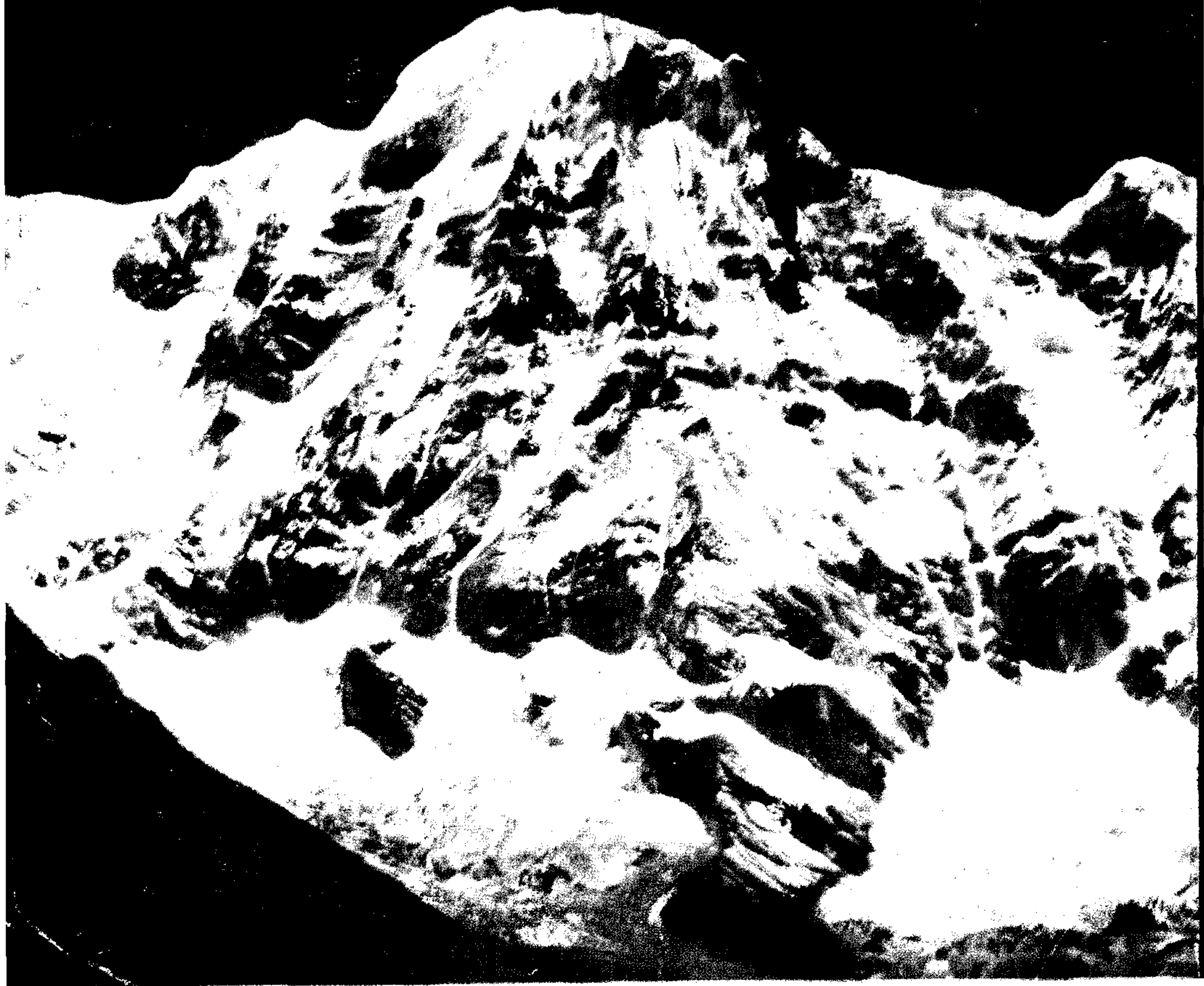


Prabuddha Bharata

or Awakened India



VOL 97 NOVEMBER 1992



ISSN 0032-6178



Editorial Office

P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh 262 524, U.P.

Publication Office

5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014
Phone 44-0898



*Rates of Subscription
(inclusive of postage)*

	Annual	Life (30 years)
India	Rs. 30	Rs. 500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs. 120	Rs. 2000
U.S.A. & Canada		
Surface Mail	\$ 20	\$ 300
Air Mail	\$ 35	\$ 600
Other Countries		
Surface Mail	£ 15	£ 225
Air Mail	£ 25	£ 375

Cover: Annapurna Peak,
Nepal

Prabuddha Bharata

**A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order**

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

NOVEMBER 1992

CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	...	...	...	441
Prayers : Do They Work—I				
—(Editorial)	...	...	...	442
Vedanta : A Rejuvenating Power				
—Dr. Tanya Mukherjee	...	...	...	448
Mysticism in The Vakhs of Lal Ded				
—A. N. Dhar	...	...	...	453
Sri Ramakrishna's Gong				
—Richard Prescott	...	...	...	458
The Supreme Puruṣa in Stotra Literature				
—Jankinath Kaul	..	..	..	462
Some Essentials of Hinduism				
—S. L. Verma	...	...	...	466
Death of The Dinosaurs—The Puranic View				
—Dr. S. K. Balasubramanian	...	...	...	473
Shanti				
—Smt. Tove Majumdar	...	...	...	475
How Long, O My Lord				
—V. Gopinathan	...	...	...	476
Mother Comes				
C. P. Ghosh	...	...	...	477
Reviews and Notices	...	...	...	478
For Seekers of Spirituality	...	...	...	480



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

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 97

NOVEMBER 1992

No. 11

Divine Wisdom

He who in the waking state enjoys, through all his organs, objects with ever-changing attributes in the outside world, who in dream has experiences similar to them in his heart, and who withdraws them in profound sleep, are one and the same Ātman—the Witness—of the three states and the Ruler of the organs. This is proved from the persistence of memory in all these states.

Thus reflecting that the three states of the mind due to Guṇas are created in Me by My Māyā, and being thus sure about the Reality, destroy egoism which is the receptacle of doubts with the sword of knowledge sharpened by inference and competent testimony, and worship Me who is seated in the heart.

One should look upon this universe as a hallucination, being a phantasm of the mind, now seen and the next moment destroyed—

like a dream, and extremely shifting like a circle of fire. It is the One Consciousness that appears as multiple in form. The three-fold distinction due to the transformation of Guṇas is Māyā.

Withdrawing the organs from the universe one should be immersed in one's own Bliss ; one should give up desires, be silent and free from action. If ever the universe is experienced, it will not lead to error, being one discarded as unreal, but will linger as a memory only, till death.

The perfect man does not behold the evanescent body, sitting or standing, removed by chance or restored by chance—for he has realized his true nature—as a man dead drunk does not care about the cloth he wears.

from the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam

Prayers : Do They Work

I

Prayer is one of the most ancient expressions of religion. Almost all great religions, including primitive ones, have laid emphasis on simple or elaborate poetic prayers. Psalms in the Bible form the best collection of prayers of both Christianity and Judaism. The Qurān contains many touching prayers to the Almighty. Jains and Buddhists have their own collections of prayers. In Hinduism we have prolific *stotra* literature containing charming poetic prayers. *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*, *Lalitā Sahasranāma*, *Śivamahimna Stotra*, *Devī Māhātmya*, to mention a few important ones. In addition, there are innumerable works of great *ācāryas* and poet-saints. The *stotras* mention that when they are recited with concentration and pure heart, these prayers are believed to achieve remission of sins (*sarvāpāpa vinirmuktah*) and bring prosperity and fulfilment of desires. While the destruction of sins and liberation form the dominant refrain of *stotra* literature, at the same time, the acquisition of impermanent material gains are subordinated. Seeking material benefits is not condemned, but the spiritual goals receive more prominence. As a religion adopts more spiritual values, the quests of supplicants become more spiritual. This becomes very clear when one reads *R̥g-Vedic* prayers, beginning from simple petitions to supernatural powers to bestow glory, riches, victory in battles and defeat of enemies, and rising to the highest requests for the welfare of humanity and Oneness of vision.

Ludwig Feuerbach, a 19th century German philosopher summed up the significance of prayer when he stated, "The most intimate

essence of religion is revealed by the most simple religious act: prayer." Most of us are skeptical about the simple act of prayer. Though outwardly we try to pray, yet, internally the nagging suspicion about its efficacy disturbs us. More often than not we resign to the idea that there is nothing harmful in praying—if some good comes out of it, that much we gain. There is nothing to lose. Some think that praying to this or that god or goddess would be to undermine their superior rationality and faith in "science". To them, there is no other higher power than the mighty human brain. The belief is that the mind is capable of achieving anything worthwhile and it can lay open the profoundest secrets in no time, no matter about the soundness of one's own rational capability. But there come moments in everyone's life when the very foundation of this self confidence is shaken. In such fear and darkness the ability to listen to one's rational thoughts seems to fly away and one feels one's self on slippery ground, as when an old woman once asked her grandson, "Do you say your prayers at night?" "Oh, yes!" he replied. "And every morning?" "No," he replied, "I'm not scared in the daytime."

In moments of trial and overwhelming difficulty, man realizes that he cannot stand alone, nor rely entirely on his own power of "being reasonable". When the mind falls into despair and one feels utterly helpless to deal with the problem through mental power alone, often the heart expresses itself and shows the way. When the mind is silent the heart becomes active. The heart has a superior language. Words are obstructive

and clumsy instruments. They often cannot express the subtle impulses of the heart, rather they obscure the truths felt there. When the heart expresses in silence, the whole truth becomes communicated without the slightest shade of misunderstanding. Human life would have become dull and dreary without the participation of heart. Mind measures and calculates, but the heart feels and acts with unerring faith. Richard of Saint-Victor, a medieval mystic, said, "Indeed many things which we shall not be able to discover either by the experiment of work or by the investigations of reason, we shall deserve to be taught by importunate prayer, by the revelation of divine inspiration."

In distress or in the anguish of grief the heart cries, beseeches, and looks beyond the ken of the ordinary for a ray of hope. This looking beyond for guidance and help is prayer. Silencing the discursive reasoning mind, the heart bursts forth in supplication to the Supreme Power. Skepticism and jarring doubts are swept aside or passed over when we invite a greater power than ourselves to come. Conceived as within our own hearts or as outside the universe, we call It God, the final Resort, Truth and Force in the world. However great may be the power of mind and intellect, in the stress of dire circumstances these fail to show us the way. Cold logic, razor sharp reasoning are admirable qualities in a human being, but they cannot always be relied upon. They have their limits beyond which they are rendered useless. There is no individual who has not experienced mental turmoil, ripping inner conflicts, acute loneliness, deep depression or agonizing human relationships. Sometimes symptoms of neurosis manifest themselves or take the forms of physical diseases. All troubles spring from a disturbed mind. Physicians and psychiatrists have been stressing the necessity of restful mind

and spiritual calmness. Spiritual quietude not only provides strength, but calms the debilitating agitation. The question that has been engaging the attention of physicians, neurophysiologists and psychiatrists is: Can sincere and earnest prayer quieten the turbulent waves of the mind, restore its balance, and bring about salutary changes in our inner and outer lives ? Does it have any power ?

Prayers are of two kinds: personal and transpersonal. When a person falls into extreme difficulty, when he sees that there is no way out for him, either physically or psychologically, and is beyond the help of any human power, he surrenders to a much higher power. He supplicates that Power to come to his rescue ; he invokes the Divine Presence to stand by his side. Usually man remembers God, in this way, in his times of great crisis. When everything is going well with him, according to his plan, his felt need for God does not arise. Having understood this universal experience of human life, Kunti Devi, the mother of the Pandavas in the *Mahābhārata*, prayed to the Lord to keep her always in some difficulties that she might never forget Him. It appears to be strange that one would pray to invite troubles, but the attitude of Kunti had a profound meaning. Her desire to have unbroken remembrance of God, and her acceptance of the unavailability of human suffering and weaknesses are the cardinal points of Kunti's prayer. There are also people who, even in happy days, pray to God to keep them permanently in a happier condition. Either to ward off grief or to win showers of more worldly happiness is the key refrain of their personal prayers.

In the first stage, personal prayer is "O Lord, give me this and give me that." In this kind of prayer, self-interest, the "me" is uppermost. In the next stage, a man's interest expands a little and he realizes that

his happiness depends also on his family members. Therefore, for them too he prays and requests God. In another stage, he grows a little more and prays to God to do good not only to himself and his small circle of relations, but to others known to him. His relationships and interconnectedness with other human beings has taken a considerable leap. Still, the concern for personal welfare has the upper hand. Personal prayers are limited to this physical world and a happy life devoid of worries and anxieties.

Transpersonal prayer has a wider dimension. It is not a prayer to the Supreme Being for material benefits, but for pure devotion and enlightenment. A person has gone beyond the personal needs and desires, yet he feels in his heart a kind of lack of spiritual fulfilment or completeness. Prayer arises out of this sense of incompleteness to attain completeness in the Divine. Imploring prayer to God wells up when a person realizes his own efforts are inadequate to liberate him from the confines of the present state of ignorance and bondage to matter. His prayer is a longing to be liberated from the strictures of limited individual consciousness to merge into the infinite blissful consciousness of God. He piteously entreats for divine intervention and his heart longs for the vision of God or Oneness. To him God is not a mere managing director of this universe to favour him with a few tinsel trinkets or to satisfy his wants. But separation from the Divine Being is an agony to him. He wants God and God alone. He believes that his trials and tribulations, as well as fame and wealth, are all from God. Therefore, such a person has no complaint or demand to enforce. Saints and sages also pray not for themselves, but for the welfare of all beings. They too suffer, but their sufferings are vicarious. They intercede

and implore the Supreme Power on behalf of suffering humanity. Their acts and thoughts are for the universal good. Moses viewed himself as one with his people, even when they failed in their duty, "Pardon your people," he prayed. Such solidarity finds its perfect form in the prayer of Christ on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Such supreme love is expressed in the words of Sri Ramakrishna when he prayed to the Universal Mother—"I just said to the Divine Mother in my ecstatic mood, 'O Mother, may those who come here (referring to himself) through sincere attraction obtain perfection.'"¹

A person who prays for material benefits is not condemned. He too gets a place among devotees. The Gita classifies four types of devotees who worship and pray to God. The Lord says, "Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me, O Arjuna: the distressed, the seekers of knowledge, the seekers of enjoyment and wealth, and the man endowed with wisdom." (VII. 16) Śaṅkara in his commentary explains the verse: "...he who is in distress—overpowered by a robber, a tiger, illness, or the like; Seekers of knowledge—means Self-knowledge or the Knowledge of God; Enjoyment—both here and hereafter; and the wise man—one who has renounced all desires born of māyā." In the following verse the Lord indicates His preference: "Of them, the wise man, ever steadfast and devoted to the One alone, excels; for supremely dear am I to the man of wisdom, and he is dear to Me." (VII. 17) But what about the three others—the distressed, the seekers of enjoyment and seekers of knowledge? Are they not dear to God? Has God the blemish of partiality towards

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985) p. 587.

some of His beings ? Not so. The Gita further says, "Noble indeed are all the classes of devotees, but the wise man I regard as My very Self ; for with the mind steadfast, he resorts to Me alone as his supreme Goal." (VII. 18)

All these four classes of devotees are noble and dear to God. The majority are in the lower stages of spiritual seeking, and only a few are on the higher level. The vision of the multitude does not extend beyond the pleasures and enjoyments of the world or heavens. They are satisfied with all desirable things. The world after all is a training ground. Each soul is being trained here and is travelling from lower truth to higher truth. God being the Indweller draws all souls by His own uncanny ways. He listens to all prayers. Prayer, even momentary, turns our minds inward towards the Indwelling Spirit. That fleeting inward glance also has its effect in bringing about transformation of one's life. We rarely become introspective for long, but during prayer for a brief moment we connect ourselves with the Cosmic Intelligence. To God, therefore, all devotees, even those who come to Him with only material requests or to mitigate their personal sorrows or suffering from illness, are dear. None is forsaken.

The Lord assures in the Gita that His children are not left desolate. "In whatever way men worship Me, in the same way do I fulfil their desires."² Explaining the verse Sankara says in his commentary, that Sri Krishna means: "I reward men by granting them the things they desire just in accordance with the way in which they seek Me, and the motive with which they seek Me ; for they do not seek for liberation. One

cannot indeed pursue pleasure and at the same time seek for liberation. Wherefore, I reward seekers of fruits by securing to them their selfish ends ; I reward the unselfish, who do their prescribed duties and seek for liberation, by granting them knowledge ; I reward men of knowledge, who have renounced the world and seek for *mokṣa*, by granting them *mokṣa* ; similarly, I reward men in distress by relieving them from distress. Thus do I reward all, just in the way they seek Me." In the simple words of Sri Ramakrishna, "God gives to different people what they can digest. The mother does not give fish *pilau* (greatly spiced) to all her children. All cannot digest it ; so she prepares simple fish soup for some."³

All are not disillusioned with the world. Still we are body-conscious and mind-conscious. Our bodies and the world mean a great deal to us. Physical enjoyments, family, wealth, status and fame, are matters of serious importance ; they occupy all our interest and attention. Man begs the Almighty to grant him these things which he considers are the sole objects necessary for his happy existence. He gets many times over what he wants. But the contentment he derives is temporary. Discontent seems to be the hallmark of life. Through the ups and downs of our earthly experience we gather enough knowledge to know black is black and white is white. During the "ups" people usually get puffed up with their intelligence and self-efforts, but during the "downs" they surrender and appeal to the Divine Spirit for Its favourable intervention. And soon or late they praise God for granting their desires. That is very comforting and strengthening. The faith that in moments of crisis someone is on our side watching and caring is a powerful solace.

2. *The Bhagavad Gita*, IV. 11.

3. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 540.

A sick child gets comfort and peace in the presence of the caring mother. Man is after all a child. His bloated ego in a moment becomes deflated. He becomes calm and peaceful when he entrusts his worries and agonies to the Source of Love. Prayer accomplishes it. It not only establishes our inter-connectedness with one another, but reveals our indissoluble relationship with the Infinite. Prayer links us up with the Source of Light. Mostly we pray for ourselves but occasionally we pray for others too. That little unselfishness and that bit of concern or love for others purifies our heart. The less and less of "me" brings more and more of peace and bliss. To pray for others means to forget our personal troubles and anxieties and feel for the welfare of others. We seldom forget ourselves, therefore we are always conscious of our tension and worries. The remembrance of these mental afflictions and brooding over them adds more turmoil. There is an instructive story. An old wealthy woman who was worried too much with her own problems could not endure them anymore. She went to a psychiatrist for consultation. The psychiatrist heard her story. In course of the investigations he learned that this woman did not mix with anyone, nor did she take any interest in others. She was lonely and cut off from others. He asked her whether there were any kindergarten or primary schools near her home. She mentioned one kindergarten. He requested her to spend an hour or two just watching the young kinds at play. She agreed, though reluctantly, and every morning watched the children at their play. Seeing her every day there, the children innocently approached her and showed her their toys, books and drawings. They sought her advice and suggestions. She unconsciously involved herself in the education of the children. The more she occupied herself with them, the more she felt happy

and peaceful. She extended her activities and thought of the welfare of others. As she began to forget herself and her worries, a new dimension opened before her.

We have to discover our inter-connectedness with others. If we want to be happy we must try to help others as much as lies within our capacity. If we cannot do this, pray to the Cosmic Intelligence for the welfare of others. It is a fact that when we pray sincerely, we will find help reaching those we want to help.

Prayer should not be reduced to mere words, but it should also find expression in action. What we promise at the time of our repentance or gratitude should be kept up. We promise God during a crisis that we will not repeat the same mistakes again, but as soon as the crisis passes we forget everything. Untruthfulness brings endless misery.

Gandhiji had great faith in the efficacy of prayer. He writes: "On all occasions of trials He has saved me. I know that the phrase 'God saved me' has a deeper meaning for me today, and still I feel that I have not yet grasped its entire meaning. ...But in all my trials—of a spiritual nature, as a lawyer, in conducting institutions, and in politics—I can say that God saved me. When every hope is gone, when helpers fail and 'comforts flee', I find that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer, are not superstition; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting, or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal.

"Such worship or prayer is no flight of eloquence; it is no lip-homage. It springs from the heart. ...Prayer needs no speech. It is in itself independent of any sensuous

effort. I have not the slightest doubt that prayer is an unfailing means of cleansing the heart of passions. But it must be combined with utmost humility.”⁴

A Jewish tale in this connection is: Late one evening a poor farmer on his way back from market found himself without his prayer book. The wheel of his cart had come off right in the middle of the woods and it disturbed him that this day should pass without his having said his prayer. So this is the prayer he made: “I have done something very foolish, my Lord. I came away from home this morning without my prayer book and my memory is such that I cannot recite a single prayer without it. I am going to recite the alphabet five times slowly and you, to whom all prayers are known, can put the letters together to form the prayers I cannot remember.”

The Lord said to his angels, “Of all the prayers I have heard today, this one was undoubtedly the best, because it came from a heart that was sincere and simple.”

Sri Ramakrishna also tells a story of how the pride of Sage Narada was humbled. Once Narada felt that in all the world there was no greater devotee than himself. The Lord read his heart and said, “Go to such and such place. A great devotee of mine lives there. It will help you to know him.” Narada went and found a farmer who rose early in the morning, pronounced the name of Hari only once, and then taking his plough went

to his fields where he worked all day. At night he went to bed after uttering the name of Hari once more. Narada thought, “How can this rustic be a devotee of God? I see him immersed all day in his worldly duties.” Narada came back to the Lord and expressed what he felt. Then the Lord said, “Take this cup of oil and go round the city and come back without spilling a drop.” Narada did as he was told. “How many times did you remember Me in the course of your walk round the city?” asked the Lord. “Not once, Lord.” said Narada. How could I when I had to watch this cup brimming with oil?” The Lord said, “That bowl so absorbed your attention that you forgot Me altogether. But look at that rustic who, though carrying the heavy burden of a family, still remembers Me twice everyday.” Therefore Sri Ramakrishna says, what matters is sincerity and earnestness in prayer. We cannot deceive the Indwelling Witness, to which the innermost thoughts are transparent. Our real motives may be hidden from our conscious mind, our narrow vision circumscribed by the selfish limitations may delude us, and our desires may appear to us quite guileless, but the Cosmic Consciousness knows everything. Past, present and future are in it. A tiny bubble—an individual, cannot separate itself from the ocean.

Is there any use in praying? Does it really work? Many scientific experiments have demonstrated that prayer contains a potent power. Modern medicine has shed its rigid orthodox idea that prayer is nothing but a superstition and has introduced prayers for patients in addition to prescribed drugs.

4. M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography Or, The Story of my experiments with truth*, translated by Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1929) 14th reprint. p. 61.

Vedanta : A Rejuvenating Power

DR. TANYA MUKERJEE

The malaise in modern human society is due to the absence of spiritual orientation. The perennial teachings of the Vedanta have the power to lift spirit of man up—says the writer, who is a research fellow at Patna University, Bihar.

Times of rapid change in the world are always times of great insecurity for the ordinary person. In the international scene we are all aware that Western technological civilisation has created a world-wide ferment. In the fields of science and technology change is so rapid that if grandfathers of the present generation could return to view the world they knew once, they would feel like children with almost everything to learn afresh. From riding horseback (the fastest mode of travel then) man today proudly claims the capacity to fly a plane at three times the speed of sound. Specialists in one field can scarcely understand the language of specialists in another. Amidst such an era of specialisation has come estrangement. We are being swept along by the excitement of new discoveries and inventions in diverse directions, and we seldom pause to ask ourselves: To what goal is this leading us?

A cool reflection reveals that the anti-thesis to such frenzy is peril—a threat and menace to cosmic perpetuity. For, everything that puts more power into the hands of a few men can be used for the latter; man poses a threat to man, life and property. Thus the world's greatest problem today is fear and insecurity. To attempt to alleviate pervasive anxiety on this account, each nation is seeking to acquire more power and wealth and technological ascendancy, so that no other nation dares challenge or attack it. Of course, all nations feel more

menaced by this and try to do the same thing, so that we have a vicious circle.

The surrender of man's artifice to technics has consequences which console man with the feeling that he is progressing, but cause him to neglect or deny fundamental forces of his inner life which are then turned into forces of destruction. As Karl Jaspers observes. "The sclerosis of objectivity is the annihilation of existence."¹ Never before, perhaps, has the ordinary man felt so threatened, so helpless in the face of fate, so lonely in the vast arena of the universe. On the whole, then, the situation of man is that "now his very being is menaced by a world he has himself established."² Naturally enough he seeks to escape from his fear-insecurity in many forms of bloody sport, in the euphoria of alcohol and drugs, in the excitement of gambling, and in the thrills of looting and robbery and the luridness of debauchery and tinkering with the manifold machines which our technological age has provided. Can we blame him for leading such a rudderless life? To live with all the menaces of our nuclear age is well-nigh intolerable. But is it impossible?

1. Quoted in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans., P. Mairet, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1957) p. 11.

2. K. Jaspers, *Man in the Modern Age*, trans. E. and C. Paul (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951) p. 175 .

It may be affirmed that in so far as these are forms of escape they will not prove gratifying; they will yield but temporary obliviscence. A constant pursuit of power and possessions, on the other hand, offers no positive solution, for the crises of life may entangle man from unexpected quarters. In fact, an intense feeling that one is confronted by sure death creates dread. In such a dread there is an uncanny and stupefying feeling. "All things and we with them sink into a sort of indifference.... There is nothing to hold on to. The only thing that remains and overwhelms us, while what *is* slips away, is... 'nothing'. Dread reveals Nothing."³ Confronting such dread a man will be thrown back upon himself, and he may then long with all his heart for some answer to the riddles of life, some assurance that life does have meaning in it and that it is not just "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Or, alternatively, he may take recourse to suicide.

In the face of such dilemma—life-affirmation and life-denial, man's solution lies in the quest of a basic religio-ethical principle, which must not only be something universally valid, but something absolutely elementary and inward, which, once it has dawned upon him, never relinquishes its hold, which as a matter of course runs like a thread through all his meditation, which never lets itself be thrust aside, and which continually challenges him to try conclusions with reality—a principle which rejuvenates the despondent, desperate individual into taking an optimistic outlook on life, making his spirit shine radiantly with a brilliance and effulgence from the innermost recesses of the soul.

The only satisfactory principle is, as propagated by the Vedanta, the discovery

of the enormous resources of his inner Self, the discovery by the individual that he is *amṛtasya putraḥ*, the son of immortality, potentially divine. Life's one purpose should be the realisation of divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. This is no easy quest or achievement, but it is a possible one, and the only satisfying one. In this way he may ride out the storms of this modern age with inner serenity, in the assurance that come what may there is nothing really to be feared. That such realisation of divinity is a living truth and not a matter of abstruse speculation is afforded conviction by the living examples of great prophets and seers who have left behind their footprints in the sands of time. As models they inspire man, and as dispensers of grace they assist him towards realisation.

Realisation of divinity is religion. At base, all religions teach this same simple and sublime truth, although accretions in the forms of doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms generally obscure it. The power of attaining divine Knowledge is also within ourselves. "Be a light unto yourself"—so said the Buddha. "The Kingdom of God is within you"—spoke Jesus Christ. "Until a man becomes a prophet, religion is a mockery"—preached the Hindu monk of India, Swami Vivekananda. "Man has to see religion, feel it, realise it, in a thousand times more intense sense than that in which he sees the wall".⁴

Religion is not the private property of a handful of prophets and seers, priests and clergymen, to be graced upon us through the pages of scriptures; it is a realisation which can be claimed universally. For, we have to remind ourselves: "Books never

³. Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being* (London: Vision Press, 1949) p. 366.

⁴. Swami Vidyatmananda (Ed.), *What Religion Is, In the Words of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978) p. 11.

make religions, but religions make books.”⁵ Each one of us will have to discover religion for himself.

The different living religions of the world are different forces in the economy of God, working for the good of mankind; not one can become dead, not one can be killed. Each is kept alive by the shining beacon of its mission. So is the case with the individual. Every human being is an embodiment of an ideal, a mission. Whatever else he may lose, so long as that ideal is not lost and that mission is not hurt, nothing can kill him. Wealth may come and go, misfortunes may pile mountain high, body may become weary with old age, but if the mission is fresh and young in his heart, he will keep going with youthful zest and vigour. But when that ideal is lost, all the wealth, all the power cannot save him.

To realise the ideal, it is a necessary requisite to comprehend and appreciate the plan of the universe as unity in diversity. As human beings, we proclaim a separate identity from the animals, but as living beings, men, women, animals and plants, all are encompassed into one whole; and as existence, the unified whole becomes one with the universe. As a part of the universe, man establishes his kinship (*vasudaiva kutumbakam*) with not only other biological creatures, but also with the inorganic existents of nature. That universal existence, that harmonious score of all discordant notes is God, the Upaniṣadic Brahman, the macrocosm, the ultimate unity in the universe. In him we are all one. That is why the Vedānta Philosophy preaches, “Thou art That” (*Tat tvam asi*), or “I am Brahman” (*Aham brahmāsmi*), meaning thereby that, in essence, the individual soul is identical to the Cosmic or Divine Soul. This bold declaration goes beyond the Christian teach-

5. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

ing that souls of men are creations of God, by affirming that the central essence of each soul is God. Multiplicity in all its forms is a phenomenon of the world of appearances; differentiation must prevail in manifestation, for differentiation is another name for mobility, for progress.

Man, Vivekananda interprets, is like an infinite spring, coiled up in a small box, and in the process of realisation of the ideal of divinity, that spring tries to unfold itself; and all the social phenomena that we see are the results of this trying to unfold. All the competitions, struggles and evils that we see around us are neither the causes of these unfoldments nor the effects. They are co-existent circumstances, for had they been an essential part of the self-perfecting process, of the process of God-realisation, human nature could never express oneness or kinship, could never do any good to others. There are moments when every man feels that he is one with the universe, and he rushes forth to express it, whether he knows it or not. This expression of oneness is what we call love, compassion and sympathy, and it is the basis of all our ethics and morality. If I am the universe, this universe is my body. As such, every soul that exists is my soul; and in hurting anyone I hurt myself; in loving anyone I love myself. Hence, it is incumbent upon man that he realise his perfect nature, his universal self, his infiniteness.⁶

Once he realises his infinite nature, he attains a state of equanimity (*sthita-*

6. This truth has been recognised by all the great personalities of the world. They had in themselves the perfect consciousness of the undivided spirit of man. Their teachings were against tribal exclusiveness, and thus we find that Buddha's India transcended geographical India and Christ's religion broke through the bonds of Judaism.

prajñatā), where like the ideal ascetic, he curbs his passions and maintains calmness in cold and heat, in joy and sorrow, in honour and dishonour. He attains to the highest state of Brahman (*Brāhmī-sthiti*), where he is never bewildered (*nainām prāpya vimuhyati*) and from which he never falls down (*yad gatvā na nivartante*). This high state of consciousness is what the Christian mystics refer to as the Unitive Life, and the Buddha designates as Nirvana or Enlightenment. Its blissful state transcends the limitation of linguistic description so that "He who speaks does not know; he who knows does not speak." (*Tao Te Ching*).

Vedanta illumines the lofty ideal of realisation so that man's faith in himself and in his environment may be reinstated, so that his rudderless life may be capably steered towards its destiny. Although Vedanta emphasises the one objective of realisation, it accepts diverse methods of reaching it. Diverse approach, like the different radii of a circle, all terminating at the centre (God), is necessary because human temperament is variegated.⁷ Consequently, Vedanta propagates a religious ethics that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it is equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic and equally conducive to action. Everyone who has only one of these elements of character is one-sided; the world abounds with such men with knowledge of one road only in which they move, thereby treating everything else as dangerous and horrible. It is upheld by them that the ethical or religious

good is not to be discovered in the outer world, but "by means of the self-penetration of the individual in himself and his God relationship,"⁸ that Self-contemplation is the only contemplation that is needed for Ethics.⁹ They overlook the simple truth that as many faiths, so many ways (*yato mot, tato path*), all leading to the one and the same Goal. Combination of all these elements in a harmonious balance would realise the ideal of a perfect man.

The combination or synthesis of elements is called yoga or union, and the man who seeks after yoga is called a yogi. To the selfless worker (*karma yogi*) union between himself and the God of love; and to the philosopher (*jñāna-yogi*), it is the union of all existence.

Human society is a graded organisation. We all know about morality and duty. But the significance of morality and ideas of duty and virtue vary greatly in different communities, societies and countries. What we have to recognise is that duty and morality vary, but only under different circumstances, in different situations. Take, for instance, the moral maxim: "Resist not evil." The *karma yogi* is the man who understands that the highest *ideal* lies in realising the aforesaid maxim, in *non-resistance*. But does that mean that he will connive at the exploitation of himself or others? On the contrary, his duty is to *resist evil*. A man who does not resist because he is weak, lazy and *cannot* resist, commits a sin; but a man who does not resist because he *will not*, but instead blesses his enemies with his power exhibits a grand act of love. Unless a man works and fights, he cannot gain the power to resist, and

7. Cf. "Any teaching concerning man must have human nature as its chief element. How far it will harmonise with human nature is a matter of time." R. Tagore, in *Rashiar Chithi*. Quoted in S. Sinha, *Tagore's Approach to Social Problems* (Calcutta: Modern Books Ltd., 1947) p. 15.

8. Cf. Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Trans. D. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton Univ. Press, 1941) p. 129.

9. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 284.

unless he gains that power, non-resistance cannot be regarded as a virtue.

Karma Yoga deals with the science of harnessing the energy of the worker to the greatest advantage. Allaying physical needs and discomforts of others is indeed a great service. But greater than that is the imbuing of spiritual knowledge and strength in every human breast, that we are potentially divine, so that physical miseries would not disseminate. "We may convert every house in the country into a charity asylum; we may fill the land with hospitals; but the misery of man will still continue to exist until man's character changes." In rendering such a service alone, a karma yogi becomes a benefactor of mankind. In return, he seeks not reward, for the secret of selfless service is to worship work in the likeness of God, to see God in the naked poverty, in His dumb creatures. For him, the truth is simply spelt out thus: He who loves His creatures, serves the Lord (*Jive prem kare jei jan sei jan sebicche ishvar*). He is always the giver, never the seeker of returns, and so, he eludes the grasp of misery and attains the state of bliss. Once the karma yogi realises his ideal, he does not turn away from the degenerate humanity, leaving them in the wild. He extends his compassionate hand to redeem the suffering masses like the *Bodhisattvas* and the *Arhats*.

The system of raja yoga is the science of psychic control. It deals almost exclusively with the power of concentration which enables analysis of the mind, a gathering of the facts of the supersensuous world, and so building up of the spiritual world. Yoga means "yoke"—to join; that is, to join the soul of man with the Supreme Soul or God. Through faithful practice and discipline, layer after layer of the mind will open before the yogi and he will be able to recognise, assess, and finally transcend the zones of

his individual unconsciousness and consciousness (i.e. the *id* and the *ego*), to actually realise his oneness with the superconsciousness or the Cosmic Mind. According to the *rāja yogi*, the external world is but the gross form of the internal, or subtle. The finer is always the cause, the grosser the effect. The man who has discovered and learned how to manipulate the internal forces will get the whole of nature under his control. The yogi proposes to himself no less a task than to master the whole universe, to control the whole of nature. He wants to arrive at the point where what we call nature's laws will have no influence over him, where he will be able to get beyond them all. He will be master of the whole of nature, internal and external.

In bhakti yoga the central secret is to know that the different faculties, the various passions, feelings and emotions nurtured in the human heart are not wrong in themselves; only they have to be carefully controlled and given a more powerful direction, a higher condition of excellence. Bhakti is not an article of fashion, desired at one time, and discarded at another. It is an intense urge for possession, a necessity for that without which we cannot live. Ramanuja, commenting on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, remarks: "The attainment of bhakti comes through discriminative knowledge, controlling the passions, sacrificial work, purity, strength and suppression of excessive mirth." The mechanics of bhakti yoga exposes the ingrained delusion that we are wholly the body we own and so must preserve and dote on it by all means. The lifting of this veil of delusion makes the bhakta indifferent to selfish struggles and conditions him wholly to surrender to God's will. Things may come as they may, but a bhakta re-

(Continued on page 472)

Mysticism in The Vakhs* of Lal Ded

A. N. DHAR

Time and again mystics have appeared on this planet and shown mankind the inadequacy of sense perceptions and limited human intellect to comprehend Ultimate Reality. The Saint, Lal Ded of Kashmir, is still adored as a great poet and mystic. The author, who is a U.G.C. Emeritus Fellow, at present lives in Jammu. He interprets the profound poetry of Lal Ded with refreshing insight.

Living on this planet, man has never remained content with what he observes around him. The phenomenal world has always aroused in him an urge to know and seize the unknown, far beyond his immediate grasp. His spirit does not let him sit still; he has been ever restless to probe the mystery and immensity of the universe. As the scientific temper demands, he analyses and classifies the observed facts systematically, thus arriving at theories and doctrines, which help him in the acquisition of knowledge and its practical application. His quest does not, however, stop at the theoretical and the empirical. This is because he is not merely a creature of reason; he is a conscious being, gifted with a soul—revealed in his capacity for reflection and introspection, and in his unbounded capacity for love. Love, in its higher form, leads man to the Divine, which the mystics speak of as the Substratum, the Ground of Being that they seek to attain. They also characterize the Divine as the Transcendent, the “Great Beyond” not within the reach of the human intellect.

In the sacred texts of the various faiths, the Deity is invested with diverse attributes, falling broadly into two categories: the terminology connected with the *via affirmativa* and the vocabulary, including paradoxical expressions, associated with the

via negativa. Language performs a delicate and difficult task in the hands of the articulate mystic, who often adopts the poetic mode of communication as appropriate to his needs. Accomplished in this, the mystical poet shows utmost resourcefulness in making words convey his perceptions of the Divine. Images and symbols pointing to the “world of silence” which finely suggest experiences esoteric in nature, based in the soul’s direct *contact* with the Divine, serve such a poet as indispensable tools. Much of his vocabulary often relates to the Mystic way—the stages through which the aspirant has to pass till he finally attains his goal. The symbolism of the “mystical journey”, cutting across the boundaries of cultures, has a universal validity.

The foregoing introductory observations meant to define the essential quality of mysticism in relation to the poetic mode of communication, are relevant to the main theme of this paper—my account of Lal Ded, the well-known mystic poet of Kashmir, and of her *vākhs* that have come down to us as a rich legacy. I shall restrict my discussion to her standing as a mystic on the basis of what we gather from the *vākhs*. In them we have authentic evidence of her two striking qualities as a highly advanced mystic: firstly, the extraordinary intensity of her aspiration for union with the Divine, and secondly, her assured sense of fulfilment in having found the Beloved

* Poetic verses of Lal Ded

close at hand, both conveyed in unmistakable accents. Uttered in the fourteenth century, the *vākhs* haven't surprisingly, lost any of their freshness and charm for the Kashmiris today; they have perpetuated Lalla's memory, as a living monument of her literary achievement and of the heights she had scaled as a mystic. They range from the mature aphorisms of a seer, an accomplished mystic, to the spontaneous outpourings of a seeker in the realm of divine love: She speaks in the tone of a wise sage in one *vākh* here, counselling self-restraint and avoidance of extremes, and conveys her anguished sense of separation from the Beloved in another *vākh* there. Many *vākhs* have the preacher's tone and a good number of them breathe the confidence of a highly developed *yoginī* who has tasted the final beatitude and now "holds infinity in the palm of [her] hand". In view of these qualities, Lal Ded's verse sayings can aptly be characterized as the poetry of direct mystical experience.

Though a literary study of Lal Ded has to base itself mainly on the solid foundation of her *vākhs*, any adequate account of this great saint-poet cannot leave out the biographical aspect altogether. In her case, however, we have no authentic biographical details available and have nothing other than the *vākhs* to fall back upon to draw useful inferences from. Several scholars of Lal-Ded, notably Professor Jayalal Kaul, have raised the question of the authenticity of the *vākhs*—Professor Kaul would depend upon the stylistic criteria in establishing the genuineness or otherwise of a Lalla *vākh* and, at the same time, he accepts as valid the fact of linguistic change some of the *vākhs* could inevitably have undergone across time. Given the severe handicaps of Lal-Ded scholarship, including the non-availability of a wholly authentic compilation of Lalla's utterances, except perhaps

the earlier compilation of sixty *vākhs* brought out by Rajānaka Bhāskara along with his Sanskrit translations over two hundred years ago, it is difficult to pronounce on the genuineness of a number of *vākhs* with certitude, and equally difficult to arrive at any biographical detail through a mere textual analysis of a *vākh*. Grierson and Barnett have done a commendable job in bringing out *Lallā-Vākyāni*, which remains to this day the most valuable and dependable collection of Lalla's *vākhs*; together with the elaborate commentary provided by the editors, it still remains indispensable material for the Lal-Ded scholar.

Before I come to the particular *vākhs* that I propose to discuss in this paper, I should like to draw attention to some opinions about Lal Ded which I consider untenable—based as those are on one-sided approaches and sometimes on misreadings of the text. Some scholars, for example, want to project Lal Ded mainly as a *Śaivite*, a follower of the *Trika* (Kashmir Saivism).¹ Others point her as deeply influenced by Islam, particularly Sufism, while still others would characterize her teachings as an "admixture of non-dualistic philosophy of Śaivism and Islamic Sufism".² One cannot deny the fact that much of the mystical terminology we come across in the *vākhs* is very obviously rooted in Kashmir Śaivism; such terminology is clearly traceable to her upbringing in a Kashmiri Hindu family. Some scholars, attaching significance to the interaction between Hinduism and Islam in Lalla's time, have been at pains to assert

1. Jayalal Kaul, endorsing the views of Grierson and Barnett, and Sir Richard Temple, maintains that "Lal Ded was a Saiva Yogini of the Kashmir school." See his *Lal Ded* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1973) p. 53.

2. P.N.K. Bamzai, "Lalleshwari—Forerunner of Medieval Reformers", *Kashmir Samachar*, Lal Ded Number (1971), *Lalvākh*, p. 16.

that her *vākhs* have a marked bias of both Śaivism and Sufism, or more precisely, owe their richness and power to the fusion of Yoga and *Irġan* that the saint-poet realized in her spiritual life. In the view of a scholar, "Lalleshwari...took the best of Islamic thought, and fused it with the best in her own creed."³

None of these approaches seems wholly valid. To see Lal Ded as just the follower of a particular religion or of a particular school of thought would only dwarf her spiritual stature, which is indeed among the loftiest in the recorded history of the saints and mystics of all times and climes. When we study the *vākhs* as a body of utterances and ponder over them seriously, we feel convinced of her uniqueness and of her extraordinary stature. Whatever she might have owed to this or that influence is far outweighed by her individual genius. Her perceptions are entirely her own, her experiences very acute and her poetic sensibility one of the finest we have known. All these qualities are immediately discerned by the perceptive reader. Men of all faiths will always derive satisfaction from Lalla's *vākhs*; all will agree that her teaching confirms, rather than conflicts with, this or that creed. This is because she has got to the root of the matter and realized the universal in its essence. Behind all religions, there is one Religion which belongs to all humanity—of which the *rinda*, the unfettered mystic, is the most legitimate custodian. Lal Ded, undoubtedly, speaks to us in the *vākhs* in the confident tone of such a mystic.

Several Lal-Ded studies advocate the view that Lalla roamed about *vivasan*, without apparel, in a state of ecstasy after she left her in-laws' house for good in search of

3. Daya Kishan Kachru, "The Light of the Valley", *Ibid.*, p. 7.

God. There are, on the other hand, some scholars who reject this view partly. They seem to feel uncomfortable about Lalla's nudity, considering it incompatible with the spiritual height she had attained. They would argue that as a woman who preached self-control and moderation in life, she could not have moved about in a nude or semi-nude state in violation of social decorum. In this context, a suggestion has been put forth that the word "*nangai*" in one of her famous *vākhs* (which will be discussed later) is a misreading or a corrupted form of the word "*nonguy*", a flower found in Kashmir, which could "rise up and dance" when "pressed between the thumb and the forefinger."⁴ One fails to understand why scholars should read too much of biography into Lalla's mystical utterances, though the biographical aspect can assume relevance in certain contexts. In the present case, the scholars concerned have got worried over the "nude state" suggested in the phrase "*nangai natsun*". Obviously, this lyrical utterance conveys the state of spiritual ecstasy Lalla must have experienced when she followed the secret doctrine imparted to her by her preceptor.

If we accept the fact that Lalla was a highly advanced mystic who saw the Self all around her as the Reality behind phenomena, then to expect her to have scrupulously followed social conventions or the dictates of a religious order is to shut our eyes to the greatness she had achieved.⁵ True mystics tend to escape "the fetters of

4. See B. N. Parimoo, *The Ascent of Self* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978) Second Revised edition, 1987; p. 63.

5. I am indebted to Shri Udaynath Tiku, who is a devoted scholar of Kashmir Saivism, for his valuable comments and suggestions, which I have borne in mind in the present discussion regarding Lalla's "nudity" and her spiritual greatness.

organized religion.”⁶ Lalla’s *vākhs* bear ample testimony to her mystic vision and to her state of spiritual exaltation. In them we find “live symbols of a deeply felt experience”⁷ which explain Lalla’s extraordinary power and appeal as a mystic poet. It is to the *vākhs* that we must now turn our attention, to the poetry of aspiration and fulfilment that they embody.

Lalla’s *vākhs* are a collection of her verse-sayings handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, not recorded in any authentic manuscripts during her life or preserved in writing posthumously. The order in which they occur in this or that compilation today has no validity beyond what suited the considered choice of the editors. It is not to be disputed that if we arrange the *vākhs* in accordance with a preconceived scheme, we can demonstrate a pattern in Lalla’s spiritual development—a thing rigorously done in Professor Parimoo’s *Ascent of the Self*. In this work, the *vākhs* have been arranged systematically to show Lalla’s progress on the Mystic Way: the stages she passed through as a *yoginī* till she attained union with the Universal Self. One could, however, have reservations about such an approach, though its usefulness cannot, at the same time, be disputed, as Professor Parimoo’s lucid and painstaking study bears out. It is very difficult to judge the actual state of mind of a mystical poet, precisely the level of his or her spiritual attainment, on the basis of isolated poetic compositions; no definitive arguments and interpretations can be offered in support of the views one puts forth in this regard. Secondly, we should not forget that the moods of a mystic are

likely to vary from time to time, assuming that he feels impelled to communicate his experiences as a normal human being. So long as poetic communication belongs to the realm of art, it seems reasonable to expect the mystic poet to sing of pain and separation, and of joy and fulfilment, in the same breath at times, and in quick succession, too, all depending upon the social context of such communication. The accomplished mystic may, for example, look back and write faithfully of his former moments of poignant divine separation in moving lines. In the absence of a knowledge of the time-sequence of poetic utterances or compositions, the task of tracing the mental or spiritual development of a poet through sheer literary analysis seems a very difficult one, and the conclusions arrived at not altogether unquestionable.

In Lalla’s case, we hear the note of aspiration and anguish in a relatively small number of the *vākhs*. On the other hand, the note of confidence and fulfilment is, on the whole, pervasive in a good number of them. This, however, does not in any way render her poetry of aspiration less significant or valuable than her poetry of fulfilment. A quantitative approach is bound to be misleading while one interprets or evaluates mystical poetry of diverse types and shades.

In the textual analysis of the select *vākhs* that I am undertaking presently, I do not aim at unfolding a developmental pattern in Lalla’s spiritual life. I have picked up the *vākhs* of my choice here and there, and shall discuss them sequentially, bearing in mind the precise scope of the present essay as indicated by its title.

I begin my examination of the *vākhs* with the one I alluded to earlier in connection with Lalla’s use of the word “*nangai*”,

6. S. K. Ghose, “Mysticism”, in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1977) p. 786.

7. Quoted in Jayalal Kaul, *Lal Ded*, p. 40.

the authenticity of which has been questioned by some scholars. The *vākḥ* is:

The Guru gave me but one precept:
 "From without turn inward."
 It came to me (Lalla) as God's word ;
 Consequently, I started roaming nude.⁸

This *vākḥ* is very significant in that Lalla unfolds a remarkable experience she had as she began her spiritual quest. She indirectly acknowledges her indebtedness to her preceptor, identified as Siddha Srikanth (*Sedamol*) by her biographers, who is believed to have been an advanced *yogi* of the Trika school. I have emphasized earlier that Lal Ded was a spiritual genius who can be classed with the greatest mystics of the world ; yet before she came out into the open and roamed about as a *rinda*, not tied to any dogma or religious order, she sought initiation from a Master in accordance with the tradition followed by seekers throughout all cultures. Having all the makings of a *yoginī* before her initiation, Lalla took the

8. The text of the selected *vākḥs* of Lalla, discussed in this paper is generally as approved and used by the late Professor Jayalal Kaul, reproduced later in Devanagari transliteration in Nilakanth Kotru's *Lal Ded*. (Srinagar/Delhi: Utpal Publication, 1989). Only here and there I have followed the text available in other studies on Lal Ded. As far as the rendering of the *vākḥs* into English is concerned, I do not claim any originality in this regard. I have freely consulted the available English studies on the poetess and adopted the translations I found accurate and appropriate, altering the translation without sacrificing the sense wherever I felt it necessary. I acknowledge my indebtedness to the authors and editors in general.

Guru's precept as God's word. It worked an instant transformation in her. She was thrown into a state of ecstasy, often a sign of a seeker's intimacy with the Divine. In that state she continued to move about god-like, forgetful of her physical condition and of how others might regard her in that condition.⁹

The *vākḥ* conveys in brief the steps of the *sadhana* prescribed by Lalla's Guru— withdrawing the mind from the external world and directing its attention inward on the Self. The Trika school, no doubt, preaches this doctrine ; but we find it as no different from the essential teaching of the Upaniṣads. In fact, it is the gist of what mysticism of all shades recommends as the technique of meditation as a prelude to spiritual illumination. We can see that Lalla's mysticism, as conveyed so pithily in the *vākḥ*, accommodates the essentials of mysticism across cultures. It is relevant to add that Guru Srikanth recognized Lalla's excellence in Yoga in these words: "*Gavati cāṭha gvarasa tho daya—The disciple excelled the guru!*" believed to have been uttered by him when he complimented her on performing a rare spiritual miracle, something that was far beyond his own capabilities.

(to be continued)

9. For quoting to me the slokas 36, 37, Skanda XI, of *The Śrīmad Bhāgavata* (Swami Tapasyananda's Vol. IV, Madras edition), in support of his view regarding Lalla's physical state, I am grateful to Sri Jankinath Kaul, my teacher.

Sri Ramakrishna's Gong

RICHARD PRESCOTT

What Sri Ramakrishna perceived in his transcendental state about the origin and dissolution of the universe, the same mystery is being grappled with by modern Physics. In this thoughtful essay, the author gives us an appreciation from both the points of view.

In that blessed, wondrous book, the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, recorded by 'M', the Great Master describes an interpretation of the *Mahā-Bīja* AUM, in reference to the Sound of the Gong.—

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to Mahima): "You explain 'Aum' with reference to 'a', 'u', and 'm' only."

MAHIMA: "'A', 'u', and 'm' mean creation, preservation, and destruction."

MASTER: "But I give the illustration of the sound of a gong: 'tom', t-o-m. (The 'o' is to be pronounced as 'aw' in dawn.) It is the merging of the Līlā in the Nitya: the gross, the subtle, and the causal merge in the Great Cause; waking, dream, and deep sleep merge in Turīya. The striking of the gong is like the falling of a heavy weight into a big ocean. Waves begin to rise; the Relative rises from the Absolute; the causal, subtle, and gross bodies appear out of the Great Cause; from Turīya emerge the states of deep sleep, dream, and waking. These waves arising from the Great Ocean merge again in the Great Ocean. From the Absolute to the Relative, and from the Relative to the Absolute. Therefore I give the illustration of the gong's sound, 'tom'. I have clearly perceived all these things. It has been revealed to me that there exists an Ocean of Consciousness without limit. From It come all things of the relative plane, and in It they merge again. Millions of Brahmāṇḍas rise in that Cīdākāśa and merge in It again. All this has been

revealed to me; I don't know much about what your books say."¹

How beautiful, how absolutely beautiful, the Nature of Reality is described in the most elegant manner. The very same idea is brought into the light of understanding for modern people by some contemporary scientific observations. Though the language at times may appear a little comical (for example, the "Big Bang"), the essential idea is the same, no doubt.

The mechanics of Creation, the physics of this beautiful Universe in all its Splendour is portrayed in eloquent terms...Try and see, if you can, the similarity between the "Gong" and the "Bang". Before space-time was created, before energy and matter were invented, out of Something less than the size of a single atomic particle, out of Something so infinitesimally small that it cannot be comprehended, the Primordial Explosion, the Big Bang (the Great Cause) appeared...expanding, in the first split seconds of spacetime, to the size of a grapefruit, a little ball of unimaginable Power and Light! Spontaneous creation out of the Ineffable Something, what a thought! Echoes of Non-Duality, what is Here before the creation of the other!

Three minutes later, as spacetime spreads out, the Luminous Plasma (the causal)

1. "M", *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 653.

appears. It is opaque, filled with highly charged, free-moving particles and electromagnetic forces that have yet to become atoms. Note the parallel between this Plasma and the Cosmic Prana of the Upaniṣads, the original cosmic universal breath, filled with life force and energy that animates all creation. *Prāṇa* is ubiquitous, just as the mysteriously smooth cosmic microwave background radiation is, both are amazingly uniform. Could Physics and Spirituality both be speaking of the Breath of God!

Three hundred thousand years later, under the influence of profound gravitational force, spacetime spreads out even more so. the Luminous Plasma becomes the Gargantuan Vapour Clouds (the subtle). These colossal clouds are filled with warm and cool areas, the warmer areas will eventually become the galaxies. Atoms are forming under the influence of gravity. Witness the similarity in nature between these Clouds of Cosmic Mist and the *Hiranyagarbha*, the luminous golden embryonic womb of this Universe, the cosmic universal dream state. You must try to extend your perceptions a wee bit. From a high cosmological viewpoint parallels in quality and nature do exist between the cloud state and the dream state, universally speaking. Human beings and all creatures on the Earth are but condensations of the remnants of these Giant Vapour Clouds. So what then is Consciousness itself? Is the Universe itself conscious, intelligent and full of feeling? We are indeed the stuff of which dreams are made! It is undoubtedly a great misconception to think that this beautiful Universe is insentient. So it seems, that every single thing that happens here, under the guise of good or bad, is only so in order to spur us onward...

Now, in the fabric of space-time, some fifteen billion years later, what we term the present, there exists the Great Wall of

Galaxies, the Field of Superclusters (the gross). And within each of these innumerable galaxies exist red giants, white dwarfs, neutron stars and pulsars...like so many personalities, characters, beings and souls. Observe the parallel between the great galactic fields, these luminous milky oceans of stars and the conception of *Virāt*, that is the physical creation itself, the universal cosmic waking state, the field of the waking physical creation...God and His Splendour, an eternity to us is but a two day experiment, a magic show lasting three or five days. The *Līlā* (Cosmic Play) merges in the *Nitya* (the Eternal), like the sound of the gong, gravity (the essential force) reaches its extent and then the gross, the subtle and the causal begin to make their return to the Great Cause, the Primordial Beginningless Being, what is so comically called the 'Big Crunch' in astrophysics. The fabric of spacetime somehow reverses, the sound of the gong recedes back into itself, though some believe it may go on forever, but tell me what phenomenal created object ever does go on forever? Dear friends, these are such elegant and beautiful thoughts given to us from the two schools of thought, yet the same conclusion is there if we can look behind the veil of language, the interesting and funny choice of words. The Bang, the Gong, both are humorous in their own ways and both illustrate to us some essential truth, some wondrous, awe-some reality before us, right in front of our faces.

Now, Mother Science (Knowledge) speaks to us saying, "Oh yes, we have heard these concepts. We have seen these things." And Sri Ramakrishna expressed one of his many experiences to us, "I have clearly perceived all these things...Millions of *Brahmāṇḍas* rise in that *Cidākāśā* and merge in It again." *Brahmāṇḍas* are literally Eggs of Brahma (Creator God)...Universes...Little

Bangs, Big Bangs, if you will. *Cidākāśa* is the Knowledge Space, Consciousness Space. Our ideas that are prejudiced by what we think is big and small limit our perceptions of reality. Take for example, on the smaller scale, the creation of atoms, which on the larger scale is the same as the creation of the universe. Gravity separates from the other. Other is not really described by science. It is a continuum, a previously existing Something, but this Something is left in question as to Its Nature. Then, in the course of things, the strong, weak and electromagnetic forces separate. This jars the formation of quarks that eventually join together to create particles, which in turn become the nuclei of atoms. And atoms are born. The creation of atoms and galaxies go hand in hand as the fabric of space-time expands. Amazing, isn't it. (Please consider these thoughts with an open mind, a child's mind full of wonder.)

What was theory to Mr. Erwin Schrodinger was experience for Sri Ramakrishna. Schrodinger theorized the existence of quantum "you-s", multiple alternate Universes, quantum "me-s", all simultaneously existing along a single line of Consciousness in space-time. Quantum realities were his thought, "discrete packages" of reality, as real as anything or anyone for that matter, existing in the paradox of the Greater Universe. And why not? Ramakrishna clearly perceived all these millions of *Brahmāndas*. And doesn't every human being at times create alternate lives and experiences while in the dream state? The Universe is a great and beautiful paradox. Consider the black holes in space, gravitational fields that pull in everything around them. But where does that "everything" empty itself? White holes perhaps? It seems obvious that white holes should be quasars, the farthest, brightest objects in the known universe. Yet the paradox of space-

time intercepts that idea, on the one hand, while on the other, the natural fact that space-time warps and warps around itself is a strong augmentation that this idea may well be a reality. What a wonder it all is!

Paradox after paradox unfolds. There are Voids, Spaces (*Ākāśa*) between the Galaxies that are so great, the very thought of ever crossing them is overwhelming. There are great Void Spaces between the Stars themselves, light years, parsecs in distance and size. And proportionately there are Void Spaces between the particles of a single atom, almost all Void Space. So much so, that it would seem that you should be able to pass your hand right through solid matter. But you can not, for such is the power of *Māyā* (Cosmic Illusion) holding us spellbound by embodiment...

And what of the paradox of dark matter and bright matter? We can visibly see only one percent of the matter in our Universe in the form of stars and galaxies. The other ninety-nine percent is what is named dark matter, yet it is detected by gravitational effects. We really know so little of what exists in the *Cidākāśa*. Millions of *Brahmāndas* go unnoticed by us who are but babes in the lap of Immensity!

Now consider this thought, the Nature of Light is said to be electromagnetism and it is electromagnetism that powers the human brain. So it is Light, in this sense, that powers the brain. Yet, in the electromagnetic spectrum, we only have knowledge of what is probably just a few waves in the Great Ocean of Brilliance and Radiance. To wit, radio television, microwave, infrared, red, violet, ultraviolet, x-ray, gamma ray and cosmic rays...all merely waves within the electromagnetic spectrum. Interesting, yes. When this electromagnetism leaves the brain we say that a person has passed away, has died, has given up the ghost. This is

even more fascinating. In laboratory conditions all the phenomena of the near death experience can be recreated except the experience of the Light, which is Light beyond the known spectrum. This is a beautiful fact, that distinguishes between what are Phenomena and what is Reality. So much of the human brain has now been mapped out. We know what areas function as memory, perception, forethought, logic, imagination, etc....yet we do not understand the nature of what has been called the convergence zone, where and what it is. This zone of convergence is what pulls all the other functions together and makes our lives possible. So once again, the paradox which teaches shines through. Could it be anything other than Consciousness itself, the very Witness of the Universe, never to be reduced as an object of examination? In other words, a Reality which is beyond all phenomena can not be measured by the terms of phenomena. The "Beautiful" can never be defined. Can the Nature of the Infinite ever be expressed within the framework of the finite? Maybe not, yet perhaps it is always so, no matter where we look.

Only the "Beautiful", only Sweetness and

Love remain after the conceptual meltdown takes place. The Continuum of Consciousness is Real and all that exists in It is Real, having Reality as its one and sole source of existence. Life is a wide open field that does not stop with death nor begin with creation. The manifestation itself proves the Existence of the Source of the Manifestation. That is mere logic. And we are here to enjoy it, to adore it, to delight in it, to know it...in an All Consuming Love...

One can not accurately say how profound was the *Insight* of this wonderful person, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa...yes, the very embodiment of the God Principle... Though fond and loving respect is given to our teachers, we are always reminded by Sri Ramakrishna, "If they need teaching, then He will be the Teacher. He is our Inner Guide." (He, God, the "Beautiful" Divine Mother.)

When we first came into this garden, for some reason we had to "count the mangoes". We don't know why. But now, we shall just enjoy these mangoes.

I bow to Vivekananda, a mere glance of whose eyes is enough to impart both enjoyment and liberation, who tramples with ease the myriad hordes of vice, who is the veritable Siva with the crescent moon on the forehead, and who is worshipped by Indu.

—Prayer

The Supreme Purusa in Stotra Literature

JANKINATH KAUL

The appeal of stotra literature is timeless and therefore it occupies a unique place in Hindu religion. Sri Jankinath Kaul of Kashmir has translated these verses in adoration of Nārāyaṇa by an unknown devotee.

God, in the monistic character, cannot be apprehended by the senses. He is beyond the ken of argument and may reveal His Divine Glory to the few through intuition. God, however, becomes accessible in form to earnest seekers through their one-pointed and wholehearted devotion to Him. When belief strengthens into burning faith, knowledge of God ripens into devotion. This is called *Jñāna-Bhakti*. Devotees invoke their chosen deity by chanting the names and reciting the *stotra*-s (hymns) concerning that Deity. This brings about transformation in divine ecstasy to them and they see visions of God, each in his own desired form.

The *stotra*-literature in Sanskrit is so vast that it becomes difficult to make a proper count of them. Being predominantly devotional, the *stotra* is considered the best of all the various branches of Sanskrit literature. Stotras are like fountains of unending juice that soothes the hearts of devotees who aspire for attaining perennial joy of supreme peace and spiritual prosperity. These include eulogies composed of the Lord's "hundred-names" (*śatanāma*), or "thousand-names" (*sahasranāma*), extolling Him in His various forms and incarnations. Recital of stotras and *sahasranāmas* in all their variety is a prominent part of worship, supposed to secure early favours of the particular chosen deity.

The antiquity of the *stotra* literature is traced back to the *Vedas* and the *Tantras*,

which contain a good number. Their number further multiplies in the *Purāṇa*-s. Then the great masters of light and learning, like *Ādi Śaṅkarācārya*, *Abhinavaguptapāda* and others, were prompted to write prominent stotras which form items of daily prayer even today during individual as well as congregational worship. *Saundaryalahari* of *Śaṅkara*, the *Śivastotrāvalī* of *Utpaladeva* (of Kashmir) and *Pañcastavi* of *Dharmācārya* (probably of Kashmir) are worthy of mention. There are other smaller but principal stotras, like *Mukundamālā* of *Rāja Kulaśekhara Alwar*, *Śivamahimnāstotra* of *Puṣpadanta*, *Gaurīstuti* of *Śaṅkara*, and others, besides the *Bhavānī-nāma-sahasrastuti* from *Rudrayāmala Tantra*, the *Lalitāsahasranāma* from *Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa*, *Durgā Saptāśati* (*Devī Māhātmyam*) from *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* and *Śiva Sahasranāma* etc. which are recited and chanted at different shrines on particular occasions of worship. Still smaller stotras, like *Bhaja Govindam* of *Śaṅkara* and *Bhairavastuti* of *Abhinavagupta* (and such a host of these in their variety), are the burden of worship in most parts of our country today.

Large number of hymns and garlands of Divine Names relate to different deities like *Viṣṇu*, *Śiva*, *Śakti*, *Gaṇapati Indra*, and so on. *Puruṣa Śūkta* is the famous hymn in the *Ṛg Veda* which contains many more dedicated to the Supreme Lord. A large number of bunches of *stotras* have been sung in the *Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* to the

holy glory of *Bhagavān Viṣṇu*. The boy *Dhruva* divulged the Truth of devotion and knowledge of the Supreme Self. Addressing *Viṣṇu* as the Supreme Purusa, he eulogised :

O Lord! Thou art all-powerful ;
It is Thou that enters my internal organs
And Who awakens my sleeping voice
with Thy Divine Effulgence.
Thou givest life to my hands, feet, ears
and skin—
All my organs and even to my vital airs.
All-pervading Lord! I adore Thee.

A galaxy of stotras follows in praise of *Viṣṇu* and His Incarnations. Similarly, such stotras are found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and other *Purāṇas*. These sing of particular *Līlās* of particular incarnated deities at particular times. The outstanding ones are those relating to *Rāma* and to *Kṛṣṇa*. These give melody to mind and joy to the inner soul. Such a small stotra of eight verses is given below. Nothing is known about its author.¹ This is compiled in the collected works of *Pandit Keśava Bhatta*, compiler of *Karma Kāṇḍa* and stotra literature who flourished in Kashmir during the turn of the nineteenth century. This wonderful hymn of unrivalling devotion is sung in adoration to the Lotus Feet of the Supreme *Puruṣa*, and the burden of each verse is “*Vande Mahāpuruṣa te caraṇāravindam*” (Adoration to Thy Lotus Feet):

ध्येयं सदा परिभवन्नमभीष्टदोहं
तीर्थास्पदं शिवविरिञ्चिनुतं शरण्यम् ।
भृत्यातिहं प्रणतपाल भवाब्धिपोतं
वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥ 1 ॥

1. The unknown author appears to have composed the latter seven slokas (3-9) in concordance with the first two which are found in the *Bhāgavatam*, *Ekādasa Skandha*, IV. 33-34. Metre and refrain are the same throughout.

O Lord, the Highest Self!² Thou vouchsafest Thy devotee who takes refuge in Thee. I prostrate at Thy Lotus-Feet, which are worthy of being meditated upon constantly ; which put an end to the worldly defeats occurring due to illusion and ignorance ; which bestow fulfilment of all desires to devotees as spontaneously as milk from a cow ; which have the glory of the places of sanctity ; to which the tallest of gods—*Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Maheśa*—offer obeisance ; which remove (by mere touch of grace) pains and difficulties of devotees as do masters of their servants and, therefore, which are like a ship to ferry across the ocean of *samsāra*.

त्यक्त्वा सुदुस्त्यजसुरेप्सित राज्यलक्ष्मी
धर्मिष्ठ आर्यवचसा यदगादरण्यम् ।
मायामृगं दयितयेप्सितमन्वधावत्
वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥ 2 ॥

O, the Highest Self!³ I worship Thy Lotus Feet, which wandered from forest to forest⁴ after bidding adieu to the kingdom that no one desires to depart from and that is cherished even by the gods ; which, following the righteous path, ran after the Magic deer (*māyāmṛga*)⁵ to fulfil the wish of your beloved spouse, *Sītā*.

श्रीमत्सरोरुहयवांकुशचक्रचाप
मत्स्याङ्कितं नवविलोहितपल्लवाभम् ।
लक्ष्म्यालयं परममङ्गलमात्मरूपं
वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥ 3 ॥

2. Distinct is the Supreme Purusa called the Highest Self (*Gita XV 17*).

3. Lord *Rāma*, who demonstrated the bounds of morality.

4. *Vālmikiya Rāmāyaṇa*, *Ayodhya Kāṇḍa*, cantos 19-40.

5. *Ibid.*, *Aranya Kāṇḍa*, canto 43, verses 22-24.

O Supreme *Puruṣa*!⁶ I bow to Thy Lotus Feet, which are bright with sparkling red colour (or radiant like fresh red leaves), which bear the auspicious signs⁷ of a lotus, a wheat plant, a hook (elephant goad), wheel (*cakra*), a bow and a fish; which have their place in the heart-chamber of *Lakṣmī*; which are propitious and, hence, the very self of *Lakṣmī*, the Goddess of Prosperity.

वृन्दावनान्तरमगादनु गोकुलानां
सञ्चार्य सर्वपशुभिः स्वविवृद्धकामी ।
सञ्चिन्तयद्गगुरोर्मृगपक्षिणां यत्
वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥ 4 ॥

O Highest Self, in the form of Lord *Kṛṣṇa*! I take refuge at Thy Lotus Feet which, displaying the extraordinary valour, followed the innocent people of *Gokula* to the interior of the *Govardhana Hill*⁸ in *Vṛndāvana* and which held through (Thy small finger) the hill (for seven days) to provide protection to the animals and birds (opposing the wrath of *Indra*).

यद्गोपिकाविरहजाग्नि परीतदेह-
स्तप्तस्तनेषु विजहुः परिरम्य तापम् ।
रासे तदीयकुचकुङ्कुमपङ्कलिप्तं
वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥ 5 ॥

O Great Self in Lord *Kṛṣṇa* as Divine Dancer)! I adore Thy Lotus Feet which,

6. Lord *Nārāyaṇa*, who incarnated as Lord *Kṛṣṇa* for destroying the wicked and helping the righteous.

7. These auspicious signs were witnessed by the *Gopis*, the milkmaids of *Vṛndāvana*, during the *Rāsa-krīḍā* (divine sport), on the feet of *Kṛṣṇa*. (cf. *Bhāgavata*, Book X; Part I, Ch. 30, verses 24-25).

8. Ref. to *Bhāgavata*, Book X, Part I, Ch. 25, Verses 19-24. It should not be taken to refer to *Ajaguru* or *Aghāsura*. (*Ibid.*, Ch. 12, verses 30-33).

on touching the lovelorn *Gopis* during your *Rāsakrīḍā* (divine dance),⁹ relieved them from the pangs of love, and which also got besmeared with the hue of *kumkuma* (sandal paste) from their breasts.

कालीयमस्तकविघट्टनदक्षमस्य
मोक्षेप्सुभिर्विरहदीनमुखाभिरारात् ।
तत्पत्निभिः स्तुतमशेष निकामरूपं
वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥ 6 ॥

O Supreme *Puruṣa*, in the form of valiant *Kṛṣṇa*! We offer obeisance to Thy Lotus Feet, which trampled on the furious hood of *Kāliyanāga*, the poisonous serpent-demon; and to which the demon's mermaid wives offered hymns,¹⁰ requesting from far and near to free him and thus remove their distress of separation from their lord. Verily, the grace of Thy Lotus Feet is to be cherished.

ज्ञानालयं श्रुतिविमृग्यमनादिमर्च्यं
ब्रह्मादिभिर्हृदि विचिन्त्यमगाधबोधैः ।
संसारकूपपतितोत्तरणावलम्बं
वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥ 7 ॥

O Supreme Lord! I adore Thy Lotus Feet (the first flux or Abode of the Supreme Knowledge of the Self), which are sought after through the knowledge of the *Śrutis*¹¹ which are beginningless, worthy of worship and meditated upon with deep concentration by *Brahmā* and other great gods in

9. To know the secret or esoteric meaning of the Divine Dance, see *The Bhāgavata*, Book X, Part I, Ch. 29-33.

10. "The good are always kind to women-folk; therefore, kindly restore to us our lord, dear to us as the very vital air." Ref. to *The Bhāgavata* Book X, Part I, Ch. 16, verses 33-53.

11. "I seek to know that *Upaniṣada Puruṣa*." *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III. 9. 26.

their heart's cave,¹² and which lift the worldly minded from the deep well of ignorance.

येनाङ्कपालवपुषः स्तनपानबुद्ध-
स्त्वदंघ्रिणाहतमनो विपरीतचक्रम् ।
विध्वस्तभाण्डमपतद्भुवि गोपमूर्ते-
र्वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥ 8 ॥

O Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, Possessor of immeasurable power in Your very childhood! On Your first birthday, Mother *Yaśodā* had, according to custom, put You lying under the shade of the cart of *Nanda Bābā*, the leader of milkmen of *Gokula*, so that You learnt to change your sides. The cart was in the sun. The demon *Śakaṭāsura* took chance, by a previous curse, to sit invisibly in the cart with the aim of crushing your baby body. Knowing his intent through your omniscience, You rubbed your feet under the pretext of struggling desire to

suck the breast of your mother. In Thy omnipotent nature, the kicks of Thy Lotus Feet turned the cart turtle. It crashed along with the utensils (milk pots) contained therein. The invisible *Śakaṭāsura*¹⁴ was thus killed with the touch of Thy Divine Feet. He got release from the curse, as was promised to him by *Lomaś Rṣi*. To these Lotus Feet of Yours, I offer salutation with reverence and devotion.

इत्यष्टकं पठति यहः परमस्य पुंसो
नारायणस्य निरयार्णवतारणस्य
सर्वाप्तिमाशु हृदये कुरुते मनुष्यः
संप्राप्य देहविलयं लभते च मोक्षम् ॥ 9 ॥

If one, desirous of liberation, recites with sincere devotion this eight-verse hymn to Lord *Nārāyaṇa* one is endowed with the means of crossing this mundane ocean. The invisible individual soul, in this human frame, will experience and attain complete co-ordination with the Self in the interior of the Cave of his Intellect or spiritual heart. He will enjoy the experience of the state of *Jīvanmukti* and finally leave away even the last trace of body-consciousness.

Salutations to Nārāyaṇa!

12. "...who is experienced as the Origin of Truth in this manifestation." (*Ibid.*, *Sankarācārya Bhāṣya*.)

13. "The intelligent give up happiness and sorrow by developing concentration of mind on the Self and thereby meditate on the Eternal Being who is inscrutable, lodged inaccessibly, located in the cave of the intellect and seated in the midst of misery." *Katopaniṣad*, I. 2. 12.

14. For details refer to *The Bhāgavata*, Book X, Part I, Ch. 7, verses 4-10.

Vedanta recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error; and the greatest error, says the Vedanta, is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature, and that you have no power and you cannot do this or that.

—Swami Vivekananda

Some Essentials of Hinduism

S. L. VERMA

Hinduism is a confluence of many rivers and streams. For a beginner to enter into its deep waters is a mind-boggling exercise. To help them come to grips with some of its salient features, the writer, an advocate in Delhi, presents a lucid discussion.

Normally the term *religion* is taken to mean a faith as taught by one preacher, guru or prophet. But Hinduism is not a religion as taught by one person. The term *Hinduism* is a foreign term for the religion of the people of India. The indigenous Sanskrit name for the Hindu religion is *Dharma*, which relates to fundamental truths which a person should live and abide by. Literally the word *dharma* means the principles or relationship which holds us firm. In a technical sense it also means the virtues of human beings. It may also mean the fundamental truths about living or the Science of Living, as for example, heat may be said to be the dharma of fire, and cold the dharma of ice. Dharma does not belong exclusively to any race, sect or group. Strictly speaking, true dharma can be classified only as "The Dharma", and not as the Hindu Dharma. Dharma is universal. It is a collection of principles or rules of conduct applicable to, and which should be observed by all human beings.

The Vedic Trinity ; God—Soul—Matter.

The sources of Hindu Dharma are the *Vedas*, the oldest known scriptures of the world. The first essential of the Vedic Dharma is that whatever exists is from God. All things are derived from Him and He is in all. He is eternal. He is the ultimate, pure and unalloyed. He is omni-present, omni-scient, immortal, truth, bliss, love, just, merciful, unborn, fearless, and the Creator of the Universe.

Another thing that is eternal according to the *Vedas* is the Soul, which is called the *Ātman* (meaning the all-pervading). It is called *Jīva-ātman* when it is present as life-energy in the body of a living being. Compared to Soul, God is called *Param-ātman* (the Supreme or Primal Soul). Soul is consciousness. Consciousness is the quality of the soul. Soul's presence is the presence of consciousness. The Soul does not derive its consciousness from any external object. The Soul is eternal and it does not die with the death of the body.

The third eternal thing, according to the *Vedas*, is matter. Scientists teach us about conservation of matter. Matter cannot be created or destroyed. It only changes its form and is always in a state of flux (disintegrating and re-forming or re-becoming). Matter, which is another name for nature, is insentient. It has no inherent consciousness. A living being is thus matter plus Soul. So long as the Soul is present in the body, the body is seen to be with consciousness. When the Soul leaves, the body is inert or dead. Thus the Vedic Dharma teaches us three eternal things: God, Soul, and Matter.

The Vedic name for God is A-U-M, or OM. A name can be pronounced only by making a sound. The first and basic sound that we make when we open our mouth is 'A' (as in Baa). This in its pitch becomes 'U' (Oo). The last sound we make is 'M' (Ma) when we close our mouth. Thus God

is the beginning, the highest pitch and the end. OM is God's own name.

He has several other names according to His attributes and qualities. One of them is SAT-CIT-ANANDA. *Sat* means existence. *Cit* means consciousness or self-conscious. *Ananda* means joy or bliss (which includes love). God is existence, consciousness, and Bliss. Soul is *Sat-Cit*, but not *Ananda*. Matter is SAT, but it has no *Cit* and no *Ananda*.

Three Schools of Hinduism

As stated above: God, Soul, and Matter are the *three* eternals. There are three schools in Hinduism. One school maintains that there are three eternals, as stated above. The second school says that God and Soul are one and the same and therefore there are only *two* eternals. (This second school is called the *Dvaita* school, meaning "dual".) And the third school is that of *Śaṅkarācārya*, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda, which holds that God, Soul and Matter are all different expressions of the one Divine Reality. They say that there is *no two* (which in Sanskrit is *a-dvaita*—not two, or no two). But these distinctions are of academic interest because according to all schools, God is present in everything and is therefore everything. The truth is that whatever exists is from God and is in God.

The next essential that the *Vedas* teach is that the soul is always trying to reach God, it is always trying to seek the source from where it came. It has affinity for, and is attracted to God as iron is to a magnet. The *Cit* in man can only be perfect, satiated and complete when it finds and rests in *Ananda* (bliss), which is an attribute of God. But the soul has attraction for matter also, and so long as this affinity with matter remains, the soul wears the

body of matter and tries to live in matter, in the form of a living being. The consciousness of the soul operating through the media of the senses gets attracted to the beauty and pleasures obtainable from matter.

Karma

From the time we are born we are always doing some action or deed, either physical action or mental action. The Sanskrit word for action or deed is *Karma*. The word karma is derived from the root "*kr*" (which is also the root of the English word create). The theory of karma is based on the theory of cause and effect. "Thou shall reap what you sow." All karma become cause for their effects, and the effect of past karma along with present karma become cause for the consequent effects and this process goes on forever. Every action of the body that we do and every thought we think, become fine and are stored up in the form of impressions in our consciousness or mind. It remains latent for sometime, and then it rises up in the form of a mental wave and produces new desires. Nothing is destroyed in the universe. Existence can never become non-existence. This is the law of nature.

If one looks at a damsel with pure consciousness, it is action without any 're-action'. If one looks at her and thinks or feels or says that she is beautiful, or if he looks at her with love or passion or hate, then such action is with re-action. When we talk of karma we talk about karma with re-action, such as "like" and "dislike".

If longing for worldly pleasures and objects remains in anybody, that person will be born again. Nothing can prevent the course of strong desires.

The thought, will, or desire which is extremely strong during one's lifetime will mould the inner nature of the dying person. The newly moulded inner nature will express in a new form.

The thought, will, or desire which moulds the inner nature has the power of selecting or attracting such conditions or environments as will help it in its way of manifestation. Science tells us that that which remains in an unmanifested or potential state must at some time or other be manifested in a kinetic or actual form. Therefore we shall get other bodies sooner or later. Birth must follow death and death must follow birth. The consciousness goes with the soul when we are reborn, that is, when we take a new body.

It is our karma which causes us to be reborn. Our new life is according to the *gati* of our karma, that is, according to the direction or course of our karma. The word *gati* means the course, the way, the result, the path. (The English words gait or gateway convey some of its meanings.) Sometimes this is referred to as re-incarnation or re-birth. But there is no incarnation or birth of soul or consciousness. Only a new physical body is manufactured. It is a continuous flow of life energy according to the laws of karma. The nature of consciousness at the time we leave this body will determine the nature of our next body.

When the soul has freed itself from the fetters of desires of material things, we attain freedom, liberation, *mukti*, *nirvāṇa*.

All the sects of Hinduism, including the Sanātanis, the Ārya Samājis, Brahma Samājis, Jains, or Sikhs believe in Karma and Rebirth, and the transmigration of the soul at the time of rebirth according to rules of *gati* of karma. The Buddhists also

believe in the Law of Karma and its *gati*. They say it is the consciousness which passes from one body to another. They also say that the Law of Karma governs all life; it is universal and supreme. According to them even the Divine Power cannot alter the course of karma. They maintain, if you regulate your karma you will reach *nirvāṇa* (*nir* means without; *vāṇa* is existence—*Nirvāṇa* is freedom from the cycle of existence). By our karma we can attain *nirvāṇa* without the intervention or aid of God, that is, by one's own effort. This is not inconsistent with Hinduism, because the Law of Karma is made by God to reach Him and if we follow it we will be liberated. Thus, all these religions, in this sense, are based on the *Vedas*.

Yoga

The purpose of life is the union of soul with God. In Sanskrit the union of soul with God is called Yoga. The English word 'yoke' is derived from the Sanskrit root *yug*, meaning to join. God made man in His own image, and man alone can understand Him and reach Him. No other being can know Him or reach Him. Even the angels have to be reborn as men if they want liberation and *mukti*. To be born as a human being is the greatest gift of karma.

The Four Avenues of Yoga

All life is action and all actions are motivated with the desire to reach God, the source of all life. The actions performed by us are of four kinds, namely:

- (i) physical or bodily actions,
- (ii) mental actions,
- (iii) intellectual actions, and/or
- (iv) emotional actions.

These actions are performed by the four

sets of tools provided to us by God or Nature. First, there are the actions of our physical body, or the sense organs ; secondly, the actions of our mind ; thirdly, the actions of our brain or intellect ; and fourthly, the actions of our heart or emotions. The human body can function only through one or more of these four sets of tools, and no other. Actually, all these tools function simultaneously and Yoga is one, but for academic understanding Yoga is divided into four parts, dealing with the functions of each of the above four sets of tools.

Karma Yoga

The first tool available with us is the yoga of action or deed and is called the Karma Yoga, which deals with the physical actions which we do. God acts for the benefit of His creation. He does not do anything for His self-increment or self-interest. If we want to find favour with Him we should act like Him. All life is action, but every little finite action should be a surrender to the Infinite ; even as breathing in seems to be receiving of the gift of life, and breathing out a surrender into the Infinite life. We should be good and do good. We should commit no sin. Any act which causes harm or injury to others is a sinful act. God cannot and does not commit sin. If we do sinful acts we will be punished. The punishment for the sin is contained in and is inherent in the sinful act itself, as the act causes a cleavage and leaves impressions on the consciousness and mind which get polluted accordingly. All our actions should be for attaining God. Do the highest action of reaching God. All our actions should be for the good of others, who are His creations. With our hands we should serve others, who are all His children. Our eyes should be used for study and discovery of things which will

alleviate human suffering and promote happiness. Our mouths should sing praises of the Lord. We should speak words which are pleasant to others. Our tongue should be sweet, and not use harsh or abusive words. If we do acts which are selfish, we are driving ourselves away from our goal. Acts done to achieve predetermined results can lead to disaster. Means must justify the end. We have control over our actions but no control over the results of our actions. Therefore, means are more important than the end, and means must justify the end.

Rāja Yoga

The second tool available with human beings is mind. This leads us to the second path, called the Rāja Yoga, or the Royal Yoga. Thought is the product of the mind, and mind can be controlled only by controlling thought. Thought is always active. So long as we are conscious, we cannot stop thinking. Even in our sleep thought functions as dreams. Thought acts as a veil between our soul and our realisation of our true nature. Consciousness contains within it the ego or 'I' (called the *Ahaṁkāra* in Sanskrit), the mind (called *Manas*) and the intellect (called *Buddhi*). *Ahaṁkāra*, *Manas* and *Buddhi* remain in the *Cit* as sugar remains in milk. Rāja Yoga is the path by which we reach the pure consciousness through the medium of the mind. Pure consciousness is the attribute of soul. By reaching pure consciousness we reach the soul and God. Thought can be controlled only by stopping it from dissipating or wandering. Thought has a tendency to dwell on the past or the future. It does not want to remain on the present. It can be tamed and be made to remain on the present. The process of thought cannot be stopped, but it can be controlled by making it one-pointed, that is by focussing it on one thing at a time. If our thought is one-

pointed it is called *ekā-graha* (one-housed). This control of the waves (*vṛttis*) of thought is Rāja Yoga, Mind has been compared to a restless monkey which has somehow become intoxicated with liqueur, and which has been stung by a scorpion. Mind can never be at rest. All actions originate in the mind as mental actions before they are transformed into physical actions. Everything arises in the mind. Everything we experience is the product of our mind. When an object comes into contact with one of our sense perceptions a wave arises in our mind. We first see the object with our pure consciousness as a child sees it. But the waves which thus arise in the mind get associated with the waves of our prior impressions accumulated in the mind, resulting in desires of likes and dislikes. Desires of like produce attractions and we crave for more. Desires of dislike produce hatred. If our desires are not fulfilled unhappiness results. Desires are the root cause of all evil because they are always selfish. Our desire should be for the Highest One and our thoughts should be thoughts for the Highest and how to reach Him. They should help and guide our actions. Mind can find peace only in the Infinite. Mind can be pure only when it wants God and nothing but God. All sins and evil or selfish actions pollute the mind. The kingdom of God can be reached only by a pure mind and not by a polluted one.

Bhakti Yoga

The heart which is the third tool is said to be the seat of emotions. Hatred, anger, jealousy and love are emotions. The highest emotion is love. Hatred, anger and jealousy are selfish emotions. Love can be selfish as well as non-selfish. Pure and good love is the one which is unselfish. This emotion has been given to us to love God. Love is the foundation of life, because God is Love.

The only true religion is the practice of love. Love is the pathway to the world beyond, the ladder leading to the portal of paradise. Love permeates the whole world and sustains all things and brings about perfection. Clothed in radiance, love is the light that dispels darkness and transforms sorrow into joy, to lead us to the joy of the Most Joyous. Love cures all ills, and is the divine physician for the ailments of vanity and pride. If we search within our heart, we will find God there. Love is the quickest and shortest path to God. The warmth of love starts operating the moment we start to tread the path of *bhakti*. Love responds speedily and immediately. Love attracts love. It is self-responsive. It attracts God's love in response, the moment we dwell in it. The response is direct and immediate, without any other medium between the two of us. God said: "Whoever approaches Me walking, to him I will be coming running." His heart expresses supreme devotion to His whole creation. He is attracted by love and can be reached and conquered by love. Hatred cannot conquer hatred, but love can conquer hatred. Let us abide in the joy of love by not returning hatred to those who hate us. Let us always dwell free from hatred. Towards all living things have *maitri* (love), *karuṇā* (compassion), and *mudita* (joy in the success of others, i.e., the opposite of jealousy). May all beings be happy. May none suffer. Send *maitri* to all living beings, to all human beings, without any distinction of race, colour, caste or religion. Bless them that curse you. Love of others should be greater than the love of self. It is only when the personal self is offered at the altar of love that harmony manifests. It is only by sublime unrestricted selfless love that we can reach God. It is only by boundless faith and love in God that we can cleanse and purify our consciousness and soul, and free our-

selves from the cycle of rebirth. In all true love there is the love of the Infinite. We love our wife or husband because we love our Self, which is the manifestation of God. We love the other because we see God's love there. All true love is love of eternity. This is the path of Bhakti Yoga, the path of Devotion. Love is infinite ; it is infinity. The more we give the more we have, and the more we practise it, the more it grows.

Jñāna Yoga

The next and fourth tool available with human beings to reach God is the brain or intellect (*Buddhi*). Through learning, knowledge and wisdom, we can know God. God is truth. Truth can be known only by man because man is endowed with the power of knowledge and reasoning. Dharma is the search for truth and the way to live by it. Truth can never be destroyed, nor Dharma, though it may not be known to us for some time. Truth ever wins (*Satyam-eva jayate*). Science is daily making searches into truth in nature and making new inventions. Truth is in nature because of the presence of God in nature. But the truth must be the ultimate truth, the absolute truth, and not the relative or conventional truth. It should be truth which ultimately triumphs and which is true at all times and for all beings. What is that by knowing which we can know everything ? The answer is, it is God because He is in all. He is all knowledge. He is all wisdom. He is the absolute truth and the absolute reality because everything comes from Him. God has given us a spark of His intelligence. With that little spark man has made so many inventions and discoveries. Intelligence is not something which can be manufactured by us. It is inherent in our consciousness. Its source is the infinite intelligence of God and the more we give or use it, the more we have, as it is always linked with and draws from its inexhaustible source. Intelligence has

been given to us to know Him. This path is called the Jñāna Yoga or the Yoga of Knowledge. This yoga helps us to know and understand God through *jñāna* or *buddhi*. It tells us that God and Soul are not material things. God and soul are absolute. They are beyond matter and cannot be known through the medium of matter. They are beyond science. Science deals only with matter and is limited to matter. All scientific experiments are made through the medium of matter. Matter is a compound and is always in a state of flux, ever changing, ever disintegrating and ever becoming (*bhava*). But God and Soul are not compounds. Consciousness is an attribute of the soul. Intelligence or *buddhi*, which is in the consciousness, is the first material product emanating from it. Intelligence is the first basic matter. You find it even in crystal. Nature has intelligence. Thought is the next gross matter after intelligence. Through intelligence we reach our consciousness and from there the soul and God. God created the universe by His Will. Human will is called *Ātma-śakti*, meaning the soul's power or strength.

It is by one or more of the four above yogas that we can reach God. We may follow one or more of these yogas, whichever we choose, it will lead us to the others, as they are all linked and overlapping, leading to the same end ultimately. The *Vedas* are the oldest human records describing God, Soul and Matter. These three concepts are common to all religions. Thus, the *Vedas* embrace all religions. The *Vedas* do not require a person to be a Hindu. The word Hindu does not appear in the *Vedas*. They ask us to be an *Ārya* (English, *Āryan*), which means a noble person, a sublime person. Even Buddha's eightfold path is called the Aryan Eightfold Path, practising which will make a person an *Ārya*. No distinction is made on the ground

of race, colour, religion, or country. All our desires, wills, and thoughts are recorded in our consciousness (*Cit*) as in a computer. We are makers of our destiny. We will reap what we sow in our consciousness, through our mind, and with the aid of our intellect. This is the Dharma. Life should be lived by Dharma which is true for all beings at all times. Dharma alone can lead us to the Divine. The spirit in us is a river. Its sacred bathing place is meditation, its

waters are truth, its banks are holiness (works, actions), and its waves are love.

Our prayer should be confined to five things: God give us peace (*śānti*), strength (*śakti*), light (*jyoti*), wisdom (*jñāna*), and bliss (*ānanda*, joy and love). If we have these all our other requirements will be answered.

May peace be to all beings!

May all beings be happy!

VEDANTA: A REJUVENATING POWER

(Continued from page 452)

mains calm in his state of sublime resignation, like Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramakrishna and others.

Finally, the *jñāna yogi*, the philosopher, the thinker, analyses everything that comes in mind, and when analysis ultimately bogs down to a vicious circle (due to the limitations of the abstractions and symbols of analysis), he resorts to meditation, which leads to the unification of the subject and object of meditation; it inspires the mind to realise that the God whom he was imagining as sitting in heaven and ruling the world was none other than his own self, that the little "I" had never really existed. This realisation fills him with a sense of beatitude and complete satisfaction.

He becomes a *jīvanmukta*, a man totally free from the shackles of attachment and bondage, one who is capable of looking with an equal eye on all pairs of opposites.

A synthesis of the four kinds of yoga will reveal that the apparent freedom and self-assertion of our personal being to which we are so profoundly attached conceal a most pitiable enslavement to countless beings, powers, forces, influences in universal Nature; that the self-abnegation of the ego in the Divine is its self-fulfilment; that it is the conversion of the human soul into the Divine Soul and of natural life into divine living which is the integral plan of existence, the principle of teleology behind all religion and morality.

Death of The Dinosaurs—The Puranic View

DR. S. K. BALASUBRAMANIAN

The extra-terrestrial events have found their way into the mythologies of the old religions, camouflaged in colourful stories. The writer who is of Pune examines them in the light of scientific discoveries.

The dinosaurs were once the dominant life-forms on earth. They were the largest animals known to have inhabited our planet. With aggressive self-assurance they lived on the earth for more than a hundred million years. Suddenly they disappeared, about sixty-five million years ago in a cataclysmic event leaving their bones, whole skeletons sometimes, in mute testimony to their prolific past.

Scientists have pondered for long over the nature of the event which could have swallowed all life on earth in that distant past. Recently definite evidence has been obtained on the nature of the great catastrophe.

Iridium is a rare element found in the earth's crust. Than earth rocks and soil, meteorites contain a larger proportion of it in their chemical make-up. So if any layer of the earth's crust, corresponding to a well-defined geological age, has more than a normal amount of iridium, it can be taken to indicate that a collision with a great meteorite or other extra-terrestrial object took place. Recent studies in the U.S. found an above-normal iridium content in soils at widely separated places at a level corresponding to sixty-five million years ago. The striking coincidence of this date with that of the disappearance of the dinosaurs led to the theory that the demise of these great reptiles was linked with a meteorite collision. The terrific impact of the meteorite with the earth may have produced a

huge cloud of dust that blocked out sunlight to the earth for as much as hundreds of years. Earth enveloped in darkness, photosynthesis stopped and plants died. Ambient temperatures fell, triggering the onset of an ice age. The great quantity of dust in the atmosphere and the consequent break in the food chain thus were responsible for the death of the dinosaurs.

The 'smoking gun', to establish the validity of this hypothesis was, however, absent. If an event of such magnitude had indeed taken place, it should have left a large crater hundreds of kilometres wide. A few months back such a crater was identified near the Yucatan plateau in Central America beneath the sea. The Gulf of Campeche, inside the Mexican Gulf, is believed to have been the site of the collision with such a large meteorite. The resulting concussion is believed to have produced tidal waves hundreds of metres high, agitating the oceans for several years and inundating all the littoral areas. Carried by winds, mixing into the atmosphere, a thick layer of fine dust blocking out sunlight, the collision produced a veritable cosmic deluge, wiping out all forms of life on earth.

Meteorite penetrations through earth's thick protective atmosphere are not that rare. According to statistical probability, a major collision is possible once every twenty-five million years. In the early eighties the earth missed one such malevolent visitor by a bare six hours.

The Great Deluge, or devastating flood, is common to both Hindu and Hebrew mythological traditions. The story of the first Avatar of Viṣṇu, the Matsya-avatar, centres round the flood. The Jewish version of the flood is found in the Old Testament. Archeologists have also found supporting evidence.

The Jewish version says that God ordered Noah to build an ark on a high mountain and take on board the male and female of every known species to save them from sure extinction in the impending flood. The waters rose as predicted and swallowed up all life except those forms which were on the ark. At last the ark was ferried across to a safe dry spot. The Hindu version is similar, but differs in some details. Here, Viṣṇu came as a fish and ordered his devotee to take animal pairs to a high dry spot and saved them by bringing a ship when the flood came.

The asteroid collision theory is not found in Hindu mythology. It requires a 'creative interpretation' of the Purāṇa on the Second Incarnation of Viṣṇu as the *Kūrma*, or tortoise to explain it.

On the advice of Brahma, the Devas sought the help of Viṣṇu to churn the ocean of milk with Mount Manthāra to produce *Amṛt*, the elixir of immortality. The Asuras also cooperated in the effort. Viṣṇu in the form of the Tortoise supported the mountain and turned it to churn the ocean. A number of animals came from the ocean—animals of utility and support to human life on earth. Finally, Dhanvantari, the celestial physician, emerged with the jar of elixir. The asuras snatched the jar and refused to share it with the devas. Viṣṇu then took the form of a bewitching damsel, *Mohini*, and deluding the asuras with her coquetry, served all the elixir exclusively to the devas.

One asura though, saw through the trick of Viṣṇu and took on the disguise of a deva. In this disguise he was served with the last drop of *Amṛt* from the jar. Sūrya, the Sun-god, discovered the deception and Viṣṇu beheaded the asura with his *Cakra*, divine discus. The demon's head and body, though separated, had become immortal by virtue of swallowing the immortality-bestowing potion. *Rāhu*, the head, pursues even to this day the sun and moon with implacable hatred and swallows them periodically. Since the head is open at the neck, the sun and the moon escape through his gullet, though they suffer an eclipse during the period of transit through his mouth. *Rāhu* is considered a malevolent influence over life on earth and the eclipses are feared by the devout as periods of pestilence and suffering. Equally immortal, the decapitated body, called *Ketu*, is responsible for meteoric phenomena.

Hindu astrologers are able to predict the eclipses accurately on the basis of the mythological theory of *Rāhu* swallowing the sun. Nonetheless, they, (*Rāhu* and *Ketu*) play an important role in the occurrence of the ordinary eclipses. To pose a threat to life the eclipse must be prolonged. If the eclipse caused by *Rāhu* was the one that led to the extinction of the dinosaurs, the fact that *Ketu* was linked to the meteoric phenomena would support our view.

The origin and functions of the asteroid belt in the Solar System are not well understood. The asteroid pieces may be the shattered remnants of an extinct planet or may be the malevolent visitors from outer space blocked by an invisible barrier and broken up by attrition in collisions with other sections of the belt. Occasionally an unwelcome visitor sneaks through and causes havoc on earth as happened on that

(Continued on page 477)

Shanti

SMT. TOVE MAJUMDAR

All Isms—politics have proven of no worth
To solve the universal problems on earth.
They have let loose evil and destructive forces,
And humanity suffers their consequences and causes.
There can never be any action
Without good and bad reaction.

If all nations of the world would practise their faith in deed
There would for world peace and happiness be no other need.
When we in the books of wisdom will read
We will imbibe a valuable growing seed
And will tread the path that till goodness will lead
Then we could eliminate exploitation, evil and greed
No more would nations weep and bleed
The world's hungry children we could all feed.

God is the only reality
So why bother about nationality.
God has created all no matter what race
His love equally all will embrace.
When nations unite and bring God into this world,
Then only will we solve all problems on earth.

Aum peace!

Peace!

Peace!

Errata

In the article "The Unique Space-time and Historical Sense of the Hindus"
in June '92 issue:

<i>Page</i>	<i>Column</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
254	2	4	Brahman's	Brahma's
254	2	6	2,11,04,000	3,11,04,000
255	2	37	1,700	2,700
258	1	32	18 Chatur-Yuga	28 Chatur-Yuga
260	1	38	1 Paramāṇus = 1 Aṇu	10 Paramāṇus = 1 Aṇu
260	2	15	1 Krosha (about 21) miles/Gavyuti	1 Krosha (about 2½) miles/Gavyuti

How Long, O My Lord

V. GOPINATHAN

How Long, O My Lord!
Shouldst me suffer thus,
Bearing grief's burden
In this sea of woe!
Whenst can I hope
To be one with Thee,
O Mighty soul of Mine,
Mercy's visible form!
Dost Thou know my heart
Yearns to see Thy smile,
Thy bewitching beauty,
Thy benign pair of eyes,
And Thy ceaseless play Divine,
Thy Form in Chariot
Driving Arjun, Thy friend,
Giving him counsel high
For all time and sundry!
How do I yearn
To see Thy form Bright
Caressed by Gopis
Of Vrindavan, sweet!
Whenst can I have
A glimpse of Form
Adored by Sakti ?

The angry glance
Cast at Bhishma
When he tore with shafts
The frame of Arjun!
Whenst can I hear
Thy magic Flute
That brings calm
To all beings alike!
Tell me, O My Lord!
How Long shouldst I wait
To grasp in my grip
The soft feet that stamped
The pride of Kāliya,
The idol that saved
Meera from deadly venom ?
The Hand that partook
Spinach leaf from Krishna ?
O my mind flutters,
Frets to see them all!
How Long, O My Lord!
Shouldst me suffer thus,
Bearing grief's burden
In this sea of woe!

Note: Krishna is a synonym of Draupadi.

The Master will be your protector. You must live depending on him. Let him do good to you if he so desires, or let him drown you if that be his will. But you are to do only what is righteous, and that also according to the power he has given you.

Holy Mother

Mother Comes

C. P. GHOSH

Oh! Mother comes. Our Mother comes!
Her golden-hued complexion with the golden rays of the sun,
Jasmines, chinaroses bloom copying Her smile.
Dew-drops gleam on the grass, on the banks.
Here the lilies, there the lotuses bloom in the ponds.
The blooming white *kash* waving like *chamars*,
Flakes of cotton float in the azure sky—
Green paddy fields toss their crowns by the breeze nearby.
Sweet divine scent of Her sublime presence fills the air—
The advent of Mother from the lap of Nature so clear,
Her affectionate glance makes the rivers dance.
Brimming our hearts with surpassing grace.
O Thou Embodiment of joy eternal! Power and Love,
Shatter the masses of fear and ignorance.
Illumine the worn-out soul with love and hope.
Our unflinching devotion to Thy Feet!
Oh! Mother comes. Our beloved Mother comes!

DEATH OF THE DINOSAURS—THE PURANIC VIEW

(Continued from page 474)

fateful day when the life of dinosaurs was snuffed out. *Rāhu* is the persistent pest that is a constant threat to life on earth and may be identified with sections of the asteroid belt uncontrollably set on a destructive trajectory.

A question not germane to our main theme could be raised about the ethics (or absence of ethics) in denying Amṛt to the asuras who had participated in the effort to procure it. The term *asura* should not be interpreted to mean a group of “evil” persons. But the term signifies the qualities that are sometimes destructive in nature.

Much as we may not like it, some of the asura qualities prod mankind to constructive actions too. Hence, symbolically, the Purāṇas speak of them as having cooperated with the devas. The term *deva* or *daiivī-sampat* should be taken on the whole to mean the qualities that elevate and liberate the human being, and the *āsura-sampat* leading, on the whole, to the degradation of the individual and society. The two terms contrast the twin faces of human character, and show, incidentally, how we human beings attribute to the gods our own qualities. Hence, no question of our judging the ethics of the gods.

REVIEWS & NOTICES

STOTRAMALA, translated by Justin E. Abbott. Published by Samata Books, 10 Congress Building, 573 Mount Road, Madras, 600-006; 1990. 207 pages plus xxii; Rs. 45/-.

The lives and inspired poems of the Hindu saints have attracted many scholars from America and the European countries. The book under review is a translation into English of the poems of fourteen poet-saints of Maharashtra by Justin E. Abbott, who came to India as a member of the American Marathi Mission. He studied the lives and works of the Marathi saints for many years. Long fascinated with the devotional literature, he came to the conclusion that this body of writing contained literature of the highest order with a supreme message. His book was first published in 1928 and now the second edition is brought out by Samata Books.

Very few Western scholars have understood the Hindu way of *Bhakti* (devotion) which is *Vedāntic* in philosophy, but *Purānic* in narration. Appreciably, we find that Reverend Justin E. Abbott brought out the real essence of the Marathi poems, which inspire readers to surrender to God and live the pure life.

The prayers are the earnest appeals of a devotee longing for the grace of God. In this 'garland of prayers' each flower is so original and fragrant that the readers' mind is transported to the divine realm.

The prayers of Dhyānadeva (Jñāneśhwara) are replete with simile and metaphor, and give a glimpse of the Saint's extraordinary intellect. They reveal his rational philosophy too, as he experiences the grace of God and realizes his identity with Him. The prayers of Namdev and others reflect the attitude of surrender to God and prayers for His Grace. In all the verses, as the translator observes, there is a common thread of acknowledgment of God's supremacy, and His Oneness, though He is called by various names. The translator recognizes the uniqueness of Hinduism, wherein polytheism

is always seen to have its root in monotheism.

The book is an important contribution to religious literature, for which M/s. Samata Books, Madras should be congratulated.

Swami Brahmasthananda
Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad

HOLY BRINDAVAN AND SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND HIS APOSTLES, by Swami Ekatmananda, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras.

A simple record of the history of Brindavan and its many temples is what this little book commences with. The experiences of Sri Ramakrishna at Brindavan then unfold. The visits of Holy Mother to Brindavan and of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna form the last part of the narrative. Swami Ekatmananda adds no personal touches, no comments, no adjectives—just the presentation of events. Nowhere in the book is the author present. And this is the beauty of the book. The events in themselves are so moving that they need no adjectives to embellish them. Of course, one must be sensitive to this wonder. What would a glorious sunrise mean to one who languishes in bed behind curtained windows? To one bereft of devotion, the book might mean little. But for one who has tasted the joy of loving the Lord, it is a marvellous journey. A journey to Brindavan, where Krishna played and stole every heart. No, not just a journey to Brindavan, but travelling in the company of Guru Maharaj, and the Holy Mother, travelling with Swamiji and the apostles of Sri Ramakrishna! What rare good fortune! To know that Sarada Devi prayed for purity puts us all to shame! Yet, perhaps it is a prayer she mouths on our behalf, lest we should forget to ask. The occasional despair and gloom, as the exultation and bliss of spiritual life both find a place here. The hardships faced by some of the monks makes us question our attachment to petty things. How simple and pure they were! That simplicity is aptly reflected in the style

of the book. To all those with tenderness in their hearts, it is a journey to the land of love.

*Dr. Suruda Natarajan
Bangalore*

(1) **QUEST FOR DEVELOPMENT**, compiled and edited by O.P. Ghai. 144 pages Rs. 125/-. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. L-10, Green Park Extension, New Delhi, 110-016.

(2) **QUEST FOR ACHIEVEMENT**, compiled and edited by O.P. Ghai. 192 pages Rs. 150/-. Sterling Publishers. New Delhi.

Sri O.P. Ghai's many books, elegantly brought out by Sterling Publishers, have been widely acclaimed by pundits all over India, and rightly so. His wise and useful collection of selected passages from different eminent writers on relevant themes calls forth our admiration.

Only enlightened individuals who have realized their potential can bring about welcome transformation in others. They alone can contribute to the welfare of society. For the development of head and heart there is enough wisdom in the writings of great souls. Those luminous thoughts are the heritage of humanity. Through O. P. Ghai's carefully compiled anthologies we get a glimpse and taste of that precious wisdom.

The first book contains ennobling and enriching thoughts of famous writers on eight topics—Beauty, Books, Friendship, Happiness, Health, Love, Music, and Life.

The second book is also equally stimulating and rewarding. It covers such scintillating topics, the value and importance of which cannot be underestimated in our time of crashing values. The book is divided into seven chapters, covering such valuable themes as Aims, Courage, Enthusiasm, Self-improvement, Time, Work, and Success.

Our educational institutions, specially of higher learning, are in poor shape. Such anthologies are not only eye-openers to students but to teachers as well.

It will be a commendable service if the author similarly undertakes to publish Sanskrit Subhashitas (wise sayings) which are available in thousands, in four or five volumes for the benefit of all.

S.M.

THE MIRACLE OF MINDFULNESS, by Thich Nhat Hanh. Publishers: Rider, Random Century House, 20 Vauxhal Bridge Road, London. 140 pages; Price £ 6.99.

A spate of books explaining the meaning of Zen and its technique of meditation, published during the last three decades, have thrown ample light on the interesting subject. The present book makes a sincere attempt to guide the beginners. It offers specific step-by-step guidelines to novitiates as to how to acquire the skills of mindfulness. Most of us are unaware what we do, and what we think day in and day out. It is sheer wastage of energy. If we are not in control of ourselves, whatever we do is going to bring misery not only to ourselves but to others also.

A scattered mind—a mind which is unable to focus its attention on any subject or task even for a few minutes is incapable of understanding deeper dimensions of life. The author himself an experienced Zen master suggests many simple exercises which are quite effective and easy to practise. A few months' practice will produce a noticeable transformation in one's life. The reader of this manual on meditation will need no specific religious belief to understand and benefit from its wisdom.

A very useful publication by the famous Publishers of standard works.

S.M.

FOR SEEKERS OF SPIRITUALITY

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (*to M.*): "I was meditating inside the mosquito net. It occurred to me that meditation, after all, was nothing but the imagining of a form, and so I did not enjoy it. One gets satisfaction if God reveals Himself in a flash. Again, I said to myself, 'Who is it that meditates, and on whom does he meditate?'"

M.: "Yes, sir. You said that God Himself has become everything—the universe and all living beings. Even who meditates is God."

MASTER: "What is more, one cannot meditate unless God wills it. One can meditate when God makes it possible for one to do so. What do you say?"

M.: "True, sir. You feel like that because there is no 'I' in you. When there is no ego, one feels like that."

MASTER: "But it is good to have a trace of ego, which makes it possible for a man to feel that he is the servant of God. As long as a man thinks that it is he who is doing his duties, it is very good for him to feel that God is the Master and he, God's servant. When one is conscious of doing work, one should establish with God the relationship of servant and Master."

M. was always reflecting on the nature of the Supreme Brahman.

MASTER (*to M.*): "Like the ākāśa, Brahman is without any modification. It has become manifold because of Śakti. Again, Brahman is like fire, which itself has no colour. The fire appears white if you throw a white substance into it, red if you throw a red, black if you throw a black. The three gunas—sattva, rajas, and tamas—belong to Sakti alone. Brahman Itself is beyond the three gunas. What Brahman is cannot be described. It is beyond words.

That which remains after everything is eliminated by the Vedantic process of 'Not this, not this', and which is of the nature of Bliss, is Brahman.

"Suppose the husband of a young girl has come to his father-in-law's house and is seated in the drawing-room with other young men of his age. The girl and her friends are looking at them through the window. Her friends do not know her husband and ask her, pointing to one young man, 'Is that your husband?' 'No', she answers, smiling. They point to another young man and ask if he is her husband. Again she answers 'no'. They repeat the question, referring to a third, and she gives the same answer. At last they point to her husband and ask, 'Is he the one?' She says neither yes nor no but only smiles and keeps quiet. Her friends realize that he is her husband.

"One becomes silent on realizing the true nature of Brahman.

(*To M.*) "Well, why do I talk so much?"

M.: "You talk in order to awaken the spiritual consciousness of the devotees. You once said that when an uncooked luchi is dropped into boiling ghee it makes a sizzling noise."

The Master began to talk to M. about Hazra.

MASTER: "Do you know the nature of a good man? He never troubles others. He doesn't harass people. The nature of some people is such that when they go to a feast they want special seats. A man who has true devotion to God never makes a false step, never gives others trouble for nothing."

From the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna
Aug. 20, 1883