

VOL. 100 NOVEMBER 1995

ISSN 0032 - 6178

Centenary of

100

Prabuddha Bharata
1896 - 1995



Prabuddha Bharata
or Awakened India





PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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

Publication Office
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014

Phone (91)(33)244 0898
(91)(33)245 2383
Fax (91)(33)245 0050



Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage)

Annual Life
(30 Years)

India	Rs. 45	Rs. 500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs. 120	Rs. 2000
U.S.A. & Canada		
Air Mail	\$ 20	\$ 300
Other Countries		
Air Mail	£ 15	£ 225

Cover: Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati
Inset: Prabuddha Bharata Office

NOVEMBER 1995

CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	849
Why We Are Very Special <i>Editorial</i>	850
Madhusudana Saraswati on the <i>Bhagavad-Gita</i> Swami Gambhirananda	853
Sri Ramakrishna— The Spiritual Ideal for the Age Swami Bhuteshananda	856
Knowledge and Truth According to Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedanta Prof. R.I. Ingalalli	862
Krishnaji Narayan Athalye: The Pioneer Biographer of Swami Vivekananda Swami Videhatmananda	865
The Concept of God in the Hindu Religion Swami Tathagatananda	872

(Continued on next page)

CONTENTS (Continued)

Away from the Urban Rush: A Pilgrimage S. Ragi Simhan	880
Practical Vedanta	888
News and Reports	890
Reviews and Notices	892
From Students	891
Unlettered, But a Poetess Farhat Amin	889
China Curbs Muslim Region	852
Discoveries	871

New Release

MIND

ACCORDING TO

VEDANTA

(A Collection of Articles)

*By***SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA**

An in-depth study of the gripping subject. Enjoy it!

SIZE : Crown 1/8
Pages : 181 & VIII

Price : Rs.15.00
By post : Rs.23.00

*Write to:*

Sri Ramakrishna Math
Mylapore, Madras-600 004

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 100

NOVEMBER 1995

No. 11

Divine Wisdom

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 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
सम्प्लोहिता 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 Jñāna 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-
वैक्लव्यवाष्पकलया पुलकीकृताङ्गाः ॥

To this exquisite place (abode of Viṣṇu) 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.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.15.23-5

Why We Are Very Special

A para of the *Taittirīya-Upanishad* reads:

From that Brahman indeed, which is this Self, was produced space. From space emerged air. From air was born fire. From fire was created water. From water sprang up earth. From earth were born the herbs. From the herbs was produced food. From food was born man. That man, such as he is, is surely a product of the essence of food....(2.1)

At first sight the ideas here appear so archaic and irrelevant in the context of our scientific knowledge. But Shankaracharya, commenting on the above text, dives deep into it and brings out a hidden significance—that a human being is the best fruit of the cosmic process of creation. The evolutionary chain has reached, so to say, its culmination by producing human beings. In us alone is most developed the power to understand, achieve, control and create. Most remarkably, in us alone is the power of complete self-comprehension just waiting to light us like the brilliance of the sun from behind a patch of cloud.

Shankara raises a question: The text says, 'From food was born man....' Food eaten by parents gets partly converted into the procreative fluids, from which children are born. But this is true for all the creatures. Since all beings without exception are modifications of the essence of food and are equally descended from Brahman, why does the text specify man alone as the last product?

And he himself answers: That is so

because of his preeminence.

What does his preeminence consist in?

According to Shankara, man's preeminence consists in his competence for karma and knowledge. For, man alone, who has desires, learning and capacity, is qualified for rites (meant to secure those desires) and duties, and also for knowledge by virtue of his discriminative ability, craving (for results), and great concern for his objectives (being alert about all his experiences). This, says Shankara, is proved by the evidence of another Vedic text:

पुरुषे त्वेवाविस्तरामात्मा स हि प्रज्ञानेन सम्पन्नतमो
विज्ञातं वदति विज्ञातं पश्यति वेद श्वस्तनं
वेदलोकालोकौ मर्त्येनामृतमीप्सति इत्येवं सम्पन्नः
अथेतरेषां पशूनामशनापिपासे एवाभिविज्ञानम् ।

Puruṣe tvevā'vistarāmātmā, sa hi prajñānena sampannatamo, vijñātam vadati, vijñātam paśyati, veda śvastanam, veda lokālokau, martyenāmṛtamīpsati, ityevam sampannaḥ; athetareṣāṃ paśūnāmaśanā-pipāse evābhivijñānam.

In man alone is the Self most manifest, for he is the best endowed with intelligence. He speaks what he knows; he sees what he knows; he knows what will happen tomorrow; he knows the higher and lower worlds; he aspires to achieve immortality through mortal things. Vṛ̥ is thus endowed with discrimination. Whereas other beings are (predominantly) conscious only of hunger and thirst. (*Aitareya-Āraṇyaka*, II.3.2.5)

Thus, though the *Taittirīya* text is apparently a quaint description of creation, still, according to Shankara the intention there is to point out our uncommon characteristics, indirectly encouraging us to exercise and perfect them, especially our hunger for knowledge. For, at the end of complete knowledge, which obviously must include knowledge about ourselves, lies immortality.

To restate this for our understanding: We are very special because of our unequalled capacity to perform karma, that is, diverse goal-oriented actions. Not mechanically, but intelligently. We are untiring in our efforts to improve the quality of our activity and what we get out of it. Our phenomenal memory helps us mentally reconstruct past actions and visualize possible ways of doing them better in future. Besides, even while working we are able to learn more and faster than any other creature. Further, we are able to discover newer and newer layers of connections among all that we have learnt.

Again, different activities bring varieties of information and experience, and these we have the capacity to organize into knowledge of systematized information. Our power of investigation, induction, deduction, and discovering fresh data is unique. Additionally, we have devised machines to enhance the power of our senses, and also machines to design better machines to improve our karma and knowledge.

Thus, regarding karma, we are special because our capacity to work is purposive and innovative; we are able to diversify our activities in endless ways; our drive for improvement through work is inexhaustible; and our way of working generates an unmatched variety and volume of knowledge.

We are also remarkable with regard to knowledge: We can communicate thoughts, share knowledge and thereby generate fresh knowledge. Then, *'he sees what he knows'*—that is, we have this extraordinary power to translate our ideas and concepts into diagrams, pictures and objects. Not only so, with this power of visualization and on the basis of the trends these pictures and charts suggest, *'he knows what will happen tomorrow'*—we are able to make long-range forecasts with a rational accuracy unknown to other beings.

We do not remain confined to a set pattern of karma and knowledge. Nor are we satisfied with things and situations as given. We manipulate them, reorganize them, and develop: *'He knows the higher and lower worlds'*—we understand, discriminate and remember the differences between our earlier states and those gained subsequently—beginning from improvement of material conditions, and progressing towards planned acquisition of knowledge, building an intricately balanced community life, cultural refinements, awareness of personal dignity, and, remarkably, the moral sense which prompts us to restrain our impulses and wants in consideration of others' convenience.

So, by the way we build on karma, experience, knowledge, memory and discrimination we are superior.

Having thus secured the best of this world, the human being is next impelled to seek prolongation of his life. Who, after all, can bear the prospect of losing among other things, his hard-earned possessions? So, *'he aspires to achieve immortality through mortal things.'* This certainly is the most striking aspect of our personality—this desire to be alive through eternity.

Despite all our abilities and dazzling

achievements, we are aware of our mortality. Most are frightened even to mention or to think of death. A few come to terms with death by resigning to it as an inescapable end. And some desperately seek medical help to delay aging and prolong life. A good many, of course, resort to religion with the hope of gaining some divine being's assistance to live as long as possible in the midst of their possessions, relatives, joys and, ah! such a variety of tantalizing colour and entertainment.

All the above attempts are futile. Simple logic says that things that are themselves mortal and changeful cannot in any way yield something that is changeless and immortal. Besides, commonsense says that things that are products degenerate in course of time. So, seeking immortality for ourselves as human beings per se, as mere products of the 'essence of food', is utter foolishness.

But then, the hope for immortality cannot therefore be considered baseless, because this desire not to die is experienced by all in one way or another, at one or another time in life. In fact, this desire itself is being identified by the Upanishad as our ultimate uniqueness. Surely it is the most

exceptional feature of our personality. Other creatures, too, instinctively try to save themselves. But the *aspiration* to achieve immortality, which the quoted *Aitareya-Āranyaka* text mentions, this deliberate and conscious search for immortality, is exclusively human. Failing to achieve immortality through mortal means, man did not let go the hope. He did indeed discover the correct means to that end. That means, as hinted by Shankara, as has already been quoted earlier—the means is not anything material, but it is *knowledge* of the Atman: the highest possible knowledge about ourselves.

Leaving out a discussion of how self-knowledge brings immortality, which is beyond our present purpose, what is clear is: We are unique because of the nature of our activities, the knowledge our experiences generate, our memory, discrimination, foresight, sense of personal worth, and the intentional quest for self-knowledge and immortality. In other words, unless these are evident in a person, he is human in form only, nearer to the lesser creatures on the scale of evolution. On the other hand, only when our activities, knowledge, intelligence, etc. lead us up to seek and realize our immortality, we are on the way to becoming fully human. □

China Curbs Muslim Region *

Chinese authorities have ordered new curbs on religious activity in the heavily Muslim northwestern region of Ningxia, the official Xinhua News agency said today.

The move comes at a time of growing concern in Beijing over rising Islamic fervour in Central Asia and the risk of it spreading to China's own Muslim communities.

Xinhua said a new law issued by the Ningxia government bars religious bodies 'from interfering in administrative affairs that should be dealt with by the government and from punishing any religious believers for any reason'

* By permission, reprinted from *The Hindu-
than Times*, New Delhi, 19 July 1995

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

RENUNCIATION OF ACTIVITY: NOT FOR ALL

But he who has realized the supreme Entity and does not derive pleasure from the senses, he, on account of being self-fulfilled, does not incur sin even by not performing the rites which are thus the cause of the movement of the Wheel of the World. This He says in two verses:

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।
आत्मन्येव च सन्तुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥

*Yastvātmaratireva syād-
ātmatrptaśca mānavah;
Ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭas-
tasya kāryam na vidyate (3.17).*

But that man who rejoices only in the Self and is satisfied (only) with the Self, and is contented only in the Self—for him there is no duty to perform.

Only one who derives pleasure from the senses experiences joy in garlands, sandal-paste, woman and so on; contentment in food, drinks, etc. which are pleasing to the mind; and gratification by getting animals, sons, gold, etc. and from absence of disease etc. For it is a matter of experience that, in the absence of the aforesaid objects there is an absence of joy, contentment and gratification in those who are full of attachment. Joy, contentment and gratification are particular mental modes revealed by the witnessing consciousness. But in the verse, '(As) the extent of need (fulfilled) in a well' (2.46), it has been said that the man who has attained the highest Bliss does not desire the pleasure

of objects, because he does not perceive duality and because it is very insignificant. Hence, since on account of the absence of joy, contentment and gratification with regard to the non-Self he continues to perceive directly the Self which is supreme Bliss and non-dual, therefore it is through a figure of speech that he is called '*ātma-ratiḥ*, one who rejoices in the Self', '*ātma-trptaḥ*, one who is satisfied with the Self', '*ātma-santuṣṭaḥ*, one who is contented in the Self'. Accordingly there is the Śruti,

He disports in the Self, delights in the Self, and is engrossed in (spiritual) effort. This one is the chief among the knowers of Brahman.¹

The 'ca, and, in *ātma-trptaḥ ca* (in the *Gītā* verse) is for drawing in the word *eva*, only. The word *mānavah* (man) is used to imply that any person whosoever who has become so is alone self-fulfilled, but not anyone (merely) through his excellence in Brāhminhood etc. The *ca* in *ātmani eva ca santuṣṭaḥ* is used in the sense of a conjunction. *Yah*, he who has become thus; *tasya*, for him; *na vidyate*, there is no; *kāryam*, duty, whatsoever, be it Vedic or worldly, because the ground of eligibility is absent in him.

(Objection:) Is it not that, even in the case of a man of Self-knowledge there should be rites and duties for self-elevation or Liberation or avoidance of evil?

1. *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*, 3.1.4.

Hence He says:

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥

*Naiva tasya kṛtenārtho
nākṛteneha kaścana;
Na cāsya sarvabhūteṣu
kaścidarthavyapāśrayaḥ (3.18).*

For him there is no need at all for action, nor (does he suffer) any effect whatsoever here from non-performance of action, because for this one there is no needful connection whatsoever with any object.

Tasya, for him, for the one who rejoices in the Self; *na eva arthaḥ*, there is no need at all—whether it be in the form of prosperity or Liberation—; *kṛtena*, for action, because in him there is no hankering for elevation to heaven etc., and because Liberation cannot be achieved through action. In keeping with this is the Śruti,

A Brahmin should resort to renunciation after examining the worlds acquired through *karma*, with the help of this maxim: 'There is nothing (here) that is not the result of *karma*; so what is the need of (performing) *karma*?'²

That is to say, *akṛtaḥ*, (that which is not a product of action) the eternal, Liberation; does not come *kṛtena*, from action. The negation of its (Liberation) being a product of Knowledge as well is suggested by the word *eva* (at all) (in the *Gītā* verse); for, the 'non-achievement' of the ever-achieved Liberation, which is the nature of the Self, consists in the mere ignorance (about it). And that (ignorance) is removable by Knowledge alone. When that (ignorance) is removed by the Knowledge of the Reality, then for that knower of the Self there remains no need

whatsoever to be fulfilled either through action or through Knowledge. This is the meaning

(*Objection:*) Even by a man in such a state actions must be undertaken for avoiding evil.

Hence He says, *na akṛtena*, nor (does he suffer) any effect from non-performance of action. The suffix (*kta*) is used here to convey the sense of an abstract noun. Through the non-performance of the *nitya-karmas* there is no effect *kaścana*, whatsoever; *iha*, here, in the world, either in the form of being open to censure or incurring some evil. He (the Lord) states the reason for all this in the next half (of the verse): The (word) *ca* is used in the sense of 'because'. Because *asya*, for this one, for the knower of the Self; *na asti*, there is no; *artha-vyapāśrayaḥ*, needful connection whatsoever; *sarva-bhūteṣu*, with any object, beginning from *Brahmā* and ending with inanimate objects. The meaning of the sentence is that there is no need that can be fulfilled by depending on some particular object. Therefore performance and non-performance are useless for this one, as the Śruti says, 'Things done or not done do not trouble him.'³ In accordance with the Śruti, 'Even the gods cannot prevail against him, for he becomes their own self'⁴, since it has been said that even the gods are incapable of preventing his Liberation, therefore the purport is that there need be no performance of any action even in the form of worship of gods for averting obstacles.

This kind of a knower of Brahman has been described by Vasistha in terms of the seven different stages:

The plane of knowledge, called *śubhecchā*, good resolve, is declared to be the

2. *Ibid.*, 1.2.12.

3. *Brhadāranyaka-Upanisad*, 4.4.22.

4. *Ibid.*, 1.4.10.

first; the second one is *vicāraṇā*, deliberation; the third is *tanumānasā*, fitness of the mind; the fourth is *sattvāpatti*, experience of Reality; after that comes what is called *asamsakti*, non-relationship; the sixth is *padārthābhāvinī*, absence of objects; the seventh is spoken of as *turyagā*, reaching the *turīya*.⁵

Among these the first is the desire for Liberation, which starts from discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal, etc. and culminates in its fruit. Then, after approaching the guru, *vicāra*—in the form of *śravaṇa* and *manana*—on the Upaniṣadic texts is the second. Then the third is the ability of the mind to grasp subtle things with concentration (accomplished) through the practice of *nididhyāsana*. These three stages, which are forms of discipline, are called the waking-state by the yogis, for the world continues to appear as a separate (entity). So has it been said,

O Rāma, it has been ascertained that these three stages constitute the waking state. In the waking state this world is perceived just as it is with ideas of differences.⁶

Then from the Upaniṣadic texts follows, as the fruit, the fourth stage, (viz.) *sattvāpatti*, experience of Reality, consisting in the supersensuous realization of the identity of Brahman and the Self. This is called the state of dream, because the universe as a whole appears as unreal. So it has been said,

5. *Laghu-Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, *Lavaṇa-upākhyāna*, 13.113–14.

6. *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha-Rāmāyana*, *Niroḍhā-prakarāṇa*, part 1, 126.52.

When firmness in non-duality is established and duality has ceased, the persons who have reached the fourth stage see the world as a dream.⁷

That yogi who has reached the fourth stage is called a *brahmanvit*, a knower of Brahman. However, the fifth, sixth and the seventh stages are the secondary divisions of *jīvanmukti* itself (the state of remaining Liberated even while living).

As to that, the state of *nirvikalpa-samādhi* (total spiritual absorption in which the subject-object relationship vanishes), which comes when the mind becomes withdrawn through the practice of *savikalpa-samādhi* (spiritual absorption in which the subject-object relationship persists), is called *asamsakti*, non-relationship, and *susupti*, sleep, because from this state he (the yogi) emerges by himself. This yogi who is such is a *brahmanvit-vara*, a great knower of Brahman. What comes after that as a result of the maturity of practising that (earlier *samādhi*) and lasts for a long time is called *padārthābhāvanī*, absence of objects, and deep sleep, because the yogi, who does not emerge by himself from that, is awakened only by the efforts of others. That one who is such is a *brahmanvit-varīyān*, a greater knower of Brahman. Indeed, it has been said,

After reaching the fifth stage, called by the name *sleep*, he gradually reaches the sixth stage called deep sleep.⁸

(to be continued)

7. *Laghu-Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, *Yoga-saptabhūmikā-upākhyāna*, 43.70.

8. *Ibid.*, 73, 76.

There is only one sin. That is weakness.

Swami Vivekananda

Sri Ramakrishna— The Spiritual Ideal for the Age

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

The life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna are very meaningful to people today. Although no one may ever understand his life fully, we can gain much by trying to practise his teachings. Two of the most prominent are: the need of Self-Realization, or God-Realization, which enables us to see God in all; and the need for accepting all the religious paths as valid ways and approaches to God.

Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, emphasizes the practical importance of these teachings of Sri Ramakrishna in this highly illuminating talk. We regret we could not ascertain the place and year in which this was delivered.

*Om niranjanam nityam anantarūpaṁ bhaktānukampā-dhṛtavigrahaṁ vai;
Īśāvatāraṁ paramēśanūdyam taṁ rāmakṛṣṇam śirasā namāmaḥ.*

*Om! One who is blemishless, eternal, and of limitless forms;
who, indeed, out of compassion for devotees assumed a form;
who is an incarnation of the Lord; who is the adorable Supreme Lord—
to Sri Ramakrishna, who is such, we salute with our heads (bowed down).*

Friends,

I have been asked to speak in English, So excuse me for speaking in a tongue that is natural neither to me nor to you. Unfortunately I am not able to speak in the language that is spoken here, which is a deficiency which I cannot overcome, and for which I beg your pardon.

The subject for this evening is 'Yuga-dharma-sthāpaka Sri Ramakrishna', that is, 'Sri Ramakrishna as the Establisher of the Spiritual Ideal for the Age'. I translate *dharma* as *spiritual ideal* because *dharma* has been used in various senses. So, *yugadharmā* also may be very differently interpreted by different people. Sri Ramakrishna did not bother much about the various interpretations. He said, 'I know nothing except God. Verily I tell you, I do not know anything except God.' That is his emphatic utterance. He was

not even conscious that he was going to be the teacher of the Age. Once I described him as 'A Teacher Who Never Taught'.

Sri Ramakrishna never had the ego that he was a teacher. He used to say, 'Three words prick me.' Those words were: 'teacher', 'kartā' (agent), and 'bābā' (father—in either a spiritual or earthly sense). These three terms he never accepted in reference to himself. Yet we speak of him as the establisher of the religion for this Age! It seems to be rather curious. But the whole life of Sri Ramakrishna is curious. As I told you, he never posed as a teacher. On the contrary, he said, 'I am an eternal learner; as long as I live, I learn.' Those were his words.

And then just think of his humility. When somebody spoke about him in some high-sounding words he would say, 'I am

the humblest of the humble. I am not even worthy to be a hair of your body.' This is the kind of expression we hear from him.

Nevertheless, even when he was just a little child, he spontaneously attained God-realization of a very high order. We do not know where he got this knowledge, this realization; it was not from any kind of *sādhanā*, as we understand the word. Sri Ramakrishna gave some hint about this, but never elaborated the point. He said, 'Incarnations are born with full Realization. They are like plants that flower after the fruits have come.' The life of Sri Ramakrishna was like that. That was the peculiarity with which he was endowed from the very beginning—from his boyhood.

least for the sake of others, by some prescribed methods. And Sri Ramakrishna practised those methods.

Other Incarnations also practised *sādhanā*. Sri Krishna went to his guru's home to learn the scriptures, and engage in *sādhanā*. Sri Ramachandra did the same thing. Every teacher, every Incarnation has to do that. Why do they do this? Because they have to demonstrate to the world how God-realization is to be attained, step by step, up to the last stage. That has to be actually demonstrated through their own lives. Without this demonstration the purpose of the Incarnation becomes unfulfilled. If they remain at the highest stage, always immersed in Brahman, that does not help us.

Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly reminds us, first, that God is the be-all and end-all, the foremost thing in our life. Why? Because without knowing Him we can never be free from ignorance.... Secondly, God-realization is possible by various methods, various ways. All these ways are capable of leading to the Goal;... Thirdly, as we proceed towards God, our life is transformed in all respects.

He did not stop there. His *sādhanā*, regular practice, began a little later, when he had a tremendous urge for God-realization. But, as we have seen, he had already had a spiritual experience of the highest order, even before adolescence. So why should he want to practise *sādhanā* for the God realization he had already attained? The only answer is: This is a unique life that we have before us. This Sri Ramakrishna has to be understood from two different angles of understanding. One angle tells us that he is the perfect manifestation of the highest Reality. Seen from the other angle, he is just an ordinary person like us who practises *sādhanā* to realize the Supreme Reality. These two go side by side. We see this not only in Sri Ramakrishna, but in other great prophets and Incarnations also. Every Incarnation is born with spiritual Knowledge. But that Knowledge has to be manifested, at

We have to be helped by a person who comes down to our level and shows us the way, step by step, to the highest goal. Swami Saradanandaji has stated in *Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasānga (Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master)* that every event in the life of Sri Ramakrishna has a deep meaning for us. His was not simply a life lived in isolation. It was a life that was to be the beacon light for us, so that we can have our path lighted and gradually reach the highest goal.

Swami Vivekananda said that even the Vedas and the Vedānta will have to be understood in the light of Sri Ramakrishna, in the light of his teachings. His life is the light by means of which we will be able to read the meaning of the scriptures. The scriptures contain much wisdom no doubt, but they remain unintelligible to us unless we see them interpreted through the lives of

these Incarnations. They make the scriptures living. As Sri Ramakrishna himself has stated, our scriptures are a mixture of sand and sugar. You have to find out where the sugar is and where the sand is, then you can reject the sand and take the sugar. In other words, Truth is mixed with some unnecessary things. It needs some husk, as it were, something to protect it from being diluted or misinterpreted.

Brahman has been so often elaborately described by the scriptures, but do we really understand It? If we study the scriptures, where do we finally end up? We too often become either agnostic or utterly bewildered. We do not know where we are. That is why the scriptures themselves warn us again and again: *Nānudhyāyād bahūn śabdān, vaco viglāpanam hi tat* — 'Do not read the scriptures too much; that will only make

reach, we at least have the advantage of the Incarnations of God. It is through them that we can learn the true meaning of the scriptures. That is why Swami Vivekananda said that the Vedas and the Vedanta will have to be understood through the light of Sri Ramakrishna, his life and teachings.

Who Was Sri Ramakrishna?

The more we study his life, the more we feel we are incompetent to gauge him. Even Arjuna, when he was given that Supreme Knowledge, the *Viśvarūpa*, when he saw God in His fullness, became frightened and said to Sri Krishna, 'I took you to be an ordinary man and behaved with you like a friend, and therefore I must have treated you disrespectfully. Please forgive me.' Those were the words of Arjuna, who was the closest associate of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. In the same way, when we look at

...but he had that one desire to be helpful to others, to help people reach the highest Goal, so that they could then enable others to free themselves. That was the great desire that Sri Ramakrishna had which kept him in body.

your ideas clouded.' Your mind will be clouded unless you have some sure guide who can tell you how to study the scriptures. All true Knowledge has to be received through an Enlightened Soul. A light has to be kindled by another light. An Enlightened Soul alone can enlighten others. Otherwise the scriptures remain sealed books. You do not know how to open the seal and learn the contents. This is true for scriptures of all religions, not only here. The key to their meaning is held by these Great Souls.

Sri Ramakrishna wanted to receive all Knowledge direct from the Divine Mother, to whom he always had easy access. Unfortunately it is not so with us. Still, we know that we must acquire direct Knowledge by some means. If the Divine Mother or the Mother of the Universe is not within our

the people who were very close to Sri Ramakrishna, what was their estimate of him? Swami Vivekananda, the greatest exponent of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the closest and foremost disciple, says, 'I am afraid to speak of my guru, because when I try to do that, I may only distort the picture. I am incompetent to gauge him, so I am afraid. I do not feel sufficiently gifted to elaborate on that point.' If Swami Vivekananda spoke in that way, what can the other disciples say? They all felt the same way—that Sri Ramakrishna was so great that their understanding of him was very incomplete. That was Sri Ramakrishna.

So it is no wonder that we today cannot completely understand Sri Ramakrishna. He has so many facets, so many different

aspects, that we get bewildered when we try to understand him. He not only realized in a systematic way the different paths leading to God-realization that are involved in Hinduism, he followed the Christian method and the Muslim method. And after completing all these *sādhana*s, he said, on the bedrock of his personal experience, that these are all different paths leading to the same goal. Let us remember that this was not an intellectual generalization, but the experience that he had through the performance of the disciplines of the various religions.

We find glimpses of this kind of essential oneness of religions in the Vedas: *Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*—‘Truth is One, wise men speak of It in various ways.’ In the Gita and the Upanishads we find the same thing. Still, Sri Ramakrishna’s kind of practical experience through the paths of different religions has not been mentioned anywhere in our ancient scriptures. That is a new thing you find in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Perhaps it was necessary in this Age for this experience to be demonstrated to the world, so that people can know that there is an inner harmony, or Oneness in the different faiths that seem to be contradictory and conflicting. This is what is very necessary today when there is so much strife in the name of religion. Sri Ramakrishna wants us all to understand that God can never be exhausted in any one religion. You can never describe him and say that God is this and this alone and nothing more. Nonetheless, Sri Ramakrishna taught that you must have faith in and stay on your own path or you can never progress, though you must never think that your religion is the only path. It is just a path, that is all.

Religion in Practice

When religion becomes a very important factor in our life naturally it will show its effect in every walk of our life, every aspect

of our personality. That was another teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. If you are religious you must show it through your whole being. If you behave in one way and believe in another way, that means you are a hypocrite. For example, if you say everything is Brahman and then make a big distinction between man and man, you are only showing your ignorance. Sri Ramakrishna saw God everywhere, not merely theoretically but as a matter of direct experience. One day he was meditating with closed eyes. Then he opened his eyes and told the devotees, ‘I was trying to meditate with closed eyes. I did not like it, because it implies that God is there only when I close my eyes. But when my eyes are open is He not there? Whether I open my eyes or I close my eyes, God is always there.’ If we have this kind of God-realization, it will show in the way we behave with others. It will show whether or not we are looking upon the world as a manifestation of Divinity. Sri Ramakrishna said, ‘If you can worship God in a stone or clay image, can you not worship Him in a human being?’ Man is such a great manifestation of Consciousness, of *Chaitanya*, he is perhaps the best image we can have of God.

Still, Sri Ramakrishna never decried any kind of worship. He believed in all paths. But at the same time he knew what is good for the world and what is not. So he prescribed only such things as are conducive to the well-being of the whole world at all times. Sri Ramakrishna never limited the paths of God-realization, neither did Swamiji, who said, ‘I shall be happy when every man has a religion of his own.’ There are a multiplicity of religions and a multiplicity of ideals. That does not matter. That need not bewilder us. I can see God only through my own eyes, therefore my God-realization is bound to be different from yours. As we proceed nearer and nearer to the Goal our ideas become clearer and

clearer and ultimately when we reach the Goal, all descriptions cease. *Yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*—That Goal is one which words cannot express and the mind cannot reach. Sri Ramakrishna says, Brahman is one thing that has never been made *ucchiṣṭa*, that is, has never been defiled by man. We go further and further and when we reach the Goal we stop. That is what Sri Ramakrishna says beautifully: 'Our thought there ceases to be a stream of thinking, a meditation. It merges in the Knowledge Itself, the all-pervading Knowledge.' That is what has to be remembered.

The whole world is waiting to be shown this truth, that each person's well-being depends on the well-being of others. Others' well-being and my well-being cannot be separated.... If we follow this teaching we can solve many of the problems besetting modern society.

Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly reminds us, first, that God is the be-all and end-all, the foremost thing in our life. Why? Because without knowing Him we can never be free from ignorance. We can never be free from these unending passages through births and deaths, through all the various ills of life. This goes on until we realize God. Secondly, God-realization is possible by various methods, various ways. All these ways are capable of leading to the Goal; thus we should have respect for all of them. Thirdly, as we proceed towards God, our life is transformed in all respects. As Sri Ramakrishna has demonstrated, when we at last attain God-realization, we shall see that God is everywhere; then we cannot isolate ourselves from the many. Our freedom, our liberation, is intimately related with the liberation of others.

Swamiji was once asked by Sri Rama-

krishna, 'What is your aim in life?' Swamiji said, 'My aim in life is to remain merged in samādhi. Only occasionally I may come out of it and have a little food and again go deep into samādhi.' Sri Ramakrishna did not approve. He said, 'I thought you were greater than that. Why don't you become like a banyan tree which spreads its branches everywhere so that tired pilgrims can come and rest under its shade. You have to be the solace to everybody. Instead of that you want to remain satisfied with the bliss of samādhi!' Sri Ramakrishna himself had a tendency to remain in samādhi, which he resisted. Once when he was about to merge into samādhi, he pleaded with the Divine Mother saying, 'Mother, don't make me oblivious of my surroundings. I want to speak to the devotees. I don't want to be merged into samādhi.' Why? Sri Ramakrishna did not have any kind of worldly *vāsanās*—any kind of desire for earthly things, but he had that one desire to be helpful to others, to help people reach the highest Goal, so that they could then enable others to free themselves. That was the great desire that Sri Ramakrishna had which kept him in his body.

It is said that some sort of desire is necessary to keep the soul bound to the body. What desire did Sri Ramakrishna have? He had only this one desire, 'I want to help others attain Self-realization.'

*Sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ paśyed
bhagavadbhāvamātmanah;
Bhūtāni bhagavntyātmany-
eṣa bhāgavatottamaḥ.*

He is the supreme Bhāgavata, the devotee, who realizes his Self in all beings, and all beings in his Self, and God residing in all beings, and all beings residing in God.

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.2.45)

He who attains this kind of Knowledge

is the highest devotee. When the highest is achieved, we see God manifest everywhere. That is why Swamiji says, *Sarvabhūte śeyi premānoy*— that Supreme God of love is present in all beings, therefore we should worship Him there. Perhaps we must live in solitude in the beginning for some time, but we should remember that that is only a stage of preparation. When you have reached the goal, your existence will merge with the Supreme which is everywhere. In the Upanishads it is said,

*Yathodakam śuddhe śuddham
āsiktaṁ tādr̥g eva bhavati;
Evaṁmuner vijānata
ātmā bhavati gautama.*

Just as a drop of pure water, when it falls into pure water, becomes one with that water and loses its individuality, in the same manner when you have God-realization of the highest order, you become one with Brahman.

(*Katha-Upanishad*, 2.1.15)

You become identified with the entire world in heart and soul in every way. That sort of realization is not merely a theory; it is not merely a scriptural statement. It is a knowledge that has to be attained, that has to be made your own, that has to be realized. It will show in your behaviour. As Swamiji says, our doom was sealed on that day when we made the distinction between the *vyavahāra* and *paramārtha*, that is, between our behaviour and our commitment to the highest truth. If our behaviour is not consistent with the Truth we proclaim, we will end up cheating ourselves, we will remain sealed within the shell of our ideas, and they will never find manifestation in our life.

That is no realization at all. True realization will make us one with the entire universe. Our behaviour will be shaped accordingly.

That is what you find in the unique teaching and life of Sri Ramakrishna. That is why he protested when somebody praised charity to others, that is, *jīva-dayā*. Sri Ramakrishna protested. No! Who are you to show charity to others? You have to serve God in every being. That is a great teaching which we should follow in the Modern Age. We should know that nobody can reach the goal in isolation. The whole world is waiting to be shown this truth, that each person's well-being depends on the well-being of others. Others' well-being and my well-being cannot be separated. My liberation and the liberation of the world should go together. If we follow this teaching we can solve many of the problems besetting modern society.

We are trying to bring about a new way of thinking and behaving so that we can live—individuals and nations—in peace with one another. We know how our efforts are being frustrated because, though we have tried many things, we are still far from that goal. Why? Because we have not tried to change ourselves in the way that is necessary in order to have that sort of unity with the entire world. Unity that is not merely a word in the scriptures, but a way of life for us, must be rooted in the realization of the highest Truth, which is all-pervading.

May Sri Ramakrishna help us reach that goal. May his life be a light to us, and through our devotion to him, may we have this great realization! □

Though one should conquer a million men on the battlefield, yet he, indeed, is the noblest victor who has conquered himself.

Buddhism, Dhammapada 103

Knowledge and Truth According to Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedanta

PROF. R.I. INGALALLI

In this closely reasoned article the author, Chairman, Department of Philosophy, Karnataka University, Dharwad, examines Swamiji's insights into Knowledge and Truth from a comparative perspective. Swamiji's views are shown as constituting a balanced perspective in which fact and value, science and spirituality are found to have their appropriate places.

1. In classical Indian thought both knowledge and truth are considered to be cardinal concepts, and they have been analysed extensively. In recent times, however, a comparative understanding of the concepts of knowledge and truth has become a fruitful enterprise. In my view such a comparative study of Indian and Western ideas was introduced and enriched by Swami Vivekananda as the World Teacher (*paramācārya*).

In this paper an attempt is made to understand Swami Vivekananda's views on our traditional concepts of knowledge and truth—in terms of contemporary conceptual framework. In this regard I would like to consider a cluster of questions for explication and reconstruction. What is knowledge? Does it capture the sense of *jñāna* or *pramā*? Even if knowledge is equated with *jñāna* and *pramā*, does *jñāna* or *pramā* satisfy the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge as per the Western classical analysis? How are the concepts of knowledge and truth interrelated? In the sequel I try to find out answers to these questions drawing on the ideas of Swami Vivekananda.

2. In the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* we find that the Sanskrit word '*jñāna*' is used for knowledge. Even though

'*jñāna*' is ambiguous, it is used in the sense of right apprehension (*yathārthānubhava* or *pramā*). Consequently, '*jñāna*' as knowledge is free from error, because, for Swami Vivekananda, knowledge means freedom from error.¹ Accordingly only true belief can be a necessary component of knowledge. Since human mind is the locus of knowing, there is a reference to the faculty or source of knowledge, namely, experience, and it is the only source of knowledge.² However, it is not proper to understand the above statement that 'all knowledge is based on experience' either in the empiricist's tradition or within the Kantian framework. Contextual usage of both 'experience' and 'knowledge' is not restricted to the domain of perceptual objects only, and there is a reference to non-perceptual or transcendental objects. Consequently spiritual knowledge is the highest; secular knowledge opens the eyes of human beings towards the spiritual knowledge.³ Thus, the word 'experience' in the above statement designates both sensuous and non-sensuous apprehension.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 5, p. 264; (hereafter C.W.).

2. C.W., vol. 6, p. 81.

3. C.W., vol. 5, pp. 267–8.

3. In the context of knowing the external world, it is interesting to note the following passage which recalls the Kantian view:

Mind makes things knowable. It is only things which have certain peculiarities that bring themselves within the range of the Known and Knowable. That which has no qualities is unknowable. For instance, there is some external world X unknown and unknowable; when I look at it, it is X plus mind. When I want to know the world, my mind contributes three quarters of it.⁴

There are, however, similarities and differences between the views of Kant and Swami Vivekananda regarding the nature of human knowledge. Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*)⁵ imposes a limitation to the cognitive faculty by way of subordinating it to the sensuous faculty. Consequently, the co-ordination of sense-intuitions and concepts of understanding set aside other possibilities of knowing by means of a non-sensuous faculty such as intuition or pure reason. For Kant every knowable object is a sensuous object. But, paradoxically, every sensuous object presupposes a thing-in-itself which is unknowable in principle, because according to Kant there are no sense-intuitions (sense-data) pertaining to the thing-in-itself (X). Of course Kant tried to give a theoretical justification for his postulation of the noumenon (thing-in-itself).

4. Swami Vivekananda, however, differs from Kant for the following reasons. First, the Kantian account of knowledge is restricted to the domain of empirical objects and ignores the faculty of non-sensuous knowledge. Second, the Kantian distinction

between phenomenon and noumenon is unacceptable. Further, there is the question of accommodating inferential knowledge within the Kantian framework because there is a structural difference between perceptual or observation statements such as 'there is a pot on the ground' and an inferential statement, namely 'Yonder mountain possesses fire', which is derived from the conjunction of 'every place of smoke is also a place of fire' and 'that mountain possesses smoke'. In the case of perceptual judgements, in order to have knowledge of a particular object it is necessary to have sense-impressions; however, in the case of indirect or inferential knowledge there is no provision to have sense-data or intuitions, for there is no relevant perceptual object in that situation, but some other object or event is present. However, Swami Vivekananda recognizes two forms of inferential knowledge, namely deductive and inductive. For instance:

What we call inferential knowledge in which we go from the less to the more general or from the general to the particular, has experience as its basis. In exact sciences people easily find the truth because it appeals to the particular experience of every human being.⁶

Accordingly, in the deductive mode of knowledge there is a movement of thought from the general to the less general, whereas in the case of inductive reasoning general truths are established on the basis of the observation of particulars. Deductive or formal mode of reasoning has been considered a logical form of thinking in mathematics and logic. Inductive thinking as a technique to formulate a law like a statement or a natural law is mainly based on careful observation and analysis of particulars of a certain kind. It is interesting to note that

4. C.W., vol. 5, p. 273.

5. Translated by N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan & Co., 1958).

6. C.W., vol. 1, p. 125.

according to Swamiji both inductive and deductive reasoning, although structurally different, converge on experience as the basis.

5. Following the tradition of Indian philosophical thought, Swami Vivekananda recognizes the means or source of knowledge as a generator of the faculty of knowledge. In his commentary on the *Yoga-Sūtras*, Swamiji has given an interesting analysis of the three sources of knowledge: direct perception, inference, and competent evidence. Direct perception as a faculty gives rise to sensuous knowledge based on direct sense-experience. However, all perceptions are not correct, and there is the need of a criterion to distinguish correct perceptual judgement from incorrect perceptual judgement. And such a criterion is available through direct perception (*pratyakṣa-pramāṇa*). Similarly, the criterion to distinguish correct inference from incorrect inference is obtained from sound valid inference (*anumāna-pramāṇa*). Next *āpta-vacana* or *śabda* is considered to be an important source of knowledge because it functions as an adequate means of secular and spiritual knowledge.

6. There is also reference to instinct, reason and inspiration as the instruments of knowledge.⁷ Instinct is related to perception; for, the perceptual mechanism normally functions on the basis of instinct. However, reason as a faculty of inference is developed in man, and systematic inquiry into the nature and criteria of inference is usually known as logic. Inspiration is the source of spiritual knowledge. Consequently, inspiration is considered to be a spiritual faculty. To this effect it is said, 'This world or universe which our senses feel, our mind thinks is a fraction of the infinite. So there must be some other instrument called

inspiration by means of which the infinite is understood.⁸ Accordingly, the material scientist cannot make a comprehensive claim of knowing, because of the limitation of scientific methodology structured in empirical observation, analysis and the testing of hypothesis.

7. Since the concept of truth is structured in knowledge, it is desirable to understand the notion of truth. In contemporary epistemology, 'knowledge is justified true belief'. Accordingly, truth, belief and justification constitute necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge. In contradistinction, with both the empiricists and rationalists Swamiji has accepted two kinds of truths: (1) that which is cognizable by the five ordinary senses of man and reasoning based thereon; and (2) that which is cognizable by the subtle super-sensuous power of *yoga*.⁹ There is an interesting explication of two sets of truth: 'The one set is that which abides for ever, being built upon the nature of man, the nature of the soul, the soul's relation to God, the nature of God, perfection and so on, and there are also the principles of cosmology, of creation, the wonderful law of cyclical processes and so on; these are the eternal principles founded upon universal laws of nature. The other set comprises the minor laws which guide the working of everyday life.'¹⁰ This distinction reminds us of the famous Upanishadic distinction of higher knowledge (*adhyātma-vidyā*) and lower knowledge (*laukika-vidyā*) involving higher truth and lower truth, respectively. And in Sri Shankaracharya's view, lower truth is a step towards higher truth. Accordingly, there is a co-ordination of the two sets of truth. The search after truth

(Continued on page 879)

7. C.W., vol. 2, pp. 389-90.

8. Cf. *Ibid.*

9. C.W., vol. 6, p. 181.

10. Cf. C.W., vol. 3, p. 111.

Krishnaji Narayan Athalye: The Pioneer Biographer of Swami Vivekananda

SWAMI VIDEHATMANANDA

(Rendered from Marathi by Prof. S. W. Nande of Amarawati, Maharashtra)

The influence of great spiritual personalities is hard to measure, because distances of space or time are no barrier to this influence. Anyone anywhere may come under their spell and become transformed into an instrument of the Divine. This is the story of one such person who helped spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in Kerala and Maharashtra. As there are quotations in this article from old sources, factual errors here may be ignored.

The author is the editor of the Vivek Jyoti, the Hindi journal of the Ramakrishna Order, published quarterly from the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur, Madhya Pradesh.

Today there are innumerable biographies of Swami Vivekananda in various languages of the world, the foremost of which is undoubtedly the one compiled by his Eastern and Western disciples. Another one by the French Nobel Laureate, Romain Rolland, has been translated into almost all major languages of the world and has gained wide popularity. Since serious efforts to produce an authentic and official 'Life' began only after several years of Swamiji's passing away, it is a matter of great surprise that a biography of Swamiji was written and published even while he was alive, and that too in Marathi. It was compiled by Sri Krishnaji Narayan Athalye, the editor of a popular Marathi monthly, *Kerala-Kokila*, and running into some 34 pages was serialized in five issues of the journal, between 1899-1900. Before delving into Athalye's acquaintance with Swamiji's works and his personal memoirs, we shall give a few salient features of his own life and legacy.

Sri K.N. Athalye was born in 1852 in a village called Tembhu, located in the Satara

District of western Maharashtra. The son of an erudite brahmin scholar, who was well versed in Vedic knowledge, Krishnaji was tutored at home by his father till he was twelve years of age. He was then admitted into a school at Karad in 1866, where he learnt both Marathi and English. The noted social reformer Sri Gopal Ganesh Agarkar was his schoolmate. Poverty at home drove him from Karad to Pune. Although faced with adverse circumstances, he got free board and lodging with some affluent families of Pune and completed his studies in the Training College there. Thereafter he moved to Satara and there he served as a teacher for the next five years. Drawing had been his hobby since early childhood, and he now decided to pursue this as a career. He resigned from his job at Satara and went to Bombay to join the J.J. School of Arts. There he specialized in oil-painting. Having completed this course he went to Baroda, where he had an opportunity to deliver a lecture on 'The Art of Colour' in a local high school. Sir T. Madharao, the then Diwan of the Baroda State, who was in the audience, was so much impressed by the lecture that

he appointed Krishnaji in the service of the State with a salary of a hundred rupees a month. It was thus that he came to paint the oil-portraits of some of the prominent members of the royal family. Later, when Sir T. Madharao left Baroda for Madras, he took Krishnaji with him there.

One of Krishnaji's elder brothers was staying in Cochin, Kerala, at that time. As he was not keeping well, Krishnaji went to see him. There, Mr. Clown, the chief officer of a company named 'Walcart Brothers', engaged him as his Hindi teacher. Thus this chance visit was prolonged, and he resided at Cochin for the following two decades or so.

As he settled down in Cochin, he also started his literary activities. His first notable work was *Gītā-padya-muktahār*, a Marathi poetic rendering of original verses from the *Gītā*, which was published in 1884 by Nirnaya-sagar Press of Bombay. Soon this work became so popular that Krishnaji was honoured by his publishers and presented with a gold bracelet weighing 12 tolas (i.e., about 120 grams). Also the Sringeri Math Shankaracharya conferred on him the title 'Maharashtra-Bhāshā-Chitra-Mayura'. In 1885 he published his poetic translation of *Shringara-tilaka*, a composition by Kalidasa.

The Saga of Kerala-Kokila

On 28 October 1886, Krishnaji started a Marathi monthly entitled *Kerala-Kokila* from Cochin, and then his name began to spread all over Maharashtra. One humorous aspect of the project was that the owner of the press, Sri Devji Bhimji, who sponsored the publication, knew nothing of the Marathi language. Therefore Krishnaji shouldered himself practically all the labour of publishing, from writing to editing, and even proofreading.

After five years of uninterrupted publication, Devji Bhimji transferred to him the ownership of the journal. As a result of this Krishnaji could not cope with the onerous tasks of both editing and publishing at the same time. Therefore he entrusted the printing and publishing part to his Bombay agent, Sri Janardhan Mahadeo Gurjar. It is significant to note that even in those times *Kerala-Kokila* had a circulation of over three thousand five hundred copies. With the exception of a two-years' gap, when the magazine stopped its publication owing to an epidemic of plague, Krishnaji, with single-minded devotion and conviction, efficiently carried on its publication for about twenty-eight years.

The contents of the illustrated journal included biographies of well-known personalities, descriptions of places of interest and scenic beauty, current information on scientific and social topics, the wonders of nature, poetry, intricate and complex clues on chess, and also material of interest to women. Krishnaji personally contributed to these various topics. Besides these, it also contained book reviews and letters from readers. He was ever vigilant and saw to it that the magazine evoked interest, inspiration, and instruction. His voluminous contribution includes more than forty books and a number of translated works. He displayed his artistic skill as a painter, a poet, a prose writer, translator, biographer, and most significantly as an efficient editor.

Raja Yoga and Its Impact

In 1897 Krishnaji came across some of the recently published works of Swami Vivekananda and was so impressed with them that he immediately decided to serialize their Marathi renderings in his popular monthly. In the January 1898 issue of *Kerala-Kokila* he expressed his feelings in this regard in the following editorial note:

Having completed (the publication of) an interesting scientific topic, 'Vidyun-manas-shastra', I was in a perplexity as to what topic should be taken up next. But the mercy of God is unfathomable. He is the one protector of the helpless. How could He forsake me? I came across a more excellent topic. What is it? The 'Yoga-shastra' lectures of that great scholar, Swami Vivekananda, who enthralled nations like America and England with his unparalleled knowledge and fine oratory. These lectures, based on experience, are so captivating and illuminating that they defy description.

It is therefore proposed to publish them from time to time in the interest of the Marathi readers. So far we have been able to procure *Jnana Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, and *Raja Yoga*, and these are so absorbing that once taken in hand, it is difficult to put them down. Among these *Raja Yoga* is by far the best. It is really the king of the Yogas. Therefore we have commenced with the same and have completed the first portion of the preface in the present issue. From this, the readers can have an inkling of the forthcoming subject...

As the *Raja Yoga* series began to appear in the pages of the *Kerala-Kokila*, there was a great response from the readers in 'The Letters to the Editor'. Sri Raghunath Keshao Khare of Gulsarai wrote in the December 1898 issue:

...Received all the issues of *Kerala-Kokila* of the current year. Since no issue of the magazine was received for some time past, a doubt naturally arose in mind that it might have ceased publication. The cause of its disappearance now being known, the doubt is removed and we feel great joy. The most heartening matter is that you have started the elevating topic of *Raja yoga*. Some time back, when I received a copy of the same, I had a mind to translate it myself into Marathi to the best of my ability. But the thought also cropped up in the mind as to how far an ordinary man of my intelligence would be able to do justice to this profound subject.

Even so, I began, and as I have progressed forty to fifty pages in my translation, lo the issue of *Kerala-Kokila* arrived and I was overjoyed to see the

same matter published in it. If the translator is commensurate with the subject, the rendering comes out to be of high standard and delights the reader. Your taking up this project has gladdened not only myself but all those who have gone through the lectures of the world-renowned figure in the original and also in your translation. You have tried to maintain the ease and felicity of your language in keeping with the subject.

After this we find another interesting letter from Sri R. Atmaram, Civil Surgeon, Hingoli. It was originally written in English, dated 30 July 1898, and was published, along with a Marathi translation in the January 1899 issue of the journal. The original letter is thus:

Sir, I am in receipt of your No. 1, 2, 3, Book 12, for which many thanks. Please, continue the magazine without interruption. Send one number V.P. for your subscription.

In these books I read the translation of *Raja-yoga* by Swami Vivekananda of Calcutta. I do not think that you are publishing this by his authority, as I have been authorized by the Swami to translate his work on *Raja-yoga* in Marathi, and I have nearly finished it to publish separately. In that case will you please inform me on what authority you are publishing it?

P.S. If you at all wish to publish it I am prepared to give it in your magazine in a more detailed way, i.e., with a necessary portion of *Putanjali-Bhashya* by Vachaspati Misra.

In reply to the above letter the Editor wrote:

...You have informed us that you have procured the permission to translate *Raja-Yoga* into Marathi. We also have got the permission to translate not only that but all the works of Swami Vivekananda. We have even been granted permission to [translate and] publish the *Brahmavadin* monthly of the Ramakrishna Math, with all its articles as *Maharashtra-Brahmavadin*.

In the same issue another letter, from Sri

Yashwant Vasudeo Gunaji, is also noteworthy, which says, in part:

...I was highly elated to see that you have taken up Raja Yoga in your *Kerala-Kokila* monthly. The subject is too magnificent for words to describe. It would be good if you could publish it in every issue. The august Swami Vivekananda has virtually taken the whole of Europe and America by storm through his oratory. Hence it is natural for Marathi readers to be eager to benefit from his speeches. The whole Marathi community would be highly obliged if you could translate all the Raja Yoga lectures immediately and bring them out as a separate book. It would certainly have a large readership and justify your labour.

Sulabha Vedanta': Sri Ramakrishna

Along with Raja Yoga, Krishnaji started another feature entitled 'Sulabha Vedanta' from the March 1899 issue onwards, which comprised the life and sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. Later, it was compiled into a book, and it gained wide popularity through its numerous reprints. Commenting on this a reader, Sri Bandivadekar of Goa, wrote to the editor:

...Just like Raja Yoga, the 'Sulabha Vedanta' is my favourite topic. I feel like reading it again and again. You have mastered the art of simplifying abstruse subjects by your words and creating an indelible mark in the minds of readers. These sayings of the most honourable Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa were rendered by foreign scholars into their own languages, and they have thus shown their appreciation to the world. And now you are translating them into Marathi for the benefit of the Maharashtra readers. For this, our gratefulness to you is too immense to express....

The Biography of Swamiji

From the December 1899 (year 13, number 12) issue, Krishnaji began to publish a long monograph entitled 'Srimat Vivekananda Swami', which was to become the first biography of Swamiji ever attempted

by anyone. At the outset there is a beautiful photograph of Swamiji and a lengthy poem, entitled 'An Eastern Voice from the West'. The poem is so lucid and enchanting that we are not able to resist reproducing it here in full:

Far from the distant lands afar—
Where trans-Atlantic breakers roar;
Where centred wisdom's glories smile,
And wealth and fame the time beguile;
Where deathless science its splendour throws
In freedom's fence luxurious grows;
Sweet Brotherhood plays her lively sport,
And stunning cannon the valour report;
Where proud Albion up-rears her flag,
Red, red it floats over snowy bank;
Red Albion wields her heavy sway,
Over lands and islands far away;
In West and East and South and North,
All round expands her widening growth;
Where monarchy in choicest form,
Leaves ample scope for sweet reform;
Where Science leaves Her giddy ground,
To practice yields Her solemn ground;
Where wisdom over might prevails,
And Want Her want of room bewails;
A voice as from Heaven came,
Clothed in Vivekananda's name.

Gentle as the dew that drops from skies,
Sweet as the rosy morning's rise,
Calm as the Ganges' waters roll,
The voice advanced towards its goal.
The voice came yet did not fade,
Swelled in every grove and shade.
'Here comes the man! The man here comes!'

The one of India's glorious sons,
With whose sharp intellectual lance,
Were hurled back ev'n the best Savants.
Defender of India's faith was he,
Far, far away in the distant seas.
Clad was he in orange garb,
His face did many an eye absorb,
A beautiful voice did he command,
Sannyasin's danda was in his hand,

Men drew by thousands as he spoke;
Interest in thousands more awoke.

To East he pointed as the home
Of highest thoughts nor Greece nor Rome;
Gigantic sceptics were spell-bound
For those who strayed the path he found;
Travell'd ov'r a foreign land,
Bewitched them as with a magic wand;
Taught Advaita in terms as clear,
As th' icy waters the Himalayas bear;
Laid stress on unity as the goal;
Comforted India's troubled soul.

And now on the religion's platform meet
East and West each other to greet.
The voice came in terms express.
Brought hope to despair and joy to distress;
And in its mad career it swept
The world through poles from right to left;
But as it ran its joyful course
To India it had recourse.
It sang in gentle tunes and airs
The glory that the name still bears.

That tuneful music roused the dead,
Awake the slumberer from his bed,
The young reformer the obstinate old
All welcomed as the voice rolled.
'Peace, peace to all' it said;
'Fight not, strife not, quarrels end,
Bear, forbear, but help and give.
Each the other, the whole is one,
Words without an act are vain,
As thundering clouds with the rain.

Thy mother India still wants reform,
The true one but no verbal storm.
One which builds but destroys not
With an empty curse what she has got.
Let India's happy womb be blest
With such more sons as work in the West,
Who made the Indian birth a pride,
Spread India's name so far and wide.
Despised as recently she lay,
Now in the West there comes Her day.

Lone wisdom treasured in Her breast
In Western minds now finds its rest.
Thus East and West their thoughts exchange,
As faith and wisdom fix there range.
And all things take their proper seat,
Religion and Science shake hands and meet.
Then set yourselves to the noble task,
Ye are the lions throw off the mask!

At the outset of this biography the author refers to the famous assurance of Sri Krishna from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and from the *Jñāneshwari* (a commentary on the *Gītā*) that whenever virtue subsides and vice prevails, he (the Lord) embodies himself forth in this world. The author also says that even after thousands of years Gautama Buddha is still adored by half the world, and that the teachings of Acharya Shankara are respected all over India. Again he says that a divine personage of the same stature as those mentioned has taken birth in our land and, as with the sunrise, several parts of the world are becoming illumined by his knowledge. Then the author says that in the absence of a full-fledged biography he has had to collect titbits of information from the published works of Swamiji and from the one by Prof. Max Müller.

Therefore, as is evident, this monograph has hardly anything new to offer. However, its significance lies in its being the first *Life* of Swamiji, and that too while he was alive. Although it was a modest attempt, there is something noteworthy at the end of it. In the fifth and last instalment of this thirty-four page *Life* published in the July 1900 issue of the journal, the author gives an eye-witness account of the happenings at Madras just before Swamiji left for his second visit to the West. The following is a translation of the author's memoir:

After spending some days in the Himalayas, Swamiji came back to Calcutta. I had a desire to go there and see him, and accordingly all preparations

had been made to start on 18th June 1899. Then all of a sudden a telegram came from Calcutta saying that he would be sailing for England on the 20th, and that on his way he would make a halt in Madras on the 24th. Therefore, I arrived in Madras on the 23rd to see him. I went to the local Ramakrishna Math and met Swami Ramakrishnanandaji. He was an ideal monk and a brother disciple of Swami Vivekananda. One of his English lectures, published as *The Pastoral Shri Krishna* is very lucid. Besides this, he also delivered a very enlightening lecture on 'Yoga', which was beautifully translated into Marathi and published by Satyashodhak Press of Ratnagiri.

The Swami is well versed in Hindi and understands a bit of Marathi also. The Math premises were full of hectic activities. Swami Ramakrishnananda was himself preparing a few dishes for Swamiji. The members of the Reception Committee had assembled to deliberate on the busy schedule of the next day. Telegrams of invitation and felicitation were pouring in from far and wide. Among them there was a long telegram from the Raja of Ramnad, in which he requested Swamiji to sanctify his residence by visiting him along with his companions. The next morning all kinds of people, distinguished and plain, thronged at the seaport. The ship had docked the previous night and it was arranged that Swamiji would alight from the ship at 8 a.m. and again board it at 4 p.m. But, by invoking the quarantine law, the Government did not allow Swamiji to leave the ship. Many important people tried to exert their influence, but to no avail. The Government would not allow Swamiji to get down, or anyone else to enter the ship and have his *darshan*. Therefore everyone became disheartened. Hundreds of crowded boats encircled the ship.

After descending the ship's stairway, Swamiji accepted only a small basket of fruits brought by Swami Ramakrishnananda. As Ramakrishnananda introduced us to Swamiji with our names, he cast a smiling glance towards us, but at that very moment a European doctor came out and began to goad him to take his seat. Therefore Swamiji was left with no alternative and he reluctantly bid the gathering *adieu*, asking them to contact him through letters. He then went back to his cabin. When

Swamiji came down the stairway we saw him barefoot, shaven-headed, and dressed in a white flannel garb. Shradhananda* (an American disciple of Swamiji) was holding an umbrella over his head with Swami Turiyananda standing behind him.

Although Swamiji went back to his cabin, people did not lose hope entirely. They thought that Swamiji might come out once more and they could again have a glimpse of him. So they kept on waiting in their boats till 11 or 12 a.m. in the scorching sun. Come what may, none was prepared to return. The sea is always rough at the Madras port, so the boats were tossing several feet up and down! Even then the people lingered on. Hence, Swamiji again came out on the deck at noon, and he then told the people by gestures that he was having chest pain and was not keeping well. All were requested to go back. After this, with a kindly look he surveyed the whole crowd. At that moment people were going to raise cheers of victory, but Swamiji motioned not to do so and that he would return soon. Again he signalled them to disperse and he went back inside. It was then that everyone returned home with a heavy heart. In the evening at 4 o'clock Swamiji's ship was to proceed for Ceylon.

The Ramakrishna Math of Madras is situated on a high area near the beach in a bungalow called the 'Ice House'. In the evening all the followers assembled there to raise a high banner of the Ramakrishna Math on the top of the bungalow and were waiting to draw Swamiji's attention towards it. But the ship started late in the evening and it is doubtful whether Swamiji saw it.

Thus ends Krishnaji's graphic description of Swamiji's brief stay in Madras. In the concluding paragraph he prays to the Lord that such an altruistic, world-emancipator, and dharma-oriented person might live long. But his prayer went unanswered as Swamiji gave up his body within two years. After Swamiji's passing away on 4th July 1902, the *Kerala-Kokila* published a very touching obituary note in its May issue. (For

* In fact it was Sister Nivedita, an Irish disciple.

some reason the journal was running three months behind schedule.) An English rendering of the obituary is here reproduced:

Srimat Swami Vivekananda, an embodiment of Narayana, who ushered in the rejuvenation of the Vedic religion during this Kaliyuga entered into final *samadhi* on the night of Friday, 4th July, at Belur Math near Calcutta. A highly venerable incarnate Being has departed, causing a great void that is impossible to fill. It is a matter of great misfortune that the people of Bombay Presidency were deprived of seeing such a noble soul and hearing the nectar-like words from his mouth! For a long time he was suffering from chest pain, but nobody thought that the end would come so soon. As usual on Friday evening he had gone for a walk with his disciples and after coming back to the Math, he said that he would sit for meditation. And in that very posture, repeating the name of Narayana, he passed away from this mortal world. A great soul! A noble person! A conqueror of death! There is no doubt about it.

Apart from this note, two more poems were published in memory of Swamiji in the pages of *Kerala-Kokila*. Krishnaji continued with the translation and publication of Swamiji's various lectures, conversations, poems, interviews, etc. through the pages of his journal and also in the form of books. Then in 1912 he wrote and brought out a new biography of Swamiji, *Vivekananda*

Jivan, containing some 166 pages. In 1917 he also published a rendering of *My Master*.

This is how Sri K.N. Athalye, a contemporary of Swamiji, started a Marathi journal from Kerala in 1886, which gained wide popularity in Maharashtra. Efficiently and skillfully he played a fourfold role: of editor, author, poet, and translator, and carved out his own name in golden letters in the annals of Marathi literary and journalistic tradition. He was extremely fascinated by the works of Swamiji and tried to get a personal audience with him, but unfortunately had to rest content with only seeing him. Through his hard work he became a pioneer in spreading Swamiji's message in Maharashtra. This literary giant passed away in 1927 at Pune. ‡

‡ Although Krishnaji happened to be the first biographer of Swamiji, soon after, a poetic *Life* in Marathi also appeared. It was composed by Sri Jaganathrao Tullu in five hundred and two verses. This forty-four page booklet was published soon after Swamiji's death, on 15 November 1902, from Murud (Dist. Janjira). In the Foreword the poet has thanked H.H. Nawab Sir Sidhi Ahamad Khan, under whose patronage this work was created. It goes to show that there were also many non-Hindu admirers and devotees of Swamiji in Maharashtra.

Discoveries ^{*}

'Newton was sitting in the garden when an apple fell on his head. He discovered the "Law of Gravity"', said the teacher.

A bright lad in the class replied, 'Sir, the lesson is clear. If Newton had not been sitting in the garden but in a classroom as we are, he would not have invented anything.'

* (Contributed by Mrs. Kanwal Nath Grover, New Delhi)
Reprinted by permission of *The Hindusthan Times*.

The Concept of God in the Hindu Religion

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

The Hindu conception of God differs from the Semitic and other religions' conceptions in that it is founded on the eternal, impersonal Truths of the Vedas. Here God, or Brahman, is viewed as Satchidananda—Being-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute. He is immanent as the Divine Self in all beings, though unaffected by the world's diversity.

The author, who is the spiritual head of the Vedanta Society, New York, deals with some of the far-reaching implications of this concept in this well-documented article.

Hindus believe that religion is realization—the truth of religion must be intuitively experienced in life. Hindus are not satisfied with an implicit faith in certain dogmas or doctrines about God, the human soul, or the final goal of life. Their rational minds demand the highest truth. Hindus do not unquestioningly submit to the authority of any prophet or teacher. They enjoy absolute freedom of thought, will, and emotion; they may even pursue spiritual life without believing in God. The one requirement is that they lead moral lives, earnestly disciplining body and mind, and thus purifying themselves. Religion is a way of life which ennobles their character, enlightens their view of life, and deepens their knowledge of nature, man, and God.

The loftiest ideal of Hinduism is to see human beings as the living temples of God. God is infinite, immortal, and eternal. The universe is His body. To the Hindus, man is essentially a spiritual being, the cosmos ultimately a spiritual entity. The microcosm is identical with the macrocosm.

In Vedic literature, God is essentially a transcendent being: '*Ekam sat,—one Truth*',¹ 'that breathed without air, by its own

power.'² The absolute Reality is one and without a second, the sole Reality beyond time, space, and causation. It is not related to anything else. It is pure Spirit, an undifferentiated, homogeneous mass of Consciousness, free from attributes. It is contemplated upon as Silence, or as '*neti, neti, not this, not this*'.³ It is also called *Satchidānanda*.

The use of the expression *Satchidānanda* does not mean that the Absolute can be determined or limited in any way. The word *sat* means Being. It is existence itself, subtle, all-pervading, taintless, indivisible, pure. *Sat* should not be confused with what we call the phenomenal existence of things as perceived by the senses. As a mirage cannot be seen without the desert, nor a painting without the canvas, so the Reality called *Sat* is the support of the world of appearances that we see. If non-being were the fundamental nature of things, we could not explain the 'isness' that we always perceive. To quote Swami Vivekananda, 'All that we see and feel about things is pure and simple existence, "isness"'.⁴ 'No illusory percep-

1. *R̥g-Veda*, 1.64.46; hereafter *R.V.*; *Chāndogya-Upanisad*, VI.2.1; hereafter *Ch. Up.*

2. *R. V.*, 10.129.4.

3. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 1.4.23; hereafter *Br. Up.*

4. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. VII,

tion is possible without a substratum,' says Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā* (II.33).

Likewise, the word *cit*, Consciousness, does not mean empirical consciousness. God is pure Consciousness,⁵ not a self-conscious personality. Life depends on sentience. Thus, consciousness is at the root of life. Consciousness, or God, is the timeless being of the cosmos, the first principle implicit in all our experience. It is self-existent, self-luminous, beginningless and endless. God, as pure Consciousness, is all-pervading. It illumines everything; nothing illumines it.⁶ The whole universe of animate beings and inanimate objects comes from this Consciousness. Everything is sustained, and ultimately dissolved, by It. 'One self-effulgent Being, hidden in all beings, and all-pervading, is the inner Self of all animate beings.'⁷ Absolute Consciousness is directly and immediately present as the soul of all beings. The fundamental difference between matter and spirit is that spirit is self-aware, while matter is not. One tiny insect is aware of itself, but the sun is not aware of its own existence. Therefore Hinduism rejects the idea (popular in secular scholarship) that the world is a product of unconscious matter, and that life and consciousness have evolved from this dull matter.

The word *ānanda*, or Bliss, does not mean sensual pleasure. *Ānanda* is the absolute Bliss found when subject and object become one—when ego-consciousness is lost. All pleasures derive from God, the supreme Source; sensual pleasures are merely a drop in the infinite ocean of Bliss. 'No one can live

without that Bliss.'⁸

Sat, *Chit*, and *Ānanda*—Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss Absolute—are co-dependent. Any one of them implies the other two. They are not attributes of Brahman—they are the very essence of Brahman. These epithets are more negative than positive; Brahman alone, beyond diversity, is indescribable and incomprehensible.⁹ Nonetheless, as Sri Ramākrishna says, the pure mind can comprehend Him—the non-dual impersonal God of Advaita Vedānta.

Nondual Reality, or the attributeless, *nirguṇa* Brahman, cannot in fact directly create the world of multiplicity. Thus we come to the concept of the personal God—*saguṇa* Brahman, or *Īśvara*—Brahman in the state of manifesting Its *Māyā-Śakti* is the creative power of God, also called *Devātma-śakti*—God's self-conscious power.¹⁰ This mysterious power, *Māyā*, is the essence of relative existence.

Nirguṇa Brahman, transcending all natural objects, is experienced only in deep meditation. It is then known by its transcendental attributes: *satyam* (truth), *jñānam* (knowledge), *anantam* (infinity), and *advaitam* (nonduality, oneness). When we adopt a transcendent point of view, we speak of nondual Brahman. The same nondual Brahman, projecting the cosmos through *Māyā-Śakti*, we call the immanent God. This manifested God appears as the personal God, souls, and the world. The word *personal* means that He has holy attributes, not that He has a body like a human being. The individual soul (*jīva*), the world of experience (*jagat*), and their supreme Ruler (*Īśvara*) are the three main

p. 55; hereafter C.W.

5. *Aitareya-Upaniṣad*, III.1.3.

6. *Kāṭha-Upaniṣad*, II.2.15.

7. *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, VI.2.; hereafter *Śv. Up.*

8. *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*, II.7.1; hereafter *Tai. Up.*

9. Cf. *Tai. Up.*, II.2.9.

10. See *Śv. Up.*, I.3.

categories of the cosmos. Nondual monism sees the souls, world, and personal God as three simultaneously arising, interdependent, forms of relative existence. This is a most valuable understanding.

The human mind naturally thinks of God in relation to the universe. Though immanent in the cosmos, God is all-transcendent, unaffected by diversity. Though *saguna* (with attributes), God is *nirguna* as well. There is no real conflict between the two aspects, dynamic and static. Says Swami Vivekananda:

These are various forms of that same Oneness, of which all these various ideas of worlds are but various readings, and the Personal God is the highest reading that can be attained to, of that Impersonal, by the human intellect.¹¹

As the God of Transcendence, He is the subject of our contemplation and communion. As the God of immanence, He receives our love and devotion. God's transcendence and immanence are complementary.

Although the Upaniṣads refer to both *nirguna* Brahman and *saguna* Brahman, there is only one Brahman. *Nirguna* is Brahman as It is. *Saguna* is the same Brahman when It comes within the purview of discussion, adoration, and dedication. *Nirguna* is Brahman in reality; *saguna*, in relativity. *Nirguna* Brahman manifests itself to us as Īśvara, the God we worship. As the God of Transcendence, He is the subject of our contemplation and communion. As the God of immanence, He receives our love and devotion. God's transcendence and immanence are complementary. Thus, the infinite God, the God of transcendence, is the same God of immanence who reaches us through

Māyā-Śakti, while ever remaining beyond the cosmos. Sri Ramakrishna, the great illumined soul of modern India, throws light on this enigma:

When I think of the Supreme Being as inactive, neither creating, nor preserving, nor destroying, I call Him Brahman, or Purusha, the Impersonal God. When I think of Him as active, creating, preserving, destroying, I call Him Shakti or Maya or Prakriti, the Personal God. But the distinction between them does not mean a difference. The personal and the impersonal are the same Being, in the same way as milk and its whiteness, or the diamond and its lustre, or the serpent and its undulations. It is impossible to conceive of the one without the other. The Divine Mother and Brahman are one.

Further,

Brahman and Sakti are identical. If you accept the one, you must accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. If you see the fire, you must recognize its power to burn. You cannot think of fire without its power to burn, nor can you think of the power to burn without the fire. You cannot perceive of the sun's rays without the sun nor can you conceive of the sun without its rays.... You cannot think of milk without the whiteness, and again, you cannot think of the whiteness without the milk. Thus one cannot think of Brahman without Sakti, or Sakti without Brahman.

...One cannot think of the Absolute without the Relative, or of the relative without the Absolute. The Primordial Power is ever at play. She is creating, preserving, and destroying in play, as it were. This Power is called Kali. Kali is verily Brahman and Brahman is verily Kali. It is one and the same Reality. When

11. C.W., I, p. 377.



'You don't look anything like your pictures.'

(New Yorker Magazine)

we think of It as inactive, that is to say, not engaged in the acts of creation, preservation and destruction, then we call it Brahman. But when It engages in these activities, then we call It Kali or Sakti.¹²

Says Swami Vivekananda:

Who is Ishvara? *Janmādyasya yataḥ*—'From whom is the birth, continuation, and dissolution of the universe,'—He is

Ishvara—'the Eternal, the Pure, the Ever-Free, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Merciful, the Teacher of all teachers'; and above all, *Sa Īshvaraḥ anirvachanīya-premasvarūpaḥ*—'He the Lord is, of His own nature, inexpressible Love.' These certainly are the definitions of a Personal God, Are there then two Gods—the 'Not this, not this,' the Sat-chit-ānanda, the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss of the philosopher, and this God of Love of the Bhakta? No, it is the same Sat-chit-ānanda who is also the God of Love, the impersonal and personal in one. It has always to be understood that the Personal God worshipped by the Bhakta is

12. Cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Myalpoore, 1985), pp. 134-5.

not separate or different from the Brahman. All is Brahman, the One without a second; only the Brahman, as unity or absolute, is too much of an abstraction to be loved and worshipped; so the Bhakta chooses the relative aspect of Brahman, that is, Ishvara, the Supreme ruler. To use a simile: Brahman is as the clay or substance out of which an infinite variety of articles are fashioned.

As clay, they are all one; but form or manifestation differentiates them. Before every one of them was made, they all existed potentially in the clay, and, of course, they are identical substantially; but when formed, and so long as the form remains, they are separate and different; the clay-mouse can never become a clay-elephant, because, as manifestations, form alone makes them what they are, though as unformed clay they are all one. Ishvara is the highest manifestation of the Absolute Reality, or in other words, the highest possible reading of the Absolute by the human mind. Creation is eternal, and so also is Ishvara.¹³

Sri Ramakrishna, to whom both aspects of God were a matter of direct knowledge and immediate experience, had seen the Divine in everything and in every being. He said, 'It was revealed to me that all these are one Substance, the nondual and indivisible Consciousness.'¹⁴ The entire cosmos is soaked with divinity, but the cosmos does not cover His entire being; he is also beyond the cosmos. The cosmos exists as a portion of His Being.¹⁵

In the Upaniṣads, the impersonal God is generally referred to as It or That, and not as He or She. The personal God is referred to

as He or She or It, according to the mood of the devotee. The Hindu mind knows the futility of addressing the timeless, nameless, ineffable, impersonal God by any name or form. Yet, the mystics enjoyed a deep sense of satisfaction in glorifying and singing the blessedness of the supreme Spirit seen in personal form. The very name and form of God have a purifying and transforming influence. Through such worship, a true devotee seeks the inner truth and enjoys pouring out his deep feelings.

The seers report that the Supreme Being remained alone in His undifferentiated unity until He decided: 'I am one, I shall become many; I shall grow forth.'¹⁶ Thus, the transcendent, indivisible, incomprehensible existence of the impersonal God appears before us in and through the entire cosmos. Here we find that the personal God with His immanent qualities is bliss (*ānanda*), immortal (*amṛta*), peace (*śānti*), auspicious (*śiva*), holy (*śuddha-apāpavidha*), and beautiful (*sundara*). He is the supreme God within and beyond the cosmos, its Master, the source of soul-power whose unalterable laws the entire cosmos obeys, and whose shadow is immortality and death.¹⁷

The all-pervading, self-effulgent God is the only source of all virtue, happiness, peace, wisdom, power, and knowledge. He is the pure, holy, and benevolent one. He is the dearest of friends, the most affectionate parent, and the most loving saviour—'The goal, support, lord, witness, refuge, friend, origin, dissolution, firm ground, storehouse, and undying seed.'¹⁸ These suggestions can be found in the *R̥g-Veda* as well.

Hinduism, discovering the ground of existence, addresses embodied beings as the

13. C.W., III, p. 37.

14. *The Gospel*, p. 282.

15. See *R. V.*, 10.90.3; *Br. Up.*, III.9.26; *Bhagavad-Gītā*, X.42.

16. *Ch. Up.*, VI.11.

17. See *R. V.*, 10.121.2.

18. *Gītā*, IX.18.

Children of Bliss.¹⁹ Says Swami Vivekananda, 'Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature.'²⁰ The goal of Hinduism is to unfold the potential divinity within us. God lies planted deep within every heart. God, in Hinduism, is not only the creator of the world, but also the immortal inner guide.²¹

A human being can evolve into an illumined soul only because the divine spark is within. To a Hindu, this is the real cause of evolution: the Immortal within us impels us to realize the true nature of the Self. Evolution postulates involution. In the words of Swami Vivekananda:

The common man may see the world as a multitude of different things, but an intelligent, discriminating person sees the universe as one whole. An eternal law lies behind the universe, keeping all things within their limits, eliminating chaos, and maintaining harmony, rhythm, and order.

From the lowest protoplasm to the most perfect human being there is really but one life. Just as in one life we have so many various phases of expression, the protoplasm developing into the baby, the child, the young man, the old man, so, from that protoplasm up to the most perfect man we get one continuous life, one chain. This is evolution, but we have seen that each evolution presupposes an involution. The whole of this life which slowly manifests itself evolves itself from the protoplasm to the perfected human being—the Incarnation of God on earth—the whole of this series is but one life, and the whole of this manifestation must have been involved in that very protoplasm. This whole life, this very

God on earth, was involved in it and slowly came out, manifesting itself slowly, slowly, slowly...²²

In fact, says Śaṅkara, '...truly, God is the only transmigrant.'²³

In addition, God intervenes in history as Avatara, or Incarnation, to overthrow the forces of evil and to create a centre of spiritual regeneration. Such an advent generates a new creative force in the world based on righteousness. In this way God restores moral equilibrium and sets an inspiring example of spirituality through His exalted life and blessings. This is the gracious God's periodic move to maintain world order.²⁴

From this brief discussion in the Hindu concept of God, we recapitulate the main ideas:

- ✱ God is the supreme Reality.
- ✱ The individual self is one with the supreme Self.
- ✱ All existence is ultimately One.
- ✱ God fills everything.
- ✱ He is both personal and impersonal.
- ✱ The personal aspect of Brahman is what we call Śakti, or Īśvara, or God.
- ✱ Brahman and Śakti are inseparable, like fire and its heat.

The universe comes out of Brahman, rests in Him, and merges in Him.²⁵ This

19. See Śv. Up., IV.3.

20. C.W., I, p. 11.

21. See Br. Up., III.7.3–23; Gītā, XV.5, XVIII.61.

22. C.W., II, p. 228.

23. Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya, 1.1.5.

24. See Gītā, IV.6–8.

25. See Tai. Up., III.6.

cycle continues throughout eternity. Just as the spider is said to bring out its web from within itself and again retract it, so God projects and absorbs the universe. Just as herbs shoot up from the earth, or hair grows out of living bodies, so the cosmos emerges from God.²⁶

Thus Hinduism teaches us to see and experience oneness in the manifold. The Upaniṣads exhort us repeatedly, clearly, and unambiguously: 'You have to see this Ātman!'²⁷ Therefore, 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!' God is the soul of life and the soul of the universe, whose subtle presence illumines our minds so that we can unravel the secrets of nature, within and without. God is the law-giver as well as the law. This law—known as *ṛta*, the 'fixed way or course'—rules the whole gamut of cosmic activity. Hinduism removes the inveterate conception that God is far away and unknowable, that people are weak and mortal, that dull matter runs the world, and that the cosmos is created out of nothing. Hinduism teaches that religion is not based on dogma or blind faith—the truth of religion can be realized in this life, through struggle.

God is eternal and infinite, he is the inexhaustible source of all life and the whole universe. Outdated and anthropomorphic conceptions of God, cherished in many cultures, may find some light in Vedānta philosophy. Vedānta does not present truth in dogmatic terms; as such, religious persecution is seldom found in the history of Hinduism. To a Hindu, God is the loving, living, eternal Guide. His wisdom is revealed in the cosmos; His almightiness forms the distant nebula and grows the grass under our feet. His infinite love impels Him to create, preserve, and redeem mil-

lions and millions of living beings, and to lead humanity through countless stages of evolution. Again, His unbounded love is reflected in the sense of justice we feel, deep in our hearts—in our conscience, the silent voice of God.

God, ever watchful, maintains His creation through His laws—*ṛta* and *satya*. Hindus do not believe in a cruel, anthropomorphic God who is jealous, angry and punitive. Free-will gives man moral responsibility. Man is accountable for his actions—as he sows, so he reaps. Such is the divine Law. The law of karma, to a Hindu, is not about retribution—it describes the natural consequences of our actions. 'As one acts, so one becomes. The doer of good become good, the evil-doer become evil.'²⁸ Virtue leads to happiness; weakness leads to misery. Divine order is the nature of the world. The common man may see the world as a multitude of different things, but an intelligent, discriminating person sees the universe as one whole. An eternal law lies behind the universe, keeping all things within their limits, eliminating chaos, and maintaining harmony, rhythm, and order.²⁹

The concept of the 'adorable Lord of the world', the Divine who resides in the hearts of all beings, guiding and spurring our growth, plays a vital role in the spiritual life of the Hindu. The sincere feeling of deep, loving adoration nurtured in the depth of one's heart is called love for God. Hindus worship a living, loving, and concerned God, who always hears our deepest prayers. He is nearer than our arteries; He is our inner Self. These lovers of God find that, as the mystics say, one omnipresent God lives within us. God is *sarva-bhūta-antar-ātman*, the inner Self of all beings. Thus there is only one religion; different faiths are different

26. See *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*, I.1.7.

27. *Br. Up.*, II.4.5.

28. *Ibid.*, IV.4.5.

29. See *Br. Up.*, IV.4-22.

paths leading to the same goal.

The urge to seek God is the perennial urge of human life. The search is eternal; thus religion has survived the ravages of time, as well as the impulsive nature of man.

God is our very own. He is the moral prop of our life. He is truth, beauty, righteousness, and immortality. Yet again, He is not separate from us, nor from the universe, for all are in Him. We live, move, and have our being only in Him. □

Knowledge and Truth

According to Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedanta

(Continued from page 864)

may be external as in the case of developed physical sciences; and the internal search for truth is present in subjective sciences like religion or scripture which deal with the truth of the metaphysical world. The role of reason in searching for metaphysical truth is only secondary, because reason, having inherent limitations, cannot inquire into its own fundamental elements. However, the necessity of reason in comprehending spiritual truth is recognized, because comprehended truth is to be realized in the heart, the source of feeling, so that intellect and heart are simultaneously illumined.

8. **Criteria of Truth and Strength:** Religious or metaphysical truth is understood in terms of Strengths.¹¹ Accordingly, anything that makes human beings strong, physically, intellectually and spiritually,

11. C.W., vol. 3, p. 225.

accept it as true, says Swamiji. Both the sets of truth have to satisfy this criterion of truth. Consequently, there is a need to rediscover traditional spiritual concepts for meaningful human existence.

9. **Conclusion:** From the above understanding of the concepts of knowledge and truth it is desirable to formulate certain consequences. First, it is greatly relevant today to articulate modern theories of knowledge and truth in the light of the unified framework given by Swami Vivekananda, in which different types of truth, empirical and non-empirical, fit together into a coherent system. Moreover, it is also necessary to evaluate scientific and technological results applying the criteria of spiritual truth. Thus science and spirituality can go together to enrich human existence, in which facts and value are, or should be, related to each other. □

The body is cleansed by water, the internal organ is purified by truthfulness, the individual soul by sacred learning and austerities, the intellect by true knowledge.

Hinduism, Laws of Manu 5.109

Away from the Urban Rush: A Pilgrimage

S. RAGI SIMHAN

With his interesting and chatty narrative style the author, an Advocate in Bombay, takes us along on his pilgrimage to Gangotri and Badrinath.

In the sweltering summer of 1989, partly spurred by some vague spiritual feelings but mostly to escape it all, I decided to undertake the Chārdhām Yātrā, but at the last minute decided to make it only to Gaṅgotri and Badrināth. When young I had heard that people in olden days undertook this arduous yatra at the fag end of their frail, wasted lives, bidding goodbye to their near and dear ones. For, those were the times when there was no knowing whether one got buried in the icy Himalayan slopes or slipped into the ravines or got washed away by the rapids of the Ganges, proverbially riding the crocodile. There were no roads, rest houses, or electricity. Trekking miles and miles of meandering narrow pathways strewn with sharp cutting stones, pilgrims would manage somehow to reach the summit of their spiritual quest.

Things now are, of course, a matter of fun and frolic, almost like a school boy's picnic. One does not know whether the change is a matter for regret or rejoicing. Mindless urbanization, cruel deforestation, avoidable pollution and rank commercialization are the current problems.

Call it a coincidence or the Lord's wish, every pilgrimage, curiously enough, starts off with an unplanned, unintended temple visit. The Lakshminarayan temple in Delhi was my starting point.

The ochre-coloured *vimānas*, domes shaped in the typical northern style of temple art, are a striking contrast to the broad terraced *gopurams* of the mammoth rock hewn structures of South India, with dainty 'kalashas' perched on them! Still,

everywhere and at all times, there is the faith that *vimāna darshanam* is *pāpa vimochanam*—the darshan of a *vimāna* releases one from sin.

Inside, the white marble statues of the Lord Sri Vishnu and his eternal consort Sri Lakshmi are impressive due to their size. Sri Sudarshana holding the *chakra* is exquisitely pleasing to the eye. I do not understand a Hanuman with a woman under his feet being crushed to pulp. I am unable to bring to mind any episode in the Sri Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* or Tulasidas' version to understand this depiction. I am sure some of the more knowledgeable readers may venture to guess the preoccupation of Hanuman!

On the forenoon of 20 May 1989, we board a luxury bus to Haridwar (pronounced Hardwar). The Saivites and the Vaishnavites have this age-old quarrel about the spelling. The gate that leads to Hari or Hara must quite simply lead to only one God, call him by any name! Unavoidably delayed, we reach Haridwar around midnight, and somehow manage to find our way to the Sadhubela Ashrama. Sure enough, the solid iron front gates are locked. We call out for the watchman and hear the echo of our voices reverberating in the *Saptarshi* adjacent to the flowing Ganges. An enormously muscular but surprisingly lanky watchman with a spear in his right hand and a fierce Alsatian keeping him company tells us that we must come back the next morning as everyone in the Ashrama had retired to bed and he cannot procure the keys to our rooms. A little bit of name dropping does the trick. The gates are flung open

and we enter the Ashrama which is surprisingly posh and clean. The marble floor, soft and silken, reminds one of a smooth floor powdered for a banquet dance. The rooms are immaculate with clean attached bathrooms. Happily we snuggle into the comfort of soft pillows and warm blankets.

The next morning, reading through the inscriptions on the wall, I find out that the Ashrama had its beginning in Sind; its assets accumulated over almost a hundred years to more than three and a half crores of rupees. Alas, all these were lost during the country's partition. New branches sprang up in Bombay, Haridwar, Banaras, and other places. There is a well-stacked library with some rare books and original manuscripts, and a kitchen serving the choicest of tasty *sātvik* food prepared by eager attentive cooks, their mission obviously being to make you happy by feeding you to the brim. The Ashrama does not charge you for the room or for the food; it is left to your good sense to give whatever generous donation you want to.

Ashramas cannot really survive, grow or expand unless their founders were great souls blessed by God to accomplish a predetermined mission. Sadhubela's founder undoubtedly must have been a great personage, and looking at the followers coming to the Ashrama, one can infer that he had transcended barriers of state, language, caste and creed. This is, indeed, a hallmark of all great saints.

The presiding deity of the Ashrama is Sakshi Gopal, Sri Narayana Himself. The image of this God is of Lord Krishna playing the flute, with the Cow of Plenty by his side merrily encircling him and fondly licking his feet. The umbrella is the hood of Lord Adishesha of the Milky Ocean. The numerous layers or tiers of the coiled serpent cushion the Lord's fragrant feet. Remarkably noticeable in the Idol is its fully grown adult look! He is Lord Vishnu, the Adult! The moustache is typically of an *Uttar Bharatiya* (North Indian) depiction! The Chola sculptures are

of rounded or oval faces without any moustache. In the Tirunelveli district Gods sporting a moustache is quite common. Some of the Chera kings or nobles are usually seen with a moustache, but it is rare to find that in idols.

That evening we see the grand *ārathi* waved round the face of Ganga Maiya to the chant of the *Mangalam Om Sri Jagadeesha Hare*. Hundreds of lamps ensconced in red flowers are set afloat by women with great fervour and devotion. Ceremonies like these of *bhakti bhāvanā* reflect eternal pantheism. The aspirations of every good woman at heart are the same: fecundity, prosperity, health and all-round happiness to all. The great Lord, it is said, appreciates *bhakti-yoga* in women and *jñāna-yoga* in men!

Next morning, with beads of perspiration dripping all over our faces, we wait for a relentlessly long time to get into the trolley car to take us to Manasa Devi Temple. The Devi is a three-faced image and incomparably beautiful. Her eyes are large, limpid and surprisingly soft, considering the fact that Her task in getting rid of evil should have been reflected in an emotionally charged face with a fierce look.

The view from the 1600 feet high Manasa Devi hill is simply breathtaking. The gorgeous Ganga spreading all over, playfully taking different curves, now teasing, now exacting, is a mischievously prancing nymph. Suddenly we stiffen with shock. The wide patches of sand and the shrinking greenery zooms in the fast changing ecological patters. Desilting, felling of trees and other kinds of brutalization of the Ganges may soon change things irreversibly for the worse. Much later we were to see a telling poster in the Himalayas, which showed a hunter seated at one end of a see-saw with a gun aimed at a rabbit perched delicately at the other end. The poster caption, pithily enough, warned, 'Be careful, you may change the ecology a wee bit!'

No visit to Haridwar, as the saying goes,

is ever complete without a visit to the Gauri temple at Kankhal. Sant Tulasidas in his *Rāmācharitmānas* tells the story of Gauri ever so touchingly. Everyone knows of Lord Shiva as the greatest and foremost among the *bhaktas* of Lord Sri Rama. Lord Shiva's love for Gauri is a great story. Daksha, father of Gauri, deliberately slights Lord Shiva, his son-in-law by not inviting him to his *yajña* (sacrificial ceremony) to which every other god, sage, and seer is called. Saddened at this premeditated slight to her loving consort, and despite Lord Shiva's remonstrances not to attend the *yajña*, Gauri proceeds to meet her father and finds him recalcitrant, persistently throwing insults at Lord Shiva in the presence of all other guests in the august assembly. Unable to bear the insults she immolates herself in the very sacrificial fire prepared for the great *yajña*. Learning of the tragedy Lord Shiva is aroused in mighty anger, and from his matted hair Veerabhadra is born who beheads the stubborn Daksha. In a life-giving act Veerabhadra condescends to become cool and fixes a goat's head to the body of Daksha, leaving a clear lesson to posterity that all Shiva-haters would forever go the way of a goat, forever bleating!

The Gauri temple is on the bank of the eternally flowing Ganges and can be seen from the hill on which originally Shiva and Gauri were seated watching the ongoing preparations for Daksha's *yajña*. There is a Shiva temple at the very site where Daksha was beheaded. Flanked by a Hanuman temple on one side and the Lord Sri Lakshmi-Vishnu temple on the other, the main row is a complete temple complex. Every god, saint, and *rishi* is said to have visited this *punya-sthal*, sacred place, during the *yajña*. Pure vibrations at the site speak of their living presence.

The pivot around which Haridwar moves is the Adi Shankaracharya Ashrama. Undoubtedly Adi Shankaracharya is the first monk who organized a Missionary

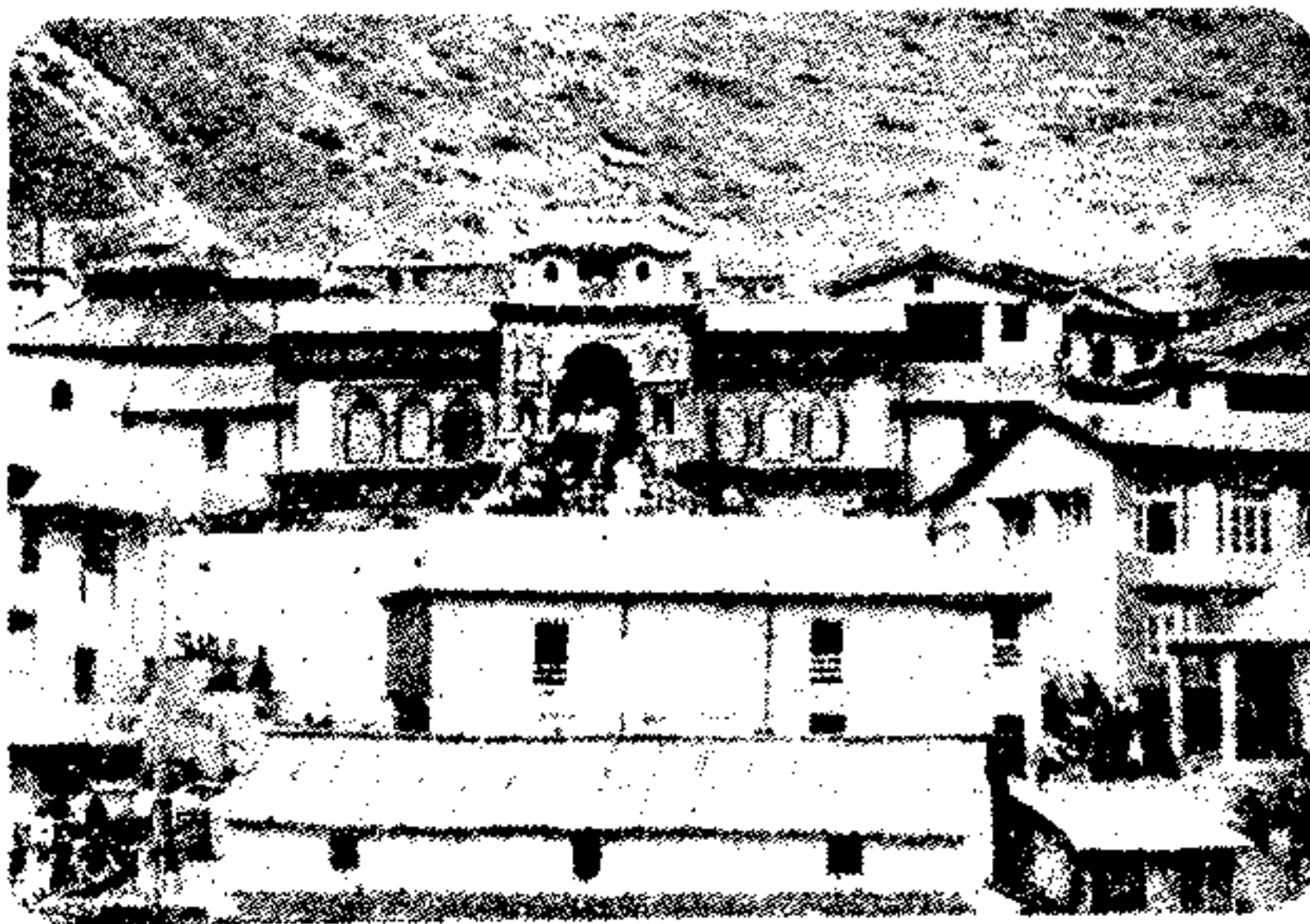
Order of the Hindus. Expounding abstruse doctrines of Advaita for the highly erudite, he was also responsible for systematizing ancient and popular religious traditions and composing beautiful hymns, to all of which a common man could easily relate. Some historians speculate on the intriguing possibility of his having drawn up the boundary of a Hindu state from the extreme north downwards to the south, and from the west to the east, considering the manner in which he established the Ashramas and consecrated the *iyotir-lingas*, holy places of Shiva worship. Of course this is merely a matter for scholarly debate. For, can a great universal religion such as Hinduism have any boundaries?

The Shankaracharya Ashrama is a quiet, serene place. A modern prayer hall with marble deities housed therein is also the assembly hall. We spot Sri Purananandaji, the presiding pontiff of the Ashrama. He makes gentle conversation with us and blesses us. He insists on our partaking of the Ashrama food, the *prasād*, offered. The convention is one of reversal of feeding the saints. It is the sannyasi with the begging bowl who is now offering you rich, pure food. He can and will suffer no insult by your refusal. The food is surprisingly elaborate and wholesome. *Puri, chana, ālu, subzi, jilebi, dāl* and rice, all served on stitched leaves by eager hospitable ashramites, insisting on loading us all with a feast. Cool water is given in earthen pots. All this adds a new zest to our day.

Floating rocks from the Sethu Bridge (built by Sri Rama to attack Ravana) are displayed at the Ashrama. You realize that even mere stones turned to the service of the Lord Sri Rama, willingly giving up their innate quality of *tamas*, of being dull, heavy and insensate. The thought of Lord Sri Rama moves us to tears as we think of his suffering.

At the shop selling religious ware we first acquire a *rudrākṣa*. I chance across a

Radhakrishna at the mirror-temple,
Haridwar



The Badrinath Temple

Ganga and Alakananda,
Devprayag



Shāligrāma-stone. The *Shāligrāma* is stated to contain in its spirals the all-pervading spirit of Lord Mahavishnu. One test to identify a genuine *Shāligrāma*-stone is to see whether there are *chakras* underneath the outer casting. Of course, one cannot go about breaking the stone. The outer perforations are another test. One acquires the stone with faith and also realizes that one can acquire it only if it wills. Similarly, if one has the right *bhāvanā* one will sense spiritual vibrations manifesting different *āmsas*, aspects of Lord Vishnu.

This matter-of-fact statement will perhaps be met with a sense of derision by those who pride themselves on a scientific bent of mind. How can an inert stone have any live vibrations? Not being a scientist, I can only refer them to the discoveries of one of India's greatest scientists, the late Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose, who proved to an enlightened scientific world that stones do have life. The universal all-pervading consciousness permeates them as well. *Shāligrāma*-stones are only found in the Gandhak river in the Nepal region. They are encasings of an extinct species of worm. Each stone has one hole from which the worm pierced its way out of the stone. Fully rounded stones are of higher spiritual quality than those with other shapes. The stones are stated to be great aids to meditation.

We troop up to a temple of Lord Shiva housing a mercury *līnga*. This is also at Kankhal, the same place where the Daksha Mahadev temple is situated. An earlier Shiva temple at the same site and quite ancient is a quaint rock structure built not on the northern tradition but reflecting the tenth century southern Chola architecture. This is a neat and tidy little temple with a lovely limpid-eyed Nandi fondly gazing at the *līnga*. One's empathy is more with *jyotir-līngas* of black stone. A traditional mind refuses to accept mercury instead of stone. We are, however, told that mercury *līngas* kept for worship are of immense effect and

potency.

A little distance away we enter the Ardhanārīshwara temple. The novelty here is the Saivite concept—of half-male, half-female Ardhanārīshwara—behind the Vaishnavite image of Radhakrishna. The marble idols are exquisite. Lord Krishna signifies the concept of Bliss even as Rama does of Pleasure. In the *Gīta-Govinda*, Jayadeva evokes the 'beautiful' Radha in all her spiritual fullness and fragrance. No amount of words could capture Radha's beauty or her love for Lord Krishna: As I embrace you, dear Radha, I clothe thee with my love; even as you yield unto me, my darling Radha, you cherish me with your love! We both are one under a vast exquisite canopy of enchantment and bliss. Radha's love for Krishna is profound and divine, incomprehensible to vulgar minds.

Back from Kankhal one cannot miss a rather gaudy but elaborate temple built in glass and mirror across the Saptarshi Grounds. A visit to this temple is imperative at least for tourists if not for pilgrims. Here the principle of parallel mirrors is used to multiply the number of almost endless images of the various deities carved in white marble from Jaipur. The temple's glass-work alone is stated to have taken over twenty years of labour to complete. Incidentally, a word about the Saptarshi Lane. It is full of big ashrams set in a row. I thought that, if trees could be planted on either side of the lane the greenery in the area would be enhanced. Besides, they would shelter the pilgrims from the blazing sun.

A drive uphill, of about twenty kilometres, takes us to Rishikesh, the land of the sages!

Of Rishikesh, the famous Lakshman Jhula and the old ashramas much has been written. In recent times the most famous ashrama is the Sivananda Ashrama (of the Divine Life Society). The work at this Ashrama is multidimensional. The evening prayers include the chanting of the *Maham-*

rityunjay-mantra on which Swami Sivananda laid great importance. The Swami Sivananda Jhula being new and more accessible has robbed the Lakshman Jhula of much of its popularity. Some provincial-minded people refuse to call the Jhula by the name of Swami Sivananda! They prefer the name Ram Jhula.

Rishikesh recedes into the background as the mammoth mountains take us, as it were, into a friendly welcoming embrace. The different routes to Kedarnath, Yamunotri, Gangotri and Badrinath, the 'Chārdhām' as these places are collectively known, are like the formation of two capital M's written together with each of the peaks separated by the ravines and valleys at the lower levels.

The night air at Bhorghat was nippy but not so cold. The atmosphere was rarefied. Suddenly one could feel the stillness, the vastness of space, and the quietitude of time. Next morning, at Gangotri, was excruciatingly cold. The feet touching the crystal clear waters felt numb and, unaccustomed to the riverbed, they got pierced by the sharp stones. One feels the teeth chattering and the body shivering, as if the heart was about to come to a dead stop. Yet, undaunted in one's determination to have a dip in the Ganges, and chanting 'Ganga Gangiyate', one manages to wash off his sins as best as he can.

Prayers over on the bank, we visit the Ganga Matha temple and are accosted by the Pandas (priests). Gujaratis and Marwaris are much sought after by the Pandas, who specialize in tracing your genealogy and making astrological forecasts. A south Indian brahmin is reverentially avoided. He is supposed to be knowledgeable about the *mantras*. Moreover, he is one of a kind with the Pandas, inasmuch as he can be trusted not to be carrying much cash on him!

Ganga is a divine river. This is of course stating the obvious. Consider certain facts. There are rivers all over the world. Yet none

of them touch the lives and sentiments of a people as completely and spiritually as the Ganga does. The legends and the true stories about the Ganga are fascinating. Who can remain uninspired by the single-minded devotion of Bhagiratha in getting Ganga on to the earth to resurrect the dead? Who can forget that Ganga gave birth to the great Bhishma, who was one of the greatest Vishnu-bhaktas, and whom Lord Sri Krishna himself honoured as a great sage, requesting him to expound Dharma to Yudhishtira?

There are several other legends concerning Ganga which are not so well known. For instance, not many perhaps know that Ganga was born thousands of years before the episodes related to the Ganga were narrated in the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*. Her birth, which took place during the Vāmana Avatara, was entirely accidental! Trivikrama, whilst stepping into the three worlds, unwittingly tore the upper crust of the universe with his toenails. Ganga burst forth, thence, dripping from the toes of Lord Vishnu. Thereafter she became the eternally pure Vishnupadi river. One of her tributaries, known as Alakananda, finally flowed into the Bharatavarsha (Indian subcontinent)!

The *Devi-Bhāgavata* relates the story of the rivalry between the three goddesses: Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Ganga, the three consorts of Lord Vishnu. One day, Ganga, overcome with passion, cast meaningful glances at Vishnu. The Lord in turn reciprocated, showing in his mischievous eyes readiness for dalliance. Saraswati was smitten by jealousy and acted rudely; Lakshmi intervened to pacify the other two, but Saraswati was angered even more. She cursed Lakshmi to be born on earth. Ganga, disapproving of the unjust curse, which Lakshmi had done nothing to merit, in turn cursed Saraswati to be born on earth as a river. Saraswati retaliated by cursing that Ganga too should have to be born on earth

as a river and take the sins of the whole world upon herself.

Finally, Lord Vishnu intervened to bless Lakshmi to be born as Tulasi and thereafter as Padmavati; Saraswati to be born as a pure river by herself, and Ganga as an extraordinary river to take upon herself the sins of humanity. In such reincarnated lives on earth, Saraswati was to be Brahmā's consort, Ganga Shiva's wife, and Lakshmi was to marry Lord Vishnu himself.

Elders say that the power of Ganga is such that the mere repetition of the mantra '*Ganga Gangiyate*' instantly purifies one of all sins. Ganga is a geographical wonder and a spiritual fact. A small trickle from the Gomukh glacier becomes a gushing torrent at Gangotri, and from there on with enormous speed, riding the proverbial crocodile as it were, it becomes a sea of water in the distant east, merging into the sea. The water of the Ganga is said to be rich with oxygen. Notwithstanding the mindless pollution caused by humans and their industry, the water has mercifully remained life-sustaining. Millions of plants, trees, flowers and fruits, herbs and fishes, a whole lot of living species—human, animal and birds, including crawling creatures—draw their sustenance from Ganga. To the Hindu the Ganga is etched in his archetypal psyche. His empathy is not merely outward, nor is it cultivated. Ganga is a part of his being. Ganga-*snān* (bath) for the body is equivalent to the ultimate spiritual bath of the mind (*Mānasam snānam Vishnu chintanam*: A bath for the mind is by contemplating on Vishnu).

Srinagar to Badrinath is a long drive. The Badrinath road spirals steeply in the last 5000 feet. The moment we reach Badrinath we feel a new energy within us. Inexplicably we are elated. The mind goes back thousands of years to the time when Nara and Narayana performed their austerities in the Badrika Ashrama. The idol of Lord Badrinath is a matter of historical debate.

Supposed to have been originally a Hindu idol, it was thrown away into the Brahma Kund by the Buddhists. The sulphur springs were not kind to the idol. The crustiness of the stone reflects the effect of sulphur. Yet it is a magnificent black stone of *sāligrāma*, with the natural signs of Lord Vishnu all over. The idol was recovered from the springs and installed at the temple by Adi Shankara. The small oval reflects the *Shrivatsa*.

The abhishek (ritual bath) of the Lord is a many-splendoured sight, a blessing forever. The Badrinath temple is the final place of pilgrimage, the ultimate destination of a true Vaishnava.

Badrinath temple is small. Yet the heart of the Lord is big and all-encompassing. In the *Vishnu-Sahasranamam* the Lord is referred to as *Mahāmānasa*, which is interpreted by Adi Shankara as the 'One who always feels that he is not giving enough to the *bhaktas* and wants to give ever more'.

The temple front reflects unmistakably the architectural style of the Buddhists and the Hindu influences blended beautifully. The main temple is basically in the usual Hindu pattern—there is a *sanctum-sanctorum*. Traditionally, a Namboodri brahmin is the chief priest and performs the main service of the Lord. The Lord is seated amidst Lakshmi, Kubera and others in rapt and joyous attendance. There is a lovely *utsavamurti* whose puja is also performed simultaneously.

The ceremonies at the *mandir* are partly in the southern and partly in the northern traditions. In the Sanskrit pronunciation of the *mantras* one can detect a distinct southern influence. The early morning chant (from the audio cassette recording) of the *Venkatesha-suprabhatam* followed by the *Vishnu-Sahasranamam* (sung by Smt. M.S. Subhalakshmi in her melodious divine fervour and clear diction) played over the loud-speaker reverberates in the mountains as a 'wake up' signal.

We are blessed to take in fully the Lord's form and beauty during the *abhisheka* ceremony. This is done elaborately early in the morning, a little after the *Brāhma-muhūrta*. One can hardly describe the intense joy and bliss in being a witness to the *abhisheka*. To the chant of *Purusha-suktam* and *Vishnu-Sahasranamam* with their rhythmic flow of words and majesty of cadence, the Lord is given a ritual bath with traditional components. Fragrant sandal, camphor and *kasturi*, and numerous other substances combine to create divine *vāsanās*, flavours. It is so overpowering that some *bhaktas* cry unabashedly, intoxicated with bliss.

From the bad comes some good—somehow, somewhere—the poet Tennyson wrote. The Chinese aggression made us build bridges, roads and camps. Over the years the Indian army has undoubtedly done an excellent job. Originally, *Bahronghat* was the last post one could reach driving. Thereafter it was a very risky trek to *Badrinath*. Thanks to the army, which has built a bridge at *Bahronghat*, one can now reach the very doors of *Badrinath* temple by car. Mentally we thank the army for making our pilgrimage so easy.

With the army's kind permission, we are allowed to see three of the most fascinating sites in *Badrinath*, which are now in the security area. Sage *Vyasa's Guha*, *Ganapati's Guha*, and *Bhimkund*, all celebrated places in the Epics. The *Ganapati Guha* is a small cave. Sage *Vyasa's Guha* is an architectural riddle. As we enter it we feel we are entering an air-conditioned auditorium, in total darkness. Gradually the darkness vanishes. Our eyes now perceive a well-lit cave and a life-like *Vyasa* image. It is a deeply moving experience unfolding itself from darkness to light.

Bhimkund is a place where *Bhima* uprooted a rock and placed it as a bridge to enable the *Pandavas* to cross a mighty rapid (which perhaps existed in those days) on their way to Heaven. Torrents of water cas-

cade downwards and we trace the origins of the mythical river *Saraswati*. It is unbelievable, but the river *Saraswati's* water is pure white throughout the year, a matter reflective of pure knowledge untainted by falsehood.

Coming down with a sense of fulfilment, the pilgrimage now almost over, we halt at *Joshi Math*. The importance of this sprawling civil and military township is that centuries ago *Adi Shankaracharya* meditated at this place, which overlooks the *Badrinath* area and the *Nilkanth* peak. *Joshi Math* is also the retreat for the monks of *Badrinath* during winter. Hardly anyone stays at *Badrinath* between October and May, because of the severe cold. The *Shankaracharya Ashrama* at *Joshi Math* is a serene place with modern conveniences. In the temple the residents chant the *Annapūrneshwari-Stotra*. From the way the hymn was composed with dedication and love, one can feel the affection the great sage had for his mother also.

In the drive down what gets etched in one's mind is the triangular view of *Devprayag*, tipped by the *vimāna* of one of the ancient temples of *Sri Rama*. *Devprayag* is at the confluence of the great *Alakananda* and the *Ganga*. The area is pervaded by an unforgettable overwhelming silence that effortlessly lifts up our mind. This is the indescribable peace which every pilgrim brings back. Its memory lingers for days even in the midst of the urban rush. □

Correction

In the July '95 *Prabuddha Bharata*, *Thakur*—on p. 678, first column, third-last line of the text—should have been *Tagore* (*Rabindranath*).

Practical Vedanta

SKINNY RELIGION

It was the year of 1945. In the temple of Shri Ranchodji at Dakor, the Maharashtrian saint Shri Narahari Maharaj was conducting a religious musical programme. After the programme was over, the saint announced that shortly there would be a vocal recital by the famous Ustad Rajak Hussain. At this a few orthodox Hindu pundits in the audience stood up excitedly and said to Narahari Maharaj in protest: 'To allow a Muslim to sing in a Hindu temple! O God! Don't you know that no non-Hindu has so far ever been allowed even to enter this temple? How did you dare arrange such a programme?'

The pure and alert mind of Narahari Maharaj at once hit upon an idea as a fitting answer to the pundits. Bringing the drum that had been used a while ago by the music party, he asked them: 'Revered sirs, can you tell me what I hold in my hands?'

'It is a drum', observed one of them.

'And can you please tell what it is made of?', asked Shri Maharaj again.

'Of course we can', replied a pundit. 'Simple. It is made of wood and animal skin.'

'And,' said Narahariji, 'your shoes are also made of animal skin. But you have left them outside the temple! Why didn't you come inside the temple with your shoes on?'

'Because they are made of animal skin, and we Hindus consider skins to be very unholy.'

'If it is so, sir, then how did you allow this drum to be brought inside the temple?' countered Shri Narahariji. Everyone was floored. The pundits all fell silent.

Narahari Maharaj broke the silence: 'It is true that we Hindus consider skins to be unholy, but we don't consider the drum so, though it is also made of skin. That is because a drum is purified through some religious rite after its manufacture.' He continued in a commanding tone: 'Sirs, before inviting Ustad, I thought over the matter quite a lot, and only afterwards did I make up my mind to hold the programme. Revered sirs, I request you to please look upon this Ustad as a human being as we all are, and not to think with our narrow minds of what his religious group is. Let us purify our minds as this drum has been purified, and then I am sure there will not be any hesitation in us to enjoy the music of the Ustad.'

The words of Shri Narahari Maharaj satisfied all the pundits. They calmly sat down and intently listened to the music. So pleased were they with the devotion of the Ustad that after the music they honoured him with flower garlands and praise.

Unlettered, But a Poetess*

FARHAT AMIN

Many people write poetry. But in Phulbani district of Orissa lives a poetess called Purnabasi, who can neither read nor write; yet her poems are well appreciated. Her poems are a complete work of art abiding by the norms and style of Oriya literature.

Purnabasi is a 55-year-old woman of Kandha tribe, living in the dense forests of Khajuripada, 24 kms away from Phulbani. a widow living with her two daughters in Charipada village, she earns her living by farming and leads a simple life.

Purnabasi, who is popularly known as Tadisaroo Bai, can speak only in Kuin (the tribal language of the Kandhas). But when she gets into a trance she starts singing devotional poems in chaste Oriya language. The themes of her extempore poems are generally derived from the holy *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Ramayana*. These unwritten and uncomposed poems from Tadisaroo Bai's throat do not have any definite time limit. Sometimes she keeps singing for hours together, and sometimes she halts just after a few minutes. This irregularity in her flow of poems is not self-made, but it's due to 'the command of the holy spirit within me', she says. Who is this holy spirit within her? When asked, Tadisaroo Bai narrated the whole story of her spiritual power to this correspondent.

Way back in 1969, in the month of Vaishak, on a Monday evening, Tadisaroo Bai was attracted by some invisible force which forced her to travel to the Tadisaroo mountain about 30 kms from her village. Before setting out on her spiritual journey, she had requested her husband to keep three promises. But as her husband failed to do so,

she was bound to spend a night in the Tadisaroo ashram with the saints and also faced a few animals like a tiger, a bear and a snake on her way.

'All these hindrances were nothing but the penance I was paying for my husband's disobedience', explained Tadisaroo Bai. Later, saving herself from wild animals, she reached a cave in Tadisaroo. And there she met a saint called Polastya. 'It was Maharishi Polastya who gifted me this spiritual power', revealed Tadisaroo Bai, showing immense gratitude and respect to her invisible guru Polastya. When asked whether a common man can see or meet her guru, came the reply in a sing-song manner: 'It is only possible if one has a lot of devotion and love for the guru.'

Tadisaroo Bai, who shuns publicity and avoids talking about her guru and her source of spiritual power, once, after repeated request had sung the following lines in Oriya, informing about her guru: *'Tadisaroo perbatore moro motho achi/ birato patharo pare moo baso karoochi./ Taro charipate moro/ salua brukhya re chauni hoichi/ Taharo dooare achi naghoda kabato/ Patharo kabato go/ Rahiachi duare kebala bakti bhabo/ Ta phitai pare/ premobhakti bhabe jebe lakibo/ Apana kabato phiti/ pasi jibo jano/ Sri Guru Polastya Rishi Oobha hebe,/ Sisyanananko madhya redisibe.*

This means: My Motho is in Tadisaroo Mountain. Behind a huge stone I reside. Around it I have a cluster of Sal trees. And its opening has no doors, but just a rock, dear! Here exists only devotion; and devotion alone can open the door. The doors will open on their own. Then Sriguru Polastya

* With permission from *The Hindusthan Times*, New Delhi.

(Continued on next page)

News & Reports

Vedanta Society of New York,
34 West 71st Street, New York, N.Y., 10023
(Report of Society Activities:
April 1994 to March 1995)

This is the first Vedanta Centre in the United States of America, having been started by Swami Vivekananda in 1894. It is housed in a mostly residential area of Manhattan Borough of New York City (Phone: 212-877-9197). Swami Tathagatananda has been in charge of the Centre since 1977.

The Swami conducted Sunday morning services; Tuesday evening classes on Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master; and Friday evening classes on the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Group devotional singing, open to the public, was held every Saturday and Sunday evening.

Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Lord Buddha and Sri Krishna were celebrated, as well as Easter, Durga Puja and Christmas. The annual Vivekananda Fourth of July Festival took place as usual at the country home of one of the members.

The Centre's centenary celebrations included a play on the life of Swami Vivekananda by one hundred Indian

American students, a special two-hour service with three visiting swamis and a rabbi, participation in special seminars and conferences, guest lectures by most of the swamis in America, and the feeding of poor children through a local church. Of special note was a symposium on 'One hundred years of Vedanta in America', which was part of the Fifth International Congress of Vedanta, held at Miami University in Ohio and attended by more than one hundred scholars. A special concert of original music on Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings in America was performed by professional chorus, orchestra, soloists and narrators, seventy-five performers in all, in a prestigious concert hall before a warmly appreciative audience. In honour of its centenary, the Centre published the book *Meditation on Swami Vivekananda* by Swami Tathagatananda.

Swami Tathagatananda gave a number of outside talks at schools, colleges, temples and other Vedanta Societies, and to groups of devotees, in different parts of the United States. □

Unlettered, But a Poetess

(Continued from previous page)

rishi will make his appearance, and will be visible amidst his disciples.'

Poetry doesn't come to her on its own. Tadisaroo lights a few joss sticks and sits in a clean and calm place and meditates for sometime. And soon flows poetry along with melody. A teacher, Pankaj Pradhan, of a local school at Phulbani has been keeping

record of Tadisaroo Bai's poems since 1990. By now he has recorded almost 800 poems of hers.

According to Pradhan: 'Tadisaroo Bai's poems are highly literary and the uniqueness which I found in her poems is that she never repeats the same poem twice. Her poems are always new.' □

Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to Religious Harmony

MISS VIVEKA TURNBULL (18 YEARS), AUSTRALIA

Vivekananda sowed the seed of religious harmony in the world. He became the meeting-point for the East and the West, past and future. He left us with numerous stories of 'The many and the one are the same reality, perceived by the mind at different times and in different attitudes'. Through his worldwide lecture tours and the establishment of the Ramakrishna Order, he gave to people the opportunity to realize the unity of religions.

Swami Vivekananda's dream was to harmonize the culture of the East and West, thereby making a perfect civilization. He dedicated his life and his ability to discriminate between the eternal and non-eternal to enable people to see the unity in the world. Through all of Vivekananda's lectures the concept of unity and harmony in all religion was emphasized. Whatever he was teaching, whether the Divinity in all people or discussing dogma and superstition, he would bring people closer to the essence of religion, to the 'eternal religion', comprised of three truths—'God is', 'God can be realized' and 'God-realization is the supreme goal of human existence'. Vivekananda taught acceptance and not tolerance, for 'tolerance means that I think that you are wrong, and I am just allowing you to live'. He opposed exclusion, disliking 'any attempt to exclude from Hinduism any of her numerous branches and offshoots'. In his eyes they were all Hindu. Vivekananda unified Unism, Dualism, Modified Unism, and Visishtadvaita, claiming that even the utmost realization of dualism and modified unism were but stages on the way to unism itself. Final bliss was in our mergence in the One-without-a-second.

Vivekananda extended to the west the doctrine of Divinity in man, to be realized by faithful service through whatever form. At the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893, he told of the necessity to form a universal religion with no location in place or time, that encompasses all creeds, saints and sinners alike. This would not come through the domination of one religion, but would be infinite like the God it will represent. Vivekananda went all over the world delivering this message, which is also the message of Vedanta.

Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Order to carry on the Vedic message. He established Vedanta in different parts of the world. The movement has continued to grow, allowing more and more people to discover the unity and harmony in religion.

'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissention', Vivekananda's earnest words at the Parliament of Religions, have resonated in the ears of people, and like ripples from a pebble dropped in a pond have reached larger and larger numbers of individuals. So his contribution to religious harmony was to sow the seed, allowing more and more people in each decade to unify themselves with the universe and the infinite and eternal God. □

Verily nothing is more purifying
than the holy name of God.

—*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 6.1

Reviews & Notices

KARMA AND REINCARNATION:
By Swami Muni Narayana Prasad; publ.
D.K. Printworld P. Ltd., New Delhi
110 015; pp. 106; Rs. 50/-

This well-known Vedantic text has been profusely narrated in the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and Itihasas. However, the intriguing philosophical bewilderment needs further clarifications, which have been properly summarized by Swami Muni Narayana Prasad in this small book.

The work is divided into nine chapters, viz.: Vedic References; Artabhas, Doubt and the Mystery of Karma; What is Karma and Who Does It?; What is Birth and Death? The Two Paths: In the *Katha-Upanishad*; In the *Bhagavad-Gita*; In the *Brahma-Sūtras*; and Conclusion. Besides, the author has given a Bibliography, Glossary and Index for the readers.

As the doctrine of Karma and Reincarnation is acceptable only on scriptural evidence (*sruti*), so the author has aptly cited the *Katha-Upanishad*, *Chandogya-Upanishad*, *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*, *Rig-Veda*, etc. In addition to that the theory of reincarnation is supported by the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Brahma-Sutras* of Badarayana.

The author has made attempts to establish an *advaitic* (non-dualistic) basis in his work, but Karma and Reincarnation are fundamentally the creative urge of Nature, which is dualistic.

'The *Karma* understood here concerns not only human beings. Every being, whether living or not, is subject to it. The flowing of water, the burning of fire, the blowing of wind, are all part of it. All such *karmas* together cause the creation, sustenance and destruction of all living beings. Such phenomena are merely the expression of the creative urge of the total nature' (p. 32). The author also cites from the *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*: 'Verily, one becomes good by good actions, and bad by bad

actions.' The idea of meritorious and sinful actions is there in the Vedic context of rituals as well as in the concept of *Karmas* supposed to cling to the souls. But in the Upanishads they are to be understood from the *advaitic* perspective.

The author is very correct in his Vedantic approach when he examines the various stanzas of the *Bhagavad-Gita* to explain the theory of reincarnation and quotes a verse: 'As a man casting off his worn out garments receives new ones, likewise the soul, casting aside the worn out bodies, takes to others that are new' (2.22).

'Apparently, it looks as if this verse teaches that a soul leaves one body when it is worn out and receives a new one. If we take the stanza to imply this sense, there have to be as many souls as there are bodies. But according to the verse, the bodies are many and the embodied is one' (p. 59). According to the *advaita* point of view the Self is only one and its oneness is not affected by the multiplicity of bodies. Nor is the Self affected by the birth and death which are really of the bodies.

In the conclusion of the book the author has stated that 'there is neither birth nor death, nor reincarnation in the view of the *jnānin*. In an *ajnānin*'s view, birth is real and death and rebirth also are real. Reality always remains Reality: *sat*, *cit*, and *ananda*.' Thus the ultimate goal of the author is to teach *vidyā* or wisdom.

Is it possible that there is one law for a *jnānin* and another for an *ajnānin*? Did both of them not come into being from the same Reality or Brahman, according to Vedanta? All these questions are unanswered, although we try to turn ourselves towards the Reality which is beyond comprehension, *neti neti*.

On the whole the book is a work of wisdom. It is insightful and philosophical at the same time—useful for the perusal of scholars and spiritual aspirants.

Dr. Anulya Mohapatra, Orissa

Contemporary Work Philosophy and Action Culture: Compiled and contributed by Ananda; publ. Associated Publishing Company, 8798/7 Rani Jhansi Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi 110 005; 1994; pp. 218; Rs. 80/-.

In one of his essays, Carlyle praises work and raises it to the status of worship. This was a new concept for Europe then, but in India we have been equating work with worship from the days of the Upanishads. It is said in the *Ishopanishad* that we should aspire to live 100 years on this earth while performing our duties. The *Bhagavadgita* also elaborately describes the science of *Karmayoga*, and according to Lokmanya B.G. Tilak, *Bhagavadgita* is another name for *Karmayoga-shastra*. The present book is an elaborate elucidation of this concept of *karma* on the backdrop of Indian philosophy.

The book is comprised of two parts and two appendices. Part I contains eleven chapters consisting of writings of great Indian thinkers who have contributed to the work-philosophy of this land. These thinkers are Swami Vivekananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Annie Besant, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore.

Two chapters are devoted to Swami Vivekananda, who describes *karma* as a means to the Supreme Knowledge, and also as a tool for shaping our character. According to Swamiji, all the movements in human society are simply the display of thought, the manifestation of the will of man. Machines or instruments, cities, ships or men-of-war are simply the manifestation of the will of man; and this will is caused by character and character is manufactured by *karma* (p. 4). These two chapters (abstracted from *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. I) give a good grounding to all those who want to acquaint themselves with the work-philosophy of India. Tilak's exposition of the third chapter of the Gita also highlights the excellence of work—*yogah karmasu kaushalam* (p. 43).

'The Study of Karma' by Besant is a

thorough examination of the law of *karma*, which according to her is the law of all laws and is at the root of human evolution (p. 55). Our actions are cumulative and they direct the future course of our life. Here, Besant has also analysed Family karma, Collective karma, and National karma, after explaining their dynamics. In the chapters that follow, Aurobindo deals with the ideal of *Karmayogi* and emphasizes the awakening of the nation; and two small essays by Mahatma Gandhi deal with two basic ideas related to *Karmayoga*, 'Morality in Karma', and 'Bread Labour'. According to Gandhiji everyone should earn his own bread, and no work is low. In the last two chapters of this part, Rabindranath Tagore shows us the way to cooperation by bridging the gap between individual work and collective work.

The sole motive of the author-compiler in part I of his book is interconnecting the thoughts of these great Indians so as to present the fundamental Indian thought on *karma* to contemporary young Indians, so that they will be more firmly rooted in their own culture. They will thus be able to accept the new concepts of work culture of the West with better discrimination.

From this point of view, part II of the book which is authored by the compiler himself is very important. There he has not only traced the concept of *karma* to the Vedas and Upanishads, but also has followed it closely through Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, right up to Marx, Ouspensky and others. It is extremely rewarding to go through this part of the book, for here we see the ancient thought newly propounded by Swami Vivekananda and others, deftly dovetailed in the work-philosophy of modern times. This renders it a philosophy for all times and for all peoples.

An article in Appendix B by Swami Tathagatananda, titled 'Human Development through Work', also adds to the comprehensiveness of this analysis of the Philosophy of Work and action-oriented Culture.

The book may not have been designed to meet the needs of University students of Management Science, but all the same it is an essential text for all those interested in

human development through work. Dr. S.K. Chakravarty of the Institute of Management writes in the Foreword, '...indisputable reading for workers all over the world, more specifically for those in India.'

Dr. N.B. Patil, Bombay

Snakes and Ladders: By Dr. M. Lakshmi Kumari; publ. Vivekananda Kendra Prakashan, 3, Singarachari Street, Triplicane, Madras 600 005; pp. 135; Rs. 15/-.

Snakes and Ladders is based on the basic principles of the first, second and third chapters of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, vis-à-vis the thoughts and loftiest ideals preached and professed by Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa. A compilation of the author's editorials published in the Vivekananda Kendra's monthly, *Yuva Bharati*, from 1985 to 1987, which evoked widespread appreciation from the readers, the main objective for bringing out this book is to enable the 'youth to peep through a small window on the vast panorama of beauty the *Bhagavad-Gita* offers.' *Snakes and Ladders* is a popular game in India. The learned authoress has selected the curious title, *Snakes and Ladders*, to show that human life is comparable to this simple game; for on the one side of life, there are greed, temptation and other dissipating forces which, like snakes, are always ready to devour us, and on the other side, there are a number of ladders of opportunity which enable us to escape from these snakes and climb to success, fulfilment and freedom. In the light of the lofty and life-invigorating message of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Dr. Lakshmi Kumari has very cogently presented her reflections on the difficulties and pitfalls which confront modern man in his everyday life, and also how these can be successfully met if the tormented soul bears in mind the import and implications of the *Gita*. That the *Bhagavad-Gita* as a perennial source of strength and inspiration is still very relevant to us today has been very succinctly brought home by Dr. Kumari. In a book which is a compilation of editorials, organic cohesion in the presentation of

theme obviously cannot be expected. As a matter of fact, there are repetitions of the same idea in several places but they are not boring, and do not detract from the inherent beauty of the presentation. Quotations from various sources have been cited, but no references are given. Nevertheless on the whole, this book makes for interesting reading and it may prove to be a highly inspiring treatise, especially for the Youth, for whom the book was brought out.

Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee, Tripura

Sri Ramakrishna Gita: By Swami Brahmastwarupananda; tr. V. Rajgopal Bhat, M.A.; publ. Swami Anandashram of Chitrapur Trust, 9-A Erandavana, Karve Road, Pune 411 004; pp. 400; price not mentioned.

Sri Ramakrishna Gita is a beautiful pocket edition of a book written by the late Swami Brahmastwarupanandaji of Uttarkashi. He presented in simple and mellifluous Sanskrit verse the ideas contained in the luminous and spiritually pregnant sayings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in 18 chapters on the model of the *Srinad Bhagavad-Gita*. Swami Akhandanandaji, a disciple of the author, who had himself translated the original into Hindi, readily parted with the original Sanskrit manuscript with the permission to publish it along with an English translation. This English translation has been ably made by Sri V. Rajgopal Bhat, an erudite scholar. The present small book throws fresh light on the many-splendoured phenomenon that was Sri Ramakrishna.

As is well known, *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) is a faithful recording of the eternal spiritual truths uttered by the Master in course of his daily conversations with his disciples and devotees. It was compiled in Bengali by Sri 'M.' (Sri Mahendra Nath Gupta) and runs into 5 volumes. Although *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* has been translated into many languages, a concise pocket edition of it accommodating the framework of Sri Ramakrishna's illuminating teaching was

felt necessary. In the recent past, many scholarly and informative works are being published by eminent scholars and devotees elucidating the life and teachings of the Saint of Dakshineswar. The present work, *Sri Ramakrishna Gita* is undoubtedly a welcome and significant addition to these works inasmuch as it is composed in elegant and lucid Sanskrit verse imbued with an engrossing devotional fervour. The simple English translation will be of immense help to those not familiar with either Bengali or Sanskrit in gaining a fair idea of the elevating spiritual truths preached and practised by Sri Ramakrishna. It is confidently hoped that spiritual aspirants and seekers of truth will find joy and peace of mind in reciting the *Sri Ramakrishna Gita* regularly with devotion and dedication. Attractive photographs of Sri Ramakrishna, and Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, along with a photocopy of the handwriting of Sri Ramakrishna, add to the beauty of the book. It is hoped that it will receive the serious attention and wide circulation it deserves.

Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee

Katha-Upanishad (with translation and notes based on Shankara's Commentary): By Swami Lokeshwarananda; publ. Secretary, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700 029; 1993; pp. 184+iv; Rs. 30/-.

Swami Lokeshwarananda, the translator of this popular Upanishad, hardly needs an introduction. Author of many important books, the Swami now offers us a beautiful rendering of the *Katha-Upanishad*. Each verse is given in the original Sanskrit, followed by its English transliteration, word-for-word meaning, and the complete translation. This is enriched by the Swami's comments given wherever needed, based on Shankara's *bhāshya*. The word-for-word translation helps clear comprehension.

The *Katha-Upanishad* dramatizes and successfully grapples with that enduring question challenging all philosophical and religious systems: the question of death and the way of transcending it. The Upanishad,

through the inspiring discussion between the seeker, Nachiketa, and the teacher, Yama, the God of Death, gives us some basic instructions about the attitude we must cultivate before we can hope even to grasp the conclusion—mortality can be transcended only through Self-knowledge. The Upanishad emphasizes in many places the identity of the individual Self and Brahman, and that the goal of life is to know this through the intellect made sharp and pure by spiritual discipline. 'A person who has realized his identity with Brahman is no longer subject to birth and death.' He is immortal and free—'free from fear, free from attachment, free from desires.'

As Swami Lokeshwarananda puts it in the introduction, the Upanishad covers the 'whole field of philosophy concerning the nature of the self.' This field balances the secular and the sacred on the principle of *śreyas*, the good. This 'good', however, is conceived not in terms of passive ethics but in terms of a comprehensive knowledge of the Self, which is different from the ordinary 'good'—enjoyment of sense pleasures.

By bringing out numerous implicit issues, such as *śraddhā*—faith, discrimination, non-attachment and the different facets of Self-knowledge, this translation offers a dependable introduction to Vedanta. Eminently readable and clear, Swami Lokeshwarananda's translation whets the reader's appetite for more such books from him. We particularly look forward to the *Mandukya* and the *Chandogya Upanishads* in the series of Upanishads the Institute is planning to publish.

Swami Brahmasthananda, Hyderabad

Symbolism and Spiritual Wisdom: India's Life-breath: By Ardhendu Sekhar Ghosh; publ. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 400 007; 1990; pp. 202; Rs. 35/-.

Professor Ardhendu Sekhar Ghosh is no stranger to students of Indian Culture. A distinguished scientist, he has been an authentic interpreter of Ancient Wisdom for modern contexts, as evident, notably, in his earlier book *Bhagavad Gita* for the lay reader.

In the present volume, Professor Ghosh addresses himself once again to the most urgently needed task of contemporising ancient insights. In the wake of developments in cognitive theories and psychological insights—evident in the methodology of science and technology—there is need to balance tradition and modernity. If this balance is not achieved, we may, as Professor Ghosh rightly says, become 'anti-spiritual'. There is 'thus', he says 'an urgency to nourish the native cultural roots, and to strengthen the related value-system, through appropriate social education.'

The implications of this process of 'nourishing' the roots is, in fact, the overall concern of the book. Consisting of three parts, it offers initially 'Definitions and Explanations', followed by an indepth exposition of 'Symbolism in the Ancient Indian Literature', and concludes by offering a blueprint for 'An Appropriate Education for Nourishing the Native Cultural Roots.' These are followed by 5 appendices covering very crucial areas such as 'Parallelism between Modern Physics and Vedanta', 'Shakti Sadhana', etc.

All this results in a study marked by scientific rigour and spiritual concern. If science represents the product of 'the faculty of intuition rather than that of rationality,' spiritual traditions—what are being referred to today as 'wisdom traditions'—exemplify not only transcendental truths but the language of symbolism as the expressive mode of these truths. For, as Professor Ghosh says, 'there must exist some natural nexus or link (or association) between the form of representation and the subtle concept being represented.' Thus mental and psychic phenomena—in addition to the tangible objects—are articulated through symbols and images.

It is in terms of this basic view of symbol and its function that Professor Ghosh studies several related issues. His views on 'The Gayathree' and Vedic Symbolism (and the appendix 'Shakti Sadhana') deserve and sustain close reading. Relying on authentic expositors of implicit meaning Professor Ghosh brings out the significance of these aspects briefly but suggestively.

As Dr. Karan Singh says in his appreciative 'Foreword', Professor Ardhendu Sekhar Ghosh 'has attempted a wide-ranging essay on Symbolism and Spiritual Wisdom in India.' While I wholly agree with this view, I do feel that in terms of organizing the material and editing it, the book needs more exacting care. Explanatory Notes and Appendices would have gained by being integrated with the main text.

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna, Hyderabad

Īśa-Upaniṣad: Tr. Swami Lokeshwarananda; publ. Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta; 1994; pp. 32; Rs. 10/-.

Kena-Upaniṣad: Tr. Swami Lokeshwarananda; publ. Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta; 1993; pp. 42; Rs. 10/-.

For the last three or four centuries, the *Upaniṣads* have been translated into many languages of the world. Swami Lokeshwaranandaji's English rendering of the *Īśa* and *Kena Upaniṣads*, based on his class talks, are an addition to the existing many, with a difference. While there is undoubtedly the stamp of scholarship, the translation is practical and easy to comprehend. Generally, the *Īśa-Upaniṣad* is not understood so easily. However, the notes to this *Upaniṣad*, based on Shankara's Commentary, make it easily understandable. There is word-by-word transliteration also. The *Kena-Upaniṣad* also has the notes, word-by-word transliteration, etc.

These two additions to the existing translations of the *Upaniṣads* will certainly help the modern reader understand more clearly the profound meaning of our Vedic literature.

Swami Sunirmalananda, Belur Math

Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down.

—Swami Vivekananda