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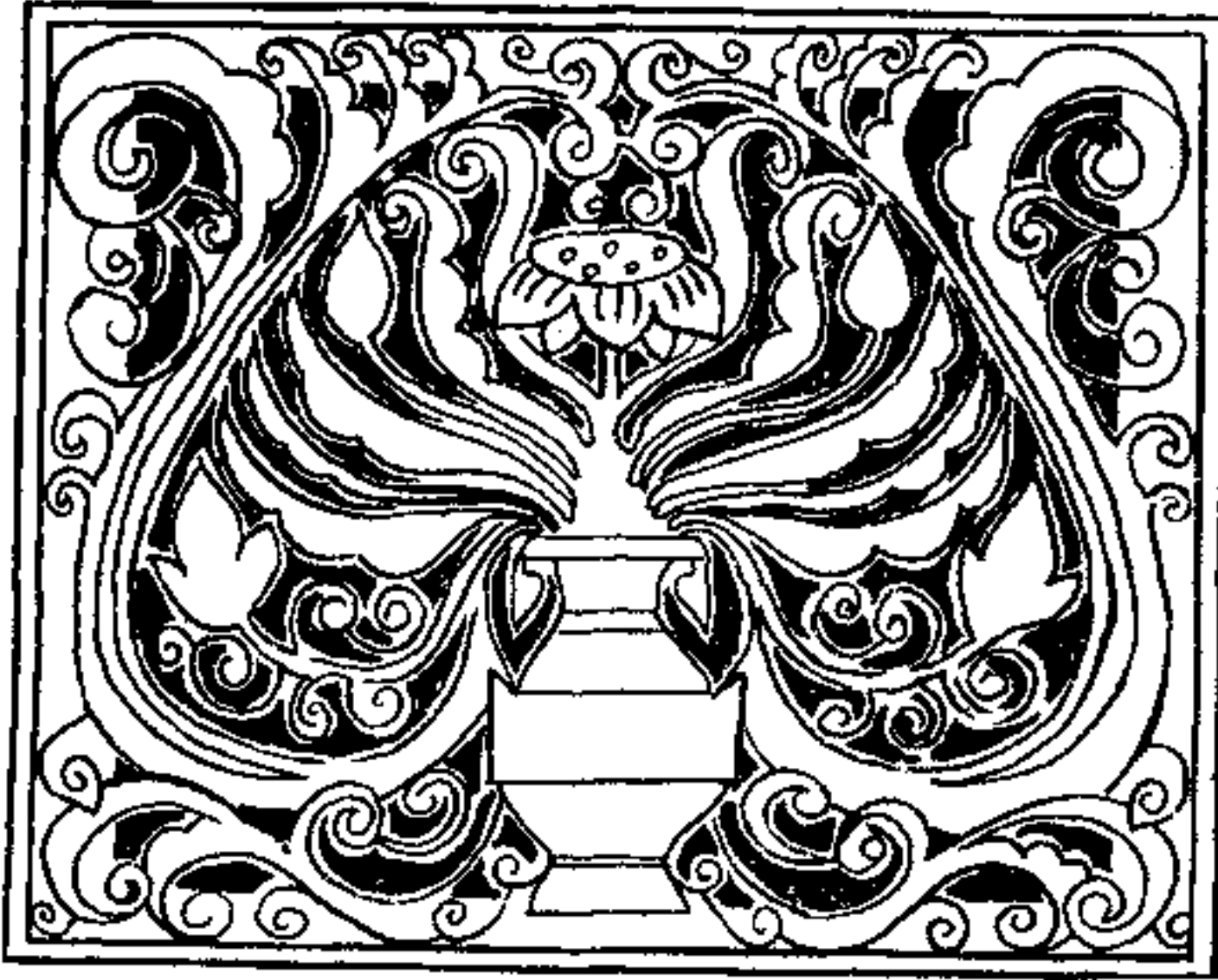
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Prabuddha Bharata
or Awakened India





PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 100

JULY 1995

No. 7

Divine Wisdom

DEVOTION AND DISPASSION

साध्वेद् व्याहृतं विद्वन्नात्ममायायनं हरेः ।

आभात्यपार्थं निर्मूलं विश्वमूलं न यद्वहिः ॥

It has been well stated by you that the cause of the world lies in Maya, the mysterious power of the Lord. Apart from the Lord, it has no independent existence, and apart from Him it cannot be understood at all.

यश्च मूढतमो लोके यश्च बुद्धेः परं गतः ।

तावुभौ सुखमेधेते क्लिश्यत्यन्तरितो जनः ॥

Those who are given absolutely to physical life and do not think of anything higher, and those who have gone beyond the buddhi (intellect) and obtained intuitive understanding—both these are happy (the first because they are incapable of any doubt, and the second because they have no attachments). The sufferers are those who stand in between these two extremes.

अर्थाभावं विनिश्चित्य प्रतीतस्यापि नात्मनः ।

तां चापि युष्मच्चरणसेवयाहं पराणुदे ॥

Though objects contrary to the Atman are experienced, we shall discern their hollowness through discrimination and with the help of Your worship, and thus renounce them completely.

यत्सेवया भगवतः कूटस्थस्य मधुद्विषः ।

रतिरासो भवेत् तीव्रः पादयोर्व्यसनार्दनः ॥

By the worship of devotees I shall attain to the state of intense delight and attachment to the feet of Him, the Lord of all and the changeless Being. By means of such attachment to the Lord all sorrows are overcome.

दुरापा ह्यल्पतपसः सेवा वैकुण्ठवर्त्मसु ।

यन्नोपगीयते नित्यं देवदेवो जनार्दनः ॥

The service of holy men devoted to Mahavishnu is indeed difficult to get for those devoid of great austerities to their credit. It is only in the company of such holy men that you hear constantly about the Lord and His excellences

—From the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

Towards Happiness

The second verse on the previous page is very helpful. There we find a hint on how to attain true happiness. Two classes of people, it says, are happy: First, the totally deluded ones (मूढतमाः, *mūḍhatamāḥ*), who are devoid of discrimination, who are completely in the clutches of sense-pleasures and are unaware of higher values. That these are happy is obviously a tongue-in-cheek statement. For, we who somehow—through God's grace or a holy person's blessings, or after reading some elevating literature—have awakened to spiritual ideals understand very well through hindsight how devastating sense-indulgence is.

We are reminded of Sri Ramakrishna's example that people given to worldly pleasures are like camels which love to feed on cactus though their tongues get pricked by the thorns and bleed. We know from experience that all mundane joy is interlaced with failure, disease, sorrow, etc. The advice of the worldly-wise to us, 'Never mind these dark patches, these potholes, in life. Life is such. Take all knocks bravely, get up after each fall, wipe off the tears, smile, and keep moving', does not help. Nor do we derive lasting satisfaction and peace from counselors, pep-talks, positive thinking, antidepressants, and the tips on happy living many popular journals offer. The second type of happy people are, as the verse says, those who have gone (गताः, *gatāḥ*) beyond (परं, *param*) *buddhi*.

We are the uncomfortable in-between class (अन्तरिताः जनाः, *antaritāḥ janāḥ*): We no doubt desire happiness, but we are unwilling and unable to go back and try finding joy

in worldly pleasures; we are laden with family and social responsibilities which cannot be renounced, and so we have to be very much in the world; and, at the same time, we are still not well past sense-dangers and safely established on the peaceful spiritual heights. Our capacity to discriminate and ward off temptations is still a flickering flame just lit, yet to become a blaze which no allurements can douse. We are struggling to enter the enviable second group.

How shall we transcend the *buddhi* and attain lasting happiness? What does this transcending imply?

Going beyond the *buddhi* suggests acquiring intuitive understanding, that is, attaining Self-knowledge. So, relating this idea with the general Vedantic teachings, rising above the *buddhi* implies shedding our *kartr̥va-buddhi* and *bhoktr̥va-buddhi*. The former means our inborn sense, 'I am the doer (*kartr̥*), the chooser, the agent, of all my actions, mental and physical'; the latter is our equally well-settled sense, 'I am, I shall be, the experiencer (*bhoktr̥*) of the consequences of my actions; I am the one who ensures that the fruits of my actions come to me.' These two *buddhis* are the fundamental characteristics of human existence, of our individuality, that is, of our being *jivas* (individual souls). If we cast off these two *buddhis*, we get intuitive understanding of our true nature as the ever-perfect, blissful Atman and of our relationship with God. We understand that God alone is in fact the only *kartr̥* and the dispenser of the results of all our endeavours. And the consequent resignation to the will of the Divine brings

true happiness in its wake.

In the *mūḍhatamāh*, the first category of people, these two *buddhis* are intense. In the second category, the two *buddhis* are absent, and hence they are happy and carefree like a child which knows that its entire responsibility is in the trustworthy hands of its mother. In us, the in-betweens, however, these two *buddhis* have merely got loosened or shaken. We are no longer certain that we can go on endlessly nourishing these two *buddhis*, or powers, and determine everything concerning our lives. Our power to choose, plan, will and act with the certitude of achieving a cherished goal is, life has cautioned us, not as all-powerful and infallible as we formerly believed. We have had first-hand experience that a hard-earned cup of honey can slip and fall just as we are about to tilt it at our lips. The most promising of our plans can crash in total failure, against all hopes and calculations. What we thought would give us happiness can turn into a source of great disappointment and anguish. Today, if we are sure about anything, it is that the two *buddhis* have their limitations.

We may, from time to time, feel, 'Enough of these joys and sorrows, this relentless activity, and the highs and lows in life', and wish to lay down our *buddhis*. But we are unable to wish them away, they won't go! And we discover that they are closer to us than our breath! Besides, the nature of life is such that we are almost always in situations that compel us to exercise our *karṭṛva-buddhi*: we simply have to choose, plan, decide, and work if we wish to survive. But this is not the end of our troubles: we next have to face the *fruits* of our works—for, actions must yield results; this is Nature's inexorable law. So we perforce also become *bhokṭṛs*—now experiencing success and joy, now failure and sorrow.

How shall we rid ourselves of these two irksome *buddhis* and go beyond them, beyond their powers? By dealing with them one at a time, first with the *bhokṭṛva-buddhi*, and then with the other. Because as we have said before, the *karṭṛva-buddhi*, the awareness 'I am the doer', is basic and almost impossible to erase. It keeps streaming up into our consciousness, indistinguishably mixed with that other uncontrollable and inexhaustible stream of thoughts and the urge to activity rising up from somewhere—God knows from where—deep within us. In the midst of our day-to-day activities, which require continuous exercise of our judgment, power of choice, etc.—and therefore the flow of an undercurrent of the knowledge 'I am the judge and chooser, I am the doer or the agent of these activities'—we simply cannot say, 'I am not the doer, I am not the *karṭṛ*', without recourse to hypocrisy.

So we shall find it easier to defeat first the *bhokṭṛva-buddhi*. Experience has taught us that we are not the undisputed masters of our actions and their results; and hence our earlier immature attitude—'I am totally, or at least to a large extent, in control of my life'—now stands humbled. Therefore we are just ripe to take steps to eliminate the second *buddhi*, 'I am the one who decides, the one who ensures, that such and such a result shall be mine. I shall or I wish to derive precisely such and such a result for such and such of my action.' We should now begin to practise reminding ourselves that God is the one who decides which of our actions bears which fruit. No sooner than we sincerely practise this for some time, we realize that the degree to which our minds used to get excited or agitated by the joys and sorrows from successes or failures has started reducing. Further, the duration also over which we remain upset gets short and shorter. The thought, 'Steady, this situation is God-sent', flashes more and more easily in our minds. The more definite has been our life's lesson

that our powers are not only limited but also under the control of a greater power, the more sincere will be our practice of this first step and the more convincing our experience of the heretofore unknown joy of resignation to God's will. To be sure, we shall be able to carry on all our activities as energetically as they require, but we shall arrive at an inner poise that is unshakable by the success or failure of our plans. Success will not turn our heads, nor will failures break our hearts or dry up our energy for hard work. Our mind will grow more and more calm with this dedication or surrender of the fruits of our actions to God.

What does this dedication mean? It cannot mean something like handing over of the fruits of our actions. Say, I build a house. Dedicating this to God cannot mean I convert it into a temple. Besides, what if the house were to collapse after some days? So with a factory, for example. Again, say, a farmer sows his fields. Dedicating the harvest to God cannot mean it is all made over to a temple. Besides, the crop may some times fail. In such a case, how can there be any material handing over? An employee earns a salary for his hard work. Does he, or can he, dedicate his money to God by gifting it all to a religious institution? So, it is only in a very limited sense that dedication or surrender implies making over to God (or to a religious institution or for a religious purpose) as a token of gratitude a nominal portion of the *objective* or *material* result of our action—as, for example, a person putting into a temple's collection-box a few rupees of his monthly salary, or a farmer gifting a few fruits from his orchard to a temple.

On the other hand, the predominant implication of dedicating to God the fruits of our actions is remembering—constantly if possible, or at least as often as possible—that the final outcome, both success *and* failure of our actions, are in the hands of

God; more particularly, remembering that the *subjective* results of our actions as also of others' actions that affect us—joy, elation, etc. *as well as* anxiety, disappointment, pain, etc., are decreed by God.

Over a period of time this attitude slowly blossoms into a joyous certainty of the presence of God within us and around us. Impelled by this special kind of joy and inner poise, as we persevere with this discipline to destroy our *bhokṛtva-buddhi*, another awareness slowly rises—that God is not only the one who dispenses the fruits of our actions, but He is also the real doer (*kartṛ*) of actions. Our *kartṛtva* was all along only a semblance, a shadow, deriving its existence solely from God the Absolute Power.

This second stage, however, lies far in the future and depends entirely on how well we perform in the first stage. In fact, we do not even have to put in any extra effort to practise the second step of transcending our *kartṛtva-buddhi*—if we are earnest in the first stage and succeed in spontaneously remembering God as the one who dispenses the results (the pleasant and the unpleasant) of all our works, then the firm knowledge of the fictitious nature of our *kartṛtva* dawns within us of its own accord. On the other hand, if we try to practise denying our *kartṛtva* without consistently practising denial of our *bhokṛtva*, it is more than likely that our conduct will become hypocritical.

So it is better that for the present, we concentrate only on perfecting the first step, resting assured that God is our Master, or, by far still better, that He is *our own* as Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother Sarada Devi have revealed; and that He gives us just what is necessary to awaken us sooner or later to His absolute power and eternal loving presence. □

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

When thus the question about eligible persons was asked by Arjuna, (the Lord gave) the answer in accordance with that.

श्रीभगवानुवाच

Śrībhagavān uvāca:

The Blessed Lord said:

लोकेऽस्मिन्द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयाऽनघ ।
ज्ञानयोगेन सांख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥

*Loke'smindaividha niṣṭhā
purā proktā mayā'nagha;
Jñānayogena sāṅkhyānām
karmayogena yoginām. (3.3)*

O unblemished one, among these people two kinds of steadfastness were spoken of earlier by Me—in the Yoga of Knowledge for the men of realization, in the Yoga of Action for the yogis.

Aṣmin loke, among these people, who entertain the idea of eligibility, who are of two kinds according to the difference of pure and impure mind; dvi-vidhā, two kinds; of niṣṭhā, steadfastness, states—adherence to Knowledge and adherence to Action; proktā, were spoken of; purā, earlier, in the preceding chapter; mayā, by Me, who am very beneficent to you. And so you should not feel depressed by the doubt regarding the sameness of the eligible people. This is the idea. By addressing him as anagha; unblemished one, the Lord indicates the fitness of Arjuna for instruction.

The word *niṣṭhā*, steadfastness, is used in

the singular number for expressing the idea that steadfastness, though verily one, is of two kinds according to the difference of the states of being the goal and the means, but not that there are verily two independent steadfastnesses. So will He (the Lord) say, 'He sees who sees Sāṅkhya and yoga as one' (5.5). He (the Lord) shows that very steadfastness as of two kinds: Sāṅkyā means right Knowledge of the Self. For those who have attained that, *sāṅkhyānām*, for the men of Self-realization, who have resorted to monasticism from the stage of Celibacy itself, who have a firm understanding about the Reality as a result of the realization arising from the Upaniṣads, who have ascended to the plane of realization, who have a pure mind; *jñāna-yogena*, in the Yoga of Knowledge. *Jñāna* itself is a yoga in the derivative sense of 'that through which one becomes united with Brahman'. Steadfastness in that has been spoken of in, 'Controlling all of them and becoming concentrated, one should remain seated by accepting Me as the supreme,' etc. (2.61). But, *yoginām*, for the yogis, who are not of pure minds, who have not ascended to the plane of Knowledge, for the yogis who are eligible for action; *karma-yogena*, in the Yoga of Action. *Karma*, action, itself is a yoga in the derivative sense of 'that by which one becomes united with purification of the mind'. Steadfastness in that for ascending to the plane of Knowledge through purification of the mind has been stated in, '...since for a Kṣatriya there is no other means conducive to bliss than a battle,' etc. (2.31).

Hence there is neither a combination of

Knowledge and action nor an option between them. But to those whose minds have become purified by selfless works, Knowledge comes only after renunciation of all works. Thus in accordance with the difference in the states consisting of purification and non-purification of the mind, two kinds of steadfastness have been taught to the very same person, (viz) you, in, 'this knowledge about the Self has been imparted to you. However, listen to this (wisdom) which is to be adopted in the Yoga (of Karma)' (2.39). So the idea is that, since both are useful to the very same person in accordance with the difference in his states, therefore there is no futility in imparting the instruction (to the very same person) in spite of the difference in eligibility.

To point out this very thing He shows, in the thirteen verses beginning with '(A person does not attain freedom from action) by the non-performance of actions' etc. (4) and ending with 'O Pārtha, he lives in vain' (16), that performance of actions is for a man of impure mind until his mind becomes pure. However, in the two verses beginning with 'But, that man who rejoices only in the Self' (17) He shows that for the enlightened man of pure mind there is no dependence on any work whatsoever. But in the verses beginning with 'Therefore, remaining unattached' (19) He shows that, with the skill in the form of absence of hankering for results, action, even though a source of bondage, becomes a source of Liberation through purification of the mind and rise of Knowledge. After that, however, raising the question, 'Now then, ...impelled by what' (36), the Lord will say till the end of the chapter that, '*kāmya-karmas* do not have the capacity to purify the mind on account of the defect of desire; hence, you (Arjuna) will become competent for Knowledge through purification of the mind attained by performing actions without desires, indeed.'

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।
न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥

*Na karmaṇāmanāraimbhān-
naiṣkarmyam puruṣo'śnute;
Na ca sannyasanādeva
siddhim samadhigacchati. (3.4)*

A person does not attain freedom from action by the non-performance of actions; nor does he attain fulfilment through mere renunciation.

As to that, since an effect in the absence of a cause is illogical, therefore, *puruṣaḥ*, a person, an extrovert, who is unfit for Knowledge because of the absence of purification of the mind; *na aśnute*, does not attain; *naiṣkarmyam*, freedom from all actions, that is to say, steadfastness in the Yoga of Knowledge; *anāraṃbhāt*, by the non-performance; *karmaṇām*, of actions, which have been enjoined for Self-knowledge by the Śruti,

The Brahmins seek to know It through the study of the Vedas, sacrifices, charity, and austerity consisting in a dispassionate enjoyment of sense-objects'.¹

Objection: Well, since in accordance with the Śruti, 'Desiring this world (the Self) alone monks renounce their homes' (*ibid.*), it is logical that from the very renunciation of actions follows steadfastness in Knowledge, therefore what is the need of work?

Hence He says: *na ca*, nor; *adhigacchati*, does he attain—i.e., he certainly does not attain—; *siddhim*, fulfilment, in the form of steadfastness in Knowledge, which culminates in yielding its fullest result; *san-nyasanāt eva*, through mere renunciation, undertaken without mental purity. Renunciation itself is not possible without purity of the mind which is born of (selfless)

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 4.4.22.

actions. Even if it is somehow undertaken out of mere eagerness, it does not culminate in yielding its fruit. This is the idea.

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥

*Na hi kaścitkṣaṇamapi
jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt;
Kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma
sarvaḥ prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ. (3.5)*

Because no one ever remains even for a moment without doing work. For all are made to work under the compulsion by the guṇas born of Nature (Prakṛti).

As to that, *hi*, since; *kaścit*, no one whosoever, who is an extrovert on account of the absence of purity that results from (selfless) works, who has not controlled his organs; *jātu*, ever; *tiṣṭhati*, remains; *kṣaṇam api*, even for a moment; *akarma-kṛt*, without doing work—rather he remains verily engrossed in performing worldly and Vedic duties—, therefore monasticism is not pos-

sible for one of impure mind. This is the meaning.

Why, again, is it that an unenlightened person cannot remain without activity? *Hi*, for; *sarvaḥ*, all, the living beings, devoid of purity of the mind; *kāryate*, are made to work, perform worldly or Vedic duties; *avaśaḥ*, under compulsion, being verily non-independent; *guṇaiḥ*, by the *guṇas*; *prakṛtijaiḥ*, born of, manifested as the effects, (viz.) (the qualities of) *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, of Nature (Prakṛti); or, by (the *guṇas*, attributes, viz.) attachment, repulsion, etc., born of their own natures (*prakṛti*). Hence the meaning is that no one whosoever remains without doing work. Since the natural *guṇas* (qualities) are the impellers, therefore for the man of impure mind, who is ever engaged in work under the control of another, renunciation of all actions is not possible, i.e., steadfastness in Knowledge that follows from monasticism is not possible.

(to be continued)

From our Readers

Respected Swami,

In reply to the 'Letter from the Editor' in the April 1994 PB:

(a) India has not awakened as wanted by Swamiji.

(b) We have succeeded in building up numerous Ramakrishna Mission institutions from where students have come out very successful with brilliant examination results—but failed so far to make true and perfect men as wanted by Swamiji. However the Mission has definitely been able to mould some youngsters to become perfect Brahmacharis and Sannyasis.

(c) It is hightime that concerned persons of our country, in collaboration with the Mission, took proper steps to improve our system of education. Only then we can succeed as wanted by Swamiji.

(d) Today India cannot be proud of her condition, because the masses have not awakened as wanted by Swamiji. So, keeping our focus on the ultimate values of human life, we should vigorously take steps to rouse the masses.

(e) Yes, India must find out a proper response to consumerism.

Dr. Roma Chakraborty
Calcutta

Letters of Swami Vivekananda*

Eight heretofore unpublished letters of Swamiji were found in the archives of the Raniakrishna Ashrama, Argentina, and received some time ago by Belur Math. We are publishing four that we felt were of general interest.

1st Feb 95
54 West 33 New York

Dear Mrs Bull

I had a very nice visit with Mr Rhys Davids. We had a long conversation. He wants me to join his Asiatic Society. His idea is to create an intellectual respect for the Hindu thought in England and that then the English will be forced to treat the Hindus better politically.

It is your idea that they (...) the Hindus must create a respect for their religious thought. However both ought to be done.

I have got a list of books from Mr Rhys Davids which I mention below.

Pali Grammar edited by Müller—5\$

Childers Pali Dictionary—50\$.

If 62\$ in addition be sent over to the Pali Text Society in London (Mr Davids) they will send all the Pali books already printed. The address is 22 Albemarle Street, London Pali Text Society. Mr Davids said the payment is to be in advance. As for the Pali Grammar and Dictionary that can be got through any bookseller in Boston.

I want to ask you to finish our library to write two letters to India.

One to the Buddhist Text Society in Calcutta to furnish us with a catalogue of all their published books both Sanskrit and Pali. Also to the Asiatic Societies of Calcutta and Bombay for the same and to the proprietor of the Anandasrama Poona India for their catalogue of publications—the last mentioned firm publishes the most important books and the got up and printing is superb.

I am doing very well. Miss Hamlin has sent the gas stove and we will try to do something on it.

Your ever devoted son

Vivekananda

* Illegible portions of the letters have been shown as (...), and words we have guessed have been bracketed with a ? mark.—Ed.

P.S. In addition I think a set of Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East* and Rhys Davids' Hibbert Lectures on Buddhism will be very good to start with. We will also try to get the Talmud the greater portion of which has been translated into English and the Quabbala—the Quoran has many translations. We can get also a number of the old fathers of the Christian Church in translation. Also we require the latest works on Egypt and Babylonia. This will be a grand start.

V



26th April, 1896
 High View, Caversham,
 Reading

Dear Mrs Bull,

I arrived safely here day before yesterday.

We landed at Queenstown, Ireland and had a run through to Dublin in the way of seeing several old English towns.

Sturdy was at the station to receive us. From the fourth of the coming month we are going to occupy the house in London: 63 St. George's Road, S.W.

It is a small house and will be good enough for us. We will (see for some ?) hall later on.

Saradananda is here—and has been very much liked by Mr and Mrs Sturdy. He is helping Sturdy some.

I am taking a few days rest before the work begins. Already the notices are out. Sturdy is very methodical and enthusiastic and for Vedanta he spares neither time nor work nor money.

He will soon go through the manuscript and get it out. Mr Fox told me that Prof. James is going to write a preface. Is it true? If so when is it coming over?

Goodwin of course was as good as ever. He is gone home. We will soon have him over in London for taking down the lectures. The classes here are going to be better organized into the advance and elementary.

I am going to get all the books I want (...) in India House library and make the advanced class as learned as I can.

Miss Muller is coming to see us today.

I am in good health and hoping you are same.

I am yours affly

Vivekananda

P.S. Give my love to all our friends and my blessings for the baby and her mother.

V.



57 Ramakanta Bose's Street
(undated)

My dear Mother,

Here is a letter from Miss Muller. She wants badly a piece of land near our Math in Beloor. Of course she would not buy the Mookherjey place on account of its high price. She wants a piece of land off ours to build. The piece off the southern end will not hurt us the least and she has a claim as she really presented us the land.

My conscience will not be satisfied if I do not give her this piece. Of course her place will be entirely separated from the Math by a wall. If still there is any disturbance in the future "Mother knows best".

I want your advice immediately as I will have to reply her tomorrow early or tonight.

I was bad again yesterday today not much better. Don't care let things drift. I expect you on Thursday.

Ever yours in the Lord,

Vivekananda

Mrs Sarah C. Bull
C/o General Patterson
U.S. Consulate
3 Esplanade



The Math
Beloor Howrah Dis Beng
6th February '99

My dear Mother,¹

Hope this letter will find you safe amongst your people in Cambridge. I was so glad to learn your opinion about the Math in the letter you left for us.

My stay at Vaidyanath proved disastrous to my health, I nearly died of suffocation, so had to be brought down and I am doing decidedly better here, under the treatment of Dr Sirkar.

The last month has been one of great anxiety for the members with Yogananda (the Swami who lives in Mother's house) on the point of death and I dangerously ill. Yogananda's state continues to give us great anxiety.

The Math has so far proved very healthy for us all and I intended in a few days to be there. I am now in Calcutta.

I am roused to work again though not personally this time. I have sent two boys to East Bengal and Saradananda and Turiyananda go to Guzerat as I have a number of friends there whom I could not visit yet.

My cousin is doing very well in Vaidyanath. Things here are not very cheerful just now. I have very little hope of making Margoe's school a success. Mother knows best as ever. Anyhow I am doing some work again. I have started a Bengali magazine here, which I hear is much appreciated.

Hope your daughter is very well now after the storm that has passed over her.

My love to Dr Janes and all the Cambridge friends,

Ever your devoted son

Vivekananda

1. Mrs. Sarah C. Bull

Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to India's National Integration

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

India is burdened with many problems today—seemingly insurmountable problems. Is the situation hopeless? Will India sink under the weight of these problems? Swami Ranganathananda, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, says here that those who have studied the works of Swami Vivekananda will not be too worried. The problems we see today have been stirred up by India's newly awakened energy. When that energy is finally put in the proper direction, India will not only raise herself but will also raise the rest of the world.

The following is from a talk given by the Swami on 18th March 1995 at Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, in connection with the centenary celebration of this journal.

I don't know how many of you have seen the special issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, the Centenary Issue, released about two months ago. It is a large book containing very inspiring material. It is worth reading. The name *Prabuddha Bharata* was given by Swami Vivekananda when he was in America. He asked his Madras disciples to start a journal with that name. The journal continued for some time, but then the editor passed away and there was fear of its ceasing publication. Swamiji then transferred it to the Himalayas, the home from where great ideas have come.

For the first issue from the Himalayas Swamiji contributed a message which contains a verse from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The story behind the verse is not mentioned in the message itself, but I am telling it to you as it is found in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. An elephant caught by a crocodile prayed to the Lord. The Lord then came and saved the elephant. That is Gajendra Mokṣa [the liberation of Gajendra]. In that story Gajendra, the big elephant, praised the Lord, and Swamiji quotes one verse from that hymn:

*Yasminnidaṁ yataścedaṁ
yenedaṁ ya idaṁ svayam;
Yo'smāt parasmiācca paraḥ
taṁ prapadye svayambhuvam. (8.3.3)*

'I take refuge in that Self-Existent Being, from Whom is this Universe, by Whom is this Universe, in Whom is this Universe, Who Himself is this Universe, Who is also beyond the Universe.' That is the meaning of that beautiful passage in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Swamiji continues his message after giving this śloka.

Prabuddha means 'awakened'. For example, Buddha was so called because he was awakened to his own true spiritual nature. That is *prabuddha*. And *Bharata* is India. This India is awakening to its own spiritual culture and tradition. Swamiji himself was one of the greatest contributors of this awakening of India, and so he named the magazine *Prabuddha Bharata*. As you know, this journal is coming out every month and going round the world. It is a very inspiring journal with articles from people of India, America, Europe and other places. As a part of the centenary celebration of this magazine, I shall speak on national integra-

tion: What has Swamiji contributed to our national integration? The more we think about this subject, the better our nation, our people, will be. This subject is relevant to the rest of the world as well, as I will show in the course of today's talk.

In India we have one unique feature: From the very beginning of this country we have been a multi-cultural country. We have never been a single race with a single language and a single religion. Three or four thousand years ago, in the Atharva Veda, this concept was expressed in a beautiful verse which says that this land, with its many languages and religions, is like a wonderful cow standing firm and nourishing all people with her milk. And all through these thousands of years India has been a multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual nation. And today we are a fully multi-faceted nation. This is our heritage. How did we keep this up? How many thousands of years have we been going on this way? This is a great question.

Since the Second World War a big change has come over the rest of the world. Almost all the other countries started with a single race and a single religion. But now, since the Second World War, almost all countries have become socially diverse. Take England, France, Germany, America, or Australia—all are now multi-religious, multi-racial, etc. And they are facing a problem—how to deal with this kind of situation in society. They have had no previous experience of it. But India has had this experience. And we have maintained it purposely. In the case of other countries it came by chance, because they had colonies. When people from their colonies went to their country, they could not say no to them. And so in France, Germany, England, etc., you will find people from all over the world. But in the case of India it was natural, spon-

taneous. It was based on a profound philosophy, the philosophy of the Upanishads. The cultural and spiritual inspiration from these Upanishads has sustained this nation for thousands of years. In the Upanishads we have the philosophy called Advaita, non-duality: We are all one. There are not two. There is multiplicity outside, but within all human beings there is a single unity. We call it 'unity in diversity.' Even today, political leaders speak of India as a country of unity in diversity. When Indonesia became free, President Sukarno gave his country this very message of unity in diversity.

Now this idea of unity is not just a philosophy—it is a spiritual realization. Our sensory system reveals differences to us. But our sages asked this question: Are these differences real? Or, is there a unity behind all this diversity? We find this question raised in the Upanishads. The sages went deep within, into their own self, and discovered the One behind the many, the One infinite Self in all beings. This was a remarkable discovery, because the nature of the Self is Pure Consciousness—*cit svarūpa*. *Cit* is the Sanskrit word for consciousness. In external matter there is no consciousness; it is dull, dead. But in man there is a centre of Pure Consciousness. And the greatest truth discovered by the sages is that this consciousness is one and the same in all. There are not many; there are not two. There is only one, Advaita, non-duality. What a wonderful idea! This concept of Advaita which was realized by sages, became the inspiration for building up a corresponding culture and civilization in this vast country. We can understand uniformity in a small country. But this is a vast country. So many differences are there, so many levels; so many things are there. But the sages courageously took up the idea: We shall build a nation based upon this vision of unity in diversity. Diversity will remain. Multiple factors will remain,

but they won't do any harm, because we see the unity behind all this diversity. That is the basis of Indian culture. That is what made us withstand all sorts of foreign invasions, foreign subjugations, and many other difficulties for hundreds of years, a fraction of which destroyed many other cultures and civilizations. This inner strength of the Indian culture, coming from the Upanishads, is what the country must try to understand today.

Will Durant was a great American philosopher and historian. He died a few years ago at the age of ninety-four or ninety-five. He and his wife together produced ten volumes called *The Story of Civilization*. And first volume is *Our Oriental Heritage*. There he says something like this: We Americans have a heritage not only from Greece and Rome and Palestine but also from oriental countries. And towards the end (of Chapter XXII) under 'Farewell to India', his conclusion, before taking up the chapters on China and other countries, is significant: Farewell to India is not like the farewell to Egypt, or to Babylon, or to Assyria, because those farewells are final. Those civilizations are no longer there. They have completely changed. But the farewell to India is one that will make us meet India again and again on the stage of history. She is eternally going on. This we must keep in view when I speak of Advaita.

Now this Ashrama is called Advaita Ashrama. What is this Advaita that Swamiji focussed on? There are several levels or schools of Vedanta. The highest is called Advaita. There is a definition of Advaita given by Gauḍapāda in his wonderful book, *Māṇḍūkya-Upanishad Kārikā*. Gauḍapada lived and did *tapas* on the river Narmada in Madhya Pradesh. His disciple was Govinda Acharya, and Govinda Acharya's disciple was Shankaracharya. Now, this famous verse occurs in the Gauḍapada Karika:

*Asparśayogo vai nāma
sarva-sattvasukho hitaḥ;
Avivādo'viruddhaśca
deśitastam namāmyaham. (4.2)*

'I salute this profound philosophy which taught us the yoga of non-touch.' He calls it *asparśa-yoga*—a very unique usage—because in it there is no second thing to touch. Advaita becomes *asparśa-yoga*. What is its speciality? *Sarva-sattvasukho hitaḥ*. 'It is for the happiness and welfare of all people', not of a particular group or sect. *Sarva* means 'all.' Not only so, it is *avivādaḥ*, 'free from disputation'; *aviruddhaḥ*, 'free from contradiction.' 'To this great philosophy I offer my salutation.' That is a wonderful statement.

This philosophy of Advaita has been the strength behind India's five thousand years of cultural evolution. When you come to the India of today, you find many differences. And more and more differences are coming. But that should not worry us, for whenever the country has needed help, somehow a great spiritual personality has risen. For instance, Buddha came in the sixth century BC, and Shankaracharya came in the eighth century AD. They were great minds and had this Advaitic vision. And in this age Sri Ramakrishna has come, so also Swami Vivekananda and Holy Mother. All these have come and they have given us the same philosophy of Advaita with a greater strength and force to deal with the problems of today. Problems thousands of years ago were different from today's. And so to make us able to deal with these problems, these people came in our age. Among them, Swami Vivekananda is outstanding, because it is to him that Sri Ramakrishna gave all his power and understanding, so that with his great gift of speech and his tremendous energy, he would be able to do great things.

At the age of twenty-nine, Swamiji went to America. At that time our country was not



Rev. Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj on way to the auditorium



Address of Welcome by Swami Mumukshananda, President, Advaita Ashrama



The lecture in progress



Two sections
of the audience



Rev. Maharaj meeting the devotees after the function

free, and there were no Indian ambassadors in America. You can imagine how difficult it was for a man like him to go to America and get admission to the Parliament of Religions when he had no credentials. No association had sent him. He just walked in, as Romain Rolland puts it. Swamiji thought: 'If I go they will certainly accept me.' And literally it happened like that. First they refused. From Chicago he came to Boston where he met Professor Wright, professor of Greek at Harvard University. Prof. Wright was so impressed by Swamiji that he immediately said, 'Why don't you represent the Hindu religion at the Parliament of Religions?' 'I do want to represent it,' said Swamiji, 'but they told me that I do not have enough credentials.' John Wright then replied, 'To ask you, Swami, for your credentials, is like asking the sun its right to shine!' But he did not just say empty words. He wrote a letter to the Parliament of Religions authorities: 'Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together.' With that letter Swamiji returned to Chicago and was admitted to the Parliament. Then what happened you know. We celebrated the centenary of the Chicago Parliament in 1993 and 1994 in India.

In 1897, when Swamiji returned from America, there began a tremendous new chapter of India's history. Swamiji first landed on Indian soil at Ramnad near Rameswaram, where he got a tremendous reception. The whole nation rose to welcome him. Even the prince of Ramnad pulled Swamiji's carriage along with other young people. Yet, when he spoke, he criticized our people, our misunderstanding of religion; he spoke against all orthodoxy and priestcraft. In any other religion, any other society, he would have been hanged, or crucified. But not in India. He said all those things, but he brought awakening to the people. In fact, the first words spoken by

Swamiji on the soil of India were about this awakening:

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking...[India,] this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.

We were sleeping. We had become *tamasic* and selfish. We did not care for other people. All this had brought about slavery. But centuries of slavery had not destroyed the soul of the nation. The soul was still strong and steady. That is why the nation could rise once again. Any other country would have died. Take France for example. Hitler ruled for four years over France, and France was very badly affected. Another twenty years more and France would have been dead. That was the condition in foreign countries, but not here. Here, awakening came after centuries, and the man who brought about this awakening was Swami Vivekananda, the very embodiment of Advaita, of the feeling of oneness. The *śloka* which I quoted earlier from Gaudpada's Karika—, *avivādo aviruddhaśca*, without contradiction, without any kind of disputation; *sarva-sattvasukho-hitah*, interested in the happiness and welfare of all beings—that is the philosophy that Swamiji expounded in Colombo, Ramnad, Calcutta, Madras, Almora, Lahore, throughout India.

Everywhere crowds of highly educated people came to hear this great evangelist of the new India. The book that was made from these lectures should be studied by everyone in India—*Lectures from Colombo to Almora* (in Bengali, *Bharate Vivekananda*, and in Hindi, *Bharat me Vivekananda*). All these

lectures convey a profound message of strength, of fearlessness, of mental awakening, making the nation march on to the highest level instead of becoming stagnated. The titles of the five lectures in Madras are especially interesting. The first one sounds like a military general's lecture. It is titled 'My Plan of Campaign'. Then comes 'Vedanta in its Application to Indian Life'. Then 'The Work Before Us'. Then his lecture on 'The Sages of India' covers the time of the Upanishads up to Ramakrishna. And lastly comes 'The Future of India'. The subjects are relevant even today.

In these lectures Swamiji has scolded the people of India for practising untouchability, caste consciousness, and misplaced pride in not allowing others to have education. The lower classes had been kept down

attitude in India, more than in any other country. Swamiji wanted to reverse this trend, to make Vedanta be our philosophy of life and action—Practical Vedanta, as he called it.

Swamiji spoke in 1897, and fifty years later in 1947, political freedom came as scores of patriots came forward, inspired by Swamiji's lectures. They all regarded him as their great leader. How many young people were inspired by Swami Vivekananda—men like Subhas Chandra Bose. Swamiji never took part in politics, but he gave a philosophy of human development and fulfilment that could be applied to politics, sociology, economics, everything. That is the central teaching that Swamiji gave.

In all these fields you can see the rise of

...he called upon the people to wipe out this blot from our society—this blot of untouchability, this blot of caste consciousness, exploitation, and the like. This blot must go. It has no basis in a philosophy which teaches that in everyone there is the same Atman, that the same infinite Self is manifested in the hearts of all.

for centuries. In the Lahore lecture on Vedanta, in which Swamiji spoke for two hours, he called upon the people to wipe out this blot from our society—this blot of untouchability, this blot of caste consciousness, exploitation, and the like. This blot must go. It has no basis in a philosophy which teaches that in everyone there is the same Atman, that the same infinite Self is manifested in the hearts of all. He wanted us to try to understand this truth.

Two or three years earlier, Swamiji had written from America: 'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.' Our philosophy is based on our non-separateness, and yet you will find the most divisive

a new India. But as we rise, we develop problems. When we were asleep we had no problems. For centuries India was asleep in *tamas*, but as soon as a little life came, many problems also began to come. And today India is full of problems. Of all people, Swami Vivekananda is the only one who would not be sorry. He would welcome these problems.

Let me tell you an incident that happened when he was coming from America to India. On the ship there was an English or American passenger. One day that person told Swamiji,

'Swamiji, your nation is very moral.'

—'Why?'

—'You see our nation. How much crime we have in our society. Your society has no crime.'

Now, any patriot would be happy to get a tribute like this from a foreigner, but not Vivekananda. He said: 'I wish it was otherwise. I wish there was some crime in India. There is no energy to commit crimes.'

That was the India of that time. Today Swamiji would be happy that we can commit all types of crime! We can throw stones at running trains and do this or that! Swamiji would see the present condition of our people as a development, but he would gently tell us: 'Go one step more. Give a human direction to all your energy.' And the whole philosophy of education and religion is now in that direction—service. Service shall be our motto. Whatever energy you have, serve the nation with your energy. When the people of India understand this truth, all the tremendous energy you find in India today will be channelled in that direction. And what great growth will take place thereby.

Swamiji spoke about this idea of human development—*tamas* [inertia] to *rajas* [activity], *rajas* to *sattva* [calmness], step by step. *Tamas* by itself looks fine, but there is no life in it. Once a young person came and told Swamiji, 'I want to renounce the world and become a sannyasin.' Swamiji looked at him and asked: 'What do you have to renounce—neither a good body, nor a trained mind, nor money in the pocket! What will you renounce? Have something to renounce!' Who else has spoken like this except Krishna in the *Gita*? Nobody else said anything like this till Swamiji came: 'If you want to renounce, you must have something to renounce.' Therefore, we must develop our personalities. He described this type of education as man-making, nation-building, character-building. Merely making doctors,

lawyers, nurses—that kind of education is not education. Where are the human beings, the well-developed people? They are not there.

During the last few years, the Government of India has been worried about divisive tendencies in the nation. People in the government do not know Swami Vivekananda well. They have not studied Swamiji's approach to these problems. But they invited me to become a member of the National Integration Council. After attending two or three meetings, I never went back. It was mere talk. There was absolutely no integration coming out of the Council. Those who came and spoke there, spoke only through the mouth. They didn't have that feeling of oneness in their heart.

Swamiji's way of looking at things is so different from the view of ordinary people. Ordinary people have, say, only a five year view, a five year plan, whereas Swami Vivekananda had a five hundred year plan, a long range view. Great statesmen also are like that. They can see far ahead. But a politician cannot do so. He can see at the most from one election to the other—nothing more than that. What we see is that, as India grows, new sections of people who had been kept down for centuries are slowly coming up. And as they come up, a lot of energy is released. A kind of shaking of the nation is going on. People get frightened by seeing this: 'Oh! Something bad is happening; our nation may break up,' and all that. They are absolutely wrong! If you have studied Vivekananda, you will never be worried by these things. The backward classes have been treated as animals, worse than animals, by our society. Now they have an opportunity to manifest themselves as human beings. But when they do so, we get frightened. So you can see, in India people are afraid of new sections developing self-consciousness, of new sections who are

saying: 'Give us a place in your nation. Let us enjoy the spirit of freedom. Why should only a small number of people enjoy that spirit of freedom?' That is what we too want. All people should enjoy that spirit of freedom. So, those who have studied Swamiji will never be worried at what is going on in India today. We welcome all this. The sooner people rise and say, 'Give us a place in this country of ours', the more we shall be happy.

So we should not be worried. This nation has existed for five thousand years. It is not going to die now. All this new energy will become well developed and directed in a common channel for human welfare. That is the integration that will come in the future. You cannot have integration between a

was throwing chapatis from a distance onto his leaf-plate, because, after all, he was a Muslim. Being very orthodox, she could not go closer. Mother saw it and said: 'How can a man eat if you serve the food like this? Give it to me.' She took the plate of chapatis, sat by the side of the Muslim, and served the chapatis one at a time, saying, 'Baba [child] eat', just as the labourer's own mother would have done. Tell me, have you seen this kind of motherly love anywhere? That Muslim, named Amjad, might not have gotten, even from his mother, the kind of love which he got from the Holy Mother. So we see, Mother has started this new tradition with regard to dealing with people not of one's own family. We should feel that they are our children, they are our own. That attitude is related to integration.

You cannot have integration between a weakling and a strong man. The weak man must become strong. He must be educated. Then there will be real integration. So national integration is an ideal. That ideal will be realized when education spreads among the people, when economic opportunities come, and when women come up from their dependent state.

weakling and a strong man. The weak man must become strong. He must be educated. Then there will be real integration. So national integration is an ideal. That ideal will be realized when education spreads among the people, when economic opportunities come, and when women come up from their dependent state. Then you will have real national integration. That is going to happen as the life and teachings of Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna and Mother become widely known.

Imagine what a wonderful personality Holy Mother was! Brought up in an orthodox family in a village, without any education, she had the most modern mind. How do we know it was modern? We know from the following incident. Once she fed a Muslim labourer in her house. Her niece

Then Swamiji brought Miss Margaret Noble from England. After hearing Swamiji's lecture, this lioness of a woman decided she would go to India and serve Swamiji's cause, specially the uplift of the women of India. She told this to Swamiji, and he agreed. But had his doubts: How will she be received in India? How will she work? When Margaret came, Swamiji thought: I shall introduce Margaret to the Holy Mother. If Mother accepts her, India will accept her.' Nivedita herself has written about that incident. They entered Mother's house in Calcutta and Swamiji told Mother, 'Here is your daughter, Margaret, from England.' As soon as Mother heard this, she got up from her bed, took both of Nivedita's hands, and made her sit on her own bed. This was a wonderful event in Swamiji's life. He saw that Mother stood beyond the petty

orthodoxies of ordinary people. She welcomed Nivedita, a mleccha, into her own house. That is what happened, marking a new beginning. What a modern mind you find in the Holy Mother, full of infinite compassion and mother-love, accepting all!

If there is hatred, if there is a sense of separateness, then national integration is difficult. If there is love and compassion, the problem of integration cannot be there. Take the case of Ramakrishna. Among his various spiritual practices, there is one which nobody else had done. Near the Dakshineswar temple there was the house of an untouchable sweeper. One day Ramakrishna decided to wash the sweeper's latrine. This was impossible during the day, because he would not be allowed in there. So he began to get up at midnight, go there, wash the latrine, and finally wipe the floor with his own long hair. He then prayed to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, make me forget that I am of a superior class called the brahmins. Make me the servant of all!' That is one of Sri Ramakrishna's great *sādhana*s. What a wonderful attitude of humility!

And what do we see in Swamiji? When he was on pilgrimage in India, he lived in the houses of princes and peasants and untouchables and Muslims—in the house of anyone who gave him shelter. Everywhere he was at home. Once a Muslim, thinking that Swamiji was like other orthodox monks, said, 'Swamiji, I shall arrange a brahmin to come and cook for you.' 'Why,' Swamiji exclaimed, 'I will take your food.' No Muslim had heard this from anybody else before. They heard it for the first time from Swamiji.

So, the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Mother, and Swamiji show us the way. When these walls, which had been built between various groups in the country during the medieval period, are broken, then national integration

will become a reality. What you find today are just political disturbances. Ordinary people are still quite happy and good, and they cooperate with each other. I see it in Hyderabad. Still, national integration needs the awakening of all sections of people. Some are economically very down; some are very high. That will not bring national integration. A normal human life of comfort and satisfaction must be achieved. Everybody must have a reasonably good standard of food, shelter, and clothing. That is the aim of India's policy today. And we are slowly progressing towards that. Once we achieve a measure of economic integration and Swami Vivekananda's ideas become more popular and widespread here, then people will see the real greatness of India and what it can contribute to the rest of the world.

What is the purpose of this national integration? You have studied European history. When Germany was broken up into a number of small states, Napoleon could invade every one of them. Then came Bismarck. He unified the whole of Germany and made it powerful; it became a militant nation and entered into two World Wars. All this happened in Europe. National integration is dangerous in countries like that. If they are disintegrated, they cannot do much harm, but if they are integrated, there is danger. But so far as India is concerned, when we are well-integrated, we shall be of greatest help to the rest of the world. Swamiji has said that India is immortal if she remains a non-aggressive nation. Any aggression towards others will destroy our soul, because our philosophy says we are all one. In the Vivekananda literature you will find this wonderful idea repeatedly stressed.

Will a strong India give trouble to her neighbours? Many people ask that question. Neighbouring countries also ask that ques-

tion. They don't know the soul of India. Even most of our own people today do not know the soul of India. But when they read Vivekananda, they will understand that soul. Here is a nation, so strong in numbers, strong in intellect, strong in natural resources, and it is a strong developing democracy. There is nothing to fear from this nation. Only blessings will go out from here. Today, India's spiritual ideas are spreading all over the world. There is so much hunger and thirst for India's spiritual ideas in other people of the world.

A scientific and rational philosophy of human life, individual and collective, will spread out from India to the rest of the world. And the world is hankering for that. A global awareness is coming. Physically the world is becoming united, but mentally that union has not yet come. The vision necessary to achieve that is only here, and nowhere else—that Advaitic vision of harmony, unity, and oneness. So, in the future, India will be not only a socially and economically developed nation, but also a nation from which great ideas will spread throughout the world, for the good of mankind. Long ago our sages sang: *Lokāḥ samastāḥ sukhino bhavanti*—let all the world be happy.

Thakur used to quote a verse from the Vedas: *Yatra viśvam bhavati ekanīdam*—'Where the world becomes one family.'

Nīdam means a bird-nest. All the birds are sitting inside the nest and are very happy there. Similarly, the world should be like that nest with everyone happy in it. So this is the ultimate integration—not only on the national level but also on the international. Swami Vivekananda introduced into India the basis for this integration, and he himself was a perfect blending of such integration. Rabindranath Tagore, in his tribute to Vivekananda, said that Vivekananda kept the East on one side, the West on the other side, and became central to both of them. Romain Rolland gave a similar tribute—Vivekananda was the harmony of all human energy. That was his tribute to both Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Rolland said that they are the splendid symphony of the universal soul. The universal soul includes everybody, and it excludes nobody. With the advent of these great personalities of the modern age, awakening has come, a direction has come, an understanding of the distance we have to progress has come.

The India of today has many maladies, but she has also remedies. Remedies must be applied, and the maladies will go. And our remedies are good not only for us, but for the rest of the world as well. This Vedanta philosophy is meant for all humanity. It is not meant for a sect, a creed, or a particular race. That is the nature of India's Vedanta, and with it we can hope to achieve integration in every sense of the term. □

At the head of all these laws, in and through every particle of matter and force, stands One through whose command the wind blows, the fire burns, the clouds rain, and death stalks upon the earth. And what is His nature? He is everywhere the pure and formless One, the Almighty and the All Merciful. Thou art our Father. Thou art our beloved Friend.

—Swami Vivekananda

Gleanings from the Wayside

PAO YI

(Continued from the previous issue)

Twenty

To know one's own mind
Is the beginning of insight;
Enlightenment is incremental.
The One is all pervading,
And dwells in every heart,
And yet we are blind to it.
It is fully present everywhere,
And yet we do not see it.

Why is this so?
It is because our minds
Are in love with the many,
And cannot stand too much oneness.
When the mind seeks the many
For the sake of the many,
The One holds itself in abeyance.
But when the mind seeks
The One in the many,
The One reveals itself.

So if you seek it
And it seems to be absent,
Do not give way to despair.
Just continually think of it,
And eventually it will come forth.
Where thoughts of the One fill the mind,
The One cannot hold itself back.

Twenty-one

The One is without limit and always the same.
Most people think it is boring.
Can you merge into it and be happy forever?
Or do you need the tumult of the ten thousand things?
Can you be content with vast constant expanse?
Or do you sometimes need fireworks?

No need to feel shame!
 Man is but flesh and blood;
 He cannot stand too much light.
 For those who cannot endure
 The bright light of the sun,
 The One has provided small lamps.

But when the night is long
 And the lamps burn out,
 Some men welcome the sunrise.

Twenty-two

Some seek the One
 In hope of benefits:
 Power, status,
 Health, wealth,
 Even immortality.

Here we have five kinds of fool.
 Anyone who sees the One
 In hope of getting something extra
 Won't get anything extra,
 And he certainly won't get the One.

Make no mistake! You don't get the One;
 The One gets you.
 You can't possess the One:
 The One possesses you.

Therefore seek not to get it,
 But to be gotten by it;
 Not to possess it,
 But to be possessed by it.
 Anyone who seeks the One for its fruits
 Is not fit to be called a human being.

Twenty-three

Serenity can become smugness,
 Tranquillity can become torpor,
 Self-acceptance can become complacency,
 Certainty of one's place in the universe
 Can become overweening pride.
 Therefore mind the borders of virtue,
 Lest they unravel into vice;

Double-stitch the hem of your character:
Be mindful lest the edges fray.

Most men prune the branches
But ignore the roots.
A few water the roots
But ignore the branches.
The wise man pays attention
To the whole tree,
And thus becomes whole.

Therefore mind your roots
And spread your branches.

Twenty-four

Some men hear of the One and laugh.
Others hear of it and ignore it.
Still others never hear of it.
They wander the earth in ignorance,
Enchanted by the magic of the many.
How does the man of the One regard them?

As orphans who do not know
They have a mother.

Twenty-five

The man of the One knows when to be soft,
And when to be hard.
He knows when to advance,
And when to retreat,
When to hold fast,
And when to give way.

He knows when the One
Must be held in abeyance
To contend with the contradictions
Of the many.

Twenty-six

The man of the One
Does not feel contempt,
Does not despise anything,
Does not feel superior to anyone.

To feel contempt
Is to stray from the One.

The ten thousand things
Are offspring of the One;
The myriad beings
Are its children.
Though they stray from the One,
Though they violate it daily,
Still they are its children.
They may commit evil,
They may tyrannize the earth,
But still it is their mother.
It rests latent within them,
Though they do not know it;
Without it to nourish them,
They could do nothing.
And who ever knew a mother
To cast off her children?

Therefore the man of the One
Identifies with the Mother,
And does not cast off her children.

Twenty-seven

The man of the One values the One,
So he avoids entanglements.
If these get a grip on his mind,
He becomes lost and confused.

If you are entangled in little things,
How will you see the One Great Thing?
If you are struggling to untie a knot,
How will you see the whole carpet?
Don't be blinded by the knot!
Keep your eyes on the carpet!

Twenty-eight

For one who is fully immersed in the One,
The world and its problems are nothing.
He wends his way through them with ease.
Entanglements do not bind him,
For he is indifferent to them.

His eyes are always on the One.
 Even if the world should vanquish him,
 He is not really vanquished;
 For he cares only for the One,
 And from it he derives sustenance.
 To remain unperturbed in the midst of disasters
 Is the mark of the man who is steeped in the One.

Twenty-nine

The man of the one lives alone,
 But cherishes a few close companions.
 His needs are few,
 And easily satisfied;
 He works at a simple job.
 He avoids the contentious,
 Or if he cannot avoid them,
 Avoids getting embroiled with them.
 He does his work with one third of his mind,
 And with the remainder
 Cherishes the One.

Thirty

The One
 Fills all,
 Contains all,
 Transcends all,
 Sustains all.

Unmoving,
 It traverses galaxies
 In a flash of light.
 Impersonal,
 It seems to be
 A fostering mother.
 Unknowable,
 It seems to be
 A benevolent father.
 Unfathomable,
 It is right here.

It generates forces in the universe,
 Yet itself is not a force.
 The ocean evolves from it,
 And also the teardrop.
 The mind seeks to know it,

But cannot grasp it,
Perceives its outlines dimly,
But cannot hang onto it.

It does not act,
It only moves,
And moves the mind
That opens to it.

The wisest minds
Make themselves
An empty vessel
For it to flow into.
And from them
It flows into others.

Thirty-one

What is the One good for?
It fights no battles,
Builds no cities,
Earns no money,
Plows no fields.
It doesn't help you
Get rich,
Win fame,
Acquire power,
Do great deeds.

But it gives you the strength
To do these things,
And always is there
To sustain you.

Whenever you tire of the world and its ways,
You can always come home to the One.

(Concluded)



Vivekananda's Orations: A Plea for Linguistic Evaluation

PROF. B.N. SIKDAR

Professor B.N. Sikdar, a research fellow at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in Calcutta, here discusses the oratorical grace and power of Swami Vivekananda's speeches. This article forms the introductory part of his dissertation, 'The Eloquent Vivekananda', which is under preparation.

1

To call Vivekananda a 'rhetorician' may seem derogatory, but actually it would not be incorrect. 'Rhetoric' (from Greek *rhetor*—a public speaker) did not assume a bad connotation until the eighties of the sixteenth century.¹ In ancient Greece rhetoric was given as important a place in the academic curriculum as agriculture, music, warfare, horsemanship and other arts and sciences. Nobody aspiring for prominence could do without success in public speaking. Every important town had its chair of Rhetoric.² Socrates and Plato dealt with it, and Plato's disciple Aristotle devoted a treatise to it³ and summed up its practical value. The Stoics were the first in Europe to give recognition to rhetoric as a branch of philosophy, which then included the sciences.

The Romans, emulating Greek scholarship, founded academies to teach and practise rhetoric. Cicero, the greatest Roman orator, taught it to the children of the imperial household. He also wrote *De Oratore* in which he pointed out that 'No one can be a good speaker who is not also a thinker.'⁴ *Ad Herennium* in which there was a good

summing up of all rhetoric authorities including Quintilian, continued to be a standard textbook until the end of the Middle Ages.

The Stoics believed that language was 'the key to the understanding of how the human mind works.'⁵ Two thousand five hundred years later, modern scholars (e.g., Richard A. Sherwitz and C. Jack Orr) have reverted to the study of rhetoric in earnest, although they prefer to call it 'linguistics'. They choose to describe this discipline as 'the application of reason to the imagination for the better moving of the will.'⁶ To attempt to evaluate Swami Vivekananda's orations in the light of rhetorical principles is to have a glimpse, however partial and imperfect, into the deep complex processes of his mind. Only a man who was convinced that he had an heroic mission to fulfil and who could identify himself with a nation's destiny, could have faced a huge congregation of Western people and addressed them in their own language without notes.

2

A speech is a direct communication of an idea or ideas from the speaker to the hearer in a form moulded by the former according

1. The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989

2. W.G. De Burgh, *The Legacy of the Ancient World*, p. 304.

3. *Rhetoric*, about 330 BC.

4. *Brutus Oration*, 23.

5. *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey*, 1988, p. 463.

6. *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, Ed. by Richard A. Sherwitz, p. 1.

to his individual capability. By polish and design, every speaker seeks to make his communication effective. The stylish devices he adopts reveal a part of his mental make-up. An artist nurtured in the country will show his preference for the imagery of trees, plants, flowers, streams, the moon, etc.—natural objects—when supporting his ideas with a comparison or illustration. Insincerity in imagery is always found out. Even Milton's description of nature has been criticized, his 'Garden of Eden' compared to an English park.

A noble idea borne on the wings of rhetoric produces consequences that transcend time and place. An example of this power of oratory occurs in Lincoln's famous Gettysberg Address (1863), particularly in his description of democracy, 'a government of the people, by the people, for the people', which crops up even in today's political rhetoric, and is found in numerous textbooks. It continues to inspire us. More recently, in 1989, the young people of China who gathered together in the Tiananmen Square in China, carried posters which bore certain well-chosen phrases from Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Ideas become sharper and more appealing when presented in appropriate clothing, and acquire a greater momentum. It is a lesson of history that bad or immoral ideas die out fast, though rhetoric may make them very effective for a short time (e.g., Hitler's speeches). Only grand and noble ideas have an enduring quality.

In another way a good speech may become impressive. Scholars call this its symbolic influence. What Lincoln, Jefferson, Patric Henry, Edmund Burke or preachers like Martin Luther and Christmas Evans said might or might not have been successful in controlling the tide of affairs at the time, as for example, Burke's speeches on Warren Hastings and on American Taxa-

tion. Yet their thoughts left their imprint on history and later changed its course. Jefferson's and Lincoln's ideas are still acting on the national psyche in the United States. The Americans have ever since been struggling to reach the goal they set, with varying degrees of success over the years.

A century ago a young monk from India spoke to the American people and created seismic disturbances of which the epicentre was Chicago. Even more than those of Jefferson and Lincoln, Swamiji's words entered deeply into the American mind. His words have survived the onslaught of two world wars and are inspiring thousand, not only in America but all over the globe. The stylistic devices that he chose to use are not mere adjuncts to his ideas; they are one with his thought—as tightly joined as body and soul in our earthly existence.

3

Wherever Swamiji went on his whirlwind lecture tour, the limelight followed. This inspired Romain Rolland to call him 'a tongue of flame'—a rhetorical expression in itself. At least twice Vivekananda called himself 'a preacher'.⁷ Indeed he was one, though not of the usual kind: he did not proselytize. A typical preacher's job is to strengthen the bonds between his church and the congregation. Vivekananda had no 'church' to attract the people to. His was a synthetic creed hammered into shape by his guru in the fire of personal experimentation with three major faiths. It was the seeds of Ramakrishna that Vivekananda scattered. His job was to draw the ungodly away from fanaticism and bigotry, to the path of toleration and universality. He was no priest, he did not belong to any evangelical order, yet his orations made their impact as no ser-

7. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990), vol. 2, p. 485; vol. 6, p. 248.

mons of the Christian preachers did.

A linguistic analysis of his orations may help us to see how he accomplished his task in spite of many difficulties inherent in the situation. The force of his language is the counterpart of the courage of a man who embarked for America on a seemingly hopeless mission.

4

There is another consideration that make such a study obligatory. For the past two thousand years the subject of Rhetoric / Linguistics has been allowed a place in the system of liberal education. Modern Universities have retained it as one of their disciplines. It has been the mainstay of teachers since the inception of academic instruction. A teacher's success in the hall, like an orator's, is judged in part by the persuasive quality of his lectures. Such an aesthetic effect makes the pursuit of learning delightful. In 'Soul, God and Religion' there is a grand passage, beginning 'Through the vistas of the past, the voice of the centuries is coming down to us, the voice of the sages...' Even in print the voice of Vivekananda seems to sweep us along, and by its insistent rhythmical quality fills our heart with delight. One of the features of *epedeictic* (display) oratory is to begin with striking phrases in order to arouse the attention of the hearers. The opening paragraph of 'Soul, God, and Religion' testifies to the role of emotion in Vivekananda's thought, to the imaginativeness of his reasoning. Usually Vivekananda spoke extemporaneously. With regard to precision and epigrammatic force, there is plenty as well in Vivekananda's orations. We quote only two: 'The fire that burns the child also cooks the meal.'⁸ 'Tears and laughter are near kin.'⁹

8. *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 54.

9. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 11.

A gift for words is one of the components of oratory. This gift became one of Swami Vivekananda's assets; it was also a vehicle for self-expression.

5

Rhetoric has been a traditional weapon. English literature of the seventeenth century, especially its second half, is full of records of controversy over the form most suited to pulpit eloquence. In general, the Anglican church sought to be concise and laconic and criticized the emotionalism of the nonconformists. Joseph Glanville (1636–80), an eminent Anglican preacher, advocated the plain style for many years. Experience, however made him later modify his view.¹⁰ Perhaps more to the point is what Richard Baxter (1615–91) wrote in his *A Call to the Unconverted*, 'If Ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail. If they speak gently or coldly, you either sleep under them or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon.'¹¹ All hortative speakers find out sooner or later that it is not easy to please every taste when one is addressing a heterogeneous multitude. Swami Vivekananda's unexpected, unforeseen success from the moment of his appearance in the West is proof enough that his oratorical instincts helped him to make use of a style that was intermediate between the high-flown and the plain. Swamiji was eloquent in the sense that Cicero defined the term: 'Eloquence is nothing but wisdom delivering copious utterance.'¹²

Swamiji lived and spoke toward the close of that period of excellence of British Parliamentary Oratory often described as 'the Antonine age'. Chatham, Sheridan, and the Younger Pitt held Westminster Hall

10. *Oxford History of English Literature*, vol. 6, p. 307.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 307.

12. Cicero, *De Partitione Oratoria*, 79.

spellbound for hours. Their influence, and the influence of Edmund Burke (who could not make any impact in spite of his noble language and ideas), are clearly discernible in Swami Vivekananda. They caught his imagination at the moment of his intellectual and physical adolescence, and left their mark to some extent on what he later wrote in English—not excluding letters.

There can be no doubt about his great oratorical ability. His writings in Bengali also have the cadences of speech. They echo with his measured rhetoric.

An analysis of Vivekananda's speeches in the light of rhetorical principles is imperative for reasons intellectual, biographical and theological. □

From our Readers



Sanmarga Sangam
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T.N.

Respected Swamiji,

With reference to Fr. John Chethimattam's article, 'Hundred Years of Hindu-Christian Dialogue' (P.B., January 1995), it must be said that there is absolutely no historical evidence that St. Thomas ever came to India.

The story is originally found in the *Acts of Thomas*, written by the Gnostic preacher Bardesanes at Edessa in Syria in the third century C.E. It has been dubbed by the Catholic hagiographer Donald Attwater as 'no more than a popular romance, written in the interest of false Gnostic teachings.'

Bishop Stephen Neill, a respected authority on the growth of Christianity in India, was much distressed by the spread of a spurious St. Thomas history among Indians. He wrote, 'A number of scholars, among whom are to be mentioned ... Bishop A.E. Medlycott, J.N. Farquhar and the Jesuit J. Dahlman, have built on slender foundations what can only be called Thomas romances, such as reflect the vividness of their imaginations rather than the prudence of rigid historical critics.' And Prof. Jarl Charpentier observed, 'There is absolutely not the shadow of a proof that an apostle of our Lord—be his name Thomas or something else—ever visited South India or Ceylon and founded Christian communities there.'

Dr. Koenraad Elst, in his book *Negationism in India*, points out that the story of St. Thomas in India is no longer taught in Catholic universities in Europe.

It would have been in the interests of truth and good scholarship—and a Hindu-Christian dialogue must be based on truth and good scholarship, not sentimental fables and communal tales—if you had taken the trouble to check this reference and correct it even as you took the trouble to correct Fr. John's misconceptions about the Vedanta.

Yours faithfully,

16 March 1995

Ishwar Sharan

The Relevance of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's Philosophy in the Present Age

DR. B.B. THAKUR

In this era of tremendous advancement of science, we are committing a twofold mistake: on the one hand, materialistic science is being over-emphasized while on the other the aims of religion are being misdirected. In such a disturbed condition of discord and disharmony, Sri Ramakrishna's rationalistic approach to religion has a fresh and profound relevance for the modern man. So says Dr. B.B. Thakur, reader in Philosophy, J.B.S.D. College, Muzaffarpur, in this brief essay.

It is proposed to present briefly and critically Sri Ramakrishna's contributions as a philosopher for modern times. Indeed, this subject is of profound significance, as people are becoming more and more interested—enchanted, one may say—in modern scientific and technological developments. True, there have been spectacular developments in the various spheres of science: time and space have been to some extent tamed; many hitherto inconceivable things have been made possible; and people have really been greatly benefitted by the various inventions and discoveries. Many, particularly young people, have naturally come to think that science is all that matters and are forgetful of spiritual, religious and other things which are equally, or more important. They forget the warning of one of the greatest scientists of modern times, Albert Einstein, who said, 'Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.'

It is necessary to ponder seriously this problem of attaching excessive importance to materialistic science. If we think about it deeply, we soon become disappointed and disillusioned. This will not be bad, however, if we come to realize that science is not everything, but has its limitations. No doubt, we do not mean to be critical of all science and scientific developments; we ac-

knowledge the utility and importance of it, but at the same time, our thinking should be more balanced and objective.

It has been seen that materialistic science cannot supply humanity with so many things which are indispensable in life: it cannot make man nobler, it is incapable of providing him with desired peace, equanimity and other virtues, and it cannot inculcate faith, confidence and other qualities of mind and heart that human beings need today more than ever. So science has helped man, but helped him to become one-sided in his development, and in the process man is becoming bereft of his humanistic and moral values. S. Ramakrishnan, the eminent Indologist, has said:

Science has glorified the external man. In the progress it has denigrated the inner man. This has spurred man and woman to a neurotic pursuit of external pleasures and generated grisly greed for rights without duties.¹

So things are not happy. There is an atmosphere of distrust and disappointment

1. S. Ramakrishnan, 'Science and Spirituality: Need of Synthesis', in *Bhavan's Journal*, August 1981, Annual Number, p. 24.

at every level of life. People by and large are unhappy everywhere in the world. In India, persons of position are not so altruistic and value-oriented as they should be. The sense of sacrifice and service has markedly shrunk in recent times and the interests of people are not properly looked after. Public officials and persons in power appear to be more concerned about self and power, though there are some honourable exceptions.

There are mounting cases of corruption, murder, riots and terrorism. Of course this is not confined only to our nation, but is really in evidence everywhere—a global phenomenon. The common man is beset with various troubles and tensions due to these social, political and other evils. Dr. Radhakrishnan aptly remarked that 'the world stands at a cross-roads, faced by two alternatives: organization of it as one whole, or periodic wars.'²

Besides the problem created by materialistic science, there are the signs that the aims of religions are being misdirected. It is sad to see that religion, which is one of the noblest endeavours of human culture, and which is supposed to be a unifying and inspirational force, is misused and misapplied for petty and parochial ends. People quarrel in the name of religion, caste and creed. We frequently hear of communal riots and other such ugly incidents. It is really a pity that religion is being defamed and tarnished. Suffice it to state, there is an atmosphere of frustration and gloom.

There was a galaxy of socio-religious reformers in the latter half of the 19th century. Historically it was necessitated owing to the fact that Hinduism, one of the oldest and greatest religions of the world, had sunk

low and become subject to various malpractices. The great Religion had lost its original purity and universality due to adverse political circumstances. It was a stage of stagnation. Alien rulers had exploited our country for a long period, so naturally Hinduism lost something of its original character, though it continued to be a living religion. Due to those various malpractices that had crept in, there was an urgent need to reform and rejuvenate Hinduism. That was why the various socio-religious movements sprang up with their lofty mission. We may mention here that Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, and others, all played their important parts. They tried to purify Hinduism, revive its moral fibre, and make it dynamic and universal, suited to the needs of the age. It was clear that the Ramakrishna movement was one of the most effective, centering as it did, round the great master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. We shall see how Ramakrishna Paramahansa's philosophy—some highlights and important features of it—can be a panacea for the various problems of present-day society.

But it has to be understood that, though the Ramakrishna movement had a grand influence as a reforming force in society, one should not say that the great master himself was merely a socio-religious reformer. He was much more than that. We may quote Professor Nagaraja Rao to have a perspective:

Sri Ramakrishna is the starting point of the modern renaissance of Hinduism. This illiterate temple priest did not take anything on trust. He is the unwearied experimenter of all religions and forms of worship. He had been initiated into the Tantra, Vaiṣṇava and Vedānta methods of spiritual discipline. He then practised with success the Islamic and

2. Dr. S. Radhakrishna, *Religion and Society* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1947), p.12.

the Christian forms of spiritual life. After a full and vivid firsthand personal experience, he declared the unity of Religions and fellowships of faiths. This is the cornerstone of the religion we need. Ramakrishna says, 'I have had to practise all the religions, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity, and I have walked the path of the different denominations of Hinduism, again of the Śāta, vaiṣṇava, Vedānta and other sects. I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are travelling; only they are coming through diverse ways.'³

ment but for the joy of sharing it with others.⁴

It is pointed out that Sri Ramakrishna tried to establish the essential unity of all religions. Many others talked about the harmony underlying all religions, and their essential unity, but there was something unique and unparalleled about this great master. He actually demonstrated this great truth, not only in words, theoretically, but in practice and experience. This is perhaps unique and unparalleled in the history of humanity.

It has been seen that materialistic science cannot supply humanity with so many things which are indispensable in life: it cannot make man nobler, it is incapable of providing him with desired peace, equanimity and other virtues, and it cannot inculcate faith, confidence and other qualities of mind and heart that human beings need today more than ever.

Thus he was a unique being. He started his life as a priest at the Dakshineswar Kali temple, but he did not remain long as a simple priest and worshipper. He developed a spiritual and religious intensity. He used to become completely absorbed in worship, being 'mad after God'. He was like that from the very beginning. That was the real goal of his life. Swami Bhuteshananda has rightly said:

From the early days of his life Sri Ramakrishna was mad after God. God-realization was his only concern in life, other things were absolutely secondary for him. He said, 'Verily, I tell you, I know nothing but God.' He lived for God-realization. However, he wished to have this realization not for his own enjoy-

Another remarkable thing, we see that Ramakrishna Paramahansa, though primarily a devotee of Ma Kali, was also initiated in the Vedantic tradition, and he soon realized the great transcendental truth of Vedanta. To clarify and expand this assertion, it may be shown that he advocated the philosophy of Vedanta in a more synthetic and dynamic manner than was ever done before. He ultimately believed and taught one Reality, known as Brahman or God. But for him there is no real difference between 'nirguṇa' Brahman (God without conceivable qualities) and 'saguṇa' Brahman (God with qualities). He also said that God may be conceived of either 'with form' or 'without form'.

God is formless and God is with form too, and He is that which transcends both

3. Prof. P. Nagaraja Rao, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, (cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, [Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1986], 22 Oct. 1882, p. 129), pp. 16-17.

4. Swami Bhuteshananda, 'The Message of Sri Ramakrishna', in *Prabuddha Bharata*, vol. 91, July 1986, p. 296.

form and formlessness. He alone can say what else He is.... They are like ice and water. When water freezes into ice, it has form; when the same ice is melted into water, all form is lost. God with form and God without form are not two different beings. He who is with form is also without form. To a devotee God manifests Himself in various forms. Just think of a shoreless ocean—an infinite expanse of water—no land visible in any direction: only here and there are visible blocks of ice formed by intense cold. Similarly, under the cooling influence, so to say, of the deep devotion of his worshipper, the Infinite reduces Himself into the Finite and appears before him as a Being with form. Again, as on the appearance of the sun, the ice melts away, so on the appearance of knowledge, God with form melts away into the formless.⁵

all the religions, as they aim for realization of God or Truth. It is quite fitting, therefore, that Ramakrishna Paramahansa is regarded as the prophet of harmony.

Additionally, it may be pointed out that the present age, being the age of science and scientific experiments, Ramakrishna Paramahansa presented religion in the light and spirit of this age. His approach was quite rationalistic and experimental, and this may account for his appeal to the modern man. Swami Jitatmananda has observed:

Ramakrishna took always a strongly rationalistic and experimental approach to religion. Reason and experience were the foundation of the entire religious life of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. When a Western disciple of Vivekananda asked him if religion and reason can go together, Vivekananda's

The modern world may become a better place, full of harmony and love, if we really appreciate this great master's synthesizing and universalistic approach to religion and life's problems.

As indicated earlier, Ramakrishna identified the Brahman of Vedanta with the Divine Mother of the Śakti cult. His unique way being 'by experience', or direct vision, he found that the different conceptions about God were perfectly reconciled and synthesized. His approach was quite catholic, synthetic and dynamic. He did not uphold the idea of important essential differences in approaches to God and spirituality. Likewise, he held that the paths of devotion, action, knowledge and yoga—all these lead to the same goal. Having seen this for himself and practised it in his life, he taught the essential unity and harmony of

answer was emphatic: 'Remember, the superconscious never contradicts reason,...it transcends it but contradicts it never.' One must follow truth, as Vivekananda used to say, to the utmost bounds of human thought and never be afraid to face reason. Instinct matures into reason and reason ultimately matures into intuition.⁶

Now, in the light of the above observations, it can be seen that Ramakrishna Paramahansa's philosophy is really quite relevant for the present age, vexed by

5. *The Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1948), pp. 7-8.

6. Swami Jitatmananda, 'Sri Ramakrishna and the Modern Time', in *Vedanta Kesari*, vol. 72, Nov-Dec 1985, p. 475.

religious discord and disharmony and other allied problems of social disintegration. Religions having lost their former influence, modern man is not easily convinced about God or belief in His existence. Now, due to the great master's unique approach, ordinary people can see and believe that surely God, or Reality, *must exist*. Based on the authoritative explanations, and rationalistic experimental approach of this great superman, Ramakrishna Paramahansa is sometimes regarded, rightly one thinks, as an incarnation of God and reinstator of Dharma.

Ramakrishna's teachings and preachings are of profound importance and significance in our present age. Everybody can choose his or her path, according to his or her temperament or capacity, and can practise the path of spiritual betterment, making life more meaningful. Through Ramakrishna's teachings and example one may be inspired towards altruism and spiritual living. One can get rid of one's narrow frontiers. One can be more catholic and accommodating.

The modern world may become a better place, full of harmony and love, if we really appreciate this great master's synthesizing and universalistic approach to religion and

life's problems. Dr. S.B.P. Sinha rightly remarked in this context:

...Sri Ramakrishna is regarded as a bridge between divinity and humanity, and it is proper that we should try to acquaint ourselves with the sublime ideas and ideals of this great master who lived philosophy in the truest sense. It is high time that we should realize the importance of his great mission in the larger interest of the present world which is confronted with various problems.⁷

So we see that Ramakrishna is a unique figure who descended on this earth to alleviate the sufferings of each and all, and to make our world more habitable. Indeed, his teachings are relevant and important for the present world torn by conflicts and problems. We should try to study the life and teachings of this great superman and practise those teachings in our day-to-day life so that this world may become better. His philosophy is not a philosophy in thought only, but a philosophy of action, aiming at the welfare of humanity at large, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. □

7. Dr. S.B.P. Sinha, 'Applied Philosophy and Sri Ramakrishna', in *Prabuddha Bharata*, vol. 95, Dec. 1990, p. 499.

'True Brahmins are not greedy, nor criminal, nor angry. Are you such? If not, do not mimic the genuine, real men. Caste is a state, not an iron-bound class, and every one who knows and loves God is a true Brahmin...Where do the Vedas say that sacrifices make us pure? They may please, perhaps, the angels, but they make us no better. Hence, let off these mummeries—love God and strive to be perfect.'

—Lord Buddha

Rich-poor: Managing the Gap*

Despite economic progress, the gap between the haves and the have-nots has been widening across the North-South divide. The challenge facing the world economy—Bharat Dogra argues—is to tackle the challenge of poverty.

The most striking feature of the world economy as it advances to the 21st century is the very high degree of inequality. The richest 20 per cent of the world's people now receive more than 150 times the income of the poorest 20 per cent. Twenty per cent of the world's population has 83 per cent of the world's income and, hence, five times the purchasing power of the poor 80 per cent.

Between 1960 and 1991 the share of world income for the richest 20 per cent of the world's population rose from 70 per cent to 85 per cent. Over the same period the share for the poorest 20 per cent fell from 2.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent.

This inequality has been accompanied by an actual fall in the income and earnings of poor countries and of the people living there in recent years.

In the 90s per capita income in Africa has come down to the level of the 1960s, and in Latin America, to the level of the late 1970s. In the 1980s per capita economic output in Latin America dropped almost 10 per cent.

Real wages fell by 20 per cent in Latin America in the 1980s. In many African countries the value of the minimum wage dropped sharply—by 20 per cent in Togo, 40 per cent in Kenya and 80 per cent in Sierra Leone.

According to 1993 data, almost one-third of the total population of developing countries are still in absolute poverty. More than a billion people living here survive on a daily income of less than \$1. An idea of the extent of under-nourishment and health can

be had from the fact that in South Asia 30 per cent of the babies are born underweight. Mass famine deaths have continued right into the 90s.

In Sub-Saharan Africa of the 80s, all countries had double-digit unemployment figures. In Latin America urban employment during this period was above eight per cent. India and Pakistan had unemployment rates above 15 per cent.

Due to their vast resources and power, MNCs can function with little regard for their ethical responsibility towards the interests of consumers and farmers. They can abandon factories when workers ask for more.

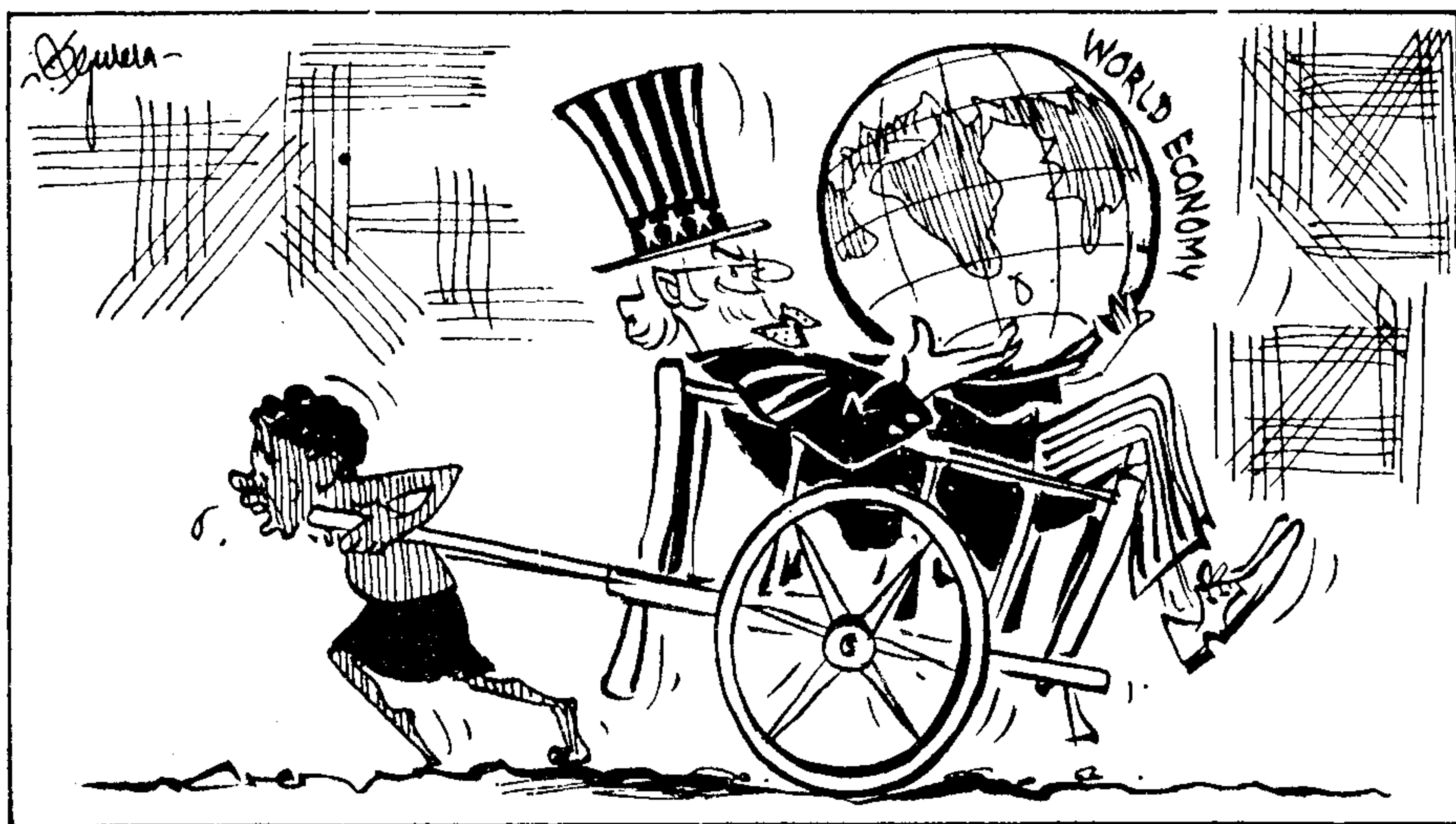
The most amazing aspect of the economic deprivation is significant level of want and misery in the richest countries. In both the US and the European Union, nearly 15 per cent of the people live below the poverty line.

In the European Union, 44 million people (some 28 per cent of the workforce) receive less than half the average income of their country.

In the US, real earnings fell by three per cent through the 1980s and between 1987 and 1990 real benefits per pensioner declined by 40 per cent.

In OECD countries unemployment stayed above six per cent throughout the 1980s. Unemployment in the European members of OECD increased threefold from three per cent in the mid-1970s to almost 10 per cent in 1992. During 1974–94 the number

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



of jobs in industrial countries increased at only half the rate of GDP growth and failed to keep pace with the growth in the labour force. By 1993 more than 35 million people here were seeking work.

Ironically, this deterioration in the plight of the poor people within rich countries happened despite massive resource transfers from the poor nations to the rich. These transfers were much higher than the aid from the rich countries to the poor countries.

Developing countries (excluding those which export oil) have suffered heavily due to worsening terms of trade for several years. Due to this they may be losing between \$150 to \$200 billion a year. Many studies on commodities exported by these countries have shown that they receive only 10 to 15 per cent of the final retail price of their commodities when sold to consumers in developed countries.

According to a paper prepared by the UNCTAD Secretariat in 1992, 'the price index of principal non-fuel commodities exported by developing countries fell by a

staggering 50 per cent in real terms between 1979-81 and 1988-90.'

Partly due to this and partly due to other factors such as the oil price increases, corrupt business and arms deals between ruling elites and western companies and distorted development thinking (often imposed by the west) reflected in unnecessarily import-intensive development strategies, the foreign debt of many developing countries has increased rapidly. Beyond a point, of course, the debt tends to be self accentuating because of the very heavy interest payments involved.

In 1980, the capital-importing developing countries had a debt of \$567 billion which increased to \$1,066 billion in 1986 and \$1,419 billion in 1992. During this period these countries had to pay back \$891 billion as principal and \$771 billion as interest. In other words, despite paying back \$1,662 billion they were left with an outstanding debt of \$1,419 billion in 1992.

In 1992 developing countries had to pay \$160 billion in debt service charges. The total

external debt of developing countries grew from \$100 billion in 1970 to over \$1,500 billion at present.

In addition, very vast funds are also transferred from poor to rich countries in the form of technology payments, profits and dividends of foreign companies and perhaps even more than that by the practice of transfer pricing between multinational companies and their affiliates in developing countries. The Washington-based International Trade Commission estimated some time back that if proposed changes in patent rights are pushed through, US multinationals alone can take \$40 to \$60 billion a year from consumers in developing countries.

While rich countries, specially the US, have used 'free trade' arguments to open up more and more markets for their products, they have continued to impose a large number of restrictions on what most developing countries can export to them. An amazing example of this is the trade war unleashed by the US on Korea to convert a Korean surplus of over \$1 billion in 1987 to a deficit in 1991.

According to the Human Development Report (1992) prepared by the UNDP, poor nations are being denied \$500 billion worth of market opportunities annually—about 10 times the annual flow of foreign assistance they receive.

A number of direct and indirect transfers every year send enormous amounts of resources from the poor to the rich countries, which have been experiencing quite a high level of poverty and unemployment. In fact, a lot of the recent additions to the national income of the richest countries has been cornered by a relatively small section of the richest people living there. In the UK not only do the top 10 per cent of the people have 50 per cent of wealth, in addition during 1979–89, the top two per cent cornered as much as 24 per cent of the total increase in marketable wealth.

According to UN data, replicating the

patterns of the North in the South would require 10 times the present amount of fossil fuels and roughly 200 times as much mineral wealth. And in another 40 years, these requirements would double again as would world population.

People in industrial countries make up about one-fifth of world population but consume 10 times more commercial energy than people in developing countries, and they account for 71 per cent of the world's carbon monoxide emissions and 68 per cent of the world's industrial waste.

Industrial countries have roughly four-fifths of the world's income, and consume 70 per cent of the world's energy and 75 per cent of its metals. Hence it is clear that the present life of the majority of people in industrial countries cannot serve as a model for other countries.

Between 1960 and 1991 the share of world income for the richest 20 per cent of the world's population rose from 70 per cent to 85 per cent. Over the same period the share for the poorest 20 per cent fell from 2.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent.

According to the Human Development Report 1994, 'A major restructuring of the world's income distribution, production and consumption patterns may be a necessary precondition for any viable strategy for sustainable human development'. Inequalities have to be reduced in rich as well poor countries. In addition at the international level, resources transfers have to be changed in the direction of rich to poor.

But such essential reforms do not appear to be on the agenda of the present world, which seems to be obsessed with the further expansions of multinational companies and the further spread of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), both trends adding to the existing inequalities and distortions in the world economy.

More than 90 per cent of all MNCs are headquartered in the developed countries. In some important industries the top five MNCs account for over 50 percent of worldwide sales. In 1991 General Motors had sales of \$124 billion while IBM had sales of \$65 billion. Some MNCs have a bigger turnover than the national incomes of some of the countries in which they operate.

Due to their vast resources and power, MNCs can function with little regard for their ethical responsibility towards the interests of consumers and farmers. They can abandon factories when workers ask for higher wages and shift thousands of miles away, bringing capital intensive technologies which can cause a net loss of jobs at the new place as well.

MNCs capable of shifting operations at short notice are unlikely to bother much about protecting local environment. The

threat to the interest of consumers, farmers, workers and environment is of special concern in the case of MNCs also because of the enormous resources they command.

Thus the world economy, despite being supported by amazing advances in science and technology, has performed very badly from the point of view of removing poverty and injustice. Without removing poverty or reducing it to insignificant levels, the existing trends in world economy have inflicted massive damage on the environment, endangered the future of various forms of life, including humankind. Given the serious distortions that exist in the global economy, the words 'growth' and 'development' acquire entirely different connotations of growing injustice and environmental ruin. This kind of growth without basic reforms can bring grave perils. □

From our Readers



J-1915, Chittaranjan Park
New Delhi-110 019

To:

Swami Sarvatmananda, Boston

Revered Maharaj,

...It was indeed a pleasure to read your extremely well-researched article entitled, 'Vedanta: Its first hundred years in America' in the March '95 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*. In fact, this appears to be the first in-depth comprehensive history of the American Centres of the Order and its work there. However, writing about some of the Swamis who preached in America and went back to India or those who had gone there for preaching and/or some other work, you have missed out the names of some very senior Swamis who were either posted there for preaching work or had just been casual visitors. Nonetheless, some of them were extremely eminent people with a saga of service behind them.

The first omission that comes to my mind is that of Swami NIRMALANANDA (a disciple of Swami Vivekananda who also had the good fortune of visiting Sri Sri Thakur on a few occasions) who reached New York on Nov. 25, 1903 to assist Swami Abhedananda and stayed in America till end-1905. He also established a Vedanta Centre at Brooklyn on Jan. 30, 1905. (Please refer page 140 of Swami Gambhirananda's *History of the Ramakrishna*

(Continued on page 704)

Practical Vedanta

HEAVEN AND HELL

The saintly Hakuin of Japan was once visited by a soldier who questioned him thus—'Sir, what in reality is Heaven and Hell, or is it just a figment of imagination?'

Hakuin gazed at him from head to toe and asked, 'What is your occupation?' 'I am a soldier, Sir', came the reply.

The saint appeared surprised: 'Did I hear you correctly? Indeed you say you are a soldier! By your appearance you seem to be more of a beggar! Whoever gave you admission into the armed forces must be a dunce and an utter fool.'

Hearing this the soldier turned livid with rage and his hand reached for his sword. Hakuin, however, interrupted him: 'Well, you also carry a sword I see. But it appears to be terribly blunt. So how do you propose to cut off my head?'

These words added fuel to fire and the soldier in a thundrous rage drew out the sword from the scabbard ready to strike. Again the words of Hakuin came quietly, 'See here, the gates of Hell are open now!'

Hardly had the soldier heard these words than he realized how peacefully the saint remained seated despite the threat of the sword held over his head. His anger and rage abated just as fast as it had risen. Struck by the saint's unshakable self-control, he pushed his sword back into the scabbard, only to be enlightened further: 'To answer your question, soldier, now the gates of Heaven have opened.'

Reviews & Notices

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SURANGAMA SUTRA: By Anthony Elenjittam (alias Bhikshu Ishabodananda); Publ. Basic Education Publications, Aquinas Hall, Bandra, Bombay 400 050; 1993; pp. 81; price not mentioned.

This book is based on the *Surangama Sutra* of the Mahayana Buddhism, which is a compilation of Buddha's teachings to his disciples. It propounds the concept of the universality of mind as one of the fundamental constituents of this universe.

The book under review is in two parts. In Part-I the author has tried to establish, through inter-religious comparative studies, the fact that mind is the fundamental and underlying phenomenon which explains all conscious, sensual and transcendental aspects of human personality. He distinguishes between the outward-directed mind which responds to the senses, sense objects and the happenings in the objective world, and the inward-directed mind which promotes self-awareness and Self-realization. He also elucidates how the mind, unconditioned by name, form, time, space and causation is limitless, immortal and universal, and is at the root of the real 'I' or pure existence.

The author has also endeavoured to throw light on inter-religious harmony through a comparative analysis of the various philosophic concepts of Advaita Vedanta and the *Surangama Sutra*. Considering human problems in a general way, he refers to various spiritual practices and drives home the fact that unless we transcend our physical and mental barriers and experience the state of pure consciousness, imperfections will not cease binding us to sufferings and sorrows in the world. Through such discussions the author leads us to the Buddha's method of reasoning and the possibility of mitigating our sufferings

and sorrows.

The viewpoints presented have been strengthened by referring to Vedanta, Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Platonic philosophy, and the Neo-Vedanta of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

In Part-II the author elucidates the contents of the *Surangama Sutra* in great detail. Fr. Elenjittam's outlook is a product of his extensive studies in Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions. Besides, his involvement in work for the welfare of destitute children in India fills his writings with love and universality. This book appears to be particularly meant to promote inter-religious understanding.

Swami Muktidananda, Mysore

SWAMIJIR PADAPRANTE VIDESHINIRA (Bengali): By Himani Chakraborty; Publ. Navaneeta Prakashani, Kunjban Township, Agartala, Tripura; first edition 1993; pp. 105 + 4; price Rs. 60/-.

The book under review presents short life-sketches of five western women disciples of Swami Vivekananda, namely, Miss Josephine MacLeod, Mrs. Sara Chapman Bull, Sister Christine, Mrs. Charlotte Elizabeth Sevier, and Sister Nivedita.

When Swamiji went to America and England with his message of Vedanta and the mission to integrate the East and the West with the spiritual wisdom of India, many people were impressed by his majesty, eloquence, and fascinating spiritual personality. While he faced the malicious attacks of the Christian missionaries many noble women, who recognized his greatness and defended him, also helped him spread his Message. Some became his ardent disciples. Swami Vivekananda saw in them the embodiment of power, freedom, and fearlessness. These disciples established a uni-

que relationship with Swamiji as Mothers, friends, and daughters, and actively participated in furthering the cause of the Ramakrishna Movement.

The author, with her charming and racy style, narrates the fascinating life stories of these dedicated disciples of Swamiji, whose services he utilized for uplifting the condition of women in India and giving them dignity. In the life of Miss Josephine MacLeod we find her ever ready to do the work of Swamiji and inspire others to join in it. Swamiji was, for her, an embodiment of Truth and Love, and a friend for all time. In Mrs. Sara Chapman Bull and Mrs. Sevier, the Mother-heart was prominent, and they helped Swamiji in his mission as a mother would help her son. Captain and Mrs. Sevier were instrumental in establishing the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati in the Himalayas, as desired by Swamiji. In the lives of Sister Christine and Sister Nivedita, there is a remarkable influence of Swamiji as their Guru and Father in one. Studying the lives of all these great women, the author has unveiled Swamiji as an impressive spiritual guide with prophetic accomplishments.

The book is invaluable for all those who are connected with the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta Movement and its multifarious activities. We do hope that its English version also will soon be made available so that it reaches a wider circle of readers. The book has been dedicated to Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission as an expression of the author's gratitude and reverence to him. We hope that the readers, especially women, will take inspiration from this book and work for the regeneration of our Motherland.

Swami Brahmasthananda, Hyderabad

THE NEO-HINDU CONCEPT OF MAN: In the Light of Sri Aurobindo's Evolutionary Vision; by Dr. Amalraj Susai; Publ. Intercultural Publications Pvt. Ltd., 15 A/30 W.E.A., New Delhi 110 005; 1993; pp. 272; Rs. 200/-.

Sri Aurobindo was a great Yogi and a visionary of this century. His writings, running over 30 volumes, are a rich cultural heritage of India and of the world. Sri Aurobindo believed in the evolution of man and had envisaged a bright future for humanity.

Dr. Amalraj Susai, the author of the present volume, aims at presenting the vision of Aurobindo, centred around the anthropological axis. Although the author titles his work 'the Neo-Hindu Concept of Man', it is more or less a universal concept and may be accepted as such.

Aurobindo related man to God, making God the foundation of man's existence, nature, activity and freedom. He integrated the religious, social and moral dimensions of man in his evolutionary vision. It is believed that the traditional Indian religious thought subverts the significance of the social dimensions of man. But Aurobindo, in his writings, presented man as a socio-religious being.

The author analyses Sri Aurobindo's vision of man and provides an intercultural dialogue between Aurobindo's thought and Western philosophy. In this task the author's knowledge of Western and Indian philosophy and of Christian theology has stood him in good stead.

After giving a brief life sketch of Aurobindo in the opening chapter, the author deals with the theory of 'Reality in General' and 'In Evolution'. The nature of reality is examined in relation with the Absolute and also with the 'Origin of the Material Universe'. He feels that 'Aurobindo's concept of Reality as unity in diversity (integral spiritual monism) is the cornerstone that unifies the different aspects of his vision....Such a unity is possible since everything that exists is the manifestation of the Supreme....The evolutionary process is constituted of two movements (involution and evolution) that link the Divine to the finite beings and enable them to return to the Absolute' (p. 102).

There is a remarkable similarity between Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda in the exposition of the nature of spiritual evolution.

While Chapter 4 deals with the Religious Dimensions of Man, chapter 5 expounds his Social Dimensions. The former emphasizes the fourfold Yogas, viz. Jnanayoga, Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Siddhiyoga (Yoga of Perfection). In chapter 5 the author remarks that Aurobindo believes 'Our existence is closely knit with the existences around us and there is a common life, a common work, a common effort and aspiration without which humanity cannot grow to its full height and wideness' (p. 183). The appreciation of the Social Dimensions of Man is all the more necessary for the further journey of humanity in the 21st century.

The last chapter is on New-Hindu Vision. The author is critical here regarding Aurobindo's vision in general and advances his own views based on Christian theology. He criticizes the concept of Being and Becoming and also the Vedantic theory of Creation. This he does with the help of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology. He further compares Aurobindo's views on relation between the intellect and spiritual (mystical) experience with those of Henri Bergson, Kant and other Western philosophers. He also describes Anthropocentric Humanism and Theocentric (Integral) Humanism, and categorizes Aurobindo's Humanism as a Theocentric one. The author concludes, 'Aurobindo's had been a sincere attempt to integrate the genuine values of the individual within the Vedantic philosophy. Thus he has paved the way towards a Hindu Humanism' (p. 247).

Sabino Palumbieri, Professor of Philosophical Anthropology at Salesian Pontifical University, Rome, has written a learned foreword enabling readers to embark on this scholastic journey. The volume is well documented with copious notes and a rich bibliography. The index would prove useful. Get-up, printing and paper are good. Any serious reader of comparative philosophy would find the reading rewarding.

Dr. N.B. Patil, Bombay

RIPENESS IS ALL: N. Raghunatha Aiyar Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume, 1893-1993; ed V. Sivaramakrishna; Publ. Vigneshwara Publishing House, No. 19, 12th Main Road, Malleswaram, Bangalore, 560 055; pp. 126; Rs. 20/-.

There is, it seems to me, a peculiar synchronicity in my reviewing this volume of tributes to and a selection of articles by N. Raghunatha Aiyar (1893-1982), the great nationalist, redoubtable journalist, translator, commentator-columnist and, above all, one who perfected the rarest of arts: the art of living a life of integrity, honesty and fearlessness. The synchronicity is this: I recall, even today, the breathless eagerness with which I used to wait for my copy every week of *Swatantra* (I still treasure the annual numbers) and devour, first thing, *Sotto Voce* by Vigneshwara, the pen name of Raghunatha Aiyar. As such this is a welcome opportunity to articulate an admiration held so long in private!

In one of his pieces, he says, 'The power to jolt the routine out of its rut by what looks like an exercise in paradox—that is the mark of the born teacher.' This exactly sums-up Raghunatha Aiyar's great achievement as a journalist, a nationalist and, above all, a champion of the enduring values of the Hindu way of life. Indeed he is, as an admirer in the volume puts it, 'a veritable moving encyclopaedia' of Indian philosophy and religion. Therefore, whatever he wrote bears the inimitable imprint of the '*vichara* of a philosopher and the *sahridayatva* of a connoisseur.'

But Mr. Aiyar was not a journalist alone: he was also a gifted dedicated organiser who gave concrete shape to the association of journalists though he was, equally dedicatedly, against the not so savoury methods of trade unionism. This is because he believed—and acted on that belief—that the job of a journalist is the relentless quest for truth and an articulation of this truth without any vested interest to please or public to appease.

This accounts for the quality which marks his writing: cold logic and commitment to values, what Professor Iyengar calls 'the ribbon of stern purpose running through it all.' In this regard he is comparable, as the contributors to this volume affirm, to the most eminent among world journalists. Indeed, like C.P. Scott of *The Manchester Guardian*, Raghunatha Aiyar made 'righteousness readable'. No surprise that he founded the immensely popular and unquestionably authoritative *Hindu Literary Supplement* and shaped its destiny for over twenty-five years. Comparable excellence is evident in his column *Sotto Voce*.

This volume, intelligently put together and ably edited, is a fitting testimony to the protean achievement of this great figure of the modern Indian renaissance. Divided into two sections, we have essays assessing his achievement and also a representative selection of his writings. The contributors include such eminent litterateurs as Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Professor S. Ramaswami, Sri V.K. Narasimhan, Dr. D. Anjaneyulu, Sri P. Vaman Rao and the editor himself.

The most valuable tribute, however, comes from His Holiness the Paramacharya of Kanchi Sri Chandrasekhara Swami, who was the impulse behind Raghunatha Aiyar's monumental translations of the great epics *The Ramayana* and *The Bhagavata*. This was indeed, an arduous, daunting job for someone who crossed sixty years of age. Nevertheless, he did it with remarkable vigour and with scrupulous loyalty to the originals. No wonder the Periyavar conferred on him the richly deserved title, '*Bhagavata Vidya Praveena*'. In his blessings the great Acharya refers to Raghunatha Aiyar's writings as possessing '*Gambhirata*' and '*dirghadarshana-mulakata*'.

Among the pieces by Raghunatha Aiyar reproduced in the volume, readers of *Prabuddha Bharata* would surely find those on 'Sri Ramakrishna, The Complete Man', 'Sage and Seer'; and of course the classic on 'Gandhi' of particular interest.

In short, this volume, rich in stimulating thought and reminiscence, is a valuable addition to the cultural history of recent times.

As such it deserves to be read by all those interested in perceiving and conserving the enduring core of our culture.

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna, Hyderabad

VEDIC HERMENEUTICS: by K. Satchidananda Murty; Publ. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, in association with Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi; 1993; Rs. 150/-.

A recent tendency in the study of Indian philosophy and religion is to evaluate them in terms of contemporary critical, interpretative strategies popularized by current Western thought. These include structuralism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, etc.

Vedic Hermeneutics belongs obviously to this ethos. Though hermeneutics is essentially theological in its assumptions, it is largely, today, a *critical* concept drawing its logic from the textual approaches systematized or reflected in the work of Heidegger, Gadamer and others. The implicit concerns include the author's intention, the relativity of meanings, the role of the reader in constituting meaning and significance in a text, and above all, the structure of the whole and the parts of a text. A 'hermeneutic circle' is thus envisaged. The present volume is divided into three chapters and tries to explicate such issues as approach (right?) to the sacred lore, the content of sacred lore, and the unity and essence of the Vedas. In comprehending the complexity of these 'problems', the logical premises found in the *Nirukta* and *Mīmāṃsā* are made use of. The commentaries of such stalwarts as Madhva, Sāyaṇa are also pressed into (tortuous textual?) service. The author's overall view is that the four Vedas form a unity of meaning and significance covering different dimensions of our cognition and volition.

In these terms the book does have a unifying thematic and explicatory impulse. Nevertheless, this overall impulse does not match the actual content of the book. For

instance, one would expect—at least as a reader I expected—a clear connotative and conceptual frame regarding what constitutes hermeneutics in Professor Murty's view. In the absence of such a controlling critical centre, the book appears a random collection of sporadic insights loosely held together.

One example in this regard is the issue of the 'eternal' nature of the Veda. Professor Murty says: 'Today with our knowledge of the history of language and of the origin and development of the universe and man, we cannot accept any book—whether the Veda or the Quran—either as eternal or as composed by God.'

This is a perfectly logical statement. But the logic rests on the assumption that the *Veda is a book*. Whether the Veda is that or a cluster of inner, transcendental truths *given a verbal form* is a point which needs careful clarification. If what the Vedas, essentially, transmit are truths for which language is an inadequate medium, then one cannot, I suppose, apply criteria relevant to a *book* carrying the *signature* of an author specifically tied to a locale and time. This is, implicitly, to underscore the aesthetic-thematic rather than the *knowledge* which makes the very act of perception and all its modes possible. This is all the more surprising because Professor Murty himself says, 'a scripture is valuable only insofar as it makes known truths unknowable through an empirical source of knowledge...and which remain uncontradicted by human experience and science.'

One wishes, in such contexts, that the author dug deep into the implications for hermeneutics of the question of meaning *in and of* texts. Since he observes that 'nowadays the Veda is chanted by those who do not know its meaning and heard by many who do not understand it', it should be possible to think of the Vedic text as an instance where communication is posited *even without* understanding in the cerebral sense of intellectual apprehension. This branches off into consideration of language as *mantra*.

This question seems to me very valid since, in the final and more satisfying chap-

ter of the book, the author rightly points out the spiritual gain of interiorizing Vedic, specially Upanishadic, insights. 'They are,' he says, 'interior symbolizations of something sacred, efficacious of well-being.' In these terms hermeneutics becomes *Vedic* only in the realization of this interior process. For us, today, this is so much a process not of *exegesis*, interpretative strategies, but of *isogesis*, interior illumination.

Beautifully produced with the stamp of excellence associated with M/s Motilal Banarsidass and carrying an appreciative foreword by Mandana Mishra, Vice-Chancellor, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, New Delhi, *Vedic Hermeneutics*, nevertheless, is a book which promises much but delivers little. Coming from an author of admitted stature, this is, indeed, a pity.

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna, Hyderabad

POEMS BY KAUSHIKA: Printed and published by 'Kaushika', N.R. Subramanyam, 133 Palace Road, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, 625 001; 1993; Rs. 30/-.

In this elegant book are interesting reflections of the author woven into a garland of poems, replete with sentiments, narration, philosophy, and action of life.

The poems are written luminously on a variety of themes and moods, ranging from the very light to the sublime. The author writes on 'Gypsy Girl', 'Sweeper girl', 'Indian Drummer', 'The Spinner's Song'; he marvels at the beauty and mystery of nature in 'Garland of Flowers', 'On Smiling Flowers', 'Tiny Drop', and 'Myriads of Delight'; pays glowing tributes to the Mother in 'Mother'; muses on God and inseparability of time and space, and on creation in 'God', 'Supreme intelligence', 'Time is Endless', 'The Seed'; justifies the presence of spirit within in 'Inner Peace' and 'Inward Glow'. Ecstasy of a devotee approaching a temple is sweetly described in 'Temple Bell'.

On the whole, the poems are serious, interesting, and imbued with the wisdom, beauty and nobility of life. The volume im-

parts sheer joy and a sense of fulfilment to the perceptive reader. It is quite delightful to have such beautiful and moving poetry

from the pen of an advocate. Printing is excellent.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia, Rajkot, Gujarat

From our Readers

(Continued from page 697)

Math and Mission, Advaita Ashrama, 1983, 3rd ed). While it is true that Swami Nirmalananda (Tulsi Maharaj) was a controversial figure and later severed connections with the Order after some very unsavoury incidents, his name should have found a place in your article as one of the earliest preachers in America, at least for the sake of historical authenticity and record.

Swami Sambuddhananda, a direct disciple of the Holy Mother and a very senior monk of the Order, who was the Head of our Bombay Centre for more than 30 years and Organizing Secretary of the Centenary Celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji, visited America in August 1968 and delivered lectures at all the centres there. This is mentioned in one of his letters to my father Sri Pijush Kanti Roy (a writer in *Udbodhan*, *Prabuddha Bharata*, etc.) dt. 14.10.1968 and his lecture tour was also reported in *Udbodhan*. Hence his name should have been included in your list of Swamis in page 484 of your article.

Yet one more omission is that of Swami NIRVANANANDA (dear Surya Maharaj). He visited America in February 1956 along with the then General Secretary Swami Madhavananda at the invitation of Swami Prabhavananda for the temple opening of Santa Barbara centre. (Pl. refer page 18 of *Brahmananda Sevak Nirvanananda—Bengali—*edited by Swami Purnatmananda, 1994.) As you know, Revered Maharaj later became Vice-President and was a remarkable personality in the history of the Sangha. The non-inclusion of his name has, therefore, come as a surprise. I am sure this was an oversight.

The non-inclusion of Swami Yuktananda's name is perhaps understandable but there is no denying the fact that he was deputed to St. Louis to assist Swami Satprakashananda and was there for some time till he returned to India.

As for myself, I am a very humble student of the Ramakrishna Movement for the last 29 years. I received Holy initiation from Most Revered Prabhu Maharaj in 1968 at the age of 12 years and had the very rare privilege of coming in very close contact with him upto Feb. 1985. You might have read an article by him, 'Spiritual Hints on Meditative Life', in *Vedanta Kesari* of Oct. 1988, which was actually a collection of his teachings which he wrote to me and to my mother in his own handwriting in reply to our questions....

25.3.95

Yours sincerely,
Bhaskar Roy

The highest duty consists in doing the little that lies in one's power, seeking neither death nor life, and biding one's time like a servant ready to do any behest.

—Swami Vivekananda