



# Prabuddha Bharata

or

## Awakened India

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# Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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**JULY 1988**

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 93

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No. 7

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

## VISIONS OF DIVINITY

### *The Kingdom of God*

Jesus answered and said unto him (Nicodemus): Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *They* are spirit, and *they* are life.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found 'one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.'

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

Therefore is the Kingdom of Heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

When any one heareth the word of the Kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one* and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.

(St. John, 3.3, St. Matthew, 13.31, 13.33, 13.44, 13.45, 13.47, 18.23, 13.19, St. John, 6.63.)

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL discusses how the basic ideas of Vedanta—the science of de-hypnotization, are being vindicated by the recent findings of science and psychology.

ADMINISTRATION FOR SERVICE by Swami Ranganathananda, President, Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad is based on the talk he delivered to the officials of the Andhra Secretariat on 1 April 1987.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND HIS MESSAGE by Father Francis X. Clooney is an illuminative exposition of the idea of '*Bhavamukha*' from the Christian standpoint. Fr. Francis X. Clooney S.J. is a member of the Society of Jesus, and teaches in the Theology Department at Boston College Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE AND THE MASSES by Prof. Radhakrishna Murthy, Hyderabad, is a brilliant exposition of the idea, by the author who is deeply interested in both Vedanta and leftist humanism. This paper was read in the first national seminar on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda held at Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad in 1983.

TWO LIGHTHOUSES FOR THE BLIND are contributed by Swami Tanmayananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, and the Jt. Editor of *P.B.*

A TRIP TO RITHA SAHIB by Swami Ajitatmananda, Mayavati, is based on a recent trip to this secluded Himalayan pilgrim centre hallowed by the memory of the great teacher Guru Nanak.

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## VEDANTA—THE SCIENCE OF DE-HYPNOTIZATION

(EDITORIAL)

There was once a bumblebee which had heard that it could never fly because of its heavy wings. This wise piece of information made it well contented to sit quietly somewhere until one day a bird flew very near with the hope of devouring it. In utter despair the bumblebee suddenly made a desperate attempt to save itself; and without its knowing, it flew out. Flying over, it realized that 'the mental block' was gone.

The little story with which Dr. Gustaf Stromberg, the well-known American astronomer, began his book *Man, Mind and Universe*, is symbolic of the human drama. The happy prince Gautama was hypnotized to believe that life is meant for sense pleasures, until one day the grim spectre of disease, old age and death broke the illusions. De-hypnotized, he came out, broke

the barriers of his thought, released the infinite soul-force within, made superhuman struggles, reached illumination, and emerged as a world-conquering force. Every individual who made a mark in history, had, like this bumblebee, released a tremendous amount of life-force which made them fly to great heights of achievement and higher evolution.

The 'reductionist arrogance' of science, as Theodore Roszak called it, wanted to reduce man with a Soul, the Kingdom of God within, to a multiple of chemical compounds, and gave birth to 'new superstitions', as Vivekananda calls them, of science. Nobel Laureate Francis Crick announced, 'I myself, like many scientists believe that the soul is imaginary and what we call our minds is simply a way of talking about the functions of the brain. Once one has become adjusted

to the idea that we are here because we have evolved from simple chemical compounds by a process of natural selection, it is remarkable how many of the problems of the modern world will take on a completely new light.<sup>1</sup>

Scientists bound by the new materialistic dogma forgot to ask the basic question, 'What is it that evolved from the chemical compound to the noble scientist?' Roszak wrote of the 'new light' which these scientists hailed as their beacon, 'this is the funeral gleam by which we travel the wasteland, the light of dying stars.'<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, modern man, as eminent psychologist C.G. Jung puts it, is in search of a Soul. Dr. Raynor C. Johnson's book *Imprisoned Splendour* speaks of the Infinite inside man, and claims that it is an approach to reality, based upon the significance of data drawn from the fields of natural science, physical research and mystical experience.<sup>3</sup>

The Vedanta philosophy is based on this 'imprisoned splendour', the Infinite knowledge, power and bliss inherent in all human beings. But he is unaware of it. He is hypnotized and conditioned to think of himself as a tiny body-mind complex. Vivekananda says, 'Everybody is hypnotized already. The work of attaining freedom, of realizing one's own nature consists in de-hypnotization. One thing to be remembered is that we are not gaining powers at all. We have them already. The whole process of growth is de-hypnotization.' The

effect is always inside the cause, says the Vedanta. The gigantic banyan tree is already potentially present inside the tiny seed. The power of Christ who was destined to lead mankind for milleniums, was potentially present inside the body-mind of the Son of a carpenter, Jesus of Nazareth. It only got manifested. Vedanta philosophy asserts that this tremendous potentiality lurks behind each living being. Only in human-body the great power finds a fit place for its manifestation. The Upanishads which are the repository of Vedanta philosophy, constantly hammers the primal truths like, 'Thou art That', 'Ye, Children of Immortality', 'I am Brahman, the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute', into our brains. Man is hypnotized to believe that he is a 'born sinner' whose only duty is to pray for forgiveness and be saved by a God sitting somewhere in a heaven which none has seen. Vedanta, on the other hand, thunders to everyone that the God who will save us, is already inside us. It reminds us that our present suffering is only an effect of our past actions, and that by the superior action of our present, the future is bound to be better. 'Thine is only the hand that holds the rope that drags thee on', says Vivekananda. 'Save yourself by your own action; do not demoralize yourself', says Sri Krishna to the mighty Arjuna who was suddenly frightened with the sight of the colossal army against him. The 'scorcher of foes' was hypnotized to believe, for the time being, that defeat was his inevitable end. Krishna's words de-hypnotized him and released the mighty soul-force with which Arjuna fought the greatest war ever fought, and won. 'Religion is the manifestation of the natural strength that is in man' says Vivekananda.<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \* \*

1. Theodore Roszak, *Where the Waste Land Ends* (New York: Anchor Books, Double Day and Company Inc, 1973) p. 173.

2. Ibid.

3. Dr. Gustaf Stromberg, (A Scientist's View) *Man, Mind and the Universe* (California, Los Angeles Science of Mind publications, 1977) p. 33.

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati Memorial Edition) Vol. 6, p. 126. (Hereafter *Complete works* with vol & page).

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol 8 p. 185.

How does this Infinite Power within begin to manifest? The mystical tradition of Vedanta has prescribed all possible ways for this end. Firstly, there is the path of discrimination, or Knowledge, the path of realizing the Ultimate Reality, through pure reasoning. The next is the way of devotion in which prayer, Japa or repetition of the Holy name of the Lord, plays a vital role. Prayer makes our individual will coincide with the Cosmic Will. And when the Cosmic Will begins to manifest through the individual, he creates history. Dr. Stromberg writes: 'The potential power of human will is very great because it is part of the Cosmic will and redramatizes our capacity for the creation of good.... When we pray we are in communion with the Cosmic Mind, in which our minds are "rooted". The Universal Mind is the Mind of the Almighty.'<sup>6</sup> Alexis Carrel, who received Nobel Prize in medicine in 1912, wrote, 'Prayer is not only worship; it is also an emanation of man's worshipping Spirit—the most powerful form of energy that one can generate...the only power in the world that seems to overcome the laws of nature.'<sup>7</sup>

Then comes the way of Yoga, the path of concentration and meditation. The function of Yoga is to awaken the Infinite Power coiled up like a serpent at the base of the spinal column, by the mystic process of breathing and meditation. Yoga literally means union. It is the union of the individual Self with the Infinite Self, the One all-pervading Consciousness everywhere. Yogis claim and demonstrate that men can achieve this mystic union. Recent researches in split-brain analysis have confirmed that our brain is bi-cameral. While the left-half of the human brain is responsible for *Yan*, the faculty of reasoning, fighting, accumulating and living a mundane life, the

right-half of the brain is responsible for *Yin*, the faculty of intuitive leaps, altruistic motivations, love, service, intuition, higher imagination and inspiration leading to great discoveries and spiritual evolution of the individuals. It is this *Yin*-element in our brain which helps us to be in touch with the Infinite within through meditation. Says Vivekananda:

Every meditation is direct superconsciousness. In perfect concentration the soul becomes actually free from the bonds of this gross body and knows itself as it is. Whatever one wants, that comes to him. Power and knowledge are already there. The soul identifies itself with what is powerless matter and thus weeps... He who has known God, has become God. There is nothing impossible for such a free soul.<sup>8</sup>

This explains why Christ and Buddha emerged into a 'dynamo of power' and 'moved countries in their lifetime.'<sup>9</sup>

Finally comes the path of unselfish action in which, in a state of utter sacrifice, the worker forgets his puny little self. The moment this egotistical self is forgotten, the power of the Supreme Self, the Cosmic 'I', begins to manifest through such a person who has lost the power even to breathe for himself. They are the Buddhas whose lives confirm the truth, 'Unselfishness is God'.

\* \* \* \*

Where do these processes lead to? Darwinian evolution showed us the evolution of apes unto man who remains, at bottom, a biological animal. The different visions of man envisioned in the West, like the 'Political animal' (Aristotle), 'tool-making animal' (Benjamin Franklin), 'Social animal' (Marxist view), 'Psycho-biological being' (Freudian view), or more recently 'economic animal' (Alvin Toffler), are only variations on one theme—man is basically an animal. Vedanta differs at this funda-

6. Dr. Stromberg, *Man, Mind and the Universe*, p. 16.

7. Quoted in *Ibid.*

8. *Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 226.

9. *Complete Works*, vol. 2, pp. 12-37.

mental point. No. Man is basically not an animal, but god. The end of all education, all training is to manifest his inherent divinity. Civilization is not a bloody struggle for self-survival as Darwin showed, but 'the manifestation of divinity within man' as Vivekananda put it to the Harvard scholars in 1896. Patanjali the father of Indian Yoga, describes evolution as 'infilling of nature'. Just as a farmer brings water into his field by breaking the barriers or obstacles, similarly an individual evolves by removing his own psycho-social obstacles, when his inner potentiality manifests more and more.

Vivekananda exposes the limitations and even the basic mistake of Darwin. When there is a fire in a theatre, Vivekananda argues, people rush for personal safety, make stampede and kill others. But certainly more people, if not all, could come out if there had been no rush for 'competition'. We struggle through 'ignorance' and 'impatience' and out of utter selfishness. Vivekananda says:

Our education and progression simply mean taking away the obstacles, and by its own nature the divinity will manifest itself. This does away with all the struggle for existence. The miserable experiences of life are simply on the way, and can be eliminated entirely. They are not necessary for evolution.<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Stromberg writes:

'The main defect of Darwin's theory is that it completely ignores the existence of mind and of consciousness, and in particular the supreme importance of the development of the human mind. If Darwin's theory were correct, the law of the jungle would be one of the most fundamental laws of nature. All ethical concepts would be meaningless and Christ's command to love your enemies would be a ridiculous commandment.'<sup>11</sup>

'Human evolution is not biological but psycho-social', says Julian Huxley. A highly evolved human being does not grow horns, but grows into a christ-like personality. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in his book *Phenomenon of Man* speaks of this Vedantic evolution. The 'thing within' evolves from amoeba to Christ. This 'thing within' is the Self of Vedanta. The culmination to *christogenesis* is the highest spiritual evolution of individuals.

\* \* \* \* \*

Modern science dissects the human body in order to know the workings of the human consciousness which only is the source of infinite knowledge and power within. Cyberneticist W. Ross Arshby has argued in his book *Design for a Brain* that human brain is only a thinking machine whose mathematics and organization pattern can be known. Like most scientists of the behaviourist school, he believes that learning as a process has no 'necessary dependence' on consciousness. Arthur Koestler comments that to these behaviourists 'consciousness does not merit study by the scientific community'.<sup>12</sup>

Even Harris Walker, a scientist of NASA, postulates that 'consciousness is a non-physical but real quantity.'<sup>13</sup> Karl Pribram, the brain-researcher, has, in fact, established that 'consciousness' is a holographic, non-physical reality which is spread everywhere inside the brain. Even when one part of the brain was damaged, Pribram found, that the entire memory and the power to respond, were fully contained in the undestroyed part. 'Brain is a hologram', he concluded.<sup>14</sup> According to physicists David Bohm, and B. Hilley, even in Physics, 'information' could be transmitted without

10. *Complete Works*, vol. 5, pp. 277-78.

11. Dr. Stromberg, Loc. Cit. p. 64.

12. Michael Talbot *Mysticism and the New Physics* (A Bantam Book, 1981) p. 46.

13. Michael Talbot, Loc. Cit. p. 46.

14. Ed. Ken Wilber, *The Holographic Paradigm*, (Shambhala, 1982) p. 7.

'any interaction that could transmit information.'<sup>15</sup>

Consciousness is not like any one of the organs like eye or ear. It is the non-material entity which gives 'life' to the otherwise lifeless organic compounds in a living body. It transcends matter but permeates through it. It is everywhere, and therefore it is futile to search for it by dissecting human body. Such attempts are destructive. 'Man is not a thing. He cannot be dissected without being destroyed', writes psychologist Eric Fromm.<sup>16</sup>

Another scientist admits:

It now seems highly plausible that the seat of consciousness will never be found by a neurosurgeon because it appears to involve not so much an organ or organs, but the interaction of energy fields within the brain.... Neurophysiologists will not likely find what they are looking for outside their own consciousness for that which they are looking for is that which is looking.<sup>17</sup>

We remember the saying of the Upanishad, 'How to know the Knower?' The Yoga-psychology makes us aware that in the inward journey to the Reality within, our mind is the tool with which we have to proceed to the Pure Mind within. Every mind, as Vivekananda puts it, is in touch with the Cosmic Mind, the Primal Mind of which all minds are only expressions. Sri Ramakrishna tells us that Pure Mind leads us to Pure Consciousness. 'The Pure Mind, Pure Intelligence, the Pure Atman (consciousness) are really one and the same', says Sri Ramakrishna.<sup>18</sup> That is why Jesus said, 'Blessed are the Pure, for they shall see God.'

Keith Floyd thinks that higher brain-functions come from the pineal gland.

'Pineal body occupies the mid-point at the centre of a neural energy field, at which point occurs the burst of light that is experienced as the screen of consciousness on which shifting, figure-ground relationships represents external reality.' This burst of light, the 'bioluminescence' or 'the light inside the skull' says Michael Talbot 'may be the very self-illumination that the Upanishads refer to'.<sup>19</sup>

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says that it is the eternally illumined and all-pervading Consciousness which makes a man, sleeping in a dark chamber, see in dream the ways, houses, and beings, all illumined.

Dr. John C. Lily shows in his book *The Human Biocomputer* that our brain works as a bio-computer. Every learning is gained through a 'metaprogramming' of the biocomputer 'Consciousness' is the 'metaprogrammer'. And therefore, writes M. Talbot, it is important for us to feed the brain (bio-computer) with proper symbols. 'Religion is a metaprogramme' says Talbot, and 'visualization is a yoga of the mind. It produces quick results by utilizing forces familiar to man only at the deeper levels of consciousness.'<sup>20</sup> That is why imagination, dwelling on higher thoughts, prayer, meditation and repetition of Holy words (mantra) are the processes for bringing the higher awareness. In fact this is the way to reach the state of Pure Consciousness, the stage of *samadhi*, which scientists call the state of Homeostasis. At this stage one sees, as Wordsworth says, 'into the life of things' Latest study in neurophysiology shows that 'bio-computer is constructed to achieve what might be called a cognitive Homeostasis'. Cybernetician Heinz Von Forester points out 'The nervous system is organized (or organizes itself) so that it computes a stable reality'.<sup>21</sup> In this state of Samadhi

15. Michael Talbot, Loc. Cit. p. 49.

16. Quoted in Theodore Roszak, *Where the Waste Land Ends*, p. 161.

17. Dr. Stromberg, Loc. Cit. p. 112.

18. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (New York Edn.) p. 802.

19. Michael Talbot, Loc. Cit. pp. 56-57.

20. Ibid., pp. 149-51.

21. Ibid., p. 156.



or cognitive Homeostasis the external reality no longer seems apart from the Self. In this state of highest cognition man sees vision of unity, and all his fears are gone.

Dichotomies of I-thou, heaven-hell, God-man are resolved for ever. Man communes through mystic, super-sensory intuition with the infinite, unchangeable One within himself which is above change, or decay. At this point man becomes completely aware of the Infinite Power, and everlasting life within, whose other name, in the Vedantic tradition, is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. This is the end of 'becoming'; this is the state of 'Homonymy' (the vision of unity) which Abraham Maslow, the most renowned American psychologist of today, describes as the culmination of psychic experiences in his celebrated book *Psychology of Being*. British psychologist R. D. Laing speaks of this state as 'inner illumination'. American psychologist Jacob Needleman speaks of this 'inner transformation' as the end of all spiritual journey within.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the emergence of Freud, the sudden popularity of psychoanalysis threatened to replace religion, and people began to frequent the new bishops, the psychiatrists, with the hope of curing mental sufferings. By 1975 the Freudian psychotherapy, which considered 'libido' or sex-instinct as the only controlling factor in man, appeared to be growing at a declining rate, wrote *Saturday Review* (Feb. 21, 76 pp. 17-18). The new school of Behaviour Therapy led by B.F. Skinner concentrated on the change of behaviour of the individual by mechanical or forced change of environment. Soon after this, another school known as Humanistic Therapy emerged as a reaction against both these schools which consider man either as mere biological entity or a machine. The Humanistic therapy feels that man's needs are 'higher' than mere bread and sense pleasures. Abraham Maslow,

belonging to this group, approaches almost Vedanta philosophy when he asserts that man must discover the 'self' or the biological essence within. A fourth group, the Transpersonal psychology, introduced the practice of Vedantic sadhana by the technique of 'Transcendental Meditation'. This meditation, 'a variant of Raja Yoga, has become extraordinarily popular in the United States and Europe', because it 'helps people attain deep states of relaxation', and 'release creative energies'.<sup>22</sup>

1976 survey by the American psychoanalytic Association showed that 70% of the members' patients are receiving some kind of therapy other than psychiatry. By 1979, 75% of the mental patients were being treated not as inmates of the mental hospitals, but as outdoor patients. Even then 40% of America's hospital beds were occupied by these very patients. Confronted with increasing burden psychiatrists dreamt of easy solution through drugs. Confidence among these dreamers increased. Arnold Mandell, Professor of Psychiatry at California University declared, 'Psychiatry will become the most scientifically precise of medical specialities relying not *at all* on subjective judgement.' Others dreamt of a Brave New World of mind-controlling drugs. Euphoria ran high. *Time* (April 2, 1979) commented, 'At the very least, the drugs may give psychiatry the bold new tools that will enable it to shake off its own current depression and fulfil the high hopes that Freud and his followers correctly held out for it.'<sup>23</sup> Today after nine years, that euphoria has given way to a national despair. All attempts to medically control and guide man, the infinite, have failed. Drugs have brought disaster. *Time* (Sept 23, 1987) regrets that the 325 million dollar scheme to counteract the drug menace may not be

22. *Saturday Review* (New York, Feb. 21, 1976) pp. 17-18.

23. *Time* (New York, April 2, 1979, pp. 52-55).

available due to the recent slump in American economy.'<sup>24</sup>

By 1970s Psychotherapy had lost much of its original charm and had been split into 130 sub-schools.<sup>25</sup> Today there is an increasing demand for *Kundalini Yoga* or 'Kundalini hypothesis' in which even scientists like 'German physicist C. F. Von Weizsacker has also taken a serious interest'.<sup>26</sup> E.F. Schumacher, in his book *A Guide for the Perplexed*, writes, '*The modern experiment to live without religion has failed, and once we have understood this, we know what our post modern tasks really are. Significantly a large number of young people (of varying ages!) are looking in the right direction.*' Schumacher thinks that this right direction lies in what he calls the '*Yoga of a new consciousness, 'the applied science' of religion which seeks 'self knowledge in the inner world of scientist himself' or the 'Divine Power that dwells within him.*'<sup>27</sup> Schumacher's idea of 'the applied science of religion' is only an echo of Vivekananda's definition of Vedanta as the 'science of religion' or 'Practical Vedanta' which nearly 90 years ago, the Hindu monk preached on both sides of the Atlantic.

\* \* \* \* \*

Vedanta believes that the powers of human mind are infinite.

Until sixties the West believed that the powers of the mind are limited. Medical sciences believed that body functions like blood-flow, body-temperature, brainwaves etc. were under automatic regulation. Mind has no control over them.

But in the sixties, researches showed 'that people can learn to control these kinds

24. *Time* (New York: Sept. 23, 1987, p. 31).

25. *Saturday Review* (New York: Feb. 21, 1976, p. 14).

26. *Saturday Review* (New York: Feb. 22, 1975, p. 16).

27. E. C. Schumacher, *A Guide for the perplexed* (Abacus Edn. 1981) pp. 104-5 and p. 159.

of body functions'. The discovery of this so far unknown ability of the mind, is abbreviated in the term *biofeedback* which means a phenomenon of control over internal biological activities of an individual when informations about the function is 'fed back' to the person concerned. 'Almost without warning their dictum (that mind has no control over so-called automatic body functions) collapsed', wrote Barbara Brown, one of the pioneer researchers in this field.<sup>28</sup>

We remember the phenomenon of *Psychokinesis* by which Yuri Gellar bent a spoon only by his thought power. 'The power of the mind is infinite', says Vivekananda. This ancient yogic idea Vivekananda gave in the West, nearly 65 years before the phenomenon of biofeedback was discovered:

All the automatic movements and all conscious movements are the working of Prana through the nerves... True psychology would try to bring them (automatic movements) under the control of the consciousness. The great task is to revive the whole man, as it were, in order to make him complete master of himself. Even what we call the automatic actions of the organs within our bodies such as liver etc., can be made to obey our commands.<sup>29</sup>

...Practical psychology directs first of all its energies in controlling the unconscious, and we know that we can do it. Why? Because we know the cause of the unconscious is the conscious; the unconscious thoughts are the submerged millions of our old conscious thoughts, old conscious actions become petrified.<sup>30</sup>

This is the process of self-purification, of de-hypnotization from the compelling spell of evil tendencies within us. Spiritual practices through Japa or meditation or prayer are only different kinds of biofeedback for controlling our unconscious

28. *Saturday Review* (New York, Feb. 22, 1975, p. 22).

29. *Complete Works*, vol. 2, pp. 12-37.

30. *Ibid.*

thoughts. And this is done by counteracting the unconscious and destructive thoughts by conscious and constructive thoughts. Vivekananda says: '...whatever is in this universe has been projected by Prana. The highest result of vibration is thought'. 'As you think, so is your success', says the *Ashtavakra Gita*. 'Think like Buddha, you will become a Buddha'.... We are heirs to all the good thoughts of the universe if we open ourselves to them... It is thought which is the propelling force in us', says Vivekananda.

\* \* \* \* \*

Neither the Darwinian concept of evolution nor biological research so far has succeeded to explain the world-conquering power of human individuals like Buddha and Christ, 'the high degree of purposive organization' found in all living organisms, or the gigantic personalities like Alexander who commanded millions. Eminent biologist Julian Huxley thinks, 'the human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself... man remaining man but transcending himself by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.'<sup>31</sup> This thought of higher human potentialities he calls 'trans-humanism'. Huxley feels that science must understand that a religion of some kind is a necessary organ for coping with destiny.' And religion must also 'accept and utilize the findings of science...' for a better 'religious construction'.<sup>32</sup> Huxley admits that 'our meagre knowledge of mysticism and Yoga makes it clear that some regions of human potentiality remain virtually unexplored, or at least unavailable to mankind as a whole'. He foresees in future the rise of a *science of human possibilities*, 'I would venture to prophesy that one of the next important steps in human progress

31. Julian Huxley, *New Bottles for New Wine* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957) p. 17.

32. Ibid., p. 305.

will be the development of a science of human possibilities—their nature, their limits, and the communicable techniques for their fuller realization.'<sup>33</sup>

In 1890s Vivekananda brought 'this science of human possibilities,' the Vedanta, and interpreted it as the 'science of soul', or the 'science of religion' in the West.

'Religion is the science which learns the transcendental in nature, through the transcendental in man.... We become perfect even in this life. This is the higher part of our life, and the science of the study of mind and its powers has this perfection as its real end', says Vivekananda.<sup>34</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Huxley of the 19th century once said that 'every man should be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him'. 'It seems clear', says Vivekananda 'that the conclusions of modern materialistic science can be acceptable, harmoniously with their religion, only to the Vedantins or Hindus as they are called'.<sup>35</sup>

Bertrand Russell said in his book *Wisdom of the West*: '...we cannot give scientific justification for the goals that we might pursue, or for the ethical principles that we adopt.'<sup>36</sup> All ethics is based on unity, says Vedanta. And this unity is a common ground of both modern science and Vedanta. Cain who murdered his brother in the old Testament asked, 'Am I the keeper of my brother?' The answer is self-evident. This feeling of oneness, the solidarity of all life, is according to Vedanta, the grand finale of spiritual life. Vivekananda says, 'The end and aim of all science is to find the unity, the one out of which the manifold has been manufactured, One existing

33. Ibid., p. 301.

34. *Complete Works* vol. 2, pp. 12-37. & vol. 8, pp. 20-21.

35. *Complete Works.*, vol. 3, p. 185.

36. Quoted in *Atom and Self* by Dr. D. S. Kothari (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1983) p. 51.

as many.<sup>37</sup> The new paradigm of science, the holographic paradigm as supported by modern physics and physiology, confirms this age-old Vedantic truth. Russell was probably not acquainted with this holistic goal of Vedanta. Julian Huxley says, 'Some kind of wholeness, some degree of unification is thus indispensable, for the higher levels of human fulfilment'.<sup>38</sup> Vedanta is that religion without which, as Einstein put it, science is lame. It is, again, that science without which religion is blind. Rejecting an extra-cosmic factor or a God in heaven, Vedanta, in the way of science and reason, asserts that God, the effect, is involved in man, the cause.

'Vedanta and modern science both posit a self-evoking cause. It Itself are all the causes', says Vivekananda.<sup>39</sup> In the spirit of Vedanta, he declares, 'Take off the veil of hypnotism which you have cast upon the world, send not out thoughts and words of weakness unto humanity.... It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. And what causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature.... Infinite strength is religion and God.... Within there is the Lion, the eternally pure, illumined and ever-free Atman.'<sup>40</sup>

37. *Complete Works.*, vol. 7, p. 133.

38. Huxley, *Loc. Cit.*, p. 300.

39. *Complete Works* vol. 7, p. 103 and p. 51.

40. *Teachings of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, 1976, pp. 266-67, 207.

Sri Ramakrishna used to tell a story. Once a lioness went to attack a flock of sheep. In the action the mother gave birth to a lion cub but herself died. The lion cub, brought up among the sheep, learnt only to eat grass and flee like them, even though it developed to a full-grown lion. One day an elderly lion, came to attack the same flock. He spied the deluded lion. Conditioned to think of itself as lamb, this lion got frightened and began to bleat. The elder lion took it to a pond and showed its face. At once the bleating stopped. It roared for the first time in leonine majesty. Then it was fed with meat. For the first time it tasted its real food. Freed from a life-long bondage of delusion, it went away with its saviour. The elder lion is the real teacher who de-hypnotized the younger one, the disciple, and led it to higher dimensions of life. The young spiritual seeker Narendra thought of personal salvation as the highest good attainable, until one day his great teacher made him realize a far higher state of realization—vision of God everywhere and in every being. The great realization transformed the Calcutta boy into a world prophet, and made him announce to humanity hypnotized in today's sensate culture: 'Never forget the glory of human nature! We are the greatest God.... Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which I AM'.

## ADMINISTRATION FOR SERVICE

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

### 1. *Our post-freedom tragedy*

I wish to draw your attention to the deficiencies that have crept into our national life ever since that blessed occasion of our achievement of political independence on 15 August 1947. The whole nation was in

ecstasy on that day when, after centuries of political subjection and immobilisation, we became free; we got the power to shape our destiny in our own way. That really was an occasion for national rejoicing behind which were the wide-spread heavenly attitudes of renunciation and service, *tyaga*

and *seva*, of the decades-long freedom struggle. But what was a heaven on the first day of independence began to be converted into more and more of a hell from the very next day onwards. We allowed, day by day, in the post-freedom years, all sorts of negative and self-centred attitudes and actions, and fissiparous tendencies, to invade our hearts and our public life. We steadily forgot the message of *tyaga* and *seva* and started creating a hell out of that heaven, with the result that today, after 39 years of freedom, we are confronted with staggering problems of mass poverty, illiteracy, corruption, all sorts of social malpractices, and much callousness and human unconcern in the administration.

What is India today? A bit of a hell. We cannot trust each other; politics, administration, and many among the citizens are corrupt; we cannot work together; we have lost the national vision and fallen under the tyranny of regional and caste loyalties. We more often pull each other down; we quarrel and fight on petty matters, like linguistic, regional, and water-resources-sharing issues; we resort to violence at the slightest provocation. How can we have Human Resource Development in such a situation? Something has gone wrong somewhere during the last few decades. The spirit that animated the nation during the political struggle for freedom is not animating it today. That spirit should have, on the other hand, animated people of an undeveloped nation like ours ten-fold in our post-freedom period, in order to make that freedom meaningful to the millions of our weaker sections. That did not happen; and that has been our Post-Freedom tragedy.

## 2. Swami Vivekananda on 'the Living' and 'the Dead' in society

I wish to inspire you with a wonderful passage, with a powerful sentiment, in the

last sentence, from Swami Vivekananda, written from Chicago to the Maharaja of Mysore in 1894, which contains a profound message to all of us today. What he wrote then had slowly entered into the national mind and heart, throwing up thousands of patriots—men, women and even children—inspired by that wonderful spirit of *tyaga* and *seva*, that had won for us our political freedom. Here is that sentence (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* vol. 4, pp. 362-63).

The one thing that is at the root of all evils in India is the condition of the poor. The poor in the West are devils; compared to them, ours are angels, and it is, therefore, so much the easier to raise our poor. The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, to develop their lost individuality.... Priest-power and foreign conquest have trodden them down for centuries and, at last, the poor of India have forgotten that they are human beings. They are to be given ideas; their eyes are to be opened to what is going on in the world around them; and then they will work out their own salvation. Every nation, every man and every woman, must work out their own salvation. Give them ideas—that is the only help they require, and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization comes in the law of nature.... This is what is to be done in India.... If the poor cannot come to education, education must go to him.

This life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but *they alone live who live for others; the rest are more dead than alive.*

After independence, alas! we have had too many *dead* people of the above description, just as, before independence, we had many many *live* people. This teaching will help us to sit up and think today as to how to tap the enormous human resources that are available in our nation. Demographically, we are a big nation. But we want to restrict our population; we do not want any more in numbers. Seven hundred million people is big enough; it may become 1,000 million by the time our

socio-economic, developmental, and family welfare measures succeed in achieving a zero population growth in our nation. It is important that we stabilize our population at that level. But it is more important that we take all positive measures to rouse their hidden energy resources, their latent creative energies, talents, and capacities, so as to raise them to the highest level of human dignity and worth. The whole social philosophy and message of Swami Vivekananda is comprised in that one single phrase: *man-making—nation-building through man-making—men and women, physically fit, mentally informed and alert, and free.* A thousand million of such people will be a tremendous human resource and its impact within the nation and abroad will also be equally tremendous.

### 3. *Two factors in all Human Resource Development*

In the field of Human Resource Development, we have to reckon with two factors, which have to work together for achieving success. The first factor is the politicians and the ministers, and the second factor is the administrative staff at all levels. These two factors can create either a heaven, or a hell, in any society. Between these two, we have succeeded in creating near-hellish conditions in our nation, in these few post-freedom years. How can we reverse this trend and start creating heavenly conditions? How can we bring hope and cheer and peace to the nation? How shall we make the people feel that we are progressing towards the national goal envisaged in the Constitution? These questions, when seriously considered, burn into our souls the supreme importance of the wonderful sentiment conveyed in those words of Vivekananda quoted before: *They alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than*

*alive.* This is the criterion of being 'alive' or 'dead' in the case of a species so highly evolved as man. We need a thorough change in mind and attitude in our politics and administration at all levels, through which we shall have more and more of *live* people instead of *dead* people among them.

Thinking is the most powerful force behind all high culture and civilization. When we become complacent, when we stop thinking, all progress also comes to a stop. It looks as if, after our independence, calm thinking became devalued, frenzied thoughts and actions became the main features of our national life. That has to be reversed today. The remaining twelve years of this amazing twentieth century must be utilized to make our national development move faster and faster and faster, so that every man and woman and child in our country will achieve a sense of human dignity and worth and feel the touch of the blessings of political freedom. It is here that our administration, at all levels, urgently needs an attitudinal change.

### 4. *Three types of human growth*

There are very many ideas relating to this subject. I present to you now one of the more important of those ideas; it relates to a certain *growth* needed in the administrator to be able to discharge this responsibility. We know two types of growth. One is the physical growth which a baby attains before as well as after it is born. Then comes the mental growth. It begins immediately after birth and continues and expands through education in school and college. We can watch this mental growth in the baby, child, youth and adult. This second growth is a beautiful process and is uniquely human. We have achieved these two types of growth in increasing numbers of our people and that process is expanding steadily. But, because we have not achieved another and a third type

of growth which is most vital, we are in trouble today. That is called the spiritual growth of man. It is an integral part of the science of man, of the science of human possibilities, of the science of Human Resource Development. We use the word religion. It is a highly misunderstood and misapplied word. Today it means only either some superstition or miracle-mongering, or some ritual or communal conflicts. These are the expressions of a static piety, or rather, of a piety-fringed worldliness which can smoothly exist with much selfishness, exploitation, violence, greed, and other evil traits of character. But, according to religion as a science, as the science of spirituality, developed in our country, *religion means the spiritual growth of man*. In that spiritual growth is found the onset of the humanistic impulse, a sense of social responsibility, and the spirit of service. What is the nature of that spiritual growth? One may go to a temple, or a church, or a mosque, or a Gurudwara. One may read holy books; one may do rituals or meditation; but one must always ask this one question to oneself: Have I grown spiritually from these? Have I become purer, more humanistically-oriented, more loving, more peaceful and more efficient in work? Then I will become a blessing to others. These are the fruits of religion understood as spiritual growth: these constitute the virtues and graces of a *dynamic spirituality* as against the evil fruits of that *static piety*.

##### 5. *The anatomy of power: healthy versus unhealthy*

All politics and administration mean power, political power, administrative power. We have to learn how to handle power; being a subject nation for centuries, we had not the opportunity to handle political power. During our centuries-long feudal

socio-political order, power was more often used to exploit and harm the people than to serve them. Such powers, in the hands of the few constituting the administration, sit heavily on all others, but more heavily on the poor and on the weaker sections of society. And this has been the dismal record in our country for centuries. This dismal use of political, social and religious power to crush the millions in our nation evoked the following bitter response from the bleeding heart of Swami Vivekananda in a letter written from America to his faithful Madras disciple Alasinga Perumal in 1893 (*The Complete Works*, vol. 5, pp. 14-16.)

And Oh! how my heart ached to think of what we think of the poor, the low, in India!— They sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society; and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too are men. And the result is slavery.... You are bond-slaves to any nation that thinks it worthwhile to rule over you. Ah tyrants! You do not know that the obverse is tyranny and the reverse slavery. The slave and the tyrant are synonymous.

I pity them.... Their eyes see nothing beyond their little horizon of a few yards—the routine work of eating, drinking, earning, and begetting, following each other in mathematical precision!... Their nice little brown studies of lives never rudely shocked by the wail of woe, of misery, of degradation and poverty, that has filled the Indian atmosphere—the result of centuries of oppression. They little dream of the ages of tyranny—mental, moral, and physical—that has reduced the image of God (that is man) to a mere beast of burden; the emblem of the Divine Mother (that is woman) to a slave to bear children; and life itself, a curse!

...  
I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle, for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed.

We are now a free democratic state; for the first time after 5,000 years of our long history, this country of ours is experimenting with a continent-wide democratic government of the people, by the people, for the people. We have never experienced this before. All

through, we were all *prajas*, subject, literally, children. We were all subjects, of some king, some emperor, some military conqueror, either indigenous or foreign. But today, for the first time, we are, each one of us, sovereign, in a sovereign democratic republic, in which the sovereignty of every individual in India, his or her primary personality, shines as a free and responsible citizen of free India. It is very unfortunate that this truth, this citizenship awareness, has not dawned and become active in most of our people, even in our so-called educated people filling our politics, administration, and the professions.

It is in this context of freedom that we must learn to handle all political and administrative power relevant to our new democratic State. At present, it is obvious that many of our holders of power do not know to handle power. There is a healthy way, and there is an unhealthy way, of handling power. When power goes into our heads, it inebriates us like wine, and then we harm the people, instead of helping them. That is the unhealthy way of handling power.

It is in this new context of our struggle to transform feudal India into a democratic India, not only political but also economic and social, that every holder of power must ask oneself this great question: What shall I do with the power placed in my hands by our State? Even a peon has more power than any citizen; he can stop the citizen visitor from getting into the office to meet the officer. A constable stationed on the road has more power than the citizen; he can use that power to harass that citizen, especially the weaker sections of society. This is the peon or the constable as a mere employee. But if that peon or constable or any other of the higher functionaries of the State, ceases to identify oneself with one's mere *function*, and is aware of one's *being*, one's citizenship of free India, how vastly different will be his

or her treatment of the citizens! He or she will welcome the visitor and courteously say to him or her: Please come in, I am here to help you, to serve you; what can I do for you? *Such healthy and beneficent handling of power at all levels and fields of administration will be the real national revolution.*

True religion is, in the scientific definition given by Swami Vivekananda, 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man'. Work done in a spirit of service, on the one hand, and inward meditation, on the other, form the twin means for the manifestation of that inherent divinity. That confers character-strength and work-efficiency. It signifies the onset of spiritual growth and psycho-social evolution, referred to earlier. In the absence of this spiritual growth as its fruit, all religious rituals and practices become sterile. *Spiritual growth is the key word in the science of religion.* Growth is the key word in the science of agriculture. You plant a sapling; it has two leaves; you water and manure it; after two years, it has only two leaves as on the first day; then the science of agriculture says that there is something wrong with the plant; it should have grown, but has not. This should be the approach to religion also; it should be approached as a science of human growth, development, and fulfilment. As a static piety, it keeps us where we are, where we begin; as a dynamic spirituality, it makes us grow in ethical awareness, humanistic impulses, and spirit of service and dedication. Politically as well as spiritually, when a *grihasta* grows into a citizen, service becomes the supremely rewarding attitude in inter-human relationships, rewarding, as much to the one that is served as to the server. When power becomes invested with this spirit of dedication and service, it becomes capable of achieving the spiritual development of the individual concerned along with the total human development of the nation. A



tremendous revolution in the attitude to work will be achieved thereby, with equally revolutionary consequences for our nation. It will mean the writing of a new glorious modern chapter of our long national history.

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND HIS MESSAGE

(One Christian's Reflections on the Command, 'Remain in *bhāvamukha*')<sup>1</sup>

FATHER FRANCIS X CLOONEY S.J.\*

I am honored to participate in this prayerful celebration commemorating the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. It is a day when prayer and reflection together, across religious boundaries, are especially appropriate, and I am glad to be here with you as a Roman Catholic priest and a Jesuit.

In preparing my reflections, I decided that I would simply focus on one important theme that caught my attention in reading *The Great Master*—Swami Saradananda's masterful recounting and illumination of the life of Ramakrishna. The theme is that of *bhāvamukha*, and I will read and comment on certain passages which, I think, show how the concept of *bhāvamukha* is an invaluable key to understanding the very heart of his life and mission. I will conclude by suggesting how this theme echoes in my own life as a Roman Catholic devotee of Jesus Christ.

"Remain in *bhāvamukha*:"<sup>1</sup> thus the

Divine Mother commanded Ramakrishna several times in his life, telling him that he must not spend his life entirely in ecstasy, as if beyond the world and turned away from it, and that neither should he forget the divine by being too fully immersed in material reality. Rather, he was to remain in something of an in-between state, on the "edge" between the finite and infinite, aware of how the former is always flowing from the latter.

Ramakrishna first hears the Mother's command after a certain Vaishnava, named Haladhari, had one day "proved that the Divine experiences in ecstasy were all untrue, and pointed out that God was beyond existence and non-existence. Great was the Master's perturbation." Paltry experiences we have in this world are really nothing: they need to be put aside, ignored, if we seek to understand the divine and reach our full spiritual capacity.

This rebuke naturally tormented Ramakrishna because through all the early years of his life, he had frequently experienced, as absolutely central to his developing self-identity, powerful, all-encompassing movements of his spirit toward the Divine as a Mother beckoning him and revealing herself to him; but now someone was telling him, "Don't pay any attention to that, drop it, for it is only your imagination." This is what happens next, in one of the most important moments of his life:

\* This is slightly revised version of the talk the author gave at the Ramakrishna Mission Vedanta Society of Boston on 1 March 1987, at the invitation of Swami Sarvagatananda.

1. The word *bhavamukha* is a compound, which the glossary to the English translation of *The Great Master* explains as follows: '*Bhava* means a being, an idea, and *Mukha* the source. The word means the source of all beings and thoughts and ideas.' 'Remain in *bhavamukha*' therefore enjoins one to remain just as that point where the divine source floods forth into the multiplicity of experiences, thoughts, things, looking, as it were, in both directions at once.

[Ramakrishna says,] I cried with the feeling of wounded love and said to the Mother, "Shouldst Thou, O Mother, deceive me so, because I am unlettered and ignorant?" The cry and the agony would not stop. I sat there and wept in the "mansion." What I saw some time afterwards was like a fog-like smoke rising suddenly from the floor and filling the space in front of me. I saw later in that smoke a beautiful living face of golden complexion, with beard reaching to the breast! That figure looked steadfastly at me and said with a profound voice: "My child, remain in Bhavamukha." That figure repeated those words thrice and immediately dissolved in the fog, and the fog-like smoke also vanished into the void. When I had that vision, I got back my peace of mind.

Precisely in the moment of doubt and torment, when he had been told that his experiences were really just the products of a childish imagination and that the divine was beyond such experiences, he was assured that this world of experience was precisely where he should remain, without apology; to understand his Mother, the Absolute, he had to learn to be constantly aware of her *while* dwelling in the world where human experiences occur. He should no longer be afraid of being trapped or confined there, but rejoice at the fact that he could see her presence revealed in each and every experience.

Later on, after a period of very intense meditation, in which he had dwelled in a pure and unqualified state for as long as six months, hardly eating, hardly breathing, hardly sleeping, (hardly staying alive, it seems, and on the edge of death,) he returned to the "world of the senses" when he again heard the command: "Remain in *bhāvamukha*." This time, the nature and purpose of this remaining was spelled out clearly and fully.

...the Master's mind had the immediate consciousness of the existence of that idea or will in the cosmic mind of the omnipresent Brahman, as it was remaining most of the time in complete oneness with the Absolute, the non-dual Being;

and, at times, getting separated from It partially, was realizing that it was a part of the all-pervading Brahman with attributes, the Mother of the universe. On account of that realization, the future purpose of his life stood completely revealed to him.

For, not standing in need of a body, nor at all desirous to continue in life, yet commanded again to "remain in Bhavamukha," according to the inscrutable will of his Universal Mother, the Master now came to know that he had to live in a body thenceforward in accordance with the will and purpose of the sportive Divine, and that he had been so commanded because his body could not continue to live, were he totally identified with Brahman...

He came to know, moreover that it was with a view to accomplish some special purpose of Her's on earth that the universal Mother had brought him down to earth into a poor Brahmin family, as one devoid of all grandeur of external powers. He came to know, further, that only a few people would be able to know and understand, during his lifetime, the mystery of that play of the Divine Mother and that as soon as the generality of people would begin to understand it, the Mother would absorb Her child back into Her own Person; but that the spiritual waves, which his body and mind would generate, would go on surging with ever greater momentum and would bring after his passing away plenitude of well-being to humanity for all time.

This rich passage affords us a clear sense of the mission given to him, why he was to remain on the "edge" between the finite and the infinite, why he had been born (and born into the particular circumstances of one poor family), why he had grown up as he did with his particular life experiences, why he had not yet passed beyond this world to some more permanent union with his Mother. His "mission" was to dwell at that crucial meeting point of the divine and human where all experiences begin, and to make known in this world—using the concrete resources of his own life—what it means to be religious and conformed to the divine. He also learned that even when he finally would pass away and be taken back to his Mother, the "waves" of his inner spiritual experience would radiate throughout the

world. Indeed, this last point is not unconnected with the motive for which we ourselves are gathered here today and on occasions like this.

Remaining in *bhāvamukha* placed him at the source of all religious experiences, where the Divine Energy differentiates itself into various forms which can be seen and heard and felt by various people in various ways: that unique point where the human "I", the little self, exists simply to reflect the Divine Self. The story of his life as recounted in *The Great Master* is the account of how the "I" that was his embodied self became more and more completely that precious place in which the Divine Self touches the human. Indeed, as will be no surprise to anyone who has read *The Great Master*, his personality itself—his specificity—became for him the primary communicator of divine experience; his message was not separable from his personality. His physical presence and appearance, his sense of humor, his compassion, the tricks he would play, the large and small things his disciples remembered—all of this had to do with his being the communicator of the Divine Mother.

But despite his joy and constant proximity to the Divine Mother, the necessity of remaining in *bhāvamukha* caused him great suffering—in his own person, and for the sake of others. Thus, for example, when in his state of higher, unconditioned consciousness, he heard the command, "Remain in *Bhāvamukha*," and began to return "for the enlightenment of the world" to ordinary consciousness, "this was followed by illness, blood-dysentery; there was wringing pain in the intestines and it was excruciating. It was after continually suffering for about six months that the mind gradually came down to the normal body-consciousness."

Being on the edge between the divine and the human opened him to participation in the suffering of the world in an extra-

ordinary way; if he had been either totally beyond this world in a state of bliss, or totally sealed within this boundaries of ordinary life, his sensitivity and his capacity to suffer would not have been so great. Being "on the edge" opened him to all the varied sorrows humans are liable to. The extent to which his state of *bhāvamukha* allowed him to share in the sufferings of other people is shown when it is recounted that

even in that state [of *bhāvamukha*] the manifestation and knowledge of that One is so great that the Master felt quite fully that it was He who was doing, thinking and saying whatever anyone in the world was doing, thinking and saying. Even a glimpse of this state is very wonderful. The Master said that when one day a man was walking on the grass, he was feeling very much hurt in his chest, as if it was on his chest that the man was walking. In fact, the blood in his chest coagulated to produce black marks and he became extremely fidgeting on account of pain.

Any pain that was human would destined to become his pain, part of his mission on this earth. One is reminded here of the compassionate sensitivity of Sarada Devi who suffered greatly for the sake of her disciples; as Swami Ghanananda recalls in his account of her, a guru like her "at the time of initiation takes on himself the sins of the disciple and suffers so much from physical maladies. It is extremely difficult to be a guru; for he has to take the responsibility for the disciple's sins." [*Women Saints*, 112].

Dwelling at the source of the world in the Divine Self and faced toward the myriad manifestations of the divine in human experience, Ramakrishna always manifested a reverential care for even the smallest aspects of earthly life. The text gives many different examples of how he had great attention for details, letting nothing carelessly slip by. For instance:

Thus, though remaining incessantly in *Bhavamukha*, the Master was careful about all the

necessary things. He would keep a thing invariably at its proper place, take care of the articles of daily use such as clothes, the small bag of spices, etc., belonging to himself, inquire whether any necessary thing had been forgotten and left behind at the time of going to or returning from any place and always think how the environment of devotees might be made favorable to the spiritual practices by his constant searching inquiries into their worldly affairs to the same degree as their spiritual.

Every detail of this life mattered to him *because* he lived in *bhāvamukha*. Sometimes we may feel that the more spiritual someone is, the less he or she should care about the things of this life, the less he or she should even notice them. But the effect of *bhāvamukha* was clearly not of that sort: dwelling in *bhāvamukha* may free one of material obsessions, but at the same time it opens one's eyes to see everything in the world as a sacred reality, a place of potential religious experience, even grass, chairs, a bag of spices, a bed, a room, were all manifestations of the Divine. Ramakrishna could not be afraid of attending to these things lovingly.

This reverence for the presence of the divine in this world allows, of course, for distinctions; seeing the Mother everywhere did not reduce things to a dull sameness, and special places and things would remain rightly special. Thus, later in life Ramakrishna visited Benares and other pilgrimage sites, and told his disciples that although God can be found everywhere, one should appreciate particularly those places in which God dwells in some special way. He illustrates the way one should ponder those special places by the homely example of a cow chewing its cud:

[Ramakrishna explained,] "...there is a special manifestation of God in these places, though He is uniformly present everywhere, like water which is easily accessible in wells, pools, ponds or lakes, though it can be had in other places also, if one digs for it there." Again, the Master taught us to "chew the cud" after our visits to

these places endowed with a special manifestation of God. He said: "Just as cows eat their fill, become free from anxiety and then, resting in one place, chew the cud, so after one has visited temples and places of pilgrimage, one should sit in a secluded place, think on and merge oneself in those pure thoughts of God that rose in the mind while one was in those places; one should not apply one's mind to sights, tastes and other worldly objects immediately after visiting them. Those thoughts of God do not, in that case, produce permanent results in the mind.

Obviously, this reverence for special places and moments flourishes most fully when it becomes reverence for human beings. Ramakrishna once speaks about the need to respect one's teacher, saying that it is not enough merely to respect the words of the teacher as if to say: "Oh, I like my teacher's ideas, but I don't like the way he dresses, or talks, or eats." It is not right, he says, to separate the word spoken from the speaker:

A man who loves or admires somebody feels special attachment for even a trifling thing used by his beloved. He considers even a flower touched by him, or a piece of cloth worn or a small thing used by him as sacred. Indeed the very ground on which he treads is regarded by him to be very dear and precious. Does it need to be explained that he will have a natural reverence for the body through which he accepts his worship and bestows grace upon him? Those who say so do not understand at all what is meant by the mood of the spiritual teacher.

*Bhāvamukha* was a resource which helped people to find God. Ramakrishna dwelled on the edge of the divine, and could guide others toward that source. Here too it was primarily his personality—the particularity of his life history, his behavior, his own explorations—that communicated the Divine:

Do you not see, with how many kinds of states the Master had to be acquainted? Born in a poor cottage, he suffered intense poverty during his childhood, was appointed a priest in the Kali temple, passed through a mean condition of serving another during his youth and, absorbed

in a search for God, met with harsh treatment from his relatives and became an object of pity and contempt for the worldly people who regarded him as mad, during his period of Sadhana. Again, he experienced the respect worthy of a king when Mathur Babu entertained the greatest possible reverence for him and showed the intensest devotion to him; and he had the supreme splendor worthy of the gods when the aspirants of various denominations poured out their hearts' love and devotion at his lotus feet, knowing him to be an incarnation of God. Thus experiencing all of these and numerous other states, he had to stand the test of remaining perfectly unperturbed under all those circumstances. Just as, on the one hand, his undivided divine love engaged him intensely in practising extraordinary austerities and opened his super-sensuous, subtle Yogic vision, so, on the other, his acquaintance with all those worldly states enabled him rightly to grasp and understand the mental attitudes of people under all circumstances in the gross external world, gave him his skill in dealing with them, and made him sympathize with all kinds of misery and happiness. For it was through all these internal and external states that the Master's power as the teacher was seen to blossom and manifest itself more and more every day.

He attuned himself always to the concrete realities of the people around him, precisely because he could see the Divine manifest in their experience; if he could find the Divine in the grass, in cows and clothing, in teachers and images and temples, he knew all the more that each person who came to him was a unique manifestation of the Divine. Indeed, his primary way of elevating people spiritually was through loving, personal relationships. It is frequently recalled by those who knew him that he could read hearts, that he could be gentle or stern or angry or loving, depending on the precise needs of the person who came to him; *The Great Master* contains a wealth of assurances in this regard, such as the following:

Established in Bhavamukha, the Master knew well the spiritual mood natural to each man or woman, and in accordance with that mood had a relation of love with him or her...It was after

he came down from the non-dual spiritual plane in his first vision of the Divine Mother in the temple that the Master practised the spiritual devotional moods of Sakhya (friendship with God), Vatsalya (treating God as your own child), Madhura (treating God as your husband or wife) to experience directly the bliss of those moods, and attained the highest stage in each of them... Long afterwards, when the devotees of the inner circle came to him, one day the desire arose in the Master's mind that the devotees also might experience ecstasy and he prayed to the Mother accordingly; and immediately some of them began to have such experiences.

Even though all these people were different and each one had a different place in life, his love for them, his ecstasy, reached each in his or her own way. In general: he believed and felt "that all things, men and women, cows and horses, wood and earth, were rising and merging as different aggregates of ideas in the Universal Mind, and that through these coverings of ideas the invisible ether of existence was manifesting itself in various degrees;" his realization of this could then help others to experience the same, according to their abilities and needs.

The longer he dwelt at the source of all religious experience the more his *bhāva-mukha* overflowed into the lives of those around him. Two instances of this come to mind. Once, in January of 1886, the very last year of his life, he was walking in the garden of his house, supported by several disciples and followed by others. Suddenly one of them, Girish, began proclaiming the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna, and then:

In the meanwhile in a state of divine semi-consciousness the Master looked at all present and said smilingly, "What more shall I say to you? May all of you be spiritually awakened." When the devotees heard those words of blessing destroying their fear of the world, they raised with great joy repeated cries of "Glory to Ramakrishna." Some of them saluted him, some showered flowers, some again came and touched

his feet. No sooner had the first devotee touched his feet and stood up than the Master in that state of semi-divine consciousness touched the devotee's breast and passing his hand in the upward direction, said "Awake." And as soon as the second person came and saluted him and stood up, he did the same thing to him, so also to the third and to the fourth. In this way he touched one after another, all of those who approached him thus. And there arose by that marvelous touch a wonderful mood in the mind of each, some of them began to laugh, some to weep, some to meditate and some again to call aloud all others in order that they might be blessed by receiving the grace of the Master, the sea of gratuitous mercy and share the bliss that was overflowing.

Even when he was in ecstasy, he never stopped having an effect on those around him—because he was in *bhāvamukha*, not separated from the world. Moreover, as the text says, some laughed, some wept, some meditated, some sang, some were quiet. There was no single, "generic" experience, each person was uplifted in a different way.

Once, when he was visiting the house where Sri Chaitanya had lived a few centuries earlier, he stood on Sri Chaitanya's chair while the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was being read to him. It is reported that his state of *bhāvamukha* was revealed and overflowed in this way:

He lost himself in listening to the nectar like words of the *Bhāgavata*. He ran towards the seat of Sri Chaitanya, stood on it and entered into so profound a Samadhi that not even the slightest movement of the vital force was observable in him. Seeing that extraordinary loving smile on his effulgent face and the upward pointing of his finger in his uplifted hand, as in the images of Chaitanya himself, eminent devotees felt in their heart of hearts that the Master in *Bhāvamukha* had become completely identified with the great lord—that, having ascended to a higher plane of consciousness, viz., that of *Bhāvamukha*, he was not then at all conscious of the great distance of time, place and other things which in gross eyes, separated his bodily and mental existence from those of Sri Chaitanya... They did not at first know what to do, but later, impelled by that indescribable feeling, they raised

a chorus of the loud shout of Hari and began singing His name.

He was here, in this world, and yet "there", dwelling at the point from which all experiences of the divine flow, just to be near him physically could become the occasion for rising toward that source. This is not a question of mere excitement or of a "cult of the person," but of personality being the chosen vehicle by which the divine reaches the human.

Although much more could be said about the state of *bhāvamukha* and its manifestation in Ramakrishna's life, I think these examples suffice to suggest the depth and breadth of the spiritual possibilities thereby opened. In conclusion I wish now to turn to a more personal kind of reflection. What does all of this mean to me? I am, as you know, a Jesuit and a Catholic priest, a devotee of Jesus Christ, not of Ramakrishna. Nevertheless, Ramakrishna's life and its message echo in my life, what I have described to you about *bhāvamukha* resonates within me and illuminates my own Christian experience. When I speak of Ramakrishna, I am not speaking merely of some outsider, some stranger to my own experience, but rather of someone who tells me a great deal about myself and my faith. What is the significance of such echoes, such illuminations across religious boundaries? I do not want to speculate here, or engage in a theological inquiry as to what this might mean for formal presentations of the Christian faith or for a Christian "theology of world religions." Rather, I wish to remain with the particular, the ways in which his *bhāvamukha* highlight for me certain aspects of my Christian faith.

There have been moments in my life, I suspect in all of our lives, when there have been inklings of what Ramakrishna is talking about and experiencing, of how the divine presence illuminates all the things of life. There are those moments

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, ex-President of India. It may be mentioned that his library, consisting of some 13,000 volumes, was taken over by Tokyo University as many scholars of Japan were intimately related to him.

Swami Vivekananda considered his visit to Max Muller's residence "as a pilgrimage". Max Muller was very hospitable to Swamiji and Mr. Sturdy, inviting them to lunch with him, showing them part of the Oxford University campus and the Bodleian library, and accompanying them to the railway station. And all this was done with great reverence because, as he said, "It is not every day one meets a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa." (*Complete Works*, vol. IV, p. 280).

"The jeweller alone can understand the worth of jewels; this is an old proverb. Is

it a wonder that this Western sage does study and appreciate every new star in the firmament of Indian thought, before even the Indians themselves realise its magnitude?

"When are you coming to India? Every heart there would welcome one who has done so much to place the thoughts of their ancestors in the true light", I said. The face of the aged sage brightened up—there was almost a tear in his eyes, a gentle nodding of the head, and slowly the words came out: I would not return then; you would have to cremate me there. Further questions seemed an unwarrantable intrusion into realms wherein are stored the holy secrets of man's heart....His life has been a blessing to the world...." (*Complete Works*, v. 4, p. 281).

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## RELIGION AND LITERARY CRITICISM

TUTUN MUKHERJEE

Lead me from the unreal to the Real  
Lead me from darkness to Light  
Lead me from death to Immortality.  
(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*)

A very large amount of literary activity in the twentieth century has been devoted to the interpretation and the explication of literature from differing, often divergent, points-of-view to have acquired the recognition of an independent genre of study. The last decade of the century is advantageously poised to assess the basic way in which this vast body of writing has furthered man's knowledge.

### I

First let us briefly examine what is the present concept of man and what is the kind

of knowledge that is generally sought.

Today's man prides himself in the infallibility of his scientific knowledge of the physical world with the help of which he wields greater control over his environment. He has perpetuated, with his knowledge, an efficient and pervasively secular society designed to last longer than any individual's lifetime.

The kind of information that caters to and satisfies the needs of the member of the social state and is aimed at making the performance of the implicit tasks more controlled and skilled is considered valuable knowledge. In the process, man has willingly made himself subservient to the social order, a replaceable spare part in the great machine of the materialist society in which all of his temporal desires and aspirations

Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you"—be with me and for me in your own home, right where you used to be, then without realizing how holy that environment could be.

*St. John's Gospel* [20.11-18] tells us that after Jesus' death, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb in order to stay by the body. She meets the Risen Lord, but he seems so human, so ordinary that she thinks that he is the gardener—even in resurrection he looks like anybody else. She wants to cling to him, but he tells her to return to the city, to tell the disciples that he is risen. Again, the command given to Ramakrishna finds an echo here: "Don't dwell in the pure ecstasy of divine immediacy, but rather go back into the world for the sake of the human race, to illuminate their lives."

Likewise St. Paul, who so intensely experienced the Risen Lord and was so successful in sharing that experience with others, was the kind of person he was because he could live with the basic tension: he was totally "in Christ", and yet "in the world, for others." As he recounts in *Philippians*:

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. [1:21-24].

What Paul is saying is what we might now be able to name "the mission to remain in the state of *bhāvamukha*."

I am a Jesuit, and it was an essential part of the experience of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order, that God is to be found in the world. In creating the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, Ignatius defined a new way of being a religious, of living the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He chose not to be a traditional monk living in isolation from the everyday

world, but rather to nurture that "holy indifference" which made him able to see all things as coming from God and returning to God. His mysticism was simply to find God in all things, as he indicates in the directives stated at the end of his great text, *The Spiritual Exercises*:

Now I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees... [Then I will reflect] how God dwells in creatures: in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in man, bestowing understanding. So He dwells in me and gives me life, sensation, intelligence; and makes me a temple, since I am created in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty... [Then I should] consider how God works and labors for me in all creatures on the face of the earth, that is, He conducts Himself as one who labors. Thus, in the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, the cattle, etc., He gives Being, conserves them, confers life and sensation, etc... [I should] consider all blessings and gifts as descending from above. Thus, my limited power comes from the supreme and infinite power above, and so, too, justice, goodness, mercy; etc., descend from above as the rays of light descend from the sun, and as the waters flow from their fountains, etc. [*Spiritual Exercises* 234-7, Puhl translation.]

If the Jesuit cannot find God in all things, then he cannot find God at all: this too resonates with Ramakrishna's *bhāvamukha*: to live out one's precious experience of God here in a world illumined with God's presence. In fact, this point might well be added: a very interesting comparison can be undertaken at some point between the Jesuit Order and the Ramakrishna Order and the ways they have gone about defining religious life, the visions they have articulated, the works they have undertaken, and the ways in which they have learned from each other the years.

I would like to conclude with a couple





the low and the miserable because service to man is the only true service to God. The emphasis and focus in these writings is thus on the motivation of those who seek to serve than on the situation of those who are sought to be served. Such an emphasis may even create erroneous impression that Vivekananda wanted the perpetuation of poverty for providing us an opportunity for service and means to our *moksha*.

My purpose in this study is to show that Vivekananda more than merely expressed pious sentiments appropriate for a status quo situation but conceived a clear methodology for a radical social change.

Change meant to him something far from charity. Charity is not only not to be encouraged but is positively to be condemned. Vivekananda did not believe that the weaker sections were in need of charity. He had the fullest faith in their inherent ability to lift themselves up. They are merely to be awakened, not to be pitied and made objects of our charity. He was fully conscious of the fact that they would hate us if we made them objects of our pity and charity and that they would adore us if we awakened them to the status of potential divinity.

Vivekananda, as one who had a vision of universal reality and the potentiality of the individual, was struck by the inequalities in the society which for ages preached the essential equality of all men. Hinduism with its doctrine of *Advaita* is the boldest religion of the world proclaiming the unfettered freedom of man and ironically enough nowhere else the fetters are stronger and held longer than in India. He was appalled at this Advaitic atrocity perpetrated on the credible masses. His first task was then to isolate the root cause of this dichotomy. The villain of the piece, according to him, was religion. Religion, instead of remaining an instrument of liberation of the individual, became an instrument of oppression and exploitation.

Vivekananda saw that religion was wrongly supposed to impose restrictions on the actions and aspirations of certain sections of people. The oppressed believed that bondage was a religious injunction and that it would be sinful for them to attempt to throw off their fetters and fight to come out of their misery. It was at these fetters, at this ignorance, that Vivekananda directed his blow. He wanted the masses to be enlightened in this essential spirit of *Advaita* that man is free and free to act. There are no fetters. Man has not to be given freedom, nor is he to gain freedom, for he is already free. He has only to be made aware of it.

If there is one thing which Vivekananda emphasized in his teachings it is this awareness of absolute, unfettered freedom. He does not recognize any authority which seeks to impose rules on this freedom, however high and holy the authority attempting to impose them might be. That is religion which frees. If it tries to bind, it is no religion. The words on the opening page of his *Raja Yoga* tellingly present this truth, 'be free. This is the whole of religion.' And freedom to Vivekananda meant freedom to act and action meant acting in freedom. Thus Vivekananda has salvaged religion as an instrument of liberation. The moment it seeks in the least to fetter, it forfeits its claim to be called religion.

Religion in the name of caste stamped certain classes as unworthy of any freedom, freedom to know and to act. Vivekananda pointed out that no true religion would thus deny freedom. 'It is in the books written by priests that madness like that of caste is to be found and not in books revealed from God.' He firmly believed that religion has no right to impose weakness on any section. He observed 'Religion has only to do with the soul and has no business to interfere in every social matter.' Vivekananda thus seeks to free the weaker and also the religion.

But it would be dangerous not to be aware that caste, or any other distinction can drop in two conditions—in ignorance and in knowledge. It is easy to say that caste is an evil, easy to believe, easy to accept intellectually but impossible to erase it from our consciousness. Let us not deceive ourselves. Vivekananda himself says that it is at 'the root of Maya' It is one thing to say that caste is an evil out of anger, jealousy and hatred, no doubt generated by centuries of oppression or out of pity. It is quite another thing to be aware of the essential oneness of all creation.

It must be realized that not all those who say there is no caste, are revolutionaries, and not all those who say caste is real, are unenlightened reactionaries. In fact I am inclined to believe the reverse to be true. And most of us do not have the same right, as Vivekananda had, to say that caste is an evil illusion.

Emerging from the ignorant inactivity and gaining this awareness of the freedom to act, the next question is how to act. It is necessary here to note that Vivekananda believed in absolute self-reliance whether in the case of an individual or a class or a nation. No one can help another. And no one will. He believed that the weaker classes should liberate themselves. It is futile to expect the privileged classes, the aristocracy, or the intellectuals, to do anything to bring them up. 'Trust not the so-called rich. The hope lies in you—in the weak, the lowly but the faithful.' He expected the weaker class to look for no sympathy and support but consolidate its power and fight for its own liberation. He fully knew the force of class consciousness. Writers on Vivekananda to his right and to his left missed his central message. The leftists accused him of abetting the feudal forces as they were obliged to misrepresent his message. The neo-rightists, if I may so call them, sought to soften and weaken his revolutionary message by representing

him as a kind of vague socialist who believed that the weaker sections would somehow, in some mysterious manner, be uplifted without any struggle.

One can hardly accuse Vivekananda of vagueness. Probably he is the only philosopher who did not indulge in ambivalence. He was clear and forthright in his utterances. He may not have written a political manifesto or discussed the logistics of a class war. But he certainly left no doubt about the nature of the course of the social change. And it would be incorrect to say that he did not foresee any violent change. He knew that without fight, without struggle no improvement in the condition of the masses would come. His language is a language of dynamic struggle for better life, through education and spiritual ideas of Vedanta. Each writer on the *Gita* would point to a *shloka* as the most important one. Ramanuja for instance would choose: *Sarvadharmam partityajya mamekam sharanam vraja*. Shankara may choose: *Karmanyakarma yah pashyedarmani cha karma yah*. But Vivekananda most emphatically said that the crucial verse of the *Gita* was: *Kshudram hridaya daurbalyam tyaktvottishtha Parantapa*. Vivekananda thundered against *hridaya daurbalyam* for it keeps one away from the necessary struggle.

This was how Vivekananda envisaged the social change: 'People of this country are immersed in great *tamas*.... So my idea is first to make the people active by developing their *rajas* and thus make them fit for the struggle for existence.' The crucial word here is 'struggle'. Struggle for education, for better living, for better opportunities is inevitable and the masses have to be prepared for this struggle. They must first be aroused through education and vedantic slogan of everyone's innate divinity, awakened from their *tamas*, sleep and inactivity—*kshudram hridaya daurbalyam tyaktva*. They have to attain a dignified status in

on the political system in India, by Subhas Kasyap, Secretary General, Lok Sabha, and Sravan Kumar (I.A.S. Retd) highlight on the present political condition in India. The illustrated article on the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama by Swami Jitatmananda is informative. The illustrated sketch on the Jnanpith Laureates is an added attraction of this issue. Rt. Honble V.S. Srinivasa Sastri's inspiring writing on the great books that influenced his life bring a new dimension. Besides, there are two other short sketches on Kulapati Balakrishna Joshi, and Vishnu Vaman Shirwadkar. The article on Yoga practice by B.K.S. Iyengar and the illustrated one-act play on Kisa Gotami have contributed to the enrichment of this special issue of *Bhavan's Journal*.

Four books (in English) for children from Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4. (All published in 1988; Prices not mentioned).

1. Ramayana for Children (Illustrated)—Swami Raghaveshananda, Art by Padmavasan.
2. The Story of Sri Sankara for children.
3. Pictorial Stories for children.
4. Gods and Goddesses (see and paint).

The four books mentioned above are new publications to acquaint the Indian children with the gods and goddesses of Hindu pantheon, and with the epic of the Ramayana. The language of the stories is simple, meant for school children. The four-colour illustrations in every page are impressive. The first two books, on the Ramayana and Sankaracharya, deserve especial credit for easy, lucid writing, excellent printing, and attractive art designs which drive home the theme of the books much quicker than the words in print.

S.J.

**SHRI RAMAKRISHNA PRADHANA SISHYA-VARGAMU (TELUGU)** By Dr. P. Shyamsundara Murthy, published by Shri Ramakrishna Seva Samiti, Maruteru (W. Godavari, A. P.)—534 122, p. 122 + xi, Rs. 5/-

Much of the vast Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature is yet to be translated into Telugu. While the gospel of Shri Ramakrishna has been translated only recently, the *magnum opus*—The Great Master, still remains a hidden treasure. Under the circumstances, any book on Shri Ramakrishna in Telugu would be welcome and the book under review, dealing with the lives of direct disciples of Shri Ramakrishna will be widely welcomed.

The book is based on the Apostles of Shri Ramakrishna, compiled in English by Swami Gambhiranandaji, the past president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. It is not a literal translation and is a highly abridged version of the original. Unfortunately, many of the important incidents in these lives have been sacrificed due to the brevity of the life-sketches. The last fifteen pages of the book have been devoted to *namavalis* and *hymns*. This space could have been better utilised for giving some more details of the lives of at least a few of these monks.

Nevertheless, the Telugu readers who have had no opportunity to read these biographies will surely welcome the book, which is written in simple and chaste Telugu.

Kamala Jaya Rao  
Ramakrishna Math  
Hyderabad-29

**THE WISHING TREE** by Christopher Isherwood. Published by Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1988, p. 208 Price, \$ 9.95.

We now have in the present book a stimulating and sumptuous collection of most of the articles Isherwood wrote for the magazine of the Hollywood centre *Vedanta and the West* between 1943-1975. (I still remember the breathless excitement with which I used to wait for the arrival of these issues from, roughly 1962 onwards, far, far away from Hollywood to a remote place in Andhra where I was then based, and I still have those copies which I fondly think are collectors' items!)

Arranged under five heads, these essays range from personal statements, synoptic essays on Vedanta and the Western condition, the intersecting points between the writer and the Vedanta to portraits of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Sarah Bernhardt, Swami Shivananda and Girish Ghosh. It also includes selections from his Gita translation, some prefaces he wrote, and, as a culmination, an entrancingly beautiful fable after which the book is named: *The Wishing Tree*.

This wide range of contents, however, has one central concern which is, as it were, the animating impulse of Isherwood's life and writing, ever since he came in touch with Vedanta (and its modern exemplar Ramakrishna) through Prabhavananda: the intense desire to actualize the real nature which is "divine". This manifestation seizes every activity whether it is creative or analytical. In Isherwood's memorable words, this

And now to come to the subject of what happened to the message of Vivekananda, the message of the Upanishads which should be the mission of all the religious organizations to spread and not of just one particular organization. Vivekananda said the masses in India are so poor that they cannot reach out for education. The Mohammed must go to the mountains. But now we find that it is not the masses which are the mountain, the immobile. It is the non-masses like us. We are not eager to go from village to village as he had asked us to do. We are eager to fly from city to city from Bombay to Belgrade, from Madras to Massachusetts in a truly universal spirit. And we think a lecture a great success if two Americans attend it than when two hundred ignorant Indians do. We think our mission complete if we sell books which the poor illiterate can neither buy nor

understand. Our religion is reflected in building five-star temples and three-star meditation centres. All that glitters is God. And our religion comes in flood and ebbs into famine.

Gandhi also said, 'reach the masses'. But they seem to be beyond our reach. That is probably the fate of any prophet of revolution—including Marx. Thus between the message and the masses—falls the shadow.

I consider Vivekananda to be nothing if not a religious teacher, and the fundamental mission of religion is to awaken the masses. It doesn't appear to us that religion has done much in this when we see what kind of political and social awakening is found in the country today. Thus the religion we, by and large practise, is not the same religion Vivekananda speaks of. He speaks of Practical Vedanta. Have we tried to put Vedanta into practice?

## TWO LIGHT HOUSES FOR THE BLIND

### I

#### REACHING OUT THE BLIND

*Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore*

SWAMI TANMAYANANDA

Swami Vivekananda appealed to the countrymen to provide education to the masses to develop their lost individuality. This has been the guiding principle of our institution. Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, is one of the nationally recognized educational complexes in India. Situated in an area of 300 acres, the institution offers education right from the primary to doctoral level. Various types of education, such as School education, Teachers' Training, Agricultural, Technical

and Physical Education, etc., are available at the institution and the beneficiaries are increasing every year. The institution is very particular in the innovation of new ideas and implementation of those at the grassroot level, in order to help many persons in the community.

The Vidyalaya entered into a new and challenging venture known as the 'Integrated Education for the Blind' in the year 1980. In collaboration with the International Council for the Education of the Visually

Handicapped (ICEVH) and the Christoffel Blindenmission, West Germany, the work commenced. With the popularity gained with the idea of Universal Education in India, the institution proclaimed that Universal Education would be unreal without the inclusion of the disability population in its fold. Striving hard to prove the systematic implementation of integrated system, in which the blind child is educated along with the normal sighted children, the institution started demonstrating the concept by admitting seven blind children along with the sighted in the Vidyalaya High School and TAT Kalaniyam Primary School in June 1980. After two years of continuous effort and experimentation, we came out with the cost-effective and working modalities of integration. Therefore, for the first time in the history of education of the blind in India, training emerged at the Master's level at Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya College of Education in 1982-83, thus creating a zeal for professionalism in young people. As the declaration of the International year of the Disabled People (IYDP) declared in 1981 provided stupendous significance to the education of the disabled, the University Grants Commission came forward to support our institution to start training programme at the B. Ed. level also to train teachers of the blind in integrated education programmes. Today, training facility is available both at the M. Ed. and B. Ed. levels. In implementation, we had to face many unforeseen circumstances. Each problem solved exposed us to two or three additional problems. With our philosophic consistency in blind welfare, we continuously strived hard and succeeded in our efforts. The trained teachers from the Vidyalaya are deployed in integrated education programmes in various parts of the country. As on 31 August 1987, a total of 574 disabled children (467 blind children and 107 orthopaedically handicapped children) are

served by 57 trained teachers from the institution in 44 schools. As a result, integrated education has become an irresistible force today reaching the length and breadth of the country.

When the Resource teachers started service delivery in the schools, they felt the need for braille material for effective integration of blind children. Unfortunately the vital text material such as Mathematics and Science were not available from the Braille Presses. The Vidyalaya mounted a modest Resource and Development Centre, with a specific objective of transcribing Mathematics and Science text material for the integrated education programmes. With the expertise available for this field in the Vidyalaya, many innovative techniques such as adaptation of text material, incorporation of tactile diagram, pagination etc., were used. The finished books became very popular among the blind children in schools and the demands increased. Schools from other States have also approached. Our role was perceived by the University Grants Commission as a Regional Resource Centre. The UGC has accepted to extend financial assistance to the institution to establish a Braille Material Production Centre to cater to the needs of blind children of integrated education programmes in the southern States. We will be introducing Computerised braille production for the first time in India in the very near future.

The Resource and Development Centre also has a Recording Unit to record lessons in cassettes. Professional recording of text material is done and the cassettes are used by the integrated education programmes which are being implemented in the 44 Schools.

Equipments play an important role in the education of the blind. Some equipments are used by children such as braille slate, abacus, taylor frame etc., whereas equipments like brailier, thermoform

machine etc., are used by the teachers. In India, the major problem with the Braille (typewriter for the blind) is that they go out of order very often. These machines are very sensitive to dust and maintenance in the past was a real problem. Sensitising this, the Vidyalaya developed expertise in the maintenance services for braille. Today, we have a full fledged unit in the Vidyalaya to undertake maintenance services for braille. A large number of organizations is using the services of this centre.

Even though our initial focus was on the school going population, blind people of other age groups also approached us for service. This demand resulted in starting of the community based Rehabilitation Services for the Blind in six blocks surrounding the Vidyalaya.—About 100 villages have been brought under the Rural services over the past two years. These services include the teaching of Orientation and Mobility skills for independent movement, Daily Living skills, Manual dexterity skills and Vocational skills. We could mobilize the local resources such as the Employment Exchanges, Regional Rehabilitation Centres, Nationalised Banks, Industries etc., to secure assistance for the clients to start self-employment programmes. A total of 132 adult blind clients has been served so far and 97 clients are being served currently. Our services in this area will develop intensively.

Substantial amount of print literature has been developed in the institution. At the request of UNESCO, the institution developed a Source Book for Teachers of Visually Disabled Children. Similarly many research articles have been published by the staff of this Department.

National and International Organizations have recognized the work of the Vidyalaya in the field of education and rehabilitation for the blind. The UNESCO conducted its Regional Planning Seminar and Workshop on Special Education in August 1985 at the

Vidyalaya. The National Council for Educational Research and Training, New Delhi, The National Institute for the visually Handicapped, Dehradun, and other Voluntary Organizations are collaborating with the Institution for various development project in the area of visual disability.

Our services for the blind, thus continue. We find enormous joy and satisfaction to see the blind individuals blossoming in life. We are committed to the notion that the provision of the right opportunity to the blind people would bring out their latent potentiality. Our staff execute this work with a sense of devotion, dedication and determination. The welfare of the blind in future will really flourish as more and more people with commitment are drawn to its services. We are guided by the words of Swamiji—'Every duty is holy and devotion to duty is the highest form of worship of God'

## II

### A HOME FOR THE BLIND BLIND BOYS' ACADEMY

*Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama,  
Narendrapur*

S J.

Unless you go near, you can never know that he is a blind man driving the tractor, choosing the right kind of seeds and manure, or planting seedlings. It is at the Agriculture farm of the Blind Boys' Academy at Narendrapur. He is one of those blind youth who come in batches every year for training either in agriculture, light engineering, music and regular academic studies, vocational school, poultry and Dairy. Some of them come back to their alma mater, Narendrapur, just to offer the first fruit of their maiden harvest to the Swamis who brought light in their dark life.

The story of this outstanding institution for Blind Education, one of the best in South East Asia, goes back to the post-partition days. Discouraged, and driven by poverty and apathy, a brilliant blind youth Sri Bhavani Prasad Chanda came to a Swami of the Ramakrishna Order, to find a way out for his college education. At once he was accepted. The Swami provided him not only with books, hostel facilities and college opportunities, but with a hope and love the youth had himself never dreamt of. Soon he emerged as a good scholar and powerful debator. When he finally got his M.A. degree, he refused to go home for a comfortable life. The Swami's love had already inspired him to dedicate his own life to help build an institution for the blind. That was the beginning of the Narendrapur Ramakrishna Mission's Blind Boys' Academy in the year 1957. Some two dozens of blind youth joined the first batch in a tin shade with a few braille books and musical instruments, but under the loving care of a band of inspired Swamis under the guidance of the dreamer-builder of this pioneering institution, Swami Lokeswarananda.

Today it is a colossal institution with two huge three-storey hostels, and a modern three-storey complex which virtually shelters the entire academy. It keeps four objectives as its goal.

(1) Educate those among the blind boys who appear to be intellectually sharp ;

(2) Teach advanced music to the really talented among them ;

(3) Train them to work as drill and press operators, capstan operators, turners and other skilled craftsmen ; and

(4) Teach scientific farming, specially poultry-keeping, dairy science, kitchen gardening, horticulture, floriculture, etc., to those who have a farming background or come from poor families of rural areas.

Already a good number of the students

has got rehabilitated. The following is the latest position :

<i>Profession</i>	<i>No. of blind men employed</i>
School & College Teachers	20
Music Teacher	14
Industrial worker	145
Workers in the Sub-contract Workshop	40
Agricultural workers resettled in their home	125
Miscellaneous	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>359</b>

A new project under the placement department of the Academy has been introduced in 1976. It is a mobile exhibition which is installed in a demonstration van with an inside floor area of 12' × 6' and 5.5' height. The van is equipped with power-driven mini lathe, grinding and drill machine and one hand-driven rubber band cutting machine. The students of the industrial Training Centre of the Academy, work on these machines in front of spectators to give them a practical idea about the blind person's capabilities.

All the 115 trainees in Agriculture have already been resettled in their professions like, Poultry, Goat and Cow keeping, Market-gardening, Cultivation of paddy and wheat, etc.

A swimming pool project was commissioned in 1978 in an artificial pool with inlet and outlet facilities of water. It has created a new jubilation in the heart of blind youngsters. When situation permits, competition in aquatics will be organized here, in this artificial pool.

There are practically a few teachers in the country who are specifically trained to teach the blind. This has proved a great



hurdle to the work of educating the blind. The Academy started training such teachers on the regional basis in 1965 and since then trainees representing different schools and organizations for the blind in the Eastern Region and also of South India have been trained.

The Academy started a Regional Braille Press in 1967 at Narendrapur, which is producing Braille Books to meet the needs of blind students living in the Eastern Regions of India, Assam, Orissa, West Bengal, Tripura, Manipur, etc. Up to 1986 the Press has completed brailing of books for classes I to VII and most of the text books for classes IX and X including annual calendars, and also a few books of the higher secondary standard.

Since May 1986, the Blind Boys' Academy has started a new venture—spice powder and naphthalene ball-making units for self-employment of those visually handicapped post-trainees, who are waiting for employment.

Presently eight blind workers have been engaged in training for a period of one

year, to learn making spice powder and naphthalene ball, operating heat-sealing machines, drying, packing etc. as also to sale the products and to create market for the future self-employment.

In completion of their training the trainees-cum-workers would be encouraged to start a small business either individually or in a group of 4-5 ex-trainees. Nationalized Banks have assured the financial assistance for these entrepreneurs.

Today after thirty years the Academy feels a sense of pride. Some of the students have come out as good musicians, teachers, lecturers on different subjects, and even as writers. But most of them have gone to the vocational line either for employment opportunities or success in self-employment.

Some of the ex-trainees of the Academy have been awarded National Award for outstanding worker, both in the field of agriculture and engineering, by the President of India. Government of India has offered the Academy the National Award for the best work done in the cause of the disabled for the year 1983.

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## A TRIP TO RITHA SAHIB IN THE HIMALAYAS

SWAMI AJITATMANANDA

24 January of this year was one of coldest days in Mayavati. On this day we were to make a trip to Ritha Sahib, holy pilgrim centre of the Sikhs in this Kumaon Himalayas. We started at 7 a.m. by our jeep. Since it was a hilly road, the speed of the vehicle was slow. All the wheat fields and valleys on our way were covered with thick frost as if there was a snow-fall. The Himalayan snow-peaks of Nanda Devi, Nanda Kot, Panchachuli, and Trishul, were very clear, and we could see these peaks from different spots on the way. The jeep

moved through long winding paths covered with pines and cedars. Occasionally we stopped in secluded pine forests to have a cup of tea. In the chill winter morning the sky was azure blue, and the forests green except for some Rhododendrons loaded with red bushes of flowers. For sometime the jeep climbed up, and then it began to climb down to the hilly river bed in between steep rising hills on all sides. The Himalayan view was just grand, the peaks dazzling in the fresh-fallen snows due to rains a few days back. It was

programme was limited to the usual morning meditation and chanting of hymns, a beautiful puja at 11 a.m. and the evening Arati. The magazine "*Vedanta*"—the first one in Brazil concerning the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature—was released and distributed among devotees and to the general public. It was, however, on 12th March, Sunday, that the public celebration was duly performed with grandeur at the retreat Ashrama of Sao Paulo. This retreat is located in the rural area in a lovely spot surrounded by trees, a very propitious place for seclusion and spiritual practices. It has a large shrine room and accommodation for many devotees. Under the loving guidance of Swami Ritajananda, then visiting Brazil, the ceremony began at early morning with meditation and hymns. At 11 a.m. a wonderful puja was performed in honour of Shri Ramakrishna, followed by sumptuous lunch with consecrated food. At 3.30 p.m. the commemoration proceeded with Mr. Marcicano, a noted Sitarist, playing an inspired concert. In sequence we had a dramatized performance on the life of Shri Ramakrishna. The first meeting of "M" with the saint of Dakshineswar was read by a group of devotees. Jose Tolentino from Belo Horizonte played the role of Shri Thakur. Even though a blue-eyed man Mr. Tolentino's interpretation was so convincing and he acted with such a fervour that sometimes the spellbound audience could feel, as it were, that Shri Ramakrishna himself was there alive. Next we had the reading of a brief biography of Shri Ramakrishna very well written by Arual Costa, a devotee from Sao Paulo. A superb guitar concert was the following surprise. Mr. Hermes from Curitiba played guitar and interpreted spiritual songs composed by himself. A couple of admirers of Shri Thakur—Surendra and Janaka, disciples of the late Swami Tilak, sang some beautiful hymns in Sanskrit. Swami Ritajananda concluded the celebration with sweet and touching words just before the evening Arati which was performed in an atmosphere of bliss and peaceful joy.

## PRACTICAL HINTS FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

### SELF-CONTROL

Mere suppression of passions helps little. There must be a high ideal along with self-restraint. Without a high ideal the passions will find another outlet. You must give them a new direction; then you will automatically be rid of them.

—Swami Turiyananda

Diversion of the mind to higher things is the easiest way to conquer lust. Forget the lapses totally. Nobody remembers if he satisfies the calls of nature... Give a higher direction to the mental energies. Energy is creative, so transform the sexual energy into spiritual energy. If you fail to do so, kama (lust) will do havoc in the physical plane.

—Swami Saradananda

The more your love towards God is increased, the less your lustfulness will be. Always try to walk along the proper path. Be truthful and good and have no sensual desires. Let this be your end and aim. Struggle hard and if in the course of that struggle your foot slips, and you have to fall several times, what does that matter? Rise up again and go on struggling. Rest assured, you will conquer in the end.

—Swami Ramakrishnananda

... It is difficult, even impossible, to practise absolute purity without love and faith in God,... and without continence realisation is impossible. ... it is not possible to practise continence without devoting yourself to the practice of Japam.

—Swami Brahmananda

tendency to meditate and he used to spend a lot of time in lonely places. As the days passed, his passion for meditation increased. His parents got him married to divert his mind, but Nanak continued his meditation to realize the Truth

One day he went to a river to take bath and returned home after a long time. There he had an extraordinary experience. 'There is no Hindu and there is no Muslim'—this was the first utterance of Nanak after this experience.

In the tradition of Indian religious mendicants, he embarked on a lengthy journey, probably travelling to the Muslim and Hindu religious centres of India, even to places beyond Indian border. And one such place in the sublime Himalayas where he came and practised austerities is this Ratha Sahib.

Today Ratha Sahib is a well-known pilgrim centre of the Sikhs. Many Sikhs as well as people of other religions visit this place throughout the year, and pay homage to the holy memory of their great teacher, Guru Nanak. Constructions of guest houses, we saw, were going on. Devotees, old and young, even the boys, were smilingly participating in the Karseva. A deep faith was written large on their face. The priests showed us round, and offered

us tea and snacks. They themselves served the food with a kindly hospitality. When we came to take photograph, the entire community joined us for snaps. The priests requested us to send the photos along with negatives which we gladly did. We could feel the deep unity of India, the basic oneness of the Hindu-Sikh faith in the kind, silent look of all the inmates and their unspoken words of love. In this distant, silent region of Holy Himalayas, the spirit of God pervades everyone even today, as it did during those hallowed days when Guru Nanak had come here long ago

The little river went on murmuring as we were stepping out of the compound. In the vast panorama and profound silence of the deep green hills studded with forests and fields, we felt a strange purity in the morning air. Some of us remembered the words written on the Great Guru by a devotee-poet, Nannihal Singh Layal:

Pure he was; purity he preached  
 Lovely he was so love he preached.  
 Humble he was so humility he preached  
 Divine he was, so divinity he preached.  
 Apostle of peace and justice he was,  
 Incarnation of equality and purity he was,  
 Devotion and Bhakti he preached of course

Gives Nanak the message to all  
 That God above all, is the Lord of all

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE GLORY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA  
 [English translation of 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Mahima' (Bengali) by Akshoy Kumar Sen]  
 TRANSLATED BY MIHIR LAL DUTTA Published by  
 Srimati Mita Dutta, 199A, Aurobinda Sarani,  
 Calcutta 700 006 1986. Pp xiii + 160 Rs 25

'It has been said by Christ "No man hath seen God at any time, but through the Son" It means that the vibration of light is omnipresent, but we have to strike the light of the lamp

before we can see the light. Even so the omnipresent God of the universe can be seen only when he is reflected by the giant lamps of the earth—the prophets, the man-Gods, the Incarnations, the embodiments of Divinity', observed Swami Vivekananda. But even when the Omnipresent God is reflected in the human form it is very difficult to recognize Him, because while as divine incarnation, He involves Himself in the world process benevolently, the glory of His real nature remains concealed from

the ordinary mortals. In whatever appearance or attributes He may descend nobody can recognize Him unless He imparts that power to recognize the Lord, the Supreme Person in Him. It is in this background that we have to view the Self-revelation of God to man in the Divine Sport of Sri Ramakrishna. In fact this Self-revelation of the God-man Sri Ramakrishna is the greatest of his boons to mankind.

Sri Akshoy Kumar Sen, the author of the original work *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Mahima* (Bengali), was one of the rare souls who participated in the Divine Sport and was blessed with such a boon: the Self-revelation of the Supreme Being in the human frame of Sri Ramakrishna. But the bliss of such a unique experience did not remain confined to him alone. The author was doubly blessed in the sense that he was gifted with the talent of communicating such a unique experience through some of his immortal works: *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi* (Bengali), the life-story of Sri Ramakrishna in the style of Krittivasa's *Ramayana* and Kashiram Das's *Mahabharata*, *Padye Sri Sri Ramakrishna-deber Upadesh* (Bengali), the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna in verse, and finally *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Mahima*, the work under review. In the divine drama of Sri Ramakrishna, Akshoy played the role of a minstrel and his ballads are aimed at spreading the immortal life and message of the Master.

The work under review is in the form of a dialogue between 'Prabodh', 'Pathak' (both were actors in Sri Girish Ghosh's theatre and were blessed with the divine touch of Sri Ramakrishna) and the 'devotee', who is presumably none other than the author himself. Sri Ramakrishna has entered into the marrows of his 'devotee'. His talks are all like flashbacks of his unique experiences with Sri Ramakrishna. The 'devotee' repeats only the Lord's words. He is, indeed, full of Sri Ramakrishna. Hence when we finish reading the book what remains in our mind is the blessed form of Sri Ramakrishna.

All the treatises on devotion recommend contemplation on the glories of the Divine Incarnation as the best means to spiritual progress. Why? Because those who contemplate on the glories of the Divine Incarnation are cleansed of all taints that obstruct one's spiritual progress. Laying emphasis on such a contemplation the author writes, 'Hearing and adoration of the events of his Divine Sport (*Lila*) are so beneficial that even if a person who is closely attached to worldly affairs listens to or...sings His Divine

Sport, he too will swim with joy in the ocean of bliss. Let me tell you in short—there is not a single human being on earth who does not feel profound joy by chanting the name of Sri Ramakrishna in simple faith.' (p. 17). This is because, the words of the Lord have the intrinsic power to annihilate all sins, just as the penetrating power of the minute trickles of dew falling in the winter season impregnates even the hard stone. 'Similarly such an intrinsic power is concealed in the very simple celestial preachings and sincere teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that even in case, a stone-hearted earth-bound soul listens to them, those teachings will penetrate deeply into the core of his heart through his veins, muscles, bones and marrow.' (p. 43) Again, 'As a small bullet, when fired through the mouth of a canon, can demolish a hillock... likewise, such power exists in the words of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna, that it can completely destroy the veil of the deep-seated ignorance of Maya which envelops completely the real nature of the Almighty and the essence of the divine truth. The words of Thakur are as powerful as the canon balls.' (p. 62). The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna will be thrilled to read such lines as 'The body of the omnipresent Lord (Sri Ramakrishna) is never lost...Though his sportive play in the human plane is over, yet his being has not been altogether destroyed. The Blessed Lord fulfils the wishes of his devotees like the wish-yeilding tree. (*Kalpataru*), (p. 28).

Though it is true that God 'descends' as man at every great crisis in history, His life and activities are not limited to the short duration of His mortal existence. The redeeming power of a Divine Incarnation continues to operate for ages to come. Like the eternal flow of Ganga, the unconditional divine grace that flowed in the human frame of Sri Ramakrishna has been transforming the lives of millions. 'The real power of these divine incarnations', observed Swami Vivekananda 'is their spiritual power coming out of their almighty all-embracing love. There are also their great teachings which are magazines of power, inexhaustible, and which continue to work on the minds of men. By contemplating on these divine manifestations... man is transformed into what they themselves were. He is freed from the badge of slavery to Nature, and the mystery of God stands revealed to him.' These words of Swamiji find further amplification when one goes through the work under review. Through every page of the book one finds 'Pathak' and his growing inquisitiveness to know more and more about Sri Ramakrishna

getting closer to the 'Devotee's' (author's) deepest convictions. And so does the reader.

In these days when the Ramakrishna Vivekananda literature is reaching the multitude of different linguistic background, it is fitting that the original work in Bengali, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Mahima* should reach the hands of the wider English speaking public. The translator Sri Mihir Lal Dutta, who is fortunate enough to have received the blessings of Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, deserves our sincere congratulations. He has for the first time made the admirable attempt of rendering such a significant work in English. There are quite a few mistakes in the book. An extra attention to the language and style would have made the work more charming. Printing mistakes are many and have affected to some extent the high standard of the book. Nevertheless the translator's pious attempt will be welcomed with gratefulness by the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. It is worth going through this translation which is moderately priced.

BR NIRVIDA CHAITANYA

#### MEDITATION AND SPIRITUAL LIFE:

By SWAMI YATISWARANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bull Temple Road, Bangalore 560 019. Second revised edition 1983. Pp xxix + 563. Rs 60.

• This book under review is the second revised edition of a compilation of the talks and writings of Swami Yatiswarananda who was a vice-president of the Ramakrishna Order. The Swami was well-known and revered for his vast scholarship, spiritual attainments and a long period of spiritual ministrations to thousands of seekers of God both in India and abroad. The book is divided into four parts with 35 chapters. The chapters present, in a very lucid manner, a whole gamut of instructions for spiritual life with special emphasis on meditation.

Part One of the book, 'The Spiritual Ideal' brings within its purview six illuminating chapters like, 'The ideal of superconscious experience', 'The soul and its destiny', 'Different conceptions about God', and 'Conditions of the Spiritual ideal'. Part two deals elaborately with 'spiritual practice (preparation and techniques)' in 20 chapters highlighting the need for the Guru and spiritual guidance, renunciation and detachment, purity of mind, integration of personality and inner noise, love of God, self-surrender, concentration, and finally, meditation.

This part expounds the place of prayer, mystic worship, power of the divine name, and formless meditation. Part three opens up new vistas of spiritual experiences and various stages of spiritual progress. This part comprising eight chapters deals with more serious topics like spiritual transformation, reactions to sadhana, reality of spiritual experience, spiritual unfoldment, the attainment of real freedom in this life, and life in freedom. The last chapter of the part three entitled 'Footprints on the Sands of Time' presents a spiritual panorama of the saints of India. Part four includes under the caption 'Spiritual Titbits' some important sayings and instructions of Swami Yatiswarananda which are very helpful to the seekers of God.

The first three parts of the book deal with the spiritual ideal, its practice, and spiritual experience respectively.

The author, a realized soul, puts primary emphasis on the striving for the highest, the Spiritual Ideal, at the beginning. He says, 'We must strive to achieve something that is higher, that is not subject to change and decay...' and for that, 'we should try to live a spiritual life knowingly, consciously, deliberately, in a spirit of dedication and singleness of purpose' (p. 5). At one place the author says, 'What is needed is not just a false outer humility but a dignified modesty based on faith in our potential divinity. Without an attitude of self-surrender to the Divine, a spirit of dispassion and a spirit of acceptance of moral correctiveness, spiritual life becomes very difficult. In other words, we should strive to bring about a total change in our attitude towards ourselves, towards the world and towards God' (p. 82). Swami Yatiswarananda stresses the need for purity of mind as the fundamental basis of spiritual life. He says, 'The pure heart becomes the reflector of Truth. So does the purified, thoughtful mind. The pure mind becomes progressively alive to the ideas of higher life. The purer the mind, the more awakened it becomes and the better does it reflect the Truth. In the higher realization, the mind and the heart, both merge in the ultimate Truth' (Part II, pp. 141). Unfortunately, 'There are people', the author says, 'who have no sense of impurity, the more they commit wrong the more they become callous. All their moral sensitiveness is destroyed. They have no sense of shame. But a true aspirant is highly sensitive to the moral sense' (Part II, p. 135). About strength, the author says, 'A healthy and strong mind is, of course, more important. Weak-minded people cannot accept a high ideal and pay a high price

for it. They are scared away by the struggles and sacrifices that spiritual life involves. Strengthen your mind, strengthen your will. One of the tests of mental strength is faith and perseverance'. (Part II, p. 176). The author continues, 'To the extent we dissociate ourselves from the false personality and identify ourselves with the Spirit, we get fearlessness and strength, we get purity and peace'. (Part II, p. 182).

About the techniques of spiritual practice, the author says, 'In our spiritual practice we must proceed step by step. First comes Pratima Puja, i.e., worshipping the Lord with the help of a form, a symbol, a picture or an idol. Next, the repetition of the Lord's name, thinking of Him and singing His glory. Later on, the mind gets a little absorbed; you feel the divine presence. That is dhyana, and dhyana in due course leads to the highest superconscious realization'. (Part II, pp. 230-31).

While explaining spiritual experience the author says, 'The ordinary human awareness is limited to sense experience; it does not go beyond that. When spiritual experience comes, it first brings about a transformation of consciousness. One then realizes that one is not the body or the mind but the soul. This is followed by the expansion of consciousness. We then experience that we are all parts of the Supreme Spirit who dwells in all beings. Advancing further we realize that Brahman alone is the only Reality.' (Part III, p. 453). He adds, 'In Hinduism the highest ideal, the goal of life has been held to be the attainment of total freedom, even in this life, from the clutches of ignorance and all its products: egotism, hatred, craving and sorrow. This total freedom is attained by the transformation and expansion of consciousness and the final realization of the oneness of the Self with Brahman' (Part III, p. 453).

In view of such treasures of spiritual life contained in this book, it will be treated as a magnum opus of spiritual literature by the seekers of God. Man's innate desire is to know himself, to unveil the mysteries of life and to realize the Truth. This desire is especially keen for a spiritual aspirant who endeavours to fulfil it with perseverance. But then, after some time he may find that his spiritual progress gets stunted or spiritual hankering dries up. Often confusions, doubts and problems start surfacing as the aspirant embarks upon spiritual journey. All the paths leading to the highest spiritual goal may not be suitable to all aspirants as they differ from one another in psycho-social conditions and inborn traits. But the seekers need not be afraid of such

human predicament. If he gets the right type of spiritual guidance and techniques, his spiritual progress, despite uneasiness and sluggishness at times, becomes smooth and steady. Of course, the aspirant must be prepared physically and mentally to pay the high price for Self-realization. In this context *Meditation and Spiritual Life* by Swami Yatiswarananda will be a solace and immensely helpful to all spiritual aspirants. The voluminous book is a product of spiritual realizations of an outstanding and a highly spiritual monk-teacher.

Spiritual struggle, especially for modern man, is an all the more difficult, up-hill task. Mere faith does not suffice today. At every step the seekers want reason about the validity of the means of sadhana, and also the unchallengeable superiority of his or her own spiritual ideal. The author who spent a few decades as spiritual minister to thousands of seekers in the West, is thoroughly acquainted with the problems of modern man. He knows how to satisfy them with perfect reason. The charm of this book is that it provides reason at every step of our non-linear, up and down spiritual journey.

A seeker after reading this book, feels doubly assured, and marches on again with renewed energy and enthusiasm. It is for this reason that the book has already found a place on the tables of spiritual seekers irrespective of religion and faith, along with *The Eternal Companion* or the *Spiritual Teachings of Swami Brahmananda*, *The Rules of St. Benedict* and the few books on meditation by accomplished spiritual teachers. The book has already run into a second edition which obviously testifies to its wide appreciation by spiritual seekers. Thousands have already got benefit from this book for their spiritual striving, and thousands more, we hope, will get the same in the days to come.

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THE MANDUKYA-KARIKA (*Sanskrit Text with English rendering and notes*) BY SWAMI GABHIRANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Trichur, 680 551. 1987. Pp. xxiii + 142. Rs. 16.

The Mandukya Upanishad is a basic text of Advaita literature. Advaitavada appears in its pure and most convincing form in this Upanishad. Gaudapadacharya wrote Karika (explaining

verses) on it, Shankaracharya the grand disciple (disciple of disciple) of Gaudapada commented on it Anandagiri composed a Tika (explaining note) on this commentary.

Shankaracharya says that the four chapters of the Mandukya Karika are *Vedantartha-saṅgrahabhūta*—the very essence and epitome of all Vedantic knowledge For a student of Advaita Vedānta, the Mandukya Upanishad, the Mandukya Karika and Shankara's commentary on the Karika are guiding steps The idea of Advaitic realization—*ayam ātma Brahma*, 'the individual Self is the supreme Self'—is enshrined in the Mandukya Upanishad

Swami Gabhrananda in the work under review presents a simple English rendering of Gaudapada's Karika on the Mandukya Upanishad and an expository English version of the twelve mantras of the basic text The author is not interested in philosophical discussion or hair-splitting arguments, as real religion is *atmanubhūti* or Self-realization which has nothing to do with arguments about *atmanubhūti*. 'Learn to live with Truth', the author says, 'and you will soon be one with It' He is for religious realization and not for philosophical disputation With this end in view he has composed the present work. The five śloka composed by Shankaracharya as adoration to Gaudapada (his *mahaguru*), which appear as invocation put the reader in the proper frame of mind to grasp the intended meaning of the book

The Mandukya Karika is divided into four chapters, technically called prakaranas. The first chapter is on Upanishadic wisdom (*āgama*) which is a commentary in verse on the twelve mantras of the Mandukya Upanishad. The second chapter is on 'Misapprehension' (*vaiatithya*) and it describes the illusory nature of *samsara* using the analogy of dream The third chapter is on the non-dual Truth (*advaita*) It brings out the nature of Atman (Self) as One without a second beyond all modifications The fourth chapter is on 'Disillusionment' (*alatasanti*) It repudiates the views of the opponents and vindicates the position of Advaita

The author adds two appendices Appendix I contains twenty-one verses by Shankaracharya divided into two sections The first section entitled *Tattvamasu* or Thou art Brahman, is an extract from his *Vivekachudamani* (verses 254-64), the second is his '*Dashastoti*? 'Ten verses on the Atman' These verses give us the last word on the Advaita nature of Self as Consciousness and bliss Appendix II, *Is Vedānta the Future*

*Religion*? by Swami Vivekananda is an impassioned appeal to follow the path of Self-knowledge. The author has done well by quoting Shankara and Vivekananda, two great Advaita teachers representing the classical and modern periods in his 'The Mandukya-Karika' which is an Advaita text

The author has also added notes to explain certain difficult words and the concordance lists which give us parallel passages from the major Upanishads the Bhagavata, the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and the works of Swami Vivekananda These are really helpful in understanding the text

The translation is remarkably lucid and clear. Swami Aśeshananda in his 'Foreword' has rightly said 'He has combined in his excellent translation scholarship with simplicity All great things in life are very simple The air we breathe, the sunshine we enjoy, the mother's love that we cherish through the length of our days, are all very simple Likewise, when the style of a book is simple and clear it captures the imagination of ardent souls who seek knowledge from a clear fountain from which a perennial flow of wisdom springs unceasingly'. We like to add that lucidity of exposition is due to either conviction or realization or both of the author

Gaudapada's *ajativada* or the theory of no creation is a logical pendant to the Advaita theory of Consciousness as only real Of course some scholars describe Gaudapada as a 'hidden Buddhist' as to them his *ajativada* is a form of Buddhist nihilism But these scholars forget that Gaudapada refuted the doctrine of *anatmanvada* of Nagarjuna and accepted Self which is essentially Consciousness, as the only Reality If 'Self as only real' and *ajativada* are read together, one will readily agree with Swami Aśeshananda to hold that Gaudapada is an Advaitin Shankara in his commentary on the sutra: *Tadananyatvamarambhana-sabdadvivaha* clearly states that an effect is ultimately non-different from the cause. This means that there is nothing like effect apart from the cause and if this be the case then the effect is really non-existent, there is no effectuation or creation and this is *ajativada*.

In translation, we think, there are some inaccuracies Only two examples are cited here In page 79 the author writes: 'You are the embodiment of intense awareness of the eternal consciousness' Can we think about a body of consciousness? From the advaita standpoint all

forms of body are negated when eternal consciousness is realized. The use may be figurative but misleading. The Upanishadic text 'You are Brahman' means you being essentially Consciousness are non-different from Brahman which is Consciousness as such. The author translates the word aja as the Impersonal (p. 5a). But Atman as aja is neither personal nor impersonal (vide Appendix 1, sloka no. 8). The fact is that the ultimate Advaita position cannot be correctly described, it is to be realized.

The author correctly emphasizes realization for everlasting peace. We recommend this book for the perusal of scholars as well as of the interested public for their spiritual benefit. The author has presented the original Sanskrit texts also and this presentation has enhanced the worth of the book. English speaking world, we are sure will get intellectual satisfaction and spiritual uplift through a perusal of this translation.

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**THE TEN SUTRAS OF HINDUISM—THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION:** BY SWAMI MUKHYANANDA. Published by Centre for Reshaping our World-view, C/o S.R. Banerjee, Post Box No. 7844, Calcutta 700 012. 1986 (2nd Edition). Pp. 34. Rs. 5.

Hinduism, is a science of perennial evolutionary values applicable to all human beings and to all religions. The modern man has to rediscover his dynamic heritage to enrich his life. Thus 'The Ten Sutras of Hinduism—the Universal Religion' brings out the essentials of Hinduism in the simplest language specially addressed to the youth of our country. The book will serve as a brief introduction to the profound field of knowledge on Hinduism. A section on 'Universal Prayers', will serve the cause of Hinduism and its noble world-mission of bringing harmony and peace to humanity as well.

The author is doing a noble service to

Hinduism by bringing out such low-priced and thought-provoking booklets on the Hindu Faith.

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**ANCIENT VEDIC MATHEMATICS:** BY NARINDER PURI. Published by Mrs. Meenakshi Puri, Spiritual Science Series, 41/2, Amod Kunj, University of Roorkee, Roorkee 247 667 (U.P.). 1986. Pp. 128. Rs. 9.

The book provides an introduction to the elementary arithmetical operations. A few chapters included in this book form a new link to the real beauty of the ancient Vedic Mathematics. This Indian system of Mathematics revealing mysterious quantities of numbers provides unique solution in several instances where only trial and error method is available at present. The main features of this small booklet are that each chapter begins with the Vedic Sutra, followed by illustrations and discussions; and a few problems are given at the end to be worked out to get familiar with the operations. One of the unique facts of Vedic Mathematics is that it provides simple methods of checking the correctness of all the arithmetical operations like addition, multiplication, subtraction, division etc. which could be extended and applied with accuracy even to the algebraic operations.

The 'Vedic Mathematics' (already published in U.K. with translations in Latin and German) has been published as a text book in the colleges in U.K., U.S.A., Australia, Holland etc. run by London School of Economics and a pilot project is being conducted for including in the A-level mathematics. At this stage we are at a loss to know why very little efforts are being made to spread this wonderful system in our country when the western countries have rediscovered the importance and unlimited potentialities in them.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RELIEF SERVICES BY RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

Ramakrishna Mission is continuing extensive relief services in several drought affected areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Orissa. After conducting a thorough survey in 148 worst affected villages of Barmer district in the Thar desert of Rajasthan, 5000 persons have so far been selected to whom 28,720 kg. of "energy concentrate" (a specially made high-energy food product) have been distributed @ 8 kg. per head per month. Notwithstanding extremely hot climate (50 degree celsius), frequent sand-storm, scarcity of drinking water and formidable problems in transportation due to loose sand everywhere, a team of our monastic and volunteers are working heart and soul to rescue the helpless villagers from starvation and death. Besides, a cattle-camp is being maintained at Shivbari near Bikaner where 210 rare breeds of cows are taken care of so as to save them from extinction.

Primary relief work is also continuing among the drought-affected people as well as distressed cattle in 15 Talukas of Rajkot, Kutch, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Surendranagar and Panchmahal districts of Gujarat. Without any Government subsidy or aid, since January 1987 till 10th June 1988, 4,57,823 kg. food grains, 26,215 meters grey clothings, 16,169 pcs. Saris, Chadars & Children's garments, 2,354 pcs. blankets and 19,90,000 litres of drinking water were distributed to the suffering people. Moreover, 47,35,155 kg. green and dry fodder and other cattle-feed and 39,90,000 litres of water were supplied for the distressed cattle.

3913 starving people, mostly children and mothers, belonging to 27 drought-stricken villages of Ganjam district in Orissa, are being fed everyday through two feeding camps at Mantridi and Patrapur. Large quantities of clothings are also being distributed among the afflicted.

In the meantime a devastating fire broke out in Bamni village under Khatra sub-division of Bankura district, W.B. Rice, Provisions, clothings, utensils etc. were rushed to the affected village and were distributed.

Needless to add, continuance of such massive relief services entirely depends on the unstinted support and active co-operation from the large-hearted public.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA,  
VIVEKANANDA VIJNANA BHAVANAM  
PUNKUNNAM, TRICHUR 680 002

Sri Ramakrishna Math, Puranattukara, founded the Vivekananda Vijnana Bhavanam in 1945 at Punkunnam in Trichur in a small building with library equipments. Promotion of Sanskrit education and propagation of cultural and spiritual ideals are the twin mottoes of the institution. A spacious hall to conduct classes and discourses was put up and the library was expanded during 1958-60. Later, in 1984, as part of the diamond jubilee celebration of the parent institution at Puranattukara, a double-storey building was constructed, replacing the old structure. A swami of the Order assisted by two others, is carrying on this work now.

Daily worship and prayers are conducted in the shrine and prayer hall. Weekly discourses are given by competent persons, including swamis, on sacred texts like the Gita, the Upanishads, the Bhagavata, and the Adhyatma-Ramayana. Special lectures are arranged on auspicious occasions. A three-day celebration of the birth anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda is also held in April every year. Personal counsel may be had by previous appointment with the head of the centre.

Free classes are held to coach students for various examinations in Sanskrit conducted by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, since 1967. Increasing number of students are being prepared for the Balabodha, Prarambha, Pravesha, Parichaya, Kovida and other examinations.

The library contains a rare collection of books on religion and philosophy in English, Sanskrit and Malayalam. The free reading room has many important journals and dailies. Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature and other scriptural and cultural books are displayed for sale.

## PRACTICAL HINTS FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

### *Purity*

Four things are absolutely necessary to attain to the purification of the heart. The practice of self-control, which means the control of the mind.... Then comes the practice of truthfulness, because the eternal Truth cannot be gained by falsehood. We must be true to ourselves first, then true to our neighbours, next to humanity, and finally to God. Disinterested love for humanity is another; and unselfish work is the fourth.

*Swami Abhedananda*

The building of a pure life and character is the sole concern of the spiritual aspirant. It is the primary object of his life; everything else is secondary.... A pure and spotless life is a source of real welfare to the world. When such a life is actually lived, there is no need for oral preaching. Example is more potent than precepts.

*Swami Shivananda*

Rather than smearing the body with mud and then undergoing the trouble of washing... is it not better to keep at a safe distance from mud?

*Swami Turiyananda*

It won't do to sit (for meditation) for an hour or two at a time and then turn to worldly affairs. You should maintain the purity of the thought of God at all times.... There is no other means to check the mad course of the mind. Malice, deceit, and crookedness should be utterly given up. Without purity, and sincerity one cannot realize God. There is no use in following external observances if the mind has not been thoroughly cleansed.

*Swami Brahmananda*

By observing the faults of others we are gradually infected by them.

*Swami Premananda*

To get rid of evil thoughts one should be occupied either in good works or in good thoughts. Do meditation and japam as long as long as you can, sincerely and earnestly, and the rest of the time should be devoted to selfless service. The more you think pure thoughts, the more you are away from impure ones.

*Swami Saradananda*

Q: Can I continue to be pure and spiritual irrespective of my actions—whether they are good or bad?

A: Certainly not. Your good acts contribute to make you grow more and more spiritual while the bad ones go to drag you down....

*Swami Shivananda*

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