

he seemed to go into samādhi. Swamiji had apparently availed himself of the promise of Amarnath and left the body to regain his treasure, his native state, the Absolute.⁶²

He came for such a short time; he worked hard for the good of all people. He may have moments of darkness about the work and his mission, but he never despaired about the real nature of humanity.

He held out the highest for every man and woman. He taught us to realize our own nature, to find the truth, to serve our fellow men and women. His spiritual treasure was immeasurable; it had been accumulated for the good of everyone. He gave this treasure freely, without stint, so that *all* men and women would be raised to a new level of spiritual and human accomplishment.

⁶². *Life*, (1918) vol. 4, p. 81.

(concluded)

KHETRI IN THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT

DR. ARUN KUMAR BISWAS

When it was decided that I should visit the Hindustan Copper Corporation's mining establishment in Khetringar, Rajasthan, a few days before the Christmas of 1982, I also resolved to be a pilgrim to the Maharaja's palace at Khetri, where Swami Vivekananda had stayed for a long period inspiring the Maharaja and countless inhabitants of Khetri. During my visit, I started reading about Khetri and realized that Khetri was a *tirtha* (sanctified place) in more than one sense. It represents the Shekhawati spirit of independence and the Rajput tradition of heroism and valour, and constitutes a small but glorious part of Bhāratatīrtha (Holy Land of India) eulogized by Tagore in one of his famous poems.

This article consists of three sections: the first one outlines briefly the long heritage of Rajput and Shekhawati traditions. The second section is the major one describing the interactions between the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement and the people of Khetri. Notwithstanding some beautiful treatments of the subject in Hindi, English and Bengali such as those by Jhabarmal Sharma, Benishankar Sharma, Shankari

Prasad Basu and others, a coherent treatise utilizing the material available in all the three languages is yet to be presented. The third and last section contains some reflections and suggestions of the author.

I

Ancient civilization on the banks of the Saraswati

Swami Vivekananda was one of the first to challenge the theory of Aryan 'invasion' of India¹ — his original Bengali words were *O sab āhammaker kathā*: 'That is all nonsense.' At the Paris Congress of 1900 he asked if any Vedic text referred to Aryans as outsiders 'migrating' to India. That Mahenjo-daro civilization (discovered twenty years after Swamiji's death) and script are Vedic in character has been conclusively proved by the well-known archaeologist Prof. S. R. Rao². In the course of

1. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1954) Vol. 5, Pp. 436-37.

2. S. R. Rao: *The Decipherment of the Indus Script*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1982).

his wanderings in north India Swamiji had a vision of an ancient ṛṣi chanting Vedic hymns on the bank of the Indus³. After repeated floods, the Aryans migrated from the Indus, a major section moving towards the valleys of the Yamuna and the Ganga. On their way, they must have lived on the banks of the Saraswatī—now the dried-up Ghaggar (see, the map of northern Rajasthan).

The dried up beds of the ancient river Saraswatī near Bikaner have been investigated by archaeologists like L. P. Tessitory, Aurel Stein, A. Ghosh, Herman Goetz etc.⁴ The proto-historic mounds and terracottas of Saraswatī, Umā-Maheśwar and Govardhandhārī Krishna etc. are some of the earliest landmarks of Indian culture in Rajasthan. Even today, the Sāraswat Brāhmins in India bear the noble heritage of the river.

Swamiji wrote (in May, 1895) to the Maharaja of Khetri about the divine message revealed 'to the sages on the bank of the Saraswatī'. It is only very recently that the truth of Swamiji's vision of the beautiful civilization that grew on the banks of the Saraswatī (now known as Ghaggar, see map) has been understood through the findings of archaeologists. Kalibangan has been described by Thapar as 'truly the first city of Indian cultural heritage.'⁵ This Harappan metropolis was found to contain Indus valley seals as well as fire altars for animal sacrifice, thus linking the Indus

valley with Vedic civilization. Copper bangles, ploughing implements, bronze mirror, gold and carnelian beads were the other important finds. The *R̥g-Veda* clearly captures the mood of the ancient seers who had migrated from the flood-stricken Indus to the Saraswatī valley :

O Saraswati, does thou not trouble us with excess water, but accept our friendship. Saraswati, the inspirer of truthful word, the instructress of the right-minded, has accepted our sacrifice. She makes manifest by her deed a huge river, and generates all knowledge.⁶

A visit to the Bikaner museum to see the ancient image of the goddess Saraswatī, who was linked to Holy Mother Sarada Devi by Sri Ramakrishna himself, was the first point in my pilgrimage to Khetri.

Shekhawati dynasties

Whereas one section of the migrant Aryans moved towards the Gangetic valley founding the Suryavamśa (Solar dynasty) of Ayodhyā (where Lord Rāma was born), another section moved towards the south and founded the Candravamśa (Lunar dynasty) to which belonged Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas of *Mahābhārata*. The Maharajas of Jaisalmer claimed to be Yādavas, of the lineage of Yadu, an ancestor of Lord Kṛṣṇa—or Candravamśis.⁷ The kings of Mewar (Udaipur) and Amber (Jaipur) and their Shekhawati feudatories derived their lineage as Suryavamśis^{8*}. The

3. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1949) Vol. 2, P. 256.

4. A. Ghosh, 'Rajputana Desert', *Bulletin of the National Institute of Sciences of India*, 1. 1952. Pp. 37-42.

Aurel Stein, 'Ancient sites along the Saraswatī', *Geographical Journal*, 99, 1942. Pp. 173-82.

H. Goetz, *Art and Architecture of Bikaner State*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

5. B. K. Thapar: 'Kalibangan: A Harappan Metropolis' in *Ancient Cities of the Indus*, Ed. G. L. Possehl. 1979.

6. Quoted in A. C. Das, *Rig Vedic India*, 1971. p. 71.

7. James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, New Delhi: M. N. Publishers, 1978 Reprint) Vol. 2, p. 169.

8. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1, P. 39.

* Swamiji used to discuss these lineages in the court of Khetri. Once a Muslim musician of the court (Musraf Khan?) asked him whether he, the musician, had any lineage. Swamiji jokingly replied that he was a tārāvamsī. The musician later used to claim that he was a 'tārāvamsī'.

Mewar ancestry is believed to start from Lord Rāma's first son Lava and the Amber ancestry from his second son Kuśa.

Kuśa's descendants are also known as Kuchwahās. They migrated westward. The famous king Nala (his wife was the chaste Damayanti) settled in the city of Nurwar (or Nishida near Gwalior). His descendant Dhola Rai founded the state of Dhoondar (modern Amber or Joipur) in A.D. 967.⁹ At this time, Arab and Turk invasions of India started. Mahmud of Ghazni repeatedly invaded India during 1010-1022 and plundered Thaneshwar, Somnath etc. of their enormous wealth. It is believed that he plundered, amongst many others, a famous temple at Nerhar (near Pilani and Khetri) belonging to the kingdom of Satrajit of *Mahābhārata* fame.

The next invader Muhammad Ghorī was resisted by Prithviraj of Delhi and his Rajput friends before the final defeat of the latter in 1192. Samarsi of Chitor and the Kuchwaha king Pujoon had married Prithviraj's sisters and stoutly defended him and the motherland against the invaders till their death.¹⁰ Prithviraj died on the bank of Saraswati.¹¹ The victims have been immortalized by the Rajput bard (Charanakavi) Chand.¹²

9. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, P. 280.

10. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, P. 284.

11. Wolseley Haig Ed. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 3, P. 40.

12. Swamiji liked to listen to Chand's poems in the court of Khetri. When Swamiji's younger brother Mahendranath later on met Munshi Jagmohanlal, the latter recalled one such favourite song of Swamiji describing the heroism of Rajputs, recited the same and explained its meaning. It related a cavalry fight over the possession of a fort on the top of a hill, the sound of horses' hoofs, the clang of swords and spears, etc. Mahendranath Dutta, *Vivekānanda Swamījir Jibaner Ghatanabali* (Bengali), Vol. 2, P. 179.

The Shekhawati chieftains were descended from Balaji, the third son of Raja Oodikurn who became the Kuchwaha King of Amber in A.D. 1389. Balaji founded a separate kingdom for himself in Amratsir. His son Mokul was childless till he received the blessings of a Muslim mystic named Shekh Boorhan. Mokul's son was named Shekhji and his branch of the Kuchwaha family became known as 'Shekhawati'.¹³ Shekhji revolted against the tyrannical rule of the Amber dynasty and refused to pay Chandrasen of Jaipur (A.D. 1524) the customary tribute of colts. He was inspired by his patron saint Boorhan: *Kyā socate ho? Tumhāre ghore tumhāre hī pās rahenge. Tumhāri svādhinatā kā upabhog tumhī karoge* ('Why do you worry? Your horses will remain with you and you will enjoy freedom.') This incident is still recalled as *Jagadīshkā bardān*, 'blessings of the Lord'.¹⁴ Shekhji's son Raemal employed the famous Sher Shah's father as a sepoy; this fact has been recorded in *Akbar-nāmā* and Price's *Mohamedan History* (1820).

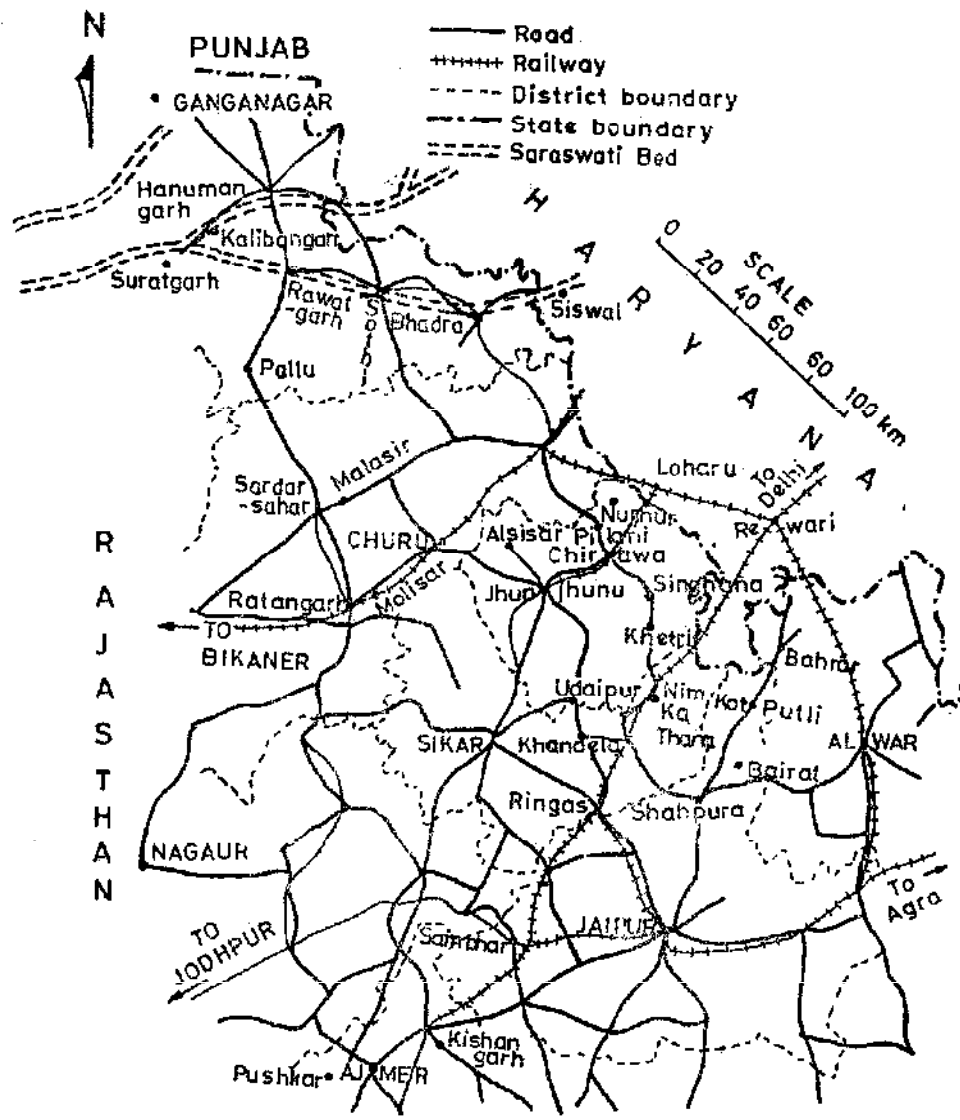
Raisal Darbari Shekhawat consolidated his kingdom around Khundaila (now Khandela) and Udaipur (see map) in collaboration with the Mughal emperor Akbar and Man Singh of Jaipur. A very controversial topic of his time was whether to aid Akbar in cementing Hindu-Muslim unity or to assist the defiant Rana Pratap of Mewar (Udaipur). The issue became clear during the tyrant Aurangzeb's time. Shujaun Singh, a descendant of Bhoj Raj, a Shekhawat, unsuccessfully fought against Aurangzeb's army which demolished the temples of Khandela.¹⁵

Bhoj Raj was Raisal Darbari's third son

13. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, Pp. 285,313-24.

14. Jhabarmal Sharma, *Khetri ka Itihas*, (Hindi) 1927.

15. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, Pp. 313-24.



MAP OF NORTHERN RAJASTHAN

and started the northern Shekhawati kingdom around Udaipur (near Khetri, see map, not to be confused with the Mewar capital). This branch came to be known as 'Sadhant' after Shardul Singh who annexed Jhunjhunu from the Kayam Khani Nawab Ruhel Khan and later on annexed Singhana and Khetri as well. Shardul's grandson Bhopal Singh came to the Khetri valley during his marriage, lived in the area and constructed in 1754 the famous fort Bhopalgarh on the top of the hill (2337 ft. above sea-level). The two palaces where Swamiji used to stay in Khetri during 1891 and 1897 face the Bhopalgarh fort.

Rajput heroism

Like many educated Indians, Swamiji was also moved by the tales of Rajput chivalry. Charanakavi Chand's poems, the tales of Padmini and Rana Pratap and the spirit of defiance exhibited by Shekhawati chief such as Shekhji, Shardul Singh etc. inspired him and made him inspire others. He read Colonel Tod's Annals of Rajasthan and could quote from memory extensively from this book.¹⁶ Even in America he introduced

16. Vivekananda Swamijir *Iibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, P. 179.

the book to his Western friends and disciples. In a letter to the Hale sisters dated 5 May 1895, he wrote that he hoped they were enjoying Tod's 'Rajasthan'.

The reason for Swamiji's fascination for Tod's work is not far to seek. Tod loved the sacred land of the Rajput heroes, and Swamiji loved heroism wherever he found it. A few quotations from Tod may not be out of place here :

Reduced in power, circumscribed in territory, compelled to yield much of their splendour and many of the dignities of birth, they (Rajputs) have not abandoned an iota of the pride and high bearing arising from a knowledge of their illustrious and regal descent.¹⁷

What nation on earth would have maintained the semblance of civilization, the spirit or the customs of their forefathers, during so many centuries of overwhelming depression, but one of such singular character as the Rajput? Not an iota of their religion or customs have they lost... Mewar, the sacred bulwark of religion never compromised her honour for her safety.¹⁸

Then a warning to the British in 1832 :

Their history should be deeply studied by those who have succeeded to the paramount power; for Aurangzeb had less reason to distrust the stability of his dominion than we have: yet what is now the house of Timour?¹⁹

Swamiji was equally enamoured of Rajput traditions. In his famous reply of May 1895 to Khetri court's felicitations to him on his success in the U.S.A., he wrote :

The Kṣatriyas have always been the backbone of India, so also they had been the supporters of science and liberty.... You, Rajputs, have been the glories of ancient India.

17. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1, P. 112.

18. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol 1, P. 210.

19. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, P. viii.

Rajasthan's contribution to science and industry

In this context we may also mention the glorious contributions of Rajasthan to Indian science. Starting from the Indus Valley civilization, the fame of Indian non-ferrous metallurgy has been chiefly due to the mines of Rajasthan. Tod records his observation about the old copper mine at Dariba (recently reactivated): 'filled with water and the miners are all dead'²⁰ and that 'the tin mines of Mewar were once very productive, yielding no inconsiderable portion of silver.'²¹ Zinc and Lead have been made out of Zawar ores near Udaipur in Mewar since time immemorial.

The inhabitants of Khetri may legitimately be proud of their contribution to copper metallurgy for many centuries. Khetri copper belt extending between Singhana to Raghunathgarh in Rajasthan is marked by intense mining activity. Following the discovery (in 1972) of a thick deposit of Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP) dated 2500-2200 B.C. in Jodhpura—15 km from Bairat, the capital of Matsya Desa, and in later times an important site of Buddhist Rock edict—a team of archaeologists discovered in November 1977, 'the richest find of pre-historic copper objects in a single site' at Ganeshwar, 15 km from Neem ka Thana and 60 km from Khetri.²² By 1979, a huge hoard of copper celts, axes, chisels, bangles, fishing hooks, arrows, etc. had been unearthed.

Copper was mined at Khetri during the Mauryan period. Abul Fazl recorded in 1590 that 'Babai has a copper mine.

20. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, P. 549.

21. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1, P. 10.

22. R. C. Agrawala and Vijay Kumar, 'Ganeshwar-Jodhpura Culture', in *Harappan Civilization—A Contemporary Perspective*, Ed. G.L. Possehl. 1982. Pp. 125-34.

Singhana Udaipur has a copper mine and a mint for copper coinage.' The mints functioning in Singhana and Khetri were closed by the British in 1869.²³ Much of the ancient Indian arts and crafts based upon non-ferrous metals and alloys like bronze, brass etc. had been made possible by the ingenuity of the mine and metal workers of Khetri and Mewar region.²⁴

The Kuchwaha Maharaja of Amber (Jaipur), Sawai Jai Singh II ruled during 1699-1743 and, taking advantage of the crumbling Mughal empire, extended his influence 'from thirty *kos* of Delhi to the shores of the sea at Surat'. The astronomical catalogue known as *Zij Muhammad Shahi* was prepared under his direction. This is the last Indian astronomical work in pre-British India.²⁵ The astronomical equipments as well as the new city of Jaipur were designed by Vidyadhar Bhattacharya, a Bengalee astronomer who helped Jai Singh in all astronomical pursuits and in negotiations with the Portuguese court-missionary Padre Manuel and the French astronomer-missionary Claude Boudier.²⁶ The latter came all the way from Chandernagore in West Bengal to Amber, set up a telescope and held scientific dialogues with Jai Singh and Vidyadhar.²⁷

The Khetri kingdom

The independence of Shekhawati rulers (of Khandela and Udaipur and later on of

Khetri) was however curbed during Jai Singh's regime. The British had replaced the Mughals as the central authority in Delhi but this did not change the suzerainty of Jaipur. The rulers of Khetri had to struggle perpetually with the Jaipur throne. Abhay Singh of Khetri assisted the British in 1803 against the Mahratta power which had ravaged Rajasthan; as a reward, the pargana of Kot Putli (see map) was awarded to the Khetri kingdom in 1806 with the understanding that 'the Raja will consider it his duty to conciliate the ryots and inhabitants of that district, promote their welfare and prosperity and refrain from any oppressive measures'. Sikar and Khetri were considered to be powerful feudatories of Jaipur throne, almost as independent in domestic arrangements as their suzerains.

Raja Fateh Singh who became chief of Khetri during 1842-70 wrote in his autobiography: *Merī pratham siksā Hindī me hūi. Merī matr̥bhāṣā Hindī hī hai ... 1855 me maine angreji padhnā ārambha kiā.* 'My basic education was in Hindi which is my mother tongue ... In 1855 I started learning English.'²⁸ Aided by Major J.C. Brookes, the British Political Agent at Jaipur, Fateh Singh introduced some land reform measures and established several schools and hospitals. This was highly applauded by Sir John Lawrence in the Agra Durbar of November 1867. The palace in which Swami Vivekananda stayed in 1891, and which is at present a centre of Ramakrishna Mission, was built during 1864-66 and named 'Fateh Bilas' by W.H. Beynon, the Raja's friend, during his visit to Khetri in February 1866. In the meantime the two principal personalities of our narrative were born: Raja Ajit Singh as the son of Thakur Chattu Singh at Alsisar on 16th October 1861, and Swami Vivek-

23. J. C. Brooke, 'The Mines of Khetri in Rajputana', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1864, Pp. 519-529.

24. Hindustan Copper Ltd., Brochure on Khetri Copper.

25. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, Pp. 288-90; 9; 10.

26. W. A. Blanpied, *The Astronomical Efforts of Raja Sawai Jai Singh II*, Harvard University, 1973.

27. Edward Maclagen, *The Jesuits and the Great Mughal*, (London: 1932.) p. 134.

28. Fateh Singh, *Autobiography*, (Calcutta: E. M. Lewis Central Press, 1869.)

ananda as Narendranath Dutta at Calcutta on 12th January 1863.

Raja Fateh Singh did not have a male heir. Advised by his minister Nandlal Nehru, elder brother of Pandit Motilal Nehru, he adopted the nine-year old Ajit Singh as his son and heir in 1870. A few months later, Fateh Singh died at Mussoorie and the boy Ajit Singh became the next Raja of Khetri. His education was arranged by Raja Ram Singh of Jaipur under the guidance of Kantichandra Mukherji, the headmaster of Maharaja College, Jaipur, and later on Raja Madhav Singh's prime minister. Educated at Noble's school at Jaipur, Ajit Singh became an able successor to Fateh Singh.

Contact with Bengal

By the time Swami Vivekananda met Maharaja Ajit Singh for the first time in 1891, many emotional contacts had already taken place between Bengal and Rajasthan. During Akbar's time, Raja Man Singh of Amber, after defeating Pratapaditya of Jessore in Bengal, brought the image of Goddess Kali known as 'Jasoreswari' and a family of Bengali priests to Jaipur. Sawai Jai Singh's contact with Vidyadhar Bhattacharya, the Bengali astronomer, in the early part of the 18th century has already mentioned. Again in the nineteenth century, another famous Bengali administrator Kantichandra Mukherji was brought by Maharaja Ram Singh to Jaipur, first appointed as a teacher and then elevated as an administrator. A branch of the Brahmo Samaj was established in Khetri around 1886 which was its only branch in Rajasthan at that time. It was possibly established by a legal luminary from Bengal.²⁹

29. Benishankar Sharma, *Swami Vivekananda—A Forgotten Chapter of His Life* (Calcutta: Oxford Book & Stationery Co. 1963) p. 16.

The holy name of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had been spread in the Shekhawati Kingdom around Khetri by Pandit Narayan Shastri much before 1886, when the Great Master passed away. Pandit Narayan Shastri was himself a Shekhawati Rajput. Well versed in philosophy, he had rejected an offer to be a court pandit of the Maharaja of Jaipur, and had come to Bengal to study Nyaya philosophy.³⁰ At Dakshineswar he met Sri Ramakrishna in 1857 and received his initiation into sannyasa from him.³¹ Soon after this he left his wife and family for the practice of austerities and it is not known how and when he died.³² Narayan Shastri met the famous Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta and disapproved the poet's conversion to Christianity. He wrote in Bengali with a piece of coal on the wall of the verandah on the eastern side of Sri Ramakrishna's room in Dakshineswar, that it was a mean act to change one's religion for the sake of money. This writing used to attract attention of the latter-day disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.³³

From one Pandit Sitaram, Swami Akhandananda learnt, while staying and studying in the tomb of a Jain sadhu at Malsisar, that Narayan Shastri had spread Sri Ramakrishna's message in that part of Rajasthan 'many years ago' and had preached that the Master was an incarnation of God.³⁴ Whether Narayan Shastri did this after he finally took leave of the Master, or whether he used to visit his

30. M., *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, Vol. 4 (Calcutta: Kathamrita Bhavan) Pp. 123-25.

31. *Kathamrita*, Vol. 2, p. 151.

32. *Kathamrita*, Vol. 2, p. 151.

Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga* (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office.) Vol. 4, Pp. 88-96.

33. *Lilaprasanga*, Vol. 4, Pp. 88-96.

34. Swami Akhandananda, *From Holy Wanderings to the Service of Man*, (Madras: Ramakrishna Math. 1979) p. 68.

homeland from time to time while staying as a disciple of the Master at Dakshineswar, is difficult to ascertain now.

It is clear that Maharaja Ajit Singh was brought up in a cultural atmosphere which was a happy blend of Western liberal education and Indian spiritual wisdom. He visited Calcutta in 1890, arranged there a conference of Sanskrit scholars, stayed with his subjects like Surajmal Jhunjunia, and might have heard from them, or even earlier from Pandit Narayan Shastri in Khetri, about Sri Ramakrishna.³⁵ Thus when his minister Munshi Jagmohanlal told him that a Bengali sadhu had come to Mount Abu where the Raja was staying at the Khetri House, he was eager to meet the sadhu, who was no other than Swami Vivekananda. They met each other for the first time at the Khetri House, Mount Abu, on the fourth of June 1891. Swamiji found in the Raja an enlightened ruler, a musician, a poet, and above all an ardent and faithful disciple.

II

Ajit Singh's first meeting with Swamiji

Many facts about Ajit Singh's life and his association with Swamiji have been mentioned by earlier authors, and it is not necessary to repeat here all of them. Only a few salient points need be brought out here in order to clarify and integrate the vast, scattered pieces of information on the subject.

The very first two questions put by the Raja to Swamiji and the respective answers he received are most revealing. In reply to the question: 'What is life?' Swamiji said:

³⁵ Jhabarmal Sharma, *Adarsha Naresh*, 1940. Sailendranath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra. 1975) Vol. 2, Pp. 1482-1484.

'Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down'. The reply brought out not only Swamiji's personal struggles against heavy odds but also reminded the listener of his own experiences as well. Ajit Singh must have remembered the struggle against the Jaipur throne which had led to the establishment of the Shekhawati dynasty at Khetri a couple of centuries ago—the kind of struggle which he too had started waging, and was to continue till his death in 1901. The second question, about education, brought out Swamiji's definition that education is the nervous association of ideas and his giving an illustration from Sri Ramakrishna's life.³⁶

The Raja was fired with a deep spiritual fervour, and Swamiji became his friend, philosopher and guide. The beautiful association of the two continued uninterrupted from 4th of June to 27th of October 1891 as indicated by the Waqayat Register.³⁷ They were together at Mount Abu till 24th July. Often they dined together. On the 15th of June and again on the 22nd they spent the whole day (9 am to 5 pm) discussing religion and cultural matters. On the 27th of June, Swamiji sang and the Raja accompanied him on the harmonium.³⁸

Leaving Mount Abu on the 24th of July and spending a few days at Jaipur, Ajit Singh and Swamiji reached Khetri on the 7th of August 1891 and stayed together for two and a half months.

A careful perusal of the Waqayat Register entries as noted by Benishankar Sharma prompts the author of this article to firmly suggest that the nautch-girl episode in Swamiji's life took place on the 9th of

³⁶ *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1949. Vol. 2, Pp. 219-221.

³⁷ *Swami Vivekananda, a forgotten chapter of his life*.

³⁸ *Swami Vivekananda, a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 40.

August 1891, Sunday evening, on the roof of the Dewan Khana, also known as Futeh-Bilas, where the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Smriti Mandir is located in Khetri at present.

The party from Mount Abu reached Khetri on the 7th of August and the next day was a rest day. On the 9th, Sunday, people of Khetri started coming to pay their respects to the Raja who had been out of town for a long time. Jhabarmal Sharma says: 'It was customary for the subjects to pay homage to the Raja (on his return after a long absence) during morning and evening; this was known as *salam malum*.' Swamiji came to the Raja's palace and stayed with him up to 2 pm (Did he bestow spiritual initiation to the Raja on this day?). It rained a little, but still it was hot. After playing tennis, the Raja came and 'sat with his officials on the roof of the Dewan Khana in the evening at 7 pm.' Below the roof of the Dewan Khana is the big Durbar Hall of Futeh-Bilas and above the roof is the room which was given to Swamiji for his stay at Khetri.

To follow Jhabarmal Sharma's description: the Raja sitting on the roof sent a request to the Swami, through his attendant, to kindly come down for religious discussion. Swamiji came down and some discussion took place till a group of *nartakīs* (dancing and singing girls) came to pay their respects to the Raja. An elderly *nartakī* sought the permission of the Raja to entertain him with a song. The Raja permitted her to sing, but Swamiji stood up to leave her company. Ajit Singh assured Swamiji that the woman was a reputed singer of Bhajans, but that assurance probably did not impress Swamiji. He went back to his room, which was just above and overlooking the roof where the incident took place, and hence he could hear the song even from his room or the balcony in front of it. As is well known to the

readers of Swamiji's biography, the soulful rendering of Surdas's Bhajan: 'O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities! Thy name, O Lord, is same-sightedness ...' deeply touched Swamiji. He realized that there was divinity in all beings, even in the singer woman whom he had ignored. He came down to the hall of audience and joined the party. Swamiji addressed the elderly *nartakī* as 'māyī' who in turn addressed him as her *lāl*.³⁹

In later years Swamiji recalled this episode several times to Sister Christine, Ida Ansell, Sister Nivedita, and others. In May 1898, Swamiji went to Nainital with Sister Nivedita to meet Ajit Singh and there also, some dancing girls wanted to meet him. This time he readily agreed and told Sister Nivedita about the earlier episode.⁴⁰ In his letter of 23rd August 1896 to Swami Ramakrishnananda, Swamiji advised that public women should be allowed to visit Dakshineswar since 'the Lord manifests himself specially for the sinful'!

That the *nartakī* episode took place during Swamiji's first visit to Khetri has been clearly stated by Jhabarmal Sharma who had heard a first-hand account from Munshi Jagmohanlal, a direct witness, and got his version thoroughly scrutinized and certified by Swami Akhandananda (who wrote a preface to Sharma's book). Jhabarmal Sharma's graphic description (no date was put by him) can easily be connected with the Waqayat Register entries for the date 9th of August 1891, as quoted earlier.

It is remarkable that Swamiji stayed at Khetri for more than two and half months; this was partly out of his deep affection for the new disciple Raja Ajit Singh. Swamiji also took the opportunity to study Patanj-

39. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2, (1913) Pp. 153-54.

40. Sister Nivedita, *Notes on Some Wanderings with Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1967), Pp. 14-16.

ali's *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇinī's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* from Pandit Narayan Das, a reputed grammarian whom he referred to as 'my professor' in his letter to Pandit Shankarlal dated 20th September, 1892. Swamiji must have also studied Yajurveda with another scholar, Pandit Sunderlalji Ojha mentioned in the same letter.

The days were spent in spiritual discussions, scientific observations through telescope and microscope. Raja Ajit Singh was a musician and poet and Swamiji used to sing songs composed by the Raja. In his introduction to Jhabarmal Sharma's book *Khetri Nareś aur Vivekananda*, Swami Akhandananda has spoken of the love-filled poetic heart of the Raja and how Swamiji used to sing a particular song composed by the Raja with great feeling.⁴¹ Swamiji also greatly enjoyed the Raja's recital of the Veena.

The Guru and the disciple were not much different in age. Together they used to go for a ride and occasionally on a hunting trip—Swamiji refused to take any gun even at the risk of facing wild tigers—and admired the flora and fauna of the Shekhawati kingdom. They shared their interest in fauna till the end of their lives. In his letter dated 28th April 1893 from Khetri Swamiji asked Dewan Haridas Beharidas Desai whether he could offer a lion cub of Junagadh to Ajit Singh in exchange of a suitable animal of Rajputana. Again, he wrote from Almora to the Raja on the 9th of June 1898: 'I want a couple of tiger skins if I can, to be sent to the Math as present to two European friends.' And then, 'Fish roes will be sent for your lake, as the right season is approaching, from Calcutta'.

Ajit Singh's court was adorned by philosophers, poets and musicians. One of them was the famous maestro Musraf Khan who played on the Veena on 21 October 1891 before Swamiji, and was later on sent by Pandit Motilal Nehru (Ajit Singh's legal adviser) to the World Music Conference in Paris.⁴²

Swamiji admired Rajasthani customs and manners. He wrote to his monastic brothers from London on 27 April 1896 about the rules and regulations to be followed in the Math: 'There should be fixed hours for meals. Everyone must have a seat and a low dining table. He will sit on the former and put his plate on the latter, as is the custom in Rajputana.' Swamiji praised the Rajput style of wearing a dhoti.⁴³

Raja Ajit Singh had recommended to Swamiji that to protect himself from the hot wind (*loo*) of Rajasthan, he should wear a turban. The Maharaja taught him how to wind the turban. Swamiji thereafter wore turban and the various photographs show how many styles of winding it he had mastered. Swami Turiyananda used to mention how speedily and neatly Swamiji could wind the turban. It may also be pointed out that the 1887 group photograph at Baranagar Math shows him with a headdress.

The controversy as to whether Raja Ajit Singh gave the name 'Vivekananda' to Swamiji, and if so, when (during the first visit in 1891 or during the second visit in 1893, immediately before Swamiji's departure for the U.S.A.) has been discussed at length by several authors, especially Jhabarmal Sharma, Benishankar Sharma, Shankari Prasad Basu and S. N. Dhar. It is evident that Swamiji used to change his name from time to time. While he wrote as 'Sacchid-

41. The song begins with:

बिन बिन मोकुं कछु न सुहावे
तइपत जिय अति ही अकुलावे...

42. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter in his life*, p. 50.

43. Mahendranath Dutta, *Londone Swami Vivekananda* (Bengali) Vol. 2, p. 168,

ananda' to Sm. Indumati Mitra as late as on 24 May 1893—seven days before his departure for the U.S.A.—he had used the name 'Vivekananda' in his letter dt. 26th April, 1892 to Haridas Beharidas and, according to Shankari Prasad Basu, that was the time when Swamiji started using the name. S. N. Dhar further points out that some of the earlier letters of Swamiji such as those dated 24 January 1890, February 1890, 6 July 1890 etc. bear the name 'Vivekananda'. It is quite possible that Ajit Singh's statement preferring the name 'Vivekananda' to 'Vividishananda', mentioned by Jhabarmal Sharma was made in 1891 at Mount Abu.⁴⁴ This is clearly indicated in the Waqayat Register entries. The final decision regarding the name was probably taken by Swamiji himself, while booking his passage to America at Bombay, prior to his second visit to Khetri.

The claim made by Benishankar Sharma that 'It was not at Madras (but at Khetri) that Swamiji secured the funds which enabled him to go to America' has been ably refuted by Swami Gambhirananda by citing a letter of Swami Shivananda dated 13 February 1894 and numerous statements of Swami Vivekananda himself.⁴⁵ It is acknowledged, however, that Raja Ajit Singh arranged to convert Swamiji's ticket to one for a higher class and provided him with enough pocket money, a part of which was to be delivered in U.S. currency through Thomas Cook & Son. Swamiji lost the circular notes, and a series of telegrams sent by Ajit Singh to Thomas Cook enabled him to receive \$ 150 at Boston.⁴⁶ In a letter written from Japan to Ajit Singh—quoted

by Mahendranath Dutta—Swamiji regretted that the money had gone to the U.S.A. bank; otherwise he would 'buy Japanese goods and go back to India!' (He actually bought and sent some presents to Ajit Singh).⁴⁷

Swamiji wrote to Ajit Singh on 1st December 1898: 'You made it possible for me to get rid of a terrible anxiety and face the world and do some work'. Swami Gambhirananda has identified this 'terrible anxiety' as concern for Swamiji's mother and two younger brothers.⁴⁸

Raja Ajit Singh's help to Swamiji's family

Ever since Swamiji resolved to renounce the world—even before the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna in 1886—he could not shake off the tremendous agony he felt for the plight of his widowed mother and his young brothers: Mahendranath and Bhupendranath who were only seventeen and six years old respectively in 1886. On 14 July 1889 Swamiji wrote to Pramadas Mitra, the great scholar and philanthropist of Banaras, regretting that his mother had refused to accept the monetary donation sent by him. When Swamiji's younger sister committed suicide in Simla (end of 1890) the news was sent by Mahendranath to Swamiji who was then staying at Almora. After this, Swamiji resolved to move without letting others know about his whereabouts. But his agonized heart was never consoled. Nine years later he wrote to Mrs. Bull (12 December, 1898): 'I went years ago to the Himalayas never to come back; and my sister committed suicide, the news reached me there, and weak heart flung me off from that prospect of peace!! It is the weak heart that has driven me out of India to seek some help for those I love'.

⁴⁴. Jhabarmal Sharma, *Khetri Nares aor Vivekananda*, 1927, p. 11.

⁴⁵. Swami Gambhirananda, *Yuganayak Vivekananda* (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1373 B.S.) Vol. 2, Pp. 421-25.

⁴⁶. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, Pp. 85-91.

⁴⁷. *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali* (Bengali) Vol. 3, Pp. 1-3.

⁴⁸. *Yuganayak Vivekananda* (Bengali) Vol. 1, Pp. 421-25.

Mahendranath suffered from haemoptysis and Swamiji's relatives continued to cheat and harass his mother. Under these circumstances, Swamiji might have told Raja Ajit Singh, on the latter's enquiry, about his family during his first visit to Khetri. Mahendranath writes that Ajit Singh was eager to know more details and wrote to 'Sarat Maharaj, Jogen Maharaj and Mr. Sannyal to send news about Swamiji's family and to keep this matter a secret.'⁴⁹ It is not clear whether the Raja sent any monetary help to Swamiji's family even before the 31st of May 1893. Probably he did, and did it secretly. Mahendranath's letter to Ajit Singh dated 28 February 1893 contains the opening sentence: 'Anxious as I am at not receiving your Highness' any letter for a long time, I am still more so for the health of the newborn child.'⁵⁰ This clearly shows that Ajit Singh had sent news of the birth of his son Jai Singh few months earlier, and had been in regular correspondence with Swamiji's family through the Alambazar Math.

Ajit Singh wrote to Mahendranath on 10 March 1893 enquiring about his studies and the books he was reading. Mahendranath replied on the 22nd of March, and this correspondence went on. Mahendranath has noted in his memoir that the Raja used to write to him twice every month in his own hand (evidently to keep the matter confidential) as a humble devotee of Swamiji.⁵¹

In the meantime, Munshi Jagmohanlal went to Madras and persuaded Swamiji to come to Khetri for the second time and bless the newborn baby.⁵² Just before

Swamiji's trip to the U.S.A., Raja Ajit Singh not only gave a fat purse to him, but also decided to send Rs. 100/- every month to Swamiji's mother. This removed 'a terrible anxiety' from Swamiji's mind and 'made it possible for him to face the world and do some work'. This noble act of the Raja elicited warm appreciation from Swamiji's monastic brothers. Swami Ramakrishnananda wrote on 13 June 1893: 'When such a noble prince like your good self feels always anxious to redress the family, I am confident that their troubles will very soon come to an end.'⁵³

Swami Shivananda wrote on 20th July 1893: 'I had a chance of having a look into the letter from you enquiring Vivekananda's former household affairs; ... I was able to form a high opinion of your kind-heartedness.'⁵⁴

On the 6th of July 1893, Raja Ajit Singh ended the confidentiality of his correspondence with Mahendranath and hoped that Mahendranath 'will not mind my Dewan Jagmohanlal writing to you ... you must not think by this that I will quite drop off writing to you at times.'⁵⁵ Mahendranath writes that the monthly donation of Rs. 100/- used to be sent to Swamiji's mother till the Raja's death in 1901.

It seems that the Raja was willing to donate another Rs. 100/- per month to the Math but Swami Brahmananda did not agree to accept this offer conveyed through Swamiji in May 1893; this annoyed

birth in 1889, Motilal had his horoscope prepared by the court astrologer of Khetri. Ajit Singh had two daughters but no son at that time. In 1891, he solicited and received Swamiji's blessings to have a son.

49. *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali* (Bengali) Vol. 2, Pp. 180-81.

50. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 69.

51. *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, Pp. 180-81.

52. It is known that after Jawaharlal Nehru's

53. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 163.

54. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 164.

55. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 167.

Swamiji.⁵⁶ In his letter of 1st December 1898, Swamiji requested the Raja that this additional monthly stipend of Rs. 100/- be paid to him 'for my lifetime for my expenses'. Very promptly the Raja sent Rs. 500/- through his banker in Calcutta, Seth Dulichand Kankaria, and continued to send monthly donations.⁵⁷

The intimate contact between the Raja and Swamiji's family and admirers continued after Swamiji's departure for the U.S.A. in May 1893. Ramakrishnananda's letter dated 10 February 1894 inviting Jagmohanlal and the Raja to attend Sri Ramakrishna's birthday ceremony on 11 March 1894 is very touching :

'We all wish that you once come and see what supernatural things occur that day. Thousands and thousands of men from Calcutta aristocracy and gentry resort at the place, the garden of Paradise, where our Lord lived, to forget the cares and anxieties of the world and enjoy peace, merriments and real happiness...singing chorus songs in praise of the Greatest of the Great...won't you come to see such a grand scene and grandeur things ?'⁵⁸

Raja Ajit Singh wrote to Swami Akhandananda on 26 December 1894 about the impending marriage of his elder daughter Suryakumari, with the prince of Shahpur during the end of January 1895. Swamiji's family and followers in Calcutta were invited. Swami Yogananda, Swami Saradananda and Sannyal mahashay consulted one another, and sent as present a Dhākā sari, paddy, Dūrvā grass and vermilion—the traditional token of Bengali goodwishes. Later Mahendranath explained to Jagmohan-

lal the significance of the typical Bengali presents offered to the Rajasthani bride.⁵⁹

After leaving India, Swamiji wrote many letters to Raja Ajit Singh. Some of these letters—originals or copies—were sent to Alambazar Math. A few of these papers 'kept in a file in the eastern corner of the big room in Alambazar Math' were unwittingly destroyed by Niranjan Maharaj.⁶⁰

In 1896 Sharat Maharaj (Swami Saradananda) went to U.K., and a week later Mahendranath followed him and both met Swamiji in London. Mahendranath wanted to study law but Swamiji advised him against it. Aukhoy Kumar Ghosh, a young devotee of Swamiji also went to U.K. to study law. Both of them might have received financial help for their travel from Raja Ajit Singh. Ghosh was the first person to inform the Raja about Swamiji's success in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago.⁶¹ In his letter dated 13 January 1899, Ghosh asked Raja from London for permission to use £ 20 sent to Mr. Sturdy for Mahendranath ('nobody knows where he is for the last 19 months').⁶² This establishes Raja's continued support to Mahendranath during his stay at U.K. During the summer of 1897—after Swamiji reached India—Mahendranath left for an extensive tour across the continents. Swamiji's youngest brother Bhupendranath wrote to Jagmohanlal about Mahendranath's trip to Turkey and that 'he will travel to Persia, Tibet, Mangolia up to the Chinese wall.'⁶³

The above pieces of information abun-

^{59.} *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, p. 185.

^{60.} *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 3, Pp. 136-7.

^{61.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, Pp. 202-4.

^{62.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 205.

^{63.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 200.

^{56.} *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, p. 181.

Londone Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 1, Pp. 139-40.

^{57.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, Pp. 176-77.

^{58.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, Pp. 195-98.

dantly show how intimate Ajit Singh's relationship was with Swamiji's family and friends. Many statements made by Swamiji prove the special affection he bestowed on the Raja. To Ramakrishnananda (1895): 'Whenever the king of Khetri wants some information, you write yourself, nobody else should know.'⁶⁴ To Akhandananda (13th November 1895): 'King (of Khetri) is the only householder in India who has proved his unquestionable friendship so far.'⁶⁵ To Jagmohanlal (11th October 1897):

'Certain men are born in certain periods to perform certain actions in combination. Ajit Singh and myself—are two souls—born to help each other in a big work for the good of mankind—we are as supplement and complement.'⁶⁶ Mahendranath writes: 'Raja Ajit Singh served Swamiji the way Rasmani's son-in-law Mathuranath Biswas served Sri Ramakrishna.'⁶⁷

(To be concluded)

⁶⁴. *Swami Vivekanander Vani O Rachana*, (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, B.S. 1369) Vol. 7, p. 170.

⁶⁵. *Swami Vivekanander Vani O Rachana*, Vol. 7, p. 176.

⁶⁶. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 118.

⁶⁷. *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, p. 212.

WHY DO WE LIVE ?*

(A JAPANESE SERMON)

DR. J. A. B. SCHERER

In a certain place there was once an extraordinary dunce by the name of Chokichi, [begins the preacher]. Now, there are very many dunces in this world, but this particular fellow was a most accomplished dunce. In the matter of forgetting things he was a perfect genius.

One day his mistress said to him: 'Chokichi, this is the anniversary of the death of our principal ancestor, and his reverence the priest will be here before long. Therefore we must have the customary offerings ready to set before the household gods. So hurry to the market and buy me some carrots, dock, wild potatoes, mushrooms, and lotus root—these five things.'

With this she gave him five farthings, and Chokichi with an exclamation of assent, girded up his loins and started off.

As he was hurrying along to market on a dogtrot he met his neighbour, Chomatsu.

'Hallo, Chokichi!' said the latter; 'you are in a great hurry. What are you after and where are you going, anyhow?'

'To market to buy some things,' answered Chokichi, as he hurried on.

'Well, what are you going to buy?'

'What am I going to buy? I don't know, I'm sure,' was the reply.

So the story goes. This forgetting the important business that his mistress had sent him on, and only racing in the street—it was a great piece of folly, was it not?

And yet this Chokichi is not to be heedlessly laughed at. For while it may not

* Reprinted from *Prabuddha Bharata* September, 1904.

KHETRI IN THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT

(Illustrated)

DR. ARUN KUMAR BISWAS

(Continued from the previous issue)

Shekhawati involvement in Ramakrishna Movement

Apart from rendering personal service to Swamiji, his family and friends, Raja Ajit Singh also took a deep interest in the philanthropic activities started under the inspiration of Swamiji. This endeared the Raja all the more to his subjects. His good administration elicited praise from the British Agent, Colonel Trevor.⁶⁸ On 20 September 1892, Swamiji wrote to Pandit Shankarlal of Khetri about the need for free thinking and travel to foreign lands 'to see how the engine of society works in other countries', and about the need to protect the poor from economic exploitation and oppression in the name of caste.

We have already referred to the frequent correspondence between Swamiji and Ajit Singh for a period of one year from April 1893, during which period even Swamiji's gurubhais, the members of his family and his disciples and admirers in India were looking to the Raja for information about Swamiji. The Raja was urged to visit foreign countries and learn from Japan's excellent industrial progress. Swamiji wrote to Alasinga on 31 August 1894 that he had sent a phonograph to the king of Khetri and, on 19 November 1894, that the Raja had intimated him of the safe arrival of the phonograph.

The message contained in the phonograph (Swamiji's address to the Raja in Hindi) was, according to Jhabarmal Sharma who

most probably got it from Munshi Jagmohanlal: 'Please spread education among your subjects, establish schools in villages and make arrangements for the treatment of the sick in hospitals. Your subjects' prosperity is your prosperity; therefore please look after them as you would your own children.'⁶⁹ The Raja must have found this message very inspiring. The phonograph was played in the Durbar hall before the leading citizens of Khetri. Unfortunately, the record containing Swamiji's solemn and melodious voice 'was sold as a part of un-serviceable stores to some kabadi (junk dealer).'⁷⁰

Soon after Swamiji's success at the Chicago Parliament of Religions of 1893 there were concerted attacks against him and his views.⁷¹ Swamiji needed formal support from the Hindu society in India for his cause. Rising to the occasion, Ajit Singh sought more information about Swamiji's activities (Swamiji requested Miss Mary Hale in his letter dated 30.3.1894 from Detroit to send relevant paper cuttings to Raja Ajit Singh), and arranged a special Durbar in Dewan Khana (above which

⁶⁹. Jhabarmal Sharma, *Khetri Nares aur Vivekananda*, p. 85.

⁷⁰. *Swami Vivekananda—a Forgotten Chapter of His Life*, (henceforth *Forgotten Chapter*) p. 226.

⁷¹. It was at this time that Ajit Singh wrote to Swamiji on April 7, 1894, not to lose heart: 'My dear Guroo...you ought not to feel disgusted by the backbiting of our countrymen...Remain there where the people are jewellers of human beings'. See, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by Eastern and Western Disciples*, (henceforth *Life*). 1979. Vol. 1, p. 488.

⁶⁸. Pioneer, 31 January 1982; Quoted in *Khetri kā Itihās* (Hindi).

Swamiji stayed during his 1891 visit to Khetri) on the 4th of March 1895. A letter of appreciation for Swamiji's good work was read by Munshi Jagmohanlal, formally adopted, signed by the Raja and then sent to Swamiji. In return, Swamiji sent his beautiful letter of thanks to Raja in May 1895 in which he inspired the whole nation through Raja Ajit Singh. He feelingly mentioned: 'Once more the voice that spoke to the sages on the banks of the Sarasvatī...has spoken again.' He concluded by hoping that there would be a 'glorious renaissance of the religion eternal' through Kshatriyas like Ajit Singh 'who have always been the backbone of India and the supporters of science and liberty'.

Swami Akhandananda in Khetri

Swami Akhandananda was the first amongst Swami Vivekananda's Gurubhais to be inspired by Swamiji's ideal of service to the poor and needy. He was so much in tune with Swamiji's love for the down-trodden that he had started work even before Swamiji encouraged him to do so. Closely following Swamiji, Swami Akhandananda toured through Rajasthan and reached Jamnagar where he was inspired by Jhandu Bhat's spiritual zeal for serving suffering people.⁷² In July 1893 he went to Khetri to recuperate his deteriorating health, stayed there for a month and a half, and then proceeded to Malsisar at the request of Bhursingh. There he studied scriptures under Pandit Sitaram who told him about Sri Ramakrishna's message having been spread much earlier in the Shekhawati region by Narayan Sastri.

During his sojourn in and around Malsisar for eight long months he saw the piti-

able condition of the poor, and wrote a long letter in Hindi to the Raja of Khetri on 'The duty of a king to his people.' He described 'how his poor tenants lived in dingy huts, with scarcely any access to air and light, how they lacked nutrition and proper clothing, and how like leeches, the rich sucked them dry to satisfy their own love of luxury.'⁷³ This message was similar to, though a bit harsher than, Swamiji's message on the phonograph. The Raja acknowledged the pertinence of the advice to him to improve the lot of his subjects in his letter to Swami Akhandananda dated 26 December 1894.⁷⁴

During the early part of 1894, Swami Akhandananda came back to Khetri at the Raja's invitation. From there he wrote a letter to Swamiji asking 'whether he was right in taking the vow of relieving the distressed people.'⁷⁵ Swamiji replied in the affirmative (1894) and sent him lofty words of encouragement:

Try to develop spirituality and philanthropy amongst the Thakurs in the different places of Rajputana...Make a trip now and then to Malsisar, Alsisar, and all the other 'sars' that are there...Go from door to door amongst the poor and lower classes of the town of Khetri and teach them religion...the poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion.

Swami Akhandananda had thought that he would leave Khetri if Swamiji did not inspire him to serve the poor. He used to cry to Sri Ramakrishna: 'Why this inequality? Why can't you get the people's wealth evenly distributed?'⁷⁶ Even after receiving Swamiji's inspiring letter, Swami Akhandananda thought whether Swamiji

72. Swami Akhandananda, *From Holy Wanderings to the Service of Man* (henceforth *Holy Wanderings*), p. 64.

73. *Holy Wanderings*, Pp. 68-9.

74. *Forgotten Chapter*, p. 224.

75. *Holy Wanderings*, p. 69.

76. Swami Annadananda, *Swami Akhandananda* (Bengali), p. 94.

would ask his Gurubhais also to engage themselves in the service of man. A post-card from Swami Ramakrishnananda (middle of 1894) contained the information that Swamiji had already done so.⁷⁷

The first work undertaken by Swami Akhandananda was to arrange education for the boys belonging to the 500 families of 'gola' or hereditary servants in the kingdom of Khetri. The social background of the 'gola' system in Rajasthan has been described by Tod as follows :

Famine in these regions is the great cause of loss of liberty: thousands were sold in the last great famine. The predatory system of the Pindarries and mountain tribes aided to keep it up. Here, freedom is derived through the mother. The offspring of a *golee* (female slave) or *dasi* must be a slave (*gola*). Hence the great number of *golas* in Rajput families, whose illegitimate offspring are still adorned in Mewar, with a silver ring around the left ankle, instead of the neck.⁷⁸

When Swami Akhandananda started organizing a school for the *gola* boys, the Raja's officers protested and pointed out that the boys, though illiterate, were required for work in their offices, and hence should not be sent to school. The Raja reversed his decision twice, and the school started with a Bengali M.A. teacher from Meerut as the headmaster. This was during the end of 1893 or the beginning of 1894. Towards the end of 1894 the Raja established, in accordance with Swami Akhandananda's suggestion, a separate education department and the Khetri Adarsha Vaidika Vidyalaya, a school for Vedic studies, inaugurated by Colonel Pride, the British Political Agent at Jaipur.⁷⁹ Echoing Swamiji's exhortation to the Raja on the phonograph, Swami

Akhandananda also urged the Zemindars of Malsisar (where a good school was established), Alsisar, Jhunjhunu, Chirawa, Khandela, Surajgarh, Lohegir etc. to dedicate themselves to the welfare of the people. He suggested that the bones of dead animals be used as manure. He also arranged subscription to agricultural periodicals and the improvement of hospitals.

Swami Akhandananda's love for the poor was so intense that he became an outspoken critic of all those who exploited them—the middlemen, money-lenders and corrupt officers. Some of them were annoyed with him for the *gola* episode. At the instance of Swami Akhandananda, the Raja stopped listening to the flatterers and started receiving 'nazar' or salutation of the common people directly, instead of doing it through the feudal lords. Whether the Raja himself was annoyed at such direct interference and unsolicited advice we do not know. Mahendranath quotes Swamiji as saying in London: 'The Raja used to treat Ganga (Akhandananda) very well in the beginning. But Ganga did not behave as a sadhu when he interfered in their politics, and the Raja did not tell him anything out of his respect for me'.⁸⁰

During the early part of 1894, Swami Akhandananda went to Udaipur and became acquainted with the prime minister's nephew. There also Swami Akhandananda was appalled at the extreme poverty of the people and, when the Rana of Udaipur sent provisions to him (also to other Sannyasins during the *caturmāsya* period), he refused to accept the gift on the ground that eighteen lakhs of Rana's subjects—his sons—were not able to get even a square meal every day. The headmaster of Udaipur High School later on warned Swami Akhandananda that the Rana was annoyed and

⁷⁷. *Holy Wanderings*, p. 77.

⁷⁸. James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (henceforth *Annals of Rajasthan*) Vol. I, Pp. 144-45.

⁷⁹. *Holy Wanderings*, Pp. 79-80.

⁸⁰. *London Swāmi Vivekānanda* (Bengali), p. 139.

that his life was in danger.⁸¹ The prime minister's nephew once asked Swami Akhandananda to give a lecture on religion which must not encroach on politics or patriotism. Akhandananda wanted to talk on the tyranny of the moneylenders over the poor, but even this was disallowed.⁸²

If Swamiji did indeed make the remark in London about Swami Akhandananda, as quoted before, it was probably because he had not by then received a first-hand version of the facts from his Gurubhai, and thus could not realize the predicament of a social worker actually witnessing social tyranny. After Jamnagar and Khetri, Swami Akhandananda initiated his pioneering social service work at Murshidabad in West Bengal. He expired as the third president of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission on the 7th of February 1937 in a room adjacent to the one in which Swamiji had passed away. Two days before his death when he was at Murshidabad, he dictated the following statement for insertion in his Bengali memoirs: 'The beginning of *Sevāvratā* (dedication to service) was at Jamnagar; Khetri saw its gradual unfolding and Murshidabad its expansion and culmination.' In the words of Swami Abhedananda, emotional experiences in Rajasthan had made Swami Akhandananda 'a patriot, statesman and philanthropist'.⁸³

Till 1895 Swamiji's plan was to start his philanthropic work in Rajputana. In 1894 he wrote to Alasinga that he was planning to return to India and that after reaching Bombay he would go to Rajputana first. In a letter written to Swami Ramakrishnananda in 1895 he expressed his displeasure at the poor response from Bengalis, and wrote that his Math should be established in Rajputana. Again in his letter

dated 13 November 1895 to Swami Akhandananda, he wrote :

Take particular care to start a centre in Rajputana. It must be in some central place like Jaipur or Ajmer. Then branches must be established in towns like Alwar and Khetri...A Religious Association has been afoot at Ajmer—What is it? Let me know all about it...About Maths or centres, or anything of the kind, it is no use starting them in Calcutta...'

But Swamiji's displeasure might have been softened after the wonderful meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall on 5 September 1894 under the chairmanship of Raja Pearimohan Mukhopadhyaya. In this meeting, organized through the tireless efforts of Swami Abhedananda and others, the residents of Calcutta expressed their appreciation of Swamiji's work in the U.S.A. and thanked him for it. Swamiji inspired Ramakrishnananda and others to start social service for the poor, and to think of a centre around Calcutta mainly to accommodate the Holy Mother and to look after her welfare.

During the latter half of 1895, Swami Akhandananda (probably Swami Brahmananda also) was at Jaipur. In an undated letter sent in 1895 to Jaipur (probably addressed to Swami Brahmananda) Swamiji wrote :

Give my special love and blessings to Hari Singh and others. Never take part in quarrels and disputes. Who on earth possesses the power to put the Raja of Khetri down? The Divine Mother is at his elbow.

It is said that he sent along with this letter a poem to encourage Ajit Singh who had difficulties with the king of Jaipur under whom the Khetri Raja was a feudatory chief. The first and the last (sixth) stanzas of this beautiful poem are reproduced below :

If the sun by the cloud is hidden a bit,
If the welkin shows but gloom,

81. *Holy Wanderings*, p. 75.

82. *Swami Akhandananda* (Bengali), p. 98.

83. *Swami Akhandananda* (Bengali), p. 105.

Still hold on yet, a while, brave heart,
 The victory is sure to come. ...
 With thee are those who see afar,
 With thee is the Lord of might,
 All blessings on thee, great soul
 To thee may all come tight.

The above encouragement to the Raja was necessary, because Swamiji's Gurubhais (monastic brothers) like Swami Akhandananda and Swami Brahmananda left Rajasthan during the end of 1895, to take care of Alambazar Math, to start the work of social service in Bengal, and to make preparatory arrangements for Swamiji's arrival in India. The work in Rajasthan was initiated again six years later, when Swamiji's disciples Swami Kalyanananda and Swami Swarupananda organized relief operations during a famine at Kishengarh and started an orphanage.

Swamiji left the U. K. on 16 December 1896 for India. Raja Ajit Singh sent Jagmohanlal to Madras to meet Swamiji. Jagmohanlal came back to Khetri and reported on Swamiji's deteriorating health. By the time Ajit Singh reached Calcutta (on 18 March 1897), Swamiji had gone to Darjeeling after the tumultuous and warm receptions held in his honour in Calcutta on the 19th (arrival) and 28th of February (reception meeting), and after attending Sri Ramakrishna's birthday celebrations at Dakshineswar on 7 March 1897.

Swamiji came back to Calcutta on the 21st of March just to meet Raja Ajit Singh. This was a memorable day for both the guru and the disciple, not only because they met after four long years, but also because they visited Dakshineswar together. While this was the only visit of the Raja, for Swamiji it was the last visit to the holy temple (for he was not welcome there-after!) A graphic description of the incidents on the 21st of March 1897 is available in the Khetri Waqayat Register reproduced by Benishankar Sharma in his

book; but this, however, sadly misses the tender moments of the guru and the disciple at Dakshineswar.⁸⁴

When Swamiji's train arrived at Sealdah station, Raja Ajit Singh entered the first class compartment and prostrated himself before the Swami. 'He washed the Swami's feet and put kesar (saffron) and chandan (sandalwood paste) on them, garlanded the Swami and also offered him a bouquet.' Then they went to Shew Buxji Bagla's house and took rest. In the afternoon Swamiji escorted the Raja to the temples of Kali and Radhakanta at Dakshineswar and then entered Sri Ramakrishna's room where 'he rolled himself thrice, from one end to the other, prostrated before Sri Ramakrishna's picture and then look at it with a steadfast gaze. The Raja and others stood outside the room.' Swamiji took the Raja to the holy Pañcavati, meditated there and then, sitting on a branch, swung like a boy. He told the Raja: 'During Sri Ramakrishna's time, we used to swing ourselves like this and make fun; the memory comes back to my mind. Look at this beautiful scene and surroundings on the bank of the Ganges.'

Trailokyanath Biswas (Mathuranath's son and the then keeper of the Dakshineswar temple) did not receive the guests in person, and later on wrote to the editor of a Bengali newspaper (a translation of the letter appeared in the *Indian Mirror* of 4 April 1897) that he 'did not want to keep any contact with a person who had crossed the oceans and yet called himself a Hindu'. He had also ordered a purificatory puja for the Goddess defiled by the visit of such a person! The forces of conservatism made it clear that Swamiji was not welcome to the holy place which had earlier inspired him and, through him, the whole world. Swamiji's opponents were overjoyed

⁸⁴. *Forgotten Chapter*, Pp. 213-19.

and made capital of this incident without, however, making any dent on the mighty liberal forces of Hinduism.

From Dakshineswar the party came to the Alambazar Math where a welcome address was presented to the Raja. He dined there. We read in Swami Virajananda's reminiscences :

In Alambazar Math, the Raja sat in a kneeling posture before Swamiji on a mat spread on the floor of the hall and conversed with him for a long time. Plainly dressed and modest in manners, he attracted the notice of everybody. On the occasion, under the orders of Swamiji, a special *bhoga*, which included fruit, sweetmeats and *halua* was offered to the Master.⁸⁵

Benishankar Sharma has reproduced a letter written by one Satish Chandra Dutta to Raja Ajit Singh on 7 August 1897. Dutta wanted to meet the Raja on the 21st of March 1897 (in Dulichand's house, prior to the Raja's trip to Dakshineswar temple) and seek financial assistance from him for his daughter's marriage. Swamiji's brother-disciples did not allow Dutta to meet Ajit Singh and advised him to write a letter. Dutta's letter starts with the introduction : 'I am one of the disciples of Swami Vivekananda that is your honour's Gurubhai...' Benishankar Sharma comments that 'it is evident that he wanted to exploit the sentiments of the Raja'. Indeed, many persons wanted to take advantage of the Raja's kindheartedness and his regard for Swamiji. In this particular case, however, the present author finds that Mahendranath had identified Satish Chandra Dutta as a householder disciple of Swamiji whom Swamiji nicknamed (evidently before 1891) 'Mutku'.⁸⁶

Raja Ajit Singh was invited to attend

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1897. He wanted to take Swamiji with him, but the doctors and friends strongly advised Swamiji, who was in failing health, against a second trip so soon. The Raja made a successful trip to U. K. and Germany, meeting Max Muller, Bismarck and other eminent persons. Queen Victoria honoured Ajit Singh by presenting him with a diamond-studded sword.⁸⁷ According to the *Indian Spectator* of 31 October 1897, the Raja showed considerable courage in crossing the 'Kalapani' and pushing forward the liberal reform movement. The press had always been spontaneous in its praise for the Raja. *The Times of India* in its issue of 10 November 1893 referred to the Raja's philanthropy in granting tax-exemption to his subjects to the extent of more than a lakh rupees, in planning an orphanage, and his foresight in requesting the Government of India to arrange geological exploration in Khetri (which is now the site of extensive copper mines and works).⁸⁸ Ajit Singh was the first to introduce land reforms in Rajasthan.

Naturally, Swamiji was proud of his disciple. On 23 July 1897 he wrote to Sister Nivedita : 'One of my best workers is now in England, the Raja of Khetri. I expect him soon in India, and he will be of great service to me no doubt.' On 15 November 1897 he wrote to Shrimati Indumati Mitra that he was proceeding to meet his friends in Rajputana to secure adequate funds for the Math (by that time the Raja had come back to India). Swamiji and his party reached Khetri and presented the Ramakrishna Mission's address of appreciation to the Raja on 12 December 1897. 'Swamiji

⁸⁷. *Forgotten Chapter*, p. 120.

⁸⁵. *Afiter Smriti* (Reminiscences of Swami Virajananda recorded in Bengali) p. 91.

⁸⁶. *Vivekananda Swāmijr Jibaner Ghatanābali* (Bengali). Vol. II, Pp. 79-80.

⁸⁸. Shankari Prasad Basu, *Vivekānanda O Samakālin Bhāratbarsha*. (Calcutta: Mandal Book House. 1975) Vol. I, Pp. 73-4. (Henceforth *Samakalin*).

was accommodated in Sukhmahal. . . . The earthen lamps were placed on the stairs of the tank in wave-like fashion and on bamboo arches made in the doorways. The whole of Bhopalgarh fort was also lighted.⁸⁹ On the 20th of December Swamiji delivered his lecture on Vedantisin. At the time of leaving Khetri the Raja gave Swamiji Rs. 3,000/- for the Math. The details of this emotional and memorable third visit of Swamiji to Khetri have been vividly chronicled by other authors.⁹⁰

Swamiji again met Raja Ajit Singh at Nainital on the 13 May 1898 (their last meeting) when he took the opportunity of introducing the Raja and Sister Nivedita to each other. Then Swamiji went with his party to Almora and wrote to the Raja on 9 June 1898 : 'Very sorry to learn that you are not in perfect health.' Again on 10 August 1898 : 'I have not heard long news of you. How are things going on with you bodily and mentally?'⁹¹

Ajit Singh's mental problems

Ever since Shekhji revolted against the tyrannical rule of the Amber (Jaipur) dynasty in the early part of the sixteenth century, and started his kingdom, the Shekhawati tradition of assertion for independence continued right up to Raja Ajit Singh's tragic death in 1901.⁹² It is very significant that Swamiji told the Raja in his very first meeting at Mount Abu in 1891 that life is the unfoldment of the self against heavy odds.

Jhabarmal Sharma has narrated in his book *Ādarśa Nareś* (1940) the development of the strained relationship between Ajit

Singh on the one hand, and Madhav Singh, the ruler of Jaipur, and his chief minister Kanti Chandra Mukherjee on the other. As early as 1881, Ajit Singh had started asserting himself, and later on obtained mining rights in the Babai district of Khetri. He was always subjected to the overlordly treatment of the court of Jaipur. His association with Swamiji was probably never liked. The Raja's decision to go abroad was probably disapproved by the court of Jaipur. During his absence there was an uprising in Narehra, an interior village, which had to be quelled by the Raja's troops.⁹³ The Jaipur court charged that Ajit Singh was not properly administering his subjects and hence should abdicate in favour of his son. Ajit Singh was also toying with the idea of renouncing the world.⁹⁴

Under the circumstances, Ajit Singh must have communicated his mental agony to Swamiji whose letter dated 26 October 1898 reads :

I am very very anxious about your health...I am praying day and night for your welfare. Do not lose heart if anything befalls, the 'Mother' is your protection...I am ready to lay down my life ever for your well-being.⁹⁵

Six days before his departure for the second visit to the West, Swamiji wrote on 14 June 1899 :

I want your Highness in that fashion as I am here, you need most of friendship and love just now. I am starting for England again on the 20th this month...May you be protected from all dangers and may all blessings ever attend you.⁹⁶

Pandit Motilal Nehru's friendship

At this stage, Pandit Motilal Nehru helped Raja Ajit Singh considerably, as a

⁸⁹. *Forgotten Chapter*, p. 142.

⁹⁰. See *Forgotten Chapter*, Chapter 7; and also *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, Pp. 1023-30.

⁹¹. *Forgotten Chapter*, p. 179.

⁹². See Part I of this article.

⁹³. *A Comprehensive Biography*, Vol. II, p. 1483.

⁹⁴. *Forgotten Chapter*, Pp. 182-3.

⁹⁵. *Forgotten Chapter*, p. 178.

⁹⁶. *Forgotten Chapter*, Pp. 183-4.

law practitioner, in the Raja's dispute with the Jaipur Durbar. Nandlal Nehru was associated with the Durbar of Khetri and thus his brother Motilal had been Ajit Singh's family friend. Motilal was brought up as a child at Khetri and was taught by Qazi Sadruddin.⁹⁷

On Jawaharlal Nehru's birth, Ajit Singh wrote on 9 December 1889 to Pandit Motilal Nehru who was in Allahabad: 'Very much pleased to learn that you have been pleased with a son. I congratulate you for this. As for the horoscope, it will be sent to you sometime afterwards.'⁹⁸ The court astrologer of Khetri eventually sent Jawaharlal's horoscope.⁹⁹

Sent by the Raja to the U.K. to lobby for his case against Jaipur, Motilal wrote back to Jagmohanlal on 22 October 1899 about his efforts to persuade influential people in London.¹⁰⁰ However, he had reservations about the Khetri administration which he later on confided to Jagmohanlal: 'Your famine operation was a fiasco ... at considerable hesitation, I consented to put in a glowing account ... advantage was taken by subordinate officials of serious indisposition of His Highness by systematic misrepresentation.'¹⁰¹ In the said letter Motilal had also written:

I think you showed me a telegram from H. H. asking certain particulars about a horse for Jawaharlal...Jawaharlal has nearly forgotten all he learnt of riding, and I feel he must have a horse at once...you must have received my typewritten letter about (Paris) exhibition business...I am told there is a very clever Beenkar player in Been in the employ of H. H. (Musraf

Khan). I will be glad if H. H. permits him to go to Paris for a few months.

Eventually Musraf Khan did go to Paris Exhibition to play on the Vina.¹⁰²

While Swamiji was in California, he wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull on 7 April 1900: 'Letter from the Math received today tells me that the Raja of Khetri has stopped the stipend ... well, Mother's wish. The Raja has been very good for years. All blessings on him.' Marie Louise Burke has put forward a hypothesis that the Raja might have thought that his guru had collected many American admirers, and therefore did not need the personal stipend.¹⁰³ We believe that this is a somewhat unfair verdict on the Raja who might have been pressured for by the court of Jaipur to cut down his expenditure. Swamiji's mother's stipend was never suspended, though.

Raja Ajit Singh's last birthday was celebrated in Rawalpindi in October 1900 a few days after the festival of Dussehra. Jagmohanlal recalled later on that amidst merrimaking and musical programmes, a singer sang a couplet expressing deep pathos:

Having become my own unfaithful life,
My Beloved has cheated me;
And at the sudden separation from Her
I have lost the zest for life.¹⁰⁴

The mood of pathos that this song created almost forewarned the listeners about the impending tragedy.

102. The author of this article contacted Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for further information, if any, on the subject, and was informed by her that Pandit Motilal Nehru did not leave any memoirs or unpublished material dealing with the Durbar of Khetri or Swami Vivekananda; nor did she recall having heard of any other episode.

103. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda—His Second Visit to the West—New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama). Pp. 482-85.

104. Quoted in *Adarsh Naresh (Hindi)*.

97. B. R. Nanda, *The Nehrus—Motilal and Jawaharlal*. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1962) p. 22.

98. *Adarsh Naresh (Hindi)*, p. 344.

99. *The Nehrus—Motilal and Jawaharlal*, p. 25.

100. *The Nehrus—Motilal and Jawaharlal*, p. 38.

101. Letter dated 18 March 1900—Jhabarmal Collection in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

Two weeks before Swamiji reached Belur Math after his second visit to the West, Raja Ajit Singh's tragedy had reached a climax.¹⁰⁵ On 26 November 1900 Ajit Singh, undergoing medical treatment at Agra, received a stiff note from the chief minister of Jaipur (who was also his erstwhile teacher) Sri Kanti Chandra Mukherjee, stating that 'a trustworthy Kamdar should be appointed by the Durbar (of Jaipur) to look after the interests of the Khetri ryots.' Ajit Singh politely denied that there was any maladministration in Khetri, and that the present Kamdar (Pandit Gopinath) was a gentleman who had received his education under him (Kantibabu). Ajit Singh met Kantibabu in Agra on the 15th of December while the latter was on his way to Calcutta. Kantibabu was persuaded by Ajit Singh's arguments and hoped that he would be able to restore harmony between the Durbars of Khetri and Jaipur. However, on his way back to Jaipur, Kantibabu expired on 4 January 1901 at Nagpur. This was a shock to Raja Ajit Singh and drove him to extreme despair. He developed acute heart and brain problems. On 18 January 1901 he went alone to Secundra (containing the mausoleum of emperor Akbar) on the outskirts of Agra, ascended one of the minarets, the height of which was 86 feet, and fell from above meeting instantaneous death.

Swamiji wrote to Mary Hale on 5 July 1901: 'Raja of Khetri was repairing this grand old piece of architecture at his own expense at Agra, and one day while on inspection he missed his footing.'

Though according to Swamiji, it was an accident, Mahendranath later heard from Jagmohan that it was a clear case of suicide.¹⁰⁶

^{105.} *Adarsh Naresh ; A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, Pp. 1471-74.

^{106.} *Ghatanābali*, Vol. II, Pp. 186-7.

The turn of the century moved very fast indeed for the guru and the disciple. Swamiji reached Belur Math from his second visit to the West on 9 December 1900. He had heard of Capt. Sevier's death and had to leave Belur Math on 27 December 1900 for Mayavati. Sometime during this time (between the 9th and the 27th December) he wrote his famous letter to the Raja of Khetri, the last of the interesting series of letters discovered by Jhabarmal and Benishankar Sharma :

I feel that my work in this life is done. Through good and evil, pain and pleasure my life-boat has been dragged on—the one great lesson I was taught is—that life is misery, nothing but misery. Mother knows what is best. Each one of us is in the hands of karma; it works out itself—and no way. There is only one element in life which is worth having at any cost—and it is love. Love immense (sic) and infinite, broad as the sky and deep as the ocean, this is the one great gain in life. Blessed is he who gets it.¹⁰⁷

Swamiji indeed had the Buddha's heart, and Raja Ajit Singh was blessed in that he received the great saint's pure and infinite love before his death. Like his Master, the Raja expired before he completed forty years of his life which was full of struggles.

Ajit Singh's son Jai Singh died in 1910, and then the succession passed from his family. Amar Singh ruled Khetri between 1911 and 1927, and since then Raja Sardar Singh has remained the titular head. Raja Sardar Singh donated the Dewan Khana, where Swamiji had stayed, to the Ramakrishna Mission on 29 December 1959. The Mission's new centre in this building was

According to one of Raja's trusted lieutenants, the Raja confided to his officials, few days before his death, the following; life had become a burden to him; his cremation should be done at Mathura and his officials should not betray the cause of Khetri Durbar. *Adarsh Naresh*, p. 275.

^{107.} *Forgotten Chapter*, Pp. 184-86.

inaugurated by Sri Sampurnanand, Governor of Rajasthan, on 11 November 1963.

The story of Khetri's contribution to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement will remain incomplete unless we make a fitting reference to some of the illustrious members of the family of Raja Ajit Singh and other citizens of Khetri.

Raja Ajit Singh was ably supported in his philanthropic work by his wife Champabatji of Atva (Jodhpur) whom he had married in 1876. The Rani picked up training in nursing from her American lady physician Dr. Clara Swain, M.D. Two daughters were born to the royal couple: Suryakumari (in 1879) and Chandrakumari (in 1888). Even though they had no male issue for sixteen years after their marriage, the Raja refused to marry a second time and his prayer for a male child was fulfilled through Swamiji's blessings in 1893.

We mentioned earlier the wedding of the elder princess that followed the next year. Suryakumari married Umed Singh, Prince of Shahpura in 1894. She was not only proficient in English, music and Sanskrit but also in Vedanta and Vivekananda's writings. She wanted Swamiji's works to be published in Hindi, and entrusted for this purpose a sum of Rs. 1,70,000 to Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha before her death.¹⁰⁸

Pandit Narayandas, who was referred to by Swami Vivekananda as 'my professor' (as he had taught Swamiji Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*), was born in 1845 in Gaji ka Thana of Alwar and educated in Benares by Pandit Govinda Shastri and Pandit Shib Kumar Shastri. He joined the court of Khetri in 1883. Pandit Gopinath, Raja Ajit Singh's erstwhile teacher at Jaipur, and his son Lakshminarayan served Khetri administration quite ably for decades.

Munshi Jagmohanlal born in 1866 (son

of Haribansji Mathur of Jaipur) studied at Jaipur till 1883, then came to Khetri, and was later on entrusted with the charge of external affairs. He was not only Ajit Singh's trusted minister but also one of Swamiji's initiated disciples.

Jagmohan was conversant in English, Sanskrit, French, Urdu and the Rajasthani dialects, and thus became the 'right hand' of the Raja. He was a Vaiṣṇava, a vegetarian and a dedicated spiritual aspirant.¹⁰⁹ It may be recalled that it was he who introduced Swamiji to the Raja on 4 June 1891 at Mount Abu. His trip to Madras to bring Swamiji to Khetri and his accompanying Swamiji to Bombay to see him off in 1893 are parts of history. We may quote from Swamiji's letter dated 22 May 1893 written to Haridas Viharidas, the Dewan of Junagadh, Swamiji's appreciation of Jagmohan:

The private secretary of H.H. of Khetri and I are now residing together. I cannot express my gratitude to him for his love and kindness to me. He is what they call a Tazimi Sardar in Rajputana i.e. one of those whom the Rajas receive by rising from their seats. Still he is so simple, and sometimes his service for me makes me almost ashamed.

After Jai Singh's death in 1910, Munshi Jagmohanlal was thrown out of job, and spent a somewhat difficult time in Calcutta where he was ill-treated by some of his erstwhile Marwari friends who had given him temporary shelter. After a few years he got a job in the court of Alwar and lived there till he died, probably in 1920. For his outstanding services he was conferred the title 'Rajratna'. He gave a lecture on Swami Vivekananda in Calcutta.¹¹⁰ Apart from the Waqayat Register records, much of our information about Swamiji's activities in

109. *Ghatanābali*, Vol. II, p. 176.

110. *Ghatanābali*, Vol. II, Pp. 176,187-8.

108. *Adarsh Naresh*, Pp. 287.

Khetri during June-October 1891, his famous conversations with the Raja, the nautch-girl episode, and also about the Raja's difficulties with the court of Jaipur etc. have come to us from the recollections of Jagmohanlal recorded in the works of Jhabarmal Sharma and Mahendranath Dutta.

Starting from Narayan Shastri, who was directly initiated by Sri Ramakrishna and first spread the Master's name in the Shekhawati kingdom, Raja Ajit Singh, Munshi Jagmohanlal and Pandits Narayandas, Shankarlal, Sunderlal Ojha and many others of the Khetri region have been inspired by the messages of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Hari Singh Ladkhani of Jaipur served Swami Akhandananda¹¹¹ and Swami Brahmananda¹¹² like a true disciple. Benishankar Sharma, the famous author was born and brought up in Khetri. His father Pandit Baliram Sharma had the proud privilege of attending upon Swamiji while the former was a student of Yajurveda under Pandit Sunderlal Ojha. Padmabhusan Pandit Jhabarmal Sharma, an eminent literator and an authority on Raja Ajit Singh and Shekhawati Kingdom, was also an illustrious son of Khetri. The author of this article sought some help in his research from Jhabarmalji but as ill-luck would have it, Panditji passed away on the 4th of January 1983 in his house at Jaipur.

Music lovers of Khetri

It is not very well known that Swami Vivekananda was linked with several men of Khetri, like Raja Ajit Singh, Dulichand Kankrania, and Shyamlal Khetri through their love for music and their schools (*gharana*) of musical training. They belonged to the post-Moghul era of the

resurgence of Indian Classical music that took place at Jaipur, Gwalior, Calcutta and other centres.

After the fall of Muslim empires in Delhi and Lucknow, the descendants of Tansen and Sadarang moved out and settled in Jaipur, Gwalior and other places. Atrauli (Jaipur) Seni gharana specialized in instrumental music, particularly on Veena. Raja Ajit Singh learnt Veena from Bhop Singh of Barsane (Braj mandal) who was the court-musician at the Durbar of Jaipur.¹¹³ Later on Ajit Singh was tutored by the famous Musraf Khan, who was employed by him at Khetri.

The Gwalior gharana became famous in vocal traditions. Ganpat Rao Bhaiasaheb, Alladia Khan and Badal Khan practised music together at Gwalior during the second half of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁴ They knew another great artiste at Gwalior: Ustad Ahmad Khan, who belonged to the Sadarang school and whose disciple Beni Ustad (Das) was the music teacher of young Narendranath (later Swami Vivekananda). Ahmad Khan later on came to Calcutta and stayed as the court-musician of the Raja of Andul (near Calcutta). Narendranath might have taken some lessons directly from Ahmad Khan also.¹¹⁵ Ganpat Rao recalled that Ahmad Khan was exceptionally gifted about 'tān': 'Be-bayan Tanaiat'. His voice was loud but somewhat hoarse.¹¹⁶

Ganpat Rao was a master musician of Harmonium recital and Lachao Thumri. His disciples Seth Dulichand Kankrania and Shyamlal Khetri belonged to the kingdom of Khetri and earned reputation as great musicians in Calcutta.

¹¹³. *Adarsh Naresh* (Hindi), p. 22.

¹¹⁴. Suresh Chakravarti, *Sudhāsāgar Tīre* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers). Third section.

¹¹⁵. Amiyanath Sanyal, *Smritir Atale* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Jijnasa). p. 236.

¹¹⁶. *Smritir Atale* (Bengali). p. 20.

¹¹¹. *Holy Wanderings*, p. 76.

¹¹². Mahendranath Dutta, *Swami Brahmananda Mahārājer Anudhyān* (Bengali), Pp. 56-7.

It may be recalled that Raja Ajit Singh used to send money to Swamiji through Dulichand, who was the proprietor of Messrs. Harsukhdas Dulichand firm. His garden palace at Dum Dum named 'Orchid Dale' was a favourite spot for many a musical soiree in Calcutta. Seth Dulichand employed Badal Khan and Alladia Khan of Gwalior for coaching his musician wife Tarabai, who hailed from Goa. Another famous musician from Goa, Kesarbai Kerkar later on sought Dulichand's help in becoming a disciple of the illustrious Alladia Khan. It is well known that Badal Khan subsequently trained Bhisimadeb Chatterji. It was at Dulichand's house that Ustad Alla-uddin Khan met Ahmad Ali, the Sarod player and went with him to Rampur. (During his stay in Calcutta Ustad Alla-uddin Khan witnessed Narendranath's fame as a Dhrupad singer and received musical instructions from Swamiji's brother Amritalal (Habu) Dutta.¹¹⁷ Dulichand died in 1929 at Varanasi.

Shyamlal Khetri was not a rich person like Dulichand. But he was of a deep religious temperament and earned fame as an accomplished music teacher of Calcutta. Stalwarts such as Mouzuddin Khan, Amiyath Sannyal, Girija Shankar Chakrabarti received musical instructions from him at his residence: 101, Harrison Road. It was Shyamlal who introduced Ustad Alla-uddin Khan to the Nawab of Maihar.¹¹⁸ Subsequently, Alla-uddin Khan's school of music at Maihar (where he stayed for decades) became a legend in our country.

Shyamlal Khetri has left some precious memoirs about Raja Ajit Singh and Swami Vivekananda: 'The Raja was an expert Vina-player. His recital would charm music connoisseurs. Once Swami Vivekananda

was present at the Raja's Vina recital and showed his appreciation by nodding his head. Later on he addressed the Raja: "What an enchanting spell you cast with your Vina!"¹¹⁹

When and where did this musical soiree take place? Shyamlal met Raja Ajit Singh thrice: once in Lahore and twice in Calcutta (1890 and 1897). Ajit Singh and Swamiji never met each other at Lahore, and Ajit Singh did not know Swamiji in 1890, when he visited Calcutta and stayed in Babu Kirti Chandra Mitra's palace at Hatibagan.

Waqayat Register shows that Ajit Singh and Swamiji had a hectic day on the 21st of March 1897 visiting Dakshineswar and Alambazar Math and later on at night dining and resting together in Dulichand's garden. Next day morning, the great music lover Sourendra Mohan Tagore came to meet them at the garden.¹²⁰ Therefore it is likely that the musical soiree took place in Dulichand's garden at Dum Dum sometime between the 22nd and the 25th of March 1897.

The musician, poet and philosopher

It is significant that a musical expert of Swamiji's calibre fully appreciated the accomplishment on the Vina of Raja Ajit Singh who belonged to the Seni gharana. It may be recalled also, that the disciple used to follow his spiritual guru's vocal presentation on the harmonium.¹²¹

Jagmohanlal has given several illustrations of Ajit Singh's competence as a poet and a composer. While travelling by boat to London in 1897 and watching the unceasing movement of waves on the sea, Ajit Singh was inspired to compose a song dealing with the various modes of calming

¹¹⁷. Alla-uddin Khan, *Amār Kathā* (Bengali). (Calcutta: Grantha Jagat), Pp. 11-12.

¹¹⁸. *Amār Kathā*, p. 21.

¹¹⁹. *Adarsh Naresh*, p. 380.

¹²⁰. *Forgotten Chapter*, p. 218.

¹²¹. *Forgotten Chapter*, p. 40.

one's mind. He also set it to music based on the *rāga* (tune) Bihag. *Rāga Bihag* was the favourite melody of Swamiji also. The hymn to the Devi beginning with *sarva mangala māngalye*, sung during the vesper service in Ramakrishna Ashramas, is tuned in this *raga*.

We have already referred to Swami Akhandananda's mentioning a particular song, composed by Raja Ajit Singh, and frequently sung by Swamiji himself, in his foreward to Jhabarmal Sharma's book.¹²² Jhabarmal has narrated how this particular song was composed. A *thumri* composed by Nawab Sahib Ibrahim Ali Khan was being sung in the court of Khetri. Ajit Singh asked his courtiers to compose similar *thumris*. Then he himself tried with his pen and produced the wonderful, now famous, composition.

The song is a beautiful and poignant portrayal of the soul of a spiritual aspirant who has lost the charm of *life* owing to the separation from the beloved, and who nonetheless shrinks from *death* in the hope that the Lord may yet come. The song amply illustrates the deep devotion of the composer, and naturally received Swamiji's warmest approbation.

Raja Ajit Singh was a very special disciple of Swami Vivekananda. He not only helped his guru during the moments of his greatest need, but also fully shared his guru's deepest thoughts on music, poetry and spiritual yearning. His nexus with Swamiji reminds one of the beautiful relationship between Arjuna and Lord Krishna, and that between Mathuranath Biswas and Sri Ramakrishna.

III

My visit to Khetri on 24 December 1982 was an emotional pilgrimage. I received a

warm welcome from the Swamijis of the Ramakrishna Mission centre there now known as Swami Vivekananda Smriti Mandir. A young student of class eight, who belonged to the Shekhawati lineage, took me round.

Leaving Futeh Bilas or Dewan Khana, now Vivekananda Smriti Mandir, I went across the old city gates, past the temples of Sri Hanuman and Sri Satyanarayana, and then through the massive metal fort gate up the walled fortress of Bhopalgarh. From the Bhopalgarh hill, I could see the beautiful eastern panorama, the valley and the two palaces where Swamiji stayed—Dewan Khana in 1891 and Sukh Mahal in 1897.

My mind hovered over the hallowed and hoary past of the northern Rajasthan—the land of Rg-Vedic Saraswati valley near Bikaner, the land of Rajputs who fought hordes of invaders for centuries in their valiant struggle to preserve ancient ideals and traditions. I almost saw Raja Ajit Singh riding with Swamiji and protecting him from prickly shrubs, and heard him saying, 'It has been the duty of Kṣatriyas to protect Dharma always!'

From time immemorial, Khetri has supplied copper to successive civilizations in India. Dr. D. P. Agrawal has proved in his book *The Copper Bronze Age in India* (p. 17) that copper metals and alloys used in Harappa and pre-Harappa chalcolithic civilizations were derived from Khetri ore. Britishers saw Hindu miners raising the ore and Muslim technicians smelting the same for making good quality metal and coins near Singhana and Khetri. As a mineral engineer I collected samples of ancient slag on the hills of Singhana, and heard unstinted praise for the earlier metal-making practices from the modern experts at the Hindustan Copper Limited, situated in the same area, now known as Khetrinagar.

^{122.} विन विन मोहि कू कछ न सुहावै
तरफत चित्त अति ही अकुलावै । etc.

(Continued on page 140)

We can try to understand it by means of a simile. Take reality as a limitless amount of lines, points and segmental chains of such lines and points. By means of the unifying and ordering power of the personal, this unordered plenteousness turns into the structure of an ordered crystal. Or take another analogy: Reality is like a net which hangs in central knots. Each person is such a knot.

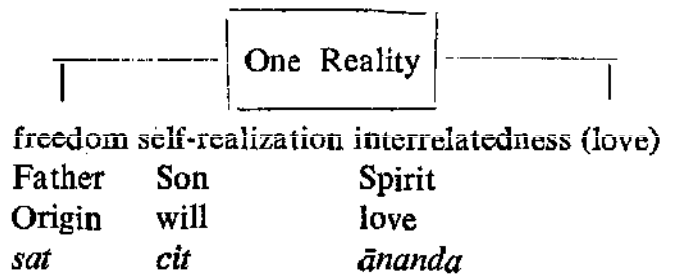
Thus, there is personality from the most primitive forms of organization of matter until it reaches the integrated structure of the human brain. The whole reality is a manifestation of this principle of personality. The Trinity as the integrating wholeness of its self-movement is the most powerful expression of personality. Reality becomes more and more personalized as much as it participates and gets integrated in the Trinitarian process of *perichoresis*.

3. *Unity of Freedom and Love*

Karl Barth's famous saying, God is the one who loves in freedom, expresses clearly the problem of combining freedom and love (involvement) together with the notion of God. Only if we are able to do so, shall

we answer the soteriological problem. This means that, in our non-dualistic approach, only when the One Reality is freedom and love, there is hope for fulfilment of the human destination.

Again, I will try to apply the Trinitarian *perichoresis* in order to demonstrate the non-dualistic nature of freedom and love:



If we compare this diagram with those given above, we can easily interpret it. It means that the freedom of the One Reality is its self-realization in love. If God is the continuity of freedom in realizing love, we can go on to formulate, that the Trinity is the continuity of freedom in its eternal self-realization in interrelatedness. This is the *perichoretic unity* of Being. This is the Trinitarian dance, in which creation is salvation and salvation is creation. This is the process of continuous new creation in the Spirit.

(Continued from page 126)

Raja Ajit Singh passed away eighty years ago. The other Rajas of Rajputana laid down their power soon after the British rulers left this country in 1947. Now the common people of India must protect their own ancient ideals and traditions. The business magnets of this area such as Singhanias, Dalmias, Jhunjunu-walas and Birlas (of Pilani) have attained national fame. They should contribute more to the uplift of their fellow countryman. Swamiji, however, relied more on the common people.

The missionary zeal for social service must reappear on the soil of Khetri. There is a Christian Mission school at Khetri. Why can't Hindus have their own

schools, institutions for Vedic studies, and technical institutes in and around Khetri? The Shekhawatis of today should come forward and take the initiative in these matters. Lastly, the ideals of Swamiji, who inspired the Shekhawatis during his three visits, should be more actively pursued.

At dusk, standing on the terrace in front of the room where Swamiji stayed in 1891, I had a beautiful westward view of the illuminated Khetri town and the Bhopalgarh fort on the hill. This charming view Swamiji too must have enjoyed more than eight decades ago. It was Christmas eve. I felt blessed for being a pilgrim at Khetri hallowed by the presence of Swamiji.