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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'

बहस्पते प्रथमं वाचो अग्रं
यत् प्रैरत नामधेयं दधानाः ।
यदेषां श्रेष्ठं यदरिप्रमासीत्
प्रेणा तदेषां निहितं गुहाविः ॥

सक्तुमिव तिनउना पुनंतो
यत्र धीरा मनसा वाचमकृत ।
अत्रा सद्वायः सख्यानि जानते
भद्रैषां लक्ष्मीनिहिताधि वाचि ॥

1. O Brhaspati!¹ the eternal word (*vāk*) is the highest (*agrām*); it originated first (*prathamam*). Impelled by it (*yat-prairata*) the ancient sages gave names to various objects.² This (primordial word which is) the best (*śreṣṭham*) and sinless (*aripram*), lies hidden in the cave of the heart. But (goddess Sarasvati) reveals it out of love (*preṇā*).³

Rg-Veda 10.71.1

2. The seers mentally create words (with as much care as a person) sifts barley flour with a sieve. Through words friends recognize friendship.⁴ Lakṣmi, the goddess of auspiciousness, dwells in words.⁵

Rg-Veda 10.71.2

* Given here are the opening verses of the important Rg-Vedic *Jñāna-sūktam*, Hymn to Knowledge. Jñāna, meaning knowledge of supreme Brahman, is regarded as the deity of this hymn. To the Vedic seers knowledge meant the Vedas, and they regarded the Vedas as the manifestation of the unmanifested eternal Word (*vāk*) or Śabda Brahman. Words have two powers: to reveal and to create. Ordinary words reveal objects, the Vedas reveal the supreme Reality. Again, the whole universe is created out of the primordial Word, as a tree is produced from a seed. How did words first originate in the world? What is the process which produces words in us? What is the connection between words and their objects? These were the questions that the ancient sages asked themselves, and some of these are implied in the present hymn.

1. The seer of the hymn is Brhaspati; here he is addressing himself.

2. According to Sāyaṇa, the first line refers to children's first utterances. Elders first give names to objects, children follow them.

3. *Preṇā* is according to Sāyaṇa the poetic form of *preṇā* 'through love'. He interprets the second line as, 'At the time of studying Vedas, Sarasvati reveals with love the true meaning of Vedas.'

4. That is, words are the medium of communication among friends.

5. How many people have attained prosperity through the skilful use of words and how much unhappiness is produced by the wrong use of words!

TO OUR READERS

With this issue *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India* enters the eighty-seventh year of its publication. On this happy occasion we send our greetings and best wishes to our subscribers, readers, contributors, reviewers, publishers of books, advertisers, friends and sympathizers, and take this opportunity to express our gratitude to them all.

This is one of the oldest among the popular religious journals of the world. Its title *Awakened India* represents the two-fold vision of its founder Swami Vivekananda. One is the spiritual awakening of India which, he believed, would lead to the political awakening and material prosperity of the nation. The other is the spiritual awakening of the West the impulse for

which, he believed, would go forth from India. Anyone who has rightly discerned the present-day world situation cannot fail to notice that both these expectations of Swami Vivekananda have been fulfilled to a considerable extent. However, no one can afford to ignore the fact that immorality, materialism, violence, communalism and other destructive forces have also become stronger in human societies all over the world. The best way to combat these powers of darkness and ensure individual fulfilment and social harmony and peace is to stress spiritual values in all walks of life. This is the task *Prabuddha Bharata* has set itself. You can help in this cause by popularizing this journal among your friends.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

From the standpoint of the macrocosm, *upāsānās* have been classified into two groups: *virādupāsānā* and *antaryāmyupāsānā*. This month's EDITORIAL shows how the latter leads to the attainment of a higher harmony in life.

IN FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: NARENDRANATH Swami Prabhananda of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, pieces together considerable research material to recreate the original Dakshineswar scenario.

Swami Siddhinathananda, Editor, *Prabuddha Keralam*, shows that the SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS OF A JUST SOCIETY envisaged by the Hindu tradition are the *varṇa* and *āśrama dharmas*. The article is based on a paper presented by the author on 2. 6. 81 in the Hindu-Christian Dialogue held at

Rajpur, Dehra Dun, under the auspices of the World Council of Churches.

IN THE PLACE OF NEGATION IN ADVAITA Prof. S.S. Raghavachar, former Head of the Department of Philosophy, Mysore University, makes the important observation that, according to Śaṅkara, the true nature of Brahman can be indicated only through '*neti, neti*', and not through positive statements like the *mahāvākyas*. Scholars will find the learned author's thesis challenging.

Marie Louise Burke (Gargi), the author of the well-known volumes on *Swami Vivekananda in the West—New Discoveries*, needs no introduction to our readers. In ADVAITA FOR THE WEST she makes a brilliant attempt to trace an evolutionary sequence in Swamiji's ideas expressed in the West which reached their climax in Advaita as an all-encompassing ideal for mankind.

HIGHER HARMONY THROUGH MEDITATION

(EDITORIAL)

Meaning of upāsanā

The term *upāsanā* means both concentration and worship. It is concentration of mind practised as a form of worship. What is worship? Worship is the establishment of a loving relationship with an adorable form of God. Any act which promotes a deep personal relationship with God through concentration on, and love for, God is *upāsanā*. Meditation is practised by Yogis, Buddhists, occultists and, in modern times, by a large number of people as a form of relaxation and psychotherapy. Its aim is to isolate the individual soul from its entanglements with nature. Meditation in Vedānta differs from all these forms of pure concentration in that it is invariably looked upon as a means of uniting the individual soul with God, through worshipful concentration. Vedāntic meditation is called *upāsanā*. Without the idea of devotion and union *upāsanā* has no meaning.

It is now clear that sitting quietly with closed eyes is not the only form of *upāsanā*. Work can also become *upāsanā* if it is done with meditative awareness and devotion. What is really important in *upāsanā* is not how you keep your limbs—whether folded up or freely moving. The important point is the state of your consciousness. It is of course true that sitting still with the eyes closed is a great help in practising concentration on God. But that is not the essential point. The essential point is to maintain an awareness of the 'eternal relationship between the eternal soul and the eternal God' always. This awareness comes when the *buddhi* or intuitive faculty awakens in man. When work is done with this awareness, it becomes 'working meditation'. The

Gītā calls it *karma samādhi*.¹ Centuries before Zen Buddhism popularized the idea, the *Gītā* taught that meditation and work are relative terms, and that all work could be done with meditative awareness.

Whether *upāsanā* is done as 'sitting meditation' or 'working meditation', its aim is to unite the individual soul with God. This experience of unity alone can give us lasting security and peace and harmony with all creation.

Cause of disharmony

What is the basic cause of disharmony in our lives? The ego has built walls in consciousness which cut us off from the stream of universal life. Each individual lives in his own private world. Almost all the problems of life arise from the fact that the individual's private world does not correspond with the harsh realities of the outside world. Sometimes this understanding comes to us as a shock. Thomas Huxley said, 'When you err, Mother Nature raps your knuckles and leaves you to find out why'. Disappointments and suffering, which shatter the house of cards that the ego has built, are often necessary to wake us up from our dreams and to make us realize the truth of larger life.

In the well-known Advaitic treatise *Pancadaśī*, Vidyāranya speaks of two types of creation: *īśvara-sṛṣṭi* (divine creation) and *jīva-sṛṣṭi* (self-creation). The former is the world as it really is. The whole universe is produced by the mighty creative power of God. One of the Upaniṣads

1. Cf. ब्रह्मार्पणं . . . ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ।

states : 'Under the rule of this very Absolute, O Gārgi, the sun and moon are held in their own courses. Under the rule of this very Absolute, O Gārgi, heaven and earth hold their own positions...'² The meaning of this passage is that everything in the universe is controlled by universal laws. One of the most important of these laws is the law of Karma which states that the experiences of happiness and sorrow are the result of man's past actions. There is order, rhythm, harmony in *īśvara-sṛṣṭi*, God's creation. It is neither good nor evil. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition evil is personified as the Devil who always works counter to God's designs. But in Vedānta evil is regarded only as a mode of experience. Everything in the phenomenal world is the play of the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Good and evil are only degrees or gradations in the way these *guṇas* influence us. The Atman is beyond the three *guṇas*, and so it remains unaffected by good and evil. God's creation is selfless, that is it is meant for the enjoyment of the *jīvas* and aims at the welfare of all beings.

Jīva-sṛṣṭi or ego's creation is the world as we understand it. It is our own interpretation of the actual world created by God. It is the world of values. Our value-judgements are based on past experiences, sometimes experiences of previous lives. If you tell a story to a child it will not merely listen but will add its own meaning to the story. A child does not merely see and hear. It also judges and interprets every experience. What is the basic criterion by which the individual judges his experiences? It is self-preservation. The urge to protect oneself

is the basic instinct in all living beings. This instinct makes us act and react in three different ways : towards an object (attachment), against an object (hatred), away from an object (fear). Actions give rise to happy or unhappy experiences which leave their impressions (*samskāras*) in the mind. Behaviour, experience and impressions are the three raw materials which the ego uses to build up its own private world. This building process goes on all through one's life. This is *jīva-sṛṣṭi* the world of the ego.

Self-preservation, self-centredness, is not the only characteristic of *jīva-sṛṣṭi*. It has a second characteristic : symbolization. Our private world is not entirely built out of our actual experiences in life, in which case we would all have become hard-core realists. A major part of the human mind is occupied with symbols of various kinds. The human mind does not remain satisfied with experiencing actual objects and people. It idealizes them, clothes them with symbols and ideas, and builds out of them a conceptual world. Usually some correspondence is maintained between the conceptual world within and the actual world outside. But often this contact is lost, and then one lives in a dream world.

'The symbol-making function is one of man's primary activities like eating, looking or moving about', says Susanne Langer. 'It is the fundamental process of his mind and goes on all the time.'³ As object in a factory assembly-line, all sorts of ideas and emotions are continuously moving through our mind in the never-ending streams of the unconscious. Only a small fraction of these thoughts is directly related to real events ; the rest is all useless. The urge to symbolize or conceptualize manifests itself in different ways in our life. One way is talking to oneself when we are not talking to

2. एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गि सूर्यचन्द्रमसौ विधत्तौ तिष्ठतः, एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गि द्यावापृथिव्यौ विधृते तिष्ठतः . . . ।

Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 3.8.9.

A similar idea occurs in *Taittirīyopaniṣad* 2.8.1 and *Kathopaniṣad* 2.3.2-3,

3. Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York.: Mentor Books), p. 4.

others we are chattering to ourselves. Another way is indulging in day-dreams and fantasies. Then there are the actual dreams which occur during sleep. As if this were not enough people borrow the fantasies and imaginations of others in the form of short stories, crime fiction, cinema, etc. All this is *jīva-sṛṣṭi* the world of the ego created by itself.

God does not create sorrow or happiness, good or evil. These are the creations of the ego. Says Vidyāraṇya, 'Objects created by Īśvara do not alter, they remain the same. But one man may feel happy on obtaining a gem, another may feel disappointed at failing to get it, while a person who is not interested in it looks at the gem without feeling happiness or sorrow. Through personal relationship the same woman appears as a wife, a daughter-in-law, a sister-in-law, a cousin and a mother, but she herself remains unchanged.'⁴ He gives another example. 'A liar told a man whose son had gone to a far-off country that the boy was dead, although he was still alive. The father believed him and was struck with grief. If on the other hand, his son had really died abroad but no news had reached him, he would have felt no grief. This shows that the real cause of a man's bondage is his own mental world.'⁵

It is the ego's creation that is the source of all conflict and trouble. It is this impermanent and illusory world of the ego that all religious teachers ask us to renounce. The *Īśvara-sṛṣṭi*, the real world created by God will endure until *pralaya*, cosmic dissolution. It is not an obstacle to spiritual life, says Vidyāraṇya. Rather, it could even be a help to the attainment of freedom.⁶ If we know how to practise constant discrimination and

keep ourselves open to reality, we learn many lessons from the real world around us. A wise man is one who converts every experience into a means of God realization, who uses every object as a stepping stone to reach Truth, who 'finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything'.

A good deal of the modern man's time is spent in the unreal world of his own creation. The more a person gets shut up in his own world, the more he moves away from the universal stream of life and the more ignorant, insecure and unhappy he becomes. Moreover, the continuous creation of images, ideas, and desires, and getting emotionally involved in the private worlds of other people cause sheer waste of mental energy. Too much of thinking and reading, constant feeding and stimulation of the mind, is one of the chief causes for the restlessness and mental troubles of the modern man. Everyone has to face real problems and difficulties in life. But brooding over them and worrying about them will only make them worse. So the Upaniṣad says, 'Do not reflect on many words; for it exhausts the powers of speech.'⁷ Here comes the importance of practising *upāsanā*, Vedantic meditation. It is only when we practise meditation that we become aware of the conceptualization process incessantly going on automatically within us, filling the mind with rubbish and dissipating its powers.

True meditation is something more than ordinary concentration, something more than an attempt to reduce surface thoughts. It strikes at the very root of the conceptualization process. It penetrates into the depths of the unconscious and controls mental automatisms and the creation of useless images and ideas. In other words, it checks the

4. Vidyāraṇya, *Pancadasi* 4.20-23.

5. *Ibid* 4.34, 35.'

6. अबाधकं साधकं च द्वैतमीश्वरनिर्मितम् ।

Pancadasi 4.

7. नानुध्यायाद् बहून्-शब्दान् वाचो विग्लापनं

हि तत् ।

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.21

ego's building activities, the *jīva-sṛṣṭi*. Not only that. More important, meditation unites the individual soul with the cosmic Reality of which it is a part. In the Yoga system of Patañjali the aim of meditation is to isolate the soul from its entanglement with Prakṛti. But in the Vedantic tradition this kind of meditation is regarded only as a preliminary step. The real purpose of Vedantic meditation is to integrate the individual with the cosmic Reality. This is what the word *upāsana* really means.

Integration of the individual with the cosmic

In the Upaniṣads we get two fundamental insights into the nature of Reality. One is that God is the only reality. The universe is not regarded as something separate from God. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* says, 'The Supreme Self alone is all this'.⁸ Explaining this passage Śrī Śaṅkara says, 'There is no such thing as the universe apart from the Self'.⁹ The very word Puruṣa (Self) is explained as 'that by which all this is filled'.¹⁰ Even an uncompromising dualist like Madhvācārya holds that the only reality is Brahman who is the source (*bimba*); everything else in the universe is derived from It and so is only a reflection (*prati-bimba*) of Brahman. Śrī Rāmānuja regards the universe as the body of God who is the Supreme Self immanent in all sentient and non-sentient beings. Thus all schools of Vedānta hold an integral view of Reality.

The second fundamental insight of the Upaniṣadic sages is that the microcosm and the macrocosm, the individual and the uni-

versal, are built on the same pattern.¹¹ Reality has different levels and at each level the nature of the individual corresponds to the nature of the cosmic Reality.

At the highest level is the Absolute, the Supreme Brahman without attributes (*nirguṇa*), who is the ultimate and immutable cause of the universe. The next in order comes the conditioned Brahman with attributes (*saguṇa*), called Hiraṇyagarbha. This is God regarded as a Person (*Puruṣa*). He is the sum total of all selves and is their inner controller (*antaryāmin*). He manifests himself as the Virāj, the third order of reality. Virāj consists of three worlds: the gross universe (*bhuh*), the subtle world of the manes (*bhuvah*) and the subtle world of the gods (*svah*). The Virāj is the wheel of transmigratory existence (*samsāra*). Living beings are first born in the physical world. After death they go according to their Karma either to the world of manes or the world of gods. From there they are reborn in the physical world again. In order to get liberation from this cycle of births and deaths, the soul must go beyond Virāj and attain union with the personal God. According to Advaita this is only an indirect or graded form of liberation called *krama mukti*. Direct and final liberation is obtained only when the soul realizes its oneness with the supreme, impersonal Brahman. This in brief is the Vedantic view of the macrocosm, the Reality regarded as a whole.¹²

Corresponding to these three cosmic levels, the individual self also has three levels: the Prājñā, the Taijasa and the Viśva. If the cosmic levels are likened to

8. पुरुष एवेदं विश्वं ।

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.1.10

9. न विश्वं नाम पुरुषादन्यत् किञ्चिदस्ति ।

Śaṅkara, Commentary on *ibid.*

10. पुरुषः पूर्णमनेन सर्वमिति ।

Śaṅkara, Commentary on *Katha Upaniṣad* 4.12

11. Cf. Swamiji's lectures on 'Jñāna Yoga' in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976), Vol. 2, pp. 203-225.

12. The various schools of Vedānta describe these levels in different ways. What is given above is a generalized picture based on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.1-7; 5.5.1,

the storeys of a big mansion, the individual levels may be regarded as the stairs leading to these storeys. If we want to contact the cosmic Reality at a higher level, we should first attain the corresponding higher dimension of our self. So spiritual progress may be regarded as a movement from Viśva to Taijasa and from Taijasa to Prājña, and realizing the cosmic Reality corresponding to these levels.

It should be mentioned here that in traditional Vedantic books the Viśva is regarded as the self in the waking state, the Taijasa as the self in the dream state and the Prājña as the self in the deep-sleep state. Hence they may not appear to represent lower and higher spiritual levels. But this view applies only to the unenlightened self which is covered with ignorance. Dream and deep-sleep are like going up the staircase blindfolded, while spiritual experience is like going up the staircase with eyes wide open. When ignorance covering Viśva is removed, it will no longer remain deluded by the pleasures of the world but will see the universe as God in the form of Virāj. When the ignorance covering Taijasa is removed, it will no longer dream but will see God as Hiraṇyagarbha and get the visions of various gods and goddesses. When the ignorance covering Prājña is removed, it will no longer remain immersed in deep sleep but will have the direct realization of the impersonal aspect of God. All these changes take place at different stages in *upāsanā*.

Thus *upāsanā* or Vedantic meditation involves a double process: the progressive transformation of the self and its integration with the divine Reality at different levels.

Two types of upāsanā

In an earlier context we showed that *upāsanās* could be classified into three

groups: *pratīkopāsanā* (meditation on an Image) *nāmopāsanā* (meditation on a Mantra) and *ahamgrahopāsanā* (meditation on the Self).¹³ This classification is from the standpoint of the microcosm. There is another classification from the standpoint of the macrocosm. Depending upon the level at which the contact between the individual soul and the divine Reality is established, *upāsanā* may be grouped into two: *virād-upāsanā* and *antaryāmyupāsanā*.

God manifesting Himself through the whole universe is Virāj. Worship of Virāj is called *virādupāsanā*. All living beings are parts of Virāj. Among them man is the highest manifestation of the Divine. To serve one's fellow men as God is one of the best ways of doing *Virādupāsanā*. Says Swami Vivekananda,

This is the only God that is awake, our race—'everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything'—all other gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all round us, the Virāt? When we have worshipped this, we shall be able to worship all other gods. . . . The first of all worship is the worship of the Virāt—of those all around us.¹⁴

Discharging one's duties of life or helping others out of attachment or compassion is only good Karma. To become an *upāsanā* or Yoga, work must be done as worship and with meditative awareness. In other words, work should become *karma samādhi*, 'working meditation'. Everything that we enjoy comes from the universe around us, the energy for all our work too comes from the universe, every form of life is a part of the universal life—the Virāj. Knowing this, the wise man surrenders the fruits of his actions to Virāj. This is *virād-upāsanā* of the best type.

There are, however, other forms of *virād-*

13. See June 1981 Editorial.

14. *The Complete Works* (1973), Vol. 3, p. 301.

upāsanā like ritualistic worship and prayer. The divine image (*mūrti* or *vighraha*) worshipped in temples are really symbols of Virāj. According to Śrī Rāmānuja, a special aspect of God called *arcā* manifests Himself in properly consecrated images. The *arcā* may be regarded as an aspect of Virāj. Most of the worldly prayers too belong to the realm of Virāj. When a man prays for wealth or when a woman prays for a child, he or she is really praying to God in the form of Virāj, and it is from the Virāj that the response comes. The *R̥g-Veda* is full of such prayers.

Similarly the so-called meditation attempted by a beginner in spiritual life should also be regarded as a form of *virādupāsanā*. The divine form he meditates on is only a gross mental reproduction of the deity's picture he has seen outside. The divine name he repeats is not the subtle mantric potency of the deity, but only a gross sound (belonging to the *madhyamā* or *vaikharī* stage of thought). When he tries to meditate on his own higher Self, he only succeeds in thinking about his ego. All these are only aspects of Virāj. As long as the aspirant's meditation does not go beyond his body and mind, it is nothing but another form of Karma. There is not much difference between this kind of meditation and Karma Yoga. Both are forms of *virādupāsanā*.

What are the results of *virādupāsanā*? It undermines the unreal world created by the ego—the *jīva sṛṣṭi*. It reduces egoism and selfishness. The attainment of selflessness is the real purification of the mind. As the mind gets purified, the light of the inner Self manifests itself more and more. Another result of *virādupāsanā* is that it brings the individual into greater harmony with universal life. This kind of harmony based on selflessness is superior to the harmony based on selfishness and attained through social adjustments. However, Hindu tradition holds that *virādupāsanā*

in itself is not enough to assure liberation, *mukti*. It may lead to the attainment of some higher world after a person's death. But to attain liberation one must realize the real nature of one's Self and its oneness with the Supreme Self. The seeker of liberation should not, therefore, remain satisfied with *virādupāsanā*, however important it is during the early stages, but should move on to higher stages of spiritual life.

The next higher stage in *upāsanā* (from the standpoint of the macrocosm) is *antaryāmyupāsanā*, meditation on God as the *antaryāmin*, the Inner Controller. The nature of the Inner Controller is discussed at great length in the *Upaniṣads*, especially in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*.¹⁵ Like the golden thread stringing the pearls in a necklace, God exists in the souls of all beings as the *sūtrātmā*, the spiritual continuum. He is called Hiraṇyagarbha, the Golden Womb, because the whole universe (as Virāj) comes out of him. He is the Puruṣa, the supreme Person, of whom all souls are parts. The famous hymn known as *Puruṣa-sūkta* describes the emergence of the Virāj (the universe with all its beings, sun and moon and seasons) from the Puruṣa. After cosmic dissolution when a new creation is about to begin, God first manifests Himself as the Hiraṇyagarbha who as the cosmic Soul becomes the creator and protector of the universe and the lord of all beings, the Prajāpati.¹⁶ In Vedānta He is known as Saguṇa Brahman, lower Brahman.¹⁷

15. Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.6.1-3.7.23.

16. हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताग्रे भूतस्य जातः पतिरेक
आसीत् ।
R̥g-Veda 10.121.1

ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः संबभूवः

विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता ।

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.1.1.

17. In the Vārtika school of Advaita (to which belong Suresvara, Sarvajñātma Muni and Sadānanda—the author of *Vedānta Sāra*) the terms

In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* the sage Yājñavalkya is asked, how many gods are there? He at first puts their number as three thousand and three. When further questioned, he reduces the number to thirty-three, then to three, and finally to one. That single god is Prāṇa or Hiraṇyagarbha.¹⁸ The idea is that all gods and goddesses are only different aspects of one supreme Deity, the Hiraṇyagarbha. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says, 'Bhuḥ bhuvah and suvah are the three worlds (of the Virāj). The sage Māhācamasya discovered a fourth world—the (lower) Brahman; it is the Cosmic Soul; all gods are parts of it'.¹⁹ While initiating a disciple into meditation, the Guru usually asks him to choose a deity as his *iṣṭa-devatā*. All these 'chosen deities' are really the *ādhidaivika* aspects of the one supreme Deity. Behind every image you meditate on is the light of this supreme Deity. Behind every mantra you repeat is the supreme Word. But to realize this important truth the aspirant must rise above the forms, words and symbols produced by the ordinary mind. In other words, he must rise from *virādupāsanā* to *antaryāmyupāsanā*.

The transition from lower meditation to higher meditation cannot be effected by a change in imagination. It is the result of an inner transformation. As already mentioned, in order to contact the cosmic Reality at a higher level it is necessary to rise to a corresponding higher dimension of one's own self. How is this inner change brought

about? Through purification of mind and intense aspiration. It is intense longing, what Sri Ramakrishna calls *vyākulatā*, for God that opens the door to the inner shrine. Prayer is the most powerful expression of this inner yearning.

In the Upaniṣads there is considerable discussion on this point. The sun is there regarded as a symbol of Virāj. Hiraṇyagarbha, the Inner Controller, is symbolized as the Puruṣa, the Person, within the solar orb. Again and again we come across in the Upaniṣads statements such as, 'He that is here in the human person, and He that is there in the Sun are one'.²⁰ In the Upaniṣads we find several prayers addressed to the sun. These are really addressed to the Virāj with the aim of realizing the Hiraṇyagarbha. Take for instance the prayer in the *Īśa-Upaniṣad*: 'The face of Truth is hidden under a golden vessel. O Sun, do thou open it so that I, who am devoted to Truth, may see it'.²¹ As Śaṅkara's commentary on this verse makes it clear, here the 'golden vessel' stands for Virāj and 'the Truth' (satya) stands for Hiraṇyagarbha. The well known prayer beginning with 'Lead us from the unreal to the Real...' is also, like the above, a prayer for the attainment of Hiraṇyagarbha, as Śaṅkara's commentary on it shows. The celebrated Gayatrī, the sacred prayer of the twice-born, too belongs to this category.

In *antaryāmyupāsanā* the aspirant meditates on the unity of the *jīvātman*, the indi-

Saguṇa Brahman and Inner Controller are applied to a third level of Reality called Īśvara who occupies a position in between the supreme and Hiraṇyagarbha. In other schools the supreme Brahman itself is regarded as Īśvara; this view is followed here in our discussion.

18. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.9.1-9.

19. भूर्भुवः सुवरिति वा एतास्तिस्रो व्याहृतयः ।
तासाम् उ ह स्मैतां चतुर्थीम् । माहात्मस्य प्रवेदयते ।
मह इति । तद् ब्रह्म । स आत्मा । अङ्गान्यन्या देवताः ।

Taittirīya Upaniṣad 1.5.1.

20. स यश्चायं पुरुषे । यश्चासावादित्ये । स एकः ।

Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.8.5

The same idea occurs in *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* 16 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 5.5.2-4.

21. हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।

तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

Īśa-Upaniṣad 15.

22. असतो मा सद्गमय . . . ।

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.3.28.

vidual Self, with the *paramātman*, the Supreme Self, the Inner Controller. How does he do it? First of all he looks upon his own Self as light. Then he regards the Inner Controller as the Light of this light—that is, as the true Light which illumines even the light of his own soul. This is not a process of imagination but an actual intuitive experience. The mind then remains absorbed in the interior Light. The image of his Chosen Deity no longer remains a picture, but becomes identified with the Inner Controller and becomes the very source of the interior Light. Or it may merge in that Light and disappear. It is through this *upāsana* that the aspirant realizes that God is infinite and dwells in the hearts of all beings as the Inner Controller.

According to Advaita Vedanta, this is the highest realization attainable through *upāsana*s, also called *vidyās*, described in the Upaniṣads. Beyond this lies the uncharted realm of the impersonal Brahman, the Absolute; which can be realized only by following the path of negation, the *Jñānamārga*.

What are the results of *antaryāmyupā-*

sanā? It expands our consciousness. It gives an infinite dimension to our life. During the early stages of spiritual life the aspirant usually thinks of himself first and then tries to accommodate God and the world into his mental frame. *Antaryāmyupāsana* reverses this process. The aspirant now spontaneously comes to regard the Infinite as of primary importance and himself as of secondary importance. He realizes that consciousness is infinite, that his own Self is only the individual (*ādhyātmika*) aspect and his Chosen Deity only the theistic (*ādhidai- vika*) aspect of that infinite consciousness. He sees the whole universe governed by a divine order and harmony—the Logos. The harmony that his life now attains is unchangeable because it is grounded in the Infinite.

A person's life, especially spiritual life, attains maturity only when he experiences the Infinite. The Infinite can be contacted at different levels, and the course of a person's life depends upon at what level he establishes this contact. Human life becomes full only when it partakes of infinite life. Every person is great in proportion to his share of the Infinite.

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : NARENDRANATH

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

[A hundred years ago in December 1881 an event of great significance to the modern world took place in a quiet suburb of Calcutta—the meeting of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda (then known as Narendranath) at Dakshineswar. It marked the end of the ancient age and the dawn of a new renaissance. However, the event signified not merely the transition of one age into another but more importantly, it actualized the transmission of the spiritual wealth of ancient India into an incipient new nation and through that the establishment of a spiritual channel between the East and the West. As a centenary commemoration of this historic event, we are publishing the following article which recreates the original scene with a wealth of research details—Ed.]

Every great world teacher had a dynamic counterpart, a chief apostle, to spread his message. Christ had Peter and later on Paul, Śri Kṛṣṇa had Arjuna, Buddha had

Ānanda, Gourānga had Nityānanda, and the latest of God-men Sri Ramakrishna chose Narendranath to serve as the chief apostle of his mission.

If Narendranath was the symbol of the modern spirit, Sri Ramakrishna represented the best of India in the ancient tradition. In fact, the transformation of the former into Swami Vivekananda may be regarded as the resultant force of the convergence of the two personalities, Sri Ramakrishna and Narendranath. The relationship between these two great personalities was not merely that of Guru and disciple. It was the fusion of two mighty wills and the creation of a tremendous spiritual power which burst upon the world like a new sun rise. It was the fusion of the ancient and the modern, of the East and the West, of religion and science, of love and knowledge, of devotion and service. The meeting of these two great personalities is thus an important historical event.

Born in Simulia, Calcutta, on January 12, 1863, of an aristocratic Kāyastha family, Narendra grew up into a handsome young man, possessing presence of mind, keen intelligence and prodigious memory, a passion for truth and devotion to purity in thought and action. His father Viswanath Dutta, a distinguished attorney of the Calcutta High Court, was a man of independent spirit, agnostic about religion, a lover of travel, literature and music and a critic of social conventions. But the grandfather, Durgacharan, a rich and cultured man had renounced his wife and children at the age of twenty-four and had become a Sannyasin. From his boyhood Narendra felt an irresistible desire to realize the ultimate Truth. His mother Bhuvanewari Devi was a pious Hindu woman of regal bearing. Deeply devout and of heroic spirit, she was a source of constant inspiration to him all through his life.

About Narendranath's adolescent period

one of his college friends Brojendranath Seal wrote :

He was undeniably a gifted youth, sociable, free and unconventional in his manners—an excellent singer—the soul of social circles—a brilliant conversationalist, though somewhat bitter and caustic, piercing with shafts of wit the shows and mummeries of the world—sitting in the scorner's chair but hiding the tenderest of hearts under the mask of cynicism—altogether, an inspired Bohemian but possessing what Bohemians lack, an iron will ... and withal possessing a strange power of the eye which could hold his listeners in thrall.

Distinguished for his brilliant intellect and phenomenal memory, he studied with zest world history, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, art, music, etc., and tried to 'weld Hellenic beauty and Indo-Germanic thought into one harmonious whole'.¹

During his college days the views of Western philosophers had unsettled his faith in God. He wanted a demonstration of God before he could accept Him. Though universal reason was having the upper hand in his mind, his emotional nature became dissatisfied with mere abstractions. He longed for a concrete support, a *guru*, who embodying perfection in the flesh would be able to guide him. This attitude distinguished him from his contemporaries. Unlike most of his college friends, he felt the urge for a spiritual life, as distinct from the philosophical pursuit.

It was this spiritual quest that took him to several religious leaders of the time who belonged to the Brahma Samaj. He had a meeting with Maharshi Devendranath Tagore who encouraged him. He was for a time influenced by the magnetic personality of Keshab Chandra Sen and his eloquent sermons. He joined as a singer in his choir and was a member of the 'Band of Hope'. With the formation of the Sadharan Brahma

1. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1974), p. 224,

Samaj, he 'became an initiated member of the Samaj'.² He also participated in other activities like mass education, the Hindu Mahāmelā of Navagopal Mitra, etc.

Narendra heard the name of Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Dakshineswar for the first time perhaps from Principal Rev. William Hastie of General Assembly's Institution where Narendra was a student. Rev. Hastie introduced Sri Ramakrishna by way of illustration to bring home the concept of 'a momentary trance' in Wordsworth's poem 'Excursion'. It is also quite likely that Narendra heard about the saint of Dakshineswar mentioned in the Brahma circles he was closely acquainted with. Eulogistic accounts of the saint used to appear in Brahma journals and books and, a voracious reader that Narendra was, he might have read about the saint. Besides, it is not unlikely that he heard of the saint from his neighbours Ramachandra Dutta and Surendranath Mitra, both greatly devoted to the saint. In fact the saint came to be widely known in the Simulia locality after Ramachandra became a staunch disciple of his in 1879. Nevertheless, it may be concluded that such pieces of information did not prompt him to pay a visit to the saint of Dakshineswar.

As to when and under what circumstances Narendranath met Sri Ramakrishna for the first time there are several surmises. The first edition of *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western Disciples (Vol. 1, p. 53), mentions the meeting of the two at Dakshineswar as 'their first meeting' although it makes a brief reference to a meeting of the two at Surendranath Mitra's house in November, 1881. Swami Saradananda, in his *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, categorically claims that the first meeting took place at the house of

Surendranath Mitra just before Narendra's F.A. Examination which began from November 28, 1881. Rakhal Chandra Ghosh, who had first met Sri Ramakrishna about six months earlier and was said to have been present in that meeting, supports this viewpoint.³ Curiously enough Narendra does not mention this when he gives Mahendranath Gupta (the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) an account of his first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna. Nevertheless many biographers have finally agreed that an early meeting of the two at the house of Surendranath Mitra did take place in Simulia, and hold that it served as a prelude to the 'historic first meeting' of the two at Dakshineswar.

Narendranath was then preparing himself for the final F.A. Examination of Calcutta University. Surendranath Mitra had invited the saint of Dakshineswar to his residence at Simulia and organized a small festival in the evening. It was probably in the month of November, 1881.⁴ As no other good singer was available, Surendranath persuaded Narendra to treat the audience to devotional songs, Narendra's delightful voice charmed the ear of Sri Ramakrishna.

Very little is on record about this 'chance meeting' of Narendra with Sri Ramakrishna. He was not perhaps much impressed by the 'Paramahansa of Dakshineswar'. In fact to Narendranath, 'he looked just like an ordinary man with nothing remarkable about

3. See *Swami Brahmananda* (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan, 2nd edition), p. 48.

4. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, tr. by Swami Jagadananda, Ramakrishna Math, Madras, p. 715. The claim by 'The Life' (1956 edition, p. 30) and Romain Rolland that the first meeting came off in November, 1880, does not fit into the circumstances. Like a few other biographers, Priyanath Sinha (his pen-name being Gurudas Burman), a classmate of Narendranath, does not at all mention of the meeting at Surendra's place in his *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Charit'* (Bengali).

2. Dr. R. C. Majumdar, *Swami Vivekananda, a Historical Review*, published by General Printers and Publishers, Calcutta, 1965, p. 6.

him'.⁵ On the other hand, the piercing insight of Sri Ramakrishna, helped him discover in the tormented and storm-tossed youth, as Narendra then was, the apostle he had been waiting for. Evidently, he felt attracted towards the young man.⁶ He talked with Surendranath Mitra and then with Ramachandra Dutta, a relation of Narendranath,⁷ and collected relevant information about the young man. The singing over, Sri Ramakrishna came close to the singer, carefully studied his physical features and lovingly invited him to visit Dakshineswar temple at an early date.

However, Sri Ramakrishna had earlier seen Narendra in a mystic vision. In later years he described this vision to his close disciples. One day, absorbed in samādhi, he found his pure mind soaring high along a luminous path till it crossed the barrier between the phenomenal universe and the Absolute and entered finally the transcendental realm. There he saw seven sages, superior even to gods in wisdom and holiness, absorbed in meditation. While he was admiring their spiritual attainments, he noticed a portion of the undifferentiated Absolute becoming condensed, as it were, to take the form of a divine child. Sitting upon the lap of one of the sages and gently clasping his neck, the child whispered something into his ear. At this the sage awoke from meditation and looked upon the wondrous child. The child seemed to be the treasure of his heart and that their familiarity was of eternity. The child joyously

said to him, 'I am going to the earth; you must come with me'. The sage's tender look expressed his consent. Soon thereafter the sage was again immersed in samādhi. Sri Ramakrishna was astonished to observe that a part of the mind and body of the sage descended to earth where Narendra lived. When Sri Ramakrishna saw Narendra for the first time, he recognized him to be that sage. Subsequently on being asked, Sri Ramakrishna admitted that the divine child was none other than he.

It is now almost certain that the first real 'encounter' between the Master and the disciple took place someday in December, 1881.⁸ Soon after Narendra took his F.A.

8. Very rightly the new revised and enlarged edition of *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1980), vol. 1, p. 60, holds that Narendra 'in the company of two of his friends went for the first time to Dakshineswar one day in December, 1881'. Swami Gambhirananda in his article on 'Tyāgi Bhaktader Sri Ramakrishna-Samīpe Agaman' (Udbodhan, B.S. 1357, Aswin and Kartik) puts December, 1881 as the time of first meeting. S. N. Dhar's assertion that 'the historic first meeting at Dakshineswar between Naren and Sri Ramakrishna took place on Sunday, January 15, 1882 and his arguments in favour of it (Ref. *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, published by the Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyākumari, vol. 1, p. 110) are not tenable. For we find that Manomohan, Ramachandra, Surendranath, Narendra and Nityagopal—five of them visited Dakshineswar on Sunday, January 29, 1882. To the familiar audience Sri Ramakrishna gave a brilliant exposition on Mother Kali, (vide *Tattwamanjari*, vol. 9, no. 11, p. 200). By that time Narendra seemed to have become quite a familiar figure. According to S. N. Dhar, Narendra's second visit to Dakshineswar took place on February 5, 1882, and the third visit on February 12, 1882. Again we find Narendra present at Dakshineswar on Sunday, February 19, 1882, the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna (vide *Tattwamanjari*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 11). But he was absent on Tuesday, February 7, 1882 when Ramachandra and Nitvagopal visited Dakshineswar. (vide *Tattwamanjari*, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 3).

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati Memorial edition, vol. 4, p. 179.

6. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, p. 715. Swami Brahmananda said that they clearly felt that the Master was very much attracted towards Narendra as soon as he saw him that day.

7. According to Swami Gambhirananda, Ramachandra Dutta was the maternal uncle of Bhubaneswari Devi, and not a cousin as claimed by Mahendranath Dutta. (*Yuganayak Vivekananda*, [Bengali] 3rd edition, vol. 1, p. 94 F.N.).

examination,⁹ his father decided to give Narendra in marriage to a girl of his choice. There was also the tempting offer of a large dowry that might enable Narendra to go to England to take his I.C.S. Examination. Narendra stubbornly refused, for he apprehended that marriage might deter his spiritual progress. Since his adolescence two contrasting visions of life—one of the worldly life of comfort, ease and luxury, and the other of a mendicant's life of renunciation and pursuit of Truth tossed his mind, particularly before he went to sleep at night. The latter, however, used to dominate. It gradually formed into a strong urge in him for realizing the Truth, and he became restless to find out the way for the same. Ramachandra Dutta came to his help and suggested, 'If you have a real desire to realize God, then come to the Master at Dakshineswar instead of visiting the Brahmo Samaj and other places'.¹⁰

9. According to '*Sri Sri Latu Maharajer Smriti Katha*' (Bengali), 2nd edition, p. 101, Narendra was visiting Dakshineswar frequently. Latu met Narendra at the latter's residence on the day following Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, i.e. on February 20, 1882. Latu said, 'Yesterday there was great festivity at Dakshineswar. Why did you not go, dear? He (Sri Ramakrishna) inquired of you repeatedly. Please accompany me to Dakshineswar. He wants to see you'.

Naren: 'I have no time to visit him now. The examination is knocking at the door. How can I spare time for the mad Brahmin?' Here the 'examination' perhaps refers to internal examination held at the college. By this time Narendra must have visited Dakshineswar several times. It also agrees with the fact that Narendra's first visit to Dakshineswar took place soon after the F.A. Examination. The examination was held for five days commencing from November 28, 1881.

10. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, p. 715. On hearing this persuasive advice, Narendra requested his uncle Jnan to visit the saint of Dakshineswar. The latter complied with his request and reported back to the effect that the so-called Paramahansa of Dakshineswar was but a mad-cap. This view of Akshay Kumar Sen

Whether it was Rev. Hastie, Ramachandra Dutta, Surendranath Mitra or some other person who urged Narendra to visit Dakshineswar, it was, nonetheless, the young man's spiritual fire, profound thirst for Truth and above all the chain of circumstances that drove him to take refuge at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. According to Bhuvanewari Devi 'it was Ramachandra who brought Naren to Ramakrishna'.¹¹ But some of his biographers hold that Surendranath invited Narendra to accompany him to Dakshineswar and the latter accepted the offer. One day he along with two or three friends of his accompanied Surendranath in his horse carriage to Dakshineswar.¹² What

in his '*Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*', p. 328-29 does not find support from any other author.

11. Bhupendranath Dutta, *Swami Vivekananda, Patriot Prophet — A Study*, Calcutta, 1954, p. 155.

12. According to Gurudas Burman, Narendra went to Dakshineswar in the company of Ramachandra Dutta alone. Baikunthanath Sanyal, too, holds the same view (*Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilamrita* [Bengali], 2nd edition, p. 286). Girish Chandra Ghosh also holds this view (Girish Chandra Ghosh, '*Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda*', *Udbodhan*, vol. 7, 15 Magh, 1311 B.S.).

Bnt, Akshay Kumar Sen claims that Narendra went to see Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar in the company of Surendranath Mitra alone.

Manomohan Mitra wrote in *Tattwamanjari* (quoted in *Bhakta Manomohan*, Bengali, published by Udbodhan, Calcutta, p. 78) 'In the month of Pous (December-January) 1881, the devotees Ramachandra Dutta, Surendranath Mitra, Narendranath Dutta and this humble servant went to Dakshineswar in a carriage'. Thereafter he describes how Narendra was introduced to Sri Ramakrishna by Ramachandra Dutta.

Swami Suddhananda's diary, a major source material of Swami Vivekananda's biography, gives a completely different account. He writes that Narendra first visited Dakshineswar in the company of Hemali, a common acquaintance of his and Rakhal, and several other young men. They went in a hired boat. They paid the boatmen four annas as fare for the trip. Rakhal had already visited Sri Ramakrishna several times and he served as the guide of the party. According to this account, however, this was Narendra's

is definite is that the historic event took place one winter afternoon in the month of December, 1881.¹³

There was Sri Ramakrishna, 45, who had discovered through a series of intensive experiments the wonderful truth that the paths of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam lead to the same goal, God, who is called by different names in different religions. Sri Ramakrishna pointed out that economic life, social life, or aesthetic life can be secured only when human life is anchored on the spiritual ideal. People were charmed at his simplicity of manners and humility. Such was his spiritual power that just by a touch, or simply by a look, by a

second meeting with Sri Ramakrishna, the first one being at Surendranath's. Again, this tallies satisfactorily with Swami Saradananda's description that the party entered Sri Ramakrishna's room through the western door. Those who used to come by carriage or on foot from Calcutta used to enter through the eastern door. The northern door was enclosed by bamboo screen against northern wind.

While Swami Saradananda holds the view that Narendra's first visit to Dakshineswar was his second meeting with Sri Ramakrishna, 'M' (in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 981) records the following conversation :

'M': 'You must remember vividly your first visit to him'.

Narendra : 'Yes, it was at the temple garden at Dakshineswar, in his own room. That day I sang two songs'.

However, the statement found in the *Bengali Gospel*, vol. 5, Appendix 1, that 'Three years earlier (1882) Narendra in the company of a few Brahma friends of his came to see Sri Ramakrishna and stayed there overnight', perhaps refers to some subsequent visit. Nonetheless, it is evident that 'M' was not present on the occasion of Narendra's first meeting.

13. *The Gospel*, p. 1017, mentions that Narendra, Rakhai, Kedar joined in the annual festival of Simla Brahma Samaj, held on January 1, 1882 at the house of Jnan Chowdhury. It has been recorded also 'Narendra had met the Master only a few days before at the temple garden at Dakshineswar. He used to participate now and then in the worship at the Simla Brahma Samaj and sing for the congregation'.

word or by a wish he could transform their lives. His method of unfolding individual aspirant's religious potential along the path best suited for him was unique. About him Narendra said later, 'All my life I have not seen another man like that, and I have travelled all over the world. When I think of that man, I feel like a fool, because I want to read books and he never did. He never wanted to lick the plates after other people had eaten. That is why he was his own book'.¹⁴ In another context he said, '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'. To him 'Sri Ramakrishna is a force. You should not think that his doctrine is this or that. But he is a power . . . working in the world'.¹⁵ This was the person that young Narendranath came to meet.

It may be presumed that Sri Ramakrishna was seated on the small couch in his room. He was dressed in a red-bordered ordinary dhoti. Very likely he had put on his usual winter garment, a green coloured moleskin shawl bordered with red. A man of medium height, he was thin to emaciation and of extremely delicate health. The slightly veiled eyes and the short beard he wore could hardly give a visitor the impression that an extraordinary personality lay hidden behind them. He had a bewitching smile. His rustic Bengali spoken with a slight though delightful stammer held his listeners spell-bound.

Sri Ramakrishna recounted Narendra's visit in the following words.

Naren entered this room on the first day through the western door (facing the Ganga). I noticed that he took no care of his body; the hair of his head and his dress were not at all trim; like

14. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 6, p. 64.

15. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 5, p. 269.

others, he had no desire at all for any external objects; he was, as it were, unattached to anything. His eyes indicated that a major part of his mind was perforce drawn ever inward. When I saw all these, I wondered, 'Is it possible that such a great spiritual aspirant possessing a superabundance of *Sattva*, should live in Calcutta, the home of worldly people? There was a mat spread on the floor; I asked him to sit down. He sat down near the jar of Ganga water. A few acquaintances of his also came with him that day.... On enquiry, I came to know that he learnt two or three Bengali songs only. I asked him to sing them. He began singing the Brahmo song, 'O mind, come, let us go home'¹⁶

16. According to Swami Suddhananda's diary, Sri Ramakrishna recognized Narendra to have seen him at Surendra Mitra's. He said to Narendra, 'I wish much to hear you sing. That day you sang. They were pleasant to listen to'. In those days he knew classical songs in Hindi and a few devotional songs composed by the Brahmos.

Swami Nikhilananda's translation of the Bengali song composed by Ayodhyanath Pakrashi runs like this :

Let us go back, once more, O, mind, to our own abode !

Here in this foreign land of earth

Why should we wonder aimlessly in stranger's guise?

These living beings round about, and the five elements,

Are strangers to you, all of them; none is your own.

Why do you thus forget yourself,

In love with strangers, O my mind?

Why do you thus forget your own ! etc. (vide, *The Gospel*, p. 981).

According to Narendra's own narration as found in the *Gospel*; p. 982, he also sang another song composed by Becharam Chatterjee. It runs as follows :

O Lord, must all my days pass by so utterly in vain?

Down the path of hope I gaze with longing, day and night.

Thou art the Lord of all the worlds, and I but a beggar here.

How can I ask of Thee to come and dwell within my heart?

My poor heart's humble cottage door is standing open wide;

Be gracious, Lord, and enter there but once, and quench its thirst !

As if in meditation he sang it with the whole of his mind and heart. When I heard it, I could not control myself and was in ecstasy.¹⁷

As his mind descended to normal consciousness Sri Ramakrishna with a radiant smile lighting his face, said, 'Behold ! how Naren beams with the light of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning !'¹⁸ Those present in the room were surprised at these words but could hardly appreciate their import. On being questioned by the Master, Narendra replied that every night as he closed his eyes to sleep he saw a ball of light between his eye-brows. Sri Ramakrishna was delighted and observed that it indicated Narendra's inborn capacity for meditation on the transcendental Self.

Here is Swami Vivekananda's own account of what happened then.

Shortly after, he suddenly stood up, and taking me by the hand, led me on to the northern verandah. It was winter and the open spaces between the pillars were covered with bamboo mat screens to keep out the cold northern wind. Therefore, on entering the covered verandah, when the door leading to the verandah was closed, he could not be seen by anyone from within the room or from the other side of the verandah. As soon as the Master entered the covered verandah he closed the door behind us. I thought he might perhaps give me some instruction in private. But what he said and did next was beyond my comprehension. All on a sudden he caught hold of my hand and began shedding

17. From *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, p. 716.

18. The 'Life of Swami Vivekananda' has put this episode after Sri Ramakrishna had fed Narendra sweets, etc. We have followed here the sequence followed in the diary of Swami Suddhananda.

According to Manomohan Mitra's account in *Tattwamanjari*, Narendra sang only the song, 'Fix your mind in the One Ancient Person without blemish', etc. The song transported Sri Ramakrishna into ecstasy and his face beamed with joy. The *Gospel*, p. 535, however, corroborates the fact that Narendra sang the two above quoted songs.

profuse tears of joy. He addressed me very tenderly, as if I were somebody familiar to him for a long time, 'Ah! is it nice that you should come so late? Why have you been so unkind as to make me wait all these days? My ears are tired of hearing the futile talks of worldly people. Oh, I thought I would burst, not having found anyone to whom I could communicate my inner experiences.' And so he went like that all the time raving and weeping. The next moment he stood before me with folded palms showing me the respect due to a divine being and addressed me, 'Lord, I know that you are the ancient sage Nara,¹⁹ the incarnation of Narayana, born on earth to take away the sufferings and sorrows of mankind'.²⁰

I was altogether taken aback by his conduct—I was startled. 'What is this I have come to see', I thought, 'He must be stark mad! Why, I am but the son of Viswanath Dutta, and yet he dares address me thus!' However, I kept quiet and then let the madman talk. The next moment he asked me to wait there and brought some butter, candy and sandesh from the room and began to feed me with his own hand. He paid no heed to my repeated requests to give them to me so that I might share them with my companions saying, 'They will get some later. You

19. During Narendra's third visit to Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna fell into a trance and touched Narendra and the latter lost all outward consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'When Narendra had lost his normal consciousness I asked him that day many questions, such as who he was, where he came from, why he was born, how long he would be in this world and so on and so forth. Entering into the depth of his being, he gave proper answers to all these questions. These answers of his confirmed what I thought and saw and knew in my vision about him. It is forbidden to say all these things'. (*Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, p. 736).

20. Truly Romain Rolland comments that in the first few words Sri Ramakrishna spoke to Narendra 'he settled for Vivekananda the duty of social service, to which he was to devote his life'. (*The Life of Ramakrishna*, by Romain Rolland, footnote on p. 250).

According to the *Gospel*, p. 981, Sri Ramakrishna during the third meeting with Narendra and Narendra's second visit to Dakshineswar praised him as if he were God. He said to him, 'O Narayana, you have assumed this body for my sake', etc.

please eat these yourself.' Saying so he fed me all these delicacies and said, 'Promise me that you will come back soon to see me alone'. Unable to evade his importune request, I had to say, 'Yes'. I returned with Sri Ramakrishna to the common parlour and sat down beside my companions.²¹

Narendra quietly sat watching Sri Ramakrishna minutely but could not find anything abnormal in Sri Ramakrishna's words, demeanour or behaviour towards others. On the other hand, his illuminative talk and ecstasy suggested that he was truly a man of renunciation and there was a marked consistency between precept and practice in his life. He spoke lucidly about renunciation.

Suddenly it struck Narendra, 'Can this man be a great teacher?' He crept near to Sri Ramakrishna and asked him the challenging question which he had already asked various religious men.

'Do you believe in God, Sir?'

'Yes'.

'Have you seen God, Sir?'

'Yes, I see Him just as I see you here, only in an intenser sense. And if you want to see, you too can see Him.'^{21a}

Sri Ramakrishna continued,

God can be seen and spoken with, just as I am seeing you and speaking with you, but who wants to do so? People grieve and shed potsful of tears at the death of their wives and sons and behave in the same way for the sake of money and property, but who does so because he cannot realize God? If anyone is really equally anxious to see Him and calls on Him, He will certainly reveal Himself to him.²²

Narendra could not but believe that Sri Ramakrishna was saying then like a divinely

21. *Śrī Śrī Rāmākṛṣṇa Līlāprasāṅga*, vol. 5, pp. 68-70.

21a. Swami Vivekananda's lecture on 'My Master', vide *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 4, p. 179. The last portion of this dialogue is from Gurudas Burman, p. 212.

22. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, p. 718.

inspired man from the depths of his realization. Recounting later its impact he said,

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.²³

Nevertheless, Naren could hardly reconcile the picture before his eyes of this unostentatiously simple and serene man with his strange conduct he had just witnessed. He was tempted to conclude that Sri Ramakrishna must be a monomaniac, and even thought that perhaps he himself had been subjected to a trick of hypnotism or mesmerism by the old man. However, he said to himself, 'He may be a madman but only a fortunate few can have such renunciation. Even if insane, this man is the holiest of the holy, a true saint, and for that alone he deserves the reverential homage of mankind'. Nursing such conflicting thoughts, he managed to bow before Sri Ramakrishna and begged his leave to return to Calcutta. Sri Ramakrishna took hold of him and said endearingly, 'Come again, won't you, please? I feel greatly anxious for you. Will you come again?' Narendra could not resist saying 'I shall try, sir'.

Sri Ramakrishna had already made an assessment of Narendranath. He later described Narendra as a *nityasiddha*, *Iśwara-koti*, etc. In his characteristic way he spoke of Narendra as a thousand-petalled lotus. 'Others are pots and jugs. Narendra is a huge water-barrel. Among fishes he is the huge, red-eyed carp, others are small varieties of fish... He is like the male pigeon who, if held by its beaks, forcibly breaks away from you... I feel strong, when he is with me in a gathering'. He was never tired of pointing out the superiority of his gen-

ius, nor of foretelling his great future. He himself used to test his disciples through secular and spiritual means and would ask them, 'Test me as money-lenders test their coins. You must not accept me until you have tested me thoroughly'. As Sri Ramakrishna saw in him the 'future great man', he accorded him the highest place among his disciples.²⁴ He publicly placed the recognized fame of Keshab Chandra Sen below the potential greatness of Narendra, who had accomplished nothing as yet. Narendra however, did not feel flattered by what he regarded as the saint's exaggerated estimate of his potentialities.

Narendra returned home but was at a loss to make a definite estimate of Sri Ramakrishna. His philosophical and scientific thinking had received a severe jolt. In his next visit to the saint, which took place almost a month later, Narendra was determined to assess the 'real nature and power of the strange individual'. However, as Sri Ramakrishna drew near him in an ecstatic mood, muttered some words and placed his right foot on his body, he was swept off by a powerful spiritual experience. He saw 'with eyes open, that all the things of the room together with the walls were rapidly whirling and receding into an unknown region and my I-ness together with the whole universe was, as it were, going to vanish in an all-devouring great void'.²⁵ He cried out in consternation. Sri Ramakrishna laughed, stroked his chest and brought him back to normal consciousness. On his way to his home Narendra mused, 'How can a man who shatters to pieces a resolute and strong mind like mine be dismissed as a lunatic?' He determined to be more careful next time.

But he did not fare better even during his

23. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 5, p. 179.

24. Swami Ramakrishnananda: *Sri Ramakrishna and His Mission*, published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1955, p. 46.

25. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, p. 737.

third visit. Sri Ramakrishna walked with Narendra for some time in the adjacent garden of Jadunath Mallick. In the parlour Sri Ramakrishna went into an ecstatic trance and touched him. Narendra completely lost his external consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna asked him many questions regarding Narendra's past, his mission in the world, his span of life in the world. About this incident Sri Ramakrishna later on said, 'Entering into depth of his being he gave proper answers to all these questions. These answers of his proved what I thought and saw and knew in my visions about him'.²⁶ He learnt also that Narendra was a great sage who had attained perfection in meditation, and the day he recognized his true self he would give up his body through yoga. The effect of this mystic experience lingered with him almost for a month, like an intoxication.

What, however, drew Narendra irresistibly to the Master was the latter's unbounded love. He later admitted that Sri Ramakrishna had bound him over to him by his love. His intense love for others and deep concern for others' welfare distinguished all his activities and to Narendra he appeared as love personified. After the Master's passing Swami Vivekananda once wrote: 'Sri Ramakrishna has no peer; nowhere else in this world exists that unprecedented perfection, that wonderful kindness for all that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for men in bondage'.²⁷ So overjoyed Sri Ramakrishna used to be at times at the sight of Narendra that he would pass into *samadhi*, saying 'There he is—Na—'. Sri Ramakrishna would feed him with his own hands. Sri Ramakrishna lovingly called

him 'Śukadeva'.²⁸ Anxious to bequeath his own spiritual treasure to his heir-elect as early as possible, Sri Ramakrishna trained him in many ways and granted him several deep spiritual experiences.

However, despite these convincing experiences and demonstration of the incomprehensible power of Sri Ramakrishna, and in spite of the Master's immeasurable love for him, Narendra had considerable difficulty in fully accepting him as a world teacher. He never abdicated his reason for a moment. He would accept nothing that could not be rigorously tested by reason. When asked by the Master, Narendra would bluntly say, 'A thousand persons may look upon you as an *avatāra*, but I will refuse to do so until I am convinced about it'. Sri Ramakrishna was not annoyed in the least for he knew truth will triumph in the end.

The transformation of Narendranath from an apparently unbelieving youth into an ardent believer in the prophethood of Sri Ramakrishna and the torch-bearer of his master's message to the world is, according to his biographers, a guarded secret of Swami Vivekananda's inner life. It no doubt involved stupendous spiritual struggles and manifold spiritual experiences. The outcome of this transformation was a new revelation to the world, the dawn of a new Age. So closely connected are the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna with those of Swami Vivekananda that Sister Nivedita wrote about them in her book *The Master as I saw Him*:

It was said to me lately by one of the older generation that 'Ramakrishna had lived for the making of Vivekananda'. Is it indeed so? Or is it not rather impossible to distinguish with such fixity between one part and another, in a single mighty utterances of the Divine Mother-

²⁶. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, p. 740.

²⁷. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 6, p. 231.

²⁸. Mahendranath Dutta, *Sri Sri Ramakrishner Anudhyāna* (Bengali), published by Mahendra Publication Committee, Calcutta 700 006, 1st Edition, p. 83.

heart? Often it appears to me, in studying all these lives, that there has been with us a soul named Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, and that, in the penumbra of his being, appear many forms, some of which are with us still, and of more of whom it could be said with entire truth that here

ends, in relation to him, the sphere of those of others, or that there begins his own.²⁹

29. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967), vol. 1, p. 68.

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS OF A JUST SOCIETY

SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA

The word 'Society' may mean a human community or the entire body of mankind. Either way, society is composed of men. Man is the primary unit of society. But any collection of individuals does not make a society. It must have a set pattern and a code of conduct to regulate the relation among its members. Here comes the question of justice. Justice means righteousness, uprightness, fairness, etc. So a just society is one wherein the mutual relations of its members are guided and regulated by justice. In a small group, this may be practicable to some extent; but in the vast mass of mankind is it a practicable proposition? Is it not Utopian? It may be Utopian, but it is worthwhile to have it, for mankind must have a noble ideal to strive for. If no such ideal is kept in view, it will be the jungle law, and not human law, that will prevail among mankind. Trains may run late, but can any train run without a timetable? Rules may be observed more in their breach, yet society cannot survive without certain regulatory rules. So, even as a Utopian ideal there must be the conception of a just society. The point of our discussion here is, what could be the true foundation of a just society?

Where do we begin, at the individual end or the social end? Evidently at the individual end, because the individual is the starting point. The personality of man has three levels: the animal, the human and the

divine. In common with the sub-human creatures, man is naturally interested in preserving and perpetuating his life. At this level, he is not far removed from the quadrupeds. But endowed as he is with the power of thinking, he soon finds that for his very survival he has to depend on others. He learns that unbridled selfishness is suicidal. He has certain basic needs like food, clothes, shelter and family to live and multiply. The objects of enjoyment exist in limited quantities but man's greed is unlimited. Therefore a workable adjustment with other individuals becomes indispensable. At least a sort of non-aggression pact must prevail in society for each individual's survival. The posture of confrontation cannot continue for long, for it causes constant anxiety. So men developed certain social rules. These social rules are only a form of organized selfishness. They cannot withstand the stress and strain of self-interest. It is only the fear of retaliation that actually keeps each man in check. Prison, police, and penal codes are only the organized forms of collective retaliation. Governments function at this level.

However, this is not the whole truth about human society. Man has a spiritual dimension too. He has an innate conception of goodness and freedom. This he derives from his divine essence. Only when he becomes aware of his true spiritual essence does he deserve to be called man. Every-

one thinks, 'I am, I must be, free. I value my being for itself.' This sense of self-value leads us to accept and respect those values for our fellow-beings also.

What is the source of this sense of value and what is its sanction? The source is my own being; it is not imposed from outside. In my essence I am the Spirit, the Atman, which knows no destruction. I am the witness of all the changes, but I am changeless. Eternally I am. I cannot conceive of a time when I was not, or, when I will not be. I must be there as the witness of both being and non-being. Pure being is my essential nature. Being knows no spatial or temporal limitation. The Infinite can be only one. Hence all existence is one in the Infinite Spirit. This is the ultimate experience of great spiritual masters and the testimony of great scriptures. This is the conclusion of Vedanta. It is this oneness of existence that gives sanction to all moral values. Why should I love my neighbour? Why should I do unto others as I would want others to do to me? If it serves my purpose, why should I not hate my neighbour? The reason is, by hating my neighbour I am hurting myself, for I and my neighbour are one in the Spirit. This spiritual oneness of all existence is the source of all moral sense, and it is the spiritual brotherhood of the human race that gives sanction to the moral governance of society.

It is the moral value that gives rise to the sense of justice. So, spiritual oneness is the ultimate foundation on which a just society may be built up. Hindu society was organized on the basis of this spiritual foundation. This scheme had twin goals to achieve: individual salvation and social justice. It is called *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*—a code of living based on one's social status and stage of spiritual evolution. *Varṇa* originally meant a division of labour according to each one's aptitude. There was the intellectual class devoted to study and teaching. They were known as Brahmins. The ruling class

was called the Kṣatriyas. Next in social order was the business community called the Vaiśyas. Then came the labouring class known as the Śūdras. Each *varṇa* had its allotted duties and certain privileges. The emphasis was always on the discharge of duties and never on privileges. It was a composite scheme for the common welfare of the whole society. But what was originally a division of labour based on the aptitude and capacity of each individual, became hereditary as the powerful classes started stressing their privileges more than the discharging of the social obligation, and that led to its degeneration and ruin.

The *āśrama dhrama* is a course of discipline for self-improvement. As a student one learns the end and means of a perfect life which forms the foundation of his whole future. It is called Brahmacharya, the life of discipline essential for the acquisition of sacred knowledge. Next is the life of the Grhastha, the householder. The health and welfare of the society depend on him. His is a life of service. Man depends on ever so many factors for his existence. His debts to the world are innumerable. The ancients have fixed five natural debts which every one ought to discharge. The gods give us sun and rain; the Rṣis have, through their austerity accumulated a vast store-house of wisdom; the parents have provided us with the body; we depend on other men for mutual help; the dumb creatures we depend on for milk, manure and transport. So we are indebted to all of them. The debt to the gods is discharged by offering oblations in the fire. The Rṣis will be pleased by our studying and teaching the Vedas. To propitiate the departed ancestors one has to offer libations to the manes and also produce progeny for the perpetuation of the family tradition. One must render hospitality to fellowmen. The dumb creatures have to be looked after with care and kindness. These are called the five daily *yajñas* of a householder. Here only duties are pre-

scribed; there is no mention of any privileges for the householder. This is social justice in practice. It embraces the whole creation from the gods down to the animals.

After discharging one's duties as far as possible and on reaching the age of fifty, one has to retire from social and domestic duties, entrusting them to one's son. The retired man goes to some sacred place, and enters on a life of severe penance and meditation. He is called a *Vānaprastha*, an anchorite. In due course, he cuts himself off from all worldly ties and takes to *sannyāsa*, a life of total dedication to God. Thus the *āśrama dharma* is a scheme for the attainment of spiritual freedom through the fulfilment of one's domestic and social duties. The twin schemes of *varṇa* and *āśrama dharmas* is the practical application of the moral obligations of each towards his fellow-beings. Its ultimate basis is the spiritual oneness of all existence. Each for all and all for each, is its directive principle. It is a scheme based on the ideal of *yajña*, sacrifice. Occasions for friction and injustice are reduced to the minimum. Selfishness is the root of all injustice. The *varṇa* and *āśrama dharmas* aim at the eradication of all selfishness.

Of late, this scheme has fallen into disuse. The *Brahmacarya* and *Vānaprastha āśramas* have almost disappeared. *Gārhas-thya* remains though not exactly in the ancient form. *Sannyāsa* too survives to some extent. The other two stages also deserve to be resuscitated in modern times. Without a proper foundation provided by the *Brahmacarya āśrama*, a noble and fruitful life cannot be built up. The problems of the present day generation gap and of old age could be solved if a proper *Vānaprastha* order is organized.

The home being the unit of society, the search for justice in society must start with the home. Truly has it been said, charity begins at home. India had an age-old family system which ensured the security

and welfare of each member. It was the joint-family system where members of three or four generations lived together under a senior member. Under this system, none was neglected. The aged and the ailing, the crippled and the orphaned, the dull and the retarded, all were taken care of. To each according to his need and from each according to his capacity, was the principle on which this system was based. Necessarily, this involved a great deal of self-sacrifice which restricted the individual's freedom. Justice involves sacrifice. Modern man in search of personal freedom has broken up the joint-family with the result that each individual is left to fend for himself. As a consequence, society is faced with the problems of the orphans, the aged, the sick and the forsaken. Old people feel insecure and neglected. Society and the individual have to pay a heavy price for modern man's unbridled assertion of individual freedom.

Selfishness is the mother of all injustice. Fear of punishment may keep it in check to some extent. But the effective check can come only from within. This is possible only when one learns to value each individual for himself, for 'I and my neighbour' are one in Spirit. Here is the spiritual foundation for a just society. This spiritual contact with God and the neighbours in and through God has to be assiduously cultivated. Prayer and meditation play a very important part in daily renewing this contact. This awareness is real religion, and all moral values are derived from religion.

In modern times some countries are experimenting with the idea of building up a model society disregarding religion. Paradoxically, the very protagonists of the system may have got such an idea from the ancient monastic communities. Have they succeeded? The present indications are that they have not. Material poverty they may have removed to a certain extent; but at what price? The whole nation is suppressed.

The individual has no freedom. A few who control the State machinery dictate and decide what is good or bad for the whole country. A society without freedom is not worthy to be called a society, much less a just society. Justice springs from freedom and it thrives in freedom. It is impossible to build a society where justice finds an honourable position without the moral values derived from religion. For only religion can make man truly unselfish and enable him to recognize another's need as greater than his own. Love of God is true religion, and love of man in and through God is true morality which is the source of all justice. A life without prayer and meditation will be barren. It cannot beget true justice

The common people follow the example set by the rulers and leaders of society. Śrī Rāma was *dharma-vigraha*, justice personified. There is a fine description of the condition of the people under Rāma's benign rule: 'At the time, no woman suffered widowhood. None had any harm from reptiles. Nobody suffered from any ailment. There were no thieves or rob-

bers in the land. None had any mishap. There was no occasion for old people to perform the funeral rites of young people. All were happy; all were devoted to justice. Free from ailments and anxieties they lived long. Edible roots and fruits were plenty. Plants and trees were always in bloom. Rain fell when people needed rain. The wind blew soft and pleasant. The Brāhmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and the Śudras were devoted to their allotted duties, were happy in doing them and were free from greed. When Rāma ruled, people were truthful and just. All were in fine shape and upright.'

The glorious period of India's history was when Ashoka, one of the world's great emperors presided over her destinies. The concluding verse of the *Bhagavad-Gīta* reads: 'Where Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Yoga and Pārtha with his bow stand together, there prosperity, victory, dignity and justice reign supreme; have no doubt about it'.

When good men are ready to fight for justice with God as their support, then justice will prevail in society.

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THE PLACE OF NEGATION IN ADVAITA

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

1

In all mystical philosophies such as that of Plotinus, theological systems as that of Saint Aquinas and Idealistic monism like that of Śamkara, the approach to the absolute reality comes to be formulated in negative terms. The reason for this inclination is obvious. Human thought and language arise in empirical consciousness and are forged in relation to objects and situations obtaining in the materialistic and pluralistic order of experience. Hence no affirmative characterization of the superempirical

ultimate in terms relative to that order is possible. But an ascent to the Absolute must be effected. The only alternative method of access to that altitude should be by negation. The self-cancellation of the lower is the way to the attainment of the transcendent. This mode of progress through negation is best exemplified in the Advaita of Śamkara and a study of his procedure is found to shed illumination on the entire methodology of transcendentalism.

2

Śamkara enters the Indian philosophical

scene not as an originator of a new line of thought but as a commentator, in spite of his great intellectual brilliance and spiritual profundity. All his astounding powers of intellect and intuition and his inimitable scholarship are devoutly harnessed to the elucidation, thorough and penetrating, of the perennial classics of Vedanta, the Upaniṣads, the *Brahma-sūtra* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. It is in the course of his interpretation of these texts, that the negative mode of designating the ultimate Principle acquires substantiation. While all these texts illustrate and embody the method, it is particularly in the Upaniṣads, the really foundational authority, that the method is inculcated in a great variety of ways. In explaining these, Śaṅkara presents the negative approach to the absolute in all requisite amplitude. Among the Upaniṣads, the greatest and the longest one, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, is the focal classic for the purpose. The formula of '*neti, neti*' is its characteristic contribution. We will do well to attend to Śaṅkara's exposition of the formula, both in the commentary on the Upaniṣad and in the connected discussions in his interpretation of the *Brahma-sūtra*.

3

THERE ARE TWO arresting features in this connection in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. In the first place, the *neti, neti* passage is not found in any other Upaniṣad and is unique to this Upaniṣad. In the second place, it occurs five times in this Upaniṣad.¹ We can make out thereby that it is both special and pervasively fundamental to it. In the traditional exegetical estimate, it enjoys both *apūrvatā* and *abhyāsa*. It appears that the first enunciation of the principle is of the greatest importance, and the subsequent

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 2.3.6; 3.9.23; 4.2.4; 4.4.22; 4.5.15.

incorporations of it in the course of the wide-ranging Upaniṣad is just confirmatory of its importance and almost borders on formal acknowledgement.

It is necessary to go through the first passage in some detail. It is the concluding part of a section named 'Mūrtāmūrta Brāhmaṇa' which opens with the declaration that Brahman has two forms (*rūpa*): gross (*mūrta*) and subtle (*amūrta*). The two forms are analysed into two sets of factors—composing the framework of the external world and that of the corresponding individual personality. The details of these factors are not of importance for our purpose on hand. All that is essential to note here is that two forms are ascribed to Brahman, the gross and the subtle, and each form finds embodiment both in the cosmos and the individual living being. The discourse proceeds thence to the heart of the teaching. It declares *neti, neti* 'Not this, Not this'. What could this mean? It manifestly signifies an emphatic negation. It is further asserted, 'there is no other, transcending this'. Brahman is proclaimed to be *satyasya satyam* 'the Reality of realities'.²

Let us follow the elucidation of Śaṅkara in the commentary on the Upaniṣad and also his detailed discussion in *Brahma-sūtra*, 3-2-22.

(a) What is it that is negated? It cannot be both Brahman and the forms predicated of it. Such a total negation would be absurd, for all negation requires an affirmative basis.³ Nor can Brahman, the same as the Atman, be negated as it is a self-established and self-luminous reality. It is the pre-supposition of all cognitive affirmations and negations. The negation, in so far as it is the exercise of cognitive consciousness, is itself based on it. The 'contingent'

2. *Ibid*, 2.3.6.

3. Śaṅkara, Commentary on *Brahma-sūtra* 2.2.81; 2.3.7; 3.2.22.

phenomena can be negated as their non-existence is conceivable. The Self is a 'necessary' entity in the sense that its opposite is self-contradictory. The forms attributed to it can be negated without self-contradiction. But why does the sacred text attribute forms to it and then negate them? There is a strong reason behind the procedure. The manifold of existence given in empirical consciousness, is first of all denied independent reality. It has no being outside Brahman as supposed in popular understanding. And then its existence in Brahman as its attribute or form or mode is also denied. That way a total negation of the phenomenal is achieved. The procedure of the Upaniṣad in this connection is perfectly suited for achieving such a completeness of negation.

(b) Why should predication of forms to Brahman be discarded? Principally there are two reasons. The categories of thought and speech apply validly to the objects of experience, and the Atman-Brahman is never an object. It is *aviśayāntahpāti*, meaning it does not fall into the realm of objects but constitutes the transcendent subject. Further, all our categories of conception and verbalization apply to the pluralistic world of mundane experience and cannot signify the absolute Self devoid of all plurality. In this predicament the only way of thinking of an utterance that can serve to lead us to Brahman is the negative one. Through negation the empirical encrustation on Brahman is removed and the self-luminous reality allowed to shine irrepressibly in our consciousness unobstructed.

(c) Why does the Upaniṣad employ two negations, *neti, neti*? The superficial justification would be that the gross and subtle attributions are cancelled by the two negations. The deeper and radical interpretation would be that the repetition serves to repudiate all possible predications. This is a consummate technique of the text to do

away with all positive characterizations.

(d) The Upaniṣad leaves us in no doubt that it is perpetrating no nihilism. 'There is no other, transcending this': this statement means that everything other than Brahman is a fictitious construction destined to pass away on the dawn of enlightenment. This positive intent in spite of the negative characterization is brought out in the conclusion that Brahman is the 'Reality of realities', *satyasya satyam*.

(e) Śaṅkara discerns an alternative and deeper import of the statement, 'there is no other, transcending this'. He understands it to mean, 'there is no way of indicating Brahman other than and superior to the negative process of denying the cosmic manifold'. His words are crisp and clear *nahi prapañcapraṭiśedharūpādeśanāt anyat param ādeśanam brahmaṇo asti*.⁴ That only when a conditioned presentation of Brahman mixed with error is enough for the purpose on hand will the Upaniṣads advance a positive characterization, is his considered observation.⁵

Nothing more seems to be needed to emphasize the ultimate status of '*neti, neti*' as the presentation of the essential nature of Brahman.

4

Human thought and words are bound up with the pluralistic and objective world of phenomena. They cannot be instrumental in cognizing and indicating the ultimate Principle, which is both the ultimate subject and absolutely free from plurality of all kinds. But it is not something which can be negated, for it is the substratum of all experience and knowledge including our negative judgements. It is eternally given in self-consciousness. It is an indisputable

⁴ *Ibid*, 3.2.22.

⁵ Śaṅkara, Commentary on *Bṛhādāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 2.3.6.

reality, and it cannot be positively affirmed by the inherently vitiated modes of thought and speech. Hence the way, nay, the only way, to it is the removal of the fictitious superstructure imposed on it by the radical error of human understanding. World-cancellation is the most authentic apprehension of the Absolute: *nahi prapañca-pratiśedharūpādeśanāt anyat param brahmaṇo ādeśanam asti*. Human bondage is, in essence, the superstructure in question and its dismissal through enlightenment by way of *neti, neti*, is man's supreme emancipation.

Such is the crux of philosophical position.

5

There is some complication in post-Śaṅkara Advaita on this question. The *Samkṣepa Śārīraka* of Sarvajñātma Muni attributes the view of the primacy and ultimacy of the negative propositions of the Śruti to some Advaitin, whom one of his commentators identifies as Mandana, and vigorously controverts it by upholding the supremacy of affirmative texts such as *tattvamasi*, 'That thou art'. The negations are regarded as accessory clarifications. The work commends another Advaitin as sharing this estimate, who seems to have regarded the negations as just restatements of the negative implications of the inclusive and primary affirmations. The latter Advaitin is identified by the commentator as Padmapāda.⁶ But Sarvajñātma Muni apparently violates Śaṅkara's assertion in the *Sūtra-Bhāṣya* that there is no way of indicating Brahman other than the negation of the world, and the Ācārya's assertion in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Bhāṣya* that the fundamental nature of Brahman is signified by the negative texts such as *neti, neti* and positive texts can present only the conditioned Brahman. In the later context the

positive texts adduced by Śaṅkara as instances are *vijñānam ānandam brahma* and *vijñāna-ghana eva brahmātmā*. Traditional scholars may try to get over the difficulty by insisting that the positive texts mentioned are not *mahāvākyas*, and that in relation to the *mahāvākyas* such as *tat tvam asi* and *aham brahmāsmi, neti, neti* can function only in an accessory capacity.⁷ That Śaṅkara placed the *mahāvākyas* above *neti, neti* and the other affirmative texts such as the ones he adduces were placed lower than it, is an arbitrary contention without a shred of evidence in Śaṅkara's interpretation. Further, the *Sūtra-Bhāṣya* passage that there is no way of instruction about Brahman other than and superior to the negation of the phenomenal order, offers an insuperable difficulty to those who seek devices to get over the primacy of the negative approach.

A closer attention to the *mahāvākyas* strengthens this conclusion remarkably. A *mahāvākya* is an identity-proposition in which the subject-term refers to the cognizing self and the predicate signifies Brahman. The two cannot be identified as they appear to the first look, on the surface, as it were. The predication of Brahman-hood has to knock out in the notion of the self all that is incompatible with Brahman-hood. In reality even the supposedly affirmative *mahāvākya* such as *aham brahmāsmi* exhibits a fundamentally negative character. Sureśvara elucidates that *mahāvākya* precisely in this manner.⁸ The serpent in the standard example of illusion is described as the rope in the correcting judgement for purposes of negating the illusory serpent in its substratum, the rope. The apparently affirmative statement is a

7. This possibility was suggested by Prof. Hiriyanna in the course of a personal discussion.

8. Suresvara, *Naiṣkarmya-Siddhi*, ch. 2, verse 29. The above understanding of Suresvara is endorsed in *Pancadasi*, ch. 8, verse 44.

6. Cf. *Samkṣepa Śārīraka* ch. 1, verses 250-263.

cancellation-statement. In 'Brahman', the 'I' is pruned down to its essential nature by virtue of the identification propounded. In the traditional Advaitic terminology this is a case of *bādhārtha-sāmānādhikarāṇya*, apposition or co-ordination with a negative purport.

The position is not altered in the case of the other equally great *mahāvākya*, *tat tvam asi*. Śaṅkara himself includes it in the category of identification for purposes of negation. He lists four modes of *sāmānādhikarāṇya*, apposition or equation:

- (a) Substantive and adjectival relation = *viśesyaviśeṣana*.
- (b) Terminological equation = *ekatva*.
- (c) Superimposition = *adhyāsa*.
- (d) Sublation or cancellation = *apavāda*.⁹

It is pertinently revealing that he assigns *tattvamasi* to the last type of co-ordinate apposition. This would have been enough by itself to establish the negative character of the identification that obtains in *tattvamasi* in his view.

9. Śaṅkara, Commentary on *Brahma-sūtra* 3.3.9.

But he goes further and furnishes a fuller and more forceful demonstration of the negative mode of the import involved. In the penetrating shorter and independent treatise *Upadeśa Sāhasrī*, we have the following statement. "The term *tat* has the meaning of the term *tvam*, that is, the Innermost Self. The term *tvam* has the meaning of the term *tat*. Thus the two together sublimate the 'subjection to evil' in the connotation of *tvam* and 'non-selfhood' in the connotation of the term *tat*".¹⁰ By virtue of the identity propounded, each term mutually works out in relation to the other, the principle of *neti, neti*. The elucidation installs *neti, neti* in the very core of *tattvamasi*. Nothing more seems to be necessary for substantiating the completeness and finality of the *neti, neti* procedure.

10. तच्छब्दः प्रत्यगात्मार्थस्तच्छब्दार्थस्त्वमस्तथा ।

दुःखित्वाप्रत्यगात्मत्वं वारयेतामुभावपि ॥

Śaṅkara, *Upadeśa Sāhasrī*, verse portion, ch. 18, verses 197-198.

ADVAITA FOR THE WEST

MARIE LOUISE BURKE

1

The paper has to do with the philosophical teachings Swami Vivekananda gave during his first visit to the West. More explicitly, it has to do with my own present understanding of those teachings—an understanding which is, I believe, shared by many others, but not by all. To put it briefly, my understanding is that during the years of 1895 and 1896, when Swami Vivekananda gave his most fully formulated and detailed

teaching of Vedanta, he not only taught Advaita Vedanta with increasing emphasis, but, actually, taught nothing else; that is to say, he did not teach the other schools of Vedantic thought as equally acceptable religious philosophies for modern times. As I said, I do not think this view is universally held.

It has been said, for instance, that since Advaita is one of the three Vedantic ways of understanding God and man and the world, Swamiji, by virtue of his great universality, would not have taught it exclus-

ively. It is interesting to note that this view has existed from the very beginning of his mission and was held, or seems to have been held, by no less prominent a disciple of his than Sarah Ellen Waldo, who, as is well known, expertly took down his classes at Thousand Island Park. About two years later, after Swamiji had returned to India, she wrote a letter to Swami Saradananda, who was then in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and whom she had come to know during the previous year. I quote from her letter :

I find in many people, a tendency to identify Vedanta with Advaita. Mrs. (Annie) Besant does, and even Van Haagen (a New York disciple of Swamiji's) does and thinks that you do.

When I gave him a definition of Vedanta as including the three stages of dualism, monodualism, and monism, he wanted to strike out dualism and said he was sure I was wrong in calling that Vedanta. My understanding is that what Swamiji is striving for with all his might is precisely to wipe out the idea that only Advaita is Vedanta and to impress everyone with the clear idea that it includes the three. I have heard him say so over and over again, and it is in even his Madras speeches. Mrs. Besant told me in so many words that *her* idea of Vedanta is that it is an intellectual system of reasoning, so carefully worked out as to be impregnable against any argument that the human mind can devise against it, but as having in it little help to everyday life—... a mere dry philosophy without any of the vivifying power of love, a dead abstraction... And this view is quite general among scholars and those who know anything of Eastern thought. That is why I mean to subscribe for a translation of Ramanuja's Bhasya ... (to prove) that Vedanta is not Advaita alone but includes vishishtadvaita equally. There is no doubt that the latter is really more attractive and *better suited* to the majority of Western minds.¹

The views that Miss Waldo expressed here seem to me to be representative of views that exist even today; that is why I have quoted her. And those views are entirely respectable. There is no question

that there are three main schools of Vedanta—that is to say, three main interpretations of the Vedantic scriptures, and Swamiji did indeed say in Madras in 1897 (and elsewhere as well) that the word *Vedanta*, as he used it, applied to every sect in India that based its authority upon the Upaniṣads. 'This is what I mean by the word Vedanta,' he said, 'that it covers the ground of dualism, of qualified monism, and Advaitism in India.'²

That statement was perhaps what Miss Waldo was referring to. But in this same Madras lecture Swamiji went on to say that the three main schools of Vedanta—over the respective merits of which commentators and pundits, philosophers and devotees daily engaged in rousing battles on the ghats of Benares — were, in fact, harmonious. He said :

It was given to me to live with a man who was as ardent a dualist as an Advaitist, as ardent a Bhakta as a Jnani. (He was speaking, of course, of Sri Ramakrishna). And living with this man first put it into my head to understand the Upaniṣads and the texts of the scriptures from an independent and better basis than by blindly following the commentators; and in my opinion and in my researches, I came to the conclusion that these texts are not at all contradictory ... but wonderfully harmonious, one idea leading up to the other. But the one fact I found is that in all the Upaniṣads, they begin with dualistic ideas, with worship and all that, and end with a grand flourish of Advaitic ideas.³

Again, in Calcutta Swamiji said, "This is my attempt, my mission in life, to show that the Vedantic schools are not contradictory, that they all necessitate each other, all fulfill each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping-stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, the Tat Tvam Asi (the

1. Sarah Ellen Waldo to Swami Saradananda, April 15, 1897, papers of Sara C. Bull,

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 3:230 (Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Edition, throughout).

3. *Ibid.*, 3:233-34

identity of the individual with the universal), is reached."⁴

Now, my understanding is that what Swamiji was saying here is not that he was *preaching* all the Vedantic schools, but that he was giving an interpretation of the Upaniṣads that accommodated them all. And, again if I am not mistaken, his interpretation was made in the light of ultimate Oneness, as voiced by Advaita. Neither dualists nor qualified monists look upon their religions as 'stepping-stones' to monistic truth. Indeed, dualistic, or theistic, religions consider monism to be blasphemous.

The Advaitin, on the other hand, looking back, as it were, from a transcendental viewpoint, can see that dualistic teachings, from the most crude to the most noble and exalted, are rooted in the divinity and absolute freedom of the soul and are reaching toward a realization of that divinity and freedom. It is the Advaitin who can say that other viewpoints are not wrong, that they are right as far as they go, that they are necessary stages through which the soul passes on its way to a full realization of its identity with Brahman. Thus it seems to me that in his oft-repeated declaration that the varying interpretations of the Upaniṣads are necessary and harmonious steps leading to the ultimate truth and that they are representative of various religions of the world. Swamiji was not, as I said, *preaching* them all but, rather, was explaining them and throwing a wonderful harmonizing light on them, pointing out that they were never to be disparaged or condemned, but accepted in the light of and as ways to Oneness, as stages in man's flight toward the discovery of that One Being, which he himself is.

It is, I think, of interest to note here that in the exposition of his message in the West, Swamiji led his audiences step by step through the stages of dualism and qualified

monism, explaining these *first*. Just as the Upaniṣads begin with dualistic ideas (as he pointed out) and end with a grand flourish of Advaitic ideas, so in each of his *series* of Western lectures, as well as in some of his individual lectures, he would begin with dualistic ideas and end with a grand assertion of Advaita. This method, which he employed in both New York and London, is not always obvious in the *Complete Works*, for, generally speaking, his lectures are not there arranged in the order in which he gave them, but, very probably, in the order in which they came to light through the years. But however that may be, it was through a chronological reading of his American and English lectures of 1896 that I was struck by the notion that he was following a method and by the realization that for the sake of his listeners this almost had to be so. His effort was to impress upon an entire culture a new and startling and, in some respects, a very difficult philosophy and way of thinking—and this within a few short months, less than a year. With the tremendous power of his intellect he gave his message so that it could be understood, digested, and acted upon. He did not speak in a haphazard, emotive, or poetic fashion—there was not time. Thus, even he, whose every word was truth itself, had to be methodical. I should hasten to add, however, that to say Swamiji gave his message with method is not to say that he did not speak with divine inspiration. His lectures were in themselves free flowing; he was truth embodied. But divine inspiration does not exclude intelligence. Indeed, to make the Vedanta philosophy in all its practical and theoretical aspects clear and living to the Western mind was an intellectual achievement of stunning proportions. On the other hand, he would never have undertaken that mission were it not for the vastness of his being. His words poured from him: he lectured as an act of love and worship, and thus while he

4. Ibid., 3:324.

knew precisely what he was doing, he was at the same time fully spontaneous.

But as I was saying, Swamiji expounded his message in steps, leading the mind of his audience (which was by and large the same audience for any one series of lectures) from the beginning of religion to its final goal. In 1896 his public lectures in New York were, first, 'The Claims of Religion', in which he defined religion in general and showed the necessity for it in all human life, and, second, 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion', in which he gave a further definition of religion in general and of various religions or creeds in particular, showing the harmony between them. He then went on in his third and fourth lectures—'The Macrocosm' and 'The Microcosm'—to answer some age-old questions, which in modern form were agitating the nineteenth-century mind. 'Whence came this vast external universe? Where is it going? Why? How?' And next, 'Who is this "I" that witnesses the external world? Who and what is man?' In these two lectures Swamiji explained in some detail the cosmology and psychology of Vedanta. Through a cosmological argument he posited the existence of an immanent God and through a psychological argument the existence of the individual, self-luminous, and eternal soul behind the changing phenomena of body and mind. In other words, in these lectures he reached the pinnacle of dualistic thought.

In his fifth New York lecture, 'Bhakti Yoga', Swamiji did not at once take up the thread of philosophy where he had left off. Rather, he spoke now of the path of love. Here, too, he began with a dualistic approach. He spoke of the early stages of the relationship between the individual soul and the Personal God, and he ended with an ecstatic assertion of their oneness.

There we find the highest culmination of that with which man begins. At the beginning it was love for the self, but the claims of the little self made

love selfish; at the end came the full blaze of light, when that self had become the Infinite. That God who at first was a Being somewhere, became resolved, as it were, into Infinite Love. Man himself was also transformed. He was approaching God, he was throwing off all vain desires, of which he was full before. With desires vanished selfishness. And, at the apex, (man) found that Love, Lover, and Beloved were one.⁵

It was not until his sixth lecture 'The Real and the Apparent Man', that Swamiji took up the philosophical thread of the Vedantic argument and after reviewing the dualistic position, he at last came to its resolution in monism. He said :

It is not that the Soul and the mind and the body are three separate existences, but this organism is one. It is the same thing which appears as the body, as the mind, and as beyond the mind and body. . . . There is but one all-comprehending existence, and that one appears as manifold. This Self or Soul or Substance is all that exists in the universe. That Self or Substance or Soul is, in the language of non-dualism, the Brahman appearing to be manifold by the interposition of name and form.⁶

In one grand, rolling sentence after the other, he poured forth the luminous truths of Advaita Vedanta.

This whole universe is that One Unit Existence; name and form have created all these various differences. . . . There is but one Atman, one Self, eternally pure, eternally perfect, unchangeable, unchanged; it has never changed; and all these various changes are but appearances in that one Self. . . . It is the greatest of all lies that we are mere men; we are the God of the universe. We have been always worshipping our own hidden Self.⁷

In June and a part of July of 1896, Swamiji's public lectures in London followed the same pattern as those in New York, as their titles alone suffice to show: 'The

5. Ibid., 2:53.

6. Ibid., 2:274.

7. Ibid., 2:275, 279

Necessity of Religion'. 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion', 'The Real Nature of Man' (which last covered the same ground as the New York lectures 'The Macrocosm' and 'The Microcosm'), 'Bhakti Yoga', 'Renunciation', and 'Realization'.

From here on, beginning with the fall of 1898 in London—the last season of his first visit—it was, it seems to me, all Advaita. His class-lectures on Maya, on the Upanishads, and on Practical Vedanta had their beginning, middle, and end in a glowing discussion of the philosophy and practice of monism. (I may mention here that during his second visit to the West he laid strong emphasis on the innate divinity and freedom of man, as though underscoring that which he considered most important.) He said toward the end of 1896:

This is what I feel to be absolutely necessary all over the world. These doctrines are old, older than many mountains possibly. All truth is eternal. But it has to be made practical, to be made simple (for the highest truths are always simple), so that it may penetrate every pore of human society and become the property of the highest intellects and the commonest minds, of the man, woman, and child at the same time.⁸

Let us go back for a minute to Miss Waldo's letter to Swami Saradananda in which she cited Annie Besant's criticism of Advaita as a mere dry philosophy without any of the vivifying power of love. This was, and perhaps still is, a view held in some circles. But to Swamiji the concept of Brahman as the sole Reality was not in any possible sense a dry or life-denying philosophy. On the contrary, it was life-giving; it was the teaching, the vision, that could, in the face of the lurking nihilism of modern times, reveal the eternal reality and meaning of human life. 'Philosophy insists', he said, meaning Advaita philosophy, 'that there is a joy which is absolute, which never changes.... Vedanta (again meaning

Advaita) shows that everything that is joyful in this life is but a particle of that real joy, because that is the only joy there is. Every moment really we are enjoying the absolute bliss, though covered up, misunderstood, and caricatured.'⁹

Of course, there are some who do not care for this. I am reminded of a university student who was taking a course on Eastern Philosophy and who announced that he did not like Vedanta. Why? Because all it had to offer was Absolute Bliss. But, as a matter of fact, for those who are dissatisfied with Absolute Bliss, Advaita Vedanta *has* other things to offer. It was, indeed, the practical, everyday applicability of Advaita that Swamiji stressed and explained over and over with all the vivifying power of his own being, knowledge, and love. The idea behind renunciation, he often said, is not to turn away from the world but to understand what the world really is. And it is only through the Impersonal that one can truly understand what the world really is, for it is the Impersonal that holds within Itself all personalities from the immanent God to the individual soul. It is the true reality and glory of all things. Indeed, 'the Impersonal instead of doing away with the personal, the Absolute instead of pulling down the relative, only explains it', as Swamiji said, 'to the full satisfaction of our reason and heart'.¹⁰ And again, 'The Personal God is the highest reading of the Impersonal that can be reached by the human intellect, and what else is the universe but various readings of the Absolute?'¹¹ As long as we stand apart, as it were, and read the Absolute in our various ways, there will ever be the 'Personal God, and we will ever be related to Him in a bond of love.

Bhakti Yoga, the path of love, can certainly therefore, be a path toward the real-

8. Ibid., 2:358.

9. Ibid., 2:166-67.

10. Ibid., 2:338.

12. Ibid., 2:321.

ization of the identity of the Self and Brahman. From the start, the bhakta's effort can be to know himself as spirit, even as God is spirit. Indeed, any path can lead to the highest truth of Vedanta—a truth not to be attained as a far-off goal, but to be seen through the correction of faulty vision as the present fact. There are many ways to cure that obdurate blindness of ours, all of which Swamiji taught and harmonized, all the while teaching that we are even *now* one with Brahman.

To return to Miss Waldo. According to her, as well as to many others, 'there is no doubt that (vishishtadvaita) is really more attractive and *better suited* to the majority of Western minds'. Now, it may well be that the majority of people in *any* country are more comfortable in a theistic religion which teaches (as does Vishishtadvaita) that the individual souls though parts of the Personal God, are eternally distinct from Him and dependent on Him. But it does not follow that because of this Swamiji taught Vishishtadvaita as an alternative and adequate view. 'No doubt', he said in connection with dualism, '... each one must have his own path, but the path is not the goal'.¹² Again and again he thunderously urged his listeners to go forward, to push on to a higher ideal and a broader vision, to assert and to realize their own full divinity and freedom to continually seek, through love or knowledge or action, or through all of these, the Reality (with a capital *R*)—the Reality that God *is* and that we are. Listen to Swamiji speaking to English housewives :

However terrible (the monistic idea) may seem now, the time will come when we shall look back, each one of us, and smile at every one of those superstitions which covered the pure and eternal soul, and repeat with gladness, with truth, and with strength, I am free, and was free, and always will be free. This monistic idea will come

out of Vedanta, and it is the one idea that deserves to live.¹³...

If this be the truth, why let people drink ditch water when the stream of life is flowing by? If this be the truth, that they are all pure, why not at this moment teach it to the whole world? Why not teach it with the voice of thunder to every man that is born, to saints and sinners, men, women, and children, to the man on the throne and to the man sweeping the streets? ... Dualistic ideas have ruled the world long enough... Why not make a new experiment? It may take ages for all minds to receive monisms, but why not begin now? If we have told it to twenty persons in our lives, we have done a great work.¹⁴

There are many, many such unequivocal statements in Swamiji's Western lectures, in which he asserted his conviction that Advaita was the suitable religion and philosophy for this age; that it was, in fact, 'the only remedy there is'.¹⁵

2

One of course has to consider what the dominant characteristics of this age are before one can discuss what kind of religion may or may not be suited to it. But before I continue, let me say that the title of this paper should perhaps be 'Advaita for the World'. It is true that Swamiji taught Advaita Vedanta in the West and for the West, but I believe that the reason he did so was that he knew Western culture was spreading throughout the world; Western thought was in some sense becoming world thought, or so integral a part of world thought that we could no longer speak of East and West as two distinct and separate cultures. To teach Vedanta for the modern West was to teach it for the modern world.

Now, one of the most striking things about the world-wide modern age is its radi-

13. Ibid., 2:200.

14. Ibid., 2:199-200.

15. Ibid., 2:199.

12. Ibid., 2:231.

cal difference from any age that has preceded it. Some have compared the magnitude of that difference not to the movement from one culture to another but to that from pre-historic times to civilization. We have entered a totally new epoch containing wonders and perils for which we have had almost no preparation at all; everything is different.

First, there is the fantastic increase of our scientific knowledge, the acquisition of which accelerates so rapidly that no one person can possibly keep abreast of it. Nor does it help any more to specialize, for the various branches of science are melting into one another—chemistry into biology, biology into physics, physics perhaps soon into metaphysics, as Swamiji predicted. And in any event, as we probe deeper and deeper into the heart of the universe, trying to discover some basic force or unity, we come upon deeper and deeper mysteries, and with each astonishing disclosure, our awe and our bafflement grow. As the scientist Lewis Thomas recently said, 'The greatest of all the accomplishments of twentieth-century science has been the discovery of human ignorance'.¹⁶ One thing, however, seems fairly clear to us, and that is that whatever the basic nature of the universe may turn out to be, its explanation lies within itself; it is guided by its own laws; it evolves out of its own being; it is playing its own game and dancing its own dance; it exists in and for itself. What, then, has happened to God? At least one thing has happened: the concept of an extracosmic force or being acting upon the universe from outside as its creator, guide, and destroyer has died. This demise has, of course, been recognized for a very long time, and today no educated and thinking person will deny it; it has become an integral part of our culture.

As for the concept of an immanent Personal God who projects the world of name and form out of His own being—that concept at its best is not, I think, altogether opposed to science at *its* best. But still it does not satisfy the search for unity, which is one of the most powerful motives of modern times; nor does it stand up to reason; nor does it provide an explanation of, let alone a solution to, the problems of today—the very urgent problem, for instance, of evil. The Personal God, when looked upon as ultimate, must, by definition, be infinite. But how is one rationally to relate the Infinite to the finite—to the phenomenal and changing world? There is no satisfactory way. Again, how does one relate a necessarily benevolent and omnipotent God with the existence of unspeakable and rampant human misery—or, for that matter, with any kind of misery and evil at all? Such questions have plagued theistic religions from their beginning. That is one reason why the Indo-Aryan sages did not stop with dualism; the human mind cannot stop there. But it is only after these many centuries, only now, with our immense increase of scientific knowledge (which the ancient ṛsis had fully grasped in principle) that we in the West are understanding that we must go ahead. We cannot seek for unity in the external universe and at the same time be satisfied in our spiritual life with an unresolved duality; we cannot split ourselves in two and remain whole.

The educated and thoughtful men and women of modern civilization need a religion they can believe in and practise with conviction, a religion that will not militate against humanity's invaluable heritage of reason or ever contradict its hard-won scientific knowledge. I believe that Swamiji came to teach that religion. Despite his own immensity, which defies classification of any sort, which could pour itself into any mould and out again, I believe that in his role of compassionate World Teacher, with

16. Lewis Thomas, "Debating the Unknowable," *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1981, pp. 49-52.

which we are here concerned, he was giving to mankind the religion that it so desperately needs.

Are there other solutions? One solution, of course could be to betray our reason and retreat to blind faith or irrationalism of one kind or another. But I do not think this is an acceptable way out for us; indeed, I have used the words *betray* and *retreat* advisedly.

Another solution would be to give up religion altogether. This, also of course, is no solution at all, for while there is a sort of grandeur in the idea of man as an accidental phenomenon standing solitary in a vast and mindless cosmos, responsible to himself alone, there is no real possibility here of establishing moral values, for there are no universal ideals or principles to refer them to or judge them by; there is no basic meaning to life, and thus even the concept of grandeur or heroism is itself nullified. This existential nihilism—if there is such a term—has possessed our culture to a greater extent than I think we are generally aware of. The idea that human life has no meaning and that moral values have no reality or authority has seeped throughout our social structure like dry rot; whether it is articulated or not, it is there, undermining our ideals; and these are not times in which we can risk the collapse of ideals. To repeat, this age cries out for a philosophy and a religion that will accord with our new knowledge, with our search for unity, with our demand for a rational approach to the problems of metaphysics as well as with those of science and with our critical need for universal principles in which our ideals can be rooted. That is our intellectual position, and Advaita Vedanta with its teaching that ‘there is but One Eternally Blissful Principle, (which) is manifesting Itself as all this variety’ is the only satisfactory answer to it. ‘Advaita—the nonduality the Oneness, the idea of the Impersonal God,’ Swamiji said, ‘is the only religion that can

have any hold on any intellectual people.’¹⁷ To know ourselves as that Reality is to know as well the underlying Reality of the universe, which all our modern science and all our philosophy and all our dreams seek. ‘That One is manifesting Himself as many’, Swamiji said, ‘as matter, spirit, mind, thought, and everything else. . . . Let the world resound with this ideal and let superstitions vanish.’¹⁸

There is another aspect of our culture that is also radically different from that of previous cultures. It concerns the heart. It is the awareness that has come over everyone on earth that there are *other* people on earth—real people with real feelings and real hungers. There is, I believe, this very genuine sense of compassion abroad in the world—a sense of anguish over the anguish of others, whether or not they are tribally related to us, a sense of responsibility for the welfare and freedom and dignity of all human beings, whoever they may be. We have, in short, a social conscience that takes in the whole world. But, at the same time, just see what is taking place in this humane world of ours! What is going on every day and in almost every part of the globe is the exact opposite of our ideals. The world is rife with hatred, fear, and suspicion, with oppression, concentration camps, terrorism, torture, genocide, persecution, unspeakable cruelty. I do not think there is any way to exaggerate the horror of things that have gone on, and are going on, in this highly civilized twentieth century, for they could scarcely be worse. But I do think it is safe to say that the vast majority of sane men and women do not *condone* these flagrant violations of human rights. Indeed many people of goodwill and courage militate against them. Then why do they continue? It is as though some diabolical

17. *Complete Works*, 2:139.

18. *Ibid.*, 2:304.

force were loose on earth, acting with a will of its own.

In a sense that is precisely the case, and I think it has always been the case; such is the nature of the relative world. There is good, and there is evil. Things seem worse today because we are more closely interrelated with one another than ever before, because our conscience is keener, and also because the forces of evil have the wherewithal to blow us out of existence at any time. The world is today hanging by the thinnest of threads, a thread that any political leader can break by tugging at some other thread in the same global web. The power of evil is perhaps not any more virulent or prevalent than it has ever been, but today we simply cannot afford to give it free rein. But it is not possible to bring it under control on the level where it has developed and proliferated—the social-political level. I think there is only one possible way to deal with it: our ideals—those humane ideals I was speaking of—must become so potent and so unshakably rooted as to overpower it and hold it firmly in check.

There is nothing new in this idea. There is no religion that has not told people to love one another; we have heard this endlessly, and we do not doubt in the least that mutual love is the answer to our problems. There is just one trouble about it: *how* are people going to love one another? Standing by itself, the dictum tends to be meaningless, if not fatuous. As long as we live and have our values on the level of matter (and on the level of mind that is bound up with matter), as long as we are ordinary people thinking ordinary thoughts, we are just not capable of loving one another in any way that will play the least part in defusing the massive time-bomb of world affairs. On the level where we ordinarily live, much of our compassion, however vocal and emotive it may be, is flimsy; much of our love is self-love and fickle; it

is full of demands, physical and psychological and when these demands are not met, disappointment, frustration, anger, even hatred are the results. Generally speaking, this is the sad story of almost all human relationships and while this kind of love (better called attachment) may make the world go around, it will never make it go around peacefully.

There is only one way that this world can change, and that is for many men and women everywhere to start seeing themselves and others on a deeper level, on the level of spirit. It is not, certainly, an easy matter for anyone but a born spiritual genius to change his entire outlook upon the world; it requires a profound inner transformation, brought about by intense practice, by renunciation, self-discipline, and meditation. But if we at least try by every means to seek the Oneness of Being, if we try to deepen our perception and to act from this deeper level of awareness, then our love for others will deepen, and our ideals, rooted in the oneness of all life, will be strong, our activity will become a form of yoga, and we ourselves will become invulnerable in the knowledge of who we really are. Said Swamiji:

Nothing but going towards reality will make us strong and none will reach truth until he is strong.... Strength, therefore, is the one thing needful.... And nothing gives such strength as this idea of monism. Nothing makes us so moral as this idea of monism. Nothing makes us work so well at our best and highest as when all the responsibility is thrown upon ourselves.¹⁹

It is the strong men and women, the thoughtful and courageous, who will undertake to remake the very texture of their lives. And it is they who can set the standard of any given culture; it is they who can influence others—not by talking, but by living in accordance with their ideals. Thought is the crown of the human race,

19. Ibid., 2:201.

and there is nothing more powerful in human society than ideas—*living* ideas, ideas that spring from the basic need of the times and that are put into consistent practice with full conviction of their truth. Though the whole world at first stands against them, the world will come around. The deeper and more selfless a thought is, the more powerful it is, for the more clearly does it reflect the spirit. Again, the more persistently a person puts a spiritual thought into practice, the more he or she becomes a complete man or woman—strong, fearless, ennobled in every respect, and a dynamic source of good. For instance, if the compassion that we sincerely want to feel for humanity were *consciously* rooted in ideal of the unity and divinity of all human beings—then it would have irresistible power, for who and what can resist that which directly expresses Reality itself?

Now, I am not saying, nor do I think Swamiji said, though he said he wished it could be so, that all people everywhere will soon take to the principles of Advaita Vedanta and strive toward the realization of man's divinity. No. But it would seem to me that if hundreds of people in many countries made a strenuous, all-out effort to stand and live by the monistic ideal, by whatever name they may call it, their goodness and love would have more power than any force on earth—and this even in a world that seems to be spinning wildly out of control. This qualitative change in thinking and feeling, this influx of spiritual thought and selfless love, would in time—in time enough, one hopes—lift the entire level of world thought very noticeably and effectively. We might then be able to realize that dream we have had of a united world in which all nations will form a cooperative whole. The resources of the earth together with the technology that is available even today, can, it is said, support the population of this earth many times over. All that is lacking are numbers of men and women of

profound compassion, self-sacrifice, broad intelligence, and an indomitable will—all infused with spirituality. In a word—what is wanted are real men and real women—and these of all types: householders, monastics, and those in between.

One more thing before I close. Do we *care* whether or not the world survives? Those of us who are seeking God—what do we care about the world? It will go its own way—or, if you like, God will take care of it, or it is all Brahman anyway; our concern is to know Truth and leave the world behind. Yes, this is certainly one way to look at things; it is perhaps the traditional way of spiritual seekers. But I honestly do not believe that we can get away with this sort of thinking today, and I do not think Swamiji recommended it. As I pointed out, we human beings are intimately connected with one another and, despite much evidence to the contrary, we do care about one another—that is the dominant spirit of the times. I may of course be very wrong, but I do not think that spiritual practice can flourish when it moves too hard against the current. Our spiritual life is not so separate apart of life in general that we can turn our backs on the world and spend *all* our time doing japa or waving incense before an altar or meditating in a cave; that is not the way of this age. As Swamiji said, 'the fictitious differentiation between religion and the life of the world must vanish, for the Vedanta teaches Oneness—one life throughout.'²⁰ One of his main endeavours was to bring the principles of Vedanta into the marketplace, and I suspect that if we are to follow him, our spiritual effort must include the whole world and everyone in it. Indeed, is not the motto of the Ramakrishna Order 'For one's own salvation and for the good of the world'? How, then, are we going to follow Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda except by feeling for others,

²⁰. Ibid., 2:291.

by serving others as God, by realizing the highest truth within ourselves and outside of ourselves as well? How can we help ourselves on any level if we do not serve the world? And how can we serve the world if we do not become as great as Swami Vivekananda wanted everyone to be?

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

DANTE AND SRI AUROBINDO : BY DR. PREMA NANDAKUMAR. Published by Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., 2G Montieth Court, 72 Montieth Road, Madras 600 008. 1981. Pp. 160. Rs. 54/-.

Dr. Prema Nandakumar's *Dante and Sri Aurobindo : A Comparative Study of The Divine Comedy and Savitri* is a work that should provide food for thought for both the general reader and the specialized student of literature. Not that she says something that is strongly original but the weight of research has toned her statements admirably, specially when she is trying to compare Milton's *Paradise Lost* with either *Savitri* or *The Divine Comedy*. One feels she is justified in her, what may be said to be, 'reverential' approach to both Dante and Sri Aurobindo. If the best criticism of Shakespeare is mostly reverential, there seems to be scope enough in such a type of criticism. Yet, the author is not too reverential to lose sight of the literary aspect of the two poems.

Justifiably Prema Nandakumar has disagreed with Eliot—not a safe person to disagree with though—who remarks, 'Whatever the *Comedy* is, an epic it is not.' For that matter, from Aristotelian point of view the tragedies of Shakespeare would be wanting. Admittedly, geniuses not only work within an accepted framework but also forge a new one. 'Critics need not hesitate to call *The Divine Comedy* an epic.' In support of her contention she gives relevant excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's *The Future Poetry* (p. 35). Whatever some Western critics (like Landor and Sidgwick) may think of *The Divine Comedy*, the author of the book under review is singularly free from prejudices.

Similarities and contrasts between the two great poems have been shown clearly. Perhaps *Savitri* is influenced by the *Comedy* but is an extension of the religio-philosophic consciousness of man since the Middle Ages. From the point of view of structure *The Divine Comedy* is a work of craftsmanship which *Savitri* strictly speaking

is not, but that does not detract from making the latter a great poem. The author has relevantly quoted from Sri Aurobindo's *The Future Poetry* and has shown that Sri Aurobindo was attracted by 'the journey of the seer through the three worlds beyond us.' Whereas in *The Divine Comedy* we encounter Dante the traveller, in *Savitri* we encounter Ashwapathi the traveller.

Dr. Prema Nandakumar has very ably juxtaposed the features of Dante's *Inferno* with Sri Aurobindo's *The Book of Eternal Night*. Because of the superior spiritual brilliance of Sri Aurobindo's mind his description is according to the author 'an infinitely more exciting and dynamic experience than our passage through Dante's Hell'. (p. 91) She rightly concludes that Dante's soul is quite conscious of sin, fear and frailty, but *Savitri's* is drenched in purity, power and love. In other words, there is a negative approach in the former, whereas there is strength and positivity in *Savitri*.

This perhaps marks the essential difference between an over-awareness of sin in Christianity and the awareness of positive forces in Hinduism derived from the Vedic concepts of humanity as *amṛtasya putrah*—'Children of immortal bliss'. *Savitri* is a great mystical work filled with the light of the Spirit. The focus is throughout on the divine possibilities inherent in the soul. Here one is also reminded of Sri Ramakrishna's admonition that one who constantly thinks of sin becomes a sinner and one who constantly thinks of freedom verily becomes free. Fear of hell has no place in the triumphant march of the Spirit wrenching immortality from the hands of Death.

The literary value of the book under review cannot be over-emphasized. For students of both comparative literature and comparative religion this book is extremely useful. There are relevant references to Michael Madhusudan Dutta's *Meghanada Vadha Kāvya*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*; to Virgil, to Milton; making it a fruitful work of research.

Divided into twenty-two chapters this book has a plan which enables the author to draw comparisons and conclusions. Between medievalism and modernism instead of being a gap there appears to be an evolutionary progress. One feels that there would not be any two opinions when the author says, 'Where Dante crystalizes ideas into strikingly memorable images, Sri Aurobindo shapes large chunks of spiritual experience into symbolic powers and personalities. Dante's poetic genius is essentially lyrical; Sri Aurobindo's on the contrary, is massively epic. Dante strives to achieve jewelled compression; Sri Aurobindo's creative urge is towards the radiant extension of consciousness. They seem to function poetically in quite different ways, although their goal be the same : to project a great vision of man's future.' (P. 14).

However, in spite of everything, one would have expected the book to be more thoroughly revised and the binding a little better than what it is. In a book of such depth it is unfortunate several printing mistakes have crept in, as for instance at the beginning of Chapter 7.

The book is a notable addition to Indo-Anglian literary criticism and a significant contribution to the growing literature on Sri Aurobindo.

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REFLECTIONS ON TALKS WITH SRI
RAMANA MAHARSHI : BY S. S. COHEN.
Published by Sri Ramanashramam, Tiruvanna-
malai, S. India (Third edition), 1979. Pp. ix+192.
Rs. 8/-.

This is one of the best compilations bringing the teachings of Ramana Maharshi under a definite doctrinal classification. Most of the teachings have been taken from *Talks with Ramana Maharshi* and Cohen has added his own valuable expository comments after each teaching. A glossary at the end explains many of the Sanskrit words related to spiritual practices and concepts. Throughout Sri Ramana's teachings the bold underline is *seek the seeker*. Nevertheless, it is very significant and important to note the practical approach of this towering *jñāni* to questions regarding happiness and misery, life, death and rebirth, guru, God, grace and advanced stages of spiritual disciplines. Being based on the

realization of the highest Truth, his views on all these different aspects of life have a deep spiritual significance, and what Cohen has done is to bring this out.

To the question how to avoid misery, the sage replies, 'Has misery any shape? Misery is only an unwanted thought. The mind is not strong enough to resist it. It can be strengthened by worship of God.... Will-power is normally associated with sure success, whereas, actually it should be understood as the strength of mind which meets success and failure with equanimity.... Surrender, and all will be well. Throw all responsibility on God.' About happiness he says, 'What is usually sought as happiness is better called pleasure, and that depends on our effort. Absolute happiness concerns a state beyond effort and effortlessness.'

Another teaching: 'You will see you are not the doer. Then you will be free. This requires the grace of God, for which you should pray to Him.... One may also seek the company of holy persons and serve them, but finally, the *I-am-the-body* idea must vanish.'

As it happens our spiritual quest often gets bogged in wanting to know about miracles, psychic powers, reincarnation, memory of past lives, etc. Sri Ramana's teachings help us develop the right attitude towards these questions: 'See to whom these questions arise. Unless the questioner is found, these questions can never be set at rest. People look at the body only and want *siddhis*. A *Jñāni* will not waste a thought on them. Atman alone is to be realized. Atman is self-evident. Know it and be done with speculation.'

Sri Ramana's teachings, free of prejudice, dogma and tradition, have a universal value. They do not disturb the faith of any man but only elevate it. Though based on an eternal perspective, the teachings nevertheless have a tender human quality. Those who would like to try a method of spiritual growth and experience that at the very first does not threaten to dislodge a seeker from his tradition, culture, reason and identity will find the teachings of Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi a great help. The present book should serve as an admirable introduction to these teachings.

SWAMI ATMARAMANANDA
Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA VRINDABAN

REPORT FOR APRIL 1980 TO MARCH 1981

Begun in 1907 as a small homoeopathic dispensary, the Sevashrama has grown into a well-equipped, 121-bed allopathic hospital serving the needs of the large indigenous as well as floating population of Vrindaban and its neighbouring districts. The hospital has departments of General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Dentistry, General Medicine, and a Homoeopathic Out-patient Clinic. The General Surgery Department performed a wide variety of operations including E.N.T., orthopaedic, cancer and gynaecology; a neurosurgeon has recently joined the faculty. Facilities exist for conducting electrocardiograph, radiography, physiotherapy and basic laboratory tests. Also worthy of mention are the Ophthalmic Out-patient Department and the 8-bed Cancer-Ward. In order to make available the services of the Ophthalmic Department to the rural population, a fortnightly out-patient eye clinic is conducted at Koshi-kalan, a small town 38 km. from Vrindaban, for patients from the surrounding villages. An eye camp is also organized there once a year.

During the year the In-patient Department treated 3,249 patients, the total patient-days being 18,560. Operations of various types in the department numbered 468. Entire free treatment was given to 22% and the remaining 78% were subsidized by the hospital to the tune of 80%.

The total attendance at the Out-patient Department was 2,27,053, new cases numbering 41,354 and operations 561. All out-patients receive free consultation and medicines. A large number also get the benefit of free investigations.

The Homoeopathic Clinic treated 1,548 cases, the Radiology Department handled 2,875 tests and the Clinical Laboratory made 23,292 examinations of various kinds. The hospital has attached to it a School of Nursing which can accommodate 30 students. 9 students appeared for the first year examination and passed creditably.

Future Plans: (a) In order to achieve diag-

nostic excellence and deliver equality health care, equipment is necessary for a modern laboratory in which a wide spectrum of tests may be conducted. (b) In order to achieve excellence in diagnostic radiology, specialized 700 MA X-ray equipment is needed which can detect diseases involving arteries, veins, brain, kidneys and other vital organs. (c) An 8-bed intensive care unit with monitoring facilities is needed to help the Sevashrama save more lives. (d) India ranks third in the world in the number of head injuries. Yet with a population of 660 million, 528 million of whom live in villages, there are only about 100 neurosurgeons, most of whom are in big neurosurgical centres in cities. In order to overcome this gross imbalance in health-care delivery, the Sevashrama wishes to establish a Neurosurgical Unit. (e) A large percentage of the illnesses that are prevalent in India is directly related to poverty, ignorance and lack of sanitation. The Sevashrama wishes to participate in the eradication of communicable diseases through education of the community, training of health workers, and adoption of some nearby villages whose total health care would be covered by the institution. (f) An incinerator is needed for the scientific disposal of wastes in order to prevent the possibility of disease transmission. (g) Hospital linens need to be washed and dried very hygienically to check infections. Therefore the facilities of a modern laundry are urgently needed.

Immediate Needs: (a) The financial position of the institution is not very good. The ever-increasing cost of foodstuffs, medicines, appliances, etc. has taken the expenditure beyond the slender resources of the Sevashrama. In view of this, the generous public is requested to contribute liberally to the Hospital Maintenance Fund. (b) Persons desirous of endowing beds in memory of their loved ones may do so by donating Rs 30,000/- per bed. (c) Donations may also be made for any of the items listed under 'Future Plans' above.

All donations may kindly be sent to the following address, specifying the purpose: The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, Dist. Mathura (U.P.) 281 121.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

North and South

Did the North-South summit conference held in Cancun, Mexico, in October, 1981 only serve to add one more term to the existing stock of political verbiage? Whether the summit produced any concrete results may be doubted, but its relevance in the present world context can never be called in question. For one thing, it was brought about by a new awareness of international ethics animating world forums: the need for a more equitable sharing of wealth by all the countries.

It is now widely admitted that the present monetary system is based on world conditions that prevailed thirty-five years ago when American economy and the dollar were powerful, the riches of the major European countries were built on colonial exploitation, and the Third World had not emerged as a vocal bloc. A dozen rich nations of the North now control about three quarters of the world's wealth. They dictate the rules of world trade and finance. They reaped the benefits of the Industrial Revolution and now, armed with mighty nuclear weapons and backed by vast military-industrial establishments, manipulate world politics to their own economic advantage. Though there is much talk of inflation in Western countries, a World Bank report states that these nations are steadily growing richer, while the per capita income of poor nations is not likely to rise much in the coming decade. The GNP per head in the U.S. is 7060 dollars while the figure for India is 150 dollars! The poor nations are not begging for the wealth of richer nations. What they are asking for is the establishment of a new international economic order (NIEO). It was the recognition of this need that led to the formation of the Brandt Commission, the first visible outcome of which was the Cancun conference.

Even earlier studies had made disturbing revelations. Of the 1400 million tonnes of food and feed grain produced annually, developed countries eat half, and their animals eat a quarter of the grain equivalent of the total human consumption of China and India put together. The U.S.A. with only 6 per cent of world population consumes a third of world production of energy and raw materials. According to reports, world food production has grown significantly faster than world population. After the Second World War production of food between 1949 and 1975 increased by 155 per cent, while the population increased only 67 per cent. Over the same period the quantity of rice available per person doubled. This gives the lie to the assertion frequently made in developed countries that the increase of population in under-developed countries is the main cause of all the economic problems of the world.

The Brandt Commission's recommendation to transfer resources from the rich to the poor countries in substantial measure—50 to 60 billion dollars annually over current levels—within the next five years has not evoked any enthusiastic response in the North. One point, however, is to be remembered. The U.S. and some European countries now spend billions of dollars on providing arms to the countries of the Third World with the ostensible purpose of containing Russian domination, but this does not prove to be an answer to the challenge of Soviet ideology. Some constructive steps to reduce the wide economic disparities between developed and underdeveloped countries will be the only effective answer to that challenge.
