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No. 7

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

TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

श्रीरामकृष्णोपदेशावलिः ।*

SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA

‘अधुनैव मया दृष्टः

कृकलासो मनोहरः ।

वृक्षशाखाग्र-भागेऽस्मिन्

रक्तवर्णः समुज्ज्वलः ॥

पत्रान्तरं प्रविष्टोऽसौ

इदानीन्तु न दृश्यते ।

किं भ्रातः स त्वया दृष्टः

सरटो भृशमद्भुतः ॥’

‘भ्रातर्मयापि दृष्टोऽसौ

नूनं पीतो न रक्तभाक् ।’

तस्य तद्वचनं श्रुत्वाऽ-

ब्रवीत्तं प्रथमोऽध्वगः ॥

‘किं कामलरुजा भ्रातर्

दृष्टिस्ते कलुषीकृता ।

कथं त्वं मन्यसे पीत-

ममुं कोकनदच्छविम् ॥’

परिहासमिमं श्रुत्वा

तमुवाच ततोऽपरः ।

‘नाहं कामलवानस्मि

न मे दृष्टिर्भ्रमात्मिका ॥

‘Just a little while ago, I saw a beautiful chameleon of a bright red colour on the tip of the branch of this tree. But it cannot be seen now, as it just entered the bunch of leaves. Did you also see that exceedingly wonderful lizard, brother?’ [said one passer-by to the other. To him, the latter replied :]

‘Yes brother, I too have seen it, but it is yellow, not red.’

Hearing his words, the first passer-by said : ‘Are your eyes affected by jaundice, brother? Else, how would you see this creature yellow, though it is red like a red lotus?’

Listening to his contemptuous remark the latter replied : ‘Neither am I suffering from jaundice, nor is my sight defective.

* 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.

'पीतं द्रक्ष्यामि शोणं चेत्
यास्यामि दुष्टदृष्टिताम् ।
पीतान् सरटनिवहान्
विधाता सृष्टवान् पुरा ॥
रक्तोऽसौ सरटो नूनं
नवसृष्टिस्तवाधुना ॥'

इत्थं विवदमानौ तौ
तृतीयः प्राप्तवान् पथि ।
साग्रहं समकालञ्च
तं प्राप्य पृच्छतः स्म तौ ॥
'भ्रातर्यदि विजानासि
सत्यं नु वद साम्प्रतम् ।
किं वर्णः सरटो भाति
पीतः किमुत लोहितः ॥'

तयोस्तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा
सस्मितं तावुवाच सः ।
'युवयोर्वचने सत्यं
बहुरूपः स एव हि ॥
'पत्रान्तरेऽसौ हरितोऽपि भूत्वा
चापेक्षते कालवशात् प्रनेयान् ।
आहार्यकीटानतिलीक्षणदृष्टिः
स्वपत्रवर्णाच्च सुगुप्तदेहः ॥
'आहार्यमाहर्तुमनेकरूपं
प्रयोजनस्यानुमतं स घत्ते ।
स्वभावमित्यस्य निरीक्ष्य धीरा
इमञ्च नित्यं बहुरूपमाहुः ॥

'अनन्तभावस्य च विश्वमूर्त्ते-
दंभ्रान् विभिन्नानधिगम्य भावान् ।
परस्परं मूढमनुष्यसंघाः
इत्थं पृथिव्यां विवदन्ति नित्यम् ॥
'युवां ततो नार्हथ एवमेव
चित्ते निघातुं खलु दीनभावम् ।
नान्यस्य धर्मो कुरुतश्च निन्दां
सर्वे विवादा हि तमःप्रसूताः ॥'

Had I seen all yellow things red, then could it be said that my sight has been affected. Moreover, the Lord has created yellow chameleons long ago. This red chameleon seems to be a new creation of yours now.'

While they were arguing thus, there came by the same way a third wayfarer. Having approached him eagerly, both of them asked simultaneously : 'Brother, if you know, then please tell us the truth now. Of what colour is the chameleon, yellow or red?'

After listening to their words, the third man said with a smile : 'What you both are saying is true, for the chameleon is known to have various colours. At times it hides itself in the leaves, assuming even a green colour. Taking the colour of the leaves and thus becoming imperceptible, this keen-sighted creature waits for its prey. In order to procure its food, it takes various forms according to necessity. Knowing this characteristic of this creature wise men call it "Bahurupa" (one having various forms).

'Even so, in this world ignorant men belonging to various sects always quarrel amongst themselves, not understanding the different aspects of Infinite Reality. It does not, indeed, befit you both to nourish such a narrow view in your heart. Give up, therefore, finding faults with others' religions, as all such quarrels are born of ignorance.'

ACARYA SANKARA THROUGH HIS GITA-COMMENTARY—I

(EDITORIAL)

Everyone who has some knowledge of Hinduism and Indian Philosophy, knows about the great Ācārya Śaṅkara, the chief exponent of the Advaita Philosophy and the rejuvenator of the Eternal Religion (Sanātana Dharma) of the Vedas. He is well known for his commentaries on the *Brahma-Sūtras*, *Upaniṣads* and *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā*, and for his treatises on the Advaita Vedānta. About this great Ācārya and his works, Swami Vivekananda says in his lecture on 'The Sages of India': 'The spirit of the Lord descended again, . . . and this time the manifestation was in the South [India], and up rose that young Brahmin of whom it has been declared that at the age of sixteen he had completed all his writings; the marvellous boy Śaṅkarācārya arose. The writings of this boy of sixteen are the wonders of the modern world, and so was the boy. He wanted to bring back the Indian world to its pristine purity, . . .'¹ The Ācārya saved India from the Buddhist degradation and re-established the Vedic Religion. But, as happens due to passage of time, the disciples and followers of Śaṅkara shaped him and his philosophy according to their liking; and, as a result, Śaṅkara as he appears to many, is entirely different from what he actually was. This is because people view the great Ācārya through the glass of the opinions of his disciples and biased followers. From the various misconceptions prevalent about Śaṅkara narrated below, it would appear that his followers 'did not understand the Master'. It is therefore necessary to restore as correct a picture of this great Ācārya as possible, and to do this, the only way open

to us today is to study his personality through his writings. For this purpose the most appropriate of his works would be his commentary on the *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā*.

Gītā, the Supreme Nectar :

The Upaniṣads are too difficult for ordinary men to understand the real spirit of the Vedas, although they are the main authority to support any philosophy of the Hindus. And even though Vyāsa has tried to systematize the Upaniṣadic thought by writing the *Brahma-Sūtras*, his attempt has become the cause of rambling of the brain for average men who try to collect some honey from them. Furthermore, the commentators and sub-commentators on these *Vyāsa-Sūtras* have made them beyond the comprehension of ordinary men, as everyone has interpreted them in his own way. The only authoritative Vedantic scripture within the reach of the man in general, is the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. That is why all the Ācāryas of the three main Vedantic schools have written commentaries on the *Gītā*. The purer the intellect the more can it enjoy the beauty of the *Gītā*. A sage has spoken about the greatness of the *Gītā* in the following words: 'All the Upaniṣads are the cows, the Son of the cowherd [Śrī Kṛṣṇa] is the milker, Pārtha [Arjuna] is the calf, men of purified intellect are the drinkers, and the supreme nectar *Gītā* is the milk.'² Through the *Gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa has placed before mankind the broad and all-comprehensive philosophy of the Vedas in all its aspects—dualistic, non-dualistic and qualified non-dualistic. He has told thereby how the various Yogas—Karma, Bhakti, Rāja and

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati; Advaita Ashrama, (hereafter *Complete Works*). III. 1970. p. 265.

2. *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā*, trans. Swami Swarup-ananda, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1972, p. vii.

Jñāna—lead ultimately to the same goal. The Lord has also lucidly pointed out therein the inter-relationship and the harmony of the Yogas. Besides all these points, the uniqueness of the *Gītā* is in its interpretation of the Truth through the personality of an Avatāra: ‘*paramārthatattvaṁ vāsudevākhyam param brahma*—the Supreme Truth Brahman of the name Vāsudeva,’³ in the words of Ācārya Śaṅkara.

Although so broad is the teaching of the *Gītā*, some commentators have interpreted it in the light of their own narrow views. Unless the personality of its commentator is magnanimous like its exponent the Lord Kṛṣṇa, it is not possible for one to bring out the real essence of it. For instance: In the *Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa has told Arjuna how liberation can be attained through various Yogas; but the commentators are fanatic about their own views in this respect. Some say that according to the *Gītā*, liberation is attainable only through Karma-Yoga; others say only through Bhakti-Yoga; and still others say only through Rāja- or Jñāna-Yogas. This is not the correct way of explaining the *Gītā*. Ācārya Śaṅkara knew this secret and, through his commentary, placed before the aspirants the real spirit of the *Gītā* in its broad and all-comprehensive form. Being overwhelmed by his marvellous *Gītā*-commentary, Swami Vivekananda praised Śaṅkara in the following words: ‘The great glory of Śaṅkarācārya was his preaching of the *Gītā*. It is one of the greatest works that this great man did among the many noble works of his noble life—the preaching of the *Gītā* and writing the most beautiful commentary upon it.’⁴ Swamiji uttered these words about Śaṅkara only

because he got the glimpse of his broad personality in his *Gītā*-commentary. There cannot be, therefore, a better measure to fathom the personality of Ācārya Śaṅkara than his commentary on the *Gītā*.

Some Misconceptions Regarding Śaṅkara :

At the very mention of Śaṅkara’s name, many are reminded of his doctrine of *māyā* (*māyāvāda*), his concept of the Transcendental Reality (*nirguṇa-Brahmavāda*) and his non-dualism (*advaitavāda*). They believe: that as according to Ācārya Śaṅkara this world is false like a dream, there is no place for the worship of qualified Brahman (*Saguṇa Brahma*), or for dualism and qualified non-dualism in his philosophy; that Śaṅkara does not give any importance to Karma as a means to liberation; that in his opinion Bhakti is merely an emotional display, Avatāras and various gods and goddesses are all as false as dream objects; that liberation is attainable by Jñāna-Yoga alone, and other Yogas like Karma, Bhakti and Rāja, are only for the beginners; and so on. But such notions about Śaṅkara can be only held by those who have not critically studied his works. The following discussion is mainly to refute these misconceptions and to pinpoint the magnanimity of Ācārya Śaṅkara’s personality in the light of his *Gītā*-commentary.

Some may be of the opinion that his commentary on the *Gītā* cannot be a proper measure to fathom Śaṅkara’s personality, as he has simply explained in his commentary whatever Lord Kṛṣṇa has said therein. The broadness expressed in the *Gītā* is of Lord Kṛṣṇa and it cannot be said to be of the Ācārya as well. Howsoever logical this argument may sound, it is not true; because a commentary (*bhāṣya*) is not a mere glossary (*ṭīkā*), but over and above, it explains word by word the import of the scripture along with the comments of the commentator. Through the comments one can get a glimpse of the

³ *Śrīmad-Bhagavad -Gītā* with Śaṅkara’s commentary and Hindi translation, Gorakhpur : Gita Press, seventh edition, (hereafter *Gītā-Bhāṣya*), ‘Introduction’, p. 61.

⁴ *Complete Works*, III, p. 328.

views of the commentator. Therefore, whatever Śaṅkara has said in his *Gītā*-commentary besides explaining the meaning of the verses, can serve as a valid means for measuring his great heart. Those who have studied Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Gītā*, know full well that besides the explanations of the verses, he, in addition to the introductory and concluding commentaries to the *Gītā*, has also written long comments on some, and introductory commentaries to each chapter, propounding his own views, whereby one gets an idea of his large heart. An attempt has been made here to place some of these views before the readers in his own words.

Śaṅkara's Definition of Religion:

His very definition of religion reveals the great heart of the Ācārya Śaṅkara. According to him: 'The Vedic religion is twofold—with a tendency towards the world (*pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa*) and with a tendency away from the world (*nivṛtti-lakṣaṇa*). Religion is that which is responsible for the stability of the world, and is the cause of man's material as well as spiritual liberation.'⁵ He believes that just as the religion (*niḥśreyasa*) of the spiritual aspirants characterized by dispassion and knowledge has been set into motion by Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Creator of the world, in the same way the religion for the seekers of material prosperity (*abhyudaya*) has also been propounded by the same Lord for the stability of this world. Śaṅkara was aware of the fact that, as there is a basic difference in the competency of men, both these types of religion (*pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa* and *nivṛtti-lakṣaṇa dharma*) are necessary for men.

5. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, Introduction, p. 13; the original Sanskrit version reads: द्विविधो हि वेदोक्तो धर्मः, प्रवृत्तिलक्षणो निवृत्तिलक्षणश्च । जगतः स्थितिकारणं प्राणिनां साक्षात् अभ्युदय-निश्चयस-हेतुः यः

Although spiritual liberation is the ultimate goal of religion, Śaṅkara did not deny that it is attainable only by gradual spiritual evolution of man. In his opinion, 'Even though the religion for worldly prosperity prescribed in the Vedas for less competent men is the cause of attaining godhood and such other positions in the heavens, it leads to the purification of the aspirant's heart if performed with the spirit of dispassion, surrendering the fruits of the work to the Lord. And a soul who has thus become pure and fit for higher knowledge ultimately attains liberation due to the dawn of knowledge. In this way it (*pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa-dharma* or *Karma-Kāṇḍa*) leads to liberation.'⁶ Hereby it is clearly revealed that Ācārya Śaṅkara did not deny the necessity and utility of the Work Portion (*Karma-Kāṇḍa*) of the Vedas; and out of deep devotion he told in his introduction to the *Gītā*-commentary that both these types of religion are the creations of Lord Nārāyaṇa. This statement is enough to show that Śaṅkara did not condemn the followers of the *Karma-Kāṇḍa* who sought material prosperity. All he meant to say was that material prosperity cannot be the ultimate goal of human life; so *Karma-Kāṇḍa* should be given only its due value. It should neither be overestimated nor underestimated. Hereby Śaṅkara has also showed a way for higher spiritual evolution to the followers of *pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa dharma*.

The Necessity and Goal of Karma-Yoga :

Ācārya Śaṅkara believes that 'devoted each to his own duty, after getting rid of

6. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, Introduction, p. 15; the original reads: अभ्युदयार्थः अपि यः प्रवृत्तिलक्षणो धर्मो वर्णाश्रमान् च उद्दिश्य विहितः स देवादिस्थान-प्राप्तिहेतुः अपि सन् ईश्वरार्पणबुद्ध्या अनुष्ठीयमानः सत्त्वशुद्धये भवति फलाभिसंधिवर्जितः । शुद्धसत्त्वस्य च ज्ञाननिष्ठायोग्यताप्राप्तिद्वारेण ज्ञानोत्पत्तिहेतुत्वेन च निश्चयमनेन ननु अपि उपनिषत्तन्त्रे ।

impurities, man attains perfection in the form of fitness for knowledge.⁷ He says that attaining worldly or heavenly prosperity is the natural result of all works, but if they are performed with the spirit of dispassion, surrendering the fruits to God, the same Karma becomes transformed into Karma-Yoga which makes one fit for higher knowledge due to the purification of the heart. In this way Karma-Yoga becomes the cause of one's liberation. In his commentary on verse forty of the second chapter of the *Gītā*, Ācārya Śaṅkara calls Karma-Yoga a way to liberation — '*mokṣa-mārge karma-yoge*'. These words of the Ācārya vividly reveal his attitude towards Karma-Yoga. Similarly, in his commentary on the nineteenth verse of the third chapter he says : 'A person who performs Karma with a spirit of non-attachment and for the sake of the Lord, ultimately attains liberation through purification.'⁸ Lest someone misunderstands Karma-Yoga as a direct means to liberation, Śaṅkara has already clarified in his introductory commentary to verse four of the same chapter, how this Yoga leads to liberation. He says : 'Karma-Yoga is the cause of liberation because it is a means for the attainment of knowledge, not independently.'⁹ Hereby he is neither overvaluing Karma-Yoga nor undervaluing it, but giving it its due value.

In his commentary on the sixteenth verse of the same chapter Śaṅkara emphatically

7. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, XVIII, 45, p. 437 ; the original reads : संसिद्धिं स्वकर्मानुष्ठानाद् अशुद्धिक्षये सति कायेन्द्रियाणां ज्ञाननिष्ठायोग्यतालक्षणां लभते प्राप्नोति ।

8. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, III, 19, p. 94 ; the original reads : असक्तो हि यस्मात् समाचरन् ईश्वरार्थं कर्म कुर्वन् परं मोक्षम् आप्नोति पूरुषः सत्त्वशुद्धिद्वारेण ।

9. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, III, 4, p. 85 ; the original reads : कर्मनिष्ठाया ज्ञाननिष्ठाप्राप्तिहेतुत्वेन पूरुषार्थ-हेतुत्वं, न स्वातन्त्र्येण, . . . ।

points out that 'Karma [Yoga] is a must for ignorant people who are fit only for it. This is the essence of this chapter.'¹⁰ This clearly indicates that Śaṅkara had no hatred for Karma-Yoga.

Moreover, although an exponent of Advaita, Śaṅkara's broad heart is revealed when he tells in his commentary on the tenth verse of the fifth chapter with what attitude one should perform Karma-Yoga. One may be stunned to see how an ardent Advaitist is stating in black and white that one who performs karma surrendering its fruits to the Lord with the attitude of a servant working for his master, giving up attachment even for liberation, remains unstained by it, like a lotus leaf in water.¹¹ While commenting on the thirtieth verse of the third chapter also he says the same thing in the following words : 'Surrender all actions to Me, Vāsudeva, the all-knowing, all-pervading Supreme Lord, with the attitude "I, the doer, am doing this for the sake of the Lord like a servant."¹² As a matter of fact, the attitude of a servant to his master is a dualistic attitude, but Ācārya Śaṅkara is liberal enough to recognize its necessity for a beginner. This is clear from his statements in the commentary, because there is no mention of the 'servant and the master attitude' in the original verses. This shows that Śaṅkara, though himself a

10. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, III, 16, p. 92 ; the original reads : तस्मात् अज्ञेन अधिकृतेन कर्तव्यम् एव कर्म इति प्रकरणार्थः ।

11. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, V, 10, pp. 152-53 ; the original reads : ब्रह्मणि ईश्वरे आधाय निक्षिप्य तदर्थं करोमि इति भृत्य इव स्वाम्यर्थं सर्वाणि कर्माणि मोक्षे अपि फले सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः सर्वकर्माणि । लिप्यते न स पापेन संबध्यते पद्मपत्रम् इव अम्भसा उदकेन ।

12. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, III, 30, p. 99 ; the original reads : अहं कर्ता ईश्वराय भृत्यवत् करोमि इति अनया बुद्ध्या ।

staunch non-dualist, knew that the dualistic attitude is necessary for an aspirant to start with. It can be safely concluded from this that he too believed like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda that dualism is a necessary stage for the gradual spiritual evolution of an aspirant. Śaṅkara's support to dualism will be seen later as well, when the topic of Bhakti-Yoga will be dealt with.

Śaṅkara's View Regarding Karma-Sannyāsa :

It has been seen before that according to Śaṅkara, Karma-Yoga performed in the right spirit leads to purification of the mind (*sattva-śuddhi*) and thereby makes the aspirant fit for higher knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā-yogyatā*); and, the purpose of Karma-Yoga being thus served, one becomes fit for renouncing it (*karma-sannyāsa*). In this connection he says in his commentary on verses eight and nine of the fifth chapter: 'A knower of the Truth, who has attained higher knowledge [though Karma-Yoga] and, as a result, sees only inaction in actions, alone is fit for the renunciation of actions, as he sees the absence of action. For instance, a thirsty man who was once running after the mirage mistaking it for water to quench his thirst, no more runs after it when he is convinced of the absence of water therein.'¹³ Śaṅkara is logically and psychologically right in saying so, because by Karma-Yoga the aspirant transcends the inertia (*tamoguna*) and the dynamism (*rajoguna*) in him with the help of activity (*rajas*) and knowledge (*sattva*), and thus becomes established in the *sattva-*

13. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, V, 8-9, p. 152; the original reads : यस्य एवं तत्त्वविदः सर्वकार्यकरणचेष्टासु कर्मसु अकर्म एव पश्यतः सम्यग्दर्शिनः तस्य सर्वकर्मसंन्यासे एव अधिकारः कर्मणः अभावदर्शनात् । न हि मृगतृष्णिकायाम् उदकबुद्ध्या पानाय प्रवृत्त उदकाभावज्ञाने अपि तत्र एव पानप्रयोजनाय प्रवर्तते ।

guna (the quality of purity) which is a must for higher knowledge, by attaining which ignorance vanishes and the aspirant becomes liberated. So once the *sāttvika* state is achieved by the aspirant, there is no need of Karma-Yoga any more. In such a state Karma automatically drops off like a dried leaf. In this connection, Śaṅkara says in his commentary on the twelfth verse of the fifth chapter: 'One gets the peace of liberation . . . through the stages of: attaining the purification of the mind, fitness for higher knowledge, renunciation of action, and stability in knowledge.'¹⁴ In the commentary on the previous two verses Śaṅkara has already told that 'for an ignorant man who has taken resort to Karma-Yoga . . . attainment of purification of the mind (*sattva-śuddhi*) is the only aim to be achieved.'¹⁵ Hereby, Śaṅkara is doing nothing more than corroborating the opinion of Lord Kṛṣṇa expressed in the third verse of the sixth chapter. He says in the commentary of the same verse: 'The more the mind withdraws itself from action [as an after-effect of purification], the more the mind of one, who has no more to make effort for controlling the senses, enters into Samādhi.'¹⁶ The same thing was emphatically told by Śaṅkara in his introduction to the fifth chapter in the following words: 'By saying "for him [a Yogārūḍha] when he has attained such concentration, inaction

14. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, V, 12, p. 153; the original reads : शान्ति मोक्षाख्याम् आप्नोति नैष्ठिकीं निष्ठायां भवाम् । सत्त्वशुद्धि - ज्ञानप्राप्ति - सर्वकर्मसंन्यास - ज्ञान-निष्ठाक्रमेण . . . ।

15. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, V, 10, 11, pp. 152- the original reads : यः तु पुनः अतत्त्ववित् प्रवृत्तः च कर्मयोगे . . . केवलं सत्त्वशुद्धिमात्रफलम् एव तस्य कर्मणः स्यात् . . . ।

16. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, VI, 3, p. 173; the original reads : यावद् यावत् कर्मभ्य उपरमते, तावत् तावद् निरायासस्य जितेन्द्रियस्य चित्तं समाधीयते ।

is said to be the way" the Lord has pointed out the renunciation of action for one in whom higher knowledge has dawned [as a result of purification by Karma-Yoga]. . . . Thus for a man who has attained higher knowledge, Karma-Yoga which is antagonistic to higher knowledge and promoter of false knowledge, is not possible even in dream.¹⁷

After reading such statements of Śaṅkara, it is but natural for some to feel that he was a hater of Karma, and a fanatic advocate of renunciation of action after the attainment of purification (*karma-sannyāsa*). Such a rash judgment about Śaṅkara, though apparently convincing, is absolutely wrong. He was a psychological expert who could study the nature of the purified mind of a spiritually evolved aspirant and prescribe means for his further evolution. Even in man's everyday life it is seen that if he is ill or overwhelmed by an intoxicant, he is unable to perform any physical action, because his mind is in a different state at that time. Similarly, when an aspirant's mind becomes pure and indrawn due to the effect of higher knowledge, it becomes psychologically impossible for the mind to co-operate with the body in doing any physical work. In such a state, the aspirant has not to renounce Karma by effort, but it automatically drops off as a natural psycho-physical necessity. The only Karma which an aspirant whose action has thus dropped off naturally is seen to do, is to maintain his body for further march towards the goal.

17. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, V, Introduction, p. 146; the original reads: 'योगारूढस्य तस्यैव शमः कारणमुच्यते' इति अनेन च उत्पन्नसम्यग्दर्शनस्य कर्मयोगाभाववचनात् । . . . आत्मतत्त्वविदः सम्यग्दर्शनविरुद्धो मिथ्याज्ञानहेतुकः कर्मयोगः स्वप्ने अपि न संभावयितुं शक्यते यस्मात् ।

Is Renunciation of Action Necessary for All?

Śaṅkara has often pointed out in his commentary that renunciation of action is *not* for one who has not attained due purification through Karma-Yoga and become fit for higher knowledge. Such pseudo-renunciation of action is more than a deadly poison for an ignorant aspirant. That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa did not allow Arjuna to do so. Śaṅkara has told again and again in his commentary that till the aspirant's mind becomes pure and higher knowledge dawns in him, Karma-Yoga is a must. For one who is fit for Karma-Yoga, Śaṅkara does not even tolerate over-emphasis on meditation at the cost of Karma, or over-doing of Karma at the cost of meditation (*aṅgāṅgībhāva*). He says in his commentary that due value should be given to both Karma and meditation; because Karma will keep inertia (*tamogūṇa*) under control, and meditation will prepare a proper ground for higher knowledge in the aspirant. So if Karma is renounced when one is not fit to do so, or if it is undervalued, the aspirant will fail to attain due purification and fitness for higher knowledge. On studying his commentary critically one becomes convinced of the fact that he does not prescribe renunciation of action for all.

Śaṅkara's absence of fanaticism about renunciation of action (*karma-sannyāsa*) becomes evident from the following statement in his commentary on the twentieth verse of the fourth chapter where he says: 'Even if he [the aspirant who has attained purification and higher knowledge by Karma-Yoga] continues to do action as before without any attachment for its fruit for the sake of others although its purpose in his own life has been served, he does not do any work. Due to higher knowledge functioning in him, his apparent Karma is transformed into inaction (*akarma*).'¹⁸ This

18. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, VI, 20, p. 122; the original

statement is a clear evidence of the broadness of the Ācārya. Moreover, what Śaṅkara says is not his own view ; in his commentary on the twenty-seventh verse of the fifth chapter he points out : 'Lord [Kṛṣṇa] has pointed out at every step [in the *Gītā*] that Karma-Yoga when performed with the attitude of surrendrance to God, the Ultimate Reality, leads to liberation gradually after attaining higher knowledge through

reads : स कुतश्चित् निमित्तात् कर्मपरित्यागासंभवे सति कर्मणि तत्फले च सङ्गरहिततया स्वप्रयोजनाभावात् लोकसंग्रहार्थं पूर्ववत् कर्मणि प्रवृत्तः अपि न एव किञ्चित् करोति । ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्मत्वात् तदीयं कर्म अकर्म एव संपद्यते . . . ।

purification and by renunciation of action.'¹⁹ Keeping in mind this sequence of spiritual evolution told by the Lord, Śaṅkara does not hesitate to say that Karma-Yoga leads to liberation.

Thus, in fact, are Ācārya Śaṅkara's views on Karma-Kāṇḍa, Karma-Yoga and Karma-Sannyāsa in the light of his *Gītā*-commentary. His views regarding the other Yogas, described in the *Gītā*, as paths to liberation will be discussed in the next instalment of the Editorial.

(To be concluded)

19. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, V, 27, p. 164 ; the original reads कर्मयोगः च ईश्वरार्पितसर्वभावेन ईश्वरे ब्रह्मणि आधाय क्रियमाणः सत्त्वशुद्धि-ज्ञानप्राप्ति-सर्वकर्मसंन्यास-क्रमेण मोक्षाय इति भगवान् पदे पदे अब्रवीद् वक्ष्यति च ।

THE MESSAGE OF RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA*

SRIMAT SWAMI VIRESWARANANDAJI MAHARAJ

I am happy to declare open this Vivekananda Lecture Hall and Swami Shivananda Library. I must congratulate the management who has built this and finished the construction within so short a time.

These libraries are a part of our work—our cultural work. All over India, they are attached to our centres. They are always there to meet the demands of the people who want to know about our culture and also to know about the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Holy Mother.

* The benedictory address of Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, delivered on the occasion of the Dedication Ceremony of the Vivekananda Hall and Swami Shivananda Library at Sri Ramakrishna Mission and Ashrama, Khar, Bombay, on 18 February 1978.

Today we are having so many isms. We are having socialism, communism and so many other isms. Swamiji himself declared once, 'I am a socialist, not because socialism is the panacea for all our ills ; but because half a loaf is better than no bread.' From that standpoint, he appreciated or welcomed the socialistic attitude in the country. But of course, it was not so strong at that time ; it was just the beginning. Still he declared that one day it will become a strong movement all over the world. Why did he say that socialism is only half a loaf? Because these isms of the modern age—socialism, communism, etc.—are all offshoots of the materialistic civilization of the West. They only work in the physical plane, the economic field, and not beyond that. Man, however, lives not only in the physical plane but also in the intellectual and

spiritual planes. Socialism and communism do not include man's existence in these two planes. But Swamiji said that the higher castes had not only exploited the masses and deprived them of their legitimate share in the wealth of the country produced by their labour, but had also deprived them of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the nation. The masses were not given this culture or spiritual heritage, though this message was carried to the nations outside the country. Swamiji wanted that the culture and the spiritual truths discovered by our ancestors should be brought to the doors of everyone in the country—high or low, rich or poor, whether educated or uneducated, whether tribal or urban; in short, to each and everyone irrespective of their status. This message of our Indian culture and philosophy and the religion of the Upanishads should be spread all over the country. He wanted that the country should be flooded with spiritual ideas so that all these religious truths discovered by our ancestors in the spiritual field should be imbibed by everyone; and he also foretold that if that happens, the Indians may be imbued with this great ideal and new strength, and will be able to regenerate the country and bring it to a very high level of culture and prosperity. You can call it Vivekanandism or Vedantism or whatever you may like to call it, that ism includes the whole of man, his existence in all the three planes—physical, intellectual and spiritual. That is why he felt that socialism is a partial remedy.

We have been trying to implement Swamiji's ideas in our country. We have been trying to spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji to backward areas, to the villagers and to the tribal areas. I am glad to tell you that the people in these backward areas take to this message with great eagerness. They seem to be hankering for such truths. If we do such kind of work on a larger scale, many problems of the tribal areas will be solved. Just a few selections

from the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*¹ (*Vachanamrita*, as you call it) and a short life of Swamiji were published and circulated amongst the tribals. And I tell you, these people in the tribal areas became so interested that they wanted to have more and more books of that kind. In one tribal area, a small pamphlet containing the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna was published in their own language, and it spread all over that tribal area. Today the song composed by Arun Chatterjee, I think, 'Ramakrishna Saranam, Ramakrishna Saranam' is sung in these tribal areas. When you enter this tribal area, you will find that the people sing this song and dance. So that shows how the message is received by them and if there is any default, it is on our part—we have not taken this message to them.

The Ramakrishna Mission no doubt has been trying to do its best in implementing Swamiji's message; but I must tell you frankly that what we have been doing—either in the urban areas or in the tribal areas—is only microscopic compared with the needs of the whole nation. It is therefore necessary that this Ramakrishna-Vivekananda message should be spread all over the country so that the youths of the country, instead of wasting their time and energy in useless political processions etc. as at present, would take to this constructive work of educating the masses; thereby they will be doing greater service to the country than by what they are doing now. That is why we stress the spread of Swamiji's message, and as a result, we have libraries attached to our centres all over the country. Though these libraries are very small, yet they do supply some inspiration to the people who come and take advantage of them. I wish that this message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Holy Mother spread throughout the country so

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by 'M'.

that many people, many associations, many societies may come forward, and work for the regeneration of the country on the lines laid by Swamiji. That is why I say that this message should be spread all over the country more than the social work. The message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda must be spread all over the country and that is more important than having these hospitals

or schools etc. Not that these are useless, I don't say that. But if the message is spread and the people take to this message, the work will be a hundred times, or a thousand times more than what the Ramakrishna Mission is able to do. From that standpoint, I am saying that the message is more important than the social work done by the Mission.

PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS AND THE UPANISHADS

SWAMI BHAVYANANDA

Om,
 May God protect us !
 May He guide us !
 May He give us strength
 and right understanding !
 May love and harmony
 be with us all !
 Om, peace, peace, peace !¹

This invocation has a very special significance. In ancient India the pupil used to live with his teacher for a period of sixteen years. It was not a kind of literary education that was given there, not simply an academic education. It was character building; it was in a way bringing out the hidden divinity. That was the purpose of this education. So, great understanding, a great spirit of give and take, a spirit of harmony had to dominate such a scene. There were several students, perhaps both boys and girls, and they stayed in the teacher's house. This peace invocation brings out all these implications. It expresses beautiful sentiments. The teacher and the student are engaged in the pursuit of knowledge and also in the building up of character, becau

simply to acquire knowledge without the building up of character would have no purpose; more academic knowledge could not solve the problems. It was a joint endeavour on the part of both the teacher and the pupil.

When people live together, there always arise little problems of life, and the necessary adjustments have to be made. Hence this invocation includes a line on the harmonious relationship within the group that lived there. In acquiring knowledge, the student-teacher relationship is a very important factor, and we feel the importance of it today when this relationship is being broken up. In this relationship not only information and ideas are given, but a certain amount of inspiration as well is being imparted to the pupil. It is like lighting one lamp with the help of another. Secular knowledge is capable of nourishing worldly life only, but spiritual knowledge achieves all-round fulfilment. The humility expressed in this prayer is full of dynamism. It is meant to act in a way that helps both the teacher and the pupil.

The Hindu books of authority are called the Vedas, which mean the 'books of knowledge'. The Upanishads constitute the concluding portions of these books: hence

1. Invocation at the beginning of *Katha Upanishad*.

they are called 'Vedanta', or the end portions of the Vedas. The name also gives the suggestion that the Vedanta contains the essential teachings of the Vedas. Most of the later philosophers in India as well as the philosophies and religions they developed, are based on the firm foundation of the Vedantic teachings. All revivalist movements have traced their ancestry to the Upanishads. Their subtle philosophy, lofty idealism and sublime poetry continue to move keen minds even in our own times. The boldness with which the ancient Indian thinkers approached the path to freedom is especially noteworthy.

An outstanding example is the *Bhagavad-Gita*, in which it is clearly mentioned how the essential teachings of the Upanishads have been incorporated. In the introductory portion there is a verse which says : 'This milk, which constitutes the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, was taken out of the cows which are the Upanishads and the milker was Krishna.'² He milked these cows in order to give the milk to Arjuna ; and through him all wise people who require spiritual nourishment can take it. This milk is the nectar of the *Gita*.

In the study of the Upanishads we are trying to understand that mother cow itself, trying to know what it is all about. Thus we shall be getting our nourishment from the source. In the *Gita*, which is a much later book, a kind of synthesis of these ancient teachings has been aimed at ; whereas in the Upanishads the pure original thought is passed on. Find out what suits your requirements and take it. The Upanishads aim at bringing peace and freedom to the human spirit, for our spirit is much troubled. We feel as if imprisoned ; we would like to do many things, but we just don't have the freedom. We are caught in the prison of time and space. Therefore the Upanishads

aim at a method by which we can transcend this limitation and attain freedom.

As we all know, the facts of life are very disconcerting. The human mind wants to grasp the nature of reality, but it has difficulty in doing so. The Upanishads set forth certain fundamental conceptions which can guide us satisfactorily. In spite of the fact that there are a number of authors behind these books, they have a unity of purpose and offer a clear picture of reality, which becomes quite distinct as we follow it. As they provide a wealth of thought for reflection, an earnest student derives great satisfaction from them : in fact, their philosophy has stimulated spiritual souls throughout the millenia.

Man can gain spiritual insight by two means : firstly by concentrating on the wonders of the world outside, that is, by objective means, and secondly by subjective means. Accordingly, the Dharma, or spiritual message of the Upanishads, is twofold. As Acharya Shankara puts it : one is the objective understanding, by which process one can reach the highest truth, and the other is subjective understanding, the searching within. Shankara very clearly says that both these processes are necessary for the sustenance of this world. Quite often, when we talk of spiritual life, we mean withdrawing, renouncing and getting away. That is one method. But if we are all asked to do that, we find that we are just not ready for it. I am not yet ready, please wait a little, we say ; because it all depends upon the state of my own development. If that were the only path, then for most of us a spiritual pursuit would be impossible. The path must make it possible for all of us to pursue a spiritual life, whatever we are and wherever we are. That is how spiritual development takes place.

Thus objective as well as subjective methods can be supplied in developing our dormant spiritual power. This power is latent within us ; it is not somewhere else.

2. *Gītā-Māhātmyam*, 6.

Rather it has to be brought out from within us by one or the other method. For some, the former method suits, for others the latter. The Upanishads emphasize the exploration of the inner world in depth, of the immortal Self. This method is expounded here and is given as the inner method. The light does not come from the sky, but from within us. The divine spark, the Universal Reality is mirrored here in our own soul. God dwells in the heart of man.

The kingdom of God is within us. That is why Jesus said : 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God ; and all these things shall be added unto you.'³ First I must see God here and must try to understand God. The Supreme Reality, which is the source of all beings, is one with the Self of man. The Upanishads carry this message of joy, and it gives us great hope. One of the Upanishads clearly says : 'Hear ye, children of immortal bliss !'⁴ It does not matter what you are now ; inherently you are immortal, divine. So the message is for you. The Upanishads do not condemn us for our lapses ; on the contrary, they have this vision, this perception of the Reality, and they call on us to bring out that Reality.

Life on earth is a means for realizing this Truth. The disciplines of life in this world are meant to guide us to the higher joy of possessing the Supreme Truth. The very process of living is meant for this. The bringing out of the spiritual dimension, if it is understood and applied and if we have become conscious of it in whatever work we do, gives a kind of new zest and joy to our life. Going through life is a continuous preparation to achieve this perfection. That is why one of the Indian scriptures says : 'Going through the normal process of living, that itself is the path that leads to spiritual emancipation.'

When we acquire this vision of life, then

life gets a different meaning, then it is no longer an empty dream. The Upanishads uphold this lofty vision before humanity. Spiritual perfection is an inner experience. Nothing much is seen from the outside. It is not something that can be perceived by these eyes. In fact, Holy Mother used to say : 'What happens when one finds God : Does one grow two horns? No, indeed, but the mind becomes pure.'⁵ If you have the inner perception, then you recognize ; but until you have developed that perception, you cannot understand, you cannot take measure in any way. Intuitively you may feel it, but nothing external shows it to you. I have seen one or two people who had met Sri Ramakrishna. About him they used to say : 'Well, he could have been any of those poor Brahmins who were walking in the street. Only when we went close to him, we felt there was something different in him.' Provided they sought it, otherwise they would not have recognized it. People who had seen Holy Mother, his wife, said : 'She could be any ordinary woman, very shy, very withdrawn.' Only people who had heard something about her and went to see her with eagerness, would see something there ; otherwise they could not even have seen that much.

It is the identity of the individual soul with the universal Soul that makes for this inner transformation, and this identity constitutes the essence of spiritual life. The all-pervasive divine power enables us to understand this spiritual Reality. Spiritual things cannot be grasped by intellectual means ; they are to be spiritually discerned. The yoga method of discipline aims to guide men that way. Man, with the help of his divine insight, transcends the limitations of his intellect and of his reason in his own mystical experience. It is in this state that

3. Matthew 6:33.

4. *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad*, II. 5.

5. *The Message of Holy Mother, Mayavati* : Advaita Ashrama, 1962, p. 16.

the unheard becomes heard, the unperceived becomes perceived and the unknown becomes known. Problems raised by the intellect are solved by themselves in that transcendental state.

Most of us live at the level of intelligence and reason; we have not yet risen higher than that. Being intelligent and seeking to understand, we are still faced with a certain amount of limitations, any number of doubts may arise, questions may be asked, but satisfactory answers cannot be got. The real answer cannot be found in words; it has to be found in experience, and the answer has to be my experience, not somebody else's. That is why it is said in the Upanishad: 'When this perception comes, words fail to reach it, mind cannot grasp it.'⁶ The answer is beyond, it belongs to a different wavelength.

We should cease to judge everything by the yardstick of intellect and reason, and begin to discern spiritually. The disciplines expounded in the Upanishads aim to lead us to that Reality. Mind and intellect become fully satisfied by them. One who treads the spiritual path, has to cast aside the pride of intellect and egoistic self-consciousness. Simplicity and purity are essential for taking up this journey. Yet one should not assume by this that intellect is useless as a guide. We must be very careful not to make this mistake. No, far from it. Intellect is also the power of God expressed through the human agency. What it can grasp is not false, only it fails when it attempts to grasp the Reality in its fullness. In all other activities our intellect succeeds. Again, what our intellect investigates is not unreal, but it is not absolutely real. Intuition can throw light into the dark recesses of the mind where the intellect cannot penetrate. Mystical intuition does not contradict reason, but both are mutually beneficial and lead to a

sober life. The vision of the intellect is widened in the spiritual experience. The contradictions of the intellectual state are resolved. When humanity has this vision, even scientific knowledge will become really a blessing; but as it is today, we all know, it is not an unmixed blessing. This is because the minds that handle it are not really pure enough to do so for the benefit of humanity. The knowledge that we have acquired in the fields of science and technology remains subordinate to the whims and fancies of the people who are not themselves properly self-controlled.

The Eternal Spirit expresses itself in the varied manifestations of this world, full of passions and paradoxes, truths and contradictions. Through all this it is God's power alone that is functioning; but weak souls unaware of this truth, grow weary and want to escape. But escape where? We are in the world—there is nowhere to go.

The seeming contradictions merge into the life of the spirit. The Upanishads are intended to make us realize this intuitive knowledge. They want us to experience bliss, not simply acquire an intellectual knowledge. For intellectual knowledge would leave us skimming merely the surface of the Reality. In experience we attain the bliss of that Reality. It lies hidden in our unexplored depths and has to be brought out. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Any number of descriptions of milk you may have read, but if you have not drunk it, you cannot be nourished by it.' So all our intellectual knowledge—if we don't aim to bring out our own spiritual dimension from within, if it is only show-off-knowledge—has no real meaning.

The ancient teachers have not forgotten the importance of moral and ethical values in this process. These play a very important part in our spiritual life. Tapas or self-control is part of the initial steps in spiritual life. The *Kena Upanishad* clearly mentions this: 'The main supports of spiritual

⁶ See *Taittiriya Upanishad*, II. ix. I.

life are meditation, self-control and dedicated work.⁷

Depending upon the way of expression most suited for my requirements, I can proceed to practise. The Upanishads give us all these insights. There is great emphasis on the moral character of the aspirant because spirituality is not mere scholarship; it is a real transformation of our being in its totality. It is growth, culminating in the realization of Truth.

In a scholarly but impure mind, no spiritual knowledge can ever dawn, because such a mind is not tuned to that wavelength at all. It is merely tuned to a certain level of understanding, very good in itself, very keen; but it cannot rise above this level. One will have to become free from all crookedness falsehood and deception; that is the pure state demanded of a spiritual aspirant. Anything less than that would make the understanding of Truth in its totality impossible. In the *Katha Upanishad* there is a reference: 'One who has not desisted from bad conduct, whose senses are not controlled, whose mind is not tranquil and concentrated cannot attain the

Self through knowledge.'⁸ Unless one has reached this stage, one does not understand the Truth.

So we have to struggle hard to overcome our innate animal impulses. The body is the animal; we have to learn to control and guide it properly. Normally, the mind is dominated by the senses and is very much bound; as a result it is very limited in its expressions. A pure mind has the capacity to turn all the energies of both body and mind in the direction of the Self within. This is what makes spiritual life a heroic adventure. You have to be very vigilant, there is no slackening of effort. As a writer beautifully put it: The price of Liberty is eternal vigilance. This life is the consummation of evolution; in the process of evolution we have come up to this stage. We have taken millenia to reach it. But to bring it to perfection, we can co-operate actively; we can hasten the process. Evolution reaches its highest form, its consummation, in the understanding of Truth.

Man, who is human today, becomes God. This is the message and the hope the Upanishads hold for us.

7. See *Kena Upanishad*, IV. 8.

8. *Katha Upanishad*, I. ii. 24.

A RELIGION THAT CAN SATISFY THE MODERN SEEKER

SWAMI BHASHYANANDA

The modern age is an age of science in which the human mind has been dominated by a mechanistic outlook. Due to scientific and technological developments, distance between the nations has been reduced, and the world has seemingly become smaller. As a consequence, men have been brought into a closer contact politically, socially and culturally. It is quite natural, therefore, for man to compare his social and behavioural

patterns with those of other nations. When he does so, he finds some things common but many things different and strange.

This need or comparison also arises because the modern mind wants to find explanations based on reason for behaviour and thought-processes during his daily life. When man tries to understand some of his own beliefs, particularly in the domain of religion, and is unable to get satisfactory

explanations, he feels a need to study other religions and the explanations given by them. There are, however, people whose first reaction is that the other views are strange and alien, and therefore they have a tendency to avoid them. On the other hand, some may like to investigate other religions. They feel that though a new idea may be strange, yet it is humane, kindred, and potentially one's own. They may be able to learn from it. Thus, men, through reason, modern science and technology, are discovering the common features in their thinking processes and behavioural patterns.

The soul of the scientific method is reason and experience, and not mere faith. Judged by this standard, many religions as preached from the pulpit are found to be unsatisfactory. Thus the human need formerly filled by prayer, religious guidance and so on, is taken over by psycho-analysis these days. Society or community takes the place of a personal deity. Such noble impulses as love of one's neighbour and unselfish service are substituted in modern times by institutionalized philanthropic and charitable works.

Another attraction of the modern age is that the new discoveries of science and technology are at least partially able to satisfy man's desire for creature comforts. It is felt that most of the problems of life can be handled without the knowledge of God, soul and immortality. Supposedly, one does not need to apply religious knowledge to solve the problems of life.

For all these reasons and more, religion, as it has been understood, is presently at a discount. The average educated person today is not found to be religious, though many people have vague religious thoughts and feelings which they are unable to explain. While people in the Middle Ages had an anchor in their life through faith in God, in modern times people seem to have drifted away from this point of stability, and as a result an ever increasing number seem to end up in the psychiatric chair.

In spite of all this, we find that religious aspirations cannot be eradicated. Cults are multiplying everyday. There is a huge demand for mystical books in order to pacify the inquiring human soul. This is because there is a deep-rooted hankering for religious experience in man. It arises from his own nature and has very little to do with his earthly environment. It seems as if man is a celestial tree planted on earth, for this search after the highest is in his inner constitution; he is trying to fulfil this urge with all his inner capacities, mental and spiritual tendencies, and with the help of all the conveniences that have been placed at his disposal.

According to Hindu mystics, the world process is sustained by two forces: one is called Pravritti (desire for worldly prosperity) and the other is termed Nivritti (desire for liberation). Even the desire for worldly prosperity must be controlled by spiritual laws, or it creates chaos, confusion, wars and destruction.

Indeed, man is like the prodigal son of the biblical story. He may have all possible worldly pleasures and comforts, and yet some time or other he discovers that earthly life is short-lived. He then proclaims, 'What shall I do with these earthly possessions if I am doomed to die?'—and thus goes in search of immortality and eternal life. For instance, Lord Buddha, before enlightenment discovered the changes which the human being has to go through, such as, birth, growth, decay, old age and death. He then showed to mankind the way to attain eternal peace, joy and enlightenment through detachment.

Man has a body and senses which seek satisfaction in material pleasures, a mind which seeks contemplation in science and art, and a heart which longs after the spirit. While on the deathbed, every rational mind must ask, 'Is this the end? What is beyond?' It is this inquiry into the beyond rising from the heart which distinguishes man from

animal. He seeks the permanent beyond all changes, and this search can only be satisfied by religion. Science studies only the outer life ; psychology studies only the fringe of the mind ; but the study of religion reaches that which is deep and sublime in man.

Animals and uncultured men derive their pleasure from the senses ; while educated men get it from art, science and philosophy ; and the spiritual man from the spirit within. The test of religion is in the attainment of highest bliss and freedom, which is an automatic outcome of the communion with one's highest nature. Vedanta speaks of God as the embodiment of freedom and the master of nature ; and through the control of his passions and desires, man achieves not only union with God but also freedom and self-mastery.

The essence of religion is eternal Truth, though its form changes from time to time. Dogmas, creeds, modes of worship, rituals and mythologies, through which the eternal religious truths are conveyed by teachers and scriptures, are secondary. The non-essentials, however, have to be given the value they deserve. The kernel and the husk are both essential for the corn. But, in the ultimate analysis, the kernel has to be separated from the husk before it is ready for consumption. Similarly, the non-essentials of religion, which change from time to time, must eventually be transcended, leaving the central truths which are eternal.

Although the scope and aim of religion is to realize the real nature of man, the universe, and the ultimate Reality which controls man and nature, the leaders of religion have been quarrelling for a long time on its validity and basis. Some religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam, speak of their historicity. They claim that their prophets are historical persons whose words are the standard of truth. The dogmas creeds and rituals of such religions are based upon interpretation of the prophet's

words. True religion, on the other hand, is based on eternal laws, not created by man. The Indian Rishis, through their spiritual penetration, discovered those laws first through moral and ethical life, and then through meditation. These eternal laws synthesize God, soul and the world ; and because the Rishis demonstrated these impersonal truths in their own lives, we revere them.

And it is this type of scientific exploration which will attract man today ; for the modern mind needs religion which will satisfy reason and be based on experience. That is the demand of the age in which we live. We should always keep this test in our mind. Truth is not the monopoly of a particular person or group of persons. The science of yoga emphasizes that truth must be pursued by all. If there is a God, we should all be able to realize Him. Realization is real religion. By merely shouting or chanting the name of God we will not be able to perceive Him. We may believe in all the churches and places of worship, read all the scriptures, and be baptized with all the holy waters of the world, but all this would be of little avail without actual perception of God. Without this vision, one would still be an atheist.

We study the scriptures because they are based on experience and indicate the way. The validity of actual experience in religion is greater than the validity of science. In addition to reason and scriptural authority, one's own experience gives one the inner conviction which science alone cannot provide. But religious beliefs based purely on the intellect will decay like a bouquet of flowers. Religion does not come into experience by mere intellectual reasoning.

But then, what about religious cosmology? How far does that agree with experience? Science and religion seem at conflict when they describe the process of creation. The biblical story of creation is in direct con-

tradition to Darwin's theory of evolution, and therefore religion was discredited. As a reaction to this, the church opposed science. Of course, whether the sun is going around the earth or the earth is revolving around the sun matters very little as far as the attainment of inner peace is concerned; Christ laid the foundations of Christianity when people believed that the sun went around the earth. Sri Krishna, Socrates and Plato gave humanity tremendous truths which have eternal validity, though modern science was not even born then.

The Vedantic view of creation is not opposed to that of modern science. According to Vedanta, there is no absolute creation. The design theory is a childish explanation of creation. The postulate that the nose is created by God so that the spectacles may be placed on it is ridiculous. It makes God an architect dependent on the world. The design theory may be good for teaching the beginners God's power and glory, but it cannot stand the test of reason. Vedanta speaks of evolution based on involution from one Supreme Reality, the One-without-a-second, whose manifestations are seen in causal, subtle and gross forms, like the tree and the seed. Kapila, the founder of the Sankhya philosophy, ages ago saw no absolute destruction of nature, but only change. In creation, cause becomes the effect; and in dissolution, the effect goes back to the cause. A machine, when it degenerates, goes back to the scrap-iron state. The universe is eternal either in gross, subtle or causal form, for the causal comes forth again and again as the subtle and then gross. We cannot add or take away even one ounce of energy from the totality of the universe.

It follows from this that the concepts of time and space have neither beginning nor end. If we try to think of a limit to time and space, or when time and space began, we will have to think of time

and space as beforehand; that is, we are trying to discover the time and place in which time and space began, which is illogical. As such, time and space are infinite and eternal. Thus, they are an aspect of God. Time, space and causation come from Him and ultimately merge in Him.

Matter and force are the two entities which bring forth the process of creation. The primal matter (Akasha) and the primal force (Prana) acting upon each other create forms; and at the end of the cycle, when the gross merges into the subtle, and the subtle into the causal, the primal matter remains embedded in the primal Prana. At the end of the cycle, all material forms are ultimately reduced to undifferentiated Akasha. This Akasha remains involved in Prana. They remain mixed together in fine forms in a state of dissolution—not annihilation. When the new cycle begins, creation appears to evolve in reverse process—subtle to gross. Just as physical bodies can be explained by Darwin's theory of evolution, these subtler and superfine causal manifestations can be explained through the science of intuition, which only religion can give.

As can be seen from this, God is the manifestor, not the creator. In and through the universe God exists. He manifests Himself as the universe. It is a projection of this cosmic mind. As to how He manifests, it is said in the *Mundaka Upanishad*: 'As a spider spreads and withdraws its thread, as on the earth grow the herbs, and as from the living man issues out hair on the head and body, so out of the Immutable does the universe emerge here.' (I. i. 7).

The external aspect of thought is word. The names and forms are inseparable from the word. St. John begins his Gospel with these profound words: 'In the beginning was the word.' This word is Om of the Vedas. The Absolute (God) manifests Itself as this

universe through time, space and causation. Why and how? Vedanta calls it Maya. Our mind and reason, being part of it, cannot explain it fully.

Vedanta describes Reality as : '*sarvam khalu idam brahma*—all this is verily

Brahman.' All that is seen through the sense organs, felt in the mind and heart, and experienced through intuition is that One Reality called God. This explanation of religion satisfies not only reason and science, but also faith.

TRADITION, CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

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Human society, as we see it today, has evolved through stages, with the gradual development of the primitive man who first lived in tribes and clans. The story of primitive man is 'the record of a hungry creature in search of food. Wherever food was plentiful, thither man has travelled to make his home.'¹ With the invention of agriculture this nomadic life of man ended, and he settled down to a particular place.² Since that time, certain factors have contributed to the formation of the present structure of society. Certain ideas, beliefs, customs, practices and experiences of man have played a very useful part in influencing the process of man's social evolution. For, man inherited all these faiths and beliefs together with the influence of the geographical factors; and these determined to some extent his character and his outlook. So, man as he stands today is 'the product of history, heir to a thousand traditions [we shall define tradition presently], the subtle flower of a certain climate, of certain skies, of certain customs, of a certain soil which has no equivalent anywhere else.'³ Society,

being essentially dynamic in nature, cannot but move or evolve; and the process of evolution that started at the dawn of civilization has not yet ended. The essential point lies in understanding evolution as a creative force. 'Evolution, in other words, is coming to be regarded as a creative process, continually engaged in bringing to birth something new; there is literally more in the universe at any moment than there was the moment before; the future is unpredictable and man is free within limits to make it as he pleases.'⁴ In this process of creative evolution, tradition and culture take a leading role.

To begin with, tradition is the sum of all the ideas, habits and customs of a people transmitted from one generation to another, and is thus a social heritage that one generation inherits from its previous generation. It moulds and determines the behaviour of the inheriting generation and endows it with the past achievements.⁵ To the inheriting generation it appears as the sum of habitual customs, beliefs, religious practices and so on of the previous genera-

1. Van Loon, *The Story of Mankind*, New York: Washington Square Press, 1968, (hereafter *Mankind*), p. 20.

2. See Mino Masani, *Our Growing Human Family*, Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1951, chap. 4.

3. Leo Moulin, *Socialism of the West*,

London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1948, (hereafter *Socialism*), p. 250.

4. C. E. M. Joad, *Guide to Modern Thought*, London: Pan Books, Ltd., 1948, p. 22.

5. See M. Ginsberg, *The Psychology of Society*, London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1933, p. 104.

tion ; but it relates to the whole past history of the people.

Culture implies the distinctive features of the outlook on life evolved by a people in relation to its entire way of life. In framing this outlook, tradition plays a significant part, but it is not the sole governing force in it ; for in it we find a refinement—an intellectual, emotional and spiritual achievement—of the inherited beliefs and practices as manifest in the art, literature and other humanitarian pursuits. Thus, in common usage, this concept of culture refers to an 'ill-determined whole in which art, ritual, customs, manners as well as general intellectual and spiritual aspirations mingle imperceptibly in a somewhat vague pattern.'⁶ Behind this common-use concept, there will be found some common traits in the national character of a people which constitute their outlook on life, and it is this particular outlook that differentiates peoples of different places.

Because all countries have not the same traditions, and as the refinement of these inherited beliefs and faiths, etc. reaches different stages at different times in the life of different peoples, there are bound to arise some differences in the national character of different peoples living in different geographical regions. Because of this, a man becomes tied to particular cultural characteristics. It is only natural that his characteristics will thrive most under the given conditions, and that is why he ceases to be himself when transferred to some other place with different social environment. So a man cannot neglect his environment if he is to see that his development is not retarded in any way.

Thus, if tradition in the form of past experiences and achievements relates to the past, culture is an amalgamation of past with present. These past experiences and

achievements are gradually purified by the social developments as these percolate in the life of the present generation. So in the life of the present generation we do not find the crude forms of customs and practices in those shapes in which these originated in the primitive society. The outlook on life of the present generation is thus a modified form of the product of amalgamation of past with present.

In the preceding paragraphs we have defined culture as an outlook on life and have enlisted such factors as customs, beliefs, religious practices, geographical factors, etc., as modified through social development, which frame this outlook on life. To a Marxist, this approach is insufficient. To him, this outlook on life is nothing but the product of economic forces obtaining at any moment in a society, and these forces are the most dominant ones for him. Thus Engels writes: 'There is, therefore, no automatic outcome of the economic situation as some find it convenient to fancy. Men make their own history, but in a given environment in which they live, and upon the foundation of extant relations. Among these relations, economic relations, however great may be the influence exercised on them by other relations of a political and ideological order, are those whose action is ultimately decisive, *forming a red thread which runs through all the other relations* and enables us to understand them.'⁷ Not satisfied with this, he continues : 'Political, legal, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc. development, is grounded upon economic development. But all of them react, conjointly and separately, one upon another,

⁶. *The Statesman*, The Republic Day Number, 26th January 1955.

⁷. F. Engels in a letter published in the *Sozialistischer Akademiker* in October 1894 ; see G. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, ed. D. Ryazanov, Calcutta : Eagle Publishers, 1944, (hereafter *Problems of Marxism*), p. 55. Italics mine.

and upon the economic foundation.⁸ This attitude is common to all the Marxists.⁹ Though it is true that economic forces play some part in framing the outlook on life, we cannot agree with the view that these forces are the dominating forces in the matter of art, literature, religion, philosophy, etc. To hold this belief is to forget that man is an ardent devotee of beauty, to neglect the 'genesis of artistic import', to fail to recognize the 'aesthetic emotion' in man and the emotional content of a work of art, which give man 'aesthetic pleasure'.¹⁰

In considering the origin of tradition, a brief study of the origin of ideas, habits and customs, is necessary. At first sight it would appear to anyone that these command much prestige from us. The reason behind this is not far to seek. It may be stated that most of these ideas and customs have some experience behind them. The primitive society of man underwent many experiences from the day of its growth [birth?] and the human brain constantly treasured those experiences in the form of symbols.¹¹ Later on these became associated with the way of life and found expression in the various forms of beliefs and customs. In the early stages of social evolution it was found necessary that some common rules should be framed which would bind all men together for the purpose of continuation of society; and thus a body of customs came to be recognized as essential for the infancy of human society. That was why anyone deviating from the accepted body of customs came to be looked upon seriously

and was generally dealt severe punishment. Behind this body of customs and beliefs there were the herd-instinct and the ignorance and fear of the primitive man in the unknown. Anyway, the infant society came to exist through these various customs and practices. With the progress of time some of these customs and practices became worn out and some were modified to a certain extent because of a change in the experience of mankind; and hence there was some modification of outlook. The fact that some of these practices current even to this day are not found helpful from a certain point of view, does not lead us to suppose that they were always so in the process of evolution. Every period will inherit some of the practices of the past and develop some new ones suitable for the times. A very important factor for a society is the experience that men face while living in it and which they can retain for the coming generation. In this respect Prof. Dewy argues: 'Society means association; coming together in joint intercourse and action for the better realization of any form of experience which is augmented and confirmed by being shared.'¹² However, these beliefs and customs formed the habit of men and afterwards, transmitted through tradition, attained enormous prestige. Thus, in the light of the above analysis, tradition radiates the experience of the past to the future generations.

Briefly speaking, culture is fashioned by tradition. So far as this is so, we can talk of a traditional culture. But traditional culture reflects the static condition of society. If the outlook on life undergoes no change corresponding to a change in experience, that cannot suit a changing population, society being essentially

8. See *Problems of Marxism*, p. 54.

9. Plekhanov himself believes in this approach. See *ibid.*, chap. I, especially pp. 41-70.

10. We do not elaborate these concepts here, but those who are interested will please turn to Dr. (Mrs.) S. Langer's work entitled *Philosophy in a New Key*, Cambridge, U.S.A.: Harvard University Press, 1951, chap. IX.

11. See the excellent study by Dr. S. Langer, *ibid.*, chaps. I-III.

12. J. Dewy, *A Reconstruction in Philosophy*, New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc. (Mentor Books), 1951, p. VIII, especially p. 160.

dynamic in nature. A society cannot both move and remain static. New ideas often radiate from other societies and these leave their shadows on the society concerned. So society gradually conforms to the pattern of life that is current, and this also moulds its notion of past tradition as represented by old ideas, though with some reservation because of the prestige enjoyed by tradition. This change in outlook generally comes out of intercourse among different peoples of the world. Thus traditions are further modified and we can talk of a cultural tradition reflecting the dynamic nature of society.

Every nation has its own tradition and culture, and these are its important assets in the sense that these, along with other factors, define and determine the national character of its people. Those who are born to a society, are born with its tradition and culture and acquire the national character. Out of this process there arise national types, and when the society acquires some amount of political consciousness, there emerges a very important quality of the people which is known in political science as nationality.

Tradition is a tool for the evolution of mankind towards perfection. Without tradition the intellectual and spiritual improvement of man is not possible, because tradition transmits experience to the future generation and thus makes it sure that the future generation is not to commit the mistakes which the past generation committed. Man is uniquely gifted with speech and writing, and it is through these that the ideas of the past generation are diffused among others. The human species is generally improving because of the capacity of the human brain to conceive and restore [store?] experience. Through the new experiences and ideas gathered, the human brain develops. And even from a biological point of view, the brain will appear to be a very important factor for the evolution of the

human species, because it is the centre of speech; of the intellectual, aesthetic, moral and spiritual ideas, which are intimately connected with the evolution of man to a better end.¹³

The body of customs, practices and ideas which work for progress must be distinguished from superstitious practices and ideas. These latter become associated with society and influence the social life. Sometimes these get prestige, just as healthy practices get, because they are old and are generally mingled with the healthy tradition of a people. Sometimes these superstitious practices overshadow the healthy practices. These unworthy practices are not reviewed in the light of experience due to a blind outlook, and thus corrupt the social outlook and stop the flow of life instead of furthering it. This creates factions among men and bars the growth of a common outlook and therefore must be guarded against seriously. Only growing experience through various sources can help us in this respect. A refined outlook on life is very essential for progress.

This refined outlook plays a very important part, for it comes out of experience and makes every individual experienced in the refined light. When society as a whole becomes imbued with a useful attitude, then social progress can be achieved easily. This refined outlook on life, which we may call culture, is a product of yesterday and today. For the sake of progress it is necessary to hold fast what is true and good in order to advance in both. 'To cast away the old is not of necessity to obtain the new—to reject anything that is valuable, lessens the power of gaining more. That a thing is new does not, of course, command; that it is old does not discredit.

13. For a detailed study see, du Noüy, *Human Destiny*, New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc. (Signet Books), 1949, (hereafter *Human Destiny*), chap. 9.

The test question is "Is it true or good?" (Tyron Edwards). Thus culture works both for inward expansion of the individual and for general expansion of society.¹⁴

Man is not satisfied with what he is; being a product of evolution, he tries to become the master of evolution and, in fact, he is 'a rope connecting animal and superman—a rope over an abyss. . . . What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal.'¹⁵ In him there is always a craving towards perfection—not only material, but spiritual too, and the latter is more important than the former one. In this attempt culture plays a very significant role by virtue of its making men associated with the finer qualities of life. From this standpoint we can define culture as an effort towards perfection 'through *all* the voices of human experiences which have been handed upon it, or art, science, poetry, philosophy, as well as of religion.'¹⁶

So we are now in a position to state that 'the essence of culture is that dominion over nature in the material, moral, and spiritual spheres which maintains in a society a higher and better state than the given natural condition would produce, characterized by a harmonious balance of spiritual and material values, as well as a definite and more or less homogeneous ideal, which is the goal of all the various activities of the society.'¹⁷

-Bearing in mind all that we have said so far, we can sum up the position as follows: Cultural tradition is the most important factor for the evolution of mankind. Bereft of it we are not much above the animal world. It ennobles us and leads us towards

a better evolution for the future, and reveals to us a nobler and moral meaning of life on earth. A theory of social life that takes into account only the material progress of man, cannot be regarded as complete. We must take into account the inner fruits of civilization by which we mean the 'force or influence which tends to raise the level of mankind, and assures *to the greatest number of men the maximum enjoyment of the highest spiritual values.*'¹⁸

Thus far we have stated that the purpose of civilization is to make room for the spiritual progress of mankind. Now let us study the impact of the modern structure of civilization on the free play of tradition and culture and thus on social progress.

The present aspect of civilization marks a rise in the material progress together with poverty. Today, the social life is full of class conflict.¹⁹ Another special feature of this civilization is the rise of the 'mass-man' whose manifold problems have attracted the notice of many social thinkers.²⁰ The growing poverty of the mass-man in spite of the material achievements of the world—a paradox of the modern era—and his indifference to all that does not contribute immediately to his material welfare, is a serious hindrance to real progress. The progress of society has reached a stage which Lewis Mumford has called 'megapolis' which is marked by mechanization and standardization of life in the fields of art and culture, where business mentality governs the society, and which is marked by a strong class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 248; italics in the original.

19. For an elaborate discussion, see K. Marx and F. Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto', in *Capital, The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings by K. Marx*, New York: The Modern Library, 1932.

20. For example, see J. Ortega and Y. Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc. (Mentor Books), 1951.

14. See Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1969, (hereafter *Culture*), chap. I, especially p. 48.

15. F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. T. Common, New York: Carlton House, no date, p. 8.

16. *Culture*, p. 47; italics in the original.

17. J. Huizinga, *Incertitudes*, Paris, 1939, pp. 39-41; see *Socialism*, p. 258.

In this mass-society which is characterized by irrationality, impersonal relations, extreme specialization of roles, the mass-man feels himself lonely and lost in spite of concentration of sheer numbers, and suffers from loss of the sense of intimacy and security.²¹ Along with this loneliness, the mass-man suffers from frustration and cynicism. In the modern social structure the mass-man finds himself unimportant and without any social status. He cannot appreciate that he has some significance for the society and that his work is meaningful from a social point of view. Living under such circumstances, he is constantly unhappy. His happiness is to be realized from his circle of friends, where he is loved by others and where he can feel that he is contributing something to the community as a whole. Mere economic betterment cannot cure these psychological ills. What is needed more specifically is a change of environment which can bring about a change in social output. A change of environment can come from a change in social consciousness which again depends on a healthy system of social education.

Now—to take a short digression from the main theme of the essay—with the growing success of mass-man in controlling the affairs of the modern state (through the vote), the duty of spreading social education and making provision for the policies for economic betterment, have been left in the hands of the state. Though the importance of state activity in the economic field has been realized, the state-launched economic policies suffer from the flavour of sectional interest and often cannot better the condition of the mass-man to whom they are directed. Much of the betterment policies end in misuse of money, and to his surprise the mass-man finds the wastage of the common fund—defects from which a

democratic form of government has been found to suffer a long time. To say this is not to belittle the importance of governmental spending, but to point out the importance of planning the timing and the direction of public expenditure in addition to the control over its volume. The trouble that we find with the state-sponsored and -controlled education is that such a system moulds every man to a particular fashion, that is to say, such a system can create better citizens, but not better individuals. In fact, the government-financed and -backed scheme of education is a huge cauldron where every man is made to lose his individuality. This uniformity of human thought is a bar to the helpful group-composition of society which is an indicator of social progress. If everybody is of the same pattern, then, to our judgement, the advancement of society suffers.

Moreover, the modern state controls not only education but also other aspects of social life, and with them the social outlook. A free outlook has not always been granted to individuals in many collectivist countries. Without this liberty, the tools of evolution, namely, tradition and culture, cannot have a free play. That is why it is not difficult to see that in spite of government-sponsored cultural missions visiting various countries under the auspices of cultural co-operation among the various nations of the world, there has been a breakdown of the traditional and cultural outlook in the life of the nations. The protest that we have raised against the government-sponsored education, can also be raised against the government-sponsored cultural missions, inasmuch as these missions no longer reflect the special cultural characteristics of a nation where these missions are controlled by the diplomatic relations existing between countries.

To revert to our main theme of the essay, it is to be realized that too much reliance on the material outlook and too heavy a

21. For an interesting analysis see the article by R. S. Vyas, 'Mass Society and City Culture', in the *Modern Review*, Calcutta, January 1956.

burden of economic pressure, among others, are the roots of the modern aspect of our social life. Such is the condition that 'if you will notice you will find that almost everybody around you is forever talking economics and discussing wages and hours of labour and strikes in their relation to the life of the community, for that is the main topic of interest of our own time.'²² If this be the true reading of our time (which in our opinion it certainly is), then we feel that a prescription must provide for the economic betterment of man and the spread of social education. These are very helpful factors for the realization of the importance of cultural and spiritual values whose utter neglect denotes a crisis in culture.

Material progress is not all, neither is intelligence alone, because it is dangerous to rely blindly on intelligence if it is too full of materialism and does not take into account the intuitive or rational contents of moral or ethical values.²³ The present civilization implies a neglect of the finer human values of life, art, morality, duty, spirituality, etc. Many would argue that morality is nothing but a want of opportunity and that sin is geographical. We are inclined to say here that such arguments not only neglect the dignity of man, they are also pernicious to the society in the sense that, under the

influence of these ideas, the morality and spirituality of man are now coming to be regarded as the vanishing points of human character. And we have reasons to trust that these conceptions injure society to a degree which lies beyond the possibility of repair. It is true that with the exception of a few details we have not been able to publish a moral code containing all the principles of morality. We believe that such an attempt is not always possible in a social science. What is of paramount importance to us is that the code of morality has not yet varied essentially from age to age and that, with some exceptions due to peculiar social structure and custom, a sin is always a sin. We can rely on certain rules of morality and on certain notions about sin derived from the transmission of experience through human intelligence from one generation to another and from one part of the world to another and commanding universal obedience from all corners of the world. We trust that with some fundamental principles (we do not say that such principles should be static, and thus we allow proper importance and scope to the change of time and experience) of this nature, the world can be made safe for mankind.

Human evolution should aim at the betterment of the species. Looking at it from the biological point of view, we can say that future development should be attained through the brain, and development of the brain itself depends upon a good environment, the importance of which has been well recognized in biology. We have pictured the brain as a transmitter of human experience from one generation to another. The question, whether certain characteristics of one generation will pass on to another, is no longer answered on the basis of the old-fashioned Weismann theory of the germ-cell, which distinguished between the inherited characteristics and acquired characteristics, holding that the former and

22. *Mankind*, p. 251.

23. Civilization in which the material element prevails over the ethical one is without a sound foundation. The survival of civilization depends upon its attainment of equilibrium between the forces making for material progress and those leading to ethical developments. An intellectual culture implied in ethical and spiritual developments is of supreme importance in the survival and progress of civilization. Mere introduction of high ethical standards among peoples not sufficiently advanced intellectually to receive them does more harm than good. The history of the world—especially religious history—abounds in such examples. An excellent treatment in this respect will be found in P. N. Bose's *Epochs of Civilization*, Calcutta: W. Newman & Co., 1913, chap. 3.

not the latter were diffused through successive generations by genes. A modern biologist, on the other hand, takes his stand on environment and urges that what one inherits are not characteristics at all, but certain materials which, given certain conditions, will produce certain characteristics. This approach neglects the importance of the genes. We are not so sure as the modern biologist is, and cannot wholly agree to his argument on this point. Environment is certainly important, but we cannot wholly deny the importance of genes. A ray of hope is still surviving here, however. If we can improve the environment, then those who will live in it will also be changed after some time, and with them the later generations; because if the parents are changed it is expected that their next generation will also be changed (possibly through a change in genes due to a better environment).²⁴ If

24. This statement will be opposed by those who do not adhere to the theory of evolution associated mainly with the names of J. B. Lamarck (1744-1829) and Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and feel that 'acquired characteristics are not inherited because environmental factors (which do not affect genes in the sex cells) cannot influence the next generation.' (Mark A. Hall and Milton S. Lassen, *Review Text in Biology*, 1966, pp. 304, 305; see *Did Man Get Here by Evolution or by Creation?*, New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1967, p. 13). It will be pointed out that the failure in the experiments of Weismann to establish a breed of tailless mice and the survival of an almost equal number of hornless sheep with those having horns side by side, go against the theory of evolution which rests on the transmission of acquired characteristics to successive generations and on the survival of the fittest. On the other hand, after the researches of some biologists, especially those of Henslow, Harrison and Garrett in the case of moths, it seems likely that 'environment may, through the bodyplasm, act on the germplasm and that germinal modifications so acquired are transmissible.' [Quoted from the article 'Heredity' in *Everyman's Encyclopaedia*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1958, (hereafter *Everyman's Encyclopaedia*), vol. 6.] However, I feel here that in the artificial experiments connected with

this is so, a cultural environment will play a very important part by modifying our outlook and thus improving our brain, making progress more certain for our future generation. Negligence of this will retard evolution and will mean euthanasia of humanity. It is time that there be a restatement of human values.²⁵ We must not forget that man is the central problem of our study, and the betterment of man demands recognition of the finer sentiments of our life. A true development of humanity can alone help us in this respect.

Diffusion of culture, so important for the dynamic aspect of society, is coming to a stop because of the spread of cold war. This means the spread of mistrust and lack of intellectual intercourse between different

the mice and the moths, the mice and the moths were tools in the hands of man and as such had no mind and will-force and intelligence of their own, and hence, those factors were not acting in these cases. So the results of these experiments cannot be blindly applied in the case of man in whom mind—which is the seat of consciousness, thought, volition and feeling and thus reflects, through the stimuli of brain, will-force, creative consciousness and intelligence—is so active a force and which yields so to environment. It may be noted here that the brain itself responds swiftly and intelligently in consequence of the impact of the environment. Hence, in the case of man, the influence of environment, due to the prevalence of his intelligence, creative consciousness and will-force, is likely to be more prominent than it is in the case of animals. In the case of sheep, it can be easily seen that those with horns enjoy some advantage over those without horns. I do not discuss the matter further. Interested readers will please turn to the articles on Environment, Evolution, Gene, Genetics and Heredity (especially the section on disputed questions) in *Everyman's Encyclopaedia*. Also the discussion on 'Interplay of Heredity and Environment' in Section Q of Pear's *Cyclopaedia* (Great Britain: Pelham Books Ltd., 1975), may be consulted in this connection.

25. See the thoughtful article by Mrs. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, 'Restatement of Human Values' in the *Modern Review*, Calcutta, for March 1948.

countries and hence a static condition in many societies. Static culture means a static society. And no society can remain both static and alive. It is necessary to appreciate this problem at this crucial stage. Growth of a friendly outlook and proper understanding will bring an end to the war phobia that captures the sky today. Interchange of friendly ideas will ease the situation and this will lead to a cultural intercourse among various countries.²⁶

Humanity pines for better co-operation, co-ordination and understanding. Mankind as a whole must move if there is to be any real development in humanity. The crisis in culture—its static state—is inimical to

26. In this connection, it is necessary to point out that this friendly attitude must be distinguished from mere diplomatic relations and cultural relations. I invite my readers' attention to the doubt that I have raised against government-sponsored cultural missions. The growth of a friendly attitude is such a vital problem of the day that we cannot achieve it through fighting and cannot leave it to the government to establish it among different nations. The situation is grave; we cannot leave world politics to our world politicians, who often do not behave as men.

the development of the conception of a true humanity which means the winning over of the remains of the animal in us by the development of our moral and spiritual ideas and aspirations in which will be found the constituents of our true personality.²⁷

At the end of our journey let us summarize our position : Civilization progresses as mankind progresses. Progress of mankind depends not only on material welfare but also on spiritual welfare. Neglect of spiritual and ethical welfare shows that civilization is in danger. Uplift of mankind (from these standpoints) will mean advancement of civilization. Mankind must strive for better ends and it is through civilization that these better ends are to be realized.

It is a stage of crisis ; crisis in moral, ethical, religious, spiritual and cultural life. We must realize this and find out some means to remove it ; otherwise, there is no hope for mankind. With this solution mankind stands and with its neglect mankind falls. We human beings cannot but be aware of our future.

27. For some discussion on this aspect of our progress, the reader is referred to *Human Destiny*, especially chap. 10.

TWO GEMS OF THE ETERNAL RELIGION

S. KRISHNA BHATTA

The Eternal Religion or the Sanatana Dharma, as it is commonly called, is a universal concept transcending all kinds of man-made barriers. To balance the full weight of the term Sanatana Dharma one may go on counterpoising it with weights like the basic tenets and practices of all religions, good conduct, righteousness, and so on ; still it cannot be balanced as it is the sum total of the experiences of many great Seers.

How did the Sanatana Dharma acquire such a wonderful power? It is a big tree of eternity which has its roots in the Ashramas, the spiritual retreats of our great Rishis, and in the Upanishads, which are the most invaluable contribution of India to the world. From time immemorial, this Great Tree has been nourished by many great thinkers—the Acharyas and the Saints with their simple living and high thinking. At the same time, this tree has shown, from

time to time, indications of many diseases—some as old as the tree itself. It is like the water of a river, which is crystal clear at its source, but becomes dirty in its long course. This is due to man's being tempted to eat the forbidden fruit, and taking recourse to corrupt practices in the name of religion.

After the age of Rishis, we come across many great personages who devoted their lives for cleansing the accumulated dirt of various types, according to the need of the time, and thus rejuvenated the Sanatana Dharma. Of these noble souls, Sri Shankara and Swami Vivekananda were giant men, who worked wonders in the field of the Sanatana Dharma during their short span of life. Generally, as we know, geniuses do not live long in this world. For instance, poets like Keats, Shelley, Toru Dutt; mathematicians like Ramanujam; political martyrs like Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad and others, performed the best in their respective fields during a short period of life. But, it is rare to find geniuses like Shankara and Vivekananda who worked in many fields in their short span of life, and have innumerable contributions to their credit. Both have set excellent examples to men in general, and to the youth in particular, as to how one could make his life fully useful to the world, however short it may be. They are not men, but phenomena which narrow-minded persons fail to understand. However, both have shown by their lives the way to draw inspiration from the guru and from the sacred thought-provoking works like the Upanishads.

Sri Shankara :

Sri Shankara had to engage himself in various activities for the uplift of the masses. By his extensive travels all over the country, he had to wage a severe spiritual war against atheistic tendencies and all kinds of cruel and evil customs then

prevalent in the name of religion. To remove conflict in respect of our mythological gods like Vishnu, Shiva and others, he established the *pancāyatana* worship (a combined worship of five gods). He started the Kumbha Mela, and organized the tenfold Order of sannyasis. In a word, he infused real spirituality into the materialistic life of the masses. For those who desired to reach the spiritual heights, he consolidated the Vedantic thought and led the aspirants in the proper direction. He has also shown how Bhakti (devotion) could be a major step in attaining Brahma-jnana (knowledge of the Absolute). This fact has been rightly expounded by the late C. Rajagopalachari in his commentary on Sri Shankara's hymn 'Bhaja-Govindam'. Shankara, who was a powerful unifying force, has been aptly described by the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as 'a curious mixture of a philosopher and a scholar, an agnostic and a mystic, a poet and a saint, and in addition to all this, a practical reformer and an able organizer.'¹

Swami Vivekananda :

What Sri Shankara did at the national level, Swami Vivekananda did both at the national and the international levels. In the days of Sri Shankara people had forgotten the essence of the Vedantic doctrines and resorted to wrong beliefs and malpractices in the name of religion; while in the days of Swami Vivekananda, Indians had forgotten the glory of their own Motherland and had turned towards the spiritually barren West by imitating it in various ways. Like his great Master Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda pointed out the more practical and real aspects of the Sanatana Dharma. He exhorted the youth in particular to be free from all sorts of slavish thoughts, and to become strong physically,

1. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta : Signet Press, 1946, p. 156.

mentally and spiritually. He made the Indians look to the lives of the great Rishis of the past, and the glory of their religion. He thus became known as a patriot-saint of India.

Swamiji's historic address at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, drew the attention of the world intelligentsia to the universal aspect of Sanatana Dharma. But, in his own country, he had to tackle the narrow-minded few, who continued their quarrel about the three interpretations of the Vedanta Philosophy—Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita and Advaita. According to Swami Vivekananda these are three stages in the spiritual development of man. An aspirant starts with Dvaita (dualism), evolves to Vishishtadvaita (qualified monism), and finally reaches the heights of Advaita (monism). Further, as a great educationist, Swami Vivekananda preached that education is nothing but the manifestation of the perfection already in man.²

* * *

Someone may ask : 'After all, what has been done by these two personalities?' Before recklessly asking such a question, one

². See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama. IV, 1972, p. 358.

should think for a while, what would have been the fate of our Sanatana Dharma, had these two great souls not been born ! It is really unfortunate that many Indians do not even know about them. For instance, once it so happened that a European earnestly asked an Indian, 'Sir, I have read a few books about Shankara. Could you kindly tell something more about this great man?' Surprisingly enough, the Indian did not know even the name of Sri Shankara. It is said that the European then took him to task, saying, 'Sir, don't you know that great world-thinker Shankara?' The Indian must have been embarrassed.

What happened in the case of Shankara, might happen in the case of other personalities like Vivekananda as well. It is necessary that Indian youth should not be ignorant about the teachings of these two great souls. In short, Shankara and Vivekananda held the spiritual ideal of our Rishis before us and taught the way to bring it into actual practice. They have shown the practical way of transforming the material life into the spiritual, through renunciation and service to humanity. And all this they did in the short span of their lives. It is therefore necessary that Indians should feel ever grateful to these two gems of the Eternal Religion.

THE ETERNAL BRIDE

H. P. GANGULI

When our bus left Trivandrum for Cape Comorin on that January afternoon, I could hardly believe that I was going to see the goddess Kanyākumāri.

The bus was full to capacity but no standing was allowed—all tickets having been sold out in advance. Our first halt was at Nagercoil for about ten minutes. We got down and strolled about in the bus stand

visiting the near-by shops selling giant-sized bananas and coconuts. The total distance from Trivandrum to Cape Comorin, approximately sixty miles, was covered in about four hours. The road is all along very good and well maintained. With hillocks and hutments, the scenery is charming all through.

We reached Cape Comorin around 5

o'clock in the evening—the bus taking us straight to 'Kerala House', the State Government hotel, where a room had been reserved about a month ahead. It was indeed a thrill to feel that I had come at last to the southernmost point in the country, the end of India so to say. The vast sea in front was actually the confluence of three seas—the Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. The local people said that occasionally the colour of the water in the three seas assumed different shades, thus distinguishing the one from the other.

As the evening shadows were creeping in, we took the road to the seaside to go to the temple. The temple of Kanyākumāri, quite close to the sea, was very small and simple compared to the vast expanse of water in front.

As I heard the sounding of the gongs indicating that the hour of Ārati had come, I practically ran to the temple. By the side of the main door we had to put our shoes off. Men had to enter the temple taking their coats and shirts in hand—the custom is to bare the upper portion of the body before any man is allowed inside. As I stood before the image I forgot the surroundings at once. There stood before me the image of a girl in her teens, a beautifully dressed bride with ornaments on, with a big garland reaching almost down to her feet, and looking enchantingly beautiful and serene. Her pair of big bright eyes was enough to captivate the heart of anybody, and she looked so real and human that the very appearance of her beautiful face reminded every parent of his or her own daughter. That comparison is irresistible.

The Ārati (waving of lights before the Deity) was a simple affair and it was over in a short while. Prasād (consecrated food) was distributed to the visitors, and thereafter we requested the head priest—a fatherly looking tall, handsome Brahmin—to narrate to us the history of Kanyā-

kumāri. Kanyākumāri, the maiden daughter, stood there at the southernmost corner of Mother India for how many centuries he could not say—his guess was for thousands of years. At one time an Asura, Lavanāsura by name, became so strong, arrogant and turbulent that the gods became afraid of him. As the gods could not tackle him, they gathered before Lord Brahmā for help. Rising from his deep meditation the Lord predicted that Pārvati could alone kill the demon provided she remained unmarried. The gods were comforted by this prediction and awaited the day when she would come of age to tackle the demon. The child developed gradually into a beautiful girl and prayed to have Lord Shiva as her consort. Lord Shiva—the god most easily to be won over—granted her prayers and was on his way to marry the girl. Pārvati's parents arranged for a grand marriage reception and a feast befitting the occasion. Saint Nārada remembered, however, Brahmā's prediction that the maiden Pārvati could alone kill the demon. He realized that once Pārvati got married, she could not kill the demon, and he took to spoiling the marriage. When Shiva's marriage party had reached Suchindram—a place about fifteen miles from Cape Comorin, Nārada made the cocks crow at the dead of night. The marriage party misunderstood this to mean that the night was over and the *lagna*—the blessed hour for the celebration of the marriage—had passed, and so it was useless to proceed further; and they stopped there for good. Here at Cape Comorin the parents of Pārvati were anxiously awaiting the bridegroom's party. The daughter, beautifully dressed in her best, was waiting for the supreme hour of her life when she would be united with her beloved, the most sought-for consort in the world. The marriage feast was ready, the invited guests had all arrived, and an air of expectancy pre-

veiled everywhere. All waited and waited, but in vain. The night slowly wore into dawn but the bridegroom did not come. The bride's house was turned into a place of mourning. The parents wept, the guests parted, and the bride stood in her bridal dress alone and silent as she is standing there for centuries—as we see her today. Since then, she has been dressing every evening as a bride, and at that time an air of expectancy can be breathed and felt in the air. As the hours pass, and the bridegroom does not turn up, her lovely face looks forlorn and sad, and her eyes seem full of tears as her bridal dress is taken off and the temple door is closed for the night. Sitting there in that small temple by the side of a vast expanse of water we firmly believed every word of the priest. One of us asked him what happened next. The priest narrated the rest of the story. Lavanāsura was so tempted by the beauty of Pārvati that he proposed to marry her. Her terms were simple. She had taken a vow to marry anyone who could win a fight with her. The demon readily agreed and was killed by Pārvatī to the immense relief and joy of the gods.

We then asked the priest when we could see the Abhisheka (ablutions), and we were asked to come at 4 o'clock in the morning. We deposited the fees for the Abhisheka, conveyed our Pranāms to the priest and came back to the hotel.

Throughout the night the incidents (I could not for a moment disbelieve them) passed through my mind. In the little sleep that I had, I dreamt of a huge marriage party breaking up in despair, the parents and relatives weeping loudly and the face of a beautiful bride with a big garland in hand awaiting alone the arrival of the bridegroom who never turned up.

We reached the temple about 3.30 next morning and waited in the 'Nāt Mandir'. At 4 o'clock the head priest opened the temple door and we saw the deity this time

in her unadorned image. The image was beautifully carved out of black stone with her dress and all similarly made. The head priest poured buckets of milk mixed with rose water and other perfumes on the body. As the milk coursed down the black-stone body of the deity I had a feeling that here was Hara and Pārvati in one—at last the long looked-for consort had come to her chosen bride and they were united in marriage. After the bath, the priest wiped off the water from the body. The tenderness and care with which he did this, made us all feel that here was an affectionate father giving his beloved little daughter an early morning bath. After this, the door was closed, and we saw sandal paste in lumps being carried inside. We waited for about half-an-hour for the door to open. On a screen in front of the deity being removed, we were astonished beyond measure to see the black-stone image of the deity converted into an amazingly beautiful lady with her sari and ornaments on, her benign eyes spreading infinite love, peace and charm. Perhaps nowhere in India is sandal paste thus used in any other temple. We looked on and on as long as we stayed in the temple, and with a very heavy heart we had to tear ourselves away when the time for departure came. All the way back to Trivandrum, we were sad and felt as parents do when they have to go away leaving their beloved child behind.

Five years have rolled by since then, but not a day has passed without my paying a mental visit to the deity of my dreams. I have since attended any number of marriages. On every occasion I have heaved a sigh of great relief to see the bridegroom appear at the appointed hour to the great joy and merriment of everybody at the bride's place. Immediately thereafter, my mind has unconsciously travelled back to the far-away little temple by the side of the seas at the remotest corner of India

where a girl dressed in her best wedding dress still stands, all alone, expecting her consort to appear. Invariably I have felt that the *lagna* will soon pass, but the bridegroom will not turn up, and a deep sense of sorrow and shame has filled my heart as I

could not be present there just now to keep her company, console her and wipe away the big drops of tear that will presently fill the large and beautiful eyes of Kanyā-kumāri—the Eternal Mother, the Eternal Daughter and the Eternal Bride.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA* —XI

To Sister Christine

60

The Math, Belur,
Dist. Howrah, Bengal, India,
25th December 1901.

Dear Christine,

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year is the usual congratulation. Alas! The stars brought you a tremendous blow. Blessed be the name of the Lord. After all, it is only 'Thy will be done'—our only refuge. I will not insult you by offering you consolation—you know it all already; only this line to remind you of one who is in entire sympathy with you, and who knows that all your plans must be good in joy or sorrow, as you are dedicated to the eternal Mother. Well, the Mother phenomenal has merged in the Mother absolute, eternal. Thy will be done.

By this time you must have made a decision, or rather the 'Mother' has shown you the way, surely. I rest content.

The soldier of the Queen has gone abroad to fight for her cause, leaving all he loves to her care. The soldier is to look to his duty; the Queen of the Universe knows the rest.

With all love as usual,
VIVEKANANDA.

61

The Math, Belur, Dist. Howrah,
23rd January 1902.

My dear Christine,

By this time you must have settled your plans. Don't worry, however, on my account. I only want to see you rested and well rested, wherever you be.

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

Excuse this rather long delay in writing ; owing to various reasons I could not, but mentally sending you good wishes all along.

Miss MacLeod has arrived with her Japanese friends : Mr. Okakura, a professor of art, and Mr. Hori, a Brahmacharin. The latter has come to India to study Sanskrit and English. The former to see India, the Motherland of Japanese culture and art. Well, Mrs. Bull and Nivedita are also expected in a few days. As it seems now, this whole party is going to Japan—minus Nivedita. She remains here to work.

Now, I am going to try my hand in Japan and, if possible, in China. Oh, how I wish you were coming with Nivedita to make one of the party to Japan ! Yet, do not put yourself to unnecessary trouble for that. There is Japan, and there is the U.S. after all where we meet. You will only break yourself in trying to 'hustle up'. No hurry, no worry. I am rather anxious in not hearing from you for weeks. I pray you are not ill, anyway.

To Mother have I given you over. She protects Her own, ever and ever, I have no fear.

With all love and blessings,
VIVEKANANDA.

62

The Math, Belur,
Dist. Howrah, Bengal,
30th March 1902.

My dear Christine,

You know how welcome you are, I need not express it. This is a land where expressions are studiously subdued. Margot and Joe³⁴ have already written and made arrangements at Bombay. I expect and wait you here in Calcutta. I wish I could be in Bombay to receive you, but all our wishes are not to be fulfilled.

Come over straight ; only take great great [care] of the heat by protecting the back of the head.

The trains here are not so safe as in your country, so have a little care of your things during night travel.

If you feel tired, take rest in Bombay. Mrs. Bull, Joe and Margot are anxiously waiting you, and so is

VIVEKANANDA.

³⁴. 'Margot' was a nickname of Miss Margaret Noble, otherwise known as Sister Nivedita ; 'Joe' refers to Miss Josephine MacLeod.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Ācārya Śaṅkara through His Gītā-Commentary—I (Editorial): Somehow or the other many misconceptions regarding Ācārya Śaṅkara are prevalent amongst people, perhaps because they have hardly made any attempt to read his works between the lines, or because of their studying the works of those who have written with biased minds about the great Ācārya. In this editorial an attempt has been made to refute some of these misconceptions in the light of his commentary on the *Gītā*, and place before the readers the magnanimous personality of Śaṅkara in the true light.

The Message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda: In this benedictory address given by His Holiness Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on the occasion of the Dedication Ceremony of the Vivekananda Hall and Swami Shivananda Library at Sri Ramakrishna Mission and Ashrama, Khar, Bombay, he very lucidly points out: 'I wish that . . . message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Holy Mother spread throughout the country so that many people, many associations, many societies may come forward, and work for the regeneration of the country on the lines laid by Swamiji.' He says that only socialism and communism are not enough to fulfil the needs of the masses; they should be made aware of their cultural and spiritual heritage as well.

Present-Day Problems and the Upanishads: When people of various temperaments live together, problems naturally arise; and it becomes impossible to solve them only on the rational level. The author, Swami Bhavyananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, England, is of the opinion that the problems

raised by the intellect are solved by themselves in the transcendental state. In this short but illuminating article the Swami has well depicted how the Hindu scriptures, especially the Upanishads, can help mankind in solving their present-day problems.

A Religion That Can Satisfy the Modern Seekers: In every age are found some seekers who want to realize God; but due to the circumstantial changes of the age, they find the older religions inadequate to satisfy their spiritual needs. In this article Swami Bhashyananda, Head of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago, has very beautifully narrated how Vedanta alone can satisfy the spiritual needs of the modern scientific mind, and help it march Godward boldly. The Swami says that it 'satisfies not only reason and science, but also faith.'

Tradition, Culture and Civilization: Shri B. B. Kundu, the author of this learned article, is a renowned lawyer of Calcutta, and also a good writer. In this essay, he has very lucidly narrated the principles of evolution of 'Tradition, Culture and Civilization'. He rightly points out: 'Cultural tradition is the most important factor for the evolution of mankind. Bereft of it we are not much above the animal world.' It ennobles us and leads us towards a better evolution for the future, and reveals to us a nobler and moral meaning of life on earth.' He has also dealt with this issue from a biological point of view.

Two Gems of the Eternal Religion: In this article, Shri S. Krishna Bhatta, Reader and Head of the Department of English, Acharya Pathshala Evening College, Bangalore, has told in brief how the Acharya Shankara and Swami Vivekananda are the two gems of the Eternal Religion of the Hindus. Needless to say, the contribution

of these two great souls for the revival of the Vedic religion is unique.

The Eternal Bride : The author Sri H. P. Ganguli, a reputed lawyer of Calcutta, describes lucidly in this write-up his visit to Kanyakumari, a place of pilgrimage for the Hindus, situated at the southernmost end of India in Kerala State. Besides many other things, the author narrates in brief the Pauranic legend as to how the Divine

Mother Parvati came to be known as Kanyakumari, the Eternal Bride.

Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda—XI: In this number, Swami Vivekananda's hitherto unpublished letters written to his American disciple Sister Christine from 25 December 1901 to 30 March 1902 are being published.

We hope our readers will find these articles interesting and illuminating.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

A BIOLOGICAL THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE: BY C. R. B. MENON, Publishers: Chetana (P) Ltd., 34 Rampart Row, Bombay, 1976, pp. xii+129, Price : Rs. 15/-.

This book seems to be a study of the working of Nature, based mostly on the already known scientific and psychological knowledge. It tries to systematize it from a 'biological' point of view under different headings, i.e. as related to the functions and characteristics of body and mind and of man in society. It says man's thought cannot go beyond certain limits, and he can know truths of Nature only vaguely and to a limited extent—as far only as can serve his working life—since Nature has designed the human species for work, and his body and mind, including intelligence, are conditioned accordingly. The final conclusion of this study, after examining the several limitations and contradictions involved in human search for knowledge, is that only physically verifiable inferences consistent with all observed phenomena could be regarded as true till any inconsistency between it and an actual phenomenon is shown to exist (p. 124).

From all these discussions, it seems finally what emerges is not any new so-called biological theory of knowledge, but an affirmation of the scientific method, in the above sense, to the exclusion of all others. The author holds that man cannot know any truth in the universe, even the simplest (p. 118), directly, and has only the capacity to infer truth from the evidence for it. But if that is so, how is one to know the truth of the evidence, and how can one know the truth of the inference itself? Inference can only work on the basis of certain perceptions which we directly

take as true. Only in case of unseen things, they are inferred through things directly perceived and taken to be true, and their verification also depends on perception which is taken directly as true. The truth of the inference or its falsity, on the basis of the available evidence, is also directly revealed and not inferred. Thus, *ultimately*, truth is self-revealed, i.e. directly known, and is not a matter of inference. Inference is only an intervening stage to bridge the unseen gap.

While this study, presented in a hurry as the author admits, gives some limited practical understanding, it lacks profundity and breadth of vision. It is full of assumptions and presumptions. Though the author is not in favour of religion or mysticism, 'Nature' is almost apotheosized and practically treated as synonymous with God, doing all things in a sentient way with a 'Great Design', assigning rewards and punishments, and decreeing all laws, rules and regulations, ways of life, etc. Still, it leaves unexplained what Nature is, what man is, who it is that questions and acquires knowledge, what life is, why there is ignorance if the body is a mine of knowledge and wisdom, whether mind is a part of Nature or not, if so why it does not contain knowledge and wisdom, etc. Thus, while the author starts with the declaration to clear uncertainties, he fares no better, excepting to say, since truths cannot be known correctly or to any great extent, one should limit one's quest to practical uses of life on the physical plane.

The author, according to his own theory that Nature has limited the intelligence of individuals only to particular subjects, seems to understand

only the practical scientific achievements of European nations since the Renaissance, to the exclusion of all achievements in thought, culture and science of other nations, except those inspired by European science in recent times. It is no wonder, therefore, that the author thinks that human intelligence woke up on earth about 2,500 years ago in Greece, and the European nations who have advanced in science and technology are the most intelligent races on earth (pp. 40, 41, 119).

With all these limitations, the book is well written in readable, good English, and the author presents his ideas clearly and systematically, interspersing several good, useful hints here and there. This pioneering line of thought suggested by the author may be pursued and investigated by competent, scholarly thinkers in a comprehensive and objective manner with a wider perspective. The printing and get-up are good.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA
Ramakrishna Math, Belur, W.B.

ŚRĪ ŚANKARA VIJAYAM, Publishers :
Ganesh & Company, Madras, 1976, pp. 82,
Price : Rs. 4/-.

This is the second edition of a booklet first published in 1970. It presents to the reader an account of the life and work of Acharya Shankara which is traditional in its nature and full of supernatural events. It also touches in brief the lives of Govinda Bhagavatpada and Gaudapada, along with those of his disciples, Padmapada, Sureswara and Hastamalaka.

With little justification, the author fixes the year of Shankara's birth as 509 B.C., taking only the genealogical records of the heads of the Maths at Dwaraka, Jagannath and Kamakoti which are preserved in those places. In fact, the former two of the above mentioned genealogies differ from that of the third by placing the year as 516 B.C. and 541 B.C. respectively, thus cutting the claim at its very root. Again, not advancing any reason and following probably some version of Shankara's traditional biography which none but the author knows, he shifts two incidents in Shankara's life—namely, Shankara's learning Kamasutra, and his ascending Jnanapitha—to an unusual place and setting. Perhaps this is done due to the author's overzealous attitude to place the Kamakothi Pitha at Kanchi as the chief of the Maths started by Shankara. This remark is justified on various other grounds as well.

The author has also made an unsuccessful

attempt to establish Kanchi as the place where Shankara left his mortal coil.

While the printing and the cover picture of Shankara are good, the publisher should have taken more care to prevent the Printer's devils. However, the second edition of the book justifies its publication as an addition to Shankara's biographical literature in English.

BRAHMACHARI KARUNA CHAITANYA

PHILOSOPHICAL TRENDS IN MODERN
MAHARASHTRA: BY MATTHEW R. LEDERLE,
Publishers : Popular Prakashan, 35c Tardeo
Road, Popular Press Bldg., Bombay, 400 034,
1976, pp. xx+467, Price : Rs. 76/-.

To some Western minds Indian philosophy means merely the classical systems of our ancient tradition. They refuse to admit that modern India has also developed philosophical themes which, if not completely different from the traditional thinking, certainly reflect our rethinking in modern terms and to some extent improvement upon the past. It was only a few years back that most of our universities did not have courses on modern Indian philosophy, although they included contemporary Western philosophies therein along with classical philosophical systems. But now the Boards of Studies in the Indian universities easily accept the suggestion to offer courses in the areas relating to contemporary Indian thinking; and as a result of this the philosophy syllabi include the thought of Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Radhakrishnan, Gandhi, Tilak, Vinoba and others.

The soil of Maharashtra has been fertile in nourishing the body of our land politically, economically, socially, religiously, academically and so on. In the book under review Dr. Matthew Lederle has surveyed the reign of philosophy in modern Maharashtra. This work is an outcome of doctoral researches of the author at Pune University under the able supervision of Professor D. D. Wadekar who is well-known to the philosophical world for bringing out the *Marathi Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* in three volumes. The German origin of the author, his naturalization in India and residence in Maharashtra, has given him a broad outlook enabling him to see things in their proper perspective. He is at home with original Marathi sources and Sanskrit texts. He takes up the span of one hundred fifty years for his study and presents a comprehensive account of socio-religious and philosophical trends of modern Maharashtra. As this study is not confined to philosophy only,

it is also not restricted to the geographical boundaries of modern Maharashtra, for we find in it treatment of the ideas of a Telugu Krishna-murti and a Gujarati Gandhi among others. Any figure or trend that has been responsible for shaping the thinking of Maharashtrian people has been included here without prejudice.

The author discusses at length the philosophies of Lokamanya B. G. Tilak (1856-1920) and Professor R. D. Ranade (1886-1957). Tilak was a great votary of action, and the author notes that Lokamanya 'removed the stigma attached to activity by the renunciatory systems' of India. But he disagrees with the *ātmaupamyā-ethics* (to treat others like one's own self) of the author of *Gītā-Rahasya*, because ultimately it is based on the principle of identity between man and God (*aham brahmāsmi* or *brahmātmaikyavāda*), wherefore no absolute value can be attributed to good or bad actions, which belong to the realm of relativity. Such disagreement of a continental mind can be easily understood because he finds it difficult to hold the absolutistic doctrine and explain in the same breath the nature of phenomena through *Māyāvāda*. The Advaitic doctrine of differences in the levels of reality (or for that matter levels of unreality) paves the way for *loka-samgraha* and *ātmaupamyā-ethics* along with its absolutism. The metalogical stand can't be taken as a 'gross logical breach' in the system of Tilak.

The 'Rational Mysticism' or the philosophy of God-realization of Prof. Ramachandra Dattatraya Ranade finds excellent treatment in the hands of the author. For Dr. Lederle, and rightly so, Ranade is the greatest philosophical mind of modern Maharashtra. Ranade was a visionary of a glorious India which assimilated as well as transcended the virtues of the East and the West. Although he did not write a systematic treatise explaining his philosophical outlook, his mystic philosophy finds expression through several of his writings. His position that 'all mystics everywhere have a vision of the self' and 'universal experience of mystics regarding identity of the self with God' may not be admitted by the Buddhists and many Semitic theologians. However, his ideas are based on first-hand experience and have been reasoned out by him, in addition to the support received from the pan-Indian mind.

Apart from these philosophical personalities, the indologist Bhandarkar, the liberal Gokhale, the reformer Ambedkar, the *sarvodayi* Vinoba and many others have found their place in this work. The book will definitely contribute to a better understanding of philosophical trends in modern Maharashtra in particular and of modern Indian

philosophy in general. The Director of the Snehadarshana, a Centre of Inter-Religious Dialogue at Pune, deserves our thanks for the timely production of this book.

DR. S. P. DUBEY

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THE LIVING MAHABHARATA : BY DR. J. R. GOYAL, Publisher : Indian Heritage, 1193 Shora Kothi, Subzimandi, Delhi, 110 007, 1975, pp. viii+176, Price : Rs. 25/-.

The *Mahābhārata* is perhaps the longest epic poem in the world. The *Living Mahābhārata* by Dr. Goyal is an abridgement of the same. The author has truly brought out the quintessence of this large work in the span of 176 pages. The arrangement is the same as of the original *Mahābhārata*, and all the eighteen Parvans have been summarized here in a simple narrative form. The author has laid special emphasis on the moral teachings and has given adequate space for the portions regarding Vidurniti, Bhīṣma's advice, Yakṣa's questions, etc.

The book is interspersed with quotations about the *Mahābhārata* by eminent men like C. Rajagopalachari, S. Radhakrishnan, Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru and K. M. Munshi. The topics in the various Parvans have been duly captioned, and this has served as a good guide for locating the various incidents in the narrative. The author surely intended the book for those who have no access to the original *Mahābhārata*. Adequate references to the original work (preferably of the critical edition published by Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune) would have gone a long way in adding to the utility of the book. Sanskrit words have been printed without any diacritical marks and proper nouns have been spelt in a way that would appear queer to many a reader. Even so, the author deserves to be congratulated for bringing out the essence of this great epic in simple and picturesque English.

DR. N. B. PATIL, PH.D.

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THE SPIRIT OF MODERN INDIA : EDITED BY ROBERT A. McDERMOTT AND V. S. NARAVANE, Publishers : Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, 10019, pp. xviii+313, Price : \$ 6.95.

The national glory of every country depends upon the great men and women who take birth

from time to time and their substantial contributions to the cultural heritage. *The Spirit of Modern India* is a collection of writings in philosophy, religion and culture. It contains the dominant ideas of modern Indian thinkers who have influenced both their own culture and the contemporary West.

A great spiritual renaissance emerged in the spiritual firmament by the birth of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The period defined as 'modern' in the book deals with a great era which started with Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen and Sri Ramakrishna, and passing through Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, ultimately culminates in Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Radhakrishnan. The aspects of modern India presented in this volume are intellectual, cultural, philosophical and religious.

Thus we get a picture of the great Yogi Aurobindo, who meditated on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* even in grim years when he was tried for 'conspiracy'. Similarly we see Jawaharlal Nehru, who could discover India even in the dark corners of jail. In doing so he saw the Ganga—symbol and memory of the past of India—running into the present and flowing on to the great ocean of the future. Mahatma Gandhi was able to fast for twenty-one days against caste oppression while he was in jail for 'sedition'. In this country one could see a President, Dr. Radhakrishnan, translating and writing commentaries on Indian scriptures before beginning each day's administrative work.

The 'Spirit' mentioned in the title of the book represents the key ideas of modern Indian thought and culture and the abiding power of the personalities who fashioned these ideas.

The spirit of Modern India is the key which unlocks the golden gate of great culture which existed in this country and exists even today in spite of turbulent storm and whirlwind all around. This book is an indispensable guide to all who want to know the real India in the right perspective.

A. S. PARAMESWAR
Advocate, Ernakulam North, Kerala

THE ASIAN JOURNAL OF THOMAS MERTON, Publishers : New Directions Publishing Corporation, 333 Sixth Avenue, New York 10014, 1975 (first paperback edition), pp. xxx+445, Price : \$ 3.45.

This beautiful travel account begins with an eastward flight from Honolulu in 1968 by the late Thomas Merton, well-known Trappist monk

of Gethsemani, Kentucky, U.S.A. As he reaches Bangkok he gives descriptions about the spread of Buddhism and the monumental sculptures which have stood the test of time.

Thomas Merton's intellect penetrated and conceived not only religion and philosophy but also creative writing, art, music, international relations, etc. In the descriptions of men and matters he saw during the visit, there is a richness of lyrics and humour. He minutely observed everything at Bangkok, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, the Himalayas and Ceylon. In vivid panoramic descriptions he mentions the bewildering buildings, yellow and shabby with dilapidation, markets full of things for Diwali, cows wandering amid traffic, a beggar woman with a baby running after visitors, gentleness of the sky, singing of birds, kites around modern houses, Buddha with his face masked and buried in gold by some benefactor as though smothered by it, cultivated fields, green landscapes, etc. Yet simultaneously Merton could listen to the all-pervading call of a spiritual outlook. At Kanchenjunga he discovers that 'true love requires contact with the truth and the truth must be found in solitude.'

Merton reaches the culmination of his spiritual aspirations at Mahabalipuram and Polonnaruwa in Ceylon, where his Asian pilgrimage has become clear and purified. At the altar of the Buddha temple he saw and knew what he was obscurely looking for. In fact he could pierce through the surface and go beyond the shadow and disguise. He could see Asia in purity, clarity and completeness. Merton concludes the first part with a universal proclamation that this culture needs nothing more. So it can afford to be silent, unnoticed and undiscovered. It is for the Asian, European or American to discover it.

From this enchanting world of description, the reader comes to naked reality in the postscript, where we read about the sad and sudden death of the Journal's author in a small cottage room at Bangkok due to electric shock.

'Part Two' of the book contains various notes from Merton's original 'Journal' which seemed to impede the flow of the main narrative; so such notes were segregated into this section. The Appendices include essays, letters, talks, etc. by Merton. Very illuminative essays are found therein, such as his 'View of Monasticism', 'The Significance of the *Bhagavad-Gita*', 'Marxism and Monastic Perspectives', etc.

The Bibliography at the end gives information about various writers and works from which passages are quoted in this book. Notes at the end of each chapter give all information which

readers need to know, which is a great boon to research students. The Index at the end is very valuable and informative. There are many pictures of men and places which Merton came in contact with during his Asian visit.

This 'swan song' of Father Thomas Merton is melodious in dignity, erudition and depth.

A. S. PARAMESWAR

SANSKRIT

SRI RAMAKRISHNA-SAHASRANAMA-STOTRAM: BY PROF. TRYAMBAKA SHARMA BHANDARKAR AND PROF. PANCHU GOPAL VANDYOPADHYAYA, Publishers: Ramakrishna Shivananda Ashrama, Barasat, 24-Parganas (W.B.), 1975, pp. 9+196, Price: Ordinary Rs. 8.50, Limp Rs. 10/-.

Swami Apurvananda of Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi, has been doing a good deal from that citadel of Sanskrit learning to serve the needs of the growing number of devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, by bringing out the Master's biography, Stotras concerning him, and other literature of the Ramakrishna Order in Sanskrit with the help of scholars. The present work also, with Hindi translation, has been sponsored by him and edited by Acharya Sri Ananda Jha, Head of Oriental Sanskrit Dept., Lucknow University. (A Bengali translation of the same has been published separately by the Swami.)

The authors are devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and reputed scholars in Sanskrit. Under the guidance of Swami Apurvananda, they have produced a work of immense practical and lasting value. In 200 verses they have incorporated 1,000 descriptive names and epithets of Sri Ramakrishna, which spring from his great holy life. Thus at the time of recital, Sri Ramakrishna is vividly portrayed before the mind of the devotee.

Each Sanskrit verse is followed by the analytical meaning of its words, with the names numbered, and the purport of the verse, with notes where necessary—all given in Hindi. This has been done by Prof. Vandyopadhyaya. For purposes of Archana (worship), the book gives the 1,000 names separately in alphabetical order. (It should also have been given in the order in which they occur). Also included in the book is a list of 108 names, composed independently, together with the method of ritual worship of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Shiva and Krishna. The method of performance of Homa and the Mudras used in worship, etc. are also given, rendering the book very useful to devotees.

The mistakes in printing should be eliminated in the next edition. The use of bold type for Sanskrit words in the analytical meaning would be helpful.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

DIVYA-RAMAYANAM: BY SWAMI APURVANANDA, Publishers: Sankara Vihar, 25 Trust Square, Madras-12, 1976, pp. 8+584, Price: Ordinary Rs. 15, Calico Rs. 17.50.

Swami Apurvananda of the Ramakrishna Order has been doing good work in the propagation of religious literature, especially through Sanskrit. This work is a Sanskrit rendering of the author's Bengali work, done at his instance by the late learned Prof. T. A. Bhandarkar, Sahityacharya, Varanasi.

The long Preface discusses and shows how the *Ramayana* was written by Valmiki to inculcate the different social and ethical ideals in society by the depiction of ideal characters.

The author has given in footnotes, Preface and Appendix, some of the other traditions of the *Ramayana*, where they differ from Valmiki, which are interesting. The translation is in simple, fluent Sanskrit which even ordinary people with a modicum of Sanskrit knowledge can read and understand and in the process improve their Sanskrit, besides imbibing noble ideals. Difficult Sandhis have been avoided, following modern methods. It is a welcome attempt for the propagation of Sanskrit and the inculcation of much-needed *Ramayana* ideals to purify and elevate human society. Printing mistakes must be avoided in the next edition, and the footnote types may be changed.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

BENGALI

BRAHMA-SUTRA-MALA: BY Vāṇibhadra Puṣpadevi, Publisher: the Author, No. 1, Dr. Shyamadas Row, Calcutta, 700 019, 1976, pp. 12+233, Price: Rs. 10/-.

This is a rendering of Vyāsa's *Brahma-Sūtras* into simple, rhymed Bengali couplets. Though the subtitle says it is a poetic rendering of the Bhāṣyas of Śankara and Rāmānuja, it is not to be taken in the literal sense, for the author gives only some salient points from their Sanskrit commentaries. The aim of the book is not to translate the commentaries in detail, but to acquaint the lay reader, in a general and popular way, with the main ideas in the *Brahma-Sūtras*. It is a Garland (Mālā) of flowers of spiritual ideas threaded (Sūtra) in the *Brahma-Sūtras*. The learned author has presented to the

people her Bengali verse renderings of the major eleven Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad Gītā* earlier and earned the titles 'Sarasvatī', 'Śruti-bhārati' and 'Vāṇī-bhadrā'.

The terse and cryptic *Brahma-Sūtras* with their polemical prose commentaries, unlike the poetic *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads, do not lend themselves to versification easily. However, the author has made a good attempt to give some idea of their scope and teachings in simple verse based on the commentaries of the two Acāryas representing Jñāna and Bhakti standpoints. Connecting links are given, where necessary in prose. Her earlier renderings of the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* have been of great help to her in this task, for the *Brahma-Sūtras* are meant to thread together the Upaniṣadic teachings. With this book, the author has completed the versification of the *Prasthāna-traya* of the Vedānta and deserves the gratitude of the general Bengali-reading public.

The book is readable and fulfils the purpose with which it was written. The printing and get-

up of the book are good.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

MAHAPURUSH SWAMI SHIVANANDA: BY SWAMI SADASHIVANANDA, Publisher: the Author, Ramakrishna Shivananda Ashrara, Barasat, 24-Parganas, West Bengal, 1976, pp. 6+138, Price: Rs. 3/-.

To the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Shivananda needs no introduction. It was from Swami Vivekananda that he earned the honorific, 'Mahapurush', due to his burning renunciation. The author of the biography does not claim any scholastic ability. He has given all details in simple language, and aims at providing a life at moderate price so that the general public may be benefited. It is hoped that the book will arouse the interest of the readers in spiritual subjects. A welcome addition to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature.

SWAMI RAMANUJANANDA

Ramakrishna Mission, Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Ranchi, Bihar

NEWS AND REPORTS

MAYAVATI CHARITABLE HOSPITAL

REPORT : APRIL 1977—MARCH 1978

The Mayavati Charitable Hospital forms a part of the Advaita Ashrama activities. It came into being in response to the pressing needs of the neighbouring and far-off villages, reaching out to the northern frontier areas of India, where live some of the poorest people of our country. Their helplessness in sickness would touch any heart if only it were known. A humble dispensary was therefore spontaneously started in 1903 to give them some relief. Since then, it has been naturally growing in size and serviceability until it became a fairly well-equipped, small rural hospital.

Now quite a large number of patients come here daily, crossing the mountains on foot, horseback or in dandy. All patients get prompt and sympathetic treatment completely free of charge.

The Hospital stands within the precincts of the Ashrama, and is under the charge of a monastic member qualified for the work. A resident doctor treats the patients with the help of his assistants. Service is conducted in a spirit of worship, and as such, irrespective of caste and creed of the suffering people. Earnest efforts are made to maintain a high standard of efficiency in service. In the Hospital there are 23 beds; but sometimes arrangements have to be made for

more indoor patients.

The total number of patients treated during the year in the indoor department was 449, of which 337 were cured, 89 were relieved, 20 were discharged otherwise and 3 died. In the outdoor department the total number of patients treated was 17,852, of which 7,087 were new and 10,765 repeated cases.

Immediate Needs: To enable the Hospital to serve the ailing poor in this remote area of the Himalayas, the generous public is requested to contribute liberally towards the following needs: (1) Anaesthetic Apparatus (Boyle's) with accessory anaesthetic equipment: Rs. 7,000. (2) Electric Instrument Sterilizer: Rs. 1,050, Universal Drum Stand with Drums: Rs. 600, Instrument and Dressing Cabinet (75"×33"×17 3/4"): Rs. 650, Diagnostic Set—English: Rs. 600, Electric Cautery: Rs. 200; total: Rs. 3,100. (3) Some of the Hospital beds in the Indoor Department are already endowed; it will greatly help if the remaining beds are also endowed by the generous public in memory of their near and dear ones; cost of endowment per bed: Rs. 5,000.

All donations are exempt from Income-Tax; cheques and drafts may be issued in favour of Mayavati Charitable Hospital, and sent to: Mayavati Charitable Hospital, P.O. Mayavati, via Lohaghat, Dist. Pithoragarh, U.P., 262 524.