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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'

देवानां युगे प्रथमेऽसतः सदजायत ।
तदाशा अन्वजायंत तदुत्तानपदस्परिम् ॥

1. In the primeval age before the gods, the Manifested was born from the Unmanifested.¹ After that was born Space.² Then came the upward-moving Force.³ (*uttānapada*)

Rg-Veda 10.72.3

भूर्जज्ञ उत्तानपदो भुव आशा अजायंत ।
अदितेर्दक्षो अजायतदक्षाद्दितिः परि ॥

2. From the upward-moving Force was born *bhūh* (the earth), and from it was born Space.⁴ Dakṣa was born of Aditi and Aditi was born of Dakṣa.⁵

Rg-Veda 10.72.4

* The Creation hymn begun last month is continued here. Human language becomes ambiguous and paradoxical when it is used to convey the ineffable mystery of Creation.

1. This idea is elaborated in *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* (2.7) and *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (6.2.2.). See Śaṅkara's commentary there.

2. Sāyana interprets *āśah* as *disā*, directions, the four quarters. In other words, it means Space.

3. The meaning of *uttānapada* is obscure. According to Sāyana, it means 'trees', but this makes no sense in the context. The word probably implies the upward creative thrust of Evolution.

4. The Vedas speak of three worlds : *bhūh*, *bhuvah* and *svah*, meaning the earth, the sky and heaven respectively. Of these, *bhuvah* also means the world of manes (*pitṛloka*).

5. Another paradoxical statement. Without attempting to explain it, Sāyana simply quotes Yāska who says, 'It may be objected: how can it be that Dakṣa was born from Aditi and afterwards Aditi from Dakṣa? The answer is : either they were born together or, according to some mysterious law of the gods, they reciprocally gave birth to each other and shared each other's nature.' Evidently, Dakṣa and Aditi refer to the static and dynamic, positive and negative, male and female, aspects of Reality. Aditi is the prototype of divine Śakti, the great Mother of the Universe.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses two aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's personality, namely the world teacher and the deity.

Swami Mukhyananda, an Ācārya at the Probationers' Training Centre, Belur Math, gives a novel pragmatic interpretation of the *Īśāvāsya-Upaniṣad* in THE DIVINE LIFE.

Among the several noted personalities who got involved in Swami Vivekananda's life without really understanding his true greatness and his mission on earth was Pramada Das Mitra. In the article SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND PRAMADA DAS MITRA the story of their early friendship and subsequent estrangement is narrated vividly by Swami Jitatmananda of Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad.

INTEGRAL YOGA OF AUROBINDO, THE WAY—1 is a brief but lucid exposition of the fundamental spiritual techniques taught by Sri Aurobindo. The article is intended not for mere perusal but for study and actual practice. Its author Sri M. P. Pandit is a well-known scholar and spiritual guide of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

In the second part of PEOPLE OF THE NEW AGE Swami Yogeshananda presents a brilliant study of the spiritual crosscurrents agitating the turbulent world of modern American youth. The author wishes to acknowledge the help he got in the preparation of the article from his monastic brothers at the Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat, Ganges Town, Michigan, U.S.A.

THREE ASPECTS OF THE RAMAKRISHNA IDEAL—

(EDITORIAL)

In last month's editorial three aspects of the personality of Sri Ramakrishna were mentioned—namely, the ideal man, the world teacher and the deity—and it was pointed out that his status as the ideal man of the present age lay in his being the embodiment of the *vijñāni* and *ṛṣi* ideals. Before proceeding further, it is necessary to state the view of his chief apostle Swami Vivekananda on this matter.

In spite of his customary reluctance to speak about his master, Swami Vivekananda has on several occasions emphatically expressed his conviction that Sri Ramakrishna is the ideal man of the present age. According to Swamiji, the greatest need of the present age is two-fold. One is the consolidation and synthesis of all the achievements of the past and the present, of the East and the West. The other is a universal

person who has actually achieved this in his life and has demonstrated the infinite possibilities of the human soul. Such a person alone could be regarded as the ideal man of the present age. Swamiji saw in Sri Ramakrishna the fulfilment of the widest possible harmony and all-embracing synthesis of human values and ideals, and the fullest manifestation of the divine glory of the human spirit.

Therefore, Swamiji placed his master before the world as the ideal for the present age. 'Such a unique personality', he pointed out, 'such a synthesis of the utmost of Jñāna, Yoga, Bhakti and Karma, has never before appeared among mankind. . . . He is the true disciple and follower of Sri Ramakrishna, whose character is perfect and all-sided like this. The formation of such a perfect character is the ideal of this age,

and everyone should strive for that alone.¹

Let us now turn to the other two aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's personality.

AS THE WORLD TEACHER

Swami Saradananda has described Sri Ramakrishna as 'the Great Teacher among world teachers' (*ācāryāṅgām mahācāryah*). In order to understand Sri Ramakrishna's role as a world teacher, it is necessary to examine how far he manifested the following common features found in the lives of all the great teachers of mankind.

1. A world teacher has a message for the whole humanity suited to the needs of that Age.

2. He starts a new *sampradāya* (spiritual tradition) which, through a succession of teachers (*guru-paramparā*), becomes an independent religion or religious movement.

3. His life and teachings produce far-reaching changes in society.

Sri Ramakrishna's message to the world

The first message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world is the message of hope. Every age marks a critical period in history, and every age needs a messenger of hope to reassure the people. In the present age mankind is facing a graver crisis than it did ever before. This is the age of doubt and profanity. At the mighty onslaught of science and secular knowledge ancient images are tumbling down, old values are getting devalued, and earlier beliefs are being discarded. What the modern world needs is an undeniable personal testimony of the fundamental verities of religion like God, immortality of the soul, man's spiritual destiny, effectiveness of prayer, worship and service. This Sri Ramakrishna has provided. Through his stupendous spiritual endeavours,

experiments and experiences he has re-established the ideal of God realization as the goal of human life. With the authority born of direct experience he has assured humanity that not only is God realization possible, and possible for all, but is the only lasting solution to the existential problems of life. To countless suffering people this assurance has shown a way out of sorrow, meaninglessness, anxiety and conflict. To those who are bewildered and confused by the benefits and limitations of science and secular philosophy, this assurance has given the inspiration to seek the ultimate reality by transcending the senses.

The second message of Sri Ramakrishna is the divinity of life. Whereas Western culture upholds the dignity of man, Vedanta upholds the divinity of man. This fundamental tenet of Vedanta which had for centuries remained obscure, being largely eclipsed by the *Māyā* doctrine, has been revived in modern times by Sri Ramakrishna. He saw nothing but divine consciousness everywhere animating every living being. He looked upon every person as a unique manifestation of the Divine. According to him the differences of strength, intelligence, beauty, talents etc. found among people are due to the differences in the manifestation of divine Power in them. He saw human life as a splendid opportunity to realize the spiritual dimension of the soul. To him every human being is a potential god. He saw God even in the fallen, in the wicked, in the poor and the miserable. He discouraged people from dwelling upon sin and other negative aspects of life. Even in *Māyā*, which traditional Advaitins regard as the power of illusion, he saw two forces: *avidyā-māyā* or deluding power and *vidyā-māyā* or liberating power.

This message has come to mankind not a day too soon. This is the age of humanism. Man is being exalted to the level of the superman, and human needs are considered to be man's ultimate concern. Man

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), vol. 7, p. 412.

is the focus of all attention, endeavour and speculation. While modern socio-political ideas proclaim the glory of man, the marvels of science and technology confirm it. Everywhere people are awakening from the slumber of ignorance, emerging from the darkness of superstition, and are breaking the shackles of tyranny and oppression. Nevertheless, humanism is a limited concept. It does not provide a satisfactory solution to the existential problems of life. It does not reveal the true nature of man or the meaning of life. Nor can it satisfy the higher spiritual urges of man or relate him meaningfully to the vaster reality around him. Furthermore, when humanism is followed for its own sake, it runs the risk of degenerating into body worship, pleasure seeking, materialism and slavery to the physical world. When pushed beyond a limit, humanism becomes self-defeating. To prevent this it must be made a means and not an end—a means of attaining the full divine dimension of life.

This was what Swami Vivekananda attempted to do. He formulated a new humanism which stressed the potential divinity of the soul and spiritual oneness of life. He preached a divinized humanism which sublimated service into worship, human love into divine love and every activity a means of realizing the ultimate Reality. This gives human existence a higher significance and every action and thought a higher purpose, and makes life a joyful adventure. And Swamiji only gave a practical direction to the teaching he had received from his master Sri Ramakrishna.

We now come to the third and most well-known message of Sri Ramakrishna, the message of harmony. Though this is a widely talked about subject, there yet remains a great deal to be understood about it. For Sri Ramakrishna practised different types of harmony at different levels of human existence. Broadly speaking, spiritual life has three modes or aspects: the

ideal or the ultimate Reality which the aspirant wants to attain, the means or pathway to the goal, and finally the actual experience resulting from the realization of the ideal in life. In the school of Rāmānuja these are known as *tattva*, *hita* and *puruṣārtha* respectively. The precise nature of each of these modes has for centuries remained a matter of controversy among the various schools and sects of Hinduism. One of the great achievements of Sri Ramakrishna is the reconciliation of these contradictory views.

Regarding the first aspect known as *tattva*, the ultimate Ideal or Reality, Sri Ramakrishna achieved two types of harmony. One is the harmony between the ideal of the Personal God and the ideal of the Impersonal God. God as a Person is the object of love and devotion, whereas God as the impersonal Absolute is the goal of knowledge. This distinction has kept Vedanta split into the dualist and non-dualist schools. Most dualists do not recognize the Impersonal, while the non-dualist tries to include the Personal in the realm of *Māyā*. Sri Ramakrishna accepts both as equally real and true. According to him the Impersonal and the Personal are the static and dynamic aspects of one and the same ultimate Reality. He named these aspects *nitya* and *līlā*, or Brahman and Kālī, respectively. The Master elucidates his concept as follows:

Thus Brahman and Sakti are identical. If you accept the one, you must accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. If you see the fire, you must recognize its power to burn also. You cannot think of fire without its power to burn, nor can you think of the power to burn without fire... What is milk like? Oh, you say, it is something white. You cannot think of the milk without the whiteness, and again, you cannot think of the whiteness without the milk. Thus one cannot think of Brahman without Sakti, or of Śakti with Brahman. One cannot think of the Absolute (*nitya*) without the Relative (*līlā*), or of the Relative without the Absolute.

The Primordial Power is ever at play. She is creating, preserving and destroying in play, as it were. This Power is called Kālī. Kālī is verily Brahman, and Brahman is verily Kālī. It is one and the same Reality. When we think of It as inactive, that is to say, not engaged in the acts of creation, preservation and destruction, then we call It Brahman. But when It engages in these activities, then we call It Kālī or Sakti.²

It is interesting to note here that this concept of the Master is supported by two aphorisms in the *Brahma-sūtra*, one of the three foundational scriptures of the Vedānta. These aphorisms are: '(The relationship between Brahman and Jīva is) like that between the serpent and its coil, for both are taught'; and 'Or it is like the relation between light and its source, since both are luminous'.³

A related problem is whether God is with form or without form. There are many religious sects in India which vehemently condemn worship of anthropomorphic forms of God as idolatry, not to speak of Islam and Protestant Christianity. During Sri Ramakrishna's time this was a vital issue agitating the minds of educated Hindus. Sri Ramakrishna has solved this problem from the level of actual experience. According to him, the experience of God with form or without form depends upon the basic structure of the aspirant's mind and the way it is orientated to Reality. Within its specific parameters each experience has its own validity. Says Sri Ramakrishna :

No one can say with finality that God is only 'this' and nothing else. He is formless, and again He has forms. For the Bhakta He assumes forms. *But He is formless for the Śānti; that is, for him who looks on the world as a dream...* Do you know what I mean? Think of Brahman, Exist-

ence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute as a shoreless ocean. Through the cooling influence, as it were, of the Bhakta's love, the water has frozen at places into blocks of ice. In other words, God now and then assumes various forms for His lovers and reveals Himself to them as a Person. But with the rising of the sun of knowledge, the blocks of ice melt. Then one doesn't feel anymore that God is a Person, nor does one see God's forms. What He is cannot be described.⁴

This takes us to the other type of harmony achieved by Sri Ramakrishna in the field of the ideal or goal which has a vaster scope, for it embraces all religions. Most world religions, especially Christianity and Islam, and many Hindu sects accept a Personal (non-anthropomorphic or anthropomorphic) God. But they hold divergent views regarding His true nature, and this has led to inter-religious conflicts and even wars. Sri Ramakrishna has tried to reconcile these differences from the point of view of linguistic analysis which is now becoming a powerful tool in the hands of modern philosophers. The God of Hindus is not different from the God of Christians or Muslims, but He appears to be different because the religious 'language' (that is, the symbols, images and myths) employed in describing Him varies from religion to religion.

The Reality is one and the same; the difference is in name and form. It is like water called in different languages by different names, such as *jal*, *pānī* and so forth. There are three or four ghats on a lake. The Hindus who drink water at one place call it *jal*. The Musalmans at another place call it *pānī*. And the English at a third place call it 'water'. All three denote one and the same thing, *the difference being in the name only*. In the same way, some address the Reality as Allah, some as God, some as Brahman, some as Kālī, and others by such names as Rāma, Jesus, Durgā, Hari.⁵

This statement of the Master may appear to be very simple, but it is pregnant with a

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974), pp. 63-64.

3. उभयव्यपदेशात् महिकुण्डलवत् ॥

प्रकाशाश्रयवद्वा, तेजस्वात् ॥

Brahma-sūtra 3.2.27, 28.

4. *The Gospel*, p. 78.

5. *Ibid* p. 64.

deep significance for universal inter-religious understanding and harmony. It is a pity that its theoretical and practical implications have not yet been fully worked out.

So much for harmony in the field of the ideal or goal of religion. Let us now turn to the second aspect of religion known as *hita*, the suitable means or path to the goal. Here again, Sri Ramakrishna has achieved an important reconciliation. However, the harmony of the means is different from the harmony of the goal. Whereas the goal of all spiritual paths is the one God, the paths themselves are diverse. But this does not mean that they are discordant. All spiritual paths—Jñāna, Bhakti, Yoga and Karma in Hinduism and the various paths in other religions—are valid means of realizing God. This the Master learned from his own actual experience. The choice of a path depends upon a person's temperament, and everyone must have the freedom to choose his own path. Sri Ramakrishna never allowed any of his followers to criticize any religious path. He encouraged each of them to stick to his own path and guided him along that.

The third aspect of religion is *puruṣārtha*, value-fulfilment resulting from the actual realization of the Ideal. The highest value cherished by traditional Indian religions is *mokṣa*, liberation from all bondage and sorrow and the experience of unalloyed bliss. The nature of this experience is also a matter of controversy among the various sects and religions. The dualists hold that in this state the individual Self remains distinct from the Supreme Self, while the non-dualists hold that they become one. An attempt is often made to overcome this controversy by making dualism, qualified monism and non-dualism three successive stages in the ascending scale of experience. This, however, is unacceptable to the dualists who do not recognize non-dualistic experience as the highest. Sri Ramakrishna has reconciled these views in a remarkable way which deserves further study and popularization.

According to him, non-dualistic realization marks the highest peak of spiritual experience but not its final end. After attaining the peak experience, when the illumined soul comes down to the relative plane, he sees all beings permeated with divine consciousness. This is of course a dualistic experience but it is not, for that reason, a lower experience.⁶ Thus Sri Ramakrishna has made Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita three modes of the highest spiritual experience. He has made dualists, qualified monists and non-dualists sit around the round table of spiritual experience assigning equal status to all. It is a mistake to categorize Sri Ramakrishna's thought as Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita or Advaita. So vast and all-embracing is his consciousness that it admits of no such divisions. All that we may say of it is that it is *paripūrṇa*, all-filling, completely integral.

As regards the practical aspect of *puruṣārtha*, the traditional Indian view is that the illumined soul simply lives unaffected by the joys and sorrows of life, waiting patiently for the death of his body. Such a person is called a *jīvanmukta*, liberated-in-life. As we said earlier,⁷ this ideal does not satisfy the modern man's social awareness and commitment. Here comes the importance of Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of the *vijñānī*, the man of integral realization who dedicates his life to the service of God in man. Through this ideal the Master has harmonized the ancient *jīvanmukta* ideal with the norms and needs of contemporary

6. In this connection it is worth mentioning Madhusūdana Sarasvati's famous dictum: 'Dualism is deluding before full realization. But, cultivated for the sake of Bhakti after attaining full illumination, it is more beautiful than non-dualism.'

द्वैतं मोहाय बोधात् प्राक् प्राप्ते बोधे मनीषया ।
भक्त्यर्थं कल्पितं द्वैतम् अद्वैतादपि सुन्दरम् ॥

7. See March 1982 Editorial.

society. This is Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of the perfect man.

The new spiritual tradition.

If the first characteristic of a world teacher is that he has a universal message for all mankind, his second feature is that he starts a new *sampradāya*, religious tradition or path. Every great world teacher blazed his own distinct trail which, starting at first as a movement, soon became a new religion or sect. What is the uniqueness of Sri Ramakrishna in this regard? Answers Swami Vivekananda, 'Other teachers have taught special religions which bear their names, but this great teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. He left every religion undisturbed because he had realized that in reality they are all part and parcel of the one eternal religion'.⁸

Like all other great teachers Sri Ramakrishna too started a new religious tradition, but a tradition without traditional barriers and distinctions. To give his own illustration, when the paddy fields get flooded in the rainy season, roads, fields and canals all become one vast sheet of water and one can go anywhere in any direction by the village boat. Similar is the nature of the *sampradāya* or religious tradition started by Sri Ramakrishna. It is a universal and all-encompassing movement which includes all the earlier traditions. Swami Abhedananda has in a memorable hymn pointed out three unique features of the *sampradāya* of Sri Ramakrishna: 1. acceptance of the best elements of all religious traditions, 2. non-condemnation of any traditions, and 3. the pathless path, that is, a tradition free from all sectarian prejudices and limitations.⁹

8. 'My Master' in *the Complete Works* (1978) vol. 4, p. 187.

9. Cf.

पूजिता येन वै शश्वत्. सर्वेऽपि साम्प्रदायिकाः ।
सम्प्रदाय विहीनो यः सम्प्रदायं न निन्दति ॥

Swami Abhedananda, *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa-Stotram*.

To spread and perpetuate his *sampradāya* for the welfare of mankind a world teacher builds up a *guru-paramparā*, an unbroken line of teachers. He gathers around him a band of all-renouncing disciples who carry his message far and wide. They in their turn train more disciples, and thus through a succession of apostles the purity and vitality of the original teaching are maintained for centuries. This is true of Sri Ramakrishna also whose spiritual tradition and message are enshrined in the monastic order bearing his name.

Impact on society

The third feature of the world teacher is that his life and ideas produce far-reaching changes in society. We have only to look at the pages of history to understand the mighty social changes that came in the wake of the great prophets. The influence of Buddha penetrated deep into Hindu society, the message of Christ totally transformed Europe, while Mohamed created a new civilization in the Middle East. Sri Ramakrishna is too close to the modern age to make a historical measurement of his influence possible. But no discerning person can fail to notice the direct or indirect influence of Sri Ramakrishna upon the spiritual awakening and religious liberalism that are now sweeping through Europe and America. In India itself it has produced two great changes. One is the spiritual renaissance of the nation and the other is the all-round integration and rejuvenation of Hinduism. Limitations of space prevent us from discussing this subject in greater detail here. We only mention Swami Vivekananda's views on the influence of Sri Ramakrishna.

Swamiji saw immense possibilities in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. One of these is the creation of a universal religion. Swamiji saw that the message of Sri Ramakrishna if properly interpreted could

not only bring about inter-religious harmony and understanding, but also unite diverse religions and sects into one universal Religion. Such a unified Religion would exert a tremendous liberalizing and integrating effect on mankind, and would considerably enhance human development and spiritual evolution. Secondly, Swamiji saw that the personality of Sri Ramakrishna could serve as a prototype for the creation of a new society. 'The life of Sri Ramakrishna proves that the greatest breadth, the highest catholicity and the utmost intensity can exist side by side in the same individual, and that society also can be constructed like that, for society is nothing but an aggregate of individuals', said Swamiji once.¹⁰ Again, in a letter to his monastic brothers he wrote, 'In other words, the old Teachers were rather one-sided, while the teaching of this new Incarnation or Teacher is that the best points of yoga, devotion, knowledge and work must be combined now so as to form a new society'.¹¹ The building of such an integral society has already begun and is going on imperceptibly.

AS THE DEITY

Evidence of the supernatural in Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna was not a mere ideal man or a world teacher, but was a unique Being endowed with the supra-human attributes of the Divine Person. Even during his lifetime he had become an object of worship, and several great scholars, spiritual adepts and religious leaders had considered him an Avatār. Today he is being worshipped by millions of people belonging to all strata of society, castes, creeds and nationalities. And this universal acceptance is not the result of organized proselytization but a spontaneous product of the intuition of the human soul for things divine.

It was this natural conviction that prompted Western savants like Max Müller and Romain Rolland to become his admirers. Introducing Sri Ramakrishna to his Western readers, Romain Rolland wrote, 'Allowing for differences of country and of time, Ramakrishna is the younger brother of our Christ'.¹² This kind of extraordinary charisma cannot be explained only on the basis of the humanity of Sri Ramakrishna.

Another evidence of the supernatural in Sri Ramakrishna comes from the Master's inborn spiritual traits and extraordinary experiences. The vast range of his experiences, which included not only all the ideals of Hinduism but also the ideals of other religions, is unprecedented. No less astonishing is the rapidity with which he touched the peak of every type of religious experience, to attain anyone of which an ordinary saint or sage usually takes a lifetime.

Yet another evidence of the supra-human dimension of Sri Ramakrishna's personality lies in the great spiritual power he wielded. Transformation of character is a difficult process. More difficult is the transformation of consciousness or spiritual awakening. Both take years to achieve. But Sri Ramakrishna could bring these changes in a very short time. He could raise the consciousness of people to a higher plane by a touch, a look or a mere wish. A measure of the Master's spiritual power may be gathered from the large number of great souls whom he awakened, illumined and guided. Only a super-human divine Centre can keep in orbital circulation a galaxy of such first-magnitude spiritual stars as Vivekananda, Brahmananda and Nag Mahashaya.

Functions of the Avatār

Every saint and sage is not an Avatār. According to Swami Vivekananda, an

10. *The Complete Works* (1972), vol. 7, p. 412.

11. *ibid* p. 496.

12. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1970), p. 12.

Avatār is born only once in five hundred years or so. An Avatār is not a passive being who only enjoys the worship of his devotees. He is a special manifestation of the Divine who is endowed with supreme powers, and shoulders super-human responsibilities for universal welfare out of boundless love and compassion for suffering humanity. In order to understand the avatarhood of Sri Ramakrishna, it is necessary to study the characteristic features and functions of an Avatār and how far they are fulfilled in Sri Ramakrishna. Owing to limitations of space it is possible only to mention briefly some of these here.

1. *The redeemer* Swami Vivekananda has defined the Avatār as a *kapāla-mocana*: 'One who can alter the doom of people is the Lord. No sadhu, however advanced, can claim this unique position'.¹³ An ordinary illumined soul may be able to guide a few people or even awaken their spiritual consciousness, but he cannot alter the *karma-phala* of anybody. Only God or an Incarnation of God can wipe off the effects of past Karma. This is the meaning of Christ's 'forgiving the sins' of others. An avatār is the redeemer of the fallen.

2. *The door to the Infinite.* The personality of an Incarnation appears to be limited, but it is ever in contact with the Infinite. Sri Ramakrishna used to compare the ego of the Incarnation to a big hole in a wall through which one could see vast stretches of land on the other side.¹⁴ This means that the Avatār acts as a door to the Infinite. He acts as a connecting link between the individual consciousness of the aspirant and the infinite consciousness of God. This connection lies hidden deep in our consciousness. The Avatār has the capacity to manifest Himself as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*). Seated in the heart, He first of all awakens the individual

consciousness of the aspirant; then He reveals Himself in all His divine splendour; and finally through His consciousness, the individual consciousness of the aspirant gets united with the infinite consciousness of Brahman.

3. *Shock-absorber and evolutionary catalyst of the age.* Every age is marked by the clash of ideals, the conflict of the dominant forces of history. The shocks produced by these conflicts upon society are absorbed by the Incarnation. How does he do it? By exercising his omnipotent will and by evolving new ideals suited for the age.¹⁵ These ideals represent the Zeitgeist or Spirit of that age.

Furthermore, the Avatār gives a tremendous boost to the spiritual evolution of mankind. The birth of an Incarnation is marked by the signs of spiritual awakening all over the world. Swami Vivekananda has said that in this age Sri Ramakrishna has awakened the cosmic *kundalinī* by his fervent prayers.

4. *A new focus.* It is difficult for the majority of people to turn to God unless they are attracted to an adorable divine Form. To convert human love into divine love, a divine focus is necessary, and the Avatār serves this function. Since the living conditions and standards of human society go on changing, ancient divine images become inadequate to attract people of a later age. A new Incarnation provides a new focus.

An adorable form alone is not enough to attract people to God. They need divine *līlās* stories or myths. The *līlā* or divine

15. Referring to this point, Swami Vivekananda says: 'These universal thought waves seem to recur every five hundred years, when invariably the great wave typifies and swallows up the others. It is this which constitutes a prophet. He focuses in his own mind the thought of the age in which he is living, and gives it back to mankind in concrete form. *The Complete Works* (1978), vol. 6, p. 134.

13. *The Complete Works* (1973), vol. 5, p. 325.

14. *The Gospel*, p. 738.

myth of one particular age becomes inadequate in a subsequent age. With the birth of a new Avatār starts a new *līlā*. Through his *līlā* the Incarnation teaches people how to put into practice the new ideals of the age he himself has developed.

5. *The great Lover* Above all, the Avatār is a great Lover of mankind. Ordinary people can love only a few people sincerely, the rest of human love is all mere show. But so vast and deep is the love of the Avatār that it cannot be satisfied even by the love of thousands of people. It is this pure and eternal love of the Incarnation that draws millions of people to him.

Those who make a reverent study of the life of Sri Ramakrishna and meditate upon him with devotion alone understand how the above mentioned characteristics of the Avatār were fulfilled in his unique personality and life.

Uniqueness of Sri Ramakrishna

Though the great prophets of the world have in common the traits and functions mentioned above, each one of them is a unique and special manifestation of the Divine. What are the unique features of the avatarhood of Sri Ramakrishna? The most obvious of these are its modernity and authenticity. The life he lived was not much different from that of the average modern Indian. The events of his life are not lost in the haze of legend and history but have been meticulously recorded. Another unique feature is his message of all-round harmony. But the most distinctive feature of his personality is that it embodied the spiritual

consciousness of all other earlier Incarnations. So great is the plasticity of his divine mould that Sri Ramakrishna could appear as different gods and goddesses as he did to many of his disciples, and as he still continues to do to the members of his far-flung spiritual family. To try to understand this unique phenomenon is to forget the limitations of the human mind.

We have seen that Sri Ramakrishna's personality has individual, universal and divine dimensions. The Ramakrishna ideal stands for the ideal man of the age, the world teacher and the Deity. It is this composite ideal that Swami Vivekananda has placed before mankind as its goal and way. In a letter dated 25 September, 1894, Swamiji has with deep humility and fervid conviction invited the whole world to partake of the nectar of knowledge, bliss and immortality that this ideal stands for. 'That nectar which has been obtained by churning the infinite ocean of the Vedas, into which Brahma, Viṣṇu, Śiva and other gods have poured their strength, which is charged with the life-essence of the Avatāras—Gods Incarnate on earth—Sri Ramakrishna holds that nectar in his person, in its fullest measure!'¹⁶

The future of mankind may depend upon the way it responds to this call.

(Concluded)

16. प्राप्तं यद्वै त्वनादिनिघनं वेदोर्दधि मथित्वा
दत्तं यस्य प्रकरणे हरिहरब्रह्मादिदेवैर्बलम् ।
पूर्णं यत्तु प्राणसारैर्भौ मनारायणानां
रामकृष्णस्तनुं धत्ते तत् पूर्णपात्रमिदं भोः ॥

ibid p. 275.

THE DIVINE LIFE

*(A free rendering of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*)*

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

The eternal That is whole, and the temporal This is whole ;
And each has its own important role.
Out of that Eternal springs this Temporal,
Both indeed are One and Spiritual.
Even when This Whole is derived from That Whole,
There still remains the One Complete Whole.
Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

1. The Lord abides even in the least of things,
In the changeful world and all beings.
He is the Giver to everyone ;
So covet not the wealth of any one.
Renounce all your attachment,
And enjoy life in contentment.
2. Desire to live for a hundred years
Doing selfless work to wipe others' tears ;
There is no better way to gain freedom
From the duty of work and its thralldom.
Without work thou shan't remain
In this world, which is the work's domain.
3. Those who seek but a selfish end,
Verily slay their higher Self ;
To darkest worlds on death they wend,
By demoniac pursuit of power and pelf.
4. The Self, beyond the senses' reach,
Swifter than the mind and speech,
Is One, calm, unmoving, still,
The Source of life and work and will.
Outstripping all that run very fast
It always remains the first and the last.
5. It moves yet moves not, near yet far,
The Self abides in atom and star ;
Inside, outside, of all things,
The One resides in all beings.
6. He who sees his Self in all,
And in his Self sees all, great and small ;
Verily abides in eternal Light,
And never looks down on any or hate.
7. When to the knower of Supreme Brahman,
All beings appear as his Ātman ;
And in god and man and bird and animal,

- He sees but the one pervasive Principle ;
 What sorrow, what delusion,
 Can touch the mind of such a person !
8. He, the Pure One, self-existent,
 Effulgent, incorporeal ;
 Sans all evil, all-pervading,
 He is but the One Real.
 All-seeing, the Lord of mind,
 The supreme Inner-Controller,
 He it is who apportions
 Work and its fruits to all for ever.
9. Blinding darkness do they enter
 Those who seek knowledge mundane,
 Greater seems the depth of darkness
 To sink in knowledge of divine.
10. We have from the wisemen of yore
 Learnt the secrets of these two,
 Complete knowledge verily includes
 Mundane and the divine too.
 Mundane knowledge gives us one view,
 While knowledge divine yields a farther view.
11. He who knows and justly combines
 Knowledge both mundane and divine ;
 Through mundane knowledge solves life's problems,
 And becomes immortal through knowledge divine
12. He who seeks but this imperfect world,
 Verily sinks into deep darkness ;
 But into deeper darkness he seems to enter
 Who looks to Heaven for perfectness.
13. We have heard from those who taught us,
 Wisemen of great eminence,
 The perfect and the imperfect are
 Aspects of one Existence.
 This imperfect world helps us one way,
 And the perfect Heaven has Its own sway.
14. He who knows this wisely pursues
 Both the temporal and the Eternal ;
 Through the perishing world death he conquers.
 And through Heaven gains the Immortal.
15. The Face of Truth lies hidden in glamour,
 Like the sun beneath a golden cover ;
 Reveal that, O Sun, the great supporter,
 To me devoted to truth and virtue for ever.
16. O Sun, Supporter, Lonely Courser,
 Progeny of the Supreme Lord ;
 Deign to withdraw, O Controller
 The dazzling rays that ever hide.

- Let me behold Thy blessed Form
 Hidden amidst the rays divine.
 The Supreme Person in the solar orb
 Is the same One in me, the Self within.
17. The body in the end is turned into ashes,
 And life's breath joins Immortal Life ;
 Remember, O Mind, remember, O Mind,
 Your past deeds and repeat Om all your life.
18. O Fire Divine !
 Thou visible symbol of the Supreme Being,
 Who knowest all our thinking and doing :
 Uphold our good and burn up our sin,
 We offer our prayers to you again and again.
 Lead us by the right path beyond pleasure and pain,
 To the highest Good, the Supreme Divine !
 Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND PRAMADADAS MITRA

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

The meeting of the unknown wandering monk Vivekananda and the titled aristocrat and scholar Babu Pramadadas Mitra of Benares, the gradual development of their friendship, and the final estrangement between them, form a remarkable chapter in Vivekananda's life. It reminds us of Paul's failure to impress upon the Jews and the Greeks the meaning of the Crucifixion, and of his great words :

The Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom ; but we preach Christ crucified—unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks a foolishness.¹

During the late eighties of last century when as a wandering monk Vivekananda was roaming from place to place in search of God and peace, he eventually came into contact with this highly respected scholar of

Benares. Vivekananda was still groping in darkness as to how to carry out the great task that his master Sri Ramakrishna had laid on him. The poverty of his own mother and brothers on the one hand, and the unsettled and difficult life of his brother monks whose responsibility Ramakrishna had placed on him, were tormenting his great heart. Moreover, he was yet to find his own true identity vis-a-vis the world around him. The Pauline transformation, the rebirth of man into a prophet that he was undergoing, impressed everyone although he himself was both unaware and sceptical about it. Worst of all, as an extreme step towards finding a solution to the problems of life, he even sought the help of the Gazipur saint Pavhari Baba. In short, Vivekananda, during those days, was a soul in conflagration, at war with conflicting dichotomies. Naturally, when the hospitable and scholarly philosopher Pramadadas appeared at this stage as a friend, philos-

1. I Corinthians 1 : 22-23.

opher and kind host not only to him but also to his other brother disciples, Vivekananda accepted him with alacrity.

Already recognized as a scholar of high repute, Babu Pramadas Mitra became special magistrate of Benares in 1882 and a fellow of Calcutta University in the same year. In 1887 he was appointed a member in the Central Committee of Imperial Institute in London. In 1886 he translated the British national anthem into Sanskrit and received appreciation from the British rulers. In 1892 he was appointed the Commissioner of Benares on account of his high position both in orthodox Hindu society and contemporary ruling class in India. After his English translation of the *Gītā* in 1896, the Puna journal *Marāṭha* praised him as 'widely known in the upper provinces for his Sanskrit and English scholarship'. The *Indian Nation* wrote in an obituary on him. 'But the real distinction of his life was his moral and religious character'.²

It is this religious character of Pramadas that first attracted another young wandering monk Akhandananda, Vivekananda's brother-disciple, who met the scholar in the house of Babu Durgashankar at Gaya. Durgashankar, a Bengali by birth and an earlier devotee of Ramakrishna, received the itinerant Akhandananda in his house with all honour. Pramadas who came to the holy city of Gaya on some property business, eventually went to his friend's house and met for the first time a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Akhandananda's purity, austerity and depth endeared him to Pramadas who learnt practically from this young monk that Ramakrishna was an incarnation of God. Thoughts on the God-man deepened in Pramadas, and he soon composed the celebrated hymn on Ramakrishna begin-

ning with '*Visuddha vijnānam agādha-soukhyam*'—a song which Akhandananda loved to sing with devotion to the end of his life.³ Akhandananda began to learn Sanskrit intonation, accent and pronunciation from this great scholar. On a subsequent visit to Benares (probably early 1888) he took Vivekananda to Pramadas and introduced them to each other for the first time.⁴ Pramadas at once arranged for the stay of both the brother monks in his palatial building at Chowkhamba in Benares, and personally looked after their comforts.

Pramadas's kind hospitality and religious mind impressed young Vivekananda very deeply. In that period of hopeless desolation, foodless days and shelterless nights through which the sons of Sri Ramakrishna were passing, the kindness shown by the religious and philosophic aristocrat was a godsend to Vivekananda. Here was a man in whom he could confide not only for his material needs, but also for spiritual solace. In a series of letters Vivekananda frankly admitted his unstinted admiration for this scholarly philosopher. On his return to the Baranagore monastery Vivekananda wrote (17.8.1889) to Pramadas,

My prayer is that among the many people embracing sannyasa nowadays, greedy of honour, posing renunciation for the sake of a living, and fallen off from ideal from both sides, may one in a lakh at least become high-souled like you! To you my Brahmin fellow-disciples who have heard of your noble virtues tender their best prostrations.⁵

Pramadas was not a Brahmin but a Kṣatriya by caste. But the Brahmin disciples of Ramakrishna were ready to bow

3. See *Altar Flowers* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1974), p. 170.

4. Swami Annadananda, *Swami Akhandānanda* (Udbodhan), pp. 28-29 (in Bengali).

5. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978), vol. 6, p. 210.

2. Sankari Prasad Basu, *Vivekānanda O Samakālīn Bhāratavarṣa* (Calcutta: Mandal Book House, B.S. 1385), Vol. 3, p. 161.

down to him in gratitude. Vivekananda even mentioned in a letter (4.7.89), that his relation with Pramadadas was not just temporal, but eschatological. In the same letter he wrote to Pramadadas :

I am indebted to you for the advice which comes from you as the outcome of your experience and spiritual practice. . . . I have been vouchsafed the ideal shastra; I have seen the ideal man; and yet fail myself to get on with anything to the end—this is my profound misery. . . . Bless me that my heart may wax strong with strength divine, . . . 'We have taken up the Cross, Thou hast laid it upon us, and grant us strength that we bear it unto death. Amen'—*Imitation of Christ*.⁶

In the next letter of 7.8.89 the note of despondency is no more. Vivekananda now wants to clarify and know the truths behind age-old traditional ideas like caste, nirvāṇa, personal salvation, and ends with the paramount question. . . . 'Why should the Śūdra not study the Upaniṣads?'⁷ The emerging prophet raises a protest for the down-trodden proletariat who had been exploited through ages both materially and religiously, and for whom he was born.

But the prophet was destined to wait for five more years to raise his voice. At this period, poverty, incertitude and anxiety for his brother monks haunted him like ghosts. Pramadadas, it seems, never tired of imparting timely advice of renunciation and transcendence over wordly relations which were after all Māyā in his philosopher's vision. But the philosopher's words failed to pacify the tormented prophet. With genuine humility but unflinching love for his brother-monks, Vivekananda opened his heart to Pramadadas. In his letter (of 19.2.90) Vivekananda wrote: 'Well, you may smile, sir, to see me weaving all this web of māyā—and that is no doubt the fact. . . . The sons of my Master are indeed great objects of

service, and here alone I feel I have some duty left for me'.⁸ The māyā, the worries, gradually increased. On 3.3.90 Vivekananda wrote :

You know not, Sir, I am a very soft-natured man in spite of the stern Vedantic views I hold. And this proves to be my undoing. At the slightest touch I give myself away; for however I may try to think only of my own good, I slip off in spite of myself to think of other peoples' interests. This time it was with very stern resolve that I set out to pursue my own good, but I had to run off at the news of the illness of a brother at Allahabad! And now comes this news (Saradananda's illness) from Hrishikesh, and my mind has run off with me there.⁹

Nearly a month later (31.3.90) Vivekananda again wrote to Pramadadas seeking his consolation and blessings for this inextricable bondage to his brother disciples,

I am so very weak-hearted, so much overmastered by the distractions of love! Bless me, that I may harden. What shall I say to you about the condition of my mind! Oh, it is as if the hell-fire is burning there day and night. Nothing, could I do yet! And this life seems muddled away in vain; I feel quite helpless as to what to do.¹⁰

The dichotomy between personal salvation and responsibility for brother-disciples deepened. Vivekananda's mind became a veritable battlefield. Peace was nowhere for him. The loving faces of those holy children of God loomed large upon his emotional soul. The only way out was now to flee from them, to live in retirement, and to search for God's powers to save them. And this happened. Vivekananda left the dilapidated Baranagore monastery where the brother-disciples were living a life of severe austerities bordering on starvation. He went in search of some way out of this predicament. We find him next at the door of the Gazipur saint Pavhari Baba.

6. *ibid*, vol. 6, pp. 206-207.

7. *ibid*, vol. 6, pp. 208.208.

8. *ibid*, vol. 6, p. 223-224.

9. *ibid*, vol. 6, p. 229.

10. *ibid*, vol. 6, p. 236.

And Pramadadas was during this crucial period consoling helping, inspiring the young monk towards a life of greater detachment and renunciation. With great expectation Vivekananda waited at the door of Saint Pavhari Baba. From Gazipur Vivekananda opened his heart, it seems only to Pramadadas. On 4.2.90 he wrote to Pramadadas, '... and through supreme good fortune, I have obtained an interview with Babaji. A great sage indeed!—It is all very wonderful, and in this atheistic age, a towering representation of marvellous power born of Bhakti and Yoga!'¹¹ Again on 13.2.90 he wrote, '... Such amazing endurance and humility I have never seen. Whatever good things I may come by, sure, you have your share in them'.¹² But the fire of Vivekananda's mounting expectation was soon drenched by the Saint's reluctance and inability to give anything new to him. In utter disappointment and disillusionment Vivekananda finally wrote to Pramadadas (3.3.90):

While I myself have come, a beggar, at his door, he turns round and wants to learn of me! This saint perhaps is not yet perfected—too much of rites, vows, observances, and too much of self-concealment. The ocean in its fullness cannot be contained within its shores ... soon I shall ask leave of him to go.¹³

That was Vivekananda's final return to the doors of his master. He never strayed any more. The irrepressible scepticism and spiritual adventurism left him for good. With a voice of repentance, surrender, and tearful remembrance of the old ineffable love that Ramakrishna had bestowed on none else but him, Vivekananda wrote to Pramadadas in a post script to the same letter :

So now the great conclusion is that Ramakrishna has no peer; nowhere else in this world exist that

unprecedented perfection, that wonderful kindness for all that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for man in bondage... Never during his life did he refuse a single prayer of mine; millions of offences has he forgiven me...'¹⁴

Finally Vivekananda ends this memorable letter with prayers for Pramadadas,

If the soul be deathless, and so, if he still lives, I pray to him again and again: 'O Bhagavan Ramakrishna, thou infinite ocean of mercy, and my only refuge, do graciously fulfil the desires of my esteemed friend, who is every inch a great man.'¹⁵

The prophet's prayer was answered. Babu Pramadadas gained social eminence and worldly prosperity as well as name and fame—the things which he had sought. But could he realize who this prophet was whose prayers brought heaven into his life? Subsequent actions of Pramadadas prove that he did not.

Vivekananda, returned to the Baranagore Math, borrowing some Vedanta literature from Babu Pramadadas together with a copy of Pāṇini's grammar for his brother-disciples to study Sanskrit at the Math.¹⁶ The monastery was in a precarious condition. The building was dilapidated. The monks had hardly anything to eat, and few clothes to wear. Vivekananda was their chief source of inspiration and strength. He was the captain of the ship of monastic vocation in which the poor young monks had set sail on the stormy ocean of life. The brothers were eagerly waiting for his return to the Math. The help which Sri Ramakrishna's eminent householder disciples Balaram Bose and Suresh Mitra had extended to them so long suddenly came to an end. Within two month's of Vivekananda's return from Gazipur, both of

11. *ibid*, vol. 6, p. 220.

12. *ibid*, vol. 6, pp. 222, 223.

13. *ibid*, vol. 6, p. 230.

14. *ibid*, vol. 6, pp. 231-232.

15. *ibid*, vol. 6, p. 232.

16. *Prabuddha Bharata*, vol. 68, June, 1963, p. 338.

them passed away leaving the young monks in the midst of utter uncertainties. The news of Balaram Bose's death reached Vivekananda while he was at Benares, in April 1893. He wept like a child at the unexpected demise of that guardian and friend. When Pramadadas wondered at this human weakness in a monk, Swamiji replied, 'Please do not talk that way. We are not only monks. What! Do you think that because a man is a sannyasi, he has no heart?'¹⁷

Vivekananda felt the need of a permanent monastery was urgent, as the dilapidated ghost-ridden house was unfit for human habitation. Groping in unrelieved gloom he found no one so approachable as Pramadadas who had so kindly given them shelter and religious encouragement at Benares for the last few months. At last in a state of desperation Vivekananda decided to stretch his hand out for a little help. In his letter of 26.5.90, he appealed to his rich and well-placed friend, who was every inch a great man, for a sum of money to purchase a plot of land on the Ganga where he could finally inter the sacred ashes of the great Master. Vivekananda even offered to beg from door to door in the great city of Benares, where with a little introduction of Pramadadas the collection would be easy in the elite and rich circles which held Pramadadas in high respect.

Vivekananda got again another of the several shocks that rocked his life. His earnest request for a little house for his Master went in vain. Pramadadas refused to help and instead, gave the young monks the gratuitous advice to learn detachment and dependence on God. In monumental disillusionment, but with a calm and non-chalant mind, Vivekananda wrote back, 'Your advice is undoubtedly a very signifi-

cant one. His will be done. This is very true indeed'.

Why did Pramadadas refuse help despite all his respect for Sri Ramakrishna? Probably it was the same reason which the Greeks had found for the crucifixion of Christ—an act of foolishness. Detachment or withdrawal from the world of men was the final end of the stoic philosophers, who could not therefore appreciate the deification of the Cross. Why should the philosopher return to the world after attaining that supreme detachment? The return of the Prophet in the fullness of love for those who had crucified him was a fact that always baffled the philosophers. That is why whereas Epictetus spoke of the coming of 'Civitas Dei', the Kingdom of God, an ideal society capable of embracing the whole mankind, as the ultimate fulfilment of philosophy, St. Paul preached it as the gospel of a new revelation made by God to man through the death of Christ. Pramadadas found enough reason to respect the superhuman renunciation of Ramakrishna, but he found no reason to support the young monks' efforts to preserve the altar-fire of the same renunciation for ages to come. Was it not a degeneration into worldliness? Brought up solely on the traditional ideas of religion as a cult of personal salvation Pramadadas failed to realize that the institutionalization of a spiritual force was of far greater importance to posterity than the total loss of volatile spiritual treasures. A Christ, a Buddha, or a Ramakrishna brings divinity to the earth. A Paul, an Ananda, or a Vivekananda takes up the responsibility of preserving it for mankind at the price of their own sweat and blood.

The refusal, never expected, was deeply disappointing to Vivekananda and his brothers. If an enlightened Hindu having so much respect for Ramakrishna could refuse to believe that the cause of a Ramakrishna monastery was worth serving, what could they expect from the common illiter-

17. *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1979), vol. 1, p. 237.

ate masses ignorant of the true greatness of Ramakrishna? Nevertheless, the dogged determination of Vivekananda was only strengthened by his friend's refusal. A few months later he returned to Benares for a short stay there on his way to the Himalayas. On the eve of his departure he declared in the presence of many others, 'I shall not return until I burst on society like a bomb-shell; and it will follow me like a dog'.¹⁸ Pramadadas had to wait four more years to witness this bursting of the bomb-shell. Vivekananda returned to Benares, his dear holy city of Śiva, in 1901 when he was literally being worshiped as the new prophet of Hindu India.

The Indian apathy to the cause of Ramakrishna in those early days left an indelible mark on the young mind of Vivekananda. A few years later when he started collecting money for the Math in the West, his first duty was to keep up the losing morale of his brother-disciples. His letters from America set ablaze the fire of a new hope in those solitary souls struggling for God in that dilapidated monastery at Baranagore. In 1894 he wrote to Swami Abhedananda, 'So long as you gird up your loins and rally behind me, there is no fear even if the whole world combine against us.... The whole band of scoffers will be swept away by the tidal wave of love'.¹⁹

Throughout the year of 1894 he went on encouraging his monastic brothers. To Swami Abhedananda he wrote :

I shall collect my own funds to build a monastery for ourselves, and if people criticize me for it I see nothing affects us either way. You have your minds high and steady, it will do you no harm. May you have exceeding love for one another among yourselves, and it would be enough to have an attitude of indifference towards public criticisms.²⁰

18. *ibid*, vol. 1, p. 248.

19. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1981). p. 177.

20. *ibid*, p. 176.

Again to Swami Shivananda he wrote :

I would have, before this, returned to India, but India has no money. Thousands honour Ramakrishna Paramahansa, but nobody will give a cent—that is India.²¹

A year later Vivekananda's voice sounded like a thundering Paul. He had at last discovered his own identity—the alter-ego of his master, Ramakrishna. In 1895 he wrote to Swami Ramakrishnananda :

While I am on earth, Sri Ramakrishna is working through me. So long as you believe in this there is no danger of any evil for you.²²

By the year 1897 when Vivekananda was preparing for his avalanche-ride return to India, visible changes had come in the life of the philosopher-scholar Pramadadas. His loyalty to the British rulers had increased all the more. After rising in 1892 to the post of the Commissioner of Benares, he was now awarded the much coveted title of Rai Bahadur, a title bestowed on the influential Indian feudals of those days who were most loyal to the British rulers. In 1898 Pramadadas was congratulated by his English teacher Ralph Griffith on his publication of 'Dialogue on the Vedantic conception of Brahma' Meanwhile he was drifting towards the European theosophists who were preaching a theosophical version of the Hindu faith in India. Intellectually Pramadadas drew nearer to the theosophists, and socially to the British rulers, while Vivekananda was emerging as the growing image of national resurgence which neither the orthodox custodians of religious authority nor the British rulers could accept without fear or heartburn.

Vivekananda was emerging as a new Buddha. Thoughts of personal salvation had left him for good. Slowly he was

21. *ibid*, p. 180.

22. *ibid*, p. 203.

emerging as the prophet of a new religion of selflessness, a religion of worshipping God in man, and especially a religion of seeing God in the suffering and the distressed. He never cared for name and fame. He was only worried about fulfilling his master's mission. He wrote (on 12.1.1895) impatiently to his disciple Alasinga who was constantly cautioning him of the vilification campaign going on against him :

My life is more precious than spending it in getting the admiration of the world. I have no time for such foolery. What work have you done in the way of advancing the ideas and organizing in India? None, none, none ! An organization that will teach the Hindus mutual help and appreciation is absolutely necessary.²³

And again he writes to Miss Mary Hale on 9.7.1897 :

I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing sure that I have put on a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep, without caring what will be next ; and may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls ; and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.²⁴

Vivekananda's transfiguration could not be hidden any more. Persons like the eminent poetess Ella Wheeler Wilcox saw in him the birth of a Christ. Turiyananda and Christine heard in his voice the passionate cry of a Buddha for souls in bondage.

Vivekananda's growing fame and historic success had already triggered off conservative criticism against him in India. The Brahmos under the leadership of Pratap Chandra Majumdar were desperately trying

to prejudice a sizeable portion of Bengal intellectuals against him on the eve of his return. Missionaries in India joined the fray. On the one hand, the period of Vivekananda's return to India was tense with the eager expectations of a nation-wide ovation from the masses, the liberal Hindus and the followers of Vivekananda. On the other hand, his antagonists, the Brahmos, a few conservative Hindu groups, theosophists and missionaries had almost started an orchestral denunciation of Vivekananda in a last effort to fill the minds of Indians with ill-will towards one who was destined to be the saviour of Hinduism and the whole Indian nation.

This conflict of the pro-Vivekananda and anti-Vivekananda forces had begun in Bengal as early as 1894. A public meeting was held in Calcutta in 1894 in honour of Vivekananda, despite the strong resistance of orthodox Brahmins and Brahmos. It was hailed as a great demonstration by liberal Hindu aristocrats who praised 'the singular contribution of Swami Vivekananda in the land of Cute Yankes', even as one of 'high political value and significance'.²⁵ The great success of the Calcutta meeting of 1894 left only one avenue open to the detractors—to prove that Vivekananda did not represent the orthodox Hinduism, but a neo-Hinduism, and that Vivekananda was an outcaste to the orthodox Hindu for crossing the seas and partaking *mleccha* food in a *mleccha* land. Majumdar's paper *Unity and the Minister* wrote on 25th March, 1894, 'we are glad that our old friend lately created a good impression in America by his speeches, but we are aware that Neo-Hinduism of which our friend is a representative is not orthodox Hinduism. The last thing which the latter would do is to cross the Kālāpāni, partaking of the *mleccha*

23. *ibid*, p. 197

24. *ibid*, p. 350.

25. Sankari Prasad Basu, *Vivekānanda O Samakālīn Bhāratavarṣa* (Calcutta: Mandal Book House, B.S. 1382), vol. 1, p. 246.

food and cigars and the like'.²⁶ Casting infamy on rivals is the last prop of ignoble minds. Another Brahma paper quoted an American missionary who claimed support for his anti-Vivekananda view from an orthodox Hindu journal *Dharmapracāra*k published from Benares. The Brahma journal quoted the missionary's words—

With regard to the assertion made in certain quarters that Vivekananda went across the Atlantic as a representative of the orthodox Hinduism, we may note that *Dharmapracāra*k says that 'one special feature of Hinduism is its observance of caste system.... He (Vivekananda) clearly says that caste has nothing to do with religion. It is a social division. The Americans might be pleased with such exposition, but it cannot brighten the hope of Hindu Community. Hindus have reason to be pained rather than delighted by such statement of the Swami'.²⁷

We do not know if Pramadas was in any way connected with this orthodox Hindu paper of Benares. He was the most highly respected Hindu and Commissioner of Benares in 1894. But he is not known to have made any protest. Brahmos were untiring in their vilification. The Brahma paper *Messenger* quoted, with obvious pride of superiority over an ex-communicated monk (?), most slanderous remarks against Vivekananda made by missionaries in their journal *Indian Witness* :

Swami Vivekananda is said by the Indian native papers as an imposter; they say he is a Bengali Babu of low caste, and has assumed a Madrasi Brahmin name to hide his identity and low origin. If all this be true, and it is not denied, Vivekananda ought to receive from everyone the treatment he got from Baltimore hotels when they refused to entertain him. They did so because of the colour of his skin. That was wrong. They should have refused him hospitality because he was morally black.²⁸

That was the last prop to which the missionaries, the Brahmos, and the orthodox Hindus could tie their boats in the rising tide of a Vivekananda-wave in India—to prove that Vivekananda was an imposter, an outcaste, and that he was parading in a monk's garb and a Brahmin monk's name for which he was unfit.

Birds of a feather flocked together. The lone bird, Vivekananda, stood apart on his solitary rock, along with God. He was calm. He knew that that gull sees the furthest which flies the highest.

Pramadas kept silent all those years when Vivekananda's historic success was raising new cross-currents of thought in the moribund Hindu society. Then in 1896, while in London Vivekananda one day received from Pramadas a copy of his translation of the *Gītā*, printed in 1896, with only one line addressed to Vivekananda on its cover. Even after Vivekananda's triumphal return Pramadas had no correspondence with him, although Vivekananda was aware of the orthodox Hindu view that Pramadas entertained against his sailing to the West and living with foreigners. However, in May 1897 when Vivekananda was in Almora, he received the news of 'some unavoidable domestic grief' that had come in the life of Pramadas, probably through a letter from him. And Vivekananda wrote a memorable letter, the last ever to be written to Pramadas. After writing some consolatory lines on Pramadas's 'domestic grief', Vivekananda came out with the voice of the Prophet. In the beginning he rather mockseriously mentioned Pramadas's new love for Western theosophists and his revulsion for 'roughish black natives' like Vivekananda. He also mentioned rather humorously Pramadas's new adoration of theosophist Gods like 'postulated creator' etc. And then he invaded the orthodox bastion of Pramadas, which, Vivekananda saw was only a 'Smṛti-based' fundamentalist version of

26. *ibid*, vol. 1, p. 264.

27. *ibid*, vol. 1, p. 275.

28. *ibid*, vol. 1, p. 280.

priests and upper-class Hindus as opposed to the 'Śruti-based' broad, humanitarian nature of true Vedantic Hinduism. Vivekananda wrote (on 30.5.1897) to Pramadadas:

The Smrtis and the Purānas are productions of men of limited intelligence and are full of fallacies, errors, the feelings of class, and malice. Only parts of them breathing broadness of spirit and love are acceptable, the rest are to be rejected. The Upaniṣads and the Gītā are the true scriptures—Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Chaitanya, Nanak, Kabir and so on are the true Avatāras, for they had their hearts broad as the sky—and above all, Ramakrishna. Ramanuja, Shankara and others seem to have been mere pundits with narrowness of heart. Where is that love, that weeping heart at the sorrow of others? ... Liberation is only for him who gives up everything for others, whereas, others who tax their brains day and night harping on 'my salvation', 'my salvation' wander about with their true well-being ruined, both present and prospective.²⁹

Vivekananda hit at the root of the orthodox practice of casteism. 'The conviction is daily gaining on my mind that the idea of caste is the greatest dividing factor and the root of Māyā; all caste either on the principle of birth or of merit is bondage'.³⁰ And he ended the letter with an unforgettable piece of humour—

I am Shudra, a Mlechchha, so I have nothing to do with all that botheration. To me what would Mlechchha's food matter or pariah's? It is in the books written by priests that madnesses like that of caste are to be found, and not in the books revealed from God. Let the priests enjoy the fruits of their ancestors' achievement, while I follow the word of God, for my good lies there.³¹

What did Vivekananda think about those threats of being outcasted by the orthodox? A month later (9.7.1897) Swamiji wrote from Almora to Miss Mary Hale of Chicago :

²⁹. *Letters*, pp. 337-338.

³⁰. *Letters*, p. 337.

³¹. *Letters*, pp. 337-338.

If I should have to be outcasted, it would be with half the ruling princes of India, and almost all of educated India.... It will suffice to say that the police were necessary to keep order if I ventured out into the street! That is outcasting indeed!³²

Pramadadas's orthodox denunciation of Vivekananda was not very different from the antagonism of the Brahmos. The Brahmo worship of Christ at the expense of Hindu faith resembled a fair-weather cult of Caesar worship in the troubled times of British rule in India. Pramadadas's emphasis on traditional laws was only characteristic of the dominant minority who, throughout history, have tried with the help of king power and priestcraft to subjugate the common man with social laws in the name of religion at the expense of God. Whenever a new religious force based on the powerful realization and character of a great individual is on the upsurge, it generally confronts tradition-bound philosophers as its biggest challenge, and in such encounters the defeat of the philosophers is a foregone conclusion. The new leader, though initially unrecognized, soon emerges out as the saviour-leader of the masses. He upholds the dignity of the common man over the preponderance of age-old socio-religious jurisdiction. The new saviour with his charismatic spiritual élan can inspire his followers to die for the cause. While the predominantly worldly-minded philosophers with their dry reasonings, succeed neither in establishing their credibility before the masses nor in inspiring their followers to die for the cause. We are reminded of the monumental gibe of the French minister Talleyrand in late 18th century France. To the Director of Larevelleze—Le'peuse, who sought to replace an outmoded catholic church with a 'fancy-religion' of political rulers, he flatly told,

For my part I have only one observation to make. Jesus Christ, in order to found His religion.

³². *Letters*, p. 348.

was crucified and rose again. You should have tried to do something of the kind.³³

While Vivekananda could rub off the orthodox denunciation of Pramadadas with nonchalance, his brother disciples could not but react to this slur on their beloved leader. The new religion of Ramakrishna which raised the essential divinity of man over caste and creed, and which inspired men to worship God in distressed humanity stood face to face with the priest-ridden Hinduism of untouchability, caste-distinctions and rituals. Swami Trigunatitananda, a fiery brother-disciple took up the cudgel and reacted to Pramadadas's orthodoxy in an unusually bold letter. He came forward to answer a letter from Pramadadas which obviously criticised Vivekananda as a Śūdra, or an outcaste according to the yardstick of Manu-smṛti. He could not forget the old refusal of Pramadadas with his advice of 'God's will be done'. Swami Trigunatitananda's letter to Pramadadas begins with a banter: 'It is God who has borne all the expenses for establishing our Math ... Who else but God is capable of bearing such a huge expenditure?'

Then the writer goes straight into the heart of Pramadadas's letters and mercilessly exposes the weakness behind his blind adherence to orthodox ideas on caste and food:

Since you have reached old age, it is not desirable for you to get into arguments. The answer to the middle of your letter is this—Firstly, Swami Vivekananda has gone through the pages of *Manu-Smṛti*, etc. a countless number of times. We know it too well. On the contrary, to speak the truth, Swami Vivekananda is no way inferior to the writers of Smṛtis like Manu. This you will come to know gradually.

Secondly, since you have taken no sacred thread, you yourself are a Śūdra. Manu says, no higher habits can even be inculcated by a Śūdra.

What are restrictions about food etc. to you? All the activities that you are doing should never be done by you according to Manu, and according to your own opinions you are only drowning yourself gradually in the mire of sin.

Thirdly, according to Manu, everyone is required to offer prayers to the departed ancestors along with beef. Are Hindus like you doing so? Why do you not accept intercaste marriage? Why do not the higher three castes eat the food cooked by a Śūdra?

Swami Trigunatitananda makes almost a frontal attack. Pramadadas, himself a non-brahmin, wanted to arrogate to himself the authority of a law-giver and the right to criticise another non-brahmin Vivekananda as an outcaste on account of his sea-voyage and eating with foreigners. Pramadadas was not aware that the ancient authority which he quoted to castigate Vivekananda had long been outdated and violated by Hindus themselves for centuries. Smṛtis or social laws are never the essence of Hinduism. The essence is Śruti—the revealed and eternal truths about human life that Vedic ṛṣis perceived through their direct realization and recorded for the spiritual welfare of mankind, irrespective of caste, creed and nationality. While Smṛtis or social customs have undergone countless changes owing to the exigencies of time, Śrutis have stood immutable through the ages.

This static, superstitious orthodoxy of the so-called orthodox leaders and priest class, Vivekananda discovered, had always resisted any breakthrough in thought in India for centuries. Vivekananda criticized the orthodox Hindus vehemently in clear and categorical words in his Calcutta address:

Do you know what the Śāstras say about people who have been eating Mlechchha food and living under a government of the Mlechchhas. as you have for the past thousand years? Do you know the penance for that? The penance would be burning oneself with one's own hands. Do you want to pass as teachers and walk like hypocrites? ... If you think you are not able to do that in this age, admit your weakness and excuse

³³. Quoted in A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (abridged), p. 493.

the weakness of others, take the other castes up, give them a helping hand, let them study the Vedas and become just as good Aryans as any other Aryan in the world.³⁴

Swami Trigunatitananda's letter ends in a similar tone, 'Since you belong to the Sūdra caste, then according to Manu, your duty will be to distribute to others all you possess and take up the life of a "servant". If you fail, then we will know, according to Manu, you are a vain man and your life, too, is in vain'. Vivekananda's brother-disciple only turns the table on Pramadadas to expose how wretched his own life would be had he attempted to live it according to the injunctions of *Manu-Smṛti*. Finally, with the confidence and broadness of mind of a true brother of Vivekananda, he extends to Pramadadas his challenge and genuine good will :

Now, according to us ... you are not a Sūdra. You are a Kṣatriya. Please come. We shall give you the sacred thread. If you are not a coward, if you are not swayed by the criticism of the so-called scholarly fools, we will bring a rebirth into your life.³⁵

The tail-end of the Pramadadas episode was not yet told. After Trigunatitananda, Akhandananda, another illustrious disciple of Sri Ramakrishna made a last attempt to clear the misunderstanding. In two eye-opening letters Swami Akhandananda made a final attempt to bring out the essence of the new Vivekananda religion which they all followed with unquestioning surrender to their leader whom they regarded as a world teacher. Akhandananda did not yet lose faith in the essential magnanimity of Pramadadas. Though Pramadadas had earlier refused to give financial support to the Ramakrishna monastery, Akhandananda now requested him to help him with some

money in his desperate struggle to feed the homeless and hungry orphans who gathered round this penniless monk after the devastating Bengal famine of 1897. Vivekananda, himself struggling with the problem of the terrible plague raging in Calcutta in those days, was always there behind Akhandananda like a guardian-angel rushing money, men and above all encouraging this 'child of my spirit' by keeping the burning bush of love glowing all the time.

But alas, Pramadadas refused to help him this time too. However help came to Akhandananda from other Indians and, most unexpectedly, from some British officials in Bengal who felt the pangs of Akhandananda's heart for those images of God embodied in emaciated bones and anaemic flesh. After founding the rural orphanage in the unknown village of Sargachi in Murshidabad district, Akhandananda once said, 'Britishers provided the foundations of this Ashrama, when storms were blowing over me. ... They used to tell me "Swamiji, why are you worrying? We are always with you..."'³⁶

Now to come back to Akhandananda's correspondence. The palingenesis of this great monk, his transformation from an adventurous wanderer in Tibet and the Himalayas into a saint whose heart bled for the poor and the miserable, is vividly portrayed in the two letters that he wrote to Pramadadas. The scholar, instead of giving money, had proffered him the unsolicited advice that money and its concomitant worldly activities would only spoil the spiritual life of the young monk whom the Benares scholar had patronized so much in his wandering days. On 19.10.1898 Akhandananda answered Pramadadas :

You have reminded me of my earlier days.... When I first went to the Himalayas, I was a different man altogether. Now I wonder when I

34. *Complete Works* (1973), vol. 3, p. 340.

35. *Vivekānanda O Samakālīn Bhāratavarṣa*, vol. 3, p. 169.

36. Swami Annadananda, *Swami Akhandānanda Calcutta* : (Udbodhan), p. 190.

look at myself. During those days even the sight of a man in the Himalayas annoyed me. I then loved to live away from human society.... But the same I who, without caring for the world of men used to roam from one peak to the other on the Himalayas, am today seeing God himself in man. Today I am realizing that the service of human society is indeed service to Him.

However, my answer to your queries is as follows. Despite my preoccupation with philanthropic activities that involve the use of money, I have not to spend time worrying about money alone. On the contrary, most of my time is being spent in contemplation. Moreover, this also I have realized that it is His work that is being done through me by His grace.... And the knower of the Self is free from all actions, despite his performing a thousand duties. It is not possible for a wordly man deluded by Māyā to comprehend this great truth which lies hidden in the heart of the true Karma-yogin, the knower of the Self.³⁷

Probably Akhandananda's great words failed to impress the worldly scholar who as usual reciprocated again with stale sermons on detachment so much essential for sadhus. Akhandananda's reply written on 10.1.1899 is at once corrosive and sublime.

If the rajas and maharajas and rich zamindars had tried to alleviate the wants of common people then the all-renouncing monks, whose hearts feel intensely for suffering humanity, would not have laboured and suffered so much for the removal of hunger of the masses. The rich householders of our country have petrified hearts. Their hearts are composed of such adamant material as that of the thunderbolt, and covered with such thick armour, that the cry of the afflicted cannot penetrate into them. Dry talks on scriptures do not soothe the aching soul.³⁸

Akhandananda ends his letter with a few lines that lend the radiance of a divine revelation to its whole theme :

I hear that God, who is present in all souls, incessantly telling me, 'My lad, it is man who

became the Vedic seer, it is as man that Incarnations like Rama and Krishna were born. Do you not see how sad is the present plight of man?' Can one who listens to these divine words rest in quiet any more? This life I have sacrificed for the service of man. How many more lives I have to sacrifice for the same cause I cannot say.

These sublime words of the apostle had at last their effect. Pramadadas later on came up and joined hands with the small group of the followers of Vivekananda who started the 'Poor Men's Relief Association' in Benares with the aim of saving the poor, the sick, and the dying souls from the streets and ghats of Benares and nursing them back to health. He even became one of the early office-bearers of this organization which later on grew into the mighty Sevashrama Hospital of the Ramakrishna Mission at Benares. Vivekananda and his brother-disciples, however, remembered him with gratefulness for whatever he had done for them in their early days at the Baranagore monastery. When Pramadadas passed away in early 1901, Vivekananda was still alive, and the *Prabuddha Bharata* of June 1901 published on behalf of the sons of Sri Ramakrishna, an obituary full of respect and gratitude.

We have to record with profound sorrow the death of Rai Pramadadas Mitra Bahadur of Benares, whose name occurs under our notice of the 'Poor Men's Relief Association', as one of its office-bearers. He belonged to one of the most respectable families of Bengal and was the most conspicuous figure of the Bengalis resident in Benares. Profoundly erudite in Sanskrit and English learning, he was for some time a fellow of the Universities of Calcutta and Allahabad. He was possessed of vast wealth. But the most noteworthy feature about him was that these great earthly blessings could not make him forgetful of the true aim of life.... May his departed soul find fitter environments for the realization of his heart's Ideal!

^{37.} *ibid*, p. 159.

^{38.} *ibid*, p. 160.

INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO*

THE WAY—I

SRI M. P. PANDIT

Works

In keeping with the integral character of the approach and the goal, the Way to be hewn by the seeker is also integral. It enfolds the dynamic will, the heart of emotions, the mind that seeks knowledge, in its comprehensive scope. Each of these is a major power in the aspiring individual and each has its claim and its way of fulfilling itself. In this Yoga, there is a simultaneous awakening and culture of consciousness on all these three levels of being with a view to spiritualizing and ultimately divinizing their powers.

Activity is a law of nature. It may not always be physical; it may be psychological, intellectual, or vital (relating to life-energies). There is a constant outpouring of energies in whatever form. And this output, according to another law of nature, produces its own *Karma*. Every action evokes a reaction and the series of reactions thus produced forge a bondage. All work is thus a means of bondage. There is, however, according to the *Gītā*, a way to convert this agent of bondage into an agent of liberation. This is the *way of works* which plays a key role in the spiritual evolution of the individual.

* Earlier, the author discussed the three fundamental psychological 'Processes' involved in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, namely, Aspiration, Rejection and Surrender (see *Prabuddha Bharata* June, July, August and September, 1980). Nowhere, the author presents the practical side of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. In traditional Hinduism the path of work, the path of Meditation and the path of love are regarded as independent disciplines. But in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga they are regarded as three aspects of one single integral path—the way to the ultimate goal.—*Ed.*

Normally all work is done with a motive, the motive of ego, desire. The ego-desire propulsion may be personal or broader than personal, for example when related to the society or the nation etc. It is this usual human motive that is really the cause of *Karma*. When action is done without such a motive, when it is governed by a sense of duty without a personal choice, then the situation becomes different. The *sādhaka* learns to give up this common motivation and work with a spirit of consecration to the Divine. He takes up every work as a sacrifice to the Divine, and does it in the spirit of offering his energies to the Master of works. So done, action is not vitiated by the elements of ego and desire which create their own reactions in the field of work.

The English word 'sacrifice' does not do justice to the concept of *yajña* in the tradition of the *Gītā*. In sacrifice, there is some shade of pain, self-denial, whereas in work offered and done in the spirit of this Yoga there is a joy of serving selflessly. The Mother uses the term consecration, for this word has the connotation of 'making sacred'. The seeker makes an act holy, sacred by offering it to the Divine.

And the test that he has truly offered it to the Divine is in the way he regards the result of the work. In offering his works to the Divine he retains no claim to the fruit of works. Those too he leaves to the Divine Will. He takes them as coming from the Divine and learns to accept them with an attitude of equality. Failure and success do not weigh with him as they normally do in every-day life. To offer and exert himself in the spirit of that offering is his concern. Whether the effort suc-

ceeds or fails to succeed is not his pre-occupation. Not that he is indifferent. He takes full interest in what he does but his effort is not result-oriented. To work is its own reward. Work, for him, is a means for dedicating himself and his energies to the Divine and he welcomes it from that standpoint. It is a means of approach to the Divine in the sphere of his dynamic will.

When works are done for their own sake i.e. not for fulfilment of desire and without a constant eye to the results, there is less tension and the quality of the works improves. Further as they are offered to the Divine, the sādḥaka tries—in the measure of his sincerity—to do them as well, as perfectly as he can. For he cannot be negligent or indifferent; he cannot make a flawed offering to the Divine.

The Sādḥaka works for the Divine, he is a servitor of the Divine. He does works with love and devotion as his contribution to the Divine's manifestation. He welcomes works in the spirit of the Mother's mantra : 'Work is the body's prayer to the Divine'. Whatever work comes to him is holy. He does not make mental distinctions between high and low work, mental and manual work. Just as he has renounced his claim to the fruit of works, so he learns to give up his claim for the choice of works. All works are to him assignments from God.

In working for the Divine, in this manner, his sense of doership slowly dwindles. His devotion, his dedication, his remembrance of the Divine, intensifies and he feels a flowing of the force of the Divine, the *śakti*, in his being; he feels a constant guidance from within or above. Things are done which he alone, with his puny strength, could not normally have done. From being a servant of God he develops into an instrument of God.

While this transition is taking place or the state is being set, it is necessary for him to be vigilant and beware of any egoistic claims creeping in. It is easy, when the

Divine Śakti works through him, for the mind or the ego to think or feel that he is doing everything and claim the credit for himself. That is a danger to which many have succumbed. The only safeguard against such pitfalls is sincerity and humility.

The Sādḥaka succeeds in becoming a more and more perfect instrument of the Divine Śakti as he lets the Divine impulsion, Divine guidance, replace his own individual will and mind. He yields more and more room within himself to the workings of the Divine Will. As this progression develops, a slow change takes over his being. He feels increasingly identified with the Divine Śakti, the Divine Consciousness that fills and moves him. He is not aware of his separate existence, especially during spells of such inspired and guided work. He has no fatigue, no boredom. Every moment is an occasion for the streaming of a fresh current of the Divine Power, for a reaffirmation of the act of surrender and self-offering. He feels a child of the Divine, a portion of the Divine.

All along his devotion, with which he starts his consecration, goes on increasing and informing the different parts of his being. His devotion intensifies into love and he is filled with a melting love for the Master of his being. Works culminate in Love.

His sense of separativity thins. His ego dwindles, his desire drops off and he awakes to a growing sense of the infinitude of the Divine, the omnipotence of His Śakti. The light of Knowledge begins to shine in the depths and on the heights of his being. Even his body shares in this spreading knowledge and feels itself a vehicle of God. Works done in consecration lead to a true knowledge of Him to whom they are consecrated.

Works are not just a means for this spiritual conversion. Their role is not over with this liberation from ego and ignorance. Works, thereafter, become means for the

radiation of the Divine Consciousness that is being increasingly housed in the Sādhaka. They are, for him, a means to serve as a channel for the Divine's manifestation in the world, an enlightened and illumined live channel.

Love

As important as consecration is purification. It is indispensable for one who seeks to realize the divine consciousness to denude himself of all that is contrary to what he aspires for. The human is, in a sense, the meeting ground of the animal and the divine. He is a strong mixture of animality and divine potentiality. In yoga he is required to dispossess himself of the lower movements in his feelings, emotions, impulses and activities. When the Sādhaka looks into himself, he finds his emotional being a sea of waves of a conflicting character. He is a field of battle between movements that are *daivic* and those that are *adaivic*. In the symbology of the Vedic mystics, the soul of man is a constantly changing scene of war between the hosts of Darkness and the children of Light. It is up to man, at each moment, to tilt the balance in the direction he chooses.

It is a laborious way to fight with the lower impulses and powers of nature and eliminate them one by one. Sri Aurobindo asks the Sādhaka to take to a more positive way. Not to dwell too much on the negative side of things but to concentrate on the positive side which will steadily displace its opposite is his way. And the centre of this purity, the source of all that is divine in the seeker is in himself, in his soul. In this philosophy there are two souls in man the desire-soul in the front and the true soul, the psychic being, a concentration of divine consciousness, deep behind. Distinct from the physical being, *annamaya puruṣa*, distinct from the vital, *prāṇamaya*, distinct from the mental, *manomaya*, supporting all

of them from within, is the psychic being, the *caitya puruṣa*. The centre of this *caitya puruṣa* is called the psychic centre which is behind the yogic centre known as the *anāhata*.

The psychic being is the divine element in man. It is also the source of his divine potentialities, for example qualities and powers that are of a diviner nature, like harmony, peace, compassion, benevolence, love, devotion, and selflessness. It is in the measure in which the sādhaḥ taps this source, opens himself to its influence, that his nature gets purified. Usually this psychic *puruṣa* is behind the thick veil of the multiple ignorant nature and can only act indirectly in one's best moments. They are the moments when one feels pure, peaceful, generous, loving, friendly to every one and so on. It is the first step in this Yoga to awake to the presence of this psychic being within and clear the passage for its direct action in purging the nature of its lower elements and awake the higher elements that lead to the Divine and build the nature divinely.

But before one can thus awake and stay awake to the psychic influence, a minimum psychological and moral purification is necessary as, indeed, in all paths of yoga. The sādhaḥ must learn to abstain from movements that are of a gross type and make him gross : thoughts, emotions, impulses, physical activities that increase the element of the lower *prakṛti*, the darker vibrations and *samskāras* that are clearly ungodly. Both physically and psychologically, he must cleanse himself of the dross before he is ready to practise yoga. Negatively, to desist from such movements ; positively, to cultivate habits and traits that refine, subtilize, elevate and naturalize movements of the higher nature. The desire-soul must be attenuated. *Svādhyāya*, study of devotional and spiritual literature, and *satsanga*, company of the holy, are highly helpful at this stage.

Once this preliminary discipline becomes natural and there is an increasing turn to the Divine and things of the Divine, the *sādhaka* launches on his inner journey. His sole object is to become conscious of the divine centre, the psychic within himself. He turns his gaze inward. Whatever he may be doing by way of external activity, some part of his attention is always turned towards the heart region where the psychic is present. He does not allow any movement of the mind or the heart or the vital or the physical to cloud the soul—the soul in evolution being the psychic. He exerts himself to create a climate for the psychic to emerge and act. He does not allow contraries like egoism, desire, selfishness, cruelty, and hatred to pollute his personal air.

More actively, he engages himself in prayer, contemplation, meditation, worship—inner or outer or both—and adoration of the Divine. In meditation he concentrates in the heart and aims at plunging himself into the depths of his being. By steady practice, keen aspiration and will, he is able to shift his poise from the external consciousness to the inner. During these sessions of meditation he discovers things in himself and in his atmosphere that still pull him outward and downward; he takes steps to excise them from himself and pushes inward towards the sanctum of his soul. A stage comes when he does not need to push; he is pulled within as by a magnet. The influence of the psychic begins to act: he is filled with intense devotion, utter purity, innocence of a child of the Divine, a quiet joy. As he comes out of this communion, naturally this state tends to get diluted, but with vigilance and care it is possible to retain it and stabilize it more and more.

By such regular evocation, remembrance and affirmation of the psychic nature in daily life, there comes a thaw in the crust around the inner being, and the texture and pattern of life begin to change. More and

more the power of devotion for the Divine, the perception and feeling of the Divine around and a spontaneous urge to love and love in abandon, grow. This action of the psychic being, at first occasional, then intermittent, slowly takes a permanent shape. The *sādhaka* becomes a *sant*. This is a capital step in the first phase of the Integral Yoga of transformation.

But this emergence and establishment of the psychic being as the centre of life is not all. It remains to recast the entire nature in terms of the psychic consciousness. Thinking, feeling, impulsion, activity—all are cultured in the mould of the psychic. This is termed *psychicisation*. Being directly linked with the Divine above, the psychic cuts through all the ramifications of the mind, its reasoning, its limitations and has access direct to the source of knowledge. It has its own intuitions, intimations of truth, vibrations of identity, which it communicates to the being of the *sādhaka*. And these intimations make themselves felt with an authenticity that will not be questioned. To be open to the psychic is to be always open to the divine Truth and one who is thus guided needs no external standard. He lives in truth, speaks the truth and acts the truth.

The first fruit of the psychic realization is Love, entire Love of God. The acme of this Love is an identity with the Beloved, yielding an intimate Knowledge of His Existence. And both this Love and Knowledge pour themselves in varied acts of service, of adoration of His Presence in All.

Meditation

Meditation is the art of tuning oneself to a higher state of being or to the working of a higher Consciousness. The *sādhaka* suspends the normal outgoing movements of his mind and turns them in the direction of his spiritual objective.

Sri Aurobindo distinguishes between different types of meditation, *dhyāna*,

There is a method of meditation in which the mind is trained to dwell upon a single theme (*manana*), step by step, working out its several implications, looking at it from different angles; it may be an Idea or a Form or a Sound that forms the object; the mind moves upon it in sequence till it is filled by it and becomes one with it.

There is a way in which the mind is concentrated upon a single object; it is not allowed to shift. As a result of this concentration, the object yields the knowledge of its contents; this is the *dhyāna* of contemplation.

There is another way and that is to hold oneself as a witness and merely watch all the scenes and thoughts that pass across the screen of the mind; one does not participate but only observes what they signify. This is the *dhyāna* of self-observation.

Yet another method is to treat the thoughts as foreign and refuse to allow them to enter. This leads gradually to a vacation of the mind. It is the *dhyāna* of liberation inasmuch as it frees the mind from helpless subjection to the flow of thought-waves.

The *sādhaka* is advised to begin with the method that is easiest and therefore natural to him. Actually one learns to use all the forms of *dhyāna* as the *sādhana* progresses, according to the need of the situation.

But the practice of meditation is rarely a smooth process. Obstructions crop up and the most obstinate of them is the rush of thoughts, thoughts entirely extraneous to the purpose of the sitting. It looks as if thoughts increase when one wants to meditate. But that is not so. There are always swarms of thoughts floating about in the air, but men are normally too occupied with something or other to notice them. When one sits quiet, one begins to be aware of them and to notice their invasion, as it were.

There are a few ways of dealing with these distracting thoughts. One is to let them flow, but hold oneself back as a wit-

ness; one does not sanction, does not take part; gradually the movement of the thoughts slows down and ultimately they come to a stop.

The other is to be vigilant and keep the doors of the mind shut. After a furious onslaught, the invaders lose their force and give up. This is a difficult operation but if there is strength of will, one succeeds.

Yet another way is to ignore the thoughts and let them wander on the surface or the periphery of the mind. The main attention is kept centred on the object of meditation without allowing it to be distracted by the movement of casual thoughts on the surface. Thus one is aware of the movement of thoughts but the consciousness is active only in the selected field of attention. This leads gradually to a kind of bifurcation of consciousness by which the outer layer attends to routine matters while the main part stays gathered in a different poise.

Apart from the rush of thoughts, there is a certain wandering of the mind. This difficulty is more with those who are not normally accustomed to any discipline of the mind. Whatever they may be doing, they let their mind go off. That is an added handicap which can be eliminated only by a strong will and constant vigilance.

Then there is an involuntary sliding into sleep during the meditative exercise. Unless one is very *tāmasic* by nature, this kind of sleep is usually a reaction of the physical consciousness to the pressure of the mind to go within. The only movement away from external awareness means, for the body, going into the sleep state. And that is what happens when there is a movement to indraw oneself. This sleep, however, is different from the normal kind of sleep. It is a condition of the surface consciousness; within, the mind is gathered in itself and the process of meditation goes on. If one persists, the onset of sleep becomes less and less frequent.

Another difficulty is the restlessness of the system. The body is usually accustomed to a rhythm of the inflow and outflow of Prāṇic energy which is determined by its active and passive states. When, however, the body is made to sit immobile, the energy that gathers is more than what the physical body is normally accustomed to hold and there is a restlessness. This difficulty is usually anticipated and provided for by finding one's *āsana*. An *āsana* is that position of the body and its limbs in which one can sit for a length of time without feeling disturbed in any part; in a word, one should be able to forget the body.

Taking the right physical posture, keeping before himself the object of the meditation, the *sādhaka* holds the mind quiet and in a state of receptivity to the Divine Consciousness above the mind. He conceives of a Calm, a Peace, a Silence pervading above and around and opens himself to its action. Sri Aurobindo points out that it is easier and more natural to let the Peace and Silence enter into oneself than for oneself to acquire and hold to it. Accordingly the *sādhaka* of this path calls

for the descent of this Calm and Peace into himself and lays himself open to its action. It is a fact of spiritual experience that above all activity and movement there is a zone of silence; above every form there is a status of silence from where the overseeing Intelligence acts. The mind is gathered and kept with its lid open, as it were, to this Silence and Peace which begin to flow in and settle in it. Usually there is a sensation of coolness or a rocklike feeling. Slowly one is possessed by this action of the Higher Consciousness. The mind in meditation becomes like a blotting paper and absorbs what comes into it and enfolds it.

Thoughts, agitations, fantasies of whatever kind—all die down. There is a solid block of peace in the head, over the head and something of it begins to percolate through the heart, through the other parts of the being, a little by little. Even the body gets into a statuesque posture, in due course.

This is the beginning of the next movement in this yoga, the movement of spiritualization.

(To be continued)

‘Ask nothing; want nothing in return. Give what you have to give; it will come back to you—but do not think of that now, it will come back multiplied a thousandfold—but the attention must not be on that. Yet have the power to give: give, and there it ends’.

Swami Vivekananda



HUMAN TRENDS

PEOPLE OF THE NEW AGE

SWAMI YOGESHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

PART II : PRESENT TRENDS

Movements on the Right

We mentioned earlier the Hare Krishna devotees, most of whom were young WASP¹ Americans, drawn, even beyond their own imagining, into a whirlpool of new religious fervour openly expressed and aggressively evangelistic. Partly in reaction to these 'oddities', but having independent roots, there arose what came to be called collectively the 'Jesus Freaks'. They have no qualms about appearing just as outlandish, vagabond and exhortative as their Hindu counterparts, while proclaiming an ardent love of Jesus, as narrow and doctrinaire as any. Some of them travel like Gypsies, in a sort of caravan, or by the van-load around the Bible-Belt,² carrying their faith to the faithless and fallen.

But by far the most significant and impressive turn of events on the American religious Right, is the rise of the charismatic movement. Not confined to this con-

continent alone, it is spreading widely throughout other Christian countries, all the while changing the face of Christian worship and devotion. Truly it is an irony of fate that the practices (if not always the beliefs) of the Pentecostals (until the late 1970s a minor denomination comprising some less educated segments of society), consisting of emotional outbursts in song and exclamation, speaking aloud in 'foreign languages' (sometimes 'interpreted' by a clergyman on the platform), and invariably ending in healing sessions, by prayer, touch or both, should have spread in a very few years like subterranean fire, until nearly every main-line denomination, including the Roman Catholic has been forced to make a place for the movement, if not make way for it.

The charismatics sometimes work like 'fifth columnists', sending round to the traditional churches a musical revivalist, who first warms up the congregation with special new-type Gospel songs, all the words of which come straight from the Bible. Healing service follows; then suggestions for a charismatic enclave, as one of the church 'circles'. The writer was told by one of

1. White Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

2. The Mid-west and South, in parts of which the Bible is all-in-all.

their number that it is almost a game among them, to see who will be able to convert (not her word) the largest number of traditional congregations to the charismatic way.

This phenomenon of the ecstatic's giving utterance to what sounds like a foreign tongue (as reported of the followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost³) it being understood as a sign of the Holy Spirit falling upon him, will bear some pondering. Do we hear of it in India? I think not, nor as a concomitant of ecstasy in most other religions of the world, though it was found in some of the early religions like the Greek, and has cropped up periodically in Christian history. Does this lend weight to the claim of some psychologists that the devotee is going to experience what his society or community leads him, by its tradition and custom, to expect? And what does it say to the Vedantist who prefers to think that the human mind is much the same the world over, and that the phenomena of religion constitute a universal science?

What accounts for the spread of this deliberate cultivation of a soul-shaking 'baptism by fire'? Books, no doubt, are being written about it at this moment; what is certain is that the Christian churches, over-intellectualized and too long centered on a social gospel of good works which has not been able to change the world, was ready for a sea-change. But the charismatic movement is a surge on the Right, since it flows from fundamentalist and evangelical sources.⁴

Another, more political manifestation of the new conservatism of the New Age, is the Moral Majority, a vociferous and activist agglomeration of adherents of assorted

Rightist causes, led by a Southern Baptist preacher using the mass media to full advantage, and affecting a fair segment of the voting public. No one can begrudge them their right to public expression; but when they surreptitiously connive to have books withdrawn from public and school library shelves, most of us will agree that they have gone too far.

Movements on the Left

The drug culture: in a previous article in 'Human Trends' we have sketched out how the users of the psychedelic drugs, who bring down upon themselves a heap of deserved opprobrium, were nevertheless pioneers in breaking down the Western taboo on alterations in consciousness. We put into the balance the hypocrisy of critics, who are themselves users perhaps of alcohol, tobacco, 'speed-pills' and many others, and made a plea to those caught in the trap of the new addictions, to discover this extremely important fact: it is *not* the drug which gives the boost; that is a mere trigger; there are sounder and superior ways to go. Transformations of consciousness, a profound science long known to the yogis of India, do indeed cradle the key to the meaning of life; but the end and means have to be compatible. So we will say no more on the subject now, but will move on to other developments.

Women's Equality Movements

Indian women, we suppose, must be staring with mouth agape at the behaviour of their activist American sisters. But peace, gentle souls: it is only because we have lagged so far behind you, that we now have to witness the exaggeration a backlash always brings. Compare the stir caused by the appointment of a woman as justice of the U.S. supreme court with the aplomb with which India took its Prime Minister.

3. Acts, 2.

4. The influence on Western religion of the gradual absorption of its black minority elements, a story not yet fully told, weighs heavily here too, just as in music, art, etc., as described in Part I.

The New Age woman is determined not only to be the 'equal' of man but also to be so accepted. Equal pay for equal hours; no discrimination in hiring, or on boards and committees; her work in the home evaluated on a wage-basis; the right to reverse roles (going out to work while the husband keeps house); these are some of her demands. And if one asserts that it is ridiculous to expect girls' athletic teams to compete equally with boys', the reply comes, 'Let us play in mixed teams and you will see, in time, how we develop!'

Society here is trying to minimize the mental and biological differences between man and woman. Clothes are designed for the Unisex. When it recently became necessary to buy a new pair of shoes, I asked the sales-lady to direct me to the men's shoes department. 'Oh, there's no distinction like that any more; the shoes are all over there', was her reply.

Coming to matters more serious and closer to home, the New Age women, in sexual and social custom, are protesting what has never before been challenged on a massive scale—the double standard for defining chastity differently for men and for women. Sensing this in the wind, Swami Vivekananda made that remark in a Western interview: 'I would very much like our women to have your intellectuality, but not if it must be at the cost of purity'.⁵ In regard to Vedanta monasticism and the Ramakrishna Order, it and the emancipated woman seem to be on something of a collision course. How are they going to come to terms? The problem is, how to preserve the life-style and atmosphere a monastic community feels it requires, when the public (consisting very often of women) have access to it and contact with it, as conforms to the social expectations of Western people. It is essential that the monks maintain their

traditional purity and isolation by making the other sex understand the imperative of this *without making them feel discriminated against on the basis of their gender*. One cannot help feeling that our monks have not always been careful about this. And what has the Movement offered to Western women in the way of monastic life? There is justification for feeling that the Order has hobbled itself to a certain extent, by going along like this on only one leg.

The pressure on public officials to appoint to governing bodies, members of 'minorities' even waving their lack of qualification (wellknown in India in another context), is so heavy that perhaps a society can endure only one such pressure at a time. It may be for this reason that the progress in civil rights and integration for racial minorities has slowed.

Hypno-regression; astrology; herbology; psychometry and other ESP phenomena

Called quackeries by the rock-ribbed establishment, these are play-fields for many persons of the New Age. These hypnotists (not, generally, quacks, but accredited scientists) purport to regress us (wakening old mental associations, retracing *samskāras*) to childhood, babyhood—and then to the recall of previous lives! And big books full of case histories of hundreds of persons undergoing this experience through hypnosis, are selling well. Westerners seem to prefer to get others to do for them what the Indian yogi would think it proper to do for himself. The 'previous-life' accounts given by these subjects are curious indeed. Let the Vedantist who might wish to jump aboard this raft of apparent proof of reincarnation, beware: skeptical psychologists are giving all sorts of explanations of how the subject is unconsciously fabricating what he or she thinks the hypnotist wants to elicit. In defense, the regressors are

⁵ *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), Vol. 5, p. 412.

inventing their better safeguards to prevent that possibility : and so it goes.

Astrology, which has accompanied man throughout his history, East or West, was almost thrown on the scrap-heap in the West, with the advent of the scientific age, its territory divided up between astronomy and psychology. But astrology was much too tough to give up the ghost so early (as India's preoccupation with it shows), and is experiencing a grand revival in the New Age mentality.

Is there a distinct personality-type with which to characterize the new style of life and thought? Do the same persons who buy at the Health Food Store also grow herbs and make herb-tea to treat their illnesses? Visit a 'psychic' to have their palms read? Submit their aching backs to the manipulations of chiropractor or naturopath—or anyone but a regular Doctor of Medicine? Hold in their hands something long worn by someone else and divine the character of that person (this is called psychometry) by extra-sensory perception? Do they analyze their dreams in little groups of like-minded persons? The answer is often yes. But perhaps just as often, the individual is ready for only one or two of these adventures at a time. All of them, and more, belong in this picture, and each is worthy of depicting in detail, but here we have had to content the reader with mere sketches.

Creative sleep

By far the most provocative for a Vedantist (at least for this one) of the new trends, is the experimentation going on in sleep and dream. We shall devote more discussion therefore to this development. The writer recalls having asked, years ago, one of the Indian Swamis guiding our monastery, whether the advanced *sādhaka* attempts and succeeds in controlling his dreams. 'Ah'! was his smiling reply, 'probably if

that is going to be done, it will be in *this* country (U.S.A.)'. And sure enough, some twenty years later I asked a friend, nineteen years of age, whom I met at a conference, what his hobby was 'Lucid dreaming', he replied; 'I practice lucid dreaming'.

Many people are doing so. A lucid dream is one in which you realize that you are dreaming. The implications of having a vivid sense of this are obvious to the Advaita Vedantin : here in the waking state too, we are dreaming, the World-Dream. Could we but realize this, we might wake up to Reality. And this too can be *practised*. But let us hear more about these new dreamers.

The New Age exploratio of sleep is advancing on two fronts, external and internal. In the former, sleep laboratories have been set up (twenty existed in 1974 in the U.S.) wherein volunteers submit to spending the night with electrodes taped to their heads, and under close observation by trained psychologist. The entire pattern, in terms of brain waves, of human sleep and dream, has thus been charted over the past dozen years, with somewhat surprising statistical results. The famous 'rapid eye-movements' have been conclusively identified as the manifestation of active and vivid dreams. In a normal night, the four or five periods of active dreaming are separated by periods of the low mental activity we traditionally call deep sleep. To paraphrase the Upanisad, 'Just as a large fish moves along both banks of a river, so this Person moves, between the two states of dreaming and deeper sleep'.⁶

Other laboratory experiments have dealt with sleep and dream deprivation : subjects being kept awake as long as possible to see the effects upon them ; or being wakened from sleep every time they give evidence of dreaming. Here the most interesting conclusion has been that there is a fundamen-

6. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.3.18

tal (biological?) *need* for dreaming—even more than a need for sleep in general. In other words, deprived of dream for long enough, the volunteers began to do it anyway—by hallucinating in the waking state!

The 'inner' exploration of sleep is much more unconventional. It is done not in laboratories, of course, but by individuals, and by small groups of 'devotees'. The young man who gave his hobby as lucid dreaming happens to belong to a club for dream study: he and his friends record and report to each other their dreams, possible interpretations, and attempt to assist each other in learning better control in the next ones. This is not something quite new in the world. Anthropologists have studied well the culture and habit of a whole community or tribe of people in Malaysia, known as the Senoi. Strange as it sounds to us, these amazing specimens of the human race (now almost totally 'modernized' by outside contact) taught their children to report all dreams at breakfast. Their courageous and socially beneficial dreams were commended, and where necessary the children instructed to behave in such and such a way in the next such dream. The Senoi's daily life, individually and as a community, depended upon dream guidance and the *integration* of the dream and waking states.

Books, some of them written by Ph.D.s in clinical psychology, are current and popular, assisting these yogis-of-the-dream-state to pursue their objectives. What are those objectives? Some are unquestionably worldly: having happier dreams, experiencing the sensation of flying, meeting your loved one; but other objectives seem definitely beneficial in psychological or even spiritual terms: ridding oneself of nightmares or sleepwalking, learning to integrate or absorb into one's personality the lessons about oneself which many in the West believe ordinary dreams are trying to tell us, through their symbolism, developing

one's powers of creative or analytic thought (which can be shown as actually happening in lucid dreams)—and last, and perhaps best, simply the achieving of lucidity itself: the awareness that you are fabricating your own drama. In this practice one tries *not* to become so lucid as to wake up, but rather to continue the dream as a conscious constructor of its content.

The instructions, for instance, for combating one's evil dream-creatures remind us of Swami Vivekananda and his lesson on the day the monkeys chased him: 'Face the brutes!' You are to learn how, in your dream, to turn fearlessly upon your foes. These advocates make much of the psychological value, in controlling dreams, of *faith*: faith in high moral principle, in God or saints or angels—faith, they generously declare, in anything you like, will be effective.

It is important to note the theoretical basis on which today's dream interpreters operate. Following the eminent psychologist C. G. Jung, they tell us, 'Everyone and everything you see in your dream is an aspect of yourself'. *Which* self is not specified; nor does it mean (as in the Upanishads) simply that oneself is the light, or source, for all this nocturnal drama; it refers to psychological symbolism, for example, if I dream of my bearded mathematics professor, this perhaps represents my studious self, my ratiocination, the scholarly and reasoning aspect of my nature. And so on with all the rest.

Let us hear another remarkable statement from one of these books. 'You may think of the dream-state as another, albeit very special, level of reality'. Now the radicalness of such a statement may possibly escape our readers, accustomed to the Vedanta philosophy. But this is a dramatic admission and achievement on the part of the Western mind! For it, the gross material of the waking world has been the measure of reality, for these many centur-

ies. If one looks through the *opus* of Swami Vivekananda in the West, one will be hard put to find any passage relating to Śaṅkarācārya's several degrees of reality. Swamiji understood, perhaps, how little prepared for that his hearers were. But today's psychology is different.

Unless you have had some experience in lucid dreaming, you will find it difficult to believe the astonishing claims made for that state by those who cultivate it. (They read much like the claims of Patañjali about the yogic powers.) You can do just about anything you like—fly here and there, forward or backwards, walk over water, meet and talk with your friends, change your form, multiply it into various aspects, visit Tibet (of course, whether your encounter tallies with anything now present in the physical Tibet is another question; at any rate, *you* will be satisfied that you visited Tibet, or anywhere else). Actually your greater reward is the feeling of power and control which comes with *combining* the freedom the mind has in dream *with* the self-consciousness of the Doer and the Enjoyer. It is acknowledged, however, that there is a limit to one's control in lucid dreams.

Returning to external experimentation on dream in the laboratories, we must add that the sleeping subject can be taught to press, while asleep, a signal button fastened in his palm which will indicate to fellow-researchers when his dream has become lucid! Can we still recognize as sleep such a state of affairs?

One of these writers ends her treatise on a most philosophical note: 'Life,' she says, 'is perhaps just another layer of dream'. It sounds like Lewis Carroll. And just here lies the most welcome and promising note of the whole dream-study process, for us, attracted to the Vedanta philosophy and psychology. If I can practice, through my dreams, becoming aware that I am dreaming, and that my 'truer' state lies beneath

this phantasmagoria, perhaps it will reinforce my attempt to practise a similar wakefulness, dispelling my *avidyā* in the waking state as well.

Now a Vedantist may like to raise some questions about the spiritual value, if any, of this creative dreaming. Does it really give a new dimension to Arjuna's epithet, *gudākeśa*—conqueror of sleep? Take the case of our waking ego. The ego in ordinary dreams is pallid and nebulous by comparison, as a rule. If we now extend the domain of the former into the dream state, strengthening its role as Doer and Enjoyer, setting it up as Master of the dream world, it will be what egos always are—often fat, sensuous, selfish, and even more so. Then too, the strictures of social pressure we feel in the presence of others, in waking life, not being present there, the dreaming ego would take liberty as license. Nothing will be gained spiritually by this. It may be that the *jīva* has, in some modern sense, gone to a heaven.

On the other hand, one of the aims of religion according to Swami Vivekananda is to bring the unconscious under the control of the conscious.⁷ And, 'Broadly speaking,' he says, 'the proper use of any of the faculties of our mind and body is termed virtue, and its improper application or waste is called vice'.⁸ In dreaming haphazardly we may be wasting or misusing our mental powers. Can it be that sleep has been judged spiritually neutral only because we have not learned to use it correctly? If the spiritual aspirant whose aims are pure and whose understanding of his position is clear, can make progress in the control of undesirable thought and action through lucid dreaming, it surely bodes well. The

7. 'True psychology would ... try to bring the unconscious under the control of the conscious ... The next step is to go beyond the conscious.' *Complete Works* (1976), vol. 2, p. 35.

8. *Complete Works* (1973), vol. 5, p. 337.

teachers of Vendanta generally tell us that if we take care of our conscious mental life, via the waking state, the subconscious will gradually take care of itself, and that is the usual practice, and for many it has been successful. This does not seem automatically to rule out doing it another way; and as a matter of fact, the control of dreaming is a well-known yogic practice in Tibetan Buddhism. Swamiji himself said, 'By the control of the subconscious mind, you get control over the conscious'.⁹

Another criticism may be levelled against the idea of taking all dreamfigures as 'aspects of oneself'. As one sharp dissector of the American character points out:

We Western people . . . are trying to be several selves at once, without all our selves being organized by a single, mastering Life within us. Each of us tends to be, not a single self, but a whole committee of selves. There is the civic self, the society self, the professional self, the literary self. And each of our selves is in turn a rank individualist, not cooperative but shouting out his vote loudly for himself when the voting time comes.¹⁰

9. *Complete Works* (1978), vol. 6, p. 32.

10. Thomas Kelly, in *Testament of Devotion* (New York: Harper & Bros. 1941), pp. 114-15.

Whether the Jungian method of dream analysis can make any measurable improvement in this chronic condition remains to be demonstrated.

In sum, we can say with the Senoi people (who used to demand of their dream-visitors some gift that would be beneficial to society), if all this 'creative dreaming' be productive of the greater revelation of Truth, and truly helps us to 'wake up' and wake others up, then we are for it! 'Be bold and face the Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease, or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams, which are Eternal Love and Service Free'.

From all of the foregoing it seems to be clear that religion is being vastly redefined, and is exploding in all directions. The next pervasive effect will come from the present influx of millions of Hispanic immigrants. That influence is difficult to classify as leftist or rightist, but it is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. Its result only the future can disclose.

(Concluded)

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

GHERANDA SAMHITA: Edited and translated by SWAMI DIGAMBARJI and DR. M. L. GHAROTE. Published by Kaivalyadham S.M.Y.M. Samiti, Lonavla 410 403. 1978. Pp. xviii+196. Rs. 30.

Gheranda Samhita is one of the two most authoritative treatises on yoga, both *hatha* and *rāja*, the other one being *Hatha-yoga pradipikā*. It deals with six techniques to make the body strong, and *āsana*, *mudrā*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*—in all 102 practices of varied techniques. The book is in the form of Rishi Gheranda's advice to his disciple Chandakapali as to how to practice all these and attain liberation. Many of his instructions are cryptic and

so a teacher should be there to explain the details and intricacies of the system. Many yogis and pundits have tried to translate this treatise with their own commentaries. Among these, the book under review is a reliable one. Both scholars and *sādhakas* will find it very useful and authoritative.

The present book contains an informative introduction, notes, cross-references, and a detailed index. Thirty art plates show the correct postures and techniques of the fifty-two *sat-karmas*. Translation is literal and true to the text. The editors have added some notes but it would have been better if more detailed notes had been given. Moreover, personal experiences of the editors regarding the practice of these techniques, if

given in the notes, would help the readers more. Yoga covers a part of physiology, psychology, medicine, and also psychotherapy. So, we request the editors to re-define some yogic practices in modern terms in the next edition so that yoga becomes helpful not only to the sādhas but to common people also. Yoga is a much misunderstood discipline, especially in the West. The best way to understand it is to go to the original sources with the help of an experienced teacher. Since such teachers are rare, books of this kind need an elaborate introduction explaining the rationale of yoga, the dangers and pitfalls involved in its practice, the right attitude needful for understanding it, etc.

Printing, paper, and get-up of the book are satisfactory. For a book of this kind with so many photographs, the price is very moderate.

SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA
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ZOROASTRIANISM : BY G. M. JAGTIANI.
Published by G. M. Jagtiani, D/22, Self-Help Housing Society, St. Francis Road, Vile Parle (W), Bombay 400 056 1981. Pp. V+56. Rs. 5.

This is one of the most interesting books on Zoroastrianism to come out in recent years. Zoroastrianism is known in India as the religion

of the Parsis—a small, prosperous, well-knit religious community which has identified itself with the life and culture of the people of India. Though the Parsis have played a leading role in the advancement of commerce and industry in India, most Indians know very little about their religion and social customs. There has never been a Hindu-Parsi conflict or problem. What inspired the Hindu author to undertake this unique work is his selfless love and admiration for these peace-loving, intelligent and noble-hearted people who form only a speck in the demographic map of India.

Within the covers of this small, beautifully printed book the author has packed lots of interesting information on different aspects of Parsi life. These include a brief account (based on Indian sources) of the early history of Parsis, a life-sketch of Zarathustra, fire-worship and the tower of silence. Sri Jagtiani's interest lies more in the social aspect of Zoroastrianism than in its philosophical doctrines. The author's approach is frank and sincere, and his discussions are lively. There is not a single dull page in this book. While the Parsis may find this book provocative, non-Parsis will find it stimulating and enlightening.

S. B.

NEWS AND REPORTS

VIVEKANANDA ASHRAMA, SHYAMALA TAL

REPORT FOR APRIL 1980 TO MARCH 1981

The Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamala Tal, was founded in 1914 by Swami Virajananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda and later the seventh President of the Ramakrishna Order. Started as a centre for meditation and spiritual practices in the secluded and serene surroundings of the Kumaoun range of the Himalayas at an altitude of 5,000 feet, Vivekananda Ashrama is now a well-developed institution with retreat facilities for monks and lay-devotees, a 15-bed indoor/outdoor hospital, a veterinary clinic, an apiary, a huge water reservoir with a capacity of 6 lakh litres of water, and a large orchard and flower garden of wide repute.

The Ashrama retreat provides accommodation for some 35 persons at a time. Besides regular evening *arati* and *Ramnam sankirtan* on every

Ekadasi day, annual festivals like the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Holy Mother are celebrated, in which the local people and villagers join and partake of *prasad*.

The hospital and the veterinary departments are the only source of medical help to the people within a range of 54 miles between Tanakpur and Champawat. Therefore, patients come from long distances, taking even 2 or 3 days to make the journey. Besides free treatment, patients are supplied free medicines and injections. Indoor patients are also supplied free diet, tea, milk and kerosene oil. During the year the hospital treated 47 indoor patients and 11,627 outdoor patients (new : 3,060; repeated cases : 8,567). The veterinary department treated 67 animals, including cows, buffaloes, bulls, calves and goats.

The Ashrama water reservoir supplies drinking water to the local villagers during summer and drought periods as well as to the hospital,

Immediate requirements : 1. The hospital being an important source of medical aid in this poverty-stricken and inaccessible region of the Himalayas, it is receiving an increasing number of patients every year. The immediate needs of the hospital are free medicines, injections, rugs, utensils, and proper bedding for the wintry climate. 2. The Ashrama has a small library which requires recent publications on socio-cultural and spiritual subjects. 3. The Ashrama itself has depended almost entirely on donations from the public for the past sixty-six years of its existence. The beneficent public is requested to continue its kind support of the Ashrama and hospital by sending generous contributions in cash and kind to: The President, Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamala Tal, P.O. Sukhidhang, Dist. Pithoragarh, U.P. 262 523.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, BARANAGORE

REPORT FOR APRIL 1980 TO MARCH 1981

Religious and Cultural : Weekly religious classes were held on Saturdays. There was Ramnam sankirtan and Bhajan every Edakasi day. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated, as were the birthdays of various Incarnations and Prophets of the world. The Secretary delivered religious discourses about sixteen times a month outside the Ashrama.

Medical : The Homocopathic Charitable Outdoor Dispensary treated 56,469 patients (New: 3,904 ; old : 52,565).

Educational : The Centre runs a Higher Secondary Multipurpose School having as its feeder institutions a Primary School, two Junior Basic School units and two Junior High School units. During the year the number of students stood as follows : Madhyamik School, 1,055 ; the two Junior Basic Schools, 411 boys and 16 girls ; Primary School, 242 boys and 11 girls. Various extra-curricular activities were provided for the students, such as drills and military-style parade, physical exercises, seasonal open-air sports, and annual sports, competitions, and educational tours of West Bengal and outside.

The school library had 5,142 books. There is also an Area-library with a spacious reading-room. It had 10,451 books. The audio-visual unit had nine films—Trailanga Swami, Rani Rasamani, Bhārater Sādhak, Sādhak Rāmprasād, Sri Ramakrishna, Vama-Kshepa, Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Dada Thakur and Mahisasur Badh—which were screened at the Centre and in remote villages. In all sixty-nine showings were given during the year, with an average attendance of 550.

Contributions, which are exempt from Income-tax, may be sent to The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, 37 Gopallal Tagore Road, Calcutta 700 036.

ABOUT PALLIMANGAL

Although the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission are dedicated particularly to the uplift of the masses from their very inception, with a view to quickening the process of eradication of poverty and illiteracy along with their disastrous effects on society, the twin Organizations have initiated integrated rural development programme, called Pallimangal, in late 1980.

Jayrambati in Bankura and Kamarpukur and 15 other villages in Hooghly in West Bengal have been chosen for the Pilot Projects.

So far 392 families of these villages have been covered by various programmes, namely, Agriculture, Pisciculture, Dairy Development, A.I. Centre, Poultry, Cottage Industries, Weaving, small business, etc. Mobile Medical Service gave free treatment to about 35,000 patients. Other public health programmes are also undertaken from time to time. Veterinary service has been arranged. Night Schools and Non-formal Schools have been opened for those who are unable to take the benefit of the existing schools.

On the 16th of March last, a Pallimangal Sponsored Bakery was inaugurated by Swami Abhay-anandaji at Jayrambati.

Pallimangal is financed by public donations approved under section 35 CCA of Income Tax Act. Till March 1982, a sum of nearly Six Lakhs Rupees have been disbursed for Pallimangal work described above.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Religion and Rural Reconstruction

One of the mistakes committed in rural planning in India was to ignore the deeply entrenched inequalities inherent in village communities. This had been pointed out by Dr. Ambedker who was against accepting the village as the basic unit in planning. Outwardly a village may appear to be a self-contained unit, but internally it is riven by deep socio-economic disparities. Socially the village is divided into castes, economically it is divided into land-owning and landless communities. Before economic uplift is attempted it is necessary to integrate village life, and for this the inegalitarian institutions and mutually exclusive attitudes are to be changed first. How to do this is the basic problem in rural reconstruction.

There are four possible ways of overcoming inequalities in village life and achieving integration.

1. Large-scale industrialization. This was successfully attempted in Europe. In India the sheer size of the country, its predominantly agricultural economy and the utter backwardness of the villages make total industrialization impossible.
2. Collectivization—converting villages into communes, attempted with varying success in communist countries. Democratic polity precludes this method.
3. The Gandhian or Sarvodaya approach. This is a secular ethical approach based on the superiority of moral force over the forces of evil. The actual method is to appeal to the human conscience to renounce selfishness and work like members of one family for the common welfare of the village community. Though earlier experiments with this method mostly ended in failure, new attempts are now being made to re-vitalize the Gandhian Sarvodaya ideal in villages.
4. The religious approach. Religion is the backbone of India, said Swami Vivekananda. This is of course true of India as a whole but it is specially true of Indian villages. Religion is the most powerful force shaping the life of the Indian villager. He is most sensitive to it. The best way to change his heart and open his mind to the collective welfare of the whole village community is to appeal to his religious sensibility.

Religion has therefore a constructive role to play in rural reconstruction. And yet this point has neither been practically applied nor even recognized by the Government. There are several reasons for this. One is the policy of secularism adopted by the Government which makes religion a taboo. The second reason is the fear that encouragement to religion may lead to inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts. This fear is baseless for secularism has not succeeded in preventing communal disturbances. The third reason is the belief that the popular religion prevalent in villages is rather primitive and full of superstitions. This is only partly true, for even the poorest villager has some idea of the spiritual principles of higher religion.

It is clear that till now only the lower and negative aspects of religion have been stressed. The time has come to teach the higher and positive aspects of religion to the Indian villager, awaken his moral responsibility to his fellow men and motivate him to work for the uplift of the community. It was the firm conviction of Swami Vivekananda that Hindu religion has certain common spiritual principles which, if properly applied at the individual, social and national levels, could solve the problems of reconstruction and rejuvenation of the Indian society. This is the field where non-sectarian religious agencies can play a vital role.
