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

THE DIVINE MESSAGE

O Supreme Lord, I bow to Thee, the Primal Being,
Beyond Nature, incomprehensible, transcending sense perception,
Unchangeable, yet residing inside and outside all living beings.

O Thou who are mistaken by deluded men to be a mere actor
On this stage (of life), how could we women comprehend Thee,
Who had to incarnate Thyself for teaching bhakti, even to those
Who discriminate between the Self and the non-Self,
And who are meditative and pure minded ?

Salutations to Govinda, to Krishna, the son of Vasudeva and Devakī
The son of the cowherd, Nanda!

Salutations to Him who is lotus-eyed, lotus-naveled,
And whose feet are like (the tender petals of) lotuses,
And who wears a garland of lotus flowers.

O Hṛṣīkeśa (Lord of mind and senses), O All-pervading One,
I, with my sons was promptly rescued from many dangers by Thee,
Who are the Lord, even as Thou rescued Thine own Mother Devakī,
Who was long plunged into sorrow, confined in prison by the evil Kāṁsa.

(Kunti Devī's prayer to Sri Krishna—from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*)

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is on SRI CHAITANYA—PROPHET OF LOVE. In March on *Dol Purnima*, the full-moon day, his birthday is celebrated in many parts of the world with great eclat. As years roll on, Sri Chaitanya's doctrine of divine love (*bhakti*), goes on increasing in popularity. The first and second instalments cover his life and the third will discuss his teachings.

INDIA'S HERITAGE presents a brief discussion of the abiding strength and greatness of Indian culture, its power of accepting and assimilating thought currents and humanity from different parts of the world. Sri Ramlal Bhutani, the author, is a retired ambassador of India's foreign service.

SARADA, THE MOTHER OF THE WORLD is by Miss Abhaya Dasgupta, Librarian, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta. She elaborates on many aspects and touching episodes in Holy Mother's life in her very thoughtful article.

MEDITATION—A FEW THOUGHTS ON A SCIENTIFIC LINE, is a short essay taking its cue from the entropy phenomenon of thermodynamics. The author, Miss Sonali Chakraborti, suggests the possible potential of

meditation as an inhibitor of senescence and senility. The author is a research scholar on 'aging' in Calcutta.

UNCROWNED KING OF MADRAS, ALASINGA PERUMAL is an absorbing study on the life of one of Swami Vivekananda's most devoted disciples in India. The article throws light on some little known facets of Alasinga's life. The author, Swami Deshikatmananda, is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, Belur Math, District Howrah.

EMPHASIS ON MEDITATION IN THE DHAMMAPADA discusses lucidly how Buddhism impresses upon its followers that the supreme goal of life, enlightenment or *nirvāṇa*, is only attainable by meditation. The writer, Yog Dhyān Ahuja, is a professor of philosophy at the Metropolitan State College, Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.

NICHOLAS ROERICH AND NEW EDUCATION is a short paper based on the talk delivered by the author in the U.S.S.R. The author, Dr. Amrita Monica Salm, of California, U.S.A., stresses the urgency of disseminating new education based on the ideas of Swami Vivekananda and Nicholas Roerich to the younger generations.

SRI CHAITANYA—PROPHET OF LOVE

(EDITORIAL)

Messengers of divinity do not come as scribes or polemicists. Their lives are their message. They live the ideal life and set examples for the rest of mankind to emulate. Their teachings, though couched in simple language, set alight the hearts of common people and none can escape their transforming power. Buddha taught in the simple

Pali language, the patois of the unlearned people, and left it to his followers to write for the learned. Christ, born in a carpenter's family, preached to the common folk, and his teachings found written form in the first Gospel by Mark. Sri Chaitanya did not care to write any philosophical books, but asked his disciples to do the work of expoun-

ding. Sri Ramakrishna was least concerned about the written record of his teachings, but meticulously they were recorded by his disciple who made mental notes and jotted them down unbeknown to others. Similar was the case with Saint Francis of Assisi. These saints and saviours of the world were born to kindle the spark of divinity in the hearts of men, to deliver them from the suffering and bondage of the world. For this sole purpose they came down to the earth, played their divine sport or *līlā* and redirected the course of spiritual consciousness. Again and again the world has seen the play of God in human form.

In his introduction to *The Great Master*, Swami Saradananda says: 'Incarnations of transcendent greatness appeared in India even up to the present time, whenever the necessity for them has arisen. It is well-known how a little more than four hundred years ago, the shining example of Bhagavān Sri Chaitanya made people lose themselves in ecstasy in singing the name of Hari (*Viṣṇu*).¹ Sri Ramakrishna says: 'God incarnates Himself on earth in a human body. He is, no doubt present everywhere and in all beings, but man's longing is not satisfied unless he sees God in human form. Man's need is not satisfied without the Divine Incarnation.'² Therefore the author of *Sri Chaitanya Charitāmṛta*, Sri Krishnādās Kavirāj, says: 'Of all the acts of Sri Krishna, the best were those that pertain to his human embodiment. The human form was his own form.'³ To Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas,

1. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1978) Vol. I, p. 10.

2. *Ibid.*, 1984, Vol. II, p. 883.

3. Krishnadas Kavirāj, *Sri Chaitanya Charitāmṛta* (Calcutta: Natabihari Roy, Pub.) Adilīlā: p. 37.

श्रीकृष्णेर यत लीला, सर्वोत्तम नरलीला ।

नर बपु ताहारुस्वरूप ॥

Sri Chaitanya is an incarnation of Krishna, and Sri Ramakrishna reiterated this many times. It is said in the *Great Master* that Bhairavi Brahmani used to read the *Chaitanya Charitāmṛta* and the *Chaitanya Bhāgavata* to Sri Ramakrishna⁴.

On the evening of the first full-moon day in February 1486 A.D., a child was born to Śaci Devī and her husband Sri Jagannāth Miśra. The child was called Nimāi or Viśwambhara. He also came to be called Gaurāṅga because of his complexion, fair as molten gold. Jagannāth Miśra was a poor brahmin teacher of Sanskrit and other subjects to the students of Navadvip, a town in West Bengal, seventy miles to the north of what is now Calcutta. Some months before Nimāi was born, Jagannāth found one day that a divine light entered his heart and passed onto Śaci Devī. Śaci Devī also had many divine visions of gods worshipping her. Such spiritual experiences of the parents of divine souls are not rare. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Māyā Devī, the Mother of Buddha, and Chandrāmaṇi Devī, the Mother of Sri Ramakrishna, all had similar strange experiences. Nimāi was the last child born to Śaci Devī and Jagannāth. He had one elder brother, called Viśwarūpa, about ten years old.

The parents discovered one day to their surprise, small footprints in the room which showed in their imprint, clear marks of a banner, a thunder bolt, a conch, a discus and a fish.⁵ The husband and wife were at a loss, not being able to solve the mystery. Then one day, while feeding her child, Śaci Devī noticed those same marks on her child's feet. When astrologer, Nilambar Chakravarty, was consulted, he said that not only were those marks evident, but the

4. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master, op. cit.*, p. 216.

5. *Sri Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, op. cit.*, Adilīlā:— p. 54.

child had thirty-two other such signs on his person, all of which indicated his divine nature.⁶ One unusual phenomenon was observed in the child's behaviour. When he cried or became annoyed, the name of Hari would pacify him. A similar characteristic was seen in the childhood of Swami Vivekananda. When bribes, or threats or entreaties all failed, if the mother poured cold water on his head, uttering the name of Śiva, he too would immediately become calm.

The boy, Nimāi, was very restless and turbulent in nature, often totally unmanageable. But he was extremely beautiful, and people were charmed by his looks, and even by his boyish tantrums. It was sometimes beyond the power of Śaci Devī to control the boy. Often she locked him up in a room. Once even, Nimāi, in a wild temper, hit his mother with a brickbat and she fell unconscious. Nimāi was remorseful. Perhaps that was the last time, and afterward he never treated his mother rudely.⁷ During Nimāi's childhood many miracles took place which were beyond anyone's power to explain. Once two thieves, attracted by the jewels which Nimāi wore, enticed him away from the house and then kidnapped him. They wanted to take him far away and remove the gold ornaments. But as they carried him off, somehow, overcome by a strange power, they lost their way, and after walking round and round, ultimately, to their chagrin, found they had come back to the house of Jagannāth. There they left the boy and took to their heels. Sometimes, the parents heard the sound of jingling anklets in the house.⁸ Many were the indications heralding that the boy Nimāi was an extraordinary being.

Nimāi's father first taught him the alphabet, and Nimāi soon learned to read and

write. Later he was admitted into the village *tol* (Sanskṛt school), where Nimāi found a wide field for his fun and frolic. With his friends he created almost a terror in the hearts of people. His sometimes not-so-innocent sports and boyish mischief brought widespread protests from neighbours, causing anxiety to both mother and father. Reprimands and punishments by his parents did not in any way curb Nimāi's jovial sports. However, one tragic event had a telling effect, and it sobered him to a great extent. His elder brother, Viśwarūpa, took the vows of sannyāsa at young age, and left the house, parents and young brother plunged into untold grief. It was a great shock to Nimāi, and the sadness and constant tears of his parents moved him terribly.

Afterward, Nimāi was admitted into the school conducted by the grammarian, Gaṅgādās Paṇḍit. In this seminary Nimāi with his sharp intellect and powerful memory excelled over others, and soon became the favourite with his teacher. When he was only eleven years old, due to illness, his father breathed his last. As Jagannāth had been the only earning member, the family was soon in dire straits and Śaci Devī was at her wits end, and at the end of her financial tether. Somehow she had to find means to live because of her only son still quite young. Nimāi soon gained mastery over many branches of learning, and especially in Sanskṛt grammar he was unbeatable. Inebriated by his scholarship, Nimāi began to look down upon others with contempt. He even humiliated his dearest friend, Murāri Gupta, who later on would become his staunch follower and earliest biographer. Nimāi's classmates and seniors as well, were afraid of his keen intellect, prodigious memory and haughty temperament.

At the age of sixteen, Nimāi Pāṇḍit became an accomplished scholar, opened his own school and began teaching. He was

6. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

the youngest teacher in the town of veterans. The school within a short time attracted many students and shot into fame. The conspicuous cause for this popularity was unlike others, he freely mixed with his students and with them indulged in youthful sports and hilarity. This cheerful spirit and jovial nature were Nimāi's prominent characteristics, and remained with him throughout life. In Sri Ramakrishna too, one notices this prominent characteristic. Nobody ever found him gloomy or sullen. In the Order of St. Francis of Assisi, a sad countenance was an offence against the holy rule. The Brothers were expected to turn a smiling face to God and men. Therefore St. Francis used to call the Brothers 'Jesters of the Lord'.⁹

The financial condition of the family improved, lessening the burden on Nimāi's mother. When he was about sixteen, she therefore arranged for his marriage. Nimāi Paṇḍit, as he was popularly known in the town of Navadvip, married Laxmi, the daughter of a poor brahmin Vallabhācārya. He made his mark by writing '*Vidyāsāgari Tikā*', which was a commentary on *Kalāp Grammar*. As Nimāi's reputation spread so also did his ego become inflated. Lesser Vaiṣṇava scholars were particularly a prey to his derision and caustic remarks. Being a neglected small group in that town, they tried to avoid him. Brahmin though he was, in an age of caste discrimination, Nimāi mixed freely with non-brahmins and even dined in their homes. His detractors nicknamed him 'Uddhata Cūḍāmaṇi'—'Crest-jewel of arrogance'. During this period of his life Nimāi had no special love for God or for Krishna, or for anything, for that matter, except his attachment to scholarship. His future preceptor, Sri Īśwara Puri, a

venerable monk who visited Navadvip, tried to impress upon Nimāi, devotion to Sri Krishna, but he failed to produce any tangible change in this scholar.

Once a great pāṇḍit, Keśava Kāśmiri, came to Navadvip and challenged others to debates. He belonged to the school of Nimbārka Vaiṣṇavas, and was known as a '*Digvijayī*' or conqueror. News of his arrival and reputation reached the ears of Nimāi through his students. It so happened that by chance this paṇḍit and Nimāi met on the steps of the Gaṅgā. Nimāi and his students requested the Paṇḍit to recite some verses in praise of Gaṅgā (the holy river). Keśava Kāśmiri at once extemporaneously composed and recited many Sanskrit ślokas. Nimāi pointed out some grammatical error in one of the verses composed by the great scholar, and this led to an animated discussion between them. Paṇḍit Digvijayī felt humiliated having to accept defeat from such a young man, and he returned home crestfallen. The same night Goddess Saraswati (Goddess of Learning) appeared in his dream and told him that Nimāi was not an ordinary person, he was none other than an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu Himself. The Paṇḍit returned next day and reverentially bowed to Nimāi and then returned to his place. In spite of his seeming exterior arrogance and immodest behaviour, Nimāi did experience occasionally states of trance. Some thought these states were the work of evil spirits, and others felt the trances were brought on by his excessive reading and discussing.

Nimāi loved wandering sādhus and monks. He invited them to his home and fed them sumptuously. He also gave away money and alms to the poor and needy. No guest left his house empty-handed. Low caste people also, like shoemakers and grocers, with whom he mixed freely, held him in high esteem. Because of his generous nature, Nimāi was often short of money. During this time while Nimāi was living the life of

9. Sister Devamata, *Sri Ramakrishna and St. Francis of Assisi* (La Crescenta, California: Ananda Ashrama,) p. 24.

a happy householder and successful teacher, a misfortune shook him. His wife, Laxmi, died suddenly of snake-bite and he was grief-stricken. Nimāi soon regained his composure and consoled his old mother. After some time he again married, this time to Viṣṇupriya, the only daughter of Rāja Paṇḍita Sanātana, a wealthy man of Navadvip.

It was at the end of 1508 that Nimāi went to Gayā, the sacred place where all Hindus come to worship Lord Viṣṇu and to offer prayers for the ancestors. Nimāi came to perform the traditional rites for the departed soul of his father. In Gayā he happened to meet the sādhu, Īśwara Puri, whom he had already seen in Navadvip. After a few day's stay in Gāya, a deep change came over Nimāi Paṇḍit. He requested Īśwara Puri to give him *dikṣā* or sacred initiation into religious life. At this, Īśwara Puri agreed and gave to Nimāi a *Gopāla-mantra* (a holy word or name of the child-Krishna). Repetition of the sacred mantra produced a tremendous impact on the mind and personality of Nimāi. One day as he was repeating the mantra, he fell into a state of divine bliss. After regaining his normal consciousness he began to weep continuously for the vision of Krishna. Day and night he felt excruciating pain due to separation from his spiritual Ideal. He bade good-bye to his companions and himself left for Mathurā to meet Krishna. When he advanced a little distance, he heard a divine voice asking him to go back home, the time was not yet ripe for his visit to Mathurā. Nimāi obeyed, and returned to Navadvip in the beginning of 1509. He was totally a transformed personality. Nimāi invited respected members of the Vaiṣṇava community and narrated to them about his transcendental experiences. These stalwart devotees of Viṣṇu were completely taken aback by the changes they saw in Nimāi. There was an unbelievable metamorphosis

in the man who used to parade his learning and ridicule the Vaiṣṇavas. But they were exceedingly happy that Nimāi would lead them hereafter.

Nimāi became oblivious of his surroundings, neither home nor school attracted him anymore. Day and night he spent uttering the name of Krishna in an indrawn mood. Instead of teaching grammar and other subjects to his students, he talked animatedly only about Sri Krishna and devotion to Him. The students were bewildered and conveyed the strange news to their parents. Elders close to Nimāi advised him to conduct his classes properly. But such advice had only temporary effects and soon Nimāi forgot everything and the flood of devotion swept him off his balance. Bereaved Śaci and Viṣṇupriyā tried in vain to bring his condition to normalcy by various means. Overtaken by the pining for Krishna, Nimāi used to roll on the ground, writhed in pain and crying aloud. Murāri Gupta, his biographer, described his condition thus: 'On hearing the name of Hari (Viṣṇu) or songs about Him, he rolls on the ground sometimes in a perturbed state, sometimes like a log of wood. Sometimes with great devotion he sings of Krishna or Govinda. Sometimes his voice is choked and his body shivers and horripilates again and again.'¹⁰ Another biographer, Krishnadās Kavirāj, in his *Chaitanya Charitāmrita* remarks: 'One who has tasted the sweet name of Krishna, which is like nectar, finds that his thirst to taste it, instead of being assuaged, increases more and more.'¹¹ One finds the same description of Sri Ramakrishna's anguish in *The Great Master*—'Sometimes it increased

10. A. K. Majumdar, *Caitanya, His Life and Doctrine* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969) p. 137.

11. *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita, op. cit.*, p. 257.

ए माधुर्यामृते सदा येइ पान करे ।

तृष्णा शान्ति नहे तृष्णा बाडे निरन्तरे ॥

so much that, unable to surpress it, he fell on the ground and struggled in pain.¹²

In his classes Nimāi exhorted his students to sing the name and glory of Krishna, and devote their time to thinking of Him. He urged them to repeat the following verse again and again:

Haraye namaḥ Kṛṣṇa Yādavāya namaḥ
Gopāla Govinda Rāma Śrī Madhusudanāya

'Salutations to Hari, Yādava Krishna, Gopāla, Govinda and Śrī Madhusudana.' (all names of Krishna) After repeated states of trance and indrawn consciousness accompanied by uncontrollable storms of emotions, Nimāi could not continue anymore his worldly duties and teaching. One day he called his students to him and said: 'Brothers, excuse me, I am no longer fit to teach you. Whenever I attempt to give you lessons, I find a dark-coloured small boy (Krishna—krishṇavarṇa ek śīṣu murali bājāy) playing on the flute before me, and then I am not myself. I am possessed by Him and forget everything else. You had better go to some other school.'¹³ Nimāi began to

serve the devotees of Sri Krishna, the Vaiṣṇavas, and would touch their feet whenever he saw them. Advaitins and some scholars, who earlier had tried to belittle the Path of devotion (*bhakti*), became afraid of Nimāi's aggressiveness. Other than a very few Vaiṣṇavas, all thought that he had become mad. His mother also had some apprehensions about the sanity of her only son. One great Vaiṣṇava, Śrīvāsa, however, assured Nimāi that his symptoms were not those of some disease, but were the signs of great *mahā-bhakti-yoga* (realization of God). Śrīvāsa also convinced the anxious Śaci that the symptoms were not of disease but of greatness. Śrīvāsa had the good fortune of witnessing the *Nṛsimha* (Lion-god, one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu) in Nimāi. Advaita Ācārya, another great devotee of Viṣṇu, a resident of Santipur, had a strange dream in which Sri Krishna appeared and asked him not to worry, the Lord would spread the name of Krishna everywhere. After seeing the God-intoxicated Nimāi, Advaita Ācārya was convinced that Nimāi was the Master Himself, a reincarnation of Sri Krishna.

12. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master, op. cit.*, p. 163.

13. Swami Durga Chaitanya Bharati, *Sri Gouranga—The Man* (Calcutta: M. L. Dey & Co., 1933) p. 44.

14. Swami Saradeshanda, *Sri Sri Chaitanya-deva*, (Bengali) Shillong, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama.

INDIA'S HERITAGE

RAMLAL BHUTANI

One of the oldest civilisations, India represents one-sixth of humanity. It is the largest democracy in the world and among the top ten industrialised nations. India needs no introduction in the American hemisphere; this was done by Christopher Columbus. It was in quest of India that

Columbus set sails from Spain. Inhabitants in this part of the world were then labelled as 'Indians' and the name of India stands today engraved in the geography and history of the New World.

India was an attraction then, now is and will remain so. For, India has stood for

thought and intellect. India excelled not only in the arts and spirituality but in science as well. Not many in the west are aware that India gave the world the system of numerals and the concepts of zero and decimal. Indian astronomers had surveyed cosmos, studied the motion of the sun and the moon and assessed the age of the universe.

India and her nuances are as unlimited as her concepts. From snowcapped Himalayas to sandy-dunes, to sylvan forests, Indian masses impress one with their variety, different creeds, castes, communities and costumes and several languages, each rich in its prose, poetry and plays. India is a beautiful blend of the ancient and the modern. She is an archaic village or a way-side town left behind by the advances of time. She is also bustling metropolises, booming business houses, buzzing factories, lush fields. We have boeings and bullock-carts, an extensive network of railways and, yet, there are areas unexplored or without metalled roads. High-rise buildings and hi-fi stereos contrast with the simple living of village folk and of the aboriginals who still lead their sheltered existence unhindered by the spread of 'modern' civilisation. Yet keeping pace with the times, India is one of the few countries in the world that has acquired advanced technology in several sectors. To the Indian, the country is a harmonious whole; to the alien, its diversity is a puzzling complexity which he seeks to unravel and understand.

India's legend as 'golden sparrow' spread across the continents and tempted no less a man than Alexander. He eventually retreated, leaving behind a portion of his army which gradually was assimilated. India witnessed the rise and fall of many empires. The Mauryan dynasty, founded in 323 BC by Chandragupta, is reckoned as the golden age of that period. The great monarch, Ashoka, a descendant of this dynasty,

recognised the futility of conquest by war, while expanding the boundaries of his empire, and embraced Buddhism. In the South, the Chalukyas and Pallavas had established their dominion. Trade routes through south brought us in touch with Judaism and Christianity. Then came Islam in the 8th century A.D. Subsequently, the Moghuls established a mighty empire. Life and style gradually changed as Islam made its impact in certain spheres. Europeans followed. India came under the British rule. It brought a touch of the industrial revolution and the western civilisation; it also evoked a reaction and a united bid to oust foreign dominance. After a long and noble struggle, that became a trail-blazer for many colonies. India regained her independence in 1947.

India passed through vicissitudes but retained its ancient culture. Some historians begin with the Vedic age, while many would like to trace it earlier to the Indus Valley civilisation, finds of which are reckoned as the earliest recorded but not yet fully decipherable. Some Indian and Soviet scholars, who have been working on the symbols and hieroglyphics, are of the view that some codes are understandable and contain a number of Tamilian lingua and signs. Researchers felt that the Proto-Indian civilisation, which existed on a huge territory stretching far beyond the Indus valley and connected by trade relations with various tribes of the Indian subcontinent, exerted a profound influence on all subsequent Indian cultures and religious systems. Traditions of the Proto-Indian civilisation are traceable in the Jhukar culture that came to replace it in the Indus Valley, and in later times in Brahminism, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism.

The Indus Valley civilisation itself manifests an advanced stage of architecture, town planning, roads, public baths and sewerage system, coloured fabrics, figurines, etc. That was some 3,500 years B.C. And, it must

have taken the Indus society a few centuries to reach that high stage of progress in that era. This would suggest that our ancient heritage is at least some 5,000 years old.

The name India, we understand, is derived from the name of river Indus. Known for its riches, India became a target of invasions, mostly from the north-west, and these invaders often referred to the plains as the area of the Indus. In Sanskrit language, the river Indus is called Sindhu. The letter 'S' is generally transliterated as 'H' in Persian. For example, the word 'Saptah' (a week) is 'Haftah' in Persian. The river Sindhu was called Hindu and the inhabitants came to be labelled as 'Hindus' (though this term is not found in our scriptures) and the area itself came to be known as Hindustan or Hindusthan.

Old scriptures include the books of knowledge, the Vedas, treatises on various schools of thought, the Purāṇas, the post-scripts or the Upaniṣads. It is the philosophy contained in these volumes that has inspired millions through the millenia. India's rich contribution to the world of thought and intellect has yet to be matched by any other civilisation. Be it in the field of Yoga, meditation, theory of Karma, or of re-incarnation, or progressive uplift of consciousness from body to mind, from mind to intellect and on to spirit and the imperishability of the spirit or soul.

Through the ages, Indian philosophy has transcended geographical boundaries and Indian thought spread far and wide benefiting humanity as a whole. As inheritors of this great civilisation, we should remember that India's contribution is not limited to philosophy alone, but covered a wide spectrum of 'mantra', 'tantra' and 'yantra'. On the materialistic plane, such as in the realm of arithmetic and astronomy, environment and cosmos, medicine and surgery, art of warfare and diplomacy, sculpture and music,

India touched commanding heights and achieved glory.

India's seats of learning, the Gurukulas, and residential universities like the Nalanda in Bihar and Taksh-Shila in North-West (Taxila near Peshawar) attracted scholars from far and near. As a cradle of spirituality and civilisation, India continued to provide inspiration to humanity.

The culture continued to imbibe new ideas from all directions, even from outsiders and invaders—retaining what could be assimilated and rejecting the superfluous. And, in the process, influenced and, in many cases, absorbed the aliens who became settlers. It was the tolerant approach and the capacity to amalgamate new ideas that kept the culture *avant-garde* and refreshed. Thought marched on with the times. Our present heritage thus is a summation of acquisitions of thoughts over the centuries—from Indus Valley to Ashoka, to Akbar, from Gautama Buddha to Guru Nanak to Gandhiji.

History has witnessed many civilisations come and go. The Roman, the Greek, the Mesopotamian, the Byzantine, the Egyptian, and the Babylonian, etc ... they flourished in their days but have gradually faded away. The Indian culture has survived the centuries and thrived through the ages, as we kept our windows open for fresh air but refused to be blown off our feet. Our roots are deep and we can stand the strong winds. We have learnt to combine spirituality with science, tradition with technology and believe in marching to modernisation with moral values. India has always stressed the creation as a whole, believed in universal brotherhood treating the entire world as one large family, as reflected in the Vedic motto: *Vasudhaiva-hi kutumbakam*.

Many westerners wonder why the ancient Indian thought admits of so many gods and goddesses. Why does it not have just one holy book or one prophet or one foun-

der? Why do we have so many scriptures, hundreds of treatises, thousands of gods and goddesses in the *Dharma*? Actually, the word *Dharma* stands for right conduct, duty or a way of life and does not denote 'religion' in the sense other sects, faiths or beliefs are understood. Ours has been a combination of various schools of thought, giving each one the liberty to pursue his or her own concept or idea of God or the ultimate Truth. The Truth is one but the wise describe it variously.

When we set one question paper in a school test, we do not expect one and the same answer from all pupils. Each pupil will reply in his or her own way. Each answer paper will describe the same point differently according to a student's own concept. The question is one, but answers are many. In fact, if two students answer in exactly the same manner, we will suspect some malpractice! If there are five hundred candidates sitting for the test, there will be five hundred different answers. Similarly, if each person wishes to express or pursue his own conception of God or Truth, why should this be denied to him? For an entire population of, say, 330 million followers in that age, it came to be reckoned that there are 330 million gods and goddesses. To any stretch of the imagination, this represents the zenith of liberty of thought!

India is not only the largest democracy

on this planet in a political sense with 'one person, one vote' but it is also a true democracy in terms of religion with 'one person, one's own concept of God'. The tradition of tolerance and the heritage of plural thought have ensured it over the ages, even provided refuge to the persecuted and the minorities. There is room for all. Here, a hundred flowers bloom and a thousand ideas prosper. There is a unity in diversity. A common cultural strand runs through a necklace of variety of gems of thoughts. It is not the shape of architecture of the abode of the Lord or the shade of its belief that matters as much, as the message of spirituality behind it. And, ambassadors of Indian culture like the Buddhist monks, Śāṅkarācārya, Vivekananda helped spread the spiritual message.

The common man in India believes in the moral order. He aspires for salvation, adores the Supreme and is able to see Him in all and all in Him. The fragrance of traditional philosophy or Vedanta permeates the lives of rich and poor, peasants and labourers, affluent or indigent. For him the mystique of philosophy, the inspiration from sagas in stones, carvings in the caves, the stupas and gompas, mosques and churches, houses of worship of various denominations, temples of gods and temples of technology ... all are guiding posts and part of common heritage.

SARADA, THE MOTHER OF THE WORLD

ABHAYA DASGUPTA

All this happened on the way from Kamarpukur to Jayrambati. The sun was setting and its rays tinged the western horizon red. Sarada, a village housewife, but almost a girl still, was hurrying down the village path that wound through seemingly

endless open meadows. Her escort, also a mere boy named Shivu, her nephew, son of the elder brother of her husband, a bundle of clothes in hand, followed behind her. But he had suddenly stopped. When Sarada became conscious of this, she turned round

and asked, 'What's the matter? Why have you stopped?' Shivu asked a ridiculous question, 'Tell me who you really are. Unless you give a straight-forward answer to this I'm not going with you.' He sounded very determined. Sarada at first tried to dismiss the question. She replied, 'Why, am I not your aunt? Who else can I be?' The boy was not satisfied. He declared that he would not move a step further, and that she could go alone. Sarada argued, cajoled and begged. She said everything she could think of but the boy was adamant. When all her efforts failed, Sarada had to admit the truth about her identity, she told him in her characteristic cryptic language, 'People say that I'm Goddess "Kali".' Shivu, with a triumphant smile on his face, resumed his journey.¹ This seemingly dramatic event was the beginning of a revelation. It was like the first sound of the conch shells in the evening which keeps echoing in the air. Even today, in the self-same meadow near Jayrambati village, the same sweet and sacred words 'people call me Kali' can be heard echoing through the distant evening air, and in the murmur of the near-by Amodar river. But who is the Kali? The same Goddess Bhavatarini, worshipped by Sri Ramakrishna. She is called by yet another name—Jagattāriṇī², or the Saviour from worldly miseries. That is why Sri Ramakrishna not only worshipped Goddess Kali, but ended up placing his last offering at the feet of Sarada, the Mother of the World. ... But one pertinent question: that day when the Mother of the World was walking along the village path with Shivu, what role did he play? Was it not like the role of a *ṛsi* of olden times? Was it not true that he made no mistake in recognizing who his aunt really was? He recognized her but

wanted that she would admit her identity herself. So he pressed her for an answer to the question, 'Who are you?' Blessed indeed was Śivaram. Sarada Devi had no choice but to admit that she was Goddess Kali.

Another scene. In her Jayrambati village, Mother Sarada was resting on a cot one evening. Radhu was sleeping by her side. A lamp, on a metal stand, was emitting mild light in the room. A devotee was sitting on the floor nearby. He had come to Jayrambati from somewhere. Something was weighing on his mind, but he gave no indication of it. Yet Mother sensed it. She suddenly turned to him and asked, 'Is there anything that's worrying you?' The devotee asked a surprising question. 'Are you Mother of everybody?' The answer, as surprising, came right away, 'Yes, I am.' He next asked, 'Are you Mother of all living beings, including animals?' Again she affirmed that she was their mother too³. This was another instance in which she made no secret of her identity. The devotee must have guessed that 'perhaps' Sarada Devi was the Mother of the world. But he wanted to be sure of it. Mother often used words like 'People say', or 'perhaps', whenever devotees questioned her about her identity. She similarly showed great affection for Radhu, as if she was attached to her. These were all a smoke screen, a veil, by which Mother tried to hide herself and pass like any ordinary woman, yet there were plenty of things she said or did, suggestive enough for discerning people to understand who she was.

Once she said, 'You probably know that Thakur had motherly love towards everybody in this world; the Master regarded all creatures as manifestations of the Divine Mother. He left me behind to give expres-

1. Swami Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1962) p. 185.

2. *Jagattāriṇī*, *jagat* (world), *tāriṇī* (who takes across).

3. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1969) p. 363.

sion to this Motherhood.⁴ In fact, the uncommon divine nature of Mother lay in this quality of motherhood. She became Mother to all, only to protect and uplift them. The sweetness of her motherhood attracted both the virtuous and the wicked, the wise as well as the foolish, the rich and the poor. This motherliness in her unfolded itself gradually as days went by.

Sri Ramakrishna continuously talked on religious subjects. But Sri Sarada Devi? She was always shy, quiet and reserved. She hardly ever talked. At least she never gave any hint of her great spiritual character. Yet, now and again, as if in spite of herself, her spirituality came out like flashes. For instance, the way she treated all, high or low, everyone was her child, irrespective of race, religion or caste. Everyone received from her the same motherly love and care. Here she could not hide herself; the mother in her came out strong and clear. It cut across barriers of time and space. Young or old, Indian or non-Indian, man or animal, everyone was her child.

Sri Ramakrishna said that it was *Jagad-dhātrī*⁵ or Mother of the world, who was holding and protecting the world, otherwise it would disintegrate. She could be seen by the pure mind, in the heart of a man who had overcome all his desires. The ordinary mind is like a drunk elephant, it is uncontrollable; to control it you need the help of the lion of Goddess *Simhavāhinī*,⁶ or the Supreme Mother.

The word *jagad-dhātrī* means Mother of the World. *The Caṇḍī*⁷ says that behind her terrifying image as destroyer of evil, there

lies a sweet motherly image of *Jagad-dhātrī* holding to Her bosom the whole world.

As we reflect on the life of Mother Sarada we are struck by the *Jagad-dhātrī* aspect of her character. In this she is unique. Every extraordinary person has not just one great quality, but many great qualities. There is, however, one common link holding those qualities together. That link constitutes his individuality. What is it that distinguishes Sarada Devi? That is the *Jagad-dhātrī* aspect of her character which finds its expression in her sacrifice, service and loving care of others. As daughter, as wife, or as mother, in every phase of her life, her motherly nature predominates. But she takes great pains to hide this celestial nature. One has to watch and study closely to discover it. In public Sri Sarada was always a lady wearing a veil. No one could see her face. This continued to the last day. Only when she was at Jayrambati, she did not use a veil. Was she not a girl of that village? Sri Ramakrishna had referred to her as a 'cat covered with ashes'. No better description could fit her. Indeed she was always in disguise. Looking at her no one would suspect her spiritual greatness. She looked so ordinary.

It is said that Goddess *Durgā* came to the rescue of the gods and goddesses when they were being harassed by the demons. According to Swami Vivekananda, Mother Sarada was *that Durgā*, the *living Durgā*, as he would call her. She was born to give knowledge to man, Sri Ramakrishna used to say. The struggle in modern times is in the realm of the human mind. The world is again and again getting stained with blood because of conflicts between one country and another, one community and another. People are selfish, vain and jealous. If there is no open violence, there is hatred in the heart, which is more dangerous. Men and women are artificially divided into countries and communities, and they are

4. Nikhilananda, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

5. *Jagad-dhātrī*, *jagat* (world), *dhatri* (who supports).

6. *Simhavahini*, *simha* (lion), *vahini* (who rides).

7. *The Caṇḍī*, i.e., *The Devī Māhātmyam* (Sanskrit & English together) (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1972).

opposed to each other. So Goddess Durgā had to appear this time, as an embodiment of tolerance, love and peace, and she came in the form of Sarada Devi. She had the tolerance of the earth. She also had a heart which embraced the whole world. Mother Sarada taught by her own example. She did not preach, but others learned by her precepts.

We are reminded by this of a statement once made by the bold devotee, Sri Girish Chandra Ghosh: 'It is difficult for us to believe that God is born like us as a human being—just like one of us. Can you even dream that the Divine Mother of the Universe is standing before you in the form of a simple village woman? Can you imagine that Mahāmāyā, like an ordinary woman, is performing household chores and other duties? Nonetheless she is the great Māyā, the great Śakti, the Mother of the Universe. She is incarnated to establish the ideal of God's Motherhood and assure liberation for all.'⁸

Sarada was born on 22 December 1853, the daughter of poor parents in a tiny village. In her childhood she experienced extreme poverty. But the hardship she suffered only endowed the character of the small girl with sweetness. Even as a child she loved to serve others, which charmed everybody. She felt distressed if others suffered. That is why we find her feeding hungry cows by cutting grass growing in the pond; or sometimes she is running to the field to deliver the breakfast to the labourers. As if she feels she is the mother of all from the moment of her birth, mother of all beings and of all animals. And she does not feel tired working for others, rather she is pleased. With great care and affection she is rearing her younger brothers, though she herself is still a child. She is seen by the

side of the hungry when there is a famine. What could she do as a child? The food is too hot and the starving people cannot wait for the food to get cool. Sarada cannot wait either, she helps the food get cool. With her tiny hands she starts fanning the steaming food. She does it unasked. To quote her own words, 'No sooner was the hot food served on the leaves, than I would fan it with both hands so that it might cool quickly. For, alas, the hungry stomachs could not brook delay.'⁹ Aghormani Devi, an old lady, had been Sarada's playmate as a child. She says, 'Sarada was simplicity personified. We children would play together and sometimes we quarrelled. But Sarada was an exception. She never quarrelled. Once the worship (pūjā) of Jagad-dhātrī was going on at Jayrambati and Sri Ramhriday Ghosal of Haldepukur village happened to be present. Finding the Mother lost in meditation before Jagad-dhātrī, he watched but he could not distinguish between Jagad-dhātrī and Sarada. They looked the same. He became frightened and left the place.'¹⁰ People used to say that even Sarada's physical features were like those of Goddess Jagad-dhātrī. This did not escape the notice either of her mother, Shyamasundari Devi. So once she said, 'My child, I wonder who you really may be, my dear! How can I recognize you, my daughter! My Mother, tell me who are you to me. You have to tell me yourself who you are.' Sarada knew how to evade a direct reply. She teased her saying, 'Who am I, who can I be? Have I grown four arms (like the Goddess)? Why then should I have come to you?'¹¹ Even from a little conversation between mother and daughter, one could see who she was. Was she not the Mother of the World holding the family with her four arms? Yet she always tried to conceal her real identity.

8. Nikhilananda, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

9. Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

II

The next chapter unfolds at Dakshineswar. The youthful Sarada is confronted by her husband, preceptor and chosen Ideal. He asks her a difficult question. 'Oh, have you come here to drag me into domestic life?' Sarada was just a village girl, coming for the first time to see Sri Ramakrishna in Dakshineswar, yet she knew the aims and objects of life. She promptly replied, 'No, why should I attract you to a worldly life? I have come here to help you achieve your cherished goal.'¹² This reply at once reveals her as someone extraordinary. Sri Ramakrishna is not only pleased, but also reassured. And from this point onwards, Sri Ma Sarada's role becomes of far greater importance than ever before. She began to serve not only Sri Ramakrishna, who at that time was in delicate health, but also his ever increasing circle of devotees. Sri Sarada never had a family of her own; now her family was the whole world. Her new life involved ceaseless work, but no one noticed it. Hardly anyone even noticed her existence. She worked in silence, always behind a curtain, as it were, unknown even to the permanent residents at Dakshineswar. That is the measure of the austerity she practised. She was totally self-effacing. It was an inborn quality with her. Sri Ramakrishna continued to live in close communion with God as before, regardless of his deteriorating health. Sarada Devi, however, sustained him with all the care and attention that lay in her power. If she did not support him, both physically and morally, the way she did, it is doubtful if he could have achieved all he did.

Sri Ramakrishna called out to devotees to come to him. They started coming from far and near, people of different castes and creeds. The temple grounds at Dakshineswar

were all the time crowded. It was at this time that Sri Ma Sarada Devi's patience was put to the severest test. All women wish to establish their supremacy in their own households, specially in affairs concerning their husband. First and foremost, they want to stay close to the husband; it is a natural desire. But in the big household which grew around Sri Ramakrishna, the role of Sri Sarada was only to serve and nothing else. To Sarada Devi, Sri Ramakrishna was 'God eternal and absolute,' to use her own words—both as her husband and in his own right. To serve him, she felt, was to worship God. This attitude enabled her to face her daily tasks joyfully. She said later: 'When I thought that I was serving him, no physical discomfort bothered me. The days passed in unmixed bliss.' 'Sometimes,' she once remarked, 'I could not see him even once in two months. Naturally I felt depressed. At that time I used to say to myself: "O mind, why should you think yourself so fortunate as to be able to see him every day?" I would stand for hours behind a small hole in the screen of my porch and listen to his singing. On account of standing long hours on my feet, I got rheumatism.'¹³ Regarding Sarada Devi's natural bashfulness and retiring habits, the manager of the temple garden once remarked: 'Yes, we have heard about her living there, but never seen her.'¹⁴ Is it not in these things that Mother's character as Jagad-dhātrī is best reflected? What does Jagad-dhātrī do? She holds the world, but you don't see her. Similarly, Sarada Devi sustains the *līlā* (divine sport) of Sri Ramakrishna, but she is invisible.

Sri Ramakrishna's *sādhana* or spiritual practice was by then the talk of Calcutta's intelligentsia. But how many knew of Sri Sarada's contribution to this or even her

12. Nikhilananda, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

14. Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

existence? In the small groundfloor room of the *nahavatkhānā* (orchestra tower) at Dakshineswar was spent fourteen long years comprising an amazing chapter in the life of the Mother of the World. Here Sri Sarada was always busy serving Sri Ramakrishna and his devotees. As if she was trying to show that religion lay not in abstinence from work, but in doing it selflessly. Among other things, Mother also looked after her mother-in-law. She was performing all her duties silently, steadfastly like mother earth itself. By day she could not go out to answer calls of nature, but had to wait till nightfall. What hardship and forbearance it meant, but she went through all difficulties only to serve as a mother, the world around her. Other devotees saw the Master as and when they liked, but she, whose claim was the strongest, was denied that privilege.

Sarada Devi did not want anything for herself—not physical comforts, not reputation, honour or even recognition. Can an ordinary mortal show such selflessness? Even a human mother wants some return from her children. Only the Mother of the World is an exception. What is impossible for humans is possible for Her. She is like the rain which pours to give life to nature but wants nothing in return. These are many small incidents through which we get a glimpse of the selflessness of Sri Sarada. Sri Ramakrishna was her husband whom she regarded as a divine being, but she never felt that she had any special claim on him. She felt that she was mother to all who came to Sri Ramakrishna, and acted accordingly.

Usually Sarada carried Sri Ramakrishna's lunch to his room. That was the only time she could see him and talk to him. One day as she was about to start for his room carrying his plate of food, a woman said, 'Mother, let me carry the food for the Master.' Without demur Sarada Devi handed over the plate to her and she took it to the

Master, placed it before him, and went away. Sarada Devi sat near Sri Ramakrishna in order to watch him eat. But he could not even touch the food. Looking at Sarada Devi, he said, 'What have you done? Why did you allow her to touch the plate? Don't you know she leads an immoral life? How can I eat the food she has touched? Sarada said, 'I know all about it; please eat the food today.' But still the Master could not touch the plate. He wanted Sarada Devi to promise that she would never let anybody else bring his food. Sarada Devi said firmly, with folded hands: 'Master, I cannot give any such promise, but I shall try to bring your food myself. If someone addresses me as "Mother" and wishes to carry the plate, I shall not be able to refuse. You must not forget that you are not only my Lord; you are the Lord of all.' Sri Ramakrishna was satisfied and ate his meal.¹⁵ This shows the kind of person Sarada Devi was.

Baburam was to be served only four chapatis¹⁶ at night. In this way each young man receiving spiritual training under Sri Ramakrishna had been allotted a number of chapatis as his quota. He could not eat more. Sri Ramakrishna once found out by cross examination that Sri Sarada had given Baburam five or six chapatis. Immediately Sri Ramakrishna came to the Nahavat where Mother stayed. He expressed his displeasure that Baburam had been given more chapatis than the quota fixed for him. He said this over-eating would affect his spiritual progress. In protest Sri Sarada gave a clear reply, 'Why is there so much fuss because I gave Baburam two extra chapatis? Please don't interfere where my children's food is concerned. I would be responsible for their future.' Sri Ramakrishna had nothing to say in reply. This

15. Nikhilananda, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

16. Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

was a matter that fell within the domain of Mother. It looks as if Sarada Devi foresaw her future role regarding the spiritual life of the young monks. She was bracing herself to play that role. Do we not get here a glimpse of the future Mother of the Sangha?¹⁷ But not only those young monks received the Mother's care, the Master also received the same motherly care and attention from her. Suppose he was reluctant to eat, Mother knew how to make him eat. She would argue, appeal and make all kinds of pleas. Finally her will would prevail. In all such matters, her decision was final.

III

Another new chapter started in the life of Sri Sarada after the disappearance of the Master from the scene of earthly life. Her life from now on was all motherliness—Mother, the Guru; Mother, the Guide; and Mother, the Wise Counselor and of course, always the Mother of her household. So long she had remained behind the scenes but now that Sri Ramakrishna, the great Banyan sheltering thousands of devotees and disciples had disappeared, she emerged more than ever as the Mother of the Ramakrishna Sangha, of the devotees, and of the whole world. Some time after his death, Sri Ramakrishna one day appeared before Sarada and said that he had left behind some priceless jewels. Who were these priceless jewels? The young devotees with great spiritual potential, who had left home and hearth to realize God. They were the future monks (sannyāsins). He implied by this that the responsibility now devolved upon her to look after them. That is why we find she always felt so much concerned about them. It broke her heart when she came to know they were wandering homeless and living on *bhikṣā* (food collected by begging monks). They were actually enduring great privations and she became conscious of the

need to unite them. She would pray to Sri Ramakrishna for their welfare and implored him that they might have a place to stay and sufficient food. As a result there came into being the religious order now known all over the world as the Ramakrishna Order. It owes its origin and growth very much to Sarada Devi. She used to pray: 'Master, you came, played and disported with these few and then went away; and should everything end with that? If so, where was the need for coming down in the midst of so much sorrow? ... I shan't be able to bear the sight of my sons, who come out in your name, going about begging for food. My prayer is, that those who leave the world in your name may never be in need of bare subsistence. They will all live together holding to your ideas and ideals; and the people afflicted with the worries of the world will resort to them and be solaced by hearing about you. That's why you came. My heart is pained to see them wandering about.'¹⁸ Again, we hear her saying, 'How much concern I expressed to Thakur on their account. I begged and begged that Thakur may look after them. It is due to his blessings that we have the Math (Belur Math) today.' Sri Sarada Devi's limitless love acted as a cement to bind the Math together. That she guided the formation of the Math is a fact not known to many. She provided selfless love and spirit of self-sacrifice which acted as the life-blood of the brotherhood of sannyāsins. She was watchful to see that the Ramakrishna Order should be firmly rooted in the ideals of renunciation, service to God, forbearance, love and discipline. She was really the mother of the Sangha. Though, however, she was the leader, she tried as much as possible to remain hidden from the public view. This was seemingly a dichotomous situation, yet Mother reconciled all opposites.

17. *Sangha*, Sanskrit for monastic brotherhood

18. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

Swami Shivananda was then in charge of the Math at Belur. A particular brahmacharin had done something awkward, when his colleagues told him that he might be expelled from the Math. The brahmacharin got frightened and ran away from the Math to Mother at Jayrambati. He narrated to her his predicament, and asked for her protection. Sarada Devi wrote to Mahapurush Maharaj (Swami Shivananda) in a letter that the boy had no doubt done something wrong, but she would be happy if he could be allowed to stay on in the Math. As the boy returned to the Math, Swami Shivananda embraced him and commented good naturedly, 'How now, my boy! So you went to the High Court to complain against me?'¹⁹ Again, we get an idea of the concern she felt about the health of the monks when she observes: 'The boys at the Math are in bad health, they are not getting the right kind of food to eat. I feel distressed about it. Yogin (Swami Yogananda) led a hard life, he suffered much and finally died prematurely. While on pilgrimage he used to take water in his hands only to drink. This, with dry bread in powder form was all he had in the way of food. This caused severe stomach trouble. Finally he died.'²⁰

Mother could, at times, be also very strict if necessary in the interest of the Ramakrishna Order. The Rules of the Order, in keeping with the principles of renunciation and realization of God as a part of sannyāsins' life, were sacred to her. She would not stand any laxity of discipline when these principles were involved. At the same time she would pray to Sri Ramakrishna that her ego might not assert itself. We wonder what great strength she had, to be able to destroy her ego on the one hand, and to expand her love on the other. Because she had overcome her ego, her heart was always

filled with joy. Out of the fullness of her heart, she wanted nothing for herself, she wanted only to give.

Yogin-Mā once said laughingly, 'Howsoever, Mother loves us, it is not like the way Thakur loved the boys. It is not possible to describe his concern and love for the boys.' At this Sri Sarada's rejoinder was: 'That is no surprise. He chose only the best few and loved them. And with what care he selected them. He scrutinized them for months and then only he accepted them. I've in my share only the ordinary. I can't choose, I accept one and all. People come to me like ants come in long lines. I'm not as choosy as the Master was.'²¹ Truly indeed, Mother accepted all who came to her. Such tolerance and compassion were not possible for any earthly mother. Swami Vijnanananda said: 'Invoke Mother, and everything will be all right. Sri Ramakrishna, however, is a difficult person to please. Unless everything is done right, he would not grant his grace. Mother, on the other hand, is very kind.'²² Mother would show due respect to everybody; no one was too small to her.

Sri Sarada shared the grief of others. A village woman of humble origin had lost her son and she was weeping. Mother was also seen shedding tears with her. Sometimes she was cooking for the devotees, sometimes she was seen going about asking her neighbours for milk to serve tea to the devotees. She wept when she heard sad news about her children. Again, she missed sleep at night and prayed for her innumerable devotees. If somebody said that she belonged to a low caste, Mother would protest, saying, 'Who says you are of a low

19. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

20. Nikhilananda, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

22. Umapada Mukhopadhyaya, *Amiya Bānī* (Bengali) (Calcutta: General Printers & Publishers, 1977) p. 151.

caste? You are my daughter, come inside.' With her a new age began.

Jagad-dhātrī puja used to be performed every year at Jayrambati. As usual, there would be evening *ārati* (waving of lamps before the Deity) and also the Mahāṣṭami *ārati* (special worship on second day) to Mother Jagad-dhātrī. On such occasions, Sarada Devi herself would keep fanning the Deity with *cāmara* (fan). The people in attendance would not see any difference between the two Mothers. Always, Sarada Devi would be present at Jayrambati during the Jagad-dhātrī Puja. How could it be otherwise, for they were the same.

Mother would often say, 'Don't be afraid. Human birth is full of suffering and one has to endure everything patiently by taking the name of God.'²³ ... 'God is one's very

own. It is the eternal relationship. One realizes Him in proportion to the intensity of one's feeling for Him. Don't be afraid. Always remember that somebody is protecting you.'²⁴ Here one can see the sweetness of the Mother.

As her work and life were drawing to a close, even then, one came near, seeking solace. Mother Sarada gave her parting blessing: 'Why do you fear? You have seen the Master. But I tell you one thing—if you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger. The whole world is your own. ... Whenever you are in distress, say to yourself; "I have a mother"²⁵ So, Mother, we salute you; You're our own.

23. *Thus Spake Holy Mother* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1962) p. 72.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

25. Nikhilananda, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

MEDITATION—A FEW THOUGHTS ON A SCIENTIFIC LINE

SONALI CHAKRABORTI

Meditation is identified by the teachers of almost all religious sects as one of the paths leading to the realization of the Self or the attainment of God. There has been a great deal of discussion and thought on meditation in all religions at the level of metaphysics.

We read in the Upaniṣads that the senses have a natural tendency to draw us towards what is external, cause us to identify ourselves with various objects and persons, and bind us on the level of the mind. Afterward, we cannot release ourselves from those identifications and find peace. The Upaniṣads also tell us that it is possible through meditation to disengage ourselves from this bondage to the external world. A person

who is thus able to free himself is called in the *Bhagavad Gītā* a man of steady intelligence, the *sthita prajña*, or sage. In the *Gītā* it is also said that the *sthita prajña* is he whose mind is not shaken by any kind of adversity or happiness in life. He is never thrown off his balance or becomes forgetful of his peace of mind, right behaviour and true identity. Meditation is the means by which the sage attained his steady intelligence. By it he was able to withdraw the mind from the external world of names and forms and disengage himself from all the identifications which the mind is susceptible to. He became free from bondage. So meditation allows one to free oneself from the external, takes one deep into the world

of silence and enables one to realize that substratum whose energy (*śakti*) it is that appears to our eyes as 'all that which is'.

As soon as we are able to contemplate this totality (*sarva*) under the real aspect of what it is in itself, our attitude towards our environment will be inspired by witnessing the continuous presence of that Supreme Reality, to which Indian sages refer under the name *Ātman* or *Brahman*, and to which Western mystics refer to under the name of God.

Meditation thus brings Realization (*aparokṣa anubhūti*) and along with it comes internal quietude and a happiness unfathomable. This great potentiality of meditation for leading one to Self-realization or God-Knowledge, had long been realized by our ancient sages. As we know from the continuity of ancient civilization with modern, human life and human nature is largely the same. What then may be the significance of meditation for us living in today's world? For the purpose of finding out, we may look at meditation from a different angle—through the eyes of science.

Swami Vivekananda asks the following rhetorical question in his *Raja Yoga*, and gives its answer:

What is the use of such knowledge (as that got by meditation)? In the first place knowledge itself is the highest reward of knowledge, and secondly, there is also utility in it. It will take away all our misery. When by analysing his own mind, man comes face to face, as it were, with something which is never destroyed, something which is, by its own nature, eternally pure and perfect, he will no more be miserable, no more unhappy. Man will find that he never dies, and then he will have no more fear of death. When he knows that he is perfect, he will have no more vain desires, and both these causes being absent, there will be no more misery—there will be perfect bliss, even while in this body. ... Just as you would take up any other science, exactly in the same manner you should take up this science for study. There is neither mystery nor danger in it.

Some modern investigators maintain that the practice of meditation reduces blood pressure, regularizes breathing and produces various other beneficial physiological effects. Research is still continuing in this field. The days are not far off when we may have concrete proof of the power of meditation to increase human longevity.

Those who have some knowledge of physics are familiar with a quantity known as 'entropy'. It is defined as the measure of DISORDER in a system. We know that entropy in any irreversible system goes on increasing, until the system reaches an equilibrium state which is the state of maximum disorder, i.e. maximum entropy, in thermodynamic terms. Thermodynamics is applicable not only in physical systems, but in biological systems as well. Our existence from birth to death is obviously an irreversible process. A child is born, grows up and reaches maturity; aging begins and finally comes death. Clearly, the process of life, growth and decay is irreversible. In fact, all natural processes are irreversible.

All systems undergoing irreversible processes move towards equilibrium; and every living system is heading towards death—the ultimate end for all forms of life. With this little analogy, we have arrived at an important conclusion drawn by theoretical biologists, that death is the equilibrium state for all living systems.

It is an innate wish of every human being to live longer, to have his life-span increased. In a physical system, the attainment of equilibrium for an irreversible process can be delayed if we can somehow reduce the rate of increase of entropy. We may apply the same rule to a biological system as well. The question that immediately arises is, how can we reduce the rate of increase of entropy in a bio-system, in a human being in particular? The simple answer is, since entropy is nothing but a measure of dis-

order, we have somehow to check the increase of disorder produced in ourselves.

Our task now is to identify the sources of disorder. It is mostly acceptable to modern science that a human being is composed of two well-coordinated, but at the same time, independent entities—the body and the mind. Disorders in the body are well taken care of by our doctors. Any kind of disease is a bodily disorder. When a bodily disorder increases to the extent that it becomes uncontrollable by our doctors, the rate of movement towards equilibrium is obviously increased, and death occurs more quickly.

Owing to lack of understanding of what mind exactly is, we have always overlooked, perforce, the disorders brought on by the constant stresses and strains in our minds. Two points may be noted here; that in the Vedic period of ancient India, there is evidence that people expected a life-span of a hundred years, far beyond the life expectancy of moderns; and secondly, by these disorders, we do not refer to insanity here, which is something different.

Every thought is a kind of 'wave' generated in the mind, so says a psychologist. A physicist defines a 'wave' as a kind of 'disturbance' which propagates through a medium. Putting two and two together, we come to the conclusion that outside impressions impinging on the mind create thinking, or streams of thought, which are really disturbances of the natural tendency of the mind to remain in repose. It follows that

the more hectic our life is, the more impressions we get from the external world, and the more will be the disturbance. Disturbance increased beyond a point will produce disorder or entropy at an increased rate. This wear and tear on the bio-system may shorten life expectancy.

People well-versed in the art of meditation say that meditation is the technique for diverting the wayward destructive mind into planned constructive channels. Meditation thus arrests the ripples of scattered thoughts in human minds, relieves tensions of disorder, and as it becomes perfect, produces inner quietude and an unfathomable bliss, really a state of blessedness.

If meditation really makes all this possible, then it should, no doubt, be able to reduce the rate of approach to equilibrium (i.e. death) by our previous arguments.

It is interesting to note at this point that according to Chambers Dictionary, '*meditation*' is derived from the Latin word '*meditari*', probably a cognate of '*mederi*', meaning 'to heal'. Meditation heals the mind of disorder, much as medicine helps in reducing bodily disorders.

If meditation does really bring mental quietude, then it must also be able to delay the process of aging and onset of senility. So, even those people who are of an intellectual bent, not attracted by the emotional fanfare of popular religion, can practise meditation for mental well-being and a longer life.

UNCROWNED KING OF MADRAS : ALASINGA PERUMAL

SWAMI DESHIKATMANANDA

Who is this man ?

Once a very strange thing happened in the Bangalore bound train at Central Station, Madras. A black Indian slapped the face of a British officer! The Indian was standing near the door of a first class compartment, having come to see off a travelling Madras University professor. The British officer, proud of his superior birth, savagely pushed the young man and shouted at him. The reaction was the slap. The coolie carrying the officer's baggage at once left the bags and ran to a nearby Anglo-Indian inspector, urging him to punish the offender. With all his men the inspector rushed to the scene, ready to arrest the heathen. But suddenly as he saw the red and white caste marks on the heathen's forehead, he stopped, stood at attention and saluted the man! Then, in astonishment he addressed the British officer, 'Sir, have you insulted this gentleman? He could never behave improperly with anyone.' 'Who is this man?' the officer asked. 'Why, he is one of the best known leaders of Madras, loved and respected by one and all! Even His Highness, the Governor, invites him to his chambers and treats him cordially. He is Mr. Alasinga Perumal.'¹

The great Dewan of Mysore, Sri V. P. Madhava Rao, used to refer to Alasinga as 'the uncrowned King of Madras'.² Only Alasinga, patriot and saint in one, could dare to take to task a British officer for impudence in those days. In the late nine-

teenth century, Indians in all stations were treated only as slaves by the English in India. Hardly any Indian ever dared to raise his voice against anything done by an Englishman, even a grave injustice. Alasinga Perumal, however, was a man of another type. The great Tamil patriot-poet, Subrahmanya Bharati, wrote in his magazine 'India'— 'When we asked Sister Nivedita at Calcutta: "There are in Madras no patriot leaders old enough to supervise and guide youths (energetic and spirited) like us ; what are we to do ?" The Sister replied, "Alasinga is there. If you have doubts regarding public affairs, you may have them cleared by him."'³

Swami Vivekananda loved this obedient disciple so much that he never tolerated any gossip about him or even the slightest off-hand remarks. Miss Josephine Macleod writes very interestingly about a predicament she once unwittingly fell into:

What a pity that Mr. Alasinga wears those Vaishnavite marks on his forehead (she had remarked to someone in the presence of Swami Vivekananda)! Instantly the Swami turned and said with palpable sternness, 'Hands off! What have you ever done?' I did not know what I had done then. Of course I never answered. Tears came to my eyes and I waited. I learned later that Mr. Alasinga Perumal was a young Brahmin teaching Philosophy in a college in Madras, earning 100 rupees a month, supporting his father, mother and four children and who had gone from door to door to beg the money to send Vivekananda to the West. Perhaps without him we never would have met Vivekananda. Then one understood the anger with which Swamiji met the slightest attack on Mr. Alasinga.⁴

1. L. N. Shastri, *Karmayogi Alasinga Perumal* (Kannada) (Bangalore: I.B.H. Prakashana, 1972) pp. 3-6.

2. L. N. Shastri, *Alasinga Perumal* (Kannada) (Mysore: Mayur Prakashana, 1972) pp. 130-31.

3. *Vedanta Kesari*, Mylapore, Madras, Vol. XXVIII, December 1941, p. 304.

4. *Prabuddha Bharata*, Calcutta, Vol. LIV, December 1949, p. 473.

Life in brief

Alasinga was born in Chikkamagalur of old Mysore State in 1865. Both his parents, belonging to the Mandayam Vaiṣṇava Tengalai sect, were from Mandya, a town in Karnataka State. They were descendants of Śri Anantha Suri and Anandalwar, who had been direct disciples of Śri Rāmānujācārya (A.D. 1017-1137). The father, Sri Narasimhacarya, was a clerk in the Chikkamagalur municipal office, and had had no children after many years. The parents, who served a great saint of the Dattatreya tradition at Baba Bundengiri hills,⁵ got his blessing and to them Alasinga was born. His original name actually was Alagiya Singa Perumal (beautiful Lion-god, 'Narasimha', one of the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu). His full name was Mandayam Chakravarti Alasinga Perumal. Alasinga's childhood was spent in Chikkamagalur, but the father had to shift the family to Madras when he secured a good job in the Central Customs Office there. The family lived in a house in Tiruvallikeni, near Lord Parthasarathi temple. His descendants are still living in the same house. After Alasinga's school final, he joined the Presidency College of Madras for a short period. Then he joined Madras Christian College and completed his B.A. degree. At this time he became very intimate with, and a favourite student of Dr. A. William Miller, whose influence sustained him even after Swami Vivekananda went to America. It was through the request of Alasinga that Mr. Miller wrote letters to his friends in America to help Swami Vivekananda soon after the Swami's arrival there. After securing his B.A. Alasinga enrolled as a candidate for the law examination, but he could not finish the course as he had to support his family.

5. Dattatreya is an incarnation of Lord Visnu. Bababunden Giri is in the western hills of Karnataka.

At the age of twenty Alasinga found employment as a high school teacher at Kumbakonam, and in 1887 he joined as an assistant science teacher in Pachiappa High School at Chidambaram. When his father passed away, he was transferred to Madras Pachiappa High School. The students and the authorities of the school were very much impressed and inspired by his extraordinary nobility, dignity and sincerity. Within three years, at the age of twenty-five, he was promoted as the headmaster of the school. He was the first person ever to occupy such a prestigious position at such a young age. In those days teachers were very much honoured and respected in society.

A year before his death he had been promoted to the position of Professor in the Pachiappa College. Alasinga was hard-working and dedicated. Besides his teaching duties, he associated himself with various activities in the city, and among other things, started the Young Men's India Association (Y.M.I.A.). He was a great supporter of the Triplicane Literary Society, and it was here that Swami Vivekananda delivered many talks and lectures before going to America in 1893 and after he returned to India in 1897. People often associated Alasinga Perumal with every progressive movement that used to take place in the City of Madras.

Parliament of Religions in America

It is very interesting to narrate the story of events prior to Swami Vivekananda's going to America to represent Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago. Dr. J. H. Barrows, president-to-be of the coming Parliament, was making arrangements before the opening of the Parliament. He had written to Dr. Miller, requesting him to expound on Hinduism at the Parliament. Dr. Miller told this news to Yogi Parthasarathi Iyengar, the maternal

uncle of Alasinga Perumal. Mr. Iyengar had connection with the American Hindu Association. Alasinga learnt about the Parliament from Yogi Parthasarathi and Dr. Miller. As neither of them was willing to represent Hinduism, Alasinga and his friends requested Professor Rangachariar to become their representative. The professor was Alasinga's sister's husband and was a great scholar and orator. But as he was an orthodox Vaiṣṇava he also refused to accept the honour. Crossing the sea in those days was tantamount to throwing away one's caste in society. Alasinga was at a loss and was very sorry as nobody was available to expound the religion of his Motherland which was saturated with spirituality.

Leaving everything to Providence, he heard with pleasant surprise from his brother about a Bengali sannyāsin, well-versed in Eastern and Western philosophy who could also speak English fluently. A sannyāsin who could speak English!—something strange in those days. Alasinga and his friends went to see this talented sannyāsin at Manmathanath Bhattacharya's house at Mylapore. Most of them being graduates and post-graduates, they stood stupefied by the extraordinary brilliance of this young sannyāsin. It was Alasinga Perumal alone, who could venture a measurement of the monk. It was love at first sight; and throughout his life Alasinga remained an ardent and obedient disciple of the Swamiji. He was convinced that this Swami Saccidānanda (then Swamiji used this pseudonym) was the fittest person to represent the Hindu religion at Chicago. He recollected:

On the second day, I remember, he talked of the East and West and he said: 'You (the Hindus) need more ruggedness and the West needs more gentleness.' I asked: 'Why do you not go to the Parliament of Religions at Chicago to represent Hinduism?' 'I have no objection to going,' he replied, 'if someone will send me.' One of us offered him some money (two rupees). It was

the first time he had taken money and he laughed, 'I will give it to the first beggar I meet', and actually he gave it to a beggar. When the first subscription for his journey came to two hundred and fifty rupees, he took it, went at once to the shops and bought a cart and a number of toys for some children whom he loved very much.⁶

Alasinga arranged for several lectures and addresses by Swamiji at the literary society of Triplicane, and thus introduced him to the public. Here it was under the Presidentship of Dewan Bahadur Raghunath Rao that the decision to send Swamiji to the Chicago Congress was taken. With great reluctance Swamiji consented. Within three days a substantial amount was collected by Alasinga and his friends for Swamiji's passage. As, however, the Swami did not receive the 'command' from Above, he asked them to distribute the money among the poor. Obediently, Alasinga did accordingly.

Later, after receiving the letter of Holy Mother, consenting that he should go, and after seeing in a vision Sri Ramakrishna beckoning to follow him over the waters of the ocean, did Swamiji finally agree to embark on the voyage and to represent Hinduism at the Chicago Parliament. Alasinga went from door to door and collected money, as Swamiji said, that since he was to represent the common people, to further their cause; the money should come from them. But the money collected was inadequate. Finally Alasinga and his friends went to Mysore, Ramnad and other places, and collected a total of four thousand rupees.⁷ It was decided that Swamiji would sail from Bombay as he had to pay a return visit to the Maharaja of Khetri in Rajasthan. By the blessings of Swamiji the Raja had now become the father of an heir to the throne

6. Sister Devamata, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (La Crescenta, Calif. Ananda Ashrama,) p. 166.

7. *Sri Sri Mahapurushji's Patravali* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Udbodan Office) p. 38.

and he wanted Swamiji to bless the child. There was planned a great festival for the purpose, for which the Raja sent his Private Secretary, Jagmohanlal to Madras to bring the Swami back to Khetri. After the celebrations Jagmohanlal accompanied Swamiji to Bombay. He changed Swamiji's second class ticket to a first class one, and provided him with suits and silk garments. From Madras Alasinga Perumal went to Bombay bringing Swamiji's luggage, and made all arrangements for a comfortable voyage. Swamiji was very much moved and filled with affection for his beloved disciple, who was straining every nerve to make his Guru happy and comfortable. Reminiscing later to Sister Devamata, Alasinga says:

He sailed in the fourth week of June from Bombay.⁸ While we were at Bombay together, we said to him: 'Swamiji, you are going to America, time is considered very precious there, so you must have a watch.' 'All right; buy me one,' was his quick answer. 'You should also have some visiting cards.' 'Very well, have one hundred printed.' At that time he was known as Saccidānanda, but when I asked, 'What name am I to put on the cards, he replied: 'Swami Vivekananda'! It was the first time that he used that name. He had his European clothes stitched at Bombay. When they were brought home he dressed himself in them and looked very grand. Then we drove to Cook's to get the circular notes, afterwards to buy the new watch. This was Swamiji's first experience of circular notes and of a Gladstone bag.⁹

Finally dawned the day of departure, 31st May 1893. Alasinga had to part with the company of his great Master. Tears rolled down his cheeks and words failed him when he prostrated at the holy feet of his Guru on board the steamer 'Peninsular'. Swamiji stood on the deck and gazed towards

his beloved disciple and the Motherland, until everything faded from sight.

Swamiji's letters to Alasinga; Alasinga's timely help, and national awakening

It is through the many letters written to Alasinga Perumal by Swami Vivekananda that we understand the wonderful relationship that existed between them. The disciple was ready to risk his own life for the sake of his Guru, and the Guru was striving hard to instil courage, confidence and organizing power in his disciple. It is these letters and his lectures from Colombo to Almora which inspired thousands of young men and it culminated in the struggle for Indian independence. Alasinga received about forty-one letters from Swamiji, mostly from America.¹⁰ It was the largest number of letters ever written to a single person by Swamiji. From these letters we understand his great trust in Alasinga and how Alasinga's timely action in India paved the way for Swamiji's success in America.

Appreciating Japan Swamiji wrote:

See how nations are on the march! Do you love man? Do you love your country? Then come, let us struggle for higher and better things; look not back, no, not even if you see the dearest and nearest cry—look not back, but forward! ... India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand of her young men—men, mind, and not brutes—How many men, unselfish, thoroughgoing men, is Madras ready now to supply, to struggle unto life and death to bring about a new state of things—sympathy for the poor—and bread to their hungry mouths—enlightenment to the people at large?¹¹

Winter was approaching, money dwindling, the opening of the Parliament of Religions was still about a month away and

8. Actually Swami Vivekananda sailed from Bombay on 31 May 1893.

9. Sister Devamata, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (La Crescenta, Calif. Ananda Ashrama), p. 167.

10. *Udbodhan* (Bengali), Calcutta, July-August 1963, p. 380.

11. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) p. 37.

there were no friends to help Swamiji. In such trying circumstances, Swamiji writes to Alasinga:

The expense I am bound to run into here is awful. You remember, you gave me £178 in notes and £9 in cash ... Before you get this letter, my money would come down to somewhere about £70 or £60. So try your best to send some money ... and even if I die of cold or disease or hunger here, you take up the task ... If you fail in keeping me here send some money to get me out of the country ... In the meantime if anything turns out in my favour, I will write or wire.¹²

Within a few days of receiving this letter, as Alasinga was struggling to collect money, a wire came from Swamiji:

Starving. All money spent, send money to return at least.¹³

Alasinga began to shed tears and wondered whether he had committed a heinous crime in making a great sannyāsin suffer from hunger and cold. He was repenting for his short-sightedness and finally rushed to his friend, Sri Kalyanaram Iyer, and took a loan of one thousand rupees. Adding to this his own salary of hundred rupees, he sent the total by express money order. Alasinga did not stop at this. Professor William Miller also wrote letters at his request to his friends in the United States to help Swamiji. Alasinga never gave a thought to himself or his own family. But very soon the next letter from Swamiji came, saying,

I am sorry that a moment's weakness on my part should cause you so much trouble; I was out of pocket at that time. Since then the Lord has sent me friends.¹⁴

In the same letter Swamiji narrated in detail about the Parliament of Religions:

... The next day all the papers announced that my speech was the hit of the day and I became known to the whole of America ... from that day I became a celebrity. ... I am now out of want. Many of the handsomest houses in the City are open to me. ...

This popularity of Swamiji created for him many enemies amongst the ranks of the Christian missionaries. Therefore he requested Alasinga to convene a meeting in Madras to pass a resolution mentioning that he had come to America as an official representative of Hinduism, and that he had the support of the Indian people.

Even before Swamiji's letter, dated 9th April 1894, reached him, Alasinga had already planned and got together a public meeting at Madras, on Saturday 28th April at Pachiappa College. It was presided over by Dewan Bahadur S. Subrahmanya Iyer, CIE, and attended by, among others, Raja Sir S. Ramasamy Mudaliar, Kt. CIE, Sri Sundarama Iyer, B.A., B.L. and Mr. Manmathanath Bhattacharya. The Raja of Ramnad sent a telegram of support. Three resolutions were moved and seconded by eminent persons of Madras and outside Madras. The first resolution was to thank Swami Vivekananda for representing India at the Parliament and for his lucid exposition of Hinduism; the second was for thanking the American people for the cordial and sympathetic reception they had accorded the Swami; and the third to request the Chairman to forward copies of the above resolutions to Swamiji and to Dr. J. H. Barrows, President of the Parliament of Religions.¹⁵

Though the news of the meeting held at Madras appeared in several Indian newspapers, e.g. *The Hindu* of Madras and *The Indian Mirror* of Calcutta, it took

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 38, 45.

13. *Swami Vivekanandara Alasinga Perumal* (Kannada), p. 54.

14. *Letters*, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

15. Sailendranath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda* (A Vivekananda Kendra Publication, 1974) p. 632.

almost three months for the articles to be reported in American newspapers.

Alasinga as a Journalist

Alasinga was seriously thinking of bringing out a journal publishing the lectures of Swamiji in America. It would counteract the Christian propaganda against Hinduism, and spread the life-giving teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Hindu scriptures to the educated young men. In this context Swamiji wrote encouraging:

Several things are necessary. First there should be strict integrity ... methodical (ness) and strict (ness) in keeping accounts.

Secondly, entire devotion to the cause, knowing that your *salvation* depends upon making the *Brahmavādin* a success. Let this paper be your *Iṣṭadevatā* and then you will see how success comes....¹⁶

Alasinga followed Swamiji's instructions in letter and spirit. He threw himself heart and soul into the work of editing and managing the *Brahmavādin* up to the end of his life. *Brahmavādin* became the first and foremost Indian monthly journal in English in those days. It was a religious magazine with philosophical leaning. It required a great deal of determination and enthusiasm to popularize and to find subscribers and readers. But this great labour Alasinga performed very successfully. Day and night he used to work, writing and editing, pasting addresses, affixing stamps and despatching. Many subscriptions came from America and England as well. Due to Alasinga's single-minded devotion to the cause, the number of subscribers rose to three thousand five hundred even in 1897-98. The magazine soon had a good standing and English translations of various Indian scriptures were published serially. Some of them were:

16. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. V, p. 111,

Śamkara's hymns, portions of the *Brahma-sūtras*, *Śri Yāmuna-stotra-ratna*, *Śri Ramanuja's Gītā-bhaṣya*, *Ātmavidyāvilasa* of Sadāśiva Brahmendra, and Kyanta's *La Philosophica*. Along with Indian contributors, many eminent scholars from foreign countries used to send articles. Swami Abhedananda, Swami Nirbhayananda, Swami Ramatirtha, Colonel Smuts, Max Muller, Paul Deussen, Kakusa Okakura, Brajendra Nath Seal and others. Much impressed with the *Brahmavādin*, Max Muller advised Alasinga Perumal to publish the essays relating to *vedānta* in book form. For the contemplated work named 'Select Essays from the *Brahmavādin*', Max Muller sent a Preface. It was written on 19th October 1898, and sent from Oxford, published in the *Brahmavādin* itself in January 1909, unfortunately just after Professor Muller's passing away.

Alasinga was active either directly or indirectly in publishing and patronising many other magazines. *Prabuddha Bhārata* was started at the suggestion of Alasinga with the support of Dr. Nanjunda Rao. *India*, a patriotic journal, was also being printed in the *Brahmavādin* Press. When the British were about to seize the journal *India*, Alasinga Perumal installed another press to keep it alive. *India* and *Bāla Bhārati* used to be printed there. Due, however, to the British Government's harrassment, the magazines had not a great circulation. Later, Alasinga arranged for these to be printed at Pondicherry.

For the first few initial years, Alasinga's talented brother-in-law, Professor M. Rangacharya, contributed articles regularly to the *Brahmavādin*. G. G. Narasimhacharya, R. A. Krishnamachar and others helped Alasinga in its management and circulation. But during the last four years before his death in 1909, Alasinga conducted the *Brahmavādin* single-handedly. After his passing

away, his sons carried on publication for another five years till 1914, when it was altogether discontinued.

Alasinga was a powerful writer, a thinker and an erudite scholar. He was very practical and was a man of action. His faith in his Guru was absolute, and he strove hard to implement Swami Vivekananda's ideal. It was Alasinga, who in large measure defended his Guru from attacks by Christian missionaries in India by his invaluable forceful articles in Indian and American papers.

Swami Vivekananda's triumphant arrival in Madras

Swamiji had said once to friends in Detroit, 'India will listen to me! I shall shake India to her foundations! ... India will receive me in triumph.'¹⁷ And actually he was received as a conquering hero, greeted with triumphal receptions all along his route of return, from Colombo to Almora, from extreme south to extreme north. Such a reception for a sannyāsin was unprecedented in Indian history. The reception in Madras was nothing short of tremendous, and all credit for the enthusiasm and planning had to go to Alasinga Perumal and his friends. As early as 21 December 1896, a preliminary meeting was called by Alasinga and was held at Castle Kernan.¹⁸ Means and methods were discussed to accord a fitting reception to Swamiji on his entry into Madras. Upon receiving news of Vivekananda's arrival date at Colombo (14 January 1897,) another meeting was held and a reception committee formed. It was composed of some persons of the highest standing in the Hindu community of Madras—Hon'ble Justice Subramanya Iyer, as Chairman. Pamphlets were printed on different

aspects of Swamiji's achievements in projecting and elucidating *Sanātana Dharma* (the Eternal Religion) in foreign lands. These were widely distributed, and seventeen triumphal arches were constructed in various parts of the city. Inscriptions were blazoned: 'Awakened India's Hearty Greetings to Swami Vivekananda!'; 'Hail Harbinger of Peace!'; 'Hail Sri Ramakrishna's Worthy Son!'; 'Welcome Prince of Men!' and '*Ekam Sad Viprā Bahudhā Vadanti*' adorned the road from Egmore Railway Station to the Castle Kernan. Pictures of Swami Vivekananda with the date of his anticipated arrival were also displayed at various places.

For seven days while Swamiji remained in Madras, the whole city wore a festive look, both in appearance and behaviour. Staying in Castle Kernan on the Madras Beach, the Swami was at the peak of his strength, giving speeches and lectures on various topics, published now in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. The programme arranged by Alasinga Perumal and others, was followed entirely, including a visit to the Triplicane Literary Society where Swamiji also spoke.

On the day of his departure, though Swamiji was not expected to come to the pier to board his steamer until 8 o'clock in the morning, even before the break of dawn people began to pour in by thousands. Devout Alasinga also accompanied Swamiji to the pier, and thence to Calcutta to attend Sri Ramakrishna's birthday celebrations and to see the other disciples of the Master staying at Calcutta. Alasinga was anxious about Swamiji's health as continuous exertion and speaking for weeks together had produced their effect. The steamer took on the appearance of a cargo vessel when doctors advised Swamiji to drink plenty of green coconut milk instead of water. Thousands of coconuts were on board and perhaps many hundreds in Swamiji's cabin

17. Sailendranath Dhar, op. cit., p. 856.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 876.

itself. It was with heavy heart and many prayers to God for his safety and health, that the people of Madras bade him good-bye as he embarked for Calcutta.¹⁹

Powerful personality of Alasinga Perumal

'A leader is born and not made,' Swami Vivekananda said once. Alasinga was born with qualities of leadership. Even before he met Swamiji he was a leader of the young men. But Swamiji shaped him to outshine all other leaders in the Madras Presidency. Alasinga's popularity throughout the Presidency was astounding. But in Madras City he had no peer in any respect. Princes of Ramnad, Mysore, and Khetri were his admirers. Great intellectuals as well as top government officers were his friends. From society's elite to persons of the lowest classes, all would approach him for various favours. Yet in spite of his great popularity, he was humble and ready to sacrifice his all for the sake of the needy.

A new department of Deputy Accountant-General of postal services was opened in Madras. Many posts were created. Those whom Alasinga recommended were invariably appointed. Some vacancies still remained and with regard to these, Mr. Dutta, the then Deputy Accountant-General, wrote to Alasinga. 'Still some vacancies are not filled. Shall I keep them reserved for applications from your side?'²⁰

Alasinga Perumal had a soft corner for the people coming from the lower classes. He had seen his Guru weep at their miserable condition. So sometimes he used to go out of his way to solve their quarrels and to help them. Once a low caste man (at that time the term *Harijan* (lit. man of God), was not yet coined) had vowed to present

a cow to the Parthasarathi temple. Accordingly, he brought the beautiful cow to the temple authorities. But the head of the temple downright refused to accept the gift from the untouchable. The heart-broken Harijan prayed for Alasinga to intercede. Alasinga, paragon of compassion that he was, visited the temple along with the Harijan. The Head explained to Alasinga his position as an upper caste, and finally Alasinga asked, 'If I present the cow myself will you accept?' To this he immediately agreed. In the presence of the Harijan, the cow was handed over to the priest with proper ceremony. Alasinga paid the Harijan the cost of the cow, and the Harijan in turn, put the whole amount into the charity box of the temple and went home fully satisfied. The incident demonstrated the practical common sense of Alasinga Perumal, not to interfere with the traditions of the temple, but never to disappoint those who used to seek his help.

Last days

The last days of Alasinga Perumal were testing times. He had been married when yet a boy to a small girl, by name Srimati Rangamma. She stood by him in all his difficulties till the end of her life. Rangamma was devoted to God and to her husband. Thanks to her, Alasinga Perumal could look after the publication of *Brahmavādin*, continue his public service and his teaching at Pachiappa unhindered. Also he could lend his helping hand to the Ramakrishna Math in all its activities. Smt. Rangamma died in 1905, leaving behind five children, her own mother, and others. Domestic responsibilities fell on the shoulders of Alasinga. Swamiji had already passed away in July of 1902, which was a great blow to Alasinga. And added to this, and the death of Rangamma, what was thought to be a small boil on his lower jaw was diagnosed as cancer. Dr. Nanjunda Rao tried his best to

19. Swami Vivekananda in *Indian Newspapers* p. 712.

20. L. N. Shastri, *Alasinga Perumal*, op. cit. pp. 130, 135.

relieve Alasinga from pain, and American friends sent him medicines from abroad. Unfortunately, the medicine bottles were found broken when the package was opened. Though his suffering could not be alleviated, Alasinga, who considered every service as service to God, never deviated from his daily routine of serving the poor of the slums or helping the needy with food or money. The cancerous wound became enlarged and spread becoming a gaping hole in his cheek. He was not able even to swallow food. As part of a daily routine Dr. Nanjunda Rao came to clean and dress the wound, and finally when pain became excruciating, he cautioned Alasinga to remain in his room. But even in this extremity, when slum dwellers sought Alasinga's help in settling a dispute, he could not refuse. Pressing his hand on the wound he went to them, found an acceptable solution to their problem and returned to his room.

Alasinga followed in letter and in spirit Swami Vivekananda's exhortation: 'See God in every being; serve God in every being.' He was a living embodiment of the Karma Yoga taught by Swamiji. Achieving such excellence in his life, he attained immortality on 11th May 1909 by casting off the mortal coil. He was forty-four years old. Alasinga's old mother survived him. Four sons were still quite young and his only daughter was, luckily, married. Alasinga died penniless and a debtor, but though he did so, it was because he was a man of high principles. Long ago one of the millionaire disciples of Swamiji had offered him one lakh rupees. Sister Nivedita informed Alasinga by wire. Alasinga thought over the gift for half an hour and replied by wire that while he was thankful for the goodwill shown, he would not accept the money.²¹ Such was his love for freedom.

21. *Vedanta Kesari*, op. cit. December 1941, p. 302.

Faithful friends of Alasinga, and the Ramakrishna Math helped the family to pay back the debt incurred by the Brahmavādin Press, and they arranged for proper education of his children. Many dailies and journals paid great homage to Alasinga, praising him for outstanding contributions in many fields. *Brahmavādin*, in its June 1909 issue, published his life briefly and said: 'His death has naturally cast a deep gloom over his numerous friends in Madras and in other parts of India, and has caused a gap which cannot be easily filled.' The *Anglo-Indian Daily* and the *Madras Mail* paid tributes to Alasinga for his self-sacrificing work in the cause of the Ramakrishna Mission and through it, for the religious and moral education of the people.²²

The Hindu hailed the great achievement of Alasinga Perumal in raising funds to send Swami Vivekananda to America, and praised him for *Brahmavādin's* success as a foremost religious magazine, and for his staunch support, furthering the cause of the Vivekananda Mission, and said: 'Service was his motto and ungrudgingly he rendered it to whosoever sought it of him in times of trouble and need.'²³

The Indian Review and *Prabuddha Bhārata* also wrote similar condolences. Subramanya Bharati, the Tamil patriot-poet, wrote in his journal, *India*, 'The sad news of the passing away of Alasinga at Triplicane, Madras on the evening of the last (May 11, 1909) reached us the next day. Patriots are of two sorts. One sort is those who play on the stage. The other sort labours from behind the screen, not caring for fame. The latter must be considered worthier than the former and in no way inferior. The late Alasinga belonged to the latter type.'²⁴

22. *Brahmavadin*, June 1909, p. 269, 270, 272.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Vedanta Kesari*, Op. cit., Dec. 1941, pp. 303-4.

To quote Swamiji's own words about Alasinga Perumal: 'One rarely finds men like our Alasinga in this world—one so unselfish, so hard-working and devoted to

his Guru, and such an obedient disciple is indeed very rare on earth.'²⁵

25. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Op. cit., VII pp. 333-34.

EMPHASIS ON MEDITATION IN THE DHAMMAPADA

YOG DHYAN AHUJA

While the ethical teachings of the Dhammapada have their unquestioned merit, the emphasis in this scripture on meditation is in no way less important.

Siddhārtha Gautama left the comforts of his home while he was in the very prime of his youth. The event is called "Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa," the "Great Going Forth." The young prince Siddhārtha was now a wandering monk searching for the peace of Nirvāṇa.

Siddhārtha had seen varied faces of human misery. For him suffering became a telling and compelling problem. And, at long last, he discovered the solution. The answer he found was Nirvāṇa and the method he employed was meditation. Meditation is the path, Nirvāṇa is the destination. The study of one, thus, is as important as that of the other.

The term "Nirvāṇa" or "Nibbāna" as it is used in Pāli Buddhist texts, appears to have connoted a shade of inexpressibility, perhaps, right from the start. Nirvāṇa, or Nibbāna is not one of those terms about which the Buddha is typically silent as has happened in certain other instances. Nonetheless he appears to have been conscious of the difficulty in comprehending the significance of Nirvāṇa. Oldenberg begins an analysis of the Buddha's concept of Nirvāṇa in these words:

"Seated under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha said to himself 'Difficult will it be for men to grasp the law of causality, the chain of

cause and effects. And this also will be very hard for them to grasp, the coming of all conformations to an end, the loosening from everything earthly, the extinction of desire, the cessation of longing, the end, the Nirvāṇ.'" ¹

The ineffability of Nirvāṇa is reflected also in Nāgasena's conversation with King Menander. In the *Milinda Panha*, Nāgasena is stated to have compared Nirvāṇa with pure water, which extinguishes fire, with the fathomless ocean, which never overflows, and with the air, which exists but cannot be shown in colour or form.²

The word "Nirvāṇa," though basically signifying the blowing out of a flame, has had diverse meanings. As noted by Sir Monier Monier-Williams, the *Abhidhana Padipika* gives forty-six synonyms for the word "Nirvāṇa."³

Oldenberg maintains that annihilation precedes the supreme bliss and that the gloss of eternity, in this regard, is a later concept. Max Müller believes that Nirvāṇa is not an extinction but a completion.⁴

1. Hermann Oldenberg, *Buddha, His Life, His Doctrine, His Order* (English) Tr. William Hoey (Published by Williams and Norgate, Edinburgh, 1882) p. 263.

2. *Milinda Panha IV*, 7-17, 36 SBE 106-107.

3. Sir M. Monier-Williams, *Buddhism* (Choukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, India, 1964) p. 137.

4. Max Müller, *Introduction to Rogue's Buddha Ghosha's Parables*, p. xxix, seq.

According to Childers, "Nirvāṇa" is used to designate two different things, the state of sanctification called Arhatship and the annihilation of existence in which Arhatship ends.⁵

Nirvāṇa or Nibbāna in the Dhammapada:

The *Dhammapada* asserts: "Nibbāna is supreme, the Buddhas say." (184).

The Buddha warns against the relentless-ness of death from whose icy hands the victim cannot be saved even by the nearest and dearest ones. "Just as a great flood sweeps away a sleeping village, so does death carry off the man who, in the love for children and cattle, is engrossed and distracted." (287) With the fact of death being so grim and gloomy, the Lord Buddha says, "The wise and the righteous should lose no time in clearing the way that leads to Nirvāṇa." (289).

There are exhortations time and again to remove the hurdles on one's path to Nirvāṇa. "If a seeker of Nirvāṇa, once having got rid of the forest (i.e. craving) runs back to the forest (i.e. craving) he looks like one who, having freed himself from the bondage, runs back into the bondage." (344).

In this context, there occurs in verse 383 an interesting word, "Akata" (Sanskṛt *Akṛtam*). This word has been interpreted in different ways. Max Müller,⁶ Radhakrishnan⁷ and P. L. Vaidya⁸ give its direct translation as "unmade" or "uncreated." On

5. Pali Dictionary under *Nibbanam*, pp. 265-274.

6. Max Müller: *Dhammapada: Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford University Press, London: 1924) p. 90: 'That which was not made.'

7. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada* (Oxford University Press, London, 1966) p. 177: 'The Uncreated'

8. P. L. Vaidya, *Dhammapadam* (Poona, 1939) p. 92: 'What was not made.'

the other hand, Rahul Sankrityayan⁹ and Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita¹⁰ explain it as: "uncreated, that is, Nirvāṇa." Nārada Mahā Thera,¹¹ likewise, renders it as the Uncreate (Nibbāna).

The *Dhammapada* is enthusiastic in praise of Nirvāṇa:

"Health is the greatest gain

Contentment is the greatest wealth

Trust is the greatest kinsman

Nirvāṇa is the greatest happiness." (204)

The original Pali words in the last line, that is, "*nibbānam paramam sukham*," occur at the end of the previous verse also. (203).

Nirvāṇa means release from the taints of deeds: "In the case of those who earnestly strive for Nirvāṇa, the *Āsavas* (i.e., the defilements left by deeds) fade away." (226) The state of Nirvāṇa is depicted to be superior even to the joys of heaven: "Some people enter the womb (i.e., are reborn). Evil doers pass into hell. The righteous go to heaven, and those free from *Āsavas* (taints of deeds) attain Nirvāṇa." (126).

Thus while Nirvāṇa is extolled as the supreme happiness, it is also depicted as being indescribable. All the same, Nirvāṇa is the shield against inexorable death. In brief, it is imperative for one to make an all-out effort to attain Nirvāṇa.

Oldenberg closes his discussion of Nirvāṇa by citing some pertinent verses from the *Dhammapada*. There is warmth and eloquence in Oldenberg's expression while he speaks of Nirvāṇa and gives relevant quotations from the sacred text. "These aphorisms," he says, "will show more clearly than all abstract treatment, what melodies were

9. Rahul Sankrityayan, *Dhammapadam* (Pali, Sanskṛt, with Commentary in Hindi) (Lucknow, India, 1965) p. 170.

10. Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita, *Dhammapada* (Varanasi, India, 1968) p. 247.

11. Nārada Mahā Thera, *Dhammapada, Text and Translation*, (Maha Bodhi Society of India: Calcutta: 1970).

awakened in the circles of that ancient monastic order, when the chord of Nirvāṇa was touched."¹²

Yoga in the Dhammapada

The word "Yoga," akin to "yoke," is from the Sanskrit root "Yuj." Numerous words cognate with "Yoga" continue to be in common use in many Indo-European languages.

In the Dhammapada, the term "Yoga" and some other words derived from "Yuj" occur in several contexts. As "Yoga" it is employed in a verse in the meaning of "attachment." "Him I call a Brāhmaṇa who has given up attachment (Yogam) with human things, who has abandoned attachment (Yogam) with the heavenly things and is separated from all attachment (Yogam)."

Some derivatives of "Yuj" occur in verse 209. Nārada Mahā Thera¹³ interprets these words, in general, as "applying oneself to." Max Müller renders the word "Yoga" in this verse as "meditation."¹⁴ The same word in the above verse as well as the one that follows it, has been referred to by T.W. Rhys Davids in support of the meaning of Yoga as "pondering, concentration, devotion."¹⁵

Another similar example reads: "From Yoga is wisdom born: from lack of Yoga (Ayoga) comes loss of wisdom." (282) The word "Yoga" as used in this instance has been interpreted as "zeal" by Max

Müller¹⁶. Radhakrishnan,¹⁷ Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita¹⁸ and Nārada Mahā Thera¹⁹ adopt "meditation" as the meaning in this context. P. L. Vaidya²⁰ interprets it as "meditation" (zeal).

The word "Yoga" as employed in the above illustrations may as well mean "attention" of the mind, in accordance with the tenets of Buddhism, rather than Yoga in the sense of "union" with Self, in conformity with the Yoga theory.

However, the term that became woven into the fabric of the Buddhist meditational tradition in China and Japan was not "Yoga" so much as "Dhyāna."

Dhyāna or Jhāna in the Dhammapada

The Sanskrit word is "Dhyāna." The Buddha uses its Pāli form "Jhāna." In Chinese the word is rendered as "Ch'an." In Japanese it takes the form of "Zen." It is believed that the tradition of Dhyāna was carried from India into China by Bodhi Dharma, an Indian Buddhist philosopher and missionary during the sixth century A.D. From China the Ch'an Buddhist meditational system was introduced as Zen into Japan. Zen became woven into the warp and woof of Japanese life and culture.

There is a conspicuous centrality of meditation in Buddhist practices. Edward Conze remarks: "Meditation is, in Buddhism, easily the chief means of salvation. The stress is throughout, far less on doing something by overt action, than on contemplation and mental discipline. What one aims at is the control of mental processes by

12. Hermann Oldenberg, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order* (English) Tr. by William Hoey (Published by William and Norgate, Edinburgh, 1882) pp. 284-285.

13. Nārada Mahā Thera *Dhammapada* (Maha Bodhi Society of India: Calcutta: 1970).

14. Max Müller, *Dhammapada: Sacred Books of the East*.

15. T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*: (Surrey: 1925).

16. Max Müller, *The Dhammapada: Sacred Books of the East*.

17. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada*.

18. Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita, *Dhammapada* (Varanasi: 1968).

19. Nārada Mahā Thera, *Dhammapada* (Maha Bodhi Society of India).

20. P. L. Vaidya, *Dhammapada* (Poona: India, 1934).

NICHOLAS ROERICH AND A NEW EDUCATION

DR. AMRITA MONICA SALM

When we contemplate the life and teachings of Nicholas Roerich (1874-1967), the great Russian artist, writer and mystic, we begin to comprehend his depth, insight and wisdom. We recognize that he was a genuine educator. Roerich represents the wonderful and natural synthesis of East and West in his philosophy, life and activities. As an artist he was not limited to any particular medium of art in exploring and expressing his philosophy. His paintings were one mode of presenting a personal vision of beauty and truth. He was well-known for his work in archaeology, architecture, costume design and stage sets. His writings and scientific research along with the organization, management and creation of bold new institutions reflected an understanding of culture as the unity of all aspects of art and the force within all activity. Whatever he pursued was done as an inner search, an attempt to learn more about himself through the medium of his environment. His interests were varied; his approach was creative, masterly, imaginative and innovative. He was a role-model for his students, colleagues and friends. And his message was to strive towards perfection.

Roerich's philosophy and teachings reflect how deeply he was influenced by Eastern spiritual thought. He often referred to Swami Vivekananda and other Indian philosophers in his writings. In an attempt to understand Roerich's philosophy of education I shall frequently return to those persons who influenced him. Several themes can be found in his writings on education and culture including (1) the aim of education (2) the meaning of culture and (3) the necessity of removing ignorance. Each of these will be discussed in the development of a "new education."

"Education," according to Swami Vivekananda, "is the manifestation of the perfection already in man."¹

All knowledge, secular or spiritual, is in the human mind. In many cases it is not discovered, but remains covered, and when the covering is being slowly taken off we say 'we are learning', and the advance of knowledge is made by the advance of this process of uncovering. The man from whom this veil is being lifted is the more knowing man; the man from whom it has entirely gone is all-knowing, omniscient.²

This unveiling of man's real nature is the essence of learning. Most educational systems stress the importance of developing a strong intellect, technical skills and a competitive nature. There is no clear conception of what real education is. Marie Montessori, whose educational methodology has been widely accepted throughout the world, stressed the development of the total child and that "Children must grow not only in the body but in the spirit."³ In a similar context Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his autobiography:

I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs. In other words, an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with the corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor, lopsided affair. By spiritual training, I mean, education of the heart.⁴

1. Swami Vivekananda. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, p. 490. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1987).

2. Vivekananda, Vol. I, p. 28.

3. Marie Montessori, *Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook*. (Cambridge, Ma. Robert Bentley, Inc., 1964), p. 3.

4. Mahatma Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections*. Compiled by Krishna Kripalani (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1987), p. 138.

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"The ultimate goal of all mankind," as Swami Vivekananda pointed out, is that "the aim and end of all religions is but one—reunion with God, or what amounts to the same, with the divinity which is every man's true nature..."⁵

To Nicholas Roerich the aim of education is the cultural growth of the child, i.e. the unfolding of latent or potential powers and innate capabilities.⁶ This approach to education is quite contrary to the practice of "producing" people who can perform well on standardized examinations, get accepted into the most prestigious universities and succeed in securing the best government jobs. This production-based education is analytical in its foundation—filling children with information and not allowing time for synthesis. In contrast to this Vivekananda said:

Education is not filling the mind with a lot of facts. Perfecting the instrument and getting complete mastery of the mind is the ideal of education.⁷

The approach suggested by Vivekananda is more synthetic. It is a process of seeing and understanding the relationship between things, their similarities and differences. This process of synthesis allows the child to connect to his environment in a natural way providing for the discovery of the things around him, within him and about him. Until we have experienced our oneness with the universe we are not a "total or complete" person. It is the process of unfoldment which introduces the child to himself. An effective education is one that gradually allows the child to commune more and more with his environment, with himself.

5. Vivekananda, Vol. V, p. 291.

6. Garabed Paelian. *Nicholas Roerich*. (Sedona, Az: Aquarian Educational Group, 1974), p. 61.

7. Vivekananda, Vol. I, p. 510.

By studying Roerich's interpretation of culture we can understand why he thinks the cultural growth of the child is education. What is culture? The Latin word *cultus* means to till, to cultivate, to worship or reverential homage. By applying his knowledge of Oriental languages Roerich took the last three letters of the word 'ure' and defined it to mean light. Culture, as conceived by Roerich is the cult of light or the veneration of light.⁸ In one context Roerich wrote:

Culture is the reverence of Light. Culture is the love of humanity. Culture is fragrance, the unity of life, and beauty. Culture is synthesis of uplifting and sensitive attainments. Culture is the armour of light. Culture is the Heart.⁹

An educational programme that cultivates the heart is then a real education. A person is everything contained within and without himself. It is the experience of that inner light that makes one a cultured or educated person. Our schools must try to facilitate the cultivation of the heart. Then we will be able to implement some of Roerich ideas. He further stated that "education and culture are synonymous."¹⁰ This becomes clear when viewed from the wider perspective which acknowledges the unity between all people and objects. This is the basis of all Indian philosophy that we are one.

Education is the process of development which must be based on the values of human freedom, dignity and equality. The growth and development of a nation depends on the responsibilities of its citizens and the values—moral, ethical, cultural and spiritual which are accepted, imbued and taught. The educational system is a direct reflection of the attitudes, values and consciousness of the nation at large. Roerich exhorts us

8. *Roerich*, p. 58.

9. Nicholas Roerich, *Himavat Diary Leaves*. (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1946), foreword.

10. *Ibid*, p. 343.

“thus everyone, for whom Education and Culture are not empty words, should in his field, as far as he can, fight ignorance. Let no one say that he has no possibility to do so—this would be untrue.”¹¹ He continues:

There is not such state of consciousness in which it is untimely to be humane. And only human hatred could whisper denying this Truth; hatred—this horrible monster, in the darkness of its cave, always dreams of transforming mankind into beasts, which should devour each other. Verily, from small to great, everyone can and it is the duty of everyone to bring his mite to the cause of combating ignorance. Uniting in groups and by himself everyone can somewhere stop the evil doings of the monster of ignorance. Every labor already contains the striving to perfection and enlightenment.¹²

Ignorance, according to Roerich, is more than removing illiteracy. It is going to the root of ignorance, that which separates us from that Light. According to the Hindu philosophy we must experience our real, abiding nature—the nature of the spirit, or the Ātman, as being Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute. This is real education. This is the process of removing ignorance. It then becomes the responsibility of all persons, teachers, parents, labourers, professionals, government officials from the highest positions to the lowest in assisting each other in manifesting one’s perfection. What can act as the impetus for this ancient philosophy to work in our modern, highly technical society? If we can learn to see the divinity in others, or as Vedanta puts it, to see the oneness of human existence, all narrowness will vanish. As Roerich so aptly states:

On one part there are being opened new educational institutions, which by their very appearance seem to invite new research; yet on the other part every unusual manifestation which did not enter into the elementary textbooks, is not only ridiculed but also prosecuted. It means

that the hydra of ignorance dwells not only in illiteracy but also in fossilized perception and in human hatred.¹³

“It is hatred,” Swami Vivekananda says “that separates man from man, therefore it is wrong and false.”¹⁴ How can hatred be removed? By removing the ignorance, the fears and the barriers that separate us from each other. And it is only by knowing one’s real nature that all fears vanish. That is why, I believe, Roerich said that “education and culture are synonymous.” It is the process of education—the manifestation of divinity or experiencing the oneness of existence—that will remove ignorance permanently from the minds of men.

What type of education can attempt to remove this ignorance? Roerich suggests that “consciousness, humanness and courage are the three universal qualities, but sincerity is needed to apply them.”¹⁵ In another context Roerich wrote, “Does there not exist a panacea for everything that exists? Is it not love to humanity?”¹⁶ Similarly, Swami Vivekananda said, “Purity, patience and perseverance are the three essentials to success and, above all love”¹⁷ The ancient scriptures of India, the Upaniṣads, proclaim that we should practise *dama*—self-control, *dāna*—charity and *dayā*—compassion.¹⁸ Gandhī suggests character-building as being the primary education.¹⁹ Vivekananda said:

Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas... If education were identical with infor-

11. Ibid, p. 348.

12. Ibid, p. 348.

13. Ibid, pp. 347-348.

14. Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 304.

15. *Himavat*, p. 25.

16. Ibid.

17. Vivekananda, Vol. VI, p. 281.

18. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, Part V, Ch. II, i-iii.

19. Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India*, 1-6-1921.

mation, the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopedias the Rishis.²⁰

Education is not information alone; but the experience or realization of the Light within.

Let our new education be based on the only foundation that is meaningful—that we are divine in nature and that the purpose of all education, all action is to manifest that divinity. Eastern philosophy teaches us that the manifestation of divinity or perfection is the means of cultivating the heart. The Western use of technology is analytical. Utilizing both approaches of analysis and synthesis we must develop a sound educational system. Roerich believed and practised this synthesis of East and West. Our educational programmes would benefit from this blending.

What are the means of such an education? Cultivating the heart, teaching children to concentrate, to contemplate and to develop self-reliance and faith. Swami Vivekananda said:

The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure

20. Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 302.

a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have, would have vanished. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves. Born with the consciousness that they are great, they become great.²¹

Education must be Spirit-oriented, not object-oriented. A philosophy of education based on the real, abiding nature of man will result in the full utilization of the most important resource we have on this planet—the infinite resource within all persons—their divinity. As educators, as thoughtful world citizens, we must clearly understand what is at stake and begin to restructure our educational systems. It has been suggested that, “education must be approached as the science of human resource development.”²² We can no longer be satisfied with piecemeal efforts to satisfy political whims or fly-by-night theories so common in the social sciences. We must “arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.” That goal is the manifestation of the divinity in all. Only then we can begin to move towards Roerich’s vision of peace through culture.

21. Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 301.

22. Swami Ranganathananda, *Children: Humanity's Greatest Asset*. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1987), p. 5.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

FUNDAMENTALS OF VISHISTADVAITA VEDANTA (A Study based on Vedanta Deshika's *Tattvamukta-katapa*) by S. M. Shrinivasachari. Motilal Banarasidass. First published in 1988, Price Rs. 200/-.

The book under review attempts to present in a systematic way the fundamental doctrines of Vishistadvaita Vedanta of Ramanuja in the light of the outstanding philosophical

classic ‘Tattva-mukta katapa’ written by Vedanta Deshika.

The author of the book had also published in 1961 another book ‘Advaita and Vishistadvaita’ covering a study of Shata-dusani, an important polemical work from the standpoint of Vishistadvaita Vedanta against Advaita. This work is also written by Vedanta Deshika.

Both *Shatadusani* and *Tattva-mukta-katapa* are highly technical works written in terse Sanskrit and presented in the classical style replete with subtleties of dialectical arguments. But a study of these texts is an essential prerequisite for getting deeper insight into Vishistadvaita doctrines.

Prof. Chari has done a unique service to the world of philosophy by presenting in English the Vishistadvaita tenets on the basis of these authoritative texts.

The main objective of the book under review is to remove a prevalent impression that Vishistadvaita is primarily theology and establish that it is essentially a system of philosophy based on sound logic. The contents of the book include a foreword by K. Satchidananda Murthy, Vice Chairman, University Grants Commission, a preface, scheme of transliteration, list of abbreviations, introduction and then twelve chapters on different Vishistadvaita tenets and their general estimate, glossary, bibliography and index.

In page 253 Prof. Chari writes: According to the Advaitin, avidya has two important functions: (a) Concealment of the true nature of Brahman (*tirodhāna*); and (b) Projection of the illusion of the Universe (*vikshepa*). Advaitins generally speak of

avarana and not of *tirodhana* as *tirodhana* may mean destruction which Ramanuja accepts and with which he criticises Advaita Vedanta by pointing out that concealment of Brahman by *avidya* will really annihilate Brahman. But the advaitins contend that *avidya* only covers (*āvaraṇa*) Brahman as clouds sometimes covers the sun and do not destroy it.

In 'introduction' (page-1) the author observe: 'The Ultimate Reality is absolutely one in the sense that it does not admit of any kind of differentiation, either internal or external, such an absolute identity would imply denial of Ultimate reality to individual souls and the Universe. The statement is a bit confusing. If by individual soul a *jiva* is meant, the advaitins will say that *jivatva* is false but *jiva* is essentially Brahman (Vide Advaita interpretation of the text *tattva-masi*).

Any way the book under review is really a scholarly treatise based on analysis and criticism. I am sure that the book will be very much appreciated by scholars and students of philosophy for its light of logic.

Dr. Nirod Baran Chakraborty
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PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

Disciple: 'What method should I follow as regards repeating His name?'

Swami Turiyananda: 'There is nothing to be bothered about methods. Just think, "I am Thy child, Thou art my Mother." Talk with Her in the same way as you are talking with me. She knows your heart. She is indeed within all.'

Disciple: 'Should prayer also be made?'

Swami: 'Yes, you should be much praying too. You should have songs also. Else you may feel monotonous. But then in the beginning special stress should be given on *Japam*. You should practise one thing at a time. Greatly be up and doing. Once the mind is brought under control, there is no more fear. It is the mind which creates all troubles. You may be working with the hands, but the mind should always be repeating his name. Only the lips are repeating His name, while the mind is wandering—this method will not do. Mind and lips both together should take His name. This is what is called making the mind and speech at one with each other. Mental *Japam* is the best.'

'What is meant by spiritual practices? It is nothing but an attempt to identify oneself with the one ultimate Reality, which alone exists. There is only One without a second. Perception of Unity is Knowledge, perception of variety is ignorance. Because we have separated ourselves from That, all troubles ensue. If one can surrender oneself wholly to Him, there is real peace. Peace is nowhere else. The more you go towards Him, the greater is the peace. Ultimately

you will have to rest in Him. Are you in fact separate from Him? You find yourself separate, because you think so; else you are nothing but He.'

Disciple: 'If we mix with people, everything becomes upset.'

Swami: 'Avoid company so long as the mind is not under control. And when the habit has once been formed, there is no harm in one's associating with people.'

'But success or failure, everything rests with Him. What is wanted is dependence on God. One must surrender everything to Him. Without that no success is possible. After having total self-surrender in Him, live contentedly in whatever condition He places you. The path of self-surrender is open for all; but none sees it, none follows it.'

'Satan was greatly vaunting of his power. So God sent him to tempt Job. Satan went to Job and said, "Just worship me, and I will give you greater wealth and prosperity." Job replied, "Get thee hence, Satan." Enraged at this, Satan destroyed his all; one by one he lost his children and finally Job himself fell a victim to leprosy. Even then Satan did not cease from tempting him. At this Job said, "The Lord giveth and taketh away. Let His will be done."'

Then the topic turned to spiritual practices and Swami Turiyananda said, 'Don't be under dependence on anybody. Very secretly you should pray, so that none may know it. As soon as people will come to know of that they will be after you and your independence will be gone.'

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

NEWS AND NOTES

The Ramakrishna Students' Home, Madras—We have received the annual report of the above institution for the year 1917. Started thirteen years previously, it has been providing free board and lodging and healthy environment to scores of poor students who come to the town from the outlying parts of the Presidency to prosecute their college studies. The boys who come to the town fresh from their homes are liable to be surrounded by undesirable influences

and it is a pleasure to notice that some of them are taken in hand by the Home, and their lives placed under noble formative influences. The Home is connected with the Ramakrishna Mission, Madras and the Swamis of the Mission exercise a beneficial and religious influence on the life of the students. Missionary bodies all over the world have taken pains to mould the lives of the young and it is a highly beneficial move that the Ramakrishna Mission, Madras has interested itself in, forming the character of the youth of Madras.

The ninth annual report of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bharukati, shows a progressive record of work undertaken by the above institution. Started with the object of building lives on the ideals and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and rendering social service in the form of religion, to minister to the sick and succour the needy, and to exercise a beneficial influence in forming the character of the young, it has been carrying out its work faithfully and steadily. In the charitable dispensary connected with the Ashrama, it treated and nursed 61 patients; in the

school, 82 poor boys received free education up to the Upper Primary standard; it also organized water supply in several local Melas where the people suffered a great deal in former years from scarcity of water. Religious classes were also held in which our sacred scriptures were studied and discussed. In fine, the Ashrama is a glowing testimony to what every large-hearted, public-spirited man in his humble sphere in villages and townships can do to improve the lot of his fellowmen and withal to purify and broaden his own mind and heart.