

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

### Tolstoy and Vivekananda A. P. Gnatyuk-Danil'Chuk

I love Indian philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Leo Tolstoy to D. P. Makovitsky on 14 October 1909

You can see this [truth] from. . . the books both of ancient as well as modern serious thinkers, starting with the authors of the Indian Vedas, the Buddha, Confucius, Lao-Tzu, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Socrates, Plato, Christ. . . unto Rousseau, Pascal, Kant, Schopenhauer, Emerson, Fichte, Vivekananda, and many, many others.<sup>2</sup>

Tolstoy's Letter of 8 April 1910 to F. Ovehinnikov

In India over 200 million people, highly gifted in both spiritual and physical strength, are under the rule of totally alien small circle of peoples, who are immeasurably lower than those whom they rule. The reason thereof, as seen from your letter<sup>3</sup>. . . and from extremely interesting works of the Hindu writer, Swami Vivekananda, is the absence of a rational religious doctrine.

'Letter to a Hindu' (14 December 1908)

It is common knowledge that the doyen of Russian literature, Leo Tolstoy, had a profound philosophical and academic interest in India and Indian philosophy, and felt a sense of deep anguish and wrath on the fate of the extremely talented Indian people suffering under the foreign yoke. It is also equally well known that Tolstoy has been enjoying singular popularity in India where, out of love and respect, he is called rishi, an epithet used by the Indians for their sages of yore right from the time of the Vedas.

Mahatma Gandhi believed himself to be a dedicated admirer of Leo Tolstoy, 'owing him much in life'. Gandhi and Tolstoy exchanged letters, and this correspondence is not only well known but already fairly well studied.

But what to this day remains virtually obscure or known only in a distorted form is the great place which Tolstoy's contemporary, one of the most eminent thinkers and social leaders of modern India, Swami Vivekananda, and his preceptor, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, held in Tolstoy's quests of spiritual life in the last years of his life.

The first Russian book to dwell upon the Vivekananda-Tolstoy theme, among other things, is Tolstoy and the East by A. I. Shifman,<sup>5</sup> for many years associated with the Tolstoy Museum at Yasnaya Polyana. This valuable study, though copious and rich in factual material, devotes only a few pages to the theme. The subsequent works dealing with Tolstoy and India—for instance, the interesting chapter 'Asia's Reply to Tolstoy' in the well-known work Tolstoy and the Contemporary World by the Soviet scholar of Tolstoy studies, K. Lomunov;<sup>6</sup> and the article 'Tolstoy and the Literature of the East' by the eminent Soviet Indologist, E. P. Chelyshev<sup>7</sup>—are also generally evasive in the matter of Tolstoy's interest in Vivekananda.

Only Professor V. S. Kostyuchenko of the Department of Philosophy of the Moscow University, in his fine monograph on Swami Vivekananda, mentions casually that 'Vivekananda's Raja Yoga had aroused keen interest in the most diverse countries and amongst the most diverse thinkers—from Leo Tolstoy to one of the founders of pragmatism, William James.'<sup>8</sup> But Professor Kostyuchenko has taken this reference not directly from Tolstoy's works but from Romain Rolland's well known article entitled 'Asia's Reply to Tolstoy'.

We find that the best, though concise, that has been said on this theme is by Romain Rolland, the author of most profound and extensive works on Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, translated also into

Russian. These works have, over the years, been a good source of inspiration not only for the scholars of the subject but also for those who have been interested in modern Indian thought. 'The religious firmament of India was most brightly illuminated by stars of the first magnitude that had suddenly started shining in it. . . the two wonders of the spirit: Ramakrishna (1836-1886), the godly inspired man who had enveloped all forms of deity with his love, and his pupil, still more powerful than the teacher, Vivekananda (1863-1902), whose tempestuous energy had awakened the effective god, the god of Gita in his suffering people, for centuries to come. . . . Tolstoy, with his vast curious spirit, of course, knew about them. . . . In 1896 he had felt exhilarated to see Vivekananda's first published works—Yoga's Philosophy and Lectures on Raja Yoga. He was also delighted at Viveka-nanda's book on Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna. It is the misfortune of mankind that Vivekananda, in the course of his travels in Europe in 1900, was, not advised to go to Yasnaya Polyana.

The author of this book [Romain Rolland] is not happy at the thought that in this year of the World Fair, when the great Swami passed through Paris, surrounded by such bad guides, he was not able to bring together the two clairvoyants, the two religious geniuses of Europe and Asia.<sup>9</sup> In his biography of Vivekananda, Romain Rolland adds that up to June 1895 he had completed the redaction of his famous treatise on Raja Yoga, which was destined to inspire (*italics mine*—author) Tolstoy,<sup>10</sup> but, Rolland continues in his *Life of Tolstoy*: 'the fatal movement of the historical stream took Tolstoy away from the yogis with their terror of god to the threshold of the great work of Vivekananda and Gandhi—Hind Swaraj.'<sup>11</sup>

We have quoted in full these statements of Romain Rolland, for these alone provide the correct key to Tolstoy's assessment of Vivekananda. Other works of western scholars on Tolstoy have only a brief reference that Tolstoy had read Raja Yoga.

The theme being dwelt upon here did not also find its full expression in India despite the fact that some Indian works have reproduced and interpreted whatever little there is of this in Shifman's book. It is, we may add here, therefore very important to rectify the errors and discrepancies in this work, though we must stress that doing this does not in any way belittle the great contribution of the author, the first to take up this important aspect. One valuable book, containing many interesting ideas and facts on Tolstoy-India theme, is that recently published under the title *Bharatpathik Leo Tolstoy [Leo Tolstoy, the traveller to India]* by Jhara Basu,<sup>12</sup> with a foreword by the well-known Bengali writer and literary scholar, Annada Shankar Ray, who calls himself a pupil of Tolstoy.

How is it, then, that, save Romain Rolland, no one has so far made a well-established and correct estimate of Vivekananda's place in the life of Tolstoy? This, first of all, as we see, is because Tolstoy did not write any complete commentary on the works of Vivekananda; the observations on the Indian philosopher lie scattered on the pages of his less accessible works and cannot be pieced together without surveying a large amount of material and without scrupulous analysis. Secondly, this is also sometimes due to the lack of proper study of the complex world outlook of the writer and, sometimes, to the one-sided approach to it.

The present paper has no pretensions to a full treatment of the Tolstoy-Vivekananda theme; it simply seeks to focus attention on this vital subject. This study is based only on Tolstoy's own assessments and observations found expressed in various articles, letters, entries in diaries of the later years, and also on extensive notes (only very recently published) of his personal physician and friend, D. P. Makovitsky, who, from 1905, was always with Tolstoy right up to the writer's death. We have tried to follow the course of development of the writer's thoughts and the circle of his interests within the framework of the present theme, elucidating the actual statements of Tolstoy where necessary.

On 13 September 1896 Leo Tolstoy wrote to Anendra Kumar Datta<sup>13</sup> who had sent him Vivekananda's book [Yoga's Philosophy. Lectures on Raja Yoga, or Conquering Internal Nature, NY, 1896]: 'I received your letter and the book, and thank you very much for both. The book is most remarkable and I have received much instruction from it. The metaphysical side of the doctrine, the precept as to what the true "I" of a man is, is excellent. So far humanity has frequently gone backwards from the true and lofty and clear conception of the principle of life, but never surpassed it.'<sup>14</sup>

The next day [on 14 September] he writes in his diary: 'During this time there has been a letter from a Hindu "Tod" (A. K. Datta) and a charming book of Indian wisdom.'<sup>15</sup> To understand what attracted Tolstoy to this book, we shall refer to one more document. On 14 October the same 1896 year he wrote to P. V. Verigin<sup>16</sup>: 'Thanks to books, I have come in contact, this present autumn, with a Hindu, who fully shares with us our Christian views and has sent me a book of a compatriot of his, expounding the doctrine of the Brahmins, having semblance with the essence of the teaching of Christ.'<sup>17</sup> Thus, Tolstoy found in Vivekananda's works an echo of his own reflections on the true essence of Christianity cleansed from later distortions. It is therefore difficult to agree with A. I. Shifman who believes that 'in the passionate tirades of Vivekananda, Tolstoy heard the echoes of the early teachings of the ancient Indians, and particularly many motifs of the Vedas congenial to him.'<sup>18</sup> We see that Vivekananda's very first work read by Tolstoy left on him an indelible impression and for ever became one of the favourite books of the writer.

### III

About Ramakrishna Tolstoy obviously knew little at that time. He came to know Ramakrishna's sayings for the first time in 1903 when he received from Germany the journal 'Theosophiser Wegweiser' and in his copy underlined Ramakrishna's numerous aphorisms. 'Much here is the same as my own understanding', he wrote then in his diary.<sup>19</sup> Some of these sayings in a revised form found place in Tolstoy's books: [Sayings] For Every Day, Circle of Reading, and Way of Life. But far greater impression on Tolstoy was made by excerpts sent to him by K. A. Sergeenko from Max Müller's book The Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Tolstoy wrote to Sergeenko on 13 February 1906: 'Ramakrishna I know, and I have many excerpts from his sayings. I know him from theosophy journals. The fine thoughts you have recorded are not there. Where did you take them from?'<sup>20</sup> And, in his conversation with D. Makovitsky, Tolstoy observed: 'Sergeenko has sent me extracts from Müller's book Ramakrishna. His selection of the "sayings" is wonderful. Ramakrishna died 50(?) years ago. The most brilliant wise man!'<sup>21</sup> But Tolstoy at that time apparently did not know that Vivekananda was Ramakrishna's pupil.

We shall note here that during this period Tolstoy also kept up correspondence with Baba Premananda Bharati (Surendra-nath Mukherjee), a pupil of Vivekananda, who in 1902 had emigrated from India to U.S.A. and was in Los Angeles publishing the journal 'The Light of India'. Bharati had sent Tolstoy a book on Krishna which had evoked the writer's interest.<sup>22</sup> Tolstoy's letter of 3/16 February 1907 to Bharati about this book is of special interest, for it enables us to have a better understanding of some subsequent statements of the writer on Vivekananda: 'The metaphysical, religious idea of Krishna so well expounded in your book is the eternal and universal basis of all religions and all philosophical systems. It is the truth that the essence of everything existent. . . is love and that human soul is the emanation of this essence. . . . But in Krishna's religion, as also in all ancient religions, there exist assertions which not only cannot be established but are a clear product of unrestrained imagination and are moreover not necessary at all. . . . Such. . . are all stories of miracles. . . .'<sup>23</sup>

### IV

Tolstoy's further familiarity with Vivekananda, more complete and profound, judging from all available

records, took place in 1908, although we would wish to stress here that Tolstoy was the very first Russian to know and appraise the brilliant Indian philosopher as early as in 1896, immediately after the publication of Vivekananda's works. This time Tolstoy's introduction to Vivekananda took place through the Russian writer, I. F. Nazhivin, who had himself translated Vivekananda's two speeches and 'Hymn of Creation'.<sup>24</sup> These, so far as we are aware, were the very first translations into Russian of Vivekananda's works.

I. F. Nazhivin advised Tolstoy to read not Baba Bharati's book on Krishna but another better one<sup>25</sup> (Nazhivin's letter of 29 June 1907). And on 7 July 1907, Tolstoy, in his reply, sent a request to Nazhivin: 'Please send the Brahmin's book. Reading of such book surpasses all pleasure. This is elation of the soul.'<sup>26</sup> But the book, it seems, did not then reach Leo Tolstoy, for there is no reference to his reading it. Therefore, A. Shifman's statement that Tolstoy read Vivekananda's 'Speeches and Articles' in 1907 obviously does not correspond to facts. On the other hand, in 1908, Tolstoy, on receiving Nazhivin's aforesaid translations, could not help expressing his exclamation: 'I have just finished reading your wonderful book *The Voices of the People* and I wish to say thanks for this.'<sup>27</sup> (Letter of 9 March 1908 to Nazhivin.) 'The Hindu's article has left a great impression on me. This is unusually good.'<sup>28</sup> (Letter of 12 March 1908 to Nazhivin.) The writer once again felt his nearness to Vivekananda: 'Yesterday read the Hindu's wonderful article [God and Man], translated into Russian by Nazhivin. Here are my thoughts, obscurely expressed,'<sup>29</sup> wrote Leo Tolstoy in his diary on 10 March 1908.

Tolstoy made all efforts to have Vivekananda's works. On 25 May 1908 he told D. P. Makovitsky that he had read two volumes of Swami Vivekananda<sup>30</sup> received on that day. 'Surprisingly profound on god, soul, man, unity of religions. He is Ramakrishna's pupil, and died in 1902.'<sup>31</sup> It is only at this stage that Tolstoy at last came to know about the unusual bonds between these two thinkers so close to him.

Leo Tolstoy now began enthusiastically his reading of Vivekananda's works. He took notes and underlined what specially impressed him. Unfortunately, these books, so far as we know, have not been located. We are only left with copious notes on these books in Tolstoy's own diary and also the day-to-day notes (for instance, made on 5, 21, 23, and from 26 to 29 June 1908) of D. P. Makovitsky. We shall be citing some of these notes here. On June 5, 1908, Tolstoy told Makovitsky: 'Since six in the morning I have been thinking of Vivekananda. Yesterday, read Vivekananda whole day. There is a chapter on justification of violent means of resisting the evil. Very talentedly written.'<sup>32</sup>

On 21 June 1908 he talked to V. G. Chertkov about Swami Vivekananda's article on Krishna. This article essentially touched upon the problem of righteousness or unrighteousness of violence or non-violence. Tolstoy said: 'Krishna sometimes commands that evil be rewarded by good and sometimes kills the evil-doer and then resurrects him and makes him feel the joy of life ("Tolstoy", Makovitsky says, "elucidated it in the sense that this was toning down of punishment, that this leads to the same law of reward of evil by good").'<sup>33</sup> D. P. Makovitsky wrote on 26 June 1908: 'Yesterday Tolstoy came to the hall with one of Swami Vivekananda's three volumes. . . . "Excellent book, so many thoughts are here for circle of reading", said Tolstoy (and, later, while I galvanized his head, he read Vivekananda and underlined some sentences).'<sup>34</sup>

What precisely interested Tolstoy at this time and what he was reflecting upon can be understood by referring to an entry in his diary on 26 June 1908: 'Felt now for the first time the possibility, as Vivekananda says, that "I" could completely yield to "you"—Felt the possibility of self-denial not for the sake of anything but for the sake of sound sense. . . . It is most difficult and even most necessary to escape from this terrible indulgence with self and with one's "I". And I am beginning—now before my death—to sense the possibility of such renunciation of one's "I". [For me] it's not much of a virtue.'<sup>35</sup> We would wish to stress here how greatly self-exacting Tolstoy was, even to the extent of being

merciless to himself.

Tolstoy never spared even the greatest authorities (not even Shakespeare) in any walk of life, particularly on art and literature, when it came to making critical comments when necessary. In short, Tolstoy judged harshly both his own self and others. For instance, he spoke to Chertkov on 28 June 1908: 'Vivekananda greatly disappoints me. He writes about miracles which he has seen and himself performed. . . . How oddly it conjoins with depth of thought.'<sup>33</sup> And, on 29 June 1908, he records in his diary: 'I am reading a Hindu—very witty, verbose and blank. He wants to justify their belief in subjective beings and their doubts in them. . . . One thing is and one thing is undoubted: my life and my possibility and need to decide how to conduct it. Only this alone is the basis of all religions, the basis of all philosophies. And this alone exists.'<sup>37</sup> Leo Tolstoy does not notice that he is possibly contradicting his own self, contradicting that note which he had made in his diary on 26 June. But there is also no doubt in that Tolstoy always denied the existence of so-called miracles and sharply condemned one's belief in them, first of all in Christian practices. Not being familiar with all principal works of Vivekananda, he erringly found in him this belief in 'miracles' although Vivekananda, as is well known, had censured such a belief.<sup>33</sup>

Fuel was added to fire when, during these very days, the leaders of theosophical society—Kamenskaya, Pisareva, and others—came to Yasnaya Polyana. When Pisareva 'started, entering into supernatural explanations', Tolstoy exclaimed: 'Here is the very thing which repulses me. This is something which can be discovered in unnatural way. This characteristic is also there in Vivekananda.'<sup>39</sup>

In his talks with the theosophists, Leo Tolstoy gave expression to some of his original, profound thoughts, which make it possible for us to understand better his concept of essential problems of Indian philosophy and religion. Tolstoy said: 'We live in an illusory world; life is ever and ever more an awakening in me and in us of the divine source, a spiritual one. . . . The material world, what does it exist for? . . . How can one know why the world exists? . . . I am engaged in how to assist each other in the best possible way, and. . . this field is endless, field of liberation. . . . If anything frightens me, it is to be born in a palace and not in a slum. Life is the process of liberation of spiritual source, the very source which is there in the convict and in everybody. And our efforts must be directed towards this and not towards what these "ethers" are and what will happen to our souls. And this most vital thing has been said everywhere. . . . [Theosophy] is the most impure truth when one judges that none is able to know, observe soul for 1,000 years; what sort of substance this is which can observe the soul for 1,000 years—this is absurd.'<sup>40</sup>

The theosophists went away, and Tolstoy's irritation waned out in a few days. On 4 July 1908 he noted in his diary in quite another tone: 'Read Vivekananda's article on god—an excellent one. Should be translated. I myself thought of this itself. His criticism of Schopenhauer's will is quite true. Only one thing is not true—where he begins with (objective) judgement about the world.'<sup>41</sup> As we see, Tolstoy here takes the ground of uncognizability of the highest source. Further, he ponders over problems of destruction of evil and of enhancing the good and, in his diary, makes a note of Vivekananda's ideas which he fully subscribes to: 'Vivekananda says that the eternal destruction of evil and enhancement of good are not possible, but this is not possible only because of the notion of time or because of the notion of implementation. But there should be neither of these. Increasing of the good in myself and in the world are life—mine as well as that of the world. This increase cannot be achieved [but one must try, for], the process of this increase is life itself—fulfilling one's purpose in life—increasing of good, I am only fulfilling my purpose.'<sup>42</sup>

A general assessment of Vivekananda's works made by Tolstoy after he had familiarized himself with a large number of his works, is most clearly seen in his article 'Religion and Science' (completed on 17 August 1908). Though, as mentioned earlier, some critical comments made by Tolstoy on Vivekananda were in his personal diaries or talks, and not for the press, the article 'Religion and

Science' was duly meant for publication. Here he virtually says that mankind must assimilate the heritage of Vivekananda along with that of the other sages. He writes: 'The task before the leading thinkers of mankind now. . . is to show the inevitability and need of what has ever been regarded as Prajna [knowledge]. And to show that this knowledge was long known to mankind and manifested itself both in the teaching of religion as well as in the teachings of the sages, not only Indian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman, but also the later ones unto the very last: Kant, Schopenhauer, Vivekananda. . . .43

V

During the last year and a half of his life Tolstoy paid great attention to the problems of contemporary life of India, of liberation of its people. As is known, the impetus for this was provided by the letter from the young Indian revolutionary, Taraknath Das. Tolstoy took almost half a year to write his famous 'Letter to a Hindu' (completed on 14 December 1908), addressed apparently to an individual but essentially a message to the entire Indian people. It is not a matter of mere coincidence that not only Vivekananda's name is mentioned twice in the text of this letter but one of the sections of the letter itself opens with an epigraph from Vivekananda—'God is one whole; we are only its parts' (Vivekananda's exposition of the teaching of the Vedas).<sup>44</sup> As is known, this letter later initiated the correspondence between Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi which afterwards also played an important role in the growth of national liberation movement in India. A survey of this correspondence, or its detailed analysis, is beyond the scope of the present short paper. Besides, it is now widely known both in India and USSR.

On 16 February 1909 Tolstoy received the third volume of Vivekananda's Speeches and Writings presented to him by an Indian. Makovitsky records that Tolstoy read it and liked it immensely in the same way as he had done the earlier two volumes.<sup>45</sup> Incidentally, this volume was destined to be the last book of Vivekananda to be received by Tolstoy.

On 7 May 1909 Tolstoy spoke to the editor of the Posrednik publishing house (which used to bring out Tolstoy's own works): 'The most eminent of modern Indian thinkers is Vivekananda and he should be published.'<sup>46</sup> So Tolstoy had in mind the publication of an anthology of Vivekananda's sayings. In fact, in his article 'On Education' (completed on 1 May 1909), he again mentioned Vivekananda amongst the best thinkers of the world, alongside Socrates, Rousseau, Kant, etc.<sup>47</sup>

Tolstoy continued to stress the need for reading Vivekananda; for instance, on 24 June 1909, he made an interesting observation in respect of Vekhi, the well-known collection of Russian philosophical tracts of early twentieth century: 'It is not worth reading, the Vekhi. . . when one has such (things) for reading as Ramakrishna, the Buddha, Vivekananda, the Gospel. . . .48

In 1910 also, which unfortunately turned out to be the last year of his life, Tolstoy continued to appreciate Vivekananda and take interest in Indian philosophy, maybe more than before. Thus, while talking to Bulanzhe on 28 January 1910 about the book Theosophy and Modern Psychology by Annie Besant, Tolstoy said: 'She rests on what is weak, what is erroneous, and Vivekananda on what is true '(emphasis mine—author).<sup>49</sup> This observation of Tolstoy further corroborates what a great contrast he discerned between the theosophists and Vivekananda, and how very akin was the thinking of these two great minds in respect of theosophy, specially in the attitude to so-called 'miracles'.

On 12 March 1910, on receiving a book entitled The Fountain-Head of Religion from Rama Deva, the publisher of the journal 'The Vedic Magazine', Tolstoy exclaimed: 'This book has given me great joy. I have, for the first time, understood that we have become accustomed to regard, as gods, the "god-creator", "god-Christ", "god-Mohammad", who soar in the skies; and (as regards) the god who is the source of everything. . . only such great minds as the ancient Indian sages can attain this great

concept. Were there no Krishna, there would have been for us no concept of god. Our Christian notions of spiritual life come from the ancient Hebrew, and the Hebrew notions from the Assyrian, and the Assyrian from the Indian. . . the older, the loftier.'<sup>50</sup>

Proceeding chronologically, we come to 29 March 1910 when Tolstoy met the famous Czech thinker, statesman, and revolutionary, Jan Massaryk, and, among other things, asked him if he was reading Indian philosophy. Tolstoy told Massaryk that the greatest philosopher of modern India is Vivekananda.<sup>51</sup>

To conclude, I would like to say that, for Tolstoy, Vivekananda had indeed become, and remained unto the last, a living personification of the spiritual richness of modern India. After Tolstoy's death, his followers, including Nazhivin in particular, arranged the publication of Russian translations of a number of books of Vivekananda, as also of The Gospel of Ramakrishna and of Max Müller's books on Ramakrishna.<sup>52</sup>

## VI

Interest in the life and work of this remarkable Indian patriot thinker, and social leader has been growing from day to day all the world over, including the Soviet Union. Apart from the books and articles already mentioned in Section I of this paper, those lately published in the Soviet Union and deserving mention here include Professor Kostyuchenko's monograph on Neo-Vedanta, with one chapter devoted to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, and Professor Rybakov's book bearing the title *Bourgeois Reformation of Hinduism* [in Russian].

The Soviet scholars in the Moscow University and other universities of USSR and in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR. Academy of Sciences are continuing their work on Vivekananda studies with unabated vigour.

Vivekananda's works are being read with keen interest in the Soviet Union today, and have even inspired our writers and poets.

The following lines from Valentin Sidorov's poem on Vivekananda are an eloquent testimony to this interest:

It has been rightly said of him:  
He was like a naked sword,  
His thought was ringing like a steel blade,  
Glistening, sparkling, fluttering.  
A stroke, another stroke!

This Spake

Vivekananda to his followers:  
'We are not weak. And if you are weak  
It is because you love your own weakness.'<sup>53</sup>

## Notes

1 D. P. Makovitsky: *Yasnopolyanskie zapiski* [Notes from Yasnaya Polyana], Vol. IV, p. 77, in the series *Literaturnoe slenadstvo* [Literary Heritage], Vol. 90, bks. 1, 2, 3, and 4, Moscow, 1981. (Hereafter Mak.)

2 Leo Tolstoy: *Complete Works* (in Russian, in 90 Vols., Moscow-Leningrad, 1928-1958), Vol. 81, p. 220. (Hereafter CW.)

3 Letter of 24 May 1908 from the Indian revolutionary Taraknath Das to Leo Tolstoy. (CW, Vol. 37, pp. 245-72).

4 CW, Vol. 37, p. 246. As is known, the 'Letter to a Hindu' was one of the reasons for Mahatma Gandhi to address Leo Tolstoy; this letter was later published with Gandhi's prefatory note. The idealistic nature of Tolstoy's thought here is quite obvious; but, as rightly noted by K. Lomunov, the Soviet scholar of Tolstoy studies, 'the "Letter to a Hindu" is expressive of deep compassion of the great Russian writer whose voice was listened to by the whole world. This letter filled the hearts of the Indians with joy and hope and encouraged them in their struggle for liberation. . . . Gandhi at once understood and appraised the whole significance of Tolstoy's address to the Indian people.' (See K. Lomunov: *Tolstoy and the Contemporary World* (in Russian), Moscow, 1975, P. 374.)

5 A. I. Shifman: *Tolstoy and India*. Eng. tr. Delhi, 1969, 2nd ed. 1978. (Quotations here are from this edition.)

6 K. Lomunov: op. cit.

7 E. P. Chelyshev: *Tolstoi i literatura Vostoka* [Tolstoy and the Literature of the East] in L. N. Tolstoi I sovremennost. Sb. statei i materialov [Tolstoy and the World of His Time], Moscow, 1981.

8 V. S. Kostyuchenko: *Vivekananda* (in Russian), Moscow, 1977, p. 122.

9 See Romain Rolland: *Complete Works* (in Russian), vol. 14, p. 338.

We shall observe here that it is apparently on the basis of this statement that A. I. Shifman writes without any basis: 'There exists an indication that Swami Vivekananda, during his travels in Europe in 1900, intended to visit Yasnaya Polyana.' (A. I. Shifman: *Leo Tolstoy and the East* [in Russian], Moscow, 1971, p. 131.)

Vivekananda intended to visit Russia in April 1897, but this visit did not materialize for reasons not known. (See his letter to Josephine MacLeod in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. VIII, p. 392. There is no reference in Vivekananda's works or in the literature on him that Vivekananda intended to visit Yasnaya Polyana in 1900.)

10 Romain Rolland: *Complete Works* (in Russian), vol. 19, p. 258.

11 Ibid, vol. 14, p. 338.

12 Jhara Basu: *Bhàratpathik Leo Tolstoy* [Leo Tolstoy, the traveller to India], Calcutta, 1963.

13 Reference to this exchange of letters is found in the chapter on Romain Rolland in the book *Tirthankar* (in Bengali; new edition, Calcutta, 1982, p. 21) by the well-known Indian musician, Dilip Kumar Roy, a friend of Anendra Kumar Datta:

Romain Rolland: You will be surprised, Dilip, if I tell you that Tolstoy, in the last years of his life, was charmed by Vivekananda's writings. Tolstoy's close friend, P. Biryukov, and numerous other scholars keep chanting Vivekananda's name even now. In Russia, specially, there are even more of such people.

Dilip Roy: That they are so influenced by Vivekananda I did not know. All I knew was that Tolstoy, in the last years of his life, was charmed by Vivekananda, and this because a Bengali friend of mine had sent to him. . . a copy of Vivekananda's Raja-yoga. Tolstoy had later written to him, 'It is doubtful if in this age (another) man has ever risen above this selfless spiritual meditation.'

14 CW, vol. 69, p. 145 (also in Dilip Kumar Roy: *Tirthankar*, p. 21).

15 CW, vol. 53, p. 106. ('Tod'—this is how the name of A. K. Datta is found in Tolstoy's diary.)

16 Peter Vasil'evich Verigin (1859-1924)—the leader of the big group of 'dukhobory' (followers of L. Tolstoy); went away to Canada in 1902, after 15-year exile. Follower and correspondent of Leo Tolstoy, who wrote sixteen letters to Verigin between 1895 and 1909.

17 CW, vol. 69, p. 169.

18 A. Shifman, op. cit., p. 33.

19 CW, vol. 54, p. 155.

20 CW, vol. 76, pp. 98-9.

21 Mak. vol. II, p.64.

22 Shree Krishna, *the Lord of Love*, NY, 1904.

23 CW, vol. 77, pp. 37-8.

24 See: (i) 'My Master', speech made by Swami Vivekananda at the Vedanta Society in New York, published in Russian translation in the anthology *V daline skorbi* [in the Spaces of Sorrow] (Moscow,

1907, pp. 183-204).

(ii) 'God and Man'; speech made by Swami Vivekananda, in the anthology: I. Nazhivin, Golosa narodov [Voices of the Peoples] (Moscow, 1908, pp. 65-79).

(iii) Gimn tvorenya [Hymn of Creation], in the same anthology of Nazhivin, pp. 80-1.

25 Mak., vol. II, p. 457.

26 CW, vol. 77, p. 151.

27 CW, vol. 78, pp. 78-9.

28 CW, vol. 78, pp. 84-5.

29 CW, vol. 56, p. 129.

30 These books were sent to Tolstoy by S. R. Chitale.

31 Mak., vol. III, p. 98.

32 Mak., vol. III, p. 106. It may be remarked here that some scholars and literary critics claim that Tolstoy censured Vivekananda for his belief in violent means of struggle against evil. This wrong understanding, it appears, originates from the assertion made by Bhupendranath Datta (see, for example, Jhara Basu, op. cit., p. 22), who seems to go to the extent of saying that Tolstoy did so in his letter to Taraknath Das. The letter is available in original in Tolstoy's Complete Works (vol. 37, pp. 245-272), but we did not find any such censure there.

33 Mak., vol. III, p. 122.

34 Mak., vol. III, p. 125.

35 CW, vol. 56, p. 137.

36 Mak., vol. III, p. 126.

37 CW, vol. 56, p. 364.

38 I feel that Tolstoy gathered this wrong impression about Vivekananda's belief in miracles from writings or talks of the theosophists who had a penchant for such things. Tolstoy would never have formed this wrong impression if only he had read Vivekananda's speeches against miracles. In fact, in his letter to the editor of the Light of the East (see S. P. Bssu's Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatavarsa [Vivekananda and Contemporary India], vol. III, p. 83), Vivekananda unambiguously stated: 'I have always found "Occultism" injurious and weakening to humanity. . . . For centuries we have been stuffed with the mysterious, the result is that our intellectual and spiritual digestion is almost hopelessly impaired and the race has been dragged down to the depths of hopeless imbecility. . . . Sankari Prasad Basu, in his book (vol. III, pp. 39-113), gives an excellent, exhaustive treatment of this question of Vivekananda versus theosophists. See also V. S. Kostyuchenko, op. cit., p. 123.

Thus, if Tolstoy has casually and out of context made some critical comments on Vivekananda, one should not take them in their literal sense, as Shifman and others sometimes did. Tolstoy considered Vivekananda a part of his inner world; and while he discussed him with others or made some comments on him, this was rather some sort of loud thinking for exchange of views and not any judgement on Vivekananda. Tolstoy had an exceptionally high overall assessment about him.

39 Mak., vol. III, p. 127.

40 Mak., vol. III, p. 128.

41 CW, vol. 56, p. 138.

42 CW, vol. 56, p. 365.

43 CW, vol. 37, p. 361.

It is interesting to note here that Tolstoy at this time, as he says, is going further away from Christianity (Makovitsky, vol. IV, Notes of 13 August 1908). It is possible that this was due to Tolstoy's reading of two volumes of Vivekananda.

44 CW, vol. 37, p. 269.

45 Mak., vol. III, p. 333.

46 Mak., vol. III, p. 104.

47 CW, vol. 38, p. 68.

48 Mak., vol. III, note on 24 June 1909.

49 Mak., vol. IV, p. 166.

50 Mak., vol. IV, p. 196.

51 Mak., vol. IV, p. 213.

52 We give a list of these books:

- (i) Filosofiya yoga (philosophy of yoga). Lectures given in New York in the winter of 1895 on Raja-yoga, including also Patanjali's aphorisms with commentary. Tr. by Ya. Popov, Sosnitsa, 1911.
- (ii) Vivekananda, Swami: Prakticheskaya Vedanta (Practical Vedanta), Moscow, 1912.
- (iii) Vivekananda, Swami: Karma Yoga, Moscow, 1912 (2nd ed., Petrograd, 1916).
- (iv) Vivekananda, Swami: Bhakti Yoga; Lectures rev, and pub. by Swami Saradananda. Tr. from 2nd Calcutta ed. by Ya. Popov, St. Petersburg (SPb.), 1914.
- (v) Ramakrishna Provozoestie Ramakrishny: (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna). Tr. from Eng. ed. with a foreword and introd. by Swami Abhedananda, SPb., 1914.
- (vi) Filosofiya Vedanty (The Philosophy of Vedanta) by M. Müller. Tr. from Eng. by N. F. Nazhivin, Moscow, 1912.
- (vii) M. Müller: Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, his life and doctrine. Tr. from English by N. F. Nazhivin, Moscow, 1913.

53 Valentin Sidorov: 'Vivekananda', a poem in Russian.

\* From Swami Vivekananda Studies in Soviet Union (pp. 159-176) published by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture. Professor Danil'chuk was a reputed linguist and Indologist. See his Obit on p. 435.