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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'

यज्ञेन वाचः पदवीयमायन्ता-
मन्वविदन्नृषिषु प्रविष्टां ।
तामाभृत्या व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा तां
सप्त रेभा अभि सं नवंते ॥

उत त्वं सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहु-
नेनं हिन्वंत्यपि वाजिनेषु ।
वा चरति माययैष
वाचं शुश्रुवां अफलामपुष्पाम् ॥

1. Through sacrifice [the wise] followed the trail (*padavīyam*) of the Word and found that she had entered the hearts of the Ṛṣis. They brought her out and distributed her in different places.¹ The seven singers² chant her.

Rg-Veda 10.71.3

2. One man who has the nectar of true knowledge in his heart (*sthirapītam*) is called a member of the assembly (*sakhye*) of the wise ; he is not excluded (*ahinvānti*) from important matters (*vājīnesu*). [Another man who has only book knowledge] wanders in illusion (*māyayā*) like a barren cow (*adhenvā*) or like a tree which does not produce flowers or fruits (*aphalāmapuṣpām*).³

Rg-Veda 10.71.5

* The *Jñāna-sūktam* begun last month is continued here. The hymn is an exaltation of the power of the Word. All knowledge is conveyed through words. Words are not artificially created by men, who only discover anew words which already exist in the cosmic mind. All words originate from *vāk*, the primordial supreme Word which is the symbol of Brahman. It is to be noted that *vāk* is in the feminine gender. This suggests that just as woman is the creative power and counterpart of man, so the *vāk*, the Word, is the creative power and counterpart of consciousness. The whole manifested universe is revealed through words, and when words merge in consciousness, as happens in *Samādhi* and deep sleep, the universe ceases to exist for that person.

1. The general idea of this mantra is this : through sacrifice the sages attained purification of mind. In their purified hearts the knowledge of the Vedas was revealed. They taught this knowledge to different people.

2. According to Sāyaṇa, the seven singers are the seven Vedic metres like *Gāyatrī*, *Anuṣṭubh*, etc.

3. The meaning given is based on Sāyaṇa's interpretation. According to him, the first half of the verse praises the man who has realized the truth of scriptures in his life ; everybody seeks his advice. The second half ridicules the person who knows only how to chant the Vedas.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the importance of self-knowledge in meditative life.

In the article ON CONVERSION Swami Budhananda, Secretary of the New Delhi Ramakrishna Mission centre, presents the view of the Ramakrishna Mission on a vital issue agitating Hindu society at present.

As an expression of man's experience of the sacred and as a social institution, pilgrimage occupies an important place in all religions. However, not many people even in the West know much about the traditions of pilgrimage in Christianity. Our readers will find the lively personal account of Christian pilgrimage in the article THE RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGE IN EUROPE interesting and informative. Its author Swami Vidyatmananda of Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Gretz,

France, is widely known, under his pre-monastic name John Yale, for his book *A Yankee and the Swamis*.

Dr. Sampooran Singh M.Sc., Ph.D., D.Sc., Director (Rtd.), Terminal Ballistic Research Laboratory, Chandigarh, presents several thought-provoking ideas in his article THE CONCEPT OF MAYA IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN PHYSICS.

At this time when all sorts of divisive forces have started operating overtly and covertly in India, threatening its very existence as a nation, no other theme is more relevant and significant to its people than national integration. Swami Mukhyananda, Acharya, Probationers' Training Centre, Belur Math, places the whole question in historical perspective in the article INDIAN THOUGHT AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION.

MEDITATION AND SELF-IDENTITY

(EDITORIAL)

One of the basic prerequisites for the practice of meditation is self-identity, knowledge of who the meditator is. For ordinary prayer and worship self-knowledge may not be so very necessary. But when one reaches the stage of meditation self-knowledge becomes important.

There are two reasons for this. One is that meditation is a fully conscious process. Therefore the aspirant must know what is consciousness, and consciousness is identical with the self. Ordinary concentration involved in normal activities is mostly unconscious or subconscious. Meditation is a self-directed, self-controlled process. Without self-awareness or self-remembrance meditation will become mechanical.

Secondly, *upāsanā*, as Vedantic meditation

is called, is the establishment of a direct relationship between the soul and God. This, however, is not a subject-object relationship in the ordinary sense of the term. Your relationship with your book, your chair, your friends and relatives is a subject-object relationship. They are objects because they are outside your self. Even internal images and ideas produced by memory and imagination are outside your real Self and hence are objects. God is not an object of this type. He is the innermost Self, the Soul of all souls, the Supreme Self (*paramātman*), the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*) immanent in the souls of all beings. Unless you know your soul how can you know the Soul of all souls? Unless you realize your own true Self how can you realize the

Supreme Self? When a devotee is asked to worship God as his Master, Friend or Mother, what is implied is not an ordinary human relationship. It is a purely spiritual relationship the meaning of which cannot be understood without Self-realization. The Gopis of Vrindavan looked upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their Beloved. But though they were poor cowherd women, they were fully aware of the spiritual nature of their relationship. In one of the famous hymns of the *Bhāgavatam*, the Gopis state, 'Thou art not a mere son of a cowherd-woman but the innermost Self and Witness in all beings.'¹

Vedanta books speak of three kinds of difference (*bheda*). The difference between two species, like a tree and a stone, is called *vi-jā-tī-ya*. The difference between two things belonging to the same species, as between one mango tree and another mango tree is called *sa-jā-tī-ya*. Inherent differences existing in one and the same thing, like the branches, leaves, and flowers of a tree, are termed *svagata*.² The difference between God and the soul does not fall under any of these types. God is all-pervading; He is both immanent and transcendent; He is inside and outside the soul. He is both the Subject and the Object. Śrī Rāmānuja calls the relationship between God and the soul *apṛthak-siddhi*, 'inseparability'. The advaitins admit no difference at all between the two; they regard Reality as *akhaṇḍa*, indivisible. In order to practise *upāsanā*, the aspirant should know the exact nature of the relationship between the soul and God.

This is a mystery hidden deep within one's soul.

God is generally regarded as unseen. If one's own true Self is also regarded as unknown, no real relationship can be established between the two. Therefore one must first of all realize one's true Self, the *jīvātman*, the luminous spiritual entity within, which is separate from body and mind. The search for God begins with the Self. God is to be sought not in the outside world nor in the mind. His real abode lies in the depths of the Self, and so the primary purpose of meditation is to discover this divine centre within us.

When you sit for dinner, your relation with the rice, dal and curries served before you will be a subject-object relation at first. But once these things have gone into your tummy, this relation will cease, for they have now become a part of your body. This may be taken as a rather crude illustration of what happens during meditation. Meditation usually begins with a divine image in the mind. The aspirant's relation with the image is a subject-object relation at first. But as concentration deepens, the object moves closer to the centre until, when the awakening of the Self takes place, the image gets absorbed into the Self. Now the image alone shines, being illumined by the light of the Self. Though the mind still exists, its presence is no longer noticed as the light of the Self has engulfed it. It is as if the Self had taken the form of the image.³ Further progress lies in the sinking of the image deeper in the light of the Self. From now on the relation between the two is no longer that of subject and object; it may

1. न खलु गोपिकानन्दनो भवान्
अखिलदेहिनामन्तरात्मदृक् ।

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.31.4

2. दृक्षस्य स्वगतो भेदः पत्रपुष्पफलादिभिः ।
दृक्षान्तरात् सजातीयो विजातीयशिलादितः ॥

Pancadasi 2.20

3. Patanjali has succinctly described the whole process in the following aphorism: 'When the mind is purified of memory (of distracting objects) and appears as if devoid of its own nature, then the object alone will shine in it.

स्मृतिपरिशुद्धौ स्वरूपशून्य इव अर्थमात्रं निर्भासा...।

Yoga-sūtra 1.43

be described as 'co-inherence'.⁴ It is only when the aspirant has reached this stage that he will understand the real significance of describing God as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*), Supreme Self (*paramātman*), etc.

The above discussion should make it clear why self-knowledge is important in the practice of *upāsana* or Vedantic meditation. It is the only door to God-realization. All the great mystics of world religions know this. St. Bernard, one of the great mystics of the West, says, 'Knowledge of yourself is a step to the knowledge of God ; and from His image which will be renewed in you He Himself will be seen'.

There is yet another reason why a certain degree of self-knowledge is essential for the practice of meditation. If there are deep divisions in one's personality caused by conflicts and complexes, one will find it difficult to meditate. Meditation involves your whole life. It is not a form of recreation or pastime or an isolated activity. You may sit down to meditate only for a short period once or twice a day, but your life during the rest of the day must be regarded as a preparation for it. Meditation becomes successful only when it is supported by your whole life. And your whole life depends upon what you think of yourself.

Self-acceptance and change

The first qualification needed for the acquisition of true Self-knowledge is self-acceptance. Before embarking on the journey to God the aspirant should know where he stands, what his defects and drawbacks are. He must have a realistic picture of himself and accept it. In modern times many young people are exposed to the deleterious

influences of modern culture. Traumatic experiences of childhood and adolescence, evil effects of films and bad company, and the alienating and unsettling effects of urban life produce wrong impressions, wrong impulses and wrong attitudes which darken and warp the soul. The picture of themselves that many young people have when they turn to meditative life is not very edifying. But unless they accept themselves with all their limitations, they will not make much progress. Pretending to be greater than what one really is, blindly imitating spiritually advanced people and other forms of self-deception are a great obstacle to a beginner. A seeker of Truth must be truthful to himself. Spiritual life built on self-deceptions and illusions will one day tumble down like a house of cards. 'The sickest mental patient is the one who hotly denies that there is anything wrong with him', says Dr. William Menninger.⁵

The second qualification that an aspirant must have is the will to change himself. Self-acceptance does not mean brooding over the past, self-condemnation and other negative attitudes. To change one's character, to remove deep-rooted desires and tendencies, is no doubt difficult, but it can be done through perseverance. Many people begin spiritual life with much enthusiasm but, when they meet with obstacles, their fervour will cool down. Speaking about the need for unflagging zeal in order to control the mind, Gauḍapāda says that it should be like the determination of a person to empty the ocean drop by drop with the tip of a *kuśa* grass.⁶

Perseverance must be one-pointed. What an aspirant should have is an unwavering,

4. This is what Śrī Rāmānuja calls *aprthak-siddhi*; it is somewhat similar to the Nyāya principle of *samavāya*. See M. Hiriyanna *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (London : George Allen and Unwin, 1956), p. 399.

5. William Menninger, *You and Psychiatry* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948).

6. उत्सेक उदधेर्यद्वत् कुशाग्रेणैक बिन्दुना ।
मनसो निग्रहस्तद्वद् भवेदपरिखेदतः ॥

one-pointed will. This is what the *Gītā* calls *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi*.⁷ Says Swami Vivekananda, 'Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life ; think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced'.⁸ A sincere spiritual aspirant gives his whole life to meditative life. Even while engaged in work a part of his mind always remains fixed on the ideal.

What gives unity or one-pointedness to perseverance? Perception of the ideal. This, then, is the third requisite of meditative life : to live for an ideal. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'Live for an ideal, and that one ideal alone. Let it be so great, so strong that there may be nothing else left in the mind ; no place for anything else, no time for anything'.⁹

Ideals are of two types : subjective and objective. The objective ideal is the object of your meditation, a deity or divine being whom you love and adore, who draws all your powers towards him like a magnet. It is called the Chosen Ideal, *iṣṭa-devatā*. At the same time every spiritual aspirant must have a subjective ideal, an ideal which he wants to *become*, an image of his own higher Self. It is called the Self-ideal. There is a close connection between these two ideals which is governed by an important law of consciousness.

A fundamental law of consciousness

Before proceeding further it is necessary to state here this law of consciousness which holds good at all levels of human existence. It may be stated as follows :

our understanding of reality depends upon our understanding of ourselves. A child has little self-knowledge, and its knowledge of the external world does not go beyond the toys and dolls he plays with. As he grows older, the focus of his interest is shifted to games like football and cricket, and later on to books, friends, social life, money, etc. Growth is a process of inner development. The greater the inner development, the wider becomes one's knowledge of the world around him.

This is true of spiritual growth too. A person who identifies his self with his physical body can conceive God only as an embodied being or as an image or idol. One who has identified his self with his mind can understand God as Cosmic Mind. To have a more advanced understanding of God one must go beyond ordinary selfhood, the ego. The knowledge of God derived from books is like the toys of a child. To realize God as the Supreme Spirit is not possible unless one realizes oneself as the Spirit. God knowledge is directly proportional to Self-knowledge. As one advances in spiritual life, both the types of knowledge grow until they ultimately get united in the non-dual experience. This is the reason why in the Advaita system no distinction is made between the two types of experience.

In other Schools of Vedānta, especially in that of Śrī Rāmānuja, self-realization is clearly distinguished from God-realization. The former, which he calls *ātmāvalokana*, is considered to be an essential step to the latter. The law mentioned above has been succinctly stated by Rāmānuja as follows : 'What a person regards as the goal of his life depends upon what he considers himself to be'.¹⁰ This means a spiritual aspirant needs two types of ideals : an ideal

7. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 2.41

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), vol. 1, p. 177.

9. *ibid* (1973), vol. 5, p. 251-252.

10. आत्माभिमानो यादृशः तदनुगुणैव पुरुषार्थं प्रतीतिः

Vedārtha-samgraha, para. 45.

for himself (called the Self-ideal) and an ideal to love and adore (called the Chosen Ideal).

The concept of self

We have used the word 'self' frequently. It is now necessary to understand its real significance. In Indian thought the term 'self' refers to the Ātman, the unchangeable, immortal spiritual substance which is the basis of the notion of 'I' in man. Except the Buddhists who deny its existence, all Indian philosophers believe in the Ātman though they hold different views regarding its real nature. Vedantic scriptures speak of different selves, but all these are only different levels or dimensions as aspects of one and the same self. These dimensions can be understood in several ways. Structurally, the self is spoken of as having five sheaths, *kośas*: the material sheath, the vital sheath, the mental sheath, the intellectual sheath and the blissful sheath, each representing a certain dimension of the self. From the metaphysical standpoint the self is said to have three levels: the *pāramārthika* or real, the *vyāvahārika* or empirical and the *prātibhāsika* or illusory.¹¹ Again, according to the state—waking, dream or deep sleep—in which it exists, the self is called *viśva*, *taijasa* and *prājña* respectively.

A detailed study of the nature of the self has to be postponed to a future occasion. Here we are interested only in the functions of the self. Functionally, the self is experienced in three modes: the *bhoktā* or enjoyer, the *kartā* or doer and the *jñātā* or knower.

The *bhoktā*, enjoyer, is the aspect of self most familiar to us. It is consciousness identified with the mind and the five *jñānendriyas* (sense-organs of knowledge). Through the five senses various types of

experience are coming to us. The *bhoktā* appropriates them for itself. Then we feel 'I am happy', 'I am unhappy', etc. The term *bhoktā* means one who experiences *bhoga*. The word *bhoga* means the feeling of both happiness and sorrow.¹² Most of our experiences make us suffer, and so the *bhoktā* may be called the 'suffering self'. Pleasant experiences create attachment (*rāga*) to those objects, while unpleasant experiences produce aversion (*dveṣa*) or fear (*bhaya*) for the objects concerned. Attachment, aversion and fear are, thus, the characteristics of the *bhoktā*.

The *kartā* or doer is the self which is referred to when we say 'I did this', 'I think so', etc. It is consciousness associated with the will and *karmendriyas* (organs of action). Actually, all activity is going on by the operation of universal forces. But the *kartā* appropriates them to himself and claims himself to be their doer. Thus egoism is the chief characteristic of the *kartā*. It is the self which gets into bondage, and so we may call it the 'bound self'.

The *jñātā* is the self which 'knows' all experiences and actions. It does not enjoy or do, it does not suffer nor is it bound. It simply exists and knows. It is the *sākṣi* the 'witnessing self'. Everything we see, feel or do is presented to it. Every experience of an object and every action actually reveal this true spiritual centre within us. But owing to the restlessness of our minds we seldom notice it. It is through meditation that we discover and develop this sanctuary of peace lying deep within us.

Meditation and self-surrender

Behind the *bhoktā* or enjoyer stands the *kartā* or doer and behind the latter, the *jñātā* or the witness. These three selves

11. cf. *Laghuvāsudeva-mananam*.

12. सुखदुःखसंवेदनं भोगः ।

represent three modes of our relation with the world. How do we relate ourselves to God? Neither as the enjoyer nor as the doer. Enjoyment applies only to objects of pleasure and pain which God is not. Since God is the source of all power and movement, we cannot realize Him unless we give up the false notion, 'I am the doer'. The first two modes of the self are unstable, being dependent on external conditions, and are the source of all suffering and bondage. This leaves the witnessing self as the only way of relating ourselves to God. To love God as one's Master, Father, Mother or Beloved is good, but it should not be done with the first two selves. Our true relationship with God will begin only after we have reached the witness stage. To attain this we must transcend the other two selves. How to do this?

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'I am the enjoyer of all austerity and sacrifice, and the supreme Lord of all the worlds'.¹³ Here the Lord is identifying Himself with the Virāj, the cosmic Being. All beings are parts of Virāj who is the real enjoyer. This knowledge makes us offer all our experiences, the fruits of all our actions to the Virāj. Through this *virādupāsanā* or worship of the Cosmic Being (which is what Karma Yoga really means) we learn to identify ourselves more and more with the Cosmic Being, and gradually the *bhoktā* in us will become one with Him. Thus we transcend the enjoyer-self.

A little careful observation of the universe will teach us the truth of Newton's First Law of Motion that motion is uncreated. All movements, all activities, all forms of work are parts of one universal motion which must have a common centre of origin. There must be a centre from where started the primordial impulse. There must be a Prime Mover

who initiates and sustains universal motion. He is the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*) indwelling in the hearts of all beings. It is this knowledge that gives us the courage, freedom, license to sit down and practise meditation. If you are not convinced of this truth, you should not attempt to meditate; you should rather go and do some work.

Meditation is an attempt to transcend the *kartā* (the ego who thinks he is the doer of all his actions) by surrendering it to the Inner Controller. If Karma Yoga is external self-surrender, meditation is internal self-surrender. In Karma Yoga the *bhoktā* is surrendered, while in meditation the *kartā* is surrendered. When you sit for meditation, the first thing you have to do is to surrender your ego, the doer, to the Lord. Before you enter the inner shrine you must leave the doer-self outside its portals. The *Gītā* teaches us to say, 'I take refuge in that Supreme Person alone who is the source of primordial activity'.¹⁴ This is the attitude that a meditator must have when he practises meditation.

Of course, in the beginning of meditation the mind has to be controlled, and so you will have the feeling 'I am controlling my mind'. But as meditation deepens, concentration becomes spontaneous and you lose the idea that you are 'doing' meditation. Then the object alone shines in the field of consciousness, and you just witness it in serenity and peace. You have now transcended the *bhoktā* and the *kartā* and have become the witnessing Self. About this state Swami Vivekananda says, 'And then along with it, there must be meditation. Meditation is the one thing. Meditate! The greatest thing is meditation. It is the nearest approach to spiritual life—the mind

13. cf. भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।

Gītā 5.29

14. तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये

यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ।

Gītā 15.4

meditating. It is the one moment in our daily life that we are not at all material—the Soul thinking of Itself, free from all matter—this marvellous touch of the Soul!’¹⁵

Self-image and self-fantasy

In Western thought the importance of self as an integrating principle gained recognition only in modern times, owing mainly to the efforts of psychoanalysts. Among the several useful concepts developed by them two have a special relevance in the present context. These are self-image and self-fantasy.

Every person has an idea of who he is, a view of himself as distinct from other persons. This self-image is actually a mosaic of several pictures. His own ‘body-image’ seen in the mirror is only a part of this mosaic. The rest of it is composed of the opinions of others about himself, and his own evaluation of his worth. The building of the self-image goes on throughout one’s life. When a little boy hears elders telling him ‘Ramu, you are a gem of a boy’, ‘You foolish boy, you can’t do that’, and so on, he gets an idea of himself as an object, the ‘me’. As he grows, this self-image too goes on changing. However, the discarded earlier self-images do not disappear, but lie buried deep in the person’s unconscious. From there, without his knowledge, they influence his attitude towards himself and other people. The popular notion that an adult person is able to have a realistic idea of himself is not true in the majority of cases. Most people have poor knowledge of themselves.

It is with wrong self-images and colossal ignorance of themselves that many people turn to meditative life. Few among them understand that not only their prayer and meditation, but also their attitude towards God and Guru are influenced by their self-images. Evidently, wrong self-image is a great obstacle to spiritual life. But fortu-

nately, through proper self-analysis and guidance of a competent spiritual teacher, this defect can be rectified. Meditation itself will gradually expose the hidden layers of the self and enable the aspirant to deal with them effectively.

One’s self-image is actually an image of one’s ‘me’. What about one’s ‘I’? Every one is endowed with certain talents and capacities, desires and ambitions. These constitute the basic elements of a person’s ‘I’. But owing to lack of training in self-knowledge, he generally does not know how to understand his ‘I’. He always judges himself by his ‘me’, his self-image. The ‘I’ always clamours for self-expression, to achieve something, to express its own inherent powers. If, however, the environment is not favourable, it will lead to conflicts though the person may not be aware of them. To escape from these conflicts the frustrated ‘I’ may seek false fulfilment through fantasy. A little boy may have developed the desire to become a famous cricket player. But his parents force him to study hard and become an engineer or a doctor. So when he sits down with his books, his ‘I’ wanders to the cricket field. He creates through imagination an idealized ‘I’, a superstar who slams an unbeaten double century or skittles out the entire Australian cricket team for a meagre fifty runs! A person who has failed to achieve success in any field may create an imaginary self who, as an orator or musical prodigy, keeps a million people spell-bound or, as a scientist, discovers the panacea to all the illness of mankind, and so on. James Thurber has brilliantly portrayed the process of self-fantasy in his famous work *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*.

Generally people dismiss self-fantasy as day-dreaming. However, as the great psychologist Karen Horney has shown, though the phantasy is unreal it expresses man’s real need. According to her, there is in each person an urge to attain greatness, glory,

¹⁵. *Complete Works* (1973), vol. 5, p. 253.

magnificence, which she calls the search for glory. Her interpretation of self-fantasy or self-idealization : 'In this process he endows himself with unlimited powers and with exalted faculties; he becomes a hero, a genius, a supreme lover, a saint, a god. Self-idealization always entails a general self-glorification And the idealized self becomes more real to him than his real self, not primarily because it is more appealing but because it answers all his stringent needs'.¹⁶

From the point of view of Vedanta, the idealized self (self-fantasy) and the self-image both represent the *prātibhāsika jīva*, the illusory self. Both originate in childhood and their roots lie deep in the unconscious. Both are great obstacles to a spiritual aspirant. However, there are basic differences between them. The self-image is for the most part imposed from outside by the social environment. It can be corrected to a great extent through self-analysis, realistic living and guidance. The idealized self, on the other hand, is the expression of the person's deeply felt needs. It cannot be removed by mere knowledge of its workings, which indeed many people do have. It can be overcome only by fulfilling the basic need which causes it.

Self-ideal and Chosen Ideal

The point is, why does the illusory self exist at all? There is no illusion which does not stand for some reality. Even behind a mirage there is a reality, only it is in the wrong place. The water you see in a mirage may not be in the desert but it certainly exists somewhere else; the snake you saw in the rope stands for the real snake which you had seen elsewhere. Similarly, the idealized self or self-fantasy, stands for

the real glorious Self which is the true nature of man. There is perfection already in man. Fantasies and day-dreams are produced by a dim, unconscious intuition of the supreme power, light, beauty and glory inherent in the Ātman.

There is a god, your own higher Self, hiding within your heart clamouring for expression. The clamour cannot be suppressed. The best way is to give the god freedom to express himself—not through fantasies, but through the systematic practice of spiritual disciplines. All one's ambitions and dreams are to be converted into a drive for Self-realization. All the energies now being wasted on sense pleasure and imagination are to be conserved and directed towards the Ātman.

However, many people find it difficult to conceive the nature of the true Self. A direct experience of the Ātman is the result of a transformation of consciousness. This involves purification of mind and the practice of intense prayer or meditation. During this interim period many aspirants need an image of their own true Self, the Ātman. One may look upon oneself as a mass of light or as a luminous god or goddess or an angel. We may call this higher image of one's higher Self the Self-ideal. No doubt this too is a kind of imagination, but it is different from self-fantasy. The idealized self produced by fantasy or day-dream is a means of escape from reality, and the whole process of day dreaming is controlled by the unconscious. But the Self-ideal is a means of facing the reality, and meditation, where it is mainly employed, is a fully conscious and self-directed process.

The Self-ideal or higher image of oneself is necessary for most aspirants to make the Ātman more real to them. Secondly, it helps the aspirant to counteract the false self-images produced through fantasy. Every time he feels he is about to be overpowered by fantasy or day-dream, he should

¹⁶. Karen Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1950), chap. 'The Search for Glory'.

strongly visualize himself to be a pure light or a luminous god or goddess. Such visualizations will also enable the aspirant to maintain his purity and to protect himself from temptations. The use of a Self-ideal is meant only for the beginner. Once the aspirant realizes the luminous splendour of his own true Self, the use of these images becomes unnecessary. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'When the soul has wrestled with circumstance and has met death, a thousand times death on the way, but nothing daunted has struggled forward again and again and yet again—then the soul comes out as a giant and laughs at the ideal he has been struggling for, because he finds how much greater is he than the ideal. I am the end, my own Self, and nothing else, for what is there to compare to my own Self?'¹⁷

A higher Self-ideal, a divine Self-image is necessary for spiritual aspirants for yet another reason. Those who follow the path of devotion are usually advised to look upon God as their Master, Father, Child or Beloved. In order to cultivate this attitude, the aspirant must have a spiritual image of himself. If he wants to look upon God as Master, then he should look upon himself as a servant. If he wants to look upon God as Father or Mother, he should look upon himself as a child. If he wants to look upon God as Child, he should look upon himself as a mother.

It is here that the fundamental spiritual law mentioned earlier comes into operation. To restate it : our understanding of reality depends upon our understanding of ourselves. The law has still deeper implications. In the theistic tradition an aspirant is advised to choose an aspect of God like Śiva, Viṣṇu or Devī as his *iṣṭa-devatā*, Chosen Ideal. The law operates in the choice of the deity. There must be compatibility between the worshipper and the worshipped. This means the aspirant must

have in him some rudiments of the qualities of the deity whom he adores. In order to adore Śiva as your ideal you must have some qualities of Śiva in you, in order to accept Jesus as your ideal you must have some qualities of Jesus in you. Each aspirant should choose that divine Being who is the fullest embodiment of his aspirations, of his potentialities.

Choosing the wrong deity may impede an aspirant's spiritual progress. But to choose the right deity the aspirant must have some self-knowledge. However, this is seldom found, and therefore many aspirants need the guidance of an experienced teacher. One day Sharat (who later on became Swami Saradananda), then a young college student, was sitting in Dakshineswar listening to Sri Ramakrishna. The Master was talking about the unique virtues of the deity Gaṇeśa. Suddenly Sharat said, 'Well, sir, I like the character of Gaṇeśa very much. He is my Ideal'. The Master at once corrected him saying, 'No, Gaṇeśa is not your ideal. Your ideal is Śiva. You possess Śiva-attributes'.¹⁸ Sri Ramakrishna himself has been accepted now as the Chosen Ideal by thousands of people. The advantage of the Ramakrishna-ideal is that it is in harmony with the temperaments and aspirations of modern people. Moreover, it does not clash with other ideals. Not only that; Sri Ramakrishna represents the Universal Ideal which interlinks all other Ideals.

In its real essence the individual Self is a part of the Supreme Self. This is man's real identity. But owing to ignorance he has lost contact with his own true Self. The purpose of meditation is to restore this lost identity to man. When we meditate on God, the divinity lying dormant in us gets awakened. Hindu scriptures illustrate this

¹⁸. Swami Gambhirananda, *The Apostles of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1967), p. 173.

¹⁷. *Complete Works*, vol. 5, p. 252-253.

truth with the help of the maxim of the wasp and the worm (*bhramara-kita nyāya*). It is common observation that the wasp takes grubs and caterpillars to its nest to serve as food for its young ones which later on emerge as full-fledged wasps. This has given rise to the popular belief that the worm, by intensely thinking of the wasp, transforms itself into the wasp.

It is by meditating on God that man recovers his true identity as the immortal Ātman. About this realization the Upaniṣad says: 'Puruṣa, the indwelling Self, of the

size of a thumb, is ever seated in the hearts of men. One should unerringly separate Him from one's body like a stalk from the *muñja* grass. Him one should know as pure and immortal. Him one should know as pure and immortal'.¹⁹

19. अंगुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा

सदाजनानां हृदये संनिविष्टः ।

तं स्वाच्छरीरात् प्रवृहेन्मुञ्जादिवेषीकां धैर्येण ।

तं विद्याच्छुक्रमृतं तं विद्याच्छुक्रमृतमिति ॥

Katha Upaniṣad 6.17

ON CONVERSION

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

[The mass conversion of Hindus into Islam at Meenakshipuram in South India, and its fall-out in other parts of the country, have brought to focus a serious age-old problem of the Hindu society. Many earnest attempts are being made by socially conscious and good-hearted organizations and persons to solve this problem. In order to discuss the issue at a public forum and to emphasize and demonstrate the solidarity of the Hindu population, a mammoth public meeting under the name *Virat Hindu Sammelan* was organized by the leaders of several Hindu organizations and representatives of Jains and Sikhs at the Boat Club, New Delhi, on 18 October, 1981. The meeting was addressed, among others, by Swami Budhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi. An English translation of the Swami's speech, originally delivered in Hindi, is given below.—Ed.]

I shall try to place before you the thinking of the Ramakrishna Mission in this regard.

The Mission thinks that for seeking an ideal solution of the problem, it should be set in perspective.

The *Rg-Veda* breathed one cardinal principle of the Eternal Religion in these words: *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*. 'Truth is one: sages call It by various names'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa emphasized the same truth in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Ācārya Śaṅkara harmonized various sects of Hinduism in the same spirit. In the modern age Sri Ramakrishna gave practical demonstration of this ideal through practising the sadhanas of different religions and uphold-

ing their spiritual truths from his experience.

This is one of the greatest ideals which the modern age requires, not only in India, but all over the world—that all religions finally lead to the same goal, to God realization.

Any other idea which is discordant with this great ideal, which this country has cherished for millennia, will only retard the progress of this nation and bring about disunity and disintegration of the life of the nation.

It is because of this great ideal that Parsis and Jews could come here and settle down as refugees and follow their religions without any disturbance.

The Hindus expect that followers of other religions in the country will respect this great Hindu ideal, for any interference will not be acceptable to the Hindus and will create a reaction. Moreover, it is absolutely necessary if all of us, of different religions, are to live together as one nation.

It is in this perspective that the Mission views the problem of conversion, and seeks to be of service in building a world order in which followers of all religions can practise their own faith without interference from and interfering in, other faiths.

The problem which Meenakshipuram symbolizes calls for a good deal of heart searching of the Hindus. Hindus must have the boldness to do this. Swami Vivekananda teaches us that we should try to find the cause of the defects of society within us and not outside. Diseases attack the body only when it is weak and not when it is strong and vital. The Hindu society is weak on account of various dissensions and rank superstitions and prejudices which do not form a part of the Hindu religion. This weakness and want of unity have corroded the Hindu society and subjected it to attacks from outside. Make the Hindu society strong and united, then every thing will be all right and none will dare to touch it.

Read the agonized statements of the new converts as to why they embraced Islam. All of them bitterly complained that the inhuman, cruel and insulting practice of untouchability in Hindu society had driven them to Islam.

It is an undeniable fact of history that the Harijans have been kept outside the Hindu social fold as outcastes for centuries and they have been treated inhumanly by Hindus. Therefore the first and foremost thing to be done in solving the problem of mass conversion is the complete eradication of untouchability from India.

The Ramakrishna Mission asks : Can you and your friends together organize the Hindus of your locality to wipe out un-

touchability and maltreatment of the Harijans, and raise them to a better status? Will you allow them to enter the temples and your houses, and use your wells and tanks which were denied to them so long? Can you awaken the conscience of Hindus through mass media and impress upon them the urgency of wiping out untouchability, which has amply proved itself to be suicidal?

We read in newspapers that some converts gave expression to their painful feelings about how before their conversion they had been harassed in their own villages by some people, and how benefits meant for them could not reach them. If it be true, cannot you and your friends in the locality give such harassed people active protection against oppression and harassment and see to it that benefits meant for them reach them properly?

The backward and tribal people, and specially the Harijans, must be raised on all the planes—physical and economic, intellectual and cultural and finally spiritual. They must be given proper education, cultural and religious ideas through audio-visual aids, simple discourses, Harikathas and dramas etc. Facilities for hygiene, sanitation and better forms of living should be made available to them.

The foremost duty, however, is to improve their economic condition by giving them training in handicrafts, cottage industries etc., so that they may overcome their poverty. This is of primary importance. 'Empty stomach is not good for religion', said Sri Ramakrishna. So, the Hindus as one body should try to ameliorate the economic condition of all their co-religionists—especially the poorer and backward classes, like our Banabasis, Harijans and Girijans and others and then disseminate among them our intellectual, moral and spiritual ideals.

In short, our object should be to see that

every one down to the lowest of the low of our people be helped to attain fulfilment in life through *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. That will be the most authentic way of solving the problem symbolized by the Meenakshipuram incident.

THE RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGE IN EUROPE

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

Early in my book *A Yankee and the Swamis* I reflected on man's universal enthusiasm for going on religious pilgrimages. Since the most ancient times sites considered sacred have attracted the pious, the venturesome, and the curious. Holy places in Egypt and Chaldea drew devotees. Jews regularly made the prescribed annual trip to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. Greeks went periodically to their temples at Athens and Delphi and to Olympus. Since many centuries Muslims from all over the world have felt duty-bound to visit Mecca at least once during their lifetime. Buddhists undertook pilgrimages to sanctuaries in Tibet, India, and Sri Lanka. For the Christian, Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela were eminently important.

The Hindu longed to go to the four supremely sacred spots of India: Rameswaram, Puri, Dwaraka, and Kedarnath; or at least to three of them, so that his disappointment in not having been to the fourth would remain in his mind as a holy sentiment at the time of his death. Indeed, the book *A Yankee and the Swamis* is the story of a Westerner's pilgrimage to some of the sacred spots of India, tradition-sanctified as well as modern. In the pages of this book I spoke of the different categories of holy destinations and of the reasons why people made and make an effort to go to them. As categories I listed: natural spots having a spiritual attraction, old and power-charged temples, and religious communities.

And reasons for going—these I listed as: curiosity and distraction, the seeking of some boon or favour, and devotion.

In trying to understand what happens, what interchange takes place when a pilgrim reaches a holy destination, I reasoned that the spiritual deposit stored up at a sacred site is communicated to the pilgrim through 'vibrations'. That is to say, a subtle power abides in such a site, which is available to anyone going there with longing in his heart. I used the word 'vibrations' for want of a better term. It is difficult to define exactly what happens when a pilgrim finds himself face to face with his objective. Western writers have used the word 'encounter'. Indians speak of the event as 'gaining darshan'. Darshan may be defined as seeing or experiencing. Paying respects to a holy place or person by a ceremonious visit is called seeking darshan, and the purification felt in the presence of holiness is referred to as obtaining darshan. I find this explanation the best which one can hope for and would apply it equally to the process in Europe. In making religious pilgrimages Western pilgrims are seeking and obtaining darshan, although most of them would never have heard the word.

Sri Ramakrishna's comments on the religious pilgrimage and the utility of visiting holy sites are enlightening. He himself enthusiastically visited shrines in and around Calcutta, and in 1868 he made a four-months' pilgrimage to Benares and

Brindaban. Sri Ramakrishna said that God is especially manifest in those places where people have made a practice of praying, worshipping, and meditating. No doubt God pervades all creation, but he is more easily accessible in such sites, just as one can dig for water almost anywhere and eventually reach it, but will find water more readily accessible in wells and reservoirs. In addition, holy sites attract not only ordinary seekers but highly evolved spiritual souls as well, and these latter reinforce and augment by their presence the power already there. In established spiritual sites the thought of God has become, as it were, solidified; hence pilgrims to such destinations can there easily 'extract' thoughts of God.

Having lived at the Centre Védantique Ramakrishna at Gretz in France for the past sixteen years, I have had occasion to examine the phenomena of the religious pilgrimage in Europe. It is an absorbing study. One finds that pilgrimages and pilgrims in Europe are not so very different from pilgrimages and pilgrims in India. They behave in much the same way, and for many of the same reasons. In this article I shall try to describe the religious pilgrimage in Europe, although necessarily in a condensed fashion, as the subject is vast.

The author of a serious study is obliged to state his sources, and this I shall now do. In preparing myself to write this article I received general guidance from the work of Professor Alphonse Dupront, President of the University of Paris, and an authority on the religious pilgrimage in Europe. Another helpful source was a small book by Romain Roussel, *Les Pèlerinages*, published by the Presses Universitaires de France. A third was *Pèlerins du Moyen Age* by Raymond Oursel, published by Fayard. Descriptive works such as the following proved useful: *Iberia* by

James A. Mitchner, Will Durant's *The Age of Faith*, Henry Adams' *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, and *L'Enigme des Vierges Noires* by Jacques Huynen. Pilgrim guidebooks from pilgrimage centres proved helpful. The fourth and best source of material on pilgrimages was the pilgrimage itself, which I made (although not on foot!) to Rome, Assisi, Lourdes, La Salette, Rocamadour, Chartres, Einsiedeln, Vézelay, and Mont-Saint-Michel.

This article naturally organizes itself into four parts:

1. Physical aspects of the religious pilgrimage; 2. Motivations; 3. Means of obtaining darshan; and 4. Pilgrim destinations. There is, finally, a brief summary at the end.

1. *Physical aspects of the religious pilgrimage*

Conquest of space. We may think of the religious pilgrimage as an allegory of life itself—an arduous, lengthy journey by a stranger in a strange land (the word pilgrim comes from the Latin word for 'stranger'). This stranger is inspired by the hope of a happy resolution of a problem. His expedition is a microcosm of man's traverse of time; of man's struggles on earth; of man's search for meaning and final peace.

The pilgrimage, properly speaking, involves a distant place, and getting there must entail time and hardship. Ideally the pilgrim must go on foot; sometimes the last part of the journey is made on one's knees or even by measuring the distance with one's body.

For the medieval European, the conquest of space was a strenuous undertaking. The dangers submitted to were formidable: sickness, accidents, and robbery took their toll, so that only a partial number succeeded in reaching their destinations, and an even smaller percentage managed to return home.

There were hundreds, even thousands (one figure given is ten thousand) of pilgrim shrines authorized by the Catholic Church, some perhaps no farther away than the next village. But there was an excitement to be experienced, and perhaps increased virtue to be obtained, if the voyage was long and difficult.

Many accounts have come down to us recalling the rigours of the voyages. Roads were often mere tracks, sometimes laid with rough stones, sometimes not. Simply to maintain the feet in walking condition was a problem. Resthouses were often few and far between, so that the pilgrim was required to sleep out of doors or in any makeshift shelter he could find. He washed, if he washed at all, in rivers. His clothes, generally of heavy wool, became begrimed. (Indeed, it has been suggested that the liberal use of incense in churches at that epoch was more in the interest of fumigating the congregation than for pleasing the Lord!)

Raymond Oursel has reprinted from the wall of a guesthouse in Aubrac, France, a revealing text, which in translation reads as follows :

O God, who made Abraham leave his country and who kept him safe throughout his travels give your children the same protection. Sustain us in dangers, lighten our steps. Be for us a shade against the sun, a cloak against the rain and cold. Aid us when we are fatigued and guard us against all perils. Be the staff that keeps us from falling down and a welcome haven from disasters of the sea. All this so that we, guided by you, may safely reach our goal and return home safely.

Because of these rigours, not all could set out to distant places. Then the community might choose and send one of its members as its representative. He bore with him the aspirations of the flock at home and vicariously presented the needs and longings of the members at the pilgrimage's end, claiming its benefits for them in absentia. Upon

his return this representative was received as an object of wonder and of reverence.

Some older pilgrims made the trip in the intention of never returning. They would wait for death at the holy site ; to die there would assure them their salvation. It was generally supposed that death in the Holy Land provided the shortest possible route to paradise. (This idea is familiar to all those who, since times immemorial, have made Benares their home in old age.)

The conquest of space was an important element of the religious pilgrimage. The act of getting to the holy destination was a cleansing austerity. It was usually preceded by a solemn vow of intention. (What an abomination, for example, to drop in on Amarnath in an afternoon by helicopter in place of walking many days to reach the sacred cave and many more days to come down!) The time needed permitted the pilgrim to focus his mind intensely on the objective and to build up readiness. It allowed him an opportunity for self-examination. The pilgrimage has been called walking prayer, and many seem to have made the trip in an indrawn mood. He compared himself and his ordeal with Jesus' heavy toil in dragging to Calvary the cross on which he was to be crucified. He fingered the beads of his rosary as he walked. (For some, of course, the chance to get away from home gave an opportunity for every kind of license.) The hardships encountered and overcome increased the pilgrim's ardour. It induced a buildup of longing, which spiritual directors such as Swami Brahmananda consider essential. These great European voyages were often taken in groups, and the pilgrimage was scheduled so that the pilgrims reached the sacred destination on some important holy day. The collective enthusiasm, the group spirit, energized each individual. The texts of some songs composed and sung en route have come down to us.

Preparing for the encounter. As the spire

at journey's end, the silhouette of the shrine to which he had for so long been making his way, came into view, the pilgrim felt his enthusiasm intensify. The first sight of Rome is said to have elicited from the weary pilgrims a full-hearted hymn of gladness :

O noble Rome, of all this world the queen,
 Ruby red with martyr's blood,
 Yet white as lilies with purity,
 We offer thee our salutations again and again.
 We, and all generations which have gone before,
 and all which will follow, salute thee.

Now the pilgrim prepared himself actively for the encounter, for obtaining darshan. He bathed, had his hair cut, put on fresh clothes (if he had any), went to confession, perhaps did the Stations of the Cross, fasted. Circumambulation of the holy of holies, so common in India, is said to have been practised at some shrines in Europe. He would likely enter the church as part of a procession, the banner of his group flying above him, singing in full voice in an ecstasy of delight. Processions in which the participants danced were not uncommon. (It must have been like the frenzy of excitement I witnessed when I first visited Jagannath and mingled with the shouting, leaping crowds, surging forward toward the holy of holies, crawling under and over the great pole that had been laid across the opening from the pilgrims' chamber to slow the surge.)

The encounter (obtaining darshan). The pilgrim was at last face to face with the sacred. He had expected something to happen, and quite often something did happen. He obtained darshan; he came into the presence of the sacred and entered the field of its radiation. The word 'encounter' is equally descriptive because it implies a two-way event. The pilgrim had done his part; now the Divine must respond. (My own experience at Jagannāth, when I sensed the power and immensity of the sacred as

something tangible, is proof to me that the term encounter is apt.)

What happened? For some a revelation, a psychological opening out, a strengthening of conviction, a reassurance, a cleansing, an absolution, a conversion. For some, physical healing. And, it is hoped, for all joy, a sense of satisfaction, a renewal of courage, some moments of peace of heart: 'I have done my part, I have offered the sacrifice of conquest of space; I have prepared for the encounter. The sacred has responded'.

2. *Motivations*

The pilgrimage, then, is the carrying out of a kind of contract. The pilgrim's idea is: 'In making this effort, I will do all that I can to gain the grace I am seeking, and the Divine will surely respond'. There is a sound psychological basis for this. Sadhana is necessary to achieve results in the spiritual realm, and the pilgrimage is a gross sadhana. The miraculous response which the pilgrim expects to find at the destination may be considered a physical counterpart of the opening up of the spirit whose pilgrimage is interior and whose sadhana is austerity, *japa*, and meditation, expects to discover in his own inner being.

What, then, were the objectives of those making these great pilgrimages in Europe?

Distraction. There can be no doubt that one motive was tourism. Life in medieval Europe was rather colourless and routine. The majority of the population huddled in poorly lighted and inadequately heated huts in winter, and worked from early till late in the fields in summer. The principal relief from this life was an occasional festival offered by the local church to commemorate some annual holy day. (It has been said that in medieval times, long before legislation and the existence of labor unions gave workers the right of repose, it was only the church's holy days, which all had the right

to celebrate, that saved the common people of expiring of overwork and boredom.)

Churches, and particularly those at the great pilgrimage sites, permitted themselves a splendour few could approximate in their homes. The buildings were impressive and were filled with precious things, lavishly displayed. Music, gorgeous vestments, and colourful rituals made the services impressive. Besides, there was the attraction of the prodigious, of the miracle-working relics, for which the site had become famous. It was a treat for all the senses to be a pilgrim who had arrived at his destination.

Physical healing The average pilgrim was without doubt inspired by a mixture of motives. There was the element of distraction, of adventure. For some, in an epoch when the practice of medicine was rudimentary, pure physical healing was a principal motive. Different shrines were celebrated for the curing of different complaints—one for barrenness, another for troubles of the eyes, a third for maladies of the skin, and so on.

Psychological aid. Surely there was a psychological advantage to be gained from the pilgrimage. Even if one's motive was physical healing, and one was not cured, one's morale certainly was boosted by the experience, and one obtained grace to bear the suffering. The change of scene, the excitement of meeting many types of people en route, the attractions found at the destination—all were therapeutic. The pilgrimage provided a renewal, a recharge of psychic energy.

Judicial motives. Sometimes pilgrimages were taken as the preferable alternative of punishments. There were those common criminals who, having been told by the judge to go to jail or to a certain pilgrimage site, might choose the latter—often Santiago de Compostela. They were required by the court to obtain a certificate at the destination and bring it back with them, proving that they had fulfilled the condition of their

release. And many went and presumably were benefitted. But accounts reach us also of some who chose an easier way. At the Spanish border there was a lively black-market in such certificates. Thus the sentenced man, if he succeeded in obtaining such a certificate, could avoid the rigours of crossing the Pyrenees and a long march across northern Spain; he could idle away his time as he wished, and reappear before the sentencing judge seven months later, his obligation to all intents and purposes discharged.

Penitence and salvation. Of course the declared motivation of most pilgrims was salvation. Or at least penitence which is the prerequisite of salvation. Penitence is defined in Christian theology as a virtue which inspired a sinner to regret having offended God and which caused him to atone for his errors and not commit the same in the future. Sometimes penitential pilgrimages were self-imposed and sometimes the undertaking of such pilgrimages was ordained by the Church as a condition to the granting of absolution. Without absolution one stood in awe of the Last Judgement and dismal prospects in the afterlife.

In medieval times these pious displacements were sometimes forced upon very highly placed individuals. Church courts used the pilgrimage as a means for correcting influential citizens who could not be dealt with in the ordinary way, such as great nobles guilty of political crimes, corruption, or offences against the church. As punishment Church tribunals assigned such individuals to make pilgrimages in expiation, often to distant sanctuaries, sometimes even carrying a placard proclaiming their offence.

3. *Means of obtaining darshan*

We have spoken of the encounter. What does the pilgrim do at the moment of encounter? That is to say, by what means

does he absorb the 'vibrations' available at the pilgrim destination? How does he imbibe the darshan?

Sight. For some, seeing is enough. Knowing that he has actually arrived, that he is physically in the presence of the revered object, that it is there in plain sight before his eyes—this will satisfy some. One remembers an incident cited by Swami Atulananda in *Atman Alone Abides* concerning an individual who travelled to Tiruvannamalai to obtain the darshan of Ramana Maharshi. He saw the Maharshi passing from one room to another, and was satisfied: 'Now I have seen the Maharshi'.

Touch. But most pilgrims will want to approach as close as possible the sacred relic and if feasible touch it—with the hand, with the forehead, with the lips. The outer protection at the saint's tomb, the reliquary in which the relic is kept—this must be touched or kissed. All who have been to St. Peter's basilica in Rome are impressed by the fashion in which the right foot of the bronze figure of St. Peter (said to date from the 5th century) has been worn down by the pressure of the lips of the faithful.

Absorption. One may want to eat or drink something closely associated with the revered object. Earth from the holy destination may be carried home, or a leaf, a pebble, a flower. On Good Friday at the famous sanctuary of Loreto in Italy the janitors sweep the church and put the collected dust in sachets. This powder, sold to pilgrims and taken by them mixed in a drink, is supposed to provide immunity against misfortune and disease.

The idea of *prasād* may not be understood in the West. However, Holy Communion, which is one of the culminating events of pilgrim festivals, in which the devotee eats bread as a symbol of the Saviour's sacrificed flesh and sips wine (vicariously through the priest) representing blood shed for his salvation, has as its objective the same as consuming *prasād*.

The objective is to draw close to the Divine by imbibing something intimately associated with the Divine. The water that pours from the side of the grotto at Lourdes is sipped as reverently as that of the Ganges, and bottles of it, in the same fashion, are carried home or sent to friends. So also with the waters of the River Jordan, in which Jesus was baptized. Often at pilgrimage sites there are holy wells, from which it is customary to take a purifying drink.

Immersion. We may think of immersion as absorption in reverse. That is to say, instead of taking the sacred water on the inside, it is taken on the outside. This idea, of course, is familiar to all Hindus. The sanctifying bath is much in evidence at Lourdes where specially built basins have been installed through which flows the water from the Virgin's grotto; and it is during the immersion that those who go to Lourdes for healing may expect this miracle to occur. Long ago many of the pilgrims making the journey to Palestine carried in their baggage their intended burial shroud so as to be able to make it holy for its ultimate use by dipping it in the waters of the Jordan.

Participation. Most pilgrims will want to make some gesture expressing their gratitude for favours anticipated or received. The usual form of participation is an offering. In the past this might be agricultural produce or a farm animal; now it is generally money. The rich may offer a new organ, stained glass windows, vestments, or architectural embellishments.

Another form of participation is to leave one's name behind, so as to remain, as it were, present, hence sharing in the graces available at the pilgrimage site, although departed. In some places guestbooks are available, where the pilgrim may leave an enduring record of his passage. Or the pilgrim may use the less formal means of writing his name and the date of his visit on some convenient wall. All pilgrimage centres are covered with graffiti.

Offer of the ex-voto. The ex-voto is a physical evidence presented to a sanctuary testifying to a benefit received there. This may be a plaque giving one's name or initials and the date on which some wished-for benefit was received. The walls of some pilgrimage sanctuaries are covered with such ex-votos. If healing or the rapid mending of some injury is asked for, a charming habit is to leave a miniature or even full-size model of the member which was healed—a limb or a heart or other organ modelled in wood and hung in the sanctuary. (A model heart may carry a metaphysical message, as well: thanks to the Divine for mending a broken love affair.) At Saas-Fee, Switzerland, where winter skiing accidents are frequent, the chapel which Swami Vivekananda visited in 1896 is embellished with a whole string of miniature arms and legs representing those broken on the ski slopes and mended through the grace of the Virgin. At Lourdes rows of crutches and other prosthetic devices are displayed as testimony to miracles performed. Some ex-votos will graphically depict dangers avoided, such as model ships to indicate

marine disasters eluded, or paintings showing calamities circumvented.

Souvenirs. And finally, to imprint a lasting remembrance, the pilgrim will want to take home with him some tangible reminder of the visit—a souvenir, so named because the word in Latin means 'to remember'. This may be some manufactured item such as a statuette, a rosary, a medal, or a banner. Nowadays the pilgrim will make or buy a set of photographic slides picturing the holy precincts and perhaps a recording reproducing the music heard there. The souvenir is kept in one's home, as a reminder, a talisman, and a tangible evidence of the encounter; and a topic of conversation with one's friends for years after.

Medals from a pilgrimage site are part of the most ancient traditions of the religious pilgrimage in Europe. Such a medal might reproduce in miniature the most important feature of the shrine. Returning from a great pilgrimage, the pilgrim placed the souvenir on his outer garment and would permit, for a small consideration, those he encountered en route to kiss the medal.

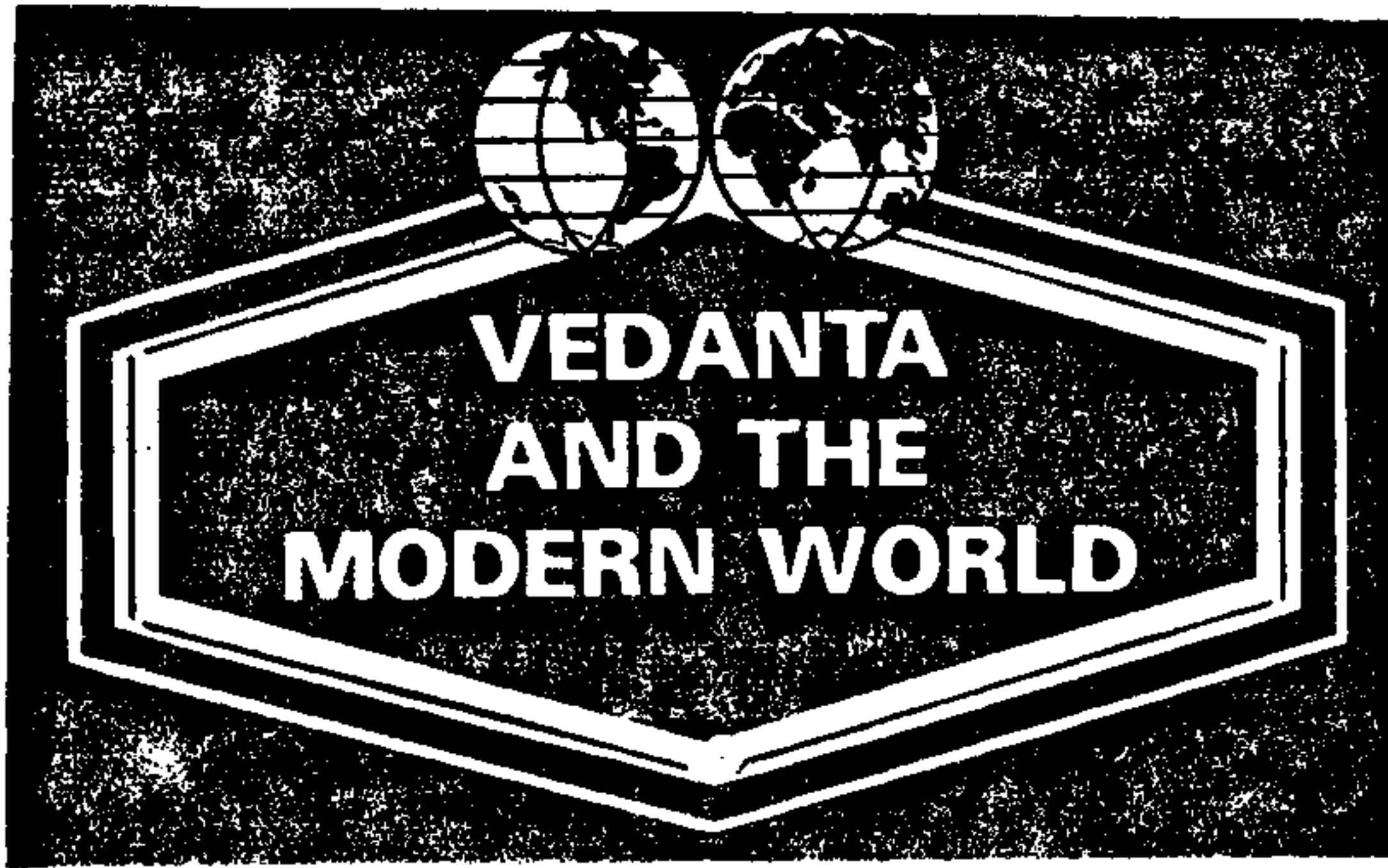
(To be continued)

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galactic space; it is the basis of the whole cosmos and beyond the cosmos. The physical universe—the stars, the planets with life and without life, etc.—with all their multiplicity is an expression or manifestation of the Active Reality.¹⁸

18. For an elaboration of this thesis see: Sampooran Singh, *Dynamic Interplay Between Science and Religion* (Jodhpur: Jainson Publication, 1978).

The attributes of the Universal Consciousness are Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute, or Truth-Knowledge-Freedom, or Truth-Holiness-Beauty, or Life-Light-Love. Whatever be the way we describe it, it means a state of existence which transcends māyā. Perhaps the most redeeming feature of modern physics is that it unmistakably points to the possibility of such a transcendental state.



THE CONCEPT OF MĀYĀ IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN PHYSICS

DR. SAMPOORAN SINGH

Introduction

The concept of māyā is admitted in several systems of Indian philosophy, though not precisely in the same sense. It has its roots in the triple text of Vedānta—the Upaniṣads, the Brahma-sūtras, and the Gītā—and its outlines are found in the writings of pre-Śaṅkarācārya philosophers. But Śaṅkara, the great non-dualistic philosopher, was the first to develop and work out the theory of māyā in logical terms.

The Upaniṣads declare categorically that Brahman (Universal Consciousness) is the non-dual, formless, attributeless, Truth and Reality and that the whole cosmos (world of objects) is nothing but Brahman, and that the Ātman (Individual Consciousness indwelling each being, is identical with Brahman. But in our common experience, we do not see this unitary infinite Truth but find multiplicity, and each being is finite, relative, limited, conditioned and ever-changing. The doctrine of māyā explains the limitations of the unlimited, the conditioning of the unconditioned, the relativity of the Absolute. In the waking state of mind, māyā is a reality, as space, time and causation—which may also be summarized as name and form—are the very stuff of māyā. In the superconscious state, māyā is negated.

Modern physics has had a profound influence on contemporary philosophical thought. It has revealed a surprising limitation of classical ideas and has led to a

thorough revision of many of our basic concepts on matter, object, space, time, cause and effect. The dramatic changes in theoretical physics has created a new awareness. This article presents the relevance of this new awareness to the concept of māyā. To be more precise, the influence of the Einsteinian world view on the concept of māyā is presented here. The philosophical aspects emanating from this new awareness and the characteristics of Universal Consciousness are also discussed.

The world view of modern physics

Two great theoretical systems of modern physics were developed between 1900 and 1927. One was the Quantum Theory, dealing with the fundamental units of matter and energy. The other was Relativity, dealing with space, time, and the structure of the universe as a whole. Quantum theory deals with the microcosm and Relativity describes the macrocosm. Both describe phenomenon in their fields in terms of consistent, mathematical relationships. The two systems rest on entirely different and unrelated theoretical foundations.

Man's world picture is a construct of his sensations, perceptions, memory and knowledge. Schrödinger concludes, 'The stuff from which our world picture is built is yielded exclusively from the sense organs as organs of the mind, so that every man's world picture is and always remains a construct of his mind and cannot be proved to

have any existence'.¹ Capra says, 'All the concepts we use to describe nature are limited, they are not features of reality, ... but creations of the mind ; parts of the map, not of the territory'.²

Relativity theory has shown that space is not three-dimensional and time is not a separate entity. Both are intimately and inseparably connected and form a four-dimensional continuum which is called 'space-time'. This concept of space-time was introduced by Hermann Minkowski in a famous lecture in 1908 with the following words :

'The views of space and time which I wish to lay before you have sprung from the soil of experimental physics, and therein lies their strength. They are radical. Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality'.³

Space and time are now reduced to the subjective role, so space and time are 'nothing but names, forms of thought, words of common usage'. The subjectivity of time is best explained in the words of Lincoln Barnett, Mendel Sachs and Albert Einstein :

The sense of time, like the sense of colour, is a form of perception. Just as there is no such thing as colour without an eye to discern it, so an instant or an hour or a day is nothing without an event to mark it. And just as space is simply a possible order of material objects, so time is simply a possible order of events.⁴

The real revolution that came with Einstein's theory ... was the abandonment of the idea that the space-time coordinate system has objective significance as a separate physical entity. Instead

1. Schrödinger, E., *Mind and Matter* (Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 44.

2. Capra, F., *The Tao of Physics* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1979), p. 167.

3. Minkowski, Hermann, Quoted in Einstein, A., et al., *The Principle of Reality* (New York: Dover Publications, 1923), p. 75.

4. Barnett, L., *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1949), p. 39.

of this idea, relativity theory implies that the space and time coordinates are only the elements of a language that is used by an observer to describe his environments.⁵

The experiences of an individual appear to us arranged in a series of events; in this series the single events which we remember appear to be ordered according to the criterion of 'earlier' and 'later'. There exists, therefore, for the individual, an I-time, or subjective time. This in itself is not measurable.⁶

Time-space is not the framework of the world of nature or objective world but the world of our perception. Time cannot exist without events and events cannot exist without an observer, a thinker (the mind). The time-space coordinate system has no objective significance as a separate physical entity, and so it has no real existence of its own. The time-space section constructed by a frame of reference, is only a subjective experience. For each frame of reference, there is a scale of time and a scale of length. As different persons have different frames of reference, each person will describe the phenomena in a different way. Each person lives in his own time-space section and psychological space, that is his imaginary world. Einstein used the velocity of light—one of the mysterious constants of the universe—as a measuring rod to correlate events in different inertial frames of reference.

These developments—the unification of space and time and the equally important concept of the equivalence of mass and energy—have had a profound influence on our picture of matter. Subatomic particles are dynamic patterns which have a space aspect and a time aspect. Their space aspect makes them appear as objects with a certain mass, their time aspect as processes involving the equivalent energy. Capra says,

5. Sachs, M., 'Space Time and Elementary Interactions in Relativity', *Physics Today*, February 1969, vol. 22, p. 53.

6. Einstein, A., Quoted in Barnett, L., *op. cit.*, p. 39-40.

'(The physicist) has become aware of the essential unity of all things and events. More than that, he has also learnt that he himself and his consciousness are integral parts of this unity.'⁷

Many of the paradoxical situations in atomic physics are connected with the dual aspect of matter. An electron, in fact, any physical entity on the atomic scale, shows both particle and wave properties. Nature is so made that an experimental arrangement designed to test the 'particle aspect' automatically excludes an experimental arrangement to test the 'wave aspect'. The two experimental conditions are mutually exclusive. This is due to the fact that every act of observation is accompanied by a certain minimal disturbance which cannot be eliminated and which is inherent in the very nature of things. It is this 'uncertainty principle', first propounded by Heisenberg, which accounts for the mutual exclusion of experimental arrangements for investigation of wave and particle properties.

Quantum theory reveals,

a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated 'basic building blocks', but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. These relations always include the observer in an essential way. The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational processes, and the properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of the object's interaction with the observer.⁸

The universe is seen as a dynamic web of inter-related events. None of the properties of any part of this web is fundamental; they all follow from the properties of the other parts, and the overall consistency of their mutual interrelations determines the structure of the entire web.⁹

In Quantum theory, the observed objects processes/events can only be understood in terms of the interaction between various processes of observation and measurement, 'the end of which lies in the consciousness of the human observer'.¹⁰ 'In atomic physics, the scientist cannot play the role of a detached objective observer, but becomes involved in the world he observes to the extent that he influences the properties of the observed objects'.¹¹ John Wheeler sees this involvement of the observer, and he suggests replacing the word 'observer' with the term 'participator'; so we are participators in a participatory universe.¹² Man is not a spectator but he is an actor where he interacts with other actors in the great drama of existence.

The exploration of the subatomic world reveals the intrinsically dynamic nature of matter. 'Every subatomic particle not only performs an energy dance; but also is an energy dance; a pulsating process of creation and destruction.'¹³ 'The whole universe is thus engaged in endless motion and activity; in a continual cosmic dance of energy.'¹⁴

A modified concept of māyā

The philosophical thought based on modern physics suggests that the observer and the observed, the subject and the object, interact with each other and both undergo mutations, and are thus continuities of change.¹⁵ We have seen that Einstein used the constant velocity of light

10. *ibid.*, p. 318.

11. *ibid.*, p. 145.

12. Wheeler, J. A., Quoted in Mehra, J. (ed.), *The Physicist's Conception of Nature*, Reidel, D., Dordrecht, Holland, 1973, p. 244.

13. Capra, F., *op. cit.*, p. 258.

14. *ibid.*, p. 236.

15. Cf. Sampooran Singh, An Extension of the Theory of Relativity to States of Mind, *The Vedanta Kesari*, 1981, LXVIII, no. 6, p. 215-21

7. Capra, F., *op. cit.*, p. 322-23.

8. *ibid.*, p. 71.

9. *ibid.*, p. 302.

as a measuring rod to correlate external events. As an analogy, we may compare the mind to a measuring instrument, which measures time and length as a function of the velocity of thought. Each frame of reference corresponds to the velocity of thought of a particular person; it constructs a specific time-space section. So different time-space sections are measures by the measuring instrument. We define 'māyā' as the measure by the measuring instrument.¹⁶ The fundamental measure is subjective time, so māyā plays the role of subjective time in our thinking process. The measure is a four-dimensional time-space framework constructed by the mind but we tacitly assume it to be closely parallel to the external objective world. The measure has no objective significance as a separate physical entity, that is, it has no real existence of its own. The external objective world is, therefore, an appearance with mind as the frame of reference. The objective world apart from the mind does not exist, so the world is an appearance, an unreality. If the frame of reference is assumed to be the objective world, then the objective world is a physical entity or reality on its own merit. But with mind as the frame of reference, time-space, velocity, momentum are all relative, and unreal. To consider these concepts as real is itself ignorance, nescience, māyā, a creation of our own fantasy, an optical illusion, a delusion of mistaking the map for the territory. Time-space is an abstraction, but when an abstraction is taken to be something real, it contradicts itself. We must conquer illusion, or to be more precise, transcend the time-space section, thought, and sensual space, before we can hope to know reality. Reality must be endowed with permanence, otherwise it will not be real.

Knowledge is based ultimately on

¹⁶. Madhavtirtha, Swami, *Maya* (Velad: Vedant Ashram, 1943) presents an outline of this definition.

measurement and all measurements are relative consisting merely in the application of a standard to the magnitude measured. In those areas of life's experiences where measurement has validity, objective communicable statements become possible only about pairs of sense impressions—not about single sense impressions. For measurement always needs pairs of sense impressions, measurement is always a relation between two points or objects. It is this which eliminates the subjectivity of sense impressions, eliminates the 'I', and is the basis of the objectivity of science. In those areas of life's experience where measurement has validity, the subjective element of measurement is eliminated, which means that the concept of māyā is transcended; such experience gives us factual knowledge or scientific knowledge. Hence in these areas science and technology are, and must remain, supreme. But we have to understand that man's essential fields of experience is psychological where measurement has no validity. Truth, love, beauty, joy are not measurable commodities and yet man's happiness is intimately related to them. These belong to the realm of values, and here science and technology must remain silent, for values are outside their domain and purview.

For centuries man has worshipped at the altar of the mind. Let us now have a closer look at the thinking process. When there is a new challenge or a new subjective experience, the mind first of all enters into a state of non-verbal or thought-free perception or pure perception. The next step is that the mind identifies (recognizes), verbalizes, names and stores this perception; this is called psychological memory and knowledge. The identification and naming is basically comparing the new index card with the old memory. The old memory absorbs the new and becomes modified into new memory. The naming and the feeling are instantaneous. The memory is the past

time, so the naming reduces the new to the old, this brings in feelings of pleasure or pain, like or dislike, and so on. When we bring time into our thinking, that is when we introduce the concept of time or māyā in our thinking, we bring contradiction, pain, misery. So every activity based on the concept of māyā—which is time or psychological memory or psychological knowledge—is destructive leading to a great deal of misery, confusion and sorrow. It is the concept of māyā in our thinking that sustains and gives continuity to memory, the 'me', the self-centred activity of the mind. If man wants to get rid of pain, he must jettison the concept of māyā, jettison the self-centred activity of the 'me', jettison the psychological memory and knowledge. It means liberation from subjective time or psychological time; it is going beyond the ordinary experience of time, a movement from time to the timeless state of mind. Time means contradiction, friction, resistance, imperfection, bondage. So real life should be a movement from friction to frictionlessness, from resistance to resistancelessness, from imperfection to perfection, from bondage to freedom.

By comparing memory's new index card with the old memory, we create multiplicity. It is the mind that creates multiplicity. Thus creation of multiplicity is a subjective act. The mind brings time between challenge and response, fact and action, and this also creates multiplicity. Out of our many experiences, we unconsciously select those only in which we are interested, and this creates multiplicity. When the reality appears multiple, it is because we see the many and do not see the root of the multiplicity in its concreteness in which the whole is one. The real problem in life is to penetrate through the variety and particularity, the multiplicity of the manifest world, to the undifferentiated unity that lies embedded in every creation. The real conflict in life is not between good and evil,

but between intelligence and ignorance. The greatest need of our world is not the discovery of a new scientific marvel or a new momentary pleasure, but the discovery of a new understanding of life. It is to understand the relationship of imperfection to perfection; of multiplicity to oneness, to unity; to live beyond the realm of time-space section and psychological space. This understanding leads man from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality; in other words this understanding leads to spiritual realization. This realization is not the vision of something different, but it is seeing everything differently

The human problems are created by thought, which is based on past time. Our thoughts have become time-space bound and can get no grip on concepts beyond time and space. The problems are the creations of time; and are a variety of systems, of theories, of ideas, of relationships, and our problems are always multidimensional. A one-dimensional thought can never give a total solution to a multidimensional problem. A problem is a creation of our one-dimensional thinking which by its very nature cannot see the wholeness and fullness of the real situation. Thinking or intellectual approach has not really solved, and will not solve, any of our human psychological problems.

Each mental frame of reference constructs its own time-space section. Each one of us constructs his own world model. All human problems—the relationship between I and thou, between I and mine—are the creation of our thought, our mind. We ourselves are the greatest problem! The answer to all our problems must come from 'within'. The perception of truth arises 'within'. So truth is, as it should be, a part of ourselves. All intelligence is structured in our consciousness.

If we realize that the observer and the observed are not two separate entities but

one only; the maker of effort and the object toward which he is making effort are the same; then our response will be entirely different and our effort will not be destructive. We can say that there is no sense of separateness only when there is no sense of 'I' or 'me' dominating. It is in this state of true being, when there is no becoming, that there is real understanding. One of the conditions for a right understanding of relationships is the destruction of the sense of separateness in one's inner-world; when this sense is destroyed, one secures oneness or wholeness. Evil pertains to the individual, not to the wholeness of things, not to the universal.

Thought is emitted in a discontinuous stream. So thought does a discontinuous scanning of an event (the perceptual image) at its surface in one-dimensional system and in one plane, and further the X-coordinate is also changing non-randomly. Rational knowledge is a system of abstract concepts and symbols, characterized by the linear, sequential structure, which is typical of our thinking and speaking. The limitations of our thought, speech, rational knowledge have become increasingly apparent, as all our effort is one dimensional and limited. The natural world, on the other hand, is one of infinite variety and complexity, a multidimensional world, where things do not happen in sequence, but all together. As a one-dimensional system cannot perceive the multidimensional world, so thought cannot determine the results; it is Nature that determines the results. This means that man is the director of effort only, which is always one-dimensional, while results, which are multidimensional systems, are controlled by Nature or Universal Consciousness. We should put in our maximum effort but should not worry about results.

Philosophical aspects of the new vision

Mind unconsciously projects its percep-

tions into space and then views the objects of its own making. What is immediately seen as the outside thing is really the mental picture, or the perceptual image, which is only a construct of the mind. We make an abstraction from all possible appearances of an object, and then proceed to assert that we have seen the object. The abstraction by the mind produces experience. The experienced unity comes from the integrating character of the self-conscious mind. Mind is the only instrument by which a man becomes self-aware or self-conscious of his own inner thoughts. The laws of nature tell us little or practically nothing about nature, but certainly something about ourselves. Assertions about the world are really assertions about our understanding of the world.

In order to know the Truth we have to correct and increase the sensitivity of our instrument of measurement. As the frame of reference moves from imperfection to perfection there is relativistic time-space transformation. For the study of the external world, we assume quantum uncertainty (Heisenberg's principle) in the instrument and no quantum uncertainty in nature. Similarly, in the study of inner or spiritual life also it is our own mind that introduces confusion and uncertainty. So Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle can be applied to man's inner world also—in a general way. The inner spiritual progress does not depend on outer conditions so much as the way we react to them from within. It is our way of thinking about the external world that is to be modified, and not the external world itself. We have to rise above the relative plane and experience the truth beyond the multiplicity of the phenomenal world. Spiritual freedom implies the complete self-transcendence of time, space and causality, which implies transcendence of all relational objects/processes, things/events. The concepts of time, space and causality can only

be understood and lived by right thinking and right observation.

The history of physical science in the twentieth century is one of transcending matter and a progressive emancipation from the purely human angle of vision in the waking state. The emphasis has now shifted to understanding the dynamics of the human mind, the mechanics of the thinking process. We cannot know the world without knowing the 'knower', or to be more precise, the 'participator', and his instrument of knowledge. The highest realization the intellect can have is to realize that it is limited and conditioned and is therefore incapable of seeing truth. This is the supreme realization for the intellect, and realizing this it becomes silent and still. It is only when the illusion-bound intellect with its noisy self-assertion is quiet for a while, that the voice of the living truth can be heard. Truth comes out of life, and we must live the right life in order to know Truth.

Every thought and act that endeavours to maintain a merely material existence is a waste of energy and a lost opportunity to progress spiritually. The more the measurement is independent of perceptual magnitudes, the more efficient or sensitive the instrument becomes. Independence of perceptual magnitude means the ending of the time-bound activity of the 'me', which means the ending of thought, the ending of the time-space section, and all this implies the ending of the concept of māyā. Māyā appears to be real in the waking state and dream state; it is absent in the deep-sleep state; and is negated in the superconscious state. The art of true living lies in jettisoning the discontinuous, distracted mode of mind, and to live a holistic life which is the dynamic interplay of the rational mode and the intuitive mode of mind.

The observer while imposing a structure on the universe through the natural concep-

tualization going on in his mind, introduces 'levels of perception' or 'frame of reference' as a new element in the description of the physical reality. Each of these levels of perception is characterized by a set of concepts and assumptions which determines the structure of the time-space section. A totally concept-free observer is one in whom the self-centred activity of the 'me' has ceased; he sees a universe without any structure, that is, a homogeneous, undifferentiated and dimensionless universe. An observer in the waking state of mind who is bound by psychological memory and knowledge will see a homogeneous time-space continuum as heterogeneous, differentiated and multidimensional solely by the action of observation. It is the observer that creates multiplicity, finitude, relations and continuous change to be more precise, what we experience as relative is nothing but the Absolute experienced in a special way by the conditioned mind; and if the mind is unconditioned, it will experience the Absolute, the Truth.

As long as we live lower values of life, our measures are subjective time and subjective space, so māyā is 'relatively real', or is an 'empirical reality', that is, it has its 'reality' in the empirical world of subject-object relationships. In this state of mind, we are deeply attached to our egos, time-space sections and have relative relationships with people and things; we are inwardly fragmented which results in pain and misery. But when we live the highest values of life, which are spiritual values, our measure of time and space is jettisoned; the mind then remains in a timeless state; the observer and the observed coalesce and vanish; there is no longer any subject-object relationship; hence māyā ceases to be real, that is, it has no absolute reality, it is unreal. To live a holistic way of life is possible only by transcending māyā. In this transcendental state there is no fragmentation, no contradiction; hence

pain and misery are absent ; we live in freedom, love and bliss.

Universal consciousness

Every object is known to us simply as the sum of its qualities, and since qualities exist only in the mind, the whole objective universe of matter and energy, atoms and stars, does not exist except as a construction of human consciousness, an edifice of conventional symbols shaped by the senses of man. Barnett says, 'Einstein carried this train of logic to its ultimate limits by showing that even space and time are forms of intuition, which can no more be divorced from consciousness than can our concepts of colour, shape, or size'.¹⁷ Universal Consciousness or the Self is the fundamental Reality and the mind is only its derivative. The mind is an instrument at the disposal of the Self. When the mind is impure, which means accumulation of psychological memory and knowledge, the sensitivity of the instrument decreases and it becomes conditioned, limited, prejudiced, dull. When we introduce the concept of subjective time or māyā in our thinking, our minds lose their holistic perception or intuition. Every activity based on the concept of māyā—which is subjective time or psychological hindrances—fragments life and this leads to a great deal of misery, confusion and sorrow. Living in the notion of māyā or time means sensual gratification, remaining tethered to self-protecting demands and pursuits, attached to the acquisitive spirit which arises from the desire for security, and so on. When the mind is pure, which means, when psychological memory and knowledge come to an end or the self-centred activity of the 'me' ceases, the instrument becomes highly sensitive, pliable, alert, clear. It is only when we are aware of every movement of our own thought and

feeling in our relationship with people, with things and with nature that the mind becomes sensitive. Sensitivity of mind comes with deep intuitive awareness. The pure mind is the fountainhead of creativity, and this comes into being when at all moments there is awareness of the structure and dynamics of mind. Creative living is freedom from the concept of māyā, the objective time. To live creatively is to live in freedom, peace and bliss.

A concept-free mind or pure mind is 'pure consciousness' or Brahman. Oscillations of the mind are its impurities, even meditation is an expression of impurity as it is the expression of a wish for realization. When the mind is absolutely pure, it will see the subject as 'pure consciousness'. The substratum of the subject is 'pure Consciousness'—pure in the sense that it is contentless, objectless, free from subject-object and time-space divisions. It is simply an awareness of awareness itself.

This Universal Consciousness is an infinite continuum. The distinguishing characteristic of a continuum is that the interval separating any two points may be divided into an infinite number of arbitrarily small steps. Infinity is not infinite continuation in one direction but infinite variation at every point. Out of the Universal Consciousness or the Spiritual Continuum or the 'Passive Reality' evolves the individual 'Centre of Operation' or 'Perfect Point' or 'Continuum Point', that manifests activity. If the Continuum is the 'Passive Reality', the Continuum Point is the 'Active Reality'. The Universal Consciousness is indivisible into Passive Reality and Active Reality, or Silence and Activity. The Passive Reality and the Active Reality are complementary to each other, which are different modes of the same Reality, the obverse and reverse affirmations. Passive Reality is the affirmation of the non-dual, formless, attributeless ; it permeates all the galaxies and the inter-

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17. Barnett, L., *op. cit.*, p. 14

INDIAN THOUGHT AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION*

(A Historical Perspective)

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

INDIA¹ is a vast country with varied physical features. It was inhabited even in most ancient times by the Indo-Aryan people of different ethnic groups and also numerous hill tribes. Dwelling in different parts of India, generally separated from one another by mighty rivers and high mountain ranges, they gave rise to several regional and linguistic groups. There were differences from region to region in dress and food habits, customs and manners, language and thought, social organization and religious beliefs, and levels of civilization and culture. They were often insulated from each other without contact or were, in some cases, in conflict with each other. With this complex inheritance and confusing milieu, we find the beginnings of Indian history throwing a challenge to its great minds to integrate this heterogeneous mass of peoples into a homogeneous nation devoted to certain common noble ideals and outlook on life,² and with love and loyalty for the country as a whole.

The ancient period

Away in the dim historical beginnings of the Vedic civilization, over 5000 years ago, the challenge was accepted by the sages of India and the problem was tackled on different levels—socio-economic, political, religious-cultural, and spiritual—adopting the principle of UNITY IN VARIETY, rather than

a steam-rollered uniformity, destroying all diversity, by the domination of a single powerful culture. They had the deep insight and farsight to know that that was the only way, and the most desirable way, to bring about unity and integration in this vast country with its variegated background and to preserve and foster its richness of thought and culture. They abjured force and strove for the inner growth and evolution towards unity of each group from where it stood, rather than adopting hasty, violent methods and destroying their individuality. We do not find from the ancient literature of the country that they preached an artificial adjustment or forced amalgamation. It seems they thought that, instead of tackling the problem frontally and superficially, it would yield better and lasting results if ideas and ideals of a universal nature were propagated among the people through literature, religious institutions, and common socio-religious customs and practices. This would help each section to grow towards unity without sacrificing its individuality.

At the very start we find the great Vedic dictum which guided their methodology : *ekam sad viprā bahūdā vadanti*³—‘Truth or Existence is One (and Infinite); It is described by the wise variously (as Its manifestations are manifold).’ In and through nature and life, that Infinite Truth is expressing Itself in numerous ways, and as such we should try to see its reflection everywhere. Accordingly, in the philosophico-religious field, while emphasizing the absoluteness of the Infinite Impersonal

* The expanded version of a talk given over the All India Radio, Jaipur, on 14th November, 1973, in the ‘India through the Ages’ series.

1. For the purpose of this article, ‘India’ signifies the entire sub-continent.

2. ‘*Kṛṇvanto viśam-āryam*’—transforming the whole world into noble people—was the ideal.

3. *Rg-Veda*, 1.164.46 ; cf. also ‘*Satyam-Jñānam-Anantam Brahma*’—Brahman is Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Infinity (*Tai. Upaniṣad*, 2.1.).

Existence known as Brahman or Ātman beyond name and form, freedom was allowed to worship Its personal manifestation in relation to the universe as its Lord and Ruler (*Īśvara*, God) according to one's own tradition, and under whatever name and form one chose, on the principle of the *Īṣṭa Devatā* (chosen form of the Deity or Lord). It was inculcated that all worshippers are travelling towards the same goal—God—through different paths,⁴ and the God, of all religions is One and the same.⁵

In social matters different manners and customs were accepted as relevant to the different groups and were not interfered with. Each group was allowed to grow and develop according to the law of its own being with realization of the highest spiritual ideals as the goal.⁶ Amidst the numerous groups that existed, with varying levels of socio-

4. 'In whatever way men worship Me, in the same way do I reach him forth : it is My path that men tread in all ways' (*Gītā*, 4.11); Even those devotees who, endued with devotion and faith, worship other gods, they too worship Me alone, though not by the scripturally approved method' (*Gītā*, 9.23). cf. also, 'As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee', (*Śiva-mahimna Stotra*, 7), quoted by Vivekananda at the Chicago World Parliament of Religions, 1893.

5. 'He who is worshipped as Śiva by the Śaivites, as Brahman by the Vedantins, as Buddha by the Buddhists, as Kartā by the Naiyāyikas (logicians) versed in reasoning, as Arhat by those who are devoted to the teachings of Jinas, as Karma by the Mīmāṃsakas—may that Hari, the Lord of the three worlds, fulfil your desires' (from *Hanūmatnātaka*—11th or 12th century temple inscription).

6. 'Devoted each to his own duty, man attains the highest perfection. How engaged in his own duty, man attains perfection, to that listen: from whom is the evolution of all beings, by whom all this universe is pervaded, worshipping Him, with his own duty, a man attains perfection' (*Gītā*, 18. 45-46).

economic structure, customs, religious beliefs and attainments, a type of harmony and inter-communion was sought to be established through a broad-based socio-spiritual and politico-economic framework applicable to the whole country, cutting across the barriers of language, regions, customs, religious affiliation, etc. The claims of society and the individual were harmonized by a system of duties to be performed and values to be realized. Perfection of the individual was held up as the goal, for which everyone was to strive, at whatever stage he be. It was taught that Perfection or Divinity is inherent in every being and in the universe, and it can be realized by fulfilling one's own duties (*svadharma*) to the society, in which the Divinity of the individuals is collectively reflected (*Virāt*), in a spirit of dedication and worship. This was the original basis of the caste (*varṇa*) system. Recognizing the slow and evolutionary nature of individual development, as also the inevitability of different stages of development of individuals, according to age, ability and aptitude, provision was made for the fulfilment of different types of human aspiration : *artha* or acquirement of wealth ; *kāma* or pursuit of desires ; *dharma* or cultivation of moral and ethical virtues through self-sacrifice and service ; and *mokṣa* or final emancipation through the realization of Divinity within.⁷ Orderly, graduated stages of development called *āśrama* were also envisaged in individual life to climb up the ladder to individual perfection by progressive cultivation of higher spiritual virtues and worldly detachment. For facilitating the process of the realization of Divinity within, or Divine Communion, practical methods called the

7. It may be noted that in this entire socio-spiritual scheme; more self-renunciation and self-discipline were prescribed as one rose up. The twin ideals of social welfare (*abhyudaya*) and spiritual felicity (*nihsreyasa*) were sought to be combined harmoniously (cf. Śaṅkara's introduction to his commentary on the *Gītā*).

Yogas were evolved to suit different temperaments and aptitudes.⁸

On the cultural level, the development of Sanskrit, by freely borrowing words from the *prākṛt* and other regional languages, as a common medium of thought and inter-communication, helped to evolve common concepts and values all over the country. In ancient literature India was pictured before her people as the blessed holy land (*puṇya-bhūmi*) where even the gods wished to take birth.⁹ Though there were numerous political divisions, they did not affect the cultural unity of the people or their life. The oneness of the country was defined and idealized as the holy land extending from the Himālayas to the southern sea or Kanyākumārī, and it was Bhāratavarṣa¹⁰ There was

unrestricted movement throughout the country for all. The political unity was sought to be achieved by the ideal of *cakravartī-sārvabhauma* or *āsamudra-kṣīṭīśa*, the universal emperor, whose writ would run through the whole country. This was the ideal which emperors like Ashoka and Samudragupta tried to realize. Though this political ideal remained unfulfilled, the unity and oneness of the country was a fact ingrained in the minds of all, including the kings of different States. Politics was confined to the kings and was not allowed to disturb the general life of the population. Further, all the kingdoms were practically guided by the same *Nīti-śāstras* (works on political science), though there was no paramount power for the country as a whole. Also mostly the same set of law-codes (*Dharma-śāstras*) applied all over the country.

Pilgrimage to important holy places located all over India,—from Kashmir to Kanyākumārī and from Kāmṛūp (Assam) to Kutch—was prescribed and eulogized. All the important religious sects, whether Śaivas, Śāktas, or Vaiṣṇavas, Buddhists or Jains had their holy places scattered all over India. The whole of India (*āsetu-himācala*) was the natural unit for all the religio-philosophic and cultural activities. Through myths and legends also the unity of the country was impressed on the minds of the people: Pārvatī as Kanyā (virgin) is depicted as making *tapas* at Kanyākumārī for the hand of Śiva who dwells at Kailāsa in the Himālayas. Satī's corpse which Śiva was carrying while roaming in sorrow was cut into fifty-one pieces which fell in all the four quarters of the country. These spots were designated Śakti-pīṭhas and were considered holy places of pilgrimage. Similarly, the twelve Jyotirlingas and the four Dhāmas (abodes of spirituality) were spread all over the country. *Kumbha* and other religious fairs (*melās*) were instituted to which people, including kings, flocked

8. 'With a view to effecting the liberation of human beings, I have inculcated three Yogas or methods, ... the Path of Knowledge (*Jñāna-yoga*) is for those who have attained detachment in work and have no attraction to it; for those who have not yet attained to this state and desire fruits of work, the means is the Path of Work (*Karma-yoga*); and for those who have somehow developed a veneration for narrations about Me (God) and such other things (like the grace and love of God), and who is neither withdrawn from work nor attached to it, the Path of Devotion (*Bhakti-yoga*) is highly fruitful' (*Bhāgavata*, 11.20.6-8). The *Gītā* provides a number of permutations and combinations of these three yogas, and also gives the Path of Mind-control (*Rāja-yoga*), which is generally accepted as common to all the other Paths.

9. गायन्ति देवाः किल गीतकानि,
धन्यास्तु ये भारतभूमिभागे ।
स्वर्गपिवर्गस्पर्दमार्गभूते,
भवन्ति भूयः पुरुषाः सुरत्वात् ॥

(Verily, even the gods sing the glory of those blessed people who have attained birth in the holy land of Bhārata, which is conducive both to earthly prosperity and heavenly bliss, and who far excell the gods). *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 3.2.24.

10. उत्तरं यत् समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रेश्चैव दक्षिणम् ।
वर्षं तद् भारतं नाम भारती यत्र सन्ततिः ॥

ibid., 3.2.1

from all parts of Bhāratavarṣa. The seven holy rivers,¹¹ the seven holy mountains,¹² and the seven holy cities,¹³ which were daily remembered, included those from the north as well as the south.

The great Śaṅkara and other Ācāryas established their religious institutions in the four quarters and tried to cover the whole country in their ministrations.¹⁴ The *Gītā*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the Purāṇas, especially in their vernacular versions, became the common heritage of the people, and preachers and wandering monks carried their moral and spiritual teachings to every nook and corner of the country. This helped to develop common cultural and spiritual ideals throughout the country, so much so that, though people followed different religious persuasions, foreigners designated all the people of India under the common epithet 'Hindu', and called the country 'Hindusthān'. It is well to remember that the term 'Hindu' is a geo-cultural designation and is equally applicable to all the people of India, irrespective of their religious faith.¹⁵

The middle ages

While thus a nation with common socio-political, cultural, and spiritual ideals was

11. Gangā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu, Kāverī.

12. Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Śuktimān, Ṛkṣa, Vindhya, Pāriyātra.

13. Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Maya (Hardwar), Kāśī, Kāñci, Avanti, Dvārakā.

14. Ācārya Śaṅkara (7th century) established his four cardinal monasteries (Mathas) at Badrināth in the Himālayas, Pūri on the east coast, Dvārakā on the west coast, and at Śringeri down South.

15. 'Hindu', as is well known, is corruption from 'Sindhu', 'S' being pronounced as 'H' by the Persians who gave the name. Sindhu in Sanskrit means the river, sea, or ocean. So Hindu culture, may be taken to signify 'the ocean of culture into which all other cultural streams pour forth their quota.'

emerging with the motto of 'Unity in Diversity', the advent of alien people on the scene in waves, from about the close of the twelfth century, with violence of deed and demeanour, and with quite different social and religio-cultural values, upset the whole process and threw fresh challenges to the spirit of assimilation and integration. As against the diffuse state of political power in India, and the softer nature of her people given to cultural and spiritual values, these alien people were rugged and accustomed to hard life, and were newly inspired by the message of Islam which taught the brotherhood of all its followers, irrespective of all distinctions. The ideals of unity in diversity, spiritual equality of all faiths and the conception of the infinitude and many-facetedness of Truth were, however, beyond their purview. They had iconoclastic zeal, inherited from the Semitic tradition, and sought their own exclusive religious and political domination. Their political morals too were different from those which had been evolved and practised in the country, which respected certain codes of political and military behaviour, and left the general populace untouched. Thus, the challenge was both political and socio-religious, and India had to deal with entirely unsympathetic aliens, intoxicated with the wide success of Islam elsewhere, and with the blind, un-compared, conviction that they possessed the best religion and all the Truth. It is often seen that political success leads to religious arrogance, especially if it is not based on philosophic thought.

History shows that refined, age-old cultures are easily overpowered by vigorous and rugged new cultures. This happened here also. When India was vigorous in the past, it had assimilated several alien peoples like the powerful Greeks, Scythians, Huns, etc. But at the beginning of the Middle Ages (10th century) she had been weighed down with the undesirable accretions of her hoary antiquity. Due to over-liberality and com-

placency an insular outlook had developed in socio-political matters. The country was large enough for the play and interplay of various forces, and people never looked beyond its borders to see what new forces were gathering outside. Every day they wished for the peace and happiness of the whole world in their prayers and they assumed that people all over the world also thought the same way¹⁶ Added to this, the country was politically weak as internecine quarrels were frequent, and when the invading hordes rushed in, India was unable to put up a united resistance. And she gradually seemed to succumb, politically, as wave after wave of invasions took place, and more and more regions of India came under Muslim rule. Consequently a good number of Indians were converted to Islam through force or otherwise. India was shocked by the virulence of violence and iconoclastic zeal of the invaders. Its reverberations shook the country out of its complaisance, successful resistance was built up at different places, and the Muslim march slowed down to a halt.

As the tumult of violence calmed down in due course and the vision was cleared of the dust of unfamiliarity, the very living together brought in time mutual understanding to some extent as ideas and ideals were exchanged. India realized that a new type of integration, on a wider plane, was needed to meet this challenge through cultural assimilation and political adjustment. The old framework of evolutionary development of the individual through the scheme of

varṇa and *āśrama* had to be modified to accommodate revolutionary social equality, the counterpart of spiritual equality, and individual fulfilment had to be supplemented by social fulfilment, as earlier taught by the Buddha—*bahujana hitāya, bahujana sukhāya*. The release of liberal socio-religious forces was needed to bring this about and to awaken the masses. There now arose numerous great saints and sages all over the country to meet the situation—Jñānadev, Nāmadev, Ekanāth, Tukārām, Rāmadās and others in Maharashtra; Vyāsa Rāya, Purandaradāsa and others of the Dāsa-Kūta movement, and Basaveśvara and others of the Śivaśaraṇa movement in Karnataka; Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānak, Dādū, Sūrdās, Tulsīdās, Mīrābāi, Narsi Mehta, Vallabha, Chaitanya, Śaṅkaradeva, and others in the North. Through their devotional songs, hymns, and writings in the vernaculars, they inculcated among the people spiritual ideas and ideals and devotion to God, irrespective of caste, creed, and status in life, and a liberal outlook and love towards all beings. They made philosophy practical instead of remaining as the debating ground of learned scholars. This mitigated the rigours of social distinction, brought cohesion, and helped to clean the undesirable accretions in social and spiritual life, to a great extent.

On the other side, as the alien Turkish hordes, who were small in number, settled down in the country, struck roots, and became part and parcel of it, they were also influenced by the liberal climate of Indian thought, and in course of time shed some of their violence and bigotry. They too, to some extent, became participants in the process of integration through Sufi saints, broad-minded Muslim divines and poets, and liberal rulers. The process was facilitated as the vast majority of Muslims in India were local converts accustomed to Indian ways of thought.

Thus, though there were severe conflicts—

16. सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु, मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग् भवेत् ।

(May all beings be happy may all be free from diseases and evils, may all see what is auspicious, may none be subject to sorrow). Also 'Lokāh samastāh sukhino bhavantu'—May all the worlds be happy. Several such verses seeking universal welfare are commonly repeated all over India, especially after a religious function.

they were mostly on the political level—as is natural when mutually opposed cultural values come together, there were processes of mutual assimilation as well. Sikhism is an outstanding example of this process on the Indian side, and the movements of Kabīr, Dādū, Garībdās, and others are also evidences of it. On the Muslim side, the Sufis were greatly influenced by the Vedāntic thought and Yogic practices, and taught liberal ideas to dives Muslims of fanaticism. Akbar and Dārā-Shikoh are outstanding examples of the influence of the Indian thought on the Muslim ruling classes. They strove for the harmony of all communities in general and the Hindu and Muslim communities in particular. Dārā-Shikoh visualized the 'Mingling of the Two Seas'.¹⁷ Guru Nānak pointed out: '*na Hindu, na Musalmān*'—'There is no Hindu, no Musalman'; there is only One God for all; and all are His children. When this process of forging the unification was still on the anvil, and was yet to be fully accomplished, there was a severe set back due to the re-emergence of fanaticism and violence under Aurangzeb, which eventually led to the destruction of Muslim political power in India.

The challenge of Western culture

At this juncture, new factors were emerging on the Indian stage with the coming of adventurous European powers in the 17th century. In due course, the establishment of British supremacy in India brought into the country the superiority-conscious Christian Missionary religion,¹⁸ the nascent

Western culture, and also the powerful Western materialistic rational thought and scientific achievements. Christianity and Islam had already faced each other and fought out their bloody religious battles for centuries long ago elsewhere, outside India. As such, the main brunt of the new challenge was to be borne by the hoary culture of India. The nation had already been weakened and somewhat exhausted by the long struggles and conflicts with the Turkish invaders, and the process of assimilation and unification of Hindu and Islamic cultures had only been half accomplished. Therefore the country seemed to go down under this fresh and novel onslaught of the religious and materialistic culture of the West, aided by political might and economic exploitation.

But it was only for a while. The British Empire in India served to bring about, may be as an unintended by-product, a unified national political consciousness, through common political and administrative institutions, applicable throughout India, as also through the common media of the English language and the interlinking of different parts by means of the railways, etc. And soon enough, India gathered up her scattered spiritual forces to meet this new double challenge of Western religion and scientific materialism. Christianity was already an old and much weathered religion and it had lost much of its violent spirit, though not its exclusiveness. Though like Islam it had its roots in the Semitic culture, it had also absorbed in the course of its development some of the religious features which were not alien to Indian culture. To some extent it was also spiritualistic and individ-

17. A title of the book which Dārā-Shikoh wrote in Persian. He also got translated into Persian some fifty of the Upaniṣads (which in its Latin translation, 'Oupenikhat' by Anquetil Dupéron, deeply impressed and influenced Schopenhauer and others), the *Gītā*, the *Yoga-Vāsīṣṭha*, etc.

18. There were small groups of Syrian and Nestorian Christians who had settled in Kerala

long before Christianity went to Europe. But they were not a significant force and lived in harmony with Indian culture. Similarly early Jews had also settled in Kerala and the Parsis came to Surat around the 9th century. All these have lived in India peacefully, unmolested, and with full freedom to follow their religions.

ualistic in nature. Further, while the modern scientific and technological inventions were new to India, the West had long traditions of rational and philosophic thought, tempered with the scientific spirit, and she had also witnessed several types of materialism and atheism in her long history and taken them in her stride.

The comprehensive assimilative power of Indian thought is admirable. Its basic tenets of the infinitude and non-duality of Reality; the oneness and solidarity of all existence; the harmony of the spiritual and the secular; the divinity of the soul; the recognition of the One in the many; its acceptance of infinite time and space and the strict law of causation as the framework of its conceptions and its scientific and philosophic attitude to religion that recognizes the Perennial Philosophy of the one Eternal Religion of which the different historic religions are but different temporal manifestations; and that religion is a matter of realization and not of mere belief—all these enable it to easily accommodate within its spacious bosom every sincere religious expression and scientific discovery.¹⁹ As against this, those historic religions which depend on a Founder and are time-bound, but consider dogmatically that the particular expression in which their religion is cast is the highest and the final one, and the others are all errors, naturally find it difficult to accommodate either religious, philosophic, or scientific conceptions in their

scheme of things. They forget Religion, being the discovery and realization of Divine Reality, is naturally, like science, universal and is not the property or prerogative of any one, exclusively, and try to impose their own version of it on others by some means or other.

However, soon the innate powers of resilience and the assimilative spirit of India woke up and from the second quarter of the nineteenth century manifested themselves in a plethora of new movements like the Brāhmo-Samāj, Ārya-Samāj, Prārthanā-Samāj, and other reform bodies and associations to counteract the dogmatic attacks and to incorporate into Hindu culture the worthwhile new values from both Christianity and Islam, as also from the rational thought and scientific achievements of the West. Rājā Rām Mohan Roy spearheaded the movement and Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated in his own life the oneness of Religion and the common goal of all its expressions by practising and realizing the whole gamut of Religion, including Christianity and Islam.²⁰ As Kazi Nazrul Islam, the patriotic Bengali Muslim poet, has sung: 'Oh Sri Ramakrishna, prostrations unto you, take my salutations; you worshipped with the same faith and devotion the One God in the Hindu temple, Muslim mosque, and Christian church, and all the three worlds are filled with the sweetness of your love.'²¹ Romain Rolland, Aldous Huxley, Arnold Toynbee, Aurobindo, Tagore, and a host of other eminent men have paid glowing tributes to the spirit of religious harmony which Sri Ramakrishna realized and propa-

19. The modern far-reaching revolutionary developments in physics, astronomy, biology, and other sciences do not pose any problem to Indian thought or religion; rather, in some scientific conceptions it is more comprehensive and has gone far deeper than modern science to the heart of Reality. Moreover, Indian religio-philosophic thought is a growing tradition; it is neither exclusive, nor a time-bound closed system. It encourages investigation and enquiry and keeps its doors open and welcomes: 'Let noble thoughts come to us from every side' (*A no bhadrāhkratavo yantu visvatah, Rg.Veda, 1.89.1*).

20. Romain Rolland says in his *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (1928). 'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people'.

21. *Mandire masjide girjāy, pūjile brahma sama-sraddhāy.*

Tava nāma mākhā prem-niketane bhoriyache tāyi trisamsār.

gated.²² His great disciple Vivekananda carried this universal message to the West and proclaimed it at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.²³ He also drew attention, in many of his lectures in the West, to the scientific approach in Indian thought.²⁴ Romain Rolland desig-

22. 'Diverse courses of worship from varied springs of fulfilment have mingled in your meditation. The manifold revelation of the joy of the Infinite has given form to a shrine of unity in your life, where from far and near arrive salutations, to which I join mine own', sang Tagore.

Dr. Arnold Toynbee writes, in his Preface to *Sri Ramakrishna and His Unique Message*, published from London, 'Sri Ramakrishna's message was unique in being expressed in action. Religion is not just a matter for study; it is something that has to be experienced and to be lived, and this is the field in which Sri Ramakrishna manifested his uniqueness. He practised successively almost every form of Indian religion and philosophy, and he went on to practise Islam and Christianity as well. His religious activity and experience were, in fact, comprehensive to a degree that had perhaps never before been attained by any other religious genius, in India or elsewhere.'

23 At the concluding session of the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago (1893), he declared: 'The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist (or a Muslim or any other), nor a Hindu or a Buddhist (or a Muslim) to become a Christian (or any other). But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of their resistance, "Help and not Fight", "Assimilation and not Destruction", "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension".'

24. In his Indian lectures, he always advocated the coupling of Vedanta with modern science.

nates the religious teachings of Vivekananda as 'Universal Science-Religion' in his biography *Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*.²⁵ In the wake of Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita, Aurobindo, Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru, Radhakrishnan, and others have worked for national integration in a broad spirit, in the context of human or world integration.²⁶ Gandhiji worked for Hindu-Muslim unity on the political level.

He also used to say, 'Can you make a European society with India's religion?' About religion, his idea was it should be 'deep as the ocean and broad as the sky', as illustrated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

25. Romain Rolland characterizes Vivekananda in these memorable words in his biography: 'In the two words equilibrium and synthesis Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit: the four Yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action, from the most spiritual to the most practical. Each of the ways that he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all, and embraced them all. As in a quadriga, he held the reins of all four ways of truth and he travelled towards Unity along them all simultaneously. *He was the personification of the harmony of all human energy.*'

It is evident that though such unique versatile, harmonious, individuals cannot be produced, except rarely, society as a whole can move towards this harmonious ideal.

On Vivekananda's achievements in the West, Sri Aurobindo remarked: 'The going forth of Vivekananda, marked by the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer the world by her message of love, goodwill and peace.'

26. *Yatra visvam bhavati eka-nidam* (*Taittiriya Aranyaka*, 10.1.3), 'where the world becomes like a single nest for all the human beings to roost.' It is also interesting to know that for Swami Ramatirtha, Tagore, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, and a few others, 'India' always stood more for a spiritual entity than a geographical unit. They wanted India to rise to serve the world. As Vivekananda declared, 'India's gift to the world is light spiritual.' Recently Jagadguru Bharati

The present situation

So far as the national integration is concerned, the crux of the whole problem is the achievement of Islamic integration into Indian culture to their mutual benefit. But, unfortunately, the process of cultural integration, set afoot in the Middle Ages, remained incomplete, due to the fanaticism of Aurangzeb and later on account of British political intervention, who naturally adopted the policy of divide and rule to keep up the empire, ultimately resulting in the partition of the country. However, the threads are being picked up in the present-day India to achieve complete integration. In this, the Indian Muslims also have to play an active part to fit into the Indian cultural context, by assimilation and understanding co-operation, to evolve a future great united India, the common home-land of all great religions and cultures. It should be remembered Islam is not confined to India, but is widely spread in Asia and Africa with numerous followers. If Indian Muslims can assimilate the liberal spirit of Indian culture and broaden themselves, they can play a great role in leavening the Islamic world in the spiritual field, as India once did in the field of knowledge during the times of Harun-al-Rashid and other great Arab kings. Here is an opportunity for Indian Muslims for self-fulfilment, and in the process they can also bring about a transformation in Indian society by their sympathetic approach, as

Krishna Tirtha of Govardhan Math, Pūrī, during his tour of U.S.A. in 1958, pointed out: 'Bhārata is the name for India. *Bhā*, means light and knowledge (in Sanskrit); and *rata* means devoted; *Bhārata*, means devoted to light, as against darkness. . . . So, Bhārata is not the name of a mere geographical entity placed in some corner of the world and having its own geographical, topographical, and other limitations. Bhārata stands for every individual soul that has this ideal of light, the dedication to the light, as against immersion in darkness'. (*Vedic Metaphysics*, Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 54-55).

the Sufi saints did during the Middle Ages.

Similarly, the Indian Christians, by Indianizing their religion, and assimilating the Indian spirit, can play a great part in exerting liberalizing spiritual influences on Christendom. It is well known how Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, a famous Indian Christian, tried to combine Christianity with Vedānta.

We may recall here what Swami Vivekananda wrote to a Muslim friend, Mohammed Sarfaraz Hussain of Nainital, on 10th June 1898 :²⁷

... I am firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind... We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expression of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedānta brain and Islam body—is the only hope. I see in my minds eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedānta brain and Islam body.

This is, however, a long-range process. But to come to the immediate problems, since Independence fissiparous tendencies on regional and linguistic basis are raising their head again and social differences are coming to the fore, fanned by narrow selfish political interests. These also require to be handled adroitly. The process of integration can be furthered not so much by harping loudly on integration on a superficial plane, but by developing common national values, in the international context, in a spirit of unity in diversity, and through intercultural contacts at depth in a silent and steady

²⁷ Letters of Swami Vivekananda, (Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.)

manner. To mitigate the conflicts, broad and healthy ideas, clean and hygienic living, and liberal cultural education must be spread among all. The uplift of the poor masses should be given priority. However, it should be pointed out here that the constant harping on, and invoking of, caste, tribe, religious minority, etc. in administration, politics, and public life only lead to their perpetuation, and do not eliminate the sources of conflict as events have proved. The implications of the Advaitic principles of oneness of existence and Divinity and solidarity of humanity must be worked out in practice on the individual and national planes. Harmony of religions and ethical and moral values should be inculcated. Our economic and political life should be reoriented and imbued with moral principles as emphasized by Gandhiji so that we pursue material values in the context of spiritual values. The people must be taught that there is a Spiritual Reality interpenetrating all beings and our happiness and misery consist in the happiness and misery of the other beings around us. Thus will emerge an India which will look upon the whole world as One Family (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*).

India is a world in miniature, whether we look at her from the physical, racial, or religious points of view. Here are represented various racial stocks and seven of the

important religions of the world —Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam, with a sprinkling of Jews thrown in. If she can work out the integration of all these fully in the Indian cultural milieu, in which her efforts have already partially succeeded, she will be not only achieving her own national integration, but also will become an ideal for the whole world. Says Troy Wilson Organ, a distinguished professor of philosophy at the Ohio University.

India remains 'a world in transition'. The big question is whether India can develop into an independent nation that is more humanistic than nationalistic, a nation that makes room for manyness without jeopardizing oneness. Can there arise a political state whose end is the Perfection of Man? Such a nation would inspire the peoples of the world to the realization of a human catholicism, a condition in which each person seeks reality, spirituality, integration, and liberation. The ideals are implicit in Hinduism. 'Meet together, talk together, let your minds apprehend alike. . . . Common be your intention; common be the wishes of your hearts; common be your thoughts, so that there may be thorough union among you.'²⁸ The realization is in the future. Man is yet to be led 'from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light and from death to immortality.'²⁹

28. *Rg.Veda*, 10.191.2, 4.

29. *The Hindu Quest for the Perfection of Man* (Ohio University, 1970), pp. 346-7.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SRI KRISHNA—THE SUPREME IMMANENCE (A VEDIC CONSPECTUS): BY S. SUBRAHMANYAM. Published by P. S. Subrahmaniam, 26, 6th Main Road, R.A. Puram, Madras 600 028. Pp. 100. Rs. 15. (Also available from P. R. Menon, 17/4, Ballygunge Station Road, Calcutta 700 019).

Here is a nice little book from the pen of a hereditary student of Vedic wisdom who has made a laudable attempt to reveal the Vedic source of the supreme divine Reality Krishna, later per-

sonified as an Avatāra. He has also tried to explain the allegorical meaning of some of the wondrous and delightful legends (much maligned by the ignorant and the perverted) connected with His pastoral life at Vrindābana in childhood and early boyhood, such as the prankish stealing of butter and curds, showing the universe in His mouth when chastised by Yasodā for eating mud, subduing the Kālīya-Nāga, lifting of the Govardhana Hill, *rāsa-kṛīḍā* with the Gopis, grace on Kujā, killing of Kamsa, etc. Though earlier allegorical explanations are not lacking,

this is a novel approach in the Vedic context. He has given quotations of over 35 verses from the *R̥g-Veda* and also verses and passages from some early Vedic literature, Upaniṣads, the *Gītā*, *Bhāgavatam*, etc., with interpretations to support his thesis.

It is interesting to note that the word 'Krishna' occurs in a good number of these verses, besides the words Gopa, Ghṛta, Rohiṇī, Yuvatī, Arjuna, river Amshumatī (Yamunā), Gāvah, Dhenavah, etc., associated with the later legends of Krishna, with esoteric meanings and significance. There is also reference made to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* passage on Krishna-Devakīputra.

Is such an allegorical interpretation justified? It is well known that from Vedic times to this day in our mystic literature spiritual truths are often represented in esoteric and allegorical language, the significance of which only the initiated can truly understand. That is why the interpretations of the Vedas by the uninitiated, especially by the unsympathetic Westerners brought up in an alien cultural milieu is often merely philological, naturalistic, and crude, and often prejudiced. The great Vedic exegete Yāska (8th Cent. B.C.), has laid down that the Vedas can be interpreted in three ways—naturalistic (*ādhi-bhautika*), mythical (*ādhi-daivika*), and spiritual (*ādhyātmika*). The same applies to all our esoteric mystic literature. Such a spiritual interpretation alone will yield true and meaningful results. And our author has attempted it.

However, it does not mean the allegorical, mythical and poetic representations of Divinity are to be discarded. Far from it. For such literature has been purposely created to serve the emotional and mystic needs of pure souls hankering for the touch of the Divine. We cannot always live on mere abstract realities as long as we are persons. They have to come alive clothed in flesh and blood and with colour and charm to live amidst us. The Indian mind is poetically mystic by nature and it wants to feel the divine presence concretely in all aspects of life. The realization that the Divine Reality is not merely transcendent, but is immanent in all life and existence, rather than the whole universe is nothing but Its playful manifestation, including all the beings in it, lends such poetic representation significance and purpose. It helps us to occupy our thoughts with the Divine and to divinize and raise our ordinary emotions and consciousness to the incorporeal spiritual level. Our emotions cannot be eradicated, but only can be transformed by divine orientation. The allegory

is to be realized and felt as mystic Divine Play on the spiritual plane, and not as sordid human activity. Those who confine themselves to the physical level and conceive only of a sombre, authoritarian, extra-cosmic God, sitting in stern judgement on poor erring humanity, and not as a living and loving presence in all, can hardly understand such allegorizations. But in the prolific Indian religious context, it has given inspiration, joy, and spiritual elevation for scores of centuries to innumerable pure souls, devotees, and mystics and inspired writers, poets, musicians, artists, and sculptors. It is not a field for morbid minds.

The Personal Divine is always to be seen in the background of the Impersonal Reality. They are one Reality. The Person is for the purpose of devotion and meditation so that we may rise to the Impersonal, transcending our limited personality. Hence the author has added at the end some mellifluous hymns used in the worship and contemplation of the Divine Krishna from the *Nārada Purāṇa*, *Nārayaṇīyam* and other works.

Several of our elaborate Purāṇic stories, like that of Vāmana measuring the earth in three strides, can be easily traced to the Vedic literature in germ form. In fact, all our Itihāsa and Purāṇa literature is meant for illustrating the Vedic lore and principles (*Itihasapurāṇabhyam vedam samupabṛhmayet*). Hence, it is no surprise if Sri Krishna as Reality and Divine Person can be traced to the Vedas. One can profitably refer to D. C. Sircar's article on 'Early History of Vaishnavism' in the *Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. 4, published by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, where the Vedic Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa-Krishna identification and their solar association is dealt with. An admirable study of Krishna's divine play (*līlā*) may also be found in *The Divine Player* reviewed in the February 1980 issue of this journal.

However, there may be differences of opinion in regard to the interpretation of the Vedic quotations. Since this is an original research work, it would have been useful if word for word meaning was given, with allegorical meaning in brackets, and the interpretation justified in notes. This can be done in the next edition, when the work may be suitably revised and several printing mistakes that have occurred eliminated.

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SANSKRIT-ENGLISH

ABHIJNANA-SAKUNTALAM : BY E. P. BHARATA PISHARODI. Published by Kamadhenu Publications, P.O. Eranellur, Trichnr District, Kerala State, 680 501. 1978, pp. 78+xxxiv, Rs. 5/-

This is a well known Sanskrit classic by Kālidāsa, abridged and adapted to suit the most potent audio-visual medium of the day, the cinema. All the excellences of the original play (the dialogues and poetic expressions) have been retained here. The dramatic effect has been enhanced through the screening directions. The original arrangement of the Acts has been modified and compressed into 60 scenes (of 120 minntes' run) but the sequence in the original has been kept undisturbed. The interval has been indicated, when Śakuntalā leaves the asram with Gautami, Śārṅgrava and Śāradvata. The skill of the author lies in giving fine details of the visuals

in between the dialogues. (These have been given in English). It would, of course, be upto the director of the film to adhere to these instructions. But for a lay reader, the author's directions go a long way in enabling him to visualize the drama, right as he reads it.

There have been screen adaptations of the classics in regional languages since long but this is, perhaps, the first attempt where a screenplay in Sanskrit is attempted. The text precedes with a synopsis and is followed by pagewise paraphrase in English. The book can be useful even for theatrical performance. Many more such adaptations of the classics would surely revive a general interest in them.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA
CHANDIGARH

REPORT FOR APRIL 1980 TO MARCH 1981

Spiritual and cultural : In the shrine apart from the daily service, there was fortnightly Ramanama sankirtan, and the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and other teachers were celebrated. Regular weekly discourses and classes were conducted. A weekly session on Sunday morning was organized for the benefit of youth and children. The library continued its home-lending service for the members (total books : 2,217; books issued : 463). The book-sale section made available Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Vedanta literature in English, Hindi, Punjabi and Sanskrit.

Narayan seva was conducted in a diversified way. There was a blood-donation camp, organized in collaboration with the local blood-bank in which a number of devotees, men and women, donated blood. The children of the local Bal-Niketan were fed sumptuously at Sakat, near Chandimandir; handicapped children were given fruits, biscuits, library books and games material.

Medical : The free Homeopathic dispensary : patients served 2,617; new cases being 552.

Educational : The Vivekananda Students' Home (started in 1960) provides accommodation for college students and promotes their study and character building.

RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, DINAJPUR
(BANGLA DESH)

REPORT FOR APRIL 1980 TO MARCH 1981

Religious : The Ashrama conducted daily puja, bhajan and Ramanam sankirtan on Ekadasi days. Weekly religious classes on *Gītā*, Upanishads and *Kathāmrita* were held. Besides, religious lectures were delivered at different places. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Holy Mother and other religious teachers were celebrated with dne solemnity.

Cultural and Educational : The Ashrama runs a small Students' Home where 13 boys resided of which 4 were free boarders and one partly free boarder. The Ashrama maintains a library and free reading-room (total number of books : 1,858; books issued: 700). The Ashrama published 6 books during the year.

Medical : The charitable dispensary treated 83,191 patients of which 39,594 were new and 23,597 old. A Mobile Charitable Dispensary started in 1980 treated 39,644 patients through 4 sub-centres. The Homeopathic dispensary treated 10,356 patients (new: 5,679; old: 4,677).

Relief : Pecuniary help of Tk. 3,584.35 was accorded to 61 persons. Educational help of Tk. 3,420.45 was given to 7 poor students. Clothes and other garments were distributed to 1,638 families in 45 villages. Milk was distributed through 5 centres on card system.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Taming the Savage

An old Greek inscription states that the aim of mankind should be 'to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of the world.' Aristotle said that the city was built first for safety, but then that men might discover the good life and lead it. Has free India realized these ideals to a greater degree than what the British had imposed upon her? The contemporary national scene does not warrant such an assumption. All over the country there are innumerable pockets of barbarism.

Barbaism is of two types. One is what Gilbert Murray calls 'effortless barbarism'—the harmless, homeless life of primitive tribes. The second type is the cultivated and perverted barbarism of the civilized man. This latter finds expression in three kinds of anti-social activity: communal riots, violence and crime. A Union home ministry report for 1979-80 states that the number of communal incidents rose from 169 in 1976 to 304 in 1979. Deaths caused by riots rose over the same period from 39 in 1976 to 261 in 1979. These are only official data, and the actual figures are certainly much higher.

Equally distressing is the increase in acts of violence like the assassination of political and religious leaders. It is a pity that in a civilized society there exist people who believe that the best way to establish the superiority of their religious or political creed is to liquidate their opponents.

The rise in crime has assumed the proportions of a tidal wave. Theft of private and public property, murder, molestation of women, kidnapping of children, bank robbery, banditry in running trains and other criminal acts have registered an unprecedented spurt, and have made life unsafe for normal citizens in cities. Haunted by the menace of dacoits, many villages in north India have become less safe than cities. From their hide-outs in the Chambal ravines a number of dacoit gangs are terrorizing countryside and villages and frequently commit mass murders with impunity. The most gruesome of these gory incidents was the pitiless massacre of 24 Harijans in Deoli, a village in the Mainpuri district of U.P. This outrage perpetrated in the name of caste has sent shock waves all over the country.

The main cause for communal riots is the failure of education in India. Secular education has created ignorance of religions and mutual distrust among their followers, for it does not provide the scope for understanding different religions and settling religious disputes through dialogue. The cause of caste conflicts is apparently more socio-economic than religious. It may be traced to the fear of land owning communities that the economic rise of Harijans might reduce the availability of cheap farm labour and upset the existing hierarchy of social status. Several causes like industrialization, unemployment, glorification of violence in Hindi cinema, removal of prohibition, and the free availability of huge quantities of weapons—indigenously manufactured and smuggled in from neighbouring countries—have contributed to the alarming rise in crime.

However, it cannot be denied that the ultimate cause of all these troubles is the lopsided emphasis on economic growth and the neglect of moral values in public and private life. Paradoxically, economic development itself produces discontent. Democracy has no meaning unless it succeeds in taming the savage in man.