

SVAMI VIVEKANANDA:

ARCHETYPAL HERO OR DOUBTING SAINT?

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The image of the warrior-monk (kṣatriya-sannyāsin) marching into the citadels of Western materialism and triumphantly demonstrating the powers of Indian spirituality is so strongly believed (almost as a cardinal tenet of Indian patriotism) and so carefully managed by his followers that one may not be easily able to find the historial Svāmī Vivekānanda. The archetype of Vivekānanda as the Hindu spiritual hero is so pervasive and notions about the Hindu spiritual stages so predetermined that Vivekānanda the human being has been lost to the legend. A simple search for the patterns of this man's ultimate concerns leads immediately into a labyrinth of methodological considerations and their solutions predict success or failure.¹

"That which concerned Svāmī Vivekānanda ultimately" will require two lines of development. These penetrate through dual consideration of the hero legend created by well-meaning followers and of the camouflaging effect created by Vivekānanda himself as he changed his patterns of ultimate concern during his lifetime.²

The contention of this study is that the practice of fitting Svāmī Vivekānanda into a Hindu hero archetype has been costly for those who wish to know about the human quest for meaning and purpose in the life of the individual. The more the historical Vivekānanda has been lost to the archetype of the spiritual hero, the more his life story fits into predetermined stages thought to

be ideal exemplars of cultural goals. The less his own quest for ultimacy follows a human course, the less he is an example of human doubt and struggle.

Some might suggest that it is a sacreligious act to question a spiritual hero legend. However, it is suggested that the gain from demythologizing the Vivekānanda legend will be sufficient to offset any loss.

The following table summarizes the four stages in Vivekānanda's spiritual development posited in the official accounts³ and most other studies.⁴

ARCHETYPE OF THE SPIRITUAL HERO

- I. Wonderous Child.
 - Visions
 - Meditations
- II. Exceptional College Student.
 - Masters Western thought
 - Independent thinker
- III. Carefully trained by Śrī Rāmākṛṣṇa
- IV. Warrior-monk.
 - Conquers West
 - Awakens India.

Different historical periods appeared as the data was allowed to cluster according to the question asked in a previous study ("What pattern of ultimate concern was held and when?").⁵ This study draws from that earlier study but finds that the first two periods (childhood and college) were more important than previously seen. The following table makes explicit these periods in Vivekānanda's life.

HISTORICAL PERIODS OF DOUBT AND FAITH

- I. Childhood. 1863-1878.

- II. College. 1878/9-1886.
 - Brahmo Samaj
 - Freemason
 - Skeptic
- III. Rāmakṛṣṇa's Disciple. 1886-89.
- IV. Renewed Search. 1889-90.
- V. Break with Rāmakṛṣṇa Gurubhāis. 1890.
 - Reestablishing Contact from America. 1894.
 - Return & Founding of Order. 1897-1902.
- VI. Facing Death. 1902.

Each of the historical periods will be presented and, in spite of the evidential difficulties, the pattern of ultimate concern held during each period will be posited. An appendix provides a chronology of Svāmī Vivekānanda's life.

I. Childhood (1863-1878)

While there is rich lore about the future Svāmī Vivekānanda's childhood, it lacks the historical substance to support conclusions about a pattern of ultimacy during this period. Even so, the accounts about his early childhood suggest a far more traditional upbringing than one would suspect by beginning with his college days. Two themes in these childhood stories will be examined: predictions that he would become a sannyāsin and stories of his early spiritual powers.

Future Sannyāsin. Born minutes before dawn on January 12, 1863, on the festival day of Makrasaṁkrānti, the future Vivekānanda was given the name Vireshwar in honor of and gratitude to Śiva. The birth had maternal and cultural significance from the points of view of Hindu astrology and folk piety. The childhood legends seem to indicate that his mother as well as his relatives believed that this child was a gift from Śiva, that he had a special destiny and that he would become a sannyāsin.⁷ Stories about his special attraction to

and concern for sādhus and sannyāsis abound.⁸ When he was about eight, Biley (Vireshwar Datta's childhood nickname) proclaimed: "I must become a Sannyasin, a palmist predicted it."⁹ Many books on Vivekānanda go to the expense of including a photostat of his palm print.¹⁰ Link all these with the possible influence of his grandfather who renounced married life in his late twenties¹¹ and one must appreciate the centrality of the sannyāsa issue for the legend. Even though there remains none of the documentation which would raise these stories to historicity, or refute them as invention, one cannot miss the central role which the issue of marriage versus its renunciation for religious reasons had during Narendranath Datta's late teens and early twenties (Vireshwar, "Biley," received the adult name of Narendranath according to the Hindu custom). Another example, that totally depends on the astrological prediction, was his future guru's use of the seven stars, linking these with the seven ṛsis, and identifying Narendra as Nara reborn.¹²

Early Spiritual Powers. The childhood legend abounds with stories very familiar to Indian expectations. Biley was a naughty boy (like Lord Kṛṣṇa),¹³ meditated through the visit of a snake at five or six ("I knew nothing of the snake or anything else, I was feeling inexpressible bliss."),¹⁴ demonstrated kingly attributes,¹⁵ had no caste consciousness,¹⁶ and confounded his teachers.¹⁷ His vision of and merger into the Absolute, when he was fourteen (1877), is cited to prove his special gifts and his readiness for the perfect guru who could harness these siddhis for their proper goal.¹⁸

While the issue of development of spiritual powers (siddhis) will become important after Narendra meets Sri Ramakṛṣṇa, there is

too much documentary evidence to suggest that Narendra had no background of siddhic experiences to draw upon when he first met Ramakrsna in 1881. The point will be developed later.¹⁹

Paternal Influence. If the legends have any historicity, the world of Vireshwar Datta was molded by his mother's deep and traditional piety, peopled by sādhus and sannyāsis, and enriched by spiritual and psychic experience. Its experiential content, that of a Hinduized childhood, would suggest a traditional Hindu piety.

This maternal influence was challenged in 1877 when the family moved to Raipur for two years. There he seems to have been first influenced by his father's rational, progressive ideas. The curious stories of the boy "flying into a rage" during the discussions between his father and other progressive civil and religious leaders bears the unmistakable marks of his first identity crisis which would fully explode in 1880.²⁰ But by the time the family returned to Calcutta in 1879, his father's encouragement motivated him to begin study towards a law degree, to join the most radical branch of the Brahmo Samaj, to attend the Freemasons and to consider further study in England, as well as marriage.

Had the maternal world been operative when he joined the Hindu reform movement, he would have lost caste (been "out-casted"), as most other college students who joined.²¹ Yet his mother's more traditional influence would account for his attraction to the more devotional aspects of the Hindu tradition. This attraction and repulsion would contribute to a nervous breakdown.

II. College and Legal Studies (1878/9-1886)

In 1878/9 Narendranath Datta passed the entrance exam and began Presidency College at sixteen. There were two pivotal crises within the college period. One occurred in 1884 when Narendra's father died. The existential crisis which resulted was to eventuate in his break with the Brahmo Samaj. His despair led him into a period of skepticism and then to Rāmakṛṣṇa. But by focusing on this crisis, as all previous studies including my own have, the developments are interpreted as follows: the Brahmo period was a mere prelude to his encounter with Rāmakṛṣṇa; it allowed him to discover that Brahmos could not "see God."²² This interpretation is immediately weakened when an earlier crisis is recognized and given proper perspective.

The precise dates are sketchy, but after about a year at Presidency College in Calcutta, Narendra had a nervous breakdown. No one disputes this occurrence; it just did not seem worthy of exploration. Since complete access to all the extant Vivekānanda documents has been denied scholars, even the desire to explore such a seemingly important event could only end in frustration.²³ But several facts do emerge. The breakdown and the following recuperation at Buddha Gaya occurred sometime in 1880. Before this period Narendra had attended Presidency College and was a member of the most social reform-minded faction of the Brahmo Samaj movement. After his return to Calcutta in 1881 he changed colleges to the Scottish Church College and switched his affiliation within the Brahmo Samaj to the Adi Brahmo Samaj, which was more conciliatory toward the Hindu community, more devotional in

religious expression, more gradual in the area of social reform, and more strongly led by one religious leader, Keshab Chandra Sen.

Could this be only circumstantial? Is it probable that the nervous breakdown had nothing to do with the religious changes which such affiliations suggest? Perhaps enough of the evidence is not available to decide these questions fully, but an examination of each group and Narendra's activities within them will suggest important tendencies which will continue beyond this period.

David Kopf's brilliant study of the Brahmo Samaj revealed three radical ideas.²⁴ These reflected notions which were becoming important to liberal religions in other parts of the world at that point in time. First was their notion of rational faith versus what they saw as the enslavement of meaningless superstitions. Second was their belief in social reform, including the emancipation of workers, peasants and women. Third was their belief in a universal theistic progress of religion, positing the perfectability of mankind and believing that this could be achieved by joining social reform to radical religion.²⁵ Spencer Lavan's illuminating study on the influence of American Unitarianism on the Brahmo movement emphasized twin pillars of reasoned faith and social or humanitarian reform.²⁶ This reform of every aspect of Indian society and religion had been going on for sixty years when Narendra joined in 1878/9. Yet 1878 was crucial to the movement. Pressures from within between those for rapid change and those who wished to accomodate with the Hindu community burst apart the movement, irreparably. Pressures from outside the Brahmo movement would push individuals back into caste structures or hurl them

out into a non-spiritual, skeptical, materialistic world. As a movement, this rupturing meant ever decreasing power and influence to accomplish its reforms. But individuals now occupied themselves with changing affiliations within the varying factions or by returning to an orthodox Vaishnava, Shaiva or Shakta piety. Few had a stable religious identity.²⁷

Narendra's joining the most radical faction of the Brahmo movement linked him to the use of reason against superstition, magic and miracle.²⁸ The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was led by Shivanath Sastri and Vijay Krishna Goswami (who will later be won back to Shaktism by Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa). They fought to break with caste Hinduism, to raise the status of women and the masses, and to allow the individual through hard work to become self-reliant and self-sufficient.²⁹ While the Brahmos wished to reform Hinduism of its multiform varieties of idolatry and superstition, Hindus actively opposed them, sometimes physically and economically.³⁰ But the most effective weapon was to "out-caste" anyone taking the Brahmo oath.

Shivanath Sastri's writings show two emphases which Narendra would later adopt, its Sadharan Brahmo formulations. The first involved the belief that universal religion was practical.³¹ It entailed service to mankind. Ram Mohun Roy's famous dictum was cited, "The true way of serving God is to do good to man."³² Like other Brahmos both before and after him, Sastri blamed India's "pessimistic view of life" upon the teachings of Vedanta.³³ The Brahmo Samaj or "the Theistic Church of India" was to raise Hinduism and Hindu society from this sombre and gloomy view of life and this tainting touch of Vedantism by teaching

that human society is a Divine dispensation, and all its relationships are sacred and spiritual."³⁴ Śankara and his doctrine of maya had "drawn away into the life of mendicancy hundreds of spiritually disposed persons, and has thereby robbed society of their personal influence and example. . ."³⁵

The second emphasis has already appeared in these quotations: the sacredness of all social relationships--even marriage. The Brahmo emphasis upon the liberal spiritual life as one within both society and marriage was stressed especially by Sastri.³⁶ This was a general theme of the Brahmos, of course, but it had special meaning in 1878 when Brahmos were splitting organizationally over the role and equality of women in their quest for universal (liberal ?) religion.

Sastri had another interesting idea: to preach "universal theism" not only to the educated but also to the uneducated masses.³⁷ This idea would be adopted by the future Vivekananda.

If the rule of full membership in the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was enforced for Narendra, he would have only been an associate member, awaiting his eighteenth birthday for the final oath and full membership. That would not have been done until January 1881. In the meantime he had suffered a nervous breakdown and the recuperation in Buddha Gaya. Since the Buddha was an important figure in the Brahmo faith because of his compassion for and service to mankind, his place of enlightenment would not have been a strange choice for a Brahmo.

Upon Narendra's return to Calcutta a change had occurred. He became active in the Adi Brahmo Samaj, Keshab Chandra Sen's

Church of the New Dispensation. While Keshab had begun with a repudiation of Hindu superstitions and priestcraft with universal reason as the guide, by 1876 he was becoming increasingly anti-rational and was being drawn toward ecstatic religious devotion. Keshab's visits to Sri Ramakṛṣṇa during 1882-1884 leap from the pages of Mahendranath Gupta's account of the priest of Kālī.³⁸ As the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj became more concerned about changing society, Keshab and his group turned toward "non-progressive, asocial, personal, spiritual realization."³⁹ Keshab's later writings showed an increasing tendency to turn inward through prayer and devotion.⁴⁰

From 1881 until Keshab's death in 1884, Narendra was active in the Adi Brahmo Samaj's Band of Hope.⁴¹ He took part in the theatrical performances which sought an awakening of Indian spirituality. One of these, in which Keshab played the part of Pavhāri Bābā, introduced him to a yogi of great powers (siddhis) to whom he would go seven years hence.⁴² His brother would later remember his evaluation of Keshab's influence on his life: "But for Ramakrishna, I would have been a Brahmo missionary."⁴³

One other factor cannot be evaded. Keshab experienced an opposition between spirituality and sexuality during this last phase of his life. His opponents in the radical factions of the Brahmo Samaj accused him of degrading women.⁴⁴ It was true that he found their presence at Brahmo worship objectional, but he eventually yielded and allowed them to be segregated to the left side of the assembly. But he could not shake a perception that sensual contact with women, and even the possible thought of it,

was inherently evil. The only way to avoid pollution in sexual contact with one's wife was to practice "mental" renunciation. Keshab shared this view with Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa, who expressed this conception explicitly and even required those who had not "touched women" to go beyond this to renunciation "in actuality."⁴⁵ Keshab's gradualism toward full equality for women rested on the subtleties of this renunciation of the senses, not on any explicit idea of women's inferiority. The radical brand of Brahmos were tampering with changes which went to the heart of several Indian religious systems' conclusions about sense contact in general and sexual contact specifically--only one who renounced the world both "mentally and in actually" could achieve mukti, liberation. Keshab was perhaps leading Narendra back toward the renunciation of his grandfather and the prediction of the palmist.

The second crisis during his college period would eventuate in his abandoning the reform of Hinduism as a Brahmo. In fact, after his period of skepticism (1884-5) and the period of training with a Kālī priest (1885-89), he would become a revivalist of true Hinduism rather than a reformer.

Prior to his father's death in 1884, Narendra had joined the Freemason's Lodge in Calcutta at his father's urging. Freemasonry in India concerned itself with equality, social reform, philanthropy and a "common denominator approach to religious unity."⁴⁷ It was another force in the drive toward breaking the caste system, communalism, and dietary laws. Narendra's father arranged an appointment for his son as a law clerk with Nimai Charain Bose. He also pushed his son toward marriage plans, which only his

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untimely death prevented. He suggested that Narendra might use his wife's dowry to go to England for further law studies.

Keshab died a month before Narendra's father. The double deaths seemed to have had a profound effect on Narendra's life. From wealth and power his family plunged into poverty and weakness. He would become involved in a family lawsuit for the next three years to try and retain the house for his mother against other members of the joint family. How far he had moved from the Sadhāran Brahmo ideal of the married man working in the world for the good of mankind can be observed in his struggle to keep from getting married. A marriage into a good family and with sizeable dowry would have ended his financial cares.⁴⁸ He obtained employment from Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the grand old Hindu athiest, but that lasted only a month.⁴⁹ It is doubtful that Narendra represented the kind of rational, reform-minded model for boys that Vidyasagar wanted in his school. Throughout 1884 and the beginning of 1885, Narendra struggled with unemployment and the existential, and for him spiritual, crisis of unmerited suffering. He moved into skepticism and despair. But simultaneous to these later events (1881-85), Narendra had begun going to Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa and would eventually become his disciple.

III. Rāmakṛṣṇa's Disciple (1885-89)

From the first meeting in November 1881 between Narendranath Datta and Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa, pūjāri of the Dakshineswar Temple outside Calcutta, until the final submission to Kālī in June 1885, a complex series of events were to transpire, ending Narendra's revulsion of

idol worship.

As Keshab Chandra Sen began to move back to inward-directed spirituality, he found Rāmakṛṣṇa, a traditional Śakta priest who shared many of the ideals of the New Dispensation Church. As Keshab turned against Unitarian social action, especially the urgency with which the American field worker, Rev. Charles Dall, the British Unitarian social activists, Mary Carpenter and Annette Akroyd, and the radical Samajis pressed the issue about equality for women, Keshab began to mention Rāmakṛṣṇa in his magazine in 1879.⁵⁰

In 1881 Narendra heard a classroom example in which Rāmakṛṣṇa was mentioned by Professor Hastie.⁵¹ Hastie tried to explain a trance that Wordsworth alluded to in his poetry, stating that Rāmakṛṣṇa of Dakshineswar went into deep trance states. Narendra and the others in the class did not know about trance states, according to official histories.⁵² And if that is the case, based on a memory of Svāmī Vivekānanda many years after this event, it would cast doubt on the legend about childhood experiences of meditation and the altered state experience in the oxcart on the way to Raipur.⁵³ Whichever the case, the first meeting with Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa was at Surendra Nath Mitra's house in November 1881 where Narendra had sung.⁵⁴ There are substantial difficulties with the evidence to reconstruct the first three meetings.⁵⁵ The first meeting appears to have been embarrassing for Narendra. Rāmakṛṣṇa immediately identified him as Nara, the sagely Incarnation of Nārāyaṇa, thus punning his name. Rāmakṛṣṇa told of a past vision of the seven ṛsis identifying Narendra with Nara:

now "born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind."⁵⁶ Possibly to assuage his embarrassment, the legend was Narendra asking this Kālī priest if he had seen God. To Narendra's amazement, he reported later, Rāmakṛṣṇa answered, "Yes, I see Him just as I see you, only in a much intenser sense. God can be realized; one can see and talk to Him as I am doing to you."⁵⁷ (The likelihood that he asked the question in this way is almost nil. As a Brahmo, God was Spirit so the question could not have been asked this way. Both the hand of the legend-makers and that of Vivekānanda's later retelling are seen here.)

Almost a month passed. Then on December 27/28, 1881, Narendra went to see Rāmakṛṣṇa at Dakshineswar. There he was invited to sit on Rāmakṛṣṇa's small bed. Immediately Rāmakṛṣṇa put his foot⁵⁸ on Narendra's chest. Narendra began to lose sensory awareness of his body.⁵⁹ He was deeply frightened by the experience. There appears to have been little in his background upon which he could have drawn to explain the occurrence.⁶⁰ Narendra did not initiate the next contact. Rāmakṛṣṇa had to come to the Simla Brahmo temple on January 1, 1882, to see him at the annual festival of the Brahmo Samaj. Keshab Chandra Sen was also there.⁶¹

The pattern for much of the next four years has emerged. Narendra is more sought after than seeking Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa. Yet Rāmakṛṣṇa's ability to induce altered states of consciousness both in himself and in others both attracted and repelled. The evidence is clear from both Narendra's subjective accounts (and they do vary widely as he valued the experiences differently at different times in his life) and from other observers within the

Rāmakṛṣṇa circle that Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa was able to induce in Narendra altered states of consciousness with his touch.⁶² Narendra experienced varying degrees of loss of body consciousness, loss of an ordinary sense of time, loss of or changes in personal identity, a sense of euphoria, and a range of experiences which in the last quarter of the twentieth century are now beginning to be easily recognized as a pattern.⁶³ But this was hardly the case in the 1880's. These experiences defied explanation--and that was especially true in terms of nineteenth century Western thought.

After the third visit, during which Rāmakṛṣṇa again used his touch to induce a hypnotic state in Narendra, Rāmakṛṣṇa complained regularly that Narendra must not love him as he continually stayed away and ignored his invitations to Dakshineswar.⁶⁴

During August 1883 Narendra began to visit Rāmakṛṣṇa more regularly.⁶⁵ But that was short lived.⁶⁶ There is no documentary evidence that Narendra visited Dakshineswar between August 1883 and March 2, 1884. On January 8, 1884, Keshab Chandra Sen had died. Narendra's father died before March 2nd, probably in February. It was then that Narendra returned to Rāmakṛṣṇa.⁶⁷ But he informed Rāmakṛṣṇa that he was now studying the "views of atheists."⁶⁸

The encounters were few during 1884, usually in Calcutta and when Narendra was singing on holy days at the Samaj.⁶⁹ Narendra was running the lawsuit against those members of the joint family who tried to take his father's house, and he was preparing for the law exam. But when Narendra came, Rāmakṛṣṇa would touch him and Rāmakṛṣṇa would go into an altered state,

samādhi. Once this occurred with Rāmakṛṣṇa sitting on Narendra's back while he lay on the floor on his stomach.⁷⁰

But a year after his father's death Narendra began to alter a stance which he would later identify as the key to his resistance to Rāmakṛṣṇa: he would worship Kālī and finally break the letter of his Brahmo oath, although the spirit may have been broken years before.⁷¹ There is no evidence that he worshipped as a Brahmo after March 1885.⁷²

Several days before March 1, 1885, Narendra had an altered state experience in Calcutta without Rāmakṛṣṇa's inducement.⁷³ This brought him to Dakshineswar and an abortive attempt to meditate on Kali.⁷⁴ "Why, I have meditated on Kālī for three or four days, but nothing has come of it."⁷⁵

After this initial turning to Kālī, Narendra seemed to go into a period of skepticism for three months. But even then Rāmakṛṣṇa used his touch to alter Narendra's moods.⁷⁶ On June 13th in absolute despair Narendra's pūjā to Kālī resulted in an experience of her as a living presence.⁷⁷ He, like Vijay Kṛṣṇa Goswami, had been won away from the Brahmo Samaj.⁷⁸ Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa had continually used his powers (siddhis) and influence to modify the religious path of both Vijay Goswami and Narendra. Both were led to do pūjā before Kālī's image. Image worship was one of the most important things for Brahmos to avoid; it was a meaningful outward expression of their faith in God without form. Its practice was to condone the total system of inequality and superstitions which the Brahmos had taken an oath to reform. It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa had

converted Narendranath Datta and Vijay Kṛṣṇa Goswami from their faith and practice as Brahmos and returned them to identities which were consonant with the Hindu tradition.

Ramakṛṣṇa had led Narendra to an experience of Kālī as the Supreme Mother of the Universe.⁷⁹ Rāmakṛṣṇa also had Narendra study the Vedānta to see that his Brahmo prejudices were wrong about it as well. Rāmakṛṣṇa taught that the Absolute of Vedānta, Brahman, and the goddess of form of Śaktism, Kālī, were the same. Therefore Narendra had to lay aside his Brahmo repudiation of Vedānta and Śāṅkara and realize Vedānta's truth. Devotional expressions, even before images and even persons (guru-pūjā), was proper. Rāmakṛṣṇa taught Narendra that special persons (Īśvarakoti) had extraordinary powers (siddhis) and were able to know the divine directly (nirvikalpa samādhi). The goal of life was God-realization through renunciation of "women and money."

The long struggle between Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa and Narendra culminated in Kālī pūjā in June 1885. One year later Rāmakṛṣṇa would die of throat cancer. In this brief period the full impact of his spiritual achievements produced their results upon Narendranath Datta. Even though he did not receive initiation from Rāmakṛṣṇa, he received a kind of commission in two parts: "teach my boys"; "keep them together". He sought to accomplish this by forming a monastic gathering at a Baranagore house (euphemistically called a Māth). With a non-traditional self-initiation they began wearing ochre robes.^{80 75}

Rāmakṛṣṇa's death left Narendra with an unenviable task.

First there was the problem of his own doubts about realizing God, and even God's existence. He had had extraordinary experiences--most induced by Rāmakṛṣṇa--but without a living guru these experiences did not yield certainty. His personal mixture of jñāna and bhakti were fragile at best and at their worst they erupted in fits of skepticism which greatly disturbed his fellow monks (gurubhāis). Kālī pūjā and Rāmakṛṣṇa pūjā were less meaningful to him than study of the scriptures. But the scriptures seemed to be a patch-work of dualistic, modified monistic, and monistic concerns. If Vedānta, and monistic Vedānta at that, was the highest form of expression about God realization, then how could it be acquitted of the charge that its doctrine of māyā promoted social apathy. How could service to others and the social concerns of the reformers of "New India" movements be found in traditional Indian sources? What was to be the "mission" of this band of disciples of Rāmakṛṣṇa?

This period of search, within the confines of Rāmakṛṣṇa's last words ("Keep my boys together" and "Teach them"), spanned 1886-1889. It was relatively successful as it included the practice of various spiritual disciplines. But personal liberation (mukti) seemed to act as a centrifugal force spinning disciples away from the ~~Baranagore~~ Math and sending them on solitary quests for God realization.⁸² (Another explanation of why they left the Math so often is that only then were they free to pursue their own mukti without Narendrakṛṣṇa's seering doubts.)

IV. Neo-Hinduism: Search for Universal Foundation (1889-90)

All the worship and discipline of the Baranagore period began to become distasteful to "Svāmī Narendra."⁸² By August 1889 he is convinced that a reinterpretation of the Vedas would provide a scriptural base for a socially concerned Vedānta. This reformed Vedanta would be free from caste distinctions and injustices. Thus it would be that universally true religion all religious liberals were seeking, and it would be based on the Vedas.⁸³

Puṇḍit Mitra of Varanasi and "Svāmī Narendra" corresponded during August 1889 over his new scriptural discoveries. "Narendra" believed, like any good student, that in the proper question there was already contained the answer. He only had to ask his brilliantly constructed questions, and the answers to liberate Vedānta from its besmirched reputation would be provided by none less than Puṇḍit Mitra, Sanskrit scholar of Varanasi.

These questions involved some of Rāmakṛṣṇa's central realizations. Rāmakṛṣṇa taught that Vedānta was the highest expression of universal religion (Sanātana Dharma). Śankara's interpretation of Vedanta was recognized as the most authoritative. But Sankara's doctrine of the world as illustory (māyāvāda) had been bitterly attacked by Brahmo thinkers. If the future Svāmī Vivekānanda was to prove Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa's realizations about Vedānta, then he would have to find some way to answer this criticism. But there was an even more troubling one: Śankara seemed to teach that persons could be denied study of the Vedas on basis of their birth (jati). This would lend credence to the Brahmo charge that caste discrimination was integral to Vedānta and its scripture.

What excited Svāmī "Narendra" was the discovery that Śāṅkara based his "birth doctrine" on less authoritative scriptures (smṛti).⁸⁴ His questions to Puṇḍit Mitra were planned to elicit answers which would have judged Śāṅkara's interpretations on caste as erroneous. Puṇḍit Mitra's letters are not available for study,⁸⁵ but the young questioner would remark:

"Why has no foundation for the authority of the Vedas been adduced in the Vedānta-Sūtras?"⁸⁶

"The Vedānta requires of us faith, for conclusiveness cannot be reached by mere argumentation. Then why has the slightest flaw, detected in the position of the schools of Sāṅkhya and Nyāya, been overwhelmed with a fusillade of dialectics?"⁸⁷

"Why should the Śūdra not study the Upanishad?"⁸⁸

Puṇḍit Mitra's kind responses instructed him to "give up arguing and disputing"--the solution of overcoming doubt in the adequacy of a belief system by giving up doubt.⁸⁹ He had not succeeded in gaining recognition for his ideas for reinterpreting Vedānta by asserting the primacy of śruti over smṛti, especially on the caste issue. He would have to return to these notions after his worldwide recognition as Svāmī Vivekānanda.

The months of correspondence had come to naught. All hope of finding a universally acceptable scriptural foundation for Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa's realizations (and linking them to liberal social concerns) had to be abandoned.

Search for a New Guru. It is difficult to determine whether Svāmī "Narendra" searched for support from a traditional siddha and yogi, Pavhāri Bābā, or for someone who would give him the religious certainty he lacked.

There is evidence both ways. At the end of this period, Svāmī "Narendra" would state:

. . . I am Ramakrishna's slave, having laid my body at his feet 'with Til and Tulasi leaves. . . . Now his behest to me was that I should devote myself to the service of the order of all-renouncing devotees founded by Him, and in this I have to persevere, come what may, being ready to take heaven, hell. . . . His command was that his all-renouncing devotees should group themselves together, and I am entrusted with seeing to this. 90 83

Even though this period of search is over, an anguished tone is evident. "Having to persevere" is a phrase which demonstrates this well. Note also that the service is to the order of bhaktas, a telling confession of his perception at this time of Rāmakṛṣṇa's commission to him.

But just what his visit to this reknowned yogi was to accomplish is something of a puzzle. The question about Rāmakṛṣṇa's use of siddhis in Narendra's training may have motivated a quest for answers. Since he was soon to seek initiation from Pavhāri Bābā, the problem of an unorthodox ordination could be considered as well. Yet Svāmī "Narendra" seemed to be working on a new solution: India's spirituality could be proven by the extraordinary accomplishments of its gurus, siddhis, and sādhus. He saw "all Gurus are one and are fragments and radiations of God, the Universal Guru." 91 If asceticism brought godliness and power, as Rāmakṛṣṇa taught, then this "air eating" Bābā might induce in him permanently what Rāmakṛṣṇa had only provided in an impermanent taste.

Svāmī "Narendra" received instruction in rāja yoga and practiced austerities in a lemon grove. He had found a sādhū who could remain, "it was rumoured," in a state of samādhi for months. In a land (Bengal) that hardly knew of yoga he had found a master, rāja yogi. When Svāmī "Narendra" sought initiation, he ran into the same problem he met with Rāmakṛṣṇa. Pavhāri Bābā was a solitary

monk, working out his own salvation; he was slow to take on the karma of disciples. Eventually Narendra lamented that he would get "no help from this ritualist." But even when he stated that Rāmakṛṣṇa "must be an Avatāra," he stayed in Ghazipur waiting for initiation from Pavhāri Bābā.⁹² Only circumstances which forced him to leave, moved him from Ghazipur. His "great agitation of mind" led him to describe himself as "a man driven mad with mental agonies."⁹³

His return to Baranagore Math was brief. As soon as he took care of some of their financial difficulties, he left with the intention of never returning. He had sought certainty in the scriptures but found contradictions. But he had developed a way of excising caste discrimination from Vedānta (at the expense of Śankara). Pavhāri Bābā's rāja yoga had become so important that he would begin with its exposition to his first formal classes in America three years hence.

V. Neo-Hindu Missionary (1890-1902)

This period of Narendranath Datta's life involves three phases: the break with his gurubhāis (1890-1893), the reestablishing of contact from America with these śaktas of Rāmakṛṣṇa (1893-1897), and the return to India and founding the Ramakrishna Order (1897-1902).

The Break with his former Gurubhāis (1890-1893). It appears evident that the future Svāmī Vivekānanda (at this point in time he had adopted the name Svāmī Sachchitananda) could not lead his gurubhāis from their bhakti with its worship of Kālī and Rāmakṛṣṇa

or from jñāna with its direct approach to God realization in brahmajñā into combining either of these with radical social concern. Rāmakṛṣṇa had taught that bhakti was the best form of religion of the kali yuga and his former gurubhāis were not willing to follow Sachchitananda's call to social reform.⁹⁴⁸⁶

In July 1890 Sachchitananda left the Banagore Math with a promise that he was leaving them for good. He believed that he would be able to find laborers in India, ten in every town he visited. This was to be the "work of Kālī."⁹⁵⁸⁷ For almost two years he sought out the rājas of India, for "a prince has the power of doing good."⁹⁶⁸⁸ He believed that India's condition was not the fault of its religion but that it had abandoned its religious identity. He believed that Vedānta was the key to raise the masses. His social program included education of women and the masses, improving agriculture and ending child marriage. But he discovered that these were neither concerns of the privileged, powerful, nor religious.

By May 1892, the idea of going to the West, to the World Parliament of Religions, was beginning to take shape. But first he would have to discard one of Rāmakṛṣṇa's key dogmas--the renunciation of "gold." He could not go to the West without handling money. The Kanyakumari vision of his "mission to the West" went through many changes, each a testimony to the agony of deciding what was perceived²⁵ as eternal questions^{even} when doubts and uncertainty prevailed.⁹⁷⁸⁹ He needed funds for India; needed to defend Hinduism in the West from attacks of conservative* Christian missionaries; and would swap spirituality for science

and technology.

On May 31, 1893 the newly named Svāmī Vivekānanda (he received his name from a suggestion of the Maharaja of Khetri) sailed for the U.S. Arriving several months too early, he quickly exhausted his funds. Americans aided him, even getting him credentials for the conference although he represented no religious organization. He told the organizers he was a member of the oldest order of sannyāsis in India founded by Śāṅkara.⁹⁸ The Parliament of Religions made him a celebrity. Within two months of his first speech The Statesman (Calcutta) carried the first news of the "Brahmin Sannyasin."⁹⁹ But it was the Indian Mirror which championed the svami. On December 20, 1893 it reported that he "was one of the actors on the stage which was erected at the house of the late Babu Keshub Chunder Sen to represent a religious drama, composed, we believe, at the advice, and under the guidance of Babu Keshub."¹⁰⁰ But Calcutta heard on November 30th that this svami was

"a nephew of our late friend, Tarak Nath Dutt, of Simla, who was an Adhyeta of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. Narendranath was for sometime a Brahmo, and with his sweet voice led the orchestra of a certain Brahmo Samaj, of this city. He was for a time one of the actors in the Nava Brindaban Theatre, when our Minister was in the flesh."¹⁰¹

The article added "that he is not a Hindu of the old Orthodox School; he is a representative of the Neo-Hindus."¹⁰²

Svāmī Vivekānanda left the Parliament of Religions a celebrity. He conceived a plan to earn enough money to continue his mission in India. First he joined a Lecture Bureau but quit in July 1894. His next moves were not for hire: he lectured at the Greenacre Conference sponsored by Christian Scientists, moved about as a soiree ornament in Boston and New York entertaining the wealthy and

curious. Finally he settled into giving regular classes in Brooklyn. From February until June 1895 the classes on rāja yoga were transcribed by Miss S. E. Waldo and were transformed into the book by that name. It is important that his first formal teachings to his American followers involved "psychic control"--such meditative methods as mantrayāna, prāṇāyāna, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, and dhyāna.¹⁰³⁹⁵ Patanjali's Yoga aphorisms were translated and studied to explain the mastery of spiritual powers (siddhis), which were still a matter to be fully integrated in his own understanding. Next he turned to what was to become the hallmark of his teachings, karma yoga.¹⁰⁴⁹⁶ J. J. Goodwin took down the lectures which began in December 1895 and ended in book form on February 24, 1896. Other lectures were compiled into books on Bhakti Yoga and Jñāna Yoga.

Reestablishing Contact. His work in America, England and Madras was commenced before he was able to bring his former gurubhāis to his spiritual conception and program. His first extant letter to a former gurubhāi was on March 19, 1894.¹⁰⁵⁹⁷ In it he told of his plans to raise the masses in India, working in America to get money, giving spirituality in return, depending "on no one in Hindustan." "If any of you help me in my plans, all right, or Gurudeva will show me the way out." Shortly thereafter (August 1894) he wrote a scathing letter suggesting that these gurubhāis were failing him at the moment and had failed the masses for centuries.

If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God--every being that wears a human form--God in His universal as well

as individual aspect. The universal aspect of God means this world, and worshipping it means serving it--this indeed is work, not indulging in ceremonials. . . . If now you can show this in practice, if you can make three or four hundred disciples in India within a year, then only I may have some hope. . . . (This second set of illusions are in the published text of the letter, the original has long ago deteriorated, and the photostats will not be allowed to be studied by scholars.)^{106 98}

He called upon his former gurubhāis to renounce their personal goal of mukti. "It is only by doing good to others that one attains to one's own good, and it is by leading others to Bhakti and Mukti that one attains them oneself."^{107 77} He gradually drew some into famine relief work, goading them into practical service. But these were monks who had renounced the world to seek their own salvation through methods as sādhanaś, tāpas, japas, pūjā, dhyāna--all designed to remove the karma already acquired from past activity. Now Vivekananda called them back into action--organized activity at that! In an April 1896 letter he reorganized the Math: "If you consider it wise to be guided by my ideas and if you follow these rules, then I shall supply on (sic.) all necessary funds."¹⁰⁸ The letters which evidence the struggle are discussed elsewhere.¹⁰⁹ All these letters have been carefully edited but even then the anger displayed by Svami Vivekananda toward his former brothers was not completely excised. His Madras disciples began publishing his speeches in the Brahmacharyin.^{110 62} The popular press in India was constantly publicizing his remarks, often for their political content.^{111 3} When he left America and England in December 1896, he left Vedanta societies in New York and London and some totally committed disciples.

Return to India and Founding the Ramakrishna Mission. The triumphal return of Svāmī Vivekānanda to India has been explored

extensively.¹¹² But what must be noted is the gradual and subtle crisis which beset Vivekānanda upon his return. He had been turned into a living archetype by the Indian press, the spiritual warrior who had shown the superiority of Hinduism to the world. Yet his reason for defending the glories of Hinduism lay in the fact that something eternal was there to be awakened. That awakening had not yet been effected. But as he attempted to rally Indians to their "mission"¹¹³ he encountered opposition and hostility. Even the most generous assessment of the months between his return to India and the departure again to the West can find no satya yuga. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission were founded in 1897, training of disciples was begun, and plans were laid. But Vivekānanda would not live to see the awakening. It was the message of the Eternal Religion that was his final triumph. His return to America served to give that work a firm foundation. But the second trip was more of a psychological than an organizational necessity. Vivekānanda's pattern of ultimate concern during this period brought together many of the elements which had troubled him in earlier periods. Vedānta was fully exonerated from the Brahmo charge that its doctrine of māyāvāda prevented humanitarian concern. Vedānta was conceived not as the true religion but as the eternal truth behind all religion.

The Message of the Religion Eternal: Sanātana Dharma. Svāmī Vivekānanda's Vedānta¹¹⁴ proceeded from the epistemological question: What is that by realizing which everything is realized? This question set the goal of the belief system and directed it toward a special kind of knowledge. It affirmed that the goal is that

unity in which everything is realized. This special knowledge is aparokaṣānubhūti (transcendental realization) which seeks

to find unity in the midst of diversity. . . . In reality, the metaphysical and the physical universe are one, and the name of this One is Brahman; and the perception of separateness is an error--they called it Maya, Avidya, or nescience. This is the end of knowledge.¹¹⁵⁻¹⁰⁵

Thus, true knowledge or Truth is oneness, unity. The test of truth is oneness.¹¹⁶ The principle by which truth is judged, which Svāmī Vivekānanda has designated "reason,"¹¹⁷⁻¹⁰⁷ is unity. "Unity is the goal of Religion and Science."¹¹⁸⁻¹⁰⁸ Unity or "Absolute Truth is God alone."¹¹⁹⁻¹⁰⁹ Truth is to be judged by truth and by nothing else."¹²⁰⁻¹¹⁰

The svāmī's quest for meaning has as its goal nothing less than absolute truth.¹¹¹ To be absolute is to be unaffected by change.¹²¹⁻¹¹¹ The absolute cannot be part of an order limited by space, time and causation (deśa-kāla-nimitta). Yet all that confronted the senses is necessarily within the phenomenal realm, even the written Vedas.¹²²⁻¹¹² So one cannot begin with the scriptures as the foundation for the realization of changeless knowledge.¹²³⁻¹¹³ The scriptures had first been accepted "on faith" in order that they might be used to prove the existence of the Absolute.¹²⁴⁻¹¹⁴ This could never grant certainty. Therefore, the traditional starting point had to be discarded.

Svāmī Vivekānanda found that the foundation of every level of knowledge is personal experience.¹²⁵⁻¹¹⁵ True knowledge must never be accepted "on faith" in an outside authority. If it is universally true, it must be capable of verification by each seeker after truth when he has reached that level of understanding.¹²⁶⁻¹¹⁶

The discoveries of r̥sis and avatāras, which are repeatable when one reaches that stage of spirituality, have shown that the

foundations of knowledge (pramānas) in the sensate world are not untrue but actually lower levels of truth which point beyond themselves to the direct experience of the Absolute (aparokṣānubhūti).¹²⁷ Because of this structure of true knowledge all relative knowledge must be judged by the highest principle. That principle is unity.¹²⁸ According to the process of generalization, which was seen by Svāmī Vivekānanda as the scientific way of acquiring knowledge, all lower apprehensions of truth depend upon each higher synthesis, until, at last, the highest generalization is reached--the unity or oneness of all the universe.¹²⁹

Svāmī Vivekānanda identified the changeless, infinite, eternal unity as the most meaningful concern of life.¹³⁰ But even as the sources of knowledge were found to yield impermanent knowledge, so also the process of perception was found to leave a radical break between the impression of an object upon the mind and the knowledge of the object-in-itself.¹³¹ That which was external to the individual (jīva) was found to be unknowable in its essence. The jīva merely reacted to what came from beyond its mind (manas) and was limited to its created visions--its own illusory universe.¹³²

Not only was the jīva's knowledge of objects incomplete and ever changing, it also suffered from the impossibility of true knowledge of itself. The mind (manas) of the individual (jīva) was limited by space, time and causation (deśa-kāla-nimitta) and because of this the mind differentiates that which is really one as a multiplicity by name and form (nāma-rupa). The jīva cannot know the true perceiver because the jīva has relative existence on the sensate plane where true perception does not occur. The real

is beyond the mind (manas). It is beyond differentiation.¹³³

This analysis led the svāmī through the sources of knowledge to the process of perception. Each analysis has pointed beyond itself.

The unique aspect of the svāmī's teachings about the cosmos is not that the cosmos lack ultimate reality.¹³⁴ While he says this, it is commonplace among advaitans. Nor does his usage of the notions of māyā and avidyā suggest originality. Through these notions, he was able to demonstrate, like those before him, that the world which we see is vivārta (appearance). What is unique is the svāmī's combination of two theories of causation and their corollary views of the universe.¹³⁵ He combined pariṇāma from Sāṃkhya with vivārta from Advaita Vedānta and made them refer to two complementary, but distinct realms of reality. Accordingly, pariṇāma referred to a real transformation of the cause into a multiplicity of effects. But this was viewing the universe from beneath, within māyā and bound by deśa-kāla-nimitta. According to vivārta the relative view is transcended and the apparent multiplicity of objects can no longer be found. For beyond the bonds of time, space and causation there is only Brahman.¹³⁶

When viewing the pattern of ultimacy from the vantage point of the solution, one is struck by its nearly perfect relationships.¹¹⁴ If it can be granted that Svāmī Vivekānanda was slightly ambiguous in his formulations about saguna and nirguna Brahman,¹³⁷ even so the solution was eventually brought to the doctrine of neti neti, the absolute negation of formulations about the Absolute in categories limited by space, time and causation.¹³⁸ Thus, each component

of the pattern of ultimacy points to advaita (non-duality) or to eka (oneness).¹³⁹ The epistemology of sanātāna dharma was based upon the principle of unity which was found by the ṛsis and avatāras to be the highest principle of knowledge. By it the relative value of sensate knowledge could be determined, and from it the structure of knowledge could be deduced. Thus, only data which proved unity are real data; all else (data which suggest multiplicity) must be understood in the light of the principle of unity.¹⁴⁰ The process of perception found that behind a radical split between the individual perceivers and the perceived was the one perceiver, the Ātman.¹⁴¹ His analysis of the cosmos determined that the multiplicity of objects of perception was only apparent and that behind this illusion was the source of all objects, Brahman.¹⁴² Finally, Ātman and Brahman were realized as one and that beyond all qualities of space, time and causation is the perfect existence, consciousness and bliss of the inexpressible. The solution in the quest for ultimate meaning finally leaps beyond all categories of rational and sensate processes to the experience of the Absolute in nirvikalpa samādhi (changeless absorption in the One).¹⁴³

Except for placing the sanātāna dharma on the epistemological foundation of personal experience judged by the principle of unity instead of the Vedas, Svāmī Vivekānanda's formulation offers little that has not already appeared in Indian thought. What is novel is the application of the sanātāna dharma to the social problems in deśa-kāla-nimitta to provide direction and purpose on the plane of vivārta.

In Practical Vedānta (note an old Brahmo emphasis) Svāmī Vivekānanda applied changeless principles to the problems of a changing age. The problem for Vedānta can be summarized: the only Real is Brahman, realized only in nirvakalpa samādhi, the changeless state of consciousness of oneness.^{144/15} Limited existence is suffering, brought about by ignorance (avidyā). Ultimately it is illusion (māyā). Liberation from the bonds of suffering (mukti) is knowledge (jñāna) of one's true nature as the Unmanifested, who alone is beyond all activity. Since Vedānta teaches that mukti is not in the world, why should not the seeker of Brahman turn from all activity in the world to a life of contemplation (dhyāna) of the Real?¹⁴⁵ But if this done, what benefit will Vedānta be for the suffering masses of Indian and the world? (A question which is meaningful for a Brahmo but not a strict advaitan!!!)

This philosophical dilemma posed by the apparent opposition of jñāna and karma could be solved in two steps. First, Vedānta had shown that relative truths are levels or stages (avasthās) in realizing the one Truth. These stages of interpreting the Vedānta--dvaita (dualism), viśiṣṭadvaita (qualified monism) and advaita (monism)--are complementary, fulfilling each other as one "stepping stone to the other until the goal, the Advaita, the Tat Tvam Asi, is reached." From the strict viewpoint of advaita, which is the highest stage of truth, there can be no duality. There is no doer or deed; there is no desire or attraction. There is only Brahman. However, this viewpoint is eschatological. While in the world of multiplicity, the jīva must act. Even though is activity. Thus

Svāmī Vivekānanda concluded: "The highest Advaitism cannot be brought down to practical life. Advaitism made practical works from the plane of Vishishtadvaitism."¹⁴⁶ At this level activity is real and plans can be made for the good of all beings. Thus, since activity is inevitable in the world of multiplicity, the real problem concerns the binding effect of activity (samsāra). The Bhagavad Gītā has properly shown that the jīva is only bound to the results of its actions (karma) if it is attached to them through egotism (ahamkāra) or desire.¹⁴⁷ By renouncing the fruits of its action, the jīva will be freed of the binding effects of karma. With regard to self (jīva) the actions can be given in the service of the Self (ātman), the totality of all beings. The discipline of activity without selfish motives can also, therefore, lead to the attainment of liberation from deśa-kāla-nimitta. But more important, in this age of suffering (the kali yuga), karma yoga is the means by which Vedānta serves practically in the world.

Practical Vedānta could both harmonized and revolutionize all of life in the world. It could produce "the new order of society"¹⁴⁸ and "can change the whole tendency of the world"¹⁴⁹ by putting the forces which have become destructive in check. This plan could be accomplished through education and service. "Our work is to ground knowledge of the real Self within the masses."¹⁵⁰ Ignorance of the real Self within has brought weakness, suffering and evil.¹⁵¹ Education about the potentiality within man will reverse the process of deterioration and begin the process of expansion toward men's true nature. The process of growth gradually develops the powers within until "Brahminhood" is reached.¹⁵² "Liberty is the first condition

of growth."¹⁵³

Trained in the fiery mantras of the Upanishads and in the principles of practical Vedānta, the masses will be awakened to their own strength. The radical reform of society, based upon the harmony of science and Vedānta, will have begun. Each man, woman and child will grow according to their own nature; none will need to rule them. "They will solve their own problems. O tyrants, attempting to think that you can do anything for any one! Hands off! The Divine will look after all. Who are you to assume that you know everything?"¹⁵⁴

The twin principles, vairāgya (renunciation) and jīvanseva (service to mankind)¹⁵⁵ provide the basis for all activity in the world.¹⁵⁶ They teach mankind to discover "their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life."¹⁵⁷

"I believe that the Satya Yuga (Golden Age) will come when there will be one caste, one Veda, and peace and harmony. This idea of the Satya Yuga is what would revivify India. Believe it."¹⁵⁸

He believed that practical Vedānta's principle of unity would create this new India. He saw the masses being liberated from dualistic customs and superstitions.¹⁵⁹ Advaita had never been allowed to come to the people. Now that it would come to them so that the impersonal idea would gradually take "away all trade from the priests, churches, and temples."¹⁶⁰ True knowledge of the Self would gradually raise all to "Brahminhood."¹⁶¹

Able to assimilate the entire spiritual pilgrimage of mankind, Vedānta would be able to provide a rationale for being religious in the modern world. In its spiritual bankruptcy, the West would turn to Vedānta and be saved by "the religion of the Upanishads." It

would change "the whole tendency of the world," bringing in the satya yuga.^{162/32}

VI. Facing Death (1902)

Throughout the last two years of his life, Vivekānanda's medical problems with diabetes began to slow down the "cyclonic Hindu."¹⁶³ In this time he began to gravitate toward meditation and devotion.^{164/33} Kālī pūjā, the very type of religious expression he pressured his gurubhāis to drop, became increasingly meaningful the last six months of his life.¹⁶⁵ He left no written expression of this devotion to Kali during this last period of his life.

He died on July 4, 1902. He died with great serenity and dignity. It is said that he predicted his death a week in advance. It is in the calm with which he faced death that one sees no evidence of his wrenching, lifelong doubts. But these very doubts moved him through an extraordinary religious pilgrimage.

1. These methodological considerations have been discussed in detail in an earlier study, Williams, Quest for Meaning of Svāmī Vivekānanda (Chico: New Horizons Press, 1974), pp. 1-9. Hereafter Q.
2. Ibid., p. 7-9. The camouflage effect of Svami Vivekananda's different versions or valuing of the same event is overcome through careful examination of contemporaneous and later documentation and through understanding the significance of periods of belief.
3. Official accounts of the life and teachings of Svami Vivekananda designates three types of literature coming from the Ramakrishna movement. First, there are the direct sayings and writings of Svami Vivekananda. These have been collected and carefully edited by the Ramakrishna Order and published in The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (Volumes 1-8. Six Editions to date. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964. Hereafter CW) and in innumerable monographs, usually selecting sayings topically. Second, there is the "direct disciple" literature collected by the Order. This includes The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples (Four Editions to date; currently undergoing another revision. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965. Hereafter LVK.), Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Admirers (Two editions. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964. Hereafter RSV.), and Sister Nivedita's The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita (Two editions. Volumes 1-4. Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1972). Third, there are the class of works by Swamis and laymen of the Ramakrishna movement. Jean Herbert's Swami Vivekananda: Bibliographie (Paris: Advien Maisonneuve, 1938) lists some of this third class as well as some of the first. Studies by Swamis Abhedananda and Nikhilananda are representative; while lay followers would be typified by Majumdar, Rolland, Isherwood and Yale. Secondary articles are to be found in such journals as Prabuddha Bharata and Vedanta Kesari.

Marie Louise Burke's Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries (Two Editions. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1958) and Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West. New Discoveries (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) report even damaging data before interpreting it in a light positive to the movement.

4. Even historians like R.C. Majumdar (Svami Vivekananda: A Historical Review [Calcutta: General Printers & Publishers, 1965]) and V. S. Naravane (Modern Indian Thought [New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964]) follow this schema.

5. Q, p. 6.

6. LVK 9.

7. LVK 12, 14.

8. LVK 10-11.

9. LVK 16.

10. Vivekananda: A Biography in Pictures (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), p. 12.
11. LVK, 4-6. Charan Dutta became a monk a twenty five, leaving his wife and baby son.
12. LVK, 46.
13. LVK 9ff and The Story of Vivekananda: Illustrated (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970), a children's book in English for young Indians, p. 8-11.
14. LVK 13-14.
15. LVK 13, 19.
16. LVK 18, 14.
17. LVK, 13, 15-6, 21, 23.
18. LVK, 18: "Had Naren's powers not been checked by this accident, he would have shattered the world." This remark is attributed to Sri Ramakrsna.
19. Cf. section III. (Ramakrsna's Disciple.)
20. LVK 22: "So Ambitious was he in this respect that if his mental powers were not given recognition, he would fly into a rage, not sparing even his father's friends and nothing short of an apology would quiet him."
21. David, Kopf, The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 103.
22. The significance given to Narendranath Datta's asking religious leaders if they had "seen God" is central to the legend. By struggling with this aspect of the biography, we have all missed the significance of the nervous breakdown.
23. The existence of the photostats at the Belur Math Library is a well kept secret. Scholars are encouraged by this author to ask to see them.
24. Kopf, op. cit., 3-14.
25. Ibid.
26. Spencer Lavan, Unitarians and India: A Study in Encounter and Response (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977).
27. Kopf, loc. cit.
28. Ibid., 18.
29. Ibid., 26-31, 39-41, 92-4.
30. Ibid., 98ff.

31. Shivanath Sastri, The Brahmo Samaj: Religious Principles and Brief History (Abridged Edition. Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1958), chapter 3.

32. Ibid., p. 26.

33. Shivanath Sastri, The Mission of the Brahmo Samaj or the Theistic Church of India (Calcutta: Kuntaline Press, 1910. 2nd Edition.), p. 57.

34. Ibid., 51.

35. Ibid., 50.

36. Sastri, Brahmo Samaj, op. cit., chapter 3.

37. Sastri, Mission, op. cit., 97ff.

38. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, recorded by Mahendranath Gupta and translated from Bengali into English by Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1969). Hereafter GRK.

39. Kopf, op. cit., 26.

40. Keshab Chandra Sen, Spiritual Progress; Sayings and Writings (Calcutta: Navavidhan Publication Comm., c.1934), 6, 7, 25.

41. Bhupendranath Datta, Svami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1954), p. 259. Hereafter BD.

42. GRK, 198.

43. BD, 154.

44. Kopf, op. cit., 124.

45. GRK, 82, 112, 113, 157, 166, 247, 438-9, 583-4, 670, 748, 817, 819..

46. BD, 102, and GRK, 127.

47. Robert F. Gould, A Concise History of Freemasonry (London: Gala & Polden, Ltd., 1903), especially p. 398.

48. BD, 109.

49. LVK, 90. Cf. Kopf, op. cit., pp. 47ff concerning Vidyasagar.

50. Kopf, op. cit., 32.

51. LVK, 26.

52. Ibid. See also citations in footnote three.

53. R. C. Majumdar, ed., Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary Committee, 1963), p. 47. Hereafter SVC MV

54. Ibid., 48.
55. Q, 26.
56. LVK, 46.
57. LVK, 47.
58. GRK, 841; LVK, 65; SVCMV, 48. Three of the four versions of this event say "hand" instead of "foot": GRK, 231, 717, 770.
59. Ibid.
60. Scientific research in a sufficient number of fields to produce significant interpretative breakthroughs began to take place in the late 1970s. Altered (or alternative) States of Consciousness (ASC) is now a recognized field of research engaged in from neurophysiology, biofeedback research, drug research, transpersonal psychology, etc. Daniel Goleman and Richard J. Davidson (eds.) summarize what has transpired to date in Consciousness: Brain, States of Awareness, and Mysticism (New York: Harper & Row, 1979). Two more edited works which survey the field are recommended to those wishing to survey the research: (1) Charles T. Tart (ed.), Altered States of Consciousness (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co, 1969), and (2) Norman E. Zinberg (ed.), Alternate States of Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives on the Study of Consciousness (New York: The Free Press, 1977).
61. GRK, 1019-20.
62. GRK, 231, 717, 770, 841; LVK, 65, 93-4; Q, 25-6.
63. GRK, 279.
64. GRK, 394.
65. GRK, 397.
66. GRK, 462, 508, 562.
67. GRK, 569.
68. GRK, 727.
69. GRK, 711.
70. GRK, 987; Q, 21, footnotes 77 and 78.
71. GRK, 734.
72. GRK, 735.
73. GRK, 724ff.

74. GRK, 538ff, 581.

75. Q, 22 and LVK 158-9, 168.

76. Svāmī "Narendra" is a construct to indicate that he now had self-ordination but had not yet come to the name he would be known by later. Since the redactors hand is present once again in the extant data, all his letters are signed as if he were already using "Vivekananda" at this time. How he perceived himself by name would be important information.

77. CW, VI 208-9.

78. Unfortunately the Order only saved Vivekananda's part of the correspondence.

79. CW, VI, 211.

80. CW, VI, 212.

81. CW, VI, 209.

82. CW, VI, 214.

83. CW, VI, 239.

84. CW, VI, 231-2 and Q, 47-51.

85. CW, VI, 239 and LVK, 200.

86. Q, 54ff.

87. Ibid, 55.

88. RSV, 38-9.

89. LVK, 251-55.

90. This is demonstrated in the biographical entries of the histories of the parliament: Walter R. Houghton, ed., Neely's History of the Parliament of Religions and Religious Congresses at the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago: F. T. Neely, 1893), p. 64; John Henry Barrows, ed., The World's Parliament of Religions, 2 Vols. (Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893); J. W. Hanson, ed., The World's Congress of Religions (Chicago: International Publishing Co, 1894), 366ff. Marie Louise Burke, op. cit., 1966, details some of the times he identified himself as a Brahmin monk. (69-70).

91. S. B. Basu and S. B. Ghosh, eds., Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers, 1893-1902 (Calcutta: Dineshchandra Basu Bhattacharyya and Co., 1969), 8.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid., 9.

94. Ibid

95. CW, I, 119-313.

96. CW, I, 25- 118.

97. CW VI, 250.

98. CW, VI, 263.

99. Ibid.

100. CW, VIII, 489-94.

101. Q, 120 footnote 36.

102. Swami Satprakashananda, Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to the Present Age (St. Louis: The Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1978), p.128.

103. Basu and Ghosh, op. cit.

104. Vivekananda's use of the term "mission" reflects a borrowing from his Brahmo Samaj background.

105. CW, V, 519-20.

106. CW, II, 304.

107. Vivekananda has used the English word "reason" in two ways: (1) as the activity of the mind, anumana (CW, VII, 91: inspiration is higher than reason) and (2) as the criterion of truth (CW, II, 335-6: reason is the universal authority: "I believe in reason and follow reason having seen enough of the evils of authority, for I was born in a country where they have gone to the extreme of authority." V, 315: "The Vedas, i.e. only those portions of them which agree with reason, are to be accepted as authority." V, 411: "Personally I take as much of the Vedas as agrees with reason.").

108. RVK, 396.

109. CW, VII, 120.

110. Ibid, 101.

111. For more than adequate documentation of this summary see Q, 63-67.

112. Q, 67-73.

113. Q, 74-9.

114. Q, 80-85.

115. Q, 85- 104.

116. CW, VII, 181.

117. CW, VI, 122.

118. CW, I, 446-80; IV, 102-10; V, 239-42, 246-9; VI, 83-4; VII, 273-5 (note svami is being challenged on his particular usage of karma yoga); VIII, 8-9, 484.

119. CW, III, 161.

120. CW, III, 158-9.

121. CW, II, 358.

122. CW, II, 355.

123. CW, III, 293.

124. CW, III, 246.

125. CW, III, 246.

126. CW, II, 285; V, 228.

127. CW, VII, 498.

128. CW, V, 382, VII, 133.

129. CW, V, 31.

130. CW, III, 225, 263-5, 279.

131. CW, II, 320. CW, II, 303: "You know in your inmost heart that many of your limited ideas, this humbling of yourself and praying and weeping to imaginary beings are superstitions."

132. CW, III, 293.

133. CW, III, 159, 197-8, 293-304; V, 31; VII, 95.

134. Burke, op. cit.

135. ^{CW} VII, 129f; V, 391f; VII, 139f; VII, 252f; VII, 230; VII, 264; VIII, 517; VI, 515f.