

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda- Volume 9- Sayings and Utterances

SAYINGS AND UTTERANCES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

In this section, only Swami Vivekananda's direct words have been placed within quotation marks. References have been identified by the following abbreviations:

ND → Burke, Marie Louise. Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries. 6 vols. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983-87.

CWSN → Nivedita, Sister. The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita. Vol. 1. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982.

LSN → Nivedita, Sister. Letters of Sister Nivedita. 2 vols. Compiled and edited by Sankari Prasad Basu. Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982.

VIN → Basu, Sankari Prasad and Ghosh, Sunil Bihari, eds. Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers: 1893-1902. Calcutta: Dineshchandra Basu, Basu Bhattacharya and Co., 1969.

1. From Mrs. Prince Woods's description of Swami Vivekananda's departure from the Woods's residence in Salem, Massachusetts, in August 1893. Swami Vivekananda gave his staff, his most precious possession, to Dr. Woods, who was at that time a young medical student, and his trunk and his blanket to Mrs. Kate T. Woods, saying:

"Only my most precious possessions should I give to my friends who have made me at home in this great country." (ND 1: 42)

2. On the back of Swami Vivekananda's transcription from Louis Rousselet's book *India and Its Native Princes—Travels in Central India and in the Presidencies of Bombay and Bengal*, dated February 11, 1894:

"I say there is but one remedy for one too anxious for the future — to go down on his knees." (ND 1: 225)

3. An extract from a prayer Swami Vivekananda delivered at the Chicago World's Parliament of Religions:

"Thou art He that beareth the burdens of the universe; help me to bear the little burden of this life." (ND 2: 32)

4. An extract from another prayer offered by Swami Vivekananda at the Chicago World's Parliament of Religions:

"At the head of all these laws, in and through every particle of matter and force, stands One through whose command the wind blows, the fire burns, the clouds rain, and death stalks upon the earth. And what is His nature? He is everywhere the pure and formless One, the Almighty and the All Merciful. Thou art our Father. Thou art our beloved Friend." (ND 2: 33)

5. From Mary T. Wright's journal entry dated Saturday, May 12, 1894:

The widows of high caste in India do not marry, he said; only the widows of low caste may marry, may eat, drink, dance, have as many husbands as they choose, divorce them all, in short enjoy all the benefits of the highest society in this country. . . .

"When we are fanatical", he said, "we torture ourselves, we throw ourselves under huge cars, we cut our throats, we lie on spiked beds; but when you are fanatical you cut other people's throats, you torture them by fire and put them on spiked beds! You take very good care of your own skins!" (ND 2: 58-59)

6. An 1894 extract from the *Greenacre Voice*, quoting one of the Swami's teachings delivered at Greenacre, Maine:

"You and I and everything in the universe are that Absolute, not parts, but the whole. You are the whole of that Absolute." (ND 2: 150)

7. In a March 5, 1899 letter from Sister Nivedita to Miss Josephine MacLeod:

"I am at heart a mystic, Margot, all this reasoning is only apparent — I am really always on the lookout for signs and things — and so I never bother about the fate of my initiations. If they want to be Sannyāsins badly enough I feel that the rest is not my business. Of course it has its

bad side. I have to pay dearly for my blunder sometimes — but it has one advantage. It has kept me still a Sannyasin through all this — and that is my ambition, to die a real Sannyasin as Ramakrishna Paramahansa actually was — free from lust — and desire of wealth, and thirst for fame. That thirst for fame is the worst of all filth.” (ND 3: 128-29)

8. From John Henry Wright’s March 27, 1896 letter to Mary Tappan Wright, in which Swami Vivekananda stated that England is just like India with its castes:

“I had to have separate classes for the two castes. For the high caste people — Lady This and Lady That, Honourable This and Honourable That — I had classes in the morning; for the low caste people, who came pell-mell, I had classes in the evening.” (ND 4: 73)

9. While Swami Vivekananda was offering flowers at the feet of the Virgin Mary in a small chapel in Switzerland in the summer of 1896, he said:

“For she also is the Mother.” (ND 4: 276)

10. From Mr. J. J. Goodwin’s October 23, 1896 letter to Mrs. Ole Bull, quoting Swami Vivekananda’s conversation at Greycoat Gardens in London

“It is very good to have a high ideal, but don’t make it too high. A high ideal raises mankind, but an impossible ideal lowers them from the very impossibility of the case.” (ND 4: 385)

11. A November 20, 1896 entry from Swami Abhedananda’s diary, quoting Swami Vivekananda’s observation of the English people:

“You can’t make friends here without knowing their customs, behaviour, politics. You have to know the manners of the rich, the cultured and the poor.” (ND 4: 478)

12. In Mr. J. J. Goodwin’s November 11, 1896 letter to Mrs. Ole Bull, quoting Swami Vivekananda’s unpublished statement toward the end of “Practical Vedanta — IV”:

“A Jiva can never attain absolutely to Brahman until the whole of Mâyâ disappears. While there is still a Jiva left in Maya, there can be no soul absolutely free. . . . Vedantists are divided on this point.” (ND 4: 481)

13. From Swami Saradananda’s letter to a brother-disciple, concerning Swami Vivekananda’s last days:

Sometimes he would say, “Death has come to my bedside; I have been through enough of work and play; let

the world realize what contribution I have made; it will take quite a long time to understand that”. (ND 4: 521)

14. In an October 13, 1898 letter to Mrs. Ashton Jonson, written from Kashmir, Sister Nivedita described Swami Vivekananda’s spiritual mood:

To him at this moment “doing good” seems horrible. “Only the Mother does anything. Patriotism is a mistake. Everything is a mistake. It is all Mother. . . . All men are good. Only we cannot reach all. . . . I am never going to teach any more. Who am I that I should teach anyone? . . . Swamiji is dead and gone.” (ND 5: 3-4)

15. From Mr. Sachindranath Basu’s letter recounting Swami Vivekananda’s closing remarks in his talk to swamis and novices assembled at Belur Math, June 19, 1899:

“My sons, all of you be men. This is what I want! If you are even a little successful, I shall feel my life has been meaningful.” (ND 5: 17)

16. During an evening talk with Swami Saradananda in the spring of 1899:

“Men should be taught to be practical, physically strong. A dozen such lions will conquer the world, not millions of sheep. Men should not be taught to imitate a personal ideal, however great.” (ND 5: 17)

17. From Mrs. Mary C. Funke’s reminiscences of her August 1899 voyage to America with Swamis Vivekananda and Turiyananda:

“And if all this Maya is so beautiful, think of the wondrous beauty of the Reality behind it!” (ND 5: 76)

“Why recite poetry when there [pointing to sea and sky] is the very essence of poetry?” (Ibid.)

18. In Miss Josephine MacLeod’s September 3, 1899 letter to Mrs. Ole Bull:

“In one’s greatest hour of need one stands alone.” (ND 5: 122)

19. From Sister Nivedita’s October 27, 1899 diary entry at Ridgely Manor, in which Swami Vivekananda expressed his concern for Olea Bull Vaughn:

“Nightmares always begin pleasantly — only at the worst point [the] dream is broken — so death breaks [the] dream of life. Love death.” (ND 5: 138)

20. In a December 1899 letter from Miss Josephine MacLeod to Sister Nivedita:

“All the ideas the Californians have of me emanated

from Chicago.” (ND 5: 179)

21. From Mrs. Alice Hansbrough’s reminiscences which quoted Swami Vivekananda as telling Mr. Baumgardt:

“I can talk on the same subject, but it will not be the same lecture.” (ND 5: 230)

22. Mrs. Alice Hansbrough’s reminiscences relating Swami Vivekananda’s response to her sight-seeing attempts:

“Do not show me sights. I have seen the Himalayas! I would not go ten steps to see sights; but I would go a thousand miles to see a [great] human being!” (ND 5: 244)

23. From Mrs. Alice Hansbrough’s reminiscences relating Swami Vivekananda’s interest in the problem of child training:

He did not believe in punishment. It had never helped him, he said, and added, “I would never do anything to make a child afraid”. (ND 5: 253)

24. Mrs. Alice Hansbrough’s record of Swami Vivekananda’s explanation of God to seventeen-year-old Ralph Wyckoff:

“Can you see your own eyes? God is like that. He is as close as your own eyes. He is your own, even though you can’t see Him.” (ND 5: 254)

25. Mrs. Alice Hansbrough’s reminiscences regarding Swami Vivekananda’s opinion of the low-caste English soldiers who occupied India:

“If anyone should despoil the Englishman’s home, the Englishman would kill him, and rightly so. But the Hindu just sits and whines!

“Do you think that a handful of Englishmen could rule India if we had a militant spirit? I teach meat-eating throughout the length and breadth of India in the hope that we can build a militant spirit!” (ND 5: 256)

26. Mrs. Alice Hansbrough’s reminiscences of a picnic in Pasadena, California when a Christian Science woman suggested to Swami Vivekananda that one should teach people to be good:

“Why should I desire to be 'good'? All this is His handiwork [waving his hand to indicate the trees and the countryside]. Shall I apologize for His handiwork? If you want to reform John Doe, go and live with him; don't try to reform him. If you have any of the Divine Fire, he will catch it.” (ND 5: 257)

27. From Mrs. Alice Hansbrough’s reminiscences:

“When once you consider an action, do not let anything dissuade you. Consult your heart, not others, and then follow its dictates.” (ND 5: 311)

28. From Mr. Frank Rhodehamel’s notes taken during a March 1900 lecture in Oakland, California:

“Never loved a husband the wife for the wife’s sake, or the wife the husband for the husband’s sake. It is God in the wife the husband loves, and God in the husband the wife loves. (Cf. Brihadâranjaka Upanishad II.4.5.) It is God in everyone that draws us to that one in love. [It is] God in everything, in everybody that makes us love. God is the only love. . . . In everyone is God, the Atman; all else is but dream, an illusion.” (ND 5: 362)

29. From Mr. Frank Rhodehamel’s notes taken during a March 1900 lecture in Oakland, California:

Oh, if you only knew yourselves! You are souls; you are gods. If ever I feel [that I am] blaspheming, it is when I call you man.” (ND 5: 362)

30. An excerpt from Mr. Thomas J. Allan’s reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda’s March 1900 San Francisco lecture series on India:

“Send us mechanics to teach us how to use our hands, and we will send you missionaries to teach you spirituality.” (ND 5: 365)

31. Mrs. Edith Allan’s reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda’s philosophical observations while cooking at the Turk Street flat:

“The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, by His illusive power causing all beings to revolve as though mounted on a potter’s wheel.’ [Bhagavad-Gitâ XVIII.61] This has all happened before, like the throw of a dice, so it is in life; the wheel goes on and the same combination comes up; that pitcher and glass have stood there before, so, too, that onion and potato. What can we do, Madam, He has us on the wheel of life.” (ND 6: 17)

32. From Mrs. Edith Allan’s reminiscences of an after-lunch conversation:

“The Master said he would come again in about two hundred years — and I will come with him. When a Master comes, he brings his own people.” (ND 6: 17)

33. Mrs. Edith Allan’s reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda’s “kitchen” counsel while he was staying in San Francisco, California, in 1900:

“If I consider myself greater than the ant that crawls on the ground I am ignorant.” (ND 6: 19)

“Madam, be broad—minded; always see two ways. When I am on the heights I say, 'Shivoham, Shivoham:

I am He, I am He!' and when I have the stomachache I say, 'Mother have mercy on me!'" (Ibid.)

"Learn to be the witness. If two dogs are fighting on the street and I go out there, I get mixed up in the fight; but if I stay quietly in my room, I witness the fight from the window. So learn to be the witness." (Ibid.)

34. From Mr. Thomas J. Allan's reminiscences of a private talk with Swami Vivekananda in San Francisco, California, 1900:

"We do not progress from error to truth, but from truth to truth. Thus we must see that none can be blamed for what they are doing, because they are, at this time, doing the best they can. If a child has an open razor, don't try to take it from him, but give him a red apple or a brilliant toy, and he will drop the razor. But he who puts his hand in the fire will be burned; we learn only from experience." (ND 6: 42)

35. From Mrs. Alice Hansbrough's reminiscences of a walk home with Swami Vivekananda after one of his lectures in San Francisco in 1900:

"You have heard that Christ said, 'My words are spirit and they are life'. So are my words spirit and life; they will burn their way into your brain and you will never get away from them!" (ND 6: 57-58)

36. From Mrs. Alice Hansbrough's reminiscences in San Francisco, 1900 — referring to Swami Vivekananda's great heart:

"I may have to be born again because I have fallen in love with man." (ND 6: 79)

37. From Mrs. George Roorbach's reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda at Camp Taylor, California, in May 1900:

"In my first speech in this country, in Chicago, I addressed that audience as 'Sisters and Brothers of America', and you know that they all rose to their feet. You may wonder what made them do this, you may wonder if I had some strange power. Let me tell you that I did have a power and this is it — never once in my life did I allow myself to have even one sexual thought. I trained my mind, my thinking, and the powers that man usually uses along that line I put into a higher channel, and it developed a force so strong that nothing could resist it." (ND 6: 155)

38. In a conversation with Swami Turiyananda, which probably took place in New York:

"The call has come from Above: 'Come away, just come away — no need of troubling your head to teach others'.

It is now the will of the Grand Old Lady (The "Grand Old Lady" was a figure in a children's game, whose touch put one outside the game.) that the play should be over." (ND 6: 373)

39. In a July 1902 Prabuddha Bharata eulogy, "a Western disciple" wrote:

The Swami had but scant sympathy with iconoclasts, for as he wisely remarked, "The true philosopher strives to destroy nothing, but to help all". (VIN: 638)

40. Sister Nivedita's reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda in an October 9, 1899 letter to Miss Josephine MacLeod:

He has turned back on so much — "Let your life in the world be nothing but a thinking to yourself". (LSN I: 213)

41. Swami Vivekananda's luncheon remarks to Mrs. Ole Bull, recorded by Sister Nivedita in an October 18, 1899 letter to Miss Josephine MacLeod:

"You see, there is one thing called love, and there is another thing called union. And union is greater than love.

"I do not love religion. I have become identified with it. It is my life. So no man loves that thing in which his life has been spent, in which he really has accomplished something. That which we love is not yet ourself. Your husband did not love music for which he had always stood. He loved engineering in which as yet he knew comparatively little. This is the difference between Bhakti and Jnana; and this is why Jnana is greater than Bhakti." (LSN I: 216)

42. Swami Vivekananda's remarks on his spiritual ministry, recorded in Sister Nivedita's October 15, 1904 letter to Miss Josephine MacLeod:

"Only when they go away will they know how much they have received." (LSN

II: 686)

43. Sister Nivedita's reminiscences in a November 5, 1904 letter to Alberta Sturges (Lady Sandwich) of Swami Vivekananda's talk on renunciation while he was staying at Ridgely Manor:

"In India we never say that you should renounce a higher thing for a lower. It is better to be absorbed in music or in literature than in comfort or pleasure, and we never say otherwise." (LSN II: 690)

44. In Sister Nivedita's November 19, 1909 letter to

Miss Josephine MacLeod:

“The fire burns if we plunge our hand in — whether we feel it or not — so it is with him who speaks the name of God.” (LSN II: 1030)

45. Swami Vivekananda’s reminiscences of Shri Ramakrishna, recorded in Sister Nivedita’s July 6, 1910 letter to Dr. T. K. Cheyne:

“He could not imagine himself the teacher of anyone. He was like a man playing with balls of many colours, and leaving it to others to select which they would for themselves.” (LSN II: 1110)

46. Sister Nivedita’s reminiscences of a conversation with Swami Vivekananda at Ridgely Manor, recorded in an 1899 letter written from Ridgely Manor to Miss Josephine MacLeod:

I have never heard the Prophet talk so much of Shri Ramakrishna. He told us what I had heard before of [his master’s] infallible judgement of men. . . .

“And so”, Swami said, “you see my devotion is the dog’s devotion. I have been wrong so often and he has always been right, and now I trust his judgement blindly”. And then he told us how he would hypnotize anyone who came to him and in two minutes know all about him, and Swami said that from this he had learnt to count our consciousness as a very small thing. (LSN

II: 1263)

47. From Sister Nivedita’s January 27, 1900 letter to Sister Christine:

Swami said today that he is beginning to see the needs of humanity in quite a different light — that he is already sure of the principle that is to help, but is spending hours every day in trying to solve the methods. That what he had known hitherto is for men living in a cave — alone, undisturbed — but now he will give “humanity something that will make for strength in the stress of daily life”. (LSN II: 1264)

48. In a July 7, 1902 letter to Sister Christine, Sister Nivedita recorded one of Swami Vivekananda’s remarks made while giving a class to the monks at Belur Math on July 4, 1902:

“Do not copy me. Kick out the man who imitates.” (LSN II: 1270)

49. The Swami’s comment after he made a statement concerning the ideal of the freedom of the soul, which brought it into apparent conflict with the Western conception of the service of humanity as the goal of the in-

dividual:

“You will say that this does not benefit society. But before this objection can be admitted you will first have to prove that the maintenance of society is an object in itself.” (CWSN 1: 19)

50. Sister Nivedita wrote:

He touched on the question of his own position as a wandering teacher and expressed the Indian diffidence with regard to religious organization or, as someone expresses it, “with regard to a faith that ends in a church”. “We believe”, he said, “that organization always breeds new evils”.

He prophesied that certain religious developments then much in vogue in the West would speedily die, owing to love of money. And he declared that “Man proceeds from truth to truth, and not from error to truth”. (CWSN 1: 19-20)

51. “The universe is like a cobweb and minds are the spiders; for mind is one as well as many.” (CWSN 1: 21)

52. “Let none regret that they were difficult to convince! I fought my Master for six years with the result that I know every inch of the way! Every inch of the way!” (CWSN 1: 22)

53. Swami Vivekananda was elucidating to what heights of selflessness the path of love leads and how it draws out the very best faculties of the soul:

“Suppose there were a baby in the path of the tiger! Where would your place be then? At his mouth — any one of you — I am sure of it.” (CWSN 1: 24)

54. “That by which all this is pervaded, know That to be the Lord Himself!” (CWSN 1: 27)

55. Concerning Swami Vivekananda’s attitude toward religion:

Religion was a matter of the growth of the individual, “a question always of being and becoming”. (CWSN 1: 28)

56. “Forgive when you also can bring legions of angels to an easy victory.” While victory was still doubtful, however, only a coward to his thinking would turn the other cheek. (CWSN 1: 28-29)

57. “Of course I would commit a crime and go to hell forever if by that I could really help a human being!” (CWSN 1: 34)

58. To a small group, including Sister Nivedita, after a lecture:

“I have a superstition — it is nothing, you know, but a

personal superstition! — that the same soul who came once as Buddha came afterwards as Christ.” (CWSN 1: 35)

59. After Swami Vivekananda was told of Sister Nivedita’s willingness to serve India:

“For my own part I will be incarnated two hundred times, if that is necessary, to do this work amongst my people that I have undertaken.” (CWSN 1: 36)

60. Sister Nivedita’s memory of an incident:

He was riding on one occasion with the Raja of Khetri, when he saw that his arm was bleeding profusely and found that the wound had been caused by a thorny branch which he had held aside for himself to pass. When the Swami expostulated, the Rajput laughed the matter aside. “Are we not always the defenders of the faith, Swamiji?” he said.

“And then”, said the Swami, telling the story, “I was just going to tell him that they ought not to show such honour to the Sannyasin, when suddenly I thought that perhaps they were right after all. Who knows? Maybe I too am caught in the glare of this flashlight of your modern civilization, which is only for a moment”.

“ — I have become entangled”, he said simply to one who protested that to his mind the wandering Sâdhu of earlier years, who had scattered his knowledge and changed his name as he went, had been greater than the abbot of Belur, burdened with much work and many cares. “I have become entangled.” (CWSN 1: 43)

61. Sister Nivedita wrote:

One day he was talking in the West of Mirâ Bâi — that saint who once upon a time was Queen of Chitore — and of the freedom her husband had offered her if only she would remain within the royal seclusion. But she could not be bound. “But why should she not?” someone asked in astonishment. “Why should she?” he retorted. “Was she living down here in this mire?” (CWSN 1: 44)

62. As years went by, the Swami dared less and less to make determinate plans or dogmatize about the unknown:

“After all, what do we know? Mother uses it all. But we are only fumbling about.” (CWSN 1: 44)

63. Quoting Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita remembered:

Love was not love, it was insisted, unless it was “without a reason” or without a “motive” (CWSN 1: 52)

64. About Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita wrote:

When asked by some of his own people what he considered, after seeing them in their own country, to be the greatest achievement of the English, he answered “that they had known how to combine obedience with self-respect”. (CWSN 1: 54)

65. Swami Sadananda reported that early in the morning, while it was still dark, Swami Vivekananda would rise and call the others, singing:

“Awake! Awake! all ye who would drink of the divine nectar!” (CWSN 1: 56)

66. Sister Nivedita remembered:

At this time [during the Swami’s itinerant days, near Almora] he passed some months in a cave overhanging a mountain village. Only twice have I known him to allude to this experience. Once he said, “Nothing in my whole life ever so filled me with the sense of work to be done. It was as if I were thrown out from that life in caves to wander to and fro in the plains below”. And again he said to someone, “It is not the form of his life that makes a Sadhu. For it is possible to sit in a cave and have one’s whole mind filled with the question of how many pieces of bread will be brought to one for supper!” (CWSN 1: 61)

67. About his own poem “Kali the Mother”:

“Scattering plagues and sorrows”, he quoted from his own verses,

Dancing mad with joy,
Come, Mother, come!
For terror is Thy name!
Death — is in Thy breath.
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for e'er.

“It all came true, every word of it”, he interrupted himself to say.

Who dares misery love.
Dance in Destruction’s dance,
And hug the form of death, . . .

“To him the Mother does indeed come. I have proved it. For I have hugged the form of Death!” (CWSN 1: 98-99)

68. Sister Nivedita, referring to her plans for a girls’ school:

Only in one respect was he [Swami Vivekananda] inflexible. The work for the education of Indian women, to which he would give his name, might be as sectarian as I chose to make it. “You wish through a sect to rise

beyond all sects.” (CWSN 1: 102)

69. Commenting on Sister Nivedita’s visit to Gopaler-Ma’s dwelling — a small cell:

“Ah! this is the old India that you have seen, the India of prayers and tears, of vigils and fasts, that is passing away, never to return!” (CWSN 1: 109)

>70. About the aims of the Ramakrishna Order:

The same purpose spoke again in his definition of the aims of the Order of Ramakrishna — “to effect an exchange of the highest ideals of the East and the West and to realize these in practice” (CWSN 1: 113)

71. After teaching Sister Nivedita the worship of Shiva, Swami Vivekananda then culminated it in an offering of flowers at the feet of the Buddha. He said, as if addressing each soul that would ever come to him for guidance:

“Go thou and follow Him, who was born and gave His life for others five hundred times before He attained the vision of the Buddha!” (CWSN 1: 114)

72. Upon returning from a pilgrimage in Kashmir:

“These gods are not merely symbols! They are the forms that the Bhaktas have seen!” (CWSN 1: 120)

73. Sister Nivedita’s reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda’s words heard long before:

“The Impersonal God seen through the mists of sense is personal.” (CWSN 1: 120)

74. Swami Vivekananda’s comment when he was reminded of the rareness of criminality in India:

“Would God it were otherwise in my land, for this is verily the virtuousness of death!” (CWSN 1: 123)

75. Swami Vivekananda said:

“The whole of life is only a swan song! Never forget those lines:

The lion, when stricken to the heart,
gives out his mightiest roar.
When smitten on the head, the cobra lifts its hood. And the majesty of the soul comes forth,
only when a man is wounded to his depths.”

(CWSN 1: 124)

76. After hearing of the death of Shri Durga Charan

Nag (Nag Mahashay):

“[He] was one of the greatest of the works of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.” (CWSN 1: 129)

77. About Shri Ramakrishna’s transformative power, Swami Vivekananda said:

“Was it a joke that Ramakrishna Paramahansa should touch a life? Of course he made new men and new women of those who came to him, even in these fleeting contacts!” (CWSN 1: 130)

78. While speaking on the true spirit of a Sannyasin, Swami Vivekananda said:

“I saw many great men in Hrishikesh. One case that I remember was that of a man who seemed to be mad. He was coming nude down the street, with boys pursuing and throwing stones at him. The whole man was bubbling over with laughter while blood was streaming down his face and neck. I took him and bathed the wound, putting ashes on it to stop the bleeding. And all the time with peals of laughter he told me of the fun the boys and he had been having, throwing the stones. ‘So the Father plays’, he said.

“Many of these men hide, in order to guard themselves against intrusion. People are a trouble to them. One had human bones strewn about his cave and gave it out that he lived on corpses. Another threw stones. And so on. . . .

“Sometimes the thing comes upon them in a flash. There was a boy, for instance, who used to come to read the Upanishads with Abhedananda. One day he turned and said, ‘Sir, is all this really true?’

“‘Oh yes!’ said Abhedananda, ‘It may be difficult to realize, but it is certainly true’.

“And next day, that boy was a silent Sannyasin, nude, on his way to Kedarnath!

“What happened to him? you ask. He became silent!

“But the Sannyasin needs no longer to worship or to go on pilgrimage or perform austerities. What then is the motive of all this going from pilgrimage to pilgrimage, shrine to shrine, and austerity to austerity? He is acquiring merit and giving it to the world!” (CWSN 1: 133)

79. Referring to the story of Shibi Rana:

“Ah yes! These are the stories that are deep in our nation’s heart! Never forget that the Sannyasin takes two vows: one to realize the truth and one to help the world — and that the most stringent of stringent requirements is that

he should renounce any thought of heaven!" (CWSN 1: 134)

80. To Sister Nivedita:

"The Gitâ says that there are three kinds of charity: the Tâmasic, the Râjasic and the Sâtâvic. Tamasic charity is performed on an impulse. It is always making mistakes. The doer thinks of nothing but his own impulse to be kind. Rajasic charity is what a man does for his own glory. And Sattvic charity is that which is given to the right person, in the right way, and at the proper time. . . .

"When it comes to the Sattvic, I think more and more of a certain great Western woman in whom I have seen that quiet giving, always to the right person in the right way, at the right time, and never making a mistake.

"For my own part, I have been learning that even charity can go too far. . . .

"As I grow older I find that I look more and more for greatness in little things. I want to know what a great man eats and wears, and how he speaks to his servants. I want to find a Sir Philip Sidney (Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586): English poet, soldier and politician.) greatness! Few men would remember the thirst of others, even in the moment of death.

"But anyone will be great in a great position! Even the coward will grow brave in the glare of the footlights. The world looks on. Whose heart will not throb? Whose pulse will not quicken till he can do his best?

"More and more the true greatness seems to me that of the worm doing its duty silently, steadily, from moment to moment and from hour to hour." (CWSN 1: 137)

81. Referring to the great individual — the divine incarnation, the Guru, and the Rishi:

"You do not yet understand India! We Indians are man — worshippers, after all! Our God is man!" (CWSN 1: 144)

82. On another occasion, Swami Vivekananda used the word "man-worshippers" in an entirely different sense:

"This idea of man—worship exists in nucleus in India, but it has never been expanded. You must develop it. Make poetry, make art, of it. Establish the worship of the feet of beggars as you had it in Mediaeval Europe. Make man-worshippers." (CWSN 1: 144-45)

83. To Sister Nivedita:

"There is a peculiar sect of Mohammedans who are reported to be so fanatical that they take each newborn

babe and expose it, saying, 'If God made thee, perish! If Ali made thee, live!' Now this, which they say to the child, I say, but in the opposite sense, to you tonight: 'Go forth into the world and there, if I made you, be destroyed! If Mother made you, live!'" (CWSN 1: 151)

84. Long after Southern magnates in America had apologized to Vivekananda when they learned that he had been mistaken for a Negro and was thus refused admission into hotels, the Swami remarked to himself:

"What! rise at the expense of another! I didn't come to earth for that! . . . If I am grateful to my white-skinned Aryan ancestor, I am far more so to my yellow-skinned Mongolian ancestor and, most so of all, to the black-skinned Negritoid!" (CWSN 1: 153)

85. Commenting on the dungeon-cages of mediaeval prisoners on Mont-Saint-Michel:

(CWSN 1: 154)

"Oh, I know I have wandered over the whole earth, but in India I have looked for nothing save the cave in which to meditate!" (Ibid.)

86. Though he considered offspring of the Roman Empire to be brutal and the Japanese notion of marriage a horror, Swami Vivekananda nevertheless summed up the constructive ideals, never the defects, of a community:

"For patriotism, the Japanese! For purity, the Hindu! And for manliness, the European! There is no other in the world who understands, as does the Englishman, what should be the glory of a man!" (CWSN 1: 160)

87. Swami Vivekananda said of himself before he left for America in 1893:

"I go forth to preach a religion of which Buddhism is nothing but a rebel child and Christianity, with all her pretensions, only a distant echo!" (CWSN 1: 161)

88. Describing the night Buddha left his wife to renounce the world, Swami Vivekananda said:

"What was the problem that vexed him? Why! It was she whom he was about to sacrifice for the world! That was the struggle! He cared nothing for himself!" (CWSN 1: 172)

89. After describing Buddha's touching farewell to his wife, the Swami said:

"Have you never thought of the hearts of the heroes? How they were great, great, great — and soft as butter?"

(CWSN 1: 172)

90. Swami Vivekananda's description of Buddha's death and its similarity with that of Shri Ramakrishna's:

He told how the blanket had been spread for him beneath the tree and how the Blessed One had lain down, "resting on his right side like a lion" to die, when suddenly there came to him one who ran for instruction. The disciples would have treated the man as an intruder, maintaining peace at any cost about their Master's death-bed, but the Blessed One overheard, and saying, "No, no! He who was sent (Lit., "the Tathâgata". "A word", explained Swami Vivekananda, "which is very like your 'Messiah'") is ever ready", he raised himself on his elbow and taught. This happened four times and then, and then only, Buddha held himself free to die. "But first he spoke to reprove Ananda for weeping. The Buddha was not a person but a realization, and to that any one of them might attain. And with his last breath he forbade them to worship any."

The immortal story went on to its end. But to one who listened, the most significant moment had been that in which the teller paused — at his own words "raised himself on his elbow and taught" — and said, in brief parenthesis, "I saw this, you know, in the case of Ramakrishna Paramahansa". And there rose before the mind the story of one, destined to learn from that teacher, who had travelled a hundred miles, and arrived at Cossipore only when he lay dying. Here also the disciples would have refused admission, but Shri Ramakrishna intervened, insisting on receiving the new-comer, and teaching him. (CWSN 1: 175-176)

91. Commenting on the historic and philosophic significance of Buddhist doctrine:

"Form, feeling, sensation, motion and knowledge are the five categories in perpetual flux and fusion. And in these lies Maya. Of any one wave nothing can be predicated, for it is not. It but was and is gone. Know, O Man, thou art the sea! Ah, this was Kapila's philosophy, but his great disciple [Buddha] brought the heart to make it live!" (CWSN 1: 176)

92. Concerning the Buddhist First Council and the dispute as to its President:

"Can you imagine what their strength was? One said it should be Ananda, because he had loved Him most. But someone else stepped forward and said no! for Ananda had been guilty of weeping at the death-bed. And so he was passed over!" (CWSN 1: 177)

93. Considering reincarnation a "scientific speculation" rather than an article of faith:

"Why, one life in the body is like a million years of confinement, and they want to wake up the memory of many lives! Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof! . . . Yes! Buddhism must be right! Reincarnation is only a mirage! But this vision is to be reached by the path of Advaita alone!" (CWSN 1: 180-81)

94. "Had I lived in Palestine, in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, I would have washed his feet, not with my tears, but with my heart's blood!" (CWSN 1: 189)

95. "For the Advaitin, therefore, the only motive is love. . . . It is the Saviour who should go on his way rejoicing, not the saved!" (CWSN 1: 197-98)

96. On the necessity of restraint in a disciple's life:

"Struggle to realize yourself without a trace of emotion! . . . Watch the fall of the leaves, but gather the sentiment of the sight from within at some later time!" (CWSN 1: 207)

"Mind! No loaves and fishes! No glamour of the world! All this must be cut short. It must be rooted out. It is sentimentality—the overflow of the senses. It comes to you in colour, sight, sound, and associations. Cut it off. Learn to hate it. It is utter poison!" (Ibid., 207-208)

97. On the value of types:

"Two different races mix and fuse, and out of them rises one strong distinct type. A strong and distinct type is always the physical basis of the horizon. It is all very well to talk of universalism, but the world will not be ready for that for millions of years!

"Remember! if you want to know what a ship is like, the ship has to be specified as it is — its length, breadth, shape, and material. And to understand a nation, we must do the same. India is idolatrous. You must help her as she is. Those who have left her can do nothing for her!" (CWSN 1: 209)

98. Describing the Indian ideal of Brahmacharya in the student's life, Swami Vivekananda said:

"Brahmacharya should be like a burning fire within the veins!" (CWSN 1: 216)

99. Concerning marriage by arrangement instead of choice, Swami Vivekananda said:

"There is such pain in this country! Such pain! Some, of course, there must always have been. But now the sight of Europeans with their different customs has increased it. Society knows that there is another way!

[To a European] "We have exalted motherhood and

you, wifehood; and I think both might gain by some interchange.

“In India the wife must not dream of loving even a son as she loves her husband. She must be Sati. But the husband ought not to love his wife as he does his mother. Hence a reciprocated affection is not thought so high as one unreturned. It is 'shopkeeping'. The joy of the contact of husband and wife is not admitted in India. This we have to borrow from the West. Our ideal needs to be refreshed by yours. And you, in turn, need something of our devotion to motherhood.” (CWSN 1: 221-22)

100. Speaking to a disciple with great compassion:

“You need not mind if these shadows of home and marriage cross your mind sometimes. Even to me, they come now and again!” (CWSN 1: 222)

101. On hearing of the intense loneliness of a friend:

“Every worker feels like that at times!” (CWSN 1: 222)

102. Concerning the Hindu and Buddhist monastic and non-monastic ideals:

“The glory of Hinduism lies in the fact that while it has defined ideals, it has never dared to say that any one of these alone was the one true way. In this it differs from Buddhism, which exalts monasticism above all others as the path that must be taken by all souls to reach perfection. The story given in the Mahâbhârata of the young saint who was made to seek enlightenment, first from a married woman and then from a butcher, is sufficient to show this. 'By doing my duty', said each one of these when asked, 'by doing my duty in my own station, have I attained this knowledge'. There is no career then which might not be the path to God. The question of attainment depends only, in the last resort, on the thirst of the soul.” (CWSN 1: 223)

103. With reference to the idea that the lover always sees the ideal in the beloved, Swami Vivekananda responded to a girl's newly avowed love:

“Cling to this vision! As long as you can both see the ideal in one another, your worship and happiness will grow more instead of less.” (CWSN 1: 224)

104. “The highest truth is always the simplest.” (CWSN 1: 226)

105. Swami Vivekananda's remarks on American séances:

“Always the greatest fraud by the simplest means.” (CWSN 1: 233)

106. On Western and Eastern views of a person as a body or a soul:

“Western languages declare that man is a body and has a

soul; Eastern languages declare that he is a soul and has a body.” (CWSN 1: 236-37)

107. Concerning Swami Vivekananda's reverence for his Guru:

“I can criticize even an Avatâra [divine incarnation] without the slightest diminution of my love for him! But I know quite well that most people are not so; and for them it is safest to protect their own Bhakti!” (CWSN 1: 252)

“Mine is the devotion of the dog! I don't want to know why! I am contented simply to follow!” (Ibid., 252-53)

108. “Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to begin every day by walking about in his room for a couple of hours, saying 'Satchidânanda!' or 'Shivoham!' or some other holy word.” (CWSN 1: 255)

109. A few months before his passing away, Swami Vivekananda said:

“How often does a man ruin his disciples by remaining always with them! When men are once trained, it is essential that their leader leaves them; for without his absence they cannot develop themselves!” (CWSN 1: 260)

110. A few days before his passing away, the Swami said:

“I am making ready for death. A great Tapasyâ and meditation has come upon me, and I am making ready for death.” (CWSN 1: 261-62)

111. In Kashmir after an illness, Swami Vivekananda said as he lifted a couple of pebbles:

“Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as that [the pebbles struck one another in his hand] — for I have touched the feet of God!” (CWSN 1: 262)

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1.1 Text

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