



Prabuddha Bharata

or

Awakened India

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Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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No. 6

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

VISIONS OF DIVINITY

Holy Mother Sarada Devi

Beloved Mother,

This morning, early, I went to church—to pray for Sara. All the people there were thinking of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and suddenly I thought of you. Your dear face, and your loving look, and your white Sari and your bracelets. It was all there. And it seemed to me that yours was the presence that was to soothe and bless poor S. Sara's sickroom. And—do you know?—I thought I had been very foolish to sit in your room, at the evening service to Sri Ramakrishna, trying to meditate. Why did I not understand that it was quite enough to be a little child at your dear feet? Dear Mother! You are full of love! And it is not a flushed and violent love, like ours, and like the world's but a gentle peace that brings good to everyone and wishes ill to none. It is a golden radiance, full of play.... Dearest Mother—I wish we could send you a wonderful hymn, or a prayer. But somehow even that would seem too loud, too full of noise! Surely you are the most wonderful thing of God—Sri Ramakrishna's own chalice of His Love for the world—a token left with His children, in these lonely days, and we should be very still and quiet before you—except indeed for a little fun! Surely the wonderful things of God are all quiet—stealing unnoticed into our lives—the air and the sunlight and the sweetness of gardens and of the Ganges, these are the silent things that are like you!

Do send to poor S. Sara the mantle of your peace. Isn't your thought, now and then, of the high calm that neither loves nor hates? Isn't that a sweet benediction that trembles in God, like the dew-drop on the lotus-leaf, and touches not the world?

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'A yearning love that can never refuse us; a benediction that for ever abides with us; a presence from which we cannot grow away; a heart in which we are always safe; sweetness unfathomed, bond unbreakable, holiness without a shadow—all these indeed and more is motherhood.'

Sister Nivedita

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL discusses how in the latest developments of modern science the idea of Spirit, the non-physical Reality from which the physical universe has emerged, is slowly gaining ground.

MOULDING OUR LIVES IN SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS is by Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

SAINT JNANESHWARA: THE GREAT HARMONIZER is by Swami Brahmasthananda of the Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad.

TWO POETS: JOHN DONNE AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA is a comparative study between the poems of John Donne, the 17th century English metaphysical poet, and those of Swami Vivekananda. It is by N. Pratima,

a research scholar in English, from the Dept. of English, Andhra University.

THE BIRTH OF THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA BY M.—II, is the second and concluding portion of the article by Swami Mukhyananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math.

AUNT BHANU is a beautiful portrait of a village woman known as Aunt Bhanu, a highly developed spiritual soul, who is associated with the life of Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi. Swami Jayadevananda, Principal, Probationers' Training Centre, Belur Math has translated this short life-sketch from the original Bengali version of *Sri Ma Sarada Devi* (Bengali) by Rev. Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

SPIRIT—THE FIFTH DIMENSION OF SCIENCE

(EDITORIAL)

Once Socrates told an Indian scholar that his object of study was man. The Indian only asked him how could he expect to know man without knowing God? Swami Vivekananda who repeated this story to the Indians during his lecture in South India, pointed out,

The great question of all questions at the present time is this: Taking for granted that the known and the knowable are bounded on both sides by the unknowable and the infinitely unknown, why struggle for that infinite unknown? Why shall we not be content with the known? Why shall we not rest satisfied with eating, drinking, and doing a little good to society?

But fortunately we *must* inquire into the beyond. This present, this expressed, is only one part of that unexpressed. The sense universe is, as it were, only one portion, one bit of that infinite spiritual universe projected into the plane

of sense consciousness. How can this little bit of projection be explained, be understood, without knowing that which is beyond? ¹

Man is not, as physicist Heinz Pagels writes, just a *Homo Faber* (a tool-fabricating animal), he is also *Homo spiritualis* (an animal who wants to know the Spirit behind all matter). Socrates himself admitted, 'An unexamined life is not worth living.'²

But for many scientists such a search for the Spirit behind matter, generally appears

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati Memorial Edition) Vol. 3 pp. 2 & 3. (Hereafter referred to as *Complete Works* with vol. and page no.)

2. Heinz Pagels, *Perfect Symmetry* (U.S.A. Bantam Edition) 1986, pp. 386-87.

as nonsensical. The main occupation of science, as we know it generally, is to deal with hard, real, objective matter of the external world. The internal-world of mind, thought and feeling has already been relegated to psychology which is yet to emerge as a fully recognized experimental science as physics and chemistry. Why should a scientist bother about a so-called inexplicable, non-physical, transcendental, spiritual, unseen and intangible entity, which people call God, in order to know and explain a baseball or an automobile? But this non-physical reality is what is slowly emerging with a greater importance through the adamant barriers of the so-called physical sciences today.

When Swami Vivekananda went to the West, religion was in disgrace. In 1861 Darwin's theory of Evolution that man came not from Adam and Eve but from apes, had shattered the theological foundation of church-based Christianity. Millions left the church. Some of the western rationalists, in despair, surrendered to the powerful reasonings of Schopenhauer who asserted that the world was ruled not by a providential or just God, but by a blind 'will' which strikes both good and bad alike in blind stupidity and therefore death is the only finale of a life full of existential suffering. The more philosophic one took resort to Kantian philosophy which established that the Ultimate Reality is unknown and unknowable. Some, therefore, turned agnostic with the conviction that it is better not to try to know the ultimate Reality. But the vast majority of people went straight to the new religion of science. In the physicists' Congress held in 1874 in Belfast, physicists like Huxley and Tyndal declared science as the new 'Church-scientific' and the scientists as its new 'bishops'. To them, matter tangible to all our senses, became God, and the new religion of the 'Church-scientific' came to be known as 'scientific

naturalism' or 'scientific materialism'.³ The hard, tangible matter became the object of worship to these new bishops. Ernst Mach, the philosopher of Positivism, of the 19th century science, reminded his promising disciple Einstein that as a scientist he should scrupulously avoid everything connected with mind, emotion or thought.⁴

The Newtonian physics became the go of the day. It saw God as the unfailing Mechanic who runs the universe of sun, moon, and stars in perfect order. William Blake even drew the sketch of the Newtonian God—a colossal geometrician, planning the creation of our universe with a compass. Like the eternal separation between cosmic God and the puny man, matter (the object of experiment) and mind (of the experimenter-scientist) was finally separated by the Newtonian science, and the so-called Cartesean dualism of the West was finally confirmed. This Cartesean dualism between God and man, mind and matter, sacred and secular, saint and sinner, godly and worldly, resulted, according to A.D. Reincourt, in 'the schizophrenic culture of the western civilization'.⁵

But by 1920s new rumblings began to be heard in the horizons of science. In 1927 Heisenberg's celebrated experiment of Uncertainty Principle proved three startling facts:

1. No one can ever know the sub-atomic particles like electron,
2. The strict law of cause and effect does not apply to the world of sub-atomic particles,
3. In every experiment of sub-atomic particles, the consciousness of the scientist

3. Collin Russel, *Science and Social Change (1700 to 1900)* (London: McMillan Press, 1983) pp. 244, 256 & 259.

4. Heinz Pagels, *The Cosmic Code* (New York, Bantam Books, 1983) pp. 39-40.

5. Amaury De Reincourt, *The Eye of Shiva (Eastern Mysticism and Science)* (New York: William Marrow and Company, Inc. 1981) p. 158.

and the act of observation, affect the observed phenomenon.

For the first time consciousness emerged as an undeniable factor in scientific experiments. The demolition of strict cause and effect relation brought Niels Bohr's famous answer to Einstein, 'Nor is it our duty to prescribe to God how he should run the world.' After Heisenberg's discovery Arthur Eddington remarked that '... religion first became possible for a reasonable scientific man about the year 1927...' ⁶ With the fall of strict causality or determinism of a machine-like universe which was the final thought of Newtonian science, the thought of the presence and functioning of a super-deterministic factor behind the universe, began to crystallize. In 1972 David Bohm's successful experiment with Bell's Theorem finally established *The Principle of non-local causes*. Gary Zukav, commenting on Bell's Theorem, wrote, 'In this case we are led to *superdeterminism*. This is determinism far beyond ordinary determinism.' ⁷

Einstein who stood, until the end, against Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, had to admit a similar truth. In 1951 he wrote, 'All these 50 years of conscious brooding have brought me no further to the answer to the question: What are light quanta? Nowadays every Tom, Dick and Harry thinks he knows it, but he is mistaken.' ⁸

Einstein's question was an offshoot of his own celebrated discovery which gave him Nobel prize. In 1914 he discovered, to the surprise of the entire world of science, that light moves as particles. Since Thomas Young's Double-slit experiment in 1823, scientists knew that light could move only

as waves. Einstein called the newly discovered light particles *photon*. Closely following this discovery, another Nobel physicist Louis De Broglie discovered, through his Electron-diffraction experiment in 1920s, that electrons, which were so long known as particles, also move as waves. At once a completely new horizon opened before science. Every object in this universe was composed of minutest objects which were fundamentally seen to move both as particles and waves. They called it 'wavicles'. But questions, especially Quantum questions, began to torment all scientists. What is the real nature of an object? Particle or wave? Niels Bohr offered the celebrated concept of complementarity. He asserted that both the aspects of matter—wave and particle—are real. We must accept both the wave and particle nature of every object in the universe. Nobel physicist Max Born wrote,

And the development of modern physics has enriched our thinking by a new principle of fundamental importance, the idea of complementarity. The fact that in an exact science like physics there are found mutually exclusive and complementary situations which cannot be described by the same concept but need two kinds of expressions, can be applied to other fields of human activity and thought. ⁹

Max Born struck at the most important contribution of Niels Bohr, who got the idea of complementarity from the ancient Chinese idea that Yin (the mystical, non-physical, the intuitive aspects of life), and Yan (the rational, the physical, the materialistic aspects of life) must combine in order to make a complete picture of Reality. Probably without his knowing it, Bohr was paving the way for the emergence of the metaphysical, non-material, and spiritual universe of the fifth dimension into the four-dimensional picture of our universe.

6. Ibid., p. 32.

7. Gary Zukav, *The Wu Li Masters* (New York: William Marrow & Co., 1979) pp. 318-19. Also see, *Vedanta Kesari* (Madras) Aug. & Sept. 1986. 'Bell's Theorem: The All-pervading Unity'.

8. Quoted in D.S. Kothari, *Atom and Self* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1983) pp. 47-48.

9. Max Born, *The Restless Universe* (New York: Dover Publications, 1951) p. 313.

The concept of complementarity, however, was only an explanation of the existing phenomena, and not an answer to the basic question, 'Where did the universe emerge from?' If Charlie Chapline appears in one film as a chimney sweeper, and in the other, as a window-glass repairer, we can guess that it is one single man who is taking two roles in two films. But in order to know the actor as he really is, we have to meet him behind the stage either in the green-room or in his residence, when he is no more acting. Einstein's Relativity ultimately proved that all our knowledge of the space-time universe is only relative. The absolute knowledge of anything is beyond space-time dimensions. Physicist David Bohm said scientific research 'moves towards the Absolute by studying the relative in its inexhaustible multiplicity and diversity.'¹⁰

Austrian Nobel physicist Erwin Schrodinger raised a fundamental question in 1925 when he wrote the first paper dealing with the philosophical-metaphysical aspects of Quantum physics entitled 'Seek for the Road'. It was the same year when he was making his fundamental discovery of wave-equation which brought him Nobel prize in Physics. In this paper he was responding, as it were, to the question which the electron might ask the scientist 'who are you to know all?'¹¹

This paper was published only in 1960. Why this long delay? Perhaps, as he said, they were too Vedantic, too strange and daring for the western world which was still dreaming of a comfortable living in a fully comprehensible and tangible world of matter.

In two books *My View of the World* (1964, Cambridge) and *Mind and Matter*, Schro-

dingier tried to assess with all possible logic of quantum physics, that it is consciousness, the Spirit, which is the real substratum of all matter. And consciousness is numerically one. The plurality of consciousness is Maya, he repeatedly asserted.¹² Through his celebrated thought-experiment, *Schrodinger's Cat*, he also established that it is consciousness which lends reality to external objects. It is only a confirmation of the well-known assertion of Max Plank, the father of Quantum Physics, 'Consciousness I regard as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness.'¹³

Today physics has already entered the world of the mystical, in spite of all its willingness to accept mysticism as unscientific and 'crazy'. While working on Quantum theory, Heisenberg came to India for lecture, and he was a guest of Tagore. In an interview Heisenberg told physicist Fritzof Capra that he talked a lot on Indian Philosophy with Tagore. This talk helped him a lot to work on Quantum Physics, and also made him realize that these new ideas of Quantum Physics which are thought to be 'crazy' in the West are considered quite acceptable and metaphysically sound in the Vedantic mysticism. Heisenberg also said that Niels Bohr had a similar experience when he went to China.¹⁴ But neither Heisenberg nor Bohr dared to make these ideas public in the West which was still unwilling to accept anything mystical-spiritual in the domain of science.

In 1957 the Everette-Wheeler interpretation of Quantum Physics, finally held up the old Vedantic idea in modern science—

12. Erwin Schrodinger, *My View of the World* (Cambridge University Press, 1964), chapter on 'The Vedantic Vision'.

13. C.E.M. Joad, *Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1932) p. 12.

14. Ed. Ken Wilber, *The Holographic Paradigm*, (Shambhala, 1982) p. 27.

10. David Bohm, *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1957) p. 170.

11. Quoted in D.S. Kothari, *Atom and Self*, p. 17.

External reality is only *observer-created reality*. It is aptly known as the 'Many-Worlds Interpretation.'¹⁵ The increasing importance of the mystical in modern science has unsettled many of the old vanguards. Jeremy Bernstein, an American physicist, for instance, declared recently that these attempts to correlate physics to mysticism, will 'eventually lead to obsolescence of science'.¹⁶ But Truth, as Vivekananda said, does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. It is society which has to accept truth or die.

Thoughts about the Spirit, the non-physical Reality behind the space-time universe are slowly gaining ground. In 1961 Schrodinger said: 'I consider science an integrating part of our endeavour to answer the one great philosophical question which embraces all others, the one that Plotinus expressed by his brief: *who are we?* And more than that: I consider this not one of the tasks, but *the* task of science, the only one that really counts.'¹⁷

Scientist M. Delbruck, in his Nobel Address, in December 1969, speaks of Consciousness not as something derived from brain and nerve but as a factor independent of body: 'Thus, even if we learn to speak about consciousness as an emergent property of nerve nets, even if we learn to understand the processes that lead to abstraction, reasoning, and language, still any such development presupposes a notion of truth that is prior to all these efforts and that cannot be conceived as an emergent property of it, an emergent property of a biological evolution.'¹⁸ Eminent physiologist Alexis Carrel echoed a similar idea, 'The world of matter is too narrow for our thinking. Man is a material being, but belongs also to another world which extends

beyond space and time.'¹⁹ In these lines we find an echo of Swami Vivekananda's ideas, 'Physics is bound on both sides by metaphysics.'

Dr. Gustaf Stromberg, the internationally famous scientist-astronomer whose name has been inscribed on the wall of fame in America, wrote in his book *Man, Mind and Universe* published in 1966:

The most startling recent discovery, and for us the most important, is that beyond the physical world of matter and energy is another world, which cannot be described in terms of space and time. It is a *spiritual* world which is not subject to the deterioration and dissipation characteristic of the physical world. This newly discovered world existed before the material world was 'born' several billions of years ago, and we have no reason to believe that it will ever come to an end. It has therefore been given the descriptive name: 'The Eternity Domain'. It is the world in which our minds are 'rooted', and in which both life and mind have their origin....

In the opinion of many scientists, God had lately been reinstated as an indispensable element in the world needed to explain the ultimate origin of energy, matter, life and consciousness....

We know nothing about the actual cause of the cosmic explosion, the 'big blow' which heralded a new era in cosmic history. Since we are convinced that *ex nihilo nihil fit* (out of nothing, nothing comes) we are led to the conclusion that the energy emerged from another 'world' than that described in the science of physics. The only such world of which we have any knowledge, and which does not belong to the physical world, is the *mental* world clearly manifested in our own consciousness. We are therefore justified in stating that beyond the physical world of space and time there is a mental world, and that energy and matter have come into existence by the action of a *Universal Mind* of infinite power....

People of various cultures have given different names to such a Power. We call It God.²⁰

Recently a concept of a five-dimensional

15. *Prabuddha Bharata* (Calcutta) May, 1987.

16. Ed. Ken Wilber, *The Quantum Questions* (Shambhala, 1984) Preface.

17. Quoted in D.S. Kothari, *Loc. Cit.*, p. 9.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

19. Quoted in Gustaf Stromberg, *Loc. Cit.*, p. 22.

20. Dr. Gustaf Stromberg, *Man, Mind and Universe* (A Scientist's View) (California, Los Angeles: Science of Mind publications, 1977) pp. 19-20, 21 and 25.

universe was offered by the prominent British scientist and philosopher, J. G. Bennett. In collaboration with two British mathematicians, R. L. Brown and M.W. Thring, he published in the *Proceedings of The Royal Society* for July, 1949, an article in which he showed that the mathematical foundations of theoretical physics could be simplified and generalized by the assumption that the universe has five dimensions.²¹

Bennett calls the new fifth dimension as 'the eternity dimension' and it runs perpendicular to Minkowski's time axis. According to Bennett, it defines a realm beyond the four-dimensional space-time world of physics. We may call this recently discovered world as the 'Eternity Domain of the Universe'. Bennett tells us that the reason why we have no immediate experience of events which take place in this non-physical realm is that we are 'eternity blind' which, in Vedantic term, means that we are not spiritually enlightened.

No measurements can be made of this spiritual background because measurements are made with material measuring rods and clocks, and matter has no place in a non-physical world. This is one of the points of impasse in modern science to which until now physical sciences provided no clue. But from Plank onwards the co-existence of the physical and non-physical world, and the primacy of consciousness over matter, are slowly being accepted. Nobel Physicist Eugene Wigner said in 1964, 'There are two kinds of reality or existence—the existence of my consciousness and the reality or existence of everything else. This latter reality is not absolute, but only relative. Except immediate sensations, the content of my consciousness, everything is a construct, but some constructs are closer, some farther from direct sensations.'²²

Physiologists and Neurologists who, follo-

wing the materialistic approach, sought to identify the brain as the only seat of consciousness, are finding it difficult to hold their views any more. Indian physicist Dr. D. S. Kothari explains, 'As the brain is within natural science and the mind is outside natural science the problem of comprehending the brain-mind interaction becomes the riddle of riddles—the greatest mystery of all.'²³

Vedanta knew it ages before that consciousness (*chit*), the all-pervading (*sat*) Reality, is the substratum of everything. In human body or living organism, this consciousness makes itself felt by the pulsating life-force, or *Prana* which acts on the otherwise inorganic matter (*akasha*) of which a living organism is composed. Modern discoveries in the field of bio-physical sciences are confirming it. Experimental studies made at the Medical School of the Yale University under the able leadership of H. S. Burr have shown that all living things are embedded in complex electrical fields which determine the structure and structural changes in living organisms. The organizing electric fields in a fertilized egg cell apparently expand from a point of zero dimension to full size at maturity; and later in life the fields contract and disappear, a process which we describe as *death*. When the fields have completely disappeared, there is no longer any organized activity. The unorganized fields inherent in all inorganic matter of the (dead body) will quickly cause a breaking up of all fluid matter in the organism. It can be shown that these mysterious organizing fields are not 'anchored' in the matter of which the organism is built. On the contrary, the molecules are incorporated in a preexisting autonomous field of force, which may well be called 'a living force field'.²⁴

Dr. Stromberg writes again, 'What we

21. Ibid., p. 106-7.

22. Quoted in D.S. Kothari, Loc. Cit., pp. 13-14.

23. D.S. Kothari, Loc. Cit p. 15.

24. Stromberg, Loc. Cit., p. 26.

actually perceive must be the "projections" onto the space-time world of events occurring in an extraphysical world, that is, a world beyond physical space and physical time.' He calls Newton's god '*the spirit of the universe*'. This all-pervading *Spirit* has both physical and mental characteristics', he says.²⁵

Recent developments in astrophysics have supported this idea. By 1970 the Big Bang Theory established that this universe of ours had an origin from the colossal blasting of a super-dense supernova. After this blasting this universe will inflate, remain stationary, and then again contract to a point of singularity which means a state where neither space nor time can apply. The inflationary model of the universe takes 'vacuum decay' as the 'ultimate catastrophe'. What was there before the origin of this universe? What is this 'vacuum state'? Edward Tyron, an American physicist writes in 1973 (in an article entitled, 'Is the universe a vacuum fluctuation?') that no law of physics prevents *creatio-ex-nihilo*, creation out of nothing.²⁶ Alex Vilenkin, a theoretical physicist, recently said to another physicist, 'I think the universe should really begin as nothing. No space, no time—nothing.'²⁷

Today physicists like P. Englert, E. Gunzig and P. Spindel describe 'the first model of universe as originating from nothing by a quantum process.' In fact, they call it a 'spontaneous creation of all the matter and the radiation in the universe.'²⁸ Physicist Heinz Pagels thinks that two ways are open to the physicists: Either the universe began from a primal seed or it came from nothing. But then the question remains, 'Where did the seed come from?' We have come to the old answer—the seed came from the point of singularity where

neither space nor time can apply. It is a state of non-physical profundity. Physically it is nothing; but logically this 'nothing' contains the potentiality of everything. 'Nothingness contains all of being. All of physics—everything we hope to know—is waiting in the vacuum to be discovered,' writes Heinz Pagels. (New York, Times 26, 1982). Mr. Pagels again writes that 'nothing stands in the way of a rational description of the very origin of the universe, and some day this will be achieved. The singularity at the beginning of time should be viewed as a challenging puzzle, not a signal that we must give up.'²⁹

The ancient Rishis of the Upanishads did not give up their search. At the limiting point of matter, they took the 'intuitive leap' and realized the 'non-physical,' non-spatio-temporal 'nothing', the spirit, the Eternity domain of Absolute Existence as the basis of the universe. 'All creations are only (spatio-temporal) name and form on the ocean of the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute, like foams on an ocean', writes *Drig-Drishya-Viveka*. 'Space is foam like', says physicist John Wheeler, (New York, Times, September 26, 1982).

In a recent book *A New Science of Life* (1981) which has raised a lot of commotion in the world of science, the scientist-author Dr. Rupert Sheldrake writes that 'living organisms are shaped by morphogenetic fields of a type unknown to science.'³⁰ Contrary to the mechanistic approach of life-science, Sheldrake finds, on the basis of some openly verified experiments he had made, that there is a 'general possibility of transtemporal causal connections'. Dr. Sheldrake asserts that 'despite cracking of genetic codes, biological science retains a substantial portfolio of unsolved problems.'³¹

25. Ibid.

26. Heinz Pagels, *Perfect Symmetry* p. 358.

27. Ibid., p. 361.

28. Ibid., p. 359.

29. Ibid., p. 354.

30. Rupert Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1985) p. 218.

31. Ibid., pp. 97 and 217.

A causal connection between 'the trans-temporal' and the 'space-time' reality is only another affirmation of the spiritual reality.

What makes the same elements form into a hen inside an egg, and a human baby in a human embryo? The geneticists would at once answer that this is the natural outcome of genes. But what is the factor which moves the different genes to form in different patterns? Dr. Sheldrake accepts a superior consciousness transcending space-time as the primal factor behind all creations, both organic and inorganic. He says:

The universe as a whole could have a cause and purpose only if it were itself created by a conscious agent which transcended it. Unlike the universe, this transcendent consciousness would not be developing towards a goal; it would be its own goal. It would not be striving towards a final form; it would be complete in itself.

If this transcendent conscious being were the source of the universe and of everything within it, all created things would in some sense participate in its nature. The more or less limited 'wholeness' of organisms, at all levels of complexity could then be seen as a reflection of the transcendent unity on which they depended, and from which they were ultimately derived.

Thus this fourth metaphysical position affirms the causal efficacy of the conscious self, and the existence of a hierarchy of creative agencies immanent within nature, and the reality of a transcendent source of the universe.³²

In 1844 chemist Liebig argued that 'in living bodies there is added yet a *fourth cause* which dominates the force of cohesion'.³³

Hans Driesch, the 19th-century biologist thought of this 'fourth cause' the transtemporal factor behind all organisms. This factor, says Dr. Sheldrake, 'acted on the physical system but was not itself part of it'. He (Driesch) called this non-physical causal factor *entelechy*. He postulated that

entelechy organized and controlled physico-chemical processes during the formation of different kinds of living organisms. Dr. Sheldrake writes,

Similarly, the nervous system provided the means for the actions of an animal, but *entelechy* organized the activity of the brain, using it as an instrument, as a pianist plays on a piano.

Entelechy is a Greek word whose derivation (*en-telos*) indicates something which bears its end or goal in itself; it contains the goal towards which a system under its control is directed.

Driesch described *entelechy* as an 'intensive manifoldness', a non-spatial causal factor which nevertheless acted into space.³⁴

Vivekananda, the modern interpreter of Vedanta gave these very ideas to the West, ideas which are getting confirmed today by science nearly a hundred years after he had spoken of them.

We must first find the universe which includes all universes; we must find something which, by itself, must be the material running through all these various planes of existence, whether we apprehend it through the senses or not.³⁵

This gross part of man, this body, in which are the external instruments, is called in Sanskrit, *Sthula Sharira*, the gross body; behind it comes the series, beginning with the organs, the mind, the intellect, the egoism. These and the vital forces form a compound which is called the fine body, the *Sukshma Sharira*. These forces are composed of very fine elements, so fine that no amount of injury to this body can destroy them; they survive all the shocks given to this body. The gross body we see is composed of gross material, and as such it is always being renewed and changing continuously. But the internal organs, the mind, the intellect, and the egoism are composed of the finest material, so fine that they will endure for aeons. They are so fine that they cannot be resisted by anything; they can get through any obstruction. The gross body is non-intelligent, so is the fine, being composed of fine matter. Although one part is called mind, another the intellect, and the third egoism, yet we see at a glance that no one of them can be

³². Ibid., p. 210.

³³. Ibid., p. 47.

³⁴. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

³⁵. *Complete Works* vol. 2, pp. 155-57.

the 'Knower'. None of them can be the perceiver, the witness, the one for whom action is made, and who is the seer of the action. All these movements in the mind, or the faculty of intellection, or egoism, must be for some one else. These being composed of fine matter cannot be self-effulgent. Their luminosity cannot be in themselves. This manifestation of the table, for instance, cannot be due to any material thing. Therefore there must be someone behind them all, who is the real manifestor, the real seer, the real enjoyer and He in Sanskrit is called the Atman, the Soul of man, the real Self of man. He it is who really sees things. The external instruments and the organs catch the impressions and convey them to the mind, and the mind to the intellect and the intellect reflects them as on a mirror, and back of it is the Soul that looks on them and gives His orders and His directions. He is the ruler of all these instruments, the master in the house, the enthroned king in the body. The faculty of egoism, the faculty of intellection, the faculty of cogitation, the organs, the instruments, the body, all of them obey His commands. It is He who is manifesting all of these. This is the Atman of man. Similarly we can see that what is in a small part of the universe must also be in the whole universe. If conformity is the law of the universe, every part of the universe must have been built on the same plan as the whole. So we naturally think that behind the gross material form which we call This universe of ours, there must be a universe of finer matter which we call thought, and behind

that there must be a Soul, which makes all this thought possible, which commands, which is the enthroned king of this universe. That soul which is behind each mind and each body is called *Pratyagatman*, the individual Atman, and that Soul which is behind the universe as its guide, ruler, and governor, is God.

From this God, the Spirit, the Brahman, the all-pervading Consciousness, the Universe has been 'projected' or manifested. There is no separate 'creation', according to Vedanta, by an extra-cosmic creator. It is like the projection of the web by the spider. Vivekananda interprets, 'God being the cause of the projection, the continuance, and the dissolution of the universe, the cause must be present to produce the effect.'³⁶

Every piece of matter has three dimensions, length, breadth, and height. Einstein's theory of Relativity added a new dimension, the time-dimension. Today's science, supported by Vedanta, is bringing a fifth dimension—Spirit, which transcends both space and time, but nevertheless projects, manifests and interpenetrates through this very space-time universe of nature and life.

36. Ibid., p. 429.

MOULDING OUR LIVES IN SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

One of the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, which he repeated many times, was, 'I have made the mould and leave it for you, now you cast your life in that mould. I have lit the fire, now you warm up yourselves. I have cooked the food, now you sit down to eat from the dish already prepared for you.' Each and every word of this saying is deeply significant. Many of us worship Sri Ramakrishna as an incarnation of God. We say many, because there may be some among

us who do not look upon him as such. But everybody can accept him as a consummate man, if not an incarnation. When God incarnates Himself, He conceals His splendour under the guise of a man. When He is born as a human being, He behaves like an ordinary man, the natural weaknesses in a man may be found in him sometimes. Birth, death, old age and disease, these are inevitable stages in a man's life. An incarnation has to go through them. Yet we say

he is God. This is known as an incarnation of God. An incarnation is a synthesis of both man and God. Natural qualities of a man are inherent in him. But when we wish to judge him by the standard of a man, we find that he rises far above the common human standard. How we refer to such a superhuman being is not important, but we must know that we have to make our goal in life with his example. We have to build up our keen desire to walk along his path. We must receive the inspiration from him to reach the goal. We have to get the directions of the path from his life. He incarnates as a man to show us the way. Had God remained as God, the All-Controlling Power, the Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient One, what good would it do to us? He would have remained beyond our reach. We are ordinary men. We cannot comprehend such a transcendent being. When God sees that man is becoming completely detached from Him, man is burning in the sorrows and miseries of this world, man is failing to taste the most invigorating nectar of the Lord, and finds himself in a state of utter confusion, God incarnates Himself so that man can find his way once again, make a clear conception about his Goal, and can feel the Infinite within his reach. It does not matter much whether or not man can fully comprehend Him. There is a description in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. The moon is reflected on the water. The fishes swimming in the water consider it as another fellow aquatic animal and play with it. Similarly when God incarnates among us, He comes like man, and behaves as our playmate, our very near and dear one. We feel no diffidence with this strange man, no fear of him. We can spend our whole life with him. We do not know whether God has any need of such a human form, but we certainly need Him as an incarnation. If He never embodied Himself in such a way, man could not have any conception of God or a high spiritual life.

Someone may say, 'Why? Are not these truths all written in the scriptures?' But all scriptures would appear as heaps of paper, if God never came among us as an incarnation. They could never touch our life. God comes to put life into the scriptures which then become inspiring, active, and take vivid shape to render the message of God in clear accents. When God comes as an incarnation, He illumines the Vedas by his splendour. The incarnation invigorates our spiritual life by his life. His spiritual power attracts us towards him, and thus gives inspiration to our life. We make progress toward our goal by making him our pole star. As a lighthouse helps a ship to sail along the right direction, an incarnation helps us to move along the right spiritual path by providing us with his beacon. This is the purpose of the advent of God. He comes to raise a man to His supramental state, and as a means to this, He adopts a human form, and accepts all human attributes.

There is no harm if we look upon Sri Ramakrishna as a perfect man or as an Incarnation of God, because the life of an incarnation is the wonderful synthesis of two aspects of God and man. When we consider Sri Ramakrishna as a man we notice that he is not different from us in his hunger and thirst, disease and sorrow. When his nephew Akshay died he felt the anguish as if his heart were being rinsed like a towel. Such is the divine play of an incarnation in which we see Him as a man. We brave to build up a relation with him. We can open our mind to him. He would sympathize and guide our spiritual life. Sri Ramakrishna, the incarnation of God, thus gives us a rare opportunity to love and worship God in man and thus realize God through him.

The 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated only last year. Even now the four quarters are illumined by his radiance. His presence is still being

felt by all. Quite a few among us have come in direct contact with his apostles, though not with him. Their lives have been gratified by the grace from these apostles. We feel he is still around us.

The day to day events of his life have been recorded in such a way that it has no parallel in case of any other Incarnation of God. This is unique. We can witness his life more lively, more comprehensively through the stories of mythology.

Sri Ramakrishna was a wonderful man with varied spiritual ideas. The numerous ideas which may be found in the minds of men, particularly the seekers of truth, are all reflected in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, and through him, they are becoming clarified, clearly understood. When anybody approached Sri Ramakrishna with any doubt about his spiritual life, the Master would tell him, 'Look here, I used to have similar problems and I did so and so which removed my doubts'. There is no better way to encourage a seeker of Truth. He faced all the spiritual doubts in his own life, and offered the solution to them all (through his own experience). This is known as making a mould.

We do not know why he practised the various religious austerities. A devotee may follow any path of Sadhana (religious austerity) to know the truth. But what was Sri Ramakrishna's necessity of performing so many varied religious practices and austerities? He had already realized God. He had no further necessity. The answer to this is that he had actualized all possible spiritual practices in his own life, and left conclusive proof thereof, so that, other seekers can get the necessary instructions. The poet Tagore wrote, 'All the streams of religious practices performed by the Sadhakas have finally met in your meditation'. All have gained fulfilment through his Sadhana. Just as all the rivers flow through different routes and finally meet in the ocean, similarly various spiritual thoughts

finally find their destination in the vast ocean of varied spiritual realizations in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. There was the source, as well as the confluence of all the rivers. All the spiritual attitudes were generated in his mind, and they finally reached their culmination also there. When we analyze his life we can understand this uniqueness of Sri Ramakrishna. How many types of religious worshippers and ordinary seekers of God, assembled around Sri Ramakrishna. The young, the old, and the women, all gathered round him. All of them received full satisfaction from him. He was a child with the children, a young man with the youth, and a man of profound knowledge with the old. In him was the totality of so many wonderful ideas. That was why the author of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga* (*Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*) said that the Master was the king of ecstasies, the arbiter of all spiritual moods, and their supreme end. The life of Sri Ramakrishna thus illumines the path of God realization. His was not an ordinary, dimly flickering light. It was like a blazing sun illumining the whole world of religion with extreme brightness. Whether one was a non-dualist, a qualified non-dualist or a dualist, a *Jnani* (follower of the path of knowledge), a *Bhakta* (follower of the path of devotion) or a *Yogi*, everyone could find the fullest gratification in him. Vijay Krishna Goswami once said, 'One could possibly find drops (of divine spiritual ocean) here and there, but here (in Sri Ramakrishna) the ocean itself was full'.

If we want to reach the goal in our life through the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, we find that he welcomes all of us in the spiritual journey, however varied may be our ways. We can say without hesitation that there was never a trace of despondency in him. He never uttered a word of dejection, there is hope for all. Nobody is expelled from the Kingdom of God. Sri Ramakrishna had given assurance to each

one whether one was a monk or a householder, a *yogi*, or a *Jnani*, rich or poor. He never excluded anyone.

His sayings are numerous. In course of explaining the various classes of men, he said that there are four types of men, namely, those bound by the fetters of the world, those who are seekers after liberation, the liberated, and the ever-free. He then described a soul-in-bondage, which is almost identical with modern man without God. A bound soul is one who never wants to know anything about God. It is in bondage but has no feeling, no pain of bondage. He is like a fish trapped in a net. It clings to the net with the net in its mouth, not knowing that the fisherman would soon drag the net along with him to the shore, and it would die. He further compared the bound soul to the filthiest worm found in the filth which would die if it is taken out from there, and kept in a nice spot. It could not bear the nicer place. Similarly a bound soul can not bear the name of God. He loves nothing other than petty material things. This is how once he described a bound soul. One amongst his audience got frightened, and asked with great fear, 'Sir, is there no way out for such a soul in bondage?' Sri Ramakrishna assured him, 'Yes, there is a way'. He further explained that it was the way of singing in praise of God, enjoying the company of His devotees, meditating on Him, and living in solitude. The first thing he said, 'Chant the name of God, sing in His praise'. What will happen then? The mind will become purer day by day, and it will feel attracted towards Him. Then he spoke of holy association with monks, which means association with the devotees of God who have already started their journey to God. What will be the result? Through this association people would realize how to lead a life centred on God. A holy man is one who is entirely devoted to God. Then he suggested the need of living occasionally in soli-

tude, where the devotee would easily retain the idea of God formed in his mind, and go on reflecting on it. There he can meditate on Him in loneliness and cogitate on what he had seen and listened to in the holy company. The continuity of this process will gradually make our mind pure. Then he said, 'what is the next stage after the mind becomes pure? God would then manifest Himself to His devotee'.

One who is forgetful for ever, has to be awakened up with a shock, if necessary. We are in deep slumber, we have to be roused. A mother adopts any means to wake her child. When required, she even shakes the baby, at times even by pinching the child. Why does she do all these? The child is sleeping all the time. It wants to remain inactive and indifferent. Mother does not want that. She wants to play with her children. She does not want that they should be forgetful about her. She desires that the children should be attracted towards her, should come within the world of her influence, and thus they should know how to tackle with the imminent worldly afflictions.

The Mother of the universe reincarnated Herself as Sri Ramakrishna to show the path of salvation to the afflicted souls. Sri Ramakrishna's teachings are all-embracing and all-engulfing. He never had any narrow-mindedness, bias or prejudice. There is nobody who is left out of the perview of his teachings. Those who are hated, ignored, and rejected by the society as poison, even for them there is compassion in his heart. For them, too, he gave teachings in order to take them to higher strata. Sri Ramakrishna is eager to do that. People who are ignored in the family, even the drunkard, the debauch, and all sorts of mischievous persons, are not neglected by Sri Ramakrishna. His heart bled even for them. This all-embracing, all-engulfing compassion for souls in bondage is the special characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna. Though he was

holiness itself, the impure people could come near him and could leave with him the responsibility of all their misdeeds and of their salvation. He was always accepting them. He would lead the particular person to his suitable path. One of the teachings of the Master was not to disturb anybody's mood or temperamental tendencies. One should proceed to God according to his own inclination. This was easy for Sri Ramakrishna, who is the harmonizer of all ideas, the Master of all Ideas. That is why he could lead anybody according to his natural mood. He is the ideal of the Sannyasins (monks) as well as of the householders.

When he speaks about renunciation, he makes no compromise. He says, 'My son! Nothing can be attained except through renunciation!' Wherever one may be stationed in life, there is no way out for him except through renunciation. If someone raised any doubt, 'We are householders, how can we renounce everything? This is not possible for us', immediately came the rejoinder from him, 'You do not have to renounce externally, it would be sufficient for you to make inner renunciation'. We must keep it in mind that he never compromised. He never said that realization was possible without renunciation. On the contrary he said, 'For some renunciation must be both external and internal; but for others inner renunciation would be sufficient'.

And how many types of examples he furnished himself by way of his own life! In the life he lived, the true nature of an all-renouncing ascetic is shining brightly. Again, one can find in his life examples of an ideal householder as he lived in family with his near and dear ones. Sri Ramakrishna wanted to serve his mother so that she would not suffer. For this reason he took sannyasa (vow of renunciation) secretly so that his mother did not suffer mental anguish. While in Vrindaban, the Master met a lady devotee, known as Gangamayee,

whose devotion impressed him and who was also greatly impressed by him. This spiritually advanced Sadhika used to call the Master as Dulaly, in the sense that he was the embodiment of Sri Radha. While staying in Vrindaban, the Master said, 'I have a weak stomach which can not stand all types of food. If I stay here, who is going to cook for me?' She replied, 'I shall cook your food'. So it was decided that he would thenceforward live in Vrindaban. At this moment he remembered that his mother was living alone in the 'Nahabat' in Dakshineswar. Who would look after her if he stayed at Vrindaban? So the idea was scrapped. He could not stay at Vrindaban, but returned to his mother. Is it right for a monk to have so much attachment for his mother? The reply to this is, an ascetic is not a brute. No, his heart is not a burial ground, he must have a tender heart but it must not be sold out to one person or one thing only, his heart will have no constraint, it will remain open to embrace all.

We notice in the life of Sri Ramakrishna that his love is all-embracing. He feels sorry in the sorrows of others. He feels joyful in the joy of others. Throughout his whole life what earnest efforts he made to express to all what is inexpressible, to bring all within the purview of the supreme spiritual knowledge he had realized in his own life! We must comprehend these, his life, his efforts, his teachings. If these fail to lead us in the right direction we should consider ourselves worse than the souls in bondage. If we study his life, his teachings, we see what great treasures are lying there. We should think how much of these we can put into practice. There we can get all the ingredients and provisions we need in our life. In so lucid and simple words he uncovered so many deep mysteries of religious life. He said, 'If you feel attraction towards Him, if your heart weeps for Him, that would be sufficient. Nothing more

would be required'. To pray to him with extreme humility is the highest form of Sadhana (spiritual practice). If a devotee wanted to perform further spiritual practices, he would open out to him the limitless treasure of his own spiritual practices. Numerous types of sadhana in the paths of *Bhakti*, *Jnana*, *Tantra*, and the Vedas, he practised. He also called on God in the mood of *Shanta* (meditating on the Lord as Absolute Brahman), *Dasya* (worshipping the Lord as His servant), *Sakhya* (to consider oneself as the friend of the Lord), *Vatsalya* (to care for the Lord as one's child). His teachings are equally applicable to all. We have to keep in mind that he is the mould for the multitude, not for one or two seekers of God only. Nobody is required to change his ideas in order to cast himself into that mould. Everyone would find in him the supreme manifestation of his individual ideas and ideals. This is the most significant characteristic in the life of Sri Ramakrishna for which we consider him as the confluence of all religions, harmonizer of all religions. Votaries of various ideas would find in him the culmination of their individual ideal. He said, 'You keep to your ideal, but you have no right to criticize the ideas of others. How little do you know about your own ideal, and yet you dare to criticize others?' He again said, 'Do not limit the ideas of God. Do not

say that He can be so and so and nothing else. His Ideas are infinite. Nobody can put a limit to them'. Sri Ramakrishna is sympathetic to all. He is the Ideal for all. It has been particularly described in the *Lilaprasanga* (*Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*) that various Sadhakas (seekers) would consider him as a fellow Sadhaka, and they would be charmed to witness the splendid manifestation of the Supreme in him, whichever path they may be following. This is his special characteristic. If someone enquires about the significant characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna, if he wants to know whether he was a *Jnani* or a *Bhakta*, a dualist, a qualified non-dualist or a non-dualist, we can straightway say that he belongs to all spiritual paths. No path has been left out by him. He is the King, the emperor in the realm of Divinity, as the author of *Lilaprasanga* said about him. He was the Master of all spiritual moods and attitudes.

Let us meditate on Sri Ramakrishna. It would be sufficient for us if we can surrender to him. Our lives will be illumined in his splendour. I pray to Sri Ramakrishna for all. Let his light remove the darkness from our lives. Let his influence attract us towards him, his affection inspire us to surrender to him. Let his advent among us be meaningful. Let our lives become full.

SAINT JNANESHWARA: THE GREAT HARMONIZER

SWAMI BRAHMASTHANANDA

Saint Jnaneshwara, who harmonized the path of *Yoga* with *Jnana* and *Bhakti*, and gave a new impetus and status to Bhagavad-dharma in Maharashtra, was one of the most outstanding personalities in Indian mysticism. His uniqueness becomes obvious

when we look at the historical background of the 13th century in which his advent took place.

In the thirteenth century A.D., Ramadeva Rao Yadav was the king of Devagiri which is now known as Daulatabad near the

famous Ellora caves. Maharashtra was dominated by three main religious cults, the Natha cult of yoga propagated by Matsyendra Natha; the Mahanubhava cult, propagated by Chakradhara Swami who was the worshipper of Sri Krishna and spread dualistic philosophy; and the Warakari cult of devotion with an intellectual mysticism of which Sri Vitthal of Pandharpur is the deity.¹ As Prof. Ranade writes: 'These great mystics of Maharashtra have produced a literature, which shall continue to be the wonder of all humanity.'²

II

Jnaneshwara's ancestors lived at Apegaon: a village on the northern bank of the river Godavari in Paithan tehshil, about six miles from Paithan in the Aurangabad district. His great grand-father was initiated at Apegaon by Gorakshanatha. His grand-father, Govindpant, and grand-mother, Nirai, were also the followers of *Natha Sampradaya*.

Vitthalpant, Jnaneshwar's father was a learned brahmin, well-versed in Sanskrit scriptures. He lived with his parents in Apegaon. Once, having taken permission of his parents, Vitthalpant went on a pilgrimage. He happened to visit Alandi, a place of pilgrimage on the bank of the river Indryani, twenty-one kms. from Pune. There he had the *darshan* of Siddheshwar Shiva. Siddhopant, the recorder of the Alandi temple, gave his daughter Rukmini in marriage to Vitthalpant. After marriage the couple went to Apegaon and lived there happily till Vitthalpant's parents passed away.

Vitthalpant was much grieved at the death of his parents and, realizing the transient nature of this world, became disgusted with

it. He began asking his wife repeatedly for her consent to renounce the world. Knowing his intention, Siddhopant invited Vitthalpant to live with him in 1266 A.D. and advised him to give up the world after the birth of children. While staying at Father-in-law's house, Vitthalpant felt an urge for renouncing the world, and one day, he disappeared from Alandi on the plea of going for a bath in the river. After visiting many holy places of pilgrimage, he finally went to Varanasi. There he surrendered himself at the holy feet of Swami Ramananda (or Sripad Swami). Without revealing the facts of his married life, he obtained Sannyasa from his guru and continued to stay at Varanasi with the Sannyasa name, Chaitanyashrama.

At Alandi, his father-in-law tried to trace him but in vain. Rukmini became very depressed and started performing traditional austerities like fasts, circumambulating the sacred Ashwattha tree and praying to God for the return of her husband.

Some years passed. One day, while Rukmini was circumambulating the Ashwattha tree, a bright-looking Sannyasi came there. When she saw the venerable Sannyasi, she bowed down to him as per the religious tradition. Seeing the mark of marriage on her forehead, the Swami blessed her saying 'May you be blessed with noble children'. At this, to his surprise, he found the lady bursting into tears. The Swami tried to know the cause for her weeping and went with her to her father's house. On enquiry, he came to know that the youth who got Sannyasa from him was, in fact, the husband of Rukmini. The Sannyasi who was none else than Swami Ramananda took Rukmini and her parents along with him to Varanasi and ordered his disciple, Chaitanyashrama, to resume the householder's life. Vitthalpant accepted the command of his Guru, though much against his wish, and went back with his wife and her parents to Alandi.

1. Vitthal is one of the epithet of Sri Krishna.

2. R.D. Ranade, *Mysticism in Maharashtra* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982) p. 21.

The Brahmin community did not like this kind of behaviour of Vitthalpant. They excommunicated him and he was not allowed to live in Alandi. Thereupon, Vitthalpant went out of the town to Siddha Bet. There, four children were born to them; Nivriddi, the eldest of the children, was born in 1273 A.D.; Jnanadeva, the second son in 1275 A.D. on Krishnashtami day; Sopanadeva in 1277 A.D. and the youngest daughter, Muktabai in 1279 A.D.

The significance behind the names given by Vitthalpant to his children shows the trend of his mind. The various stages of God realization is reflected in the names of the children, namely, Nivriddi (renunciation), Jnanadeva (Knowledge), Sopan (the climbing steps) and Mukta (liberation). But the village people used to harass the children by calling them the progeny of a Sannyasin. The entire Brahmin community was bent upon getting rid of Vitthalpant and his family.

While leading their lives in distress, Vitthalpant, with his wife and children, went to Nasik and Tryambakeshwar on pilgrimage. During their stay at Tryambakeshwar, in the holy atmosphere, one day, in the rainy season, they were all circumambulating the holy mountain, Brahmagiri, of Tryambakeshwar. Suddenly there came a thunderstorm. To add to their horror, they heard the roar of a tiger nearby. They ran hither and thither to save themselves. They lost their path in despair and fear. After the quietening of the storm, all came together except Nivriddi. They tried to search him out, but since they could not find him nearby they returned to their shelter full of sorrow, thinking that the tiger might have killed him.

In the feverish pursuit of getting a safer place to hide himself, the boy Nivriddi, lost the track and entered the cave where the great yogi, Gahininath, the disciple of Gorakshanath was living. Visualizing the potential greatness of Nivriddi, the yogi

Gahininath initiated him and taught him the science of *Yoga* by which he soon realized the infinite divinity within and without. He was then just a boy of less than ten years! But, what is strange there? His whole personality got transfigured. Nivriddi attained sainthood and was absorbed into the lineage of the Natha cult and subsequently came to be known as Nivriddinath.

After a few days, Nivriddinath returned home where he found his parents, brothers and sister, all deeply worried about him. But now he returned home with the wonderful and unspeakable spiritual experience which had already turned him into an enlightened soul.

III

Even such a blessed event in the life of Nivriddinath could not change the outlook of the orthodox people of Alandi. Vitthalpant again begged the brahmins for accepting them back into their community. He asked them to tell him the way of atonement, but the heartless orthodox brahmins told him that there was no other way except to plunge into the Ganges at Prayag and die there. Helpless and worried about the future of their children, Vitthalpant and his wife, Rukminibai, accepted this way of atonement and were virtually driven to drown themselves in the Ganges at Prayag. With the loss of their parents, the orphaned children had no support in this world, except the Lord. The younger brothers, Jnanadeva and Sopanadeva and the youngest sister, Muktabai, all now found in Nivriddinath, their sole support, guide and father-image. Nivriddinath initiated the younger brother Jnanadeva, and Jnanadeva initiated Sopanadeva and the sister Muktabai with the sacred Mantra both of whom now started severe spiritual sadhana. Exactly where they performed their Sadhana, and how they were enlightened with the highest

spiritual realization, are not known. But the events in their lives and the 'abhangas' (verses) they composed, give a glimpse of the height of their spiritual attainment.

Even after the death of Vitthalpant and Rukminibai the persecution of their children by the orthodox Brahmin society did not stop. The people of Alandi did not accept Nivrittinath and his brothers and sister. They used to harass them in many ways. They did not allow them even the minimum facilities of livelihood. Such was their superstition and such was the hard-hearted caste system! Jnanadeva was disgusted with such inhuman treatment by the people. He became angry and locked himself in his hut and observed silence. His brothers, Nivrittinath and Sopandeva tried their best to pacify him and asked him to open the door of the hut, but Jnanadeva was desperate. He was tired of this persecution. Both the brothers failed to change the mind of this growing saint. Then, the youngest sister filled with divine wisdom and an outpouring of love for her saintly brother stood in front of the door, and began to sing, *abhangas* (verses), full of deep meaning, addressing Jnanadeva:

If the world becomes heated with anger, like fire, we should be like water to extinguish it happily. The pious-hearted yogi forgives the faults of the people. If our tongue is caught in our own teeth, does anyone pull out the teeth? Please, hear this, and be calm, O, Jnaneshwara and please open the door. My brother, let us cross this Maya and save the whole world. So kindly open the door.

Muktabai, the saintly sister of saint Jnaneshwara, in fact, asked his brother to open the door of liberation to all.

There was a wicked person in the village, by name Visoba Chati. He used to delight in tormenting these pure souls. Once, Muktabai wanted to prepare a pancake (*mande*) for which she wanted a hollow earthen vessel (bowl). There was no such

earthen vessel in house. So Jnanadeva started going to the potter. Visoba came to know this, and ran towards the potters' shops ahead of Jnanadeva and ordered them not to give any such pot to Jnanadeva. If they disobeyed him, he warned, they would meet with disastrous consequences. As a result of this, nobody ventured to give him such a pot. Jnanadeva returned empty-handed. He told his sister Muktabai to prepare the dough. When she asked for the pot, he said, she should bake the pancake on his back. He sat in dorsal position and with his yogic power he made his back very hot and Muktabai baked the cake (*mande*) on her brother's back. The wicked Visoba had come to see and enjoy the fun of this humiliation. He was watching everything standing near the window. But the vicious man was dumbfounded to see the yogic powers of Jnanadeva. His eyes were opened and he came inside the house to fall at the feet of Jnanadeva. As soon as he came near, Muktabai shouted at him saying—'Away, O Khechar!' Visoba begged pardon for his wicked deed and repented for torturing these embodiments of divinity. Thenceforward he was changed. Jnanadeva asked Visoba to surrender at the feet of Muktabai. On his doing so, she initiated him, and later on Visoba 'Khechar' became the great saint who initiated another saint Namadeva, when the latter was asked by Jnanadeva to approach Visoba for initiation.

Even these miracles and supernatural powers could not change the mind of the people in Alandi. Jnaneshwara and his sister and brothers were not accepted into the Brahmin community. But now some persons began to look at them with sympathetic respect. An aged and noble brahmin advised them to go to Paithan (Pratishthan) to take the certificate of purification from the leaders of the Brahmin community who were occupying seats of learning and culture at Paithan. This incident is supposed to have happened in 1287 A.D. When

these three brothers and the sister went to Paithan for obtaining certificates, they presented themselves before the learned brahmins of Paithan and begged for the certificates of purification. Some of the most orthodox brahmins cross-examined them and found that the boys excelled them in all respects; in learning, intuition and experience. But the ego of the brahmins was offended.

The story goes as follows: One brahmin pandit asked Jnanadeva sarcastically, 'What knowledge have you got bearing this name?' Jnanadeva replied: 'I possess the knowledge of the whole world. I have become this world in all these names and forms including you, the people of this village and the animals.' Hearing this the pandit asked, 'If it is so then the he-buffalo which is carrying the leather bag of water on his back is also your form! And we also call him Jnana!' Jnanadeva replied, 'Yes, he is also my form.' On hearing this the pandit brought that buffalo near the assembly and whipped the buffalo on its back. The marks of whipping appeared on the back of Jnanadeva seated in the assembly. Everyone was wonderstruck by a real experience of the Advaita consciousness demonstrated by Jnanadeva.

During the same incident at the same place, the story goes, they asked Jnanadeva to make the buffalo recite the Vedic mantras. And Jnanadeva put his hand on the head of the buffalo and enlightened him with the knowledge of the Vedas, and the buffalo recited the first verse of the Rig-Veda. Everyone in the assembly was dumbfounded. They caught a glimpse of the great divine power that incarnated in the form of Jnanadeva. All of them fell at his feet and begged his pardon for having harassed him in many ways. They addressed him: 'You are the divine incarnation, what right have we got to purify you? You are beyond the bondages of this world. Please bless us

and take us across the world. This is our prayer.'

IV

Instantly saint Jnanadeva and his brothers and sister became famous in the society. Now they started their journey back to Alandi from Paithan. They halted at Nevase on the river Pravara in Ahmadnagar district of Maharashtra. There was a temple dedicated to the goddess Adimaya. There in the temple Nivrittinath instructed Jnanadeva to give extempore exposition on *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita* in Marathi. This was in the verse form in *ovi* metre. Jnanadeva has given the name to his commentary as *Bhavartha Deepika* which means exposition of the meaning of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. This was taken down by his disciple Satchidananda Baba whose life was once saved by Jnanadeva. The people of the village were astonished and delighted to hear such a lucid and sweet exposition of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. This is known as *Jnaneshwari*. This was written in 1290 A.D. at Nevase. Jnanadeva was henceforward called Jnaneshwara, the God of Knowledge, by the people.

This *magnum opus* of Jnaneshwara shows his vast knowledge and is justly famous for the last 700 years as an unfailing source of inspiration. In a recent study, Eleanor Zelliott rightly observes that *Jnaneshwari*, 'One of the earliest works in the Marathi language', is 'still the most highly respected popular religious text in Maharashtra. There is no question ... that the *Jnaneshwari* is the foundation of the *Bhakti* tradition in Maharashtra...'³

The similes, metaphors and imageries used by Jnaneshwara to explain the deep meaning of the verses of the *Bhagavad-*

3. Karine Schomer and W.H. McLeod, (Eds) *The Saints: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987) p. 92.

Gita, are unparalleled in the history of Hindu religious literature. In the book Jnaneshwara appears to be addressing a learned audience. At the end of the book Jnaneshwara prays to the God of the universe and asks the Lord to shower his blessings on all, good and bad, vicious and virtuous. He says,

Now I pray to the Lord who has pervaded the entire universe. Now the Supreme Self should get itself propitiated by this sacrifice in the form of a literary production and should grant me in charity the only boon that the evil, the vile, and the wicked should drop all their crookedness and sting, and they should develop a love towards good actions, and further there should be created fellow-feeling (towards one another) amongst the beings. May the darkness in the form of sins get destroyed and may the entire universe (people) conduct itself in the light of the rising Sun, in performing one's own (religious) duty; and may each and every being (as a class) get the fulfilment of each and every wish of his. Let the concourse of saints that shower down all that is propitious on the universe, appear and visit perpetually the aggregate of beings on this earth. These saints are, as it were, the blossoms of the moving (walking) 'Kalpataru' trees who go to bless the inhabited places (towns) of sentient, they are 'Chintamani', gems or the talking oceans of the nectar. May these saints who are uncontaminated Moons and heatless (cool) Suns, be the constant kinsmen of all. In short, let all the three worlds be happy and perfected (with the bless of Monism), and let them render service eternally to the Primeval Supreme Being. And especially those in this universe that (literally) live on (the constant study of) this work (*Gita*), may they have the perfect happiness both temporal as well as spiritual.⁴

Ever since its appearance people have been reading this book with great devotion and reverence. But since there was no printing technology, hand-written copies were read out in temples and houses. Naturally, there was much interpolation and the original book came to be corrected after

nearly 300 years in 1584 A.D. Jnaneshwara appeared in a dream to saint Eknath and asked him to correct the distorted *Jnaneshwari*. Saint Eknath took it down by meditating on Jnanadeva. Jnanadeva himself entered the mind and intellect of Eknath, as it were, and made Eknath the instrument for re-writing the *Jnaneshwari*. The last verse of Eknath suggests the truthfulness of the above statement. He says, 'One who would hereafter interpolate any Marathi verse of his own composition in this copy of *Jnaneshwari* might thereby put an empty coconut shell in a dish filled with nectar.'⁵ The text of *Jnaneshwari* contains 9,000 verses.

Having completed this monumental work all the brothers and their sister went back to Alandi. Now there was no harassment by the people. On the contrary they were regarded as the embodiments of divinity on earth. Nivrattinath was not satisfied with this work of commentary by Jnanadeva on the *Gita* which was not Jnaneshwara's original work. He wanted his disciple to write an original work on philosophy reflecting his non-dual experience. At this suggestion Jnaneshwara wrote another book *Anubhavamrita* which is considered one of the most comprehensive book on Advaita Philosophy. Prof. R.D. Ranade writes in his *Mysticism in Maharashtra*: 'Jnanadeva regards *Prakriti* and *Purusha* or *Shakti* and *Shiva*, as the parents of an infinite number of worlds, who mutually exhibit their *essential unity*; and he declares that it is very difficult to know what part of either of them is united to the other to make one whole.' (*Anubhavamrita*, opening Sanskrit verses, 3,4)⁶

Five verses composed in Sanskrit at the beginning of this book, give the glimpse of his non-dual experience within and without.

5. Ibid., p. 673.

6. R.D. Ranade, *Mysticism in Maharashtra*, op. cit., p. 143.

4. Ramachandra Keshav Bhagwat, Tr., *Jnaneshwari* (Madras; Samata Books) p. 671.

The three opening verses of *Anubhavamrita* say:

1. I take shelter in the deity, who is well known as the glorious Nivrattinath, who is indestructible, indescribable, the bliss itself, unborn and imperishable.
2. *Shiva* and *Shakti* are identical but frequently appear as two. So it is not possible to know whose half part is united with the half part of the other.
3. I bow to the parents of the world, who reveal their essential unity to each other, so that I may understand the same.⁷

Jnaneshwara himself considered this book as an unfailing guide to people who were confused by different philosophical arguments. He refuted many arguments based on dualism and established the non-dual entity of the Ultimate Reality. His other works are *Changadeva Pasashthi*, that is, 65 verses addressed to the great yogi Changa-deva who became the follower of Jnaneshwara and was initiated by Jnaneshwara's younger sister Muktabai. Jnanadeva also wrote *The Abhangas* and *Haripatha* for the common people to recite and take the name of God, thereby developing devotion to the lotus feet of God. He taught the people to repeat the holy names, namely, 'Rama-krishna Hari' 'Jai Jai Vitthal Panduranga'.

During Jnaneshwara's time Pandharpur was a well known place of pilgrimage on the bank of Bhima. There many contemporary saints like Namadeva, Goroba the potter; Sanvata the gardener, and Chokhamela the outcaste, Janabai the maid-servant; Narahari the goldsmith, lived and spread devotion in the minds of people for Lord Vitthal.

Jnaneshwara with his brothers and sister went to Pandharpur, and this was a golden opportunity for him to synthesize the path of yoga with the path of devotion.

In one of the Abhangas on *Hari Patha* he says, 'Please take the name of Hari and don't think of *punya*, the acts of merit, etc. thereby you will get infinite happiness and joy and liberation.' Till today his Abhangas, the religious lyrics, are sung throughout Maharashtra with great devotion and joy. A sect known as Warkari was prevalent during Jnaneshwara's time. Jnaneshwara rejuvenated the Warkari sect with intellectual mysticism. It was in 1296 A.D. that Jnaneshwara travelled in North India in the company of Namadeva and other saints visiting many places of pilgrimage. Everywhere he was welcomed and was listened to with great reverence by the devotees. On coming back from the pilgrimage he declared his intention to give up his mortal frame. He felt intuitively that his life's purpose was over.

It was in 1296 when he was barely 21 that he decided to enter Maha-Samadhi. The news of his intention spread quickly and saints from several places began to come to Alandi. Jnaneshwara had declared the day when he would pass away in the Yogic posture. People began to sing devotional songs day and night. The day, according to Indian calendar, *Kartik Krishna-Trayodashi*, the 13th day of the dark fortnight of *Kartika*, in 1296 A.D., finally arrived.

People were singing. In the midst of singing Jnaneshwara was smeared with sandal paste by Namadeva; and flowers and garlands were offered to him. He sat in the pit in the yogic posture and amidst the joy of singing the name of God, his elder brother placed the slab on the pit holding his breath with a calm mind. Thus this great life ended in the physical form but the spiritual current that Jnaneshwari left behind is never to die.

Within one and a half years, Sopandeva, Muktabai, Nivrattinath and the yogi Changa Deva left this world in the same way.

7. B.P. Bahirat, *The Philosophy of Jnanadeva* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984) p. 151.

V

Jnaneshwara propagated the philosophy of Advaita for the Marathi speaking people. He presented his philosophy intermixed with Divine Love. *Bhakti* is the culmination of spiritual experience, and it is ultimately non-dual in nature. According to Jnaneshwara this world is the play of the Divine, which he named as 'Chidvilas'. Without any change in the Absolute Brahman, It

appears in names and forms with multifarious activities.

Jnaneshwara does not negate the world but accepts it as waves on the Ocean of Consciousness. He says in his *Anubhavam-rita*, 'If the capital of unity is not lessened and the advantage of gracefulness is obtained, then why should not ocean water in the form of its own ripples smell like the buds of flower?'

TWO POETS: JOHN DONNE AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

N. PRATIMA

Swami Vivekananda's poetry is a testimony of his faith in Vedanta. The Vedanta system of philosophy is accepted as containing the very essence of Indian wisdom. Swami Vivekananda had absorbed the essentials of Indian wisdom through the study of scriptures and the teaching of the great sage of modern India, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The abstruse depths of the Indian mind have been expressed in the poetry of Swami Vivekananda with a simplicity which is unparalleled. Irrespective of the difference in the traditions and religions of mankind, mystic poets of all lands arrive at the identical affirmation of the cosmic unity. Mystic poets like Rumi, Goethe and Swami Vivekananda affirmed that there is an all-pervasive unity of the universe. The celebrated metaphysical poet John Donne of 17th century England also accepts the presence of an all-pervading cosmic Being.

T.S. Eliot's famous essay 'The Metaphysical Poetry' is an indication that Donne's ideas have relevance today.¹ Even during the 19th century Donne was praised by Coleridge, Lamb and De Quincey. Donne,

the religious poet gains the upper hand over the earlier Donne who dealt more with the matters of the heart than with the concepts dealt in metaphysics and religion.² Donne's religious poetry has been regarded by C.S. Lewis as the outstanding contribution of lasting value superior to his earlier love-poetry.

In his essay on 'Lancelot Andrewes' Eliot has contrasted the approaches of Andrewes and Donne towards religion. He says that while Andrewes is nearer to the religious traditions and medieval in outlook, Donne is more modern yet religious, accepting that faith in the divine, in oneself can redeem one from damnation.³ Dominic Baker-Smith argued that Donne's religious poetry does not lose any of its intrinsic value even if his approach towards religion is non-traditional.⁴ Donne accepts the

1. *Selected Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1951) pp. 281-291.

2. Helen Gardener, Ed. 'Introduction' *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 1979) p. 4.

3. *Selected Essays*, op. cit., pp. 351-2.

4. Dominic Baker-Smith, 'John Donne's Critique of True Religion'. *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, Ed. by A.J. Smith, (London: Methuen, 1972) p. 404.

authenticity of religious experience. He argues that until the human being is capable of hearing the voice of inner conscience, one cannot know the real meaning of religion. He asserts that truth should not be covered by symbols or idols, and one should always follow the path of reason to escape from obscurantism.⁵ Donne has given a premium value to the personal response in the field of religion which is however not in tune with the focus provided by tradition and authority of the church. His modernity certainly proposes a new mode of religious sensibility which is unlike that of the medieval approach, yet not alienated from the essentials of the religious perspective.⁶ Donne gives more significance to the essence of the religious teaching than many sectarian interpretations of it. This aspect of Donne's thinking reminds one of the assertion of Swami Vivekananda that the core and essence of religion is realization, which may defy any codification or dogma of ecclesiastical authorities. Vivekananda says that the human being has the in-built power to move towards the Truth.

Ay, born heir to the infinite thou art,
Within the heart is the ocean of Love,
'Give' 'Give away'—whoever asks return,
His ocean dwindles down to a mere drop.⁷

According to Donne the essence of Christianity is more important than any church or institution, and he gave primary significance to the quest of truth than strict adherence to the traditional approaches towards religion. He says in *Satyre III* as follows:

5. *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, op. cit., p. 415.

6. *Ibid*, p. 432.

7. 'To A Friend', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1962) Vol. 4, p. 496.

Is not our Mistresse faire Religion,
As worthy of all our Soules devotion.⁸

Donne finds that real devotion determines the quality of religious life and not any blind following of the traditional norms. Like Vivekananda he accepted that until the spirit of religion pervades the entire existence of the human being, there will be no escape from the turmoils and contradictions of life. Donne had reached the portals of religion after a period of wayward life and his immense faith in the ameliorative power of religion, is a product of his sincere search for truth through the experiences of life. In his verse letter to Rowland Woodward Donne he says, 'There is no virtue but Religion.'⁹

Donne has given much importance to the immense power of potentiality of the self and finds that the human being has to delve into his own self in order to know the essence of his existence. Donne says, 'Seek we then ourselves in ourselves.'¹⁰ In the background of Advaita philosophy the concept of Self or Atman assumes even greater importance. For Swami Vivekananda the individual need not seek inspiration from any outside agency in his struggle to overcome the existential difficulties. Every individual has the discriminating capacity endowed by the inner conscience. The light of the inner soul can guide the individual in solving the contradictions of life, says Vivekananda. The power and guidance of the soul equips the individual to scale the heights of spiritual realization which is the goal of religions. This is the voice of Vedanta which expresses in the lines of his poem 'Lights',

8. *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, Ed. by John Hayward, (London: The Nonsuch Library, 1955) p. 127.

9. 'Verse Letter to Rowland Woodward', *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, op. cit., p. 156.

10. *Ibid*, p. 157.

I look behind and after
And find that all is right,
In my deepest sorrows
There is a soul of light.¹¹

The sermons of Donne are fine pieces of oratory and expressions of his religious fervour. His divine poems lay stress on the power of religion in freeing the individual from the hold of superstitions, harmful ideas and beliefs.¹² The writings of Donne explain his spiritual growth from a totally materialistic level to that of pure spirituality. The transformations in the life of Donne can be clearly seen in his prose and poetry. The matured Donne resembles a saint in search of the Almighty God. In fact, sometimes his genuine utterances sound authentic or even iconoclastic in the background of the church-dominated, dogma-bound religion of the 17th century which allowed no genuine mystics to raise their voice, and even persecuted them as heretics. Donne's thoughts resemble those of Meister Eckhart who said,

God is near to us, but we are far from Him.
God is within. We are without. God is at home; we are abroad. When God made man he put into his soul his equal, his active everlasting masterpiece.

And Eckhart, the genuine mystic, died as a confirmed heretic persecuted by the Church.

Unlike Donne, Swami Vivekananda analyses life from the heights of spirituality. Donne had the deepest involvement with all aspects of worldly life. In contrast with this, Swami Vivekananda's perception of human life is that of a spectator who knows the essentials of the human situation but who is never a part of the spectacle of life.

11. 'Light' *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., Vol. 8, (1959) p. 168.

12. H.W. Garrod, 'Introduction', *John Donne: Poetry & Prose with Isaac Walton's Life*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1946) p. 1x.

Swami Vivekananda's thoughts were basically transcendent like a lotus which is never touched by the dirt and mire. Donne's spiritual growth prepared him to join the company of exalted souls who are in search of the divine order to be free from the constraints of life. A hankering for higher truths and for God bind all seekers of truth into one homogenous class.

Donne believes that the troubles of mankind are not hidden from God. He says that the only panacea for the troubled soul lies in faith in God. All existential anxieties as well as metaphysical doubts can be solved through faith in God. In the *Divine Poems*, he writes,

Then turne,
O Pensive soule, to God, for he knows best
Thy true grieffe, for he put it in my breast.¹³

Swami Vivekananda's beliefs are steeped in the Indian lore and ethos. Unlike John Donne the life of Swami Vivekananda is the spiritual saga of a man who spent every moment of his life in search of the supreme truth and showed the link between the finite and the infinite. Vivekananda described his spiritual experiences in terms of significant symbols. The Mother symbolises the ultimate power which is the source of all creation. The following verses which are a translation from the original Sanskrit give an idea of the life of the individuals, their troubles and anxieties and the redeeming power of the Mother who saves her children from all perils.

Oh! May the Mother of the universe—
In whose activity no respite rests
Incessantly distributing the fruits
Of action done, guiding unceasingly
All action yet to come—bestow Her boon
Of blessing on me, Her child, for evermore.

13. 'Divine Poems', VIII, *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, op. cit., p. 283.

I realize, I know, that it is Thou
Who holdest in Thy hands Karma's ropes.¹⁴

Donne had firm faith in the ameliorative power of religion. He is not ready to substitute anything in its place, for in that case the human destiny would be threatened. He says,

There is no Vertue, but Religion;
Wise, valiant, sober, just, are names, which none
Want, which want not Vice-covering discretion.¹⁵

In the background of Vedanta, Vivekananda does not accept that the individual is haunted by any sense of original sin. He says that the actions of the individuals are the source of good or bad results which have to be experienced compulsorily. Like Buddha, he says that the law of karma determines the texture of the human life. All anxieties, sorrows, and joys have to be traced back to it. He writes:

A glaring mixture of heaven and hell,
Who can fly from this Samsar of Maya?
Fastened in the neck with Karma's fetters,
Say, where can the slave escape for safety?¹⁶

The significant difference between these two poets lies in the fact that while Vivekananda, a true Vedantist, never believes in Original Sin, Donne accepts not only the doctrine of Original Sin, but also the possibility of redemption through faith in God. He says,

If our Soules have stained their first while yet wee,
May cloth them with faith and dear honesty.¹⁷

14. 'A Hymn to the Divine Mother', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4, p. 499.

15. 'Verse Letter to Mr. Rowland Woodward', *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, op. cit., p. 156.

16. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 493.

17. 'Verse Letter to Mr. Rowland Woodward' *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 156.

Though a Vedantist, Swami Vivekananda fully believed in devotion as a way to enlightenment. The following lines of Swami Vivekananda which are a translation of his Sanskrit poem in praise of Lord Shiva express his deep faith and devotion to his dear God, Shiva.

May the devotion,
The burning devotion of this my life
Attach itself to Him, to Shiva, who,
While being Lord of all, transcends Himself.¹⁸

Donne believed that our soul has the powers of reason and faith, and that both are helpful for the individual's progress towards God. He says,

Reason is our Soules left hand, Faith her right,
By these wee reach divinity, that's you;¹⁹

Swami Vivekananda affirms that reason is essential for divine realization. Reason, followed sincerely, ends in faith. And faith is a power. 'Faith is not belief. It is a grasp on the Ultimate', he said. When Vivekananda speaks of faith in his poem 'To My Own Soul', he also knows that faith is a saving power for erring individuals.

In thee is friendship, faith,
For, thou didst warn when evil thoughts were
brewing.²⁰

John Donne is against the mechanical performance of rituals and does not find any piety in them. The essence of religion cannot be grasped by merely visiting the pilgrim centres. He says,

18. 'A Hymn to Shiva', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4, p. 502.

19. 'Verse Letter to the Countesse of Bedford', *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 159.

20. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 8, p. 170.

As all which goe to Rome, doe not thereby Esteeme religions, and hold fast the best,²¹

Swami Vivekananda also does not believe in the efficacy of rituals performed to gain redemption from all sorrows and sufferings of life. The amazing diversity of life-forms as well as the inanimate objects is suffused completely with the all-pervasive Reality which is also Divine Love, says Swami Vivekananda. In the poem 'To a Friend' he writes,

From highest Brahman to the yonder worm,
And to the very minutest atom,
Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love;
Friend, offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.²²

Donne's Prose Letters, Divine Poems and Sermons depict his spiritual growth. There is a gradual shift of attention from the mundane matters to the religious thoughts in the Divine Poems. Donne's perspective is filled to the brim with spiritual fervour in his religious poetry.²³

Donne believed that through fervent prayer one can attain freedom from all evils.²⁴ Donne and Vivekananda accept that the selfish attachment to worldly matters and the lure for pleasures must be overcome in order to tread the path of

21. 'Verse Letter to the Countesse of Bedford', *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 161.

22. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4, p. 496.

23. Oliver Elton, 'English Muse' *John Donne: Poetry & Prose with Izaak Walton's Life*, p. vii.

24. Miscellaneous Prose, *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 433.

religion. Swami Vivekananda prays to the Divine Mother to help him in overcoming the worldly bonds.

O Terrible Mother, cut quick the core,
Illusion dispel—the dream of happiness,
Rend asunder the fondness for the flesh.²⁵

The height of Donne's spiritual thought comes when he equates the soul with the temple of God. He is surprised that in spite of the possession of the divine soul, evil should appear in the human world. He laments that he was certainly under the influence of the devil and thus led a wayward life before realizing the sublime duty of approaching God. He asserts that,

My selfe, a temple of thy Spirit divine;
Why doth the devill then usurpe on me?²⁶

In Vedantic idea, this 'evil' which covers the Divine within is 'Maya'. Both John Donne and Swami Vivekananda spoke of the need of feeling a sense of oneness with everything in creation. This feeling of unity produces mental harmony and spiritual elevation. In the words of Vivekananda,

Who loves all beings, without distinction,
He indeed is worshipping best his God.²⁷

25. 'And Let Shyama Dance There', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4, p. 509.

26. Holy Sonnets, II, *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 280.

27. 'To A Friend', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4, p. 496.

THE BIRTH OF THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA BY M.,—II

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

7. *The Kathamrita takes shape*

With all these developments in the background and having been encouraged by the letter of the Holy Mother of 26 November 1895, M. began to make serious efforts to give a living narrative form to his notes and, perhaps after several progressive attempts, succeeded in perfecting the methodology of presentation by early 1897. At this stage, it is evident that M. read out some portions to the Holy Mother, though with great hesitation, to get her blessings. It may be noted that M. was initiated with a Mantra by the Holy Mother, as instructed by Sri Ramakrishna in a dream, and she had initiated his wife some time earlier. She wrote on July 4, 1897 in Bengali, a highly encouraging and reassuring great letter to a diffident M., which reads:

Long live dear son (*Baba Jivan*)—Whatever you had heard from Him is nothing but the Truth. You need not feel any diffidence about it. At one time it was He who had placed those words in your custody. And it is He who is now bringing them to the light of the day according to the needs of the times. *Know it for certain that unless those words are brought out, man will not have his consciousness awakened.* All the words of His that you have with you—every one of them, is true. *One day when you read them out to me, I felt as if it was He who was speaking.*

8. *The Commencement of the English version first*

Encouraged by this great and authoritative letter from the Holy Mother, and also assured by Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother in dreams and visions, M. cast off most of his hesitancy and was determined to publish his narratives.

In Bengal, especially in Calcutta itself, there were, however, a few journals devo-

ted to different sects and view points. They all did not look at Sri Ramakrishna in the same way. Only few were sympathetic. But probably none, except the *Tattvamanjari* edited by Ramachandra Datta since July 1885 to propagate the message of Sri Ramakrishna, would look upon him as an *Avatara*. That some hostile forces were gathering can be seen also from the fact that though Sri Ramakrishna's birthday was allowed to be celebrated on a grand scale in March 1897 on Vivekananda's return to Calcutta from the West, the authorities refused permission to hold the celebration in February 1898.

In a letter written from U.S.A. in 1895 to Swami Ramakrishnanandaji at Alambazar Math, Vivekananda wrote: 'Did Sri Ramakrishna come for this or that particular individual, or for the world at large? If the latter, then you must present him in such a light that the whole world may understand him. You must not identify yourself with any Life of him written by anybody, nor give your sanction to any. There is no danger so long as they do not come out associated with our name... 'say yea, yea to all and stick to your own.'

In the circumstances M., finally thought of making a trial by publishing the narratives in English first in the *Brahmavadin* at Madras to see the reactions of the people in general, though, perhaps, he had some ready material at hand in Bengali which he had read out to the Holy Mother. By March 1897 Swami Ramakrishnanandaji had gone to Madras to start a Ramakrishna Math there deputed by Swami Vivekananda on his return to Calcutta on 19 February 1897 from the West, as per his promise to the people of Madras on his way. So, M. decided to send the matter to Ramakrishnanandaji, whom he knew very intimately, in instal-

ments for publication in the *Brahmavadin*. He got the material ready directly rendering into English from his Bengali notes, and despatched the first instalment to him around September 1897 either in Ms. form or as a printed pamphlet/leaflet.⁷ If it was in Ms. form, he must have got a few early prints of it from Madras, before publication in the journal⁸, for sending to Swami Vivekananda, and later for review in two journals in Calcutta.

7. Receiving the first instalment from M. for publication in the *Brahmavadin*, Swami Ramakrishnanandaji wrote a wonderful letter to M. in Bengali, from Triplicane, Madras, where the Ramakrishna Math, in its rudiments, was then situated, probably in the third week of October 1897 after its publication in the *Brahmavadin* in its issue of 15 October 1897. It reads:

According to your desire, the beautiful paper (*Patrakhani* is the word used, which may mean either leaflet or Ms.) which you had sent of the book on the life of Sri Sri Guru Maharaj, has been completely printed in the present issue of the *Brahmavadin*. Just as by eating sweet, delicious, and pleasing food in a small quantity none will be satisfied, and the desire to eat more and more of it will grow stronger, similar is our condition. We are awaiting with great expectancy, with outstretched necks, as to when will the second wave (instalment) from your life of Sri Sri Guru Dev—the wave from the river of devotion, which takes its rise from transcendental love, which is highly cooling, bewitching the mind, full of fragrance, and giving the touch of new life—the wave of sweet devotional feelings (*madhura-bhava*) rising as a result of the holy breeze—will satiate our minds and souls. Please don't be miserly in this respect... I had already sent you my hearty Vijaya Greetings, embraces, *pranam* etc. in my letter to the (Alambazar) Math. Now again I am tendering them in this letter. Please accept and make us happy.

This letter also makes it quite definite that M. himself sent the *Gospel* instalments to Madras around September 1897, either in the form of Ms. or leaflet.

8. We do not find that this and the next pamphlet/leaflet was sent by M. to any others than Swamiji and the *Tattvamanjari* and the *Dawn* for review.

9. *The two pamphlets sent to Vivekananda*

Anyway, M. sent a copy of the first leaflet to Swami Vivekananda who was on a tour in the northwest of India. Swamiji was very pleased to find that M. was making a stir. This was long after he had heard him in February 1889 at Antpur. Swamiji wrote to Swami Brahmananda from Murree on 10 October 1897: 'I see that Master Mahashaya has buckled to work after such a long time. Give him my special love and greetings. To see him, with his feminine retiredness, stirred to work, my courage has gone up by leaps and bounds. I am writing to him tomorrow even.'

When Swamiji reached Rawalpindi, he wrote to M.

Dear M—*C'est bon, mon ami*—now you are doing just the thing. Come out, man! No sleeping all life; time is flying. Bravo! That is the way.

Many thanks for your publication—only I am afraid it will not pay its way in a pamphlet form.... Never mind, pay or no pay—let it see the blaze of daylight. You will have many blessings on you and many more curses—*vaisa hi sab kal banta hai saheb* (but that is how all things are accomplished, sir!)⁹

9. The remark of Swamiji in this letter—'You will have many blessings on you and many more curses' has been interpreted in several ways. The introduction to *Condensed Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* has pointed out (in 1978) that 'this remark has proved prophetic, for this great work has had hostile criticism from different points of view'. However, it was well known that Pratap Chandra Mazumdar had turned bitterly hostile to Swami Vivekananda and his Guru Sri Ramakrishna after the great success of Swami Vivekananda at the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, and his own discomfiture. Swamiji made a reference to it, without directly naming him, in his lecture on 'My Plan of Campaign' at Madras in February 1897. It is seeing Mazumdar's name in the first pamphlet, and being reminded of his present utter hostility of himself and Sri Ramakrishna, perhaps also visualizing several more hostile people will appear in these accounts in future, that Swamiji made that remark.

This is the time—yours in the Lord, Vivekananda.

The material of this pamphlet was published in the *Brahmavadin* in its issue for October 15, 1897. By then, M. had got ready his second pamphlet/leaflet or early prints of his second instalments from Madras, the material of which was published in the *Brahmavadin* in its issue of 16 November 1897.

From Dehradun Swamiji wrote his second famous letter to M., on 24 November 1897.

My dear M—, Many thanks for your second leaflet.¹⁰ It is indeed wonderful. The move is quite original, and never was the life of a—great Teacher brought before the public untarnished by the writer's mind, as you are doing. The language also is beyond all praise, so fresh, so pointed and withal so plain and easy.

I cannot express in adequate terms how I have enjoyed *them* (evidently Swamiji is referring to both the pamphlets or leaflets). I am really in a transport when I read *them*. Strange, isn't it? Our Teacher and Lord was so original and each one of us will have to be original or nothing. I now understand why none of us attempted his life before. It has been reserved for you, this great work. He is with you evidently.—With love and namaskar.

—Vivekananda.

P.S. The Socratic dialogues are Plato all over; you are entirely hidden. Moreover, the dramatic part is infinitely beautiful. Everybody likes it, here and in the West.

10. *The reviews and the identification of the Pamphlets*

Enthused and emboldened by Swamiji's and Swami Ramakrishnanandaji's letters, appreciating and authenticating his work,

¹⁰. Please compare the word 'leaflet' with the title 'Leaves from the Gospel...' under which the material was published in the *Brahmavadin*. In a footnote to the word 'Leaflet', the 1948 edition of *Letters of Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama) mentions it as 'The Leaves etc.'

M. sent the copies of his two pamphlets/leaflets together for opinion or review to Ramachandra Datta and Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, who reviewed them in the December 1897 issue of their journals, *Tattvamanjari* (Bengali), and *Dawn* (English) respectively. The *Tattvamanjari* hailed M. as Sri Mahendra Nath Gupta, worthy of sincere reverence (*Shradhaspada*), the recipient of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Deva's powers (*Sri Ramakrishna deber Shakti-prapta*), and his dearest servant. While introducing M., the review in Bengali says: 'There is a saying that if burning coal is covered with cloth, it will gradually burn up the cloth and manifest itself with its natural glow. Similarly is Gupta Mahashaya (M.). From the day the Lord (Sri Ramakrishna) left us winding up his divine sport, *having been hidden by the veil of time for a dozen years (Yuga)*, M. has just begun to shine forth. The Lord used to say that Gupta Mahashaya was a modest and shy devotee. He is a person of extremely peaceful nature. Though he is greatly learned in the modern Western knowledge,... nobody has seen him showing himself off eloquently. We have always known that he has a pure character. ...Twelve years ago what attitude he cherished in the presence of the Lord, seeing no change whatever in that attitude in him even today, we are indeed very happy.' It also adds further that M., being a great scholar, could have made use of the material to serve his own ends; but instead, in keeping with his firm faith in the Lord, he has with unsparing effort brought out the teachings of the Lord in the form of these two booklets for the enlightenment of the general public.

In the course of the review it was suggested: (1) it would be better and more appropriate to publish the material in original Bengali; and (2) Instead of publishing piecemeal in pamphlets, it should be published in volumes.

Fortunately, the review gives the contents

of the two pamphlets, the first relating to the Master's conversation with Pratap Chandra Mazumdar at Surendra Nath Mitra's Garden-house at Kankurgachhi, and the second with Pandit Shashadhar Tarkachudamani at their first meeting, and refers also to some salient points in the conversations.

Now, since the place, persons, and contents of the first two instalments published in the *Brahmavadin*, and these two reviewed pamphlets are identical, we may safely conclude that the materials sent to the *Brahmavadin* were brought out in the form of pamphlets for personal circulation to elicit opinion. since it was M.'s first attempt to publish his diary-notes elaborating them into a live narrative.

We may also safely conclude from the dates of Vivekananda's letters to M.—17 October (about the first pamphlet received by him in first week of October), and 24 November 1897 (regarding the second pamphlet received by him about the second week of November), that M. must have sent to Swamiji the same pamphlets at the time he sent them to the *Brahmavadin*, or a little earlier. The two instalments related to conversations of Sri Ramakrishna on (1) Sunday 15 June 1884 with Pratap Chandra Mazumdar; and (2) Wednesday 25 June 1884 (*Ratha Jatra* day) with Pandit Shashadhar Tarkachudamani, and were published in the *Brahmavadin* on 15 October 1897 and 16 November 1897 respectively. So though the original pamphlets sent to Swamiji are not now traceable, the material of the pamphlets is safely there in the *Brahmavadin* issues and the *Gospel* volume.

We may also note here that M. contributed two more instalments to *Brahmavadin*, which were not made into pamphlet form. They were published on 1 February 1898, and 16 May 1898, relating to the visit to Vidyasagar on Saturday, 5 August 1882, and the conversations with the Bauls from Shibpur and visitors from Bhavanipore at

Dakshineswar on Sunday 3 August 1884. No more instalments appeared in the *Brahmavadin*. M. had written them in current English and the instalments were published under the title *Leaves from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*—According to M., A Son of the Lord and *Servant*. M. had no readymade material for a volume and sent the material in instalments as and when ready. Hence, the title 'Leaves from the Gospel' seems to be appropriate.

M. had also sent the pamphlets to Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, the editor of *Dawn*. He published the first instalment of the *Gospel* in its December 1897 issue, and made these highly eulogistic comments:

We are extremely thankful to our friend M., whom we may introduce to the reader as an unassuming gentleman of high spiritual attainments, and a devoted *Servant of his Lord and Master*, Sri Ramakrishna, for having given us an opportunity to publish what we may call 'A Modern Gospel'—which breathes throughout a deep catholicity in reference to all forms of religious discipline and therefore at war with not one of them.

Satish Babu also wrote in the same issue a long article entitled: 'On the Value of Sri Ramakrishna's Gospel'. Thereafter from 1898, both *Dawn* and *Light of the East* (another journal run by Satish Babu) published the *Gospel* instalments taking the material from the *Brahmavadin*. When the first volume of the *Kathamrita* in Bengali was published in February/March 1902, the *Light of the East* published a very appreciative review in its December 1902 issue under the title *A Popular Exposition of the Fundamentals of Hindu Religion and Philosophy*. The review opined that the *Kathamrita* was faultless, popular, factual and attractive.

11. *The commencement of the Kathamrita*

After receiving the highly encouraging and authenticating letters from Swamis

Vivekananda and Ramakrishnananda, and seeing the highly appreciative reviews in the *Tattvamanjari* and the *Dawn* M. cast aside all hesitation and misgivings and jumped into the arena with full determination, never to look back. Now, from early 1898, he began to concentrate his efforts to give the narration in the original Bengali, keeping intact Sri Ramakrishna's very words as far as possible. Not that there were no more adverse criticisms; there were from several quarters and from different angles. But the great assurance received from the Holy Mother, the authenticating letters of Vivekananda and Ramakrishnananda, the two eulogistic reviews, certainly some appreciations, orally, though not recorded, from the disciples and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, his own deep convictions, and the supreme merit of the work itself far outweighed all adverse criticisms and M. took them in the stride.

So M. began to work on the Bengali version and contributed instalments from early 1898 onwards to various Bengali journals and they started appearing in about eighteen magazines, though not simultaneously. They are: *Tattvamanjari*, *Hindu Patrika*, *Punya*, *Navya Bharat*, *Bambodhini*, *Sahitya*, *Rishi*, *Udbodhan*, *Arati*, *Prayas*, *Sahitya-Samhita*, *Alochana*, *Pradeep*, *Janmabhumi*, *Utsaha*, *Anusandhana*, *Pravasi*, and *Banga darshan*. Among these were those belonging to the Brahmos, Vaishnavas, and conservative Hindus.

We may note here that M. had no ready-made material, but prepared each instalment from time to time for publication, and when a number of instalments were published in the journals, they were gathered up into a volume. Thus the first volume in Bengali was published by Swami Trigunatitananda from the Udbodhan Office in February/March 1902 (on Sri Ramakrishna's birthday) at the instance of M. under the title *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*. In a similar manner the second volume followed in

1904. Whether the same methodology was applied further on, needs investigation. However, the third volume was published in 1908, the fourth in 1910 and the fifth and the last in 1932, a few months after M. passed away on 4 June at the age of 78, the proofs of which he had completed seeing just the previous day. The first four volumes were dedicated to the Holy Mother, and from the second volume onwards M. himself published the volumes from *Thakur-bari* (the Lord's House) as M.'s house at 13/2 Gurupasad Chaudhuri Lane, Calcutta, became known after the installation of the *Mangal-ghata* of Sri Ramakrishna there for worship by the Holy Mother in 1887. This house is presently called the *Kathamrita-bhavan* (the Kathamrita House).

12. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Volumes*

Though M. did not contribute any further instalments to the *Brahmavadin* in English, he had not given up the idea of publishing a volume, rendered directly into English from his notes (not translation of the Bengali volume). This is known by a footnote in the Bengali journal *Navya Bharat* in its issue for Phalgun 1309 (Bengali Era) corresponding to February-March 1903. The note is given after publishing an instalment of the *Kathamrita*. It says that the first volume of the *Kathamrita* is available at 13/2 Gurupasad Chaudhuri Lane, from Sri Prabhas Chandra Gupta at Rs. 1/-, and then adds that the English rendering of the *Kathamrita*—*Leaves from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*—(title printed in English)—will soon be published (in book form). It also reproduces in full Vivekananda's letter to M. dated 24 November 1897, which not only serves to authenticate M.'s writings, but also indicates that Swami Vivekananda had seen two of those very instalments, in pamphlet form, which were published by the *Brahmavadin*.

However, the volume in English with the title *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* could be published only in 1907 through the *Brahmavadin* office, Madras. M. had no time to publish it then as he was concentrating on the Bengali rendering. He had also his duties in the schools as a teacher and a proprietor. Moreover he was particular that he himself should prepare the English version in order to bring out the spirit of the Master's ideas, and did not like that it should be merely translated from the Bengali volume. To someone who translated portions of the Gospel in English, M. wrote, 'The translation of Gospel (*Sri Kathamrita*) in the *Morning Star* (a journal run by Avyaktananda) is, I regret to say, not satisfactory to me. Being an eye-witness I naturally want the spirit to be kept up in the translation. Moreover the report of a meeting should not appear in a mutilated form.'

When the second volume in Bengali had been published in 1904, M. found some leisure and began to prepare the Ms. for a volume in English version, probably at the proddings of Swami Ramakrishnanandaji who was in charge of the Ramakrishna Math at Madras and was associated with the *Brahmavadin* as well. He added the freshly prepared material to the already published four instalments in 1897-98, all rendered in English directly from his Bengali diary-notes, and sent it to Swami Ramakrishnanandaji for publication.

In the meanwhile, M. saw that Sri Ramakrishna was being accepted on a level with incarnations like Sri Krishna, Buddha, and Jesus Christ. One Reverend Fletcher Williams of the Unitarian Church had written to the *Indian Mirror*, Calcutta, on March 8, 1899, 'I have no doubt whatever he (Sri Ramakrishna) possessed of the prophetic power, I should suppose that as in the case of other great souls, his influence proceeded rather from what he was than

from what he said. There must have been a strangely magnetic charm about his personality, and in this respect *he no doubt resembled Jesus of Nazareth.*' Maxmuller and other savants from the West had also placed him on an equal footing with Christ. Romain Rolland also did it in 1928 in his biography of Sri Ramakrishna. Moreover Sri Ramakrishna himself had told that Christ had merged into him after he had a vision of him. So M. had given up all hesitation in presenting Sri Ramakrishna as the latest, if not the greatest, *Avatara* to humanity for the present age. Hence, when he prepared the Ms. for the English version for publication in 1907 by the *Brahmavadin* Office, he adopted the biblical terms of expression for verbs such as—'He saith' 'talketh', 'Verily, verily, I say unto you' etc. May be the very title *Gospel* was chosen by him for this reason in 1897 itself.

However, these expressions were changed in the second edition published in 1911 by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, Swami Ramakrishnanandaji doing the revision at the request of M. himself.¹¹

Around 1907 when M. sent the Ms. to the *Brahmavadin* Office he had also sent a copy of it to Swami Abhedananda at New York, along with a copy of Vivekananda's famous letter of 24 November 1897, for publication there, authorizing him to edit it if and where necessary. Accordingly, editing the Ms. and changing the biblical terms of expression, and adding some more material taken from the first two volumes so far published in Bengali with his own translation, Swami Abhedananda published a volume of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* from New York Vedanta Society in 1907. It was republished by him later in 1939 in

11. When the second edition of the Gospel, Vol. I was being published in 1911 by the Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, Swami Ramakrishnanandaji had written to M., 'According to your desire, I shall alter the "biblical forms of verbs" as needed.'

Calcutta, under the title *Memoirs of Sri Ramakrishna* from the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math.

In 1912, Swami Trigunatitananda published a reprint of the 2nd edition of M.'s own English version of the *Gospel* brought out by Madras Math in 1911. The Ramakrishna Math, Madras, again reprinted its 1911 edition under the title *The Condensed Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* at a highly subsidized price in 1978.

Swami Nikhilananda, head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York, translated all the five volumes of the Bengali *Kathamrita* into English for the first time independently, and, arranging the material in a strictly chronological order, published it in one sumptuous volume in 1942 from the New York Centre, with a Foreword by Aldous Huxley and a long introduction by himself on Sri Ramakrishna and other relevant matters.¹² It was also brought out

12. It may be interesting to note that in the 1897-98 instalments of the *Gospel* published in the *Brahmavadin*, the description of the author was—'According to M.—a son of the Lord and *Servant*'; in the 1907 *Brahmavadin* Office edition

in its first Indian reprint by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, in 1944, substituting a valuable introductory chapter on M., the author, for the Introduction by Nikhilananda. Both these have gone into several editions. Swami Nikhilananda also brought out two abridged editions, one of which was published by M/s Harper & Sons in New York and London in 1948 under the title *Ramakrishna—Prophet of New India*, and the other abridged edition was published by the New York Centre itself under the original title. The *Gospel* translated by Swami Nikhilananda received the acclamation of the entire scholarly world, of the devotees, and followers of Sri Ramakrishna all over the globe.

(Concluded)

of Vol. I, it was—'According to M. (Mahendra), a Son of the Lord and Disciple', with a sub-title to the *Gospel*, "*Or the Ideal Man for India and for the World*" Part I. In the further editions from Madras, the bracketed name (Mahendra) and the whole sub-title were dropped; and in the American editions, it was given simply—'Originally Recorded in Bengali by M., a Disciple of the Master'

AUNT BHANU

SWAMI JAYADEVANANDA

Aunt Bhanu's paternal house was near the Holy Mother Sarada Devi's house at Jayarambati. She was the daughter of Sri Kshetra Biswas of 'Sadgop' caste. The Mukherjees were the priests of her family and she was known as the Mother's aunt to the co-villagers. Her real name was Managarabini, which was probably first changed to Manu and subsequently to Bhanu. She was married at an early age at the Phului-Shyambazar in the South-West part of Jayarambati. She had a daughter

who passed away at a very tender age and she became a widow when she was around twenty years. She then took shelter at her father's house. The rest of her life was spent at Jayarambati, although occasionally she visited her in-law's house.

Shyambazar was dominated by the Vaishnavas. It can be presumed that aunt Bhanu was attracted to the *Raga-Margasadhana* (*Madhurabhava*) at her in-law's house. She practised that Sadhana also at her father's house. But it is heard that her

brother, Gour Biswas, was very antagonistic to Vaishnavism. In spite of that, devotion of aunt Bhanu did not diminish even a little.

Sri Ramakrishna now and then visited his in-law's house at Jayarambati. That led to aunt Bhanu's close contact with him. In those days the people of Jayarambati used to call the Master, 'mad son-in-law of the Mukherjees'. But Bhanu, a true spiritual seeker, could recognize the real nature of the great Master. Attracted by him, she used to visit the Mukherjees' house frequently whenever the Master was there. The ladies from the nearby houses also came. Seeing them the Master used to talk in such a way that either they would laugh heartily or would run away out of bashfulness. The Master would then say, 'Those who are useless have left, now let us talk.' Though she used to visit the Master, she was always afraid of her brother. The witty Master, knew about this. So he used to frighten her now and then saying, 'There comes your brother Gour', and she would huddle herself up out of fear. Then the Master would say, 'Shame, hatred, fear, these three should not remain in us.' He advised her sometimes, 'When your brother will come to scold you, raise your hands and dance clapping and saying, "O mind, sing of Gour Netai". Then your brother will take you to be mad and no more say anything.' The innocent aunt followed the advice and got the desired result.

Sri Ramakrishna occasionally visited Bhanu's house. She used to spin thread with a spinning wheel in her house, and the Master then sang sweet songs with gestures in tune with the sound of the wheel. Once when aunt Bhanu was staying with the Mother in Calcutta, Sister Nivedita coming to know of this incident brought a spinning wheel and asked the aunt to turn it and sing the songs the Master used to sing. The aunt did so, and Sister Nivedita

felt very happy. During the Master's time, the economic condition of Bhanu's father was good. He had many cows and milk, curd and butter-milk were available in plenty. She used to feed the Master occasionally with these.

Once when Sri Ramakrishna was about to return to Kamarpukur, he asked aunt Bhanu, 'Do you know how to make *pan* (betel roll)?' She at once went to prepare *pan* for him, but the Master did not wait for it and proceeded towards Kamarpukur. When aunt came back with the *pan* she saw that the Master had already gone a long distance. She, being a woman, could not shout to draw his attention, and it was considered not proper to call a person from behind. So she started running to catch up with him. After having gone far, the Master turned and seeing her coming asked in surprise, 'Aunt, you have come so far?' She replied, 'You wanted to have *pan*, so I have brought it'. The Master was pleased and smilingly told her, 'You will attain'. Aunt probably understood that her spiritual practices will bear fruits. Accepting the *pan* the Master said, 'Being a woman you have come such a long distance, when you go back you may receive scolding at home. You better do one thing; go to the potter's house and take a pot with you, so that they may think that you had gone there.'

Aunt Bhanu considered this as an important event in her life. She used to take some of the devotees coming to Jayarambati to her house and serve them snacks and betel leaves while narrating this incident. She treated the male devotees as if they were her grandsons, and some of them, 'big grand sons'. Girish Babu belonged to the second category. Devotees from different distant places used to visit Sri Ramakrishna, but there was no sign of any devotion to the Master among the people in the nearby villages. Aunt Bhanu lamented about this, saying, 'People come here to see the Master from distant towns of Bishnupur and

Tamluk, but the poor villagers here do not take the advantage of his divine presence. There is no illumination below the lamp.' To the devotees she would like to talk about the Master with a heart full of joy. She would sing couplets learnt in her childhood and also songs she heard from the Master, and during these hours she would be unmindful of her bath and food.

When devotees started visiting Jayarambati, aunt Bhanu was old. She was thin and dark in complexion. Still her face expressed joy and guilelessness. She was very free with them and treated them as her own. She used to dance and sing with gestures in the mood of *Vraja Gopis*, the milkmaids of Vrindavan. She liked thinking about God, the Master and the Holy Mother. She did the worship of the Master regularly. If she had to go out anywhere, she used to hand over the Master's picture, which she used to worship, to Indumati Devi and say, 'My child, pluck two *Tulasi* leaves and offer them to the Master's lotus feet saying, "*Tulasipatram Ramakrishnaya namah*"'.

Some incidents in aunt Bhanu's life were very delightful. The barbers of Jayarambati in her time were affluent house-holders. Once they arranged for a party of *Kirtan* singers to sing for 24 hours. This party of singers had come from a nearby village. This created a lot of enthusiasm among the people of Jayarambati, who attended the *Kirtan*. After sunset, when there were not many people in the street, the Holy Mother also started to attend the *Kirtan* with a lady companion. Br. Gopesh followed them. It was pitch dark and the companion had a lantern with her, which emitted very little light. Suddenly they noticed that at some distance ahead, a small light in the air was dancing and approaching them. When they moved closer, it was found that the light was on a person's head. The Mother went ahead of her companions, and recognized the person. It was aunt

Bhanu. She called her in a low voice, 'Aunt!'. The aunt, so long in ecstasy, regained consciousness. She was returning from the *kirtan*. Her mind was absorbed in the *kirtan* and with her right hand she was holding the lantern and her left hand was on her hip. She was dancing to the tunes of the *kirtan* which she heard so long. There was much laughter and fun on both the sides. Aunt was then about seventy years old. That night, the Mother listened to the *kirtan* from a distance, and after prostration returned to her house.

The old aunt Bhanu was deeply devoted to the Mother. After sunset, with a lamp in her hand, she used to visit the Mother's house, and keep the lamp in a corner after putting it off. Then she prostrated at the feet of Mother and talked to her about her weal and woes, and about the Lord's glories. Later, she took *prasad* from Mother and lighting the lamp, left for her house with a joyful mind. Aunt felt very worried if ever the Mother fell ill. She felt as if one of her own people was lying in sick bed. Aunt said that she had a vision of the Mother with four hands. She told Mother one day that whenever the Mother would sing, her voice resembled that of the Master. Mother said, 'What do I know? You know yourself'. But aunt said, 'The Master is within you.'

Aunt Bhanu was the Mother's childhood companion. Even at her old age aunt now and then stayed with the Mother in Calcutta or Varanasi. In the Year 1319 (Bengali year), in the month of *Paush*, when the Mother was staying at Lakshmi Nivas in Varanasi, Swami Brahmanandaji once came there to salute her, and seeing aunt there in the ground floor, he started making merry. Aunt was fond of merriment by nature; with gestures she started singing about child Gopala thus: 'In this row of houses who has a black pet cat? One of you catch it and give it to Lalita.... It has stolen the curd, broken the pot, and wiped its mouth

with the rag.' After listening to her, Swami Brahmanandaji got so much absorbed in the mood of Sri Krishna, that tears started flowing from his eyes, drenching his shirt. Mother, seeing this, said afterwards, 'Aunt, you are not ordinary. Rakhal, who is a great ocean, is stirred by you.'

The Mother liked aunt and praised her devotion. She had a natural attraction to this childhood companion. When aunt Bhanu was in her deathbed, the Mother visited her and said, 'Aunt, if you also will go away; whom shall I talk to?' Aunt replied that she could live longer if the Mother willed so. The Mother went back without saying anything. On that day at

the time of sunset the aunt saw that the Mother was standing outside her (Mother's) own room, extending her hands and asked her (Bhanu) to take the *Charanamrita*, the sacramental water of the worship. After that, aunt gradually recovered from her illness. She was convinced that it was Mother alone who had saved her. But Mother, listening to her, said, 'Aunt, it is the Master's will.'

Aunt Bhanu's financial condition was not good; but her family difficulties could not curb her spiritual fervour. It was because of her intense devotion. She passed away a little before the passing away of the Holy Mother.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SRI VISHNU SAHASRANAMAM (*With text in Devanagari, transliteration and commentary of Sri Shankaracharya*): TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY SWAMI TAPASYANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 600 004. 1986. Pp. iv+216. Rs. 20. Deluxe Rs. 26.

Sri Vishnu Sahasranamam is one of the most popular texts among the orthodox Hindus, for it at once appeals to the heart and the mind of the devotee. Even though there are many other sahasranamas like Lalitha, Shiva etc., Vishnu sahasranama occupies a unique and special place in the devotional as well as philosophical literature of this culture. A celebrated commentary by Sri Adi Shankaracharya speaks about the greatness of the text and the significance of its content. Sri Shankaracharya himself considers this text as the one that can bestow upon the seeker the maximum benefit with least effort (*alpaprayasam analpaphalam*). He further exhorts the greatness of this text, while commenting on the eighth shloka by giving three reasons namely; (i) there is no violence like killing animals etc., (ii) there is no need for other persons or materials as in the case of performance of rituals and (iii) it does not require any specific time and place. It is also interesting to note that the text provides a good basis for etymological study of the

names, which the commentary of Shankara does very effectively.

The names enumerated in the Sahasranama have at once a theological significance as also a philosophical import, which would help the seekers who contemplate upon them, to explore the rich vista of significance of the names at both the levels.

As an answer to six questions asked by Yudhishthira, the grand sire Bhishma informs that by prayer and contemplation upon *Purushottama*, (that Principle which pervades and abides within this city, at its core), a seeker can cross the misery. Explaining the term the 'Greatest Purifier of all (*Pavitranam Pavitram*), Shankara becomes eloquent when he says that when one contemplates, sees, sings Its glory, praises, worships, remembers, or—even salutes, this text one is totally cleansed of all sins. This is exactly the purpose of the Sahasranama.

Tradition believes that there are three modes or stages of recitation or singing in praise of the Lord. *Vachika*, the verbal, *Upamshu*, non-verbal and *Manasa*, mental. The benefits and the quality of chanting and contemplation would increase from the first to the last.

There are said to be more than fifteen commentaries on Vishnu Sahasranama, the most popular perhaps being that of Sri Shankaracharya,

and Parashara Bhatta's *Bhagavadgunadarpana*, which is very popular among Sri Vaishnava traditionalists. This is more important from the etymological and linguistic points of view.

Swami Tapasyanandaji has done a yeoman service for the English speaking public by rendering this important text into simple and easily understandable English, closely following Sri Shankara's commentary.

It is often a very difficult task to render a Sanskrit term into exact English, for various reasons. Sanskrit is a lucid language in the sense that it does not get bound to frozen and rigid meanings of the terms as they are fluid, and provide more and more insight as one contemplates upon them. The whole basis on which the Vishnu Sahasranama attains the celebrity it has attained, is the fluidity of the expressions pointing towards that Supreme Godhead. To bring out the all pervasive meaning and significance of each name is almost an impossible task. But, this volume is a compact one which could certainly be a constant companion to anyone who would like to purify his mind by the process of contemplation on the names and also on the deliberate meditation on the import of the names, each one of which becomes an arrow of thought charging towards the core of the cosmos, namely the Truth. This exercise certainly lifts the mind to the higher realms.

The mode of presentation is just like a lexicon which at once helps a person to look out for any needed term and contemplate on it. The *namavali* at the end would be useful for chanting purposes.

It is a well known fact in Indian philosophical tradition that the quality of a man is determined by the quality of his mind, which in turn is determined by the quality of thoughts he entertains. In this sense, this volume is a welcome addition to the seekers who, if serious, can certainly profit very much, both aesthetically, devotionally, and philosophically.

Vishnu Smriti says: 'A true psychological purifying bath is indeed the contemplation on the Vishnu, the Supreme'. This volume would certainly provide that sacred bath to the seeker.

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SRI RAMAKRISHNA: THE POWER AND GLORY. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-600 004. Pp. 303. Rs. 12/-

This anthology of articles is a timely publication on the occasion of the Post-Centenary

Golden Jubilee of the advent of Sri Ramakrishna. It contains 20 articles on the various aspects of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, gleaned from the 1985 number of *Vedanta Kesari*. The writers are mostly monks of the Ramakrishna order and what they have written here is not a show of their scholarship but a sweet expression of their personal experience of delving deep in the divine life of the Master. In the opening article, Swami Tapasyananda has explained the meaning and implication of the state of *Bhavamukha* in which Sri Ramakrishna always was. He says that Sri Ramakrishna's remaining at the threshold of transcendence can be compared with the living of an emperor in a slum with all its filth and dirt, only to shower benefits on the slum-dwellers. (p. 37). In the next article Swami Harshananda gives the quintessence of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna in six *Sanskrita mantras* simulating the ancient *Upanishadic* texts. Marie Louis Burke points out the inner unity in the teachings of the Master and the exposition of Vedanta by Swami Vivekananda (p. 59). Swami Vidyatmananda narrates interesting episodes, which indicate how Sri Ramakrishna is even now, moulding the minds of the young and the old and how they become instrumental in spreading the message of universal love and peace, all over the world. (p. 75). Here we come to know of the stupendous task of the publication of the Concordance to the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, New Lork, 1985—a 650 pages volume brought out so ably by Miss Katherine Whitmarsh. Swami Siddhatmananda has drawn upon *Bhagavata* and has shown how Sri Ramakrishna was both, *Bhagawan* and *Bhagawatotama*.

In his well-documented article, Swami Jitatmananda narrates how Arnold Toynbee—the great historian finds in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, a hope for the survival of mankind and how Nicholas De Roerich, [the Russian artist, looks upon Sri Ramakrishna as a shelter, where all humanity finds an acceptance and being in peace. (p. 255). The artist experienced the power of creative goodness in Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Pitambarananda has explained the Master and the Holy Mother relationship in question—answer form. Swami Kirtidananda's article on the Master's childhood makes an interesting reading. Swami Prabhananda's account of Master's last days is well-documented and throws some new light on the great life. Swami Sastrananda's article about the Master's humour is worth reading. In the article titled 'The Legacy of Sri Ramakrishna', Pravrajika Atma-

prana has shown how the teachings of the Master enrich devotee's mind and intellect.

All these articles have been woven in a rich spiritual fabric and the entire book spells out the glorious spiritual pattern of our culture. The book is rightly named as 'Sri Ramakrishna—The Power and Glory'.

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ANTARYATRA (*Conversations with Swami Rameswarananda*): BY NARENDRANATH CHATURVEDI. Published by Seva Pratishthan, P.O. Gurukul, Bakani, via Jhalarapatan (Jhalwad) Rajasthan. Pp. 92. Rs. 20.

ANTIM MUKTI: BY NARENDRANATH CHATURVEDI. Published by Ananda Prakashan, 1, L-1 Dada Badi, Kota. Distributors: Seva Pratishthan P.O. Gurukul, via Jhalarapatan (Jhalwad) Rajasthan. PP. 82. Rs. 20.

The books under review are records of conversations with Swami Rameshwarananda of Phalwad dealing with the different aspects of Spiritual life.

Spiritual quest is essentially a journey within, an exploration of the deeper levels of consciousness. This involves clear understanding of the nature of mind, its motivations and functioning. Swami's views on these subjects are found in this book. He clarifies several points relating to the nature of "dharma", the techniques of meditation, the role of self-will, holy association, spiritual awakening etc. Swami argues that the journey within involves the cultivation of the attitude of "witness" so tha. we don't allow ourselves to be caught because of our little egos. For overcoming the ego, introspection is indispensable and this is, as the Swami rightly says, the beginning of spiritual life. To inspire such life the Swami has narrated his own life story in brief.

The Swami's sayings are helpful—though one feels that they should have been arranged and recorded more coherently. Similarly, some of the statements about Sri Ramakrishna are

not true and might cause misunderstandings in the mind of the readers. (page 80 of *Antaryatra*). The author should have verified the facts in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna never renounced his wife but saw in her the Divine Mother, the embodiment of divine 'Shakti' Sri Ramakrishna's divine life is beyond the imagination of ordinary people. As such, the comments that Sri Ramakrishna got the 'Shakti', but realized that on the stage of this world, he would not be able to use that power, can be questioned.

Inspite of these blemishes the books have got some good thoughts for all aspirants.

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HINDI

HINDU DHARMA, KUCH TATHYATMIK JANAKARIYAN: BY NIRANJAN JAMIDAR. Published by Gita Samiti Prakashan, Bada Raola, Indore Citry, Madhyapradesh, 452 004. P. 55. Rs. 5.

This booklet provides information in brief about the Hindu Religion. These are gleanings from various sources both general and scriptural books. The author has compiled the information in small chapters to give a very brief account about the scriptures viz., the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, *Puranas*, the various sects, rituals and modes of worship, festivals, art and culture, places of pilgrimage, deities, sages and saints. At the end he has given a list of selected books in Hindi for further reading on Hindu religion.

There are many printing mistakes in the booklet which should be corrected in the next edition. However, the reader gets a glimpse of the vast literature and wide range of the Hindu religion in this booklet.

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PRACTICAL HINTS FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Japam

Q. : How should I do Japam ? Are there special rules for it ?

A. : Taking the name of God repeatedly and with love is japam. Do that, and you will find joy as you go on practising it. There are no special rules for japam. Japam can be done always, while walking, moving about, eating, lying down, in sleep, in dream.... The real thing is love. The more you repeat His name with love, the more joy will you derive from it.... Go on repeating his name as much as you can. You should of course do japam always and as much as lies in your power, but it is particularly necessary to do it every morning and evening at a fixed time and from a fixed seat.

—*Swami Shivananda*

Q.: What is the use of keeping count with the fingers while repeating the mantram ? Is it not enough to do so mentally ?

A.: God has given the fingers that they may be blessed to our repeating His name with them.

While performing japam, take the name of God with utmost love, sincerity, and self-surrender. Before commencing your meditation daily, first think of your utter helplessness in this world and then slowly begin the practice... as directed by your guru.

Q.: Is it of any use to be merely repeating His name without intense devotion ?

A.: Whether you jump into water or are pushed into it, your cloth will get a drenching. Is it not so ?

The mantram purifies the body. Man becomes pure by repeating the name of God. So repeat His name always.

—*Holy Mother*

Constant repetition of the mantram is keeping good company. It must be natural like breathing. The repetition of the divine name will bring into your mind holy associations, the blessed qualities of God, and take away all blemishes of the heart.

—*Swami Saradananda*

Now the more one practises spiritual disciplines, the nearer one moves toward the light of God, the purer one becomes in body and mind, and the more clearly will the evil impressions of one's many, many past lives be revealed. The 'heat' produced by the practice of japam will draw them out, and that same heat will destroy them. The power of the Word is supreme.

No more will the mind be troubled by restless waves of lust and craving ; by the power of the Word the mind becomes pure, transformed, renewed. Upon the pure mind the power of God descends. Unto the pure heart Reality is revealed.

—*Swami Adbhutananda*

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

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OUR LATE EDITOR

It is with the deepest sorrow that we announce the death, on the 13th of last month, at the very early age of 26, of Mr. B. R. Rajam Iyer, B.A., Editor of *Awakened India*.

Mr. Rajam Iyer was born in 1872 at Batlagundu, a village in Madura District. Nothing that is of interest is known of his early life, except that he was a shy boy and never used to join in the ordinary boyish games and amusements. After passing in F.A. Examination at Madura, he came to Madras in 1887 and joined the Christian College, from which he graduated in 1889.... Endowed by nature with an imagination which was at once lofty, subtle and wild, and a keen sensibility, he revelled by turns in Shakespeare, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth and George Elliot. He seemed to have permanently imbibed a genuine passion for truth, power and beauty.—a passion which very soon developed into the philosophic yearning for realizing the Truth, the Atman itself.

In 1894 he seriously set his heart upon realizing this Infinite happiness to which the whole creation is moving consciously or unconsciously. He was either meditating, reading devotional or philosophical works, or writing for the *Prabuddha Bharata*; and towards the close of his short life he devoted nearly the whole of his time to meditation, so much so that he found the editing of the journal a burden.

FAREWELL

We regret very much to intimate to our subscribers that we are forced to stop the journal with this issue, as we find the loss sustained in the premature death of our Editor Mr. B. R. Rajam Iyer, irreparable. Except the few 'Contributions' and the 'Extracts', all the articles were written by him, some under the following pseudonyms:—T.S. Natarajan, M. Ranganatha Sastri, A Recluse and Nobody-knows-who. And if the articles were pleasing and edifying in a high degree, it was because the writer had himself some realization of the Truth, and his views were developed under the teaching of a great sage, the 'Mauni' whose 'Meditations' appeared in the journal.

The *Awakened India* office will, however, be continued, and copies of the second volume and the back issues as well as the books of the *Prabuddha Bharata* and *Brahmavadin* series will be sold.