

krishna by M. does not comprehend all the teachings of Ramakrishna. In this connection, two special teachings of Ramakrishna should be mentioned. Ramakrishna said: "Tie Vedanta in the corner of your cloth and go wherever you like". To understand fully the implications of this saying one has to study carefully the speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda. Here we find that Ramakrishna cannot be fully understood without Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Vivekananda cannot be fully understood without Ramakrishna. Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda) held that Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were the obverse and the reverse of the same coin. The other teaching is that man's spiritual goal is not to show kindness to living beings but to serve living beings as the manifestations of the Supreme. This teaching clarified to the young Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) the mission of his life.

Now we come to the universal teachings of Ramakrishna about the power of the mind to withdraw from external and internal details, and about the power of the mind to feel unity with all lives and all things. These centre round the two significant words mentioned in the book—*Samadhi* and *Bhavamukha*. Mr. Isherwood's mystical meaning makes *Samadhi* something absolutely beyond the reach of people. According to Patanjali any intense concentration is tantamount to *Samadhi*. Even to ordinary people something of *Samadhi* becomes known when they, at the intensest moments of affection, aesthetic experience and dedication, forget the ego and feel perfect tranquillity. The intensest form of *Samadhi* that so often came to Ramakrishna was an indication of how ordinary men and women, following in his footsteps, could withdraw from everything for a time to experience emancipation and relief. The superconscious experience is based on the pure tranquillity of *Samadhi*, and Swami Vivekananda asserts that a time will come when it will become the common property of mankind. Mr. Isherwood explains in Chapter 10 the nature of *Bhavamukha*, a state of unity based on tranquillity, which formed the background of Ramakrishna's thoughts and activities. For the full understanding of this feeling of unity we have to go to Swami Vivekananda when he preaches the unity of existence, of life and of mankind as the great principle of Vedanta and visualises on a spiritual basis a world community without oppression or exploitation. Once Ramakrishna, identifying himself with a sweeper, heartily did the work of sweeping in a latrine by breaking the caste barriers so that he could experience true spiritual oneness. At another time, he felt a deep spiritual unity with a person who was being assaulted, and his deep sympathy and strong imagination brought the mark of the blow on his own body.

The state of *Bhavamukha* also explains Ramakrishna's behaviour towards sub-human creatures. Mr. Isherwood tells us how Ramakrishna worshipped the cat when it came to the chapel. We read elsewhere how

once Ramakrishna very affectionately rescued a minnow from a small pool in the field when the flood was over, and put it into a lake, and how at another time he became extremely anxious about a mother cat when she with her kittens took shelter in his room and he was relieved when a disciple took charge of them. The service of *Jivas* (the living beings) as prescribed by Ramakrishna is never confined to human beings.

The complicated world of today will be struck by the simplicity and naturalness of Ramakrishna. His simplicity had a sense of universal reverence behind it. Once he bowed down to a little girl who had bowed down to him. Mr. Isherwood says: "The majority of us spend the greater part of our lives in the future or the past—fearing and desiring what is to come, regretting what is over.... To be with Ramakrishna was to be in the presence of that Now."

The last chapter gives a short account of the spread of the spiritual influence of Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in India and the West. After the passing away of Ramakrishna in 1886, the young disciples gathered together in a haunted house, their first monastery, and individually and in small groups visited the sacred places throughout India. The most important events were the success of Swami Vivekananda at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, his valuable preaching work in America and Britain, his triumphal march from Colombo to Calcutta in 1897, and then the establishment of the Belur Monastery as the permanent headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order, and the organisation of the Ramakrishna Mission for the service of the people.

This chapter has a pathos of its own as we find the disappearance of Swami Vivekananda from the scene in 1902, and then the passing away of the Mother Sarada Devi and the direct disciples of Ramakrishna, one after the other, leaving a vast spiritual field in India and the world to their spiritual children, the monks, nuns and devotees in the East and the West. At the heart of the Ramakrishna Order and the Ramakrishna Mission remains Ramakrishna, a conundrum to the scientifically minded people all over the world. Mr. Isherwood has given most of the available facts about a unique "phenomenon", and each reader of the book has to answer the searching questions that he has put forward in the penultimate paragraph of the book: "To the best of my ability, the phenomenon has been described. How should one interpret it? How react to it? Should it be dismissed from the mind, as something irrelevant and inconveniently out of line with everyday experience? Or should it be taken as the starting-point of a change in one's own ideas and life?" (This review is reprinted from the September number of *World Faiths* for which it was written.)

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THE COMMON LIFE

A NEWSLETTER

on RECONCILIATION, NON-VIOLENCE, PEACE and SPIRITUAL COMMUNISM

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NOTES

A Common Social Goal: Humanity is one, and a common social goal must be kept before all races and nations. For lasting peace, ultimately a common social system has to pervade the entire world, and that system has to be established by a non-violent social revolution. The world cannot face the horror of a nuclear conflagration; and, while there may be occasional regional skirmishes and civil wars, it must be the special concern of the United Nations and the statesmen that no skirmish or civil war can gain an international magnitude. A new world order has to emerge within the framework of peaceful co-existence—peaceful co-existence not merely of capitalism and communism, but also of different forms of communism. The world today urgently needs (1) a spiritual conception of human unity based on the feeling of one in all, and all in one, discarding aggressive nationalism, oppressive racialism, class snobbery and religious fanaticism; (2) a comprehensive scheme for the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange to promote sharing, social equality, and the methodical use of manpower and scientific resources; (3) a clear idea of individual freedom, based on a real understanding of the relation between the individual and the collective; and (4) a non-violent technique of social revolution, that uses moral persuasion, democratic means and the methods of non-participation, and challenges the paroxysm of violence in this nuclear age. The socialisation of the means of production is the most important step in bringing about a new social order, but a classless society cannot come into being unless and until equal emolument is given to all forms of socially necessary labour, unskilled, skilled and intellectual, a spiritual incentive and a missionary spirit inspire the people, and a rational and moral standard of living is accepted by all. The social goal of humanity is non-violent spiritual communism.

Majority Rule for Rhodesia: If the White minority government in Rhodesia, which has declared independence illegally, fails to pave the way for African majority rule in the near future, then disaster will fall upon Rhodesia, and eventually upon the whole of Southern Africa where the peoples in the Portuguese possessions and in the Union of South Africa have been struggling for freedom and justice. The Prime Minister of Britain said in Parliament that he did not believe in the immediate functioning of the principle of one man, one vote in Rhodesia, in spite of the fact that this principle was accepted by the last Conference of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers, which was held in London. A summit resolution of the Organisation of African Unity called on Britain to adopt in Rhodesia a constitution based on one man, one vote, and the General Assembly and the Trusteeship Committee of the United Nations

also stood for majority rule in Rhodesia. A Royal Commission could have promoted a peaceful settlement, had it been instituted and had its terms of reference included an amendment in the 1961 constitution for one man, one vote. The Archbishop of Canterbury was consistent, from his own standpoint, when he said that the application of force might be needed in certain circumstances. The Rhodesian minority government representing almost all the 217,000 Whites, have declared independence unilaterally against the interests of 4 million Africans. Only a strict imposition of economic sanctions by Britain and a well-planned non-violent non-co-operation movement of the Africans can peacefully lead to majority rule. Peace in Southern Africa depends entirely on the decision of the White government in Rhodesia. With a view to saving Rhodesia from riots and bloodshed, avoiding a conflict in which all the new African governments may be involved, and stopping the intensification of racial conflict in Africa and the world, a new Rhodesian government should (1) set up a Cabinet with an equal number of White and African members, (2) frame a constitution based on universal adult franchise, with proper safeguards for minority rights, and (3) promulgate a comprehensive system of education for Africans, and within a year organise general election on the basis of the new constitution. The system of universal adult franchise is functioning well in many newly free countries without universal literacy and there is no reason why it should not succeed in Rhodesia.

Slavery: The lovers of human freedom will be pained to know that slavery in the traditional form and as serfdom, debt bondage, and sham adoption still exists in certain countries. In some Latin American states more than one million persons are subject to serfdom; in the world, about 250,000 persons are in a state of slavery in a traditional sense; there is the evidence of slavery on the pilgrim route from Sudan to Mecca; in West Africa there is a tribe in which buying, selling and torturing slaves is prevalent; and in one West African country girls are bought and sold for harems. The problems of slavery in all these countries were discussed by the Social Committee of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in Geneva in July last, 1965. the delegates of India and Ecuador admitted the presence of bonded labour among the agricultural workers in their countries, and said that their governments were striving to remove it. The British proposal to call on all member-states of the United Nations to become parties to the International Slavery Convention of 1926 and the supplementary Convention of 1956 was adopted. Dr. Muhammed Awad, the United Nations rapporteur, has suggested that the United Nations should take the initiative in bringing together the countries involved, for the comprehensive study of the problem. Sir Douglas Glover, Chairman of the Anti-slavery Society

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which has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council has advocated the setting up of a committee by the United Nations to help the countries which have to tackle the problem of slavery. In these countries, desirable public opinion against slavery cannot be formed without a real democratic system which allows criticism of the government and society; it is a pity that religious and humanitarian organisations cannot speak freely, as they depend upon the support of the rich. In these circumstances, the countries involved should be made to feel the pressure of world opinion through the United Nations.

Vegetarianism and Population: Last summer the eighteenth World Congress of the International Vegetarian Union was held in Swanwick, Derby, England. About 400 people from different parts of the world came to the Congress. Mr. Geoffrey Rudd, general secretary of the Congress, said that if people gave up meat diet and resorted to vegetarianism, then the world would be able to support five times its present population, and that it would be more economic to produce vegetables than meat. We hope that thinkers and statesmen of all countries will pay heed to his utterance, and strive to introduce necessary food reform in their countries. An experiment made in England by Edward Carpenter showed that only half an acre of land per person was necessary for vegetarian food. It is known that for meat diet more than two acres per person is required.

THE PROBLEM OF THE INDO-PAKISTAN SUB-CONTINENT

As chairman of the Vedanta Movement, a British philosophical society seeking spiritual understanding and peace among all races and nations, I sent the following cable to the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan on September 23: "For international prestige India and Pakistan should solve their problems on their own initiative. It is unwise to dissociate Kashmir problem from problem of Muslim minority in India and of Hindu minority in Pakistan. Suggesting rapprochement on following basis. Acceptance of U.N. cease-fire line as permanent frontier by both. India and Pakistan to set up a permanent minority commission to handle problems of Hindu and Muslim minorities and a permanent boundary commission to resolve border disputes. Four joint sessions of Indian and Pakistani cabinets every year to direct affairs of common interest." The copy of this cable was sent to the Prime Ministers of Britain and Russia, the President of America, the U.N. Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council.

A complete cease-fire and a lasting peace should be sought by India and Pakistan for the following reasons: (a) A war or the preparation for a war will lead to an utter misuse of raw materials, machinery, man-power, etc. in India and Pakistan, do the greatest damage to the economic potential of both the countries and obstruct their economic plans and the raising of the standard of living of the people. (b) There are religious, racial and linguistic problems in India and Pakistan, and the continuation of a cold or hot war will certainly intensify these problems and tend to bring about the

disintegration of both the countries. (c) The continuation of hostility will necessitate the open or secret acceptance of help from other nations and this acceptance may ultimately tell upon the freedom of both the countries. (d) The continuation of hostility may lead to intervention by other nations thus creating a complex international situation, hampering the solidarity of each of the two countries, destroying Asian unity and making a nuclear war feasible. (e) The expenditure for armaments and other paraphernalia of warfare incurred by both out of fear of each other should be saved and used for constructive purposes in both the countries. A cease-fire and a lasting peace must be achieved in such a manner that the integrity of India and of Pakistan does not suffer in any way.

The old cease-fire line established by the United Nations should be accepted as the permanent frontier between India and Pakistan; India should not claim for herself the part of Kashmir in Pakistan outside this border, neither should Pakistan claim for herself the part of Kashmir in India outside this border. It must be the concern of both Pakistan and India to see to it that Kashmiris can enjoy all the legitimate rights and liberties by means of the constitutions of India and Pakistan. In the present situation there is no likelihood of Pakistan's taking away Kashmir from India by force; neither can India by using force get back the part of Kashmir now under Pakistan's occupation. It will be wise, therefore, to accept the old cease-fire line as the permanent frontier between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir side.

Pakistan and India should form a non-aligned confederacy retaining their own constitutions and ways of life, and their two cabinets should have joint sessions at least four times a year to frame a comprehensive policy for (1) international relations, (2) concerted economic planning in both the countries, (3) religious tolerance and (4) cultural give and take. Neither India nor Pakistan will incur any political or cultural loss by entering into such a confederacy. Rather through such a confederacy the sub-continent will become strong and invincible. The formation of an Indo-Pakistan confederation will preserve the two social systems in India and Pakistan intact and at the same time enable the two countries to initiate a common foreign policy, defence measures and economic planning. There will not be any minority problem as the entire sub-continent will be governed unitedly by Hindus and Muslims in co-operation with other communities.

Under the auspices of the joint cabinet two permanent commissions with an equal number of representatives from Pakistan and India should be set up: a minority commission to tackle all problems of the Hindu minority in Pakistan and the Muslim minority in India; and a boundary commission to settle all the disputes that may arise in the boundaries between India and West and East Pakistan. Hindus and Muslims fought together for independence in 1857. No Hindu-Muslim riot was known before the first decade of this century. The Morley-Minto Reforms with the provision of separate electorate stimulated political ambition in Muslims; and the leaders of Indian nationalism outside the Indian

Congress were not able to create an idealism which could satisfy the Muslim community. A confederacy based on democratic principles will fully satisfy Muslim political ambition, and a policy of cultural give and take between the two communities will invigorate the sub-continent by means of the social equality that Islam upholds and the philosophical equality that Hinduism preaches. The acceptance of the spirit of confederation will take away the idea of grabbing from the minds of the two communities, and consequently a boundary commission as suggested will be able to function without difficulty, and reasonable adjustments will be made without grudge or complaint. Administrative facilities should be the first consideration in making boundary adjustments.

It is wrong to think of the Kashmir problem as dissociated from the Muslim minority in India and the Hindu minority in Pakistan. It will be an utter lack of wisdom to jeopardise the lives and liberties of 50 million Muslims in India and the 10 million Hindus in Pakistan for the sake of 4 million Kashmiris. Judging from the problems of minorities, the partition has been a most unwise political act, and now a way should be discovered through a confederacy to mitigate the wrongs that have been done to the minority communities and devise a way of bringing together the two countries without in any way encroaching upon their sovereignty and territorial integrity. If the confederacy works successfully for a reasonable period of time, then a federation of India and Pakistan, through which the great communities in co-operation with other communities can concertedly govern the entire sub-continent, may arise through common consent.

A contented, well-organised and free Indo-Pakistan sub-continent is needed for peace in Asia and the world. It should be the concern of the powerful nations to see the sub-continent politically, economically and culturally united, and they should persuade India and Pakistan to be united through a confederacy. If the experiment along the line of a confederacy can be fruitful, then it is likely that an Indo-Pakistan Federation will ultimately come into being. The two Bengals and the two Punjabs can then be federated states within the main federation, the two Kashmirs can be reunified, and there can be the states of Sind and the North-western Frontier Province on a linguistic basis. The official language of the federation can be Hindi (in Devnagri and Urdu scripts) embodying words and phrases from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Urdu. The present partition is politically, economically and culturally detrimental to both India and Pakistan, and a hostile relation between India and Pakistan can make the condition of the Muslim minority in India and the Hindu minority in Pakistan quite precarious. We appeal to India and Pakistan to consider favourably the proposal for a confederacy.

RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

Ramakrishna and His Disciples by Christopher Isherwood (Methuen. 36s.) can be taken as a companion volume to Romain Rolland's *Prophets of the New India*.

It is an inspiring book for the devotionally minded men and women of the world, and it will help strengthen the bridge which has been constructed between India and the West. This biography, with its fascinating English and lucid style, is expected to draw the attention of many people who are not directly concerned with religion or mysticism.

The "phenomenon" that is Ramakrishna has been depicted in its various facets with frankness and clarity. We find Ramakrishna in his boyhood proving that the aesthetic emotion is "the very twin brother of mystic experience" as he enters into the calm of *Samadhi* by seeing natural scenery, singing a devotional song, and taking the part of a god in a drama. His acceptance of priestly duties at the Kali temple of a Rani, belonging to a low caste, started the process of evolving a casteless society in India. The Tantric practices which according to tradition require sex, wine and meat were transformed by him through purer methods. It is hoped that the process of refinement begun by him will culminate in the abolition of animal sacrifice extant in certain temples.

In 1936, on the occasion of Ramakrishna's centenary, Tagore said in a poem how the various ideas and faiths mingled in Ramakrishna. In Mr. Isherwood's biography we find Ramakrishna absorbing first the various aspects of Hinduism and then practising Islam and Christianity with equal sincerity and devotion. Ramakrishna exemplifies the Vedic principle: "The Truth is one but sages call it by different names". He shows how the followers of different faiths can establish a relationship of mutual give and take without in any way damaging the individual features of their faiths.

Ramakrishna died of cancer. Mr. Isherwood has given the disciples' various interpretations of this illness, excepting the one upheld by some of his devotees. It is that he chose this illness deliberately and happily died of it in order to take away the sins of the world so that by sheer faith in him liberation can be achieved by a seeker. He declared on his deathbed that he was an incarnation of God but not in the sense of Vedanta which taught the spiritual equality of all beings. Theistic Hinduism says that God's emanation is infinite as God is infinite. However, the universal message of Ramakrishna, as will be shown later on, is free from metaphysics and theology.

The quintessence of the *Gospel of Ramakrishna* by M. is given in Chapter 19. The three significant parables of Ramakrishna—the parable of the fishes about four kinds of men, the parable of the serpent about hissing but not harming, and the parable of the mad elephant and a disciple about the false application of a spiritual principle—are of great practical help not only to those who follow the spiritual path but also to those who intend to follow a non-violent mode of living. Ramakrishna gave an equal spiritual status to his male and female disciples. After his passing away, Saradamani Devi, his wife, became the spiritual head of the community of aspirants who had gathered round him. The great wisdom of some of the elder of his women-disciples reminds one of Savonarola's saying: "An old woman is a greater philosopher than Plato".

Mr. Isherwood truly says that the *Gospel of Rama-*