

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda-
Volume 8- Writings: Prose And Poems

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Chapter 1

The Struggle For Expansion

The Struggle For Expansion^[1]

The old dilemma, whether the tree precedes the seed or the seed the tree, runs through all our forms of knowledge. Whether intelligence is first in the order of being or matter; whether the ideal is first or the external manifestation; whether freedom is our true nature or bondage of law; whether thought creates matter or matter thought; whether the incessant change in nature precedes the idea of rest or the idea of rest precedes the idea of change -- all these are questions of the same insoluble nature. Like the rise and fall of a series of waves, they follow one another in an invariable succession and men take this side or that according to their tastes or education or peculiarity of temperaments.

For instance, if it be said on the one hand that, seeing the adjustment in nature of different parts, it is clear that it is the effect of intelligent work; on the other hand it may be argued that intelligence itself being created by matter and force in the course of evolution could not have been before this world. If it be said that the production of every form must be preceded by an ideal in the mind, it can be argued, with equal force, that the ideal was itself created by various external experiences. On the one hand, the appeal is to our ever - present idea of freedom; on the other, to the fact that nothing in the universe being causeless, everything, both mental and physical, is rigidly bound by the law of causation. If it be affirmed that, seeing the changes of the body induced by volition, it is evident that thought is the creator of this body, it is equally clear that as change in the body induces a change in the thought, the body must have produced the mind. If it be argued that the universal change must be the outcome of a preceding rest, equally logical argument can be adduced to show that the idea of unchangeability is only an illusory relative notion, brought about by the comparative differences in motion.

Thus in the ultimate analysis all knowledge resolves itself into this vicious circle: the indeterminate interdependence of cause and effect. Judging by the laws of reasoning, such knowledge is incorrect; and the most curious fact is that this knowledge is proved to be incorrect, not by comparison with knowledge which is true, but by the very laws which depend for their basis upon the selfsame

vicious circle. It is clear, therefore, that the peculiarity of all our knowledge is that it proves its own insufficiency. Again, we cannot say that it is unreal, for all the reality we know and can think of is within this knowledge. Nor can we deny that it is sufficient for all practical purposes. This state of human knowledge which embraces within its scope both the external and the internal worlds is called Maya. It is unreal because it proves its own incorrectness. It is real in the sense of being sufficient for all the needs of the animal man.

Acting in the external world Maya manifests itself as the two powers of attraction and repulsion. In the internal its manifestations are desire and non - desire (Pravritti and Nivritti). The whole universe is trying to rush outwards. Each atom is trying to fly off from its centre. In the internal world, each thought is trying to go beyond control. Again each particle in the external world is checked by another force, the centripetal, and drawn towards the centre. Similarly in the thought - world the controlling power is checking all these outgoing desires.

Desires of materialisation, that is, being dragged down more and more to the plane of mechanical action, belong to the animal man. It is only when the desire to prevent all such bondage to the senses arises that religion dawns in the heart of man. Thus we see that the whole scope of religion is to prevent man from falling into the bondage of the senses and to help him to assert his freedom. The first effort of this power of Nivritti towards that end is called morality. The scope of all morality is to prevent this degradation and break this bondage. All morality can be divided into the positive and the negative elements; it says either, "Do this" or "Do not do this". When it says, "Do not", it is evident that it is a check to a certain desire which would make a man a slave. When it says, "Do", its scope is to show the way to freedom and to the breaking down of a certain degradation which has already seized the human heart.

Now this morality is only possible if there be a liberty to be attained by man. Apart from the question of the chances of attaining perfect liberty, it is clear that the whole universe is a case of struggle to expand, or in other words, to attain liberty. This infinite space is not sufficient for even one atom. The struggle for expansion must go on eternally until perfect liberty is attained. It cannot

be said that this struggle to gain freedom is to avoid pain or to attain pleasure. The lowest grade of beings, who can have no such feeling, are also struggling for expansion; and according to many, man himself is the expansion of these very beings.

1.0.1 References

- [1] Written by the Swami during his first visit to America in answer to questions put by a Western disciple.

Chapter 2

The Birth Of Religion

The Birth Of Religion^[1]

The beautiful flowers of the forest with their many - coloured petals, nodding their heads, jumping, leaping, playing with every breeze; the beautiful birds with their gorgeous plumage, their sweet songs echoing through every forest glade -- they were there yesterday, my solace, my companions, and today they are gone -- where? My playmates, the companions of my joys and sorrows, my pleasures and pastime -- they also are gone -- where? Those that nursed me when I was a child, who all through their lives had but one thought for me -- that of doing everything for me -- they also are gone. Everyone, everything is gone, is going, and will go. Where do they go? This was the question that pressed for an answer in the mind of the primitive man. "Why so?" you may ask, "Did he not see everything decomposed, reduced to dust before him? Why should he have troubled his head at all about where they went?"

To the primitive man everything is living in the first place, and to him death in the sense of annihilation has no meaning at all. People come to him, go away, and come again. Sometimes they go away and do not come. Therefore in the most ancient language of the world death is always expressed by some sort of going. This is the beginning of religion. Thus the primitive man was searching everywhere for a solution of his difficulty -- where do they all go?

There is the morning sun radiant in his glory, bringing light and warmth and joy to a sleeping world. Slowly he travels and, alas, he also disappears, down, down below!

But the next day he appears again -- glorious, beautiful! And there is the lotus -- that wonderful flower in the Nile, the Indus, and the Tigris, the birth - places of civilisation -- opening in the morning as the solar rays strike its closed petals and with the waning sun shutting up again. Some were there then who came and went and got up from their graves revived. This was the first solution. The sun and the lotus are, therefore, the chief symbols in the most ancient religions. Why these symbols? because abstract thought, whatever that be, when expressed, is bound to come clad in visible, tangible, gross garments. This is the law. The idea of the passing out as not out of existence but in it, had to be expressed only as a change, a momentary

transformation; and reflexively, that object which strikes the senses and goes vibrating to the mind and calls up a new idea is bound to be taken up as the support, the nucleus round which the new idea spreads itself for an expression. And so the sun and the lotus were the first symbols.

There are deep holes everywhere -- so dark and so dismal; down is all dark and frightful; under water we cannot see, open our eyes though we may; up is light, all light, even at night the beautiful starry hosts shedding their light. Where do they go then, those I love? Not certainly down in the dark, dark place, but up, above in the realm of Everlasting Light. That required a new symbol. Here is fire with its glowing wonderful tongues of flame -- eating up a forest in a short time, cooking the food, giving warmth, and driving wild animals away -- this life - giving, life - saving fire; and then the flames -- they all go upwards, never downwards. Here then was another -- this fire that carries them upwards to the places of light -- the connecting link between us and those that have passed over to the regions of light. "Thou Ignis", begins the oldest human record, "our messenger to the bright ones." So they put food and drink and whatever they thought would be pleasing to these "bright ones" into the fire. This was the beginning of sacrifice.

So far the first question was solved, at least as far as to satisfy the needs of these primitive men. Then came the other question: Whence has all this come? Why did it not come first? Because we remember a sudden change more. Happiness, joy, addition, enjoyment make not such a deep impression on our mind as unhappiness, sorrow, and subtraction. Our nature is joy, enjoyment, pleasure, and happiness. Anything that violently breaks it makes a deeper impression than the natural course. So the problem of death was the first to be solved as the great disturber. Then with more advancement came the other question: Whence they came? Everything that lives moves: we move; our will moves our limbs; our limbs manufacture forms under the control of our will. Everything then that moved had a will in it as the motor, to the man - child of ancient times as it is to the child - man of the present day. The wind has a will; the cloud, the whole of nature, is full of separate wills, minds, and souls. They are creating all this just as we manufacture many things;

they -- the "Devas", the "Elohims" are the creators of all this.

Now in the meanwhile society was growing up. In society there was the king -- why not among the bright ones, the Elohims? Therefore there was a supreme "Deva", an Elohim - jahveh, God of gods -- the one God who by His single will has created all this -- even the "bright ones". But as He has appointed different stars and planets, so He has appointed different "Devas" or angels to preside over different functions of nature -- some over death, some over birth, etc. One supreme being, supreme by being infinitely more powerful than the rest, is the common conception in the two great sources of all religions, the Aryan and Semitic races. But here the Aryans take a new start, a grand deviation.

Their God was not only a supreme being, but He was the Dyaus Pitar, the Father in heaven. This is the beginning of Love. The Semitic God is only a thunderer, only the terrible one, the mighty Lord of hosts. To all these the Aryan added a new idea, that of a Father . And the divergence becomes more and more obvious all through further progress, which in fact stopped at this place in the Semitic branch of the human race. The God of the Semitic is not to be seen -- nay, it is death to see Him; the God of the Aryan cannot only be seen, but He is the goal of being; the one aim of life is to see Him. The Semitic obeys his King of kings for fear of punishment and keeps His commandments. The Aryan loves his father; and further on he adds mother, his friend. And "Love me, love my dog", they say. So each one of His creatures should be loved, because they are His. To the Semitic, this life is an outpost where we are posted to test our fidelity; to the Aryan this life is on the way to our goal. To the Semitic, if we do our duty well, we shall have an ever - joyful home in heaven. To the Aryan, that home is God Himself. To the Semitic, serving God is a means to an end, namely, the pay, which is joy and enjoyment. To the Aryan, enjoyment, misery -- everything -- is a means, and the end is God. The Semitic worships God to go to heaven. The Aryan rejects heaven to go to God. In short, this is the main difference. The aim and end of the Aryan life is to see God, to see the face of the Beloved, because without Him he cannot live. "Without Thy presence, the sun, the moon, and the stars lose their light."

2.0.2 References

- [1] Written by the Swami during his first visit to America in answer to questions put by a Western disciple.

Chapter 3

Four Paths Of Yoga

Four Paths Of Yoga^[1]

Our main problem is to be free. It is evident then that until we realise ourselves as the Absolute, we cannot attain to deliverance. Yet there are various ways of attaining to this realisation. These methods have the generic name of Yoga (to join, to join ourselves to our reality). These Yogas, though divided into various groups, can principally be classed into four; and as each is only a method leading indirectly to the realisation of the Absolute, they are suited to different temperaments. Now it must be remembered that it is not that the assumed man becomes the real man or Absolute. There is no becoming with the Absolute. It is ever free, ever perfect; but the ignorance that has covered its nature for a time is to be removed. Therefore the whole scope of all systems of Yoga (and each religion represents one) is to clear up this ignorance and allow the Atman to restore its own nature. The chief helps in this liberation are Abhyasa and Vairagya. Vairagya is non-attachment to life, because it is the will to enjoy that brings all this bondage in its train; and Abhyasa is constant practice of any one of the Yogas.

Karma - yoga . Karma - yoga is purifying the mind by means of work. Now if any work is done, good or bad, it must produce as a result a good or bad effect; no power can stay it, once the cause is present. Therefore good action producing good Karma, and bad action, bad Karma, the soul will go on in eternal bondage without ever hoping for deliverance. Now Karma belongs only to the body or the mind, never to the Atman (Self); only it can cast a veil before the Atman.

The veil cast by bad Karma is ignorance. Good Karma has the power to strengthen the moral powers. And thus it creates non-attachment; it destroys the tendency towards bad Karma and thereby purifies the mind. But if the work is done with the intention of enjoyment, it then produces only that very enjoyment and does not purify the mind or Chitta. Therefore all work should be done without any desire to enjoy the fruits thereof. All fear and all desire to enjoy here or hereafter must be banished forever by the Karma - yogi. Moreover, this Karma without desire of return will destroy the selfishness, which is the root of all bondage. The watchword of the Karma - yogi is "not I, but Thou", and no amount of self - sacrifice is

too much for him. But he does this without any desire to go to heaven, or gain name or fame or any other benefit in this world. Although the explanation and rationale of this unselfish work is only in Jnana - yoga, yet the natural divinity of man makes him love all sacrifice simply for the good of others, without any ulterior motive, whatever his creed or opinion. Again, with many the bondage of wealth is very great; and Karma - yoga is absolutely necessary for them as breaking the crystallisation that has gathered round their love of money.

Next is Bhakti - Yoga . Bhakti or worship or love in some form or other is the easiest, pleasantest, and most natural way of man. The natural state of this universe is attraction; and that is surely followed by an ultimate disunion. Even so, love is the natural impetus of union in the human heart; and though itself a great cause of misery, properly directed towards the proper object, it brings deliverance. The object of Bhakti is God. Love cannot be without a subject and an object. The object of love again must be at first a being who can reciprocate our love. Therefore the God of love must be in some sense a human God. He must be a God of love. Aside from the question whether such a God exists or not, it is a fact that to those who have love in their heart this Absolute appears as a God of love, as personal.

The lower forms of worship, which embody the idea of God as a judge or punisher or someone to be obeyed through fear, do not deserve to be called love, although they are forms of worship gradually expanding into higher forms. We pass on to the consideration of love itself. We will illustrate love by a triangle, of which the first angle at the base is fearlessness. So long as there is fear, it is not love. Love banishes all fear. A mother with her baby will face a tiger to save her child. The second angle is that love never asks, never begs. The third or the apex is that love loves for the sake of love itself. Even the idea of object vanishes. Love is the only form in which love is loved. This is the highest abstraction and the same as the Absolute.

Next is Raja - Yoga . This Yoga fits in with every one of these Yogas. It fits inquirers of all classes with or without any belief, and it is the real instrument of religious inquiry. As each science has its particular method of investigation, so is this Raja - yoga the method of religion.

This science also is variously applied according to various constitutions. The chief parts are the Pranayama, concentration, and meditation. For those who believe in God, a symbolical name, such as Om or other sacred words received from a Guru, will be very helpful. Om is the greatest, meaning the Absolute. Meditating on the meaning of these holy names while repeating them is the chief practice.

Next is Jnana - Yoga. This is divided into three parts. First: hearing the truth -- that the Atman is the only reality and that everything else is Maya (relativity). Second: reasoning upon this philosophy from all points of view. Third: giving up all further argumentation and realising the truth. This realisation comes from (1) being certain that Brahman is real and everything else is unreal; (2) giving up all desire for enjoyment; (3) controlling the senses and the mind; (4) intense desire to be free. Meditating on this reality always and reminding the soul of its real nature are the only ways in this Yoga. It is the highest, but most difficult. Many persons get an intellectual grasp of it, but very few attain realisation.

3.0.3 References

- [1] Written by the Swami during his first visit to America in answer to questions put by a Western disciple.

Chapter 4

Cyclic Rest And Change

Cyclic Rest And Change^[1]

This whole universe is a case of lost balance. All motion is the struggle of the disturbed universe to regain its equilibrium, which, as such, cannot be motion. Thus in regard to the internal world it would be a state which is beyond thought, for thought itself is a motion. Now when all indication is towards perfect equilibrium by expansion and the whole universe is rushing towards it, we have no right to say that that state can never be attained. Again it is impossible that there should be any variety whatsoever in that state of equilibrium. It must be homogeneous; for as long as there are even two atoms, they will attract and repel each other and disturb the balance. Therefore this state of equilibrium is one of unity, of rest, and of homogeneity. In the language of the internal, this state of equilibrium is not thought, nor body, nor anything which we call an attribute. The only thing which we can say it will retain is what is its own nature as existence, self-consciousness, and blissfulness.

This state in the same way cannot be two. It must only be a unit, and all fictitious distinctions of I, thou, etc., all the different variations must vanish, as they belong to the state of change or Maya. It may be said that this state of change has come now upon the Self, showing that, before this, it had the state of rest and liberty; that at present the state of differentiation is the only real state, and the state of homogeneity is the primitive crudeness out of which this changeful state is manufactured; and that it will be only degeneration to go back to the state of undifferentiation. This argument would have had some weight if it could be proved that these two states, viz homogeneity and heterogeneity, are the only two states happening but once through all time. What happens once must happen again and again. Rest is followed by change -- the universe. But that rest must have been preceded by other changes, and this change will be succeeded by other rests. It would be ridiculous to think that there was a period of rest and then came this change which will go on for ever. Every particle in nature shows that it is coming again and again to periodic rest and change.

This interval between one period of rest and another is called a Kalpa. But this Kalpic rest cannot be one of perfect homogeneity, for in that case there would be an end

to any future manifestation. Now to say that the present state of change is one of great advance in comparison to the preceding state of rest is simply absurd, because in that case the coming period of rest being much more advanced in time must be much more perfect! There is no progression or digression in nature. It is showing again and again the same forms. In fact, the word law means this. But there is a progression with regard to souls. That is to say, the souls get nearer to their own natures, and in each Kalpa large numbers of them get deliverance from being thus whirled around. It may be said, the individual soul being a part of the universe and nature, returning again and again, there cannot be any liberty for the soul, for in that case the universe has to be destroyed. The answer is that the individual soul is an assumption through Maya, and it is no more a reality than nature itself. In reality, this individual soul is the unconditioned absolute Brahman (the Supreme).

All that is real in nature is Brahman, only it appears to be this variety, or nature, through the superimposition of Maya. Maya being illusion cannot be said to be real, yet it is producing the phenomena. If it be asked, how can Maya, herself being illusion, produce all this, our answer is that what is produced being also ignorance, the producer must also be that. How can ignorance be produced by knowledge? So this Maya is acting in two ways as nescience and science (relative knowledge); and this science after destroying nescience or ignorance is itself also destroyed. This Maya destroys herself and what remains is the Absolute, the Essence of existence, knowledge, and bliss. Now whatever is reality in nature is this Absolute, and nature comes to us in three forms, God, conscious, and unconscious, i.e. God, personal souls, and unconscious beings. The reality of all these is the Absolute; through Maya it is seen to be diverse. But the vision of God is the nearest to the reality and the highest. The idea of a Personal God is the highest idea which man can have. All the attributes attributed to God are true in the same sense as are the attributes of nature. Yet we must never forget that the Personal God is the very Absolute seen through Maya.

4.0.4 References

- [1] Written by the Swami during his first visit to America in answer to questions put by a Western disciple.

Chapter 5

A Preface To The Imitation Of Christ

A Preface To The Imitation Of Christ^[1]

The Imitation of Christ is a cherished treasure of the Christian world. This great book was written by a Roman Catholic monk. “Written”, perhaps, is not the proper word. It would be more appropriate to say that each letter of the book is marked deep with the heart’s blood of the great soul who had renounced all for his love of Christ. That great soul whose words, living and burning, have cast such a spell for the last four hundred years over the hearts of myriads of men and women; whose influence today remains as strong as ever and is destined to endure for all time to come; before whose genius and Sâdhâna (spiritual effort) hundred of crowned have bent down in reverence; and before whose matchless purity the jarring sects of Christendom, whose name is legion, have sunk their differences of centuries in common veneration to a common principle—that great soul, strange to say, has not thought fit to put his name to a book such as this. Yet there is nothing strange here after all, for why should he? Is it possible for one who totally renounced all earthly joys and despised the desire for the bauble fame as so much dirt and filth—is it possible for such a soul to care for that paltry thing, a mere author’s name? Posterity, however, has guessed that the author was Thomas à Kempis, a Roman Catholic monk. How far the guess is true is known only to God. But be he who he may, that he deserves the world’s adoration is a truth that can be gainsaid by none.

We happen to be the subjects of a Christian government now. Through its favour it has been our lot to meet Christians of so many sects, native as well as foreign. How startling the divergence between their profession and practice! Here stands the Christian missionary preaching: “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Take no thought for the morrow”—and then busy soon after, making his pile and framing his budget for ten years in advance! There he says that he follows him who “hath not where to lay his head”, glibly talking of the glorious sacrifice and burning renunciation of the Master, but in practice going about like a gay bridegroom fully enjoying all the comforts the world can bestow! Look where we may, a true Christian nowhere do we see. The ugly impression left on our mind by the ultra - luxurious, insolent, despotic, barouche-and-brougham-driving Christians of the Protestant sects will be completely removed

if we but once read this great book with the attention it deserves.

All wise men think alike. The reader, while reading this book, will hear the echo of the Bhagavad-Gitâ over and over again. Like the Bhagavad-Gita it says, “Give up all Dharmas and follow Me”. The spirit of humility, the panting of the distressed soul, the best expression of Dâsya Bhakti (devotion as a servant) will be found imprinted on every line of this great book and the reader’s heart will be profoundly stirred by the author’s thoughts of burning renunciation, marvellous surrender, and deep sense of dependence on the will of God. To those of my countrymen, who under the influence of blind bigotry may seek to belittle this book because it is the work of a Christian, I shall quote only one aphorism of *Vaisheshika Darshana* and say nothing more. The aphorism is this: आप्तोपदेशवाक्यं शब्दः—which means that the teachings of Siddha Purushas (perfected souls) have a probative force and this is technically known as Shabda Pramâna (verbal evidence). Rishi Jaimini, the commentator, says that such Âpta Purushas (authorities) may be born both among the Aryans and the Mlechchhas.

If in ancient times Greek astronomers like Yavanâchârya could have been so highly esteemed by our Aryan ancestors, then it is incredible that this work of the lion of devotees will fail to be appreciated by my countrymen.

Be that as it may, we shall place the Bengali translation of this book before our readers *seriatim*. We trust that the readers of Bengal will spend over it at least one hundredth part of the time they waste over cart-loads of trashy novels and dramas.

I have tried to make the translation as literal as possible, but I cannot say how far I have succeeded. The allusions to the Bible in several passages are given in the footnotes.

References

- [1] Translated from an original Bengali writing of the Swami in 1889. The passage is the preface to his Bengali translation of *The Imitation of Christ* which he contributed to a Bengali monthly. He translated only six chapters with quotations of parallel passages from the Hindu scriptures.

Chapter 6

An Interesting Correspondence

An Interesting Correspondence ^[1]

Now Sister Mary,	Of heart - struck lion's rage.
You need not be sorry	The cloud puts forth its deluge strength
For the hard raps I gave you,	When lightning cleaves its breast,
You know full well,	When the soul is stirred to its inmost depth
Though you like me tell,	Great ones unfold their best.
With my whole heart I love you.	Let eyes grow dim and heart grow faint,
The babies I bet,	And friendship fail and love betray,
The best friends I met,	Let Fate its hundred horrors send,
Will stand by me in weal and woe.	And clotted darkness block the way.
And so will I do,	All nature wear one angry frown,
You know it too.	To crush you out -- still know, my soul,
Life, name, or fame, even heaven forgo	You are Divine. March on and on,
For the sweet sisters four	Nor right nor left but to the goal.
Sans reproche et sans peur,	Nor angel I, nor man, nor brute,
The truest, noblest, steadfast, best.	Nor body, mind, nor he or she,
The wounded snake its hood unfurls,	The books do stop in wonder mute
The flame stirred up doth blaze,	To tell my nature; I am He.
The desert air resounds the calls	Before the sun, the moon, the earth,
	Before the stars or comets free,

Before e'en time has had its birth,
 I was, I am, and I will be.
 The beauteous earth, the glorious sun,
 The calm sweet moon, the spangled sky,
 Causation's laws do make them run;
 They live in bonds, in bonds they die.
 And mind its mantle dreamy net
 Cast o'er them all and holds them fast.
 In warp and woof of thought are set,
 Earth, hells, and heavens, or worst or best.
 Know these are but the outer crust --
 All space and time, all effect, cause.
 I am beyond all sense, all thoughts,
 The witness of the universe.
 Not two or many, 'tis but one,
 And thus in me all me's I have;
 I cannot hate, I cannot shun
 Myself from me, I can but love.
 From dreams awake, from bonds be free,
 Be not afraid. This mystery,
 My shadow, cannot frighten me,
 Know once for all that I am He.
 Well, so far my poetry. Hope you are all right. Give my
 love to mother and Father Pope. I am busy to death and
 have almost no time to write even a line. So excuse me if

later on I am rather late in writing.
 Yours eternally,
 Vivekananda.
 Miss M.B.H. sent Swami the following doggerel in reply:
 The monk he would a poet be
 And wooed the muse right earnestly;
 In thought and word he could well beat her,
 What bothered him though was the metre.
 His feet were all too short too long,
 The form not suited to his song;
 He tried the sonnet, lyric, epic,
 And worked so hard, he waxed dyspeptic.
 While the poetic mania lasted
 He e'en from vegetables fasted,
 Which Leon^[2] had with tender care
 Prepared for Swami's dainty fare.
 One day he sat and mused alone --
 Sudden a light around him shone,
 The "still small voice" his thoughts inspire
 And his words glow like coals of fire.
 And coals of fire they proved to be
 Heaped on the head of contrite me --
 My scolding letter I deplore
 And beg forgiveness o'er and o'er.
 The lines you sent to your sisters four

Be sure they'll cherish evermore
 For you have made them clearly see
 The one main truth that "all is He".
 Then Swami:
 In days of yore,
 On Ganga's shore preaching,
 A hoary priest was teaching
 How Gods they come
 As Sita Ram,
 And gentle Sita pining, weeping.
 The sermons end,
 They homeward wend their way --
 The hearers musing, thinking.
 When from the crowd
 A voice aloud
 This question asked beseeching, seeking --
 "Sir, tell me, pray,
 Who were but they
 These Sita Ram you were teaching, speaking!"
 So Mary Hale,
 Allow me tell,
 You mar my doctrines wronging, baulking.
 I never taught
 Such queer thought

That all was God -- unmeaning talking!
 But this I say,
 Remember pray,
 That God is true, all else is nothing,
 This world's a dream
 Though true it seem,
 And only truth is He the living!
 The real me is none but He, The real me is none but He,
 And never, never matter changing!
 With undying love and gratitude to you all. . . .
 Vivekananda.
 And then Miss M.B.H.:
 The difference I clearly see
 'Twixt tweedledum and tweedledee --
 That is a proposition sane,
 But truly 'tis beyond my vein
 To make your Eastern logic plain.
 If "God is truth, all else is naught,"
 This "world a dream", delusion up wrought,
 What can exist which God is not?
 All those who "many" see have much to fear,
 He only lives to whom the "One" is clear.
 So again I say
 In my poor way,
 I cannot see but that all's He,

If I'm in Him and He in me.

Then the Swami replied:

Of temper quick, a girl unique,

A freak of nature she,

A lady fair, no question there,

Rare soul is Miss Mary.

Her feelings deep she cannot keep,

But creep they out at last,

A spirit free, I can foresee,

Must be of fiery cast.

Tho' many a lay her muse can bray,

And play piano too,

Her heart so cool, chills as a rule

The fool who comes to woo.

Though, Sister Mary, I hear they say

The sway your beauty gains,

Be cautious now and do not bow,

However sweet, to chains.

For 'twill be soon, another tune

The moon - struck mate will hear

If his will but clash, your words will hash

And smash his life I fear.

These lines to thee, Sister Mary,

Free will I offer, take

"Tit for tat"-- a monkey chat,

For monk alone can make.

6.0.5 References

[1] In order to truly appreciate this correspondence, the reader has to be informed of the occasion which gave rise to it and also to remember the relation that existed between the correspondents. At the outset of the first letter the Swami speaks of "the hard raps" that he gave to his correspondent. These were nothing but a very strong letter which he wrote to her in vindication of his position, on the 1st of February, 1895, which will be found reproduced in the fifth volume of the Complete Works of the Swami. It was a very beautiful letter full of the fire of a Sannyasin's spirit, and we request our readers to go through it before they peruse the following text. Mary Hale, to whom the Swami wrote, was one of the two daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Hale whom the Swami used to address as Father Pope and Mother Church. The Misses Hales and their two cousins were like sisters to him, and they also in their turn held the Swami in great love and reverence. Some of the finest letters of the Swami were written to them. In the present correspondence the Swami is seen in a new light, playful and intensely human, yet keyed to the central theme of his life, Brahmajñana. The first letter was written from New York, 15th February 1895-- Ed.

[2] Leon Landsberg, a disciple of the Swami who lived with him for some time.

Chapter 7

Thou Blessed Dream

Thou Blessed Dream ^[1]

If things go ill or well --

If joy rebounding spreads the face,

Or sea of sorrow swells --

A play -- we each have part,

Each one to weep or laugh as may;

Each one his dress to don --

Its scenes, alternative shine and rain.

Thou dream, O blessed dream!

Spread far and near thy veil of haze,

Tone down the lines so sharp,

Make smooth what roughness seems.

No magic but in thee!

Thy touch makes desert bloom to life.

Harsh thunder, sweetest song,

Fell death, the sweet release.

7.0.6 References

[1] Written to Miss Christine Greenstidel from Paris, 14th August 1900.

Chapter 8

Light

Light ^[1]

I look behind and after

And find that all is right,

In my deepest sorrows

There is a soul of light.

8.0.7 References

- [1] From a letter to Miss MacLeod, 26th December 1900
(Vide Vol. VI.)

Chapter 9

The Living God

The Living God ^[1]

He who is in you and outside you,

Who works through all hands,

Who walks on all feet,

Whose body are all ye,

Him worship, and break all other idols!

He who is at once the high and low,

The sinner and the saint,

Both God and worm,

Him worship -- visible, knowable, real, omnipresent,

Break all other idols!

In whom is neither past life

Nor future birth nor death,

In whom we always have been

And always shall be one,

Him worship. Break all other idols!

Ye fools! who neglect the living God,

And His infinite reflections with which the world is full.

While ye run after imaginary shadows,

That lead alone to fights and quarrels,

Him worship, the only visible!

Break all other idols!

9.0.8 References

[1] Written to an American friend from Almora, 9th July 1897.

Chapter 10

To An Early Violet

To An Early Violet^[1]

What though thy bed be frozen earth,
Thy cloak the chilling blast;
What though no mate to cheer thy path,
Thy sky with gloom o'ercast;
What though if love itself doth fail,
Thy fragrance strewed in vain;
What though if bad o'er good prevail,
And vice o'er virtue reign:
Change not thy nature, gentle bloom,
Thou violet, sweet and pure,
But ever pour thy sweet perfume
Unasked, unstinted, sure!

10.0.9 References

- [1] Written to a Western lady - disciple from New York, 6th January 1896.

Chapter 11

To My Own Soul

To My Own Soul ^[1]

Hold yet a while, Strong Heart,
Not part a lifelong yoke
Though blighted looks the present, future gloom.
And age it seems since you and I began our
March up hill or down. Sailing smooth o'er
Seas that are so rare --
Thou nearer unto me, than oft - times I myself --
Proclaiming mental moves before they were!
Reflector true -- thy pulse so timed to mine,
Thou perfect note of thoughts, however fine --
Shall we now part, Recorder, say?
In thee is friendship, faith,
For thou didst warn when evil thoughts were brewing --
And though, alas, thy warning thrown away,
Went on the same as ever -- good and true.

11.0.10 References

[1] Composed at Ridgely Manor, New York, in 1899.

Chapter 12

The Dance Of Shiva

The Dance Of Shiva ^[1]

Lo, the God is dancing
-- shiva the all - destroyer and Lord of creation,

The Master of Yoga and the wielder of Pinaka.^[2]

His flaming locks have filled the sky,

Seven worlds play the rhythm

As the trembling earth sways almost to dissolution,

Lo, the Great God Shiva is dancing.

12.0.11 References

[1] This and the next one are translated from Bengali songs.

[2] Trident.

Chapter 13

Shiva In Ecstasy

Shiva In Ecstasy

Shiva is dancing, lost in the ecstasy of Self, sounding his own cheeks.

His tabor is playing and the garland of skulls is swinging in rhythm.

The waters of the Ganga are roaring among his matted locks.

The great trident is vomiting fire, and the moon on his forehead is fiercely flaming.

Chapter 14

To Shri Krishna

To Shri Krishna

(A Song in Hindi)

O Krishna, my friend, let me go to the water,

O let me go today.

Why play tricks with one who is already thy slave?

O friend, let me go today, let me go.

I have to fill my pitcher in the waters of the Jumna.

I pray with folded hands, friend, let me go.

Chapter 15

A Hymn To Shri Ramakrishna

A Hymn To Shri Ramakrishna

(In Sanskrit)

1. He who was Shri Rama, whose stream of love flowed with resistless might even to the Chandala (the outcaste); Oh, who ever was engaged in doing good to the world though superhuman by nature, whose renown there is none to equal in the three worlds, Sita's beloved, whose body of Knowledge Supreme was covered by devotion sweet in the form of Sita.

2. He who quelled the noise, terrible like that at the time of destruction, arising from the battle (of Kurukshetra), who destroyed the terrible yet natural night of ignorance (of Arjuna) and who roared out the Gita sweet and appeasing; That renowned soul is born now as Shri Ramakrishna.

3. Hail, O Lord of Men! Victory unto You! I surrender myself to my Guru, the physician for the malady of Samsara (relative existence) who is, as it were, a wave rising in the ocean of Shakti (Power), who has shown various sports of Love Divine, and who is the weapon to destroy the demon of doubt.

Hail, O Lord of Men! Victory unto You!

4. Hail, O Lord of Men! Victory unto you! I surrender myself to my Guru the Man - god, the physician for the malady of this Samsara (relative existence), whose mind ever dwelt on the non - dualistic Truth, whose personality was covered by the cloth of Supreme Devotion, who was ever active (for the good of humanity) and whose actions were all superhuman.

Hail, O Lord of Men! Victory unto You!

Chapter 16

No One To Blame

No One To Blame ^[1]

The sun goes down, its crimson rays

Light up the dying day;

A startled glance I throw behind

And count my triumph shame;

No one but me to blame.

Each day my life I make or mar,

Each deed begets its kind,

Good good, bad bad, the tide once set

No one can stop or stem;

No one but me to blame.

I am my own embodied past;

Therein the plan was made;

The will, the thought, to that conform,

To that the outer frame;

No one but me to blame.

Love comes reflected back as love,

Hate breeds more fierce hate,

They mete their measures, lay on me

Through life and death their claim;

No one but me to blame.

I cast off fear and vain remorse,

I feel my Karma's sway

I face the ghosts my deeds have raised --

Joy, sorrow, censure, fame;

No one but me to blame.

Good, bad, love, hate, and pleasure, pain

Forever linked go,

I dream of pleasure without pain,

It never, never came;

No one but me to blame.

I give up hate, I give up love,

My thirst for life is gone;

Eternal death is what I want,

Nirvanam goes life's flame;

No one is left to blame.

One only man, one only God, one ever perfect soul,

One only sage who ever scorned the dark and dubious ways,

One only man who dared think and dared show the goal --

That death is curse, and so is life, and best when stops to
be.

Om Nama Bhagavate Sambuddhaya

Om, I salute the Lord, the awakened.

16.0.12 References

[1] Written from New York, 16th May, 1895.

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16.1.1 Text

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