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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

नमो मित्रस्य वरुणस्य चक्षसे
महो देवाय तद् ऋतं सपर्यत ।
दूरेदृशे देवजाताय केतवे
दिवस्पुत्राय सूर्याय शंसत ॥

1. Salutations to the Eye¹ of Varuṇa and Mitra ! Let us offer [all our actions as] a sacrifice (*ṛtam*) to the great God who sees far, whose birth is divine, who reveals [all things]. Let us sing praise to Sūrya, the son of heaven.

Rg-Veda 10.37.1.

सा मा सत्योक्तिः परि पातु विश्वतो
द्यावा च यत्र ततन्नहानि च ।
विश्वमन्यन्नि विशते यदेजति
विश्वाहापो विश्वाहोदेति सूर्यः ॥

2. May the word of Truth protect me everywhere!² It is Truth that supports heaven and earth, days and nights. The whole universe vibrates in Truth. The flow of rivers and the rise of the sun follow Truth.³

Rg-Veda 10.37.2.

येन सूर्यं ज्योतिषा बाधसे तमो
जगच्च विश्वमुदियर्षि भानुना ।
तेनास्मद्विश्वामनिरामनाहुति-
मपामीवामप दुष्पुण्यं सुव ॥

3. O Sūrya, with that light with which you dispel darkness, with that light with which you impel every moving thing, remove from us poverty (*anira*), neglect of oblation (*anāhuti*), illness (*amīva*) and evil dreams.

Rg-Veda 10.37.4.

* A beautiful hymn in the form of a prayer to the Sun. To the Vedic people the Sun was not a mere astronomical body. They looked upon Sūrya as the source of life, energy, food; the creator of the universe; the inspirer of noble thoughts; and the impeller of all actions. In the Upaniṣads the Sun becomes a symbol of Virāj. The goal of life is to attain the union of the individual Self with the Cosmic Self (Hiraṇyagarbha) who indwells in the solar orb. This prayer has both personal and cosmic dimensions. It is not a mere request for material benefits, but a fervent wish to live in accordance with universal Truth.

1. The 'eye' means the witnessing self, the indwelling consciousness.

2. Truth alone can protect us in all situations, not falsehood.

3. What is truth? The natural order of things, the great laws of the universe.

The Vedic sages made no distinction between physical laws and moral laws, as modern people do. All laws, to them, were expressions of one universal order called *ṛtam*.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

It is not enough to spend one or two hours a day in meditation. Meditative life should become natural and continuous. How to make it so is the theme of this month's EDITORIAL.

Every religion has two aspects. One is the essential aspect consisting of its fundamental faith and view of reality. The other is the existential aspect consisting of external forms like rites and institutions. THE EXISTENTIAL CHARACTER OF HINDUISM is a brief discussion of the part played by rites and social traditions in Hinduism. Its author Dr. Sri Prakash Dubey M.A., M.A., Ph.D., is Reader in the Department of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Philosophy, University of Jabalpur, and Joint Secretary, Indian Philosophical Congress.

The life of Nag Mahashay, one of the greatest lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, was a blazing fire of purity, renunciation

and spirituality. The reader can see something of this fire in the inspiring article NAG MAHASHAY by Swami Chetanananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.

In the second instalment of BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND INDIAN MYSTICISM Dr. S. K. Chakraborty M.Com., A.I.C.W.A., Ph.D., contends that right decision making in the various departments of industrial management needs maturity of character, moral stamina and spiritual outlook. He offers some useful suggestions to business executives for the attainment of these qualities. The author who holds a doctorate from the University of Liverpool has considerable post-graduate teaching experience in Indian and British universities and is at present a professor in the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.

MEDITATION AND SPONTANEITY

(EDITORIAL)

Continuity and spontaneity

Meditative life will become a life of joy, blessedness and fulfilment only when it becomes *sahaja*, natural. Naturalness implies two things: continuity and spontaneity.

A natural life is a mode of living which is continuous, and it is continuous because it has become a part of your nature. It is not enough to meditate one or two hours a day. What is equally important, if not more so, is to maintain the meditative awareness throughout the day, all through your life. Spiritual life is the transformation of consciousness. It will take a very

long time to effect this transformation through meditation if you devote only one or two hours a day to it. If the rest of the day is spent in an unreclected, restless, careless and mechanical way, it may cancel out the effects of meditation. Meditation becomes a powerful and quick means of transformation of consciousness only when the meditative awareness is made continuous, that is, when all your thoughts and actions are supported by an interior calmness and self-awareness.

Continuity of meditative awareness can be maintained only when meditative life has become spontaneous, effortless. Many of you may have read the little book *The*

Practice of the Presence of God. In it the great 17th-century French mystic Brother Lawrence exhorts us to maintain constant remembrance of God. Many Indian saints too have taught the same thing. Apparently it looks like a simple and easy technique. But in actual practice nothing could be more difficult. If through sheer will power one tries to impose such a continuous remembrance upon the mind, the result will be a great strain which few people can withstand for long. Regarding this point it is worth citing an observation made by the famous Cistercian monk Thomas Merton who was mainly responsible for the recent renewal of contemplative life in the Catholic Church.

The English Benedictine monk Dom Sebastian Moore in a book called *God is a New Language* frankly discusses what he calls a 'catholic neurosis'. 'The effect of being continually exposed to the truth which is doing one no good, is distressing to the soul. There can even result a kind of unbelief, an exhaustion of the spirit, which is all the worse for being partly unconscious.'

Now let's make a distinction here. Does he mean continuously exposed to an *ideal* which is held up before us and which, we feel, is doing us no good? An occupational disease of contemplatives consists in this unconscious conviction that we are in the presence of wonderful spiritual values which aren't reaching us. Somehow we are failing them, we are never quite measuring up....

So, therefore, I would say that it is very important in the contemplative life not to over-emphasize contemplation. If we constantly over-emphasize those things to which access is inevitably quite rare, we overlook the ordinary authentic real experiences of everyday life. Dom Sebastian points out that if all ordinary difficulties are always faced on the highest religious level, as crucial problems of faith and morals, we are never able to get to grips with them on our own personal level.¹

The truth is that the presence of God is not something to be 'practised'. It is a

spontaneous experience which, when it comes, stays with you all through and, even if you want to forget it, you cannot. The advice of Brother Lawrence to practise the constant presence of God is really an advice to maintain a constant meditative awareness. This becomes an effortless, creative and joyful exercise only when meditation itself has become natural and spontaneous.

What is the meaning of spontaneity? Everything we do effortlessly is not necessarily a spontaneous action. Through practice type-writing, cycling, piano recital and similar activities become effortless, but they belong to what scientists call conditioned reflexes. Spontaneity is the very opposite of conditioning. It is the total response of the whole personality unconditioned by previous experiences. The sense of wonder that a butterfly evokes in a child, the spell-binding effect of a glorious sunset, or the compassion one feels for suffering people is a spontaneous response involving the whole personality. There is a higher but much rarer, type of spontaneous experience classified under 'nature mysticism'. Some people, especially adolescents and artists, occasionally get into a spontaneous state of alertness. With your eyes wide open you suddenly find yourself in the grip of a mysterious stillness of silence in which trees, houses, grass, people, hills, roads, sky, clouds—all appear to be intensely vivid, real, filled with an ethereal living Presence. You feel you are an inseparable part of a larger life of which the whole world is only a pictorial representation. The past and the future are blotted out, time comes to a standstill, and you exist in an endless present. You desire nothing, you plan nothing, you are filled with the lambent beauty and peace of pure existence. Existence itself becomes a joy. Such experiences come to many people, but few have the heart of a William Wordsworth, a Richard Jefferies or a John Muir (the American naturalist) to

1. Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (New York: Doubleday Image Book, 1972).

understand them. The Zen masters, however, recognized the significance of such experiences and tried to convert them into a first stepping stone to higher spiritual experiences. Through the tea ceremony, sand garden and other customs 'nature mysticism' has become a characteristic feature of Japanese culture.

These semi-mystic experiences are usually without any religious content or value, and may not produce any lasting transformation of character or consciousness. But by the release of spontaneity and the feeling of oneness with cosmic life they make an individual's life natural, fresh and joyful. In striking contrast, the life of meditation that the average spiritual aspirant leads is full of struggles, and is hemmed in by so many rules and restraints which kill spontaneity and cut off the soul from cosmic life. In many people meditation engages only a part of the mind and fails to evoke a total response. Some spiritual aspirants instead of trying to grow according to each person's own law of being, try to follow or imitate the ways of other people. The result of all this is that the meditative life of many spiritual aspirants remains isolated, stale, artificial, uncreative, unrelated to the realities of life, and joyless. Is it possible to make spiritual life free, fresh, spontaneous, natural, continuous, integral and joyful?

Meditative life will become spontaneous and natural only when the *buddhi*, the spiritual heart, awakens, that is, when the *jīvātman* emerges to the surface of the conscious mind and takes charge of all our thoughts and actions. Meditation is an attempt to rise from a lower state of consciousness to a higher one. This upward movement is difficult and strenuous owing to the downward pull of lower instincts and mental automatisms. It becomes easy and natural only when an upward pull is exerted by the awakened *buddhi*. This higher awakening, however usually takes a long

time. What are we to do until this happens, or if it never happens?

One thing we can do is to speed up the awakening process by intensifying our effort, and quickly go through the unpleasant early phase. This of course means greater struggles, but those who are endowed with intense aspiration face them cheerfully. The other thing we can do is to reduce the obstacles to spontaneity and continuity and make meditative life as natural as possible.

Simplicity

The first step towards making meditative life natural is to simplify one's life. Simplicity does not merely mean possessing fewer things, or simplifying one's style of living, though this is of much help. What is more important is to simplify one's mental life. Mental simplicity has several aspects. One is intellectual simplicity. A mind filled with all sorts of undigested and disconnected ideas is a great obstacle to meditation. Knowledge gained from book and persons must be scientifically systematized; that is, we should know how the different ideas we pick up are inter-connected. Along with that, these ideas must be integrated into life. This calls for a basic philosophy of life. Every spiritual aspirant must develop his own philosophy of life by weaving together knowledge and experience. Scriptures and the various systems of philosophy are meant to serve only as guidelines to help each aspirant to develop his own philosophy of life. The development of a basic philosophy of life will enable us to establish right relationships with the people and the world around us, to understand better the problems of life, to reduce our worries and, by ordering our thoughts and emotions, will provide more room in the mind for God and spiritual things.

The second aspect of mental simplicity is

the simplicity of faith. One may have the knowledge of a scholar but must have the faith of a child.² What is faith? Faith is the acceptance of the natural order of things in the universe. If we wish to live in harmony with God, the world and fellowmen, we must have faith in them. Without the native simplicity of faith, life becomes artificial, insecure and unhappy.

Another aspect of mental simplicity is the shedding of the masks we put on. To pretend to be what one is not is a futile task and a waste of energy. Hypocrisy and conceit choke the springs of spontaneity. To accept oneself with all one's limitations and idiosyncrasies is very much necessary to make meditative life natural.

Yet another aspect of mental simplicity is simplicity of conduct. Spiritual aspirants tend to over-burden themselves with too many rules, vows, rituals and observances. Some of these are necessary during the early stages of spiritual life, no doubt, but too much dependence upon them will impede the soul's mobility. As the aspirant progresses, he should outgrow the earlier supports and hold on to higher supports which are invariably simpler and less restrictive. Too many scruples convert spiritual life into a form of self-torture. True simplicity always implies the ability to transcend both *dharma* and *adharma*, virtue and vice, at least to a certain extent. Fenelon, an influential mystical theologian and educator of 17th-century France, has neatly summed up what simplicity means in the following lines.

I should say simplicity is an uprightness of the soul which prevents self-consciousness. It is not the same as sincerity which is a much humbler virtue. Many people are sincere

2. Cf. पाण्डित्यं निर्विद्य बाल्येन तिष्ठति ।

Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad 3.5.1.

Christ says: 'Except ye... become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 18 : 3.

who are not simple. They say nothing but what they believe to be true, and do not aim at appearing anything but what they are. But they are forever thinking of themselves, weighing their every word and thought, dwelling upon themselves in apprehension of having done too much or too little. These people are sincere, but they are not simple. They are not at their ease with others, nor others with them. There is nothing easy, frank, unrestrained or natural about them.

To be absorbed in the world around and never turn a thought within, as in the blind condition of some who are carried away by what is pleasant and tangible, is one extreme as opposed to simplicity. And to be self-absorbed in all matters, whether it be duty to God or man, is the other extreme, which makes a person wise in his own conceit—reserved, self-conscious, uneasy at the least thing which disturbs his inward self-complacency... The one is intoxicated by his outward surroundings, the other by what he believes himself to be doing inwardly. But both are in a state of intoxication, and the last is a worse state than the first because it seems to be wise, though it is not really, and so people do not try to be cured. Real simplicity lies in a *juste milieu* equally free from thoughtlessness and affectation, in which the soul is not overwhelmed by externals so as to be unable to reflect, nor yet give up the endless refinements which self-consciousness induces. The soul which looks where it is going without losing time arguing over every step, or looking back perpetually, possesses true simplicity.

Return to the centre

Spontaneity is a total response of the whole personality. If we wish to make meditative life natural and continuous, we should attain integration of personality. In many people their emotions go one way, intellectual life goes in another direction and actions follow a third course. Spiritual life for them is the intensification of any one of these faculties. As a matter of fact, spirituality is neither an emotion nor reasoning nor action. It is something directly connected with the 'spirit', the Atman or true Self. The Self is the core of the personality. It is the centre around

which the whole personality is to be integrated.

In ordinary life it takes several years for a mature person to attain some measure of integration of personality or wholeness. This made the famous psychologist Dr. Jung believe that the self is something 'created' later on by the human psyche—a process which he called 'individuation'. But Indian thought regards the true Self or Atman as an eternally self-existing, uncreated principle of pure consciousness. However, in ordinary life this true self remains veiled or hidden, and so most people are unaware of its real nature. The Atman is our innermost centre;³ it is our true, most natural state, our simplest being. The nearer we go to the Self, the more natural and spontaneous our life becomes. The farther we move away from the Self, the more unnatural and disintegrated our life becomes.

Everything in the world, everything in us—the body, mind, thoughts, actions—is discontinuous, except the Atman. The Self alone is unchanging and unbroken. Therefore if we wish to make meditative awareness, remembrance of God or repetition of divine Name continuous, we should hold on to the Self. The Atman is the storehouse of consciousness and so, the nearer we approach it, the greater becomes our consciousness and the stronger our memory. The farther we move away from the Self, the more forgetful we become.

Thus the only way to make our meditative life natural and continuous is to discover our true Self and abide in it. It is through meditation that we reach this centre of consciousness in us. Rituals, studies, prayer and worship are only indirect means, but meditation leads us directly to the Self.

3. सर्वस्मात् अन्तरतरं यदयमात्मा ।

Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad 1.4.8.

The Upaniṣads say: 'In the beginning God alone existed as pure Being,*the one without a second. Then He willed, "May I become many, may I multiply".'⁴ The whole universe with its myriads of beings was projected out of that one Being. This is macrocosmic creation. A similar, microcosmic, creation seems to be going on perpetually within ourselves. Knowledge is only a manifestation of consciousness. According to the Tantras thoughts are only forms of the 'power of consciousness' (*cit-sakti*). Just as sparks emerge out of the fire, or as electric pulses rush out of the dynamo, so knowledge emerges out of the self continually. It is this self-projection of the Atman that is the basic force impelling the mind and the senses outward towards their objects.⁵ It is the source of all knowledge, all creativity. But creation is also a form of destruction, the outward self-projection is a form of self-exile. We are, as it were, continually exiled from the centre of our being, we are continually losing ourselves. This is the cause of disharmony in us, the source of our sorrow. In deep sleep the Self withdraws all its powers back into itself, just as the sun withdraws all its rays in the evening. So only during sleep we remain in our natural state. This, however, is an unconscious state.

It is through yoga, especially the yoga of meditation, that man overcomes the centrifugal force of inner creation, the outward thrust of Atman's self-projection. Yoga is the reversal of creation. It is a conscious attempt to gather the scattered powers of consciousness and the will and reverse them

4. सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीद् एकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

... तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति ॥

Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 6.2.1, 3.

Also cf. *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.6.

5. Cf. 'Willed by whom does the directed mind go towards its object? ... Who is the effulgent being who directs the eyes and ears?'

Kena-Upaniṣad 1.1.

towards their source, the Atman. In deep meditation all thoughts merge into a single thought, and this single thought then plunges into the light of the Atman, like a piston going back into the barrel. Meditation is an attempt to remain in one's natural state consciously. It is a form of conscious sleep; it is counter-sleep.

It is not possible for most people to remain absorbed in meditation for a very long time. Nor is it necessary. What is more important is to hold on to the centre of one's 'I'-consciousness at all times even while engaged in the various activities of life. This is not difficult, for we think about and talk about the 'I' almost all the time. What we have to do is to keep this 'I' anchored in our heart, the seat of the true Self, and not allow it to wander too far away from this centre. We should always be in a mood to return to our true centre. This kind of 'self-remembrance' makes remembrance of God and the divine Name easy to practise. Indeed, it is easier to hold on to the subject than to the object.

Extension of consciousness

There are two major obstacles to making spiritual life continuous and spontaneous: one is the presence of large areas of unconsciousness in the mind, and the other is the hold of the past upon our present life.

Spiritual is a conscious life. In fact, it is struggle for consciousness—for greater and higher consciousness. But when we observe our life we find that the sphere of our present consciousness is very limited. Many pious people take a decision in the morning to remember God throughout the day. But they find they forget Him most of the time. The reason for this is that what is called conscious mind is only a small island in an ocean of unconsciousness, and the island is constantly being submerged by the

waves. Spiritual aspirants must clearly understand what conscious life really means. Conscious life is that in which there is self-awareness. We may be aware of the things we handle, of the people around us, of the food we eat; but we are seldom aware that we are aware. Our so-called awareness is only an identification with the objects around us, and we are carried away by the unconscious stream of life. A life without self-awareness is really unconscious life.

Most of the problems of life are the direct or indirect result of the unconscious way of life we lead. Lurking in the dark chambers of the unconscious are the instincts and impulses of lust, anger, greed, selfishness and violence. These spring upon the soul like tigers only when the conscious mind yields to the unconscious. Worries, tensions, conflicts and psycho-somatic diseases overpower us only when the unconscious dominates our life. The ordinary person knows very little of the unconscious. It is meditation that reveals its presence and mode of operation. When we sit for meditation or Japa, all kinds of distracting thoughts crowd in upon us. These are the thoughts and experiences of the past which are usually kept in check in the unconscious through certain subliminal controls. Meditation is a form of relaxation, and this relaxation (as happens during dreaming) removes the subliminal control thereby letting loose the imprisoned thoughts. Unless the unconscious is brought under the control of the conscious to some extent, meditation is difficult and maintaining continuous meditative awareness, impossible.

The aim of spiritual life is not merely to live a conscious life but also to gain super-conscious experience. But it is impossible to go beyond the conscious as long as it remains imprisoned by the unconscious. Thus spiritual life involves two types of struggle: one is to control the unconscious, and the other is to transcend the conscious. Says Swami Vivekananda:

Kaunsar Naga. This is a big lake situated at a height of more than 14,000 feet in Anantnag district. The lake is shaped like a foot and it is believed that Lord Viṣṇu had placed his holy foot in the place where the present big lake is found.

Devī or Divine Mother

We have numerous places of pilgrimage dedicated to the Divine Mother in Kashmir of which Ksheer Bhawani, Sri Sharika Mandir, Mahakali Mandir (in Srinagar and Vadora), Jwala Mukhi (in Khrew), Shailapuri (in Nagabal, Baramulla), Baladevi, Sri Vaishnodevi and Sarthal Devi (in Jammu region) are well known. The most important among them all is of course Ksheer Bhawani.

The temple of Goddess Mahārajanī, known as Ksheer Bhawani, is situated about 14 miles away from Srinagar at the village Tulamula in the famous Sindh valley. The road leading to Ksheer Bhawani has also a spiritual significance. While going to Ksheer Bhawani first we reach 'Vicharnag' (the lake of discrimination). Then we reach 'Tyangal-bal' (the hill of burning charcoals) and Kavaj-var (the fire of cremation ground) and Amar-her (the immortal staircase). These two names denote renunciation. The third place is Aanchar Lake, which derives its origin from Aachar (righteousness). After going through these places we reach the cherished destination, the holy place of the Divine Mother, the abode of love, pure and divine, and be with the Divine Mother.

An old Sanskrit text called the *Bhṛngeśa Samhitā*⁴ carries a chapter known as 'Rajanī-Prādurbhava' which gives a description of the origin of this temple. Rāvaṇa, the demon-king of Lanka, in order to attain unlimited power worshipped Mother

Mahā-rajani. The Divine Mother after being moved by the immense *tapas* (penance) performed by Rāvaṇa, bestowed upon him many boons. Soon after, Rāvaṇa began to lead a life of luxury, and after forcibly taking away Sītā, prepared himself for a battle with Lord Rāma. After watching the misbehaviour of Rāvaṇa, the Devī asked Hanumān to take Her to Satisar (Kashmir) along with 360 Nagas. Hanumānji installed the Devī at the Tulamula village in Kashmir Valley. Here the Devī is being worshipped as 'Ksheer Bhawani' or Goddess Rajanī. Only flowers, milk and sweets are offered to Her.

The Brahmins of Tulamula have been described in *Rājatarangini* as full with spiritual powers. For quite sometime in the past this important *tīrtha* remained under flood waters, and it was only after a pious Brahmin Sri Krishna Pandit had a vision of it that the place was rediscovered. He was a great devotee of the Devī and composed the famous hymn the *Rajanī Stotra*. Later on a beautiful marble temple was erected in the centre of the 'Kunda' (spring) by the Dogra rulers. This spring changes colours and is shaped like 'OM' in the Sharada script. Every year an annual festival is held on Jyeṣṭha Śuklā Aṣṭami at this holy place.

During his stay in Kashmir Swami Vivekananda visited this holy place twice or thrice. Soon after he had had the stupendous vision of Mother Kālī at a solitary place near Srinagar, Swamiji went to Ksheer Bhawani on September 30, 1898. There he lived a life of intense *tapas* and devotion to the Mother for a week. His biography gives the following details of his stay.

Before this famous shrine of the Mother he daily performed Homa, and worshipped Her with offering of Kheer (thickened milk) made from one maund of milk, rice and almonds. He told his beads like any humble pilgrim; and as a special Sadhana, every morning he worshipped

4. This text, source of many other 'Māhātmyas', is not extant now.

The second method is prayer and self-surrender, followed by the Bhakta. Prayer opens the chambers of the heart to the inflow of divine Power. Just as the electromagnetic field in a recorder erases a song recorded in a cassette by demagnetizing it, so divine Power erases the impressions of the past in the unconscious. Through intense prayer the whole unconscious comes under control quickly.

The third way of achieving *nirodha* is that of meditation. For a beginner meditation is like opening the Pandora's box but, as he persists in it, consciousness extends deeper into the unconscious and checks its wayward movements. And, when the *buddhi* awakens, the light of *prajñā* (higher consciousness, spiritual intuition) illumines the dark nooks and crannies of the unconscious and burns up its impurities. Gradually, the aspirant learns that meditative awareness can be extended into the unconscious even at other times, when he is not sitting in meditation but actively engaged in work. This is what is described as *yoga-yukta karma* in the Gita.¹⁰ Through practice consciousness can be extended into all parts of the personality—it can be extended into the physical body to cure diseases, and even into the dream state to prevent the rise of bad dreams

To be constantly aware of every thought and action is the best way of controlling the unconscious. Buddha called it *samyak smṛti* (*sammāsati* in Pālī) 'right mindfulness' and included it in his Eight-fold Noble Path. Ancient Buddhist Yogis called this practice *samprajanya*. Śāntideva defines it as follows: 'To be constantly witnessing every state of the body and the mind is, in brief, the nature of *samprajanya*'¹¹ The

Southern (Theravāda) Buddhists call this technique *vipassana*, 'insight'. It is an important spiritual technique for them, so much so that they regard *samādhi* or absorption as a lower state than it. Indeed, to extend awareness into all spheres of action and thought at all times is a more effective way of transforming human consciousness into divine consciousness than spending one or two hours a day in 'sitting meditation'. What makes this practice difficult is our habit of constantly judging, choosing, influencing people and things, which produces strain and conflict. Once we give up this habit, meditative awareness becomes easy and natural.

Contacting the Infinite

One more factor, however, is needed to make meditative life continuous and spontaneous—unity with the Infinite. If meditation were only an endless watching of every movement of the body and the mind, it would be nothing more than spiritual narcissism. This may perhaps be true of certain forms of Yogic and Buddhist meditations, but not true of Vedantic meditation known as *upāsana*. For the fundamental aim of *upāsana* is to realize the unity of the individual and the cosmos.

The individual is in dynamic contact with the cosmos at all levels—physical, mental and spiritual. This contact is of the nature of a dynamic equilibrium, that is, it involves a two-way exchange. This principle of universal equilibrium or harmony which governs the physical, moral and spiritual existence of all beings was known in the Vedic period as *ṛtam* and, in later ages, as *dharma*. We are continually receiving many things from the universe, and are eager to get more out of it—more food, more money, more pleasure. But in order to attain equilibrium we have also to refund to the universe in the same measure. Nay more; the ancient Hindu sages discovered that

10. Cf. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 5.6-12.

11. एतदेव समासेन संप्रजन्यस्य लक्षणम् ।

यत् कायचित्तावस्थायाः प्रत्यवेक्षा मुहुर्मुहुः ॥

Śāntideva, *Bodhi-Caryāvatāra* 5.108.

even what we get is determined by what we have given. They called this truth the law of Karma. It is the giving, returning, refunding, that determines the way this law operates. The sages understood that it was the failure to refund to the universal stream of life that upsets the harmony (*ṛtam*) and produces sorrows, conflicts and worries in a person's life. So they made this principle of giving back a major spiritual discipline called *yajña*. These three concepts—*ṛtam* (or *dharma*), *karma* and *yajña*—are closely inter-related. The cause of all bondage and suffering is the breaking of the fundamental law of *yajña*. The Gita points this out: 'It is the performance of actions without the aim of *yajña* that causes bondage in the world.'¹² Indeed, the concept of *yajña* is the very foundation of the philosophical edifice of the Gita.

Upāsana, meditation, is not mere concentration on certain parts of the body or mind. It should be looked upon as an attempt to restore harmony or equilibrium at the highest level, the spiritual level. It is a process of spiritual refunding, the self-oblation of the Jīvātman into the Paramātman. It should be remembered that *upāsana* arose out of the Vedic sacrificial rites. For a long period it remained an integral part of Vedic *yajña*, and the two were separated only in later centuries in the Āraṇyakas. Under Yogic and Buddhist influence people gradually forgot this connection. Now in modern times there has arisen the need to reunite once again *upāsana* with *yajña*—not the fire ritual, but the living self-sacrifice for the service of God in man. It was the genius of Swami Vivekananda that first achieved this fusion and converted it into a practical ideal for the modern man. It should, however, be remembered that what is needed

is not a mere combination of *upāsana* and *yajña*, but their indissoluble fusion. It is not enough to do work followed by some meditation, nor is it enough to remember God once in a while in the midst of work. What is needed is that work should become an extension of meditative awareness and meditation should become a self-oblation of the individual spirit into the Supreme Spirit. When copper and tin fuse we get bronze which is a new metal with different properties. Similarly, when work and meditation fuse, we get a new dimension of living.

This fusion cannot be achieved at the physical or mental level, but only at the deepest level of the spirit. It is the result of an actual experience of the unity of the individual Self with the Supreme Self. A living contact with the Infinite is necessary. We may begin our meditative life by centring it on a Chosen Deity, but through Him we should establish a contact with the Infinite of which the Jīvātman and the Deity are two different manifestations. Meditation should become an unceasing flow of human consciousness into cosmic consciousness, and work should become an unceasing flow of human existence into cosmic existence. Only then will the conflict between work and worship, between the sacred and the secular, disappear. Only then will meditative life become natural, a continual and spontaneous expression of the glory of pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Swami Vivekananda has placed this before mankind as the ideal of the modern age: 'My ideal indeed, can be put into a few words, and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.'¹³ What this ideal really means is *the conversion of one's whole life into yoga*.

¹². यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

Bhagavad-Gītā 3.9.

¹³. *Complete Works* (1972), vol. 7, p. 498.

THE EXISTENTIAL CHARACTER OF HINDUISM

DR. S. P. DUBEY

It may be said at the outset that Hinduism is not a well-defined religion in the sense we make use of the term 'religion' in the English-speaking world. Originally a geographical denomination, the word 'Hinduism' stands today for a way of life led by the people of India, and also by some who live in other countries, in conformity with the Vedic tradition.

The term 'existential' as used here is also not much dependent on the connotations of 'Existentialism', the modern movement in European philosophy. The essentially anti-systematizing spirit of this movement cannot be applicable to Hinduism in the usual manner. Although, as we shall see in due course, we can find some existentialist expressions in Hinduism as well, the accidental character of the movement is completely missing from the Vedic tradition which is based on the idea of cosmic order (*ṛta*) and is said to be a religion-everlasting (*sanātana dharma*). In the present context the expression 'existential' can be understood clearly if we distinguish between the existential and the essential. The former, as against the latter, indicates mainly those external factors which are responsible for the existence and forward movement of a particular religion. The essential character of the religious phenomenon, on the other hand, is represented by the inner faith of its followers. Although this permits external manifestation or expression, it is personal and cannot be directly observed by the religionist. Its manifestations are historically notable and physically verifiable.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith in his remarkable book *The Meaning and End of Religion* suggests that instead of using the term 'religion' for the phenomenon understood by this word, we should make use of the

terms 'faith' and 'cumulative tradition' so that the inner and the outer aspects might be intelligible more clearly. By cumulative tradition is meant the entire mass of overt objective data that constitute the historical deposit, as it were, of the past religious life of the community in question: temples, scriptures, theological systems, dance-patterns, legal and other social institutions, conventions, moral codes, myths and so on; anything that can be, and is, transmitted from one person, one generation, to another, and which a historian can observe. Faith, on the other hand, is the personal quality of human life and history. There can be an empirical procedure by which, through disciplined investigations, it should be possible to give a more adequate and accurate account of it.

In the sphere of intellectual deliberations Hinduism allows absolute freedom, giving rise to almost mutually contradictory schools of philosophy. But in the realm of socio-personal behaviour it prescribes common regulations known as *varṇāśramadharma*s and *puruṣārthas*. The perfect codification of human consciousness is a distinct character of its faith. Although all religions of the world have tried to adapt themselves to human life, the integration of wisdom (*Jñānam*), will (*icchā*) and activity (*kriyā*) found in Hinduism is unparalleled. The pilgrimage of the human soul is regulated in such a manner that it has made the basis of a nation unique in religious history. We shall deal with the triple division shortly.

Experiences of human life, such as death, fear, love, estrangement, commitment etc. form the core of the existentialist movement. We can see some of these factors clearly shaping the march of the Hindu tradition.

The foremost experience is that of death. One of the oldest Upaniṣads (*Kaṭha*) discusses the confrontation between the young Naciketā and the King of Death (Yama-rāja). The idea of the deathlessness of the human soul is developed in the Upaniṣad which, subsequently, gave rise to the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The dialogue between the human and the divine in the battlefield establishes the deathlessness of the human soul and ensures the validity of the *varṇāśrama-dharmas* and the *puruṣārthas*. The four Mahāvākyas of the Upaniṣads assert the identity between the Absolute and the finite. If religion is the extension of human life to its uttermost limit (innermost as well as uppermost limits), the Hindu faith represents it most completely. In fact it is a religion of infinity—its goal and task are alike infinite. It expands what exists, the universe as well as the self, and the two become one.

The Sāṃkhya (and to some extent the Advaitic) concept of the soul shows the existential estrangement of man from himself and from the world. Even modern Hindu thinkers like K. C. Bhattacharya hold that ultimate freedom consists in freeing the Being from the object as well as the subject. But this is philosophical Hinduism which is not our immediate concern. The existential idea of commitment is found in modern Hinduism in the personality of Mahatma Gandhi in abundance. We shall come to this towards the end of our discussion.

To come back to the triple division of human consciousness, it may be noted that philosophical Hinduism takes care of the first aspect, namely Jñāna or wisdom, in great detail. The second aspect, namely Icchā or will, finds adequate expression at the secular plane in Hinduism and leads to the third, Karma or action, subsequently. The Upaniṣads clearly state that the person is of the nature of will; as one wills so one becomes, because one acts accord-

ingly.¹ This incidentally anticipates by centuries the existentialist dictum: 'Man is only what he does.' Since the aspect of Jñāna or knowledge finds expression chiefly in the vast literary output of Indian culture, we shall confine our discussion to the Icchā (will) and Karma (action) aspects of consciousness.

On the secular plane the Karma doctrine signifies will as well as action, freedom as well as determination. Although the doctrine is common to most of the Indian religions, in the context of Hinduism it involves rigorous bondage as well as eternal freedom either by knowledge or by will and action. It opens up for absolute decision against the past deeds and for a self-ordained future. If the Latin term *existere* refers to 'emergence', the Hindu version of the Karma theory proclaims order-and-progress. The two-fold division of the Karma theory (the *sañcita*, *sañcīyamāna* and *prārabdha* division; and the *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kāmya* division) places before an individual occasions to choose for himself. We may also note here that the existential character of Hinduism is more clearly manifest in the aspect of Karma.

The existential nature of the Karma theory in Hinduism is seen in the forms of rituals, rites and ceremonies. Of the two divisions of the Hindu rituals, namely, the Vedic and the Āgamic, dealing with the performance of sacrifices and the practice of worship respectively, the former will be taken up earlier because of the fact that performance of *yajña* is taken to be the best form of religious activity. In fact the Mīmāṃsā system identifies Karma with *yajña*.

In Hindu tradition the entire world-event is treated as the universal sacrifice of the Puruṣa (Primeval Person), from whom

1. Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 4.4.5.; *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 3.14.1.

everything in the world is said to have emanated. A celebrated hymn of the *R̥g-Veda* says: 'Puruṣa is the whole universe, what was and what shall be—with the sacrifice the Gods sacrificed the sacrifice.'² Although the Vedas originally prescribed that both husband and wife should equally take part in all *karmas*, religious and secular,³ the ideal was lowered in later writings, especially the Smṛtis, and the male was regarded as *yajña parāyaṇa* whereas the female was treated as *tapah parāyaṇa*. The earlier ideal, of course, was reestablished in Āgamic worship in a changed form.

A sacrificial rite consists in offering some material as oblation to a deity (like Indra, Mitra or Varuṇa) with the recitation of a *mantra*. The offerings are either spread over the sacrificial litter or are consigned to the sacred fire lit on the sacrificial altar. Subsequently, Fire (*agni*) assumed greater importance and became the mediator between gods and human beings. The essence of sacrifice is to surrender (*tyāga*) one's ego (*svāhā*) to the higher being, although it has commercial and utilitarian motives as well. The surrender has to be sincere and should be made with faith (*śraddhā*). The *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* illustrates the futility of sacrificial activity not accompanied by faith. One hymn of the *R̥g-Veda* enjoins people to utter a powerful speech to Indra which is sweeter than butter or honey. The practice of animal sacrifice is expressly found in several Vedic rituals. But gradually this practice was discouraged, and melted butter, grains, juice etc. were offered instead. The *Sāma-Veda* goes further ahead, for it uses only the *mantras* in place of victims or materials.

It says, 'God! we use no sacrificial stake. We slay no victim. We worship entirely by the repetition of the sacred verses.'

Repetition of *mantras* has an important part in sacrificial rites. A *mantra* is supposed to be a definite succession of unalterable letters (or sounds), the repetition of which will obtain the desired result if uttered in the prescribed manner. Since the sound of words in the *mantras* is of great importance, the significance is lost if translated. It is the sound of the *mantra* that produces vibrations, which in turn help it to assume a definite form. The sound-figures cause vibrations in the medium around them, first on the earth and then in the space and the beyond. These, in turn, throw corresponding vibrations into bodies against which they strike when these bodies are capable of responding to them. As these vibrations come up against the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*), they are thrown into corresponding vibrations, and the result is the purification of the subtle body.

The *Mīmāṃsā* school of Hindu philosophy, which has systematized Vedic rituals, holds that all the Vedic texts pertain to some sacrificial activity or the other, otherwise they convey no meaning (*āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt, ānarthakyam atadarthānām*). Vedic rites, are of three types: obligatory (*nitya*), occasional (*naimittika*) and optional (*kāmya*). The twilight prayer (*samdhya*) is a good example of the unconditional duty, the performance of which does not bring any virtue but from its non-performance accrues sin. The *Samdhya* is performed thrice everyday at daybreak, noon and sunset. Atri says that a twice-born should always perform *samdhya* thrice (*samdhya trayam tu kartavyam dvijenātmaavidā sadā*). Meditation on a deity, along with the recitation of the *Gāyatrī mantra*, is an important feature of the twilight-prayer. This famous *mantra* common to all the four Vedas invokes the

2. पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यम् ।
उतामृतत्वस्येशानः यदन्नेनातिरोहति ।

R̥g-Veda 10.90.2.

3. See Sāyaṇa on *R̥g-Veda* 5.61.8.

principle of divine Light: 'The Being whose sound-symbol is Om, appears as the earth, the sky and the heaven. We meditate on the most resplendent and adorable splendour of the self-luminous Being. May It guide our minds.' This prayer is still current in orthodox homes.

Most of the Hindu sacraments (*samskāras*) are *naimittika karmas* performed on special occasions. Many of them bear socio-religious significance, hence are performed by the average Hindu. They aim at spiritualization of the important events of an individual from the cradle to the funeral pyre. The performance of purificatory rites makes the life of an individual sanctified. They indicate man's commitment and responsibility towards the society. Hence they need somewhat more attention in our context.

Most of the *Grhya-sūtras* refer to the *samskāras* or sacraments but differ regarding their total number. The number varies between eleven and forty-eight. Āśvalāyana mentions eleven, Pāraskara, Baudhāyana and Varāha make references to thirteen; Vaikhānasa says the sacraments are eighteen. The *Dharma-sūtras* of Gautama mention forty-eight sacraments. Since the *Grhya-sūtras* deal with rites performed inside the house, they usually do not discuss the funeral rite, although some of them do make references to it. The most popular sacraments, as given in the *Vyāsa-Smṛti* are the following sixteen: (1) *Garbhādhāna*, (2) *Pumsavana*, (3) *Sīmanta*, (4) *Jātakarma*, (5) *Nāma-kriyā*, (6) *Niṣkramaṇa*, (7) *Annaprāśana*, (8) *Vapana-kriyā*, (9) *Karṇa-vedha*, (10) *Vratādeśa*, (11) *Vedārambha*, (12) *Keśānta*, (13) *Snāna*, (14) *Udvāha*, (15) *Vivāha* and (16) *Tretāgnisangraha*. It may be noted here that the most recent book on the subject, the *Samskāra-vidhi* of Swami Dayananda, also admits sixteen sacraments. *Upanayana*, marriage and *antyeṣṭi* are the most important sacraments performed even today.

We may make a hurried survey of the three because they clearly manifest the existential character of the Hindu tradition.

Upanayana (investiture) of a child belonging to the three upper classes is the sacrament that marks the second birth (*dvija*) of the individual when he is brought to a learned teacher for study. It symbolizes the spiritual awakening of the person. The child (mostly male) is initiated by imparting instructions for the Gāyatrī prayer and the wearing of the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*), the latter being the symbol of several traditional qualities. The *Āpastambha Dharma-sūtra* (1.1) prescribes the season and the age for initiation of different castes. Spring, summer and autumn are suggested for the investiture of the children belonging to the Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya communities respectively. Similarly eighth, eleventh and twelfth years from the date of conception of the child are prescribed as the age of initiation of the three classes respectively. *Upanayana* is commitment to study and the observance of the socio-religious duties of the three upper classes of the Hindu society.

Marriage (*vivāha*) marks the entry of the individual into social life. If *Upanayana* symbolizes the first stage of the Hindu individual in the society (called *brahmacharya āśrama*), marriage represents the second stage called *grhastha-āśrama*. One is to marry around the age of twenty-five after completion of study. The *Āśvalāyana Grhya-sūtra* (1.5) recommends the choice of intelligent counterparts: 'Let him (the father) give the girl to a young man endowed with intelligence. Let him (the bridegroom) marry a girl that shows the characteristics of intelligence, beauty and moral conduct, and who is free from disease.' Manu refers to eight forms of marriage found in the society and indicates that the first type is the best while the last one is deplorable. The married couple must perform five sacrifices daily, called *pañca-*

*mahāyajñas*⁴. These are the service rendered to living beings (*bhūtas*), to human beings (*manuṣya*), to the departed ancestors (*pitṛ*), to the gods (*deva*) and to God (*brahmā*). These sacrifices represent the commitment of the individual to the entire universe.

The last rite is that of *antyeṣṭi*, funeral rituals performed when the person is dead. Death, it may be noted, does not mark the end of the individuality of a person. It is only an occasion to renew his existence and to fulfil his commitment to the society. The idea of rebirth, associated with the doctrine of Karma, makes the life and death of an individual simply a preparation for merging into the Infinite Being. References to funeral rites are found in the *R̥g-Veda* (1.2.34) and in the *Atharva-Veda* (18.2.34). The latter says: 'Ye nikhāta ye pariṣṭā ye ca dagdhā ye coddhitā.' Though practice of leaving the dead body in the open is mentioned in some places, and the corpses are also said to have been left either in the caves (*guhā-nikhāta*), or submerged in water (*jala-nikhāta*) or buried in soil (*bhū-nikhāta*), the most popular form of the disposal of the dead body is cremation and is practised all over the country in almost like manner. The *Manu-Smṛti* (2.16) treats *antyeṣṭi* as an important rite. Even the Sannyasins honour this rite and perform it themselves symbolically while they are alive.

The third class of Karmas known as *kāmya-karma* is of hypothetical nature, performed with the desire of obtaining a certain particular end. The person who is desirous of a son should perform the *putra-kāmeṣṭi* sacrifice, one who desires universal empire should do the *rāja-sūya-yajña*, and so on. These sacrifices gradually became tedious and expensive. Hence, instead of organizing such rites, people began appealing directly to the Deity for the cherished desire and this marks the transition from

the Vedic to the Āgamic rituals. We shall now take note of these Āgamic rituals which are in vogue. The existential character of Hinduism is manifest in these rituals in an impressive manner.

Āgamic rites are centred on the worship of an idol and the observance of fasts and feasts. They have become an important part of popular Hinduism. It may be noted that there is no reference to idol-worship in the Vedas. The Indus valley civilization, of course, exhibits this practice. Mostly it is the Purāṇas and the Epics which provide objects for idolizing. The Āgamas prescribe systematic worship of the idols inside the home, temple or outside.

It may be noted here that although idol-worship is not peculiar to Hinduism, the practice has become a distinctive characteristic of this tradition. It must also be pointed out that the function of the idol is symbolic. Not even an illiterate devotee regards the idol as exhausting the being of the deity it symbolizes. In fact idolatry is the beginning of religion, not its end. The *Śiva Purāṇa* clearly says: 'The highest state is the natural realization of God's presence; the second is meditation and contemplation; the third is the worship of the symbol, and the fourth is the performance of rituals and pilgrimages to sacred places.'

There are three major Āgamic sects in Hinduism; Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Śāktism. They are based upon their respective Āgamas which are theological treatises and manuals of worship. The *Pañcārātra* literature is the main Āgamic authority for Vaiṣṇavism. Śaivism recognizes twenty-eight Āgamas whereas Śāktism considers seventy-seven Āgamic texts, known as the Tantras, to be authoritative. Although in a wider sense all the above sects, and also the Gāṇapatyas (worshippers of Gaṇapati) and the Sauras (worshippers of the Sun-god), are treated as Tāntric cults, Śāktism is best identified as a Tāntric system. We shall come to it shortly.

4. Cf. *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 11.5.6.1.

Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism have more of a national character as compared to the regional character of Śāktism. The former identifies the highest reality with Viṣṇu who is the preserver-god in the trinity of the Purāṇas. The Vaiṣṇava cult is also known as *Bhāgavata*, *Pañcarātra*, *Sāttvata* and *Ekāntika*. Viṣṇu, with his numerous names, incarnations and his consort Lakṣmī, is the subject-matter of all the Vaiṣṇava scriptures. Places connected with Viṣṇu and Śiva are spread all over the country and are regarded as holy spots. Devotees make pilgrimages to these places and participate in the national life indirectly. The major events in the mythical lives of the deities are celebrated as festivals, and the fasting and feasting connected with these festivals control the physical health of the individual.

Śaivism, although spread all over the country like Vaiṣṇavism, is divided into southern and northern sects. The southern version is represented by the Śaiva-Siddhānta cult based mostly on Tamil texts, and the Lingāyat cult based mostly on Kannada texts. The northern form is known as Kāshmir Śaivism, based on Sanskrit texts. In both these traditions the supreme deity is Lord Śiva, the destroyer-god of the popular trinity. Pārvatī the consort of the Lord, is supposed to be forming an integral part of the body of the Lord. This gives rise to the unique symbol of *Ardha-nārīśvara*, the Andro-gyne, a two-in-one concept of man and woman. The idea, of course, is not exclusively of the Purāṇic age. The *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* exalts Rudra as both female and male (*tvam strī tvam pumānasi*). The marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī forms to subject-matter of literary and religious involvements of the individual. Śivarātri (the Night of Śiva) is the most important festival of the Śaivites. As the figure of Viṣṇu is symbolized in *śālagrāma*, Śiva is popularly worshipped in the form of the *liṅga*.

Śaktism, although treated as an indepen-

dent sub-sect of Hinduism, is closely connected to Śaivism because the consort of Lord Śiva is the chief deity in this cult. Kālī, the Divine Power is represented as the World Mother, and for the realization of this Power Tāntric practices are prescribed. Some of these Tāntric practices are responsible for the prevalent misunderstanding about this cult. The basic idea is that the soul must embrace the world in order to overcome it. Awakening of the coiled psychic power, called *kuṇḍalinī* is supposed to be a sure method for the realization of the Divine. Here the Yogic and the Tāntric practices become somewhat similar. Since the Yoga philosophy does not have any deity as an end in view, the system could not grow as a religious phenomenon, but the various practices of Yoga were adopted by almost all the religious cults in India (and, now, abroad). In this context we shall not deal with the Yoga discipline but we shall briefly discuss the Tantra, since it is almost an integral part of *Śakti*-cult.

Tantra is the Āgamic technique of worship. The *Kāmikā-Tantra* of Śaivism says that Tantra is so called because it elucidates the meanings of the *tattva* and *mantra* and liberates man from bondage.⁵ Post-Vedic Hindu tradition has recognized Tāntric literature to be as respectable as the Vedas. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* quotes the view of Lord Śiva himself in this context. The Lord says: 'Know the scripture which is of the nature of the Vedas to be of the nature of *Kaula* (Tantra).'⁶ It must be noted here that in the opinion of Tāntric teachers the Tantras are specifically meant for this Age, whereas the Vedas, the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas are designed for Satya, Tretā and Dvāpara Ages respectively. The Tāntric

5. तनोति विपुलानर्थान् तत्त्वमन्त्रसमन्वितान् ।
त्राणश्च कुरुते यस्मात् तन्त्रमित्यभिधीयते ।

Kāmika-Agama

6. तस्मात् वेदात्मकं शास्त्रं विद्धि कौलात्मकं प्रिये ।

Kulārṇava-Tantra

system is further popular because the practices are open to all castes and to any sex.⁷

After surveying the major existential characteristics of classical as well as popular Hinduism, we come to take up a representative of the present century who is an illustrious embodiment of all that is best in Hinduism. In the person of Mahatma Gandhi the essential Hinduism becomes amply manifested and its spirit actualized. Although Gandhi's religious outlook is universal, he was convinced that for him the best approach to God was through Hinduism. At one place he says, 'I have no other wish in this world but to find light and joy and peace through Hinduism.'

The commitment of Gandhi to human society at large and his adherence to the Hindu view of life make him the best representative of existential Hinduism in the twentieth century. In his own typical style he has identified Hinduism with the search after Truth through non-violent means. He writes: 'If I were asked to define the Hindu creed, I should simply say, search after truth through non-violent means.'⁸

In an interesting chapter of his book *Hinduism* R. C. Zaehner compares Gandhi with Yudhiṣṭhira, the famous character of the *Mahābhārata*, and holds that Gandhi was in history what King Yudhiṣṭhira was in myth. Gandhi, for him, is the 'conscience of Hinduism that hungers and thirsts after righteousness in defiance of the letter of the law of Gods and men.' In the uplift of the lower and weaker sections of Hindu society, Gandhi has surpassed all individuals and institutions. For the preservation of human dignity of millions of people he staged an unparalleled war against the might of British imperialism, and that too through non-violent methods. His love for truth has challenged all formulations of theological disciplines,

7. सर्ववर्णाधिकारश्च नारीणां योग्य एव च ।

Gautamīya-Tantra

8. *Young India*, April 10, 1924.

and yet he was one of the most God-fearing persons of the century. His commitment to the society and to his life's principle made him work fearlessly, unceasingly, until his death which he faced with a prayer.

His interpretation of the basic philosophy of the Gita and its application in his own life and in the political field make Gandhi one of the truly great Karma Yogins that India has ever produced. In his war against injustice, suffering and exploitation with deep involvement but without any selfish motive, and in his post-Independence activities he proved himself to be the embodiment of all that is best in Hinduism, nay, the best in all religions and cultures.

Now to conclude this brief introduction to the existential characteristics of Hindus, we may point out that Hinduism is a religion that combines contemplation and action, a religion that takes care of the secular as well as the sacred existence of man. The doctrine of Karma, taken in its multiple dimensions, forms the backbone of this tradition. This doctrine connects the individual with his past and the future through the transmigration principle; it makes the person commit to himself and to the society through the theory of *varṇāśrama-dharmas*; it also relates the finite being with the Infinite existence through the doctrine of the four *puruṣārthas*. It has sustained this religion through several thousand years. Its application in the political field by one of Hinduism's greatest sons has brought for Hindus an independent, sovereign democratic State. The doctrine of Karma gives us a hope for the future because we are our own future determinants. Whether interpreted in the light of the teachings of Tilak, Gandhi or Radhakrishnan, Karma serves as the common ground for the people following this pattern of life which existentially begins with the finite and ends in the Infinite, begins with an enquiry into the nature of life and ends in the triumph over death. In a word, Hinduism represents a graduated march towards eternity and infinity.

NAG MAHASHAY

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

There is a saying, 'Gurus are available by the thousands, but real disciples are very few.' A real disciple is one who translates the teachings of his guru into action in his life. Durga Charan Nag was one such rare soul. Once he overheard Sri Ramakrishna say, 'It is very difficult for doctors, lawyers, and brokers to advance on the path to God.' Referring to doctors in particular, he said, 'If the mind dwells on tiny drops of medicine, how can it conceive of the Infinite?' Durga Charan was then practising homeopathic medicine. He noticed that most of the time his mind was reflecting on the faces of his patients, and this disturbed his meditation. He therefore thought that the advice was meant for him. Immediately he resolved, 'I will not make my living from that profession which is an obstacle to the realization of God.' He returned home and that very day threw his medicine box and medical books into the Ganga.

How can we harmonize God and the world? How can we live in this world without being worldly? How can we love and not be attached? Is it necessary to renounce the world for God-realization? What is the duty of a householder? What is the goal of human life? These and other vital questions, Sri Ramakrishna answered for the modern world. He did so, not only through the use of tales and parables, but also by quietly moulding the lives of some perfect exemplars of his teachings. The life Durga Charan Nag is just such a model of an ideal householder. Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated to the modern world through him that a person could lead a married life and at the same time have the highest spiritual experience.

According to Vedantic tradition, the life

of a householder is based on spirituality. He should follow the path of truth and dedicate the results of all his actions to the Supreme Being. It is not an easy path. 'He is a true hero,' said Sri Ramakrishna, 'who can perform all the duties of the world with his mind fixed on God. None but a very strong man can stop to admire a bridal procession moving by while carrying a load of two maunds (164 pounds) on his head.'

It was because of his extraordinary personality that Durga Charan Nag came to be known as Nag Mahashay (Nag is the surname, and Mahashay is a title meaning a great-souled one). An illumined soul is ever contented, ever blissful, ever free. He has no craving for heaven or for the world; he transcends the pairs of opposites. The *Aṣṭāvakra Samhitā* describes the signs of such a great soul:

Those desirous of worldly enjoyment and those desirous of liberation, both are found in this world. But rare indeed is the great-souled one (*mahāsaya*) who is not desirous of either enjoyment or liberation.

Swami Vivekananda once said about him, 'I have travelled many places in the world, but nowhere have I come across such a great soul as Nag Mahashay.'

Durga Charan Nag was born on August 21, 1846 at Deobhog, a small village in that part of Bengal which is now Bangladesh. His father, Dindayal Nag, was a pious man who was employed for a modest salary by a large commercial firm in Calcutta. Although two daughters and another son were also born to Dindayal, only Durga Charan and one of the daughters survived childhood. Durga Charan lost his mother

when he was eight years old and was then brought up by an affectionate aunt. This aunt used to narrate to the boy at night tales from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Sometimes after falling asleep Durga Charan's dreams would vividly reproduce scenes from those tales. Other nights he would see the forms of gods and goddesses in his dreams. In the mornings, when he described these to his aunt, she would be filled with awe.

Durga Charan was a handsome, modest and sweet-natured boy. He was not very fond of sports, but occasionally, at the urging of his friends, he would join them in their games. His love of truth was so great that, even in play or fun, he would never speak a lie. And if any of his friends did so, he would immediately have nothing to do with that person. He was often drafted as a mediator when a dispute arose among his playmates, and the boys, knowing his fairness, accepted his decision without question. Once some mischievous boys insisted that he tell a lie so they could win a game, but Durga Charan refused and consequently they lost. Enraged, they dragged him through a rice field until his body was covered with cuts and bruises. He returned home in the evening in pain but without a word of complaint against anyone.

There was a grade school near his village that offered classes through the eighth grade. Durga Charan completed the course there and wanted to go to Calcutta to continue his education, but, because of financial difficulties, his father was unable to send him. Durga Charan then decided on his own to attend Dacca Normal School, which was ten miles from his home. His aunt was opposed to the idea because it meant that he would have to walk twenty miles everyday, and she could not bear the thought of his undertaking such a hardship. But he was determined, so at last she relented. Every morning she cooked rice and vegetables together for his breakfast, and

when necessary, he bought puffed rice at school for his lunch. Thus for fifteen months, in chilling rain and scorching heat, he patiently walked back and forth the twenty miles. During this time he missed only two days of school. His thirst for knowledge was so great that he did not mind the physical discomforts.

Once, while returning home, Durga Charan encountered a ghost, but he did not become frightened. He thought to himself, 'I have not done any harm to him, so why should he harm me?' As he hurried on his way he heard the loud laughter of the ghost behind him but did not look back. On another occasion, during the rainy season, he fell into a pond from a slippery road. He tried to climb out several times by holding the grass and bushes of the slope but failed. Finally he stopped and began to chant the name of the Lord. After gaining new strength, he pulled himself out of the pond.

One of the teachers of the school noticed the sincerity and determination of Durga Charan and offered him free board and lodging. Durga Charan humbly declined, saying, 'No, sir, I do not feel any difficulty in coming here.' The teacher was amazed and remarked, 'I know not what this boy will be in the future.'

Although Durga Charan did not study in that school for very long, he was able to master perfectly the Bengali language. During this time he wrote several essays on religion and how to build character which were later published in a pamphlet entitled *Advice to Boys*.

When he was fifteen years old his marriage was arranged to a girl of eleven. At that time child marriage was commonly practised in India, although betrothal might be a more accurate term. After the marriage the bride would return to her parents' home, and later she would come to live with her husband when they both came of age. Five months after his marriage, Durga

Charan moved to Calcutta with his father. He began studies in the Campbell Medical School, but, for some unknown reason, discontinued them after a year and a half. Later he studied homeopathy under Dr. Behari Lal Bhaduri, a renowned physician of Calcutta. His success in his profession was immediate. He had a rare intuition in diagnosis and even as a student performed some remarkable cures. He refused to set any fixed fee for his services. Whatever people offered he accepted, provided it was not more than what he considered just. He treated poor patients free of charge, sometimes even giving money to them for food and medicine. Some unscrupulous people took advantage of his kindness, but he did not mind. He served men as God.

Since Durga Charan lived mostly in Calcutta and his wife lived with her family in Deobhog, he seldom saw her. But even when he did visit his family in the village, it is said that he would spend the nights sitting on the branch of a tree in order to avoid her company. It was not that he had no love for her. He was then in his late teens, and he felt that without celibacy one could not realize God. The snares of worldly life could not trap this free soul. His wife died, however, very suddenly and prematurely.

Durga Charan was very much shocked at the news of her death. He started to devote more of his time to the study of the scriptures and to meditation. Often in the evenings he would go to the cremation ground of north Calcutta and stay there until late at night. The funeral pyres on the bank of the Ganga reminded him of the impermanence of human life and the unreality of the world, and he would think: 'Vanity, vanity, all is vanity! God alone is the Truth. Unless He is realized, life is truly a burden. How shall I realize Him? Who will show me the way?'

About this time he met Suresh Chandra Dutta who was a member of the Brahmo

Samaj, a religious and social reform movement which was very popular then in India. They spent much time together in discussions about spiritual life, and although their religious views were poles apart, they developed a close friendship. Suresh was very much impressed with Durga Charan's spotless character, faith and love for God.

Dindayal soon discovered that his son was losing interest in medicine and was practising spiritual disciplines in a cremation ground at night. Naturally this worried him, but he thought that another marriage would cure his son of this religious madness. Consequently, he selected a bride and insisted upon the marriage. Durga Charan pleaded: 'Once before you persuaded me to marry, but that girl died; again you are going to place someone's daughter in the jaws of death! ... Father, give up your resolve. I beg you, kindly do not put me in bondage again. So long as you are living I shall serve you heart and soul; I shall serve you a hundred times more devotedly than your would-be daughter-in-law. Please spare me.'

Dindayal wavered. He thought that if the marriage would not make his son happy then it might be better to cancel it. But no sooner had he agreed to the cancellation than the thought struck him that if his son did not marry, his lineage would come to an end. In his grief over his son, Dindayal quit taking food and wept secretly. Seeing the pitiable condition of his father, Durga Charan reluctantly agreed to the marriage. Before he left for his native village with his father, he went to the holy river Ganga and prayed, 'O Mother, I have heard that you are the purifier of all sins; therefore, if I be defiled by the dirt and dust of the world by becoming a householder, wash them off me.'

As married life does not suit everybody, so also monastic life is not meant for all. God has created human beings with different temperaments. Although Durga

Charan did not want to marry, one should not think that he hated married life. On the contrary, he once said : 'Marriage with the pure desire for progeny does not defile a man. But only saints and sages of yore were fit for such marriages. After observing austere *brahmacarya* (celibacy) for a long time, they would marry and then, having sons like Vyasa, Śukadeva, Sanaka, and Sanatkumāra, they would finally retire to the forest to lead the life of a recluse. But it cannot be so in this Iron Age. Nowadays people do not have sufficient austerity and self-control, so the children born of lust become wicked and immoral.'

After his second marriage, Durga Charan again returned to Calcutta with his father, leaving the young bride, Sharatkamini, in Deobhog. He abhorred the idea of taking service under anyone, so he again settled into the practice of medicine. Once he cured a critically ill patient in the house of his father's employer and in gratitude was offered a silver casket filled with rupees as payment. But he courteously declined to accept it and asked for only twenty rupees (less than three dollars) as his legitimate remuneration. His father was infuriated when he heard of it and said, 'You will never succeed in your profession, I tell you, if you go on this way.' But Durga Charan replied : 'I cannot help it. What I believe to be wrong, I cannot do, come what may. God is Truth. Have you not always taught me to walk in the path of righteousness? In all conscience, how could I have demanded more? False conduct brings ruin.'

An easygoing life is the bane of spiritual aspirants. Ordeals, trials and tribulations help them to grow. It is easy to navigate a ship in a calm sea, but he is the real captain who can save his craft in a storm, Durga Charan's faithfulness to his ideal was tested through marriage and then through money. As a doctor he had a good reputation, but, in spite of it, he remained un-

attached. Lust and greed and name and fame are the greatest obstacles to God-realization. He was confronted with these obstacles at every step of his life, but his efforts to overcome them only made him stronger.

When a wild lion is engaged, he roars and tries his utmost to break out of the cage. Similarly, Durga Charan was desperately trying to sever the bonds of maya. His heart was crying for freedom. Once he met a holy man who told him, 'However strong might be your faith, and intense be your love for God, unless you are initiated by a guru and practice *sādha*na according to his instructions, you cannot have the vision of God.'

The lives of the mystics prove that when intense longing for God dawns in a soul, God responds and makes everything favourable for the devotee. One morning Durga Charan was seated on the bank of the Ganga when his family guru arrived there, unexpectedly, on a boat. When he was asked the reason for his coming to Calcutta, the guru replied, 'I have come at the special command of the Divine Mother to initiate you.' However, the initiation only created in him more hunger for God. He was carried away by divine intoxication and often lost outward consciousness. Once, while he was meditating on the bank of the Ganga, the flood tide rose and swept him into the river. It was several moments before full consciousness returned to him and he was able to swim ashore.

Eventually Durga Charan's young wife, Sharatkamini, came to Calcutta to serve her husband and old father-in-law. Though Dindayal was greatly troubled about his son, his sympathies were more with his daughter-in-law who, it seemed to him, was rejected by her husband. Saratkamini, however, was not disturbed; she knew that her husband was not an ordinary man. His mind always dwelt in God, and no power of maya could tempt or bind him. One

day Durga Charan said to his wife : 'Love on the physical plane never lasts. Blessed is he who can love God heart and soul. Even a little attachment to the body endures for several births, so be not attached to this cage of flesh and bone. Take refuge in the Divine Mother and think of Her alone. Thus your life here and hereafter will be ennobled.'

Sharatkamini herself was like a nun—very pure, dedicated, self-effacing and unselfish. She did not try to possess her husband for her own self-interest; she was simply his co-pilgrim. She was happy to serve her husband and father-in-law and, later, the many devotees that came to their house. Her life shows that when a person comes in close contact with a God-intoxicated soul, that person's mind rises above the physical plane.

After sometime Dindayal decided to retire from his job and live in his village home. Handing over the charge of his Calcutta house and his job to his son, he left for Deobhog with his daughter-in-law. Durga Charan remained alone in Calcutta.

People read about God, talk about God, hear about God, but how many really want to experience Him directly? Durga Charan was, however, completely possessed by the desire to realize God. One day his friend Suresh came to him with news about Sri Ramakrishna, the saint of Dakshineswar. They both decided to go immediately to Dakshineswar and see him. They arrived there about two in the afternoon and inquired about the Master. Pratap Hazra, a strange devotee, informed them that Sri Ramakrishna had gone to Chandannagore and asked them to come back another day. They were terribly disappointed and about to leave when they noticed someone inside a room beckoning them to enter. It was Sri Ramakrishna.

The Master received them cordially and asked them about themselves. During the course of the conversation he advised :

'Live in the world like a mudfish. The fish lives in the mud but its skin is always bright and shiny. Similarly, remain at home unattached and the stain of worldliness will not touch your mind.' He asked them to meditate in the Panchavati grove for some time, and then he took them to see the different temples. As they were leaving, Sri Ramakrishna said to them : 'Come again. A relationship grows through frequent visits.'

The following week they again went to meet Sri Ramakrishna. Welcoming them he said : 'I am very glad to see you. It is for you that I am here.' He beckoned Durga Charan to sit near him and said : 'Don't fear, my child. You have attained a very exalted state.' The Master then sent him out of the room to do some small tasks. When he had left, the Master turned to Suresh and remarked : 'Did you notice? This man is like a blazing fire!'

The next time, Durga Charan went to Dakshineswar by himself. Sri Ramakrishna asked him, 'What do you think of me?' Durga Charan saluted him with folded hands and replied : 'You cannot hoodwink me anymore, Divine Master. Through your grace I have come to know that you are that Supreme One.'

It was a few months after his first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna that Durga Charan gave up his medical practice. Although he had taken over his father's job, he began to devote more time now to meditation and felt a strong urge to renounce the world. With that intention, he one day went to see the Master. As soon as he reached there, the Master said in an ecstatic mood : 'What harm is there in remaining as a householder? Only keep the mind fixed upon God. The householder's life is like fighting from within a fortress. Remain in the world like the ancient king Janaka, unattached. Your life will be an example of how a householder should live.' Durga Charan was speechless. He returned

home obeying the behest of the Master.

It is true that God helps those who help themselves; but it is equally true that God helps those who do not help themselves. According to most theistic religions, self-effort is essential for the beginners while self-surrender is practised by the advanced spiritual aspirants. Self-surrender is considered to be the highest state in spiritual life. Durga Charan had completely surrendered himself to his Master's will, but it gradually became impossible for him to continue his routine work. However, his employer was very kind to the Nag family. An arrangement was made whereby a faithful man of the company would work on behalf of Durga Charan who would then get a commission. All through Durga Charan's life, the financial matters of the Nag family were taken care of by this employer.

Such was the employer's faith and trust in Durga Charan that once, during the time of an epidemic, he wanted to leave the plague-stricken city but was worried about leaving his possessions unattended. Durga Charan was not afraid of the plague, so the employer left everything in his care and fled. Durga Charan accepted the responsibility as a sacred trust and later returned the property to the employer just as he had received it.

An interesting incident happened one day when Durga Charan went to his country home to visit his father. A cow, tied near the corner of the house, was straining to reach a pumpkin plant that was growing nearby, but the rope she was tied with was too short. Durga Charan happened to see the cow, and out of compassion released her so she could eat the plant. Seeing this, Dindayal flew into a rage and said: 'You yourself do not earn money. Instead of helping the household, why are you causing harm to it? You have given up your medical practice. Now how will you maintain yourself?'

'Please don't worry about that. God will take care of me,' replied Durga Charan.

'Yes, I know. Now you will go naked and live on frogs!'

Durga Charan immediately stripped himself, picked up a dead frog from the courtyard and started eating it. He then said to his father: 'Now I have fulfilled both of your commands. Please don't worry about my food and clothing any longer. Chant the name of the Lord, I beg you, and don't think about household affairs in your old age.' Dindayal now thought that his son had indeed become mad and, in order to avert further bizarre behaviour, said to his daughter-in-law, 'Hereafter, let none go against his wishes.'

Durga Charan could not tolerate worldly talk. If anyone started such a conversation, he would skilfully change the subject to spiritual matters. If he happened to become angry with someone, he would mercilessly beat his own body with whatever object he had near at hand as self-punishment. He would not contradict anyone, nor would he indulge in criticizing others. Once he inadvertently made a critical remark about a person and, as soon as he was aware of it, picked up a stone and hit his own head with it until it bled profusely. It took about a month for the wound to heal. He justified this strange action by saying, 'The wicked deserve right punishment.'

His austerity defies description. The *Bhāgavatam* says, 'He who has controlled the tongue has controlled everything.' It is hard to concentrate the mind on God if it is always drawn to good food, and, because of this, Durga Charan was very particular about control of the palate. He would not use any salt or sugar on his food in order to curb his desire for delicacies. Once he lived for two or three days on only rice bran. He often abstained from food and water for days. He gave up using shirts and shoes and wore only a plain cloth and

chadar (cotton shawl). Observing his austerity and self-effacement, Girish Chandra Ghose, a close friend of his, remarked, 'Nag Mahashay has knocked on the head of his rascal ego so severely that it cannot raise its hood anymore.'

When Durga Charan returned to Calcutta, he went to see Sri Ramakrishna and expressed his agony that he had not yet achieved complete self-surrender to the Lord. The Master consoled him, saying, 'If you love "this" (pointing to himself), everything will be all right.'

'Sir, how shall I pass my days at home?'

'You will not have to do anything. Only remain in the company of the holy.'

'I am a simple, uneducated man; how shall I recognize the holy men?'

'Listen, you will not have to look for them. You stay at home, and the real holy people will come to you of their own accord.'

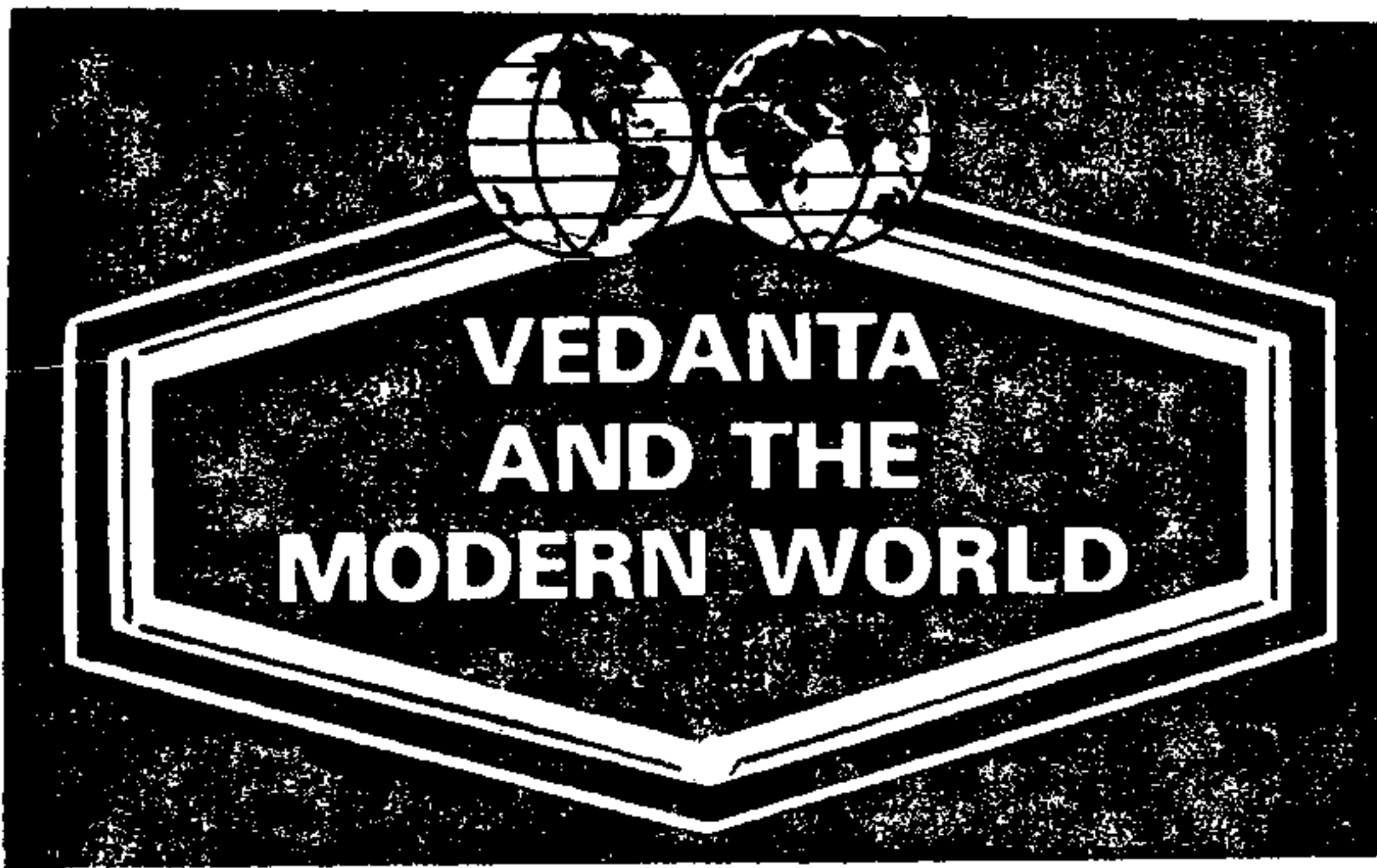
During the last days of Sri Ramakrishna, when he was stricken with throat cancer, Durga Charan rarely went to visit him because he could not bear to see his beloved Master suffer. One day, when he did go to pay his respects to him, Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Oh, you have come. Look, the doctors have failed. Can you do anything to cure me?' Durga Charan reflected for a moment and then resolved to transfer the Master's disease into his own body. He said in an inspired mood: 'Yes sir, I know how to cure you. By your grace I will do it right now.' But as he approached, the Master understood his motive and pushed him away, saying, 'Yes, I know you have that power to cure the disease.'

Just a few days before the Master passed away, Durga Charan went to see him. As he entered the room he heard Sri Ramakrishna express a desire to eat an Āmalaki fruit, which is soothing for the throat. A

devotee replied that none were available as they were out of season. But Durga Charan thought that if the word Āmalaki came from the lips of the Master, then it must be available somewhere, and, without saying anything, he left in search of it. For two days he checked different gardens in the suburbs of Calcutta, and at last on the third day, he appeared before the Master with a few Āmalaki fruits. The Master was very pleased and asked the Holy Mother to cook some rice and hot curry for Durga Charan. But when the food was served he would not touch it; it was his fasting day (*ekādaśī*, that is, the eleventh day of the moon). However, when the Master himself touched the food and sanctified it, Durga Charan took it as *prasād*. And in his exuberant devotion, he not only ate the food, but the leaf-plate as well. From that time on the devotees were careful when serving him *prasād* on a leaf-plate. As soon as he finished the meal they would snatch away the leaf-plate. They even removed seeds and pits from fruit before offering them to Durga Charan, lest he should swallow them also.

When Sri Ramakrishna passed away on August 16, 1886, Nag Mahashay quit eating and remained in bed. Hearing about this, Swami Vivekananda went to his house along with two of his brother disciples. After repeated requests he got up from bed, and Swami Vivekananda told him that they had come there for lunch. Immediately Durga Charan went to the market, brought back groceries and cooked for them, but he would not eat anything himself. When they urged him to eat, he said, 'Alas, how can I offer food to this wretched body which has not yet been blessed with God-realization?' It was with great difficulty that Swami Vivekananda finally persuaded him to take some food.

(To be concluded)



BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND INDIAN MYSTICISM—II

DR. S. K. CHAKRABORTY

(ii) Some Indian managerial and allied phenomena

Having tried so far to offer some glimpses of the precious heritage we possess in the field of human psychology, and for which we should be ever grateful to our ancestors of antiquity, let us have a sampling of the typical issues which beset organizations in India today. The examples cited may not always be directly referring to behaviour and decision-making within organizations. But they all intend to raise the question, what sort of a 'man' is behind the 'manager' or 'man-agement' educator' and his decision-making processes? In all fairness, we must also acknowledge that there are examples of sterling conduct too—but surely they are the exceptions. With due credit and reverence for such actors on the management scene, let us concentrate on the pernicious effects of the 'bad money driving good money out of circulation' syndrome. At the same time, if we seem to be adopting a holier-than-thou stance in narrating certain incidents with unnamed *dramatis personae*, we must confess our own contamination too and offer our apologies to them.

1. Sometime ago a nominee of a financial institution was deputed to take over the

Chief Executive's post of a large sick company. This was to be a temporary measure to last until new professionals were recruited to various posts, including that of a Chief Executive. But the nominee Chief Executive continued to do all in his power to prevent this process with a view to protecting the sudden gains he had tasted in the form of a free chauffeur-driven car, free house, free servants and so on. He became a cause of embarrassment to the financial institution concerned. The few good professionals who were left in the company also started quitting one by one.

2. In the apex training establishment of a large public sector enterprise a certain invited speaker from another public sector unit had preceded another speaker in a training course for giving his lectures. It so happened that both of them were to travel back to Calcutta on the same night by the same train by the same class. As the second speaker was staying at a place in the outskirts of the town, he was picked up by the driver first, and then they drove up to the house of another executive in the town, near to the station, where the first guest speaker was supposed to be having his dinner. The car had reached about forty minutes before the departure time of the train. The driver and the second speaker

waited and waited, and after about twenty minutes the latter advised the driver to go in and inform the gentlemen that it was getting late. He came back telling that they were still drinking, and had not yet begun their dinner. Around five minutes before the departure time, the two gentlemen came out and stood in the courtyard, and one of them was heard telling the other 'who's that fellow sitting in the car?' After that another two minutes of inaudible talking went on between the driver and the two officials. The next moment the luggage of the first speaker, already placed inside, was dragged out of the car. At last at 9 p.m. the car drove off—with only the second speaker. By the time he reached the station the train had steamed off. Somehow, he managed to get a first class berth in the next passenger train. It was a winter night, and he had no bedding. The other guest speaker, who had forgotten time and space in the drinking spree, followed soon and also got a seat in the same compartment. He, however, would offer not a word of apology for the delay and inconvenience he had caused. On the way to the station the disconsolate driver was trembling with fear because he was threatened with punitive official action by the host officer for bringing along another person in the car (although it was a fact that this was an officially allotted duty to him).

3. A young engineer in a public sector plant once took a group of shop-floor workers to task for deliberately working slow during normal hours for earning overtime. He was told off by the group on the ground that they had irrefutable proof that quite a few of the top bosses had small component-making firms in their wives' names, and that these substandard items were being sold at huge profit to the plant.

4. A trade union leader desperately tried to keep himself in the lead by inventing new demands—often in sheer competition with another union leader—knowing very

well in his heart of hearts that the unit itself was gasping for life. Another trade union leader would make his workers accept high work norms without any wage gain in a private sector firm, whereas the same person would ask the workers in a sick firm in the public sector to conform even to the work norms as they stood before a wage rise.

5. An external part-time Chairman of a company usurped and undercut the power and role of a full-time Managing Director, and even went on to form cliques by splitting the Board in order to get another term of Chairmanship.

6. In the headquarters of a large all-India organization there are three strong regional cliques. In the matter of promotions to various levels of officers, the heads of these cliques support in concert the candidates for their respective regions. Unfortunately the fourth region does not figure in this top level alliance, and officers belonging to this region therefore perennially suffer the lot of a Cinderella. And this alliance has seen to it that promotion decisions even at senior levels do not come for review before the Board.

7. The Directors of three profit-centre Divisions of a highly profitable company would award annual increments much more—at times two or three times more—to 'adequate' rated performers, than to 'good' or 'excellent' rated performers. As a result, the much-vaunted 'objective' appraisal system lost all credibility in that company.

8. The fight between two Managing Directors of the same firm regarding succession to the Chairmanship of the concerned industry-association reached such a pitch that it received considerable newspaper coverage, and a retired ex-Chief of the firm had to be summoned from his Swiss sanctuary to play the father and patch up the quarrel.

9. A professor of management once

reviewed together two books on the same subject by two different authors. One of the books was praised to the skies whereas the other was mercilessly criticized—sparing not even its publisher. One crime the latter had committed was to make references to some Indian concepts. Later on it turned out that the first author was the would-be boss of the reviewer who was then planning to migrate from one institution to another.

10. A group of public sector textile mills has a prime responsibility to manufacture controlled cloth only for the rural poor. The Government heavily subsidizes the mills to enable such cloth to be sold to the poor. But only the Apex Cooperative Societies can buy this for distribution. Despite repeated efforts, the group's own sales counters are not allowed to sell them. Consequently, the bulk of such cloth to day goes to traders and through them to totally unintended classes of people, because the Apex Societies are always short of cash. Vested interests would not permit the group to do the selling. And decision-makers apparently cannot resist the pressure of such interests.

We are sure some of our readers have more telling and heart-rending stories to tell. One approach to such issues is to claim that these events are but natural, and we ought not to blow them out of all proportions. But strangely enough, when anyone of these events happens to the lot of an individual or institution he or it does think a whole world about his or its affliction! What a large burden of mute anguish most organizational members conceal in their bosom!

The other approach is to face the issues realistically. In this two complementary options are possible :

(a) to minimize, reduce, such events in organizations—and not to say that they constitute the reality which needs to be accepted as unavoidable ;

(b) to raise the individual through inner growth and training to a level from where he could treat these events with equanimity, transcend them and go on working productively.

In fact, it is in the strategy (b) that lies the path to achieving (a). It is the 'unit', the individual, which matters most, and not so much the structure or the system. Thus, there is no private profiteering in public sector units—the rallying cry for workers' solidarity. Yet do Indian employees pour out their hearts blood for the public sector units where their job security is fool proof? The system changed from private to public sector. But to what effect in terms of employee behaviour? The much-maligned zamindari system has gone into oblivion. Instead, we see the emergence of long chains of bureaucratic and local government agencies. Do the poor villagers really fare much better under this system? The impersonal tyranny, the sucking greed and avarice within each link in the chain absorbs probably a good seventy five percent of the aid and help pumped in from the top. At least in those days one could hope to change the heart of a zamindar and make him perform great acts of social charity. And many were inherently good too. But how do you motivate a faceless, heartless bureaucracy? Again the question boils down to that of the individual—not the system as such. *This, in our view, is one more fundamental plank of the Indian thought structure. We should hold back the reins of galloping institutional engineering. It is the unit—the individual—who deserves attention in the minutest details.* Even if systems or institutions or structures have to be changed, what to change? how to change? when to change? how much to change?—all such decisions necessarily emanate from the individual. What is his quality, what are the foundations of his mental make up, what is his source of nourishment for the heart? If the vast

majority of Indian elite engaged in the task of changing India's face is to be judged by the kind of reading habits it displays while on Indian Airlines flights (James Hadley Chase, Debonair Probe, Stardust, Alistair Maclean and all that stuff), one cannot be so sure whether we have wholesome mental food habits.

(iii) *Mysticism—applying the stepdown transformer*

We are aware that our readers may be eager for more down-to-earth exposition of our main theme than what has been attempted so far. The charge of being obscure and intangible might well be levelled by them. So, there is a need to 'step-down' many of the high-voltage concepts to more directly apprehensible and usable notions in our daily activities. But before we do so, let us quote a representative piece of sociological writing on the very broad subject of tradition (and we would prefer to substitute 'heritage' for tradition) versus modernity in which management is also imbedded :

... the problem of industrial change in the traditional culture pattern of India, to my mind, should be analysed with reference to the social-structural processes involved and their functional significance.... The existing Indian culture pattern, to the extent it is traditional, has no rigid stability about it. It allows scope for progressive synthesis which goes in favour of industrial change. However, the fact that the two patterns of traditional culture and industrial change involve different values, norms of action, and principles of organisation, should not be lost sight of....¹⁵

Our readers will agree that the paragraphs written so far in this paper are at least no more vague, no more distract, than the excerpt just reproduced.

¹⁵. Singh, Y.; 'Traditional Culture Pattern of India and Industrial Change' in *Tradition and Modernity in India*, ed. A. B. Shah; et. al., (Bombay : Manaktalas: 1965), p. 69.

In section (ii) we had suggested five general criteria of good decision-making.¹⁶ They were not of a relative nature in the sense that they might apply to one culture, and not to another; or to one phase of a society's history, and not to the other. Let us now offer a series of propositions with mystic roots but of direct practical relevance to decision-making, especially in the context of the human side of the organization :

(1) *All our powers—to act, think, reason, feel—are rooted in the Divine or Cosmic Energy, and this is all within each one of us.*

That is to say, unlike the concept of 'free will' in Western philosophy according to which each person has his own independent free will with no common principle to harmonize and unify them, the Indian concept of free will is that it is nothing but a reflection of the one universal, transcendental Cosmic Free Will. If we begin to teach ourselves to seek nourishment from this source, we shall commence strengthening and unifying the powers within and amongst us. Each one of us can experience this Cosmic energy at the back of all our powers by sitting quietly for a few minutes and observing how all our basic functions of living go on in spite of ourselves as it were. Of course, a first requisite for this process is an abiding sense of humility. The type of intellectual training process we normally undergo today does not foster this trait of human character.

(2) *This Cosmic Energy can be harnessed through deep concentration; deep concentration is essential for good or effective decision-making; such concentration can come to a pure mind only; a pure mind is largely independent of external sense gratifications.*

External sense gratification includes love of power, love of money, hunger for praise,

¹⁶. See the first instalment of this article in *Prabuddha Bharata*, September, '82.

temptations of the flesh, and so on. They are selfish in nature, and always produce opposite reactions too. Selfish minds are not pure and hence not poised. Therefore the clarity and comprehensiveness emanating from concentration do not come to play their role in decision-making. Let us ask a candid question of ourselves: for how many moments in a day do we consciously try to raise thoughts that are pure and calm, serene and elevating, forgiving and grateful? These are the maintenance functions of our soul. Without them how can our intellectual machine—on which we obviously depend so much—function well as manifested through good decisions?

A practical way to go about this is to engage in the task of training ourselves for equanimity (*sthitaprajña* of the Gita). Thus, if I am praised and I lap it up as if I deserved it fully, then I should equally well accept a criticism as being fully deserved. If I am not grateful for a praise, why should I be angry for a criticism? If at ten places I have been honoured and warmly welcomed, why should indifference or even total non-recognition at the eleventh place make me fume with anger and hurl curses? In fact, our mystics advise us to seek our haters, our detractors and to regard them as our benefactors and teachers. Sincere practice of such an approach over a period of time will surely bring about more balance and poise, will conserve energy by making us less selfish, and by helping to have a purer mind and concentration. And how great will be our delight to see that after a time these very persons have transformed their disposition towards us. The change has been wrought unseen.

(3) *All our work is a prayer, a worship of the Divine or Cosmic Energy.*

The practical meaning of this mystic principle is as follows. Whenever we start any work, any time of the day, anywhere, we should steady ourselves at its commence-

ment and say to ourselves within that this is the work of the Divine, and is being offered to Him. The Cosmic Energy is thus invoked at the start. When that piece of work ends, let us again gratefully remember the Cosmic Energy which enabled us to do the job. This process is true of a writer of an article, a wage negotiator, a finance executive, a works manager, a doctor, a teacher going to the classroom to deliver a lecture, a speaker rising to address an audience, and so on. Thus in many Indian homes even today food is first offered to the Divine before people start eating it. Can we not bring this reverential attitude in to our lavish parties—especially when millions go hungry in this country? This is likely to reduce wastage, turn our minds to the poor, and make us feel grateful to the Divine for letting us have our full. What is there to sneer at in this 'tradition'?

Today work is indeed worship for most of us—but it is mostly the worship of our own egos, of our own narrow, selfish interests. Only when we can steadily begin to go beyond such constraints and do it for, and with the help of, the Divine, will it truly become a worship in the Indian mystic sense.

(4) *It is the direction and attitude of the mind which is of far greater consequence than the act itself.*

This principle may be explained first with a parable. Once two bosom friends were walking along a busy street in a town. It was just past twilight. Presently they heard beautiful music from a society woman's parlour. One of the friends suggested that they should go in and spend a good time. The other did not agree and said he would rather visit a temple. So, the first friend went in. The second friend walked up a few more paces and came by a temple where the evening prayer bells were chiming. He was glad, and went in. After a while the

first friend began telling himself : 'How good is my friend. He is in the temple, thinking and hearing of God. And how vile I am to spend my time in low sense pleasures with this woman.' The second friend too was thinking thus. 'O, what a fool I am to be here. My friend is having a jolly good time there, while I am just watching this old priest waving his lights.' While both were thus lost in their thoughts, they suddenly died. The God of Death sent His messengers to take back the two souls. The first friend's soul was taken to heaven, while that of the second to hell!

Suppose a boss is treated insolently by a young officer. He responds to this by a formal act of issuing a notice calling for an explanation of the young man's behaviour. But what is his mental attitude at that time? If he is doing it out of anger and spite, and preparing the way for a showdown or penalty for the subordinate, then the psychological wave pattern for rectification by the latter will not have been set in motion. On the other hand, if the boss were within himself, keeping his cool, and uttering calm prayers for a mental transformation of the subordinate while issuing the notice, it would be an ideal case of mystic approach to managing the situation. It would be profoundly good for both. And the whole process may not take, more than a few minutes to carry out. But initially, hard and sincere practice is necessary, notwithstanding some failures in the beginning. Similarly, in a poor country like ours, with so much unemployment around, all of us at one time or another, must have been approached by hapless young men for jobs. We know that in spite of all sincerity we cannot do anything for most of them. But then, can we not each day at some fixed hour pray to the Divine for their well-being and mental strength? This kind of mental help, our mystics say, is no less tangible than physical help which we often find unable to render.

(5) *Always tell yourself that everyone else connected with a problem or a situation has done his bit to solve or improve it. The rest of whatever is left undone is your responsibility and yours alone.*

This is a wonderful mystic response to working with and amongst people in large organizations. We talk, hear, and read so much about teamwork. Yet we seem to remain for ever in the state of Tantalus so far as its realization is concerned. The above principle is an antidote to finding excuses and alibis, a check on our natural tendency to pass the buck on to one's subordinates. And it offers the strength of the conviction that the support of the Supreme Divine Power is there to back up one's efforts. Here is an effective way for the cultivation of a sense of responsibility and self-dependence by connecting oneself with the Divine within—the higher Self.

This mystic conviction and commitment to oneself also contains the answer to a very common question asked by educated Indian adults: what can *they* do if the society around them is open to such and such vile customs or practice. This attitude is downright escapist, and promises only a vicious self-perpetuating cycle. Each one of us, despite various limitations around must pick up at least one lofty principle and struggle to put it into practice. Seeing this, others will pick up courage. Each obstacle can thus be converted to an experiment in self-growth.

(6) *Decisions cannot be objective unless the subjective element is assiduously cleansed and trained.*

The most apt managerial situation for this mystic principle is that of manpower recruitment, promotion, transfer, rewards and the like. We are aware that however sophisticated and objective our recruitment and appraisal systems may be, very little headway has been made in this country in raising the credibility of these systems in the

eyes of the common people. Regional, linguistic, family and political strings thoroughly entangle the whole range of such decisions. The truth is that fine instruments are of little use if the user does not possess the refined sensitivity to employ them with grace and large-heartedness. A steel knife can be used for dressing vegetables or fruit, but it can also be used to kill a man. It all depends on the user, the training, purity and loftiness of his mind. In a country like India, with so many sub-nations inhabiting it, the only solution to this class of problems lies in absorbing the spirit of harmony through a superordinate reference point found in her heritage, namely, the native and time-tested faith in the Divine. This alone is the common keynote which can still string together all such diverse notes by a slow but sure process of inner purification and restoration to health of the subjective element. If the fear of divine retribution through Karma is still something which lurks in the souls of Indians, let us reactivate it and bring it to the fore. This will be to the ultimate good of all in our secular and managerial actions and decisions.

(7) Do not go out of your way to seek work or position. Do whatever comes to you with utmost dedication. All the rest will follow automatically.

This guideline is not a counsel for passivity. Instead, if properly understood, it will prevent us from the wastage of energy and destruction of poise entailed in being aggressively ambitious. We shall then be able to concentrate much more on those decisions which are right now before us. Thus shall we acquire the strength of patience which should make us more and more capable of coping with even more complex and long-range decisions. Someone has put it with remarkable felicity: 'We all run after the throne, the king. Let me assure you that you lose nothing by stopping that chase. Let it be understood

that as soon as you are ready, the crown will reach your head of itself.'

(8) Better decision-making commences as soon as one begins realizing and feeling in the depths of one's heart that one is Free.

Moments of quiet and candid reflection will tell all of us how bound and fettered and constrained we are at every moment of our waking state. My neighbour has a car, how can I be without one? One divisional director has two air-conditioners in his office room, how can I be content with only one? He is a factory accountant with twenty five subordinates; I am a corporate accountant with only ten subordinates—how ludicrous is this? (The poor corporate accountant chooses not to see that managing more men is much more complex too!) The marketing manager of another company has a chauffeur-driven car, whereas I—also a marketing manager of this company—get just a car. Isn't that patently unfair? A thousand and one such issues constantly bristle in our minds. We resort to actions and decisions, goaded by such feelings, which are unbecoming of the level and status we belong to. They cut into the roots of our sense of dignity. We lose our inner freedom—the real, enduring freedom.

The essentially Indian mystic response to this phenomenon is this: our training and teaching have told us to learn to live with and on as little as possible (mind you, this counsel is for the readers of this kind of an article and not for the poor, hungry, destitute millions), whereas people in the West are taught how much more they need to live on. At least one person in today's context in this country has had the clarity and courage to express this conviction—although he is a highly reputable economist himself.¹⁷

¹⁷. Rao, V. K. R. V. in *Tradition and Modernity in India*, *ibid*, p. 168.

There is a school of thinking among Indian managers which says that such matters of mental discipline and character should be taken for granted by members of business organizations. We are sorry to disagree with this view. It is precisely these issues which contaminate our behaviour and decisions in organizations in a dominant and real way. We should humbly recognize them and begin to do something about them, rather than shutting our eyes to them and imagining that they do not practically affect us.

(9) Each good done by me to someone else is a good done unto me; each harm done to someone else is also a harm done unto me.

The first part of the principle ought not to be interpreted in the sense of decisions and actions taken under the spell of sycophancy and personal motives. The purifying and elevating effects of the rule will be revealed only when you are able to do good to one who does not belong to your regional or linguistic group, or caste or political flag; or one who is your subordinate who wields no power over you, or from whom you have no personal gain to reap; or one who is your detractor or harbours a grudge against you. To take a concrete decision problem, if you write a book, will you dedicate it to your Director only so long as you are an Assistant Professor and he is in office; and not when he retires and you are already a full Professor? Another example: when a politician or a trade union leader asks farmers or factory workers not to repay their loans or not to accept productivity bargains, is his intention to do good to them or is it to assure his own re-election? Calculated goodness—especially with a focus on self-interest—loses its potency for right decision-making.

Suppose we work out a plan to deceive a financial institution into lending money or an artificially low-cost estimate project, or

conceive a scheme to catch an unwary colleague in a trap, or a bank manager to encash a forged cheque. In doing any of these things the mental processes we undergo are the torture and harm we do to ourselves. And we suffer all this even before the intended but unwary victim is harmed by our deed. But somehow such inner consequences seem to have lost their smiting power. Some of us do feel their itchings, yet we choose to ignore them in our decisions almost as if in spite of ourselves.

(10) Decisions in the sphere of long-range perspective planning need more of direct intuitive apprehending power than of an information system.

An organized information system certainly helps in the detailed work of corporate planning. But all major break-through decisions in planning have, in the beginning or in the end, been the products of intuitive, synthetic grasp of a total reality in a spell of effortless spontaneity. Too much of formal, professional education and training certainly chisels our analytical, differentiating power. But most often this is achieved at the cost of our synthetic, integrating power. The latter can be preserved and strengthened by consciously attempting to loosen the tight grip of reasoning or intellectual power at periodic intervals, and to let our mind float as it were in a state of natural repose, waiting to receive the intimations from a higher, superconscious plane. It is by this process that our decisions can achieve much deeper and extensive backward and forward linkages. Once again experimentation is required.

(11) Our verbal, and perhaps written, communication to others should be consciously directed towards their hearts, than to their ears or eyes. This will improve the effectiveness of communication.

As a part of the managerial process we are often trying to influence the decisions and actions of others. And for this we

take the help of communication. Now, any action or behaviour ultimately needs the support of the heart—the feeling behind. Mere intellectual absorption is not a sufficient condition to transform a communication received into action. Its percolation from the brain down to the heart is a prerequisite for the expected action or decision to result. So, if we direct the communication—say while addressing a group of employees on the necessity of timeliness and discipline at the work place, or on the merits of the participative style of management—to the hearts, besides the ears, of the audience, there is a much better chance of these ideas taking firmer roots in a larger number of minds. For one thing, speaking to the heart of another will purify and strengthen our own conviction about those ideas. For another, we will be able progressively to eliminate the communication of false, make-believe, dishonest ideas to our listeners. We shall begin to cut down on playing games! (The message in this paragraph is substantially different from that in populist transactional analysis training for communication).

(12) *All decision-making—managerial or otherwise—will be better if we maintain close surveillance on the nature of what we conceive as real.*

When we were toddlers, the world of dolls was our conception of reality. What quarrels and cries did we not indulge in amongst ourselves as children over possession of this or that doll! When we grew into adolescents the playground seemed to be the only reality around which our mind revolved. Lost was the world of toys and dolls. When we became adults and entered employment or work, our jobs, promotions, perquisites, became our world of reality. And thus it goes on. With each stage of mental growth our conception of reality undergoes a transformation. From a distance we are even able to enjoy a hearty laugh contemplating

our childish inanities or youthful fancies. A common feature all along is that none of these conceptions of reality endures and satisfies us for long (not even Maslowian self-actualization which is but a faint shadow of altruistic self-growth through working with superconscious insight—the path and goal indicated by Indian psychology). Those who have progressed further than we in their mental growth may be possessing a grasp of reality from which they could equally well laugh at our immersion in the problems of fame and name, power and pelf, promotions and perquisites. Where is any flaw in this logical possibility? Each succeeding stage in such a growth pattern is able to take a more detached, poised and balanced perspective than the previous one. Obviously then more mature decisions about problems pertaining to these relatively lower-order stages can be taken by those who are in the next higher stage. But if all are afflicted by the same illness, who heals whom?

Thus, if we make it a practice of reading general books on astronomy, or religious philosophy and spiritual psychology (written by people with some realization and not mere scholars), or social history—in addition to TA, MBO, DCF, PERT—we shall be able to lift our minds to progressively higher levels of comprehension, wider vistas of perception of unity, and greater degrees of integral perspective. Only then shall we slowly be able to dissolve the petty barriers and obstacles to good decision-making. Only then shall we begin to cease behaving like the nursery rhyme pussy cat who goes to London to see the Queen, but ends up by watching the rat under the Queen's chair!

(13) *Conflicts in human organizations stem from our natural propensity for divergences in respective relative standpoints on a given issue: resolution of such conflicts can best be achieved on an enduring basis*

if these divergent relative standpoints can be merged or dissolved in a higher, more absolute perspective.

Here is a striking example of such mystic resolution of conflict in an Indian organization. In one of the larger and older branch centres of this organization a long simmering conflict between two groups of resident members, all very highly dedicated and self-sacrificing in deed and spirit with respect to the manner of carrying out social service, had burst out to the surface. The local head's efforts for reconciliation were of no avail. Nor was much change caused by the advent of a very senior emissary from the headquarters. Rational, intellectual analysis and arguments made no breakthrough. As a last resort, the President himself came down from the headquarters. His style of dealing with the situation was extraordinary. He never discussed anything relating to the dispute amongst the feuding members who were in a most pugnacious mood. Instead, he increased the frequency and duration of prayers, meditations and spiritual discussions and insisted on all the inmates joining these collective activities. Within a few days the flames of anger were evidently getting quenched. At the end of a week members of both the

groups were again seen talking to one another, and working together. The President had been successful in elevating the consciousness of the quarrelling inmates to such a pitch of loftiness and unity that from that height each one was able to realize the pettiness of their quarrels. They spontaneously forgot their disputes and forgave one another. Teamwork and cohesion was restored once more.

It would be unwise to jump to the conclusion that such an approach is relevant only to social service or similar organizations, and not to commercial or economic or governmental organizations. For instance, in the field of industrial relations we have been experimenting with all kinds of institutional administration with the help of conciliators, arbitrators, appellate tribunals and all that. Similarly, there are many other issues which are purely intra-organizational, as for example, a boss and a subordinate locked in a long dispute over annual performance rating and increment awards. Is such a prophylactic as mentioned above altogether irrelevant in such cases? It is our conviction that sooner or later we shall have recourse to such enduring spiritual approaches in business management.

(To be concluded)

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE YOGA-SUTRA OF PATANJALI: BY GEORG FEUERSTEIN. Published by Dawson and Sons Ltd., Cannon House, Folkestone, Kent England, 1979. Pp. xiii+179. £10/-.

This new translation of Patañjali's Yoga aphorisms is a sequel to the author's earlier work *The Essence of Yoga* (1974) published by Rider and Company. The basic approach of Feuerstein to Patañjali's system has been foreshadowed in that work, which provides an admirable introduction to Yoga in all its aspects.

In the present work every aphorism is given a

transliteration, word-for-word meaning and the overall meaning. To these the author has added copious comments. A long introduction clarifies some philosophical concepts of Patañjali. There is an overview of topics at the beginning of the book, and at the end is a continuous translation of all the aphorisms. Apart from a general index, a word-index to the *Yoga-Sūtra* has also been added. To a student of Yoga all these features are of great help.

Feuerstein says his purpose is to provide 'an unadulterated translation... based on the insights of critical scholarship'. The *Yoga-Sūtras* for all

their apparent simplicity are admittedly difficult to understand. No translator has so far succeeded in giving a translation that satisfies all people. Feuerstein's attempt cannot be described as the best, but it is certainly an improvement on many of the existing translations. It has certain distinctive features. One is the simple and easy to understand style. His deep knowledge of both Eastern and Western philosophies and modern psychology has enabled him to interpret yogic ideas in a refreshingly original and modern way. He has perhaps made Patañjali closer to the modern man than any one else has done.

The second distinguishing feature of Feuerstein's translation is the use of special word-equivalents, some of which he has coined. *Citta* is translated as 'consciousness' (the usual word is 'mind stuff'), *vṛtti* as 'fluctuation', *samskāra* as 'subliminal activators', *pratyaya* as 'presented idea', *samādhi* as 'ecstasy' and so on. The author hopes that the reader 'will gradually realize that the apparent awkwardness of such terms as the above-mentioned is redeemed by their inherent usefulness in terms of precision and ultimate clarity'.

A third important feature of Feuerstein's work is the originality of some of his views. For instance, he gives to Patañjali's whole system the term 'Kriyā Yoga'. According to him the term Aṣṭāṅga Yoga by which Patañjali's system is traditionally known cannot be its proper designation. Regarding the place of Īsvara in the Yoga-Sūtra he says that 'Īsvara, like the *puruṣa* and like many other concepts, stands in fact for a certain class of experiences'. On the whole, the comments he offers on the aphorisms are stimulating and interesting, though not always convincing. He has boldly criticised not only modern interpreters but also ancient scholiasts like Vācaspati and Vyāsa. It is to be admitted that some of his criticisms carry conviction, and even where they do not, they serve to make the ideas clearer. His translation of *vikalpa* as conceptualization is correct, and his interpretation of *nirodha*, *nidra* and *smṛti* is illuminating. However, the terms *pratyaya*, *samskāra*, *karmasaya*, etc. need further clarification.

The book gives clear evidence of the fact that Feuerstein is one of the few modern interpreters who have got some deep understanding of Patañjali. I am happy to recommend this book to all those who are seeking a readable modern translation of the *Yoga-Sūtras*.

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MEDITATIONS : BY SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI. Bihar School of Yoga, Monghyr, Bihar 811 201. 1981. P. 299. Rs. 50.

In spite of its sub-title, indicating that the book concerns Meditations from the Tantras, the work under review covers a wider range. It is almost encyclopaedic in its scope inasmuch as it deals with Meditation in every major yoga, in the past and in the present times. The author highlights the coming together of Science and Spirituality in the field of meditation, for instance in the biofeedback techniques. He pays tribute to the services of Carl Jung in extending the area of research in modern psychology.

Meditation, it is pointed out, is intended to establish a link with the Higher Consciousness, at first in special periods and eventually all the time. In the process, meditation has a therapeutic value which even non-believers can try. The subject of brain waves, for instance Beta, Alpha, Theta and Delta is treated in the simplest language. While on the topic of DNA, Swamiji makes a very pertinent observation: 'Scientists have taken the pattern of the DNA molecule as being the instrument that guides life along certain directions; they have missed the underlying principle behind the DNA molecule itself: that is, consciousness.' The molecular structure is merely the executor of the will of the cell consciousness (p. 24).

There are illustrated instructions on the various meditative poses, Mudras and Bandhas. Techniques of Prāṇayama are developed step by step. The role of meditation in the spiritualization of the mind, the subtilization of prāṇa, and purification of the physical body is discussed in depth. While on Nāda Yoga, the author cites a passage from the *Bhāgavatam* :

'Lord Kṛṣṇa left his place at midnight and went into a jungle. It was a fullmoon night of the first month of winter. He began to play the flute. The echo of the flute spread in the calm and undisturbed atmosphere. Music rose from the wild jungle and it was heard by the Gopis. And when they heard the sound of the flute, they immediately left their houses and their husbands and forgot all their duties and past life. They ran without consideration to the place where the nāda from the flute was emanating. They started dancing about the flute bearer. After sometime it so happened that each found herself dancing with the original Kṛṣṇa.' He explains the significance: 'Kṛṣṇa represents the higher consciousness and his flute playing is the nāda sādhana. The senses (Gopis) forget the outer reality (their

husbands) and withdraw from their sense organs to dance around the divine *nāda* or the flute-like sound. The flute sounds belong to the *pasyanti* state—actual sounds are not heard but the frequencies, which are compared with the sounds of lutes and bells, are sensed.

Among the themes given for 'Abstract meditations' is one from Inayat Khan:

When I open myself to the outer world,
I feel myself as a drop in the sea;
But when I close my eyes and look within,
I see the whole universe as a bubble
raised in the ocean of my heart.

A solid work of reference, this treatise calls for deep study and daily practice.

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RETREAT INTO ETERNITY (*an Upanishad book of aphorisms*): BY SWAMI AMAR JYOTI. Published by Truth Consciousness, Gold Hill, Salina Star Route, Boulder, Colorado 80302. 1981. Pp. 128. \$ 10.95. Available in India from Jyoti Ashram, 87-91, Lulla Nagar, Pune 411 001. Rs. 60.

Swami Amar Jyoti is a spiritual master born in India in 1928. He is the founder-president of two Ashramas in India and four in the United States including two communities for lay disciples.

Questions like what our true nature is and how to realize it, have been haunting the human mind from time immemorial. In fact, the answers to these queries form the core of the Vedanta philosophy. This book presents these Vedantic insights into the nature of life and reality with the help of modern outfits like fresh aphorisms, interesting anecdotes and suggestive pictures. The aphorisms, though not sequentially arranged, were originally communicated by the author to his disciples either through discourses or through letters. The mature reflections of an illumined mind, these aphorisms have vitality and freshness. There are 70 beautiful illustrations including 35 full colour photographs, mostly of natural scenery; each picture is accompanied by a set of thought-provoking statements. For example, the picture of a majestic lion gazing out of its cage bears the text: 'God has made us free. Be sure.' (p. 93) The whole book represents a novel and highly effective way communicating spiritual truths to modern minds.

This book is meant for repeated reflection. The reviewer can do no better than place before the readers a few of the illuminating thoughts of

Swami Amar Jyoti. 'The greatest authority is truthfulness.' 'Realize your perfection within and you will see everything perfect.' 'Morality is the by-product of spirituality.' 'Prayer is for your own opening rather than to make God hear; He already knows.' 'Don't try to conquer; realize unity.' 'To be humble is to be courageous.' 'Habit is a dead branch on the tree of life.' 'No God would ever wish that you work so much or in such a way that you forget Him.' 'To the degree you've attained peace you'll find it wherever you go.' The book ends with a telling final aphorism, 'Retreat into eternity, and awake in the ecstasy', which sums up the message of the whole book.

This book does not enter into any philosophical controversies. Rather it intends 'to reveal the Eternal Truth in a spirit both ancient and freshly creative' so as 'to give each reader at least a glimpse into Eternity.' Direct in approach, simple in language, universal in spirit, deep in import, excellent in get-up, the book is bound to leave an indelible impression upon the minds of its readers. There is, however, one printing mistake on p. 97.

If you are searching for a delightful and ennobling gift book for presentation to a friend or a relative, you can unhesitatingly choose this book. It will provide him or her perpetual inspiration and guidance, and will be cherished as something of everlasting value.

SWAMI MUKTINATHANANDA
Belur Math

GITA MAKARANDA: BY SWAMI VIDYAPRAKASHANANDA. Published by Sri Suka Brahma Ashram, P.O. Sri Suka Brahma Ashram, Kalahasti, Dist. Chittoor (A.P.). 1980. Pp. 1123. Rs. 30.

It is easier to attempt to write a commentary upon the *Brahma-sūtras* and Upaniṣads than to attempt a commentary on *Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā*. Yet numerous commentaries have been appearing from time to time on the Gita. Many of them are of a superficial nature. Only a few commentators of mature intellect try to dive deep into the ocean of the Gita and bring out gems of purest ray serene. Such works alone satisfy the spiritual thirst of Sādhakas. One of such important commentaries that have appeared in recent times is the *Gita Makaranda* written by Swami Vidyaprakashananda of Sri Suka Brahma Ashram. The fact that the *Gita Makaranda* has undergone two editions of 2,000 copies each in one year shows how eagerly it has been sought after by religious-minded people.

Every commentary has its own peculiar method of approach and emphasis. The test of a worthy commentator lies in presenting before its readers the pregnant ideas of the original author. Swamiji has been successful to an appreciable extent in this direction. The commentary makes pleasant reading, devoid of pendency.

The more than one hundred pages of introduction give a succinct account of the whole Gita in a lucid style. This in itself deserves to be published as an independent booklet, and if done so, would attract extensive readers.

The significance of the title of each chapter and its central ideas are explained at the beginning of each chapter. The coherence of each discourse to the next one is also lucidly stated. This rebuts the cheap criticism about the inconsistency of the chapters. Every verse in Devanāgarī script is followed by a transliteration, word-by-word meaning, a literal translation and an illuminating commentary. The commentary, besides containing special explanation of significant words, has also posed certain questions before the readers and answered them for the better understanding of the Gita. In a way, this seems to be the special feature of this commentary. Swami Vidyaprakashanandaji's ardent desire is that every reader should become spiritually elevated after a study of the Gita. His concern for common man is clear throughout the work. It would have been more beneficial for ardent readers, had the commentator briefly adverted to the anecdotes connected with the four types of devotees like Gajendra, Devahūti, Dhruva and Prahlāda while explaining the verse 7.16. There are a few other occasions also which deserve a more detailed explanation, as for example, sloka 18.78.

The Gita is an ever fresh, fully blossomed lotus. Its appeal is universal. The sensuous caterpillars of human souls turn themselves into butterflies by a meticulous and faithful study of the work. Every human being, a *nara*, is to become a better human being, a *narottama*, and then should realize himself as no other than Nārāyaṇa. This evolution is possible by a scrupulous study of the Gita, followed by a sincere attempt to translate its ideas into everyday life. *Gita Makaranda* has thrown open the flood-gates, releasing the immortal message of the Gita for true seekers of God.

The book *Gita Makaranda* was first published in Telugu in 1963. The present book under review is a commendable translation into English by Prof. Durbha Rama Murthy done in 1980.

It would be more fitting if the translator's name is also given on the inner title page, in as much as he is instrumental in extending the benefit of the work to the English reading public.

The absence of diacritical marks in such a work would confuse a reader who is not already familiar with the Gita. This can be rectified in the next print. It would be grammatical to substitute 'Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā' for 'Sri Bhagawat Gita' extensively occurring in the work.

The lovers and devotees of Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā are deeply indebted to Swami Vidyaprakashanandaji for his sweet and thought provoking commentary. They can repay the debt only by a constant study and thorough assimilation of the ideas contained in the work.

The price is quite reasonable.

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VEDANTA IN PRACTICE: BY SWAMI PARAMANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-600 004. 1981. Pp. 110. Rs. 5.

The book is one those little gems of Swami Paramananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. As the title suggests, it is an inspiring invitation to live the highest truths of Vedanta in daily life. In it the author leads the spiritual seeker to the glory and joy of Self-realization in the painstaking, affectionate and patient manner of an enlightened teacher, who indeed he was.

The first five chapters of the book serve as a complete musical piece for developing the central theme—learn to build a moral life, learn to meditate, realize thy divinity. The music develops in a rising crescendo, always harping on the themes of purity, love of God, patient acquisition of higher spiritual habits, living a meditative life and earnest spiritual practice in unbroken continuity. Every line is a note of urgency for self-realization. Any intelligent reader can see that this is no intellectual treatise on the subject of Vedanta, but something reminiscent of the lines of the Bible—'Out of the fullness of the heart speaketh the mouth.' Every line reveals the profundity of the teacher's realization.

The finale is an orchestration of some of the powerful and conflagrant lines from the Upaniṣads, The Dhammapada, and the poems of Swami Vivekananda and Śamkarācārya. This is a book meant not just to be read but also to practise, for one who is a pilgrim on the path to God.

SWAMI JITATMANANDA
Ramakrishna Math
Hyderabad

THE MESSAGE OF THE RIVER : BY SWAMI SASTRANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sector 15-B, Chandigarh-160 015. 1981. Pp. 36. Price not mentioned.

This is a refreshing little dramatic narrative supported by music and suitable incantations from our scriptures. Meant for performance by school or college students, the little booklet offers the message of purifying mankind by means of the benign and elevating influences of Nature. The central figure, the River, which in some ways also means the river of life, is represented by the holy river Gaṅgā and its sisters like Yamunā having an age-old reputation for their purifying power. On the one hand, the booklet is an echo of the ancient Indian call to humanity to commune with nature, which is, in Wordsworth's words, 'neither harsh nor grating, though of ample powers to chasten and subdue.' The river not only chastens and subdues our lower self, but elevates us to Self-Knowledge. On the other hand, the booklet is an invocation to the 'new race of purifying saints' and national purifiers represented in modern times by the holy trinity of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Saradā Devi and Swami Vivekananda. In these days of environmental pollution, water pollution and above all the pollution of human values, this little book will certainly infuse in the younger generation today a veneration for Nature and its pulsating life, a belief and faith to which Indians have been traditionally conditioned throughout ages, but which seems to be fast disappearing from the land.

The excellent introduction by J. S. Hathi, the Ex-Governor of Punjab, serves as the right prologue for the theme of the book.

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

THE VAGABOND OR QUEST ETERNAL: BY K. T. NARASIMHACHAR, Published by Vivekananda Kendra, 3, Singarachari Street, Triplicane, Madras-600 005. 1981. Pp. xiii + 75. Rs. 6.

The book is a collection of seventy short poems mostly reflective in nature and dealing with the sudden spiritual revelations, which probably come to many sensitive souls sometime or other in life, but get powerful expression only from poets like the author of this book. All the poems shed the light of Vedanta, especially the Vivekananda Vedanta which inspires one to spurn and rise above the values of a self-seeking world in order to rejoice in the larger dimensions of a life centered on God. Poems like 'Vagabond', 'The Unknown Fairy', 'The Black Sheep', and 'The Scavengers of Souls' strike the reader with their startling frankness about the oft-unspoken truths of mundane life. Lines like 'Stoop not even to conquer' or 'Only man is the black sheep in this beneficent flock' reveal a pure soul's reaction to some of the bovine norms of human existence.

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

RELIGIOUS LESSONS FOR CHILDREN: BY SWAMI RAGHAVESHANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-600 004. 1981. Pp. 32. Rs. 2.

This book is a novel attempt to initiate children into some of the most universal and purifying elements of Hindu culture. The author also seeks to instil in the children respect for elders and love for healthy habits through regular devotion to gods and goddesses. The second half of the book is a short portrayal of the life of Vivekananda, the ideal man, with beautiful illustrations on each page. Illustrations of saints on cover pages and the impressive sketches make the book fascinating to the imaginative and imitative minds of children. An ideal gift-book for the little ones.

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

NEWS AND REPORTS

**SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIDYALAYA,
COIMBATORE**

REPORT FOR 1979-1981

This centre, situated in Perianaikenpalayam, a village in Coimbatore district, is one of the largest educational institutions of its kind in India carry-

ing on diverse activities on educational lines to meet the needs of modern youth.

Educational: It runs the following institutions. (1) A Residential High School: the total number of students in this school was 361 during the period under review. Some of the students are from different parts of India outside Tamil Nadu.

(The students and staff contributed manual labour to construct a tiled house for the scavenger of this institution.) (2) Swami Shivananda Higher Secondary School. It had 890 boys and 25 girls. There were 224 students staying in the hostel attached to it. Educational tours were arranged to various places in India. (3) The T.A.T. Kalaniyam, a non-residential co-educational middle school catering to the needs of the surrounding villages, had 889 boys and 362 girls. Free mid-day meal was provided to 160 children and free uniforms were distributed to 50 children. (4) Balwadi: caters to the needs of very poor children of the age-group 3-5 years. There were 35 children who were looked after under expert guidance and supervision, (5) Industrial Institute: offers training courses in fitting, turning and hand composing and proof reading in printing, with additional training in allied branches like blacksmithy, welding etc. There were 116 students during the period. (6) The Polytechnic: offers two regular courses: 1. A three-year Diploma Course in Civil and Rural Engineering. 2. A three-year Diploma Course in Mechanical and Rural Engineering. The latter course is newly introduced and is being offered for the first time in India and has been recognized by the Government of Tamil Nadu. (7) The Community Polytechnic: offers service to the rural people in a variety of fields like non-formal technical training, rural consultancy service, transfer of technology and extension programmes. (8) The School of Agriculture, offering a post-matric certificate course in agricultural science, had 205 students. Besides, it does extension and rural development work. (9) The Gandhi Teacher Training Institute had 34 trainees during the period. The trainees ran a night school for backward-class children and, through mobile library and mobile laboratory units, did rural extension work. (10) The Type-writing Institute conducts courses in type-writing in English and Tamil. (11) The Arts College: offers graduate and post-graduate courses in arts and sciences, The total strength of students in all the classes was 755 in 1979-80. It conducted seminars and special lectures, N.C.C. sports and games, youth camps, etc. A number of scholars are doing research for Ph.D. and

M.Phil degrees Under the National Adult Education programme, the Arts College has started 60 adult schools in Perianaikenpalayam and surrounding villages. (12) The Teachers College: offers courses in B.Ed. (119 students), M.Ed., M.Phil. and Ph.D. It has at present 10 scholars working for doctorate. (13) The Maruti College of Physical Education: offers higher grade certificate courses in B.P.Ed., and M.P.Ed., and is affiliated to the university of Madras. This college held paly festivals and seminars and has a physiotherapy dispensary which treated 400 patients. It also conducts yoga classes for the Vidyalaya students.

The Industrial Section of the Vidyalaya, apart from giving intensive training to the students, produces: three-and single-phase electric motors, domestic pump-sets, sugercane crushers, wet grinders etc.

The library of the Vidyalaya received a number of journals and the total number of books was 52,001. The library was well utilized by the staff and students with an average attendance of 250 daily. The centre brought forth six publications on educational and social themes.

Medical: The Vidyalaya's dispensary caters to the medical needs of the students and also of the people of the surrounding villages. The total number of patients treated was 25,358. The Vidyalaya runs a Mini Health Centre too at Vivekanandapuram, an interior village. And this centre caters to the medical needs of 13 villages and treated 7,989 patients.

The Vidyalaya celebrated its Golden Jubilee in September 1980 with diverse cultural and educational programmes. Sri N. Sanjiva Reddy, the then President of Indian Republic, delivered the jubilee address and Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj presided over the opening function. Specially made Tanjore Silver Plates were presented to a large number of dedicated workers of the institution.

The centre observed the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and other religious festivals.

The Vidyalaya is at present intensifying its activities on Rural Development and Non-formal Education.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

A Dedicated Life

Not many people understand a prophet's mission to mankind, fewer people have the courage to follow him heart and soul, fewer still are those who succeed in fulfilling his mission to an appreciable degree. One among such rare persons was Sri Eknath Ramakrishna Ranade, the moving spirit behind the Vivekananda Rock Memorial at Kanyakumari and president of the Vivekananda Kendra, who passed away in Madras on 22 August 1982.

It was at Kanyakumari that Swami Vivekananda had found the full profile of his mission to India and the world. Sitting on the last stone of India, Swamiji entered into a deep meditation which revealed to him the truth that 'India shall rise only through a renewal and restoration of that highest spiritual consciousness that has made her, at all times, the cradle of civilization and cradle of Religion'. This was the historic signal for the birth of a great socio-cultural renaissance which ultimately brought on the crest of its wave freedom for India and spiritual awakening for the West.

This historic event deserved to be immortalized in a concrete form at the land's end which had witnessed it, as a standing reminder to future generations of Indians of the image of the great soul who gave them pride and confidence in their ancient culture and made India a nation with a noble destiny a nation which has something rich and enduring to contribute to world culture. In the year of Swamiji's birth centenary Sri Eknath Ranade rose to the occasion and won the nation's gratitude by building the magnificent Vivekananda Rock Memorial. It was a project involving millions of rupees, vast human and material resources, and great engineering skill and artistic finesse. When some misguided elements, utterly oblivious of their demographic insignificance and fiducial anachronism, tried to thwart the project, Sri Ranade stirred the conscience of the people all over the country so successfully that what began as a modest group project was converted into a national commitment of epic proportions. By any reckoning, this in itself was a stupendous achievement.

But Sri Ranade's zeal did not stop with the stone monument. Swami Vivekananda had earlier diagnosed the cause of India's downfall and discovered the way to her rejuvenation. But he needed one thing more to fulfil his mission, as he himself stated: 'What I now want is a band of fiery missionaries. My plan is to start institutions in India, to train our young men as preachers of the truths of our Scriptures in India and outside India.' Sri Ranade's response to this was the creation of a new body of lay preachers, men and women, trained to spread the man-making, life-giving principles of Vedanta. This has great mobility and immense possibilities.

Eknath Ramakrishna Ranade marched at the vanguard of a great movement holding aloft the torch of India's immortal spiritual culture. He is no more, but the torch will continue to burn and will be carried forward on the shoulders of thousands of men and women to whose welfare he had dedicated his life.