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MAY 1962

# Prabuddha Bharata

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By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga, by one or more or all of these the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.



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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Spiritual Talks of Swami Shivananda .. .. .	201
East and West— <i>Editorial</i> .. .. .	205
The Sacred in Buddhism— <i>By Swami Nityabodhananda</i> .. .. .	212
Novalis, Fichte, and Śaṅkara— <i>By Professor Leta Jane Lewis</i> .. .. .	219

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CONTENTS (*Contd.*)

	<i>Page</i>
Plato's Limited God— <i>By Dr. R. Balasubramanian</i> .. .. .	224
Politics and Morals— <i>By Dr. Paresh Nath Mukherjee</i> .. .. .	231
Devotion in the Religious Philosophy of Tagore— <i>By Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao</i> ..	234
Notes and Comments .. .. .	236
Reviews and Notices .. .. .	237
News and Reports .. .. .	240

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Vol. LXVII

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No. 5



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—:0:—

## SPIRITUAL TALKS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

*Belur Math, February 19, 1931*

It was the auspicious birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. The whole monastery was in the midst of a joyous, day-long programme of worship, chanting, music, group-singing, offerings, distribution of *prasāda*, and so on. Both men and women devotees gathered in their thousands to participate in that bliss. From early dawn, Mahapurushji had been in a high state of spiritual elation, talking thus of his own accord : "Glory to Ramakrishna, glory to the Lord, glory to God ! This is a very auspicious day when He Himself descended on this earth out of His own compassion. This is a unique event. The whole world is saved by His grace. Yes, this is unique indeed !" There was a steady flow of devotees, both men and women, who came in to bow down before him, and he, too, blessed them all out of a heart full of the divine fervour. The prayer was constantly on his lips : "May all be blessed whoever and wherever they be ! Be compassionate to all, O Lord ; be propitious to your followers, be

merciful to all creatures !" On that day, he initiated many with *mantras*.

At meal time at noon, when the attendant came with some *prasāda* of Sri Ramakrishna for him, he showed no inclination for eating anything. He just took up a little bit with his fingers, placed it in the mouth with the words, "Glory to *guru*, glory to the Lord !" and then told the attendant : "Take all this away, remove all this. Does one feel like eating all this on such a day ? There is no need to eat all this today. The Master descended on this day. It makes me speechless to think how blessed the day is. Is this just an ordinary day ? The Lord of all the worlds and all the creatures, nay, of infinite creation itself, incarnated on this day. Is this an everyday occurrence ? The same Reality that came down one day as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, and Gaurāṅga descended again as Sri Ramakrishna after centuries. Oh, my imagination fails, my thought comes to a standstill ! What a momentous day it is ! Aha ! My speech, body, and mind have



become sanctified by speaking of the Master on his birthday. It will be really grand if one can die on such a day! It will be a real blessing to die on this birthday of the Master, at his own place, while talking to his devotees about him!

The rush of devotees continued even in the afternoon; and as they came in his presence, they remained standstill, fascinated by his divine mood. And then, they departed with grateful hearts filled with his blessing and inspiration for a spiritual life. As soon as the Raja of — and his wife departed after paying their respects to Mahapurushji, he said: 'I don't much care who is a prince or a princess. Nārāyaṇa alone is true, and it is He alone that exists for ever. The Master is all this. He came down for the good of the world and its creatures. It is for spreading his message alone that this body still lives. Else, why should it be alive? For I have no other desire or want. The one vow of my life is to preach his message as long as this body lasts. And it will last as long as there is need for doing his work.'

Two American ladies came to see him and enquired about his health. 'I am very fine today', he replied. 'Aha! The whole earth is full of bliss this day; for the Master came down on this earth on such a day. I cannot express before you the elation I feel within myself. What a blessed day it is! Never before did such a great spiritual force descend on this earth. The whole world will be saved. It will take centuries to realize who the Master is, and what his gift to this world has been.'

Mother Kālī was to be worshipped at night. When the worshipper came to pay his respects to Mahapurushji and ask for his permission and blessing for starting the worship, Mahapurushji said: 'Yes, my son, perform the Mother's worship with the fullest devotion. This is the day when Mother makes a special revelation of Herself. It is through Mother's power that

everything is done. In the present age, Her power is acting through the Master's personality. For the Master is none other than Mother Kālī Herself, who descended on this earth as Sri Ramakrishna. Every time I think of him, I am struck with wonder at the greatness of the personality with whom we lived. He was none other than God incarnate, Mother Herself. Our life has been fulfilled. Those who have not seen the Master but see us will also be blessed. For we are part and parcel of him.'

*Belur Math, February 20, 1931*

The Master's birthday celebrations went off yesterday amidst great joy. The intense God-absorption that one noticed yesterday in Mahapurushji continued even today. The whole night had been spent in the worship of Mother as well as recitation and music. The *homa* was performed after the worship in the small hours of the night. In the very same fire was then performed the *homās* for *sannyāsa* and *brahmacarya*, during which he initiated seven *brahmacārins* into *sannyāsa* and three others into *brahmacarya*. Thus, though he had a strenuous time of it all along, he did not seem to be tired today. The divine bliss within lit up his whole countenance.

In the morning, they brought to him all kinds of food offered to Kālī at night. With eyes shut and with folded hands, he showed his extreme regard for that *prasāda*, and then tasted from each kind with the tips of his fingers, praying all the while with extreme humility, 'Mother gracious, Mother, Mother, be kind to the world, Mother!' That earnest supplication touched everyone's heart deeply.

Now came the newly ordained *sannyāsins* and *brahmacārins* to salute him. He asked everyone of them of the new name he had got, and as they told their names, he expressed keen delight. Then, all of a sudden, he became very serious and said: 'Names and forms—all these are very superficial, external things; all these are ephemeral—they last for



just a little while. All this is vain. One has to go beyond name and form, one has to attain that highest Bliss, to realize the soul which is the supreme Reality. *Sannyāsa* consists in that alone, to be sure. It is an easy affair to perform the *virajāī homa*, discard one's tuft of hair and the sacred thread, and then wear the ochre cloth to become a monk. That is monasticism of merely the most rudimentary form, but it is very difficult to become a real *sannyāsin*. You have to meditate on the great Upaniṣadic sayings every day. Go, my sons, now, and be merged in meditation, and realize the Self. Then will your joining this Order of the Master and your life of renunciation have any meaning. If you would pay heed to my words, this is all that I can say.'

When the newly initiated *sannyāsins* begged for his blessing, he blessed them with all his heart and said: 'You have taken refuge with the Master who was the foremost among the men of renunciation; you have dedicated your body, mind, heart, and everything at his feet. You are very dear to us. I pray sincerely that you may have constant and unshakable love for and faith in God. Keep the ochre cloth that you have worn in the name of the Master unsullied till the last day and go on doing his service all the while. He is verily a wish-fulfilling tree. Pray to him fervently for love and devotion; pray for the knowledge of Brahman. He will grant everything, he will fulfil everything. He has nothing that he would deny you. We have this in the *Devī-sūktā*: "It is I Myself who, having been entreated by men and gods, speak of this secret about Brahman. I make great all those whom I wish to save. I make someone Brahmā, someone a seer, someone intelligent, and someone else a realized soul." It is She Herself who, out of compassion, revealed this knowledge about Brahman that is hankered after by men and gods alike. And by a mere wish of Hers, she can make anyone Brahmā, or a seer, and so on, just as She wills. She is ever ready to bestow Her

favour just for the mere asking.'

Next, he repeated the following verse several times: 'O Lord, I do not long for wealth, retinues, a beautiful wife, or even all-knowingness. My only prayer is for absolute devotion to you in all the lives that I may have.' Then he talked about the places the new *sannyāsins* would visit for their alms, and remarked: 'In any case, one looks fine in ochre clothes. But the outer colour will not suffice; it will have some meaning, only if you can have your inner being equally coloured in ochre, my sons. That is the only thing that matters.'

At about eleven in the morning, he said to an attendant: 'Aha, what a great occasion it was yesterday! The Master came down in this age just as Śrī Kṛṣṇa did in Vrindaban, Buddha in Kapilavastu, or Śrī Caitanya in Nadia. One has to admit some efficacy for such august moments. Aha, look at the description etc. of the birth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as given in the *Bhāgavata*! Everything, then, is charming, everything is so joyous! Everything is auspicious—the various directions, the sky, the town, the village, the group of cowherds, the trees, creepers, and herbs. All is quiet around. What a captivating description! With this, he asked the attendant to read that passage from the *Bhāgavata*.

*Belur Math, 1931*

Mahapurushji was physically so weak that it was difficult for him even to get down from his bedstead without somebody's help. At night, he had little sleep. So, the attendants kept vigil by turns at night. All that time, he remained absorbed in thoughts of God. Often enough, he would ask the attendant at his side to read certain passages from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the *Gītā*, the Upaniṣads, the *Bhāgavata*, or some such book, while he listened with full attention. At other times, he would sit quietly or would pray with folded hands to the Master for the good of the world. How appealing the language would sound then! At times,

again, he would lie down with the picture of some deity on his chest. All the while, he lived in a divine atmosphere. When the attendant put the question, 'Sir, would you not sleep?' his answer would be, 'What sleep can I have, my boy?' and with that he would sing :

'My sleep is gone, shall I sleep any more? I now keep awake through the power of *yoga*. Now have I offered the sleep of *yoga* to you, my Mother, and laid sleep itself to sleep. Now have I come across an excellent mood—the mood have I learnt from one who is an adept. I have met a man of that country, my Mother, which knows no night at all. To me are now days and nights all the same, and all practices futile.'

Once, in connection with sleep, he said : 'It is said in the *Caṇḍī* that sleep is nothing other than a form of Mother Herself—"The Goddess who lives in every being as sleep." She is the substratum of everything ; She pervades everything mobile or immobile. There is nothing beside Her. "Thou art the only repository of the whole universe." That Mother Herself is the very essence of this entire creation. Mother is ever in the inmost core of my heart, illuminating it all the while. A mere vision of Hers can alone remove all fatigue, and there can then be no more need of sleep. Whenever I feel a little tired, I just try to have a glance of Mother. That is enough. That brings bliss ; all the fatigue is removed.'

It was about 3 a.m. Silence reigned all around. The whole world lay quiet in the lap of slumber like some tired child. The entire monastery seemed to be merged in meditation. A small electric lamp burned in

Mahapurushji's room. Noticing the attendant near him, he said : 'Look here, my son, you should make intensive *japa* at dead of night. That is the best time for *japa* and meditation. When you start making *japa*, you may feel sleepy, but you must not give in. After some time, you will find that, although you may feel drowsy at the time of *japa*, the process of repetition of the *mantra* will proceed automatically in the subconscious. You should fix your posture in such a way that you can sit upright. If you feel very sleepy at any time, you may leave the seat and continue your *japa* while standing or sauntering about. "Work with the hand, and have Hari's name on the lips"—that is to say, you should repeat God's name under all circumstances, no matter whether you are walking or working. If you continue making *japa* in this way for some time, you will find that a part of your mind will always be engaged in *japa*—an undercurrent of *japa* will continue in your mind under all circumstances. If you can practise *japa* with determination for two or three years, during both day and night, you will find that you will become your own master. I hope you are aware of what is called *mahā-rātri*, dead of night, in the *Caṇḍī*; that dead of night is the most suitable time for spiritual practices. A spiritual current keeps on flowing during that period. You will understand the influence of that current as your mind grows finer. Why should a monk sleep too much at night? A little sleep for one or two hours should be enough. When will he practise his *japa* and meditation if he should spend the whole night in sleep? Nature becomes absolutely calm at dead of night, so that the mind becomes quiet with a little effort, and higher thoughts and higher moods come to it very easily.'



## EAST AND WEST

It has grown into a custom to start any discussion on the East and West with a reference to Rudyard Kipling who held that the East was East and the West was West, and the two could never meet. That idea sits like a ghost on the shoulders of all who would make a comparative study of international affairs, so much so that when the world seems at present to have divided itself into two blocks—democrat and communist—and the line of demarcation seems to have no definite form, or seems to run from west to east, rather than north to south, people still insist on calling this a division between the East and the West. In addition to the assumption of such a stereotyped pattern, the other hypotheses are that the two cannot be reconciled and the West is superior to the East. When studying Swami Vivekananda, however, we must remember that, though he used the terms East and West, just like others, for the sake of convenience, he never thought in terms of two irreconcilable entities. He believed even in those days that, though the East and the West had their own peculiarities and a harmony between the two or the blending of the two cultures seemed impossible, this could yet be accomplished, and in this success lay the promise of real human progress. When, therefore, he made distinctions between the two, his aim was not to divide them still further, but rather to emphasize the good and bad points in each, so that they might work jointly for a common humanity through a process of self-purification and due honour to each other. For he was not working as a politician, nor even as an Indian, but as a man of religion and universal love, based on the spiritual truth of the unity of all. His declared policy was: 'I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God.' Harmony through spiritual progress was his motto.

To this end, he studied both the East and the West at first hand, and recorded his conclusions in detail in his book *East and West*, and in a passing way in his *Memoirs of European Travel*, where marriage, social institutions, religion, position of women, and all such subjects were studied, traced to their sources, and compared with their counterparts. In addition to this special study, his lectures, conversations, letters, and writings are full of references to such contrasts and comparisons, as well as suggestions for improvement and reconciliation. The total impression left on the reader from such a frequent reversion to this topic is that the Swami attached great importance to it.

The suggestion has often been made that Swami Vivekananda's work was motivated by his love for his country, so that it lacked an impartial human background. Reverend Reeves Calkins, for instance, writes, 'Vivekananda was a patriot much more than philosopher. I think his passion for Vedāntic propaganda was because this seemed to him the best way of fostering Indian nationhood' (*Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 401). As against this, Sister Nivedita opined that Swami Vivekananda's mission had a twofold purpose—'one of world-moving, and another of nation-making'. He himself resented the idea that he was a politician or even a mere patriot. According to his own estimation, he was simply a religious man aiming at the uplift of the world as a whole. That this was so has been amply shown by us in our January editorial on Universalism.

The other criticism that can be levelled against his evaluation of Western culture is that his judgement was warped by the enmity displayed by Christian missionaries against him, and the ill-treatment his countrymen received at the hands of Western Christian rulers. This might have sounded to be true to some extent if he had not lived in loving



relationship in many Western families as one of their own, and if his criticism had been one-sided. As a matter of fact, he had his own appreciation of Western civilization and, often enough, he advised his countrymen to learn from the West. His criticism was never meant for wounding anyone, but only to appraise the person concerned of the real facts of the situation so that there would be no uninformed condemnation, misguided egotism, or unquestioning imitation. He denounced just because he loved, and was impatient for a better state of things. His opinions must be studied against this general and friendly background.

Again, we have to remember that both the East and the West have changed after Swami Vivekananda's advent, a change that he himself foresaw or actively endeavoured to bring about. He realized that a material civilization had an ingrained unsteadiness, and, unless the West changed that outlook, cataclysms were in store for it. Two world wars have substantiated his fears. That imbalance is still in evidence, because the West has not fully accepted his point of view as yet. Similarly, in the East, an empty stomach did not go well with high philosophy. His teaching and preaching have found ready response in many hearts, both here and elsewhere, just because they have discovered the real man behind all admonitions. This has led to a betterment of life in India, a reassessment of the values of life elsewhere, and a more friendly understanding and co-operation between the two halves of the globe. Swamiji summed up the object of his going to the West thus: 'To give and take is the law of nature. ... They (the Westerners) have been for a long time giving you (Indians) of what wealth they possess, and now is the time for you to share your priceless treasures with them. And you will see how the feeling of hatred will be quickly replaced by those of faith, devotion, and reverence towards you, and how they will do good to your country, even unasked'. That the Swami was right in

this 'Plan of Campaign' is borne out by the subsequent history of the world. His holiness and unstinted gift of India's spirituality to the world raised India in world estimation, and his presentation of the good features of Western life gave new direction to the Indian reform movements.

Lastly, he talked in general terms of tendencies and prevailing forces, and not of individuals and institutions as such. If thus he referred to Indian spirituality, he did not mean that all Indians were spiritual; and, if he decried the materialism of the West, he did not imply that everything Western was materialistic with no spirituality at all. He made distinctions in order to emphasize certain facts, and not to decry anything. He was a lover of men, and could discover the universal humanity underlying all peculiarities of geographical, economic, political, or social conditions. He spoke as a man to humanity itself, on which alone his attention was riveted.

With these warnings against misunderstanding, we proceed to a detailed study of his views.

## II

In his view, 'The Western man is born individualistic, while the Hindu is socialistic—entirely socialistic' (*C.W.*, Vol. VIII. p. 62). In marriage, and many other affairs in the West, each individual can assert that he or she will abide by personal predilection and not be dictated to by others. The Hindu demands that the individual shall bow down to the needs of society, and those needs shall regulate his personal behaviour. As a result of these two attitudes, the West has granted freedom to society, so that society has grown and become dynamic, whereas the Hindu society has become cramped in every way. Here, again, Swamiji does not shut his eyes to the Western social decorum that rules the behaviour of individuals in matters of matrimonial alliances, free mixing of the sexes, etc. No society can really live without



suitable inhibitions and regulations. The West lives and prospers, because it has these in its own way. Still, a broad distinction of social rigidity and flexibility in the East and the West does strike even the most casual observer. His own conclusion was that liberty is the first condition of growth. 'In India, religion was never shackled. . . . On the other hand, a fixed point was necessary to allow this infinite variation to religion, and society was chosen as that point in India. As a result, society became rigid and almost immovable. . . . On the other hand, in the West, the field of variation was society, and the constant point was religion. . . . The result is a splendid social organization with a religion that never rose beyond the grossest materialistic conceptions' (*C.W.*, Vol. IV. p. 346).

Life differs in the East and the West, because the goals are different. 'Of the West, the goal is individual independence, the language, money-making education, the means, politics; of India, the goal is *mukti*, the language, the Veda, the means, renunciation' (*C.W.*, Vol. IV. p. 476). The contrast is complete, both as regards the ideal and the means of its realization. We are not as yet concerned with the relative merit or demerit of either. Our first attempt is to discover the urges that lead either society, so that we may discover the ways and means for a harmony between the two. In India, the emphasis on spirituality, reinforced by renunciation, has produced a type of culture that is different from that in the West. The West goes on multiplying its wants, while the East tries to remain satisfied with what little it can get. In the West, happiness and laughter are on the surface; but inside it is all sorrow. The East is sombre outside, but full of contentment inside. In the West, the need for satisfying wants gives rise to material prosperity; in the East, renunciation leads to poverty.

The Swami noted that the Indian reformers of his days, dazzled by the glamour of

Western civilization, failed to distinguish between the two outlooks on life, and, consequently, they believed that India's salvation lay in a blind imitation of everything Western. In his *East and West*, he further pointed out that, in addition to the basic outlooks, one had to take into account the climatic, historical, and other influences, which mould a nation's character. Dress, food, architecture, personal behaviour, etc. are largely the products of geographical conditions. The emphasis on certain aspects of life, rather than on others, is often a result of historical factors. Besides, to understand a society, one must have personal experience of its inner working; superficial studies are greatly misleading. Hence he writes: 'The present writer has, to some extent, personal experience of Western society. His conviction resulting from such experience has been that there is such a wide divergence between Western society and the Indian as regards the primal course and goal of each that any sect in India, framed after the Western model, will miss the aim' (*C.W.*, Vol. IV. pp. 478-79). Accordingly, his stern warning rang out, 'O India, this is your terrible danger. The spell of imitating the West is getting such a strong hold upon you that what is good or what is bad is no longer decided by reason, judgement, discrimination, or reference to the Śāstras' (*C.W.*, Vol. IV. p. 478). For her own good, as also for the spiritual health of the whole world, India had to be saved from this suicidal imitation and self-condemnation; for India's Westernization would toll the death knell of spirituality itself.

If India had to be set on her own feet, the worthlessness of the outer brilliance of the Western civilization had to be exposed and the stupidity of imitation had to be utterly condemned. For in self-assertion and self-confidence lay the promise of the future, while self-forgetfulness and self-condemnation opened the gate of national disruption and disaster. As between the imi-



tative, soft-brained Westernized man and the hard-brained, orthodox bigot, he preferred the latter. 'There are two obstacles on our path in India—the Scylla of old orthodoxy and the Charybdis of modern European civilization. Of these two, I vote for the old orthodoxy, and not for the Europeanized system; for the old orthodox man may be ignorant, he may be crude, but he is a man, he has a faith, he has strength, he stands on his own feet, while the Europeanized man has no backbone' (*C.W.*, Vol. III. p. 151); 'Ay, in spite of the sparkle and glitter of Western civilization, . . . I tell them to their face, that it is all vain' (*C.W.*, Vol. III. p. 149).

The civilization of the West is derived from the Greeks, whose watchword was expression, as against the Indian keynote of meditativeness. Hence the Western art excels in perfection of form, whereas the Indian art tells of deep thoughts. Europe is engrossed so much in action and expression that it has hardly any time for meditation, while India thinks so deeply that she hardly knows how to express or act. The extrovert West tends to keep itself confined to matter, whereas the introvert East is liable to get lost in the immaterial.

The conceptions of God, religion, and other things also conform to this external tendency in the West. 'Politics, social improvement, in one word, this world, is the goal of mankind in the West, and God and religion come in quietly as helpers to attain the goal. Their God is, so to speak, the Being who helps to cleanse and to furnish this world for them' (*C.W.*, Vol. III. p. 179). It was according to these conceptions that the Indian God was decried by Western Christians for having failed to bring the Indians prosperity and liberty. All this may be described as a tribal or materialistic conception of God. The West is reconciled to God when things go well, but angry when suffering is the lot.

The West claims superiority at present, but there was a time when the East had its day, and the West learnt from her. India, China,

Persia—these were the cradles of civilization. All the great religious systems originated in the East. The Indian society survived a hundred shocks under which the old civilizations of Greece, Rome, Babylon, and Egypt crumbled down. That shows the intrinsic vitality of the Indian culture and its vigour of recuperating after every fall. This nation cannot die, though, to others, it may appear effete. Under peculiar circumstances, India lay low during the British regime. But that was no reason for the sweeping generalization that she suffered because her past and present outlooks were intrinsically bad. The fact is that the West has yet to learn the secrets of a stable society; and here India can teach her well enough.

As for the relative superiority of the West, facts may seem too eloquent to need any proof. The West may laugh at India's caste system, for instance. But what nation could deny some sort of social stratification? In India, it is based on spirituality; elsewhere, on money or power. The Indians might appear impractical in worldly affairs; but were they not very practical in matters religious? Some social evils and superstitions might have grown during the periods of India's decadence; but they were neither basic to India's culture, nor innate to the individuals. Besides, what nation had not some sort of irrational and outmoded customs and manners? Evils there are everywhere. But that does not constitute a reason for wholesale damnation. If the Indian widows are supposed to be sentenced to life-long servitude, the despondency of the unmarried maidens make the Western atmosphere gloomy. If child-marriage weakened the Hindus, late marriage led to sexual promiscuity in the West. We have our oppressive priestcraft, the West has its Shylocks. The Indian peasant may be poor, but poverty does not make him criminal; the Indians are religious; while in the West, the masses are very ill-behaved, and do not know much of religion beyond certain forms. Thus neither



society presents humanity at its best. To get at the true man here or elsewhere, one has to go deeper.

### III

Such in brief was Swamiji's comparative study of the East and the West in the secular sphere. But he scored his highest when he came to spirituality, in which field, according to him, India had no compeer, and could still become the teacher of the whole world. The contrast is brought out boldly in the words: 'When the sledge-hammer blows of modern antiquarian researches are pulverizing ... all sorts of antiquated orthodoxy, when religion in the West is only in the hands of the ignorant, and the knowing ones look down with scorn upon anything belonging to religion, here comes to the fore the philosophy of India, which displays the highest religious aspirations of the Indian mind, where the grandest philosophical facts have been the practical spirituality of the people' (*C.W.*, Vol. III, p. 110).

The Vedānta philosophy of India supplies the *raison d'être* for all religious efforts anywhere at any time. Indian philosophy can not only stand its own ground against all scientific and rational onslaught, but it can take under its protective wings all who search for rational assurance. In this field at least, both of theory and practice, the Indians need not be apologetic. They have become the guardians of the science of all religions—the saving message for humanity; and they have to cultivate it more assiduously so as to be able to give freely to others from this invaluable common heritage of men: 'We Hindus have now been placed under God's providence in a very critical and responsible position. The nations of the West are coming to us for spiritual help. A great moral obligation rests on the sons of India to fully equip themselves for the work of enlightening the world on the problems of human existence' (*C.W.*, Vol. III, p. 139).

In spiritual outlook, the two halves of the

globe differ widely. The West, too, has its religion, but not with that boldness for accepting it at the cost of everything else as is the special characteristic of the Hindus. In India, they trace their nobility to the seers of old, but in Europe one feels proud if one can trace one's lineage to a robber baron. The Eastern masses may be ignorant about politics and economics, but spirituality has percolated to such an extent to all strata of society that the Indian masses are very much more well informed in this field than their compeers in the West. If you ask a European ploughman about party politics or monetary or scientific problems, he will prove that he is well versed in these matters; but ask him about religion, he will simply say that he goes to church or belongs to a denomination. The Hindu peasant, on the other hand, can teach you volumes about mythology, religious beliefs, and philosophy.

Religion becomes somehow subordinate to secular needs in the West. That this is no exaggeration was proved by the revolt in Russia against religion, which submitted to Czarist dictation and justified the oppression of the masses. It has been aptly said by the Western communists that religion becomes too often the handmaid of politics, doing the police duty to keep the masses under control with doses of convenient dogmas, enervating them like opiate. As against this, Indian spirituality kept itself free from secular trammels through her independent world-renouncing *sannyāsins*, and selfless poor Brāhmaṇas.

A corollary of this basic confusion between the secular and the spiritual is that, in the West, poverty and social backwardness are equated with irreligion, and, conversely, prosperity with spiritual attainment. The West is prosperous and powerful, *ergo* it must be religious; and the East is not so, *ergo* it deserves to be ruled over and shown the true religion, viz. Christianity. Colonialism and conversion thus run hand in hand.

Protestant West denied monasticism, and the result has been that it has not produced



a single outstanding saint during the past centuries. Again, the philosophical thoughts of Western religious people is very often restricted by dogmatic beliefs beyond which it cannot fly. It is not really philosophy that they create, but merely scholasticism or theology. There is a pitiable lack of uncompromising search for the realization of truth, however antagonistic it may be to cherished beliefs. The fact is that the West, following its Greek predecessors who set the tune, have been searching for truth externally. As a result, their sciences have developed. But the spirit has been cramped, and, consequently, religion can hardly command the allegiance of the intelligentsia. Religion in the West suffers from arrested growth, dogmatism, and superficiality.

Western society thus lacks a stable foundation in a spirituality that identifies itself with unshakable and eternal Truth—with Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Itself. 'I must tell you frankly that the very foundations of Western civilization have been shaken to their base. The mightiest buildings, if built upon the loose sand foundations of materialism, must totter to their destruction some day' (*C.W.*, Vol. III. p. 380).

The priests in the West do not so much lead society, as they pander to its whims and needs. In its home policy, the priesthood lacks depth and sincerity of purpose, and fails to command respect. Christ's life of renunciation is totally ignored. His higher teachings about unity and divinity of man are misinterpreted; and sects are organized on the basis of superficial dogmas. In the field of foreign activity, the missionaries are more keen on villifying the heathens and misrepresenting the non-Christian beliefs for home consumption, so as to get more money, rather than to understand the foreigners with more sympathy, and live the life that Christ exemplified. Worse still is that the missionaries identify themselves with colonialism. They, as also the foreign scholars, start with prejudice and thus can never appreciate the

Hindu history, literature, philosophy, and culture. Hence their hollow criticism either alienates or amuses the Hindu intelligentsia. The result has been that, after Swami Vivekananda's advent, the Hindus have learnt how to totally ignore such mischievous propaganda, or to react with equal force and alacrity. The West, also, has learnt that all is not as well at home or as bad abroad as the missionaries represent.

Let us then acknowledge that neither culture can be condemned outright; that the two cultures differ; that the Hindu ideal, after all, is not as worthless as the West thinks, but rather that it has still much vigour, which the West would do well to imbibe. The West cannot ignore the fact that its religion is in a low ebb now, and society in a state of confusion.

#### IV

In India, however, Swami Vivekananda was not singing lullaby to a drowsy nation. His aim was to wake it up, but not to pander to its self-complacence. His criticism of the West was, therefore, matched by his more caustic criticism of the East. When his countrymen characterized the Westerners as materialists, he turned upon them with the remark, 'Grapes are sour'. It was the indolence of the Indians that prevented them from more enjoyment and not a real dislike for it. 'How much of enterprise and devotion to work, how much enthusiasm and manifestation of *rajas* (activism) are there in the lives of the Western people! While in your country (i.e. India), it is as if the blood has become congealed in the heart, so that it cannot circulate in the veins—as if paralysis has overtaken the body and it has become languid. So my idea is first to make the people active by developing their *rajas*' (*C.W.*, Vol. VII. p. 181).

The fact is that it will not do simply to bank on our high ideals, past achievements, and present superiority in certain respects. If we are to live as a nation, we must learn



many things from the West, retrieve our position in the comity of nations, and make our contribution to the total good effectively. We have to preserve spirituality as the central fact of life; but then we have also to stretch out our hands to receive from others all we can, without jeopardizing that central theme.

What can we learn from the West? 'We can learn mechanism from them' (*C.W.*, Vol. III. p. 317). 'We should learn from the West her arts and her sciences. From the West, we have to learn the sciences of physical nature' (*C.W.*, Vol. III. p. 443); 'The Western people are grand in organization, social institutions, armies, governments, etc.' (*C.W.*, Vol. II. p. 362), which they can profitably teach us. We can benefit greatly by imbibing their nationalism, their democratic outlook, their enterprising spirit and business integrity, their intense activism, power of co-operative effort, and their solicitousness for the improvement of the masses. We can also adopt many features of their free social institutions, though we have to proceed with caution. In short, in all fields of expression of life, they are presently in advance, and can teach us in many ways for years to come. To restore a balance in our life's activity, we require all these very badly. It is silly to cry that we are spiritual; the fact being that, in spite of the giants in spirituality we have produced, most of us are imbeciles, steeped in *tamas*, lethargy. The Christian belief in and struggle for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth has much meaning for the Hindu society of the present day which is swayed too much by a negative philosophy.

At the same time, the West also has to learn from us: 'Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground, and make spirituality the basis of her life. And what will save Europe is the religion of the Upaniṣads' (*C.W.*, Vol. III.

p. 159); 'The thoughtful men of the West find in our ancient philosophy, especially in the Vedānta, the new impulse of thought they are seeking, the very spiritual food and drink for which they are hungering and thirsting' (*C.W.*, Vol. III. p. 182).

Swamiji dreamt of a suitable combination of the two cultures to make an ideal human society, though he had his doubts whether this dream would be fulfilled in the near future. Even so, the attempt has to be made, and 'each will have to supply and hand down to future generations what it has, for the future accomplishment of that dream of ages—the harmony of nations, an ideal world' (*C.W.*, Vol. III. p. 171). A complete civilization needs a suitable blending of the two elements. Although he denounced the drinking 'carelessly of those decoctions of Western materialism with an Eastern flavour' (*C.W.*, Vol. IV. p. 333), still he asked his 'brave boys', 'Can you make a European society with India's religion?' and answered, 'I believe it is possible, and must be' (*C.W.*, Vol. IV. p. 368). We may also cite: 'The future holds the conjunction of the East and West, a combination which would be productive of marvellous results' (*C.W.*, Vol. VII. p. 289). 'By uniting the materialism of the West with the spiritualism of the East, I believe much can be accomplished' (*C.W.*, Vol. VII. p. 284). 'The reformers must be able to unite in themselves the culture of both the East and the West' (*C.W.*, Vol. VIII. p. 308). 'By combining some of the active and heroic elements of the West with calm virtues of the Hindus, there will come a type of men far superior to any that have ever been in this world' (*C.W.*, Vol. VIII. pp. 323-24).

This was a consummation that he eagerly looked for, and yet, he was not an impatient reformer who would destroy every existing thing and antagonize those very persons whom he would reform. Swamiji would rather give them liberty, appreciate their present difficulties, and egg them on to further achievement. 'Help and not condemn' was



his watchword. "The Westerners should be seen through their eyes ; to see them through our eyes, and for them to see us with theirs—both these are mistakes' (C.W., Vol. V. p. 514). Again, a fruit-tree must be judged by the best it can produce, and not by the worm-eaten, undeveloped fruits. Each society has its own part to play, and each has its specific contribution. Let them play separately their

parts to the full, till they can combine into one. His conclusion is: 'My message in life is to ask the East and West not to quarrel over different ideals but to show them that the goal is the same in both cases, however opposite it may appear. As we wend our way through this mazy vale of life, let us bid each other godspeed' (C.W., Vol. IV. p. 77).

## THE SACRED IN BUDDHISM

BY SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

Buddha apparently recognized neither God nor soul nor Self, yet his life and teachings are saturated with a deep sense of sacredness. Buddha, by making the salvation of all a means to his own good, by his choosing to raise others from suffering by a free act of grace and compassion, introduces into Buddhism a deeply sacred element. I would have said a deeply religious element, if the word religion is taken in Buddha's sense—a religion without God, without soul.

In recognizing neither God nor soul, Buddha created a kind of holy revolution in Indian thought and tradition. Vivekananda rightly calls Buddha the rebel child of Hinduism. Buddha revolted against the existing forms of Vedic religion and sacrifice which helped man to 'exteriorize' rather than 'interiorize' himself. Buddha set himself against the social inequalities of the caste system and against priesthood. But it was a sacred revolt. Buddha did not divide the world into two: sacred and the world of rebellion. In Buddha's revolt, there was no adversary except himself, the feeble human nature in him, but which can be transformed by the sacred. In the sacred world of Camus, which is the world of tradition, there are no more questions, only eternal answers and commentaries.

He says that if in such a world, where things are held sacred, the problems of rebellion do not arise, it is because no real problems are to be found in such a world. But Buddha found that in the world of tradition, real problems existed, a real holy revolt could be raised and fulfilled. Buddha accomplished it through love and knowledge.

Camus says that where theoretical equality conceals factual inequality, the climate necessitates a revolt. It was so in the Indian society of Buddha's time. Though Hindu philosophy affirmed great equality, Hindu society was the picture of inequality. Buddha set himself against this inequality; but that was the by-product of his revolt against himself which ended in his illumination and the discovery that world problems can be solved only through love and knowledge, *karuṇā* and *prajñā*.

In his book *The Rebel*, Camus mentions neither Buddha nor Gandhi. Both of them were holy rebels. Though these two did not divide the world into two, the world of sacred and that of rebellion, there are points of resemblance between Camus's rebel and the rebel in Buddha and Gandhi. Camus says: "The rebel is a man who is determined on laying claims to a human situation in which all answers are human." These words could

easily be those of Buddha or of Gandhi.

Camus says: 'Man's solidarity is formed upon rebellion, and rebellion in its turn can only find its justification in this solidarity. So, then, any rebellion which claims the right to deny or destroy this solidarity loses simultaneously its right to be called rebellion and becomes in reality an acquiescence in murder.' Buddha would accept the latter part of this declaration that any rebellion that claims to destroy solidarity is suicidal. But Buddha would not agree that man's solidarity is founded upon rebellion. Rather he would say that this solidarity is founded on love. If man rebels, it is to awaken this dormant love in the other, Buddha would say. Camus says, the moment when a movement of revolt begins, suffering is seen as a collective experience. It is just the reverse for Buddha. Because suffering is seen as a collective experience, Buddha would start a revolt to remedy it by awakening compassion and the sense of redress in others. Camus's division of the world into two, that of the sacred and that of rebellion and his powerful reasoning brings him to a position where all that is possible is All or Nothing--which is evidently the Hegelian relic of 'either-or'. For Buddha, our method of thinking in the 'either-or' fashion can never be a solution to our problems. Buddha advocated the 'Middle Way', the way of moderation, in which the poles of 'either-or' were harmonized.

Buddha built his views on the most evident fact of life, namely, suffering. Life was suffering; but life was also more than suffering. Life, by a consciousness of suffering or evil, teaches us to discard the secular values which produce suffering, and go in search of the sacred, the abiding. That which is abiding, that which is above suffering is also in life. This is the transcendent quality of life, the saving power of life, and on this saving power, Buddha laid the foundation stone of the structure of the Sacred. Buddha did not say that he had come to

build the sacred in man. Quite on the contrary, he asked man to build it himself: 'Be a lamp unto your feet, work out your own salvation' was his final message.

To Buddha belongs the unique distinction of having constructed the sacred without a reality, without God and without soul. He constructed it on suffering and on life's quality to transcend it. Buddha knew that if he were to admit a Reality, then we would create another 'system' and take refuge under that. He knew that if he were to admit a God, then we would create another religion and thus add to the existing number of religions. He did not want us to seek the security of a philosophical system or a religion. He wanted us to seek security under the sacredness of our transcendence, to awaken the sacred in us. It may be said that in spite of all his safeguards, man made a God of him after his passing away, that his disciples made systems of philosophy out of his utterances. Still it has to be pointed out that the Arhat-ideal of the Hinayāna, which was superseded by the Bodhisattva ideal of Mahāyāna, is not a simple deification of the man Buddha, but deification of the guide-saviour aspect of Buddha. He is not a God there as other Gods, neither a law-giving God nor a dictator, but one who participates in human suffering and guides man to transcend it.

No doubt, systems were created out of his message. But the Mādhyamika tenet, which is his central message, is not a system. It asks us to discard, to renounce all points of view. The renunciation of all points of view is not again another point of view. It is the courage to throw to the winds all sense of security and to depend on one's own inner transcendence, on one's own sacredness.

We know from experience that pain and suffering are caused when our will is violated or frustrated, when our *will to live*, which is the very source of life, is struck by an impediment of disease or fear of death. When Buddha spoke of clinging to life as the cause



of suffering, he was hinting at suffering as frustrated will. But Buddha wanted to take pain, suffering, and imperfection above the domain of will. To say that pain and imperfection are the results of man's rebellious will coming in conflict with cosmic will would be to admit sin. We say we have sinned when we have violated or sinned against cosmic will or God's will. But Buddha would not admit sin or repentance. And by not admitting sin, Buddha took pain, evil, etc. above the domain of will.

For the moment, let us suppose that Buddha was a believer in God. Then, he would have said that the presence of pain and imperfection must be traced to a disharmony between the creative purpose of God and the actual world. We would have said that God is trying His best to impress on the abysmal void that is this universe, His own design, His purpose. Buddha would have said that God is making the best of a bad job. If, in spite of God's efforts, pain and imperfection and ugliness still remain, it does not show lack of divine purpose, but the nature of manifestation or creation which cannot completely be redeemed from pain and imperfection. These are implicit in creation. This is how Buddha would have taken pain and imperfection above the plane of will, if he were a believer in God.

But, for Buddha, the word God is taboo. The world is not God's creation, but man's creation. The world of pain, imperfection, and ugliness is implicit in man's thinking, it is in the nature of his thought. It is not man's responsibility. To make man or God responsible for suffering or evil, will be to localize and focalize it and thus to separate it from thought. Localization means objectivation, and objectivation means tearing away from the subject and making it into an abstraction. In other words, when everybody is responsible for a thing, how can we make somebody responsible? That is what Buddha meant by saying that pain is implicit in man's thinking, and hence it is a cosmic responsibil-

ity. Also, we find good and innocent people suffering pain; even saints suffer. And then a most difficult question: How to account for cancer in the fish? What sin or violence of cosmic will did the fish do to merit cancer, except the sin of being born. Even for being born we cannot assign responsibility to somebody. It is a chain phenomenon, a chain in which the main links are ignorance, combination of name and form, contact, desire, and previous existence. So, Buddha found it absolutely unhelpful to assign pain and imperfection to individual will, and thus absolutely necessary to raise it above the level of sin and individual responsibility.<sup>1</sup> None can *will* suffering if it is co-extensive with manifestation, because it is implicit in our thinking and inseparable from it. Is there no way out of this evil implicit in thought? Buddha answers, 'yes'. Man is thought; but man is more than thought, man is being, *nirvāṇa*. Here lies the sacredness of thought, in its capacity to transcend itself. In the same way, pain and evil are eternal companions of our thought. The way to extinguish them, namely *nirvāṇa*, is also implicit in thought. When the flow of thought which we define as 'I-consciousness' (here the 'I-consciousness' is not meant in the Vedāntic sense) stops, then ignorance stops, and when ignorance stops, other links of the chain get extinguished, and peace dawns: it is the silence of *nirvāṇa*.

Buddha's concern for pain and suffering, implicit in creation, manifested as compassion or *karuṇā* and as wisdom or *prajñā*. For Buddha, compassion is an urgent need. When we see a wreck, shall we go about asking how it happened and when, or shall we immediately plunge in the centre of the wreck and try to save whatever we can? Buddha

<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that Buddha did not accept *karma* and its implications on individual suffering. But *karma* is an explanation on the individual plane, whereas Buddha here is putting evil on the cosmic level. Buddha accepted *karma*, but not a soul that goes through *karma*, which means again that his effort was to take evil above the plane of individual responsibility.



barred all questions of philosophy with this argument of the urgency of compassion, the urgency of curing the man who is bitten by the snake of ignorance. When a man bitten by a snake is brought to me, I shall not indulge in questions like where was he bitten and at what hour, which have no relation with the cure to be effected. I shall immediately take steps to cure him. This is what Buddha said.

What is the state of Buddha's mind when he stands before a wreck which he wants to save? We already said that he does not ask questions. Is he impatient or moved by righteous indignation? He is neither moved by pessimism nor optimism. He stands before the wreck with equanimity or *samatā*, with a mind that always carries with it the primordial suchness of things, the totality, the prius of everything, the *śūnyatā*. He does not see in the wreck simply the evil. He sees in it the co-existence of evil and the supreme good, namely *nirvāṇa*. This vision of completeness, where totality is creative, where evil is juxtaposed with its own salvation—which according to Buddha is the character of everything and every being—makes Buddha 'silent'. It is not a silence of words, nor even of will, but the plenitude of suchness which is beyond words and conceptualization. It is *śūnyatā*. It is not the wreck that imparted to Buddha-mind its totality. Buddha's mind is always the cosmic mind where opposites coexist. He transfers to the wreck the suchness and primordial purity of his mind. He transfers his sacredness to the wreck and this transfer is Buddha's compassion. The mere presence of his mind, which is full of equanimity, means compassion and the redemption of the wreck.

The Mahāyāna texts speak of Buddha's silence by using the terms unfathomable, awe-inspiring, etc. According to them, all his teaching is contained in his silence. Evidently, those texts are referring to the profound aspect of Buddha's being which is in-

accessible to mind or words. The Vedānta texts also refer to Being by the word silence, *śāntam*, meaning thereby that there neither the mind nor word has any entrance.

Buddha's silence is an inner fire that consumes everything, and this fire is the source of all sacredness for Buddha. For him, sacredness is not an external fire that can be fed by fuel. To give his own words to a Brāhmaṇa who was familiar with the idea of sacrifice and the ritual fire: 'Do not deem, O Brāhmaṇa, that sacredness comes by mere laying wood on the fire, for it is external. Having therefore left that course, I kindle my sacred fire only within, which burns for ever; and on that I have my mind rightly fixed for ever. In this sacrifice, the tongue is the sacrificial spoon and the heart is the altar of the fire' (*Samyutta Nikāya*, p. 168).

Witness the source of Buddha's compassion and activity. It is not the anxiety to improve or to correct or to create, not even the sense of a mission to save, which are our attitudes when we find ourselves before a situation that needs saving. For Buddha, compassion and activity to redress things are just the spontaneity of his mind that is calm and tranquil with its own suchness. This suchness is not a dead sea of uniformity, but a womb of benign activity.

According to Buddha, every object and every being carries in its heart the *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* aspects, that is to say, the evil and the sacred aspects, the determinate and the indeterminate aspects of reality. In existential language, we say that there is a will at the heart of things. It is this will that balances between the two opposing aspects. When we study a thing, if we find that we are not able to understand it, we are anguished. The sense of our intellectual or spiritual inferiority before the problem anguishes us. It is more correct to say that our will which tries to be in harmony with the will at the heart of that thing is agonized, and hence we feel the anguish which is the anguish that accompanies all knowledge. The Buddha



gives us a remarkable formula to get over the anguish. He says that our anguish is due to two factors: first, our mind tries to comprehend by its relational technique, by its usual method of either-or; secondly, we do not concede an indeterminable aspect to things, an aspect to which the thing points. In other words, we do not concede that the thing we want to know is, perhaps, as great as ourselves. This recognition of suchness in things restores suchness to our mind, unity to our mind, which till now was divided between either-ors.

It is important to remember that suchness is not an impersonalized, qualityless something, that it is not a dead sea of uniformity without any waves and wind. Suchness is the source of our personality, the essence of our faith and aspiration. It is the will, but it is deeper than the will. It cannot be defined, but only indicated. Even in ordinary language, when we say, 'Such and such is the greatness of that man, or such and such is the situation', we are indicating the limits to which words can climb to measure up to the full dimensions of that person. It is not limiting by words, but showing the limit of words. Buddhism indicates suchness by the coexistence of opposites in suchness condition, a coexistence in which there is always a transcendence of the *status quo*. It is a dynamic coexistence which makes us 'silent', silent, because cleansed of all concepts or thought.

To indicate the dynamic nature of suchness, Āśvaghoṣa, one of the greatest pillars of Buddhistic doctrine of 80 A.D. and the author of the suchness or *tathatā* philosophy, used the word 'inter-perfuming', inter-perfuming between suchness and ignorance and between ignorance and suchness. Āśvaghoṣa's word inter-perfuming, we have reason to believe, perhaps, led to the inter-penetration theory of Zen Buddhism.

To quote Āśvaghoṣa's words: 'By perfuming we mean that while our worldly clothes (viz. those which we wear) have no odour of

their own, neither offensive nor agreeable, they can yet acquire one or the other odour according to the substance with which they are perfumed. Suchness (*tathatā*) is likewise a pure thing, free from all defilements caused by the perfuming power of ignorance. On the other hand, ignorance has nothing to do with purity. Nevertheless, we speak of its being able to do the work of purity because it, in its turn, is perfumed by suchness. Determined by suchness, ignorance becomes the *raison d'être* of all forms of defilement. And this ignorance perfumes suchness and produces memory. Memory, in its turn, perfumes ignorance. On account of this reciprocal perfuming, the truth is misunderstood. On account of its being misunderstood, an external world (projected by the subject) appears. Further, on account of the perfuming power of memory, various modes of individuation are produced.'

In other words, ignorance must have an alloy, a raw material, a substance to manifest itself, and this alloy is supplied by suchness. And suchness, in turn, must have a raw material to manifest itself, and that is supplied by ignorance. It is a mutual and dynamic interpenetration in whose current all of us are caught up. It is an interpenetration that never allows evil or ignorance to remain as a fixed quantity, that purifies us of all fixed ideas regarding evil, ignorance, *nirvāna*, and suchness.

If we ask the question, 'What is the basis or substratum of evil?', we shall get the answer, suchness of evil, as suchness is all-pervasive and always annexes evil and ignorance to itself. What saves evil or what is sacred in evil is this base of suchness which refuses itself to be qualified as evil or suchness. Just look at this wonderful idea of evil being sustained by suchness or evil penetrating a region where it can no longer be recognized as evil or its opposite, where it knows itself and transcends itself.

We think that evil is something non-intelligent, that it can be attacked and



destroyed. The Buddha says that evil knows itself, being sustained by suchness or *nirvāna*, that it has a quality to transcend itself. So, then, to attack evil is a waste of energy; the best thing is to know its self-transcending or creative quality and capacity.

Herein is the great strength that Buddhism gives to us. While adopting a realistic attitude to pain, suffering, and imperfection, it affirms that suffering, which is real every moment, penetrates a region where it loses its nature, where it can no longer be recognized either as suffering or as suchness, in short, where evil transcends itself. This self-transcendence of evil is our own self-transcendence, for it is only when it is integrated to our being that it is experienced or felt as transcendence.

In other words, evil consumes itself by its own dynamism in so far as enlightenment or illumination is its eternal companion. It is this dynamism that gives dynamism to our life, evil seeking its freedom in self-transcendence. Without knowing this self-transcending quality of evil, we think of destroying it, attacking it, etc. Our efforts are a waste in this direction. On the other hand, if we *know* the self-annihilating quality of evil, then we will not resist evil, we will transcend it by knowing it.

Āsvaghoṣa affirms the need for knowing the self-transcending quality of ignorance or evil and thus of not resisting it. He says one can never destroy ignorance, but one can only know it. Ignorance, in its ultimate nature, is identical and non-identical with enlightenment; the part which is non-identical can be destroyed, but the portion that is identical with enlightenment cannot be destroyed. So, then, ignorance in one sense is destructible, though in another it is indestructible. The waves which are stirred up in the ocean can be stopped by stopping the wind. But water remains the same, for water is both identical and non-identical with the waves. Āsvaghoṣa, by affirming the indestructibility of ignorance and evil, adopts

a very realistic attitude to it, and suggests that all that we can do is to know it and thus to know its self-transcending quality. By knowing it, we shall learn not to resist it but to transcend it.

The doctrine of momentarism, which is one of the originalities of Buddha, and which says that our consciousness renews itself every moment and that the world is consequently a novelty every moment, comes to support this idea of self-transcendence of ignorance. It suggests that the power of consciousness to renew itself can be harnessed to aid this self-transcending act, to aid our freedom, to aid our creative genius. Real creativity is a process that progresses from bad to good and not from good to better. The artist feels dissatisfied with what he has done, and then he creates something really original. That is how the evil in us evolves through a *meffiance* of ourselves and then through its *depassement*, all which is accomplished in the self-transcendence of evil.

From the above study of the transcending quality of evil and ignorance, it is clear that Buddhism is not a negative or pessimistic philosophy, but a very positive one. The silence of Buddha, the concept of *śūnya* or void, and the concept of *nirvāna*, all have positive imports. Buddha would not have built his life and teachings on abstractions nor on negative concepts. And then, more positive than his philosophy was his remarkable personality whose impact on the human mind and spirit is felt even today, after 2,500 years. The two aspects of his personality, compassion and wisdom, well-matched and well-balanced, form a rare combination which is witnessed perhaps only once in a cycle or millennium.

Before we close, we must study briefly the discipline aspect of Buddhism. One hears in the West a very cheap criticism that Buddha was an atheist, a non-believer in the soul; and so how can there be an element of sacredness in his teaching? How can he be a mystic?



All through, I have been insisting on what Buddha revealed as the transcendent quality of life in its accommodation both to evil and *nirvāṇa*, which (quality) is expressed by silence. If one word can express the deep mystical treasure in us, it is silence. There cannot be a greater mystic than Buddha, who condensed the whole of his teaching by his silence. I have already referred to Buddha's own words about the sacred fire that he kindled within himself and which burnt for ever. The essence of all mysticism is the kindling of this inner fire.

If Buddha was not moved by the idea of sacredness, he would not have emphasized on the eightfold path; and he would not have laid down the discipline for monks and the laymen. Worship of the Buddha as the home of perfection and meditation on the various stages of spiritual elevation, the *bhūmis* as they are called, are enjoined for all. Then there is the insistence of the threefold discipline, *śīla* (observance of precepts like non-violence, friendliness, etc.), *samādhi* or concentration, and *Prajñā* or Wisdom.

The Mahāyāna tradition, though imbued with extreme altruism, did not discard the scheme of discipline prescribed by Hīnayāna. The Arhat-ideal of Hīnayāna was replaced by the Bodhisattva-ideal of Mahāyāna. Those aspiring for Buddhahood are Bodhisattvas. All beings are identical with Buddha; and Bodhi (enlightenment) is implicit in them; but it has to be realized by spiritual discipline.

The Bodhisattva—and any of us can become a Bodhisattva—makes the salvation of all his own good. He makes the Great Resolves usually before a spiritual guide. The chief ones are that he would help all beings in their spiritual endeavour, that his knowledge and means be of unending service to beings, that beings following this discipline be firm in their virtue and they be not born in evil state, that beings afflicted by various diseases, but helpless and poor, be cured of their diseases etc. The seed of Buddhahood is sown in the initial vow of the

Great Resolves the Bodhisattva makes. The entire later discipline is the cultivation and preservation of this.

The several and most classical Buddhist spiritual discipline for the monk as also for the lay is of a threefold variety. *Śīla* (observance of precepts), *samādhi* (concentration), and *prajñā* (wisdom). The Mahāyāna elaborated it into six, which are known as the *pāramitā* discipline: charity, observance of precepts, perseverance, energy, meditational exercises, and knowledge. The Bodhisattva perfects himself by the practice of these six disciplines. He then acquires several other virtues and practises other types of meditation, and gradually advances through *bhūmis* (stages of spiritual progress). The *bhūmis* are ten in number.

The *bhūmis* are stages of perfection, or spiritual states, stages through which Buddha passed either in his life as Siddhārtha or in previous lives. The idea behind presenting the *bhūmis* to the aspirants is that the aspirants should intellectually and spiritually integrate with those spiritual states and grow into them.

In the first stage, we are asked to develop the eight rules of conduct: liberality, compassion, indefatigability, humility, study of scriptures, heroism, approval of people, and fortitude. In the second, we are asked to feel an aversion to all forms of existence and cultivate a disposition which is good, amiable, sweet, keen, and bountiful. In the third, our minds should be set on renunciation. We must try to make all creatures happy, not for their own well-being, but to prepare them for the fourth stage.

In the seventh, the Bodhisattvas apply their minds to abstention from killing. They have now mastery over action, resoluteness, endurance, uprightness, and sincerity. In the eighth stage, one acquires the knowledge of sameness of all objects, gives up all thought-constructions, and is thoroughly convinced of the non-origination of all worldly objects. One becomes full of compassion. In the ninth

*bhūmi*, the Bodhisattva develops the faculty of minutely observing the mental inclinations of different beings and prepares himself for helping others in their spiritual acquisition. In the tenth *bhūmi*, he becomes omniscient—perfect in all meditational exercises. He is then possessed of a resplendent body and acquires great yogic powers. This is known as the cloud-of-virtue and is also known as *Buddhabhūmi*, though complete Buddhahood is still far off.

To conclude: Buddha does not construct his sacredness on God or on the soul, but on the quality of life that tran-

scends suffering. Pain and imperfection are implicit in creation and in thought; but so, too, is *nirvāṇa*. Evil is redeemed by its juxtaposition with *nirvāṇa*. This thought should give us strength that though pain and suffering seem to be our lot in life, the possibilities of transcending them are also given to us. Buddha wanted us to depend on nothing, on nobody, except ourselves. 'Be a lamp unto your feet and go forth into the world for the good of the many and the salvation of the many' was his last message, which wants us to be bold in a world that discourages us and makes us feeble.

## NOVALIS, FICHTE, AND ŚĀṆKARA

BY PROFESSOR LETA JANE LEWIS

Friedrich von Hardenberg (1774—1801), whose pseudonym was Novalis and who is generally acknowledged to be the greatest of Germany's romantic poets, was stimulated in philosophical thought by the disciple of Kant and inspirer of Hegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, whose so-called 'subjective' idealism is in some respects similar to, but by no means identical with, Śāṅkara's non-dualistic idealism. Novalis at first greeted with enthusiasm the publication of Fichte's basic work, *Die Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794, as he initially believed he saw in it a system of thought which he could accept as intellectually credible and in conformity with his deepest intuition. But he realized after reflection that he was not in entire harmony with Fichte. Thus, in July 1796, he wrote to his friend, Friedrich Schlegel: 'I am indebted to Fichte for incitement—it is he who roused me and indirectly animates me. But don't believe that I, as formerly, passionately pursue one (philosophy) only without watching where I am

going.'<sup>1</sup> However, instead of completely rejecting Fichte's ideas, Novalis revised them in keeping with his own convictions. As one critic has correctly stated, 'Fichte gave Novalis occasion for sublime misunderstanding'.<sup>2</sup> And it is remarkable that the changes which he intuitively made in Fichte's philosophy had the result of transforming it, so that in numerous major respects it exhibits a striking correspondence with Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta. This correspondence is particularly surprising, since Novalis died too soon to see the Sanskrit studies initiated in Germany by August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel or to learn of Sri Ramakrishna's experiential verification of the essence of Śāṅkara's thought and, in general, had no way in which to become acquainted with Śāṅkara's philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich von Hardenberg, *Novalis Schriften*, Ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut A.G., 1929), IV, p. 153. I have made the English translation from the original German of this and all following quotations.

<sup>2</sup> Luitgart Albrecht, *Der magische Idealismus in Novalis' Märchen* (Hamburg: Hansischer Gildenverlag, 1948), p. 10.



Therefore, reasons other than direct influence must be sought to explain why Novalis, in the course of studying Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, developed his thinking in line with Śaṅkara's.

Novalis was first attracted to Fichte, because he believed he saw in the latter his own tendency to look within himself for ultimate truth and reality. This inwardness on Novalis's part seems to have been innate and enhanced by the pietist atmosphere created in the Hardenberg family by his father and devout paternal grandmother, through whom he early became acquainted with the tradition of Zinzendorf and other German pietists seeking the kingdom of God on earth by the intensification (*Verinnerlichung*) of individual religious experience. Informal meditation on Christ and, although our poet-philosopher was nominally a Protestant, on the Virgin Mary, with both of whom he entered into very intimate and tender relationships, made a living reality of religion for Novalis.

This inclination towards spiritual inwardness was deepened in Novalis by first-hand acquaintance with the transitory character of the external universe. At the age of nine, when he nearly died as the result of an attack of dysentery which lasted for months, he became vaguely conscious of man's mortality and consequent need to find himself intimately involved with a Reality which does not change even when the body is destroyed. And, as he grew older, this consciousness of the possibility of death increased owing to anxiety about the health of members of his immediate family. His mother suffered chronically from both mental and physical ailments, and his brothers and sisters were so weak constitutionally that they were continually threatened by disease. But the blow which gave the most impetus to his search for an abiding Reality was the excruciating illness and death in 1797 of his child fiancée, Sophie von Kühn, coupled with the immediately following decease of his favourite brother, Erasmus. Evidence of the mortal

seriousness of his own tuberculosis, which next began to develop, was anti-climactic.

Because Novalis's study of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* was literally a matter of life and death to him, he threw himself into it with such intense thoughtfulness that, over a period of several years, he filled a large notebook with calculations intended to aid him in following its ramifications and clarifying its implications. Seeking the truth without the sure guidance of an illumined *guru*, he was forced to grope in the dark and test Fichte's theories as well as he could according to his own intuition and judgement. Wherever Fichte's logic provided him with ideas which, in his opinion, were sound, he retained them unaltered, but he changed those of Fichte's hypotheses which he, personally, found unsatisfactory. And, as I have already indicated, his alterations in Fichte's philosophy metamorphosed it into one that resembled Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta. Therefore, in order to observe Novalis's deviation away from Fichte and towards Śaṅkara, we shall proceed to enumerate the main points of interest to Novalis in the original *Wissenschaftslehre* and compare them with the principles set forth by Śaṅkara.

There is an essential epistemological difference between Fichte's system of thought and Śaṅkara's. Fichte, who ignored or rejected the possibility that knowledge might be acquired in ways other than through the senses, insisted that only the content of empirical consciousness, plus whatever facts can be deduced from this consciousness, furnishes valid data for philosophy. But Śaṅkara, for his part, maintained that, although the evidence of the senses does, indeed, have relative validity, there is an absolute Reality, knowledge of which can be obtained only in transcendental states of consciousness. Both Fichte and Śaṅkara considered consciousness to be the fundamental fact which neither needs to be proved nor can be proved; but Śaṅkara held that consciousness properly understood inheres in Brahman and is, there-



fore, without origin or cause, while Fichte, who attributed no such absolute character to consciousness, felt compelled to deduce an origin and a cause for it. Śāṅkara believed that Brahman's absolute consciousness is dependent upon no object, but Fichte felt that consciousness can appear only where there is an external object of which to be aware.

On the basis of his reasoning regarding the nature of consciousness, Fichte set about the task, which Śāṅkara considered superfluous, of explaining consciousness intellectually. He first assumed the activity of an absolute Ego, which, prior to the appearance of consciousness, posits first itself and then the not-Ego. When the absolute Ego finds its activity of positing itself restricted by its activity of positing the not-Ego, the illusion of duality occurs, and, according to Fichte, consciousness arises. Then, due to the activity of productive imagination (*produktive Einbildungskraft*), which works unconsciously, the Ego becomes aware of a world of objects. As Fichte did not feel that he could assume outside of empirical consciousness anything which is not necessary for the production of that consciousness, he would ascribe to his hypothetical absolute Ego neither absolute existence and absolute consciousness nor any other attributes apart from mental activity. But Śāṅkara, who held that even empirical consciousness is, in the last analysis, none other than Brahman's absolute consciousness, maintained that the sages, by stripping consciousness of its mundane contents, experience Brahman not only as absolute consciousness, but also as absolute bliss and absolute knowledge.

Both Fichte and Śāṅkara related their conceptions of God directly to their conceptions of the Absolute. To Fichte, God was to be identified either with the absolute Ego, which posits the universe, or with the unconditioned Ego, which would appear if the duality of Ego and not-Ego were ever to be overcome and the world were to vanish. Fichte postu-

lated no transcendental Absolute contemporaneous with the universe, since his absolute Ego was thought to forfeit its unconditioned state immediately upon acquiring consciousness. Thus, his God is as involved in matter as humanity is and not transcendent of it. Distinguished only as man's highest mundane action and thought, He does not possess consciousness independent of our empirical consciousness. It is impossible to enter into any kind of relationship with Him, for He evolves towards perfection as we evolve, and is dependent upon us for His own spiritual progress. But Śāṅkara's God, the omniscient Īśvara, partakes of the absoluteness of Brahman, with which, in actuality, He is identical. Being one with the Ground of the universe, Īśvara is, of necessity, immanent in it. However, He is also the independent, transcendent Lord of the universe, with whom human beings can easily enter into a personal relationship.

Teleologically, Śāṅkara and Fichte concurred in one important respect. Both were convinced that philosophy's practical goal is the transcending of multiplicity. Fichte insisted that, by the expansion of the Ego beyond its usual limited confines, mankind should continually attempt to eradicate the line separating Ego from not-Ego. But he also reasoned that if the distinction between subject and object were to be removed, if, in other words, the subject should cease to cognize an object, consciousness itself would vanish, for there would be nothing of which to be conscious. Furthermore, he concluded that, since 'finitude' is endless, the task of expanding the Ego into the not-Ego would be infinite and, consequently, never finished. Thus, according to Fichte's logic, the distinction between subject and object would always remain for the conscious subject, and his philosophy is therefore, for all practical purposes, dualistic, rather than monistic. But Śāṅkara taught that the Absolute, which is the Self of all, is realizable, and that all human beings, ordinarily after many lives, will



some time experience their identity with the one great Reality, Brahman. In his opinion, expanded individual consciousness is preliminary to the attainment of absolute consciousness. And in spite of their differing opinions as to the accessibility of the final goal, the two philosophers concurred in the conviction that morality in one's personal life and non-attachment to material objects are the *sine qua non* of gradual progress towards this goal. They laid great stress on the thesis that disinterested action coupled with love and consideration for one's fellowmen are indispensable for the all-important expansion of the individual ego beyond its usual narrow confines.

Initially, Novalis, who firmly believed that 'All philosophy is valueless without ecstasy'<sup>3</sup> interpreted Fichte's idealism to imply that one can cognize the absolute Ground of all creation by looking within one's self. However, he understood after a little deliberation that the *Wissenschaftslehre*, which posited a merely hypothetical Absolute without actual existence, provided no real basis for this conclusion. Due to this dissatisfaction with Fichte, Novalis created, under the influence of Jakob Boehme, Plotinus, Schelling, and other Western mystics and thinkers, an ontology of his own by ascribing to the Fichtean absolute Ego the attributes of absolute consciousness, absolute existence, and absolute bliss, which made it identical with Śaṅkara's Brahman. And, since absolute existence pertained to it, it was not infeasible that it might be known in higher states of consciousness.

Novalis's God, whom he regarded as the Absolute viewed personally, was, like Fichte's, immanent within the universe. But, whereas Fichte held his deity to be involved in matter and not transcendent of it, Novalis agreed with Śaṅkara in maintaining that God is transcendentally conscious of creation, and thus capable of entering into relationships

with, and being worshipped by, His devotees. Novalis's own experience of the presence of God was so intense that it would have been impossible for him to conceive of a deity who did not perceive his loving devotion. And this religious depth also resulted in his feeling assured that God is immanent within himself as well as within all other mortals. He stated that, by going 'consciously beyond the senses',<sup>4</sup> one can realize the divinity of the real Self. 'We must seek God among people.'<sup>5</sup> 'There is only *one* temple in the world, and that is the human body. Nothing is more holy than this sublime form.'<sup>6</sup>

Novalis also assumed that the Self of man is the heart of nature. "Who knows the world?"—"He who knows himself".<sup>7</sup> In some of the most exquisite passages of his entire poetic production, he told how the source of eternal life dwells in stones, vegetation, and animals, and how Christ is to be found in the stars and the sun. But, in accord with Śaṅkara, Novalis took care to explain that God, while manifesting Himself in the universe, is not to be confused with the finite. 'God has nothing whatsoever to do with nature. He is the goal of nature—that with which it is to achieve harmony at some later date.'<sup>8</sup> Thus, Novalis felt that the manifestation of divinity is not yet perfect, but must gradually become so. And he again concurred with Śaṅkara when he stated that the Absolute cannot be regarded as active in the universe. 'The character of the Absolute is changelessness—without opposition—without continuation—inactivity—quiet—identity.'<sup>9</sup>

Novalis concluded that his God, being in everything, can be worshipped in anything. "Those are happy people who perceive God everywhere—find God everywhere—these

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II. p.18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, III. p.291.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I. p.211.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, II. p.179.

<sup>3</sup> Hardenberg, *Op. cit.*, III. pp.262-63.



people are really religious.<sup>10</sup> He sought God in human beings 'as doctor, as priest, as wife, as friend, etc. Everything good in the world is the immediate activity of God. God can appear to me in any human being. One can study Christianity for eternities—It will appear more sublime and more manifold and more splendid'.<sup>11</sup> He anticipated the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna when he discouraged the individual from attempting to approach the Godhead directly and suggested that it be conceived under some form comprehensible to the heart and intellect. 'Nothing is more indispensable to real religion than an intermediary which binds us with the Godhead. A human being simply cannot assume a relationship immediately with the latter.'<sup>12</sup> He, likewise, foreshadowed the wisdom of Sri Ramakrishna when he asserted that the individual's divine ideal must be selected by him in accordance with his innate tendencies and not forced upon him from the outside. 'The human being must be completely free in the choice of this intermediary. . . . One soon sees how relative these choices are, and is unconsciously forced to the opinion that the nature of religion probably is not dependent upon the character of the mediator, but merely consists in the attitude towards it, in the relationships with it.'<sup>13</sup> Although Novalis's own chosen ideal seems unquestionably to have been Christ, he also worshipped God as Mother in the Virgin Mary, and sanctified his departed Sophie by identifying her with this divine Mother. Perhaps, this universality in religious attitude accounts for the remarkable fact that, before the close of the eighteenth century, Novalis condemns as 'unjust' any faith which claims uniqueness in possessing the key to salvation<sup>14</sup> and, in so doing, anticipates Sri Ramakrishna's loving acceptance of the truth in all religions.

His immediately experienced religion, sup-

ported by a philosophy in harmony with Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, convinced Novalis beyond any doubt that God is a living Reality. He felt the presence of the divine Ground of the universe so certainly within himself that he identified, first, himself and, then, humanity in general with It, rather than with the mortal body. Thus, he reduced his fear of death and alleviated his grief at the loss of Sophie, whom he grew to regard as his very Self. And during his own fatal illness, he derived such comfort and reassurance from his portion of God-realization, small though it was in comparison with that of an illumined soul, that he is said to have borne his final suffering with unusual fortitude.

Novalis seems never to have attained *samādhi*, but his longing for God-realization became more and more intense as he progressed spiritually. He believed in agreement with Śāṅkara's teaching that the goal of complete conscious union with God is attainable. 'Every human being who now lives by and through God is himself to become God.'<sup>15</sup> Novalis's opinion that by a gradual process one slowly approaches union with God and the awareness of identity with the Absolute was without doubt inspired by Fichte, but, as we have observed, he differed from the latter and agreed with Śāṅkara in assuming that the developmental process would one day culminate in the attainment of absolute consciousness. And he considered reincarnation a possible means of spiritual progress beyond this one life. 'Whatever does not reach perfection here, reaches it perhaps in the hereafter—or must begin another earthly career.'<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, then, intuitive affinity appears to account for the similarity in Novalis's thought with that of the great Indian saint and philosopher, about whom he knew nothing. Novalis was a meditative person and, consequently, sought a philosophy on the

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, III. p.243.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, II. p.27.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, III. p.290.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.



order of Śaṅkara's which would accord with his mystic experiences and give intellectual support for his belief that man is an immortal spirit rather than a body. He was disappointed in Fichtean idealism, because it was not based upon the evidence of supramundane states of consciousness, and did not assume a truly existent and knowable ultimate Reality. But, without completely rejecting Fichte's system of thought, in which he found the congenial tendency towards inwardness, Novalis superimposed on it ideas in

essential agreement with those of Śaṅkara, who maintained that a blissfully existent Absolute and a transcendental deity could be known by the consciousness devoid of material attachments. Novalis saw in Fichte's philosophy an admirably brilliant effort in idealistic thought, which, because it was based on sense data plus deduction rather than on mystic experience, was defective in being powerless to satisfy the individual thirsty for, and already somewhat cognizant of, transcendental Reality.

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## PLATO'S LIMITED GOD

BY DR. R. BALASUBRAMANIAN

In Plato's philosophy, we find one of the earliest attempts to arrive at a conception of God who is supreme, but who is nevertheless limited in many ways. To speak of God as supreme and also as limited is a contradiction in terms. A limited God does not deserve the title of supremacy; if God is supreme in every sense of the term, it is meaningless to speak of His limitation. Starting as he does with the Forms which constitute the ideal pattern on the one side and the timeless receptacle on the other side, Plato could not have arrived at a conception of God who is supreme and infinite; believing in a multiplicity of gods who form a hierarchy, he could think of the supremacy of God only in a halting sense. Plato's account of God, in spite of the difficulties it involves and the problems it poses, marks a significant departure from the popular Greek religion. In Plato's conception of God, we could notice a trend away from popular Greek thought to something new; but one feels on the whole dissatisfied with Plato's account. If Plato's view of God is very often vague, if it is difficult to explain what he intends to convey by the term 'God', if he speaks of gods no

less than of God, if it appears that he believes in animism, polytheism, and naturalism no less than in a supreme but limited God, it is, observes Demos, not the consequence of an absence of reflection: 'It comes from his having achieved a novel insight, which, not being adequately grasped, is unclear. The idea of God in Plato's mind is not made, but in the making, moving as it does away from Greek polytheism towards the doctrine of a benign and spiritual God. God is an artificer and a demiurge; He is also a shepherd and a father.'<sup>1</sup>

Let us first consider the place of God in Plato's scheme. There is a world of reality consisting of Forms, permanent and unchanging. The world of sensible things given to us in sense-perception is only semi-real. The realm of Forms accounts for the pattern which we see in the sensible world. But the Forms by themselves cannot produce the pattern or the order without a principle of activity; and the principle of activity is God. Though the sensible world owes its being to the presence in it of the Forms, the Forms

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<sup>1</sup> Raphael Demos, *The Philosophy of Plato* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1939), Chapter V.

by themselves cannot completely account for the world. In addition to the Forms and God which is the principle of activity, Plato introduces another factor to complete the explanation, and that is the receptacle, which is the matrix, out of which the sensible world has been fashioned after the likeness of the Forms. So, in the explanation of the creation of the world, the Forms, the receptacle, and God play their parts. The world of sensible things is the result of the modelling by God of the featureless receptacle after the likeness of the Forms. In other words, God is only the efficient cause of the world.

We get an account of the place and work of God in the creation of the world in the *Timaeus*. Plato starts with two fundamental points: (1) the sensible world 'becomes', that is, it is a world of happenings or events; and (2) whatever 'becomes' has a cause, by which the *Timaeus* means that it is the product of an agent.<sup>2</sup> The artisan or craftsman who makes the world is God. A craftsman works with a model before him. We must ask whether the model on which the world has been made is itself something that has 'become' or something eternal. Since the maker is the best of all causes and the thing he makes the best of all effects, clearly the model of which the sensible world is a 'copy' or 'likeness' is eternal.<sup>3</sup>

To Plato, God and the Forms are distinct but eternal and co-ordinate realities. God did not create the Forms; nor is He dependent upon them; He exists side by side with them. In the same way, there is the receptacle which is other than God and which is not created by God. The receptacle is already there; and creation is only transformation consisting in the introduction of order into chaos; it is a process of mixing the 'pattern' provided by the Forms and the 'receptacle', and the only novel fact in creation is the presence of the pattern in the receptacle. If the Forms are conceived as so

many moulds, it could be said that the work of God consists in stamping the moulds on the featureless receptacle with a view to giving form and shape to it. To sum up the discussion so far: Plato's God is finite, in the sense that He does not constitute the totality of things. There are factors other than God, viz. the receptacle and the ideal pattern, both of them being uncreated and timeless. And correspondingly, God's power is limited; He is only one among a group of causes.<sup>4</sup>

What is the nature of God which is limited by the eternal Forms on the one hand and the receptacle on the other? In the *Republic* and the *Theaetetus*, there are passages which delineate the nature of God. First of all, God is characterized by perfection. 'The state of divine nature must be perfect in every way.'<sup>5</sup> 'We cannot admit of any imperfection in divine goodness or beauty.'<sup>6</sup> Second, God does not undergo any change or transformation either from any outside cause or of His own accord. Being as perfect as He can be, God 'remains simply and for ever in His own form'.<sup>7</sup> Third, God is truthfulness. 'Gods, then, have no motive for lying. There can be no falsehood of any sort in the divine nature.'<sup>8</sup> 'We conclude, then, that a god is a being of entire simplicity and truthfulness in word and deed. In Himself, He does not change, nor does He delude others, either in dreams or in waking moments by apparitions or oracles or signs.'<sup>9</sup> Fourth, He is pure without any tinge of envy or trace of injustice. 'In the divine, there is no shadow of unrighteousness, only the perfection of righteousness.'<sup>10</sup> There is no evil in Him, and He is not responsible for the evil in the world; for He is good. 'The divine, being good, is not, as most people say, re-

<sup>2</sup> *Timaeus*, 28a-c.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 29e

<sup>4</sup> Demos, *The Philosophy of Plato*, Chapter V.

<sup>5</sup> *Republic*, II.380.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Republic*, II.382.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Theaetetus*, 176c.



sponsible for everything that happens to mankind, but only for a small part; for the good things in human life are fewer than the evil, and whereas the good must be ascribed to heaven only, we must look elsewhere for the cause of evils.<sup>11</sup> Fifth, God is outside time. Time and the world 'began' together, God, in fact, making both of them.<sup>12</sup> These, then, are the characteristics of God: perfection, changelessness, completeness, and self-sufficiency—because there is no change and there is no becoming in Him—truthfulness, purity, and righteousness, and finally timelessness.

If God is said to be the creator of the world, what is the motive of His creation? If God is complete and possesses everything, He does not require a world. If He does create a world, He is not complete, for He requires the world which He creates. The answer is, according to Plato, that God was perfectly good, and for that very reason did not want to keep His goodness to Himself, but to make something like Himself.<sup>13</sup> In other words, Plato derives creativity from the completeness of God. God is creative, because He is a complete being, and He could not be creative unless He were complete.<sup>14</sup> The world, which God has created, does not in any way diminish the completeness of God or alter His nature. 'He abides in his own proper state.'<sup>15</sup> 'And when the Father that engendered it (cosmos) perceived it in motion and alive, He rejoiced.'<sup>16</sup>

It is not necessary to go into the details of creation in the order in which it is narrated in the *Timaeus*. But a passing reference must be made to the creation of 'gods', as it throws light on the relation between the 'supreme' God and the created gods. God, who was perfectly good, wanted to make something like Himself. Creation, in other

words, is determined by the principle of self-reproduction or self-representation. God fashioned the world-soul and then created the various 'gods'. As the creator is a cause, so is His creature. The creator transmits His creative power to the gods, who are His creatures. Thus, we have God, the supreme creator, and also 'gods', who are lesser divinities, in that they are the creatures of God. The supreme God is exclusively concerned with the creation of the immortal aspect of the universe, and turns over the task of creating mortal things to the lesser 'gods'. When all the gods had been born, He that had begotten this universe addressed them in these words: 'To the end, then, that mortality may be and this universe be a universe indeed, turn ye also, as your nature bids, to the making of living creatures, copying my action in your own creation. And, inasmuch as it is meet there should be somewhat in them to bear the same name as the immortals, being called divine, and to the guide of those of them who are at any time minded to follow righteousness and you, I will provide it. I will sow the seed and make the beginning; thereafter, do ye fashion living creatures, weaving mortality upon immortality.'<sup>17</sup> The difference between the notion of God and that of 'gods' is significant. God is a creator who is uncreated; the gods are created creatures. God is timeless; the gods are temporal. God is simple and pure; the gods are impure and partake of the refractory element.<sup>18</sup> Despite the supremacy which God enjoys as an absolutely original uncaused cause, in relation to the 'gods' created by Him, He is limited and finite.

We have seen how the concept of God becomes a necessary element in Plato's philosophy by serving as the link between the world of Forms and the receptacle. This apart, the existence of God is sought to be proved in other ways, too. Plato seems to employ three proofs for the existence of God.

<sup>11</sup> *Republic*, II.378.

<sup>12</sup> A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work* (Meridian Books, New York), p. 443.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 441.

<sup>14</sup> Demos, *The Philosophy of Plato*, Chapter V.

<sup>15</sup> *Timaeus*, 42c.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 37c.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 41c.

<sup>18</sup> Demos, *The Philosophy of Plato*, Chapter V.



(1) *God as maker*: The world is a 'becoming' which requires a cause, and this cause is God. In the *Timaeus*, it is said: 'It is impossible for anything to attain becoming without a cause.'<sup>19</sup> In the *Sophist*, we come across the following discussion between the Stranger and Theaetetus:

'Str: Now, take all mortal animals and also all things that grow—plants that grow above the earth from seeds and roots, and lifeless bodies compacted beneath the earth, whether fusible or not fusible. Must we not attribute the coming into being of these things out of not-being to divine craftsmanship and nothing else? Or are we to fall in with the belief that is commonly expressed?

'Theaet: What belief do you mean?

'Str: That Nature gives birth to them as a result of some spontaneous cause that generates without intelligence. Or shall we say that they come from a cause which, working with reason and art, is divine and proceeds from divinity?

'Theaet: ... looking at your face and believing you to hold that these things have divine origin, I, too, am convinced.'<sup>20</sup> This argument purports to prove the existence of God as the maker of the world.

(2) *God as designer*: We see order and design in nature. It is not denied that there is disorder or irregularity in nature. Since order has the upper hand, it points to the existence of God who is the 'best soul'. God contemplates the Forms and reproduces them in the order of the sensible world. Being perfectly wise and good, God makes the sensible order after the pattern of the Forms He contemplates. The universe is the result of design, and Plato believes in a divine purposive activity.<sup>21</sup>

(3) *God as the object of personal experience*: Plato seems to think that the final court of appeal for the existence of God is

personal experience. Perhaps, he feels that it is difficult to give a strictly logical proof for the existence of God. Though it is rather difficult to have the personal experience of God, the possibility of attaining God-experience is not ruled out. It is equally difficult to give a logical demonstration of the personal experience of God. In the *Timaeus*, there is a significant passage which lends support to this point. 'Now, as for the maker and father of this universe, to find Him out is hard, and to speak of Him, when one has found Him, before all mankind, impossible.'<sup>22</sup>

It may be pointed out in this connection that, according to Plato, atheism is one of the three heresies which are morally pernicious, the other two being the doctrines that God is indifferent to human conduct and that an impenitent offender can escape God's judgement by bribing Him through gifts and offerings.<sup>23</sup> Plato discusses these views in the *Laws*. He would consider atheism as identical with the doctrine which holds that the world is a product of unintelligent motions of corporeal elements. Plato's refutation of atheism consists in showing that all corporeal movements are, in the last resort, causally dependent on 'motions' of soul, wishes, plans, and purposes; that the world is therefore the work of a soul or souls, and further that these souls are good; and that there is one 'perfectly good soul' at their head, viz. God. His central thesis is that mind, not bodies, is 'what is there to begin with'.<sup>24</sup>

## II

Plato's conception of God as a limited and finite being is open to objection from many points of view. Finding that it is impossible for him to account for the sensible world by relying only on the unalterable and eternal Forms, Plato is compelled to introduce God into the metaphysical scheme as the active

<sup>19</sup> *Timaeus*, 28a.

<sup>20</sup> *Sophist*, 265c-d.

<sup>21</sup> A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, p. 492.

<sup>22</sup> *Timaeus*, 28c.

<sup>23</sup> *Laws*, 899d-905d; 905e-907d.

<sup>24</sup> A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, p. 490.



principle working on the eternal, featureless receptacle and shaping the sensible things on the model of the Forms. So far as the pattern or order that has to be brought into existence in the sensible world is concerned, He has no choice; the pattern or model is already there in the realm of Forms, and all that He has to do is to stamp the pattern on the receptacle. Presumably, the pattern provided by the Forms is as He would like it to be! Whatever it may be, it is evident that God has nothing to choose in respect of the pattern or model; nor is it the result of God's work.

Being only the efficient cause of the world, God has to depend upon the receptacle, which is outside of Him and which serves as the material cause, and thereby suffer further limitation. Just as the pattern is not the result of His making, so also the receptacle does not owe its existence to the work of God. But where is the guarantee that the receptacle, which is eternal like God, will yield itself to be moulded by Him? Will it not offer any resistance to the work of God? What would happen if there is any such resistance on the part of the receptacle to the imposition of order or pattern on it by God?

It seems that this difficulty can be got over by introducing the conception of persuasion in the act of creation. When God works on the receptacle, He does not, observes Demos, act like a brute force. The receptacle is won over to the divine purpose; chaos submits to the lure of the ideal. God acts like a philosopher-king, and not like a tyrant.<sup>25</sup> Brilliant as it is for what it suggests with a wealth of imagination, it does not offer any solution to the difficulty. The problem still remains: Why does chaos submit to the lure of the ideal? What would happen if it does not submit? What could a finite and limited God do under these circumstances?

Plato's God is not omnipotent. He is not, according to Plato, 'the cause of all things'.<sup>26</sup>

There is evil in the world, but God has nothing to do with that; He is not responsible for that. Being the best of all causes, God is the author of the good alone. Demos seems to see great merit in Plato's conception of God as a limited and finite being. He suggests that Plato 'limits the power of God in order to preserve His goodness'. It is not necessary to limit the powers of God in order to preserve His goodness. The line of reasoning underlying Demos's argument seems to be as follows: If God who is good is credited with limited powers, He can be absolved of all responsibility for the existence of evil in the world. Being good, He is responsible only for the good; and since He has limited powers, He is helpless so far as evil is concerned, and has nothing to do with that. But this argument proceeds on the assumption that evil is real. The problem of evil has not escaped the attention of Plato. He seems to think that evil is unreal, and that everything being really good, evil arises from our failure to perceive the whole scheme of things. There is the following passage in the *Laws*: 'All things are ordered systematically by Him who cares for the world—all with a view to the preservation and excellence of the whole, whereof also each part, so far as it can, does and suffers what is proper to it. To each of these parts, down to the smallest fraction, rulers of their action and passion are appointed to bring about fulfilment even to the uttermost fraction; whereof thy portion also, O perverse man, is one, and tends therefore always in its striving towards the All, tiny though it may be. But thou failest to perceive that all partial generation is for the sake of the Whole, in order that for the life of the World, all blissful existence may be secured, it not being generated for thy sake, but thou for its sake.'<sup>27</sup> If evil is unreal, as Plato himself seems to think, there is no need to limit the powers of God in order to preserve His goodness. If it is real, and if it can

<sup>25</sup> Demos, *The Philosophy of Plato*, Chapter V.

<sup>26</sup> *Republic*, 380c.

<sup>27</sup> *Laws*, 903c.



be accounted for in a different way without attributing it to God, the question of limiting the powers of God for the sake of preserving His goodness does not arise.

There is also, according to Demos, another merit in Plato's conception of finite God. A finite, definite being, says Demos, may sustain relationships, because it allows the existence of other things. Plato's God does not absorb the world; therefore, a genuine communion between God and the world is possible. The world and God are distinct; therefore, they can be together. God is *with* the world; this is the best way of explaining the relation between the two. This argument overlooks the basic issue whether the conception of God as a finite and limited being, as Plato thinks, is satisfactory. There is no denying the fact that a finite being may and does come into relationships with other things. If God is finite, He may sustain relationship with the world. But it is quite possible to explain, as the Advaita Vedāntin does, the relationship between God as infinite and the world as an appearance thereof. Further, what does it mean to say that God is *with* the world? The world and God, it is said, are distinct; therefore, they can be together. Does it mean that God and the world can be together in the same way as two things, a table and a chair, can be together in a room? Do both of them have a common basis for their support? If so, what is that basis? Do God and the world have the same ontological status? How does the communion of God with the world take place? There is no answer to these questions; the whole conception is extremely vague; and in the absence of a satisfactory explanation of the communion of God with the world or of God being with the world, it is too much to say that 'it is the best way of explaining the relation between the two'.

The theory of creation, too, is not free from difficulty. If we examine the motive of creation of the world by God, we find that it remains an unsolved puzzle. It is no answer

to say that God creates the world because He is perfect and good and complete. The question is: Why should God, who is perfect, good, and complete, create the world? Does the perfection of God require Him to create the world? It is difficult not only for Plato, but for others, too, who take the theory of creation literally, to answer these questions satisfactorily. There are those who hold the view that creation is a mere will of God. Some think that creation is from time alone. Some others say that creation is for the enjoyment of God, while still others maintain that it is for His disport.<sup>28</sup> All these views have to confront the same difficulty, and the problem remains unanswered. Grube comes forward with the suggestion that the theory of creation must not be taken seriously. The creator as a creator is, says Grube, pure myth.<sup>29</sup> 'The time-sequence of creation must be taken as a myth, a convenient literary artifice to facilitate analysis. . . . If creation is interpreted literally, it leads to several absurdities. . . . Taken literally, He is a mere stage device.'<sup>30</sup> If the theory of creation is a literary device to facilitate analysis, then what is the explanation of the world? Grube seems to cut the Gordian knot by declaring that 'the world has always existed'.<sup>31</sup> The suggestion that the theory of creation must not be taken seriously and that creation is pure myth is acceptable; but it is to be seriously doubted whether this is Plato's view.

We pointed out earlier that it is quite possible to explain the relation between God and the world without restricting the powers and limiting the infinity of God for the purpose of preserving 'a genuine communion between God and the world'. According to Advaita, the relation between the Absolute and the world is similar to the relation between the rope and the illusory snake. In

<sup>28</sup> *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, I.8-9.

<sup>29</sup> G. M. A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (Beacon Press, Beacon Hill, Boston), p. 177.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*,



the case of the rope-snake illusion, we say that the rope is the cause of the snake. It is the rope that appears as the snake, and in the absence of rope, there is no illusion of snake; that is to say, the rope is the substratum of the snake. The rope remains a rope all the time without undergoing any change, though it projects the appearance of the snake. In other words, the rope is the cause of the illusory snake only in a special sense. It is not the cause of the snake in the sense in which clay is the cause of pot and other things made out of it; for, while clay undergoes transformation in the process of becoming pot etc., the rope does not undergo any change. There is no *transformation* (*pariṇāma*) of the rope into the snake, but only an *illusory appearance* (*vivarta*) of it as the snake. The relation between the Absolute and the world is analogous to the relation between the rope and the illusory snake. Just as the snake is the appearance of the rope under certain limitations, so also the empirical world is an appearance of Brahman, the trans-empirical reality. Just as the snake is a superimposition on the rope, so also the world of plurality is a superimposition on the non-dual Brahman due to ignorance (*avidyā*).

Strictly speaking, there is, according to Advaita, no *real* relation between the Absolute and the world. Relation is possible only between things which are on the same ontological status. There is relation between clay and the objects made out of it, for it is a case of transformation of clay into pot etc., where the effect, namely, pot, is as real as clay, which is its cause. Both the cause and the effect have the same ontological status (*samasattāka*). It is therefore legitimate to talk about the relation between clay and its products. But the same thing cannot be said of Brahman and the world, for they are not on the same ontological footing. We have already pointed out that Brahman is the cause of the world, in the same way as the rope is the cause of the illusory snake;

that is to say, the world is not a transformation of Brahman, but only an illusory appearance thereof. Whereas in the case of transformation (*pariṇāma*) the effect is as real as the cause, in the case of the illusory appearance (*vivarta*) of one thing as the other, the effect is less real than the cause; the cause and the effect have different ontological status (*viśamasattāka*). Brahman is absolutely real (*pāramārthika*), while the pluralistic universe is empirically real (*vyāvahārika*). The perception of the pluralistic universe stands contradicted at the time of Brahman-realization, in the same way as the cognition of the illusory snake stands contradicted at the time of the realization of the object in front as rope. Though the world is quite real from the empirical point of view, it has to be treated as unreal (*mithyā*) from the transcendental point of view. There is therefore no real relation between the non-dual Brahman, which is absolutely real, and the world of diversity, which is only empirically real.

The foregoing explanation of the relation between God and the world given from the Advaitic point of view would enable us to overcome the difficulties mentioned earlier in connection with Plato's conception of a limited God. There is no need to make God a finite being for the purpose of sustaining His relationship with the world and preserving the world intact without allowing it to be absorbed by the all-embracing, infinite God. Ultimate reality is one and non-dual (*ekameva advitīyam*); there is no second to it; therefore the question of the absorption of the world by the Absolute does not arise. While we deny the reality of the world from the ultimate point of view, we do *not* deny the reality of the world from the empirical standpoint. Again, it is not necessary to limit the powers of God in order to preserve His goodness, for the world does not proceed from God in the real sense; and so the evil and imperfection found in the world need not be traced to God. Since there is no creation



of the world by God, the question of the dependence of God on some primordial stuff like the Platonic receptacle does not arise. It is true that we come across creation-texts (*sarga-śrutis*) in the Upaniṣads. But the theory of creation set forth in the scripture (Śruti) should not be taken literally. Though the scripture teaches creation, it does not declare that creation is real. The non-dual Brahman alone is the purport of the scripture, and so the creation-texts should be interpreted in such a way that they would accord with the central teaching of the Śruti. If creation were real, the Upaniṣadic teaching about the non-duality of Brahman and the illusory nature of the world of plurality would be void of meaning. Since the Śruti purports to teach the non-dual nature of the ultimate reality, which is immutable (*akṣara*), the creation which is spoken of must be an illusory one. The creation-texts

serve as a device to introduce the teaching relating to the non-dual reality; and that is the useful purpose served by them. This idea, viz., that the theory of creation set forth in the Upaniṣads is for the purpose of introducing the teaching relating to the non-dual Brahman and that, from the ultimate point of view, there is no such thing as creation, is clearly brought out by Gaudapāda in his *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*. He says: 'The creation that has been multifariously set forth with the help of the examples of earth, gold, sparks, etc. is merely by way of generating the idea (of oneness); but there is no multiplicity in any way.'<sup>32</sup> Again, he declares: 'There is no dissolution, no creation, none in bondage, none striving or aspiring for salvation, and none liberated. This is the highest truth.'<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, III.15.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, II.32.

## POLITICS AND MORALS

BY DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE

Morals are relative to the utmost degree. Also morals are concerned with every aspect of the individual and society. There are private morals, sexual morals, economic and commercial morals, and political morals—with fine grades of differences. They differ from age to age and from one set of circumstances to another. We must be very cautious in the study of morals and politics. That is why Goethe remarked: 'Nothing is more inconsistent than the highest consistency, for it brings about unnatural phenomena that finally encompass our ruin'.<sup>1</sup> Morals are flexible; only they should not be easy. Again, in order to keep political morals high, the greatest amount of impartiality and

detachment is needed. For instance, a categorical statement coming from an Englishman under the influence of racial complex in the disturbed days of 1857 like 'A Hindoostanee Badmash without arms is a leopard without claw'<sup>2</sup> does not show high political morals.

In the field of politics, from times immemorial, there have been two approaches—'right of might'<sup>3</sup> and 'aspirations without power'.<sup>4</sup> The first of these, the more popular, has always led to great political oppressions and tyranny. The second is a

<sup>2</sup> *Friend of India*, November 12, 1857.

<sup>3</sup> *Le droit par la force*, as the French historians call it.

<sup>4</sup> *L'esperance sans le pouvoir*, as inscribed on the Palace of Peace at Geneva.

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, *Blut and Ehre (Munchen)*, p. 195.



high ideal, and like all ideals, unfortunately, has not been realized so far. It shows that our political morals are poor, and that we are at a comparatively very low stage of civilization.

Yet, it is of paramount importance that we should strive to improve our political morals. Today, an inner collapse is visible everywhere, and there is the deepest longing for a new synthesis. Rosenberg hinted at it long back,<sup>5</sup> although his Nazi ways and means of bringing about this new synthesis are surely not the most suited for the purpose. This inner collapse is perceptible since the last century. When the French Premier in 1848 was exhorting the people to 'grow rich',<sup>6</sup> Ruskin, with a far truer insight and instinctive moral sense, was writing: 'Above all, a nation cannot last as a money-making mob'.<sup>7</sup> He saw the approaching inner collapse, when Guizot failed to see it. This collapse is increasing with the progress of time, primarily because we and the materialistic world with us are moving away from the spiritual ideals of humanity.

It is really tragic that very few politicians ever realize that this inner collapse is due to their insistence on the politics of might. Rather, they glorify it. On the edge of every sword of 'Hitler-Youth', the words 'Blood and Honour' (*Blut und Ehre*) were engraved, which Rosenberg adopted as the title for his book.<sup>8</sup> With inexcusable arrogance, he writes: 'Today, for the first time, men can see what (glory) it meant for one man (i.e. Hitler) to fight against the entire world'.<sup>9</sup> Again, glorifying the German leaders as having the 'iron will', he is proud that 'German freedom will be led by fewer and fewer persons'.<sup>10</sup> In very much the same strain, Hitler writes: 'Always the material interests of men prosper only so long as they

are guided by heroic virtues'.<sup>11</sup> It looks as if there was no way to be virtuous except through the politics of might, through iron dictatorship, through complete regimentation, and the complete crushing of the human spirit. What a delusion! Hitler further writes in *Mein Kampf*, with great bravado, that the Bismarckian Reich was built by the 'iron will' and the 'regiments of the Front'.<sup>12</sup> How pitifully short-sighted is mankind! Hitler is blind to see that the 'iron will' and the 'regiments of the Front' failed to prevent the ruin of the Bismarckian Reich in 1919. Hitler's own Reich, too, was ruined at a later date. Truly is it said that the 'regime of the Junkers triumphs (only) in its complete insolence'.<sup>13</sup>

Nietzsche, Treitschke, and other German philosophers, in their adoration of the politics of might, ridiculed democracy and what they called 'effeminate French culture', and propagated virile Nordic virtues, that is, brute force. Treitschke wrote: 'War is inevitable; it is the necessary condition for the existence of the state; it is not only a practical necessity, but it is also a theoretical necessity, an exigency of logic. The concept of the state implies the concept of the war, because the essence of the state is power'.<sup>14</sup> Criticizing democratic and peaceful ideals, he further wrote sarcastically: 'The state is not an Academy of Arts. If it sacrifices its power to the ideal aspirations of humanity, it contradicts itself, and proceeds towards destruction'.<sup>15</sup> What a facile over-simplification! In this politics of might, there is no place for decency or refinement, no room for sentiment or mercy, and no trace of ideals or idealism. There is scope only for military dictatorship, strict regimentation, and ruthless persecution. One such nefarious and ghastly example in recent history was the

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> Guizot's exhortation, '*Enrichissez vous*'.

<sup>7</sup> John Ruskin, *King's Treasuries*.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich), p. 167.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>13</sup> J. Dresch, *De la Revolution Francaise a la Revolution Hitlerienne* (Paris), p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61, quoted therein.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62, quoted therein.



coldblooded murder of Roehm, the political adversary of Hitler, on the night of the 30th June 1934 with 77 followers. Commenting on this shocking incident, J. Dresch writes: 'The revolution of Nihilism is not over by any means. The final result shall be barracks, prisons, immense misery, and debacle of all culture'.<sup>16</sup>

Liberty and freedom, as championed by Burke and Bentham in the Age of Reason, are fast dying, and mankind is being imprisoned. The human spirit is being crushed by the politics of might. Although this insistence on might in politics in recent history is due, to a great extent, to Bismarck, to whom 'the unification of Germany under Prussian dictatorship' was everything, 'all other considerations being secondary',<sup>17</sup> we should not hold Germany alone guilty of this crime. No country at present, whether it is Germany, Italy, Russia, or our Eastern states like Japan and China, or even the citadels of democracy like France, England, and America, is free from this pernicious influence of the politics of might.

Might must be replaced by right if politics has to be clean and healthy. M. Jean Herbert very pertinently points out that the Asians consider themselves inwardly 'much superior to the barbarians of the West',<sup>18</sup> who, solely due to their scientific and technological superiority, had enslaved the Asians. Might never leaves a desirable lasting impression. Rather, M. Jean Herbert has great appreciation for the liberal and tolerant outlook that was prevalent in ancient India, where the atheist Cārvākas were given complete freedom to preach atheism in God's temple.<sup>19</sup> There was no trace of might there. Everybody's right was conceded, and that is why ancient India reached the high pinnacle of glory. Long back in 1755, Morelly in his *Code de la*

*Nature* referred to the American 'savages' (primitive tribes of America) who could very well call the Europeans 'savages' for their political savagery and barbarity.<sup>20</sup> And professor Mornet of Sorbonne insists that 'The good legislator should be, above everything, a moralist'.<sup>21</sup> Even Nietzsche, the pillar of aggressive German nationalism, admitted: 'Between ourselves be it said, I consider Prussia as a Power to the highest degree dangerous for civilization'.<sup>22</sup> Coming from Nietzsche, this admission is very interesting and significant. Righteousness, which was the basic aim of the Age of Reason, the French Revolution, and the nineteenth-century liberalism, and which was also so thoroughly inculcated in our ancient scriptures,<sup>23</sup> must once again be enthroned in the heart of man, if human dignity and human personality have to secure their proper place in politics.

In the wake of the Age of Reason, it was thought that monarchical and aristocratic tyranny would be replaced by liberal democratic wisdom and sobriety, and, at long last, a moral tone would be introduced in politics. But these high hopes have since been betrayed to a considerable extent, and the misgivings of Mably, who feared the 'degraded multitude',<sup>24</sup> have become distinctly visible. Alexis de Tocqueville, the great apostle of democracy, found that 'the men of the democratic age obey with extreme reluctance their neighbours who are their equals. They refuse to recognize in them higher wisdom than they have'.<sup>25</sup> And finally, condemning the excesses of the French Revolution, he was constrained to write: 'The characteristic of the savage is to decide (be swayed) by the sudden impression of the moment, without

<sup>20</sup> D. Mornet, *La Pensee Francaise au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siecle* (Paris), p. 60.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche's writing of the 7th November 1870.

<sup>23</sup> *Vide Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, L.11.

<sup>24</sup> 'Multitude degradee'.

<sup>25</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *La Democratie in Amerique*, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> Bismarck's admission to Busch on the 23rd February 1879. Cf. Jacques Bardoux, *Quand Bismarck Dominait L'Europe*, p. 290.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Herbert, *Introduction a L'Asie* (Paris), p. 497.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.



any memory of the past or any idea of the future'.<sup>26</sup> Witness what another leader of those days says regarding the type of freedom established in the 1848 Revolution in France: 'Today, money is needed; enough money is needed for enjoying the right to speak. We are not rich enough. Silence to the poor!'<sup>27</sup> Thus, even democracy has failed to a considerable degree in introducing that moral tone in politics which its apostles had expected it to do in the Age of Reason.

Lastly, we come to the point which is the crux of the problem. Long back, ancient India tried to impart a moral and ethical tone to politics through spirituality and through the medium of religion. Gandhiji, in recent times, tried to purge politics of its impurities by following the same path. Although worldly-wise people may not approve of this path, and some may say that politics and morals can never go together, unless we learn to dispense with these time-honoured Machiavellian prejudices of an age gone by, human civilization can never survive. We can clearly perceive the truth of it, if we contrast European political morals with the Indian ones of the past. After the eminent philosophers of France had preached their lofty

gospels, and after the liberating French Revolution took place, Napoleon complained: 'Every one tells lies sometimes, but to tell lies always (like Metternich) is really too much'.<sup>28</sup> Even the concession of telling lies 'sometimes' that he makes here, and of which Napoleon himself was an adept, was inconceivable in ancient India. Again, Napoleon told the famous Talleyrand: 'You are a coward, a traitor, a thief. . . . You have betrayed and deceived everybody. You would sell your own father'.<sup>29</sup> What morals, and what politics!

All the known forms of government—monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, and dictatorship—will not make for lasting peace unless ruse and duplicity, organized political murders and organized political lies are cast aside, and politics is governed by ethics and spirituality. The ideal of Plato that philosophers alone should be rulers and the 'rājarsi' ideal of ancient India are not impossible ideals of unpractical dreamers; rather, they are extremely practical and imperative for the survival and progress of mankind. This lesson becomes more and more patent, as Machiavellian politics and European diplomacy unfold their ruthlessness and barbarity every day.

<sup>26</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *L' Ancien Regime*, p. 114.

<sup>27</sup> Lamennais: quoted by Gaston Martin, *La Revolution de 1848* (Paris), pp. 111-12.

<sup>28</sup> Algernon Cecil, *Metternich*, p. 108.

<sup>29</sup> G. P. Gooch, *Studies in European Diplomacy and Statecraft*, p. 248.

## DEVOTION IN THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF TAGORE

BY DR. P. NAGARAJA RAO

Devotion (*bhakti*) is one of the important modes of God-realization recognized, elaborated, and defended in Indian theism. Rāmānuja and other theistic thinkers have found ample support for it in the Upaniṣads. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* highlights the method of devotion as the easiest way for God-realization. Rāmānuja has developed the doctrine

to its perfection in his theory of *prapatti* or total self-surrender. The doctrine of *prapatti* brings out, on the one hand, the utter finitude of man and his complete helplessness and dependence on God; and on the other hand, the glory and the infinite compassion of God for the human soul. God is all in all in the Vaiṣṇava theologies.



Rabindranath Tagore's conception of *bhakti* is unique. It is in keeping with the theistic tradition. It does not lag behind the theist's adoration of God, but, at the same time, it has an equally great regard for the dignity of the human being and his personality. The human is no doubt subordinated, but not sacrificed to the divine. The religious adoration of God does shake the individual, but does not shatter him away. Man, before God, is fascinated and subjugated, but not annihilated.

According to Tagore, *bhakti* is an intense longing of man for God-union. It is God-love. The emotion of love is universal, and it is the most potent factor in the human being. Hence is the special appeal of *bhakti* to man. It is man's nature to love, which points to his effort to fly from his loneliness. It is innate in man. If he cannot find a god in heaven, he will turn to a god on earth and deify some idol of his own making. *Bhakti* is man's love to transcend himself.

Tagore's philosophy is not a type of Spinozistic or Wordsworthian pantheism. God is a supreme Person, full of love and concern for mankind. God is immanent and transcendent. Tagore was as opposed to impersonal absolutism as to pantheism. He put forth the 'sport theory' of creation, called *līlāvāda*. He was greatly influenced by the songs and the faith of the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal. Tagore's theism is warm and full of life-like imagery. He establishes an intimate personal relation with God. Though Tagore has a personalistic conception of God, he is careful not to identify his God with any specific deity of any theology or religion. Hence he is not dogmatic like the sectarian theologians.

Tagore plays hide and seek with the Lord. His central thesis is that God needs man, as much as man needs God. It is a reciprocal relation. He lays equal stress on the humanity of God as on His divinity. He addresses God: 'Had not there been "I", Oh Lord of the three worlds, your love would

have been empty.' Tagore looks upon himself as the bride of the Lord, waiting to receive Him every hour. Tagore expresses the different moods of the devotee—anguish at separation, joy in reunion, offering his all, feeling of gratefulness for all the gifts of life. Tagore looks upon life as a gift of God, and beautiful living consists in making our life a fit instrument for His operations. 'Man should realize', Tagore writes, 'that this world is not a storehouse of mechanical power, but a habitation of man's soul, with eternal music and beauty and its light of divine presence.'

Devotion, to Tagore, is a kind of *karmayoga*, with a strong and warm love of the positive life. Tagore fights against defeatism, quietism, and acosmism. He regards God Himself as the great worker for the happiness of humanity.

'Our Master is a worker, and we work with Him.

Boisterous is His mirth, and we laugh with His laughter.

He beats His drum, and we march.

He sings, we dance in tune.'

According to Tagore, it is God's delight to see the glory of His creation, propagated and expounded and sung through man and his creative work. He writes: 'My Poet, is it Thy delight to see Thy creation through my eyes and stand at the portal of my ears silently to listen to Thine own eternal harmony?'

Tagore insists on a reverence for life. Creation, for him, is not a veil hiding the resplendent face of Reality. It is the love-drama of the Infinite and the finite. The *jīvanadevatā* of Tagore has two aspects, immanent and transcendent. His prayer is: 'Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for the Lord to fill with music.' The problem of the devotee is: How should one become a flute in the hand of the Lord for Him to pour forth His music? A flute must be hollow, If the flute is stuffed



with passions and desires, the music will not flow from it. One must empty oneself of one's ego before one becomes a perfect instrument in the hands of God. There must be self-emptying before there can be divine filling. Tagore exhorts us to become fit instruments for the Lord's work.

Tagore's conception of *bhakti* passes through all the stages and moods. The *Gītāñjali* echoes all the moods we find in the nine types of devotion elaborated in the *Bhāgavata*. The keynote is the love-aspect of devotion. The sincerity of emotion and the richness of human feelings make the *Gītāñjali* one of the best books in devotional literature. It develops the *bhakti* doctrine through all its phases.

Tagore was never an abstract thinker. He was a living fire. He has a deep sense of

satisfaction with his own experience and love of God. Devotion to the Lord did not mean inaction; it was for him active, disinterested love. He says: 'There is no freedom from action; there is only freedom in action.' Tagore was not a secular humanist. His theism was humanistic. Human life and God are organic, according to Tagore. He described his religion as the 'Religion of Man'.

Tagore was no logician. He writes about his way of life: 'My religion is essentially a poet's religion. Its touch comes to me through the same unseen and trackless channels as does the inspiration of my music and poetry. All that I feel about it is from my vision and not knowledge.' Tagore's devotion was visible in his musical singing. He himself valued his music, and was conscious of its excellence.

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

Swami Nityabodhananda, of the Ramakrishna Order and head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Geneva (Switzerland), relates in his article 'The Sacred in Buddhism' that, though Buddhism did not rest on God, or soul, or any other absolute reality, still Buddha raised it to the status of a sacred religion by incorporating into it the element of compassion as a principle inherent in the very nature of man. Pain and imperfection there are in the world, being inherent in nature and thought; but so also is *nirvāṇa*. With the help of this innate principle of *nirvāṇa*, man can transcend all evils and suffering. ...

Friedrich von Hardenberg, whose pseudonym was Novalis and who is acknowledged to be the greatest of Germany's romantic poets, saw in Fichte's philosophy an admirably brilliant effort in idealistic thought and was accordingly attracted by it. But he

discovered that it was defective in being powerless to satisfy an individual like himself, who was thirsty for, and already somewhat cognizant of, transcendental Reality. Novalis's intuitive nature, therefore, egged him on to a higher philosophical speculation through which he approached Śaṅkara in many respects, although the latter's non-dualistic philosophy was still unknown in Europe. We are indebted to Professor Leta Jane Lewis, Ph.D., of the University of Michigan, U.S.A., for her scholarly article on 'Novalis, Fichte, and Śaṅkara', which throws light upon this aspect of Novalis's thought. ...

Plato's conception of a limited God, impressing the eternal Forms on an eternal receptacle, raises many philosophical difficulties, which many have tried to solve, but without any success. Dr. R. Balasubramanian, M.A., Ph.D., Fulbright Scholar at the



Stanford University, U.S.A., shows in his article 'Plato's Limited God' that no solution of the problems of creation, evil, etc., and of God's relation with the world, is possible, unless it be on the basis of the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara. ...

That politics should be governed by the higher ideals of morality and ethics is the

theme of the article entitled 'Politics and Morals' by Dr. Paresh Nath Mukherjee, M.A., Ph.D., Lecturer in History, D. A. V. College, Dehradun. ...

'Devotion in the Religious Philosophy of Tagore' is by Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao, M.A., D.Litt., Professor of Philosophy, Government College, Mercara, Mysore State.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**THE PRINCIPLES OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY.** BY PROFESSOR BEN KIMPEL. *Published by Philosophical Library, New York-16. 1960. Pages 234. Price \$3.75.*

Since the publication of Moore's *Principia Ethica*, moral philosophy has been in troubled waters; and this disintegration did not stop with the logical positivists even. Now, serious thinkers have begun thinking over the subject again. Though the positivistic way of spiriting away of the problems in epistemology and metaphysics might be defended somehow, this is not easy with moral philosophy, since any way of living does entail moral problems. One such major problem refers to that of responsibility. The meaning of this term and its implications have to be rendered clearer. Then, moral philosophy involves questions of semantics and axiology, and also the problems involved in the relation between the individual and society.

Such an approach is undertaken by Professor Ben Kimpel in the present volume: Right, ought, good, conduct, and responsibility are some of the words whose precise meanings and implications are worked out with brilliant acumen and skill. Unlike the positivists, whom he does not reject entirely, Professor Kimpel does recognize the necessity of a metaphysics without which no moral philosophy is possible. This is a healthy return to the idealistic tradition, though he would call it an empirical moral philosophy.

The first eight chapters are devoted to a detailed exposition of the nature, scope, and methods of moral philosophy. The last chapter deals with the nature of moral responsibility. The entire work clarifies sound moral ideals. The presentation is succinct and lucid; and it fulfils a long-felt need for a clear thinking of the basic questions.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

**THE UPANIṢADS: GATEWAYS OF KNOWLEDGE.** BY M. P. PANDIT. *Published by Ganesh & Co. (Madras) Private Ltd., Madras-17. 1960. Pages 174. Price Rs. 6.*

The present exposition of the Upaniṣads is based mainly on the interpretations of these sacred texts made by Sri Aurobindo and Sri Kapali Shastri. In the book under review, the author tries to establish, on the basis of textual evidence, that the Upaniṣads are parts of the Vedas.

In India, the truth of the Spirit has always been regarded as the ultimate Truth, and both the Vedas and the Upaniṣads give expression to this one sublime wisdom. As such, they represent a continuity of religious and philosophical thought of our country. Most of the Upaniṣads are included in the Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka portions of the Vedas, though there are a few which are included in the Saṁhitā portions as well. In the opinion of the author, 'The knowledge that is proclaimed to be enshrined in the revealed scripture (that is, the Vedas) is here brought out to the fuller view; what is in the Upaniṣads is derived from, and rests upon, the kernel in the Veda'. The book contains valuable quotations to support this integral view.

The reviewer is particularly interested in the chapter on 'The Sādhanā', where the practical discipline prescribed by the Upaniṣads for reaching the goal of Brahman has been expounded in an erudite manner. The realization of the highest Truth is, indeed, a very difficult task. The possibility of this realization depends on the purification of all and every one of the agencies employed. The purification of the mind, the senses, the ego, etc. will not be possible unless one is helped by a preceptor who has been able to grasp the Truth personally through his own *sādhanā*.

The book also contains very lucid and scholarly inter-



pretations of the *Isā*, *Kena*, and *Taittirīya Upaniṣads* from the standpoint of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

DR. ANIMA SEN GUPTA

EXPOSITION AND CRITIQUE OF THE CONCEPTIONS OF EDDINGTON CONCERNING THE PHILOSOPHY OF PHYSICAL SCIENCE. BY JOHANNES WITT-HANSEN. Published by G. E. C. Gads Forlag, Vimmelskafet-32, Copenhagen. Pages 135. Price not mentioned.

The brochure under review presents a critical account of the philosophical insights of Eddington, a pioneer in the newly developing field of philosophy of science. After an exposition, in the introductory chapter, of some of the basic principles of Newtonian mechanics and Kantian metaphysics, the author traces the gradual emergence of Eddington's scientific philosophy from a background of Relativity theory and Quantum mechanics. This is followed by a discussion of some of the forces in Eddington's life which shaped his *Lebensanschauung* (Chapter I).

Eddington's scientific epistemology receives special attention, and the difficult concepts forming its foundation are explained at length in Chapter II. An idealistic theory of knowledge, in which the dualism of consciousness and matter is abolished, and within the framework of which the laws and constants of physics can be deduced purely from epistemological principles, seems to be the main outcome of Eddington's standpoint. This is a new type of idealism without the pitfalls of Berkeleyanism and extreme solipsism.

In evaluating Eddington's contributions to philosophy (Chapter III)—and, the reviewer is tempted to add, in belittling their value to human understanding—the author of this monograph draws a distinction between *good* and *perfect* observations. What if we cannot make a *perfect* observation? Good observation has been good enough for us. Witness all the good it has done us! Why bother about perfection, as Eddington seems to do? Thus is dismissed a deep-seated error, which Eddington exposed so tellingly, in scientific methodology. Not satisfied with this, a broadside is fired against Eddington's proof of subjectivity in physics. The arguments advanced by the great astro-physicist to show that physical knowledge is purely subjective, and that the only objective world is the spiritual world, are attacked on grounds which may seem very convincing to the scientist, but rather naive in the eyes of the philosopher. 'Oh! But that is an unacceptable position for a physicist' (p. 88) is how the scientist brusquely concludes his debate with anyone exposing the fallacies in scientific methodology.

The final conclusion seems to be that Eddington's philosophical problems themselves are 'premature, and the solutions he presents appear to be illusive' (p. 101).

It is in this cavalier manner that the profound find-

ings of Eddington in respect of the philosophical implications of recent science are dismissed. It is a puzzle to the reviewer why the author of this booklet, who, evidently, has a penetrating intellect and keen philosophical insight (witness, for example, his brilliant disquisitions on Kantian metaphysics, particularly in the 'Conclusions')—why he should have failed to see correctly the picture that Eddington has unveiled. It is just like Nelson putting to his blind eye, at the battle of the Nile, his telescope and saying that he could not see the signals on the mast of the Admiral's ship! Is the blindness in one eye of the pure scientist feigned, or has nature doomed him to this fate? Be that as it may, the pure scientist is the loser by refusing to learn the language which Eddington uses. Let the students of philosophy draw the right lessons from the blunders of the pure scientist.

PROFESSOR P. S. NAIDU

PRINCIPLES OF CARTESIAN PHILOSOPHY. BY BARUCH SPINOZA. NEWLY TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN BY HARRY E. WEDECK. Published by Philosophical Library, New York-16. 1961. Pages 192. Price \$4.75.

The present work was first published in Latin in 1663 and was immediately translated in Dutch, thus proving its wide popularity on the Continent. Dr. Runes, the editor, informs us that it is the only book by Spinoza which was published during his lifetime. So, Spinoza was not fortunate enough to see his own system in print. However, even in the present book, one may find the glimpses of his system. In translating this book directly from the Latin, Mr. Harry Wedeck has taken care to use terms which can be easily grasped.

Though explicitly there is a world of difference in the views of Spinoza and Descartes, implicitly there is essential identity. Cartesian principles are involved in the views of Spinoza. One who is interested in the Cartesian school of philosophy may easily see that Spinoza completed the system, whose foundation was laid down by Descartes. One may find gaps in Descartes's dualism, which have rationally been filled up by Spinoza's monism. Of course, this is not to deny the greatness of Descartes, the original inspirer of Spinoza, a man after his own mind, and architect of a system which is a nightmare even to the present day Anglo-American philosophers. Descartes's importance lies not merely in historical priority, for there were great philosophers historically prior to him, but for the foundation of a solid system which stands even now, in spite of the bad winds from all sides. In the present book, Spinoza has proved the legitimacy of concepts involved in the thought of Descartes without abandoning his own philosophical standpoint. This may seem to be surpris-



ing, but is true if one takes the trouble of reading this book.

The book is divided into three parts: (1) Introduction, (2) Principles of Cartesian Philosophy, and (3) Cartesian Thoughts on Metaphysics. The last part is merely an appendix to the first two parts. One misses completely the geometrical treatment of philosophical concepts in this part of the book, for the simple reason that the results reached after geometrical treatment in the first two parts are applied to the concepts of this field. In the terminology of Spinoza, metaphysics is concerned with such problems as 'Being and Its Affections', 'God and His Attributes', and 'Human Mind'; the last including such problems as the 'Immortality of the Soul' and 'Human Freedom'. Before proceeding to these transcendental problems, it is necessary to clarify the concepts involved in our empirical and rational understanding and to put forward one's views against the false opinions concerning these and the transcendental concepts. In the first two parts of the book, Spinoza deals with Descartes's views in so far as he establishes their truth in contradistinction to the views held by his predecessors. Like a geometrician, Spinoza uses 'definition', 'axiom', 'proposition', 'proof', 'scholium', and 'lemma' in connection with the Cartesian concepts. The purpose of Spinoza in writing this book is not merely to present Descartes's views in a different garb, but also to remove the deficiencies involved in them. He feels the necessity of proving even those propositions which have been left by Descartes as unproved.

The Philosophical Library has really done a great service to the philosophical world by publishing this translation of a valuable work by Spinoza.

SURESH CHANDRA

## SANSKRIT

KENOPANIṢAT. WITH ŚRĪ ŚĀṆKARA'S COMMENTARIES. EDITED BY ŚRĪ SATCHIDANANDENDRA SARASVATI. Published by Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, Holenarsipur, Mysore State, Pages 111. Price Rs. 2.

This edition with the two commentaries of Śrī Śāṅkara is intended for readers who wish to have the plain text of the commentaries unencumbered by glosses and sub-glosses. The learned editor has divided the text into paragraphs with indication of important variants and traced the quotations to their originals.

Unlike the other Upaniṣads, the *Kena* has two commentaries—the *pada-bhāṣya* and the *vākya-bhāṣya*—both ascribed to the great commentator Śrī Śāṅkara. The

editor has come to the conclusion that the *vākya-bhāṣya* could not have been written by the same commentator who wrote the *pada-bhāṣya*. The following are some of the reasons given by the editor to substantiate his arguments: (1) Neither Śrī Śāṅkara nor any of his contemporaries have stated that two commentaries have been written on the *Kena*. (2) Some textual difference can be seen in both the commentaries; for instance, 'nāham manye, nāha manye' (II,1). (3) The glossator says that the *vākya-bhāṣya* was written after the *pada-bhāṣya*; there is no reference or support in the *vākya-bhāṣya* to substantiate this view. (4) The explanation of some terms in both the commentaries are contradictory; for instance, the explanation of 'pratibodhaviditam matam'. (5) The introductory sentences of the *vākya-bhāṣya* are not only extraordinary, but also written in a peculiar style. Further, the editor, following Professor Hiriyanna, opines that the glossator of the Upaniṣad is not the well-known Ananda Giri. The reasons given by the editor in support of the above opinions deserve the attention of scholars.

This edition with the close attention paid to typographical details and textual criticism will be useful to serious students of Vedānta.

SWAMI ADIDEVANANDA

## SANSKRIT—ENGLISH

PANCHIKARANAM OF ŚRĪ SĀṆKARĀCHĀRYA. WITH ŚRĪ SURESVARĀCHĀRYA'S VĀRTTIKA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, Mathura, U.P. Pages xviii+74. Price Re. 1.

The book presents the original verses of Śāṅkarācārya and the *vārttika* verses on them by Sureśvarācārya, together with analytical as well as running translation of the same in English. The whole book is exhaustively elucidated with footnotes. An analytical introduction by Professor S. S. Raghavachar, of the University of Mysore, and a Foreword by Swami Hiranmayananda, of the Ramakrishna Order, have increased the value of the book. This well-known Vedāntic treatise sets forth in a nutshell the philosophy of monistic Vedānta and indicates a way of attaining the highest realization through self-identification with cosmic reality with the help of the letter *Om*, as prescribed in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. The book is a valuable addition to the Vedāntic works presented so far in English. We welcome it heartily.

S. G.



# NEWS AND REPORTS

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SOCIETY RANGOON

REPORT FOR 1960

The activities during the year were as follows :

*Free Library* : Total number of books in seven languages : 30,670 ; additions during the year were more than 3,500. Number of books issued : 35,904.

*Free Reading Room* : There are at present 29 dailies and 125 periodicals in the reading room. Average attendance : 350.

*Scripture Classes* : Classes on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* were held on Fridays and Sundays, and on Vedānta on Saturdays. Total number of classes held : 153. Average attendance : 20.

*Burmese Language Class* : Thrice a week, a Burmese language class was conducted.

*Cultural Study Group* : Several homely discussions on educational, cultural, and religious subjects were held among small groups of educated people.

*Celebrations* : Birthday anniversaries of the prophets of diverse faiths and festivals of different religions were celebrated through public meetings and social functions. In all, 47 public lectures were organized during the year.

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA VISAKHAPATNAM

REPORT FROM JANUARY 1960 TO MARCH 1961

The activities during the period under review were as follows :

1. *Religious Service* : Daily worship was conducted at the Ashrama shrine. On Sunday evenings, classes in Telugu were held on *Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Classes and lectures on various other subjects were also arranged.

2. *Free Reading Room & Library* : Total number of books in the library : 2,308 ; number of magazines : 20 ; number of dailies : 6 ; number of books issued : 214.

4. *Cultural and Recreation Centre for Children* : This section conducted instructive and educative programmes of spiritual and cultural value for children, including documentary film shows. A children's library was also conducted.

4. *Sarada Bala Vihara* (Preparatory School for Children) : This school had a strength of 180 infants. Staff : 7.

5. *Adult Education Centre* : This centre, meant for local fishermen, taught twelve of them to read and write.

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA PATNA

REPORT FROM JANUARY 1960 TO MARCH 1961

The activities of this Ashrama for the period under review were as follows :

*Religious Activities* : In all, 281 scriptural classes were held on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, *Yoga-Vāsīṣṭa Rāmāyaṇa*, and the Upaniṣads. Regular worship and *bhajanās* were conducted at the shrine. Birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, and other saints and prophets as well as various religious festivals were celebrated.

*Educational and Cultural Activities* :

(a) The Adbhutananda U.P. school, which imparts free education to poor boys, had a strength of 246 students.

(b) *Students' Home* : Strength on 31.3.61 : 28 (16 non-paying, 3 partly paying, and 9 paying).

(c) *The Turiyananda Library and Free Reading Room* : Number of books on 31.3.61 : 5,873 ; additions during the period : 341. Number of dailies : 6 ; periodicals : 73. Total number of books issued : 11,445.

*Medical Activities* :

(a) *Homoeopathic Charitable Dispensary* : Number of patients treated : 81,434 (new cases : 9,302).

(b) *Allopathic Dispensary* : Number of patients treated : 66,630 (new cases : 9,565).

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, MANGALORE

REPORT FROM JANUARY, 1960 TO MARCH 1961

The Mangalore Ashrama, from its inception in 1938, has endeavoured to spread among the people the ideas and ideals of Vedānta, in the light of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, and to create interest in spiritual life. During the period under review, regular worship and *bhajanās* were conducted at the Ashrama shrine. Study classes on *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* and the *Anu-gītā* were also conducted. Public lectures were given in different parts of the town and district. Brief talks on moral and religious subjects were given to the students of the Balakashrama, run by the Mission. Birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated with a varied religious and cultural programme. The Ashrama library issued 1,198 books during the period. The Ashrama has published a number of books in Kannada, Sanskrit, and English.