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Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA



By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or
all of these the Vision of the Paramatman is Obtained.

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS

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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

1. Then¹ there was neither death nor immortality ;² nor any sign of day and night. That one,³ breathless, breathed⁴ by its own power.⁵ Other than that there was nothing beyond.

Rg-Veda 10.129.2

* The *Nasadiya suktam*, the Hymn of Creation, is continued here. In this hymn the unknown sage is trying to express his ineffable experience of the Absolute through the negation of a series of antinomial concepts. The intended effect of this mode of expression is, like that of the Koan of Zen, to break the conceptualization process and lift consciousness to a plane of unitary vision. It is perhaps a mistake to interpret this ancient hymn in terms of later philosophical concepts like Brahman, Maya, etc. It is best understood by meditating upon it.

1- That timeless period before creation.

2- Death takes place only in the manifested world or Virat; beyond that lies the world of Hiranyagarbha where one remains immortal. But

the Absolute transcends even these states of human existence. Confer, *yasya cliyamrtam yasya mrtyuh* (*Rg-Veda* 10.121.2).

³« A significant phrase which refutes the Samkhya dualism of Prakrti and Purusa.

⁴» A seed shows no signs of life like respiration, metabolism, etc; nevertheless, it is alive. Likewise, in the primordial state Reality *is* Life but without any signs of life-activity.

⁵« Sayana interprets *svadhaya* as 'by Maya' (*svasmin dhiyate dhriyate 'asritya vartate Hi svadha, muyd*). The Tantrik concept of *cit-sakti* and the Upanisadic concept of Prana may also be traced here. Confer, *devatma-saktim sva-gunairnigudhiun* of *Svetasvaiara Upanisad* 1.3.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The only way to attain success in life is to face the truths of life. This is the* theme of this month's EDITORIAL.

Swami Nityabodhanandaji, head of the Vedanta Centre of Geneva, Switzerland, is well known as a deep thinker and erudite exponent of Indian thought in Europe. In THE MESSAGE OF THE MIRROR the author discusses how different religious traditions have used the mirror as a metaphor to show the innate clarity and revealing power of the mind. The brevity of the author's statements will enable you to get at his points directly—and make you think.

In REORIENTATION OF EDUCATION Swami Hiranmayanandaji, a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Order and head of the New Delhi Ramakrishna Mission, has given an excellent survey of the present state of Education in

India and has indicated the lines along which the system of education should be reoriented in the light of the message of Swami Vivekananda. The importance of the article lies in the fact that it is based on the author's vast experience in the field of education.

To make a comparative study of Raja Yoga in the light of modern medical knowledge and discover parallel principles in human anatomy and physiology call for medical competence and a thorough understanding of Yoga. Dr. Jaladhi Kumar Sarkar M.B.B.S., Ph. D., F.A.M.S., F.N.A., retired Professor of Virology and former Director, School of Tropical Medicine, Calcutta, has both these qualifications, and this makes his article ANATOMICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL BASIS OF RAJA YOGA a valuable document.

THE TRUTH OF SUCCESS

(EDITORIAL)

Why do we fail ?

The pond in the forest was full of lotus plants, many of them in bloom. Bees were buzzing around the flowers. One big black bumble-bee (*bhramard*) was so absorbed in enjoying nectar that it lost all sense of time. Soon the sun set, darkness crept in, the petals of the lotus flower started closing. But intoxicated with the nectar, the bee was not aware of what was happening. When at last it came to its senses, it found itself trapped inside the closed flower. It then thought: 'Very soon the night will pass, the rosy dawn will come,

the sun will rise, and this beautiful lotus will open again. And..,' But alas! just then an elephant, which had come to the pond to drink water, pulled out the lotus and chewed down the flower, bee and all.¹

1. Free rendering of a Sanskrit verse commonly taught to children as a lesson in the correct use of the future tense (*Irt*).

To be absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure and, when difficulties come, to dream of a better future, only to see one's hopes vanishing in the gullet of the great guzzler, Time—this is how human life is mostly spent.

The life of every human being is filled with desires. Most of these can never be fulfilled and have therefore to be suppressed, ignored or transcended. We can hope to have only some of our desires satisfied. Even out of these only a few actually attain fruition. We ponder and plan, struggle and compete, experience and experiment, hope and dream, pray and worship. Yet very often our calculations go wrong, the edifice of our 'great expectations' comes tumbling down and the goal slips through our fingers. In other words, we often fail. Why?

In the first place, this question itself seldom rises in our minds. We suffer endlessly and yet do not ask ourselves why we suffer. We fail in many undertakings and yet rarely seek to know the cause of failure. We commit many mistakes but rarely pause to consider their root cause. Questioning is a form of awakening. You can change or rouse the consciousness of a person by putting the right question to him. The great naturalist Louis Agassiz used to awaken the minds of his students by repeatedly asking them, 'What do you see?' Socrates and, ages before him, the Upaniṣadic sages turned the questioning method to advantage in imparting knowledge. Great men are those who ask great questions and thereby raise the consciousness of vast numbers of people to higher levels. As Susanne Langer has shown, through their questions they open new epochs in human history.² Socrates opened a whole new epoch with his question, 'What is

virtue?'. The upaniṣadic sages opened a new epoch by asking such great questions as, 'What is the self?', 'What is the Infinite?', 'How to know the knower?' and so on. These fundamental questions raised a host of other questions and opened new vistas of understanding. When all possible answers to the epochal questions have been found, that epoch comes to an end. Then another teacher raises another great question and opens a new epoch.

In our individual lives it is vitally important to keep asking ourselves fundamental questions. In order to solve the problems of life we must be awake, and we are awake only as long as we encounter Life. One of the best ways of keeping our encounter with Life ever fresh is to ask ourselves existential questions continually. Why do we not do it?

One reason is that we are afraid of the responsibilities we would have to shoulder if we found the real answers. A second reason is that we already know too many false answers. We find or invent cheaper alternatives that enable us to escape from our troubles for the time being. Says Swami Vivekananda: 'This moment we are whipped and, when we begin to weep, nature gives us a dollar; again we are whipped and when we weep, nature gives us a piece of ginger-bread, and we begin to laugh again.'³ Another reason is that we hope that tomorrow our problems would be solved. We blame the world for all our sufferings and failures, and hope that the world would change tomorrow and then all would be well with us.

The will to succeed

But time and tide wait for no man. The *Mahabharata* narrates how an old man had

². Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: Mentor Books, New American Library, 1951) p. 20

³. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) Vol. 1, p. 411

to learn this truth from his own son. The young boy said, 'Death overpowers the man who thinks: "This has been done, this is yet to be done, and this is half done"'.⁴ Everything is controlled by time. In the *Mahabharata* the King of Death asks his son, 'What is (the most important) news?' Yudhiṣṭhira answers, "Time is cooking all beings in the cauldron of great delusion using the sun as fire and days and nights as fuel, stirring them with the ladles of months and seasons—this is the news."⁵

Only the desires are ours, the means of fulfilling them belong to the world outside. One of the most basic laws of the science of economics is that wants are unlimited but means are limited. In a general way this law applies in all fields including spiritual life. Limitation of the means includes both the scarcity of resources and the limitation imposed by time. The whole of human life is a continuous endeavour to manipulate limited resources within limited time to achieve the maximum satisfaction of unlimited desires.

Time is limited, resources are limited, and it is not possible to satisfy all the desires that arise in the mind. Therefore the wisest thing to do is to choose an ultimate goal of life, subordinate and orientate all desires to this supreme goal, and bend all one's energies to achieving this goal within the short span of life destiny has allotted to us. Success in life depends upon how best and how far one

attains the goal of our life. It is a mistake to identify success with the satisfaction of some lower desires and to think that one's whole life has failed if these are not fulfilled.

It is not possible to be always successful at all times everywhere in every undertaking. Nor is it necessary. Real success lies in choosing the right goal and attaining it. Every person should choose the goal that lies within his capacity to attain—either in worldly life or in spiritual life. After attaining a lower goal we should strive for the next higher goal. Our life should be a progressive movement from fulfilment to fulfilment—not from frustration to frustration. There may be some failures in life but our life as a whole should not be a failure.

The important point is to make the will to succeed the dominant note of one's life. This does not mean one should become a careerist or a go-getter. What everyone needs is a bracing attitude that disposes one to succeed, and a strong will to persevere until success is attained. This is especially needed in spiritual life.

Sometimes failures in worldly life may turn a person's mind to the spiritual path. But this does not mean that spiritual life is meant only for those who have failed in worldly life. Nor is it true that success in spiritual life is incompatible with success in worldly life. The person endowed with the will to succeed can succeed in either worldly life or spiritual life or both. The person who harbours the defeatist attitude will fail in both the types of life. It is easier to succeed in worldly life than in spiritual life. 'The spiritual path is extremely difficult and dangerous as the sharp edge of a razor', says the upaniṣad.⁶

4. इदं कृतमिदं कार्यमिदमन्यत् कृताकृतम् ।
एवमीहासमायुक्तं कृतान्तः कुरुते वशम् ॥

Mahābhārata,
Śāntiparva 175.20

5. अस्मिन् महामोहमये कटाहे
सूर्याग्निना रात्रिदिवेन्धनेन ।

मासर्तुं दर्वी परिघट्टनेन

भूतानि कालः पचतीति वार्ता ॥

ibid, Vanaparva 313.118

6. क्षुरस्य धारा मिशिता दुरत्यया ।
दुर्गं पथस्तत् कवयो वदन्ति ॥

Katha Upaniṣad 1.3.14

The demands of sacrifice, self-control, concentration and perseverance that spiritual life makes cannot be met without great strength and courage. Even to pray intensely or to depend only on God one needs tremendous strength. A person who lacks strength will, instead of praying, either sit and brood over his troubles or go about blaming other people.

The primary purpose of religion is to give man strength to face the problems of life and enable him to succeed in life. A Dostoevsky, a Maupassant or a Kafka can only expose the miserable conditions of society and leave man all the more helpless. But a Kṛṣṇa, a Buddha, a Christ or a Mohammed reveals man's divine destiny and makes him overcome his wretchedness. Every religion asks man to face the problems of life boldly. Before delivering his great spiritual message, Kṛṣṇa exhorted Arjuna: 'If you are killed you will attain heaven, if you win (the battle) you will enjoy the earth. Therefore, O son of Kunti, arise with the determination to fight.'⁷ The point Kṛṣṇa was trying to drive home is this: whether you follow worldly life or spiritual life, you should give up the attitude of defeatism, pessimism. Such an attitude is a denial of the evolutionary elan of life and an insult to God.

There is no disease without a remedy, no problem without a solution, no obstacle without a means of overcoming it. The purpose of every religion is to find a lasting solution to the problems of life. And the lasting solution that all religions have found is simply this: awakening to Truth. How does this solve the problems of life? All existence, all phenomena, all beings, are

governed by Truth and as the Upaniṣad declares, 'Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood'.⁸ This is the most fundamental and universal law of the universe. Though it may appear to be too abstract, metaphysical or simplistic, the Law of Truth is of paramount practical significance. All our problems arise only from the inadequate opening of our being to Truth.

The Law of Truth

Our purpose here is not to define Truth but to understand its practical significance. There are three aspects of Truth which are of vital importance in practical life. One is its all-inclusiveness. Truth is the highest generalization possible for the human mind. All the laws of the universe that have so far been discovered and all those that will be discovered in future are nothing but the expressions of the fundamental law of Truth. There is nothing which is outside truth. Even error, ignorance, falsehood, illusion and unreality are within the realm of Truth; for, to say that a lie is a lie is an assertion of truth.

Understanding this fact has two practical benefits: it simplifies and harmonizes human life. Day by day human knowledge is increasing at a rapid rate and the mind of the modern man is cluttered up with countless ideas, concepts, facts and memories. Then there are the rules and norms of morality and conduct, imposed by religion, state and society, which constantly come into conflict with the ever increasing desires and changes in the social environment. All this makes human life very complex and confusing. However, if we understand that all forms of knowledge are only different manifestations of the one universal law of Truth, our thirst

7. हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे

महीम् ।

तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥

Bhagavad-Gītā 2.37

8. सत्यमेव जयते नानृतं ।

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.1.6

for knowledge will cease. Similarly, there is no need to worry about so many rules of moral conduct like non-violence, continence, truthfulness and renunciation. By holding on to the one eternal law of Truth constantly all these virtues automatically get fulfilled. This will make our life simple and well-ordered. Every person is unique, every time is unique, every situation is unique. This means that we have to take new decisions and act and react in a variety of ways constantly, all through our life. This is one of the major causes of tension and stress in our life. But if we hold on to the Law of Truth we can deal with every situation in a natural and spontaneous way. This important principle was taught by Sri Ramakrishna through a simple teaching which he gave his holy spouse Sarada Devi, 'Act according to the time, act according to the place.'⁹

Religion and science are only two ways of seeking Truth in two different planes of consciousness. All the different religions have for their ultimate goal the absolute Truth; even the most fanatic follower of a religion cannot deny this. The Vedic sage enunciated this principle in the famous dictum, 'Truth is one: sages call it by different names'. Sri Ramakrishna gave it a more practical shape when he declared, 'As many minds, so many paths'. By following this simple principle we can avoid the conflict between religion and science and between one religion and another, and live in harmony with others.

We now come to the second aspect of Truth which too has immense practical significance. It is: there are different degrees of Truth. The Vedic sages discovered, apart from the principle already mentioned above, two other important principles: one is that Reality consists of

five levels of being; the other is that the microcosm (the individual) and the macrocosm (the universal) are built on the same plan. The five levels of being are matter, life, consciousness, self-awareness and bliss. Each of these has its own degree of truth and innumerable laws based on it. Corresponding to these levels, the individual being has five *kośas* or sheaths. For the all-round development and integral functioning of the individual each sheath must open freely to the corresponding level of cosmic reality and follow its truth. Everyone must follow the laws of truth operating at the different cosmic levels. The laws of one plane may not apply in another plane. Reading books will not fill the belly, any more than taking food will increase the knowledge of the mind. The water of a holy river may purify the mind but, if it's polluted and contains pathogens, it may cause disease in the body. Both the effects of the water are governed by the laws of the mental and physical planes.

This takes us to the third practical aspect of Truth: truth is not only knowledge but also power. Whoever opens himself to truth gets power. Truth is not an abstract concept but is identical with reality itself.¹⁰ And reality is power. Each

10. During the early Vedic period individual life was not considered to be separate from universal life. Both pulsated together in one unified cosmic rhythm which the Vedic sages called *ṛtam* (similar to the Tao of the ancient Chinese). There was no need to 'practise' truth as a virtue, for the Vedic people 'lived' truth. Since truth is inseparable from Reality, by living in harmony with reality the law of truth automatically gets fulfilled. This harmony was to a great extent lost during the later Vedic period. *Satya* or truth got separated from *sat* or reality. In due course another term, *dharma*, came into vogue to denote cosmic order, and *satya* was reduced to the status of a virtue, truthfulness in personal conduct. In the Upaniṣadic period the spiritual existentialism of the early Vedic period gave way to essentialism, and the primary quest

9. *Jakhan jemon takhan temon, jāhāke jemon tāhāke temon, jekhāne jemon sekhāne temon.*

level of truth has its own power. Whoever opens himself to a particular level of truth gets the power of that level. The nature of our life depends upon the way we open ourselves to different levels of truth and power. Being parts of Universal Life we are all immersed, as it were, in an ocean of power. But we must learn how to open ourselves to this power.

By taking nourishing food and proper exercise we gain physical power. Through education, reading and thinking we open our minds to the power of knowledge. Through scientific research scientists learn how to unlock the power hidden in atoms and molecules. There are people who learn how to open the chambers of psychic power. Spiritual people gain spiritual power through prayer and meditation. The 'charisma' of leaders is nothing but the capacity to open themselves to social power.

We often, very often, notice that virtuous people suffer whereas wicked fellows thrive in life; that those who follow dishonest means become rich whereas the honest remain poor; that immoral men enjoy good health, whereas pure and holy men suffer from various ailments; that materialists and atheists enjoy life whereas pious believers are tortured by doubts and conflicts. This is true not only of individuals but also of nations. Both Russia and China were formerly extremely poor countries, but after eliminating religion, churches, priests and monks they have now become Super-powers. By contrast India, with all its

temples and Ashrams, *yajñas* and *pūjās*, saints and sages, non-violence and religious harmony, continues to be poor and neglected. When we see so much suffering, cruelty, injustice and immorality all around us we cannot help asking ourselves whether there is a God or a moral order governing the universe. Unable to find the right answer, millions of people have lost faith in God and religion.

The real fact is that the whole universe is governed by the Law of Truth. 'Truth alone triumphs', no doubt, but not necessarily the truth as we conceive it. If we wish to succeed in life, we must observe how the Law of Truth operates at all levels, and open ourselves to it at the appropriate levels. If an honest man fails in his business or in getting promotion in his office, it is not because of his honesty but because of his inability to open himself to the truths of the practical world. When the virtuous king Yudhiṣṭhira went to heaven he was astonished to find the souls of Duryodhana and other wicked heroes of the Kurukṣetra war occupying honourable seats there. Then a divine voice told him, 'The laws of heaven are different from the laws of the earth'. A hero is a hero even if his intentions are evil. The faith of a wicked man in the power of wickedness is often found to be far greater than the faith of virtuous man in the power of goodness. As a matter of fact, many of the so-called good people harbour grave defects, and their pretensions to virtue are often only a cloak to hide their weaknesses. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the Serpent, but God was not deceived and drove them all out of Eden.

The operation of the eternal Law of Truth may be conceived as the exercise of the Divine Will or as the Divine Mother's *līlā* or as the supreme Lord's cosmic yoga. In whatever way it is conceived, Truth alone triumphs at all planes in all walks

of the Upaniṣadic sages became how to realize the ultimate 'substance'. It was this quest that finally led to the discovery of Brahman and the unity of Atman and Brahman. This, however, led to the neglect or devaluation of the world. There is at present a great need to revive the earlier view which regarded Truth as identical with Reality.

of life. Failures happen only when we do not open ourselves freely to Truth at all levels. What prevents us from opening ourselves to Truth? If Truth is so important and necessary, why is it that all people do not open themselves to it fully?

The root cause—ignorance

The first and most obvious answer to the above question is: ignorance. Ignorance of what? Ignorance of everything—ignorance of one's real nature as the Atman, ignorance of what is truth and the power of truth, ignorance of the nature of the world. Indeed there seems to be no limit to human ignorance. But what is ignorance? Like knowledge ignorance too must be traced to the soul of man. According to some Protestant theologians man is a born sinner and depravity is his essential nature. Among the Indian philosophers some (Rāmānuja, for instance) hold that ignorance is a limitation of self-knowledge caused by one's past karma. According to Advaitins ignorance is a distinct category, a kind of mysterious power known as Maya. Primarily a veil covering the Atman, Maya is the root cause of all other forms of ignorance and error.

As a metaphysical concept Maya may satisfy the intellect but, being an intangible negative principle, it is of little practical value. We have to come to grips with the problems of practical life and understand the immediate, tangible causes that prevent our awakening to truth and produce failures in life, especially in spiritual life. Some of these causes lie in the outer world and are beyond our control, but many of them lie within us and can be effectively dealt with through self-knowledge and intelligent effort.

Self-knowledge

One of the astonishing things about human life is that though everyone knows

so much about other people and the outside world, he knows very little about himself. This is one of the chief reasons why he is so easily affected by his environment. He regards himself as one of the innumerable objects of the world and allows himself to be treated as a commodity. His subjective life and experience have little value, he values more the objects around him. His estimate of himself depends upon what others speak of him. In other words, the clearest sign of inadequate self-knowledge is the absence of self-respect and dignity. A person without self-respect cannot be expected to treat others with respect. He develops an irreverent, critical and often violent attitude towards the world. At the same time he is helplessly dependent upon the world. This love-hate relationship with the world distorts our view of reality and prevents us from opening ourselves to truth. It has to be changed, and for this self-knowledge is necessary.

Self-knowledge has different levels. Vedānta speaks of the five dimensions of the self corresponding to the five kośas or sheaths. Though it is good to know about all these levels, in the present context it will be enough to focus our attention on two of these which are beyond our ordinary means of knowing and yet profoundly influence our life. These are the unconscious and the transcendent. The transcendent aspect will be dealt with in the next section.

About the unconscious a great deal has been written in books. With the help of psychoanalytic techniques Freud and his followers have discovered many of the processes going on in the unconscious. However, it is not enough to learn about these from books or to psychoanalyse the minds of other people. We should learn to dive deep into our own unconscious and understand how the processes going on

there control our own thinking and behaviour. Among these processes there are three which deserve special consideration here.

One is continuity with the past. Being the store-house of the seeds (*samskāras*) of past experiences, it is the unconscious that provides us continuity with the past. Many of our past experiences were certainly unhappy or painful, and we would like to forget them and start a new life. But problems cannot be solved merely by forgetting them. And since many of our present problems and sufferings have been caused by the experiences of the past, it is necessary to keep a vital link with our own past life. That is why the upaniṣadic sage tells himself, 'O mind, remember what has been done, remember what has been done.'¹¹

Of course, there is no need to brood over the past mistakes, or to gloat over the past achievements. What is necessary is to build a new self. But a new self (that is, the empirical self or ego) cannot be created through plastic surgery; it has to grow out of the old one. Life is not a palimpsest but a continuous record. Spiritual life appears unreal to many people because it has no foundation in the past. In order to hide past life the self puts on several masks which prevent it from facing the truths of life. These masks are to be thrown off.

Secondly, the unconscious is also the power-house of the mind. The various instincts and drives that motivate us have their origin there. All these are, however, only different manifestations of two primordial, existential drives: *rāga* (pleasure seeking) and *bhaya* (fear). It is the first that gives rise to the second, and these two represent the positive and negative

aspects of the struggle for existence shown by all living beings. If we want to understand the problems of life we must understand how these two basic existential drives operate in us. They often prevent us from opening ourselves to Truth fully. This leads us to the third important point about the unconscious, namely, the repression of success.

Paradoxical as it may seem, we very often actively work for our own failure—not consciously but unconsciously. Some failures are caused by unfavourable external factors like poverty, social injustice, lack of opportunities, etc. But when educated people placed in favourable circumstances fail to achieve some of the major goals of their life, it is clear that the cause lies within them. In his famous book *The Power of Positive Thinking* Norman Vincent Peale says, 'People are defeated in life not because of lack of ability but for the lack of whole-heartedness. They do not whole-heartedly expect to succeed.'¹² He quotes the well-known Canadian athletic coach Alec Percival to the effect that most people, athletes as well as non-athletes, are 'hold-outs', that is they are always keeping something in reserve; they do not invest themselves hundred per cent.

Dorothea Brande in her excellent book *Wake up and Live* has shown that there is an 'unconscious conspiracy' in many people against their own success, which she calls 'the will to fail'. The natural tendency of every living being is to succeed. But in some people this will to succeed gets repressed so that they may fail in their undertakings. This repression is, no doubt, an unconscious process, but why do they do it? Why do people unconsciously wish for and ultimately bring about their

11. ऋतो स्मर कृतं स्मर, ऋतो स्मर कृतं स्मर ।

Iśa Upaniṣad 17

12. Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1967)

own failure? There are several reasons. The most important of these is the fear of responsibility. Responsibility involves freedom of the individual, taking risks, facing the unknown, dealing with unpleasant facts, people and situations, keeping promises, and other troubles. The unconscious naturally wants security and comforts, even if this means remaining at a lower scale in life or failing in one's undertakings.

The repression of success, the 'will to fail' appears in different ways in our daily life. One is day-dreaming. This generally means an escape into the world of fantasy. But endlessly planning about the future, brooding over the past, thinking about what other people have done or are going to do—all these are also forms of day-dreaming. Another way the 'will to fail' works is the diversion of one's energies in the wrong direction. For instance, when the day of examination approaches, an engineering student may suddenly develop a tremendous interest in biology and may spend hours reading and preparing notes on that subject, neglecting the subject of his examination. Or one may abandon oneself to one's daily routine and fill one's time with ever so many trifling activities. Regarding this Dorothea Brande says: 'The cold truth is that we apply the routine-observing tendency to our whole lives, growing mentally and spiritually more flaccid, more timorous, less experimental with every day we spend supported by the rigidity of habit. We avoid responsibility which entails discipline.'¹³ Laziness, inertia, is yet another sign of the repression of success. About this Alexis Carrel remarks:

Laziness is particularly lethal. Laziness does not only consist in doing nothing, in sleeping too long, in working badly or not at all, but also in devoting one's leisure to stupid and

useless things. Card-playing, cinema, radio, endless-chattering, rushing about aimlessly in motor cars—all these reduce the intelligence. It is also dangerous to have a smattering of too many subjects without acquiring a real knowledge of any one. We need to defend ourselves against the temptations provided by the rapidity of communication, by the increasing number of magazines and newspapers.¹⁴

Nowhere else is the 'will to fail' so commonly seen as in spiritual life. It may not be possible for all to attain *nirvikalpa samādhi* or merge like a salt doll in the ocean of Brahman. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, a one-litre pot is not expected to hold four litres of milk. But everyone is born with a certain spiritual potential and, if this has not been actualized to the full extent, he has lived in vain. Complaining about lack of time and facilities, creating unfavourable situations oneself by neglecting one's duties or by quarrelling with other people—all these are clear indications that the 'will to fail' is active in the spiritual aspirant. The sincere aspirant who is determined to succeed will make the best use of his time, discharge his duties properly, and lead a well-adjusted regulated life. He will take all precautions, says the Upaniṣad, 'to protect the fire of Yoga in him as a pregnant woman protects the foetus.'¹⁵

Knowledge of oneself, of one's capacities as well as limitations, is very much necessary for all people. There is an ancient saying which brings out the importance of self-knowledge.

He knows not he knows not, and he knows not—
avoid him.

He knows he knows not, and he knows not—
teach him.

14. Alexis Carrel, *Reflections on Life* (Bombay: Wilco Books, 1967)

15. अरण्योनिहितो जातवेदा

गर्भं इव सुभृतो गभिणीभिः ।

Katha Upaniṣad 2.1.8

13. Dorothea Brande, *Wake Up and Live* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955)

He knows not he knows, and he knows—
awaken him.

He knows he knows, and he knows—
follow him.

Self-trust

Many people seem to have a lot of self-knowledge and yet fail in life. What is the reason for this? There is a link connecting knowledge and action: it is *trusting oneself*. If this link is missing, self-knowledge will be of very little practical use.

What does trusting oneself mean? We have seen that the two important dimensions of the self are the transcendent and the unconscious. Of these the transcendent is beyond the realization of most people, whereas the unconscious is full of defects. How then can one trust oneself? Indeed, many people would trust others rather than themselves. Lust, anger and other passions are lurking in the depths of the unconscious. Most people have the fear that these may 'spring upon them like tigers' (as Swami Vivekananda put it) and overpower them some day in an unguarded moment. This fear creates deep insecurity, inferiority complex and even self-hatred. Moreover, a good deal of psychic energy is spent in dealing with these problems, with the result that many people have a constant feeling of fatigue and exhaustion—neurasthenia as doctors call it.

It is of course true that, as long as the unconscious remains 'the Devil's workshop', it is not wise to trust it *fully*. But the unconscious is also the workshop of the angels! Deep down within us we have ever so many good instincts and impulses like love, compassion, purity, nobility and strength. Let us have trust in these good powers. This trust will come naturally to us if we have faith in the fundamental goodness of creation and firmly believe that Truth and Goodness will ultimately triumph. With this faith we have to

exercise our good instincts more and more (through Karma Yoga) and gradually bring the evil instincts under control. This is what purification really means. Once the whole of the unconscious is purified to a satisfactory extent, we must learn to trust it. For the unconscious is our psychic power-house, and unless it is allowed to operate freely, we will not have enough mental power at our disposal. This is one type of self-trust.

The higher, transcendent dimension of the self is known as the Atman. An eternal part of the Divine, the Atman is self-luminous, immortal, unchanging, blissful and free, unaffected by emotions, thoughts and impurities. It is the source of all knowledge and spiritual power. By its very presence, by merely focusing its light, it can purify and control any part of the mind. The Atman is our real nature. To understand it and to hold on to it all times is the higher and real form of self-trust. Once Swami Vivekananda was asked, 'What is the true meaning of the assertion that we should depend upon ourselves?' Swamiji replied, 'Here self means the eternal Self. But even dependence on the non-eternal self may lead gradually to the right goal, as the individual self is really the eternal Self under delusion.'¹⁶

The Atman being an inseparable part of the Supreme Self, dependence on the true Self ipso facto means dependence on God. The Atman is the door that opens to the infinite power and light of the Divine. To trust oneself does not mean to remain alone; rather, it means keeping the door of the spiritual heart open and letting the Divine do everything for us. So we need not be afraid of trusting our higher Self.

Self-directed effort

Self-knowledge and self-trust predispose a person to success but the actual attainment

¹⁶. *Complete Works* (1973) 5:314

of success needs a third factor, right effort. Self-trust must issue forth in action. Otherwise too much preoccupation with oneself may lead to an unhealthy form of introversion (to be distinguished from introspection) which, as Henry Link has pointed out in his famous book *The Return to Religion*, is one of the main causes of failure and unhappiness in life. Speaking about introverted people Dr. Link says:

They had done what they felt doing when they felt like it. They had failed to practise the many habits which lead to skill and satisfaction in a variety of contacts with people. They had pleased themselves first and so failed to learn how to give themselves to others. They had devoted their energies to the narrow subject: *themselves*. Now their energies were eating them up. They were finding that oneself, as an object of attention, is not sufficient for success; that doing the things they liked and avoiding those they disliked led to a sense of inferiority and an emotional hell. In trying to find their lives in their own way they lost them.¹⁷

Knowledge, education, has its uses but too much preoccupation with it may prevent a person from putting forth right effort and convert him into an ineffectual drone. About such people Dr. Link comments: 'They needed to stop sponging which they enjoyed doing and which was becoming a vice, and needed to start producing which they increasingly dreaded.' Knowledge has no value unless it is tested in actual life and this testing can be done only through work. Nobody will seek the guidance of a person who has only theoretical knowledge without any practical experience. A person without the 'will to act' can help neither himself nor

others. If half of our miseries is caused by ignorance, the other half is caused by inaction. We often hesitate to act for fear of committing mistakes. This fear can be overcome only by acting, even if that means committing more mistakes. Says Dr. Link: 'I have told hundreds of clients that it is better to make seven mistakes than one. While one person hesitates because he feels inferior, the other is busy making mistakes and becoming superior.'

Nowhere is this more true than in spiritual life. The knowledge gained from scriptures and the guru must be applied in actual life by serving God and man. Meditation is not a pleasant dream; it needs intense practice and struggle. A headache, stomach upset, distraction, lack of 'mood' or some such small difficulty is enough to make people give up prayer and meditation and resort to sponging, that is, reading books which they often mistake for the practice of Jñāna Yoga! Too much reading creates a conceptual delusion which is all the worse for being unconscious. 'The mass of words is a forest which makes the mind wander.'¹⁸ Even what we know about Bhakti and Jñāna turn out to be empty conceptual frames. When a person is hungry his immediate concern will be only food; a poem on hunger or a treatise on nutrition will not satisfy him. Similarly the soul which really longs for God will not bother about Bhakti or Jñāna but will strive intensely for a direct, self-to-Self contact with God.

Intense, self-directed effort is necessary to attain success in any field, spiritual or worldly. What is self-directed effort? If we study our actions we will notice two characteristics. One is that most of these are going on unconsciously. We are rarely self-aware during work. We say we were

17. Henry C. Link, *The Return to Religion* (New York: MacMillan and Co. 1951) Though the author has somewhat exaggerated the difference between introversion and extroversion, this book, which was reprinted more than fifty times in less than twenty years, deserves to be read by all spiritual aspirants.

18. शब्दजालं महारण्यं चित्तभ्रमणकारणम् ।

absorbed in work when in fact we were being helplessly carried away by its impetuosity. Work controls us, not we it. As a result, we are not able to keep ourselves open to Truth always. This is one of the main reasons why we commit so many blunders and suffer.

Secondly, we notice that most of our actions are triggered by the opinions of the other people or by our instincts and emotions, some good, some bad, like love and compassion, jealousy and anger, greed and vanity, etc. This kind of work is really not our own; it is alienated work. And the success that is attained through such work too does not really belong to us, nor bring us fulfilment. What then is our own work? There is deep within us a creative urge; the soul wants to express its powers, its beauty, its bliss. Only that work is ours which satisfies the inner creative urge by becoming a channel for the soul to pour forth its rays. Our work becomes ours only when it springs from our own soul. This kind of creative work is truly unselfish work, for it has no other motive than self-expression and self-realiz-

ation. It does not generate competition nor necessitates exploitation.¹⁹

Creative, conscious work, which keeps us open to Truth, is self-directed work. The success attained through it alone is real success, our success, and it alone can give us real fulfilment.

The success of Truth

In conclusion, we should remember two points. Truth alone triumphs. When we succeed, Truth triumphs—not we. When we fail, we fail—not Truth. Secondly, all worldly successes are partial and temporary, being based on experiences of relative and incomplete truths. The highest and everlasting success is to become one with the ultimate absolute Truth.

19. There is a trend in modern times, especially among western youths, to look down upon success as unethical. The disillusionment produced by the two World Wars and material affluence is chiefly responsible for this attitude which has given rise to Hippyism, Counter-Culture, New Age and other movements. But their criticism of success is applicable only to crass economic success achieved through cut-throat competition and exploitation. At all events there is no need to glorify failure.

THE MESSAGE OF THE MIRROR

SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

The mirror as a symbol of clarity, inner transparency, comes up often as a theme in several spiritual traditions. The mirror receives light from outside which it projects without retaining it, and is therefore a model of non-attachment.

The outside world makes an impact on our mind. Men and things which fall on the screen of our mind are transformed into 'images'. These 'images' or impres-

sions are used by us in dealing with persons and things.

But there must be light, for if there is no 'light' before the screen how can the images fall on the screen? This light is the unflinching consciousness in us, thanks to which we gather impressions and knowledge of men and things.

When this light is dim the impressions we gather are either dim or not correct.

We often say, 'My first impression is the last impression'. This happens when the light of consciousness is not bedimmed. To indicate this inner clarity, the transparency we are capable of, mystics and mystical traditions have used the symbol of the 'mirror', the inner mirror all of us possess. Witness for instance Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's verse 'Cleansing the mind-mirror every day'.¹

Everyone of us has his inner mirror. All spiritual discipline is intended to restore our inner mirror's pristine transparency. A common advice given to spiritual aspirants is: 'When you meditate, sit still, let not waves rise on the mind surface'. When thoughts rise on the mind surface, the mind-mirror is shaken. In the same way as we get only bits of the sun's image if we shake the mirror held against the sun, so also the divine Presence in us is broken to bits if we shake the inner mirror.

The sovereign method of restoring transparency to the mind-mirror is to cultivate the conviction that it forms part of the cosmic mirror in which the Divine reflects Himself. The words of Lord Nārāyaṇa to Nārada are quite in point: 'I have created this world, in order that you may see Me reflected in it'.²

By means of the symbol of the cosmic mirror, the spiritual traditions invite us to enlarge our inner world by widening the scope of our vision and our faculty of transparency. The thought process involved in the transfer from the personal mirror to the cosmic mirror, is not just a simple intellectual step. It necessitates an emotional elevation, that of Bhakti. The majesty of creation evokes the majesty of its author, and there follows the sponta-

neous desire to confide in Him with complete abandon.

Certainly the mountains and the rivers reflect the majesty of the Lord; however a more subtle view affirms that His love and majesty are more to be seen in the Life and Light in the world.

The Mirror in Vedānta

Vedāntic cosmogony teaches that the human mind is constituted of the transparent parts of the five elements. Furthermore the three *guṇas* Sattva (clarity), Rajas (activity) and Tamas (inertia) are involved in the creation of the world. Tamas obscures the light of consciousness, Rajas distorts it, Sattva reflects it. Man as the image of God, has in himself more Sattva, more light, than other creatures; consequently his vocation is to radiate light, making the inner world more transparent and better disposed to the realization of human destiny.

In Chinese Zen

Two 6th-century masters of Chinese Buddhism (Ch'an) have used the mirror as a symbol of inner transparency: Shen-hsiu makes the following statement:

'The body is the bodhi-tree (illumination).
Our mind is like a mirror.
Make sure that it is polished
That no dust gathers upon it'.

His monastic brother Hui-neng, who came to be venerated later on as the 6th patriarch of Zen, says:

The bodhi-tree does not exist
Nor the mirror.
Since all is void
Upon what can the dust fall?'

1. चेतो दर्पणमार्जनं । Sikṣāstaka 1

2. माया ह्येषा मया सृष्टा यन्मां पश्यसि नारद ।

Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva 339.44

As Hui-neng sees the Truth clearly thanks to the void, the void itself serves

as his mirror. Hui-neng synthesized Chinese Taoism and Buddhism, whose central theme is the void; not emptiness, but the substantive void.

In Sufism

The well-known 11th-century Sufi master, Ibn Arabi makes great use of the mirror as a symbol of divine transparency: he sees the mirror-world as the first of God's creations. The second creation is man, whose vocation is to 'polish' and keep the cosmic mirror transparent.

Really the idea of mirror-transparency is not new. Is it not a reiteration of the idea of the Light of God, the transluminous Word, the Logos that dwells in man and in all things rendering them transparent? It is through the knowledge of his own self that man becomes transparent.

Further analysis shows us a more spiritual vision of the mirror.

If we place an object upon a mirror, we see its reflection. To whom does the reflection belong? Where is the root of the reflection? In the mirror? We are obliged to reply yes and no. The object is in the mirror for the moment, but it does not belong to the mirror. We cannot affirm a cause and effect relation between the mirror and the reflection.

The mirror has yet another meaning: it projects a strong light received by it. With the help of the mirror we are able to play with this light at will. God does the same with His Light and the cosmic mirror. God plays with His own Light. Vedanta calls this game 'Lila'. God hides behind

His own Light, provoking man's curiosity. The Lord plays hide and seek with man.

Above all, the mirror gives us a lesson in non-attachment. It reflects the image of an object without possessing it. Union of subject and object takes place, but it is union without motive. If our mind-mirror is capable of being attentive to reflections without retaining the objects, the question then follows, why does it retain the anxiety and the sorrows?

This question must deal with the constitution of the mind. As long as the mind remains the instrument of the ego, it cannot exist without being in a state of possessiveness, it cannot act without motive. By its very nature possessive, it is condemned to be taken over by worry and sorrow. The ego, being by nature opaque, causes the inner mirror to be less transparent and some times opaque.

The remedy is simply to become aware that one's mirror is identical with the divine cosmic mirror, which is always transparent. Establishing identity is the second lesson of the mirror.

Between our own mirror and the cosmic mirror there is identity, not just a simple participation. We are divine mirrors. Anxiety and suffering exist for us as long as their reflections last. But the certainty of our identity with the divine mirror helps us to place the reflection of bliss, which is the characteristic of the cosmic mirror, upon our own mirror. The reflection of suffering disappears. Suffering is transitory. All reflections are transitory. The mirror, the presence-transparency is permanent. It abides.

RE-ORIENTATION OF EDUCATION

SWAMI HIRANMAYANANDA

The defects of the present system

The educational system that was introduced into India after the conquest of the country by the British was a graft of the English educational system prevailing at that time in England. The graft did not thrive well on the Indian soil because it lacked the aim and objective which had fertilized it in its native land. Macaulay wrote the Minutes which formed the basis of official educational policy of the British Government in India. He clearly stated that the Government must 'at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect'. The Mudaliar Commission refers to this scheme as follows: 'The education imparted in these schools became a passport for entrance into Government services. This was mainly due to the Proclamation issued by Lord Hardinge in 1844 that for service in public offices preference should be given to those who were educated in English Schools'.

Now, an education that has such a limited objective and a purely utilitarian aim is sure to stultify itself. This is what has actually happened since English education was introduced in India in 1835. Though Commissions and Committees looked into the defects of the system from time to time, yet the picture has remained very nearly the same. According to the Mudaliar Commission the following are the basic shortcomings and defects of the present Secondary Schools, which are also valid for other educational institutions:

(1) 'the education given in our school is isolated from life'.

(2) 'it is narrow and one-sided and fails to train the whole personality of the student'.

(3) 'Education was given until recently in English, a foreign language. If a student did not fare well in English he could neither pass the School Final Examination nor find any post in Government Service. The other subjects, which were psychologically and socially important or congenial were not given greater attention'.

(4) 'the methods of teaching generally practised failed to develop in the students either independence of thought or initiative in action. It is a matter of complaint that lessons are imparted in a mechanical way giving information which is reluctantly memorized by the students.'

(5) 'the increase in the size of classes has considerably reduced personal contact between teachers and pupils. Thus the training of character and inculcation of proper discipline have been seriously undermined'.

(6) 'the dead weight of the examination has tended to curb the teachers' initiative, to stereotype the curriculum, to promote mechanical and lifeless methods of teaching, to discourage all spirit of experimentation and to place the stress on wrong or unimportant things in education.'

Such then is the dismal picture of our educational life. All the Committees and Commissions appointed even after the achievement of independence have failed to brighten up the situation, because the reforms suggested by them have been superficial and piecemeal. What is needed now is a restatement of the aims and ideals of education, and a radical change of the approach to the problem.

In the context of these considerations we want to invoke the great personality of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji was not merely a spiritual teacher and his vast intellect could scan all our national problems and throw on them the floodlight of his radiant mind which could resolve the darkness of ignorance underlying them.

Studying the problems of Indian national life, he saw the depth of ignorance that the people of India were steeped in. He could easily make out that the main reason for our degradation was lack of education. He wrote: 'Education, education, education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got'.¹ But Swami Vivekananda was conscious of the defects of the prevailing system of Education. Some of his views on the present education system are given below:

(1) 'It is almost wholly one of defects. Why, it is nothing but a perfect machine for turning out clerks'.²

(2) 'We have had a negative education all along from our boyhood. We have only learnt that we are nobodies. Seldom are we given to understand that great men were ever born in our country. Nothing positive has been taught to us. We do not even know how to use our hands and feet'.³

(3) 'Our pedagogues are making parrots of our boys and ruining their brains by cramming a lot of subjects into them...Goodness gracious! What a fuss and fury about graduating and after a few days all cooled down...It would be better if the people got a little technical education so that they might find work and earn their bread instead of dawdling about and crying for service'.⁴

(4) '...Is that education, as a result of which the will, being continuously choked by force through generations is well-nigh killed out; is that education under whose sway even the old ideas, let alone the new ones, are disappearing

one by one—is that education which is slowly making man a machine?'⁵

(5) 'Well, you consider a man as educated if only he can pass some examinations and deliver good lectures. The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name?'⁶

If we study the above carefully we will be impressed by the fact that even as long ago as the last decade of the nineteenth century, when people were enamoured of the prevalent system of education, Swamiji could easily detect its underlying defects, and that his observations are in close accord with those made by the Mudaliar Commission at a much later date. Though Swamiji was never mainly concerned with pedagogy as such, education as a national problem always engaged his thought. His observations on education are so revealing that Sister Nivedita in one place remarks: 'With regard to the details of his educational suggestions, their pedagogic soundness had always been startling to me'.⁷

But one will not be very much startled if one remembers the fact that Swamiji at the end of his spiritual quest had found the key to life. This had made him a spiritual teacher of the whole humanity. No door of human life remained closed or barred to him. He was the *Yugācārya*, the teacher of the new era. So he could not only find out the defects of the educational system in vogue, but clearly enunciate and formulate a new system—a system which might solve the educational problems of India and of the whole world.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 8 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978). 4:483 (hereafter cited as *Complete Works*).

2. *Complete Works* (1973) 5:364

3. *Ibid.* p. 332

4. *Ibid.* p. 367

5. *Ibid.* p. 4:490

6. *Complete Works* (1972) 7:147

7. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, 4 vols. (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Sister Nivedita School, 1967) 1:215-16

The philosophical foundation

Aldous Huxley has said,

Men live in accordance with their philosophy of life, their conception of the world. This is true even of the most thoughtless. It is impossible to live without a metaphysic. The choice that is given us is not between some kind of metaphysic and no metaphysic; it is always between a good metaphysic and a bad metaphysic.⁸

Hence as education is the art of preparing for life, it cannot be divorced from the philosophy of life. As Professor Dewey puts it,

If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellowmen, philosophy may be defined as the general theory of education or education in its more general term or generalized theory of education.⁹

If we read the history of educational movement in Europe from the eighteenth century we shall find that the educational theories of Rousseau, Kant, Herbart, Spencer and Froebel are based on the particular brand of philosophy they adhered to. For instance, Rousseau wrote: 'whatever comes from the hand of the author of nature is good and everything gets defiled in contact with man'.¹⁰ For Rousseau the state of nature is the ideal state, and so in education he disapproved interference with nature and advocated individualism. Hegel in his philosophy of absolute idealism held that everyone existed for the State. So, according to him the State has the absolute right to determine who should be taught, how they should

be taught and what they should be taught. When we take up the education system of Granville Stanley Hall and John Dewey we find that 'The starting point of their educational thought is the doctrine of evolution as applied in child-study and the philosophy of both men is, broadly speaking, pragmatic in its insistence on the subordination of intellect to practical ends'.¹¹ But Western philosophy, as it is not based on the experiential verifiability of its doctrines, has always been unequal to the task of solving life's problems. In contrast, Indian philosophy has always been rooted in the direct experience or realization of the verities that it propounds. A philosophical truth incapable of verification through *anubhūti* (experience) has always been held to be inconsequential and inane. That is why Western philosophy and educational theories based on them are never related to life. They are subservient to political, social and economic values and conditions. Western education wavers between the individualism of democratic countries and the absolutistic indoctrination of the socialistic bloc. So thinkers like Aldous Huxley say: 'The time has now come when we must ask in what precisely a good education consist'.¹²

Regarding this Swami Vivekananda says, 'The use of higher education is to find out how to solve the problems of life', and he goes on to add, 'and this is what is engaging the profound thought of the modern civilized world, but it was solved in our country thousands of years ago'.¹³ It could be solved because in India that fundamental philosophical truth, which solves all problems of life, had been realized in life.

8. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1937), p. 291

9. W. H. Kilpatrick, *Source-Book in the Philosophy of Education*, Chapter 1.

10. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* Book 1.

11. William Boyd, *History of Western Education*, p. 394

12. *Ends and Means*, p. 207

13. *Complete Works*, 5:368

Before we undertake any discussion of this philosophy we shall do well to understand the formative influence that went to the determining of Swami Vivekananda's vision. Regarding this Sister Nivedita says 'There can be no doubt, I think, that the formative influences in his life were three fold: First, his education in English and Sanskrit literature; secondly, the great personality of his Guru, illustrating and authenticating that life which formed the theme of all the sacred writings; and thirdly, -as I would maintain, his personal

knowledge of India and the Indian peoples. as an immense religious organism, of which his Master himself, with all his greatness, had been only, as it were, the personification and utterance'.^{1*} To these, I shall add a fourth: his own spiritual experiences culminating in me *mrivikaipa tamaani* at

Cossipore. Of course, in the life of his Master, which was an epitome of the Indian achievements in philosophy and religion, Swami Vivekananda found the key to life. Because here was one to whom Samadhi was a constant mode of knowledge. Every hour saw the swing of the mind from the many to the one. Every moment heard the utterance of wisdom gathered superconsciously'.^{1*} By studying this life and following it Swami Vivekananda could not only attain knowledge but also learn about the method to acquire it. By following this method, he found that 'he who was thus the living embodiment of books was so unconsciously for he had read none of them'.¹⁶

But more about it later. Now, what was the knowledge that was revealed to Sri Ramakrishna in Samadhi? Swami Vivekananda says on this subject as follows:

14. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, 1:63
10. *Ibid*,

1. 'It was given to me to live with a man who was as ardent a dualist, as ardent an Advaitist as ardent a Bhakta as a Jnani And living with this man first put it into my head to understand the Upanishads and the texts of the Scriptures from an independent and better basis than by blindly following the commentators; and in my opinion and in my researches, I came to the conclusion that these texts are not at all contradictory...But the one fact I found is that in all the Upanishads(they begin with dualistic ideas, with worship and all that, and end with a grand flourish of Advaitic ideas'.n

2. "Therefore, I now find, in the light of this man's life that the dualist and the Advaitist need not fight each other, ..?»^{ch} if a p!a<P am! a great place in national life, The dualist must remain for he is much part and parcel of the national religious life as the Advaitist. One cannot exist without the other; one is the fulfilment of the other'.is
3:* <w* have s<fn how in the whole of this universe there is but One Existence; and One Existence when seen through the senses is called the world, the world of matter.. .There is but one Being which the ignorant call the world. When a man goes higher in knowledge, he calls the very same Bein_s the world of thought Again when knowledge itself comes, all illusions vanish, and man finds ft g nothing but Atman j am that One Existence. This is the last conclusion'.^

in the light of the above discussion it is apparent that Swami Vivekananda held that Advaita realization was the acme of man's quest for spiritual life, though he did not deny the validity of other realizations. As he says

'Man is not travelling from error to truth but climbing up from truth to truth, from truth that is lower to truth that is higher'.^{2<>}
B

Or in the language of Sister Nivedita 'it must never be forgotten that it was Swami Vivekananda who, while proclaiming the sovereignty of the Advaita Philosophy, as

«. *Complete Works*, (1973) 3:233-34
Ibid.
2* *Complete Works*, 1: xji

including that experience in which all is one, without a second, also added to Hinduism the doctrine that Dvaita, Vishishtādvaita, and Advaita are but three phases or stages in a single development of which the last-named constitutes the goal. This is part and parcel of the still greater and more simple doctrine that many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the mind at different times and in different attitudes'.²¹

This Advaita Vedanta, till the advent of Swami Vivekananda, had been thought to be meant for only a few. It was like the eternal snow on the pinnacle of personal realization of a few to be gazed at from afar and admired. It never thawed and melted into a flowing stream irrigating and drenching the parched soil of social life. It was Swami Vivekananda's contribution to Indian spiritual life to bridge the hiatus between individual achievement and social need. Says he

'We must prove the truth of pure Advaitism in practical life. Shankara left this Advaita philosophy in the hills and forests, while I have come to bring it out of those places and scatter it broadcast before the work-a-day world and society. The lion-roar of Advaita must resound in every hearth and home, in meadows and groves, over hills and plains'.²²

And what distinctive merit will this philosophy have on individuals and society?

Swami Vivekananda says:

'What a mine of strength is in this Impersonal God, when all superstitions have been thrown overboard and man stands on his feet with the knowledge—I am the Impersonal Being of the world! What can make me afraid? I care not even for nature's laws. Death is a joke to me. Man stands on the glory of his own soul, the infinite, the eternal, the deathless—that soul which no instruments can pierce, which no air can dry, nor fire burn, no water melt, the infinite, the birthless, the deathless, without beginning and without end, before whose magnitude the suns and moons and all their systems appear like

drops in the ocean, before whose glory space melts away into nothingness, and time vanishes into non-existence. This glorious soul we must believe in. Out of that will come power. Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be; if you think yourselves impure, impure you will be; if you think yourselves pure, pure you will be. This teaches us not to think ourselves as weak, but as strong, omnipotent, omniscient. No matter that I have not expressed it yet, it is in me. All knowledge is in me, all power, all purity, and all freedom. Why cannot I express this knowledge? Because I do not believe in it. Let me believe in it and it must and will come out. This is what the idea of the Impersonal teaches'.²³

So, this is the grand idea which forms the bed-rock of Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of life. This is the charter of enfranchisement which he has drawn up not only for the Hindus alone but for the whole world. To realize the unity of the whole universe in our empirical and transcendental experience is the aim and end of Swami Vivekananda's outlook of life. As a natural corollary from this philosophical standpoint follows what has been stated by Sister Nivedita:

'This is the realisation which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma, not as divorced from, but as expressing Jñāna and Bhakti. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field, are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man, as the cell of the monk, or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality. All his words, from one point of view, read as commentary upon this central conviction. "Art, Science and Religion", he said once "are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this we must have the theory of Advaita"'.²⁴

What is the pedagogic significance of

21. Ibid. p. xv

22. Ibid. 7:162

23. Ibid. 3:130

24. Ibid. 1:xv-xvi

this philosophy? In the words of Swami Vivekananda

'The only *ism* that we require now is this wonderful idea of the soul—its eternal might, its eternal strength, its eternal purity, and its eternal perfection. If I had a child I would from its very birth begin to tell it "Thou art the Pure One". You have read in one of the Puranas that beautiful story of queen Madalasa, how as soon as she has a child she puts her baby with her own hands in the cradle and how as the cradle rocks to and fro, she begins to sing: "Thou art the Pure One, the Stainless, the Sinless, the Mighty One, the Great One." Ay, there is much in that. Feel that you are great and you become great'.²⁵

In another place

'Make your children strong from their very childhood, teach them not weakness, nor forms but make them strong; let them stand on their feet—bold, all conquering, all-suffering; and first of all, let them learn the glory of the soul'.²⁶

So, this is the philosophical foundation on which Swami Vivekananda wanted to build up the grand edifice of his educational system which would prepare men and women of the whole world to achieve the summum bonum of human life and existence.

The psychological background

Bertrand Russel in his book *On Education and Civilization* says that any serious educational theory must consist of two parts—a conception of the ends of life and a science of psychological dynamics, that is, of the laws of mental change: the science of psychology is to consider what can be done towards realizing the purposes or aims of education. The old traditional method did not take cognizance of the mind of the child, the psychological processes

involved in learning. They were mainly concerned with what the children should do, how they should work, and so on. It was Rousseau who first drew our attention to the difference in aptitude of children. Gradually we have awakened to the fact that the 'being to be educated' must be studied first. In this sense education has been psychologized.

But the difficulty has been that there are many schools of European psychology each differing from the other. There is no unanimity, and naturally it is well-nigh impossible to arrive at any truth in the midst of this medley of thought. Dr. Ballard has rightly remarked

'The votaries of the general science of psychology have split up into warring schools or sects. Each maintains that it is the custodian of the true faith, while all the other sects have gone astray like lost sheep. The behaviourist will have no traffic with the introspectionists, the Gestalt psychologists none with the psycho-analysts. They quarrel about everything, even about the very elements of which the object of study is composed, some maintaining that they are static things, like the atoms of chemistry others that they are active and dynamic things—events rather than entities, processes rather than products. In fact, we are no longer faced with psychology but with psychologies, no longer with a pure science but with a medley of contradictory assertions and denials. No wonder the teacher elects to leave the matter alone'.²⁷

A similar view has been expressed by D. J. Moxley in the *Encyclopaedia of Modern Knowledge* 'Psychology is still a young science and that its theories are yet tentative and provisional. In other words the Newton of psychology has not yet appeared though Freud or Jung or Adler may perhaps be its Galileo'. Now it will be quite apparent that to build an educational system upon theories which are tentative and provisional will mean that the

²⁵. Ibid. 3:242-43

²⁶. Ibid. 3:130-31

²⁷. Quoted in K. K. Mukherjee, *New Education and Its Aspects*, p. 6

system also will be tentative and provisional.

Nay more. These educational systems, based as they are on incorrect psychologies, prescribe play and play-way etc. as the method of teaching. These paths of least resistance fail to train the will and personality of the educant. Aldous Huxley rightly remarks:

'Psychology has its Gresham's law, its bad money drives out the good. Most people tend to perform the actions that require least effort, to think the thoughts that are the easiest, to feel the emotions that are most vulgarly commonplace, to give rein to the desires that are most nearly animal. And they will tend to do this even if they possess the knowledge and skill to do otherwise. Along with the necessary knowledge and skill must be given the will to use them, even under the pressure of incessant temptation to take the line of least resistance and become an addict to psychological drugs. Mostly, people will not wish to resist these temptations unless they have a coherent philosophy of life, which makes it reasonable and right for them to do so, and unless they know some technique by means of which they can be sure of giving practical effect to their good intentions'.²⁸

If we read the above statement carefully we will find that Western psychology is not an infallible guide for the training of the mind which is what education means. As Swami Vivekananda says: 'The idea of psychology in the West is very much degraded'.²⁹

The study of psychology in the West does not help us to control our mind. We can not free ourselves from the tentacles of our senses. Swami Vivekananda points out:

'We are slaves to ourselves and to others. Deep down in our subconscious mind are stored up all the thoughts and acts of the past, not only of this life, but of all other lives we have lived. This great boundless ocean of subjective mind is

full of all the thoughts and actions of the past. Each one of us is striving to be recognised, pushing outward for expression, surging wave after wave, out upon the objective mind, the conscious mind. These thoughts, the stored-up energy, we take for natural desires, talents etc. It is because we do not realise their true origin, we obey them blindly, unquestioningly; and slavery, the most helpless kind of slavery, is the result, and we call ourselves free. Free! We who cannot for a moment govern our own minds, nay, cannot hold our mind on a subject, focus it on a point to the exclusion of everything else for a moment! Yet we call ourselves free'.³⁰

But Indian psychology, says Swamiji,

'teaches us to hold in check the wild gyrations of the mind, place it under the control of the will, and thus free ourselves from its tyrannous mandates. Psychology is therefore that science of sciences, without which all sciences and all other knowledge are worthless'.³¹

Swami Vivekananda's approach to Psychology was based on the systems of Sāṃkhya, yoga and Vedānta. But on these he focused the searchlight of his master-mind and reinterpreted the theories in terms of modern science. It is astonishing that at a time when Freud had hardly formulated his theory of the unconscious, Swamiji had clearly and unmistakably spoken not only about the conscious or the subconscious but the superconscious also. Swami Vivekananda says: 'Consciousness is a mere film between two oceans, the subconscious and the superconscious'.³² In another place he remarks: 'What does consciousness matter! Why, it is nothing as compared with the unfathomable depths of the subconscious and the heights of the superconscious!'³³

Freud at a later date spoke of the unconscious as constituting the greater portion of the mind. But Freud had no

28. *Ends and Means*, p. 247

29. *Complete Works* (1978) 6:28

30. *Ibid.* 6:29-30

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Complete Works* (1977) 8:276

33. *Ibid.*

idea of the superconscious and, for the matter of that, in Western psychology there is no conception of the superconscious. Only recently have the parapsychologists headed by Dr. Rhine and others have come to admit the existence of Extra-Sensory perception (E.S.P.)³⁴ But the beginning is very rudimentary and crude. Moreover Freudian way of curing mental ills through the Free Association Method gives at best only temporary relief. The complexes are resolved only to recur over and over again because the mind is not brought under control.

It is the same case with other psychological systems of the West. But it is different with Indian psychology. There is a method to bring the mind under control. Swami Vivekananda says:

'Practical psychology directs first of all its energies in controlling the unconscious, and we know that we can do it. Why? Because we know the cause of the unconscious is the conscious; the unconscious thoughts are the submerged millions of our old conscious thoughts, old conscious actions become petrified—we do not look at them, do not know them, have forgotten them. But mind you, if the power of evil is in the unconscious, so also is the power of good. We have many things stored in us as in pocket. We have forgotten them, do not even think of them and there are many of them, rotting, becoming positively dangerous; they come forth, the unconscious causes which kill humanity. True psychology would, therefore, try to bring them under the control of the conscious. The great task is to revive the whole man, as it were, in order to make him the complete master of himself. Even what we call the automatic action of the organs within our bodies, such as liver etc., can be made to obey our commands.

This is the first part of the study, the control of the unconscious. The next is to go beyond the conscious. Just as unconscious work is beneath consciousness, so there is another work which is above consciousness. When this superconscious state is reached, man becomes

free and divine, death becomes immortality, weakness becomes infinite power, and iron bondage becomes liberty. That is the goal, the infinite realm of the superconscious'.³⁵

So, when it was pointed out above, in the case of Sri Ramakrishna, 'Here was one to whom Samadhi was a constant mode of knowledge. Every moment heard the utterance of wisdom gathered super-consciously', we were referring to a psychological method which has been practised in India from time immemorial for gaining knowledge, secular and spiritual.

And in order to attain this superconscious state the first and foremost thing necessary is concentration and detachment from the object of the senses. That is why Swamiji says:

To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I would collect facts at will. Side by side, in the child, should be developed the power of concentration and detachment'.³⁶

So, we find in the language of Sister Nivedita: 'Fortunately for the civilization of India, the Hindu has always clearly perceived the mind behind the method as the thing with which education has fundamentally to deal'.³⁷

There is another way of looking at mind. Swamiji analyses mind into four aspects. He says

'The internal organ or mind has four aspects. First—Manas, the cogitating or thinking faculty, which is usually almost entirely wasted, because uncontrolled; properly governed it is a wonderful power. Second—Buddhi, the will (sometimes

35. *Complete Works* (1976) 2:35

36. *Ibid* 6:38-39

37. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (1968) 4:333

34. See, Dr. Alexis Carrel, *Man the Unknown* (Hammondsworth; Penguin Books), p. 98-100

called the intellect). Third—Ahamkāra, the self-conscious egotism (from Aham). Fourth—Chitta, the substance in and through which all the faculties act, the floor of the mind as it were; or the sea in which various faculties are waves'.³⁸

In accordance with the predominance of the working of these different aspects we classify men into four general types. 'There are four general types of men—the rational, the emotional, the mystical, and the worker'.³⁹ So, in the education of these different types of men different methods are to be followed. Swamiji says

'The teaching must therefore be modified according to the needs of the taught...Past lives have moulded our tendencies; give to the taught in accordance with his tendency. Intellectual, mystical, devotional, practical—make one the basis, but teach the others with it. Intellect must be balanced with love, the mystical nature with reason, while practice must form part of every method. Take every one where he stands and push him forward'.⁴⁰

Through the harmonized working of different aspects of mind a well-integrated personality will eventually develop.

The aim of Education

From the above discussion on the philosophical and psychological basis of education we find that, according to Swami Vivekananda, education is the training of the mind with a definite objective: the development of the total personality of a man. Swamiji says:

'The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making'.⁴¹ 'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas. If you

have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library'.⁴²

In another place he says 'The end of all education, all training should be man-making...The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow'.⁴³ And yet in another place, 'It is man-making education all round that we want'.⁴⁴

The method

Having thus determined the aim of education, let us examine the method which Swamiji prescribes for realizing this ideal. It has already been said that the philosophical basis of Swamiji's view of life is Advaita—the unity of all existence. To realize this unity is the aim and end of all our quest. According to this view, there is no question of acquiring anything extraneous. Swamiji says:

'Now this knowledge, again, is inherent in man. No knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside. What we say a man "knows", should, in strict psychological language, be what he "discovers", or "unveils"; what a man "learns" is really what he "discovers", by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge'.⁴⁵

And the natural deduction from this is:

'you see no one can teach anybody. The teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching. Thus the Vedanta says that within man is all knowledge—even in a boy it is so—and it requires only an awakening, and that much is the work of a teacher'.⁴⁶ You cannot teach a child any more than you can grow a plant. All you can do is on the negative side—you can only help.⁴⁷

38. *Complete Works*, 8:39-40

39. *Ibid* 5:418

40. *Ibid* 7:98

41. *Ibid* 2:15

42. *Ibid* 3:302

43. *Ibid* 2:15

44. *Ibid* 3:224

45. *Ibid* 1:28

46. *Ibid* 5:366

47. *Ibid* 5:410

You can take away the obstacles, but knowledge comes out of its own nature. Loosen the soil a little, so that it may come out easily. Put a hedge round it; see that it is not killed by anything, and there your work stops. You cannot do anything else. The rest is a manifestation from within its own nature. So, with the edu-

cation of a child; a child educates itself.⁴⁸

That is why Swami Vivekananda succinctly defines education as 'the manifestation of perfection already in man.'⁴⁹ So, according to Swamiji 'Liberty is the first condition of growth.'⁵⁰ A child should be allowed to develop in its own particular way. The only help that can be given is to help it to perfect the instrument with which it will gather knowledge.

A man is a body-mind complex. Hence the body cannot and should not be neglected. Physical weakness is a great hindrance in our life. Swamiji says,

⁶We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it. First of all our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are bold words; but I have to say them, for I love you. I know where the shoe pinches. I have gained a little experience. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger.⁵¹

In another place he says

'What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the universe and will accomplish their purpose even if it meant going

48.Ibid 4:55

49.Ibid 4:358

50.Ibid 3:246

51.Ibid 3:242

down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face.'⁵²

But the first requisite for bringing

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"g^eneration of the people is *sraddha*.

Swamiji says

'Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith in God—this is the secret of greatness. If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which foreigners have now and again brought into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith and be strong; that is what we need..We have lost faith in ourselves. Therefore, to preach the Advaita aspect of the Vedanta is necessary to rouse up the hearts of men, to show them the glory of their souls.'⁵³

It has been said in the Gita '*sraddhavan labhate jnanam*' and Swamiji also exhorts people to have this *Sraddha* for the attainment of knowledge.

Along with perfecting the body by acquiring 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel' we should try to perfect the other instrument necessary for acquiring knowledge, the mind. And the only method for perfecting this instrument is concentration. Swamiji says

There is only one method by which to attain this knowledge, that which is called concentration. The chemist in his laboratory concentrates all the energies of his mind into one focus, and throws them upon the materials he is analysing, and so he finds out their secrets. The astronomer concentrates all the energies of his mind and projects them through his telescope upon the skies; and the stars, the sun, and the moon, give up their secrets to him. The more I concentrate my thoughts on the matter on which I am talking to you, the more light I can throw upon you. You are listening to me, and the more you concentrate your thoughts, the more clearly you will grasp what I have to say.

52.Ibid 3:190

53.ibid

How has all the knowledge in the world been gained but by the concentration of the powers of the mind? The world is ready to give up the secrets if we only know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration. There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point; that is the secret.⁵⁴

But the question arises: can this concentration be developed? Swamiji says 'The Yogis say, yes. The Yogis say that we can get perfect control of the mind.'⁵⁵ But along with this power of concentration another thing is equally important—the power of detachment. Swami Vivekananda says

'So along with the development of concentration we must develop the power of detachment. We must learn not only to attach the mind to one thing exclusively but also to detach it at a moment's notice and place it upon something else. These two should be developed together to make it safe.'⁵⁶

Sister Nivedita very penetratingly puts Swamiji's views in perspective when she writes

'The training of the attention—rather than the learning of any special subject or the development of any particular faculty—has always been, as Swami Vivekananda claimed for it, the chosen goal of Hindu education. Great men have been only as incidents in the tale of this national effort to achieve control and self-direction of the mind itself.'⁵⁷

Concentration as a method for acquiring knowledge is a contribution of the Indian mind to education methodology. Western pedagogy has been groping in the dark, and till now they have not been able

to find out a method of education which is stable and helpful. So Indian educationists instead of following the Western method should turn their attention to their age-old method which has withstood the test of time. As sister Nivedita says

'It is not here then, in the object and nature of the inner psychological process, that Western educators have anything to teach India.'⁵⁸

On the other hand, it is the Western educationists who will have to sit at the feet of India to learn the true educational method.

Now, how to achieve concentration? Mind can be controlled and concentration attained by following the methods of Raja Yoga. Raja Yoga prescribes several methods but the most important of them are breathing and meditation. Swamiji says 'By the exercise of breathing we begin to feel all the movements of the body that we (now) do not feel. As soon as we begin to feel them, we begin to master them. Thoughts in germ will open to us and we will be able to get hold of them.'⁵⁹ About meditation Swamiji remarks as follows: 'Before we can control the mind we must study it. We have to seize this unstable mind and drag it from its wanderings and fix it on one idea, over and over again this must be done. By power of will we must get hold of the mind and make it stop and reflect upon the glory of God.'⁶⁰

So this in brief is the process by which mind can be developed into a fit instrument for gaining knowledge. But as a prerequisite another thing is necessary: *Brahm-acarya*. As Swamiji says in his various lectures

'Every boy should be trained to practise absolute Brahmacharya and then and then alone,

54. Ibid 1:130-31

55. Ibid 6:38

56. Ibid

57. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* 4:334

58. Ibid 4:335

59. *Complete Works* 1:507

60. Ibid 8:47

faith and Śhraddhā will come.’⁶¹ ‘Chastity in thought, word and deed always and in all conditions is what is called Brahmacharya.’⁶² ‘Do you see, simply by the observance of strict Brahmacharya all learning can be mastered in a very short time—one has an unfailing memory of what one hears or knows but once. It is owing to this want of continence that everything is on the brink of ruin in our country.’⁶³ ‘The chaste brain has tremendous energy and gigantic will-power.’⁶⁴ ‘Controlled desire leads to the highest results. Transform the sexual energy into the spiritual energy. The stronger the force is, the more can be done with it. Only a powerful current of water can do hydraulic mining.’⁶⁵

But in order to receive this training one should live in constant touch with competent teachers. Ordinary schools where mercenary teachers give merely academic education to students is no education at all. So Swamiji says

‘My idea of education is personal contact with the teacher—Gnugriha-Vāsa.’⁶⁶ ‘One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching...In our country the imparting of knowledge has always been through men of renunciation. India had all good prospects so long as Tyāgīs (men of renunciation) used to impart knowledge.’⁶⁷

Again he says

‘The disciple of old used to repair to the hermitage of the Guru, fuel in hand; and the Guru, after ascertaining his competence, would teach him the Vedas...’⁶⁸ ‘Without faith, humility, submission, and veneration in our hearts towards our religious teacher, there cannot be any growth of religion in us; and it is a significant fact that, where this kind of relation

between the teacher and the taught prevails, there alone gigantic spiritual men are growing; while in those countries which have neglected to keep up this kind of relation the religious teacher has become a mere lecturer, the teacher expecting his five dollars and the person taught expecting his brain to be filled with the teacher’s words, and each going his own way after this much has been done.’⁶⁹

A life can be lighted only by the fire of another life. So, unless the teacher is a man of character and the student is receptive, there can be no education in the real sense of the term. The man-making education which Swamiji wants can be imparted only when a student lives with an ideal teacher and profits by his example and advice in the different situations of day-to-day life.

Swamiji also wanted that the school should have proper environmental set-up. That is why he says ‘that true education is gained by constant living in communion with nature.’⁷⁰

The above are in brief outline the theories of objectives and methods of education as adumbrated by Swami Vivekananda. They are revolutionary in character, and at the same time they are rooted in the age-old tradition of India. Education in modern India has been wrongly planned and carelessly executed. It is high time we discard the prevailing systems. We should develop our own system on national lines as indicated by Swamiji. We can revise our educational plan and programme; then and then alone shall we be able to evolve a system which will be truly ‘man-making and character-building’. And this is necessary not only for the regeneration of India but for the redemption of the whole world. As Swamiji says

61. Ibid 5:369

62. Ibid 1:190

63. Ibid 7:224

64. Ibid 1:263

65. Ibid 7:69

66. Ibid 5:224

67. Ibid 5:369

68. Ibid 6:472

69. Ibid 3:52

70. Ibid 5:369

'But education has yet to be in the world, and civilisation—civilisation has begun nowhere yet.'⁷¹

'The ideal, therefore, is that we must have the whole education in our country, spiritual and

secular, in our hands, and it must be on national lines, through national methods as far as practicable.'⁷²

71. Ibid 3:114

72. Ibid 3:302

ANATOMICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL BASIS OF RAJA YOGA

DR. J. K. SARKAR

All orthodox systems of Indian philosophy have one goal in view: the liberation of the soul from all bondage and sorrow. The method of attaining this is known as Yoga.¹ There are four main types of Yoga of which Rāja Yoga is the subject of our discussion here. The central principle of Rāja Yoga is the attainment of liberation by the direct control of the mind. Mind is generally regarded as a form of subtle matter. But in Rāja Yoga mind is regarded as a form of energy radiated by the Self. This 'consciousness-energy' (*cit-śakti*) is known as Prāṇa. All mental and physical activities are believed to be energized by Prāṇa. But out of the some total of Prāṇic energy only a small portion takes a kinetic form as psycho-physical energy. The rest of the Prāṇa remains dormant or 'coiled up' and is known as *kuṇḍalinī*. The locus of *kuṇḍalinī* is the region at the base of the spine. The method of Rāja Yoga is to awaken this dormant Prāṇic energy. When awakened *kuṇḍalinī* rises through six *cakras* or centres. When it finally reaches the centre in the brain, the mind attains

its fullest development, the soul becomes omniscient and is liberated from all bondage and sorrow for ever.

Swami Vivekananda (often endearingly referred to as Swamiji) delivered a series of lectures on Rāja Yoga in New York. Later on, these lectures, along with the Yoga-aphorisms of Patañjali, were published in book form with the title *Rāja Yoga*. This became immensely popular and was mainly instrumental in creating the wide interest in Rāja Yoga in modern times. In this book, several anatomical and physiological terms, mainly relating to the human nervous system have been used, although the whole process of Rāja Yoga was not explained on the basis of modern medical sciences. His attitude to his own scientific explanation of the process of Rāja Yoga can be assessed by his remark in a letter to his favourite disciple Alasinga in 1896

Mr. Satyanathan, whom I met in London the other day said that there has been a friendly review of my Raja Yoga in the Madras Mail, the chief Anglo-Indian paper in Madras. The leading physiologist in America, I hear, has been charmed with my speculations. At the same time, there have been some in England, who ridiculed my ideas. Good! My speculations of course are awfully bold; a good deal of them will ever remain meaningless; but there are hints in it which the physiologists had better taken up earlier. Nevertheless, I am quite satisfied with the result. 'Let them talk badly

1. The word 'Yoga' is derived from two roots one meaning 'concentration' and the other meaning 'union'—union of the individual self with the Supreme Self. Patañjali uses Yoga only in the first sense of concentration. But in Rāja Yoga, which is a branch of Tantra Śāstra, 'Yoga' means both concentration and union.

of me if they please, but let them talk' is my motto.²

It may be mentioned here that 'in order to know how the nerves and the brain are formed and how they function, he (Narendra, as Swami Vivekananda was known in his pre-monastic life) went from time to time to the Calcutta Medical College with his friends and applied his mind to the study of physiology and listened to the lectures on the subject.'³ Thus, it can be presumed that Swamiji had some knowledge of human physiology and anatomy.

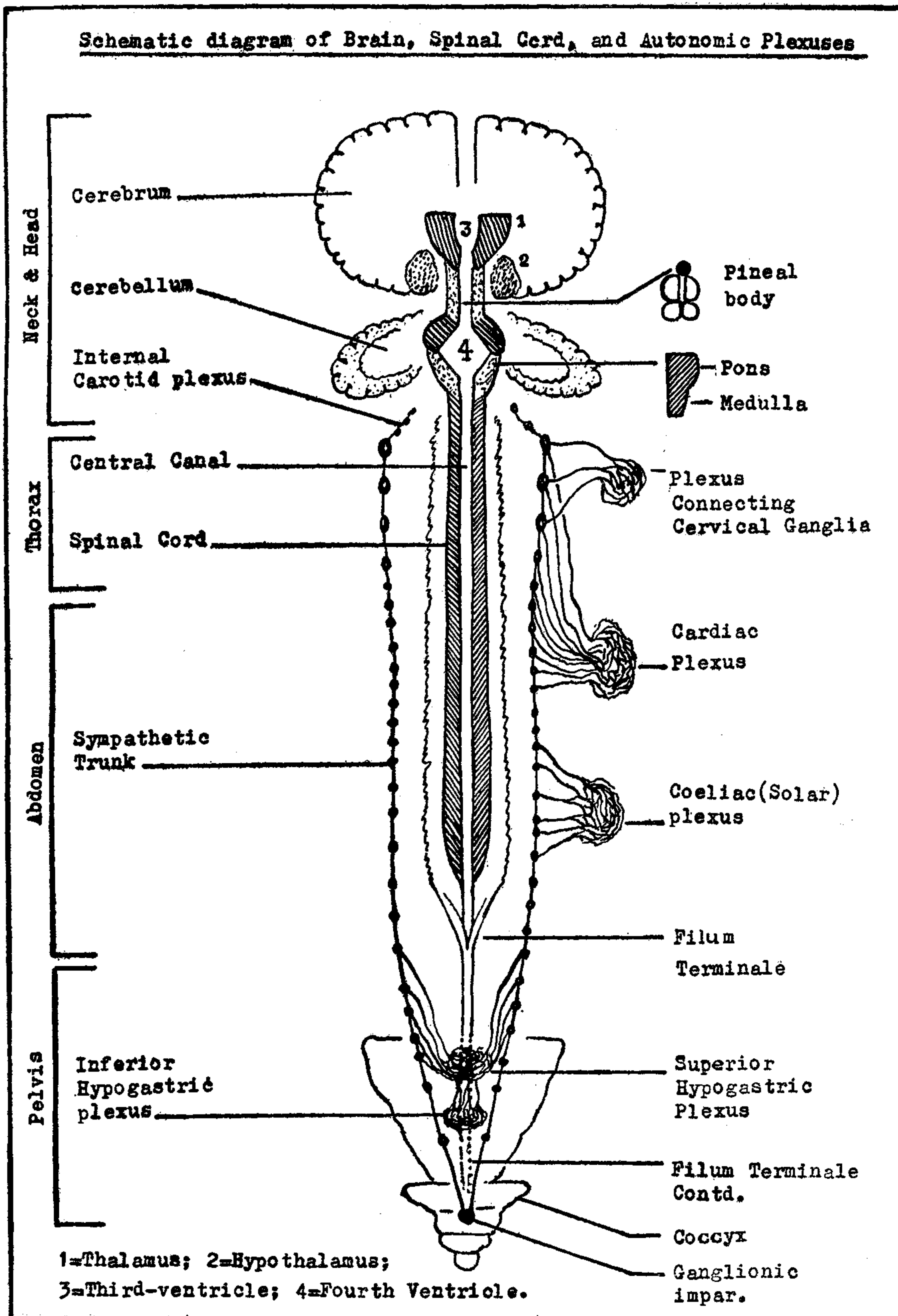
The chief purpose of the present paper is to enquire how far the Yogic processes and experiences described in Swami Vivekananda's work can be explained on the basis of the present-day anatomical and physiological knowledge. It is also hoped that the article will rouse the interest of scientists, especially those of the medical profession, in Yogic phenomena and prompt them to undertake further study and research in this field. However, it should be kept in mind that all the Yogic concepts cannot be correlated with the anatomical. What is important is to know that though most of the Yoga processes take place in the subtle, supra-sensuous planes, many of them have a corresponding anatomical basis. Swamiji's repeated references to the various parts of the human nervous system in his book make it imperative to look for possible anatomical and physiological processes involved in the Yoga system.

Before proceeding further, a short description of human nervous system is

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 8 Vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) 5:118-19. Henceforth cited as *Complete Works*.

3. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*. Trs. Swami Jagadananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1952), p. 799

necessary, as Yogic processes chiefly involve the nervous system. (The reader is requested to refer to the diagram as he goes through the description. It should be noted that plexuses occur on both sides of the spine, but in the diagram they are shown only on one side for the sake of clarity). The human nervous system consists of two parts: the central (or somatic) nervous system (CNS), through which we perform our voluntary acts; and the autonomic (or visceral) nervous system (ANS) which is independent of our will. The former includes brain (the main division of which are the cerebrum including the cerebral cortex, thalamus, hypothalamus, pituitary, pineal body etc; the midbrain; the cerebellum; the pons and the medulla oblongata—from above downwards, but all within the skull bone) and the long spinal cord within the upper two thirds of the backbone (known as spine or vertebral column), but continuous above with the medulla. The CNS sends or receives nerve impulses to or from the periphery of the body with the help of 43 pairs of nerves arising from the brain and the spinal cord. The higher centres for thinking, hearing seeing, judgement, movement etc. are located in the different areas of cerebral cortex. The four ventricles or cavities of the brain and the narrow canal in the spinal cord contain a fluid called cerebrospinal fluid (csf) in the form of a continuous stream. The ANS controls the activities of the internal organs and consists of two divisions; the sympathetic and the parasympathetic. The parasympathetic nerves arise from the brain, as well as from the lower portion of the spinal cord. Their actions are usually localized, such as the slowing of the heart etc. and in general serve to conserve the body energy. The sympathetic system consists of nerves arising from the middle part of the spinal cord and forming two long



(Diagram: Dr. Samar Mitra)

trunks on the two sides of the spine extending from the base of the skull to the coccyx (a small triangular bone which is below the triangular sacrum, the backbone of the buttock). The two sympathetic trunks which contain several ganglia (a ganglion is an aggregation of nerve cells), meet terminally at a small ganglion, called the Ganglion Impar, in front of the coccyx. Sympathetic nerves arising from the ganglia on these two trunks, on their way to different organs of the body such as intestine, heart, uterus etc., form several 'plexuses' (network of fine nerves) at different levels, sometimes jointly with parasympathetic nerves. Sympathetic reactions are mass reactions like constriction of the arteries, acceleration of the heart, slowing of the intestinal movements etc. The ANS though outside CNS has certain control centres in the brain.

Although our present-day knowledge of the brain is about 200 years old, still our understanding of brain functions is far from complete. To cite an example of our ignorance regarding the functioning of the nervous system, even the cause of sleep, in other words, the brain processes leading to sleep, are not known definitely, and that is why various theories about sleep are current even today. Our understanding of the ANS is far less, and only recently has the need for a fuller study of this system been increasingly felt.

In the descriptions given in *Rāja Yoga* there are very few areas which are not related directly or indirectly to anatomical parts or physiological processes of the human body. It is not possible to deal with all these aspects in detail within the framework of this article. However, our purpose would be greatly served if some of the key points are considered, as the other aspects of *Rāja Yoga* are related to these basic points. Therefore it is proposed to discuss here mainly the following points:

idā; *pingalā*; *mūlādhāra*; *sūṣumnā*; and the *cakras* or lotuses. In the following portion, some quotations from Swami Vivekananda's *Rāja Yoga* concerning these topics will be given first, followed by comments and possible or suggested anatomical and physiological parallels.

Idā and pingalā

(i) There are three main currents of this *prāṇa* in the human body. One they called *Idā*, another *Pingalā* and the third *Sūṣumnā*. *Pingalā*, according to them, is on the right side of the spinal column, and the *Idā* on the left, and in the middle of the spinal column is the *Sūṣumnā*, an empty channel. *Idā* and *Pingalā*, according to them, are the currents working in every man, and through these currents, we are performing all the functions of life.⁴

(ii) There are two currents passing through the brain and circulating down the sides of the spine, crossing at the base and returning to the brain. One of these currents, called the 'sun' (*Pingalā*), starts from the left hemisphere of the brain, crosses at the base of the brain to the right side of the spine, and recrosses at the base of the spine, like one-half of the figure eight.

The other current, the 'moon' (*Idā*), reverses this action and completes the figure eight...These currents flow day and night and make deposits of the great life forces at different points, commonly known as 'plexuses'; but we are rarely conscious of them...These 'sun' and 'moon' currents are intimately connected with breathing...⁵

(iii) The 'sun' and 'moon' currents bring energy to all parts of the body...The *Yogī*...is able not only to feel them, but actually to see them. They are luminous in his life, and so are the great nerve centres.⁶

(iv) [...They (*Idā* and *Pingalā*) are the main channels through which afferent and efferent currents travel.]⁷

There does not seem to be any known nerve group or part of the spinal cord in CNS which corresponds to the left nerve

4. *Complete Works* (1977), 1:224

5. *Ibid* (1977), 8:43

6. *Ibid*, 8:45

7. *Ibid* (1978) 4:236

current *idā* or the right nerve current *pingalā*. Although it is known that bundles of corticospinal nerve fibres of CNS arising from cerebral cortex cross (decussate) at Medulla Oblongata, these cannot be correlated with the *idā* and the *pingalā*. From Swamiji's statements such as 'currents flow day and night', 'intimately connected with breathing', and his linking the currents with 'plexuses', it appears that *idā* and *pingalā* are related to ANS. But, although the two sympathetic trunks meeting at Ganglion Impar conform to the description: 'The two currents circulate down the side of the spine...returning to the brain', the existing knowledge of ANS does not support the idea that the right sympathetic trunk transmits the afferent, and the left trunk transmits the efferent impulses; nor is there any crossing of the sympathetic nerve fibres at the base of the brain. But at the same time, it cannot be denied that the exact routes of afferent and efferent nerve impulses of ANS inside the spinal cord have not been worked out yet. Thus, considering all aspects, it is difficult to fit in the *idā* and *pingalā* concept with any definite autonomic pathway of the nervous system.

In this connection, mention may be made of the existence of a diffused, ill-defined mass of nerve cells and fibres forming a meshwork or reticulum in the central portion of the brain stem (mid-brain, pons and medulla) collectively known as Reticular Formation, which extends downwards into the spinal cord and upwards into the thalamus. The extent, subdivisions, connections and functions of this Formation are uncertain.⁸ Some of the functions that are ascribed to this Formation are: maintenance of posture, muscle-tone, alertness or wakefulness, regulation of ANS and endocrine glands

(which secrete hormones). The Formation is also concerned with emotional and sex behaviour.⁹ Thus, it seems that there is scope for thinking that *idā* and *pingalā* may in some way be related to this Formation.

Mūlādhāra

(i) Now the centre where all these residual sensations are, as it were, stored up, is called the Mūlādhāra, the root receptacle, and the coiled-up energy of action is Kuṇḍalinī, 'the coiled up'. It is very probable that the residual motor energy is also stored up in the same centre, as, after deep study or meditation on external objects, the part of the body where the Mūlādhāra centre is situated (probably the sacral plexus) gets heated. Now, if this coiled-up energy be roused and made active, and then consciously made to travel up to the Sushumnā canal, as it acts upon centre after centre, a tremendous reaction will set in.¹⁰

(ii) You are, as it were, sending the nerve current down the spinal column, and striking violently on the last plexus, the basic lotus which is triangular in form, the seat of the Kuṇḍalinī.¹¹

(iii) All energy has to be taken up from its seat in the Mūlādhāra and brought to the Sahasrāra.¹²

(iv) The Yogīs say that that part of the human energy which is expressed as sex energy, in sexual thought, when checked and controlled, easily becomes changed into ojas, and as the Mūlādhāra guides these, the Yogī pays particular attention to that centre.¹³

The sacral plexus, referred to by Swamiji, is in the pelvic cavity in front of the sacrum. It is formed by different sacral nerves and belongs to CNS, although the plexus receives a few branches of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nerves. On the other hand, the two ganglionated sympathetic trunks of ANS meet each other in Ganglion Impar in front of the

8. *Gray's Anatomy* (London: Longman, 1967) p. 1049

9. *Human Physiology*, (Calcutta: New Central Book Agency). 2:1300

10. *Complete Works*, 1:164

11. *Ibid*, 1:167

12. *Ibid*, 1:169

13. *Ibid*, 1:170

coccyx, and it is reasonable to think of the possibility of this ganglion being the *mūlādhāra*, as was suggested by the author elsewhere.¹⁴ But at the present state of knowledge no special function can be ascribed to this ganglion. Furthermore, there is specific mention by Swamiji of a 'plexus' being the seat of *Kuṇḍalinī*.

There is an ANS plexus in front of the sacrum called Inferior Hypogastric Plexus (also called Pelvic Plexus) having connections with the urinary bladder, rectum, prostate and seminal vesicles (uterus and vagina in females). This plexus is in front of CNS plexuses, sacral and coccygeal. It is suggested that this Inferior Hypogastric plexus represents the *mūlādhāra*.¹⁵ The exact shape of this plexus cannot be defined but the network looks somewhat triangular, and the Sacrum bone in front of which this plexus is situated is triangular in shape. What Swamiji meant by 'sacral plexus' may be the Inferior Hypogastric plexus of ANS. It may be pointed out here that in the days of Swami Vivekananda, the terms 'autonomic' and 'parasympathetic' were not used and in the anatomy books¹⁶ of that period, the sympathetic nerves and the Inferior Hypogastric plexus got much less attention than CNS plexus like sacral plexus. Thus it is quite likely that Swamiji did not mean any somatic (CNS) nerve plexus to indicate 'mūlādhāra', rather, he meant the ANS plexus in the same region, now known as Inferior Hypogastric plexus.

14. See *Udbodhan* (1344 B.S.), Vol. 30, pp. 82-90

15. Rele had made this suggestion earlier. See, V. G. Rele, *Mysterious Kundalini* (Bombay: D.B. Tarapore sons & Co. Ltd. 1927) p. 27. The present author came to know of Rele's work only after preparing the first draft of this article.

16. cf Henry Gray, *Anatomy; Descriptive and Surgical*, (London: Longmans Green & Co. 1883).

Suṣumnā

(i) But why should not the mind send news without any wire, or react without any wire? ...If you can make the current pass through the *Suṣumnā*, the canal in the middle of the spinal column, you have solved the problem...If we can send the mental current through the hollow canal without any nerve fibres to act as wires, the *Yogī* says, the problem is solved...¹⁷

(ii) Where the spinal cord ends in some of the lumbar vertebrae a fine fibre issues downwards, and the canal runs up even within that fibre, only much finer. The canal is closed at the lower end, which is situated near what is called the sacral plexus, which, according to modern physiology, is triangular in form.¹⁸

(iii) To open that *Suṣumnā* is the prime object of the *Yogī*. According to him, along this *Suṣumnā* are ranged these centres, or, in more figurative language, these lotuses, as they are called.¹⁹

(iv) This *Suṣumnā* is in ordinary persons closed up at the lower extremity; no action comes through it. The *Yogī* proposes a practice by which it can be opened, and the nerve currents made to travel through.²⁰

(v) The *Yogīs* claim this cord is closed, but by the power of meditation it has to be opened. The energy has to be sent down to [the base of the spine], and the *Kuṇḍalinī* rises.²¹

It can hardly be doubted that the *sūṣumnā*, as described by Swamiji, is the central canal of the spinal cord which is continuous above with the cavities of the brain and is thus in direct contact with the hypothalamus and the pineal gland. As was mentioned before, the spinal cord lies only in the upper two-thirds of the vertebral column. In the lower third of the spine, it tapers off abruptly into a conical extremity, from the apex of which a delicate *non-nervous* filament named *Filum Terminale* descends to the coccyx, the lowest bone of the vertebral column. The central canal

17. *Complete Works*, 1:163

18. *Ibid*, 1:160

19. *Ibid*, 1:169

20. *Ibid*, 1:163

21. *Ibid*, 4:236

descends nearly 5-6 mm into the Filum Terminale.

In early embryonic life the spinal cord occupies the entire length of the vertebral column. Later on, the vertebral column begins to grow more rapidly than the spinal cord. As the migration of the spinal cord upwards commences, the terminal portion of the central canal becomes adherent to the surrounding structures, and the portion of the cord just proximal to it along with its coverings become drawn out to form the delicate Filum Terminale. All these changes happen before birth.²² The central canal is filled with the cerebrospinal fluid (csf) and is surrounded by a gelatinous substance which contains a few nerve cells and fibres.

It must be mentioned here that Swamiji has described the *sūṣumnā* as a 'hollow' canal and has not mentioned any fluid within it. The reason seems to be that in the anatomy books of Swamiji's time, the existence of csf in the central canal was not known.²³ As regards the transmission of nerve impulses through *sūṣumnā*, the following possibilities may be thought of:

(a) Taking the central canal as *sūṣumnā*, we may think of the narrow column of csf within it conducting the nerve impulse from *mūlādhāra* upwards to the brain. Although the extent of the

central canal is only up to 5-6 mm of the Filum Terminale, the major part of the rest of the Filum Terminale (which was at one time a part of the spinal cord) may be considered to have potency and might be containing minute traces (not ordinarily detectable) of csf, which the Yogis have the power to utilize as a conducting medium. It is worth noting here that the lower part of the Filum Terminale is in the vicinity of the Inferior Hypogastric plexus or *mūlādhāra*. Conduction of nerve impulse depends on the presence of salt ions, but it is difficult to assume that the csf of the central canal (not known to have salt concentration different from that of csf in general) can be the conducting medium of nerve impulses, although it is a fact that the vibrations in the fluid in the internal ear ultimately produces electrical impulses in the brain resulting in hearing.

(b) The few nerve cells and fibres in the gelatinous substance that surrounds the central canal conduct the nerve impulses to the brain.

Lotuses or plexuses:

(i) The Yogī conceives of several centres, beginning with *Mūlādhāra*, the basic, and ending with *Sahasrāra*, the thousand petalled lotus in the brain. So, if we take these different plexuses as representing these lotuses, the idea of the Yogī can be understood very easily in the language of modern physiology.²⁴

(ii) Now, if this coiled-up energy be roused and made active, and then consciously made to travel up the *Sūṣumnā* canal, as it acts upon centre after centre, a tremendous reaction will set in.²⁵

(iii) In the language of the Yogī, the *Sūṣumnā* has its ends in two lotuses, the lower lotus surrounding the triangle of the *Kuṇḍalinī* and the top one in the brain surrounding the pineal gland; between these two are four other lotuses, stages on the way:

22. In this context it is interesting to note that in adult life, the brain is the main centre of control and the lower extremity of the spine (supposed to be the seat of *kuṇḍalinī*) is not so vitally important. But in one of the very early stages of embryonic life known as the Gastrula stage, the 'dorsal lip' of the Blastopore (also known as the Primitive Streak) is the centre of intense activity. The nerve cord (as also notochord) originates from here as a hollow tube which grows forward and bulges into the brain. The dorsal lip or Primitive Knot corresponds to the base of the spine in adult life.

23. cf *Anatomy: Descriptive and Surgical*, p. LXXXII

24. *Complete Works*, 1:160-61

25. *Ibid*, 1:164

- 6th. Pineal Gland.
- 5th. Between the Eyes.
- 4th. Bottom of the Throat.
- 3rd. Level with the Heart.
- 2nd. Opposite the Navel.
- 1st. Base of Spine.²⁶

It is apparent that, as described by Swamiji, the lotuses are plexuses belonging not to the CNS, but to the ANS. The latter plexuses have one characteristic, not possessed by somatic nerve plexuses, and that is, the ANS plexuses contain nerve cells and ganglia. These enable the ANS plexuses to originate, store or co-ordinate nerve impulses. The Inferior Hypogastric plexus particularly contains numerous small ganglia.

We suggest that the anatomical sites of the lotuses are as follows:

1. *Mūlādhāra* — Inferior hypogastric plexus (pelvic plexus).
2. *Svādhiṣṭhāna* — Superior hypogastric plexus.
3. *Maṇipura* — Coeliac or solar plexus.
4. *Anāhata* — Cardiac plexus.
5. *Viśuddha* — plexuses connecting superior, middle and inferior cervical ganglia.
6. *Ajñā* — Internal carotid plexus.
7. *Sahasrāra* — Pineal gland.

Although these autonomic plexuses are situated in front and on the two sides of the vertebral column, the reactions produced in them may be felt centrally, that is, around the central canal (*suṣumnā*) of the spinal cord. Furthermore, future research may establish the direct connection between the sympathetic nerves and the nerve cells in the gelatinous substance around the central canal, and then the explanation of the passage of nerve impulses from plexuses via *suṣumnā* would be easy.

26. Ibid, 8:52. See also Ibid, 1:169

Pineal Gland

(i) When the Ojas has gone from centre to centre and reaches the Pineal Gland (a part of the brain to which science can assign no function), man then becomes neither mind nor body, he is free from all bondage.²⁷

(ii) The Yogī pictures this serpent as being slowly lifted from stage to stage until the highest, the pineal gland, is reached.²⁸

The pineal gland is a small body 6 mm × 4 mm in size situated in the middle upper part of the brain. It first appears on about the 36th day of gestation, gains maximum development at about 7 years of age, and then undergoes involution up to about 14 years of age. In Gray's *Anatomy* (a standard textbook for medical students for more than a century) published in 1883, one can find only a short description of this gland. In a physiology book of Swamiji's time, published in 1876, is written (with reference to the pituitary body and the pineal gland together)—'It is difficult to classify organs, the functions of which we are quite ignorant. The structure resembles ductless glands.'²⁹ In recent years the pineal gland (now known as the Pineal body) has attracted much attention and modern research is revealing several functions of it. The latest edition of Gray's *Anatomy* says: 'Once considered a phylogenetic relic, the vestigial remains of a dorsal 3rd eye and an organ of little functional significance, the mammalian pineal gland has now been demonstrated to be an endocrine gland of major regulatory importance, modulating the activity of adenohypophysis,³⁰ neurohypophysis, end-

27. Ibid, (1978) 6:131

28. Ibid, 8:46

29. A. Flint, H. K. Lewis, *A Text Book of Human Physiology* (136, Gower Street, London: H.K. Lewis, 1876), p. 486

30. Hypophysis = Pituitary. It may be mentioned here that the embryonic brain during the early stage of development consists of three

ocrines, pancreas,³¹ parathyroids, adrenal³² cortex, adrenal medulla and gonads...The pineal secretions may reach their target cells either via csf or via circulatory system'.³³ It may be mentioned here that the pineal gland has certain peculiar features: a) it is a part of the brain, but lacks in true nerve cells; b) it is outside the blood-brain barrier, i.e. unlike in other parts of the brain, blood circulation has free access to the gland; c) in this organ, there are pinealocytes—a peculiar type of cells not found elsewhere in the body; d) it produces an enzyme produced nowhere else but is necessary for production of a hormone which influences the development and functions of gonads, pituitary and thyroids.

The above characteristics indicate that this tiny organ in the brain is controlling some of the most important vital functions of body like a commander, and it is quite reasonable to accept this gland as the site of *sahasrāra*. In this connection it is interesting to note that Descartes in the 17th century regarded this gland as the

parts: fore-brain, mid-brain and hind-brain. The forebrain in due course gets demarcated into two sections: an anterior section which develops into the cerebrum and a posterior part known as the diencephalon. An outgrowth of the upper part of the diencephalon becomes the Pineal Body and a similar outgrowth of the lower part becomes the Pituitary Body. The floor of the diencephalon is known as the Hypothalamus, which is the control centre for some of the most important homeostatic functions like regulation of body temperature, of hunger, of water in the body, of sleep and also the sense of pleasure.

31. Responsible for digestion and insulin preparation.

32. Adrenal = Suprarenal, responsible for maintenance of blood pressure and metabolism.

33. *Gray's Anatomy* (1980), 36th Ed. p. 1447.

'seat of the soul, the connecting link between mind and body'.³⁴

General discussion:

Our study leads us to the tentative conclusion that Yogic processes involve ANS (control of which has been lost by man in the course of human evolution³⁵) particularly sympathetic system, and that the aim of Yogīs is to gain control over this system. This is also the view of Rele.³⁶ The ultimate aim of *Rāja Yoga* is to reach *sahasrāra* the site of which is the pineal gland, and not the cerebral cortex as is usually thought of. Anatomists and physiologists of the present day know that the higher control of the ANS lies in the Hypothalamus.³⁷ The discussions in the present paper indicate that this control, so far as Yogic practice is concerned, is performed by the pineal gland through the agency of the Hypothalamus.

Our ordinary day-to-day life is mostly controlled by the CNS and our normal activities and thinking co-ordinated in the cerebral cortex. Yoga seems to be an attempt to go beyond this control and conditioning. Swamiji says:

The mind has made this network of the nervous system, and has to break it, so that no wires will be required to work through. Then alone will all knowledge come to us—no more bondage of the body; that is why it is so important that we should get control of that Sushumnā. If we can send the mental current through the hollow canal without any nerve fibres to act as wires, the Yogī says, the problem is solved...³⁸

34. *Abnormal Psychology* (Bombay: Hill Publishing Co. Ltd. 1947), p. 80

35. *Complete Works*, 1:153

36. *Mysterious Kundalini*, p. 85

37. *Human Neuroanatomy*, (Calcutta: Oxford, I.B.H. Publishing Co. 1970) p. 495

38. *Complete Works*, 1:163

and

When we succeed in bringing the currents through this passage called 'Sushumnā', up to the brain, we are for the time being separated entirely from the body.³⁹

These statements suggest that bypassing the nerves of the CNS, and keeping the mental processes within the limits of the ANS and pineal gland, constitute the main physiological basis of *Rāja Yoga*.⁴⁰

39. Ibid, 8:46

40. The author wishes to thank Dr. Samar

Mitra, Emeritus Professor of Anatomy, Calcutta Medical College; Dr. S. Chowdhuri and Dr. B. K. Chakravarti, Professor and Ex-Professor of Physiology respectively, Calcutta Medical College; Dr. S. K. Sen, Professor of Neurology, Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences; Dr. S. Bose, Professor of psychology, University of Calcutta; and Dr. D. Banerjee, Psychologist, All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Calcutta; for their valuable help and suggestions. Dr. Samar Mitra went through the manuscript and prepared the diagram of the nervous system.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE PATH OF SRI RAMANA—PART I. BY SRI SADHU OM. Published by Sri Ramana Kshetra, Kanvashrama, Varkala, Kerala 695 145. Copies available from Sri Sadhu Om, Thiruvannamalai 606 603. Tamilnadu. 1981. Pp. xviii + 171. Rs. 12.

The book is an elaboration of the main teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi, namely, 'To abide in the Heart as it is (that is, without thought, as "I am") is truly meditating upon the Heart, the Reality'. According to the author, this statement represents the only meaningful *sādhana*. The book first gives, as an introduction, a short life of Ramana Maharshi. Then follows the exposition of his teachings in eight chapters. His teachings are meant for one and all. 'He is indeed the Loka Maha Guru—the Guru for the whole world!' (p. 31) Sri Ramana's message is universal.

The chapter, 'What is happiness?' gives a clear analysis of the universal quest for happiness. Maharshi's own words are used to trace the source of love and happiness to Self. The next chapter therefore discusses the method of reaching this perennial source of supreme happiness. The method is self-enquiry, tracing the trail of 'I'-thought back to its source. There is a temporary cessation of mental activity as in deep sleep which is called *mano laya*. Again there is a permanent cessation of mental activity as in Self-knowledge which is *mano nāsa*. Our happiness also is temporary or permanent accordingly. For the mind itself is only a bundle of thoughts and all thought-functions bring misery. 'If the I-thought

is prevented, all other thoughts also will be prevented. This is Bhagavan's special teaching. In his own words (*Ulladu Nārpadu* verse 14) quoted by the author, 'only, if that first person (the ego) in the form 'I am the body' exists, will the second and third persons also exist...' Here the second and third persons mean the world. The author very correctly observes. 'The first person thought, "I" has this peculiar property, if (by enquiring "who am I?") attention is focussed on it in order to discover what it is, this "I"-thought will subside. But on the contrary, the more we attend to thoughts pertaining to the second and third persons, the more they will increase.'

The path of enquiry destroys the ego, 'I', through the process of tracing its source, whereas the path of devotion surrenders the ego to God. The author agrees that the end of both these paths is the same.

In the chapter 'The enquiry "Who am I" and the four yogas' the author emphatically asserts that the enquiry 'who am I' is the essence of all yogas. It is the Mahā Yoga. We also agree with the author that the true import of the *sāstras* cannot be learnt except from Jñānis. But to suggest that traditional interpreters were book-worms, is far-fetched and provides a jarring note to an otherwise good analysis. The *sāstras* provide methods for diverse types of attitudes and for different degrees of purity of mind. Ramana Maharshi himself pointed this out on several occasions. Ultimately it is *citta-suddhi* that counts, and all may not be as

fortunate as the author has been in finding an exalted guru as Sri Ramana Maharshi.

In chapters six and seven the author expatiates upon how the 'who-am-I' enquiry differs from the traditional Jñāna Yoga methods of *so'ham* (I am that) meditation and the negative enquiry through *neti, neti* (not this, not this). 'Until one gains the true experience of Brahman, in whatever way one may meditate on Brahman, it will only be a thought about a second or third person ... Thus if one takes to meditating "I am Śiva" or "I am He" and so on, the ego will wax and grow strong'. (p. 94) 'Thinking "I am not this, not this" (*neti neti*) is a negative method... just as impractical as 'drink the medicine without thinking of monkey''. (p. 103) Such clarifications are useful practical aids to a sādḥaka. However, the author has overlooked the fact that in the traditional path of Jñāna, there are sufficient safeguards to overcome those defects of the *so'ham* and *neti neti* methods.

To conclude, this is a good attempt at presenting before the English-knowing public the salient features of Sri Ramana Maharshi's teaching in a lucid style. All sādḥakas who take to *vicāra mārga* of this type are placed under a debt of gratitude to the saintly author.

SWAMI AMRITANANDA
Secretary, Vivekananda College, Madras

KANNADA

SITA-DARSHANA BY SITA-SUTA (*Kachigere Siddegowda*). Published by Suguna-Prakashana, 1596 Vidyanagar, Mandya, Karnataka. 1979. Pp. 208. Rs. 6.

Rāmāyaṇa and *Mahābhārata*, the two immortal epics of India have held before the people for emulation great ideal characters in their different relationships in family and society and have immensely influenced the life of Indian men and women for scores of centuries. Sītā, the heroine of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is one such ideal character of all-round wifely virtues—chaste, pure, loving, gentle, kind, generous, high-minded, courageous, sagacious, circumspect, self-confident, forbearing, independent, and withal an ideal loyal companion

to her husband Śrī Rāma—held up for the guidance of women.

In the course of his lecture on 'The Sages of India' at Madras in February 1897, Swami Vivekananda rapturously exclaimed about Sītā: 'And what to speak of Sītā? You may exhaust the literature of the world that is past, and I may assure you, that you will have to exhaust the literature of the world of the future, before finding another Sītā. Sītā is unique; that character was depicted once and for all. There may have been several Rāmas, perhaps, but never more than one Sītā! She is the very type of the true Indian women, for all the Indian ideals of a perfected woman have grown out of that one life of Sītā... The women of India must grow and develop in the foot-prints of Sītā, and that is the only way.' (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, pp. 256-57).

The book under review is a critical study and evaluation of Sita's ideal character emerging from the *Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa* in all its bearings—from her childhood days in Janaka's palace, through her marriage to Śrī Rāma, life at Ayodhyā, in exile in the forest with Śrī Rāma, at Lankā in Rāvaṇa's captivity, triumphant return to Ayodhyā with Śrī Rāma after her rescue, and the final drama at Ayodhyā when she disappeared into the Mother Earth from where she had arisen. The author has traced the gradual unfoldment of Sītā's great and sublime character at every stage in and through the various incidents and trying circumstances. He has also made comparative evaluation, where necessary, of her response to circumstances with that of Śrī Rāma and others. The author has made use of some of the earlier profound studies of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by eminent persons.

The author's study (*Urmilā-darsana*) in Kannada about Urmilā, another great woman character from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is supplemented by this study. There is a long introduction of 66 pages. The author's efforts are laudable and it is a good augury that the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* still hold the attention of the people.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA
Acharya, Probationers' Training Centre
Belur Math

NEWS AND REPORTS

VIVEKANANDA ASHRAMA, SHYAMALA TAL

RELIEF

(Report for April 1983 to March 1984)

Started as a centre for meditation and spiritual practices in the secluded and serene surrounding of the Himalayas at an altitude of 5,000 feet, the Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamala Tal is now a well developed institution with retreat facilities for monks and lay-devotees, a 15-bed indoor hospital, a veterinary clinic, a water reservoir, an orchard and a flower garden.

The Ashrama retreat provided accommodation to monks and lay-devotees as usual. Besides regular evening *ārati* and *Rāmanāma Sankirtana* on every Ekādashī day, annual festivals like the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and the boly Mother were celebrated with due solemnity.

The hospital and the veterinary departments are the only source of medical help to the people within a range of 54 miles between Tanakpur and Champawat. Besides free treatment, patients were given free medicines. During the year 9 indoor and 10,178 outdoor patients were given treatment at the hospital. The veterinary hospital treated 52 heads of cattle including cows, bullocks and calves.

The Ashrama distributed 625 kilos of milk-powder and 25 bottles of Horlicks among the undernourished villagers including children and expectant mothers. About 4,000 used cotton garments were given to the needy. Camps for the treatment of eye and dental troubles were opened occasionally with the help of specialists. Donations for the maintenance of the hospital or the Ashrama may be sent to the President, Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamala Tal, P.O. Sukhidhang via Pilibhit, Dist. Pithoragarh, U.P., PIN Code: 262 523. Funds forthcoming the Ashrama proposes to take up the following schemes gradually:

- (1) repair of the existing building and improvement of the present water supply scheme
- (2) improving medical service
- (3) expansion of veterinary service
- (4) integral development of at least 8 surrounding villages.

West Bengal Flood Relief: Massive relief work has been started in six districts of West Bengal, for the victims of pre-monsoon flood ravages. Cooked food was served from the Headquarters to 37,957 marooned people in 19 villages of Howrah and Hooghly districts. The Burdwan camp of the Headquarters distributed *Khichudi* to 14,172 sufferers in 11 villages of Burdwan district. The Kamarpukur camp of the Headquarters distributed cooked food among 19,636 marooned people in 17 villages of Hooghly district. A Mobile Medical Unit of Kamarpukur Centre treated more than 4,800 patients of Khanakul Block of Hooghly district. Cooked food was served to a total number of 29,640 flood-affected people of Malda district, by the Malda Centre. The same centre also distributed powdered milk to 2,259 persons from its Harishchandrapur Camp. 5,000 kg of rice, 4,894 kg of potato and 525 kg of salt were distributed among 1,555 families in Howrah district by the Headquarters while the Narendrapur Centre distributed among 221 families in 24-Parganas district, 550 kg of *Chira* and 90 kg of molasses.

Assam Flood Relief: The Karimganj Centre closed the relief work after distributing of 200 Dhotis, 221 Saris, 991 old garments and 768 exercise books. Also 9 families were given help to rebuild their damaged homes.

Sri Lanka Refugee Relief: Through our Thyagarajanagar (Madras) Centre primary relief is continuing, mainly attending to the educational needs of refugee children.

Rehabilitation: The Bankura Centre in West Bengal has completed the reconstruction of house roofs of 17 families at Rangametia and Basudevpur. The construction of a primary school and installing a tube-well in Kerala village of Junagadh district, Gujarat, have been completed under the supervision of Rajkot Centre.

Donations may please be sent through account-payee cheques or drafts drawn in favour of *Ramakrishna Mission* and addressed to the General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, PO. Belur Math-711 202, Howrah, W.B., India.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Revolution in the Medical World

While India is busy starting new medical colleges, mass producing doctors (many of whom eventually emigrate) and paramedical personnel, and trying to make available to untold millions basic health facilities, across the globe, another type of revolution is transforming medical thinking in the developed countries of the West. A new movement in health consciousness is already on the march although, like all incipient movements, it is yet to gain widespread notice and official recognition. This new movement is called 'holistic health', deriving its name from the Greek word for 'whole'. Its central principle is that the human body is not a machine but only one dimension of the total personality, and illness is a condition affecting the whole person. This is of course the central principle in Indian and Chinese systems of medicine, and it had remained so even in the western system from the times of Hippocrates till the middle of the last century.

Modern western medicine is based on three principles: 1. diseases are local, affecting certain organs; 2. diseases are mostly caused by pathogens entering the body from outside; 3. all diseases can be cured through chemotherapy (including the use of antibiotics) or surgery. The whole attention of the medical world has been focused for more than a century on finding new drugs, and techniques and machines for the detection and isolation of disease-causing factors. Increasing specialization has compartmentalized disease and separated doctors from patients and, worse still, doctors themselves from one another. Doctors deal with not patients but symptoms, and their job is not to heal the person but to make the symptoms disappear somehow or other.

The new movement is the result of a three-pronged thrust coming from three different disciplines. The first of these is Freudian psychiatry which has shown that many physical ailments are caused by mental troubles. The second influence is the increasing popularity of yoga and oriental views on health and the development of biofeedback and related techniques. The third thrust has come, rather belatedly, from the medical profession itself. The first shot was heard when a few years ago Dr. Robert S. Mendelsohn, a paediatrician and Associate Professor at Abraham Lincoln School of Medicine, University of Illinois, published his book *The Confessions of a Medical Heretic*. Without mincing words Dr. Mendelsohn said, 'I believe that more than 90 per cent of modern medicine could disappear from the face of the earth—doctors, hospitals, drugs, and equipment—and the effect on health would be immediate and beneficial.'

Holistic health looks upon health not as a mere absence of symptoms of illness but as a positive state of 'wellness' of the whole person. It rejects the concept of an ignorant patient who passively accepts treatment from outside, and believes that the patient should understand the cause and cure of his illness and should actively participate in his recovery by changing his life-style. The basic principle is to cure oneself through self-control, body-awareness, diet, avoidance of stress, positive thinking and yoga or meditation. The function of the doctor is to guide the patient in this self-healing process.

The prevailing sophisticated western system of medicine has its uses, but its abuses are quite as great, and the time has come for a revaluation of its basic presuppositions and practice.