



# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 87

DECEMBER 1982

No. 12

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

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

*'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'*

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।  
स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वात्यतिष्ठद्दशांगुलं ॥

The Puruṣa,<sup>1</sup> with thousand heads, thousand eyes and thousand feet,<sup>2</sup> encompasses the earth on all sides,<sup>3</sup> and stands upon [a space of] ten inches.<sup>4</sup>

*Rg-Veda* 10.90.1.

\* Here we begin the *Puruṣa Sūktam*, one of the most famous, widely quoted, living hymns of the *Rg-Veda* forming a part of various rituals and prayers followed by Hindus from very ancient to modern times. Western scholars regard it as a late addition to the Samhita. But though it foreshadows certain concepts of the Upaniṣads, it certainly preceded them in the time of composition. The whole hymn also occurs in the *Yajur-Veda* 31.1.16. Sāyaṇa and Mahīdhara identify Puruṣa with *Virāj*, the Divine Consciousness limited by the manifested universe, the sum total of all beings, also called *Prajāpati*, the Lord of all creatures. This is the accepted Advaitic tradition. Theistic interpreters like Ranganātha Muni and Rāghavendrasvāmin identify Puruṣa with Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu.

1. Yāska in his *Nirukta* gives three derived meanings for 'puruṣa'. Śrī Śamkara in his commentaries gives two meanings: *puri sete iti* ('one who lies in the city of this body') and *purṇam anena sarvamiti* (one who fills up everything). That is, the Atman.

2. Obviously, the word 'thousand' stands for an infinite number.

3. This refers to the *ādhibhautika* or transcendent nature of the Cosmic Spirit; all beings exist in Him but He extends even beyond.

4. This refers to the *ādhyātmika* or immanent aspect of the Spirit. Puruṣa is not only all-pervading but also dwells in the hearts of all beings as the Jivātman or individual Self. The size of the image of a huge tree or mountain falling on photographic film depends on the size of the camera. Similarly, limited by the heart, the infinite Spirit appears to be the individual Self ten inches long—as seen in meditation. Cf. *anguṣṭha mātrah puruṣah* in *mātrah puruṣah* in *Katha-Upaniṣad* 4.12,13.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the need for self-realization and God realization. Though a continuation of last month's editorial, it may be treated as an independent one.

The dominant motif and historical significance of the life of Sri Sarada Devi, the holy consort of Sri Ramakrishna, is the ideal of mother-hood which she lived to perfection. In THE LIGHT OF MOTHERHOOD Swami Satyarupananda of Belur Math points out that the motherhood that the Holy Mother exemplified is essentially a spiritual ideal for all women which is independent of the biological function of childbearing.

In the second instalment of MY WESTERN EXPERIENCE Swami Lokeswaranandaji, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, presents his observations on those aspects of London that he encountered during his visit to that city in November, 1981.

SAMKARA ON THE BRAHMA-SUTRA by Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, former head of the department of philosophy, University of Mysore, is a masterly resume of Śrī Saṁkara's interpretation of the *Brahma-Sūtra* based on his two-tier view of Reality.

In EXISTENCE AND POWER Hans Elmstedt first examines man's quest for power and how he uses it. Power means control, and control can be used in two ways: outer-directed and inner-directed. The West has followed the former and the East, the latter. Elmstedt further shows that the three faculties of mind distinguished by Western psychology, namely, will, cognition and feeling, may be regarded as manifestations of the three aspects of Reality, namely, Existence, Consciousness and Bliss respectively. Though brief, the article is a thought provoking study. The author is a school teacher living in Lancaster, California, and is a member of the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

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## SEEKING GOD THROUGH MEDITATION

(EDITORIAL)

### *Need for realization of the individual Self*

There are two approaches to spiritual realization. One is a negative desire to escape from sorrow. The other is a positive longing for God. These two attitudes are not the same. Both take the form of spiritual aspiration and appear to be alike, but they are based on two different levels of experience. For the vast majority of people it is the desire to escape from sorrow, fear and unfulfilment that provides the chief motivation to lead a spiritual life. If they could find everlasting peace, security and

satisfaction in worldly life, few people would ever care for God. Real longing for God is extremely rare, and comes only to those who have already realized their true nature as the Jīvātman, the individual Self.

The truth is that for most people God is an abstraction, a mere concept. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, talking about God is like children's swearing by the name of God after having learnt it from their grandmothers. God is not an external object like a tree or a house. He is the Paramātman, the Supreme Self. Just as the Jīvātman dwells within the ego or the false self, so

the Paramātman dwells within the Jīvātman. According to almost all the schools of Vedānta, the individual Self is a part or reflection of the Supreme Self. Unless a person knows the part, how can he know the whole, the Infinite? Unless he sees at least the reflection, how can he think about the original? Hence Self-awareness, realization of one's true Self, is an unavoidable first step to God realization.

There is another reason why a direct experience of Atman is important. What most people seek is not God but their own higher Self. Human wants are unlimited, no doubt, and it is impossible for anyone to satisfy all his desires. But as Śaṅkarācārya points out, 'Desire for the Atman consumes all other desires.'<sup>1</sup> How is that? The Atman is the real source of happiness in us; desire for external objects is only an indirect search for it. When the Atman is sought direct, all other desires get cancelled out.<sup>2</sup> 'The Atman is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, dearer than all other objects'<sup>3</sup> because it is the real source of happiness in us. The sage Yājñavalkya teaches his wife Maitreyī that the husband is loved not for the sake of the husband but for one's own Self; the wife, sons, wealth and other things are loved not for their sake, but for the sake of one's own Self.<sup>4</sup> If this is true, as indeed it is, then it must also be true that even God is loved not for the sake of God but for the sake of one's own Self.

1. आत्मकामत्वे चाप्तकामता ।

Samakara, Commentary on *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*, Introduction.

2. Cf. आप्तकामम्-आत्मकामम्-अकामम् ।  
*Bṛhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad* 4.3.21.

3. तदेदत् प्रेयः पुत्रात्, प्रेयो वित्तात्,  
प्रेयोऽन्यस्मात् सर्वस्मात्  
*ibid* 1.4.8.

4. *ibid* 2.4.5 and 4.5.6.

It is important for spiritual aspirants to know this, for in the vast majority of them self-love and love for God get mixed up. Indeed, it is not uncommon to find intense selfishness and devotion to God coexisting in the same individual. Man's primary concern is himself and, until he attains Self-realization, his talk of unselfishness and love for God is seldom sincere. Only a person who has realized the Atman can have unselfish love for his fellow-men or for God. One day Girish Chandra Ghosh told Sri Ramakrishna, 'I have one desire: love of God for its own sake.' The Master at once pointed out to him, 'Only the Īśvarakotis have such love. It is not for ordinary men.'<sup>5</sup>

Real love for God is, as Swami Vivekananda has said, 'the eternal relationship between the eternal soul and the eternal God'. The relationship that most people maintain with God is only a projection of human relationships and emotions, as has been pointed out by Feuerbach (who influenced Karl Marx) and Freud.<sup>6</sup> The ego of the average person is full of so many defects that it is unfit for God realization. In order to establish a divine relationship with God man must transcend the ego and realize his higher Self.

Human relationship, especially between men and women, is often determined by considerations of beauty. Apart from being attracted by beautiful forms, people want to be very beautiful themselves. How much time they spend before the mirror! Even in a poor country like India several hundred millions of rupees are being spent annually on cosmetics alone. In spiritual life the problem of beauty assumes much import-

5. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974) p. 651.

6. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper, 1957).

Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott (New York: Doubleday, 1954).

ance. Unless the pull of the beauty of God proves to be stronger than the pull of the beauty of the human flesh, it is not possible to maintain the purity of mind or to love God wholeheartedly. It is for this reason that Hindu Gods and Goddesses are pictured and described as full of splendour and beauty. Where this is not so obvious, as in the received pictures of Sri Ramakrishna who is now worshipped by millions of people, meditation on such forms may lack romantic dynamism especially for some people who are highly sensitive to beauty. The realization of one's own higher Self solves this problem once for all. When the light of Atman shines forth the souls of men and women become exceedingly beautiful transforming them into gods and goddesses clothed from head to foot in celestial effulgence. Only then will they cease to be troubled by the charms of the physical body; only then will they begin to understand the real beauty of God. About the beauty of the soul the great Roman mystic philosopher Plotinus (A.D. 205-270) says:

Withdraw into yourself and look: if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the sculptor; He cuts the marble here, smooths there... until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also... Never cease chiselling your soul until there shall shine out on you, from it, the god-like splendour of virtue, until you shall see the perfect Goodness established in the stainless shrine.<sup>7</sup>

The interior 'chiselling' is done through meditation.

For a lasting relationship to be established there must be compatibility between the persons concerned. Our relationship with God becomes true and firm only when through purification and meditation our souls begin to absorb some of His divine attributes. As long as we think ourselves impure, sinful,

weak and worthless, our chief concern will only be how to get rid of these limitations. When, however, we acquire certain divine attributes through Self-realization, we begin to feel irresistibly drawn to that person in whom these attributes are fully manifested. We will seek God only when God becomes our highest ideal, and God will become our highest ideal only when we realize that He is the full manifestation of those divine attributes which are present in us at least in a rudimentary form.

There is yet another reason why Self-realization is important: it gives us freedom to seek God. It is one thing to try to control one's thoughts and meditate for an hour or two. Seeking God is quite a different thing; it is an unceasing penetration into the depths of consciousness, which is not possible unless there is perfect interior stillness and the soul is free to seek God. 'Be still, and know that I am God' says the voice of God in the Bible.<sup>8</sup> True interior stillness is independent of external conditions. It is not like the calmness of a lake when there is no wind, but is rather like the emergence of an island above its surface. An area of inner silence is created permanently when the Atman emerges above the mental waves.

God is eternally free, and the goal of life, according to all schools of Indian thought, is the attainment of absolute and everlasting freedom known as *mukti* or *mokṣa*. For those who are bound *mukti* is nothing but a word and all their efforts, including prayer and meditation, are only an attempt to get better adjusted to their bondage. Realization of the inner Self gives us the first glimpse of true freedom, and only after we get it can we understand what *mukti* really means, and only then will we intensely aspire and struggle to attain it.

Even in the path of Jñāna, realization of oneself as the individual Spirit (*tvam-*

7. Cf. Sheldon Cheney, *Men Who Have Walked with God*.

8. Psalms, 46: 10.

*padārtha*) is necessary before attempting to realize its oneness with the infinite Spirit (*tat-padārtha*). A fundamental postulate of Advaita is that the world is an illusory phenomenon superimposed on Brahman. But it should be remembered that this superimposition (*adhyāsa*) is a process taking place in the self within—and not in the external world as the well-known analogy of the snake and the rope might suggest. Therefore the removal of this illusion known as *apavāda* or de-superimposition must also be conducted in the self, and for this the inner Self (*pratyagātman*) must be discovered first.

Thus we find that realization of one's true nature as Jīvātman is an unavoidable qualification to be acquired before one embarks on the search for God. This point has been strongly emphasized in most schools of Vedānta, especially in the school of Rāmānuja.

### *Need for seeking God*

With the exception of a few highly qualified spiritual souls ordinary spiritual aspirants find that the direct perception of the light of the individual Self itself needs several years of struggle in purification and practice. When at last they attain it the question comes to them, why not remain satisfied with this experience? Indeed many spiritual aspirants do remain satisfied with the inner light and peace gained through meditation, often mistaking them for the highest state of realization. Where is need to continue the struggle in order to seek God, the Supreme Self?

Swami Vivekananda raises a similar question in his introduction to his translation of Patañjali's Yoga Aphorisms. 'Is going back to God the higher state or not?', asks Swamiji. And he answers that seeking God is an inexorable law of life. All motion takes place in a circle. Life is a movement, a process, a projection from the divine

Reality, and must return to that source. Says Swamiji, 'Law is uniform. Nothing is more certain than that... Whether we will it or not, we shall have to return to our origin which is called God or Absolute. We all came from God, and we are all bound to go back to God. Call that by any name you like, God, Absolute or Nature, the fact remains the same.'<sup>9</sup> Ignatius Loyola put it in a personal way: 'I came from God, I belong to God, I am destined for God.' According to an ancient dictum attributed to the Greek philosopher Empedocles, God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. Each soul is a divine centre and has no meaning or reality without the divine circle. This is a fundamental doctrine of Vedānta. Search for the Absolute (which will really begin only after the soul has discovered its true nature as the divine centre) is the soul's search for completeness, perfection. Thus God realization is the fulfilment of a universal divine law. We may call it the Law of Completeness, *pūrṇatā*.

The theistic schools of Vedānta and Christianity hold that man's search for God is the soul's response to God's attraction and love. It is God who attracts, and Bhakti is the soul's response to it. When Kṛṣṇa played his flute even the cows and trees and creepers remained enthralled. When God calls, the soul cannot resist it and will rush towards Him. True love for God is not an emotion, but the spontaneous attraction of the pure Jīvātman for the Paramātman. Hence true love will begin only when the inner Self is realized. As pointed out earlier, sin, weakness, sorrow and other gross forms of human inadequacy can be overcome through the realization of one's inner Self. But, says the *Bhāgavatam*,

<sup>9</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) vol. 1, p. 197.

'Even the sages who have realized the Atman, and freed from bondage, maintain motiveless love for the Lord. [ Why? Because ] He is so full of noble qualities.'<sup>10</sup>

Seeking God then, whichever way we look at it—either as a natural law or divine attraction—is a spontaneous movement of the inner Self towards the Supreme Self.

There is another factor which makes the search for God a compelling spiritual urge even after the realization of the inner Self. The Jīvātman in its real essence is self-luminous, free from sorrow and has its own fund of pure joy. In the state of bondage this inherent happiness remains unrealized owing to the covering of *avidyā* (according to Śaṅkara) or owing to the contraction of its knowledge (according to Rāmānuja) or owing to the presence of *bhāvarūpa-ajñāna* (according to Madhva). When through self-realization this obstacle is removed, one experiences the pure happiness or peace of the inner Self. This happiness, known as *ātma-sukha* is, however, limited. It is only a particle or a reflection of the boundless bliss of the infinite Brahman known as *brahmānanda*. The *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* clearly distinguishes between the happiness of the inner Self (which it calls the *ānandamaya-ātman*) from the *brahmānanda* of the infinite Spirit.<sup>11</sup> A person who remains immersed in sense pleasure and worldly experiences cannot understand what even *ātma-sukha*, the serene joy of the inner Self is; the boundless *brahmānanda* is simply beyond his conception. It is only when he gets a taste of the inner bliss will he be able to form an idea of what the bliss of Brahman is like. And then his heart will intensely long for God. This was what the sage Sanatkumāra taught Nārada.

10. आत्मारामाश्च मुनयो निर्ग्रन्था अप्युरुक्रमे ।

कुर्वन्त्यहैतुकीं भक्तिम् इत्थंभूतगुणो हरिः ॥

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7.10.

11. Cf. *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.5.1 and 3.6.1.

After leading the disciple, step by step, up to the portals of the Atman, Sanatkumāra said, 'That which is *bhūmā* (infinite) is alone happiness. There is no happiness in anything *alpa* (finite). The Infinite alone is happiness.'<sup>12</sup> Brahman or God is *bhūmā*, the source of boundless bliss, and God realization alone can give the soul everlasting fulfilment.

A third spiritual factor which urges the soul to seek God is its desire for total freedom. The Buddhists and some of the modern philosophers of the West have emphasized only the negative side of life, namely, suffering and dread. But as Swami Vivekananda has shown, the positive and chief existential characteristic of life is the struggle for freedom.<sup>13</sup> Pursuit of sense enjoyments is the misuse of freedom and leads to the bondage of the soul. Spiritual life is the struggle to attain the freedom of the soul.

Spiritual freedom is of two types. One is detachment. By detaching the will from sense objects and emotions the inner Self can remain unaffected by pleasure and suffering, good and evil. In ancient Greece the Stoics idealized this as the goal of life. But even though the soul is detached, it still feels that it is a limited entity. Limitation itself is a form of bondage. This is clear from the experience in sleep. In deep sleep (*susupti*) the soul does not know anything

12. यो वै भूमा तत् सुखं, नाल्पे सुखमस्ति,  
भूमैव सुखम् . . . ।

*Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 7.23.1.

In this context it should be noted that according to non-Vedantic schools like Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Buddhism and Jainism, the mind is the seat of happiness and the Atman is not blissful in its real nature. Even among Vedanta teachers some like Vallabhācārya hold that in the individual Atman happiness remains completely suppressed, Brahman or God alone being the only source of all happiness.

13. See, 'Karma Yoga' and 'What is Religion' in *The Complete Works*, vol. 1.

and does not suffer. But it does not know either that it is infinite, and this means that it is still limited, bound. Direct realization of the individual Self makes detachment natural and spontaneous; but it is only partial freedom.

The second type of spiritual freedom is the total freedom of the Self known as *mukti*. Regarding this there are various views. According to Rāmānuja and other Vaiṣṇava teachers, the individual Self itself is a limited entity and its limitation is real; total freedom means the union of the soul with God who alone is absolutely free and upon whom all the souls are absolutely dependent. But Śaṅkara holds that the limitation of the soul is an illusory one produced by *ajñāna* and, when this ignorance is removed, the soul realizes its infinite dimension as Brahman and becomes absolutely free. In the Śaiva and Tāntrik systems bondage is regarded as a limitation of the three powers of the soul, and is of three types. The first one, known as *āṇava mala*, is a limitation of the willpower (*icchā-śakti*); the second one, *māyīya mala*, is a limitation of the power of knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*); and the third one, *kārmika mala*, is a limitation of the power of action (*kriyā-śakti*). Realization of the individual Self removes only the last two types of limitation. The first type of limitation (*āṇava mala*) is an intrinsic aspect of the soul's nature and can be removed only through a special infusion of divine grace; with its removal the individual Self becomes one with the Supreme Self and attains absolute freedom.

It does not matter which of these views we accept. What is important is to know that realization of the individualized Atman gives only partial freedom and that total and final freedom (*mukti*) can be attained only through the realization of Brahman. But without the former the latter cannot be attained or even be properly understood.

### *Sannyasa and the quest for God*

We have seen that the realization of the individual Self gives us partial freedom in the form of detachment. Detachment means withdrawal of the will, *saṅkalpa tyāga*. This enables the aspirant to remain unaffected by the duties and responsibilities of life and by the distractions of the external world. His ego or lower (outer) self, which till then under the sway of instincts and emotions had been acting as his enemy, comes under control and, as the Gita says, now acts as his friend.<sup>14</sup> When the inner Self emerges, it illumines the *buddhi* or *dhī*, the heart, the faculty of intuition and higher intelligence. With this illumination, called *prajña* in Yoga books, the aspirant acquires a wonderful capacity to understand spiritual truths, a deep insight into the nature of reality and consciousness. The Zen masters call this 'Prajña diamond' or the 'diamond eye'. It instantly reveals the subtle defects and weaknesses of the mind which had for long remained hidden and, like a diamond-edged knife, it cuts through the veil of Maya. It also serves as a powerful torch lighting up the inner path to God.

It is at this stage that the full value and meaning of Sannyasa, monkhood, becomes clear to him. It is possible to carry on the interior search for God without formal renunciation but the spirit of Sannyasa is necessary for all true seekers of God. Sannyasa is usually associated with the giving up of one's hearth and home and with external marks like the shaven pate and the ochre robes. But Manu says, 'External mark is not the basis of religion.'<sup>15</sup> The English proverb 'The cowl does not make a monk' expresses the same idea. Spiritual life

14. बन्धुरात्माऽऽत्मनस्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 6.6.

15. न लिङ्गं धर्मकारणम् ।

*Manu-Smṛiti* 6.66.

is the transformation of consciousness without which external marks have little value. Sannyasa is not mere renunciation. The real fact is that Sannyasa has two aspects. Renunciation of lust and wealth is only its negative aspect, and external marks like the ochre robes usually indicate only this. The positive aspect is that it presupposes an inner transformation of consciousness.

The attainment of *prajña*, the realization of the individual Self, is not dependent on external renunciation, though it is a great help. For the attainment of this preliminary illumination the most important condition is purity of mind, and for purification the best means is selfless work. So a combination of Karma Yoga and *upāsana* (meditation) aided by such auxiliary disciplines as discrimination, detachment and intense aspiration or prayer, is the best means for the realization of the individual Self. This is the unanimous view of most of the Vedanta teachers. In Hindu monasticism ample opportunity is provided for this in the form of several years of novitiate known as Brahmacharya. During this period the novice serves his Guru and attends to other religious duties. The Gāyatrī prayer that he repeats expresses the immediate aim of his vocation, namely, the awakening of the *dhī*, the hidden faculty of spiritual intuition. Without this awakening it is not possible to grasp the deep meaning of the mystic formulas that guide a Sannyasin's life. A mother has to look after her son only until he is grown up, and then she leaves him free to find his way in the world. Like a fond mother Gāyatrī takes the aspirant to the chamber of the heart and leaves him there. Once he attains the knowledge of his inner Self, Gāyatrī has no more function to perform, and so the aspirant for Sannyasa gives it up. He now goes out into the wide world—not only the external world but also the inner world of consciousness—in search of God. This going forth, *pravrajana*, is the real Sannyasa.

In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* these two stages of spiritual life are indicated in a grand passage which has served both as an authoritative canon and as an inspiring manifesto for all Sannyasins for nearly three thousand years. 'The individual Self shining in the *viññānamaya-kośa* in the heart ... is to be realized first through *svādhyāya* (study and enquiry) *yajña* (worship and self-surrender) *dāna* (charity and love) and *tapas* (austerity and concentration),' says Yājñavalkya and continues: 'Realizing the individual Self a person becomes silent. He then becomes a monk leading a wandering life seeking the highest world of Brahman.'<sup>16</sup> An ancient technical term (*pāribhāṣika samjña*) for the individual Self is *hamsa*, the Swan, and that for the Supreme Self is *parama-hamsa*, the Supreme Swan. A Sannyasin is one who, after having realized the *hamsa*, seeks to realize the *parama-hamsa*. Seeking, worshipping, serving the Supreme Spirit in all beings is the Dharma of a Sannyasin, but for this he must have attained a prior experience of the divinity of his own soul. He is called an *ātma-yājīn* because his whole life becomes an oblation of the individual Self into the Supreme Self, but for this he should first realize the inner Atman.

#### *The range of God experience*

The difference between the realization of the individual Self and of the Supreme Self becomes clear when we compare the goal of Patañjali's Yoga with the goal of

16. स वा एष महानज आत्मा योऽयं विज्ञानमयः प्राणेषु य एषोऽन्तर्हृदय आकाशस्तस्मिञ्छेते . . . तमेतं वेदानुवचनेन ब्राह्मणा विविदिषन्ति यज्ञेन दानेन तपसानाशकेन, एतमेव विदित्वा मुनिर्भवति । एतमेव प्रव्राजिनो लोकमिच्छन्तः प्रव्रजन्ति ।



Vedanta. According to Patañjali, the Puruṣa or the Self is an independent entity which is not part of a larger whole (God Himself being only a special kind of Puruṣa). The goal of this system of Yoga is, as has been pointed out by Bhoja, *viyoga* or separation—separation of the Puruṣa from Prakṛti. But Vedanta holds that all individual souls (Jīvātman) are parts of an infinite ultimate reality known as Brahman. The goal of Vedantic endeavour is twofold: first to realize one's true nature as the Jīvātman, and then to get reunited with Brahman. Thus whereas Yoga ends in Self-realization, Vedanta begins from there and ends in the realization of Brahman or God.

Regarding the nature of God experience Vedanta offers a variety of standpoints which could be understood as forming a graded series. Beginning with a clear awareness of the presence of God in the centre of one's luminous heart and a deep love for him, it may take the form of a blissful intimate communion with Him, and may develop into a vivid perception of the all-pervading presence of the Supreme Spirit in all beings, and may get intensified into the glorious vision of the Divine Person in all His luminous splendour, power and beauty, followed by the experience of an inseparable union with Him at all times. The culminating experience, according to Vedanta, is the attainment of the non-dual state of existence in which the individual spirit gets totally merged in the Supreme Spirit. However, Sri Ramakrishna has pointed to a still further stage called Vijñāna which gives an integral knowledge of the total Reality, including both the phenomenon (*līlā*) and the noumenon (*nitya*).<sup>17</sup> Hindu scriptures describe God-experience in various ways.

The Gita speaks of three levels of God-

experience: knowing (*jñātum*), seeing (*draṣṭum*) and entering into or merging (*praveṣṭum*).<sup>18</sup> For Rāmānuja God-experience is a progressive intensification of love and divine Presence, though he recognizes three stages in it, namely, *pāra-bhakti*, *para-jñāna* and *parama-bhakti*.<sup>19</sup> Other bhakti schools have their own ways of classification. Advaita teachers divide God-experience into two levels, *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa* corresponding to the experience of the *saguna* and *nirguna* aspects of Brahman. Vidyāraṇya divides knowers of Brahman into four groups: *brahmavid*, *brahmavid-vara*, *brahmavid-varīyān* and *brahmavid-varīṣṭha*, in the ascending order of completeness of their experience.<sup>20</sup>

For our present purpose it is enough to note two important points here. One is that these degrees or stages should not be viewed as totally different and independent 'quantum jumps'. Instead of looking upon the path of God realization as a ladder, it is perhaps more correct to view it as an ascending slope. Different teachers have used different scales to measure and mark this slope. Secondly, we should keep in mind that, whatever be the scale used, the factor common to all the stages of experience is the contact between the soul and God, between the individual spirit and the Supreme Spirit. This is the most important point in God experience: to feel the contact of a larger consciousness. How to experience this contact through meditation is our next topic of discussion.

(To be continued)

18. ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च

Gītā 11.54.

This idea is elaborated further in 18.55. Though Śamkarācārya has taken all these three stages to mean the same experience, Vedānta Desika holds that they refer to three levels of Bhakti experience.

19. Cf. Rāmānuja, *Śaraṇagati-Gadya*.

20. Vidyāraṇya, *Jīvanmukti-Viveka*, 4.

17. See, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 30 ; 229.

# THE LIGHT OF MOTHERHOOD

SWAMI SATYARUPANANDA

## *Womanhood and motherhood*

The bisexuality of the human race has decided once for all the different functions of man and woman in the world. There are certain functions which a man cannot undertake; they are reserved for the woman-folk only. Tenderness, affection, forbearance, service and sacrifice are the qualities which are inborn in woman; whereas freedom, activity, dominance and aggressiveness are natural in man. Dr. Alexis Carrel, in his famous book *Man the Unknown*, observes, 'The differences existing between man and woman are of more fundamental nature.... In reality woman differs profoundly from man. Every one of the cells of her body bears the mark of her sex.'<sup>1</sup>

What is this mark, this uniqueness of woman? What is the essence of womanhood? Motherhood is the essence of womanhood. Every female is born a potential mother, and unless she manifests her potential motherhood to its fullest extent, she cannot achieve fulfilment and complete satisfaction in her life. Swami Vivekananda in his lecture 'Woman of India' observes, 'She has to wait till her womanhood is fulfilled and the one thing that fulfils womanhood, that is womanliness in woman, is motherhood.'<sup>2</sup>

It is said that male and female are only the gross physical manifestation of a primordial division in Reality into Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Puruṣa and Prakṛti are different in their nature but coexist and cooperate to produce all the richness of life. The roles of man and woman are complementary and each has to play his or her unique role in

life to reach the common goal, namely, Self-realization. Unselfish, all-sacrificing love is the soul of motherhood. This kind of love is manifested in the woman's life when she becomes a mother.

Here a significant question arises: is motherhood essentially a physical condition? Is it necessary that a woman must marry and give birth to a child in order to attain to motherhood? It is in trying to find the answer to this question that we understand the greatness and unique contribution of Sri Sarada Devi, the holy consort of Sri Ramakrishna. Although for the vast majority of women marriage and giving birth to children are undoubtedly necessary to realize and manifest their inborn motherhood, these are not unavoidably essential conditions. Motherliness is inherent in woman. Its manifestation does not essentially depend upon birth to a child. This is what the Holy Mother as demonstrated through her life.

Motherliness consists in a pure, all-embracing, all-sacrificing tender love towards all. Every woman can cultivate this attitude if she is taught from her childhood that the essence of her very being is this unselfish motherly love, that she is a born mother, and holiness of motherhood is her birth right. She has not to *become* a mother which she always *is*. She has only to manifest her inherent motherhood in the form of pure and unselfish all-embracing love towards all.

It should be remembered here that if a woman marries and gives birth to a child but does not manifest this unselfish love in her life and continues to lead a selfish and sensuous life, then she is not entitled to be called a mother. She might have given birth to a child, but has not achieved motherhood in the real sense of the term. On the

1. Alexis Carrel, *Man the Unknown* (Bombay: Wilco Edition, 1974) p. 93.

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) vol. 8, p. 59.

contrary, motherhood may manifest itself even in childhood if a congenial atmosphere and proper training are provided to girls. This is what we find in the early life of Holy Mother.

### *The motherly daughter*

Unselfish love and tireless service characterized the Holy Mother's life from her very childhood. She was the eldest child of her parents. She had one sister and five brothers. Even as a young girl, she used to take care of her younger brothers like a mother. There is a small river known as the Amodar near Jayrambati, the birth place of the Holy Mother. She would take her younger brothers to the river and give them bath, then she would give them puffed rice for refreshment.

Her father used to grow cotton. Her mother used to go to the fields to pick cotton, and little Sarada Devi would accompany her and help her in collecting cotton pods. She also used to help her mother in spinning sacred threads.

As a young girl she had often to wade in neck-deep water to cut grass for the cattle, and had to carry food to the labourers working in the paddy fields.

When she was ten or eleven years old Jairambati and nearby areas were ravaged by a horrible famine. Her father was a very pious and kind-hearted man. Although he himself was not a man of affluence, he opened a free kitchen for the hungry people. *Khichudi* (a mixture of rice and lentil soup) was cooked in big pots and the hot food was served in leaf plates. The famine-stricken people were so hungry that it was difficult for them to wait till the food was cool enough for eating. Young Sarada Devi would stand with two fans and work them with both the hands so that the hot food might become cool sooner before the hungry people started eating it.

These small incidents show that unselfish

love and untiring service were inborn traits of Sarada Devi's personality. As an obedient and devoted daughter, she never lost a single opportunity to serve her parents in any manner she could.

### *Devoted sahadharminī*

Marriage is one of the most important incidents in human life. The Hindu thinkers have given their best attention to this important event. To a Hindu, marriage is not a contract between two persons of opposite sex to live together and enjoy sensuous worldly life. To him marriage is a sacrament, a purifying ceremony meant to help both the partners to conquer their lower self and raise themselves up from the level of physical pleasure to the sphere of spiritual bliss, culminating in the highest spiritual realization of the oneness of all souls in the Supreme Self. This is why a Hindu wife is called *sahadharminī*, the religious counterpart of her husband. Here religion does not mean mere faith or creed or membership in a church. It means the pursuit of the highest spiritual ideal of Self-realization. Being a co-religionist, the duty of a Hindu wife is to help her husband to scale the highest summit of spiritual realization. For this she herself must become a spiritual aspirant.

The Holy Mother was a living example of this ideal of *sahadharminī*. Sri Ramakrishna, her husband, was an all-renouncing saint. All women were verily the manifestation of Divine Mother for him. The sole aim and object of his life was God alone. By the time he was married, he had already reached the highest summit of spiritual realization and was fully established in the realization of Supreme Brahman. He was twenty-four years old at the time of his marriage.

Holy Mother Sarada Devi was then just a small girl of six years. She neither knew anything of marriage nor had practised any spiritual discipline. After her marriage for

several years she did not see her husband. She was being brought up in an ordinary Indian village atmosphere. In that atmosphere it is natural for any growing village girl to dream of her future household life as one of worldly enjoyment and worldly love. Few young girls brought up in that atmosphere would dream of living with an ascetic husband and devote herself solely to his service ignoring her own needs and happiness. But Sarada Devi was not an ordinary girl. Her inborn sense of divinity kept her mind pure and holy. When she was eighteen or nineteen years of age rumours reached her ears that her husband, who was living in Dakshineswar some sixty miles away from Jairambati, had gone mad. She had not seen him for several years. She decided to verify the actual situation for herself. Accordingly she reached Dakshineswar sometime in 1872, only to find her husband a perfect gentleman and a wonderfully loving husband. She decided to live with him in Dakshineswar and to devote herself completely to his service. Being very intelligent, she could recognize within few days the extraordinary greatness of her husband and the exalted state of spiritual consciousness that he habitually lived in.

A new chapter opened in the life of Sarada Devi. The contact with her divine spouse quickened her own inherent spiritual powers. Her whole attitude towards life changed. One day Sri Ramakrishna asked her, 'Do you want to drag me down into Maya?' 'Why should I do that', came the prompt reply. 'I have come only to help you in the path of religious life.' Another day Sarada Devi asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'How do you look upon me?' Without a moment's hesitation the Master spoke out what had become a matter of actual experience with him, 'The Mother who is in the Kali temple is the same mother who gave birth to this body and is now serving me.'

The relationship between her and the Master never sank to the physical level but

always remained at the spiritual level. One night Sri Ramakrishna actually worshipped her as the Divine Mother of the Universe. Through that rite he roused the latent Divine Motherhood in her. From that day Sarada Devi became the true Holy Mother of mankind in the present age. With the husband and wife established in the realization of spiritual oneness, history was created in the field of marital relationship. The true ideal of *sahadharminī* was practised and demonstrated to perfection in the exemplary life of the Holy Mother. Once she realized that she had come to help her husband in the fulfilment of his spiritual mission on earth, she devoted herself fully to following the instructions given by her husband, and to his service.

Sri Ramakrishna had a very delicate stomach and even a slight irregularity in food was enough to upset his stomach. So his food had to be prepared with scrupulous care and attention. Holy Mother could do it just the way that suited his health and stomach. Sri Ramakrishna knew it only too well, and utterly depended on Holy Mother in this respect. Thus cooking food and serving him became the chief duty of Holy Mother at Dakshineswar.

However, her field of service was not confined to Sri Ramakrishna alone. It included everyone connected with the Master and many others as well. When the Holy Mother came to stay at Dakshineswar, her old mother-in-law was also living there. Sri Ramakrishna was very much devoted to her. The Holy Mother used to live with her mother-in-law in a very small double-storied building originally meant for playing temple music. The old lady lived on the first floor and the Holy Mother on the ground floor. Even while doing her household duties the Holy Mother would be so much vigilant that whenever the old lady called her, she would run upstairs and be at the side of the old lady to serve her.

As days went on, many devotees started

coming to Sri Ramakrishna, and at times some of them would stay with the Master. And so the Holy Mother had to cook different kinds of food suited to the different tastes of the devotees. For Rakhal (Swami Brahmananda) she would cook *khichudi*; for Naren (Swami Vivekananda) she would prepare thick *chapatis* and thick *dal* (lentil soup) and so on. Sometimes the volume of cooking would be so much that she had to cook almost the whole day. But she bore the entire burden cheerfully. The one single purpose of her life was to serve Sri Ramakrishna whom she regarded as God Himself, and through this service she not only learned how to divinize all her actions and her entire life, but also how to manifest the divine Motherhood that was burgeoning within her.

The years that the Mother spent with the Master at Dakshineswar and Cossipore are important for her personally as constituting the formative and most blissful period in her life. But they are important to the rest of the world for the values she lived and exemplified. In the first place, her life showed that marriage is a spiritual partnership, a mode of spiritual living, and is not an obstacle to higher realization if it is understood in this light. Secondly, she showed how to do intense spiritual practice even in the midst of intense activity, how to remember God constantly, how to convert one's whole life into unbroken worship. Thirdly, she demonstrated how the apparently contradictory ideals of the wife, nun and mother could be integrated in a woman's life. For a woman there can be no better example of overall integration of personality than that of the Holy Mother.

### *Blossoming of divine Motherhood*

If at Dakshineswar divine Motherhood burgeoned in Sarada Devi, it started blossoming after the Master's passing away. The rest of her life was the unfolding of the

divine Motherhood that she held within her, as a dam holds a vast reservoir of water. Her love was not a mere attitude of good will and compassion for all which characterizes all spiritual men and women. It was intense, intensely human and personal, more real and tangible than the love of one's earthly mother. Her love had both intensity and extensity. It was steady and unwavering. Nobody could approach her without tangibly feeling the uplifting purity of her maternal love. Most of the time devotees felt that her pious love had even excelled the love of their own mothers. A few examples would show how deep and broad her maternal love was.

When her house at Jairambati was being built, some Muslim labourers of the neighbouring village were employed for construction work. Before working as labourers they had been robbers and dacoits. Everybody in the village was afraid of them and hated them. But when these thugs came in contact with the Holy Mother their lives were transformed. One day one of these Muslim labourers brought some bananas to Mother and said, 'Mother, I have brought these for the Master (meaning, to be offered to Sri Ramakrishna) would you accept them?' Holy Mother said 'Yes, my son, I would' and gladly accepted them. A lady devotee was standing by. She told Mother, 'I know these people. They are thieves. Why do you accept their things for the Master?' Holy Mother replied in a solemn tone, 'I know who is good and who is bad.'

Among these labourers was one named Amjad. One day Mother took him into her house for meals. He was made to sit on the verandah and the Mother's niece Nalini was asked to serve him. Being a caste fanatic, Nalini stood at a distance from him and started throwing the different articles of food into his plate. Holy Mother saw this and remarked, 'If you serve a person in this way, how can he relish the food?'

She took the things from Nalini's hands and herself served the poor man. After Amjad finished his eating the Holy Mother herself washed the place where he had taken food. Nalini was shocked at this unorthodox act, and exclaimed, 'O aunt, you are surely going to lose your caste.' The Holy Mother retorted, 'Keep quiet. Even this Amjad is my son exactly in the sense that Sarat is.' Sometimes mothers hate their own sons if they become thieves or robbers. But the Holy Mother adopted even a robber (who had been jailed several times) as her son. Sarat Maharaj, Swami Saradanandaji, was a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He was an illumined soul, a monk of the highest order, and a life-long attendant of the Holy Mother. On the other hand, Amjad was a thug. But the Holy Mother did not make any distinction in her all-embracing love.

The greatest help that can be given to a man or woman is spiritual help. It is only by following spiritual laws and leading a spiritual life that a man can get real peace. Besides being the mother of all, the Holy Mother was herself the eternal source of spiritual power which she was always eager to give to one and all who came to her seeking spiritual instruction or shelter irrespective of their fitness for receiving the instruction. Many men and women of unworthy character came to her seeking spiritual instruction and shelter. Holy Mother knowing fully well about their character, still accepted them out of her boundless mercy gave them necessary spiritual instructions, and transformed their life and character. This was not an ordinary act of spiritual charity, for it meant the acceptance of the sins of others and vicariously suffering for them. But she did not shrink from suffering for the sake of others. When one of her disciples asked her why she accepted such people as her disciples, the Holy Mother said in a convincing manner: 'I am their mother, is it not my duty to clean my child

if he comes to me covering himself with dirt and mud?' Love has no meaning unless it is based on self-sacrifice. It is the readiness to undergo suffering and sacrifice that makes motherhood the best expression of human love. The Holy Mother elevated it to its highest possible dimension by undergoing the greatest form of self-sacrifice.

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, his sannyasin disciples lived together at the Baranagore monastery for some time and then some of them started leading a life of mendicancy and austerity, wandering all over the country. When the Holy Mother came to know of this, she was very sorry for her sannyasi children. Once while on a pilgrimage she saw a large Buddhist monastery at Gaya where there were proper arrangements of food, living rooms and other minor facilities for the Buddhist monks. Seeing this and remembering the hardships of her own sannyasi children, she was overcome with sorrow and prayed to God with tears in her eyes, 'O Lord be gracious and make arrangements for coarse food and clothing for my children. I cannot bear to see those who have left their hearth and home for your sake wandering like beggars.' It was in fulfilment of that prayer that the various Ramakrishna Ashramas came into existence one by one, and adequate arrangements for ordinary food and clothing for the monks were made.

The major part of her life was spent in her village home in simple and modest surroundings. Her means were very meagre. But whenever monks and devotees visited her she used to do everything in her power to make their stay comfortable. Her native village of Jairambati was in her days a small, remote, backward area. Milk, fresh vegetables and other ordinary groceries were not available easily. When her spiritual children from the cities and towns visited her at Jairambati, the Holy Mother would go round the village with a pot in her hand to collect milk for her children.

She would often exclaim in anguish, 'Alas, I could not feed and look after my children well.' At the village even in her old age she herself did most of the cooking. She herself would sit by the side of her devotees and serve food to them like the fond mother that she was.

The life of a woman begins as a daughter, develops as a *sahadharminī* and reaches its culmination in motherhood. All these three important phases of a woman's

life were fully developed in the person of Holy Mother. But what makes the Holy Mother's life unique is the demonstration of the fact that the central core of womanhood is motherhood, and that it is by developing this potentiality that a woman can attain the full dimension of her personality and ultimate fulfilment. Furthermore, the Holy Mother's life is a new revelation of the spiritual and divine nature of motherhood.

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## MY WESTERN EXPERIENCE—II\*

(ENGLAND)

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

### *At the Vedanta Centre*

When my plane touched down at Heathrow, I told myself to be ready for humiliation and harassment of every sort, for Heathrow today has acquired notoriety for its atrocious treatment to coloured visitors. I said to myself that on some plea or other, officials at the airport might detain me, or even refuse entry, though, for all I knew, I had valid papers as a visitor. I was particularly worried on account of my ochre clothes, for they might be a special cause for suspicion in their eyes. But to my pleasant surprise, they smiled, glanced through the papers, and then waved me through.

As I came out of the airport, I found a dozen friends waiting for me. I knew Swami Bhavyananda, head of the Vedanta centre in England, would be there, but I did not expect others. It was, however, good to see them all after many years. Swami Bhavyananda, I found, had not changed much except that all his hair had

turned grey and he had also lost some weight, which, medically, was perhaps good for him. There were some who wanted that I should travel in their car, but Bhavyananda dismissed the idea out of hand. He bundled me into his car and drove away. Before leaving he announced that a reception was going to be given to me at the Vedanta Centre in the evening and, if anybody wanted to attend it, he or she was welcome.

England! I had heard and read so much about England that I thought I knew it well, but as I was being driven to the Vedanta Centre at Bourne End, there wasn't anything I saw which I could truly say was familiar to me. It was, however, lovely, driving over the highways, with rolling fields on both sides, cattle grazing here and there, dotted over with cottages! Skirting round London we passed through some small towns and finally arrived at the Vedanta Centre after about forty minutes' drive. There is a fine avenue, flanked by tall shady trees, which leads you to the main building of the centre. The place looked like a rich man's country house, and that was

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\* Continued from the September, 1982 issue.

exactly what it turned out to be, for I discovered that the estate originally belonged to the well-known British novelist Edgar Wallace who did most of his writing here. The centre is now at Bourne End in Buckinghamshire about thirty miles outside London but previously it was at Holland Park in a fashionable part of London. There are some who think it has been a mistake to shift the centre to a suburb, for not many people are now able to visit the centre. Swami Bhavyananda, however, thinks the present site is much better because it is more quiet and has beautiful surroundings with open spaces full of vegetation on all sides. He has many weekend visitors who come from all over England and even outside to spend a day or two in the elevating atmosphere of the centre, receiving instructions from him and sharing in the life of the monastery. When I arrived, the place was full of such people, for it was a Sunday. Swami Bhavyananda introduced me to some of them, mostly elderly people of course, but people who were still active in their professions. Some arrived after me. I was surprised to find that, within minutes of their arrival, they were busy helping with whatever work there was to do—typing, selling books, cooking, washing, gardening, and so on. They had come by previous arrangement and some of them have been coming every weekend over the years. Bhavyananda addressed most of them by the first name, for I guess they were his disciples. It was Swamiji's hope that England would be a strong base for Vedanta. There are signs that this hope will be fulfilled.

A tall and heavily-built young English brahmachari looked after me so long as I was at the centre. He is a cheerful person always humming or whistling while running around to carry out orders from elders. He has been at the centre for more than two years and, as he says, is enjoying every minute of his life here. *He goes home*

sometimes to see his mother. I asked, 'Didn't she object to your becoming a monk?' He said, 'No, she didn't, in fact, she doesn't quite understand what becoming a monk means, for she finds outwardly there is no change in me except that I'm now a more quiet and humble person than what I was before. As a matter of fact, now she thinks I'm a person easy to talk to and argue with, which she thinks is a great change that my present way of life has brought about. This is why she is happy that I'm here though she doesn't understand why I'm here and what I'm doing.' I asked him how he came to know the centre. He said a friend of his had started visiting it and he sometimes accompanied him. Later his friend joined the centre and he followed suit. His friend has now left but he is continuing.

At lunch, I was introduced to more members of the centre. There was quite a hubbub in the dining-hall, for there were more people than there were seats for and many people ate standing. The lunch was neither English nor Indian, for it consisted mostly of nuts, pastries and fruits, besides bread and butter. There was also coffee. Swami Bhavyananda told me after lunch that I could rest in my room till the evening prayer, for the meeting would be held only after that. He said he would call me when it was time for the meeting.

It was a small hall where the meeting was held. I think there were not more than 120 people present, yet some people had nowhere to sit. Among those present was Prof. Matilal who had come all the way from Oxford to hear me. Swami Bhavyananda introduced me in a neat little speech and announced the subject I was to speak on—'Sri Ramakrishna's Contributions to Spirituality. I spoke for an hour. The meeting ended with a few complimentary remarks from Swami Bhavyananda.

Dinner soon followed after the meeting. *The scene was the same as at lunch, more*



guests than there were seats and a lot of hubbub. The table literally groaned with food, both Indian and Western. Every guest had brought large quantities of food, mostly cooked at home. Bhavyananda, at the head of the table, saw to it that I had a generous helping of each of the varieties of food that the guests had brought.

### *The British Council*

I started my sightseeing tours the next day, with Dr. S. R. Das Gupta, whom I knew from the days he was in Calcutta, taking me round to wherever I wanted to go. Dr. Das Gupta was previously attached to the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratisthan in Calcutta, but now he is second in command in a big Government hospital in England. I first went to the British Council for I was supposed to be its guest. I had received a letter from it asking if I would please call at its office at 11 a.m. on 2 November. The British Council had sanctioned a small grant to me to help me meet my expenses in England. I was to receive that money on that day. It had also prepared a tentative itinerary for me and had arranged for one of its officials to accompany me to places I wanted to see. I was also invited by the British Council to be its guest at lunch at Hamiltons Restaurant in Trafalgar Square at noon that day.

I saw quite a bit of London as we drove to the British Council situated at Spring Gardens. A flood of memory rushed through the mind as we crossed the Thames bridge. How many times has it been mentioned in English literature! Dr. Das Gupta pointed out to me various landmarks in London—the Buckingham Palace, the Parliament, the British Museum, the famous Hyde Park, and so on. I was to pass by these places twice the next few days.

We took quite sometime locating the British Council. Dr. Das Gupta consulted the London map several times, stopped

passersby and asked and finally found the building, but only to discover the entrance was on a side lane and there was no place where he could park his car! This is the difficulty in most Western cities—you just don't know where to park your car. Often you have to drive round and round looking for a bit of vacant space where you can squeeze in your car. If you are lucky to find a place to park the car within the prescribed areas, you have to pay a fee according to the reading of the meter installed there. In most Western cities owners leave their cars at night in the open near their homes, for they have nowhere else to keep them. When there is a snowfall, the whole car may lie buried under the snow and has to be dug out before it can be used again.

We left the car quite some distance away and walked back to the British Council building. Miss B. M. Moss received me and we sat down for a friendly chat. She was, essentially, a social worker and had spent sometime in African countries doing rural welfare work. She, however, did not know much about India. She left to fetch the money the British Council had offered to pay me. I took the opportunity to look round to have an idea of what was going on at the office of the British Council. I noticed that there were small groups of people, mostly coloured, waiting in the lounge, probably students who had applied for financial assistance and had been summoned for an interview with the appropriate authorities. Inside the office there was quite a brisk air of serious activity by men and women, mostly young and middle-aged, who handled the vast range of educational and cultural activities in which the British Council is engaged in most countries of the world.

Miss Moss returned with the money and a senior officer, Miss J. Clayton, who was to be my hostess on behalf of the British Council. We walked to Hamiltons, the restaurant where we were to have our lunch,

Miss Clayton, Dr. Das Gupta and myself. I gathered that the British Council always entertained its honoured guests at this restaurant. I won't say I enjoyed the lunch, but I enjoyed the talk I had with Miss Clayton, for she knew India, having worked in the rural areas of South India. She was fascinated by the temple architecture of South India. She, however, did not know much about North India. She said she would soon be visiting Calcutta. I invited her to visit the Institute of Culture which she did when she came to Calcutta later.

I had written to the British Council that I wanted to see the India Office Library and Records. Miss Clayton told me that arrangements had been made for me to visit the Library the same afternoon and an officer of the British Council would take me there. Mr. Desmond of the Library received me when I arrived but, as he had to leave immediately for some meeting somewhere, he handed me over to some of his senior colleagues who showed me round with great courtesy. The Library and Records now occupied a magnificent new building and is staffed by men and women from the Indian sub-continent as well as the British Isles. It has books and records covering every period of Indian history including the latest decade. I asked if they had any publications of the Institute of Culture. They immediately produced several including even *Tava Kathamritam*, my insignificant Bengali commentary on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. As I went round, I noticed scholars poring over books in secluded corners with the help of shaded lights. The whole place was quiet; people talked, if at all, in whispers and moved about as silently as possible.

### *The Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind*

The institution I saw next was the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind. I knew its founder who was himself blind

and who had visited Narendrapur when I was there. At one time, the Society used to train teachers for the blind who worked at the Blind Boys' Academy at Narendrapur. The officials of the Society knew me by name and were happy to have me visit them, though they did not know that I was no longer at Narendrapur. Some of them, however, knew about the Institute of Culture, for they had stayed at its guest house. I do not know where the Society was situated before, but I noticed it now occupied a newly constructed magnificent building opened by the Queen.

The present Director of the Society was previously a college teacher. He is new in the field of work for the blind, but he seemed to be fully conversant with the problems of the blind. When I mentioned that the problems varied from country to country, he readily agreed. No country can copy another country in tackling its problems of the blind, for the socio-economic situation is not the same in any two countries. What is possible in the West is not possible in the East, and it is a mistake to give the same kind of training to the blind children in the two hemispheres of the world. I pointed out that in a agricultural country, the accent, in any training programme for blind children, should be on agriculture. The director readily agreed that each country had to devise its own training programmes according to the needs of the local situation. In India the mistake on the part of institutions working for the blind has been to imitate their sister institutions in the West blindly. This has been a self-defeating exercise. The Director showed me round the different departments of the Society, introduced me to his colleagues and then brought me back to his office for a cup of tea.

### *Cambridge*

I had told Prof. Matilal that I wanted to visit Cambridge. Could he please arrange

for someone to show me round? He sent word that Dr. J. J. Leipner of Divinity School, Cambridge, would be glad to receive me on 4 November sometime in the forenoon. He would also show me round. Cambridge is more than one hundred miles from the Vedanta Centre. After an early breakfast, we started for Cambridge.

Dr. Leipner was in a calssroom teaching some Upaniṣad. After some brief introduction, he excused himself saying, 'Will you please go round a bit on your own? I'm not free till 3.30 p.m. Please come then. And if you agree, I would like to arrange at that time a seminar with my colleagues and students which you might conduct on Vedanta.' I said I would be glad to exchange ideas on Vedanta with his colleagues and students. We wandered about for sometime, ate lunch in a restaurant, and exactly at 3.30 p.m. returned to Dr. Leipner's room. The room was already full.

Dr. Leipner introduced me to the audience, saying it was an informal meeting where we could talk to one another freely and raise whatever questions we liked in order to understand each other's viewpoint about Vedanta. A young man stood up and said, 'We would like you to explain to us what you mean by Maya.' This was the starting point of a long but very fruitful exchange of views between me on the one side and the students and teachers present, on the other. What impressed me most was the fact that the members of the audience were highly knowledgeable about different schools of Indian philosophy, in particular Advaita Vedanta. The discussion lasted for nearly two hours. Dr. Leipner thanked me and said that he would like to organize a similar seminar in the near future with representatives from different British Universities and would be happy to have me participate in one. I replied it would give me the greatest pleasure to be able to attend the seminar,

Dr. Leipner then took us out on a quick tour of Cambridge, showing us all its important landmarks. It was a great help having him as a guide, for he knew every bit of the university and was able to tell us the history of every building and every college within the campus. The most interesting part to us was the Backs, the fields on the river Gam.

As evening was gathering, we decided to return to Vedanta Centre. At this point Dr. Leipner startled us saying in clear Bengali 'Let us now go and have some tea at my house.' I was astonished that he knew Bengali. I asked, 'How is it you know Bengali?' He said, 'With a Bengali wife, how can I help knowing it?' Gradually he unfolded his story. His father, a Czech, had been in Calcutta with the Bata company, when he did a course at Jadavpur. It was at that time that he had met his future wife, an accomplished lady who was closely related to K. C. Neogi. Dr. Leipner told me that his wife would probably prepare a 'wonderful' thing which she called 'Payesh', but would I be careful never to find fault with it, however it might taste?

Mrs. Leipner is a wonderful hostess! She gave us an Indian meal with *luchi* and curry which we enjoyed very much. The *payesh* came last of all and it was indeed wonderful, not in the sense I thought Dr. Leipner had used the word but in a real sense. It was very well-done and each of us ate a large quantity of it.

### *Madam Tussaud's museum*

My lectures at Oxford were to begin on 5 November. Among the places I saw before leaving for Oxford was Madam Tussaud's museum. I had heard much about its wax figures, but had never realized how life-like they could be. I had some idea about it the first time when I saw in Singapore wax figures representing the scene of the Japanese surrender to the Allies. But the figures in Madam Tussaud's museum

are unique. As you enter it, you see some people crowding round the counter for tickets. One man is handing in money to the man behind the counter, others are waiting their turns, their bodies postured at different angles. One man is standing cross-legged. At first sight, you see nothing unusual about them—it is a usual sight at any popular theatre. But a second look will show the unusualness—the figures are stationary! As you climb up the stairs, you see uniformed guards to check your tickets. They fix you with an enquiring stare, but from your earlier experience, you may think they are fake, but soon you discover that they are not. Thus, at every step, you are so deceived that you never know for sure what is fake and what is real. Many scenes from world history and many world statesmen are also represented as the wax figures. Some of them are very good but there are some, specially those of Indian leaders, which are disappointing. As we were going round, we heard shrieks of pain coming from somewhere; soon we found ourselves in what was labelled ‘The Chamber of Horror’. Here we saw human ingenuity at its cruellest in torturing fellow-men for political, religious and criminal reasons. The acts were reproduced so vividly that I felt sick after seeing some of them, and I asked Dr. Das Gupta to take me out immediately. But he said, ‘Let us have a cup of coffee first, then we will go out. There is a restaurant around here.’ As we were going to the restaurant, we noticed a board in a corner which read, ‘I lost my head here’. Dr. Das Gupta said, ‘Let us have your picture taken here, you’ll see why it’s written “I lost my head here.”’ A photographer was ready with his camera. My picture was taken and immediately delivered—it was only my head! Rather a gruesome sight.

### *Oxford*

My lecture at Oxford was scheduled to

begin at 6 p.m. on 5 November. Accompanied by the Das Guptas, I arrived at All Souls at 5.15 p.m. I was hoping that Swami Bhavyananda would come with me, but he had a lecture engagement elsewhere. Prof. Matilal had sent word that he would be busy till 5.30 p.m., but he had given us directions as to where we were to look for him. When we met Prof. Matilal, he asked if I was ready to go to the lecture-hall right away. I said I was.

The lecture was held in what looked like a large class-room. There were barely forty to fifty people present including some devotees from the Vedanta Centre. Prof. Matilal introduced me and I began to speak. I began by making a comparative study of the two schools of thought headed by Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. I then proceeded to point out how they differed in their interpretation of the verses of the second chapter of the Gita. I had divided the chapter into two parts, each part being covered by each lecture. I spoke with the help of notes. I quoted profusely from different commentaries. As far as I could judge, the audience was pleased with the speech. I think Prof. Matilal had told me that the audience might not like Śaṅkara’s non-dualistic interpretation. I was therefore prepared for attacks on Śaṅkara. There was, however, none. In fact, when Prof. Matilal invited questions, no one in the audience had any questions to ask. I felt relieved.

The second lecture was held the next day in the hall of a new college opened by the Queen. There was a much larger audience this time. Again there were some devotees from the Vedanta Centre and there was Swami Bhavyananda himself present. I began by giving a resume of what I had said the previous day and then trailed off into an abstruse discussion of Maya, perhaps a hang-over of what I had said earlier at Cambridge. As I realized I was making a very



# SAMKARA ON THE BRAHMA-SUTRAS

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

## *Structure of the treatise*

The structure of the *Brahma-Sūtra* is superbly conceived in four chapters (Adhyāya). The first chapter achieves a systematization of the teachings of the Upaniṣads as presenting Brahman as the ground of the cosmos and as constituting the ultimate reality. The chapter is fittingly designated Samanvayādhyāya. The second chapter named Avirodhādhyāya answers all actual and conceivable opposition to the philosophical position advanced in the first. Not content with the demonstration of the logical consistency of that thesis as against the fallacious objections, it undertakes a fairly full refutation of the metaphysical schools opposed to Vedānta in the manner of free and non-dogmatic critical examination. Thus the thesis concerning Brahman is established on logically firm and invulnerable foundations. The third chapter deals with the concept of Sādhanā or planned human endeavour to realize the highest goal of life. All that is involved in the formulation of this Sādhanā receives due attention and explanation in the chapter. The last chapter named Phalādhyāya elaborates the nature of that goal itself in clear terms bringing in all the connected details.

The upshot of the whole treatise is that Brahman is the ultimate reality, that the realization of Brahman by way of knowledge is the road to salvation, that salvation lies in the attainment of Brahman on the part of soul of man through a process of integration, and that this consummation is the supreme value which transcends all temporality.

## *Two levels of the doctrine*

Such is the bare indication of the theme of the fundamental classic of Vedānta.

Śaṅkara's commentary is the earliest one we have, though he himself alludes to earlier commentaries for critical purposes. That so early a commentary should be so commanding in style and compass of accomplishment is a standing wonder in the annals of Indian philosophy. It is difficult to word a proper homage to this magnificent work. Something humbler can be attempted with minimum pretensions. Śaṅkara prefaces his commentary with an ostensibly factual description of the human predicament as involving a basic error or misconception termed *adhyāsa*. The first four Sūtras contain a general introduction to the entire Sūtras by the author of the Sūtras himself, and that receives interpretation from Śaṅkara. After this preface on *adhyāsa* and the introductory four Sūtras, the commentary takes shape through the four Adhyāyas or chapters.

The positive doctrine of the *Brahma-Sūtra* is stated in two levels, according to Śaṅkara : one provisional and preparatory, and the other final and conclusive. Brahman is sometimes represented in the manner of the God or Īśvara of theism, investing it with the attributes of a personal God, who creates, sustains and withdraws the universe, and who possesses all the implied attributes such as omniscience and omnipotence.

The second level conception is that Brahman is pure infinite consciousness with no cosmic involvement and no attributes signifying personality. It is pure impersonal Absolute. The world order in the lower stratum of thought is a reality, subject to creation, evolution and dissolution through divine agency. But from the higher point of view it is an appearance, not of course, an inconceivable unreality, *asat*, nor an irreducible ontological principle not subject

to sublation by philosophical enlightenment. The proper word for its ontological status is *mithyā*. The individual soul, described in philosophical parlance, as the *Jīva*, is other than, and subordinate to Brahman, subject to the afflictions of the mundane order, from the provisional mode of appraisal. But in the higher plane of consideration, as all that constitutes its individuality and finitude belongs to its empirical personality, which is itself an extension of the world-order that is *mithyā*, its essential being is absolutely one with that of Brahman understood in the higher view, as pure impersonal absolute consciousness. The line of demarcation between the individual self and the Supreme Self is just a creation of the fundamental *adhyāsa*, even as the external world is.

The goal of life in this two-level metaphysical setting also admits of a similar two-level description. It is attainment of God without sharing His cosmic powers and functions according to the ordinary level. But the higher perspective inevitably sets up the ideal of the realization of the utter identity, rather non-distinction, between the finite individual and the absolute spirit. The pathway to the goal is devout meditation subsuming under itself the ethics of action to some extent according to the lower view. The final understanding is that *Jñāna* or knowledge in its highest sense of intuitive insight or experience, *avagati*, which transcends meditation, intellection and mundane sense-experience, is the pathway to the ideal truly conceived. It is a matter of immediate experiential recovery of the supreme status.

It is a fascinating task to trace Śaṅkara's thought on the introduction to the science of Vedānta and on his exposition of what he takes to be the higher level of Vedānta. This two-fold task occupies us in what follows.

### *Introduction to Vedānta*

Why does Śaṅkara preface his work with

an account of *adhyāsa*? This is an oft-asked question. Śaṅkara's reason is obvious. The first Sūtra initiates the process of comprehending Brahman. The need for that comprehension must exist, and it must be exhibited that the lack of that comprehension is the entire basis of human bondage. It is not that we should seek to know Brahman because we do not know it, but that our not knowing it is the primordial source of all the maladies of finitude. That human bondage is factual and not to be escaped from by mere enlightenment, would remove the necessity for enlightenment. Inquiry into Brahman becomes a basic and absolute necessity only if all the evil we are heir to is traceable to the ignorance of it. Hence *adhyāsa* as the supreme causal power projecting all evil must be appropriately enunciated before undertaking the inquiry into the reality that Brahman is.

The first Sūtra *athāto brahma-jijñāsā* contains many significant elements. *Atha*, meaning 'then' or 'thereafter', is obviously referring to some precondition of the inquiry in question. Śaṅkara refutes the suggestion that *karma-jijñāsā* is the precondition. According to him the precondition consists of *nityānitya vastu viveka, ihāmūtra phalabhoga virāga, samādi sādhanā sampat* and *mumukṣutvam*. These four factors constitute the background and antecedent to the inquiry into Brahman. The next word *atah* in the Sūtra gives the reason for the inquiry. It is that the ends attainable through actions enjoined even by the Vedas are transient and do not rise to being the summum bonum of life. Hence the knowledge of Brahman should be sought. How can we seek to know Brahman? If it is absolutely unknown to us, the very desire to know it will not arise and exploration into the totally unknown is an impossibility. If it is known to us, no inquiry is necessary. So the quest is either impossible or superfluous. Śaṅkara answers that we already have an idea of Brahman, by the

very etymology of the word and by scriptural declarations about it. Further, Brahman is one with our inmost self and that self is a matter of certitude by way of self-consciousness. The self is the one entity that we cannot negate without self-contradiction. So the inquiry is not impossible. It is also not unnecessary, for we have no determinate understanding of Brahman. Endless confusion prevails in the field. Several views, starting with pure materialism and rising up to the theistic view that Brahman is the Lord of the individual Atman, are mentioned by Śaṅkara. The view that Brahman is the same as that Atman is also recorded at the end. A rational examination of these alternatives must be undertaken and a decisive and conclusive characterization of the subject matter must be arrived at. That is knowing Brahman, and only that knowing, can put an end to the evils born of error. Hence the inquiry into Brahman is both possible and necessary.

The second Sūtra offers a definition of Brahman to the effect that it is the source of the origin etc. of the world. Though the definition somewhat anticipates the cosmological argument making God the first uncaused Cause of the totality of contingent phenomena forming the world, it is no speculative argument but just a reiteration of passages in scriptures such as the one in the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*. The manner of this causality of Brahman is precisely determined in the course of the rest of the commentary. The final view is not affected by the absence of the terms, *tatastha lakṣaṇa*, *svarūpa lakṣaṇa* and *vivarta-vāda*, in the course of Śaṅkara's commentary. On the whole, this Sūtra moves in the preparatory level of Vedānta as conceived by Śaṅkara.

The third Sūtra points out that Brahman is the source of scriptures, and scriptures constitute our source of knowledge concerning Brahman.

Under the fourth Sūtra Śaṅkara offers a

major elucidation of his position in respect of the fundamental issue of Sādhanā. As a preliminary clarification, he rejects with very good reasons the Prābhākara contention that verbal testimony (Scripture) only teaches imperatives and cannot communicate information about an accomplished reality. So effective is Śaṅkara's argument that the position countered has only historical interest in subsequent thought. The major issue discussed is whether action or knowledge is the means of spiritual release. The case for action is dismissed after a thorough discussion. The advocacy of faction reappears taking a subtler form and is asserted that knowledge is also a mental action and nothing else. This gives Śaṅkara an opportunity to discriminate between willed thought in the form of meditation or contemplation and knowledge engendered by the compulsiveness of evidence. It is the latter *vastu tantra* cognition, and not the *puruṣa tantra* practice of the presence of the Divine, that constitutes the knowledge that could effect man's emancipation. Such knowledge on its very rise ushers in perfection, leaving nothing more to be achieved. If, in spite of knowledge, man is still subject to the evils of bondage, it is proof positive that genuine knowledge is not yet reached. So much, perhaps, suffices as a rough statement of the introductory affirmations in Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra*.

### *The higher dimension of Vedānta*

It is of absorbing interest to watch Śaṅkara rescuing the tenets of the higher and ultimate version of Vedānta, in his conception, from the disproportionately large mass of ideas in the Sūtras belonging to the presumably preliminary level of Vedānta. There are, according to him, some top-level Sūtras wherein the Sūtrakāra (author of the Sūtras) effects the crucial ascent. Such Sūtras are small in number and are



placed in extraordinarily central textual context. We shall consider some of them for bringing out the distinctive direction of the vedantic philosophizing of Śaṅkara.

(a) While introducing the 12th Sūtra (I Pāda) in the first chapter, Śaṅkara outlines the distinction between the two views of Brahman: the one, compatible with ignorance and enjoining meditation, attributing to it determining characteristics; and the other cancelling ignorance and pertaining to authentic knowledge, conceiving it as the unconditioned and attributeless spirit. The Sūtrakāra, according to Śaṅkara, makes the fundamental decision in the Sūtra *na sthānatopi parasya-ubhaya-liṅgam sarvatrahi* (3.2.11). The Śruti may speak of Brahman in two voices: sometimes as *saguna* and *saprapañca*, and at other times as *nirguna* and *niṣprapañca*. But they are not to be accepted as equal in evidential quality, nor are we to accept the *saguna* and *saprapañca* view as the final truth explaining away the other alternative. Brahman is absolutely and intrinsically attributeless, formless, indeterminate and acosmic. Śaṅkara would endorse Spinoza's dictum that 'all determination is negation' and would discard that of Hegel denouncing 'pure Being' as 'pure nothing'. Brahman therefore, is the Absolute and not God, in the language of Anglo-Saxon Idealism.

(b) The ontological status of the external world or creation in so far as it is physical is an important philosophical issue. The second Sūtra, as we have seen, posits the creation of the world by Brahman. Śaṅkara repeatedly affirms that the world-effect of Brahman is not ultimately real. It has apparent existence only, and no noumenal status. This is brought out in two sections.

Under the Sūtra *tadananyatvam ārambhāna śabdādibhyaḥ* (2.1.14), it is argued that the effect, in so far as it differs from the cause, is unreal and causation does imply that the effect must have some difference, *atiśaya*, from the cause (2.1.6). Hence the

world-order supposed to have evolved from Brahman is unreal. Śaṅkara, while distinguishing the dream-world from the waking-world, hastens to clarify that in final assessment the latter too lacks reality (3.2.4). This idealistic denial of the reality of the world is further reinforced by a closer analysis of the causation of the world. The world, as a system of contingent things and events, is an effect on all accounts. It cannot originate from pure matter. Nor can it be the creation of an extra-cosmic God. Śaṅkara discards these possibilities after very thorough discussions (2.1.1 and 2.2.37). The only alternative remaining is that Brahman is the material-cum-efficient cause of the world. This is stated very well by the Sūtrakāra (1.4.23). But there is an inseparable difficulty in explaining Brahman's evolution into the cosmos. *Kṛtsna-prasaktiḥ niravayavatvaśabda-kopovā* (2.1.26). Does Brahman in its totality pass into the world? Its transcendence and supercosmic reality stand given up in such a hypothesis. Does a part of Brahman become the world, while the rest of it continues in undamaged transcendence and supercosmic glory? That would be attributing compositeness of Brahman rendering it itself a contingent system of effects. Compositeness is one of the admitted marks of an effect. The dilemma forces revision of the notion that Brahman is the cause of the world. The argument irresistably recalls the criticism of the doctrine of ideas in Plato's own Dialogue, Parmenides. The only legitimate resolution of the deadlock is to hold that the world is just phenomenal, a distorted presentation of Brahman owing to the fecundity of Māyā.

(c) The position of the individual self, the Jīva, in relation to the Supreme Spirit, Brahman, is the central problem in Vedānta. Śaṅkara's formulation of Vedānta stands or falls with the identity of the Jīva, properly understood, with Brahman, again, correctly understood. The issue is a little complicated

by the Sūtrakāra, in certain contexts, taking the Jīva as an *aṁśa* (part) of Brahman, and in certain other contexts, also asserting their total identity. Śaṅkara himself tells us that not merely the other philosophers but some Vedantins also affirm that the individual spirit is really other than the Supreme Spirit (1.3.19). In this confusing state of affairs, Śaṅkara naturally searches for the Sūtras that make a definitive pronouncement on this all-important issue. There is one Adhikaraṇa (1.4.19 to 22) wherein the much needed statement is fully obtained. The topic of discussion is the import of the great instruction of Yājñavalkya to Maitreyī in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. That section of the Upaniṣad speaks of the Atman primarily but attributes to it the status of Brahman. In other words, some kind of identity is asserted. There are three ways of explaining the identity. One sage, Āśmarathya, seems to have propounded the view that since all souls have originated from Brahman, the language of identity is adopted in the dialogue. Audulomi, on the other hand, opines that as the Jīvātman merges in the Paramātman in the state of final liberation, such a language of identity is quite natural. Śaṅkara takes the Sūtrakāra as rejecting both these positions. The first view takes the causal process of the Jīvas arising from Brahman as real. The second admits identity as a state to be realized, and thereby implies the reality of states. Both are inadmissible assumptions. There is no causation as a fact and there is no such thing as a real succession of states. The sage Kāśakṛtsna is cited by the author of the Sūtras as setting forth the third view which he himself admits as the true stand. According to it, the Paramātman or Brahman enters the individual and abides as his Atman. The Sūtra reads: *avasthiteḥ iti kāśakṛtsnaḥ*. It is not a matter of mere pre-creation identity or post-mundane identity, but timeless and stateless substantive identity. Śaṅkara clinches the position by

saying that those who hold any other view are guilty of three errors. (1) They stultify Vedanta itself, and thereby block the pathway to perfection which is of the nature of the flawless illumination flowing from Vedanta. (2) Their description of *mokṣa* renders it artificial and transient. (3) Their position cannot stand logical scrutiny.

(d) In the order of conception, the goal precedes the means and, in the order of actualization, the means precedes the goal. To the question as to what constitutes the supreme end of life, Vedanta in general gives a single answer that it is the attainment of Brahman. The difficulties start from this point. The significance of the 'attainment' must be precisely determined. Śaṅkara sees in the Sūtras a clear enunciation that it means the merger or identity with Brahman. But the identity is there as an eternal verity. Hence only the recognition of this identity through a nullification of the illusion of difference between the aspirant and the Divinity aspired after, can be the significance of the attainment. The Sūtrakāra, according to Śaṅkara, is clear that this realization of non-difference is the summum bonum. He fixes up this interpretation taking his stand on one of the final Sūtras of the text, *avibhāgena dṛṣṭatvāt* (4.4.4). Sometimes the Upaniṣads may employ the dualistic terminology in their accounts of the attainment of the goal. That is only a figurative mode of statement. The overwhelming evidence is unambiguous in its unitary purport. The Upaniṣadic passages such as 'I am Brahman', 'That thou art', 'wherein he sees nothing else', etc. are too numerous and emphatic in their non-dualistic import to be twisted. This is perfectly intelligible. As bondage is a fabrication of the error of dualism, the liberation from it must be of the nature of a non-dualistic integration with the Ultimate Spirit.

This *mokṣa* or liberation has no eschatological connotation for Śaṅkara for

the simple reason that embodiment is just a matter of misconception and with the removal of that misconception all that has to be got rid of in liberation has been got rid of. But still owing to the momentum of antecedent delusion or of the Karma at the root of the circumstances of the present life in which Sādhanā has brought about liberation, the world-order of mundane actualities may present itself to the emancipated person, in spite of his being experientially established in non-dualistic realization. This interim position would remain till the complete liquidation of the traces of the delusion and Kārmic residue. Such a state of emancipation, along with the lingering 'lag' of the part bereft of its delusive potency, is what is called Jīvanmukti. In his great commentary Śaṅkara brings in this concept several times, and three prominent references to it may be noticed (1.1.4, 13.3.32 and 4.1.15). In the first passage the fundamental proposition that there is no embodiment other than the misconception to that effect is advanced. The second passage makes the striking point that *tattvamasi* (That thou art) cannot be construed to mean 'you will become Brahman after death'. The third passage maintains that the paradox of a person being really emancipated and still going through bodily existence with the attendant experiences is a fact of personal experience. 'How can the verdict of such authentic personal experience be disputed on a priori grounds?', asks Śaṅkara.

(e) The last topic for our consideration is Sādhanā. It has been pointed out already that the ultimate Sādhanā leading to liberation is Jñāna or knowledge. It is not Karma, ritualistic and ethical action, nor is it *āpāna* or devout meditation. It is cognitive realization of the final spiritual identity of *Ātman* and Brahman, both the terms being divested of their popular empirical and cosmic associations. A decisive discernment in this regard is a precondition for

the apprehension of the import of *Tattvamasi*. Two Sūtras bring out the nature of the Sādhanā in question. *Puruṣārthoḥ śabdāditi Bādarāyaṇaḥ* (3.4.1). The content of that knowledge is also distinctly specified: *ātmeti tūpagacchanti grāhayanti ca* (4.1.3). 'The Supreme One should be apprehended as one's own inmost self.'

What could lead to this Jñāna is also laid down in the Sūtras according to Śaṅkara. Karma is not to be totally rejected in all possible senses. That it is not the *final* means is the point of the assertion that Karma is not the means to Mokṣa. That it is an indirect means is not ruled out. There is the Sūtra, *sarvāpekṣā ca vajñādi śruteḥ āsvavat* (3.4.26). Śaṅkara clarifies that Karma is required for the generation of knowledge and not as an integral supplement to knowledge, rendering the efficacy of the latter by itself partial.

The immediately following Sūtra lays down another equipment as required for the dawn of knowledge, and it is said by Śaṅkara to be a more intimate means of Jñāna, *śamadamādyupetaḥ syāt...* (3.4.27). This equipment consists of dispositional virtues such as the control of the senses, that of the mind, detachment from non-spiritual concerns, steadiness in the face of emotionally affecting conditions and contemplativeness. With this two-fold preparation, outer and inner the aspirant should launch himself towards the liberating illumination.

That illumination itself consists of the stages, *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. There is a controversy in the later Advaitic tradition as to which of these is most important. In Śaṅkara's commentary itself there is no hint of such an uncertainty. *Śravaṇa* is the assimilation of revelation. *Manana* is ratiocination on the data of *śravaṇa*, somewhat in the style of the

*Brahma-Sūtra* itself, ending in the stabilized conviction in the truth obtained from *śravaṇa*. *Nididhyāsana* is continued contemplation of the truth so established. Now *śravaṇa* is introduced in the *Sūtra śāstrayonitvāt* (1.1.3). *Manana* is indicated in the *Sūtra sahakāryantara vidhiḥ* ... (3.4.47). *Nididhyāsana* is inculcated in the *Sūtra āvṛttiḥ asakṛd upadeśāt* (4.1.1). *Śravaṇa* leads to *manana*, which in its turn passes into *nididhyāsana*, and that culminates in what Śaṅkara calls *avagati* and *darśana* (1.1.4 and 4.1.1). This is immediate experience or direct realization of the Brahman-Atman identity.

There is one totally unexpected, but highly agreeable, complication introduced at this stage. Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara posit that this ultimate unitary vision takes place when the aspirant is in a particular state which is named *saṁrādhanā* by the former and is interpreted as *Bhakti*, *dhyāna* and *praṇidhāna* by Śaṅkara. This admission of the attitude of worship at this climax of

the spiritual quest is a surprise. One could understand *Bhakti*, devout contemplation and surrender in the approach to the lower Brahman or *Īśvara*. But Śaṅkara is unambiguous in his declaration that *Bhakti* is the state in which the vision of the higher, unqualified and acosmic Brahman takes place. His words are: *enam ātmānam nirasta-samasta-prapañcam avyaktam saṁrādhanā kāle paśyanti yoginaḥ. Saṁrādhananca bhakti-dhyāna-praṇidhānā-dyanuṣṭhānam* (3.2.24). It is impossible to do away with this recognition of *Bhakti* on the part of Śaṅkara at the very summit of the human endeavour after the Impersonal Absolute. Bādarāyaṇa uses the right word *saṁrādhanā* and supports himself with the authority of *Śruti* and *Smṛti*. Śaṅkara, the great commentator, exhibits noble fidelity to his original, and says nothing to withdraw or weaken this exaltation of *Bhakti*. 'Bhakti' deserves to be the last word in our homage to Śrī Śaṅkara.

## EXISTENCE AND POWER

HANS ELMSTEDT

### Introduction

The following article will present ideas that attempt to support the thesis that spirituality can be and is expressed or manifested in the phenomenal world in many ways. One way, to be explored here, is the quest for and the exercise of power. We all seek control over our own lives and to influence people and events, but some individuals seek control and influence on a larger scale. What motivates us to seek power and to exercise it? What do we gain, what do we lose?

### Background

In the West, for the most part, man tries to define that which he seeks to understand and by defining that thing he assumes that he knows or understands it. When a label or a name is given to a thing or an event the resulting concept can be used and manipulated in the mind, hopefully leading to greater knowledge and understanding. Western man has been pre-eminently successful in defining the world around him, the world he sees and knows objectively. This need or impulse has

helped him to gain considerable mastery over the material, phenomenal world and his science and technology reflect that fact. Yet his success in defining the phenomenal world has not been matched to the same degree in the spiritual world. His ideas about himself and the ultimate nature of reality have not yielded the same confidence and competence that have come from his efforts to define the material, objectified world. The concepts, ideas and methods that he uses to define and understand his objective world are not adequate to define and understand the subject, who is himself.

Subject and object are the two sides of the same coin. Western man attempts to play the game of life with a two-headed coin, both sides being 'objects'. This is not possible; both sides, subject and object, must be represented if the game is to be played by the rules. He not only cheats himself by misreading and thus misrepresenting the truth but he also tries to change the rules to suit his own narrowminded and shortsighted world view.

In the East attention to and accommodation of the subjective has been pre-eminent, and its religions reflect this attitude. Hinduism has allowed the greatest freedom to expression of man's subjective nature, and organizes his spiritual needs and striving in the light of that subjectivity. In fact, Swami Vivekananda, a great exponent and expounder of Vedanta, the essence of Hinduism, has said that there should be as many religions as there are individuals. How much more subjective freedom can a religion allow?

In the West science has been supremely objective and has caused nature to yield up many of its secrets. But now science is approaching a point where the secrets are more difficult to reach, especially in the area of physics. There appears to be a growing awareness that a better balance will be needed between the subjective and objective elements in its concepts and

methods if nature is to yield up any more profound and really meaningful secrets.

### *Western psychology*

Psychology, a young science in the West, has tried to deal with the problem of balancing the subjective and the objective in the past. These efforts have resulted in extreme polarization of professional and academic viewpoints and orientations. On the one extreme is the very objective Behaviourism that had its formal beginnings with J.B. Watson and led to the Skinnerian School of conditioning based on stimulus and response, allowing for no admittance of the inner dynamics of the individual. On the other extreme was E.B. Titchener's use of introspection as the main method for analyzing the structure and contents of consciousness. This led to the Structural school, now defunct, but represented today by the existential approaches to understanding human experience where the data or contents of experience are taken as facts. All viewpoints that currently prevail in Western psychology probably fall somewhere between these two extremes, determined by the methods used or the content pursued with the results expected to support and to advance a particular theoretical position.

In spite of the many attitudes and orientations found in Western psychology some ideas have become generally accepted by both the professionals and the public. One of the most widely held is that of the basic nature of the mind. It is assumed that the mind resides in the brain that has its home in the head and that there are three mental processes possible and these together constitute the mind. These three processes are cognition, conation and affection. Cognition is a process whereby an organism becomes aware of or obtains knowledge of an object, the concept having much in common with the general term

'thinking'. Conation, or volition, denotes the general impulse that leads to activity, inner or outer directed, with the public usually equating this with the idea of 'will'. Affection is a general term that involves the ideas of feeling and emotion, generally taken to include love, hate, pleasure, anger, etc.

### *Control, power and will*

These three processes, as psychological concepts, have helped Western man to accept the view that he has a relatively unrestrained existence in a mechanistic, objective world. This has led to a world view that depicts him as the master of his own fate, a fate that depends heavily on his control of the forces and events of the material world. The recognition of the need and the ability to control one's behaviour is understood, more or less, by every individual. It is necessary for control of behaviour, circumstances and desires. Some activities are more easily controlled than others and if we can't provide the proper control, society has established rules and procedures that will do it for us.

A profitable way to look at control is in subject-object terms. Who, the subject, controls what, the object. The subject remains relatively constant but the object can vary by being placed within the organism or outside. When the object is seen as within, we refer to it in psychological terms such as drives, needs, desires, anger, etc.; and when placed outside, we see it as people, objects and events. This leads to the problem of how the subject controls the object. The best way to approach this is to look at the object in the two ways suggested above. First, when the object is within the organism, control is effected in two ways, one positive and the other negative, both highly purposive and thus quite necessary.

The positive aspect of control involves guidance. Here we guide our energies and

efforts along worthwhile and acceptable lines of activity and purpose. When this is done successfully it can lead to attainment of those ends or goals that are being sought. A channeling of energies is attempted with no effort being made to inhibit them. The negative aspect lies in containment, in limiting overt expression of certain drives or needs that would, if pursued, cause harm to oneself or lead to conflict with the established laws and mores of society. Energies are often controlled by inhibiting them. The terms positive and negative used here are only arbitrary but serve to distinguish the two aspects of inner-directed control.

The key words 'guide' and 'channel' really do not tell us how control is effected. If the end or goal is sufficiently attractive, that in itself aids the process of guidance or channeling. The exercise of control, the how, is ultimately dependent on will, the inner strength and its mobilization within the mind and body, that is potentially available to each individual. The terms 'will-power' and 'self-discipline' are often used to define this capacity or ability.

When the object is placed outside the organism, control is seen as being over objects, people and events in the environment. We are all familiar with this because we continuously engage in it. We influence, shape and re-structure the people, objects and events that surround us. Politics and propaganda are organized, systematic efforts to do this on a larger scale. There are many ways an individual can improve control that is outer-directed if desired. Books offering advice and techniques are readily available and opportunities are endless that allow one to practise and to develop it. This is not a modern phenomenon. There have been times and circumstances that allowed for enormous latitude in the exercise of control, both inner and outer, positive and negative. Such unrestrained exercise of control can occur as licence or as power.

*Power in history*

Normally our ability to control our behaviour and the objects and events in our lives are restricted to our immediate surroundings. We are also constantly checked by our environment and the structure of the society we find ourselves in. There have been times in the history of the world when certain individuals were able to cast aside the normal constraints on control. By doing so they were able to rise to high positions with almost limitless power over people and controllable events. They did so by desire, design and the skilful use of opportunities presented to them.

Genghis Khan, in the late twelfth century, began the long ascent to power and his extraordinary use of it that saw its climax in the Mongol Empire, one of the largest land empires ever created on earth before or since. R.L. Lopez, et al., believe that the only motivation that Genghis Khan had was 'an insatiable hunger for power ... "One God in heaven, one Lord on earth, Genghis Khan": these were the first words of the orders of submission dispatched by the Mongols in every direction at the start of every campaign.'<sup>1</sup> He didn't attempt to force his religious beliefs on those he conquered. His exercise of power can thus be seen as almost completely motivated by its use alone and not by any effort to use it to achieve some higher end.

Another ruler who exercised enormous power, but with extreme cruelty, was Ivan IV, also called 'Ivan the Terrible.' He was absolute ruler of a huge Russian empire during the second half of the sixteenth century. Unlike the raw power of Genghis Khan, Ivan IV 'held the unshakable conviction that his sovereign power came from God, that he represented God on earth, and

that those who resisted his power resisted God'<sup>2</sup> Ivan IV received his power from God thus ensuring its abundance and its free use for his own needs and purposes.

*Politics and power*

We have seen how power can be used in two extreme ways, one for its own sake, the other as an expression of God's will. What causes the pursuit and exercise of power? What human need does it satisfy? G. Tinder sees two opposing attitudes that might serve as an explanation. On one side, taking an Aristotelian position, 'Man's essential unity with other men is affirmed only through entering political life. This is to say that man's essence, as expressed in virtues like courage, pride and truthfulness, can be realized only through the amplitude of opportunities for action that accompanies the possession and use of power.'<sup>3</sup> On the other side, taking his ideas from the position held by Epicurus, a Greek philosopher who lived in the third and fourth centuries, B.C., Tinder states, 'The great problem Epicurus was trying to deal with was the general disorientation of life, not unlike the 'alienation' of the present, that was suffered with the passing of the city-state as a viable life form. Epicurus, with a number of other philosophers, tried to discover how the individual, living in a world that suddenly seemed vast and strange, could carry out an untroubled and self-sufficient existence.... Politics means the very opposite of a good life. It means continuous vexation, dependence on others. Only in private life—a kind of tomb for an Aristotelian—can there be serenity and independence.'<sup>4</sup> If we see politics as an outer-directed form of control, with the

2. *ibid.*, pp. 563-4.

3. Tinder, G. *Political Thinking-The Perennial Questions* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, Inc., 1970) pp. 58-9.

4. *ibid.*, p. 59.

1. Lopez, R.S., Barnes, T.G., Blum, J., and Cameron, R. *Civilizations-Western and World* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, Inc., 1975) p. 254.

acquisition and use of power as its goal or motivation, both sides seem plausible. These positions seem irreconcilable or at least perplexing to the individual who tries to understand the reasons for the human quest for power. The difficulty could well be due to the fact that we have succumbed to an outer-directed, objective orientation or viewpoint that has narrowed our vision and thus our ability to understand. There is a need for an inner-directed, subjective view-point that will open up to our understanding an inner world and its dynamics. If we look to the Eastern religions we will find a different balance between the subjective and the objective.

#### *Eastern viewpoint*

Hinduism has had enormous influence in the determination of these attitudes. Specifically, the Vedanta, central to Hinduism, acknowledges the Absolute, the source of all existence, knowledge and bliss. This Absolute is both immanent and transcendent, and according to Swami Vivekananda, 'Absolute Existence, absolute Knowledge and absolute Blessedness are not qualities of the soul, but the essence; there is no difference between them and the soul. And the three are one; we see the one thing in three different aspects.'<sup>5</sup>

Everything we are, understand and feel in the phenomenal world are manifestations and ultimately reflections of the Absolute. If we are to truly understand ourselves and the nature of this world, we must grasp this fact and uncompromisingly pursue its implications wherever they lead.

The Western analysis of the mind, mentioned earlier, the cognitive, conative and affective elements, can be given greater meaning if they are related to the three aspects Existence, Knowledge and Blessedness or Bliss, of the Absolute. When we

exist or act, the conative element, it is due to the reflection of Existence. When we know or understand, the cognitive, it is reflected knowledge and when we feel love or pleasure, the affective, it reflects Bliss. In keeping with the purpose stated in the Introduction, the acquisition and use of power, one form of control, has been examined. An attempt will now be made to relate it to conation, or will, and finally to the Vedantic concept of Existence, one of the three aspects of the Absolute.

#### *Will and ego*

Swami Vivekananda tells us, 'The will is identical with the motor nerves. When I see an object there is no will; when its sensations are carried to the brain, there comes the reaction which says "Do this", or "Do not do this", and this state of the ego-substance is what is called will. There cannot be a single particle of will which is not a reaction.'<sup>6</sup> Swami Akhilananda relates this idea to our own behaviour in Western psychological terms, saying, 'Our emotions, urges and instincts are inseparably connected with our volition. We wish to express each of our emotions. When the mind becomes active in its totality, we call it "will". Without this will we cannot translate our ideas or emotions into actions or a dynamic state.'<sup>7</sup>

From these two complementary ideas we can see that the use of power has its origin in the will. When the will is strong it indicates great mental activity, and is experienced as ego. The greater the will the greater the ego. When the ego is active the mind is alive, the 'I' is magnified and our sense of being or existence is heightened. Intensely experiencing the ego does not

6. *ibid.*, p. 446.

7. Swami Akhilananda *Hindu Psychology-Its Meaning for the West* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1948) p. 78.

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1963) vol. 2, p. 459.



mean that the aspect of Existence or Being is strongly reflected. Proximity of ego and Existence does not imply identity, just as being in a bank, close to large amounts of money, does not make us rich. A large tenacious ego only means that a formidable barrier has been erected between the individual and the Absolute. To believe otherwise is to misread the actual importance and essential nature of the ego. It can be the means to get great power and sense of being in the relative, phenomenal world, but it finally proves to be the last barrier that must be overcome before the Absolute can be fully reflected. Direction is crucial. If the direction of the ego is toward the phenomenal world, enhanced ego, will, control and power can be expected. If the direction is reversed then the effort can lead to increased reflection and manifestation of the Absolute, in all three aspects.

In the West the direction has been outward and the result has been great scientific and technological development and control over the material world. Western man sees his science and technology, largely dependent on reason and objectification, as the instruments by which that control can be increased in the future. His religious beliefs leave him quite free to pursue this activity

because these beliefs do not impact on his ideas about and understandings of the dynamics of his mind and essentially subjective nature. There is an enormous chasm, perhaps a wall is more accurate, that separates Western religious beliefs and the pursuit of science, especially in those disciplines that deal with behavior based on man's real nature and purpose. It is as if he has managed to compartmentalize his basic needs and goals into two parts, one religious, the other secular. He has so secularized and objectified the basic thrust of his scientific knowledge and activities that it can't deal adequately with a real and spiritually meaningful understanding of himself and the phenomenal world.

### *Conclusion*

In the West man has sought answers to questions arising from the problems he is confronted with, problems that he himself has created for the most part. As long as he sees the problems as centred in the objective, phenomenal world, solutions will be inadequate and temporary. Man will only know the real nature of the phenomenal world when he knows himself. Man defines the world, the world does not define man.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**THE WAY OF ALL WOMEN—A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION**: BY M. ESTHER HARDING. Published by Rider & Company, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6 JD. 1980. Pp. x+286. £ 3.95.

The book under review traces Dr. Esther Harding's understanding of woman as daughter, lover, wife, mother, mistress, friend and co-worker and in other various relationships. In the history of mankind there have always been men and women who have married and lived happily or unhappily. Their single status was not an indictment of the institution of marriage. But for the first time, in the second half of this

century, young women in most parts of the world are questioning the sanctity of marriage, and some have chosen to discard the very institution of marriage. They have raised the standard of revolt by remaining unmarried, mixing freely with others for sexual gratification, and begetting children if they so desire, calling such children as 'children of love'. These children are yet to grow into adulthood to approve, or decry, their mother's choice.

This book traces the position of woman in the present-day world. If a woman is to be creative other than biologically, she must work toward her own wholeness. She must make the effort to

become aware of the most concealed levels of her feminine nature and to bring her active, ordering masculine qualities to conscious availability. And proceeding from this individual development, Dr. Harding sees the larger role of women today as conscious participation in a movement toward building up those feeling-truths which our culture has neglected. It was the first turning point in the history of women when the female of the species homo sapiens opted to stay in the cave and tend the precious fire, while the male undertook to hunt food for himself and her. This division of work is the genesis of marriage. The research and the conclusions that Harding has set forth in this scholarly and learned volume are not only interesting, but essential for the modern women to reflect on why most women are thinking of remaining unmarried.

There is one thing generally felt by the women of today. They desire to be something more than mere home-makers and housewives. They are concerned about making marriage and children compatible with their urge to develop the other facets of their personality. They are examining the basic structure of human society to find a happy solution. Unfortunately the experiment of free love and living in' is being indulged in by modern youth more as an ensign of their liberal thinking in India, rather than as something they have thoughtfully adopted as their firmly rooted belief. Therefore, there is an imperative need for those in the vanguard as leaders of the women's movement to dispassionately evaluate the institution of marriage and family from the point of view of both men and women. The author's discussion will captivate the reader as it did the reviewer.

PROF. K. S. RAMAKRISHNA RAO  
Head of the Dept. of Philosophy  
Government College for Women  
Mandya, Karnataka

### TELUGU

ŚRIMACHHANKARA BHAGAVATPADA  
CARITRA: BY DR. POTUKUCHI SUBRAHMANYA  
SASTRI. Published by Sadhana Grantha Mandali,  
Tenali-522 201, (A.P.). 1978. Pp. 544. Rs. 20.

Śamkara's life needs no introduction to any Indian. There are many books, which profess to be biographies of Śamkara and are full of legendary stories and incredible anecdotes, some of which are mutually contradictory. The present book under review is one of the best books available in Telugu. It is thought

provoking and satisfying to the reader. The author of this book is an erudite scholar. He presents this valuable volume after making a careful study of all the *Śamkaravijayas* available in Sanskrit and other works. Quite original and critical, it enlightens the reader on many facts and fictions regarding Śamkara's life and works.

The book is divided into ten chapters. The first one, serving as prolegomena and entitled 'Śamkaravijayamulu', gives detailed information on existing Sanskrit *Śamkaravijayas* and their authors. The author opines that some of the narrations found in these works are allegorical and are the conjectures of the authors which in course of time gathered around the original story. The second chapter is on 'Avatārasamayamu', the time of advent. Śamkara's date of birth is a controversial and challenging problem. After analyzing different views, the author says that the great Acārya must have been born either in A.D. 368 or 387 or 392.

In the third chapter 'Govinduni Śiṣyudu', Dr. Sastry says that Śamkara's composition of 'Kanakadhārā-Stotra' has nothing to do with the popular story of gold *amlakis* showered on a poor Brahmin widow, a story fabricated by later writers (p. 70). Hymns, Nirvāṇa Śatakam, Nirvāṇa Dasakam etc. are given with brief translation as they contain Śamkara's reply to the query 'who are you?' put by his guru Govinda Bhagavatpāda. The fourth chapter 'Kāsinivāsamu' reveals Śamkara's state of non-dual mood reaching its summit. He sang a number of hymns in praise of deities during his stay at Kāsi (p. 107). Though Śamkara has made many disciples, only four of them have been accepted as his chief apostles by scholars uncontroversially. In the fifth chapter 'Advaita Vijayamu', the author claims that Śamkara's meeting with Kumārila Bhatta is only a fiction (p. 249); Maṇḍana was neither the nephew nor disciple of Kumārila. The well-known episode of Śamkara's entering into the dead body of a king in order to master the science of sexual love is unbecoming of the saintly character of the prophet and so must be regarded as another false story. Nor does the author accept that Śamkara cursed the Nambūdri clan, for he says it is silly to attribute such things to him. In the sixth chapter 'Kāncī Nivāsamu', he author states that *Śrīcakra* was not installed by Śamkara at Kanci (p. 300). Variances among text and the prevailing contradictions in records are given while discussing whether Śamkara established a *pītha* at Kanci or not.

The seventh chapter 'Digvijayamu' gives elaborate information about organizing the four *pīthas* in the four corners of India. The eighth and ninth chapters, 'Mathāmnāyamu' and 'Mahānusāsanamu' respectively, are the highlights of the book and are very useful. The last chapter 'Śamkara Darsanamū' gives a lucid exposition of Śamkara's Advaita philosophy. The author is an adept in presenting the saint's philosophy very impressively. He says that many people have formed the prejudice that devotion has no place in Advaita. Śamkara who is acclaimed to be the embodiment of the

highest Knowledge also wrote many stotras in praise of gods and goddesses which is an ample proof of his intense devotional attitude (p. 441). Another important feature of this book is that it contains some minor treatises like *Drg-dṛṣya-viveka* etc., and this has made it all the more valuable. The author's painstaking research work is a notable addition to modern Telugu literature. The style is lucid and convincing. The printing and getup are excellent.

SWAMI TARAKESHANANDA  
*Mayavati*

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

(FROM APRIL 1980 TO MARCH 1981)

(We are presenting here a brief summary of the latest report of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, which will give our readers some information about the activities of these twin organizations. The report was issued by the General Secretary in June 1982 from the Headquarters at Belur Math, Dist. Howrah, West Bengal 711 202, India.—*Ed.*)

Though Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, with their respective branches, are distinct legal entities, they are closely related, inasmuch as the Governing Body of the Mission is made up of the Trustees of the Math; the administrative work of the Mission is mostly in the hands of the monks of Ramakrishna Math; and both have their Headquarters at Belur Math. The Math organization is constituted under a Trust with well-defined rules of procedure. The Mission is a registered society. Though both the organizations take up charitable and philanthropic activities, the former lays emphasis on religion and preaching, while the latter is wedded mainly to welfare service of various kinds. This distinction should be borne in mind, though 'Ramakrishna Mission' is loosely associated by people with Math activities also. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that the appropriation of the name of Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda by any institution does not necessarily imply that it is affiliated either to Ramakrishna Math or to Ramakrishna Mission.

The Math and the Mission own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them. Though both the Math and the Mission receive grants from the Central and State Governments and public bodies for their social welfare

activities, the other activities of the Math are financed from offerings, publications, etc., and the Mission is supported by fees from students, public donations, etc. Both the Math and the Mission funds are annually audited by qualified auditors.

### SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

In spite of some obstacles, hindrances, and intimidations faced by the organization, the following notable developments took place during the year under report:—

A New Arogya Bhavan Block at Belur Math was inaugurated. Two units of Mobile Dispensary—one at Raipur and another under the auspices of Pallimangal (Headquarters) at Kamarpukur—and a Mobile Service Van at Vrindaban were started. A new School Library Building at Malda and a new Braille Library Building at Narendrapur were declared open. Indoor Hospital at New Itanagar started functioning.

Foundation was laid for a New Monks' Quarters at Jalpaiguri.

In the other wing of the Organisation, the Ramakrishna Math, the following developments took place:

A new Universal Sri Ramakrishna Temple

was consecrated, an Institute named 'Vivekananda Institute of Education and Culture' and a Vivekananda Health Centre at Hyderabad were dedicated. An Auditorium named 'Swami Vivekananda Centenary Auditorium', at Bangalore, was inaugurated. A new Building of Sri Ramakrishna National School at Madras, and a new Library Building and Vivekananda Hall at Tiruvalla were declared open. Two new Math Centres—one in Lucknow and the other in Kankhal were started. A Homoeopathic Dispensary was started at Dinajpur in Bangladesh.

Foundation was laid for a new Building for Brahmanandodayam High School at Kalady.

### CENTRES

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March, 1981, 118 branch centres in all, of which 52 were Mission centres, 22 combined Math and Mission centres, and 44 Math centres. These were regionally distributed as follows: two Mission centres, five combined Math and Mission centres and three Math centres in Bangladesh; one Mission centre each in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius and France; one Math centre each in Switzerland, England and Argentina; 12 Math centres in the United States of America, and the remaining 45 Mission centres, 17 combined Math and Mission centres and 26 Math centres (88 in all) in India. The Indian centres were distributed as follows: 28 in West Bengal, 11 in Uttar Pradesh, 11 in Tamil Nadu, seven in Bihar, six in Kerala, four in Karnataka, three each in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, two each in Maharashtra and Meghalaya, and one each in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh. Moreover, attached to the branch centres there were over twenty sub-centres where monastic workers resided more or less permanently.

### TYPES OF WORK

**Medical Service:** The Math and the Mission institutions under this head served the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Prominent of these are the indoor hospital in Calcutta, Kankhal, Lucknow, New Itanagar, Ranchi, Trivandrum, Varanasi and Vrindaban. In 1980-81 there were altogether 14 Indoor Hospitals with 1,698 beds which accommodated 47,624 patients and 79 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 45,41,161 cases including the old ones. Besides, some centres had provision for

emergency or observation indoor wards attached to their dispensaries. The Veterinary section of the Shyamala Tal Sevashrama treated 69 cases. The Sanatorium at Ranchi and the Clinic at New Delhi treated T.B. cases alone, while large sections of Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the hospital at Trivandrum were devoted to maternity and childwelfare work. At Trivandrum there was also a department of Psychiatry. Research on different branches of Medical Science as also Post Graduate training in degree and diploma courses were conducted at Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta.

**Educational Work:** The twin organizations ran, during the period, five Degree Colleges of general education at Madras, Rahara (24 Parganas), Coimbatore, Belur (Howrah), and Narendrapur (24 Parganas) with 4,042 students on their rolls. The last two were wholly residential, and the colleges at Madras and Coimbatore had attached hostels for residing students. In addition, there were three B.Ed. Colleges at Belur, Coimbatore and Mysore with 350 students; one Basic Training School at Coimbatore with 17 students; one Post-graduate Basic Training College at Rahara with 86 students; three Junior Basic Training Institutes at Sarisha and Sargachhi with 217 students; a College for Physical Education, an Institute of Commerce, and a School of Agriculture with 115, 8 and 102 students respectively at Coimbatore; four Polytechnics at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Coimbatore with 1,631 students; 9 Junior Technical and Industrial Schools with 795 boys; 11 Vocational Training Centres with 328 students; 93 students Homes or Hostels, including some orphanages with 10,927 boys and 1,331 girls; 42 Higher Secondary, Secondary and High Schools with 21,679 boys and 9,848 girls; 25 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 4,201 boys and 3,170 girls; 45 Junior Basic, U.P., and Elementary Schools with 6,658 boys and 3,475 girls; and 348 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 14,682 boys and 5,749 girls. An Institute of Medical Sciences with 30 students, was conducted by the Seva Pratishthan of Calcutta. Training of Nurses and Midwives was undertaken by Seva Pratishthan of Calcutta and also Math Hospital at Trivandrum, the total number of trainees being 339. The Institute of Culture in Calcutta conducted a School of Languages for teaching different Indian and foreign languages with 2,024 students. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy, an Institute of Commerce and a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre with 143, 143 and

1,334 students respectively. The centre at Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a training centre in farming (Divyayan) with 645 (215 in campus) students. The centre at Rahara conducted a Rural Librarianship Training Centre (residential) with 32 students. Thus there were altogether 75,696 boys and 24,625 girls in all the educational institutions run by the Math and the Mission in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji and Mauritius.

*Recreational Activities:* Some of the Math and the Mission centres have been providing scope for recreational, cultural and spiritual activities for youngsters at stated periods outside their school hours. The *Vivekananda Balaka Sangha* of the Bangalore Ashrama has a fine building of its own. At the Mysore Ashrama also a number of boys take advantage of the various kinds of facilities provided for them, and the youth section of the *Janashiksha Mandir*, Belur, is engaged in similar activities. Hyderabad Centre also started similar activities for boys on Sundays.

*Work for Women:* The organization has ever been conscious of its duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are the Maternity Sections of the Seva Pratishtan, Calcutta and the Hospital at Trivandrum; the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinics at Jalpaiguri and Khetri; the women's sections of the Hospitals at Varanasi and Vrindaban; the attached Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi; the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras; the Girls' High Schools at Jamshedpur; the Sarada Mandir at Sarisha and the two Training Schools for nurses in Trivandrum and Calcutta. Moreover, there are separate arrangements for women in other hospitals, dispensaries and schools, and some institutions are conducted only for them. The Madras Math also conducts a High School and a Primary School for girls.

*Rural Uplift and Work among the Labouring and Backward Classes:* The twin organizations have all along tried their best to serve the unfortunate countrymen who have fallen back culturally or otherwise. These services are done in three ways: (a) By bringing them from rural areas to our Urban Centres; (b) By sending our dedicated workers in rural areas; (c) Through Centres located in rural areas. In addition to the more prominent village Ashramas like those at Cherrapunji, Sarisha, Ramaharipur, Manasdwip, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Chandipur, Sargachhi, Along, Narottam Nagar, New Itanagar, Coimbatore, Kalady, Trichur and Nattarampalli, a number of rural sub-centres—both permanent

and semi-permanent—are run under the branch centres at Belur, Rahara, Sarisha, Trichur, Kankurgachhi (Calcutta), Malda, Ranchi, Narendrapur and Cherrapunji. Of these, special mention may be made of the numerous village sub-centres started for educating the hill tribes in Meghalaya and a farming centre at Ranchi, specially meant for Adivasis and Scheduled Castes. Welfare work of various kinds was done among the Nagas, Kukis and Mizos etc. by the Silchar Ashrama. Our educational, medical, and cultural activities in Arunachal Pradesh are also proving very useful and popular. During the year, the organizations ran in the rural and backward areas 19 Secondary or High schools, 47 Senior Basic, Junior Basic, M.E. and U.P. Schools, 53 Primary Schools, 5 Night Schools, 11 Vocational Training Centres, a Rural Librarianship Training Centre, a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre, a School of Agriculture, 200 Adult Education and Community Centres and an Institute for training village youths in farming—with a total of 32,961 students. The organizations also conducted 37 Outdoor Dispensaries treating 8,29,654 patients and 6 Mobile Dispensaries serving 1,58,993 patients, besides running 223 Milk-distribution centres and a number of libraries with 4 mobile units all located in the rural and backward areas. In addition to such varied activities, preaching and educative tours, screening moviefilms and slides and such other efforts were also undertaken frequently. For the poor and labouring classes in the rural and industrial areas, the organisations conducted several night schools, community centres, etc.

*Pallimangal (Integrated Rural Development Programme):*

*Pallimangal (Integrated Rural Development):* The Math and the Mission Headquarters directly conducted Pallimangal activities in 17 villages in and around Kamarpukur, Joyrambati and Bāli-Dewanganj. A group of 20 unemployed trained young men as Pallimangal Cadre has been conducting the day to day field works under the supervision of the monks. The following programmes were implemented during the year 1980-81:

A. Agriculture: (i) Land Reclamation: Feasibility of cultivation on sand-covered land was demonstrated in Kharif and Rabi seasons, on about 2 acres of land fruitfully by growing Groundnut, Sweet Potato, Mustard and variety of vegetables; (ii) Extension Work: 448.5 kgs of Groundnut seeds were distributed free among

100 farmers of six villages for sowing in 8.04 acres of land. Fertilisers, seeds, and pesticides worth Rs. 39,500/- were given on credit to 178 farmers of 17 villages covering an area of 66 acres of land, to be returned in cash or kind when possible for them.

**B. Pisciculture:** Demonstration of scientific fish-culture was started in 2 ponds and 18 farmers did composite fish-culture under our guidance; the outcome was very good.

**C. Crafts:** Training was imparted to 6 persons in knitting.

**D. Education:** Three Night Schools were run by our cadres in 3 places, with average attendance of 70 students.

**E. Mobile Medical Service** started on 27.1.81, treated 7,134 patients, covering 17 villages.

**F. Veterinary:** 36 old and 121 new cases were treated in Joyrambati only.

Pallimangal spent Rs. 1,27,816/- approximately on the whole project during the year (excluding Mobile Medical Van).

Besides the above activities, the following Pallimangal Programmes were implemented through the Branch Centres:

Through Mobile Dispensary Units, treatment was given to 20,083 cases covering 46 villages by Raipur Centre, 52,531 cases at Sakwar by Bombay Centre, 54,922 cases covering 15 villages by Kankhal Centre. Also free medical services were rendered by Manasadwip Centre in one village. Two Libraries were conducted by Manasadwip and Chandipur Centres respectively, Homoeopathic Dispensary (cases treated 45,117), Agro-Economic Services by Power Sprayer and Irrigation through Pump, and Nutrition Programme for school children were conducted by Chandipur Centre.

**Mass Contact:** From the foregoing account it will be evident that the organization's activities are not confined or concentrated in urban areas alone; they are spread over other fields as well. The message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is steadily spreading in all parts of India, which is evident from the participation of innumerable people during the annual celebrations. The Ashramas and temples also draw thousands of people throughout the year. Over and above these, there are a number of medical institutions where lakhs of people get free medicines and thousands are treated in the indoor departments. In the educational institutions also a considerable number of poor students get free education, board, or lodging. The organization is also running a good number of free libraries in the

rural areas. The publication centres, sometimes, sell booklets at nominal price to suit the pocket of the masses.

**Spiritual and Cultural Work:** Both the Math and the Mission centres laid emphasis on the dissemination of the spiritual and cultural ideals of India, and through various types of activity tried to give a practical shape to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that all religions are true. The centres established real points of contact among people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. More than 115 Libraries containing vast number of books and journals were conducted by them. Attached to the libraries Reading Rooms were maintained in many places. One Sanskrit Chatuspathi too was run. At least ten centres published books on religious subjects and 12 journals in different languages. Special mention should be made of the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, which has published *The Cultural Heritage of India* (5 Volumes so far) and which has been trying to bring together eminent men and women of India and other lands in cultural fellowship. The Math centres at Mayavati, Baghbazar (Calcutta), Madras, Nagpur, Mysore, Rajkot, Trichur and Bhubaneswar, in particular, have to their credit a considerable number of useful publications. Some of our foreign centres too are publishing valuable books. It may not be out of place to tell here of the continuous preaching of Vedanta through classes and lectures for quite a few years now, being carried on by Swami Nihshreyasananda in Africa, (Zimbabwe—Rhodesia) with Salisbury (35, Rhodes Avenue) as his centre.

**Relief and Rehabilitation Work:** As usual the Mission undertook relief and rehabilitation work either directly through the Headquarters or in conjunction with some branch centres. Some works were also conducted by the branch centres themselves.

1. The following relief works were conducted in India:

**A. Flood Relief:** At Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh through Rajahmundry Centre; at Katihar, Lalganj, and Matihari in Bihar through Katihar Centre; at Kutch in Gujarat through Rajkot Centre; at Gunupur and Muniguda in Orissa through Bhubaneswar Centre; at Kalichak, Mahanandatala, Manikchak, and Nurpur in West Bengal through Malda Centre.

**B. Cyclone Relief:** At Nadia in West Bengal by the Headquarters.

**C. Drought Relief:** At Jamshedpur in Bihar

quality than the market food. Yogindra agreed. But when he returned with the pudding and told the Master the reason for his delay, the Master scolded him: 'I wanted to eat the market pudding, and you were told to buy it. Why did you go to the devotee's house and give them trouble over it? Besides, this pudding is very rich and hard to digest. I will not eat it.' Indeed, he did not touch it, but he asked the Holy Mother to give the pudding to Gopaler-ma. As he explained: 'This is given by the devotees. Gopāla dwells in her heart. Her eating it will be the same as my eating it.'

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Gopaler-ma was grief-stricken and for a long time lived in seclusion. After a while, however, repeated visions of the Master consoled her bereaved heart. Once she went to attend the Car Festival of Jagannath in Mahesh, on the other side of the Ganga. There she had the cosmic vision of the Lord. She saw her beloved Gopāla not only in the image of Jagannath in the chariot, but also in the pilgrims who were pulling the chariot. 'I was then not myself,' she said. 'I danced and laughed and created a commotion there.'

Occasionally she would visit Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples at the Baranagore monastery. At their request she would cook a couple of dishes and offer them to the Master.

The human mind is a mysterious phenomenon. In general, people are not happy because their minds are always craving worldly comforts and luxuries. The mind becomes impure when it is involved with mundane things, and it becomes pure when it becomes desireless. The impure mind suffers, and the pure mind enjoys bliss. It is very difficult to give the mind to God if it is preoccupied with many worldly possessions. Gopaler-ma's mind, however, was always God-centred. Just

as the needle of the compass always points to the north, so also her mind was always directed toward God. Mercilessly she would drive away all distracting thoughts. Swami Ramakrishnananda related the following incident:

One day, after Sri Ramakrishna had passed away, some of his disciples went to see her and found her room full of mosquitoes and other troublesome creatures. Although she did not appear to mind them and kept on repeating the name of the Lord, it distressed them to see her in such discomfort, so the next day one of the disciples brought her a mosquito-curtain. That night when she sat down to repeat the Name, she found her mind constantly wandering to the curtain, thinking whether a cockroach or a rat might not be eating off a corner of it. Seeing this she said, 'What! This wretched curtain thus to take my mind away from my Gopala!' and without ado she made it up into a bundle and sat down again to her devotions with the mosquitoes all about her.

The next morning we were just getting up at the Math when Gopaler-ma appeared. She had walked all the way (at least five miles) and must have started at three o'clock. She laid the bundle down.

'What is it?' someone asked.

'It is the curtain you gave me yesterday. It takes my mind away from God. I don't want it,' was her answer; and nothing could persuade her to take it back.<sup>6</sup>

One day in 1887 Gopaler-ma came to Balaram's house in Calcutta. A number of devotees were also there who were aware of her high spiritual experiences, and they began to ask her some questions. She said to them: 'Look, I am an old, illiterate woman. What do I know about the scriptures? Why don't you ask Sharat, Yogin, and Tarak?' But they persisted, so finally she said: 'Wait, let me ask Gopāla. O Gopāla, I don't understand what they are talking about. Why don't you answer their question? Hello, Gopāla says this...' In this way Gopaler-ma answered the

<sup>6</sup>. *Message of the East* vol. IX, 1920, p. 165.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *Planning for the Poor*

It is said that the number of poor people in India today almost equals the total population of the country at the time of Independence. This means that the agricultural, industrial, scientific and educational achievements of this nation during the last thirty years have not benefited the masses in any significant way. The argument that population explosion has nullified the general effects of economic growth does not wash. For it is expected to be taken care of by planning. The inescapable fact is that thirty years of planning have failed to provide an egalitarian basis to economic development. But what else is planning meant for? The uncoordinated progress in industry, agriculture and other fields could just as well have been achieved by giving a free rein to capitalist economy without the discipline of planning. Several thinkers and political economists now believe that planning in India would have been more successful had it been based on Gandhian economy rather than on industrialism and Westernization on which it is at present based.

In an article entitled 'Gandhian Planning and Poverty' published in *Gandhi Marg* No. 43 (New Delhi, October 1982) Sri J. S. Narayan Rao has suggested a four-point Gandhian paradigm for planning. The first point is to enforce a 'ceiling' upon the unbridled wants of the ruling and the rich class. 'It is impossible to envisage increasing the low "floor" of consumption of the poor without austerity or abnegation of the unwanted wants of the "haves" at least till the mass poverty is removed. Gandhi desired a sort of ceiling on the wants of the elite as the first pre-condition for improving the lives of the have-nots...Gandhian planning sees to the needs of the most neglected first. It does not care for cosmetic development of the economy consisting of sky scrapers, beauty parlours, jean shops, foreign liquor bars and the like.' Classical economists including Adam Smith believed that production of luxury goods for the rich helped the poor by providing them employment. Modern economists have disproved this theory and have shown that, on the contrary, such diversion of resources deprives the poor of the vital means of improving their own lot.

This takes us to the second point that Sri Rao makes : the poor must have the first claim on the resources of the economy. 'Gandhi preferred the use of resources, irrespective of their ownership, public or private, to the needs of the poor...One may have doubts regarding the success of trusteeship based on normal persuasion, but not concerning its resource use approach which is the only approach for annihilating poverty...Planning should replace price mechanism with social use.' This implies industrial democracy—equality of workers and entrepreneurs.

The third point to be taken into consideration in planning is the connection between poverty and employment. Gandhiji emphasized the

*(Continued on page 523)*