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

THE DIVINE MESSAGE

A HYMN TO VISHNU

I bow down again and again to that Supreme Soul (*Puruṣa*)
who is beyond mind and speech, yet supporter of mind and speech ;
To Him I bow down again and again, who is Infinite
and of inconceivable prowess.
Salutations again and again to That One, Ocean of Infinite Grace!

Neither righteous, nor a knower of Ātman am I,
bereft of worthy possessions, helpless, and without devotion,
With no other shelter but Thee—
Therefore, O Lord, Thou art my only refuge!

O Mukunda! in this world, there is not a single censurable act
which I have not committed thousands of times ;
Now, when experiencing the evil effects of those numberless deeds,
I supplicate Thee in agony of heart.

Almost drowned in this sea of *samsāra*, after long I have sighted
dry land, as it were, in Thee.

Thou too, O Lord, have found one most needy of Thy redeeming Grace!

—Yamunācārya

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is on SRI CHAITANYA—PROPHET OF LOVE. The enthralling and elevating saga of the divine person has, down the ages, been a fount of inspiration. In recent times, the life of Sri Ramakrishna, his extraordinary experiences of different spiritual states, and recurring references to Sri Chaitanya in the *Gospel* have lent credence to the supernatural events which are recorded in the life of Chaitanya.

In her article, TRADITION IN A. K. COOMARASWAMY AND T. S. ELIOT, the author, Dr. Rama Nair, with deep insight shows how these two great intellectuals of penetrating vision strove to stem the decay and disintegration in our society. Dr. Rama Nair is a reader in the Department of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

MEITEI IDENTITY AND CULTURAL CRISIS, a paper by Amiya Bhaumik, a research scholar at Lucknow University, Lucknow, casts light on the efforts of Meiteis, the largest clan of Manipur, to restore their ancient culture and language.

TRENDS OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY—The author of the article, Swami Bhavaharananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, traces some of the history of women in Hindu society. He points out the two paradoxical extremes—the tendency of society towards deification of women on the one hand, and

oppression of them on the other. Swami Vivekananda was the first sannyasin to take up their cause and suggest practical steps to raise their status.

The eternal charm and magic of the Himalayas does not easily fade once the mind is impressed. IN THE KUMAONS is a travelogue re-creating a pilgrimage made in 1989. The author is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

The former Jt. Editor of this Journal, Swami Jitatmananda, whose scholarly and illuminating editorials earned accolades over the years, in his present essay, SCIENCE DISCOVERS AN UNDERLYING UNITY BEHIND THE UNIVERSE, discusses some of the latest discoveries in the field of Quantum Physics. Modern Physics is slowly stepping into the shoes of Philosophy—says the Swami.

TRUTH BEYOND THE CELL is an interesting poem by a horticulturist as he muses on the metaphysical Truth behind a cell. The poet, Dr. M. P. Alexander, is a principal scientist at the Division of Plant Genetic Resources, Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bangalore.

In his poem, ZERO AND SILENCE, Dr. K. S. Rangappa of Mysore, expresses subtle thoughts. Dr. Rangappa draws his inspiration from the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.

SRI CHAITANYA—PROPHET OF LOVE

(EDITORIAL)

About the middle of June 1509, Nityananda, in search of his Master, reached Navadvip. He stayed in the house of Nandan Ācārya. There Nityananda met Nimai one

day and immediately recognized him as the Master. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect considers Nityananda to be an incarnation of Sri Krishna's brother, Balarāma. It is said

that Nimai appeared to Nityananda in the form of Viṣṇu, with conch, discus, club, lotus and so on. With the arrival of Nityananda the first group of Vaiṣṇavas with Nimai as their leader, was formed. They soon started holding the regular *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, chanting and singing the Lord's name. Advaita Ācārya too, joined the group. The houses of devotees soon reverberated with the singing of the names of Krishna led by Nimai, tears streaming down from his eyes. During this time, Nimai displayed many supernatural powers and indirectly indicated to all that he was indeed an incarnation of Lord Krishna. His followers did not harbour any doubts about it.

Nimai started his preaching work in 1510, when he was 24 years old. He sent forth his disciples, Nityananda and Haridas, to spread the name of Krishna everywhere and to every man. He was convinced that the repetition of the name of the Lord is the most efficacious religion for this dark age (*kali-yuga*).¹ In more recent times, Sri Ramakrishna has emphasised the same thing when he said: 'Chant the name of Hari. In the *kali-yuga* one should sing the name and glories of God.'² In spite of many difficult encounters, and from some quarters loud protests, Nityananda and Haridas moved freely, undeterred, and carried out the Master's instructions. Nityananda lit the lamp of devotion to God in the hearts of two notorious drunkard-criminals—Jagai and Madhai. Nimai, the apostle of forgiveness, pardoned them for their previous crimes, accepted responsibility for their

atonement, and redeemed them. Full of repentance, both led pure lives. So far, the *saṅkīrtanas* were conducted privately in the homes of devotees, and only followers of Nimai were invited to join them. But soon large numbers of people wanted to enter. Finally, Nimai had to concede to their demand. *Saṅkīrtanas*, with loud singing and dancing in the name of the Lord, began to take place in public, in the streets and temples. The *mahā-mantra* of Krishna's name imparted by this rising prophet of love, began to rend the air of Navadvip. Everywhere, in houses and in streets, people sang in chorus:

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna
Krishna, Hare Hare.
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama,
Hare Hare.

Nimai threw open the portals of the Kingdom of God to one and all, the affluent and indigent, learned and ignorant, high-caste and low-caste, to the aged and to children. All felt a divine presence, joy and spiritual elevation in singing the name of the Lord. *The Chaitanya Charitamrita* gives a graphic picture of it. A veritable flood of divine love (*prema*) began to flow outward from Navadvip whose energy none could resist.³

A *kāzī*, or Muslim civil judge, backed by a number of people, tried to stem the tide of the movement unleashed by Nimai, but he was taught a lesson by him, made amends, and never after interfered. As days passed, Nimai felt within himself an irresistible urge to renounce the world, to take the vows of a monk (*sannyāsa-vrata*), and widen the

1. Krishnadas Kaviraj, *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita* (Calcutta: Natabihari Roy,) *Adilā*, p. 11.

कलिकाले युगधर्म—नामेर प्रचार ।

नाम बिनु कलिकाले धर्म नहि आर ॥

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Swami Nikhilananda, trans. (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 433.

3. *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, p. 32.

उथलिलो प्रेमबन्या—चौदिके बेडाय ।

स्त्रि-वृद्ध-बालक-युवा सभारे डुबाय ॥

सज्जन दुर्जन पंगु, जड अन्धगण ।

प्रेम बन्याय डूबाइलो जगतेर जन ॥

field of work for which he was born. Krishnadas Kaviraj, his biographer, says: 'The Lord, though fond of *līlā*, out of compassion for the world, works incessantly.'⁴ Nimai disclosed his mind to his intimate disciples. The disclosure created a stir among them, but their pleas and dissuasions did not produce any change in Nimai's determination. Hearing the heart-breaking news that Nimai would renounce hearth and home forever, Sachi broke down. Nimai impressed upon her the mission that he was destined to carry out in the world. He would take all her responsibility and she need not worry. He even promised her that he would be born as her son in two more births. With heavy heart she accepted Nimai's *sannyāsa* as the will of God, but she extracted another promise from Nimai, that she could see him now and then. 'This story has since been carried to the furthest corners of the country through poetry, songs, ballads, dramas and discourses, and yet even after these four hundred forty-four years it has not lost in the least its original pathos. There is no man or woman, young or old, even to this day, who hears the episode of Gourānga's (Nimai's) renunciation and is not moved to tears.'⁵

Keśava Bhāratī, a monk who was staying in Katwa, twenty-four miles from Navadvip, had consented to give *sannyāsa* to Nimai. One day in the early morning, Nimai left Navadvip and reached Katwa. There he shaved off his beautiful curly locks and performed all preparatory rites for becoming a *sannyāsī*. Keśava Bhāratī initiated him into *sannyāsa* and gave him the new name,

4. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

यद्यपि केवल क्रीडामात्र तार धर्म ।
तथपि जीवेर कृपाय करे एत कर्म ॥

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

'Sri Krishna Chaitanya', he who awakens Krishna in the hearts of all.

After his *sannyāsa*, Sri Chaitanya returned to Navadvip. Seeing the ochre-clad Nimai, people once again reeled in ecstasy and there was general rejoicing everywhere. The celestial *saṅkīrtanas* went on as before but with redoubled enthusiasm. After a few days Nimai called his close disciples and informed them that since he had become a *sannyāsī*, he should live separately, away from his relations. Sachi reluctantly permitted him to stay in Nīlācala, or Puri. The new sannyasin left for Puri. From afar, seeing the temple tower of Jagannātha, like a whirlwind, Sri Chaitanya rushed to enter the temple and embrace the Deity, Jagannātha (Viṣṇu). But almost at once he was overcome by a divine afflatus and fell on the ground, losing all external consciousness in the thought of God. He lay there like a log of wood. The guards were about to pounce on the disturber of temple decorum, and throw him out. Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma, a Vedic scholar, who had been watching the whole scenario with baited breath, intervened and saved Sri Chaitanya. Sārvabhauma was astonished to behold such celestial beauty in the young monk. He had him carried to his home. Soon Nityananda and the others learned about the incident and came to the place. Sometime after, Sri Chaitanya regained his normal consciousness.

Sārvabhauma had been earlier a resident of Navadvip and had earned a reputation as the greatest logician. He studied Vedānta philosophy at Kāśī and Nyaya (logic) in Mithila, which was the most important centre of learning in North India. Pakṣadhara Miśra was the head of the Mithila school. In this school there was a rule that students were not allowed to transcribe any copy of the original texts. Sārvabhauma committed to memory many important treatises of Nyaya, and thus, not violating the rule of the school, returned to Navadvip and foun-

ded his own school. The fame of his school spread far and wide, and eager students rushed to Navadvip. As a result, the college at Mithila lost its importance and glamour. Raghunatha Śiromaṇi, a famous pupil of Sārvabhauma, founded the Navya Nyaya—a new school of logic which even today commands respect. The muslim king, Husain Shah, started persecuting Brāhmins of Navadvip on flimsy pretexts. Many Brāhmin scholars fled from Navadvip, seeking shelter elsewhere. Vāsudava Sārvabhauma also left Navadvip and went to settle in Puri. Pratāp Rudra, the King of Orissa, having heard the reputation of Sārvabhauma, accorded him royal reception and appointed him as court paṇḍit.

Having learned that the young monk had not studied Vedānta philosophy, Sārvabhauma, being a great scholar and addicted to scholarship, felt that Sri Chaitanya must study it under his tutelage. Meekly, Sri Chaitanya submitted to the proposal. For seven days Sārvabhauma dilated on the difficult text of *the Brahmasutras*, displaying his enormous fund of knowledge. On the eighth day he said to his pupil; 'For seven days you have heard my exposition on the scripture, but you have not said a word, but instead have been sitting mute all the while.' Sri Chaitanya replied: 'The sutras are clear and they do not require "text-torturing". Your lengthy pedantic expositions have only obscured and clouded the meaning.' Then in simple language, briefly, and quoting from *the Bhāgavata*, *the Padma-Purāṇa*, and *the Gītā*, he explained to Sārvabhauma the nature of God, devotion and the importance of chanting His name. Love of God is the only essential thing, and all the rest are non-essentials, he said. In his angelic voice he concluded, reciting:

*Harer nāma, Harer nāma, Harer nāmaiva
kevalam,
kalaunasti evanasti evanasti eva gatir
anyathā.*

Hari's name, Hari's name! There is no other means to salvation in the kali-yuga, no other, indeed none.

While chanting this verse he burst into tears, his voice was choked and he passed into the state of trance with outstretched arms. His face became radiant and the divine vibrations that emanated from him spiritually charged the whole atmosphere, revealing to the astonished paṇḍit that this young *sannyāsin* was not an ordinary mortal but an apostle of divine love. Sārvabhauma believed him to be none other than Viṣṇu Himself, and surrendered to him. Thus the teacher became the disciple. Later, in praise of Sri Chaitanya he composed '*The Gaurāṅgāṣṭaka*', a hymn of eight verses.

It is worth recalling in this context, Sri Ramakrishna's deep influence on Śaśadhar Tarkacūḍāmaṇi, Padmalocan Tarkālaṅkar, and Śivanāth Śāstri—all well-versed paṇḍits in scriptures and logic. Śaśadhar Tarkacūḍāmaṇi was a famous exponent of orthodox Hinduism, and he was the talk of Calcutta. During their first meeting, Sri Ramakrishna instructed the Paṇḍit: 'Those persons only who have got power direct from the Mother of the Universe can truly become preachers of religion; the grandiloquence of other so-called preachers is vain.'⁶ Śaśadhar, after realizing that mere eloquence and intellectual sophistry were arid, surrendered to Sri Ramakrishna saying: 'Sir, my heart has dried up because of my study of philosophy. So I have come to you in order to have a little of the sap of devotion.'⁷ A little later, the Paṇḍit gave up the preaching and devoted his life to realize God. Padmalocan Tarkālaṅkār, a well-respected court paṇḍit in the court of the Rājā of Burdwan, had mastered Nyaya and Vedanta. In

6. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1984) p. 685.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 725.

debates he was unassailable. Sri Ramakrishna, having heard much about this great scholar and *sādhaka*, went himself to meet him. After seeing the paṇḍit, Sri Ramakrishna in an ecstatic mood, began to sing one of the songs of Ramprasad. The atmosphere became charged with spiritual vibration, the paṇḍit was deeply touched and could not control his flood of emotion, and began to shed profuse tears. He said to Hriday: 'How strange, never before have I shed tears. His devotional singing brought tears to my eyes.' He said further: 'My long and continuous study of holy texts has now proved fruitful.' Addressing his disciples, the paṇḍit said: 'Do you see, he has acquired a million times more, without any study of the scriptures than I have achieved by mastering a roomful of them.'⁸

The divine Chaitanya, after staying some time, felt the urge to go to the southern parts of India. Wherever he went he held *Krishna-saṅkīrtanas* and asked people to repeat the name of Krishna. His radiant countenance, tall and strong body, clad in ochre cloth, radiated an unearthly beauty that cast a spell on whoever beheld him. Villagers and townspeople flocked round this heavenly Pied Piper and joined him enthusiastically in the praise of Hari. Sri Chaitanya met another great devotee of Krishna, Rāmānanda Roy, by birth a śūdra. He revealed to Rāmānanda His divine form as Radha-Krishna. Sri Chaitanya instructed him to renounce the worldly life and proceed to Puri. Chaitanya, the wandering friar, travelled extensively in Andhra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra and Gujarat. As was the custom in olden times, he held discussions and debates with scholars belonging to different schools of thought. He silenced many and converted many

others to the path of *bhakti*. He left a considerable impact on the *bhakti-movement* of South India. No being ever embodied in both life and character the Krishna-spirit more fully than did Sri Chaitanya.

There is a famous story which Sri Ramakrishna often told devotees. It happened during the sojourn of Sri Chaitanya in the South. A *brāhmaṇa* in Rangakṣetra or Sri Rangam, in Tamil Nadu, recited every day from the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Though this poor man could read the Sanskrit words, he did not know their meanings. Yet, while reading his face beamed with joy and there was brightness in his eyes. Someone informed Sri Chaitanya about the man, and he went to see him. Sri Chaitanya asked him what joy he could get from reading the *Gītā* when he could not understand the meaning of the verses. To that, the *brāhmaṇa* replied, 'As long as I read the *Gītā*, I see before me Sri Krishna, seated on the chariot, holding the reins and instructing Arjuna.' Hearing this from the illiterate devotee, Sri Chaitanya embraced him and said that he alone had understood the import of the *Gītā*, and others, parrot-like, only uttered the words.

Sri Chaitanya, after his long, arduous, triumphant tour, returned to Puri to the great rejoicing of his followers there. The bliss of their reunion was indescribable. During his absence, Pratāp Rudra, the King of Orissa, had learned of his fame and was pining to see him. But Chaitanya, sensing that the King was still proud of his royal position, curtly refused to meet him. It was only at the time of *Ratha-Yātrā*, the Car Festival of Jagannātha, that the King did see him. The King could win the grace of Sri Chaitanya only when in utter humility, he had divested himself of his royal attire and put on the clothes of an ordinary devotee. Sri Chaitanya graciously accepted the personal service rendered by the humble and devoted king. During his wanderings,

8. Swami Prabhananda, *First Meetings with Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1987) p. 20.

Sri Chaitanya had refused the royal hospitality of the Kings of Baroda and Travancore, and instead, begged his food from the common people.

In Chaitanya's subsequent tour to Bengal, at Ramkeļi, two high officials of the Sultanate, Sākar Mallik and Dabir Khas, joined the select band of Chaitanya. Later they became famous as Rūpa Goswami and Sanātana Goswami. It was they who provided the strong foundation for the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava philosophy of *prema-bhakti* as taught by Chaitanya. They wrote a number of books to explain the principal tenets of Sri Chaitanya's teachings, as he himself did not write.

It was always a strong desire of Sri Chaitanya to visit the holy town of Vrindāvan, where Sri Krishna spent his boyhood playing on the banks of the Yamunā. Going there he was always seen in the ineffable state of divine bliss, occasionally regaining his normal consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna also during his visit to Vrindāvan went into *bhāva-samādhi* often. '...After a short stay at Kāśī, the Master went to Vrindāvan with Mathur Babu. He, it is said, was in a wonderful *bhāva-samādhi* (divine consciousness) on seeing the image of *Baṅkuvihārī*—Deity of the Viṣṇu temple—he lost himself in ecstasy and ran to embrace Him...Experiencing various visions of Sri Krishna and Sri Radha, the Supreme Lady of Vraja, he felt intense divine love in those places.'⁹

Crowds thronged round the divine Chaitanya and forgot themselves in the flood of *bhakti*. From Vrindāvan Sri Chaitanya reached Vārāṇasi. Vārāṇasi, being the citadel of monistic philosophy, and not admitting of any divine incarnations, the simple Vaiṣṇava faith in Krishna had been under constant attack. There, Sri Chaitanya

too, was subjected to some derision and laughter for his devotion. The Vedāntins said, 'What kind of a sannyāsin could it be who indulged in frivolous dance and music, setting aside the study of the *sāstras* and scholarship?'¹⁰ But Chaitanya convinced the redoubtable Prakāśānanda Saraswatī and the other sannyāsins of the non-dualistic school of Vedānta, of the power and glory of God's name, the joy of total surrender to the Lord, and devotion to Krishna, and he clearly pointed out the vanity of denouncing *bhakti*.

When Totapuri, the naked mendicant, arrived at Dakshineswar, his expert eyes quickly recognized that Sri Ramakrishna was a fit person for Vedantic *sādhanā*. When Sri Ramakrishna went to take the permission of the Mother to embark on the *sādhanā* under Tota Puri, the latter understood that 'Mother' meant not his earthly mother, but the image of the Devi installed in the Kālī temple. The attitude of his disciple, Tota Puri thought, was due to ignorance and superstition. According to this Vedāntin there was no need for worshipping, praying to, or propitiating God. Even admitting the existence of a Personal God was a weakness for a Brahmajñānī. Tota Puri relied on personal efforts and perseverance, and denied the role of divine grace. To him, devotional moods accompanied by singing and dancing, laughing and weeping were antics of immature people. Under his guidance, Sri Ramakrishna, a child of the Divine Mother, attained *nirvikalpa samādhi*, undifferentiated Consciousness. Yet in spite of his experiencing this loftiest experience of spiritual realm,

10. *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, p. 33.

संन्यासी होइया करेन गायन नाचन ।
ना करे वेदान्त पाठ—करे संकीर्तन ॥
मूर्ख संन्यासी निज धर्म नहि जाने ।

9. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, p. 652.

to the astonishment and chagrin of Tota, Sri Ramakrishna used to sing and chant the names of God. This great Vedantin would have remained unconvinced about the power of the Universal Mother had he not learned it through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna.

Unaccustomed to the humid and warm climate of Bengal, Tota Puri in time fell prey to the virulent disease of blood dysentery. With the passage of months of excruciating pain, his mind lost its usual equipoise and he could no longer endure it. Finally, with the determination to end his 'cage of flesh and bones' by drowning it in the Gaṅgā, one night he entered into the water. Wading on and on, he found he had reached the other bank. In a flash, he saw the play of the Universal Mother. The Brahmajñānī returned, a totally transfigured *bhakta*. He spent the remainder of the night chanting the hallowed name of the Divine Mother. Sri Ramakrishna taught Tota Puri that Brahman and Śakti, the Lord and His Power, are one and the same. The path of love and devotion leads one to the realization of God and ultimately to the attainment of non-dual Consciousness.

Sri Chaitanya held aloft once again the philosophy of Vaiṣṇava *prema-bhakti*, ecstatic love. As a result, the animosity between the bhaktas and the *Vedāntins* which was very pronounced at that time, cooled down. In Vārāṇasi, Chaitanya attracted large crowds and the city throbbed with *Krishna-nāma-sankīrtana*. What magic wand did Sri Chaitanya possess? The remarks of Thomas of Celano, disciple of St. Francis, are recalled. He compared the effects of the simple preachings of St. Francis to a star rising brightly over the horizon and the breaking of dawn after a gloomy night. Like a river rich in goodness and fruitfulness, Francis streamed through the place and

transformed gardens in the hearts of men so that they blossomed in virtue.¹¹

After his Vārāṇasi tour, Sri Chaitanya returned to Puri. There he settled down. All over Orissa, Bengal and Assam his sect had gathered innumerable followers. The name of Sri Krishna Chaitanya became a household word in all those parts of India. He felt now the need to organize the scattered groups of Vaiṣṇavas and to nurture carefully the tender saplings of Krishna-love he had planted in the hearts of people. His prominent disciples as instructed by him went to different parts of the country to spread the doctrine of *bhakti*. The trusted disciple Nityananda went to Bengal to organize the Vaiṣṇava sect.

There are some similarities between Swami Vivekananda and Nityananda. Both were great organizers, lovers of the oppressed people, and had unwavering faith in their Gurus. Dinesh Chandra Sen wrote:

The organization of the Vaiṣṇava community into its later forms eminently was due to this apostle. His compassion for the depressed castes was a marked feature in his career devoted to the good of people. Though a brāhmana, he had no caste prejudices and mixed freely with the fallen and lowly without caring for the consequence. He opened the doors of Vaiṣṇava society to all people irrespective of caste.¹²

In his *Chaitanya Bhāgavata*, Vrindāvan Das narrated an interesting episode in the life of Nityananda, which shows the implicit trust Sri Chaitanya had in Nityananda. Once the wealthy merchants of Saptagram and Nadiya offered Nityananda, out of devotion, costly silken apparel studded with pearls and other precious stones. Reluctantly, Nityananda accepted those loving gifts, and

11. Johannes Jorgensen, *St Francis of Assisi* (New York: Image Books, 1955) p. 90.

12. Dinesh Chandra Sen, *Chaitanya and His Companions* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1917) p. 35.

so as not to wound their devotion, wore those clothes and gems. Seeing Nityananda, the ascetic, in those things, someone went to Puri and reported to Sri Chaitanya that Nityananda was rolling in luxury, using the costly ornaments and articles given by merchants. Hearing that canard, Sri Chaitanya said: 'I know true renunciation is the very breath of Nityananda. Do not look at his exterior. Dust and ashes, and the jewels and stones of which you speak, are to him of the same value. Even if I hear from you that he has fallen prey to low courtesans, or indulges in wine, I would not lose my faith in him.'

There was a striking parallel in the life of Swami Vivekananda: Due to the sudden death of Naren's father, the entire family fell into a desperate condition for lack of means. The whole responsibility of maintaining the family of seven or eight suddenly came to Naren. The family was thrown into the direst poverty due to misfortune, and at time went without food. Years later, Swamiji reminisced on the hardships: 'Even before the period of mourning was over I had to go about in search of a job. Starving and barefooted, I wandered from office to office under the scorching noonday sun with an application in hand. ...But everywhere the door was slammed in my face.... Seeing all this, the world sometimes seemed to me to be the work of a devil.'¹³ In an agony of heart, Naren felt piqued with God, and even once a doubt about the existence of God crept into his heart. From boyhood, fearlessly outspoken as he was, he ventilated his doubt saying that 'God was a myth, and it was cowardice to believe in Him'. Soon a rumour gained currency that Narendra had not only become an atheist but that he had fallen into a bohemian life of immor-

ality. Some concocted stories reached Dakshineswar, and though Sri Ramakrishna would not give any ear to them, one of the young disciples lamented in anguish, 'Oh, I could never have dreamed that Narendra could stoop so low!' Hearing those words, Sri Ramakrishna became grave and said: 'Hush, you fool! The Mother has told me that it can never be so. I shan't be able to look at you if you speak to me like that again.'¹⁴

Vallabhācārya, founder of another Vaiṣṇava sect, who was proud of his vast learning, met Sri Chaitanya at Puri. Sri Chaitanya noted the flaw in the great ācārya (teacher), and intelligently divested him of his over-weaning pride, a deadly obstacle to devotion to God. During this time also, another great soul, the Assamese saint and devotee of Sri Krishna, Śankara Deva, met Sri Chaitanya at Puri. There are some similarities in the teachings of the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas and those of Śankara Deva. Guru Nanak (1469-1536), another spiritual luminary of that age and the founder of Sikhism, came also to Puri, and he and Sri Chaitanya met each other.¹⁵

Sri Chaitanya's last years were spent in relative quietude. The great sannyāsin led a very austere life, shunning all luxuries and even ordinary comforts of life. He ate meagre food, just enough to sustain the body and slept also very little. He set before his disciples, a perfect example of renunciation.

Again once Mahendra Kaviraj of Sinthi gave five rupees to Ramlal, nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, and told him to use the money for the Master. When Sri Ramakrishna learned about it he felt very much afflicted. He described his condition thus: ...'But

13. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) pp. 123-24.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

15. B. B. Majumdar, *Sri Chaitanya Chariter Upādan* (Bengali), (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1939) pp. 532, 546.

will you believe me? I had slept only a little while when I suddenly woke up writhing with pain, as if a cat were scratching my chest. ...I said to him (Ramlal), "Go at once and return the money." Ramlal gave it back the next day.¹⁶

Often Sri Chaitanya was found totally absorbed in the thought of God or in *samādhi*, and he was rarely aware of what was happening around him then. His companions with much effort would bring him back to the normal state. In the middle of the nights he would get up uttering the name of Krishna, rush outside and fall unconscious. The alarmed disciples began to keep whole-night vigils. This great teacher was seized by the love of Radha, the ecstatic love that Radha felt (*mādhurya-bhāva*) due to separation from Sri Krishna. His cry for Krishna, the pining for Krishna filled the

whole atmosphere. His once strong health broke down under the unbearable strain of the *divya-unmāda*, or divine madness.

The *līlā* of the great prophet of love was nearing the end, like a great river rushing to meet the ocean. After blazing the path of *prema-bhakti*, Sri Chaitanya passed away at Puri in 1533. He was forty-eight years old. Was he born again as Sri Ramakrishna in our time? The author of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* supports this view:

M:— 'I feel that Christ, Chaitanyadeva, and yourself—all three are one and the same. It is the same Person that has become all these three.'

Master:— 'Yes, yes! One! One! It is indeed one. Don't you see that it is He alone who dwells here in this way?'¹⁷

16. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 580.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 825.

"TRADITION" IN A.K. COOMARASWAMY AND T.S. ELIOT

DR. RAMA NAIR

The unimaginable scientific and technological advancement of the twentieth century has left man a spiritually weak and insecure entity, unable to withstand the pressures of an increasingly demanding society. To the modern individual the idea of a spiritually integrated society is both unthinkable and impossible. His essential harmony with Nature, of which he is an integral part, has been reduced to a disoriented mass of confused ideologies and egocentric philosophies. Modern man, in spite of his 'brilliant' achievements in the material world, can be likened to a tortured soul in need of an antidote to soothe the burning anxieties of his anguished and fragmented existence.

"For to give bread alone, to try to heal the physical ill *before* the spiritual, is merely to endanger mankind with the confusion of still more unintegrated and meaningless lives with power to pursue aimless and clashing courses".¹

Modern man is

"...like the automobile enthusiast who spends so much time dismantling and rebuilding his car that he never drives anywhere".²

It requires insight and an intuitive perception into the reality behind the illusion of

1. Alan Watts. *The Supreme Identity. An Essay on Oriental Metaphysic and the Christian Religion*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 39

2. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

'progress' to end man's ceaseless endeavours to 'find' himself.

Coomaraswamy and Eliot, the two intellectual giants of the twentieth century, were endowed with this rare gift. With their 'seeing' eye and penetrating vision they were able to assess the nature of the prevailing ills. There is a striking similarity in their thoughts and ideas regarding the one basic principle which they felt could bring unity and order in a slowly decaying and disintegrating society.

Coomaraswamy and Eliot strongly believed in the positive and enriching value of 'tradition'. Tradition is looked upon by the Westerner with deep mistrust. They are prejudiced against the word and all it stands for

"since they bear to bring upon it a progressivist outlook which on the one hand looks upon all that is historical or behind us as inferior and surpassed, and on the other, searches for ever greater validities, at the same time denying the continuance of previously established validity within newly discovered contextual reality".³

In modern society nothing is regarded to exist beyond the bounds of contingency and relativity. There is no question, then, of going beyond the finite and the temporal. But

"...knowledge of the infinite does not obliterate ordinary knowledge; on the contrary, it perfects it just as formless light reveals the clarity of forms".⁴

Traditional cultures viewed knowledge of the universal and the infinite as man's true end.

Oriental and mediæval Christian society were governed by 'tradition'. Tradition implies a set of universal principles based

3. Kurt F. Leidecker, "Coomaraswamy, A Modern Plato". *Ananda Coomaraswamy: Remembering and Remembering Again and Again*. Edit. by S. Durai, Raja Singam. (Kuala Lumpur, 1974), p. 11.

4. Alan Watts. *The Supreme Identity*. p. 37.

on bodies of knowledge that belonged to no one in particular. Such societies were bound together by the principle of a cosmological unity. They did not understand tradition to be as something handed down from the past and adhered to accordingly as in the West. They attached an insignificant importance to historical facts and historical progression. Tradition meant the transmission of the eternal truths of life having a universal validity from the past to the present, and then, from the present to the future.

The Western mind is appalled by

"the stability and seeming monotony of this non-historical mode of existence".⁵

The West considers such a culture static and monotonous in contrast to its own dynamic culture. Alan Watts rightly states that

"The sense of monotony is the result of an improper use of memory, and of a constant comparison of the present with the past—a comparison to which the western mind is moved by his egotism, by his irresistible itch to be an improvement on all the former generations of mankind".⁶

Coomaraswamy, like the other traditionalists, believed that here is an eternal source of life, the 'One' variously called the God of religion, the Absolute of philosophers, and the Truth, Beauty and Good of the artists, poets and mystics. Knowledge of the phenomenal world is the means to an end—the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. What is present in Nature is a manifestation of the different aspects of this Being. A more systematic analysis of this mysterious principle is expounded in the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads*, and the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The aim of all knowledge is to help man achieve self-realization. Self realization can be attained not through intellectual explorations but through contemplation. When contemplation is

5. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

replaced by excessive intellectuality, the result is a preoccupation with the material world.

But in India, where knowledge of this Reality is a way of life, Coomaraswamy found a solution to this distressing problem of the West. Knowledge not founded on a spiritual basis tends to become pragmatic. And pragmatic knowledge denies the mode of reflective enquiry which can lead to true peace and happiness.

Coomaraswamy made the profound observation that,

“The heart and essence of the Indian experience is to be found in a constant intuition of the unity of all life, and the instinctive and ineradicable conviction that the recognition of this unity is the highest good and the utmost freedom. All that India can offer to the world proceeds from her philosophy. This philosophy is not, indeed, unknown to others—it is equally the gospel of Jesus and of Blake, Lao Tzu, and Rumi—but nowhere else has it been made the essential basis of sociology and education’.⁷

Coomaraswamy’s approach was traditional. The presence of the Divine in Nature was perceived by Plato and the Christians of the Middle Ages. In every man is present the Pure Self which can never be individualized. The ‘Self’ is the principle by which all things ‘exist’ as beings. The ‘Self’ which is transcendent is identical in reality with *Ātman* or the Eternal one. It follows that human individuality is only a reflection of the Self. When the individual is isolated from the Self, man leads a meaningless existence, because Reality is achieved when the two are perfectly united. The Self is also referred to as the *Brahman* which is the Universal Spirit. The Brahman within the individual is called *Puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* is the ‘Light’ of Christ, and the ‘knowledge’ of Aristotle.

7. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. *The Dance of Shiva*. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt., Ltd., 1974), pp. 21-22.

The idea of a cosmic divinity which pervades Nature, and can be realised by man within himself, is the fundamental basis of Coomaraswamy’s philosophy. It can be attained through an intellectual process, through contemplation of the divine archetypal forms, rather than through an emotional process of self-expression.

Since the end of art is the perfection of man, its aim is to impart knowledge which serves as a reminder and a support to contemplation. Art gives rise to that intellectual perception which is needed to purify one’s emotions and bring about a harmony within one’s own self. Here the artist as well as the spectator are engaged in a joint activity that brings perfection to both of them.

Such a traditional concept of Art disregards the idea of an artistic ego. Coomaraswamy discounts the significance of ‘inspiration’ in the creative process. Inspiration is the result of those irrational impulses which seek expression to gratify the sense. Coomaraswamy states that there is no such thing as a disinterested aesthetic contemplation.

For

“Art is an intellectual, not a physical virtue; beauty has to do with knowledge and goodness, of which it is precisely the attractive aspect; and since it is by its beauty that we are attracted to a work, its beauty is evidently a means to an end, and not itself the end of art; the purpose of art is always one of effective communication”.⁸

Consequently, Coomaraswamy is vehement in his denunciation of the division of art into the ‘fine’ and the ‘useful’. The ‘fine’ gratifies the ‘aesthetic’ sense, while the ‘useful’ serves the practical needs of day to day existence. In the traditional view of art there is no essential distinction of a ‘fine’

8. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt., Ltd., 1974), pp. 16-17.

and 'useless' art from a utilitarian craftsmanship. Such a hedonistic concept leads not to an integrated society, but to a fragmented existence.

As Eric Gill caustically put it,

"On the one hand we have the artist concerned solely to express himself; on the other is the workman deprived of any self to express."⁹

Therefore, to the traditional craftsmen of the East, their means of livelihood was not only a vocation and a profession, but also an object of devotion and love. Indian art was produced in response to a demand. Art was reflected in every aspect of life. According to the *Bhagvad Gītā* it is by intense devotion to his vocation that every man attains his own perfection. Traditional philosophy aimed at the greatest possible freedom from oneself.

Tradition implies that man evolves from the spirit of his own race. Indian culture attempts to translate spirit into matter, in order to give concrete expression to the spiritual reality of life. In the West, work was divorced from culture. Culture was considered as something to be acquired in hours of leisure. But Coomaraswamy said

"...there can be only a hothouse and unreal culture where work itself is not the means; if culture does not show itself in all we make we are not cultured"¹⁰

Indian art is strongly rooted in tradition and myth. It is representative of a race, not of an individual. The best works of art in mediæval Christendom and the East are the works of artists who preferred to remain anonymous.

"The soulful or sentimental self enjoys itself in the aesthetic surfaces of natural or artificial things, to which it is akin; the intellectual or spiritual self enjoys their order and is nourished by what in them is akin to it"¹¹

9. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

10. Ibid., p. 15.

11. Coomaraswamy. *Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism*. Edit by Roger Lipsey. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 18.

Coomaraswamy's theory is based on the classical strain of both Christian and Oriental philosophy of art. His metaphysics is immensely practical. Quoting Plato he says that

"It is one of Plato's virtue and that of all traditional doctrine about art, that "value" is never taken to mean an exclusively spiritual or exclusively physical value. It is neither advantageous, nor altogether possible, to separate these values, making some things sacred and others profane: the highest wisdom must be "mixed" with practical knowledge, the contemplative life combined with the active"¹²

Such art is never 'idealistic' in the modern and sentimental sense.

Eliot, like Coomaraswamy, attempted to mould his thoughts and writings in relation to a received tradition of learning and interpretation. His sources ranged from the traditional doctrines of Indic Philosophy and religion to the urban culture of his own time.

Eliot's own poems deal with the quest of the individual soul for the attainment of an inner harmony within itself. The search begins in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and culminates in 'Four Quartets' where the 'fire and the rose' become one. Modernity had brought mental and spiritual sterility in its wake. The spiritual barrenness of his times prompted Eliot to cultivate a set of beliefs (alien to his own culture) which might activate the process of self-realization. The principle of unity, order, and intellectual beauty, inherent in traditional cultures, appealed strongly to his critical sensibility.

Eliot believed in the importance of tradition. Tradition did not imply a blind and timid adherence to the ways of "the immediate generation before us". Tradition cannot be inherited. Eliot states that it involves the historical sense, and the historical sense

12. Ibid., p. 27.

“involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence, the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. The historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional”.¹³

It is the historical sense which makes the writer aware of his own contemporaneity.

This theory implies that no poet or artist of any sort has his complete meaning alone. The wisdom gathered in its essence over the years is extended in the work of the artist so that

“what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the work that preceded it”.¹⁴

Conformity between the old and the new is achieved when

“the existing monuments form an ideal order amongst themselves, which is modified by the new...”.¹⁵

For order to persist after the introduction of the new work,

“the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted”.¹⁶

Eliot held with the traditional philosophers that order and unity in one's life can be attained only through the exercise of self-control and self-restraint. The arts provide the necessary means to subdue man's inordinate capacity for self-destructive excesses. They help him to refine his sensibility and experience a higher level of being.

Eliot's preoccupation with the unification of the self finds an echo in most of his poems. He held that though reality is one, human understanding is necessarily dual in character. Man's truncated existence is a reflection of his own fragmented view of Reality.

Eliot stressed the need for tradition as it fostered a community of spirit and emphasized the ultimate kinship of man. True humanity depended on

“the submission of natural desire and will to something more complete and comprehensive, something above the natural”.¹⁷

Where Coomaraswamy looked for man's fulfilment in the discovery of a higher self within himself, Eliot looked for it

“in a community of spirit which shall have its positive embodiment, not merely in idea, but in act; not merely in tradition, but in myth, ritual and creed”.¹⁸

In his essay on ‘The Function of Criticism’ Eliot states that the literature of a country should be regarded not as a collection of the writings of individuals, but as

“organic wholes, as systems in relation to which, and only in relation to which, individual works of literary art, and the works of individual artists, have their significance”.¹⁹

Eliot continues,

“There is accordingly something outside of the artist to which he owes allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and to obtain his unique position”.²⁰

A common tradition unites artists consciously or unconsciously.

An artist motivated by his ego cannot

13. T.S. Eliot. “Tradition and the Individual Talent” *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. Edit. by David Lodge. (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1976), p. 72.

14. Ibid., p. 72.

15. Ibid., p. 72.

16. Ibid., p. 72.

17. David Ward. *T.S. Eliot Between Two Worlds. A Reading of T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 9.

18. Ibid., p. 9.

19. T.S. Eliot. “The Function of Criticism”. *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. Edit. by David Lodge. p. 77.

20. Ibid., p. 77.

conform to this pattern of surrender and recovery. Eliot states,

"...it is not the 'greatness', the intensity of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts".²¹

The poem is the means to an end. The poet has not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium in which impressions and experiences combine in unexpected ways. Poetry is the result of deliberate concentration.

Eliot in these oft-quoted lines asserts that

"Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality".²²

This assertion may be unacceptable to many a modern artist. Eliot refers to such a person as a "second-rate artist" who

"cannot afford to surrender himself to any common action; for his chief task is the assertion of all the trifling differences which are his distinction; only the man who has so much to give that he can forget himself in his work can afford to collaborate, to exchange, to contribute".²³

As in Eastern metaphysical speculation, Eliot too believed in the unitary principle, or *logos*, by which the universe is guided, Cleo McNelly Kearns states

"The wisdom mode of the *logos* is also, for Eliot, a crucial strategy for achieving the impersonal, ruminative, yet intimate voice that transforms the injured self into the wholeness of a member of a community".²⁴

Eliot sought to discover traditional support for his concept of a humanistic dualism and an ontological monism from Graeco-Chris-

tian and Hindu-Buddhist traditional doctrine. The dualism of the 'You' and 'I' of Prufrock is resolved in the assertion of faith in the existence of a Universal Principle in 'Four Quartets'. The soul divided against itself, establishes harmony within itself "when the tongues of flame are in-folded/Into the crowned knot of fire/And the fire and the rose are one".

Eliot further states that "The trouble of the modern age is not merely the inability to believe certain things about God and man which our forefathers believed, but the inability to *feel* towards God and man as they did", and

"...when religious feeling disappears, the words in which men have struggled to express it become meaningless".²⁵

It is the duty of the poet to communicate, through the use of an appropriate language, some new experience which enlarges the consciousness of the reader. Eliot states that the function of poetry is to impart pleasure, no doubt, but he is not specific about the nature of such pleasure

"simply because any other answer would take us far afield into aesthetics, and the general question of the nature of art".²⁶

The concept of tradition as envisaged by Coomaraswamy and Eliot differs only in intention. Both emphasise the importance of tradition in the production of any artistic work. Order, discipline and unity can be achieved by a process of mental asceticism. It is tradition that helps man find himself. Art has its basis in the spirit of man, and has to be approached rationally, not emotionally. For

"...the intellect while present in man is not of man; it belongs to the universal, and not the individual order".²⁷

21. T.S. Eliot. "Tradition and the Individual Talent". *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. Edit. by David Lodge, p. 74.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

23. T.S. Eliot. "The Function of Criticism". *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. Edit. by David Lodge. p. 77.

24. Cleo McNelly Kearns. *T.S. Eliot and the Indic Traditions. A Study in Poetry and Belief*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), p. 20.

25. T.S. Eliot. "The Social Function of Poetry", *On Poetry and Poets*. (New York: The Noonday Press, Sixth Printing 1968), p. 15.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

27. Alan Watts. *The Supreme Identity*. p. 34.

To Coomaraswamy and Eliot, the physical world was not the ultimate reality. The true end of life lay in the achievement of an integrated self. Such a concept cannot survive in an individualistic ethic. Hence the need for the restraining influence of tradition. Modernity must be built on the foundation of tradition.

MEITEI IDENTITY AND CULTURAL CRISIS

AMIYA BHAUMIK

According to sociologist Barth, an ethnic group is generally understood to designate a population which: (a) biologically, is largely self-perpetuating; (b) shares fundamental cultural forms; (c) makes up a field of communication and interaction; and (d) has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others by its constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.

This ideal type of definition is not so far removed in content from the traditional proposition that 'a race is equal to a culture, and a culture is equal to language; and that a society is equal to a unit which rejects or discriminates against others.' Ethnicity, therefore, is a primary focus of group identity. This basic group identity, according to Issacs, 'consists of the ready-made set of endowments and identifications which every individual shares with every other, from the moment of birth, by the chance of the family into which he is born at that given place.'¹ This set of endowments are broadly divided by Parsons into biological or racial, and cultural distinctions.² Biologically, there is first the new baby's body itself, all the shared physical characteristics of the group acquired through the long process of genetic history.

Culturally, the baby acquires a name—an individual name, a family name, a group name. He learns that his identity is bound up with the history and origin of the group into which he is born. The group's culture-past endows him automatically with, among other things, his nationality, local, regional or tribal affiliation, language, religion and value system. Such are the inheritances that make up the newcomer's identity.

India's northeastern jewel Manipur

Manipur, noted for scenic beauty, is a state of India in its far northeastern part. In a picturesque setting, Manipur is somewhat isolated geographically, with high mountains surrounding her broad valley. The mountains rise up to over eight thousand four hundred feet. Manipur shares borders with the states of Nagaland, Assam and Mizoram on the north, west and south, and with Burma in the east. The region became an integral part of India early in the 18th century, and achieved Statehood in 1972.

Manipur has two major physical features, the broad river valley formed by the Manipur River, having its source mainly in Lake Loktak, and the high mountains encircling the valley. The state is approximately 220 kilometres south to north, and 150 kilometres east to west as the crow flies. People of Manipur number slightly over 1.4 million, of whom the Meiteis, the traditional warrior

1. Hadson, T. C., *The Meitheis* (New Delhi: B. R. Publication reprint, 1975) Vol. XXII, p. 227.

2. *Meiteis of Manipur, a study in human ecology*, 'Geographical Review of India', Vol. XXXVII (1) March, 1975, pp. 53-61.

class living in the valley, comprise about two-thirds, and the hill tribes divided into numerous clans and sections, form the rest. The tribesmen speak languages of the Tibeto-Burman family, and practise traditional animist religions, though some of the Nagas have been converted into Christianity. The Meiteis of the Manipur Valley are largely Hindus. About 60 percent of the population speak Manipuri, which with English, is the official language of the State.³

The Meiteis—an ethnic group within Manipur

Numerically, Meiteis constitute the largest segment of population of Manipur. They inhabit approximately two thousand two-hundred thirty-eight square kilometres of the valley's fertile floor. They are regarded as the martial race of Manipur, since their ancestors ruled the area for centuries and fought bravely many times against invasions, particularly from the east. Even today Meiteis continue to hold sway on power, and possess most of the economic resources within the valley.

Until recent times, Meiteis had a very distinct cultural heritage, which was centred in their religious books called Puyas, written many centuries ago in the ancient Meitei script. They had a unique set of rituals, beliefs and sacred philosophy of their own. They called the traditional religion *Senamahism*.

During the early part of the eighteenth century, Manipur was ruled by a king of the Naga clan whose name was Nāgāsardār Pāmhwā Rājā.⁴ Pāmhwā welcomed into Manipur the popular Gosain missionaries of Bengal. These preachers of the *Bhakti*

sect of Sri Chaitanya, had been moving about over the whole of northeast India since the time of Sri Gourānga himself, early in the 16th century. They were successful in reviving the strength of Hinduism during the oppressive periods of Mughal rule. Pāmhwā Rājā, having met the great *bhakta*, Sri Shānti Dās Gosāin from Sylhet, ardently embraced the Hindu Dharma, changing his name to 'Garib Nawaj', and led his people to give up *Senamahism*. History is not clear on details of how he did this, but due to subsequent developments, as is seen when society accepts rule by autocracy, coercive measures were adopted. The sacred books, the Puyas, with their wealth of history, morals, rituals and culture, were consigned to flames. The greater part of the old knowledge was reduced to ashes. Subsequently also, the Meitei alphabet and script were also abandoned in favour of the modified Brāhmi script used by the people of modern Bengal, probably by a decree of the Rājā.

King Pāmhwā is, therefore, accused by a few historians of forcefully and wilfully destroying the old culture of the Meitei clan. The Vaiṣṇava faith (worship of Lord Sri Krishna) of Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is not blamed. The spread of Hinduism, re-awakened by him, was carried out by and large by his devoted followers, wandering minstrels and monks singing and preaching the names and glories of God. It was regrettable that organization of the Faith by Pāmhwā Rājā led to militant propagation within the Kingdom of Manipur.

Meiteis are still today mainly followers of Vaiṣṇavism, though they hold on to a few beliefs belonging to their old tradition. The remnants of the old religion, however, served to fan up the flames of nostalgia in time and a longing to bring back the old customs. Unable to forget the sorrow of losing their ethnic identity, Meiteis began to demons-

3. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (London: 1974) Vol. XI, p. 451.

4. *Viswakos* (Bengali Encyclopedia) (Calcutta: Sri Nagendranath Basu, 1891) Vol. XIII, p. 724.

trate a contra-acculturative attitude in the 1930's. Since then they have been engaged in working out a plan to revive the old Meitei script, to bring back the customs, beliefs and moral philosophy of their past, and regain their former distinct cultural identity.

Modern Meiteis believe that the revival of their forgotten script will help all Manipuris preserve their ethnic identity. As script is 'mother' to them, and language 'father', and since the old script is part and parcel of culture, it must be brought to life again. Without this, the Puyas that survive will not be intelligible. The great philosophy they contain will not be understood by the younger generation. It is mainly for this reason that a dislike has grown up towards the Bengali script and alphabet.

However, there are many who contend that the Bengali alphabet is not perfectly suited for conveying the whole range of sounds needed to pronounce some words of the Manipuri language. Continued use of

this alphabet constricts the full expressive potential of Manipuri. Then for some children the Bengali alphabet causes serious problems when learning to spell and pronounce Manipuri words. Yet others hold that this has become a major hurdle for most of the students of Manipur.

Many educated people belonging to the Meitei community have been showing their enthusiasm to revive the old Meitei religion and culture and attempts are being made to rediscover the genuine Meitei script. The task has become difficult as there is no unanimity as to what the genuine Meitei script is. According to Grierson, Meitei language belongs to the *Kuki Chin* group of language. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji was of the opinion that the beginning of Manipuri literature unquestionably 'goes back some 1500 to 2000 years'. A conference was held in 1969 and in that conference 27 letters, according to Meiteis, relate to the different parts of the human anatomy. This script is called *Mapung Mayeek*.

TRENDS OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY AND EXPECTATIONS OF VIVEKANANDA AND MAHATMA GANDHI

BY SWAMI BHAVAHARANANDA

Along with the general progressive developments in modern life and society—political, scientific, rational and technological which seem to be leading mankind to a new kind of world civilization, there is reason to pause and reflect. With all the hopeful trends, we are confronted now and then with throwbacks in social phenomena to primitive ages—viz. incidents of our people reverting to narrow superstitions, religious beliefs and fanaticism. 'Fundamentalism' of various sorts, political terrorism and other outrages seem to be on the rise.

India was shocked in 1988 when after a

tragic death in rural Rajasthan, the outlawed practice of *satī*, the immolation of a wife in the flames with her dead husband, seemed about to revive. The incident aroused immense concern from all quarters. Throwing light on *satī* Dr. Romila Thapar wrote:

There is no simple explanation for the origin of the custom of burning widows on the pyres of their dead husbands. It is said to have been associated with the aristocracy in many early societies such as...the Greeks and Scythians.

Dr. Thapar mentions reference to it by the *Rg Veda*, but says that :

...the act was only a mimetic ceremony. The widow lay on her husband's funeral pyre before being raised from it by a male relative of his. Attempts were made, probably in the sixteenth century, to seek Vedic sanction for *sati*, (then in vogue) by changing the word *agre* (to go forth) into *agneh* (to the fire) in a specific Vedic verse. But since the widow is not meant to immolate herself, this change was spurious. The Vedic act (observed by families of high status) encapsulated the termination of an earlier practice, or the symbolic death of the wife.¹

Dr. Thapar has also referred to inscriptions dating from the times of early Hindu dynasties, the Chālukyas, Yādavas, Hoysalās and others which confirmed the presence if not the support of the *sati* rite. Based on the evidence of these inscriptions, stray cases of *sati* can be said to have taken place over many centuries, but it is not to suggest that *sati* ever was widely popular or practised among the general populace. It is certain that it was only in vogue among certain upper and ruling classes. To what extent, Dr. Thapar points to uncertainty. 'Sporadic references...do not tell us much.' To understand the reasons for the problem, she further says, we must examine the systems of kinship practised in the various sections of society, rights of inheritance, prevalent social attitudes towards women, the ethic of 'hero attitudes toward Deity', the power of society to adjust to social changes and to other relevant facts. All these would reveal how and why women have been encouraged or forced to become *sati*.

Obscure as the history of *sati* is, there is no knowledge of how many *satis* there have been. It would be unreasonable therefore to blame the whole of the country or Hindu society in particular for it. Sometimes it is found that a not very wholesome local custom of meagre historic importance, suddenly becomes a big issue. This is specially true and so much applicable in a

country where even today people are very prone to accept legend and mythology as literal truth. Then in the heat and excitement of such a tragedy as *sati* everybody forgets that as an issue or crisis it may not be so powerful at all to justify rank as a very deep social and religious issue.

Though *Mitākṣara* texts are known to have permitted *sati*, there cannot be shown any bold adherence to *sati* ever to have existed in India's religious literature or scriptures. On the other hand, Thapar writes, 'Medhātithi, the major commentator on *Manu Smṛti*, writing about the tenth century A.D., is strongly opposed to widows becoming *sati*. He argues that the practice is *adharma* and *asāstriya* —against the laws of dharma and not conceded by *śāstras*.' She said, referring to the *Padma-Purāṇa*: 'The notion of *sati* was tied to the heroic ideal of the *kṣatriyas* (warring and ruling class), and it is not surprising that up to this point in history it has not been permitted to other castes—especially not to *brāhmin* (caste) women.'² *The Mahānirvāna Tantra* also states: 'A wife should not be burnt with her dead husband. Every woman is the embodiment of the Goddess. That woman who in her delusion ascends the funeral pyre of her husband shall go to hell.'³

Like various other obsolete practices and sacrifices once practised in primitive times by religions of the world, *sati* can never claim to have any credibility now. Neither has it any future. Many fierce rites of the aborigines of North America and sacrifices of the Mayans, and also some of the formidable primitivisms of the African countries have been wiped out by the passage of time. The best way to aid such process is to ignore stray incidents and not give any importance to them. As P.V. Kane has

1. Romila Thapar, "Sati in History", *Seminar*, February 1988, p. 342.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Mahānirvāna Tantra*

written in his *History of Dharma Śāstra*: 'This subject is now (only) of academic interest in India, since for over a hundred years (i.e. from 1829) self-immolation of widows has been prohibited by law...and declared a crime.'⁴

Besides, *satī* is not a case for women alone to fight, but it is a problem for the whole society. Unfortunately, *satī* phenomenon has not only been confused and mixed up with Hindu religion, it has been fully misrepresented by a group of female progressivists as another effect of male domination, chauvinism and age-old neglect of women in our society. Even the orthodox sections are so confused that some of them think that the abolition of *satī* is an anti-Hindu affair altogether. Remarks Thapar, 'To argue that the abolition of *satī* is a deliberately anti-Hindu act, is to replay the debate of the 19th century where Ram Mohan Roy had maintained, correctly, that it does not carry the sanction of the Vedas, and Mritunjaya Vidyalkar maintained that it was not enjoined by the *śāstras*. If status has to be demonstrated today, there are other ways of doing it (better) than by burning wives.'⁵ It would seem then, another William Bentinck should appear amongst us and take some measure against social evils! God forbid!

Recent indignation has caused many to look askance at the so-called 'glorification' or greatness of women in ancient India, described by some earlier scholars. Well, it may be that some of these claims have been exaggerated, but how can we deny that the basic intention of such glorification was benevolent, and that they wanted to turn our attention towards some more positive thinking about women in modern times. Those scholars meant to approach the subject of

making progress in the modern context with some open-mindedness, creativity and mood of synthesis, and not merely to bare analysis of naked and negative truth. An idealistic interpretation of history may not always be very realistic appearing at first, but in the long run it is a necessary first step toward practical measures.

For example, in a recent work, Altekar's *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, an examination is made of the exigencies of the political situation in Vedic times which were responsible for the general deterioration of women's condition beginning from about 1000 B.C. and which became quite marked in about 500 years. The author noted that the introduction of non-Aryan wives into Aryan households started the decline. The non-Aryan's unfamiliarity with Sanskrit language and culture debarred her enjoyment of the same religious and other privileges as her Aryan consort. For that she had gradually to accept an inferior position. 'Association with her must have tended to affect the purity of the Aryan co-wife as well,' Altekar notes. For expressing these things the author had to endure snubbing and being dubbed 'a racial propagandist'. No doubt, Altekar was not altogether coherent in his logical explanation of the historical background and human neglect and deterioration of women's status in ancient India, but his intents were clearly above-board.

Naturally, it is questioned why, ... 'Ultimately, and due to the non-Aryan wife, *all women*, Aryan and non-Aryan, lost their privileges? One is left wondering why (using the same logic), Aryan men who associated with such non-Aryan women, were not also deprived of their religious privileges.' Thus attacking some of the so-called idyllic pictures of historical conditions of Aryans in the Vedic age, and within that, of 'the utterly respectable status of women', Uma

4. P. V. Kane, *The History of Dharma Śāstra*.

5. "Sati in History".

Chakraborty and Kum Kum Ray rightly conclude in their paper 'In Search of Our Past', that: 'The challenge needs to be taken up in order to arrive at a fresh understanding of the history of women in early India, and in the long run, to evolve a more meaningful and comprehensive historical perspective in general.'⁶

'More than two thousand five hundred years intervened between the *Re-Vedic Age*', writes Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, 'and the close of the ancient period at about A.D. 1200.' Many changes happened in Hindu society during this period. It is inevitable that the status and position of women, too, should have undergone many changes. But it is remarkable that there was, from every point of view, a steady process of decline... Asahaya, in his commentary on *Nārada-smṛti*, wrote that "Women must ever remain dependent on others, because, as they are not entitled to study of the *śāstras*, they do not know what is proper and what is improper."⁷ A kind of fear and suppression of women followed for centuries. Women were under protection and purdah. They had always to be screened from being seen by men or strangers. There was very little for them to do beyond tending the family or remaining the objects of man's desires. No field was open for them for learning, or to earn a livelihood or free social movement. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya himself once commented on the word '*puṇḍitā*' as meaning 'she who has skill in household management'.⁸

There is evidence to show, however, that there were glimmers of light through the

6. Uma Chakraborty and Kumkum Ray, "In Search of Our Past: A Review of the Limitations and Possibilities of the Historiography of Women in Early India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXIII, No. 18.

7. *Great Women of India*, Swami Madhavananda & Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Editors (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1953) p. 14, 16.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

darkness. The Buddhists and Jainas were having more freedom, perhaps due to their ascetic orders, allowing women to develop a progressive view and social maturity. Chakraborty and Ray rightly noted that '...asceticism, especially of the kind associated with the nunneries of the heterodox sects, offered women an alternative outside the restrictions of the kinship structure, and an opportunity for self-expression.'⁹

It is unfortunate that history records continual disruption and break-down of the great ancient convents (and monasteries) due to wave after wave of destructive invasions by muslim armies. The situation that followed was such that for so many centuries nothing could survive properly in its real shape. Romila Thapar also mentions that there were increased *satīs* and sufferings of women in South India at the time when under military pressure, the Vijayanagara Kingdom was collapsing.¹⁰

It was only during the 19th century that some hope and light appeared. Great men rose up, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gokhale, Ranade, Dayananda, Bankimchandra, Rabindranath, Subramaniam Bharati, Rama Bai, and Mahatma Gandhi. They stepped forward and addressed themselves to the need of women's uplift. Each contributed in his own way, and many made unique efforts over a period of about one hundred years.

But amongst them all the role of Swami Vivekananda in the end was most outstanding. Since the time of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, or even earlier, there were practically none among the sannyāsins to represent the cause of women so vehemently in our society and that too in such a bold and radical manner. No doubt, our women were at once slave

9. "In Search of Our Past".

10. "Sati in History".

and goddess, saint and strumpet. In the confusion of our constant vacillation between idealizing and degrading them, Vivekananda not only joined other leaders of our country in glorifying the status of women, he boldly criticized conservative backwardness, casteism and other attitudes holding back progress. At the same time with all gentleness and insight into the depths of the difficulties, he urged women's freedom and advancement from 'where they are' and according to their own nature and inclination. 'Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them. ...But only teaching rites of worship won't do; their education must be an eye-opener in all matters.'¹¹ But more, Swami Vivekananda wanted to see the establishment of independent convents for women, almost in parallel with the Buddhistic and Jaina convents of the past. There Gārgi, Maitreyi, Sītā, Sāvitrī and others would be models, and women would achieve attainments even higher than these.¹²

All these great women were examples of glorious *individual* female lives in history. Vivekananda wanted collective social power too, so that women could help lift the whole society. Indeed, he wrote: 'There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of woman is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.'¹³ Social power for women he conceived to be absolutely necessary and it would be transformed into spiritual power. Therefore his idea of *strī-math* (a convent) was not only historic and spectacular it was dynamic and modern also, as it would play a great part in removing inequalities that

existed for centuries. Surely the idea was better than having a political platform for women, specially at that time. Of course the Brahmo Samaj had already come up then, and there were various other female movements and organizations. But none of them were clear about a role for women as renouncers, which Swami Vivekananda proclaimed necessary. Compared to political or other fields of work, the life of renunciation and quiet service was rather close to their nature. To boost up the sagging moral courage and character of society was in the imagination of Swami Vivekananda, and he favoured social service activities within the parameter of such a women's Math or Movement. Above all, what Swamiji wanted very specifically was that all these be done independently by women themselves. Men should have nothing to do with such, and he never liked man's undue interest in these organizational affairs of women.

In spite of Vivekananda's spiritual thrust and his emphasis on the need for renunciation and monasticism for women, he never neglected the married life and civil side of society. He said, 'In my opinion, a race must first cultivate a great respect for motherhood through the sanctification and inviolability of marriage, before it can attain to the ideal of perfect chastity. The Roman Catholics and the Hindus, holding marriage sacred and inviolate, have produced great chaste men and women of immense power.'¹⁴ He gave equal importance to the devoted performance of duty both in marriage and in monasticism.

Perhaps the most that Vivekananda expected from men was only some initial help for providing opportunities in women's education. Education would be enough. 'Women,' he said, 'have grave problems, but none that cannot be solved by that magic word *education*.' And... 'Daughters should be

11. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta. Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. VI, p. 115, 493-94.

12. *Ibid.*, VI, p. 328.

13. *Ibid.*, VI, p. 328.

14. *Ibid.*, V, p. 180.

supported and educated with as much care and attention as sons. As sons should be married after observing *brahmacharya* up to the thirtieth year, so daughters also should observe *brahmacharya* and be educated by their parents. But what are we actually doing? ...They have all the time been trained in helplessness and servile dependence on others; and so they are good only to weep their eyes out at the approach of the slightest mishap or danger. ...So Women must be put in a position to solve their problems in their own way. ...And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.¹⁵

The fact is, in most far-eastern countries where Buddhistic culture prevails, and in India too, during that age, the beginning of education and schooling of a great part of all children lay mostly in the hands of the monasteries. Swamiji thought of taking this benefit at least for spreading education amongst the illiterate masses and children, from the monastics and organized devotees. But this plan was only partially taken up, and the 'Basic Education' of Gandhiji was given a trial after independence. It is interesting to note that the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, has also recently hailed the idea of placing the religious and cultural education of the nation in the hands of the Church. So Vivekananda's ideas were not so 'utopian' as many imagined.

Swamiji himself has clearly explained his point: 'Studying the present needs of the age, it seems imperative to train some of them in the ideals of renunciation, so that they will take up the vow of life-long virginity, fired with strength of that virtue of chastity which is innate in their blood from hoary antiquity. ...Our motherland requires for her well-being some of her children to

become pure-souled Brahmachārins and Brahmachārinis.¹⁶ Naturally, Swamiji emphasized, 'Brahmachārinis of education and character should take up the task of teaching.'¹⁷ And according to Swamiji, '...In villages and towns they must open centres and strive for the spread of female education. Through such devout preachers of character there will be the real spread of female education in the country.'¹⁸ He went on to say, 'History and Puranas (religious lore), house-keeping and arts, the duties of home life and the principles that make for the development of character have to be taught. And...other matters such as sewing, culinary art, rules of domestic work and upbringing of children will also be taught. Japa, worship and meditation shall form an indispensable part of the teaching.'¹⁹ He wanted them to acquire the spirit of valour and heroism so that they also become adept in self-defence. He expected that India would produce 'great fearless women—women worthy to continue the traditions of Saṅghamitrā, Līlā, Ahalyā Bāi, and Mīrā Bāi—women fit to be mothers of heroes because they are pure and fearless, strong with the strength that comes of touching the feet of God.'²⁰ Yet he did not forget their growing up as ideal matrons of home in time. It was his belief that 'in the homes of educated and pious mothers great men are born.'²¹

It is not that what Swamiji wanted was exactly Sanskritization and a sort of revival of old orthodoxy again. But he wanted to make spiritual ideas again the common property of the masses, and 'in the language of the people'. Europe vernacularized the Bible and brought religion and culture down

15. *Ibid.*, V, pp. 231, 26, 342, 229-30.

16. *Ibid.*, V, pp. 343.

17. *Ibid.*, VI, p. 489.

18. *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 217-18.

19. *Ibid.*, VI, p. 489; VII, p. 217.

20. *Ibid.*, V, p. 231.

21. *Ibid.*, VI, p. 489.

to the people from the Greek, Latin and Hebrew, from the monopoly of the Church to the Universities. In this fight, Puritan church, Calvinists and the Protestant Revolution were really the path-finders. Monopolies of the orthodox Church and priestcraft were otherwise menacing in the same manner as some of the religious groups of India. That is why Swamiji was emphatic: 'Teach the masses in the vernaculars. Give them ideas; they will get information, but something more will be necessary. Give them culture. Until you can give them that, there can be no permanence in the raised condition of the masses.'²²

Such inspiring calls given by Swamiji must be given practical shape through education and all other possible services under the guidance of the monastics, both men and women independently. But, as Catherine Clementine Ojha writes in 'Outside the Norms':

The main difficulty in dealing with Hindu asceticism is its absence of homogeneity. It is characterized by a variety of beliefs and practices for it has no central organization and is constituted of a multitude of independent monastic communities attached to one or another of the numerous sects (orders or *sampradāyas*). No statement made about one of its traditions can be valid for the rest. This holds good for the female as ascetics as well, since it is within the monastic orders affiliated to different sects that they are formed. They do not form a coherent group, but rather co-exist in quasi ignorance of each other. One may speak of 'Hindu Feminine asceticism', but only in a very general sense.²³

Swamiji was also aware of the situation. Once a disciple asked him: 'Sir, history does not tell us of any Maths for women in India in ancient times. Only during the Buddhistic period one hears of maths for

women, but from it in course of time many corruptions arose. The whole country was over-run by great evil practices.' Swamiji replied: 'It is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women. Whereas Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings. You always criticize the women but say, what have you done for their uplift? Writing down *smṛtis* (scriptural rules) etc., and binding them by hard rules, the men have turned the women into mere manufacturing machines! If you don't raise women who are the living embodiment of the Divine Mother, don't think that you have any other way to rise.'²⁴ Swamiji wanted to start a convent with the help of lady disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi as the central figure. The celebrate nuns trained in this Math would become the teachers and preachers.

We will have to agree that Swami Vivekananda perceived a fantastic truth, and that we have not been able to comprehend his valuable teachings to fullest advantage. We have failed to draw upon all the material and spiritual resources and strength we possess. Swamiji's vision of social organization and his emphasis on bringing a spirit of co-operation and discipline into Indian society, we have failed to actualize to our full potential. Standing now at this cross-roads, it is incumbent on us to harken once more with attention and vigilance to his summons.

Swami Vivekananda was a God-realized soul, born for the good of India and the world. He was all positive, the embodiment of strength, love, and wisdom, and withal, infinite fortitude and patience. The society he dreamt of in the future with women-heroines was not just an imitation of the old. Though Sītā Devi was held by Swami Vivekananda to be one of India's ideals, he did

22. *Ibid.*, III, p. 291.

23. Catherine Clementine Ojha, "Outside the Norms: Women Ascetics in Hindu Society", *Economic and Political Weekly*, April, 1988.

24. *Complete Works*, Vol. VII, p. 214.

not wish for Sītā's sorrows on modern women. But Sītā as a symbol of strong character, fine intelligence, firmness in her purity, love and willingness to sacrifice for holding up spiritual principles, is still the ideal to be emulated by Indian womanhood.

The attitude of Sri Ramakrishna towards women was that all of them were 'Mother'. He used to say, 'All women are the embodiments of *Śakti*. It is the Primal Power that has become women and appears to us in the form of woman.²⁵ ...All the women you see are only She, the Divine Mother.'²⁶ To two sisters-in-law who, fasting, came to see him in Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Why have you fasted? You should take your meal before you come here. Women are but so many forms of my Divine Mother. I cannot bear to see them suffer. You are all images of the Mother of the Universe.'²⁷

Swami Vivekananda used often to say 'Everything is one; Divine Mother is in everything;' and as one of his teachings he urged that we look upon every relation, whether brother or husband, or father, or mother or sister, as *Mother*, regardless of

25. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1989) p. 336.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 425.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 432.

sex.²⁸ ... 'By Mother worship is not meant difference between father and mother. ...She is the Power that is in all beings.²⁹ ... "I am the Power that manifests everywhere," says the Mother—It is She who is bringing out this universe, and She who is bringing forth the following destruction...Be bold, face facts as facts. ...After all, it is only Mother's play.'³⁰

The Hindu concept of worshipping God as Mother is attracting many in the West.

The Hindu recognition of an underlying female principle has impressed some observers as a more positive formulation of women's place in the cosmos than that offered by the Judeo-Christian tradition. Joana Liddle and Rama Joshi have observed: 'The worship of the Mother Goddess does not constitute a matriarchy, but it does constitute a matriarchal culture, in the sense that it preserves the value of women as life-givers and sources of activating energy and it represents the acknowledgement of women's power by women and men in the culture.'³¹

(to be concluded)

26. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1987) Vol. VI, p. 155.

29. *Complete Works*, Vol. VI, p. 147.

30. *Ibid.*, VI, p. 149.

31. Katherine Hansen, "The Virangana in North Indian History: Myth & Popular Literature", *Economic & Political Weekly*, April 1988.

IN THE KUMAONS

BY A PILGRIM

The Kumaon Hills comprise the rugged terrain approaching the great Himalayas in the north part of Uttar Pradesh. Mayavati itself lies well inside these Kumaon foothills, about sixty kilometres by road from the plains of the lowland, and about the same number of miles as the crow flies, south of the highest Himalayan points of India. From

the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, one can see range after range of the Kumaons lying just to the north, and the large hard stone Himalayas behind, eternally covered with snow. From nearby Lohaghat town, just below the Ashrama, roads lead to the main towns of the region—Almora, Pithoragarh, Nainital, Ranikhet and others.

On December 24th, a plan was conceived to travel one of these roads north-westwards from Mayavati to visit the country village of Devidhura. Besides being an ideal vantage point from which to view the white peaks of the giant mountains, this small Indian village happens to be the seat of an historic deity. Devidhura is widely known for its temple dedicated to the Goddess Pārvatī, the Divine Mother of the Universe (Pārvatī, lit. Goddess of the Mountains). Actually, the deity of the temple is called Goddess Vārāhi, and She is the Divine Śakti of Viṣṇu, described in the *Srī Srī Caṇḍī (The Devī-Māhātmyam)* Ch. VIII, 19. Just before the pitched battle between the Divine Mother and the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha, many Divine Śaktis manifested themselves from the bodies of the great gods of Hindu mythology—Maheśwara, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Indra and others. They all assumed very terrible, fierce forms to join in the fight on the side of Mahā-Kālī, against the forces of evil in the universe. Just as Kālī was about to greet the advancing hord of evil forces, all those Divine Śaktis—Māheśvari, Ambikā Kaumārī, Vārāhi, Nārasimhī, Brahmāṇī, Aindrī and others, combined themselves with the terrific form of Goddess Kālī and increased Her strength tremendously. Then in one form, as it were, but fighting separately, those Śaktis, led by Parameśvari (Mahā-Kālī), the Supreme Goddess, completely vanquished the usurpers bent on evil intent. To have the holy *darśan* (sight) of *this* Deity, the little pilgrimage set off.

It was December 31st, last day of 1989. Happily, there were just twelve pilgrims in the little group which left Mayavati in the freezing cold, but bright sunshine that new year's eve 1989. Only about fifty kilometres from Mayavati, the little group in two vehicles arrived at Devidhura without hardship. What a nice, glorious day it turned out to be! Though the Kumaons are described as foothills, they are by no means

trifling. From their tops one seems to look down very far to the pin-point fields and houses of the terraced slopes and valleys below. Devidhura is atop one such high mountain and the view of the grand snow-covered range is very broad. One can see about two hundred miles of white mountain chain at one stretch. Some of the peaks are seen in Nepal as well. The eyes can hardly be taken away, and the mind never, once they rest on the splendour of the Himalaya. Spirit and mind soar to thought of Mahā-Deva, the Great Lord of the Mountains, Guru of Srī Rāma, and consort of Pārvatī, always immersed in the Sea of Infinite Consciousness and Immortal Existence.

One by one the pilgrims descended from their vehicles, bared their feet, and entered the village abode of Devi-Vārāhi. It was here, according to legend, that... 'more pleasing than all pleasing things, and exceedingly beautiful', the Devī issued forth from the form of Viṣṇu in the form of a fierce boar ready to fight with the demoniac forces which had overcome the world. Deep within the mountains of U.P., and isolated, visitors from long distances don't often come to Devidhura, especially not in dead of winter. But our pilgrims were warmly received and shown into the Devī *bhandār*. In the dim light of an oil lamp a young man, the brahmin priest, made each one take flower petals in hand for offering the Devī. Touching the head reverently to the casket containing the stone image, offering the flowers gently at Her feet with prayer and full heart, all must have felt the Lord's blessing. The priest (*purohit*) dabbed a bit of sandal paste (powdered, moistened wood of the sandalwood tree) on foreheads. Emerging from the shrine, someone gave a small piece of sweet as prasād, consecrated food from the temple. Coming outside the pilgrims looked around and enjoyed the sight of massive boulders and ancient cedar trees around the place.

In the Kumaon Hills, the worship of the Mother Goddess predominates everywhere. Śiva, Lord of the Mountains, is said to take second place. Though the Devī has many forms and names which are described in *The Caṇḍī*, and throughout the region there are temples dedicated to one or another of them, yet the pious Hindu never thinks he worships a stone or a symbol of God. His worship goes to the Infinite Lord beyond all symbols, idea of forms and male or female. Sometimes he thinks of 'Mother' or 'Father' of the Universe, but even that is a very far conception, much beyond stone or wood, human personality or even mythological personalities. The Creator of the Universe, beyond comprehension by mind or speech can be worshipped only by attributing to Him, however, ideal human qualities. Endowing divine attributes to the deity of the temple, for the time being, his heart expands to make room for the all-embracing Protector of Created Beings, and attempt is made to behold those qualities in everything of day-to-day life. With elevated mind, therefore, the people of the Kumaons live in isolated agrarian austerity, their lives blessed with the peace that only a non-industrialized, unmechanized way of life affords. Yet the farmer's life is not easy. Years ago there were large tracts of hardwood forest. Sometimes in addition to the trouble of cultivation, wild animals destroyed crops and even human lives. The stories of E. J. (Jim) Corbett testify both to the beauty of the Kumaon country, and the hardy nature of the people and the difficulties of the mountaineering life sixty years ago.

Perhaps many were musing on thoughts like these. The most senior one of the pilgrims had been resting quietly. Suddenly all the group were surprised: 'You know,' he said, 'just eighty-nine years ago on this day Swami Vivekananda was making his way by pony and on foot towards Mayavati! Due to rain and snowfall his party took a

rest stop just here, near Devidhura.'... Where?...Who were in the party? None could say with certainty, it had been a long time since any had read the story....No! ...Yes! It was a tea-shop they rested at...the roof leaked, it was a miserable night they passed. Thus slowly many details began to be recalled and put in place, midst quite lively conversation! It became inevitable that on returning to Mayavati they should have to re-read the story. With enthusiasm and joyful mind, the little party refreshed themselves, took in the vast scenery and returned to Mayavati. In the evening, seated in 'gol-kamrā', the round room before the very fireplace where Swami Vivekananda had put up ninety years ago, the little group of Swamiji's devotees began to read, recollecting the details of Swamiji's first and only visit to Mayavati in the year 1901.

The story had started during Swami Vivekananda's travels in Europe and Egypt in 1900, as he was circuitously returning to India from Paris. One evening in Cairo he had a premonition that something had happened to Captain J. H. Sevier. At this point, deciding to return to India straight away, he soon reached Belur Math via Bombay and learned that Mr. Sevier had indeed passed away. Swamiji wired a telegram that he was starting for Mayavati with Swamis Shivananda and Sadananda. Though in very poor health at that time and in a feverish condition, he set out for Mayavati from Kathgodam, the last stop of the railway line in the Kumaon Hills. It was 30th December 1900. With the group of porters and ponies brought by Swami Virajananda, the party travelled seventeen miles the first day and reached the village of Dhari safely and spent the night. On the second day clouds appeared, then a steady rain, then snow. Slipping and sliding, they had to stop for rest at Paurhapani, only 7½ miles from Dhari. Porters and pony drivers having sat down to smoke and tea,

the mixed rain and snow did not abate, and no one wanted to get up. Night fell. The wood fire burned damply and smokily, water dripped through the ancient straw-thatched roof, all were cold and uncomfortable. Swami Virajananda remarked, 'Swamiji, it is a very significant occasion, we are passing our New Year's eve in this way together!'

Starting out next morning, though 12 inches of snow lay on the path, the party resumed its trek, stopping at Mournalla for the night, another $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles covered. One more day and 21 miles would see them through Devidhura to Dhunaghat, and the next, (the

snow having melted) would see them approaching Mayavati.

In good spirits and with great eagerness Swamiji hurried up the long steep path to the Ashrama. How he had longed to greet his beloved disciple Captain Sevier in the newly established Ashrama. Yet, though that was not possible, Swamiji consoled the grieving widow Mother Sevier, and enjoyed the warm welcome provided for his arrival. For the rest, the next fifteen days were spent midst the unusually heavy snows and severe cold of that year. Swamiji however, walked often in the forest and beside the lake and enjoyed his stay in the new Ashrama, dedicated to Advaita.

SCIENCE DISCOVERS AN UNDERLYING UNITY BEHIND THE UNIVERSE

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

In 1982, modern science suddenly discovered that far below the apparent variations of space-time world of matter and energy, there lies a deeper fundamental interconnectedness in our universe. A research team composed of physicists Alain Aspect, Jean Dalibard, and Gerard Roger at the Institute of Theoretical and Applied Optics in Paris, made perhaps one of the most significant discoveries of the century which successfully confirmed this fact of underlying unity.

The story of this discovery goes back to the year 1927 when the young German physicist Werner Heisenberg startled the world of scientists with his successful experiment of the famous Uncertainty Principle. What is this Uncertainty Principle? It may be described, in short, in the following way.

To know a table or a chair, or a box, we just measure its mass by means of length,

breadth and height. But in the sub-atomic world, smaller particles move with a very fast speed, their mass increasing with the increase of speed. That is why in order to know a sub-atomic particle one must know both its position and its velocity. But Heisenberg's equation $\Delta Q \times \Delta P \geq h$ proved experimentally that these two aspects of the quantum particles can never be known together precisely. If one is fully known then the other remains fully unknown. In other words, sub-atomic or quantum particles (since these particles move as discreet and discontinuous quanta of energy) can never be fully known.

The three corollaries of the experiment brought, in fact, revolutionary changes in scientific thinking. These corollaries are: 1. No one can know what a sub-atomic particle really is, although one can confirm its presence and even work with it. The world

of sub-atomic particles appeared like the inside of an 'unopenable watch', as Einstein said. 2. The strict law of cause and effect relation which operates so clearly in everyday life does not operate in the quantum world of sub-atomic particles. 3. The strict division or separation between the object of experiment and the mind or subject of the experimenter, or the distinction between objective matter and subjective mind is demolished forever.

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle is also known as the Theory of Indeterminacy, since it shattered the old determinism of science which was defined by Laplace, and confirmed by Newton's laws of motion.

The success of the few laws of science discovered up to the end of the 18th century led mathematician-philosopher Laplace to postulate scientific determinism which says that the set of scientific laws can determine the evolution of the universe precisely, once the configuration of the universe is known at one particular time. Newton worked on the basis of this scientific determinism and developed the idea of a machine-like or mechanomorphic universe. But there were points of weakness in Newtonian determinism. Astrophysicist Stephen Hawking brilliantly summed up the basic defect of the classical determinism of Laplace.

Laplace's determinism was incomplete in two ways. It did not say how the laws should be chosen and it did not specify the initial configuration of the universe. These were left to God. God would choose how the universe began and what laws it obeyed, but he would not intervene in the universe once it had started. In effect, God was confined to the areas that nineteenth-century science did not understand.¹

Scientific determinacy not only failed to satisfy the quantum theory, it failed equally with the general theory of relativity when

it was applied to define the beginning of our universe. Writes Hawking:

According to the general theory of relativity, there must have been a state of infinite density in the past causing the big bang, which would have been an effective beginning of time. ... At the big bang and other singularities, all the laws would have broken down, so God would still have had complete freedom to choose what happened and how the universe began.²

Einstein, for whom the world of matter was very much real and objective, and which runs according to strict causality, could not accept the Uncertainty Principle, although the experiment was successfully and repeatedly shown before his own eyes. He called Quantum Physics a 'false religion' and believed someday some new discovery would invalidate it in just the same way as many old pillars of scientific thought had already been demolished by the later masters.

In order to disprove the Uncertainty Principle in 1935, Einstein, Boris Podolsky and Nathun Rosen published a paper (based on thought experiment) entitled 'Can Quantum mechanical description of the physical reality be considered complete?' This paper known as EPR Effect was, in fact, a direct challenge to Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. The Uncertainty Principle demonstrated that in the world of sub-atomic particles, our ordinary idea of causality simply ceases to exist. When we throw a stone in the air, we all know that the stone will move in a measured and calculable way according to the path of projectiles. But, this simple cause and effect relation in the quantum world just vanishes. Einstein, until the end of his life, stood against this demolition of classical causality in the quantum world. Now, in this paper, Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen mathematically postulated that if the strict cause-and-

1. Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (London: Bantam Press, 1988) p. 172.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

effect relation in the world of sub-atomic particles really does not exist as the Uncertainty Principle asserts, then a strange phenomenon will emerge. What is this strange phenomenon?

It is 'to put it simply' that two same kind of sub-atomic particles must somehow be simultaneously connected, even if they remain separated at an enormously long distance. How is it possible? How is it possible that two same kind of particles separated at space-like distance (which light and the fastest electro-magnetic signals take a few seconds to traverse) communicate instantaneously? Until 1936, no such phenomenon of instantaneous connection between two particles was known to exist. And since it was unknown up to the time of Einstein, he thought that Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle must be wrong. This was the contention or challenge posed by the EPR thought experiment. But the strange phenomenon did prove to exist, confirmation being shown by successful experiments in 1972 by David Bohm in London, Clauser and Freedman in U.S.A. and a team of Alain Aspect in Paris in 1982.

In 1964, J. S. Bell, a physicist at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) gave a mathematical formulation to the EPR Effect. One of the implications of Bell's theorem is that 'at a deep and fundamental level, the *separate parts* of the universe are connected in an intimate and immediate way.'³ During the 1960s, there was not sufficient technological precision to prove the theorem of Bell, but later on physicist David Bohm of London gave an experimental version of this EPR Effect. Although the whole experiment sounded like a tale from the Arabian Nights, the entire idea has now been experimentally demonstrated. In 1972, John Clauser and

Stuart Freedman at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory actually performed the experiment. They found that the statistical predictions upon which Bell based his theorem are correct. The phenomenon startled many physicists. Schrodinger commented, 'It is rather discomfoting.'⁴ David Bohm's successful experiment of EPR Effect is illustrated in a simple way by Gary Zukav in his book *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*.⁵ Let us take a two-particle zero-spin system. There are such systems in the physical world where the spin of one particle in the system cancels the spin of the other. In short, these two particles act like twin brothers. Let us imagine that the two particles of this system are scattered simultaneously in two opposite directions on the same plane of polarization. Now, if one of the particles is given a change of direction after it has traversed a certain distance (X), then the other particle moving in the opposite direction gets, after traversing the same distance (X), exactly the opposite change of direction.

If the particle A in the two-particle system AB is given a spin towards right up after it has traversed a distance (X), then the second particle B, moving on the same plane but in the opposite direction, will get, after traversing the same distance (X), a spin left down. And the change in the direction of particle B will occur spontaneously without any action done on it. The startling fact of the EPR experiment is that the particle B could somehow know that its twin brother A has been attacked in its way of motion at a distance of (X) and that his twin brother A has also been given a spin right up. And then the particle B reacts to the action done upon its twin. But B reacts in exactly the opposite way, and itself takes an opposite spin left down. That B could behave in just the opposite way from A in

3. Gary Zukav, *The Wu Li Masters* (New York: Marron & Co., 1979) p. 302.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 299-303.

an infallible manner, spontaneously, is astonishing. How could B know about its brother, and how could it react in such a strangely measured and independent way?

While EPR dealt with a pair of hypothetical twin particles, Clauser and Freedman performed an experiment with real paired particles (photon or light particles). They experimented with these paired photon particles in their states of polarization (instead of their states of spin). Clauser and Freedman used in their experiment on Bell's Theorem, the paired photons that emit simultaneously in two exactly opposite directions from a neon light.

The Clauser and Freedman experiment proved that whatever may be the altered conditions of the experiment, it ultimately verifies that one of the pair of photons (in the twin-pairs) always and instantaneously communicates with the other photon. Even when the twin photons are theoretically separated by an astronomical distance (a distance which light takes several seconds to travel), the condition of one photon is immediately conveyed to its twin. The communication is instantaneous. The strangest aspect of the experiment is here: Communication is always done through signal. And the fastest communication signal in our space-time world is the speed of light which, as Einstein showed, is the limiting speed in the universe. But, most surprisingly, the two photons seemed to communicate instantaneously, even when separated by distances which light takes a few seconds to travel! All physicists were, however, not happy with the experiment. Some criticized its methodology for various reasons.

Then, in 1982, Alain Aspect, along with colleagues Jean Dalibard and Gerard Rog er, added the refinements necessary to make the results unequivocal. The group used

photons produced by atoms of mercury vapour excited into a higher energy state with a laser beam as their paired particles. Then, with the aid of switching mechanisms that could operate in the billionths of a second, fast enough to catch a photon after it had left its source but before it had travelled more than a few yards away, Aspect, Dalibard, and Rog er proceeded to measure the angles of polarization of stream of countless paired photons. They found that the 'level of correlation' between photons scattered in opposite directions was far greater than would be expected. In fact it was almost instantaneous.

How could instantaneous communication between two objects be possible? Einstein's theory of Relativity shows that 'faster-than-light' or 'superluminal communication' is impossible. But such superluminal communication does incredibly exist! What are the possible explanations? Since 1975 scientists have been trying to explain by making intelligent guesses.

Henry Stapp, an American physicist, writes 'that information is transferred superluminally is, a priori, not unreasonable.'⁷ He asserted that Bell's theorem undoubtedly proves that 'our ordinary ideas about the world are somehow profoundly deficient even on the macroscopic level.'⁸ In 1975 another physicist Jack Sarfatti made a more daring speculation and postulated that not only superluminal connections exist between two space-like separated events, but also that such connections can be used in a controllable way to communicate messages.⁹

We have almost come to the point where we can give a physical explanation of telepathy between an anxious mother and an ailing child staying a long distance away. Scientists have today come face to face in

6. M. Talbot, *Beyond the Quantum* (London: Bantam Age New Book, 1988) p. 32.

7. *The Wu Li Masters*, p. 310.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

the laboratory with an experience that can no more be denied as belonging to the realm of mysticism or the supernatural. A fundamental unity lying at far deeper levels than could be detected either by Newtonian or Relativity physics, does really exist.

With the EPR Effect, Einstein, without knowing it, opened the Pandora's box, as Gary Zukav has said, in modern physics. It postulated the existence of a fundamental interconnectedness between two similar particles separated by any distance in the whole universe.

In 1975, physicist Henry Stapp wrote in a work supported by the U.S. Energy Research and Development Administration: 'Bell's Theorem is the most profound discovery of science.'¹⁰

Super-determinism

David Bohm, the London physicist, postulated in 1974, a new idea emerging out of Bell's Theorem—The Principle of Non-local Causes.

'Bell's Theorem dealt a shattering blow to Einstein's position by showing that the Cartesian conception of reality as consisting of separate parts joined by local connections is incompatible with Quantum theory,' writes Fritjof Capra.¹¹ Henry Stapp sums up the situation all the more powerfully. He says, 'The theorem of Bell proves, in effect, the profound truth that the world is either fundamentally lawless or fundamentally inseparable.'¹² The Principle of Local Causes will mean that when a man meets with an accident in New York, nothing is going to happen to another similar man in New Delhi. The new principle of non-local causes implies that whatever happens in one part

of the universe on a single entity has its effect which can probably be detected in any other part of the universe on a similar entity. Bell's Theorem, has in fact, laid the foundation for what Malic Kapec calls 'neodeterministic interpretation of contemporary microphysics'.

Science now looks forward to a higher kind of determinism or 'super-determinism' which rules, guides and determines the universe at a far deeper level. Gary Zukav explains,

In this case, we are led to super-determinism. This is determinism far beyond ordinary determinism. Ordinary determinism states that once the initial situation of a system is established, the future of the system is also established, since it must develop according to inexorable laws of cause and effect. This type of determinism was the basis of the 'Great Machine' view of the universe. ... According to super-determinism not even the initial situation of the universe could be changed. Not only is it impossible for things to be other than what they are, it is even impossible that the initial situation of the universe could have been other than what it was. No matter what we are doing at any given moment, it is the only thing that ever was possible for us to be doing at that moment.¹³

Zukav thinks that this super-deterministic model of Reality may be a Buddhistic idea. No. He is not aware that this is the basic Hindu or Vedantic idea on which seers and mystics have lived dedicating their whole lives with complete surrender to the will of the Ultimate Reality which is also a super-deterministic Reality.¹⁴ Zukav chooses the image of Kali, according with Hindu mythology, in order to explain this super-deterministic Reality of modern physics.

Eastern religions have nothing to say about physics, but they have a great deal to say about human experience. In Hindu mythology, Kali, the Divine Mother is the symbol for the infinite

10. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

11. Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982) p. 83.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

13. *The Wu Li Masters*, pp. 318-19.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 329-30.

diversity of experience. Kali represents the entire physical plane. She is the drama, tragedy, humour, and sorrow of life. She is the brother, father, sister, mother, lover and friend. She is the fiend, monster, beast and brute. She is the sun and the ocean. She is the grass and the dew. She is our sense of accomplishment and our sense of doing the worthwhile. Our thrill of discovery is a pendant on her bracelet. Our gratification is a spot of colour on her cheek. Our sense of importance is the bell on her toe.

This full and seductive, terrible and wonderful Earth Mother always has something to offer. Hindus know the impossibility of seducing her or conquering her, and the futility of loving or hating her; so they do the only thing that they can do. They simply honour her.¹⁵

In Shri Ramakrishna's life, this Divine Mother Kali represented the Final Power, the All-determining will in the universe, that both transcends and controls all 'freewill of individuals. She is *Ichāmāyī*, the One whose will is law. She can and does veil our knowledge of Reality by Her power of *māyā*, and She can and does lift the veil of *māyā* too, whenever She wishes.

Bell's Theorem, Zukav thinks, is compelling physicists to prod their intellects to 'lead forward, although at great risk of its present hegemony.' "They are dancing with Kali the Divine Mother of Hindu mythology," writes Zukav. Vedanta calls the transcendent immutable Reality *Brahman*. When *Brahman* is active—creating, sustaining and destroying, It is called *Kālī*, *Śiva* or *Viṣṇu*. Others call It Allah or Jehovah. This Ultimate Reality is always the Supreme, Almighty or Super-deterministic, and It is ultimately responsible for the so-called 'free-will' of man.

The implicate order: the unbroken wholeness

Following a successful verification of Bell's Theorem, David Bohm offers the idea of the universe of 'unbroken wholeness', of an 'implicate order.' Henry Stapp writes:

15. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

An elementary particle is not an independently existing analysable entity. It is in essence a set of relationships that reach outward to other things.¹⁶

Bohm writes:

Parts ... are seen to be in immediate connections in which their dynamic relationships depend in an irreducible way on the whole system, and indeed on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extended ultimately into the entire universe. Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of unanalysability of the world into separately and independently existing parts. ... What is this 'implicate order' made of? It is made of the same 'Implicate Order' of 'that which is'.¹⁷ And 'That which is' cannot be termed in space and time. ... Description is totally incompatible with what we want to say.¹⁸

Michael Talbot writes on David Bohm's Theorem in his latest book *Beyond The Quantum*:

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Bohm's theory is how it might apply to our understanding of the human mind. As he sees it, if every particle of matter interconnects with every other particle, the brain itself must be viewed as infinitely interconnected with the rest of the universe. Bohm believes that such a mind-boggling interconnectedness might even shed light on the phenomenon of consciousness itself.

For example, if the universe is holographic and each human brain interpenetrates every other human brain (indeed, every other particle in the universe), on some level that is beyond ordinary subjective experience, the human race may really be one organism.

The vast majority of physicists, however, pay no attention to Bohm's work because they hold fast to their conviction that nothing lies beyond the quantum. They reject it out of hand. Because human science is gripped by the Limit Syndrome, and because we have not yet encountered instantaneous communication between objects divided

16. *The Turning Point*, p. 81.

17. *The Wu Li Masters*, p. 315.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

by space and time, the current wisdom holds that instantaneous communication can never occur.¹⁹

In a BBC radio programme several months after Alain Aspect published his results, British theoretical physicist Paul Davies asked a number of questions to his distinguished colleagues for their reactions on the experiment of Alain Aspect. He received mostly unsubstantive replies as most of the responses were evasive.²⁰ Paul Davies agrees, however, that the Aspect experiment has put the last nail in the coffin of commonsense physics. He feels that the Aspect findings have some very profound implications for our human and scientific conceptions of the physical world.²¹ As Brian Josephson, winner of 1973 Nobel Prize in physics for his work on quantum tunnelling and superconductivity, stated in a 1982 interview: 'It raises the possibility that one part of the universe may have knowledge of another part—some kind of contact at a distance under certain conditions.'²²

Gary Zukav concludes the penultimate chapter 'Enlightenment' in his award-winning book *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*: '...The philosophy of physics is becoming indistinguishable from the philosophy of Buddhism, which is the philosophy of enlightenment.' Zukav then opens his last chapter, entitled 'The End of Science', with these words:

A vital aspect of the enlightened state is the experience of an all-pervading unity. 'This' and 'that' are no longer separate entities. They are different forms of the same thing. Everything is a manifestation. It is not possible to answer 'Manifestation of what?' Because 'the what' is that which is beyond words, beyond even space and time. Everything is a manifestation of *that which is*. Beyond these words lies experience: the experience of *that which is*.²³

19. *Beyond the Quantum*, pp. 52-53, 55-56.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

23. *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, p. 296.

This holistic picture of the universe offered by David Bohm's experiment on Bell's Theorem, and by the Aspect experiment, has led physicists to consider the entire universe as a hologram. Each sub-atomic particle is a 'holon', as Koestler put it, since each particle is connected with the whole of the rest of the universe. Each movement of a particle brings reaction and alters the condition of the entire universe. Therefore, as Bohm said, each movement is a 'holomovement.'²⁴ There is a growing conviction that this discovery of a fundamental interconnectedness of the universe will stand further tests. Physicist Fritjof Capra says:

I believe the fundamental unity and the relatedness of the universe and the intrinsic dynamic nature of its phenomenon—the two basic elements of modern physics—will not be invalidated by future research.²⁵

These new findings and connections have led to the creation of a new 'paradigm', a new set of values in the world of science. The old Cartesian or Newtonian paradigm of a dualistic world vision, of a 'schizophrenic culture' of division between mind and matter, between one and another, is today replaced by the new paradigm—the 'Holistic Paradigm', as Ken Wilber calls it. This 'Holistic Paradigm' is only another name of the monistic or Advaitic (non-dualistic) philosophy of Vedanta which India developed three thousand years ago. Hundreds of times this idea of unity comes out of Vivekananda's interpretation of the ancient Vedanta. Vivekananda spoke of the Vedantic idea of the unity of all beings with the Creator Himself in his speech on 'God in Everything', delivered in London in 1896.

This is another great theme of the Vedanta, this Oneness of life, this oneness of everything,

24. *The Holographic Paradigm*, Ken Wilber Editor (New York: Shambala, 1982) p. 51.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

We shall see how it demonstrates that all our misery comes through ignorance, and this ignorance is the obsession with manifoldness, the separation between man and man, between nation and nation, between earth and moon, between moon and sun. Out of this idea of separation between atom comes all misery. But, the Vedanta says, this separation does not exist, it is not real. It is merely apparent, the limitations imposed by the five instruments of knowledge man is bound with—the five sensory organs. In the heart of things, there is Unity still. And that Unity is God.²⁶

It is the practical application of this monistic Vedanta that can turn the scientists to a value-based culture of science. Heisenberg in one of his books entitled *The Part and the Whole* ends with this holistic view of science, and its need in the world of science today.²⁷ But old dogmas linger on. As Capra says, 'Mysticism is thought of in the scientific community as something very vague, describing something fuzzy, nebulous and highly unscientific. Now, to see one's cherished theories compared with this highly unscientific activity is threatening to physicists.'²⁸ Jeremy Bernstein, an American physicist, openly said that such attempt to correlate physics with mysticism "will eventually lead to the obsolescence of science."²⁹ But, great Nobel physicists of this century like Heisenberg, Schrodinger and Bohr were all keenly aware of the points of convergence between Vedantic mysticism and quantum physics. Schrod-

inger wrote extensively upholding this convergence as a great achievement of Modern physics, in his two volumes: *Mind and Matter* and *My View of the World*.

Physicists who sell themselves for making thermonuclear weapons for a country in order to destroy their brothers in another country, are not only disregarding the Advaitic values of a holistic universe, but are jeopardizing their hard-earned knowledge for negative and destructive purposes. Einstein said, 'Science can denature plutonium but it cannot denature evils in the heart of man.' The new holistic paradigm, the new holistic world-view confirmed by the successful experiments of the Bell's Theorem, will eventually lead scientists to accept the Vedantic oneness of humanity. Vivekananda's opening words in his celebrated speech 'The Work Before Us' delivered in Madras after his conquest of the West with Vedanta, seems to have a prophetic ring for today's scientists:

The problem of life is becoming deeper and broader every day as the world moves on. The watchword and the essence have been preached in the days of yore when the Vedantic truth was first discovered, the solidarity of all life. One atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay, the whole of life, within its scope.³⁰

^{26.} *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) vol. II, p. 153.

^{27.} *The Holographic Paradigm*, p. 241.

^{28.} *Ibid.*, p. 217.

^{29.} *Quantum Questions*, Ken Wilber, Editor (New York: Shambala, 1984) Preface.

^{30.} *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, p. 269.

THE TRUTH BEYOND THE CELL

(REFLECTIONS OF A HORTICULTURIST)

Dr. ALEXANDER CHANDANAPPALLY

A tomato fruit, an anomalous one—
a leaf through its heart.
Bud over blossom I have beheld,
most common in roses.

Flower, a modified branch,
I could recollect,
but leaf, neither a modified fruit,
nor fruit a modified leaf.
A paradox unexplainable !

Unable to unravel I stood,
recollecting scientific treatise
I had learnt to discover the disorder.
As I stood stiff as a stag,
looking at the fruit with the leaf,
heard a murmur
from nature's marvel.

'Scientist friend !
you had explained
the totipotency of cell—
Cultured cells from plants,
plants from cells,
commendable indeed !
Indeed, locked in a deed
beyond the cell eludes
the TRUTH beyond the cell.

Transcend material science,
beyond the boundary of cell,

origin of primordial cell to ponder.
You will know
I am neither the fruit nor the leaf,
though you see Me as both, eluding,
the TRUTH beyond the cell.

I am nothing but the Mother,
from whom I come—
out of Her will made manifest.
In part or in full She could express
Herself, Her will, not mine.
Attached I remain, detached She is ;
dependent I am, independent She is,
Attached or detached, She in me
and I in Her—the noble lineage—
the TRUTH beyond the cell.

Transform cognitive intellect
into intuitive intellect—
manas into *buddhi* ;
Then a small voice will whisper
from the fathomless depth
of your heart, deep within :
I am not this—*neti, neti*—
but I am THAT—*aham-tat-asmi*.
All manifestation of Her will,
both you and I—
Sat-Cit-Ānanda :
Saccidānanda ;
the TRUTH beyond the cell.

ZERO AND SILENCE

A FACE OF MANDUKYA*

Dr. K. S. RANGAPPA

Sound and number,
Bursting loud or large,
Are but limited, mortal.
Zero and silence
Are oceans endless.

Without silence, where's sound ?
Without zero, where's number ?
Both are mother
To children galore
Of infinite shapes and names—
Which lapse again
Whence they came.

Zero and silence both
Are *tureeya*,
Timeless, ubiquitous same ;
Seed, soil, grave
For form, word, wordless.

Silent zero is *tureeya*,
Syllable unspelt of *Aum* ;
Pervasive, permanent,
Inseparable, indivisible—
Like sweetness in sugar—
Without beginning, without end,
Holding all of *Aum*,
Symbol unrivalled
For all there is
In and out
Of time and thought.

**Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* is a terse Sanskrit composition crystallised in the *Atharva Veda*, logically establishing a unified philosophic Reality behind the seeming variety and ceaseless change of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep experiences.

A REVIEW ARTICLE

CULTURAL CONTACT AND FUSION : SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN THE WEST (1893-96), by Dr. Satish K. Kapoor. Published by ABC Publications, 27 First floor, Modern Market, N. G. Road, Jalandhar 144-001, 1987, pp. 432, Price Rs. 300/-.

Swami Vivekananda is an ocean of exalted and ennobling ideas. His genius has thrown illumination on almost all aspects of human life and mind. Nothing was concealed from his Advaitic realization. His practical Advaita has given humanity a new self-awareness, dignity and hope, infused new vigour and vitality, and opened before it a beatific vision. Behind the camouflage of weakness and the resulting narrowness of man, he saw the potential splendour of divinity. To awaken this sleeping lion in every heart, he laid down his life and every drop of blood at the altar of

freedom. The realization of freedom by all was his dream for humanity and the very breath of his life. In every act and thought of the Swami one discovers the working of tremendous compassion and desire to set man free from all kinds of material and spiritual bondage.

Many facets of Swamiji's mind, character and teachings are highlighted and discussed lucidly by Dr. Kapoor with deep insight and scholarship. Originally the subject was researched for his doctoral dissertation. It was later expanded with new materials to form this comprehensive volume on Swamiji. Often one finds in doctoral theses dry erudition, liberally doused in intellectual jargon and a plethora of others' opinions overshadowing the original ideas of the author. Dissertation subjects therefore make dull reading. But the present volume is a

happy exception, written with intense feeling, the author's devotion and genuine candour. The book reveals the many broad dimensions of Swami Vivekananda's personality. Dr. Kapoor has skillfully utilized available sources by and about Swamiji and strands of these are woven into a tapestry of special importance. The Prophet and his extraordinary message depicted and discussed in these 380 pages will attract the minds of readers.

The book covers minute details of the first visit of Swamiji to the West and his sojourn there from July 1893 to December 1896. This forms its main theme, yet it encompasses a wider canvas. Containing six chapters, the first is devoted to a brief outline of Swamiji's life and a description of early formative influences on his character. The author says : 'Five main factors chiselled his personality : his family samskaras, his western education, his spiritual training under Sri Ramakrishna, his trials and tribulations of adolescence and his wanderings in India.' (pages 6-7)

The second chapter takes the reader to the historic Parliament of Religions and contains much new information as Dr. Kapoor did special study on the subject while working on his master's degree at London. Thus he cites extensively from the proceedings of the Parliament and portrays the nature of some of the challenges Swamiji had to face. Although Dr. J. H. Barrows had unequivocally stated : 'We are not here [at the Parliament of Religions] as Baptists and Buddhists, Catholics and Confucians, Parsees and Presbyterians Protestants, Methodists and Muslims ; we are here as members of a Parliament of Religions, over which flies no sectarian flag [and] which is to be stampeded by no sectarian war-cries, but where for the first time in a large council is lifted up the banner of love, fellowship, brotherhood...' Still there were a few who were in the mood

for dissension, and some who would even stoop to character-assassination against a champion of non-Christian faith. Yet the Swami, an orator by divine right, not only faced these vituperations with serene detachment like the immovable Himalaya, but soon silenced the babbling babies. They did not know that Vivekananda had come with a message after touching the feet of the Lord and would deliver it in his own fashion to the world. To measure his success in America the following glowing words of Sister Christine are sufficient : 'Those who came to the first lecture at the Unitarian Church came to the second and to the third, bringing others with them. "Come", they said, "hear this wonderful man. He is like no one we have ever heard!" And they came until there was no place to hold them.' (quoted from page 151) Dr. Kapoor has traced the journey of Swamiji through the West taking help from contemporary journals and periodicals.

Swami Vivekananda : missionary, saint and prophet, forms the subject matter of the fourth chapter, and is splendid. Dr. Kapoor examines one-by-one all these aspects of Swamiji and arrives at the conclusion that he was indeed a prophet with a divine message for mankind. The universal approach of Vedanta—not restricted only to the worship of the Personal God of one religion, but which embraces all paths and world religions, we see expressed through the broad mind of this young sannyasin. Hypocrisy, boastfulness or money-seeking religionists could not stand before his gaze, either in the West or in the East. Wherever he went he conquered with the gently light and set people on the right direction. In the West, after Swamiji's visit, Christianity mellowed down its aggressive posture. O. P. Deldock's open letter to Swamiji in an American periodical sums up the changing mood of the Occident after the Parliament : '...Our clergymen are not all saints ; they

too frequently fall from grace, but, when they lose caste here, they can be utilized in foreign missionary service...where shall we look for help in this our time of need? We hopefully turn with anxious eyes to the Orient...where the star of Bethlehem arose and where God's bright sunlight ever dawns.' (quoted from page 318)

Evaluating the work of Swamiji, the author says: 'Swami Vivekananda thus proved to be India's greatest cultural ambassador to the West in modern times. He smothered the storm of missionary criticism against Hinduism, elevated the image of India in the eyes of the world, and initiated a religious dialogue between the East and the West.' (from page 355) In concluding his book the author gives up, wisely, the futile attempt to compare Vivekananda to other luminaries, and writes: 'None, but himself can be his parallel.' (366) How true the statement is!

Appendix III needs some corrections. The former name of Swami Advaitananda was not Gopal Sur, but Gopal Ghosh. The sannyasa name of Hari Prasanna Chatterjee

was not Swami Virajananda, but Swami Vijnanananda. At last the name 'Daksha'—Swami Jnanananda—should be deleted since he was not a sannyasi disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. We hope these corrections will be incorporated in the next edition. Also in Appendix IV, where the centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission have been listed as per *General Report of 1985*, will be updated because many new centres have been opened in India and abroad.

We have no hesitation in recommending Dr. Kapoor's book for its excellent qualities and for its new information and insights. The cost of the book is quite prohibitive for the purses of the fixed-income group, but that should not come in the way of libraries, educational and research institutions securing such a scholarly volume. The younger generation of India specially should read this book to learn about what Swami Vivekananda did for India and the world. Dr. Kapoor deserves our congratulations. We expect much more from his facile pen. Get up and printing are very good.

Swami Muktirupananda, Mayavati

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

Be absorbed in meditation. Be absorbed so that the world becomes annihilated, and only you exist, you and your Beloved shining in your heart. As one becomes established in the meditative life there comes a control over the mind. Then alone can one know his own mind, how and in what devious ways it works. He becomes immediately aware of any tricks the mind would try to play. The old habits of hatred, jealousy, and all the passions will no longer have the power to raise any wave in the mind. They will gradually recede, and eventually disappear.

Many changes come in one who lives the

contemplative life. The character becomes transformed, the body also changes, the voice becomes sweet; he breathes differently. A truly meditative man can be recognized by his movements, his face, his eyes. He has wonderful poise, his mind is tranquil. With eyes opened or with eyes closed, engaged in whatever occupation, he meditates constantly and continuously. The current of thought flows unceasingly toward his Beloved. Just as a person suffering acute toothache is constantly reminded of it, so is the aspirant constantly aware of the living Presence.

Swami Adbhutananda

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

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OCCASIONAL NOTES

What is the higher criterion of truth?—it may naturally be asked. It is competent testimony—the evidence of inspired persons. Just as tactno-muscular perception is the surest proof of the external world, so in the case of the supra-natural world, the realm of spirituality, the words of a Seer, a man of realization, are the most convincing proof. And you cannot challenge such evidence, for they speak with such power and authority that our doubting nature is overcome, and the truth flashes of itself from its hidden recesses within the heart. One who has eaten his fill just now, will never believe assertions to the contrary by outsiders, for he has the most convincing of arguments—he is no more hungry. So he can complacently let others prattle whatever they like about him and remain perfectly balanced. Similar is the experience of one who comes in contact with and has his character moulded by an inspired Seer, for he knows in his heart of hearts that his craving is satisfied, that he stands on solid rock, and may easily laugh at the doubts that others may cast at his state.

If the Guru or teacher be powerful enough, if he be a knower of Brahman, and absolutely unselfish, he will not only take the disciple beyond the pale of all physical and mental disquietude, but he will also endow him with power to remove others' bondage also. Like physical objects spirituality also can be transmitted from one person to another, and the qualified disciple has to assimilate it into his life by surrendering himself wholly to his teacher, and trying to practise the truths inculcated by him with his heart and soul,

cheerfully, patiently and with an iron will. He must have the simplicity of a child, have a burning passion for Truth and be ready to undergo a life-long struggle under the loving direction of his Guru, making purity and a spirit of service his motto. Then in course of time his labours bear fruit through the grace of God and his Guru's blessings and the tangible power of *Guru-sakti* breaks the barriers of ignorance, and all of a sudden flashes forth the illumination that every Hindu believes lies hidden in every soul. Just as the cultivator removes the barrier between one field and another, and the pent-up water rushes of its own force from the higher to the lower field, so the Hindu maintains that the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-blissful *Atman* lies in every being covered by a veil of ignorance, and as soon as this veil is rent asunder, He manifests Himself of His own nature. Nothing comes to us from outside. Only the obstacle is removed, and what was *already* in us, we are made conscious of. We come to know what we have always been, but what, through ignorance, we lost sight of. The teacher here gives the suggestion, and the knowledge flashes of itself. It may be a question of time but the aspirant must be prepared to stake all to achieve this end of human life, the Beatific Vision of the *Atman*. This is Realization, the corner-stone of the spiritual edifice. Without it no religious experience is considered final or valid. It is the *sine qua non* of all claims to religious acquirement. Having this, you may have it tested by two other methods, viz. the confirmation of the scriptures, and the words of your Guru. And just as there is no difference of opinion with regard to common external objects, so in the spiritual domain also all these three chime in perfect unison.