IX

THE SECOND JOURNEY TO THE WEST

He set out upon a second journey to the West in order to inspect the works he had founded and to fan the flame. This time he took with him[1] one of the most learned of his brethren, Turiyananda, a man of high caste and noble life, and learned in Sanskrit studies.

"The last time," he said, "they saw a warrior. Now I want to show them a Brahmin."

He left[2] under very different conditions from those of his return: in his emaciated body he carried a brazier of energy, breathing out action and combat, and so disgusted with the supineness of his devitalised people that on the boat in sight of Corsica he celebrated "the Lord of War" (Napoleon).[3]

In his contempt for moral cowardice he

[1] Nivedita went with them.

[2] On June 20, 1899 he travelled from Calcutta by Madras, Colombo, Aden, Naples, Marseilles. On July 31, he was in London. On August 16, he left Glasgow for New York. He stayed in the United States until July 20, 1900, chiefly in California. From August 1 to October 24, he visited France, and went to Paris and Brittany. Then by Vienna, the Balkans, Constantinople, Greece and Egypt he returned to India and arrived at the beginning of December, 1900.

[3] He recalled also the energy of Robespierre. He was full of the epic history of Europe. Before Gibraltar his imagination saw on the shore the galloping horses of the Moors and the great Arab invasion disembarking.

went so far as to prefer the vigour of crime,[1] and the older he grew, the deeper was his conviction that the East and the West must espouse each other. He saw in India and Europe "two organisms in full youth . . . two great experiments neither of which is yet complete." They ought to be mutually helpful, but at the same time each should respect the free development of the other. He did not allow himself to criticise their weaknesses: both of them were at the ungrateful age. They ought to grow up hand in hand.[2] When he returned to India a year and a half later, he

[1] When people spoke of the rarity of crime in India, he cried: "Would God it were otherwise in my land! For this is verily the virtuousness of death." "The older I grow," he added, "the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness: this is my new Gospel." He went so far as to say: "Do even evil like a man. Be wicked if you must on a great scale!"

These words must be taken, it goes without saying, (spoken as they were on the boat to sure and tried friends, who were not likely to misunderstand them), as one of the linguistic thunderbolts, whereby the Kshatriya, the spiritual warrior, fulminated against the shifting sands of the East. The true sense is probably that which I read in an old Italian motto: *Ignavia est jacere*:— The vilest of crimes is not to act.

[2] *Cf.* the Interviews recorded by Nivedita. That which emerges most clearly is his "universal" sense. He had hopes of democratic America, he was enthusiastic over the Italy of art, culture and liberty—the great mother of Mazzini. He spoke of China as the treasury of the world. He fraternised with the martyred Babists of Persia. He embraced in equal love the India of the Hindus, the Mohammedans, and the Buddhists. He was fired by the Mogul Empire: when he spoke of Akbar the tears came into his eyes. He could comprehend and defend the grandeur of Genghiz Khan and his dream of Asiatic unity. He made Buddha the subject of magnificent eulogy: "I am the servant of the servants of Buddha. . . ."

His intuition of the unity of the human race did not stop at the arbitrary divisions of races and nations. It made him say that he had seen in the West some of the best Hindu types, and in India the best Christians.

was almost entirely detached from life, and all violence had gone out of him, exorcised by the brutal face he had this time unveiled in Western Imperialism; he had looked into its eyes, full of rapacious hatred. He had realised that during his first journey he had been caught by the power, the organisation and the apparent democracy of America and Europe. Now he had discovered the spirit of lucre, of greed, of Mammon, with its enormous combinations and ferocious struggle for supremacy. He was capable of rendering homage to the grandeur of a mighty association. . . .

"But what beauty was there amongst a pack of wolves?"

"Western life," said a witness, "seemed hell to him. . . ."

Material brilliance no longer deceived him. He saw the hidden tragedy, the weariness under the forced expenditure of energy, the deep sorrow under the frivolous mask. He said to Nivedita:

"Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter: but underneath it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface; really it is full of tragic intensity. . . . Here (in India) it is sad and gloomy on the surface, but underneath are carelessness and merriment."[1]

How had this all too prophetic vision come to him? When and where had his glance, stripping the bark from the tree and

[1] *The Master as I Saw Him*, p. 145, 3rd edition.

revealing the canker gnawing at the heart of the West despite all its outward glory, foreseen the monster of the days of hate and agony that were approaching, and the years of wars and revolutions?[1] Nobody knows. The record of his journey was only kept spasmodically. This time there was no Goodwin with him. Apart from one or two private letters, the most beautiful being one from Alameda to Miss MacLeod, we have to regret that nothing is known save his movements and the success of his mission.

After having broken his journey only in London, he went to the United States and stayed for almost a year. There he found Abhedananda with his Vedântic work in full swing. He settled Turiyananda down at Mont Clair near New York. He himself decided to go to California on account of its climate, from which he regained several months of health. There he gave numerous lectures.[2] He founded new Vedântic centres

[1] Sister Christine has just revealed to us in her unpublished Memoirs that even during his first journey in 1895, Vivekananda had seen the tragedy of the West:

"Europe is on the edge of a volcano. If the fire is not extinguished by a flood of spirituality, it will erupt."

Sister Christine has also given us another striking instance of prophetic intuition:

"Thirty-two years ago (that is, in 1896) he said to me: 'The next upheaval that is to usher in another era, will come from Russia or from China. I cannot see clearly which, but it will be either the one or the other.' "

And again: " 'The world is in the third epoch under the domination of Vaishya (the merchant, the third estate). The fourth epoch will be under that of Shudra (the proletariat).' "

[2] Notably at Pasadena on *Christ the Messenger*, at Los Angeles on *Powers of the Mind*, at San Francisco on *The Ideal of*

at San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda. He received the gift of a property of one hundred and sixty acres of forest land in the district of Santa Clara, and there he created an Ashrama, where Turiyananda trained a select band of students in the monastic life. Nivedita, who rejoined him, also spoke in New York on the ideals of Hindu women, and on the ancient arts of India. Ramakrishna's small but well-chosen band was very active. The work prospered and its ideas spread.

But their leader, three parts of him, no longer belonged to this world. The shadows were rising round the oak. . . . Were they shadows, or reflections of another light? They were no longer those of our sun. . . .

"Pray for me that my work stops for ever, and my whole soul be absorbed in the Mother. . . . I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won! I have bundled my things, and am waiting for the Great Deliverer. Shiva, O Shiva, carry by boat to the other shore! . . . I am only the young boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan of Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works and activities, doing good and so forth are all super-

a Universal Religion, on the *Gitâ*, on *The Message of Buddha, Christ and Krishna to the World*, on the *Arts and Sciences of India*, on *Mind and its Powers and Possibilities*, etc. He also spoke in other places of California.

Unfortunately many of the lectures have been lost. He did not find a second Goodwin to write them down.

impositions. . . . Now I again hear his voice, the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking, love dying, work becoming tasteless; the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling: . . . . 'Let the dead bury the dead. Follow thou Me.' . . . . 'I come, my Beloved Lord, I come!' Nirvâna is before me . . . . the same Ocean of peace, without a ripple, or a breath. . . . . I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders,—glad to enter Peace. I leave none bound; I take no bonds. . . . The old man is gone forever. The guide, the Guru, the leader, has passed away. . . ."

In that marvellous climate, under the glorious sun of California, among its tropical vegetation, his athletic will relaxed its hold, his weary being sank into a dream, body and soul let themselves drift. . . .

"I dare not make a splash with my hands or feet, for fear of hurting the wonderful stillness—stillness that makes you feel sure it is an illusion! Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity fear, behind my guidance the thirst for power! Now they are vanishing and I drift. . . . I come, Mother, I come in Thy warm bosom—floating wheresoever Thou takest me—in the voiceless, the strange, in the wonderland. I come, a spectator, no more an actor. Oh, it is so calm! My thoughts seem to come from a great, great distance in the interior of my heart. They

seem like faint distant whispers, and Peace is upon everything—sweet, sweet peace, like that one feels for a few moments just before falling asleep, when things are seen and felt like shadows, without fear, without love, without emotion. . . . I come, Lord! The world *is*, but not beautiful nor ugly, but as sensations without exciting any emotion. Oh the blessedness of it! Everything is good and beautiful, for they are all losing their relative proportions to me—my body among the first. Om—That Existence!"[1]

The arrow was still flying, carried by the original impetus of movement, but it was reaching the dead end where it knew that it would fall to the ground. . . . How sweet was the moment, "a few moments just before falling into sleep"—the downfall—when the tyrannous urge of destiny that had driven him was spent; and the arrow floated in the air, free from both the bow and the mark. . . .

The arrow of Vivekananda was finishing its trajectory. He crossed the ocean on July 20, 1900. He went to Paris, where he had been invited to a Congress on the History of Religions, held on the occasion of the Universal Exposition. This was no Parliament of Religions as at Chicago. The Catholic power would not have allowed it. It was a purely historical and scientific Congress. At the point of liberation at which Vivekananda's life had arrived, his intellectual interest, but

[1] Letter to Miss MacLeod, April 18, 1900, Alameda.

not his real passion nor his entire being, could find nourishment in it. He was charged by the Committee of the Congress to argue the question whether the Vedic religion came from Nature-worship. He debated with Oppert. He spoke on the Vedas, the common basis of Hinduism and Buddhism. He upheld the priority of the *Gitâ* and of Krishna over Buddhism, and rejected the thesis of Hellenic influence on the drama, the arts and the sciences of India.

But most of his time was given up to French culture. He was struck by the intellectual and social importance of Paris. In an article for India,[1] he said that "Paris is the centre and the source of European culture," that there the ethics and society of the West were formed, that its University was the model of all other Universities. "Paris is the home of liberty, and she has infused new life into Europe."

He also spent some time at Lannion, with his friend, Mrs. Ole Bull, and Sister Nivedita.[2] On St. Michael's Day he visited Mont St. Michel. He became more and more convinced of the resemblances between Hinduism and Roman Catholicism.[3] Moreover he dis-

[1] "*The East and the West.*"

[2] Nivedita went away a short time afterwards to speak in England for the cause of Hindu women. Vivekananda, when he blessed her at her departure, said these mighty words to her:

"If I made you, be destroyed! If the Mother made you, live!"

[3] He loved to say that "Christianity was not alien to the Hindu spirit."

covered Asiatic blood mingled in different degrees even in the races of Europe. Far from feeling that there was a fundamental natural difference between Europe and Asia, he was convinced that deep contact between Europe and Asia would inevitably lead to a renaissance of Europe; for she would renew her vital stock of spiritual ideas from the East.

It is to be regretted that only Father Hyacinthe and Jules Bois should have been the guides of so penetrating a spectator of the moral life of the West in Paris in his researches into the mind of France.[1]

He left again on October 24 for the East by Vienna and Constantinople.[2] But no other town interested him after Paris. He made a striking remark about Austria as he passed through it: he said that "if the Turk was the sick man, she was the sick woman of Europe." Europe both repelled and wearied him. He smelt war. The stench of it rose on all sides. "Europe," he said, "is a vast military camp. . ."

Although he halted a short time on the shores of the Bosphorus to have interviews

[1] But he met Patrick Geddes in Paris, and his great com patriot, the biologist, Jagadis Chunder Bose, whose genius he admired, and defended against all attack. He also met the strange Hiram Maxim, whose name is commemorated in an engine of destruction, but who deserves a better fate than such murderous fame, against which he himself protested: he was a great connoisseur and lover of China and India.

[2] Miss MacLeod, Father Hyacinthe, who wished to work for a rapprochement between Christians and Mohammedans in the East, Madame Loyson, Jules Bois, and Madame Calvé accompanied him,—a strange escort for a Sannyâsin, who was leaving the world and life with giant strides. Perhaps his detachment itself made him more indulgent, or perhaps more indifferent.

with Sufi monks—then in Greece with its memories of Athens and Eleusis—and finally in the museum of Cairo, he was more and more detached from the spectacle of external things and buried in meditation. Nivedita said that during his last months in the West he sometimes gave the impression of being completely indifferent to all that was going on. His soul was soaring towards wider horizons. In Egypt he seemed to be turning the last pages of experience.

Suddenly he heard the imperious call to return. Without waiting a single day he took the first steamer and came back alone to India.[1] He had brought his body back to the funeral pyre.

[1] At the beginning of December, 1900.