

**VOL. LXX**

**SEPTEMBER 1965**

# **Prabuddha Bharata**

**OR**

## **AWAKENED INDIA**



**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

SEPTEMBER 1965

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXX

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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:0:—

आत्मार्पणस्तुतिः

THE HYMN OF SELF-OBLATION

ŚRI APPAYYA DIKSITA

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI VIMALANANDA

उल्लङ्घ्याज्ञामुडुपतिकलाचूड ते विश्ववन्द्य  
त्यक्ताचारः पशुवदधुना मुक्तलज्जश्चरामि ।  
एवं नानाविधभवततिप्राप्तदीर्घापराधः  
क्लेशाम्भोधि कथमहमृते त्वत्प्रसादात्तरेयम् ॥११॥

11. O crescent-crested Lord worthy of the homage of the world, I have transgressed Your commandments and now I ramble like a beast throwing away good conduct and feeling no sense of disgrace. During the passage of my diverse births, I have thus accumulated vices extending over a very long space of time. Would I ever go beyond the ocean of tribulations without Your grace ? Assuredly not.

क्षाम्यस्येव त्वमिह करुणासागरः कृत्स्नमागः  
संसारोत्थं गिरिश सभयप्रार्थनादन्यमात्रात् ।  
यद्यप्येवं प्रतिकलमहं व्यक्तमागस्सहस्रं  
कुर्वन्मूकः कथमिह तथा निस्त्रयः प्रार्थयेय ॥१२॥

12. O Dweller of the Mountain, You will certainly forgive all wrongdoings incidental to empirical existence when one merely entreats You with trepidation and contrition ; for You are an ocean of mercy. Albeit, relying on what strength shall I pray shamelessly for Your grace, as I am perpetrating every moment a thousand iniquities like a dumb creature ?

सर्वं क्षेप्तुं प्रभवति जनः संसृतिप्राप्तमाग-  
 इचेतः इवासप्रशमसमये त्वत्पदाब्जे निधाय ।  
 तस्मिन्काले यदि मम मनो नाथ दोषत्रयार्तं  
 प्रज्ञाहीनं पुरहर भवेत्तत्कथं मे घटेत ॥१३॥

13. Any being born has complete power to eject all demerit rising out of mundane life by placing the mind on Your lotus feet at the time of his last breath. At that time, O Master, if my internal organ of cognition is rendered morbid by the triple factors of disease and I suffer loss of conscience, O Destroyer of the Triple Cities, in which wise can that happen in my case ?

प्राणोत्क्रान्तिव्यतिकरदलत्सन्धिवन्धे शरीरे  
 प्रेमावेशप्रसरदमिताक्रन्दिते बन्धुवर्गे ।  
 अन्तःप्रज्ञामपि शिव भजन्नन्तरायैरनन्तै-  
 राविद्धोऽहं त्वयि कथमिमामर्पयिष्यामि बुद्धिम् ॥१४॥

14. When life departs from the body, a great confusion follows ; its joints and bindings crumble. Relatives and friends who are overcome with sentiments born of fond love for me fill the air with loud laments. O Śiva, pierced by innumerable interruptions, how shall I then retain even my inner consciousness and offer my mind to You ?

अद्यैव त्वत्पदनलिमयोरर्पयाम्यन्तरात्म-  
 न्नात्मानं मे सह परिकरैरद्रिकन्याधिनाथ ।  
 नाहं बोद्धुं तव शिव पदं न क्रिया योगचर्याः  
 कर्तुं शक्नोम्यनितरगतिः केवलं त्वां प्रपद्ये ॥१५॥

15. O Spouse of the Daughter of the Himalayas, together with all my holdings, today I am positively offering myself at Your lotus feet ; for You are my innermost Self. O auspicious Lord, I am not competent to understand Your abode ; nor am I able to perform Your worship or practise *yoga*. Having no other way, I simply resort to You.

यः स्रष्टारं निखिलजगतां निर्ममे पूर्वमीश-  
 स्तस्मै वेदानदित सकलान्यश्च साकं पुराणैः ।  
 तं त्वामाद्यं गुरुमहमसावात्मबुद्धिप्रकाशं  
 संसारार्तः शरणमधुना पार्वतीशं प्रपद्ये ॥१६॥

16. You are the sovereign Lord who first made the Creator of the whole world and imparted to him the Vedas in their entirety together with the Purāṇas. O Lord of Pārvatī, such as You are, I, so-and-so, weighed down by mundane afflictions, take refuge presently in You, the *guru* who illumines the soul and intellect.

ब्रह्मादीन्यः स्मरहर पशून्मोहपाशेन बद्ध्वा  
 सर्वानेकश्चिदचिदधिकः कारयित्वात्मकृत्यम् ।  
 यश्चैतेषु स्वपदशरणान्विद्यया मोचयित्वा  
 सान्द्रानन्दं गमयति परं धाम तं त्वां प्रपद्ये ॥१७॥

17. O Extinguisher of Lust, who surpasses spiritual and non-spiritual entities, You first bind all animate beings starting with Brahmā with the rope of delusion and instigate them to do what they should do for You; then again, You release those among them who seek refuge at Your feet, bestowing on them liberating knowledge, and lead them to the realm of unalloyed beatitude. I resort to You who acts as described.

भक्ताग्रचाणां कथमपि परैर्योऽचिकित्स्याममर्त्यैः  
 संसाराख्यां शमयति रुजं स्वात्मबोधौषधेन ।  
 तं सर्वाधीश्वर भवमहादीर्घतीव्रामयेन  
 क्लिष्टोऽहं त्वां वरद शरणं यामि संसारवैद्यम् ॥१८॥

18. In the case of Your most eminent *bhaktas*, You administer the antidote called *Ātmabodha* or Self-realization, and anyhow cure their disease of *samsāra*, which other celestials give up as hopeless. O paramount Lord and Bestower of Choice Blessings, suffering from the exceedingly protracted severe illness of worldly existence, I resort to You—as my refuge—the only physician who is able to cure the illness of transmigratory existence.

ध्यातो यत्नाद्विजितकरणैर्योगिभिर्यो विमुक्त्यै  
 तेभ्यः प्राणोत्क्रमणसमये संनिधायत्मनैव ।  
 तद्व्याचष्टे भवभयहरं तारकं ब्रह्म देव-  
 स्तं सेवेऽहं गिरिश सततं ब्रह्मविद्यागुरुं त्वाम् ॥१९॥

19. *Yogins* subdue their senses with great care and meditate upon You aiming release from *samsāra*. And You, the self-luminous God, draw Yourself near them at the time of the departure of their life-breath, and explain to them the well-known holy formula called *Tāraka-Brahma*, which dispels the fear of *samsāra*. O Dweller on the Mountain, I ever place myself at Your service, for You are the *guru* who imparts the knowledge of Brahman.

दासोऽस्मीति त्वयि शिव मया नित्यसिद्धं निवेद्यं  
 जानास्येतत्त्वमपि यदहं निर्गतिः सम्भ्रमामि ।  
 नास्त्येवान्यन्मम किमपि ते नाथ विज्ञापनीयं  
 कारुण्यान्मे शरणवरणं दीनवृत्तेर्गृहाण ॥२०॥

20. Should I represent to You, O Śiva, that I am Your humble dependent—an eternally established fact? And You certainly know that I am wandering about without a protector to whom I can finally resort. O Master, I have nothing else whatsoever to submit before You. Out of Your bare mercy, take notice of my having preferred to surrender fully to You as my refuge, for I am in wretched condition, and so accept me as Your vassal.

(To be continued)



# LETTERS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

( 75 )

Belur Math  
P.O. Belur, Howrah  
3 August 1917

Dear —,

I am very happy to get your letter. For a long time I had no letters from any of you. Maharaj and Hari Maharaj are still at Puri. We have got the news that they are not keeping well there and are shifting to Bhuvaneswar soon. It is a long-cherished desire of Maharaj that an Ashrama should be started at Bhuvaneswar. . . . This time Maharaj's desire is going to be fulfilled : 15 *bighās* of land have been purchased at a very cheap rate. . . .

Baburam Maharaj is now staying at the Holy Mother's place of residence (Udbodhan) at Baghbazar. He is still very weak ; but is slowly regaining his strength little by little. Even now he cannot get up from his bed ; bathing etc. are done sitting on the bed itself. However, we may hope that he will regain his health completely in course of time, through the Lord's grace. This time his illness was very serious ; there was no hope of recovery at all. He has taken rice after a month and a half. Lord is gracious ; by His mercy, He has saved His devotee for the welfare of the world. If the devotee is not there in the world, who else will be the helper in His divine play ?

What you have written is quite true. This time the divine play (*līlā*) of the Lord is a grand affair and its effects are world-encompassing, there is no doubt about it. This time the good of the entire universe will be effected ; surely the ignorance of the entire world will be destroyed and the influence of knowledge and wisdom will spread. India is no more the India of earlier times ; now she is rising, taking along with her the entire globe ; she is awakening, along with the entire universe. In this India has the Lord manifested Himself to enact His divine play ; the welfare of India is assured. Again, having sent Swamiji to the West, the Master has paved the way for the welfare of the westerners, too—this is seen right in our front. When the present war is over—it will not be long before it happens—, you will see that the whole of the western world will take on an entirely new form ; peace will reign for a long time to come. What Swamiji has said is true to the letter. You all simply be the witness with a steady, calm heart. There is no use getting restless and worried ; utmost patience and calmness are the needs of India at the moment. The devotees of the Master are clearly realizing it. They know that the incarnation of the age has come down with his devotees ; they know that the Master is behind all these things ; therefore never will India, nor the entire world, come to grief ; rather, their supreme good will be effected. . . .

Your well-wisher,  
Shivananda

---

# AGGRESSIVE HINDUISM

[ EDITORIAL ]

Let not these words frighten anybody. They are just one of those characteristic forceful expressions used by Swami Vivekananda to drive home his point effectively on his listeners. Hinduism has to be revitalized, aggressive she has to become, dynamic and strong—for her own good as well as for the good of the world—but injure she can none. No, that she cannot possibly do: she cannot live at the cost of others; that goes against her very grain. No Hindu worth the name can or ever will wish ill of other religions, or work for their extermination. Not even the most fanatical adherent of Hinduism would, in his heart of hearts, wish for the destruction of other races or religions, though under great provocation he might sometimes hit back at others in self-defence—but, mind you, only under great provocation. He bears no ill will as such to any; once the cause of provocation is gone, he is once again the 'mild' Hindu, tolerant and peaceful, working for the rehabilitation of his worst enemy. History itself is a witness to the truth of this statement: here is this wonderful phenomenon that in India, the home of Hinduism, and nowhere else, have flourished through centuries, and are still flourishing in all their glory, every major religion of the world side by side with Hinduism, in spite of the fact that some of them have often betrayed their trust, misused her hospitality, and have stabbed her in the back—razed her places of worship and threatened to undermine her very existence through sword, treachery, and depredation. Now, in the height of her maturity, she is not going to give up this ancient characteristic of hers which has made her existence a blessing unto mankind, and follow a course of hatred

and intolerance which she has never done.

And yet when we, with Swami Vivekananda, speak of the Hinduism-that-is-to-be as 'aggressive' and call upon her adherents to work for it, we use the word in no narrow sense. When we say that Hinduism has to become aggressive and revitalize herself, we are at the same time speaking for the revitalization of other religions, too. For they are as much in need of revitalization as Hinduism herself, nay more. This revitalization is not a new occurrence in the long and chequered annals of Hinduism. She has done it repeatedly whenever there was need for it; to do so is in her very constitution and she has provided for it in her sacred books, the *Śrutis* and the *Smṛtis*. This alchemy of rejuvenation, secreted in her heart, works its way automatically when needed, and she has never failed to distinguish the essentials of her being from the non-essentials and to discard the latter when they had ceased to be useful and had, instead, started corroding the centre of her being. That is why, alone among the world's faiths, she has no quarrel of any sort with the conclusions of modern science and does not feel shy of meeting its challenge. Let the scientists probe into the secrets of nature as far as they can and carry on their researches endlessly; she knows that the conclusions of science, whatever they be with regard to external nature, cannot affect the soundness of her metaphysical speculations and the intense pursuit of religious avocations by the simple pious souls. Let the whole external fabric of her social organism fall to pieces under the impact of modern civilization; she is confident that she can reconstruct it on a better footing. Let her caste system which has stood her in



good stead of yore go; let the age-old occupations and modes of living give way to new and strange ones; let some of her fond religious beliefs to which she has passionately clung for centuries wither away in the glare of modern science; none of these would affect the core of her existence. She is certain she would emerge all the better for it. How many of such out-moded beliefs she has discarded in the past when she found them not in accord with science, reason, and truth! She is not afraid of making another change and adjustment now. That explains the rich growth of her spiritual life through which she has scaled the heights of mystical experience and metaphysical speculation. Not only that, she has left her doors wide open for her children to reach still higher states of spiritual consciousness, if they can, in times to come.

But this resilience in doctrinal matters which makes possible a fresh flowering of the spiritual tree every now and then, each more beautiful and sweet-smelling than the previous one, is totally absent in other religions. Particularly the outlook of Christianity and Mohammedanism, the two religions which are likely to get unduly alarmed in India by the growth of aggressive Hinduism, is rather reactionary in this respect. These two religions do not even recognize the need for such a fresh appraisal of their religious dogmas and doctrines and religious observances to separate the grain from the chaff. A credal injunction, a view of creation, a conception of life after death, a religious tenet, propounded centuries back and fixed up by the early founders, is gospel truth for them and therefore inviolable, however irrational and out of tune with the spirit of the times it may be. There could be only one Christ and one Mohammed; and they have set in motion a spiritual wave sufficient unto humanity for its redemption through

eternity. And the church and the *dargah* are the *only* channels through which the perennial waters of this spiritual wave can, and as a matter of fact does, percolate to humanity at large. Even the spiritual experience of the later saints and seers can be only within the pale of the church and its doctrines. This, in our view, is a state of stagnancy, if anything, spiritually. Except in the matter of adding to their numbers from the fold of other religions, forcibly or otherwise, and strengthening the hands of the church materially, it does not promote in any way the spiritual growth of the respective religions. We are reminded of that famous meeting of the Pope with Thomas Aquinas. While the two were in audience, a caravan laden with gold and jewellery meant for the church happened to pass by outside. Noticing it from the palace window, the Pope, rather tauntingly, remarked, referring to a passage in the Bible (Acts iii. 6): 'Gone are the days when we had to say "Silver and gold have I none"! The Bible passage referred to was this: A certain man, lame from birth, approached Peter and John while they were on their way to the temple, and asked for alms. And Peter told him these memorable words: 'Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.' Saying this, he took the lame man by the hand and lifted him up. And lo! immediately the lame man leapt up on his feet and walked into the temple along with Peter and John. When, alluding to this incident, the Pope remarked in pride of his own pomp and glory in the above-mentioned manner, Thomas Aquinas rose equal to the occasion and replied: 'Gone were also the days when we could say: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.' The lesson of the story is obvious. And we feel that this state of stagnancy in



the spiritual outlook of these great religions should end; their dogmatic approach to religion and spirituality should give place to a universality of outlook and breadth of vision which recognizes greatness equal to that of one's own in other religions too; in other words, they *are* in need of revitalization.

### HINDUISM THE RECEPTACLE

But we are afraid they do not possess the means of doing it within the fold of their own doctrinal approach. For this, we feel, they need the holy influence of Hinduism, the most tolerant of all religions, possessing the necessary breadth of vision and universality of outlook. In fact, Hinduism *has* exerted such influence in the past; and whenever she has done so, there has been a fresh blossoming of spirituality among other religions, for instance, in the birth of the sufi sect among the Mohammedans. What is needed now is a broadening of this influence so as to embrace the entire body of other religions. And why can it not be done without injuring them? After all, even as it is, Hinduism is itself a federation of religions. No single saint, seer, or messenger of God can be said to be its sole author, but all the saints and seers and incarnations of God, even of other religions, are equally acceptable to her. The varied experiences of a multiplicity of saints, sages, and devotees form the basis of Hinduism. Out of these diverse types of experience has been woven a beautiful pattern of religion and philosophy and way of life, most comprehensive in its scope and application, to take man to the highest reaches of his personality. These different experiences do not contradict each other; each is helpful to different individuals at different stages of development. They are the interrelated parts of one whole, and represent the progressive steps in the religious life of man. Each

system of philosophy, each type of religious experience, is a religion in itself, and yet forms part of the Eternal Religion known as Hinduism. The Śāktas, the Śaivas, the Vaiṣṇavas, and many others, professing widely divergent doctrines do all go under the name of Hinduism. And what prevents the other religions, too, in India at least, from becoming parts of this eternal stream of spirituality that is Hinduism, without losing their individuality?

Nothing, except their own dogmatism, narrow vision, and extra-territorial loyalty. Hinduism has no difficulties at all in absorbing them into her fold without eliminating them altogether. She has absorbed many creeds, races, and communities in the past, and now there would be no innovation if she does it with some others. It would be only a recurrence of what has occurred previously. After all, the basic religious experiences on which the different religions are founded are not contradictory but complementary; and the majority of those professing Christianity and Mohammedanism now are only those who were within her fold years back. Their coming back into her fold now would only add to her richness, for they would be bringing in along with them the treasures of the religions born and nurtured elsewhere. There would be some more sects within the fold of Hinduism, but with their sectarianism gone by contact with Hinduism. What does it matter? Sects are not bad at all; the more of them the better it is, as Swami Vivekananda said. For, then, everyone would have the opportunity to choose his own way to perfection and follow it up in the line of least resistance. As the Swami once advised in fun a Mormon gentleman who tried to persuade him to his own faith: 'I have great respect for your opinions, but in certain points we do not agree—I belong to a monastic order, and you believe in marrying many wives. But



why don't you go to India to preach ? . . . I wish you would go to India ; first, because I am a great believer in sects. Secondly, there are many men in India who are not at all satisfied with any of the existing sects, and on account of this dissatisfaction, they will not have anything to do with religion, and, possibly, you might get some of them.' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 368, 10th edition) Fun apart, it brings the force of what we mean.

So this unification of different races and religions has to be done once again in India with Hinduism as the nucleus, this time on a wider basis to include the other religions which are remaining outside its pale. For, for good or bad, we have in India now all the representative religions of the world, and out of these heterogeneous elements we are engaged in building up a nation. And the greatest obstacle at the moment in the way of this mighty task is the intense strife between the various communities, some of which look outside the borders of India for their material and spiritual sustenance and refuse to identify themselves with the aspirations of their motherland and are in a sense strangers in their own home. A nation cannot be built without a sense of unity among them, without a common allegiance, without an awareness of the common source of their different creeds. This turn of events has to be changed ; the communal strife has to be resolved to bring about national unity and peace. Religion in the past has been the one point of unity in India, the land of diversities, and it has to be so again. For that, a centre, a nucleus round which all can veer round without losing their individuality is required, and that is provided by Hinduism. Why not any other religion form this centre of unity is a sensible question. But no ; every other religion only represents a particular phase of religion, and making it the centre of unity is to destroy every other

aspect. Not so the religion of the Hindus ; it accommodates every form of religion and religious experience, including the new ones, without affecting their essential features in any way, and leaves everyone to follow his own way. No religion need fear of losing its distinctiveness by being incorporated into Hinduism. Within its four corners, each one would be free to choose his own form of worship without detriment to the particular religious sect he belongs or to that of others. His Holiness Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati, the late Pontiff of Sringeri Math, expressed this idea beautifully when he told a European gentleman : 'All are Hindus irrespective of their desire to be called Hindus. . . . Being eternal, it (Hinduism) is also universal. It knows no territorial jurisdiction. All beings born and to be born belong to it. They cannot escape this law, whether they concede its binding force or not. The eternal truth that fire burns does not depend for its validity upon our allegiance to it. If we accept that truth, so much the better for us. If we do not, so much the worse for us. In either case, the law is there, immutable, universal, and eternal. . . . It is their (of other faiths) fault that they do not recognize that they are but aspects of the *sanātana dharma*. The highest teachings of any other religion do find a place in our religion and are but a phase of the ordinary law laid down there.' (R. Krishnaswami Aiyar : *Dialogues with the Guru*, Chetana Ltd., Bombay 1, pp. 2, 4)

This point of view has little in common with that of the missionary ; it is not conversion in the conventional sense of the other religions. No system or religion or race or society will displace the other. Each system would be, equally with Hinduism, a complete system in itself for the realization of the highest perfection, yet forming an integral part of Hinduism.



The name Hinduism itself is a word coined by foreigners to signify the comprehensive system of religion that was prevalent in India and with which they came in contact. But to its own adherents it is only the Religion Eternal (*sanātana dharma*), which includes every aspect and phase of religion found anywhere and among any people on earth, of the past, present, and the future; and its basis is spirituality. Swami Vivekananda was content to call it simply Vedānta, which he explained thus: 'All of religion is contained in the Vedānta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedānta philosophy—the Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Advaita; one comes after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. This is the essential of religion: the Vedānta applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India is Hinduism. The first stage, i.e. Dvaita, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe is Christianity; as applied to the Semitic groups, Mohammedanism. The Advaita as applied in its Yoga-perception form is Buddhism etc. Now by religion is meant the Vedānta; the applications must vary according to the different needs, surroundings, and other circumstances of different nations. You will find that although the philosophy is the same, the Śāktas, Śaivas, etc. apply it each to their own special cult and forms.' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 82, 7th edition) Elsewhere, he puts the same idea in a slightly different form: 'Whether we call it Vedāntism or any *ism*, the truth is that Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought, and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. I believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either the Hebrew or the Arab. . . . We want to lead

mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible, and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of The Religion, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best. (ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 415, 416, 7th edition) Or as he summed it up in his address to the Parliament of Religions: 'If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Kṛṣṇa and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brāhminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute, to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true divine nature.' (ibid., Vol. I, p. 19, 11th edition)

That is the highest ideal of the universal religion or the Religion Eternal that Hinduism conceives of; where, on one side, Hinduism itself ceases to be, along with other religions, as a credal religion, and yet, on the other, stands supreme with other religions forming part and parcel of it. That is what is implied in her conception of the *satya yuga*, the Golden Age, where there are only Brāhmaṇas,



men striving after spiritual perfection, striving to reach the goal of that Eternal Religion, and no other castes or denominational religions like Hinduism, Christianity, or Mohammedanism, which, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, stand as barriers between man and man. And yet they all are to be there as steps leading to, or expressions of, that highest goal. Through caste, through sect, to a withering away of the caste and the sect in the Lord, who is the Lord of all religions, is the goal set forth by Hinduism. In other words, Hinduism is to be made a commonwealth of all races and men, which is possible because here in India are living side by side people belonging to multifarious races and cultures. It has been done before, but then the circle within which it was done was smaller; now it is bigger, and there is a new challenge before Hinduism to complete this process of absorption and assimilation.

Does it look very ambitious and utopian? Let it; let us be ambitious visionaries and dream about making it real. In this world of dreams, let us rather dream loftier dreams. That is the command of Swami Vivekananda when he asks Hindus to become aggressive, when he says: 'We must go out, we must conquer the world through our spirituality and philosophy. There is no alternative, we must do it or die. The only condition of national life, of awakened and vigorous life, is the conquest of the world by the Indian thought.' (ibid., Vol. III, p. 277, 9th edition) Maybe it will take aeons to realize such an ideal, but it is worth trying, nay, it is incumbent on the Hindus to try. Even if it be utopian, to visualize it is in itself a step forward in its realization. First let the idea reign and become true in the hearts of the Hindus. It is bound to take effect in course of time. The times are propitious for it; things are heading towards it, however

distant it may be and however unrealistic it may appear now, what with the coming together of the various communities closer and the free interchange of ideas between them. In such a situation, one cannot but influence the other. The creation of a National Christian Council years back is itself a good pointer in this direction. The recent utterances of the Pope himself during his visit to India for the Eucharistic Congress meeting last December, with whatever mental reservations it might be; his calling together the meeting of the representatives of non-Christians, which would have been unthinkable a few years back; and his appeal for pooling together the resources of all the religions for fighting the materialistic tendencies of the modern era, quoting verses from the Hindu scriptures, are all quite encouraging from our point of view.

#### THE IMMEDIATE TASK

Aggression, therefore, we repeat, is to be the dominant characteristic of the Hinduism-that-is-to-be. The thoughts and ideals of aggression must reverberate in the hearts of her children. This should form the theme of their activities. This attitude of mind should spread like contagion in all walks of life. Yes, the world needs the rich heritage of Hinduism; the other religions need it. She has to spread her influence wide; she has to throw her jewels broadcast. But how? Let us sound a note of warning: let us not mistake the word 'aggressive'. In these days in India, people, especially those who are at the helm of affairs, are prone to give advice gratis to one and all, in and out of season. Therefore let us caution. Let us by all means awaken to the vigorous part we have to play in the world drama. But let us not be over-anxious to be the saviours of the world. It is not by force, it is not by imposing ourselves on others, that we can



bring others into our fold, that we can enlighten and transform them. The Indian way has always been through silent example, like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard and yet brings into blossom the fairest of flowers. Before we could enlighten the world, we should ourselves get enlightened; we should fully equip ourselves. How many Hindus themselves are awake to the glory of their own faith? Few indeed, if any. Let us do that first. Let us make Hinduism strong, vigorous, and dynamic within—not by shouting slogans, but by being spiritual ourselves—and the whole world will be automatically attracted to it. Let us, each one of us, try to be the best exemplars of the essential teachings of Hinduism, and then place them before the world and stand back and see. Others are bound to get interested in them. When the flower blooms, the bees will flock to it of their own accord. Let us set our house in order and make it fit to receive others; the other results will naturally follow.

This revitalization of Hinduism within is the most important aspect of its being 'aggressive' in the true sense; without this, the other aspect on which we have dilated upon earlier would have no meaning, would be but a cry in the wilderness. The preliminary step in this direction is to stir ourselves up from the stupor into which we have fallen under the glamour of the western civilization. We must shake off our apathy towards our own religion, which, strangely, is quite in contrast with the attitude of the adherents of other religions to theirs, and be infused with the noble mission our religion has in future. Further, we must make spirituality the centre of our life. To say India is the land of *ṛṣis*, Hindus are the most spiritual of all races, is highly pleasing, no doubt. But where are they, these *ṛṣis* and the most spiritual people? 'Self-idealism is a very special

danger at the present time. This is a period of the recapture of ideals. We are always diving into the past in order to recover the thread of our own development. We exalt the name we bear. We praise our own ancestors. We seem to laud ourselves up to the skies. All this, however, is meant for encouragement, not for conceit. "Children of the *ṛṣis*!" exclaims a great orator to the crowd before him; but if some common man derives from this the idea that *he* is a *ṛṣi*, he shows his own *tamas*, and nothing more. This was not the reaction intended by the orator. Similarly, when we say that Christ represents in Europe the Asiatic man, we mean the *ideal* of Asia, not any chance individual on the pavement.' (Sister Nivedita: *Religion and Dharma*, p. 79)

Let us not mince matters; let us be frank; let us not hide our faces, ostrich-like, thinking that the storm will blow over because we do not see it. Whatever we might have been in the past, spirituality at the moment is at a low ebb with us. Not that it is very high among other religionists, but that is a poor consolation for us. We must put our shoulder to the wheel and kindle the light of spirituality so that it blazes forth as of yore. Why are not *ṛṣis* born nowadays as in ancient times? Because, as Āpastamba says, we have destroyed, we have violated, the conditions that make possible the appearance of saints (*tasmāt ṛṣayah avareṣu na jāyante niyamātilkramāt*). Saints, men of God, *sannyāsins*, and incarnations of God do not drop from heavens. *Ṛṣis*, as Bodhāyana affirms, can be made to order by regulating the individual and collective life accordingly (*yadi kāmāyēt ṛṣim janayeyamiti śaṁmāsān etat vratamācāret*). They cannot be born in any sort of society and of any parents. They appear only in a moral and spiritualized society and of parents who are pure, holy, and devoted to righteous living.



Family, as Henry Drummond remarks, is the generator and the repository of the forces which alone can carry out the moral and social progress of the world. Where the marriage tie is held inviolable and the marriage vows are faithfully kept—in thought, word, and deed—there alone the next stage of *sannyāsa* is possible or can be successful. The birth and success of a great *sannyāsin*, a man of God, depends upon the efforts of millions of others in society, upon their living a noble and pious life. Therefore, society is an important factor. How we organize it, what ideals we set before it—on that depends the spiritual tone of the whole race in general and of the chosen few in particular.

Renunciation, service, and *mukti*, the attainment of freedom, were the pivot of life in ancient India. Freedom is of various sorts: there is the political freedom; there is the economic freedom; there is the freedom that makes drunkards, gluttons, and libertines; and there is the spiritual freedom. The first we have achieved. The second we are engaged in achieving. Now the danger is that we are on the verge of embarking upon achieving the third, under the influence of the West and in the flush of success attendant upon our efforts in the economic field. While the first two are a necessary prelude to the last, the third one is *wholly* undesirable, for it completely eclipses the last ideal which alone really matters. That is what Swami Vivekananda warned us of when he said that a time will come when the Śūdra power will rise, not by acquiring the noble characteristics of the Brāhmaṇa or the Kṣatriya or the Vaiśya, but with its Śūdrahood intact. Now the caste system that was past its prime and only stood in the way of the uplift of the masses has broken down. It is as well that it has happened. The Brāhmaṇas, who were the repositories of spiritual power, are no more there ex-

cept in name; nor the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas as a distinct class upholding a certain ideal that formed the prop of the caste system. Now there is a confused mixing up of the caste duties, and a sort of equality is established amongst the various communities. But, unfortunately, this levelling has been in a downward direction: there is a levelling *down* of caste to the same level, whereas the ancient ideal was the levelling *up* of the caste. Brāhmaṇa, the man of spirituality, was the ideal of society and stood at the top; and everyone in the lower strata was expected to slowly rise to that status. Now we have lost sight of that ideal. In our eagerness to correct one wrong, we have committed another. While we have done well in discarding a caste system which had degenerated into a means of exploiting the masses, where certain sections claimed privileges without subscribing to the duties demanded of them, we have done wrong in discarding the Brāhmaṇa ideal itself, which is no monopoly of any caste or individual. We have thrown away the child with the bath-tub. The immediate task before the Hindus is to stop this trend, resuscitate the spiritual ideal of Brāhmaṇahood, and make *mukti*, the spiritual emancipation of the soul, the corner-stone of their social structure. This is the first step: to have a clear conception of the goal, to realize that spiritual freedom, the freedom from the thralldom of the senses and all other bonds, is the highest of all freedoms, and to make spirituality the background of all our endeavours in the light of that realization. The free soul who is fully alive to his own divine nature is the perfect ideal held up before us by Hinduism for emulation. Such a soul, though he is beyond all conventional morality and the pressures of his social surroundings, is never in opposition to it. Only such a free soul's actions are potent



and effective, and not of the libertine's who is but a slave to his impulses.

When we are clear about the ultimate goal, which we have defined as spiritual freedom, the rest will follow easily. Not that everyone will be able to reach the pinnacle of that ideal at once. Such renunciation and freedom do not come for the mere asking. We have to rise to it slowly, step by step. It comes by hard struggle and complete submission and strict obedience to a disciplined course of conduct in all fields. For such regulation, there is no restriction of place or time; in whatever station we are, there is sufficient room for disciplining ourselves. Our activities in the world provide opportunities for preparing ourselves for that highest consummation. The family, the workshop, the office, all do call upon for little sacrifices, to kill our selfishness, every moment, which will take us to higher levels of duty and perfection, and equip us for the final renunciation, the *sine qua non* of spiritual perfection. This world itself is the gymnasium, the training ground, for developing our spiritual qualities, to steel our nerves and strengthen our mental powers, before we can take the final plunge and devote wholly to spiritual life. Only we must cease to be under the delusion that a life of complete ease and comfort and riches is the most enjoyable of lives. Hard struggle is required even for worldly success; much more so for spiritual success. Our young men and women should not feel shy of the hard struggle, of the life of blood, toil, and tears—to improve themselves, to elevate the society around, and to work for the regeneration of this kindest of all mothers, their religion, who has stood them in good stead through the centuries and who will not let them down now if only they care for her a little; she has nourished them solicitously and made them a race of *men*,

may, a race of angels and gods, through thick and thin, and will continue to do so if only they do not neglect her.

### THE PATH AHEAD

We may now mention in passing a few other things that need our attention. Past is a great source of inspiration, undoubtedly. But that should stir us for building up a future more glorious than it ever was previously. If, on the other hand, we merely derive satisfaction in the glorification of the past, thinking that we are great merely because our ancestors were great, we would be deluding ourselves. We are surely great, each one of us is a *ṛṣi*, but only potentially; we must manifest it, our greatness, our *ṛṣi*-hood. That is the meaning of revitalization of Hinduism. Merely resting on our laurels of the past is not enough, nor is it desirable or possible. All that was glorious in the past is not of value now. There are many things which are to be rejected. Care must be taken here to see that in throwing the weeds the flower-bearing and fruit-yielding plants also are not uprooted. Many of the old things are not to be totally rejected, but are to be transformed in a constructive manner to suit the present needs. For instance, many of the old rituals and mythology contain precious gems in them, only they are to be sifted, revived, remodelled, and reinterpreted to meet the challenge of modernity. The principles of religion in Vedānta about man and his nature, his relation with the universe, his goal of life, etc. are unchangeable. But social norms which were meant to help the individual to make these principles practical in everyday life must change.

Further, we must always be receptive to new ideals that are beneficial to us. We must be prepared to assimilate new views of life. We cannot avoid the contact of other nations, other races, other religions,

nor remain unaffected by them. Nor is it all bad. There are hundreds of things which we may and *have* to learn profitably from others, if we do not want to be reduced to the state of mummies fit to be exhibited in museums. A live religion must be growing, assimilating new forces, new materials. Hinduism is no exception. It would cease to be the day it stops doing this. But she must be careful not to take in everything indiscriminately, the good and the bad, but should exercise her power of judgement in deciding what to accept and what to reject.

Organization is a tower of strength. When many work together for a common endeavour, with the full knowledge that every action that each is doing has the backing of the whole community, there is tremendous power generated. For every individual feels the support of millions of others behind his action. Emphasis 'on individual freedom in the past has resulted in a lack of social sense among the Hindus. Institutionalization of our efforts is a great need of the moment. It is not that everyone should gather round the same institution. Various institutions, however, can work for the same cause, each in its own way, and help in the revitalization process in different spheres. We may have the highest ideals in the pages of the books, but we must make them practical in the everyday life. Our history should reflect our ideal; our literature and art should breathe this new spirit. The ancient heroes—mythological as well as historical—must

become alive to inspire, guide, and fill us with physical, mental, and spiritual strength. Our temples, monasteries, and places of pilgrimage must be vivified and made the centres of learning and culture, where religion becomes a matter of experience. And the different sects of Hinduism must stop quarrelling and vying with each other, but try to see the common bases among themselves. They must impress on their followers that they all belong to the same family tree, and that each is an important limb of that tree. In substance, we must aim at the highest and the noblest in every field of human activity.

These are some of the general outlines of the work of reconstruction of Hindu society in order to make it aggressive. 'This is the battle that opens before the present generation. On our fighting a good fight, the very existence, it may be, of the next depends. Our national life is to become perforce a national assault. As yet the very outworks of the besieged city are almost unstormed. Herewith, then, let us sound the charge. Sons of the Indian past, do ye fear to sleep at nightfall on your shields? On, on, in the name of a new spirituality, to command the treasures of the modern world! On, on, soldiers of the Indian Motherland, seize ye the battlements and penetrate to the citadel! Place garrison and watch within the hard-won towers, or fall, that others may climb on your dead bodies to the height ye strove to win!' (Sister Nivedita : op. cit., p. 145)



# THE MYTHS AND SYMBOLS IN INDIAN CIVILIZATION

## THE HINDU TRINITY

SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

The three gods of the Hindu Trinity are Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva—Brahmā who is responsible for creation, Viṣṇu for preservation, and Śiva for destruction, or, better still, creation in the midst of destruction. If the word 'god' is taken to mean the force of passion for knowledge and love, a force that is unborn and deathless and hence intemporal, then it can be linked up with the Trinity. These gods are, really speaking, cosmic passions oriented to man and his evolution. Their being eternal does not hinder them from being deeply concerned with man and his temporality. Their love is the love of the eternal husband for the eternal wife (human soul) spoken of in the 'Songs of Songs'. The three gods are the three faces of eternal love reflecting on time and proving their vitality. As they are concerned with man, their eternity must seek confirmation in time and in history. Precisely because of this fact, there are incarnations unending coming down from the Trinity, especially Viṣṇu. We are going to see that their concern for man, their seeking of confirmation in time, manifests as four essential archetypes: (1) Maintaining the world as a continuous act, or perpetual arena for man's knowledge of himself; (2) allowing their love to manifest as liberty of the individual to work for harmony through conflict; (3) insisting on incarnation (man's and not God's) as a way of provoking contradictions and transcending them; and (4) utilizing symbol as the confrontation of the visible and the invisible, of man and God. These are the patterns in which the being, action, and force of the Trinity unravel and reflect

themselves in time and history. A myth, while being intemporal, is living, and hence seeks *confirmation and vitality* in time and in history. The Trinity has a mystical dimension, but has also a historical dimension in their incarnations. The incarnations prove, above all, our thesis, namely, the vitality of the love of the Trinity to reflect in time and give to man the ideal and the measure he is searching for.

### MYTH AND HISTORY

The West is interested in, and devoted to, history; the East, specially India, is devoted to myth. The West's interest in history is an answer to the challenge of time. Against the ravages of time, history, as the temple of man's aspirations, accomplishments, and creativity, offers protection; history gives a certain certitude of man's continuity in spite of changes. For the easterner, the certitude of protection given by history is not enough. He gets it in myth.

Time, when it ravages, is not logical or rational; it is illogical and irrational. How to meet the challenge of the irrational in history? It is said that history is a great humorist. Does history keep its good humour when it sees time using its strange logic of destruction? Assyria, Rome, and Carthage, where are they? 'Time cooks everything', say the Upaniṣads. 'He who knows that in which time is cooked knows the highest truth.'

How to meet the irrational in history? The irrational can be met only by the irrational or by the supra-rational. Only a diamond can cut diamonds. This irra-

tional is in the myth and mythology. Hence, the devotion of India to myth protects man against the destruction of time by building up the bulwark of the irrational or supra-rational in man. Please do not think that the irrational only destroys; it constructs also, says Hindu mythology. There is a notion that Śiva, one of the Hindu Trinity, is the God of destruction. No, he destroys and constructs, or constructs in the midst of destruction.

All life desires eternity. History as the mirror of evolutionary time, as the process of man's formation, and civilization as the self-realization of values through evolution, both satisfy man's desire for eternity. But only partially. Even the philosophy of history, which fixes man's place in the world and meaning to humanity, cannot answer the question: 'Why is there history?' It can answer how history can help man. Questions like 'Is history indispensable? Where should history take man?' cannot be answered either by history or by philosophy of history. The statement of Hegel: 'The Absolute unfolds itself in history and so there is an increasing purpose in history', which goes far to answer the above question, cannot answer 'Why history?'

Anguish comes often from the why of things and the why of life, questions which hide in the unseen region of our unconscious and hence cannot be easily 'seen'. Why are there creation, man, and history? History can only experience the anguish coming from the 'why'. It cannot answer. It can be answered from a higher level. Because the Absolute or God (call it the Timeless or the Unknown) *loves* man in an intemporal act of Grace to make man similar to Him. That is the answer to the question 'Why history?' There is no question 'Why should God love man?' It is only when one does not love or is in-

capable of receiving love that one puts the question why he or she loves me. We can squeeze the whole of history, we will not get one drop of love. Squeeze mythology—and mythology drips God's love—and you will find an ocean of love. Even a spiritual interpretation of history, as is contained in the declaration of N. Berdeaf, the famous theologian, that 'History is walking Christ', cannot answer the question: 'Is history indispensable?' God's grace which is an eternal now-moment, which can be expressed by the axiom 'God is and God is Love', is a moment when history and all evolution becomes unnecessary. In the eternal now-moment of God's love, man transcends the human condition, goes beyond sin. Sin is a state of separation from God's love. When man is caught in the dialectics of history, he cannot hold the mirror to God's love, and so he is in sin. Man has to be taken beyond history, beyond dialectics. This is the function of myth, namely, to take man beyond the human condition, not abruptly, but by giving him the knowledge of the totality of the human condition with its laws of ambivalence that divide and unite, laws that manifest their function as in the biblical declaration: 'Thou wilt not search Me if thou hast not already found Me.' This is a declaration that asks us to accept the limitation of individuality, with its thirst for search, as the spring-board for transcendence, for the search comes from unity and not from duality. When man grows by the help of this knowledge, myth places him between the manifested and the unmanifested, between the known and the unknown. It is here that myth 'depasses' the aspect of a religion and becomes spirituality. Myth as spirituality discerns man as the most deserving recipient of God's grace, a grace already accomplished and hence without effort, and, by virtue of being this recipient, fixes for him the position



between the visible and the invisible. Man alone can receive in his heart the love of the invisible and expand that love to the limits of universe's periphery. The religion and spirituality of Hindu myth do not speak of God's love as a dogma, nor demand the acceptance of sacraments to deserve that love. Here, the religion of Hindu myth becomes an open religion, beyond confession.

### THE ESSENCE OF MYTH: THE LOVE-WILL OF GOD

Man as the bridge between the visible and the invisible, as the interpreter between the known and the unknown—this is the place that myth gains for man. Is there anything higher that man can aspire for? But, then, this is a hidden truth. And hidden truths cannot be told directly. Ordinary language is not apt. So symbols are used. Symbol is the language to convey a hidden truth. Again, symbol is opposed to dogma; for symbolism speaks of God and His love for man not as a dogma, but in an open way, open to everybody.

This, then, is the key-idea which I am going to expound in this series of studies. The essence of myth, as the Hindu sees it, is the love-will of God that involves in human suffering and helps him to go beyond the human condition by gaining for man the bridge between the visible and the invisible. The infilling of man by grace is not a mystery; though it is beyond human comprehension, it can be grasped by pure love when impregnated by the symbolism of myths and stories in the mythology.

Coming back to the question, 'Why is history?', let history interrogate itself and it cannot get out an answer, though it has a need for an answer. Let myth interrogate itself 'Why is myth?', and the

answer is: 'God's need to love man.' This love *lived* by man is mythology.

There is a cry in the West that we have lost our myth. Jung says it definitely that the West has lost its myth and that the anguish of the unconscious can be remedied only when it is rediscovered. Before the West came to lose its myth, partly or fully, the West treated the question in a slovenly manner. Since the coming on the scene of science and the increase of the prestige of reason and precision, the West thought that prestige attaches itself to a religion which is historical. Linked to this is the attachment to a historical Christ. Since the West arranged things in the above way, it has been complaining of increasing secularization. Secularization does not come from outside, but from our inside, from our attitude to religion and what we want it to be. If we want it to be historical, then naturally we clip its wing by which it would have climbed to mythical heights. Before the search to make Christianity historical started, civilization was a part of religion. But now religion has become a part of civilization.

### THE HORIZONTAL DIMENSION OF GRACE IN MYTH

Why are the personalities represented in fabulous dimensions in mythology? Not only the gods are fabulous, even the man in the street of the mythological scene has a halo round his head and is a giant in comparison with his actual replica. The answer: That is the only way of protecting reality (reality with a small 'r') against the ravages of time. When the modern man cuts the myth to proportions, something remains. So, then, the cleavage between myth and reality which we find in everyday life is a contrivance of the myth to preserve reality. In speaking of



a personality, we ordinarily say: the myth and the man; of a doctrine: the myth and the reality, thus enunciating the law of cleavage which governs the action of the myth to preserve reality. In other words, this exaggeration of reality by myth is the necessary way of achieving the eternity in space, instead of eternity in time. Instead of impressing and astounding us along the flux of time (vertically), which is not sure, the myth strikes us by a horizontal dimension, in the now-moment and so the personages are inflated. Time becomes horizontal instead of vertical. I spoke just now of the eternal now-moment of God's love transforming as will to save man. In the act of transformation, time becomes horizontal; it becomes Grace in the now-moment, a Grace which has no patience nor need of time, but which affirms that everything is achieved now.

Seeing these personalities of mythical proportions, we say they are strange. But we say it is strange after having had a dream or a vision. Modern psychologists, specially Jung and his followers, have said that dreams and visions register the fabulous activity of the unconscious, the unconscious which, by its fantastic images, is trying to draw our attention to an actual fact which we ignore or to a coming event which we do not know. The unconscious is speaking to us in symbols, and symbols hide a great truth or a mystery. The unconscious is interested in striking us with its spirituality in the now-moment, and so it assumes great proportions even as the myth assumes vast proportions in mythology to impress us. In this sense, the unconscious is the matrix of all mythology.

Amongst the array of arms India has improvised to protect man against time, irrational destruction-myth is only one; immortality of the soul and reincarnation are others. But, in a certain way, mythology includes the other methods; for myth

being the infilling of man by the Divine's love, will, and creativity, it presupposes immortality of man.

#### THE HUMANIZING OF THE UNKNOWN BY THE FABULOUS

In myth God becomes man-conscious, gets involved in a real way (in the Māyā theory, God gets involved in an unreal way) in human suffering, and then pours out in fabulous proportions his love and creativity, so that man may become God. In this act of God, we see the humanizing of the Unknown, or of the unknown God, which God achieves in mythology.

The first and foremost goal which Hindu mythology sets before itself is the humanizing of the unknown Being, the supreme Being. And this humanizing is done without in anyway losing the character of being. The unknown is presented not as something unknowable or unknown, but as something more than known. And something more than the known, when presented to man, is the fabulous.

Everybody and everything is fabulous in Hindu mythology—gods, men, animals, and even trees. Viṣṇu's body is represented as the universe itself: His feet are the nether regions; His eyes, the suns; His eyelids, day and light; His hair, the clouds; His tongue, the water; His words, the fauna; His mouth, the fire; His mind, the moon; His stomach, the seven seas; His dress, the twilight; the rhythm of His gait, the time.

What is intended here is to induce in us a sacred view of the universe by saying that it is the body of God. But the method employed is to strike silent our discursive thought by the fabulous. And then the advance from the visible to the invisible becomes easy. There is an essential resemblance between clouds and hair, their woolly shining nature, between time and the gait of God. But the links are



clear only to intuition, and not to logical thought, as it leads to the invisible.

We did not think that a relationship so intimate and intuitive but yet fabulous exists between God and the world we see around us. When we are told so, our logical thought is struck silent and a new state of consciousness opens, a state which can realize as actual the new vision of the universe. The fabulous makes the mind blank, or empty, and in this state of openness, the new relationship between God and the world can be assimilated. In ordinary language, it will be said that the world is the symbol utilized to impregnate in us the presence of God. But, then, it is not the world that is the symbol, *but the relationship between God and the world*, which is of an ideal and elevated character and hence cannot be expressed directly. It is the relationship between the visible and the invisible that is the symbol. When we open ourselves to this relationship between the visible and the invisible by the help of the symbol, our mind takes the form of that relationship, and a transfer to a higher plane becomes possible. Symbolism is destined to awaken in us not only higher ideas and images, but emotions too. With the higher emotions rising in us, a transfer is easy. We assimilate the symbol and we take the place of the symbol; that is, man as the canal between the visible and the invisible, between time and the intemporal.

This is the highest place that the myth and symbol can achieve for man—this legitimate place between the manifested and the non-manifested, between the relative and the Absolute.

Here every experience that comes by is fabulous. Man realizes himself to be fabulous, bridge as he is between the known and the unknown. How many times the mystics and the scientists would have exclaimed 'fabulous' when the unknown in

religion and science unveiled itself to them; how many times Einstein would have pronounced the word 'fabulous' in the process of working out and realizing the Theory of Relativity; how many times Ramakrishna would have exclaimed 'fabulous' in the process of his realization of the Divine Mother; how many times Michelangelo would have exclaimed 'fabulous' in the process of painting the ceiling of 'Chapelle Sixtine' or sculpturing his Pieta! No experience is fabulous when it is finished; it is fabulous in the process of unravelling the unknown. Caught in the unravelling process of the unknown in science, religion, and art, these great ones were living the unknown, touching it with their fingers, and breathing and finding no other word to communicate their experience except 'fabulous'. Here what they imagined of the unknown becomes their intuition. The agony of creative imagination transforms itself into the ecstasy of intuition. Michelangelo seems to have said that in artistic creation, agony turns into ecstasy. Why agony and anguish?

In the face of the unknown which they want to know and experience, they are anguished. Their love for it makes them imagine what it is like. When the unknown chooses to reveal itself, imagination ripens into intuition. This intuition gives place to ecstasy. Is he not a man-god who can convert agony into ecstasy? Naturally they have, while living and working, transcended the human condition.

Thus, the symbol, by the help of the fabulous, poses man in between the manifested and the unmanifested. Here man gets back his intimate being and an extreme lucidity. The ambivalence and the contradictions it involves are not got over by fight, but by spiritual lucidity. The myth and the symbol steal the sacred wind from the sails of dogma, and enshrine it in everybody's heart.



## MYTH IS MORE THAN DOGMATIC RELIGION

This capacity of the symbol to give the intimate being is contested by dogma. The moment we use the word 'symbolic', many theologians would say, then it is not spiritual. Here, by the word 'spiritual', our interlocutor means the spiritual framed in the dogma and not the spiritual in everybody's heart. When the Hindu myth and Vedānta speak of the intimate spiritual in everybody's heart, they are not cheapening it, nor throwing away the idea of the spiritual *élite*. The spiritual *élite* understands and lives this intimate experience in a fuller way, the ordinary man in a lesser way.

The transfer which the symbol can bring about cannot be brought about by the fantastic. And here comes the difference between the fabulous employed by Hindu mythology and the fantastic. Here also it should be noted that Hindu mythology is not the fairy tale, but a function and purpose higher than this, though it can satisfy children, too, who search only fairy tales.

The fantastic is the domain of caprice, of irregularity and inexactitude which came from liberty of thought, creation, and originality. The fantastic can stop thought and create a blank, but does not leave a nucleus in us that makes us stretch and touch the invisible. This the symbol does with the help of the fabulous. The symbol always points to a higher and ideal relationship. And because this ideal is in the invisible, the invisible has to be pictured in fabulous colours and proportions. I said even the trees are fabulous in Hindu mythology. For instance, there is a tree from which hang not fruits and flowers, but men with their heads downwards. When the disciple asks the master an explanation, the latter replies: 'Those are people who practised an excess of aus-

terity and went against Nature.' The tree is the tree of life and knowledge. The master did not say they are punished like this. It is not a critique, but an establishment of facts. Those who practise penance go against Nature, and how can they be represented except in an inverted physical position?

This fabulous is not simply in the forms of the unknown, but in Being, in the love, will, and creativity. The Being gives testimony of His love and power by manifesting as fabulous love, will, and creativity, all the three faculties of Being getting involved in human suffering with the purpose of saving man and the world and maintaining world stability.

The ten incarnations of Viṣṇu, as fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, the boy-monk, as Paraśurāma, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, and the future incarnation of Kalki, the incarnation of destruction, all these came either when the earth was in danger of physical destruction, by falling into cosmic waters dislodged from the harmony of its planetarium, or when threatened by moral or spiritual destruction.

Infinite love is shown, even unmerited love—which is the real meaning of Grace—to man by saving him from death which was already ordained by destiny. A very intelligent boy who was destined to die at twenty seeks refuge in Śiva, when the God of death actually comes to take him. Śiva kills the God of death and gives eternal life to this boy. Śiva thus changes destiny, puts off the hand of death which it is impossible to put off, and hence Śiva is known as the conqueror of death.

Another account which narrates the unmerited love is the story of Ajāmila, saved by Viṣṇu. Ajāmila was not at all a man of faith. He lived a life of desire and wealth. At the moment of death, he called his eldest son, whose name was Nārāyaṇa, the name of the Lord. He did not call the



Lord. He only called his son. But even inadvertently spelt out, the name of the Lord works magic. He went to paradise, and not to hell which he normally merited.

Illiterate, ignorant ones become wise poets by the Lord's grace. So, in the story of Dhruva, the little prince who, on being blessed by the beatific vision of the Lord, wanted to compose a hymn in His praise. Being without letters, he could not. The Lord, knowing his anguish, touched his cheeks with the conch, Viṣṇu's insignia, and the boy burst out in beautiful poetry. Viṣṇu's conch is symbolic of knowledge.

#### FOUR ARCHETYPES OF BEING AND ACTS

The love of the Trinity for man, which transforms itself into will to take him out of the human condition, unfolds in four archetypal patterns, patterns which man should adopt if he wants to model his will as that of God.

1. As will which is not affronted or defeated either by the unhappy results that accrue in action or by the limitation imposed on the will by the act: The will of the Trinity was to make this world a perfect one. But, then, in action the results are contrary. Still, they continue to will the best and act in the best way. The universe is a continued act of the Trinity and they utilize time to conquer time.

2. The will of God that manifests in man as the power of individuation which breaks unity and then unifies it, in which act alone man feels his liberty expanding: This power of individuation or principle of individuation is a power that unfolds as the pattern of conflict and harmony. We see this archetype—we call it an archetype instead of calling it a myth—in the myth of Viṣṇu's servants choosing to be His enemies, choosing conflict as a way of liberty to break a unity and then come back

to the bosom of His love with renewed enthusiasm and knowledge of themselves. This rejoins the declaration of the Bible: 'Thou wilt not search Me, if thou hast not already found Me.' We have the same archetype unfolding in Śiva's act of destroying Cupid in a moment of conflict with Eros and then choosing to be in eternal union with His wife, the God of Ardhanārīśvara. This pattern—conflict-harmony—gives man a new optic to look at disharmonies. They are not forced or imposed by somebody, but by ourselves, by our liberty, by our soul seeking new harmonies by cutting unity and then joining it.

3. The archetype offered by the fact of incarnation: The fact that Viṣṇu and Śiva, though having no desire to satisfy, take many incarnations, should answer for all time the eternal question man poses: 'Why am I born?' If I were consulted before, I would have chosen not to be born. Incarnation is a necessary stage to make the contradiction felt and then to exercise one's liberty to transcend the contradiction.

4. The archetype offered by the utilization of symbols like ocean to symbolize consciousness, snake to symbolize physical energy: A symbol, as we see it in Hindu mythology, is a spiritual or magnetic field which attracts man unconsciously, to the centre. Water, for instance, is not created by man; but it offers a field for man's creativity, for construction and destruction, even as atom which is uncreated, but which is an instrument for man's created certitude. In this sense, a symbol is a neutral field, the meeting-point of the uncreated and the created, of the divine and the human. This neutral aspect is precisely what man needs to step slowly from the human into the divine.

The oceanic myth is a common denominator of all traditional civilizations. In Hindu mythology, ocean of infinite waters



is the bed on which Viṣṇu sleeps his cosmic slumber, his *yoga-nidrā* (sleep which is spiritual union or state of non-differentiation). The myth of the churning of the ocean makes out water as the mine of consciousness from which comes out prosperity, beauty, and, finally, the nectar of immortality. Ocean is also the meeting-ground of God and man, God wanting to show His grace and man searching for it. Water, which is a neutral symbol, is thus given as the harmony of the uncreated and the created to drive home the idea that a symbol to be one should reflect the archetype of the soul, which, according to Hindu thought, is at the same time uncreated and created. The soul is the chosen meeting-place of God and man.

We take the four points for a detailed study :

The will of Trinity which is continued act and of which the universe is the symbol.

Action determines will and limits it. I cannot change what I have done. And this is the affront to will. And then what I have achieved may be destroyed, which is not so much a material destruction, but a menace to my will. The Trinity answers that destruction is the beginning of a new harmony, a new creation. So long as man thinks he is a slave of 'laws', he does not see this higher harmony which is Grace.

That action is continuous and that action is creation with Viṣṇu are symbolically represented in the following way : In the cliché we see Brahmā, the god of execution seated on a lotus that springs from the navel of Viṣṇu. The umbilical cord of Viṣṇu is not cut. His unconscious energies which are symbolized by the umbilical cord are always linked up and are manifesting as creation through Brahmā.

That for Viṣṇu creation and destruction are two moments which succeed each other is brought out by representing the universe

as His body. In an organism, creation and destruction are going on every moment, and nobody grieves at destruction or death which is a law of equilibrium. So also, in the organism of Viṣṇu's body which is this universe and which is constantly the arena of destruction and creation, there is a call to go up the laws, to a harmony beyond creation and destruction.

I gave description of the body of Viṣṇu. The same symbolism is repeated in the life of Kṛṣṇa in an incident when Kṛṣṇa shows the whole universe in his mouth to Yaśodā, his stepmother. Companions of boy Kṛṣṇa complain to the mother that Kṛṣṇa is eating mud, which is a habit with children. Kṛṣṇa, when questioned, denies it. The mother asks the boy to open his mouth. He does. And then the mother sees not his tongue and teeth, but all the universe, with its sun, moon, and stars, the different worlds, the city of Mathura, their town, their house, and also herself ! Needless to say that the mother swoons away.

I close by giving the myth of the churning of the ocean, which is symbolic of the churning of consciousness.

The gods and titans who were fighting to dominate the world, knowing that the nectar of immortality would give them longer life, wanted to get it. Under the direction of the Trinity, they began to churn the milky ocean, using the Meru mountain as the churning stick and the serpent Vāsuki as the rope around the mountain. The titans were to hold the head of the serpent and the *devas* (the gods) the tail and pull it so that the mountain turned and churned the ocean.

For days and weeks the churning went on, and then came out of the ocean a white elephant. Elephant is symbolic of intelligence and memory. Indra, the chief of the gods, took the elephant for his vehicle.

Then came a beautiful lady, a goddess, who was later on recognized as Śrī, the Goddess of prosperity. She was taken by Viṣṇu.

Then came out of the churning a shining necklace, set with precious gems, symbolic of earthly splendour. This also went to Viṣṇu.

Then came a deadly poison, which from a distant radiation of its venom made the *devas* and *asuras* faint. If it fell on the earth, the earth would be destroyed. So Śiva, who saves all difficult situations and who has the power to assimilate even death, took it and drank. His wife, who was by His side, immediately caught hold of His neck and pressed it so that it would not go down and kill Him. Brahmā, who was anxious of world's welfare, closed Śiva's mouth so that He might not vomit it, in which case the earth would be destroyed. So, the poison stabilized itself in His throat and became a blue ornament. To this day, Śiva is known as the God with a blue neck, the act of saving the world being symbolized by the blue than by the blueness of poison. Then came the urn containing the nectar of immortality. Is not the poison symbolical of the extreme anguish which precedes illumination, the 'dark night' that precedes ultimate union?

When the nectar or ambrosia came, the problem was to share it with gods and titans. Giving it to the titans would be to give infinite strength to those who

utilize it badly. Viṣṇu saved the situation. He disguised Himself as a charming damsel and ordered the titans to arrange themselves in a row for being served. As a preparation to tasting the nectar, Viṣṇu asked the titans to close their eyes and meditate, and in case anybody opened his eyes, he would lose his chance, as he was impatient. The titans waited and waited indefinitely. Viṣṇu, in the meantime, took the urn and brought it to paradise, where it was installed for all time.

Immortality is not simple long life, but the knowledge of the Infinite, the Invisible, which knowledge is immortal. It is high up, it is vertical growth. It is a realization. We become *asuras* if we want to eat it or taste it. Immortality does not consist of perception; it consists of realization.

It is always a female divinity, a virgin that protects it and gives this knowledge to man. We find in the *Kena Upaniṣad* that when the strange Spirit that challenged the gods, Indra, Vāyu (wind), and Agni (fire), disappeared, in its place was found a beautiful goddess who gave to the gods the knowledge of that Spirit who was Brahman, the Supreme. Now, again, we find the same repeated in another way: the Goddess, the eternal Feminine, taking charge of the immortal Knowledge and teaching the *asuras* that one should not try to eat it and get physical immortality; rather one should realize it as the supreme knowledge that transcends all perception and conceptualization.

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# SUPERCONSCIOUS VISION

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of life? Is there any goal to achieve in life?

These are paramount questions in the hearts of spiritual aspirants, discriminating souls. Generally these questions do not arise, for most people feel they have an ideal, they have a goal, they want to achieve something. For instance, a student wants to be successful in his studies and, eventually, in his chosen profession. Then his desires would be fulfilled. There are many desires and cravings arising in the hearts of everyone, and it is usually believed that if we can satisfy such desires, there will be happiness. So most people think they know what they want to achieve in life : the fulfilment of their desires.

## THE GOAL OF ALL OUR STRIVING

But the next question must be : Is there any fulfilment, is there any completeness in what they strive for? Even after they have satisfied their desires, again hundreds of other desires arise, for there is no end to temporal achievement. Again, we must analyse the motives behind all our struggles, to carefully perceive just how realistic we are about the means to fulfilment. We must bear in mind that the end of life and temporal achievement is, inevitably, death. And how realistic are we in our attitude toward death? Do we, in fact, believe in it? A great man was asked, 'What is the greatest miracle?' And he answered, 'The greatest miracle is that every day we see people dying around us, but we cannot believe that we shall die'. The fact is often impossible to face.

Try to think that you are dead. You cannot. You cannot destroy the feeling that you exist. We go into deep sleep every day, at least for a few seconds or a

few moments when we are not dreaming. In that deep sleep, are we completely unconscious? No. Some consciousness remains, if only in a link, so that when you awaken you are the same individual.

In fact, there is no such thing as annihilation or death. Meister Eckhart pointed out : 'Our Lord says that eternal life is only knowing.'

We feel that we exist, that we have desires, and that we must fulfil the desires for the purpose of attaining happiness, joy. So there is a continuous search in life. A child persists : 'Mother, why?' The eternal question, Why? Thus we begin by seeking knowledge. And what we are really seeking is God, because God is knowledge itself, the Ātman : the indwelling eternal spirit or consciousness. It is the beginning and the end of all motives, all struggles : the urge to unfold Godhead.

Now Christian theology does not accept that explanation, but if we go to the great mystics of Christianity, we shall find they speak the same language. For instance, in *Theologica Germanica* we read : 'Goodness needeth not to enter into the soul, for it is there already, only it is unperceived.' Christ taught this : 'Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.' And that is the goal : we are seeking for that perfection. And where is that perfection? In Godhead. Again, where is that Godhead? It is within us. It does not enter from outside. Or, to quote Meister Eckhart : 'All creatures tend toward their ultimate perfection. Does she (the soul) then become God? Were I to say so, it would sound incredible to people of intelligence too poor to understand. Saint Augustine says : "It is not I who say so, I refer you to the scriptures, where it says 'I have said ye are God.'"'

That is the fact. God in His infinite aspect is dwelling within each human soul, and there is an urge to unfold that God-head. We may seek ignorantly, and waste our energies, but ultimately we wake up. Thus, according to the theory of reincarnation, if we wake up in this life and reach the goal, we have attained perfection. If not, we will be born again and again until we reach that perfection.

### REALIZATION HERE AND NOW

What is religion? What is spiritual life? When does spiritual life begin? The beginning is when you seek God, seek to unfold that divinity knowingly, with awareness. That awareness is the difference between a saint and a sinner. For the sinner also is searching for God, only in the wrong way. A saint is a saint because he knows that this is what he wants to achieve: to unfold that divinity which is our very birthright. But why is it that Sat-cit-ānanda, the absolute ocean of existence, knowledge, and bliss, is dwelling within us and we are not aware of it? Even when we are told about it, it does not always dawn. We do not accept it. Why? Let me quote the first Gospel according to Saint John: 'The Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.' There is the Light, there is God dwelling within, but because of that darkness, what Buddha called ignorance, we are not aware of the Light.

This darkness is an experience both direct and immediate. To give an illustration: You may be told, and you may believe, and through discrimination you may understand, that you are not the body. If you analyse, you will find that the body merely belongs to you; it is not the essence of you. But if somebody pinches you, you feel it, because of identification. That identification is a direct and immediate experience with each one of us. So, in

order that we can know the ultimate Reality, that we can realize our Ātman, our Self, the knowledge has to be direct and immediate, just as ignorance is direct and immediate. Darkness can be removed only by the light of knowledge. What kind of knowledge? In the Upaniṣads we read:

'To Angiras came upon a time Śaunaka, the famous householder, and asked respectfully:

"Holy sir, what is that by which all else is known?"

"Those who know Brahman", replied Angiras, "say that there are two kinds of knowledge, the higher and the lower.

"The lower is knowledge of the Vedas, and also of phonetics, ceremonials, grammar, etymology, metre, and astronomy.

"The higher is knowledge of that by which one knows the changeless reality. By this is fully revealed to the wise that which transcends the senses, which is uncaused, which is indefinable, which has neither eyes nor ears, neither hands nor feet, which is all-pervading, subtler than the subtlest—the everlasting, the source of all."

There are two classes of knowledge. One kind of knowledge is that by which we know this universe: science, art, etc. That is referred to as the lower knowledge, what we perceive by the senses, or by inference from the data that we gather (inferential knowledge and direct perception). The other kind of knowledge is that which is perceived by the subtle supersensuous power of *yoga*. There is a power in every one of us, which is known as the supersensuous power, which transcends the senses. It is latent in everyone, but it has to be developed. Through *yoga*, we can develop that subtle power, and we can then know God and see God. We can realize the Ātman, the Self. One who has achieved that power and knowledge is called in Sanskrit language a *ṛṣi*. He is the true



*yogin*, one who has experienced union with the ultimate Reality.

Jesus said, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. You see, we are born as human beings, but we have to be reborn, not by dying, but while living. We have to be born anew. In Sanskrit, such a one is called *dvija*, the twice-born. It is a term also applied to birds, for birds are first born in the egg and then hatched out of the egg. The egg-shell has to be broken before the bird can find its freedom. We are born with the shell of an ego, and that is our ignorance. We have to break through the shell in order that we may realize our freedom.

Generally speaking, we live in the three states of consciousness known as waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep. Now we can say that in our waking state the sense of ego is evolved, for in all knowledge and experience we declare, 'I know this, I experience this'. That 'I' is the ego. In the realm of the subconscious, dreaming, for instance, that self is not as highly pronounced. And while we are unconscious, the ego is not pronounced at all. So there is a line of ego, and below it is the subconscious and the unconscious. Above the line, transcending the ego, is the super-conscious, where we have spiritual visions and experiences. Then is it that we are born anew. Compare it to sleep and awakening: with the sense of ego, we are sleeping; we have to be awakened by transcending it. Then we see the ultimate Reality. Many mystics of all ages have attained this state. What is the difference between a Christ and other beings? In Christ the Reality is evolved; in ordinary beings it is involved. But every one of us can reach Christhood.

However, Christ was a descent of God in human form, what we call *avatāra*. Christ, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Ramakrishna are *avatāras*. In this age, Ramakrishna exemplified the

Truth of God. And here is the difference between an *avatāra* and an ordinary human being: you and I, if we reach that state of awakening once, have accomplished our purpose. We do not remain in that state all the time. If we did, we would not go on living. But in the case of Ramakrishna, for instance, it was unique. He went into that state many times every day. In other words, for him it was a normal state. So the *avatāras* or even the associates of *avatāras*, are special souls who come to earth for the sake of mankind, and are born with knowledge. You and I have to ascend toward that knowledge.

In the Upaniṣads, the great seer says: 'I have known that truth; you also, having known that, attain immortality.' He does not say, believe me and you know. If you are hungry and I tell you, 'Look here, I have eaten and it has satisfied me; you believe in that, and you will be satisfied', is it possible? Of course not; but it is like much of the religion that is preached today. You are supposed to accept certain dogmas, belong to a church organization, believe in it, and follow certain ethical principles of life, and then you will be taken care of when you die! That is not religion. That is not what Christ taught, or Buddha taught. And Ramakrishna came in this age to again relate this truth: you must know for yourself. That is the ideal, that is the goal of life, here and now, not after the death of the body. We have to find God, directly experience God in this life.

#### THE INNERMOST SELF OF ALL

Śaṅkara, the great seer-philosopher, said: 'In the matter of inquiry into Brahman, the scriptures are not the only authority, but personal experience.' Then again he said: 'A learned man (that is, a scholar who can quote the Bible, the *Gītā*, the Upaniṣads, etc., but has no experience himself) is like a donkey carrying a bundle of



sandalwood ; he does not get the fragrance.' Mohammed said that such a man 'is like a donkey carrying a load of books'. And in the *Mahābhārata* we read : 'He who has no personal knowledge, but has heard of many things, cannot understand the scriptures, even as a spoon has no idea of the taste of the soup.'

A Hindu, as he learns to pray or meditate or worship, repeats this verse : 'As with eyes wide open a man sees the sky over his head, so the seers see God, the all-pervading existence, always.' This is the emphasis : 'I am here to pray and meditate in order that I can see God, that I can realize God, that I can have devotion to Him, that I can love Him, and become absorbed in Him.' With that attitude he goes to pray and meditate. And when he experiences *samādhi* (the superconscious state), when he becomes absorbed and has the vision of God, united with God, what is the effect ? In the Upaniṣads, we find a description like this : 'The knot of the heart, which is ignorance, is loosed, all doubts are dissolved, all evil effects of deeds are destroyed, when He, who is both personal and impersonal, is realized.'

Whenever I quote this verse from the Upaniṣads, I always remember a talk with my master, Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda). I had a friend who was older than I. He did not join any order, he did not have any teacher (*guru*), but he went away to practise austerity and meditation. After three months he wrote to me, 'I have attained *samādhi*'. So I asked my Master, 'Is it possible ? So-and-so wrote to me that he had attained *samādhi*'. My master knew the young man, and he said to me : 'Why, he came here about ten days back. I saw him, I looked at his eyes. He did not have any such thing. He may have seen a light and thought that was *samādhi*.' And then he pointed out that it is not so easy ; how a spiritual giant like Swamiji

(Swami Vivekananda) had attained *samādhi*\* only three times in his life. And Maharaj quoted that Upaniṣadic verse : 'The knot of the heart, which is ignorance, is loosed, all doubts are dissolved, all evil effects of deeds are destroyed, when He, who is both personal and impersonal, is realized.' It is the supreme attainment.

We have doubts, and it is good to have them ; they are a healthy sign. Healthy doubts give us the urge to practise. They do not cause us to give up. One teacher said, 'There is no failure in spiritual life, as long as you keep up the struggle'. And in the end 'all effects of deeds are destroyed'. You might ask, 'Then what happens to the law of Karma ?' *Karma* is completely burned, all the seeds of *karma* are burned, by the fire of that Knowledge. Divine qualities such as love and compassion, arise in the heart.

We must understand that man is spirit, and has a body and mind, and the ideal is to unfold the spirit. It may be said that we are encased in three sheaths : physical, subtle, and causal, and the spirit is identifying itself with them. While we are awake, we are identifying ourselves with all the three sheaths ; while we are dreaming, we are not conscious of the physical sheath, but the subtle sheath is pronounced ; when we are in deep sleep, the causal sheath is still in effect. And the causal sheath is the ego, source of all ignorance. However, if we go beyond these sheaths we attain the Spirit, Atman as one with Brahman.

As in the human being the underlying, pervading spirit is encased, the universe, too, may be described as God manifested, every aspect, in truth, God alone. We read in the Upaniṣads : 'Heaven is his head, the sun and moon his eyes, the four quarters his ears, the revealed scriptures

\* i.e. *nirvikalpa samādhi*—Ed.



his voice, the air his breath, the universe his heart. From his feet come the earth. He is the innermost Self in all.'

### MEDITATION THE WAY TO REALIZATION

If one goes deep in meditation, one may be in the psychic plane, and see, as it were, the subtle body of God. At such a time, one may hear sounds, see light, smell fragrance, none of which is discernible in the physical plane. One may even attain certain powers, occult powers, such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy. But then, such visions, psychic experiences, can be acquired not only through the power of meditation, but through other means and methods, like drugs and austerities. It is made clear by the great *yogins* that psychic powers are not very desirable. Those who meditate, who worship the Lord, and who wish to find God, those sincere aspirants go beyond the psychic plane; they do not want to have such visions and such powers, knowing their detrimental effects. For instance, my master, when he was a young boy, as he was meditating, suddenly began to see what his friend was doing in a room hundreds of miles away. It distracted his mind and caused quite a disturbance in meditation. So he went to his *guru*, Sri Ramakrishna, and said, 'What can I do when I begin to see and hear distant things?' Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Give up meditation for a few days, so that you lose the power.'

Now, as I mentioned before, you can acquire these powers through other methods and means. Patañjali, the great psychologist of India said: 'The psychic powers may be obtained by birth, or by means of drugs, or by the power of words, or by the practice of austerities, or by concentration.' In this connexion, because there is so much talk about drugs, I must point out that if one takes drugs, one can have these psychic

visions, and even psychic powers; but as soon as the effect of the drug wears out, you are the same person; you have really gained nothing. But what happens? It is fun, and therefore quite a temptation, and you want to repeat it, and repeat it, and repeat it, until the brain gets deranged, and then the individual becomes weak. In India we have such a class of people. They are not connected with spiritual life. Spiritual life 'Ye shall know by its fruits'. You may have visions and powers, but what are they worth? Nothing. They are still under the law of Karma, and you are still in ignorance. We have to transcend that realm.

But everybody does not have to go through the psychic plane. One can go directly to the causal plane, where one sees God in his personal aspect. God is the cause of this universe. The Personal God in our philosophy means God as the Creator, Preserver, and Dissolver of the universe, and you can come face to face with that Personal God. This is called lower *samādhi*, *savikalpa samādhi*. When you go beyond that also, then you realize Brahman as Spirit, eternal, all-pervading. You transcend the ego.

Whether this happens or not depends upon our struggle and our longing, our spiritual practice. In the Upaniṣads we read: 'This Ātman, who understands all, who knows all, and whose glory is manifested in the universe, lives within the lotus of the heart, the bright throne of God.' If you practise meditation, the heart becomes purified, and then you wish to meditate more and more. And the recollectedness of God comes to you in a natural way. As that recollectedness becomes established, the illumined knowledge of the Ātman or God arises. 'With mind illumined by the power of meditation, the wise know Him, the blissful, the immortal.'



# MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY

SRI R. D. MISRA

J. F. Ferrier was the first to use the term 'epistemology' in his *Institutes of Metaphysics* in 1854. He distinguished two branches of philosophy: (1) epistemology, or the theory of knowing, and (2) ontology, or the theory of being. By the ensuing tradition, therefore, theory of knowledge was conceived to be that 'branch of philosophy which investigates the origin, structure, methods and validity of knowledge'. (D.D. Runes: *Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 94) In the beginning of speculative thinking, of course, knowledge is accepted as valid without any discussion. But when something thought to be truthful is later on proved to be fallacious, it becomes necessary to find out whether there is any kind of knowledge which is certainly valid, and if so, what are the tests of its validity. Epistemology has, therefore, the special task of inquiring into the reasons why knowledge is valid. It seeks to establish the existence of true and certain knowledge, the means of acquiring such knowledge, and the criteria by which one can distinguish such knowledge from falsity. This traditional conception may be called the *substance-view* of epistemology, since philosophy is compared here to the trunk of a tree, of which epistemology, ontology, etc. are the various branches. Just as branches depend for their life and nourishment upon the trunk, so epistemology depends on philosophy, as a part depends on the whole.

## MODERN VIEW AS CONTRASTED WITH THE TRANSCENDENTAL VIEW

From this view results the transcendental notion of epistemology that knowledge transcends the observable things of

the world and depends upon the use of some other sources than sense-perception. Modern view, on the contrary, holds that knowledge is strictly an empirical phenomenon and so is the discipline that studies it. Transcendental view implies that knowledge is an end in itself and is therefore valuable, even though it cannot be shown to have any practical utility. Modern pragmatic mind holds, on the other hand, that knowledge has no other purpose except action, because justification of knowledge is success in action. Modern view takes knowledge, therefore, to be an instrument of prediction for which sense-observation is the only admissible criterion.

This modern view, as Russell thinks, is an outcome of the contrast between the scientific interpretation and the common-sense view of the physical world. (B. Russell: *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, pp. 14-15) Common sense assumes that things are what they seem to be. But sciences such as physics etc. prove that the observable qualities of physical objects are not the qualities that we know in our experience, but something very different. When we look at some physical objects, we do not observe their qualities as such, but only as they affect ourselves. These conflicting, and sometimes even contradictory, interpretations induce doubt and lead us to a critical scrutiny of the facts of knowledge. Epistemology comes thus to be the critical scrutiny of what passes as knowledge. The problem for epistemology, therefore, is not 'why *do* I believe this or that?', but 'why *should* I believe this or that?' It tries to find out the logical grounds upon which we may firmly base our beliefs. It has the task of arranging all our beliefs logically,



whether they are absolutely certain or merely probable. And this view is in fact an outcome of the modern critical spirit applied to the field of the theory of knowledge.

In contrast to the transcendental theory, the modern notion may be characterized as the *activity-view* of epistemology. Theory of knowledge has become a technique of critical evaluation, capable of being applied to any field of knowledge. The nature of the activity may vary according to the nature of the field to which it is being applied, but by itself it does not constitute a specific area which may limit its scope and utility. It rather covers the vast expanse of living experience as such, and there arises no question of demarcating its boundary. All sciences take cognitive awareness as their starting-point, and epistemology tries to investigate critically the very nature of this awareness, and as such, no field of inquiry is beyond its limits.

To get at a coherent view of its exact nature, it may be worth while to examine what interrelations this theory of knowledge has with some of the other allied and contemporary disciplines, namely, logic, psychology, philosophy of science, and philosophy of language.

### LOGIC

The study of logic originated in an attempt to determine the nature and conditions of valid thinking by criticizing and analysing the types of argumentative discourse. Like geometry, therefore, it owes its birth to the analysis and criticism of thought. By a long process of development, this criticism resulted in the discovery that the validity of reasoning depends upon its form. This result entailed the untenability of the traditional view of logic as a normative or regulative science. Logic does have, of course, a normative as-

pect in so far as it is concerned with the criticism of the modes of thinking, but a close analysis of its nature reveals that this normative aspect is merely a by-product. We do not study logic in order to establish norms by reference to which the validity of reasoning may be tested. The discovery of the norms of thinking, in fact, results from the fact that valid thinking is formal and that logic is the science of possible forms. Logic comes, therefore, to be recognized as the pure science of forms like that of mathematics, and even mathematics is now shown to be derivable from this pure science.

All empirical sciences deal with the given regions of fact, and so their field of investigation is the actual world. Logic, on the contrary, deals not with what is actual but with what is possible. Logician is interested in the analysis and criticism of the methods employed by those who are attempting to introduce order into a set of facts. It is possible to clearly distinguish the two disciplines, since logic is the formal science of the principles of valid reasoning, while epistemology is an empirical science which tries to ascertain the nature of knowledge and truth as such. The decision as to whether a given process of reasoning is valid or not is a logical question, but the inquiry into the nature of validity itself is epistemological. Logic is concerned with the critical analysis of the ways of attaining knowledge, while epistemology deals with the ways of interpreting knowledge, which has thus been obtained.

Logic is, therefore, the critical analysis of the methods which are employed in systematizing knowledge. In fact, not only theory of knowledge, but the whole of modern philosophy is analytical in a sense, because logical analysis constitutes its very nature. In a different sense, however, the whole of philosophy may be included under epistemology, since the latter is in



fact the end of all investigations, whereas logic is merely the means. Accordingly, logic is subsumed under epistemology as means are in the end. They are distinguishable in thought but never in action, since their close interrelation, as of means to ends, implies their inseparability.

### PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology, too, may be viewed from two different standpoints: traditional and modern. Traditional view is called rational or philosophical psychology as it deals with the nature of the mental principle—consciousness—in its interrelation to other forms of being and the problems such as the relation of mind and body etc. Modern psychology, on the other hand, is an empirical science dealing with mental activities and objective behaviour. In contrast to the old psychology of faculties, it seeks to discover how our minds work, i.e. what the various mental processes are and what causal laws operate among them, with the object of giving as complete an explanation as possible of mental happenings, both normal and abnormal. It employs experimental methods and appliances in its investigations. Its methods are thus those of natural sciences, with the severe handicap that its subject-matter is not available for direct inspection, but has to be inferred from the observed appearances and behaviour of human or even non-human bodies. Thus, psychology is interested in causal questions, in finding out *how* minds work.

Traditional psychology, being incapable of empirical investigations, has become an outdated subject. We have to consider, therefore, the relations that subsist between epistemology and modern psychology. As an empirical science, modern psychology is interested in finding out *how* our minds work on, what their material is, what its relation is to the objects in the external

world, to other person's mind, to the events of history, and so on. It is almost a descriptive science, whereas the theory of knowledge is evaluative. However, the cognitive processes of perception, memory, and imagination etc., investigated by psychology, are the very processes which, in a different context, constitute the subject-matter of epistemology. The difference lies in the fact that whereas psychology is the investigation of *all* states of mind, including the cognitive in the context of the mental life, epistemology investigates only cognitive states, and these solely with respect to their cognitive import. Nevertheless, in all our epistemological inquiries, some psychological element is necessarily involved, because, in Russell's words, 'We have to examine the relations of basic propositions to experiences, the degree of doubt or certainty that we feel in regard to any one of them, and the method of diminishing the former and increasing the latter'. By 'basic propositions' is meant here those statements of matters-of-fact which are credible without any argumentation. The central question for epistemology is: Can it ever be the case that what we perceive is identical with the physical object and its physical properties as it really is? Or must we always make a distinction between the perceived and the physical objects? In order to discuss the validity of the various means of knowledge, epistemology has therefore to depend upon an analysis of the mental processes leading to them, and, hence, it is closely related to psychology.

### PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Philosophy of science makes a systematic study of the nature of science, its methods and concepts. It also tries to ascertain the place of science in the general scheme of intellectual disciplines. It stands roughly in the same relation to the history



of sciences, just as they stand to experiment in a science such as physics. The main function of this discipline is thus a critical and systematic elucidation of the scientific methodology, discovery, and explanation. Philosophy of science, in fact, cannot be precisely defined, since it shades imperceptibly into science, on the one hand, and philosophy, on the other. However, its subject-matter may roughly be divided into three fields: (1) a critical study of the methods of science and the nature and logical structure of scientific symbols, concerned mainly with the empirical sciences; (2) the attempts to classify the basic concepts of sciences, their presuppositions and postulates; and (3) the attempts to ascertain the limits of special sciences and to disclose their interrelations with one another. Obviously, theory of knowledge has a close connexion with the first field stated above, because it aims at a critical study of the scientific statements themselves. The first field of the philosophy of science really seems to be the domain of epistemological inquiry itself, and this means that at least a part of the former is what the latter has in common to investigate.

#### PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Philosophy of language studies the concrete, actualized languages, whether living or dead, in their philosophical import. It seeks to understand the nature of language in general. In the words of M. Schliek, 'the philosopher is interested only in those characteristics which all the different methods of communication have in common and which are the *essential characteristics* of language'. The essential characteristic of language is its capability of expressing facts, where by 'expressing' is to be meant only the showing forth of logical structure and not the communication of contents. From the philosophical point of view, however, the term 'language'

must be regarded in an extremely broad sense. We must no longer restrict our attention to the so-called natural languages, e.g. English, French, etc.; rather its definition must include even those systems of written symbols, such as mathematics and symbolic logic etc., which are not universal inasmuch as they treat only a limited part of human experience, but which are of special utility in guiding certain lines of investigation. Philosophy of language, therefore, deals with the possible or potential syntactical rules which might be conceived to govern the structure of any language, whether it is natural or artificial.

It has been wisely said that the company of great books is a company of great minds. To every student, the vast bulk of knowledge comes through words and other symbols which inform him in proportion as he is able to interpret them. In turn, he can add it to the stock of knowledge only by giving expression in words or other symbols that he himself and others can understand. Right from the days of Plato down to the present positivistic era, philosophers have been concerned with the nature of concepts embodied in the symbols of language. Language, thus, plays a dominant role in stating the facts of the world as we view them, and this means that the questions about the nature of language largely determine the nature and scope of our epistemological investigations. The recent linguistic trends in analytical philosophy bear a direct testimony to this close relationship.

In conclusion, it has to be stressed again that knowledge, in order to hold itself and its products in secure possession, must subject all its assumptions to a criticism which must grow ever more as knowledge increases. Criticism of beliefs must ever be undertaken anew as the experience of man widens and his power of separating the true from the false increases. As a matter of



fact, this critical view has helped to make clear most of the obscure problems of philosophy. It has given us an instrument for the determination of philosophical tendencies and has provided us with a test of their worth, truth, and validity.

But criticism is not a fixed process of evaluation. It is an evaluation which goes on from more to more. Meanwhile, with the growth of criticism, knowledge grows and the power of the mind to grasp its objects grows. We cannot assign any limit to this growth, since mind grows by the exercise of its functions, and with the

growth of both these goes the growth of criticism, or the examination of all that is concerned with knowledge. So, there is no hindrance to the hope of the indefinite increase of our knowledge. Intensively, it will increase as we learn more of ourselves, of the world, and of the Maker of the world, and extensively, it may increase until it stands over against the whole of the world and recognizes that through and through it is an intelligible world. With the increase of knowledge the knower grows, and the mastery of the world grows also.

## THEISTIC SĀṆKHYA IN THE BHĀGAVATA

SWAMI ADIDEVANANDA

The vague anticipations of the Sāṅkhya ideas of Puruṣa (Spirit) and Prakṛti (matter) date back to an age as old as that of the basic concepts of the Upaniṣads. The Puruṣa idea is found in the *Puruṣa-sūkta*, a hymn in the *Rg-Veda* (X. 90). This term occurs again and again in the Upaniṣads. The Sāṅkhya system adopted the term 'Puruṣa' to express the inactive, conscious principle in every being, set over against the active, unconscious Prakṛti. Puruṣa and Prakṛti are set against each other in the thirteenth chapter of the *Gītā* in the Sāṅkhya style.

Though the Upaniṣadic thinkers threw out the Sāṅkhya ideas here and there in an unco-ordinated way, the term 'sāṅkhya' first occurs in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (VI. 13). There the Sāṅkhya principles are subsidiary to its leading doctrine of theism. In the *Gītā* also, the same plan is worked out more or less. The Sāṅkhya ideas, as we see in the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*, are pressed into service in favour of

theism. While the later form of Sāṅkhya was a sort of dualistic atheism, insisting on the plurality of selves and independence of Prakṛti consisting of the three *guṇas*, it seems to be very probable that the earliest form of Sāṅkhya was a sort of monotheism approaching the *Śvetāśvatara-Gītā* view. According to Professor Das Gupta, one Pañcaśikha, a disciple of Āsuri, who was himself a disciple of Kapila, probably modified Kapila's work in an atheistic way and passed it as Kapila's work. (*History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 221)

The Sāṅkhya philosophy of the *Bhāgavata*, following that of the *Gītā*, is decidedly theistic in character. The spirit of eirenicon met with in the *Gītā* finds its fulfilment in the *Bhāgavata* with regard to the dualistic Sāṅkhya, on the one hand, and monotheistic Sāṅkhya, on the other. The dialogue between Kapila and his mother Devahūti, as delineated in the *Bhāgavata*, may be said to contain a per-



fect specimen of theistic Sāṅkhya.

The founder of the classical Sāṅkhya is said to be the sage Kapila. Nothing is known about his identity, time, or place. As the author of the *Vedānta-Sūtra* devotes two aphorisms (II. i. 1-2) to meet his views, he must have been held in high esteem even by his critics. There is a reference to Kapila in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (V. 2). The commentators consider this Kapila as Hiraṇyagarbha. In the *Viṣṇusahasranāma*, the Supreme is called by the epithet Kapila. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* (X. 26) that among the perfected, he is the sage Kapila. It is difficult to identify these two Kapilas, one theistic and the other atheistic. Kṛṣṇa would not have identified himself with the atheistic Kapila, as he himself speaks with scorn of those who deny God: 'Tossed about by various fancies, entangled in the meshes of delusion, and steeped in the gratification of lust, they fall into a foul inferno.' (ibid., XVI. 16)

The term 'sāṅkhya', derived from 'saṅkhyā' may mean 'enumeration', and was probably adopted by the Sāṅkhya system to enumerate the principles, constituents, and psychic states of that system. It also means 'reflection', standing for the method of ultimate realization through knowledge. The *Mahābhārata* (XII. 311) says that the goal of the Sāṅkhya is to grasp the twenty-fifth principle, namely, the Puruṣa, as distinguished from the twenty-four principles, which consist of matter. In the *Gītā* (III. 3), *sāṅkhya* stands for reflection of those who accept knowledge alone for release, while *yoga* signifies the practical method of realizing the same by means of steady self-control: 'In this world, a twofold way of life was taught of yore by me, O Arjuna—that of *sāṅkhya* for men of contemplation and that of *yoga* for men of *yoga*.' (See also ibid., V. 4, 5.) In the *Bhāgavata*, *sāṅkhya*

is the perception of the Self by means of devotion joined to knowledge and renunciation: 'With the mind purified by knowledge and renunciation and also *bhakti*, he sees himself unconcerned and Prakṛti rendered powerless.' (op. cit., III. xxv. 18)\*

The *Bhāgavata* uses the Sāṅkhya concepts prominently in two places without giving quarter to its atheistic metaphysics: (1) Maitreya's instructions to Vidura at Haridvāra (III. 5); and (2) Kapila's advice to his mother Devahūti at Bindusaras (III. 25). It may be noted that there is not much difference in the teaching of the Sāṅkhya metaphysics at both the places.

In the *Bhāgavata*, Kapila is an incarnation of the Supreme, a fact known to his parents. He assures his father Kardama that he would impart to his mother the knowledge of Self, which destroys all *karma* and fear. (III. xxiv. 40) The main teaching of Kapila may be briefly stated thus: The Puruṣa is the Ātman, Reality, who is eternal, devoid of *guṇas*, distinct from and superior to Prakṛti. (III. xxvi. 3) There is only one Puruṣa reflecting in all bodies. Apparently, he is manifold with a self in each body. Just as one fire seems to be different and many according to its sources, the one Ātman appears manifold in relation to Prakṛti. (III. xxviii. 43) In an ultimate sense, the Lord Himself has become both Puruṣa and Prakṛti. (III. xxix. 36) The mutable Prakṛti, consisting of the three *guṇas*, is His inconceivable power or aspect. (III. xxviii. 44) It obscures knowledge and evolves manifold creatures. (III. xxvi. 5) By his *līlā*, the play-manifestation, the Puruṣa accepts Prakṛti, presented to him. Thus, when the actions are done by the *guṇas* of Prakṛti, the Puruṣa attributes the agency to himself by superimposition. (III. xxvi. 6) And thus Prakṛti brings

\* From here onwards all the references in the brackets are to the *Bhāgavata*.



about his *samsāra* and forms his bondage, though he is free from activity, a mere witness and of blissful essence. (III. xxvi. 7) While Prakṛti is the cause of the body, senses, etc., and of agentship, Puruṣa is said to be the cause of pleasure and pain, being the subject of experiences.

Though the Puruṣa abides in Prakṛti, he remains, in fact, unaffected by the *gunas* of Prakṛti like sun's image in water. (III. xxvii. 1) Even in the absence of real conditions to limit him, the transmigratory existence does not disappear so long as he is thinking of objects. (III. xxvii. 4) There is an explicit description of the means to get rid of the mortal coil. In the first place, the deluded self should bring under control his mind, by means of *bhakti-yoga* and renunciation. (III. xxvii. 5) Sincere love towards the Lord and finding delight in His deeds help concentration of mind. (III. xxvii. 6) He should regard all beings as equal, hating none, renouncing all attachment, and performing one's own duty. (III. xxvii. 7) It is not difficult to separate Puruṣa from Prakṛti, though they are interdependent. When Prakṛti is constantly realized as the source of evil, and consequently given up, it ceases to bring about the inauspicious condition of Īśvara who is supreme in His real state of bliss. (III. xxvii. 24)

The knowledge of the Sāṅkhya principles of Puruṣa and Prakṛti is not an end in itself; a knowledge of these principles is the root cause for *bhakti-yoga*: 'The description of *mahat-tattva* and other principles of Prakṛti and Puruṣa has been given as known to the Sāṅkhyas—the description by which their true and distinct nature is perceived and which is said to be the source of *bhakti-yoga*. . . .' (III. xxix. 1-2) This is, indeed, a revolutionary doctrine of the *Bhāgavata*. Unfailing *bhakti-yoga* is that by which the self is able to get out of this mortal coil brought about by these three

*gunas*, and thereby becomes fit for attaining the divine state. (III. xxix. 14) For this reason, the sage Kapila teaches the *bhakti-yoga* to his mother.

*Bhakti-yoga*, according to Kapila, is of two kinds: *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*. The former, again, has three divisions: *tāmasa*, *rājasa*, and *sāttvika*. He who practises *bhakti* with feelings of pride and jealousy belongs to the *tāmasa* class. He who, desirous of worldly objects, worships the Supreme belongs to the *rājasa* class. The devotee of the *sāttvika* class is one who adores the Supreme as his duty, but with the notion of difference. (III. xxix. 8-10) The disinterested and immediate devotion, which is an uninterrupted flow of thought towards the Supreme, is known as *bhakti-yoga* of the *nirguṇa* type. (III. xxix. 11-12) The devotee of this type does not accept any heavenly state, even if offered by the Lord Himself. In this state, the self is able to get out of *samsāra*, brought about by the *gunas* of Prakṛti. (III. xxix. 13-14)

Evolution starts from a disturbance of the equipoise of the three *gunas*. Here one need not search for the cause of the initial disturbance of the equipoise. It cannot be the unevolved Prakṛti or the pure Puruṣa, who is unable to influence the Prakṛti. The objections raised against the classical Sāṅkhya evolution cannot be brought here, as the process of evolution has been started by the will of the Supreme and maintained by his intervention at each stage. In its own Prakṛti, whose *gunas* are disturbed by the *adṛṣṭa* of the individual selves, the Supreme places its power; thereupon, the Prakṛti produces the first principle of *mahat*. (III. xxvi. 19) That is how the evolutionary process becomes intelligible. The orderly evolution of Prakṛti as cosmos without chaos is due to the constant presence of the Supreme in Prakṛti, which forms a part of the former.



The evolutionary process has been started not by Prakṛti, but by Puruṣa for his own purpose, namely, the liberation from the bondage of Prakṛti. The contemplation of the Pratyagātman, the inner Self in the body, as distinct from the modes of Prakṛti, engenders *nirguṇa bhakti-yoga*, which is the ultimate means of release. It

must be noted that in the experience of the Puruṣa, bondage implies no change in its essence. The apparent experience and enjoyment belong to the fabricated ego which desires freedom. The Puruṣa, whose essence is immutability, is identified with the Supreme, the one Reality without a second.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Swami Nityabodhananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Geneva, Switzerland, studies 'The Myths and Symbols in Indian Civilization' with special reference to the Hindu Trinity—Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva—from a new angle which is at once original, refreshing, creative, and constructive. The article makes interesting reading, and stimulates thinking.

Swami Prabhavananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, U.S.A., describes the nature and

content of the 'Superconscious Vision' and the way to attain it.

Sri R. D. Misra, M.A., U.G.C. Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, Lucknow University, examines the modern theory of epistemology in its relation to logic, psychology, philosophy of science, and philosophy of language.

'Theistic Sāṅkhya in the Bhāgavata', by Swami Adidevananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission and Ashrama, Mangalore, is based on the instructions of Kapila to his mother Devahūti recorded in the third *skandha* of the *Bhāgavata*.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

BLISS DIVINE. BY SWAMI SIVANANDA. 1964. Pages 520. Price Rs. 15.

THE REALIZATION OF THE ABSOLUTE. BY SWAMI KRISHNANANDA. 1964. Pages 239. Price Rs. 5.

The Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy, P.O. Sivandananagar, Dt. Tehri-Garhwal, U.P.

The first is a collection of sixty-six essays by Swami Sivananda, the founder of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, on spiritual and secular subjects

like Brahman, *brahmacarya*, *japa*, *yoga*, *jīvanmukta*, *vairāgya*, Vedānta, creation, Devī, the *Gītā*, God, *guru*, *prāṇāyāma*, ethics, idolatry, Buddha, Jesus, *samādhi*, *sannyāsa*, music, silence, *kuṇḍalinī*, happiness, *Om*, etc., all meant to help the attainment of the Self, knowing which everything else in the universe and beyond is fully known. Although many of the truths expressed may not be quite new, yet the manner of their expression by the Swami is unique, sublime, persuasive, and carries conviction to the heart of a lay devotee.

The author of the second book is the disciple of Swami Sivananda on whom the mantle of the master fell after the latter's passing away in 1963. The book is an intellectual treat, and deals with the different aspects of Advaita Vedānta under different captions such as 'The Nature of the World', 'The Need for Integral Knowledge', 'The Nature of Reality', 'The Process of Truth-realization', and 'Attainment of Liberation', etc., in a lucid, convincing, and comprehensive manner.

P. SAMA RAO

**DOES THE SOUL REINCARNATE?** BY SWAMI ISWARANANDA. Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Vilangans, Puranattukara P.O., Trichur, Kerala. 1964. Pages 56. Price Re. 1.

This is a brief thesis on reincarnation, discussed in the light of the latest researches in biogenesis. Incidentally, the laws of Karma and ethics are considered. The conclusions drawn by the Swami are rather very far reaching, and disturb the metaphysical truths about Karma and reincarnation propounded by our ancient seers after an insight into the essence of things.

The booklet is, no doubt, thought-provoking; but if the conclusions presented in the booklet are accepted, they give the go-by to the metaphysics of the law of Karma on which the theory of reincarnation is based. Besides, these findings do not offer any incentive to the spiritual aspirant to attain absolute purity and the necessary *adhikāra* for achieving *jīvanmukti*. There seems to be nothing like obtaining *videhamukti*, if we construe the learned author strictly. For, by his denial of reincarnation, he regards death, the shedding of the physical body once, as the end of it all, and further declares positively that there is a complete absorption into the ultimate Brahman straightway at such shedding of the body. Such a stand would inevitably encourage the erring and the sinful to continue in their irreligious activities.

The conclusions and their *raison d'être* are unacceptable for the following reasons:

1. The acutest scientific research, which is mainly based on pragmatism, has its own limitations. The findings based thereon cannot be comprehensive enough to enfold the truths of the metaphysical world, where intuition and divine sense alone, not physical observation and scientific reasoning, can grapple with or apprehend the laws of higher being.

2. Biogenesis is one such branch of science having its own limitations. However, there is no essential contradiction between its hypothesis and that of the metempsychosis as conceived by our ancient seers.

On the other hand, biogenesis supports in its own way the theory of Karma, supporting reincarnation, as is admitted on pages 24 and 31 ff. Besides, this science explains only the birth of a particular type or pattern of creation from out of protoplasm or psychoplasm, but not the causes of either hereditary tendencies or the abnormality like the genius, the aberrations from the normal, and the defects and deficiencies on the physical and mental planes of a being. Further, this science, as it stands today, does not explain the evolution of species.

3. Psycho-analysis does not explain the continuous existence of the *jīva* in *sūkṣma śarīra* in between the 'death' of one embodiment and the rising into life of another which is unlike the parental one. Biogenesis does not also explain this.

4. It is only at the time of *pralaya*, or the final dissolution at the end of a cycle, that all the *jīvas*, together with their *karmas*, are effaced. The creation at the beginning of another cycle means something new again, which is uninfluenced by what it was or remained to be at the end of the earlier cycle, and is not a confirmation or evolution of anything that existed before in the past. The original impulse of the Godhead to create cannot be ascribed to any *samskāras* based on the *guṇas*, though the created acquire them later on through the effect of their environment.

5. It is not correct to assert that the 'truth of reincarnation has never been investigated in India' and that 'it has been believed in by all the *ṛṣis*, *ācāryas*, and *avatāras*, and never questioned or verified'. The teachings about reincarnation are really not part of *Brahma vidyā*, and the principles of righteous conduct obtaining therein, as well as those of the theory of reincarnation, are quite relevant as means to the attainment of the *adhikāra* for liberation.

6. Our ancient *ādhyātmika*, *ādhibhautika*, and *ādhidaiivika* theories are quite in consonance with the theory of biogenesis, and do not militate against it.

7. It is similarly incorrect to say that the doctrine of rebirth does not recognize the influence of environment on the *jīva*. Otherwise, what is the meaning of the emphasis on *sadācāra*, *saṭsaṅga*, etc.?

8. Reincarnation is not a simple process of a disembodied soul's getting embodied again in a continual process. It is a continuous process till the individual self gets perfectly ripened to get absorbed in the Divine with the aid of *tripuṭikarāṇa* and *svakarma*.

9. There cannot be any assumption of the sort that 'the theory of reincarnation does not explain new species ... new organisms ... etc.' (p. 35), for the scaffolding of the subsequent body or tenement depends upon the intensity of the disembodied



soul's last desire or predilection. *Bhramara-kīṭaka-nyāya* applies here also.

However, the book stimulates thinking and is helpful in finding our true moorings.

P. SAMA RAO

**EXPLORING THE CHRISTIAN MIND.** BY DAVID WESLEY SOPER. Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y. 1964. Pages 193. Price \$ 5.

This book is a serious and sincere attempt to collect the views of leading religious thinkers of the Christian world with regard to the possibilities and probabilities which they envision for mankind during the remainder of this century. It contains a number of interviews with such notable shapers of Christian thought as Karl Barth, Jacques Maritain, T. S. Eliot, Arnold Toynbee, Christopher Dawson, etc. The range of topics covered is wide, and the discussions are lively. The language has pungency, candour, and grace. The book makes a very interesting reading.

SWAMI HARSHANANDA

**THE BEST OF GRACIAN.** A NEW TRANSLATION BY THOMAS G. CORVAN. Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. 1964. Pages 84. Price \$ 3.

Balthasar Gracian was a cleric who lived in central Spain about 333 years ago. Before he died, he left behind quite a few works—dramas, poems, allegorical writings—out of which his maxims have remained perennially popular. Schopenhauer was so fascinated with them that he brought out the first ever translation of the Spaniard in German. The present collection of Gracian was culled and translated by Thomas Corvan, who is a distinguished attorney in New York. The translator says in his introduction: 'Gracian has been many things to many men. He can be sought for solace in the hands of great men—looking backward. Yet, in the hands of men in their prime, he can be a source of direction and drive—looking forward.'

The book is divided into three parts: (1) About Fate; (2) About Ourselves; (3) About Others.

The sayings are highly interesting as well as instructive. A few of them may be quoted here so as to create an interest in the would-be readers:

'Much that could be said in life would be better left unsaid. It is the better part of prudence—to keep a portion of the truth untold.' (p. 5)

'The wise are alert to when the fruit is ripe, and by quickly stepping in the orchard, pluck the fruit and make capital. What is left to the tardy is second best.' (p. 6)

'In dealing with others, deal at a distance. When one is understood too well, respect is undermined. Therefore create an aura of mystery about yourself, as a shield against the envious stings of others.' (p. 24)

'There is an art in avoiding an argument. It is well to neither cause a new one, nor become complicated in an old one.' (p. 33)

'There is no substitute for self-analysis. It is medicine to the mind.' (p. 37)

'He who acts in haste, invariably hurts himself. When passion enters the mind, reason leaves.' (p. 45)

'A stable man reflects a steady mind.' (p. 59)

'Solomon always kept a second ear for the second side of the same story. So should you!' (p. 60)

'Since friends are for friends—make the most of them; their confidence, their counsel, and their co-operation.' (p. 77)

The language is beautiful, and the translator as well as the publisher deserves our hearty congratulations.

SWAMI HARSHANANDA

**THE GĪTA-GOVIND.** TRANSLATED FROM SANSKRIT BY DR. BANKEY BEHARI. 1964. Pages 88. Price Rs. 3.50.

**THE SCIENCE OF DIVINITY (A DIGEST OF ŚRĪMAD BHĀGAVATAM).** BY SRI M. K. KEWALIA. 1964. Pages 66. Price Rs. 2.50.

Radha Madhav Society, Jodhpur.

However much we may, in the name of dissemination of the Hindu religious culture, commend the above publications, the poor, inadequate, and incorrect English, the inaccurate translation, and printing-mistakes with which the books are bristling, would prejudice the ordinary lay reader against them. The only saving feature about them is the sincere devotion of the translators to the respective original works and to the cause of the Hindu religion.

P. SAMA RAO

## SANSKRIT

**SARVA - TANTRA - SIDDHĀNTA - PADĀRTHA-LAKṢAṆA-SANGRAHA.** COMPILED BY BHIKSU GAURISANKARA. Jyotishaprakash Press, Varanasi. (To be had of: Srimati Manobhari Devi, Vill. Putthi, P.O. Bawanikhera, Dt. Hissar.) Pages 302. Price 75 P.

Here is a fine miniature encyclopaedia of terms in use in various branches of Sanskrit lore. The compiler is an erudite Sanskrit scholar, who has devoted his lifetime to the study of the main branches of Sanskrit learning. In the work under review, he brings together the difficult technical terms of Sanskrit



Śāstras and the common words of daily use with the most perfect ease, with the result that the correct meanings are readily known. The topics covered by the author may be said to be all the different branches of *darśana*, *Dharma Śāstras*, *alankāra*, *vyākaraṇa*, knowledge of trees, plants, and herbs, and words of daily use with their equivalents, sometimes in different connotations; and all these we get in a pocket-size book. Students and teachers of Sanskrit as well as the general readers wishing to know the exact meanings of any Sanskrit term will do well to keep a copy of the book with them. The compiler has, indeed, done an invaluable service to all lovers of Sanskrit by bringing out this work, and that at a nominal price.

DR. B. K. SENGUPTA

ŚRĪ SUBHĀṢACARITAM. BY V. K. CHATRE, Joglekar Sadanam, Kalyananagaram (near Siddheshvar), Dt. Mandalam, Maharashtra, 1963. Pages 76. Price Rs. 2.50.

To write the life of Netaji in Sanskrit verse is, indeed, a novel attempt. The book will be found interesting by the educated public.

DR. ANIMA SEN GUPTA

## KANNADA

BRAHMASUTRAGALU. BY SWAMI ADIDEVANANDA. Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore 2. 1964. Pages 843. Price Rs. 16.

Swami Adidevananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission and Ashrama, Mangalore, has carved out a special place for himself in the literary and philosophical world of Karnataka by his masterly renderings into Kannada of the major Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the present work, which is a Kannada translation of the *Brahma-Sūtra* with copious explanatory notes and a valuable introduction, forms a fitting climax to his earlier works. Like the previous works, but to a far greater degree and in a far more complete way, this work, too, exhibits great clarity of understanding, subtlety of thought, a thorough grasp of the subject, and comprehensive manner of treatment. The Swami's vast learning, catholicity of outlook, lucidity of expression, synthetic vision, and convincibility are in bountiful evidence. And what is more, attitudinarianism is totally absent.

In translating the *sūtras* and in his explanatory notes, the Swami closely follows Śaṅkara, but wherever the interpretations of Rāmānuja and

Madhva differ, they have been mentioned and also incorporated into the text. So also the interpretations by the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā etc. have been given. The Sanskrit originals of these interpretations have been given in the footnotes wherever necessary, in order to help the student in understanding the essence of the *sūtras*. The Swami's approach to the *sūtras* is one of synthesis between the seemingly contradictory interpretations, here and there, by the three *ācāryas*, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva, the propounders of the Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Dvaita systems of Vedānta respectively. One could easily see that there is a greater degree of agreement between Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja than between these two and Madhva. However, the author steers clear of the differences between them to maintain his synthetic view, without doing injustice to the special stand taken by the *ācāryas* in the matter of the interpretation of the *sūtras*.

The work is a unique one in many respects, and, as far as I know, the first of its kind in Kannada. The learned Swami has, indeed, laid us under a deep debt of gratitude by bringing out this inspiring work, and he deserves our congratulations for having given a correct lead in the proper understanding of Vedānta, of which the *Brahma-Sūtra* is truly the foundation. The format and get-up of the book are nice, and the price is quite moderate.

P. SAMA RAO

## BENGALI

GALPE VEDĀNTA. BY SWAMI VISVASRAYANANDA. Ramakrishna Mission Calcutta Students' Home, Belgharia, 24 Parganas, West Bengal. 1963. Pages 128. Price Rs. 2.

The author has succeeded in bringing out the basic principles of Indian religion and culture through various stories. In fact, the book is a transparent mirror through which the cultural life of ancient India has been well reflected.

According to Indian belief, truth is something that is to be lived and also made the central ruling principle of thought and action. This idea has been well expressed in the story of Satyakāma Jābāla. The Indian ideal teaches that one should always be devoted to duties he is entrusted with. By discharging duties in a devoted and disinterested spirit, one can easily gain spiritual perfection. This idea has been lucidly explained in the stories of Dharmavyādha and Kauśika and the crane.

DR. ANIMA SEN GUPTA



## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA ASANSOL

REPORT FOR 1962-64

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

*Cultural and Religious:* Daily worship and prayers at the Ashrama shrine; observance of *Durgā-pūjā*, *Kālī-pūjā*, *Sarasvatī-pūjā*, and *Viśva-karmā-pūjā*; celebration of the birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, and other religious prophets like Buddha, Jesus Christ, etc.; fortnightly *Rāmanāma-kīrtana* on Ekādaśī days; and scriptural classes at Dhanbad, Durgapur, and Kumardhubi.

*Philanthropic:* Relief to the tune of Rs. 4,000, in cash and kind, was rendered to the flood-stricken people on the banks of the river Ajoy, in the district of Burdwan, during the years under review. Besides, the Ashrama distributed about Rs. 2,000, in cash and kind, among the needy persons.

*Educational: Higher Secondary Multipurpose School:* Total strength: 1962-63: 767; 1963-64: 783; *Junior Basic Schools:* Total strength: Unit I: 1962-63: 133; 1963-64: 140; Unit II: 1962-63: 132; 1963-64: 142. Total number of books in the school library: 4,232 and 5,430 respectively in 1962-63 and 1963-64. Dailies received in the reading room: 2; periodicals: 26.

*Students' Home:* The Ashrama maintains a students' home for the students studying in the higher classes. Total strength: 30.

*Public Library:* Total number of books: 1962-63: 715; 1963-64: 737.

*Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Celebration:* The Ashrama celebrated the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda in the industrial belt extending from Burdwan to Dhanbad in a befitting manner. The celebration was inaugurated on 17 January 1963 in the Ashrama premises. In this connexion, a 20-day programme was arranged from 11 to 30 April 1963. Processions, meetings, lectures, *bhajanas*, devotional music by celebrated artists, physical feats demonstrations, staging of dramas on the life of Swamiji, magic lantern lectures, film shows, essay, elocution, and music competitions for students of the local schools and colleges, distribution of photo-folders and

pamphlets containing the teachings of the Swami free and at concession rates, and a clay model exhibition depicting the various incidents of the Swami's life, were the different items of the programme.

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME MYLAPORE, MADRAS

REPORT FOR 1964-65

The home has two sections. The junior section consists of 154 boys of the high school, 7 of the pre-university class, and 2 of the Savitri Ammal Oriental School, Mylapore. The senior section consists of 109 boys of the technical institute and 21 boys of the degree courses. The high school and the technical institute are entirely residential and self-contained, and they form part of the home. Students of the pre-university and degree courses have their board and lodging at the home, but study in the Vivekananda College.

*High School Section:* The total strength: 154. The school imparts a liberal education and aims at the harmonious development of the body, mind, and spirit. Great stress is laid on the formation of character along with training in self-reliance, leadership, and community life.

*College Section:* The total strength: pre-university: 7; B.Sc.: 16; B.Com.: 5.

*Technical Institute:* The Institute provides for theoretical instruction and practical training for students appearing for the mechanical engineering diploma examination and for the post-diploma examination in automobile engineering conducted by the State Board of Technical Education. The total strength: first year: 40; second year: 34; final year: 35.

*Elementary Schools: Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Elementary School:* The total strength: 403 (boys: 228; girls: 175). Midday meal was provided for 20 children.

*Ramakrishna Mission Higher Elementary School, Mallankaranai:* The total strength: 174 (boys: 149; girls: 25). Agriculture is taught as a pre-vocational subject in the school. There is a hostel attached to the school, in which there were 44 boarders belonging to the scheduled castes and backward communities. One hundred pupils of the school were supplied with midday meals.