

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda-  
Volume 3- Reports in American Newspapers

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# Chapter 1

## India: Her Religion and Customs

### INDIA: HER RELIGION AND CUSTOMS

(*Salem Evening News*, August 29, 1893)

In spite of the warm weather of yesterday afternoon, a goodly number of members of the Thought and Work club, with guests, gathered in Wesley chapel to meet Swami Vive Kanonda,<sup>[1]</sup> a Hindoo monk, now travelling in this country, and to listen to an informal address from that gentleman, principally upon the religion of the Hindoos as taught by their Vedar<sup>[2]</sup> or sacred books. He also spoke of caste, as simply a social division and in no way dependent upon their religion.

The poverty of the majority of the masses was strongly dwelt upon. India with an area much smaller than the United States, contains twenty three hundred millions [sic] of people, and of these, three hundred millions [sic] earn wages, averaging less than fifty cents per month. In some instances the people in whole districts of the country subsist for months and even years, wholly upon flowers<sup>[3]</sup>, produced by a certain tree which when boiled are edible.

In other districts the men eat rice only, the women and children must satisfy their hunger with the water in which the rice is cooked. A failure of the rice crop means famine. Half the people live upon one meal a day, the other half know not whence the next meal will come. According to Swami Vive Kyonda, the need of the people of India is not more religion, or a better one, but as he expresses it, "practicality", and it is with the hope of interesting the American people in this great need of the suffering, starving millions that he has come to this country.

He spoke at some length of the condition of his people and their religion. In course of his speech he was frequently and closely questioned by Dr. F. A. Gardner and Rev. S. F. Nobbs of the Central Baptist Church. He said the missionaries had fine theories there and started in with good ideas, but had done nothing for the industrial condition of the people. He said Americans, instead of sending out missionaries to train them in religion, would better send some one out to give them industrial education.

Asked whether it was not a fact that Christians assisted

the people of India in times of distress, and whether they did not assist in a practical way by training schools, the speaker replied that they did it sometimes, but really it was not to their credit for the law did not allow them to attempt to influence people at such times.

He explained the bad condition of woman in India on the ground that Hindoo men had such respect for woman that it was thought best not to allow her out. The Hindoo women were held in such high esteem that they were kept in seclusion. He explained the old custom of women being burned on the death of their husbands, on the ground that they loved them so that they could not live without the husband. They were one in marriage and must be one in death.

He was asked about the worship of idols and the throwing themselves in front of the juggernaut car, and said one must not blame the Hindoo people for the car business, for it was the act of fanatics and mostly of lepers.

The speaker explained his mission in his country to be to organize monks for industrial purposes, that they might give the people the benefit of this industrial education and thus elevate them and improve their condition.

This afternoon Vive Kanonda will speak on the children of India to any children or young people who may be pleased to listen to him at 166 North street, Mrs. Woods kindly offering her garden for that purpose. In person he is a fine looking man, dark but comely, dressed in a long robe of a yellowish red colour confined at the waist with a cord, and wearing on his head a yellow turban. Being a monk he has no caste, and may eat and drink with anyone.

\* \* \*

(*Daily Gazette*, August 29, 1893)

Rajah<sup>[4]</sup> Swami Vivi Rananda of India was the guest of the Thought and Work Club of Salem yesterday afternoon in the Wesley church.

A large number of ladies and gentlemen were present and shook hands, American fashion, with the distinguished monk. He wore an orange colored gown, with red sash, yellow turban, with the end hanging down on one side, which he used for a handkerchief, and congress shoes.

He spoke at some length of the condition of his people and their religion. In course of his speech he was frequently and closely questioned by Dr. F. A. Gardner and Rev. S. F. Nobbs of the Central Baptist church. He said the missionaries had fine theories there and started in with good ideas, but had done nothing for the industrial condition of the people. He said Americans, instead of sending out missionaries to train them in religion, would better send someone out to give them industrial education.

Speaking at some length of the relations of men and women, he said the husbands of India never lied and never persecuted, and named several other sins they never committed.

Asked whether it was not a fact that Christians assisted the people of India in times of distress, and whether they did not assist in a practical way by training schools, the speaker replied that they did it sometimes, but really it was not to their credit, for the law did not allow them to attempt to influence people at such times.

He explained the bad condition of women in India on the ground that Hindoo men had such respect for woman that it was thought best not to allow her out. The Hindoo women were held in such high esteem that they were kept in seclusion. He explained the old custom of women being burned on the death of their husbands, on the ground that they loved them so that they could not live without the husband. They were one in marriage and must be one in death.

He was asked about the worship of idols and the throwing themselves in front of the juggernaut car, and said one must not blame the Hindoo people for the car business, for it was the act of fanatics and mostly of lepers.

As for the worship of idols he said he had asked Christians what they thought of when they prayed, and some said they thought of the church, others of G-O-D. Now his people thought of the images. For the poor people idols were necessary. He said that in ancient times, when their religion first began, women were distinguished for spiritual genius and great strength of mind. In spite of this, as he seemed to acknowledge, the women of the present day had degenerated. They thought of nothing but eating and drinking, gossip and scandal.

The speaker explained his mission in his country to be to organize monks for industrial purposes, that they might give the people the benefit of this industrial education and thus to elevate them and improve their condition.

\* \* \*

(*Salem Evening News*, September 1, 1893)

The learned Monk from India who is spending a few days in this city, will speak in the East Church Sunday evening at 7-30. Swami (Rev.) Viva Kananda preached in the Episcopal church at Annisquam last Sunday evening, by

invitation of the pastor and Professor Wright of Harvard, who has shown him great kindness.

On Monday night he leaves for Saratoga, where he will address the Social Science association. Later on he will speak before the Congress in Chicago. Like all men who are educated in the higher Universities of India, Viva Kananda speaks English easily and correctly. His simple talk to the children on Tuesday last concerning the games, schools, customs and manners of children in India was valuable and most interesting. His kind heart was touched by the statement of a little miss that her teacher had "licked her so hard that she almost broke her finger". . . . As Viva Kananda, like all monks, must travel over his land preaching the religion of truth, chastity and the brotherhood of man, no great good could pass unnoticed, or terrible wrong escape his eyes. He is extremely generous to all persons of other faiths, and has only kind words for those who differ from him.

\* \* \*

(*Daily Gazette*, September 5, 1893)

Rajah Swami Vivi Rananda of India spoke at the East church Sunday evening, on the religion of India and the poor of his native land. A good audience assembled but it was not so large as the importance of the subject or the interesting speaker deserved. The monk was dressed in his native costume and spoke about forty minutes. The great need of India today, which is not the India of fifty years ago, is, he said, missionaries to educate the people industrially and socially and not religiously. The Hindoos have all the religion they want, and the Hindoo religion is the most ancient in the world. The monk is a very pleasant speaker and held the dose attention of his audience.

\* \* \*

(*Daily Saratoga*, September 6, 1893)

. . . The platform was next occupied by Vive Kananda, a Monk of Madras, Hindoostan, who preached throughout India. He is interested in social science and is an intelligent and interesting speaker. He spoke on Mohammedan rule in India.

The program for today embraces some very interesting topics, especially the paper on "Bimetallism", by Col. Jacob Greene of Hartford. Viva Kananda will again speak, this time on the Use of Silver in India.

## Notes

[1] In those days Swami Vivekananda's name was spelt in various ways by the U.S.A. newspapers, and the reports were inaccurate mostly owing to the novelty of the subjects.

[2] Vedas.

[3] Mohua.

[4] American reporters added all sorts of epithets like “Rajah”, “Brahmin”, “priest”, etc., for which they alone were responsible.

## Chapter 2

# Hindus at the Fair

### HINDUS AT THE FAIR

(*Boston Evening Transcript*, September 30, 1893)

Chicago, Sept. 23:

There is a room at the left of the entrance to the Art Palace marked "No. 1 — keep out." To this the speakers at the Congress of Religions all repair sooner or later, either to talk with one another or with President Bonney, whose private office is in one corner of the apartment. The folding doors are jealously guarded from the general public, usually standing far enough apart to allow peeping in. Only delegates are supposed to penetrate the sacred precincts, but it is not impossible to obtain an "open sesame", and thus to enjoy a brief opportunity of closer relations with the distinguished guests than the platform in the Hall of Columbus affords.

The most striking figure one meets in this anteroom is Swami Vivekananda, the Brahmin monk. He is a large, well-built man, with the superb carriage of the Hindustanis, his face clean shaven, squarely moulded regular features, white teeth, and with well-chiselled lips that are usually parted in a benevolent smile while he is conversing. His finely poised head is crowned with either a lemon colored or a red turban, and his cassock (not the technical name for this garment), belted in at the waist and falling below the knees, alternates in a bright orange and rich crimson. He speaks excellent English and replied readily to any questions asked in sincerity.

Along with his simplicity of manner there is a touch of personal reserve when speaking to ladies, which suggests his chosen vocation. When questioned about the laws of his order, he has said, "I can do as I please, I am independent. Sometimes I live in the Himalaya Mountains, and sometimes in the streets of cities. I never know where I will get my next meal, I never keep money with me I come here by subscription." Then looking round at one or two of his fellow-countrymen who chanced to be standing near he added, "They will take care of me," giving the inference that his board bill in Chicago is attended to by others. When asked if he was wearing his usual monk's costume, he said, "This is a good dress; when I am home I am in rags, and I go barefooted. Do I believe in caste? Caste is a social custom; religion has nothing to do with

it; all castes will associate with me."

It is quite apparent, however, from the deportment, the general appearance of Mr. Vivekananda that he was born among high castes — years of voluntary poverty and homeless wanderings have not robbed him of his birthright of gentleman; even his family name is unknown; he took that of Vivekananda in embracing a religious career, and "Swami" is merely the title of reverend accorded to him. He cannot be far along in the thirties, and looks as if made for this life and its fruition, as well as for meditation on the life beyond. One cannot help wondering what could have been the turning point with him.

"Why should I marry," was his abrupt response to a comment on all he had renounced in becoming a monk, "when I see in every woman only the divine Mother? Why do I make all these sacrifices? To emancipate myself from earthly ties and attachments so that there will be no re-birth for me. When I die I want to become at once absorbed in the divine, one with God. I would be a Buddha."

Vivekananda does not mean by this that he is a Buddhist. No name or sect can rebel him. He is an outcome of the higher Brahminism, a product of the Hindu spirit, which is vast, dreamy, self-extinguishing, a Sanyasi or holy man.

He has some pamphlets that he distributes, relating to his master, Paramhansa Ramakrishna, a Hindu devotee, who so impressed his hearers and pupils that many of them became ascetics after his death. Mozoomdar also looked upon this saint as his master, but Mozoomdar works for holiness in the world, in it but not of it, as Jesus taught.

Vivekananda's address before the parliament was broad as the heavens above us, embracing the best in all religions, as the ultimate universal religion — charity to all mankind, good works for the love of God, not for fear of punishment or hope of reward. He is a great favorite at the parliament, from the grandeur of his sentiments and his appearance as well. If he merely crosses the platform he is applauded, and this marked approval of thousands he accepts in a childlike spirit of gratification, without a trace of conceit. It must be a strange experience too for this humble young Brahmin monk, this sudden transition from poverty and self-effacement to affluence and aggrandizement. When asked if he knew anything of

those brothers in the Himalayas so firmly believed in by the Theosophists, he answered with the simple statement, "I have never met one of them," as much as to imply, "There may be such persons, but though I am at home in the Himalayas, I have yet to come across them."

## Chapter 3

# At the Parliament of Religions

### AT THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

(The Dubuque, Iowa, *Times*, September 39, 1893)

WORLD'S FAIR, Sept. 28. — (Special.) — The Parliament of religions reached a point where sharp acerbities develop. The thin veil of courtesy was maintained, of course, but behind it was ill feeling. Rev. Joseph Cook criticised the Hindoos sharply and was more sharply criticised in turn. He said that to speak of a universe that was not created is almost unpardonable nonsense, and the Asiatics retorted that a universe which had a beginning is a self-evident absurdity. Bishop J. P. Newman, firing at long range from the banks of the Ohio, declared that the orientals have insulted all the Christians of the United States by their misrepresentations of the missionaries, and the orientals, with their provokingly calm and supercilious smile, replied that this was simply the bishop's ignorance.

### BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

In response to the question direct, three learned Buddhists gave us in remarkably plain and beautiful language their bed-rock belief about God, man and matter.

[Following this is a summary of Dharmapala's paper on "The World's Debt to Buddha", which he prefaced, as we learn from another source, by singing a Singhalese song of benediction. The article then continues:]

His [Dharmapala's] peroration was as pretty a thing as a Chicago audience ever heard. Demosthenes never exceeded it.

### CANTANKEROUS REMARKS

Swami Vivekananda, the Hindoo monk, was not so fortunate. He was out of humor, or soon became so, apparently. He wore an orange robe and a pale yellow turban and dashed at once into a savage attack on Christian nations in these words: "We who have come from the east have sat here day after day and have been told in a patronizing way that we ought to accept Christianity because Christian nations are the most prosperous. We

look about us and we see England the most prosperous Christian nation in the world, with her foot on the neck of 250,000,000 Asiatics. We look back into history and see that the prosperity of Christian Europe began with Spain. Spain's prosperity began with the invasion of Mexico. Christianity wins its prosperity by cutting the throats of its fellow men. At such a price the Hindoo will not have prosperity."

And so they went on, each succeeding speaker getting more cantankerous, as it were.

\* \* \*

(*Outlook*, October 7, 1893)

. . . The subject of Christian work in India calls Vivekananda, in his brilliant priestly orange, to his feet. He criticises the work of Christian missions. It is evident that he has not tried to understand Christianity, but neither, as he claims, have its priests made any effort to understand *his* religion, with its ingrained faiths and raceprejudices of thousands of years' standing. They have simply come, in his view, to throw scorn on his most sacred beliefs, and to undermine the morals and spiritualist of the people he has been set to teach.

\* \* \*

(*Critic*, October 7, 1893)

But the most impressive figures of the Parliament were the Buddhist priest, H. Dharmapala of Ceylon, and the Hindoo monk, Suami Vivekananda. "If theology and dogma stand in your way in search of truth," said the former incisively, "put them aside. Learn to think without prejudice, to love all beings for love's sake, to express your convictions fearlessly, to lead a life of purity, and the sunlight of truth will illuminate you." But eloquent as were many of the brief speeches at this meeting, whose triumphant enthusiasm rightly culminated in the superb rendering by the Apollo Club of the Hallelujah chorus, no one expressed so well the spirit of the Parliament, its limitations and its finest influence, as did the Hindoo monk.

I copy his address in full, but I can only suggest its effect upon the audience, for he is an orator by divine right, and his strong intelligent face in its picturesque setting of yellow and orange was hardly less interesting than these earnest words and the rich, rhythmical utterance he gave them.... [After quoting the greater part of Swamiji's Final Address, the article continues:]

Perhaps the most tangible result of the congress was the feeling it aroused in regard to foreign missions. The impertinence of sending half-educated theological students to instruct the wise and erudite Orientals was never brought home to an English-speaking audience more forcibly. It is only in the spirit of tolerance and sympathy that we are at liberty to touch their faith, and the exhorters who possess these qualities are rare. It is necessary to realize that we have quite as much to learn from the Buddhists as they from us, and that only through harmony can the highest influence be exerted.

LUCY MONROE.

Chicago, 3 Oct., 1893.

\* \* \*

[To a request of the *New York World* of October 1, 1893, for "a sentiment or expression regarding the significance of the great meeting" from each representative, Swamiji replied with a quotation from the Gita and one from Vyâsa:]

"I am He that am in every religion — like the thread that passes through a string of pearls." "Holy, perfect and pure men are seen in all creeds, therefore they all lead to the same truth — for how can nectar be the outcome of poison?"

## Chapter 4

# Personal Traits

### PERSONAL TRAITS

(*Critic*, October 7, 1893)

. . . It was an outgrowth of the Parliament of Religions, which opened our eyes to the fact that the philosophy of the ancient creeds contains much beauty for the moderns. When we had once clearly perceived this, our interest in their exponents quickened, and with characteristic eagerness we set out in pursuit of knowledge. The most available means of obtaining it, after the close of the Parliament, was through the addresses and lectures of Swami Vivekananda, who is still in this city [Chicago]. His original purpose in coming to this country was to interest Americans in the starting of new industries among the Hindoos, but he has abandoned this for the present, because he finds that, as "the Americans are the most charitable people in the world," every man with a purpose comes here for assistance in carrying it out. When asked about the relative condition of the poor here and in India, he replied that our poor would be princes there, and that he had been taken through the worst quarter of the city only to find it, from the standpoint of his knowledge, comfortable and even pleasant.

A Brahmin of the Brahmins, Vivekananda gave up his rank to join the brotherhood of monks, where all pride of caste is voluntarily relinquished. And yet he bears the mark of race upon his person. His culture, his eloquence, and his fascinating personality have given us a new idea of Hindoo civilization. He is an interesting figure, his fine, intelligent, mobile face in its setting of yellows, and his deep, musical voice prepossessing one at once in his favor. So it is not strange that he has been taken up by the literary clubs, has preached and lectured in churches, until the life of Buddha and the doctrines of his faith have grown familiar to us. He speaks without notes, presenting his facts and his conclusions with the greatest art, the most convincing sincerity; and rising at times to a rich, inspiring eloquence. As learned and cultivated, apparently, as the most accomplished Jesuit, he has also something Jesuitical in the character of his mind; but though the little sarcasms thrown into his discourses are as keen as a rapier, they are so delicate as to be lost on many of his hearers. Nevertheless his courtesy is unflinching, for these thrusts are never pointed so directly at our customs as to

be rude. At present he contents himself with enlightening us in regard to his religion and the words of its philosophers. He looks forward to the time when we shall pass beyond idolatry — now necessary in his opinion to the ignorant classes — beyond worship, even, to a knowledge of the presence of God in nature, of the divinity and responsibility of man. "Work out your own salvation," he says with the dying Buddha; "I cannot help you. No man can help you. Help yourself."

LUCY MONROE.

## Chapter 5

# Reincarnation

### REINCARNATION

*(Evanston Index, October 7, 1893)*

At the Congregational Church, during the past week, there have been given a course of lectures which in nature much resembled the Religious Parliament which has just been completed. The lecturers were Dr. Carl van Bergen of Sweden, and Suami Vivekananda, the Hindu monk. ... Suami Vivekananda is a representative from India to the Parliament of Religions. He has attracted a great deal of attention on account of his unique attire in Mandarin colors, by his magnetic presence and by his brilliant oratory and wonderful exposition of Hindu philosophy. His stay in Chicago has been a continual ovation. The course of lectures was arranged to cover three evenings.

[The lectures of Saturday and Tuesday evenings are listed without Comment; then the article continues:]

On Thursday evening Oct. 5, Dr. von Bergen spoke on "Huldine Beamish, the Founder of the King's Daughters of Sweden," and "Reincarnation" was the subject treated by the Hindu monk. The latter was very interesting; the views being those that are not often heard in this part of the world. The doctrine of reincarnation of the soul, while comparatively new and little understood in this country, is well-known in the east, being the foundation of nearly all the religions of those people. Those that do not use it as dogma, do not say anything against it. The main point to be decided in regard to the doctrine is, as to whether we have had a past. We know that we have a present and feel sure of a future. Yet how can there be a present without a past? Modern science has proved that matter exists and continues to exist. Creation is merely a change in appearance. We are not sprung out of nothing. Some regard God as the common cause of everything and judge this a sufficient reason for existence. But in everything we must consider the phenomena; whence and from what matter springs. The same arguments that prove there is a future prove that there is a past. It is necessary that there should be causes other than God's will. Heredity is not able to give sufficient cause. Some say that we are not conscious of a former existence. Many cases have been found where there are distinct reminiscences of a past. And here lies the germ of the theory. Because the Hindu

is kind to dumb animals many believe that we believe in the reincarnation of souls in lower orders. They are not able to conceive of kindness to dumb animals being other than the result of superstition. An ancient Hindu priest defines religion as anything that lifts one up. Brutality is driven out, humanity gives way to divinity. The theory of incarnation does not confine man to this small earth. His soul can go to other, higher earths where he will be a loftier being, possessing, instead of five senses, eight, and continuing in this way he will at length approach the acme of perfection, divinity, and will be allowed to drink deep of oblivion in the "Islands of the Blest".

## Chapter 6

# Hindu Civilisation

### HINDU CIVILISATION

[Although the lecture at Streator on October 9 was well attended, the *Streator Daily Free Press* of October 9 ran the following somewhat dreary review:]

The lecture of this celebrated Hindoo at the Opera House, Saturday night, was very interesting. By comparative philology, he sought to establish the long admitted relationship between the Aryan races and their descendants in the new world. He mildly defended the caste system of India which keeps three-fourths of the people in utter and humiliating subjection, and boasted that the India of today was the same India that had watched for centuries the meteoric nations of the world flash across the horizon and sink into oblivion. In common with the people, he loves the past. He lives not for self, but for God. In his country a premium is placed on beggary and tramps, though not so distinguished in his lecture. When the meal is prepared, they wait for some man to come along who is first served, then the animals, the servants, the man of the house and lastly the woman of the household. Boys are taken at 10 years of age and are kept by professors for a period of ten to twenty years, educated and sent forth to resume their former occupations or to engage in a life of endless wandering, preaching, and praying, taking along only that which is given them to eat and wear, but never touching money. Vivekananda is of the latter class. Men approaching old age withdraw from the world, and after a period of study and prayer, when they feel themselves sanctified, they also go forward spreading the gospel. He observed that leisure was necessary for intellectual development and scored Americans for not educating the Indians whom Columbus found in a state of savagery. In this he exhibited a lack of knowledge of conditions. His talk was lamentably short and much was left unsaid of seeming greater importance than much that was said. <sup>[1]</sup>

### Notes

- [1] It is clear from the above report that the American Press, for one reason or another, did not always give Swamiji an enthusiastic reception.

## Chapter 7

# An Interesting Lecture

### AN INTERESTING LECTURE

(*Wisconsin State Journal*, November 21, 1893)

The lecture at the Congregational Church [Madison] last night by the celebrated Hindoo monk, Vivekananda, was an extremely interesting one, and contained much of sound philosophy and good religion. Pagan though he be, Christianity may well follow many of his teachings. His creed is as wide as the universe, taking in all religions, and accepting truth wherever it may be found. Bigotry and superstition and idle ceremony, he declared, have no place in “the religions of India”.

## Chapter 8

# The Hindoo Religion

### THE HINDOO RELIGION

(*Minneapolis Star*, November 25, 1893)

“Brahminism” in all its subtle attraction, because of its embodiment of ancient and truthful principles, was the subject which held an audience in closest attention last evening at the First Unitarian Church [Minneapolis], while Swami Vive Kananda expounded the Hindoo faith. It was an audience which included thoughtful women and men, for the lecturer had been invited by the “Peripatetics,” and among the friends who shared the privilege with them were ministers of varied denominations, as well as students and scholars. Vive Kananda is a Brahmin priest, and he occupied the platform in his native garb, with caftan on head, orange colored coat confined at the waist with a red sash, and red nether garments.

He presented his faith in all sincerity, speaking slowly and clearly, convincing his hearers by quietness of speech rather than by rapid action. His words were carefully weighed, and each carried its meaning direct. He offered the simplest truths of the Hindoo religion, and while he said nothing harsh about Christianity, he touched upon it in such a manner as to place the faith of Brahma before all. The all-pervading thought and leading principle of the Hindoo religion is the inherent divinity of the soul; the soul is perfect, and religion is the manifestation of divinity already existing in man. The present is merely a line of demarkation between the past and future, and of the two tendencies in man, if the good preponderates he will move to a higher sphere, if the evil has power, he degenerates. These two are continually at work within him; what elevates him is virtue, that which degenerates is evil.

Kananda will speak at the First Unitarian Church tomorrow morning.

\* \* \*

(*Des Moines News*, November 28, 1893)

Swami Vivekananda, the talented scholar from the far-off India, spoke at the Central church last night [November 27]. He was a representative of his country and creed at

the recent parliament of religions assembled in Chicago during the world's fair. Rev. H. O. Breeden introduced the speaker to the audience. He arose and after bowing to his audience, commenced his lecture, the subject of which was “Hindoo Religion”. His lecture was not confined to any line of thought but consisted more of some of his own philosophical views relative to his religion and others. He holds that one must embrace all the religions to become the perfect Christian. What is not found in one religion is supplied by another. They are all right and necessary for the true Christian. When you send a missionary to our country he becomes a Hindoo Christian and I a Christian Hindoo. I have often been asked in this country if I am going to try to convert the people here. I take this for an insult. I do not believe in this idea of conversion.<sup>[1]</sup> To-day we have a sinful man; tomorrow according to your idea he is converted and by and by attains unto holiness. Whence comes this change? How do you explain it? The man has not a new soul for the soul must die. You say he is changed by God. God is perfect, all powerful and is purity itself. Then after this man is converted he is that same God minus the purity he gave that man to become holy. There is in our country two words which have an altogether different meaning than they do in this country. They are “religion” and “sect”. We hold that religion embraces all religions. We tolerate everything but intolerance. Then there is that word “sect”. Here it embraces those sweet people who wrap themselves up in their mantle of charity and say, “We are right; you are wrong.” It reminds me of the story of the two frogs. A frog was born in a well and lived its whole life in that well. One day a frog from the sea fell in that well and they commenced to talk about the sea. The frog whose home was in the well asked the visitor how large the sea was, but was unable to get an intelligent answer. Then the at home frog jumped from one corner of the well to another and asked his visitor if the sea was that large. He said yes. The frog jumped again and said, “Is the sea that large?” and receiving an affirmative reply, he said to himself, “This frog must be a liar; I will put him out of my well.” That is the way with these sects. They seek to eject and trample those who do not believe as they do.

**Notes**

[1] Although in spots, as will be seen, the reporter woefully failed to follow Swamiji's argument regarding conversion, he captured enough of it to enable the reader who is familiar with Swamiji's thought to comprehend his meaning.

## Chapter 9

# The Hindoo Monk

### THE HINDOO MONK

*(Appeal-Avalanche, January 16, 1894)*

Swami Vive Kananda, the Hindoo monk, who is to lecture at the Auditorium [Memphis] tonight, is one of the most eloquent men who has ever appeared on the religious or lecture platform in this country. His matchless oratory, deep penetration into things occult, his cleverness in debate, and great earnestness captured the closest attention of the world's thinking men at the World's Fair Parliament of Religion, and the admiration of thousands of people who have since heard him during his lecture tour through many of the states of the Union.

In conversation he is a most pleasant gentleman; his choice of words are the gems of the English language, and his general bearing ranks him with the most cultured people of Western etiquette and custom. As a companion he is a most charming man, and as a conversationalist he is, perhaps, not surpassed in the drawing-rooms of any city in the Western World. He speaks English not only distinctly, but fluently, and his ideas, as new as sparkling, drop from his tongue in a perfectly bewildering overflow of ornamental language.

Swami Vive Kananda, by his inherited religion or early teachings, grew up a Brahmin, but becoming converted to the Hindoo religion he sacrificed his rank and became a Hindoo priest, or as known in the country of oriental ideality, a sanyasin. He had always been a close student of the wonderful and mysterious works of nature as drawn from God's high conception, and with years spent as both a student and teacher in the higher colleges of that eastern country, he acquired a knowledge that has given him a worldwide reputation as one of the most thoughtful scholars of the age.

His wonderful first address before the members of the World's Fair Parliament stamped him at once as a leader in that great body of religious thinkers. During the session he was frequently heard in defence of his religion, and some of the most beautiful and philosophical gems that grace the English language rolled from his lips there in picturing the higher duties that man owed to man and to his Creator. He is an artist in thought, an idealist in belief and a dramatist on the platform.

Since his arrival in Memphis he has been guest of Mr. Hu L. Brinkley, where he has received calls day and evening from many in Memphis who desired to pay their respects to him. He is also an informal guest at the Tennessee Club and was a guest at the reception given by Mrs. S. R. Shepherd, Saturday evening. Col. R. B. Snowden gave a dinner at his home at Annesdale in honor of the distinguished visitor on Sunday, where he met Assistant Bishop Thomas F. Gailor, Rev. Dr. George Patterson and a number of other clergymen.

Yesterday afternoon he lectured before a large and fashionable audience composed of the members of the Nineteenth Century Club in the rooms of the club in the Randolph Building. Tonight he will be heard at the Auditorium on "Hindooism".

## Chapter 10

# Plea for Tolerance

### PLEA FOR TOLERANCE

*(Memphis Commercial, January 17, 1894)*

An audience of fair proportions gathered last night at the Auditorium to greet the celebrated Hindu monk. Swami Vive Kananda, in his lecture on Hinduism.

He was introduced in a brief but informing address by Judge R. J. Morgan, who gave a sketch of the development of the great Aryan race, from which development have come the Europeans and the Hindus alike, so tracing a racial kinship between the people of America and the speaker who was to address them.

The eminent Oriental was received with liberal applause, and heard with attentive interest throughout. He is a man of fine physical presence, with regular bronze features and form of fine proportions. He wore a robe of pink silk, fastened at the waist with a black sash, black trousers and about his head was gracefully draped a turban of yellow India silk. His delivery is very good, his use of English being perfect as regards choice of words and correctness of grammar and construction. The only inaccuracy of pronunciation is in the accenting of words at times upon a wrong syllable. Attentive listeners, however, probably lost few words, and their attention was well rewarded by an address full of original thought, information and broad wisdom. The address might fitly be called a plea for universal tolerance, illustrated by remarks concerning the religion of India. This spirit, he contended, the spirit of tolerance and love, is the central inspiration of all religions which are worthy, and this, he thinks, is the end to be secured by any form of faith.

His talk concerning Hinduism was not strictly circumstantial. His attempt was rather to give an analysis of its spirit than a story of its legends or a picture of its forms. He dwelt upon only a few of the distinctive credal or ritual features of his faith, but these he explained most clearly and perspicuously. He gave a vivid account of the mystical features of Hinduism, out of which the so often misinterpreted theory of reincarnation has grown. He explained how his religion ignored the differentiations of time, how, just as all men believe in the present and the future of the soul, so the faith of Brahma believes in its past. He made it clear, too, how his faith does not be-

lieve in "original sin," but bases all effort and aspiration on the belief of the perfectibility of humanity. Improvement and purification, he contends, must be based upon hope. The development of man is a return to an original perfection. This perfection must come through the practice of holiness and love. Here he showed how his own people have practiced these qualities, how India has been a land of refuge for the oppressed, citing the instance of the welcome given by the Hindus to the Jews when Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple

In a graphic way he told that the Hindus do not lay much stress upon forms. Sometimes every member of the family will differ in their adherence to sects, but all will worship God by worshipping the spirit of love which is His central attribute. The Hindus, he says, hold that there is good in all religions, that all religions are embodiments of man's inspiration for holiness, and being such, all should be respected. He illustrated this by a citation from the Vedas [?], in which varied religions are symbolized as the differently formed vessels with which different men came to bring water from a spring. The forms of the vessels are many, but the water of truth is what all seek to fill their vessels with. God knows all forms of faith, he thinks, and will recognize his own name no matter what it is called, or what may be the fashion of the homage paid him.

The Hindus, he continued, worship the same God as the Christians. The Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva is merely an embodiment of God the creator, the preserver and the destroyer. That the three are considered three instead of one is simply a corruption due to the fact that general humanity must have its ethics made tangible. So likewise the material images of Hindu gods are simply symbols of divine qualities.

He told, in explanation of the Hindu doctrine of incarnation, the story of Krishna, who was born by immaculate conception and the story of whom greatly resembles the story of Jesus. The teaching of Krishna, he claims, is the doctrine of love for its own sake, and he expressed [it] by the words "If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of religion, the love of God is its end."

His entire lecture cannot be sketched here, but it was a masterly appeal for brotherly love, and an eloquent de-

fense of a beautiful faith. The conclusion was especially fine, when he acknowledged his readiness to accept Christ but must also bow to Krishna and to Buddha; and when, with a fine picture of the cruelty of civilization, he refused to hold Christ responsible for the crimes of progress.

## Chapter 11

# Manners and Customs in India

### MANNERS AND CUSTOMS IN INDIA

*(Appeal-Avalanche, January 21, 1894)*

Swami Vive Kananda, the Hindoo monk, delivered a lecture at La Salette Academy [Memphis] yesterday afternoon. Owing to the pouring rain, a very small audience was present.

The subject discussed was "Manners and Customs in India." Vive Kananda is advancing theories of religious thought which find ready lodgment in the minds of some of the most advanced thinkers of this as well as other cities of America.

His theory is fatal to the orthodox belief, as taught by the Christian teachers. It has been the supreme effort of Christian America to enlighten the beclouded minds of heathen India, but it seems that the oriental splendor of Kananda's religion has eclipsed the beauty of the old-time Christianity, as taught by our parents, and will find a rich field in which to thrive in the minds of some of the better educated of America.

This is a day of "fads," and Kananda seems to be filling a "long felt want." He is, perhaps, one of the most learned men of his country, and possesses a wonderful amount of personal magnetism, and his hearers are charmed by his eloquence. While he is liberal in his views, he sees very little to admire in the orthodox Christianity. Kananda has received more marked attention in Memphis than almost any lecturer or minister that has ever visited the city.

If a missionary to India was as cordially received as the Hindoo monk is here the work of spreading the gospel of Christ in heathen lands would be well advanced. His lecture yesterday afternoon was an interesting one from a historic point of view. He is thoroughly familiar with the history and traditions of his native country, from very ancient history up to the present, and can describe the various places and objects of interest there with grace and ease.

During his lecture he was frequently interrupted by questions propounded by the ladies in the audience, and he answered all queries without the least hesitancy, except when one of the ladies asked a question with the purpose of drawing him out into a religious discussion. He refused

to be led from the original subject of his discourse and informed the interrogator that at another time he would give his views on the "transmigration of the soul," etc.

In the course of his remarks he said that his grandfather was married when he was 3 years old and his father married at 18, but he had never married at all. A monk is not forbidden to marry, but if he takes a wife she becomes a monk with the same powers and privileges and occupies the same social position as her husband.<sup>[1]</sup>

In answer to a question, he said there were no divorces in India for any cause, but if, after 14 years of married life, there were no children in the family, the husband was allowed to marry another with the wife's consent, but if she objected he could not marry again. His description of the ancient mausoleums and temples were beautiful beyond comparison, and goes to show that the ancients possessed scientific knowledge far superior to the most expert artisans of the present day.

Swami Vivi Kananda will appear at the Y. M. H. A. Hall to-night for the last time in this city. He is under contract with the "Slayton Lyceum Bureau," of Chicago, to fill a three-years' engagement in this country. He will leave tomorrow for Chicago, where he has an engagement for the night of the 25th.

*(Detroit Tribune, February 15, 1894)*

Last evening a good sized audience had the privilege of seeing and listening to the famous Hindu Monk of the Brahma Samaj, Swami Vive Kananda, as he lectured at the Unitarian Church under the auspices of the Unity Club. He appeared in native costume and made with his handsome face and stalwart figure a distinguished appearance. His eloquence held the audience in rapt attention and brought out applause at frequent intervals. He spoke of the "Manners and Customs of India" and presented the subject in the most perfect English. He said they did not call their country India nor themselves Hindus. Hindostan was the name of the country and they were Brahmans. In ancient times they spoke Sanscrit. In that language the reason and meaning of a word was explained and made quite evident but now that is all gone. Jupiter in Sanscrit meant "Father in Heaven." All the languages of northern India were now practically the same, but if he should go

into the southern part of that country he could not converse with the people. In the words father, mother, sister, brother, etc.; the Sanscrit gave very similar pronunciations. This and other facts lead him to think we all come from the common stock, Aryans. Nearly all branches of this race have lost their identity

There were four castes, the priests, the landlords and military people, the trades people and the artisans, laborers and servants. In the first three castes the boys as the ages of ten, eleven and thirteen respectively are placed in the hands of professors of universities and remain with them until thirty, twenty-five and twenty years old, respectively. ... In ancient times both boys and girls were instructed, but now only the boys are favored. An effort, however, is being made to rectify the long-existing wrong. A good share of the philosophy and laws of the land is the work of women during the ancient times, before barbarians started to rule the land. In the eyes of the Hindu the woman now has her rights. She holds her own and has the law on her side.

When the student returns from college he is allowed to marry and have a household. Husband and wife must bear the work and both have their rights. In the military caste the daughters oftentimes can choose their husbands, but in all other cases all arrangements are made by the parents. There is a constant effort now being made to remedy infant marriage. The marriage ceremony is very beautiful, each touches the heart of the other and they swear before God and the assemblage that they will prove faithful to each other. No man can be a priest until he marries. When a man attends public worship he is always attended by his wife. In his worship the Hindu performs five ceremonies, worship of his God, of his forefathers, of the poor, of the dumb animals, and of learning. As long as a Hindu has anything in the house a guest must never want. When he is satisfied then the children, then father and mother partake. They are the poorest nation in the world, yet except in times of famine no one dies of hunger. Civilization is a great work. But in comparison the statement is made that in England one in every 400 is a drunkard, while in India the proportion is one to every million. A description was given of the ceremony of burning the dead. No publicity is made except in the case of some great nobleman. After a fifteen days' fast gifts are given by the relatives in behalf of the forefathers to the poor or for the formation of some institution. On moral matters they stand head and shoulders above all other nations.

## Notes

- [1] It is quite unlikely that Swamiji made the remark attributed to him regarding the marriage of monks. This must have been an aberration on the part of the reporter, for, as is well known, if a Sannyasin takes a wife he is considered by the Hindu society to be a fallen person and beyond the pale.

## Chapter 12

# Hindoo Philosophy

### HINDOO PHILOSOPHY

(*Detroit Free Press*, February 16, 1894)

The second lecture of the Hindoo monk, Swami Vive Kananda, was given last evening at the Unitarian church to a large and very appreciative audience. The expectation of the audience that the speaker would enlighten them regarding "Hindoo Philosophy," as the lecture was entitled, was gratified to only a limited extent. Allusions were made to the philosophy of Buddha, and the speaker was applauded when he said that Buddhism was the first missionary religion of the world, and that it had secured the largest number of converts without the shedding of a drop of blood; but he did not tell his audience anything about the religion or philosophy of Buddha. He made a number of cute little jabs at the Christian religion, and alluded to the trouble and misery that had been caused by its introduction into heathen countries, but he skillfully avoided any comparison between the social condition of the people in his own land and that of the people to whom he was speaking. In a general way he said the Hindoo philosophers taught from a lower truth to a higher; whereas, a person accepting a newer Christian doctrine is asked and expected to throw his former belief all away and accept the newer in its entirety. "It is an idle dream when all of us will have the same religious views," said he. "No emotion can be produced except by clashing elements acting upon the mind. It is the revulsion of change, the new light, the presentation of the new to the old, that elicits sensation."

[As the first lecture had antagonised some people, the *Free Press* reporter was very cautious. Fortunately, however, the *Detroit Tribune* consistently upheld Swamiji, and thus in its report of February 16 we get some idea of his lecture on "Hindu Philosophy," although the *Tribune* reporter seems to have taken somewhat sketchy notes:]

(*Detroit Tribune*, February 16, 1894)

The Brahman monk, Swami Vive Kananda, again lectured last evening at the Unitarian church, his topic being "Hindu Philosophy." The speaker dealt for a time with general philosophy and metaphysics, but said that

he would devote the lecture to that part pertaining to religion. There is a sect that believes in a soul, but are agnostic in relation to God. Buddahism [sic] was a great moral religion, but they could not live long without believing in a god. Another sect known as the giants [Jains] believe in the soul, but not in the moral government of the country. There were several millions of this sect in India. Their priests and monks tie a handkerchief over their faces believing if their hot breath comes in contact with man or beast death will ensue.

Among the orthodox, all believe in the revelation. Some think every word in the Bible comes directly from God. The stretching of the meaning of a word would perhaps do in most religions, but in that of the Hindus they have the Sanscrit, which always retains the full meaning and reasons of the world.

The distinguished Oriental thought there was a sixth sense far greater than any of the five we know we possess. It was the truth of revelation. A man may read all the books on religion in the world and yet be the greatest blackguard in the country. Revelation means later reports of spiritual discoveries.

The second position some take is a creation without beginning or end. Suppose there was a time when the world did not exist; what was God doing then? To the Hindus the creation was only one of forms. One man is born with a healthy body, is of good family and grows up a godly man. Another is born with a maimed and crooked body and develops into a wicked man and pays the penalty. Why must a just and holy god create one with so many advantages and the other with disadvantages? The person has no choice. The evildoer has a consciousness of his guilt. The difference between virtue and vice was expounded. If God willed all things there would be an end to all science. How far can man go down? Is it possible for man to go back to brute again?

Kananda was glad he was a Hindu. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans several thousand [Jews] settled in India. When the Persians were driven from their country by the Arabs several thousand found refuge in the same country and none were molested. The Hindu, believe all religions are true, but theirs antedates all others. Missionaries are never molested by the Hindus. The first

English missionaries were prevented from landing in that country by English and it was a Hindu that interceded for them and gave them the first hand. Religion is that which believes in all. Religion was compared to the blind men and the elephant. Each man felt of a special part and from it drew his conclusions of what an elephant was. Each was right in his way and yet all were needed to form a whole. Hindu philosophers say "truth to truth, lower truth to higher." It is an idle dream of those who think that all will at some time think alike, for that would be the death of religion. Every religion breaks up into little sects, each claiming to be the true one and all the others wrong. Persecution is unknown in Buddhism. They sent out the first missionaries and are the only ones who can say they have converted millions without the shedding of a single drop of blood. Hindus, with all their faults and superstitions, never persecute. The speaker wanted to know how it was the Christians allowed such iniquities as are everywhere present in Christian countries.

## Chapter 13

# Miracles

### MIRACLES

*(Evening News, February 17, 1894)*

I cannot comply with the request of The News to work a miracle in proof of my religion," said Vive Kananda to a representative of this paper, after being shown The News editorial on the subject. "In the first place, I am no miracle worker, and in the second place the pure Hindoo religion I profess is not based on miracles. We do not recognize such a thing as miracles. There are wonders wrought beyond our five senses, but they are operated by some law. Our religion has nothing to do with them. Most of the strange things which are done in India and reported in the foreign papers are sleight-of-hand tricks or hypnotic illusions. They are not the performances of the wise men. These do not go about the country performing their wonders in the market places for pay. They can be seen and known only by those who seek to know the truth, and not moved by childish curiosity."

## Chapter 14

# The Divinity of Man

### THE DIVINITY OF MAN

(*Detroit Free Press*, February 18, 1894)

Swami Vive Kananda, Hindoo philosopher and priest, concluded his series of lectures, or rather, sermons, at the Unitarian church last night, speaking on "The Divinity of God" [sic].<sup>[1]</sup> In spite of the bad weather, the church was crowded almost to the doors half an hour before the eastern brother — as he likes to be called — appeared. All professions and business occupations were represented in the attentive audience — lawyers, judges, ministers of the gospel, merchants, rabbi — not to speak of the many ladies who have by their repeated attendance and rapt attention shown a decided inclination to shower adulation upon the dusky visitor whose drawing-room attraction is as great as his ability in the rostrum.

The lecture last night was less descriptive than preceding ones, and for nearly two hours Vive Kananda wove a metaphysical texture on affairs human and divine so logical that he made science appear like common sense. It was a beautiful logical garment that he wove, replete with as many bright colors and as attractive and pleasing to contemplate as one of the many-hued fabrics made by hand in his native land and scented with the most seductive fragrance of the Orient. This dusky gentleman uses poetical imagery as an artist uses colors, and the hues are laid on just where they belong, the result being somewhat bizarre in effect, and yet having a peculiar fascination. Kaleidoscopic were the swiftly succeeding logical conclusions, and the deft manipulator was rewarded for his efforts from time to time by enthusiastic applause.

The lecture was prefaced with the statement that the speaker had been asked many questions. A number of these he preferred to answer privately, but three he had selected, for reasons which would appear, to answer from the pulpit. They were:<sup>[2]</sup>

"Do the people of India throw their children into the laws of the crocodiles?"

"Do they kill themselves beneath the wheels of the juggernaut?"

"Do they burn widows with their husbands?"

The first question the lecturer treated in the vein that an

American abroad would answer inquiries about Indians running around in the streets of New York and similar myths which are even to-day entertained by many persons on the continent. The statement was too ludicrous to give a serious response to it. When asked by certain well-meaning but ignorant people why they gave only female children to the crocodiles, he could only ironically reply that probably it was because they were softer and more tender and could be more easily masticated by the inhabitants of the rivers in the benighted country. Regarding the juggernaut legend the lecturer explained the old practice in the sacred city and remarked that possibly a few in their zeal to grasp the rope and participate in the drawing of the car slipped and fell and were so destroyed. Some such mishaps had been exaggerated into the distorted version from which the good people of other countries shrank with horror. Vive Kananda denied that the people burned widows. It was true, however, that widows had burned themselves. In the few cases where this had happened, they had been urged not to do so by the priests and holy men who were always opposed to suicide. Where the devoted widows insisted, stating that they desired to accompany their husbands in the transformation that had taken place they were obliged to submit to the fiery test. That is, they thrust their hands within the flames and if they permitted them to be consumed no further opposition was placed in the way of the fulfilment of their desires. But India is not the only country where women who have loved have followed immediately the loved one through the realms of immortality; suicide in such cases have occurred in every land. It is an uncommon bit of fanaticism in any country; as unusual in India as elsewhere. No, the speaker repeated, the people do not burn women in India; nor have they ever burned witches.

Proceeding to the lecture proper, Vive Kananda proceeded to analyze the physical, mental and soul attributes of life. The body is but a shell; the mind something that acts but a brief and fantastic part; while the soul has distinct individuality in itself. To realize the infinity of self is to attain "freedom" which is the Hindoo word for "salvation." By a convincing manner of argument the lecturer showed that every soul is something independent, for if it were dependent, it could not acquire immortality. He related a story from the old legends of his country to il-

lustrate the manner in which the realization of this may come to the individual. A lioness leaping towards a sheep in the act gave birth to a cub. The lioness died and the cub was given suck by the sheep and for many years thought itself a sheep and acted like one. But one day another lion appeared and led the first lion to a lake where he looked in and saw his resemblance to the other lion. At that he roared and realized else full majesty of self. Many people are like the lion masquerading as a sheep and get into a corner, call themselves sinners and demean themselves in every imaginable fashion, not yet seeing the perfection and divinity which lies in self. The ego of man and woman is the soul. If the soul is independent, how then can it be isolated from the infinite whole? Just as the great sun shines on a lake and numberless reflections are the result, so the soul is distinct like each reflection, although the great source is recognized and appreciated. The soul is sexless. When it has realized the condition of absolute freedom, what could it have to do with sex which is physical? In this connection the lecturer delved deeply into the water of Swedenborgian philosophy, or religion, and the connection between the conviction of the Hindoo and the spiritual expressions of faith on the part of the more modern holy man was fully apparent. Swedenborg seemed like a European successor of an early Hindoo priest, clothing in modern garb an ancient conviction; a line of thought that the greatest of French philosophers and novelists [Balzac?] saw fit to embody in his elevating tale of the perfect soul. Every individual has in himself perfection. It lies within the dark recesses of his physical being. To say that a man has become good because God gave him a portion of His perfection is to conceive the Divine Being as God minus just so much perfection as he has imparted to a person on this earth. The inexorable law of science proves that the soul is individual and must have perfection within itself, the attainment of which means freedom, not salvation, and the realization of individual infinity. Nature! God! Religion! It is all one.

The religions are all good. A bubble of air in a glass of water strives to join with the mass of air without; in oil, vinegar and other materials of differing density its efforts are less or more retarded according to the liquid. So the soul struggles through various mediums for the attainment of its individual infinity. One religion is best adapted to a certain people because of habits of life, association, hereditary traits and climatic influences. Another religion is suited to another people for similar reasons. All that is, is best seemed to be the substance of the lecturer's conclusions. To try abruptly to change a nation's religion would be like a man who sees a river flowing from the Alps. He criticizes the way it has taken. Another man views the mighty stream descending from the Himalayas, a stream that has been running for generations and thousands of years, and says that it has not taken the shortest and best route. The Christian pictures God as a personal being seated somewhere above us. The Christian cannot necessarily be happy in Heaven unless he can stand on

the edge of the golden streets and from time to time gaze down into the other place and see the difference. Instead of the golden rule, the Hindoo believes in the doctrine that all non-self is good and all self is bad, and through this belief the attainment of the individual infinity and the freedom of the soul at the proper time will be fulfilled. How excessively vulgar, stated Vive Kananda, was the golden rule! Always self! always self! was the Christian creed. To do unto others as you would be done by! It was a horrible, barbarous, savage creed, but he did not desire to decry the Christian creed, for those who are satisfied with it to them it is well adapted. Let the great stream flow on, and he is a fool who would try to change its course, when nature will work out the solution. Spiritualist (in the true acceptance of the word) and fatalist, Vive Kananda emphasized his opinion that all was well and he had no desire to convert Christians. They were Christians; it was well. He was a Hindoo; that, also, was well. In his country different creeds were formulated for the needs of people of different grades of intelligence, all this marking the progress of spiritual evolution. The Hindoo religion was not one of self; ever egotistical in its aspirations, ever holding up promises of reward or threats of punishment. It shows to the individual he may attain infinity by non-self. This system of bribing men to become Christians, alleged to have come from God, who manifested Himself to certain men on earth, is atrocious. It is horribly demoralizing and the Christian creed, accepted literally, has a shameful effect upon the moral natures of the bigots who accept it, retarding the time when the infinity of self may be attained.

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[The *Tribune* reporter, perhaps the same who had earlier heard "giants" for "Jains," this time heard "bury" for "burn"; but otherwise, with the exception of Swamiji's statements regarding the golden rule, he seems to have reported more or less accurately:]

(*Detroit Tribune*, February 18, 1894)

Swami Vive Kananda at the Unitarian Church last night declared that widows were never buried [burned] alive in India through religion or law, but the act in all cases had been voluntary on the part of the women. The practice had been forbidden by one emperor, but it had gradually grown again until a stop was put to it by the English government. Fanatics existed in all religions, the Christian as well as the Hindu. Fanatics in India had been known to hold their hands over their heads in penance for so long a time that the arm had gradually grown stiff in that position, and so remained ever after. So, too, men had made a vow to stand still in one position. These persons would in time lose all control of the lower limbs and never after be able to walk. All religions were true, and the people practiced morality, not because of any divine command, but because of its own good. Hindus, he said, did not believe

in conversion, calling it perversion. Associations, surroundings and educations were responsible for the great number of religions, and how foolish it was for an exponent of one religion to declare that another man's belief was wrong. It was as reasonable as a man from Asia coming to America and after viewing the course of the Mississippi to say to it: "You are running entirely wrong. You will have to go back to the starting place and commence it all over again." It would be just as foolish for a man in America to visit the Alps and after following the course of a river to the German Sea to inform it that its course was too tortuous and that the only remedy would be to flow as directed. The golden rule, he declared, was as old as the earth itself and to it could be traced all rules of morality [sic]. Man is a bundle of selfishness. He thought the hell fire theory was all nonsense. There could not be perfect happiness when it was known that suffering existed. He ridiculed the manner some religious persons have while praying. The Hindu, he said, closed his eyes and communed with the inner spirit, while some Christians he had seen had seemed to stare at some point as if they saw God seated upon his heavenly throne. In the matter of religion there were two extremes, the bigot and the atheist. There was some good in the atheist, but the bigot lived only for his own little self. He thanked some anonymous person who had sent him a picture of the heart of Jesus. This he thought a manifestation of bigotry. Bigots belong to no religion. They are a singular phenomena [sic].

#### Notes

- [1] Actually the subject was "The Divinity of Man".
- [2] This and the next four paragraphs appear in Vol. IV of the *Complete Works* under the heading, "Is India a Benighted Country?"

## Chapter 15

# The Love of God

### THE LOVE OF GOD <sup>[1]</sup>

(*Detroit Tribune*, February 21, 1894)

The First Unitarian Church was crowded last night to hear Vive Kananda. The audience was composed of people who came from Jefferson Avenue and the upper part of Woodward Avenue. Most of it was ladies who seemed deeply interested in the address and applauded several remarks of the Brahman with much enthusiasm.

The love that was dwelt upon by the speaker was not the love that goes with passion, but a pure and holy love that one in India feels for his God. As Vive Kananda stated at the commencement of his address the subject was "The Love the Indian Feels for His God." But he did not preach to his text. The major portion of his address was an attack on the Christian religion. The religion of the Indian and the love of his God was the minor portion. The points in his address were illustrated with several applicable anecdotes of famous people in the history. The subjects of the anecdotes were renowned Mogul emperors of his native land and not of the native Hindu kings.

The professors of religion were divided into two classes by the lecturer, the followers of knowledge and the followers of devotion. The end in the life of the followers of knowledge was experience. The end in the life of the devotee was love.

Love, he said, was a sacrifice. It never takes, but it always gives. The Hindu never asks anything of his God, never prayed for salvation and a happy hereafter, but instead lets his whole soul go out to his God in an entrancing love. That beautiful state of existence could only be gained when a person felt an overwhelming want of God. Then God came in all of His fullness.

There were three different ways of looking at God. One was to look upon Him as a mighty personage and fall down and worship His might. Another was to worship Him as a father. In India the father always punished the children and an element of fear was mixed with the regard and love for a father. Still another way to think of God was as a mother. In India a mother was always truly loved and revered. That was the Indian's way of looking at their God.

Kananda said that a true lover of God would be so wrapt up in his love that he would have no time to stop and tell members of another sect that they were following the wrong road to secure the God, and strive to bring him to his way of thinking.

\* \* \*

(*Detroit Journal*)

If Vive Kananda, the Brahmin monk, who is delivering a lecture course in this city could be induced to remain for a week longer, the largest hall in Detroit would not hold the crowds which would be anxious to hear him. He has become a veritable fad, as last evening every seat in the Unitarian church was occupied, and many were compelled to stand throughout the entire lecture.

The speaker's subject was, "The Love of God". His definition of love was "something absolutely unselfish; that which has no thought beyond the glorification and adoration of the object upon which our affections are bestowed." Love, he said, is a quality which bows down and worships and asks nothing in return. Love of God, he thought, was different. God is not accepted, he said, because we really need him, except for selfish purposes. His lecture was replete with story and anecdote, all going to show the selfish motive underlying the motive of love for God. The Songs of Solomon were cited by the lecturer as the most beautiful portion of the Christian Bible and yet he had heard with deep regret that there was a possibility of their being removed. "In fact," he declared, as a sort clinching argument at the close, "the love of God appears to be based upon a theory of 'What can I get out of it?' Christians are so selfish in their love that they are continually asking God to give them something, including all manner of selfish things. Modern religion is, therefore, nothing but a mere hobby and fashion and people flock to church like a lot of sheep."

### Notes

- [1] The *Detroit Free Press* report of this lecture is printed in Vol. VIII of the *Complete Works*.

## Chapter 16

# The Women of India

### THE WOMEN OF INDIA

(*Detroit Free Press*, March 25, 1894)

Kananda lectured last night at the Unitarian church on "The Women of India." The speaker reverted to the women of ancient India, showing in what high regard they are held in the holy books, where women were prophetesses. Their spirituality then was admirable. It is unfair to judge women in the east by the western standard. In the west woman is the wife; in the east she is the mother. The Hindoos worship the idea of mother, and even the monks are required to touch the earth with their foreheads before their mothers. Chastity is much esteemed.

The lecture was one of the most interesting Kananda has delivered and he was warmly received.

\* \* \*

(*Detroit Evening News*, March 25, 1894)

Swami Vive Kananda lectured at the Unitarian Church last night on "The Women of India, Past, Medieval and the Present." He stated that in India the woman was the visible manifestation of God and that her whole life was given up to the thought that she was a mother, and to be a perfect mother she must be chaste. No mother in India ever abandoned her offspring, he said, and defied any one to prove the contrary. The girls of India would die if they, like American girls, were obliged to expose half their bodies to the vulgar gaze of young men. He desired that India be judged from the standard of that country and not from this.

\* \* \*

(*Tribune*, April 1, 1894)

While Swami Kananda was in Detroit he had a number of conversations, in which he answered questions regarding the women of India. It was the information he thus imparted that suggested a public lecture from him on this

subject. But as he speaks without notes, some of the points he made in private conversation did not appear in his public address. Then his friends were in a measure disappointed. But one of his lady listeners has put on paper some of the things he told in his afternoon talks, and it is now for the first time given to the press:

To the great tablelands of the high Himalaya mountains first came the Aryans, and there to this day abides the pure type of Brahman, a people which we westerners can but dream of. Pure in thought, deed and action, so honest that a bag of gold left in a public place would be found unharmed twenty years after; so beautiful that, to use Kananda's own phrase, "to see a girl in the fields is to pause and marvel that God could make anything so exquisite." Their features are regular, their eyes and hair dark, and their skin the color which would be produced by the drops which fell from a pricked finger into a glass of milk. These are the Hindus in their pure type, untainted and untrammelled.

As to their property laws, the wife's dowry belongs to her exclusively, never becoming the property of the husband. She can sell or give away without his consent. The gifts from any one to herself, including those of the husband, are hers alone, to do with as she pleases.

Woman walks abroad without fear; she is as free as perfect trust in those about her can render her. There is no zenana in the Himalayas, and there is a part of India which the missionaries never reach. These villages are most difficult of access. These people, untouched by Mahometan influence, can but be reached by wearisome and toilsome climbing, and are unknown to Mahometan and Christian alike.

### INDIA'S FIRST INHABITANTS

In the forest of India are found races of wild people — very wild, even to cannibalism. These are the original Indians and never were Aryan or Hindu.

As the Hindus settled in the country proper and spread over its vast area, corruptions of many kinds found home among them. The sun was scorching and the men exposed to it were dark in color.

Five generations are but needed to change the transpar-

ent glow of the white complexion of the dwellers of the Himalaya Mountains to the bronzed hue of the Hindu of India.

Kananda has one brother very fair and one darker than himself. His father and mother are fair. The women are apt to be, the cruel etiquette of the Zenana established for protection from the Mohammedans keeping them within doors, fairer. Kananda is thirty-one years old.

#### A CLIP AT AMERICAN MEN

Kananda asserts with an amused twinkle in his eye that American men amuse him. They profess to worship woman, but in his opinion they simply worship youth and beauty. They never fall in love with wrinkles and gray hair. In fact he is under a strong impression that American men once had a trick — inherited, to be sure — of burning up their old women. Modern history calls this the burning of witches. It was men who accused and condemned witches, and it was usually the old age of the victim that led her to the stake. So it is seen that burning women alive is not exclusively a Hindu custom. He thought that if it were remembered that the Christian church burned old women at the stake, there would be less horror expressed regarding the burning of Hindu widows.

#### BURNINGS COMPARED

The Hindu widow went to her death agony amid feasting and song, arrayed in her costliest garments and believing for the most part that such an act meant the glories of Paradise for herself and family. She was worshipped as a martyr and her name was enshrined among the family records.

However horrible the rite appears to us, it is a bright picture compared to the burning of the Christian witch who, considered a guilty thing from the first, was thrown in a stifling dungeon, tortured cruelly to extort confession, subjected to an infamous trial, dragged amid jeering to the stake and consoled amid her sufferings by the bystander's comfort that the burning of her body was but the symbol for hell's everlasting fires, in which her soul would suffer even greater torment.

#### MOTHERS ARE SACRED

Kananda says the Hindu is taught to worship the principle of motherhood. The mother outranks the wife. The mother is holy. The motherhood of God is more in his mind than the fatherhood.

All women, whatever the caste, are exempt from corporal punishment. Should a woman murder, her head is spared. She may be placed astride a donkey facing his tail. Thus riding through the streets a drummer shouts her crime, after which she is free, her humiliation being deemed sufficient punishment to serve as a preventive for further crime.

Should she care to repent, there are religious houses open to her, where she can become purified or she can at her own option at once enter the class of monks and so become a holy woman.

The question was put to Mr. Kananda whether the freedom thus allowed in the joining the monks without a superior over them did not tend to hypocrisy among the order, as he claims, of the purest of Hindu philosophers. Kananda assented, but explained that there is no one between the people and the monk. The monk has broken down all caste. A Brahmin will not touch the low-caste Hindu but let him or her become a monk and the mightiest will prostrate himself before the low-caste monk.

The people are obliged to take care of the monk, but only as long as they believe in his sincerity. Once condemned for hypocrisy he is called a liar and falls to the depths of mendicancy — a mere wandering beggar — inspiring no respect.

#### OTHER THOUGHTS

A woman has the right of way with even a prince. When the studious Greeks visited Hindustan to learn of the Hindu, all doors were open to them, but when the Mohammedan with his sword and the Englishman with his bullets came their doors were closed. Such guests were not welcomed. As Kananda deliciously words it: "When the tiger comes we close our doors until he has passed by."

The United States, says Kananda, has inspired him with hopes for great possibilities in the future, but our destiny, as that of the world, rests not in the lawmakers of today, but in the women. Mr. Kananda's words: "The salvation of your country depends upon its women."

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