



# Prabuddha Bharata

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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'*

महि ज्योतिर्बिभ्रतं त्वा विचक्षण  
भास्वंतं चक्षुषेचक्षुषे मयः ।  
आरोहंतं बृहतः पाजसस्परि  
वयं जीवाः प्रति पश्येम सूर्यं ॥

यस्य ते विश्वा भुवनानि केतुना  
प्र चेरते नि च विशंते अक्तुभिः ।  
अनागास्त्वेन हरिकेश सूर्याह्लाह्ला  
नो वस्यसावस्यसोदिहि ॥

शं नो भव चक्षसा शं नो अह्ला  
शं भानुना शं हिमा शं घृणे  
यथा शमध्वञ्छमसद्दुरोणे  
तत्सूर्यं द्रविणं धेहि चित्रम्

1. May we live [ long ] to see thee, O Sun, the witness of all, the bearer of great effulgence, ever radiant, giver of joy to every eye, rising above the vast ocean [ of existence ]

*Rg-Veda 10.37.8.*

2. O Sun, by your guidance all beings move by day and repose at night. O Harikēśa,<sup>1</sup> rise day after day bringing us purity and blessedness.

*Rg-Veda 10.37.9.*

3. O Sun, bless us with your light ; bless us with your rays ; bless us during the day ; bless us with your warmth during winter ; and make our life blessed at home and abroad by granting us your wealth.

*Rg-Veda 10.37.10.*

\* The hymn to the Sun begun last month is concluded here. In the Vedas and Upaniṣads light remains the most dominant symbol of divinity. It is the connecting link between man and God, between matter and spirit. If the spirit is thought to be totally different from matter, it will lose its meaning to human life ; if they are considered to be the same, pantheism or even materialism cannot be avoided. The symbolism

of light avoids these extremes. The Spirit as light pervades and informs every being without identifying itself with them. Is it any wonder then, that the Sun has been worshipped in India for thousands of years as the manifest divinity (*pratyakṣa devatā*)?

1. Harikēśa literally means one with shining hair. Cf. the description of the 'Golden Person in the solar orb' in *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 1.6.6.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

In order to realize the Supreme Spirit or God man must first of all realize his own true nature as the individual spirit dwelling in the heart. This month's EDITORIAL is a brief description of the spiritual heart which marks the golden threshold of Divine Life.

Beauty is an expression of the harmony of divine Existence. When one encounters it, the soul is lifted out of gross materialism and ascends to an experience of higher consciousness and bliss. In ordinary people this experience is seldom pronounced. But in great saints and mystics, who are highly sensitive to beauty, the experience gains intensity even in childhood foreshadowing the spiritual glory that they would acquire in later years. This is the theme of THE FLIGHT OF THE SOUL by Ann Myren who is an instructor in social sciences at the College of Alameda, Alameda, California.

Swami Chetanananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A., concludes his inspiring account of the life of NAG MAHASHAY, one of the great householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

In THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA Thiru T. S. Avinasingam, founder-Director, Sri Ramakrishna Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, neatly summarizes the salient features of Indian culture. The article is based on a talk to a group of visiting American educationists given by the author at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore.

In the concluding instalment of BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND INDIAN MYSTICISM Dr. S. K. Chakraborty, Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, stresses the need for training in spiritual orientation, prayer and meditation for business executives, and points to the work being done in this field in Japan.

## SEEKING GOD THROUGH MEDITATION: THE GOLDEN THRESHOLD

(EDITORIAL)

### *The golden lid*

'The face of Truth is covered with the golden lid',<sup>1</sup> says the Upaniṣad. What is this golden lid? To know this we must understand the meaning of the word 'Truth' here. If we analyze the context in which the word occurs and study Śaṅkara's commentary on the passage, it will be clear that *satya* or Truth is here used in a specific sense. It means *satya-brahman*, *saguṇa-brahman*, *apara-brahman*

(Lower Brahman) also known as *hiranya-garbhā* and *mukhya-prāṇa*. It is the first manifestation of the unmanifested supreme Brahman which is known as *para-brahman* or *nirguṇa-brahman*.<sup>2</sup> As the Lower Brahman is called *satya* or Truth, the Supreme Brahman is known as *satyasya satyam*, the Truth of Truth.<sup>3</sup>

1. हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 5.15.1 ;  
*Isa-Upaniṣad* 15.

2. स यो हैतं महद्-यक्षं प्रथमजं वेद सत्यं ब्रह्मेति  
*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 5.5.1.

3. सत्यस्य सत्यमिति, प्राणा वै सत्यम्,

तेषामेष सत्यम् ।

*ibid* 2.3.6.



Satya-Brahman or Hiranyagarbha is the Personal God, the supreme Puruṣa or Person. All gods and goddesses and Avatars are special emanations of Him.<sup>4</sup> He is the one God worshipped under different names in various religions and sects. He is the sum total of all souls, their Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*) and the giver of the fruits of their karma. He is the God of the Bhakta, the goal of Bhakti Yoga, the object of the devotee's search. He is the Great Lover whom the devotee wants to meet and get united with.

The Upaniṣads speak of this Personal God or Truth as residing in the solar orb.<sup>5</sup> What does the solar orb signify? It stands for Virāj, the manifested universe, the whole creation.<sup>6</sup> The world with all its living and non-living beings constitutes the cosmic body, and God dwells within it as the Cosmic Self—this is the meaning of the phrase 'the Person in the solar orb'. What we see as the sun is only a luminous disc; the real nature of the sun is unknown to us (though astrophysicists are trying to find it out with the help of special optical and other instruments). Just as the luminous disc hides the real nature of the sun, so also the Virāj or manifested universe hides the Hiranyagarbha or the Personal God who dwells within it. Thus the 'golden lid', meaning the solar orb, stands for Virāj, the physical universe which is the object of all our experiences. This is the philosophical

meaning of the term. But the 'golden lid' has a deeper mystical meaning too.

A concept which is central to Vedānta is that the *adhidaiva* or macrocosm (the universe) and the *adhyātma* or microcosm (the individual) have the same structure. As there is an outer sun, there is also an inner sun. What is the inner sun? The *pratyagātman* or inner Self, also known as the *jīvātman* or individual Self. The *buddhi* or Heart, the faculty of intellect or intuition, corresponds to the solar disc. As the solar disc hides the real nature of *satya-brahman*, so *buddhi* hides the real nature of the *jīvātman*. About this identity the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* says, 'This *hrdayam* (heart, intellect) is Prajāpati (Virāj); it is Brahman, it is everything.'<sup>7</sup> One of the greatest discoveries of the Vedic sages found in the Upaniṣads is about the unity of the individual Self and the Cosmic Self. The earlier form in which this identity was expressed was, 'He that is here in the human person, and He that is there in the sun, are one.'<sup>8</sup> Later on it was more directly stated in the form of the four *mahāvākyas*, such as 'That thou art' (*Tat-tvam asi*).

So then, there is a golden lid within us—the *buddhi*. It is said to be golden because it is illumined by the light of the Atman within. However, it does not appear golden to all people. The *buddhi* becomes golden only when the impurities and density of the mind are reduced through austerity, continence and spiritual practice. At night even the disc of the sun is not visible. Similarly, in the darkness of ignorance the luminous *buddhi* is

4. अङ्गान्यन्या देवताः ।

*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 1.5.1.

5. तद्यत् तत् सत्यमसौ स आदित्यः, य एष

एतस्मिन् मण्डले पुरुषः

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 5.5.2.

6. To the Vedic sages the orb of the sun is the symbol of cosmic life, Prāṇa. The *Prasna-Upaniṣad* (3.8) says, 'The sun is indeed the external Prāṇa.' The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (1.3.1 and 1.5.1) identifies Prāṇa with OM, and OM with the sun,

7. एष प्रजापतिर्यद् हृदयं, एतद्ब्रह्म, एतत् सर्वम्

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 5.3.1.

8. स यश्चायं पुरुषे । यश्चासावादित्ये । स एकः ।

*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.8.5.

Also *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 2.3.5; 4.2.2; 5.5.2 and *Isa-Upaniṣad* 16.



not noticed. First of all the inner golden vessel is to be discovered by purifying the mind. The next step is to open it and experience the light of the individual Self within it. The third step is to realize the unity of the individual Self and the Cosmic Self.

The word 'hidden' (*apihita*) too has a deep significance. It implies three facts. One is the transcendent nature of Truth. The ultimate Truth is beyond the reach of the ordinary mind and senses. Secondly, the word 'hidden' is used to warn the aspirant not to mistake a glimpse of inner light for the ultimate Truth. All that glitters is not gold. The light one sees in meditation is only partial Self-knowledge. It is only an appearance, a reflection, of the infinite Light of Brahman. The aspirant should not confuse appearance with Reality. Thirdly, the word 'hidden' indicates the need for effort, *sādhana*. If we want to know the Truth, the lid must be removed first. We must explore, investigate, discover Truth. This exploration is to be undertaken in the unknown depths of the heart. The golden lid stands for a deeper level of consciousness known as the spiritual heart. It is there that Truth is to be sought.

#### *The Heart: a chamber with two doors*

The *buddhi* or spiritual heart, which looks like a golden vessel from outside, is indeed a chamber with two doors. One door lets us in. When we enter the chamber what do we find there? We find the chamber filled with the light of the *jīvātman*, the individual Self. Because of its luminous nature it is named *taijasa*, 'the effulgent', in the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad*. This is the self which sees dreams. What meditation does is to wake up this dream-self from its sleep and make it conscious of its intrinsic luminous nature. Owing to the lack of self-awareness, the waking state

is not much different from the dream state—for the majority of the people. Just as in the waking state the self can be trained to detach itself from sense objects and to remain alert as their witness, so also the *taijasa* or dream-self can be trained to remain alert as a witness without identifying itself with dream objects. This is what meditation actually does; it inhibits the dreaming process itself.<sup>9</sup> Then the *taijasa* ceases to be the dream-self. Its light can then be focussed on the subtle inner worlds and made to reveal the presence of gods and goddesses: this is how one gets visions and spiritual experiences. Or this awakened dream-self can be trained to awaken its next higher dimension known as *prājñā* which then experiences its oneness with Infinite Consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

We have been speaking about the first door and the experience one gets on entering the chamber of the heart through it. This experience is like that of a person who, after wandering in the dark, comes across a cottage and on opening the door finds it filled with light. The first door leads one from darkness to light, from the unconscious to the true conscious, the real source of consciousness. The chamber has, however, a second door which opens

9. This explains why meditation often ends in sleep. What happens is, as the waking-state self (called *visva*) tries to penetrate deeper, it is overpowered by *tamas*, tumbles into the dream world, and merges into the dream-self. But when the density of *tamas* is reduced through Brahmacharya, control of food and purification of the mind, the waking-state self penetrates into the interior through meditation and succeeds in awakening the dream-self.

10. In the path of Yoga, the aspirant moves from one level of the self to another. But the Advaitin tries to go straight from the waking self to the Supreme Self. He bores, as it were, a tunnel through all the three states and reaches the fourth state of non-dual consciousness known as *turīya*.



outwards or upwards into a new world of cosmic consciousness. The second door leads one from light to greater light, from consciousness to superconsciousness, from the individual Self to the Cosmic Self. Beyond the second door lies the realm of the Infinite. It is there that the Bhakta seeks his beloved Lord and the Jñāni tries to merge the individual Self in Brahman.

The first genuine spiritual experience that comes to the aspirant is the direct perception of the light of his own true Self in the chamber of his heart. The experience of the interior light is not like seeing the external light. When you see the light of the sun or an electric lamp, you know it as an object different from you and never identify it with your own self. The experience of Atman's light is not objective; it is not different from you; rather, you feel that you *are* that light. You immediately know that it is the light of your own Self, that you are self-luminous. Along with this photic experience comes the knowledge that you are the spirit separate from the body and also from the mind. In Patañjali's Yoga this experience is known under different names such as *ṛtambharā-prajñā* (truth-bearing consciousness) *pratibhā* (intuition) and *prajñā-loka* (light of transcendental consciousness).<sup>11</sup> In the Bhakti schools it is called *ātma-jñāna* (or *ātmāvalokana* as Rāmānuja calls it) or knowledge of the Self and distinguished from *brahma-jñāna*, realization of Brahman or God. In the school of Advaita no difference is made between these two types of experience, as Atman and Brahman are regarded as one. But it should be noted that Advaita as an experience (as distinguished from Advaita as a philosophy) is meant only for a person who has already had a preliminary Atman experience known as *dr̥g-dr̥śya viveka* (discrimination between the seer and the

seen). Thus in all schools of Indian thought the perception of the *jīvātman* is regarded as the starting point of spiritual experience. It is a limited experience and is as such distinguished from the higher stages of experience in which there is a direct awareness of the Infinite.

The experience of the inner Atman in the chamber of the heart is the first milestone on the path of spiritual realization. Every aspirant must pass through the chamber of the heart, for the only door to the Divine lies hidden there. However, some aspirants who follow the path of devotion may not recognize or understand the inner Light (*pratyag-jyoti*) as the experience of the Atman. When during meditation the image of the Chosen Deity appears vivid and luminous, they understand it to be the light of God rather than the light of their own higher Self. Since the individual self is only a part or reflection of the Supreme Self, there is no real difference between the light of the Atman and the light of Brahman from the highest standpoint. Nevertheless, it is useful to maintain this distinction during the early stages of spiritual life.

In Judeo-Christian mysticism the emphasis is always on God experience rather than on Self experience. Early Judaism regarded God as so transcendent ('wholly other') that He was beyond direct realization. Jesus introduced for the first time the concept that 'the kingdom of God is within you'. The original idea of God was anthropomorphic. The early Christian mystics developed the concept of God as a formless, uncreated 'uncompassed Light' (*incircumscriptum lumen*). This was identified with the light of Mt. Tabor which was believed to be the light of the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> In deep

11. *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.48; 3.35; 3.5.

12. According to the New Testament, Christ once took three of his disciples to the top of a mountain and, before their wondering eyes



contemplation this light is infused into the soul by God. Thus spiritual experience is something that comes from outside. In contrast to this, the Yoga-Vedanta tradition holds that spiritual experience is the unfolding, unveiling or expansion of the light of consciousness inherent in the soul.

In this context it should be stated that in the Hindu view human personality is trichotomous, that is, it consists of a physical or gross body (*sthūla-śarīra*), mental or subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*) and the Atman. Of these only the Atman is self-luminous, whereas the other two bodies only reflect the consciousness and glory of the Atman. The Judeo-Christian dogma holds that man is dichotomous, consisting of the body and the mind, the mind itself being regarded as the soul and spirit. The Christian dogma further holds that the soul is tainted by the original sin committed by Adam and Eve. In other words, the prevalent Christian notion of the soul corresponds to the *sūkṣma-śarīra* in Hinduism (and not to the Atman). However, the Jewish philosopher Philo and some of the earliest Christian writers (many of whom were condemned as heretics) like Clement of Alexandria and Origen and some of the Desert Fathers believed in trichotomy. They divided the soul into two parts: a vital part called *psyche* and a rational part called *nous*, and *nous* was believed to be lodged in the heart (*kardia*). [Also known as the 'intellect', the *nous* was believed to be the spiritual faculty in man by which he gained direct intuition of God. Hence meditation came to be called 'Prayer of the Heart']. St. Paul himself,

at least twice in his Epistles, distinguishes between the soul (*psyche*) and the spirit (*pneuma*).<sup>13</sup> It should be noted here that *pneuma* or spirit in the official dogma refers to the Third Person of the Trinity, namely the Holy Ghost which comes to 'indwell' the souls of only Christians through baptism.

Though this is the dogmatic view, direct personal experience compelled several great mystics to speak of a 'portion of the human soul which is untouched by physical concupiscence'. St. Bernard called this pure part of the soul the 'third chamber of the Spouse'. In the life of Brother Giles, an uneducated peasant disciple of St. Francis of Assisi, is recorded a remarkable experience. One day when Giles was praying in the hermitage of Favarone (in Perugia, Italy) he felt that his body was, as it were, dead and the soul passed out of it. 'And while the soul was out of the body, it took great pleasure in gazing itself because of the remarkable beauty with which the Holy Spirit had adorned it. For it was exceedingly subtle and radiant beyond all conception.'<sup>14</sup> Brother Giles himself once said, 'Oh what a great and rare spiritual grace has he to whom it is granted to know his own soul! Only God knows it, and he to whom He wishes to reveal it.'<sup>15</sup> Speaking about the nature of the human spirit, St. Gregory the Sinaite, a great 14th-century ascetic and mystic of the Greek Orthodox Church, said, 'Unless anyone has seen the resurrection of his soul, he cannot know exactly what the spiritual soul (*nous*) is.... Purified in this manner the soul...is illumined by the bright radiance and grace of the Holy Spirit... For she is pure and bright without any admixture of material

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underwent a transfiguration when his whole body became luminous and his face shone like the sun. The Gospels (Matt. 17:2, Luke 9:29) do not mention the name of the mountain, but Christian tradition identifies it as Mount Tabor. The light is believed to be a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit upon Christ.

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13. I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12.

14. *Little Flowers of Francis of Assisi* (New York: Image Books/Doubleday, 1958) p. 245.

15. *Little Flowers*, p. 249.



passion and her nature, especially her spiritual nature, is as it was before the transgression of first parent Adam.<sup>16</sup>

It was this intrinsic divinity and glory of the soul that Swami Vivekananda proclaimed before the world in a thundering voice. The glory of the soul is, however, only a reflection of the ineffable splendour and power of the infinite Brahman. But unless we see at least the reflection, it is impossible for us even to conceive of the Infinite.

### *Point of convergence*

In the Tantras the whole *suṣumna* or central channel is regarded as the Jīvātman, and the six *cakras* in it as standing for the different states of the soul's existence. At the first three lower centres the Jīvātman remains dormant, identifying itself with physical and mental experiences. It awakens and becomes self-aware only when consciousness is raised to the level of the fourth centre known as the *anāhata cakra*. This is usually spoken of as the heart-centre and is pictured as a blue lotus with twelve petals. But in some well-known Tāntric works is described another heart-centre. This is pictured as an eight-petalled red lotus just below the *anāhata*; it is in this red lotus that mental worship of one's Chosen Deity is to be performed.<sup>17</sup> The

*Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* call it *ānanda-kanda*, the 'root of bliss'.<sup>18</sup>

These lotuses are only mystic symbols which, however, represent certain super-sensuous levels of experience. What is important is to know that the heart is the point of convergence of several powers. The three lower *cakras* stand for levels of the unconscious, whereas the three higher centres stand for levels of the super-conscious. The heart centre situated in between is the seat of true consciousness, the source of self-awareness. That is why in the Upaniṣads the heart is regarded as the *vijñānamaya-kośa*, the sheath of intelligence or self-awareness.

While the Tantras describe the different levels of consciousness as *cakras*, wheels or circles, the Upaniṣads describe them as *kośas* or sheaths. Consciousness limited by the five sheaths appear as five different selves. In the unique symbolism of the Upaniṣads each self is pictured as a bird. The *vijñānamaya*-self bird has for its head *śraddhā* or dynamic faith. Awareness and will are the static and dynamic aspects of the Jīvātman. In ordinary life the will is enslaved by lower instincts and is directed outward towards sense objects. When it is freed and directed inward, it becomes a spiritual force known as *śraddhā*. True faith is the motive force leading and directing a person's spiritual progression. Hence it is spoken of as the 'head' of the *vijñānamaya*-self. *Ṛtam* (cosmic truth or law) and *satyam* (individual truth or self-awareness) form its right and left wings. Its tail is the *mahat* or cosmic mind; what this means is that individual consciousness is only a part of cosmic consciousness. What constitutes the main body of the bird? 'Yoga is the soul' or main body of

16. 'The Life of St. Gregory the Sinaite' ('The Fathers of Orthodox Monasticism' series) in *The Orthodox Word*, California, September-October 1969, vol. 5, No. 5.

17. मध्ये रक्ताम्बुजमिति हृत्पद्मस्य  
कणिकाधोदेशे ऊर्ध्वमुख रक्तवर्णष्टदलपद्ममित्यर्थः ।  
एतत् पद्मोपरि मानसपूजा कार्या ।

*Kalīcarāṇa's* commentary on *Satcakranirūpana*, 25. See John Woodroffe *The Serpent Power* (Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1950) pp. 259, 377-8.

18. *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* 5.132.

the self, says the Upaniṣad.<sup>19</sup> That is, the heart is the unifying centre for uniting the scattered powers of the will, knowledge and feeling into one-pointed yoga. Karma Yoga, Rāja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jñāna Yoga all meet at the heart-centre. It is only when the heart, *vijñānamayośa*, awakens that spiritual practice becomes a Yoga.

Thus we see that the spiritual heart is the seat of both self-awareness and will. It is also the point where one comes into touch with psychic Prāṇa or life-force. If consciousness is symbolized by the sun, Prāṇa is symbolized by fire. The connection between these two is one of the profound insights into the mystery of creation that the Vedic sages gained. It is Fire, life-force, that leads the soul to the Sun, Hiranyagarbha or Personal God. In the *Īsāvāsya-Upaniṣad* the sage first prays to the Sun to reveal his true nature, and in the concluding verse prays to the Fire to lead his soul along the right path.<sup>20</sup>

During the early Vedic period the sages tried to realize the mystic contact between Sun and Fire, between consciousness and Prāṇa, by means of external *yajña* or sacrifice, and a meditator (especially a Samnyāsin) came to be called an *ātmayājīn*. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* says, 'An *ātmayājīn* (one who sacrifices to the Self)

is superior to a *devayājīn* (one who sacrifices to the gods).'<sup>21</sup>

It was the *vidyā* or meditation on the inner fire that Naciketā wanted to know as the second boon from the god of Death Yama. The answer that Yama gave the boy is significant: 'That Fire which is the support of this world and is the means of attaining the infinite world is *hidden in your heart*.'<sup>22</sup> It is clear that what Yama taught was not an external ritual but an internal meditation which he himself named *nāciketa-vidyā*. Though he does not elaborate it, the entire *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* is actually based on this particular *vidyā*.<sup>23</sup> Now what is that fire 'hidden in your heart'? This inner fire is a prefiguration of what came to be known as *kuṇḍalinī* in later works on Yoga and the Tantras. *Kuṇḍalinī* is the mass of psychic Prāṇa lying dormant in man. When it awakens, the heart-centre opens and man discovers his real nature as the effulgent Self. It was the secret technique for this awakening that Naciketā really wanted to learn as his second boon.

19. तस्य श्रद्धैव शिरः । ऋतं दक्षिणः पक्षः ।  
सत्यमुत्तरः पक्षः । योग आत्मा । महः पञ्चमं  
प्रतिष्ठा ।

*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.4.1.

20. व्यूह रश्मीन् समूह तेजो यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं  
तत्ते पश्यामि ।

*Īsāvāsya-Upaniṣad* 16.

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये

*ibid* 18

21. तदाहुः आत्मयाजी श्रेयान् देवयाजी इति ।

*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 12.2.6.13.

The evolution of *upāsana*, meditation, from the Vedic sacrificial altar to the Tāntrik *Kuṇḍalinī* is a fascinating subject but is beyond the scope of the present discussion. The identification of the Sun with Fire and their internalization can be traced fully in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Fragmentary hints are found in the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka* (1.2.1-7), *Chāndogya* (1.2.1-1.7.9), *Maitrāyaṇī* (6.1-10) and some other Upaniṣads.

22. अनन्तलोकाप्तमथो प्रतिष्ठां

विद्धि त्वमेतं निहितं गुहायाम् ॥

*Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* 1.1.14.

23. Anandagiri in his gloss on Śamkara's commentary on this verse simply states that this is a meditation on the identification of oneself with Virāt. It should be noted here that every Upaniṣad, or in the case of a big Upaniṣad every chapter of it, is based on a particular *vidyā* developed by some great sage.



*The golden threshold*

The spiritual life of almost every aspirant passes through three stages: purification of the mind, illumination of the self and union with God or the Absolute. The discovery of the 'golden vessel' or the spiritual heart and the experience of the light of the Atman shining within belong to the second stage. It marks a crucial period in the aspirant's

life. Behind him lies his past life stretching backward to primeval time, filled with the remnants of his discarded egos, memories, dreams and the marks of his struggles and sufferings. Before him lies far beyond the reach of his vision the boundless realm of divine Light, the glory of Divine Life. He now stands at the golden threshold of immortality.

*(To be continued)*

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## THE FLIGHT OF THE SOUL

ANN MYREN

Let us try to recapture the essence of a wonderful experience which Sri Ramakrishna had when he was a boy. As a boy he was known as Gadadhar or Gadai. He lived in the village of Kamarpukur in West Bengal with his family. Gadai loved the dramas of spiritual heroes and often became totally absorbed in the stirring tales, losing himself in deep meditation. So we know that Sri Ramakrishna had the tendency towards spiritual consciousness even at a very early age.

One day in the month of June or July something extraordinary happened. Gadadhar, who was then six or seven years old, took a little basket of puffed rice to eat for his lunch and wandered off into a nearby paddy field. As Kamarpukur was a small village, little Gadadhar must have felt the immensity of the world as he gazed across the flat fields to the low horizon. He wandered along a narrow path separating the paddy field, now brilliant green shining in the summer sun. With the sun high in the sky, no doubt, the calm of a hot day had settled on the land and, perhaps, the only sounds were the buzzings and hummings of the insects. Gadai walked slowly along the narrow balk and, looking up at the sky,

he saw a beautiful black cloud charged with rain. He stood watching while eating the puffed rice, and soon the cloud grew and grew to cover almost the whole sky. Then a flock of pure white cranes flew across the black cloud. Rising from the beauty of the external world to the beauty of the internal world, Gadai's soul took flight, and he became absorbed in a higher, inexpressible state of Divine beauty. Some time later some people found little Gadadhar lying on the ground, carried him home in their arms, and although he felt quite well, his parents took no chances and kept him out of school for a few days.<sup>1</sup>

In Sri Ramakrishna's childhood it was his perception of stark and stunning beauty which caused the flight of his soul. But before we consider the nature and cause of such inspiration, let us first examine other spiritual seekers who have had similar experiences. Although these experiences may not be so familiar to us in time and place as those of Sri Ramakrishna, they

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1. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, tr., Swami Jagadananda, (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1952) pp. 49, 101.

help us to deepen our understanding of this wonderful ascent of the soul and in a way can be instructive in our own spiritual lives.

For example there was the experience of Jakob Boehme, a Protestant mystic who lived in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Although he had some influence on Protestant sects, he is mostly noted for his own spiritual experiences which he recorded. His biographer wrote the following:

Sitting one day in his room his eyes fell upon a burnished pewter dish, which reflected the sunshine with such marvellous splendour that he fell into an inward ecstasy, and it seemed to him as if he could now look into the principles and deepest foundation of things. He believed that it was only a fancy, and in order to banish it from his mind he went out upon the green. But here he remarked that he gazed into the very heart of things, the very herbs and grass, and that actual nature harmonized with what he had inwardly seen. He said nothing of this to anyone....<sup>2</sup>

Boehme, whose concentration was intensified by the brilliance of the sun's reflection, found in his experience the principles of the universe, a perception of a higher cosmic order.

Rabindranath Tagore, the great Bengali poet, had several mystical experiences during his lifetime. When he was eighteen '... a sudden spring breeze of religious experience. . .' came into his life and '... passed away leaving in memory a direct message of spiritual reality. Writing of this experience, he said :

One day while I stood watching at early dawn the sun sending out its rays from behind the trees, I suddenly felt as if some ancient mist in a moment lifted from my sight, and the morning light on the face of the world revealed

an inner radiance of joy. The invisible screen of the commonplace was removed from all things and all men, and their ultimate significance was intensified in my mind; and this is the definition of beauty.<sup>3</sup>

We see that it was Tagore's absorption in the sunrise which caused his mind to ascend to higher consciousness where complete beauty stood revealed to him.

No doubt all of us have some appreciation of that mighty range of mountains, the Himalayas, which have been for centuries an inspiration to India's holy men. There is a most striking description of the flight of the soul in Swami Akhandananda's book, *In the Lap of the Himalayas*.

The temple of Kedarnath was on the lap of a huge peak and the entire peak was now revealing itself before me. It was as bright as the glowing morning sun. Thousands of soft rays were emerging from the peak and they were all enveloping and overwhelming me. I thought to myself that I had come to this place of eternal light, leaving the eternal darkness permanently behind. I could not look at the snow-white peak for long. My eyes became indrawn and the huge peak of the mountain appeared before me as an eternal uncreated symbol of Śiva. This was no imagination. It was a divine experience.

I thought of merging permanently here into the very magnificence of this divine mountain. No happiness could have been greater.<sup>4</sup>

And finally one more example of Divine Consciousness brought on by the wonder and beauty of nature. When Swami Vivekananda was a fourteen year old boy, he was in charge of taking his family to Raipur in Central India. Travelling by the foot of the Vindhya mountains which rose high in the sky on both sides of the road, he experienced a wonderful beauty. The

3. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1966) pp. 93-4.

4. Swami Akhandananda, *In the Lap of the Himalayas* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1980) pp. 102-3.

2. Hans Lassen Martensen *Jacob Boehme* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895), p. 7.



mountainside were covered with trees, creepers, flowers and fruits, and birds of various colours flew about the slopes, filling the air with song. He later said:

I saw all these and felt an extraordinary peace in my mind. The slow-moving bullock-carts arrived at a place where two mountain peaks, coming forward as though in love, locked themselves in an embrace over the narrow forest path. Observing carefully below the meeting-points I saw that there was a very big cleft from the crest to the foot of the mountain on one side of the path; and filling that cleft, there was hanging in it an enormous honeycomb, the result of the bees' labour for ages. Filled with wonder, as I was pondering over the beginning and end of that kingdom of bees, my mind became so much absorbed in the thought of the infinite power of God, the Controller of the three worlds, that I completely lost my consciousness of the external world for some time. I do not remember how long I was lying in the bullock-cart in that condition.<sup>5</sup>

Swamiji had samadhi, the merging of his own consciousness into Divine Consciousness. His soul ascended from the beauty of the natural world to the infinite beauty of the Divine. Nature is beautiful because it manifests a fragment of the beauty of God. Undoubtedly seekers of Truth and Beauty would like to experience such realizations as Swamiji's or others of these holy persons. Now to understand these experiences so that we may help our own spiritual lives, we must understand both the nature and cause of such flights of the soul.

In Vedanta the soul, when called by its Sanskrit term *jīvātman*, refers to the pure Atman, that is infinite existence, knowledge, bliss or Sat-cidānanda, plus the ignorance which covers its own real nature. So the soul, as it were, can be viewed from the perspective of either the absolute or relative: from the first, the soul is seen as absolutely pure, infinite and eternal—that is

the real Soul, the Atman; and from the second perspective, the soul is seen as bound and called the *jīvātman*. The *jīvātman* is eternal and goes on enjoying and suffering in birth after birth until it realizes its true, perfect nature. However, even though we may appear bound and think we are bound, it is important to remember that the reality of the *jīvātman* is to be free, unbound. Now when we refer to soul as in 'The Flight of the Soul', we are referring to what appears to be the Atman plus body and mind or the *jīvātman*. What we must do is find a way to free ourselves from the delusion in which we think the soul is limited. Here we can use the flight of the soul.

The flight of the soul means a rising of the soul from this physical world to a perception beyond the narrow confines of gross materialism. It is an experience we all have, although we may not recognize it as such, when we become entranced with or concentrated on beauty and lose our normal sense awareness of the world. We all respond to music, to art, to nature. We have felt ourselves uplifted by an experience of beauty, not lifted as far as we can envision from our knowledge of spiritual experience, but taken beyond the realm of a normal state of awareness. That is, when we are deeply moved by the beauty, a dimension is added to our sense experience. Perhaps moved by the wonderful measured cadences of baroque music, the heroic strains of Beethoven, the moving expression of a poem, the splendour of a building, the harmony and strength of a sculpture, the directness of a painting, the stillness of the mountains, the power of a rushing river, the restless vigour of the ocean, the freshness of dawn or the peace of twilight, we are captured by beauty; we are startled and the soul is stirred, the flight begins, the deep response of the *jīvātman* to beauty.

Swami Askhokananda, speaking about mystics, beauty, and art, said:

5. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) vol. 1, p. 40.



Great mystics always have been artists. They may not always be able to transfer their aesthetic sense into verse or onto canvas or into sculpted figures, but they always have a lively sense of the beautiful. Of course, if they happen to have been born with artistic talent, then they become exquisite artists; there is a quality about their work which you don't find in the works of ordinary artists, however excellent their technique might be. These mystics contribute something ineffable. It has to be so, because, you see, they find God to be true, to be good, to be auspicious, and to be beautiful. But, of course, since God is beauty itself—since beauty exists in itself—the mystics do not care for form any more. Their minds go to the very essence of beauty, which is also the essential Being.<sup>6</sup>

We know from the experiences of the great knowers of pure Being, such as Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, that behind this world of appearances is Reality, Brahman or Atman. Now we also know that we are in our real nature the Atman, identical with Brahman, but we have forgotten it and we have regrettably learned to think of ourselves as the little *jīvāman*, limited in knowledge and feeling. Thus most of the time we function at this lower level where we are the *jīvātman*, the embodied soul. But we have this real Atman present within us. For that matter, there would be no existence of any kind without Atman or Brahman. Now this Atman shines in our minds, making us conscious beings. It is through the Atman that perception takes place. Further, we have within the mind the higher mind, that state or region of the mind which is very pure and calm. We must tap that higher mind and have actual awareness of the presence of Atman or Brahman. We all know that Brahman and Atman are

6. Swami Ashokananda, 'The Great Lie', *Prabuddha Bharata*, April 1978, p. 176. In the original lecture *satyam*, truth; *sivam*, good, auspicious; *sundaram*, beauty. Swami Ashokananda was the editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* from 1927-1929 and head of the Vedanta Society of Northern California from 1931-1969.

the same, the first referring to universal Consciousness, and the Atman referring to the Self as illimitable individual Consciousness. So we can say that in our real nature, we are Atman or Brahman and be absolutely accurate.

With this universal Consciousness shining in our minds, we partake of the nature of Brahman. What is the nature of Brahman? It is *satyam*, *jñānam*, *anantam*—Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite. It is *satyam*, *śivam*, *sundaram*—Truth, Goodness, Beauty. Here, of course, we are concerned with *sundaram*, beauty. We have within our very own being imperishable, infinite beauty, and that is why we respond to beauty in the seemingly objective world. It is exactly as if the beauty of the higher mind seeps down governing our perception of beauty in the forms of art, nature, and man. We naturally seek beauty because it is a part of our very Self as pure Consciousness. Now if this psychology seems too impersonal, we can reflect on a passage from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*: 'Whatsoever being there is, endowed with glory and grace and vigour, know that to have sprung from a fragment of My Splendour.'<sup>7</sup>

Here we understand 'My splendour' to mean Lord Kṛṣṇa's. The Lord's splendour is in man, in nature, in art. He is in the calm of the morning, the glory of a sunset, the life and freshness of spring. It is He who captures us in a painting, sculpture, music or in any art. In a poem by the sixteenth-century Indian mystic, Dādū, are the following lines :

He, the pure One is aflame; He the life of all is flaming;

He, the Lord of the worlds, is ablaze.

He, the flaming One, is revealing Himself in ever new forms.

He, the incomprehensible flaming One, He the immovable Soul, the eternal Being,

7. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, tr. S. Radhakrishnan (New York : Harper and Row, 1973), 10.41.



He is the only existence, aflame in the universe.

Yes, He is the only existence and He is aflame in the universe. He is constantly revealing Himself in forms of nature, of art, of man. He is the *tejas*, the splendour, the beauty. So the flight of the soul is, in fact, our very own inner beauty in our own souls taking flight to the infinite beauty of God. When we *see* beauty, *sundaram*, we are, in truth, seeking God, and as we know, Sri Ramakrishna was such a seeker.

From early in his childhood Sri Ramakrishna had intimate contact with the arts of his village, Kamarpukur, and became quite expert in drama, painting and modelling, all of which were often used to express spiritual themes. We know about Gadadhar's taking the role of Śiva, when the principal actor suddenly fell ill and how he lost himself in the role of Śiva, going into a deep state of meditation. Here we have a wonderful example of the flight of the soul. Gadadhar took the role of Śiva and his soul ascended to Śiva-consciousness. Later he formed a dramatic company with his friends and he would himself take many of the different parts. Portraying the various holy people superbly, Gadadhar frequently lost his normal state of consciousness.

This venture apparently continued for some time with Gadadhar taking the chief roles and also training the other young actors. As his desire grew to act in the various dramas about heroes, sages, and holy men, he finally gave up school with a clear conscience, knowing deep in his heart that the value of divine dramas far outweighed the value of education.<sup>8</sup> Swami Vivekananda wrote that drama is the most difficult of all art as two things must be

satisfied, the ear and the eye.<sup>9</sup> Gadadhar had, no doubt, a kind of intuitive sensitivity to both of these needs. Judging from the other instances in his life, his ability to portray women, for example, and his use of language, we can infer that he was an expert actor, appealing to both the ear and eye.

Gadadhar also danced with unusual grace, adding beauty to the village dramas and *kirtans*. Further, he showed talent in painting and clay modelling by making images of gods and goddesses. He was sufficiently expert in these arts to often set other artists straight on some exact detail. He produced figures of great beauty because his direct knowledge of Divine forms gained in ecstatic moods was coupled with his artistic ability. Later when Sri Ramakrishna became the priest at the Dakshineswar Temple, he mended a broken image of Kṛṣṇa with such expert skill that careful scrutiny could not reveal where the break has been. As Swami Vivekananda said, 'How great an artist was Sri Ramakrishna himself.'<sup>10</sup> His soul often ascended to the beauty inherent in Divinity when moved by the art of this world. The language of art speaks indirectly, sometimes much more effectively than a pile of learned philosophy books. Art shall always be considered superior to philosophy or knowledge or science, because it can move the soul.

We are struck by the beauty of many of Sri Ramakrishna's wonderful visions, the manifestation of Divinity in his very being. For example, his first vision of Divine Mother. Swami Saradananda, quoting Sri Ramakrishna, wrote in *The Great Master*:

. . . what I saw a boundless infinite conscious sea of light! However far and in whatever direction I looked, I found a continuous

8. *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1948), p. 40.

9. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964) vol. 7, p. 407.

10. *Complete Works* (1959) vol. 5, p. 373.



succession of effulgent waves coming forward, raging and storming from all sides with a great speed. Very soon they fell on me and made me sink to the unknown bottom. I panted, struggled and fell unconscious . . . . But immediately after I lost consciousness on account of the unbearable anguish, I saw that form of Mother consisting of consciousness with hands that give boons and freedom from fear—the form that smiled, spoke and consoled and taught me in endless ways. <sup>11</sup>

Another extraordinarily beautiful vision came to Sri Ramakrishna when he went to pick some flowers which grew everywhere on the trees. At once he had the vision of Virāt, the world appearing as the vast form of God, and the flowers looked like a bouquet placed on the head of the Deity. He could not pick them. Can you imagine the beauty of the world as the vast one, Virāt? <sup>12</sup>

At some other time in response to a question about AUM, Sri Ramakrishna, referring to creation, preservation and destruction, said:

But I give the illustration of the sound of a gong: 'tom', t-o-m. It is the merging of the Līlā in the Nityā: the gross, the subtle, and the causal merge in the Great Cause; waking, dream, and deep sleep merge in Turīya. The striking of the gong is like the falling of a heavy weight into a big ocean. Waves begin to rise: the Relative rises from the Absolute; the causal, subtle, and gross bodies appear out of the Great Cause; from Turīya emerge the states of deep sleep, dream and waking. These waves arising from the Great Ocean merge again in the Great Ocean. From the Absolute to the Relative, and from the Relative to the Absolute. Therefore I give the illustration of the gong's sound, 'tom'. I have clearly perceived all these things. It has been revealed to me that there exists an Ocean of Consciousness without limit. <sup>13</sup>

11. *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, p. 141.

12: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1952) pp. 687-8.

13. *The Gospel*, p. 653.

Sri Ramakrishna not only affects us by the grand visual quality of his divine experience, but also by his perfect use of metaphor. And last, we have this unusual vision which Sister Nivedita described:

Ramakrishna used to see a long white thread proceeding out of himself. At the end would be a mass of light. This mass would open, and within it he would see the Mother with a vina. Then She would begin to play; and as She played, he would see the music turning into birds and animals and worlds and arrange themselves. Then She would stop playing and they would all disappear. The light would grow less and less distinct till it was just a luminous mass, the string would grow shorter and shorter, and the whole would be absorbed into himself again. <sup>14</sup>

Clearly we can see from these transcendental visions that the real source of beauty is the Divine. And we can also understand why, according to Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna said that no one can be truly spiritual without art, this sense of beauty. <sup>15</sup> Yes, beauty is the manifestation of the real Self, of God or the Divine Person. As we shall see, like his master, Swami Vivekananda also had this sense and experience of beauty.

It is thought that Narendranath Datta (Swami Vivekananda) first visited Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar in December of 1881. Sri Ramakrishna had previously heard Naren sing at Surendranath Mitra's house, but there had been no prolonged contact between them. When he finally came to the Master's room at the Dakshineswar Temple, Sri Ramakrishna was very much moved by the inwardness of Naren's mind. On inquiry, Sri Ramakrishna learned that Naren knew only a few Bengali songs. He asked him to sing them. Naren began singing the Brahmo song, 'O mind,

14. *Eastern and Western Admirers, Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961) p. 282.

15. *Complete Works* (1959) vol. 5, p. 259.



come let us go home.... Oh my mind, go on the path of truth. Light the lamp of love, have it always with you and go forward. Take carefully with you the secret provision of devotion.'<sup>16</sup> Naren, who was eighteen years old at this time, was a wonderfully well-trained musician. But it was not only his musicianship which affected Sri Ramakrishna, it was also his powerful concentration. Naren, resplendent in his capacity to capture the beauty and truth of the song, conveyed that beauty to Sri Ramakrishna and evoked the flight of his soul. 'Music,' Swami Vivekananda later wrote, 'is the highest art and to those who understand, the highest worship.'<sup>17</sup> So we see in the singing of the song which caused Sri Ramakrishna's samadhi the intermingling of beauty and worship.

From childhood when little Bileh, Naren's family's name for him, first heard the wandering musicians who came to his parents' house joyously singing of the Lord or sacred stories in song, he was attracted to music. And his father, Vishwanath, a lover of music, who himself used to sing, gave Bileh his first lessons in music. After Naren's stay at Raipur when he returned to Calcutta, Vishwanath arranged for Naren's training in classical vocal and instrumental music. Naren mastered the pakwāj and tabla, types of drums, and the esraj and sitar, stringed instruments. And although he excelled with these instruments, his greatest accomplishment was vocal music.

Naren gave great energy and concentration to practice. His voice was so sweet that it was very unusual, and one biographer remarks that had Naren not met Sri Ramakrishna, he would have become one of India's great classical singers.<sup>18</sup> So we can see that Naren's voice was not just an

ordinary well-trained voice, but an exceptional voice, trained to excellence.

Swami Vivekananda was also a fine writer. It is a well accepted fact that he set a new standard for Bengali literature, emphasizing the use of colloquial language. His Bengali prose has been used in textbooks to illustrate vigour and clarity, and his Bengali poems are very beautiful in language and structure. In English Swamiji's writings ranged from poems to lectures to letters to books. No one who has read Swami Vivekananda can deny his capacity for expression, particularly in the difficult and often obscure aspects of philosophy. He has taken the highest, most transcendental thoughts and expressed them in clear, direct English without the loss of either beauty or truth. '... philosophy is the highest poetry. It is not dry bones. It is the essence of things. The Reality itself is far more poetic than any dualism,'<sup>19</sup> the Swami said. Swamiji was by nature a poet, and his lectures are filled with poetry. Of course, we cannot ignore his letters which express humour, courage, beauty, the whole range of human emotion in energetic and forceful prose. The beauty of Swami Vivekananda's writings is the beauty of strength.

Narendranath also expressed his love of beauty in several other ways. He studied art and architecture as a wandering monk in his early sannyasin days and later commented frequently on the art and architecture of both the East and West.<sup>20</sup> He designed the Temple of Sri Ramakrishna at Belur Math, giving form to his aesthetic sense. He also expressed his philosophical ideas in an artistic way when he created the symbol of the Ramakrishna Math and

16. *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, p. 716.

17. *Complete Works* (1959) vol. 5, p. 124.

18. Sailendra Nath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, (Madras :

Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra, 1975) vol. 1, pp. 57-8.

19. *Complete Works* (1956) vol. 6, pp. 63-4.

20. Bhupendranath Datta, *Swami Vivekananda Patriot-Prophet* (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1954) p. 300.



Mission. Furthermore, he expressed his sense of beauty in drama. His acting pleased Sri Ramakrishna. And finally, he was a masterful cook. Culinary art is one of the arts of India, and he learned it from his father who was an excellent cook.<sup>21</sup>

Swamiji's deep feeling for beauty is expressed very well by his own words, 'Art—is representing the beautiful. There must be art in everything.'<sup>22</sup> He was once heard to say, 'Verily, art is Brahman'<sup>23</sup> His experience of beauty was both profound and intense. Early in his spiritual training by Sri Ramakrishna he had '... found that the Divine Mother was living and conscious, the perennial fountain of Divine Love and Beauty.'<sup>24</sup> So we see that for Swamiji beauty is the expression of the Divine.

We have considered beauty in nature and the arts as well as in the wonderful super-conscious experiences of Sri Ramakrishna. Now let us turn to the expression of beauty in humanity. No beauty on this earth can surpass the beauty in the person of a knower of God. Here Divinity emanates from the physical body causing a wondrous, sublime beauty of incomparable quality. Sri Ramakrishna himself became so beautiful during the *bhāvasamādhi* (devotional ecstasy) of his early days that he became the centre of attention everywhere he went. His complexion assumed a brighter hue, as if a light came out of his body, when he felt spiritual emotions. Holy Mother said that the colour of his body was like the golden amulet which he used to wear. According to Swami Saradananda the Master himself said:

Ah! There was such beauty then that people

21. *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (1979) vol. 1, p. 42.

22. *Complete Works* (1959) vol. 5, p. 259.

23. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 4 vols. (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1918) vol. 4, p. 146.

24. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, (1979) vol. 1, p. 128.

used to stare at me; the chest and the face used always to be red, as if a light emanated from the body. As people used to stare, I always kept the body covered with a thick wrapper and asked Mother importunately, 'Here is your external beauty, Mother, please take it back and give me internal beauty.' I used to pass my hand over the body and slapping it again and again said, 'Go in, go in'. As the result of this the exterior became pale, as you see it.<sup>25</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna, of course, knew the real source of beauty, and at another time felt quite distressed as he thought people were only attracted by his physical beauty and not by inner beauty.<sup>26</sup> The Master's great disciple, Swami Vivekananda, also manifested beauty in his person, although his beauty was somewhat different from Sri Ramakrishna's. It seems from the descriptions that Sri Ramakrishna's beauty was more serene while Swami Vivekananda's was more heroic.

We have many pictures of Swami Vivekananda, so we can see what a striking person he was. However, the comments of his friends and disciples give us an additional insight into his appearance and presence. For example, it has been said by people who knew and observed Swami Vivekananda that '... Swami's eyes were so magnetic—though full of kindness and love, his voice had such an unusual combination of sweetness and strength, and his gait was so majestic. . . .'<sup>27</sup> 'He was a most gorgeous vision . . . had superb carriage of the head.'<sup>28</sup> 'He seemed like an immense wave going along; his back was straight as a rod, yet his entire bearing was a perfect blending of dignity and grace.' 'His voice was the most musical I have ever heard.'

25. *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, pp. 443-4.

26. *ibid.*, p. 445.

27. *Reminiscences*, p. 112.

28. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1958) p. 20.



‘. . . his face looked golden.... He had long blue-black hair, wavy, but not curly, and his eyes, his wonderful eyes.’ And finally, ‘The beauty of Swamiji nobody can imagine. His face, his hands, his feet, all were beautiful. Swami Trigunatita later said that Swamiji’s hands were far more beautiful than any woman’s. His colour would seem to change, some days being darker and some days lighter, but usually there was about it what can best be described as a golden glow.’<sup>29</sup>

Swami Vivekananda must have been a magnificent sight, in fact, a living vision. His face, radiating light and set off by his jet black hair and ochre robe made a lasting impression on all who saw him. And of course, those who came to know him and write about him saw his beauty as the result of his high spiritual attainment. There was no misunderstanding that his beauty was purely physical beauty rather than divine. All who truly saw him knew him to be divine.

We also have firsthand observations of the spiritual beauty of two of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Premananda and Swami Shivananda. When Swami Premananda was in a state of ecstasy his face became red-gold, perhaps somewhat like the colour of Sri Ramakrishna’s body. And in the case of Swami Shivananda, it was noted that he was a very spirited looking person, ‘. . . With an erect and noble bearing... and he had a wonderful golden complexion.’ There was about the face of Swami Shivananda a ‘. . . sort of reddish mantle, and that, of course, made him look even more attractive and spirited.’<sup>30</sup>

29. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda His Second Visit to the West New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) pp. 162, 295-6, 318, 449.

30. Swami Ashokananda, *Memories of Swami Shivananda* (San Francisco: Vedanta Society of Northern California, 1969) pp. 1-2.

We cannot leave this topic without some reference to Holy Mother. We can see her beauty from her pictures. Sister Devamata refers to her body as ‘. . . delicate and shapely.’<sup>31</sup> Not only was she lovely in appearance, but she created a beautiful atmosphere around herself. Sister Devamata wrote :

Those who had the rare blessing of living with Holy Mother learned that religion was a sweet, natural, joyous thing : that purity and holiness were tangible realities; that the odour of sanctity was literally a sweet perfume overlaying and destroying the foulness of material selfishness. Compassion, devotion, God-union were her very nature; one scarcely knew that she possessed them. It was through the soothing benediction of a word or touch that one sensed their presence. <sup>32</sup>

This tangible atmosphere of peace and joy was the outward expression of her inner beauty. As we can see among these various holy persons, there are many different expressions of beauty : beauty in the physical body, in the voice, in gracefulness, in a handsome appearance, in demeanor and the atmosphere which a person creates around himself or herself. Now if the source of beauty is the Divine, is there any art by which we spiritual seekers can bring beauty into our lives and transform our inborn desire for beauty into a practice which will help us attain our goal, God realization ?

What is the art, the great art which we may all practise that will lead us to penetrate forms and give us direct realization of divine beauty? That art is the art of meditation, the greatest art the human mind has ever developed. How can we use the art of meditation to take us from the world of physical beauty to the world of divine beauty? We can use the higher

31. Sister Devamata, *Days in an Indian Monastery* (Cohasset, Mass., The Vedanta Centre, 1975) p. 214.

32. *ibid.*, p. 228.



mind to move from lower to higher beauty. As mentioned before, this is the very calm, transparent aspect of the mind, unattached to material forms, and saturated with Brahman-Atman. Now when we try to meditate, we are trying to concentrate our minds on the form of God or on the Infinite One, Brahman or Atman. Actually we are trying to subdue our desires, detach our minds from domination by the senses and raise our conscious minds to superconsciousness, or to the higher mind, the region of truth, goodness and beauty. By our efforts to subdue the lower mind and control the senses, we achieve consciousness of the higher mind. In this state when we perceive beauty in art, nature or humanity, we know that the beauty is an aspect of the Divine. Then beauty is divorced from physical forms; the world of form appears to be effulgent with the beauty of God, Brahman or Atman.

Now can we learn to use this divine beauty to help us maintain a calm meditative state of mind continuously? Yes, if in our ordinary perceptions when we come upon beauty, we discriminate and see the beauty as an expression of the Lord or as an aspect of Brahman. Or if we are more devotional, when we experience beauty and are moved by it, we can offer to the Lord our wonderful response to beauty. That is, we make our outer experience an inner experience. And by moving from the outside to the inside, we come closer to the truth of our own Being.

Of course, we would like to carry a meditative state of mind into all of our actions, and we can by the practice of karma yoga. When we do selfless action, we are denying our little self in an effort to come into contact with the real Self. Now that Self, Atman—or Brahman—is the ultimate source of beauty, and our actions

as we work can manifest that divine beauty. Whether we are gardening, cooking, shopping, keeping books, arranging flowers, managing firms, teaching, raising families, driving a cab or doing any other of the countless jobs, we can turn our tasks into an art, a source of beauty, and in so acting, respond to the beauty inherent in God and manifest that beauty in our lives.

From a philosophical viewpoint, we know that the beauty in forms has its origin in higher consciousness. We can use this knowledge if we adopt the position that everything happens within our own consciousness, and the reality of these forms and actions is in fact Divine. Our true consciousness is Divine. Without Divinity there would not even *be* any consciousness whatever. Let us learn to see the world with the eye of the soul and find the Lord or Brahman ever present in our perceptions. Then the *jīvātman* or soul when touched by beauty will know that this beauty *is* Divine in origin. Here begins the flight of the soul, the flight to Infinite Beauty.

In the *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad* we find this verse:

In the highest golden sheath is the Godhead,  
unsullied, indivisible; pure is it,  
the Light of lights. He who knows the Self  
knows it.

Neither sun nor moon nor stars shine there.  
Neither lightning nor fire finds there a place.  
With the radiance of that Light alone all  
things shine.

That radiance illumines all this world. 33

When we are caught by beauty, when our soul is startled, may our soul take flight to the realm of Infinite Beauty, God.

33. Raimundo Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience, Mantramajari* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) p. 335. *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*, 2.2. 10-11.



## NAG MAHASHAY

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

After his Master's death, Nag Mahashay spent most of his time in Deobhog, managing the household and caring for his aged father. There he lived a simple, unassuming life, concealing his glowing spirituality under a veil of great humility. But as fire cannot be hidden, so it is with spirituality. Gradually the name of Nag Mahashay spread far and wide. People came to him for advice and to enjoy his holy company. He served everyone with amazing self-effacement. Once Swami Vivekananda said that the whole of East Bengal was blessed because of the birth of Nag Mahashay.

Service to man is service to God. Nag Mahashay saw that it was God who appeared in various human forms, and therefore he would serve each guest with love and respect. No one could leave his house without having been fed. He even reserved a room for visitors to stay adjacent to his shrine.

Nag Mahashay suffered from chronic colic pain. Once when he was in pain, some visitors arrived. Since there was no rice or other groceries in the house, he immediately left for the market without another thought about his own condition. He never allowed anyone to carry even large articles for him, and this time, while returning home with the heavy load of rice on his head, he fell on the street, overcome with pain. Plaintively he prayed to Sri Ramakrishna: 'Master, what shall I do? The living gods are at my house and I am delayed in serving them. Wretched indeed is this cage of flesh and bones which has created an obstacle to the service of God today.'

After a while when the pain had subsided a little, he returned home and asked Sharatkamini to cook for their guests immediately. He then bowed down to the visitors and apologized for serving them so late.

Another time two guests came at night. It was the rainy season, and all the rooms of the thatched house were leaking except one, which was Nag Mahashay's bedroom. When the guests were fed, he said to his wife: 'We are very fortunate today! Can we not sacrifice a little comfort for these living gods? Let us pass the night sitting under the eaves and chanting the name of the Lord.' That wonderful couple then vacated their room for the guests and spent the night under the eaves in meditation and Japa.

Since Nag Mahashay could not bear others serving him in any way, he would not allow anyone to repair the roofs of his thatched huts. Whenever he chanced to be away from home for a few days, Sharatkamini would hire someone to make the repairs in his absence. Once he was home for a long period and, although the roof badly needed repairing, she could not get any chance to have it done. Finally she secretly engaged a roofer, hoping the work could be finished quickly before her husband noticed. But Nag Mahashay saw the man working on the roof. He became very disturbed and started hitting his forehead, saying: 'Master, why did you ask me to stay at home? I am taking service from others for my comfort. Fie on this householder's life!' Seeing his agony, the roofer came down. Nag Mahashay fanned



him, served him tobacco, paid him the whole day's wages, and then sent him home.

When it was necessary for him to travel by boat, he would not allow the boatman to row but insisted on plying the oars himself. During the rainy season the whole village became flooded with water, and it was impossible to visit a neighbour or to go shopping without a boat. But since Nag Mahashay did not have one, his wife had to manage the household with the help of neighbours. Moreover, she had to collect firewood for the entire rainy season beforehand.

Once a young devotee of Nag Mahashay came from Dacca to visit him. It was a rainy day and there was no boat to cross the inundated area, so he decided to swim, although it was quite a distance. When the devotee reached the northern boundary of Nag Mahashay's garden it was 9 o'clock at night, and he was cold and completely exhausted. Much to his surprise, however, Nag Mahashay was waiting there for him.

'Alas! What have you done?' Nag Mahashay asked. 'The fields are infested with venomous snakes at this time. Why did you take such a risk in this dangerous weather?' He hurried the young devotee into the house. Sharatkamini gave him a dry cloth to put on and then rushed to the kitchen to cook food for him, only to find that all the dry firewood was gone. Without a moment's hesitation Nag Mahashay began cutting down a pole in his house. He would not listen to anyone's objections. 'Here is a man who has come to see me,' he said, 'even at the risk of drowning and snake-bite, and can I not give up the attachment for this ordinary cottage for him? I would be blessed if I could serve such people at the cost of my life.'

Every evening Nag Mahashay waved light and incense before the picture of Sri Ramakrishna, and the devotees sang

vesper songs and kirtan. Primarily he was a worshipper of Śaktī, the Divine Mother, but he had love and respect for all faiths. Like his Master he believed that all paths lead to the same goal, and whenever he passed a mosque or church, he would bow down with devotion.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* states: 'A man consists of the faith that is in him. Whatever his faith is, he is.' A man of faith is free from fear, worry, and anxiety. Once there was a terrible fire in a neighbour's house which was only fifteen yards from his own. A strong wind was blowing and occasionally sparks fell on Nag Mahashay's roof. While the villagers were fighting to stop the blazing fire, Nag Mahashay stood before it with folded hands, unperturbed. Sharatkamini, however, was frightened and started throwing clothes, bedding, and blankets outside. Seeing her, Nag Mahashay cried out: 'Shame on you! Still you have no faith in God! Brahma, the god of fire, has come. Instead of worshipping him, you are busy protecting these trifling objects! Victory to Sri Ramakrishna!' He started to dance in the courtyard. Then he added, 'If God protects, no one can destroy; and if God destroys, no one can save.' The neighbour's house was burned to the ground, but Nag Mahashay's house remained undamaged.

There is a common belief among the Hindus that those who bathe in the holy river Ganga during Ardhodaya Yoga (an auspicious day which comes once every fifty years) become free from impurities and ignorance, and go to heaven. Three or four days before that auspicious occasion Nag Mahashay left Calcutta, which is on the bank of the Ganga, to return to his village. His father was furious and said to him: 'People are selling everything they own to go and bathe in the Ganga on this holy occasion, and you have come back home, leaving



the Ganga! I really don't understand your attitude toward religious life! Still a few days are left. Take me to Calcutta.'

But Nag Mahashay humbly said: 'If a man has true devotion, Mother Ganga reveals herself in his house. It is needless for him to go any place.'

On the day of Ardhodaya Yoga, several of Nag Mahashay's devotees came to visit him. Suddenly one of the women noticed a stream of water gushing out of the southeast corner of the courtyard. The devotees gathered around it in amazement and watched as it formed a flowing stream. Nag Mahashay was in his room when he heard the excitement of the devotees. He came out and, seeing the stream, bowed down to it reverently. Then, sprinkling a little water on his head, he prayed, 'Victory to Mother Ganga! Mother, purify us.'

Word of the mysterious water spread throughout the village, and on that auspicious day devotees and villagers alike were blessed by bathing in that miraculous stream. Hearing of this episode sometime later, Swami Vivekananda commented: 'The wish of a great soul like Nag Mahashay can make the impossible possible. Their infallible will power can even liberate people.'

Seeing God in everything is the culmination of Vedantic experience. When Nag Mahashay was asked why he remained with his hands folded reverently so much of the time, he replied, 'I perceive God in every being and in every thing.'

It is said that nonviolence is the highest virtue, a virtue that Nag Mahashay practised to the letter throughout his life. No one ever saw him kill an insect, and when he walked through the street, he was always vigilant lest he step on any creature. A devotee was one day seated with him on the porch of the shrine when he noticed that the eastern bamboo fence was covered with anthills. Thinking to

protect the fence from further damage, the devotee jumped on it and shook it so vigorously that a large section of the anthill fell to the ground. Nag Mahashay cried out: 'Alas, what have you done? For a long time they lived happily building their homes on the fence and today you have made them homeless. It is unfair.' Seeing the tears in his eyes, the devotee was overwhelmed. Nag Mahashay then approached the ants and said: 'Please climb up on the fence again and build your comfortable homes. You have nothing more to fear.'

Once a few European officers of the Narayangunj Jute Mill came to Deobhog to hunt birds. As soon as Nag Mahashay heard the gunfire, he ran up to the hunters and with folded hands begged them to stop shooting. The hunters did not understand what he was saying, no doubt thinking he was crazy. They reloaded their rifles and were about to shoot again when Nag Mahashay leapt forward, and with superhuman strength seized their weapons. He then carried the rifles home. The Europeans were humiliated and angry, and they decided to bring legal charges against him. Meanwhile Nag Mahashay sent the rifles back to the hunters through one of the workers at the jute mill. The worker explained to the Europeans about Nag Mahashay's saintly nature, and they never returned to Deobhog to hunt.

Spirituality is not something that can be measured with a measuring rod. When a person becomes spiritual his heart expands and he feels intensely for others. Nag Mahashay would feel the hunger of the dogs, cats, fish, and birds, and he would feed them accordingly. Once when he met a fisherman with a basket of live fish for sale, Nag Mahashay bought all of the fish and immediately set them free in a neighbouring pond. On another occasion a cobra appeared in his courtyard, and



Sharatkamini, fearing it would bite someone, wanted it to be killed. Nag Mahashay said to her, 'It is not the snake of the jungle, but the snake of one's own mind that injures a man.' Then, with folded hands, he addressed the snake: 'O goddess of the snake, your abode is in the jungle. Mother, please go back to your own place and leave this poor man's cottage.' Amazingly, the snake then followed him to the jungle. 'If you do not harm anyone in this world,' he commented, 'no one will harm you. The reflection in the mirror shows exactly the same face you make at it.'

It would pain him if anyone tore a leaf off a tree. There was a cluster of bamboos adjacent to his cottage, and the branches were damaging the wall. They had even penetrated inside the cottage, but he would not cut them back. When someone offered to cut them for him, he said, 'Is it proper to destroy something which you have no power to create?'

People talk about 'cosmic consciousness', 'universal brotherhood', 'oneness of God', 'unity in diversity', and 'God in everything', but are these beautiful concepts mere imagination? Men get strength and inspiration when they find a person who has experienced and demonstrated these sublime truths. A man of God actually knows God's will, and whatever he does is good for all.

Once a devotee came to visit Nag Mahashay. Nag Mahashay and his wife gave their room to him and they slept in the kitchen. In the middle of the night, the devotee was suddenly awakened by a startled outcry. He rushed to the kitchen as Sharatkamini was lighting a candle. They found that a cat had jumped on Nag Mahashay's face and had scratched the white of his left eye. Sharatkamini wept at the sight of the wound, but Nag Mahashay consoled her, saying, 'Don't worry. It is nothing. Why do you think

so much about this rubbish body? God came to me in the form of a cat to punish me for my past karma. Truly, this is the grace of God.' Fortunately the scratch was healed in a few days and his sight was not damaged.

Once, when Nag Mahashay went to a pond to wash his hands and feet, a snake bit a toe on his left foot. In spite of the pain, Nag Mahashay did not move, and after a short while the snake left. When Sharatkamini saw the bleeding toe she was very much worried. But Nag Mahashay said to her: 'Don't worry. It was just a water snake. Thinking my toe was food, it bit me.' Indeed, his capacity to endure suffering was remarkable. When he suffered excruciating colic pain he never complained but would sometimes say: 'Victory to Sri Ramakrishna! Master, I could not serve you well with this body so it became diseased as a fitting punishment. Blessed is the colic pain which reminds me of Sri Ramakrishna! Master, it is your grace. Without your boundless grace there is no other way for a man to attain liberation.'

He whom God loves, everyone loves. Although it is true that God loves all, the mystics are very special because they carry the message of God. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'God is in all men, but all men are not in God.' Truly, Nag Mahashay was loved by all. When he went to the market for shopping, the shopkeepers competed with one another to sell their merchandise to him. They believed that if they could sell something to a holy man such as Nag Mahashay, then that day their sales would increase. He never bargained or asked for the change which was due to him. But generally the shopkeepers sold to him at a reduced rate, or they gave him some extra quantity free of charge as a token of their love.

Yogis are frequently tested in their spiritual lives through temptations,



Although some fail to pass the tests, these fallen yogis are also great teachers. Their lives reveal to us the pitfalls along the spiritual path so that we might avoid them. A real yogi, however, does not take a false step. Nag Mahashay did not wear the ochre cloth of a monk, but he was a true yogi. Once a middle-aged widow was much drawn to him. She visited him quite often and showed much love and respect for him, but Nag Mahashay understood her worldly motive. He said to his wife one day: 'Look, I think even the dogs and the vultures would not relish this rubbish body, and that woman has a craving for it. The Master is testing me in many ways. Victory to Sri Ramakrishna!' His wife forbade the widow to visit their house anymore. Later, however, the woman's life was changed, and she became a sincere devotee of Nag Mahashay.

To him all women were the veritable manifestation of the Divine Mother. 'I have never touched a woman in my life, so I have nothing to do with this world,' he said to his father when the latter scolded him about his unmindfulness of the household. His purity was almost tangible. Desire for progeny, wealth, and name and fame simply could not appear in his mind. But as he himself observed: 'A man can overcome the temptation of gold and diamonds through renunciation, but he needs the grace of God to overcome lust. Where there is lust, there God is not; and where God is, there cannot be lust. So long as your body is not burned into ashes, do not be proud of your chastity. No one can escape maya unless the Divine Mother allows one to pass.' Without having taken any monastic vows, he was a true monk. Swami Premananda once said :

I tell you for a fact, I am not enamoured of the mere ochre cloth. I want renunciation

and dispassion. I very much appreciate the life of Nag Mahashay. He did not wear the ochre cloth, and yet what a great soul he was and how great was his renunciation!

When I visited Dacca the last time, I went to Nag Mahashay's place before I left. One of his friends told me that a Brahmin used to come to his house to read the *Bhāgavatam*. He would read a verse and Nag Mahashay would expound for a long time. Pandits read the *Bhāgavatam*, but Nag Mahashay had actually realized the truth it contained, and they were, therefore, as vivid to him as any sensible object.

He who seeks Self-knowledge shuns carnality like poison, comfort like a demon, and fame like a snake. Nag Mahashay, like other mystics, loved obscurity, to be away from the eyes of the public. Normally he chose to visit Sri Ramakrishna on weekdays, when few visitors were present, avoiding Sundays and holidays when crowds would come; so there is no mention of his name in the huge volume of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

Later in his life, when his own reputation as a holy man drew people to Deobhog to seek his company, he frequently left home secretly to visit Calcutta. The first place he went on reaching Calcutta was the Kalighat Temple where he would bow down to the Divine Mother. Then he would leave his cloth bundle at his residence and go straight to Girish Chandra Ghosh to salute him. He once said about Girish: 'If one is in the company of Girish Babu for even five minutes, one gets freed from worldly delusions.... He has such a keen insight that he can see at a glance the innermost recess of a man's heart, and by virtue of this powerful insight he was able to recognize the Master as an avatar.'

Girish also had tremendous love and regard for Nag Mahashay. He knew Nag Mahashay did not accept gifts, but in spite of that he one day presented a blanket to



him. Out of his deep respect for Girish, Nag Mahashay accepted the blanket by putting it on his head and went home. Later a devotee went to visit him and found him seated with the blanket on his head. Hearing of this, Girish found a tactful way of taking it back so that Nag Mahashay might not suffer any further discomfort.

Although this type of behaviour seems very strange to ordinary people, it is called in devotional scriptures *ūrjitā bhakti*, or exuberant devotion. When this type of devotion awakens in the heart of an aspirant his behaviour becomes erratic. For no outwardly discernible reason he may smile, cry, dance, sing, or even remain motionless like a log. The least reminder of the Beloved puts him into ecstasy. Once, for example, when he went to visit the Holy Mother, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, she gave him a piece of mango. But instead of eating it, Nag Mahashay rubbed it on his head. The Holy Mother then fed him herself. She also gave him a cloth, but Nag Mahashay never used it. On special occasions he would tie it around his head. Sometimes he would say, 'Mother is more gracious than father.'

After Swami Vivekananda's return from the West in 1897, Nag Mahashay came to Belur Monastery to see him. Swamiji earnestly requested him to live at the monastery, but Nag Mahashay declined because the Master had asked him to stay at home and lead the life of a householder. In course of conversation Swamiji said to him: 'It is you who have really appreciated and understood Sri Ramakrishna. We only spend our time and energy in useless wanderings.' When Swamiji heard that he was in debt, he immediately wanted to take care of it; but Nag Mahashay humbly declined to accept the gift of a monk. Swamiji expressed a desire to visit his home in Deobhog,

which made him very happy. Unfortunately, he could not do so during Nag Mahashay's lifetime.

Years before, when Sri Ramakrishna had introduced Nag Mahashay to Swami Vivekananda, he said, 'This man has genuine humility. There is no hypocrisy in it.' Humility was one of the main traits of his character. 'I and mine' are the warp and woof of maya, which bind the soul, and these were totally obliterated from his personality. Girish once humorously remarked that the great enchantress, Mahāmāyā was in trouble when she tried to bind Swami Vivekananda and Nag Mahashay. 'As she tried to trap Vivekananda he became bigger and bigger, and at last he became so big that all her fetters were too short and she had to let him go. And when she attempted to trap Nag Mahashay, he began to make himself smaller and smaller until he had at last reduced himself to such a degree that he could easily slip through the holes of her net.'

One day Nag Mahashay was at Girish Ghosh's house with other disciples and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. They were speaking about the Master when Swami Niranjanananda turned to Nag Mahashay and said: 'Well, sir, our Master used to say that one who thinks of himself as mean and wretched actually becomes so. Why then do you always think of yourself as so low and degraded?' Nag Mahashay replied, 'Ah, I see with my own eyes that I am low and degraded; how can I think that I am Shiva? You can think like that. Girish Babu can say that he is Shiva. You have such great devotion for the Lord. Where is such devotion in me? If you all help me, if the Master grants me his grace, my life will be blessed.' The utter sincerity and humility of his words silenced Swami Niranjanananda. He could neither contradict him nor could he pursue the subject any further. Girish Ghosh later



said, referring to the incident: 'If a man is sincere, and if all idea of egotism has really vanished from his mind, he attains to the state of Nag Mahashay. The earth becomes blessed by the very touch of the feet of such great men.'

Nag Mahashay's humble, guileless, and gentle behaviour easily conquered the hearts of all. Once two monastic disciples of Swami Vivekananda came to visit him at his village. He entertained them with great care and respect, and when it was time for them to leave, he accompanied them to the railway station. But the train was very crowded. When the two swamis tried to get in, the other passengers would not make room for them. Seeing the monks being treated disrespectfully, Nag Mahashay cried out in agony, 'O Lord, forgive these people who have ill-treated the holy men!' At the sight of his intense suffering, the passengers inside the train became ashamed of their behaviour and hurriedly made room for the monks.

It is sometimes assumed that non-violence and humility arise from weakness and faint-heartedness, but, on the contrary, they actually originate from inner moral and spiritual strength. An ideal character is one that is combination of the gentleness of a flower and the power of a thunderbolt. Nag Mahashay's life was just such a blend of these two opposite qualities. He was humble but not cowardly. Once a distinguished rich man was criticizing Sri Ramakrishna in Nag Mahashay's presence. With great humility he pleaded with the man to stop, but the man did not pay any attention. At last Nag Mahashay became very angry. He took the man's shoe (for Nag Mahashay himself never wore shoes) and started to beat him with it, forcing him to leave the place. That man also lost his temper and threatened Nag Mahashay's life. But after a few days the wealthy man came to Nag Mahashay and begged his forgiveness.

On another occasion, Nag Mahashay was going by boat from Calcutta to Belur Math to see Swami Vivekananda. As soon as the monastery came into view he bowed down with reverence. Observing his exceptional devotion toward the monastery, a passenger of the boat started to criticize the monks. Soon other passengers joined him. But Nag Mahashay could not bear it. Immediately he became furious and protested: 'What do you know about monks? You only know how to satisfy your cravings for lust and gold! You are blind, ignorant! Fie upon your tongues that speak ill of the monks!' Seeing Nag Mahashay's wrath, those people became terrified and asked the boatman to put them ashore immediately. When Swami Vivekananda heard of the incident, he remarked, 'At times it is necessary to behave like a lion.'

As a son Nag Mahashay was ideal. He not only served his father with much love and attention in his old age, but he also looked after his father's spiritual life as well. Daily he read from the scriptures to his father, and he carefully protected him from the company of worldly-minded people so that Dindayal could not get any chance to listen to worldly gossip, or *māyā-purāṇa* as he called it. Gradually, through the spiritual influence of Nag Mahashay, a great change came over Dindayal's life. He began to devote most of his time to prayer, Japa, and meditation. Swami Turiyananda once narrated the following story:

I went to his [Nag Mahashay's] house and saw his father practising japa, sitting in a corner. Nag Mahashay said to me, 'Bless my father that he may have true devotion to God.' 'He has already got it,' I replied. 'He is constantly repeating the name of God. What more do you want?' Nag Mahashay rejoined, 'What is the use of rowing a boat which is at anchor? My father is much attached to me. What good will his japa do?' 'If he is not to love a son like you, whom else should he



love?' I asked. 'Don't say so, don't say so,' he cried out. 'Only bless him that he may lose all attachment for me.' Oh, what a great man Nag Mahashay was!

One morning, after serving his father as usual, Nag Mahashay left for the market. There was no reason for him to be especially concerned about Dindayal at this time. Although his father was aged, he seemed to be in good health. However, in his absence Dindayal was walking in the street when suddenly he fell to the ground unconscious. As soon as Nag Mahashay got the news he rushed to his father and carried him home. A doctor diagnosed the cause as apoplexy. Shortly after, at the age of eighty, Dindayal passed away while repeating the name of the Lord. Nag Mahashay also chanted the Lord's name in his father's ears and prayed for his liberation.

Nag Mahashay performed the rites and rituals as enjoined by the scriptures for his departed father, although he had to borrow money, even mortgaging his own house, for the ceremony. He later related an interesting story about his father's tremendous self-control. Once Dindayal was going by boat from Calcutta to East Bengal on business. Along the way he landed at a place where he discovered by chance a hidden jar of gold coins. Though tempted, he felt it was a sin to covet another's wealth. Immediately he covered the treasure as he had found it and left the place.

Nag Mahashay never initiated anyone, but he was an awakener of souls, and his life was a source of inspiration to many people. Like his Master, he spoke only about God, and he would often remind the devotees: 'God first, and then the world' and 'A man has a right to demand money from his employer in the evening if he worked the whole day; similarly, if a man calls on God all through his life, he

can force God to give him a vision or realization.' If anyone addressed him as 'guru', he would knock his head on the ground and say: 'I am an insignificant person. What do I know? All of you come here to bless me with the dust of your holy feet. In this age, the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna are the real gurus.'

Sharat Chandra Chakravarty was a great devotee of Nag Mahashay and later wrote his biography. One day he begged Nag Mahashay to initiate him, but he refused. Seeing Sharat Babu's disappointment Nag Mahashay said: 'Don't lose heart. Lord Shiva himself will be your guru.' Binodini Mitra, the daughter of Nag Mahashay's cousin and another of his biographers, related in her book how that blessing was fulfilled:

It was May 1897. Swami Vivekananda was staying at the Alambazar monastery after returning from the West. Sharat Babu went to see Swamiji and found him resting in his room. He sat down to wait for Swamiji to get up, but all of a sudden he saw that Lord Shiva was lying where Swamiji had been. He could not believe his own eyes at first, but as he stared at the figure he could not doubt what he saw. He then remembered the boon Nag Mahashay had given him. Swamiji later initiated him.

Three years after the passing away of his father, Nag Mahashay became seriously ill with colic and dysentery. He said to his wife: 'My *prārabdha karma* (action performed in a past life, the fruit of which is being reaped in the present life) has almost come to an end—only a little is left. Don't worry about this cage of flesh and bones.' He refused any medical treatment, but he would take a little juice of the hinche green, a kind of medicinal creeper that grows on the surface of ponds, which Sri Ramakrishna had mentioned as being good for the stomach. He had very little body-consciousness. In spite of the cold winter weather, he left his own room and



moved to the porch, using only a torn blanket for his bed.

Sharat Babu hurried to Deobhog as soon as he heard the news of Nag Mahashay's illness, and tended on him the last thirteen days of his life. Nag Mahashay said to him, 'So long as life remains in this cage of flesh and bones, please talk to me about Sri Ramakrishna and the scriptures.' Three days before his passing away, he asked Sharat Babu to consult the almanac and find an auspicious date for a journey. As soon as he heard the date, he said, 'If you permit me, I shall start my journey on that day.' Sharat Babu was dumbfounded. With tearful eyes he reported the conversation to Nag Mahashay's wife.

The last few days Nag Mahashay was in samadhi off and on. Because Sri Ramakrishna had asked him to stay at home and live the life of a householder, he had never gone on a pilgrimage to the holy places, although he had once gone to Gaya to perform the last rites for his father. Two days before he passed away, at 2 o'clock in the morning, he said to Sharat Babu: 'Sri Ramakrishna has come here to show me the holy places. Please tell me the names of holy places you have seen, and I will visit them one after another.' As Sharat Babu mentioned the name of each place—Hardwar Prayag, Varanasi, and Puri—Nag Mahashay immediately had a

vision of it and vividly described what he was seeing. Sharat Babu knew he was witnessing the blessing of Sri Ramakrishna upon his disciple, yet, seeing Nag Mahashay's pain and suffering, he could not help thinking that God was a cruel Master. But Nag Mahashay read his mind and said: 'Please, never doubt the boundless mercy of God. What good will this body be to the world? Look, I am bedridden; I cannot serve you, so Sri Ramakrishna, out of compassion, is taking away this body.' Then he said in a feeble voice, 'Let the body and its suffering know each other; O my mind, you be happy.'

On December 27, 1899, the auspicious time of his final departure came. Nag Mahashay was in *bhāva* (devotional) samadhi. Sharat Babu began to chant the name of Sri Ramakrishna in his ear and, placing the picture of the Master in front of him, said, 'This is the picture of your Master, in whose name you have renounced everything.' Nag Mahashay opened his eyes and saw the face of his beloved Master. With folded hands he saluted Him and murmured, 'Grace, grace—you blessed me out of your boundless mercy.' He then slowly merged into *mahāsamādhi*, the ultimate experience from which one never returns to the earthly plane.

(Concluded)

## THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

THIRU T. S. AVINASHILINGAM

### *Prehistoric roots*

The cultural history of India is a most exciting one. Thousands of years before the birth of Christ the first Aryans came to India. They were virile energetic men and women who worked hard on the fields and in their homes, and created a civilization and culture which have provided the

foundation for the cultural values and habits of a major portion of the world. They were great thinkers, who had the courage to investigate into such fundamental matters such as nature, soul and God, who pursued truth at the sacrifice of the pleasures of life. They did not care for name and fame, and so the Upanishads which contain their thoughts, do not even



bear the names of the authors. The total number of Upaniṣads is said to be 108, but the most important of them are considered to be ten, namely the *Īśa*, *Kaṭha*, *Kena*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍukya*, *Aitareya*, *Taittirīya*, *Chāndogya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*.

Archeologists are of opinion that there existed in India a pre-Aryan civilization with highly developed art and culture as evidenced by excavations in Mohenjodaro in Sind and Harappa in Punjab. It is also said that a similar, and perhaps connected, civilization flourished in South India which formed the basis of Tamil and Dravidian culture. One of the outstanding products of this Dravidian culture is *Thirukkural*, composed some five centuries before Christ and considered by some to be the most outstanding universal ethical code in the world. The mingling of these two streams gave rise to the composite culture known as Indian culture with its several distinctive features.

### *The Epics*

The ethical code and the social life based on that code find their best expression in our two epics the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* tells the story of Rāma who, at the time of his being crowned as emperor, abdicated the kingly pleasures to obey the behest of his father and stepmother, and lived in exile in the forests for fourteen years. The inspiring story has been told for generations in folklore in all the twenty languages of India and its myriad dialects, and has also spread to Indonesia, Malaysia, Ceylon, Vietnam, Thailand, China and Japan. The other great epic which has shaped the life of the Indian people, the *Mahābhārata*, is the story of Kṛṣṇa, the author of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which is considered to be the essence of the Upaniṣads.

### *The Buddhist period*

After the prehistoric period came

Buddha, regarded by many scholars as the tallest figure in history. The story of his life is well known. He was born a prince, was married to a beautiful princess and had a lovely child. He had all the pleasures which the world could offer. But three experiences changed his whole life. He met an old man bent double with age; then he saw a sick man and thirdly, he came across a dead body being taken to the graveyard. These sights made him think deeply about the transience of this world and its pleasures. He renounced his kingdom and family and went in search of Truth. He did great penance and attained enlightenment or Bodhi, as it is called, in Buddha Gaya. He spent the rest of his life preaching the gospel of love and selfless life. His message has spread throughout the world, and nearly one third of the world's population consists of his followers.

Following in his footsteps came the great emperor Ashoka. When he came to throne he was filled with the ambition to conquer the world with the sword. He killed his opponents ruthlessly and conquered all the neighbouring countries. When the king of Kalinga resisted him, he invaded his country and defeated him, killing thousands of people in the process. He went round the battlefield to see what the might of his arms had achieved. In the field, strewn with dead bodies and men shrieking in pain, a calm, quiet and dignified Buddhist monk who was there ministering to the injured, looked up at the mighty monarch and said, 'What, O king have you achieved through this destruction? You have brought untold misery to thousands of families. This will not bring you joy and peace. Not hatred but only love can give you lasting peace'. Hearing these words, the great emperor was converted to the ways of the Buddha and devoted the rest of his life to spreading Buddha's message of love, nonviolence, peace and kindness.



### *The Golden Period*

The thousand years following Ashoka was the Golden period of Indian history. When thought, culture and art reached their zenith. Chinese historians, who came crossing the Himalayas braving many dangers, have written that at that time there was so much virtue, contentment and love amongst the people that a young and beautiful woman with many costly ornaments could go through the streets in the dead of night without any fear.

Then came the great Ācāryas or religious teachers from the 8th century A.D. onwards—Śrī Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva who expounded the three major schools of Vedānta philosophy, namely Non-dualism, Qualified Monism and Dualism. Śaṅkara, as if to demonstrate the oneness of India, established four great monasteries in the four directions of the country, namely Jotirmath (near Badri) in the Himalayas, Dwaraka in the West, Puri in the East, and Sringeri in the South. At that period there was also a great revival in the South led by the Śaiva saints like Sambandar, Appar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar and Vaiṣṇava saints like Nammālvar and others. Their message couched in simple musical lyrics continues to be a permanent inspiration for the Tamil people.

### *The dark ages*

As the poet said, prosperity brings decay. Material wealth and comforts make one pleasure-loving and weak. In India this resulted in the rise of the privileged classes who tightened their hold on the weaker sections and illtreated them. Caste became rigid, and religion degenerated into ceremonials. The result was that the Hindu kingdoms succumbed to Muslim invasion in the 11th and 12th centuries, and later succumbed to the Western powers in the 17th and 18th centuries. But the difference between the two was, while the

Muslims settled in India and were absorbed as part of the Indian community, the Britishers lived as foreigners with their base in England and exploited the wealth of India for their own benefit. It is good to note that even in the Muslim period, there were great emperors like Akbar who were fascinated by Hindu culture and therefore developed a universal outlook. Even in that period India produced many saints and savants like Mīrābāi and Tukārām in the West, Caitanya in the East, Tāyumanavar and Rāmalingar in the South, Rāmānanda, Tulsīdās, Kabīr and Nānak in the North, who kept up the flame of Indian culture and religion.

The rule of the British, though they lived as foreigners and exploited the country for their own welfare, was not without its own benefits to the country. For the first time in her long history, India was politically unified. The contact with Western culture and scientific spirit gave a new impetus to the revival of Indian culture. People like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen in the East, Gokhale and Balagangadhara Tilak in the West, and Swami Vivekananda about whom we will hear more later, were products of the Western scientific spirit. In one of his very feeling letters Swami Vivekananda wrote, 'Let us pray day and night for the down-trodden millions of India, who are held fast by poverty, priestcraft and tyranny.' 'Him I call a Mahatman, who feels for the poor.' And lo, as if in answer to his anguished appeal, a great soul—Mahatma Gandhi—appeared on the scene. The story of the nonviolent struggle for freedom started by Gandhiji against one of the biggest empires of the world, and the success which attended it, is well known to you and does not need repetition here.

The story of Swami Vivekananda is the story of the meeting of the Western scientific spirit with the ancient cultural heritage of India.



### *The age of science and demand for proof of religious experience*

In this age of science man asks for proofs. Mere quotations from scriptures, however ancient or holy, do not satisfy him. Swami Vivekananda was such an agnostic at first. A graduate of the Calcutta University in the latter part of the last century, he was trained in philosophy and science and wanted proof of religion and existence of God. He went to many of the spiritual luminaries of his age, like Keshab Chandra Sen and Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, and asked them a simple straight question, 'Have you seen God?'. They could not reply. At last, at the suggestion of one of his British professors, who said, 'If you want to have proof of superconscious experience, go to Dakshineswar; there lives a God man, who may satisfy you', he went to the temple of Dakshineswar one afternoon. There he saw the sage Sri Ramakrishna sitting on a simple wooden bedstead. I can do no better than give in Swami Vivekananda's own words the story of his encounter with Sri Ramakrishna.

He looked just like an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. He used the most simple language, and I thought 'Can this man be a great teacher?', crept near him and asked him the question which I had been asking others all my life; 'Do you believe in God, Sir?'. 'Yes', he replied. 'Can you prove it, Sir?'. 'Yes'. 'How?'. 'Because I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense'. That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality, to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. I began to go to that man, day after day, and I actually saw that religion could be given. One touch, one glance, can change a whole life. I have read about Buddha and Christ and Mohammed, about all those luminaries of ancient times, how they would stand up and say, 'Be thou whole', and the man became whole. I now found it to be true, and when I myself saw this man, all scepticism was brushed aside. It could be done, and my Master used to say,

'Religion can be given and taken more tangibly, more really than anything else in the world'.

The second idea that I learned from my Master, and which is perhaps the most vital, is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of one eternal religion.

*Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti.* 'Truth is one; sages describe it in many ways.' That one eternal religion is applied to different planes of existence, is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the one. One infinite religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this religion is expressing itself in various countries, in various ways. Therefore we must respect all religions and we must try to accept them all as far as we can.

In the presence of my Master I found out that man could be perfect, even in this body. Those lips never cursed anyone, never even criticized anyone. Those eyes were beyond the possibility of seeing evil, that mind had lost the power of thinking evil. He saw nothing but good. That tremendous purity, that tremendous renunciation is the one secret of spirituality. 'Neither through wealth, nor through progeny, but through renunciation alone, is immortality to be reached', say the Vedas. 'Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and follow me', says the Christ. So all great saints and Prophets have expressed it, and have carried it out in their lives.

Sri Ramakrishna proclaimed, 'Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show, by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light.'

### *Continuity of Indian culture*

India has had a hoary past. So also have other countries: Persia, Egypt,



Greece and Rome. But there is one vital difference between India and these other countries. The civilization in these countries flourished for a period; held sway for a few centuries, and then disappeared for ever. Today these civilizations have become a part of history and are no more a part of the life of the people. Other religions and cultures are supporting the lives of the people in these countries. But in India we see a different spectacle. It has been said that if a man who lived in India thousands of years ago came back today, he would not be bewildered and would not find himself in a foreign land. The same laws are here adjusted to changing times, the same thoughts refined through thousands of years, the same customs, the wisdom of the sages and the experience of centuries that seem to be eternal, still animate the soul of the nation. The cultural life of the people seems to be unaffected by the ups and downs of history, invasions, and the change of kings and governments.

About the continuity of Indian culture Will Durant says in his famous book *The story of Civilization*:

Here is a vast Peninsula of nearly two million square miles; two-thirds as large as the United States, and twenty times the size of Great Britain; 320,000,000 souls—more than in all North and South America combined, or one-fifth of the population of the earth; an impressive continuity of development and civilization from Mohenjodaro, 2,900 B.C. or earlier, to Gandhi, Raman and Tagore; faiths compassing every stage from barbarous idolatry to the most subtle and spiritual pantheism; philosophers playing a thousand variations on one monistic theme from the Upanishads, eight centuries before Christ, to Śamkara, eight centuries after him; scientists developing astronomy three thousand years ago and winning Nobel Prizes in our own times; a democratic construction of untraceable antiquity in the villages, and wise and beneficent rulers like Ashoka and Akbar in the capitals; minstrels singing great epics almost as old as Homer, and poets holding world audiences today; artists raising

gigantic temples for Hindu Gods from Tibet to Ceylon and from Cambodia to Java.

During the course of its long history the country has suffered many invasions by outside powers, and at times it seemed India would be overwhelmed and its culture and religion would be wiped out. But with time, the country absorbed those shocks, and the invaders were transformed into a part of Indian society and culture. Thus Indian culture today is a mosaic of various cultures, of beliefs and patterns of life. We find in India people of different races and backgrounds, of different shades of development, speaking different languages, but all, by and large, living together in peace and amity. The question is, how has India developed this resilience not only to absorb these shocks, but to transform the foreigners as parts of Indian culture? What is the source of this resilience and strength in Indian society? Swami Vivekananda explains it as follows:

Everyone born into this world has a bent, a direction towards which he must go, through which he must live, and what is true of the individual is equally true of the race. Each race, similarly, has a peculiar bent, each race has a peculiar *raison d'être*, each race a peculiar mission to fulfil in the life of the world. Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was, and it never will be. But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate, as it were, into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race and give the essential life-giving message to the world. India's gift to the world is the light spiritual. Slow and silent, as the gentle dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unheard, yet producing a most tremendous result, has been the work of this calm, patient, all-suffering race upon the world of thought.

#### *Basic tenets*

This spiritual message has been spelt out by Swami Vivekananda as follows:

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal.



Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. (These are called Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Rāja Yoga, and Jñāna Yoga). This is the essence of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.

Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not merely hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes.

If there is ever to be a universal religion, it will be infinite like the God it will preach... which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity...which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its policy, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman.

Self-sacrifice, not self-assertion, is the highest law of the universe. Religion comes with intense self-sacrifice. Desire nothing for yourself. Do all for others. This is to live and move and have your being in God.

Faith, in ourselves and faith in god—that is the secret of greatness. God is present in every jiva; there is no other God besides that. Who serves jiva, serves God indeed.

The national ideals of India are Renunciation and Service.

The importance of this spiritual message of India to the present-day world has been pointed out by Dr. Arnold Toynbee, the famous historian, who said:

It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending, if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race.... At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way—Emperor Ashoka's and Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions. Here we have an attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family and, in the

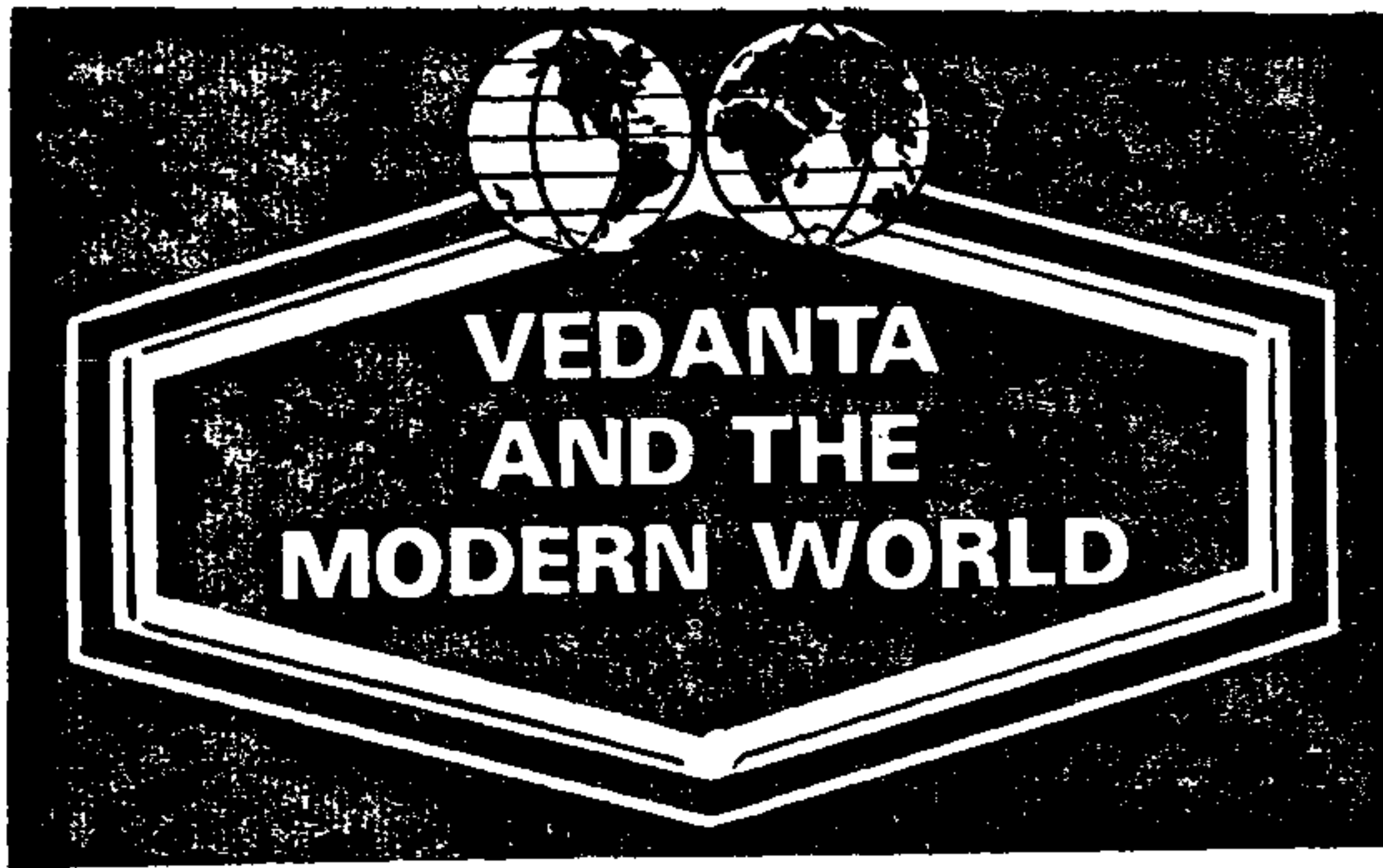
atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.

### *Where to find true India*

Foreign visitors who have read or heard of India's spiritual heritage, who have read about Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, come with great expectations of experiencing this spirituality everywhere. Instead, even as they land, they see in the newspapers no reflections of the noble message of India, but news of strikes, bank robberies, theft and all kinds of violence. They see only dirt and poverty wherever they go. Naturally, they are disappointed. The people with whom they move are educated people in government offices and universities. All over the world they see the rich exploiting the poor, the educated exploiting the not-educated, and the politicians exploiting everybody, and they don't find anything different in this country. And they ask, where is the spirituality of India of which Swami Vivekananda and Arnold Toynbee have said?

Christ said, seek and thou shalt find. Even so, one must seek to find places where the spiritual message is lived. The Ramakrishna Mission, the Aurobindo Society, the Maths of Shankaracharyas, Mahatma Gandhi's disciple Vinobaji's Ashram, the Sarvodaya institutions, the religious institution of Acharya Tulsi and numerous other saintly souls who are trying to live this message are some of the places where you can find its authentic expressions. And if you want to see the real people of India, go to the so-called backward villages, where the poor still cling to their timeless faith and culture, and to love and charity amidst poverty, sharing what little one has with others even in times of dire need.





## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND INDIAN MYSTICISM—III

DR. S. K. CHAKRABORTY

### (V) Conclusion—a shining example

Lest our readers feel that all that has been said above so far is vacuous, empty, impractical talk, we wish to offer here some excerpts from a series of experiments and efforts made along these lines in a Japanese bank employing about three thousand people in 1969. While we quote these paragraphs written by an American, both joy and sorrow mingle in our heart: joy because this experiment is based ultimately on several basic principles and philosophies which have been transplanted on Japanese soil from India; sorrow because owing to a tragic spell of arrogant, half-baked intellectualism we have chosen to turn our backs on them with suicidal contempt.<sup>18</sup> As a preamble, the author reports:

Many Japanese companies train their new employees, according to a philosophy of 'spiritualism', a set of ideas about human psychology and character development [mark our earlier reference to a school of Indian thought which assumes that problems of character do not

18. Four years ago the author had in a humble way tried to draw the attention of Indian managers to the need for placing man development before management development. See S.K. Chakraborty, *Managerial Appraisal and Development: Empirical Perspectives* (Delhi: MacMillan, 1978).

exist in organizations, and proceed with their training and development programmes on that basis]...Spiritualism's debt to the Zen, Confucian and Samurai traditions is quite apparent.

During the last few years Japanese media have given considerable attention to the startling increase of company training programmes devoted at least in part to *seishin kyooiku*, a manner of training commonly translated as 'spiritual education'. As many as one-third of all medium and large Japanese companies may now conduct such programmes as part of their regular in-company training.

Spiritualism provides a very definite philosophy of socialization and human development... Spiritualism offers a perspective by which individual character continues to be widely judged today. Company spiritual education is, in summary, but the most recent manifestation of a very long and still quite vital Japanese orientation to issues of human psychology and education....

And then the author goes on to describe in detail the particular bank's training programme:

*Seishin* education is given routinely to all new men and to many others in the course of their mid-career training. The programme described here involved 120 new men, all recent graduates of high schools and universities. [We recently attempted such a dialogue with second year boys in our Institute. All attempts even to communicate such ideas were a pitiful failure!] It began within several weeks after their graduation and lasted for three months... The time devoted to *seishin* education was estimated by the training staff to be about one-third of the



entire introductory programme. The remaining two-thirds is devoted to training new bank members in the numerous technical skills expected of them in their job. This estimate of the division of time between spiritual training and technical training, however, ignores the fact that individual performance in the task of learning banking skills is commonly interpreted according to *seishin* concepts, and even many aspects of recreation, such as the songs taught the trainees are, in fact, vehicles for *seishin* messages.

.... In this way moral education, which is almost exclusively verbal in nature, fits into the spiritual training programme in which the emphasis is primarily on learning through experience.<sup>19</sup>

The most essential requirement of management and management educators in India today is to quickly set about recouping our lost paradise of self-respect. We have argued earlier that so far as 'software' management processes regarding the human dimension are concerned—in contrast to 'hardware' management tools and techniques like PERT, DCF, LP and the like—India needs to borrow from nowhere, not even from Japan, she has only to muster enough courage to develop training processes from within.<sup>20</sup> It is high time we gave up certain shibboleths held by many of our professional managerial class, as for instance, that the caste system and Indian heritage or tradition are equivalent; that ancient sages were self-aggrandizers and agents of oppression, and so on. The present author remembers, about two years ago when he was giving a talk on such issues to a group of government officials, suddenly a senior person

19. Rohlen, R.P., 'Spiritual Education in a Japanese Bank', *Ameridan Anthropologist*, October, 1973, pp. 1542-42.

20. This distinction has been dealt with somewhat more elaborately in two earlier papers by Chakraborty, S.K., (a) 'Management Stylistics in India: The Case for a Countervailing Ethics', *Decision*, July, 1980; and (b) 'Understanding Organizational Reality in India: An Indian Perspective', *Asian-Pacific Training and Development Journal*, New Zealand, June 1981.

shouted at him: 'Are we listening to a pandit from Kashi?' Such is the condition of our educated executives and administrators! Let us instead try to know that the Śrutis and the principles of Vedānta are timeless and contain the luminous core of our tradition. Let us quote Capra again at this point.<sup>21</sup>

In modern physics, the universe is thus experienced as a dynamic inseparable whole which always includes the observer in an essential way. In this experience, the traditional concepts of space and time, of isolated objects, and of cause and effect lose their meaning. Such an experience, however, is very similar to that of the Eastern mystics.

The basic oneness of the universe is not only the central characteristic of the mystical experience, but is also one of the most important revelations of modern physics.

It is the Smṛtis and Purāṇas which deal with more localized and temporary social customs to regulate social life. They change and adapt themselves to changing times. Caste is a social institution; not a religious or spiritual or mystic principle. Thus, we have the story of the boy Satyakāma Jābāli in the *Chāndoḡya-Upaniṣad* who was born of an unknown father, yet was admitted to discipleship for highest knowledge by the 'seer' because of his courage to openly admit such a shocking truth about his life. Besides, let us also summon up a bit of our lost feeling of gratitude, for, with all its faults, the caste system enabled India to survive during a thousand-year span of foreign invasions and plunder. Historical myopia is today perhaps a fashionable elitist disease.

Surely we have not made any original contribution in terms of ideas in this paper. Our silent gratitude goes to those unnamed neo-Vedantists of India whose life of love and labour for their brethren inspired their writings, and which, in turn, has

21. *Tao of Physics*, op. cit., p. 86, p. 134.



kindled a small flickering flame within us. We do hope that time will draw near when we shall feel more confident to quote their names in articles of this kind meant for business people. But at the moment let only the principles be examined, without names which might cause a mental block to some of them. We are sure there must be quite a few managers who might be practising many of the ideas discussed here. But there must be many more who are just unaware that such a world of thought and practice exists as an alternative to what they are now accustomed to. Amongst them many would be the souls far more courageous than ours to make a throbbing reality of these principles. The struggle to achieve a measure of stability and certitude in even one of them would be enormous. But even a small bit of success will boost one's spirits. Then the whole effort, as someone put it so aptly, would be a delicious torment! Because the joy of that small victory will be far in excess of the loss one may suffer from the viewpoint of the usual yardsticks applied to one's managerial actions and decisions.

Our readers may also have noticed that this paper does not have the undertone of a scholarly piece of writing. For, one often feels a sense of dry intellectual exercise in many of the scholarly writings bearing on such themes as discussed here. To mention one recent work in this area which is a product of profound and sustained scholarship, the author states:

a psychological revolutionary situation in India can only come about if large sections of Hindu society question the usefulness, if not the existence, of 'ultimate reality', bring up to awareness its parameters in Hindu infancy and firmly reject many of its social and cultural manifestations as vestiges of an archaic, personal and historical past.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>22</sup>. Kakar, S., *The Inner World* (Delhi Oxford University Press, 1978) p. 187.

This in a way is a rather dangerous call for destructive normlessness. We are witnessing the consequences of such rejection and revolution around us all the time. Rejection and revolution have become self-deluding cloaks for indiscipline and selfishness because nothing then has any sanctity—except one's own self-centred motives. Our intellectual efforts for the past thirty-five years have not produced one single authentic substitute or replacement for our much-maligned archaic heritage (although in all fairness to the author of the above book, he does accept that Hindu heritage has much to conserve and capitalize on). In questioning the concept of 'ultimate reality' the author demonstrates once again a characteristic common amongst all of us: to reject anything which our intellect cannot grasp, assuming that this faculty is the highest a human being possesses. Indian psychology is a standing challenge to this standpoint. As to its utility, the message of Indian psychology and philosophy is that the nearer people are to comprehending the 'ultimate reality' the better they resolve their *own* conflicts first, and consequently thereafter of others. Human history provides any number of examples to prove this. Mere rejection is, therefore, an entirely negative approach, and no fundamental and enduring change can be built on it. So our plea is. if we possess a sound heritage of psychological insights for conducting secular life—including management—from men of lofty altruism and deep realization, and not from careerist frothy intellectuals like us, we had better utilize them. Such higher ideas and formulations are bound to be far more infallible and enduring. The 'real task at hand is to put them into practice through cases, games, role-plays, exercises, and so on. They should become our very own training and management development packages. It is also our moral duty to pass on such noble ideas, tested and



applied in our lives, to the posterity.

Would it be so ridiculous, after all, to visualize, for instance, that in the near future modern Indian organizations will see the practical merit of erecting a hall or two for all levels of employees for a few minutes of silent, humble praying and capturing of their inner poise before they begin their day's work, and also at the end of it? A soft golden-bluish light of the shape of a flame may be kept alight in the centre, symbolizing the luminous soul within each of us, and a solemn silence may be maintained in the hall. This may be one small, practical way to foster authentic indigenous organizational culture. If a beautiful rose and a prickly thorn can go together, can we not consider mysticism and management to be a credible combination for the 'software' of organizations? There is no need to be shy about it; no need to be intellectually stubborn either.

A most practical prayer for such occasions might be the one uttered by an ancient Indian prince:

O Lord, I know what is good,  
But I do not know how to practise it.  
I know what is bad,  
But I do not know how to avoid it.  
O Lord, you who reside in my heart,  
Please give me the proper directive,  
And the will to obey your directive.<sup>23</sup>

(Concluded)

23. जानामि धर्मं न च मे प्रवृत्ति-  
जानाम्यधर्मं न च मे निवृत्तिः ।  
त्वया हृषीकेश हृदि स्थितेन  
यथा नियुक्तोऽस्मि तथा करोमि ॥

*Prapanna-Gītā*, 56.

For more such prayers, see Swami Yatiswarananda, *Universal Prayers* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1980).

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**HATHARATNAVALI** of Srinivasa Bhatta. Edited by M. VENKATA REDDY. Published by Vemana Yoga Research Institute, Market Street, Secunderabad-500 003. 1982. pp. 68+162. Rs. 35.

Published now for the first time, after extensive study of the extant MSS. of the work, *Hatharatnāvali* is authored by Śrīnivāsa Bhatta who lived in the 17th century A.D. in Andhra. He belonged to the Nātha tradition, and has incorporated some of the Tantra practices in this manual of Hatha Yoga. The editor discusses the works of Śrīnivāsa and Atmārāma who, according to him, must have been contemporaries or separated from each other by just a few decades. He feels that Atmārāma, author of the *Hathayogapradīpikā*, and Svātmārāma are the same. The present work is placed between 1625 and 1695 A.D.

The author states that he has sought to integrate both the Vaidika and the Tantrika paths in his treatise. Consisting of four chapters, it covers the philosophy of the Sāmkhya,

pre-Patañjali Yoga and the concept of Hatha, the various purificatory processes—outer and inner—, Asanas, techniques of Prāṇāyama, gradations of Samādhi etc. 84 Asanas are listed though only about thirty of them are described.

A special feature of this work is the importance given to Vajroli which has for its aim, 'arousal of Kuṇḍalinī, cleaning of *nāḍis* and the union of *apāna* and *prāṇa*'. Śrīnivāsa differs from Atmārāma in certain details of the technique. Also to be noted is his definition of *antar-nauli*: 'East rotation from *idā* and then again from *pingalā*; rotation of these two is called *antarnauli*'. The editor notes: 'There is another opinion. *Antarnauli* is moving vertically the Recti muscles (abdomen) starting from down to upwards and vice versa. This is also fast rotation of abdomen vertically, whereas the movement of Recti muscles is horizontal in *nauli*.'

The passages on *nāḍānusandhana*, *granthis* and *nāḍis* in the fourth chapter are instructive.



With some pruning in some portions and further elucidation in others (textual), this work would be a useful addition to the literature of Hatha Yoga.

SRI M. P. PANDIT  
*Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*

**SRI KRISHNA: The Manifest Divinity.**  
BY SWAMI CHIDBHAVANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, Tirupparaitturai, Dt. Trichinopoly, Tamil Nadu. 1981. pp. 183. Rs. 6.

In keeping with his usual approach of demystification of the mysterious, Swamiji accomplishes many objectives in narrating the story of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He gives all the legendary details in their picturesque form, but at the same time underlines their deeper import in a rational language.

He explains the concept of Avatarhood and, in doing so, draws attention to the fact of an eternal avatar at different levels of existence. His account of the ten Incarnations takes into account the modern theory of evolution. His interpretation of Kalki may not find general acceptance. To him, 'The phenomenon of unmanifestation is called the Kalki.' (p. 7) It may be mentioned that the Rider on the White Charger may well signify the new Time-Spirit rushing in the Force of white purity, destroying the old and clearing the ground for the New Creation.

The author's explanation of 'miracles' is convincing. He states that there are laws of Nature on the subtler levels too, not merely on the physical that we are aware of. Happenings according to these deeper processes strike us as miracles as they transcend the operations of physical laws. Swamiji takes each of the major superhuman feats, *līlās*, of the Lord Kṛṣṇa and shows how they are all based on the eight *siddhis* of Yoga. Sri Kṛṣṇa is the Yogesvara.

He devotes a considerable portion of the exposition to the phenomenon of the Boy of 7 (9?) dallying with hundreds of women at the same time. What is the meaning of Śrī Kṛṣṇa marrying sixteen thousand wives? The symbology behind it is revealed in a satisfying manner.

How Lord Śyāmasundara reclaimed Beauty and Harmony for the Kingdom of God on Earth is another topic of interest in this delightful work.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

**SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA KATHAMRITA  
CENTENARY MEMORIAL:** edited by D. P.

GUPTA and D. K. SENGUPTA. Published by Sri Ma Trust, 579 Sector 18-B, Chandigarh. 1982. pp. xvi+344. Rs. 60 (\$10).

Sri Mahendranath Gupta, the recorder of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, is familiarly known by his pen name 'M' or 'Sri Ma'. He was born in Calcutta on the 14th of July, 1854. 'He had a brilliant scholastic career at Hare School and the Presidency College at Calcutta... After he passed out of college he took up work as headmaster in a number of schools in succession.' He also worked as a professor of City College and Ripon College. He was married to Nikunja Devi, a distant relative of Keshab Chandra Sen, and he had four children, two sons and two daughters. Owing to a bitter quarrel in the family, M. was suffering from a terrible mental depression when he first met Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar, most probably on the 26th of February 1882. He briefly recorded in his diary descriptions of this and subsequent meetings with the Master which ranged over a period of 4 years. A decade after the Master's demise M. brought out selections from his diary as two pamphlets in English, entitled *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, in 1897. Later he wrote the *Kathāmṛta* in Bengali which appeared in five volumes in 1902, 1905, 1907, 1910 and 1932 respectively. Shortly after sending the last volume to the press M. passed away on 4th June 1932.

Sri M. Trust, a charitable institution created in 1967 in memory of Sri M., decided to commemorate the centenary of *Sri Sri Rāmākrishna Kathāmṛta* and its recorder. The present volume is a collection of these articles.

The book is divided into four parts: (1) Sri Ramakrishna, (2) The Kathamrita, (3) Sri M, and (4) Sri Ma Darshan. Besides, there is an Introduction, an Epilogue and twenty-nine illustrations mostly concerning Sri Ramakrishna and Sri M. The Introduction contains a biography of M, including a short history of the Gospel literature. The first part, consisting of five articles, highlights several characteristic features of the Master's life. There are fifteen essays in the second part which delineates the uniqueness of the *Gospel* and points out its relevance to every seeker of Truth irrespective of his faith or level of realization. Part three, comprising twenty articles and two hymns on M, covers about fifty percent of the volume. It presents various reminiscences about M, and different aspects of his multifaceted personality. Four short articles in the last section introduce Swami Nityatmananda and his memorable work



*Sri Ma Darshan* (originally in 16 volumes in Bengali) which is 'a faithful record of Sri M's mode of teaching.' The Epilogue briefly outlines the genesis of Sri Ma Trust and its founder Swami Natyatmananda.

The volume is a treasure house of the thoughts of a galaxy of eminent writers, including several distinguished monks of the Ramakrishna Order. This enables the readers to view the subjects from a wide variety of standpoints and understand them in a new light. Of course, there are repetitions of several quotations, incidents and themes. However, as Revered Bhuteshanandaji points out in his article: '... unless repeated, words will not make their impress on unconcentrated minds like ours. That is why everything has to be repeated and we have to hear it again and again. Repetition, therefore, is no blemish in holy books.' (p. 69) Thus the book amply fulfils its purpose which is to help remind the readers 'of the glory of the Great Master, his Word and his Evangelist.' Although a page of errata is given, several printing mistakes remain unnoticed. We believe that this Memorial volume will gain immense popularity as it provides fresh insights into *Kathāmṛta* which may be 'regarded as a meta-scripture, a scripture beyond all scriptures, a scripture to understand all other scriptures.'

SWAMI MUKTINATHANANDA  
Belur Math

**THE FOUR HOLY ABODES OF GOD:**  
BY SWAMI SADASHIVANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Shivananda Ashrama, P.O. Barasat, Dt. 24-Parganas, (W.B.) 1981. Pp. viii + 24. Rs. 4.

This book is an English rendering of the Bengali booklet entitled *Chāri Dhām* by Swami Premeshananda who was a distinguished monk of the Ramakrishna Order. Besides his lucid literary works, Revered Premeshanandaji composed many songs on Sri Ramakrishna and others for which he was praised by the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and the direct disciples of the Master.

Five poems and a famous song have been translated in this little book. The first poem, 'The Four Holy Abodes of God', depicts the living greatness of the four places, namely, Kamarpukur, Jayrambati, Dakshineswar and Belur Math. The next three poems describe the glory and sanctity of 'Kamarpukur', 'The

Mango Grove of Manik Raja', and 'The Amodara' river which were associated with the divine play of Sri Ramakrishna. The last poem portrays 'Sri Ramakrishna at Kashipur' and poignantly reveals how he sacrificed his body to redeem others from their sins.

Swami Shraddhanandaji Maharaj of the Vedanta Society, Sacramento, has adorned the book with an excellent preface and a supplementary analytical note under each poem to help 'comprehending the underlying ideas of the original compositions'. The short biography of Revered Premeshanandaji given at the end is quite relevant.

SWAMI MUKTINATHANANDA

### TAMIL

ATMA NIVEDANAM (Tamil) 2nd edition, 1982. Pp. 143. Rs. 3.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA SAHASRANAMAVALI (Tamil and Sanskrit): compiled by SWAMI APURVANANDA, Sanskrit by SRI PANCHUGOPAL BANDHYOPADHYA. 1982. Pp. viii + 116. Rs. 3.

Both published by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, 26 Duraiswamy Road, T. Nagar, Madras-600 017.

These two small beautiful books are a welcome addition to the devotional literature, particularly for the devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

*Atma Nivedanam* is a garland of Vedic Hymns, *stotras*, songs on Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, *nāmāvali*, and songs in praise of deities of the Hindu pantheon. There are also extracts from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Meaning in Tamil is given for hymns and *stotras* wherever it is needed.

*Sri Ramakrishna Sahasranāmāvali*, as the name indicates, is a collection of 1008 names on the glory of the Lord who manifested as Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna in this Age. The *nāmāvali* is in the Devanagari script with transliteration and meaning in Tamil. Sri Ramakrishna Laghu Pūjā has also been added.

The two books with beautiful cover pictures of Sri Ramakrishna and the fine getup will certainly be well received by the devotees for use in their daily recitation and worship.

SWAMI TANMAYANANDA  
Sri Ramakrishna Math  
Madras



## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME, MADRAS

REPORT FOR 1981-1982

This institution was started in 1905 under the inspiration of Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. From a humble beginning with 5 orphans, it has now grown into its present dimension with 327 poor students. The Home provides free board and lodging and education under 'Gurukula' system with a view to moulding the character and career of the students. The Home comprises: (1) Residential High School, (2) Residential Technical Institute, (3) Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Primary School and (4) Middle School at Malliankaranaï, a village in Chingelput district.

The Residential High School had 203 students during the period under review. The school has a library (books: 5,091) and a fairly well-equipped laboratory. Out of the 34 students who appeared for the S.S.L.C. Examination 33 passed. The Technical Institute (residential) offers diploma courses in mechanical engineering, automobile technology and machinshop technology. There were 125 students. A post-diploma course in automobile engineering has been introduced from 1979-80 as a part-time evening course. Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Primary School had 399 pupils (boys: 222; girls: 177). 40 children were provided with mid-day meal. The Middle School at Malliankaranaï village had 177 boys and 65 girls. It also served daily mid-day meal to 100 children. A hostel is attached to this school which had 30 boarders belonging to scheduled caste and backward classes.

The Home pays close attention to the general health of the students. All the inmates are taken care of and supervised by a monastic warden and lay ward-masters. Moral and religious classes, bhajans, chanting etc. were conducted for fostering spiritual values and integrity among the students. The Hostel library had in its section for senior students 2,653

books. Several extra-curricular activities were organized. Birthdays of sages and saints were celebrated.

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, CEYLON

REPORT FOR 1979-'81

*Spiritual:* Regular worship was performed in the Ashrama shrine and bhajan was conducted on Fridays. Religious discourses and retreats were conducted for the devotees. Sunday religious classes for the children of the metropolis were continued. The Swamis delivered lectures on diverse subjects at various places in the city and outstations on invitation.

The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and other saints were celebrated with special puja, homa, bhajan etc.

*Cultural and educational:* The Ashrama library had 3,513 books, and the free reading-room made available a number of periodicals and newspapers to the public. (The centre runs a Sunday School which had 358 students and 18 honorary teachers.) The International Cultural Centre of the Ashrama provides accommodation for guests from all parts of the world. Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Hall, the largest of its kind in Colombo, is made use of by the public for holding cultural and educational activities.

*Batticola Branch:* The Centre's branch in Batticola carried on regular worship, bhajan and chanting. It runs a Boys' Home and two Girls' Homes (boys: 107; girls: 46) at there different places for orphans. Besides academic education, the children are given allround training in spiritual and moral life. The centre has two libraries and a reading-room for the children and the public.

The Ashrama celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1980 in a fitting manner for eight days with diverse cultural programmes. Many senior monks of the Ramakrishna Order from India graced the occasion.



# NOTES AND COMMENTS

## *India and China*

The two emerging giants India and China offer a significant study in comparison and contrast. Both countries have enormous human and natural resources; both are primarily agricultural and rural economies involved in the process of industrialization through central planning; both are rooted in their own ancient cultural heritage; both face similar problems of population growth, economic development and military defense; both strive to play dominant roles in Asian and international spheres.

The contrasts are equally striking. China has always been far more homogeneous culturally and linguistically than India. China was never under total subjugation to a Western power, and has been able to maintain her national identity and political unity for more than two thousand years. India remained politically divided for centuries and its common cultural bond is so tenuous that national integration is one of the major problems facing the country now. Besides, large sections of Indian people are yet to find their true identity in the nation's ancient culture. China is a totalitarian state with a vigorous political ideology and a powerful united political will by the exercise of which it has succeeded to a great extent in reducing economic disparities and in eliminating social injustice, though at the cost of freedom of the individual. Its most notable achievement, however, is the creation of a common work ethic and a high degree of motivation and dedication to common welfare, and the involvement of the masses in national development programmes. India is a free country with parliamentary democracy and mixed economy. It is yet to evolve a distinct ideology, work ethic and motivation for the masses to participate in national reconstruction. The gap between the rich and the poor is ever widening, and millions of people are denied human dignity and social justice.

India's weaknesses and failures have, however, been openly displayed, whereas those of China had long remained hidden behind the bamboo curtain. It is only recently that the true scenario there has begun to be exposed, and World Bank reports and preliminary assessments by Western economists indicate that the much-maligned India has not, after all, fared too bad in comparison with her giant neighbour. In science, education, technology, agriculture and communication India is far ahead of China. Recent reports put 150 million Chinese as close to absolute poverty. Though unemployment is low (20 million), the high levels of employment have been achieved at the expense of low productivity. Internal generation of capital has been found inadequate to meet the needs of the ambitious scheme of 'modernization' and China, like India, has come to depend heavily on foreign credit.

In a recent interview given to Sri G. K. Reddy of the *Hindu*, the Chinese prime minister admitted that China 'overemphasized the class struggle' and was too slow in shifting its focus to economic reconstruction after the 1949 revolution. Here is a lesson for India and other developing countries to learn: the way to prosperity and peace is not through conflict, but through harmony attained by the development of wisdom, love and freedom inherent in the human soul.

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