



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

# Prabuddha Bharata

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## The Divine Message

Though the *Vedās* speak of Him, and the  
*Purānās*,  
Though the learned discourse on Him, and  
*Indra* and *Brahmās* expound His Law,  
*Krishnā* and His *Gopis* speak of Him,  
*Shivā* and the adepts tell about God and  
all the *Buddhas* proclaim Him,  
Though millions have spoken thus ; though  
millions came and sat and left their seats  
and have gone,  
And if there come as many more creations  
and speak of Him, yet, He shall for ever  
remain The Undescribed!  
And Thou, O Lord, art more than our minds  
can comprehend!  
Thou art as Great as Thou canst be!  
Thou art as the Verity, Thou art the One  
Reality ;  
Thou alone knowest Thyself.  
Of what avail are thy ear-rings, O Yogi ?  
better adorn thy mind with peace.  
Have no desires pulling at thy heart ; mind  
not what happens.  
Of what use the Yogi's *Jholi* that thou  
wearest ? Make retirement within the  
chambers of thy soul thy *Jholi*!  
Be self-contained and centred in thy own Self.  
This *Bhibut* doth not help thee to forget

thy body, make *Dhyān* thy *Bhibut*, by  
*Dhyān* this body will be that raiment  
which death can touch not.  
Wear, O Yogi, the *Khintha* of new Youth  
that fades not.  
Make Faith thy Staff.  
Take the middle path and be patient.  
Thou canst not be of *Ai* Sect of *Yoga* by  
roaming with the so-called Yogis ; but  
only if thou sharest the goodness in  
company with the whole world.  
Born of the waters, we children of great  
Earth learn our lessons from the winds,  
And we spin in the arms of Day and Night ;  
they nurse us well.  
Before the Great Judge will be read out our  
Actions, good or bad.  
By our own Actions we shall be nearer Him  
or farther off!  
Those who fix their *Dhyān* on *Nām* shall  
pass above the pain of labour.  
Their task is done.  
Bright are their faces!  
And in joy of one liberated soul shall many  
more be, through His great Love,  
made free!

(From Guru Nanak's Japji Sahib)

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

□ This month's EDITORIAL is the concluding part of THE WONDER OF BEING CHEERFUL.

□ DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN AND IDEALISM is a perceptive article showing the brilliant and noble mind of the great philosopher and second President of the Indian Republic. The author, Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao, D. Litt., Madras, is himself an eminent scholar and reputed writer. His articles have appeared in many esteemed journals of India and abroad.

□ SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S HIMALAYAN ENCOUNTERS presents an overview of a few of Swamiji's wanderings in the mountain regions of India. The author, Dr. Raghuraj Gupta, points out here how during his wanderings in the hills, Swamiji's great love for his countrymen, poor and common folk, comes to the light of our understanding.

□ Mr. R. Prescott of Houston, Texas, USA, writes some of his reflections on THE PROCESS OF AWARENESS in this brief paper.

□ Swami Brahmeshananda, in PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD, suggests some practical steps to this cherished goal of religious life. The Swami is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Varanasi, U.P.

□ Swamiji's urgent call to throw open the door of opportunity equally to all is discussed by Dr. (Mrs.) Rajni Sharma, Ph.D., Reader, Dept. of Philosophy at K. B. Womens' College, Hazaribag, Bihar, in her brief article: SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND HIS CONCEPT OF EQUALITARIANISM.

□ Dr. Leta Jane Lewis, in COMPASSION, illuminates the God-like unlimited compassionate natures of Buddha and Vivekananda. Dr. Lewis is Professor Emerita of California State University, Fresno, U.S.A.

□ Prof. Mamata Ray's indepth study of the life of Sister Nivedita finds its eloquent expression in her interesting FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON SISTER NIVEDITA. The author is a Lecturer in Political Science in the Dept. of Economics and Politics at Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal.

□ The philosophy of Buddha appeals to rational minds who want directly to enter into the realm of spirituality without any metaphysical distractions. Dr. Robin Ghosh, Ph.D., Dept. of Philosophy at Patna University, Bihar, explains perspicuously the practical approach of Buddha in THE PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHA.

## The Wonder Of Being Cheerful

In his best-selling book, *Anatomy of an Illness*, Norman Cousins to some extent enlightened the medical profession. The book is a fascinating story of how the author 'laughed his way' out of a progressive crippling illness that doctors believed irreversibly degenerative. In August 1964, with a slight fever, the author flew home from the USSR to the USA after an official visit. His fever and achiness of body rapidly worsened and within a few days he was hospitalized, unable almost to move his limbs. The doctors diagnosed *Collagen*, a systemic disease of the body's connective tissue. Asked about his chances, the doctors said frankly that recovery would require a miracle. His chances of living through it were one in five hundred. But Cousins was a courageous man. The shattering news, instead of trapping him in a state of utter despair, set him thinking and produced quite a different reaction. He was at this point taking maximum doses of pain killing drugs, *codeine*, *colchicine* and sleeping pills, but mainly *phenylbutazone* and *aspirin*, and felt 'run over by a truck' in every joint. Cousins also survived some lapses in hospital care, which should have been better. He decided to fight the adverse circumstances. First of all, he reasoned that if negative emotions wear a patient down, positive emotions must have the power to bring about salutary changes. If depression, anxiety, helplessness and stress could cause incalculable damage to body and mind, by the same token, cheerfulness, faith, love, and hope must have their reverse effects. With this positive philosophy and a

determinism to buck up his optimism, Cousins took the responsibility of getting well into his own hands.

Acting on his commonsense convictions plus some health tips, he immediately reduced his heavy dosages of *phenylbutazone* and *aspirin* which were producing unpleasant side effects and impairing the function of the adrenal glands. To revitalize the body's defences he began to take heavy doses of vitamin C (*ascorbic acid*). Cousins tells us that with the cooperation of nurses and his doctor, he also began to keep himself in a morale-boosting milieu. He watched hilarious comic films, read or had read to him funny books and stories, and tried to keep himself in the best possible mental frame. The effect, he says, of laughter and exhilaration of mood was profound. Anxiety and feeling of body pain lessened to a considerable extent. He seemed to realize the priceless wisdom in the adage, "Laughter is the best medicine". Within a few weeks he was completely off drugs and sleeping pills and could sleep well for long hours. He was up again after a few months, out on the golf course and tennis green, and returned to his journalism and piano playing. His recovery seemed almost a miracle and astounded medical circles. "I have learned," confesses Norman Cousins, "never to underestimate the capacity of the human mind and body to regenerate even when the prospects seem most wretched."

"The life-force may be the least understood force on earth. William James said that human beings tend to live too far within self-imposed limits. 'It is possible that these limits will recede when we respect more fully the natural drive of the human mind and body toward perfectibility and regeneration. Protecting and cherishing that natural

drive may well represent the finest exercise of human freedom'.<sup>1</sup>

The life-force which Norman Cousins speaks of is the little wave of *Prana*. Vivekananda said, "From thought down to the lowest force, everything is but the manifestation of *Prana*. ...This little wave of the *Prana* which represents our own energies, mental and physical, is nearest to us of all the waves of the infinite ocean of *Prana*."<sup>2</sup> *Prana* is the name of the Energy of the universe. Mind is the great instrument for using as well as wasting the *Prana*.

'Placebo medicine' helped draw the attention of scientists to the unusual power of the mind. The use of these dummy medicines, called placebos (usually sugar-coated milk-powder pills) perhaps goes back as far as medical history. When used in the place of actual drugs (unknowingly by the patients) in the treatment of all types of diseases and disorders, even including drug addiction, placebos very often produce all the beneficial effects of real drugs, without the side-effects. However, they have been known to produce side-effects and violent reactions too. Till now it is a great mystery how placebos do their work. Only this much is known, that placebos do indeed seem to trigger mechanisms in the body that anaesthetize pain, even of postoperative wounds, seasickness, headaches, coughs and anxiety. Other conditions affected by placebos reported by medical researchers are arthritis, blood cell count, respiratory rates, vasomotor function, peptic ulcers, hay fever, hypertension and spontaneous remission of warts. Experimenters have shown that placebos are able to activate the body's own endomorphic system, releasing 'internal morphine'—the body's own anaesthesia and suppress pain. "The

most valuable physician," writes Norman Cousins—"to a patient and to a society—knows how to distinguish effectively between the large number of patients who can get well without heroic intervention and the much smaller number who can't."<sup>3</sup>

In large numbers of patients the placebo prescription instills needed confidence and triggers biochemical processes in the body. It is the robust confidence and the desire to get well that makes incredible things happen, and not mere intake of powerful drugs. Whatever mind wishes the body translates into reality. Just so, persistent worries and anxieties do not just vanish on their own without leaving scars and wear on the organism. But robust health does not necessarily indicate intelligent and rational mind. Those who do heavy physical labour everyday often have disease-free well-muscled bodies but mostly pass through life with little mental or cultural development. The important point is, good health is an invaluable asset and should diligently be taken care of. It naturally presupposes the healthy and happy state of mind.

In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Caesar's remarks about Cassius, who was the main conspirator in the downfall and assassination of the emperor, reflect profound psychology. Caesar had heard about the conspiracy and was already wary of Cassius. Mark Antony, the trusted lieutenant of the emperor, tried to reassure him: "Fear him not, Caesar, he is not dangerous: he is a noble Roman and well given." Caesar replied:

He is a great observer, and he looks  
Quite through the deeds of men; he  
loves no plays,  
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music,  
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort  
As if he mock'd himself, and scorned  
his spirit

1. Norman Cousins, *Anatomy of an Illness* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985) p. 48.

2. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. I, pp. 148-49.

3. *Anatomy of an Illness*, p. 55.

That could be moved to smile at anything.  
...Such men...are very dangerous.

(Act I scene ii)

The man that either does not laugh or smile or love plays and music is not only an unhappy man but a saddist. His nature is destructive, and wherever he goes he spreads a pall of gloom. Happiness is the music of life, bereft of it life is a melancholy pilgrimage. The Biblical proverb says, "He that is of merry heart hath a continual feast." The merry heart not only heals the body but blows off anguish, anxiety, tension and fatigue. A hearty laugh for a tired man works like a tonic, rejuvenating his whole system. The healing power of laughter, down the ages, has caught hold on the attention of physicians, philosophers and politicians. In the olden days, in India, every king's court was adorned by an intelligent jester (*viduṣaka*). Employing his gift of wit and wisdom prudently, the jester relieved the ruler of mental stress. The king used to spend some time with his court jester revelling in fun and frolic. In the celebrated Saṅskṛt dramas of Kālidāsa, Bāṇa, Bhavabhūti, and others, we invariably find the interesting character of *viduṣaka*, like Shakespeare's Falstaff, adding spice to the whole plot. Those who scoff at humour and laughter as signs of frivolous mind commit a grave error and miss something.

The medical profession has been taking an animated interest in the effect of laughter. In Western countries many conferences and seminars have been convened to assess its positive therapeutic value. Laughter has been called 'internal jogging'. Dr. Annette Goodheart, a psychotherapist who teaches laughter therapy, says that her entire therapy is based on the premise: "We don't laugh because we are happy; we are happy because we laugh." As Yale University experiments by Gary Schwartz and others have brought new evidence that by changing the muscle patterns of the face, one can alter the inner

moods. Dr. Goodheart buttresses the same idea when she says we are happy because we laugh. Her observation on American women is still interesting. Why do women usually live eight years longer than men? American society approves of giggling and laughter among girls and women, but ridicules smiling males—says she. Is that the reason why Western clergymen put on so solemn and serious faces and avoid laughing in public? Swami Vivekananda, a child of bliss, was chided for his infectious cheerfulness and spontaneous laughter by the guardians of the Church. "What business," thundered the Swami, "have you with clouded faces? It is terrible. If you have a clouded face do not go out that day, shut yourself up in your room. What right have you to carry this disease out into the world?"<sup>4</sup> Even the Bible proverb says, "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance; but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." What a dreadful life it is to keep away deliberately from mirth and joy as if they are contagious diseases!

A number of hospitals have made provision for laughing rooms. In these laughing rooms patients are helped to spill over their good humour while watching comic films, books and cartoons. Several volumes of R. K. Laxman's cartoon quips are, indeed, hazardous to depression. Albert Schweitzer, it is said, to reduce the rigours of the hot and humid climate of equatorial Africa, where his hospital was located, made use of humour therapy on his staff. This therapy worked wonders on his young doctors and nurses, invigourating their sagging spirits and taut nerves. Everyone looked forward to meal-times at which this venerable old man would unleash waves of laughter through his amusing anecdotes and witty remarks. After meals the staff would go out refreshed and

4. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* Vol. I, p. 265.

in jovial moods to attend to their duties. Dr. Schweitzer knew the prophylactic effect of mirth and music on the chemistry of the brain in addition to modern medicine. Cheerfulness, it is certain, spawns biochemical changes. How it does so is being investigated in a number of research institutions. Socrates, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Avila, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and his brother disciples, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Gandhiji, to name a few, all possessed a deep sense of humour. Sri Ramakrishna outshone all of them. His sparkling wit and humour, witty stories and brilliant mime and mimicry used to make his disciples and devotees roll on the ground bursting with laughter. Such was the magic of this king of ecstasy. The *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* in respect of this cheer and humour, also is a treasure. St. Francis used to call his brother friars in the Order 'Jester's of the Lord'. They all wanted to turn a smiling face to God and men.

Edison, a legendary figure in modern science, was reported to have collected juicy jokes and quips. Following his death his desk was found stuffed with magazine clippings and pieces of paper inscribed with jokes and stories. Many American presidents employed well-known humourists to spice their dull speeches with fun. Some were great humourists like Lincoln, and Lincoln himself used to rock with laughter reading Orpheus Kerr and Artemus Ward. There is an anecdote about Lincoln who was not a good looking person. Once a Philadelphia delegation went to meet him and they introduced one of their members: "He has been good enough to paint and present to our conference room a most beautiful portrait of yourself." President Lincoln paused a little and turning to the painter said, "I presume sir, in painting the portrait you took your idea of me from my principles and not from my person." Men of wisdom, down the centuries, have known that laughter costs

nothing, instead gives much. Hilarity, fun and exhilaration obliterate national stiffness and pull down the wall that separates individuals. Comedians and humour writers like Woody Allen, Charlie Chaplin, Mark Twain, P. G. Wodehouse, Stephen Leacock, James Herriot, and many others from different countries have knit mankind into one family. Laughter reminds us we are all one. "This I conceive," said Lin Yutang, the famous writer, "to be the chemical function of humour: to change the character of our thought." It is rightly said, "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." But it has to be cultured and nurtured.

Why most of the people suffer from moroseness, depression, insecurity, fear and so on? To opulent or poor there seems to be no escape from the net of unhappiness. Are these inevitable existential problems? Is this the final truth—that as long as one lives on this planet, one has no choice but to suffer? If the answer is affirmative then life would be a curse instead of a blessing. There are, before our eyes, shining examples of men and women, even in modern times, who have shown how to free oneself from misery and anguish. Infatuation with self-importance, undue concern for petty happenings in one's life, exaggerated self-limiting opinions, and unfettered fantasies cause much of our misery. Conceptualizing about life—that it should be like this or should not be like that, acts as a hurdle in the path to mental peace. Misery is the product of the mind. A mind educated in a lopsided way, adversely conditioned produces distress and turmoil. It is an exercise in futility to look for meaning or purpose in life in the world of objects and emotions, however sentimental. When the old ways do not pay off, people seek the help of psychotherapists to suggest some new illusions so as to find durable security in their dream-life. "The seeker," writes Sheldon Kopp, "comes in hope of finding something

definite, something permanent, something unchanging upon which to depend. He is offered instead the reflection that life is just what it seems to be—a changing, ambiguous, ephemeral mixed bag. It may often be discouraging, but it is ultimately worth it, because that is all there is.”<sup>5</sup>

Desire for prolonged life, or perennial youthfulness, or an insatiable thirst forever for pleasures is nothing but wishful thinking, childish dreaming. Mankind has, for millennia, been searching for this Golden Fleece. Everyone thinks that he would get it ultimately. Even when an inescapable aging process sets in, sapping the organism of its vitality, even when senile dementia creeps in, and even when all dreams are shattered by the harsh realities of the world, man hangs on desperately to fleeting pleasures. He hopefully longs for medical giants to come to his rescue, to prolong his life or forestall the death of the body indefinitely. This thirst to continue is never quenched. Thomas Browne, a seventeenth century physician and author, rightly remarked: “The long habit of living indisposeth us to dying.” People have as much abhorrence for talking about death as for thinking about it. The dead bodies are removed from hospitals in Western countries at dead of night so that nobody can see. People detest any inadvertent discussion about death. “These days,” writes a famous biologist, Lewis Thomas,

“the habit has become addiction: we are hooked on living; the tenacity of its grip on us, and ours on it, grows in intensity. We cannot think of giving it up, even when living loses its zest—even when we have lost the zest for zest. ...If we ever do achieve freedom from most of today’s diseases, or even complete freedom from disease, we will perhaps terminate by drying out and blowing away on a light breeze, but we will still die.”<sup>6</sup>

5. Sheldon B. Kopp, *If You Meet Buddha on the Road...* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988) p. 5.

6. Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of a Cell* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984) p. 56.

Modern medical technology may put death off for longer periods. But longevity does not vouchsafe happy life. “We hanker to go on,” observes Lewis Thomas,

“even in the face of plain evidence that long, long lives are not necessarily pleasurable in the kind of society we have arranged thus far. We will be lucky if we can postpone the search for new technologies for a while, until we have discovered some satisfactory things to do with the extra time.”<sup>7</sup>

Many therapists and doctors’ succinct advice to glum-faced patients and to those in mortal fear is, “Don’t take your life too seriously—it’s temporary.” How true the statement is! Once this idea of the body’s temporal nature and rather short earthly existence takes root in the mind, one’s mental perspective changes, gets broadened and mellowed. Instead of life’s being a colourless melodrama, hidden springs of joy, hitherto unknown, are unlocked. Instead of considering themselves heroes of a high tragedy, people become willing participants in life’s joyful adventure. When the temporariness of life is imprinted upon the mind, one looks at his own fortunes and misfortunes and events of the world in a non-attached way. This ‘new view’ not only burns off all suffering but brings about a mysterious exhilaration. In fact *true living* is dying to all attachments, all yesterdays—unburdening oneself from the ‘sense’ of possession—‘this belongs to me; that belongs to me’. In a temporary life nothing belongs to us, including one’s own body. When Narendranath first met Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar, he sang a Brahmo song which sent Sri Ramakrishna into a thrill of ecstasy. The song contained in gist the philosophy of *Life*.

O my mind, go to your own abode

In the foreign land of this world

Why roam uselessly like a stranger! ...

Explaining the profound idea Vivekananda said: “Work as if you were a stranger

7. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

in this land, a sojourner ; work incessantly, but do not bind yourselves ; bondage is terrible. This world is not our habitation, it is only one of the many stages through which we are passing. ...The very reason of nature's existence is for the education of the soul ; it has no other meaning ; it is there because the soul must have knowledge, and through knowledge free itself."<sup>8</sup> There is a Jewish Hasidic saying: "A man must have two pockets into which he can reach at one time or another according to his needs. In his right pocket he must keep the words: 'For my sake the world was created.' And in his left: 'I am dust and ashes.'"

We are too egoistic to deny the high opinion of ourselves. We complain, whine and lament over why we do not get what we want, as though we fully deserve more than others. We are apt to think that we are indispensable in the world, and the world should pay us homage for what little we do for it. But the world has not satisfied any human being. Further, it is neutral, indifferent. Man is not disturbed by things or events, but by the meaning and value he attaches to them. Our wrong perceptions ensue in our half-waking and half-dreaming hypnotic state. This hypnotism has, trans-generationally, been implanted in us. Each fresh generation thinks that its elders were wrong and it would certainly find lasting happiness from snatching and squeezing this world more. Like Sisyphus, it rolls a heavy stone up the side of a mountain, and when it gets to the top the stone will roll back down again. The next generation with full enthusiasm rolls up the heavy stone again. The very realization that in a temporary life there is neither lasting pleasure nor lasting misery brings peace and wisdom. This peace and wisdom is, as it were, more manifest in animals than in men ; so he

would prefer to live with them, merrily said the famous poet Walt Whitman,

I think I could turn and live with animals,  
they are so placid and self-contained,  
I stand and look at them long and long.  
They do not sweat and whine about their  
condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and  
weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing  
their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is  
demented with the mania of owning  
things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind  
that lived thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over  
the whole earth.<sup>9</sup>

Wisdom opens new vistas of life and elevates it to a state of play and fun. When life becomes fun, unnecessary dead-seriousness drops away ; all whining and whimper evaporate ; all crying and weeping for help vanish. Greed to grab and hoard disappear. Pleasure and pain alike lose their meaning. The whole world is seen as a vast play, vast fun. What other meaning can we ascribe to it ? The whole universe is the play of the Cosmic Mind. That one truth rings out again and again in Vedānta. It says life is a play ; know it and play to your heart's content. Humour and hilarity are not only in slap-sticks, comic strips or jokes, but are in every event of life. It is an artificial life where everything is planned beforehand, and everything is prearranged meticulously as in a computer program. The funniest thing of our civilization is, even we have been coached how to laugh, at what, and how long ; and when to smile and when not to. Every human response is controlled and manipulated. This machine-like conditioning, limiting our lives, has sponged it out of

8. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* Vol. I, pp. 56-57.

9. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1920 p. 50.



freshness and spontaneity. Yet in spite of one's careful planning, life is full of uncertainties. It springs surprises and administers shocks to awaken us.

Young children do not search for motive or purpose for their actions. They are interested in everything they see and hear; the world is full of surprises for them. They spend hours watching the flight of butterflies, changing colours of clouds, twinkling stars, movements of birds and many other things attractive to their eyes. They never complain why they were born in a poor family, nor rejoice at the affluence of their parents. They are happy as they are, without any comparisons, ambitions or worries. To the adult eye, wrapped in its own petty sorrows, there is nothing to cause delight. It is the grown up man who puts before him a mythical goal and pours every ounce of his energy to reach it, but never succeeds. As he proceeds the goal recedes farther and farther. It is a goal of his own unsubstantial projection, a chimera.

Sri Ramakrishna tells a humorous story of a magic jar.

A barber was once given by a *Yakṣa* (geni) seven jars of gold. The barber opened them and found all full of gold except the last one which was only half full. A strong desire arose in the mind of the barber to fill the seventh jar also; for without it his happiness was incomplete. He put all his wife's ornaments and all his earnings into the jar, but the mysterious vessel, as before, remained unfilled. Starving himself and his family he saved money to fill the jar. At last he began to live by begging, still putting everything into the insatiable cavity. As days passed his miserable condition grew worse. The king noticed his careworn features and asked, "What is the matter with you? Have you got the seven jars?" The barber was awe-struck by the question and he confessed everything. The king said, "Go at once and return the jars to the *Yakṣa*. Nobody can ever fill the mysterious jar." The barber did as the king advised and had peace.

The jar of desire to possess more and more things in order to derive happiness cannot be filled. It is only when we let go

our hold that the fountain of joy gushes.

People are strange. They do not realize their own unwise thinking brings unhappiness. Instead of deriving pleasure from what he has, comparing himself with his neighbours, he derives pain from what others have. He feels miserable thinking of his neighbour's car which he does not have. That neighbour feels anguish thinking of his next neighbour who has two cars while he has only one. And so on the chain of misery extends. Vivekananda told this funny story to illustrate.

A poor man was once able to propitiate a certain god who gave him three boons to ask along with three throws of dice. The happy man communicated this news to his wife who at once told him to cast for wealth first. To this the man said, "We both have very ugly little noses, for which people laugh at us. Let us first cast for beautiful aquiline noses." But the wife was for wealth first and so she caught hold of his hand to prevent him from throwing the dice. The man hastily snatched his hand away and threw the dice exclaiming, "Let us both have beautiful noses and nothing but noses." All at once both their bodies were covered over with many beautiful noses, but they proved such a great nuisance to them that both of them agreed to throw for the second time asking for their removal. It was done, but they also lost their own little ones by that! There was only one boon more to ask. Having lost their noses they looked uglier than before. They wanted to have two beautiful noses, but they feared to be questioned about their transformation lest they should be regarded by all to be two big fools who could not mend their circumstances even with the help of three boons. So both of them agreed to get back their ugly little noses and the dice were accordingly cast.<sup>10</sup>

All our energies, hopes and aspirations are centred in the world. Even for a moment we can't forget the world and its miasmatic bewitchments. Except in the state of deep sleep, the mind incessantly cerebrates. Even to get a few hours sound sleep has become a hard job and many have to resort to pill-popping. The world extracts its heavy price

10. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* Vol. VII, p. 90.

from us unless we learn to detach ourselves now and then from it. This, of course, is not through drugs and alcohol. "Drunkenness is temporary suicide," said Bertrand Russell. Workaholism too is a degenerative condition. Workaholics come under the illusion that their work is of tremendous importance and to ignore it even for a day would bring all kinds of disasters. Such deluded ones should visit the graveyard once to see those who have lived similarly lying there. Our doings are not so important as we naturally suppose. Our successes and failures or all other things that happen to oneself haven't any cosmic importance.

When the body is in sound health, we are no more conscious of body. When the mind is in a happy and euphoric state we are seldom aware of mind. This happens when the mind stops worrying about itself or about the world. Our minds are soaked and super-saturated with the world—its events and things, its emotions and quasi-realities. There is hardly any empty space left inside. It is like the story of the Arab's camel. Once a camel just pushed its nose through the door of the Arab's tent. The Arab at once objected to this but the camel said, "Oh, I am only putting my nose into your room for a moment. Nothing more. But in fact it slowly pushed in its ugly head and then its whole body inside the tent. When the owner then began to vigorously protest, it said, "If you do not like my presence in your house you had better get out, but I will not."

Sri Ramakrishna unflaggingly pointed out the bane of worldly-mindedness, saying:

...The souls that are entangled, involved in worldliness, never come to their senses. They lie in the net but are not even conscious that they are entangled. If you speak of God before them, they at once leave the place. They say: "Why God now? We shall think of Him in the hour of death." But when they lie on their death-beds, they say to their wives or children: "Why have you put so many wicks in the lamp? Use only one wick. Otherwise too much oil will be burnt."

While dying they think of their wives and children, and weep, "Alas! what will happen to them after my death?"

The entangled souls repeat those very actions that make them suffer so much. They are like the camel which eats thorny bushes till the blood streams from its mouth, but still will not give them up. Such a man may have lost his son and be stricken with grief, but still he will have children year after year. He may ruin himself by his daughter's marriage but still he will go on having daughters every year. When he goes to a holy place he doesn't have any time to think of God. He almost kills himself carrying bundles for his wife...They laugh at those who think of God and meditate on Him, and call them lunatics.<sup>11</sup>

Without kindling a spiritual spark or love of God in one's heart, one may try by whatever means one likes to derive happiness from the desert of the world. But without the spiritual orientation he only meets with frustration and misery. Mankind has tried again and again all the tricks history teaches, but without success. Yet, modern people may be awakening to the efficacy of the meditation or relaxation response as a great anodyne. Meditation is emptying of the mind of its contents. The contents are desires and longing for things, anxieties, stress, envy, fear, sorrows and so on. In the first two verses of the Dhammapada, Buddha says: "Mind is everything. Our life is the creation of our mind. If a man speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him as the wheels of a cart follows the beast that draws it. If a man speaks or acts with a pure mind, joy follows him as his own shadow. The *Pañcadaśī*, an Advaita text enunciates: "The impure mind is that mind which is polluted by the world and the pure mind is the mind free from it." (X. 116)

Exhilaration and cheerfulness are our real nature, sorrow is superimposition of the world onto the Self. A mind which possesses nothing and is not possessed by anything is blissful.

<sup>11</sup>. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 631.

# Dr. S. Radhakrishnan And Idealism

DR. P. NAGARAJA RAO

Among the contemporary interpreters and exemplars of India's eternal, ancient cultural ideas and philosophic wisdom, harmonized with the best in modern thought, Professor Radhakrishnan stands second only to Gandhiji and Tagore. He is the most renowned representative philosopher of India. He has in all, some forty volumes to his credit. They are partly interpretative and partly constructive. His two volumes on Indian Philosophy are authentic, and constitute a liberal interpretation of the history of Indian philosophical ideas and systems. We get a very concise account of his constructive thought in his Hibbert Lectures.

Dr. Joad gives us a graphic account of the impression he made on the western audience as a speaker, some twenty years ago, in his book, *Counter Attack from the East: The Philosophy of Radhakrishnan*. He is the most gifted of our Philosophical writers. In every speech and every page of his writing we see the undiminished vigour of his thought, the arresting originality and the amazing sweep, clearing the most abstract and difficult problems of Philosophy and metaphysics in a most lucid manner. "He has made righteousness readable." The distinguishing characteristics of his dynamic idealism are a deep spiritual note, a catholic outlook, a quick appreciation of the eternal values of all cultures and religions and an abiding confident optimism as to the future of human civilization. Radhakrishnan's idealism discloses the influences of Śaṅkara, Hegel, Plato and the doctrines of different philosophers of evolution. In the construction and exposition of his system he has met the criticisms of philosophical concepts by modern Physics and Biology. His Idealism differs in some respects from Śaṅkara's and from other western parallels. His is

essentially Upaniṣadic idealism in its comprehensiveness. He accepts the monistic and theistic stands of the Upaniṣads and does not subordinate the one to the other.

The central philosophical category in his idealism is the primacy of the Spirit, and its manifestation in matter, life, mind and self. The Spirit is not a homogeneous, non-composite entity like the Brahman of Śaṅkara. It is not the substance of Hegel. It is dynamic energy, not immobility. It is something real in itself, and by itself "we know it", we cannot explain it. It is felt everywhere. It is not the physical body or the vital organism, or the mind or the will, but something which underlies them all and sustains them. It is the basis and background of our being, the universality that cannot be reduced to this or to that formula.

The Spirit with its characteristics—creativity, order, change and progress—is present at all the levels of existence in an ascending series, each representing a higher level than what precedes it. It is the presence of the Spirit that is responsible for the development of matter into life, of life into consciousness and of consciousness to self-consciousness. The development in evolution is not merely continuous but also marks the emergence of new levels. Man is not naturally selected but is spiritually elected. Reality is a general unity or continuity, running through the different levels. The Spirit is not only immanent but also transcendent.

The Spirit is the Absolute. It has infinite possibilities present to it. The one actual manifestation of it is the world. The Absolute are God and souls. Creation is a free act. The Absolute is in no way dependent on the world. It cannot add or take away anything from the premises, as Spinoza would have us believe. The Absolute is the

ground of the world, and it is so only in the sense that the possibility of the Absolute is the logical prius of the world. The world could not be but for this possibility in the Absolute. Here we see the strong influence of Śankara's Vivartavāda, in Radhakrishnan's idealism.

God is the Absolute viewed in the cosmic context. He is the Absolute in the empiric dress. God does not amuse himself watching universe and the drama of life. He is organic with the world and He endures as long as the world lasts. Time, God and the world are coeval. The world is relatively real. There is no dualism of God and the world in his system. God is not the mere appearance of the Absolute but is the very Absolute in the world context. When all the souls attain conscious realization of unity with the Spirit, God and the world lapse into the Absolute.

The human self is conceived by Radhakrishnan as an organized whole and not as a fallen creature born in sin. Man and Spirit are akin to each other. Man and Spirit are consubstantial. Through ceremonial purity and ethical perfection man acquires the necessary merit for spiritual realization. Spiritual experience is realized fully in religious intuition.

The concept of intuition is central to Radhakrishnan's idealism: Intuition is wisdom transcendent, it is different from intellectual knowledge, yet not discontinuous with it. It is not contra-intellectual but trans-intellectual. It is not an instinct. It is not a shadowy sentiment or pathological fancy fit for cranks and dancing dervishes. It is not fancy or make-believe, but a bonafide discovery of Reality. It is the response of the whole man to reality. Intellect, emotion and will are fragmentary aspects and intuition is their totality. Great scientific inventions, literary productions, artistic achievements and moral reforms are touched by the Spirit and rooted in intuition. "We

discover by intuition and explain by Logic." Spiritual intuition is another name for mystical experience.

Radhakrishnan affirms that the future religion of the world is the religion of the mystics. He calls it the spiritual religion and its two characteristics are: it is scientific, and it is humanistic. In his *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, he gives the most glorious account of the perennial philosophy of the mystics and their history in the East and the West in some hundred and fifty pages. His massive erudition, theological scholarship, and thorough documentation of the facts and theories of mysticism leaves one supremely satisfied. He sums up there the role and characteristics of mysticism.

He holds that religion today has to face, science on one front and humanism on another. The religion of the Upaniṣadic mystics that we find substantiated in the *Gītā* does not permit us to fly from social agonies. In his *Kamala Lectures on Religion and Society*, he has described as to how religion should spread the gospel of humanism and eliminate the gap between irresponsible wealth and human misery. It does not seek to explain social injustices in terms of God's will. After some eighteen months's stay in Russia, as India's Ambassador at Moscow, he declared in one of his speeches, that if religion fails to stress the humanist elements, 'militant atheism will be the alternative to dishonest religion'. 'Religion has no secrets which absolves us from living.' It is not quiescent but combative. It starts with the individual, but it must end in a fellowship. When the mystics refer to the kingdom of God they mean the entire world community. He suggests that all the political ills, economic confusions and physical anxieties of our age can be set right by the power of the Spirit, a power which will help us to discipline our passions of greed and selfishness and organize the world which is at one with us in desire.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Buddhism reconciles it with Advaita Vedānta. He consistently maintained in his British Academy Lecture on Gautama the Buddha and other writings that Buddhism is not nihilism and Buddha was no agnostic. Buddha, by no possible means could have preached an arid rationalism to his sixth century B.C. pupils and enjoyed the great spiritual popularity he had. To regard Buddha as a rationalist and an agnostic is to mistake the purport of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Dhammapada*, and the Upaniṣads. The representative religious classics of the two systems, give us a clear idea of the unity of their moral and spiritual outlook.

Radhakrishnan's Idealism gives us a balanced and true picture of the relation between the individual and the society. Two very different conceptions of human life are struggling for the mastery of the world. Extreme individualism, on the one hand, regards the society as a means for the individual's well-being. Collectivisms of East and West, on the other, do not care for the

individual, but aim at producing an efficient society—and not the true individual with power and freedom to pursue his aims. Radhakrishnan states that the individual and the society, each considered apart from the other, is an empty abstraction. The real individual needs the society to grow to his best stature. The society and the individuals are not antithetical to each other. They are inseparable.

In the famous *Library of Living Philosophers* series, edited by Paul Arthur Schlipp, a volume is devoted to the philosophy of Radhakrishnan. He takes his place in that Series of the great philosophers of our age, viz. Whitehead, Moore, Santayana, Einstein and Dewey. Prof. Hinmann in his presidential address at the International Philosophical Congress in America, 1921, mentioned Radhakrishnan as a representative idealist along with Bosanquet. His influence on the modern Indian thought and education is of the foremost importance. He represents the best in the West and East.

## Vivekananda's Himalayan Encounters

DR. RAGHURAJ GUPTA

The Himalayas played a pivotal role in the life of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). The lofty hill ranges cast their hypnotic spell on him when in 1890 as a young man of twenty-seven, seeing them for the first time, he sauntered through the Himalayan town of Almora.

Like all spiritual seekers and lovers of God, Vivekananda too felt inspiration and expansion of spirit while he lived among the caves and dales and snow-capped peaks of the glorious mountains. Having practised severe austerities at the Baranagore Math and

before that, having lived with the Great Master for many years, Vivekananda left Calcutta with his soul aflame, eager to find a way to give the Master's spiritual message to humanity. He was not only to cross the ocean of Māyā himself, but to help others do so.

Vivekananda had written to one of his *gurubhais* (brother disciple) who had already gone up to the Himalayan region, "...I intend shortly to go up to some place in Garhwal where I can settle down for a long meditation." And to another he said, "I shall not

return until I acquire such realization that my very touch will transform a man.”

In the 90's of the nineteenth century there were no motor roads in the Kumaon-Garhwal region of the Himalayas. Only foot and bridle paths existed. Living on the alms of the wandering sannyasin, Vivekananda and Akhandananda, carrying only bowl and staff, proceeded from Nainital where they had been guests of Babu Ramprasanna Bhattacharya, on the deep forest road to Almora till they came to Kakriaghat on the bank of the Kosi and Sujal rivers. Here the two monks separated for a time and Vivekananda, spotting a peepul tree, sat for meditation, while Akhandananda went singly. Under this peepul tree Vivekananda noted down in his small diary that on that day while in meditation, one of the great revelations of his life came. He had the supreme vision of oneness of the macrocosm with the microcosm. He wrote: “The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the universal Soul in the Living Prakriti (Nature)—the objective universe...”

After a short while the two monks again joined each other. From Nainital they had started out on their way to Badrikāśrama, determined to do the whole distance on foot without a pice, “eating what chance might bring”, not even visiting any house for their food. Nearing Almora, but with still about two kilometres to go, weak from want of food, both the monks sat down for rest on the path, opposite a Muslim cemetery. Vivekananda suddenly felt utterly exhausted, and near fainting, he lay down. Akhandananda hurried to look for water. At one side of the cemetery lived a Muslim caretaker, a fakir named Zulfikar Ali. He chanced to see the Swami in that helpless condition and came to him with a cucumber to offer—the only thing he had. To his surprise, the Swami asked the fakir to put the cucumber

in his mouth, saying he was too weak to do so himself. The man remonstrated saying, “Holy sir, I am a Muslim!” “That does not matter at all,” said the Swami with a smile; “are we not all brothers?” Taking the juicy fruit and feeling refreshed by the man's affection, the Swami thought to himself, “The man really saved my life; I had never felt so exhausted.” Later he used to say this to others. The symbolic gesture of Islam extending its hand of friendship to the Hindu monk was a moment of joy and inspiration to the Swami.

The story did not end there, but had its denouement seven years later. In the year 1897, Vivekananda returned to Almora on his tour of India following the Parliament of Religions in Chicago and his sojourn in America. His world-wide recognition turned him overnight into a national hero of India, and his name became a household word throughout the land. He came into Almora on a caparisoned horse in a regal procession, being honoured by almost the whole populace. As he arrived, his eyes fell on that very Muslim fakir standing far away in a nook watching the procession. The Swami alighted and approached the fakir with a warm greeting. The two embraced each other and the crowd felt blessed to see their affection for each other. In his public speech which followed, Vivekananda said, “I owe my life to a Muslim fakir of Almora whom I have the good fortune to see and greet after seven years.”

This dramatic incident conveys something yet more relevant today. After enjoying forty-five years of self-government, when Hindus and Muslims in India still live in suspicion and fear of each other, the message of Swami Vivekananda is loud and clear: “Are we (Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others) not all brothers?”

It seems that the barbaric bang of the Babari Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi of Ayodhya and the mourning screams and sighs of the

victims of communal riots in Meerut, Bhagalpur, Sasaram and Munger in Bihar are not enough to stir our deadened conscience and compassion!

On the one hundred and twenty-sixth birth anniversary of Vivekananda, shall we hear with sympathetic ears his clarion call: "*Are we not all brothers?*"

Vivekananda's last journey to the Himalayas took place just a year before his physical farewell to the mortal world. His French biographer, Romain Rolland, has vividly pictured it in his *Life of Vivekananda*. The Swamiji's memorable visit to Mayavati took place about a year after the Āśrama was acquired and built up by Captain and Mrs. Sevier, his disciples who accompanied him on his return from England. The month of January and the year 1901 is crucial. At this time of year, access to and place in the mountains was most difficult and dangerous. Winter was particularly severe that year and four days' march through snow and rain was an ordeal. In frail health the Swami started the long forest trek with two other monks. Amidst falling snow, rain, mist and clouds they and their ponies could scarcely see the paths. Yet with difficulty his companions pushed their way through and arrived at Mayavati on third January. They could stay only a fortnight. Asthma suffocated Swamiji, and the least physical effort exhausted him. On twelfth January they celebrated his thirty-eighth birthday at Mayavati.

In Mayavati Āśrama, consecrated to the contemplation of the Absolute, he discovered that a worship room dedicated to Sri Rama-krishna had been set up. He was saddened that idol-worship had established itself in the Advaita Āśrama, and gently called to task those who were responsible. He reminded his followers that no dualistic reli-

gious weakness was to find a foothold in this sanctuary devoted to the highest spiritual monism. Vivekananda left Mayavati on the eighteenth. By that time the situation had been corrected by the inmates themselves. Swamiji travelled four days over the slippery slopes descending, and re-entered the monastery at Belur on 24th January, 1901.

About a month before his demise, Vivekananda was talking to some Santhal workmen, poor folk employed by the monastery for digging the ground. He loved them dearly and mingled with a group of them, talking to them, making them talk, weeping in sympathy as they related their sorrows. One day he served a sumptuous feast for them, at which time he said, "You are Nārāyanas (the embodiment of God Himself); today I have entertained Nārāyana Himself!..."

He further said, "Alas! Nobody in our country thinks for the low, the poor and the miserable. Those that are the backbone of the nation, whose labour provides food, those whose one-day strike from work raises a cry of general distress in the city. Where is the man in our country who sympathizes with them, who shares in their joys and sorrow? ...You are continually telling them, 'Don't touch me; don't touch this or that.' Is there any fellow-feeling or sense of dharma left in the country? There is only 'Don't touchism' now. Kick out all such degrading practices...Go out and bring them together one and all."

"He is present in everything. These are all the manifold forms of Him. There is no other God to seek for. He alone is worshipping God, who serves all beings."

Shall we care to listen to the call of Vivekananda and do our bit to share the sorrows of our fellowmen?

# The Process Of Awareness

R. PRESCOTT

Awareness is intrinsic and innate within all of us. The question is how can we bring it to the surface—make it rise within our limited experience of life?

Experience is there, we all know it! Perhaps in a dream, a swoon, a moment of great emotion, perhaps some of us have had near-death experiences, or we have heard of them, or have listened to stories about the realizations of wonderful beings who have made the crossing.

In every moment awareness is there. Awareness follows us through each event of life and death. The God-Principle never leaves us, even during the times in which we seem to leave it. Awareness remains amidst the beautiful and the ugly experiences that we perceive with our bodies and our minds. Yet no matter what happens...awareness is the same.

For some unknown reason, philosophies which have grown out of the Himalayan Region have presented to our world very clear demonstrations upon this subject of awareness.

*The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* has given us the finest illustration. Its teachings on the subject of awareness are profound. The demonstration that *Māṇḍūkya* gives is divided into four examples. These are the waking state, the dream state, the deep sleep state and profound Consciousness. Awareness is there within all these states. Pure Consciousness is called *Turiya*, the Fourth and final state of human existence. Waking state is the very life that we know from day to day. It is our most evident proof of existence.

The dream state is the second level of our existence and this state is mysterious—a juggling of thoughts and feelings within a self-luminous plane of consciousness. Dream

state is the reflection of the impressions received in the waking mind. What you have picked up you rehash when you are asleep.

Deep sleep is the absence of any image of thought or feeling. Slumber is perfect rest without any seeking. The third state could be called emptiness, but it is not, emptiness is vacant, profound slumber is full of conscious awareness.

Human life is like a spark that flies off the magnet of the Sun. We are just waves upon the Ocean of God. Our lives and our dreams are very funny things. Within the Tibetan tradition we can find more amazing examples of the process of awareness and the study of the object of awareness.

The Tibetan sages compound these three ideas and by this process they come up with six states of consciousness. First is *Chikai*, the Clear Light of Death; second is the *Chonyid*, the realm of dream-like energies and phenomena; third is *Sidpa*, the state where the soul tends to seek rebirth; fourth is *Cheshi*—this is ordinary waking consciousness; fifth is *Milam*, the dreams we find within our sleep; sixth is the state called *Samten (Samādhi)*, the state of equilibrium and equality.

Three states or six states, three thousand or three million states, the human creature should have no definite limitations. What is awareness and what is the process of this universe? Who are we and what is the creation that we observe together? Awareness remains the intrinsic principle. Among all these phenomena awareness remains innate within every creature.

If you would really examine it you will find that no one can define what Awareness is. This is truly God's Domain and we humans are only dreamers therein.



Some of us say that God is one perfect absolute, others believe that the God-Principle is divided. Still who knows what awareness is, infinite or perfect, divided or diverse? These are all the same awareness. Who can define the nature of awareness? A Christ or a Buddha, maybe not—they are aware of their own experience. Yet what is your experience? Could it be so different?

Ask yourself: 'What is the human body and mind? What is the spirit and the soul? What is awareness?'

Make a personal note of this moment. Where are you? Who are you? Awareness is there. You are within the moment! You are within the *where!* The awareness is here. Yet who can define what awareness is?

## Practice Of The Presence Of God

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

How to live in the world? How to harmonize the world and God? Often Sri Ramakrishna had to answer many such questions of his householder devotees. He answered in various ways. The best way to live in the world according to him is to be turned into 'gold' or 'butter' before entering into the world: "...Be ye turned into gold by touching the philosopher's stone. Then if you are laid deep under earth for a thousand years you will remain gold forever and behave like gold when you are dug out."<sup>1</sup> "...The world is like water and the mind of man like milk. Milk will mix with water if you put the two together. But turn the milk into curds by letting it stand in one spot. Then churn it and have butter. Now if you keep the butter in water, it won't mix with it but float unattached."<sup>2</sup>

But alas, most of us are already deeply engrossed in the world before we hear this advice. It is now too late for us to get turned into gold or butter. What is the way out for such? For us too Sri Ramakrishna has a

word of hope: "It matters not whether you live the life of a householder or are men of the world—only you must fix your mind on God. Do your work with one hand and touch the feet of the Lord with the other. When you have no work in the world to do, hold His feet fast to your heart with both your hands."<sup>3</sup> Here we have a goal and method in one. What it really means is that one must perform one's duties with only half the mind and must keep the other half busy with the thought of God. When the work is over, one should apply the whole mind in thinking of God.

The advice is extremely useful for all spiritual aspirants, and is specially so because for most of us it is difficult to get rid of worldly entanglements and to engage solely in spiritual practices in solitude. Even when we are lucky to disengage ourselves temporarily or permanently from worldly activities, our minds refuse to cooperate. We are not able 'to hold the feet of the Lord with both hands', i.e. we are not able to concentrate our whole mind on God even when not engaged in work. In such a situation the

1. *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1937) page 102.

2. *Ibid.*, page 103.

3. *Ibid.*, pages 107-8.

only reasonable alternative is to make the best use of our working hours. It will not do to restrict spiritual practice to Japa, meditation, worship or prayer alone, daily at fixed hours for a limited period of time. We must be able to transform every moment of our life into a spiritual one. Every one of our acts must become a consecration, and the difference between the secular and the sacred must vanish. So one of the means of sublimating and spiritualizing every moment of our life is "...to do the work with one hand and touch the feet of the Lord with the other".

But is it really possible? Can the mind be divided into two? Even if it is possible, will it not prove detrimental to the work at hand and affect its efficiency? To be able to answer these questions, let us first understand the nature of our mind.

Various thoughts, ideas, desires and imaginings constantly arise in our mind one after the other. Actually, mind is nothing but this uninterrupted flow of thoughts. Generally no two thoughts are very similar. When we are engaged in any particular work, thoughts related to that specific work predominate and others are temporarily subdued. Yet not all thoughts are of one type. The heterogeneous ones unrelated to the work at hand also continue to arise. Similarly, during meditation on God, thoughts related to God predominate but other thoughts also creep in. Only in the disciplined mind of a Yogi, thought-waves related exclusively to work and God alone arise during work and meditation respectively, to the exclusion of all other thoughts. This can be better understood with the help of the following diagram:

*Natural state of an untrained mind:*

A — B — C — D — A — E — G —  
F — C — E — D — H

*Untrained mind during work:*

W — A — B — W — W — C — W —

D — W — E — W

*Untrained mind while meditating:*

G — A — G — B — C — G — G —  
D — E — G

*Trained mind of a Yogi during work:*

W — W — W — W — W — W —  
W — W — W — W — W

*Yogi's mind while meditating:*

G — G — G — G — G — G — G —  
G — G — G — G

('W' stands for thoughts related to work ;  
'G' stands for thoughts related to God ;  
other letters represent other thought  
waves.)

It is thus evident that half or more of our mind remains occupied with thoughts other than the work-proper in which we are engaged. The task before us is to replace these irrelevant thoughts with only one type of thoughts—those related to God. If we succeed in this, only two types of thoughts would arise in our mind during work, viz. those related to the specific work and those related to God. This can be represented thus:

W — G — W — G — W — G — W —  
G — W — G ...

This is what is called "doing work with one hand and touching the feet of the Lord with the other". Once this is accomplished, it would be easier to 'hold His feet with both hands' when the work is over.

Our daily activities can be divided into three categories according to the mental attention required in doing them. *Mechanical activities like bathing, washing, dusting the house, travelling and so on*, are performed almost reflexively due to years of habit. In these activities mind remains unoccupied with any specific thought and roams about aimlessly. *Conversation, business transactions, reading, etc.* fall into the second category of works which require greater, but

not the whole attention. Finally the activities associated with the individual's *specialized occupation* requires the fullest attention. An accountant must concentrate fully while keeping his accounts, so must the surgeon while performing an operation. Yet in the midst of these absorbing occupations there are long or short intervals when the mind gets respite or break. Thus during every type of secular activity there is possibility of remembrance of God. In mechanical and mainly physical activities almost the whole mind can be trained to think of God. During those works which require full mental attention the advice of Swami Brahmananda may be followed: "Before you begin the work, remember the Lord and offer your salutations to Him. Do the same at intervals in the course of the work and also after you have finished it."<sup>4</sup>

## II

Remembrance of God while being engaged in work is more appropriately called 'the practice of the presence of God'<sup>5</sup> because here we try to feel the Lord's presence, to experience His nearness to us, even while remaining busy with secular activity. Although we may begin with imagination and thinking, it can and must lead to the actual feeling of the Lord's presence. This can be achieved variously:

1. While doing mechanical activities we may think that our *Iṣṭa Devatā*, our *Chosen Deity*, or the form of God which appeals to us most, is close by. He is lovingly observing us as we cook, wash, or sweep, and is indulgently smiling on us. We may think that He is walking or travelling with us, sitting close to us in bus or train. We may mentally salute Him or talk to Him saying:

"Lord, I wholly belong to Thee, be always with me", etc. Of course such ejaculations may be mental so that others do not hear them. Some devotees purchase an extra ticket for their Lord while travelling!

This practice is easiest and most pleasing because we think of God's form most dear to us. It is best suited for those who have a strong power of imagination. But there is a danger against which one must be careful. Persons with emotional temperament, who are not able to differentiate between imagination and actual perception, may mistake the former for the latter. To consider imagination as actuality or true vision is called hallucination and is a form of mental aberration. What we are trying to do is to make the spiritual use of our power of imagination, that is all, nothing more.

2. To avoid this danger associated with anthropomorphic imaginings, we may think or try to feel the Lord's conscious presence rather than His form. Let us think that He is close by or is present all around us as a blissful divine conscious presence, and imperceptibly showering His benign grace on us.

3. The third method is to see the presence of God in persons and objects around.

- (a) According to Swami Vivekananda there is greater manifestation of divinity in human beings. Man is the greatest temple, the 'Taj Mahal' among the temples of God. Hence we must try to think of the presence of God in young and old, rich and poor, in the wise and in the ignorant, in whomsoever we may happen to come across. Let us think that we are seeing, meeting, and talking not with human beings but with God in various forms. Pure hearted saints and sages are traditionally revered as veritable embodiments of God. It is naturally easy to see the divine in them. However, to restrict our practice of seeing God in saints and sages only would narrow down the field consider-

4. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Eternal Companion* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mysore, 1981) page 206.

5. After the famous book of that name by Brother Lawrence,

ably. Swami Vivekananda has urged us to see God more specifically in the poor, the downtrodden, the sick and the miserable. We may therefore combine the traditional belief with the modern concept of Swamiji so that our practice of the presence of God becomes more comprehensive.

(b) Indeed, every object having a special quality is considered a special manifestation of God. According to Sri Ramakrishna, although God is immanent in all creation, there are degrees of His manifestation. A person having greater learning, strength or virtue, or the person who is honoured by many, manifests divinity more powerfully. A similar idea is expressed in the seventh and tenth chapters of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, according to which God is present as the radiance in the sun and moon, as sapidity in water, as manliness in men, as wisdom in the wise, as the strength of the strong, etc. Among the orbs of night He is the moon; the *Sāmaveda* among the *Vedas*, and among the senses He is the mind. "Of purifiers," the Lord says, "I am the wind; of warriors I am Rāma. Of fishes I am the shark...and I am the quality of sattva in the good." Further, He is ever present as the life of all living beings. Now when we recollect all these things around us, when we encounter them, we have an opportunity to feel humility, love and reverence.

(c) The fact is that the Lord is present everywhere. He has enveloped and covered, as it were, everything. Hence we may try to see Him in everything, irrespective of special qualities or excellence. This is the best means of constant remembrance of God, and yet the most difficult.

4. The fourth method of the practice of the presence of God is to think of God, not in objects outside, but within our own heart. Whenever we get a little leisure, whenever mind gets a little freedom from its multifarious preoccupations, let us return into the sanctuary of our heart and have a loving

*tête-a-tête* with Him there.

5. A divine name or mantra and the picture of a deity or holy personality can be kept with us to remind us of God. To be successful in this practice one must first of all convince oneself that the divine name and the deity whose name it is are one; so also the picture and the person. Let us place the picture of the divine personality at a prominent place in our room, office or workshop. Looking at it from time to time during work would bring us close to the Lord. Let us also repeat the Lord's name mentally as often as possible during work. Let us keep a constant flow of the divine name. We may even chant a hymn, devotional song or *śloka* if occasion permits.

Since this practice is based upon the concept that the divine name and the Divine, and the picture and the person are identical, we must constantly try to deepen this faith. For, often due to lack of faith or inattention, repetition of the divine name becomes mechanical and the picture fails to remind us of the Lord. They get reduced to mere inert objects. However, mechanical repetition of the name and even an inattentive glance at holy pictures do produce a good impression on the mind. After all, we see so many holy and unholy forms, and listen to so many sounds during the day, so why not thus 'smuggle' some holy sounds and images as well into the mind?

Mind has various moods. Sometimes it is interested in the form, at other times it is attracted towards the formless. Sometimes it likes to think of God within the heart, at other times outside. It is therefore always advisable to have as many weapons in our spiritual armoury as possible, so that we are able to deal successfully with the various moods of the mind. Various methods of the practice of the presence of God are therefore suggested. A spiritual aspirant may invent his own newer techniques. The whole idea is to remember God as often as possible.

# Swami Vivekananda And His Concept Of Equalitarianism

DR. RAJNI SHARMA

The modern world at present is facing the tide of disintegrating forces which may lead us to our own destruction. The undercurrents of such forces as terrorism, communal riots, regional separatist tendencies, forms of violence, threat of nuclear war are shaking the very foundation of the world. The huge expenditure of public money and human talent in preparation for warfare make the problem of war our most pressing problem. The germs of the problem are no doubt frustrations at different stages of life and at different levels. Enough reasons can be found in economic, social, political and moral conditions, but the time has come to devise a solution. The theory of equalitarianism propagated by Swami Vivekananda can play an important role in solving the present problems. First, let us see what this theory is.

In fact, the theory of equalitarianism is the theory of sameness and oneness, which is interlinked with fraternity, brotherhood and liberty. It is a basic principle of Vivekananda's social philosophy. For him, man is a unity, not divided into sects, creeds, castes and classes. Equality and unity is the test of truth because all such things are truth which bring oneness. Differences and hatred, all these disintegrating forces, bring evils, sufferings and miseries for human beings on this planet. Inequality, which produces both physical and mental bondage, is the outcome of ignorance. Swamiji's assertion is: "I have found out by experience that all evil comes from relying upon differences and that all good comes from faith in equality, in the underlying sameness and oneness of things."<sup>1</sup>

Swamiji's purpose was to recognize the divinity of man which is equally present in all living beings. Out of this experience flows the kinds of attitudes and actions that would contribute to world community and world peace, and eventual solution of our global problems. Realization of the essential unity of the human race will teach us to live together harmoniously. For brotherhood, the recognition of the value of the individual, freedom to develop individual capacities, equal treatment before the law, political liberty, social justice, economic equality and racial tolerance are essential. A concern for common good should be of major importance, not only within nations but also among nations. Through social services, a man can be elevated from the stage of narrow and selfish gain-seeking. Further, Swamiji also advocated the practicalization of cultural and spiritual fraternity in which there would be not only economic socialism and political freedom, but also moral and intellectual kinship. His motto was, 'not levelling down, but levelling up.'

In Vivekananda's thought, equality means equal opportunity for education, equal protection under the law, and justice made available to all in society. Equality does not mean equal treatment or equal salary for all. In general, achieving equality is largely a problem of proportions. In reality we all have equal rights and shares in Truth. Equality rests simply on common humanism which recognizes every person's right, no matter what his origins or endowments, to make the most of his life in his own way. His claim to do so, without causing injury to others, deserves the same respect as the next man's.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. III, p. 194.

In human life, qualities and opportunities play important roles. Diversity in qualities, abilities, attitudes and temperaments prevails among human beings. A society cannot determine man's inborn qualities but it can provide or make possible opportunities, and here the principle of equality is applicable. People with similar capacities should have similar opportunities, irrespective of differences of birth and circumstances while the people of different capacities should be given different opportunities according to their needs.

Vivekananda pointed out that equality means fair shares of freedom. Opportunity is a freedom, a chance to choose and to act according to one's choice. Freedom is the greatest possession of man. As a matter of fact the struggle for equality is the struggle against the violation of freedom by other people. Every form of exploitation is a theft of freedom. Even morally, all men are equal and have the same right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. His assertion is that "...all members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education or knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

Vivekananda preached that "...the universe is a play of unity in variety." From the spiritual point of view we are all equal, and through recognition of this spiritual equality, world peace, real uplift of men, and progress for all the people may be possible. Men are no longer men in flesh and blood simply. They are not merely our fellow brothers and sisters, but they are ourselves

<sup>2</sup>. Swami Vivekananda, *Rebuild India* (1980), p. 40.

in different shapes and forms—because we are the same Ātman. Such feeling is a universal and uniting force which will unite the whole universe in a chain of love and compassion. It is truth itself. This very integrating force will stop the destructive attitude and war in this world. It will create an environment of harmony in which each nation and people will start to think, and make efforts to divert the huge investments in preparation of war, towards the welfare and uplift of the whole humanity. As a result, destruction may be avoided. In this way also, the theory of equality provides the basis for social ethics, non-exploitation and universal welfare. In such situation each and every person will start to realize that in harming his brothers, or in behaving unjustly towards them in any way, actually he is harming and doing injustice to himself. Spiritual equality is higher, broader and stronger than any other concept. We must carry this doctrine to every door and rouse up the hidden divinity. The masses should be raised to the level of the *Brāhmaṇa*, the custodian of society's culture.

In the present era, Vivekananda's theory of equalitarianism holds great hope for us as a solution of communal tension, bloodshed, atomic war and other evils. Adoption of his philosophy of equalitarianism and implementing it in life and society can bring peace and harmony to this earth. It can work well and help man face the grave challenges of communal disharmony, regional separatist tendencies and religious struggles. All kinds of hatred, bickerings, jealousies and unfair discriminations can be eliminated through universal feeling of equality.

# Compassion

DR. LETA JANE LEWIS

The word "compassion," which is derived from the Latin "cum," meaning "with," and "pati," meaning "to suffer," has essentially retained this original etymological meaning. Thus, Webster defines "compassion" as "suffering with another; fellowship in feeling; hence, sorrow or pity excited by the distress or misfortune of another." The very word "compassion" bears hope and reassurance because it suggests a promise of love's healing power. No one must suffer alone and unaided where there is compassion. And, yet, since compassion involves suffering, it is unfortunate that it is in any way necessary.

If we are mentally and physically sound, we all feel pain when our bodies are injured or our egos wounded. Consequently, we are capable of imagining and identifying with other people's pain, of "suffering with them," at least to some extent. We wince at the sight of someone writhing in pain at the bottom of a stairway and run to get help for him. If a stranger collapses on the street in front of us, we call an ambulance and comfort him while waiting for it. And since much suffering does not come so directly to our attention, we give to charitable organizations which reach out to people we do not know.

This humanistic compassion does much good in the world, but, unfortunately, it has its limitations. We do not have to sacrifice much to help a stranger who has collapsed on the street or to send a small contribution for the relief of cyclone victims, but our compassion only too frequently becomes qualified when it conflicts with our personal interests. This, of course, is understandable, for, although we can imagine and empathize with someone else's joy or sorrow, we do

not feel it directly through our nervous systems. When, for instance, we succeed at the expense of someone who fails in competition with us, we experience our elation much more keenly than we do his disappointment. If my friend has an abscessed tooth, I will honestly be sorry and get aspirin for him, but the chances are that I will have a tolerable night's sleep while he paces the floor.

Vedantists do not criticize our normal human attempts to find happiness and avoid pain, although such attempts often cause us to overlook the needs of others. They understand our dismay at the mere thought of the self-sacrifice potentially involved in unqualified compassion. Nevertheless, they insist that such compassion is not only possible but also the source of supreme happiness and courage. Our apprehension regarding self-sacrifice, they explain, is the result of an erroneous identification with the vulnerable psycho-physical complex, rather than with the real Self, which is divine, and, therefore, unaffected by injury to the body and personality. Divinity is compassion itself, so we will feel unqualified compassion for all human beings, no matter how evil they may appear to be, when we discover that our true nature (like theirs) is divine.

The sages also explain the motivation for unqualified compassion from the standpoint of non-dualism, according to which we are all one in the ultimate divine Reality. "Why should I love my brother? Because he and I are one."<sup>1</sup> When we know our identity with other human beings, their concerns will be our concerns. We will be loath to rise at another's expense, and even my neighbour's

<sup>1</sup>. Swami Vivekananda, *Works*, 1968, II, pp. 412-413.

abcessed tooth, which I do not feel directly through my nervous system, will be as important to me as if I did.

Of course to most people the teachings of the divinity of man and the unity of all souls in one divine Existence will seem as queer and remote as dry Hegelian concepts having little to do with reality. Fortunately, however, Vedantists do not ask us to give these teachings total credence and application at the outset. Instead, they request us to examine them in order to test their validity for ourselves. And to assist us in doing this, Vedantists point to the lives of compassionate saints and sages who are said to have achieved Self-knowledge.

In the early days of the United States, rugged, imaginative men explored virgin territory in the west and returned with fascinating accounts of great mountain ranges, vast plains, and fertile valleys. When they could, these explorers brought back specimens such as furs, fruit, and soil samples as evidence of their findings. Like them, explorers in the world of the spirit have gone ahead and returned with reports of untold magnificence. But they carry no tangible proof of what they have seen. They do not need to, however, for their radiant faces are sufficient proof that they have found the divine bliss at the core of the universe.

The Buddha was one such successful explorer in the realm of the spirit. According to the legend, the young Buddha, who was then Siddhartha Gautama, was carefully sheltered from the sight of life's pain and tragedy by his father, the king. No war devastated the kingdom. No deadly disease struck a loved one down while Siddhartha was growing up. Thus he lived in happy innocence until after he had married and had a little son. Then one day when he was going through town on the occasion of some festival, he unexpectedly came upon a tottering old man, a distended corpse, a

victim of some dreadful disease, and, lastly, a wandering monk. Aghast, he began to ask questions. Would everyone suffer the ills he had seen today? Would his parents, his wife, his sweet little son, and his father's loyal subjects eventually fall prey so wretchedly to disease, old age, and death? The Buddha's heart sank at the thought of so much tragedy. His gentle pleasures meant nothing to him now. So that very night he set forth as a wandering monk resolved not to return until he had found the remedy for suffering. For several years he walked about the country seeking the truth and performing fruitless austerities until one day he took a seat under a tree determined to meditate there until he either reached his goal or died. He did not die; because he valued wisdom more than life, enlightenment came to him quickly. After attaining nirvana, the compassionate Buddha continued to walk through the land, for he wished to teach as many people as possible the noble eight-fold path to freedom from suffering.

Unqualified compassion like the Buddha's has one of its finest expressions in the Buddhist ideal of the Bodhisattva, who is happy to sacrifice salvation itself for the sake of humanity. Instead of forgetting the world in the bliss of nirvana, the Bodhisattva chooses to undergo whatever hardships may confront him in birth after birth so that he can teach others how to end suffering. He refuses to remain permanently in the secure peace of nirvana before all beings have attained it.

Although he was not a Buddhist, Swami Vivekananda, a nineteenth-century Vedantist, exemplified the Bodhisattva's unqualified compassion. "May I be born again and again," he exclaimed, "and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls. And above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable,



my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.”<sup>2</sup>

When Swami Vivekananda was a young man, hardly more than a boy, Sri Ramakrishna recognized his compassionate nature and gave it direction. Grieved to hear of his compatriots’ terrible suffering during the many famines, floods, cholera epidemics, and other calamities that were befalling India and realizing that people in other countries were also suffering a multitude of evils, Sri Ramakrishna strove to leave behind him a band of pure young men, so firm in the spirit of compassionate self-sacrifice that they would dedicate their lives to the relief of suffering wherever it might occur. During his last illness when his body was wrecked with excruciating spasms and his throat cancer permitted him to speak only in painful whispers, if at all, he spared no effort or agony to prepare the bright young disciples who were to carry on his work of service to others. Of this period of Sri Ramakrishna’s life, Swami Vivekananda wrote:

His intense love for mankind would not let him refuse to help even the humblest of the thousands who sought his aid. Gradually there developed a vital throat disorder, and yet he could not be persuaded to refrain from these exertions. As soon as he heard that people were asking to see him, he would insist upon having them admitted, and would answer all their questions. When expostulated with, he replied, “I do not care. I will give up twenty thousand such bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man.” There was no rest for him.<sup>3</sup>

Knowing that he did not have long to live, Sri Ramakrishna hastened to confront Swami Vivekananda with the crucial question, “What do you want?” Upon hearing Swami Vivekananda’s answer, “I wish to remain in samadhi [unalloyed divine consciousness]

2. Swami Vivekananda, *Works*, 1964, V, p. 136. I altered the original punctuation slightly to facilitate comprehension.

3. Swami Vivekananda, *Works*, 1962, IV, p. 185.

for three or four days at a stretch—breaking it just to take food,” Sri Ramakrishna scolded him sharply, “You are a fool! There is a state even higher than that. Do you not sing, ‘Thou art all there is?’”<sup>4</sup> The sublime state to which Sri Ramakrishna referred is that of the illumined soul who opens his blissful eyes after samadhi and continues to see the divine Existence that he has just been experiencing. Perceiving God in everyone he meets, he realizes that the human body is indeed a temple of the Lord, who is to be worshipped and served there. Sri Ramakrishna wished Swami Vivekananda to become such a sage dedicating his life to humanity instead of seeking bliss for himself alone.

In spite of Sri Ramakrishna’s admonition, however, Swami Vivekananda did not dedicate his life to suffering humanity immediately after Sri Ramakrishna’s death. Intent upon preserving and intensifying the spiritual realizations he had had while in the company of Sri Ramakrishna, he embraced the life of a wandering monk and travelled about India for several years. He would have liked to give himself up completely to the bliss of divine communion, but he was unable to do so. Millions of people were dying of famine in India at that time, and the impoverished, illiterate masses were virtually defenceless against ravaging diseases, floods, and other frequent disasters. It was agony for him to witness the terrible condition of the masses, and he could not help himself. His compassionate nature compelled him to forget his personal welfare and give himself wholeheartedly to relieving their misery. His activities were varied. During a plague he shovelled and carted away contaminated filth from the streets in one of the poorer sections of Calcutta. In

4. Swami Vivekananda’s Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960), p. 131.

1893 he went to the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago with the express purpose of finding help for the downtrodden Indian masses. He neither intended nor expected to overwhelm his audiences with his forthright speeches on India and her spiritual contributions to the world. But he spoke the truth fearlessly in order to educate his audiences and dispel some of the misconceptions about India, her religion, and her philosophy that were prevalent at that time. Instead of responding negatively to the challenges he threw out at them, the majority of his listeners greeted him with thunderous applause.<sup>5</sup> He received such widespread acclaim that he suddenly found himself sought after by intellectuals and spiritual seekers of all classes and lionized by the rich and famous. As burdensome as so much popularity must have been for one who longed to meditate in solitude,<sup>6</sup> he was grateful for it. It opened many doors to him and provided him with opportunities to lay the foundations for his cherished humanitarian projects. Because these projects meant more to him than his own well-being, he ignored the dictates of common sense and worked to the point of exhaustion. His strong body finally gave way under the strain and he died before reaching his fortieth year. But he succeeded in leaving a legacy of compassion behind him. He had founded the Ramakrishna Mission, which, in conjunction with the Ramakrishna Math, has

5. The following item appeared in *The Herald*, one of Chicago's leading newspapers in 1893: "Vivekananda is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation." Swami Vivekananda, *Works*, V, p. 327.

6. In a letter dated January 25, 1896, Swami Vivekananda wrote the following to Mrs. Ole Bull: "I long, oh! I long for my rags, my shaven head, my sleep under the trees, and my food from begging." Swami Vivekananda, *Works*, 1968 V, p. 359.

dedicated itself to the active service of God in man for almost a century and promises to do so far into the future.

Because of its multifarious humanitarian work, the Ramakrishna Mission has become one of the most loved and respected organizations in India today. It is famous for its free hospitals and dispensaries, its educational and cultural institutions, and above all, for its untiring relief work in times of floods, earthquakes, and other catastrophes. As spiritual teachers, its monks give inspiration and guidance to seekers in many countries. One of these monks of the Ramakrishna order spoke like a true Bodhisattva of the bond which exists between spiritual teachers like himself and their disciples. "After the teacher has passed away, he still continues to watch over the disciples in spirit. He will not accept his own final salvation until all are liberated."<sup>7</sup>

The lives of these pioneers of the spirit prove conclusively that unqualified compassion is possible—at least for them! But we still have difficulty relating their superb achievements to ourselves. How, we ask, can ordinary mortals like us conceivably approach the heights reached by these extraordinary beings?

The illumined souls themselves, somewhat baffled by our continuing self-doubt, respond with patient love. They assure us that, since all human beings are essentially divine, the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary persons cannot be made. They ask us to remember that they, too, were once spiritually ignorant and had to struggle for Self-realization. They see our faults and weaknesses, but they do not identify us with them. Instead, they remind us that our failings are of the nature of illusion, to be dispelled and forgotten, for we are the Self, eternal and real, not the insubstantial ego

7. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Eternal Companion* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1970), p. 81.

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imposed upon it. They also point out that, nature sooner or later. And they have set since the triumph of truth over error is before themselves the blessed task of helping inevitable, we will all realize our divine us to do it.

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## Formative Influences On Sister Nivedita

MAMATA RAY

The previous article traced the impact of the family heritage of Margaret Elizabeth Noble (Sister Nivedita) upon her early upbringing and social education. The purpose of the present article is to throw light on those other formative influences which affected Margaret's life and personality up till the time she met Swami Vivekananda in London in the winter of 1895. These influences stemmed from sources such as the schools she attended as a girl and those schools where she later served as a teacher (including the school that she founded herself), and the intellectual company she enjoyed during her stay in London.

### *The Schools*

When her father died in 1877, Margaret Noble was only ten years old. At the death of her father, her mother returned to Ireland to live with her parents there, but as per family decision, Margaret was sent to Halifax College in England to reside and continue her studies. The child was miserable there at first, her high spirits, sense of independence and stubbornness bringing her soon into conflict with a strict disciplinarian and over-zealous headmistress by the name of Miss Larette. What disturbed Margaret most was Miss Larette's tendency always to talk in terms of sins, and her insistence on her pupils' doing penance for such imaginary

sins. Her freedom-loving soul felt oppressed and even mortified. She could not but feel that Miss Larette's teaching was bad Christianity and the seeds of her later dissatisfaction with Christianity probably lay in her experiences at Halifax in her first year of study there.

Fortunately for Margaret, at the end of the second year of her study at Halifax, Miss Larette was replaced as headmistress by Miss Collins. Miss Collins was an intellectual. Far from dismissing Margaret as proud and haughty, she recognized her *yearnings for freedom* and resolved the initial crisis of religious anxiety that Margaret was subject to, by sympathetically answering some of the basic questions about the Christian dogma that this thoughtful girl of thirteen raised. She also nurtured Margaret's interest in music and art. It is characteristic of Margaret that some of the first essays she wrote in school under the loving tutelage of Miss Collins were fervent with calls to nationhood and freedom and the self-sacrifice that these entailed. Obviously, when she wrote these classroom essays she had her homeland Ireland in mind, "...an Ireland of which she felt herself so thoroughly a part".<sup>1</sup> Ireland was in bondage and

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1. Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated* (Madras: Samata Books, 1985) p. 26.

for her freedom required the supreme sacrifice by many ardent and patriotic Irish men and women. Indeed, the great patriotic efforts, including the supreme sacrifice by many for freedom was as much the need of Ireland in those days as of India, and 'Everything for the Country' was to be the motto of Margaret's life, even in her after years in her adopted country India.

If Margaret Noble was a lover of freedom as a student, she was even more so as a teacher. Having passed her final examinations brilliantly in the Halifax College at the age of seventeen in 1884, Margaret soon took up her first teaching post at a private boarding school at Keswick. In teaching History and Literature at Keswick, Margaret would not follow the conventional pedagogic methods. Instead of imposing her will on her students and following a set and prepared course of lectures, she would use her lessons as a means of stimulating the free and uninhibited responses of her pupils. Thus began her experiment with a method of imparting education which she would develop further in later years. While Margaret enjoyed her experiments in teaching, her personal thirsting for spiritual freedom was far from satisfied by the nominal religious guidance she received in her family circle.<sup>2</sup> At one time, to satisfy her spiritual longing at Keswick she had even thought of entering a Catholic convent, but she was dissuaded from doing so by the headmistress of the Keswick School.

Margaret left Keswick to join a school—an orphanage—at Rugby.<sup>3</sup> The charity pupils at Rugby gave her a chance to test her powers of renunciation and self-sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> Her hypothesis in this experiment with living in poverty was that penury could not stand in the way of fulfilling oneself if one had

*conviction enough to live according to the ideal of one's faith.* That her courage to experiment and to live in hardship came to fruition in her later years in India could be seen from the fact that she was able to feel quite at home in her poor and dingy quarters in the squalid Bagbazar area of Calcutta.

Ever looking for a wider field of activity, Margaret left Rugby to join as a teacher in a secondary school at Wrexham.<sup>5</sup> Wrexham, a mining town with its rows of dreary slum households, might have been a great place to work for ordinary people ready to confine themselves only to school and classroom, but Margaret was of a different type. She was delighted at the prospect of widening her field of activity and putting into practice her ideals of social service and welfare work among the poor mine workers of Wrexham. Through her pupils she would visit many homes of mining families and gain insight into their lives and existence.

Research-minded as she was, Margaret turned her visits to the slums into a regular research project, collecting data she would later publish on the appalling living conditions of the miners and their womenfolk and families. To facilitate her work she enrolled as a district worker of St. Mark's Church at Wrexham. The church elders were astonished at the meticulousness with which she did her work among the poor. While the very practical and down-to-earth suggestions that Margaret gave towards alleviating the sufferings of the poor evoked the admiration of the clergy, they also sowed seeds of discord. Margaret would recommend aid and succour to all the poor who needed assistance, without discrimination as to whether they attended the church or whether they belonged to congregations other than St. Mark's. Church authorities, on the other hand, would like to keep the assistance con-

2. Reymond, p. 22.

3. She joined this school in 1886.

4. Reymond, p. 22.

5. She had served in the Wrexham school from 1886 to 1889.

fined only to those people who were attached in some way or other to their particular parish. The discord led to Margaret's resigning from the work of the church, but not without a feeling of injury to her sense of social responsibility. She took the fight to the pages of newspapers and journals, exposing the sectarian policy of the church and championing the cause of the oppressed people of Wrexham. This particular episode had a significance of its own in the life of Margaret Noble; it acted as a spur to bring out into the open her talents as a pamphleteer and social journalist. Crusading in the cause of the poor and oppressed became her life-long mission and she was at her best in this role in India's struggle for freedom from oppressive British rule.

Margaret's association with Wrexham came to an end after a personal disappointment. She was in love with a young engineer from Wales who was working in a chemical laboratory at Wrexham. Their common intellectual interests, their meetings in which they read together Thoreau, Emerson, and Ruskin, and the research aid he gave to Margaret in the form of searching for documentation for her articles, made them form an attachment to each other. Unfortunately, he died before their engagement could be announced and this led Margaret to seek a transfer to a school at Chester.<sup>6</sup>

At Chester, Margaret's passion was to try those methods of education which had been devised by the Swiss educational reformer Pestalozzi and the German Froebel—i.e. education through play, exercise, observation, imitation and constructive activity. Margaret's experiments with the *New Education*, as the philosophy and methods of education developed by Pestalozzi and Froebel was known at the time, brought her into contact with Mr. and Mrs. Logemann,

6. She was in service at the Chester School from 1889 to 1891.

and Mrs. de Leeuw who were similarly interested. At their instance she became a member of the *Sunday Club* at Chester, where she came into association with a number of young writers who appreciated the lectures she delivered and the papers she read at the Club.

Following a fruitful two-year stint at Chester, Margaret came over to London at the invitation of Mrs. de Leeuw to join the latter's school at Wimbledon.<sup>7</sup> Margaret was obviously delighted at the opportunity she had in London to carry on her experiment with the *New Education* and the new school of Mrs. de Leeuw. Consistent with her own philosophy of freedom in the classroom, the ideas of the *New Education* allowed Margaret to concentrate on developing her pupils' own individuality. Her whole emphasis at the new school, therefore, was on detecting the natural aptitudes of her students and encouraging them to develop whatever abilities they had in them in a natural spontaneous way. The object of such method was to mature her students gradually and naturally into "...new beings full of candour and confidence", and thereby inspire them "...step by step toward a world full of new discoveries".<sup>8</sup> The wheel had now turned the full circle. Never a mere school-teacher transmitting knowledge acquired only from books, Margaret Noble had now herself matured into a full-fledged educator entitled in her own right to a world view of her own. Numerous are the articles she wrote in later years of life that bear testimony to this

#### *The Company of Intellectuals*

Ever fond of spreading her wings, Margaret enjoyed every moment of London

7. Having joined Madame De Leeuw's school at Wimbledon, London in 1891, Margaret served there till 1894.

8. Reymond, p. 26.

intellectual life. She had the association of the Beatty brothers—young Irish writers in England, one a poet and the other a journalist, of William T. Stead, the editor of *Review of Reviews*, and of Prince Peter Kropotkin, the famous author of *Mutual Aid*, ideologist of the social revolution, and Russian revolutionary leader, in exile, in England. The company of these intellectuals gave great impetus to Margaret's literary efforts. Octavious Beatty was one—the editor of *The Wimbledon News*, the organ of Irish associations in England. He made Margaret contribute regularly to his paper.<sup>9</sup> At the instance of William Stead, Margaret contributed political articles also to the *Review of Reviews*. And she wrote political columns for the *London Daily News*, and occasionally scientific papers for a journal called *Research*.

Lizelle Reymond notes Margaret's very active life thus:

Margaret had joined the "Free Ireland" group working for Home Rule, only a few weeks after her arrival in London. Two months later she was speaking publicly at evening meetings and organizing centers of resistance in the south of England....One evening Prince Peter Kropotkin came to speak to the "Free Ireland" circle, and Margaret, who had long been eager to meet the famous revolutionary exile, seemed to recognize in him the voice of her father, who had died too young to complete his own work and whose task she now sought to accomplish. She felt in him, too, the characteristics of the real leader.<sup>10</sup>

It is a measure of Margaret's admiration for Prince Kropotkin that she kept regular contact with him in her after years, seeking his guidance in the revolutionary activities she undertook during her life in India.<sup>11</sup>

As a logical culmination of her professional

9. It is significant that Margaret's articles on the *Boer War* reflected the *pro-Boer*, and the anti-British point of view.

10. Reymond, p. 28.

11. Basudha Chakravarty, *Sister Nivedita* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1975) p. 4.

development, Margaret opened in the autumn of 1895 her own school in Wimbledon itself and named it The Ruskin School. The reputation of the school spread rather quickly. Among the celebrated teachers associated with the school was Ebenzer Cook, an artist from whom Margaret acquired the capacity to appreciate the composition and value of paintings—a talent she put to most effective use in promoting art and art-criticism in subsequent years in India.

Through Ebenzer Cook, Margaret became acquainted with Lady Ripon whose salon regularly featured discussions on art and literature. Margaret helped develop the salon into the Sesame Club which provided a regular venue for discussion, not only on art and literature, but also on politics, ethics and kindred subjects. Under the effective secretaryship of Margaret the Club's reputation spread so rapidly that leading personalities in all walks of life, including Bernard Shaw and Thomas Huxley, became regular visitors.

At a time when Margaret seemed to be successful on all the fronts, she suffered a second emotional disappointment in life. A friend to whom she thought herself to be engaged deserted her for another woman. Perhaps she now had an inkling that marriage was not to be her lot. Destiny willed something else for her, something much greater than to grace the home of one family or one man. Later on in India she was to illumine with the bright lamp of hope for the future, innumerable households—as 'Lady of the Lamp', the 'Fire' and the 'Mother'.<sup>12</sup>

Like a flintstone containing fire that can be brought out by striking a piece of iron,

12. Jagadish Chandra Bose likened Sister Nivedita to the 'Lady of the Lamp'. Sri Aurobindo thought that she was 'Fire'. That Rabindranath Tagore called her the 'Mother of the People' is also very well known.

Margaret Noble's inborn qualities, her childhood upbringing, and her long years of professional development showed the fire inside her. Only the 'right contact' was needed to bring the fire out. That, for Margaret Noble, was her meeting with Swami Vivekananda in the winter of 1895 when the Swami was on a mission to preach the Vedanta in London. It proved to be a turning point in her life, changing its course and purpose, and which finally brought her to India—the land in which she was destined to fulfill herself by living according to the ideals of her faith.

The point that I have tried to bring out through this narration is that the yearning for freedom was the most powerful trait in Margaret Noble's personality, and on that, all depended. She was a free soul in her personal sphere even as a child, and transferred that inborn power to the larger yearning for national political freedom when she was growing up. Her communion with

Swami Vivekananda gave her the opportunity to realize the freedom of the inner Self, essentially a religious and spiritual experience, but she kept up her struggle for India's freedom also. It was Sister Nivedita's belief that personal freedom and freedom of humanity—national freedom were bound up together, for, as her Guru had said once, "He who wants his own salvation must work for the salvation of others". Her life and India's condition were eternally related to each other. Such was her realization and faith, and this provided the basis as well as the rationale for Sister Nivedita's total commitment to the freedom movement of India.

To Nivedita, the essence of religion lay in liberation—in freedom—to be attained by unstained and determined effort, that is to say, by the conquest of the enemy within and the enemy without. In these three conceptions, placed side by side, we have the whole spiritual and political philosophy of Sister Nivedita.

## The Practical Philosophy Of Buddha

DR. ROBIN GHOSH

The sixth century B.C. saw the birth of one of the greatest living religions of the world in the Indian sub-continent—Buddhism, its preacher being the Siddhārtha, popularly known as 'The Buddha' or the 'Enlightened One'. Buddhism sowed its seed in India and gradually spread over Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, China, Japan, Indonesia and other lands, making it almost the first international missionary religion of the world. The man who founded Buddhism did not preach any form of worship, did not recognize any

personal deity, did not reply to metaphysical questions, but was worshipped and glorified by innumerable disciples—the concrete proofs we have, being the great number of Buddhist temples spread over the whole of Asia. What was, then, the secret of the spread of Buddhism? The simplest answer would be 'its practical this-world attitude'.

Buddha's entire life was a life of research-based practical wisdom. In his youth the sight of an old man bowed down by years, a corpse, and a diseased person led him to

think that life was full of suffering, and he was troubled. The sight of a mendicant or wandering monk possibly indicated to him the way to find a remedy. To find an answer to the cause of suffering and bring about its cessation, at the age of twenty-nine, he left his princely robe, bade farewell to his sleeping wife and son and wandered from place to place. He came in contact with the great scholars—Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, who taught him the stages of meditation and philosophical speculation, but that did not help him. He practised severe austerities, but that too proved futile. He became desperate to achieve enlightenment. Ultimately, seating himself under a Bo-tree, he fixed his mind towards his goal and after some weeks of deep meditation he found the answer to the mystery of suffering and was enlightened. He attained *Nirvāṇa*, the highest stage of positive bliss or pure consciousness, a state free from suffering through his own intellectual power. Thus Buddha showed to the world that a person can experience unconditional spiritual freedom in this very life and can live thereafter on a high plane of beatitude. This was his practical achievement. Had he spent his time dwelling on metaphysical theories about God, the world, and soul, and indulged in preaching these, he would never have become 'a Buddha'. He therefore did not teach any system of philosophy or metaphysics because he felt that mere theorizing would not suffice in any way to annihilate suffering.

His critics charged him for his anti-speculative attitude, as he did not try to satisfy their metaphysical questions. Rather, his answer to them was that theories and dogmas were often contradictory and did not profit anyone. In the *Majjhima-Nikāya, Sūta* sixty-three, dealing with the questions which tend not to edification, the Blessed One spoke to the venerable Māluṅkyāputta in the following way:

The religious life does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal or not eternal; on whether it is finite or not; on whether the soul and the body are identical; on whether the saint exists after death or does not exist...but there still remains birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, miseries, grief, and despair, for the extinction of which in the present life I am prescribing...[the way].

Further, I have not elucidated this because this profits not, nor has to do with the fundamentals of religion, nor tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation of suffering, quiescence, the supernatural faculties, supreme wisdom and *Nirvāṇa*.<sup>1</sup>

It is very clear that Buddha rejected all the theoretical questions and all speculative enquiries that did not touch upon his exclusive practical purpose of getting rid of suffering. This forms the kernel of his teachings. He felt that theoretical speculations terminated only in a blind alley, a cave or gorge of views, only involving the inexperienced mortal still deeper in suffering.

#### *The four noble truths*

The four noble truths: that there is suffering, there is a cause of suffering, there is cessation of suffering, and there is a path which leads to the cessation of suffering, propounded by Buddha formed the genesis of Buddhist philosophy. In fact, these truths which Buddha discovered anew from his spiritual experience, may be called universal truths because they can be readily seen by all men at all times. There is no denying the fact that life is full of suffering. But for a few roses it would simply be a bed of thorns. Birth is painful, death is painful, union with what is unpleasant is painful, and painful is the separation from the pleasant. Besides these there is sorrow, lamentation, grief, despair, unfulfilled wishes, unattainable wishes and so on.

1. H. C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1953) pp. 121-22.



The second noble truth deals with the cause of suffering. According to Buddhism the suffering-laden quality of existence is conditioned by craving (*trṣṇā*) and ignorance (*avidyā*). Related causes are sub-divided into twelve and are known as the *dwādasa-nidāna* or twelve links, one leading to the next. Suffering is due to birth, which arose from desire to be born, which in turn arose from cognition, sense contact, previous enjoyment of sense objects, mental clinging to those objects and so on. Desire, according to the Buddha, is the root cause of all suffering. He himself had thirsted for his own salvation but was defeated, and immediately after gaining enlightenment realized that at that very moment he was without any desire.

The third noble truth is the cessation of suffering. It is the complete fading out and cessation of desire, a giving up, a loosening of hold, a relinquishment and a non-adhesion. This is the stage of *Nirvāṇa*. It is the state where all earthly desires vanish, all passions come to an end. It is the complete control of the senses. In it the chain of causation is broken and there is no rebirth. In the different passages of the *Milinda Pañha*, ('Questions of King Milinda'), it is described as a kind of existence devoid of egoity, a timeless existence—full of 'confidence, peace, calm, bliss, happiness, delicacy, purity and freshness'. In it there is no trace of self-consciousness. 'The individual consciousness enters into a state where all relative existence is dissolved. It is the silent beyond, by words indescribable. In one sense it is self-extinction, in another, absolute freedom. It is the fading of the star in the brilliant rise of the sun, or the melting of the white cloud in the summer air. To the followers of later Mahāyāna, 'to think that Nirvāṇa is annihilation is a wicked heresy'.<sup>2</sup>

2. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy Vol. 1*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1923) p. 450.

The fourth noble truth prescribes the path to attain the cessation of suffering. The path is eightfold. Its aspects are: to have right views, right resolves, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. The path is difficult, no doubt, but can be achieved through purity of mind and body and by repeated practice. These are the practical means towards a noble end. But modern man, with few exceptions, is not ready to tread the blessed path. In this materialistic age people have become too engrossed in earthly desires and dishonest means. Having right views, conduct, speech, livelihood, mindfulness and efforts do not find a place in their hearts. There is moral degeneration. People have lost purity of heart and body. But the path taught by the Buddha can at least act as a reminder, an eyeopener, to those who want to achieve profound peace and happiness in their lives.

#### *Karma and rebirth*

Buddhism, as we know, incorporates the doctrine of *Karma* which explains the presence of inequalities in the world. It is a fact of common experience that all men are not placed equally in life. In the *Milinda Pañha*, Nāgasena has said:

...It is through a difference in their *karma* that men are not all alike. [From the results of previous causes] some men are long-lived and some short-lived, some healthy and some sickly, some handsome and some ugly, some powerful and some weak, some rich and some poor, some of high degree and some of low degree, some wise and some foolish.<sup>3</sup>

It has been explained through an analogy that just as all trees are not alike because of the differences in the seeds, so different *karma-s* snatch away equality from men in different respects. Thus in Buddhism the law of *Karma* operates as the law of justice

3. *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 215.

and retribution. This law links together the past, present and the future. It is a basic tenet of Buddhism that successive lives and rebirths are linked by a chain of natural causation. Even after death, the actions do not fade completely away, but remain in their seed form of potential energy.

Buddhism does not uphold the idea of an unchangeable or eternal conscious ego, agent or self. The ego or self is just a name for a number of interconnected facts or elements. So, while there is rebirth, there is no transmigration of any permanent ego from one life to another. In the *Milinda Pañha*, Nāgesena has thus explained:

What is born is not any transmigrating principle...It is name and form that is born in the next existence. [But] it is not the *same* name and form that is born in the next existence; but with this name and form he does a deed—it may be good or it may be wicked, and by reason of [it] another name and form is born into the next existence.

Names and forms in different lives are rising up and dying out in accordance with the law of moral causation or *karma*. The effect is different from the cause, although dependent on it. Causation is a series of different happenings, the succeeding event in the series depends on the preceding ones. It is due to the origin and passing out of the preceding event that the succeeding event arises. In other words, in the series of events, actions happening earlier determine the subsequent ones. This is the theory called *pratityasamutpāda-vāda* due to which even without admitting a permanent self, the Buddhists accept the theory of karma and rebirth. In fact, it is held, we are in the vortex of births and rebirths due to our ignorance regarding the nature of the world and of our own internal framework. Due to our age-old superstitions, we suffer from a false belief that we are everlasting and unchangeable consciousness in essence. If

we can ever realize that we are nothing but a momentary aggregation of the five *skandhas* (elements of personality),<sup>4</sup> we shall get free from births and deaths. It is this notion 'I' which becomes the cause of rebirth. Desire and attachment to objects rests on the notion of 'I' and so long as there remains this notion of 'I' the continuity of rebirths does not end. The intimate relation between *karma* (done under the spell of desire—*vāsanā*, *kleśa* and *ātmadrsti*) and rebirth is basic to Buddhist philosophy. Ignorance produces *samskāras* (*karmic* forces in the seed state) and become fixed in the individual mind-stuff (consciousness or *vijñāna*). These become the base for emergence of a new life. The new life again comes in contact with the external world, grows in feeling and emotion, and performs actions which again cause the origin of another life. The cycle goes on in an uninterrupted series.

Some *Therāvādins* believe that the new birth takes place immediately after death, whereas others say there is an intermediate stage before rebirth known as the stage of *gandharva*. Due to *karma*, this intermediate being, possessing supernatural vision, together with an unimpeded capacity for going through space, arises. It lives on exhalations. After a period it reaches a place where it can be born (either as male or female) according to its *karma*. As soon as the new being is formed in the mother's womb, from it, it vanishes. Thus we find that the multi-coloured worldly experiences of the living being are determined by actions springing from desire. Actions being of a mixed good and bad character, every being must go through the experiences of both desirable and undesirable effects.

4. *Skandhas* or elements of personality: (a) corpo-reality or form (*rūpa*), (b) sensation (*vedanā*), (c) perception (*samjñā*), (d) mental formations (*samskaras*), and (e) consciousness (*vijñāna*).

### *God and the world*

Buddhism is a religion in which we do not find place for God. As we have seen above, Buddha believed in the chain of causation, in relation between cause and effect, and was not ready to accept God as an uncaused cause. All the arguments for God's existence, such as the ontological, and teleological, fail as proofs. Man is born out of his own deeds and the need of a divine author does not arise. Moreover, this world which is full of imperfections could not have been created by a perfect God. Sufferings of the beings are due to *karma*. A God, however perfect he might be, can not relieve beings of their sufferings. Thus Buddha didn't preach the necessity of worship. His conscience was deeply shocked when he saw how worship incorporated cruel rites of animal sacrifice, acts which bind man still more tightly in the bonds of *samsāra*. Compassion to beings, not cruelty, leads to freedom. Therefore he taught that man should rely upon his own right-efforts to free himself, not on mystery rites or priestly intercession. In fact, his last words were: 'And now, brethren, I take my leave of you: all the constituents of being are transitory: work out your salvation with diligence.' Buddha realized that 'the only way to remove the haunting fear of the gods, the threatened torments of the future and the corruption of the human spirit, inclined to buy the goodwill of gods by flattery and praise, was to destroy the gods once for all.'<sup>5</sup> There is only cause and effect, which is derived from the past. The universe has evolved

and its evolution is based upon the materials of a previous universe. In the future also other universes would come up. The cycle of evolution and involution moves on and on.

### *The way to become a Buddha*

The Mahāsi Sayādaw, in his introduction to a lecture delivered at New Delhi during the Buddha Jayanti Celebrations from twenty-fourth to twenty-ninth November, nineteen fifty-six, suggested that anybody can become a Buddha if he practises to perfection the way to become a Buddha. The way consists of three parts, namely: (a) *Pāramī* or perfection in the cultivation of certain virtues; (b) *Cariya* or habitual behaviour; and (c) *Caga* or renunciation.

The *Pāramī-s* are ten: Perfection of *benevolence* and absence of greed, perfection of *moral discipline*, of *renunciation*, of *wisdom*, of *self-effort*, of *forbearance*, of *being truthful*, of *love* and goodwill towards all beings, and perfection of *equanimity* and *balance of mind*.

There are three kinds of habitual behaviour: acting for the benefit of all beings, for the welfare of oneself and community, and practising for the attainment of enlightenment.

There are five kinds of renunciation of worldly possessions: of offspring, of wife, of limbs and sense organs, and of one's life.

All these are in reality the practical roads which lead to salvation. As such, anybody who practises them to become enlightened can be a Buddha too, in this very life.

5. *Indian Philosophy*, p. 453.

# REVIEWS & NOTICES

**THE RIDER ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EASTERN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION:** Published by Rider, an imprint of Century Hutchinson Ltd., Brookmount House, 62-65 Chandos Place, Covent Garden, London WC2N 4NW 450 p. £ 19.95.

This new release, covering the lives and essential teachings of important mystics, thinkers and philosophers; the various spiritual practices and disciplines to be encountered among devotees; basic texts and scriptures, sects and main branches within each faith; the underlying mythologies, and important terms and concepts likely to be found in readings on *Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Zen*, will surely prove useful to writers, teachers and students. The volume has over 4000 entries and over 100 illustrations in line and tone, attractive in its binding and printing. Illustrations and entries are predominantly Buddhistic as would be expected. The *Encyclopedia* has been compiled by I. Fischer-Schreiber of the University of Vienna, Franz-Karl Ehrhard of the University of Hamburg, Kurt Friedrichs of the German Vedanta Society, and Michael S. Diener, Japanologist of Tokyo.

Swami Shivaprasadananda

**KAVYONMESHAI** By Harischandra Renapurkar. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 400 007. Pp. 200, Price Rs. 29/-.

Consisting of 42 select Sanskrit poems, from the author's compositions during the last three decades, this work is redolent with classic Sanskrit usages but with modern themes. The metres used range from the stately Shikharini, Mandakranta to lilting Upajati. The poet's command over the language is matched with his sensitivity to the ear and literary taste. The constructions are direct and the reader can follow as he goes along.

Most of the poems deal with personalities, highlighting their contributions to human progress. Kalidasa, Dayananda, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Savarkar, Satvalekar, Jawaharlal, Indira Gandhi, Lal Bahadur, Lajpatrai, are the main subjects. The author voices his disappointment with the post-independence trends in India and avers that as long as the hungry stomach remains unfed, swaraj is not real. There are patriotic exhortations. Regrets at the growth of materialistic tastes, call to return to the high values of Truth, Self, Unity, are voiced in powerful words. The excellence of

the Sanskrit language is extolled. The nuances of Dharma are explored.

His *Vivekanandalahari* of 32 verses is a graphic portrayal of the many-sided genius of the *vishwavyatirat*. His triumph in America in reaching the spiritual message of India, his dedication to the cause of uplifting the masses of this country from their tamasic condition, his condemnation of philosophy devoid of practice of Dharma, are all effectively described. The poet's eulogy of the Veda is moving, "the Jnana manifested in the pure heart of the ancient Rishis", the Sruti (and not *kriti*).

History, nationalism, social conscience, in noble verse.

M. P. Pandit

**ADI SHANKARA: THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND** by Sri S. D. Kulkarni, General Editor, Bhishma's Study of Indian History and Culture; Pub: Sri Bhagavan Veda Vyasa Itihasa Samshodhan Mandir (Bhishma), B. 7.8 Shreepal Apartments, Panch Pakhdi, Thane-400 602; Pp. 363; Rs. 240.

The author of the present volume, Sri S. D. Kulkarni, studied the problem of the ancient chronology afresh and has arrived at different dates of the landmarks in ancient Indian history.

The present Volume on Adi Shankara is the 11th in projected series Bhishma of 18 Volumes undertaken by the author. But it has been brought out first because the study of the date of Adi Shankara led to refixing the chronology of major events in the Indian history. Other Volumes are in various stages of writing and will be released in due course.

This Volume on Adi Shankara is a detailed biography of the great philosopher saint of India. The author has critically studied all the Shankara Vijaya granthas and other extant literature on Shankara. He has narrated major events in Acharya's life and has interpreted them in a rational manner. The volume is in three parts, the first dealing with the biography, the second dealing with the controversial date and the third consisting Acharya's selected hymns with English Translations. The author has marshalled the evidence on the date of Acharya in a logical manner. His arguments are based on literary evidence.

The author has succinctly brought out the quintessence of the teachings of Acharya Shankara

and has shown the pivotal role played by him in developing the philosophical and sociological thought of India. The teachings of Acharya Shankara are relevant for the entire humanity in her present day context. In this sense Acharya Shankara is verily the saviour of mankind.

Dr. A. G. Javadekar, Head of the Department of Philosophy in Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, has written a constructive introduction to Advaita Vedanta. This has added to the value of the present volume. The paper, printing and get up of the book are excellent. Further volumes of Bhishma are welcome.

Dr. Narendranath B. Patil  
Retd. Director of Languages, Bombay

**JAWAHARAJIVANAM** By S. B. Velankar.  
Pub. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay  
400 007. Pp. 120, Price Rs. 60/-.

It is meet that this publication on the Life of Jawaharlal Nehru in Sanskrit should come out in the centenary year of his birth. Pandit Nehru had great admiration for the Sanskrit language and the national heritage in Sanskrit. Sri Velankar is a recognised poet and writer in Sanskrit and it is a delight to go through these 101 *Bhavagitas*, cast in different metres, each of which is composed in a *raga* so as to facilitate recitation.

The work is divided into four parts. The first deals with the hero's life, incarceration in jail, death of his wife and then of his father, his European tours, attraction to socialism, stewardship of the National Congress. The second covers his period of prime ministership and is based mostly on his speeches. His famous utterance on 'tryst with destiny' has been happily rendered as: *daivayasit dattam vacanam, samadheyamadhuna tad gahanam* (P. 49). The third part speaks of his passing. In the fourth, there is a flashback and there are echoes from his Autobiography, *Discovery of India*. It also pays tributes to his historical role in the shaping of the nation.

Each song is accompanied by helpful footnotes; the *raga* is mentioned. The author has successfully demonstrated that Sanskrit language can handle any modern theme with grace. He has taken care to vary the metres so as to avoid monotony. Though generally they are lines with 16 *matras*, some are with 8 and some with 7. The flow of the verses is natural and pleasing to the ear.

Every lover of Sanskrit and admirer of the

personality of Nehru would like to own a copy of this well-produced book.

M. P. Pandit

**TEILHARD AND AUROBINDO**, by David M. Brookman. Maya Publications, C-5, Unit-3, Kharavelanagar, Bhubaneswar-751-001, Orissa, 1988. 145 p. Price Rs. 100/-.

"Teilhard's *The Phenomenon of Man*, says Julian Huxley in his introduction, "is a keybook of our time." He adds that "readers...may feel rewarded by the poetry of Pere Teilhard's vision of the universe. For this remarkable scientist and scholar was also a visionary."

Here lies the basic link between the two philosophies of Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin—their vision of the universe. Of course, each of them uses his own terminology—Sri Aurobindo's are based on ancient Indian tradition translated and transmuted into present-day English, and Teilhard's are basically Christian. That they arrive at the statements of their visions independent of each other is an unusual modern phenomenon.

To Teilhard, all that constitutes this universe—matter, life and mind—will, incessantly and inexorably, converge to the Omega Point which is the same as Christian salvation. He was dissatisfied with the limitations of Darwinian theory of evolution, and being a scientist—and a Christian scientist at that, he enunciated a further evolution through and into Christ. To Aurobindo, who was soaked in Indian tradition "the whole of creation may be said to be a movement between two involutions. Spirit, in which all is involved and out of which all evolves—down to the other pole of Matter, Matter in which also all is involved and out of which all evolves upwards to the other pole of Spirit." The Teilhardian evolution is, on the other hand, through radial energy which acts as an evolutionary agent.

Brookman, who establishes parallelisms between the two thinkers, is, however, careful enough to say "...the remarkable parallels we have cited between their eschatological visions do not necessarily presage the initiation of general or widespread interreligious dialogue between Christianity and 'Hinduism'." Brookman carefully puts 'Hinduism' in quotes as Aurobindo's statement is not necessarily the statement of Hinduism as a whole.

Through such books as Brookman's it is

possible for men of faith from the East and the West—and not merely those who consider themselves Christians or Hindus—to understand that religions other than their own have created thinkers whose visions are close to one another and that modern science provides a basis for such visions.

It may be hoped that this understanding will reduce tensions and fanaticism. That would indeed be a step that mankind should take towards further evolution as envisaged by these two great visionaries.

Prof. C. Visweswar

**THE VEIL**, by Sarat Jeet Singh. Published by Candle Flame, Khan Villa, Solan, Himachal Pradesh-173-212. India, 1988. Price Rs. 15/-.

*The Veil* is a collection of verses which are mostly outpourings of emotion, often in a language that could have been better. Look at the following lines from 'Mystery':

—Ah, the beauty!  
 Each giving way to life  
 To lead to yet another birth  
 And the cycle's, the tribe's, the family's  
 Offsprings pull on;  
 It is spring now, then summer, then autumn,  
 Then winter,  
 And all would pull on, pull on.  
 —Pull on till the veil of mystery is torn apart.

Or, these from 'Victory':

Rise, O man, from narrowmindedness  
 Rise, O man, from the bonds of hatred  
 Rise, O man, for your ignorance cripples  
 the innocent  
 Rise, O man, to acknowledge the truth.

Quite a few spelling mistakes like 'preffered' for 'prefered'<sup>1</sup> and 'scintilate' for 'scintillate'<sup>2</sup> as well as grammatical errors like 'so fed up I am with awaiting for you'<sup>3</sup> and:

When I saw for you again  
 You were not walking with me.<sup>4</sup>

and: 'No, I am not hungry of milk'.<sup>5</sup> have crept in.

Once in a while, as in the following:

A long, dark and lonely path stretches ahead,  
 As life flickers and hope ends in pain<sup>6</sup>

and in:

Cover my whole being with love  
 And share with me my silence.<sup>7</sup>

there is a suggestion of poetry.

1. Radicle. 2. Hermit. 3. Riddle. 4. Illusion.  
 5. The snake charmer. 6. Swing. 7. Rosary.

Prof. C. Visweswar

**THE ECONOMY OF HUMAN LIFE**: Translated from an Indian manuscript written by an ancient Brahmin. Published by Samata Books, 10 Kamraj Bhavan, 573 Mount Road, Madras-600 006, 1990. Price Rs. 40/-.

Here is a stimulating and illuminating work which made its first appearance in the year 1751 and won widespread popularity, as is evidenced from the fact that the work saw its fiftieth edition by 1812. M/S Samata Book, Madras, which publishes a good number of spiritual classics, has brought out this Indian edition of the work, obviously with the main objective of making us familiar with the reflections of an oriental thinker who is said to have been an 'ancient brahmin'. The work has been translated into French, German, Italian and Welsh.

In all, there are twelve chapters in the book which are concerned with fundamental spiritual, ethical and social issues confronted by every individual. It displays more or less an organic system of reflections which we need very much in our personal culture, inner refinement and transformation. The spirit of values and morality which the present book breathes is simple and forceful. It is therefore a valuable and welcome reprint of the extant classical literature.

Nothing definite is known from the book about its author, the land to which he belonged, or the time of its composition. As such, it is difficult to declare categorically that it is actually 'a work translated from an Indian manuscript written by an ancient brahmin'. The discerning eye will notice a happy blending of Hindu and Christian ideas in it.

Ranjit Kumar Acharjee

# PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

“You must purify your intellect completely through stillness and engage it ceaselessly in spiritual work. For just as the eye is attentive to sensible things and is fascinated by what it sees, so the purified intellect is attentive to intelligible realities and becomes so rapt by spiritual contemplation that it is hard to tear it away. And the more the intellect is stripped of the passions and purified through stillness, the greater the spiritual knowledge it is found worthy to receive. The intellect is perfect when it transcends knowledge of created things and is united with God: having then attained a royal dignity it no longer allows itself to be pauperized or aroused by lower desires, even if offered all the kingdoms of the world. If, therefore, you want to acquire all these virtues, be detached from every man, flee the world and sedulously follow the path of the saints. Dress shabbily, behave simply, speak unaffectedly, do not be haughty in the way you walk, live in poverty and let yourself be despised by everyone. Above all, guard the intellect and be watchful, patiently enduring indigence and hardship, and keeping intact and undisturbed the spiritual blessings that you have been granted. Pay strict attention to yourself, not allowing any sensual pleasure to infiltrate. For the soul’s passions are allayed by stillness; but when they are stimulated and aroused they grow more savage and force us into greater sin; and they become hard to cure, like the body’s wounds when they are scratched and chafed. Even an idle word can make the intellect forget God, the demons enforcing this with the compliance of the senses.

“Great struggle and awe are needed to

guard the soul. You have to divorce yourself from the whole world and sunder your soul’s affection for the body. You have to become citiless, homeless, possessionless, free from avarice, from worldly concerns and society, humble, compassionate, good, gentle, still, ready to receive in your heart the stamp of divine knowledge....Especially important is pure prayer—prayer which is unceasing and uninterrupted. Such prayer is a safe fortress, a sheltered harbour, a protector of virtues, a destroyer of passions. It brings vigour to the soul, purifies the intellect, gives rest to those who suffer, consoles those who mourn. Prayer is converse with God, contemplation of the invisible, the angelic mode of life, a stimulus towards the divine, the assurance of things longed for, ...As an ascetic you must embrace this queen of the virtues with all your strength. Pray day and night. Pray at times of dejection and at times of exhilaration. Pray with fear and trembling, with a watchful and vigilant mind, so that your prayer may be accepted by the Lord...”

“I wonder if a man who sates himself with food is able to acquire dispassion. By dispassion I do not mean abstinence from actual sin—for this is called self-control. I mean the abstinence that uproots passionate thoughts from the mind and is also called purity of heart. ...Do not hanker after varied and costly foods or lethal pleasures. For ‘she that indulges in pleasure’, it is said, ‘is dead while still alive’...Even with ordinary foods, avoid satiety as far as possible. For it is written: ‘Do not be deceived by the filling of the belly.’”

The *Philokalia*, Vol II, pp. 24-27; 345.

Arise! Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached! *Katha Upaniṣad*, I. iii. 14

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To perpetrate the ideas advanced in the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, some of the advanced thinkers of the time have held general sessions in other large cities. The sixth session was opened at Boston on the 24th April last, with a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Heber Newton of the Episcopal Church. ...

Rev. Newton who we hear, lately became an honorary member of the Vedanta Society founded by Swami Vivekananda in New York, delivered himself as follows in a learned discourse on "The Witness of Sacred Symbolism to the Oneness of Spiritual Religion" (*an excerpt*):—

"Our age makes certain the unity of the human race...The long puzzle as to the

secret of the curious resemblance between religions is settled once for all. The differences of religion are the differences between the pine of the Adirondacks and the pine of Long Island—differences of soil and climate. Or they are the differences between the year-old pine and the pine of a hundred years—differences in the stage of development.

Why should we waste our moral energies and deaden our spiritual lives by dwelling on differences which separate us, by quarrelling over intellectual disagreements, by contending for the things which isolate us? Why should we covet petty provincialisms of piety rather than cosmopolitanism of character?..."

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[The poems of Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919), frequently appeared in *Prabuddha Bharata's* early numbers. She was one of the most popular poets in the late 1880s. This poem appeared in November 1900.]

One ship drives east, and another drives west  
With the selfsame winds that blow.  
    'Tis the set of the sails,  
    And not the gales,  
Which tell us the way they go.

Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate;  
As we voyage along through life,  
    'Tis the set of a soul  
    That decides its goal,  
And not the calm or the strife.

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