VOL. 90

MAY 1985

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

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 90 MAY 1985 No. 5

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

NEW PRESIDENT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

It is with great pleasure that we announce that Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj was elected President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission at a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Belur Math and the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission on Tuesday, 9 April 1985.

Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Math and Mission since April 1979, and succeeds Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, who entered *mahāsamādhi* on 13 March last.

Born in 1899, Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj hails from Sadhuhati, a village in the district of Sylhet (now in Bangladesh). After graduating from Scottish Church College, Calcutta, he joined the Ramakrishna Order in May 1923. A disciple of Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, the second President of the Math and Mission, he had his *sannyāsa* from his *guru* in 1928.

He has an outstanding record of service to the twin organizations. As Brahmachari Saumya Chaitanya, he became Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar, in 1926 and continued there up to December 1935, with a break in 1929-1931 when he served at Udbodhan. During that period for some time, he studied Sanskrit at Varanasi Advaita Ashrama. Joining as a Member of the Working Committee of the Math and Mission in 1936 and continuing up to 1941, and again from 1944 to 1947, he rendered valuable services. He served in the intervening period as the Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* for three years. He was later President of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, for about ten years from 1953 to 1963. Appointed as a Trustee of the Order in March 1947, he became one of the Assistant Secretaries in April that year and served in that post till 1953 and again from 1963 to 1966. Then he became the General Secretary that year and held that position till April 1979 Thereafter, he was elected one of the Vice-Presidents in April 1979, and continued in that position till he became the eleventh President of the Order.

Besides being a great monk and worker, the Swami is an erudite scholar, too. His English version of nine major Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the *Brahma-Sūtras*, all with Śaṅkara's commentary, and Bengali version of ten major Upaniṣads, *Stavakusumāñjalī*, *Siddhānta-leśa-saṅgraha* have earned appreciation from all quarters. In addition to his translations, the fruits of his

scholarship consist in some of his masterly works of an original nature. Of them, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* and *History of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission*, in English, and *Sri Ma Sarada Devi*, *Yuganayak Vivekananda* (in 3 volumes), and *Sri Ramakrishna-Bhaktamalika*, in Bengali, deserve special mention. He edited *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (in 8 volumes) thoroughly and provided an independent 'Index' to each of the volumes. He also compiled and edited *Apostles of Sri Ramakrishna*. These works are proof of the Swami's erudition and deep understanding of the scriptures. His literary contribution to the Vedanta and Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature has been immense.

We earnestly pray to the Lord for his long life and happy period of spiritual ministration and guidance of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

पुमाँ एनं ततुत उत्कृणत्ति पुमान्
वि ततने अधि नाके अस्मिन् ।
इमे मयूखा उप सेदुरूः सदः
सामानि चक्रुस्तसराण्योतवे ॥

The [Primordial] Man[1] spreads out (*tanute*) this ;[2] the Man rolls it up (*utkṛṇatti*) and extends (*vi tatne*) it above in the heaven.[3] The rays have occupied their home ;[4] the Saman-hymns serve as shuttles (*tasaraṇi*) for the weaving.[5]

Ṛg-Veda 10.130.2

कासीत् प्रमा प्रतिमा किं निदानम्
आज्यं किमासीत् परिधिः क आसीत् ।
छंदः किमासीत् प्रउगं किमुक्थं
यद्देवा देवमयजंत विश्वे ॥

When all the gods worshipped the Supreme God,[6] what was the scriptural procedure (*pramā*) ? What was the deity (*pratimā*) ? What was the purpose or cause (*nidānam*) ? What was the oblation ? What was the enclosure ?[7] What was the metre ? What was the *pra-uga* chant ?[8]

Ṛg-Veda 10.130.3

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* The Creation hymn begun last month is continued here. The peculiarity of the hymn is that it compares Creation to a fire-ritual and a loom simultaneously. The sacrificing activity and the weaving activity appear mixed up throughout the hymn. The rituals are the threads, the hymns the shuttles, the weavers the gods or the first ancestors. In stanza no. 3 we have another set of questions which remind us of the questions of Dīrghatamas.

1. The *ādi puruṣa* is Prajāpati or Hiraṇyagarbha.

2. i.e. this Creation (here compared to a tapestry).

3. The idea is that creaton is a continuing process going on everywhere.

4. *Mayūkha* means rays ; here it may refer to fire. *sadah* or *sadanam* (home) may refer to the altar which is the 'home' of fire. The idea is: the sacrificial fire has been kindled on the altar.

5. The singing of hymns is here compared to the movement of shuttles.

6. Cf the *Puruṣa-sūktam* where Creation is said to have sprung out of the primordial sacrifice offered by the gods with Puruṣa as the victim.

7. *Paridhi* is a wooden stick (made of Palāsa wood) laid around the Vedic altar.

8. A preliminary Vedic chant.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL attempts to show that love for one's self and love for other people are not mutually contradictory but complementary.

In IMPORTANCE OF MANTRA DIKSHA Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, explains the meaning of the term *dīkṣā*, the power of the Mantra and the role of the Guru.

We are reproducing in this issue A LETTER FROM THE HOLY MOTHER TO THE LATE PRESIDENT MAHARAJ, the only English letter written by the Holy Mother (obviously, a translation of what she would have instructed). It shows the maternal concern she had for all the spiritual children of Sri Ramakrishna and to her own disciples. This letter was recently discovered among the papers of the late President Maharaj.

Unitarianism and Universalism (now constituting a unified ecclesia) represent some of the most liberal and progressive streams of Christian life and thought. When Swami Vivekananda was in the U.S.A. in the last decade of the 19th century it was only these liberal-minded Christians who opened their pulpits to him to preach from. In the article IF YOU WANT TO THINK ABOUT GOD, THEN..., originally delivered as a sermon, Dr. Bruce Alan Southworth, brought up in the liberal Christian tradition and now senior minister at the Community Church of New York, examines some of the present-day notions about God and stresses the need for a dynamic and rational concept of God.

In the book *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* there is no event more fascinating and significant than the first meeting of M. (Mahendra Nath Gupta) with Sri Ramakrishna. An insightful study of this event from a refreshingly original standpoint is attempted by Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna M.A., Ph. D., in M'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE DIVINE 'ANGLER'. The author is Reader in English at Osmania University and is a creative thinker and writer.

SELF-LOVE AND LOVE FOR THE SELF

(EDITORIAL)

Selfishness and selflessness

When Sir Philip Sydney lay dying in the battlefield, he was given a glass of water. As he raised it to his lips, he saw another wounded soldier calling for water. The knight at once gave the water to the man, saying, 'Thy need is greater than mine', and died. Through this last act of self-sacrifice Sir Philip attained immortal fame which he had failed to attain through all the battles that he had fought.

From time immemorial mankind has glorified selflessness and condemned

selfishness. Every child is told, 'Don't be selfish'. Even without this telling, people learn at the football ground, the classroom, the office, marriage altar and the church or monastery that social life is impossible without a certain degree of selflessness. In his autobiography the great Negro leader Booker T. Washington writes that one of the important lessons that he learnt while studying at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia was that 'those who are happiest are those who do the most for others'.[1]

There is in every person an urge to achieve greatness in some field or other. Selflessness is one of the hallmarks of greatness. All those whom humanity adores as great—statesmen, religious leaders, martyrs, heroes, benefactors—are those who sacrificed selfishness for the welfare of others. Whatever you do for yourself is forgotten, whereas whatever you do for others is cherished for ever. 'Petty-minded people calculate much about "mine" and "thine", says a well-known verse, 'but to the large-hearted, the whole world is like a single home.'[2] Every religion looks upon selfishness as a sin and holds aloft the ideal of universal brotherhood. As for Marxism, its aim is to actualize this ideal by whatever means available.

On the other hand, the primary instinct of every living being is to seek its own interest. What human beings naturally tend to do is to increase their areas of self-interest. Modern society actively promotes self-interest. Industry, commerce and other economic activities are to a large extent based on competition and exploitation. Advertisements in newspapers, the radio and the television have but one message to convey, 'Enjoy yourself'. People are encouraged to join group activities in schools, offices, social circles and political life with the central aim of advancing self-interest. Modern society is atomistic, with the individual—not the family or the community—as the basic unit. In such an atomistic model of living 'selflessness' itself becomes an expression of selfishness!

This is not mere oxymoron. Contradiction, as the existentialists have shown, constitutes the warp and woof of human life, and modern social conditions have only accentuated it. Most of us have accustomed ourselves to living with contradictions, which affect us only when contradictoriness oversteps our limits of tolerance. A good deal of our unhappiness comes from unresolved conflicts and contradictions, but then, we are accustomed to living in unhappiness much of our time. 'A lifetime of happiness!' exclaims Bernard Shaw sardonically, 'No man alive could bear it: it would be hell on earth,'

Need to resolve the conflict

There are, however, several reasons why we should strive to eliminate the conflict between selfishness and selflessness. For one thing, the conflict itself is based on ignorance or insufficient knowledge of the self and is therefore avoidable. Secondly, to pretend to be selfless while one is really selfish is a form of hypocrisy which makes our life unreal and our relationships unauthentic. The love-hate polarity that characterizes many human relationships has its origin in the unresolved conflict between selfishness and selflessness.

This conflict assumes great significance in spiritual life especially in the field of Karma Yoga. Selfless work is the central principle of Karma Yoga, and Hindu

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1. Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Airmont Publishing Co., 1967) p. 50

2. अयं निज: परो वेति गणना लघुचेतसाम् ।
उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ।।

scriptures hold that its purpose is the purification of mind. Many people believe that what they do is all Karma Yoga. But if, even after several years of apparently selfless work, some of them find that their minds, instead of becoming purer, are succumbing to greed, ambition, jealousy, hatred and vanity, it is clear that there is something basically wrong with their attitude towards work. Some of them may come to the conclusion that Karma Yoga is futile and spiritual progress can be attained only through meditation, preferably done in a forest.

On the other hand, there are spiritual seekers who, finding no tangible realization even after practising 'meditation' for several months or years, start thinking that, instead of wasting their time in meditation, it will be better to spend it in selfless service. There are also people who, without understanding what meditation really is, propagate the idea that the desire to meditate is nothing but a sign of laziness, escapism, selfishness or self-centredness.

Selflessness appears under various garbs: patriotism, duty, religion, justice etc. In the name of these things how much harm has been done! It may be selfishness that prompts a robber to commit robbery but it is selflessness that prompts the police to beat him to death. Hitler's self-centredness started the Second World War but the bombing, killing and destruction were all done most selflessly by other people. Indeed, if half the evil in the world is caused by selfishness, the other half is caused by selflessness.

These considerations make it necessary to examine man's attitude towards himself and how it influences his attitude towards other people. Is it bad to love oneself? Is love for oneself contradictory to love for others, or is it complementary to it? Is selfishness caused by love for oneself or, rather, is not selfishness a sign of the very lack of love for oneself? These are fundamental questions of great ethical and practical significance. They may be answered from two standpoints or levels. The eminent psychoanalyst and social philosopher Eric Fromm, who has raised these questions in his stimulating work *Man For Himself*,[3] answers them from an empirical standpoint. Swami Vivekananda, who too had paid considerable attention to these questions, has answered them from a transcendental standpoint.

Self-love and love for others

Eric Fromm has pointed out that most Western thinkers have made a dualistic approach to the problems mentioned above. That is, they regard self-love (or selfishness) and love for others as alternatives: one excludes the other; you cannot have them both. This point will become clearer if we study the two extreme views held by the Protestant theologian and reformer Calvin (1509-64) and the German philosopher Nietzsche (1844-1900).

According to Calvin man is a born sinner, without any power to redeem himself. 'We are not our own,' he said, 'therefore neither our reason nor our will should predominate in our deliberations and actions.' Not only that; being worthless, man should do everything to humiliate himself. 'For I do not call it humility if you suppose that we have anything left...', declared Calvin. 'We cannot think of ourselves as we ought to think without utterly despising everything that may be supposed an excellence in us.' Calvin believed that to seek any pleasure for oneself was nothing but self-love. And self-love was 'a pest', a sin; it was supposed to exclude love for others and to be identical with selfishness.

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3. Eric Fromm, *Man For Himself* (New York: Fawcett Premier Books, 1975) p. 133

Commenting on Calvin's view, Eric Fromm points out that it is rooted in self-contempt and self-hatred. This doctrine has considerably influenced the development of modern Western society. It 'laid the foundation for an attitude in which man's own happiness was not considered to be the aim of life but where he became a means, an adjunct, to ends beyond him, of an all-powerful God, or of the not less powerful secularized authorities and norms, the state, business, success.'[4]

At the other extreme, Nietzsche regarded man as all-powerful. He denounced love for others and altruism as expressions of weakness and self-negation. For Nietzsche the quest for love is typical of slaves unable to fight for what they want and who therefore get it through love. 'Your neighbour-love is your bad love for yourselves,' he says in *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* 'Ye flee unto your neighbour from yourselves and would fain make a virtue thereof!... You cannot stand yourselves and you do not love yourselves sufficiently.' Nietzsche believed that love for oneself alone was true love and love for others was a hypocritical expression of one's inability to love oneself.

Calvin and Nietzsche had one thing in common: both believed self-love to be contradictory to love for others. Sigmund Freud, a pioneer in many fields of psychology, tried to find out the common ground between self-love and love for others. According to him every person has a fixed quantum of psychic energy called libido (which he considered to be chiefly sexual.) 'Love' is the direction this energy takes. As the child grows, it passes through different stages in which libido changes its direction. In a new-born baby libido does not have any definite focus. After this diffuse stage, the libido gets focussed upon its own body. Freud called it 'primary narcissism'. The third stage is called homosexual, since the libido is directed to others belonging to the child's own sex. This is the stage when children seek friends and playmates. The fourth stage is called heterosexual when the libido gets directed to others belonging to the opposite sex. This marks the beginning of adolescence which finally culminates in parenthood.

This natural flow or development of libido can be blocked at any stage and, when this happens, it may cause mental disorders. When, owing to difficult social conditions, a child is unable to establish normal loving relationships with others belonging to its own sex or opposite sex, then its libido gets reverted back to itself—a condition which Freud called 'secondary narcissism'. Such an individual becomes self-centred, selfish. So, according to Freud, self-love is a symptom of stunted development. It is a sign that psychic energy, denied normal outlets of expression, is getting dammed up and is turning into a stagnant pool.

Is it bad to love oneself ?

It should be mentioned here that Freud looked upon man's essential nature as evil. He never gave the ego an autonomous position, considering it to be always under the control of the 'id' or the lower self (consisting chiefly of libidinous instincts) which is the real man. Should this be true, it would be dangerous to trust oneself and bad to love oneself. One of the earliest to challenge this view was Freud's own one-time colleague or disciple Alfred Adler. According to Adler the ego is independent of sex and other instincts and is the real man. He invented the term *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* to describe the feeling of benevolence, affection, friendliness naturally present in the soul. Apart from

4. *Man For Himself* p. 126

the primary instinct of self-preservation, there is in every person a creative urge to develop his inherent talents and capacities to the fullest extent. It is owing to this urge for self-realization (or 'self-actualization' as Abraham Maslow was to call it later on) that a musician sings, a painter paints, a scientist conducts research.

Adler's ideas combined with some of the positive insights of Freud led to the development of the modern 'humanistic psychology' through the pioneering efforts of Gordon Allport, Eric Fromm, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. About the inherent good nature of man, Maslow writes:

> We have each of us an essential inner nature, which is to some extent 'natural', intrinsic, given and, in a sense, unchangeable or at least unchanging...This inner nature, as much as we know of it so far, seems not to be intrinsically evil, but rather either neutral or positively 'good'. What we call evil appears most often to be a secondary reaction to frustration of this intrinsic nature. Since this inner nature is good rather than bad, it is best to bring it out and to encourage it rather than to suppress it. If it is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful and happy.[5]

If there is goodness in us, the right thing to do is to accept it. If we are really good, the right thing to do is to accept ourselves, to love ourselves. This self-acceptance is an essential condition for an individual's growth. When we refuse to accept ourselves our lives become artificial and all our energies will be spent in trying to become somebody else. Says Clarke Moustakas: 'As long as the individual accepts himself, he will continue to grow and develop his potentialities. When he does not accept himself, much of his energies will be used to defend rather than explore and actualize himself.'[6]

Few people realize how much harm they do to themselves by their unwillingness to accept themselves. When we do not accept ourselves, we lose our own freedom and surrender ourselves to something else or somebody else. To love oneself is not 'selfishness'. The very word 'selfishness', as pointed out by Eric Fromm, is vague. He says:

> Aside from its obvious implication, it means, 'don't love yourself', 'don't be yourself', but submit yourself to something more important than yourself, to an outside power or its internalization, 'duty'. 'Don't be selfish' becomes one of the most powerful ideological tools in suppressing spontaneity and the free development of personality. Under the pressure of this slogan one is asked for every sacrifice and for complete submission: only those acts are 'unselfish' which do not serve the individual but serve somebody or something outside himself.[7]

Much of our time is spent in proving our unselfishness to other people. The husband and wife have to prove it to each other, parents have to prove it to their children, workers have to prove it to their colleagues or bosses, friends have to prove it to their 'buddies', monks have to prove it to their brethren—indeed, most people seem to be so busy trying to prove their unselfishness that they have no time to be *themselves*, to be what they really are. As a result, their lives become unauthentic. An unauthentic person may be able to do some mechanical work but never any creative work, for creativity springs from the depths of one's soul, and a person who denies his self denies the creativity of his soul too.

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5. Abraham H. Maslow, 'Personality Problems and Personality Growth' in *The Self—Explorations in Personal Growth*, Ed. Clarke E. Moustakas (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956) pp. 232

6. Clarke Moustakas, 'True Experience and the Self' in *The Self*, p. 10

7. *Man For Himself*, pp. 131-32

Eric Fromm shows the logical fallacy of regarding love for oneself as wrong. He says

> If it is a virtue to love my neighbour as a human being, it must be a virtue—and not a vice—to love myself, since I am a human being too. There is no concept of man in which I myself am not included...The idea expressed in the Biblical 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' implies that respect for one's own integrity and uniqueness, love for and understanding of one's own self, can not be separated from respect for and love and understanding of another individual. The love for my own self is inseparably connected with the love for any other self.[8]

This argument of Fromm might look like a bit of chicanery or casuistry but, as a matter of fact, he has only expounded a universal law.

The universal law

On a river the current often brings together two pieces of wood which then float together for some time until the current separates them. In a rest-house or train strangers from different parts of the country meet, talk, remain together for some time, and then each goes his own way. But true human relationships are not so temporary and mechanical, brought about by the forces of chance. True human relationships—like those existing between parents and children, between husband and wife, among friends, colleagues, neighbours and even among the citizens of a country—are created and sustained by the power of love. Like everything else in this universe, love too is based on certain fundamental laws and, if we want to make our relationships pure, strong and abiding, we should obey these universal laws. One of the most important of these laws is this: *our attitude towards other people depends upon our attitude towards ourselves.* This law was stated by the great eleventh-century Vedantic teacher Rāmānuja as follows: 'What an individual pursues as a desirable end, depends upon how he conceives himself.'[9]

This is a very general law which operates in different fields. In the spiritual field it determines our understanding of God. At the ordinary level of social intercourse what this law means is that we cannot truly love other people without loving ourselves, and much of our hatred for other people springs from our hatred for ourselves. Eric Fromm explains this further:

> ...the attitude towards others and towards ourselves, far from being contradictory, are basically *conjunctive.* With regard to the problem under discussion this means: love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others...
>
> From this it follows that my own self, in principle, must be as much an object of my love as another person. The affirmation of one's own life, happiness, growth, freedom, is rooted in one's capacity to love, i.e. in care, respect, responsibility and knowledge. If an individual is able to love productively, he loves himself too. If he can love *only* others, he cannot love at all.[10]

Selfishness and self-hatred

We tend to take love for granted. Instead of understanding it or dealing with it consciously, we leave it to the unconscious to be dealt with by our instincts and emotions. Hence what we call 'love' is usually found to be a medley of different ingredients, including sex, beauty, greed and ambition, and it is difficult to know

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8. *Man For Himself*, pp. 133-34

9. आत्माभिमानो यादृशः तदनुगुणैव पुरुषार्थ प्रतीतिः ।
Rāmānuja, *Vedārtha Samgraha*, para 45

10. *Man For Himself*, pp. 134-35

the operation of the law described above. We can understand the law better by studying the phenomenon of selfishness.

We generally identify selfishness with self-love. A selfish person is believed to be one who loves himself more than others. The selfish person is interested only in himself, wants everything for himself, and judges people and things only by the standard of their usefulness to him. He is a careerist, an interloper, a self-server. Not only that, he does not want to give anything to others, does not care for other people's sufferings, and does not feel happy at the success of others. The dictionary will give you more than fifty words to describe the selfish person, and you may vent your spleen on anybody choosing one or more of those invectives which would, by the way, establish your own selflessness.

Nobody loves the selfish person. But the belief that he loves himself is wrong. It is a well-known psychological fact that inwardly a person is the reverse of what he appears to be outwardly. It is the very lack of love for himself and the resulting anxiety that make a person self-centred. Says Eric Fromm:

> The selfish person does not love himself too much but too little; in fact he hates himself. This lack of fondness and care for himself, which is only one expression of his lack of productiveness, leaves him empty and frustrated. He is necessarily unhappy and anxiously concerned to snatch from life the satisfactions which he blocks himself from attaining. He seems to care too much for himself but actually he only makes an unsuccessful attempt to cover up and compensate for his failure for his real self.[11]

At the other extreme is the terribly unselfish do-gooder who has no time to think about himself. He is always busy, rushing here and there, thrusting his selfless service upon others even against their wish. He has no use for books or music, and condemns all those who pray, worship or meditate as selfish people. His main purpose is to make himself indispensable and, though he tries to help others, what he really does is to make them dependent upon him so that they may not be able to manage without him.

The test of true selflessness is purity, freedom, calmness and happiness. If our concern for others does not bring these qualities into our soul, it is clear that we are not as unselfish as we pretend to be. Very often it is self-hatred or fear of one's self that drives people to abandon themselves to work and busyness under the cover of selflessness. In one of the hostels run by our Mission there was a very bright student who completed his graduate and post-graduate studies securing a high rank and was, besides, a first-class sportsman. He registered himself as a Ph. D. Candidate in a prestigious technological institute with a three-year scholarship. But, instead of doing research, he spent the first two years coaching and giving private tution to the graduate and post-graduate students of the institute in a spirit of selfless service. He was so busy with other people's affairs that he had no time to do his own work. All the while, however, he was full of anxiety and unhappiness. Finally, faced with the prospect of losing his scholarship and expulsion from the institute, he had to seek psychiatric help in a mental hospital. Evidently, the boy had a deep distrust of his own ability to conduct research in a difficult technological field. To sit down for his work meant facing himself which he dreaded. His alleged selfless interest in junior students was only a cloak to hide his distrust of himself.

Out of his experience gained as a practising psychoanalyst, Eric Fromm writes:

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11. *Man For Himself*, pp. 135-36

This theory of the nature of selfishness is borne out by psychoanalytic experience with neurotic 'unselfishness', a symptom of neurosis observed in not a few people who usually are troubled not by this symptom but by others connected with it, like depression, tiredness, inability to work, failure in love relationships, and so on. Not only is unselfishness not felt as a 'symptom', it is often the one redeeming character trait on which such people pride themselves. The 'unselfish' person 'does not want anything for himself'; he 'lives only for others', is proud that he does not consider himself important. But he is puzzled to find that in spite of his unselfishness he is unhappy, and that his relationships to those closest to him are unsatisfactory. He wants to have what he considers are his symptoms removed—but not his 'unselfishness'. Analytic work shows that his unselfishness is not something apart from his other symptoms but one of them; in fact often the most important one; that he is pervaded by hostility against life and that behind the facade of unselfishness a subtle but not less intense self-centredness is hidden.[12]

The true nature of unselfishness can be known from its effect on other people. Many of the 'over-selfless' people do not live in peace nor allow others to live in peace. They criticize and quarrel with others, and the harm they do often neutralizes all the good they do through their selfless work. Eric Fromm points out that this is true of even some over-solicitous, over-protecting parents. Their children 'do not show the happiness of persons who are convinced that they are loved; they are anxious, tense, afraid of the mother's disapproval and anxious to live up to her expectations.' The truth is this: a person whose 'unselfishness' is derived from his hatred or fear of himself transmits this hatred and fear to those with whom or for whom he lives or works.

It is well known that selflessness sometimes originates from feelings of guilt and sin. The person who donates a sum of money in charity after earning a large amount through dishonest means is an example of this kind of selflessness. Some people do selfless work as a form of self-punishment. Psychologists have shown that it was the feeling of sin that inspired some of the Christian martyrs of the Middle Ages to seek martyrdom. Even Father Damien (1840-1889), the Belgian priest who dedicated his life to the service of the lepers abandoned in the island of Molokai (in Hawaii) and died a leper there, was accused by his own church authorities of attempting to sacrifice his health as expiation for his own immorality.

The worst form of selflessness or unselfishness is that inspired by what Prof. T.M.P. Mahadevan has described as the 'saviour complex'. Saviour complex is not restricted to the missionary alone who rushes into the jungles of Africa to save the souls of the natives from hell-fire. All those who believe that they alone can save people from poverty and ignorance and, without them, the society will go to the dogs are suffering from the saviour complex. Their selflessness is only another name for self-importance. It was this attitude that Sri Ramakrishna deprecated. He used to say:

> You people speak of doing good to the world. Is the world such a small thing? And who are you, pray, to do good to the world? First realize God, see Him by means of spiritual discipline. If he imparts power, then you can do good to others; otherwise not... Sambhu Mullick once talked about establishing hospitals, dispensaries and schools, making roads, digging public reservoirs, and so forth. I said to him: 'Don't go out of your way to look for such works. Undertake only those works that present themselves to you and are of pressing necessity —and those also in a spirit of detachment. It is not good to become involved in many activities. That makes one forget God.'[13]

There is hardly anyone else in the

12. *Man For Himself*, pp. 136-37

13. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974) p. 72

modern world who stressed unselfishness and service as much as Swami Vivekananda did. He founded a Mission in the name of his master with the sole purpose of mobilizing human and material resources for the socio-economic and spiritual uplift of the masses. All the massive social service programmes and emergency relief operations of the Mission are based on the inspiration and guide-lines that he provided. But he took all precautions to save his followers from the 'saviour complex'. In his lectures on Karma Yoga, which form the theoretical basis of the Mission's practical outlook, Swamiji made the following statement which would seem almost like an echo of his master's statement quoted above.

> Why should we do good to the world? Apparently to help the world, but really to help ourselves. We should always try to help the world, that should be the highest motive in us; but if we consider well, we find that the world does not require our help at all... We may all be perfectly sure that it will go on beautifully well without us, and we need not bother our heads wishing to help it.
>
> Yet we must do good; the desire to do good is the highest motive power we have, if we know all the time that it is a privilege to help others. Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say, 'Here, my poor man', but be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by making a gift to him you are able to help yourself... All good acts tend to make us pure and perfect. What can we do at best? Build a hospital, make roads, or erect charity asylums... but what are all these? One mighty wind in five minutes can break all your buildings up. What shall we do then? One volcanic eruption may sweep away all our roads and hospitals and cities and buildings. Let us give up all this foolish talk of doing good to the world. It is not waiting for your or my help; yet we must work and constantly do good, because it is a blessing to ourselves. That is the only way we can become perfect.[14]

14. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) Vol 1, pp. 75-76

One's higher Self as the source of love and goodness

Does this statement propound a refined form of selfishness, spiritual selfishness? Remember, it was made by a person who had declared: 'Selfishness is the chief sin, thinking of ourselves first', and declared this again and again on ever so many occasions with all the emphasis he could command. The reason why both Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda stressed the importance of Self-realization is that the true Self, the Atman, is the source of all goodness. The Ātman is the source of all the love and kindness we feel, and of the truth and knowledge we have What the two great masters condemned was the tendency to seek these virtues outside of ourselves. Our love for others is inseparable from our love for our true Self. Unselfishness or selflessness is not a negative striving but a positive assertion of the higher Self. Any attempt to seek the source of goodness and love in external things will only intensify our egoism and self-centredness. Any attempt to love others or do good to others forgetting the true source of love and goodness in the Ātman will be hypocrisy. In other words, giving up selfishness and struggling for Self-realization are not contradictory strivings. They are complementary to each other, and any attempt to follow the one by ignoring the other will only lead to failure.

All the major scriptures of the world have given a central place to this teaching. In the Old Testament, God tells Moses: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself',[15]

A comparison of this with the quotation from Sri Ramakrishna's teachings given earlier should dispel the wrong notion of some people that Swamiji taught a doctrine and a way of life different from those taught by his master.

15. Leviticus 19:18

and Jesus Christ repeats this with greater emphasis in the New Testament. This commandment has been interpreted in different ways. One inescapable implication, however, is that you cannot love your neighbour if you hate 'thyself'. In a well-known passage[16] the *Gītā* speaks of the self as the unit to measure one's attitude towards the people. Commenting on this passage, Śrī Śaṁkara says: 'He sees that whatever is pleasant to himself is pleasant to all creatures, and whatever is painful to himself is painful to all beings. Thus seeing that what is pleasure or pain to himself is alike pleasure or pain to all beings, he causes pain to no being. Doing no harm, and devoted to right knowledge, he is regarded as the highest among all yogins.' Both the teachings of the Bible and the Gītā stress the need for having a point of reference within oneself in order to understand and love other people.

The idea is conveyed more clearly and directly through Yājñavalkya's talk to his wife in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. 'It is not for the sake of the husband that he is loved, but for the sake of one's own self that he is loved', he tells her. Similarly, it is not for the sake of the wife, sons, wealth, cattle and even the gods that the wife, sons, wealth, cattle and the gods are loved, but for the sake of one's own self. After saying this, Yājñavalkya asks his wife to meditate upon the self that is dear to everyone and realize its true nature.[17]

Love is indivisible

What was Yājñavalkya's purpose in giving the above discourse? Obviously, his purpose was to show the connection between love and the self. All the Upaniṣads emphatically declare that the self in its true nature is infinite and is identical with the supreme Reality. Since, as shown by Yājñavalkya, the Ātman is the source of all forms of love, it follows that love is also infinite and non-dual. Maitreyī loved her husband. What Yājñavalkya did was to make use of this love of his wife to teach her about the supreme Self. Out of this teaching there emerges, as a corollary, another equally important doctrine, namely, the non-duality of love.

This corollary has not, unfortunately, received the attention that it deserves. In modern times Swami Vivekananda revived it and found a practical use for it as the basis of the social service programmes that he inaugurated. 'It is love and love alone that I preach, and I base my teaching on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the Universe', he declared.[18] Swamiji exhorted the people to serve man as God. How can one do it without realizing God first? It is impossible to see God in others without seeing Him first in one's own soul. But everyone knows what love is and, in order to serve people as God, all that is necessary is to know that love is infinite and indivisible and is identical with Reality.

Yājñavalkya taught Maitreyī that the Self is the dearest of all. But why is the Self the dearest? Vedanta teachers say that it is because the Self is the seat of all bliss.[19] This pure divine bliss resides in every soul, and the more people a person loves, the greater becomes his share of bliss. But it is through his own inner Self that he realizes this bliss and so, if he neglects

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16. आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।
सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥
Gītā 6.32

It may be noted here that whereas Samkara understands the word Atman here as the lower self or ego, Ramanuja understands it as the higher transcendental Self.

17. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.5.6

18. *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 3, p. 194

19. cf *Pañcadaśī* 1.8

his own Self, his love for others will not bring him happiness.

The doctrine of the non-dual nature of love resolves the conflict between love for one's own self and love for others. Without resolving this conflict one should not attempt to do social service. Social service attempted as a duty or after reading some books or in imitation of somebody or to escape from one's responsibility to oneself is of a lower order, and will not lead to spiritual elevation. Service becomes a spiritual discipline only when we perceive our own good (*śreyas*) in it. Śreyas, the good, means freedom from ignorance and misery and the experience of the pure bliss of the Atman. Whatever we do for our benefit must conduce to the good of others, and whatever we do for the benefit of others must conduce to the good of ourselves. Whatever is likely to bring bondage and spiritual ruin either to others or to ourselves should never be attempted.

It was this integral principle of love that Swami Vivekananda expressed through the motto of the Ramakrishna Movement: *ātmano mokṣārtham jagad-hitāya ca*, 'for one's own liberation and for the good of the world'. To pursue only one of these ideals (either one's own liberation or the good of the world) to the exclusion of the other will do violence to the principle of unity for which Swamiji stood.

Lastly, one question remains. What is the root-cause of selfishness which is a negation of the indivisible, universal nature of love ? We have seen that selfishness need not necessarily be the result of love for one's self ; rather, it may even be the sign of self-hate. To understand the real cause of selfishness it is necessary to understand the true nature of the self. This calls for a detailed discussion which will be attempted in the next month's editorial.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MANTRA DIKSHA*

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

The word *dīkṣā* means to take the vow of making a beginning. That is why it is translated into English as 'initiation', which means to make a beginning or to make somebody begin a certain course. The end of *dīkṣā* may be various and its methods also may be various. The scriptures mention *yajña-dīkṣā*, the vow of performing a particular sacrifice with the aim of achieving something thereby. We shall, however, confine our attention here to the subject of Mantra Dīkṣā, which means to make a person take the vow of repeating a Mantra.

What is a Mantra ? A Mantra is a spiritual or mystic formula, the repetition of which brings about liberation from the bondage of ignorance, liberation from the chain of births and deaths. That is the purpose of Mantra Dīkṣā. There is a great deal of confusion in our minds regarding what *dīkṣā* is and to what extent it is important in our spiritual pursuit. Many people seek *dīkṣā* without being clear in their minds as to what it means and

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* Talk given by Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission on Tuesday, 4 September 1984, at Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore.

what should be achieved by this process. I shall treat the word *dīkṣā* only in the sense of taking a vow of performing regular repetitions of the formula as prescribed by the Guru for our spiritual attainments. The word 'Mantra' in Sanskrit is explained as *mananāt trāyate iti mantraḥ*, 'Mantra is that by meditating upon which one will be liberated from' the cycle of births and deaths, from the ocean of *saṁsāra*, from the world of Maya or ignorance. That is the etymological meaning of the term 'Mantra'. And *dīkṣā* means to make a beginning of this repetition of the Mantra in a particular process prescribed by the Guru.

In ancient times 'Mantra' meant the verses found in the Vedas. The whole Vedas consist of Mantras and Brāhmaṇas. *Mantra-brāhmaṇayorvedanāmadheyam*, 'The word Veda implies Mantras and Brāhmaṇas.' Mantras are the utteranoes of the Ṛṣis with regard to various sacrifices ; Brāhmaṇa refers to that portion of the Vedas which deals with the application of these Mantras. The Brāhmaṇas show how the Mantras are to be used in different sacrifices etc. But later on, in the Tantras, 'Mantra' gets a different meaning. The word 'Mantra' in the Tantric sense means a special, mystic formula of words which signify some aspect of God. They are written in a language incomprehensible to the uninitiated people. Tantric Mantras are cryptic in form, consisting of very pithy small syllables which signify certain aspects of God.

Mantras—whether Vedic or Tāntric—are not the compositions of any human being. They are supposed to be handed down through a succession of Gurus and disciples. Both the Vedas and the Tantras say that Mantras are eternal. While the Vedas say that Mantras are revelations to the Ṛṣis, according to the Tantras, they are utterances of Śiva in answer to the questions put by Pārvatī. Śiva explains as Pārvatī puts questions. In the Tāntric sense, Mantra is a cryptic formula symbolizing a particular aspect of God. There are different Mantras for the different aspects of God. Mantra-Dīkṣā means the transmission of a particular Mantra by a Guru to his disciple. The disciple takes the vow of repeating these Mantras or meditating upon these Mantras.

The difference between Tāntric and Vedic Mantras is this: Vedic Mantras are shortened forms of prayers, hymns etc. uttered in particular sacrifices for the propitiation of particular gods and goddesses, while Tāntric Mantras are cryptic formulas denoting a particular aspect of Divinity, say, a Deva or a Devī. The Mantra Dīkṣā that we are having nowadays in India is mostly based on the Tāntric process. There was Dīkṣā in the Vedic period also, some traditions of which survive even in modern times. As for instance, when the disciple enters the house of his Guru and is accepted as a disciple, he is initiated into the well-known Gāyatrī Mantra. Being a Vedic Mantra, the Gāyatrī is long in form. On the other hand, Tāntric Mantras are short formulas.

Mantras are to be preserved very carefully so that no change may occur in its form or character. Nothing should be added or subtracted from it. The Vedas are written down now, but formerly they were only handed down from the Guru to the disciple. They were called *śruti* and were only to be 'heard' by the disciple from the Guru and committed to memory. No change or editing of the Mantras was allowed, no grammatical corrections were to be done. They were finished products, and the disciple had only to meditate on them and follow the Guru's instructions. In the Tantras also the Mantras are to be kept without any change and are to be followed very scrupulously. The secrecy of

the transmission was rigidly enforced in the case of Tāntric Mantras. Why ? It was believed that if such a rigidity was not observed, Mantras would not be as efficacious as they should be. By loudly uttering the Mantras, they lose their potency. The Mantras are very powerful ; they are believed to be efficacious in manifesting our spiritual knowledge. By the repetition of the Mantra, the *mūrti* or the real Form of the Chosen Ideal representing the Mantra appears before the disciple.

But nowadays the Vedas are available in printed forms and anybody can have access to them. In the same way the Tāntric Mantras are also published in the Tāntric books and anybody can read them. But it is always enjoined in both the Vedic and Tāntric scriptures that such open access is not good. The Upaniṣads declare: 'Knowledge gained from a teacher alone becomes fruitful'.[1] If a bit of knowledge is to be made really effective in our lives, it must be heard from a Guru. Strict adherence to this principle has been enforced both in the Vedas and in the Purāṇas. The idea behind it is that the Guru not only gives the Mantra, but along with it he transmits some of the spiritual power that he possesses, to the disciple. When one reads the Mantras in printed books this kind of transmission of power does not take place. Now let us try to understand this in a more intelligible and rational sense. If we read certain ethical codes in a book, they may have some effect on us. But when we hear those ethical teachings from a person whom we love and revere, the effect will be naturally very different. Similarly, though we may not understand the actual process of transmission of spiritual power through Mantra Dīkṣā, we can understand at least this much that it is only from a lamp that another lamp is lighted. It is necessary that to kindle a soul there must be some soul that must have already been kindled. That is what is meant by transmission from the Guru to the disciple. Without that sort of living link, transmission is not possible.

Through this living contact the Mantra becomes more powerful. It is to preserve this power that our scriptures enjoin a kind of secrecy on the part of the disciples, and lay down rigorous punishments for those who infringe this rule. Of course, the purpose of this is just to prevent people from taking Mantras lightly or frivolously. One must take the Mantras very seriously. One should not experiment with them. They are very important in our lives. When we try to devote ourselves to the realization of God, we must know that it cannot be done in a light-hearted manner. The Guru transmits not only the Mantras but also the knowledge that he has derived through personal experience or through the experience of the teachers of that line and is therefore competent to teach the disciple in the right manner.

Another point comes to my mind in this connection. There are innumerable Mantras. If they are all placed before us, we will get confused as to which ones are to be accepted and which ones to be rejected. To remove such a confusion, the best principle would be to follow the dictates of a competent person who has direct knowledge of them. That person is the Guru.

In the Tāntric scriptures particularly, the Guru is said to be none other than God Himself. As it is said in the 'Hymn to the Guru', 'Guru is Brahmā, Guru is Viṣṇu, Guru is Śiva, Guru himself is the Supreme Brahman ; salutations to the

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1. आचार्यात् हि एव विद्या विदिता साधिष्टं प्रापतीति ।

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.9.3

Guru'.[2] The Guru is supposed to be none other than the Supreme Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that Sat-Cit-Ānanda, the Ultimate Reality, Brahman, alone is the Guru. This is in conformity with the teachings of the Vedas and other scriptures. But when we go for initiation we do not realize that we are being taught by that all-knowing Supreme Reality called Brahman. We approach an individual whom we choose as our Guru because we feel he is competent to guide us. That person has birth and death and other human limitations, and as such cannot be identified with Brahman. But our scriptures strictly enjoin on us to look upon the Guru as the Supreme. Does this not mean conflict between theory and practice? Yes, in a way it does. But then, it is just like our practice of worshipping God through images. We make images of God signifying particular aspects of Him. The image is made of materials which are non-sentient and we meditate or worship God, who is infinite Spirit, through that image. Why do we do it? Because our mind cannot grasp the Infinite, the pure Spirit which transcends our thoughts. Therefore we have to take recourse to a physical representation of It—either an idol or a picture or simply a symbolic diagram. There is no religion in the world in which God is worshipped without any image. If we do not worship Him through a symbol we cannot conceive of Him in any other way. Even religions that strongly advise the eradication of all images from the mind take recourse to some symbol or the other.

Mantras are symbolic representations of Divinity, God in the form of revealed words. There are instances of devotees mystically experiencing God in the form of an effulgent diagram or in the form of the luminous letters of the Mantra. This is, of course, an example of a mystic experience, and religion is full of such mystic expressions. We cannot always justify rationally these experiences which transcend reason. We cannot prove to the uninitiated people of the world that these experiences are real. The image of God may be a material idol or a word or a symbol, but it is an absolutely necessary help to attain God. The human mind can conceive of the Reality only through Forms. It cannot conceive of the Formless. It may be asked, have we to remain bound by Forms for ever? No. Through the Forms we have to reach the Formless. We can never reach the Formless all of a sudden directly without transforming our present state of mind. In the beginning our mind cannot think in any way except through forms or symbols. So a symbol is absolutely necessary for spiritual practice and the Mantras are symbols representing Divinity.

Suppose we love a particular aspect of God, represented in a particular image, obviously we don't like the image to be maimed or deformed. In the same manner, the Mantra also is not to be deformed. It is to be repeated as it is without introducing any changes. This rule is rigidly to be followed. Furthermore, we have to restrict to a single method of practice.

Is it necessary always to go to a Guru to progress along the spiritual path? Obviously it is the practical approach. A Guru has to have certain qualifications without which he will not be able to direct the ignorant. The first qualification is that he must be a *śrotriya*, that is, he has knowledge of the scriptures. But mere scholarship does not make one a Guru. He has to be a man of true knowledge, enlightenment; he must be a man who has realized the Truth. Secondly he must be

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2. गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुर्गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।
गुरुरेव परं ब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः ॥

avṛjina; his conduct should be above reproach. He should live strictly in conformity with the scriptural ideal. He must be free from all sins. He must be absolutely pure. Lastly, he must be *akāmahata;* his relation with his disciple should not have any kind of selfish motive. He should be free from the desire of getting any advantage from the disciple by imparting the Mantra. These are the main qualifications that have got to be kept in mind when we proceed to accept any one as our Guru.

What are the qualifications necessary for a disciple? The disciple must be earnest about the pursuit of the spiritual ideal. He must not be simply a person who just wants to have his curiosity satisfied by following the instructions. He must be serious about putting into practice the Guru's instructions. He must also be pure in character. Purity of character is stressed equally for the teacher and the taught. Above all, the disciple must be humble. He should not be haughty. He should not approach a Guru or judge him without an attitude of deep respect. Humility alone makes the seeker a suitable vehicle through which the knowledge of the Guru can be conveyed. Without humility, earnestness, purity and spirit of service, the disciple will not profit by mere contact with the Guru. That is why it is said in the Upaniṣads 'The aspirant must approach the learned and illumined Guru with firewood in his hand'.[3] Firewood is a symbol of service. In those days the Guru required firewood for the performance of *yajña*. By approaching him with a load of firewood the seeker showed his readiness to serve his Guru. The important point is, not that by service the Guru will be pleased, but the service rendered will make the disciple fit to receive the instructions that are needed for his own purification. He has simply to follow the Guru's dictates unquestioningly, with implicit faith.

Religion is not a business undertaking. Selfish motives mar the relationship between the Guru and the disciple. The disciple must be full of humility and, in a spirit of service, must dedicate himself at the feet of the Guru as a learner—not as a person who is going to purchase his education by paying something to the teacher. Spiritual knowledge is a gift from the Guru to be earned through humility and spirit of service. The Guru initiates the disciple, starts him on the path. Swami Brahmananda used to speak a lot on this subject. If you read his teachings, you will get much valuable guidance in this regard. He has taught without making mystery of anything.

Spiritual knowledge is not something that can be gained by study. It has to be earned through intense effort made with humility, perseverence and utmost faith. Faith has to be particularly stressed. When you study a book of science, you need not have much faith. But when you study the scriptures, and particularly when you practise religion, a good deal of faith is necessary. There is a beautiful illustration of the need of faith in the Vedas. The disciple requests the Guru to teach him about Brahman. The Guru teaches the disciple saying that Brahman is very subtle and that the whole universe has arisen from It. To explain the unitary nature of Reality he gives an illustration: just as when bees make honey, the nectar from different flowers gets inseparably mixed together so also all selves attain oneness in Brahman. After hearing this the disciple repeats the question, 'Please

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3. तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः
श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ।
Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12

teach me again'. That means the teaching did not produce the required sort of realization in the disciple. The Guru then gives another illustration. Again the disciple repeats the same question. The Guru gives yet another illustration; but the disciple again requests him to explain further. Ultimately the Guru says, 'Dear boy, have faith'.[4] Brahman is not a thing one can understand through illustrations. Illustrations are based on things which are visible to us, which are sensed by us. But here we are approaching something which is beyond our senses. So a lot of faith is necessary to enable us to gradually proceed along the path. Without faith we will never make any progress.

Does this faith mean that anything and everything told by the Guru should be taken for granted? No. A real Guru will insist that it should not be so. Sri Ramakrishna himself strongly advised his disciples against following the Guru blindly. He said, 'Whatever I say, don't take them for granted. You must test them by means of your understanding as far as possible. Only when they seem to be cogent and convincing, follow them. Not otherwise.' So it does not mean that we shall have to discard all our intelligence when we follow the teachings of the Guru. But we must not follow them with a sceptical mind, with a mind that is tainted with suspicion. Such a mind can never understand the true significance of the Guru's instructions. So Sri Ramakrishna says, 'Test a Guru as much as you can but, once you are convinced that he will really lead you to the highest goal, submit to him without any reservation.' The Guru must be approached with that sort of faith. And such a Guru can lead us to the highest goal. What will happen if a disciple goes to a Guru who is not sufficiently illumined? In the Upaniṣad it is said that they will be like the blind led by the blind.[5] That is really a very discouraging statement.

A question may be asked, 'We are not competent to judge others yet. Our minds are not clear. We are not free from doubts and difficulties. How can we judge our Guru who is much above us?' The answer is, try to ascertain as far as you can the pure motive of the Guru. See for yourself whether he can act as an ideal before you; then accept him. When you accept him, do so wholeheartedly, otherwise your doubting mind will always create difficulty. Suppose our Guru has not reached the highest goal. There are instances in the Upaniṣads where the Guru admits his ignorance of certain things. Then both the Guru and the disciple go to another person who has superior knowledge of the subject. That is really the way of the Guru who is sincere, is free from pretensions and is serious about the disciple's progress and welfare. In such a case there will be no tragedy of the blind being led by the blind. Rather it will be like two fellow-travellers eager to reach a particular destination. They will ask other people for directions. Sometimes they may make mistakes, but they are sure to reach the goal.

I get a Guru who is the highest in my estimation. But should I need a still more capable Guru, such a Guru also would come to me, provided I am earnest. What is basically required is earnestness. We must seek with utmost earnestness and, as Sri Ramakrishna says, help will definitely come to us if we are sincere. This is the bare truth of spiritual life because the Guru is none other than God Himself. If we

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4. श्रद्धत्स्व सोम्य ।

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.12.2

5. अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथाऽन्धाः ।

Katha Upaniṣad 1.2.5; *Muṇḍaka Up.* 1.2.8

make mistakes, God knows that we are fumbling. He knows when and how to shower His grace on us, how to bring Light to us. There is absolutely no fear even if we make a mistake, provided we are earnest in our search. That is the point we have got to remember. Without that sort of earnestness, even the guidance of the profoundest knower of Brahman will not be of much help to us. So a Guru has to be understood as a guide who helps us to gradually proceed along the spiritual path and, in case of any confusion, will arouse higher knowledge within us. That is the spirit in which a disciple has to progress in his path.

One thing is very important to remember, that the spiritual path is not very easy. As it is said in the Upaniṣads, 'Wise men say that the path is difficult like the sharp edge of a razor'.[6] Our feet will be lacerated. It is a painful process. Nevertheless, if we have a heroic heart, we can proceed without shirking the efforts that are frustrating, the difficulties that block the way. Strong determination and faith are absolutely necessary on the part of a seeker of God. Spiritual seeking is not like seeking knowledge about material things which can be experimented upon by our senses. In the spiritual domain we are in quest of something beyond the senses. We shall have to remember that there is no hope of our reaching the goal if we fumble on the way or become complacent. We must have that kind of patience which cannot be exhausted even by several lives of experience. Of course, this sort of perseverence cannot be achieved in a day or two, not even in a few years. But the object of our search is worth so much that even hundreds of lives may be spent in its quest. Nothing can be attained for which we have not paid adequately. Perhaps, in spite of our utmost struggle, the goal may still be so far away as to make us despair of reaching it. Or perhaps it may be very near our reach! Who knows when the good moment will come!

Many of you know the story of the ten virgins in the Bible. Ten virgins went out at night to meet the bridegroom who, however, did not turn up in time. They waited and waited and one of the girls said that the oil in her lamp was exhausted and asked others to lend her some oil. They refused and so she went in search of oil for the lamp. In the meantime the bridegroom came. Those who had enough oil and whose lamps were burning took the bridegroom with them and went to the bridal chamber. But the poor girl whose oil was exhausted had to go without that great joy.[7] So, that will be the case of the seeker of God who does not proceed with adequate oil of patience in his lamp. Our object of search is so valuable that it does not matter how much we pay for it. We shall never have enough money to purchase it. It is an invaluable thing.

There is a story in the Vedas regarding this. A man came to sell the sacred plant Somalatā, the juice of which is essential for the performance of the Soma sacrifice. A person who was performing the Soma sacrifice wanted to purchase that creeper. So he bargained for the Somalatā. He started bidding from twenty cowries up but was refused every time with the statement 'King Soma is more precious than that'—*rājā somo tato bhūyāt*. The sacrificer staked all his possessions for the purchase of Soma, but got the same curt

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6. क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया
दुर्गं पथस्तत् कवयो वदन्ति ।
Katha Upaniṣad 1.3.14

7. The original, slightly different, version is found in the Gospel of St. Matthew 25: 1-12—*Ed., P.B.*

reply, *rājā somo tato bhūyāt*—'King Soma is more valuable than that'. Finally when he found that he wouldn't be able to pay for it, he looted the whole of Somalatā.

The same idea is beautifully expressed in the *Bhāgavatam*. Mother Yaśodā was angry with Kṛṣṇa, because by his pranks Kṛṣṇa had caused annoyance to her neighbours. She found Kṛṣṇa to be a very naughty child and so decided to keep him tied somewhere. Since it was the house of a cowherd there was no dearth of ropes. She brought one piece of rope and tied Kṛṣṇa with it. But the rope fell short by two fingers. Then some more rope was added. Still the rope fell short by two fingers. All the ropes that were available in the house were then brought to tie him. Still the gap could not be filled. Yaśodā got exhausted. She began to perspire. Ultimately when she was tired and gave up hope, Sri Kṛṣṇa accepted the bondage. The meaning of the story is, we cannot bind God with any amount of *sādhanā*; He only accepts us. This has to be remembered. Ultimately we have to depend on His grace. The consummation of all our *sādhanās* is complete surrender to Him and dependence on His grace.

A LETTER FROM THE HOLY MOTHER TO THE LATE PRESIDENT MAHARAJ

Jayrambati
Anur, Hooghly
4 June 1917

My dear Prabhu,

Your letter is to hand. I remember you, my darling, very well. I am very glad to hear that you have become a Sadhu and taken Brahmacharya from Rakhal, my favourite son. You should not come to me now. Carry out the order of Rakhal. I hope that you shall be able to overcome all such difficulties by His (Thakur's) grace. Pray to Him, and He will favour you. Try to meditate yourself everyday regularly, and you will progress gradually. Don't be downcast, my boy. I am very glad to hear that the new Math [at Madras] has been opened. I hope that it will be completed well in time.

I am well. I bless you affectionately. You should write to me whenever you want. Do not be sorry because you do not know Bengali.

With blessings to you and all my sons of the Math

I remain
My dear child
your
'Holy Mother'

PS.
You may write in English,
but write clearly.

Faith for Today

IF YOU WANT TO THINK ABOUT GOD, THEN...

DR. BRUCE ALAN SOUTHWORTH

[What do people in the modern world think of God? No doubt, thousands of copies of Bible, Quran and Gita are brought out and hundreds of books on God are written every year, and many people read them. But there are many more powerful and convincing forces acting on the lives of the people who therefore tend to think of God in a variety of ways which are often vague, complex, conflicting. In the following pages a bright young Unitarian minister examines some of these views and puts forth his own faith. This is the first of a series of articles on 'Faith for Today' to be published at suitable intervals—*Ed., P.B.*]

if there is a god
I think he must be shaped something like a
mountain
and something like a tree
and something like an ocean...
I rather imagine he looks something like a
black man
and something like a white man
and something like a yellow man
and something like a woman, too...
I think he sees the universe through the eyes
of a big, brown bear
and through the eyes of a dove
and through the eyes of a gentle, medium-size
whale...
I rather suspect that he happened
something like a small child's smile happens,
mysteriously,
but as unavoidable as the morning,
and I think he treasures his friendship with
the stars
the way another star does...
and, finally,
I imagine he is as much afraid of death,
of nothingness,
as I am,
and that there are moments
when he wonders if he is real...

J. David Scheyer

Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* won the Pulitzer Prize this year and is a good place to start thinking about God in the modern world. I found the book richly satisfying and emotionally charged, and one of the components of the book is its wrestling with religious themes of human meaning and the ability to live in the midst of an unjust and often cruel world.

For my purposes here, I want to focus on just one chapter (about two-thirds of the way through the book) in which Alice Walker packs in at least four different ways of looking at and thinking about God.

The hero is a woman named Celie and her closest friend is another woman, a blues singer named Shug. The novel is structured as a series of letters, and throughout the book Celie has been addressing her letters to God. But this chapter is addressed to her sister Nettie, and Celie says to her friend Shug, 'I don't write to God no more.'

Shug is shocked and challenges her even though Shug herself is certainly no Sunday church-goer. She tells Celie, God 'gave you life, good health, and a good...(friend like me) to love you to death.' Celie answers, 'Yeah...and he gives me a lynched daddy, a crazy mamma, a lowdown dog of a step-pa and a sister I probably won't ever see again. Anyhow...the God I been praying and writing to is a man. And

act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgitful and lowdown.'

Celie here is rejecting the traditional, patriarchal God of history which so much of the world still worships and to which so much of America still gives lip service. This is a *supernatural, personal God* who gives good things to humanity and allows, if not dishes out, aboundant evil in this world.

When asked what God looks like, Celie decides to 'stick up for God' and says, 'He big and old and tall and graybearded and white. (The characters in the novel are black I should add.) He wear white robes and go barefooted.' Shug teasingly asks, 'Blue eyes ?' and Celie answers seriously, 'Sort of bluish gray. Cool. Big though. White lashes.'

All this makes Shug laugh. For Shug, God is something else and Shug says, 'Tell the truth, have you ever found God in church ? I never did. I just found a bunch of folks hoping for him to show. Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me. And I think all the other folks did to. They come to church to *share* God, not *find* God.'

This poorly educated yet worldly wise woman goes on to give a sophisticated interpretation of God, one that is dynamic and dialectical in the tension between the God within us and the God which is shared between us.

Shug goes on to say, 'Here's the thing... The thing I believe. *God is inside you* and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifests itself even if you not looking, or don't know what you looking for.'

'It ?' asks Celie.

'Yeah, It. God ain't a he or a she, but a It.'

God is an interior thing within us and God is within others also, and God meets God when we truly meet and communicate. God, in this view, is a datum of existence, both private in the depths and interpersonal in the daily life around us. This God is in the depths and is immanent around us.

Shug continues with her wisdom and adds a third perspective beyond that of Celie's supernatural old man, and Shug's own god within. She says, 'My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed and I cried and I run all around the house. I knew just what it was. In fact, when it happen, you can't miss it.'

Thus, there is a transcendent and mystical dimension of God which Shug brings forth. This is a *pantheistic view, god in everything* —transcendent because it includes everything, and immanent because God is Nature.

Thus, in a matter of pages we have the supernatural God of Celie contrasted with a complex interior, yet inter-personal God plus a pantheistic God of Nature.

Finally, in the line from which the title of the book comes, Shug tells Celie in effect, 'I think it angers God (she uses somewhat stronger language) it angers God into a rage if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it.'

Thus there is also this *aesthetic dimension of God, sheer beauty*—the colour purple in a field somewhere and we dishonour existence, dishonour God, if we do not take due notice.

And finally, returning to Celie's first description of God, Shug tells her that it is a bad habit to keep thinking about God as an old man. She says, 'Whenever you

NOTES AND COMMENTS

High School Education—Decline in Quality

Like several other things in India, the progress of high school education is marked by a grave contradiction. In spite of the increase in the number of schools, teachers and pupils, the quality of education is definitely declining. A most dismal proof of this fact came recently when the newspapers reported in July 1984 the mass failure of students in the high school and intermediate examinations of Uttar Pradesh. The failure of 3,26,825 regular candidates, that is 68.3 per cent of the total number of students who appeared in the high school examination, has sent shock waves all over the State. Does the pass percentage of 31.7, which is the lowest in the history of the U.P. Board of High School and Intermediate Examinations, justify the enormous investment of money and manpower on public education? The percentage of successful candidates fell from 49 in 1982 to 42.73 last year and plummetted to 31.7 this year.

The Director of Education and Chairman of the Examination Committee, U.P., attributed the higher percentage of failure this year to 'strict invigilation' and 'prolonged strike by teachers'. The president of the U.P. Parents' Association also put the blame on the teachers, who were said to be more interested in 'trade union' and political activities than in teaching. The teachers in their turn levelled counter-charges against the Government for its failure to redress their economic grievances and for introducing a new curriculam in 1982 without the support of an adequate infrastructure. The number of subjects in the high school was raised from five to seven, with science, mathematics and social science having been made compulsory, but as many as 3,000 schools do not have science or maths teachers. Moreover, two languages were made compulsory: Hindi and English, Sanskrit or Urdu. It was also alleged that the computerization of valuation, entrusted to incompetent agencies, led to inaccuracies and delay in the processing of the papers of 1,23,000 students.

Though the state of education in the other States may not be as bad as it is in U.P., everywhere there has been a steady decline in recent years. Both the government and the teachers have to share the blame for this. In a thought provoking article, based on extensive research, published in *Daedalus*, the famous journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Gerald Grant pictures public education as consisting of three concentric circles. The inner circle is constituted by teachers who, if they were free, could make a big difference in the quality of education. But they are bounded by the second circle consisting of students the nature of which is determined by parental influence, motivation, ethnic and cultural background. The outermost ring is made up of the policies, planning and financial outlay of the Government. Gerald Grant continues:

> If we visualize these three layers as the skin, flesh and seeds of a fruit, the American high school of 1900 was like an avocado. Its centre of adult power and initiative was unified and virtually impregnable. Its meaty middle layer of students was fairly homogeneous, and its skin of external policy was thin and clearly defined....The high school of 1981 is like a watermelon, with a thick rind of federal and state policy, a greatly expanded and diverse student body and no clearly definable centre.

The picture may be true of high school education in India too, with the difference that the fruit is partially rotten.

As I mentioned, Alice Walker spelled out several different views of God and those of the character Shug were a mixture of different ideas while Celie had one clear perspective. We can call the different views, paradigms, after the fashion of Thomas Kuhn in his book the *Structure of Scientific Revolutions.*

Shug was trying to convince Celie that it was not reasonable to believe in God as a bearded, old white man with blue eyes. The ancient world view of Biblical times was a three tiered world of heaven, earth and hell below ; that is the way the cosmos looked to the ancients. Humans were made in God's image ; the image of the old man followed.

Today, that old view is still held onto by many. Catholicism refined it and described the world of nature and the world of the supernatural, the latter being God's primary realm. Descartes contributed to the dualism in his division of the world into mind on the one side and matter on the other. These worked together to create a dualistic paradigm for understanding the cosmos.

Today, that view still surfaces in one form or another. I think of the mother who was consoling her little girl whose cat had died. The mother says, 'Tabby is in heaven now.' And, the little girl, quick as she can be, says, 'What would God want with a dead cat ?'

There has been a paradigm shift. It has accompanied the progress of scientific thinking, and even as scientific models of the world have changed, so have the theological perspectives among those who have tried to embrace modern conceptions.

The old paradigm spoke of a supernatural, personal God. With the Industrial Revolution, to simplify the history of ideas, the notion of Deism grew. Deism is a faith in a God who created a mechanistic world with certain immutable laws inherent. God is like the clock-maker who creates a lovely and intricate instrument, who winds it up and who then goes on to other clocks—to other worlds. The God of the Deists is just this sort of creator God ; personal or impersonal, it does not really matter, and this God does not spend time intervening with miracles and things like that.

It is a reasonable point of view to hold ; there appear to be certain natural laws and even certain moral laws, and it is up to us to observe them, otherwise we might break the clock. Today humanity is not observing moral laws and not pursuing steadfastly a theology of Love. We can easily blow up this world and civilization as we know it, and God could carry on elsewhere. This view, allows hope because it includes a perspective that humanity has the spiritual resources to overcome that fate This is a reasonable view of reality, widespread especially at the time of the founding of this country. Franklin, Jefferson and Adams were all Deists, and I suspect many of us today are as well.

Finally, I want to talk about a third paradigm neither Supernatural, nor Deist. This view reflects the perspective of modern science and it says that reality is not static ; matter and energy are in dynamic relationship as one whole. There is creativity at work within the world that generates novelty. One of the new things that has evolved has been human consciousness, emotions of love, appreciation of beauty, and the human ability to help shape the world. It allows for greater appreciation of on-going creativity than the Deist view. It has been called a process view, or evolutionary perspective, or naturalism. From a theological point of view, it can take different courses and even though it is a process, an It, it may be talked about in personal terms because to symbolize the process this way emphasizes that the

personal elements of life give us meaning; what is highest in human experience is personality and thus it is reasonable to think about God in terms of Person, as long as we remember this is only a symbolic way of talking about what we value most deeply.

I myself prefer to think about God as 'Source of Life and Love and Beauty.' Out of this vast universe, there is a process of creativity at work that led to the world as we know it and to human life and that Creativity remains at work in those deep felt experiences of human love, in our connection with one another and in beauty. I am apt to use the phrase Source of Life and Love and Beauty more readily than the word 'God' because of the continuing power of ancient supernaturalism conjured up when the traditional word God is uttered.

If we want to think about God, then we need to know which God we are thinking about. Which paradigm are we talking about? A supernatural God, a Creator Deist God of natural law, or an active, dynamic, creative process God. Or, do we prefer the mystic view and seek oceanic experiences of oneness without worry of theological language?

There are other choices to make. Do we focus on God as Person or Process? Does our paradigm try to include and rehabilitate all the Christian symbols or do we try to embrace symbols and perspectives from different cultures and traditions from around the world and learn something of the cosmos through the eyes of others?

Thus, if we want to think about God, then we have to think about which of a vast array of symbolizations we prefer; we have to find that one, if indeed any exists, which is most congenial to our own experience. And, second, we have to have a reason for accepting or rejecting that particular paradigm.

I personally reject the paradigm of the supernatural God as confusing and as no longer a reasonable approximation of the way the world actually works. The world is one complex whole, not divided into two realms. Intellectually and emotionally, it does not serve me well. And, I once even rejected the notion of God altogether because that supernatural paradigm was the only one I knew about other than pantheism, and for me to say that God was in everything did not seem to have any particular utility. It was fairly easy for me to reject the traditional old man view of God because I was never taught it. I know for those who were taught such an image it is hard to replace engrained views and to blast something out of one's consciousness.

Bertrand Russell once made the comment, 'To come to this question of the existence of God, it is a large and serious question, and if I were to attempt to deal with it in any adequate manner I should have to keep you here until Kingdom Come, so that you will have to excuse me if I deal with it in a somewhat summary fashion.' (KUNG 509) And so must I for the present.

My thinking about God in a new way, once I started it, was helped immensely by the perspective of Henry Nelson Wieman, long time professor of theology at University of Chicago Divinity School. He asked, 'What is ultimately trustworthy in this world?' and, he said, 'If we can decide that there is something ultimately trustworthy, then it would be reasonable to suggest calling that—whatever it is—God.' He took as his operational paradigm the cosmos of modern science, and a process philosophy which suggests that there is in fact a power of creativity at work in the universe. This was a reasonable observation and conclusion for me to follow.

He suggested that instead of speculative metaphysics or grand abstract cosmologies, let's start with everyday life, and this too was congenial to me. I like things concrete and observable. He suggested that creative activity was always a good thing: new connections are drawn, new meanings emerge with an attendant elegance and beauty (and to be sure we must be careful what happens to our creations as we know from atomic theory) but creativity is always a good. He suggested that in interpersonal relationships there were creative times, moments, creative events when the communication, the connectedness in the relationship deepened, and I hope we all have known moments of intimacy when not a word has to be said for communication to occur.

He suggested that this creativity was also present in our hearts and souls in moments of wonder and awe before Nature's beauty when we feel deeply connected to life and strengthened: stillness of mountains, purple sunsets, surging of tides. He suggested that a similar creative event was what has been going on in evolution and the human mind which has its own creativity.

His theology and philosophy of religion sought to pick out concrete events of interpersonal relationship, aesthetic communion, and creative happenings. He described a process of growth of meanings and all these things are trustworthy and good, and thus if we wish, we could say in things like these is God. Then, if one wants, (and it makes sense to me—it is a reasonable way to look at the universe) we can say that this creativity in art, in love, in nature, in beauty, in évolution is all part of the same unifying thing, all of God—this creativity is the Source of Life and Love and Beauty.

I shall have more to say about in my next talk along with thoughts about evil. In the present talk I have suggested that if we want to think about God, we must be clear which paradigm we choose, ancient or modern, personal or process, and although we can never prove either atheism or theism, we can have reasonable reasons for belief in a Creative God of Life, Love and Beauty.

Finally, one last thing. Where is God ?

I think about Martin Marty who teaches at the University of Chicago Divinity School and who writes for the Christian Century magazine. I think of one of his neighbours whom he describes. Last winter following a snow storm his neighbour who is in his late seventies, a retired physician, went out to shovel the walk. It was quiet that cold winter Saturday. and clear and blue above. Marty could hear the regular scrape of the shovel against concrete and a barely perceptible plop of the snow as it was piled along the walk. A scrape and a whoosh and a pause. A scrape and a whoosh and a pause. It crossed Marty's mind that his neighbour was nearly eighty and that too often one reads of sudden heart attacks among those out shovelling fresh snow with too much energy and too little caution. But, the shovelling was steady and rhythmic.

Then it stopped in mid-scrape. It was a few moments before Marty realized that what made him look up from his reading was the stopped sound ; it was silent. He was unsure what to think feeling a mixture of anxiety but also some certainty that his neighbour was in good health.

He then heard a shout. The man was calling for his wife, "Come out!" It was an excited voice—but it was not alarmed. Marty got up and went to the window to see what was going on, and there he saw the man's wife of fifty-odd years standing on the porch looking at her husband. He was in the yard, ankle-deep in snow with a grin as wide as the whole world. Next to him was a huge heart—a valentine

carved into soft snow with the man's and his wife's names clearly shaped. They laughed and waved and smiled at each other, and then again there was the scrape and whoosh and plop of snow as he continued his work.

If then, you ask where I find God, or how do I think about God, I shall point to such an event of love as just *one* small example of how God bursts into this world when we humans respond with heart and soul to the giftedness of life.

M.'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE DIVINE 'ANGLER'

DR. M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

The life of incarnate divinity is marked by one characteristic: it is holistic by nature. Every event seems to cohere, in retrospect, with a larger pattern. As such it contributes to the totality of impact the Incarnation has on the consciousness of both the direct participant in that event and on that of the one who comes to the event temporally later. There is an implicit structure, in short, of total significance deliberately predesigned by whatever 'it' is that 'controls' the systemic universe.

To what extent this is true of the several 'Incarnations' is not my present concern. But even a cursory glance at the life of Ramakrishna—specifically, the tenor of events *recorded* (not *arranged*) in *The Gospel*—reveals its holistic, organistic 'structure'. If we take organicism as 'founded on the analogy of complex systems in general with what are literally organisms, whose parts lose their nature, function, significance, and even existence when removed from their organic interconnection with the rest of the organism,'[1] then *The Gospel* is, analogically, an outstanding example of this organicism. This organicism is explicable in terms, also, of Ramakrishna's imagery of number 'one' (1) and the zero's (0) relation with it. 'Zero' in itself is nothing, as it were; it acquires solidity—organic meaning—only when it is juxtaposed with number 'one'. Analogically, Ramakrishna (and his life) is the number one which illumines his disciples and devotees who, as it were, derive their significance from their organic links with the Master. Each event—and the person's participating therein—derives its/their meaning and significance in terms both of its/their own idiosyncratic structure and the larger, overall pattern.

As a significant 'case' one can cite the *order* or sequence of the songs that figure in *The Gospel*. They are, of course, instinct with an autonomous logic of their own implicit in the life of both the song and its composer. But in the *Gospel* they acquire a different structure in terms of Ramakrishna's 'holistic universe'. Often, the songs *evoke* at the depth level—the level of 'auditory imagination'—an emotive density and cadence which probably the Master's precedent exposition could only *state*, even when the analogical imagery used for this exposition happens to be, as always, with the Master, exceptionally relevant and unimitable. In effect, the song in question becomes not only a symbolic referent of whatever the idea is that is being given the structure of prose

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1. Alan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass, Eds., *A Dictionary of Modern Thought* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1978) p. 228

discourse, but also an organic component of the intellectual and emotional complex of the significant spiritual truth that the Master is experiencing *or*, *after* experiencing, trying to express in all its contours. In every case, the songs, by and large, *do not arbitrarily figure* but become the integral extensions of the context, the parts of a larger interconnectedness.

In the first chapter, for instance, we have the Master exhorting the devotees to develop yearning: 'Cry to the Lord with an intensely yearning heart and you will certainly see Him. People shed a whole jug of tears for wife and children. They swim in tears for money. But who weeps for God ? Cry to Him with a real cry.'[2] The word 'cry' is a stimulus propelling the Master's consciousness to express itself in song: the apparently different but essentially identical carrier of the felt emotion of the context:

Cry to your Mother Syama with a real cry, O mind!
And how can She hold herself from you ?
How can Syama stay away ?
How can your Mother Kali hold herself away ?[3]
... ...

The meaning of the song *is* important; but more important is the exended meaning that the organic context suggests. This makes the song not a mere verbal/aesthetic artifact but an indispensable element of the continuum of consciousness, alternating, as it were, between statement and evocation. Similar is the case with other songs. In almost all the instances the song/prose discourses become the components of both literary and mythic consciousness operating at the depth level. As such, they are instantly, oozingly, sweet and relishable (*āpāta mādhurya*) and are, also, instinct with the nectar stemming from recollective contemplation (*ālocanā-mṛta*).

In this sense of organicism, the opening pages of the (English) *Gospel*, specially M's first encounter with the Master, seem to possess curious interconnections. It is the aim of this essay to enquire into these.

II

We know that M. came to Dakshineswar with a sensibility already tempted by the savage god: suicide. This he felt was a way out of the stress and strain he experienced at the familial front. We are told:

> ...family squabbles had gradually disrupted the harmony in the joint family. M. was a peace-loving soul, and he finally could no longer bear the pettiness and selfishness of his family members. He decided to leave home.... M. said later that at that time of his life his mental anguish was so great that he was thinking of taking his life.[4]

Two motifs, then, underlay M's mind on the eve of his 'tryst' with the Master: flight—some form of renunciation—and death.

Did Ramakrishna know these tendencies of one who was destined to be his scribe ? Did he also know that what M. felt at this stage was not renunciation but a weariness of the mind; that it was not the legitimate culmination of a diligently nurtured spirit of detachment and withdrawal; that it was a premature, essentially irrational, world-negation without warrant ? Finally, did he also know that M. was to be

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2. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Translated by Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Ramakrishna Math. 1981) p. 83. (Henceforth *Gospel*.)
3. Ibid.
4. Swami Chetanananda, 'They Lived with God—M.', *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita Centenary Memorial Volume*, Eds. D.P. Gupta, D. K. Sengupta, (Chandigarh: Sri Ma Trust, 1982) p. 191

rescued from the bog of despair without, in the process, repudiating the validity of the idea of renunciation, of flight from the misery and sheer beastliness of the world ?

It seems certain that this is so. For the very first words that M. was destined to hear from the lips of the Master—words which it was his unique privilege to record, words which eventually found their seminal place in the sacred scriptures of the world—were concerned with 'renunciation' and its related ideas:

> When hearing the name of Hari or Rāma once, you shed tears and your hair stands on end, then you may know for certain that you do not have to perform such devotions as the sandhyā any more. Then only will you have a *right to renounce* rituals ; or rather rituals will drop away of themselves. Then it will be enough if you repeat only the name of Rāma or Hari, or even simply Om.[5]

Ramakrishna was *not,* to be sure, talking about renunciation *per se* ; he was only pinpointing the rationale of the renunciation of rituals. But Ramakrishna's words are the *dhvani*—charged words of a *kāvya,* capable of infinite mutations in terms not only of *vācyārtha, lakṣaṇāratha* and *vyangyārtha* but also of the mental state and spiritual condition of the listener. For M.'s mind, already familiar, as a brilliant student of literature, with the connotative range of statements, the Master's talk about 'renunciation' must have come with a peculiar immediacy. He must have felt the relevance with a shock of recognition. If the Master's ideas on renunciation are 'decoded' in terms of M's specific situation at that moment, the Master was suggesting two things: first, renunciation *is to be judged in terms of definite contextual criteria*: in the case of ritual, *only when* we spontaneously experience emotive fullness, perceptible in physiological symptom—'when the hair stands on end' etc.,—we have the right to renounce ; second, *renunciation is not a flight, a weary giving up*: it is a spontaneous, but diligently achieved, process of transcendence: 'rituals will *drop away of* themselves.' It is not an abrupt act of impulsive decision, as M.'s own contemplated flight obviously was. In short, M. would have been, through the suggestive ideas, forced to think of his 'decision.' As such, Ramakrishna's opening 'bait' did strike rich in the case of M.

That such an inference *can* be drawn is further buttressed by the fact that during the second visit, the Master—apparently without any precedent contextual relevance —tells him about 'Pratap's brother' who represented a typical case of abrupt flight masquerading as renunciation:

> I came to know that he had left his wife and children with his father-in-law. He has a whole brood of them! So I took him to task! Just fancy! He is the father of so many children! Will people from the neighbourhood feed them and bring them up ? He isn't even ashamed that someone else is feeding his wife and children....[6]

Was this not what M. himself could be accused of if his contemplated suicide came through ? The net result of his action would exactly be what the Master was incisively criticising in the above remarks. But the interesting fact is that it is only *after* these remarks that the Master makes enquiries about M's family situation. It is *only then*—after laying down his own *norm*(s) regarding worldly life—that the Master elicits M.'s 'case' details (M. must have been, one can guess, amazed at this extraordinary insight into the nature and norms of worldly life of a person 'always' immersed in *samadhi*). And the shudder

5. *Gospel* p. 77

6. Ibid p. 79

the Master evidences at the affirmative answer from M. regarding marriage and children seems to have two implications; to blow away M.'s 'pride' and to express anxiety about the prospect of a repetition of the case of Pratap's brother—escape correlated with *tyāga*. But, of course, the Master knew the role M. was destined to play in the organic structure of his own descent. This is probably the reason why —after telling *what not to do*—he tells M. *what to do* to come to terms with the grief and misery of the world, of which M.'s cup was full at the time:

> If you enter the world without first cultivating love for God, you will be entangled more and more. You will be overwhelmed with its danger, its grief, its sorrows. And the more you think of worldly things, the more you will be attached to them.[7]

We can, also, gather from the kind of questions which Ramakrishna invariably asked of his devotees about their background —questions ranging from apparently simple queries about family situation to the most complex one of what *they thought about him*—that he was trying to identify (or confirm what he felt intuitively to be) the specific impulses that propelled these devotees in the direction of Dakshineswar. In effect, he was using the framework an earlier 'alter-ego' of his own—Sri Kṛṣṇa—had laid down regarding the impulses that lead people to spiritual life: the afflicted, the curious, the pleasure-hunter and the wisdom-quester.[8] In asking M. about his family etc. the Master was making sure, as it were, the rightness of the impulse that brought him there.

III

The next idea which is of organic interest to M. at that moment is, again, what the Master, apparently casually, talks about, the merging of the trinity: 'the sandhyā merges in the Gāyatri, and the Gāyatri merges in Om.'[9]

This has implications of far-ranging significance to M. We know from the discussion at the second meeting that M. was inclined to the 'formless' path but was also firmly convinced about the fundamental *separability* of the 'formless' from 'form'. By affirming the incompatibility of 'form' and 'the formless', M. was also implicitly denying the possibility of the unification of apparently divergent paths, at the level of the deeper mystical state achieved through a process of gradual transcendence and not by yoking paths violently together. By his strange assertion of the sandhyā merging in Gāyatri etc., the Master was using one of the most difficult baits for M. (owing allegiance to the rigorous formless monism of Brahmo religion) to swallow —the idea of a unified consciousness in which distinctions cease.

Yet, in a sense, it was not that unpalatable a bait, if we keep in mind the other details of M.'s first visit—some details, in effect, seem to negate M.'s firm commitment to the 'formless'. We can take M.'s professed statement of being inclined to 'the formless' as definitive and that, even admitting the possibility of 'form', he felt that one cannot identify 'the image with the clay'[10]—a statement he makes to the Master and gets sharply and deservedly reprimanded. Yet, we notice the curious fact that he visits 'the twelve Siva temples, the Radhakanta temple, and the temple of Bhavatārini'.[11] Dispelling the possible implication that this visit was not from an aesthetic impulse of contemplating the structural or architectural beauty, we are

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7. Ibid pp. 81-82
8. *The Bhagavad Gita*, 7.16
9. Gospel, p. 77
10. Ibid p. 81
11. Ibid p. 78

specifically told the nature of his emotion: 'And as M. watched the service before the image his heart was filled with joy.'[12] In short, how could one who professed allegiance to the 'formless' visit temples, let alone enjoy the corresponding experience positively ?

That M.'s heart should be filled with joy is, of course, natural (knowing in retrospect the basic nature of his spiritual sensibility). Yet, there was still the *residue of intellectual* conviction about distinctions as essentially differences *which was a greater obstacle to the Master's* 'baiting'. But this required *not discourses but demonstration,* in, M.'s words, not merely 'hearing' but 'noticing' ('telling' versus 'showing'). In effect, M. had to be *shown* a phenomenon which transcends all apparent distinctions: the phenomenon of 'bhāva'.

Let us see how the Master's behaviour in the first encounter is organically linked with this question.

(To be concluded)

12. Ibid

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: PAST AND FUTURE

(A Review Article)

[INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: PAST AND FUTURE. Edited by S.S. Rama Rao Pappu and R. Puligandla. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Road, Jawaharnagar, Delhi 110 007. 1982. Pp. xvii+434. Rs. 125]

Indian philosophy is as old, as rich and as variegated as the civilization of the Indian subcontinent. From prehistoric times to the present day, it has had an unbroken history. This continuity has been made possible by three factors: 1. the Guru tradition, 2. the vast range of India's philosophical vision and 3. the existential nature of Indian Philosophy. Philosophy in India has always remained inseparable from the life of the people and has adapted itself to the internal changes and external challenges that Indian society has faced. Indian philosophy passed through several critical periods in the past but the one that it is now passing through is the most difficult and significant one.

The British rule broke India's isolation from world thought, and during the last hundred and fifty years Western science and philosophy has considerably influenced the lives of educated Indians. Many Indian universities have ignored the study of Indian philosophy and many teachers teach and continue to think only in terms of Western philosophy. On the other hand, outside the academic circles, the traditional modes of philosophical thinking and teaching have been going on in the customary way.

The time has now come for Indians to understand the distinctive profile of Indian philosophy, to identify what one author has described as 'what is living and what is dead in Indian philosophy ?', and to know 'where do we go from here ?' In recent years a good deal of thinking on these issues have been made by several eminent philosophers and teachers of philosophy and a few books containing their views have been brought out. The book under review is one of the most comprehensive and systematic attempts so far made to assess the nature, function and goal of Indian philosophy vis-a-vis Western

thought. In twenty chapters as many teachers of Indian philosophy have addressed themselves to this task with skill and understanding.

Both the editors of this book (compiled to represent a symposium) are teachers of philosophy in American universities. The task they placed before the participants was in the form of four questions: 1. What is Indian about Indian philosophy? 2. What is the responsibility of the Indian philosopher? 3. What is the goal of Indian philosophy? 4. What is the future of Indian philosophy? The contributions of the authors have been divided into three parts entitled 'The Tradition of Indian Philisophy', 'Tradition and Modernity' and 'The Future of Indian Philosophy'. In the preface the editors have pointed out that the present book is 'not another collection of essays on contemporary Indian philosophy. Rather, it is a meta-philosophical work that our contributors have undertaken'.

It is difficult to critically evaluate a compilation of this kind which presents such a diversity of themes and views. The reviewer can do no better than present a brief resume of the twenty papers.

The symposium opens with Pratima Bowes's brilliant paper 'What is Indian about Indian philosophy?' in which she denounces the fashionable opinion that Indian philosophy is wholly a transcendental enterprise, for no human culture can be solely transcendental ignoring totally the every day business of life. The most striking feature of Indian philosophy is that it is based on the 'organic' world-view as opposed to the typical western 'architectonic' world-view. Bowes presents in a refreshingly original way the fundamentals of all the systems of Indian philosophy, clarifying those concepts and points of view which, she feels, have hitherto been misunderstood or misinterpreted. She concludes her survey of traditional Indian philosophy by expressing her hope that the tolerance of plurality of views and life-style which is one of the assets of the Indian philosophic tradition can still contribute to the philosophical thought of the future.

In the next paper 'In search of Indian Philosophy' Professor Sarasvati Chennakesavan presents a lucid survey of the vast panorama of Indian philosophic heritage from the ancient past of the Vedic times to the problems which agitate a modern mind engaged in serious study and research in Indian philosophy. She pleads for a distinctive identity of Indian philosophy, which is a variegated multi-faceted tapestry and therefore must be studied in the context of its multiplicity, though unity of perspectives must not be missed. She is not at all apologetic about the Indian philosophic tradition, and confidently declares: 'It possesses all the necessary ingredients to provide a rational full-fledged world philosophy'. (P. 60) It is likely that some readers might find it difficult to agree with all her formulations. Nevertheless, they will be impressed by the clarity of expression and forthrightness of her views.

Prof. P.T. Raju is one of the most outstanding academic philosophers of our country well known for his comparative studies in philosophy. His brilliant paper 'The Western and Indian philosophical traditions' is a reprint but is provided with a new lengthy postscript. After analysing the inadequacy of philological and etymological interpretations of words and concepts for evaluating Western and Indian philosophical traditions, he presents a different modus operandi for comparison which deals with the origin, development and achievements of both the philosophic traditions. The future of Indian philosophy, according to him, will not be very different from other philosophies provided that the

philosophers of the future are earnest about life, its problems and solutions, its aims and ways of achievements.

Dr. K.B. Ramakrishna Rao presents a reassessment of the views of eminent scholars like C.A. Moore and H. Nakamura, enumerating the unique features of Eastern and Western philosophies in his thought-provoking paper 'The Question of Indianness of Indian Philosophy', and reinterprets some of the basic concepts which constitute the spirit of Indian philosophy. He finds 'the whole tenor of Indian philosophy is as comprehensive as it is deep, as analytical as it is synthetic, as much fact finding as it is evaluative'. According to him, Indian philosophy is a 'total response to a total life and is interested in the total training of man'. As a philosopher upholding the Advaita Vedantic view, he has achieved the difficult task of justifying the 'essentialist' philosophy of self.

In Indian philosophy the most basic problem is that of human subjectivity, as is evident from its preoccupation with the investigation of the human self, its phenomenal and transcendental horizons. Prof. Ramakanta Sinari makes a thorough enquiry into the problem of human subjectivity along with its allied problems of the ultimate goal of human life, its transcendental destination, man's urge for self-fulfilment through self-realization. Mostly within the conceptual framework of Existentialism, Prof. Sinari analyses the vision embodied in the Indian ontology of self—ātmanology as he calls it—drawing distinction between two domains of our psychic structure, Jiva and Ātman, in a highly impressive manner. Ātmanology, he asserts, is not solipsism or subjectivism but is 'pregnant with a vision of far-reaching importance for the building up of a new social order where every individual's conduct would be governed by a transcendental outlook'. (p. 127)

Prefacing his discussion with a brief elucidation of his own conception of Philosophy, and forcefully repudiating a host of familiar major charges against Indian philosophy, Prof. K. N. Upadhyaya in his essay 'Some Reflections on the Indian View of Philosophy' makes an interpretative analysis of some distinctive features held in common by all the systems of Indian philosophy. A substantial portion of his dissertation is devoted to throwing new light on some basic concepts of Indian philosophy which would enable a reader to have a fresh look at it.

Dipankar Chatterjee's attempt at exploration of certain aspects of Indian ethics is assuredly praiseworthy. Having drawn a distinction between ethics of Virtue and ethics of Duty, he re-examines the four *puruṣārthas* central to the understanding of Indian ethics, namely, *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*, as interpreted by some contemporary western scholars—van Buitenen, Ingals, Schweitzer, Goodwin and others. Chatterjee endeavours to expose how the basic framework of Indian ethics was misunderstood by these scholars and then he proceeds to help us towards a better understanding of Indian ethics. But how far his exposition of it can promote a better understanding of Indian ethics is a point over which the readers might differ.

The late Professor Kalidas Bhattacharya was one of the foremost of contemporary philosophers who, in spite of his long career as an academic teacher of philosophy, always treated the basic problems in an original and profound way. His present paper 'Traditional Indian Philosophy as a Modern Thinker Views It', is a lucid, brilliant and comparatively long discourse on traditional Indian philosophy. Prof. Bhattacharya argues that the difference in the emphasis on and solutions of the

problems that are common to both Western and traditional Indian philosophies are all due to difference in the basic attitudes to life and the world. The claim that Western philosophy has offered better solutions to these problems has been shown to be unfounded. As a matter of fact, the problem of self, categories of negation and relation etc. were studied more closely and systematically in Indian philosophy than in Western philosophy.

R.S. Bhattacharya has titled his paper 'A New Approach to Indian Philosophy' but it is in fact only the old and hackneyed way of describing Indian philosophy as 'Mokṣa-darśana'. Though Mokṣa is a key-concept of the religio-philosophic tradition of India, it is not correct to characterize Indian philosophy in such an exclusive manner, for Mokṣa is not the sole preoccupation of India's philosophic enterprise as has been already pointed out by several other contributors in the book.

Prof. J. N. Mohanty in his scholarly paper 'Indian Philosophy between Tradition and Modernity' first examines what the concept of Indian philosophy means, and goes on to describe the predicament of the contemporary Indian philosopher placed in the perplexing situation arising out of the conflict between tradition and modernity. He is outspokenly critical of the 'spiritual-practical intention' of darśanas and passes some pertinent comments from the standpoints of Phenomenalism and Existentialism. Prof. Mohanty points to certain areas in which Indian philosophy has made significant contributions. Some of these areas are theories of consciousness, theories of knowledge and logic, descriptive psychology of mental functions and grammar, syntax, semantics and phenomenology of language. According to him these fields of philosophical activity provide opportunities for fruitful East-West contact and also possibilities of creative thinking for Indian philosophers within the tradition.

Prof. B. K. Matilal in his paper 'Indian Philosophy: Is there a Problem Today?' shows that Indian philosophy is neither primarily therapeutics of Mokṣa nor a bundle of dogmas and mystifying, unproductive statements about man and the world. Darśanas, he argues, deal with philosophy proper (*ānvikṣikī*) and show genuine interest in epistemological and logical issues which are, however, hidden in the treasure-chest of Sanskrit. As such, sound philological scholarship is a highly desirable prerequisite to understand Indian philosophy. Prof. Matilal stresses the need for studying and reinterpreting classical Indian philosophy, for he is convinced that there is no ocean of difference between a considerable portion of the problems discussed by the ancients and those discussed by the modern philosophers today.

Steering clear of the controversy arising out of the two extreme views as to what Indian philosophy is, Prof. J.S.R.L. Narayana Moorty in his paper 'Indian Philosophy at the Cross-roads' describes Indian philosophy as essentially the metaphysics of the experience of Ultimate Reality. He stoutly refutes some possible objections likely to be advanced by the philosophers of analytic tradition. He also suggests a few alternatives for making contemporary Indian philosophy meaningful and relevant.

Prof. Debabrata Sinha in his thought-provoking paper 'Indian Philosophy at the Cross-roads of Self-understanding' introduces the readers to the crux of the problem which a contemporary Indian philosopher having his moorings in his own tradition encounters in the process of active philosophizing. He brings out quite persuasively the points of comparison between Indian *darśana* and Western 'metaphysics'. As an essential step towards the exploration of the wealth of India's philosophic tradition,

Prof. Sinha suggests a programme of 'participatory interested translation', as he calls it, of the authentic classical texts. But will the interpretative-explorative translation necessarily inspire philosophical creativity ?

Prof. Rajendra Prasad's paper 'Tradition Modernity and Philosophical Creativity' forcefully argues that the relationship between the Indian philosophic tradition and modern Indian philosophizing is not one of unique philosophical importance, nor does the phrase 'Indian Philosophy' denote a particular concept of philosophy essentially different from its western conception. The supposed controversy, he argues, had its origin in the spiritualistic interpretation of Indian philosophy inaugurated by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and uncritically endorsed by several eminent philosophers like K.C. Bhattacharyya, J. N. Chubb, G. R. Malkani and others. But such a mono-dimensional interpretation, he argues, would entail the exclusion of technical philosophical disciplines such as, logic, philosophy of language, epistemology, ethical and meta-ethical theories etc. in which classical Indian philosophy is extremely rich. Prof. Prasad suggests retention of those aspects of tradition which are found to be most relevant to present situation and conducive to creative freedom, and that too after cautious and objective assessment. The future of Indian philosophy, he feels, will be determined to a large extent by its independence from bondage to traditions, both indigenous and foreign.

In his highly critical paper 'Whither Indian Philosophy: A Search for Direction and Suggestions for Reconstruction' Prof. D.C. Mathur stresses the need for Indian philosophy to come down from its ivory tower of transcendentalism and become more responsive to the living issues of contemporary society. The all-too-familiar spiritualistic-cum-religious interpretation, according to Prof. Mathur, suffers from the falacy of sweeping over-simplification inasmuch as it completely ignores the socio-historical context of the philosophical activity undertaken in ancient India. Equally unsatisfactory is its interpretation in terms of Marxian explanatory model. What India needs today is an integrated philosophical outlook described as 'Naturalistic Humanism' which, he hopes, will act as a via media between 'reductive' materialism and withdrawal philosophies of transcendental Idealism and spiritualism.

Prof. N. K. Deavaraja in his paper 'Responsibilities of Modern Indian Philosophers' argues assiduously in favour of an Indian tradition in philosophy, for he is not in sympathy with the concept of philosophy as a universal cultural activity without any national distinctiveness. He feels that important and valid insights embedded in the rich and varied religio-philosophical tradition of India are valuable even for our age. It is the responsibility of Indian philosophers to identify and incorporate them in a world-view relevant to our times.

Instead of examining the prospects or otherwise of Indian philosophy in the context of global philosophy in the coming years, Prof. V. Narayana Karan Reddy in his essay 'Futurism and Indian Philosophy' selects certain religious terms at random and interprets them in the light of Sri Aurobindo's Spiritual Evolutionism.

Confining himself mostly to the field of linguistics, Prof. N.S.S. Raman in his paper 'The Future of Indian Philosophy' deplores the tendency in some Indian philosophers to look down upon Indian philosophy and glorify the Western philosophy of language. He pleads for the cultivation of India's rich linguistic heritage by utilizing the symbolism conveyed through the Sanskrit language. Development of our own

philosophic tradition independent of Western systems without damaging the authenticity and originality of new ideas is, according to him, the need of the hour.

Prof. S. S. Rama Rao Pappu concerns himself chiefly with philosophical problems in the teaching of Indian philosophy (the philosophy of teaching philosophy). In his paper 'On Teaching Indian Philosophy', he raises certain questions which are rarely discussed in academic circles. Indian philosophy, according to him, is pre-eminently *mokṣa*-oriented. He attempts to unpack the philosophical implications of this position and its bearing on the technique of teaching Indian philosophy. By interpreting *mokṣa* in a non-spiritual way, he hopes that it could form a nucleus for a progressive philosophic pedagogy.

In the concluding paper, Prof. A. K. Gangadean has made a sustained effort to show the relevance of Indian thought to the evolution of world philosophy. His exposition bears definite marks of profound scholarship and intimate acquaintance with the basic theoretical framework of the philosophic traditions of the East and the West.

The above survey shows that the book under review, *Indian Philosophy: Past and Future* has provided a vibrant testimony to the dynamic nature of Indian philosophy on the one hand and the creative and logical abilities of modern Indian philosophers on the other hand. Probably the most crucial question discussed in the book is: Should philosophy be wholly tradition-bound or tradition-neutral? Is adherence to any tradition a liability, an impediment to creative thinking? The learned contributors of this volume have utilized their skill and scholarship to grapple with this fundamental issue. The majority of them favour the development of a philosophical tradition of our own in consonance with India's rich philosophic heritage known for its variety and profundity. They have argued that cultural rootlessness and alienation from the tradition might often prove counterproductive. But this does not mean that we should cling tenaciously to old ideas, for it produces a false sense of self-sufficiency and makes one insensitive to current philosophic movements and thoughts. This apart, a pathological attachment to indigenous philosophic tradition is detrimental to creativity and intellectual freedom. Revivalism or cultural conservatism is not going to pay in the present situation—this is what most of the contributors seek to assert. They therefore plead in favour of assimilation of important and relevant elements from western thought and culture, though not a senseless imitation of everything western. Contemporary Indian philosophy should also contribute towards the enrichment of world thought by its own distinct ideas and views.

Eminent philosophers like B.K. Matilal and N.S.S Raman have stressed the need for a linguistic orientation in the exploration and appreciation of the wealth of classical Indian philosophy. But strangely enough, the social relevance of the intellectual activity called 'Philosophy' has not received adequate attention which it deserves. In the post-independence era, Indian philosophers have not shown much interest in philosophical issues having contemporary social significance. If this tendency is not changed and if modern Indian philosophy continues to maintain its indifference to human history, the day will not be far off when Indian academic philosophy will fail to evoke respect and credibility from the thinkers and scholars of other disciplines, and people will cease to turn to philosophy for inspiration and guidance. Indian philosophy, in order to retain its time-old distinctive spirit and acquire a new identity, should endeavour to carve out an independent way of

thinking keeping in mind the contemporary historical situation.

Indian Philosophy: Past and Future delineating India's past achievements and future endeavours bears witness to our present concerns and commitments. Some of the papers raise a number of difficult and critical questions regarding Indian philosophy, and it is hoped that readers will get several points clarified by going through the pages of the book. It also provides useful material for further research, thinking and discussion. This does not, however, mean that all the views expressed in these papers will find general acceptance, for philosophical standpoints can always be disputed. Nevertheless, the book is significant and valuable not only for the varieties of topics discussed, but also for the fresh and stimulating approaches to the fundamental issues of Indian philosophy. The reviewer hopes that the book will receive wide recognition among the academic philosophers. The editor's introduction serves as the right prologue for the central theme of the book. The printing and get-up of the book are excellent and the publishers deserve our praise for such a neat production, but the price seems to be a bit high.

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REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF TIRUKKURAL: BY DR. S. GOPALAN. Published by Affiliated East-West Press, 108 Marshall's Road, Egmore, Madras 600 008. 1979. Pp. 14+259. Rs. 40.

Nothing much is known of the life of Valluvar, often called the Manu of South India. But his work *Kural* or *Tirukkural* is considered a world classic. Among the classical works in Tamil it is the greatest ethical treatise. On the one hand it is an expression of the positive, bracing qualities of Tamil culture and, on the other hand, it has helped to shape the ethical and social life of the Tamil people more than any other book of its kind has done. The precepts of Valluvar are still a living and potent force animating all strata of Tamil society. The literary value of the book is no less than the practical and the didactic. The book consists of 1330 couplets strung together to form three books dealing with the first three values (*puruṣārthas*) of life, namely, *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (pleasure). The terms used by Valluvar are *aram*, *porul* and *inpam* respectively, but these are not (as shown by Dr. Gopalan) synonymous with the Sanskrit terms. The fourth value known as *mokṣa* (liberation) is not treated separately in the book. In other words, the attributes and conditions of a 'good life' constitute the main theme of *Tirukkural*.

Dr. Gopalan's study aims at a thorough analysis and evaluation of the social implications of the concept of good life codified in the great Tamil classic. His approach is philosophical rather than historical, and the methodology employed is the analytic-interpretative one. The study consists of six chapters with a prologue and an epilogue. The exhaustive bibliography will be very useful to researchers in this field of specialization.

Since 'fixing the date of a classic helps in understanding it', the prologue contains a discussion on the date of the *Kural*. On this point the author joins issue with the famous Tamil scholar Vaiyapuri Pillai and gives certain 'fitting answers' to his arguments. In chapter two there is a fine discussion on how the *Tirukkural* represents the convergence of the three great traditions of India: Brahminical Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism.

The key to understanding Valluvar's thought is his concept of *aram*. Dr. Gopalan's central thesis is that the four-fold scheme of values in Brahminical Hinduism has been integrated by Valluvar into a single radiating centre, the *aram*, and that *porul* and *inpam* are only extensions of *aram*. 'The concept of *aram* extended thus offers us the concept of *porul* and *inpam*. The pervasiveness of *aram* is then seen in the objectifications of *aram* itself in two types of

human situations—one, the situation of the individual participating in economic and political institutions, and two, the most intimate man-woman relationship. The light of *aram* which is essential as constitutive of the good life reveals a clear spectrum in which *porul* and *inpam* stand out most distinctly.' (p. 76).

What is *aram* ? It is the moral principle of life—individual and collective. Dr. Gopalan takes pains to show the rootedness of this moral principle in the metaphysical dimension of human personality. 'Valluvar's insistence on mental purity and his concretely listing the qualities which make for mental purity point to the fact that *aram* is not something extraneous to the mind of man, that it is only a process whereby mind is cleansed of its accretions of impurity. *Aram* therefore is a principle of growth in the life of each individual.' (p. 87) In this context the author discusses the role of free will vis-a-vis that of *ūl* or the principle of determinism (popularly known as 'fate').

On the basis of his 'extension' thesis, Dr. Gopalan studies the vertical and horizontal dimensions of aram. Through the comprehensiveness of the concept of *aram* Valluvar suggests that the ultimate Good (*vītu*) in human life can be realized through two stages which connote a gradual development. He refers to these as *illaram* (*aram* of the home) and *turavaram* (*aram* of the cloister). According to Dr. Gopalan these two stages are Valluvar's adaptation of the more well-known four-stage *āsrama* scheme of Hinduism. But he points out that unlike *sannyāsa āsrama* which necessitates a total break with one's family and society, *turavaram* does not insist on a change in a person's status when he embarks upon the 'second stage'. What Valluvar stressed was a change in man's attitude towards life, not in his outer vocation. To the question whether *Tirukkural* prefers *illaram* to *turavaram* Dr. Gopalan's answer is that there is no class difference between the two ; they form a continuum, a synthesis of world affirmation and detachment. Summing up the discussion, he states: 'What is perhaps intended by Valluvar is to suggest that the Good can be attained through two overlapping, but distinct, attitudes to life.' (p. 91)

The fourth and fifth chapters explain how *porul* and *inpam*, as extensions of *aram*, are to be followed in life. *Porul* is treated both as Valluvar's economic theory and his political philosophy. These two chapters are to be studied especially by students of economics and political philosophy, for they contain the quintessence of Valluvar's views on these subjects. The difficult theme of *inpam* or 'love' is handled in a graceful way in the fifth chapter. The last (6th) chapter discusses the approach of *Kural* to religion. There is a discussion on Valluvar's concept of God in the epilogue, and the author is of the view that *Kural's* philosophy is an idealistic social philosophy. Dr. Gopalan is to be congratulated on his establishing his view that 'the characteristic feature of the *Kural* is that the social philosophy is thrown into bold relief in it, without cutting the metaphysical roots of the ideal.'

In short, this book is a must for students of Tamil literature in general, and for social philosophers and researchers in *Kural* in particular. Each chapter is followed by exhaustive notes. The language and style of the book are simple and lucid.

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UNIVERSAL IMPERATIVES OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA: BY SWAMI BUDHANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi 110 055. 1982. Pp. 44. Rs. 2.

The Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, has launched the SADHANA SERIES to help the younger generation 'cultivate the habit of reading religious literature conducive to their all round self-development.' Elegantly produced, inexpensive and avoiding the nonessentials, the series seeks to present 'small books on great themes'.

It is entirely appropriate that the first title should be on the *Gītā*. The Swami has selected 24 verses constituting the core of its integral philosophy. In these verses the Lord speaks, says the Swami, 'with all His authority, wisdom, omniscience, and understanding...in powerful imperatives sweeping aside all chances for argumentations on the part of the hearer'.

The *Gītā* is basically 'a moksha-shastra'; therefore these imperatives are given not by a doctrinaire, dictatorial mind demanding irrational conformity, but by 'an omniscient benefactor' gently helping 'faltering man' to realize his spiritual destiny.

This destiny is to be achieved not through negation but through a happy synthesis of 'nihsreyasa' and 'abhyudaya', of 'sreyas' and

'preyas'. As such the *Gītā,* says the Swami, 'does not propose to take you out of the context of your life in order to make you wise and free... it teaches you to meet every situation of your life'.

The method of the *Gītā*, as the Swami's illuminating comments on the imperatives chosen show, is 'to strengthen man from within'. The corresponding process is gradual: from right action based on 'the unique strategy of involving God in all our struggles' (which in fact is achieving the state of evenness that constitutes yoga) to an awareness of the self, an awareness which reaches its culmination in ultimate, total surrender to the Lord implicitly accepting the 'instrumental' nature of one's being.

This is the core of the *Gītā*'s imperatives for living as interpreted by the Swami. The interpretation is marked by his usual versatility and suggestiveness already evident in the impressive range of his earlier writings. In short, this invaluable introduction to a book rightly described as 'the most systematic scriptural statement of the perennial Philosophy', is bound to be a healthy corrective to the erratic, amoral ethos dominating the world of the Young today.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS HOME, MYLAPORE, MADRAS

REPORT FOR 1983-84

Started under the inspiration of Swami Ramakrishnananda in 1905 in a modest way with just 5 orphans, this institution has now grown into its present dimension with the capacity to provide free board and lodging to 369 students. The Home, working on the basis of the Gurukula system comprises the following institutions:

The Hostel at Mylapore accommodated 186 students of the High School in its junior section and 135 in its senior section of whom 122 were students of the Technical Institute run by the Home and the others of the adjacent Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College.

The Residential High School (standards VI to X) with 97 students from backward communities lays emphasis on character formation by inculcating moral and religious instruction as part of the daily routine. In the 1983 S.S.L.C. examination 47 students out of the 50 who had appeared for it passed. School education in the state being free, scholarship is offered to some students towards the purchase of text-books and payment of examination fees. The library in the senior hostel had 2,744 books at the end of the year.

The Residential Technical Institute offered three-year diploma courses in mechanical engineering with three elective subjects: automobile technology, machineshop technology and agricultural farm equipment technology. The Institute had 26 students in its part-time evening post-diploma course in automobile engineering during July 1983. Whereas all the students were offered scholarships, 40 belonging to backward classes enjoyed 50 per cent concession in fees and 12 others full freeship. In-plant training for final year mechanical engineering students was arranged for two weeks in a number of well-known firms in the city. The bookbank had 1,011 books. The Ramakrishna Centenary Primary School, Mylapore: Comprising standards I to V divided in 10 sections, the school with 208 boys and 169 girls is housed in a pucca two-storeyed building. The school with 12 teachers admitted only day scholars.

Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Malliankaranai Estate: Comprising a hostel with 37 boarders from the backward classes and the Ramakrishna Mission Middle Shcool the Home caters to the needs of the rural people of the Malliankaranai village of Chingleput district where it owns some land.

Midday meal was served to 100 students every day out of the total 272 of whom 75 were girls and 197 were boys. The foundation for a new school building estimated to cost Rs. 12 lakhs was laid in May 1983 and the Secretary of the Home solicits liberal donations from the readers towards this project. Agriculture is taught as a prevocation subject in the school. In the estate extensive cultivation was undertaken during the period under report.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

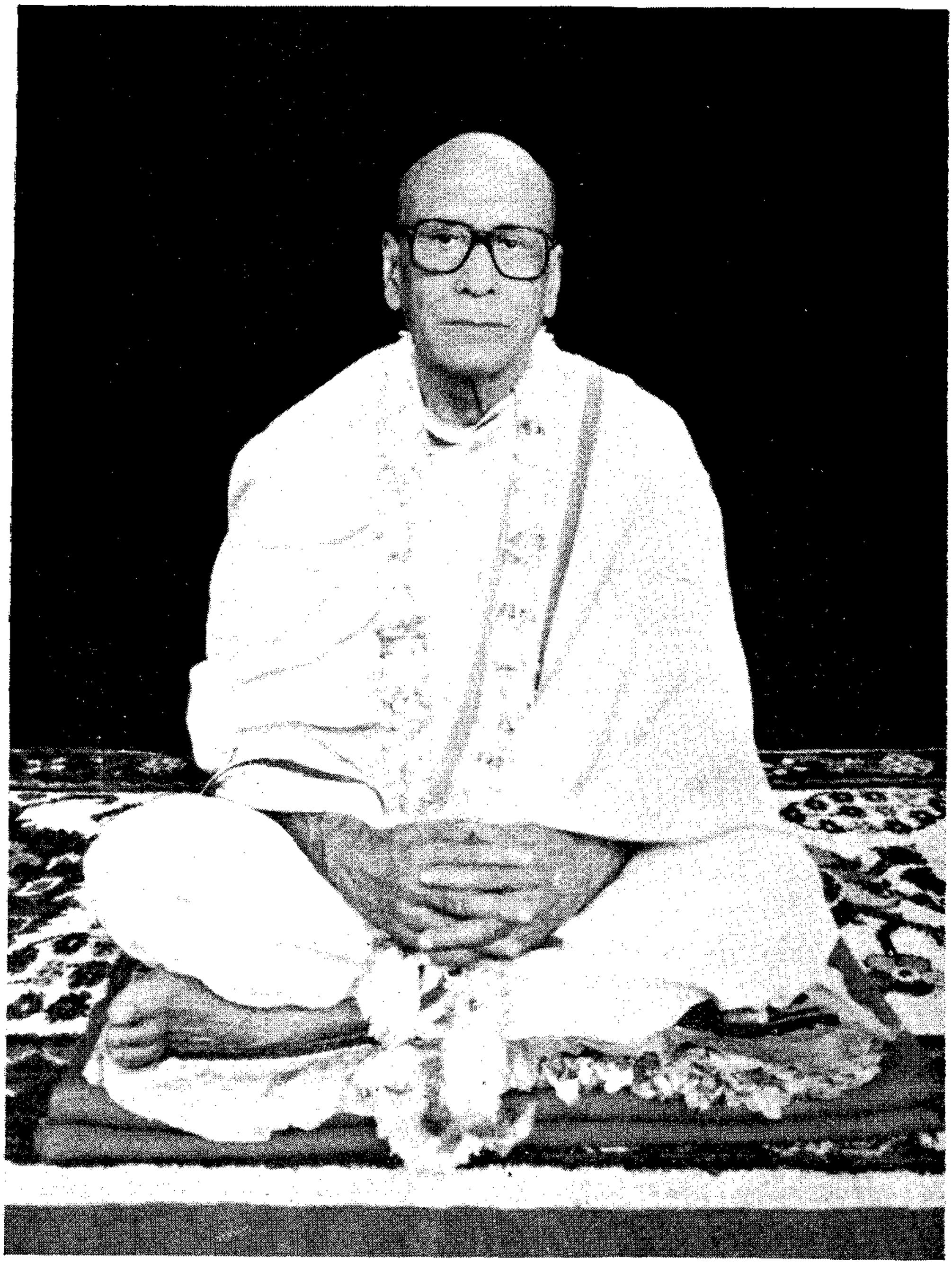
Morality in Public Life

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's repeated assertion about and attempts at providing a clean administration have aroused considerable hope in the people. The stuffy atmosphere of Indian bureaucracy has for long been in need of a breath of fresh air. The sensational spying scandal involving several officers of home and defence ministries, who sold vital secrets to the agents of foreign countries, has shown to what depths the moral level of officialdom has sunk. Less publicized but widely known instances of corruption are so numerous that they have been accepted by the people as a normal feature of Indian bureaucracy.

What is disturbing is not the increase in the number of corrupt individuals, which is true of all other countries as well, but the prevalence of an atmosphere which does not encourage people to earn more money through honest means than through dishonest means. No amount of moralizing will make the common man moral unless, like everything else in social life, morality is linked to money. In the developed countries of the West, social conditions are such that people can earn enough money through honest means. In communist countries there is a rigid ceiling on consumption itself which makes earning more money useless. The drawback of the Indian policy is that it encourages unlimited consumption but does not provide adequate and honest means for it. It should also be pointed out here that there is a close connection between corruption and the drink habit. These problems would not have assumed such a serious proportion had this country opted for Gandhian economy when it got independence. The separation of ethics from development, based on the belief that it was possible to achieve economic development solely by technological means without the need for moral constraints, was one of the grave mistakes that India's policy makers committed. The Mahalanobis model of planning, based on the Stalinist-Soviet model, has enabled India to achieve rapid growth in certain sectors, no doubt. But India's economic development has been uneven and has to a great extent been neutralized by wide social disparities and acts of injustice.

In striking contrast to this, the Chinese model of development has moral values as an integral part of it. Apart from the priority given to agriculture and rural economy, the Chinese model emphasizes 1. an egalitarian outlook that seeks to reduce social and economic differentials, 2. moral, non-material, and collective work incentives, and 3. people's involvement in development work. Not that the Chinese do not have their own problems of corruption and immorality, but there is a keen and widespread awareness of moral values in public life and a sense of commitment to them at all levels of administration. A year ago Mr. Hu Yaobang, chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, told his people that he wanted better social morality, by which he meant 'putting an effective check on such unhealthy tendencies and practices as benefiting oneself at others' expense, pursuing private interests at the expense of public interests, loving ease and hating work, putting money first in everything and unscrupulously pursuing personal enjoyment.'

We would like to see Indian leaders and political parties working hard for the moral development of the nation, which is inseparable from its economic development.



SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA