most unfortunately, in my motherland, persons who will take up one of these Tantras and say, that the practice of this Tantra is to be obeyed; he who does not do so is no more orthodox in his views. Therefore it is better for us to remember that in the Upanishads is the primary authority, even the Grihya and Shrauta Sutras are subordinate to the authority of the Vedas. They are the words of the Rishis, our forefathers, and you have to believe them if you want to become a Hindu. You may even believe the most peculiar ideas about the Godhead, but if you deny the authority of the Vedas, you are a Nâstika. Therein lies the difference between the scriptures of the Christians or the Buddhists and ours; theirs are all Puranas, and not scriptures, because they describe the history of the deluge, and the history of kings and reigning families, and record the lives of
The Vedanta in all its Phases

great men, and so on. This is the work of the Puranas, and so far as they agree with the Vedas, they are good. So far as the Bible and the scriptures of other nations agree with the Vedas, they are perfectly good, but when they do not agree, they are no more to be accepted. So with the Koran. There are many moral teachings in these, and so far as they agree with the Vedas they have the authority of the Puranas, but no more. The idea is that the Vedas were never written, the idea is they never came into existence. I was told once by a Christian missionary that their scriptures have a historical character, and therefore are true. To which I replied, "Mine have no historical character and therefore they are true; yours being historical, they were evidently made by some man the other day. Yours are man-made and mine are not; their non-historicity is in their favour." Such is the relation of the Vedas with all the other scriptures at the present day.

We now come to the teachings of the Upanishads. Various texts are there. Some are perfectly dualistic, while others are monistic. But there are certain doctrines which are agreed to by all the different sects of India. First, there is the doctrine of Samsâra, or re-incarnation of the soul. Secondly, they all agree in their psychology; first there is the body, behind that, what they call the Sukshma-Sharira, the mind, and behind that even, is the Jiva. That is the great difference between Western and Indian psychology; in the Western psychology the mind is
the soul, here it is not. The Antahkarana, the internal instrument, as the mind is called, is only an instrument in the hands of that Jiva, through which the Jiva works on the body, or on the external world. Here they all agree, and they all also agree that this Jiva, or Atman, Jivâtman as it is called by various sects, is eternal, without beginning; and that it is going from birth to birth, until it gets a final release. They all agree in this, and they also all agree in one other most vital point, which alone marks characteristically, most prominently, most vitally, the difference between the Indian and the Western mind, and it is this, that everything is in the soul. There is no inspiration, but properly speaking, expiration. All powers and all purity and all greatness—everything is in the soul. The Yogi would tell you that the Siddhis—Animâ, Laghimâ, and so on—that he wants to attain to, are not to be attained, in the proper sense of the word, but are already there in the soul; the work is to make them manifest. Patanjali, for instance, would tell you that even in the lowest worm that crawls under your feet, all the eightfold Yogic powers are already existing. The difference has been made by the body. As soon as it gets a better body the powers will become manifest, but they are there. निमित्तमस्रयोजकं प्रकृतीनां वरणभेद्यं ततः क्षेत्रिकक्षत् —“Good and bad deeds are not the direct causes in the transformation of nature, but they act as breakers of obstacles to the evolutions of nature: as a farmer breaks the obstacles to the course of
water, which then runs down by its own nature." Here Patanjali gives the celebrated example of the cultivator bringing water into his field from a huge tank somewhere. The tank is already filled and the water would flood his land in a moment, only there is a mud-wall between the tank and his field. As soon as the barrier is broken, in rushes the water out of its own power and force. This mass of power and purity and perfection is in the soul already. The only difference is the Avarana—that has been cast over it. Once the veil is removed the soul attains to purity, and its powers become manifest. This, you ought to remember, is the great difference between Eastern and Western thought. Hence you find people teaching such awful doctrines as that we are all born sinners, and because we do not believe in such awful doctrines we are all born wicked. They never stop to think that if we are by our very nature wicked, we can never be good—for how can nature change? If it changes, it contradicts itself; it is not nature. We ought to remember this. Here the dualist, and the Advaitist, and all others in India agree.

The next point, which all the sects in India believe in, is God. Of course their ideas of God will be different. The dualists believe in a Personal God, and a personal only. I want you to understand this word personal, a little more. This word personal does not mean that God has a body, sits on a throne somewhere, and rules this world, but means Saguna,
with qualities. There are many descriptions of the Personal God. This Personal God as the Ruler, the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer, of this universe, is believed in by all the sects. The Advaitists believe something more. They believe in a still higher phase of this Personal God, which is personal-impersonal. No adjective can illustrate where there is no qualification, and the Advaitist would not give Him any qualities except the three—Sat-Chit-Ananda, Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Absolute. This is what Shankara did. But in the Upanishads themselves you find they penetrate even further, and say, nothing can be predicated of it except Neti, Neti, “Not this, Not this.”

Here all the different sects of India agree. But taking the dualistic side, as I have said, I will take Ramanuja as the typical dualist of India, the great modern representative of the dualistic systems. It is a pity that our people in Bengal know so very little about the great religious leaders in India, who have been born in other parts of the country; and for the matter of that, during the whole of the Mohammedian period, with the exception of our Chaitanya, all the great religious leaders were born in Southern India, and it is the intellect of Southern India that is really governing India now; for even Chaitanya belonged to one of these sects, a sect of the Mādhvas. According to Ramanuja, these three entities are eternal—God, and soul, and nature. The souls are eternal, and they will remain eternally existing, in-
dividualised through eternity, and will retain their individuality all through. Your soul will be different from my soul through all eternity, says Ramanuja. And so will this nature, which is an existing fact, as much a fact as the existence of soul, or the existence of God, remain always different. And God is interpenetrating, the essence of the soul. He is the Antaryāmin; in this sense Ramanuja sometimes thinks that God is one with the soul, the essence of the soul, and these souls—at the time of Pralaya, when the whole of nature becomes what he calls Sankuchita, contracted—become contracted and minute and remain so for a time. And at the beginning of the next cycle they all come out, according to their past Karma, and undergo the effect of that Karma. Every action that makes the natural inborn purity and perfection of the soul get contracted, is a bad action, and every action that makes it come out and expand itself, is a good action, says Ramanuja. Whatever helps to make the Vikâsha of the soul is good, and whatever makes it Sankuchita is bad. And thus the soul is going on, expanding or contracting in its actions, till, through the grace of God, comes salvation. And that grace comes to all souls, says Ramanuja, that are pure and struggle for that grace.

There is a celebrated verse in the Shrutis, भाहारशुद्दः सत्त्वशुद्धिः सत्त्वशुद्धी भ्रुवा स्मृतिः—“When the food is pure, then the Sattva becomes pure; when the Sattva is pure, then the Smriti”—the memory of the Lord, or
the memory of our own perfection—if you are an Advaitist—"becomes truer, steadier, and absolute." Here is a great discussion. First of all, what is this Sattva? We know that according to the Sankhya—and it has been admitted by all our sects of philosophy—the body is composed of three sorts of materials—not qualities. It is the general idea that Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas are qualities. Not at all, not qualities but the materials of this universe, and with Âhâra-shuddhi, when the food is pure, the Sattva material becomes pure. The one theme of the Vedanta is to get this Sattva. As I have told you, the soul is already pure and perfect, and it is, according to the Vedanta, covered up by Rajas and Tamas particles. The Sattva particles are the most luminous, and the effulgence of the soul penetrates through them as easily as light through glass. So if the Rajas and Tamas particles go, and leave the Sattva particles, in this state the power and purity of the soul will appear, and leave the soul more manifest.

Therefore it is necessary to have this Sattva. And the text says, "When Ahara becomes pure". Ramanuja takes this word, Ahara, to mean food, and he has made it one of the turning points of his philosophy. Not only so, it has affected the whole of India, and all the different sects. Therefore, it is necessary for us to understand what it means, for that, Ahara-shuddhi, according to Ramanuja, is one of the principal factors in our life. What makes
food impure? asks Ramanuja. Three sorts of defects
make food impure—first, Jâti-dosha, the defect in the
very nature of the class to which the food belongs, as
the smell in onions, garlic, and such like. The next is
Âshraya-dosha, the defect in the person from whom
the food comes; food coming from a wicked person
will make you impure. I myself have seen many
great sages in India following strictly that advice all
their lives. Of course they had the power to know
who brought the food, and even who had touched
the food, and I have seen it in my own life, not once,
buts hundreds of times. Then Nimitta-dosha, the
defect of impure things or influences coming in con-
tact with food, is another. We had better attend to
that a little more now. It has become too prevalent
in India to take food with dirt and dust and bits of
hair in it. If food is taken from which these three
defects have been removed, that makes Sattva-shud-
dhi, purifies the Sattva. Religion seems to be a very
easy task then. Then everyone can have religion, if
it comes by eating pure food only. There is none so
weak or incompetent in this world, that I know, who
cannot save himself from these defects. Then comes
Shankaracharya, who says this word Ahara means
thought collected in the mind; when that becomes
pure, the Sattva becomes pure, and not before that.
You may eat what you like. If food alone would
purify the Sattva, then feed the monkey with milk
and rice all its life; would it become a great Yogi?
Then the cows and the deer would be great Yogis.
Lectures from Colombo to Almora

As has been said, if it is by bathing much that heaven is reached, the fishes will get to heaven first. If by eating vegetables a man gets to heaven, the cows and the deer will get to heaven first.

But what is the solution? Both are necessary. Of course the idea that Shankaracharya gives us of Ahara is the primary idea. But pure food, no doubt, helps pure thought; it has an intimate connection; both ought to be there. But the defect is that in modern India we have forgotten the advice of Shankaracharya and taken only the "pure food" meaning. That is why people get mad with me when I say, religion has got into the kitchen; and if you had been in Madras with me, you would have agreed with me. The Bengalis are better than that. In Madras they throw away food if anybody looks at it. And with all this, I do not see that the people are any the better there. If only eating this and that sort of food, and saving it from the looks of this person and that person would give them perfection, you would expect them all to be perfect men, which they are not.

Thus, although these are to be combined and linked together to make a perfect whole, do not put the cart before the horse. There is a cry nowadays about this and that food, and about Varnâshrama, and the Bengalis are the most vociferous in these cries. I would ask every one of you, what do you know about this Varnashrama? Where are the four castes today in this country? Answer me; I do not
see the four castes. Just as our Bengali proverb has it, "A headache without a head", so you want to make this Varnashrama here. There are not four castes here. I see only the Brâhmin and the Shudra. If there are the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas, where are they and why do not you Brahmins order them to take the Yajnopavita and study the Vedas, as every Hindu ought to do? And if the Vaishyas and the Kshatriyas do not exist, but only the Brahmins and the Shudras, the Shâstras say that the Brahmin must not live in a country where there are only Shudras; so depart bag and baggage! Do you know what the Shastras say about people who have been eating Mlechchhâ food, and living under a Government of the Mlechchhas, as you have for the past thousand years? Do you know the penance for that? The penance would be burning oneself with one's own hands. Do you want to pass as teachers, and walk like hypocrites? If you believe in your Shastras burn yourselves first like the one great Brahmin did, who went with Alexander the Great, and burnt himself because he thought he had eaten the food of a Mlechchha. Do like that, and you will see that the whole nation will be at your feet. You do not believe in your own Shastras and yet want to make others believe in them. If you think you are not able to do that in this age, admit your weakness and excuse the weakness of others, take the other castes up, give them a helping hand, let them study the Vedas, and become just as good Aryans as any other
Aryans in the world, and be you likewise Aryans, you Brahmins of Bengal.

Give up this filthy Vâmâchâra that is killing your country. You have not seen the other parts of India. When I see how much the Vamachara has entered our society, I find it a most disgraceful place with all its boast of culture. These Vamachara sects are honeycombing our society in Bengal. Those who come out in the day-time and preach most loudly about Āchāra, it is they who carry on the horrible debauchery at night, and are backed by the most dreadful books. They are ordered by the books to do these things. You who are of Bengal know it. The Bengali Shastras are the Vamachara Tantras. They are published by the cart-load, and you poison the minds of your children with them, instead of teaching them your Shrutis. Fathers of Calcutta, do you not feel ashamed that such horrible stuff as these Vamachara Tantras, with translations too, should be put into the hands of your boys and girls, and their minds poisoned, and that they should be brought up with the idea that these are the Shastras of the Hindus? If you are ashamed, take them away from your children, and let them read the true Shastras, the Vedas, the Gita, the Upanishads.

According to the dualistic sects of India, the individual souls remain as individuals throughout, and God creates the universe out of pre-existing material, only as the efficient cause. According to the Advaitists, on the other hand, God is both the material
The Vedanta in all its Phases

and the efficient cause of the universe. He is not only the Creator of the Universe, but He creates it out of Himself. That is the Advaitist position. There are crude dualistic sects who believe that this world has been created by God out of Himself, and at the same time God is eternally separate from the universe, and everything is eternally subordinate to the Ruler of the universe. There are sects too who also believe that out of Himself God has evolved this universe, and individuals in the long run attain to Nirvana, to give up the finite and become the Infinite. But these sects have disappeared. The one sect of Advaitists that you see in modern India is composed of the followers of Shankara. According to Shankara, God is both the material and the efficient cause, through Mâyâ, but not in reality. God has not become this universe; but the universe is not, and God is. This is one of the highest points to understand of Advaita Vedanta, this idea of Maya. I am afraid I have no time to discuss this one most difficult point in our philosophy. Those of you who are acquainted with Western philosophy will find something very similar in Kant. But I must warn you, those of you who have studied Professor Max Müller’s writings on Kant, that there is one idea most misleading. It was Shankara who first found out the idea of the identity of time, space, and causation with Maya, and I had the good fortune to find one or two passages in Shankara’s commentaries and send them to my
friend, the Professor. So even that idea was here in India. Now this is a peculiar theory—this Maya theory of the Advaita Vedantists. This Brahman is all that exists, but differentiation has been caused by this Maya. Unity, the one Brahman, is the ultimate, the goal, and herein is an eternal dissension again between Indian and Western thought. India has thrown this challenge to the world for thousands of years, and the challenge has been taken up by different nations, and the result is that they all succumbed and you live. This is the challenge, that this world is a delusion, that it is all Maya, that whether you eat off the ground with your fingers, or dine off golden plates, whether you live in palaces, and are one of the mightiest monarchs, or are the poorest of beggars, death is the one result; it is all the same, all Maya. That is the old Indian theme, and again and again nations are springing up trying to unsay it, to disprove it; becoming great, with enjoyment as their watchword, power in their hands, they use that power to the utmost, enjoy to the utmost, and the next moment they die. We stand for ever because we see that everything is Maya. The children of Maya live for ever, but the children of enjoyment die.

Here again is another great difference. Just as you find the attempts of Hegel and Schopenhauer in German philosophy, so you will find the very same ideas brought forward in ancient India. Fortunately for us, Hegelianism was nipped in the bud, and not
allowed to sprout and cast its baneful shoots over this motherland of ours. Hegel’s one idea is that the one, the absolute, is only chaos, and that the individualised form is the greater. The world is greater than the non-world, Samsâra is greater than salvation. That is the one idea, and the more you plunge into this Samsara, the more your soul is covered with the workings of life, the better you are. They say, do you not see how we build houses, cleanse the streets, enjoy the senses? Aye, behind that they may hide rancour, misery, horror—behind every bit of that enjoyment.

On the other hand, our philosophers have from the very first declared that every manifestation, what you call evolution, is vain, a vain attempt of the unmanifested to manifest itself. Aye, you the almighty cause of this universe, trying to reflect yourself in little mud puddles! But after making the attempt for a time you find out it was all in vain, and beat a retreat to the place from whence you came. This is Vairâgya, or renunciation, and the very beginning of religion. How can religion or morality begin without renunciation itself? The Alpha and Omega is renunciation. “Give up,” says the Veda, “give up.” That is the one way, “Give up,” न प्रजया धनेन खागेनकेमनुष्ठमाजु:। —“Neither through wealth, nor through progeny, but by giving up alone that immortality is to be reached.” That is the dictate of the Indian books. Of course, there have been great givers-up of the world, even sitting on
thrones. But even Janaka himself had to renounce; who was a greater renouncer than he? But in modern times we all want to be called Janakas! They are all Janakas\(^1\) of children—unclad, ill-fed, miserable children. The word Janaka can be applied to them in that sense only; they have none of the shining, Godlike thoughts as the old Janaka had. These are our modern Janakas! A little less of this Janakism now, and come straight to the mark! If you can give up, you will have religion. If you cannot, you may read all the books that are in the world, from East to West, swallow all the libraries, and become the greatest of Pandits, but if you have Karma Kanda only, you are nothing; there is no spirituality. Through renunciation alone this immortality is to be reached. It is the power, the great power, that cares not even for the universe; then it is that ब्रह्माण्डम् गोष्पदायते—"The whole universe becomes like a hollow made by a cow's foot."

Renunciation, that is the flag, the banner of India, floating over the world, the one undying thought which India sends again and again as a warning to dying races, as a warning to all tyranny, as a warning to wickedness in the world. Aye, Hindus, let not your hold of that banner go. Hold it aloft. Even if you are weak, and cannot renounce, do not lower the ideal. Say, "I am weak and cannot renounce the world," but do not try to be hypocrites, torturing texts, and making specious arguments, and trying to

\(^1\)The word Janaka lit. means a father.
throw dust in the eyes of people who are ignorant. Do not do that, but own you are weak. For the idea is great, that of renunciation. What matters it if millions fail in the attempt, if ten soldiers, or even two, return victorious! Blessed be the millions dead! Their blood has bought the victory. This renunciation is the one ideal throughout the different Vedic sects except one, and that is the Vallabhâ-çârya sect in Bombay Presidency, and most of you are aware what comes where renunciation does not exist. We want orthodoxy, even the hideously orthodox, even those who smother themselves with ashes, even those who stand with their hands uplifted. Aye, we want them, unnatural though they be, for standing for that idea of giving up, and acting as a warning to the race against succumbing to the effeminate luxuries that are creeping into India, eating into our very vitals, and tending to make the whole race a race of hypocrites. We want to have a little of asceticism. Renunciation has conquered India in days of yore, it has still to conquer India. Still it stands the greatest and highest of Indian ideals—this renunciation. The land of Buddha, the land of Ramanuja, of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the land of renunciation, the land where, from the days of yore, Karma Kânda was preached against, and even today there are hundreds who have given up everything, and become Jivanmuktas—aye, will that land give up its ideals? Certainly not. There may be people whose brains have become turned by
the Western luxurious ideals; there may be thousands and hundreds of thousands, who have drunk deep of enjoyment, this curse of the West, the senses, the curse of the world; yet for all that, there will be other thousands in this motherland of mine to whom religion will ever be a reality, and who will be ever ready to give up without counting the cost, if need be.

Another ideal very common in all our sects, I want to place before you; it is also a vast subject. This unique idea that religion is to be realised, is in India alone. नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन कृष्णो न मेर्या न बहुज श्रुतेन।—
“This Atman is not to be reached by too much talking, nor is it to be reached by the power of intellect, nor by much study of the scriptures.” Nay, ours is the only scripture in the world that declares, not even by the study of the scriptures can the Atman be realised—not talks, not lecturing, none of that, but It is to be realised. It comes from the teacher to the disciple. When this insight comes to the disciple, everything is cleared up and realisation follows.

One more idea. There is a peculiar custom in Bengal, which they call Kula-Guru, or hereditary Guruship. “My father was your Guru, now I shall be your Guru. My father was the Guru of your father, so shall I be yours.” What is a Guru? Let us go back to the Shrutis—“He who knows the secret of the Vedas,” not book-worms, not grammarians, not Pandits in general, but he who knows the meaning. यथा खरश्रद्धनमारावाही मारस्य बेत्ता न तु चन्दनस्य।—“An ass laden with a load of sandalwood knows only the
The Vedanta in all its Phases

weight of the wood, but not its precious qualities”; so are these Pandits. We do not want such. What can they teach if they have no realisation? When I was a boy here, in this city of Calcutta, I used to go from place to place in search of religion, and everywhere I asked the lecturer after hearing very big lectures, “Have you seen God?” The man was taken aback at the idea of seeing God; and the only man who told me, “I have,” was Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, and not only so, but he said, “I will put you in the way of seeing Him too.” The Guru is not a man who twists and tortures texts.

“Different ways of throwing out words, different ways of explaining texts of the scriptures, these are for the enjoyment of the learned, not for freedom.” Shrotriya, he who knows the secret of the Shrutiis, Avrijina, the sinless, and Akâmahata, unpierced by desire—he who does not want to make money by teaching you—he is the Shânta, the Sadhu, who comes as the spring, which brings the leaves and blossoms to various plants, but does not ask anything from the plant, for its very nature is to do good. It does good and there it is. Such is the Guru. —“Who has himself crossed this terrible ocean of life, and without any idea of gain to himself, helps others also to cross the ocean.” This is the Guru, and mark that none else can be a Guru, for

329
"Themselves steeped in darkness, but in the pride of their hearts, thinking they know everything, the fools want to help others, and they go round and round in many crooked ways, staggering to and fro, and thus like the blind leading the blind, both fall into the ditch." Thus say the Vedas. Compare that and your present custom. You are Vedantists, you are very orthodox, are you not? You are great Hindus, and very orthodox. Aye, what I want to do is to make you more orthodox. The more orthodox you are, the more sensible; and the more you think of modern orthodoxy, the more foolish you are. Go back to your old orthodoxy, for in those days every sound that came from these books, every pulsation, was out of a strong, steady, and sincere heart; every note was true. After that came degradation, in art, in science, in religion, in everything, national degradation. We have no time to discuss the causes, but all the books written about that period breathe of the pestilence, the national decay; instead of vigour, only wails and cries. Go back, go back to the old days, when there was strength and vitality. Be strong once more, drink deep of this fountain of yore, and that is the only condition of life in India.

According to the Advaitist, this individuality which we have today is a delusion. This has been a hard nut to crack all over the world. Forthwith you tell a man he is not an individual, he is so much afraid
The Vedanta in all its Phases

that his individuality, whatever that may be, will be lost! But the Advaitist says there never has been an individuality, you have been changing every moment of your life. You were a child and thought in one way, now you are a man and think another way, again, you will be an old man and think differently. Everybody is changing. If so, where is your individuality? Certainly not in the body, or in the mind, or in thought. And beyond that is your Atman, and, says the Advaitist, this Atman is the Brahman Itself. There cannot be two infinites. There is only one individual and it is infinite. In plain words, we are rational beings, and we want to reason. And what is reason? More or less of classification, until you cannot go on any further. And the finite can only find its ultimate rest when it is classified into the infinite. Take up a finite thing and go on analysing it, but you will find rest nowhere until you reach the ultimate, or infinite, and that infinite, says the Advaitist, is what alone exists. Everything else is Maya, nothing else has real existence; whatever is of existence in any material thing is this Brahman; we are this Brahman, and the shape and everything else is Maya. Take away the form and shape, and you and I are all one. But we have to guard against the word, "I". Generally people say, "If I am the Brahman why cannot I do this and that?" But this is using the word in a different sense. As soon as you think you are bound, no more you are Brahman, the Self, who wants nothing, whose light is inside.
All His pleasures and bliss are inside; perfectly satisfied with Himself, He wants nothing, expects nothing, perfectly fearless, perfectly free. That is Brahman. In That we are all one.

Now this seems, therefore, to be the great point of difference between the dualist and the Advaitist. You find even great commentators like Shankaracharya making meanings of texts, which, to my mind, sometimes do not seem to be justified. Sometimes you find Ramanuja dealing with texts in a way that is not very clear. The idea has been even among our Pandits that only one of these sects can be true and the rest must be false, although they have the idea in the Shrutis, the most wonderful idea that India has yet to give to the world: एक सदिश्र बहुधा बद्दन्ति।—‘That which exists is One; sages call It by various names.’ That has been the theme, and the working out of the whole of this life-problem of the nation is the working-out of that theme—एक सदिश्र बहुधा बद्दन्ति। Yea, except a very few learned men, I mean, barring a very few spiritual men, in India, we always forget this. We forget this great idea, and you will find that there are persons among Pandits—I should think ninety-eight per cent—who are of opinion that either the Advaitist will be true, or the Visishtadvaitist will be true, or the Dvaitist will be true; and if you go to Banaras, and sit for five minutes in one of the Ghâts there, you will have demonstration of what I say. You will see a regular
bull-fight going on about these various sects and things.

Thus it remains. Then came one whose life was the explanation, whose life was the working out of the harmony that is the background of all the different sects of India, I mean Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. It is his life that explains that both of these are necessary, that they are like the geocentric and the heliocentric theories in astronomy. When a child is taught astronomy he is taught the geocentric first, and works out similar ideas of astronomy to the geocentric. But when he comes to finer points of astronomy, the heliocentric will be necessary, and he will understand it better. Dualism is the natural idea of the senses; as long as we are bound by the senses we are bound to see a God who is only Personal, and nothing but Personal, we are bound to see the world as it is. Says Ramanuja, "So long as you think you are a body, and you think you are a mind, and you think you are a Jiva, every act of perception will give you the three—Soul, and nature, and something as causing both." But yet at the same time, even the idea of the body disappears where the mind itself becomes finer and finer, till it has almost disappeared, when all the different things that make us fear, make us weak, and bind us down to this body-life, have disappeared. Then and then alone one finds out the truth of that grand old teaching. What is the teaching?—
Lectures from Colombo to Almora

इत्यत: तैजितः सगोऽ थेषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः।
निद्रोऽपि हि समं ब्रह्म तस्मादव्यवहारणे ते स्थितः॥

—"Even in this life they have conquered the round of birth and death, whose minds are firm-fixed on the sameness of everything, for God is pure, and the same to all, and therefore, such are said to be living in God."

समं पद्यन् हि सर्वेऽ समवस्थितमीश्वरं
न इनस्यात्मनात्मां ततो याति परां गतिम्॥

—"Thus seeing the Lord the same everywhere, he, the sage, does not hurt the Self by the self, and so goes to the highest goal."
ADDRESS OF WELCOME AT ALMORA
AND THE REPLY

On his arrival at Almora, Swamiji received an Address of Welcome in Hindi from the citizens of Almora, of which the following is a translation:

Great-souled one,

Since the time we heard that, after gaining spiritual conquest in the West, you had started from England for your motherland, India, we were naturally desirous of having the pleasure of seeing you. By the grace of the Almighty, that auspicious moment has at last come. The saying of the great poet and the prince of Bhaktas, Tulsidás, "A person who intensely loves another is sure to find him," has been fully realised today. We have assembled here to welcome you with sincere devotion. You have highly obliged us by your kindly taking so much trouble in paying a visit to this town again. We can hardly thank you enough for your kindness. Blessed are you! Blessed, blessed is the revered Gurudeva who initiated you into Yoga. Blessed is the land of Bhārata where, even in this fearful Kali Yuga, there exist leaders of Aryan races like yourself. Even at an early period of life, you have by your simplicity, sincerity, character, philanthropy, severe discipline, conduct, and the preaching of knowledge, acquired that
immaculate fame throughout the world, of which we feel so proud.

In truth, you have accomplished that difficult task which no one ever undertook in this country since the days of Shri Shankarâchârya. Which of us ever dreamt that a descendant of the old Indian Aryans, by dint of Tapas, would prove to the learned people of England and America the superiority of the ancient Indian religion over other creeds? In the World’s Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, before the representatives of different religions assembled there, you so ably advocated the superiority of the ancient religion of India, that their eyes were opened. In that great assembly, learned speakers defended their respective religions in their own way, but you surpassed them all. You completely established that no religion can compete with the religion of the Vedas. Not only this, but preaching the ancient wisdom at various places in the continents aforesaid, you have attracted many learned men towards the ancient Aryan religion and philosophy. In England, too, you have planted the banner of the ancient religion, which it is impossible now to remove.

Up to this time, the modern civilised nations of Europe and America were entirely ignorant of the genuine nature of our religion, but you have with your spiritual teaching opened their eyes, by which they have come to know that the ancient religion, which owing to their ignorance they used to brand
Address of Welcome at Almora

"as a religion of subtleties of conceited people, or a
mass of discourses meant for fools," is a mine of
gems. Certainly, "It is better to have a virtuous and
accomplished son than to have hundreds of foolish
ones." "It is the moon that singly with its light
dispels all darkness and not all the stars put together."
It is only the life of a good and virtuous son like
yourself that is really useful to the world. Mother
India is consoled in her decayed state by the presence
of pious sons like you. Many have crossed the seas
and aimlessly run to and fro, but it was only through
the reward of your past good Karma that you have
proved the greatness of our religion, beyond the seas.
You have made it the sole aim of your life by word,
thought, and deed, to impart spiritual instruction to
humanity. You are always ready to give religious
instruction.

We have heard with great pleasure that you intend
establishing a Math (monastery) here, and we sin-
cerely pray that your efforts in this direction may be
crowned with success. The great Shankarâchârya
also after his spiritual conquest, established a Math
at Badarikâshrama in the Himalayas for the protec-
tion of the ancient religion. Similarly, if your desire
is also fulfilled, India will be greatly benefited. By
the establishment of the Math, we, Kumaonese, will
derive special spiritual advantages, and we shall not
see the ancient religion gradually disappearing from
our midst.

From time immemorial, this part of the country
has been the land of asceticism. The greatest of the Indian sages passed their time in piety and asceticism in this land; but that has become a thing of the past. We earnestly hope that by the establishment of the Math you will kindly make us realise it again. It was this sacred land which enjoyed the celebrity all over India of having true religion, Karma, discipline, and fair dealing, all of which seem to have been decaying by the efflux of time. And we hope that by your noble exertions this land will revert to its ancient religious state.

We cannot adequately express the joy we have felt at your arrival here. May you live long, enjoying perfect health and leading a philanthropic life! May your spiritual powers be ever on the increase, so that through your endeavours the unhappy state of India may soon disappear!

Two other addresses were presented, to which the Swami made the following brief reply:

This is the land of dreams of our forefathers, in which was born Pârvati, the Mother of India. This is the holy land where every ardent soul in India wants to come at the end of its life, and to close the last chapter of its mortal career. On the tops of the mountains of this blessed land, in the depths of its caves, on the banks of its rushing torrents, have been thought out the most wonderful thoughts, a little bit of which has drawn so much admiration even from foreigners, and which have been pronounced by the most competent of judges to be incomparable.


Reply to Addresses at Almora

This is the land which, since my childhood, I have been dreaming of passing my life in, and as all of you are aware, I have attempted again and again to live here; and although the time was not ripe, and I had work to do and was whirled outside of this holy place, yet it is the hope of my life to end my days somewhere in this Father of Mountains where Rishis lived, where philosophy was born. Perhaps, my friends, I shall not be able to do it, in the way that I had planned before—how I wish that silence, that unknownness would be given to me—yet I sincerely pray and hope, and almost believe, that my last days will be spent here, of all places on earth.

Inhabitants of this holy land, accept my gratitude for the kind praise that has fallen from you for my little work in the West. But, at the same time, my mind does not want to speak of that, either in the East or in the West. As peak after peak of this Father of Mountains began to appear before my sight, all the propensities to work, that ferment that had been going on in my brain for years, seemed to quiet down, and instead of talking about what had been done, and what was going to be done, the mind reverted to that one eternal theme which the Himalayas always teach us, that one theme which is reverberating in the very atmosphere of the place, the one theme the murmur of which I hear even now in the rushing whirlpools of its rivers—renunciation!

Everything in this life is fraught with fear. It is renunciation
alone that makes one fearless.” Yes, this is the land of renunciation.

The time will not permit me, and the circumstances are not fitting, to speak to you fully. I shall have to conclude, therefore, by pointing out to you that the Himalayas stand for that renunciation, and the grand lesson we shall ever teach to humanity will be renunciation. As our forefathers used to be attracted towards it in the latter days of their lives, so strong souls from all quarters of this earth, in time to come, will be attracted to this Father of Mountains, when all this fight between sects, and all those differences in dogmas will not be remembered any more, and quarrels between your religion and my religion will have vanished altogether, when mankind will understand that there is but one eternal religion, and that is, the perception of the divine within, and the rest is mere froth: such ardent souls will come here knowing that the world is but vanity of vanities, knowing that everything is useless except the worship of the Lord and the Lord alone.

Friends, you have been very kind to allude to an idea of mine, which is to start a centre in the Himalayas, and perhaps I have sufficiently explained why it should be so, why, above all others, this is the spot which I want to select as one of the great centres to teach this universal religion. These mountains are associated with the best memories of our race; if these Himalayas are taken away from the history of
religious India, there will be very little left behind. Here, therefore, must be one of those centres, not merely of activity, but more of calmness, of meditation, and of peace; and I hope some day to realise it. I hope also to meet you at other times, and have better opportunities of talking to you. For the present, let me thank you again for all the kindness that has been shown to me, and let me take it as not only kindness shown to me in person, but as to one who represents our religion. May it never leave our hearts! May we always remain as pure as we are at the present moment, and as enthusiastic for spirituality as we are just now!