



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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उत्तिष्ठत  
जाग्रत  
प्राप्य  
वरान्निबोधत



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

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No. 5

## Divine Wisdom

### TO GET THE VISION OF GOD

यत्सानुबन्धेऽसति देहगेहे  
ममाहमित्यूढदुराग्रहाणाम् ।  
पुंसां सुदूरं वसतोऽपि पुर्या  
भजेम तत्ते भगवन् पदाब्जम् ॥

Though Thou residest within all beings and art thus closest to them in the real sense, Thou art in practice the remotest entity for them so long as they feel deep-rooted identification with this impermanent body and all its appurtenances like home and the rest. O All-perfect Being! Our salutation to Thee!

तान् वै ह्यसद्वृत्तिभिरक्षिभिर्ये  
पराहतान्तर्मनसः परेश ।  
अथो न पश्यन्त्युरुगाय नूनं ये  
ते पदन्यासविलासलक्ष्म्याः ॥

O Supreme Lord! Those whose minds are captured and carried away by the senses which delight in enjoyment of degraded objects, never get the opportunity of association with holy men who have been sanctified by the touch of Thy sacred feet. (For, interested as they are only in sensual enjoyments, they scrupulously avoid such contacts with saintly ones and thereby deprive themselves of all chances of spiritual regeneration.)

पानेन ते देव कथासुधायाः  
प्रवृद्धभक्त्या विशदाशया ये ।  
वैराग्यसारं प्रतिलभ्य बोधं  
यथाञ्जसान्वीयुरकुण्ठधिष्ण्यम् ॥

O Lord! Those who become purified and endowed with abounding devotion to Thee by listening to the recitals of Thy holy accounts and excellences, attain simultaneously to intense dispassion and knowledge, and thereby to Thy imperishable state.

तथापरे चात्मसमाधियोगबलेन  
जित्वा प्रकृतिं बलिष्ठाम् ।  
त्वामेव धीराः पुरुषं विशन्ति तेषां  
श्रमः स्यान्न तु सेवया ते ॥

There are others who by their own effort conquer the powerful hold of Nature through the practice of communion through Samadhi and attain to Thee, whom the devotees too attain following the path of devotion. But the method of the former is fraught with great difficulties, but not so that of those who practise love and service of Thee.

—From the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

## The Awakening of India

This is the year in which we are celebrating the centenary of *Prabuddha Bharata's* inception, and since 'Prabuddha Bharata' means 'Awakened India', it is appropriate that we reflect on the awakening of this great nation. It is true that Swami Vivekananda once wrote to a disciple: 'You must not forget that my interests are international and not Indian alone.'<sup>1</sup> But to the followers of the Swami, the awakening of India is of international importance. Did he not say:

Shall India die? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct...<sup>2</sup>

Parents who live with their children every day are not so aware of the growth of their children as are friends who visit once in a while. Unlike the parents, a friend visiting the family after a year has not adjusted to the daily, incremental growth of the child, but is suddenly presented with little Hari who is three inches taller, fifteen pounds heavier, having maturer features.

As with children, so with nations. Foreigners who visit India every few years have recently remarked on the rapid changes visible here, just since the beginning of the

90s: the signs of growing prosperity, the availability of consumer goods, computerization, and the ready availability of modern services like photocopying and faxing.

On the road to the Himalayan shrine of Badri Narayan the pilgrim passes through a small village high in the mountains with a few ramshackle hotels and tea stalls. There, painted on the outer wall of a shop is an advertisement for colour television sets. In the back of the shop is a big satellite dish.

Moreover, activity seems to be in the air, especially commercial activity. The desire has been created in people for the newly available consumer goods. Such things can only be had with money. And money can be had through work. What decades of government top-down economic planning failed to do, seems to be happening automatically by opening India to the world market.

Yet the picture is not all bright.

Though India has been in close contact with the West for two hundred years, the exposure to the West in the last few years has increased exponentially through television, cinema, and other media. Previously the exposure to the West was more cultural and intellectual; now the exposure is to Western pop-culture and consumerism. As a result, values are changing rapidly in a direction that cannot be considered wholesome. American pop-culture in particular has a strange seductiveness which

1. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982), p. 203.

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati Memorial Edition), vol. 4, p. 348. Hereafter *Complete Works*.



has been felt all over the world.<sup>3</sup>

The growing use of drugs and alcohol in India, the breakdown of the extended family into the nuclear family, an increasingly casual attitude towards sex in certain sectors, the hunger for consumer goods, all such social changes reflect a change in values. That change in values is associated with the economic changes coming to India.

Everyone today is busy in a way not seen a generation ago. Hard work—when productive and fulfilling—is no doubt good; but when activity becomes hectic and continuous and directed towards no goal higher than financial gain, its positive value is questionable. As if the busyness of work were not enough, now entertainment has—as in the West—become for many a necessity, not an occasional and dispensable diversion. Where is the time now for cultivation of the mind and spirit—the basis of Indian culture? Where is the time for family life—the

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3. Some critics in India speak as though this seductiveness were deliberately fostered in order to bankrupt and destroy other cultures. Such conspiratorial theories are silly: there is no committee of Americans who deliberately design pop-culture to make it seductive and destructive of values. Pop-culture is just what a section of American society has created for itself, and therefore what it exports. Why do they export it? Because people want it. Why do they want it? Because it presents an image of life which is easy, fun, luxurious, glamorous, rebellious, and which can be enjoyed passively, without any effort of mind or will. As long as people want that, America—or someone else—will produce it and export it.

But does it live up to its promise? Ask any sensible American and their unequivocal answer will be no. It is just an artificial image of life. Most Americans themselves don't believe in it.

cement of Indian society?

And the political scene is anything but inspiring. Where now are the great men and women who led India to independence through the power of their character and sacrifice?

It is common nowadays to hear people lament these and other changes in India. Some wish to roll back time, push out foreign influences and retreat into isolationism, which is the method followed by some Islamic nations facing a similar challenge, and which Christian fundamentalists in America would do if they had the power. Others recognize that such retreat is not feasible, but they have a hard time suggesting any other path of national salvation. What should be our attitude, we who wish to follow the path shown by Swami Vivekananda?

First, he was insistent that India join the community of nations. In fact, he believed that one cause of India's downfall was Her isolationism, the feeling that She had nothing to learn from the outside world. He wanted the children of Mother India to open the doors and windows of the country, travel to other lands, learn what others are doing and thinking. However, She must join the community of nations not as a beggar but as an equal, which means as a donor nation. He saw that, more than all else, the unique and most valuable gift that India has to give is spirituality. That is why the international aspect of the Ramakrishna Order has been such an important and integral part of its work from the beginning. That is why great men were carefully selected from the ranks of the Order and sent as spiritual ambassadors to foreign lands. This international work must retain its importance *for the sake of India Herself*, besides the motivation of selfless service to the world at large.



Now India is poised to give in other areas as well. The computer and space industries in India, for instance, are ready for major contributions. Further, some American economists predict that India will be the next economic miracle, following China; and India's economic growth will help the global economy. Yes, it is necessary that India join the world community, which includes the global market. It may bring problems for some time, but India is strong enough to regain Her balance.

Tied to this need for India to join the community of nations as an equal is the need for action as opposed to reaction. In India we must learn once again the power of creative thought and action. India's downfall was sealed with a retreat into reaction to cir-

and music! But since the Middle Ages people have been content with endless repetition of the past. That is what prompted Vivekánanda to say:

I like to see new things. I do not care a fig to loaf about old ruins and mope a life out about old histories and keep sighing about the ancients. I have too much vigour in my blood for that....I have become horribly radical.<sup>4</sup>

The awakened mind sees existence—inner and outer—as a wonder, like a child, and is possessed of a great love for knowledge, or rather a passion for understanding. That cannot come to a mind that has all the answers, nor can it come to one who believes that all thoughts have already

*Tied to this need for India to join the community of nations as an equal is the need for action as opposed to reaction. In India we must learn once again the power of creative thought and action. India's downfall was sealed with a retreat into reaction to circumstances rather than positive creative action. Instead of acting out of Her vast inner resources of power, She recoiled into Her past as an act of self-preservation.*

cumstances rather than positive creative action. Instead of acting out of Her vast inner resources of power, She recoiled into Her past as an act of self-preservation. That was how She preserved Her culture during one thousand years of foreign domination. But that sad legacy is still with us, fifty years after independence.

India as a nation, and as a community of individuals, needs once again to act, as She did in Her days of glory. For that, there must be vision, and for there to be vision there has to be an awakening of the mind of India. Look at the wonderful cultural creativity of India, from the Vedic times up into the Middle Ages. What a wealth of spiritual ideals and practices, of philosophical activity, of development in the fields of medicine and astronomy and mathematics and literature

been thought by the ancients, leaving no need to think for oneself. One reason for the phenomenal vitality of modern science in India is no doubt the natural analytical power of the Indian mind; but another reason may well be that here is a field which is open and unburdened by the sense that the ancients have already done it all.

This does not mean, however, rejection of India's past. Far from it. The Swami was insistent that India must not lose Her soul by imitating other countries, nor must She forget Her past glory. But Her long and wonderful history must be a foundation for future action, not a hibernation chamber. He wanted Indians to research their past and write their own history, free from the

4. *Complete Works*, vol. 7, pp. 498–9.



denigrating prejudices of past Western scholars. Why? Because we stand on the shoulders of the past. A knowledge of our cultural past gives a sense of identity. It also gives continuity to national life. To know who we are and where we are going, we must be aware of our past. But that knowledge should free us for wise action in the present.

But what can we, as individuals and as groups, do when the whole country seems bent on imitation and loss of soul?

It is true that, as individuals, our present power is limited. We must recognize that tremendous historical forces are at work, as they always are in the world. Even major political figures are not really in charge of the destiny of nations, however much they may boast of their power or make grand

*'One vision I see clear as life before me, that the ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on Her throne—rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim Her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction.'*

promises to their constituents. The world is a huge affair, with vast, unseen forces at work. What can we ordinary people do?

We should remember, however, that the world is largely made up of ordinary people. The adage is true that the first step towards reforming the world is to reform oneself. A person who has gone far towards setting himself straight is no longer ordinary, and has a vaster influence than he normally knows.

But there is another factor we should be aware of. Once in a while these historical forces throw a great leader up on the crest of a wave, and around him or her many

people, a nation, or even many nations gather, and the world is turned in a new direction. Such was Swami Vivekananda. What did *he* say about the awakening of India?

One vision I see clear as life before me, that the ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on Her throne—rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim Her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction.<sup>5</sup>

He actually could see the awakening of India as an accomplished fact. That is a tremendous statement because of the stature of the one who made it. What does it do for us in practical terms? It frees our energies for positive action. In national life as in spiritual life, we are held back by our fears, hesitations, and absence of vision. When we face problems we lose courage and begin to fear any movement in any direction except backwards. Even when we are not facing problems (which is very rare) we are still unable to move forward for lack of a vision of our goal. Faith or *śraddhā* gives us both vision and the courage to move towards its fulfilment. That courage is founded on the certainty that the goal is real and attainable.

Therefore, taking heart from the Swami's vision, let us move forward with courage and not be cowed down by the present chaos. But let us go forward as helpers, participants in that awakening, not as dead wood which the historical process must push aside.

One of the Swami's great contributions to social thought was his view—expressed in various contexts—that a culture is like a living organism. How does a plant grow? Do we make it grow? Do we construct it? No. We supply water and fertilizer and a

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 353.



good site but the plant does the growing according to its own inner dynamism. Similarly, Swami Vivekananda had no sympathy for those reformers who wanted to force their own vision of what the New India should be. As he would say, 'Hands off!' Society is a living thing. Each society has its own laws of growth. Remove the obstructions to its development; but the development comes from within, not from imposition by someone or some group.

What do we need to do to further the awakening process? 'The national ideals of India,' said the Swami, 'are Renunciation and Service. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.'<sup>6</sup>

*Meditation teaches the conscious, deliberate renunciation of everything. Renunciation means the giving up of the lower, more restricted, for the higher, more universal. And if we learn to accept and follow this universal law of life, our lives become blessings to us and to the world. Service is the natural corollary to renunciation, and is an extension of the Vedic ideal of yajña or sacrifice.*

This, too, is a remarkable statement. It means that the ideals and values of Indian society are all tied to these twin ideals: by holding to them, the others are preserved. Renunciation as taught by the Swami is meant for all, not just for monastics, for it is a law of life. We must give up willingly or unwillingly. Nature forces renunciation. Childhood must be given up to attain to adulthood. Toys must be renounced for the sake of the responsibilities of grown-up life. Self-centredness must be forsaken to enter married life. Preoccupation with one's spouse must be renounced in order to raise children. Life itself is renounced in death. Meditation teaches the conscious, deliberate renunciation of everything. Renunciation means the giving up of the lower, more restricted, for the higher, more universal. And if we learn to accept and follow this

universal law of life, our lives become blessings to us and to the world.

Service is the natural corollary to renunciation, and is an extension of the Vedic ideal of *yajña* or sacrifice. The Vedic people saw all of existence as a grand, cosmic sacrifice, and all human actions as participation in that sacrifice. The highest oblation is the oblation of ego into this cosmic fire. Service is the act of sacrifice transformed into an oblation of love.

Let us strengthen ourselves and others in renunciation and service and trust in the awakening process. Let us not waste ourselves in fear of present troubles. Many

changes will come. Many old landmarks may disappear. But India's roots are ancient and *will* assert themselves. In China the Maoist government tried for decades to destroy China's ancient cultural roots, but whenever the government has loosened its grip, those roots have reasserted themselves. India's roots are at least as old and strong as China's.

Let us then not look to the future with fear, nor with timidity; but let us go forward with full confidence in the glory which awaits us. Let us not fear the new. Let us not even fear the chaos which comes with major historical upheavals. But let us at the same time be secure and strong in our ancient roots, nourishing them with the twin ideals of renunciation and service. □

Religion lies in being and becoming, in realization. —Swami Vivekananda

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 228.



# Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

## THE WAY TO PEACE

Thus it has been said that control of the organs should be undertaken with great care for steadiness of wisdom by one aspiring after Liberation. As for the man of steady Wisdom, the control of all the organs is a (self-)accomplished fact. This He says in:

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।  
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥

*Yā niśā sarvabhūtānām  
tasyām jāgarti saṁyamī  
Yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni  
sāniśā paśyato muneh. (2.69)*

*The self-restrained man keeps awake in that (Wisdom) which is (appears as) night to all beings. That during which the beings keep awake, it is night to the sage who sees.*

*Yā*, that, which is the Wisdom as 'I am Brahman', in the form of the realization that arises from Upaniṣadic sentences; appears as though it is *niśā*, night; *sarva-bhūtānām*, to all beings who are unenlightened, since to them It remains unmanifest. *Tasyām*, in that (Wisdom), characterized as the realization of Brahman, which is 'night' to all beings; *saṁyamī*, the self-restrained man, the man who has controlled the organs, i.e., the man of steady Wisdom; *jāgarti*, keeps awake; having become awakened from the sleep of ignorance, remains alert. But, *yasyām*, that—sleep of ignorance in the form of perceiving duality—in which; *bhūtāni*, the beings, which are in fact asleep; *jāgrati*, keep awake,

behave as in dream; *sā*, it; is *niśā*, night—it does not become manifest—; *muneh*, to the sage, the man of steady Wisdom; *paśyataḥ*, who sees, experiences directly the reality that is the Self.

The seeing of dream continues only so long as one is not awakened; for error persists till Reality is realized. At the time of experiencing Reality, however, there is no activity whatsoever that follows from delusion. So has it been said by the writer of the *Vārttika*:

The pure Entity is not realized so long as one is engrossed in the accessories of action (agentship etc.). And when the pure Entity is realized, how can there be engrossment in the accessories of action?<sup>1</sup>

To an unenlightened person and a knower of the Self this world is like a night to a crow and an owl.<sup>2</sup> Hari (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) Himself said this: '...that (Wisdom) which is (appears as) night to all beings...'<sup>3</sup>

And thus, one who sees wrongly does

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Vārttika, Sambandha-Bhāṣya, 166.*
2. Whereas a crow can see during day but not at night, an owl cannot see during day but can see at night. Similarly, an enlightened man sees the Self where the ignorant sees only the world.
3. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Vārttika, 1.4.313.*



not see the thing as such, because a wrong vision is the consequence of not seeing a thing as it is. And one who has the (correct) vision of a thing does not see it in an opposite way, because the non-perception of a thing (as such), which is the cause of its wrong perception, is sublated by the (correct) perception of the thing. Accordingly the *Śruti*,

When there is something else, as it were, then one can see something.<sup>4</sup>

But when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should one see and through what?<sup>5</sup>

speaks of the difference between Knowledge and ignorance. For example, that which is day to the crow—which is blind at night—is night to the owl, which is blind during day; and that which is day to the owl—which sees at night—is night indeed to the crow. Thus this is a great wonder. So, for a man having the knowledge of Reality, how can there be such usages as action, its accessories, etc. which are products of ignorance? Thus in his case the control of the organs is an accomplished fact. This is the idea.

For such a man of steady Wisdom the cessation of all perturbation also is self-evident. This He says with the help of an illustration:

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं

समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्दत् ।

तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे

स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ॥

*Āpūryamāṇamacalapraṭiṣṭhaṁ  
samudramāpaḥ praviśanti yadvat*

4. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upanisad*, 4.3.31.

5. *Ibid.*, 4.5.15.

*Tadvatkāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve  
sa śāntimāpnoti na kāmakāmī. (2.70)*

*That man attains Peace into whom all desirable objects enter in the same way as the waters flow into a sea, which remains unchanged (even) when being filled up from all sides. Not so one who is desirous of objects.*

*Yadvat*, as, the manner in which—without causing any disturbance—; all the *āpaḥ*, waters, even those originating from rainfall etc.; *praviśanti*, enter into; *samudram*, a sea; *āpūryamāṇam*, which is being filled up by all the rivers;—(sea) of what kind?—*acalapraṭiṣṭham*, which remains unchanged, which does not exceed its limits, or, that in which the immovable ones (*acala*, i.e. mountains) such as Maināka have their existence (*pratiṣṭhā*)—thereby is shown its immense depth—; *tadvat*, in the same way, in that very manner of not causing any disturbance; the man of steady Wisdom, who verily remains undisturbed, *yaṁ*, into whom; *sarve*, all; *kāmāḥ*, desirable objects, such as sound etc., which are sought for by unenlightened people; *praviśanti*, enter—being unavoidable owing to *prārabdha-karma*—, but are unable to perturb his mind; *saḥ*, he, the man of steady Wisdom, who is comparable to the vast ocean; *āpnoti*, attains—through the power of Knowledge; *śāntim*, Peace, the cessation of all the disturbances which are consequent on secular and sacred activities, and also the cessation of the recurrence of the effects of ignorance which were sublated.

*Na*, not so; *kāma-kāmī*, one who is desirous of objects; an ignorant person does not attain the Peace as explained. Moreover, he remains ever submerged in an ocean of miseries because of the disturbances resulting from secular and sacred activities. This is the meaning of the sentence. It is to be understood that, hereby has been stated that

*vidvat-sannyāsa*,<sup>6</sup> a result of Knowledge, comes only to an enlightened person; that to him alone belongs *jīvanmukti* (Liberation while still in the body), which is in the form of cessation of all disturbances; and that in him there is freedom from perturbation even while experiencing objects through divine dispensation, and so on.

Since this is so, therefore,

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।  
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥

*Vihāya kāmānyaḥ sarvān-  
pumāṃścarati niḥsprhaḥ  
Nirmamo nirahāṅkāraḥ  
sa śāntimadhigacchati. (2.71)*

*That man attains Peace who, after rejecting all the enjoyable things, moves about free from hankering, without the idea of ('me' and) 'mine', and devoid of pride.*

*Yah pumān*, that person who; *carati*, moves about, passes through experiences of objects as a result of *prārabdha-karma*—or, goes to whatever place as it may chance to happen—; *vihāya*, after rejecting, being indifferent to, even when they present themselves; *sarvān kāmān*, all the enjoyable things—of three kinds: the external, such as house, wife, etc., (and) the internal, in the form of day-dreams and in the form of mere hankering—, which are like contact with grass for one walking on a path; (and) *niḥsprhaḥ*, free from hankering, having no choice even with regard to his body and life; and who, since he is *nirahāṅkāraḥ*, devoid of pride—devoid of self-identification in the

form 'I am this' with regard to body, organs, etc., or, devoid of self-esteem that results from scholarship; therefore is *nirmamaḥ*, without the idea of 'mine'—without the idea of egoism in the form 'this is mine' with regard to a loin-cloth, a covering for the body, etc. which are meant for the mere maintenance of the body and which are brought to him through *prārabdha-karma*—; *sah*, he, the man of steady Wisdom of this kind; *adhigacchati*, attains, through the power of Knowledge; *śāntim*, Peace, the eradication of ignorance and its effects, in the form of cessation of the sorrows of trans-migratory existence.

Thus, by pointing out that the movement of the man of steady Wisdom is of this kind, the answer to the fourth question is concluded here.

Thus, in this way, under the guise of answering the four questions, all the characteristics of the man of steady Wisdom have been stated as what must be practised by one seeking Liberation. Now He concludes by praising, in terms of its result, steadfastness in the Knowledge of Reality, which is the fruit of the Yoga of Action:

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति ।  
स्थित्वाऽस्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति ॥

*Eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha  
naināṃ prāpya vimuhyati  
Sthitvā'syāmantakāle'pi  
brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati. (2.72)*

*This steadfastness relates to Brahman. O Pārtha, one does not become deluded after attaining this. Continuing in this state even in the closing years of life, one attains final beatitude in Brahman.*

*Eṣā*, this; *sthtiḥ*, steadfastness, which has  
(Continued on page 591)

6. *Sannyāsa* is of two kinds, *vividiṣa* and *vidvat*. The former is the formal renunciation (monasticism) by those who desire Enlightenment; the latter comes naturally to those who have become Enlightened.



# Gleanings from the Wayside

## *Reflections on the One*

### PAO YI

*'This is modelled in tone and theme on the Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu. Only the emphasis is a little different...I think that devotees of a monistic bent may get some benefit from it...', says Pao Yi (Embrace the One), an anonymous devotee.*

### One

There is Something Great beyond the universe,  
In which the universe rests.  
There is Something Great which floods the universe,  
Everywhere equally present.  
There is Something Great which stirs within the universe,  
Seeking vessels to receive it.

These three are one.  
The first gave birth to the second;  
The second gave birth to the third.  
Each one nourishes  
The one that came after it.  
Yet they are all aspects  
Of that One Great Thing.

Open yourself to receive the third,  
And you will perceive the second.  
Whether the first can be perceived at all  
Is something I do not know.

### Two

All-inclusive, all-containing,  
Something Great rolls through all things.  
All-pervading, all-sustaining,  
It is the source and substance of all.  
Ever at rest, it cradles the cosmos.  
Ever in motion, it broods over creation.  
Both at rest and in motion,  
It suffuses all things.

### Three

This Something Great is subtle,  
 Hard to perceive,  
 The ground, root, and basis  
 Of the ten thousand things,  
 The Matrix of the phenomenal world,  
 The great Mother-Father of the cosmos.  
 Vast, deep, and benevolent,  
 It gives birth to living beings,  
 And receives them again after death.

### Four

It was nameless, but men gave it names.  
 Brahman they called it, in earliest times,  
 Hiranyagarbha, Purusha, One-without-a-second.  
 They called it Self, they called it Soul,  
 They called it Consciousness.

Others arose. They called it  
 Dharmata, Tathata, Tathagata-garbha,  
 Suchness, Buddha-nature, Essence of Mind,  
 One Mind, No Mind, Sunyata, Void.

Still others arose. They called it Tao,  
 Great Ultimate, Mystery of Mysteries.  
 They gave it names,  
 But could not define it,  
 Wrote books about it,  
 But could not describe it,  
 Gave sermons about it,  
 But could not explain it.

It accepted all names, yet names could not bind it;  
 When they sought to confine it, it laughed and burst free.

Name it, and you miss the mark;  
 Define it, and you fall into a swamp.  
 Those who pierce the veil and see it  
 Only say Oh and Ah.  
 Its vastness strikes them dumb;  
 They shake their heads in wonder,  
 And stammer incoherently.

Here is a dilemma!  
 If we call it Brahman, we will think it is Hindu;



If we call it Tathata, we will think it is Buddhist;  
 If we call it Tao, we will think it is Chinese.  
 Best not to give it a name!

But because men need a name to hold onto,  
 You can call it the One.

### Five

One does not imply two;  
 One does not imply many;  
 One simply means one.  
 This One includes everything.  
 Apart from it, nothing whatsoever exists.  
 It holds the universe cupped in its hands,  
 And fills it full of itself.  
 It contains all existences  
 As space contains the stars,  
 As a body contains cells,  
 As an object contains atoms,  
 As the mind contains thoughts.

### Six

The One alone is simple, vast,  
 All-pervading, without character,  
 And formless, like the sky.  
 Alone, it has no splendor.  
 Its splendor comes forth  
 When it manifests itself  
 As the myriad, multiple worlds.  
 Unmanifest, it is merely vast.  
 Manifesting, it has cosmic power.  
 Manifested, its splendors are infinite.

### Seven

The One is like a tree,  
 Which has many branches;  
 Like the ocean,  
 Which has many waves;  
 Like the sky,  
 which has many clouds.

The tree can exist without branches,  
 But branches can't exist without the tree.  
 The ocean can exist without waves,

But waves can't exist without the ocean.  
The sky can exist without clouds,  
But clouds can't exist without the sky.

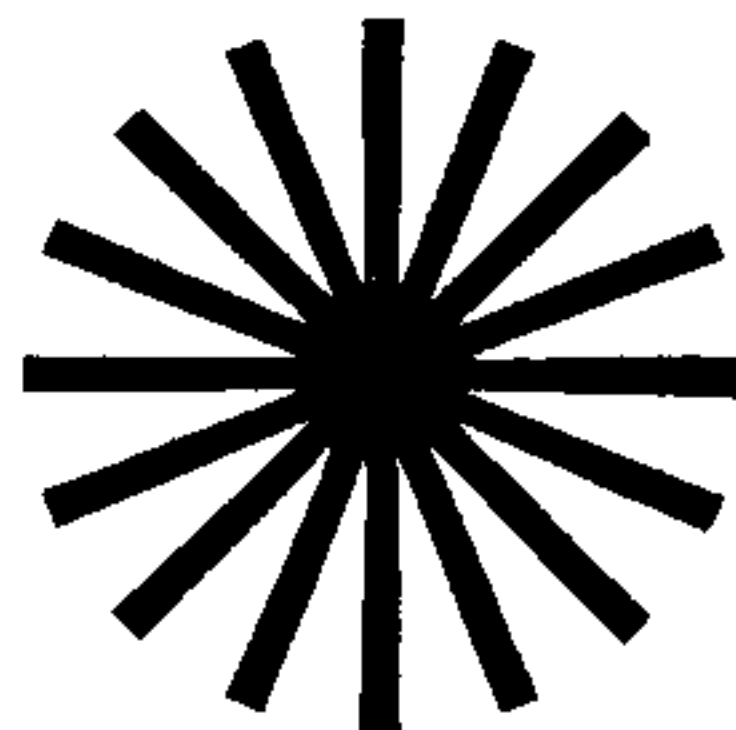
Even so,  
A tree without branches is a shrunken, dismal thing;  
The beauty of the ocean lies in its waves;  
And clouds are the glory of the sky.

### Eight

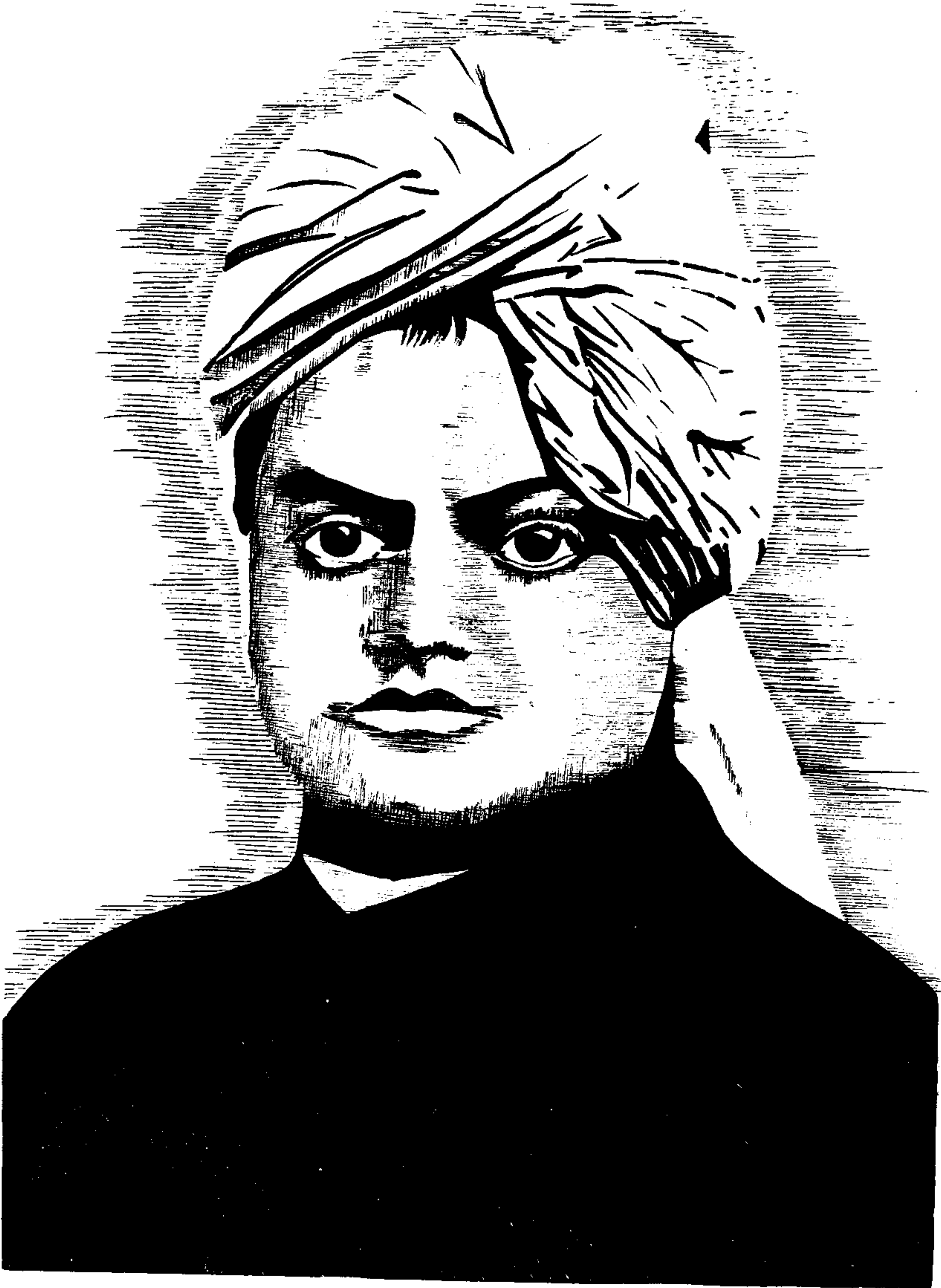
The One is not fulfilled  
Unless it manifests itself as the many;  
The many are not fulfilled  
Unless they manifest the One.

These two are constantly nourishing each other,  
Constantly interpenetrating and interacting.  
The many draw sustenance from the One;  
They return to it to renew themselves.  
The One sustains the many;  
It embraces them and renews them.  
For it is like a mother,  
Its nature is to nourish,  
And it delights in offspring.  
When the many return to the One  
And it floods them anew,  
Then both are fulfilled.

*(To be continued)*







Ink and Pen Picture by Mr. David Watts, Age: 15 years  
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# The First Step Towards Jnana\*

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The word Jñāna means knowledge. It is derived from the root *jñā*—to know—the same word from which your English word *to know* is derived. Jnana-Yoga is yoga by means of knowledge. What is the object of the Jnana-Yoga? Freedom. Freedom from what? Freedom from our imperfections, freedom from the misery of life. Why are we miserable? We are miserable because we are bound. What is the bondage? The bondage is of nature. Who is it that binds us? We, ourselves.

The whole universe is bound by the law of causation. There cannot be anything, any fact—either in the internal or in the external world—that is uncaused; and every cause must produce an effect.

Now this bondage in which we dwell is a fact. It need not be proved that we are in bondage. For instance: I would be very glad to get out of this room through this wall, but I cannot; I would be very glad if I never became sick, but I cannot prevent that; I would be very glad not to die, but I must; I would be very glad to do millions of things that I cannot do. The will is there, but we do

not succeed in accomplishing the desire. When we have any desire and not the means of fulfilling it, we receive that peculiar reaction called misery. Who is the cause of desire? I, myself. Therefore, I myself am the cause of all the miseries I experience.

Misery begins with the birth of the child. Weak and helpless, he enters the world. The first sign of life is weeping. Now, how could we be the cause of misery, when we find it at the very beginning? We have caused it in the past? Hence, comes the very interesting theory called reincarnation.

To understand reincarnation, we must first know that in this universe something can never be produced out of nothing. If there is such a thing as a human soul, it cannot be produced out of nothing. If something can be produced out of nothing, then something would disappear into nothing also. If we are produced out of nothing, then we will also go [back] into nothing. That which has a beginning must have an end. Therefore, as souls we could not have had any beginning. We have been existing all the time.

Then again, if we did not exist previously, there is no explanation of our present existence. The child is born with a bundle of causes. How many characteristics we see in a child which can never be explained until we grant that the child has had past experience—i.e. fear of death and a great number of innate tendencies. Who taught the child to drink milk [as a baby,] and to do so in a peculiar fashion? Where did it acquire this knowledge? We know that there cannot be any knowledge without

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Source: Vedanta Society of Northern California. *Vide* Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries—The World Teacher* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985), vol. 3, pp. 358–63. The title of the class is provided by the Publisher.



experience; for to say that knowledge is intuitive in the child, or instinct[ual] is what the logicians would call a *'petitio principii.'*<sup>1</sup>

It would be the same [logic] as when a man asks me why light comes through a glass, and I answer him, 'Because it is transparent'. That would be really no answer at all, because I am simply translating his word into a bigger one. The word 'transparent' means 'that through which light comes'—and that was the question. The question was why light comes through the glass, and I answered him, 'Because it comes through the glass'.

In the same way, the question was why these tendencies are in the child? Why should it have fear of death, if it never saw death? If this is the first time it was ever born, how did it know to suck the mother's milk? If the answer is 'Oh, it was instinct', that is simply returning the question that we cannot answer. If a man stands up and says 'I do not know', he is in a better position than the man who says 'It is instinct', and all such nonsense.

There is no such thing as instinct; there is no such thing as nature separate from habit. Habit is one's second nature, and habit is one's first nature too. All that is in your nature is the result of habit, and habit is the result of experience. There cannot be any knowledge separate from experience.

So this baby must have had some experience too. This fact is granted even by modern materialistic science. It proves beyond doubt that the baby brings with it a fund of experience. It does not enter into this world [with] a 'tabula rasa'—a blank mind upon which nothing is written, as some of the old philosophers believed—but ready

equipped with a bundle of knowledge. So far so good.

But while modern science grants that this bundle of knowledge [which] the child brings with it was acquired through experience, it asserts, at the same time, that it is not its own—but its father's and its grandfather's and its great-grandfather's. Knowledge comes, they say, through hereditary transmission.

Now this is one step in advance of that old theory of 'instinct', that is fit only for babies and idiots. This 'instinct' theory is a mere pun upon words and has no meaning whatsoever. A man with the least thinking power and the least insight into [the] logical precision of words would never dare to explain one's innate tendencies by 'instinct', a term which is equivalent to saying that something came out of nothing.

But the modern theory of transmission through experience—though, no doubt, a step in advance of the old one—does not prove sufficient at all. Why not? We can understand a physical transmission, but a mental transmission is impossible to understand.

What causes me—who am a soul—to be born with a father who has transmitted certain qualities? What makes me come back? The father, having certain qualities, may be one binding cause. Assuming that I am a distinct soul that existed before and wants to reincarnate—what makes my soul go into the body of a particular man? For the explanation to be sufficient, we have to assume a hereditary transmission of energies—such a thing as my own previous experience. This is what is called karma, [or] in English, the Law of Causation, the law of fitness.

1. A logical fallacy in which either the premise is wrong or what is to be proved is implicit.

For instance, if my previous action have



all been towards drunkenness, I will naturally gravitate to[wards] persons who are transmitting a drunkard's character. I can only take advantage of the organism produced by those parents who have been transmitting a certain peculiar influence for which I am fit by my previous actions. Thus we see that it is true a certain hereditary experience is transmitted from father to son, and so on. At the same time, it is my past experience that joins me to the particular cause of hereditary transmission.

word *transmission*? It is a big word, but, like so many other impossible and nonsensical terms of the same kind, it has come into use without people understanding it. If I were to ask you what *transmission* is, you would find that you have no real conception of its meaning, because there is no idea attached to it.

Let us look a little closer into the matter. Say, for instance, here is a father. A child is born to him. We see [that] the same qualities [which the father possesses] have entered

*To be a rationalist requires more than unbelief. You must be able not only to reason, but also to follow the dictates of your reason. If reason tells you that this body is an illusion, are you ready to give it up? [If] reason tells you that heat and cold are mere illusions of your senses, are you ready to brave these things?*

A simple hereditary transmission theory will only touch the physical man and would be perfectly insufficient for the internal soul of man. Even when looking upon matter from the purest materialistic standpoint—viz. that there is no such thing as a soul in man, and man is nothing but a bundle of atoms acted upon by certain physical forces and works like an automaton—even taking that for granted, the mere transmission theory would be quite insufficient.

The greatest difficulties as to the simple hypothesis of mere physical transmission will be here: If there be no such thing as a soul in man, if he be nothing [more] than a bundle of atoms acted upon by certain forces, then, in the case of transmission, the soul of the father would decrease according to the ratio of the number of his children; and the man who has five, six or eight children must, in the end, become an idiot. India and China—where men breed like rats—would then be full of idiots. But, on the contrary, we find that the least amount of lunacy is in India or China.

The question is, What do we mean by the

into his child. Very good. Now how did the qualities of the father come to be in the child? Nobody knows. So this gap the modern physicists want to fill out with the big word *transmission*. And what does this *transmission* mean? Nobody knows.

How can mental qualities of experience be condensed and made to live in one single cell of protoplasm? There is no difference between the protoplasm of a bird and that of a human brain. All we can say with regard to physical transmission is that it consists of the two or three protoplasmic cells out from the father's body. That is all. But what nonsense to assume that ages and ages of past human experience got compressed into a few protoplasmic cells! It is too tremendous a pill they ask you to swallow with this little word *transmission*.

In early times the churches had prestige, but today science has got it. And just as in early times people never inquired for themselves—never studied the Bible, and so the priests had [a] very good opportunity to teach whatever they liked—so even now the majority of people do not study for them-



selves and, at the same time, have a tremendous awe and fear before anything called scientific. You ought always to remember that there is a worse popery coming [now] than ever existed before in the church—the so-called scientific popery, which has become so successful that it dictates to us with more authority than the religious popery.

Those popes of modern science are great popes indeed, but sometimes they ask us to believe more wonderful things than any priest or any religion ever did. And one of those wonderful things is that transmission theory, which I could never understand. If I ask, 'What do you mean by *transmission*?' they only make it a little easier by saying, 'It is hereditary transmission'. And if I tell them, 'That is rather Greek to me', they make it still easier by saying, 'It is the adherence of paternal qualities in the protoplasmic cells'. In that way it becomes easier and easier, until my mind becomes muddled and disgusted with the whole thing.

Now one thing we see: we produce thought. I am talking to you this evening and it is producing thought in your brain. By this act of transmission we understand that my thoughts are being transmitted into your brain and your mind and producing other thoughts. This is an everyday fact.

It is always rational to take the side of concepts which you can understand—to take the side of fact. Transmission of thought is perfectly understandable. Therefore we are [able] to take up the [concept of] transmission of thought, and not of hereditary impressions of protoplasmic cells alone. We need not brush aside the theory, but the main stress must be laid upon the transmission of thought.

Now a father does not transmit thought.

It is thought alone that transmits thought. The child is born, existed previously as thought. We all existed eternally as thought, and will go on existing as thought.

What we think, that our body becomes. Everything is manufactured by thought, and thus we are the manufacturers of our own lives. We alone are responsible for whatever we do. It is foolish to cry out: 'Why am I unhappy?' I made my own unhappiness. It is not the fault of the Lord at all.

Someone takes advantage of the light of the sun to break into your house and rob you. And then when he is caught by the policeman, he may cry: 'Oh sun, why did you make me steal?' It was not the sun's fault at all, because there are thousands of other people who did much good to their fellow beings under the light of the same sun. The sun did not tell this man to go about stealing and robbing.

Each one of us reaps what we ourselves have sown. These miseries under which we suffer, these bondages under which we struggle, have been caused by ourselves, and none else in the universe is to blame. and God [in] the least is to blame for it.

'Why did God create this evil world?' He did not create this evil world at all. We have made it evil, and we have to make it good. 'Why did God make me so miserable?' He did not. He gave me the same powers as [he did] to every being. [It is] I [who] brought myself to this pass.

Is God to blame for what I myself have done? His mercy is always the same. His sun shines on the wicked and the good alike. His air, his water, his earth give the same chances to the wicked and the good. God is always the same eternal, merciful father. The only thing for us to do is to bear the results of our own acts.

We learn that, in the first place, we have been existing eternally. In the second place we are the makers of our own lives. There is no such a thing as fate. Our lives are the result of our previous actions, our karma. And it naturally follows that, having been ourselves the makers of our karma, we must also be able to unmake it.

The whole gist of Jnana-Yoga is to show humanity the method of undoing this karma. A caterpillar spins a little cocoon around itself out of the substance of its own body, and at last finds itself imprisoned. It may cry and weep and howl there; nobody will come to its rescue, until it becomes wise and then comes out, a beautiful butterfly. So with our bondages. We are going around and around ourselves through countless ages. And now we feel miserable, and cry and lament over our bondage. But crying and weeping will be of no avail. We must set ourselves to cutting these bondages.

The main cause of all bondage is ignorance. Man is not wicked of his own nature—not at all. His nature is pure, perfectly holy. Each man is divine. Each man that you see is a God by his very nature. This nature is covered by ignorance, and it is ignorance that binds us down. Ignorance is the cause of all misery. Ignorance is the cause of all wickedness; and knowledge [alone] will make the world good.

Knowledge will remove all misery. Knowledge will make us free. This is the idea of Jnana-Yoga: knowledge will make us free! What knowledge? Chemistry? Physics? Astronomy? Geology? They help us a little, just a little. But the chief knowledge is that of our own nature. 'Know thyself.' You must know what you are, what your real nature is. You must become conscious of that infinite nature within. Then your bondages will burst.

Studying the external alone, man begins to feel himself to be nothing. These vast powers of nature, these tremendous changes occurring—whole communities wiped off the face of the earth as in the twinkling of an eye, one volcanic eruption shattering to pieces whole continents—perceiving and studying these events, man begins to feel himself weak. Therefore, it is not the study of this external nature that makes [one] strong. But there is the internal nature of man—a million times more powerful than any volcanic eruption or any law of nature—which conquers nature, triumphs over all its laws. And that alone teaches man what he is.

'Knowledge is power', says the proverb, does it not? It is through knowledge that power comes. Man strives to know. Here is a man of infinite power and strength. He himself is, solely by his own nature, potent and omniscient. This he must know. And the more he becomes conscious of his own self, the more he manifests this power and his bonds break and at last he becomes free.

How to know ourselves? the question remain now. There are various ways to know this Self, but in Jnana-Yoga it takes the help of nothing else but sheer intellectual reasoning. Reason alone, intellect alone, rising to spiritual perception, shows what we are.

There is no question of believing. Disbelieve everything—that is the first step. Dare to be a rationalist. Dare to follow reason wherever it leads you.

We hear everyday people say[ing] all around us: 'I dare to reason.' It is, however, a very difficult thing to do. I would go two hundred miles to look at the face of the man who dares to reason and follow reason. Nothing is easier to say, and nothing is more difficult to do. We are bound to follow



superstitions all the time—old, hoary superstitions, either national or belonging to humanity in general—superstitions belonging to family, to friends, to country, to fashion, to books, to sex, and to what-not.

Talk of reason! Very few people reason, indeed. You hear a man say, 'Oh, I don't like to believe in anything; [I] don't like to grope through darkness. I must reason.' And so he reasons. But when reason smashes to pieces what he hugs unto his breast, he says, 'No more! This reasoning is all right until it breaks my ideals. Stop there!' That man would never be a jñāni. That man will carry his bondage all through his life. Again and again he will come before the power of death. Such men are not made for jñāna. There are other methods for them—as Bhakti-Yoga, Karma-Yoga, or Raja-Yoga—but not Jnana-Yoga.

is true, are you ready to deny your sense perception? If you dare, you are a rationalist.

It is very hard to believe in reason and follow truth. This whole world is full either of the superstitious or [of] half-hearted hypocrites. I would rather side with superstition and ignorance than stand with those half-hearted hypocrites. They are no good. They stand on both sides of the river.

Take anything up, fix your ideal and follow it out boldly unto death. That is the way to salvation. Half-heartedness never led to anything. Be superstitious, be a fanatic if you please, but be something. Be something, show that you have something; but be not like those shilly-shallyers with truth—those jacks-of-all-trades, who just want to get a sort of nervous titillation, a dose of opium, until their desire after the sensational

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I want to prepare you by saying that this method can only be followed by the boldest. Do not think that the man who believes in no church, belongs to no sect, or the man who boasts of his unbelief is a rationalist. Not at all. In modern times it is rather bravado to do anything like that.

To be a rationalist requires more than unbelief. You must be able not only to reason, but also to follow the dictates of your reason. If reason tells you that this body is an illusion, are you ready to give it up? [If] reason tells you that heat and cold are mere illusions of your senses, are you ready to brave these things? If reason tells you that nothing that the senses convey to your mind

becomes a habit.

The world is getting too full of such people. Contrary to the apostles who, according to Christ, were the salt of the earth, these fellows are the ashes, the dirt of the earth. So let us first clear the ground and understand what is meant by following reason, and then we will try to understand what our obstructions are to following reason.

Our first obstruction to following reason is our unwillingness to go to truth. We want truth to come to us. In all my travels, most people told me: 'Oh, that is not a comfortable religion you talk [about]. Give us a



comfortable religion!’

I do not understand what they mean by this ‘comfortable religion’. I was never taught any comfortable religion in my life. I want truth for my religion. Whether it be comfortable or not, I do not care. Why should truth always be comfortable? Truth many times hits hard—as we all know by our experience. Gradually, after a long intercourse with such persons, I came to find out what they meant by their stereotypical phrase. These people have sunk into a rut, and they do not dare to get out of it. Truth must apologize to them.

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‘Very good, madam,’ I replied. ‘You now have all these things. [And] you will have to see them millions of years yet. Then you will be bumped somewhere and come to reason. Until that time comes, you will never come to God. In the meantime, go on seeing God in your children, and in your money and your diamonds and your dances.’

It is difficult, almost impossible, for such people to give up these sense enjoyments. It has grown upon them from birth to birth. If you ask a pig to give up his sty and to go into your most beautiful parlour, why it will be death to the pig. ‘Let go, I must live there,’ says the pig.

[Here Swami Vivekananda explained

the story of the fishwife: ‘Once a fishwife was a guest in the house of a gardener who raised flowers. She came there with her empty basket, after selling fish in the market, and was asked to sleep in a room where flowers were kept. But, because of the fragrance of the flowers, she couldn’t get to sleep for a long time. Her hostess saw her condition and said, “Hello! Why are you tossing from side to side so restlessly?” The fishwife said: “I don’t know, friend. Perhaps the smell of the flowers has been disturbing my sleep. Can you give me my fish-basket? Perhaps that will put me to sleep.” ’ 2 ]

*When they see how every city is built upon ruins—every forest stands upon a city—then they become convinced of the vanity of this world.*

So with us. The majority of mankind delight[s] in this fish smell—this world, this enjoyment of the senses, this money and wealth, and chattel, and wife, and children. All this nonsense of the world—this fishy smell—has grown upon us. We can hear nothing beyond it, can see nothing beyond it; nothing goes beyond it. This is the whole universe.

All this talk about heaven and God and soul means nothing to an ordinary man. He has heaven already here. He has no other idea beyond this world. When you tell him of something higher, he says, ‘That is not a comfortable religion. Give us something comfortable.’ That is to say that religion is nothing but what he is doing.

If he is a thief and you tell him that stealing is the highest thing we can do, he will say, ‘That is a comfortable religion.’ If he is

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



cheating, you have to tell him that what he is doing is all right, then he will accept your teaching as a 'comfortable religion'. The whole trouble is that people never want to get out of their ruts—never want to get rid of the old fish-basket and smell in order to live. If they say 'I want the truth', that simply means that they want the fish-basket.

When have you reached knowledge? When you are equipped with those four disciplines: [Jnana-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Karma-Yoga and Raja-Yoga.] You must give up all desire of enjoyment, either in this life or the next. All enjoyments of this life are vain. Let them come and go as they will.

What you have earned by your past actions, none can take away from you. If you have deserved wealth, you [can] bury yourself in the forest and it will come to you. If you have deserved good food and clothing, you may go to the north pole and they will be brought to you. The polar bear will bring them. If you have not deserved them, you may conquer the world and still die of starvation. So, why do you bother about these things? And, after all, what is the use of them?

As children we all think that the world is made so very nice, and that masses of pleasures are simply awaiting us. That is every schoolboy's dream. And when he goes out into the world, the everyday world, very soon his dreams vanish. So with nations. When they see how every city is built upon ruins—every forest stands upon a city—then they become convinced of the vanity of this world.

All the power of knowledge and wealth once made has passed away—all the sciences of the ancients, lost, lost forever. Nobody knows how. That teaches us a grand lesson. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of the spirit. If we have seen all this, then we

become disgusted with this world and all it offers us. This is called *vairāgya*, non-attachment, and is the first step towards knowledge.

The natural desire of man is to go towards the senses. Turning away from the senses, taking him back to God. So the first lesson we have to learn is to turn away from the vanities of the world.

How long will you go on sinking and diving down and going up for five minutes, to again sink, again come up and sink, and so on—tossed up and down? How long will you be whirled on this wheel of karma—up and down, up and down? How many thousands of times have you been kings and rulers? How many times have you been surrounded by wealth and plunged into poverty? How many thousands of times have you been possessed of the greatest powers? But again you had to become men, rolling down on this mad rush of karma's waters. This tremendous wheel of karma stops neither for the widow's tears nor the orphan's cry.

How long will you go on? How long? Will you be like that old man who had spent all his life in prison but, when let out, begged to be brought back into his dark and filthy dungeon cell? This is the case with us all! We cling with all [our] might to this low, dark, filthy cell called this world—to this hideous, chimerical existence where we are kicked about like a football by every wind that blows.

We are slaves in the hands of nature—slaves to a bit of bread, slaves to praise, slaves to blame, slaves to wife, to husband, to child, slaves to everything. Why, I go about all over the world—beg, steal, rob, do anything—to make happy a boy, who is, perhaps, hump-backed or ugly-looking. I will do any wicked thing to make him happy. Why? Because I am his father. And,



at the same time, there are millions and millions of boys in this world, dying of starvation—boys beautiful in body and in mind. But they are nothing to me. Let them all die. I am apt to kill them all to save this one rascal to whom I have given birth. This is what you call love. Not I. Not I. This is brutality.

There are millions of women—beautiful in body and mind, good, gentle, virtuous—dying of starvation this minute. I do not care for them at all. But that Jinny who is mine—who beats me three times a day, and scolds me the whole day—for that Jinny I am going to beg, borrow, cheat and steal, so that she will have a nice gown.

Do you call that love? Not I. This is mere desire, animal desire—nothing more. Turn away from these things. Is there no end to these hideous dreams? Put a stop to them.

lives forever. Death will overtake us, even there.

Every conjunction must have a disjunction. No body, finer or coarser, can be manufactured without particles of matter coming together. Whenever two particles come together, they are held by a certain attraction; and there will come a time when those particles will separate. This is the eternal law. So, whenever there is a body—either grosser or finer, either in heaven or on earth—death will overcome it.

Therefore, all desires of enjoyment in this life, or in a life to come, should be given up. People have a natural desire to enjoy; and when they do not find their selfish enjoyments in this life, they think that after death they will have a lot of enjoyment somewhere else. If these enjoyments do not take us

*The great civilizations—what have they died of? They went for pleasure. And they went further and further down, until under the mercy of God, savages came to exterminate them, lest we would see human brutes growling about. Savages killed [off] those nations that became brutalized through sense enjoyment, lest Darwin's missing link would be found.*

When the mind comes to that state of disgust with all the vanities of life, it is called turning away from nature. This is the first step. All desires must be given up—even the desire of going to heaven.

What are these heavens, anyhow? Places where they sing psalms all the time. What for? To live there and have a nice healthy body with phosphorescent light or something of this kind going out of every part, with a halo around the head, and with wings, and the power to penetrate the wall?

If there be powers, they must pass away sooner or later. If there is a heaven—as there may be many heavens with various grades of enjoyment—there cannot be a body that

towards knowledge in this life, in this world, how can they bring us mere knowledge in another life?

Which is the goal of man? Enjoyment or knowledge? Certainly not enjoyment. Man is not born to have pleasure or to suffer pain. Knowledge is the goal. Knowledge is the only pleasure we can have.

All the sense pleasures belong to the brute. And the more the pleasure in knowledge comes, these sense pleasures fall away. The more animal a man is, the more he enjoys the pleasures of the senses. No man can eat with the same gusto as a famished dog. No man was ever born who could feel the same pleasure in eating as an



ordinary bull. See how their whole soul is in eating. Why, your millionaires would give millions for that enjoyment in eating—but they cannot have it.

This universe is like a perfect[ly] balanced ocean. You cannot raise a wave in one place without making a hollow in another one. The sum total of energy in the universe is the same throughout. You spend it in some place, you lose it in another. The brute has got it, but he spent it on his senses; and each [of his] sense[s] is a hundred times stronger than those of man.

How the dog smells at a distance! How he traces a footprint! We cannot do that. So, in the savage man. His senses are less than the animal's, but far keener than the civilized man's.

The lower classes in every country intensely enjoy everything physical. Their senses are stronger than those of the cultured. But as you go higher and higher in the scale, you see the power of thought increasing, and the powers of the senses decreasing in the same ratio.

Take a Red Indian, cut him to pieces, and in five days he is all right. But if I scratch you, it is ten to one you will suffer for weeks or months. That energy of life which he displays—you have it too. But with you, it is used in the make up of your brain, in the manufacture of thought. So with all enjoy-

ments and all pleasures. Either enjoy the pleasure of the senses—live like the brute and become a brute—or renounce those things and become free.

The great civilizations—what have they died of? They went for pleasure. And they went further and further down, until under the mercy of God, savages came to exterminate them, lest we would see human brutes growling about. Savages killed [off] those nations that became brutalized through sense enjoyment, lest Darwin's missing link would be found.

True civilization does not mean congregating in cities and living a foolish life, but going Godward, controlling the senses, and thus becoming [the] ruler in this house of the Self.

Think of the slavery in which we are [enmeshed]. Every beautiful form I see, every sound of praise I hear, immediately attracts me; every word of blame I hear immediately repels me. Every fool has an influence over my mind. Every little movement in the world makes an impression upon me. Is this a life worth living?

So when you have realized the misery of this physical existence—when you become convinced that such a life is not worth living—you have made the first step towards jñāna. □

The character of extreme minuteness of the absolute was noticed by Al Beruni, the Muhammedan scholar, who said: 'Some Hindu scholars call God *a point*, meaning to say thereby that the qualities of bodies do not apply to him. Now some uneducated man reads this and imagines, God is small as *a point*, and he does not find out what the word *point* in this sentence was really intended to express. He will not even stop with this offensive comparison, but will describe God as much larger, and will say, He is twelve fingers long and ten fingers broad. Praise be to God, who is far above measure and number!

From *Al Beruni's India*

Dear readers,  
Please go through the following request and send your replies, if any, to the  
Vivekananda Vedanta Society.—Editor

**Vivekananda Vedanta Society**  
**5423 South Hyde Park Blvd. Chicago, Illinois 60615. (312) 363-0027**  
*A Branch of the Ramakrishna Order*

To: The Editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*, Mayavati

December 2, 1994

Dear Swamiji,

At the suggestion of Rev. Sarvagatananda, the 'Staff' of the Society has undertaken a History of the Ramakrishna-Vedanta movement in America. As the Swami suggested, we are trying to follow in the footsteps of Swami Jnaneswarananda *Hinduism Comes to America*<sup>1</sup> in concentrating on mini-biographies of the Swamis—mostly, but not only the Heads of Centres. As it happens, one departure from his style will be emphasis on a 'trio': Swamis Yatiswaranandaji, Ranganathanandaji, and Nihisreyasanandaji,—who left behind no Center in their name, but travelled much like Swamiji a hundred years ago, teaching freely, brilliantly and deeply, wherever invited. And left behind hundreds of admirers, with transformed lives, in America as well as world-wide.

Naturally it is not easy to collect data on the U.S.A. work of these three—like birds, leaving no tracks in the sky—but by grace we have now more than anticipated, and more expected. And among all our Centers in America, excellent cooperation has brought ample data on all except two Swamis: Vishwanandaji in Chicago and Bodhanandaji in New York. The former is still yielding slowly to persistent questioning, cajoling, pleading here on the spot. But with Bodhananda, there are still formidable gaps in our knowledge: (i) Very few of his devotees are still alive; (ii) he was so quiet, indrawn, meditative and ascetic that he left behind few outer achievements except friends, devotees and lovers in the best sense. (iii) Because his 44 years here included the only instance of a U.S.A. Center's asking its Swami (Abhedananda) to resign, and later the only example of an Assistant (Swami Nikhilananda) moving out to start another fine Center, the devotees have tended to minimize or veil off such unpleasantnesses—as is inevitable in a democracy.

Thus we lack much corroborative data to flesh out our picture of Bodhananda especially and Vishwananda incidentally. It is certain that Bodhananda had at least three stalwart Assistants between 1927 and 1933: Swamis Jnaneswarananda, Devatmananda, and Nikhilananda. Since Jnaneswarananda founded our Chicago Society immediately after leaving Bodhananda, we have ample data about his life thenceforth; but hardly any from Bodhananda's end. Likewise with Devatmananda, who left to take up the budding Portland Centre and built it up solidly. Only with Nikhilananda does the 'gap' end; but it is tantalizingly evident that Bodhananda must have done much to 'acculturate' all three of them to our Western ways.

Hence this is to appeal to your readers, if you think wise, for any and all bits of further information about Rev. Bodhananda, and/or Vishwananda, and/or any of the 'Trio' mentioned above.<sup>2</sup> Personal memories, or those of friends and relatives; letters, articles in Journals or newspapers (or references thereto)—all will be welcomed, since despite extensive search (California to Paris and back again) the gaps are still many and most of the positive clues can stand strengthening. A few examples beside the above: (i) it is said that Bodhanandaji 'turned down without hesitation a one-million dollar gift because he felt the devotee was not a solid one yet...'—at a time when he was routinely eating meals at the 'Automat', to save his devotees trouble! (ii) Any news about his pre-monastic days, family, etc.; And, (iii) anything about his relation to his wonderful Guru (Vivekananda) and early days at the Math.<sup>3</sup>

Affectionately,  
*Swami Sarveshananda*

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- (1) Chicago, 1933, published by our Vedanta Society, and written almost surely by Jnaneswarananda.
  - (2) Only about their work in U.S.A.; for we have ample data on their work in India (and for Nihisreyasananda, in Africa).
  - (3) So far we have on this subject, only the Swami's article in *Vedanta Kesari* for Sept. 1972.



# Sublime Unity in Sharp Contrasts

N. HARIHARAN

*The story of Sītā and Rāma in Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa and the story of Krishna as told in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam have both exercised a tremendous influence over Indian life. N. Hariharan of Madurai has drawn a charming pen-picture detailing the contrasts between the marriage of Sita to Rama and that of Rukmini to Krishna. He shows the difference not only in mood but also in the underlying symbolism, drawing out the beauty of both stories.*

The Daśavatāras or ten incarnations of the Lord form an impressive pageant that moves majestically on the wide promenades of the *Bhāgavata*. While the colourful pageantry is, on the whole, strikingly splendrous, the twin tableaux in it, namely, the Rāmavatāra and Krishnavatāra (Rāma-incarnation and Krishna-incarnation) entrance us by their ineffable charm and tickle us by their intriguing contrasts. While Rāma, the strict monogamist, is a prototype of perfection in human garb and teaches, at each turn, by his impeccable conduct, Krishna is an inscrutable divinity who stuns us by His incredible exploits and shocks us by His nonchalant breaking of known rules of conduct. While Rāma is a paragon of virtue, a model of masculine chastity and a firm adherent to righteousness, Krishna is apparently a mythological version of Don Juan, a Puranic prototype of Machiavelli to whom ends justify means, a puzzle of a personality who humbles and kills titanic foes in a trice and an enigmatic divinity whose apparently questionable actions ill-accord with His lofty teachings enshrined in the *Gītā*. Truly, the contrast between these twin *avatāras* is staggering.

And nothing illustrates the yawning chasm between these twin avatars in greater vividness than their modes of wedding. In fact, the gulf of contrast opens with gaping wideness, as soon as we deal with

the subject of their weddings. To start with, Rama is an inflexible stickler of 'one-man-one-wife' rule (*eka-patnī-vrata*) while Krishna's wives, according to mythology, are a whopping sixteen thousand. And the gaping contrast assumes gargantuan proportions as soon as we set about examining the methodologies of their weddings. For purposes of our study in contrast, let us choose Sita-Kalyāṇam (marriage) as portrayed in *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa* and Rukmiṇī-Kalyāṇam as described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*.

Sita-Kalyāṇam, as felicitously narrated by Valmiki, is a simple affair perfectly in accord with Rama's puritanic virtue and admirably underscoring his passion for moral code. In fact, Rama's stumbling on Sita for his life's partner is a piece of sheer accident, though, in Sage Vishwāmītra's mind, the great event of their conjugal union was envisioned as a *fait accompli*. The road to Sita-Kalyāṇam begins as soon as the trio (Vishwāmītra, Rama and Lakshmaṇa), accompanied by other sages, leave the city of Viśālā and wend their way to Mithilā, the capital of King Janaka. Valmiki merely says, 'Having received the warmest hospitality from Sumati, Sri Rama and Lakshmana (the two scions of Raghu) spent one night there (at his capital) and proceeded from there to

Mithila the next day.<sup>1</sup>

The unfoldment of their plan to repair to Mithila for the purpose of witnessing the marvellous jewel among bows (*adbhutam ca dhanuratnam*) and also the most wonderful sacrifice of Janaka is, however, made by the host of rishis earlier at Siddhashrama after the victory of Rama in his fight against the twin rākshasas Mārīcha and Subāhu. For all his deep love and kindness for Rama and Lakshmana, Vishwamitra is inexplicably reticent on the real purpose of their planned visit to Mithila. The omniscient sage should certainly possess a prevision of the events to come and of the fact that the Sita-Rama wedding and not the witnessing of Janaka's sacrifice (*yajña*) or the famed Bow of Siva is the real purpose of their journey to Mithila. And yet, the sage and the accompanying rishis keep repeating that the object of their visit to Mithila is to see the sacrifice of Janaka and the dreaded Bow of Siva.

After the episode of Ahalyā's redemption, proceeding in a northeasterly direction from the hermitage of Sage Gautama and placing Vishwamitra at his head, Sri Rama accompanied by Lakshmana reaches the sacrificial enclosure of Janaka, the King of Mithila. At the end of his conversation with King Janaka introducing Rama and Lakshmana to him, Vishwamitra states explicitly the purpose of their visit to Mithila, namely, to examine the great bow.<sup>2</sup> Again, Vishwamitra says to King Janaka, 'Please show it (to them); may good betide you! With their desire fulfilled through the sight of this bow, the two princes will return as they would.'<sup>3</sup> Vishwamitra, the omniscient

Sage, evidently feigns ignorance about the link the bow has to Sita's marriage. He cleverly phrases his talk in such a way that the story of the bow and its relation to Sita's marriage is made to come straight from the horse's mouth. And, as expected by Vishwamitra, the story behind the bow and its relationship to Sita's wedding is related by King Janaka.

At the end of the story, Janaka promises to give away his daughter Sita in marriage to Rama in case the latter strings the intractable bow. This is the first time that Rama finds himself anywhere near the orbit of chance to marry Sita. Then, the massive eight-wheeled chest containing the heavy bow is dragged and brought to their presence. With the permission of Vishwamitra, Rama beholds the bow, seizes it promptly and attempts to string it by bending it, when the bow breaks in twain. Rama wins the grim test and qualifies himself to marry Sita. Dasharatha is duly informed of Rama's triumph in the test and of Janaka's ready willingness to give Sita in marriage to Rama. Mightily pleased, Dasharatha goes to Mithila.

The famed wedding of Sita and Rama is duly solemnized by Vasishta in the immediate presence of relations, friends and sages. The immortal words uttered by Janaka as he offers Sita in marriage to Rama constitute a vivid etching of the lofty profile of a dutiful wife. Janaka says, 'This Sita, my daughter, is going to be your helpmate in discharging your sacred obligations. Take her hand in your own and accept her. May good betide you. She is highly fortunate and will remain exclusively devoted to you and will ever follow you as a shadow.'<sup>4</sup>

1. *Tataḥ paramasatkāram sumateḥ prāpya rāghavau; usya tatra niśāmekām jagmatur-mithilām tataḥ*—Vālmīkī-Rāmāyaṇa, Bālākāṇḍa, Canto XLVIII.

2. *Mahādhanuṣi jijñāsdm kartumāgamanam tataḥ.*

3. *Etat darśaya bhadrām te kṛtakāmau nṛpatamājau;*

*darśanādasya dhanuṣo yathesitam pratiyasyataḥ*—Vālmīkī-Rāmāyaṇa, Bālākāṇḍa, Canto LXVI.

4. *Iyam sītā mama sūtā sahadharmachārī tava*



The course of Sita's wedding resembles a gentle rivulet, smooth in its serene flow and bereft of violent turbulence or wanton rebellion against protecting banks. And the sublime serenity of the course of Sita's wedding is akin to that of a highly evolved *jijñāsu* on the verge of waking up into the state of supersensuous consciousness. In fact, if we would read an allegorical meaning in the episode of Sita-Kalyanam, we can take Sita to symbolize a *mumukṣu* (the thirsting *jijñāsu*) who quietens his mind, reins in his senses, practises discrimination and dispassion, shies away from intrusions of sense-stimuli, endures the extremes of hardship, believes in scriptures with conviction, and is anchored in deep meditation. Janaka, the prototype of plenary wisdom in royal trappings, has fathered Janaki who can rightly represent the hungering *mumukṣu*. The *mumukṣu* is, as it were, perched on the precipice of spiritual growth fit and ready to take the final plunge—the plunge into the unplumbed depths of spiritual experience.

But, a thin veil of *māyā* still separates the *mumukṣu* from the Bliss of *brahmānubhava* or experience of Brahman. The tough bow of Siva which has to be strung represents the veil of *māyā*, impenetrably opaque and barring beatific vision. Siva bears his bow on his left side which, on the basis of Puranic tradition, belongs to Śakti, the Power of Cosmic Illusion. Thus, the Bow of Siva can aptly stand for *māyā*. Rama represents Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. Rama's breaking of the bow of Siva beautifully underscores the spiritual dictum that the final act of tearing asunder the veil of *māyā* is an act of supreme grace which Brahman alone is capable of performing to vouchsafe the *mumukṣu* the all-consuming experience of Brahman.

*praticchā cainambhadram te pāṇīm gṛhīṣva  
pāṇinā pativratā mahābhāga cāyevānugatā  
sadā—Vālmīkī-Rāmāyana, Bāla-kāṇḍa,  
Canto LXXIII.*

The *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* states this dictum in luminous words: 'This Self cannot be gained by the study of scriptures, nor by the power of intellect, nor even by much hearing. It can be gained only by him whom it chooses. To him it reveals its true nature.'<sup>5</sup> With the breaking of the bow (with the removal of *māyā*), Rama and Sita are united in wedlock. (Ātman merges in Brahman.) Thus, Sita-Kalyanam represents the epic saga of spiritual quest and illumination—the sublime story of *jñāna-mārga*.

If Sita-Kalyanam is a soft stream with a silent current, Rukmini-Kalyanam as depicted in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is a turbulent jungle-surge that rips its way through a tangle of boulders and brambles with none to tame its towering rage or temper its destructive abandon. In Sita-Kalyanam, Rama is unknown to Sita till the historic event of Rama's breaking of the bow. In Rukmini-Kalyanam, the first seeds of Rukmini's final wedding with Krishna are sown when she, hearing from the visitors to the palace of the extraordinary beauty, strength and virtues of Krishna, thinks within herself that he would be a suitable husband for her.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, while Rama, in Sita-Kalyanam, has no clue to his possible wedding with Sita till Janaka, in the course of his narration of the story behind the Bow of Siva, expresses his resolve to give Sita in marriage to whoever succeeds in stringing the bow, Krishna resolves in mind to marry Rukmini, considering her a fitting bride for himself, as she is the repository of great qualities like intelligence, auspicious features, generosity, beauty and agreeability in

5. *Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śrutena; yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas-tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām.*

6. *Sopasrutya mukundasya rūpavīryagunasriyah; gṛhagatairgīyamānastam mene sadṛśam patim—  
Bhāgavata, Skanda X, Chapter 52.*

nature and habits.<sup>7</sup> Thus, unlike Sita-Kalyanam, Rukmini-Kalyanam is the grand culmination of a well-crafted scheme in which both the lover and his beloved are expert co-plotters.

In Sita-Kalyanam, there is virtually no hurdle to Rama's marrying Sita except the test of stringing the bow. In Rukmini-Kalyanam, the road to the Rukmini-Krishna wedding is strewn with the thorns of trials and tribulations, of revolt and resistance. Rukmi, the powerful brother of Rukmini, is stubbornly opposed to his sister marrying Krishna. He favours her marriage with Siśupāla, the Prince of Chedi. The formidable phalanx of valiant kings like Śalva, Jarāsandha, Dantavakra, Viduratha and Puṇḍraka is in the vanguard of the grim battle against Krishna marrying Rukmini. Bhīṣmaka, the father of Rukmini, is a slave to his affection for his son Rukmi (*putras-nehavaśam gataḥ*, *Bh.*, Sk. X, Ch. 53) and is helpless. The dice appear to be heavily loaded against the Rukmini-Krishna marriage.

It is in such a plight of extreme despair that Rukmini, discarding her innate nature of shyness, vents her pent-up sentiments in a missive and sends it to Krishna through a Brahmana messenger. The missive can rightly be considered the acme of epistolary art in the rhapsody of high romance. It is neither the sentimental sob-stuff of faint-hearted femininity nor the unabashed prattle of an artless dotard. In that classic letter, Rukmini pines and prays but does not sob and snivel. The historic epistle is a lofty testament of total self-giving and self-surrender and a poignant pen-picture of the sublime sense of bridal mysticism. All the

key elements of bridal mysticism, namely, the vivid conception of one's chosen deity as one's consort, the spontaneous coming of oneself under the mesmeric spell of the ravishing charms of one's accepted consort, the total pouring of one's bridal love on him, the sublime act of total self-giving and self-surrender to him, the stinging pangs of living in separation from him, the intense longing for union with him, the readiness to face self-sacrifice in the event of failure of efforts at union with him and the grim resolve to persevere in one's efforts at union with him even in succeeding births—are so admirably fused together in Rukmini's classic epistle that it reads like a veritable exegesis on the theory of bridal mysticism. The lofty sentiment of bridal mysticism finds its apogee in Rukmini's eager suggestion in the letter of a master-plan by which her abduction by the Lord can easily be accomplished.

Krishna's reciprocity of Rukmini's loving sentiments is immediate, dramatic and tangible. He promptly leaves in his chariot for Kundināpuri, the capital of Vidarbha, along with the Brahmana messenger. The non-return of the Brahmana messenger for long depresses Rukmini. She reproaches herself for her bad luck, lack of divine grace and any possible foible that Krishna might have detected in her to warrant his rejection of her. At long last, the Brahmana messenger returns with the glad news that Krishna has arrived at Kundina. The Brahmana's labour of love earns for him the precious recompense of instant prostrations from excited Rukmini who is none other than Śrī.

From then on, developments take place quickly. Rukmini goes in a procession to the temple of the Divine Mother to offer worship to the deity. In the temple she prays, 'O Mother Goddess! I prostrate again and again before Thee and Thy offspring Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya. May Bhagavan Krishna be

7. *Tam buddhilakṣanaudāryarūpaśīlaguṇāśrayam kṛṣṇasca sadṛśīm bhāryam samudvodhūm mano dadhe— Bh.*, Sk. X, Ch. 52.



my husband! May Thou be pleased to grant this!<sup>8</sup> As she returns from the temple, her eyes scan the milling crowds for Krishna while the multitudes are maddened by her beauty. Suddenly, she sights Krishna and, in a trice, Krishna takes her by force in the very presence of his antagonists and seats her in his eagle-marked chariot, ignoring with contempt the whole assemblage of rulers. The humiliated rulers offer battle to Krishna, but are defeated by him. Rukmi, who pursues Krishna with vengeful wrath, is deformed and suffers humiliation at Krishna's hands. Krishna's conquest of his arrogant enemies who are hell-bent on frustrating his resolve to marry Rukmini and on uniting her with Sisupala, the epitome of egoism, illustrates the spiritual rule that, in the highest reaches of true bhakti, Bhagavan is sure to shield and save it from the vile forces of vanity and wickedness. Krishna triumphantly enters Dwārakā with Rukmini, and the wedding of Rukmini with Krishna takes place in royal splendour.

While Sita, in her poise and perfect serenity, represents the evolved *mumukṣu* on the verge of plenary self-awakening, Rukmini, with her mad infatuation with Krishna, symbolizes the God-intoxicated soul, the prototype of self-naughting devotion. While Sita-Kalyanam typifies *jñāna-mārga*, Rukmini-Kalyanam epitomizes the utterly sweet, if also tempestuous, way of devotion. The morally questionable act of Rukmini in sending across her epistle of exuberant love to Krishna demonstrates the devotional maxim that upswelling love for the Divine knows no restraints of ethics and elegance, customs and conventions, status and self-respect. Her unabashed confession of her mad love for Krishna, her unstinted

praise of the Lord's infinite glory, her total self-surrender and self-consecration to the Lord as revealed in her description of herself as 'a property of Thine', her fervent prayers to be united with Krishna in wedlock, her appeal to Krishna to 'capture and marry me by force according to the Rākṣasa rite, the bridal money paid on the occasion being Thy might'<sup>9</sup>, her eager suggestion to Krishna of a well-conceived plan by which her abduction by him can be effectuated, her expression of firm resolve to give up her life rather than marry anyone other than Krishna—all these which form the corpus of her revolutionary epistle reflect also the salient features of the mood of bridal mysticism. The essence of bridal mysticism lies in its forceful spontaneity and in its free jettisoning of the framework of traditional code. Rukmini's each and every move in her play on the chessboard of bridal mysticism is in perfect accord with the rules of the game though it offends conventional morality.

Thus, Sita-Kalyanam and Rukmini-Kalyanam, though poles apart in the pattern of their origin, progress and consummation, are one in their ultimate end, namely, in the attainment of the Divine. While Sita-Kalyanam portrays the austere voyage of *jñāna-yoga* which consummates itself in the unexcellable bliss of total absorption into the Divine (*sāyujya*), Rukmini-Kalyanam exemplifies the impetuous sally of *bhakti-yoga* which culminates in the illimitable ecstasy of proximity to the Divine (*sāmīpya*). Rama is the attributeless Brahman, and Sita, the *jīvātman* in the grip of yearning for spiritual release. The wedding of Sita and Rama is the *sāyujya-sthiti*—the state of identity of Brahman-Atman. Krishna is the Saguṇa Brahman, the Personal God. Rukmini is the archetypal devotee in mad love with God

8. *Namasye tvāmbikebhikṣṇam svasantānāyutam śivam; bhūyāt patirme bhagavān kṛṣṇas-tadanumodatam—Bh., Sk. X, Ch. 53.*

9. *Prasahya mām rākṣasena vidhinodvaha vīryasulkam—Bh., Sk. X, Ch. 52.*

for His own sake. The wedding of Rukmini and Krishna is the state of *sāmīpya*—of the devotee's enjoying the presence of the Lord for ever. Sita is 'an eternal portion of the Divine which is by the law of the Infinite inseparable from its Divine Whole, this part is indeed itself that Whole, except in its frontal appearance, its frontal separative self-experience; it may awaken to that reality and plunge into it to the apparent extinction or at least the merging of the individual existence.'<sup>10</sup> Rukmini is also an eternal portion of the Divine which 'may become aware of its eternal Companion and elect to live for ever in His presence, in an

imperishable union and oneness as the eternal lover with the eternal Beloved, which of all spiritual experiences is the most intense in beauty and rapture.'<sup>11</sup> Sita-Kalyanam and Rukmini-Kalyanam, in spite of there being sharp contrasts, beautifully converge in a sublime unity—the unity of divine experience either in featureless absorption or in felicitous proximity. □

10. Sri Aurobindo, *Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram, 1977), Book. I, p. 228.

11. *Ibid.*

## Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

(Continued from page 569)

been stated under the guise of the characteristics of the man of steady Wisdom, which was stated earlier in, '...this knowledge about the Self has been imparted to you' (2.39), and consists of the Knowledge of the supreme Self which is preceded by renunciation of all actions; *brāhmī*, relates to Brahman. *Pārtha*, O Pārtha; *prāpya*, after attaining; *enām*, this steadfastness; anyone whosoever, *na vimuhyati*, does not become deluded again. Indeed, there can be no recurrence of nescience which has been sublated by Knowledge; because, being beginningless, it can have no origination.

*Sthitvā*, continuing; *asyām*, in this state; *anta-kāle api*, even in the closing years of life;

*ṛcchati*, one attains; *brahma-nirvāṇam*, final beatitude in Brahman, or final beatitude as Brahman, without any distinction. The meaning of the word *api* is this: It goes without saying that one who, after taking up monasticism from the stage of Celibacy itself, continues throughout life in this steadfastness which relates to Brahman, attains the highest beatitude in Brahman.

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*In this chapter has been presented Knowledge and its means, viz. actions, and its result, viz. purification of the mind, and its result which is nothing but steadfastness in Knowledge.*

...We are accustomed to say in New England that few and fewer pigeons visit us every year. Our forests furnish no mast for them. So, it would seem, few and fewer thoughts visit each growing man from year to year, for the grove in our minds is laid waste,—sold to feed unnecessary fires of ambition, or sent to mill, and there is scarcely a twig left for them to perch on. They no longer build nor breed with us.

H.D. Thoreau, from his essay, 'Walking'



# Bastar Beckons\*

S. L. GHOSAL

*Bastar district in Madhya Pradesh may still be the most backward region, but there are pockets of change. Organizations and individuals are working relentlessly to rid the area of its poverty without disturbing the simple lifestyle of the tribals. S.L. Ghosal says a responsive administration is the need of the hour.*

Spread over an area of 39,060 square kms., Bastar remains an enigma to the outside world. It still conjures up an image of socio-economic backwardness, agricultural primitivism and administrative infirmities leading to unrelieved poverty. Abujhmarh, the exalted home of hill Marias, perhaps still remains so. However, in parts of Dantewada, Narayanpur, Bijapur, Bhanupratappur, and Kondagaon, there now exist large islands of change. Our weeklong sojourn included a score of randomly selected tribal villages of these subdivisions.

Not far from Narayanpur, set against the background of low hills, Erka stood out in perfect silhouette when we reached the village. This was our first destination. Men and women soon appeared in groups carrying gourds of liquor. After a bout of drinking in the dimly lit compound of a market place, the dancers moved to the drums. Horns and feathers seemed to sprout from their heads. Women wore saris in bright basic colours, their black hair was adorned with red flowers. Soon, drums thundered and flutes struck in a shrill note. Cymbals clashed as the drums pounded on and feet stamped in rhythm. The group gyrated wildly to the strong beat of the music and swayed in a frenzied tempo. The bells that the girls wore on their arms and ankles tinkled. The music

soon reached a crescendo. Finally, the dance came to a halt. The groups disappeared, groggy and faltering in the forest, the dim flicker of their lantern hurling weird shadows of their dark bodies.

We left Erka the next day. After an hour's drive the dense forest skirting the narrow road slowly gave way to another valley. Sulphi trees resembling green pillars dotted the lush green meadows. The sun reflected on the rocks, and sparkled on the granite bodies of men and women working in the fields. Pots and pans glistened in the bright sunshine outside the neat and clean mud huts.

The trip through these areas was not a prearranged one. The reaction of the officials to an unannounced visit varied from a friendly smile to a disguised frown. The explanation was obvious, some did not welcome all the questions, others evinced interest in them. Their response was revealing.

'My father sold out his buffaloes to release this small piece of land from the moneylender to whom it was pawned by my grandfather. But mother earth had very little to offer in this rugged terrain,' lamented Bijuram. 'There was no water except during the monsoon, no implements except sturdy hands, not much cover over heads, and no monetary assistance,' he said. 'Yet we carried on since our need was desperate, slowly the fields blossomed—

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\* Reprinted by permission of *The Hindu*, Sunday, 15 May 1994





A Maria tribesman. Massive sal logs form the background



Carrying toddy the traditional way



A sign of progress... yoga classes for tribal students in Narayanpur



what you see around is our sweat and toil round the clock,' added Makundi in a pensive mood.

Farming in Bastar plateau is indeed difficult. The entire region is undulating with varying slopes. Only 1.58 per cent of the cropped land (8.21 lakh hectares) being irrigated under tanks and wells, Bastar is primarily a rainfed district; paddy is the principal crop, followed by millets. Even though Bastar falls under high rainfall region of the state (1450 mm, annually) it occurs only during a short span of three months, rendering the entire area mostly mono-cropped. The tribal farmer plants whatever seed he has with minimal cash investment, and supplements the grain produced with wild fruits and food purchased from wage labour. Very low-calorie diet often leads to resistance to new labour-intensive farming practices than an inherent conservatism or mistrust of new methods. Having little source of cash, the tribal farmers of Bastar avoid borrowing, knowing that their repaying capacity is poor. They tend to use production loans with no planning for repayment, diverting some on immediate consumption needs; yet, they evince interest in progressive farming.

Tribal hamlets are scattered over considerable distance making field visits difficult and supervision casual. Yet, we came across some good Village Extension Workers (VEW). V.R. Sahu of Jadikursi circle, for example, exuded confidence when we met him in the village Parvalli in Bhanupratapur sub-division. He had 451 tribal families to serve, 33 being residents of his village. During his short tenure of less than two years, he spread several low-cash and no-cash technologies.

A visit to the regional agricultural research centre, near Jagadapur, however, revealed why extension messages were not

always relevant to field realities. The centre was established in 1980 with the objective of conducting experiments on an integrated crops-livestock-sylviculture and aquaculture farming system suitable to the socio-economic conditions of the tribals. At the time of our visit, 60 per cent of sanctioned positions were vacant because the Jabalpur-based main Farm University could not deploy scientists, who always tended to shun Bastar. It nevertheless has a good infrastructure and has simulated tribal farmers' field conditions to generate need-based technology.

The scientists, we interacted with, were seized of tribal farmers' field problems; yet, they did not appear to be fully responsive to the local conditions that must be considered to devise appropriate extension messages, namely, (i) different socio-religious requirements, (ii) different norms regarding leisure time, drinking customs, (iii) low-calorie diet and low energy output, (iv) lack of a favourable marketing and transport system to encourage more involvement in the cash economy, (v) day-to-day planning to meet subsistence needs, (vi) attachment to their native local, and (vii) history of exploitation and consequent mistrust of outsiders/outside institutions. All this presupposes a good extension network offering systematic feedback of tribal farmers' field problems to the research system.

To reach tribal farmers with appropriate messages and programmes, some hesitancy is, however, discernible. Eyebrows are often raised on the wisdom of spreading new ideas, conceived by experts in agriculture, agro-forestry, rural industry, etc., and imposing values that are apparently non-tribal on the surface. And a maze of uniformed opinions and myths about tribal ferocity and cultural incompatibility prove a severe disincentive for development staff being posted in the villages. An answer to these problems was sought by the administration

through increased tribal recruitment by lowering the entry qualification. But the recruits proved weaker in technical background and more prone to visit their homes nearby.

Improvement in staff performance can perhaps be achieved through measures like: (1) reducing the area covered by each village extension worker, (2) providing orientation training to them on better ways to approach tribal farmers, (3) recruiting experienced and willing workers of whatever ethnic and cultural background, and (4) putting more stress in training upon low-cost inputs for all quality of lands.

Bastar forest, despite felling, is still rich and eerily quiet. One can hear the breeze stir in the treetops, insects crawl on the fallen leaves, wild bears grunt and the fowls cluck. As darkness envelopes after sunset, myriads of fireflies, with their weird twinkle, light up the forest line. The solemn stillness of the night is only ruffled by the rustling of leaves as wild beasts roam.

The forests are the tribals' hope. Fixed as massive vertical sleepers, old sal logs fence around each tribal homestead, occasionally the entire hamlet. They were so-fixed long ago, but no one knows by whom or when. They still stand out, somewhat worn, in mute testimony of the ferocity of attack by wild animals when fauna was perhaps richer in Bastar.

'Even my grandfather, who is still alive, does not know who had fixed those logs,' observed Maner when we visited the village Sadhumichgaon. The British appetite for teak led to widespread and indiscriminate

felling; in addition, the sal forests were fashioned into sleepers for India's growing railway network. Even today, almost half the sal for railway sleepers come from Bastar. The neighbouring districts of Durg and Raipur, with growing population and industries, provide a convenient incentive for unchecked felling.

In the Kondagaon zone in Bastar, thousands of hectares of sal had to be cleared for the Dandakaranya rehabilitation project. The deep forest around Bailadilla, hitherto abounding with unusual flora and fauna, has all gone to commission the iron ore project. Yet, with natural resources in other parts of the country being squandered away, the region like Bastar is still an oasis and ought to be maintained as renewable reservoir.

No, Bastar is not really burning. There are organizations and individuals, relentlessly working to relieve Bastar of its socio-economic backwardness. May be, they shun publicity and prefer the dignity of seclusion and hardship since there is an element of pride in that. The monks of R.K. Mission Vivekananda Ashram at Narayanpur, for example, have brought health and education to 4000 square kms. of uncharted wilderness. There are octogenarian Gandhians like Panna Lal Das Gupta, still actively doing social work in the far-flung villages of Bastar. All they need is an administration fully aware of, and responsive to, their efforts to rid the district of a veritable poverty trap without disturbing their simple lifestyle, which puts less strain on the natural resources that still preserve Bastar's unspoilt character. □

Let the music of the anklets of Lord Krishna be played in my heart and not in the forest.

—Kaji Nazrul Islam



# Value-Based Education

SWAMI TATTWAJNANANANDA

*Swami Vivekananda saw education as the prime means for the uplift of India. But by education he did not mean merely the acquiring of information and job-skills. Swami Tattwajnanananda of the Ramakrishna Mission Shilpamandir, Belur, has discussed the present needs and deficiencies of the prevailing educational system in India with great clarity. The article was first presented as a paper at the National Conference on Educational Technology at the Sri Sant Gajanan Maharaj College of Engineering, Shegaon, Maharashtra, in January 1994.*

Education makes or mars the prospects of a nation. In a country like India, with its roots in hoary antiquity, it is important that educational policy pays respect to history before commencing to build for the future.

There was a time when India produced both spiritual and intellectual giants in various walks of life. The Upaniṣads eulogized both *parā* and *aparā vidyā*, sacred and secular knowledge, and we had a golden age. However, the privileges accorded to a few in the stratified caste system led us into a great depression, when Gautama Buddha with his message of renunciation and service lifted us back to the ancient glory. But due to overemphasis on the ideal of renunciation for all in society, a condition of national ill-preparedness set in, that brought on the Muslim invasions when masses of people preferred to convert to have a better lot. Again we insulated ourselves from the rest of the world, only to be exposed and laid waste by the scientifically superior and organized races from outside, particularly the British East India Company.

The presentation of Hinduism at its best by Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions opened a new and glorious chapter in India's history, however. Swami Vivekananda represents the best-educated Indian mind with his knowledge of Western

thought and deep experience of the Indian spiritual tradition. Even today, after a hundred years, the personality of Swamiji receives homage from people in all stations of life, in all religions, cultures and countries. This is a fact to be taken seriously as we prepare to enter an age of globalization.

Swami Vivekananda personified the two main principles that he taught to the world: the oneness of the universe and the divinity of man. Man is a divine being; and there is a fundamental unity running through this universe. The response Vivekananda received for this teaching on the world stage proves that we can ill-afford to ignore these two principles in our educational system.

At birth, and in his uncivilized state, man is more or less like an animal—he might be called a *manimal*.

*Āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunam ca  
sāmānyametat paśubhir narāṇām;  
dharmo hi teṣām adhiko viśeṣo  
dharmasya hīnaḥ paśubhiḥ samānaḥ.<sup>1</sup>*

That is, he eats, drinks, sleeps, fears, and

1. *Sanskrit Subhashita Sarita*, Part 1. Ed. Sri V.K. Shrotriya (Pune: Nitin Prakashan, 1988), Verse 347, p. 95.

reproduces, just like an animal. Civilization tries to instill values in him so that he will produce the minimum evil and the maximum good. Essentially education in homes, schools and colleges has made concerted effort to raise man from the brute to the human, and eventually to the level of the divine, channellizing his mental and physical energies ever upwards.

#### *Value-based education*

So first of all, the whole man-making, character-making education has to be *Value Based Education*, in the sense that it should make the person aware of the higher purposes of life—individual and cosmic, material as well as spiritual, and of the noble means to realize his goals. ‘Values’ can’t be added just like we add salt to the curry in the kitchen. In the West, from the 10th century onwards, education made enormous strides forward, and yet the number of wars, bloody revolutions and grave crimes did not decrease at all. On the contrary, in this most scientific and most ‘educated’ 20th century, the West has reached unrivalled heights in technical education, yet it has made this century the goriest ever. Mis-education has partly succeeded in the dehumanization of man. So the remedy lies in reversing the trend and educating for ‘humanization’ of man, or spiritualizing his human urges, elevating him from sensual life to spiritual life.

All education begins at home. Parents have to become enlightened citizens themselves to be able to foster their children’s spiritual development. They should not push their ambitions on children. It is not wise, since every child is born with unique potentialities and motivations. Parents should give an initial thrust, strength, and training in good habits. And at home, as Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna emphasized, an attitude of reverence for women as representatives of the divine

power must be created. There is a *śloka*:

*Yatra nāryastu pūjyante  
ramante tatra devatāḥ;  
yatra etāḥ tu na pūjyante  
sarvā tatrāphalāḥ kriyāḥ.*<sup>2</sup>

‘Where women are given proper respect and status in the society, there all works become successful.’ Another, on the same point is:

*Na gṛham gṛhamityāhur  
gṛhiṇī gṛhamucyate.*<sup>3</sup>

‘A house is not called a home till it is taken care of by the mother and wife.’ ‘A good mother is equal to a hundred teachers.’

#### *Ideal teachers needed*

The role of the teacher in this value-oriented education cannot be underestimated. In English there is no satisfactory translation, perhaps, for the word *guru*. The guru is a teacher, yet more. He is also called *ācārya*, a word which is derived from the root *ācāra*, denoting ‘practical behaviour and discipline’. This teacher practises what he preaches. He leads an ideal life, worth imitating, both inwardly in mind and outwardly in his behaviour with others.

The method of education in ancient India was *gurukula vāsa* (lit. living with the guru), a residential institution where everyone, up to twenty students, with supervisor and teacher lived attuned to the same ideal. The *ācārya* or teacher had to know his subject thoroughly and had to remember that his role combined father, mother, and teacher into one, as in the early Indian tradition parents handed over their wards to this teacher. But if the teacher became a mere ‘money-earner’, collecting tuitions and playing political games, the education

2. *Ibid.*, verse 196, p. 55.

3. *Ibid.*, verse 192, p. 54.



would have been sadly undermined of all its strength. The same holds true for today's pupils in our public and private schools. There is a śloka:

*Ācāryāt pādām ādatte  
pādām anye svamedhayā;  
pādām sabrahmacāribhyaḥ  
pādaḥ kālāya pacyate.*<sup>4</sup>

That is, an *āchārya* should remember that 'a student learns one quarter from the *āchārya*, one quarter by his own intelligence, one quarter from his peers and books, and one quarter through experience.' So he should treat the student as a gardener treats a plant—only giving the necessary nutrients needed for the manifestation of its potential energy.

#### *Health is wealth*

Health is an important value in education.

*Śarīramādyam khalu dharmasādhanam.*  
—'Indeed, (one's) body is the first means of practising dharma.'<sup>5</sup>

One who is physically fit alone can be mentally alert. Hence co-curricular activities should be given as much importance as the curricular ones, and some kind of mechanism is necessary to give it its due weight when we evaluate the success of our educational policies. A student must gear himself up to keep in good health, not only during his studentship, but as a habit for life. A regular routine and balanced diet helps the metabolism. Regular exercise helps tone up the muscles and nerves. Everyone should be his own doctor as far as possible, as everybody is unique.

#### *Faith in oneself*

'He is an atheist who does not believe in himself.'<sup>6</sup> Swami Vivekananda redefined religion as belief in oneself. There is nothing impossible if one has self-confidence. The delusion of weakness has to be shaken off by thinking thoughts of strength. The Upaniṣads teach fearlessness. One must face all difficulties in life. Face the terrible, Swami Vivekananda taught, and tremendous power will come to you through this *śraddhā*.

*Na abhiṣeko na saṁskāraḥ  
simhasya kriyate vane;  
vikramārjitasattoasya  
svayameva mrgendratā.*<sup>7</sup>

'The lion is not formally anointed to be the king of the forest, but due to his courage and strength he commands respect.'

#### *Power of concentration and detachment*

The main difference between man and man lies in the difference in power of concentration of the mind. Ordinary human beings waste most of their thought-force. You have to take up an idea, think of it, dream of it, and live in it. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, and every part of the body be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone—as Swami Vivekananda said. The more this power of concentration, the more knowledge is acquired. The theory and practice of concentration and meditation should be introduced in our schools and curricula.

Thought is the unifying force in the world. In fact, all the world is in thought. 'In space the Universe engulfs me and reduces

4. *Ibid.*, verse 120, p. 36.

5. *Ibid.*, verse 352, p. 96.

6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p. 301.

7. *Sanskrit Subhashita Sarita*, verse 216, p. 61.

me to a pinpoint, but through thought I transcend the Universe,' said the great mathematician and philosopher, Pascal. So thought has to be treated with respect. Every thought creates an impression in the mind, the combination of which impressions forms a character. Everything that enters through our senses is 'food' and that affects our thought; therefore one must be particularly careful of his intake. All sciences are developed through thought; hence thought control through meditation is a must. Swamiji said: 'No force can be created; it can only be directed. Therefore we must learn to control the grand powers that are already in our hands and by will-power make them spiritual instead of merely animal. Thus it is clearly seen that chastity is the cornerstone of all morality.'<sup>8</sup> A student is naturally in the *brahmacharya ashrama* (stage of life) and his or her chastity naturally builds up the thought force, including memory.

#### *Nonviolence and forbearance*

The strength of the strong is in non-violence. The decadent culture today has made violence an item of entertainment in the lives of people through TV and movies. Tempers heat up at short notice for no apparent reason. Disrespect for life is at the root. Strength should be gained, evil should be resisted, but nonviolence should be practised. Self-restraint is possible for a man of self-control. It comes through a humble attitude and prayers to the Divine. In our secular state, many are sceptical about religious prayers, but the Vedic prayers as follows are more secular and universal than any scientific thought.

*Om. Saha nāvavatu saha nau bhunaktu  
saha vīryam karavāvahai*

*tejasvināvadhītamastu mā vidviṣāvahai  
Om. śāntih, śāntih, śāntih.*<sup>9</sup>

'Om. May the Supreme Being protect us both, the preceptor and the student. May He nourish us both. May we work together with great energy. May our study be vigorous and fruitful. May we not hate each other. Om. Peace, peace, peace.'

*Om. Asato mā sadgamaya  
tamaso mā jyotirgamaya  
mṛtyormāmṛtaṁ gamaya.*<sup>10</sup>

'Om. From the unreal lead us to the Real,  
From darkness lead us to Light,  
From death lead us to Immortality.'

#### *Non-stealing*

Corruption is rampant all around us. The reason is that non-stealing as a value is not taught to the students. One must learn to take only what is legitimately due to him. The police should not make us moral. Stealing of things, and the desire to imitate others or possess their things, should be recognized for what it is. There should be a pressure in the family and educational institution to control wants and to satisfy legitimate wants through proper means. In the *Īśa Upaniṣad* we find:

*Īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṁ  
yatkiñca jagatyām jagat;  
Tena tyaktena bhunjīthā  
mā gr̥dhah̥ kasyasviddhanam.*<sup>11</sup>

'Whatever exists in the world is interpenetrated by a cosmic power; knowing your own place in it, be detached and do not covet anything which doesn't belong to you.' By proper evaluation of one's place in

8. *Complete Works*, vol. 8, p. 46.

9. Swami Yatiswarananda, *Universal Prayers* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1977), p. 48.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

11. *Īśa Upaniṣad*, verse 1.



this cosmic order, one becomes fulfilled and free from corruption.

### Truth

Truthfulness is the value for the modern age. Truth is dharma. *Satyam eva jayate, nānṛtam...*<sup>12</sup> 'Truth alone triumphs not falsehood.' Thought, speech and action should be aligned to be truthful. Straightforwardness is a virtue which springs from truth. By his very nature man has a desire to seek truth. There are two worlds, the microcosm and the macrocosm, the internal and the external. We get truth from both these worlds, by experience and experimentation. Psychology, metaphysics and religion are concerned with the microcosm. The physical and biological sciences are concerned with the macrocosm. A perfect truth should be in harmony with experiences in both these worlds, pointed out Vivekananda.<sup>13</sup> According to Bhīṣma, truth assumes the forms of impartiality, self-control, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, goodness, renunciation, contemplation, dignity, fortitude, compassion, and abstention from injuring.<sup>14</sup>

### Cleanliness

Cleanliness is a value often ignored; hence we have educated individuals who are dirty, personally or socially. A clean face is an indication of a clean mind. Clean and untorn clothing shows a proper attitude. Clean habits of behaviour, sitting, eating, speaking, show the culture of a man. High standards of cleanliness and hygiene are not expressly taught in the hostels of most of our educational institutions. A civic sense of cleanliness is lacking in India, as can be seen in our overcrowded crosscountry railway carriages.

12. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, iii.1.6.

13. See *Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 432.

14. *Enlightened Citizenship* (New Delhi: Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, 1985), p. 48.

Quoting Shakespeare, Mahatma Gandhi used to say, 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness.'

### Contentment

Contentment is controlling the desire for excessive wealth and sensory enjoyment (*artha* and *kāma*), two potentially dangerous but legitimate values (*puruṣārthas*) of a *dhārmic* life. Desires arising from the five sense organs of man are infinite.

*Sa hi bhavati daridro  
yasya tṛṣṇā viśālā;  
Manasi ca parituṣṭe  
ko'rthavān ko daridraḥ?*<sup>15</sup>

'One whose desire is insatiable is a poor man. If the mind is contented, who is rich and who is poor?'

However, poverty without choice can't be eulogized, and education must fight poverty on a war-footing. The value of contentment points out that all can't possess the luxuries that have been developed by technologies. Just imagine everyone driving a petrol-engine vehicle of his own and living in an air-conditioned home! The global problems of pollution, chemical wastes, global warming, greenhouse effect, are enough warnings of the necessity of this great value of contentment.

### Self-study

Most of the students depend only on what is taught in the classes but never engage themselves in regular self-study. Anything learnt must be repeated till understood. *Śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana*, is the method for self-improvement proposed by the Upaniṣads: Listen attentively, think over it deeply, chew on it as a cow chews the cud, and assimilate it till it becomes your second habit. Take the help of audio-visual methods, and group discussions; attain

15. *Sanskrit Subhashita Sarita*, verse 317, p. 87.

proficiency and establish yourself in the subject. There is no substitute for *svādhyāya*, self-study. Examinations will come only as a matter of course, and not as nightmares.

### Austerity

Austerity in thought, word and action has been recognized as a great need for all of us.

*Sukhārthinaḥ kuto vidyā  
nāsti vidyārthinaḥ sukham;  
Sukhārthā vā tyajet vidyām  
vidyārthā vā tyajet sukham.*<sup>16</sup>

This means that one who seeks pleasure will not have knowledge, and one who is a student cannot enjoy pleasures while studying. In the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*, there are plenty of examples of people who undertake *tapas* to acquire knowledge and power. Arjuna acquired his arsenal by praying, meditating, and following austerities of a difficult kind. All great people have to sacrifice pleasure to acquire knowledge. Speech should be controlled. In India, speech is 'not taxed', so everyone talks at the top of his voice without doing any work. We are good talkers, but not good listeners, and it is survival of the loudest. Speech shows the content of the mind, hence speech should be utilized properly, effectively and sparingly. Indians tend naturally to be abstract and theoretical thinkers, but technical education requires practical skills, and hard labour has to be done to acquire it. Positive thinking, controlled speech, and hard work is *manliness*.

*Udyoginām puruṣasimham upaiti lakṣmī  
daiṣam hi daiṣam iti kāpuruṣāḥ vadanti;  
daiṣam nihatya kuru pauraṣam ātmaśaktyā  
Yatne kṛte yadi na sidhyati ko'tra doṣaḥ.*<sup>17</sup>

'Wealth goes to him who is diligent and hardworking; the meanminded call it luck. One must beat the so-called "fortunes" by manifestation of soul power, and he will not fail.' A sense of the dignity of labour is one more aspect which is lacking in India among many. An efficient sweeper should have his self-respect too, and be regarded as possessed of as much dignity as a prime minister who runs his government smoothly. The powers held by men will differ, according to the demands of their work and offices, but privileges owing to status, there should be none. We Indians are good in starting new things but have no steadfastness. Bulldog tenacity is required to finish any work which should be taken up after proper thinking in the first place. Quality consciousness is the watchword in industrial production, and that can come only when the individual seeks perfection through austerity.

*Sarve yasya vinetāraḥ  
sarve paṇḍitamāninaḥ;  
Sarve mahattoam icchanti  
kulam tad'avasīdati.*<sup>18</sup>

'Wherein everyone is a leader and everyone thinks himself wise and demands greatness, [that family] perishes.' In our country it is often seen that everyone wants to command, or rather demand, respect while no one wants to obey. The political parties are playing 'American football'—attacking each other but rarely attacking the national problems. Superstition, casteism, fanaticism, backwardness, seen in the masses on one side, and 'knee-jerk responses' of the intellectuals to the global economic challenges on the other, makes one wonder whether independent India will survive or perish. It is the crying need of the hour that our young generation prepares itself through value-based education to face all

16. *Ibid.*, verse 121, p. 36.

17. *Ibid.*, verse 145, p. 42.

18. *Ibid.*, verse 433, p. 118.



these problems squarely, rather than running away to developed countries to earn fortunes for themselves. Swamiji used to say: 'So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.'<sup>19</sup> Let us not be traitors to ourselves, our country, and the world.

As we know, globalization is thrust upon everyone. Satellites are watching every corner of the world. Country is poised against country in capturing world markets. If India is to survive, the economic race has to be won against rising population and growing poverty, and every Indian must become an enlightened citizen, develop in himself the virtue of unselfishness and the spirit of service.

*Tyajet ekam kulasyārthe  
grāmasyārthe kulam tyajet;  
grāmam janapadasyārthe  
ātmārthe pṛthivīm tyajet.*<sup>20</sup>

'For the sake of the country one can give up one's family, village, and community. For the sake of Truth one can give up the whole world.' The great national sin has been the neglect of the masses and that is one of the reasons of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of use until the masses are once more well educated, well fed and well

cared for. They pay for our education, they build our temples, but in return they get kicks. If we want to regenerate India we must work for them. This was Swamiji's line of thought. He said:

There are many things to be done, but means are wanting in this country. We have brains, but no hands. We have the doctrine of Vedanta but we have not the power to reduce it into practice. In our books there is the doctrine of universal equality, but in work we make great distinctions. It was in India that unselfish and disinterested work of the most exalted type was preached; but in practice we are awfully cruel, awfully heartless—unable to think of anything besides our own mass-of-flesh bodies...

I too believe that India will awaken again if anyone could love with all his heart the people of the country—bereft of the grace of affluence, of blasted fortune, their discretion totally lost, down-trodden, ever-starved, quarrelsome and envious. Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen.<sup>21</sup> □

19. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976), letter no. 59, p. 147.

20. *Sanskrit Subhashita Sarita*, verse 385, p. 105.

21. *Swami Vivekananda, His Call to the Nation* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama), p. 87. Also: *Complete Works*, vol. 5, pp. 126–7.

If you have doubt concerning conduct, follow the example of high souls who are competent to judge, devout, not led by others, not harsh, but lovers of virtue,

—*Kṛṣṇa-Yajur-Veda, Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 1.11.4.*



# Practical Vedanta

## CHANGE OF HEART

**D**uring his travels Gautama Buddha came to a town in Magadha where, to his amazement, he found all the citizens stricken with grief. On questioning he discovered that a fearsome bandit named Angulimāla from a nearby forest had killed one or another from every family.

Angulimāla was seeking occult powers (siddhis), for which he would kill someone everyday and then cut off their fingers (anguli) to string them into a garland (mālā). He had vowed that he would offer a garland of a thousand fingers to the Goddess he worshipped.

Lord Buddha asked for the bandit's whereabouts and set out to meet him. The citizens tried to stop him, saying that even armed soldiers had not been able to prevail against Angulimala, but Buddha assured them: 'I have a weapon against which all other weapons are helpless!'

On the way he met an old woman and asked her where Angulimala lived. She looked at him in great surprise and answered, 'Angulimala, to be sure, lives a little further ahead, but why do you want to go there? He is not a man but a demon. You are taking a reckless risk, for he will surely kill you.' When Gautama asked, 'Why should he kill me?', she replied, 'My child! I am his mother. I know him only too well. He has vowed to offer a garland of a thousand fingers to the Goddess, and tonight is the last night. He has told me that if he did not find a victim today, he would use my fingers to complete the garland!'

However, seeing Gautama determined to meet her son, she reluctantly pointed to a grove of trees a little farther away. Buddha walked there and called out, 'Is anyone here?' On hearing him Angulimala rushed out sword in hand and said with exultation, 'Oh! The Goddess is surely very pleased with me and so has herself sent a victim for the sacrifice. Who are you?' Gautama Buddha countered, 'You are Angulimala, are you not?' 'Yes,' the bandit said, 'now I will slay you. Bow your head.' Buddha calmly bowed his head. Angulimala lifted his sword to strike, but suddenly stopped and asked, 'What is your name?' 'Gautama', came the softly reply.

Angulimala was stunned and could hardly speak. 'O Lord! You are Gautama Buddha!' He threw away the sword and fell at the feet of Buddha, crying piteously, 'O Teacher! Forgive me and grant me refuge. I am a great sinner and there is no penance for my sins.' The Buddha touched his forehead gently and consoled, 'Fear not, my child. Your sins have all been washed away because you have admitted your wrongdoings. Now vow to shun your old ways and live by the Dhamma.'

Not only did Angulimala renounce violence and his evil ways, but he later became a disciple of the Buddha and extensively preached the Dhamma in Sri Lanka.



# News and Reports

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION HOME OF SERVICE, BENARAS

## Centenary Celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses

To mark the conclusion of the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses, four-day-long celebrations were held from 12th to 15th January, 1995, in Varanasi under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service.

On 12th January, Swami Vivekananda's birth day and the National Youth Day, processions by the children of 24 schools and colleges of the city were held in the morning through the various routes of the city. Approximately 6000 children participated. Starting from their institutions, they converged to the Sevashrama, where each one of them was given a food packet. In the evening a Youth Day meeting was held in the Sevashrama premises, presided over by Swami Hiranmayananda. The Divisional Commissioner of Varanasi, Mr. P.K. Sinha, was the Chief Guest. Twenty boys and girls of different schools and colleges delivered speeches. Prizes were also distributed to the winners of speech, essay and quiz competitions on Swami Vivekananda held in 12 colleges in connection with the Centenary celebrations.

On 13th January at 6.30 PM a concert of devotional music by noted artists of the All India Radio was held at the Sevashrama

premises.

On 14th January at 6.30 PM, a drama was held in the local Nagari Natak Mandali Theatre Hall on Swami Vivekananda, entitled 'Krantirathi Vivekananda', staged by the students of Nivedita Shiksha Sadan and directed by Mr. P.K. Bhattacharya of the Vidya-Bharati. It was well attended and highly appreciated.

On 15th January at 4 PM, a public meeting was held in the Sevashrama premises. It was presided over by Swami Shridharananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow. Prof. Ramkumar Tripathi, Vice-chancellor of the Kashi Vidyapeeth, and Sri Jyoti Swarup, a social worker were the speakers.

Apart from the aforementioned four day long celebrations, 112 meetings were held in various schools and colleges of Varanasi and Ghazipur district. Swamiji's message was conveyed through these to the youth. Besides, booklets on his life and teachings were also distributed. So far approximately 50,000 books have been distributed during the centenary year among some 40,000 youths. □

All this universe is in the glory of God, of Śiva, the God of love, the heads and faces of men are His own, and He is in the hearts of all.

—Kṛṣṇa-Yajur-Veda, Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 3.11



## Reviews & Notices

**M.P. PANDIT: A PEEP INTO HIS PAST, by P. Raja: Publ. Dipti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 605 002; 1993; pp. 93; Rs 25/-.**

The book is a short biography of Madhav Pundalik Pandit (1918-1993), written on the basis of the personal acquaintance and interactions the author had with the subject of his writing. Why was the author drawn to writing the book in the first instance? The answer lies in the profound personal admiration he had for Sri Pandit not only as a writer and philosopher but also as a Yogi and *Siddha-Purusha* of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram of Pondicherry. Sri Pandit, as the author observes, 'was born like you and me. But how did he evolve into a great soul much honoured and respected by people from many walks of life?' It is the question posed in the last sentence which impelled the author to take a peep into the past of this great soul.

Born on 14 June 1918 into an affluent Kashmiri Pandit family, which had at some time in the past migrated to Karnataka to settle down at Sirsi, a small town in the North Kanara district of Karnataka, Madhav showed signs during his childhood of the kind of man he was to develop into in his later years: 'He never spoke unless he had something cogent to say. Silent he was not, prudent he was. Mischievous he was not; playful he was.' (p. 12)

Madhav's first teacher was his father. An advocate by profession, Rao Bahadur Pundalikrao Pandit taught young Madhav the lesson that the power of money lay in its wise uses. This lesson was not lost on the young Madhav. Years later, fully developed as a great soul in course of living in the Aurobindo Ashram and associating especially with Sri Ma, M.P. Pandit published his *Art of Living* (1989) to advise the lesser mortals to this effect: that they should neither

ignore money nor value it for its own sake. 'Choose a great cause, spend, but do not waste. Whether it is coins, currency notes, or food, or clothes, do not waste, but spend wisely.' (*Art of Living*, pp. 160-1)

Madhav's first spiritual guru was Sri Kapali Sastry, a profound Sanskrit scholar and a yogi, and a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, who stoked the spiritual spark that Madhav had in him, in such a way as to help those grow into a flame of aspiration for God. Young Madhav was eager to join the Aurobindo Ashram for continuing his spiritual journey. But Kapali Sastry, in the true spirit of an 'Anna' (elder brother) made him wait till he was twenty-one, to complete his graduation successfully.

Reminiscing later on his joining the Aurobindo Ashram, M.P. Pandit wrote that he was attracted to the Aurobindo Ashram, first and foremost, by the personality of the Mother. Writing in the 'Preface' to *Mother of Love* (1965), he characterized the Mother as SHE, as Love Incarnate. 'We came here [to the Ashrama] because our mother is here, we live here because she is present here, and we follow her wherever she is....All our lives are centred round her person....'

Under the meticulous eyes of the Mother, Madhav got his training in the *sādhana* of the integral yoga, that is, in the rigorous discipline that all life is yoga, and that every field of life is yoga too. The lucid and easy-flowing language in which M.P. Pandit wrote his understanding of the integral yoga shows the depth of his absorption of Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on the integral yoga: 'All the demarcations or segmentations are on the outside; inside all intermingle, all are one. What is done at one point has its consequences at every other point. This yoga proceeds upon this basic truth and can be pursued successfully only when life is accepted as co-extensive with yoga.' (*All Life is Yoga*, 1975, p.6)

'Higher and Broader' was the *mantra* that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gave to M.P.



Pandit. By the constant cultivation of this *mantra* he became a Universal Man himself. And if he has any message it is only this, that the purpose of man's life is to make the constant forward movement towards becoming one with the Universal Self. Self-centredness of man is the basic disease. It is the root cause of conflict between man and man. Man must broaden his vision. The individual man must grow into the Universal Man. Self-transcendence alone can right the present imbalance, and set man on his legs again. This is the main burden of nearly 150 books M.P. Pandit wrote between 1950 and 1992: on philosophy, yoga, and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sri M.P. Pandit was a prolific writer, indeed, from whose ever-active pen books poured out like a torrent. And what a facile pen he had to make philosophy and spirituality understandable and readable even to the common man!

One facet of M.P. Pandit's *sādhanā* was to make life beautiful for the common man. He published in 1985 his *Life Beautiful* with this end in view. In giving an intimate pen-picture of the literary and personal relationship he had with Sri Pandit, the author himself testifies that the concern for the common man and mankind in general was an essential attribute of M.P. Pandit's life and thinking. The author asked Sri Pandit: 'How can we get rid of the present world-wide violence?' He received the following answer: 'By creating centres of peace, pockets of peace, wherever we can. First we start with ourselves and then associate with others who are on the same wave-length. This is a sure way of combating the forces of evil on the subtle-levels.' Sri Pandit's emphasis thus was always on the individual, the rejuvenated individual: 'By eliminating these negative elements from our personal life, we can create a solid, living fortress around ourselves. Impurities shy away from Purity. Even if an individual is destroyed by a combination of evil forces, in the very act of dying he releases energies that will eventually overcome the power of evil for the benefit of mankind.' (p. 6)

M.P. Pandit would never lose his faith in the individual. He would never despair of a brighter future ahead of mankind. 'Things

will pick up', he would keep saying. Or, as he could have put it, in the words of Sri Aurobindo: 'A darkness wallows in the paths of time/ ... Yet light is there; ...'

Sri P. Raja has done a good job indeed of writing the biography of the great soul that was M.P. Pandit. A year-wise break-up of the published works of Sri Pandit has enhanced the value of the book. If the author takes the pain of annotating the bibliography in a subsequent edition, the reading public would be benefitted even more.

Dr. Anil Baran Ray, Calcutta

**SRI SADASIIVA BRAHMENDRA, By  
Dr. Prema Nanda Kumar; Publ. Rani  
Bhavani Devi Memorial Trust, Chal-  
lapalli, Krishna Dist., A.P.; 1993; pp. 96;  
Rs. 30/-**

Sadāśiva Brahmendra, a *paramahansa*, was born some 300–400 years back, in South India, to a very pious couple. He was born after his mother performed *akhaṇḍa* (*uninterrupted*) *Rāmanāma japa*, and he was named Śivarāmakṛṣṇa. His father renounced the world soon after the son's birth.

Śivarāmakṛṣṇa mastered the scriptures at a very young age, and his teachers were astounded by his profound knowledge of the scriptures. He was sought out by the royal court of Mysore, where he had to engage scholars in dialectical debates. The matter was reported to his *guru*, who chided him, saying that, while he knew how to shut the mouths of his opponents, he did not know how to control his tongue! This was the turning point in the young man's life, and from that very moment he became a *mauni* (silent contemplative). He gave up his court job, and was given the monastic vows and the name Sadāśiva by his *guru*. He performed great austerity and roamed about without any body consciousness. His was an '*icchā-marāṇa*' (death by self-willing), and he got himself buried alive. His *samādhi* (place of burial) stands today at Nerur, in Trichy district of Tamilnadu.

Sadāśiva Brahmendra has to his credit many works on Advaita philosophy. How-



ever, he is better known for his musical compositions in Sanskrit, which are very popular with lovers of Carnatic music.

The book under review is a short biography of this great soul, translated from the original Tamil by Dr. Prema Nanda Kumar. The life is covered in about 30 pages, of which ten are devoted to the *siddhis* (occult powers) he is supposed to have possessed. The narration says that, when Sadāśiva realized that the *siddhis* were sources of trouble to others, he decided to voluntarily give up his body.

The rest of the book contains his musical compositions, given in Devanāgarī script along with transliteration and translation into English. They number 23 and are perhaps the ones extant now. Many of them describe *Brahmānanda* (the bliss of realizing Brahman), but some are dedicated to Kṛṣṇa and to Rāma.

There are two short essays: one by Dr. Nanda Kumar, dealing with his philosophical works, and the other explaining the philosophy underlying Sadāśiva's songs, written by T.S. Parthasarathi. There is also a hymn eulogizing the Saint, by Sri Sivabhinava Nṛsimha Bhārati, a former pontiff of the Sringeri Math and a renowned scholar.

The book, brief in its delineation, does not really bring into complete focus the life and teachings of the great soul, who should be made known more widely. We hope that Prema Nanda Kumar, known for her calibre, will try to collect more material, and write a really good and exhaustive biography as a worthy tribute to the Saint.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, Hyderabad.

**THE VISION AND THE WAY OF  
VASIṢṬHA (VĀSIṢṬHADARŚANAM),  
compiled by B.L. Atreya and translated  
by Samvid. Publ. by Indian Heritage  
Trust, Madras, 1993; pp. 583; Price  
Rs. 175/-.**

*Yogavāsiṣṭha* (Y.V.) is one of the most important works of Indian philosophy, nay, it is one of the greatest books written under the sun. It is the Crest-jewel of all the works

on the Vedānta. It has stood on equal footings with the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavadgītā*. While making a distinction between Y.V. and the Upaniṣads as well as the *Bhagavadgītā* it has been said that the former is a *Siddha-śāstra* (written from the position of a realized one) whereas the latter are *Śādhana-śāstras* (composed from the position of a seeker). It is the Bible of those who seek for peace and liberation. People of all ages and tastes find interest in it.

In its present form Y.V. contains 27,687 stanzas (traditionally thirty-two thousand verses). Its traditional author is Vālmīki. The text has several recensions, interpolations and additions. Its present form could not have been composed earlier than the close of the fifth century A.D., as it has references to a 'Cloud-Messenger' (Kalidasa—5th Century A.D.) and the Mahāyāna theories of *vijñāna* and *śūnya*. The text is also known as *Mahā-Rāmāyaṇa*, *Ārṣa-Rāmāyaṇa*, *Gyāna-vāsiṣṭha*, *Vāsiṣṭha-Rāmāyaṇa* and simply as *Vāsiṣṭha*. It is written in simple Sanskrit containing beautiful similes, metaphors and stories (55 in all). It is a purely philosophical work but has been ignored and misunderstood because of its unsystematic presentation and stories. The text itself has been narrated in the form of a story told by Vālmīki to King Ariṣṭanemi.

The original text of Y.V. has six parts (*prakaraṇas*), namely, *vairāgya* (detachment), *mumukṣu-vyavahāra* (the behaviour of a seeker), *utpatti* (origin), *sthiti* (sustenance), *upaśama* (dissolution) and *nirvāṇa* (freedom). Each part has further been divided into various *sargas* (chapters). It was meant for the person who understands himself to be bound and wishes to be liberated. The initial dialogue between Vasiṣṭha and Rāma was recorded by Vālmīki and recited to his disciple Bharadvāja. Rāma, while a boy, reflects on the nature of things and finds them unsatisfactory. When brought before the Kulaguru Vasiṣṭha, Rāma is told that true happiness does not reside in worldly things, it is rather felt when there is no desire or *vāsanā* (*asamkalpaḥ param śreyah*). Right investigation into the nature of the Self removes ignorance which is the root cause of desire. Knowledge is the only instrument



to get freedom from suffering (*jñānam-evopāyah*). Of the four preliminary requirements for the knowledge, namely, *śama* (peace of mind), *santoṣa* (contentment), *sādhu-saṅgama* (association with the wise) and *vicāranā* (rational investigation), the last is the most important. By no other way one can come to know the truth. The ignorant or half-knowers have to be reborn in the form of a *yogi* (knower) to have a clear conception of the Self. Interestingly, seven steps to right knowledge have been enunciated in the text. They are: (i) *śubecchā* or right desire, (ii) *vicāranā* or investigation, (iii) *tanumānasa* or thinning of the mind by way of purification, (iv) *sattvāpatti* or realization of the pure Self within, (v) *anāsakti* or non-attachment, (vi) *padārtha-bhāvanā* or realization of the unreality of the objects, and (vii) *turīya* or the realization of the nameless Absolute. A distinction between *jīvanmukti* (freedom while alive) and *videha-mukti* (freedom after death) has been made and the former state has been eulogized as that of the great doer and enjoyer. Rāma has also been directed to act in the world for the happiness of the people (*lokānanda*). He takes the words of the Guru as imperative (*Gurorvākyaṃ vidhiḥ prokto*) and indulges in the welfare activities of the people.

Dr. B.L. Atreya (1897–1977) made an attempt to present the entire philosophy of Y.V. in a systematic form and compiled nearly 2,500 verses, claiming that no aspect of philosophy or practice recommended for experiencing the Reality, and no important verse expounding the same have been omitted except the stories. He had compiled the verses in three chapters, viz. 'The Qualification for Knowledge', 'Knowledge of Reality', and 'Liberation'. He wrote a long Introduction and submitted the content for

D. Litt degree in the Benaras Hindu University in 1928 under the title, *The Philosophy of Vasiṣṭha as presented in the Yogavāsiṣṭha*. The same was published from Allahabad in 1936. It was meant to be acquainted with the philosophy of Vasiṣṭha in its original, sweet and beautiful language, the charm of which eludes translation.

The title under review is a translation of Atreya's compilation. The translator has done a great service to the people having spiritual quest by rendering the text into English. It is the result of a great disciplined and humble soul. Saṃvid has rendered faithfully the sense and spirit of the original, giving the reader a taste of the power and beauty of the original. He has made use of the commentary on Y.V. by Ānanda-bodhendra Saraswati for deciphering complex verses dealing with esoteric and recondite subjects. He has also presented the analysis of the content which is a great help to the reader. One can easily locate eschatological, ideational (*samanaska*) or the world-within-world (*sargāntara*) and the like at a glance. The translator's Preface and the Foreword make the content familiar to the reader within the shortest possible time.

Thus the *yoga* (the method of freeing oneself from the misery of life and death) in the idealistic philosophy of Vasiṣṭha is made home. The lineage from the Divine Crow (*Kāka-bhuṣuṇḍa*) through Vasiṣṭha, Vālmīki, Ariṣṭanemi, Atreya, and to us through Saṃvid, is made alive with the promise that those who read the liberating story of Rāma are bound to be free from the bondage.

The edition is a beautiful gift to the Sanskrit and English-knowing world with neat printing and nice presentation.

Dr. S.P. Dubey, Jabalpur

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself  
and call thee friend who art my Lord.

—Rabindranath Tagore (*Gitanjali*)