



# Prabuddha Bharata

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

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

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

अष्टौ पुत्रासौ अदितेर्ये जातास्तन्वस्परि ।  
देवाँ उप प्रैत्सप्तभिः परा मार्ताण्डमास्यत् ॥

1. Aditi<sup>1</sup> has eight sons<sup>2</sup> born from her body. With seven she approached the gods. The eighth, the Sun (Mārtāṇḍa), she sent up high.

*Rg-Veda 10.72.8*

सप्तभिः पुत्रैरदितिरुप प्रैत्पूर्य्य युगं ।  
प्रजायै मृत्यवे त्वत्पुनर्मार्ताण्डमाभरत् ॥

2. With seven sons Aditi went to the age before [the birth of the gods].<sup>3</sup> But she bore the Sun again for the birth and death [of human beings].<sup>4</sup>

*Rg-Veda 10.72.9*

\* The hymn on the creation of gods is concluded here.

1. The word Aditi is derived from the root *do* meaning 'to divide', and so literally means 'the undivided', 'the Infinite', but is spoken of as a deity in the Vedas and the Purāṇas. In the Purāṇas Aditi is described as the daughter of Dakṣ and wife of Kasyapa by whom she became the mother of the twelve Adityas (Primal Luminaries). She also became the mother of Vāmana, an Incarnation of Viṣṇu. Aditi of the Vedas is the prototype of the Divine Mother of later Hinduism. Yāska calls her Deva Mātā, mother of the gods. In the *Katha-Upaniṣad* (4.7) she is identified with Hiraṇyagarbha, the Supreme Deity. The *Mahānārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad* (28.1) refers to her as *sarva bhutanam mātā*, the Mother of all beings.

2. According to Sāyana, the eight sons are : Mitra, Varna, Dhata, Aryaman, Amsa, Bhaga, Vivasvan and Aditya. In later mythology the number was raised to twelve which included Pūsan, Tvasta, Rudra and Visnu, and all of them were called Adityas.

3. The idea implied here seems to be that three quarters of the glory of the infinite Divine are in the unmanifested realms, only one quarter is manifested as the sun and the universe.

4. The life and death of human beings are determined by days and nights produced by the sun.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL deals with the place of the Ideal in man's spiritual quest.

In MONASTICISM AND ITS DUTY TO SOCIETY TODAY Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President-General, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, stresses the need for making monasticism more relevant to the needs of contemporary society. It was originally delivered as a speech on 4 December 1981 at a public meeting held in the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal, and was chiefly addressed to the large number of Hindu Sannyasins and Mandales'vars who attended it.

Swami Ranganathanandaji, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and President of the Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, is internationally known for his interpretation of the universal message of Sawmi Vivekananda and for his outstanding contribution to the integration of science and Vedanta into a unified humanistic discipline. On 1 January 1982 he delivered a lecture on THE SCIENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE LIGHT OF VEDANTA AND YOGA at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-

sciences, Bangalore. We are presenting here the first instalment of this brilliant inter-disciplinary study of human consciousness.

LIFE WITHIN THE KOREAN MEDITATION HALL by Shakya Ham Wol gives you an idea of the intensely meditative life led by the Buddhist monks of South Korea and also provides valuable insights into Zen. The author is an Australian born Buddhist monk of Song Kwang Sa monastery on Chogye Mountain in South Korea. We are grateful to Mrs. Yvonne Malykke for permission to reprint the article from the August, 1981 issue of *Cosmos*, an informative monthly journal on holistic life published from Australia.

In the first instalment of IS BUDDHISM A RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM UPANISADIC HINDUISM? Dr. Sushanta Sen examines the status of Buddhism as a 'rebel child' of Hinduism. The article is based on a lecture delivered at the University of Birmingham in 1971 by the author who is a Reader in the Department of Philosophy and Religion, Visvabharati University, Santiniketan.

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## SPIRITUAL QUEST—THE IDEAL

(EDITORIAL)

### *Śraddha or goal-orientation*

After attaining the highest illumination the Buddha, it is said, sat under the Bodhi tree for seven days and nights absorbed in the bliss of that experience. Then he arose and declared—the first words uttered by the Buddha : 'Opened are the gates of immortality. Ye who have ears to hear,

release your faith !'<sup>1</sup> Six years before that he had set out on a quest with the faith that there must be an ultimate spiritual solution to the problems of life, and now that faith was transmuted into illumination.

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1. अपावृतं तेषाम् अमृतस्य द्वारम् ।

हे श्रोतृवन्तः प्रमुञ्चन्तु श्रद्धाम् ॥

From faith to illumination—that is the field of man's spiritual quest.

The first great change that turns a person from wordly life to spiritual life is the dawn of a new faith in him—the faith in an ultimate spiritual solution to the problems of life. Mere belief in the existence of God is not enough to make a person spiritual. Spiritual life begins only when this belief gets energized into a dynamic faith in the possibilities of the soul and issues forth as a conscious motivation to attain an ultimate spiritual goal.

Both belief and faith are the result of processes going on in those unknown regions of the mind which psychologists call the 'unconscious'. But there are basic differences between the two. Vātsyāyana speaks of two functions of knowledge: one to reveal the existence of objects (*artha-paricchitti*), and the other to help in the attainment of some purpose in life (*phala-prāpti*).<sup>2</sup> Belief belongs to the first category while faith belongs to the second category. Belief is only a form of passive, limited, broken knowledge, while faith is something dynamic and total. Faith is more than knowledge, for it inspires the will. It is the orientation of the will towards an ultimate goal.

In ordinary life the will is kept in check by ignorance and instincts and is directed to various objects of desire. A stunted will keeps spiritual growth stunted. In order to attain his full spiritual stature man must first of all release his will from its limitations. When the will is freed from the hold of its restrictions and is directed to an ultimate goal, it becomes what is called *śraddha* or true faith. That is why Buddha exhorted, *pramuñcantu śraddhām*, 'Release your faith!'. Thus true faith means goal-orientation. Vyāsa in his commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* defines *śraddhā* as

'the mind's clear view (of the goal)'.<sup>3</sup> The well-known existentialist theologian Paul Tillich echoes this when he defines faith as 'a state of being ultimately concerned'.

A person's character and conduct depend upon the temper and direction of his will. Hence faith determines our whole attitude towards life and the general course of action we follow. That is why the *Gītā* says, 'A person's nature is made up of his faith; as his faith is, so is he.'<sup>4</sup> In spiritual life faith is what the mariner's compass is to a ship: it keeps pointing in the right direction. Owing to the influence of instincts and impressions of past experiences, the soul may stray away from the main spiritual path into side-tracks of worldliness. But faith, working beneath the surface consciousness, draws the errant soul back to the main path again and again. When you are engaged in various activities you may find it difficult to remember God constantly or keep your mind concentrated on the higher Self. But you have nothing to fear as long as your actions are supported by a strong and pure faith, that is, as long as your will remains fixed on the ultimate goal.

Indeed, true *śraddhā* is a spiritual aspirant's greatest asset. Vyāsa pays a beautiful tribute to it: 'Like a fond mother, the source of all blessings, it protects the Yogi.'<sup>5</sup> In the midst of all the trials and tribulations of life, in the midst of all the changes and uncertainties of life, there is no greater support and source of strength to a spiritual aspirant than an unshakable faith. It is equally important to all aspirants tread-

2. See, Vātsyāyana's commentary on *Nyāya-Sūtra* 1.1.1.3.

3. श्रद्धा चेतसः संप्रसादः । Vyāsa, Commentary on *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.20. Vācaspati explains *samprasāda* as 'joyful longing for the ultimate goal'.

4. श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 17.3

5. सा जननीव कल्याणी योगिनं पाति ।

Vyāsa on *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.20

ing the paths of Karma, Yoga, Bhakti and Jñāna. In Hindu scriptures faith is considered so vital that it is simply taken for granted, thereby avoiding the conflict between faith and reason that has plagued Western thought.

This true *śraddhā* or goal-orientation comes to a person at certain 'breaking points' in his life. Such a breaking point occurred in the life of young Naciketā when he saw his father giving away worthless cows as gifts. The Upaniṣad says that at that moment 'faith entered' the boy.<sup>6</sup> What this phrase means is that the boy's faith got released from its limitations and was directed to the ultimate goal of life. It was this faith that gave him the courage to renounce the world<sup>7</sup> and confront the King of Death with questions about man's ultimate spiritual destiny. The dawn of *śraddhā*, the turning of the will towards the goal, may take place suddenly when it is called a 'conversion'. Or it may be the result of a slow process of inner growth. Either way, it is a spontaneous phenomenon taking place in the unknown depths of the unconscious.

### *A map of spiritual life*

Goal-orientation begins as a vague intuition of an unknown goal. It naturally produces an intense desire to have a clear idea about the goal and the means of attaining it. This is something to be learned not from books but from an illumined Guru. In order to elucidate the nature of the goal and the means, religious teachers employ different paradigms or language-patterns. Each pattern represents a particular religious tradition. The Guru introduces the aspirant to the tradition to which he belongs.

The aspirant must, at least during the early period, stick to one tradition and follow the pattern of spiritual life belonging to that tradition.

Trying to find a spiritual solution to the problems of life is like trying to cure a disease. Life in this world is so full of sufferings and difficulties that it is itself called a disease, *bhava-roga*. This is not an altogether metaphorical expression, for the life that most people lead cannot be described as healthy. Even if they succeed in maintaining good physical health, they are far from being mentally healthy. Lust, hatred, greed, fear, vanity and delusion are moral diseases, and a mind affected by these is certainly sick. Turning to spiritual life is an attempt to regain the natural health and purity of the soul.

The ancient system of Indian medicine known as Āyurveda divides medical science into four branches: diagnosis of disease, its cause, its cure, and treatment. The Buddha based his teachings on a similar scheme through his Four Noble Truths: the existence of sorrow, the cause of sorrow, the cessation of sorrow and the way to the cessation of sorrow. The Buddhist Eight-fold Middle Path is included in the last one. It is not widely known that Patañjali's Yoga system too follows the same pattern and that the well-known *aṣṭāṅga* or Eight-limb Yoga is only a part of it. The four divisions of Yoga are:

1. *heya* or the thing to be removed—future suffering;
2. *hetu* or the cause (of suffering)—*avidyā* or ignorance;
3. *hānam* or the end (of suffering)—*kaivalya* or liberation;
4. *hānopāya* or the means of ending suffering—*aṣṭāṅga-Yoga*.<sup>8</sup>

A different model is used by the teachers of Vedānta. They divide spiritual life into three parts: *sādhya* or the goal to be

6. श्रद्धाऽऽविवेश । *Katha-Upaniṣad* 1.2.

7. This is the meaning of the boy's asking his father thrice 'Father, to whom will you give me?' See, *ibid* 1.4.

8. Cf. *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.16-28.

striven for, *sādhaka* or the striver, and *sādhana* or striving. In Advaitic treatises these are known as :

1. *prameya* or the object of knowledge—Brahman ;
2. *pramātā* or the knower—Jīva ;
3. *pramāṇa* or the means of knowledge—*śruti* or revealed scripture.

Sri Ramakrishna's favourite formula Bhāgavata-Bhakta-Bhagavān expresses a similar scheme.

The school of Rāmānujācārya follows a slightly different pattern which divides spiritual life into :

1. *tattva* or the ideal—the nature of Reality ;
2. *hita* or the practice—the means of attaining the Reality ;
3. *puruṣārtha* or the realization—value fulfilment resulting from realizing the Reality. This is the scheme we purpose to follow, as it provides a convenient map of the entire field of spiritual life.

#### *Tattva or nature of reality—the Ideal*

Before embarking on the spiritual quest the aspirant must have a holistic view of life, a clear idea of the whole Reality of which he himself is a part. What is needed is not a theoretical knowledge gained from books. The aspirant must be able to relate himself meaningfully to the world around him and the highest spiritual principle called God. This is not possible unless he has a clear understanding of his own real nature. These three—the soul, the universe and God or *jīva*, *jagat*, *īśvara*—constitute the triangle of reality known as *tattva*. Since the aspirant can have only a conceptual knowledge of it at first, it may be termed the Ideal (derived from the Greek root *idein*—to see, and hence meaning a view of the ultimate reality). The goal of life is to realize the Reality represented by the Ideal, that is, to convert the Ideal into direct experience.

#### *The soul*

Since one's concept of reality depends upon one's concept of oneself, the aspirant must first of all have a clear understanding of his own real nature. According to Vedānta the *jīva* or the soul is in its real essence the Ātman, the spirit which is eternally pure, self-luminous, free, immortal and an inseparable part of Brahman, the Supreme Spirit. This doctrine forms the foundation of ethics in Vedānta, and it is important that the aspirant should build his moral and spiritual life upon this foundation. To look upon oneself as the ever pure Ātman is the positive way of attaining purity. The negative attitude of looking upon oneself as a worthless sinner is not suitable for the practice of Yoga or Vedānta.

However, Vedānta also teaches that the real essential purity and perfection of the Ātman remains veiled or contracted in ordinary people. As Swami Vivekananda has said, the inherent divinity of man is in a potential state and the goal is to actualize it in life. The Upaniṣads describe the self of man as having several *kośas* or levels, dimensions. At each level man's understanding of reality changes. The three lower levels relate to the physical body, vital functions and the mind ; the normal life of most people is restricted to these levels. The higher levels belong to the realm of the Spirit. Furthermore, each level has several sub-levels. For instance, the mental level itself consists of different sub-levels of abstract thinking, imagination, sense-perception, emotions, etc., some of which lie wholly submerged in the unconscious, some partly jutting into the conscious, and some at the borderland between the conscious and the unconscious.

A beginner in spiritual life finds the centre of his awareness, his 'I', continually moving among these various levels. But gradually through introspection he learns two facts. One is that there is actually only

one true centre of awareness, and that what is changing is not the centre but the focus of consciousness. One may feel one's centre of consciousness at the heart or at the point between the two eyebrows. From there consciousness is focussed at all other planes. The second fact is that wherever the light of consciousness is focussed, that plane becomes real to him. For example, when consciousness is focussed at the plane of emotions, his emotions appear real to him; but when the focus is moved from there, the same emotions appear unreal to him. When consciousness is focussed at external objects, they appear real. How does a philosopher or a scientist discover new ideas? By focussing his consciousness at the abstract plane. Imagine a person standing at the top of a staircase in the dark with a flashlight in his hand. He can see only that step on which he directs his light. The self of man is like the staircase, each step standing for a particular level or plane. That plane at which consciousness is focussed becomes real to him.

This focussing of consciousness is an act of will. Most of our psychological problems come from the wrong focussing of consciousness. Desires and worries trouble us only when consciousness gets focussed at the lower planes. Brooding over them strengthens the wrong focussing and makes our problems worse. When the focus is shifted to higher planes, to thoughts of God, then the desires and worries of the lower planes lose their reality and stop haunting us. This shifting of focus can be done by exercising the will.

Every spiritual aspirant must first of all understand the difference between the centre of his consciousness and its focus. He should then try to seek the true spiritual centre and keep the focus of his consciousness as near to it as possible. The more he focusses his consciousness at the higher planes (through prayer, worship, meditation

and other disciplines) the more will spiritual life become real to him.

### *The world*

The second angle of the triangle of reality is *jagat*, the world we live in. We seldom realize how our attitude towards the world influence our attitude towards God. The well-known classification of aspirants into *ārta*, *arthārthī*, *jijñāsu* and *jñānī* found in the *Gītā* is actually based on the differences in man's attitude towards the world.<sup>9</sup> The *ārta* is the sufferer who wants to escape from his suffering; his attitude towards the world is one of helplessness and submission. The *arthārthī* is one who wants wealth and power; he has an aggressive attitude towards the world. The *jijñāsu* is one who seeks to understand the mystery of life; his attitude towards the world is marked by inquisitiveness and search. The increasing number of scientists and intellectuals, who are now trying to study Zen, Yoga and meditation with the help of bio-feedback and various electronic gadgets, belong to this category. The *jñānī* is one who seeks God-realization alone, knowing it to be the highest goal of life; his attitude towards the world is one of detachment. A spiritual aspirant must know to which group he belongs.

After classifying aspirants into four types Śrī Kṛṣṇa states that *jñānī*, the fourth type is superior to the other three types.<sup>10</sup> From this it is clear that the attitude of the *jñānī* is the most desirable one for a spiritual aspirant. In order to cultivate this attitude we must have a right understanding of the nature of the world. Living as we do in the modern world, it is difficult to remain uninfluenced by the discoveries of Western science. Through the scientific method a vast body of accurate knowledge regarding the nature of the physical world has been

9. Cf. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 7.16.

10. *ibid.*, 7.17.

gained. Though this knowledge is limited and incomplete, it would be unwise to ignore its validity and practical utility. An intelligent aspirant makes the best use of the insight into the mystery of matter and life that science provides in order to support and supplement the holistic world view provided by Vedanta.

The different schools of Vedanta, however, hold different views regarding the nature of the world. These can be divided into two main groups depending upon whether they look upon the world as real or unreal. A careful study will reveal that the apparent differences between these two groups are based on how they interpret the term 'real' and how they define truth. All schools are agreed upon two points: that the ultimate cause of the universe is the spiritual principle Brahman, and that the universe passes through cycles of evolution and involution. According to some schools Brahman itself evolves into the universe (*brahma-pariṇāma vāda*); according to some others only the Śaktī or power of Brahman evolves (*śakti-pariṇāma vāda*); and according to the Advaita school evolution is illusory and not real (*māyā-vāda*). The last view, which is the most widely accepted one, has been interpreted in three ways. Gauḍapāda holds that there is no creation at all (*ajāta-vāda*); Prakāśānanda (15th century) holds that the world is a creation of the individual mind (*dr̥ṣṭi-sr̥ṣṭi-vāda* or solipsism); the majority of Advaitins hold that creation is a cosmic phenomenon independent of individual minds, though it is only apparent and not actual (*vivarta-vāda*).

To a sincere seeker of God all these theories about the origin of the universe have any value only in so far as they provide a holistic frame of reference. What is more important for him is to know those aspects of the world which have a direct bearing on practical spiritual life. Among these there are three which every aspirant

should carefully consider: polarity, change and unity.

The most obvious and unavoidable aspect of life is its contradictory nature. All empirical experiences occur in pairs: knowledge and ignorance, happiness and sorrow, good and bad, virtue and vice, and so forth. So universal and invariable is this phenomenon that it should be regarded as a fundamental law of existence. If we understand and accept this Law of Polarity, we will not be surprised at the sorrow, suffering, cruelty, injustice and wickedness we have to encounter everywhere in the world, but will learn to bear them with equanimity and dignity. Real strength is the strength of forbearance, *titikṣā*, the capacity to forbear and forgive. Without acquiring this inner strength it is impossible to lead a meditative life. It is only by accepting the polarities of life that we can rise above them and cultivate the attitude of a witness which is so much necessary for a peaceful life. The only way to attain freedom and Truth is to run the gauntlet of the polarities of life; there is no other way.

The second aspect of the world is change. Change means impermanence. There may be difference of opinion among religious teachers as to whether the world is real or unreal, but they all agree that it is impermanent. Impermanence of worldly objects and pleasures find poignant expression in the great Indian epics. In the Rāmāyaṇa, for instance, Śrī Rāma tells Bharata: 'All that is earned will be spent, all that is built up will fall down, all that is brought together will be separated, and life ends in death.'<sup>11</sup> One of the first lessons to be learnt in spiritual life is to reduce one's dependence on impermanent things for, as Yama tells Naciketa, 'The permanent Reality cannot be

11. सर्वे क्षयान्ता निचयाः पतनान्ताः समुच्छ्रयाः ।  
संयोग विप्रयोगान्ता मरणान्तं च जीवितम् ॥

attained through impermanent things'.<sup>12</sup> The Spirit alone is changeless and everlasting, and a spiritual seeker should learn to depend on it more and more.

Change does not only mean impermanence; it also means time. Time plays an important role in spiritual life, and so an aspirant must understand the meaning of time. Though the Spirit is changeless and infinite, as long as it inhabits the physical body as the soul, it is bound by time. Each soul can inhabit a body only for a certain period. Therefore a spiritual aspirant must make the maximum use of his time and accelerate his spiritual evolution as he best can. It is, however, to be noted that though all living beings are parts of the universal movement of evolution, its rate of acceleration varies from individual to individual. Every person has his own rate of growth, and it is difficult to speed it up beyond a certain limit merely by doing more japa and meditation. Spiritual evolution during its early phase is determined by Karma, and the unwinding of a person's Karma depends upon the way he had wound it in the past. Therefore another lesson to be learned in spiritual life is patience and perseverance.

Here comes the importance of the Indian theory of cyclic time. Life is a vast system of wheels within wheels. We whirl along one wheel for some years and then move on to the next wheel. Thus we revolve on and on, birth after birth, until the soul breaks off and joins the ocean of infinite consciousness. Some waste of time and energy seems to be unavoidable in this process. This waste seems to be an unavoidable part of the overall economy of the universe in accordance with the Second Law of Thermodynamics and the two fundamental biological Laws of Evolution and Homeostasis. If we want to intensify our spiritual

practice and at the same time want to lead a peaceful life, we should learn to strike a balance between conservation and waste, between construction and destruction, between time and timelessness.

The third aspect of the world to be considered is the basic solidarity of life. Life with its polarities and ceaseless change may appear to be discontinuous when seen through the senses and the discursive mind. But behind all the apparent diversity there is the fundamental unity of consciousness which can be realized only by transcending the sense-bound world. However, even at the physical plane this transcendent unity finds a partial expression through love. When misunderstood and misdirected, love leads to delusion and bondage but when raised to its universal dimension, it leads to illumination and freedom. Whether he follows the path of knowledge or the path of devotion, a spiritual aspirant should understand the basic unity of life and the meaning and purpose of love.

### God

The third angle of the triangle of reality is Īśvara or God, known in Vedanta as Brahman. On the nature of Brahman Vedanta is divided into dualist and non-dualist schools. In the dualist schools God is considered the Supreme Person endowed with numerous divine attributes (*saguṇa*), who nevertheless dwells in all beings as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*). In the non-dualist schools the impersonal Absolute devoid of all attributes (*nirguṇa*) is regarded as the only Reality, the universe, souls and even the personal God being regarded as illusory appearances. Before embarking on the spiritual quest an aspirant must decide which of these concepts he should accept as his ideal. This is not merely a question of whether he likes God with form or without form. The choice should be based on his concept of himself. Only a person who

12. न ह्यध्रुवैः प्राप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत् ।

*Katha-Upaniṣad* 2.10



looks upon himself as the impersonal spirit can accept Nirguṇa Brahman as his ideal. Similarly, in order to worship God as the Supreme Person it is not enough to look upon oneself as a human being, but it is necessary to look upon oneself as a luminous spiritual personality. If one's attitude towards God is not properly correlated to one's attitude towards oneself, spiritual practice will become unrealistic and unfruitful.

There is also a third alternative approach to Reality which is a synthesis of the above two views. In this approach, which is based on the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, God is regarded as both personal and impersonal—the Personal-Impersonal—and all the various Avatārs and deities are regarded as manifestations of the supreme divine Person. An aspirant begins by meditating on one particular deity known as his *iṣṭa-devatā*, Chosen Deity (or *dhyāna-devatā*, meditation deity, as the Buddhists call it). As meditation deepens, he discovers the spiritual centre, his own true Self, in his heart. Advancing further, when he begins to feel the divine Presence in his Self, he realizes his Chosen Deity as the Supreme Person who dwells in all beings as the Supreme Self (*paramātmān*). The summit of spiritual endeavour is reached when the aspirant realizes the identity of the individual Self and the Supreme Self in the impersonal Absolute.

In this synthetic approach man's view of God changes in proportion to the change in his view of himself. And, as Swami Vivekananda has said, the aspirant 'progresses not from error to truth but from truth to Truth, from lower truth to higher Truth'. The whole of spiritual life is looked upon as a

continuous unfoldment of divinity lying dormant in the human soul. Since the individual self in its real nature is a part of the Supreme Self, the more it realizes its true nature, the closer it moves towards God. Thus Self-realization and God realization are two phases of a single striving. The integral nature of the spiritual ideal has been beautifully expressed by Swami Vivekananda in his famous definition: 'Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.' This integral view of reality developed by Swami Vivekananda is the ideal of the modern age, and has started replacing the one-sided earlier ideals.

#### *Hita or means—the Practice*

It is a rare good fortune to have a spiritual ideal which gives unity and purpose to life. However, even the greatest spiritual ideal is only a symbol of Reality and, though it can point out, guide and lead, it cannot give us fulfilment. Fulfilment comes only by realizing the Reality represented by the ideal. What converts the ideal into Reality? Spiritual practice, *sādhana*.

Faith reveals the ideal but not the Reality behind it. The Reality can be experienced only through supersensuous spiritual illumination. What converts faith into illumination? *Sādhana*, spiritual practice.

The whole field of spiritual practice is covered by the term *hita*. It literally means that which is beneficial, suitable or favourable. Every aspirant should choose that form of spiritual practice which is best suited to his nature, temperament, and station in life and will enable him to realize the highest goal. This will be our next topic of discussion.

# MONASTICISM AND ITS DUTY TO SOCIETY TODAY\*

SRIMAT SWAMI VIRESWARANANDAJI MAHARAJ

The subject for today namely, 'monasticism and its duty to society today', is a rather difficult one, as it suggests a sort of sermonizing on my part. But I make it clear at the very outset that I am not trying to give any sermon to you, but only trying to give expression to the thoughts that have filled my mind while thinking about the subject. I shall just think loudly what I feel in this respect.

Swami Vivekananda has very clearly told us that each nation has a great ideal, and that it cherishes to attain and realize that ideal. As long as that ideal is kept bright, so long does the nation prosper. But when that ideal becomes dim, the nation also deteriorates, till at last the ideal is lost and the nation also disappears. Like other nations, India also has its ideal. She selected Religion and *mokṣa* as her ideal, and has for the last four thousand years or more held on to this great ideal. The ideal remained sometimes bright and sometimes dim, but it was never given up by the nation. There were many people during all times in India who tried to keep the ideal intact by trying to realize God and attain *mokṣa*. The ideal was placed before the nation in such a way that all could gradually approach it. Sages in India knew that everyone is not fit to attain that ideal from the very beginning, but must be trained for that. During that period of training, he should be allowed to have some freedom to enjoy life according to his *samskāras*. So the whole society was divided into four Āśramas—Brahmacarya Āśrama, then Gṛhastha

Āśrama, then Vānaprastha Āśrama, and finally, Sannyāsa Āśrama. For each of these Āśramas, certain duties were prescribed. The duties prescribed for the students in the Brahmacarya Āśrama were such as to keep them away from the world. They stayed with their teachers, who were men of great character, away from the world. After they finished their education, they were allowed to go back to the society and work for its welfare. The Gṛhasthas were asked to earn money, to enjoy life to some extent, help the society to prosper, and keep the ideal in such a way that everyone got the scope to go towards this great end, namely *mokṣa*. That was the duty prescribed for the Gṛhastha Āśrama. And, actually, the Gṛhastha Āśrama was the mainstay of all the other three Āśramas, and they depended on it. It was the pillar of the whole society, the whole nation. Last came the Sannyāsa Āśrama, where all possessions were relinquished and men wholly devoted themselves to the realization of the ideal. They held aloft the torch of renunciation and, by their lives and teachings, held this ideal of *mokṣa* before the nation. In this way, they helped the society in its onward march towards the goal and the society in turn helped them by giving the minimum requisites of life, namely food, clothing, etc. Sannyāsins were not required to think about their wants. The society supplied them with the bare necessities of life so that they might continue their *sādhana* without any interruption. But now the situation is not like that. Social life has been disrupted; national life has been disrupted. We read in the *Gītā*, at its very beginning, Arjuna telling Kṛṣṇa that the war was bad as it would result in the killing of men and consequently in the increase of *adharma*. And

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\* A speech delivered on 4 December, 1981 at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal (Hardwar) in a meeting attended by a large number of Sannyāsins and Mandaleshwars belonging to different Hindu monastic orders.

whenever *adharmā* prevailed, all sorts of wrong ideals would come into force, the higher values would be forgotten, and the whole society would get corrupted.

Now in our own times, after the two great World Wars, we find what Arjuna said has come literally true. The society is disrupted, higher values of life are lost, and the people hold on to wrong values. A chaotic condition prevails not only in India, but all over the world. We find all around a dismal picture. In this tragic condition, what should be our duty as Sannyāsins? We Sannyāsins are faced with a difficult situation. We have only two ways of looking at this problem. Either we can cut ourselves off from the society as we have been doing till now, thinking that we have nothing to do with it; or we can feel the sorrows of the society as our own and go to the people, come down to the level of the common men, and work with them to raise them again. I feel the second alternative should be more emphasized, for if we cut ourselves off from the society and do not mix with the people, our monasticism will be at peril and gradually lose all force. So far as I know, there is dearth of monastic hands in all the monastic orders. I am subject to correction. But it is evident that the number of good monks is continuously decreasing. Why? Because the spirit of renunciation is now not there in the society in general. We Sannyāsins do not drop from heaven; we come from the society. A society that is morally healthy and ethically strong will alone produce good Sannyāsins. If we avoid going to the people and work among them, how will they mend themselves and tread the right path? If there is no improvement in them morally and spiritually, how shall we get boys with the fire of renunciation? And if at all some boys come forward to lead the life of Sannyāsins out of such a sick society, they will be, as Śrīdhara Svāmī indicates in his gloss on the

*Gītā*, *piśunāḥ kalahotsukāḥ*—always ready for fault-finding and quarrelsome.<sup>1</sup> So it is incumbent on us, in our own interest, to go to the people and try to raise them morally and economically. Moreover, as Sādhus we have a debt to the society which we must repay by trying to ameliorate the condition of the masses, and by helping them to reconstruct the society on a better basis.

A question may be asked as to how Sādhus will work towards such an improvement. To me, it appears, all our difficulties and afflictions are rooted in education. Our education is not at all an education worth the name. It is a negative education. There is no place for ethics or religion in the educational system. Our educational institutions do not impart proper *samskāras* to the boys. If our educational system is bad, we cannot expect great men to come up and take charge of the nation and help the people. So the educational system has to be thoroughly changed. True education, as Swamiji said, must be a man-making education. Sannyāsins must take charge of education. Then only can the educational system be placed on a spiritual foundation. In olden times, India had such an educational system. Great emphasis was laid on the spiritual side along with the secular. I remember the story of Nārada who went to Ṛṣi Sanatkumāra and said: 'I have learnt all the Vedas etc., but I do not find peace of mind.' The Guru asked: 'Well, you have learnt this and that, but do you know the Truth?' 'No', was Nārada's reply. The story is significant in so far as it shows that without a religious basis our education is useless. Howsoever we may boast about our achievements of going to the moon, to the Mars etc., it will not lead us to our ideal.

1. प्रमादिनो वहिश्चिताः पिशुनाः कलहोत्सुकाः ।

संन्यासिनोऽपि दृश्यन्ते दैवसन्दूषिताशयाः ॥

Suresvara, *Naiṣkarṇya Siddhi*,  
quoted by Sridhara on *Gītā* 5.6.

It is here that our Sādhu Samāj can do something positive. When our schools and educational institutions are not in a position to impart character-building education to our boys, it becomes imperative for us Sannyāsins to take the work of education in our hands and try to impart proper education to our children. Wealth or money alone does not protect a man. As has been well said, 'Man does not live by bread alone'. He needs something more to live, and that something is the higher values of life. To impart these values to the people our Sādhu Samāj has to go from village to village, from man to man, and teach them, on the one hand, religion and spirituality and the science of building up character, and on the other, crafts and village industries, health and hygiene. For mere religious education alone will not be of much avail, as more than half the people of our nation live below the poverty line. They must first be helped to come out of poverty, for, as Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Religion is not for empty stomachs'.

So our Sādhus can help to build a new order of society by going to the people of the world, by removing the unnatural differences between man and man and the imbalance caused by caste prejudices. They should open more schools and colleges, where the students can learn about the Indian values of life along with secular education. This would cause a more free mixing of the people with the members of the Sādhu Samāj. Had we Sannyāsins kept such a rapport with the common people, the unfortunate recent incident of many of our brethren embracing another religion would not have taken place at all. We must learn a lesson now, and we must become active to build a fruitful rapport with people of all levels in society. We must give them secu-

lar education and also prepare them for the realization of the ideal of *mokṣa*. We have been teaching them the ideal of *mokṣa* all right, but that teaching does not go well with an empty belly. So we, the members of the Sādhu Samāj must come down, mix with the people, educate them, and raise them economically, physically, mentally, and culturally. When all these things are in good condition, then only will people turn to religion. When such a healthy condition prevails in society, then we can come back from our work in the world and retire to our own monasteries or live in forests, and have recourse to our traditional ways of life. That, I think, is in keeping with Swamiji's ideal.

I feel apprehensive I have crossed my limits, but, believe me, I have not spoken these words in the spirit of giving sermons. Please do not misunderstand me. I have not the audacity to give sermons to the members of the Sādhu Samāj. I have only thought aloud. I have just made a sort of self-analysis. I have been thinking all these days as to what we Sannyāsins can do for the society, and I have just given a verbal expression to my thoughts, nothing more.

It does not mean that only the Sannyāsins are supposed to do all this work. The lay devotees also should do that. Specially the lay devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji should go to the villages and help the poor and neglected people there economically, culturally, and spiritually. Then alone will they qualify themselves to be called the devotees of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

May Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji shower their blessings to help us pass through this crisis, not only in India but in the whole world, and build a new order of society, so that people will lead a religious life, have faith in God and live happily this is my prayer at their feet.

# THE SCIENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE LIGHT OF VEDANTA AND YOGA\*

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

The study of consciousness received the keen attention of Indian sages as early as 4000 years ago. What is equally remarkable is that they undertook this study in a scientific spirit and succeeded in discovering some of the fundamental truths about man and nature.

## *Search for Truth versus reductionism*

It is significant that, in this modern scientific age, the study of consciousness is receiving serious attention, not only from Western psychologists but also from Western physicists and biologists. Till the twentieth century, modern science had ignored the significance of consciousness as a datum worthy of scientific investigation. The continued successes achieved from the exploration of external physical nature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had influenced many scientists to consider the objective world of matter and physical entities as the primary reality and to treat mind and consciousness as derivable from these and reducible to these. Some would abolish mind altogether and deal only with the brain. This attitude continues to influence many scientists even today, in spite of revolutionary discoveries in quantum physics and biology where the objective world has ceased to be objective in the sense understood by classical physics. Several scientists today, however, have begun to criticize and reject what they call the 'reductionist' approach as unscientific. Physicist Bernard

d'Espagnat terms this reductionist method *multitudinist* method, and warns that it will bring science itself into disfavour with the people. That will be a great tragedy; for, pure science, Vedanta considers, is one of the noblest pursuits of mankind. Though a bit long, his remarks in his article 'Quantum Logic and Non-separability' are relevant here.

By this we mean a conception according to which the ultimate reality—all that really is—would essentially be constituted by an enormous number of elementary events and/or microscopic objects, each one of them being endowed with simple properties and being such that the interactions of them all—taken as local and causal—would, combined with chance, give rise to the complexity of appearances. Considered a tool for scientific thinking, that conception is very convenient. This is why descriptions following its general lines—with eventually some more sophistication in details—are quite often made. However, it then becomes tempting to shift mentally its status from that of a useful model to what we can call a multitudinist ontology. By this we mean a metaphysics that reduces reality, both outside us and within us, to the elementary mechanisms just described. As a matter of fact, it appears that a great number of scientists—particularly the non-theorists!—do take that step, although sometimes with minor reservations in their mind. For many of them, the argument that the view is *useful in practice*, is undoubtedly, important. On the other hand, since the advent of quantum mechanics, it is a well known fact that this kind of uncritical realism runs very soon into considerable difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

Pointing out the harm that this multitudinist or reductionist method is doing to

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\* A lecture given at the symposium on *Yoga, Brain, and Consciousness* held at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore on January 1, 1982.

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1. Bernard d'Espagnat, 'Quantum Logic and Non-separability' in Jagdish Mehra, Ed. *Symposium on the Development of the Physicist's Conception of Nature in the Twentieth Century* (Boston : D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1973), p. 730. Hereafter referred to as *Physicist's Conception*.

science itself, Bernard d' Espagnat continues :

As Wigner pointed out, the naively realistic conception of most of the modern scientists (theorists excluded!) fall fortunately into that class, and that state of affairs will presumably last for at least one generation and perhaps even longer. From a cultural point of view, on the other hand, the preservation of such a conception—which, when all is said, is blatantly over-simplified,—seems to be very dangerous. Today, great efforts—meeting with partial success—are made, by way of teaching, in order to give vast layers of the world population a scientific knowledge and a scientific approach to various problems. Of course, the purpose of all this is first of all of a technological nature. But how could we expect from the majority of students and pupils that they should spontaneously make the distinctions that we know are necessary between such conceptions as instrumentalism and realism, and within the latter between the models and the truth? Particularly, how could we expect this when (as is the almost general rule) their attention is never directed to this point by their instructors? Hence it is very much to be feared that the modern mass teaching of exact sciences will definitely and erroneously compromise them, in the public's mind, with the multitudinist philosophies sketched above.<sup>2</sup>

### *Mind versus brain*

Making a distinction between mind and the physical basis of mind, the great neurologist Sir Charles Sherrington wrote :

Knowledge of the physical basis of mind is making great strides in these days. Knowledge of the brain is growing, and our theme is almost equivalent to the physiology of the brain. Mind, meaning by that thoughts, memories, feelings, reasoning, and so on, is difficult to bring into the class of physical things. Physiology, a natural science, tends to be silent about all outside the physical. And so the study of the physical basis of mind suffers from falling between two stools.<sup>3</sup>

Says neurologist Wilder Penfield :

In a sense; therefore, the higher brain stem, together with that portion of that cortex which is

being employed at the moment, is the seat of consciousness.

It is the 'physical basis of the mind', this hypothetical mechanism of nerve-cell connections. When a man is conscious, one may conceive that, within his brain, impulses are passing along a million insulating nerve fibres that compose this complex, impulses that are somehow coordinated into the orderly sequences of deliberate thought.

What is the real relationship of this mechanism to the mind? Can we visualize a spiritual element of different essence capable of controlling this mechanism? When a patient is asked about the movement which he carries out as the result of cortical stimulation, he never is in any doubt about it. He knows he did not will the action. He knows there is a difference between automatic action and voluntary action. He would agree that something else finds its dwelling-place between the sensory complex and the motor mechanism, that there is a switchboard operator, as well as a switchboard.<sup>4</sup>

### *Impact of Vedanta and Yoga on Western thought*

With these hints and suggestions, modern physical sciences help us to appreciate the depth study of mind and consciousness undertaken in India through Vedanta and Yoga, which are having increasing impact on Western psychology today in all its departments. Giving the main purpose of his book : *The Meeting of the Ways: Explorations in East/West Psychology*, edited by him, John Welwood says in his preface :

The book is designed to offer new perspectives on such perennial questions as the nature of consciousness, personal identity, sanity, and psychotherapy. The first section asks fundamental questions about the nature of the human mind. The exploration of different levels of consciousness soon leads to questions about the nature of one's personal identity or ego, the subject matter of the second section. In order to avoid purely speculative theories, the question raised by the exploration of mind and self need to be grounded in a more empirical and disciplined approach. Thus

<sup>2</sup>. *ibid*, p. 732.

<sup>3</sup>. Sir Charles Sherrington, 'Introductory' in Peter Laslett, Ed. *Physical Basis of Mind*, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>. Wilder Penfield, '*The Cerebral Cortex and the Mind of Man*' in *ibid*, pp. 63-64.

the third section of the book deals with meditation, or how one might relate to these life questions in a direct, personal way. Finally, the fourth section attempts to apply the insights of the first three sections to psychotherapy, and suggests new directions for therapy that may help people to live in a more wakeful way.<sup>5</sup>

Later, concluding his introduction, the author says :

The present encounter of the experimental, holistic, and enlightenment-oriented traditions of the East with the precision, clarity, scepticism, and independence of Western methods could lead to a new kind of psychology that transcends cultural limitations and opens up what Abraham Maslow referred to as 'the farther reaches of human nature'. Such a new form of East/West psychology, as represented embryonically in the articles assembled here, is only in its infancy, but it does not appear to be just a passing cultural fancy. May this book contribute to its further growth.<sup>6</sup>

In his concluding chapter, the editor says, after quoting the following remark of Medard Boss :

'If our science of mental health is to become more effective, psychotherapists will have to balance their knowledge of psychological concepts with a contemplative awareness.'

Interest in the wider dimensions of human awareness is one of the new horizons in psychology today. Because transpersonal concerns are at the forward 'cutting edge' of current knowledge, their aims and methods have not yet been fully clarified. I would like to close by suggesting four major features or directions that a new psychology might take.

1. This new approach needs to be a *self-knowledge psychology*, based on an inner empiricism, an investigation of experience and its deeper nature. Such an approach would evolve as a *human science*, rather than as a strictly natural science, with its own unique methods and areas of investigation. Its findings might be tested and verified by any individual who undertook to examine his or her own experience in an attentive, detailed, and disciplined way.

2. It would be a *psychology of relatedness*,

rather than a psychology of separate individuals, thus laying a basis for social concerns in the 'ecology of mind', which understands mind, not as something inside the individual's head, but as the whole System of individual-plus-environment.

3. Its basic concern with the deep nature of human existence should also provide a framework for accommodating the *whole range* of human experience.

4. It needs to be based on self-knowledge *disciplines* (such as the practice of meditation). Such discipline might provide an empirical basis that would distinguish this approach from the early schools of introspectionism, which relied on a more passive, almost random, observation of the stream of consciousness, without ever calling into question the watcher or observer of experience.

In short, such a new approach in psychology, based on self-knowledge disciplines, would include the whole range of human consciousness in the study of human behaviour from the automatic responses that behaviourism has studied, to the unconscious patterns that psycho-analysis brought to light, to the farther reaches of human possibility that Maslow called self-transcendence. This approach would not be a substitute for traditional spiritual paths, but might serve as a bridge to them, as well as a neutral meeting ground, where practitioners of different self-knowledge disciplines could come together and work out common understanding of human developments as a conscious process.<sup>7</sup>

### *Consciousness : post war Western interest in its study*

The importance of the study of consciousness is being forced upon the modern world through the increasing recognition that the serious crisis of the modern world can be resolved only through a change in consciousness and not through further technological changes in the outer physical world. As forcefully expressed by John White :

Political action, social work, this *ism*, that *ology*, are all incomplete, futile actions unless accompanied by a new and elevated mode of awareness. The ultimate action, then, is no action at all

5. John Welwood, Ed., *The Meeting of the Ways: Explorations in East/West Psychology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), Preface.

6. *ibid*, pp. xv-xvi.

7. *ibid*, pp. 223-225.

except to change consciousness. In other words, *the true revolution is revelation.*<sup>8</sup>

The study of mind and consciousness received recognition from physical science only recently when the American Association for the Advancement of Science accepted the Parapsychological Association, the international professional society for psychical researchers, as an affiliate organization on 30 December 1969. And John White predicts a healthy development in the field, in the coming years, which is getting already implemented in this very Bangalore seminar.

In the years ahead, explorations of the self will be integrated and therefore interdisciplinary. They will bring together physicists, psychical researchers, psychophysicists, religious leaders, and workers from other professions.

If the borders between self and environment can be made to disappear, this is likely to have profound effects on man's attitude to his environment, both social and physical. If the self is experienced as actually embracing other people, self-consciousness becomes social consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

### *Rescuing psychology from Freudianism's distortions*

Warning against the rigid attitude of certain psychiatrists, who blindly follow Freud's lead in defining all mystic perceptions of a fundamental spiritual unity in the universe as a regression to the primary cognition of the infantile or primitive state, Arthur J. Deikman, in his comments on the immediately preceding report on 'What Mysticism Is' by G.A.P. (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry), says :

This naive reductionism is all the more striking in the context of the numerous reports from physicists indicating that the world is actually more like the one that the mystics describe than the one on which psychology and psycho-analysis are based. Contemporary scientists have ample

8. John White, Ed., *The Highest State of Consciousness* (New York : Anchor Books, Doubleday Co., 1972), p. ix.

9. *ibid.*, p. 471.

evidence that the world of discrete objects is an illusion, a function of the particular scale of our perception and time sense. For them, it is commonplace that the phenomena of biology and physics point to a continuous world of gradients, not a collection of objects.

If our profession is to advance, we must recognize our defences against ideas that would change our assumptions. Mysticism, studied seriously, challenges the basic tenets of Western culture : (a) the primacy of reason and intellect ; (b) the separate, individual nature of man ; (c) the linear organization of time. Great mystics, like our own great scientists, envision the world as being larger than those tenets, as transcending our traditional views. By not recognizing our defensiveness, and by permitting our vision to be narrowed so as to exclude the unfamiliar, we betray our integrity as psychiatrists, showing no more capacity for freedom from prejudice than persons totally ignorant of psycho-dynamics—perhaps less....

If we learn nothing more from mystics than the need for humility, they will have contributed greatly to Western culture in general and to the profession of psychiatry in particular.<sup>10</sup>

### *Limitations of physical science*

Robert E. Ornstein, in his introduction to the book *The Nature of Human Consciousness* edited by him, quotes physicist Oppenheimer's remark on this complementarity of the scientific and mystical ways of knowing: These two ways of thinking, the way of time and history, and the way of eternity and timelessness, are both part of man's effort to comprehend the world in which he lives. Neither is comprehended in the other nor reducible to it... each supplementing the other, neither telling the whole story.<sup>11</sup>

Discussing the nature of knowledge and pointing out the limitations of the knowledge derived from physical science, in his article

10. Daniel Goleman and Richard W. Davidson, Ed., *Consciousness: The Brain, States of Awareness and Alternate Realities* (New York: Harper Row, 1979), pp. 192-94.

11. Robert E. Ornstein, Ed., *The Nature of Human Consciousness* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1968), p. 5.



'States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences', Charles T. Tart says :

Blackburn (in the selection here preceding) noted that many of our most talented young people are 'turned off' to science. I have seen the same rejection of science by many of the brightest students in California, and the problem is indeed serious. Knowledge may be defined as an immediately given experimental feeling of congruence between two different kinds of experience, a matching. One set of experiences may be regarded as perceptions of the external world, of others, of oneself ; the second set may be regarded as a theory, a scheme, a system of understanding. Reason is a tool, and a tool that is wielded in the service of assumptions, beliefs, and needs, which are not themselves subject to reason. The irrational, or better yet, the arational, will not disappear from the human situation. Our immense success in the development of the physical sciences has not been particularly successful in formulating better philosophies of life, or increasing our real knowledge of ourselves. The sciences we have developed to date are not very human sciences. They tell us how to do things, but give us no scientific insights on questions of what to do, what not to do, or why to do things.<sup>12</sup>

### *The field concept in Vedanta and modern science*

When we deal with the subject of consciousness, we deal with the subject of *experience*. Experience is a new datum that evolution exhibits with the appearance of the living cell, converting evolution from the cosmic to the organic dimension. Space, time, the nebulae, or the stars have no 'experience'; they have being, they exist, but they do not experience; in the Vedantic terminology, they possess the attribute of *sat*, existence, but not *cit*, consciousness. But the living cell discloses the attributes of *sat* and *cit*. The cell discloses the presence of consciousness, in its rudimentary experience, or awareness, of its environment. From then on, evolution is a steady unfoldment of consciousness with every step in the development of the organism; and

this development achieves a breakthrough with the appearance of man on the evolutionary scene, when experience discloses a new dimension of awareness, namely self-awareness, along with the non-self awareness, a subject awareness along with an object awareness. At this level, consciousness enlarges its bounds, resulting in man's near-total understanding and dominance of the external environment and a slight knowledge of himself as the subject, the self. Cognition or knowledge rises, at this stage from the primary to the secondary logical intellectual level.

All knowledge begins as a subject knowing an object. At the farthest reach of this process, through the entire gamut of acquiring positivistic knowledge, Vedanta discovered that the mystery of man and nature could be solved first, through an initial inner penetration to understanding the nature of the subject, the self, the knower, while investigating the nature of the objective world, followed, later, by a *daring investigation into the nature of knowledge itself*. Among the experienced, the experiencer, and the experience, Vedanta conducted an inquiry into the nature of experience itself. The Sanskrit word for experience is *anubhava*, while the word for knowledge is *jñāna*. The word for the knower is *jñātā*, and that for the object of knowledge is *jñeya*. *Jñāna*, *jñeya*, and *jñātā* are designated *tripuṭi*, the triple group, in Vedanta. Vedanta discovered *anubhava* or *jñāna* as the Consciousness-Field, and all objects or *jñeyas* and all subjects or *jñātās*, as its passing configurations, and which resolved the *tripuṭi* distinction. And it termed the ultimate Reality of Ātman or Brahman as *anubhava-svarūpa* or *jñāna-svarūpa*, or *cit-svarūpa*—'of the very nature of Experience', 'of the very nature of Knowledge', 'of the very nature of Consciousness'.

Some of the greatest utterances of the Upaniṣads convey this Truth of all Truths—

<sup>12</sup>. Charles T. Tart in *ibid*, pp. 41-60

*satyasya satyam*<sup>13</sup> : *prajñānam brahma*— 'Brahman is Pure Consciousness'<sup>14</sup> ; *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*— 'Brahman is Truth, Consciousness, and Infinity';<sup>15</sup> *sarvam hyetat brahma, ayam ātmā brahma, so'ayam ātmā catuspāt*— 'All this manifested universe is Brahman, this Self is Brahman, this Self manifests Itself through the four states (waking, dream, deep sleep and the *turiya* or the Transcendental)'.<sup>16</sup>

This development in ancient Vedanta has its parallel in modern physics, in the revolutionary concept of the electro-magnetic *field* introduced by Faraday and Maxwell, who replaced the mechanical concept of force, then prevailing, with the more subtle concept of the *force-field*, which has its own reality and could be investigated without reference to any material entities. This revolution was carried further in this century by the discoveries of the quantum and gravitational fields by nuclear science and the relativity theory. This revolutionary field concept has now entered embryology in the science of biology. According to biologist Richard Davenport,

The unit of organization that embodies the attributes of positional information in individuating systems is the *embryonic field*. We will define an *embryonic field* as an embryonic system, or part of such a system, that contains constituent elements that not only acquire their potential properties in relation to a common source of positional information, but also can re-establish the informational system, its constituent elements, and their responses, following the disturbance of spatial relationships within the system.

From a consideration of the previous properties of fields, it is clear that they provide the constraints on cellular function that are necessary for differentiation and individuation. If there is any single key to an understanding of ontogeny, it is the embryological field. When embryological systems are reduced to their essential components and properties these are found to coincide with

the properties of fields. Embryological systems cannot be reduced beyond their constituent fields without the disappearance of the very properties that characterize ontogeny. The egg is a field and can be subdivided only to the extent that preserves its field properties. During later development, the original single field of the egg becomes subdivided into smaller and more restricted fields, which have essentially the same basic properties operating on a small scale.<sup>17</sup>

Again, relating biology to the revolutionary developments in nuclear physics, Richard Davenport says :

Biology must profit from the experience of physics so that it can become conscious of what occurs during analysis and accept the fact that each level of organization is manifested by unique forces, since it contain unique interactions. Life is distinct from non-life, both in the fact that it is organized by forces that do not constrain inorganic systems, and in the constraint of its lower levels of structure by the weaker interactions of higher levels. By such a unique pattern of constraint, evolution has produced the organic world from which our description of physical reality has emerged *through binding the observer and the observed in a system of interactions that are constrained by the forces of consciousness*. Therefore, each level must be equally accepted as a legitimate description of a local experience of the universal forces of ordering that produce the aging of this world (italics not by the author).<sup>18</sup>

Finally, pleading for the release of science as a whole from the mechanistic terms and concepts of just one of its departments, Richard Davenport concludes his book :

Biology may yet produce the next great scientific revolution. However, it will not do so by any imitation of mechanical physics, but only by a recognition of the legitimacy of its own structural domain, and of the constraint of this domain on the character of our knowledge. At the same time, it must accept that all levels of structural description are equally insufficient. In this ability to accept such a realization the greatest power of our descriptive activities lies—*the power that enables us to see into our own nature*. This in-

13. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 2.1.2.

14. *Aitareya-Upaniṣad*, 5.3.

15. *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*, 2.1.

16. *Maṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad*, 2.

17. Richard Davenport, *An Outline of Animal Development* (Philippines : Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 242-250.

18. *ibid*, p. 390.

*sight will emerge from our failure to force experience to agree with our egoistic expectations, and will enable us to understand the true centre of convergence that supports all structure and, thereby, to delight in all its levels of manifestation. This insight will not, as some assume, produce the end of science but will allow us to live in the full meaning of the term scientia, 'to know'. By relinquishing our partiality, we can create a neutral space in which, little by little, we will come to know that the reality our consciousness has fashioned is symbolic in the deepest sense and ceaselessly points toward that from which all experience flows—the ineffable one that is Nature (italics not by the author).<sup>19</sup>*

### *The comprehensive nature of Ātman-Brahman as Consciousness field*

It is relevant, in this context, to point out the comprehensiveness of the Vedantic conception of Nature, so as to include the physical, the biological and the spiritual, in the unity of Pure Consciousness, which is the meaning of God in Vedanta. Says Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*, identifying Himself as the infinite Self of all

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and ego-sense—this is my *prakṛti*, Nature, divided eightfold. This is (My) lower (Prakṛti) but different from it, know thou, O mighty armed, My higher Prakṛti—the principle of intelligence, by which this universe is sustained. Know that these (two Prakṛtis) are the womb of all beings; I am the origin (maintenance and) dissolution of the whole universe.<sup>20</sup>

Commenting on the last verse, Śaṅkarācārya says: *prakṛti dvayadvāreṇa aham sarvajña īśvaro jagatah kāraṇam*—‘Through

this two-fold Nature (*aparā* [lower] *prakṛti* and *parā* [higher] *prakṛti*), I, who am the omniscient God (being of the nature of infinite Pure Consciousness), am the cause of this universe’.

There are several words in Sanskrit which serve as equivalents of the English word, Consciousness. *cit*, *prajñā*, *jñapti*, *jñāna*, *bodha*, *samvit*; according to contexts, they may mean Infinite Pure Consciousness, knowledge, wisdom, etc.

The *Pancadaśī* gives a lucid description of *samvit* as the eternal and non-dual Pure Consciousness, *brahman* :

In all the countless months, years, ages, and aeons, which are past and which are yet to come, *samvit*, which is one and self-luminous, does neither rise nor set.<sup>21</sup>

The *Śrīmat Bhāgavatam*, in a majestic utterance conveying a synoptic vision, describes the ultimate Reality as *advayam jñānam*, non-dual Pure Consciousness.

Knowers of Truth declare that the Truth of one and the same non-dual *jñānam*, Pure Consciousness, is spoken of as Brahman (by the *jñānis* or philosophers), as Paramātmān, the Supreme Self (by the *yogis* or mystics), and as Bhagavān, the All-loving God (by the *bhaktas* or devotees).<sup>22</sup>

Pure Consciousness is known as Brahman or Śiva, in its transcendental quiescent aspect, and as Māyā or Śaktī, in Its immanent dynamic aspect; and both are one, like the unity of physical energy in its two aspects of bottled up and released states.

Śaṅkarācārya presents the goal of all Vedanta as ‘the realization of the unity and infinitude of the Ātman as Pure Consciousness’— *ātmaikatva vidyā pratipattaye sarve vedāntāḥ ārabhyante*, in his *Brahma-*

<sup>19.</sup> *ibid*, pp. 402-403.

<sup>20.</sup> भूमिरापोऽनलोवायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।  
अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥  
अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।  
जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥  
एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय ।  
अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा ॥

*Bhagavad-Gītā*, 7.4-6.

<sup>21.</sup> मासाब्दयुगकल्पेषु गतागम्येष्वनेकधा ।  
नोदेति नास्तमेत्येका संविदेशा स्वयंप्रभा ॥

*Pancadaśī*, 1.7.

<sup>22.</sup> वदन्ति तत् तत्त्वविदः तत्त्वं यत् ज्ञानमद्वयम् ।  
ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्दयते ॥

*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 1.2.11.

*sūtra* commentary (*sūtra* 1.1.4). Nuclear physicist Erwin Schrodinger echoes this Vedantic truth in his book *What is Life?* :

Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular. Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown; that there is only one thing, and what seems to be a plurality is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing, produced by a deception (the Indian *Māyā*).<sup>23</sup>

The quantum energy-field or the four-dimensional space-time, which twentieth century physics presents as beyond sensory verification, finds its counterpart in Vedanta in its *cittākāśa*, the *ākāśa*, the space time continuum, of *citta* or mind. This is what mind, in dream, reveals. This is the knowledge-field or consciousness-field, of which all *dr̥k* or seer or subject, and all *dr̥śyam* or the seen or object, are but two poles as the observer and the observed. Modern sub-atomic physics is now in the position of the ancient Sāṅkhya philosophy, in its reduction of the observed into the quantum field while retaining multiplicity in the dimension of the observer. The Sāṅkhya achieved the unification of all non-self in its *pradhāna* or *prakṛti* or Nature, while retaining, however multiplicity in the realm of the Puruṣa, the observer, self or subject. *The Vedantic truth of the unity of the Consciousness-field will become revealed to sub-atomic physics when it resolves its present contradiction involved in viewing its 'observer' in terms of classical physics, while viewing its 'observed' in terms of the quantum field probabilities.* Modern physics has yet to achieve a complete and satisfactory unified field theory comprehending electro-magnetic and gravitational phenomena. Even if this unified field theory is firmly established in the future, the problem of unifying the Prakṛti and Puruṣa, the observed and the observer,

will haunt science's search for ultimate unity. Physicists like Fritjof Capra presents the Brahma of the Vedanta as a more comprehensive background reality of the universe than modern physicist's nature.

The conception of physical things and phenomena as transient manifestations of an underlying fundamental entity is not only a basic element of quantum field theory, but also a basic element of the Eastern world view. Like Einstein, the Eastern mystics consider this underlying entity as the only reality: all its phenomenal manifestations are seen as transitory and illusory. This reality of the Eastern mystic cannot be identified with the quantum field of the physicist, because it is seen as the essence of *all* phenomena in this world and, consequently, is beyond all concepts and ideas.

The quantum field, on the other hand, is a well defined concept which only accounts for some of the physical phenomena. Nevertheless, the intuition behind the physicist's interpretation of the sub-atomic world in terms of the quantum field is closely paralleled by that of the Eastern mystic who interprets his or her experience of the world in terms of a ultimate underlying reality. Subsequent to the emergence of the field concept, physicists have attempted to unify the various fields into a single fundamental field, which would incorporate all physical phenomena. Einstein, in particular, spent the last years of his life searching for such a unified field. The Brahman of the Hindus, like the Dharmakāya of the Buddhists and the Tao of the Taoists, can be seen, perhaps, as the ultimate unified field from which spring not only the phenomena studied in physics, but all other phenomena as well.<sup>24</sup>

The *cittākāśa*, referred to earlier as the Vedantic equivalent of space-time continuum, still involves the duality of the subject and the object, and therefore provokes a deeper inquiry. This limitation is overcome in the highest Vedantic view of Consciousness, infinite and non-dual, the *citākāśa*, the *ākāśa* or Void of *cit*, or Pure Consciousness, which is the same *cittākāśa* viewed non-causally.

In thus presenting the universe, in its

<sup>23</sup> Erwin Schrodinger, *What is Life* (Cambridge University Press), p. 90-91.

<sup>24</sup> Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (California: Shambhala Publications, 1975), p. 211.

fundamental aspect, as Pure Consciousness only Vedanta does not *destroy* the Universe or its matter and separate intelligent beings, but only illumines the true nature of them all, just as modern quantum and relativity physics does not destroy the stable molecular structures of the physical universe, upheld by classical physics, by presenting the universe as an ocean of energy only, but says that the familiar world of classical physics, is only a *limiting case*, viewed through the human sensory system, of the true universe presented by quantum and relativity physics. Science does not destroy or create, but only illumines, says Śamkarācārya : *śāstram*

*jñāpakam, na tu kārakam.* The material universe of daily experience, which physical science has set about to study, will reveal its true form, as condensations of Pure Consciousness, as *īśāvāsyam idam sarvam yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*, as the *Īśa Upaniṣad* proclaims in its opening verse, when physics, and all physical science, dissociates the 'matter' it studies from the dogma of 'materialism' that it wrongly associates with it, and that is termed an 'intruder' in science by Thomas Huxley, while treating 'matter' as a useful working concept.<sup>25</sup>

(To be continued)

25. Cf. Thomas Huxley, *Methods and Results*, pp. 164-65.

## LIFE WITHIN THE KOREAN MEDITATION HALL

SHAKYA HAM WOL

Have you never heard, O have you not seen,  
The cherry trees adorning the lane?  
Now blossoming on a warm spring morning,  
Then scattering in the cold afternoon breeze :  
No sooner blooming than swirling away.  
Floating clouds and green mountains,  
Humankind too, empty of own-being.  
Season after season, all are endless travellers.  
Therein the Zen youth cannot abide content ;  
Indeed such a one must seek the Diamond Realm.

For at least six months of each year, approximately thirty Buddhist monks asleep on the *ondol* (warm paper-covered stone floor) within the *Seon-Pang* (Meditation Hall) of Song Kwang Sa monastery wake at the sound of three chimes and together rise.

Endeavouring not to forget the *koan*<sup>1</sup> contemplation for even one moment, each

monk folds his thick brown quilted blanket and, hurrying past those who have not yet

state records (Ko=public, An=record) which were formerly so often talked about, examined and meditated upon. Documented koans catalogue the entire setting, verbal statement, and action in which enlightened men and women revealed awakened vision. These records often seem non-rational to those who have not the openness of mind to consider them deeply, and who have not yet awakened from the clinging, dualistic mentality which both perceives a 'self' in the non-substantial and regards 'A' as totally different from 'B'.

An example of a koan is this : Master Ku San strikes down his staff and says, 'Clearly you see and hear this. That which sees and hears, your mind, is neither a word, and as it is yet unenlightened, nor is it the Buddha. My Master, Hyo Bong, said it is not an objective thing otherwise people could swap minds, and it certainly isn't empty-nothingness or you couldn't see the staff or hear this thump. What then, is your mind?'

1. *Koan* and *Hua-t'ou* ('wha-toh') : popularly the terms are used quite interchangeably by meditators. Nevertheless, koans are just ancient

pulled on a jacket, stacks the bulky cotton quilt away in its respective place in the wall closet. Then, after sliding open all the paper doors for fresh air, the Meditation Hall residents select their shoes from among the neatly arranged pairs below the verandah, slip them on and walk into the darkness outside for an early morning wash.

Guided by a single dim light the grey-clad monks, young and old, all energetically file out toward the few urinals situated some distance away below the hall, quickly returning to wait their turn to wash in the equally few basins.

Everyone has been taught to act quickly, carefully, forming a perfectly harmonious totality, while simultaneously probing the *koan*. Teeth cleaned and face splashed with the arctic-cold water—in a harsh wind blowing from Manchuria or North Korea—a thirsty Western-born monk hopefully seeks a cup of lukewarm water from the cauldron over yesterday's fire, afterward making his way back to the light of the Zen Hall.

Having returned, the dual sets of sliding paper doors are closed all round, whereupon the cutting northwester is thankfully shut out. The time of the morning?—approaching 3.10 a.m.

With one heart, the fully ordained monks (bhikshus) then proceed to take their dark brown *kashaya*<sup>2</sup> robes down from either of the suspended bamboo poles running across the hall.

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A *hua-t'ou* is the essence of a koan-story or koan-elaboration. To ask someone to meditate on, 'What is mind?' is to give them a *hua-t'ou*. And mentally to do this and ask oneself, 'What?' ... 'What?' ... 'What?' ... is to look into a *hua-t'ou*.

2. *Kāshāya* robe: the legendary toga-like cloak worn by all Buddhas. They are made of five, seven, nine or one hundred eight strips of brownish cloth sewn together in a checkered pattern. The 'best' are made of scraps collected from rubbish heaps.

The bhikshus respectfully hold the neatly folded garment overhead briefly, return to their allocated seats, pull them over their right shoulders and under the left. Next both sides are coupled with a large cloth knot and then all stand still with palms joined level with the heart.

During this, novices have been collecting their kimono-style grey robes, putting them on, and mindfully fixing miniature *kashaya* correctly in place with a wide belt. After a monk or novice-monk has lit the candles and a stick of incense, taken the lid off the water cruet (nobody ever bothers filling it!), the Meditation Hall Leader, who is to the trained eye clearly a model of mindfulness of the *hua-t'ou*<sup>1</sup>, strikes a short bamboo clapper against one palm. This marks the time for everyone to prostrate simultaneously toward the alter-niche and grand circular mirror which replaces the usual Buddha-image.

The first deep bow represents venerating with body and mind the Dharmakaya Buddha<sup>3</sup> or Wisdom-Body of Complete Enlightenment manifested by all Buddhas. The second clack and bow indicates reverencing the illumined Dharma revealed by the Seven Buddhas of Antiquity. The third, showing respect for the Sangha, the rightly practising Fellowship, past, present, and future.

However, no one other than beginners under the tuition of scholar-teachers has ever been instructed to reflect on any of this. Rather, the Master Ku San (the resident Good Knowing Adviser of Song Kwang Sa monastery) has repeatedly taught that it is far better of Zen cultivators to look into the koan question, 'What is this mind (which enables one to fold one's hands, bow

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3. Dharmakāya Buddha: the uncreated Source out of which all springs, ultimate Reality. This 'Truth-Body' is sometimes personified in the Buddha Vairocana and his secret samadhi of timelessness, transcendental wisdom, and eternal bliss.

down and again stand up)?' for mind is the real unity of Teacher, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

It is a basic Buddhist tenet that the essence of one's mind is the nondual wisdom-nature of Buddhahood (Vajradhara-hood) or, again, the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha realized neither within, without, nor in between. To this all have bowed while searching for mind. These three prostrations concluded, the brown kashaya and large-sleeved grey robes are single-mindedly folded and once more hung in place.

Thereafter all assume the *zazen* (sitting meditation) posture. Although some Buddhist schools hold that the quarter-lotus posture is like copper ore, half-lotus like a silver bar, and full-lotus like a gold pagoda, Korean Buddhism lays, relatively little emphasis on physical posture, instead emphasizing heavily the clear awareness of the *koan* or *hua-t'ou* device throughout the three states of coming, going and staying.

Nevertheless, the half dozen or so Western monks and nuns in Korea prompted by Yoga, Chinese Ch'an and Japanese Zen, prefer to sit in the full-lotus seat even while taking meals, drinking green tea, visiting the Master, sewing, writing home, translating, or reading sutras.

Also, there is greater importance given to communal life and less laid on the fixed *dhutanga* (ascetic training rules) such as eating only once daily: the latter forms being found considerably easier than the selfless cooperative life.

Furthermore, there is no stress on studying texts as is generally prevalent in Tibetan Buddhism, or on 'answering the *koan*' so common to Japanese Zen Buddhism. Instead the native Korean approach, Mahayana (Supreme Vehicle) Buddhism, is one of weight transferred to giving oneself up to, and maintaining clear awareness of, the *hua-t'ou* (and infrequently the Mantric) meditational method at all times

and in all places, to a degree unknown in other Buddhist countries.

This orientation is in order to quickly realize the Buddha Mind, for the perception of the fundamental autonomous wisdom-nature of Vairocana Buddha within the sudden realization of Buddhahood. This entry to the Adamantine Palace, *Vimalakirti* and Kobo Daishi showed, is entirely possible within this very existence.

Because of this unscholastic, flexible, intensely practical and powerful accent, genuine awakening is probably far more frequent than in other parts of the globe. Every summer and winter at least one person achieves awakening. Such is the aim of the twelve or fourteen periods of *zazen* each day of every year.

Immediately after taking the formal sitting posture the more concentrated work on the Zen exercise begins and lasts fifty minutes. The practice fully accords with the *Surangama-Sūtra*—the very first sūtra which will disappear when the Dharma declines—wherein the Buddha addressed his attendant.

'You should know that all living beings, since time without beginning, have been subject to birth and death since they do not awaken to the permanent true mind, the bright substance of the pure nature. Instead they engage in false thinking.'

'Ananda, hearing of me, you decided to give up phenomenal considerations to follow the Path after perceiving the Tathagata's<sup>4</sup> excellence. Tell me, what is that mind which heard of, saw, and respected me?'

Believing what the Buddha said to be true, the central focus in the Korean Meditation Hall is toward forsaking attachments and understanding the bright nature of

4. Tathāgata: the name by which the historical Buddha referred to himself. 'Tathāgata' indicates one who has worked through cultivating perfections and finally attained Buddhahood.

one's true mind. Hence the Mahamudra, Ch'an and Zen methods of self-cultivation are an inward search to realize directly one's true nature (which is, surprisingly, 'no-nature') and thereby to discover the true meaning of life.

In common with the *Surangama* and *Lankavatara Suttas*' systems, the Zen discipline turns attention away from the arising and ceasing of phenomenal things and more toward the Birthless itself by looking into the simple question 'What is the mind?' (which sees and hears).

While single-mindedly probing this query with sharp clarity of mind one can speedily experience the *Surangama Samādhi*. As to method, people turn back their awareness (with neither excessive strain nor relaxation) during the sitting, and an uncertainty as to just 'What is this mind?' necessarily arises.

Although mind has no colour, shape or size, it most certainly does exist for we see, hear, and move our hands and feet. Not being a name (a conditioned label), the Buddha, a material object, or empty space-like vacuity, a slight 'thought of doubt' quite naturally bubbles up during the Zen work, holding the neurotic mind free of any disturbing influence, internal or external.

Discursive thoughts are thus vanquished without conscious effort to rid oneself of them and an alert state of calmness and equanimity increasingly prevails. Thus, as the *Uttara Tantra* and the *Awakening of Faith* state, one's consciousness is permeated by Suchness as one 'imitates' the body, speech and mind of the Buddhas.

Thereby the simultaneous development of *samatha* (concentration) and *vipasyana* (insight) taught by National Master Bojo is achieved. Co-maintained steadily, the fundamental 'thought of doubt' about the *koan* or *hua-t'ou* matures and expands into what the Great Masters call the 'feeling of doubt' which is so crucial to successful Zen meditation. When causes are ripened the condi-

tion is engendered for the flash of insight into cosmic Voidness.

As taught in the Sutra of Complete Enlightenment, the revealing of one's innate bright wisdom of Original Enlightenment is the aim of intensive effort in Buddhist spiritual exercises.

The fifty-minute sitting periods and ten-minute walking periods of *hua-t'ou* meditation are maintained until 5.30 a.m. when there is a short break taken for yoga or *t'ai-ch'i* prior to the Master's suggested light breakfast of rice-gruel (which all the Koreans hate because, they say, you are hungry again after an hour). The meal is taken communally in another large room near the kitchen and is followed by a hot cup of reconstituted milk back in the Zen Hall.

After this there is thirty minutes' group work sweeping or weeding the central compound and forest pathways. All may then go to the toilet and afterward a return is made to the seemingly endless sitting and walking exercises.

It was during the 7.30-11.0 a.m. interim one snowy morning that we first felt the reverberations and incomprehensible impact of *satori*<sup>5</sup>. It surely warrants mention.

The fortunate monk was then that winter's appointed Meditation Hall Leader—a short robust Korean named Hei Guk ('Wisdom Country'). Though still in his early thirties he had already had more than ten years' experience in meditation halls and hermitages, as well as a few cases of entry into very deep *dhyāna* (meditative absorption) wherein body and mind vanished and were replaced by great bliss, he said.

Any way, that quiet morning the only sound was that of the wind whistling through the stark trees atop the mountain ranges. We had barely sat for ten minutes after breakfast when Bhikshu Hei Guk

5. *Satori*: a sudden opening of the consciousness to a higher attitude.



unexpectedly rose from his seat facing the wall: (making any noise or moving during zazen time is strictly prohibited). He walked to one end of the Hall, donned his long grey robe, and exited via the centre door.

We Western monks were all looking over our shoulders, eyeing the surprising event (jokingly they say it is history if a fly lands on the wall you face and leaves something to remember him by!), while the Koreans sat immovably, feigning ignorance of the whole incident.

Nevertheless, we all heard Hei Guk enter Sam-il-am the Zen Master's room, and their verbal exchange grew louder and louder, eventually culminating in someone being hit repeatedly with the staff. Was strong-willed Hei Guk beating the old Master or, vice versa, was the sixty-eight year old teacher hammering him? You can imagine the electric apprehension inside the hall!

In less than half a minute which seemed like aeons, the distant door creaked open and heavy footsteps were heard approaching us through the fresh snow. Then, sobbing (with joy?) our stout supervisor re-entered the hall.

Once more the Koreans, in true Confucian form, feigned disregard and unknowing: not so the four foreign monks!

Late that afternoon while dusting cushions on the rear verandah, two or three of us cornered Hei Guk, asking for details. Somehow however, he managed to evade us, only saying: 'Oh that? Yes. Well sometimes when you meditate, different things happen', before slipping away under the pretext of having to put his cushion inside.

Several days later the Zen Master himself explained, 'Young Hei Guk shouldn't be overlooked because of his age; his mind is like a razor sharp knife. I am glad to say he has had several such wonderful experiences. There are only two or three

of the younger generation monks in Korea equalling him.'

After witnessing some other cases of *satori* the present writer can only state that the initial *satori* is always mistaken for Complete Enlightenment. For this reason the Zen Master, who speaks no English, calls it 'falling into emptiness'.

Generally, later experiences appeared to be both extremely unique and intensely transforming, as well as granting unquestioned personal confirmation as to their validity.

It ought to be underlined repeatedly that, should we but practise strenuously, such experiences are most certainly open to us, whatever our race, sex or 'caste', even in this day and age. After living close to the several Buddhists mentioned above who have opened *satori*, I cannot doubt the existence of higher states of perception.

However, indiscriminate use of the word *kensho* (perception of the Dharma Realm, or union with the Cosmos) should be carefully avoided for it means fully realizing Buddhahood within this lifetime. In this there is no room for politeness: 'certifying' someone's '*kensho*' when they have only a shallow glimpse, serves wonderfully to kill living Buddhism.

Viewing the present state of Eastern religion dawning in the West where, sadly, good imitators, scholars, books and psychobabble abound, I seriously doubt if anyone at all in the West has yet had *kensho*.

About 11.15 a.m. the Zen Master, Abbot, Elders, Meditation Hall Leader, Meditation Hall residents, and any wandering monks gather in the temple for a brief bowing ceremony and then, to the rhythm of a 'wooden fish', jointly chant the Heart Sutra.

Afterwards, lunch, the principal meal of the day, is taken formally. It almost always consists of a mixture of steamed rice and barley with lesser servings of home-grown pickled vegetables and radish-leaf soup.

Occasionally beans, soybeans, or beancurd are added, supplying adequate protein.

The vegetarian meal is preceded by the chanting of verses in praise of Manjushri Bodhisattva and Perfect Wisdom, along with raising the rice bowl over one's head in gratitude, and offering seven grains of rice to the hungry ghosts. The meal is eaten and the four bowls, chopsticks and spoon are washed with boiling water (which is then drunk). They are then dried, neatly stacked away, and all stand up, bow and depart.

As the Meditation Hall residents leave by a side door the Zen Master stands nearby scrutinizing them one by one.

Dare anyone drop their *hua-t'ou* and daydream?!

On the way back up to the Meditation Hall all clean their teeth, and hot herbal tea is served to each at his place in Hall.

During the warm months everyone joins in communal work in the vegetable fields, rice paddies, or elsewhere. The length of this traditional work can vary greatly. Some days there is no work at all and at times such as harvest season or when clearing the fields of stones and boulders, there is nothing but hard work for a week.

Extra food, especially the popular rice and lettuce pancakes fried in soybean oil, is prepared in abundance by unordained youths in the kitchen should there be a lot of work. The periods of manual labour are far from formal. At such times the senior monks often delight in telling favourite stories, yet the atmosphere is very much one of active examination of the *koan* theme.

During work the Zen Master often gives Dharma instruction or tests and encourages students. As examples, he might ask, 'Where is Bodhidharma?' or, pointing to a red pepper, ask, 'Do you have this back in your home land?' With the finish of the designated work or working times a wash

or swim in the river is taken (often leaving the Zen Master working in the fields alone), and all return to the Hall again for zazen.

At 5 in the afternoon the zazen schedule breaks cleaning chores are done, cushions dusted, water is carried if need be, firewood is split, a fire is lit to heat the Hall, feet and socks are washed, perhaps a patchwork coat mended, and supper is taken.

Afterward another return is made to the Meditation Hall for three or four sittings during which someone may patrol with the long ruler and tap anyone on the shoulders who is dozing in order to stimulate their mind.

At nine the monastery gong sounds, indicating that quilts should be unrolled for six hours' sleep on the warm ondol floor. All too soon the clock on the wall chimes three and the day's timetable begins all over again.

Every fortnight the predawn hours are spent boiling water, after which all handwash clothes, shaves, and take a bath. At noon a special meal of noodles is prepared by unordained cadets under the direction of the head monk of the kitchen. In the afternoon some monks talk in a room adjoining the Meditation Hall while most tramp in the surrounding mountains, returning for evening zazen.

On the following morning either the Indian monastic discipline or the more favoured 48 Bodhisattva Precepts are recited to the assembly by the Abbot. Early that afternoon the Dharma Master gives his customary Zen lecture with its overtones of the Flower Garland Sutra: much of this remains a mystery to listeners. No one interrupts him or dares ask intellectual questions.

Korean Zen Masters never comment on such supposedly 'Zen' texts as the Gateless Gate. Alternatively, present day Masters such as Kyong Bong, Il Ta or Ku San use

works like the Transmission of the Mind Outside the Teaching, the Record of Chung Feng, or the Record of National Master Bojo.<sup>6</sup>

Their formal talks are followed by an 'off-the-cuff' talk, often about their own experiences or simple elaborations on Zen practice. Should anyone wish to enquire further the Master is available for private interview almost anytime.

One old monk, faithful to ancient custom, goes up to the Master's room and prostrates early each morning, asking nothing. Though there is no compulsion at all in going to see him, on and off he has visitors. Fittingly, the day of reciting the Rule and listening to the Dharma discourse concludes with hour after hour of *zazen* interspersed no doubt with recollections of the Master's intriguing words.

As far as monies are concerned, the monastery office gives the bus fare to the next monastery to all residents of the Meditation Hall upon completion of a three-month winter or summer retreat. (But should they find it unbearable and run away—and this seldom happens—they of course forfeit the bus fare and must walk, if they are not caught and brought back.)

Monks and nuns in Korea travel from one Meditation Hall or special Sutra Study Hall to another, hardly ever staying at any one mountain centre for more than a year. Buddhist monks and nuns in Korea have equal status, exist in equal numbers, but live entirely separate.

I once met a Korean man who asked, 'Are there Korean nuns? I've never seen

any.' 'Certainly there are. You must have seen them! They wear the same clothes and live the same lives,' I replied. 'Then I must have seen them but couldn't tell the difference!' he said.

Donations made personally to the Zen Master when he is out giving Dharma discourses in the cities is sufficient to cover bus fares, renovation work, and the buying of things from the market like toothpaste, soap, medicine, kelp, tools and cloth.

Meditation Hall life in Korea is obviously balanced, vigorous and consistent. It is a life wherein there is no free time, no privacy and reading is strongly discouraged.

In the tropical countries of South East Asia living Buddhist Masters stress the original Indian monastic discipline and maintain as much as possible isolated forest practice, and clothing, in the actual manner of the Buddha himself two thousand plus years ago.

However, in the severe climate of South Korea, the foremost Zen Masters of big monastic sites encourage an adapted lifestyle with day after day of sitting meditation in the style of Dhyana Master Bodhidharma (the First Patriarch). Also prominent is the physical labour for which the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng, or present day Masters, are well known.

It is not uncommon for Meditation Hall residents not to read anything for several years and a number observe complete silence over periods of months. Smaller numbers follow semi-Taoist diet regimes such as abstaining totally from grains, replacing the rice and vegetables with a mixture of green pine needle flour laced with a touch of ground raw soybeans. Generally twelve to fourteen hours daily are devoted to formal *hua-t'ou* meditation.

Prior to the annual commemoration of the Buddha's attainment of Complete Enlightenment on the 8th of December, seven days are spent on an intensive period

6. One of the most remarkable Korean Masters, the Record of the twelfth century Buddhist Master Chinul (posthumous title: National Master Bojo) is a very thorough consideration of sudden versus gradual enlightenment, the teaching of the Avatamsaka Sutra, and encouraging discourses Bojo delivered. The work is available from America in two volumes.

of non-sleeping training. It is timed to finish on the very morning of Shakyamuni Buddha's Enlightenment.

Like the Buddha himself, no one lays down to sleep for a week; surprisingly, it is not followed by sleep but with a day long walk over the mountains and then the normal six hours of sleep. If this is not

done one's face and neck are found to swell up.

To aspire to the inconceivable liberation of all Buddhas, and having attained awakening to transmit this emancipation from birth-and-death to all sentient beings, is the only reason for the existence of this twelve hundred year old Meditation Hall in Korea.

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(Continued from Page 278)

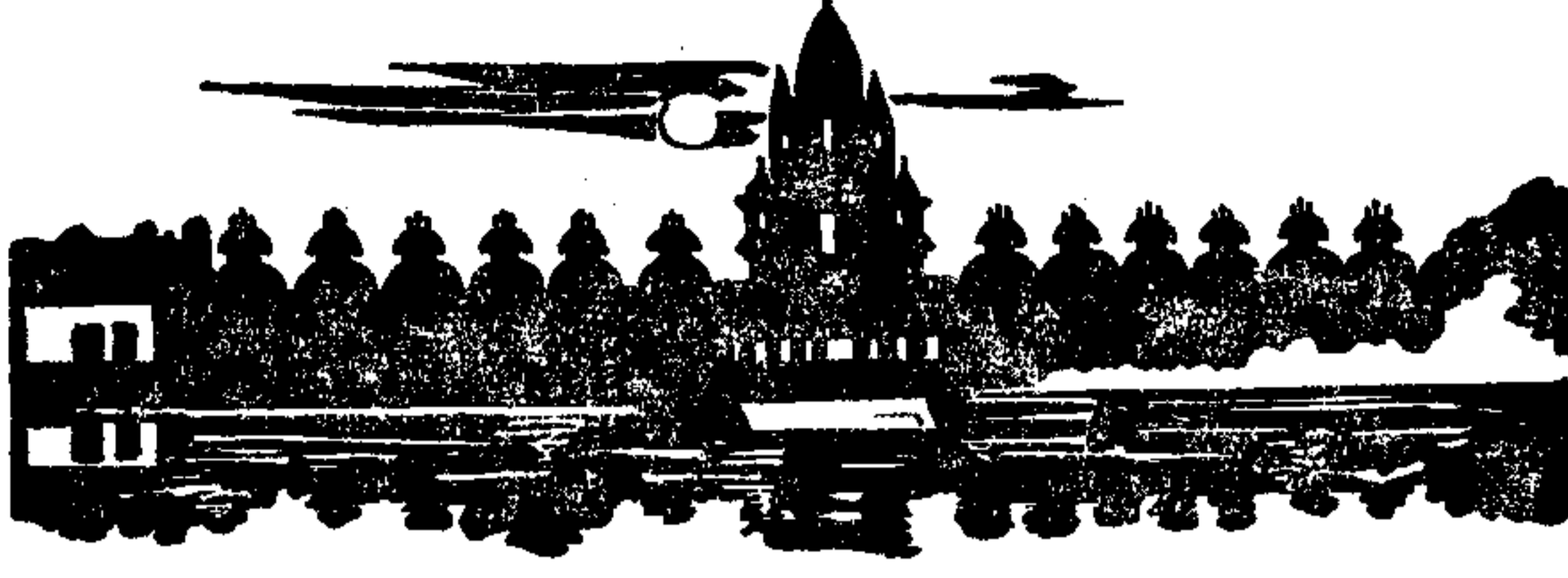
sive self-purification to an insight into the nature of Reality, in which rites and rituals could be of no real help. Instead of indulging in any kind of religious formalism he urged his disciples to cultivate the right virtues (*śīla*) and concentration (*samādhi*), which eventually culminate in the liberating knowledge of Reality (*prajñā*).

Inspired by Buddha's thought a group of Hindu thinkers, mainly from the Kṣatriya class, began to question the efficacy of the Vedic form of sacrificial worship. Their

interest shifted from external rituals to the more profound philosophical speculations concerning the nature of the self, the universe and God. Gradually, the sacrificial priesthood of the Vedic age came to be replaced by the more inward-looking spirituality of the Vedānta. This explains why the Upaniṣadic Hinduism and the religion preached by Buddha exhibit some striking features of similarity.

(To be continued)

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## IS BUDDHISM A RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM UPANIṢADIC HINDUISM ?

DR. SUSHANTA SEN

### *The rebel child of Hinduism*

There is wide divergence of opinion among the scholars of Indian religions on the question as to how exactly the Vedic-Upaniṣadic tradition of Hinduism stands related to Buddhism, which is said to have evolved out of the former. Buddha's explicit denunciation of animal sacrifice and other kinds of sacramental liturgies prescribed in the Karma-Kāṇḍa of the Vedas, his vigorous opposition to the existing caste-rules of the then Hindu society, his modal way (*sūnyakāya dr̥ṣṭi*) of conceiving Reality as opposed to the substantive way (*satkāya dr̥ṣṭi*) of conceiving the same as found in the Upaniṣads, and above all his construction of the salvation programme of mankind in terms of absolute emancipation from sufferings (*duḥkha-nirodha*) rather than in terms of union or identity with an Absolute principle usually called Brahman in the various Upaniṣads, have generated the impression—especially among the scholars initiated in the Buddhist lore—that Buddhism represents a radical departure rather than an accidental deviation from Hinduism based on the Upaniṣadic tradition. This view, however, has been challenged by a host of other scholars—Swami Vivekananda,<sup>1</sup> Mrs.

Rhys Davids<sup>2</sup>, Radhakrishnan and others, to name only a few among them—who think that Buddha was simply carrying on the insight of the Upaniṣadic seers and Buddhism is 'only a restatement of the thought of the Upaniṣads'<sup>3</sup> couched in different linguistic phraseology. The purpose of this paper is to show that neither of these theories can be accepted in toto and both of them suffer from an over-simplified solution of the problem. The most suggestive expression was used by Swami Vivekananda to describe the relationship between these two apparently heterogeneous faiths of Indian origin when he designated Buddhism as a 'rebel child' of Hinduism.<sup>4</sup> A child must genetically inherit some of the character-traits of his father whether he likes them or not. And as a conscientious child he has every right to rebel against his father whose 'character' has become debased under the pressure of the situation. It is precisely on the model

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1977), vol. 1, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> In her numerous works on Buddhism, namely, *Gotama the Man* (1928), *A Manual of Buddhism* (1932), *Outline of Buddhism* (1934), *What was the Original Buddhism* (1938), etc. Mrs. Rhys Davids elaborates this theme with tiresome repetition.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London : George Allen & Unwin, 1929), vol. 1, p. 676.

<sup>4</sup> *Complete Works* (1973), vol. 3, p. 275.

of a 'rebellious child' that the relationship between Buddhism and Hinduism is to be construed.

Born in a Hindu family, Buddha abandoned the Hindu faith in the prime of his youth in the quest of a more radical method of salvation from the sufferings (*duḥkha*) of the world and he was convinced that he had found the WAY free from the corrupt practices and customs into which Hinduism had degenerated at that time. There were in particular two elements of Hinduism against which Buddha protested—the elaborate sacrificial cult (*yajña*) performed by the people of the Vedic age in which the sacrifice of animals (*paśuyajña*) played a predominant role, and the evil effects of the caste-system, especially the exploitation by the Brāhmaṇas of the other castes in Indian society. Although these customs had a socio-religious origin in the beginning, they had developed into deleterious extremes to which the Hindu mind has often been prone.

#### *Buddha's protest against caste*

Let us first begin with Buddha's protest against the caste system in Hindu society. Originally for the effective functioning of the community, and on the principle of 'division of labour', ancient Hindu society was divided into four major professional classes—the Brāhmaṇa or priest-class, the Kṣatriya or warrior class, the Vaiśya or the class of traders and agriculturalists and the Śūdra or servant class. The earliest literary reference to these four social classes is found in the Puruṣasūkta of the *R̥g-Veda*. Of these four, the Brāhmaṇas were regarded as the highest in rank and authority. Theoretically they were simply priests, but in practice they always gained the upper hand in social and political affairs as well. It was required, for example, of a Hindu king that his prime minister be chosen from

the Brāhmaṇa class.<sup>5</sup> The Brāhmaṇas were in fact the bureaucratic elite of the society, holding almost all the key positions, both secular and religious. The main duties of the Brāhmaṇa class were to study and teach the Vedas, to act as priests in the *yajña*, and to advise and instruct the king in the interpretation of laws and the administration of the land, the king himself being usually chosen from the Kṣatriya class.

The Brāhmaṇas were supposed to be worthy of such dignity and authority in society, not because they were born into a Brāhmaṇa family, but because of certain intrinsic virtues (*guṇas*) which they were supposed to embody and cultivate. Thus in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, one of the most popular but profound and influential Hindu scriptures, it has been said that the natural qualities of a Brāhmaṇa are: self-restraint, austerity, purity, serenity, forgiveness, simplicity, wisdom in the holy scriptures, philosophic insight into the Truth and faith in God.<sup>6</sup> The members of the other three castes were likewise required to cultivate the particular virtues which were appropriate to their own functions and position in society. The theory was that the castes were not originally determined solely by birth and heredity but also by natural gifts and virtues which were cultivated by their members. This is expressed in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* when it declares that the division of the society into the four major classes or castes (*varṇas*) was based on the twin principles of *guṇa* (natural and acquired virtues) and *karma* (professional activity).<sup>7</sup> This theory made it proper to transfer an individual from one caste to another if any marked change took place in his *guṇa* or *karma* or both. Thus if a man born in a Śūdra (servant class) family was found to

5. *Manu Samhitā*, 7.58.

6. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 18.42.

7. *ibid*, 4.13.

possess the qualities and virtues of a Brāhmaṇa, he could be promoted to the Brāhmaṇa caste and be regarded as a true Brāhmaṇa. Hence the belief that everyone is originally born as a Śūdra, but may be reborn as a Brāhmaṇa, or Kṣatriya, or Vaiśya as a result of training and culture. In the same way a man born in a Brāhmaṇa family, but lacking the proper Brāhmaṇa virtues, could be degraded to any one of the other three classes according to the quality that he possessed. To quote from *Manu-Samhitā*, the most authoritative of the Hindu law-books :

One who has not the requisite qualifications of a Brāhmaṇa is a Brāhmaṇa only in name, just as a wooden elephant or a leather antelope only bears the name of 'elephant', or 'antelope'; that a Brāhmaṇa becomes a Śūdra in this life if he does not study the Vedas and serves as a labourer elsewhere; and that a Śūdra becomes a Brāhmaṇa by sheer merit, and so also a Kṣatriya or a Vaisya.<sup>8</sup>

There is ample scriptural and historical evidence of such transference of an individual from one caste to another in ancient Hindu society.<sup>9</sup> It is clear from this that originally there were no castes in the modern sense of the term, but only four functional classes in ancient India. But we have noted that Hinduism has always had a tendency to press things to their extremes, and it was because of this that the original fluid class-system gradually rigidified into a caste-system determined solely by heredity. Thus the son of a Brāhmaṇa came to be treated as a Brāhmaṇa regardless of his actual capabilities and virtues. The same applies to members of the other three classes. In this way the modern caste-system, based on the principle of birth, came into existence.

Two evil consequences followed from such a rigid hereditary caste-system. First,

it created a large group of people within the society as a whole who were excluded from membership of any of these four castes. These were the children from unlawful intermarriage between the higher and lower castes and they were declared as social out-castes, who were deprived of all the benefits and privileges of those who had a place within the caste structure. They came to be regarded as naturally impure people whose very touch could defile the members of the four castes. The most degraded outcastes were called Caṇḍālas, who were born of a Śūdra man and a Brāhmaṇa woman. They were expelled from towns, where they could not even walk except by day. They were allowed to wear only dead man's clothes, rusty iron ornaments, etc.<sup>10</sup> Bearing such an intolerable social stigma these untouchable outcastes continue to live as society's disfranchised proletariat! Secondly, the caste-system led to the glorification of the Brāhmaṇas to such an extent that they were regarded virtually as gods living among men. Their superiority over all others and their right to enjoy the wealth and privileges of the society came to be accepted as a natural birth-right. Thus they became an established, exploiting class in the society. We read in the *Manu-Samhitā* :

When a Brāhmaṇa is born he is born superior to the whole earth, he is the lord of all creatures, and he has to guard the treasury of *dharma*. Everything that exists throughout the world is the private property of the Brāhmaṇa. By the high excellence of his birth he is entitled to everything. What he enjoys, what he wears, and what he gives away are his own private property, and it is through the mercy of the Brāhmaṇa that others enjoy (anything at all).<sup>11</sup>

It was against these two evil effects of the caste-system that Buddha eloquently protested. He challenged the hereditary supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas and championed the cause of the exploited classes,

8. *Manu Samhitā*, 2.157, 168; 10.65.

9. See *Rāmāyaṇa : Bāla-Kāṇḍa* 57.65; *Mahābhārata : Anusāsanaparva*, 30 and *Viṣṇu-Bhagavata*, 9.27.19 ff.

10. *Manu Samhitā*, 10.51-56.

11. *ibid*, 1.96-101.

especially the Śūdras and the untouchable outcastes. The doors of his new religion were thrown open to all people irrespective of their castes. The members of the lower strata of Hindu society, the Śūdras and the untouchables, were given equality in Buddhism with the Brāhmaṇas. Upāli, one of Buddha's favourite disciples, who was accorded the rare honour of narrating the rules of the *Samgha* in the first Great Buddhist Council, came from a Śūdra family. In the same way many of the social outcastes embraced Buddhism, because they found in it a dignified alternative to the intolerable social humiliation of being untouchables.

Buddha did not object to their being a Brāhmaṇa class in the society, but he objected to their hereditary supremacy. He believed that a man should be called a Brāhmaṇa not because of his birth but because of his moral excellence. Thus in the *Dhammapada*, one of the most celebrated Buddhist scriptures whose position is analogous to that of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in Hinduism, a whole chapter is devoted to the different qualifications and virtues that entitle a man to be called a Brāhmaṇa. The following extracts indicate the Buddhist attitude to the caste-system in general and to the Brāhmaṇa caste in particular :

A man does not become a Brāhmaṇa by his plaited hair, by his family or by birth; in whom there is truth and righteousness, he is blessed, he is a Brāhmaṇa.

I do not call a man Brāhmaṇa because of his origin or of his mother, if he is indeed arrogant and is wealthy; but the poor who is free from all attachments, him I call indeed a Brāhmaṇa.

Him I call indeed a Brāhmaṇa from whom anger and hatred, pride and hypocrisy have dropped like a mustard seed from the point of a needle. Him I call indeed a Brāhmaṇa who in this world has risen above ties, both good and evil, who is free from grief, from sin and from impurity.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>. *Dhammapada*, ch. 26 entitled *Brāhmaṇavaggo*.

Here we see that Buddha, who was attacking the hereditary caste system, was in fact trying to restore the original social classification based on the principles of *guṇa* (virtue) and *karma* (profession).

Buddha's rejection of the hereditary caste system had its effect on the development of Hinduism. It is true that Hinduism as a whole had never been able to free itself completely from the caste-system; but in the later forms of Hinduism, especially in some of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects, there has been a tendency to recognize caste as an evil, or at least as an imperfection which ought to be got rid of. Thus in the twelfth century a south Indian Brāhmaṇa named Basava (1106-1167 A.D.) founded a new sect of Śaivism the followers of which came to be known as Liṅgāyats or Viraśaivas, and Basava followed in Buddha's footsteps in insisting that his disciples must drop their caste distinctions altogether. Today the Liṅgāyats claim that they belong to a new caste—a fifth caste—over and above the four recognized by traditional Hinduism. But in saying this their aim is not to add to the number of castes but to transcend them. In the same way Śrī Caitanya, a powerful Hindu reformer of the sixteenth century and the founder of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, denounced the caste-system. He was 'notorious' in his own days for deliberately breaking the caste rules and accepting the untouchables with dignity and honour within his own fold. In contemporary India the caste system is in the process of being discarded; it is utterly repugnant to the feelings and opinion of the present-day educated Hindus.

Throughout his career Mahatma Gandhi, the undisputed national leader of modern India, spared no pains in campaigning against the system of untouchability. He described this system as 'evil', a 'curse' or a 'crime'. In an address delivered before



the Y.M.C.A., Madras (16th February, 1916), he said :

I think this miserable, wretched, enslaving spirit of 'untouchableness' must have come to us when we were at our lowest ebb. The *evil* has stuck to us and still remains within us. It is, to my mind, a *curse* that has come to us; and as long as that *curse* remains with us, so long I think we are bound to consider that every affliction in this sacred land is a proper punishment for the indelible *crime* that we are committing (*italics mine*).

It appears that the outraged conscience of Buddha speaks here through the lips of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi coined a new word to affirm the dignity of the untouchables—*Harijan* or 'the people of God'—and he transformed his own *āshrama* at Sabar-mati into a centre for the training of the untouchables. It was through Gandhi's untiring efforts that the Hindu temples opened their gates to the untouchables for the first time. But this movement of liberation which came to its fruition in the work of Gandhi had started long ago with Buddha, and Hinduism's determination to rid itself of the evil of caste system may be regarded as a long-range influence of Buddhism on the Hindu mind and religion.

#### *Buddha's protest against animal sacrifice*

Apart from the sociological revolution initiated by Buddha in breaking the hereditary caste-rules of the then Hindu society, he also stood against the Vedic form of worship known as *yajña*. The Vedic worship was originally conceived as a means of propitiating the gods by sacrificing to them food and drink the aroma of which was supposed to nourish and please them. The food and drink was cast into the sacred fire on an altar built and consecrated for this purpose, whilst the presiding priests chanted prayers and sang hymns in praise of the gods. Fire was regarded as sacred, being thought of as the only mediator between

heaven and earth, carrying the sacrifices offered by men to the gods in heaven. Thus far the idea *prima facie* contained nothing objectionable. But in the course of time the abhorrent practice of animal sacrifice was gradually introduced into the Vedic *yajña*. The ceremonial killing of various animals, such as goats and horses, on the sacrificial altar and the offering of their flesh in the sacred fire, came to be regarded as the highest worship that man could offer to the gods. Such worship was thought of as an expiation of men's sins. It had occurred to the moral intuition of the ancient Hindus that a man must inevitably suffer as a result of his sins—a foreshadowing of the law of *karma* in the later Upanisadic age—and such suffering was the only way of purifying oneself from the sins one had committed. However, the priests of the Vedic age perverted this insight into a theory of vicarious suffering. Instead of suffering the bad consequences of his own sins, the worshipper allowed an animal to be punished in his place by sacrificing it on the altar. This idea of vicarious suffering for the expiation of sins finds its clearest expression in one of the passages of the *Tāndya Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sāma-Veda* :

O thou limb of the victim now consigned to fire, thou art the expiation for sins committed by the gods, by the fathers (our deceased ancestors), by men, by ourselves. Whatever sins we have committed, sleeping or waking, knowing or unknowing, thou art the expiation for that.<sup>13</sup>

Whatever may be the magico-moral significance of animal sacrifice, it had become by Buddha's time deeply rooted in Hindu worship. Thousands of animals were killed daily in the name of religion, and the land of Āryāvarta was virtually saturated with their blood. This cruel practice disturbed

<sup>13</sup>. As quoted by Monier-Williams, *Hinduism* (London : 1906), p. 40.

the compassionate Buddha. He violently protested against it and preached his message of non-violence (*ahimsā*) to counteract such needless slaughter of innocent creatures. There is a story in the Buddhist tradition that Buddha once wanted to offer his own life at the sacrificial altar to save the life of a young goat which was about to be killed in a Vedic *yajña*. However, Buddha's doctrine of *ahimsā* was not confined to protecting the lives of animals from being sacrificed in worship but extended to all living beings, which he taught must not be hurt by thought, speech or action.

But it should be noted here that there is nothing peculiarly Buddhistic in the doctrine of *ahimsā* as preached by Buddha, since it is recognized with equal importance as a fundamental moral precept in the Yoga system of Patañjali and Jainism both of which precede Buddhism in point of time. In Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtra*, *ahimsā* constitutes a basic aspect of the five-fold programme of the negative restraint of conduct (*yama*), and the Jainas carry this doctrine to its extreme limit by straining drinking water lest they inadvertently destroy some living creature and by sweeping the path before them lest in walking they destroy some form of life. Indeed the concept of *ahimsā* need not be supposed to have had an exclusively Buddhistic origin but should be considered essentially pan-Indian in character. This is evident from the fact that even the ritualistic killing of animals in the Vedic *yajña* was sought to be justified by an implicit appeal to the principle of non-injury (*ahimsā*), by saying that such type of killing is equivalent to non-killing (*yajñe vadho avadhah—Manu*), because the animal sacrificed in worship gets the union with God in whose name it is killed, and such union with God is regarded as the highest goal of man's spiritual life. Thus in one of the verses of the *Rg-Veda* we read : 'O thou animal (just sacrificed in the *yajña*), thou art not dying nor is in-

jury inflicted upon thee. Thou art proceeding to the god through a non-hazardous way.'<sup>14</sup> Such apologetic defence of animal-sacrifice in the *yajña* has the obvious implication that non-injury (*ahimsā*) towards animals and created living beings in general was a part of the moral heritage of the Vedic Hindus. Otherwise no such apologia would have been needed. Buddha's objection against the cultic sacrifice of animals consisted in showing that transference of sin committed by man to an animal sacrificed in worship amounted to esoteric magic—naive and simple—having no rational ground to stand upon; and anything that was repugnant to reason and moral sense was not accepted by Buddha. In one of his sermons he had asked his disciples not to accept even his own teachings out of sheer reverence to him if these proved unacceptable when judged by the criterion of reason (*parīkṣya madvāco grāhyam bhikṣave na tu gauravāt*).<sup>15</sup> It was this splendid rationalism of Buddha that led him to conclude that the vicarious expiation of sins through the sacrifice of a scape-goat in the Vedic *yajña* was irrational and unjust, and every man must suffer in his own person for the sin that he himself had committed. Not only the animal sacrifice in particular but the whole institution of sacrificial cult as such practised by the Vedic priests met with Buddha's disapproval. As against any reliance on external rituals, Buddha was convinced that the ultimate aim of religion was to lead men by progres-

(Continued on page 272)

14. न वा उ एतन्म्रियसे न रिष्यसि देवां इदेषि

पथिभिः सुगेभिः ।

*Rg-Veda*, 1.162.21.

15. See N. A. Sastri, 'Buddhism : A World Religion', in *Prajñāloka* (Nāgārjuna Buddhist Foundation, Gorakhpur, January-April, 1979), p. 10.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**CONCEPT OF THE COW IN THE RIG VEDA :** BY DORIS SRINIVASAN. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. 1979. Pp. xii+162. Rs. 35.

The subject of the Cow, *go*, in the *Rg-Veda* merits an in-depth study, next in importance perhaps only to *Rta* which is another key concept in this ancient hymnal. The author of this conscientious study examines the denotation and connotation of the term 'Cow' in these hymns from three main standpoints, namely, the economic, the ritualistic and the mythological. She examines all the major references to the Cow under these three heads and evaluates its role in the life and thought of the Vedic R̥sis.

In common with other scholars she examines the undoubted importance of the Cow in the economics of Vedic society, but she strikes out an independent line of assessment in underlining that the 'economic considerations are but incidental to the actual intent of the text.'

In the section on Vedic ritual, she describes how the Cow stands for different things in different contexts : 'rays of light', 'Cosmic Waters', 'poetic vision', 'creative and sustaining principle'. The Cow also represents deities like Uṣas and Aditi. Gods like Indra and Agni are frequently associated with *go*. Though the writer does not expressly mention the fact that the word *go* in the Veda has a double meaning, the quadruped of that name and also a ray of light, the suggestion is inescapable that to the R̥sis the Cow stands, on a deeper level, for Light—the illumination of knowledge.

The third section considers the topic in the light of the Indra-Vṛtra Myth and it is pointed out how the waters (Cows) 'represent a maternal, creative force' in the formation of the universe. In the light of the myth of the Panis, 'Cows represent three different concepts. One of these is light, in particular, dawn's light ... the other concepts are the oblation giving cow and the *dakṣiṇā* cow.'

The author makes a pertinent observation on the term, *aghnyā*. While the word undoubtedly means 'unslayable', it is not to be taken literally in the sense of *ahimsa*. For, as she points out, the physical cow was slain for various purposes on different occasions in the Vedic society. (p. 8)

We agree with the writer : 'That she (Cow) represents material well-being is a well-accepted fact. But it should also be noted that the cow

seems to be an ideal figure to further man's knowledge of the unknown. Through similes and metaphors the cow is able to clarify and then identify cosmic phenomena as well as gods and goddesses.'

The exegesis on selected passages, bibliography and index of the *Rg-Vedic* passages cited and the word index are useful additions for reference.

Though by no means a complete study, this work opens up new avenues for thought and introspection to the serious student.

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**RIG VEDA : A SCIENTIFIC AND INTELLECTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE HYMNS.** BY DR. J. K. TRIKHA. Published by Somaiya Publication, 172 Mumbai Marathi Granthasangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay-400 014. 1981. Pp. 352. Rs. 120.

It is now an accepted fact that the Veda is a special kind of Revelation received by the awakened consciousness of the R̥sis and expressed in chiselled terms by direct inspiration from the Soul of things. It is unique inasmuch as it lends itself to different interpretations from differing angles of vision. The author accepts these truths of the Veda ; he feels that in their zeal to draw the ritualistic, philological, philosophical, spiritual, historical meanings of the hymns, an important part of the content has been missed. And that is the human interest, the context of the relationship between God, Nature and man.—He has made a deep study of the *Rg Veda* from this point of view, and he illustrates his theory by explaining the first thirty hymns in this collection.

It is wrong, in the opinion of the author—and we agree with him on this point—to interpret Vedic hymns, in the light of the legends narrated in the Purāṇas which came much later. Nor is it correct to take every name and narrative literally. The Gods like Indra, Agni, Varuṇa stand for certain eternal Laws that operate in Nature and their achievements are not part of any wars between two races but high water-marks in the creation and stabilization of our universe. Dr. Trikha cites instance after instance, basing himself upon texts of astronomy, namely, *Sūrya-Siddhānta*, to prove the inter-relation between the earth, the planets and the omnipresent Divinity.

Speaking of Yajña, he writes : 'Yajña signifies

the perfected organism of life and biological functions within the perfected anatomy of man, for which the Vedas inspire in man a sense of devotion to life.' He describes how 'the three strides of Viṣṇu (hymn 1.22) have been correlated with the phenomena of equinoxes and the precession of the equinoxes'.

Elaborate introductions precede the translations of each hymn. The full text in Nāgari script follows with word meanings. A laudable attempt to present a neglected layer of the Vedic Wisdom.

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**PRIMAL MYTHS :** BY BARBARA C. SPROUL.  
Published by Rider and Company, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6 JD. 1979. Pp. 373. £ 5.50.

This publication is an interesting collection of some of our very ancient primitive myths regarding creation and the world. Really, as it has been noted on the cover, 'Barbara C. Sproul has chosen the most powerful tales, offering examples from each religious tradition, while avoiding duplication of themes and attitudes. By its range the collection provides an introduction to the cosmological and theological thinking of the world's religions.' Not only that, within its limited scope, it has provided some opportunities to study comparatively different cultures and civilizations in their mythological depths and traditional perspectives. And it has covered Africa, the Near East, Europe, India, China and Japan, Siberian and Eskimo myths, North America, Central and South America, Australia and the Pacific Islands—almost the entire Globe. Appropriately, it has introduced briefly each of these traditions and the source of information, where from all these myths have been gathered. There is no doubt that most of them are very authentic translations. While going through these primeval myths one gets some glimpses of the ethnology, cultural anthropology and also verbal forms and literary traditions which lie behind them in all their natural charm, simplicity and depths. Once upon a time these were the real poetry of life and the cultural tapestry of society. May be it is a forgotten heritage today, but it is universally there with most of us, almost a common interaction of the mind.

Introducing this pageant of our primal myths, the compiler has aptly noted: 'The most profound human questions are the ones that give rise to creation myths: who are we? Why are

we here? What is the purpose of our lives and our death? How should we understand our place in the world, in time and space? These are the central questions of value and meaning and while they are influenced by the issues of fact, they are not in themselves factual questions; rather they involve attitudes towards facts and reality.' Indeed, they describe not just the real world of 'fact' but our perception and experience of that world. Of course, these myths stand for not analytical knowledge, but belief or intuition so to say, out of which we have built the structure of our understanding about nature, life and also creation. These are the 'origin' of ourselves, a portion of our history. There was a time when our faith and knowledge were thus mixed up without any water-tight compartments or specialization of knowledge. As a result, mankind had a general and holistic view of Reality as against our modern sophistry and artificial grandeur of so-called experimental or verified knowledge. It has become customary now to say, it seems, that we should not try any more to construct such beliefs about nature and creation, but should rather transform all our energy into critical and scientific activities only. No—not even philosophy—what to speak of mythology! This is mainly because science itself has become dogmatic and has grown into a stature of knowledge about nature and creation so immense that such denial of its own genealogy—earlier processes or stages of its growth—has not only become possible but also fashionable. Yet how can we deny that mythology is also a very interesting part of this knowledge—the primeval fire that produced this light or enlightenment—and is therefore necessary for its completion or fulfilment? Without some comprehension of the foundation of human knowledge called belief or myth, or whatever it is, no knowledge, scientific or otherwise, can be complete.

The ancient myths, as noted by C. G. Jung, have certain common features. Mankind as a whole has certain common inborn tendencies to form general symbols out of their experiences of life and Reality. Hence Otto Rank described myth as 'a dream of the masses of the people'. Myths provide valuable insight into the structure and function of the collective and the individual unconscious of man. Myths enable man to overcome contradictions, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss. The rootlessness and meaninglessness that characterize modern youth are at least partly caused by the loss of myth in the present-day society. Understanding the meaning of myth has

now become a vital social necessity. Here comes the importance of this book. It is a most welcome publication. Its value would have been greater if the author had given a concluding chapter like the learned Introduction.

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AT THE FEET OF BHAGAVAN : BY T. K. SUNDARESA IYER. 1980. Pp. 100. Rs. 5.

STORIES FROM BHAGAVAN : 1980. Pp. 111. Rs. 4. Both published by Sri Ramanasrama, Tiruvannamalai-606-603 (S. India).

Speaking about the illumined soul, the *Gītā* says, 'To him whose delight is only in the Self—who is content with his Self, and who remains satisfied with his own Self only—there exists no urge for action.' (3.17) This declaration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa perfectly tallies with the state of Sri Ramana Maharshi, the celebrated sage of Arunachala. In fact, the very word 'Ramana' in Sanskrit connotatively means 'one who rejoices (in himself)'. The Maharshi's Atma-saksatkara or spiritual realization may be rightly described as *asparsa-yoga*—'that yoga which has no touch—relationship—with anything at any time; it is the very nature of Brahman', in the language of Acārya Śamkara.

An extraordinary soul with penetrating eyes, the great sage Sri Ramana stationed himself at one place and yet attracted a host of spiritual seekers from both the East and the West through the power of his exalted life and his simple but luminous teachings. He has helped thousands of people to tread the spiritual path of peace and blessedness. A man of extreme renunciation but without any traditional insignia, he was at the same time so very understanding and kind to man and beast alike. Sri Ramana Maharshi was not given to speaking much, but every act of his was a lesson in itself and education to one and all. The two books under review provide a study of this unique person which is fascinating and highly rewarding.

Through a number of anecdotes, impressively narrated by the author, *At the Feet of Bhagavan* gives the reader a fairly good idea of the human aspect of the Maharshi's personality, especially his sense of humour, and his remarkable power of intuition and imparting spiritual wisdom. The book is divided into three parts. The first two parts contain various interesting anecdotes. The

third part is devoted to Maharshi's teachings.

Great morals are best taught through illustrative parables and stories, as we know from the lives of several world teachers. Sri Ramana Maharshi, too, frequently adopted the same line. The other book *Stories from Bhagavan* is a collection of some of the delightful stories that he used to narrate. He was a brilliant story teller, and had the remarkable capacity of bringing abstruse Vedantic truths within the reach of the common man through stories and parables.

Both the books, moderately priced, make a good addition to what may be called Ramana-Vedanta literature.

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*President, Ramakrishna Math*  
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SAT-DARSHANA (of Ramana Maharshi) :  
SANSKRIT RENDERING BY KAVYAKANTA GANAPATHI  
MUNI. Published by Ramana Maharshi Centre  
for Learning, No. 3, Old Veterinary Hospital  
Road, Basavangudi, Bangalore 560 004. 1982.  
Pp. 25. Re. 1.

The path of Knowledge had for long remained obscured by the mist of scriptural scholarship until Sri Ramana Maharshi rose on the Arunachala hill in the beginning of the present century. Though the theoretical aspect of Advaita has been expounded with great skill by hundreds of sages and scholars, the practical technique for its actual realization is unclear and difficult to most people. Therefore the simple method of *ko'ham* or 'who-am-I' enquiry practised and taught by Ramana Maharshi assumes great significance for sincere spiritual seekers. The technique consists in merging all thoughts in the 'I'-thought and tracing the source of the 'I' to the foundational Reality. A clear and cogent exposition of this technique was given by the Maharshi in his Tamil poem *Ulladu Narpadu* ('Forty verses on Reality'). It was rendered into mellifluous Sanskrit verses by Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni. The present book contains the Sanskrit original with English translation and brief notes. An indispensable book for all those who want to know the simplest and best way to Jñāna.

S. B.

RAMANA THATHA : BY KUMARI SARADA.  
Published by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, No. 3, Old Veterinary Hospital Road, Basa-

vangudi, Bangalore 560 004. 1982. Pp. 22. Rs. 5.

Ramana Thatha or 'Grandfather Ramana' is one of the few children's books printed in India which are in harmony with the psychological make up of children. It is a beautiful attempt to bring the exalted life of an austere sage within the comprehensible range of a child. What could be a better way of teaching the little ones noble virtues like love, consideration for others and kindness to animals than creating in their minds

an indelible impress of a great soul who was an ideal embodiment of those virtues?

The story part of this little book consists of a few anecdotes from the life of Ramana Maharshi seen through the eyes of a child. What, however, strikes the reviewer is the overall plan of the book, especially of the pictures, so imaginatively conceived and skilfully executed. It would be a good idea to bring out an enlarged version covering the whole life of the great sage.

S. B.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION HOME OF SERVICE VARANASI

REPORT : APRIL 1980—MARCH 1981

The Home was started in 1900 as an independent institution under the name 'Poor Men's Relief Association' by a few young men who were inspired by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. The work was begun with a capital of only four annas. These young men used to take care of the poor and diseased, sometimes collecting them from the roadside. Swamiji was delighted to see their dedicated service and renamed the institution the 'Home of Service'. It was affiliated to the Rama-Krishna Mission in 1902. From this modest inception, the Home of Service has now grown into a fully equipped modern hospital taking care of the poor and the suffering as living manifestations of God.

The activities for the year are outlined below:

**Indoor General Hospital :** The total number of cases admitted during the year was 5,367; of these, 2,732 cases were relieved, 1,444 cases were cured, 510 were discharged otherwise, 509 died and 172 remained at the end of the year. Surgical cases totalled 1,710. From the roadside 14 patients were picked up. An average of 162 beds were occupied daily. Free treatment was given to 35.57 per cent of the total number of patients.

**Outpatient Department :** The number of patients treated, including those at the Shivala branch, was 2,21,188 (new cases 51,663 and repeated cases 1,50,525). Daily attendance averaged 656. Surgical cases numbered 4,270.

**Homoeopathy :** The homoeopathic sections at Luxa and at Shivala were attended by 10 homoeopaths and served a total of 23,612 patients.

**Clinical and Pathological Laboratory :** The laboratory conducted many and varied tests under the general headings of clinical pathology, serology, chemical pathology, L.F.T., and bacteriology.

**X-ray and Electro-Therapy Department :** A total of 3,121 X-ray exposures were taken.

**Invalids' Homes :** Two separate invalid homes maintained 20 men and 28 women. The men mostly comprised old retired monks of the Rama-krishna Order. The women were helpless, poor widows who had none to look after them.

**Outdoor Relief to the Poor :** Monthly pecuniary help was given to 46 poor invalids and helpless ladies and occasional pecuniary help was given to 6 persons. The total expenditure was Rs. 2,852.05. Besides, 50 new blankets were distributed, and school text books worth Rs. 78.05 were given to 7 poor boys. The institution could serve only a very small number of the poor of Varanasi because of paucity of funds.

**Immediate Needs :** As the Home's existence depends mainly on the generosity and support of sympathetic donors, the public is earnestly requested to come forward with their help and donations. The immediate needs of the Home are as follows : (1) Funds for the maintenance of the 200 beds. (2) Only a few of the 200 beds have been endowed; the cost of endowment of a single bed is Rs. 30,000/-, but donors may perpetuate the memories of their loved ones by making partial endowments of Rs. 10,000/- or Rs. 5,000/-. (3) To help the institution maintain

the old and invalid men and women, similar endowments are essential for the invalids' homes. (4) Donations are needed to meet the accumulated deficit of Rs. 3,47,591.08. (5) The proper growth of the institution has necessitated the appointment of several qualified doctors, nurses and other staff, for whom residential quarters have to be provided; for this a sum of Rs. 5,00,000/- will be necessary. (6) The present dairy requires immediate improvement to serve the patients with sufficient milk. For this funds are required in order to purchase more high-yielding cows.

Contributions, large or small, in cash or kind, will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the Secretary Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Varanasi-211 001. Donations are exempted from Income-tax.

**CENTRE VEDANTIQUE RAMAKRICHNA  
GRETZ, FRANCE**

**REPORT FOR 1981**

Each Sunday of the year there was a public

lecture or some other programme in the afternoon and every Saturday evening a talk on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. The Centre observed daily puja and two meditation periods everyday throughout the year. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Shankara and St. Francis of Assisi were observed. Special worships were performed for Durga, Kali and Shiva.

*Vedanta*, the Ashrama's quarterly magazine in French was sent to about five hundred subscribers.

During the year the number of active members increased from 188 to 200. In addition to the Centre's French members and friends, many devotees from other countries came to the Centre to make retreats in its serene atmosphere.

Swami Lokeswarananda of India, during his passage through Europe, visited and spoke at the Centre in November.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *India and America*

In the comity of nations no other two countries present a more striking instance of ambivalence in their mutual relationship than India and America do. If America is the most powerful democracy in the world, India is the largest democracy, but a democracy all the same and as open and stable as the other. India has an ancient culture with a built-in resistance to erosion which has absorbed some of the best elements of world culture. On the other hand, America has become a melting pot of different cultures and is trying to create its own distinct cultural identity. There has been close contact between the two countries at non-political levels. During the early decades following her independence India received substantial technical and economic aid from the U.S. in the fields of agriculture, industry and education. But during the latter decades India has been exporting brain power in the form of trained scientists, doctors and engineers to the U.S. During the last twenty years the melting pot of American culture has been considerably enriched by the large inflow of Indian philosophy and mysticism.

In spite of these common features, common interests and cultural sharing, the two countries have been moving apart politically during the last twenty years. The reason for this on the Indian side is a quite obvious one: the hostility of its neighbouring countries, which is not imaginary but has been proven through four wars, has forced this country to move closer to another Super Power—not ideologically but in the interest of its territorial security. The reasons on the American side are not so obvious but still discernible. One is the Americans' fear of the vulnerability of the capitalist system of economy and values which makes them look upon with suspicion all those who do not support that system. The second reason is the 'saviour complex' that has dominated that country's foreign policy. After the Second World War the U.S. emerged as the saviour of the free world, and India's refusal to recognize that image has not been properly understood by the U.S.

However, there are hopeful signs of the possibility of a change in America's attitude towards India. A report prepared by Peter Galbraith and the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has come to the conclusion that the U.S. interests are best protected by an India which is democratic, politically stable and is secure and non-aligned in foreign affairs. After pointing out India's economic development, scientific achievements and geo-political importance, the report states that an improvement in Indo-U.S. relations can reduce India's dependence on Soviet political and military support. 'This in turn might allow India to resume its historic position as an effective and moderate non-aligned leader.'

India's political destiny does not depend upon the American recognition of its importance; it is to America's own interest to do so. The Vietnam War, the Middle East turmoil and schisms in the Communist bloc should convince the U.S. Government that alliance with a non-aggressive, stable, neutral, technologically advancing democratic power like India in a geopolitically important area is far more beneficial than misalliances with unstable, fanatical and dictatorial powers.

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