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Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 6

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

TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA *

श्रीरामकृष्णोपदेशावलिः ।*

SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA

एवं जलं यथा भिन्ननामभिर्ब्रुवते जनाः ।

'वाँटर'-इति वा केचित् 'अँक्वा'-इति वा परे ।

'पानी'ति वा वदन्त्येके अभिन्नं सलिलं भुवि ।

तथैवं सच्चिदानन्दं नामभिर्बहुभिः पृथक् ।

वदन्ति भिन्नपुरुषा 'अल्ला' 'गॉड' 'जिहोवे'ति वा ॥

Just as the same water is called by some *jala*, by some others *aqua*, and by still others *pānī*, similarly the one-without-a-second Reality (Saccidānanda) is designated by different men as Allah, God, Jehovah and so on.

* See *Vidyodaya* (a Sanskrit monthly), Bhatpārā: The Oriental Nobility Institute, September-October (Bhādra), 1896, pp. 193-99. The Sanskrit rendering is by Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The English translation is ours.

THE BY-WAYS AND WAYS TO GOD—II

(EDITORIAL)

In the last instalment of the editorial it has been told that both the 'theistic materialists' (*abhyudaya-prārthīs*, those who believe in God but have a tendency towards worldly enjoyments) and the genuine spiritual aspirants (*nihśreyasa-prārthīs*, those who have chosen God or Liberation alone as their goal of life), come under the banner of religion according to the Vedic tradition. Although the former have no direct and genuine aspiration for God-realization, according to the law of spiritual evolution it is expected that if they stick to God, sooner or later they will come onto the highway leading to Liberation (*nihśreyasa*) through the purification of their mind. That is why they are said to be on the by-way to God, while those who are genuine spiritual aspirants struggling for God-realization or Liberation may be said to be on the highway leading to God.

Adhikāra—Competency :

It has also been discussed before that due to his potentially divine nature, every man aspires for unalloyed joy, uninterrupted peace, absolute freedom, sovereign power, everlasting life and cessation of misery. All these aspirations taken together form the 'cherished goal' of everyone's life ; and through all man's actions and endeavours, this 'cherished goal' finds expression in some form or the other. The One who has created this world has so planned it that man should act with this 'goal' in view. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*, 'My path, O son of Prthā, men tread in all ways.'³⁷ That is, it is this 'cherished goal' that men try to achieve in various ways—through atheistic materialism, theistic materialism or genuine spiritual aspiration. What way one will

follow depends upon one's competency (*adhikāra*). Man alone can have some kind of fitness (*adhikāra*), not animals, to perform actions accordingly. 'It is because men have freedom to perform actions according to their competency that they are called men,'³⁸ says Ācārya Śaṅkara. An atheist, a theist or a spiritual aspirant, all struggle to attain the same 'cherished goal' according to their competency (*adhikāra*). All these three types of men, therefore, are seeking the same 'goal' and are on the way to it, the only difference being that an atheist is on the forest-path, the theistic materialist is on the by-way, and the genuine spiritual aspirant is on the highway. And it is known from the history of religions that those who were on the forest-paths have come onto the by-ways or even the highway. That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa assures in the *Gītā* : 'I am the same to all beings ; to Me there is none hateful or dear. . . . If even a very wicked person worships Me, with devotion to none else, he should be regarded as good, for he has [now] rightly resolved.'³⁹ Lord Kṛṣṇa does not discard a devotee who was once an ardent atheist on the forest-path, because He knows that today or tomorrow he is bound to come onto the right track due to his motivating aspiration for the 'cherished goal'.

Knowledge—the Guiding Power :

Indeed ! Had man *known* the right way leading to the 'cherished goal', he would not have wandered hither and thither on the forest-paths or on the by-ways. It is the

38. *Gītā*, Ācārya Śaṅkara's commentary (hereafter *Gītā-Bhāṣya*), IV. 11. The Sanskrit version reads : यत्फलार्थितया यस्मिन् कर्मणि अधिकृता ये प्रयतन्ते ते मनुष्याः उच्यन्ते ।

39. *Gītā*, IX. 29, 30.

37. *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā* (hereafter *Gītā*), IV.11.

'right knowledge' which is the directing force in man's life. According to Vedānta, the knowledge sheath (*viññānamaya-kośa*) of the individual endowed with the power of knowledge, is the agent or the guiding force which controls his mental sheath (*manomaya-kośa*) endowed with will-power. The latter in turn governs his vital sheath (*prāṇamaya-kośa*) endowed with the power of activity.⁴⁰ As is the knowledge of the individual regarding the means to attain his 'cherished goal', so are his desires and activities as well. Therefore, one's tendency towards the world or God, one's love for the materialistic or spiritual life, and one's choice of the forest-path, by-way or highway, entirely depends upon the nature of one's 'knowledge'. In the *Kaṭhopanīṣad* this phenomenon has been very well depicted by the imagery of a chariot as follows :

Know the (individual) self as the master of the chariot, and the body as the chariot. Know the intellect [knowledge sheath] as the charioteer, and the mind [mental sheath] as verily the bridle. They call the senses [vital sheath] the horses; the senses having been imagined as horses, (know) the objects [the 'cherished goal'] as the ways. The discriminating people call that self the enjoyer, as associated with the body, senses and mind. But the senses of that intellect which, being ever associated with an uncontrolled mind, becomes devoid of discrimination, are unruly like the vicious horses of the charioteer. But of that (intellect) which—being ever associated with a restrained mind—is endowed with discrimination, the senses are controllable like the good horses of the charioteer. But he (the master of the chariot), does not attain that ['cherished'] goal (through the intellect), who, being associated with a non-discriminating intellect and an uncontrollable mind, is ever impure; and he attains worldly existence. That (master of the chariot)

however, who is associated with a discriminating intellect, and being endowed with a controlled mind, is ever pure, attains that goal (getting detached) from which he is not born again. The man, however, who has, as his charioteer, a discriminating intellect, and who has under control the reins of the mind, attains the end of the road—and that is the highest place of Viṣṇu.⁴¹

This imagery clearly reveals that everything depends upon how trained the charioteer (the intellect or the knowledge sheath of a person) is. If he knows the by-ways and the highways properly, the chariot will ultimately reach God—the Goal Supreme. If the charioteer, however, takes delight in the sense objects exhibited on the by-ways and remains entangled there for life, there is no hope of his ever coming onto the highway leading to God, or attaining the 'cherished goal'. His horses will land him in a ditch, if he cannot control them intelligently. So, fortunate indeed are those whose chariots are on the highways.

Religions and Individual Paths :

Every religion has produced great souls who sincerely aspired for God and directed their chariots with full speed towards Him without any digression. But if we look to their lives, we find that each one of them realized God in his own way : Some have followed the path of Bhakti ; some, the path of Jñāna ; some again, the path of Rāja-Yoga ; and some, the path of Karma-Yoga. On critical analysis it is also revealed that every spiritual aspirant followed 'his own' individual path to realize God. Each aspirant has a temperament of his own and a way of his own, by which he reaches God. The lives of various saints are the concrete examples of this fact. It is also seen that at times some aspirants have taken recourse

40. See Sadānanda *Vedāntasāra*, II, 89.

41. *Eight Upanīṣads*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, I, 1957, pp. 160-64.

to such paths which are apparently repulsive. The secret rites of the Śāktas and Vaiṣṇavas may be cited as examples of this. But Sri Ramakrishna's attitude towards these cults was quite broad; he used to say: 'They are not to be blamed. For they have the thorough conviction that the paths they follow lead by themselves to God-realization. Whatever is ardently believed in and adopted as a means to God-realization should not be found fault with. No aspirant's attitude should be condemned; since any attitude, if sincerely followed, is sure to lead to God, who is the consummation of all attitudes. Go on calling upon Him, each in your own way, and don't find fault with another's path nor take to it as your own. . . . Why should you cherish hatred towards them? Know them also to be valid paths, though they may be dirty. There may be diverse entrances to a house—the front gate the back-door and the door for the scavenger who comes to clean the dirty places in the house. Know these cults to be akin to this last-mentioned door. No matter by which door one enters, when one is once within the house, one reaches the same place as the others reach.'⁴²

Sri Ramakrishna's teaching: all paths—straight or crooked—lead to the same goal, was not a new theory. The belief was prevalent ages ago; for, it is said in the *Śiva-Mahimnah-Stotram*: 'There are different paths [for God-realization] as enjoined by the three Vedas, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Pāśupata doctrine, and Vaiṣṇava Śāstras. Persons following different paths—straight or crooked, according as they consider that this path is best or that one is proper due to the differences in temperaments—reach Thee [God] alone, just as rivers enter the ocean.'⁴³ From these statements of Sri Ramakrishna and the Hindu scripture cited

above, it is evident that although each man may follow the way according to his temperament (*svadharmā*), if he is sincere enough, his own path will take him to God directly. With regard to different religions Sri Ramakrishna has said, 'Different creeds are but different paths to reach the one God. [For instance:] Diverse are the ways that lead to the temple of Mother Kālī at Kālighāt in Calcutta. Similarly various are the paths that take men to the house of the Lord. Every religion is nothing but one of these paths.'⁴⁴ Thus, many are the ways leading to God, depending upon the psychological constitution (*varṇa*) and the station of life (*āśrama*), that is, the *svadharmā* of the aspirant.

Swami Vivekananda has said, 'Religion is Realization'; so if by following any religion one can attain God-realization, that should be taken as a valid path. About religion, Swamiji has also said: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature—external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'⁴⁵ From this it is clear that any spiritual path which helps the aspirant in controlling his internal and external nature, and thereby to manifest the Divinity within, is a valid way leading to God. Sri Ramakrishna corroborates this, saying: 'One can ascend to the top of a house by means of a ladder or a bamboo or a staircase or a rope; so also, diverse are the ways of approaching God, and every religion in the world shows one of the ways.'⁴⁶ Thus, for those who have chosen

⁴². *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1971, (hereafter *Sayings*), p. 154; sayings 486, 487.

⁴³. *Śiva-Mahimnah-Stotram*, 7.

⁴⁴. *Sayings*, p. 149; saying 464.

⁴⁵. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, I, 1970, p. 124.

⁴⁶. *Sayings*, p. 149; saying 467.

God-realization as the goal of their lives (the *niḥśreyas-prārthīs*), many are the ways which they can follow. The only basic qualification expected of them is : absolute dispassion for the world and intense, one-pointed longing for God. Sri Ramakrishna has said that whatever path one may follow, he must have intense longing for God-realization ; then alone there is a possibility of his reaching the goal.

It must be remembered, however, that although one might choose God-realization as the ideal of life and follow any one of the paths leading to it, if one forgets his goal and becomes entangled in the means only, he will never reach it. At times some weak aspirants, who had once started walking along the highway with great zeal, get tired ; and thinking that the goal is too far, they seek worldly enjoyments like name, honour, power, position and so on as by-products (*avāntara-phala*) of their spiritual life, and become stuck in them. To distinguish them from the 'theistic materialists (*abhyudaya-prārthīs*)' referred to in the first instalment of the editorial, these insincere robed aspirants may be called 'spiritual materialists', as they are not keen about their spiritual progress. And as they are not struggling for God-realization, they too may be supposed to be on the by-ways.

The Yogas—Highways to Liberation :

The Sanskrit word 'Yoga' is derived from the root *yuj* which literally means 'to join', while in the spiritual sense it is the process by which the individual spirit (*Jīvātman*) experiences its absolute communion with God—the *Paramātman*. According to Vedānta, the *Jīva* is none else but *Brahman* [or the *Paramātman*]*—Jīvo brahmajīva nūparahī* ; and the basic function of all the Yogas is to enable the aspirant to realize this identity ultimately. They are the various highways leading to Liberation or God-realization.

Yogas According to Tāntrika Tradition :

According to the Tāntrika tradition Yogas are divided into four forms : Mantra-Yoga, Hatha-Yoga, Laya-Yoga, and Rāja-Yoga. They believe that by practising these four types of Yogas, the feelings and intellectual activities of the aspirant's mind are brought under control (*cittavṛtti-nirodha*), and he realizes the identity between the *Jīvātman* and the *Paramātman* ultimately. Each of the above mentioned Yogas has the same Eight-limbed disciplines (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*) without which the aspirant may be led astray. The Eightfold discipline comprises : Yama (general disciplines), Niyama (particular disciplines), Āsana (posture), Prāṇāyāma (control of the vital force), Pratyāhāra (self-withdrawal), Dhāraṇā (concentration), Dhyāna (meditation) and Samādhi (absorption).⁴⁷ All these Yogas are complementary to each other.

Mantra-Yoga: This comprises the disciplines by which the mind is controlled through worship and devotion. As the mind is distracted by names and forms (*nāma-rūpa*), in Mantra-Yoga a particular type of name (*mantra*) and form productive of a pure state of mind (*bhāva*) is taken as an object of meditation. 'The source of all Bija-mantras (seed-mantras), the Praṇava (*Om*) or *Brahman*, is the articulate equivalent of that primal "Sound" which issued from the first vibration of the *Guṇas* of *Mūla-prakṛti*.⁴⁸ The state of Samādhi reached through this Yoga is known as *Mahā-bhāva*.

Hatha-Yoga : The practitioners of this Yoga have spoiled its reputation by restricting their practices only to the physical level. This Yoga aims at bringing under control the working of the subtle body by master-

47. For details see *Pātāñjala-Yoga Sūtras*, II. 29-55, III. 1-12 ; and Sir John Woodroffe, *The Serpent Power*, Madras : Ganesh & Co., Ltd., 1950, (hereafter *Serpent Power*), pp. 185-256.

48. For details see *Serpent Power*, pp. 196-97.

ing first the physical body. The Tantras emphatically declare that merely the practice of physical processes does not mean Yoga. For instance, it is said in the *Kulārṇava Tantra*, 'Neither the lotus seat nor fixing the gaze on the tip of the nose are Yoga. It is the identity of Jīvātman and Paramātman which is Yoga.'⁴⁹ The word Haṭha is composed of two syllables 'ha' and 'ṭha', the former means the 'Sun' and the latter the 'Moon' currents (nerve currents), that is, the Prāṇa and Apāna vāyus. Controlling these vital currents and bringing about their union in the *susumnā* is the main function of this Yoga. 'The regulation of the harmonized breath helps to the regulation and steadiness of mind, and, therefore, concentration.'⁵⁰ In Hatha-Yoga, Light is the object of concentration, and the Samādhi attained through this process is called Mahā-bodha. Needless to say, this Yoga is not for all. It needs a very competent disciple and also an expert teacher. That is why in the opinion of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji this Yoga is not for this age. Of course, even today some aspirants are seen all over the world who are crazy after Āsanās, Prāṇāyāmas, Mudras, Bandhas, Neti-dhauti and so on; but their purpose of life is only to show some physical feats. So, evidently they are still on the by-ways.

Laya- or Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga : This Yoga is nothing but the higher form of the Haṭha-Yoga, as it is connected with the Haṭha-Yoga processes. The Tāntrikas believe that both Śiva and Śakti are present in the body of every individual. The Laya-Yoga consists in the control of the mental modifications (*cittavṛtti*) by merging the material energy (Prakṛti Śakti) in the spiritual energy (Puruṣa Śakti) according to the laws which govern the Piṇḍa (individual—*vyaṣṭi*) and Brahmāṇḍa (cosmic—*samaṣṭi*) bodies,

and thereby gaining Liberation. It mainly deals with the 'supersensible *pīṭhas* (seats or centres)' and 'the supersensible forces and functions' of the body. These *pīṭhas* are also called *cakras* which are six in number (*ṣaṭ-cakras*), the lowest being the Mūlādhāra—the seat of Prakṛti Śakti or Kuṇḍalinī Śakti—and the highest being Ājñā; above that is the Sahasrāra—the seat of the Puruṣa, Paramātman or Parama-Śiva. The function of this Yoga is to rouse this coiled Kuṇḍalinī Śakti from the Mūlādhāra and gradually take and merge it into Puruṣa in the Sahasrāra.

Raja-Yoga : The former three Yogas can help a spiritual aspirant to attain Savikalpa Samādhi, and also make him fit for this highest Yoga which alone enables one to achieve Nirvikalpa Samādhi. The Tāntrikas say that the Rāja-yogī attains Liberation even while living in the body (Jīvan-mukti) and is severed from the bonds of karma (*karmāśaya*). Thus, according to the Tāntrikas, Rāja-Yoga is not only a way to God, but rather the King's Way.

There are many Upaniṣads known as the Yoga Upaniṣads which deal with these four aspects of Yoga, and even the great Advaitist Ācārya Śaṅkara—unlike Sri Ramakrishna's Vedantic Guru Totāpurī—could not resist the temptation to make 'a hymnal offering at the feet of the Mother of the universe invoked as the Power or Sakti. ...'⁵¹ The hymn is divided into two parts: the 'Ānanda-Laharī—Wave of Bliss' and the 'Saundarya-Laharī—Wave of Beauty', and the Ācārya thereby endorses the Tāntrika principles.

Yogas Corresponding to the Vedic Divisions :

It is well known that the Vedas have been divided into three main divisions—

49. *Kulārṇava Tantra*, IX. 30.

50. *Serpent Power*, p. 199.

51. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya *Saundarya-Lahari*, trans. R. Anantakṛṣṇa Śāstri and K. R. Guru, Madras: Ganesh & Co., Ltd., 1957, p. xvii.

Karma-Kāṇḍa, Upāsanā-Kāṇḍa and Jñāna-Kāṇḍa. They are meant for aspirants of different competency (*adhikāra*); and when performed with a spirit of dispassion and absolute surrender to God with a view to realize Him, they yoke the aspirant with Him, and become Karma-, Bhakti- and Jñāna- Yogas respectively. Some scholars like Shri Rajendra Ghosh are of the opinion that both Jñāna- and Rāja- Yogas correspond to the Jñāna-Kāṇḍa portions of the Vedas. Sir John Woodroffe says, 'According to Indian notions all are not competent (*adhikārī*) to attempt Yoga [according to the Tāntrika tradition mentioned above]; only a few are. One must, in this or in other lives, have first gone through Karma or ritual, and Upāsanā or devotional, worship and obtained the fruit thereof, namely, a pure mind (*cittaśuddhi*).'⁵² A pure mind is no doubt necessary for practising Laya- or Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga and Rāja-Yoga, but as Mantra-Yoga and Haṭha-Yoga are mainly for the purification of the mind, they need not be preceded by Bhakti- and Karma-Yogas, as they themselves in a way amount to these Yogas.

Karma-Yoga: An aspirant has to transcend the inertia (*tamoguna*) in him first, by taking recourse to activity (*rajoguna*) and devotion (*sattvaguna*), and thus purify his mind for higher spiritual disciplines of the Jñāna-Yoga. So Karma devoid of union with God through worship (Upāsanā) and meditation (Dhyāna-Yoga), is not Karma-Yoga, but Karma-Bhoga, because of seeking only worldly enjoyments through Karma. Moreover, just any form of Karma won't help for Karma-Yoga. It should be *vihita*, that is, either enjoined by the scriptures or by the Incarnations. Such Karma performed with dispassion and an egoless attitude (*Īśvarārpana-buddhi* and *phala-abhisandhi-rāhitya*) lead to the purification of one's

mind (*citta-śuddhi* or *sattva-śuddhi*) and make one fit for the Jñāna-Yoga. It is the 'Yoga' in Karma-Yoga, and not the 'form of Karma', which purifies. Had only 'Karma' led to purification, then this world would have been full of realized Souls. After one attains the required purification, Karma automatically drops off like a dried leaf. This is called Karma-sannyāsa in Vedānta. But Ācārya Śaṅkara says: 'Even if anyone due to some reason continues to do Karma after attaining purification of the mind, he is not the doer of that action, because his attitude has been completely changed. Although he is seen doing Karma as before, he does not do anything.'⁵³ So it may appear that such a man has realized God without renouncing Karma in form; but it should not be forgotten that he had made strenuous efforts before like King Janaka to attain that fitness psychologically through intense meditation. According to Ācārya Śaṅkara, 'work leads to purification of the mind, not to perception of the Reality. The realization of Truth [God] is brought about by discrimination [Knowledge] and not in the least by ten millions of acts.'⁵⁴ So an aspirant should never remain under the false impression that by doing mere Karma in form without due effort for purification by meditation, God will show His face to him.

Bhakti-Yoga: To realize God, it is psychologically necessary for a beginner to think of Him as an object; because in every individual the dualistic attitude—subject-object consciousness—is very deep-rooted. One has to take the help of some symbol or image to establish communion

53. See *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, IV. 19. The Sanskrit version reads: स कुतश्चित् निमित्तात् कर्मपरित्याग-असम्भवे सति कर्मणि तत्फले च सङ्गरहिततया स्वप्रयोजन-अभावात् लोकसंग्रहार्थं पूर्ववत् कर्मणि प्रवृत्तः अपि न एव किञ्चित् करोति ।

54. Ācārya Śaṅkara, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 11.

52. Sir John Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shākta*, Madras: Ganesh & Co., Ltd., 1951, p. 677.

with God. 'The effort to establish continuous communion with God lasting for a long time thinking of Him as an object, is called Upāsana.'⁵⁵ Various dualistic modes of worshipping God coming under the category of ritualistic devotion—Vaidhī-Bhakti, gradually lead an aspirant to non-dualistic devotion—Parā-Bhakti. One may even perform Karma-Yoga and Upāsana without taking recourse to various methods of dualistic devotion—Vaidhī-Bhakti. This helps an aspirant to purify his mind and establish himself in God.

Rāja-Yoga : It has been seen above that unless one's mind is purified to some extent, one does not become competent for practising this Yoga; but once the fitness is attained, it helps the aspirant to establish himself firmly in God (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*) which is necessary for Jñāna-Yoga.

Jñāna-Yoga : The ultimate goal is Nirvikalpa Samādhi and it is attained only by this Yoga, according to Vedānta. All the other Yogas discussed before enable one to become fit for Jñāna-Yoga. The reason is : man has become a man—destined to suffer, destined to die—because Ignorance (*ajñāna*) is functioning in him. That is why howsoever one may try, one remaining as man can never attain the 'cherished goal' unless and until this Ignorance is removed by Knowledge. Ācārya Śaṅkara says in his *Ātmabodha*, 'As fire is the direct cause of cooking, so Knowledge, and not any other form of discipline (Yoga), is the direct cause of Liberation [God-realization]; for Liberation cannot be attained without Knowledge. Action cannot destroy Ignorance, for it is not in conflict with Ignorance. Knowledge alone destroys Ignorance,

55. See *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, XII. 3. The Sanskrit version reads : उपासनं नाम यथाशास्त्रम् उपास्यस्य अर्थस्य विषयीकरणेन सामीप्यम् उपगम्य तैलधारावत् समानप्रत्ययप्रवाहेण दीर्घकालं यद् आसनं तद् उपासनम् आचक्षते ।

as light destroys dense darkness.'⁵⁶ In the Introduction to his commentary on *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* also he says, 'Thus in the Śrutis, Smṛtis and Epics, Knowledge alone has been said to be the means for Liberation—*evam śruti-smṛti-itihāsādiṣu jñānasyaiva mokṣa-sādhanatva-avagamāt yujyate*.'⁵⁷ It is from this point of view that the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* declares, 'there is no other way for Liberation.'⁵⁸ By studying the scriptures critically, it will be revealed that all the Yogas ultimately lead the aspirant to the gateway of Knowledge, and in this sense they are said to be the cause of Liberation.

In verses 45 to 55 of the eighteenth chapter of the *Gītā*, this gradual evolution of a spiritual aspirant from 'theistic materialism' to Karma-Yoga, from Karma-Yoga to fitness for Knowledge or *jñāna-niṣṭhā-yogyatā* and *karma-sannyāsa* (verses 45-49), thence to Rāja-Yoga or the life of pure meditation (verses 51-53), thence to Parā-Bhakti or Bhakti-Yoga of the higher type (verse 54), from Bhakti-Yoga to Jñāna-Yoga, and thence to God-realization (verse 55), has been well traced by Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thereby the Lord has shown that Knowledge is the ultimate gateway reached by all the Yogas, through which one can enter the abode of God. Even if devotees do not aspire for Knowledge, Lord Kṛṣṇa says, 'I give them Knowledge by which they come unto me. . . . I, abiding in their hearts, destroy the darkness [in them] caused by Ignorance, by the luminous lamp of Knowledge.'⁵⁹

In the light of this discussion, it can be said that although there may be many byways and highways (Yogas) to come up to the gateway of Knowledge.

56. Ācārya Śaṅkara, *Ātmabodha*, 2-3.

57. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, Ācārya Śaṅkara's commentary, Introduction.

58. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, VI. 15.

59. See *Gītā*, X. 10, 11.

from the gateway to God 'there is no other way—*nānyah panthā vidyate*', but Knowledge leading directly to God. If Sri Ramakrishna's 'as many creeds, so many paths—*jato mat tato path*', is understood in this light, then there will be no contradiction with 'there is no other way—*nanyah panthā vidyate*' of the Śruti. Of course, if Sri Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda's teachings are studied critically, it will be clear that they have not said anything contradictory to the Śrutis, but said something over and above them.

Mahāmārga—the Great Way:

The history of religions shows that Great Men are born on earth from age to age, and, instead of treading the beaten tracks, realize the Truth (God) following their own way. They preach others as well to follow the same path befitting the age. For instance, Lord Buddha attained Nirvāṇa in his own way and preached the Eightfold path to mankind. Jesus Christ also showed his own way to his followers, which was different from the earlier one. Sri Ramakrishna too followed his own way to begin with and realized the Divine Mother. Such a new way prescribed by the Incarnations as congenial for the age may be called Mahāmārga—the Great Way. They preach the new way because men cannot understand the spirit of the paths prescribed ages ago and are misguided. Moreover, due to changes in the customs and manners of the age, the older paths do not serve the purpose of the age, like outdated coins. That is why Jesus Christ said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'⁶⁰ So, if a devout Christian wants to go to the Father in Heaven, he should absorb the spirit of Lord Jesus—his dispassion, love for the Father and renunciation; if a Buddhist wishes to attain Nirvāṇa, he should assimilate the spirit of

Lord Buddha—his renunciation, dispassion and longing for Nirvāṇa; and if a follower of Ramakrishna wishes to realize God, he has to try to read the meaning of his great life, and mold his own on those lines.

In the modern age Sri Ramakrishna has shown the ways for the householders and sannyasis. He performed numerous spiritual disciplines of different sects of Hinduism and other religions, and has proved to the world that each path leads to the same God. For a modern man Ramakrishna is the Great Way. The Master has shown by his life how a householder can realize God; how a sannyasin can attain Nirvikalpa Samādhi; how one can love God with all his heart and soul. But very few are conscious of this fact. As a matter of fact there is no need of searching any method for God-realization anywhere. If we learn to read the meaning of his life, our purpose will be served. About Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda has rightly said: 'He is the method, that wonderful unconscious method! . . . He lived that great life—and I read the meaning.'⁶¹ Because Swamiji could read the meaning, he called him *avatāra-varīṣṭha* greatest of all Incarnations. It is difficult for ordinary man to find out for himself the correct way for the age. He is bewildered by the varied opinions of the scriptures and saints. For such, 'whatever way the great saints of the age have followed is the way—*mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*.'⁶² The way shown by Sri Ramakrishna is suitable for the aspirants of all nations. It is like an international highway—*Mahāmārga*; and if men choose to walk along it, they will save much of their time and energy.

In conclusion it can be said for man in general that it does not so much matter whether one is on the by-way or the highway, all that is needed is a firm conviction

⁶¹. Sister Nivedita, *The Master As I Saw Him*, Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1972, p. 197.

⁶². *Mahābhārata*, 3, 313. 117.

⁶⁰. John 14:6.

that the 'cherished goal' can only be attained in God-realization. This conviction will keep one moving towards Him, from wherever one is today, because from the

spiritual point of view : movement towards God is life ; stagnation is death.

(Concluded)

EARLY DAYS AT SHANTI ASHRAMA—VIII

GARGI

8

As is clear from the following letter written on October 17 from the Petersens' house on Buchanan Street, the Swami's stay in the mountains had not refreshed him :

My dear Shanti

Your two kind letters and the draft for \$ 30/- (thirty dollars) came duly to hand. Many thanks for them. I reached here in the evening of Saturday last and am staying at Dhira's. I hope to be in Dr. Logan's place during my stay here. Tomorrow I go to the Class. I shall let you know what it comes to pass there. What is this money for that you have sent? Is it for the Ashrama or my passage expense [to Los Angeles]? You have not mentioned anything in your letter. I am still feeling tired, not well rested. Mother's will shall be done. I got Helen's letter. Will you please thank her for me. I hear S Abhedananda has reached New York safe and sound. I am so happy to know that you all are doing well and the club is getting along so nicely even without a regular teacher. May Mother bless you all. The ashrama is getting along pretty well. Sumati [Margaret McConochie] is now in S. F. I met her the other evening. She is doing fine. Atmarama [Dr. Adams] has been in Sacramento with Carrie [Yoark]. May reach the city this evening.

Wishing you all happiness and joy with loving regards

Yours in the Mother
Turiyananda

On the evening of October 18 Swami Turiyananda lectured before the Vedanta Society at Dr. Logan's house. He remained there overnight, and the following day, according to Dr. Logan's diagnosis as published in the *Pacific Vedantin*, 'he was taken ill with cholelithiasis [gallstones], followed by nervous prostration.'

Too ill to be moved, the Swami remained for over two weeks at Dr. Logan's, where one of his students—Miss Charlotte Brown, the sister-in-law of Mr. Rhodehamel and a head nurse in a large Oakland hospital, came to nurse him. A charming story of this nursing episode, which is part of the lore of the San Francisco Vedanta Society, is related by Swami Ritajananda in his book *Swami Turiyananda*. Miss Brown, accustomed to having her sickroom commands obeyed, found her patient stubborn, irascible, fault-finding, anything but meek and grateful. 'You Western nurses', he crossly greeted her one day, 'don't know anything. Any Hindu knows how to nurse much better than you people who are trained nurses. Our grandmothers are better doctors than your M.D.'s!' Bristling, Miss Brown replied, 'I don't know about your grandmothers; but this much I can tell you: in our country, sick people show greater patience than you!' To which the Swami retorted, 'Yes! You people are fond of show. I don't care whether you praise me or blame me. If you don't like it, you can go away. I don't want any nurse. . . . You can boast of your greatness where

people will praise you. I can't work with you. You want outward pleasantness and praise. I can't pretend just to please you. In this country even sick people don't have the freedom to act. Are we to adjust all our actions to suit the reactions of the nurse ?'

It was a splendid row. Miss Brown's eyes finally filled with tears, and the Swami, noticing, became at once the soul of gentleness. 'We scold those whom we love and for their own good,' he said. 'We never utter a harsh word to people to whom we are indifferent. We try to improve those whom we love. What does it matter whether I am in good health or in ill health? I have come to this country for your good and not for mine.' And thereafter, knowing that his words had sunk deep, he was all patience and forbearance, as was his natural way.

On November 5, Swami Turiyananda returned to the Petersens' to recuperate, and from there, ten days later, he wrote again to Mrs. Hansbrough :

The 15th November 1901.

My dear Shanti,

I am up again and gaining strength every day under the special attention and care of Dhira and hope to be myself again soon. Perhaps you have heard that I was taken quite seriously ill and my condition was really precarious for a few days. My friends here were exceptionally kind and attentive to me and it pleased Mother to spare me this time. I am very weak still but have no particular complaints any more. I feel so thankful to you and the letters from you and Helen cheered me up a good deal as they were fraught with kindness love and sympathy which I needed most at that time. Your last letter containing ten dollars draft I received duly but am sorry could not acknowledge ere this, I received a very kind letter from Mrs. Kelley and I hope to write in answer to that soon. I received a very

beautiful letter from Sarbamsaha [Miss Minnie Boock] too. But I don't feel quite able to write in reply to them all just now. Will you kindly remember me to them all and give them my regards and love. I hope to see you all as soon as I am able and permitted to do so. Dr Logan had a letter from Swamiji the other day. He is now in the Monastery at Calcutta. The letter was in reply to one Dr Logan wrote to the Swamiji requesting him to send Swami Saradananda for the S.F.V.S. The Swamiji has promised to send some one as soon as he can. He asked the Doctor in that letter to tell me from him to take a complete rest for some time. I think it is rest that I need most under the circumstances to give tone to my system which has become extremely nervous. Do you know I suffered from gall stone which is a disease of women especially arising from awful mental worries? Oh the pain! It baffles all description. I don't like to think of it again. But I did pray in that awful pain that my mind might be equally absorbed in Mother as it was absorbed in pain for the time being. May Mother listen to my prayer and grant it. Will you please thank Helen for me. Really I can not tell you how I felt when I read her letter. She was before my mind's eye for a time just the same Helen I saw first—the unselfish to the extreme, kind, simple hearted Helen ready to do everything for others especially when under suffering or trouble. That is the real picture of Helen. May Mother bless her. I hope you all are doing well. My best wishes and love to all. Hoping to hear from you soon. With affectionate regards and love.

Yours in Mother
Turiyananda

And on November 25, a short note :

My dear Shanti,

Many thanks for your affectionate letter. I have got a very kind letter from Mrs. Kelly also. She reminds me of Arizona in that and suggests to me

to go there for a complete change and rest. Many of my friends here think it as a very good idea. Any way I shall come to Los Angeles soon and will settle it for certain. Probably I shall come by boat and will wire you as I start. I am improving steadily but tremendously nervous still. I hope you all are doing well. My thanks to Helen for her kind letter please. Hoping to see you all in person. With best wishes and love Yours in the Mother

Turiyananda

The Swami remained at the Petersens' until the last day of 1901, when he travelled to Los Angeles—whether by boat or by train is not recorded. He stayed in southern California for less than a week, living quietly with the Meads, and then returned to San Francisco. On January 8, 1902, he was back at the Ashrama.

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This year four students had remained through the freezing winter: Gurudasa, Eloise Roorbach, and Mr. and Mrs. Aspinall. On February 4, 1902, the Aspinalls left, and a week or so later Mrs. Petersen arrived to stay on through May. Except for two short-term visitors—Mr. Louis M. Juhl, who had known Swami Vivekananda, and a Miss Dora Hastings—no one else came, and thus Swami Turiyananda spent this last period at Shanti Ashrama with three students. He remained much of the time in retirement in his cabin, still ill, with Gurudasa to bring his meals and otherwise serve him.

Receiving further news of his brother's illness, Swami Vivekananda, then in Benares, became much concerned. He wrote anxiously to Mrs. Hansbrough on February 14. His letter has been published elsewhere,¹ but can be given here in full:

1. Marie Lousie Burke, *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1973, pp. 668-69.

Benares
14, Feb. 1902

My dear Mrs. Hansborough,

I am eternally indebted to you for what you did for me in the past and infinitely more now—for what you are doing to Turiyananda.

A gloom came over the Math when news reached Calcutta of his severe illness. Now—I hope—he has recovered completely—and I will be so glad to get the news from you.

It seems the American climate does not suit him—in that case it will be better for him to come over to India whenever he thinks fit.

In all probability I am going to Japan in a month or two. Ramakrishnananda accompanies me. Turiyananda may come over to Japan and I go to America—'Mother' knows best however and we obey.

I am just now in Benares for a few days. All letters should however be addressed to the Belur Math.

Kindly convey my best love to Turiyananda and to yourself, the holy family and the other friends.

Ever yours in the Lord
Vivekananda

P.S. Let Turiyananda take rest all the time now—he must not work at all till I reach Japan or America.

Swami Turiyananda was too ill to write to Mrs. Hansbrough from Shanti Ashrama until mid April. Even then, his letter, dated April 16 but postmarked April 12, reflects his poor health and frayed nerves; it attests also to a state of turbulence in the San Francisco Vedanta Society, part of which was caused by Dr. Logan. Since January of 1902, the good doctor (then president) had been editing and, in the name of Society (and under the seal of the Ramakrishna Mission), publishing the *Pacific Vedantist*, a monthly magazine, the idea for which was his own. (After the

second issue the magazine's name was permanently changed, at the suggestion of Swami Abhedananda, to the *Pacific Vedantin*.) Although this slim publication was not without value and might in time have developed into a substantial and worthy periodical, it remained throughout its brief lifetime of one year an amateurish affair, containing many factual inaccuracies, many misrepresentations of the Vedanta philosophy, and a good deal of extraneous material. Dr. Logan had produced the first issue without Swami Turiyananda's knowledge and had published the subsequent issues in defiance of his expressed disapproval. Mr. Albert Wollberg (the Society's Secretary and Treasurer), Dr. Lucy Chandler, and others had, for the time being at least, stood behind the doctor against the Swami, creating thereby an unwholesome rift in the Society. But the magazine was not the sole cause of trouble. Indeed, to judge by the following letter, other matters had thrown the group into a veritable uproar. What those matters were, we do not know; we know only—and this, in any event, is our only present concern—that Swami Turiyananda's health was not benefited by these squalls and tempests. His letter to Mrs. Hansbrough, written in pencil in an unsteady hand, reads as follows:

16 April 1902

My dear Shanti

It is unfortunate that I could not write to you ere this. But I have been in a terrible nervous condition again. Perhaps you are not quite aware of all the commotion that is going on or rather has been going on the Vedanta Society of S.F. since Swami A.[Abhedananda's] departure from here. It is an awfully muddled up complication, of course it is all worldly, no religion in it—But it is very likely to do injury to Swamiji's work in this country. It is impossible to put on paper about it

without being liable to be misunderstood. So I would not attempt at least for the present. I shall try later if I can do it. But I hope you will understand everything yourself by guess. Let me only say that your letter to S.F. when I was with you last time had something to do with it. And you may also remember the letter Dr. Logan wrote to me before I left Los Angeles mentioning about 'the blockade' and so forth. They actually took advantage of my being into retirement and I was quite exasperated for it. But Mother's will comes to pass always. We can only do our duty faithfully and to the best of our power. That is all for us. I am so glad Swamiji is expected soon in this country. Once here he will take everything to his side which is universal. I am pretty sure of it. Gurudasa went to the city (I being not in a condition to speak my view as to the publication of the *Pacific Vedantin*. It appeared as a Vedantist's first. *Vedantin* is a later corrected suggestion of S.A. [Swami Abhedananda]. Gurudasa returned quite disgusted at their attitude. Some of the students were with him. Mr. Petersen [vice-President of the Society] stood by him very firmly. What a travesty all this is. But I have done my duty and now I must wait with patience if I can. I am now again in retirement—of course not so strict this time. I will take rest according to Swamiji's instructions waiting for his further advice. Have you written to him again Shanti? Kindly give him my obedience and love in your next. I would not try to say anything about my feelings toward you my dear Shanti as it never can be adequately expressed. Mother knows it and I believe you too understand a little. I owe my coming back to health (if I do come) this time entirely to your timely caution and maternal care. I shall be so happy to hear from you soon. Kindly remember me to all the friends there and give them my love. With best wishes and love to yourself. Yours in the Mother

Turiyananda

In India, Swami Vivekananda became increasingly concerned over his brother's health. In March he had written to Dr. Logan, asking that the Swami be sent back to India. Nor did he rest with this: he asked Swami Saradananda to write both to Dr. Logan and to Swami Turiyananda. Swamiji's letter no longer exists (if it was received); but that of Swami Saradananda to Dr. Logan, having been read to the 'Vedanta Class', was copied into the Society's Minutes. It was dated April 3, 1902, and had been received sometime in the first week of May. Mr. Wollberg's presumably true copy of it reads as follows:

My dear Dr. Logan:

I am requested by the Swami Vivekananda to write you these few lines.

The Swami hopes that you have received his letter by this time, requesting you to make arrangements to send the Swami Turiyananda back to India, as he has not been keeping well there.

The Swami has become very anxious to know of Swami T's last illness. He himself has not been keeping very well and only a little month ago we were seriously alarmed to find him almost run down. He is much better however by a month's treatment & shows signs of perfect recovery ere long.

We hope the Vedanta work will not suffer seriously by Swami T's return and that you will find someone to replace Swami T. to carry on the good work so well begun.

The work here is progressing slowly and has been much hindered on account of the ill health of the Swami V. We hope to make up however for lost time as soon as he is well.

We hope this will find you well and happy and send our united regards and best wishes to yourself and all friends there.

The Swami sends his love & blessings to you all and hopes that his letter to

you intimating his wish to send Swami T. back has not been miscarried.

Most truly yours
Saradananda.

'This letter', the minutes read, 'was given to Dr. L. A. Chandler to take with her to the Shanti Ashrama to read same to Swami Turiyananda. She left on the 7th of May 1902 and [accompanied by Mrs. A. S. Wollberg] arrived at the Ashrama the evening of the 8th.'

The message Dr. Chandler brought to Shanti Ashrama was not a surprise to the Swami. He had already received Swami Saradananda's letter to himself. On May 9th, the day after the arrival of the two women from the city, he wrote to Mrs. Hansbrough. His handwriting this time was once again strong and sure, as of old:

My dear Shanti

I have received a letter from Swami Saradananda by the last mail. Swamiji was very ill in the monastery. But he has been doing better and I trust is all right now. May Mother keep him Shanti yet for some time for the good of many. The world does not produce such souls often and by many. His coming to Japan has evidently been postponed. I have been asked to go back to India. S. Saradananda has written to Dr. Logan also at the request of the Swamiji to see that I start all right. I have not heard from Dr Logan yet but hope to do so soon. I have heard from S. Abedananda too. He wishes me to go back rather than suffer here this way. I feel in the same way under the circumstances. So will get ready by and bye. If Mother wills it so I shall see you all again Shanti. But whether we meet in the physical plane or not certainly Mother has united us in the higher where we know no separation. Let Mother's will be done. You need not be anxious for money Shanti. It is already there. One friend has offered to pay the passage. I shall

write to you again as it develops. Remember me kindly to all the kind and dear friends there and give them my best wishes and love.

With best wishes and love as ever I am

Yours in Mother
Turiyananda

Now that his return to India was settled, did some premonition urge Swami Turiyananda to hurry? Perhaps so; but the arrangements moved slowly. A week passed before his reply reached the Vedanta Society. 'Mrs. A. S. Wollberg who had accompanied Dr. Chandler', the Minutes read, 'returned to San Francisco from the Ashrama on the 16th of May with a verbal message from Swami that he was desirous of returning to India at the earliest possible moment.'

Another week passed. 'At the meeting of the Class on Thursday the 22nd of May,' the Minutes continued, 'the matter of arranging for the departure of Swami came up. The necessary funds being forthcoming it was decided to engage passage for the Swami on the first Steamer leaving this Port—on June 6th via Pacific Ocean as per his request. Dr. Logan wrote particulars to Swami & also stated that he would go down to the Ashrama to escort Swami to this City.'

On May 28, Swami Turiyananda wrote his last letter from the Ashrama to Mrs. Hansbrough. It was, as it turned out, a letter of farewell:

My dear Shanti,

I have received your two very kind letters. The Vedanta Society of San Francisco has arranged for my passage to India at the direction of Swamiji. The 6th of June has been fixed the date for my departure. Doctor Logan will come to the Ashrama and take me to the city. Everything is going smooth so far. I am very sorry I shall not see you nor can I make any reply to your last letter in a definite way. I

shall speak about it to Swamiji when I see him. In the meantime if you think it best you can live in the Ashrama with Gurudasa and go on practising meditation etc. Gurudasa will be delighted to have you here I am sure. You need not despair Shanti at my going. The Mother is within you and I know you belong to Mother. Sannyas or no Sannyas wherever you will be you will be doing Mother's work. Only you need, as you yourself have so beautifully expressed it in your letter the final death of the little self'. Pray for it Shanti from the bottom of your heart making your heart and tongue one and Mother will grant it. I may pray for you Shanti if you want me to. But for the present I must bid you goodbye.

Kindly remember me to all the friends who have been so good and kind to me. I shall remember them all with grateful and loving heart so long as the memory endures.

Wishing you all well With love to
Carrie [Wyckoff] Helen and all as ever

I am
Yours in the Mother
Turiyananda

Shortly before Swami Turiyananda left Shanti Ashrama for the last time, it is said that he had a vision which he related to Gurudasa. One reads of it in the Swami's biography by Swami Ritajananda:

The Divine Mother had come to the Swami and had asked him to remain in the Ashrama. But he had refused. Then She told him that if he stayed the work would grow rapidly, and many beautiful buildings would be erected. Still Turiyananda had refused. At last She showed him the place full of disciples. 'Let me go to Swamiji first', he had said. And the Mother, with grave countenance, vanished from his sight. ... The vision left Turiyananda unhappy and disturbed. 'I have done wrong', he said with a sigh, 'but it cannot be helped now.'

Leaving Gurudasa in charge of the Ashrama, the Swami started for San

Francisco on Monday, June 2. The following evening he spoke to some of the Vedanta students at the Petersens' house and on the evening of June 5 was given a reception and supper at the Society's Oak Street headquarters. Mr. Allan, who was present, wrote in his 'Early History' that among the many speeches at that farewell supper was one by Mr. Wollberg in which on behalf of the Class, he presented the Swami with 'a large flexible portfolio album filled with photographs portraying his visit to America, with its various scenes in city and country, the Ashrama, the Class and many friends.' The following day the Swami sailed on the *America Maru* for India. It was not until his ship touched port in Rangoon that he heard the news of Swami Vivekananda's passing from this earth on July 4, a week earlier.

10

Thus we come to the end of the story of Swami Turiyananda's work at Shanti Ashrama.² But this does not close the story of Shanti Ashrama itself. There were—and perhaps are—more chapters to come.

In 1903 Swami Trigunatita, then in charge of the San Francisco Vedanta Society, spent the inclement month of November at the Ashrama with a group of ten students instituting a strict, highly organized regime of meditation, classes, and chores. The Swami's ways differed markedly from those of Swami Turiyananda, who disliked organization, and inevitably conflict arose between Gurudasa, whom Swami Turiyananda had left in charge of the Ashrama, and Swami Trigunatita, who, as head of the Vedanta Society was, in fact, the Swami

2. For some more information about Shanti Ashrama, we suggest the interested readers consult the book *Atman Alone Abides*, published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004. This book contains the conversations of Gurudasa (Swami Atulananda).—Ed.

in charge. It was a conflict that could not be resolved. In February of 1906, Gurudasa left Shanti Ashrama and shortly thereafter went to India for a five years' stay. In 1922 he again went to India, this time never to return. He died there in 1966 at the age of 97, well known as Swami Atulananda, a respected monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

The official records of Swami Trigunatita's visits to Shanti Ashrama with groups of students are not complete, but it would seem that, with the exception of two or three years, the Ashrama was opened annually for one month in either the summer or the fall. Each year the same strenuous routine that had been initiated in 1903 was followed. It would appear, however, that Swami Trigunatita did not look upon the San Antonio Valley as a practical place for a permanent or, for that matter, a part-time retreat. In 1912 he purchased two hundred acres of presumably fertile land near Concord, a small town in the East Bay Area, much easier of access from San Francisco than Shanti Ashrama and blessed with a more equitable climate. He hoped there to establish a Vedanta colony and a retreat, distributing most of the acreage among individual members of the Society who wished to settle there. (Concord itself, however, was too far from the city for short visits, and the land, it so happened, was infertile. All in all, the venture was impracticable, and shortly after Swami Trigunatita's death in 1915 the property was sold.)

Swami Prakashananda, who succeeded Swami Trigunatita, made four-week retreats at Shanti Ashrama with a group of students almost every June of his twelve-year ministry. But in 1927, his successor, Swami Dayananda, discontinued the practice, and it has not since been revived.

On occasion, however, Vedanta students visit the Ashrama for the day (the journey,

by another route, is now an easier one), and no one who has done so has failed to remark upon the strong spiritual atmosphere that pervades the property, distinguishing it from the surrounding land almost as though the air of 160 acres were of a different, more luminous quality. The months which Swami Turiyananda spent there, meditating, practising austerities, living in retirement for days on end, teaching from Sanskrit scriptures, chanting, speaking of God—those months—about fifteen in all—in which he gave himself fully to Swamiji's work, did not by any means go in vain. He made Shanti Ashrama a holy place; and a holy place it will ever remain. Nor need one suppose that the San Antonio Valley will always be a semi-desert. Someday an adequate supply of

water may be discovered or piped there, and the land will be cultivated; someday electricity may be brought to the valley, air-conditioning will be possible and the long, hot summers made endurable. Someday, in short, Shanti Ashrama may flourish as a livable retreat for those who wish, and are ready, to renounce the world permanently and live a secluded, contemplative life—a life dedicated to the full realization of Swamiji's teachings. When that day comes—and surely it will come, though when, who can say?—the holy land that Swami Turiyananda created at Swamiji's behest will indeed be a source of great spiritual inspiration and vitality to countless people.

(Concluded)

RAMAKRISHNA'S NAREN* AND NAREN'S RAMAKRISHNA —IV

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

8

As tradition has it, Girish Ghosh once said to Swami Vivekananda: 'Brother Naren, please write a life of Sri Ramakrishna.' No one had ever seen heroic Vivekananda so nervous with an idea. In a trembling voice he said: 'G. G. [so he addressed Girish Ghosh], ask me to dry up the ocean, I shall do that; ask me to pulverize the mountain, I shall do that; but please do not ask me to write the life of Sri Ramakrishna.'

The implication of these words was: how much have I understood of him that I should venture to write his life!

Vivekananda did not write the life of Sri Ramakrishna; but he fulfilled the re-

quest of Girish Ghosh in an unexpected manner. In the hymn beginning with the words, '*Khandana bhava-bandhana*', meaning 'breaker of the world's bondage', the Swami has presented to mankind a living mystical manifestation of Ramakrishna, which will remain an absorbing object of meditation for all times to come.

In the hymn he did not describe Ramakrishna's lineage, place of birth, his physical features or his *sādhana*s. The Divine Mother had commanded Sri Ramakrishna to stay in the borderland of the Absolute and the relative, which is signified by the words *bhāva-mukha*. Hence the Ramakrishna we have as our own, is a coalescence of the known and the unknown. He is seated on the dust of our earth, but he dwells in That which shines here and beyond. He appears to keep beat of our

* 'Naren', short for Narendranath, was the pre-monastic name of Swami Vivekananda.

time, but he really wanders on the shores of the timeless. He comes near you as your dearest, but yet stays the 'uncle moon' of all. He laughs and jokes in the parlour of the Relative, in God's drawing room—the devotee's heart, then in a trice he melts away behind the screen of name and form into something of our not-knowing. Vivekananda, in his hymn, reveals this Ramakrishna in the manner of his true being. This is his supreme gift to the world.

That Sri Ramakrishna paid so much attention to Narendra, fed him with sweets and butter, and drowned him in such love; all these were in a sense a trust-deed—a process of self-actualization in the world!

The limitless had come to do the impossible—to dwell, as it were, within the frame of limitations. It was so sweet to have him seated near the warm hearth of man's small dwelling, to own him as a relation. Suppressing his own tears, however, Vivekananda took him back to the regions of the Real whence he had come.

Though perforce every description is a kind of imprisonment of a thing within a frame of limitation, in his hymn Vivekananda did not frame-bind Ramakrishna. On the contrary he revealed his imponderableness and thus released his Master's manifestations from apparent limitations to real unlimitedness.

The hymn is a garland of *mantras*, full of redeeming meaning-power. Each of these *mantras* reveals the dimensions and depths of Sri Ramakrishna's being in a unique way. Even at a little sounding of any of the *mantras*, as we shall see, out come the vibrations of its pent-up resonance.

खण्डन-भव-बन्धन . . . वन्दि तोमाय् ।

Xhandana-bhava-bandhana . . . vandi tomāy

O Breaker of world-bondage . . .
we adore Thee

In the hymn it is said: 'We adore thee'.

Who is being adored? How does he look? The surprising answer given is: 'O breaker of world-bondage, we adore thee.' Who breaks the world's bondage? Can a broken piece of pot make the pot whole? Only the potter can make the pot whole. That alone which is unbound, unlimited and unbroken can break the world's bondage. All broken things are under the spell of Maya. Can the bird caught in the net help release the bird in the cage? So the liberator must come from the regions of the fathomless blue on wings of perfect sovereignty. And he really comes, anxiously as the thing of the heart, as the possessor of the soul, and seated there in the inner world unnoticed, breaks our bondages outer. He comes to bring back self-awareness to the self-forgetful, so that man can return from the state of brokenness to the state of wholeness.

निरञ्जन नररूपधर निर्गुण गुणमय ।

*Niranjana nara-rupa-dhara nirguna
gunamay*

Thou hast assumed a human form,
O Stainless One; Thou art beyond the
gunas, yet full of auspicious qualities.

The stainless One beyond the regions of darkness, assumed this human form and went about with the name of Ramakrishna. This assumption of the human body by the Parama Purusha, the Supreme Being, has made man self-reverent, rendered God a kin of man and made him comprehensible. Though beyond the *gunas*, the substantive forces, He is the repository of so many auspicious qualities. He is beyond the reach and touch of man, yet through sheer grace He has got Himself involved in the affairs of man. Through holding fast unto Him man can go beyond all worldly attachments. Hold fast unto Him, O man, with all your powers. Then His power will flow through your nerves, and you will be transformed. When you are transformed, your world itself stands transmuted. If you

cannot hold unto Him like a baby-monkey, then cry, 'mew mew' like a kitten. He has taught all these tricks to man, and all for getting Himself bound for man's salvation. If we do not worship such a benefactor of man, whom should we worship?

मोचन-अघदूषण

Mochana-aghadushana

O Liberator from the blemish of sin.

In these blemished times called the 'Kaliyuga' he is the blazing purifier of all blemishes. Left to ourselves we do not even know what an unblemished life is, because the very instrument with which to conceive an unblemished life, is itself vitiated. We are tied hand and foot in the net of bondage woven by our own deeds. Yet hope springs eternal in our heart. The reason is this: here in the Ramakrishna phenomenon the magnet itself removed the dross that covers the needle in order to attract it to itself. This explains how we, mere we, too have a little longing for God. With what infinite grace he said:

Sometimes God acts as the magnet and the devotee as the needle. God attracts the devotee to Himself. Again, sometimes the devotee acts as the magnet and God as the needle. Such is the attraction of the devotee that God comes to him, unable to resist his love.²⁹

The love which He is unable to resist is also planted in the devotee's heart by Himself! Had it not been so, what could really have been our hope?

He steps into time from beyond the times, and hence in the house of time He is the vanquisher of all time-born evil. The creature of time cannot remove the evil of time just as the earthworm cannot

wash its own blemish of mud. For that, rains must come from above.

चिद्-घन-काय्

Chid-ghana-kāy

Having a body, of pure consciousness made. He is like one of us to look at, and speaks like the nearest and dearest one. And yet here is the Supreme Spirit before us, true and entire, the ultimate, the indescribable. Undoubtedly his body of flesh was cremated at Cossipore—and yet that body of Ramakrishna, made of the Spirit congealed as it were, sparkles in the heart of millions of devotees. He was verily the One. How could he then become so many? He could become so many precisely because he was the One. But the mystery is that the Ramakrishna of millions of devotees, is the Ramakrishna, full and entire. A devotee may be apparently a small fragmented man. But his Lord is not a fragmentary bit of God, but God Himself. Out of the Infinite you cannot take anything which is not infinite. And after your taking, what remains is also Infinite. The devotee's heart may be a tiny place to house the Infinite but the Infinite has infinite capacity of finding his way to stay there is fullness.

ज्ञानाञ्जन-विमल-नयन वीक्षणे मोह जाय् ।

Jñānānjana-vimala-nayana vikshane mohajay

A look at Thine pure eyes touched with collyrium of knowledge dispels delusion.

Look at those two limpid eyes of Ramakrishna, eyes that see and yet see not. They see that which is Real and do not see that which is unreal. How could one see that which is not? How could one not see that which is? Yet strangely, somehow, man sees the unreal and does not see the Real! Through those eyes, Ramakrishna sees what is and does not see what is not. He who looks at those eyes intently, the collyrium of knowledge will touch his eyes

29. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974, (hereafter *Gospel*), p. 426.

also ; his illusions and delusions will go and his inner vision will be open. Our eyes are mere eyes. Ramakrishna's eyes are eye-openers, a benign flame of knowledge beaming in the heart of eternity.

चिर-उन्मद प्रेम-पाथार

Chira-unmada prema-pāthāra

Ever-mad ocean of divine love.

Brahman unqualified and unrelated, as the essence of supreme Truth, the Absolute unconcerned, may satisfy the intellect of the philosopher. But man's heart cries for love. Baby requires the mother and not philosophical correctness of the Absolute. In his hymn Sri Ramakrishna is described by Vivekananda as *Chira-unmada prema-pāthāra*, the mad ocean of supreme divine love. If he who comes were infinite, how could his love be finite? And he who has infinite love, what need has he to require reason for love? His is unreasoned love, wreckless love, whole-hoggers' love. In fact, Sri Ramakrishna did not know counting and accounting. His is all-giving, all-forgiving and total love.

The power that is Ramakrishna continues to work in the wide world mainly through love. While he was in his physical frame, his love astounded people, transformed the recipients of that love. The love that flows to the world from Sri Ramakrishna, is a thing which issues directly from the very core of Reality, call it God or by any other name. Hence it is so abundant and deluging.

जगदीश्वर योग-सहाय् ।

Jagadisvara yoga-sahāy

Lord of the Universe,
Helper in Yoga.

He who is the Jagadisvara, the Lord of the Universe, is also the Yogesvara, the Lord of Yoga. The Yogesvara alone can be a *yoga-sahāy*, helper in Yoga. He incarnates Himself as the teacher of man, in

different cycles of time. This time He came through compulsion of love, love flowing from and to Him, in order to redeem the devotees. His main mission is to provide the link of union with God to those who stand sundered in awareness from the source of their being.

Strange ! almost everybody is forgetful about his most intimate relationship, which is with God. It is through God that we know anything, but God we know not. It is through Him that we love the beloved, but Him we love not.

What Sri Ramakrishna did in the assembly of people—while talking, walking on the road, uttering a joke, through smiles and tears, through a sudden lighting touch of his personal being, or through instantaneous entry into the supernal stillness of Samādhi—was to place God into the heart of everything, and every heart into God. This was not achieved by any doing : every action and movement flowed from this awareness. And so Ramakrishna's most powerful preaching about God was not done through words ; but through those attained states of being, when he was utterly oblivious of his own body, of the world, of the watching people before him, and when he could not utter one word about God. His silence while in Samādhi was the most eloquent preaching on God.

He had not to argue with the non-believer, blast the agnostic, or smash the atheist to prove that God is. He simply said : 'I saw, I see, you too can see.' And many came and saw. It was that simple. Sometimes it was even simpler ; he did not have even to speak. Uttering the name of God, he utterly entered into Him, became That. And you saw. And you felt. And you could not deny thereafter.

He never uttered one harsh word to the sinner. He wept, and sins were washed away. To preach God he did not frame suffocating rules for your soul. His joy

was so great in communion with God that you were tempted to grab it. He was never, never drab. He hated monotony, if at all he hated anything in this world.

Yoga for him was somehow or anyhow getting to God. So a multi-tone approach—as many views so many paths—was his approach. He brought God home in so many varieties of ways that one way is sure to ring the bell for you. Had he loved himself more than he did you or God, he would have said: 'Come only this way or go to hell!' But he said: 'Come, just come any way that suits you.' So Yoga has become the delight of the soul in Ramakrishna's teachings and not a tension of the nerves. Loving God is the thing.

Love springs spontaneously when exposure to God takes place in a holy atmosphere. This is what Ramakrishna gave to the world—an atmosphere, where nothing is so real as God, and God is so real.

What will you achieve by merely pressing your nose? Open your heart. Expand your consciousness. Be simple. Discard crookedness. Become straight and true. Ask like the thunder and you will get like the shower. Yoga need not be like lumbago in your back. God is Ānanda, joy ineffable. How then can we get Him by going away to the regions where there is no entry of joy?

Sri Ramakrishna therefore laughed and sang and danced—that novel rhythm of the cosmic dance of New Natarāj, Yoga manifest—and then suddenly entered into Samādhi.

Look, where he entered. It was your heart. For you could not resist loving that Ramakrishna who loved God so much. His love has become your love, your Yoga. So he is *yoga-sahāy*, helper in Yoga. What a wonder!

Who knew that God was laughing, singing and dancing? Notwithstanding our

not-knowing, was it not so? That not-knowing is called *ajnāna*.

What is the need of our clinging to not-knowing today, when he himself out of infinite compassion has 'broken the pot in the midst of the market-place': 'He who was Rama, who was Krishna, is in this body Ramakrishna . . .?' There is no need. Yet we may take our time. Faith needs a season for growing. There is such a thing as an individual's time-factor. Well, take your time. He will wait anxiously and tirelessly at your closed doors, lest someday perchance you open it! The onus is upon him! And, are you not the daring of the Infinite?

On the other hand, he became man, such a man as man himself wonders at and reveres as his own highest state of being. This has made it possible for man again to respect himself. Man had well-nigh forgotten his true state of being—*satyam, shivam, sundaram*—Truth, Holiness, Beauty, Absolute. Through seeing Ramakrishna man has regained ground for self-realization. He had lost himself in the wilderness of bewilderment. Today he knows whither sparkles the polestar in the darkness. So, man is unafraid again. He is no longer terrified by his own ugliness, puniness and insignificance. He knows, back home and here and now and always, he is divine.

Ramakrishna not only proved God to man, but also proved equally forcefully man to God. He showed man how to storm the citadel of God. He demonstrated that man can tear the veil of Maya and become That; man can make God run about through his power of love; and, what is infinitely more, that God so much reveres man, loves man, that He became man.

Thus Sri Ramakrishna is Yogesvara. He is *yoga-sahāy*. He has taught Yoga both ways: God to man, and man to God.

In the massive mansion of ignorance, he

lighted that eternal lamp of knowledge, whose flame does not waver due to the winds of change in varying fashions of ignorance.

भञ्जन-दुखगञ्जन करुणाघन

Bhanjana-dukhaganjana karunā-ghana

Thou art the destroyer of sorrows and a configuration of concentrated compassion.

Sri Ramakrishna did not stay seated motionless like a slab of stone after uttering the Vedantic dictum: 'Brahman is real, and the world illusory.' He rolled on the dust of this earth and in tears implored: 'O my men, just utter the name of Hari once!' So abject was the self-simplification of the Lord for the love of man.

What did it really matter for the Lord if we took His Name, gave Him our love? What could we really give Him which we did not receive from Him? Can we enrich God from treasure scooped out of our ego? The point is: by taking His name we stay in Him, by loving Him we are salvaged and saved. God begs, not for replenishing his lost store, but for giving away his abundance to those who need.

Sri Ramakrishna had no affliction of his own in life, yet, why did he weep so much throughout his whole life? He wept because, as Vivekananda says in the hymn, he is: '*Bhanjana-dukhaganjana karunā-ghana*, the personification of concentrated compassion and the remover of the mortal's pang of afflictions.' Who knew how much of man's affliction he thus washed away with his tears?

If we remember Ramakrishna, to be sure, our afflictions will go. And to remember Ramakrishna, what an invitation to spiritual feast it is! So, that incomparable devotee Girish Ghosh said: 'It is not difficult to adore, love or worship him [Rama-

krishna]; what is difficult is to forget him!' ³⁰

कृन्तन-कलिडोर्

Krintana-kalidor

O Breaker of the bondage of the dark age of Kali.

In jest Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Having fed me Balaram will now make me dance!' That was to pass over fortunate Balaram. But the sovereign humourist did not say why he had at all to accept Balaram's invitation, or even come without invitation! That apart! Well, you know the story was too deep for tears. So, it needed a cover of laughter. His life itself was for self-giving. If the Supreme Being steps into our world of being, it is only to give himself away in a manner understandable to man. How piteously Ramakrishna cried to Divine Mother: 'O Mother, please don't give me Brahmajnāna.' He did not want to be unconscious in Samādhi. He wanted to make merry with human beings. In this joyless world he longed to bring a deluge of joy. And what a haven of joy he became.

There he was, seated on the couch in his room at Dakshineswar. The door was always open. Like the blowing wind anyone could enter it at the time of his choosing. That you came at all, that you asked, that you prayed, that you cried, that you knocked, made him so beholden to you. To have come to God is to make God's eyes glisten. To have asked, is to have made mute God articulate. To have prayed is to have raised a storm of affection in God's heart. Who knows about the extreme anxiety of God's responsiveness? When the prodigal son returns home there is re-

30. 'The Minute Book of the Ramakrishna Mission' (hereafter 'Minute Book'), 17th Meeting, 15 August 1897.

joicing in heaven. You do not know how God looks upon you.

Somebody was one day singing this song at Dakshineswar: 'O Lord, I am without devotion.' As Sri Ramakrishna heard the song he was overwhelmed with tears!

At Dakshineswar, whether seated or lying on bed, or sauntering about in the garden, he was always expectant—always spreading out longing looks on the way by which the suffering, sorrowing, groping and seeking people would come. And what a reception they received! Only the Divine, and not man, could receive man with that unquestioning benevolence, like the ocean receiving rivers with their refuse.

'One night while he [Girish Ghosh, that grand sinner who became a unique devotee] was enjoying with a couple of friends in a house of ill fame, he felt an irresistible inclination to go to Dakshineswar. So he left the place with his friends and got into a fly. Although the carriage was running as fast as it could, yet he told the driver to urge on. The night was advanced, people were fast asleep, and the three unsteady visitors entered Paramahansa Dev's room. An extraordinary welcome attended them. Holding him by his hands, Paramahansa Dev danced and sang in joy. A thought flashed in his mind that he was in the presence of one who can welcome to his heart a fallen man like himself. His own father, mother, wife and children would have shunned him seeing the condition he was in. Here was a man who was honoured by hundreds as a saint; [that he] should have thought it worthwhile to love and entertain a fallen man like himself! If there was a *patita-pāvana* (redeemer of the fallen) it was he, thought Girish Babu.'³¹

From his personal experience, Girish said, '... he is the embodiment of compassion, the sovereign of the heart; if you call upon

him, inner peacelessness and sin will leave you.'³²

Imagine: while the world was asleep, the Lord incarnate on earth holding in all love the hand of this drunken-fallen man and dancing at midnight at Kāli's parlour while the Ganga was flowing by.

'Bizarre madness!' would you exclaim? But, withal a shining hope for the like of us, least of us. Is that not so?

Vivekananda has hymned Sri Ramakrishna as *Krintana-kalidor*: one who cuts the fetters of the Kaliyuga ('dark age'). To cut the unyielding fetters of Kaliyuga, you require the sharp sword of Kāli. With nothing less powerful than God's own might flowing in the form of His grace can you remove the shackles forged by His Maya. And yet with what great compassion Ramakrishna softened the sword of Kāli, before striking the blow with it. The pain of that blow he took on himself, and the deliverance of it he gave away to mankind.

Even with cancer in his throat, that awful pain always demanding attention, he did not stop for a day his spiritual ministry. His soulful words are:

Let me be condemned to be born over and over again even in the form of a dog, if by doing so, I can be of help to a single soul. It is glorious to help even one man.³³

While in great physical agony one day, deeply afflicted at the sight of sorrowing disciples he said: 'I have gone on suffering so much for fear of making you weep. But if you will say, "Oh, there is so much suffering! Let the body die," then I may give up the body.'³⁴ He clearly pointed out that only to avoid causing pain to devotees, he was undergoing such pain, and it was open to

32. 'Minute Book', 14th Meeting, 25 July 1897.

33. *A Short Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1972, p. 96.

34. *Gospel*, p. 934.

31. 'Minute Book', 3rd Meeting, 9 May, 1897.

him to discard the body at will any time. But, strangely enough, nobody said that the body might go. How could they? Had he not come to give his all, immolate himself entirely? Total self-giving could not be an accomplished fact as long as a particle was kept back. When all is given, and self-giving is complete, that is Vedanta.

By renouncing woman as an object of lust, he enthroned Shakti on the pedestal of her eternal glory. By renouncing gold he enthroned the Goddess of wealth in his heart. In his own manner Ramakrishna enriched this begging world, ridden with the passion of iconoclasm. In this world where we tend to violate everything beautiful, desecrate everything holy, Ramakrishna resurrected beauty, consecrated holiness anew. This enrichment of the world this replenshing, is one of his greatest acts of bounty. Now get your full share out of that patrimony according to your full inner might and need. There is no end to the gift of this King among renouncers (Tyāgishvara). And his gift you cannot count in the figures of the bank. It provides you with the secret key for the attainment of all the values of life, up to the supreme value, *moksha*, liberation of the spirit.

Look at man of this sorry world. He is always afraid, never without doubt, and constantly having a palpitating heart, as if he is game pursued by the hunter. Like a rat he is searching for a hole, underground shelter, and strangely, that too for being fearless! He has rendered the surface of this good earth too perilous for himself. He is snatching food from the hands of *others'* children and hiding it away for the sake of his *own* children. For security's sake he is piling up world-destroying armaments! He seeks peace in such a war-like manner. With all that, he has so much knowledge, arts and sciences. This is the homo sapiens of our day. Alas! O man, what have you come to!

But even in the midst of this dire discomfiture, the way to deliverance remains open to man. Know thyself. Then your wretchedness will be gone for ever. Never again will you be assailed by doubts and fears. 'The aim of life is the attainment of God,'³⁵ teaches Sri Ramakrishna categorically. Like an arrow set flying to its target, Ramakrishna gave human life an unwavering sense of direction—as by words, more so by his own life. If this one ideal is held fast, everything else will fall in its right place; details will take care of themselves. By merely polishing details you cannot master the meaning of your life, much less self-fulfilment. What is necessary is to hold to the pillar of this root-idea. This is God's love in operation, which brings the straying soul back home, and makes him understand that the gun need have no fear of the bullet. Be target-set, then millions of problems will have no power over you.

We become weakened, worsted, twisted and disfigured by the problems of life because in going we do not move towards the goal. The very proneness to God makes of the crawling, 'insectified' man a conquering hero. God is more than our need. He is the meaning of all our needs. He is the finale of our fulfilment.

Our dark age has already been redeemed. That we do not care to know it, is the only bondage that binds us. Come out of the hovels of your illusions and see how much light is rushing in to greet you, to glorify you. That is one wave of Ramakrishna's life-work.

निष्कारण-भक्त-शरण

Nishkāraṇa-bhakata-sharāna

Thou the giver of unconditional refuge to the devotees.

There are only a handful who can take

³⁵. *Gospel*, p. 406.

care of themselves when instructed : know thyself. But there are millions who do not know how to know themselves. For those conscious or unconscious lovers of God, Sri Ramakrishna is *nishkāraṇa-bhakata-sharāna* : the giver of unconditional refuge to the devotees. He has been going about in the world and doing this tremendous work. He does not ask for credentials. How many are there in the world, who could frontally say : 'Lord God, here is cash down of my purity, give me illumination !'? Sri Ramakrishna did not ask anyone to show his sacred thread or a certificate of Sanskrit learning before instructing him. Love just flowed out of him in a mad way. Hence holding on to any pretext—inner suffering, error, sins so-called—, he is there before you, to help you all the way through. He does not wait to be formally invited and received. In your need he is there with you, before you even knew that you needed him.

सम्पद तव श्रीपद

Sampada tava sripada

Our only treasure Thy blessed feet.

This is the strangest irony: seeking to end our miseries we have made a mountain of them. Whence are all these afflictions? All of them arise from our wants. Wherefrom arise all these wants? They arise from our nature. As the plebeian saying goes, the nature does not change even with death! Even then there is a way. Take refuge in those two blessed feet. Surrender yourself completely without stint or count. Then you will see that the world has become like a mud-puddle. What does that mean? It means that you will be so infilled with grace that your wants will disappear and the resultant miseries too. Inner affluence will enrich you so much that all your outer poverty will drop off. You will discover your divine patrimony of which none can rob you.

Bhakti alone is *shakti*. Devotion alone is strength. The strength born of Bhakti is alone true affluence. In the *shakti* born of Bhakti only, the Lord is manifest. When you have that strength, are you then afraid of a storm in a cup? Therefore, true wealth are those blessed feet of the Lord, taking refuge in which you go beyond all wants, cravings and fears.

प्रेमार्पण सम-दरशन जगजन-दुख जाय् ।

Premārpana sama-darashana jagajana-dukha jāy

O Same-sighted One, Thou givest thy love equally to all and their sorrows vanish.

It is a real wonder how that wide-eyed guileless boy of Kamarpukur has today spread out all over the world. And he is going about doing good, lifting the burden of many, removing their sufferings and afflictions. There is no knowing in how many peaceless hearts he has opened the springs of inner peace. Through his divine touch uncounted people stricken with fear have become fearless; the restless have become tranquil; and the bewildered have found their way. To the forsaken and abandoned he has become the friend of their soul. In lives tainted and smeared he has blossomed neatness and purity. In how many varieties of ways he has spread out in all directions, in continents, across mountains and oceans, removing afflictions! As many types of afflictions, more than that are his approaches for removing them. It has to be so; for with everyone he is the best personal friend of the soul. Afflictions could be removed only in a personal way and not through any massive collectivization.

It is not that because he belongs to many, he does not really belong to you fully. It is not also that because he really belongs to you, he does not in truth belong to others fully. The Real is that which is entirely true in every situation. Even the last particle of sea-water will taste salt.

His oceanic love is personally for each and all because he is same-sighted. Hence with his coming into one's life, one's afflictions drop off (*jagajana-dukha jāy*).

9

Though he came from far beyond the regions of all duality, he stayed in the mud-house of our distracted world. In fact the Lord seems to be ever anxious to descend on earth as man. And so he said that he would come after a time with a broken earthen pot in his hand, indicating perhaps that the symbol of destitution will be his very ornament, that he would thus specially glorify the dispossessed, the *daridra-nārāyanas*.

Whether he comes again or not, indeed matters little for us. That he already came this time, is itself enough and more for us. He who would once hold him in his heart, will he be any more moping in the darkness of ignorance to require the coming of the Lord again? He will attain the empire of the light, the sovereignty of the spirit, the fulfilment that knows no more waning through eternity.

Vivekananda's Ramakrishna is a *musafir* (traveller) and saunters on the borderland of the Absolute and the relative. You may touch him but cannot make him a prisoner of your understanding. You can bring from the ocean a potful of brine, but you cannot bring the ocean home.

Do you remember that night? That great night of eternity? You will bear with the repetition for a sweet need! Narendra had importuned Ramakrishna that he might mediate with Kāli the Divine Mother for the removal of his gnawing worldly wants. Narendra would not acknowledge the Divine Mother. Hence, himself unable to pray to Her, he adopted this method in one of his crises of life. Even doing this was not easy for Narendra. He could not compromise on accepting Kāli without proof.

But tender-hearted as he was, he could no longer bear the sight of the sufferings of his impoverished widowed mother and his younger brothers and sisters facing starvation. Sri Ramakrishna, like a master strategist, seized this opportunity, and sent him to Kāli to ask it for himself. As Narendra stood before the resplendent Mother, he was so much moved by her livingness, grace and power, that he entirely forgot what he had gone to ask for, and simply prostrated himself before the Mother and prayed for dispassion, renunciation, Bhakti and Jnāna. When he returned to Sri Ramakrishna's room, the latter asked if he had prayed. Naren was startled and replied in the negative. The Master sent him again to the temple. Something unprecedented must have happened to him at the temple, for he again forgot to pray. He was rebuked by the Master and sent for the third time to the temple. This time he did not forget to pray but simply could not persuade his mind or tongue to utter a prayer for worldly benefit. It was impossible for him to ask for anything material. All his asking and getting were concerned entirely with the worship of the Divine. Hence, rolling on the ground, in tears he prayed: 'Mother, I do not want anything else; give me knowledge and devotion.' But afterwards from Sri Ramakrishna he extracted the word that his mother, brothers and sisters would have no want of the bare and simple wherewithal of life.

There is such depth of meaning in Sri Ramakrishna's words: 'the Incarnation is like the udder of the cow through which milk comes.' Sri Ramakrishna accepted the world with much reverence. Many a time he said: 'Mother has become everything.' He did not tell you harshly to discard the world, deny all human relationship and follow him to the wilderness for a higher life. He asked everyone to provide for his dependents, fulfil his obligations; for that way one comes to practise serious religion.

He did not give any quarter to Harish who had come to live at Dakshineswar utterly neglecting his responsibilities. He asked him to look for a job and rear his family in an honourable manner. He rebuked him for losing his sense of dignity.

Again, he explicitly said that a man could not acquire spirituality if he neglected his duties to parents. This too was a new kind of worship of the Divine Mother. If you discard the seeds of the Bilva fruits,³⁶ you cannot really get the full weight of the fruit. Therefore, specially through the training of Narendra, Sri Ramakrishna particularly cultivated compassion in Vedanta. As long as he retained his body, Ramakrishna did not permit Narendra to renounce the world. He was kept tied to the world, in affliction, so that he might pay off his debts to it. This was how Naren manifested Ramakrishna in personal life.

On that night after emerging from the temple of Kāli, perfectly convinced about Her all-powerful, all-encompassing existence, Naren implored Ramakrishna to teach him a song on the Mother. And Sri Ramakrishna taught with infinite joy and love this song to the disciple :

Mother, Thou art our sole Redeemer,
Thou the support of the three *gunas*,
Higher than the most high.
Thou art compassionate, I know,
Who takest away our bitter grief.

Sandhyā art Thou, and Gāyatri ;
Thou dost sustain this universe.
Mother, the Help art Thou
Of those that have no help but Thee,
O Eternal Beloved of Shiva !

Thou art in earth, in water Thou ;
Thou liest at the root of all.
In me, in every creature,

Thou hast Thy home ; though clothed
with form
Yet art Thou formless Reality.³⁷

Mingling his own tune with that of his Master, Naren sang this song on the Divine Mother in the depth of that great night of his acceptance of Kāli. And after that, like one intoxicated, he continued to sing that song through the whole night.

A devotee who went to see Ramakrishna next morning found that the Master's face was flushed with unspeakable joy. Pointing to Narendra who was then lying asleep in the verandah, the Master repeatedly said in glowing joy : 'Narendra has accepted Kāli. Don't you think this is wonderful !' He continued to repeat these words to everyone who came to see him on that day.

In the afternoon when Narendra entered his room, at the very sight of him, Ramakrishna entered into an abstracted mood. After a while, pressing close to Naren he uttered the supreme truth about Ramakrishna's Naren and Naren's Ramakrishna. He said pointing to himself and to Naren :

Do you know what I see? This is I,
that too is I. I am telling you the truth.
I do not see any difference whatsoever.
It is as if a stick is thrown on the waters
of the Ganga ; and looks as though the
water is divided into two. But in reality
there is no division ; it is all one water.
Do you understand what I mean? Is
there anything else but the Mother?
What do you say?³⁸

Then he wanted to have a smoke and was offered a hookah ; but he did not like smoking from it. After one or two puffs he returned it, and saying, 'I will smoke with the bowl,' took it in his hands and began smoking. After smoking three or

36. The Bilva or Bel (*Aegle marmelos*) is a thorny tree of India, producing edible fruit, and associated with Shiva worship.

37. *Gospel*, p. 159.

38. See Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, trans. Swami Jagadananda, Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1970, p. 810.

four puffs, he held it near Narendra's mouth and said 'Just have a puff, a puff through my hands.' Narendra shrunk, at which the Master said, 'What ignorance ! are you and I different ? This am I, that also am I.'³⁹

This was said not only as a truly Vedantic

revelation. A while ago he had said : 'Is there anything else but the Mother?' These two statements signify the same truth.

Ramakrishna's is Naren, Naren's is Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna is Vivekananda, Vivekananda is Ramakrishna. 'This am I, that too am I.'

(Concluded)

³⁹. *Ibid.*, p. 810.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*—X

To Sister Christine

54

The Math, Belur,
Dist. Howrah, Bengal,
14th October 1901.

My dear Christina,

Just now came a letter from Mrs. Bull, but none from you as I expected one this mail.

Mrs. Bull writes, 'I wrote Christina recently to ask her if she were to be free in case the opportunity opened for her to go to the East. I send you her reply.'

I went through several times your letter to Mrs. Bull. It surely was horrible ; and you have been all this time hiding the real state of affairs from me, and posing great cheerfulness !!

You will be a precious fool to lose the opportunity if such comes, and is offered by Mrs. Bull. You will only have to take a year's leave. The rest will all be arranged by Mrs. Bull, including, I am sure, all your anxiety for those you will have to leave behind in Detroit.

You have been good, too good to be human, and you are so still. But it is no use making oneself unnecessarily miserable. 'Mother's will' surely, if the chance comes ; and it has got to come, I know.

I would not write you about my health ; for after all this hide and seek, even though it was for my good, I think you have not much of a right to know the truth about my health.

But to some things you have eternal rights, and amongst others to my eternal love and blessings.

VIVEKANANDA.

* © The President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math.

The Math, P.O. Belur, Howrah,
12th November 1901.

Dear Christina,

The morning's mail brought me a photograph from Detroit. I thank the sender very much for promptness. Well, I liked it much. But the old one is the profile view ; this, front. Then again, the phenomenal fat seems to be only imaginary on somebody's part. In a way, I am more used to the old one, and as such I cannot slight an old friend. So let me say both are good. The one is an evolution of the other, for the better. I expected a line but it has not arrived yet, may tomorrow. We have a proverb here : 'one river is equal to forty miles.'²⁸ There is only a river between Calcutta and our Math, and yet such a round about way for the mail. Sometimes it comes dibbling for days.

Mrs. Bull and Nivedita must have started for the U.S. by this time.²⁹ Nivedita is sure to see you in Detroit. Mrs. Bull is anxious to induce you to join her Indian party via Japan. If you can take leave for some months, do come. Mother will arrange anyhow ; I need not trouble myself.

Mrs. Sevier has started already, it seems alone.

We had grand Pujas (worship) here in our Math this year. The biggest of our Pujas is the Mother worship—lasting nearly four days and nights. We brought a clay image of Mother with ten hands, standing with one foot on a lion, the other on a demon. Her two daughters—the Goddess of wealth and the Goddess of learning and music—on either side on lotuses ; beneath, her two sons—the God of war and that of wisdom.³⁰

Thousands of people were entertained, but I could not see the Puja, alas ! I was down with high fever all the time. Day before yesterday, however, came the Puja of Kali ; we had an image too, and sacrificed a goat and burned a lot of fireworks. This night every Hindu home is illuminated, and the boys go crazy over the fireworks. There are of course several cases of severe burn in the hospitals. We had less fireworks but more Puja, recitation of Mantras, offering of flowers, food and songs. It lasted only one night.

I am expected to leave Calcutta and Bengal in a few days, as this country becomes very malarious this month after the rains. It is pleasant and cool now, and the north Himalayan wind is blowing. We have fenced in a lot of our grounds to protect our vegetables from our cows and goats and sheep. The other day one of my [excision] but the [excision] mother was either so wicked or [excision], that she would not look at her young. I tried to keep

²⁸. The original Bengali proverb reads : '*Eka nadi bisa krosa*', which literally means 'one river is twenty *krosas*.' One *krosa* is equal to two miles ; so Swamiji translates the proverb as 'one river is equal to forty miles.'

²⁹. At this time Mrs. Bull and Sister Nivedita were in Europe and had planned to come to India after a visit to the U.S.A. ; but they changed their plan, and came to India directly.

³⁰. Here Swamiji is referring to Durga Puja, the autumnal worship of the Divine Mother. The demon in the image is Mahishāsura ; the Goddess of wealth, Lakshmi ; the Goddess of learning and music Saraswati ; the God of war, Kartikeya ; and the God of wisdom, Ganesha.

them alive on cow's milk, but the poor things died in the night! Two of my ducks are sitting on their eggs. As this is their first time and the male does not help them a bit, I am trying my best to keep up their strength by good feeding. We cannot keep chickens here—they are *forbidden* to us.

With all love,
VIVEKANANDA.

56

The Math, P.O. Belur, Howrah,
25th November 1901.

Dear Christine,

It seems your bottle of nerve tonic did not do you much good, your assurances to the contrary. It must have been a curious error—I must have been down with fever or asthma or something else at that time. Still a thousand thousand pardons. This was my first and it will be my last offence. Your letter that went to Miss MacLeod has not come back yet. Perhaps Miss MacLeod is bringing the letter with her, as she is coming over to India from Japan herself, accompanied by her Japanese converts (males of course, as she is a lady missionary).³¹

Well, well, I so wish things will so arrange themselves that I could see you once more. Mother knows. By the by, my right eye is failing me badly—I see very little with that one. It will be hard for me for some time either to read or write; and as it is getting worse every day, my people are urging me to go to Calcutta and consult a doctor. I will go soon, as soon as I recover from a bad cold I have on. I am so glad you were so taken in with Abhedananda; only I thought one Hindu was good for a lifetime.

Poor Miss Joe,³² so she remains ignorant as to real cause of my not going over to Japan! You need not be the least anxious—there is no harm done; and if there were, Joe and especially Mrs. Bull make it their life's duty to befriend those I love.

I will try your tonic when it arrives; and the gift I pray will even be followed by the giver, for surely a [excision] is more stimulating and healing than dead drugs.

With all love,
VIVEKANANDA.

57

The Math, P.O. Belur, Howrah,
27th November 1901.

Dear Christine,

It is almost sure, I did not write any letter to you that week which made that infamous blunder. As I wrote you two letters a few days previous, it is

31. Miss MacLeod's 'converts' were Mr. Okakura Kakuzo and Hori. Mr. Okakura was the founder of the Bijutsuin (the Fine Arts Academy of Japan) and the author of several books on Eastern art, culture and religion. Hori was a young Buddhist priest of Nara, Japan.

32. Miss Josephine MacLeod,

not at all probable that I wrote you another. Then Miss MacLeod must have sent the letter back. I must have written only one letter that week to Miss MacLeod, giving her my reasons for not going to Japan; and somehow it so happened that the hand wrote the most familiar name on the envelope. So you need not expect any letter of yours back from Japan, as there was none; and if there was, you shall have it.

I am just under another spell of catarrh and asthma. Yesterday a cyclone blew over the place, and several trees and a bit of the roof are damaged. It is gloomy yet and cold. You know it is almost impossible to write with the asthma on, so *au revoir* [goodbye].

Yours,
VIVEKANANDA,

58

The Math, P.O. Belur, Howrah,
12th December 1901.

Dear Christine,

Well then, you wanted to know all about my state of health, and you insist. You shall have it.

You know, last three years I am getting albuminuria now and then. It is not constant, neither is it yet of any organic character. The kidneys are structurally all right. Only they throw out albumin now and then.

This is worse than throwing out sugar in diabetes. Albumin poisons the blood, attacks the heart and does all sorts of mischief. Catching cold always increases it. This time it has caused a small blood vessel in the right eye to burst, so that I scarcely see with that eye.

Then the circulation has become very rapid. The doctors have put me to bed; and I am forbidden to eat meat, to walk or even stand up, to read and write.

Already there is some benefit in this lying down process, as I sleep a lot and have good appetite and am digesting my meals. Curious, is it not, that inactivity should bring on sleep and appetite?

There is no cause to be anxious at all. Mrs. Sevier arrived in Calcutta three days ago; and by the last advice from Nivedita, Mrs. Bull and she will start on the 13th December if they can secure berths, or on the 30th December at least. I pray Mrs. Bull has already invited you and that you have got your year's leave and are coming over, and that you will get this letter in India redirected. If Mother does not fulfil this prayer, sure She will take me across the water soon, and [line excised].

The doctor says if I keep to my bed for three months I will get completely cured.

Now, don't worry. If good days are not coming we will make them, that is all. Hang it! I must have good days now, and that too very soon. You know, I always keep my words. Mother must do it, or I throw Her overboard. I am not so submissive as you are.

Our old-school physicians pour in tons of iron and other metals—including gold, silver, pearls, etc.—down our throats. I would be a man of iron by this time ; perhaps yours will be the last touch to make my body one of steel.

This is our best season for eating turtles, but they are all black. The green can only be found in America. Alas ! I am prevented from the taste of meat.

Now, noble heart, take courage. Don't mope : you have buffeted many a storm in life, old war horse, to be like a silly boarding-school girl. Things must go all right. I am not going to die or to be ill just now ; I am determined to be healthy. You know my grit.

Miss MacLeod sent you your letter—what was it about? Was there anything queer? I am glad she had it. She writes beautifully about you. She has already started, and we will have a jolly good company this winter here in Calcutta. Mrs. Bull, Miss MacLeod, Mrs. Sevier and Nivedita and I will be overjoyed if somebody else will be thrown into the bargain. I won't any more value, eh? I must stop ; am going to look after my geese and ducks just for five minutes breaking the doctor's command to lie down all the time. One of the geese is a silly fearful bird, always despondent and anxious. She likes to be all alone by herself and is miserable ; very much like another goose I know in another place.

Here my story ends
and spinach top bends.
Why is spinach withering?
because the goat is browsing.
Why is goat browsing?
because no grass is growing.
Why no grass is growing?
the gardener is not watering.
Why there is no watering?
the Master is not commanding.
Why is he not commanding?
An ant has bitten the Master !

This is a nursery rhyme told after a story, and it is true of us all. It is only an ant bite after all—the troubles here ; isn't it?

Ever yours,
VIVEKANANDA,

59

The Math, Belur,
Dist. Howrah, Bengal, India,
18th December 1901.

Dear Christine,

I am much better and the rest is doing me good. I have found out that lying on bed all the time gives me as much sleep as wanted, and good digestion too. Albumin and sugar vanish immediately I begin taking rest.

Mrs. Bull and Nivedita start for India from Marseilles today, and unless they change their plan, must be in India before this reaches you—two weeks before.

Herewith I send you four hundred eighty dollars by cheque drawn on Thomas Cook & Son, Broadway, New York. They have no branch office in Detroit. On receipt of this, you write to Thomas Cook & Son, Broadway, New York, that you have got a cheque from India—mentioning the amount and number—drawn by Thomas Cook & Son on the firm of Thomas Cook & Son, and wanted to be advised as to how to cash it. (Don't send the cheque ahead. Excuse all these details—I feel you are a baby in business, though I am worse.) This is to pay your 'passage to India'³³ if you think fit to accept Mrs. Sevier's invitation. If you get leave and come, I am sure you will find somebody who is coming to England at least; thus from there again somebody who is coming to Egypt; you come with them as far as Italy, thence direct on a boat to India.

Second-class passage across the Atlantic is all right, but the second class from Italy to Bombay is rather bad. There are always a few rough men and fast women. There is money enough for travelling first class all through if so you like.

The Mother will see to it even as this money came. Drop me a line as soon as you engage your passage—better a week ahead; otherwise I don't see how the letter can reach me. The vessel to India you get from London; and possibly a letter may reach me with the name of the vessel, etc. In any case, however, you wire me as soon as you land and get into a *good* hotel. You will find many persons to receive you, and me too most probably.

In case, however, things take another turn and you cannot come, no matter. Do with the money just as it pleases you.

It is very probable that after Miss MacLeod and Mrs. Bull have been through India they are going home via Japan; and, of course, I am going with them. In that case I will be in California next fall.

It will be a nice trip, and would it not be a fine tour round the world if you get leave and come?

Do just as the Mother opens the way for you, and do not worry.

Yours with all love and blessings
VIVEKANANDA

³³. Swamiji places this phrase in quotation marks because it is the title of a poem in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

The By-Ways and Ways to God—II (Editorial): In the previous instalment of the editorial, teachings of the great saints and Incarnations for the by-way travellers were told in brief. In this instalment, an outline of the various spiritual practices (Yogas) for the aspirants on the highway to God, has been given. In addition, it has been told that in every age, whenever God comes in human form, He prescribes the Great Way (Mahāmārga) congenial for the time, by following which spiritual aspirants can reach Him. To be on a by-way or on a highway depends upon one's competency (*adhikāra*), and it does not matter much where one is today. What is desired of a person is the movement towards God from wherever he stands; the lack of which amounts to spiritual death.

Early Days at Shanti Ashrama—VIII : In the last instalment it was told that due to illness Swami Turiyananda left the Shanti Ashrama and came to San Francisco on October 12, 1901. There he was taken care of by the students of the Vedanta Society. After about a week's visit to Los Angeles to meet the Mead sisters, the Swami returned on January 8, 1902, to Shanti Ashrama, where four students had remained throughout the freezing winter. The Swami wished to return to India due to indisposed health, and his desire was fulfilled by the beginning of June 1902, when arrangements were made for his departure. After Swami Turiyananda's departure, Gurudas managed the work of the Shanti Ashrama for a few years. Swamis Trigunatita (1903-15) and Prakashananda (1915-27) kept the Ashrama running as a retreat for Vedanta students. But it was later on closed due to various inconveniences.

The author, Gargi (Marie Louise Burke),

has thus lucidly narrated the story of the Shanti Ashrama, from its start up to date, in the light of many unpublished sources. The series is concluded with this instalment. We are happy to know that it has received a great deal of appreciation from our readers.

Ramakrishna's Naren and Naren's Ramakrishna—IV : It is well known that at one time, Swami Vivekananda as Narendranath, did not believe in Sri Ramakrishna as an Avatar. He even argued on this point with Girish Chandra Ghosh, a householder disciple of the Master, who was a staunch believer of this fact. Later on, however, Narendranath fully realized that his Master was none but the One who had appeared ages ago as Rama and Krishna. This realization transformed his outlook, and as a result, he was the first person to declare Sri Ramakrishna as *Avatāra-variṣṭha*—the foremost amongst the Avatars. Swamiji has poured his realization about Sri Ramakrishna into various hymns he composed in his praise. In this instalment the author has tried to keep before the readers Swamiji's realization about his Master, as expressed by him in the famous Āratrika song '*Khaṇḍana-bhava-bandhana . . .*' which is sung regularly by Sri Ramakrishna's devotees, mainly at the time of the evening service. The author's analysis of its meaning is unique and will no doubt be illuminating and inspiring to the readers. Although Swamiji did not write any biography of Sri Ramakrishna, whatever he has said about his Master is a revelation in itself.

Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda—X We are publishing in this issue Swami Vivekananda's letters to Sister Christine from 14 October 1901 to 18 December 1901.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE SOCIALIST THOUGHT OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: BY DR. BENUDHAR PRADHAN, Publishers: The Academic Press, Old Subzimandi, Gurgaon, Haryana, 1220 001 ; 1973, pp. xiv+342, Price: Rs. 44/-.

The book under review offers an impression that Jawaharlal was the first Indian who seriously thought of making India a socialist country. Long before Jawaharlal, however, Swami Vivekananda dreamt of the establishment of an egalitarian society in India where there would be no exploitation of man by man, and the man-God identity would be established.

Tracing the growth of socialist thought in Nehru, Sri Pradhan writes: 'After his return from Europe in 1927, although independence continued to engage his primary attention, social transformation acquired a new significance for Jawaharlal.' It is well known that Nehru was so much enamoured by the Soviet system and Marxism that he made a press statement in 1933 accepting the communist ideal. Subhas Chandra in his speech at the Rangpur Political Conference on March 30, 1929, recommending acceptance of Vivekananda's ideal stated: 'This socialism did not derive its birth from the books of Karl Marx. It has its origin in the thought and culture of India.' Later criticizing Jawaharlal, he said: 'It would be foolish for anyone to say that any one system represents the last stage in human progress. As students of Philosophy, you will admit that human progress can never stop and out of the past experience of the world we have to produce a new system.' Subhas believed in socialism but he wanted to mould it, keeping in view the characteristics of Indian society. Mao Tse-Tung while establishing communism in China did not forget the characteristics of Chinese society.

Realizing his mistake much later Jawaharlal said: 'I am not enamoured of these "isms" and my approach is, and I should like to say the country's approach should be, rather a pragmatic approach in considering the problem. . . . How confused was Nehru's thinking will be evident from what the author has said: 'He was not a doctrinaire Marxist. . . . Marxism, as Jawaharlal visualised it, was more a theory of revolution and destruction than of reconstruction. Once independence was attained he felt that Marxism had fulfilled its purpose and had become an obsolete instrument.' If so, then how could Jawaharlal, as quoted by Sri Pradhan, say:

'It was the essential freedom from dogma and the scientific outlook of Marxism that appealed to me.' If Marxism to Jawaharlal was a theory of destruction, then how could it be scientific? How did the Soviet system, which enamoured Nehru, derive its birth? It is known to all that Marxism is essentially an economic doctrine. How could it become an obsolete instrument after attainment of independence?

Sri Pradhan has observed that Nehru was elected as the President of the Lahore Congress for his socialistic conviction and leaning. Elsewhere in the book the author has categorically stated that the old guards did not like Jawaharlal's pronounced bias in favour of socialism and initially Gandhiji was 'apprehensive of Jawaharlal's politics'. Sri Pradhan, it appears, has failed to ascertain the real motive behind Gandhi's generosity in making Jawaharlal the President. Before the Lahore Congress, Subhas and Jawaharlal became so close that it posed a challenge to Gandhian leadership. To wean away Jawaharlal from the clutches of 'Leftism', Gandhiji offered this coveted post, and later events proved beyond doubt that this tactic of the Mahatma succeeded. Under the influence of Gandhiji, Jawaharlal lost all his revolutionary fervour and bold thoughts to transform the Indian society on socialist lines. The author has called Nehru the 'Doyen of Indian Socialism', and he has made no secret of his intention to establish Jawaharlal as a great socialist; but his readers will, in all likelihood, find Nehru a leader who did not know his own mind. He had good intentions but lacked firm conviction in what he often professed; and his policy of compromise and so-called adjustment, which brought him good dividends, retarded the progress of the country along the socialist line. Jawaharlal himself witnessed that during his regime the rich became richer and the poor poorer.

At the end of the book, the author has made an appraisal of the role of Jawaharlal which has turned out to be an unimpressive apology. After reading the book one will safely conclude that Jawaharlal spoke not in deeds but in words only.

We may not agree with Sri Pradhan in accepting Jawaharlal as a socialist leader, but the way he has presented the ideas of Nehru deserves close attention. Jayaprakash Narayan's foreword to the book is particularly interesting in the context of what has happened in the drama of Indian politics following the last general election.

Though the quality of printing is bad, the price of the book is high.

NANDA MOOKERJEE, *Calcutta*

SONG OF THE SOUL: BY SWAMI SATYANANDA, Publisher: Swami Nirbedananda, Shree Shree Ramkrishna Sevayatan, 2 P. K. Saha Lane, Calcutta, 700 036, 1972, pp. 10+52, Price: Rs. 5/-.

To Coleridge, poetry is 'the antithesis of science having for its immediate object pleasure, not truth'. But Swami Satyananda's verse is an exception to this. His fine imagination, coupled with scientific pursuit, has contributed much to the richness of his poetry. He says :

The World at our feet—an electronic play
You of science have none other say
But the super-unconscious in voice so grim
Cry aloud Oh ! it's not so much serene. . . .

The booklet under review is a collection of Swami Satyananda's fifty-two English poems on Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Ma, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Abhedananda. These poems are the concrete and artistic expressions of a soul in emotional and rhythmical language. The poetry will not only inspire the readers with its beauty, but also encourage them to delve more deeply into the rich spiritual dimension of the Great Souls.

His prolific contribution will assuredly enrich the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. But the readers will find some poems have the stamp of abstruse thought cluttered with jargon. It would have been very fine if the photographs of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sri Ma, and Swamis Vivekananda and Abhedananda were added.

The printing and get-up are excellent, and the price, for work of this quality nowadays, is surprisingly modest.

SWAMI SHANTARUPANANDA

VOICE OF SAMANVAYA : ED. BY SRI K. SESHADRI, Publishers: The C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, The Grove, Teynampet, Madras, 600 018, April 1976, Vol. I, No. 1; pp. 150, Annual Subscription: Rs. 15/-.

The Journal under review is one more worthy contribution of the C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation to the forces rejuvenating the cultural consciousness of Indians. The Foundation intends publishing each issue of this bi-annual with 150 pages. The plan to include in each issue relevant extracts from the speeches and writings of the renowned scholar Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar is most welcome. It is hoped that the

Foundation's effort to seek also the co-operation of several Universities in the country in adding details particularly related to University research work in philosophy, would be fruitful. As is evident from the eight pages carrying the 'statement of research work in progress' in some of the South Indian Universities, the inclusion of reports from other Universities in India would provide a much needed reference point for research scholars—perhaps the first of its kind.

If the style of the present issue is any indication, the Foundation's hope of 'wide circulation, to reach individual scholars as well as educational and cultural institutions' will be amply fulfilled. We hope the later issues will include also, abridged or in full, the 'special series' of lectures being conducted at their Centre. The Foundation has gone to the very crux of the religious and cultural problems of India, in resolving to present the 'deeper harmonies of the tradition . . . of India' through this Journal. The prevailing conditions in India demand similar and greater efforts at broadcasting to the masses, such ideas as the common bases of Hinduism, the deeper and clearer insights into the scriptures of the Hindus with regard to Life and Universe, the dynamic or positive attitude towards the social and individual life, etc.

The Journal is sincerely recommended to all Indians seeking a rational and emotionally satisfying core to their personality, helplessly eager to be 'modern', yet Indian. Journals such as the one under review will surely make Indians competent to face yet another challenge of history to their power of assimilation—to assimilate the best elements in foreign cultures with which they have come into contact again and again over centuries—without losing their soul, their religion, their spiritual perspective.

Further, the *Voice of Samanvaya* would be very useful to all students of Indian culture and religion, who, handicapped by a lack of knowledge of Sanskrit, desire an authentic and objective presentation of the same in simple English.

A thorough elimination of spelling errors would enhance the dignity of the Journal, which may rightfully begin to draw international subscription.

BRAHMACHARI APURVA CHAITANYA

SANSKRIT

BHAVANOPANISAD : TRANS. BY S. MIRA, Publishers: Ganesh & Co., Madras-17, 1976, pp. xiii + 54 + 22, Price: Rs. 6/-.

This book contains the Sanskrit text of the

Upaniṣad and the commentary of the polymath Bhāskaraṛāya of the seventeenth-eighteenth century, together with their English rendering, Notes and Annotations by S. Mira, M.A.

The *Bhāvanopaniṣad* belongs to the Śākta school, where the Divine Mother—the Śakti or Supreme Power—is considered the highest Reality, the Supreme Brahman in the active state of creation. The whole universe has emanated from the Divine Sakti; and She, the Mother of the Universe, abides in the central point (*bindu*) of this emanation. Just as in every seed the scheme of the whole tree is inherent, similarly in every being in the universe, the whole scheme of the universe, including the Divine Mother of Śakti at the centre, is inherent and can be visualized and realized by that being. However, it is only at the human stage that it is clearly manifested and the being becomes self-conscious and is capable of realizing and manifesting the inherent Reality.

The Tantras and the Śākta Upaniṣads give several practical methods of *upāśana* and meditation for this purpose, of which the diagrammatic representation (*yantra*) of the Divine Mother and the emanation of the universe from Her in the form of Śrī Cakra, is ancient as well as well known. The Śrī Cakra symbolizes both the macrocosmic aspect and the microcosmic aspect as represented in man, in its esoteric spiritual cum psycho-physical context; and the identity of both can be realized through prescribed meditation (*bhāvana*) on the correspondences. The *Bhāvana-Upaniṣad* delineates this meditation on Śrī Cakra and inner worship of the Divine Mother. It describes the identity of the Śrī Cakra and the aspirant's body and correspondences of its various parts. The true significance of the various *upacāras* (ritual worship) and of *homa*, i.e. dissolution of all sense of duality in the Soul, is revealed. 'The *Bhāvana* is not mere knowledge or attitude; in its highest form it is true meditation which helps one to see things whole, related and connected.' However, being terse and esoteric the Upaniṣad could not be understood without the commentary of Bhāskaraṛāya who was an adept in Tantric lore and its practices. In passing it may be pointed out that the conception of Śrī Cakra is somewhat a Tantric or Śākta parallel to the Vedantic conception of the emergence of the universe from Īsvara, through Hiranyagarbha (with his *brahmāṇḍa*), Virāt, etc. which are all masculine. It is more natural and appropriate to associate *garbha* and *aṇḍa* with the Divine Mother than the Divine Father. The

Divine Mother is Īsvara and Māyā combined into one, i.e. Parabrahman in Śakti aspect personified. The Yoginīs and Śaktis stand parallel to the various male *adhīsthāna devatās of the psycho-physical organs*. The meditation on Śrī Cakra is parallel to the meditation on Aum. One is the graphic or visual symbol (of light) and the other sonic. Parabrahman is common to both. Of course, there are obvious differences as well. But these are two parallel streams which have intermingled to some extent. It may be a fruitful study to investigate on these lines.

The present book is a welcome addition to the understanding of Tantric practices, especially Śrī Cakra Upāśanā, when the interest in the Tantras is growing in India and abroad. The translation is commendable and the Notes and Annotations are apt and helpful. The printing and get-up are also good.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA
Ramakrishna Math, Belur, West Bengal

ARATRIKA AND RAMANAM: TRANSLATED BY SWAMI TAPASYANANDA, Publishers: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 11 Ramakrishna Math Road, Madras, 1976, pp. 3+68, Price: Ordinary Rs. 2/-; Superior Rs. 5/-.

The book contains two hymns to Sri Ramakrishna by Swami Vivekananda, the 'Sri Narayani Stotram' to the Divine Mother, and a hymn to Sri Sarada Devi by Swami Abhedananda, which are sung daily at the evening service in most of the Centres of the Ramakrishna Order in India and abroad. Also included is the 'Ramanam Sankirtanam', which is sung every *ekadashi* day in most of the Centres. The hymns and Sankirtanam, originally written in Bengali or Sanskrit, are given in Devanagari script, followed by Roman transliteration and a free, poetic English translation.

Nowadays the poetic and musical beauty of these hymns and Sankirtanam are attracting the attention of Western devotees; hence it is hoped that the book will be of use both to the English-knowing Indian as well as Western devotees.

There are, however, some typographical errors which, I hope, will be corrected in the next edition.

BRAHMACHARI SUSHANTA CHAITANYA,

LIFE OF SRI RAMANUJA: BY SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA, Publishers: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1977 (3rd edition), pp. x+279, Price: Ordinary Rs. 12/-; Superior Rs. 22/-.

The book is a translation of *Sri Ramanuja-Carita* written in Bengali by Swami Ramakrishna-

nanda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who spent over fourteen years in Madras. Part one briefly traces the development of Sri-Vaishnavism in South India from the twelve Alvars to Yamunacharya, while the second part narrates the life of Ramanuja, who inherited Yamunacharya's position as head of the Vaishnava community.

Swami Ramakrishnananda, not knowing Tamil, had to depend largely on available Sanskrit works on the subject, and the help of some scholar-friends; but the translator, Swami Budhananda, has made up for this shortcoming by having the entire manuscript scrutinized by competent scholars. Thus, very valuable footnotes give

different traditional accounts of the same anecdote, where such exist.

The many valuable Sanskrit quotations found in the Bengali original are given here also. An Appendix contains a brief but valuable exposition of Visishtadvaita philosophy by Swami Adidevananda. A comprehensive Glossary and an Index further add to the book's value.

The book is not merely a biography; factual narration is so interwoven with devotion and philosophy, that it serves as a scripture.

There are a few minor printing errors. The get-up of the book is good.

BRAHMACHARI SUSHANTA CHAITANYA

NEWS AND REPORTS

VIVEKANANDA MEMORIAL IN THE UNITED STATES

In February 1900, Swami Vivekananda, in course of his second visit to America, was invited to address a Congress of Religions being held in the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, California.

Oakland, on the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay, was then a small city of some 70,000 people, and during the first decade of the century much of its cultural and religious life centred in its liberal First Unitarian Church, from whose pulpit spoke many men of national and international prominence: Edward Everett Hale, American clergyman and author, Chaplain of the United States Senate; Julia Ward Howe, Boston poet, lecturer on woman suffrage; Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone; William Howard Taft, President of the United States; Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American Transcendentalist; and so on.

There, on February 25, 1900, Swami Vivekananda gave his first Oakland lecture, 'The Claims of Vedantism on the Modern World'. Throngs of people attended, his address was much acclaimed, and the Swami was invited to return not once but again and again. All in all, Swamiji gave eight lectures in this Church. His passage was memorable.

Some three-quarters of a century later, on Sunday morning, November 13, 1977, a commemorative service honouring Swami Vivekananda was held in Oakland's First Unitarian Church at the suggestion of its minister, Dr.

Arnold Crompton. The service was given under the joint auspices of Dr. Crompton and the Swamis in charge of the Vedanta Societies of Sacramento, Berkeley and San Francisco: Swami Shradhdhananda, Swami Swananda and Swami Prabuddhananda, respectively. Eight Swamis of the Order were present for the occasion.

The service opened with organ music and with Sanskrit peace chants by members of the San Francisco Vedanta convent, followed by Swami Swananda's brief account of Swami Vivekananda's visits in 1900. Acting as master of ceremonies, Swami Swananda also introduced each of the speakers of the day.

In his address of welcome, Dr. Crompton, to the delight of the audience, quoted a description of Swami Vivekananda given by a Unitarian minister who had heard Swamiji's first address in the Oakland Church. Years later, asked for his most vivid memory of the Swami, the minister had replied, thoughtfully, 'Vivekananda was a saint—a saint with a sense of humour!'

'People have said to me', Dr. Crompton added, 'that this great chapel is a place of peace. It is made a place of peace not by any slogans, not by any theology, but by the people who have worshipped here. . . . And it has been made a place of great spiritual peace and power by the saints who have stood here and spoken the truth in their heart; and foremost among them was the one whom we recollect today, Swami Vivekananda.'

Then followed the most moving of the day's solemn ceremonies; the unveiling, by Swami Sarvagatananda, of a handsome, richly garlanded

portrait of Swami Vivekananda and of the bronze commemorative plaque that would later be affixed to the pulpit from which Swamiji had spoken.

The principal speaker of the day was Swami Sarvagatananda, head of the Vedanta Societies of Boston and Providence, who had flown three thousand miles across the United States to officiate at the dedicatory ceremony of unveiling and to speak on 'Swami Vivekananda in America'. The Swami's address was eloquent, and dealt skillfully with the vast canvas of his subject. Swami Shraddhananda, Swami Swahananda of Hollywood, and Swami Prabuddhananda also spoke briefly in Swamiji's honour.

At the conclusion of the service, refreshments were served in the Church's Wendt Hall. As men, women and children gathered informally around the Swamis and Dr. Crompton, Swamiji's commemoration became a festive, colourful 'mart of joy'.

Some months earlier, the First Unitarian Church had received a national honour of great significance. Because of its architectural beauty, because of its rich cultural history, because 'its liberal religious views have ever made it a place of worship for men of all faiths,' this Unitarian Church, built in 1890, was in June 1977 entered on the American National Register of Historic Places as a church 'of lasting significance to our country and worthy of preservation'.

Thus in the years to come, countless Americans and visitors from abroad will come to see and to worship in this 'national treasure'. Here too, then, will these generations pass before the face of the Prophet, the great Champion of Man, Swami Vivekananda, who spoke in this Church in 1900 and was signally honoured by it in 1977 as a man of spiritual authority—the lover of God who loved not alone men of all faiths but *all* men, everywhere, of any kind whatsoever. He knew they embody Divinity full and perfect and this he told them without compromise from the first day to the last. In America the message is still ringing.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, SINGAPORE REPORT: 1976

From its inception in 1928, the Centre has been slowly but steadily growing into an important centre of cultural, educational and spiritual service in the city.

Cultural Activities: Weekly scriptural classes at the Centre as well as occasional lectures in

Singapore, were conducted by a monastic member; and Swami Siddhatmananda, the Head of the Centre, gave interviews to earnest spiritual seekers, discussing with them their spiritual problems and practices. A Sanskrit class was conducted by Mr. K. P. P. Nair and Mr. A. R. Govindan at the premises of the Mission's Boys' Home. Publications of the Ramakrishna Order were stocked for sale, sales during the year totalling \$ 7,754.50. Films on the life of Sri Ramakrishna and of Rani Rasmani were screened in the Mission auditorium for the benefit of devotees. On November 25, 1976, the Inaugural Session of the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace was held at the Singapore Conference Hall, with Swami Siddhatmananda in the chair. Two days later all the delegates met at the Mission Centre.

Celebrations: The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda were observed with special Puja, discourses, devotional songs, etc. Various other sacred occasions were also observed with due solemnity. Ram-Nam Sankirtan was held regularly on Ekadashi days.

Educational: The Sarada Devi Tamil School had an enrolment of 114 pupils, Tamil being the medium of instruction. Twenty-three pupils were enrolled in the Kalaimagal School, in which the medium is English. Night Classes for adults—two in Tamil and one in English—were conducted, with an enrolment of 73 students, most of whom were preparing for the examinations held by the Adult Education Board of the Ministry of Education.

The Boys' Home is situated in an exquisitely beautiful natural setting—surrounded by flowers, trees and spacious grounds—making it an ideal environment for young children. During the year there were 55 inmates, ranging in age from 7 to 17 years. All the inmates studied in primary or secondary schools. In the Primary School leaving Examination they obtained 85% passes. Monastic members of the Order are in charge of imparting moral and religious instruction. The inmates attend daily morning and evening prayers in the Temple and all religious and cultural functions. In the Home playground the boys play football, badminton and other sports, and have been winning trophies, cups and medals in school sport competitions. Flag Day, in aid of the Boys' Home Fund, was held on 31 July 1976, at which a gross collection of \$ 94,787.04 was made, the net proceeds being \$ 90,931.25.

The Swami Vivekananda Centenary Permanent Memorial houses a Reading Room and Library.

Scriptural classes and discourses are also held in the Reading Room.

Appeal: The generous-hearted public is requested to donate liberally: (1) towards an outstanding amount of \$ 40,000/- incurred for completing the Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Library; (2) towards an estimated \$ 250,000/- necessary to complete the Outdoor Dispensary; and (3) towards maintaining the Boys' Home at a recurrent expenditure of \$ 10,000/- per month. Contributions may kindly be sent to: The President, Ramakrishna Mission, 9 Norris Road, Singapore 8. The purpose for which the money is to be spent should be clearly indicated. Cheques, drafts, postal orders or money orders should be drawn in favour of 'Ramakrishna Mission, Singapore'.

OBITUARY: SWAMI TADRUPANANDA

With a heavy heart we record the passing away of Swami Tadrupananda, President, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, at the age of 45, on the 5th May 1978, in a friend's house at Bareilly. He had gone there from Mayavati in order to see off some close friends on the 3rd May. He felt indisposed that evening and went to stay with the friend at his house. His condition gradually grew worse on the following two days, and the end came suddenly on the evening of the 5th May. It seems to have been a case of sunstroke, followed by gastro-enteritis complications, to which he succumbed. His body was cremated on the 6th May at Bareilly, in the presence of some monks of the Order who had come from Lucknow, Delhi, and Allahabad. Later his ashes were consigned to the waters of the Ganga at Hardwar, and at Triveni, Allahabad.

Swami Tadrupananda was born in June 1932 (date not known) at Koppa, Dist. Chikmagalur, near Bangalore. After graduation in Science from Central College, Bangalore, he joined the Ramakrishna Order in June 1952 at the local Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama. He was an initiated disciple of Swami Yatiswarananda. He was initiated into Sannyasa in May 1962.

He started his monastic life at the Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore, and then was transferred to Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, where he spent about 8 years doing various types of work. In July 1960 he was transferred back to the centre at Bangalore where he spent about 9 more years, during the last five of which he worked as a successful and popular Warden of the Vidyarthi Mandiram (Students' Home). He was Joint Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* for 6 years from 1971 to 1976 inclusive, creditably conducting the magazine from the editorial office at Mayavati, and writing numerous thought-provoking editorials. He was elected President of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, in April 1977.

Swami Tadrupananda was a good speaker, an impressive writer, and had scholarly attainments and pursuits. He possessed an amiable and gentle disposition. He was well known for his openness of mind, largeness of heart, and more than usual dedication to the work allotted to him. Brother monks and devotees spoke admiringly of his qualities of warm affection, unhesitating trust, readiness to forgive, and simplicity of habits.

The Advaita Ashrama and the Ramakrishna Order have lost a promising and capable monastic member of striking Sadhu qualities in the sudden passing away of Swami Tadrupananda.

May his soul rest in peace!

The childish go after outward pleasures ;
They walk into the net of widespread death.
But the wise, knowing immortality,
Seek not the stable among things which are unstable here.