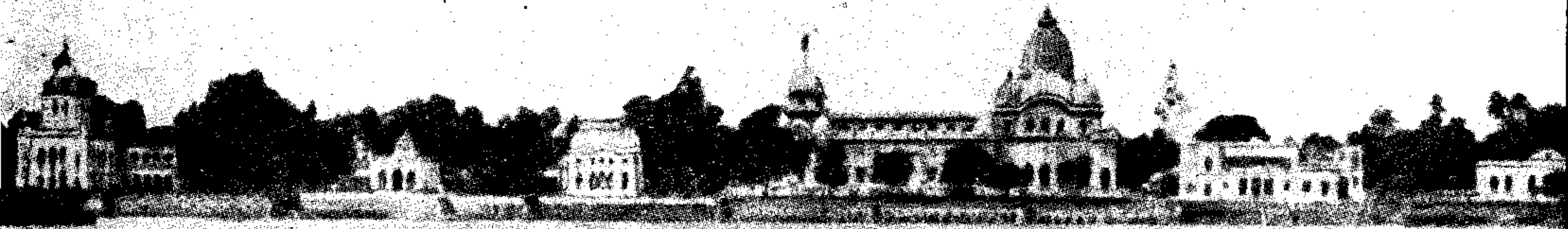
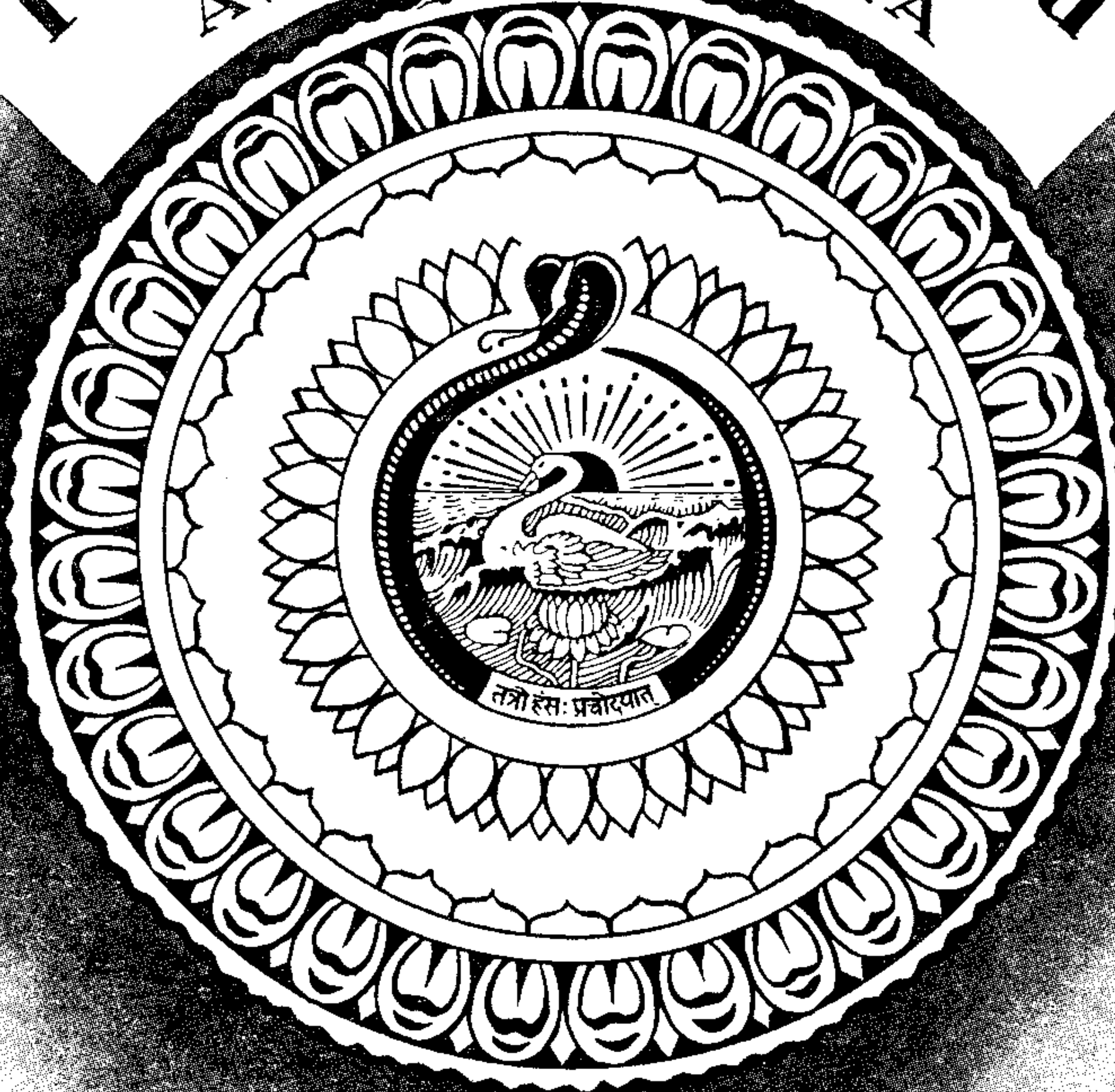


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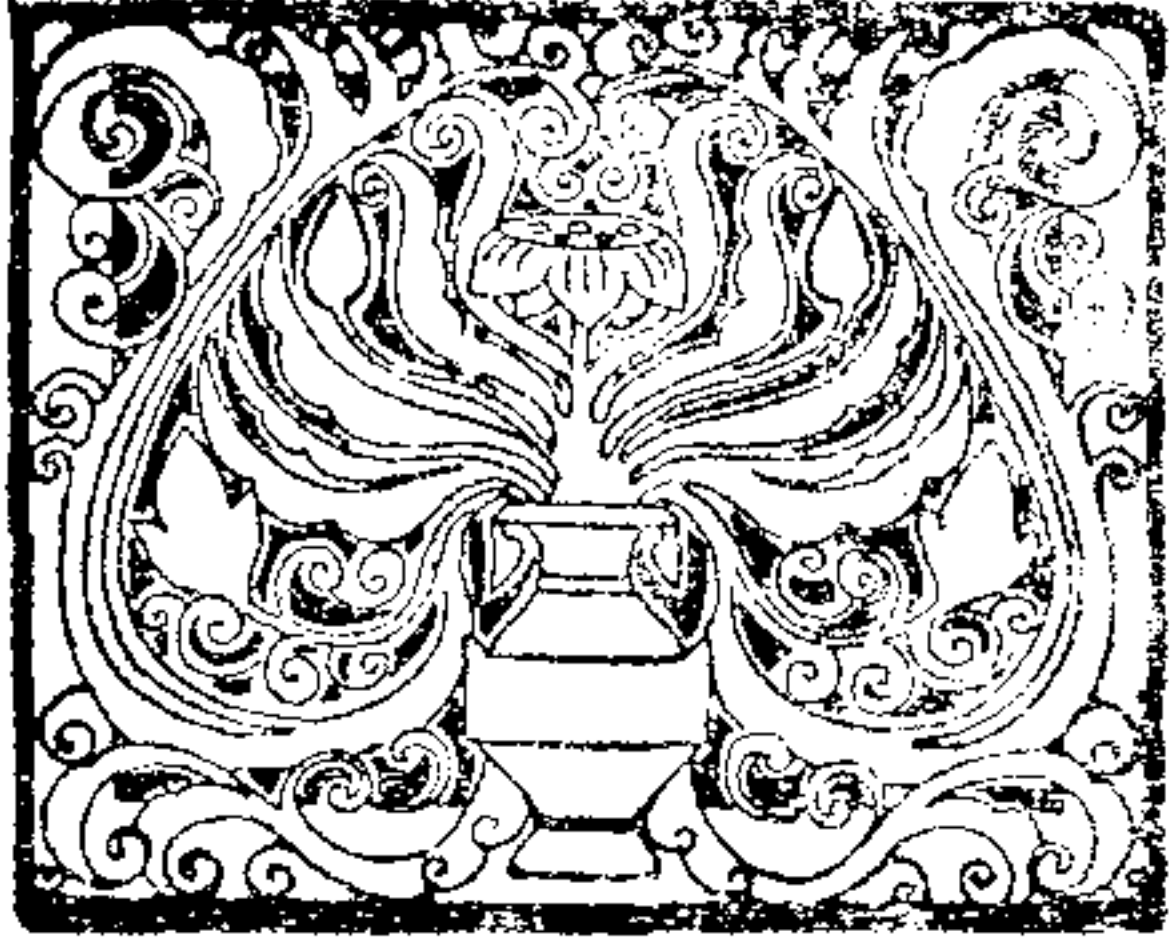
JANUARY 1987

Prabuddha Bharata

OR
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Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

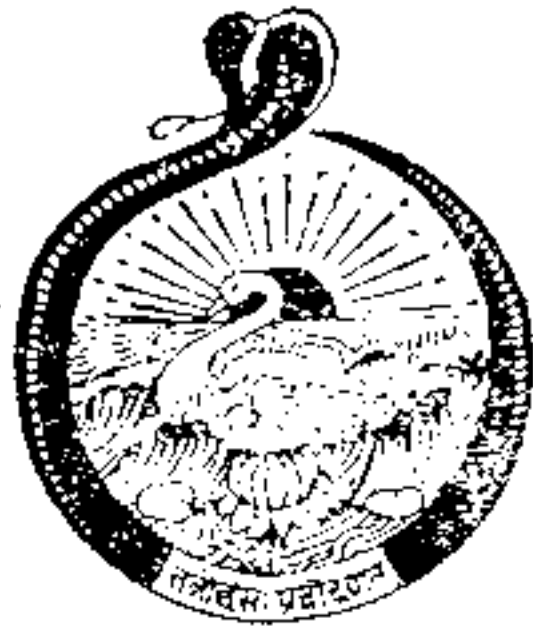
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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 92

JANUARY 1987

No. 1

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

ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

Vidyayā vindate amṛtam

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

Hear ye, children of Immortality, even those that dwell in celestial spheres!

I have realized this great Being who is effulgent like the sun beyond all darkness. Knowing Him alone one goes beyond death ; there is no other way.

Thou art the woman, Thou art the man, Thou art the youth and the maiden too. Thou art the old man who totters along leaning on the staff. Thou art born many-faced.

His form cannot be perceived within the range of senses. No one perceives Him with the eye. Those who know Him through the faculty of intuition, as thus seated in their hearts, become immortal.

These truths, when taught, shine forth only in the high-souled one who has supreme devotion to the teacher. Verily, these truths shine forth in the high-souled ones.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad
(2.5, 3.8, 4.3, 4.20, 6.23)

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

With this issue *Prabuddha Bharata* enters the 92nd year of its publication. On this happy occasion we send our greetings and good wishes to our readers, contributors and friends all over the world.

Mayavati, the home of *Prabuddha Bharata* in the Himalayas, is a living monument to Swami Vivekananda's vision of the unity of life. This month's EDITORIAL is an attempt to recapture a glint of that vision and unravel the factors that remained veiled behind it.

'Dharma is what gives focus, direction and power to the diverse strands of our personality; it is what helps us build and organize our character so that it becomes a completely stable scaffolding for self-realization, so that we may channel the energies of our Higher Self into every aspect of our Daily life', says Dr. Margaret Bedrosian. In her article THE PYRAMID OF DHARMA she shows how the different levels of human endeavour constitute the pyramid of Dharma 'each stone of which has to be chosen with care'. The author is lecturer in English and comparative literature at the university of California, Davis.

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna, Reader in English, Usmania University, Hyderabad, concludes the second instalment of his article RAMAKRISHNA AND SCIENCE by showing how the framework of Sri Ramakrishna's outlook fits in with three of the fundamental assumptions of modern science: indeterminacy, linguistic multivalence and relativity of values.

'Vedanta, at least as taught in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement, is *lived religion*', says Swami Yogeshananda who discusses in PRACTICAL VEDANTA IN THE ARTS some of the basic problems that a spiritual aspirant has to face in choosing art as a vocation, and shows how Vedanta solves these problems. The article forms a part of a series of talks that the author gave at the Vedanta Society of Houston in Texas, U.S.A.

In UPENDRA NATH MUKHOPADHYAYA Swami Chetanananda, spiritual head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, gives an interesting account of the life of one of Ramakrishna's lay disciples who in later life attained fame and wealth as the proprietor of Basumati Press.

MAYAVATI—THE HOME OF UNITY IN THE HIMALAYAS

(EDITORIAL)

It is the same old Himalayas where the wandering monk, Vivekananda was returning. In these valleys and forests he first felt the vibrant presence of divinity in nature. To him the father of the mountains was *devatātmā*, 'ensouled by divinity'. It was to him, the repository of all the best and the highest in the Indian civilization. It was, indeed, the *mānadaṇḍa*, 'the

standard by which all the other human civilizations, past, present and future, must be tested',¹ as he said.

For him it was a bliss to return to the same sublime valleys and deep forests in

1. Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983) p. 100.

whose rushing streams he first heard the sound of Śiva's drum—'Hara, Hara, Vyom, Vyom'. In the early years of his wandering life, he was virtually mad after these mountains. 'The eternal Himalayas', as he would say, 'rising tier above tier with their snow caps, look as it were into the very mysteries of heaven'.² Here during his early days of wandering, he moved alone with God, asking nothing and fearing none. Sometimes his brother-disciples followed him. Sometimes the unknown monk moved with his first disciple, carrying the disciple's shoes on his head, when the latter fell sick.

It was the Himalaya-fever, 'the devilish inwardness' as Vivekananda called it. It was the same haunting fascination for the deep woods and snowy mountains that had drawn the wandering monk in search of a life of total renunciation. 'Himalayas stand for that renunciation',³ he said. Long ago, he confided to someone dear to him, 'I was never a missionary, nor ever would be one—my place is in the Himalayas'.⁴

In this very Himalayas, under a huge banyan tree at Almora he had, once long before, the sudden realization of the oneness of the microcosm and the macrocosm, the potentiality of the entire universe in a grain of sand.

In the austere Himalayan heights of Amarnath cave one day, he had 'come face to face there with the Lord Himself'.⁵ It is here in a secluded corner of magnificent Chenars by the Dal Lake in Kashmir that he had spent seven most mystical days and

nights, listening to the vibrant voice of the Divine Mother at Kshir Bhavani. Here he worshipped the little virgin daughter of the temple priest as Umā Kumāri. In this valley, he heard the sound of 'Śivoham' in the spinning wheels of Kashmiri mothers. Here he was received with all kindness by the old Mussalman mother under the Chennar-tree, who sat in a farmyard and who told the Swami with all the dignity of the faithful, 'I thank our God, by the mercy of the Lord, I am a Mussalman'.⁶ Here, in Kashmir, the Muslim boatmen 'watched the river in his absence for his return and servants disputed with guests to do him service'. Here, the wandering monk had moved for all these years, 'in the garments of the beggar despised by the alien, worshipped by the people'.⁷ Here he stood in the true background of his homeless life—the background of cottage-roofs of common masses and lonely paths across cornfields.

Here, at Almora, on a new-moon night, he brought new life to his western daughter Nivedita by a sacred touch in the manner of Sri Ramakrishna. And that sacred touch transfigured her, and made her 'gazing deep into a Infinite Good'. That is how, she understood, 'the greatest masters bestow the Impersonal Vision'.⁸

It is in this Himalayan valley that his western disciples had seen in him 'a humility that wiped out all littleness, a renunciation that would die for scorn of oppression and pity of the oppressed, a love that would bless even the oncoming feet of torture and of death'. Here his disciples saw the 'awakening of the holy child' in their Master Vivekananda.

A pilgrim who had seen him suddenly at the turn of a mountainous path stood

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) Vol. 3, p. 285.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) 7:354.

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) 7:467.

5. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1972) Vol. 1, p. 92.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

transfixed with the words 'Śiva, Śiva'. In this abode of Śiva, he indeed became Śiva himself. His presence brought such spiritual sublimity in the atmosphere that his disciples would hear in the quivering of the palm trees the cry of 'Mahādeva! Mahādeva! Mahādeva!'⁹

Here the people saw in him the face of the prophet. In Nainital a Mohammedan gentleman for the first time accepted him as God-sent. 'Swamiji, if aftertimes any claim you as an Avatar, remember that, I, a Mohammedan, am the first',¹⁰ the gentleman said. Here like Christ and Buddha, he had received with extreme kindness and compassion the two nautch girls who had come to speak to him and sought for his blessings. And this the monk did even in the face of loud protests from pundits.¹¹

It is in this Himalayas that he, probably after his vision of the immortal Amarnath, lifted a couple of pebbles in his hand and said, 'Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes...for I have touched the feet of God.' Here he heard the eternal chanting of Ganga flowing with a sound 'Hara! Hara! The free! The free!'¹² 'That is how', he realized, 'one should leave his body in the midst of the Himalayan freedom'.

It is here in the Himalayan valleys that he would sometimes get buried in the dream of his favourite saint Śuka—'The ideal paramahansa'. Again and again he would speak of this great ideal in his life,

To him alone amongst men was it given to drink a handful of the waters of that one undivided ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda—existence, knowledge and bliss absolute! Most saints die, having heard only the thunder of Its waves upon the

shore. A few gain the vision—and still fewer, taste of It. But he drank of the Sea of Bliss!¹³

And he would recite with exuberance of joy the celebrated line, 'I know, and Shuka knows, and perhaps Vyāsa knows—a little', says Shiva'.

To those who knew him, he stood out, in his utter egolessness and lack of body-consciousness, as an embodiment of his own ideal 'Suka'. His master Sri Ramakrishna used to call him lovingly, 'My Shuka'.¹⁴ Did he not know that like Śuka he was destined to bring the Ganga of the *Bhāgavatam*, the gospel of the essential divinity and unity of life, to a world suffering from a drought of the soul? Was he not aware that he was destined to save humanity which, like the unfortunate king Parīkṣit, was poisoned to death by the cobra of a sensate culture, and which, despite all the superabundance of material wealth, was waiting for countdown to a meaningless extinction?

* * *

It is the same old Himalayas. But today the wandering monk was returning to these dark and deep woods after years of back-breaking labour both in the East and the West, for establishing Vedanta as the religion of future humanity. He was nearing his end. Today he was trudging home through the thick white snow of the opening days of the twentieth century. For the first time he was going to visit Mayavati, the 'Himalayan centre as well as a place for western disciples'.¹⁵ He wanted to have a place solely dedicated to the worship of One All-pervading Reality: The Advaita. In this home of unity there

9. Ibid., p. 276.

10. Ibid., p. 284.

11. Ibid., p. 285.

12. Ibid., p. 47.

13. Ibid., p. 294-95

14. Ibid.

15. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) 5:123.

would be no worship of personal gods and goddesses. In this 'alien land' of the world this would be Vivekananda's only home—a home for the unification of the East and the West, of all mankind under the protection and inspiration of Advaita Vedanta.

It was in the snowy heights of Switzerland that Vivekananda's idea of an Advaita Ashrama first began to crystallize. To a friend of Almora he wrote on 5 August 1896, 'I want to start a Math at Almora or near Almora rather'. In November of the same year he reminded the same friend, 'We want a whole hill, with a view of snow range, all to ourselves.'¹⁶ The prophet was, in fact, dreaming of his future at Mayavati. 'It will be a centre for work and meditation', he said, 'where my Indian and western disciples can live together and them I shall train as workers, the former to go out as preachers of Vedanta in the West, and the latter to devote their lives to the good of India'.¹⁷

In March 1899 he sent the draft of the prospectus for Mayavati. In 1900 January, a year before Vivekananda himself came to Mayavati, the prospectus first appeared in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, the first English journal that was published from Mayavati under the direct inspiration and guidance of the prophet.

THE ADVAITA ASHRAMA HIMALAYAS

In Whom is the Universe, Who is in the Universe, Who is the Universe; in Whom is the Soul, Who is in the Soul, Who is the Soul of Man; knowing Him—and therefore the Universe—as our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery and leads to Infinite Freedom.

16. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1978) 6:383.

17. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965) p. 423.

Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well-being, of individuals or numbers, it has been through the perception, realisation and the practicalisation of the Eternal Truth—THE ONENESS OF ALL BEINGS. 'Dependence is misery, Independence is happiness.' The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain to Absolute Freedom.

Hitherto it has not been possible to preach this Noble Truth entirely free from the settings of dualistic weakness; this alone, we are convinced, explains why it has not been more operative and useful to mankind at large.

To give this ONE TRUTH, a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start the Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practised nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone.¹⁸

The main lines along which the work is to be carried on are necessarily educational and consist of sending out trained teachers and issuing publications. Arrangements, therefore, are in course of progress for training Indian and European men and women side by side, for Advaita work in the East and West. All men and women who believe in the uplifting power of the Advaita and are ready to make their lives one with the GREAT LIFE and to help others in doing so, are invited to join the Ashrama and assist in the carrying out of its object in the manner best suited to each individual circumstances.¹⁹

Vivekananda was not so much interested to give a new intellectual interpretation of Advaita Vedanta, or just to found a Himalayan retreat for his western disciples. His primary motif was man-making, the creation of a new generation of 'spiritual

18. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) 5:435-36.

19. *Prabuddha Bharata* (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama) January 1900 and also *Brahmavadin* (Madras) December 1899.

humanity' as he told years before, to Junnagadh Dewan Haridas Beharidas Desai. Vivekananda's another disciple Sister Christine wrote that her master's dream was to create a new band of 'supermen' and 'superwomen' who will be combining western dynamism and Indian spirituality in their own lives. And Mayavati would be, as Vivekananda dreamt, the Himalayan Centre for training this new generation in the Advaitic way. In his San Francisco lecture 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?' Vivekananda explained this Himalayan dream:

Everyone says that the highest, the pure truth cannot be realised all at once by all, that men have to be led to it gradually through worship, prayer, and other kinds of prevalent religious practices. I am not sure whether that is the right method or not. In India I work both ways.

In Calcutta, I have all these images and temples—in the name of God and the Vedas, of the Bible and Christ and Buddha. Let it be tried. But in the heights of the Himalayas I have a place where I am determined nothing shall enter except pure truth. There I want to work out this idea about which I have spoken to you today [the teaching of Advaita Vedanta]. There are an Englishman and an Englishwoman in charge of the place. The purpose is to train seekers of truth and to bring up children without fear and without superstition. They shall not hear about Christs and Buddhas and Shivas and Vishnus—none of these. They shall learn, from the start, to stand upon their own feet. They shall learn, from their childhood that God is the spirit and should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Everyone must be looked upon as spirit. That is the ideal. I do not know what success will come of it. Today I am preaching the thing I like. I wish I had been brought up entirely on that, without all the dualistic superstitions....²⁰

On 3 January 1901, Vivekananda reached this home of unity, of Advaita, in Mayavati.

A year before he wrote to his brother-disciple, 'I am going to the Himalayas soon to retire for ever. My work is done.'²¹ He was only thirty-seven. But the last two years of incessant struggle both in India and abroad had taken from him, as he said, twenty years of his life. Utterly exhausted, today he supported himself with a staff and on the shoulders of his disciples. His days were numbered. He would not live for more than one year and a half. He told his disciple, 'You see, my son, now I am coming to the end!'²²

This dream of an Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati was fulfilled by Vivekananda's two English disciples, Captain Sevier and Mrs. Sevier. To them in London he gave the responsibility of building up this Himalayan home. They responded forthwith and followed their master right up to the Himalayas. Within three years, with intense labour and personal sacrifice they built up the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati. The austerities and rigours of this labour told heavily upon Capt. Sevier's life. A few months before the Swami could reach, Capt. Sevier died quietly at Mayavati. The ashramites made his last rites in the Hindu way by the side of the small rivulet below the gorges of the Ashrama. On that sacred and secluded spot there stands no monument. That was the Advaita wish of Capt. Sevier. He passed away like a 'martyr', as Vivekananda loved to say with the deepest respect and gratitude to the departed soul. Mrs. Sevier continued at Mayavati and waited for her master Vivekananda to step into the Ashrama on this snow-white morning.

In this home of Advaita, Vivekananda would not like any one to lean on any kind of dualistic worship or ritual. But to

²¹. Ibid., p. 483.

²². *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (1981) Vol. 2, p. 567.

²⁰. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1977) 8:139-41.

his surprise, one day he discovered a small shrine where his disciples were worshipping the great Master, Sri Ramakrishna. That evening the lion of Advaita Vedanta roared. Vivekananda thundered like Gaudapāda, or Astāvakra, or Sankara. Vehemently he spoke that in this Advaita Ashrama it should be the endeavour of the seekers of God to live only on the subjective side of religion, such as meditation and study of the scriptures. At least in this place one should try to rise above all rituals and worship of personal gods, thus freeing oneself from any dependence on this God or that book. Here in this Himalayan home one should and must derive all his strength from the infinite Divinity within. Here one should live on the infinite bliss and consciousness that is within all of us. That evening one could feel in Vivekananda's voice the vibrant music of Sankara's *Nirvāṇa-ṣaṭkam*—*Cidānandarūpaḥ Śivoham, Śivoham*. The words of the Master lifted the minds of the disciples.

Ramakrishna-worship, or for that matter any ritual or worship was felt unnecessary from that day onwards in this home of Advaita. Today when you go to Mayavati you see a picture of Madonna with the holy child and a Buddha face in the small dining room. A portrait of Vivekananda hangs on the staircase wall. A picture of Ramakrishna stands above the fire place. No incantations or flowers are offered to them. A few steps out, and the Mayavati garden with its superabundance of roses, poppies and dahlias stands out as a perpetual shrine silently worshipping the 'One Reality, beyond all form and colour, beyond time and space', as Vivekananda used to sing.

But once Vivekananda reached Mayavati, he felt jubilant. His dream had come to

reality! The all-white panorama of the wintry Himalayas reminded him that he was now with the All-white Śiva, the transcendent and the eternally meditative one. His joy knew no bounds. He wrote to a beloved one, 'The snow is lying all round six inches deep, the sun is bright and glorious'.²³ His spirit soared high.

He consoled the bereaved heart of Mother Sevier. His very presence brought, as if the sudden resurrection of a spring in the midst of this severe winter. He talked, wrote and inspired all in order to boost up his dream child of the Advaitic vision—the *Prabuddha Bharata*. A few days later he went to visit the highest hilltop nearby, the Dharmagarh peak, with the joy of a child. A grand view of the four hundred miles of snowpeaks stretched unobstructed right before his eyes. This unspeakable sublimity had always haunted him. He loved to quote the king Yudhiṣṭhira's love for the Himalayas, 'Behold, my queen, the Himalayas, how grand and beautiful they are; I love them. They do not give me anything, but my nature is to love the grand, the beautiful'.²⁴ On this blessed spot he desired to build a hermitage where he could meditate undisturbed. Like a boy unfettered from all the worries he moved by the small lake of Mayavati and declared that soon he would give up all public work and pass his days writing books and whistling merry tunes with the birds. 'Thought will be clear in the sight of snows',²⁵ he once wrote. Here sublimity pours in along with the dew drops and the rustling of the pine trees. Here one can, as Vivekananda did, sing high the Song of the Sannyasin:

Wake up the note! the song that had its birth
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach.

24. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) 1:12.

25. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1977) 8:400.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 570.

In mountain caves and glades of forest deep,
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth of fame
Could ever dare to break; where rolled the
stream of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows
both. Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say—
'Om Tat Sat, Om!'²⁶

Now the dream of a future Mayavati consumed him. He saw with his prophetic vision that the monks at Mayavati would meditate for long hours in the Himalayan solitude. But once the meditation was over they would carry baskets of apples on their head and sell them in the market below. The distinction between knowledge and action would be removed for ever in Mayavati. And Mayavati literally fulfilled the words of the prophet.

* * *

Greek civilization was buried in the Aegian Isles because the Greek philosophers refused to 'return' to the market place of life, leaving their ivory towers of knowledge. Vivekananda stemmed that danger for India by creating a historic way for the regeneration and continuation of the ancient Indian culture. 'The Paragon of Advaita Vedanta', as an eminent western philosopher would call him, did return from his Himalayan dream of Mayavati to the burning plains of India. The cry of the famished gulls, the hungry humanity, was as irresistible a call to him as the mandate of his master Sri Ramakrishna who one day asked him to spread out like the branches of a great Banyan tree. True to the words of his Master, Vivekananda indeed grew into a great life-giving Banyan, with Buddha's heart and Śaṅkara's brain, with Suka's purity and a cyclonic monk's dynamism. His Master knew that under the shade of this great Banyan,

tired souls would one day come for rest and providence.

Vivekananda knew his own destiny. He knew that he had a message for the modern world. It was the message of Vedanta which only could meet the challenges of modern science and materialism. 'His was the modern mind in its completeness', wrote his western disciple. 'In his consciousness the ancient light...shone on all those questions and all those puzzles which are present to thinkers and workers of the modern world.'²⁷ His disciple wrote:

'He might appear to take up any subject, literary, ethnological or scientific, but he always made us feel it as illustration of the Ultimate Vision. There was, for him, nothing secular.'²⁸ 'Art, Science and Religion', he said once, 'are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this we must have the theory of Advaita.'²⁹

In South India he declared that he was born to save India by the message of Practical Vedanta, as Śaṅkara had once saved India from the enveloping darkness of Buddhistic Nihilism by the reasonings of intellectual Advaita.

His role was to bring down this great philosophy from the mountain tops to the very heart of daily life. To Indians he declared his historic message:

But one defect which lay in the Advaita was its being worked out so long on the spiritual plane only, and nowhere else; now, the time has come when you have to make it practical. It shall no more be a rahasya, a secret. It shall no more live with monks in caves and forests, and in the Himalayas; it must come down to the daily, everyday life of the people; it shall be worked out in the palace of the king, in the cave of the recluse; it shall be worked out in the cottage of the poor, by the beggar in the

^{26.} *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1972) 4:392-93.

^{27.} *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (1972) 1:74.

^{28.} *Ibid.* p. 279.

^{29.} *Ibid.* p. 10.

street, everywhere; anywhere it can be worked out.³⁰

Who would work as the protagonists for this dynamic religion, this Practical Vedanta? The epoch-making ideas of Sri Ramakrishna would create, he believed, the band of 'Superman' and 'Superwoman'. And the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas would be place from where such personalities would be shaped. He was waiting for their coming.

At Almora he spoke to Indians:

Strong souls from all quarters of this earth, in time to come, will be attracted to this Father of mountains, when all this fight between sects and all those differences in dogmas will not be remembered any more, and quarrels between your religion and my religion will have vanished altogether, when mankind will understand that there is but the eternal religion, and this is the perception of the divine within, and the rest is mere froth.³¹

Had Vivekananda been all Advaita, all intellect, all knowledge, all meditation, all withdrawal from humanity, he would certainly cease to be the Vivekananda whom we know today. With him, intellect, however superior, was always subservient to heart. His intense longing for meditation and solitary living, however fascinating, would at once give way to his overpowering passion which responded to all kinds of human suffering. Love was his undoing. Heart was unquestionably dominant over intellect in his life. It is due to the supremacy of heart that his dream of living the life of a Himalayan hermit was shattered eight years before. The news of his sister's suicide had thrown him out for ever from the solitary cave of Almora where he decided to live alone in

meditation for the rest of life. The pain was excruciating beyond words. And it flung him down for ever on the burning plains of life for the regeneration of *women and the masses*. To a beloved mother he wrote:

I went years ago to the Himalayas, never to come back; and my sister committed suicide, the news reached me there, and that weak heart flung me off from that prospect of peace...Peace I have sought, but the heart, that seat of Bhakti, would not allow me to find it. Struggle and torture, torture and struggle.³²

As his Advaitic vision matured, and he began to see the visible manifestation of God everywhere, the struggle ceased. His disciples feel that their master's interpretation of the world was based on his direct realization that 'God is the Universe—not within it, or outside it, and not the universe God, or the image of God—but He it, the All.'³³ As this Advaita vision deepened, an all-encompassing love dawned in his heart. And this love came down with a tempestuous fury, in order to help mankind out of all kinds of sufferings—physical, intellectual or spiritual—everywhere and everywhen. He talked of Love that translates Advaita, the unity of life, into action. What is love? 'Love is the expression of infinite unity of existence', he would say, bringing at once the long-sought synthesis of Jñāna and Bhakti. Vivekananda knew fully well the limitations of intellect. He realized from his own experiences the all-conquering power of heart. To the westerners he exposed the sad results of a purely intellectual culture.

Intellect has been cultured with the result that hundreds of sciences have been discovered, and their effect has been that the few have made

30. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) 3:427.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

32. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1978) 6:420.

33. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (1972) 1:293.

slaves of the many—that is all the good that has been done.

Through the intellect is not the way to solve the problem of misery, but through the heart.

A pure heart sees beyond the intellect; it gets inspired: it knows things that reason can never know, and whenever there is conflict between the pure heart and the intellect, always side with the pure heart, even if you think what your heart is doing is unreasonable.³⁴

And this predominance of heart inspired Vivekananda to work intensely for the good of humanity until the last day of his life. In his life the meditative transcendence of Śiva was combined with intense activity of Śakti, the Divine Mother. What Sri Ramakrishna called Kālī, the Primeaval energy, never ceased to inspire this Śuka-like child to carry the nectar of Vedanta from one corner of the globe to the other. Are not Śiva's transcendence and Mother's power one and the same thing? Are not the fire and its burning power one and the same thing? That was the corner-stone of Sri Ramakrishna's message. The calm sea and its tempestuous surface are two faces of the *One* and the same Reality. According to Vedanta in personal God or in the incarnations of God, knowledge (*jñāna*) goes hand in hand with will (*icchā*) and action (*kriyā*). In Vivekananda's life the 'philosopher with idea' was combined with the 'philosopher in action'. Knowledge (*jñāna*) was yoked to Will (*icchā*) to do good to the world. And the Pure Will was translated into Action (*kriyā*).

This knowledge born of the Advaitic vision, this ripe Bhakti, as Ramakrishna used to say, today flows, like Ganga, on the plains. Advaita is translated into action all over the world in hundreds of Vedanta centres and temples, schools, colleges, hospitals, flood and famine relief centres and huge institutions for rural and

tribal developments. These are the new temples of divine worship. Here the deity is 'man'. 'I worship that God who by the ignorant is called man', Vivekananda declared long before. Here the only worship that incessantly goes on is service—service of food to the hungry, of education to the illiterate, of spiritual strength to souls weary of a sensate culture.

This is a new worship of the One God in countless human beings irrespective of caste, creed and nationality. It is a new gospel, a gospel not of propitiating deities for selfish ends or even for personal salvation, but the sacrifice of a Buddha-life 'for the good of many, for the welfare of many'. It is a new gospel inspiring the prophet's followers to manifest divinity in their own lives and then to worship the same ever-present divinity in the weak, in the illiterate, in the saints and sinners alike. 'Hitherto the great fault of our Indian religion has lain in its knowing only two words—renunciation and Mukti. Only Mukti *here!* Nothing for the householders! ... But these are the very people I want to help,'³⁵ he said.

His call evoked genuine response from the purest hearts. Hundreds of young men and women gifted with purity, culture and intellect today have left their hearth and home and have come up for building up their splendid spiritual lives by dwelling on the Spiritual Infinitude of life, and by egoless service to the Spirit in man. Mayavati, as Vivekananda desired, has trained saintly intellectuals who have carried the spiritual message of Advaita to the West for nearly a century. Mayavati, again, has produced saintly workers who have put into practice the idea of the Advaitic vision, of One God in entire

³⁴. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1977) 1:414.

³⁵. *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (1972) 1:140.

humanity. The dream of 'Advaita', the holistic vision of life has become today dynamic and practical in the market place of life. And this is the justification of the prophet's vision at Mayavati—a vision of the essential divinity and unity of mankind.

Secluded from the world of men by the dark woods of sky-touching cedars, cypresses, oaks, and pines, Mayavati today stands in the midst of the same meditative silence that had once haunted the wander-

ing friar. Standing on its precincts you see even today the same vast range of magnificent snow-peaks that Vivekananda had seen nearly a century before. In the small campus as you walk from the *Prabuddha Bharata* Building down to the Ashrama Hospital below, you feel for yourself how the devotees of Vivekananda, following the footsteps of their master, combined knowledge with service into a single worship of the *One All-Pervading Reality*.

THE PYRAMID OF DHARMA

DR. MARGARET BEDROSIAN

I am all that a man may desire
Without transgressing
The law of his nature.¹

Perhaps more than any other concept of the Hindu tradition, dharma addresses the needs of contemporary men and women confused about their roles and their responsibility to themselves and the world at large. Without doubt, dharma is one of the most subtle and compelling of values, testing our self knowledge at every turn. If people are often at a loss as to how they are to discover this thread that leads to the divine, it is no surprise for we live in a time when the social customs and restrictions of previous ages have little impact on our way of life, when the individual strives to free himself of the strictures of the ancestors and find himself independently. Yet in the midst of these increasingly distracted times when the

material crust of life shines with less hope the thicker it gets, learning how to detect the call of dharma and then giving oneself in service to it requires more discrimination and imagination than any other part of the spiritual path.

Originally, dharma referred to the web of moral and religious duty that bound the individual to the larger social fabric. Dharma held the social order intact; it gave the individual integrity. In a sense, this definition is still useful today, but whereas earlier ages held forth a clear—and often narrow—ideal of what moral and religious duty comprised and gave the individual a more or less unambiguous response to his actions, our own times have relegated these terms to the attic trunk without substitutes. As a result, our collective allegiance to traditional notions of morality is slippery with the indulgence of the times, yet we are haunted by a sense—for many, an inarticulate sense—that *nothing* is holding together our daily lives; we feel as though we are speeding toward nowhere. The only possible

1. *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: New American Library, 1944) p. 71. Subsequent references to this work appear in the text.

conclusion millions of people draw is anxious and filled with dread: at any moment, life will fall apart. It's a nightmare. And not all of us wake up from it. Instead, countless people find themselves caught in a stupor of addictions, dulling their awareness of how little control they have over their fate.

Luckily, most of us are aware enough to know that the poisons that turn off our minds only complicate the problem. We find ourselves much like Arjuna, with our brains whirling 'round and round', trying to get a hold of the centre. In the following pages, I'd like to briefly plunge into a fathomless subject, the dialectic on dharma as set forth in the Bhagavad Gita and suggest how Krishna's response to Arjuna's confusion is still one of the wisest resources we have in contemporary life in the quest for a righteous life.

Arjuna's plight has been commented on for centuries: he's a superb warrior who all of a sudden gets cold feet on the battleground. It's a situation that many of us can identify with: having spent years, decades, perfecting our work, the day comes when we just can't go through with it one more time, heart and spirit rebel. The excuses tumble out of our mouths, and as many commentators have suggested, Arjuna's refusal to fight hints of rationalization: there is an element of fear perhaps as he faces the thousands of kinsmen turned foe. But his fear isn't just a simple attack of nerves; he is too great a fighter for this and his character has evolved to a state where he isn't likely to fall into sloth. His trouble seems located elsewhere, in the region of the psyche where we stand impotent as we face several alternatives. His very first words to Krishna suggest his confusion as he finds himself in the middle:

Krishna the changeless
Halt my chariot

There where the warriors,
Bold for the battle,
Face their foemen.
Between the armies
There let me see them. (30)

Isn't this the existential backdrop to every moment of our lives? The awareness that armies of choices and conflicting demands press for our loyalty, for our warrior gifts? How to choose, and how to save our skin! I find Arjuna's conduct from the very beginning an apt model for any age of how one investigates the requirements of dharma: he addresses the changeless, the central consciousness that anchors all else. Though he does not yet perceive the full extent of Krishna's identity, Arjuna shows enough faith in the charioteer to at least turn to him for advice. He doesn't make the mistake of assuming his own perceptions are enough to get him out of his dilemma. Only with the changeless supporting him, does he face the armies and his choices. Similarly, any of us trying to get a grip on our lives have to find a place to grip in the midst of the flux; even if we can't see it for what it is yet, the *idea* of the changeless must become the ground where faith is planted. At the very least, this faith initiates a dialogue that activates different levels of the unconscious to seek alignment with the Higher Self.

Though Krishna smiles at Arjuna's sorrow—and what else can God do when the part forgets it's the whole!—he responds with thoroughness and sympathy to his friend's dilemma. Arjuna veils his fear of personal death by bemoaning the collapse of the world order, or world dharma, if he goes ahead with his own duty as a warrior. This too is a feeling many of us will understand: once when I was much younger, during my second year of graduate school, I entered a panic-stricken stage when fear and loathing took

over daily life. The hallways of the university seemed riddled by demonic intelligences eager to seduce me from the 'spiritual life'. I would lose my soul if I learned their game and completed what I had set out to do. I would lose my innocence. Of course, in the process I would also have to face all the demons that lurked in my own mind and heart, instead of projecting them onto the academic hallways. Running away guarantees that such fears are never lured out into the open: we can always take refuge in a convenient distaste for the mundane and tawdry. At the time, I wasn't aware of any of this, although I suspected that my depression wasn't just a simple reaction to academic sophistry. All I really knew was that I had gotten myself into this impasse and that my spiritual teacher would help. After I had rushed through the details of my little crisis and reached a crescendo with, 'I'm afraid my work is blocking my spiritual path', he smiled, waved his hand, and succinctly set me straight: 'It's just a chapter of your life. Do it and be done with it.' I had never doubted that he'd say something like this: life doesn't impel us into radically new directions very often. Usually one phase, or 'chapter', grows naturally out of the previous one, and only if we have learned or completed the lessons of one can the new unfold. Ten years later, I remember this period with gratitude and amazement: I did finish graduate school, accompanied by this and many other crises; but only by finishing was I able to discover the unconventional work that I finally claimed as my own; only by finishing did I begin to burn up some of the karma that had delivered me to the university.

Similarly, Krishna's initial response to Arjuna's sorrow brings focus to his actual dilemma: 'Bodies are said to die, but

That which possesses the body is eternal. It cannot be limited, or destroyed. Therefore you must fight.' Our fear of dying, which is ironically the one thing that *can't* happen to us, drives us to make choices that take us away from liberation. What Krishna argues here is that the body is never what we are fighting for; the purpose of being true to our dharma is that this enables us to burn up or transform our karma in the most efficient way possible. It ripens the individual self and the seeds of those abilities we've been born with so that these may be surrendered to God at last. But though the power of ripening comes from God, only the human being can make the choice to turn to that Power and to discover the specifics of his dharma. And only the human being can make the decision to lay down all duties in God, the goal of dharma.

Having established the need to be true to one's natural duty, Krishna comes back periodically throughout his discourse to the question of how one discovers this dharma in the first place. Echoing through the frenetic and scattered dynamics of the modern age, his comments may seem sketchy. We in the West especially, where the boundaries of social caste are porous and where old authority structures only go so far in helping us discover our path, can use all the help we can get. From the outset, we must be clear that dharma is not just a simple concept of duty, at least not in these times. Nor does dharma pertain only to that area of our lives called 'livelihood', the means to financial security. Dharma is what gives focus, direction, and power to the diverse strands of our personality; it is what helps us build and organize our character so that it becomes a completely stable scaffolding for self-realization, so that we may channel the energies of the Higher Self into every aspect of our daily life. Dharma, in short,

is much like a spiritual pyramid: it has to be conceived of as a holy structure with a holy purpose. And as one devotee friend put it, each stone has to be chosen with care, with an eye to its appropriateness in the larger plan. No wonder it takes such a long time to build.

Whenever we use the analogy of the pyramid, which was of course a sacred structure for the ancient Egyptians, we can't help but remember the most important facet of dharma, that it leads to a higher state of being. An individual who is nurturing his talents and making a 'success' of his life may have a lot of ambition and may contribute to the world in a great way. But he isn't practicing his dharma unless he has an image of how this exercise contributes to the collective dharma and his own evolution toward union with God. Without this sensitivity, it becomes all too easy to do things by whim or to be cowed into retreat from experiences that might ripen us. This is why our choice of a Chosen Ideal is so crucial: the ideal keeps reminding us that there is a larger reality waiting at the end of the path and yet shows us that each step of the path must be taken consciously. Anecdotes that illustrate this are everywhere in the lives of world teachers. Ramakrishna's life especially is a textbook on the nuances of dharma. One of my favourite accounts concerns his attention to domestic detail; as recorded by Swami Nikhilananda in his biography, *Holy Mother*, the Master's advice was the essence of practicality and showed a fine awareness of how the different strands of life must be braided:

...in regard to such practical matters as travelling, he asked [Sarada Devi] her always to be the first to get into a boat, railway compartment so that she could occupy a good seat, and to be the last to come out so that she might not, in her hurry, forget her luggage. He taught her that in arranging objects of domestic use one must

think out beforehand where particular articles were to be kept. What was frequently required must be kept near at hand and other things at a distance. When an article was temporarily removed from its place, it should be put back in exactly the same place so that one might not fail to find it even in the dark. He taught her how to roll the wick of an oil lamp, dress vegetables, and prepare betel leaves. He repeatedly told her to fit her conduct to the time, place, and circumstances, and the nature the people she had to deal with. He asked her not to hurt anyone's feelings. 'If you see a lame person,' he taught her, 'do not directly ask him why he walks that way.' He emphasized that she should have friendly feelings for all².

I have cited this passage at such great length because it is such an accessible illustration of dharma in practice. Ramakrishna's advice shows a fine balancing of attention to one's own needs and sensitivity to the needs of others, and proves that common sense is basic to any higher development of consciousness: it is important to find a good seat when travelling and to have one's daily articles arranged rationally. Similarly, it is important to discriminate as to the types of people one deals with; time, place, and circumstance affect our conduct, and teach us how to manifest the same friendliness while altering our social roles. As a whole, the habits Ramakrishna was trying to instill in all of us through the example set by the Holy Mother suggest how interconnected spiritual development is with the daily organization of one's life. When the little matters are taken care of as thoughtfully as the big ones, the world can't help but become a friendlier place for we will have brought consciousness to each corner of our lives. Lit up by the same care, each area helps create a unified space where the

2. Swami Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1962) p. 39.

task of self-realization proceeds harmoniously.

Returning to Krishna's discourse on karma yoga, we hear him refer time and time again to another imperative in the discovery and practice of dharma. At one point he says, 'duty well done fulfills desire' (45); then he continues, 'It is better to do your own duty, however imperfectly than to assume the duties of another person, however successfully. Prefer to die doing your own duty: the duty of another will bring you into great spiritual danger' (48). Yet later, he repeats this notion: 'When a man acts according to the law of his nature, he cannot be sinning. Therefore no one should give up his natural work, even though he does it imperfectly. For all action is involved in imperfection like fire in smoke' (127). Krishna's unrelenting emphasis on the naturalness of our dharma deserves prolonged, indeed lifelong, contemplation, especially in an age when the meaning of 'natural' is so obscured by all the unnatural processes and substances filling our lives and bodies. During the time of the Mahabharata, one's 'natural duty' was more clearly defined than it is now; considerations of caste and respect for the traditions of the ancestors moulded the individual to their imperatives. One could take comfort in conforming to the forms perhaps because the freedoms we've come to value in the Western world hadn't driven the questions of naturalness deeper into those lonely amorphous spaces where we struggle for reassurance. If we suspect that we are not doing our natural work, the 'correction' isn't simply made by stopping to do that work, just as a full state of natural well-being, i.e. health, isn't achieved immediately after we begin to change our diets and cleanse our bodies. Instead, in both cases there is an interim period where we slowly learn to listen

anew to our original wisdom and wholeness. Depending on how badly we've abused our bodies or neglected the gifts we've been born with, it may or may not take a long time to recover this awareness of what is natural to us. No one can transmit to us that animal well-being that stands for complete health; but when we have achieved it, we *know* it. Energy and calm are with us throughout the day, our body functions as part of the natural order stressing and relaxing by turn, we fall asleep without effort and wake up refreshed and happy to be alive. The body functions as nature planned for it to and the parts work together to serve that higher value of spiritual health.

By extension, no one can tell us exactly what it's like to have discovered our natural work, our natural duty, or our natural gifts. But just as a healthy body takes intrinsic joy in its activity—whether it's taking a walk, playing basketball, typing a letter, or chopping up vegetables—*without* lusting after the outcome, the person who has discovered his or her natural work and abilities will find an innate satisfaction in the doing of the task. Obviously, such satisfaction makes it infinitely easier to fulfil the demands of karma yoga as defined by Krishna in Chapter 4 of the Gita:

The seers say truly
That he is wise
Who acts without lust or scheming
For the fruit of the act:
His act falls from him,
Its chain is broken... (52)

Of course, it may still be that a person will cash in and scheme after ways to turn his abilities into material profits—this is understandable and necessary up to the point where our livelihood depends on intelligent husbandry; and as an interim stage in our evolution, it's better to exploit

our natural abilities than those that aren't ours. But the converse point is perhaps even more important in a world that seems to have gone amok with greed: whenever we are coming closer to serving those gifts that are naturally ours, the material gains of such work take a back seat to the actual doing; it's just like giving the body the form of sweets it naturally craves in the form of fruit, food which satisfies the appetite and squelches the confusing desire for more concentrated sugars found in candies and cookies. Once we rediscover the joys of sattvic fruits, we're not likely to lust after and indulge in addicting sugars that can never feed the body. Similarly, once we discover and act on our dharma, we tend to abuse ourselves less and less with frenetic and inflated desires for wealth and power that distract us from our real needs: our actions become their own fruit; they fall from us, their chain broken because they fulfil rather than muddle our desire for self-expression. Being around people who have learned the secret of dharma becomes a high form of holy company: they radiate a contentment that helps the rest of the world 'fall into place'; because they are not likely to be chasing after the inconsequential, they help clean up the psychological litter left by millions of their confused brethren. We've all seen such people in action and in rest: absorbed in meaningful work, they don't waste energy backbiting or belittling others; though they may not own much, they don't seem to have stumbled into the world by accident as so many of us have—they are full planetary citizens; and though their work may or may not be complex or skilled, their steadfastness and focus holds together society. As a result, they demonstrate how the needs of the individual and the collective are meant to be naturally harmonized.

Just as our body's needs change through

the periods of our lives, requiring adjustments to our diets, our rest, our work to maintain health, our dharma will also undergo changes as we burn up karma and discover new areas of ability and desire. If we are sensitive to our life rhythms, these shifts will be as natural as dharma itself. And yet, the number of mid-life crises people fall into and the unaccountable depression that seeps into so many of our lives now and then indicate how easily we can ignore new directions of growth. When we are in tune with our dharma, life has zest and interest. It doesn't merely satisfy us through a dry adherence to duty. Periods of transition are always tricky; because the ego can disguise our true motives, such periods raise many questions that take time and patience to answer; some of these include Arjuna's query to Krishna: is this genuine compassion I feel for the men I'm about to kill or a dread of following through on my responsibility? Arjuna is lucky to have God Himself at his right hand for immediate referral; the rest of us may have to use more indirect means. One clue that can't be overlooked is a *persistent* dissatisfaction in one's life; if for example our journal entries for several years show that we fall into deep depression or get the flu every time we come home from a vacation, this may signal the need to adjust. If in the midst of a successful career, we notice that we no longer feel the old excitement planning a new project—no matter how competently we do the work—then it is time to take stock. A natural way of life implies a progression through seasons; and the evolution of our dharma reflects these seasonal changes, a fact the Hindus sensibly recognized when they delineated the four stages of life. But it may be that some of us may have to go through seven stages, or ten, to complete the higher purpose of our life:

the point is that we have to undergo the death of the old structures if spirit is to continue streaming through the peak of our pyramid. It is in this sense that the old-fashioned concept of righteousness, a value that Krishna upholds to Arjuna as he counsels him to fight (p. 38), recovers its lost meaning; the conventional meaning of righteousness centres on morally upright or just behaviour in keeping with clearly defined sanctions. But it is hard to see how anyone can truly engage in socially just conduct, in which the needs of individuals are balanced and harmonized for the greater good of the whole, when one's inner life is not balanced and harmonized in keeping with dharma. Where, after all, would the discrimination come from to detect a righteous war from an unrighteous war if we were so at war within ourselves that we couldn't act for our own higher good? More than any other dilemma, it is this one that now plagues humanity.

Early in the Gita, Krishna basically tells Arjuna that he too is a servant of dharma. In the well known verse from the fourth chapter he states,

When goodness grows weak,
When evil increases,
I make myself a body.

In every age I come back
To deliver the holy,
To destroy the sin of the sinner,
To establish righteousness. (49)

This passage brings us to a final consideration: God in His complete freedom

serves the world through this cyclic rebirth in different times and cultures; in each incarnation, He delivers the message in keeping with the customs and attitudes of the place. He communicates in language that is lucid as well as profound. Those of us born into cultures far distant from the battle of Kurukshetra may well think through what it means for our dharma to be born American or Indian or Chinese. The personality and ideals of our homeland can't help but shape our personal dharma; these values can open up some possibilities and rule out others. Thus, it is useful to ask ourselves how the divine image is reflected in our native land. Arjuna was born into a culture where caste identity was lifelong and where the social fabric was intimately woven with spiritual concerns. For a modern American, caste structures are not a reality, though class is; spiritual concerns are filtered through a scientific and technological grid; and material abundance fogs the inner eye. The open-ended question each of us in the modern world must ask is how do we shape our lives in an affluent culture so that we can take in the best of what is here without losing our direction? How do we develop a trust that we can discover the law of our inner nature, when we have destroyed so much of its reflection in outer nature on this planet? Millennia after Arjuna faced his sorrow, the only solution is still to take refuge in a vigilant intelligence, to halt the chariot and dialogue with the Higher Self—and then move forward and fight.

RAMAKRISHNA AND 'SCIENCE'

DR. M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Three fundamental postulates of modern thought

So far we have seen Ramakrishna's analytic powers, his mapping of the Mind, with the implicit attribution of Ultimate Reality to a 'state' beyond both knowledge and ignorance. And once the fallibility of mind as an instrument of perception is recognized, several further parallels between Ramakrishna and patterns of modern empirical thinking become obvious. Only a few are touched upon as emblematic analogies.

There is fundamental identity between Ramakrishna and at least three contemporary patterns: the idea of indeterminacy: that, in lay man's terms, it is impossible to measure things simultaneously 'with more than strictly limited precision'; the idea that the relation between naming and the thing named cannot be easily identified; and, finally, that there are no 'monolithic' or 'monotone values'.⁴⁹

To begin with, the major assumption conceded by many thinkers today: If 'truth' is 'a precise correspondence between our description and what we describe', or 'between our total network of abstractions and deductions and some total understanding of the world',⁵⁰ then this kind of truth is non-existent, inconceivable. In effect, the overall picture being indeterminate, all

that we can do is to achieve epistemological self-sufficiency or autonomy only within limited frames. Even this 'limited thresholds' of 'knowledge' are supported by assumptions generated either by the mind of the frame- or pattern-maker and what he assumes, implicitly, as 'logical'. Hence, 'predictions' are purely deterministic, determined by the sequence accepted in a given context as having the logic or quality attributed to it.

To illustrate by citing the example given by Bateson: if a series of numbers is given the semblance of formal ordering by presupposed odds or evens, then only is it possible to predict the next number based on the pattern of the data given. Thus, if a series is 2,4,6,8,10,12, the next number, by assumption implicitly suggested, is 14. The prediction is possible because *first* I as the sequence-maker, suggest this sequence to you; moreover, the challenge of making you complete the series implies the subtle trap, which most people unwittingly accept, that the 'series was incomplete' and as yet lacks order; *second*, the 'facts' suggested to you by the sequence are 'not available to you beyond the end of (the possibly incomplete) sequence that has been given'.⁵¹

These two result in the idiosyncratic scientific structure of thinking. Faced with the almost endless 'patterns' in nature and the 'patterns of limited threshold' through which we would like to reassure ourselves that the mystery of mind and nature is available to logic and prediction and the resultant certainty, the scientist either *simplifies* or *ignores* facts which do not

49. Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979) p. 53. See also his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Chandler, 1972; paperback, Ballantine Books, 1972) for further discussion of the points raised in this essay.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

suit the *a priori* premises. This situation is analysed by almost every one today interested in epistemological problems. Michael Polanyi, for instance, discussing what he calls the 'tacit dimension' of human intelligence, (the fact that *we can know more than we tell*), says: all of us claim 'to have made contact with a reality; a reality which, being real, may yet reveal itself to future eyes in an indefinite range of unexpected manifestations.'⁵² Similarly, Alan Watts points out rightly that science ignores 'the context of events' and 'in one way [its] repeatable experiments are based on ignore-ance, for they are performed in artificially closed fields.' Though 'by rigorous isolation of the field' the scientist has the possibility of giving us 'more and more detailed knowledge of the way in which fields are, in practice, related to each other,'⁵³ this possibility is rarely perceived or acted upon.

The resulting situation has been described by Karl Popper through the image of the 'searchlight'. If science can be likened to 'a searchlight scanning a night sky for the planes,' for 'a plane to register, two things are required: it must exist, and it must be where the beam is. The plane must *be* and it must be *there* where the beam is.' The consequential 'restricted nature of the scientific quest,' 'far from lighting up the entire sky, illumines but an area within it.'⁵⁴ One can add, too, that it leaves the rest indeterminate and unpredictable.

Ramakrishna's image for this situation (though the frame of reference is admittedly religious) is, significantly enough, concerned with the sky: since our (naked) eye does not

register the stars in the sky during the day, the prediction, he says is hazardous that they are non-existent altogether. Besides this general statement, there is an interesting incident in his life concerned with 'sequence' and 'predictability'. One day Mathur said to the Master:

'God too must abide by his own laws. He has no power to transcend them.' 'What an absurd proposition!' replied Sri Ramakrishna. 'One who has made a law can repeal it at pleasure or make a new law in its place.' 'How can that be?' said Mathur, 'A plant that produces only red flowers cannot produce flowers of any other colour—white, for instance, for such is the law. I should like to see God produce white flowers from a plant bearing only red flowers.' 'That, too, He can easily do,' answered Ramakrishna, 'for everything depends on His will.'⁵⁵

Mathur, naturally, was not convinced. But

The next day, in the temple garden, Sri Ramakrishna came across a China-rose plant with two flowers on the same stalk, one of which was red and the other snow-white. He broke off the branch to show it to Mathur.⁵⁶

In several ways this incident is a reflector of the ideas mentioned above. (We can regard God and nature as 'translatable'). One notices Mathur's idiom: 'law', 'proposition' etc.—all suggesting, that his stance is *exactly* the same as that of the nineteenth century scientist: the laws of nature (and God) should conform to logic, be predictable and, above all, inviolate. If there is a series of red flowers on a stalk, then one stalk can produce only one and that too a red flower. And by asserting that even God cannot 'transcend' his 'law' nor 'repeal' them, Mathur is as it were, being influenced, in contemporary idiom, by *Occam's razor*: 'a preference for the

52. Michael Polanyi, 'The Tacit Dimension', *Self and World: Readings in Philosophy*, James A. Ogilby, ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1973), p. 218.

53. Alan Watts, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

54. Quoted, Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976), p. 8.

55. *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1971), pp. 72-73.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

simplest assumptions that will fit the facts' forgetting that the 'facts are not available beyond a given sequence'⁵⁷ or pattern.

It is, therefore, entirely natural that the Master should call this 'an absurd proposition', because any pattern, as the scientist would say today, 'may be changed or broken by addition, by repetition, by anything that will force you to a new perception of it and these changes can never be predicted with absolute certainty because they have not yet happened.'⁵⁸ These ideas Ramakrishna would find perfectly viable and he explains them through an arresting image: Almost echoing the words quoted above, he points out: 'there is no end to God', 'no limit' and 'nothing is impossible for Him' and adds an imagistic analogy: 'No matter how high the kites and vultures soar, they can never strike against the ceiling of the sky.'⁵⁹

In Ramakrishna's inexhaustibly suggestive world of metaphors, the vulture is a symbol, on the one hand, of sterile punditry—the tragic dissociation between knowledge and experience—and on the other, as here, it suggests the counterpart of the pundit: the facile scientist believing that by 'fixed laws' and 'permanent propositions' he can perform the rope-trick of reaching the 'vaults' of Ultimate Reality!

'Fixed laws', in fact, raises the related problem of naming the laws or facts. By implication the relation between things and their names is an important area of controversy today. Here too, we find Ramakrishna's intuitions offering significant pointers to resolve the controversy. The 'facts' in this area as analysed by Bateson are two:

1. Basically, there is a distinction—at least an awareness of it—between the naming and the

thing named. Thus, 'when we think of coconuts or pigs, there are no coconuts or pigs in the brain'. In this sense, the relation between naming and the thing named is only of 'the nature of classification', 'of the assignment of the thing to a class'. Therefore, 'naming is always classifying and mapping is essentially the same as naming.'⁶⁰

2. Since facts in the world of science are not free from value-loaded, emotive contexts, we have the paradox that the distinction between a thing and its name operates only cerebrally. 'The symbolic and affective hemisphere' of our psyche, negates this distinction when it suits its emotive needs. Identifying both, we respond emotively when for instance a name is abused or an effigy or a picture is burnt. In effect, we have two hemispheres of the brain: 'the dominant hemisphere' makes distinction but the other 'affective' one disregards the distinction and identifies both.⁶¹

In effect, if 'things are units of description', 'it is naming and describing which makes nature seem to consist of separate units.'⁶²

In Ramakrishna the problem figures as a very crucial one in several contexts with significant patterns of meaning. While his overall *experience* is one of total identity between the word or name (*Bhāgavata*), the perceiver of the word or name (*Bhakta*) and the objective correlative, so to say, of both (*Bhagavān*), for analytic purposes, we may summarize his views in this way:

Ramakrishna knew that the naming is not the thing. His image is the almanac, and the problem, interestingly, is prediction: of rain, in this case. 'The almanac forecasts the rainfall of the year. But not a drop of water will you get by squeezing the almanac. No, not even one drop.'⁶³ Obviously, the rain in the almanac is no rain at all: there is no rain in the brain; moreover, the name rain is different from the thing itself.

57. Bateson, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

59. *The Gospel*, p. 920.

60. Bateson, *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Alan Watts, *Op. cit.*, p. 70.

63. *The Gospel*, p. 476.

Similarly, in a related way, a map is not the territory, or a catalogue the things it names. Ramakrishna's metaphor is a 'letter.' A letter is only a purveyor of information, yet it is necessary for the functioning of the other side of the brain responding to our 'purposes and interests.' In effect, it may be a pointer only of limited threshold but a pointer which initiates further action. Ramakrishna tells all this in a fable:

A man lost a letter. He couldn't remember where he had left it. He began to search for it with a lamp. After two or three people had searched, the letter was at last found. The message in the letter was: 'Please send us five seers of sandesh and a piece of wearing cloth.' The man read it and then threw the letter away. There was no further need of it, now all he had to do was to buy the five seers of sandesh and the piece of cloth.⁶⁴

The example is in keeping with Ramakrishna's view of knowledge and ignorance: we need to dispel the ignorance of the contents of the letter by knowledge (scientific knowledge can we say?) but we can throw both ignorance and knowledge away (the typical dual thorns piercing all of us) in the face of the things in themselves. In effect, the letter merely names though in the absence of the naming we may not know what to seek.

But Ramakrishna's dialectic is peculiarly synergetic and is free from preference for the simplistic resolution. He categorically declared once to Bankim Chandra, 'Analogy is one-sided. You are a pundit; haven't you read logic. Suppose you say that a man is as terrible as a tiger. That doesn't mean that he has a fearful tail or a tiger's pot face!'⁶⁵ It is, appropriate, therefore, that, in another context, he should draw

attention to the viability and significance of the name in its autonomous existence. Using the framework of a myth he says:

Why, is the *name* a trifling thing? God is not different from His name. Satyabhama tried to balance Krishna with gold and precious stones, but could not do it. Then Rukmini put a tulsi-leaf with the name of Krishna on the scales. That balanced the Lord.⁶⁶

This myth is a dramatization of the scientific and the mystical views of Ultimate Reality. If Kṛṣṇa is whatever is Ultimate Reality or Nature, his wives Satyabhāma and Rukmiṇi are the scientist and the mystic trying to put the mystery of the Reality into their respective patterns or scales. Satyabhāma obviously assumes, as scientists do, that the only viable modes are quantum, mass, weight, shape—even the very act of measuring. Rukmiṇi, like all mystics, is a synergetic mystic with the third eye able to perceive the undifferentiated Divine Ground in which 'in the beginning there was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God.' In effect, naming and the thing named *can* exist in a unitary level—on which one can be aware 'of a multitude of distinct things' as only 'a multitude of changing relations'⁶⁷—before our descent into the Serbonian bog of distinctions and differences begins. If this truth is by-passed, then we have to subject ourselves, as most of us do today, either to the tyranny of the

Shrieking voices
Scolding, mocking or merely chattering.⁶⁸

or the idiocy of gadgetry. In effect, we would come to realize that 'we are not

64. Ibid., pp. 475-76.

65. Ibid., p. 669.

66. Ibid., p. 386.

67. Alan Watts, *Op. cit.*, p. 70.

68. T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 19.

here to verify', 'inform curiosity/Or carry report.'⁶⁹ Then only things 'balance'.

Finally, the parallel between the idea of monotone 'values' and Ramakrishna. 'A monotone value', says Bateson, 'is one that either only increases or only decreases. Its curve has no kinks; that is, its curve never changes from increases or vice versa.'⁷⁰ Such a value does not exist in biology. For instance, 'more calcium is not always better than less calcium.'⁷¹ In effect, an organism needs an 'optimum quantity of this which only makes it a value. Beyond the optimum which is needed even a good thing becomes 'toxic'. 'More of something is' not 'always better than less of the something.' In short, 'enough is better than a feast.'⁷² Bateson includes several psychic and biological areas as operative fields of this idea: items of diet, conditions of life, temperature, entertainment, sex and even money.

Ramakrishna's intuitions reflect and endorse the implications which can be inferred from the basic premise of monotone values. The idea that something can become 'toxic' beyond a certain point or for another structure or consciousness is repeatedly expressed by him in the image of the snake and its toxin: the poison in the snake is fatal to others not to itself. In other words, what is toxic depends on perspective rather than any innate quality. This image is Ramakrishna's classic analogy for the existence of 'evil' in a cosmos presided over by a 'benevolent God'. 'Evil', in this sense, counterpoints 'good' and in effect is the very polarity which makes the definition of 'good' itself possible. Moreover, in the world of 'play' or *līlā*, the apparently disordered existence, evil and

good both exist as a simultaneity of opposites, creating a tension necessary for the evolving self.

From this emerges Ramakrishna's concept of the archetypal toxins on the divine path: 'woman and gold'. But, here, as elsewhere his intuitions are from monochrome perspectives. It is true that he always used to exhort his devotees to give up 'woman and gold'. This is, so to say, an invariable, according to him, in any kind of higher life. But he never projected or defined them in a unilateral way.

Basic to the paradox is that in many contexts Ramakrishna's exposition of the nature of religious experience is clothed in erotic imagery. In fact, he made what should seem in any sense of the word an extremely startling statement: 'I have seen with my own eyes that God dwells even in the sexual organ.'⁷³ He cites, similarly, an intriguing remark: '...when a man attains ecstatic love of God all the pores of the skin, even the roots of the hair, become like so many sexual organs.'⁷⁴

Not only does Ramakrishna use erotic imagery but also interprets the values of woman and gold in a paradoxical way. There is the overall paradox that not only has he worshipped his own wife as the living symbol of his Divine Mother—an event heralding, probably, the arrival of Woman Power as the most significant event of the present century—but also, in many contexts, advises householders to lead a normal 'genetic' life until a certain level of spiritual growth is achieved. In fact, he always used to emphasize that the householder's life has greater advantages for spiritual struggle: 'it is like fighting from a fort. There are many disadvantages in an open field....'⁷⁵

69. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

70. Bateson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. *The Gospel*, p. 260.

74. Ibid., p. 346.

75. Ibid., p. 411.

The paradox can be resolved if we note that for Ramakrishna woman is not a monotone value. In fact many people do not notice the actual word used by Ramakrishna for woman: it is not *nārī* or *strī* (which would be the literal translation of 'woman') but *kāmīni*. This is a connotatively rich word signifying not woman as such but woman as a seductive agent. If this is kept in view, Ramakrishna is obviously not branding 'woman' as an intrinsically, archetypally seductive siren but pointing out contexts concerned with woman as instinct with *kāma* or lust, an attitude of irrationally 'passionate concern.' Therefore, 'woman and gold' do not in themselves suggest evil. Ramakrishna's views reflect the distinction which psychologists such as Abraham Maslow have drawn between behaviour and the function of the behaviour—though the same emotion may be present in both cases: 'A man', says Ramakrishna, 'has his wife on one side and his daughter on the other. He shows affection to them in different ways.'⁷⁶

In Ramakrishna, 'woman and gold' are thus correlatives of one's erotic and possessive longings (*kāma* and *artha*). But they are also basic psychic energies which wrongly directed become toxic but properly used become powerful modes of liberation. This idea is, interestingly enough, in contrast to the one we discussed earlier: woman and gold as representing the behavioural and physical world. If they are instruments of limited perception, there, here they are primal energies propelling the indwelling Spirit towards Perfection. Ramakrishna used to say: 'God reveals Himself to a devotee who feels drawn to Him by the combined force of these three attractions: the attraction of worldly possessions for the worldly man, the

child's attraction for its mother, and the husband's attraction for the chaste wife.'⁷⁷ 'The point is', he elaborates, 'to love God even as the mother loves her child, the chaste wife her husband, and the worldly man his wealth. Add together these three forces of love, these three powers of attraction, and give it all to God'.⁷⁸

In this regard Ramakrishna anticipates many of our contemporary patterns of thinking concerned with a more balanced understanding of the erotic impulse vis-à-vis the religious consciousness. Colin Wilson, for instance, discussing what he calls 'ladder of selves' (Ramakrishna's 'mind-constructs' is a reflector of this idea), points out that 'meaning' (i.e., perception of significance, or, 'a peak experience') 'can draw us up the ladder and when this happens we feel revitalized and reenergised. Sex provides an obvious example.' The addict 'believes it is the sex he is interested in; in fact it is...the momentary glimpse of a less mediocre self. But since he fails to grasp the meaning-content of the insight, he continually falls back to the lower-level ...When the meaning-content is grasped [sex] can be used to tap vital energy reserves.'⁷⁹ The same energy, he adds categorically, can be used 'for bending spoons or deflecting compass needles. The nature of this energy is still not understood but of its existence there can be no doubt.'⁸⁰

Obviously, these powers beyond an optimal limit are toxins. But used properly not only do they become neutralized but also act as 'aids' or 'channelizing currents' for attaining the 'metapattern'. Even in regard to money—excess of which hardly

77. Ibid., p. 83.

78. Ibid.

79. Colin Wilson, *Mysteries* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), p. 44.

80. Ibid., p. 85.

76. Ibid.

any one would consider toxic—Ramakrishna is firm and explicit. This highpriest of total renunciation of money would scold, in some contexts, the wastage of an extra match stick! He always emphasized that 'a householder, of course, needs money, for he has a wife and children. He should save up to feed them. They say that the bird and the sannyasi should not provide for the future. But the mother bird brings food in her mouth for her chicks; so she too provides. A householder needs money. He has to support his family.'⁸¹ These are indeed strange words if we remember that they were spoken by one whose body would get crippled and cramped with pain with even the slightest touch of a coin! But when it came to monks he would therefore recommend the exact opposite: total renunciation of money. In short, what Bateson says in regard to money as 'a monotone value' would find total, unambiguous confirmation in Ramakrishna:

What is desirable is a relationship with a certain optimum of conflict. It is even possible that when we consider money, not by itself, but as acting on human beings who own it, we may find that money, too, becomes toxic beyond a certain point. In any case, the philosophy of money, the set of presuppositions by which money is supposedly better and better the more you have of it, is totally antibiological.⁸²

No wonder that Ramakrishna calls the toxic effects of woman and gold induced by attachment beyond the optimal limit (determined by the orientations of *dharma* and *mokṣa*) as a definite disease: the disease of worldliness!

The existential approach

Every exercise in any structuring of thought should, according to Hindu philosophy, end on what is called *phalaśruti*: the hearing of the tangible gain

we get out of this endeavour. Even in this essay, one can, on a lower key, raise this issue: what is the gain of this kind of discussion? For the confirmed devotee of Ramakrishna, this is hardly necessary as a feather in the Master's cap. As for Ramakrishna himself! Well, we can only guess:

'We have lost Shiva', says Bateson, 'the Dancer of Hinduism whose dance at the trivial level is both creation and destruction but in whole is beauty. We have lost Abraxas, the terrible and beautiful God of both day and night in Gnosticism. We have lost totemism, the sense of parallelism between man's organization and that of the animals and plants. We have lost even the Dying God.'⁸³

The point of the discussion is that we haven't lost what Bateson says we did. For, Ramakrishna experienced and expounded, for us, in our time, this parallelism this dance of Siva—the Dance of the Wuli Masters⁸⁴—which is a reaffirmation of the value of all that *is*. He illumines what Fritjof Capra has called one of the most startling features of the 'new' (only apparently 'new') reality emerging unmistakably today: 'the unification of concepts which had hitherto seemed opposite and irreconcilable.'⁸⁵ One should only add, Ramakrishna's forte is not conceptual but experiential and therein lies the uniqueness of the relation between Ramakrishna and 'science'. Perception of this uniqueness, however tangential, is our tangible gain.

(Concluded)

83. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

84. See Gary Zukav for an interesting study of this idea in *The Dance of the Wuli Masters* (London: Rider/Hutchinson, 1979; Flamingo Paperback, Fontana, 1983), pp. 33-34.

85. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (New Revised edition), (London: Fontana/Collins, 1983), p. 161.

81. *The Gospel*, p. 670.

82. Bateson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 53-55.

PRACTICAL VEDANTA IN THE ARTS

SWAMI YOGESHANANDA

Some of us are under the impression that religion is a spare-time affair. 'If I get time, I'll...' is the phrase with which we begin many of our best resolutions. 'If I get home early enough this evening, I'll have time to meditate a little before dinner.' 'I'm going to get myself out of bed earlier in the morning, if I can, so I can do meditation or japa before going to work every day.' 'I'll be at the service on Sunday (or the class on Tuesday) if I can arrange my schedule for the week. I hope something doesn't come up...'

Personally I have told myself all these things at one time or another, and lived to see my own mind cook up, sometimes in very roundabout ways, circumstances that prevent the execution of my promises. When we do this we only deprive ourselves and very often take it out on ourselves in the form of negativity or feelings of guilt and hopelessness. We begin to think we may never be able to take spiritual life seriously.

Vedanta, at least as taught in the Rama-krishna-Vivekananda movement, is *lived* religion; this is exactly what it means. There are no lukewarm Vedantists; either you are practising or you are not. The question is how to do it. In the suggestions which follow, the message is that we need to discover spiritual practice as virtually a twenty-four-hour concern. We need not wait until we 'get home'; or until we are too tired to meditate; or until the lunch-break or for the stall in freeway traffic. Our spiritual practice goes on from the moment we wake, throughout the day and even on into our dreamlife at night. When we wake to this fact it is a welcome sign that our 'honeymoon' with the lure spiritual experience is over!

The following remarks are offered not as

preachments on what Vedantists ought to do, so much as suggestions which have been tried by others in the past, are being tried in the present, and may be found helpful.

The whole range of creative talent being included here—crafts, acting, writing.

Let me first set out the scripture verse which sums up the approach taken in this paper: 'Whatever in this world is powerful, beautiful or glorious, that you may know to have come from a fraction of My power and glory'—Sri Krishna in the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Our Vedanta is not a life-negating religion. We are clearly to worship the Lord in all human activity, as Swami Vivekananda has made plain. It is implicit too in his definition of idolatry: 'When you think that the image is God that is right and that is worship, but if you think that God is the image, that is idolatry.' When we say 'To the cobbler there's nothing like leather', what we really mean is not that he has made leather his God but that for him it is in leather that the Creative Principle, the Divine Power, yields up her secrets. Actually we are all artists, albeit unconsciously! 'Upon Him the senses are painting chairs and tables, rooms...worlds and moons and suns and everything else.'

If we turn to the words of Sri Rama-krishna, this is what we find: 'If a person excels in music, painting or dancing, that person can quickly realize God, provided he strives sincerely.' Why should that be so, we may ask. Because such persons inevitably become involved with concentration, development of the imagination and constant, patient practice.

The Master's own talents are well-known:

he was a gifted singer, sensitive to the slightest deviation from pitch and tempo; his dancing was spontaneous, spell-binding and infused with spiritual ecstasy; he showed natural skill in painting and sculpture. At the end of his life, after meeting Girish Chandra Ghosh, he became attracted to the theatre as a medium of spiritual expression and was himself adopted by the actors of Bengal as their patron-saint.

Narendranath as an amateur singer and player was in high demand in Calcutta society before he renounced the world. In later years he said of music, underlining the importance of the *ear* as a primary implement of *sādhana*, 'Music is the highest art and for those who understand, it is the highest worship.' 'Music has such tremendous power over the human mind; it brings it to concentration in a moment. You will find...even the minds of animals such as dogs, lions, cats and serpents become charmed with music.' Even better known are the Swami's gifts in public oratory and in *belle lettres*. He was eager to attempt to learn to sketch. I should like to remind you of a few of his pronouncements on art:

The secret of Greek art is its imitation of nature even to the minutest detail; whereas the secret of Indian art is to represent the ideal. The Indian tendency...has become degraded into painting grotesque images. Now true Art can be compared to a lily which springs from the ground, takes its nourishment from the ground, is in touch with the ground, and yet is quite high above it. So Art must be in touch with nature—and wherever that touch is gone, Art degenerates—yet it must be above nature. Art is representing the beautiful. There must be art in everything. The artistic faculty was highly developed in our Lord, Sri Ramakrishna, and he used to say that without this faculty none can be truly spiritual.

In art, interest must be centred in the principal theme. Drama is the most difficult of all arts. In it, two things are to be satisfied—first, the ears, and second, the eyes. To paint

a scene, if one thing be painted, it is easy enough; but to paint different things and yet keep up the central interest is very difficult. Another difficult art is stage-management, that is, combining different things in such a manner as to keep the central interest intact.

Feeling is the soul, the secret of everything. There is more music in common people's songs, and they should be collected together.

With all this as background let us raise some questions which are bound to come up whenever spiritual aspirants seriously engage themselves in a pursuit of the creative arts.

How do we 'spiritualize' our professional or amateur creative talents?

We do this in three ways: by content, by attitude and by context. The first means that instead of taking as subject for our art that which remains earthy, which carries both creator and observer along a limited arc only, scarcely lifting the mind beyond the ordinary and mundane, we fix our efforts on portraying hints of the eternal and infinite. We can choose to paint more inspiring persons, compose and play more sublime sounds, write on nobler themes or model in clay objects more suggestive of divinity. I have known, for example, two monks of our Order who after joining their monasteries, one a commercial artist and the other an amateur painter, turned their attention to portraits of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and the Disciples—with excellent result valued by all of us.

The second, attitude, refers to the way in which we go about our art: how much do we have our *little selves* in our thought and planning, during the execution or performance? An aspirant, who, while writing a book—even the best book—constantly anticipates what its publication will mean in terms of personal fame, glory or financial return, is not a very apt

Vedantist! Some of us think we do not have such ideas, only to discover that we do secretly harbour them. Some approach an act of creative expression thinking, 'Now I am about to show what I can do. People will appreciate this...I am about to give birth to something very precious within me which is struggling to get out, and its production will make me feel fulfilled. It will be a unique creation, never seen or heard before, an expression of the *real me*—and it will make people sit up and take notice!'

The Vedanta aspirant will be more concerned to be conscious of the universal *śakti* rising in him or her, the power of the Divine Mother who gives birth to all things and through whose will all takes the shape it does. It is a devotional attitude. The artist is to know that without that power and instigation nothing will turn out. He begins his work prayerfully, executes his act of art conscious of the divine power enabling him, and ends the production by offering it back to That from which he knows it came. He leaves at the feet of God all praise and blame, failure or success, recognition or neglect. Art for Art's sake? Yes—if you understand that art as worship. It is exactly the same as for the homemaker, understanding that she uses the divine energy of the universe in cooking her dish with skill and serving it with artistry, offering it as oblation to the Lord in the consumer, her family, who are also able to receive and enjoy it by means of that same energy.

By context is meant the avenue of appreciation or utilization. Many talented aspirants have found that by placing their art in a special context, which can perhaps be termed spiritual—sculpting an image for the Society, translating or editing literature, painting holy personages or scenes, making music for public services, cooking for the congregation, repairing broken equipment

—they somehow ennoble their art or skill and even expand and enhance their own gift in ways unexpected. This can bring a feeling of much benefit. As one of my teachers used to say, 'The dedication of our talents to the Lord's work is ennobling and purifying to both body and mind.'

All three ways are of help in integrating our lives. We may be good meditators, our spiritual life humming along in the interior dimension, yet we are not able to harmonize all that with the old ideas, habits and associations which keep cropping up in our creative activity. All this has to be brought together and integrated. And that is where a guru and the 'company of the holy' enter in. These are a great help to us. Some artistic persons have the notion that if they associate with 'religious' people and forsake the cliques of the 'arty', their art will suffer thereby; it has not been proven to be true.

Will the exercise of our creative talent distract us from spiritual endeavours?

It may surprise you that this could be a worry to anyone! Indeed, the problem has a philosophical basis, and it comes up at a certain stage in spiritual life. Vedanta says that in a sense his created world is a corruption of the Spirit; that when Brahma felt the need to 'create' or project Itself, this was already a regeneration and that we only further involve ourselves in *maya* when we follow *pravṛtti*: the externalizing of bodily and mental energies. This negative conclusion can be turned around. First, it need not arise until we are deeply involved in spiritual practice, as for example in beginning monastic life, where sometimes the candidate does have to turn his back, at least for a time, on talents previously exercised. For the householder practical Vedanta consists in changing the direction of our creativity in the ways just mentioned.

In the case, for example, of actors, Sri Ramakrishna attended plays staged by Girish Ghosh and was put into samadhi. 'I found,' he said, 'that the representation was the same as the real.' That is, with such skill and identification were those plays written and acted that he felt he was seeing Buddha, seeing Chaitanya, before his eyes. To recreate history in that way is not at all easy; it means a suspension of 'time' in the consciousness of the artists and a relating of oneself to the Eternal. The greater this ability the more compelling will be the enactment. So with all art. There cannot be much conflict between creativity and spiritual practice if the former is deliberately undertaken as one form of the latter—as worship itself.

All of us, artists or not, do something of this when we practice seeing behind the images or photographs the presence of the aspect of God represented on shrine or altar, and when in singing songs of devotion we attempt to present them as offering to a living Lord, visualized right in front of us, as the Master told us to do.

The problem of name and fame

A greater tension comes for Vedantists in the arts when the 'natural' yen for appreciation of our work, in the form of acceptance, praise and remuneration, often considered vital to the artist's motivation or inspiration, runs afoul of the spiritual counsel to pay no heed to these. Like all counsels of perfection this one can be fully practised only by the realized soul. Still, that state of unconcern or non-attachment is our goal and ideal and, without practising it, we will never reach it. Girish, under the influence of the Master's all-renouncing ideals, was inclined to give up his play-writing and staging, and one day spoke of brushing all that aside. 'No, no!' Sri Ramakrishna exclaimed, 'Through this

activity people will learn much from you. Don't give it up.'

Start by telling yourself, 'I am not *seeking* such returns as praise, reward or even acceptance in the work I am about to do. (Of course if it comes, I won't mind!). That's a good beginning. The test will be when the opposite comes, how much you react and resent. Through practice and understanding we come to view our creativity as being of little credit to us personally, stemming as it does from the Fount of all creation and executed by virtue of that same Power.

We have to discriminate constantly when roses or thorns land in our lap: Whose are these? Are they mine? *Dare* I call that work mine? How was it produced? Can I say? Or have I not simply put a label on it without justification. *Then offer back to God the results of the endeavour.*

In the ancient Indian practice of art the artist or artisan did not place his name upon the product, did not draw attention to himself, the mere instrument. We do not know the composers of the Vedic hymns, the inspired geniuses of the first iconography, makers of the immortal monuments. How different from the prima-donna mentality of the art world today! Let us try to regain that sense of being so completely one with the whole process of creation that we subtract from ourselves no segment of it, and say with Kahlil Gibran,

Beauty is life when life unveils her holy face.
But you are life and you are the veil.
Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror,
But you are eternity and you are the mirror.

Isn't Self-realization also self-fulfilment?

Indeed it is. The trouble is, some of us, having too limited a notion of ourselves, imagine that the expression of our own little personalities, our relative self, must

play a large role in that 'self-fulfilment'. Vedanta is talking, of course, about the realization of our divinity—of ourselves as Spirit. *After* the transformation of the ego in the fire of yoga and after the experience of the Atman, our true Self, the divinity realized there finds its expression through what Sri Ramakrishna calls 'the ripe ego'. This is a far cry from the type of creative activity taught in popular schools of self-discovery, self-improvement or self-expression. True individuality, Swami Vivekananda often reminds us, is to be found only in the Universal, in the apprehension of our universal, transcendent Selfhood; all other 'selves' being merely provisional.

There is another group of aspirants who form an ideal image of selfhood, wonderfully above and beyond their present little egos, and then strive desperately to model themselves into copies of that towering personality—an Avatar, a saint, a guru... For them is the fine little tale of one of the Hassidic Fathers. The Baal Shem Tov was the patriarch and archetype to all of them. And this Father Zusya attempted to bend his whole life into the shape and mould of that great soul's. As he at last lay dying, embittered by self-defeat, a sapient Father said to him, 'Look: when you get up to heaven they will not ask you "Why were you not the Baal Shem Tov?" They will ask you, "Why were you not Father Zusya?"' Self-realization is indeed the discovery of our true individuality, for that is our universality; it alone is self-fulfilment.

The odour of eccentricity

Non-artists (if there be any) are inclined to point the accusing finger at creative genius for the idiosyncrasy it often seems to require and sometimes flaunts. They ask, not without justification, how this

eccentricity can be compatible with spiritual attainment. There does seem to be a proverbial aversion to discipline in other dimensions of their lives, seen in persons who have obviously undergone great discipline in special areas. But in place of those whose peculiarities scandalize, let me place the name, for example, of performer and composer Pablo Casals—a superb artist and human being. This genius is of the opinion that there is no *necessary* connection between eccentricity and creative talent, and that to assume that the talented must be at least partly psychotic is a stereotype and fictional fad. This aspect of the artist is glorified by the press and often made to loom larger in the image of famous people than it actually does. Here is a practical rule used even by Einstein: wait until you are seventy before you cut loose!

As Vedantists we will do well to remember the value of ensemble work. Musicians who have played in orchestra or band or sung in choir or chorus know that the discipline and cooperation involved train the individual to tone down eccentricity and flair for the sake of a corporate effect. It is good for highly individualistic people in any field to undertake such exercises periodically. One of the Swamis I knew remarked that of the many things he had observed about Sri Ramakrishna's great disciples was the thread of *common sense* which ran through them all, different as they were. And once when I asked my teacher about the moods in which I felt like just doing something bizarre, he warned me: 'Don't be crazy.' It will not help us spiritually.

This is not a pitch for being prosaic, conventional or mediocre. Another abbot of mine remarked about all of us in the Society, 'You are not here because you are just ordinary people.' It is certainly necessary that the creative mood be

acknowledged, kept alive and followed, even indulged—but it has to be *guided* so as not to injure ourselves and others.

Yoga and Art

Finally a word about the fact that our Vedantic practice of yoga must surely help to engender the kind of non-attachment essential for artists—and particularly performers. Casals tells us of an incident in which he nearly lost his life. Climbing with friends down a slope on Mt. Tamalpais in California they noticed a large boulder had been dislodged behind them and was falling from above. Casals got his head out of the way in the nick of time but the boulder struck his left hand, smashing his fingers—a cellist's *sine qua non*. While his friends were aghast, he himself had a different reaction altogether. Looking at the mashed and bleeding hand he thought,

'Thank God, I'll never have to play the cello again'. This astonishing degree of non-identification is commented on by Casals in this way: 'Dedication to one's art does involve a kind of enslavement and then too, of course, I have always felt such dreadful anxiety before performance.' Creativity in itself evidently does not save us from maya's grip, but it also need not engulf us further in it. The fully developed artist had best be a yogi (and often is) and, as Casals adds, he or she must have a full understanding of life.

Honour the divine within yourself by manifesting those powers with awareness and non-attachment. Personally I am convinced that in the arts we are on the threshold of a Golden Age, which, when the full impact of the East reaches the artists of the West, will be like nothing seen in the world before.

They Lived with God

UPENDRA NATH MUKHOPADHYAY

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

According to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, four kinds of people worship God: those who are afflicted, those who seek knowledge, those who crave wealth, and those endowed with wisdom. All four kinds are worthy because their actions and thoughts are in some way connected with God, even though some of them seek worldly prosperity. No doubt God is the Kalpataru (wish-fulfilling tree), but this does not mean that He automatically fulfils all desires. As the wise doctor will not prescribe poison to alleviate a patient's pain, similarly the

omniscient God answers only those prayers which will ultimately benefit the devotee.

Once a poor but beautiful woman fell in love with a man for his money. However, after she married him and found herself the recipient of all his wealth, the object of her love gradually shifted from money to husband. She realized that any joy in life comes from the Spirit, not from matter. This is exactly what happened in the life of Upendra Nath Mukhopadhyay. He went to Sri Ramakrishna seeking wealth and material prosperity.

In *Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, Sister Devamata quoted Swami Ramakrishnananda referring to Upendra: 'At one time there was a very poor boy who used to come almost daily to Sri Ramakrishna, but the Master would never take any of the food he brought. We did not know why. Finally one day Sri Ramakrishna said: "This poor fellow comes here because he has a great desire to be rich. Very well, let me taste a little of what he has brought;" and he took a small quantity of the food. The boy's condition began to improve immediately, and today he is one of the most prosperous men in Calcutta.'

Upendra Nath Mukhopadhyay was born in Ahiritola, West Calcutta, at the home of his maternal uncle on February 28, 1868. He lived there with his mother, even though his parental home was at Balagar, Hooghly. Very little is known about his father, Purna Chandra Mukhopadhyay, except that he was a high-class brahmin and had been married several times. Upendra's uncle, Jagabandhu Bandyopadhyay, worked in a watch shop at Radhabazar, and his financial condition was not good. Having no children himself, Jagabandhu brought up his nephew as his own son.

Upendra went to primary school for a time but then discontinued his studies. His uncle scolded him for this and advised him to find a job. Though Upendra was only a boy, within a few days he found a job in a drugstore washing bottles and labelling them. Later, when he realized that the pharmacist was not an honest man, he quit his job and found another in a bookshop at Brindaban Basak, Battala (Upper Chitpore Road). Upendra's monthly salary was five rupees (about 50 cents), and his duties included cleaning the shop, arranging bookshelves, and selling books.

After some time the owner wanted to sell

the business for seventy-five rupees. Upendra decided to buy it and asked his uncle for the money. Jagabandhu refused, but his aunt secretly gave him the money. Upendra bought the shop and reimbursed his aunt within three months.

As owner of the bookstore, Upendra collected some small comic books and successfully published them in one volume. After some time he became an agent for other publishers as well as the sole distributor of the works of Surendra Nath Majumdar, the brother of Devendra Nath Majumdar, who was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. Upendra lived on the same street as Devendra, so they were acquainted with each other. Adhar Lal Sen also lived in Ahiritola, and Sri Ramakrishna visited his house several times.

In 1884, probably at Adhar's house, Upendra first met Sri Ramakrishna and began to visit Dakshineswar regularly. Observing some auspicious signs in Upendra, the Master inquired about his background. When Upendra stated his name Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Oh, you are a brahmin! Is there any regular worship at your house?' 'Yes, Sir. There is daily worship of Nārāyaṇa [Lord Krishna] in our house.' Then the Master asked, 'Some day could you bring me some prasād [sanctified food] of Lord Nārāyaṇa?' Upendra agreed.

Returning home he wondered whether or not his aunt would misunderstand the Master. After long deliberation he finally told her that a brahmin of the Dakshineswar Kali Temple had asked for some of Nārāyaṇa's prasād. Hearing this the devout woman immediately agreed to send prasād to Dakshineswar through her nephew. That day Narendra, Rakhal, and some young devotees were taking their meal at Dakshineswar. When Upendra arrived, he offered the prasād to Sri Ramakrishna, who was very pleased. The Master

took a little and asked Upendra to distribute the rest among the others.

Some of Upendra's young friends began to visit Dakshineswar with him. This irritated their parents, who complained to his uncle. As a result Jagabandhu grounded Upendra, confining him to the house. But Upendra's compassionate aunt released him. On another day she, being an excellent cook, sent prasad to Dakshineswar on her own.

Upendra was upset because he could not afford to bring the Master a gift as other devotees did. Understanding the cause of his grief, Sri Ramakrishna asked him to buy two pices worth of *jilipis* (a kind of sweet). Much later, when Upendra celebrated the Ramakrishna festival at his house, he would always offer the Master *jilipis*.

Gradually Upendra became known among the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and attended festivals arranged for the Master in their Calcutta homes. On April 6, 1885, Sri Ramakrishna visited Devendra's house, where Upendra had the great privilege of massaging the Master's feet. When Surendra, Ram, and other devotees started to celebrate the birthday of the Master at Dakshineswar, Upendra also took an active part.

Upendra was a handsome young man with a fair complexion, bright eyes, and beautiful curly hair. He was also industrious and ambitious, and the pain of poverty tormented him. Upendra had no desire to marry, but Sri Ramakrishna knew a couple who had a dark-complexioned daughter named Habi. The Master did not like her name and suggested to her parents that they call her Bhavatarini, which is also the name of the Dakshineswar Kali. From that time on she was known as Bhavatarini.

Once when Upendra's mother was visiting the Master at Dakshineswar, Sri

Ramakrishna suggested that she arrange her son's marriage to Bhavatarini. She agreed. Swami Vivekananda, who was present at the time, objected to the marriage proposal, saying that the girl was not pretty and her skin was too dark. But the Master remarked that the girl had some good signs and that this marriage would bring good fortune to Upendra. In 1885 Upendra married her with the consent of the Master. Later, when Swamiji visited the couple, Bhavatarini was reluctant to offer refreshments to him, knowing his objections to the marriage. But Swamiji mollified her and said humourously: 'Since you have wrapped yourself around Upendra's neck, I will have to eat your cooking.'

Upendra's uncle would sometimes remind him that he had neither education nor money, so his life was worthless. It was hard for this sincere teenager to digest such humiliation day after day. He first tried to help himself and then sought divine grace from Sri Ramakrishna.

One day at Dakshineswar Upendra was seated with other devotees near the Master. Pointing to him, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'This boy visits this place desiring money.' On another occasion in a gathering, a devotee said to the Master, 'Sir, you did not bless Upendra.' Sri Ramakrishna replied with a smile: 'He did not express to me what he wants. But I know his wish—that his small door should be big—and it will be.'

On January 1, 1886, at Cossipore, Sri Ramakrishna became a wish-fulfilling tree and blessed many devotees. That day he asked Upendra, 'What do you want?' 'Money'. 'You will get plenty of money', said the Master. It would be an injustice to Upendra, however, if the reader thought that he was only money-hungry. His life indicates that he had true devotion for the

Master along with the ambition to acquire wealth.

Sri Ramakrishna passed away on August 16, 1886, and his body was cremated at the Cossipore cremation grounds. Upendra was present. After extinguishing the funeral fire the devotees bathed in the Ganga. However, when Upendra went to bathe he was bitten by a poisonous snake. Immediately he sat down on dry land while the devotees tied his upper leg tightly so that the poison would not spread, and then they cauterized the wound. By the grace of the Master his life was saved. It took nearly five months for the wound to heal, but the blue mark on his skin remained throughout the rest of his life.

When Upendra started his book business there were no notable Bengali publishers in Calcutta. Battala, in West Calcutta, was just a local book market. Gradually Upendra bought a small printing press and founded the Bengali magazine *Jñānāṅkur* ('The Blossom of Knowledge'). Swami Vivekananda's translation of *The Imitation of Christ* was published serially in this magazine. Later Upendra published the book *Rajbhasha* (*King's Language*), which outlined an easy way to learn the English language. This book sold so well that Upendra amassed a tremendous fortune from it.

Later, in 1889, he published *Sāhitya Kalpadruma*, a monthly magazine. He renamed it *Sāhitya* in 1891 and transferred the entire rights to Suresh Samajpati. In this same year a son was born, Satish Chandra, who later successfully took over his father's business.

Gradually Upendra became well established in the publishing profession. He rented a two-storeyed building and expanded his work in 1896 by publishing the *Basumati*, a weekly Bengali newspaper.

When Swami Vivekananda returned to

Calcutta from the West in February, 1897, the official reception committee sent nothing more than a news release about his arrival to the Calcutta newspapers. But Upendra freely donated much more publicity. Among other things he printed thousands of handbills and distributed them throughout the city. He also placed, in prominent locations, placards announcing Swamiji's arrival time and the reception site. Furthermore, Upendra published a decorative picture of Swami Vivekananda in his newspaper. Below the picture he printed a new song written by Girish Chandra Ghosh in honour of Swamiji's return. Upendra distributed thousands of free copies of this special issue.

The evening before Swamiji's arrival, Swamis Brahmananda and Yogananda, Girish, Purna, and other devotees were discussing the arrangements. The train was scheduled to arrive at Sealdah Station from Budge Budge port early in the morning, and they were concerned whether many people would attend the reception on such a cold morning. When Upendra arrived and heard of their anxiety he assured them: 'Tomorrow thousands of people will go to see Swamiji. I posted placards all over Calcutta, Baranagore, Cossipore, Bhawanipur, and Alipur, and freely distributed fifty thousand handbills and ten thousand copies of the *Basumati*. I strongly believe that tomorrow before daybreak, by the grace of the Master, the Sealdah Station will be overflowing.' Girish was overjoyed and exclaimed, 'Brother, you have performed a great service through this publicity.' Upendra's forecast was accurate. Twenty thousand people came to receive Swamiji at Sealdah Station, creating a sensation all over Calcutta.

Very soon Upendra became a successful publisher in Calcutta. He moved his business to a more commodious building on Gray Street, and expanded production

by enlarging his press. The number of subscribers to the *Basumati* increased enormously, and some notable writers such as Panchkari Bandyopadhyay, Jaladhar Sen, and Suresh Samajpati became its editors. The Basumati Sahitya Mandir, Upendra's publication department, published cheap editions of the Mahabharata of Kaliprasanna Sinha as well as the works of such esteemed writers as Madhusudan, Bankim Chandra, Tekchand, Girish Chandra, Rangalal, Dinabandhu, Hemchandra, Navin Chandra, and Sharat Chandra. It was Upendra who made this great Bengali literature widely available. Moreover, he published the Bengali translation of many Sanskrit scriptures and other literature such as the Mimamsa, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta philosophies, the Upaniṣads, the Bhāgavata, and the works of Śaṅkarācārya, Kālidāsa, and many others.

The Basumati publication house was a temple of learning. When in 1914, during the First World War, subscribers were anxious to receive the latest news, Upendra started publishing an evening edition called the *Daily Basumati*. It was very popular and later became a regular daily Bengali newspaper.

It is a fact that for most people the desire for money takes one's mind away from God. But this was not true in Upendra's case. The more wealth he acquired, the more his devotion to the Master increased. His magazine spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji chose 'Namo Nārāyanāya' (Salutations to God) as the permanent caption for the front page of the *Basumati*, and Upendra gladly agreed. Once Swamiji remarked, 'Upendra has a wonderful business sense.' Upendra, in turn, often consulted Swamis Vivekananda and Yogananda on business matters.

Every November in his Ahiritola house

Upendra observed the Ramakrishna festival for a day, and he would arrange kirtan and a grand feast. He would decorate the picture of the Master with flowers and garlands, and many monks would participate in the festivities.

Upendra, always eager to serve the monks and the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, kept his place of work open to them. In fact, his workers often referred to the Basumati Sahitya Mandir as *Ramakrishna Sadavrata* ('Sri Ramakrishna's Inn'). Swami Akhandananda wrote in his memoirs that whenever he and his brother monks visited Upendra's bookshop, he would feed them with various kinds of sweets and other delicacies. Then he would send them by share-carriage back to the Baranagore monastery.

Swami Adbhutananda stayed for some time at Upendra's Basumati press and found everything provided for him. At one time Upendra even sent him by boat to Puri for a pilgrimage. When, after his return from the West in 1900, Swami Vivekananda heard from Swami Adbhutananda that Upendra had graciously provided food and shelter for him for some time, Swamiji, touched by Upendra's generosity, prayed to Sri Ramakrishna, 'Master, please bless Upendra.'

Because Upendra had experienced crippling poverty, he had tremendous love and compassion for the poor. He used to help his workers whenever they were in need of financial assistance. Once two young boys from a reformatory were sent by the government to the Basumati Publishing House for training. One of them stole some books and was caught by the police. The kindhearted Upendra went to court and informed the judge that he had given the books to the boy. Hearing this, the judge released him.

On another occasion Upendra arrived at his office and found a young worker encircled by others. He was told that the

young man had stolen some type and that the police were there to arrest him. But Upendra told the police he had given the type to the young man. After the police left Upendra said to the youth, 'My boy, go away immediately and never commit such a heinous act again.' Though it may seem that Upendra deviated from the truth, the scriptures say, 'One may tell a lie in order to save another's life.'

There are countless stories about Upendra's generosity. Once the paper merchant who supplied the paper for Upendra's press sent a reminder to him that a large invoice had not been paid. Upendra immediately informed the merchant that he had already paid the paper company's representative. A high official of the company came to the Basumati offices to check their account book and discovered that Upendra was right—the bill collector had misappropriated the money. Upendra, knowing that the collector had now and then visited Sri Ramakrishna, stepped forward to assume entire responsibility for the money and requested the official not to take any action against the collector.

One day on his way to the press, Upendra was stopped by a man who needed financial help for his daughter's marriage. Upendra promised to pay him the entire income of that particular day and asked him to come to his Basumati office in the evening. At the end of the day he kept his promise and paid the man three hundred rupees.

Upendra was a self-made man. He earned money by the sweat of his brow and encouraged others to earn money honestly. Tarapada Halder, a staff worker, recorded his memoirs in Upendra's Centenary Number: 'Upendra Babu used to put on a dhoti and a loose fitting shirt, over which he wore a black silk coat. He would carry a silver stick in his hand, and I don't remember whether or not I ever saw him without a Burmese cigar in his

mouth. Upendranath had a sweet relationship with his workers. It was not an employer-employee relationship; it was a father-son relationship...He was a true disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. In every step of the prosperous journey of the *Basumati* Upendra saluted Narayana and sought the blessings of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna was the presiding deity of the Basumati Sahitya Mandir. Upendra did not show his devotion publicly, so we never saw him salute the Master, but he practised his spiritual life beyond the gaze of others.'

Gradually Upendra realized that his Gray Street office was insufficient, so he bought a new building and adjacent land on Bow Bazar Street (now Bepin Behari Ganguli Street), in central Calcutta. Because he did not have sufficient funds at the time to buy the property, he had to borrow the money. But by the grace of the Master, he soon paid off the loan.

Upendra was a jolly, loving soul. At the same time he was honest and spiritual. Although he had no formal education, he was known and respected by the great writers and thinkers of Bengal. He had tremendous love and respect for writers and scholars, and it would pain him whenever he found the talent of a writer stifled from lack of money.

Upendra's son, Satish, had the same principles as his father, and achieved similar success. He also imbibed from Upendra a deep love for God. Once he went to Belur Math and asked to become a monk, but the swamis reasoned with him and sent him back home to take care of his father's business.

Upendra believed wholeheartedly that his success was due to the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna. He knew that the beloved Master would guide him in the right direction and protect him from worldly attachment. Throughout his life Upendra

experienced his guru's grace, which made Monday, March 31, 1919, in his uncle's home in Ahiritola, Calcutta.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

The First National Integration Award of India to Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission

On 31 October 1986 the First National Integration Award, instituted in the name of the late prime minister Smt. Indira Gandhi, was offered to Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. It was quite an experience to see that the award was being given not to a politician, or a diplomat, or a social worker or even to a so-called nationalist, but to a monk. In a function organized at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, and presided over by the prime minister Sri Rajiv Gandhi, the 79-year-old monk, austere dressed in ochre clothes, delivered an inspiring acceptance speech listened to by the social and intellectual elite of India, cabinet ministers, governors of several states and foreign dignitaries. It was the voice of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda that was heard through the torrent of his powerful words on this occasion. The central message of his speech was respect for the essential divinity of man, sacredness of all service and the basic unity of all religions as preached and practised by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. These are the three foundations on which not only national but even international integration could be achieved in the days to come, said the Swami.

National integration, said Swami Vivekananda nearly a century ago, should be a gathering up of the scattered spiritual forces of India. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda through their unprecedented spiritual *sādhana*s had integrated the essence of the Islamic, Christian and various types of Hindu *sādhana*s in their

own lives. Religion is not in observing this ritual or following that book, but manifesting our own essential divinity within. This is the ancient message of India. In modern times this same message has been triumphantly reestablished through the historic lives and teachings of these twin masters. Reverence for the undying divinity in all human beings, irrespective of caste, creed and nationality, was the key message of these great masters. Nothing was secular with them and all work was only worship in various ways.

For the last fifty years Swami Ranganathananda has been preaching these very ideas in India and abroad. This is his passion, a passion directly inspired by his total dedication to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideal for the integration and rejuvenation of humanity as a whole. No award adorns a monk more than the grace of God with which he continually brings, as Sankaracarya puts it, a perpetual spring of divine thoughts and virtues in the community around him. And for a monk this community is never less than the entire humanity.

Today the crying need of a multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious India is the practical and holistic philosophy of Vedānta which can embrace all Indians irrespective of caste, creed and religion and unite them into one single family. And India needs her leaders and philosophers to translate this philosophy into action, and to guide the nation in these stormy days of increasing regionalism, terrorism and religious fundamentalism. Given this background, India, the land where saints and seers have always been honoured and worshipped before kings and generals, could not have a better choice for its national award than this venerable and beloved monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

AN ENQUIRY INTO TRUTH OR TATTVA VICHARA: BY V. SUBRAMANYA IYER. Copies of the book can be had from Sri K. Subramanian, 'Subhasree' 36/A, Subramaniapuram Extension, Salem 636 007 and Sri G. S. Shyam, 'Pushpa Kunj', Nehru Road, Santacruz—East, Bombay 400 055. Published in 1982. Pp. 201. Rs. 40.

What is the nature of Reality—the ultimate and integral Truth of this infinitely variegated, complex creation? What is the mystery of the nature of one's real existence and inter-relationship with the creator and creation? These are some of the fundamental metaphysical questions which have always attracted the attention and

absorbed the thoughts of almost all the philosophers, prophets, and saints. In fact, all religions with their various schools of philosophy have come into existence directly or indirectly to unravel this mystery behind creation and to experience the reality ultimately. This search for truth encompasses the interest of not only a few religious leaders and philosophers but the whole of humanity, as it has wide-ranging impact on the pattern of life and thought of people all over the globe and constitutes the very basis of moral, cultural and social values of human society. In the book under review one finds a forceful presentation of this immemorial quest. The book is a collection of the essays, forewords, notes, conversations, speeches and letters of late V. Subramanya Iyer, a renowned exponent of Advaita philosophy of Sri Sankara. He was a prominent teacher of the Vedanta Study Circle of Mysore which trained several monks of the Ramakrishna Order in the 1930s. It is surprising to note that Sri Iyer in spite of his great erudition and influence did not attempt writing any book, though his suggestions and guidance were sought by many others who wrote books. Apart from serving as the Registrar of Mysore University for a number of years, it is evident from the book that Sri Iyer spent much of his time on absorbing studies in eastern and western philosophies, delivering lectures and discussing his views with many eminent scholars and philosophers like Henry Bergson and Bertrand Russell and scientists like Max Planck and James Jeans of international repute. His correspondence and discussions with distinguished personalities incorporated in the book indicate his popularity and the influence he exerted on them. Sri Iyer presided over the section of Indian Philosophy in the World Philosophy Congress held in 1937 at Paris.

All these credentials amply speak for the recognition Sri Iyer received at home and abroad for his intellectual brilliance and eminence in the field of philosophy, specially for his convincing exposition of Sankara's Advaita. His essays on Sankara's Advaita philosophy (chapter 1 & 2) and his foreword to the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* (p. 117) indicate how deeply the author was influenced by them. A short life sketch under the title 'A Life in Pursuit of Truth' presented at the end of the book acquaints the reader with various facts of the author's distinctive personality. Chapter 16, 'The philosopher Prince', devoted to Krishnaraja Wodeyar, Maharaja of Mysore, whom he served as a

much respected friend, philosopher and guide, indicates the honour he received from the king for his remarkable scholarship.

In the second chapter Sri Iyer analyses in depth from a convincing comparative perspective the development of philosophy in the East and the West. Describing the condition laid by Sankara for the search of Ultimate Truth through reasoning, the author tries to establish its supremacy over western philosophical conclusions which, the author says, are lopsided and are in an infantile state in their understanding of the Ultimate Truth. For they are founded on the experience of only one state of human consciousness, namely the waking state, with the other two states, dream and deep sleep, having been totally ignored, whereas Sankara takes into account and explores in detail all the three states of consciousness (*avasthā traya*) while enquiring into the nature of reality.

Explaining the ideal of Indian philosophy (p. 17) the author rightly points out that philosophy does not mean building castles in the air or flights of imagination, but means direct experience. Indian philosophy is a means of showing the ideal way of living and the practical path in our daily life. This is borne out by the example of Lord Kṛṣṇa who gave highest knowledge to Arjuna at a battlefield. Sri Iyer dispels the wrong notions about philosophy prevailing among common people that it is a dry intellectual exercise without much practical application, and highlights the underlying pragmatic approach of Indian philosophy.

Examining the history of various religions and their failure to prevent wars and other harrowing experiences, the author rightly holds that religion, if not properly perceived, has in it seeds of disintegration and disharmony. Through a series of convincing arguments Sri Iyer tries to drive home the point that if the ethical and spiritual values of religion are ignored and the integrating influence of religion into groups is exploited for narrow selfish ends with only superficial fanatic adherence to religion, it will only lead to intolerance, war and bloodshed, pushing community life into the darkness of sorrow and chaos instead of goading it towards the realization of Truth and all-round welfare.

The author, however, seems to be somewhat unreasonable in his criticism of mysticism, emotion and supramental experiences when he says, 'Mysticism is resorted to by those that have met with serious disappointment in life or those that possess weak intellect'. (p. 23). This

statement may be true with regard to some stray cases, but becomes false in the light of the lives of great mystics. Being a staunch Advaitin gifted with a sharp rational mind and influenced to a considerable extent by the scientific thought of the West, the author has tried to prove the supremacy of the intellectual disciplines of the Advaita school of thought over the path of devotion. Instead of making Advaita all-inclusive, he has attempted to make it exclusive, thereby ignoring the testimony of countless saints and sages including Madhusūdana Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda. The human intellect, however superior it may be, too has limitations to comprehend the Ultimate Truth in its totality. Vedānta scriptures clearly state that a direct experience of the Ultimate Reality is possible only by transcending human intellect and reasoning. This immediate transcendental experience is ineffable and is hence termed mystical. However, the author's contention is that so long as emotion dominates the mind, religion, art and mysticism rule it. When emotion and intellect are assigned to their respective spheres, their limitation being known, reason dominates and the philosophy of Truth rules, reason being the faculty that ultimately distinguishes the true from the false (p. 25). But this statement again appears arbitrary because reason is not an independent, autonomous faculty of mind. It is an off-shoot or manifestation of the intellectual faculty which enables us to exercise the power of discrimination and is directly governed by the intellect itself, therefore, has all the limitations of intellect. Naturally, one may not fully agree with and accept in toto all the conclusions reached by the author. However, the thought provoking original ideas of the author reflect his intellectual brilliance and are very interesting in themselves.

The 10th chapter titled 'Truth, and the Creator and Ruler of the World' is very fascinating. In it the author enters into a long monologue, putting a series of searching questions to the Creator about the cause of such common phenomena as suffering, sorrow, pain and injustice in the world which are irreconcilable with His omniscient, omnipotent, blissful and compassionate nature. The range and depth of questions speak for the author's sensitivity to the problems of life and his capacity to explore the hidden mystery of Creator-creation relationship.

In the 6th chapter, on Sanskrit education and modern life, Sri Iyer evaluates the positive role and potentialities of Sanskrit culture and language

in the multi-linguistic, heterogeneous cultural life of India. For the achievement of this he rightly emphasizes the need for enriching Sanskrit by inducting modern thoughts into it so that it can grow.

A useful key for a novel way of studying the Gita is given (p. 135) by presenting a volley of important general questions on religion, philosophy, spiritual practice, and mentioning against them appropriate verses from different chapters of the Gita as the answers.

While analysing the role of Truth in bringing about world peace in the 5th chapter, the crux of the matter is well put by the author when he sounds the repeated warning that until Truth is loved and sought there can be no general peace or salvation in this world. He holds that the world is suffering chiefly because the leaders refuse to look at Truth. The author lauds the famous declaration made by the ancient Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato that rulers must be philosophers. The views of the author are backed by appropriate quotes from Indian scriptures, and the works of western thinkers, philosophers and poets, especially the works of Sankara, in different places.

Most of the arguments revolve round the same theme or converge on the same conclusion, namely, the need for enquiry into Ultimate Truth through reasoning based on the totality of experience or all the data of life or all the three states of consciousness.

The preface to the book written by the distinguished philosopher Sri T.M.P. Mahadevan, who also edited the book, indicates its worth and the superior philosophic enlightenment of the author.

Topics like Ananda in circus, Advaitin's interest in drama, 14 points in the dream problem, and summary of talk on death give an idea of the wide variety of themes the author was capable of dealing with.

The style of writing of the author is gripping and precise. In many places the discussions are lively and the approach is frank. The arguments have the ring of sincerity, straightforwardness and are based on a depth study of eastern and western philosophies, science, history, psychology, etc.

Those with an exclusively devotional temperament may find the book a bit provocative, whereas intellectuals and rational-minded people will find it stimulating and enlightening. The reading of this book will surely serve as a further invitation to a detailed study of

philosophy in general and Sankara's Advaita philosophy in particular.

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FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: BY R. PULIGANDLA. Published by the University Press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20706, U.S.A. 1985. Pp. 363. \$ 14.75.

R. Puligandla of the University of Toledo (U.S.A) presents in this book the main tenets of the different systems of Indian philosophy. The book is intended to serve as a text book for undergraduates. Though there are several books on the subject, the author finds none suitable for a quarter or semester introductory course. The contents, organization and method of treatment of the subject have grown out of the author's personal experience in teaching Eastern thought at the University of Toledo. The main aim of this book is not only to introduce the student to the problems, methods, goals, and temper of Indian philosophy, but also to arouse in him or her sufficient interest in the subject to undertake further study of Indian philosophy and culture.

The book begins with a general introduction in which the author vigorously counters the tendency of western philosophers to rule out, by the fiat of definition, non-western thought from the domain of philosophy and relegate it to myth, religion and poetry. He points out that the basic philosophical problems raised and the solutions proposed by Indian and European traditions are astonishingly similar. He then gives a list of the main characteristics common to all systems of Indian philosophy.

The subsequent chapters are devoted to Carvakism, Jainism, Buddhism, Samkhya, Yoga, Vaisesika, Nyaya and Vedanta. The exposition is lucid, critical and illuminating. The last two chapters are devoted to 'Time and History in the Indian Tradition' and 'A Glimpse at the Contemporary Scene'. Each school of philosophy is discussed from the ontological, epistemological and ethical standpoints. Though this is a textbook intended for the use of students, the discussions are not rigidly formal or solely intended to prepare the student for his final examination, as Indian students might expect a book of this kind to be. Prof. Puligandla has tried to make his discussions interesting and stimulating. He raises innumerable questions

and his style is marked by vigour and directness. Elaborate notes have been appended to each chapter which contain additional quotations and remarks.

Having said all this, a few comments may now be offered in good faith.

In the General Introduction, the author has made certain observations, which, perhaps are not justified. On page 23 he says: 'Equally important is the fact that all schools of Indian philosophy teach that mokṣa is not a state to be looked forward to after death. Quite the contrary, it is to be attained here and now while one is still in one's bodily existence.' Nyaya Vaisesika philosophers and Ramanuja of Visistadvaita Vedanta are of the opinion that liberation is possible only after death. On page 24, the author observes: 'One may, however, consider Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisesika to be neither orthodox nor unorthodox, since they originated independently of the Vedas—that is, without accepting or rejecting them.' This is entirely against Indian tradition. Ordinarily in India we take all these systems as orthodox or Vaidic. Really these systems accept the Vedas as authoritative. Of course they believe in independent reasoning also, and hold that the Vedic conclusions can be justified entirely through unaided arguments.

On page 174, the author observes: 'It is only by the extraordinary perception of manhood as the essence of being man we say that all men are mortal.' Here he is discussing the Nyāya view of *sāmānya lakṣaṇa pratyakṣa*. The Naiyāyikas actually hold that through the ordinary perception of manhood in a man we perceive extraordinarily all men. Manhood or *sāmānya* performs the function of *sannikarṣa*.

On page 244, Prof. Puligandla says: 'Maya is the power of Brahman by which it manifests itself as the phenomenal world. It is beginningless and endless, being co-existent with Brahman itself.' The reference here is to Advaita Vedanta. The Advaitins never accept maya as endless. With the dawn of knowledge it vanishes. Maya is only a magical power. As the magician never considers this as any real power, so to Brahman this is no power at all.

On page 250, the author says: 'Just as the unreality of the imaginary standpoint (*prātibhāsika*)...' *Prātibhāsika*, to the Advaitins, is never unreal in the sense of a non-existent object like the son of a barren woman which never appears. A *prātibhāsika* object (the snake in the case of

snake-rope illusion) appears and so is unlike the unreal.

The chapter on time and history in Indian tradition is inadequate and incomplete. It could have been incorporated in the General Introduction itself.

In 'A Glimpse at the Contemporary Scene' Prof. Puligandla has discussed the views of Sri Aurobindo and Dr. Radhakrishnan. But Prof. K. C. Bhattacharya, an eminent philosopher of modern India has been omitted. The name of

Swami Vivekananda, who did so much to revive Hindu thought and restore its dignity, finds no mention anywhere in the book.

The addition of Glossary and Bibliography at the end has made the book more useful to students. We hope a cheaper Indian edition will be brought out soon.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI SRI MATRI MANDIR AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SARADA SEVASHRAMA, JAYARAMBATI

REPORT FOR APRIL 1985 TO MARCH 1986

Sri Sri Matri Mandir: The little village of Jayarambati remains much as it was when Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was born here in December 1853. It is now an important centre for pilgrimage well known among the seekers of truth in India and abroad. On the ground where Mother was born a temple enshrining her marble image has come up, and the two old cottages which served as her places of residence from 1863 to 1915 and from 1916 to 1920, and where numerous devotees were received by her and given initiation, are being maintained as shrines. All the year round thousands of devotees from all over the world come here to take back with them their share of holiness and inspiration. Daily religious discourses, Bhajan and prayers, as also Ramnam Sankirtan on every Ekadashi day, are held. Birthdays of great spiritual teachers—Sri Shankara, Sri Buddha, Sri Krishna, Jesus Christ, Sri Ramachandra, Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda and the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna are also celebrated. The annual Pujas of Durga, Jagaddhatri and Kali are performed. About fifty thousand devotees received cooked prasada here during the year. The small library had 2,500 books.

The sub-centre, Ramakrishna Yogashrama at Koalpara, 8 kms from Jayarambati, where Mother stayed on several occasions and installed the photographs of Sri Ramakrishna and herself in the shrine for daily worship, is being maintained as a place of retreat, as also is the Jagadamba Ashrama near by, where also Mother lived occasionally.

Pallimangal: Under the self-employment

scheme, training was imparted in weaving (to 11 people), hosiery (5 people) and rolling incense sticks (7 people).

The weekly mobile medical service provided medical relief to 7,680 people.

A windmill was installed on the bank of the river Amodar to provide lift irrigation for the fields of local farmers.

On Swamiji's birthday, the Youth Day was celebrated in a function attended by about 500 boys and girls of surrounding villages who actively participated in elocution, essay writing, recitation, singing and other activities.

Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama: The Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Charitable Dispensary, started at the instance of the Mother in 1916 as a humble homoeopathic dispensary, treated 35,784 patients during the year. A branch of this dispensary opened at Ramakrishna Yogashrama in Koalpara in November 1983 treated 12,567 patients during the year. The Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Vidyapitha—begun as a night school during Mother's lifetime—now consists of a junior high school, two junior basic schools and two pre-basic nursery schools, is providing education to 762 students including girls. Aid from the State Government being meagre, the Sevashrama has to depend on the public in order to make these schools worthy of the Holy Mother's name. The library had 5,000 books.

Present needs: 1. Extension of school buildings: Rs. 5 lakh. 2. Construction of a boundary wall around the school campus: Rs. 3 lakh. 3. Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama School Development Fund: Rs. 2 lakh. Remittances may kindly be made in the name either of Sri Sri Matri Mandir or of Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama, P.O. Jayarambati, District Bankura, West Bengal, PIN 722 161.