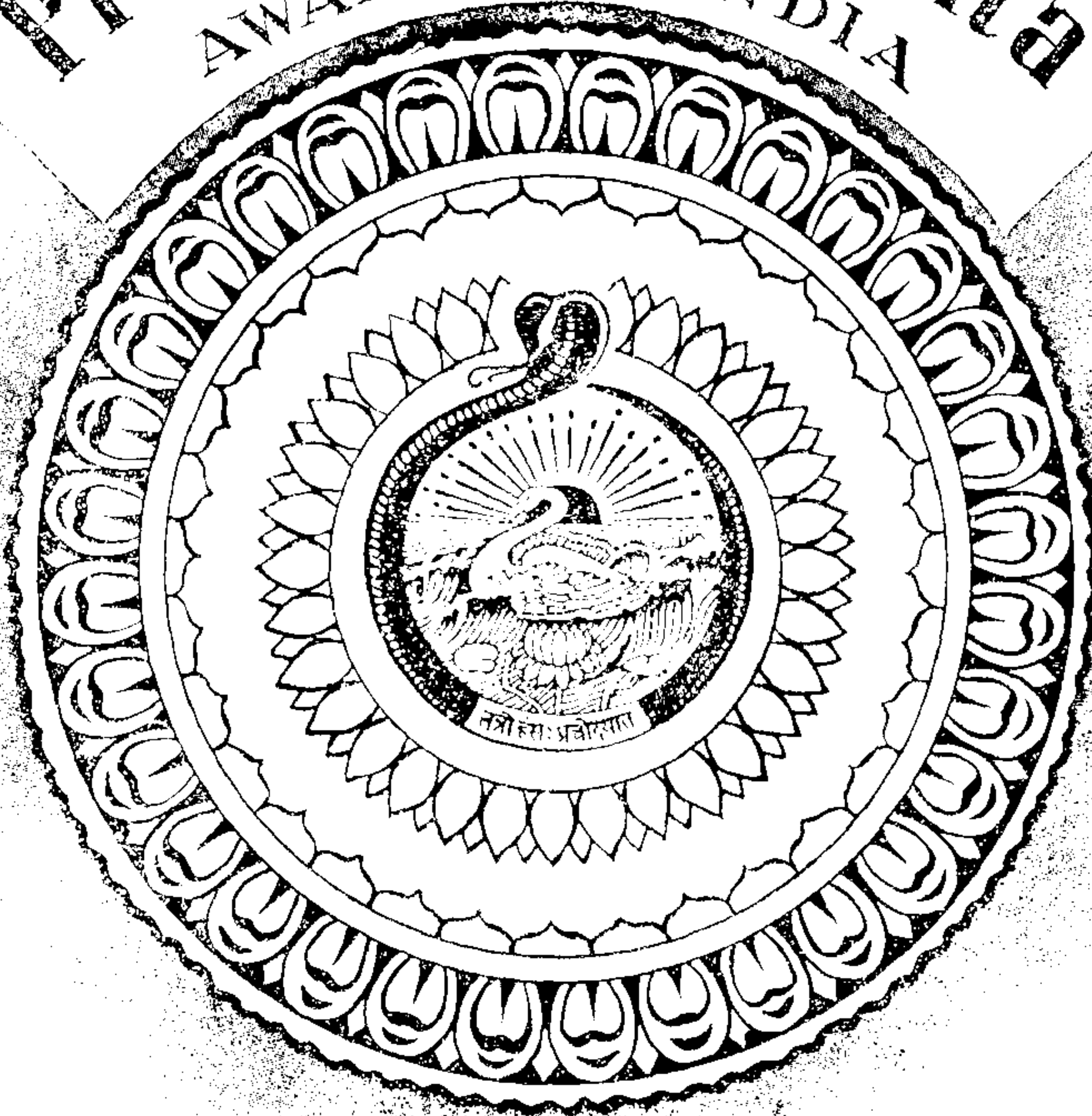


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Prabuddha Bharata

OR
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Belur Math



Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 11

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

ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

Vidyayā vindate amṛtam

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

Conversations of King Janaka and Seer Yajnavalkya

Yajnavalkya said 'This self is That which has been described as "Not this, not this". It is imperceptible, for It is never perceived ; undecaying, for It never decays ; unattached, for It is never attached ; unfettered, for It never feels pain and never suffers injury. Verily, O Janaka you have attained That which is free from fear.'

The king asked, 'When the sun has set, Yajnavalkya, and the moon has set and the fire has gone out, what serves as light for a man ?'

'Speech (sound) serves as his light, for with speech as light he sits, goes out, works, and returns. Therefore, your Majesty, when one cannot see even one's own hand, yet when a sound is uttered, one can go there.'

'Just so Yajnavalkya'.

The king asked again, 'When the sun has set, Yajnavalkya, and the moon has set and the fire has gone out, and speech has stopped, what serves as light for a man ?'

'The self, indeed, is his light, for with the self as light he sits, goes out, works, and returns'.

The king asked, 'Which is the self ?'

Yajnavalkya said, 'This Purusha, which is identified with the intellect (vijñānamaya) and is in the midst of the organs, the [self-effulgent] light within the heart (intellect). Assuming the likeness [of the intellect], it wanders between the two worlds ; it thinks, as it were, and moves, as it were. Being identified with dreams, it transcends this [waking] world, which represents the forms of death. (ignorance and its effects).

"This [universe] is myself and I am all", that is his highest state.

'That indeed is his form, in which all his desires are fulfilled, in which all desires become the self, and which is free from desires and devoid of grief.

'In this state a father is no more a father, a mother is no more a mother, the worlds are no more the worlds, the gods are no more the gods, the Vedas are no more the Vedas'.

Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad

(4.2.4, 4.3.5, 4.3.6, 4.3.7, 4.3.20, 4.3.21, 4.3.22)

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is an attempt to interpret Christ's message of the Kingdom of God, in the background of Vedanta.

In THE RATIONAL RELIGION OF THE HINDUS Mr. K. Chandrasekhara Pillai writes in an illuminating way how Shankara's interpretation of Advaita Vedanta makes us realize that this world or even our own mind is ultimately unreal, and Consciousness the only abiding Reality.

In the second and final instalment of the article THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN EVERYTHING—II Robert P. Utter, a former teacher of English and Philosophy at the

City College, San Francisco, concludes with the observation that the supreme goal of worshipping God in everything is to attain the state of ever-free, the Jivanmukta.

ARE WE ZORASTRIANS FIRE-WORSHIPPERS ? is an exposition of the true meaning of Fire-worship, the chief ritual in the Zoroastrianism, by Dr. Jal K. Wadia, himself a devout follower of the religion of Zoroaster.

Swami Sastrananda's SATYAKAMA-SATYA-SAMPRADAYA is the fourth scene of the play based on the teaching of the Upanishads.

CHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM OF GOD

(EDITORIAL)

The Young son of the carpenter called himself the 'Son of God'. For the last few years he had been preaching the message of the Kingdom of God in the entire region of Jordan, Judeah and Galilee. 'Repent Ye', he said everywhere, 'the Kingdom of God is at hand'. The simple folk saw in him the messiah, the guide to this heavenly kingdom. He healed the lepers, made the lame whole, gave sight to the blind, and brought the dead back to life. People found in the young man the purity and power of God. Secretly they even called him the King of Jews, and also Christ, the saviour.

The priests of Jerusalem did not accept this self-appointed Messiah. He was not approved by these mediators of God. They accused him of blasphemy in the name of God, and brought him to the Roman governor for judgement. They wanted him

to be crucified. The judge Pilate asked him, 'Art thou the king of Jews?' Jesus answered 'My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.' Pilate again asked him, 'Are you a king then?' Jesus answered, 'Thou sayest I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that bear witness unto the Truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.' Pilate refused to crucify him. But the howling demand of the Jewish priests to crucify him continued. Pilate went again for a new trial. Finally he asked Jesus, 'Whence are thou?' Jesus kept silent. Pilate now burst out in anger, 'Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?' Finally Jesus spoke, 'Thou couldst

have no power *at all* against me except it were given thee from above.¹ Jesus was sent to be crucified. The worshippers of God felt happy that they had 'no other king except Ceaser'. They 'platted a crown of thorns and put it about his head, and began to salute him, "Hail, King of Jews!" On the "superscription of his accusation" which hang above him on the Cross, was written "King of the Jews"².

Jesus lay dying on the Cross. The priests started mocking at him now along with the scribes and elders. 'He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.'³ Jesus who made of two fishes and five loaves a feast for multitude, who walked on the waters of the tempestuous sea of Galilee to save the drowning Peter, did neither come down from the cross, nor save himself. He died with the prayer for these very children of Israel, whose joy was in his crucifixion, 'O Lord, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.'

When St. Paul went to Rome to preach Christ and his message to the Corinthians, he regretted: 'The Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified—unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness.'⁴ Christ preached a perfection which is like that of the Heavenly Father. He spoke of a Kingdom of God which is within, an everlasting life to be lived not on this earth, but in the realm of the Spirit. And this message he spread with a passion which led him finally to die on the Cross.

The Greeks found Christ's willing acceptance of crucifixion an act of foolish-

ness. Why should a perfected soul die unnecessarily for the common mass? Why should perfection be sought in an everlasting life beyond death, and not in this physical, tangible world? Why should it be in the realm of the Spirit, in the domain of 'within'? The Greeks always dreamt of perfection in space-time that gave birth to the unforgettable Greek sculptures of Venus and Appolo, the magnificent pillars and facades of Partheonon or Olympus. 'For the Greeks, "finite" is complimentary and synonymous with perfection. "Infinite", for the Greeks, was synonymous with "imprecise", "unformed", "chaotic", and "irrational"'.⁵ In fact the Greeks had a fear of the infinite. Theirs was a religion of 'the finite, rational and perfect'. They failed again, to understand why the perfected Christ should come down and die on the Cross for the very people who denied and persecuted him. The Greek philosophers refused to return to men, and thus failed to bring a resurrection of the Greek civilization, from the point of decay. Philosophers with ideas, in the decaying period of Greek history, failed to emerge as philosophers of action. Epictetus, the Greek philosopher, spoke of the city of God (Civitus Dei). But it was only an idea, while St. Paul translated the idea of Christ's Kingdom of Heaven into a dynamic religion, by his personal passion and sacrifice.

Utilitarians or materialists, like these Greeks or the Jewish priests, are afraid to lose this life for an unknown reward in the name of God. With an innate love for a sensate life, the Jewish priests failed to accept Christ's Gospel of renunciation, and

1. *Gospel according to St. John*, 18:33, 18:33-37, 19:9-11.

2. *St. Mark* 15:17, 18, 26.

3. *St. Matthew* 27:41, 42.

4. *1 Corinthians* 1:22-23.

5. Paul Grenet, *Thomism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) p. 71 Quoted by Huston Smith 'The Spiritual Heritage of India,' *Vedanta for East and West* (Bourne End, U. K.: Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre) issue 171 January-February, 1980, p. 17.

sacrifice for others. Jesus asked them to lay up treasures in heaven, and not on earth where 'rust corrupts and thieves steal'.⁶ When his own disciples got frightened with the idea of total renunciation, he assured, 'Behold the fowls of air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.'⁷ The Jewish priests expected Jesus to bring by his miracle a kingdom of God on earth when every stone in Jerusalem would be turned into gold. Jesus did nothing of the sort, although he revealed his miraculous power to the faithful ones. The new messiah, on the contrary, spoke to these gold-mongers, of a Kingdom of Spirit. 'The Kingdom of God is within', he said, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'⁸ It is like 'a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field... but when it is grown, it is greatest among herbs and becometh a tree so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.'⁹ Again Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a life of perfection and purity. It is like 'leaven' which makes the entire meal fragrant.¹⁰ This is the greatest Kingdom for which one should sacrifice all. It is like the 'goodly pearl' for which the merchant men went and sold all that he had, and bought it.¹¹ The Kingdom of God is the manifestation of man's innate divinity which gathers all the divine virtues in life and transcends the vices. It is like the net which 'gathered the good in the vessels, but casteth bad away.'¹²

But what price has one to pay to acquire this kingdom: Renunciation. When the

richman's son approached Jesus, Jesus said unto him, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven... Come *and* follow me'. The richman's son failed to respond, as he had desires for wealth. Jesus reminded his disciples, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'¹³

The Jewish priests could not appreciate such ideas of renunciation. They wanted to have both God and mammon together. The Gospel of Jesus frustrated them, just as his rising popularity angered them. They stood, *en masse*, against the power that Jesus swayed over the simple folk with his pure God-intoxicated life. Obviously, like all incarnations of God the young Jesus, too, had to stand face to face with the worldly custodians of utilitarian religion, and 'the false prophets' who converted God and his temple into means to worldly gains. 'Woe unto you, scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites!', he said, 'Woe unto you, ye blind guides which strain at gnat and swallow a camel...ye are like unto white sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead man's bones, and of all uncleanness.'¹⁴ He cautioned the believing masses that "false Christs" and "false prophets" shall arise and "seduce" and "deceive" even the elect.¹⁵ Like a blazing fire 'he went unto the temple, and began to cast out them, that sold therein, and them that bought, saying unto them, "It is written my house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves."¹⁶ The culmination of this struggle was, said

6. *St. Matthew* 1:20.

7. *Ibid.*, 1:26.

8. *Ibid.*, 7:7.

9. *Ibid.*, 14:31.

10. *Ibid.*, 13:33.

11. *Ibid.*, 13:4.

12. *Ibid.*, 13:47.

13. *Ibid.*, 19:21-24.

14. *Ibid.*, 23:16-27.

15. *St. Mark* 13:22-31.

16. *St. Luke* 19:45.

Vivekananda, the 'overthrowing of the mass of witchcraft', 'the killing of the dragon of priestly selfishness', from whose clutches Jesus 'rescued' the jewel of Truth and gave it to the world.¹⁷

For the majority of mankind, like those Jewish priests, God and religion are only words, children's prattle. They are but means to the one single aim—worldly prosperity. The saviours like Christ and Buddha could and did stand upon Truth for the sake of Truth. For them 'the world is not, only God is'. A few were there who were thrice blessed to follow the path of these great masters. The apostles of Christ accepted the same crucifixion in their own lives with a superhuman passion for their beloved master. They, too, radiated a little of Christ's divinity.

On the shore of Galilee, Christ met his first disciples, the two simple sons of a fisherman. 'Come, I will make you fishers of men', he said. They cast their nets, renounced everything, and followed the master. These were the 'salt of the earth', Jesus would say. For these poor have-nots of God, he would shower all his love. Once when the disciples gathered round him Jesus 'lifted up his eyes... on his disciples, and said, 'Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the Kingdom of God.'¹⁸ These very children he was sending into a hostile world to preach his Gospel of the Kingdom of God within. He was sending them 'as lambs among wolves'. For these blessed souls his mother-heart cried in agony, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen

gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!¹⁹ To them his parting message was, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation but be of good cheer... These things I have spoken to you that ye might have peace'.²⁰ And finally, moments before his capture, he prayed to his heavenly Father for these beloved ones, and offered them under His protection, 'I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine'... 'They are not of the world, as I am not of the world; Sanctify them through Thy Truth; Thy word is Truth... I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou has sent me, and has loved them, as Thou has loved me... for Thou loved me before the foundation of the world'.²¹ And each of these apostles laid down their lives on the cross, as Jesus did.

Later day saints of Christianity accepted the same act of crucifixion in a spiritual sense. Their self-denials, austerities, years of vigils, fasts and prayers, their long years of intense spiritual war with the dragons inside, brought to all of them a spiritual crucifixion that led to their spiritual rebirth into saints.

The unknown poor peasant of Russia, the author of *The Way of the Pilgrim* reached perfection by a total self-surrender on seven words of prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ! Have mercy on me'. Brother Lawrence practised *The Presence of God* in the monastery as a cook, and thus reached perfection. St. Teresa of Avila experienced, during her prolonged illness, the pain of crucifixion of her beloved Lord, and reached sainthood through prayer which is to her *The Way of Perfection*. St. John of the Cross had to pass through the same

17. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1971) vol. 8, p. 94.

18. St. Luke 6:20.

19. St. Matthew 23:27.

20. St. John 16:32.

21. St. John 17.

years of intense physical affliction for the sake of the Lord. Through these periods of *Ascent* and *Dark Night*, he reached the exalted vision of the *Spiritual Canticle* and himself emerged as a *Living Flame of God*. St. Francis of Assisi, the second Christ as he is sometimes called, experienced stigmata, the bleeding on his own hands, by a complete identification with a crucified Christ.

To these poor beggars of God, history bowed down in all the ages. When the early Christian monks entered Rome, the emperor was said to have remarked, 'Have those beggars come, beggars who can topple empires?' In 33 A.D. Romans crucified Jesus. By 328 A.D. Roman empire had accepted Christianity as the state religion. In his first epistle to the new Christians of Corinth St. Paul wrote, 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ... For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. ... Where is the wise? ... hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ... Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men'.²²

These foolish beggars of God dared to enter the Kingdom of God at the expense of the world, even their own lives. And the kingdoms of the world fell at their feet.

The 'Great Commandment' of which Jesus never tired of speaking to these seekers of God is, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.'²³ To one who wanted to follow him, Jesus held

out the dreary path to perfection, 'The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head'. This total renunciation of all mundane support is what Christ said as the only way to the Kingdom of God. He laid down no other way. We, who wanted to follow him, failed because we cannot part with our ego and selfishness. We want mammon first, and we want God to give us that. 'Woe unto us!' said Vivekananda in the West, 'Let us confess and not put to shame that great teacher of humanity! ... If we cannot follow the ideal let us confess our weakness, but not degrade it. Let us not try to pull it down.'²⁴ 'The wedding is ready but they which were invited were not worthy', said Jesus.²⁵ With all the pomp and grandeur of liturgy, with all the practicality of organization and proselytizing power, we have made of Jesus, as Vivekananda put it frankly to western followers of Jesus, 'a great politician', 'a great military general' or 'a great patriotic Jew'.²⁶

When Jesus spoke of God, he spoke to three categories of spiritual seekers. For the ordinary ones Jesus spoke of 'God as a Father in heaven'. The way of dualistic worship is the commonest to the majority of mankind. Even to those who try to feel God's presence within through meditation, says Shankara, "the spatial limitation (of God) is justifiable".²⁷ Vivekananda says, 'The absolute cannot be worshipped, so we must worship a manifestation, such a one as has our nature. Jesus had our nature; he became the Christ;

22. 1, Corinthians 1:27, 19, 20, 25.

23. St. Matthew 23:37-38.

24. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1978) Vol. 4, p. 145.

25. St. Matthew 23:37-38.

26. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1978) Vol. 4, p. 145.

27. *Brahma-sutra Bhashya* Translated by Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) p. 154-55.

so can we, and so *must* we. Christ and Buddha were the names of a state to be attained; Jesus and Gautam were the persons to manifest it'.²⁸ Those who came closer to Jesus and loved him, he gave a higher teaching, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches'. He wanted them to realize themselves as not something eternally separate from a God sitting somewhere in an imaginary heaven, but as a part of the Ultimate Reality, as waves on the infinite ocean of God. But to the chosen few he held up the highest truth. 'For the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him'.²⁹ To these seekers Jesus revealed the identity of man and God, as all incarnations of God do. To the woman who wondered if Jesus was the same promised messiah, he said: 'I that speak unto thee am He'.³⁰ To his disciples he said the same truth: 'I and My Father are One' ... 'I am the Spirit, the Truth, the way to the everlasting life. He that worshippeth me in spirit, worshippeth me in truth... He that cometh from above is above all ... That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit'.³¹ When his disciple Philip asked, 'Lord show us the Father and we shall be satisfied', Jesus said, 'Have I not been with you so long and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father ... Believe that I am in Father and the Father in me ... because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in Father and you in me, and I in you'.³²

28. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 7, p. 29.

29. St. John 4:33.

30. St. John 4:26.

31. *Ibid.*, 3:6, 31.

32. *Ibid.*, 14:8.

Like all other incarnations of God, Jesus, too, came to uphold the superiority of Spirit over matter, of God over the world, of the word, the *Shabda-Brahman* as the Ultimate source of all creations. These monistic spiritual ideas, always less emphasized in Semitic religions, are set forth in the first five verses of the Gospel according to St. John which forms, according to Vivekananda, 'the whole essence of Christianity'. This Gospel begins with the profound idea: 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God'. The Ultimate Reality is represented by the word 'Om' according to Vedanta. The sounds A, U, M (the three sounds inside 'OM') contains all the words in the universe as all letters are uttered in three places ... gutter (A), palate (U) and lip (M). And words, when concentrated upon, are translated into reality. This universe is *Padartha*, or a word-built universe. (*Pada* means word and *artha*, meaning). The Ultimate Reality represented by 'OM' manifests itself through the superhuman purity, knowledge, power, and bliss in the life of an incarnation. Jesus like Rama, Krishna, or Ramkrishna, represents the everlasting life, the infinite in a finite life. This infinite dimension inside the finite body-mind complex of these incarnations is rarely understood, and even grossly misunderstood by the ordinary mortals. 'In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not'.³³

In the language of Vivekananda 'God became Christ to show man his true nature, that we too are god. We are human coverings over the Divine; but as the Divine Man, Christ and we are One'.³⁴

33. *Ibid.*, 1:4.

34. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 7, p. 4.

He asks, 'How can we understand Jesus unless we are his equals? We are the light that illumines all the Bibles and Christs and Buddhas that ever were'.³⁵ 'If he (Jesus Christ) was perfect, then we too can become perfect'.³⁶ 'Religion is not imitation of Jesus! You are quite as great as Jesus, Buddha or anybody else. If we are not, we must struggle to be...'.³⁷ The Vedanta supplies the rationale of all religions. In Western or Semitic religions the idea is that without a messiah or a holy book there cannot be any religion. But 'Real religion' says Vivekananda 'the highest, rises above mythology; it can never rest upon that'. For 'It is the message that makes the messenger; the Lord makes the temple; not vice versa'. Further, 'Books are useless to us until our own book opens...'.³⁸

In the West people, by and large, practise religion through community prayers in the Churches. Compared to this 'spiritual communism' of the west, the East always encourages 'spiritual individualism' where individuals commune alone with the God within. Did not Jesus, the Son of carpenter, pray alone, in secret, in the wilderness? It is this spiritual communion with God that made Jesus one with the heavenly Father. This Jesus is the Jesus of the orient where mystic union with God is more common than in the West. The great German mystic Meister Eckhart said: 'When I return to God, I shall be without form and thus my re-entry will be far more exalted than the setting out.' He knew that in true mystic con-

templation God and the seeker are fused into one. 'These creatures speak of God ...', said Meister Eckhart, 'but why do they not mention the Godhead? Because there is only unity in Godhead and there is nothing to talk about. God acts. The Godhead does not. It has nothing to do and there is nothing going on it'.³⁹

As the musk deer at the end of a frantic search realizes that the musk is in its own navel, and not in any distant forest where it so long roamed breathlessly, the mystic similarly realizes the Kingdom of God within himself. St. Bernard put it beautifully, 'Why do my eyes behold the sky and not my feet? It is because my eyes are more like the sky than my feet.' Meister Eckhart says, 'God is near to us, but we are far from Him. God is within. We are without. God is at home; we are abroad. ... When God made man he put into his soul his equal, his active, everlasting masterpiece'.⁴⁰ Jacob of the Old Testament said: 'God is in this place and I did not know it'.⁴¹

Zealous followers of Christ have, throughout the centuries persecuted the Jews on the simple ground that the Jews crucified young Jesus of thirty-three at the Golgotha of Jerusalem. For the true mystics and saints, Jesus is not just a body-mind complex who died on the Cross centuries ago. For them he never ceases to exist inside their own purified heart. With a mind elevated to Christ's passion for God, they realize him as an undying Spirit, the 'living presence'. St. Teresa of Avila speaks to her nuns: 'You may be in the habit of praying while looking at a picture of Christ, but at a time like this it

35. Ibid., p. 89.

36. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1971) Vol. 8, p. 17.

37. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) p. 370.

38. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 7, pp. 50, 65, 89.

39. *Meister Eckhart*, A modern translation by Raymond B. Blackney (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1941) p. 226.

40. Ibid., p. 224.

41. Ibid., p. 130.

seems foolish to me to turn away from the living images—the Person Himself—to look at His picture.⁴² It is this 'Person Himself' who became a 'living presence' to Ramakrishna when one day he was looking at the picture of Madonna and the child. The living Jesus finally merged into the body of Ramakrishna who lost himself in the thought of Christ and his apostles for the next few days. He soon had a second vision of an all-compassionate Christ, who again merged in his body.

The Christianity of the first three centuries was one of spirituality. Then the scene slowly changed. The spiritual seeking was replaced by intense desire to conquer other kingdoms in the name of God. 'Faggots, executioners, the frightful tribunal of inquisition, the crusaders, papal bulls inciting subjects to rebel, seditious preachers, conspiracies, assassinations of princes—these were the regular means that this sixteenth century Christianity employed against all who would not submit to its orders',⁴³ wrote a Christian historian. Toynbee, an ardent votary of Christianity as a saving grace to mankind, wrote with a historian's regret: 'If Christian theology—at least as interpreted by the Augustinian-Calvinist-Jansenist school—is true, God is a monster!'⁴⁴

Fanatics and fundamentalists in semitic religions have decried, and very often persecuted the mystics. Meister Eckhart was persecuted for his Vedantic message 'which might easily lead his listeners into error'. Eckhart replied in vain, 'If the ignorant are not taught they will never learn and none of them ever know the art of living and dying'. The lone mystic's

voice was tragically drowned by the *vox populi* of the priesthood. 'The church tried to fit Christ into it, not the church into the Christ', said Vivekananda.⁴⁵ The highest ecclesiastical authority indicted Meister Eckhart in Feb. 1327, and he was considered as one 'deceived by the father of lies who often appears as an angel of light'.⁴⁶ In the midst of the flourishing empire of medieval Christendom, Eckhart, too, died a lone Christian, on the Cross of Truth. His only mistake was that he worshipped Christ not as a person but as the indwelling Spirit, as the way to the everlasting life.

What is the everlasting life of which Jesus spoke again and again? It is the transfiguration of the mundane man into the divine being, holy and perfect. How did this transfiguration come? St. Paul tells us of this transfiguration, 'So also is the resurrection of the dead... It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in natural body, it is raised in a spiritual body. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is Lord from heaven.'⁴⁷ Contrary to the belief that resurrection is of the flesh and the body, Paul explicitly denies that 'flesh and blood can inherit the kingdom of God', and writes that 'as long as we are in the body we are exiles from the Lord... We would rather leave our home in the body and go to live with the Lord.'⁴⁸ 'In later Judaism the soul could be regarded as separate from the body', wrote a Christian theologian.⁴⁹ Jesus' final spiritual transfiguration came after his conquest over satan and

42. St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection* (New York: Image Books, 1964) p. 230.

43. Arnold Toynbee, *An Historian's Approach to Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956) p. 162.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

45. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 7, p. 30.

46. *Meister Eckhart*, op. cit., pp. xxiii & xxiv.

47. 1, Corinthians, 15:35-38, 42-5, 47.

48. 2, Corinthians, 5:6-8.

49. Paul Badham, *Christian Beliefs about Life after Death* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976) p. 40.

his three temptations. This came after his forty days of fasting in the wilderness. 'It was for forty days that Moses stayed at Sinai', wrote a biographer, 'and Eliza in the wilderness.'⁵⁰ We do not know any detail of these forty days of spiritual trial. The gospels only tell us that after his fasting, satan came with three temptations to overpower Jesus. Jesus conquered these last desires and stood on the rock of God forever. 'I have overcome the world', he said.⁵¹ 'Except a man be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God', said Jesus to Nicodemus. Men are spiritually reborn. He develops a divine body, a *Bhagavati tanu*, as the Vedantins say. This is especially evident in the life of an incarnation of God.

After twelve years of historic spiritual disciplines, Sri Ramakrishna, as his disciples saw him, rose above the demands of the biological body. He lost even his ordinary ego. In meditation he saw that the sinful man in him, dark and terrible, leaving his body forever, and that the divine man coming out of the body, and killing the sinful dark man with his trident. With all lust and greed, and even the ego, gone forever, he turned into holiness itself. While we know virtually nothing about Christ's forty days in the wilderness, every possible detail of Ramakrishna's spiritual struggles, is recorded today. In Ramakrishna, Romain Rolland saw the rebirth of a 'younger brother of Christ'. 'Ramakrishna is our Son, our God reborn', says Rolland, 'with each return he reveals himself a little more fully and more enriched by the universe'.⁵² Had Rolland, himself an ardent Christian, made the statements in the sixteenth century,

he would have been hurled on the stakes.

Tolstoy, another celebrated Christian, who read Vivekananda, declared him as one on the same level as Christ...⁵³ Vivekananda himself reflected the divinity of Christ. A celebrated American poetess who heard him for the first time wrote: 'I was listening to Vivekananda this morning one hour. I believe him to be the reincarnation of some great Spirit, perhaps Buddha, perhaps Christ'.⁵⁴ In California, Vivekananda burst upon the modern pharisees with the vehemence of a Christ who had one day stormed into the synagogues. To one who knew him, he said, 'You have heard that Christ said, "My words are Spirit and they are life". So are my words Spirit and life. They will burn their way into your brain and you will never get away from them!'⁵⁵ When an agnostic met Vivekananda for the first time, she wept and said, 'That man has given me eternal life. I never wish to hear him again.'⁵⁶ This is real baptism. 'Baptism', Vivekananda told the western Christians, 'is the direct introduction into the life of the Spirit. If you receive the real baptism, you know you are not the body, but the Spirit... Without this spiritual elevation the so-called baptism is mere talk, talk, ever disturbing the world with foolishness.'⁵⁷

With the courage of a prophet Vivekananda declared, 'Even Christians cannot

50. F. W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (London: Cassell & Company, 1888) p. 56.

51. St. John 16:33.

52. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) pp. 11-13.

53. *Swami Vivekananda: Studies in Soviet Union.*, Edited by Chelisev (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1987) p. 159.

54. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1966) p. 31.

55. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West*, op. cit., p. 465.

56. His Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961) p. 246.

57. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1971) Vol. 8. pp. 114-15.

understand their New Testament without understanding the Vedanta. The Vedanta is the rationale of all religions. Without the Vedanta every religion is superstition. With it everything becomes religion.⁵⁸ It is because of the absence of this Vedantic background behind all religions, that we have made of Christ, the Spirit, a Christ as the only begotten son of God. The western philosopher Pascal wrote, 'A religion cannot be true unless it has attained a true knowledge of our nature.... What religion has attained this knowledge except Christianity?'⁵⁹ Another western philosopher Schopenhauer who saw the whole breakdown of Christian theology with the discovery of Darwin that man came not from Adam and Eve but from monkeys, came to read the Upanishads. He wrote, 'In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.' Because of these Vedantic thoughts, he foretold, 'The world is about to see a revolution in thought more extensive and more powerful than that which was witnessed by the Renaissance of Greek literature'.⁶⁰

The Christians believe that God sent his only begotten Son to lead humanity to perfection. Why cannot God send another Son to serve humanity? Who can put a limit to God's power to manifest himself through man again and again? The Gita emphasizes this idea at the very outset by clarifying that whenever unrighteousness dominates the world scene, God manifests himself through a man, an incarnation of God, in order to restore the rule of Law

or Dharma in the world-order. In London Vivekananda explained this rise of a prophet: 'Universal thought-waves seem to recur every five hundred years, when invariably the great wave typifies and swallows up others. It is this which constitutes a prophet. He focuses in his own mind the thought of the age in which he is living and gives it back to mankind in concrete form... Always the wave that is backed by the greatest purity and the noblest character is what breaks upon the world as a movement of social reform.'⁶¹ Human civilization is still pretty young. Toynbee, an ardent follower of Christ and Christian religion, asks: 'How could a God who is deemed to be loving and omnipotent leave His children to perish at the dawn of their history? Human race expects at least a few thousand years to leave on this planet.... I cannot believe that... any particular prophet has seen the last of the prophets.'⁶² Arrogant denial of this truth has always led to the sad consequences of murderous fundamentalism.

Like Buddha's return after his enlightenment of Bodhi, to the doors of common man, Christ also returned to common men and sacrificed himself for bringing to their door the highest truths of religion through simple parables. Like Krishna or Ramakrishna, he, too, was born among the poor and the havenots, the shepherds of Bethlehem. And to them he returned with the power of a Christ, a saviour, to save them from the hungry hands of the false prophets, and lead them to glory and light. In a similar way Ramakrishna, too, returned from the temple precincts of Dakshineswar to the dark streets of a westernized Calcutta steeped in a sensate

58. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1975) Vol. 5, p. 212.

59. *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, op. cit., p. 290.

60. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1973) Vol. 3, p. 109.

61. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1963) Vol. 4, p. 39.

62. A. J. Toynbee, *Experiences* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969) p. 136.

culture. None of these Sons of God fought to have a kingdom without. They went everywhere carrying the bliss of their God-intoxicated life of absolute purity and unselfishness. That purity and unselfishness were the forces that brought new civilisations. The very quiet and calm of their life, their egolessness and fearlessness for the sake of God, their compassion to help men to realize the truth and, thereby put an end to the existential sufferings of humanity, denote them as world-movers.

'The highest men are calm, silent and unknown. They are the men who really know the power of thought; they are sure that, even if they go into a cave and close the door and simply think five true thoughts and then pass away, these five thoughts of theirs will live through eternity...'⁶³ 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and everything else shall be added unto you', said Jesus. The Bhagavad-Gita concludes with virtually a message of true success through the path of spiritual perfection. 'Whenever heroic seekers of truth like Arjuna follow the words of Krishna, the perfected Master in all avenues to Godhead, there will certainly be prosperity, success, and above all spiritual perfection inside.' Vivekananda cautions us to seek only the Kingdom of God and to forget what 'rest' will be added unto us. 'Truth is to be judged by truth and by nothing else', says Vivekananda. 'Doing good is not the test of Truth... The sun needs no torch by which to see it. Even if truth destroys the whole universe, still it is truth, stand by it.... Let a few stand out and live for God alone and save religion for the world.'⁶⁴ This is what all the great masters preached and

practised. And the world had to bow down before them.

Matter is limited by space and time. The kingdom of matter, too, is limited in space and time. Spirit alone is eternal. The Kingdom of Spirit transcends the boundaries of space and time. On the battle grounds of Waterloo, Napoleon dreamt of a global empire. But destiny waited for him with the fatal confinement in the little island of St. Helena. The lord of war admitted his defeat to the poor 'King' who died on the Cross, 'My kingdom is dwindling to nought', he said, 'The Kingdom of Christ is ever-expanding'.

Huge Gothic cathedrals today stand with their spires rising far above the valley of men, and touching, as if, the infinity of the heavens. Through the stained glasses above the altar, enters the light of heaven that illumines the hearts of devotees during moments of prayer. The deep rise and fall of passion hymns of Bach or Handel stir the minds of the devotees with a love for the Lord who died on the Cross for them nearly two thousand years ago. Yet passion is the beginning of religion. It is not an end. Its only aim is to lead to an identification with the dear God within. This western love for a bleeding Christ crucified by the enemies of God, Vivekananda stigmatized as 'Roman brutality'. The adoration of crucifixion is also born of the Judaic tradition of killing an individual as a scapegoat for the good of the many. The highest priest Caiaphas who desired the death of Christ 'gave the counsel to the Jews that one man should die for the people.'⁶⁵

Yet another tradition has grown among the followers of Christ. Perhaps more oriental in its spirit, the tradition lives in the cloistered contemplation of the Carthusian and Camaldolese monks, and

63. *Teachings of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) p. 210.

64. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 7, pp. 100-101.

65. St. John 18:14.

the Franciscan and Greek Orthodox monasteries where intense prayers bring the awakening of the holy child within. Vedanta too asks us to awaken the eternal Christ or Buddha within us. This is what many are seeking today.

Rituals are a must for all religions. But when rituals dominate religion, the spirit inside smothers. Books and temples or rituals are only secondary details. The goal of religion is to manifest the Christ-man, the Buddha-man within us, and then see the same Christ everywhere. The same Rama who is within me, is within all, He pervades the universe, says Tulsidas, the Rama-worshipper poet of India. The elaborate liturgy of modern Christianity tires many a soul seeking the Spirit within. Here is the feeling of one such seeker:

Church worship is intended to be the means whereby a man is encouraged to realize the all-pervasive presence of the Almighty. For long centuries Church architecture has been dedicated to this end. The lofty pillars and arches of the cathedral of the Parish Church are monuments in stone to remind the worshipper of God's exalted presence. The echoing acoustics are intended to prompt awareness of the numinous. Liturgy is designed to make it easier for the worshipper to have 'a frame of reference' to assist him in his meeting with the eternal mind. Alas, every symbol carries with it distortions, and a symbol is as much a barrier as a bastion in man's search for loving contact with God. **When all this is overlaid** by an obsessive ritual emphasizing little but sins, guilt and redemption, there is no wonder that man fails to find the reality of a tender and warm relationship.⁶⁶

The persistence on man's original sin as contrasted with the perfection of the heavenly Father, has always alienated man from God, making the 'schizophrenic division' of the West between man and God,

earth and heaven, the secular and the sacred. Vedanta emphasizes instead the essential divinity of man, and the essential divinity of all life. Religion, in Vedanta, is the deification of all life, high and low, secular and sacred. It is this Vedantic reverence to the innate divinity in all that was expressed through the lips of Vivekananda, the paragon of Vedanta, in the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893:

Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss—yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye, divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature.⁶⁷

'What modern man seeks', Theodore Roszak writes today in his book *Where the Waste Land Ends*, is the state of *apocatastasis*, an early Christian idea of 'the restoration of God to man, of the secular to the sacred, of hell to heaven'. This is an old Vedantic idea which percolated into early Christianity through the Buddhist monks of middle East, known as Essenes. Tolstoy writes, 'Our Christian notions of spiritual life come from the ancient Hebrew, and the Hebrew notions from the Assyrians, the Assyrian from the Indian... the older, the loftier.'⁶⁸

One space-scientist recently asked an Indian Swami in America, 'When we went to the moon we needed no Christ to launch or land our space-ships. Yet why should the Church fathers insist that unless we worship Christ, we have no salvation?' The swami assured him with the simple gospel of Vedanta, 'Yes, Christ is within you, His power, His purity, His love, His transcend-

66. C. Edward Barker, *The Church's Neurosis and Twentieth Century Revelations* (London: Rider & Co., 1975) p. 105.

67. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) Vol. 1, p. 11.

68. *Swami Vivekananda: Studies in Soviet Union*, op. cit., p. 171.

ence above the world, his bliss of God, his knowledge of everything, is within you. So long you utilized the same infinite Christ-power within, to develop your technology. You succeeded. Now if you want to utilize the same power for manifesting Christ's divinity within you, you can do that also.'

In the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati, the Himalayan retreat of Vivekananda, a picture of Christ hangs in the corner of the small library room. Probably it was drawn by an early Christian follower of Vivekananda. It is the picture of an oriental Christ, the ascetic, the Yogi Jesus whom Ramakrishna called Rishikrishna. In this picture Jesus does not pray with eyes turned towards the sky. He sits in

the lotus-posture, his eyes closed. He looks inward into the fathomless depth of the Soul. In the deep forest he meditates in profound clamness. He wears a simple white cloth. A small lizard crawls up his pure immaculate body. A serpent, a tiger, and a hare, all sit quietly at his feet. In the atmosphere of a Franciscan unity with nature, birds fly in joy round him. Two doves just begin to descend on his shoulders. His face radiates a peace that passeth understanding. The Son of God is now in His own Kingdom, the Kingdom to which there is no limit. Jesus is buried in the infinite bliss and knowledge of the everlasting life, the Kingdom of God within.

THE RATIONAL RELIGION OF HINDUS

K. CHANDRASEKHARA PILLAI

I

Hardly fourteen more rolls by mother Earth around the 'light of the three worlds'—*trailokya dipah*—and homo sapiens will be drifted into the twenty-first century of the Christian era. The first day of that new century will however be reckoned by the traditionalist Hindu as the 18, 63, 081st day of his *Kali Yuga*; which means that the Christian era started on the 11,32,581st day of the last of the four cyclic yugas. But assuming that *Kali Yuga* is now running its 5,085th year, civilized man is certainly older than *Kali Yuga* or even *Krita Yuga* for that matter. Unfortunately the paucity of contemporaneous evidence has disabled researchers from ascertaining the exact date of the first appearance of Man on earth. Nevertheless we can assert that knowledge is exactly as old as Man, because knowledge is the immediate and

inevitable result of mentation which is inherent in man—*manana* makes *manushya*, or man.

If knowledge is as old as Man, religion is as old as knowledge. Let us see how: All knowledge consists in answers obtained by man to a few questions put by him to himself; such as, what is this? Where is this from? How can I use it? Why that way? Why not differently? These simple questions applied to countless individuals, types of things, and events occurring in Nature, have produced mountains of answers which man has, for the sake of convenience, divided into numerous departments of knowledge, giving a different name to each. Religion is also one such department as it consists of some of the answers to those questions applied to the world as a whole and to man as an individual.

Now, have we modern men, any right, any evidence, to conclude that our progenitors, even the most ancient of human beings, were not possessed, atleast in some crude form, of the five attributes that we possess: desire, emotion, curiosity, reason and imagination? Is it possible to assume that the primitive man was totally blind to the universal phenomena of birth, growth and death in Nature? If he was not, then it must be granted that he too must have asked himself, must have wondered, how the world he saw all around with so many moving and unmoving things in it originated and what he should or should not do to satisfy his several urges. To put questions is to seek answers thereto and to seek answers is to continuously entertain answers of some kind whether correct or incorrect, doubtful or certain. So even the aborigines must have had heir own religious wisdom. It is for this reason that we have said earlier that religion is as old as knowledge. Religion arose as knowledge, as Veda.

II

Doubtlessly the earliest religious document of the human race, the Veda, gave rise to what is now known as Hinduism. This religion whose life blood is the Philosophy of the Upanishads is unique in several ways. 'The mother of religions'¹ and its ocean like literature with its ever expanding horizon, causes bewilderment in the minds of many. There is no path it has not explored through which the spirit of man could move towards its cherished goal. It is a faith that subjects itself to the Control of Reason. Even its reason allows itself

1. Swami Vivekananda used this phrase in his first address in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) vol. 1, p. 1.

to be superseded finally by a higher faculty. It defies definition but defines salvation as nothing but realization of the Truth, and bondage as mere ignorance. It holds that the individual is alone the maker of his destiny and no external agency or intermediary can offer liberation ready-made to him. It maintains that sorrow is the result of ignorance and that God resides in the heart of every being in the form of love and bliss. It teaches man that in his own mind he has his best friend and his bitterest foe, and it is upto him to subdue the inimical mind with the help of the friendly mind, and thereby win the battle of life. Such is this religion whose votaries call it Sanatana dharma—the religion eternal!

III

Understanding what religion really is and what it is not, is essential for human welfare. That is because Religion has been—and is being—widely made use of to produce and promote discord instead of harmony, hatred instead of love, and war instead of peace between man and man with the result that thousands of free thinkers who have at heart the peace and prosperity of the human race are disgusted with religion and consider it to be a curse to humanity. But we do feel that the indictment is merited by the misinformed, misguided and perversely motivated preachers of religion, and not by religion itself. To condemn physics for what happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, does not make sense.

It is however true that while Science is amoral, religion is nothing if not morals. Hence a religionist who behaves immorally, unrighteously, is far more despicable than a Scientist who does so.

'Science' simply means knowledge and is etymologically the equivalent of the

Sanskrit 'Veda'. So Science as such is not modern. We therefore often use the restrictive term 'Modern Science' to denote the experimental Sciences of comparatively recent origin.

Modern man is in a way a product of modern Science. His methods of approach and standards of evaluation are largely those that the Scientists have adopted and popularized. Anything 'unscientific' is anathema to any educated person of the modern world irrespective of his or her being a professional student of Science or not. To possess a Scientific outlook and temperament one need not be a Scientist oneself. On the other hand even some great Scientists have been accused by certain other eminent Scientists and thinkers of being unscientific in their approach to certain problems.

In exhibiting a clean Scientific temperament the educated Hindu of modern India does not probably lag behind any counterpart of his living in any other part of the Globe. He cannot therefore be asked to accept, in the name of religion, anything that goes against the findings of Science. Many educated Hindu Youths do not apparently bother their heads about religion. Can a person not live without religion? They ask. We cannot dismiss that question as silly. To do so would be silly. We have to give serious consideration to that pertinent objection and find a satisfactory reply. We have of course a reply which may perhaps be regarded as unconventional. We hold that even the Sceptic has his own religion without his either being aware of it or owning it. No thinking person can help pondering how this wonderful mansion in which he dwells, this world, came into existence and what type of relation he should maintain with the other inmates of this house; and the answers entertained by him, may be in some remote corner of his mind, to these

questions constitute his religion. In this view one can live without religion only if one can live without mentation.² The real choice before man therefore is not between Religion and no religion, but between a good religion and a bad religion. By good religion or bad religion we do not mean any one of the established religions as such. Every one can make his own religion, but let him make sure that it is a good religion that he makes bearing in mind that a good religion is a rational religion and a bad religion is an irrational religion. If every one were to do this, there would be perfect peace and amity in the World.

IV

So far as Hinduism is concerned those who have taken it seriously, and studied it carefully in all its intricacies, have found its essentials not only satisfying but inspiring, and invaluable to the inquisitive mind. We will briefly deal with some of the most important aspects of this religion which so profoundly appealed to many brilliant intellects of the West like Monier Williams, R.W. Emerson, F. Max Muller, A. L. Basham, Paul Deussen, Louis Renou, G.A. Jacobi, A.B. Keith, John Woodroffe, Romain Rolland, T. S. Eliot, A. J. Toynbee, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood and a host of others.

Stupendous indeed is the scriptural literature of the Hindus. It contains contributions from all types of minds over the millennia. Persons of different tastes may find in it things good, bad and indifferent. But there is not a single metaphysical, ethical, psychological, social, political or economic question of any importance that has not been discussed from

². *Yukti yuktamupadeyam vacanam balak-adapi aparam trnavattayajyam apyuktam padma janmana; Yoga-Vasistha, 2.18.3.*

different angles at some place or other in that illimitably vast literature. And, more astonishing, every one is at liberty—there is absolutely no restriction anywhere³—to accept whatever appears to him to be true or good and reject all else and claim to be a good Hindu. Such intellectual freedom is rare anywhere else.

As any student will soon discover Hinduism is essentially a science of reality called Brahma-vidya or Atma-vidya together with a complete philosophy of life, or dharma, based entirely on that science.

V

The most important aspect of Hinduism is the knowledge about the Ultimate Reality or Brahma-vidya. When we call Brahma-vidya a Science it is no undeserved encomium. What differentiates science from certain other departments of knowledge is its methodology. It is the way of Modern Science not to take anything on trust. It observes facts and events of Nature as closely and thoroughly as possible; it collects, arranges, and classifies them carefully and systematically; it analyses them and builds up hypotheses; it conducts experiments and tests repeatedly; it verifies the hypotheses dispassionately over and over again, and lastly theorises. The theories themselves are accepted as provisional only, always liable to be modified and even discarded in the light of facts newly discovered. That is the method of Science and that method has the full sanction of reason behind it. What is the methodology of Brahma Vidya then? In the terminology of Indian Philosophy 'Method' is 'pramana', which has been defined as the means of gaining valid knowledge. Brahma Vidya accepts

three pramanas: Sruti, Yukti and Anubhava. [Vedanta analyses Yukti as consisting of inference (anumana); Comparison (Upamana) as postulation (Arthapatti); and non-apprehension (anupalabdhi)]. Anubhava means experience which is undoubtedly the most intimate and immediate form of observation, perception par excellence, *Pratyaksha Paramya*, as we may call it. Yukti is reason. So the two methods adopted by Science viz. observation and reason are also accepted by Brahma Vidya as pramanas. But Brahma Vidya has an additional pramana, Sruti i.e. Veda, which some modernists vehemently decry. It is therefore necessary to cogitate a little about that time-honoured pramana of the Hindu Philosophers.

All exponents of Brahma Vidya insist that Veda has to be accepted as the *primary* source of valid knowledge. Why? Shankara gives the answer *Srutisca no atindriyarthavishaye Vijnanotpattau nimittam*⁴ (Veda, for us, causes knowledge to arise in respect of a subject falling outside of the province of the senses). The translation given within brackets is almost literal. Shankara has seldom used words unnecessarily. Every syllable used by him has therefore to be taken into account for understanding the meaning of any of his sentences. Here he indicates that our knowledge of supra-sensuous reality *arose* from the Vedas and that our senses are *incapable* of giving us that knowledge. It is because of these two reasons that Shankara regards the Vedas as our first pramana. At the last stage of *anubhava*, the truth realized is *Pratyaksha* (directly realized) to the experiencer. Reason (*yukti*) having served the purpose of a scaffold, suddenly melts away just before the moment of *anubhava*. What then is the real function of Sruti? It

3. See Shankara's commentary on the *Taittiriya Upanisad*, 2.6.

4. *Asmakam apratyaksamapi cirantamanam pratyaksam*, Shankara, *Vedanta-Sutra-Bhasya*, 1.3.3.

inspires the seeker to move onward for self-knowledge. And is it not absolutely necessary that somebody should do it? The Sruti does it and with that commences the game of *Atma Vidya*.

To the question whether *Brahma Vidya* is justified in its demand that the trainees initially take the existence of Brahman for granted on the authority of the Vedas, our answer is that a method is valid if it can invariably produce the correct result. That principle is unexceptionable in the realm of purely intellectual pursuits unlike in the field of morals where the end may not always justify the means. If therefore the student of *Brahma Vidya* who starts with the presumption that Brahman exists as described in the Vedas (Upanishads) and carries on his inquiry as prescribed, and finally realizes that Brahman exists as an incontrovertible truth, who can say that the method followed by him was faulty or unwarranted? Further, does not science also adopt the same method of working on given hypotheses? It may be objected that even those hypotheses are the result of previous scientific investigations. True. But can not the same be also true of the Vedic utterances about Brahman? Shankara said in one place that what is imperceptible to us might have been within the range of perception to the ancients. And today we know how true it is.

The metaphysics found hidden in the Vedic Samhitas and lying scattered in the major Upanishads has been systematized cogently and consistently by the thinkers of the Advaita school. So while writing about *Brahma Vidya* we have in mind the metaphysics of the Advaita Vedanta or shortly Advaita, which rejects the duality in our perceptions and establishes the One Ultimate Reality as only existing.

Advaita straight away gets to grips with the fundamental epistemological problems of what knowledge is, how it arises, and

where it ends. Knowledge is always awareness of something. Awareness is experienced within ourselves, whereas the things of which we are aware mostly exists outside. When the inside and outside get connected with each other we say we know the external reality. The only test of reality is our awareness of it. This is a self-evident truth.

Ordinarily we associate awareness with mind, and in that case the world outside depends for its existence on the mind. If the world is purely dependent on the mind, the latter can both conceal and reveal the world as it chooses. Advaita does not at all doubt this point. The mind sometimes projects the world, and at other times withdraws the same. During the time when the mind projects the world, we see it. When we see we are said to be awake. So the world *is* when we are i.e. when the mind is *awake*. But what happens to the world when we are asleep? As the world has no existence apart from the mind the world sinks into the mind during sleep.

During the State of wakefulness, as we have seen, a connection is established between the mind of man, and the world outside. What exactly is the nature of that connection? The things of the world being static cannot move into the mind. So, for the connection to be possible, the mind must reach out to those things. But no one can deny that the mind never fully leaves the body during life. Hence it can only be a case of the mind's spreading. Not only can the mind spread, it can also pierce into things. Now, when the spreading, piercing mind is at an object what is it that happens? Advaitins say that the mind fills that object and assumes the form of that object with the result that we are enabled to say that that particular object exists in that particular form. What we actually see—here the word 'see' is used in

the sense of perceiving through any of the five senses—are the forms of objects only. The sum total of the five different kinds of data collected by the five different senses through all of which the same mind flows as it were, is for us the world outside. The external world, then, is simply a construct of the mind. When all the *forms*—and each form is called by us by a different *name*—which go to make up the world vanish, the world itself vanishes. Forms and the world arise when the senses and mind function. In sleep the external senses do not function. But sleep itself is of two kinds. In what we may call shallow sleep, we sometimes dream. In deep sleep we do not even dream.

How does a world arise in dream? The dream world is certainly a projection of the mind. That world is not seen through the external senses. All the same you *see* so many things there including yourself. Who brought those things there? It could only be your mind. So the world-constructing mind in the state of wakefulness, constructs *this* world. Again the same mind constructs a *different* world in dream. But the dream world also goes out of existence in profound sleep. Where is our mind at that stage? It is not to be seen anywhere. It appears that the mind must always have something to live by, and when it is totally deprived of its sustenance, it is as good as dead. So in deep sleep the mind is not. Mind is the name of a function only. But the moment we return from the state of sound sleep, *sushupti*—and we always do return—to any of the other two states, wakefulness (*jagrata*) or dream (*svapna*), we regain our mind and with the mind we regain any one of the two worlds, either the ‘impermanent’ dream-world, or the so called ‘permanent’ this world. Both the worlds, are therefore, creations of the mind.

Another question that arises for considera-

tion in this context is whether this strange thing called mind which produces, and always carries with it a world, is itself awareness (consciousness), or it derives its enlightening power from some other source. In other words, the question is, ‘Is the mind self-luminous?’ Once more, the answer given by Advaita, is definite. The mind has no light of its own, it simply reflects light, as moon reflects the light of the sun. Where is the sun? It is here that we come across the supreme teaching of Brahma Vidya. There is a Reality, says the Srutis, that never ceases to be. It does not cease to shine when the mind ceases to function, as in the state of dreamless sleep. It transcends every known thing. It is not this or that. It simply IS. It is not attainable by the mind or word, both of which have to ‘retreat’ from it. It is the Truth of truths, the Light of lights. It is consciousness, pure and simple, or *prajnana*. It fills everything but is not affected by anything. It does not move, does not change. It knows not birth or death. It is not limited by space, time or causation. There is nothing else like it, and hence it is really indescribable. It has no form, no attributes. It knows, but is not known by anything. It witnesses everything but has no other witness. It alone has absolute Reality, independent existence. It has no second. It is Advaita. It is the ultimate basis, substratum of everything existing, everything known, and everything pleasing. It is *Sat* (the eternal existence). It is *Chit* (the all-pervading Consciousness). It is *Ananda* (the only bliss from which come all other joy or bliss in this universe). It is the smallest of smalls, and the biggest of bigs. It is the Self, the Atman, the Omnipresent, the Brahman. ‘I am that Brahman’. ‘You are That’, says the teacher to the disciple in the Upanishads.

Since the world is only a creation of the mind, itself only temporary in existence,

this world is not real. At the same time, in our day to day life of relative existence, the world is real. It is quite real from one angle, and absolutely unreal from another angle. That is why this world is called *mithya* (or unreal), and is likened to the mirage. This ultimately unreal world is the effect or product of an equally unreal cause called Maya. Maya is a juggler which makes the impossible possible. She has, nay she is, her three moods and two tricks. Inexplicably she is always in all the three moods which differ from one another; though at any given moment she may be more in one mood than in another. And she always plays both her tricks simultaneously. The moods, though only three, are multipliers (gunas). Maya divides by multi-plying. Her double trick is projecting what is not, that is, the dream world, and concealing what truly is, that is, consciousness. This continuous play of the double trick, makes fools of even the wise. Inscrutable is Maya. She is a recurring Zero (*sunyarupa*), sporting beside the immutable One.

Maya is also known as Avidya which blocks the knowledge of Bramhan by making us aware of the many realities (phenomenon) instead of One Reality (Noumenon). Multiplicity or duality is the result of imperfect or limited perception. When the experience of Oneness is gained there is no duality. Sorrow has no entry there. But that experience is unattainable so long as the slightest body-consciousness remains. Even in the third stage of Sushupti, there is a 'body' of ignorance, 'avidya-sharira', and that stands in the way of immediate, unitive experience, *aparokshanubhuti*. There is a fourth state when one is not aware of anything but finds oneself to be one with awareness itself. That state is *samadhi*. None but the unenlightened can disparage *samadhi* as an unconscious or semi-conscious state of

mind. In fact it is super-conscious state to which any person can rise by hard and sustained effort. In that state a person is freed from the fetters of Maya or Avidya once for all, and thereafter he is called 'liberated while living' or the *Jivan Mukta*. Such a one has achieved the summum bonum of human life.

VI

Advaita Vedanta is the 'Science of the Soul'. Ancient it is, yet astonishingly modern. The latest discoveries of modern science were anticipated with the presumption that a sharp distinction existed between matter and energy, and also between matter and mind. Physical objects were taken to be quite independent of the mind of man. Matter was regarded as indestructible, and plurality as ultimate reality. However in the course of the past six decades during which science made tremendous progress, all those old assumptions were found to be baseless, and given up one after another. Today science has proved that all kinds of matter, and all forms of energy are interconvertible and therefore basically the same. But the most wonderful discovery of modern science relates to the mind-matter relation. Max Planck, one of the greatest names in Modern Physics, has said that consciousness cannot be explained in terms of matter and its law. Here are his words: 'Consciousness I regard as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness'. This is the nearest approximation to the Advaita doctrine which holds that consciousness is fundamental in the sense that it fills even the so-called matter. In the language of the *Yoga-Vasistha*:

bodhava buddham yad vastu bodhameva taducyate 'That which is known through "bodha", must itself be consciousness', for, *na abodham budhyate bodho vairupyat tena na anyatha*, 'What is not "bodha" cannot be taken in by bodha, being of a different form'. Says Erwin Schrodinger, another great physicist, 'Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular.... How does the idea of plurality (so emphatically opposed by the Upanishad writers) arise at all?'⁵ The famous Dr. Fritjof Capra in his book *The New Vision of Reality* writes: 'Atomic physics thus reveals a basic oneness of the universe'. All this shows that today modern science stands very near indeed to Advaita philosophy which is the rational basis of Hindu religion.

5. See, Swami Jitatmananda, *Modern Physics and Vedanta* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1986) p. 36 and p. 51.

THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN EVERY THING—II

ROBERT P. UTTER

(Continued from the previous issue)

We now see what is really meant by seeing God in everything. It is seeing God reflected in the pure mind which continually dwells on the formless God-head. For such a person no formal kinds of worship are necessary, since God is seen all the time everywhere in everything within and without. Whether looking outward to sense objects or inward in samadhi one sees the same all-pervading Godhead. For a person who has attained such a state there is no absence of God, all things equally manifest God, and all states of mind are equally filled with the presence of God.

After speaking how as in the case of Sukadeva, all karmas—all puja, japa, tapas, sandhya and so forth—drop away and only the recollection and contemplation of God remain uninterrupted, Sri Ramakrishna asked a disciple to read some verses from the *Uttara Gita*, the disciple read, and finally came to a certain verse which is translated in the *Gospel* as follows:

The twice born [a member of one of the three upper castes] worships the deity in fire,
The munis [holy men] contemplate Him in the heart,
Men of limited wisdom see Him in the image.
And the yogis who have attained same-sightedness
Behold Him everywhere.¹

Upon hearing this verse, the Master immediately went into Samadhi and remained there for a long time. We can see that he was himself just such a yogi as described in the verse, one who had attained same-sightedness, for he responded to the poem by soaring into the heights of divine ecstasy and remaining poised there for an eternal moment. Since this term 'Same-sightedness' is also used as an attribute of God, then the term as applied to an individual describes the highest ideal possible for mankind. Same-

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna Vivekananda Centre 1942) p. 388.

sightedness, which is nothing but seeing everything equally as God, is the essence of the worship of God in everything.

The ideal of worshipping God in everything is nowhere more completely described than in the great Indian scripture the *Bhagavatam*. Ascribed to the poet-sage Vyasa, the *Bhagavatam*, in story after story of kings, saints, and incarnations, emphasizes over and over again the glories of the state achieved by one who worships God in everything. The whole purpose of the *Bhagavatam* is to express the unity of the paths of knowledge and devotion, and, in fact, of all the paths. This unity of all the paths finds its culmination in the worship of God in everything. The famous Eleventh Book consists of Krishna's final teachings, given just before his death to his beloved friend and disciple Uddhava. This part of the *Bhagavatam* is often published under the title of the *Uddhava Gita*. This *Gita* describes and explains in great detail the full meaning of worshipping God in everything. Sri Ramakrishna loved the whole of the *Bhagavatam* very much, and he described it as being "fried in the butter of knowledge and soaked in the syrup of love." No better or fuller discussion of the subject of the worship of God in everything can be found than this work. In one place in his lengthy discourse with Uddhava, Krishna tells Uddhava that the sense world has no absolute reality, and that therefore there is no absolute good or evil in the relative world. Uddhava then asks Krishna the following question: "For whom does this relative world exist?" Krishna answers that it exists for the indiscriminating man, who is the Atman or the Supreme Spirit associated and identified with the body-mind-ego complex. Just as for the dreamer the dream appears real, so for the indiscriminating man the world of the senses appears real. The wise man, says Krishna,

cuts asunder all attachment to the world of the senses with the sword of knowledge sharpened by the worship of his Guru (the combination of the two paths of knowledge and devotion), and "thus delivered, he wanders at will over the face of the earth."² To wander without attachments requires the attainment of a state of unshakable samesightedness, the seeing of the changeless Godhead in everything from a grain of dust to the Creator of the universe. Every finite object must be viewed in the same light, under the species of eternity. For the true Seer, one who has attained all possible spiritual wisdom and vision, God is visible equally everywhere, in every form, yet transcending every form.

The idea of the personal God that has no special divine form yet indwells in every visible form as the inner ruler is somewhere between dualism (bhakti yoga) and strict non-dualism (jnana yoga). It is Advaita Vedanta, but it is not the worship of Nirguna Brahman exclusively, for it is also the worship of Brahman as the indwelling Godhead that pervades the universe, Ishvara, or Saguna Brahman seen as the soul or self of each finite being. It is what Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda taught as the most useful and appropriate spiritual practice and goal for daily living in this very busy and active age. It may also be regarded as the combination of the four paths which Krishna taught Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. We keep our eyes open and act, but at the same time we see God in every person and object and action. It is in a sense a comfortable religious attitude, for there is no harsh withdrawal from the world, yet, in and through whatever we do,

2. *The Wisdom of God* (Srimad Bhagavatam) trans., Swami Prabhavananda (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1943) p. 309.

God is as close as breathing or heartbeat. It is perhaps more like the qualified non-dualism of Ramanuja than like Shankara's strict non-dualism. It may be regarded as a synthesis of dualism and non-dualism, or as beyond both. It thus represents the last word in freedom within the apparent bonds of maya. One walks in maya completely untouched by any bondage. It is seeing God without losing one's external consciousness in samadhi, and for this reason it may be regarded as more natural than pure non-dualism. By worshipping God in everything one is never in any way isolated from humanity, neither physically nor psychologically, for one sees all mankind as one with himself as well as one with God. There are thus no barriers of any kind between oneself and man and the whole universe and God. One has no fear of death, for he feels no fear of any force in the universe, being one with the whole. It is thus the most natural path there is, for it requires neither special external aids and conditions nor special inward talents. But for all its being the most natural path, it is not necessarily an easy one, for it requires the vision of same-sightedness, the seeing of all things and events as equally divine, the achievement of which can only come about from an attitude of total renunciation. Just as a fire burns everything to ashes, so does the ardent desire to know and love God burn all lesser desires to ashes. Thus same-sightedness can be achieved by the concentration of all our finite desires into the one infinite desire for the Infinite.

The attitude required for attaining the permanent state of seeing God in everything is thus a total one, not partial. It involves the whole of one's being, not just a part. A partial attitude is a self-deception, and by self-deception one never attains God. Spiritual practice consists in just this: making oneself whole, for

omnipresent, infinite, and eternal. Same-sightedness is thus more than a mere mental attitude; an attitude is an orientation in a certain direction, but same-sightedness is not pointed in one direction or another. It emanates in all directions at once, and is thus a state of seeing and thinking universally, for God is seen as omnipresent, infinite, and eternal. Same-sightedness is thus not influenced by space, time, or circumstances. It is seeing everything without any limitations. In that state we see all finite things as steeped in the being of God: infinite, eternal, and formless. Like the sun this state of being shines in all directions at once.

Same-sightedness is the state between the relative and the Absolute in which Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda lived continuously while they were engaged in teaching and liberating mankind. It is the state of all world-teachers, but it is also available to ordinary men. If we read such accounts of religious experiences as William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, we see that brief glimpses of this state are more readily available to religious-minded people without long and arduous spiritual disciplines than is the spiritual state of samadhi. But when we read the words of Sri Ramakrishna we realize that to make this state of seeing God in everything vivid and permanent in our lives we must first attain some glimpse of the non-dual Godhead in samadhi.

Swami Vivekananda said, "The totality of all souls, not the human soul alone, is the personal God. The will of this Totality nothing can resist. It is what we know as Law. And this is what we mean by Shiva and Kali and so on."³ We can see from this that Swamiji saw every human being and

3. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1974) p. 651.

animal and vegetable and mineral not only as a soul but, more importantly, as an aspect of God, and that each apparently finite individual was for him inseparable from God and always spoke to him first and foremost about God and not about the individual's finite attributes. Or perhaps it would be even more true to say that he saw not only the individual but all his apparently finite attributes as infinite attributes of the Infinite Godhead. Swamiji was a true seer who saw everyone and everything as God Himself and nothing else.

Swamiji also said, "Worship the Terrible. Worship Death. All else is vain."⁴ In a letter to a Western friend he wrote,

I have lost all my wish for salvation...May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.⁵

But we must remember that by worshipping the wicked Swamiji does not mean worshipping the wickedness in the wicked; he means worshipping the Divine within the wicked person. This worship of God in everything must be accompanied by a discrimination between the real and the unreal. We are not to worship the external wrappings of wickedness and ignorance which hide the real Self of such people; we are to worship the real essence of the person which is the Divine hidden to the ordinary eye within the veils of unreality as fire is hidden in smoke. This is the only way we can worship God in everything without falling into still deeper ignorance. Swami Vivek-

4. Ibid., p. 652.

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1954.) 6th Edn. Vol. 5, p. 106.

ananda, in a letter to a disciple, said this on the subject:

When you serve a Jiva with the idea that he is a Jiva, that is Daya (compassion) and not Prema (love); but when you serve him with the idea that he is the Self, that is Prema. That the Atman is the one objective of love is known from Sruti, Smriti and direct perception. Bhagavan Chaitanya was right, therefore, when He said, 'Love to God and compassion to the Jivas.' This conclusion of the Bhagavan, intimating differentiation between Jiva and Ishvara, was [for him] right, as He was a dualist. But for us Advaitists this notion of Jiva as distinct from God is the cause of bondage. Our principle, therefore, should be love, and not compassion. The application of the word compassion even to the Jiva seems to me rash and vain. For us, it is not to pity but to serve. Ours is not the feeling of compassion but love, and the feeling of Self in all.⁶

In this passage Swamiji is saying we should see only God in each apparently individual person and not the apparently separating individual qualities. This is the clearest possible statement of the total synthesis of the paths of knowledge and devotion, one of Swamiji's main teachings that he emphasized again and again. Love based on the knowledge of the Self in all beings is also one of the main teachings of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. This statement of Swamiji's is based on something that Sri Ramakrishna said while he was in a superconscious state. Once in Swamiji's presence the Master, after discoursing on Sri Chaitanya's teaching of compassion for all creatures, went into samadhi, and then, coming down only partially from that state, spoke in ecstasy the following words: "Compassion for creatures! Thou fool!... An insignificant worm crawling on earth!... Who art thou to show compassion? ... It is not compassion for others, but rather service to

6. Ibid., pp. 102-3.

man, recognizing him to be the veritable manifestation of God!" Swami Vivekananda, on hearing these words, saw in them the heart and soul of the Master's message which he, the disciple, was to proclaim to the world, and in reaction to them said among other things the following:

What a strange light I have discovered in those wonderful words of the Master! How beautifully has he reconciled the ideal of Bhakti with the knowledge of the Vedanta!...What a grand, natural, and sweet synthesis!...From these words of wisdom which Sri Ramakrishna uttered in an ecstatic mood, I have understood that the ideal of Vedanta lived by the recluse...can be practised even from hearth and home and applied to all our daily schemes of life. Whatever be the avocation of a man, let him understand and realize that it is God alone who has manifested Himself as the world and created beings. He is both immanent and transcendent...Those words of Sri Ramakrishna throw an altogether new light upon the path of devotion. Real devotion is far off until the aspirant realizes the immanence of God. By realizing Him in and through all beings and by serving Him through humanity, the devotee acquires real devotion. Those following the paths of work [karma yoga] and Yoga [raja yoga] are similarly benefited by those words of the Master...If it be the will of God, the day will soon come when I shall proclaim this grand truth before the world at large.⁷

It is clear from these impassioned words of Swamiji that he considered this whole idea of the synthesis of all the paths as the heart of his message to mankind. He here clearly announced his great mission: to proclaim the spiritual benefits of worshipping God in everything by offering service and love to all beings, that is, seeing God in all, serving God in all, and loving God in all. This "grand, natural, and sweet synthesis" of all the four paths of yoga he felt was just what the modern age needed above all. The Godhead in every

being which we worship is after all the very same Self which is the Real within ourselves. Thus the truth of the path of jnana, that the individual soul is one with God, is reconciled with the truth of the path of bhakti, that God is all and I (that is, the ego) am nothing. That in the individual soul which is unreal is the body-mind-ego complex, and this is not what we should worship. Love and knowledge are thus but two sides of the same coin; the God that I love is the Self that I worship in every being, and that same God is my very own deepest Self. For the whole external world is contained within the Self of all, just as the idea is contained within the mind that thinks it, and when I know my Self I know the Self of all. This truth is nowhere more vividly and startlingly expressed than in the statement that Swami Vivekananda made while he was staying in Alameda: "I am not in Alameda; Alameda is in me."⁸ By this worship of God in everything we are learning to see the whole universe as one unbounded sea of consciousness with which we are inseparably united. Both Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji taught this worship as the chief spiritual practice of the age whereby we transform our idea of maya as something alien, hostile, and evil into that of something supremely good, blissful, and beautiful.

The person who worships God in all things thus feels no need for anything else. He does not seek the savor of spring, or of summer, or of fall, or of winter. He holds in his hand the savor of all things, which is of no thing, and he needs no other. The *Avadhuta Gita* has passage after passage describing this state of total being-knowledge-bliss in which one who

7. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., pp. 107-9.

8. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda, His Second visit to the West: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) p. 528.

lives in the world ever-free perpetually floats. The following is a sample:

There is no need of knowledge, reasoning, time, space, instruction from a teacher, or attainment of samadhi. I am naturally the perfect Consciousness, the Real, like the sky, spontaneous and steady. I was not born or have I death. I have no action good or evil. I am Brahman, stainless, without qualities. How can there be bondage or liberation for me?⁹

This is the supreme state, the culmination, the goal of seeing and worshipping God in everything. Indeed, even the worship of God is impossible to one who has actually attained the absolute goal of worshipping God in everything, for how can one worship God if God is perceived as all that is, both the worshipper and the worshipped, as well as the entire universe? The second verse of the *Avadhuta Gita* makes this point:

How shall I salute the formless Being, indivisible, auspicious and immutable, who fills all this with His Self and also fills the self with His Self?¹⁰

9. *Avadhuta Gita.*, trans., Swami Ashokananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1977) p. 31.

10. *Ibid.* p. 2.

It is the state in which one sees nothing but the same Infinite Godhead everywhere, wherever one looks, whether in samadhi or in external consciousness. In such a state external consciousness becomes as full of God-consciousness as samadhi, for one sees nothing but God at any time, in any state, anywhere, within or without, in the saint or in the sinner, in a grain of sand or in infinite space, in the ugly or in the beautiful, in the terrible or in the pleasing, in life or in death. Seeing God always in everything, such a seer does not need to go anywhere or do anything or seek anything. He is totally immersed in God and is therefore absolutely free. No rules bind him; he does not follow this path or that path; he does not follow this man or that man; he does not pursue this goal or that goal. He is as free and vast as the sky. He sees only God before and behind, above and below, within and without. He can do no wrong, for he is indistinguishable from God. This state, the *avadhuta* state, the state of the ever-free, is the supreme goal of worshipping God in everything.

(Concluded)

ARE WE ZOROASTRIANS FIRE WORSHIPPERS?

DR. JAL K. WADIA

Zoroastrians have been worshipping fire since the inception of their religion. But as questions arise on the real significance of Fire-worship, some light is needed to be thrown on this subject. The answer to this question depends upon the individual outlook on the fire, and on the kind of worship practised.

Fire-worship is generally and strongly

advocated in the Gathas or hymns by the prophet Zoroaster, which form a part of their chief scripture—Avesta. What is that Fire or Atash as it is known in the Gathas? Materialistic in outlook, as per the general trend of the world today, Zoroastrians in general appear to have believed that Atash, which is mentioned in the Gathas, is to be understood as fire, which is ignited by

material means. The worship of it is commonly restricted to mere murmuring of some words, or a set prayer. What is generally done is to place a piece of wood into that fire with the mind wavering in wild thoughts, and the heart bereft of any love and devotion. If this is the fire which is said to be worshipped, and if this is the kind of worship of fire, then certainly Zoroastrians cannot be said to be the fire-worshippers in the original sense of the term.¹

1. According to the Zoroastrian tradition, fire was invented by the king Hoshang, son of Siamak, who was the son of Gayomard, the first mortal king on the surface of the earth. Before the Holy Prophet Zarathushtra, king Hoshang made his people revere the fire and the king Jamshed, and king Kaikhushroo of the Peshdadian and the Kyanian Dynasties, established the fire-places in honour of Fire Frobae, and the Fire Gushap respectively. Holy Prophet Zarathushtra gave premier position to this fire in his religion and regarded it as of the essence of Ahura Mazda. Zarathushtra says in his Gathas that the best offerings that the pious can make to the fire of Ahura Mazda are the righteous deeds inspired by Asha. He adds that as long as he has vitality left in him, he will think of Asha, whenever he will carry the gift of adoration unto the fire (Yasna 43:9). When the Holy Prophet is thwarted by Druj in his work of propagating the religion, he turns to Atash, the Fire, as one of the protectors that will best help him in his mission (Yasna 46:7). Fire is the means, through which the creator would bestow profit upon the righteous and bring harm unto the wicked (Yasna 51:9). Both the parties—true and false—are put to test by the blazing Fire Divine, and fire of bitter experiences (Yasna 30:7). Ahura will deliver His final judgement upon the righteous and the wicked through Fire with the Holy Spirit (Yasna 47:6). Fire is emblematic of righteousness. It is, therefore, stated that Fire which can be experienced powerfully through righteousness in life, may be a manifest help unto the faithful, but a harm unto the foe. (Yasna 34:4).

Fire removes the impurities of material objects with which our physical body comes into contact. Zarathushtrā employs this emblem of purification

Atash Aradhana, or fire-worship is strongly advocated in Yasna 34:4 of Ahunavad Gatha. And in this verse, atrae is the Avesta word for the Atash or Fire mentioned, and this atrae is to be worshipped through Atash. Atrae, which is ordinarily translated as Atash (in English as Fire), is a divine aspect of Asha, and Asha is the second of the six principal aspects with various attributes of Ahura Mazda, known in Avesta as Ameshaspenta, and in Pahalavi as Ameshaspand. In later Avesta, Atrae phonetically became

as a means to burn and destroy spiritual uncleanness or sin of a soul.

It would be evident from the above, that according to the Holy Prophet Zarathushtra, Fire stands for the Divine Spark of Ahura Mazda in the human being. It is the infinite energy, the Eternal Light, which is the very nature of Ahura Mazda. It is the Light in its various manifestations, that removes impurities, both material and spiritual, and purifies and ennobles human beings.

In the Yasna Haptanghaiti (the Avesta text which is believed to have been composed in Gathic dialect, immediately after the composition of the Gathas of the Holy Prophet) the Fire is said to be the nearest earthly image of Ahura Mazda, since Ahura Mazda is invisible; and the faithful one yearns to reach Ahura Mazda through Fire as a mediary (Kurdeh 2). In the later Avesta, Atash (Fire) is said to be the son of Ahura Mazda (Puthra Ahurahe Mazdao) who purifies one and all, and works as a source of purification.

In view of what is stated above, it is absolutely incorrect to say that the Zoroastrians are merely Fire-worshippers. Rather it is correct to say that they are worshippers of Ahura Mazda, through Fire which represents Him in physical and spiritual worlds. 'From Nature to Nature's God', is the lesson inculcated in the worship of Fire offered by the Zoroastrians. It may also be mentioned that in the Vedas we find regular sacrifice at the altar fire (Agnihotra) as the obligatory duty of all householders. Spiritual practice in Hinduism is also known as *tapas* which etymologically means the capacity to stand burning or suffering for manifesting our higher Self.

Athra and as Athra, Atræ is described as Son (Puthar) of Ahura Mazda 'the Greatest God'. The word Son, is a mere metaphorical expression meaning the Shakti or the dynamic aspect of Ahura Mazda.

In ancient times this energy aspect of life might have been known by the then Aryans as Rta. This name Rta has been gathered from *Rig-Veda*. With the passing of time this name Rta might have gradually and phonetically turned into Atar, Atræ and Athra. Athra then, at a much later period, might have turned into Atash. Today this word Atash (meaning Fire), and not Atræ or Athra, is being used by the Zoroastrians. What is Atash to Zoroastrians is Agni to Hindus. This may be regarded as the relation between these two religions. The physical fire is only a symbol representing Athra. In Atash Niyæsh of Khordêh Avesta, Athra has been stated as Athræ Ahuræ Mazdao Puthar, that is, Athra, the son of Ahura Mazda. And this Athra or Fire is an integral part of Asha. This is why in Yasna 34:4 Atræ is advocated to be worshipped through Asha.² Asha, as already mentioned, is, in its originality of

Divine Existence, the second of the six principal aspects of Ahura Mazda, and lies beyond any description in human language or expression. Its true enlightenment arises only from deep within oneself, when in true love and devotion the mind and heart become deeply embedded in Ahura Mazda, as if, in complete unity. This kind of worship seeking complete union with the Greatest God is mentioned in Yasna 50:7 of Spentomad Gatha.

From Yasna 50:7 of Spentomad Gatha we gather some thought of the way of worship as practised in ancient Iran. Worship is not merely the murmuring of some words from a set of prayer, as is usually being done today. It is truly an act of setting up of mind and heart in complete unison with Ahura Mazda. This worship is not to be done in ignorance, nor in a mechanical way, with the heart dry and bereft of love and devotion, and the mind submerged in worldliness. That verse namely, Yasna 50:7 of Spantomad Gatha relates that it is only upon being enlightened, and convinced of following the beneficial paths of righteousness and devotion that one can, through deep love and devotion for Ahura Mazda, set his mind and heart in complete unison with God during fire-worship. The Avesta words for worship, mentioned in Yasna 50:7, are *wæ yeoja*. Yeoja is derived from the derivative *yuz* (in Sanskrit, *Yoga*) meaning union, and *wæ* means 'Thee' only. Thus the worship is an act of setting the mind and heart in union 'with Thee', that is, Ahura Mazda, the Greatest God only. In other words, worship is an act of full concentration and deep meditation. This is possible when the mind is pure, innocent, and guileless, and the heart is drenched in love and devotion. This was the true form of worship as practised by the Maghavas or the great devotees, for whom Zarathushtra in Yasna

2. In the word 'Asha' is contained the true essence of Zarathushtra's teachings. The term includes in its connotation, a Universal order prevailing in the world, the immutable law governing movements of creation. In the Gathas Ahura Mazda is described as being 'of one accord with Asha', and our whole life is described as founded upon Asha. Thus, standing for the creative aspect or energy aspect of Ahura Mazda, Asha represents the sustaining aspect of what is created. Further it also stands for a basic moral order regulating human affairs in spiritual and ethical sense, implying truth, righteousness, purity of mind and soul, and other spiritual qualities. Later Avesta states: 'Through the Best Asha, through the Highest Asha, one can get vision of Ahura Mazda, one can draw unto Ahura Mazda, and one can be in perfect union with Ahura Mazda' (Yasna 60:12). Thus Asha stands for changeless Eternal Law of Ahura Mazda.

51:15 of Vohu Kshathra Gatha, promised highest reward, which is the abode of Ahura Mazda or a complete unity with Ahura Mazda. Maghavas (Maghu means great) of ancient Iran were like the Great Rishis of Ancient India.

But for the average worshippers concentration or meditation on the Impersonal, formless existence of Ahura Mazda or of Asha or of Atrae or Athra (the Divine Fire) is extremely difficult, if not impossible. To facilitate and simplify the true form of worship through concentration and meditation, the physical fire was chosen to stand as a symbol of Atrae, the Divine Fire, of Asha, and of Ahura Mazda. But here it is written upon some revelations gained by some worshippers through long practice of meditative and devotional worship that even this physical fire, which appears as inanimate, reveals within it the characteristics of Divine Atrae, the Divine Fire, through love and devotion of a true devotee, bearing simplicity and guilelessness.

The physical fire reveals the Divine Fire. It enlightens, advises, warns, and even at times foretells of future events. The Fire reveals within the devotee firstly the spiritual fire, and then the Divine Fire of the Great God. For such revelations what is needed is love, devotion, sincerity of approach, simplicity of character, selflessness, and purity of thought. It is an experienced fact of Divine Fire revealing itself in Its own way as existing and manifesting within the physical fire which is only a symbol for meditation on Ahura Mazda.

Love, devotion, concentration and meditation on Ahura Mazda, the ultimate God, are essential factors of worship. Regular meditation on Ahura Mazda disentangles the devotee from the entanglements of life, and removes all disharmony in mind, enabling the seeker to control psycho-physical forces to run in harmony

as if in one single direction towards Ahura Mazda. This gives rise to the awakening of inner spiritual consciousness, leading to the rise of spiritual insight, spiritual hearing, and a kind of spiritual speech. Upon this development the devotee gains inner spiritual experiences, and finally the inner spiritual enlightenment.

Yasna 30:9 speaks of *Mazdaoscha Ahuraongho*. This has been translated as Ahura Mazda and His associates. But here this should not lead to the conception that the 'associates' are some kind of ministerial angels, separate from Ahura Mazda. Primarily they are mere abstract moral concepts and symbolic ideals. They are the Divine Attributes of Ahura Mazda, in the same way as a man has different limbs. They have no individuality. Zarathushtra aims at replacing the Divine Beings by spiritual ideals. They all are but facets of the One Supreme Being. They may, at best be regarded as 'Rays, Aspects, Emanations' of Ahura Mazda. Their names imply certain aspects of life, especially spiritual life.

In the Gathas at two places (Yasna 30:9, 31:4), the appellation terms Mazdaoscha Ahuraongho (Ahura and His associates) are come across which refer to the Divine attributes of Ahura Mazda. In the later Avesta, they are collectively mentioned as Amesha Spenta, that is, Holy or Divine or Beneficent Immortals and they are said to be of one thought, one word, and one deed. Their Father and Lord is the Creator Ahura Mazda. (Yasna 13:83, and 19:16). In Avesta the Amesha Spentas have been known as 'Hapt (in sanskrit, Sapta) Amesha Spenta', that is, the seven Amesha Spentas. Here we note that Ahura Mazda himself has been included among the Amesha Spentas, that is to say, Ahura Mazda does not regard other six as separate from Him. Each is a different part of Him.

As per Ilme Kshnoon the very Supreme,

Prime, Divine Existence, has no form or name to conceive of, but is related as 'That' only. Ahura Mazda therefore is both beyond as also within, as one of the seven Amesha Spentas. In the list He is the head of all, but not a separate entity. He is all combined, just as a man is not separate from his limbs.

The emerging of Amesha Spenta can be regarded as the first step in the Divine act of creating innumerable, apparent, separate, individual existences or beings. Severally they are both male and female. (Yasna 4:4, 24:9, 39:3 and Visparad 9:4). Among the six, the first three, namely, Vohu Manah, Asha and Kshathra are considered as male aspects, though neuter in grammatical gender. Spenta Armaiti is pictured as a feminine concept. Haurvatat and Ameretat are treated as masculine beings, though their grammatical gender is feminine. In this division some similarity can be drawn with the Hindu concept of Purusha and Prakriti. Of the male and female Amesha Spentas, Armaiti is regarded as the female partner of Vohu Manah, Haurvatat of Asha, and Ameretat of Kshathra.

Now let us come to the very attributes of each of the six Amesha Spentas:

1. Vohu Manah can be said to be the reflection of the Divine Existence of Ahura Mazda. Literally Vohu Manah means Good Mind, but on deeper spiritual understanding, this 'Good Mind' is none else than the Divine Consciousness. This Vohu Manah can, in a way, be compared with the Hindu concept of Absolute Existence or Sat. The blessings of Vohu Manah descends on a sincere devotee, leading 'him to a deeper spiritual insight, wisdom, true divine love, and devotion (Bhakti Marga), an all-embracing love not only for human beings, but for all living objects. Love of Ahura Mazda is best known by loving His creatures. It is through Vohu

Manah that one passes through the last leap to Self-realization.

2. Asha, though literally meaning purity and righteousness, is the very active part of the creative faculty of Ahura Mazda. It creates, sustains, regulates and controls all movements in the entire realm of creation, earthly or heavenly. Asha is the maker of the Divine Immutable Laws and fully governs them (this includes the Law of Karma). Asha represents the Divine will which has planned out our universe. He stands for the plan of God, the realization of which constitutes the goal of our human life. Standing for purity and righteousness, its blessings lead one to righteous living, knowledge, and higher spiritual or inner growth. It also implies all that helps toward the progress of the world. It also symbolizes the knowledge that leads us to recognize and to realize the Divine Plan. Thus the path of Asha is the path of knowledge, the Jnana Marga. Asha, can, in a way be compared with the Hindu concept of Chit or absolute consciousness.

3. Kshathra (in Sanskrit Kshetra) denotes the domain or kingdom of Ahura Mazda. It is in Kshathra (the kingdom of God within and without) that an individual is merged in Divinity. After having filled the heart with love (Vohu Manah) and knowledge (Asha), the final stage of human life should be to devote himself to the service of humanity, the service to meek and needy, and thereby obtain the fulfilment of human life. A human being should thus transform himself into a channel through which Ahura Mazda's blessings may continuously flow, and reach other human beings. The blessings of Kshathra bestow bliss, power, inner strength, and harmony with the forces of life. Kshathra is the way to 'Ananda'. Therefore it can be said that in these three Amesha Spentas lies the ideas of Sat-Chit-Ananda.

4. Armaiti is the first of the female Amesha Spentas. Armaiti can be said to be the daughter of Ahura Mazda. Armaiti manifests the motherly attitude of Divine Love. She represents unshaken, unswerving faith and devotion, and consequently stands for stability and loyalty. Armaiti works with Asha in building up the faith in the heart of each human being. It creates in the individual a kind, harmonious, and loving disposition towards one and all. Hence Armaiti and Asha form a notable pair throughout the Gatha.

5. & 6. Haurvatat and Ameretat³ (Sanskrit, Amritattva) the last two of the six Amesha Spentas, are usually conceived in pair. The former reflects perfection, and the latter immortality. Perfection and immortality are attained upon the blessings of these two Amesha Spentas only.

The six Amesha Spentas act both individually, as also collectively, but always as part of and on behalf of Ahura Mazda.

3. Haurvatat and Ameretat are the ideal for every human being and they are the reward that come to a life dedicated to love (Vohu Manah), knowledge (Asha) and service (Kshathra) (Yasna 45:5, 32:15 and Hormazd Yasht 25). Beginning with physical health and well-being, Haurvatat represents spiritual growth, and attainment of perfection. Her companion is Vohu Manah or Divine love which alone guides humanity to perfection. Companion of Ameretat is Kshathra or service to all beings. She is almost always described as a Twin of Haurvatat, because the achievement of perfection (Haurvatat) means the conquest of death and the attainment of Immortality (Ameretat) which is the aim of human life.

It is only in this concept that each Amesha Spenta is to be worshipped, that is, as a part or an aspect of Ahura Mazda.

Conclusion:

Attributes of Ahura Mazda (as stated above) were propounded by the Holy Prophet Zarathushtra in the Gathas. They show that his message is meant not for teaching and uplifting his people only, namely, the Zoroastrians but also for the entire humanity. They are universal in their appeal. Attainment of perfection and happiness in this world, and of immortality and salvation in the next, are considered the great goal of life not only by Zoroastrians, but by the followers of all religions. Zarathushtra's message contains eternal teachings of love (Vohu Manah), truth (Asha), service (Kshathra), devotion (Spenta Armaiti), and thereby the attainment of perfection (Haurvatat), and Immortality (Ameretat). These are the progressive stages through which a devoted worshipper of even physical fire, which appears inanimate, is gradually led to. Through long practice of meditative and devotional worship of this physical fire, the Divine Fire manifests itself within the physical fire. It is with this immanent Divine Fire that the aspirant develops close relationship with God, and attains perfection and immortality. Thus the Zoroastrians are truly the worshippers of Divine Fire as the Divine spark of Ahura Mazda.

“SATYAKAMA-SATYA-SAMPRADEYA”

‘Truth—The Aspiration and the Tradition’

A play in four scenes depicting some vital aspects of the Eternal Religion and Educational Culture of India

SWAMI SASTRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

SCENE IV

[Stage 2. After a lapse of 4-5 years, Satyakama is returning to the Gurukula, with his thousand—strong, healthy and sturdy cattle herd. Location—Forest]

Y. Satyakama: (Youth) Through the grace of the Lord, and of the Guru, the first holy resolve of my life has been accomplished duly. All the cattle—cows, bulls and calves—have indeed grown healthy, strong and sturdy. And in the past four to five years, their number also has grown to a thousand.

Ah! What lovely creatures are these! It is a joy just to look at them. And what a blessed and fulfilling task it has been to serve them, to look after them, and help them grow. Indeed it is a privilege that has come my way. So, my vow and the Guru’s command—both have been fulfilled...Now I must turn my attention more towards the acquisition of knowledge.

Even otherwise, these four or five years in the forest have been, indeed, beneficial. Clean and pure environment, beautiful nature, the company of these innocent creatures—All these have contributed to the arising of a steadiness, a strength, a sprightliness and zest in the body as well as the mind, which I hadn’t experienced earlier. Even though I am on the move almost all the day, yet I don’t feel any weakness and strain! On the other hand, when in the evening, I have my bath in the stream, and tending the holy fire, sit before

it, what a lightness and energy I feel both in the body and mind! And so many beautiful ideas and lofty sentiments come up in the mind, as if inspired. I get the feeling that all this and all of us—the plants and trees of this forest, the emerald green meadows, the vast clear sky, the shining clusters of stars, these innocent creatures and myself—all of us—are born of the same parents—all nourished by the same loving parents. And specially when I sit before the majestic bright fire, how easily the mind becomes indrawn, how deeply it gets concentrated.

(Becomes a little introspective and looking at the right wing),

Ah! here! This beautiful bull is approaching...How majestic, how affectionate! Come, brother, come my child! Come my god of a Bull. (Approaches it and strokes its head) What are you seeing, my angel? What steady, large, and clear eyes you have! Looking *me*, intently? Do you wish to tell me something?

(With great affection and in a somewhat humorous way, strokes its head.)

What, do you wish to impart me some teaching? Why not? You will become my guru? All right; be my guru; lo! here I am, your disciple. Ready to receive your teaching, Upadesha!

[CURTAIN 2 CLOSES]

Stage I Acharya Satyakama, Samasrava and Upakosala discovered continuing their previous conversation]

A. Satyakama: What a unique, great and indescribable moment it was! Even as I was speaking in that fashion, the bull continued to look intently at me without a wink. I also was seeing into its eyes. And in the process, a strange experience overtook me. The mind was transported to some other level. What was till then the ordinary world we see, now put on a new appearance, and began to shine with a new light. It seemed all things were within myself. The Bull also, shining with a new light, now let out a majestic bellow. As I went on listening to it, intent on it, drawn to it, I felt it was actually addressing me, 'Satyakama...a...a!' I also felt that it was the blessed Guru Himself calling out to me. So, immediately I responded saying, 'Bhagavan! ... You wish to say something? Kindly do, kindly do!'

'Friend, now our herd has increased to a thousand. The time has come for returning to the gurukula. Accordingly take us back,' said the voice of the Bull, 'Your vow has been duly fulfilled. Why any more delay? Come, let us go,' it added.

But from within me another similar voice spoke up saying, 'But what about instruction regarding Knowledge? Knowledge has not yet been attained!' Then the Bull's voice declared, 'All right, I myself will teach you a quarter, or an aspect, of Brahman'. Thrilled, I exclaimed, 'Oh, Oh! my great good fortune! Your Holiness must instruct me, by all means instruct me!'

Samasrava: Was it really the bull itself speaking—or was it merely an imagination of your own mind?

A. Satyakama: I cannot sort that out and explain. To me then, it was as real as our external, normal world. At that time, everything—the bull, myself, my mind—had become one, as it were, without distinction of inside and outside. And everything appeared quite natural, normal. I was convinced, without any doubt, that it was

the Blessed Guru Himself who was teaching thro' the Bull and that all the teachings were real, and living truths.

Upakosala: I am eager, Sir, to know the essence of the teaching you got then.

A. Satyakama: Its essence? "Brahman is limitless, infinite, luminous. All the shining quarters are but a fraction of His limitless Light. By meditating on such a radiant Brahman, all the worlds, all one's life—here and hereafter—would become luminous, radiant with the light of Knowledge, honour and glory."—that was the essence.

Samasrava: Marvellous teaching!

Upakosala: Yes, Yes, It is true, it is true!

A. Satyakama: Marvellous? It was only the first step of a veritable flight of marvels! That experience continued. "Agni, fire, will teach you about another quarter of Brahman" continued the Bull and then became silent. I can't say how much time passed in this stage. But by early next morning, the mind had returned to the normal state. Then, as usual, after attending to my daily routines of worship etc., I took out the herd of cattle through the forest.

Upakosala: What a beautiful experience! It seems as if it happened to myself. Sir, kindly do relate what happened thereafter.

A. Satyakama: I was most eagerly looking forward to the next evening. When the time came, I left the herd to rest for the night and taking my usual evening bath, sat in meditation before the holy fire. Again, the mind started going inward; it also began to rise to higher and higher planes. The holy fire in front of me appeared to have put on a new aspect, grand and majestic. It seemed as if some unique, radiant being was present before me. Even as our guru had told earlier, a voice at the back of the mind identified him saying,

“Lo, this is verily that Jataveda!” Then the God of Fire, Agni-Deva also hailed me, calling “Satyakama—a—a”. This time I was not taken by surprise. Even so, I was thrilled and beseeched, “Lo, I am here... Be gracious, Bhagavan to command.”

Upakosala: (also thrilled): Agni-Deva! You also had His vision and His teaching! In what form did He appear to you, Sir? Was it a human form?

A. Satyakama: It is very difficult to make it clear in words, my son! It was no ordinary human or gross being. It was as if some subtle power had become incarnated and was shining. In my own mind at that time, there was not even a shadow of a question regarding the reality of that Being. “Dear Friend, I shall teach you regarding another quarter of Brahman,” said Agni Deva. “Be pleased to do so. I am ready and listening”, I responded.

“Brahman is infinite. His infinity is of such a dimension, that what are commonly considered as infinite—the vast earth or oceans, sky or even the heavens, are but a minute particle of His! The aspirant who can know this and experience this Infinity also becomes infinite. His mind, his heart, his whole life becomes vast, unbounded.”—so taught Agni-Deva. All that he taught went deep into me—and I realized it was also true. Vibrant with the feeling, “Brahman is infinite—I too am infinite,” my heart, mind and personality—all became infinite. There was no scope anywhere for any pettiness or narrowness. A feeling of vastness and freedom prevailed all-round!

Samasrava: (To himself) We have been all along hearing and repeating these truths in the form of verbal mantras only. Only today has it been revealed to me that these are things which can be experienced, that they are living truths! I don't know

when we shall be blessed by such an experience....

(Becomes serious and thoughtful.)

Upakosala: Revered Sir, what else did Agni-Deva say?

A. Satyakama: He only added, “Satyakama!... The Swan shall teach you next, about another quarter of Brahman,” and became silent.

On the third evening also, as I was sitting in the presence of the holy fire as on the previous two days, again the mind became absorbed, and ascended to higher planes. In that state, from the vast and infinite sky a Swan of indescribable beauty flew down.

“Brahman is shining, radiant. Neither sun nor moon, neither lightning nor fire—none of these commonly known lights can ever give even a remote idea of what that Divine Light is. All these are but a pale, reflected fraction of that Light. To whom Brahman reveals that Primal Light, such persons and their lives here and hereafter will all become luminous, radiant!”—so taught the Swan God, and I could actually experience the truth of it. Then adding, “The next quarter will be taught to you by the bird Madgu,”—the Swan flew away, and merged into the infinite sky from which he had come.

And finally, the next evening also, in a similar situation the Madgu bird also arrived.

Samasrava: What was the instruction of the Madgu, Holy Sir?

A. Satyakama: “Brahman is the support of all powers, and energies, the abode. Life, Sight, Seeing, Hearing, Mind—the special powers and energies of all these are but an infinitesimal fraction of the Power of Brahman. Those who worship and realize such a Brahman, the Supreme Abode and Refuge, to such all the worlds become abodes. And that person also, in turn, will become a generous refuge for

all those who come to him." This was what the Madgu-Guru taught me.

Again, I got another new experience: "My real nature is infinite and illumined. All the worlds are my abode. I am no dweller of any limited place or region; I belong to the entire universe!"

Upakosala: Ah...An experience which is worth having!

A. Satyakama: Thereafter, the teaching of such gurus' ended. It occurred to me that the objective and purpose of my sojourn to the forest had been accomplished. All that remained was to lead back the enlarged herd of cattle to the gurukula. In due course, that also was done.

After taking the cattle to their proper places, I straight went to my guru Haridrumata. Even from a distance, he began to look at me intently. Suddenly he hurried towards me and gazing at me with eyes filled with wonder, satisfaction and joy greeted me saying, "My friend! What is this? Your face is shining like a Knower of Brahman! Tell me, how did this come about? From whom did you get the instruction? Where did you get such a teacher? Let me hear about it."—He spoke with a smile as well as a feeling of respect.

Upakosala, do you understand now?... Why I also addressed similar words to you?

On my part, straight away I fell at his feet for a long time, with a heart filled with emotions and eyes filled with tears, of reverence and gratitude. Blessing me with his hands on my head, and lifting me up, with great affection he embraced me. Thereafter, as he desired I related to him in detail all that had happened in the forest.

[Curtain 2 parts. Revealed Haridrumata Gautama and youth Satyakama in the Ashrama]

Y. Satyakama: Bhagavan! I have now related to you fully all that happened. The special instructions you gave me also proved of immense value.

Still, in spite of all these happenings, I need a confirmation that all these are true, and the assurance can come only from you. Only a great sage, worthy of worship, such as your holy self alone can give that assurance. And even more, I await the crowning part of it all, the Guru's, that is your instruction and blessing.

You must graciously assure me that all that has transpired are true and worthy and bless me with the 'Upadesha' that makes all those teachings fruitful. Many may teach, but to me only what issues from your lips is the 'supreme Veda'!

Haridrumata: (with an introspective and serene face, and a majestic voice.)

Satyakama! It is your matchless humility and devotion to the guru that have taken you to these heights. Had this happened to some lesser persons, even a fraction of this would have served to swell their pride. They would have not cared for their own Guru or teacher, and ignoring and breaking away from him, would be hankering to start a new gurukula—and even a new institution and tradition—motivated by self-importance. There were such people before—and many more there will be in future! But let this be noted well. Never will the line and true tradition of Brahman, Knowledge and learning progress through such people. Never! All that such people put as 'achievements', and the new 'tradition' they seek to establish, will only amount to this: lifeless external observances, and appearances of shallow scholarship, strange practices attracting feeble minds, thirst for popularity, outward pomp and show—only these.

Y. Satyakama: I have understood, Bhagavan.

Haridrumata: Well, this is my instruction. Upadesha and blessing to you.

Your understanding, experiences and realizations are all true and authentic. I shall only repeat the teachings and experiences you have already obtained, confirm them, and bless you heartily. May your life be full, may you be covered fully with holy glory, may you ever remain Satya-Kama—a cherisher of Truth. May you become a great support for the wholesome tradition of Truth—of Sat-Sampradaya, of Satya-Sampradaya. May you become a great banyan tree giving shelter to many genuine seekers of Truth—to those thirsting for Knowledge. Om Svasti, Svasti, Svasti! All blessings be on you!

[As *Haridrumata* is blessing, curtain 2 closes.
A. *Satyakama* and his two disciples continue their conversation:]

A. Satyakama: Upakosala, Samasrava! This present context, atmosphere and the presence of pure-souls such as you two, have inspired me to reveal some of the very personal thoughts and feelings, some holy incidents and sacred experiences, which were so far lying undisclosed deep within. And such things should never also be revealed to any but the most pure and worthy recipients. With the confidence and expectation that you two are such recipients, who will understand these things in the right light and would utilize them for the real good of yourselves as well as others—and that thereby you will help in the onward march of Satya-Sampradaya, or the stream of the tradition of Truth, have I spoken out these truths.

Samasrava: Holy Sir! Please trust us—And speak without any hesitation. We shall strive all we can to be worthy of your confidence and expectations. We shall, in fact, dedicate our whole life for the purpose!

Upakosala: Sir, I am but a child of

yours. I might indeed have blurted out a few hasty words, out of ignorance and impatience. And even that I did in my eagerness to obtain the Guru's 'Upadesha' and become a graduate or 'Snataka'. But then, who else will forgive and save me? Who else will help me in the path of real progress? It is true that I sometimes thought that you were somewhat harsh, and that your respected wife—our revered guru-mata,—is more compassionate and closer to us. But now everything has become clear to me. You alone are my true well-wisher, you alone my sole refuge in this life. You are not merely my teacher, you are also my true father.—This is what my heart is telling me clearly.

A. Satyakama: Upakosala! It is all for good that an occasion has thus presented itself for you to express the feelings that had so far remained suppressed within. Even from my childhood, such a feeling of reverence has grown up within me for my revered mother, for her simple, straight, heroic, and majestic personality—that she has indeed become the adorable deity of my life. I have made it my life's foremost duty to ensure that she can live in this world, in all possible joy, peace and dignity. That has been my holy resolve. That feeling intensified further as a result of my life in the Gurukula and training under revered *Haridrumata*. That mother, that teacher, and my own feelings—all these made certain ideas, practices and life-patterns very acceptable to me, attractive and necessary, nay even indispensable.

Upakosala: If they could be explained to us also, we shall be blessed.

A. Satyakama: *Firstly*, the supreme place of Truth and its value in human life; also the idea that real education and its tradition consists in Knowing Truth, adopting one's life to it and inspiring the students likewise and prepare them for the purpose. *Secondly*, the important place

of women; a feeling of high regard for them, a reverential feeling that all of them are worthy of my respect as goddesses—even as my own mother. *Thirdly*, the importance of unflinching devotion and loyalty to the guru. The supreme duty of the disciple is to carry out the will and commands of the guru with faith and dedication, *but* with discrimination as well and in a way not opposed to Truth, and that is the best gift a grateful disciple can offer to his Guru.

Upakosala, my days in the gurukula thus came to a close. 'Samavartana' or graduation also took place. But I had a deep desire to continue as a life-long celibate and devote my entire life to study, spiritual practices and service to the guru. However, the great need to look after the mother in her old age, as also the guru's own command—did not allow me to do that.

[Curtain 2 parts. Stage II. Haridrumata talking to Y. Satyakama]

(to be continued)

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Character Energy for our Rural Educators

The National Institute of Rural Development at Hyderabad has been conducting a lot of research and orientation programmes for the leaders in the field of Agriculture in India. On 7 April 1984, the Institute observed its silver jubilee celebrations. Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Order gave the foundation address focusing on the training and the education which need to be imparted to these educators of the rural farmers. Here are some of the salient ideas that the venerable Swami held up in the august gathering there: We lost our freedom about 800 years ago, only because we did not carry the whole people with us. They were neglected all the time. Today freedom has come. If the mass of our people are not with us, if the 70 per cent of the rural and tribal population are not with us, if they remain poor, ignorant, and backward, our nation's freedom has not only no meaning at all, but also stands imperilled. The possibility of making that freedom truly meaningful is there in this modern period. We have not done well, so far as this human factor is concerned, during the last 37 years. We have done well in the fields of industry, educational expansion in urban areas, and scientific and technical education for the forward sections. We have, accordingly, what we call the third largest scientific manpower in the world. That is a wonderful achievement. But when we ask the question as to why, in spite of having the

third largest scientific manpower in the world, next only to U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., one half of our population are still poor and backward, we get the answer: our knowledge is yoked to self-interest, and is, therefore, crude and unenlightened, and not enlightened, as it is in the West. They in the West are frankly materialistic, but that materialism is brightened by the ethics of human concern, it is the mother of an enlightened self-interest. We in India swear by god and religion but practise a crude materialism which is the mother of a crude, unenlightened, self-interest. We have to assimilate our self-interest to enlightenment, and orient our education, knowledge, and talents to general human welfare. Our brains have become bright, but our hearts have not become expanded side by side. We have to learn to combine the heart and the brain to create high character energy. Swami Vivekananda therefore exhorted us to combine a Buddha's heart with a Shankaracharya's brain. That combination alone, in varying degrees, makes for high character. It is this that we have to infuse in our education. This is the first thing, therefore, to stress in all training. All this training is meant to equip the trainees with the national vision and resolve to bring brightness to the lives of people around them; otherwise, all training becomes a costly futility. All training is meant to produce a double efficiency, which Sri Krishna, in the Gita, calls Yoga, and which

he defines as inner personality efficiency and outer productive work efficiency.

Our ancient Vedantic sages have given a wonderful exposition of this great concept of efficiency. What is it that makes for efficiency for any field of human life? The *Chandogya Upanishad* gives this beautiful answer (1.1.10):

Yadeva vidyaya karoti, shraddhaya, upanishada tadeva viryavattaram bhavati

'That alone becomes *viryavattaram*, 'supremely energetic or efficient', which is combined with *vidya* or knowledge, *shraddha*, or faith, and *upanishad* or deep thinking.

The first requisite is *vidya*, what we call today the theoretical and technical knowhow of a thing. In all our training institutions, we get this knowledge and its technical knowhow. A doctor knows about the human body, about what drugs cure what diseases, or how and when to apply surgery. Similarly, in these training institutions, we teach people what is to be done, what is not to be done, with respect to rural development. But that is only one factor, says this verse; so after saying *yadeva vidyaya karoti* the verse refers to a second requisite of efficiency which is still more important: *shraddha*—tremendous faith in oneself and the cause for which one is working; the positive feeling and attitude of: I can do it, I can convert this knowledge into blessing for millions of people—the totality of positive attitudes and conviction of: I can, I can, I can. What a wonderful energy resource it is! What we have to develop in ourselves in a big way is this *shraddha*; with it we can cleave through adamant difficulties. It is the energy and drive that says: I shall either *find* a way, or *make* one;

If you ask somebody, can you do this, and he or she says no, that shows that he or she has no faith in oneself. There is energy within, but one does not know how to tap that energy. That second constituent of training in efficiency is, therefore, *shraddha*. After giving these two ingredients of efficiency, the *Upanishad* gives a third ingredient: *upanishad*, 'deep thinking' Why are our people poor? Why are they backward? Why are they suffering? What can I do for them? This kind of deep thinking, and one's sense of involvement in the work that is to be done, is the fruit of that third ingredient.

Tremendous energy is present within everyone; everyone has to learn to bring it out. For that to happen, one must combine the energy of conviction and humanistic passion. When these three are combined together, one becomes a world mover in small or big ways. If such a person goes to a village to work, within a few days of his or her arrival, the village feels a change within itself, will feel the impact of new force in the shape of that trained mind; her or his very presence will make for change in the ratio of forces in that village. This is called 'man-making education', in the words of Vivekananda.

When the inspiring address by the Swami was over, one of the speakers said with all humility that if ten such swamis could scatter abroad these inspiring ideas of Vedanta in the nooks and corners of India, the country's destiny would be totally different. Vedanta makes of a weak man a strong man, of a strong man, a divine man, not only with Shankara's intellect, and Buddha's heart, but also with Vivekananda's dynamism. However lofty may be the ideal, this, indeed, is the ideal before the Indians who are at the helm of affairs now.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

1. BHAJAGOVINDAM OF SRI SHANKARA (*With meaning and Commentary*): By A. V. SURYANARAYANA. Published by Sri Suryanarayana 1-3-176/4/C/18, New Bakaram, Gandhinagar, Hyderabad 500 380. Pp. 84 + iv. Rs. 5.

2. BHAJAGOVINDAM (*Mohamudgarm*): (Telugu commentary) By N. VISHVESWARA BHARATI. Published by Sri N.S.V.R. Gurumurthy Gunupudi, Bhimavaram (Andhra Pradesh) 534 201.

Year of Publication not mentioned. Pp. 136. Rs. 15.

The Dwadasa Manjarika Stotra or Mohamudgara of Adi Shankara, popularly known as the Bhaja Govindam, is a composition which teaches detachment and dispassion, as well as devotion. Here the great Acharya sets forth in clear language the transient and illusory nature of the sensory world and exhorts man to seek

the Immanent Reality. In the very first verse he says, 'Oh! Foolish and ignorant man, no amount of secular knowledge can save you when old age and death are upon you. Seek thou Govinda, the all-pervading reality'. Composed in simple Sanskrit, and in a metre which can be easily set to music, this composition continues to be recited even today in many homes and devotional gatherings.

The fact that not only great scholars and savants, but even ordinary men have attempted to write commentaries on it, and continue to do so, is a testimony to the immense popularity of the Bhaja Govindam. The two books under review, one in English and the other in Telugu, are attempts to explain to the lay reader this great composition of the Acharya, which although seemingly simple, is full of profound philosophical meaning. Both books are short commentaries.

The Commentator in English is a retired professor of English. He has included in this book 32 verses, of which he attributes 18 to Shankara himself and the rest, one each, to each of the Acharya's disciples. If there is any legend confirming this, the reviewer is not aware of it. In certain versions, 17 of the verses are referred to as a separate composition—the Charpataka Panjarika Stotra. Moreover, the order in which the verses are presented differs from book to book, and one feels that the whole composition was perhaps recited by Shankara himself.

In this commentary, the original verses are presented in devanagari script and a transliteration in English is also provided; the latter however lacks phonetic notations. The commentary is simple, but at certain times the author provides information which is not really relevant. Unfortunately, there are so many printer's errors in the book that they tend to distract the reader, the list of errata at the end notwithstanding.

Although most of the verses are apparently simple, some need a more detailed explanation. For example, the verse, 'Vayasi Gate Kah

Kamavikarah' would when literally translated no doubt mean 'when age advances where is the scope for lust', but Shankara must surely have had a deeper meaning in saying so. The author's comments that lustful emotions vanish with age and there is no room for lust in old age, can be questioned. Yayati is a classical example to prove the contrary. Further, this is in direct contrast to the verse 'Angam galitam... tadapi na munchati asha pasam'—even though the body has become decrepit, still man is not devoid of desire.

Short commentaries are meant to help lay readers or beginners, who are not much exposed to philosophical concepts. Therefore, the attempt to present Shankara's philosophy in a single page (P. 21) and the exposition on Brahman (P. 71) can only confuse the reader rather than help him. In fact, there is no connecting link between the last of the Bhaja Govindam verses and this exposition. One also does not understand how this fits into a commentary on the Bhaja Govindam, where Shankara hardly mentions the Atman, Brahman or any such metaphysical concept.

The commentary in Telugu is very lucid. The author uses the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi and the parables of Sri Ramakrishna to further clarify a point. The commentary is also profusely illustrated with relevant Sanskrit verses with meanings, and with Telugu poems. The language is quite simple, and the book not only makes enjoyable reading but helps one understand the Bhaja Govindam better. All those who know Telugu will definitely benefit from reading this book.

There is no information provided about the author. His name suggests that he has perhaps renounced all worldly ties and it is but natural that he should reveal nothing about himself.

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'He who knows the Supreme attains the highest.'—Tait. Upa II.1.1

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THE IMITATION OF VYASA

A Strange teaching: Bahva, being questioned about Brahman by Vashkalin, said, 'Learn Brahman, O friend' and became silent. Vashkalin waited a long time for a reply, but seeing nothing coming forth questioned Bahva a second, and a third time, and at last the latter said, 'I am teaching you indeed, but you do not understand. Silence (mauna) is that Brahman.'

Truth: Once on a time a thousand Horse-sacrifices and Truth were weighed against each other in the balance; and the latter weighed much heavier than the former. Truth is the highest refuge; Truth is duty; Truth is penance; Truth is Yoga; and Truth is the eternal Brahman.

Bargaining with God: There was a certain great king who went to hunt in a forest, and there he happened to meet a sage. He had a little conversation with this sage and became so pleased with him that he asked him to accept a present from him. 'No', says the sage, 'I am perfectly satisfied with my condition; these trees give me enough fruit to eat; these beautiful pure streams supply me with all the water I want; I sleep in these caves. What do I care for your presents, though you be an emperor'. The emperor says, 'Just to purify myself, to gratify me, take some presents and come with me into the city.' At last the sage consented to go with this emperor, and he was brought into the emperor's palace, wherein were gold and jewelry, and marble and most wonderful things. Wealth and power were manifest in this palace, and there that poor sage from the forest was ushered in. The emperor asked him to wait a minute while he repeated his prayer, and he went into a corner and began to pray, 'Lord give me more wealth, more children, more territory.' In the meanwhile the sage got up and began to walk away. The emperor saw him going, and went after him. 'Stay, Sir, you did not take my present, and are going away.' The sage turned round to him and said: 'Beggars, I do not beg of beggars. What can you give? You have been begging yourself all the time.' What is the difference between love and shopkeeping, if you ask God to give you this and give you that?

Wanting God: A certain old man used to go to the temple and pray for a very long time that God may be pleased to take him to His holy feet. Everyday he would stand for a number of hours after all others had left the temple and beg to be absorbed in the Deity with tears flowing from his eyes by force of habit. He fancied himself to be a very pious man and to excel even saints in his devotion. By his tarrying so long in the temple everyday he caused considerable inconvenience to the temple priest, who felt that his devotion was insincere and wanted to put an end to his practice. For this purpose, one day while the old man was standing begging and weeping, the priest hid himself behind the image of God and suddenly cried in a strange unearthly tone, 'Come here, thou old man, I shall absorb thee. Come at once.' The old man thought that it was God that was speaking and ran away frightened lest he might be swallowed up by Him. From that day forward not merely did he never step into the temple, but was afraid to be alone even in his house, and would not sleep unless in the midst of several persons for fear that the wicked God might steal him away all at once. Ah! how many of us want God in this fashion!