

Prabuddha Bharata

or Awakened India



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Prabuddha Bharata

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Ramakrishna Order**

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 97

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No. 9

Divine Wisdom

ADDRESS AT THE FINAL SESSION OF THE WORLD PARLIAMENT
OF RELIGIONS, CHICAGO, 27th September, 1893
BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The World's Parliament of Religions has become an accomplished fact, and the merciful Father has helped those who laboured to bring it into existence, and crowned with success their most unselfish labour.

My thanks to those noble souls whose large hearts and love of truth first dreamed this wonderful dream and then realised it. My thanks to the shower of liberal sentiments that has overflowed this platform. My thanks to this enlightened audience for their uniform kindness to me and for their appreciation of every thought that tends to smooth the friction of religions. A few jarring notes were heard from time to time in this harmony. My special thanks to them, for they have, by their striking contrast, made general harmony the sweeter.

Much has been said of the common ground of religious unity. I am not going just now to venture my own theory. But if any one here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say, "Brother, yours is an impossible hope." Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid.

The seed is put in the ground, and earth and air and water are placed around it. Does the seed become the earth, or the air, or the water? No. It becomes a plant, it develops after the law of its own growth, assimilates the air, earth, and the water, converts them into plant substance, and grows into a plant.

Similar is the case with religion. The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.

If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension."

Beware of Your Thoughts—II

Why do all religions persuade and sometimes enforce certain rules on their followers to think good thoughts and do good to their neighbours? For three reasons: Saints have realized that all beings have their existence in that cosmic consciousness or God. Like the fish enveloped in the water of the ocean, we are also surrounded by an ocean of Consciousness. Therefore our thoughts can travel any distance and affect any thing. Our imprudent actions and thoughts do harm, not only to others, but finally to ourselves also. Therefore, the wise ones make ethical and moral rules mandatory. Secondly, as life is *one*, a living being is inextricably bound up with other living beings. To be selfish is to isolate oneself from the beneficial effect of being a part of this wholeness, for selfishness brings in its train sorrow and destruction and nothing else. To get free from this strong tendency of thinking exclusively of oneself, people are advised to work for the welfare of others and mitigate their personal misery and suffering. Thirdly, whatever one does that is beneficial to the world, in turn he himself is benefited by it. Because he is part of the living world, when the whole is taken care of, how can the part be left behind? In our pre-natal life and infancy, the fingers of the hand do not develop apart from the body as a whole. On the contrary, when the whole organism is healthy the fingers and all the other organs grow apace. The universe in fact is like a pulsating body, a living organism. James Lovelock's recent theory, 'The Gaia Hypothesis', dramatically points to this truth.

John Bell of Switzerland, in 1964 in his theorem (Bell's Theorem), indicated that the

universe was based upon non-local and holistic connections, with instantaneous 'actions-at-a-distance' which run faster than light. That the universe is a multidimensional hologram is hard reality in today's science. *Hologram* literally means 'whole message'—the information of the whole is contained in the part. The whole world is like the three dimensional photograph manufactured with the aid of laser beams. A hologram differs from a conventional photograph. If one cuts a conventional photograph in half, each piece will be only half of the original image. But if a hologram is cut in half, each half still contains the whole original picture. Thus, one can cut a hologram up into many pieces, and surprisingly, each piece will still contain an entire vision of the original image. Therefore scientists suggest that in the super-hologram of the universe, past, present, and future are enfolded and exist simultaneously. Then, as Sir James Jeans said, "The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine."

In the early 1980s, Rupert Sheldrake, a plant-physiologist from England, placed before the scientific world his startlingly new hypothesis of 'Morphogenetic Fields'. His now well known theory appeared in his book, *A New Science of Life. Morphogenesis* comes from the Greek word *morphe*, meaning 'form', and *genesis*, meaning 'coming-into-being'. Sheldrake asserted that invisible morphogenetic fields are cosmic memory banks. The fields govern not only the structure of living organisms, but their behaviour as well. What Sheldrake proposes is that due to the habits and behaviour of any given species in the past, there is

accumulated and stored up, a memory pool, and through a process called 'morphic resonance' it affects the habits, emotions, thoughts and behaviour of the members of the same species living today. Each species builds up its own morphogenetic field. These fields are not static, but are susceptible to constant modifications. For once any individual person, or any other living thing, is affected by them, they in turn affect these pre-existing fields also, by cumulatively adding to them. All thoughts, new skills and behaviour do not vanish, but are ploughed back into the memory bank. So the morphogenetic fields are being built up and enriched continuously with the passage of time.

These fields, or memory pools, are non-local. That means their effects are not confined to here-and-now, only, but cut across both time and space barriers. Everything goes back into the morphogenetic record to shape the future of the species. For example, if a lion in Africa found a new hunting technique, morphic resonance might allow lions in a completely separate geographic area, say lions in Girnar in India, to suddenly absorb the new technique, in spite of the fact that they had no direct behavioural or genetic connection to the lions who originated the technique. A living organism can share in the 'M-field' of its species. According to Rupert Sheldrake, it is not true that acquired characteristics can be passed on only genetically. Through morphic resonance, an external agency, it can be acquired by a particular species. Sheldrake says that living organisms are not the only things that are controlled by 'M-fields', but also inorganic things.

Hypothesizing that a technique learnt by a species is not lost, but is stored in the 'M-field', he cites the example of 'the-hundredth-monkey-effect'. On the island of

Koshiura in Japan, researchers once dumped truckloads of sweet potatoes on the beach for monkeys to retrieve and feed on. The sweet potatoes got covered with sand and grit—an unpleasant problem the monkeys had never faced before. But soon an intelligent monkey learned to dunk the potatoes in the ocean water to remove the sand. Then, by evening, all the monkeys had picked it up. But what is surprising, monkeys on the other island suddenly and spontaneously began doing the same thing without being tutored. When we read about the ancient world civilizations, we sometimes come across simultaneous discoveries of metals, fire, the raising of different crops by agriculture and so on by the different races. The story of Manu, and Noah and the Deluge are common in many mythologies.

Hinduism has taught that every thought and every action of a person is never lost, but becomes fine and remains stored up as *samskaras*—latent impressions. All thoughts and experiences of human beings down the ages are pooled in a huge reservoir, sometimes called the Akashic record. One can tune into, or share in the memory bank, of the whole human race. If one is full of wickedness in fact, one opens one's mind to the wicked thoughts from this gigantic store and degrades himself still further. A person of good character draws to himself beneficial thoughts which quicken his evolution towards perfection. Therefore one should exercise utmost care and watchfulness about one's thoughts.

Each human being is born with his past record which determines his outstanding traits and tendencies. These traits and tendencies have their basis in our mental activity and thoughts in the past. In the present life an individual manifests those tendencies determined by the past, and forms new ones. However good or bad those tendencies may be, an individual gets

an opportunity in the present life to make use of them wisely or foolishly. Vedanta does not accept the doctrine of eternal damnation; none is doomed eternally. Man is travelling from lower truth to higher truth, summed up Swami Vivekananda. The majority take time to mature and only a few are seen to progress quickly.

To illustrate how powerful are one's tendencies inherited from the past, Sri Ramakrishna once told a humorous anecdote: "A prince had, in a previous birth, been the son of a washerman. While playing with his chums in his incarnation as the prince, he said to them: 'Stop these games. I will show you a new one. I shall lie on my belly, and you will beat the clothes on my back as the washerman does, making a swishing sound.'¹ Such is the power of inherent tendencies. And we do not know from whence they come.

Many of our apparently good actions do not bring us the desired results; it is because there is no harmony between thought and outward action. They move in opposite directions. People go to sacred places, perform charitable acts, speak kind words; either they do these things mechanically without attention, or to mask ugly thoughts they are keeping inside. They may be able to deceive the world for a short time, but they cannot conceal their secret thoughts from ever-watchful Nature. She pays them in their own coin. "As is a man's feeling of love, so is his gain." Sri Ramakrishna used to tell a parable on this spiritual truth to make it plain:

Once two friends were going along the street, when they noticed some people listening to a reading of the holy scripture, the *Bhāgavata*. "Come, friend," said

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 585. (here paraphrased)

the one to the other. "Let us hear the sacred book." So saying he went in and sat down. The second man peeped in and went away. Soon he found himself in bad company in an evil place. He looked around, but very soon he felt disgusted with the place. "Shame on me!" he thought to himself. "My friend has been listening to the sacred word of Hari; and see where I am!" But the friend who had been listening to the *Bhāgavata* also became disgusted. "What a fool I am!" he said. "I have been listening to this fellow's blah-blah, and my friend is having a grand time." In course of time they both died. The messenger of Death came for the soul of the one who had listened to the *Bhāgavata* and dragged it off to hell. The messenger of God came for the soul of the one who had gone to the wayside and led it up to heaven.

Verily, the Lord looks into a man's heart and does not judge him by what he does or where he lives. "Krishna accepts a devotee's inner feeling of love."²

The fundamental error that man commits is that he thinks he is an independent entity endowed with body and mind, and by chance is placed in a cruel world. His limited existence, bound up by the laws of space-time in the external world are the only realities to him—beyond which his horizon never extends. He does not believe that behind this puny mind lies the universal mind; behind this shallow existence in the physical world, there extends the vast unseen spiritual realm. The reason is not far to seek, observes renowned physicist Bernard d'Espagnat, that human beings feel much more at home in a world of solid things than of fluid or invisible things. Solids have shapes and forms. They are extended in space and confined to specific places. He

2. *Ibid.* p. 204.

states further, that human intelligence is, above all, a knowledge of solids. Therefore the unknown realm of divinity and the unseen but all pervading Pure Consciousness, or God, are nothing but fairy tales to mankind. The solid body and the world of solid things are tangibly real. Imbued and propelled by this sole belief, people frantically engage themselves in sipping every drop of sensory enjoyment, seizing every moment of pleasure, and in trying to possess as much of material wealth and goods as they can. The means employed may be good or evil, but the goal is pleasure.

These detrimental thoughts permeate the atmosphere everywhere, and humanity is under its spell, as if a victim of collective hypnotism. We have created these thoughts and have ourselves fallen prey to them. Ignoring the whole and laying too much emphasis on tenuous fragile individuality, we are in the midst of chaos and grief. Individually no one is happy merely possessing wealth and power, and none can be. Our philosophy of life is lopsided. Our anxiety, worries, fears are to a great extent the result of our desperate selfish clinging to life and personal objects, concealing private thoughts and our higher capabilities. "The Individual's life," states Vivekananda,

is in the life of the whole, the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole ; apart from the whole, the individual's existence is inconceivable—this is an eternal truth and is the bed-rock on which the universe is built. To move slowly towards the infinite whole, bearing a constant feeling of intense sympathy and sameness with it, being happy with its happiness and being distressed in its affliction, is the individual's sole duty.³

3. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. IV, p. 463.

What is holiness ? Holiness is the sublime experience of wholeness. Saints and sages are called holy because they have experienced the wholeness—that God has become everything. Martin Heidegger puts it poignantly: "A person is neither a thing nor a process, but an opening, or clearing, through which the Absolute can manifest."

The lunatic race in this competitive age to push oneself ahead of others, the incessant toil to achieve imaginary goals, fetishism of time, which Jeremy Rifkins calls 'the nanosecond culture', and the absence of peace and contentment, are some of the unhealthy symptoms of our sick race. Anger, anxiety, nagging worries, and depression are endemic in human society. Body is externalized thought form. It is thought which has produced the body and its future is in every one's own hands. Our physical health is inextricably woven with our mental health. Therefore every thought produces corresponding changes in the system. There is mounting scientific evidence to show that thoughts affect our bodies directly, and can depress immune functions. Doctors believe that disease is rarely a simple matter of isolated cause and effect. Physical health, to a great extent depends on our way of life and thinking habits. The old practice of treating the body with the latest drugs has brought less success without caring for the mind. Hypertension, coronary artery disease, peptic ulcers, vascular headache syndrome, including migraine, and irritable bowel syndrome, and other sicknesses, are closely linked with our morbid thoughts. The gross body reflects and gives expression to the vibrations of inner thoughts. One look at the face of worried man is enough. We are what our thoughts have made us. So we have to take care of what we think.

The task before us is difficult. The first and foremost is to transform our attitudes and outlooks and to control our seen and

sunken thoughts. We have come on this planet repeatedly to manifest our divinity and experience our oneness with cosmic consciousness. The negative thoughts that effect our separation from others, and propel us to seek our own exclusive happiness, have driven us to a state of impasse. We have to retrace our steps and dump all that debilitating stuff from our minds. Our atmosphere pulsates with negative thoughts and our tendency has become: to think too much of material things and decry spiritual insight. Nobel Neurophysiologist, Sir John Eccles, thoughtfully observes in his book *The Human Psyche*: "Man has lost his way ideologically in this age. ...Science has gone too far in breaking down man's belief in his spiritual greatness...and has given him the belief that he is merely an insignificant animal that has arisen by chance and necessity on an insignificant planet lost in the great cosmic immensity".

Thought is a great force ; we misuse it. In the glare of the objective world the eternal subject is relegated to the background ; in the flood of knowledge the immortal knower is submerged. The knower behind the little mind is the pure, limitless consciousness. There is only one substance—consciousness, it appears in different ways. Viewed from the narrow windows of time and space, it appears like gross matter, billions of gross bodies and minds and energy. Beyond space and time, beyond name and form, is the eternal Consciousness—the inner essence of all beings. Without spiritual insight we cannot experience it. Infatuated minds are not even aware of it. Vedanta says it is because of the concealing (*āvarana*) and projecting (*vikṣepa*) powers of *Māyā*. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says: "The self-existent God has rendered the senses so defective that they go outward, and hence man sees the external and not the internal Atman." (IV. 1)

How to control our negative and destructive thoughts, and in their place suffuse the mind with high thoughts and the highest ideals? *Listening*. First of all, we must hear about pure and good thoughts from the Great Ones of the past and present, day after day, and think over those thoughts month after month. We must saturate our brains with living and life-giving ideals of spirituality and religion. Secondly, *Faith*. People exude unquestioning confidence in modern advertising and in the reports of newspapers. They immediately rush and stand in queues to buy a brand new product. But the same persons, ironically, distrust the great teachings of the scriptures and the great teachers of the world. The *Avatāras*, or Messengers of God, sacrificed their lives for the welfare of mankind. Why not put a little faith in them and try to translate their teachings into our day to day life? Without a little faith in their wisdom we cannot make much progress in spiritual life. Thirdly, *Mindfulness*. Most of our day to day activities are performed in a semi-conscious state. Hardly ever are we acutely and objectively aware of our own actions and thoughts, so rushed is life. We do our work in a slipshod way because the mind wanders and is not on the work. We forget to keep our word and lose things often. It denotes restlessness and flippancy of the mind. The common psychic disease, a flippant mind, is incapable of doing anything worthwhile. Unless we gain a certain degree of control over our mind and body, we are not going to accomplish much, and we suffer. Thought can be a good servant, but can also be a tyrannical master. We have to pay sufficient attention to our bodily and mental activities. Many times we have regretted that, had we been a little careful, we could have avoided our mistakes or mishaps. Yet we continue the same life, unmindful of those past errors. Therefore, we have to set apart 15 to 20 minutes every day to watch critically our-

movements of body and train of thoughts. Fourthly, besides mindfulness of things positive, we should: *Leave off brooding over the past or future.* Our present is consumed either in looking ahead or behind. Watchfulness is in the present, and not in the past—nor either is it in the future. The sure rewards for brooding over the past are shame and regret; and from anticipation, fear and anxiety. Fifthly, *Develop counter habits.* Whenever thoughts of envy, malice, or hatred trouble, bring up counter thoughts of love, compassion, and friendliness. When hateful thoughts about someone darken the mind, rouse the counter wave of appreciation of his or her good qualities. Or think of even one loving word or deed done by the person. The author of *The Yoga Sūtras* stresses the importance of this method. Sixth, *Food.* The quantity and the nature of the food we consume is important. Thought is manufactured by food. If we starve for fifteen days, the mind will be so weak it cannot think of anything. *Sāttvic* food—pure food which is easily digestible, and which is nourishing, helps keep our mind peaceful. Certain foods not only make the body restless, but agitate the mind also. Experience is the good teacher in helping one to decide about food habits. Seventh,

Keep good company. People who are inspired by high spiritual ideals and whose characters are pure should be our companions. The books we read and the company we keep exert tremendous influence over our thoughts. Righteous and pious people not only help us, but protect us from evil thoughts. Eighth, *Remember, thoughts are powerful.* We have always to remember that good or evil thoughts are potent and they permeate the atmosphere. Human beings are receptive to both powers. If we purify our minds, and make ourselves instruments of good thoughts, they will enter us from a never-ending fund. Evil forces rush to find fertile ground in the minds of evil people. As we guard ourselves from dangers, similarly, we have to guard scrupulously against destructive thoughts. Ninthly, *Remember the Divine Light within.* We have to repeat again and again that we are not this body and mind, but in reality we are cosmic consciousness. Tenth, *The mind can be subdued.* Do we depend on thoughts or do thoughts depend on us? We are the originators of thoughts—when we stop thinking, thoughts are not there. We are the masters, and not our thoughts. They should obey us.

Old Days at Belur Math*

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

The monastic life at Belur in the early years after its inception was perhaps severely austere, and a harsh test of human endurance. In his characteristic good humour, Revered President Maharaj of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission recalls some of the privations, but he reminds us that in spite of all that those early days were filled with spiritual joy.

I have been requested to share with you my reminiscences of the old days at Belur Math. In those days (during the early twenties) the appearance of Belur Math was very much different from what you see it today. In those early days, there was no embankment on the riverside. There were no temples either—neither the big temple of Sri Ramakrishna nor the smaller ones, like those of the Holy Mother and Swamiji. Our accommodation was limited. The place was not hygienic in any way. It was malaria-prone and every year, after rains, there used to be a good number of patients down with malaria. This was an annual occurrence and we did not have qualified doctors around, nor the big dispensary that you see as you enter the Math these days. There was just an apology for a dispensary with some stock mixtures, and I do not know from where those who administered those medicines learnt the science! So, this was the health-side of the Institution in those days. Then about meals. We had practically nothing for breakfast. I say “practically” because there used to be some liquid and it was called tea. But, even that tea was not within the reach of us youngsters. There used to be puffed rice also. The Math used to get a kerosene tin full of puffed rice and that was

all. Each of us would get a small cigarette-tin (In those days cigarettes were sold in small tin packs and that was the Math’s puffed rice measure.) full of puffed rice. A Swami, who was our accountant, would sit in the room opposite and would say, “Brother, have you taken a full tin of puffed rice?” “Full” meant not overflowing! Those who had duties early in the morning and could not come at the right time would be happy to find the vessel empty. That was the condition of the breakfast. Our noon meal was not bad. We had enough food—I mean, rice and vegetables. The favourite dish of Bengalis (fish) was not there. Every Tuesday and Saturday some four annas worth of fish was bought for offering’s sake. You can well imagine the quantity we could have. Using that quantity, something like a soup was prepared. At first the elders, that is, those who were very old and not simply seniors, would get a small share. Secondly, those who were lucky to be ill on those days would get a little of that—that too, liquid alone; nothing solid would be forthcoming. That was our special item.

When we had fever, we used to be given sago-milk. A preparation of sago used to be kept in a big pot, the ones used nowadays for mass cooking. One or two glasses of milk would have been poured into it.

In the afternoon, we had the same old liquid called tea. Very few would have

* This article is based on the talk delivered in May, 1977 by Revered Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj (the then Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission) at the Probationers’ Training Centre, Belur Math.

access to it and as for the others, they had plenty of fresh air! There was a dearth of drinking water also in those days. Before our coming to the Math (i.e., before 1920) drinking water was brought from the other side of the Ganga. Sadhus used to bring it by boat. There was no drinking water available at the Math. There were small ponds, but the water could not be used for drinking purpose. At night, the same story used to be repeated as in the noon. Sometimes there used to be a little quantity of milk. Who was to take that? That was the problem. Milk was usually served in a single tumbler. We used to pass on the tumbler to the next man and so the relay would go on. For, the quantity was insufficient even for one tenth of the sadhus there. I do not call that a happy state of affairs. But that was the condition so far as food was concerned.

Luckily for us, that sort of austerity was amply compensated by the joy that we would derive from the company of our revered elders. Usually we did not feel much about the absence of these amenities. We took these difficulties for granted because we came leaving our hearth and home and it goes without saying that there must be some sort of privation. So, nobody minded these.

As regards work, there were not many servants as you find now. There were a very small number of them who used to do the cooking and other works in the kitchen like cleaning utensils. They would not wash our plates. The rest of the work had to be done by ourselves. And, in spite of the frequent attacks of malaria, we had enough time and energy to cope up with that. Water had to be drawn from the river for each and everything. Water-closets were not worth the name. Just a few of these were there for so many of us—only

five to be precise. We had to carry water for even these. There was a big water reservoir and we had to fill it with water carried in buckets.

We had to work in the garden. For watering plants, water had to be drawn from the river. There was a big jar in front of the shrine store which had to be kept full for all washing purposes. When devotees would come to take prasad, they used this water for washing their hands. There was no water tap anywhere nearby.

You see lights and fans almost everywhere nowadays. But, in those days we had no electricity. We could not even dream of such facilities. In fact, we had a sort of allergy to fans and lights. We did not like them. No one grudged them either. We had come here of our own choice; we knew that the condition would be such. So, no one complained.

There were not many cots; nor many beds were available. In front of Swamiji's temple, the first floor of Premananda Memorial was built by then. That was of some help to us. On the ground floor was the dispensary. One of the rooms was meant for medicine store; another for the doctor and compounder, and a third one was for general use. In that room there were only two seats. You may wonder, but in the Math building three or four elderly monks used to stay in a single small room. Swami Suddhananda,¹ the senior-most, was one of them. Five people lived in the small room next to the staircase. Opposite to Jnan Maharaj's room there is another room which accommodated four monks. Since Jnan Maharaj (a brahma-

1. A disciple of Swami Vivekananda, fifth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in after-life.

chārin-disciple of Swamiji) was a constant figure in one of the rooms it was known as his room. That was the manner in which we lived. When there were more Swamis in addition to those already accommodated in various rooms, they had to stay in the visitors' room. A mat was spread and these sadhus would happily lie down there. There was one big mosquito net for all. Even as people used to go in and out of it, the mosquitos also had the freedom to go in and out!

For every paltry purchase, you had to walk at least a mile away—either to Bally or to Calcutta. I was working in the shrine store for some time. Fruits for offering to Sri Ramakrishna had to be bought from Calcutta. We had to carry the load in a basket all the way and the weight was not negligible. From Calcutta to the steamer ghat, you had to carry the load. Fortunately there were steamer services between Belur and Calcutta in those days. If not to Calcutta, you would have to go to Bally or Salkia where you had to be satisfied with poor quality fruits only.

All around the Math campus there was waterlogged and marshy land covered with weeds. None dared go there even in broad daylight for fear of snakes. The land was uneven. Only after some years of our occupation it was levelled to be used for kitchen garden. We had a few cows. Of them the biggest was extremely unmanageable. Usually she would not attack us. But there was no guarantee that she would not at times. And she was absolutely dry. The little milk that we would get from one or two good cows was used for offerings and the remaining portion was for old and sick monks.

Some of us liked to study. During daytime there was plenty of work. We could

study only at night. But, where were the lights for that? Three or four lanterns were there but they could not be spared for personal use. One lamp was hung in the corridor of the Ganga-side of the Math building. If anybody had to go to toilet, he had to use that lantern. On the steps leading to Swamiji's room there was another. This was needed so as not to have difficulty in negotiating the steps. Swami Omkarananda², one of the senior monks, now no more, was very studious. He needed light badly for his studies but would not get it. He would therefore collect little bits of candles that were used in the shrine room. These bits could not be used any further. But he would use them as far as he could. But then, there was no grudging, for all that. In spite of these difficulties there were monks who were very studious. The elders used to teach us about making good use of the facilities we had. There was a good Sanskrit scholar. We could not get a second one of the same calibre after he left. This was the only special facility we had. Swami Suddhananda was very kind and would encourage us to study the scriptures in spite of all the difficulties. We had the good fortune of studying under him. Thus, there was great encouragement for studies, though the facilities were less.

I now come to the brighter side of the picture. Early in the morning, that is, at four o'clock, when the shrine would open, Mahapurush Maharaj³ himself would walk up the stairs with his *asana* and sit there in meditation. We too used to sit with him. He would not get up till about 5:30 a.m. We would also meditate thus. However,

2. Later a Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

3. Swami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission at that time.

it was not a forced meditation. We liked it, particularly in the presence of Mahapurush Maharaj. That gave us rare spiritual environment which we could not get anywhere else. Naturally we liked it. Those who had some duties to attend to in the early morning used to leave early and the others would meditate longer till the tea-bell rang. The bell reminded that you were to attend to your duties; for most of us the other meaning was not there. Before we began our duties, we used to go to Mahapurush Maharaj's room and bow down to him. He would sit there as we could go one by one. He would talk a few words now and then; about the health of some who were not well, about the work that was to be done etc. The monk-in-charge of the stores then was generally asked about what offering would be there for offering to Sri Ramakrishna that day. The stores-in-charge Swami would mention that and Mahapurush Maharaj would suggest something at times. In this manner, Revered Mahapurush Maharaj would get information of each department from the respective monks in charge when they came for Pranam. There was a doctor. Mahapurushji would ask the doctor about the condition of the patients. He would also enquire about the ailing people in the neighbourhood. For, the people of the neighbourhood had no other source of help when they fell ill. Belur Math's dispensary with its big bottles of stock mixtures was the only place that provided medical help to them even when resources for the monks themselves were meagre. The doctor attending the dispensary was very kind hearted. He would meet the requirements somehow.

After our Pranams to him, Mahapurush Maharaj would go out for a stroll. The compound was not so big as it is now. It was just up to the street on the riverside where the old gate was situated. Near the

gate there was a tank and next to it, a cowshed. He would see the cows and exchange a few words with the Swami or Brahmachārin attending to the cows. He liked the cows much and those who attended to the cows were also dear to him. He would then go to the garden. It was just a small garden. He would thereafter go to the courtyard in front of the Math office and sit there for sometime, observing those engaged in dressing vegetables. After that he would go to his room when I would get the opportunity of serving him a little more intimately. It was not a regular opportunity; but when I got it I used to massage him under the doctor's advice. At such occasions, I had the opportunity of personal talk with him also.

I shall tell you about one day. We would find Mahapurush Maharaj those days always in a meditative mood. This mood with which he started the day practically continued throughout the day. While walking he was in that mood; while sitting, then also he was in that mood. That particular day while he was strolling in the courtyard, he stood still there at the courtyard for sometime with open eyes. One of our Swamis came and bowed down to him. At that exact moment, Mahapurush Maharaj started moving forward. Naturally there was obstruction and he fell down and had some sprain in his wrist. He scolded the Swami and returned to his room. I started massaging him in his room. There was none else. He said, "I scolded the monk, but it was not his fault. How could he know I was not seeing anything at that time!" With open eyes and yet not seeing anything at all! That was the state in which he was, and we do not have such experience even after hours of meditation. Similar incidents happened now and then and kept us mentally and spiritually alert in spite of the busy pre-occupations.

Mahapurush Maharaj was always the great spiritual influence in the Math—the centre of attraction. He used to encourage us always for studying scriptures. When we started studying the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* under Swami Suddhananda, Mahapurush Maharaj himself used to come and sit with us. He brought a set of the Upaniṣads for himself. He would come and sit as if he was one of us. The result was that we felt very much embarrassed. With a great Swami like him sitting beside us we could not feel at ease after all, during our discussions. He realized this and stopped coming to the class after a few days. But everyday we had to go and report to him what we had studied in the class. The day's lesson had to be thus repeated to him everyday. Usually Swami Omkarananda used to do that, and when he was not there I had to do the task. Hence, before I entered his room I had to recapitulate and reproduce the lesson. Thus there was such a loving relationship among us that we always felt at ease in his company. He never behaved like a teacher giving training to us, as I told you. The training came to us even without our knowing. And it came from a person who never felt that he was giving any training. In this manner our training continued. It was not for any specified period. It depended on the luck of the person. As for instance, it was my good luck that I was allowed to live here for considerably longer periods. There was so much shortage of workers in all the centres. Sometimes we were sent to relief centres and that without any previous notice. I must tell you what happened in

1926. The relief work had to be started at Midnapore. We were given only half an hour's notice to be ready. We were to start within half an hour so that we could catch the earliest train; otherwise we would be late. Within that half an hour we had to finish our bath and meal, pack up our things and run to the railway station. There were no vehicles to take us to the station. That luxury was unthinkable. We somehow managed to reach the station in time. We were there for months engaged in relief activities. At any time, wherever there was any necessity some of us, particularly myself and another who is no more, had to fill up the gap. This was particularly true of us because it was considered that we did not have much work; much work according to those standards. We felt our work very heavy, but not too heavy to be helpful in other respects. What was the time we used to get for our study? After meals a little rest and then I had to read along with some Brahmachārins who were almost of my age. I had to pull them out of their beds and collect them together and study the *Gītā* or some such book. Then we studied for ourselves. In the afternoon, we had some two and a half hours for studies. At 3 p.m. there was to be reading for all people in the visitors' room, and some discussion used to follow occasionally. Great stress was given to meditation in those days. After evening *Ārati*, till the *Bhog* (offering) bell went, we had to meditate. After that, if there was time and light, we could read. We were all very close to one another, like a very closely knit family.

On The Use of The Rosary

WILLIAM PAGE

The usefulness of the rosary in spiritual practice has a special significance. In this thoughtful essay the author tells the reader something of the meaning of it. Mr. Page teaches English at Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand.

Rosaries are used in both Hinduism and Buddhism as an aid to meditation. Both faiths use a rosary of 108 beads. I have been unable to find out the significance of the number 108.* In Buddhism, it may be that 108 signifies the twelve *nidanas* (links in the Chain of Causation) multiplied by nine, but this is just my own theory.

Rosaries are sometimes looked down upon as indicative of a very low level of spiritual development. They are also considered rajasic. Tulsidas, for instance, has been quoted as saying, "One who tells his beads is vulgar." (Vividishananda and Gambhirananda, *For Seekers of God*, Fifth Edition, Advaita Ashrama, 1985, p. 162.) Here the idea is that an aspirant ought to be able to chant the Name of God mentally, without an external "counter" to help him keep track of the number of times he chants it.

For that is basically what a rosary is: a counter. It helps the devotee keep track of

* One explanation of the word *hamsa* is that it is the sound caused by inbreathing and outbreathing. When air is exhaled the sound *ha* is produced, and when inhaling, *sa*. As it occurs naturally, it is called *ajapa mantra*. The body is thought to automatically recite this mantra 21,600 times a day. Half of 216 is 108. Therefore it is advised that one should at least do japa 108 times in the morning and in the evening. With the rosary of 108 beads, one can establish harmony with this natural rhythm of the *ajapa mantra*.

times he has chanted his mantra. And this seems to indicate some calculation in the mind of the devotee. Who cares how many times he chants his mantra? Does God care? No. God is not an accountant. Does the devotee care? Probably; otherwise he would not bother to keep count. Why does he care, then? Is he trying to set a new world's record for mantra-chanting? If so, he is guilty of ambition, and he has probably forgotten what the purpose of mantra-chanting is.

Or maybe he is proud of the number of times he chants it. Maybe he thinks to himself, "Ha ha! Today I chanted my mantra 100,000 times! How holy I am!" In such cases, the rosary, and the mantra itself, have become an obstacle to him rather than a help: they have become a source of ambition and pride.

In some cases, though, the devotee may have been instructed by his guru to chant the mantra a fixed number of times daily. Ten thousand times is a number that occurs fairly frequently in the literature of the Ramakrishna movement. In such a case, the purpose of the rosary is to keep track of the number of times and let the devotee know when he has reached his "quota."

Here again an element of calculation enters in, and calculation is almost always antithetical to the spiritual life. One may become so preoccupied with attaining his "production quota" of mantras that he

forgets the purpose of the whole business. The idea is to remember God, not to count the number of times you have remembered him.

Ideally, the spiritual life should be natural and spontaneous. If we systematize it too much, it becomes mechanical, and when it becomes mechanical, it not only becomes drudgery—it substitutes quantity for quality, and the life is choked out of it. This is why it is often said that chanting the name of God once with real fervour and devotion is better than chanting it 100,000 times mechanically, like a robot. For this reason, any guru who assigns his disciple to chant the mantra a fixed number of times daily has an obligation to make sure that this does not degenerate into drudgery—that is, unless he has already determined that a little drudgery is what this particular disciple needs! He also has an obligation to make sure that the counting does not become more important to the disciple than the chanting itself, and that the tail does not start to wag the dog.

* * *

Ideally, the mantra ought to be chanted mentally, without bothering to keep count. The less calculation you have in spiritual life, the better. Ideally, too, a rosary should not be necessary: the fewer external aids you need, the better. But those who use rosaries sometimes find them a useful device for “jump-starting” the mind. They are a warmup device. You chant a few rounds of the rosary, and then once your mind gets into the rhythm of the thing, you can put the rosary aside and continue chanting mentally. Sometimes you come to a point in your chanting when the rosary becomes a distraction, even an irritant. It is at that point that you put it aside and continue without it.

* * *

Tibetan Buddhists often draw their rosaries around their wrists, like a bracelet. Chinese Buddhists also do this. Sometimes Chinese Buddhist monks and nuns wear their rosaries around their necks, like a necklace. Hindu sadhus often wear their rosaries like this, too. Maybe it is for convenience. Any time they want to start chanting, they can take their rosary off their neck or wrist and begin.

But another school of thought frowns on this practice as being ostentatious, a sign of rajas. “Look, how holy I am! I am wearing a rosary!” To which the obvious rejoinder is: “Well, if you are so holy, how come you’re wearing it instead of using it?” According to this school of thought, the rosary has been used to chant the Name of God, so even though it is only an external aid to meditation, it is holy. Each bead becomes impregnated with the Name of God. So it should not be worn or flaunted like a common piece of jewelry. It should be kept safely in a bag or box. Because it is used to chant the Name of God, it should be treated with reverence and respect.

If you think about it, the rosary has deep significance. It looks a little like a chain, and it can be regarded as a chain that binds us to the lotus feet of God. Again, it looks a little like a garland, and can be regarded as a garland to be placed around the neck of the Lord.

Again, it can be regarded as a model of the universe. Consider: The rosary is a necklace made of many beads. Is it one or many? It is both! Thus also with the universe: one universe populated by billions of entities. One or many? Both! Thus also with the Atman and the jivas: one Atman, many jivas. One or many? Both! It is one when looked at from a transcendent viewpoint, and many when looked at from a relative viewpoint.

Each bead symbolizes a jiva, and all the beads taken together symbolize the entire universe. All the jivas are bound together by the thread of the Atman that runs through them all. The head bead represents Ishwara. But the thread that represents the Atman is not limited to the rosary. It runs out through the head bead, and a short length of thread usually protrudes beyond the head bead. This reminds us that the Atman not only runs through the whole universe, but extends beyond the universe as well.

This analogy is not perfect, because the thread is made of one kind of material, and the beads are made of another. The analogy would be better if the beads and the thread were all made of the same material.

Seen thus, the rosary can be a useful aid in chanting one's mantra. It also has a practical use: since it keeps the fingers busy, it may help the devotee stay awake! Some will say that it is useful only in the lowest stages of spiritual development. But in spiritual life it can be counterproductive to think in terms of high and low.

It is never beneficial to look down on others. "He is practicing on a low plane, he uses a rosary and other rajasic aids, while I have transcended these things and practice pure sattvika worship. How low he is! How high I am!" Anyone who thinks this way has permitted the caste mentality to infect his worship; his very thoughts reveal that he has not ascended so high after all. Contempt for others and a smug self-righteousness have never been listed among the spiritual virtues.

Neither is it ever beneficial to look down upon oneself. "How low I am! I have to depend on this rosary and other external aids, while other souls, more lofty, have transcended them!" Such thoughts destroy one's confidence, lead to despair, and undermine one's spiritual life. If contempt for others is not listed among the spiritual virtues, neither is self-contempt.

The proper attitude in all cases is a cheerful optimism and perseverance, with faith that the Chosen Ideal will ultimately remove all obstacles, balanced with a healthy humility and a sense of humour. To worry about what is low and what is high is to get sidetracked. It is like climbing a mountain. If you keep stopping to look at the map and calculate how far you've climbed, you'll never reach the summit. Without worrying about how far you have come, just keep plodding up the trail. Use whatever helps and aids may come to you if they seem useful and convenient. If you do not need them, do not use them. But do not look down on others if they happen to find them useful.

A rosary is a little like the staff that some mountain climbers carry. It is not really necessary, but it gives you something to hold onto when the going gets rough. Once you reach the summit, you can throw it away if you like. But more likely, you will want to keep it as a souvenir of your climb, as a trusty tool that was helpful to you in times of trial, and thus an old and faithful friend. Sri Ramakrishna ascended the heights of spiritual experience, but so far as we are aware, it is not recorded that he ever threw away his rosary.

The Impact of Swami Vivekananda on The World Parliament

HAL W. FRENCH

The one hundredth anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 will soon be observed in many places. Admirers of Vivekananda will recall his wonderful presence and universal message, cutting across time and space. The author of this arresting article is a professor at the University of South Carolina, U.S.A.

At 1415 North Dearborn Avenue in Chicago there stood, until 1966, a large, formerly fashionable dwelling with the figure of a bear seated upright atop it. Like many other such buildings, it has since been torn down to make room for a high-rise apartment complex. Yet this structure's demolition was lamented by a few residents of Chicago, and by others visiting there from their native India. Certainly lacking in symmetry by late twentieth century standards, it was nevertheless something of a shrine. For it was here that, seventy-three years earlier, one of India's most colourful interpreters, a stranger in a foreign land, met with unusual hospitality; Arriving late by train, with no one to meet him, and having lost the address where the Parliament of Religions was to meet. Swami Vivekananda asked directions at the railroad station. Receiving no help, he slept in a large, empty box in a corner of the station. The next morning, wandering as a *sannyasin* from door to door, he was rudely treated and dismissed from a number of homes. Exhausted but not in despair, he sat down on a curb, accepting whatever might come to him.

He did not have long to wait, for a woman

across the street, from a window in the house on North Dearborn, noting his strange appearance, asked if he were not a delegate to the Parliament of Religions. He was invited in, given refreshment, and taken to be introduced to the President of the Parliament, who was a personal friend of his hostess, Mrs G. W. Hale. The Swami resided for a time with the Hale family, who became some of the most faithful followers of this "cyclonic monk of India", as he was to be called. This was only one of a series of seemingly fortuitous circumstances in America which served Vivekananda: he had come without credentials, representing no organised body, seemingly unaware that delegates from India had been selected nearly two years previously. And yet, through doors being opened by persons of influence who recognised that he had a message, he now stood on the threshold of his impressive debut at the Parliament.

Before we cross that threshold, and to insure that we cross it together, let's indulge in a few minutes of flashback, to understand some of what led Vivekananda to this moment. Go with me near Calcutta, to a temple on the banks of the Ganges several years before, where, in 1886 his remarkable master, Ramakrishna, had died. For a few years following, the young Naren, who would become known as Vivekananda, made

brief ventures from Calcutta, to Benaras and other holy places. But in 1890 he began to chafe at the regimen of his largely settled life, and determined to see, not the holy places, but the streets and shops of India, the lives of his people. He travelled by himself, for three years in India, culminating in a moment of rare vision at the southern tip of the subcontinent, at Cape Comorin. Increasingly, in his years of wandering, seeing the struggles and suffering of his people, he had begun to search for a way to apply India's ancient wisdom to its present bereft condition. It was a time for meeting the illiterate and the intellectuals, the masses and maharajahs, for learning and teaching. Encouragement came from influential sources, such as the Maharajah of Khetri, as his confidence and ability ripened. He heard reports of the Parliament of Religions which was to take place in Chicago. A plan began to emerge in his mind. Standing, then, at the peninsula's tip, he saw the small rock a short distance out in the ocean, and he resolved to swim to it through shark infested waters. Reaching it, he turned northward to Mother India. In a moment of rare objectivity, standing outside it for the first time, he was able to see his homeland as never before. His arms outstretched, a great intuition of compassion began to well up within him. How, where was he to secure help for his people? The West seemed to hold the key to the world's storehouse of material goods, but what did he have to give in exchange? India's treasures, unmined by the West, lay in the depths of her religious truths. The young educated *sannyasin* felt that he could share that with the West, perhaps as no one else could.

He travelled directly to Madras, where a following began to emerge which shared his vision: that he should go to represent India at the Parliament. The Maharajah and

other persons raised money for his voyage, and he headed for America. But he arrived in Chicago in July, only to learn that the Parliament was not to begin till September, and his childish delight in the World's Fair trappings was soon tempered by the realisation that his funds were being depleted rapidly. He made no acquaintances in this initial visit, but was advised that he could live more cheaply in Boston than in Fair-inflated Chicago, so he boarded a train East. On the train he providentially met a wealthy woman, Kate Sanborn, who offered him a place to stay, and soon began to acquaint him with Boston society. He also met the Harvard Hellenist professor, J. H. Wright, who was soon incredibly impressed with the intellectual stature of the young Swami. Upon learning that he had no credentials to speak at the Parliament, Wright is quoted as having said, "To ask for your credentials is like asking the sun to state its right to shine." Wright then addressed a letter to the Chairman in charge of delegates, saying, again extravagantly, "Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors together."¹ After a number of lectures in New England, Vivekananda returned to Chicago, where Wright's letter and Mrs. Hale's introduction produced the desired result, and he arrived at the Parliament in time for its opening ceremonies.

While the Church of England, through the stance of the Archbishop at the time, Edward Benson, did not officially participate, there were many from England who did attend, and others sent greetings, such as Benson's friend, Gladstone. It seemed to

1. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) page 297. For an expansion of observations and details throughout, see also Harold W. French, *The Swan's Wide Waters: Ramakrishna and Western Culture*, New York: Kennikat Press, 1974, 46 ff.

tians, in their earliest years, and Zoroastrians. He recalled lines from a hymn learned from his boyhood, repeated everyday in India by millions: "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee." He quoted the *Gita* to the same point: "Whosoever comes to me, through whatsoever form I reach him; they are struggling through paths that in the end always lead to me." These observations followed: "Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have possessed long this beautiful earth. It has filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for this horrible demon, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But its time has come, and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this Convention may be the death knell to all fanaticism, to all persecutions with the sword or the pen, and to all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."⁵

This was the vision, and the Parliament, in large measure echoed this charitable spirit. By the ninth day, however, it was clear that the exclusive claims made by some exponents had begun to grate on the feelings of others. It was not in Vivekananda's temper to ignore disparagements and slights, and one such appears to have occasioned one of his most noted voicings of his own theology, in his major address on Hinduism. Again, a flashback is in

order, from the ninth day to the fourth, to an address by Rev. Joseph Cook, who rather personified one of the religious currents operative in America in the late nineteenth century, i.e., the orthodox reaction to Unitarian and Transcendental thought which had been so influential earlier in the century. Late in the century the backlash was strong, and Cook, armed with a scholarly mind, educated at Yale, Harvard, Andover Newton and in Germany, settled to teach in Boston, the centre of the liberal movement. Over ten years before the Parliament, he had indicated his dismissal of it, in these words: "Boston, under Channing, Parker and Emerson, has three times tried to found a new religion, but each attempt is now a last year's bird's nest."⁶ He obviously conceived of his mission in Boston partially in terms of refutation of the pervasive heresies of this Unitarian trinity. He rather prided himself on having no sectarian commitments, and his primary platform was a series of Monday lectures, in Tremont Temple and Old South Meeting House over a twenty-five year period; these were published in eleven volumes. The direction of his thought may be condensed into this claim for the exclusive efficacy of Christianity, made in the Parliament. "What religion," Cook asked, "can wash Lady Macbeth's right hand?" And he affirmed, "It is clear that we cannot escape from conscience and God and our record of sin. It is a certainty and a strategic certainty that, except Christianity, there is no religion under heaven or among men that effectively provides for the peace of the soul by its harmonization with itself, its God, and its record of sin."⁷

We cannot be certain, as some interpreters contend, that a statement by Vivekananda

5. Walter Houghton, ed., *The Parliament of Religion and Religious Congresses at the World's Columbian Exposition*. (Chicago: F. T. Neely, 1893) pp. 64, 65.

6. Joseph Cook, *Orient* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1885) p. 331

7. Barrows, Vol. I, p. 542.

five days later was in response to Cook's, but the contrasting emphasis is clear. Vivekananda exhorted:

"Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name, heirs of immortal bliss—yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings, ye are divinities on earth. Sinners? It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, ye lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep."⁸

There was only this possible rejoinder; we do not know of any personal relationship between Vivekananda and Cook, who, my research has revealed, alone of all the persons he might meet in the West, had seen Vivekananda's Master. Space does not here permit the detailing of that encounter, but it had occurred in 1882, on a steamer trip on the Ganges above Calcutta with his acquaintance, Keshub Chander Sen, in which Cook had reportedly been much impressed by seeing Ramakrishna's spiritual exercises.⁹ Vivekananda did not refer to Ramakrishna in his recorded utterance at the Parliament, and seldom during his visits to the West; consequently, there would have been no opportunity for Vivekananda and Cook to establish a personal association on the basis of their shared relationship with Ramakrishna. However much Cook may have been impressed by his meeting with Ramakrishna, he maintained the emphasis on sin which Ramakrishna and Vivekananda alike found offensive in the teachings of the Brahmo Samaj and Christianity.

Vivekananda's contrasting liberal emphasis on essential human worth, with his accompanying challenge, seemed to accord with the spirit of the Columbian Exposition itself, celebrating the amazing achievements

of mankind. His central message, on Hinduism, made several references to the scientific spirit, claiming that the scientific quest for the unity of truth paralleled that of Hinduism, and of the Parliament itself. At the same time, he asserted, "Unity and variety is the plan of nature, and the Hindu has recognised it. Every other religion lays down certain fixed dogmas, and tries to force society to accept them...The Hindus have discovered that the absolute can only be realised or thought or stated through the relative, and the images, cross, or crescent are simply so many centres, so many pegs to hang the spiritual ideas on...Why, then, are there so many contradictions? They are only apparent, says the Hindu. The contradictions come from the same truth adapting itself to the different circumstances of different natures. It is the same light coming through different colours."¹⁰ The analogy was apt and appealing. In this major address he was largely conciliatory, and appreciative of the Parliament's goals. "Asoka's council," he said, "was a council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar's though more to the purpose, was only a parlour meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every religion."¹¹

Language such as this was well-received, and Vivekananda's successes at the Parliament insured that he would receive hearings throughout the country in the months and years following, for he stayed in the West for more than three years. His impact on the Parliament itself, as detailed, was forceful and significant. The West was fascinated with the exotic representatives of the East, and Vivekananda was clearly one of the foremost of these. The Parliament itself gave impetus to more academic study of

8. *Ibid.*, p. 971.

9. R. R. Diwaker, *Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964, p. 256.

10. Barrows, Vol. 2, p. 977.

11. *Ibid.*

religion, in the establishment of courses in comparative religions in universities throughout the land, and in the quickening of popular interest, particularly, in the religions of the Orient.

To get the whole picture, however, we need to reverse the topic that I am here addressing, and to inquire about the impact of the Parliament on Vivekananda. This, also, was considerable. It began to alter his assessment of Christianity and of other groups at work in India, and to change the direction of his mission, both to the West and to India. Earlier impressions of Christianity seem to have been largely positive. His education at Presidency and Scottish Church Colleges in Calcutta had left him with a particularly warm feeling for his old Scotch master, William Hastie. "This hot-headed old man lived on nothing, and regarded his room as his boys' home as much as his own." It was he who had first sent the young Naren to Ramakrishna. "I am proud of him," Vivekananda later acknowledged, "but I don't think you could say that he had Christianized me much!"¹² Still, following the death of Ramakrishna, he was fascinated to discover that the night when he and his fellow disciples made their monastic pact had been on Christmas Eve. He regarded it as particularly auspicious. Perhaps his first publication was a translation of *The Imitation of Christ*, which he did for a Bengali monthly in 1889. This volume, with the Bhagavad Gita, were the only two that he carried with him in his wanderings in India during the next few years. This charitable spirit seemed to characterise his feeling toward Christianity prior to the Parliament. In an early letter to Alasinga, a friend in Madras, he wrote, "I am here amongst the children of the Son

12. Sister Nivedita, *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1967) pp. 33,34.

of Mary, and the Lord Jesus will help me." Romain Rolland comments on that conviction, "He who would scourge the Tartuffes of the Christian faith, felt more than any other the breath of *Amor-Cartias* (Blessed Love), animating this same faith in its sincerity."¹³

But the Parliament itself, which seemed to offer so much by way of conciliatory regard between faiths, did not always further such accord. Chairman J. H. Barrows encouraged speakers to "state their own beliefs, and the reasons for them, with the greatest frankness," though he hoped, "without employing unfriendly criticism of other faiths."¹⁴ Some of the negative reservations toward the Parliament spilled over into it, however. Professor Herrick Johnson of McCormick Seminary in Chicago perhaps typified some of the critical response, in fuming that "inviting all the false faiths of the world to exhibit their religious goods" and to scatter "their detestable and pernicious doctrines" before Christian audiences was "a monstrous absurdity."¹⁵ Vivekananda later felt that most Christian participation was on the basis that Christianity would clearly vindicate its superiority in the marketplace, and in this, he judged, they were largely disappointed.

Controversies surfaced, and *The Times* of Dubuque, Iowa observed, "The Parliament of Religions reached a point where sharp acerbities develop. The thin veil of courtesy was maintained, of course, but behind it was ill feeling. Rev. Joseph Cook criticized the Hindoos sharply and was more sharply criticized in turn. He said that to speak of

13. Romain Rolland, *Prophets of the New India* (London: Cassel & Co., 1939) p. 179.

14. Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and Western Thought: Nineteenth Century Exploration* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981) p. 145.

15. *Ibid.*

a universe that was not created is almost unpardonable nonsense, and the Asiatics retorted that a universe which had a beginning is a self-evident absurdity. Bishop J.P. Newman, firing at long-range from the banks of the Ohio, declared that the Orientals have insulted all the Christians of the United States by their misrepresentations of the missionaries, and the Orientals, with their provokingly calm and supercilious smile, replied that this was simply the bishop's ignorance."¹⁶

Vivekananda's own part in this exchange cannot be fully detailed here, but a sample follows:

"It is not true," he said, "that I am hostile to the Christian missionaries in India. But I protest against their methods of raising funds in America. What is meant by those pictures in their school books for children where the Hindu mother is painted as throwing her children to the crocodiles in the Ganga? The mother is black, but the baby is painted white, to arouse more sympathy, and get more money. ...I have heard one of these gentlemen preach that in every village of India there is a pond of the bones of little children."¹⁷

Other examples followed. Vivekananda began to develop a strong distaste for the distortions of the Hindu society which he saw. But it became difficult for him to raise funds for India without also portraying conditions of need there.

His strategy, then, began to change. The exchange which he had envisioned was reformulated: The West needed to hear the timeless truths of India. This remained his central focus in the West. Help for India, however, came increasingly to be envisioned in terms of how India could help herself. America could not help directly, but India must be vitalised by the energy which fills

the West. He could critique the West by saying, "Your religion helps you to build Ferris wheels and Eiffel Towers, but does it aid you in the development of your inner lives?"¹⁸ India could help with that. Its spiritual message was vitally needed by the West. But a critique of social conditions in India was also developing, and this was shaped out of his continuing fascination with some Western elements. A letter to a friend in India indicates this: "It is to America—that is where the heart is. I love the Yankee land. ...In America is the place, the people, the opportunity for everything. I have become horribly radical. I am just going to India to see what I can do in that awful mass of conservative jellyfish."¹⁹ His return to India would see him advocate the directions which have continued to shape the work of the Ramakrishna movement: village uplift, the establishment of schools, hospitals, homes, flood and famine relief, etc. The record, inspired by his example, continues in its valued contribution.

Vivekananda's impact on the Parliament, then, began an exchange which took different lines than those first envisioned. For the West, through his efforts and those of others, a clearer depiction of India began to emerge. Distortions became less tenable in the light of the new regard which India had earned through these interpreters. The West began to learn from the East. Similarly, India, through the encounter, began to incorporate more social concern into its religious idealism. As we anticipate the centennial of the Parliament, a study of the quality of these events, and of central figures such as Vivekananda, may inspire us to apply their wisdom to our own cultural and interfaith encounters.

16. Swami Vivekananda, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1962) p. 473.

17. *Ibid.* p. 474.

18. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 284.

19. Swami Vivekananda, *Letters* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) p. 351.

Art and Religion

ISH KUMAR

(Continued from the previous issue)

Painting is the third factor of fine arts, though it is not equally appreciated and admired, like other arts. It is being suppressed by science and industrial development. Photography is taking its place, though photography is no art. It is mere imitation. Colours are losing their aesthetic appeal, though we deal with colour in almost every thing in our surroundings, in our furniture and even clothing. It can contribute towards our health or take away from it. It can cheer or depress our emotions. It can invigorate or devitalise our body. It can give pleasure to the eyes or irritate them. Red colour, for instance, in its purest form, is stimulating. It is warm colour and helps to increase the circulation of blood. Yellow is the colour of reason and helps to lift a man above his low desires and in its purest golden sun-colour-phase leads to spiritual entertainment. Green is nature's colour and is restful and soothing, cheerful and health-giving. The blue is the colour of beauty and sympathy, verging almost on love. In its purest form, it denotes devotional love and spiritual aspiration. Apart from these single colours, there is great art in blending or contrasting them. All this is true, but, like other arts, the two essential conditions of the influence of painting are that the art must be great and, the beholder must be gifted, though it does not need the great gift of poetic appreciation. Most people expect painting to be like photography to be recognised immediately, as if it has no elements of the artist's personality in it. It is no doubt true that painting constitutes a universal language, intelligible to all beholders. The response to such old masters

as Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Rubens was and still is instant wonder and delight. Picasso, however, thought that painting, like every other art, needed some innate aesthetic capacity to appreciate it, since painting indicated not so much the object painted as the artist's personality. To him, a woman was not a woman, but a combination of lines, forms and colour according to the painter's mood and his result was seldom Eve-like. In the name of art and according to his inspiration he transformed natural appearances. "Reality was no longer in the object," he said. Reality was in the painting....we no longer wanted to fool the eye; we wanted to fool the mind." He was ridiculed at first and there was a storm of protests in artistic circles when he began to create unrecognisable paintings, but now most artists have come to believe that painting too is not mere imitation, but transformation. He is now called "the culture hero of the century". He has established what is called abstract art. The same pictures which could not bring even a pound or two are being sold for thousands of pounds. In 1967, one of his paintings cost 36.1 lakhs rupees, believed to be the highest price ever paid for a work of a living artist. It is a pity that I could not meet him when I was in France in 1937, and again in 1938, to ask him about the spiritual significance of abstract paintings, nor have I discovered it myself to form any opinion so far. Perhaps some more qualified art critic might discover it sometime and say about Picasso what Van Gogh, the famous Dutch painter, said about Rembrandt, "There is something of Rembrandt

in the Gospel and something of the Gospel in Rembrandt."

I visited Louvre in Paris, the largest art gallery in the world. It covers and encloses 49 acres and yet is not big enough for its vast collection, part of which is stored in the basement or shifted to smaller museums. The trip through galleries up and down is about eight miles. Here quantity suppresses quality. How can one stop to appreciate a painting, much less to discover its religious significance? Louvre deserves all the superlatives that are showered on it—the biggest in art gallery space, the richest in value of art, the most famous and fabulous in the world.

But the real custodian of the greatest paintings is not France, but Italy; in fact, even Louvre was enriched by Napoleon with his loot from Italy. The place which still stands out most vividly in my memory now after more than half a century is Florence, the city of great interest to all lovers of art, the house of a score of the most famous painters, poets and musicians. It is said that without Florence, there would have been no Renaissance in Europe. During the end of the World War II, the Allied High Command issued to the troops lists of works of art throughout Europe to be protected from damage. No wonder that for Florence, the command was—"the whole city must be regarded as a work of art of first importance." The most famous of the painters of Florence are Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Of the former, I shall talk a little later. The latter was the most characteristic of the giants of the Renaissance. He has been called "the universal man", "the perfect type of man who lived in the modern world." Will you believe that he was a painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, musician, anatomist, mathematician, naturalist, inventor, astronomer, stage designer and

philosopher? He was left-handed and wrote Italian from right to left and yet he left 5,000 pages of unpublished manuscript. His most inspiring painting is *The Last Supper*, known as the greatest single painting in the world, and a source of eternal inspiration to all Christians, though I have known him more through *Mona Lisa* (mentioned above), a copy of which has been in my possession for more than half a century. It speaks unexpressively through its charming smile on her face, though it does not become clear whether it is a smile in the mouth, in the eyes or in the cheeks. Its smile is still the subject of endless discussions. Her hands are executed with as much care as her face and have been called the most beautiful hands in painting. In fact, this is the painting which made me realise that painting too was a great art. "All that is beautiful," said Leonardo, "even humanly beautiful dies—save in art."

Next to Florence, I can talk of Rome, "the eternal city," "the spiritual home of the world," particularly the Vatican City, a sort of independent country, the smallest country in the world, a little more than 100 acres, inhabited by 1,000 people, though on many days more than that number visit the place. What interested me there most was the Sistine Chapel, the ceiling of which was painted by Michelangelo, a marvellous genius. He took up the work most reluctantly, Pope Julius almost forced him. The whole roof, 10,000 sq. ft., is covered with marvellous paintings, more than three hundred, many of them much bigger than life size. They represent almost the whole story of the Book of Genesis, containing account of the creation of the world, the Fall of Man, the Deluge and the rest. Even God is there with Adam and Eve gazing at Him. Imagine the labour—ten thousand square feet to be designed, sketched, plastered and painted with more than 340 figures, all

over-head on a ceiling of the sixty-five-foot-high room. For four years and a half, Michelangelo worked on it, either lying flat on his back on a high scaffold or sitting with his face bent backwards, as his brush moved. The lime from the plaster threatened to destroy his eyes. He even moved his bed into the chapel. At times he neither ate nor slept nor changed his clothes.

In a poem (translated here in part) he described his condition: "My belly almost touches my chin, my heart points skyward, my chest bends like a hoop and from my brush wet paint drops on my face. I am in the wrong place. I am not a painter." The Pope was constantly sending for him to know when the ceiling would be finished (a wrong question to ask an artist). "It will be finished when it will be finished," replied Michelangelo. The Pope, infuriated, struck him with a stick with such force that the stick broke across the artist's back. Michelangelo refused to paint further. The Pope sent a hasty messenger after him with gold and an apology. When at last it was finished in November 1512, the Pope whispered to him, "My son, you have surpassed our wildest dream." The Chapel stands today as a tribute to the greatness of the human spirit. It is decidedly the greatest single-handed work of art thus far performed by man. It has become a place of devoted pilgrimage for all Christians, including the non-Catholics. I spent a whole hour there and ultimately left most reluctantly.

Michelangelo was also a great architect and sculptor and the Church of St. Peter, also in the Vatican City, stands another movement of his greatness. It is perhaps the largest christian church in the world and attracts christian votaries from all over.

It is hard to believe how a slab of cold marble can be so transformed into a great

work of art and be invested not only with incredible beauty of form but also with such profound passion. No one who has not seen a Michelangelo sculpture can really sense that awesome power of art, the delicate beauty or the strength of his statues, the serenity and tenderness of their expression. His style has been equated to "the language of the gods." Georgia Vinari, his biographer, wrote, "His work transcends and eclipses that of every artist, living or dead." He has been called "a master of live stone." He infused "the real passion and intense spiritual quality" into stone. He perceived beauty as the harmonious blend of the physical with the soul. He did not find any schism between matter and spirit. In spite of all his great works, not possible to mention in an article like this, on his death bed on February 18, 1564, a month short of his 89th birthday, he whispered, "I regret that I have not done enough for the salvation of my soul and that I die just as I am beginning to learn the alphabet of my profession." His influence on his contemporaries was incalculable and the relevance of his art will continue as long as art and beauty continue to be of importance to humanity. Vinari aptly wrote: "Michelangelo was sent into the world by God as an exemplar for those who practise art...to perform as true and excellent craftsmen."

Sculpture and architecture, in fact, are also visual arts like painting as music and poetry are audible arts. The most prominent illustration of their importance in India that one can cite are the Ajanta and Ellora caves. They are marvellous rock-cut temples and monasteries, particularly celebrated for their fine carving and wall painting. They are of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain origin and depict religious legends and divinities with unexcelled vitality and exuberance. They are among the most marvellous glories of ancient India.

Mention must also be made of the Kailash Nath temple near Aurangabad as a glorious work of architecture, beautifully carved with such perfect polishing of stones that even today they reflect all who enter and thousands of devotees do every year. I must confess, however, that what charmed me most on my all-India tour more than half a century ago was the Dilwara temple in Rajasthan near Mount Abu for which they charged us entry fee. I have never seen such white marble carving with all its richness and delicacy elsewhere as in that Jain temple, not even in the Church of St. Peter in the Vatican City.

Here one cannot help mentioning the 800 year old Jagannath temple at Puri which is revered as one of the country's foremost pilgrimage centres. This 12th century structure is a work of unparalleled architectural splendour, embellished with exquisite engravings. From ancient times every prominent religion has developed a certain architectural type for its edifices of worship in order to distinguish them from buildings of temporal use, and thus to intensify the worshippers' spiritual understanding and feeling. The dome-shaped tops of the Buddhist temples, of the Jewish synagogues and of the Islamic mosques remind us of the canopy of heaven guarding the world below. The lofty steeple of a Hindu temple and the tapering tower of a Gothic Church, pointing to the highest, remind men of the Absolute one who is above all. From these concrete symbols, the worshipper contemplates their meaning i.e., the particular aspect of the divinity they represent. The picture of a saint, for instance, is not a mere picture, but a personification of the ideal he stood for, an embodiment of the principle he identified. From form one reaches the formless. That, in fact, is the function of all art—to give concrete shape to inner ideas and ideals. A concrete representation of

an abstract idea makes the abstract idea clear and vivid. A pictorial representation of devotional worship makes devotion real and intense. Art is interpretative rather than representative. True art consists in idealisation and not in imitation of the real and hence it is pleasing and uplifting. Religion deals primarily with suprasensible truths. In order to comprehend the Supreme Being clearly, to worship Him with devotion and joy, to feel His presence vividly and plainly, the religious spirit of man has revealed itself in all kinds of arts. It can also be said that religion has played a distinctive role in the development of arts. Perhaps all the fine arts owe their origin to religion.

To sum up, it may be said that art does not deal with facts as such, but what Pater calls "the sense of facts". And this is Hegel: "Art liberates the real import of appearances from the semblance and deception of this bad and fleeting world, and imparts to phenomenal semblances a higher reality, born of the mind. The appearances of art, therefore, far from being mere semblances, have the higher reality and more genuine existence in comparison with the realities of common life." Ruskin distinguished between what he called the "geometric truth" and the "organic truth." Browning declared:

*It is the glory and the good of art—
Art still remains the one way possible
of speaking truth.*

Very often, with different kinds of experiences, sad and glad, happy and painful, small mercies and little ironies, life looks to be chaos and confusion and we are at a loss what to make of it. The artist goes through the same phantasmagoria, but he has a deeper perception. The lens of his vision is better focussed and the chaos is transformed into cosmos with him. Even

sorrow becomes meaningful and he declares with Goethe—

*Who ne'er his bread in sorrow ate,
Who ne'er the mournful midnight hours,
Weeping upon his bed has sate
He knows you not, your Heavenly
powers.*

or with Keats:

*To sorrow I bade good morrow,
And thought to leave her far away behind,
But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly
She is constant to me and so kind.*

or with Wordsworth:

*"A deep distress hath humanised my
soul."*

There are a hundred problems of life that an artist deals with. He does not offer solutions as a philosopher does. He gives us a deeper peep into those problems and the significance behind them. Let me end with another of Paul Brunton's quotations: "In both cases—the artist who creates and the layman who contemplates, there is approach to the borderline of yoga. If it is pure beauty which calls forth this adoration and not some lesser thing, they may indeed cross this borderline and find themselves in a yoga state."

* * *

Long after this article was written, I have come across very relevant quotations on the topic in *Prabuddha Bharata* editorials which are given below:

"Yoga and art in Hinduism were wedded together. The artist in Buddhism was called *sādhaka*, *mantrin*, or *yogin*..." (*Prabuddha Bharata*, March 1991, p. 122).

"Artistic emotion," comments Romain Rolland, "a passionate instinct for the beautiful, was

the first channel bringing him (Sri Ramakrishna) into contact with God." (*Ibid.*) Truth, beauty, art, aesthetic appreciation and mysticism are inseparably woven together. (*Ibid.*, 123).

He (Sri Ramakrishna) loved to sing, for he had a good voice, and as lofty ideas melted in the melody of a song, he experienced divine joy. To him music was the language of God, a reminder that we live in a world, which is compound of harmony, melody and rhythm. (Wasn't it Robert Browning who said, "There is no truer truth obtainable by man than comes of music?")

Sri Ramakrishna's dialogues were always interspersed with devotional songs sung by his talented disciples. He often participated, singing to chorus or solo and would very often fall into a state of divine intoxication. Dearer far than all to Ramakrishna was the music begotten of the soft stillness of silence when he turned inward on a journey into the labyrinth of his own mind to discover truth invisible to the naked eye as Wordsworth put it, to behold "truths that wake, to vanish never."

In joy or in pain, came to him as a natural language of prayer, to lead him along on a path of ecstatic communion. He could experience music on the noiseless burst of yonder flowers, at the soft caress of the rising sun.

Once Sri Ramakrishna remarked, "There is a special manifestation of God's power in a man who has an outstanding gift of music. The way of music is to suggest and of its literature to affirm and guide. To Ramakrishna music and sensory knowledge came as aids to God's experience. (*Ibid.*, Jan., '91, pp. 69-70).

The origin and growth of Indian dance drew its inspiration and nourishment from

this mystical dance...It was a sacred art performed with deep religious devotion and accompanied by instrumental ensembles, captivated and elevated the minds of countless devotees who thronged the temples... The art of dance is not mere entertainment, but has spiritual efficacy. The end of dramatic art, according to Bharata, is the moral improvement of those who witness it, not directly through sermons put into the mouths of the performers, but indirectly by making the audience experience the goodness of the virtuous path through identification with the focus of the dramatic situation.

According to Ananda Coomaraswamy, a pioneer historian of art and foremost interpreter of Indian culture to the west, *bhakti* and *yoga* were the dominant motifs which governed Indian art. Sister Nivedita too voiced the same opinion. "Great Art epochs in history are great religious epochs in these historic moments at which the soul of man was mostly deeply smitten by the glory of Ideals. In accordance with this truth, is the absolute agreement between Indian thought and Indian Art...in fact that Art, like science—like religion, has her eyes upon the unseen that transcends the seen."

Beauty then is the transcendental perfection in things, which transcends the thing itself and establishes a relationship with the infinite. Beauty makes things fit to give joy to the spirit...Therefore all Art forms address themselves to the task of manifesting this perfection and strive to lead human beings towards the ultimate God of freedom. The view that aesthetic experience is akin to mystic experience was advanced by the religious genius, Plotinus, of the third century A.D. Abhinavagupta of Kashmir held that the experience of the highest level is the experience of the Self, the Atman, or the pure Bliss. At this level of

experience, the duality in creation of subject and object disappears through intense introspection. This is also the yoga of ecstasy according to Patanjali. All things endowed with beauty and glory are aspects of God Himself, says the Gita in the tenth chapter. Sri Krishna says to Arjuna: "Whatever glorious or beautiful or mighty being exists anywhere, know that it has sprung from a spark of my splendour." (x. 41) The guiding inspiration breathes life and freshness into all forms of Art—dance, music sculpture, painting, architecture and iconography. They all represent spiritual and religious idealism. A painting, a statue, or a temple structure manifests a religious ideal to the devotee who contemplates it. It brings to the fore the object of devotion as if face to face with a lover. It is only a means to visualization of profound spiritual truths. To the Indian mind, Art is an effective expression of the Absolute. Nowhere else in the world, perhaps, has this philosophy of Art been looked upon with such reverence or imbued with such lofty significance. The following fascinating classification attests to the transmundane nature of art.

There are three schools of the Philosophy of Art: (1) The *Rasa-Brahma-Vada* (poetry, dance, drama); (2) The *Nāda-Brahma-Vada* (music); and (3) The *Vastu-Brahma-Vada* (architecture). According to the propounders of these schools, Art represents the infinite—the timeless dimension. Temple structure specially embodies spiritual ideas relating to the Yogic centres.

Bharata makes a bold assertion in his classical treatise that the creation of art is possible to him who has mastered all knowledge and fully grasped the mystery of life and realized the oneness hidden ingeniously in the diversity. As the greatest authority on the art of dance and drama, he assigns the supreme place to the *Nāṭya*. He says:

“There is no art or science, no craft or skill or knowledge that is not covered by the supreme art of *Nāṭya* (dance). (*Ibid.*, May, 1991, 202-3).

Melody and rhythm of music have the power to elevate the mind to sublime heights and ultimately to lead one to the supreme realization. *Nāda* issues forth from the Absolute. The perpetual sound is grasped in deep meditation. Therefore *Nādopāsana* worship of music is *Yoga Upāsana*. Both have similar approach and aim. Music of pleasant sound easily brings under control the tempestuous mind and helps in concentration. As Henry Longfellow said: “Music is the universal language of mankind.” It is God who manifests Himself as beauty in all things, as the goodness in human beings, and as the melody in music ...Dakṣa’s prayer to Siva in the *Mahābhārata* is: “Lord, You are that Artist, the greatest of all Artists and the Promulgator of all arts.” (*Ibid.*, 206).

The rapturous dance of Krishna as cowherd, and that of Chaitanya and of Sri Ramakrishna stoke the fire of spiritual feeling in onlookers...“But those who will not sing or dance, mad with God’s name, will never attain God,” said Sri Ramakrishna. In dance and music, the *Bhāva* (feeling) quickly turns itself into *Rasa* (Bliss), and profoundly affects the minds of those who behold it. Saints like Mira, Ramprasad, Purander Das, Tyagaraja, and Tulsidas were not only inspired poets, but also great musicians. They danced while

they sang. Extolling dance and music Sri Ramakrishna once remarked, “If a person excels in singing, music, dancing or in any other art, he can also quickly realize God, provided he strives sincerely.”

The art of dancing in India has a divine origin. It imitates the different dance postures of Siva, or in the later development, of Krishna. A transcendent state of *Ānanda* or bliss is its goal. The ultimate aim of human life is to realize that state of spiritual beatitude. As all forms of art have their inspiration in God, their purpose or *raison d’être* is to lead again to Him. The fruition of art lies in the purification of the human psyche and in uplifting the human spirit to spiritual heights. Art and dance provide a fine medium for self-expression on the part of man to find his unity with the Cosmos and its Creator. In the words of Anand Coomarswamy, one of the great exponents of Indian art, “The dominant motif governing its evolution from the third century B.C. onwards and up to the close of the eighteenth century, are devotion (*Bhakti*) and renunciation (*Yoga*)” (*Ibid.*, April, 164-165).

The spiritual map of India is thickly dotted with musicians and music-composers who used their art and talent not only for individual personal salvation, but broadcast it to help the fortunate move Godward.

He (Tyagaraja, the saint-musician) expressed in his compositions the truths of the *Gītā* and *Upaniṣads* in simple and appealing language. (*Ibid.*, Sept., 383).

You Are Your Mind

ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM

Mind is everything ; it is, on occasion, both our foe and friend. The author, well known for his many valuable books, runs a number of charitable and religious activities in Bombay.

Manopupangama dhamma; mano satta, mano maya—"The quintessence (constituting everything) is mind ; the essence constituting things is mind ; everything is mental," taught Buddha. Carlo Rubia received the Nobel Prize for having demonstrated in a laboratory that the sub-atomic particles are mental waves—which is the scientific echo of the Upaniṣadic teaching.

All of us experience the threefold states of mind: waking, dreaming, and sleeping. In our waking hours the physical world is present and impinges upon us, and we then take it as the only real—so real that the spiritual world recedes to the background, nay, does not exist at all. In this waking state, my house is *my* house, my wife is *my* wife, my wealth is *my* wealth, my brothers, *my* brothers, my government, *my* Government, and so on. Then passions, desires, lusts assail us in their most violent and virulent forms. We are tossed about on the ocean waves of desires and untoward thoughts, all succeeding each other in rapid succession, and we fall victim to them. We forever oscillate between pleasure and pain, light and darkness, happiness and misery.

All of us go the round of the successive mental states. As long as the dreams last they are so real to us that all else is forgotten. Waking experiences and dream experiences are basically the same, since both are functions of our mind, the only difference being that the dream experience is short, while the waking experiences are long. But on psychological analysis, both are found

to be of the same mental stuff. As we remember our waking experiences so we also remember our dream experiences, until the impressions of both states sink into the dark ocean depths of the great subconscious. It is as though such once-live experiences lie buried underneath a veil of nescience for the time being, until at a later date they are called back to the conscious level for one reason or other.

It is the same mind that has gone out through waking and dreaming states that is covered up with the great Unconscious when one enters into deep sleep. In that state one does not see or hear or exercise any of the sense organs which were active only a few minutes before when that mind was waking or dreaming.

So, then, the conscious level belongs to the waking state of the mind ; the subconscious level belongs to the dreaming state of mind ; and the great unconscious level belongs to the sleeping state. These states belong to all sentient beings in the entire universe—humans, mammals, plants, angels, seraphs, and all. They belong to the phenomenal world, the world of change and mutability, the *prapanca*, the world of names and forms that is forever being created, maintained in existence for a time, and then dissolved. So far, to understand this triple state is possible for everyone, without any serious difficulty, if only one undertakes to ponder oneself introspectively. One thus sees in waking hours the physical world when the senses are active, the dreaming

state in the mental world when the mind alone is active and the senses are at rest, and finally, the third state of total unconsciousness in deep sleep when both the senses and mind are at rest and inactive.

Now, the solution to all our existential problems—of misery and suffering, light and darkness, and all the dual throng that inflict heavy blows on all earthly pilgrims, is to be sought in another state of mind which is not agitated by the tides of passion, desires, emotions, lusts, or thoughts of any kind. It is quite apart from the states of waking, dream, and deep sleep, transcending them all. It is a fully awakened state wherein consciousness returns to oneself in a kind of self awareness and self consciousness, and wherein all the mental powers and faculties are indrawn. It is the Fourth, or transcendental state, which is blissful, self-abiding, self-conscious, and self-realized. There the mental powers do not go outwards into the physical objects or the senses as in the waking state, or to the objects of the mental world as in the dreaming state, or to the unconscious state of non-perception-of-the-objective-world that is deep sleep.

This is the Absolute Consciousness behind all our human experiences. It is the Unconditioned, the Absolute Consciousness that is the Source and Sustainance of all the phenomenal aspects of mind functioning in

the waking and dreaming and sleep states. That is the Ultimate Reality; that is Brahman; that is the Absolute Substratum of all. In the *Aitereya Upaniṣad* it is called *Prajñānam Brahma*—the Unconditioned Unitary Consciousness.

But is this Consciousness-Brahman any different from you and me? No. You yourself in that superconscious state are Brahman. *Tat tvam asi*—“*That thou art.*”, is the teaching which Uddalaka Aruni imparted to his son Svetaketu. “*Thou art That.*” All of us, beyond our waking, dreaming, and sleeping states, are That, and That only. This experiential state is called *Turiya*, not, strictly speaking, a fourth state, but by which is meant that it is the substratum and the ground on which is based the threefold phenomenal aspects of mind in the states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping. Śankara says: “It is that transcendental Consciousness that stands high above the waking, dreaming and sleeping states; that Brahman I am...not a compound of the physical elements.”

You are what you think yourself to be. Brahma, Indra, Yajnavalkya, Christ, Buddha, God, demon, angels and fishes, devas, and asurās, Krishna and Rama, and all are what they are according to their mental states. Your mind has fashioned you, plastered you. Your mind is both your God and your world, and you yourself.

Spiritual Symphony

N. HARIHARAN

In an integrated spiritual life, intellect, mind and senses blend together and play balanced parts. That is the sublime symphony. The author of this forceful essay is of Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

The conceptualisation of life as a journey is all too common. Much as a journey involves movement, life means a state of motion, a process of flux and flow, a poem of perpetual streaming. But, what is the terminus of this travel, the sanctuary of this flow, and the finale of this fervid poem? On this single point persists a difference of views which is as astounding as it is crucial. The materialist swears by sense-delights. The miser's deity of constant worship is Mammon. The lewd and the lascivious pay constant court to Eve and her voluptuous charms. The hero glorifies courage, the pedant consummate scholarship, the politician championship of the underdog, the social-worker alleviation of human miseries, the ritualistic puritan meticulous observance of religious ceremonies, the pious the recital of psalms, the sluggish the cosy comforts of sloth and so on and so on. In this motley crowd of ardent life-lovers stands that odd person, the unearthly *sādhaka* (spiritual aspirant) who uncompromisingly maintains that the goal of life is Release—cessation of transmigratory life—*mokṣa*. Where does the grain of truth lie in this chaff of half-truths and untruths? And has the seemingly-irrelevant but stout declaration of the true *sādhaka* any chance against the mumblings of the miser or the cackle of the concupiscent who, however, have, at their beck and call, tangible and immediate benefits to prove their points?

A little reflection will, however, reveal that the divergence of views is not so much

on ultimate goals as on the penultimate ends which constitute the proximate means to the final aim. All are unanimous in holding that the one and only aim of life is happiness, unflawed, unalloyed and unexcellable. Wherein does this happiness lie? It is on this issue that a bewildering variety of views covering the entire spectrum prevails. What is the key to felicity? Is this master key material or spiritual? Is it possible to extract the honey of supernal bliss from the flowers of sense-objects? If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, how do we explain the depression and disquietude of the richest, who are in possession of all they want?

The clearest answer to this nagging question was given by Sage Yajnavalkya long ago in reply to his wife Maitreyi's pointed poser—"Sir, if indeed this whole earth full of wealth be mine, shall I be immortal through that or not?"—*Yannu ma iyam bhagoh, sarvā pṛthivī vittena pūrṇā syāt, syāṁ nvahaṁ tenāmrutāho neti.* (*Brhad-āranyaka Upanisad*, IV. v. 3) The Sage replied, "No, your life will be just like that of people who possess plenty of things but there is no scope of immortality through wealth."—*Neti hovāca Yājñavalkyaḥ yathai-vopakaraṇavatām jīvitam tathaiiva te jīvitam syāt, amṛutatvasya tu nāsāsti vittaneti.* (*Ibid.*) The answer of the Sage has added a new dimension to our probe. The Sage has clearly identified happiness—*sukham*—with immortality—*amṛutatvam*. Why do sense-objects (*viśayas*), the seemingly sure

capsules of happiness, not lead to immortality, the synonym of happiness? In fact, the *Gītācārya* brands them “sources of sorrow”—*duḥkhayonaya*—when he says: “*Ye hi saṁsparsajā bhogāḥ duḥkhayonaya eva te*”—“Whatever pleasures are born of contacts with objects are only sources of sorrow.” (*Bhagavad Gītā*, V. 22) Why are they sources of sorrow? Because “they have a beginning and an end—*ādyantavantah*,” says the Lord. Sorrow, then, is the stemp of finitude. Conversely, bliss is the imprint of infinitude. It follows as a logical corollary that to remain ever blissful is to shake the fetters of finitude and to grow into and realise the infinitude. Now, according to the Lord, the finite are the *mātrāsparsās*—contacts with objects. They are finite because contacts as well as objects are both finite. Now, these two, contacts and objects are both of the stuff of Matter. It follows therefore that Matter is finite. Conversely, the Spirit (Self or Atman) is infinite. Thus to remain ever anchored in Bliss is to realise our Spiritual Essence. The master key to Eternal Bliss is spiritual and nothing but spiritual. After all, the apparently cranky Vedantic seeker seems to have been proved right.

How, then, is the Chariot of Life to move? Who is to control and guide its movement and how? In *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* we get a graphic illustration as to how the chariot of life should be driven. The *Upaniṣad* says:

Know the Atman as the Lord of the chariot, the body as the chariot; know the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as the reins.

The senses (and the instincts), they say, are the horses, and their roads are the sense-objects. The wise call Him the enjoyer (when He is) united with the body, the senses and the mind.

One who is always of unrestrained mind and devoid of right understanding—his sense-organs become uncontrollable like the vicious horses of a charioteer.

But of Him who knows and has a mind always controlled, the senses are always controllable as the good horses of the driver.

And he who is devoid of proper understanding, thoughtless and always impure, never attains that goal and gets into the round of births and deaths.

But he who is intelligent, ever-pure and with the mind controlled reaches that goal from whence none is born again.

The man who has Intelligence for his charioteer and Mind as (well-controlled) rein,—he attains the end of the journey, that Supreme Place of Viṣṇu.

(*Kaṭhopaniṣad*, Ch. I, Sec. III)

The *Upaniṣad* spells out the grave hazards of an undisciplined life wherein the intellect of the *jīvātmā* (chariot-rider) is warped and distorted by false values and hence is incapable of exerting beneficent influence on the wayward mind which, bereft of the backing of an intelligent will, is helpless in reining in the turbulent senses that madly charge through the thick jungle of teeming sense-objects. Such an unregulated life comes to utter grief and condemns the *jīvātmā* to eternal perdition. When the *jīvātmā*'s intellect is shaped and strengthened by strong conviction of sublime spiritual truths, it gains a clear vision. Such a transparent intellect checks the violent oscillations of the fickle mind and directs its thoughts into lofty spiritual channels. The spiritually-oriented mind guards the vulnerable senses against the onslaught of preda-

tory sense-objects and renders them totally impervious to the subtle enticements of hypnotic sense-objects. Such a disciplined life reaches its spiritual goal unhindered and the *jīvātmā* attains the end of the journey—*visnoh paramam padam*.

Thus, the goal of life from the spiritual standpoint (which is the only valid standpoint) is termination of the cycle of transmigration once for all. This goal cannot be attained by vulgar sense-indulgence. It can be reached only by the triune scheme of rigorous self-discipline under which the intellect's conviction of spiritual verities is unquestioned, the mind's moorings in the chastened Intellect are unshakable and the enlightened self-withdrawal of the senses is complete. Even as the course of the chariot is decided by the charioteer, the keynote of spiritual life is set by one-pointed intellect—*vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ*, in the *Gītā*'s pregnant phrase. The depiction of Lord Parthasarathy imparting spiritual instruction to confused Arjuna in the chariot stationed on the tumultuous battle-field has a host of spiritual implications. Lord Parthasarathy is the pure intellect in total union with the Spirit. Arjuna is the bewildered mind caught up in the perplexities of life. The noisy battle-ground is the unquiet temporal life with its mad clamour of myriads of sense-objects. The settled mind in perfect harmony with the spiritualised intellect is depicted by awakened Arjuna when he exclaims thus:

*Naṣṭo mohah smṛtir labdhā
tvatprasādān mayā 'cyuta*

*sthito 'smi gatasandeh
kariṣye vacanam tava.*

Destroyed is my delusion and recognition has been gained by me through Thy grace, O Acyuta (Krishna). I stand firm with my doubts dispelled. I shall act according to Thy word.

(*Bhagavad Gītā* XVIII, 73)

To quote from Sri Sankara's commentary on this verse:

"Destroyed is the nescience-born delusion, the cause of all transmigratory ills—a veritable sea, hard to cross. (Naṣṭah mohah ajnānajah samasta samsārānarthahetuḥ sāgarah iva dustarah) Won is the memory of the Self's truth by virtue of which all knots of the heart have been rent. All this has been due to Your grace on which alone I depended, O Lord!"

Arjuna's exclamation is, in effect, the delusion-free Mind's ecstatic experience of its firm repose in Spirit-soaked Intellect. This dual harmony of Intellect and Mind automatically leads to the Triune Symphony of integrated spiritual life wherein the triple notes of spiritualised Intellect, harmonised Mind and sublimated Senses blend together beautifully. Spirit sets the keynote. Intellect, Mind and Senses elaborate in unison on this basal monotone. The result is a grand Spiritual Symphony which an integrated spiritual life, in effect, is.

Shalt Thou Be Liberated ?

DR. ALEXANDER SATHYAMANGALAM

“I have united you both before you were seeded in this clod,
Attached you both to stick like wax in this sacred soil—
Prior to the primordial pullet-sperm proliferated.”

‘Precisely,’ said Prajapati, perambulating personage.

Sages of the East who could withstand Cupid’s arrow,
Who never felt the flash of passion,
Knew the cosmic mystery of worldly wedlocks.
(The wheel is useful for the central vacant space.)

The divine Truth continued from the days of old
Without test statistical or analysis of variance—
Produced SAVITRI of yore,
Who challenged even the god of Death,
Brought back to life *pati*, the wheel of her life,
Who floated away by the force of fate.

The glorious wall built of the Vedic soil of Savitri
Crumbled and fell as a virus infected this holy land,
Clouded an ancient culture, nourished by this fertile clay.
The infectious virus spread deep into the subsoil
Of those who had no knowledge of the solemn Truth ;
Filled the vacant space of their heart
With offsprings of the virus—the W—’s ‘Lib’,
Forgetting the Puranic Ardhanariswar union,
Departing the sacred Vedic path.

Prakriti in its playful mood strikes the Cupid arrows
All worldly creatures are flamed with passion—
Compete for partners
Seeking bondage.

Those who filled their heart prematurely
With saplings of the foreign virus
Creep along with swaggering wheels.
As the wheel of time revolves
Breaks the melody of predelineate note—
Flapdoodle, underfiled progeny,
Annointed to perform progeny’s worship
To please the world.

But now She weeps whispering:
Shalt thou be liberated from all ties and lineage ?
Or Libs be wabbed from swaddled wombs ?

A Dedicated Soul Passes Away

On June 2, 1992, Prasanna (Katharine Whitmarsh) died peacefully at the age of ninety-four in her home in Santa Barbara, California. And so ends an era. According to a senior Swami of the Ramakrishna Order, Prasanna was the last devotee either in America or in India to have seen Swami Vivekananda.

Prasanna's association with Vedanta was part of her family's legacy. Her father, Theodore Whitmarsh, was devoted to Swamiji, and it was to him that Swamiji entrusted the publication of his four yoga books.

In the Summer of 1899, Swamiji was a guest of the Leggetts at Ridgely Manor in Stone Ridge, New York. On his daily walks he would stop and watch the young Whitmarsh children, Prasanna and her brother Karl, play. The children would run races, and Swamiji would give a penny to the winner. And he held Prasanna on his lap.

Prasanna dearly loved Tantine, as her great-aunt Josephine MacLeod was known. She was fascinated by Tantine's vibrant personality. Tantine's enthusiasm for Swamiji and his message captivated Prasanna and became a major influence in her life.

Prasanna has played a unique role in the history of the Vedanta Society of Southern California. She had outstanding capacities of friendship and generosity. Her strength of mind enabled her to make a major contribution to Ramakrishna-Vedanta literature by compiling a highly appreciated *Concordance to the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Translated by Swami Nikhilananda*, when she was already in her eighties.

A devoted and steadfast supporter of Swamiji's work in the West, Prasanna participated in its growth, as her father and her great-aunt had done before her.

REVIEWS & NOTICES

UNDERSTANDING MANTRAS, Harvey P. Alper, Editor. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 110-007. 540 pages; Rs. 200 Hardback.

The Tantra speaks of the Mantra as the sound-body of the Deity. The Veda refers to the Mantra as "carved from the heart"; it reveals itself only to him who is purified. Generally the Indian tradition reveres the Mantra as highly sacred, capable of securing fulfilment here and hereafter. Put in modern terms the Mantra is a store of Power, spiritual and other. To the Western mind, however, the Mantra is an intriguing phenomenon; does it have a meaning? Is it a part of language or something of a pre-language character? Has it a role other than the ritualistic? Why does its efficacy depend upon its repetition—*japa*? *Understanding Mantras* is an excellent presentation of the diverse lines of this approach. Organised by the masterly mind of Dr. Alper, here are detailed studies on the subject by different scholars, with a brilliant introduction by the Editor. He notes: 'Mantras are many-sided instruments...they are anodyne...they are one of the structural pivots around which a mature and sophisticated society has organised its life.' (page 14)

Speaking of the "Mantra in the Rig Veda," Ellison Banks Findly writes: "Mantra has power, and the source of that power is the truth and order that stands at the very center of the Vedic universe." (page 17) The sources of mantric power are two: its form and its content. It relates man to *rta* (the right) and *satya* (the true), and through them to God.

Writing on "Vedic Mantras," Frits Staal points out that the commonly made distinction between Vedic and Tantric Mantras is somewhat superficial. Are Mantras a special kind of language? Staal answers: "The domain of Mantras is wider than that of language: anything that has certain phonological and pragmatic properties can be a mantra, but it becomes language only if it possesses in addition certain syntactic and semantic properties." (page 70)

In his paper on "Mantra in Vedic and Tantric Ritual," Wheelock underlines the fact that "...the Mantra (is) an effective word, a word of action, not just of thought." The *Bija Aksharas*, he points out, are not "mere symbols of the elements, they *are* the cosmic elements in essential form...the perceived ability of Mantras to independently effect a basic transformation in the nature of one of the ritual's components, stands in contrast to the Vedic practice where the Mantra will actualise or make explicit a transmudane reality already suggested by the physical symbolism of action or appearance." (page 103) Papers on "Mantra in Ayurveda" by Kenneth Zysk, "Mantras as Speech Acts (Mimamsa view)" by John Taber, "Power of Mantras in Bhartrihari's *Vakyapadiya*" by Harold Coward, are cogently argued and informative. "Mantra in the Pancharatra" by Sanjukta Gupta is easily one of the best in the volume. Ludo Rocher, on "Mantras in Sivapurana"; "Mantra in Yogic Meditation (Pasupata)" by Gerhard Oberhammer, deal with the role of the Mantra in Saivism.

Dr. Alper's essay on "Kshemaraja's Shivasutravimarshini", bringing out the fuller implications of the concept of 'the Cosmos as Shiva's Language-Game' is stimulating. Perhaps the most useful chapter for serious scholars is again by Alper, under the title, "Working Bibliography for the Study of Mantras," running into over a hundred pages. It is unbelievably exhaustive and a treatise in itself.

Understanding Mantras is a great work. It enlarges our knowledge of the origin and nature of Mantras in accord with the ancient Indian tradition. In a sense it is the cream of Western scholarship on the subject—perceptive, innovative and reverent.

M. P. Pandit

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RELIGIONS, BY Y. Masih. Publisher: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 7. 400 pages; Rs. 140 (paper), Rs. 200 (cloth)

Designed as a textbook, this work gives a satisfying account of the major religions of the world: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism. The common topics chosen for comparison are: God, world, soul, heaven, hell, day of judgement, destiny of each soul, rebirth, sadhana, etc. As far as possible, an account of the historical development of each religion is provided.

The author has taken certain guidelines for his study of the comparative input of each religion. He notes that unity does not mean uniformity. Knowing is subordinate to *becoming* the Divine. God within man is as important as the Reality transcendent. While on Hinduism, he emphasises the contribution of modern Teachers like Sri Ramakrishna, and cites the vibrant description of the realisation of the Paramahansa: "...The universe was extinguished, space itself was no more. At first the shadows of ideas floated in the obscure depth of the mind. Monotonously a feeble consciousness of the Ego went on ticking. Then that stopped too. Nothing remained but existence. The soul was lost in Self. Dualism was blotted out—Beyond word, beyond thought, he attained Brahman." (page 200)

The writer traces the origins of Buddhism to Sankhyan Thought. He finds the basic framework of many of the schools in Hinduism in *Karma-Samsara-Jnana-Mukti*. Five of the commandments of Moses (Judaism) correspond to the *Pancha Mahavrata*s of the Jains. He discusses the different interpretations of the Christian Trinity and feels that it corresponds to the Indian concept of *Sat-chit-ananda*; it is, of course, difficult to agree with this approach.

In the chapter on "Critical and Comparative Study of the Key-Concepts of Religions", Dr. Masih draws upon several thinkers and scientists of the present age. Speaking of God and Evil, he asks:

Is deity willing to prevent evil, but not able?
 Then he is impotent. Is he able but not willing?
 Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing?
 Whence then is evil? (page 303)—

Shades of Anatole France! He agrees that there is a supreme Will at work in the universe, and it fulfills itself through what we call good as well as what we condemn as evil.

Religion is *a priori*; it is inherent in man. As pointed out by Paul Tillich, "faith is not a phenomenon besides others, but the central phenomenon in man's personal life, manifest and hidden at the same... Faith is an essential possibility of man..." (page 335) What is the future of religions? The author traces the growth of the spirit of Holism and the interaction of 'autonomy' and 'homonymy' at the level of the human personality, and foresees a promising future for the advent of Unity of Religions.

One last point. The author is hard on Dr. Radhakrishnan for his condemnation of proselytisation. He suspects some conspiracy of Brahminism in the opposition to Christian evangelism in India. Similarly, his discussion on "Secularism in India" is bound to evoke different reactions.

Barring certain judgemental portions in the last two chapters of evaluation, the bulk of the book is a fine contribution to the subject.

M. P. Pandit

SELECTED WRITINGS OF M. M. GOPINATH KAVIRAJ, Published by M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj Centenary Committee, Mata Anandamayee Ashram, Bhadaini, Varanasi, 221-001, 1990. Price: paperback Rs. 50/-; Library edition Rs. 75/-, 225 pages.

M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj is one of the most notable saintly figures of modern India. He had already become a legendary figure in his own life-time so far as the mystic philosophers of the world are concerned. Varanasi, being the centre of the ancient traditional culture of our country, provided a large canvas for the illumined mind of the great mystic-philosopher. The Centenary Celebrations Committee has done great service to the world of learning by publishing some of the articles written by the Saint. Some of the articles appear here for the first time.

The Selection under review includes eleven essays of varied significance written by Kaviraj-ji and provides a wider horizon for the students of religion, philosophy, mysticism and culture. The topics dealt with in the collection are: (1) The Doctrine of Pratibha, (2) Sakta Philosophy, (3) Nada, (4) Yogini Hrdaya, (5) The Significance of Evam, (6) The Problem of Causality, (7) The Concept of Time, (8) Mysticism, (9) Philosophy of the Nathas, (10) Faith in God and (11) Mother.

In the very first essay of Selection we find a scholarly discussion on one of the important topics of Indian philosophy, namely, *pratibhā*. The word is known as *prajñā*, *parā-samvit*, *citi sakti*, *ārṣa jñāna*, and *Siddha Darśana*. In the Advaita Vedānta a term *pratibha jñāna* is found denoting the idea. The author finds that this faculty of vision is found in the *ājñā cakra* (between the two eyebrows just above the root of the nose). With the opening of the vision the individual begins to hear the eternal sound (*Nāda, Oṅkāra*). It is an approximation to the vision of the Supreme Being.

In the second article of the collection, the philosophy of Sāktism has been presented, in brief. Systematic study of the Sākta philosophy has, usually, been avoided, perhaps, because it is normally thought that it is not proper to drag down for the rational examination truths inaccessible to the experiences of ordinary mind. The transition from the knowledge of the Āgamas, through removal of doubts and intuitive knowledge and the recognition of the unity between the individual and the universal has been explained in the article. The next article explains *nāda*, *bindu* is disturbed by *kalā*. When the *bindu* splits itself, the great sound comes into being. This is known as *Śabda Brahman*. It may be noted here that

the 'word' interlinks the Absolute and the world. The next article deals with the term '*evam*' where 'a' represents the mother or the Sakti, 'v' represents the father or Siva, and the *bindu* (·) their union which is the Supreme *akṣara*.

In the article relating to mysticism, the learned saint holds that true mysticism implies that the soul is fully awakened so that normal human states, namely, waking, dream and deep-sleep, are supplemented by a state of unbroken self-awareness which presupposes the integration of consciousness. The vagueness inherent in mysticism involves a plunge into the profound depths of being and consciousness, leading to a clear intuition of Unity and Love, a state which continues even when the mental-life and the sense-life are resumed. It is notable here that some patterns may be found in the mystic behaviour. But every aspirant has his own spiritual path, not necessarily similar to others.

In the last article of the collection, entitled 'Mother', Gopinath-ji talks about Mā Ānandamayee. He, and everybody, found Her always in delightful gestures. Usually all the well-known mystics of the world have some period of gloom in their life. But the Mother, from her very birth, was aware of what she had ever been. There was no deviation from her self-conscious stature. As Kaviraj-ji views it, the Mother came down to awaken divine consciousness in man and bring peace and love into the world.

The collection of essays is illuminating from beginning to end and is worth possessing by every inquisitive soul.

Dr. S. P. Dubey
Jabalpur

FOR SEEKERS OF SPIRITUALITY

KEEP THE SOCIETY OF THE HOLY

The moment you become absorbed in contemplation, you experience unbounded joy. Days and nights pass away in the blissful consciousness of God.

Be careful not to speak of your spiritual moods and experiences to everybody, least of all to those of a worldly nature. It may hinder your growth. However, if you exchange your experiences with one of a like mind, whose temperament is in harmony with your own, you may be helped in your progress. Both of you are travelers on the same path. Perhaps your companion has already walked along it and is aware of its pitfalls. Benefited by his experiences, you may be able to avoid those dangers and difficulties.

Do you know why you should seek the society of holy men? Their experiences are a great help to a spiritual aspirant. When you visit a new place, if you have the help of a good guide, you will be able to see within a short time all that is worth seeing there; also you will be saved from the dangers and difficulties into which strangers are likely to fall. Similarly, from the company of advanced spiritual souls you will gather many valuable hints, and your struggle will be simplified.

This life may come to an end any moment. Nobody knows when. Be equipped for the journey with spiritual treasures. To go empty handed to an unknown place involves much suffering and sorrow. Birth is inevitably followed by death. Death means going to an unknown place, so you must prepare yourself for the journey. Always be ready for the great call.

Here you have every opportunity to grow spiritually. Struggle now to reach Reality. Hold on to the Pillar. Have tremendous faith in yourself. "I can know God"—with such faith forge ahead and you will reach him. Then life will be blessed. Free yourself from the wheel of birth and death. Be His eternal companion.

Banish all fear and weakness. Never weaken your mind by thinking of past mistakes. Sin? Sin only exists in man's eye. In God's eye there is none. One glance from Him and the sins of many, many births are wiped away.

You have come to Sri Ramakrishna. Hold on to him. You will have nothing to worry about.

You must have a regular routine for spiritual practices. You must have certain fixed hours for meditation and study. Under all circumstances follow this routine devotedly. Steadfastness is very important; without it no success is possible.

By steadfastness alone the mind becomes absorbed in God. Unless absorption is achieved, freedom from the temptations of the world is impossible. Lust, anger, delusion—these are strong foes. Be strong in the strength of God and escape from the net of maya.

Life is flowing quickly away, like a stream. The day that is once gone can never be recalled. Make the best use of your time. At the last moment, it will be no good crying, "Alas, alas!"