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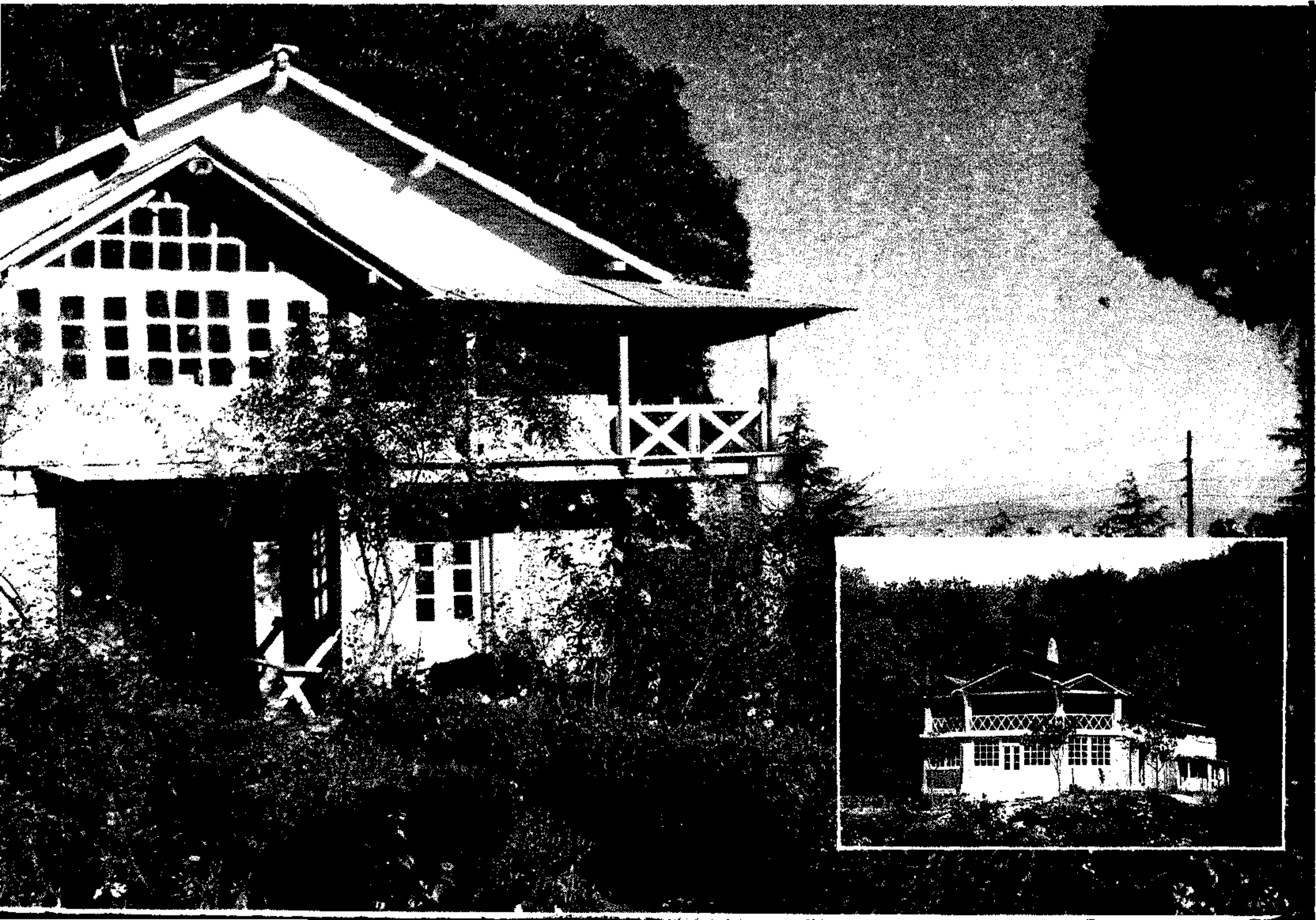


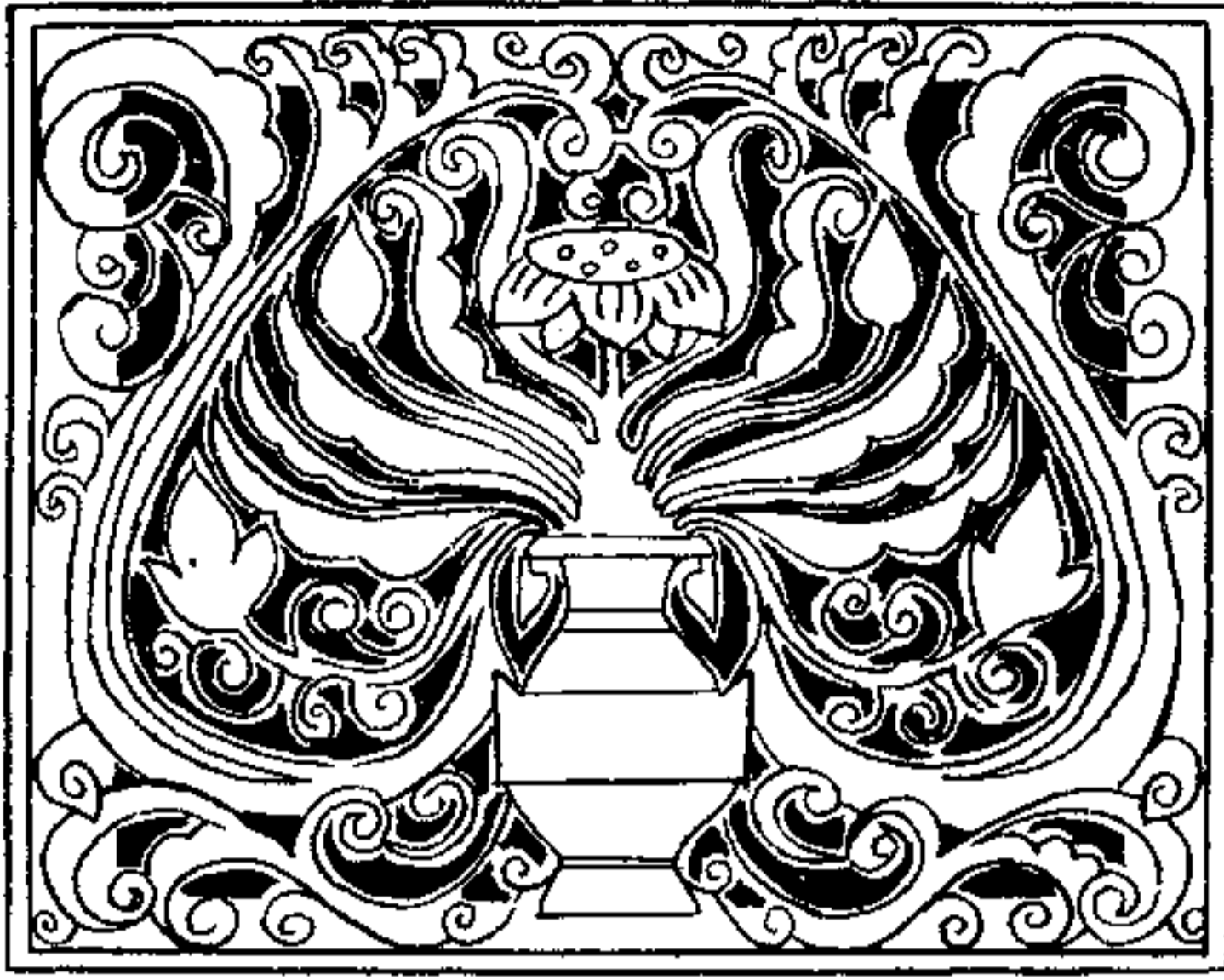
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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED.

Vol. 100

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No. 10

Divine Wisdom

GREATNESS OF HUMAN BIRTH

यन्न ब्रजन्त्यघभिदो रचनानुवादा-
च्छृण्वन्ति येऽन्यविषयाः कुकथा मतिघ्नीः ।
यास्तु श्रुता हतभगैर्नृभिरात्तसारा-
स्तांस्तान् क्षिपन्त्यशरणेषु तमःसु हन्त ॥

Those who avoid hearing about the activities and excellences of the Lord that destroy sin and purify the mind of man, but in place of it are interested only in other matters of a vulgar and polluting kind, destructive of one's mind's higher susceptibilities—such persons get no access to that (divine) region. Alas! These evil tendencies they have acquired drive them helplessly to regions of darkness.

येऽभ्यर्थितामपि च नो नृगतिं प्रपन्ना
ज्ञानं च तत्त्वविषयं सहधर्म यत्र ।
नाराधनं भगवतो वितरन्त्यमुष्य
सम्प्रीहिता विततया बत मायया ते ॥

They, indeed, are the casualties of the blinding power of the Lord's Maya, who fail to cultivate devotion to the Lord even after having got this human birth wherein Dharma and Jnana can be achieved. Even I (Brahmā) and other divinities long to get this opportunity of a human birth.

यच्च ब्रजन्त्यनिमिषामृषभानुवृत्त्या
दूरेयमा ह्युपरि नः स्पृहणीयशीलाः ।
भर्तुर्मिथः सुयशसः कथनानुराग
वैक्लव्यबाष्पकलया पुलकीकृताङ्गाः ॥

To this exquisite place go the devotees of the Supreme Being, the pure and immortal ones, who have overcome the sway of Yama, the god of death, and attained to a state higher than mine. Their eyes stream with tears and their bodies are covered with horripilations, owing to the overpowering emotions that well up in them as they converse among themselves about the deeds and excellences of the Lord.

—From *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 3.15.23-5

Sincerity

Why do so many feel that their puja, japa, etc. are not bringing them inner growth, peace and joy? Among the many reasons the feeling of self-importance is one. Here is a very educative incident from the life of Sri Ramakrishna:

One day during the rainy season of 1881 Sri Ramakrishna and a number of devotees visited Surendra's house....

Surendra approached the Master with a garland and wanted to put it around his neck. But the Master took it in his hand and threw it aside. Surendra's pride was wounded and his eyes filled with tears. He went to the west porch and sat with Ram, Manomohan, and the others. In a voice choked with sadness he said: 'I am really angry. How can a poor Brahmin know the value of a thing like that? I spent a lot of money for that garland, and he refused to accept it. I was unable to control my anger and said that the other garlands were to be given away to the devotees. Now I realize it was all my fault. God cannot be bought with money; He cannot be possessed by a vain person. I have really been vain. Why should he accept my worship? I don't feel like living any more.' Tears streamed down his cheeks and over his chest.

In the meantime Trailokya was singing inside the room. The Master began to dance in an ecstasy of joy. He put around his neck the garland that he had thrown aside; holding it with one hand, he swung it with the other as he danced and sang. Now Surendra's joy was unbounded. The Master had accepted his offering. Surendra said to himself: 'God crushes one's pride, no doubt, but He is also the cherished treasure of the humble and lowly.'* (p. 1011)

The lesson is clear: Religious disciplines remain fruitless so long as they are devoid

of love for God, but are subtly tainted by vanity and are considered capable of purchasing His grace or compelling Him to grant our wishes. At this stage we are concerned more with ourselves than with God.

But then, despite this, if we are fortunate to have an element of sincere love for God and repentance—at least in our private moments, there is a very good chance God will help us overcome this obstacle. This is what happened with Surendra.

The above incident occurred in 1881. A study of Surendra's subsequent life reveals wonderfully how in the absence of vanity God's grace works, usually unknown to its recipient—all in response to the devotee's pure love for God, no matter how feeble. On 15th June '84 we find Sri Ramakrishna remarking:

Where is Surendra? What a nice disposition he has now! He is very outspoken; he isn't afraid to speak the truth. He is unstinting in his liberality. No one that goes to him for help comes away empty-handed....

In three years Surendra had become 'outspoken', that is, his thoughts, speech and actions had become harmonious. Besides, no more was he inclined to bring 'garlands' to be noticed. His self-concern had practically disappeared, he had become liberalminded: he had noticeably progressed from mere Ramakrishna-worship to the service of the divine-in-all.

No doubt, not all the impediments on Surendra's spiritual path had gone away yet. But Sri Ramakrishna had taken charge of him, surely drawn by his sincerity, repentance and love, weak though they might have been in the beginning. Two months later we see—

Surendra stood near Sri Ramakrishna. He was in

* All the extracts here are from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600 004, 1969

the habit of drinking and often went to excesses. This had worried the Master greatly, but he had not asked Surendra to give up drinking altogether. He had said to him: 'Look here, Surendra! Whenever you drink wine, offer it beforehand to the Divine Mother. See that your brain doesn't become clouded and that you don't reel. The more you think of the Divine Mother, the less you will like to drink. The Mother is the giver of bliss of divine inebriation. Realizing Her, one feels a natural bliss.'

...Now the Master began to pray: 'ORama!ORama! I am without devotion and austerity, without knowledge and love; I have not performed any religious rites. O Rama, I have taken refuge in Thee...I do not want creature comforts; I do not seek name and fame...Grant, O Rama, that I may have pure love for Thy Lotus Feet; that I may not be deluded by Thy world-bewitching maya!...' (28.8.84)

Was not the Master, following his usual method, indirectly prompting Surendra to surrender totally to God in order to be able to avoid the snare of maya—pride, sense-pleasures, etc.? However, this prayer, 'not to be deluded by Thy world-bewitching maya', was not a hint to renounce the world—his family, responsibilities and profession. Rather the Master was preparing him to 'live in the world but be not of it' by filling him with vairagya, inner renunciation. For after a month or so we find this conversation:

Pundit (*smiling*): Revered sir, I feel a spirit of total renunciation when I am here. I feel like going away, giving up the world.

Master: No, no! Why should you give up? Give up mentally. Live unattached in the world.

Surendra wanted to spend the night here occasionally. He brought a bed and even spent a day or two here. Then his wife said to him, 'You may go anywhere you like during the day-time, but at night you must not leave home.' What could poor Surendra do? Now he has no way of spending the night away from home. (11.10.84)

What could poor Surendra do? Well, his condition was not at all that helpless. He already had the Master as his unfailing help: In just about three years Surendra was

helped to overcome the superficial and damaging show of devotion, and to go deeper and turn round self-love into love for God; he was helped to understand that worship by carrying 'garlands' to God is fruitful only if it is supported by liberal-minded service to His creatures, i.e. by carrying 'garlands' to the God-in-all; and he was helped to face his worldly commitments and life without indulgence. So, the question in fact was not what he could do, but what did he have to do at all, now that the Master, unknown to Surendra, was doing everything for him!

Still, since Surendra was unaware of the Master having taken control of him, he must have felt anxious now and then about his spiritual future. For he had as yet no visions, no signs, of grace. Nor had he realized that his liberal attitude towards all, the disappearance of his desire for recognition, and his inner vairagya were the true signs of grace. He had to work in an office for bread, he had to be busy with so many things, he had to do things he did not like at all. With hardly any time to meditate for long and regularly, much less develop the capacity to meditate, he must have sometimes felt disconsolate. The Master knew this well. So in 1885 we see him advising Surendra:

Come here every now and then. Nangta (Totapuri) used to say that a brass pot must be polished every day; otherwise it gets stained. One should constantly live in the company of holy men... Now and then you should go into solitude and call on God with a yearning heart. Your renunciation should be mental...

For you...the disciplines to be practised are kindness to living beings, service to the devotees, and chanting the name of God. Why do I say all this to you? You work in a merchant's office. I say this to you because you have many duties to perform there. You tell lies at the office. Then why do I eat the food you offer me? Because you give your money in charity; you give away more than you earn....

Your giving money away in charity is very good. Those who have money should give in charity. The miser's wealth is spirited away, but the money of the

charitable person is saved. He spends it for a righteous purpose...He who gives away in charity achieves great results. He achieves the four fruits: dharma, artha (wealth), kama (fulfilment of desires), and moksha....

Surendra: I cannot meditate well. I repeat the Divine Mother's name now and then. Lying in bed, I repeat Her name and fall asleep.

Master: That is enough. You remember Her, don't you? (22.2.85)

This would have dispelled Surendra's doubts. Now he had clear instructions on what he should have and do since he perforce had to interact with the world: pure love for God, kindness to living beings, service to the devotees—that is, love for God manifested through one's actions as kindness and service—, and, so that service to others may not corrupt him to feel very important and indispensable in the Lord's work, chanting the name of God, remembering Him 'now and then'.

In hardly another eight months Surendra was carried another step closer to God. All through these years he had felt God to be outside and distant: He was the 'other', to be worshipped, propitiated and, perhaps, a little feared. Now, in October 1885, when after Durga Puja the Mother's image was due to be immersed in the water, we discover that his relationship with the Divine Mother had imperceptibly matured into a sweet, unselfconscious feeling of 'She is my own'. More strikingly he had by now become fit to feel God as indwelling. We get evidence of this in the following narration:

Surendra was in a very unhappy mood because on this day the image of the Mother was to be immersed in the water.

Surendra: I had to run away from home.

Master (to M): What if the image is thrown into the water? May Mother dwell in the heart! (18.10.85)

Indeed, Surendra had come far: Beginning with but a modicum of genuine love for God, he had reached a state in which the thought of what God gave him never even peeped into his mind. Hereafter he was more a lover of God and an unasking giver

to God—the God in the Master and also in all living beings. It seems that the Master had timed Surendra's spiritual journey in such a way that whatever else was needed for its culmination in this very life he got before he (Master) passed away. Surendra's exalted inner life is clear from a conversation of his in April 1886, just about four months prior to the Master's casting away his body:

...Surendra arrived from his office. He carried in his hands four oranges and two garlands of flowers... He unburdened his heart to Sri Ramakrishna.

Surendra: I have come after finishing my office work. I thought 'What is the good of standing on two boats at the same time?' So I finished my duties first and then came here. Today is the first day of the (Bengali New) year; it is also Tuesday, an auspicious day to worship the Divine Mother. But I didn't go to Kali Ghat. I said to myself, 'It will be enough if I see him who is Kali Herself, and who has rightly understood Kali...

It is said that a man should bring fruit and flowers when visiting his guru or a holy man. So I have brought these....(To the Master) I am spending all this money for you. God alone knows my heart. Some people feel grieved to give away a penny; and there are people who spend a thousand rupees without feeling any hesitation. God sees the inner love of a devotee and accepts his offering... As I was coming here I bought these two garlands for four annas.

Just four annas? But in 1881 the garland he had bought was very expensive! How wonderful! What a change! How even a little genuine love draws God to guide His devotees to grasp the essence of religion—unostentatious, openhearted outpouring of love for God! Are we not reminded of what Sri Ramakrishna as Sri Krishna said in the *Gītā*?

Whosoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I accept that offering of such a spiritual aspirant. (9.26)

Only 'accept'? No. As the next few verses have said, and as observed in Surendra's life, the Lord draws such devotees to Himself. He not only makes them think they are

intimately His but demonstrates this as a fact: A few days after the above incident Surendra had gone again to the Master:

Surendra and a few other devotees entered Sri Ramakrishna's room and offered him garlands of flowers. Sri Ramakrishna put Surendra's garland on his own neck... Suddenly the Master made a sign to Surendra to come near him. When the disciple came near the bed, Sri Ramakrishna took the garland from his neck and put it around Surendra's... Sri Ramakrishna asked him, by a sign, to rub his feet. Surendra gave them a gentle massage.... Surendra was almost in an ecstatic mood. He sang:

Crazy is my Father (Shiva), crazy my Mother,
And I, their son, am crazy too!
Shyama is my Mother's name.
....
Listen, as She dances, how Her anklets
ring! (18.4.86)

Often such attention inflates the ego of the receiver. An ordinary person who perchance gets a few affectionate words and a pat from someone very great may lose his bearings and imagine himself to be great—blinded by self-importance from realizing that that greatness is really of the giver. So too in spiritual life: Often a little spiritual experience makes us vain.

But not so with Surendra. He was a blessed soul. The Master's grace ensured that no such calamity befell him. He might have come to Sri Ramakrishna as a 'beggar', expecting some ordinary gain. But that tiny spark of sincerity and love saved him. Though not a rich person, he grew to be a giver from the spiritual fullness he had begun to feel within.

His self-giving, however, was not narrow and limited to the Master. Such is the case only with ordinary people, whose devotion and giving are confined to a temple or to rituals. But Surendra's case was different. His vision had become sanctified and could see God in the Master and also in

his own heart; and, more, see and serve God in all beings, especially in the all-renouncing purehearted disciples of the Master. It was he who laid the foundation of the great Order later associated with Sri Ramakrishna's name. His devotion and sacrifice made it possible for those earnest souls to renounce the world for the realization of God. (p. 972)

After the Master passed away his disciples lived at the Baranagore Math like orphaned boys. Sometimes they would not have the money to pay their house-rent; sometimes they would have no food in the monastery. Surendra would come and settle all these things. He was the big brother of the monks. Later on, when they thought of his genuine love, they would shed tears of gratitude. (p. 972)

Restricted by his own family responsibilities, which the Master had asked him not to renounce, Surendra could but personally serve God only in a few. Nevertheless, he made up for this, satisfying his inner urge to give himself away in the service of God on a larger scale by helping establish the Ramakrishna Order.

Thus, indeed, even a little of sincere love for God carries us very very far. It reverses the current of vanity, which is love directed towards oneself, and makes it flow outwards as worshipful service: Love for God and service of God in all creatures are concomitant. Additionally, in the process many other obstacles too get washed away. Hence let us carefully tend to the spark of love we all have for God. Joy and peace will come as a matter of course, since God looks only at our inner attitude. □

He who has no faith in himself can never have faith in God.

—Swami Vivekananda

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE WHEEL OF CREATION

Actions are to be undertaken not only on the authority of what Prajāpati has said but also on the ground of their being the cause of the movement of the Wheel of the World. This He says in three verses (beginning with) 'From food,' etc.:

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसंभवः ।
यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥

*Annādbhavanti bhūtāni
parjanyaḍamasambhavaḥ;
Yajñādbhavati parjanya
yajñāḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ. (3.14)*

From food are born the creatures; the origin of food is from rainfall; rainfall originates from sacrifice; sacrifice has action as its origin.

Annāt, from food, when it is eaten and transformed into semen and blood; bhavanti, are born; bhūtāni, the creatures, the bodies of creatures; anna-sambhavaḥ, the origin of food; is parjanyaḍ, from rainfall. This is indeed a perceived fact. Here He states the utility of actions: Parjanyaḥ, rainfall; bhavati, originates; yajñāt, from sacrifice, from the merit, called apūrva, of (sacrifices such as) Kārīri etc. and Agnihotra etc. As to how the Agnihotra—sacrifice becomes the originator of rainfall has been explained in the Aṣṭādhyāyī-kāṇḍa (Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa) in the section containing six questions in the form of a dialogue between Janaka and Yājñavalkya (see Brhadāranyaka-Upanisad,

Chapter Four). It is also said by Manu,

When an oblation is properly poured in fire it reaches the sun. From the sun comes rainfall, from rainfall food, (and) from that (are born) the creatures.¹

And that *yajñāḥ*, sacrifice, called merit (*dharma*), which is subtle; *karma-samudbhavaḥ*, has action as its origin; it is achieved through the activities of the priests and the sacrificer; for, enjoined actions are the cause of *yajña*, i.e. the unseen result (*apūrva*)

कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।
तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

*Karma brahmudbhavam viddhi
brahmākṣarasamudbhavam;
Tasmātsarvagatam brahma
nityam yajñe pratiṣṭhitam. (3.15)*

Know that action has the Veda as its origin; the Veda has the Immutable as its source. Hence the all-pervading and eternal Veda is based on sacrifice.

That (action), again, which is an originator of the unseen result, *brahma-udbhavam*, has the Veda as its origin. *Brahma* means the Veda. That which has got this Veda alone as its valid means of proof (is *brahma-udbhavam*). Know (*viddhi*) that those

1. *Manu Smṛti*, 3.76.

actions only which are enjoined by the Veda are the source of invisible results (*apūrva*), but not any other (action) propounded by heretics. This is the meaning.

What is the difference between the Veda and the scripture propounded by the heretics, which makes what is enjoined by the Veda alone righteous but not so the others?

Hence He says: *Brahma*, called the Veda; *aksara-samuudbhavam*, has the Immutable as its source. That is called *aksara-samuudbhavam* which, like the breath of man, originates, gets revealed, without intellectual cognition, from the *aksara*, from the supreme Self which is free from (all) defects. Thus then, not being the creation of any person, the text of the Veda is free from all doubts about defects: and, being the originator of valid knowledge, it is authoritative with regard to supersensuous matters. But the heretical words taught by those who are possessed of defects such as error, inadvertence, imperfection of the organs, deceit, etc. cannot produce valid knowledge. In line with this is the Śruti,

Those that are the *Rg-Veda*, the *Yajur-Veda*, the *Sāma-Veda*, the *Atharvāṅgīrasa*, history, mythology, arts, Upanisads, verses, aphorisms, elucidations and explanations are (like) the breath of this infinite Reality. All these are like the breath of this (supreme Self) indeed.²

Tasmāt, hence, having originated directly from the supreme Self; *brahma*, called the Veda; which is *sarva-gatam*, all-pervading, the revealer of everything; and *nityam*, eternal, and indestructible; is, from the standpoint of its purport, *pratisthitam*, based; *yajñe*, on sacrifice, called merit (*dharma*) which is supersensuous. So the

meaning is that, by rejecting the pseudo-religion preached by the heretics, the righteousness (*dharma*) taught by the Veda is to be practised.

Let this be so. But what follows from this?

Hence He says:

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।
अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ॥

*Evam pravartitam cakram
nānuvartayatiha yaḥ;
Aghāyurindriyārāmo
mogham pārtha sa jīvati. (3.16)*

O Pārtha, he who does not follow here the Wheel thus set in motion is of sinful life. Deriving pleasure from the senses, he lives in vain.

In the beginning is manifested from the supreme Lord the Veda, which is the revealer of everything, (and is) eternal and faultless; from that follows the knowledge of rites and duties; from that rainfall; from that food; from that the creatures; in the same way, again, follows the engagement of the creatures in actions.

Yaḥ, he who; *na-anuvartayati*, does not follow; *cakram*, the Wheel, the sustainer of the whole world; *evam pravartitam*, thus set in motion, by the supreme Lord; *O Pārtha, saḥ*, he; is *aghāyuh*, a man of sinful life. *Jīvati*, he lives; *mogham*, in vain, indeed. For him death is better than life, because there is a possibility of (his) practising righteousness in another birth. This is the meaning. In support of this is the Śruti,

Now this self (the ignorant man) is an

2. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 2.4.10.

Swami Vivekananda and the Secular State

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

The Revered Swami, who is a Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, delivered the following talk on 19 March 1995 at the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, in connection with the observance of the Centenary Year of Prabuddha Bharata. He sheds new light on just what exactly is meant by India's being a secular society with a secular government and Constitution.

Swami Vivekananda gave a profound message for us in India and the rest of the world. This particular manifestation of Indian Spirituality in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda has worldwide relevance. Already the spread of the ideas is taking place. People are hungering for their ideas in many parts of the world, including small countries like Uruguay in South America. People from Uruguay came to us and requested, 'Please send us a Swamiji. We want Vedanta and Sri Ramakrishna there.' Now this is what is taking place. And as soon as the Soviet system in Russia broke down, they asked for a Swamiji there. A Swami has gone to Moscow. They look after him. They spend money for his support and they learn Vedanta and Sanskrit at their own cost. India doesn't spend a single Rupee for spreading Vedanta abroad. This is the great contribution of Swami Vivekananda in our modern age.

For our subject today we have Swami Vivekananda's name; then the other subject: a secular state and the science of values. How do they match with each other?

A Basic Blunder

I wish to tell you in the beginning that our people, our political leaders, made a big blunder when they translated the word *secular* to mean *dharma-nirapeksha-rashtra*, a state without respect for any dharma. Of course, by dharma they meant religion. It is

the biggest blunder to say *dharma-nirapeksha*:—no dharma—because it practically means 'you can do whatever you like'. From that day of Independence up to date we have been misbehaving, doing all sorts of immoral things, corruption, evil,—everything. Nothing to check it.

Why morality? Why ethics? Why dharma? Till now we understood dharma only from that point of view—the ethical sense. So the correct translation should have been *mata-nirapeksha-rashtra*, and if that had been accepted, this kind of evil consequences would not have come. *Mata* (in Hindi) means a particular religion, such as Vaishnavism (*Vaiṣṇava-mata*), Shaivism (*Śaiva-mata*), Christianity (*Kṛṣṭa-mata*), Islam—these are all *matas*. Any number of *matas* may be there in a State. We have always used the word *mata* with that in mind. And a country or a political state should be, irrespective of the various *matas* that are there, not at all exclusively associated with any particular *mata*, but respecting all *matas*. But dharma has a wider meaning than just religion, and no society can exist without dharma, all the ethical and humanistic values. That is called dharma. They didn't understand this little distinction, so they committed a big blunder. Now we are feeling the effect of it. We want values. We need values. From where shall we get them?

Dharma

The word dharma is literally translated in our *Mahābhārata* and other books as science of values. Every segment of the population has a dharma of its own—*grhastha-dharma*, (the householder's dharma), *rāja-dharma*, (the dharma of political life), and so on. These are all mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*.

Take for example *rāja-dharma*, the dharma for the particular situation we are considering now. *Rāja-dharma* means politics of the state and its system of values. That *Rāja-dharma* they forgot. Why should there be *Rāja-dharma*? Because due to their forgetfulness of this dharma, administrators in India became callous, unconcerned with the people, and corruption increased. Strong

I wish to tell you in the beginning that our people, our political leaders, made a big blunder when they translated the word secular to mean dharmā-nirapeksha-rashtra, a state without respect for any dharma.

ethical consciousness—the original meaning was expounded when Bhishma was giving his long discourse to Yudhisthira in the *Shānti-Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. *Rāja-dharma* is praised highly there. Bhishma says:

...Like the footprint of an elephant which can contain the footprints of all other animals, so is Raja dharma that dharma in which all dharmas are found. If the State is healthy, everything else becomes healthy. If the State is not morally healthy, everything goes wrong.

What is happening to India today? Due to a slip of memory of the *Mahābhārata's* message, dharma was taken for granted or got neglected. *Sarve dharmā rajadharme*

pravistha were the words Bhishma used—'all dharmas are included in *Rāja-dharma*.' But today our country has forgotten this emphasis, and the politicians have espoused a *dharmā-nirapeksha-rashtra*. The result is, therefore, that people do what they like—follow whatever impulses come to them.

What I found in America in 1986 was that the young people there don't like rules, regulations, disciplines, or things like that. That's why parents never say no to the children in any house. Teachers don't say no to the children, because they don't like it. And the result was the philosophy that came up: 'Impulse-Release-Philosophy', as they put it in American language. Whatever impulses come, release them, don't check them. Don't control them.

The result is what you see: a very chaotic society, no rules, no regulations, no disciplines, nothing. That's not a human society. In a human society there are certain restraints. That is not observed and America is suffering. We are also suffering. We are suffering badly just now, due to the nature of this political state we founded. We had great hopes of developing a powerful India, economically, socially, culturally, but we have not realized our ambition. Things rather seem to be going down and down.

For the last five years there has been talk of reversing things—i.e. bringing about a return to value-oriented education, value-oriented politics, and value-oriented administration. These subjects are coming up for more and more discussion. But no one knows how values can be given to the people. Formerly religions gave some values. Your religion would tell you not to steal, not to harm anybody. So we got some control from our religion. But today religions have not that power. Few care for a dictation from religion to 'do this', or 'don't do that'. So today we are searching for

the source of values.

Source of Values

It is a wonderful subject. None of the physical sciences can give us an answer. Politics can get a new law passed in Parliament. But that does not give you a value-system. Parliament passes the laws and the laws are dead. Nobody cares to observe the laws. Why? Values must inspire the people first, then they will respect and observe the laws. Otherwise, they will find at every step a way to break the law—and also see that they are not caught. What somebody said—a critic—was that this is the eleventh commandment. Ten commandments, you know, Moses and Jesus gave; and the eleventh is: even if you break all the ten, see you are not caught by the law. That's what they are calling the eleventh commandment.

religions can be free in India. All can freely preach their religion and practise it, but without harming other people. That is one of our natural rights protected by our Constitution. Therefore *mata-nirapeksha-rashtra* should have been the wording so far as our State is concerned. No particular *mata* or religion is going to be part of the State, but every *mata* is respected.

Dharma, however, is essential. Without dharma no society can exist. Wherever there is more than one person there must be dharma. If you are all alone on an island, there may be no need for dharma. You are alone on the island, you can do whatever you like. But if you go there with other people, you need to restrain your actions. Therefore dharma comes in. And so, in a society like ours, with nine hundred million

Ten commandments, you know, Moses and Jesus gave; and the eleventh is: even if you break all the ten, see you are not caught by the law. That's what they are calling the eleventh commandment. Today India lives by this eleventh commandment. We shall do all evil, but avoid being caught by the law of the land. You pass any number of laws but see, nothing improves.

Today India lives by this eleventh commandment. We shall do all evil, but avoid being caught by the law of the land. You pass any number of laws but see, nothing improves.

And so, it is a great subject, this subject of values—and that too in a secular state. They perhaps thought values imply a religious state; but we wanted to be 'a non-religious secular state'! Therefore we are now in search of a way to regenerate values. Where will you get this value-oriented society? They do not know.

And so that translation, *dharma-nirapeksha-rashtra*, was the first big blunder we made. The sooner we correct it the better—to *mata-nirapeksha-rashtra*, meaning all

people, how can we have a stable social order without dharma to regulate behaviour and conduct? That is the significance of the word dharma in the social sense. Its exact translation today will be 'the science of values', not a religion, but embodying the great values taught by all the great teachers of religions.

It is a wonderful science. Very often some scientists, especially of the materialistic sciences, and some leftist political thinkers, will question: how can you have values as a science? Science means physics, chemistry, etc. But no, the Oxford Dictionary also mentions science of ethics, science of morality, and so on. The word science applied to values, then means that it has an organized state.

Not in Nature

Today's question will be: what is the source of values? The first answer we find is: *not from nature outside*. Nature has no values. In the theory of evolution, up to the human level, there were no values at all. Only mere nature's compulsions made for the movement of species and evolution of species.

Biologists have come to realize, on the other hand, that at the human stage of evolu-

ecological problems are arising. The Rio Conference dealing with the Earth situation pointed these out. All these have become familiar to us and the evidence points to the fact that we need some sort of value-system by which our behaviour is adjusted so that we do not destroy nature around us and we shall keep nature healthy and strong. This means that we have to restrain our mind, our cravings for pleasures and comforts. What we call *consumerism*, which has gone out of control today, will have to be checked,

Man has now the power to alter nature all around. He can do anything. He can destroy nature. He can destroy himself also. That is the situation of evolution at the human stage...so biology today says, we want values. Without values you cannot have any kind of proper evolution.

tion we need values. We have to guide this evolution. The greatest biologist of his time, Sir Julian Huxley, said this:

Man has taken from nature the whole control of evolution. Nature has nothing to do with evolution so far as you are concerned. And evolution has ceased to be organic, but it has become cultural evolution and psychological evolution and social evolution.

New words are used. When you have this cerebral system of man, brain power and the power of reason, what more do you need by way of organic evolution? You have the best organ. With it you can change anything. Man has now the power to alter nature all around. He can do anything. He can destroy nature. He can destroy himself also. That is the situation of evolution at the human stage. And so biology today says, we want values. Without values you cannot have any kind of proper evolution. We may go in the wrong direction, we may destroy nature.

We have already found that so many

otherwise the whole of nature will be destroyed. Many scientists today are coming around to this point of view, that we need values to guide evolution in the correct direction. It is here that the teachings of Swami Vivekananda have tremendous relevance in this modern period. Nowhere else will you find the answer.

To recapitulate, the first answer is that science tells us that in raw physical nature we do not find values or dharma playing a part. Up to human evolution, all the sub-human species were guided without value systems. Progress and development came for them without the operation of values. But at the human level values are essential. If so, then what are the sources of these values? A very important question.

The Selfish Gene

There is a book written by the British biologist Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*. The finding is that the gene is very selfish. The body's make-up is determined by genes only—the genetic system. Regarding yourself as body only, the question of values does not arise. The body-oriented person will be

absolutely 'value-free' in his thinking and action. A man who believes 'I am the body and nothing more'—that man will be absolutely without values. He will exploit everybody and will do anything. So when we find in society heinous crimes are committed—a man murders his wife to get another dowry from a second woman, and others, we know what is wrong. If you examine that criminal mentality you will find that it is completely controlled by the genetic system. The genetic system is entirely selfish. It has no sympathy for another genetic system.

But values means a concern for others. Where is that concern to come from? This body? No, the body is negated as a source of values. No values will come to a man who sees only the interests of his own body. Body we say is a good servant but a bad master. That is why we say *dehātma-buddhi*, one's identifying oneself with this physical body only, must go! A more mature idea should take the place of this *dehātma-buddhi* idea. If you want dharma, if you want values, this thinking of the self as the body should yield to a higher idea. The idea that I am my body should be given up. You may think of yourself as 'in the body', but not identical with the body. 'There is something else in me'—that is one point which we must keep in view.

Today's biology therefore doesn't find values coming out of the genetic system. The author Dawkins says in his book that he is a materialist. He doesn't believe in anything other than matter. But even then he admits he has need of values for higher evolution as a human being. He says we should teach values to our children. He says in his book: 'Teach values to your children. You won't get them from nature.' So we must teach them to the children! But we ask how are we going to be able to teach values? Nobody can do it unless he knows where values come

from and what they are. Modern science, popular science, is absolutely ignorant of this subject of values. In this India has contributed tremendously for the last five thousand years, from the time of the Upanishads. And it is this subject which Vivekananda taught and made famous all over the world as part of the great philosophy of Vedanta.

What Vedanta Says

So from where will this secular state of India get values? Vivekananda says: From every individual. The Atman, the divine spark in every one of us, is the same infinite divine spark in all living beings. That is the teaching of the Upanishads. That is the source and centre of all the values that hold human society together. All values come when you manifest your Divine nature, even a little. In every moral action, in every unselfish action, you will find the manifestation of this Divine Self within—a negation of the body. If I want to care only for my body, I won't be able to do good to anybody. I can't serve anybody. If you want to point out a road to a man so that he can go to some unknown house, you have to go a little out of your way to help him. That is your renunciation of the body. You manifest a larger Self—what we call *ātma-vikās*—a certain enlargement of your natural sympathies. You can find a place for the other person. This is how values begin, and how they imbue the whole society.

Values begin when you cease to be a prisoner to your own genetic system. You expand—*ātma-vikās*. Then you are able to feel oneness with persons A, B, C, and D, and try to serve them and look after them. This is how values come into society. And this capacity to create and sustain values in the society is inherent in every human being. This is the great teaching of Vedanta. Infinite Self or Atman is the property of every human being. We neglected it as children,

thinking we were the body only. But as we grow up from childhood we learn to think of that Divine Spark within us and manifest it a bit in our conduct and behaviour.

In Sri Ramakrishna's teachings there is a parable: A father on his way home from the office brought two sweet mangoes from the market for his two children. The older boy took his mango and went straight to his room, locked the door, and ate it. When he finished he wiped his face clean of any traces of the mango and came out into the courtyard to play with others. The second boy got his mango, found it a very fine one, and immediately thought of his comrades and shared it with them. Here are two examples of people's conduct, two types of mental attitude. Notice the difference between them. The first type believes entirely in this body. He wants to fatten himself. The

already in man. How to manifest it? By service. Go beyond the body-consciousness. Try to love others, serve others, so that by following methodically the science of religion and values you become more spiritual. All values are spiritual according to Vedanta. They are not material. Though they have material effects in the world, they are spiritual. Love is a spiritual value. And service is a spiritual value. All these wonderful values are entirely spiritual.

Beyond the Body

Until we forget that we are this body we are just like the animals. If you are merely the body you are like an animal. Animals love only their own body. But we have to forget this and go beyond it. So in our language we have the saying, *Let the animal in you die so that the man in you can progress*. That *paśu-bhāva* (animal attitude) inside us must

...That is why Vivekananda defined religion as a science. That is to say, true religion is different from religion concerned only with dogmas and creeds. All these we have, but religion as a science is the method to bring about the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.

second type has a feeling, perhaps vague and not very clear yet, that he is one with others. So, he can love others. He can serve others. He can look after others. When perfected this could be the story of Ramakrishna.

Scratch the surface and all over India, even today, can be found this wonderful potential for unselfishness—non-identification of self with the body, and the manifestation of something deeper, a profound dimension. It can be developed more. That is why Vivekananda defined religion as a science. That is to say, true religion is different from religion concerned only with dogmas and creeds. All these we have, but religion as a science is the method to bring about the manifestation of the Divinity

be conquered and got rid of. This has been the moral and spiritual teaching of all the great teachers of the world. The animal tendencies within us must be controlled and gradually sublimated, getting rid of them. So Sir Julian Huxley wrote about his book on *Evolution, A New Synthesis*: 'This is my best book on the subject.' In the book he said: 'Until the mammal in us dies, the man in us cannot live and progress.' This is the language he used: '...the mammal in us dies.' The mammal branch of the animal species is, of course, so called because the young are fed by milk produced from the mammary glands of their mothers. And the human species is part of this mammalian branch of evolution. So the animal in us is still present, even though we have come up to the human level. But to proceed further we shall have

to develop values, leaving behind the dominant biological or animal tendencies and characteristics.

That is why we find that in developing values in ourselves we gradually manifest something more in our life than just physiological qualities. The spiritual human being becomes manifested. And as we mentioned before, all values are spiritual. Their source is spiritual, so they are spiritual. Their source is not material, therefore they are not material. So that is how spirituality is a great word in our Vedantic literature. Are you spiritual?—is the question. Are you religious?—is the simple question. Anybody can take the easy path to *religiosity*. If I take a bath and put on the marks of religion, I may pass for a religious person. Very

lem is the same. Everywhere values have gone away.

From the liberal Vedantic point of view: No religious ordering of others. From a teaching, somebody says, 'thou shalt do it', but who will accept it? The doubt is there: 'Why should I give up my own wish and follow the wish of somebody else?' But, if it is in my own nature to follow (say, a good path), then naturally I cannot, and do not, question or doubt that I should follow it. So there is the deeper dimension of our human personality, beyond the physical, beyond the nervous, beyond the psychic. The infinite Atman is our nature. This Atman must manifest a little in your conduct and behaviour. Then all behaviour changes. Where there was hatred, love alone will

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easy—too easy, but to be spiritual I shall have to grow up somewhat, beyond the mere body consciousness.

Swami Vivekananda on Values

This is the growth that is needed in India today. It is to stimulate this growth that India produced a Swami Vivekananda. Apart from purely traditional religion, apart from all these sectarian religious activities, just from the sublime human nature of the man Vivekananda one can discover the profound source of all the great values for man and society. It is the lives of the spiritual men like him that nourish the human spirit and the body politic to become greater and better. Not only India, but the whole world is seeking for values. If you go to Russia today you will see the great problem is the need for values in the society, and in the whole of Europe and America also the prob-

remain. Where there was exploitation, service will take its place as the main idea. This is what is meant by manifestation of the divine *within*.

The great contribution of showing the source of and cultivation of human values was what Swami Vivekananda did more than a hundred years ago, first at the Chicago Parliament, and later on in India and in other countries. It was from him that we truly came to know the teaching of Vedanta. Vedanta had been with us for more than three or four thousand years, but most of the people of India never ever had a real grasp of its potential, especially as we know it now from the teachings of Vivekananda. In fact, the common people used to consider Vedanta something un-understandable, and whatever is un-understandable was Vedanta! That was our condition in India.

That has all changed after Vivekananda. How simple of comprehension he makes Vedanta! How also Sri Ramakrishna did the same thing, as Sri 'M' records in the *Srī Srī Rāmakrishna Kathāmrita* (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, in English)! And Vivekananda said, in this modern age we shall make Vedanta the basis of our culture and society, and gradually of everything. We shall have a Vedantic civilization, where there will be freedom, equality, sacredness of the human personality. That kind of religion, state, and society will have to be developed first in India. So study the Vedanta, the infinite Atman. Behind the body-mind complex is the infinite Atman. What a wonderful teaching it is! Is there such a Reality? Yes, there is that Reality.

The Atman

This subject was dealt with by Prof. Max Müller in one of his books called, I believe, *Three Lectures on Vedanta Philosophy*. There he asked this question:

If you think,...How people in India could develop this great thought of Vedanta ages ago, and we could not do it at all here? I will answer you that: however much telescopes for observing the stars have been developed, the telescope for observing the soul we have left untouched in the West.

A very beautiful answer—'the telescope to observe the soul'. That telescope we have developed remarkably in the Upanishads.

What is my true nature? To find it, let us look behind this gross physical body of ours—the *pañcha-kośa* (lit., five coverings), as we call it. Let us look deeper than the body, even deeper than the mind, and the intellect and the nervous system, even deeper than the—what you call it?—rarefied self that is there. So when you cross over this *pañcha-kośa*, you see the Infinite

Atman. *Koś* means a sheath—there are five, one over the other. When all are crossed you discover the Infinite Self which is the Self of all that exists. And that is the experience from which all values and all morality arise. So in this way the real man is deep within.

*Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu
gūḍho'tma na prakāśate;
Dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā
sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhiḥ. (I.3.12)*

This is a great verse in the *Katha Upanishad*, chapter 3, a profound Upanishad from which Swami Vivekananda quoted often another line: 'Arise! Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached.' What does this verse mean? *Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu*, this Atman is present in all beings—even in an insect it is there, but hidden (*gūḍho'tmā*). *Gūḍho'tmā na prakāśate*—it doesn't manifest Its bright shining form in everyday life. But will it remain always hidden like this? No, it can be manifested. It can be realized. How? ...*dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhiḥ*—It can be seen when the intellect (*buddhi*) becomes sharp and subtle. One can see subtle vibrations when the mind is pure and subtle; *buddhyā sūkṣmayā*, extremely subtle. Those who have trained their minds in dealing with subtle, more subtle, and still more subtle rarities, ultimately they will come to the subtlest reality, namely, the Atman hidden in every human being. What a wonderful verse!

Physical Science

What do you find physical science has been doing for the last two hundred years? The mind was not very subtle in the beginning. So they discovered ordinary phenomena and laws that apply in nature. The whole Newtonian physics was very revolutionary for the people at that time. But we think of it as very ordinary now. In pre-historic times, there was the discovery of fire. It is ordinary combustion. We get ener-

gy from it. People lived then at the primitive stage. Then later on, during the 18th and 19th centuries we discovered coal. It contains more energy. So human society developed still more. The subtle mind could discover subtle truths. Then came electricity. Still more subtle the mind had become. We were able to use electrical energy. And in this age, the mind became extremely subtle. It could discover nuclear energy, the tremendous energy resource available in the nucleus of the atom.

So, in science also we can see the meaning of this particular statement of the Upanishad: ...*sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhī*—in the intellect of a Max Planck or a Heisenberg. What tremendous subtlety the mind is capable of achieving! Subtle truths need subtle minds to discover them. Otherwise how can they be discovered? A child of four can perhaps only think of ordinary objects—very concrete things. It cannot as yet think of abstract ideas. But later on the child develops this capacity to become subtle. Similarly in science, as scientists made their minds more and more subtle and went deeper into matter, they saw infinite energy hidden in a bit of matter. That was shown in the great equation given by Einstein for nuclear energy. That equation says that energy is equal to mass times the square of the speed of light—a profound utterance in physical science. But what made its conception possible? When you study what the Upanishad said, you can see the principle: that the mind becomes subtle and therefore can penetrate into the subtler dimensions of nature.

Modern scientific men have learned about nature and they have learned to some extent about man. What is inside man? Practically, science has studied man only as another object of the external world—how his body and brain depend on the laws applied in chemistry and physics. But the

Vedic seers, with their subtle intellects, studied the human dimension in depth, four or five thousand years ago, and reported their findings. They discovered the infinite, immortal and divine in every human being—in everyone. In this there is no distinction of caste, or creed, or race. It is a universal truth. The words in Sanskrit are: *sarva bhūteṣu*—in all beings. Even in little insects this infinite Atman is present. Only their organic system cannot manifest the glory of the Atman, because their mind-stuff cannot as yet take the form of intellect or buddhi as it does in man. Only in the human system is this development of higher power by the mind possible so that subtle truths can be realized. It is not found in other organisms.

The Atman is the Source of Values

Therefore this wonderful Atman is present in every being, it is discoverable, and that is the source of our values. When you manifest it, discovering the spiritual unity lying behind all existence, you become a great moral, ethical personality and can do immense good to the world. A man like Mahatma Gandhi—why was he great? He manifested the Atman more and more in his life—the Divine within. There is no other magic in it—absolutely pure science—the bringing out of what was hidden. What is there hidden, it becomes manifest. That is all the difference. Just like nuclear energy, it is not created there—it is there, it was there, but we discovered it now. So also, ages ago, Vedanta developed this profound truth about the Atman by scientific investigation, by trial and error—like several scientists doing the same thing and exchanging ideas.

When you read the Upanishads you will find first one hypothesis, then another, then another, and so on; finally you come to this supreme truth of the infinite Atman. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* is famous for this subject—Yājñavalkya instructing his wife,

Maitreyī, or dealing with Gārgī the great philosopher-woman. You will find this subject treated just as if in a scientific conference going on. So India has this great heritage, which in ancient days was kept safely in a monk's cave or in some forest ashramas.

particular nation or a particular group of people. But a science like this is always universal. Any scientific truth, though discovered, immediately becomes universal in scope. We can feel proud of it and practise it freely. We can broadcast it boldly, for it is

Vivekananda said in our time: Let the lion of Vedanta roar. Foxes of fear and hatred will fly to their holes. This is the language he has used. We have fear and hatred—all sorts of base emotions—all the anti-values we have. All that will go off if we let the Vedanta lion roar in our life and in the nation. This is the idea of Swami Vivekananda for the modern period, and fortunately it is meant not only for India but for the whole world.

It was never discovered by the mass of society, and so it went unutilized. We never grasped fully what it was, and we were satisfied with some illustrative little cock-and-bull stories, some myths and legends which merely indicated its greatness. But today you read Vivekananda literature and he tells you to go to the Upanishads for the full force of the Truth. The strength of the Vedanta you find in the Upanishads and in the Swami's life and teachings. A verse in Sanskrit refers to Vedanta as the roar of a lion—*simha garjana*. That is the strength of Vedanta. Jackals howl and howl in the forest only till the lion begins to roar. Then they all become silent. That is how Vedanta is described in our own literature.

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Universal Relevance

A dogmatic religion can be confined to a

universal and helpful to all. Only good can come. Even to this Vedantic truth India doesn't want to lay exclusive claim. It belongs to everybody. It deals with everybody.

That is how Swamiji presented Vedanta in America, and when he presented it, it created a tremendous impact because it was entirely new. The West had never thought along these lines. They had religion, a few dogmas and creeds; you could not question any one of them. If you questioned, either you would be destroyed or the religion would be destroyed. That was the condition there. There he went and presented the essential teaching of Vedanta, the Divinity in the heart of every human being. In that Chicago lecture he presented this in a very powerful passage. Quoting a verse from the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, where a sage tells of his own experience: *Vedāham etam puruṣam mahāntam...*¹ Addressing the whole audience he said, 'Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss...you are not sinners...ye are the Children of God...*amṛtasya putrāḥ* you are the children of immortality.'²

1. III.8.

2. *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, II.5.

The infinite Atman is *amṛta*, imperishable. Body is perishable, mind is perishable, senses are also perishable. But the Atman is imperishable. The one Imperishable among all the perishables in the world—that is how they discovered the Atman. And the word imperishable comes in the *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*. In the beginning, when the student asked the teacher, 'Sir, please teach me', the teacher says, 'There are two sciences to be studied: one is the lower science and the other is the higher, *aparā vidyā* and *parā vidyā*. *Aparā vidyā* means knowledge gained through physics, chemistry and various other subjects, including knowledge of the Vedas, holy books, etc. They are all *aparā vidyā*. And what is the other? *Parā vidyā*—the highest science. What is that? *Atha parā yuyā tad-aksaram adhigamyate*,³ 'that by which the Undecaying is apprehended'. These are all perishables. There is one Imperishable behind the perishable. Realize that truth. Then you will find something wonderful. That is how the teacher described this subject.

The Atman in all of us is imperishable. No death can touch it. That is how the Gita puts it... *naśyatsu na vinaśyati* (3.20). Not only so, but see the audacity of the sage! *Śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā ā ye dhānāni divyāni tathu*,⁴ 'If there are angels, let them also hear my teaching. It will do good to them.' What is that teaching? Is it taken from the books or is it hearsay? No, *vedāham etam puruṣam mahāntam āditya-varṇam tamasah parastāt*...⁵ 'I know this truth; I have realized this truth.' What is that truth?... *puruṣam mahāntam*... 'there is the Infinite Man behind the finite man.' We are that Infinite, truly. Outwardly we seem finite, that's all—just as, say, when you go by sea, you see a small rock cropping out of the surface of the water and you think

it is a small rock. But when you investigate, you find it is immense, going down many feet below the water. But its apparent size was only so small, projecting from the water. Similarly, when you look with the senses, the human being is a very truncated entity, a small individual. But deep within is a great immensity—that power we do not know. This, the Upanishad says, is *āditya-varṇam*,⁶ glorious like the Sun and ... *tamasah parastāt*, beyond all darkness and delusion. Having said this, the teacher did not say—'believe me and you will get the best'; he did not say even, 'try now to get it for yourself', or 'my getting is good for me, but you must get it for yourself'. No, he did not say any of these, but he said: *tam eva viditvā atimṛtyum eti*...⁷ 'by this realization you will go beyond all death and delusion.' *Nānyaḥ panthā vidyate yanāya*,⁸ There is no other way, there is no other way. This is how Vedanta expounded that study of the depth and dimension of this human personality—like the physicists today studying the depth and dimensions of matter. These are never contradictory. Vedanta accepts science, showing great respect for the knowledge of physical nature; but having come to this level Vedanta says, go deeper now into the human level.

Meditation is the Only Method

That is what is taking place in the West today. Many scientists, including physicists, are now busy studying this human as a knower and observer. One part of the study is the observed, and this is the study of the observer. Both are necessary, and the second is the more wonderful. Man now studies himself—the Knower, the Observer, the Seer, the Self—these are the various terms in Vedanta. *Viśayī* is the subject, the self; *viśaya* is the sense object. So *viśaya* we study. What

3. *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*, I.5.

4. *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, II.5.

5. *Ibid.*, III.21.

6. *Ibid.*, III.8.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

about the *viṣayī*? Scientists generally held in abeyance the study of the *viṣayī* and studied the *viṣaya*. According to Descartes that is needed. Quite good, for you need to have both. You will be forced to deal with this question of the Self, the Knower, ultimately. Who is the Knower and what is his nature? Am I this little bundle of genetic material? Or is there anything more?

There is a tremendous interest in the minds of people of the West today for this subject, to know and understand what the true nature of man is. Is he a mere biological organism who can be thoroughly known through the study of biology? Or does he have an essential inner nature transcending the genetic and neurological? Is my essential nature above the physical? Above the muscular? Have I such a dimension? They are studying. In the Montreal Neurological Institute there was a great neurologist, who passed away recently. He wrote a book on the nature of man from the point of view of neurology. In it he suggests that man is not merely a bundle of genetic material consisting of sense organs and body. There is a separate non-physical reality—the mind we call it in today's language. In Vedanta, mind, *buddhi* (intellect), and *atman* (Self) are one and the same, from the standpoint of the observer engaged in spiritual practice. We speak of these three as separate in a particular context. As Sri Ramakrishna has said, '*Shuddha manas, shuddha buddhi, shuddha atman*—pure mind, pure intellect, and pure Self are one and the same.'⁹ But when we explain in terms of their function and the philosophy, we speak of the mind, the *buddhi* and the self as different from each other.

By what method are many scientists now trying to penetrate into the human system?

They are following our method—the only method there is to study the mind and what lies behind the mind. That is meditation. So meditation has become a great industry in the West today. Sixty or seventy years ago, if a man went to a park and sat down in a corner somewhere to meditate, a policeman would arrest him! Are you going to commit suicide? he would ask. Today thousands of people sit and meditate. It has become natural there. Even millionaires come and sit and meditate. Of course, they do it only to get a little calmness of mind, that is all.

But that is the one technique which our teachers have found to discover the Atman. After all, the senses go out. We want to make the senses *go in* to observe what is there. The senses cannot do so. But the mind can. Why should the mind follow only the senses? Mind can go anywhere it likes. But now it is tied to the apron strings of the nervous system and the sense organs. So if you can detach it from them, meditation becomes the supreme laboratory for investigating the human being in his depths.

What is that depth-dimension of the human being? People live only on the surface. You can see ordinary people living on the surface—on the mere appearance of things, on the very ordinary. They are not aware of the depth in themselves. All that is purely psychological, mental, etc. but the deepest experience is only when you touch the Atman—the infinite Atman or Self—your true nature.

So Vivekananda speaks about this subject in all his lectures. Vedanta is the theme of all his lectures. Divinity in the heart of man is the theme in all his lectures. Romain Rolland, writing on the life of Vivekananda mentions this, that what he presented at the Chicago Parliament of Religions as the divinity, the immortality of the human soul, is the main theme of all his later lectures as

9. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985), p. 524.

well. This is what the world must understand today.

What is my true nature? Many answers can be given: I am this; I am that. With respect to the chair I am the body—it is my self. Perfectly correct. The body sits on the chair. Chair is not put on the body. Chair is an object. Body is the subject with respect to the chair. Then the body itself is an object. Then comes the nervous system. So there is always a subject and there is always an object. Then comes the mind. That is the subject. And finally we find even the mind is an object. The only subject in the absolute sense or final sense is the Atman—the real Self. That is your true nature.

The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* tells all this through the mouth of a father speaking to his son Śvetaketu—the profound truth ...*Aitad ātmyam idam sarvam. Tat satyam sa ātmā.*¹⁰ 'Thus has all this world that Atman for its Self'. In fact, before he presents this truth, you find something like an experimental method adopted. He asked his son Śvetaketu:¹¹ 'From that yonder tree, bring a small seed.' (It was a banyan tree.) He brought a seed. 'Oh, break one. What do you find?'—'Small seeds.'—'Break one of them. What do you find?'—'Nothing!' said the boy. The father smiled, 'Don't say "nothing". Out of that nothing, this tree has come to exist. This mighty tree exists in that nothing!'

This can be a lesson for any nuclear student today in the physics class—a wonderful study! What you call zero is everything. Nothing is zero, really. The form is gone—name and form, but the thing is there—very subtle, extremely subtle. So he told: *Eṣo'ṇimā aitad ātmyam idam sarvam...*'this whole world has that subtle essence, the Atman, as

its Self.' *Tat satyam...*'that is the truth.' *Sa ātmā...*'that is the Self.' *Tat tvam asi, Śvetaketu...* 'You are That, O Śvetaketu!' That is the father telling the son. That is a lesson the world needs to understand today. *Tat tvam asi; Tat tvam asi; Tat tvam asi*—'You are That.' You are not a mere earth-bound creature, a little physical thing for which you can compete and kill half a dozen people to fatten yourself. No, you have your infinite dimension. The same Atman is present in every being.

And so, this wonderful teaching of *Tat tvam asi* inspires people, not only in India but everywhere. I was surprised to find the famous microbiologist J.B.S. Haldane, who spent his last days in Bhubaneswar, quoted thus: 'If you can understand the meaning of this, my lecture is fulfilled', is what he said. Similarly, Schrodinger the nuclear physicist wrote in that book about his life: 'This great teaching, *Tat tvam asi*, is the supreme teaching for the world today.' 'You are That; You are That'—not this little thing which you think yourself to be.

Therefore, Swami Vivekananda preached nothing but the Upanishads in all his lectures. And of the Upanishads, the one single truth—fearlessness, fearlessness—*abhīḥ, abhīḥ, abhīḥ*. It is due to the body that we fear, whereas, in the Atman there is no fear. It is absolute and immortal in its dimension. But the body is subject to mortality and the ups and downs in life. So have a little knowledge of the Atman. That much fearlessness will come to you. We shall not remain cowardly if we understand a bit of Atman! I quote Shakespeare in a beautiful passage: 'Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once.' When you have the knowledge of the Atman you will not pass through life full of fear, full of hesitation, full of suspicion. You will be firm and steady with a great kind of confidence and faith in yourself.

10. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, VI.16.3.

11. *Ibid.*



Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj on 19.3.95



These are the things Swami Vivekananda gives in his lectures on Vedanta, which you will find in the eight volumes of his *Complete Works*.

Conclusion

So when we speak of a secular state in India, we mean to say that, if India is to be influenced for political progress by Swami Vivekananda's ideas, the ideas will first have to find a place in the minds of the people. Through the people they will affect the day to day politics and administration of the country. In a democracy it is the people as a whole that set the tone of the government. It is not the other way round. In a dictatorship it is the top political leader that determines everything. But not in a democracy. We have shown that we know how to put a person in power and tomorrow remove him from it. This power belongs in the hands of the people. That is what is called democracy.

So when Swamiji's ideas on Vedanta will spread throughout India a big change will come. We will have a secular state, but it won't be *dharma nirapeksha*, without values; it will be *matu nirapeksha*, with dharma but without religious favouritism in politics. We never had in India what is called a theocratic state. Even if you are a follower of one religion, you will respect other religions also.

All through our history it has been so. This religious harmony was given a great political status by Emperor Asoka of the third century BC. He had so many inscriptions on rocks and pillars scattered over his vast dominion, which extended from Tashkent in Central Asia to Mysore in the South. That was Asoka's great Magadhan Empire. He spread this message of religious harmony. It was a wonderful language he used, which you can read even today when you visit Junagadh. On a roadside stone edict

you will find *Samavāya eva sādhu*. *Samavāya* means concord; *eva*, alone; *sādhu*, right in the moral sense, 'If a man thinks well of his religion,' says Asoka in the edict, 'and finds evil in another man's religion, he does evil to his own religion.' For in religion *samavāya eva sādhu*, what you call *concord* alone is correct and true. This is based upon the great utterance of the *R̥g-Veda*: *Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*, 'Truth is One, sages call it by various names.' Swami Vivekananda gave a good deal of time to expounding on the impact of this particular line on the history of India. You will find two or three pages of it in his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*. Names are different. Truth is one.

Therefore we had harmony. We had very little persecution in India in religion, compared to Europe and other countries. In the Middle Ages the constant fight, massacring of people that you read about in history, you don't find in India. A little skirmish here and there when people became ignorant. They don't understand. We have had a little trouble, but by and large India has been the land of toleration where people respected each other's religion. In fact, a devotee of this god will go to the god of another religion—it is common in India. We respect Islam, Christianity and all. That is the nature of India. That is how India developed. As I said [previously], India was a multi-society—multi-religious, multi-racial, multi-lingual, from the very beginning. It was not that we were thrust into it—we deliberately developed this concept of pluralism in society. We know how to live together. We know the unity behind the diversity. Therefore in this particular context also, we respect every religion. Sri Ramakrishna gave special strength to that ancient heritage of ours when he said, *Joto mot, toto poth*, 'so many opinions, so many paths'. He meant that there are so many pathways to God, there is no need for conflict at all.

Now if secularism means merely the avoidance of control of the state by one particular religion, then we are in perfect agreement with it. But if secularism means there is no need for dharma, a great harm will come to society. Already it has come. We want more of what you call the science of values. The whole nation is seeking this. So in this secular state we do need ethical values, moral values, humanistic values. And wherefrom shall we get them? By manifesting the Atman. The word is manifestation. *Manifest it*. It is there in potential already, but manifest it. That is the only language Vedanta uses. Therefore it has a tremendous appeal to the human mind, in all parts of the world.

I referred to all this in my lecture in Moscow State University in 1977. At the end, in a question period, a professor stood up and asked this one question, 'Swami, you referred to a divine spark in every human being. It's a wonderful idea! I want to know more about it.' In Berlin too, in a public meeting, I referred to this, and a young gentleman, about twenty years old, came to me: 'Swamiji, you spoke about this divine spark in every human being. We have not heard of it at all. But it is so fascinating, it is so wonderful.' He is correct. This is the nature of reaction to this Vedantic truth.

But surprisingly, most of our own people do not know. This Vedantic truth we have to learn afresh. As I said before, we are often content with some simple myths and legends; we know a little ritual which we pay a priest to perform for us in the temple, and our religion ends there. We don't put our minds too much on what you call the spiritual growth of the human being—the Divine manifestation in human life and conduct. From Swami Vivekananda we will learn this profound truth in the next hundred years.

This is the age in which we are living—the Vedantic Age—which accepts science. Vedanta includes science within itself. As I often say, you know, here is a circle—science. Science doesn't accept Vedanta, but Vedanta accepts science. What does it show? I quote from Romain Rolland. He said, there is a big circle and a small circle. The small circle can be included in the big circle. The big circle cannot be included in the small circle. What an apt illustration! Therefore we say Vedanta includes science, we accept *aparā vidyā*, the science of the physical universe. But the supreme science, the *parā vidyā*, is knowledge of the Atman, Infinite Divine in the heart of all beings. See a newborn baby. Look at its eyes and you find some profound depth dimension. Then notice the eyes of a doll. These have no depth dimension—only the surface. In a living child there is a tremendous depth. India has dived into the depth of the living being and brought out the truth that is hidden there. That is the immortal divine nature of the soul.

That is the supreme message of Vedanta—the Upanishads and the *Gītā*. These will be the greatest promoters of values in our society and in other societies as well. We have seen what wonderful appreciation people of other nations have for the *Gītā* and the Upanishads, and the ennobling ideas of Vedanta. This is the beginning. A big revolution will come through the spread of these great books, among India's people first, and other people later on.

So we have discussed the subject 'Vivekananda, the Secular State, and the Science of Values'. These are all interconnected and Vivekananda's life and teachings reveal vital answers to many of the problems we are facing, especially the problem of how to bring back the science of values in human life. □

About Kali Pujas

GEETA MELLEN

This is a beautiful piece from a Kali-devotee of California.

Puja is the ancient Indian method of bringing the presence of the Goddess to us. When the puja is performed she becomes manifest. The puja is bringing Kali to us so we can worship her, love her, talk to her within ourselves. And She responds to us. She is alive, real, the ultimate reality. We have only to tune into her through love, the giving of our hearts.

There are many ways to do puja. Most are very exacting. Disputes may arise over how and why it all works, but it's the experience that counts. Whatever the reasons may be, the system of puja works. It has been evolving over so many thousands of years that it has been perfected into a very powerful tool.

The priest has learned to perform these intricate rituals. Through years of practice he has become very proficient at it. What is really nice is that he does the puja for the benefit of all present. The blessings that he asks for are for everyone and her presence can be felt by all.

A proper puja consists of specific steps. After saluting Mother Kali and stating his resolve the priest starts by calling many forms of God to be present and be witness to the puja. (I am referring to priest as 'he' because in this case it is a man doing the puja, but it can be a woman just as well.)

The priest then purifies the area and surroundings, then the puja utensils and flowers, etc. Everything imaginable is purified. In general, he creates the atmos-

phere to start the worship process. He salutes his guru and does small worship ceremonies to the many forms of God. He does a specific mantra to purify his mind and emotions, and therefore the mind and emotions of all present. He practises pranayamas and meditates on the Kundalini going up through all the *chakras* to merge in the *sahasrara* (top of the head). Some specific mantras are said for the total merging of the individual soul into the cosmic soul.



Once identified with the ultimate reality before creation, the creation process starts again in the priest's consciousness. This reinstates the individual, but now in a divinized way. Sound, as the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, is considered the first manifestation. 'In the beginning there was

the word.' These letters are placed all over the body as Matrikas, (they are deified in mother forms.) This invokes and places within him the Divine presence in the beginning stage of manifestation.

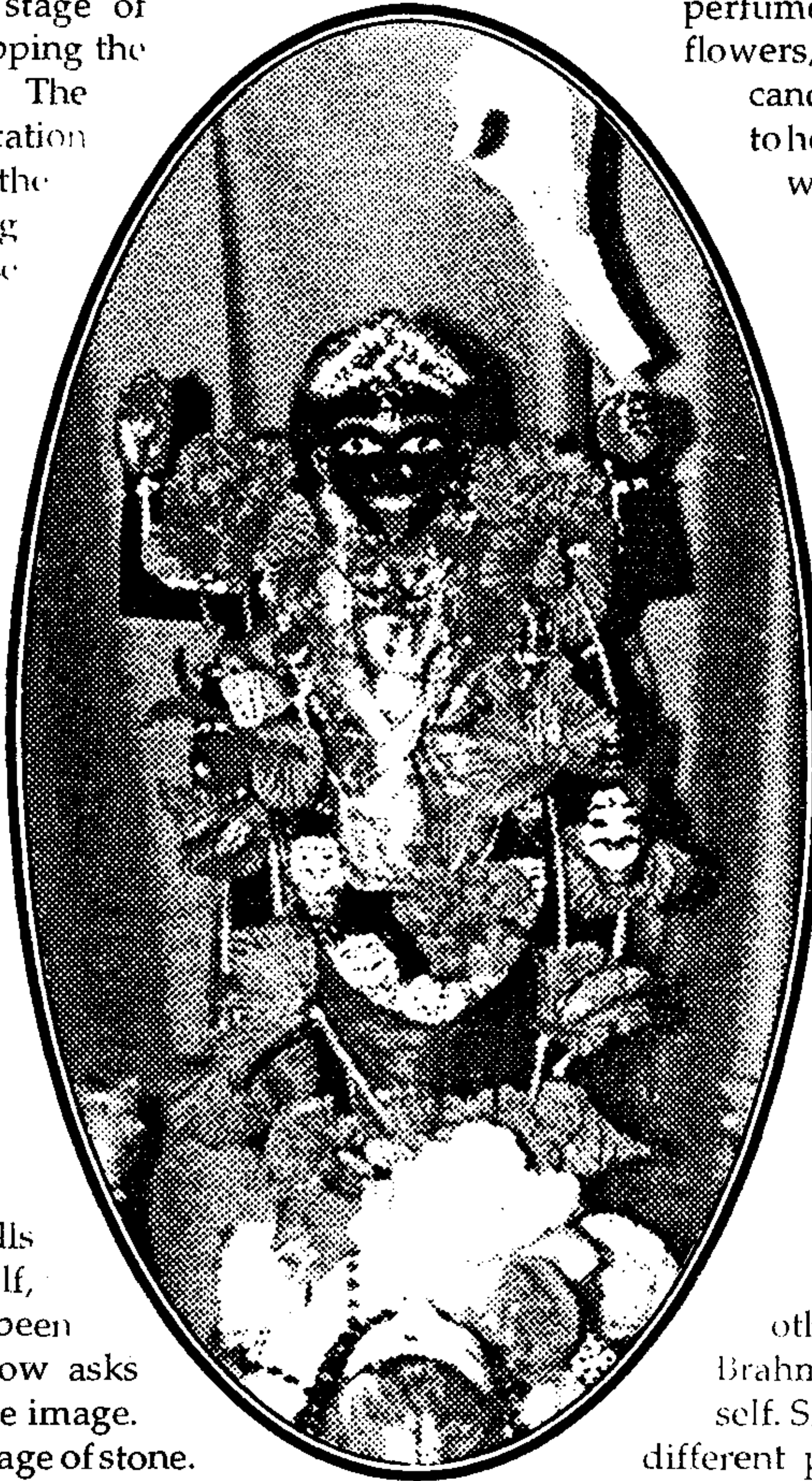
Now the priest is prepared to go on to the higher stage of loving and worshipping the Divine Mother. The process of manifestation is completed with the form of Kali being invoked within. He asks her to establish herself in his entire being and all its parts. She is described in detail and asked to come take her seat in his heart. There he performs an inner worship with all the facets of his being.

The puja proper can now begin. The priest asks Mother to manifest herself in the image that is before him. He calls her out of himself, where she has just been established, and now asks her to move into the image. It is no longer an image of stone. It is now alive with her presence. Since she has come to us, we treat her as we would the most honoured guest.

Most of the actual worship is treating her

as though she has just arrived in your home after a long journey. You take care of her, welcome her, love her. You help her wash up and give her some water to drink. You offer her a seat to rest on. Then she will want to take a bath and you give her new clothing

and jewelry and make-up and perfume. Then you offer her flowers, light incense and candles and serve dinner to her. Finally you just sit with her, talk with her, pray to her, just be in her presence. Your Mother Divine has at last come to you in person.



The real beauty is that everyone will have a different realization from this experience. We are all individuals. She will touch each one of us differently. So no one can tell who Mother Kali really is. Some will realize her as their higher self, some as a great Goddess, others as the Shakti of Brahman or as Brahman itself. She can even manifest

different personalities according to our needs, different forms for different people. It doesn't matter. The essence is the same—Mother. Mother is the one who gave birth to us, nurtured us, gave us love, looked after us and then set us free to lead our own lives.

We can always turn to our Mother. She cannot ignore the cries of her children.

I am thrilled with the idea of many people getting together to participate in an authentic puja to Mother Kali. I have been doing puja to Kali for over 20 years. For 6 years I studied puja from various sources in Calcutta. There are many interpretations of the elements of puja. This, of course has been my interpretation. Many give symbolic explanations to the various parts of the puja, especially the offerings. That has much depth to it, but I prefer to forget the mental approach of thinking about it all and take the attitude of the child whose Mother has finally come home after a long absence—after so much yearning and with so much love.

Many people look at the image of Kali and cannot relate to her as a loving Mother because of her fierce attributes. This is why, even though she cannot be explained in words, I feel compelled to share a little of what I have been taught about her. Mother Kali has her fierce side because she encom-

passes everything—the whole of the absolute and creation. Kali is also the most loving and giving Mother. She encompasses both what appears to us as good and bad. Nothing is to be rejected as not part of God. All that is in our lives is her manifestation. When we accept everything as Mother it all turns into pure bliss.

The essence of Kali is transformation. Loving her transforms our lives. This love changes our way of looking at everything. Our perspective is shifted from looking through the small ego picture to looking at life according to Mother's divine play. Her love for us is so great that she has picked up a sword and is fighting for us. She annihilates our limitations. No one can remain small when they have given themselves to her. And then she proceeds to wipe out our karma at a very rapid rate. In the process we are given everything that we desire, so we can turn around and give it back to her. Then we can truly acknowledge her as our Mother and want nothing more than to be taken up on her lap again. □

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

(Continued from page 807)

object of enjoyment to all beings. That he makes oblations in the fire and performs sacrifices is how he becomes such an object to the gods. That he studies the Vedas is how he becomes an object of enjoyment to the *r̥ṣis* (sages). That he makes offerings to the manes and desires children is how he becomes such an object to the manes. That he gives shelter to man as well as food is how he becomes an object of enjoyment to man. That he gives fodder and water to the animals is how he becomes such an object to them. And that beasts and birds, and even the

ants, feed in his home is how he becomes an object of enjoyment to these.³

A knower of Brahman is excluded by the word *indriyārāmaḥ*, one who derives pleasure from the senses. Since he derives pleasure from the objects through the organs, therefore, being eligible for rites and yet not performing them, he acquires sin only and lives indeed in vain. This is the idea

(to be continued)

3. *Ibid.*, 1.4.16.

Kali, the Black Goddess of Dakshineswar

The first time I felt like abandoning myself to the Divine Will was when I first saw Ma Kali's face in the inner sanctum of the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, Calcutta, India. I was so awed that I forgot to ask her for anything, not even to straighten out my problems. All I wanted was to let go of myself just like a child lets go of the string, releasing the balloon to ascend toward the vast blue sky.



Today, I am wealthy. Ma Kali's presence in my heart reversed, as it were, the current of love within me. Previously, this current flowed from the outside in and made me depend on favourable external influences. Now, it flows from the inside out. When I stopped depending on people to love me and started listening to and feeling the love in my own exciting heart, the current of love reversed.

If only people would become lovers rather than wanting to be beloveds, there would be a lot less hurt and hatred in the world. It's much easier to be a lover because the ego gets less in the way. As a lover, I am more prone to love unconditionally, without expectations. As a lover, I seek happiness more for my beloved than for myself. It encourages me to be unselfish. In my case, unselfishness did not come overnight. I'm still working on it and have a long way to go.



In general, surrendering to Kali means giving up the ego, but depending on which Kali worshipper one talks to, one gets a slightly different point of view. I may long to annihilate my ego but my friend Geeta Mellen may not think this is the goal.

'I believe the purpose of creation is to love God, realize one's identity with Kali but retain the semblance of separation so she can be loved,' said Geeta. 'It is Mother who gave us this ego and desires in the first place. It's up to her to take them away or fulfil them. She gives so much, even the things that lead to pain. We asked for them, and she gives them to let us grow. When you realize that everything is Kali, the desires drop away and you just love her.'

My friend Jose Alvarado does not worry about the ego. 'I never made a conscious effort to bring God into my life,' said Jose. 'God is doing everything. I am a Krishna devotee and had no intention of worshipping Kali. It's Sri Ramakrishna's trick. Somebody brought me an image of Kali, and I now worship her every day.'

One thing all Kali worshippers I met have in common is a sense of fearlessness. I don't have to be afraid of anything for I worship the Mother who gives birth and destroys all things created. So, whom or what to fear?

Ma Jaya Bhagavati, a vibrant spiritual teacher and humanitarian who founded the Kashi Foundation, Sebastian, Florida, has turned Kali worship into a most practical application. Ma Jaya gives Kali to people afflicted with AIDS. She tells them, 'I can't cure you, but I can teach you how to die fearlessly.'



Nobody can define Kali, the mystical black goddess. My book is just a blueprint, an attempt to take people a little closer to the realm of Kali. After a talk on Kali in a Berkeley bookshop, one person came to me and said, 'When you talk about Kali, you talk about love whereas I and my group look at her as a militant, liberated woman. She kills all the demons single-handedly. How do you reconcile the two views?'

Pointing to the garland of skulls Mother Kali is wearing, I used an observation Betty Lundsted, my publisher, made some time ago. When you look closely at the skulls, you see that they are all smiling. They are smiling because Ma Kali killed their egos. After they were liberated, only love remained.

The heart is such a small place. God and the ego cannot coexist there. If one is there, the other has no room.

—From *Kali, The Black Goddess of Dakshineswar*
By Elizabeth U. Harding, California
Published by Nicholas-Hays

Sitting cross-legged,
They should wish that all beings
Have firm and strong roots of goodness
And attain the state of immovability.
Cultivating concentration,
They should wish that all beings
Conquer their minds by concentration
Ultimately, with no remainder.
When practising contemplation
They should wish that all beings
See truth as it is
And be forever free of opposition and contention.

Buddhism, Garland Sutra 11

Reflections on Consciousness

SWAMI NITYASTHANANDA

Besides the objective side of our experience—involving matter, energy, time, space, life, thought, emotion, ego, intellect, etc.—there is another side we rarely take cognizance of. That is the inner subject or the witnessing agent, without which all this vast knowledge of the objective world could not have been there at all. When we turn inwards to the subjective side of experience, we enter the realm of Consciousness. Through the understanding of Consciousness lies the path to the understanding of our existence and to all forms of diversity.

The author of this thoughtful article resides at the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore.

Introduction

The concept of Consciousness is one of the greatest contributions of ancient Indian thought to human knowledge. The knowledge of this basic concept is imperative to understand what true religion and Ultimate Reality are. Understanding Consciousness gives us the clue to know the universal aspect and the unitary principle underlying divergent religious views.

We observe many things in this universe the reality of which impinges upon us. We see many material objects composed of different elements. We see many living entities throbbing with life and activity. We encounter different forms of energy such as light, heat, etc. We observe different kinds of objects which we distinguish, categorize and classify. Not satisfied with merely observing them with our naked eyes, we invented highly sophisticated instruments like the electron microscope with the help of which we have examined the vast realm of the micro-world. By scientific reasoning and mathematical inference, we have discovered the subatomic particles which are the basic components of the material world. We have also invented telescopes to go beyond the horizon of our visible universe and discovered the fantastic world of stars, galaxies, nebulae, quasars, black-holes, etc.,

the vastness of which goes beyond the ken of our imagination.

We also observe different events occurring all around us, the sequence of which we call time. There is also the infinite space in which matter exists. There is the inner world of thought which we can experience as the object of knowledge. Then there is the world of emotion which we can only experience, but cannot visualize. There is a sense of ego which everyone of us feels, but which eludes our understanding.

Thus, with our ordinary reasoning we can understand the universe as being composed of matter, energy, time, space, life, thought, emotion, ego, intellect, etc. Is there anything beyond?

All these fall under the objective side of our experience. There is the other side of our experience which we rarely take cognizance of, and that is the inner subject or the witnessing agent, without which all this vast knowledge of the objective world could not have been there at all. When we turn back and focus our attention towards the inner subjective side of experience, we enter the realm of Consciousness.

The Meaning of the word 'Consciousness'

The word 'Consciousness' has different shades of meaning. Sometimes we use this word in the sense of seeing or observing an object, as for instance, we say 'I am conscious of the book on the table.' Sometimes we say that he has lost his consciousness, only to mean that he has swooned. In psychology, this word is used to indicate different mental states, such as the conscious mind, the unconscious mind, etc. The mental state that comes to our awareness is called the conscious mind. All the mental activities of thinking, imagining, feeling, etc. which come within the purview of our awareness are called conscious state of mind. There is a vast region of the mind, called unconscious, which is the repository of impressions of the past experiences of life unknown to us, but which influence our conscious life.

consciousness. There is a similar and more commonly used word *citta* which means mind or mind stuff. The difference between these two terms is important.

Perception is a Conscious Process

Now the question is, is it necessary to regard consciousness as an entity separate from the subject? If it is separate from the subject it also becomes an object of knowledge. Then we have to assume another consciousness to reveal it. And again to reveal this consciousness we have to posit one more consciousness and this goes on *ad infinitum*. So to be consistent with reason, we rather consider the subject itself as a conscious activity, which does not require any other consciousness to reveal the objects. Now we are left with only two entities: the subject which is consciousness, and the object which is unconscious. It is

This indicates that the perceiving agent is different from all these processes. External senses and corresponding brain centres are only instruments through which the perceiving agent or the subject sees or recognizes the objects. So this process is not merely mechanical reactions to certain stimuli, but a conscious process involving selections, rejections, recognitions, etc.

In philosophy, Consciousness is associated mainly with two aspects. When I say that I am conscious of an object or a thought, three things are involved: the subject, consciousness and the object. It is consciousness that links the subject and the object. Here consciousness is called *jnāna*, the subject and the object are respectively called *jnāta* and *jneya*. Consciousness is often compared to the lamp which reveals the object to the subject, which is considered to be unconscious by some philosophers, the Vaiseshikas. The word consciousness is also used to mean the subject itself, and here we are primarily concerned with this meaning of the term.

In Sanskrit, the word *Cit* means con-

only consciousness (subject) that sees, observes or rather becomes aware of other objects, and not the unconscious object. A chair cannot perceive or become aware of the table. It is only the conscious being that sees, observes and becomes aware of other objects.

One may object to this by saying : Why do you speak of consciousness? Rather say that the eyes are observing the object or say the brain centre corresponding to the eyes is observing the object. The same thing can be told of other sense organs too. Behaviourists do not believe in the existence of mind or consciousness, and for them everything is psychological. Even thinking and emotions are merely physical reactions to certain

stimuli. The reflected light of the object falls on the retina of the eye; and this stimulus is carried to the brain centre through nerve channels. Then perception occurs.

But perception is not so simple as this. Hundreds and thousands of stimuli are carried to the brain centre. But we perceive only a few objects—those that we want to perceive. Sometimes even when the stimulus is carried to the brain, perception does not take place. This indicates that the perceiving agent is different from all these processes. External senses and corresponding brain centres are only instruments through which the perceiving agent or the subject sees or recognizes the objects. So this process is not merely mechanical reactions to certain stimuli, but a conscious process involving selections, rejections, recognitions, etc. This applies to all physical and mental activities of the individual. Will Durant says, '...we are not helpless recipients and victims of whatever stimuli may chance to impinge upon our flesh; we are agents of selection.'¹

*The World that we Observe is
a Creation of the Mind*

Now we shall consider what these sense-qualities such as colour, sound, etc., are. The colour that we see in the object is actually not there in the object, it belongs to light. When light falls on the object, it absorbs certain colours of the light and reflects a particular colour which falls on the eye. This we recognize as the colour of the object. Now, what after all are the colours of light? They are only certain frequencies in the vibrations of the light. A change in the frequency leads to a change in colour. So colour is nothing but the mode of vibrations of light, and these vibrations are converted into colours. Where do these vibrations get converted into colours? Is it in the eyes or in the brain centre? In neither of these, because at these

stages also they remain as vibrations only. It is in the mind, which recognizes these vibrations as different colours.

The same thing is the case with sound. It is not the object that produces the sound, it is not the musical instruments that produce music. They only vibrate and that vibration is carried through some medium to the ears. And in the ears also some vibrations are produced, which are later recognized as sound. This explanation applies to other sense-qualities also.

Therefore, strictly speaking, it is the mind which creates the sense-qualities. Apart from the sense-qualities we have no knowledge of the external world. So the world that we observe is the creation of the mind.

*How the Individual Consciousness is
Different from the Body and Mind*

We see so many activities that are going on in ourselves. There are mental activities of creation out of sense data, there are emotional activities of loving, hating, enjoying, etc., there are activities of the senses and activities of different parts of the body. There must be a coordinating but unchanging factor behind all these activities. Otherwise, there cannot be self-identity in us. There is a single agent, a centre of personality in every one of us who owns all these activities, whom we call *kartṛ* (agent), *bhoktṛ* (experiencer), etc. We can call this centre of personality ego, or individual consciousness or subject as told earlier. *Keno-panishad* says, 'It is the ear of ear, the mind of mind, the eye of eye, and the life of life' (1.2).

We have seen that there is a conscious subject which perceives the object. As we all know, this body also is perceived as an object, which indicates that the subject is different from the body. We have also seen

1. Will Durant, *Pleasures of Philosophy*, p. 64.

that the objects that we observe are only mental constructions. Thus, we observe the objects only as mental abstractions, and that which observes, the conscious subject, must be different from them. So we can come to the conclusion that the subject or the individual consciousness is different from the body and the mind.

We shall consider this point from another perspective. Every one of us wants freedom, even though the conception of freedom may differ from person to person. What do we actually mean by freedom? Freedom is a state in which a person is not under the pressure or control of any other person or object or force outside himself. What is meant by 'outside himself'? We generally mean outside the body. When I say 'outside me', I generally mean 'outside the body'. But when I reflect on myself, I find that my body is outside me, because I can control my body at will. That which is controlled must be different from the controller. If I go still deeper, I find that the mental processes and emotions are also outside me. However much I may be controlled by them, I know that I can definitely exercise control over them. Even if it is admitted that I am controlled by them, I must be different from them. So this 'I', the subject, is different from the body-mind complex.

Consciousness is Universal

Now we shall consider one more point. This subject or the individual consciousness cannot really be individual, for if it is individual it is finite or limited. If it is limited, it is as good as any other object of knowledge. But we have seen that consciousness is the eternal subject; it can never be an object of knowledge. We cannot imagine consciousness as broken spatially or temporally—there are no bits of consciousness. If there are several consciousnesses, one consciousness would become the object of knowledge to the other consciousness.

But consciousness can never be an object of knowledge (cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 4.5.15). So consciousness must be universal.

Let us consider this from yet another standpoint. The subtler the object, the greater is pervasion. A gross material object is less pervasive. A solid object cannot pervade outside its limit. A liquid can be more pervasive unless it is limited by vessels, etc. A gaseous object is still more pervasive than other objects. If we proceed like this, we find that the electro-magnetic energies have got greater pervasiveness than all other energies and objects, by virtue of their capacity to penetrate even solid objects. If we apply this logic to consciousness, we find that it is all-pervasive since it is the subtlest of all. So we have to consider consciousness as universal and infinite, ruling out the possibility of positing any other ultimate reality apart from consciousness, since there cannot be more than one infinite.

Sat-Cit-Ānanda

Just as consciousness is the source of all knowledge, it is also the source of all existence in this universe. As it is water that gives reality to the waves of the ocean, so also it is consciousness that gives reality to the external world, that is to say, it is the basis of all existence, nay, it is existence itself. This aspect of consciousness indicates existence and is termed as *Sat* in Sanskrit.

Consciousness is also said to be the source of all happiness that we experience in this world. Here a question may arise as to how ordinary happiness is derived from consciousness. The happiness as we know is a state of mind. It springs from within as a reaction to the things or events outside, that is to say, happiness is not in the objects themselves. So, the external objects only stimulate the inner joy. Similarly, misery is a negative reaction to the external objects and events. Now let us examine what it is

that makes the mind within us happy or miserable? It is the reflection of inner consciousness that is perceived as happiness (cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 4.3.32). This source of happiness is a subtler, higher and purer form of happiness than any other, it is the bliss or *Ānanda* which is not conditioned by external objects. It is inseparably associated with consciousness and existence as discussed earlier. Therefore the state beyond happiness is objectless enjoyment, unconditioned by any other reflector. Hence the ultimate reality is described as *Sat-cit-ānanda*, that is, Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

form itself. When water rises in the form of waves it remains as water itself. Similarly the universal Consciousness remains as such in spite of being manifest as the visible universe. In the ocean there are huge waves, small ones and bubbles too. But all are water only. Similarly, in this ocean of consciousness there are huge and powerful waves such as Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, and other great divine personalities.

Thus, consciousness is at the back of every phenomenon, whether physical, mental or spiritual. It appears as the gross

Consciousness is the totality beyond space-time—what may in sense be the real 'I'. We have come to know that consciousness and energy are one; that all space-time is constructed by consciousness; that our normal perception of reality is a composite of an indefinite number of universes in which we coexist; and that what we perceive as ourselves is only the localized projection of the totality of our true selves.

Consciousness and the Phenomenal World

There is one universal consciousness at the back of every mental and physical phenomenon. It can be compared to an infinite ocean with innumerable waves. All phenomenon of this universe—man, animal, material objects, mental and physical energies—are like different waves in the ocean. They are all different kinds of manifestations of one universal consciousness. The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* says, 'In words or speech alone the modification originates and exists. In reality there is no such thing as modification. It is merely a name and the clay alone is real.'

The clay can be moulded into different objects having different forms and names. Apart from this clay these forms and names have no existence. Whatever may be the variations in shape, there is nothing else but the clay. When different objects are made of clay, the clay does not lose its essential nature, its clayness, and it does not trans-

material objects to the physical senses; it is seen as the different forms of energies through sophisticated instruments; it is perceived as mental modifications through introspection; it is experienced as divine manifestation through spiritual insight; and when all seeing and perceiving stops, it remains by itself (*Yoga-Sūtras*, 1.3.).

Consciousness is the totality beyond space-time—what may in sense be the real 'I'. We have come to know that consciousness and energy are one; that all space-time is constructed by consciousness; that our normal perception of reality is a composite of an indefinite number of universes in which we coexist; and that what we perceive as ourselves is only the localized projection of the totality of our true selves.² □

2. Bob Toban, 'Forward', *Space-Time and Beyond*.

Convocation Hymn

Text by Erik Johns / Music by John Schlenck

This was composed specially for Convocation of Global Religions, Queens College, New York, 9–10 July 1994, organized by the Vedanta Society of New York as a part of its Centenary Celebrations.

1. Down time's dim passage we descend,
With earth our mother, sky our friend,
Diverse in language, faith and art—
Conceived as one but grown apart.

*Refrain: A voice within, begin to hear,
Echoing from ages past,
Quelling ignorance and fear,
Bringing peace to us at last.*

2. But holding fast to what we know,
We do not hear, we do not grow,
We do not see another's side,
Like slaves locked in a world of pride.

*Refrain: A voice within, begin to hear,
Echoing from ages past,
Quelling ignorance and fear,
Bringing peace to us at last.*

3. Then be not slaves! We'll find that peace
Where harsh intolerance will cease,
Where sisters, brothers, humankind
Will come to love the gift they find.

*Refrain: A voice within, begin to hear,
Echoing from ages past,
Quelling ignorance and fear,
Bringing peace to us at last.*

4. Diversity, this gift is ours—
A garden filled with many flowers,
Each with its fragrance, each unique:
This is the world that we must seek.

*Refrain: A voice within, begin to hear,
Echoing from ages past,
Quelling ignorance and fear,
Bringing peace to us at last.*

The UN: Retrospection over its Fiftieth Year

DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

As a world body founded on October 24, 1945, the United Nations stepped into its fiftieth year in 1995. The fiftieth year of an international organization like the UN is an occasion not only for celebration over its achievements to date but also for serious retrospection over the shortcomings which have long plagued the Organization.

Dr. Anil Baran Ray, Professor of Political Science, Burdwan University discusses this subject in a thought-provoking article.

Power Play

When the UN was founded high hopes were entertained of the Security Council as the executive organ of the UN with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The numerous conflicts that have taken place over the years in different parts of the world show that the Security Council, with some exceptions, has not been an outstanding success in keeping peace in the world. The reasons are to be found as much in the archaic structure of the Security Council as in the attitudes of the members of the executive organ.

It is observed that sometimes when two weak countries take their dispute to the Security Council both get crushed, but when the disputing states themselves are members of the Security Council or have the 'backing' of one or more members of the Security Council, it is the UN itself which gets crushed. Such an observation, made, no doubt, half in jest, is realistic all the same in terms of pointing out that what matters in the Security Council is power play and that impartiality and justice often have to take a back seat there in the face of an unbridled or no-holds-barred power play of its members.

The need for serious retrospection over the extent of displacement of the Security Council from its Charter-appointed role as the guardian of international peace and

security cannot be over-emphasized. An intensive study of the resolutions of the Security Council on the 'conflict' issues and the reasons for actions taken, half-taken or not-taken towards the implementation of these resolutions should tell us the truth about the extent to which the Security Council has deviated from its role.

If such a study conclusively proves that the Security Council has indeed strayed very far away from its Charter-appointed role of keeping peace in the world, then that will strengthen the case for shifting the Centre of decision-making from the Security Council to the General Assembly, by a suitable revision of the Charter, which is a time-consuming process but necessary all the same in the interest of international peace and security.

Costs of Peace-keeping

Serious reservations have also been expressed in certain quarters as to the cost-effectiveness of UN peace-keeping operations in various parts of the world. Whether such operations are really depleting the budget of the UN and whether, and to what extent, these, while undertaken in the name of the UN, actually subserve the interests only of certain States, especially of the Western hemisphere, is something which should be seriously examined with a view to suggesting curative measures in this

regard. A cost-benefit analysis should also include in its ambit the potential benefits and dangers of a peace-making role [in the sense of preventive actions (including deployment of UN forces), i.e., not allowing potential conflicts to develop into full-fledged conflicts or wars] for the United Nations in future.

Need for Inclusiveness

A certain amount of politics of power and interests is bound to be there in any forum, especially in an international one. But that should not make the States unable to see beyond the tip of their nose. After all, in spite of their egoism, they should realize that their long-term interests lie in making the UN *work*, and that they could make it work only by turning it into a genuinely impartial and just body in a strife-torn and conflict-ridden world. The UN represents a *whole* system of constituent parts and it is in the long-term interests of the constituent parts themselves—especially of the more powerful and the more developed constituents—to take along the others and thus contribute towards the viability of the whole.

The time has finally come for all member-states to see that their egoistic short-term policy interests, which bring them some gain in the short run at the cost of others, foster at the same time division, hampering in the long run the interest of the whole system which subsumes them as much as the others. They must therefore look beyond the immediate and realize that their ultimate interest lies not in exclusiveness but in inclusiveness, i.e., in the co-prosperity and development of all. A change in attitude and perspective of the member-states, particularly of the developed and powerful states, is the first requisite towards turning the UN into an impartial and just world-body.

Need for Democratization

The change in *perspective* should facilitate the change in the *structure* of the world body. A beginning should be made with the Security Council. That in the changed conditions of the world today the Security Council in its present form looks archaic is a fact which has been acknowledged by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN Secretary General, himself. He has spoken of the need for enlarging the executive organ of the world body by the addition of countries such as Germany, Japan, India, Brazil and Nigeria to permanent membership in the Security Council. Such a step, to be effected through a revision of the Charter, will make the Security Council truly representative of all the continents as well as the developed and developing parts of the world.

The other step towards the democratization of the world organization will involve the abolition of the veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council. This step, too, to be effected through an amendment of the Charter, will go a long way towards curing the Security Council of domination by a section of the membership and thus give the leading executive organ of the UN a truly democratic and egalitarian look.

Conclusion

There must be other ideas as well on re-orienting and reforming the United Nations. They must be thought out and put forward by all right thinking people of the world. There is nothing more important than good ideas. It is for the thinking people to generate such ideas and for the statesmen to put these to work in effecting the perspectival and structural changes in the UN. More than anything else celebrations over the fiftieth year of the UN should generate enthusiasm along this line. □

Vivekananda and the Art of Memory

PROF. M. RAM MURTY

The human problem is one of memory. We have forgotten our divine nature. All the great Indian teachers have declared that the revival of the memory of our divinity is the paramount goal. This is the highest, spiritual aspect of memory. Memory in its more common, mundane aspect is also an important human faculty. Dr. M. Ram Murty, FRSC, Professor of Mathematics, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, deals with different dimensions of memory in this interesting survey which he contributed on the occasion of PB's entry into its 100th year.

*Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna:
Their Extraordinary Memories*

Memory is a faculty, and as such it is neither good nor bad. Every action that we do, and every thought that we think, leaves an indelible trail of memory. Whether we remember or not, the contents are recorded and affect our daily life. Therefore, an awareness of this faculty and its method of operation is vital for a meaningful life. Properly employed, it leads us to enlightenment; abused or misused, it can torment us. So we must learn to use it properly, to strengthen it for our own improvement.

In studying the life of Vivekananda, we come across many examples of his amazing faculty of memory.

In *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, Haripada Mitra relates the following story:

One day, in the course of a talk, Swamiji quoted verbatim some two or three pages from *Pickwick Papers*. I wondered at this, not understanding how a sanyasin could get by heart so much from a secular book. I thought that he must have read it quite a number of times before he took orders. When questioned, he said, 'I read it twice—once when I was in school, and again some five or six months back.' 'Then how do you remem-

ber,' I asked in wonder, 'and why can we not remember thus?' 'One has to read with full attention,' he explained, 'and one must not fritter away the energy one draws from food.'

Another day, Swamiji was reading a book all by himself, reclining in his bed. I was in another room. Suddenly, he laughed so aloud that I thought that there must be some occasion for such laughter, and so I advanced to his door to find that nothing special had happened. He continued to read as before. I stood there for some fifteen minutes; still he did not notice me. His mind was all riveted on the book. Later on, he noticed me and asked me to walk in. When he heard that I had been standing there for a pretty long time, he said, 'Whatever one has to do, one must apply to it one's whole attention and energy for the time being. Pavhari Baba of Gazipur would clean his brass water vessel with the same undivided attention as he used in his meditation, japa, worship and study. He cleaned it so diligently that it shone like gold.'

In Meerut, Swami Akhandananda, a brother disciple, used to bring books from the local library for Vivekananda. One day, the Swami asked him to bring the works of

Sir John Lubbock. Accordingly, Akhandananda brought them, one volume each day. The Swami would finish a volume in a day and return it the next day. The librarian argued with Akhandananda that the Swami had surely returned the volumes without reading them and remarked that the latter was only making a show of reading them. Hearing of this, the Swami himself went to the librarian and said, 'Sir, I have mastered all these volumes. If you have any doubt, you may put any question to me about them.' The librarian then examined the monk, and by doing so became fully satisfied. Great was his astonishment. Later, Akhandananda asked Swamiji how he could do it. The Swami replied, 'I never read a book word by word. I read sentence by sentence, sometimes paragraph by paragraph, in a sort of kaleidoscopic form.'

The Swami's prodigious memory was demonstrated even in his youth. In college, for instance, he would finish a big book such as *Green's History of the English People* in just one night, keeping awake by drinking strong tea or coffee.

Shortly before the end of his life, he fell ill. During his convalescence, he had begun reading the newly published edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. His disciple, Saratchandra Chakravarty, seeing one day these twenty five large volumes, remarked, 'It is difficult to master the contents of so many volumes in one life.' He did not know at the time that the Swami had already finished ten volumes and was reading the eleventh. 'What do you mean?' said the Swami. 'Ask me whatever you like from these ten volumes and I can tell you all about it.' The disciple, out of curiosity, brought down the volumes and started asking him questions on abstruse topics. Not only did the Swami answer these questions, displaying a vast amount of even technical knowledge, but in many instances he

quoted the very language of the books! The disciple was astounded at the extraordinary grasp and memory of his guru and exclaimed, 'This is beyond the power of man.' The Swami then told him there was nothing miraculous about it. 'If one observed the strictest Brahmacharya, one could retain and repeat exactly what one had heard or read but once, even if years ago.'

Brahmacharya refers to the life of continence and intense study, with a mind free from all mental distractions. The concept of a 'Bachelor's degree' is derived from this idea.

Another encounter of a similar nature occurred with the German scholar, Professor Paul Deussen. When the Swami was looking into a book of poetry, the Professor, wanting to draw him into a conversation spoke to him, but received no response; Swamiji continued to turn the pages. Later on, when he came to know of it, the Swami apologized, explaining to the Professor that he had been so absorbed in the reading that he had heard nothing. The Swami's mind was always as focussed as a steady laser beam on the matter at hand. Deussen was at first incredulous, but was later astounded when the Swami recited what he had been reading.

In the life of Sri Ramakrishna too we see this phenomenal manifestation of memory. As a child, Ramakrishna used to recite in the fields and pastures of Kamarpukur, the songs and stories of the epics *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, having listened to them just once. After attending a drama of three hours duration, he could repeat the entire drama from memory, and re-enact it for those who could not attend it.

A direct disciple, Swami Saradananda, compared the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) and

Swami Vivekananda in the following way:

He (Sri Ramakrishna) was a *srutidhara* of the first order—he could remember anything he heard but once. Swamiji was one of the second order. He had to read or hear anything twice and only then could he remember it... These people have great control over their mind. Whatever they concentrate on gets stuck in their minds at once. It requires great powers of concentration. Whatever they say or hear, they remember for years... What's the difference between a *srutidhara* and an ordinary person? A *srutidhara* can focus all the powers of one's mind to a point, whereas the mental forces of an ordinary person are scattered and the individual does not have the power to focus them on one thing. The mind is perhaps divided among many things. It is almost impossible to concentrate such a mind. The Master would compare the mind to a packet of mustard seeds. If the packet is once untied the seeds get scattered in all directions. How difficult it is to collect them again. Some perhaps are lost forever.

Other Examples from History

I believe there have been many such *srutidharas* in history. For instance, Shankara in the eighth century, was considered one. His disciple, Padmapada, wrote a large commentary on the *Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya* and gave it to one of his uncles to read. The uncle, who was extremely jealous of his nephew's erudition, burnt it. There were no xerox machines in those days, so Padmapada, extremely dejected, reported the sad news to Shankara, who assured him that there was no need to worry. Padmapada had read the manuscript to him at one time, so Shankara was able to dictate it to him from memory. Padmapada then transcribed it. Many such episodes are scattered throughout history. Saint Thomas Aquinas

was reputed to have a powerful memory of this type. The Roman philosopher Seneca (55 BC—AD 37) was said to be able to repeat long passages of speeches he had heard only once many years before. He would impress his students by asking each member of the class of two hundred to recite a line of poetry and then he would recite all the lines they had quoted, in reverse order—from last to the first. Saint Augustine, in his *Confessions*, writes of his admiration for a friend who could recite the complete works of Virgil, backwards. More recently, Mahatma Gandhi writes in his *Experiments with Truth* of one Raychandbhai who performed similar feats of memory.

Mahendra Nath Gupta, M., the author of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, tells us how he trained his memory through diary writing from the age of 14 while he was still in High School. He would be meticulous in his recording of the conversations. Later, whenever he met Sri Ramakrishna, he would go home and meditate on his conversations and record precisely what he had heard. Today we are all indebted to him for his labour of love.

The Ancient Art of Memory

The famous mathematician, Norbert Wiener, used to say, 'What we don't use, we lose.' After the advent of the printed page, the ancient art of memory was not practised widely. And so now we have lost it. In the ancient days of Greece, Socrates perceived this danger and fingered the invention of writing as the culprit. 'This discovery,' warned Socrates,

will create forgetfulness in the learner's souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves ... and you give your disciples not truth, but only a semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things

and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.

Of course, if it weren't for writing, these words of Socrates would not have survived till today, and I would not now be standing before you to relate some of the great thoughts of the past. Through writing, we inherit a legacy, and the study of the past is really a form of enlightenment. Everything seems to have a dual use. We can just as well blame the loss of ability to think on television, or the new technological age. However, it is really the use we make of these devices that determines their contribution to the growth or decay of society.

In the ancient world, however, memory ruled daily life. It was through the power of memory that knowledge was transmitted from generation to generation. Everyone needed this faculty; thus, if we look back into the ancient schools, we find that the art of memory was taught in a deliberate manner. In India, the Vedas were memorized and preserved for centuries before they were written down. Their poetic rhythm made it easier to commit them to memory. The same was true of the giant epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In Greece, students memorized Homer's epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

The Laws of Memory

It is well known that we use only 10% of our inherited capacity for memory. We waste the other 90% by violating the laws of memory. What are these laws?

They are, the law of impression, the law of repetition and the law of association. The first rule is to get a deep, vivid, and lasting impression of the ideas we want to remember. This is done through interest and atten-

tion. If the mind holds on to an idea, it is a remarkable psychological law that interest and eventually love slowly manifest themselves. Swami Vivekananda writes, 'Everybody's mind becomes concentrated at times. We all concentrate upon those things we love and we love those things upon which we concentrate our minds.'

Five minutes of even vivid and energetic concentration produces greater results than days of moaning about in a mental haze. Thomas Edison found that none of his thirty assistants ever noticed a cherry tree that grew on the grounds of his factory in Metro Park, New Jersey. He wrote, 'The average person's brain does not observe a thousandth part of what the eye observes. It is almost incredible how poor our powers of observation are.' It is indeed a question of training or habit. In Harry Houdini's biography, we find how he trained himself to have a photographic memory by looking at the contents of a room and trying to instantly recall all of the objects in it.

Abraham Lincoln complained that he did not have a good memory. So to rectify it, he would read aloud everything he wanted to remember. He explained, 'When I read aloud, two senses catch the idea: first, I see what I read; second, I hear it and therefore remember it better.' 'My mind,' he continued, 'is like a piece of steel. Very hard to scratch anything on it, but almost impossible, after you get it there, to rub it out.'

Mark Twain developed a visual system of memory so that he could speak without notes. His idea was to associate a visual image with each point he wanted to make and then to remember the sequence of images. For instance, he would associate an image with each number: sun is associated with one, a zoo with two, a tree with three; a door with four and so on. The first point in the talk would then be changed to an image

and that image would then be superimposed on the sun. The second point would be translated into an image and superimposed on a zoo and so on. For instance, if you were committing this talk to such visual memory, one could associate the six stories I began with to six visual images. This ability is in itself a new art to be cultivated and practised. As one does so, one finds that the power of associating images with ideas and pigeonholing them increases.

The origin of this technique is very ancient. The old texts speak of the 'inner cathedrals of memory.' They describe the architectural approach of impinging ideas in the consciousness. For instance, students were advised to look at buildings and architecture very carefully, to take a walking tour of all its chambers. When a sequence of ideas was to be remembered, the ideas were to be changed into images and placed in each chamber in the sequence of the premeditated walking tour. It was suggested that the more ridiculous the image, the easier it was to remember.

'Our mind is essentially an associating machine,' writes William James. 'An educated memory depends upon an organized system of associations ... The secret of a good memory is thus the secret of forming diverse and multiple associations with every fact we care to retain.' The knowledge that is used tends to stick. Usage is the method to retain ideas or make new ideas enter our brain and energize it.

Ramakrishna's mind must have been one magnificent constellation of associations. Any idea or suggestion transported his mind to the highest state. At the zoo, for instance, the sight of a lion suggested to him Mother Durga, or the Divine Mother, and at once he was absorbed in samadhi. Someone casually closed an umbrella, that suggested to him the gathering of the rays of the mind,

and again he was absorbed in samadhi. The quality of our life depends largely upon the kinds of associations we make.

Vivekananda says,

Every new thought that we have must make, as it were, a new channel through the brain, and that explains the tremendous conservatism of human nature. Human nature likes to run through the ruts that are already there, because it is easy.... Each thought that we have makes a path in the brain and this path would close up, but for the grey matter which comes and makes a lining to keep it separate. If there were no grey matter, there would be no memory, because memory means going over these old paths, retracing a thought, as it were.

We can utilize these three laws: impression, repetition and association with great effect. I have in my own life. But these laws and techniques do not explain the phenomenal nature of the memories of *srutidharas*.

In our case, we observe objects and ideas through layers of past impressions and prejudices. We have to repeat and reiterate these ideas to make them stay in our minds because the clouds of pre-conceived notions and impressions keep interfering with our experience. Truly, we never experience the world. We only experience our opinion of it. In the case of the *srutidhara*, there are virtually no such prejudices or pre-conceived notions. In such a pure mind, the rays of consciousness illumine the ideas directly.

This view is supported by Swami Vimalananda, who recollects his first meeting with Vivekananda:

I had always thought that Swamiji's gigantic intellect was the result of his

highly elevated life of purity. Greater acquaintance with him was making my belief stronger till one day, his own words made it a settled conviction with me. It was a memorable evening in my life which shall never be effaced from my mind, when a question from one of his would-be disciples brought forth an exhaustive and stirring discourse on brahmacharya. In the course of the talk he was explaining to us the incalculable value of purity in religious life, how to practice it, how religious fervour, suddenly aroused by working on the emotional side of man to the utter neglect of the moral and intellectual, is apt to produce great reaction... Then at last when he came to talk of the infinite powers of strict mental purity and how the animal propensity is converted into spiritual might, he warmed up to such a high pitch of earnestness that it seemed as if the transparent soul within was flowing out in torrents through his lips, bathing its hearers with its heavenly waters. The picture that was being drawn by his words in our minds saw its own prototype in the figure that stood before us. And I leave it to you, gentlemen, to imagine the effect of these concluding words of the discourse upon us: 'My Master had told me that if I could attain to the perfect state of purity I had just described, I will have spiritual insight. I ventured to stand before the world only when I had been satisfied that I had attained to it. I earnestly appeal to you, my boys, to keep this ideal with adamant firmness. Pray, do not be unworthy of me.' On another occasion too I heard him speak of his spiritual insight which could at once see the end of a thing hidden in the womb of futurity, of which the beginning is only made. I must not be understood to mean that intellectual brightness is always a sign of spirituality. A man may have a great

intellect without being in the least spiritual. On the other hand a person may be spiritual without having the mind stored with information, vast and varied or without the power to put the words into logical form. But truth will flash in that mind of itself... Swami Vivekananda combined in him spiritual insight with an intellect of the highest order. Truth came to him by intuition. But he would press his intellect into service by giving it logical form and making it convincing by a rich supply of facts and analogies stored in his brain.

The Role of Memory in Daily Life

So what is memory? It is the faculty for retaining an idea or image in the mind and not allowing it to slip away from our consciousness. Memory is related to the ability to make images and is a fundamental quality of the human mind. It is that which distinguishes the human being from the animal kingdom.

Swami Vivekananda writes:

When we see a thing, the particles of the brain fall into certain position like the mosaics of a kaleidoscope. Memory consists in getting back this combination and the same setting of the particles of the brain. The stronger the will, the greater will be the success in resetting these particles of the brain.

There are several implications of the concept of memory. First, memory implies the past and so suggests the future. Foresight is the counterpart of memory. Pascal wrote, 'To foresee is to rule.' Second, memory implies the control of the present. It implies the power of *viveka* or discernment, the ability to make decisions based largely on our experiences of the past. Third, memory implies attention and interest. There is no such thing as a bad memory but only one

which lacks the faculty of attention and interest, because all of us remember some things very well. If we analyse the reason, we find that it is because we have paid a lot of attention and interest, and through the law of repetition, we have reinforced the images.

Memory can be conscious or unconscious, voluntary or involuntary. Everything that happens to us is recorded. Under hypnosis, people have remembered many things which they cannot consciously recall. It is therefore the faculty of recall that is in need of development. But here again, total recall is not what is desirable. In fact, many times it is the art of forgetting that we need rather than the art of memory.

When Simonides wanted to teach the art of memory to the Athenian statesman, Themistocles, the latter cried out, 'Teach me not the art of remembering, but the art of forgetting, for I remember things I do not wish to remember, and I cannot forget things I wish to forget.'

Swami Vivekananda elaborates on this universal problem:

The danger of concentrating the mind upon an object and then being unable to detach it at will...causes great suffering. Almost all our suffering is caused by our not having the power of detachment. We must learn not only to attach the mind to one thing exclusively, but also to detach it at a moment's notice and place it on something else. These two should be developed together. This is the systematic development of the mind. To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. If I had to do my education over again and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would practise concentration and detachment.

The danger to the human condition is that since impressions are all recorded, they work unconsciously. As we are not aware of them, we are not aware of their operation in the undercurrents of our mind and often wonder why we do certain things, why we react to certain people the way we do. Swami Vivekananda said,

Every thought that we think leaves such an impression on the mind-stuff, and even when such impressions are not obvious on the surface, they are sufficiently strong to work beneath the surface, subconsciously...This is really what is meant by character...If good impressions prevail, the character becomes good; if bad, it becomes bad. If a man continuously hears bad words, thinks bad thoughts, does bad actions, his mind will be full of bad impressions and they will influence his thought and work without his being conscious of the fact.

So we must be conscious of what lies submerged. As nature undulates with mathematical periodicity, so also do our thought.

We must therefore learn to synthesize our experiences and learn from the past. Any experience, whether it is good or bad, has a lesson in it for us. If we extract the lesson and learn to remember it, the experience ceases to be good or bad but rather instructive. These thoughts and impressions move like waves. When we can watch them dispassionately we find a maturity of mind emerging. To the extent that we have been able to synthesize the past and learn from our mistakes, to that extent we are able to control the present and hence our future.

In the teachings of the Holy Mother, we find the following instructions concerning this. She advises that at the end of each day,

we must examine ourselves and see what we have done; whether we have done anything wrong. If so, we must imagine that in a future event of a similar kind, we will act differently. We must visualize ourselves in this light, because on a future occasion, the mind will draw on the stored images. We cannot erase the contents in the book of experience, but we can add the appendix of wisdom.

In this regard, the Holy Mother said,

The mind is everything. It is in the mind alone that one feels pure or impure. A man first makes his own mind guilty and then sees another's fault. Can you injure anybody by enumerating their faults? You only injure yourself. If a person does even a trifle for me, I try to remember even that.

What is being alluded to here is a fundamental law of the human mind: the law of association. The mind is like a magnet which attracts to itself all the thoughts and images associated with the thought held in the mind. So in recalling evil, we invite misery. In recalling good, we invite the good, holy, uplifting thoughts to enter our mind and energize our being. Based on this fundamental law, meditation is prescribed by all saints and sages across the centuries as the most effective way to deal with the world and ourselves.

The concept of a mantra combines all three laws of memory to focus the mind. By continuously repeating an idea and contemplating its meaning, we let no other thought intrude so that all ideas associated with it converge into our mind and make it luminous. Contemplating beauty, we become beautiful. Contemplating Truth, we become truthful. Contemplating strength, we become strong. So we are not after the superhuman power of the supercomputer which can remember everything and anything. We want to remember that which is edifying, unifying and uplifting, both to ourselves and to others. In this way, our vision becomes cosmic.

Indeed, even on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Sri Krishna implored Arjuna to *remember*—his duty, his real nature and the interdependence of existence. At the end of the *Gita*, Arjuna sings,

*Nas̄to mohah̄ sm̄rtir labdhā
tvatprasādān mayū'cyuta;
Sthito'smi gatasandehah̄
karis̄ye vacanam̄ tava.*

Destroyed is my delusion, I have *regained my memory* through your grace, my doubts are dispelled, I will carry out your command.

Let us *remember* our goal! Let us *remember* our divinity! □

Each man is a microcosm of the universe. Your body is made of all the elements of the world. Nature supplied all the elements that make your body, which means that the universe made you by donating itself. If nature demanded that you refund everything that nature loaned you, would there be anything left of you? You can feel that the universe gave you birth and made you, so nature is your first parent. Do you feel good that you are a microcosm of the universe? All the universal formula can be found in you. You could accurately say that you are a small walking universe that can move, whereas the cosmic universe is stationary.

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

RELIGION THY NAME IS HUMANISM

A.K. NISHA

B.A. First Year, S.I.E.S. College, Bombay

Religion without humanism becomes a lifeless mockery and an empty ritual. Religion, caste, creed, language, or sex finds no barrier against humanism. My practical experience in my life, of what we call practical Vedanta, I want to share with all.

In the month of July '94, my father goes to Sahara International Airport, Bombay, to make an enquiry. There he sees an old lady of seventy years, approaching airport officials and requesting some help and guidance. The airport officials take her request on deaf ears. She approaches the police official on duty as well as the co-passengers, but to no avail.

My father was all this while observing the whole thing. She finally comes to my father and makes the same request. She says she came from Karachi and was proceeding to Madras to meet her brother and other relatives. Her name was Mrs. K. Sayeed, aged 72 years. Father helps her to go to the Santa Cruz Airport and puts her on the Madras flight. He then receives a letter of thanks from her after she reaches Madras.

After a month father received a letter from the same lady requesting him to help her board the flight back to Karachi at Sahara International Airport as she will be reaching Santa Cruz Domestic Airport on 23.8.94. Accordingly father met her and helped her to board the flight to Karachi. This time she handed over a ring to be presented to me as a token of her remembrance, love and affection. Father refused at first to accept it, but on her insistence he was forced to accept it.

Later, to our great shock and surprise, on 1.11.94 we received a letter from her brother Mr. Mohd. Ahmed, informing that his sister, Mrs. K. Sayeed, whom father had helped to board the Karachi flight on her return journey, passed away on 28.10.94 at 5 a.m. at Karachi.

He wrote in his letter: 'I write this to thank you profusely for helping my sister even though you did not know each other.'

The above incident teaches a great lesson, that is, Humanism is the basis of all religions and hence if a person is to be true to his religion, then he should have deep concern for the suffering of all fellow human beings.

(Please turn over)

This is the message which Swami Vivekananda wanted to spread as practical Vedanta, and the proposed universal temple that is going to take shape by the year 1997 at Madras in the Ramakrishna Math will radiate this spirit and message throughout the universe.

Miss Nisha writes:

Pujya Swamiji,

Pranams. Please find enclosed an article written by me. On reading the series under practical Vedanta in your esteemed journal I wanted to share my experience in life with the readers of *Prabuddha Bharata*, the monthly journal,—a rare experience of the play of Humanism.

I am aged 18 years Miss Nisha studying B.A. first year in S.I.E.S. College, Bombay. With my respectable pranams to puja swamiji,

Yours ever in service

NISHA, A.K.

One of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples and a brother-disciple of Swami Vivekananda (Swamiji), Swami Akhandananda would become transformed when speaking of Swamiji. An indescribable serene light would glow on his face. However, the great Swami's passing away affected him deeply. He felt a great void in his heart and lost all his enthusiasm for work. Again and again his mind would dwell on memories of his beloved brother-disciple. Then, early one morning, in a dream, he saw Swamiji walking along a street in Berhampur, W.B., going towards the Ganga:

I saw Swamiji as an extraordinarily stout and strong Mussalman fakir, with an iron chain round his waist and wearing a loose robe. He carried an iron rod capped with an iron knob from which small chains hung. He came singing, jingling the chains on the rod to keep time. He had four disciples with him. I asked him, 'Why in this form?' He replied, 'Unless I have such a body, how can I work? In your Bengal, they have delicate frames that buckle under the slightest austerity. Do you know I don't sit idle? I'm spreading amongst these people the all-embracing ideas of our Master. So it is that I'm moving among them as a fakir.' I then asked, 'Who are these?' Pointing to each of the four, in turn, he said, 'Iran, Turan, Khorasan, Afghan.' 'What will you do with them?' 'Only with such frames can one assimilate the Vedanta', was the reply. Again I asked, 'What are you going to do now?' He replied, 'That they unite with Hindusthan is what I'm about. Go through the Vedas and the *Mahābhārata*, and you will find these are your kinsmen. But a counter-force is persistently opposing.'

The dream left a deep impression on Swami Akhandananda. Concerning it he said: 'This time there will be a new awakening in Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and other states. The time is fast drawing near when the whole of Asia will attain freedom.'

—From *Swami Akhandananda* by Swami Annadananda, pp. 187–8
published by Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

Reviews & Notices

THE SAINT AND THE SCIENTIST: LIFE, WRITINGS AND TEACHINGS OF PROF. SWAMI JNANANANDA: Compiled by Dr. Raju Umupathi D.; Ed. Dr. Keshav Dev Sharma; University Resources Press, P.O. Box 5511, Washington D.C., 20016, U.S.A.; pp. 332. Price not mentioned.

This book describes the life-story and message of a sage-scientist who, in S. Radhakrishnan's words, 'wrote and spoke from a deeply digested experience'; who was as much a 'master of ancient wisdom' as that of 'modern scientific methods'. Like Nagarjuna, who was both a seer and an alchemist, Swami Jnanananda was both a yogi and a nuclear physicist of international repute. Born on December 5, 1896 at Goraganamudi, a village in the Bhimavaram taluk of the West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh, Swami Jnanananda (earlier Sri Bhupatiraju Lakshmi Narasimha Raju) had an innate desire to realize the Divine Reality since his childhood. He was attracted towards the life and teachings of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, the speeches and writings of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and the cult of Theosophy. His spiritual yearnings led him to the snowy peaks of the Himalayas where he did intense *yoga sadhana*, sometime remaining totally naked and going without food till he experienced *nirvikalpa samadhi*. During 1925-26, he penned down his mystical revelations, known as *Purna-Sutras*, while living in the cave 'Shanti Guha' in Gangotri. Later, at the behest of his father, he left for Germany to expound his revelations, and to study mathematics, physics and allied sciences with a view to synthesizing Eastern wisdom and Western thought. From Germany, he moved to Prague where he worked at Charles University for his doctorate in Experimental Physics. Sometime later, he went to England and secured another doctorate for his research on Beta

radiation. He was invited to the United States by Prof. Lindsay, a prominent X-ray physicist, and worked at the University of Michigan for three years before returning to India in 1947. To begin with, he served as Assistant Director, National Physical Laboratory, New Delhi (1947-54). Thereafter, he became Professor of Nuclear Physics at Andhra University (1954-69) and guided twenty students for their D.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees, besides publishing more than 100 articles and research papers in the field of nuclear physics. During all these years he kept on lecturing and writing on Vedanta and Yoga in a scientific manner. He attained *mahasamadhi* in 1969.

The book has two parts. Part I includes an English rendering of Swami Jnanananda's autobiography from Telegu, interspersed with poems and philosophical outpourings. It is followed by biographical details about the Swami and opinions of eminent persons on him expressed during the course of his 60th birthday celebrations (*shastipurthi*). Part II includes the *Purna-Sutras* as well as a selection of his speeches and writings on such subjects as the realization of the Absolute, the origin and structure of the Vedas, the six systems of Indian philosophy, subjectivity and objectivity, space and time, and the Philosophy of Yoga.

It is an eminently readable work free from printer's howlers or half-baked views on religion and spirituality.

Dr. Satish K. Kapoor,
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Jalandhar City, Punjab

BEING AS BECOMING—Studies in Early Buddhism: by Moti Lal Pandit; publ. Intercultural Publications (P) Ltd., 15A/30, W.E.A., New Delhi, 110 005; price Rs. 300/-

Lord Buddha 'the light of Asia' gives light not only to Asia but to the whole world. He has inspired and guided people of the

East and the West through centuries. His teachings form the basis of Early Buddhism. Thousands of books have been written on Lord Buddha and his preachings. The book under review is an addition to the list by Moti Lal Pandit who has been in Indological research during the last two decades. He has several papers and a few books to his credit.

Lord Buddha realized four noble truths—(1) there is suffering, (2) there is a cause of suffering, (3) there is cessation of suffering, and (4) there is a way to attain it. His preachings are: (1) all is impermanent, (2) all is suffering, and (3) there is no permanent self. In order to justify the above doctrines, Lord Buddha propagated a theory of Causality by the name of Dependent Origination (*Pratitya Samutpada*). This is how the author explicates Early Buddhism.

Existence, according to Lord Buddha, is of the nature of change. So the caption of the book is 'Being as Becoming'. Apart from the Preface, the book contains eleven chapters—(1) The Life of the Buddha, (2) The Central Themes of the Buddha's Thought, (3) The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, (4) The Doctrine of Karma, (5) The Nature of Samsara, (6) The Constituents of Being, (7) The Mystical Way to Nirvana, (8) Nirvana as the Unconditioned, (9) The Abhidhamma and the Theory of Pudgala, (10) Buddhist Canonical Literature, and (11) The Early Buddhist Schools and Sects. There are two appendices: (1) Dependent Origination, and (2) The Early Buddhist Councils. The Bibliography and Index have added charm to the book. The chapter on 'The Early Buddhist Schools and Sects' is well written.

The book is partly history and partly philosophico-religious. The author has a fascination for transcendence. He finds a transcendental Buddha (p. 1) who 'transcended the infirmities of the conditioned existence', 'having transcended the limita-

tions of space and time'. A question here may legitimately be raised: Did Lord Buddha accept any transcendental life? The author himself, in the Preface (p. xiii), observes: 'The important doctrines that the Buddha preached are, (a) all are impermanent (*sarvam anityam*)...and (c) the absence of permanent self (*anatman*).' So the answer of the question raised should be negative in the light of the author's observation.

The author, in the Preface (p. xii), has translated *nirodha* as 'suppressed'. Perhaps '*nirodha*' is putting a stop to, or cessation. In page 51, constant becoming and flux are said to be a 'curse'. Is it really a curse? Or is it really the nature of existence? The author himself says—'Being as Becoming'.

In page 191 the author observes: 'In so far as atman in itself is concerned, the Buddha neither denied nor affirmed it.' But in the Preface (p. xiii) the author states: 'The important doctrines that the Buddha preached are: ... (c) the absence of permanent self'. The author's intention is not clear.

The author speaks of the 'absoluteness of nirvana' (p. 315). Does Lord Buddha admit anything absolute? Nirvana is relative to sufferings in the sense that nirvana is meaningless unless there are sufferings. About the nature of nirvana, the scholars are not unanimous. Is it negative or positive? No easy answer is available. The book under review is really interesting as it raises some important issues concerning Early Buddhism. People may not always agree with the author's views, but that is not very important.

The paper, print and get-up of this book are excellent.

Dr. Nirod Baran Chakraborty,
Presidency College, Calcutta

Books Received

Divine Nectar (Gita in verse, English); by Swami Ramanujananda; pp. 100; 1994; Rs. 15/-.

Child of the Mother (A Poetical Tribute to Sri Ramakrishna); by Swami Ramanuja-

nanda; pp. 65; 1994; Rs. 12/-.

Both booklets are published in paperback by the Ramakrishna Math, Vilangan P.O., Puranattukara, Trissur, 680 551.