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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 100

AUGUST 1995

No. 8

Divine Wisdom

TO GO BEYOND SORROWS

तावद्भयं द्रविणगेहसुहृन्निमित्तं
शोकः स्पृहा परिभवो विपुलश्च लोभः ।
तावन्ममेत्यसदवग्रह आर्तिमूलं
यावन्न तेऽङ्घ्रिमभयं प्रवृणीत लोकः ॥

So long as man does not seek absolute shelter at Thy feet, he will be dominated by the vile sense of 'I' and 'mine', the root cause of all suffering, and as a consequence he will be subject to grief, desires, humiliation, and intense greed as also to sorrows on account of wealth, properties and friends.

दैवेन ते हतधियो भवतः प्रसङ्गात्-
सर्वाशुभोपशमनाद् विमुखेन्द्रिया ये ।
कुर्वन्ति कामसुखलेशलवाय दीना
लोभाभिभूतमनसोऽकुशलानि शश्वत् ॥

Those who feel a constitutional repugnance to devotional associations centering on Thee have indeed their intelligence stricken by their evil destiny. Afflicted by greed and seeking satisfaction of their trivial lustful urges, these miserable men engage themselves again and again in sinful actions.

क्षुत्तृन्निधातुभिरिमा मुहुरर्द्यमानाः
शीतोष्णवातवर्षैरितरेतराद्य ।

कामाग्निनाच्युत रुषा च सुदुर्भरेण
सम्पश्यतो मन उरुक्रम सीदते मे ॥

I shudder to visualize the miseries of beings that are going to be created—miseries arising from the affliction of hunger, thirst, disease, heat, cold, storms, floods, mutual strife, fiery lust, and insatiable anger.

अह्न्यापृतार्तकरणा निशि निःशयाना
नानामनोरथधिया क्षणभग्ननिद्राः ।
दैवाहतार्थरचना ऋषयोऽपि देव
युष्मत्प्रसङ्गविमुखा इह संसरन्ति ॥

O Lord! Even Rishis, learned in philosophies and sciences, are bound to go round and round the cycle of births and deaths if they are indisposed to contemplate on Thy deeds and glories. For, toiling all through the day they tire themselves out. At night the agitation of mind caused by innumerable desires disturbs their sleep. And the failure of their worldly plans and ambitions due to the stroke of destiny engulfs them in disappointments.

—From the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
3.9.6-8,10

The Liberation of the Bull-Elephant

It was only in March this year that we learnt of the similarity between a verse in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (8.3.3) and the first sentence of the ideals and principles Swami Vivekananda enunciated for this Advaita Ashrama, the home of PB. That verse, quoted by revered Swami Ranganathanandaji (see PB's July '95 issue), is:

*Yasminnidam yataschedam
yenedam ya idam svayam;
Yo'smāt parasmācca paras-
tam prapadye svayambhuvam.*

I seek refuge in that self-existent One in whom this (universe) subsists; from whom this has come (into existence); by whose instrumentality this has come; who is Himself (all) this; and who transcends this (manifest universe) and its causal condition.

And Swamiji's enunciation reads:

In whom is the Universe, who is in the Universe, who is the Universe; in whom is the Soul, who is in the Soul, who is the Soul of man; knowing Him, and therefore the Universe, as our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery and leads to infinite freedom....

The above verse occurs in a section containing the narrative commonly known as *Gajendra-Mokṣa* (Liberation of the Elephant-King). And it is a part of a mighty elephant's prayer addressed to the Lord after it was caught by a mightier crocodile and was being dragged towards death. So we were curious to know what is so special about the

Gajendra-Mokṣa that one of its verses appears to have occurred to Swamiji when he established the Advaita Ashrama. The *Gajendra-Mokṣa* story in essential outline is as follows:

There was a great mountain range called Trikūṭa (Three-Peaked, of silver, iron, and gold), with many rivers, beautiful valleys, and lakes, dense verdant forests, varieties of birds and beasts, and so on. These forests were lorded over by a certain bull-elephant, the king of its large herd—never before defeated by any rival; rich with decades of experience; a leader par excellence; so powerful and fearless that other beasts, far from crossing its path, would simply sulk away at its mere scent. Only the small creatures such as foxes and wolves felt no fear in its presence, for it took no notice of them!

Grazing leisurely and safe and contented, the herd ranged through the forests led by its king which easily cleared the path of all obstacles. One bright day the lumbering mass came to a particularly beautiful lake. This one, unlike any other in the forests, had exceptionally clear and sweet water, and the pollen from its golden lotuses in bloom was unusually intoxicating. Driven by the heat of the sun the king-bull hurried towards the cool inviting waters to quench its thirst and bathe. The warmth of the day apart, the bull also was evidently in rut, for a swarm of bees was pursuing it, attracted by the oozing ichor.

Plunging into the lake, the king-elephant drank to its heart's content the refreshing water and then began to enjoy a bath together with its cows and calves. So engrossed was it in its sport—*very much like a foolish and indiscriminating householder*—that it failed to notice a large crocodile stalking it. In a flash a leg of the mighty elephant was in the crocodile's vicious grasp. Hard as it struggled, it could not free itself. On the other hand, it was gradually being dragged deeper into the lake. While the cows in the herd stood by helpless, repeatedly

trumpeting in fear and grief, a few of the strong younger bulls strived to pull back the king-bull. But all to no avail.

This tug-of-war from within (*antaratah*) and without (*bahih*) the water went on for a long time. While the king grew weaker as the battle got extended, the

as wellprovided, happy, classy, powerful and unstoppable as the ad-models appear to be; and also the rare few who with steady resolve are praying for spiritual illumination and freedom from death and transmigration. That is, the elephant symbolises

The story carries a great message for all humanity—for those who like that bull are engrossed in worldly delights and achievements, unaware of impending death; and also for those who, like the bull in the face of certain death, have realized that no one and nothing can defeat death and are therefore looking for a saviour.

crocodile, which was in its own territory, grew stronger. In such a hopeless and confidence-shattering situation, and faced with certain death, the bull, instead of losing all hope, began to pray to the Lord:

'Relatives and friends and cow-elephants—all are ultimately incapable of saving me from death.... I seek refuge in Him who is the final refuge of all; *in whom is the universe...who is Himself this universe...who is the indwelling Self...*

In answer to this sincere prayer, full of utter self-surrender and disillusionment with its earlier idea that a free, secure and wholly satisfying existence is a complete ideal of life, the Lord appeared on the scene and graciously liberated the elephant—from the crocodile and also from spiritual ignorance (8.2-5).

Simple and charming as this may superficially appear as a story, even a little thought shows that it is in fact a beautiful summary of the whole of Advaita philosophy. Much more becomes clear with a closer study: The story carries a great message for all humanity—for those who like that bull are engrossed in worldly delights and achievements, unaware of impending death; and also for those who, like the bull in the face of certain death, have realized that no one and nothing can defeat death and are therefore looking for a saviour.

That elephant-king represents Man—all the millions who are ever busy trying to be

the individual soul which, trapped in ignorance and forgetful of its own true nature, has identified itself with a body and is foolishly trying to duplicate its inherent wholeness and bliss by gratifying the senses.

How does the story suggest all this? By using certain words and phrases. For example:

The elephant is compared to a foolish householder (*krpaṇaḥ grhī*, in 8.2.26):

Deluded by the Lord's Maya, he was unaware, *like a pitiable and foolish family nian*, of the imminent danger lurking as he bathed and fed the cows and the calves with the water he drew in his trunk.

Next, the verse 8.2.31 refers to the elephant as *dehī*, that is, one who feels he possesses a body, who has identified himself with his body.

And further, we are told that the elephant in its previous incarnation was the King Indradyumna. Once, while this king was practising austerities in the solitude of a mountain-*ashrama*, he failed to show due respect to the eminent sage Agastya who happened to come there. So he incurred the latter's curse to be reborn as an elephant. This means that the elephant's life can be fully understood only by keeping in mind its human antecedent.

And finally, towards its conclusion, in 8.4.18–24, the story throws up one more hint: The Trikūṭa (Three-Peaked) range stands for the world presided over by the three deities Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

What then is the elephant's message for us?

This world is like those vast forests, offering livelihood (like the delicious reeds and bamboo shoots), obstacles (like thorns, bushes, etc.), and challenges (as from other male elephants and beasts, and from a variety of circumstances as in a forest); joys (as from family members and others, and from cool rivers and lakes), power and status (as from vanquishing competitors), flattery (as from those swarming bees); self-perpetuation (through progeny, as hinted

keeps dragging us away, making us sink inwards, as it were, into the dark unknown 'watery' depths within us (*antarataḥ*). Caught between the two opposing forces, only those awakened whose ego and self-esteem are completely crushed and who because of past practice turn to God. (See pp. 706–07 here, and 8.2.28–32.)

It tells us something more: It is unlikely that the elephant-king had come to that particularly beautiful lake for the first time or that it had never before seen crocodiles. For, the bull was the king, highly experienced and advanced in years. So, we are being alerted that death attacks even in familiar places and at unexpected moments. Not that our carefulness ensures safety from death, but that we should build up even from now a strong tendency to remember the Lord and

That is, the elephant symbolises the individual soul which, trapped in ignorance and forgetful of its own true nature, has identified itself with a body and is foolishly trying to duplicate its inherent wholeness and bliss by gratifying the senses.

by the largeness of the herd and the oozing ichor on that bull); and, unfortunately for many but fortunately for a few with a spiritual past like that of the elephant as Indradyumna, occasions for getting overconfident, inadvertent, and finally grabbed by unconquerable death. At the end of life, most people are ground back into dust; the rare few are shocked and awakened to seek the Lord and realize their deathlessness as spiritual beings.

This awakening, however, is preceded by a terrific struggle: Worldly attachments—symbolised by the grieving cow-elephants and the younger males straining to their utmost to pull back the king—keep trying from the outside (*bahih*) till the very last to draw us back. And death, which means dying physically to the world, and which is inevitable and more powerful,

our spiritual oneness with Him. In this case, when caught by death, and catch it will, the force of our habit will make us turn to the Lord and pray for freedom from spiritual ignorance, not freedom from misery and death. That is what the elephant did:

I have no desire to live on in this world. Of what use is life in this elephant-body wherein the veils of ignorance hide the spiritual vision both from within and without? It is not from the crocodile threatening my life that I pray for release, but from this obstructive screen of ignorance, hiding the awareness of my spiritual self—an obstructive screen that Time cannot undo but only illumination can. For Time will put an end to this physical body but not to ignorance, which persists until Thy grace removes it (8.3.25).

The elephant is further cautioning us that

(Continued on page 752)

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

BONDAGE OR SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH KARMA

But a man of impure mind who somehow out of mere eagerness takes to monasticism does not become the enjoyer of its fruit, because—

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।

इन्द्रियार्थान्चिमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥

Karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya

ya āste manasā smaran;

Indriyārthān vimūdhātma

mithyācārah sa ucyate. (3.6)

One who, after withdrawing the organs of actions, sits recollecting mentally the objects of the senses, that one, of deluded mind, is called a hypocrite.

Vimūdhātma, one with a deluded mind, whose mind is polluted with attraction, repulsion, etc.; *yaḥ*, who; out of mere eagerness, *saṁyamya*, after withdrawing, controlling; *karmendriyāṇi*, the organs of action, (viz.) the organs of speech, hands, etc.; i.e., without performing actions with the outer organs, *āste*, sits; *smaran*, recollecting; *manasā*, with the mind that is swayed by attachment etc.; *indriyārthān*, the objects of the senses, (viz.) sound etc.—but not the Reality of the Self; who sits without work, with the self-conceit 'I have become a monk', *saḥ*, he; *ucyate*, is called; *mithyācārah*, a hypocrite—a man of sinful conduct, because of his unfitness for the result (of monasticism) on account of the absence of purity of the mind—in the books on Ethics, as in,

In this context, since renunciation of all actions has been enjoined by the Śruti for the purpose of ascertaining the meaning of the word 'Thou', therefore one who abandons these (actions) becomes degraded.

Hence it is reasonable that a man of impure mind 'does not attain fulfilment through mere monasticism'.

Without renouncing all actions out of mere eagerness, one should verily perform selfless works for the purification of the mind in accordance with the scriptures, because—

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन ।

कर्मेन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगमसक्तः स विशिष्यते ॥

Yastvindriyāṇi manasā

niyamyaṛabhate'rjuna;

Karmendriyaiḥ karmayogam-

asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate. (3.7)

But, O Arjuna, one who engages in Karma-yoga with the organs of action, controlling the organs, together with the mind, and becoming unattached—that one excels.

Tu, but—the word being used for distinguishing from the monk who is of impure mind—; the discriminating person, *yaḥ*, who; *ārabhate*, engages in; *karma-yogam*, Karma-yoga, actions enjoined as means of purification; *karmendriyaiḥ*, with the organs of action; *niyamya*, by controlling; *indriyāṇi*,

the organs—of perception, (viz.) the organ of hearing etc.; together *manasā*, with the mind;—by withdrawing them from engrossment in such objects as sound etc. which are the causes of sin, or by controlling (the organs) with the mind endued with discrimination—, and becoming *asaktaḥ*, unattached, free from desire for results; *sah*, that one; *viśisyate*, excels, becomes distinguished from the other person who is a hypocrite. Though the effort is the same, he excels on account of being the enjoyer of greater results.

Arjuna, O Arjuna, see how wonderful this is that, one who after controlling the organs of actions keeps active the sense-organs becomes bereft of the (highest) human Goal, while the other who after controlling the sense-organs keeps the organs of action active becomes the enjoyer of the highest human Goal !

Since this is so, therefore controlling the sense-organs with the mind,—

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्धयेदकर्मणः ॥

Niyatam kuru karma tvam

karma jyāyo hyakarmanah;

Śarīrayātrāpi ca te

na prasiddhyedakarmanah. (3.8)

You perform the obligatory duties, for action is superior to inaction. And, through inaction, even the maintenance of your body will not be properly possible.

Tvam, you, who have earlier not performed actions that are the causes of purification; *kuru*, perform; with the organs of action; *niyatam karma*, actions which, from the point of view of injunction are enjoined—on the ground of their being obligatory—by the Śrutis and the Smṛtis without any concern about the result, and

which are well known as *nitya(-karmas)*¹. Since the verb '*kuru*, (you) do' used in the second person implies the nominative 'you', therefore the use of the word '*tvam*, you' serves an additional purpose (of indicating that Arjuna had earlier not performed the duties that purify the mind).

Why should action itself be undertaken by a person of impure mind? *Hi*, for; *karma*, action; is verily *jyāyah*, superior to, more praiseworthy; *akarmanah*, than inaction. In the absence of action it is not merely that purification of your mind will itself not be accomplished, but *akarmanah te*, for you who are without action, without the duty of battle etc.; *śarīra-yātrā*, the maintenance of the body; *na (prasiddhyet)* will not be possible (*siddhyet*) properly (*pra*), in the manner in which it should be done according to the rules of conduct of a Kṣatriya. Accordingly was it said earlier. The words '*api ca*, and even' are meant for combination (of maintenance of the body with purification of the mind).

Having in mind (that Arjuna might think) that, since according to the Smṛti, 'A creature becomes bound by action',² all actions are of the nature of fetters, therefore they are not to be undertaken by one who wants Liberation, He gives its answer:

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥

(Continued on page 721)

1. In the case of *nitya-karmas* the scriptures give injunctions about the duties, not about the fruits. Hence, since the fruits do not come under the purview of the injunctions, therefore, giving up the hankering for the results, one's duty is to undertake those actions that come under the scope of these injunctions.
2. *Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva, 241.7.*

Ferment in the Religions of the World

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

This is one of a series of four public forums on the ferment in society in the 1960s, the 1st being 'The Vatican Council', the 2nd 'Social Ferment', this the 3rd 'Ferment in the Religions of the World', and the 4th 'Prayer, the Court, and the Schools'. Swami Prabhavananda gave this address on 4 February 1965, and was questioned by the Moderator, a Religious Studies Professor at The University of California at Santa Barbara, a Presbyterian Chaplain at the same, and a retired Minister. Swami Prabhavananda founded The Vedanta Society of Southern California in 1929 and was its Head Minister until his death on 4 July 1976.

We are grateful to Edith D. Tipple of Santa Barbara, California, for having made the transcript of the address available to us.

Dr. Fetler and Friends, first of all allow me to give thanks to the sponsors of this series in allowing me to speak to you this evening. When it was suggested to me that I speak on 'Ferment in Religions of the World', without giving much thought to it, I readily agreed. In fact, I said, 'Oh, that interests me very much!' But as I began to give thought seriously to the subject matter I began to think, 'Where is there any ferment in religions of the world? Except in Roman Catholicism, as we come to know from the Ecumenical Conference.'

Of course this Ecumenical Conference has stirred up Protestant Christianity, and perhaps has touched some in Judaism. But regarding Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism, except the educated people of the world, I do not think that they even know about this Ecumenical Conference. When Pope Paul VI went to India recently there was a Buddhist conference for which Buddhists from all over the world met together in New Delhi. I understand from the newspaper report that they only considered this one point: how to bring peace to this world.

With regard to Hinduism, or Vedanta, it

is not an organized religion in the sense that we have a Pope or a body of people who can tell us what to believe and what not to believe, who can bring reform and give new ideas or ideals. But that does not mean that it is static. You see, from time to time men of God and women of God, those who knew God, who talked with God, who realized their union with God, have been born in India, but they did not teach any doctrine or dogma. They showed the people the way to God, how to reach their union with God. In a sense a perpetual ferment is going on in Hinduism, but that ferment is in the heart of every spiritual aspirant. I shall bring that out later.

Now though we are living in one world—time and space and geographical limitations having been eliminated thanks to the progress of modern science—I must admit that mankind is not one world. None of us can claim that we are living within the boundaries of one religion, one nation, or one culture. We have become greatly aware of many cultures and religions as we are coming in closer contact with the peoples of the world. Unfortunately, however, there are still many people who believe that their religion is the only true religion and the

others are false. Nevertheless, I am glad to say that there is a growing willingness on the part of many people to attempt some sort of sympathetic understanding of other religions. That I am standing here today is a proof of that.

In my present discussion I shall try to explain to you the ideal of universality or the harmony of religions that India has taught from a beginningless time. But before I go any further, I want to tell you how this ideal of harmony and universality was demonstrated recently by the Hindu masses in India when Pope Paul VI visited the country. Without intending to offend the susceptibility of anybody, may I say humbly, most humbly, that His Holiness came back from India having learnt a great lesson.

Let me first quote Pope Paul's First Encyclical before he went to India. He said: 'Indeed, honesty compels us to declare our conviction that there is but one true religion, the religion of Christianity. It is our hope that all who seek God and adore Him may come to acknowledge its truth.' I would comment, 'Yes, we do, we do acknowledge that you have the truth! But not exclusively.'

Now, concerning Pope Paul's first sentence, I would like to remind you what Saint Augustine had said: 'That which is called the Christian Religion existed among the ancients and never did not exist from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed began to be called Christianity.' I must add here with Saint Augustine, that that ancient religion still is a living religion, and that very religion is not only known by Christianity, but by various other names: Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism. That is the Eternal Religion, beginningless and endless, the truth of God. God is beginningless and endless, and the truth

of God is beginningless and endless.

Now let me quote what Pope Paul said after his return from India:

We might well have stayed there like a stranger isolated and surrounded only by our brothers in faith, but on the contrary, we met an entire people. It represented, it seemed to us, immense crowds of the vast Indian territory, and those also of Asia. This country (India) is not Catholic, but what courtesy, what opening of spirit, what avid desire to get a glance or a word from this strange traveller from Rome. That was a moment of understanding, of community of mind. We do not know what these rejoicing crowds saw in us, but we saw in the crowds a humanity of great nobility identified with the millennial cultural traditions. These crowds were not all Christians, but they were profoundly spiritual and in so many ways so good and winning.' (*India News*, 1 January 1965)

Pope Paul did not know the attitude of the Hindu masses with regard to religion or spiritual life. They came to see in Pope Paul VI not a Christian, but a man of God. It makes no difference whether one is a Hindu or a Christian or a Buddhist or a Mohammedan or a Jew, a man of God is a man of God! And the Hindus accept him as they would accept a Hindu saint.

I believe that India has the key to bring harmony of religions in the world, but before we discuss on what grounds there can be harmony, may I point out certain historical facts. There are six major religions in the world: Hinduism (or Vedanta, the most ancient religion, and which is still living), Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, and Zoroastrianism. These six major religions again are divided

into many sects.

Of these religions, Christianity and Mohammedanism are the two which I might call aggressive. Christians still believe that their objective is to Christianize the whole world. But supposing that you are able to Christianize the whole world, what have you achieved? Can you bring peace to mankind? Can you instill that love for God, that love for fellowship, love for mankind, in the hearts of mankind just because they become Christians? Can you give to the men and women of the world that 'peace that passeth understanding' that Christ speaks of? If there is a Kingdom of Heaven, where is it? Within. Is it not true that Christ spoke that we have to enter into that Kingdom of Heaven in this life? Can you help people to enter that Kingdom of Heaven? My friends, let us all hold hands together, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Jews, Zoroastrians—let us hold hands together and try not to Christianize the world, not to Hinduize the world, but to spiritualize the world.

Now of course everybody has a dream of unifying the whole universe. I would like to quote the dream of the Hindus which was told beautifully by our Master, Swami Vivekananda. He said:

If there is ever to be a Universal Religion it must be one which will have no location in place or time, which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike, which will not be Brahminical or Buddhist or Christian or Mohammedan; but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development, which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms and find a place for every human being from the lowest groveling savage not far removed

from the brute to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true divine nature.

Leaving aside dogmatic study, we find that there is a tremendous life power in all the great religions of the world. Remember that. There is a tremendous life power in every great religion of the world. Not one of the great religions of the world has died. However, of all religions, the Hindus, from the Vedic time up to this present age, have recognized religious liberty because we believe in the truth of every religion.

My friends, let us hold hands together, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Jews, Zoroastrians—let us hold hands together and try not to Christianize the world, not to Hinduize the world, but to spiritualize the world.

In this connection I will again quote our Master, Vivekananda:

It has been proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world. And that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in

spite of resistance: 'Help, and not fight. Assimilation, and not destruction. Harmony and peace, and not dissention.'

Sri Krishna, in the *Bhagavadgita*, says: 'I am the thread that runs through all these pearls.' But before we consider this thread which unites all religions, we should first see the differences that exist. Only then can we find where and how to meet, wherein the harmony might lie.

Every religion is divided into three parts: philosophy (or theology), mythology and ritualism. It is impossible to imagine a common philosophy or theology. Today in Christianity alone there are so many wonderful theologians—who do not agree with one another. Indeed, if we had one common philosophy, there would be nothing to talk about! We should be sitting like Egyptian mummies looking at one another!

To consider mythology: When I speak of my mythology I say it is history, and yours is mythology. And when you speak of your mythology you say it is history and mine is mythology. There cannot be any common ground there.

Ritualism is similar. Non-Hindus say that Hindus worship the phallus symbol. But Hindus have no idea it is a phallus symbol! They see it as a symbol of creation. Similarly, when the non-Christian considers Divine Communion, the Sacrament: it is such a wonderful thing—for Christians, that they begin to feel Christ living within. To a non-Christian, it seems like cannibalism!

So in looking for a common ground, can we look to the holy personality? Can there be one holy personality whom all the world will accept? At least the Christians believe that. I quote to you from the Secretary General of the World Council of Churches: 'We have a new opportunity to make it very

clear that we really mean what we say and that our only motive is that the world may believe that in Jesus Christ, God reconciled the whole world to himself.' (Lecture of 9 December 1963)

As a Hindu and especially a follower of Ramakrishna, I'd say that I accept Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, and perhaps in a better way than the Christians do, which I shall explain. But—we do not accept him as the only one. You see, Christians accept the Son of God, not as one with Father—I am saying this with the authority of a very well-known theologian who pointed out to me that the son is not the father. But a Hindu, when he accepts Jesus Christ, sees in him God incarnated. But not the only one. We read in the *Bhagavadgita*: 'When goodness grows weak, when evil increases, I make myself a body. In every age I come back to deliver the holy, to destroy the sin of the sinner, to establish righteousness.'

Further, you remember what Jesus said: 'I am the Way, I am the Life, I am the Truth. Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' I believe this firmly.

Krishna again says: 'Give Me your whole heart, love and adore Me, worship Me always, bow to Me only and you shall find Me. Lay down all duties in Me, your refuge; fear no longer, for I will save you from sin and bondage.'

And Sri Ramakrishna in this present age said: 'I am the sanctuary. If a man gathers his whole mind and fixes it on me, then indeed he achieves everything.'

I believe all these statements, because each of them is a door to reach the ultimate reality. It is the same water coming out of numerous pipes from the lake. As I stated in my book, *The Spiritual Heritage of India*, the

Hindu believes:

The Eternal Vedantic religion opens to mankind an infinite number of doors for ingress to the inner shrine of divinity, and places before humanity an almost inexhaustible array of ideals, there being in each of them a manifestation of the Eternal One. With the kindest solicitude the Vedanta points out to aspiring men and women the numerous roads hewn out of the solid rock of the realities of human life by the glorious sons or human manifestations of God in the past and in the present and stands with outstretched arms to welcome all, to welcome even those who are yet to be, to that home of Truth and that Ocean of Bliss wherein the human soul, liberated from the net of maya, may transport itself with perfect freedom and with eternal joy.

Now let us see wherein lies the unity. Let us begin by asking, 'What is meant by religion?' Simply stated, it is the concern with the ultimate reality. How does one define the ultimate reality? The Upanishads, the oldest scripture of the world, says: 'The eternal amongst the non-eternals of life, the highest abiding joy in the midst of the pleasures of life.' Call that God, or Christ, or Brahman, or Allah—what difference does it make? In Him we are all one.

Hindus and Buddhists have held onto the ideal that religion is realization, and experience of God. You may believe in God, another may not believe in God, it makes no difference—until you see Him, you talk to Him, you reach your union with Him. Furthermore, every religion is based upon revelation: the Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, the Zendavesta, the Tripitaka are revelations, direct visions of God.

In this connection it is interesting that the Hindus accept the Vedas as the revealed

word of God, just as the Christians accept the Bible. But the Hindus give a different meaning to it. They say the Vedas are beginningless and endless. Now, they cannot mean those four books are beginningless and endless. They mean that the Truth of God is Eternal, and so wherever and whenever there is revelation, that is the Vedas. Therefore, what Christ saw or attained, or Bodha—that is revelation, which the Hindu would accept immediately.

This is the point: You have no religion until you personally experience the truth of God. Simply accepting the truth of the scriptures does not help. In the Vedas a great seer sage says: 'I have known that Truth that is beyond darkness. You also, having known that Truth, attain to immortal bliss.' And if you study the history of religions of the world from the Vedic times through all the different ages—Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Ramakrishna—all had the experience of God, and they all insisted upon that experience. Buddha said: 'Experiment the Truth to experience it.' Christ said: 'Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.' Mohammed gave a very beautiful illustration: 'A man who is a scholar in scripture and has no vision of God is like an ass carrying a load of books.' That is the test of truth in every religion. And if that is the test, then we find that Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Jews, have all produced saints and seers who walked with God, who talked with God, and who reached their union with God. There are such living souls in every age.

Swami Vivekananda said: 'God is the centre of all religion, and each of us is moving towards Him along one of the radii, and all must reach that one centre; at the centre where all the radii meet, all our differences will cease.'

In this present age Sri Ramakrishna

demonstrated this truth. In a way more or less peculiar to himself, through attention mainly to the mystic experience, Sri Ramakrishna harmonized conflicting notions of thought and the universe and of their relation to each other. But this was not his only way. Another still more peculiar to him might be called in current terms, pragmatic. Any idea of God, any mode of worshipping Him that worked, that led the aspirant to the ultimate goal, must be valid and true. But how could one be sure that an idea or a method is really thus effective. Clearly, by trying it oneself. And that, in all simplicity and sincerity, is what Sri Ramakrishna did. He practised the teachings of many divergent sects within Hinduism, and through each of them achieved the same supreme realization; he practised the disciplines of Mohammedanism and he followed the path of Christ. In the end he arrived at the grand conclusion with which the ancient rishis began: 'Truth is One; sages call it by various names.' Shankara, another great seer philosopher, declared that study of the scriptures is fruitless so long as Brahman has not been experienced. 'He is born to no purpose,' Sri Ramakrishna said, 'who, having the rare privilege of being born a man, is unable to realize God.'

I quote Sri Ramakrishna again:

So many religions, so many paths to reach the same goal. I have practised Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and in Hinduism again the ways of the different sects. I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. The tank has several *ghats* (ways of approach); at one Hindus draw water and call it *jal*; at another Mohammedans draw water and call it *pāni*; at a third Christians draw some liquid and call it water. The substance is one, though the names differ. And everyone is seeking

the same thing. Every religion of the world is one such *ghat*. Go with sincere and earnest heart by any of these *ghats* and you will reach the water of eternal bliss. But do not say that your religion is better than that of another.

Now I began this talk by saying that the ferment has to come in each human heart. In other words there must be unrest in you to find God. 'Knock and the door shall be opened.' 'Seek and ye shall find.' 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.' (I am quoting Christian scriptures because you are acquainted with those.) This is the one condition: longing for God, yearning for the truth of God. Whenever anybody asked Sri Ramakrishna how to find Him, he said: 'Yearn for Him with a longing heart! And you are sure to find Him.'

Where will we find Him? As I said, the ferment has to come in the heart. 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?' Where else would you seek? In churches? In temples? In books? No. You will find God nowhere until you find him here (in the heart). That was what my Master, Swami Brahmananda, one time pointed out. I was restless. I wanted to go to some place of pilgrimage. I thought I could find God there. He said: 'Look here. Find Him here (in the heart) and you will find Him everywhere. If you do not find Him here, you will find Him nowhere.'

And when we find Him, we shall say with Vivekananda:

Our watchword thus will be acceptance and not exclusion, not toleration, for so-called toleration is often blasphemy. And I do not believe in it. I believe in acceptance. Why should I tolerate? Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live! Is it not blasphemy to think that you and I are

allowing others to live? I accept all religions that were in the past and worship with them all. I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his law. I shall go into his shrine and sit down in meditation with the Hindu who is trying to see the light which enlightens the heart of everyone. Not only shall I do all these, but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future. Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvellous book, these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all other sacred books, are but so many pages and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfurled. I leave it open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutation to all the prophet of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future.

Questions and Answers

Moderator: Swami, when Christian theologians or scholars try to compare Christianity with the other religions, particularly religions of the East, they very often make the generalization that all of them have some truth, but that the other religions are man's attempt to reach God, while in Christianity it is God's movement down to man, God's attempt to reach man. By saying that, they try to emphasize the element of grace, or God's initiative, which is so strong in Christianity. Very often the implication is that the Eastern religions are primarily man's effort as opposed to God's grace. Could

you comment on this?

I am very glad you asked this question because that's a real misunderstanding. You know, anybody trying to study another religion has to be insighted under a guru. What we call *Brahmavidyā*, the Knowledge of Brahman, is imparted by the guru to the disciple. It cannot be known otherwise. Why don't people stick to their own religion if they don't understand other religions? They create more confusion. This tendency to prove 'my dogmatism is the only "ism"'—that's nothing but dogmatism.

In regard to your question, let me quote to you from the Upanishads: 'This Atman, the indwelling God, cannot be known through intellect, nor by the study of scripture, but only by Him whom this Atman chooses.' All the saints—I have lived side by side with men and women who have known God—every one of them taught us that it is not by human effort.

To quote my Master: 'Is God a commodity that we can buy Him with so much prayer, so much meditation, so much chanting of the name of the Lord? Is He a commodity like potatoes that you can buy?' But the struggles are important to purify the heart. Sri Ramakrishna said: 'The breeze of grace is blowing. Set your sail to catch it.' Now is that man's effort? These spiritual disciplines and practices are aids in opening our hearts to catch that breeze of God.

Panelist #1: It's been a delightful experience to sit once more, Swami, with a Guru. The color of the robe is familiar. I have watched them in Benares along the holy rivers. And as you well know, I do know something of your land. But I've always had a problem in talking with persons as gracious as the Swami, and those who were so filled with their own spirituality that they would spread out and take in all of God's children. I always found myself sort of lost in the pool of

their own love. And yet somehow one must step aside if possible and pronounce a judgement and evaluate. I suppose because we each stand within our own tradition and belief. I always find that the Swamis, the gurus, the teachers, these men so noble, lead me ultimately into a misty area where I simply do not understand the words. And this is rather baffling because they use the words that are so common and sound so simple. But when I back away from the words and look at the Swami's conclusion that the end result, or the end of all religious quest, is union with God—I'm not sure whether I agree with this, because I'm not sure what it means. You see, I too am a student of words and I'm afraid of words until someone draws a picture and tells me exactly what these words mean to the one speaking. I always feel that I'm lost in a mist, Swami. I wish it were not true. Your own Ramakrishna said that there were no words in language...

Yes, yes. You see, you say you don't agree with what I said, 'union with God'. I don't want you to agree with me. It is very difficult for anybody to explain what it means because in the intellectual plane that same phrase means differently to different people. Let me tell you a story: A father sent his son to the study of Brahman. The boy lived with a guru for 12 years and came back. His father asked him, 'Tell me, son, what have you learned of God?' And he gave a wonderful exposition of what God is. And then the father said, 'Go back, my son. You have not learned what is to be learned.' He studied for another 12 years. Then he came back. This time when the father asked him the question, the son remained silent. And the father said, 'Why, my son, your face shines like that of a knower of Brahman. You have known that Truth: His name is Silence.'

So naturally words are confusing. So how do we understand? Any religion, or any religious teacher, would teach you the disciplines to follow. And then if you practise—the vista opens up. I can tell you of

India. You can read a book about India. You will form some idea about it. But go there. All your ideas will change completely. It is the same way with God. No teacher can explain in so many words. I wish I had the power of Sri Ramakrishna: he would give a touch—and the man would realize God. Just as Christ said, 'Be thou whole!' (I don't mean that Christ just healed people, but when he said 'Be thou whole,' that means he attained perfection—that moment.) In the life of Sri Ramakrishna, and I have seen men and women who have testified to this truth, just by his touch, or look, there would be awakening.

Panelist #1: Of course, Swami, when I say to you that I have a problem of understanding, I'm paying you a tremendous compliment because I also frequently do not understand my own theologians in my own faith. I become lost in the abyss of reason when John Dewey said that the definition of God was the point of contact between the actual and the ideal. I entered into an area of utter confusion. The only thing that I know is that I want to walk a road with you and I can walk hand in hand up to the point where you ask me to believe that the greatest good or the highest and noblest end of religion is to become utterly contemplative and meditative, to renounce the world, as your teacher told you, and spend the rest of my life in a contemplation which will lead somehow to some mystical union with something. I would like to believe it, but my empirical Western mind demands that I ask certain questions which have to do with living, and they make me ask: Where is the social aim of all this? Where is the humanitarian impulse that grows out of this? Where is the concern with human welfare that grows out of this? Where is something beyond my own selfish, self-centred, immediate concern with my own karma?

You take it for granted that everybody has to renounce the world and become contemplative. Do not generalize. We have four yogas, four paths of union. In our life we try

to combine all these yogas. You talk about philanthropy and doing good to your fellow man. I think you have been to India. You know what the Ramakrishna Mission and these Swamis are doing: hospitals, schools, orphanages—everywhere! Throughout India.

This I saw as the contribution of the Western culture, Swami.

No, no, no, no. Wait a minute! When Swami Vivekananda was a young boy, Naren, he was with Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramakrishna was uttering some teachings of another great saint. This great saint said, 'Compassion. Compassion for all creatures.' Sri Ramakrishna repeated that a few times, then said, 'Compassion? Compassion? No, no, no. Worship. Serve God in every being. Is not God in every creature?' And Swami Vivekananda came out of the room and said, 'If I live long enough, I shall give this truth to the world.'

So it is not the Western philanthropy that the Ramakrishna Mission does. Our Swamis are serving mankind with this ideal in view, that they are serving God in every being. There's a big difference. You have to be inside to know the truth.

Panelist #2: What do you suggest or recommend to people who have started out on one path to God and who have found their pathway blocked. Do you suggest they stick with their tradition?

Oh, yes, by all means stick, stick. Do not go to dig a well in many places. But why should it be blocked? Follow any path. 'All roads lead to Rome'—on condition that your ideal is to go to Rome.

Panelist # 2: My observation is that many people, in the Western world particularly, are doing quite a bit of free-floating today, either not

taking their own tradition seriously or trying to jump from one to the other. I just wondered how profitable this can be, in view of your thesis that all roads lead, if not to God, at least to Rome.

You know, when I first came here I hired a hall, a big hall, and advertised, and people came. And I looked at that crowd and I said, 'What am I to speak to these people?' I saw in them—I have a special name: 'psychic tramps'.

Moderator: You are talking primarily of spiritual transformation. I wonder if there would be a difference in India and here in terms of the potential coming together of the two basic views that have been rivals in the quest for brotherhood. By that I mean, we've always had those who've said that we must change society first and the laws of the land before we can get a better man, and a lot of our political movements have been

So it is not the Western philanthropy that the Ramakrishna Mission does. Our Swamis are serving mankind with this ideal in view, that they are serving God in every being. There's a big difference. You have to be inside to know the truth.

based on this. On the other hand, we have those who say we have to change man before we change society. This is still an issue in the Ecumenical Movement, because we have those who are socially-minded primarily, and those who are spiritually-minded.

It is wonderful that the West is trying to reform the whole world, but we are an old race, and we are not pessimistic, but this much we can say: the world remains the same world, like dog's curly tail—you straighten it out, it curls. There will be good and there will be evil, that's what makes the world. Your ideal of millennium is just a dream which can never be realized. That means the destruction of the world! I'll tell

you a story: Sita, Rama's wife, said to him, 'Rama, I went round this city and I find so many poor people and dilapidated houses. Why can't you do something?' So he built houses and made them prosperous. And then came the plumbers and the carpenters and all kinds of labourers: 'Sir, we have no work to do! How can we live?'...I hope you get the point!

Question from floor: I was raised in the Christian church and my question is about 'lost souls'.

'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?'—which means God dwelling in everybody. How can he be a lost soul? Is not God the Indwelling Spirit in him? The sun may be covered by clouds, but the luminosity of the sun is not lost. So a man may be a sinner and wicked, but the God that is dwelling within is not affected. And one day that man will wake up. Did Christ discard anybody as a sinner? Did he not come for the sinners? We believe that there is none that will be lost. That is what this idea of reincarnation teaches: you will evolve, you will grow, and ultimately you will attain to perfection. But, don't be lazy, thinking, 'Well, I'll attain that in another life.' Struggle now.

Question from floor: What is the origin of evil?

Good question. You see, that question comes because you are thinking of the origin of this universe, that this universe began at a certain period of time and then there was the fall of Adam, and Eve was responsible, and the whole world was groaning in sin—that business. But is there a beginning to this universe? What was God doing before he created this universe? Twiddling his thumbs? God would not be God if the universe was not also eternal. Creator is eternal; creation is eternal. And what you

call evil, we call ignorance. And that ignorance is from a beginningless time, and it is a play of God. It has no beginning. And while we are in ignorance we can't say how it came. Then when we realize the truth of God—the ignorance has vanished, and the question does not arise. So there is no answer.

Question from floor: Was Mahatma Gandhi typical? I mean his Christianity...

Oh, the Christians claim him to be a Christian. But he was always a Hindu and a Vedantist all his life. Of course he read the Sermon on the Mount, which was a favourite reading, but he read the *Gita*, and he chanted the name of Rama all his life! But I don't have any objection to your claiming him to be a Christian.

Question from the floor: Concerning the caste system...

That is an old question that I have been asked many times. I have lived in this country for 41 years. I find caste system very much here. What about your Civil Rights? Isn't that based on a caste problem? Untouchables? In India the caste system was originally a division of labour. There are four castes: the *brahmins*, the custodians of spirituality; the *kshatriyas*, politicians and soldiers to defend the country; *vaishyas*, those who bring wealth to the country; and *shuddras* are the labourers. These are the four original castes. And then there began to be sub-castes. Then we lost the original purpose of it. Then came great reformers who just did away with all that.

Regarding the four castes, I believe—in a positive sense that there is a caste system. Take these panelists, for instance. They are *brahmins*; they are talking about religion, they are the custodians of theology. And there are the *kshatriyas*: President Johnson

and the Marines. And then the *vaishyas*, the businessmen; there are many businessmen here. And the *shuddras*, the labourers: there is the labour union today. So you see you have four castes as well, untouchables also.

Question from floor: Christianity is a dynamic religion, helping people; on the other hand, Hinduism...

You are taking for granted that Hinduism is not dynamic. And you are taking for granted what Christianity is doing for millions of people. Do you know Swami Vivekananda said, 'My God is the God in the poor, my God is the God in the destitute, my God is the God in the sinner.' That is Hinduism. They do all they can, but one thing of course I must admit: Christians can do more than we poor Hindus in India, because we have not the wealth. So please do not just take one side, we must listen to one another.

Panelist #1: Swami, as respectfully as I may,

may I ask another question? In speaking with people like you within your own nativeland, always in the background of our words and our agreement there stood the worship of the common people, the worship in the Temples of Kali and Vishnu and Jaggernaut, and the many many other deities within the pantheon of Hinduism, and so little evidence that the great masses of India felt as you and the other teachers felt, seemingly so little understanding of what you have said so beautifully tonight.

I would say this much. From my experience. That the masses of India are more spiritual than the masses of the West. But again I will point out: religion is not for the masses! Of thousands of people one per chance seeks to find God. How many illumined souls can you get? But if one strives for God, one becomes illumined, one becomes a man of God. Our ideal is not to be Hindu or Christian or Mohammedan or Buddhist. Our ideal is to be a man of God. □

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

(Continued from page 710)

*Yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra
loko'yam karmabandhanaḥ;
Tadartham karma kaunteya
muktasaṅgaḥ samācara. (3.9)*

This man becomes bound by action other than that action meant for the supreme Lord. Without being attached, O son of Kuntī, you perform action for Him.

According to the Śruti, 'Sacrifice is verily Viṣṇu'³, *yajña* means the supreme Lord. That work which is done for His worship is *yajñārtham*: meant for the supreme Lord. *Ayam lokaḥ*, this man, who, being eligible for

action, engages in actions *anyatra*, other than that work (meant for the Lord); *karma-bandhanaḥ*, becomes bound by action; but not so by actions done as a worship of God. Therefore you, *kaunteya*, O son of Kuntī, who are eligible for action; *samācara*, perform, in the right manner—with *śraddhā* (faith) etc.; *karma*, action; *tadartham*, for Him, for the supreme Lord; *mukta-saṅgaḥ*, without being attached. □

One whose heart is illumined by divine light has no aspiration for heaven nor is he afraid of hell.—Kaji Nazrul Islam

3. *Taittirīya-Saṁhitā*, 1.7.4.

Self-Improvement

JUDITH VIORST

Judith Viorst captured some of the dilemmas of modern day life when she wrote this poem.

I've finished six pollows in needlepoint
and I'm reading Jane Austin and Kant,
and I'm up to the pork with black beans in
Advanced Chinese Cooking.
I don't have to struggle to find myself
for I already know what I want.
I want to be healthy and wise and extremely good-looking.

I'm learning new glazes in Pottery Class,
and I'm playing new chords in guitar,
and in Yoga I'm starting to master the lotus position.
I don't have to ponder priorities
for I already know what they are:
to be good-looking, healthy and wise. And adored in addition.

I'm improving my serve with a tennis pro,
and I'm practising verb forms in Greek,
and in Primal Scream Therapy all my frustrations are vented.
I don't have to ask what I'm looking for
since I already know what I seek:
to be good-looking, healthy and wise. And adored.
And contented.

I've bloomed in Organic Gardening,...
and in Consciousness-Raising there's no one who can top me.
And I'm working all day and I'm working all night
to be good-looking, healthy and wise.
And adored. And contented. And brave. And well read.
And bi-lingual, athletic, artistic...
Won't someone please stop me!

(from How I Got To Be Forty And Other Atrocities)

The Development of the Religious Vision of T.S. Eliot

KRISHNENDU DAS GUPTA

T.S. Eliot was one of the great poets of the twentieth century, capturing with poetic vision first the boredom and horror of ordinary life, and later the possibility of spiritual fulfilment. This evolution in his writings was paralleled by the changes in his own life. Krishnendu Das Gupta, who traces this evolution, is a teacher at the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar, and is now pursuing further studies.

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on 26th September 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri. Although reared in Missouri in a part of America known as the midwest, renowned for its religious and conservative thought, Eliot's later outlook had its seed in the puritanical environment of the New England culture of the northeast and in the training of his mother, Charlotte Chauncey Stearns, who was herself a devout Christian. A dedicated scholar, Eliot studied in institutes like Harvard University, the Sorbonne (France), and Merton College, Oxford. In all his works one finds a beautiful amalgamation of varied knowledge, the subtle influence of Dante, Shakespeare, Laforgue, Charles Baudelaire and John Donne, all of whom Eliot considered his poetical masters in all his works. The religious bent could be discerned from his earliest works, but actually his poetic journey was from boredom through horror to divine illumination. And it was from 1927 that Eliot started writing truly Christian poems.

I

Among his notable earlier works is *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, published in 1917. The epigraph taken from Dante's *Inferno*,

S'io credessi che mia reposita fosse...¹

with which the poem opens, is of extreme importance because it has strong connections with the 'overwhelming question' that Prufrock is tempted to ask and which he believes only 'Lazarus, come from the dead' can answer. It is therefore a question that 'calls for an answer from beyond death and time and space, from some enfolding but unknowable world of supernatural life, which cannot be acknowledged or even talked about by virtuous agnostics.'² The poem is a sad soliloquy about a man no longer in his first youth, who is on his way to meet a lady whom he possibly loves. The lady obviously belongs to the sophisticated class:

...In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michaelangelo.

Before her he wants to lay down his problem—the 'overwhelming question'. But whether she will understand it he has doubts. As the journey is made, Eliot brings his resources to the conjuring of an inferno equipped with nightmare streets that 'follow' and are ominously 'half deserted',

1. *Inferno*, xxvii, 61-6.

2. Nevil Coghill's introduction to *Murder in the Cathedral*, p. 12.

with inimical clouds of yellow fog. It is a picture of hell but it isn't a place of punishment so much as it is a state. This is followed by the coruscating effect produced by Prufrock's obsession with time infused with the Bergsonian effect of *le temps* (abstract clock-measured time) and *la duree* (subjective time as we experience it passing). His obsession is also a Laforguean trait where he is terribly conscious of daily life and cannot omit mentally a single hour of the day. Not only this, the first half of the poem is a systematic confusion of temporal and eternal dimensions; this man's doom is an endless party-going—

For I have known them all already
 known them all
 Have known the evenings, mornings,
 afternoons,
 I have measured out my life with
 coffee spoons,

and he is no more at liberty to modify his situation than one of Dante's subjects can desert his circle of hell. He knows his helpless state, that he is nobody to disturb his universe with questions. So his questions are only indicated, never asked.

Gerontion (1920) also brings about a similar vision. The *Gerontion* of his poem—

'Here I am, an old man in a dry month,'

is never the respectable old man of Carl Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*, but a diminutive, insignificant creature. In poems before *The Wasteland*, Eliot is actually creating characters (Prufrock, *Gerontion*) he does not want to be. Like Prufrock, *Gerontion* is also suffering:

I have lost my passion—why should
 I need to keep it
 Since what is kept must be
 adulterated?

He is unaware of the love of the ideal and divine. Lacking such love his life and all of life and time become merely futile, a spectacle to fill the beholder with disgust and loathing. *Gerontion* has merely resigned to the void. So one finds Prufrock's 'overwhelming question' once more indicated.

In *The Wasteland* (1922) the poet's desolation is not the result of the 'fogbound intellectualist voices' in which he sees himself sinking but of a profounder desolation of a world drowning into materialism. Eliot's wasteland was the world he saw immediately after the First World War. The 'waste' is of course not the devastation and bloodshed but the emotional and spiritual sterility of modern civilization. Based on the popular myth of the Fisher King who was rendered impotent by sickness and maiming³ and whose land has been blighted by a curse where crops do not grow and animals cannot reproduce, the poem presents a horrifying picture of the modern world. It is a place where the modern wastelanders pray not for April but for winter. And the persona cries out in anguish:

What are the roots that clutch,
 what branches grow
 Out of this stony rubbish?

The section on Madame Sosostris is of equal importance. The Tarot pack of cards once used to determine the events of highest importance to people has degenerated in the hands of Madame Sosostris to a mere instrument of fortune telling. It is therefore not strange that she, a product of this wasteland, is unable to 'find' the 'Hanged Man' who represents Frazer's hanged god (including

3. In order to understand the various myths one must consult Miss Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), and Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which Eliot himself acknowledged as his immediate sources.

the Christ) of the fertility cult, a symbol of regeneration.

Even a more concrete picture is represented through the second section of the poem—'The Game of Chess'—; where Cleopatra amidst her wealth is the 'symbol of man at the present. He is surrounded by the grandeurs of the past but he does not participate in them; they don't sustain him' (Allen Tate). The picture of Philomel is also an important image that runs throughout the poem. The violation of Philomel still continues in the modern wasteland:

And still she cries, and still the
world pursues,

and brings into light one important aspect that John Crowe Ransom pointed out; that is, love is the aesthetic of sex, lust is the science. Implying a certain asceticism and ritual, love doesn't drive forward urgently and scientifically to the immediate extirpation of the desire. Our contemporary wasteland is in large part the result of our scientific attitude—of our complete secularization.⁴

The third section of the poem contains one of the most important images, that of Tiresias, the historical 'expert' on the relation between the sexes; and in him the two sexes meet:

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing
between two lives....

Being the best judge about the relation between man and woman, he sees the useless state which this relation is pushed to, where the girl is

Hardly aware of her departed lover....

4. J. C. Ransom, *God Without Thunder*.

What is true of her is true of modern Cleopatra who has turned into a psychiatric patient,⁵ as well as of the departed nymphs, of Elizabeth, and of the Rhine maidens. 'What Tiresias sees in fact is the substance of the poem.'⁶ Therefore, what Tiresias sees and what all the characters see is the vanity and futility of human relationship. The only positive part is the 'Hyacinth girl':

You gave me Hyacinths first
a year ago;
They called me the hyacinth girl.⁷

But even that is viewed in retrospect. Every episode (including Marie⁸, pub-monologue⁹) is only a picture receding from ecstasy to boredom. Love of men and women in *The Wasteland* is not explained or made reasonable by a higher love—an attraction to God—but it is simply the 'coupling of animals'¹⁰. The section of the poem ends with reference to quotations from St. Augustine and Buddha. About this Eliot says, 'The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem is not an accident.'¹¹ There must be some force to check this desire. 'The wisdom of the East and West comes to the same thing on this point.'¹² The imagery that both Buddha and St. Augustine used for lust is fire. 'The Fire Sermon' presents various scenes which are nothing but a sterile burning of lust.

5. *A Game of Chess*, lines 111–37.

6. Notes on *The Wasteland*, part III, by T.S. Eliot, no. 218, *Selected Poems*, p. 70.

7. *The Burial of the Dead*, lines 35–6.

8. *Ibid.*, lines 15–16.

9. *A Game of Chess*, lines 139–72.

10. T. S. Eliot's essay, *Daute*.

11. Notes on *The Wasteland*, part III by T. S. Eliot, no. 309, *Selected Poems*, p. 72.

12. Cleanth Brooks, *The Wasteland: Critique of the Myth*.

The fifth section of the poem begins with the journey over the desert to the Perilous Castle. This is of course what is described in Miss Weston's book as the search for the Holy Grail,¹³ which in modern times refers to 'man's search for spiritual truth'.¹⁴ It is a journey through a place where there is no water—

Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water...

This could be a picture of Christ walking 'hooded' after his resurrection, unrecognized on his mystical journey to Emmaus with his two disciples. The Knight reaches the Perilous Castle, the search is complete. So comes water:

Then a damp gust
Bringing rain.

Water in *The Wasteland* is 'the symbol of

'Da', the voice of the thunder and the Hindu sages, is the cosmic voice which contains the oldest and most permanent truth of the race:

Datta, Dayadhvam, Dāmyata.

'Give, sympathize, control: three sorts of giving. To sympathize is to give oneself; to control is to give governance.' It is this essence that can save mankind ...

symbolizing sterility. The question that Prufrock wanted to ask now becomes all the more hard to ask; but some kind of answer from a further region is indicated though the picture of an Antarctic expedition that the poet presents:

Who is the third who walks
always beside you
When I count, there are only you
and I together
But when I look ahead up
the white road
There is always another one
walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown
mantle hooded.

all freedom, all fecundity and flowering of the soul.¹⁵ The voice of Prajāpati follows it in the form of thunder:

*Aum iti hovāca vyajñāsiṣṭeti. Tad etad evaiṣā daiṛvī vāg anuvadati stanayitnur—da, da, da iti, dāmyata, datta, dayadhvam iti. Tad etat trayam śikṣed, damam, dānam, dayām iti.*¹⁶

'Da', the voice of the thunder and the Hindu sages, is the cosmic voice which contains the oldest and most permanent truth of the race:

Datta, Dayadhvam, Dāmyata.

'Give, sympathize, control: three sorts of giving. To sympathize is to give oneself; to

13. The Cup in which Christ drank during his Last Supper and which was lost afterwards. The Grail was a supremely holy Christian relic.

14. B. C. Southam, *A Student's Guide to T. S. Eliot*, p. 95.

15. Edmund Wilson, *The Puritan Turned Artist*.

16. *The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, V.ii.3; Eliot uses the transliterated form of the original Sanskrit passage. He has changed the word order, possibly because he found it in that order in Deussen's *Sechzig Upanishad des Veda*, p. 489.

control is to give governance.¹⁷ It is this essence that can save mankind and the poem ends with:

Sāntih; Sāntih; Sāntih.

Gradually the hints of Christianity multiply and strengthen from poem to poem. Eliot himself writes, 'As for *The Wasteland*, this is a thing of the past so far as I am concerned, and I am now feeling towards a new form and style.'¹⁸ *The Hollow Men* is a difficult poem to annotate, though its historical sources are easy to trace: 'the Gunpowder plot, the assassination of Caesar as presented in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*; the three parts of Dante's *Divina Comedia* and Conrad's story, *Heart of Darkness*.'¹⁹ Though reference to the Gunpowder Plot and *Julius Caesar* is more obvious, Eliot's use of Dante is indirect and more important. In the three books of *Divina Comedia*, through an allegorical dream-vision the poet himself is conducted through the hell of punishments and of lost souls (in the *Inferno*), the purgatory of suffering towards redemption (*Purgatorio*), and Paradise, a higher perfect world of beauty, light and music (*Paradiso*).

The conditions of these lost souls is like the lost souls in Hell. They are inhabitants of "death's dream kingdom" who have never been spiritually alive, never experienced good or evil, having narrowly lived for themselves.²⁰ From 'Death's dream kingdom' (the sinful world of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*) Eliot refers to another—'death's other kingdom' which is possibly *Paradiso*, the perfect world, the Garden of Eden where Dante meets Beatrice, his former lover on earth. In between this is 'death's twilight

kingdom' where man has to face the truth about himself. Dante is humbled and shamed by his memory of sins and unfaithfulness to Beatrice, and for Kurtz it is 'The Horror, the Horror'.²¹ The fourth kingdom is of course the kingdom of God—

For thine is the kingdom....

adapted from the Lord's Prayer.²² The refrain of quotations from the Lord's Prayer marks the beginning of his religious poems.

II

In 1927 Eliot converted to Anglo-Catholicism. The poems after *The Wasteland*—mainly *Hollow Men*, *Ariel Poems* and *Ash-Wednesday*—are all poems of purgatorial suffering. In this poem he is speaking in his own voice or creating characters he chooses to be. A.D. Moody comments, 'In *Hollow Men*, *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* he really means what he says and means it so deeply that it is him.'²³ In fact, these poems, called the dream songs, are Eliot's lyrical expressions of suffering souls, the soul as it suffers and sees as in a dream the ideal state it longs for. The *Ariel Poems* came out as Christmas greetings starting from that year. The first of them, *The Journey of the Magi* (1927), describes the journey of the three wise men to Bethlehem to greet the Messiah. This journey was a tedious one, both physically and psychologically:

A cold coming we had of it....

And it also brought into light the various temptations that they had to withstand:

17. Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet*, p. 150.

18. Letter to Richard Aldington, 15 November 1922.

19. *A Student's Guide to T. S. Eliot*, p. 148.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

21. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 111.

22. *1st Chronicles*, xxix, 11, 15.

23. T. S. Eliot—*Prufrock to Ash-Wednesday*: Talk by A.D. Moody—cassette sl. nos. 996A & 997B, Call No. 821.90 Eli-M-British Council Library, Calcutta.

There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes,
the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet....

Not only this, they had to struggle against
people to make their way:

...the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty....

All spiritual journeys are hazardous. But at
the end is the illumination.

With a running tide and a water mill
beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky.
And an old white horse galloped
away in the meadow....

Water has always been used in a positive
sense by Eliot. It is the symbol of love and
salvation as opposed to fire. The 'three trees'
obviously represent the three crosses at Cal-
vary and the 'white horse' is a reference to
Christ the conqueror riding on a white
horse.²⁴ The poem wants to convey that the
birth of Jesus brings a new era of love and
faith and marks the end of the old order
represented by the Magi:

...this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us,
like Death, our death....

And they believed that only 'another death'
can revive them. *A Song For Simeon* is a
version of the story told in *Luke* (2:25-35),
who came to see the baby Jesus and
prophesied to Mary the future torments that
Christ would have to bear and the terrible
sights she would have to endure.

(And a sword shall pierce thy heart,
Thine also).

24. *Revelation*, vi, 2 and xix, 11-14.

And he only begs of the Lord:

Grant me Thy peace.

The *Ariel Poems* show a quietness combined
with the irony of *Prufrock*. The subject of
Marina, however, admits only the minimum
of irony, and 'the poem achieves with
moving effectiveness a sense of redemptive
peace.'²⁵

Ash-Wednesday was published in 1930.
According to the Christian calendar this is
the first day of Lent, a period of forty days'
penance and fasting to commemorate the
forty days Christ spent fasting in the wilder-
ness where he was tempted by Satan and
triumphed over him.²⁶ It is a period when
Christians repent for their sins and turn
away from the world towards God. The
centre of perception, the voice 'I' begins with
his rejection of the world:

Because I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn.

The 'three white leopards' named as God's
agents of destruction in *Jeremiah* (5:6) and
Hosea (8:7) can be understood as worldly
pleasure. The stair image in section three is
of great significance as Matthiessen points
out: '...each turning of the stair presents a
distinct spiritual struggle.' The connection
between Eliot's 'stair' and Dante's hill of
purgatory appears obvious. At the foot of
the hill are the sinners. Higher up are those
whose love of God is defective, and still
higher up are those who loved excessively
things that should have been of secondary
importance, and among them are the sen-
sual and lustful. Such a reminder of the
stages of the soul that Eliot is depicting

25. David Daiches, *A Critical History of English
Literature*, vol. 4, p. 1135.

26. *Matthew* 4:1-11; *Luke* 4:1-13.

holds a universal significance. The fourth section is a general reference to Purgatorio, where Dante reaches the summit of the Mount of Purgatory, meets Beatrice, now a figure of divine beauty, reminding him of his sinful past. The last section obviously experiences the 'tension between dying and birth'. The poem in fact achieves more than the Magus achieved. "I", the Voice, the finite centre, begins where the Magus left off, and moves on: "no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation", but installed in a realm of superior wakefulness.²⁷

...the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices.

The lilac is lost in belonging to the world that has been renounced, and 'the heart "rejoices" either to applaud its departure or to bring it back transfigured.'²⁸ But the senses, by the same implication of transfiguration and recovery, renew 'the salt and savour of the sandy earth'. So the poem ends with the prayer:

Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still
Even among these rocks,
Our peace in his will...
Suffer me not to be separated
And let me cry come unto Thee.

Hugh Kenner comments that the function 'of the journey detailed in *Asht-Wednesday* is to arrive at a knowledge of the modes and possibilities of temporal redemption sufficient to prevent our being deluded by a counterfeit of the negative way.'²⁹

The Rock (1933-4) is a Pageant Play, written in support of the Forty-Five Churches of the Diocese of London. The invitation to

write the play '...came at a moment I seemed to myself to have exhausted my meagre poetic gifts, and to have nothing more to say.'³⁰ The play is about the coming of Christianity with the conversion of Saxon London by Mellitus in 605, and some later high points including the vision of Rahere in the twelfth century and Wren's St. Paul's. Basing the play on the model of Aristophanes, Aeschylus, Euripedes and the unknown author of *Everyman*, the play explores the desolate, meaningless and commercial centres of London and its suburbs:

All our knowledge brings us nearest to
our ignorance,
All our ignorance brings us nearer
to death,
But nearness to death no nearer to God.

A clearly more sermon-like picture of the life-in-death of *The Wasteland* and *Sweeney Agonistes* is revealed here. For the first time there is a sharp declaration of Christian faith by which 'hope and meaning are given to the endless cycles of time', which without this hope and meaning

Brings us farther from God nearer to
the dust.³¹

This is what is brought out through the great chorus that begins Part II, telling us of the creation of the world out of waste and void, when darkness was on the face of the deep:

Then came at a predetermined
moment, a moment in time
and of time,
A moment not out of time, but in time
in what we call history: transecting,
bisecting, the world of time,
a moment in time but not like
a moment of time,

27. Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet*, p. 226.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

29. *Ibid.*, 235.

30. T.S. Eliot, *The Three Voices of Poetry*.

31. Nevil Coghill's introduction to *Murder in the Cathedral*, p. 15.

A moment in time but time was made
through that moment; for without
the meaning there is no time, and
that moment of time gave
the meaning.³²

He is speaking of the Incarnation; and the Rock then is the rock on which Christ built his church, i.e. St. Peter. At His first entry He announces the simple theme 'Make perfect your will.' *The Rock* of course does not precisely indicate what should be done to perfect one's will save that one ought to remember death and God and perpetually rebuild His Church in London and in one's heart and to give thanks for his glory.

Murder in the Cathedral (1935) is a drama of a solitary man who retraces in specific terms the zone traversed by *Ash-Wednesday*. Becket moves like the Voice who does not hope to turn again from the 'because' of a determined wheel to the 'although' of one who has 'lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God.'³³ Writing about the conflict between the material and spiritual worlds, Eliot rapidly informs his readers about the necessary historical situation in the exposition given by the three priests and the herald who announces the return of the Archbishop to the chorus. The chorus, the leaderless women of Canterbury, inhabits the gloomy cycles of time—the death-bringing winter, ruinous spring, disastrous summer, and barren autumn—and yearns for spiritual guidance. Amidst this sombre atmosphere the month of December only brings a ray of hope and this is the month when the Son of Man was born. In a hopeless world they await eagerly the return of Thomas Becket to save them. Becket himself experiences temptations like Christ and is able to resist the first three with ease. But the

presence of the fourth tempter not only perturbs him but also astonishes him, and he exclaims:

Who are you? I expected
Three visitors, not four.³⁴

The fourth tempter tells Becket what he himself had told the chorus as their instructor and attempts to lock Becket's will to its own foreseeable consequences. He does not stop there but reminds Becket of the other distractions he has entertained:

Yes, Thomas, yes; you have thought of
that too.

What can compare with the glory of
Saints
Dwelling forever in the presence of
God?

What earthly glory, of king or emperor
What earthly pride, that is not poverty
Compared with richness of heavenly
grandeur?

Seek the way of martyrdom, make
yourself the lowest
On earth, to be high in heaven.

And Thomas at once retorts:

No!
Who are you, tempting me with
my own desires?

He also adds:

Others offered real goods, worthless
But real. You only offer
Dreams to damnation.

Becket is able to overcome this temptation. Hugh argues that 'the purification of

32. *Selected Poems*, p. 119.

33. *The Invisible Poet*, p. 226.

34. Christ was subjected to three, not four, temptations in the wilderness (*St. Matthew*, iv, 1-10).

Becket's will is insufficiently argued.³⁵ After an interval the reader is merely informed that it has occurred. What Becket realizes is that God suffers and is still and waits in 'perpetual struggle of Good and Evil' to which men are committed and in which men can only find their peace in His will, who is at the still centre of the wheel; 'we must neither act nor suffer for our own advantage, but, divested of the love of created beings, unite our will to God, to sustain the design and perfection to which we are called.'³⁶ This is obviously what is told by St. John of the Cross:

Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created beings.³⁷

Becket must give himself to suffer a fore-ordained martyrdom, because martyrdom is never the design of men.

So in the play when Becket stands on his steps to meet his murder and 'the four swords of the murderers, in their ritual slaying are the four spokes of a wheel of which Becket is the centre—they at the circumference, acting, he at the still centre, patient, suffering, witnessing, willing.'³⁸ Thus though the drama is presented in terms of the twelfth century, it comprehends and answers problems that seem quintessentially those of Prufrock ('overwhelming question') and *Wasteland's* of the twentieth.

The Family Reunion (1939) was designed to be a crypto Christian theme. Following Aeschylus and O'Neill he fashioned his

story with meticulous care, taking a family curse with a double murder as his central image and an expiation at the end. The drama was designed to show that the world of the drawing-room is one step away from the wilderness. The environment is the same 'Death is life and life is death' of Sweeney, who thinks:

Birth and copulation and death
I've been born, and once is enough.³⁹

Similarly, *The Family Reunion* is the same kind of living death in Wishwood and its cramping routine, 'in which nothing is ever to be changed and over which hangs an

Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created beings.

unspoken curse.'⁴⁰ Arising from this basic idea the gradual sense of remedy that is indicated is the same as that experienced by Becket: a withdrawal from love of the world and surrendering one's will into the will of God. The remedy for the nightmare, for the murderous spiritual fugitive⁴¹ is not flight but 'detachment', which is also shown by St. John of the Cross. That Harry will drive out into the wilderness at the end of the play is governed by a sense of withdrawal from the love of the world into possession by the love of God, by a purification of the will.

But the greatest, silent mystic is undoubtedly Celia Coppleson of *The Cocktail Party*. She, shocked by the failure of an

35. *The Invisible Poet*, p. 239.

36. Nevill Coghill's Introduction to *Murder in the Cathedral*, p. 18.

37. *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, by St. John of the Cross.

38. Nevill Coghill's introduction to *Murder in the Cathedral*, p. 18-19.

39. 'Sweeney Agonistes', T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems* (Rupa), p. 131.

40. Nevill Coghill's introduction to *The Family Reunion*, p. 17.

41. Harry could not rid himself of the obsession that he had pushed his wife overboard on an Atlantic crossing.

unhappy love-affair, feels a certain loneliness. But the loneliness she experiences is not just empty vacuity. It contains two positive elements: a deep love and a sense of sinfulness. Her sense of sinfulness does not spring from a clear-cut wrong she has done; but rather from a sense of unworthiness, a sense of that original sin, so brutally described in *The Family Reunion*; and she feels that she must make atonement for her sin. This solitude she experiences is not something ordinary, but of one cut off from all things and called by God. Her stage is not different from that of Colby Simpkins in *The Confidential Clerk*. So Reilly invites her to an even more rigorous solitude which will deepen, and the love which inspires it will grow. But where does the summit of this mystical journey lie? The story of the tragic but triumphant Celia makes this clear. The journey ends in death. Reilly had seen this and he explains at the end of the play how he had foreseen her terrible crucifixion. He explains it:

We know the death she chose
I did not know that she would die in
this way;
She did not know. So all that I could do
Was to direct her in the way of
preparation.
That way, which she accepted, led to
this death
And if that is not happy death, what
death is happy?⁴²

Her terrifying crucifixion was a triumphant death, a martyrdom like Becket's. Making atonement for the sins of the world the mystical journey then 'leads through death to eternity.'⁴³

42. *The Cocktail Party*, Act III.

43. 'The Mysticism of T. S. Eliot', William Johnston, from *T.S. Eliot: A Tribute from Japan*, edited by Masao Hirai and E. W. F. Tomlin, p. 157.

The problem that preoccupied Eliot was whether death was the only way to touch eternity. This is what he discusses in *Four Quartets: Burnt Norton* (1935), *East Coker* (1940), *The Dry Salvages* (1941), *The Little Gidding* (1942), where he tries to express timelessness in terms of time. There are ecstatic moments when there is a momentary touching of eternity: escaping from the limits of time and space one can touch 'the still point of the turning world'. The still point evidently suggests the stillness of eternity, and contrasts with the fevered movement of the temporal. 'The radiance of the white light that is associated with the stillness opposes the spiritual darkness of the world.'⁴⁴ Yet in *Burnt Norton III*, light and darkness seem to be equated, contrasted together with the 'dim light' of the world. The paradox is elaborated in *East Coker* and the readers are informed that:

...The darkness shall be the light, and
the stillness the dancing.⁴⁵

Within the still point is implied movement, as by the movement of innumerable atoms is composed the stability of objects. This still point is beyond the dimension of Time and Space:

I can only say, there we have been;
I cannot say where.
And I cannot say how long, for that is
to place it in time.⁴⁶

Most people, however, never reach the 'still point' engaged much in material cares. The saint alone escapes time to contemplate eternity:

(Continued on page 737)

44. D.E.S. Maxwell, *The Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, p. 156.

45. *East Coker*, III

46. *Burnt Norton*, II

Swami Vivekananda's Concept of Service

DR. MANORANJAN
DR. HEMA SANDHYARANI

Swami Vivekananda's concept of service is important for us to understand as it holds the key to our general well-being. The authors highlight and address four key questions on this subject. First, what is meant by service? Second, why should we serve? Third, what are the types of service? and Fourth, how does one serve?

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What is Meant by Service?

In this essay, we will discuss what Swami Vivekananda's concept of service is, and how it should be put into practice. He emphatically declared that service is not charity, but worship. This is not a theological doctrine, but a scientific and spiritual view of service. Seen in this way, service becomes a method by which we can improve the quality of our life.

Swami Vivekananda introduced the terms *service* and *worship* in a unique context. Traditionally, *service* has been interpreted as *charity*, *worship* as *prayer* and *rituals*. Swami Vivekananda expanded those concepts to include everything we think and do in our daily lives. According to his definition, service can be performed at any place and at any time.

But let us first understand the relationship between work, service and worship. When and how does work become service and service become worship? With careful analysis, we can see that our attitude determines the direction of our energies. Our energies then determine the end result of our work. Doing work simply with the idea of doing good deeds is perfectly acceptable. However, doing work with a concerned,

loving attitude is far better. It would be better if we carried out work with the idea that it is a privilege to serve others and without expecting any reward. With this attitude work becomes service. The highest form of work is that of serving people while seeing Divinity in them; service thus becomes worship. '*Shiva jnane jiva seva* Serving *jivas*, individuals, with the idea they are (embodiments of) *Śiva*' is the inspiration behind Swami Vivekananda's concept that work should be carried out with the idea of serving the Divine in all beings. This is a very deep and profound concept. The word *Divine* refers to that highest principle which transcends our individual senses and unites the whole of existence. This idea has been expressed in many philosophical texts, and has been the motivating power behind men who became great. Even for the ordinary person, work carried out in the spirit of dedication to a high ideal concentrates his energy and makes his work more productive.

Why Should We Serve?

We will now further discuss the reasons for carrying out work in the spirit of service. They involve the utility principle and the moral and spiritual principle.

First, the utility principle. In the modern age, we are usually faced with such questions as: 'Why should I help others? Why should I do good to the world? What's in it for me?' Before answering these questions let us take a close look at the nature of the problem. This lies in the *manner* in which we usually carry out our daily work. The manner in which we normally perform our work has a binding capacity because we are attached to the results of that work. The binding nature of work creates an imbalance in our psycho-physical system, which in turn affects our interaction with other individuals in society.

to inspire all of us, and to provide a solid foundation on which to base our lives.

We have a choice. We can work either in a manner which promotes our well-being, or the reverse. The problem is in this highly technological society, we work with eagerness to succeed and our actions are driven mostly by competition. Even when work is carried out with good intentions, there may be obstacles from external circumstances, and we react; if the results are favourable, we are happy momentarily, if not, we are overcome with anxiety and worry.

The attitude of carrying out work in the spirit of service, as described by Swami Vivekananda, will attune us to the positive features in all beings. As a natural consequence of this, we will begin to perceive the divine nature in others and also in ourselves. This perception is important and crucial to our own psycho-physical well-being.

However, we can work in a different way. The attitude of carrying out work in the spirit of service, as described by Swami Vivekananda, will attune us to the positive features in all beings. As a natural consequence of this, we will begin to perceive the divine nature in others and also in ourselves. This perception is important and crucial to our own psycho-physical well-being.

Thus, we drain our energies by reacting to situations. Initially, we perceive each situation as a small stressor. Gradually, these stressors accumulate and gather strength and deplete us of the energy required to cope with the problem, thus weakening our mental and physical faculties. The term given to this condition is *stress-crisis*, popularly known as 'burnout'.

Therefore, this concept of service can be utilized to promote our own health and at the same time of society at large. We may call this enlightened selfishness.

Anxiety, stress, and burnout are now among the most commonly seen conditions in medical practice. The binding nature of work leads us to worry, anxiety, fatigue, sleep disturbance, loss of appetite, decreased concentration and a whole array of somatic symptoms. We are continuously obsessed by our work and attached to the results. Clearly this is an unsatisfactory way of doing work.

But what about the moral and spiritual principle? Historically, there have been many great individuals who served others purely for the love of humanity. These include Buddha, Christ, Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi and countless others. These great souls, sacrificing their lives to help humanity, asking for nothing in return, were world movers, bringing in a mass of thought and infinite energy. They continue

Present day treatment for work-related stress disorders consists of medications, psychotherapy, behaviour modification, and a whole variety of stress management

programmes offered at every occupational site. In reality, these provide a superficial form of treatment and do not address the root of the problem. The root of the problem lies in our attitude towards ourselves, our families and, more importantly, towards our work in this 'world machine' that we live in.

In this connection, we may quote Swami Vivekananda:

This world's wheel within wheel is a terrible mechanism....If we put our hands

us the tools to promote a healthy mechanism in ourselves. This is the secret of work. Swami Vivekananda understood our predicament and offered a simple formula. He stated that we must learn the art of concentration and learn to focus on the work at hand; this must be accompanied by a wholesome attitude, which means a loving, concerned attitude towards others.

Swami Vivekananda's book, *Karma Yoga*, gives us other practical methods by which we can train ourselves to work in a better way. He says that the success of work is

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in it, as soon as we are caught, we are gone. We all think that when we have done a certain duty, we shall be at rest; but before we have done a part of that duty, another is already in waiting. We are all being dragged along this mighty, complex world-machine. There are only two ways out of it; one is to give up all concerns with the machine, to let it go, and stand aside, to give up our desires. That is very easy to say, but is almost impossible to do. The other way is to plunge into the world and learn the secret of work...Do not fly away from the wheels of the world-machine, but stand inside it and learn the secret of work. Through proper work done inside, it is also possible to come out. Through this machinery itself is the way out.¹

This scientific approach to work will give

directly dependent on the attunement of our body-mind complex. Dedication of work to a Higher Ideal conserves and concentrates our energies. This reduces the drain on our emotional and physical strength. In addition, the level of stress is alleviated. Applying Swami Vivekananda's concept of service in our daily lives will thus help us to carry out work in a way which is conducive to our own well-being.

We have discussed the theory of doing work in the spirit of service. But the illumined souls say, that 'work carried out seeing divinity in all' is not a theory, but a spiritual fact. That is, we must actually recognize our true Divine nature, and then we can sincerely 'serve man, seeing the divinity in him.'

What are the Types of Service?

Many types of service can be practised, in various ways—by action, word, or thought. We offer a few examples.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, p. 115. [Hereafter C.W.]

Social service, in the form of feeding the hungry and nursing the sick, forms one aspect of Swami Vivekananda's ideal of service. Educational service enables people to gain knowledge, thereby helping them to support themselves, their families and their communities. Psychological service, in the form of kind words, can be a powerful healing agent for someone who is emotionally depressed. The recipient can be for the moment emotionally uplifted by these words, and as a result, may acquire a permanent positive attitude as well. The power of words is often underestimated. Yet we use this power every day, without being conscious of its effectiveness.

Swami Vivekananda said of the power of words,

Words...play a prominent part in the drama of human life...One man calls another a fool, and at this another stands up and clenches his fist and lands a blow on his nose. Look at the power of the word! There is a woman weeping and miserable; another woman comes along and speaks to her a few gentle words, the doubled up frame of the weeping woman becomes straightened at once, her sorrow is gone and she already begins to smile. Think of the power of words! They are a great force in higher philosophy as well as in common life. Day and night we manipulate this force without thought and without inquiry. To know the nature of this force and to use it well is...part of Karma yoga.²

Communication is a very crucial and important form of service although it is usually not perceived as such. It is paradoxical that in this high-tech age, with the new forms of communication, (i.e. personal computers, videogames, and information super-

highways), we are unable to communicate with those nearest to us! Although our rate of communication has increased exponentially, the quality of our inter-personal communication has deteriorated. With proper training in clear communication, we can all be instrumental in breaking down communication barriers at every level. By this process, understanding is improved tremendously.

How Does One Serve?

We have discussed medical, educational, psychological and communicational service. A prerequisite for all these forms is a spiritual attitude. This means that we should adopt a loving concerned attitude towards others. Praying for those in distress or sending positive thoughts may appear to be simple acts, but they can in fact generate tremendous effects. By sending good thoughts, we can promote not only the well-being of others but also our own well-being.

Swami Vivekananda said,

Few know the power of thought...if those great thinkers go into a cave and simply think five true thoughts and then pass away, these five thoughts will live through eternity...such thoughts penetrate through mountains, cross the oceans and travel through the world. They will enter deep into human hearts and brains and raise men and women who will give them practical expression in the workings of human life.³

But to begin with, the science of work must start with self-examination. Our subtle nature within is the motivating force for all our thoughts and actions. It is therefore, crucial for us to understand the inner self. Socrates said, 'An unexamined life is not worth living.' Self-examination enables us

2. C.W., vol. 1, p. 75.

3. C.W., vol. 1, p. 106.

to clarify the situation at hand so that the right decisions are made. Without understanding ourselves, we cannot serve others effectively. Introspection reveals our own shortcomings and helps us to improve and evolve. Therefore, introspection is fundamental to character development, and thus to our ability to serve others unselfishly.

Summary

Concentration and dedication to the work at hand, and the loving manner in which the work is carried out are far more important than the results that follow. That is, the mental attitude with which work is carried out is the key. Concentration of energies on the work itself increases our productivity and reduces our anxiety and worry about the results.

Through this discipline, our character should develop to the point where we will

consider every opportunity to serve a privilege, and we will have a concerned, loving attitude. Concern for others then becomes part of our nature.

Thus, we are at last able to think beyond our own little self. There is a tremendous expansion in our outlook. We begin to understand that we cannot function as isolated beings. We are all interdependent—a part of cosmic existence. When we work with this idea in mind, our consciousness expands leading to the ultimate goal in which we perceive the Divinity in all beings and thus lovingly serve them.

Let us conclude with Swami Vivekananda's electrifying words:

ARISE! AWAKE! STOP NOT UNTIL THE GOAL IS REACHED! □

The Development of the Religious Vision of T.S. Eliot

(Continued from page 732)

...But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the
saint.⁴⁷

He finds eternity. Standing at the point of time he meets timelessness. But for the ordinary man, the poet indicates that only religion can fortify him against the most seductive earthly delights and against the most potent instruments of despair. So the emphasis is that sacrifice and struggle are necessary. And only this would lead to the serenity of the last few lines:

And all shall be well
And all manner of things shall be well
When the tongues of flame are
in-folded
Into a crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.⁴⁸

Finally, it can be said that Eliot erects his mystical theology on the basis of orthodox Christian dogma. Mysticism is nothing else but perfection of that love of God which forms the centre of the biblical message. It is moreover a purification from the scars of original sin; it is a path through death to eternal life. □

47. *The Dry Salvages*, V.

48. *The Little Gidding*, V.

The Lord's Universal Form— Bhagavad-Gita Chapter 11

DR. P.V. NARAYANA SWAMY

The Yogas—Karma, Bhakti, Jñāna or Dhyāna—by one or more or all of these attain spiritual freedom. This is the supreme message of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Then why did the Divine Lord give the vision of His all-encompassing Universal Form to Arjuna? Was it to loosen his attachment to the mundane world? The author, who is of Bangalore, gives here his poetic impression.

Gaganam gaganākāram sāgarassāgaropamā—the sky is so strikingly beautiful, an object of nature that it cannot bear comparison with anything else. So too the majestic ocean. These remarks apply *mutatis mutandis* to the description of the Lord's Cosmic Form in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The chapter is highly significant whether we judge it from the cadence of its poetry or by the content of its metaphysical truth. In fact, the description is so entrancing it is copied in other *Gītās* too.

In the very first *śloka* Arjuna, the great doubter, as we see him in chapter two, is converted convincingly by the Lord Himself. He affirms categorically to Sri Krishna: *Moho'yaṁ vigato mama*—'My delusion is destroyed.' According to Śri Śaṅkarācārya the last *śloka* of this chapter signifies the crux of the *Gītā's* teaching. It lays the foundation for bhakti, the love of God, which is elaborated in chapter twelve and so constitutes a link between the two chapters. Presenting the essential message of the *Gītā*, it sums up everything coming before it and aims at giving spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) to the devotee.

The reason for the Lord's presenting to Arjuna the vision of His Cosmic Form can be that Bhagavān (Kṛṣṇa) wanted him to

have a glimpse of the future, viz. the destruction and carnage to follow, according to the law of Time, operative against those who become burdensome to mother Earth. Sañjaya, the narrator of the *Gītā*, opines that Arjuna had a wavering mind, vide *śloka* 6 (ch. 2): *Na caitadvidmaḥ kataranno garīyo, yadvā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuh...* 'I do not know which is better, whether we conquer or are conquered.' When the great warriors, men of the ken of Bhīṣma and Droṇa, were arrayed against Arjuna's side in the battle, he felt he had no real position of strength, either morally or spiritually, from which to fight with them. With the vision of the Cosmic Form of the Lord, besides giving Arjuna a perspective on his own grief in the context of the terror of the whole Universe, Bhagavān seems to inspire him with mental confidence and physical courage.

In sublime poetry Bhagavān presents a fascinating description of two aspects of His form—the infinite of Space and the eternity of Time.

*Tatraikastham jagatkṛtsnam
pravibhaktamanekadhā;
Apaśyaddevadevasya
śarīre pāṇḍavastadā. (11.13)*

'Within the form of the God of gods Arjuna saw the whole Universe with its manifold

divisions drawn together into one whole Undivided Entity.' He saw the Cosmic Form with great reverence and greater awe, not unmixed with feelings of abject fear and total helplessness. He saw the 'One in many and many in one.' The All-pervasive aspect of the Lord's Universal Form (*viśvarūpa*), extending in all directions limitlessly with its binding brilliance was too much for Arjuna to endure. So he bowed down to Kṛṣṇa, saying—

*Namaḥ purastādatha pṛṣṭhataste
namo'stu te sarvata eva sarva;
Anantavīryāmitavikramastvam
sarvaṁ samāpnoṣi tato'si sarvaḥ.* (11.40)

'Salutations to Thee before, salutations to Thee behind, salutations to Thee on every side, O All! Infinite in might and immeasurable in strength, Thou pervadest all and therefore Thou art all.' The same vision is expressed in the *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad: Brahmaivedam amṛtaṁ purastād brahma, paścād brahma, dakṣiṇataścottarena—* 'This Brahman exists in front, at the back, below, above and all over...' (II.2.12).

The other aspect of Bhagavān, no less immeasurable and infinite, is Time:

*Kalo'smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho
lokān samāhartumiha pravṛttaḥ...* (11.32)

'I am mighty world-destroying Time, now engaged here in slaying these men' (those about to engage in the great battle of Kurukṣetra).

Our concept of time in the past perhaps dates back to a few thousand years, as per recorded history. Our 'present', the life span of an individual, is at most a paltry hundred years. As regards the future, we are blissfully ignorant. Moreover, every present moment slips into the oblivion of the past. The great river of Time thus relentlessly

flows onwards and none can trace its source or fathom its end.

Arjuna, no doubt, was visibly shaken when Bhagavān said:

*Ihaikasthaṁ jagatkṛtsnam
paśyādya sacarācaram;
Mama dehe gudākeśa
yaccānyaddrastūmicchasi.* (11.7)

'Behold now, O Arjuna! the whole universe of the moving and the unmoving, and whatever else you desire to see...', implying that Arjuna might get a glimpse of the future as regards the fate of the war and the annihilation of the Kauravas. Bhagavān's limitless aspects of space and time may be awe-inspiring to man, but they are only a tiny trifle to Him because, as he tells—*...viṣṭabhyāhamidaṁ kṛtsnamekāṁśena sthito jagat* (10.42)—'...The whole universe is supported by a microscopic fragment of Myself.'

Occasions do arise when due to the preponderance of *adharmā* (vice) in the world, collective extermination through war 'is warranted' (?). Through such wars is brought into operation 'nature's pruning hook', that is, its destructiveness—pestilence, famine, etc. sometimes following floods and earthquakes. It is pertinent to recall that after assiduous efforts for peace, wherein Bhagavān Himself took the role of an Ambassador for reconciliation, miserably failed, war as a 'court of last resort' became inevitable. Bhīṣma could not help observing, *...kālapakvaṁ idaṁ martyaṁ sarvaṁ kṣatraṁ janārdana—*'the time has made all these mortal *kṣatriyas* (the soldiers) ripe (for annihilation).'

The nadir of depravity to which the Kauravas sank in perpetrating the shameful atrocity on Draupadi, coupled with Duryodhana's insufferable arrogance at not

yielding even a needle point of territory to the Pāṇḍavas only added fuel to the fire of the already explosive situation. It was in fact the last opportunity the Kauravas had to change the course of their lives. Wicked persons dig their own graves, through their own acts steeped in *adharma*. They reap the consequences through others, who are tools in the hands of God. No sin thereby accrues to the upholders of *dharma*, because elimination of wickedness is an out and out virtue. One is reminded of Brutus' justification (in his own mind) for doing away with Caesar, when he said he plotted against Caesar ...not because I loved him less, but that I loved Rome more.' Duryodhana and his sycophants had to die in battle so that Hastināpur could prosper.

The vision of the Universal Form had both positive and negative aspects. The stupendous effulgence of the vision was so fearful that even Arjuna, the universally acknowledged warrior of extraordinary prowess—one who instilled terror in his enemies—was himself terror-stricken beyond his power to express. He was overwhelmed by the prevision of the holocaust that was going to take place on the battlefield as well as by the unprecedented revelation of the Lord's Universal Form, embodying all created beings, all pairs of opposites, all events of the past, present, and future in one sweeping, staggering vision. Such an experience could only be had through the grace of the Lord.

Bhagavān declares that He can be known in that Form only through single-hearted devotion—*Bhaktyā tvananyayā śakya...* (11.54). Echoing this, Śaṅkarācārya said in *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*: *mokṣakāraṇasāmagryāṁ bhaktireva garīyasī*—'Among all requirements for liberation, devotion is supreme.' It is unmotivated love seeking no reward. Even so, such a vision can come only through His grace. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, for instance,

was not only physically blind but mentally blind too! That was why, when Bhagavān showed him His *viśvarūpa* (Universal Form), it was just lost on him [Dhṛtarāṣṭra].

In the *Gītā* itself, Sañjaya was even a better beneficiary than Arjuna through the vision of the Lord's Cosmic Form. Sañjaya was the first to react every time Bhagavān initiated discussion on the subject. On all the three occasions when Bhagavān waxes eloquent on the topic, Sañjaya bursts into sublime poetry in sheer overwhelmed adoration. Even in the penultimate *śloka* of the very last chapter, Sañjaya recaptures how by recalling to mind time and again the Lord's Form, he is afforded ineffable bliss—

*Tacca saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya
rūpamatyadbhutaṁ hareḥ;
Vismayo me mahān rājan
hr̥ṣyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ. (18.77)*

Last two *ślokas* of chapter eleven especially are important as they epitomize the need of love or bhakti and form a link with the next chapter, 'The Yoga of Bhakti':

*Bhaktyā tvananyayā śakya
ahamevaṁvidho'rjuna;
Jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena
praveṣṭum ca parantapa.*

*Matkarmakṛtmatparamo
madbhaktaḥsaṅgavarjitah;
Niroairaḥ sarvabhūtesu
yah sa māmēti pāṇḍava. (11.54–5)*

'Only through single-minded devotion can I in this form be known, seen in reality and also entered into. He who works for My sake, who recognizes Me as the Supreme, who is devoted to Me, who is unattached, and who has hatred towards none—such a person attains Me, O Pāṇḍava!' Note that *ananyā bhakti* means ordinarily 'unswerving devotion'. It can also mean one who so iden-

tifies himself with God that he does not deem himself separate from Him; *jñātum*, 'to be known', marks the maintenance of the spiritual pursuit; *draṣṭum*, 'to be seen', means to visualize His Universal Form. This is *saguna* bhakti. *Praveṣṭum*, 'to be entered into', to enter into overwhelming (identity with Him)—this marks *nirguna* bhakti. *Mat-karmakṛt*, 'do actions as My (the Lord's) agent'—this denotes bhakti in 'open form' to be practised for identity with the Universal Being through dedicated unselfish activity—again an aspect of *saguna* bhakti. *Matparamaḥ*, 'Consider Me as supreme': bhakti also involves contemplative vision to be continuously sustained—so this again is *nirguna* bhakti.

As isolated human beings we think discursively and are occupied with mundane pursuits, hopping from activity to activity, one after another, 'in series'. But Bhagavān perceives everything 'in parallel', in a contemporaneous continuity. For Him the vast vista of space and the perennial river of time appear as one endless entity, 'in the present', there being neither 'past' nor 'future' in his discernment, because He is beyond time too!

Conceived as Time, Bhagavān creates, preserves and destroys. As such, He is both cause and consequence in the cosmos. The blessed Lord, seeing far ahead of the future, exhorts Arjuna to enter the fray, the present precipitate circumstance of fratricidal war

One should in moments of quietude, contemplate, visualizing the Lord's Cosmic Form, in all its multitudinous manifestations and magnificence. One should expand mentally one's own physical form for identification with His Cosmic Form. In that context one's narrow considerations of egoism, selfishness, and such other negative traits automatically vanish,...

Along with *nirvairah sarva-bhūteṣu* (being without hatred for any creature), Bhagavā adds *mat-karmakṛt*, in accordance with *Manu-Smṛti: Krudhyantaṁ na pratikrudhyet*—'One should never retaliate anger with anger.' Moreover, one should act on His (the Lord's) behalf and as per His ordaining. Thus Śrī Kṛṣṇa urged Arjuna to fight against Droṇa and Bhīṣma, not out of personal prejudice, but for the good of the world (*lokasaṅgraha*) as a more laudable duty. Did not Śrī Śaṅkarācārya say: *Madbhaktaḥ mām eva sarvaprakāraṁ sarvabhāvena bhajate*—'My devotee realizes Me (the Lord) through all the senses and adores Me heart and soul'? Every act of man is symbolic of things far beyond itself. When we perform a deed (sow a seed), we have to, perforce, reap the harvest of consequences that follow. Such is the inexorable law of karma. 'If chance will make me king, chance will crown me too.'

which has inevitably risen out of causes traceable to events of preceding years. Nothing one can do now, can possibly avert it. That Kauravas should die is an irrevocable result of their own mighty misdeeds in the recent past.

Lessons Learnt

One should in moments of quietude, contemplate, visualizing the Lord's Cosmic Form, in all its multitudinous manifestations and magnificence. One should expand mentally one's own physical form for identification with His Cosmic Form. In that context one's narrow considerations of egoism, selfishness, and such other negative traits automatically vanish, in the august presence of devas and ṛṣis who are the *dramatis personae* in this universal drama unfolding the cosmic vision. Not even a fool would cut his nose to spite his own face, because both are his limbs, part and parcel of his own physi-

cal body. In like manner, when one identifies himself with the cosmos, one recognizes all beings including himself as members of one family—*vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*. With such an outlook there is no scope for anger, jealousy or hatred. On the other hand, one is enabled to live in perfect harmony with all—the cosmos itself—‘with compassion for all and enmity towards none’. This is what Bhagavān meant when He proclaimed:

*Sarvabhūtasṥamātmānam
sarvabhūtāni cātmani;
Īkṣate yogayuktātma
sarvatra samadarśanaḥ. (6.29)*

‘A sincere seeker, one who is totally integrated with Yoga, sees himself in all beings, and all beings in himself. He has an even-minded attitude towards all.’ Bhagavān had earlier declared: ...*samatvaṁ yoga ucyate*—‘Yoga is equanimity of mind’ (2.48).

In the light of Bhagavān’s exhorta-

tion: ...*nimittamātram bhava savyasācin* (11.33)—‘O Arjuna, be My mere instrument’, one has to be His agent for carrying out activities prescribed by Him. How does one become a tool—a flute in His hands? A flute is basically hollow. One has to necessarily empty ‘the flute’ of all that is *ultra vires* Vedic injunctions and upaniṣadic dicta. In that case one develops love for all names and forms as for one’s Self. In such a background and through *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*,—learning, contemplating and deeply meditating—one is enabled to search for the Ultimate Truth in the innermost recess of one’s own mind. It is one thing to say the Lord pervades everywhere and everything, but entirely different to experience it. Indeed, one can conclude no better than to solemnly resolve in Arjuna’s words— ...*kariṣye vacanam tava*—‘O Lord, I shall do as you bid me to’ (18.73), drawing inexhaustible inspiration from the fact that—‘When God is with us, who is against us; when God is not with us, who is for us?’ □

Martin Luther King describes a moment of profound crisis in his life during the Montgomery boycott of 1956:

In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my problem to God. With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud. The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory. ‘I am here taking a stand on what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I’ve come to the point where I can’t face it alone.’

At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I have never experienced Him before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: ‘Stand up for righteousness, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever.’ Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything.

—From *Stride Toward Freedom* by Martin Luther King

A Review Article

THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION AND IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE: A Study on the Praxis of Liberation in the Light of the Critical Theory: by Thomas Kochuthara, Intercultural Publications Pvt. Ltd., 15 A/30 W.E.A., New Delhi, 110 005; pp. xiv+283; Rs. 200/-.

The post-World War II period was marked by a growing disapproval of the New Reformation Theology of Karl Barth and the 'Christian Realism' of H. Richard Niebuhr. This resulted in a greater theological activity. Earnest Kasemann and James Robinson sought historical evidence about Jesus, His crucifixion and resurrection. David Tracy adopted a ratiocinative approach towards theological issues. The New Hermeneutic engaged scholars in interpreting the Gospel according to the existential conditions. But there were others like Wolfhart Pannenberg who pointed out not only the limitations of language in delineating theological matters but also the limitations of the historian in establishing the Jesus tradition. Alongside the revival of older traditions (inspired by A.N. Whitehead's works) and the growth of critical orthodoxy (exemplified in the works of A.C. Outler and Gordon Kaufmann) developed new trends, both conservative and modern, (even iconoclastic) attempting a synthesis between the seemingly antagonistic concepts or readjusting the Gospel truths with the changing social realities. The Theology of the Secular, the Theology of Hope and Celebration, the Theology of blacks among Christians, and the Theology of Liberation—these and other currents enveloped the scene. Of them all, the Theology of Liberation, having its roots in the Latin American milieu, has been the most popular.

The book under review studies the origin, development, methodology and salvific aspects of the Theology of Liberation and its relation to the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School as explained by Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas. It also includes in its contextual

framework such issues as the spirituality of liberation, the dignity of freedom, the problem of violence and the role of religion in meeting contemporary needs.

The Theology of Liberation grew as an antithesis to traditional theologies which looked for the kingdom of God in heaven and not upon the earth, and which ignored sordid realities like hunger, misery, injustice and exploitation in a world governed by the Almighty. Although it seeks its sustenance from the *Gospel* and church traditions and dogmas, it holds that the *Holy Word* has been interpreted to suit vested interests in the past. It recommends a re-reading of the Bible and its message, 'which alone will reveal the meaning of the Word of God in the present situation.' Liberation Theology, says the author, is 'a critical reflection upon the Christian praxis in the light of the *Gospel*' and favours political means for social and political change. Its chief concern is to realize 'the liberation of man in all the three realms of labour, social structures and religion for the fulfilment of which involvement in the struggles of the people becomes indispensable.'

Liberation theology creates a link between religion and freedom, mysticism and politics, Divine Grace and emancipatory struggles. God is not perceived as an omnipotent being 'standing over against a finite, limited human being' but as the kinetic force of liberation in history. Spiritual experience is not gained by the prevalent methods of prayer and meditation but by engaging oneself in 'the liberative praxis'. Love for Jesus tantamounts to love for the oppressed and the crestfallen. One can prove one's fidelity to the Prophet only by having the courage of conviction and the dexterity to face ordeals in the on-going

struggle for the restoration of human dignity and human values. 'Spirituality of liberation is a spirituality like classical spiritual movements, but with emphasis on the temporal aspects of life and, therefore, with vast consequences for Christianity', argues the author.

Liberation theologians disapprove of the hierarchical pattern of the Church which promotes conformism and even servility, and favour the formation of 'a Church from below'. They expect the Church to shed its elitist character, withdraw its allegiance to unjust rulers, launch crusades against the forces of oppression, and proclaim an egalitarian order of society.

The Church is not simply an institutional arrangement for worship and other social activities. It is the body of Jesus Christ. Hence it must be an emblem of service and sacrifice, and play a major role in the transformation of society. 'The Church can be understood only in relation to the reality', wrote Gustavo Gutierrez, 'which it announces to men. Its existence is not for "itself", but rather "for others". Its centre is outside itself; it is in the work of Christ and His Spirit.' Rudolph J. Siebert ruefully stated in the Latin American context that 'the Church has lost its eschatological salt and become an ideology justifying the establishment.'

The author lucidly brings out the points of contact between liberation theology and the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. He holds that both have originated from 'the concern for man's emancipation'. He recognizes the contribution of the Frankfurt School in making 'a better evaluation of advanced capitalism' than Karl Marx. 'Thus, the false consciousness created in the late

capitalist society is not one that leads to class divisions as Marx understood, but it is of a technological myth', he says. Besides, society does not face just class oppression, as Marx believed. The individual undergoes a number of other oppressions. Marx's over-emphasis on economic factors, curtailment of freedom, rejection of God and ignorance about the emancipatory contents of religious systems also comes in for criticism.

The author believes that the Critical Theory, even at the stage of Habermas, is 'in a hypothetico-practical stage'. But it is 'no third way between capitalism and communism'. Its contribution lies in shifting the focus 'from the critique of political economy to that of instrumental reason focussing on the oppressions to which the individual was subjected'. But while the Critical Theorists recognize the relevance of religion for human emancipation at the external level, liberation theologians argue that no emancipation can be complete without the realization of religion in its spiritual essence.

The Critics of Theology of Liberation contend that it betrays the Gospel and the Christian tradition, reduces religion to revolution, and confuses people by asking them to encounter God in liberation movements. Its alliance with the Marxists has also been a hot ecclesiological issue. This book, however, refutes these charges and clears many cobwebs that cluster around Liberation Theology. Thomas Kochuthara deserves all praise for meticulously arranging the subject matter and presenting it in an interesting manner.

*Dr. Satish K. Kapoor
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Truth stands on its own evidence, it does not require any other testimony to prove it, it is self-effulgent. It penetrates into the inner-most corners of our nature and in its presence the whole universe stands up and says, 'This is truth.'

—Swami Vivekananda

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

PERSPECTIVE AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

A great dispute arose between the kings of the Shākya and Koliya dynasties over the sharing of the waters of the Rohini river. It deteriorated so much that they decided to go to war to settle the matter. The opposing troops marched to the battlefield and took up their positions, and the war was about to start.

In the meanwhile news of the impending disaster reached Lord Buddha. Immediately he came to the battlefield. 'What is the price of the water that you are about to fight for?', asked the Lord to the warriors standing in the ranks facing each other.

'Price of the water? No, Lord, none ever has to pay any price for it. It is available free to all', they replied.

'And what is the price of the life of a warrior?', asked the Lord again.

'Lord, can anybody ever pay for life? The value of life is beyond all price. Life is invaluable.'

The Lord then admonished them: 'Should you then be ready to sacrifice your precious lives for the sake of a trifle? Ask your conscience!'

These words of the Lord brought the warriors to their senses. They threw down their swords and shields and gave up the thought of fighting. A terrible bloodshed was thus averted.

ARROGANCE DISTORTS JUDGEMENT

Angada was only twenty-four years old when Sri Rāmachandra sent him off to Sri Lanka as his ambassador before deciding on war.

Seeing young Angada, Rāvana started laughing: 'I don't think Rāma's army has any bearded and mustachioed intellectual. Why else would he send this urchin here as his representative!'

Hearing this, Angada's confidence soared high and he spoke in a self-assured tone: 'Had Bhagawān Rāma known that an intellectual like Rāvana would judge another's intellect by appearances only, undoubtedly he would have sent some bearded goat in my place!'

This remark made Rāvana realize that Angada was no urchin and had been sent to Sri Lanka quite deliberately by Sri Rāmachandra.

NEWS & REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION RELIEF AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

INAUGURATION OF NEWLY BUILT HAREGAON VILLAGE ON 2 MAY 1995, IN THE EARTHQUAKE AFFECTED LATUR DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA

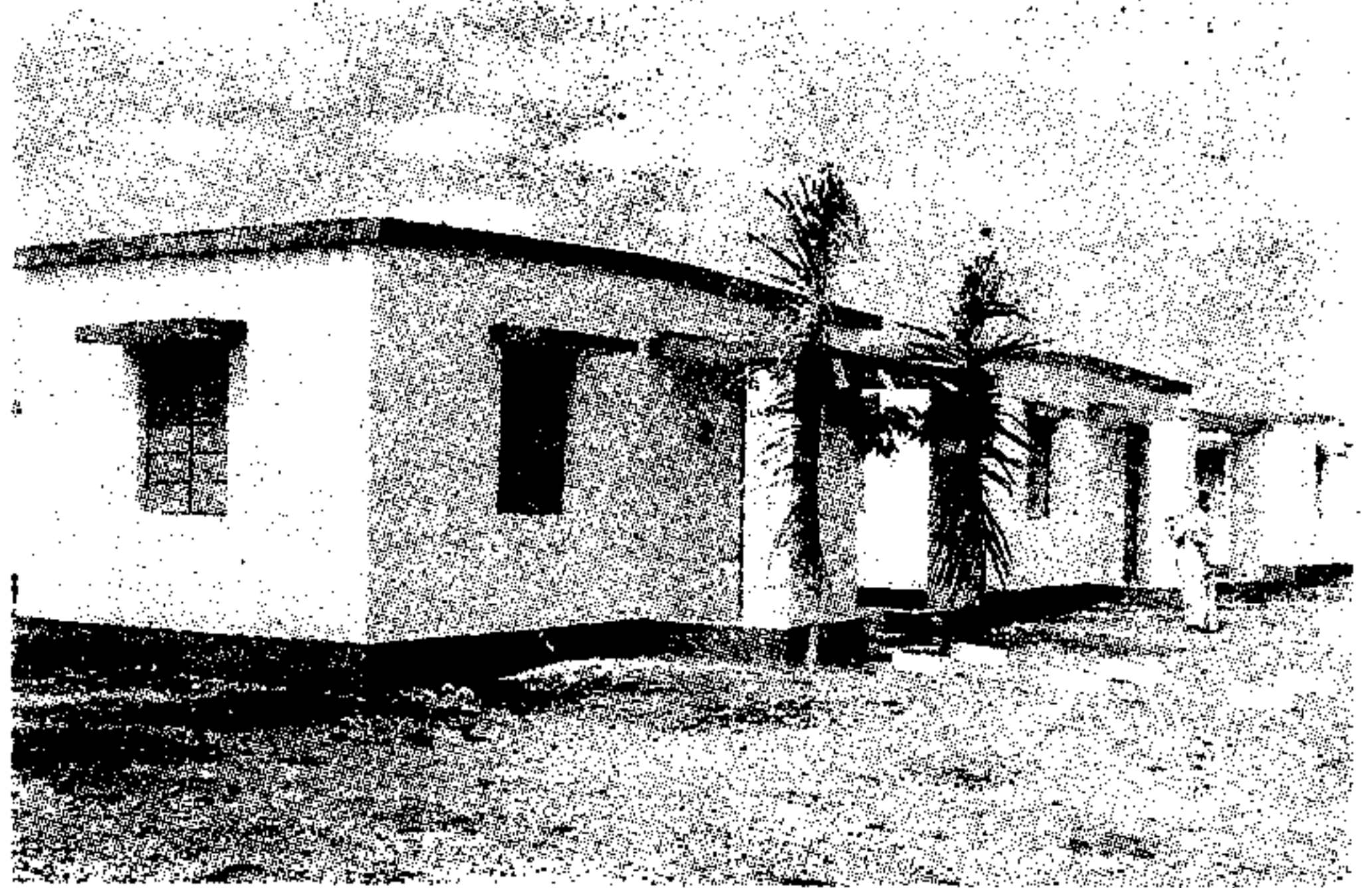
On 2 May 1995, 424 earthquake-resistant houses, a spacious Community Hall and an impressive school building with necessary infrastructure were inaugurated in Haregaon village under AUSA Taluka of Latur District which was devastated by the Earthquake in September 1993. The houses were declared open by Sri Mehli R. Cama, Director, the Bombay Samachar Limited. The Community Hall (*Samaj Mandir*) was supposed to be inaugurated by Sri P.C. Sen, Managing Director, Peerless General Finance And Investment Co. Ltd. As he was unable to attend the function, the *Samaj Mandir* was declared open by his representative, Sri Salil Dutta, Managing Director, Peerless Abasan, Calcutta. The School was inaugurated by Sri K.C. Shroff, Managing Director, Excel Industries Ltd., Bombay. Incidentally, Bombay Samachar Rahat Fund and M/S Peerless General Finance And Investment Co. Ltd. contributed Rs. 1.56 crores and Rs. 50 lacs, respectively, for this project. Besides, M/S Statesman Earthquake Relief Fund, Share & Care Foundation, American Service to India, Friends & Well-wishers of Jamnabai Narsee School, Bombay, are some of the other prominent donors.

THE NEW COLONY: Each house with a carpet area of 250 sq. feet and a plinth area of 307 sq. feet is made earthquake-resistant with six R.C.C. columns, R.C.C. beams and 4" thick R.C.C. roof slab. The cost of each

house with electrical wiring and other electric fixtures has been around Rs. 55,000/- only. The Junior school building with a total area of 10,623 sq. feet has cost nearly Rs. 18 lacs including the cost of furniture, electric wiring etc. It has 13 rooms (18'X25' each) and a 10' wide covered verandah all through. Besides, there are two separate toilet blocks at the rear and a large playground in front.

The *Samaj Mandir* with a built-up area of 2600 sq. feet, has a spacious hall (34'X22'), a stage, 4 rooms and toilets. It is designed to cater to the multifarious needs of the villagers, viz. first-aid and emergency medical store, village co-operative, cultural functions and so on. In view of the acute shortage of water in the colony, several community water posts have been erected at various points which are connected to an R.C.C. overhead tank to which water is pumped from a large well existing at the outskirts of the village.

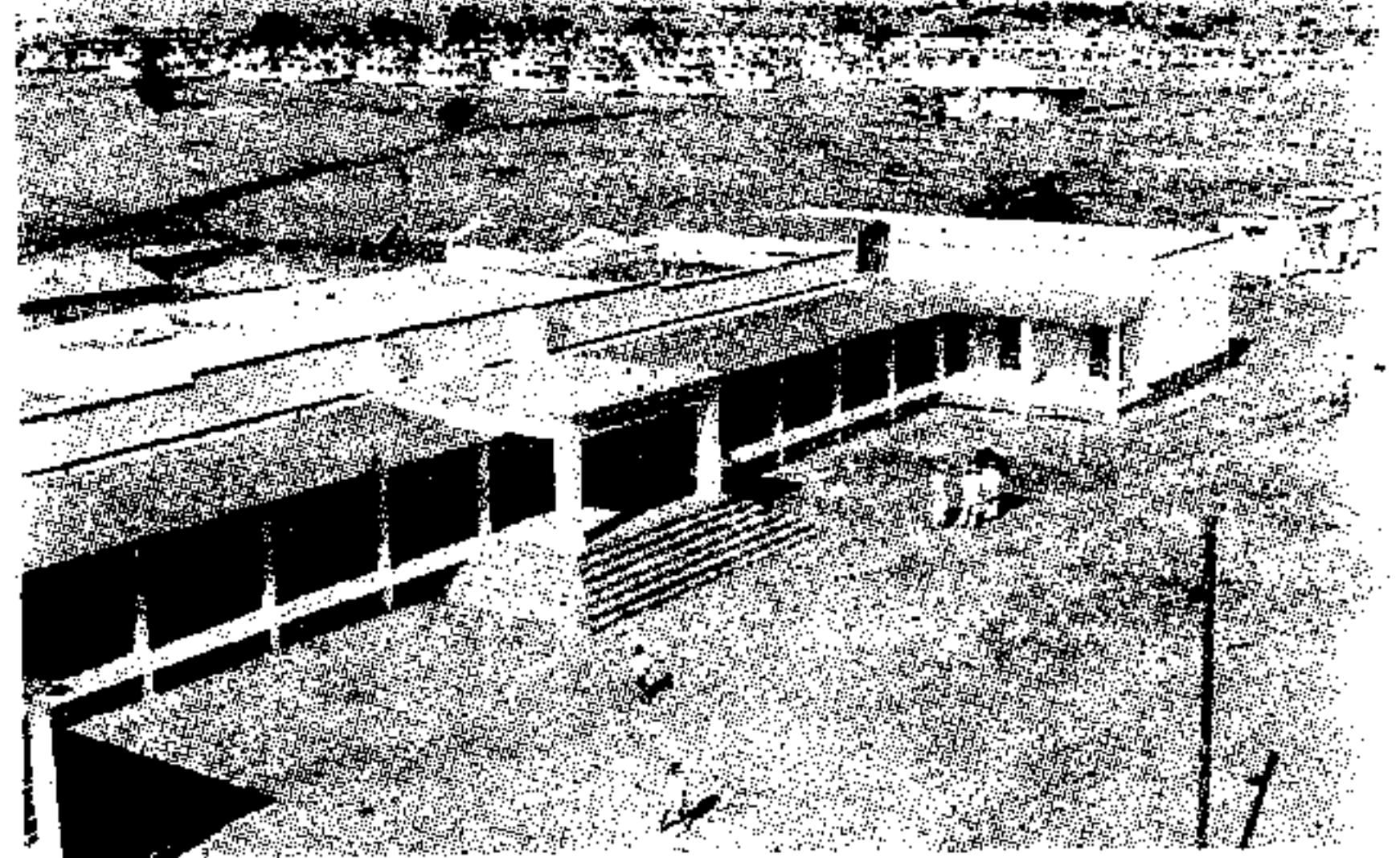
THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION: The programme started with a colourful procession of the villagers dancing Garba dance with joy to the tune of a band. At 9.00 A.M. sharp Mr. Cama opened the doors of House No. B-8/15 which was handed over to its new owner Sri Ram Namdev who lost his wife in the catastrophe. Dhoti, saree, chadar, a steel trunk, a set of utensils consisting of 10 pieces per set, rice, wheat, pulses, oil and



The houses



The school, with the community hall and the houses in the distance



The community hall

other necessary articles of daily use were also handed over along with the house to start household immediately. Then Mr. Cama unveiled two marble plaques (with inscriptions in English and Marathi) fitted in a centrally located pylon where the list of donors (Rs. 1 lac and above) along with their respective quantum of donations are displayed on a separate plaque.

This was followed by the inauguration of the *Samaj Mandir* by Mr. S. Dutta. Two marble plaques were unveiled and flower offerings were made to the pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

Sri K.C. Shroff unveiled the plaques of the school, renamed 'Vivekananda Vidyalaya' and lighted lamp in front of a big laminated portrait of Swami Vivekananda.

Subsequently a public meeting was arranged where the aforesaid persons as well as other speakers delivered brief speeches. The meeting was presided over by Swami Vagishananda, a member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission, and Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Bombay. Swami Shivamayananda, also a member of the Ramakrishna Mission's Governing Body, who has been guiding the Relief & Rehabilitation from the Headquarters, welcomed the audience. The vote of thanks was given by Swami Vishnupadananda, the Monk-in-charge of Haregaon Relief Camp. As a token, the house-key together with above-mentioned household articles were handed over to Gafur Azimuddin Patwari, to whom house No. A-3/10 was allotted. The house-keys to the other beneficiaries are being given to the respective owners sequentially.

More than 2000 people from far and near and the villagers of Haregaon attended the inaugural function and all joined in prayer

for peace in the new homes of the rehabilitated.

From The Times of India, Bombay
3 May: By a staff reporter

The Ramakrishna Mission has built 424 quake-resistant houses and a school at Haregaon village, Ausa taluka in Latur district. The houses have a carpet area of 250 sq feet each.

These were handed over to the quake-victims at a function held at Haregaon yesterday. Director of *Bombay Samachar* Mehli Cama was the chief guest. Swami Vagishananda, secretary of the Bombay chapter of the mission, presided.

When Latur and Osmanabad were devastated by an earthquake on September 30, 1993, the mission rushed relief material, including clothes and medicines. Subsequently, it was decided to undertake a rehabilitation project at a cost of Rs. 4.50 crores. The project involves the construction of 646 houses, three schools and three community halls and infrastructural facilities like roads.

From the Indian Express, Bombay
4 May: By Sumedha Raikar

Adversity does not necessarily make a man wiser. Certainly not the earthquake-hit Haregaon villagers who were haggling over the possession of the 424 newly-built houses on the inaugural day.

The Ramakrishna Mission handed over the keys to the Haregaon villagers on May 2. Built at a record pace of about one year, the new Haregaon village is part of the Mission's rehabilitation project in the quake-hit zone. The Mission authorities adopted Haregaon, Javalgawadi and Kawali immediately after the September 1993 earthquake. The Mission intends to build altogether 646 quake-resistant houses for the homeless of the three villages of the Ausa taluka.

The Haregaon project with a total cost of about Rs. 6 crore, is designed by architect Pravin Gala. The single largest donation (Rs. 1.56 crore) for the project came from Bombay Samachar Limited whose director inaugurated the new village. The Peerless Finance Com-

pany has donated Rs. 50 lakh.

Equipped with a school, community hall, internal roads and community water posts, the Haregaon complex is almost ready for use. Each house with a carpet area of 250 sq. feet is fitted with RCC column frame and sand cushion foundation—ideal for quake-prone areas.

Missionaries like Swami Vishnupadanand are

camping in Haregaon ever since they came to give primary relief. 'It took us some time to gain the confidence of the villagers. Situation was worsened by the lack of telecommunication facilities. It was also difficult to reach the relief material from Latur and Solapur to the distant villages,' says the Swami. The quake claimed 105 lives in Haregaon. At present, there are 10 widows and five orphans....

THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

Centenary Events, January 1995

Beginning last spring, the Vedanta Society of New York has been observing the centennial of its founding in 1894 by Swami Vivekananda. Two events in January 1995 continued the celebrations.

On Sunday, 22 January, Swami Vivekananda's birthday was marked with a special service, attended by more than 170 persons. The programme began with devotional music, solo and choral. After giving an opening prayer and introductory remarks, Swami Tathagatananda invited three distinguished guest speakers to talk on 'The Message of Swami Vivekananda' Rabbi Asher Block, a long-time friend of the Center, gave a short but strong talk, highlighting what makes the Vedanta Society different from other religious organizations. Dr. Robert J. Meinke, a retired sociology professor long associated with the Center, spoke on Vivekananda from a historical perspective. His excellency K.L. Agarwal, Deputy Consul General of India, spoke on what Swami Vivekananda meant to him, and then released the Vedanta Society Centenary publication, *Meditation on Swami Vivekananda*, by Swami Tathagatananda. The service closed with a congregational song composed by two members of the Center. Afterward, lunch was served to the entire congregation.

Through the offices of the Vedanta Society, in honour of Swami Vivekananda, a number of disadvantaged children were given a banquet at the Mt. Nebo Baptist Church in Harlem (a predominantly black section of New York). Funding for the banquet was partly donated by Street Children International to the Vedanta Society, and partly provided by the church itself. With this, the church was enabled to feed more than two hundred children aged two to fifteen. A programme presented by the children featured talks and demonstrations of what they had learned in Sunday school and religious songs. Leaders of the church were highly appreciative, not only of the Vedanta Society's gift but of its idea, and plan to make the children's banquet an annual event. □

No amount of force, or government, or legislative cruelty will change the conditions of a race, but it is spiritual culture and ethical culture alone that can change wrong racial tendencies for the better.

—Swami Vivekananda

Reviews & Notices

CHICAGO-DHARMA-MAHASABHA AND RAMAKRISHNA-BHAVA-DHARA (Hindi): By Swami Brahmeshananda; publ. Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi, Ranchi, Bihar 834 008; pp. 236; price Rs. 30/-.

The above publication brought out to commemorate the first Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's appearance at the World Parliament of Religions is a valuable addition to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature in Hindi. It is a collection of thought-provoking articles written by the author, a learned monk of the Ramakrishna Order, and published from time to time in the *Vivek-Sikha*, the Hindi monthly of the Order.

These articles encompass quite a wide range of ideas. The book is divided into two sections. The first section contains a set of ten articles on the Ramakrishna Movement, its nature, aspects and methodology. The author has presented a penetrating analysis of Sri Ramakrishna's unique spiritual realizations, the various paths through which they could be attained, and the Ramakrishna Mission and its multi-dimensional activities through which Sri Ramakrishna's message is reaching the minds and hearts of men and women all over the world.

In the second section, there are eleven articles studying the trio of this Movement—Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Saradadevi and Swami Vivekananda—from close quarters. These three personalities represent in their own unique ways three distinct approaches to spiritual life. In analysing the unique contributions of the trio, the author has dived deep into their spiritual lives. This study

provides very helpful ideas for right living to spiritual aspirants as well as to the general public, and hopefully will become popular.

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THE DIVINE PATH: A Video Film on Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra: Produced by the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Morabadi, Ranchi, Bihar 834 008; price Rs. 300/-.

Swami Vivekananda regarded poverty as the root of all evils in India. The poor, he felt, had been betrayed, exploited and degraded for centuries by the custodians of society. 'The poor, the low, the sinner in India have no friends, no help—they cannot rise, try however they may.... They have forgotten that they too are men', he wrote. Swami Vivekananda exhorted his countrymen to see the Divine in human forms—the 'emaciated figures of young and old in tattered rags, whose faces bear deep-cut lines of the despair and poverty of hundreds of years'. 'Him I call a *mahātman* (great soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a *durātman* (wicked soul)', he wrote to his fellow disciples from Chicago. One of the foremost tasks of the Ramakrishna Mission established by him has been to serve the neglected and weaker sections of society in a selfless spirit. The video film under review beautifully portrays the activities of one such centre for the amelioration of the downtrodden masses.

In 1927, Swami Vishuddhananda, the 8th President of the Ramakrishna Order, established a service centre at Ranchi, in the

Adviasis inhabited area of Chhota Nagpur where the vast majority subsisted under squalid living conditions and hardships due to the exploitation of zamindars and lack of social amenities. A severe famine which struck the area in the 1960s prompted the efforts to establish a new modern centre to specifically cater to the material and moral welfare of the people. This was completed in 1969 and named *Divyayan—The Divine Path* to socio-cultural transformation.

Set in an impressive locale and interspersed with quotations from Swami Vivekananda's works, the video graphically portrays Divyayan as a multi-dimensional institution for training village youth, particularly Adivasis, in agronomy, horticulture, dairy farming, poultry-keeping, bee-keeping, maintenance of farm machinery, carpentry, welding, lathe, mushroom cultivation, etc. The trainees also learn the rudiments of rural economics, marketing, and management.

Started with the assistance of the Canadian Unitarian Service Community, Divyayan was recognized as Krishi Vigyan Kendra by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in 1977 and given a National Award for excellent performance in the recent past.

Although Divyayan provides education through modern methods and techniques making full use of audio-visual aids, wherever possible, it continues the *gurukula* tradition in which the pupils stay with the Guru. The only difference is that no *dakshinā* (fee) is demanded from students after the training is completed; instead, free board and lodging, and clothes are provided for them.

Education at Divyayan is a bipolar process in which both the trainees and the trainers participate. Emphasis is laid on

'learning by doing' in a heuristic manner. Education is made more purposeful by introducing the trainees to the quintessence of Indian culture and by providing them opportunities for initiative, innovation, self-expression, self-reliance, self-discipline and leadership. Community feeling is generated through seminars, celebration of festivals, monthly meetings, recreational activities and other programmes.

The day at Divyayan begins at the *brāhmannuhūrta* (before sunrise) when the trainees in the exalted company of monks, invoke the Supreme Lord. Afterwards, they do physical exercises, being fully aware of the ancient adage that the human body is the principal instrument for practising dharma (*sharīramādyam khalu dharma sādhanam*). The trainees themselves do household work, even the menial ones, in a spirit of worship. During the day they learn their trade and remain busy in other group activities aimed at the harmonious development of personality.

The video shows that Vivekananda Seva Sanghas (numbering fifty-five) run by the Mission with the help of Divyayan-trained persons have greatly helped in the task of rural reconstruction by popularizing biogas plants, smokeless chullahs (ovens), improved ovens, etc.; supplying quality seeds and fertilizers to farmers; increasing the irrigation potential of the area through dug-wells, tube-wells, water recharge tanks, etc.; constructing low-cost dwellings for the Bihor tribes, and Community Centres equipped with solar-electric systems in a number of villages; running night-schools as non-formal educational centres; and providing health-care facilities.

Divyayan is a miniature society with a secular environment. It cultivates the spirit of cooperation, fellow-feeling and self-respect in the trainees, caters to their

material, mental and moral needs, and prepares them to be the catalysts of social change.

Well-conceived and produced by the Mission, the video is a veritable feast for the eyes and the mind, and can act as a torch-bearer to other voluntary agencies in the field of social work. Jochhon Dastidar's direction and D. Sengupta's photography are flawless.

*Dr. Satish K. Kapoor
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BOOKS RECEIVED

THE MYTH OF SAINT THOMAS AND THE MYLAPORE SHIVA TEMPLE: By Iswar Sharan; publ. Voice of India, 2/18 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002; 1991; pp. 68; Rs. 40/-.

VEGETARIANISM: For Health and Happiness: By R.N. Lakhotia, Vice President, Indian Vegetarian Congress; publ. Lakhotia International School of Better Living, S-228, Greater Kailash-II, New Delhi 110 048; 1995; pp. 64; Re. 1/-.

The Liberation of the Bull-Elephant

(Continued from page 708)

a great enticer lurks on our path to illumination—an enticer who dulls our judgement and stalls our progress. That is religious pride, the 'holier than thou' attitude, which must have misled Indradyumna. Besides, he was weighed down by royal pride also—pride in having a following etc. That is also what led him, as the elephant, to carelessness and the jaws of death. Otherwise, had he been courteous and respectful towards sage Agastya—i.e., aware of the pre-eminence of spiritual knowledge—, he might very well have won the latter's blessings and attained his goal in that very life. The demotion into a spiritually insensitive life could have been entirely avoided.

And what did the elephant gain when this pride was shattered? It realized its spiritual identity with the Lord: '*prāptah bhagavataḥ rūpam*, it got the Lord's form', as verse 8.4.6 declares.

This together with another revelation adds up to the story's culminating Advaitic message: When the crocodile was killed by the Lord so that the elephant could be

released, it regained its original form as a celestial being of the *gandharva* class (8.4.3). That is to say, the ever so many causes of death also are really the multifarious forms of the Lord's power. All life then is a cloak over the Divine. Thus with this unexpected and profound ending the story puts our life in an entirely new perspective: Even the very causes of all the pleasant and the unpleasant incidents in our lives are in fact parts of a jigsaw which remains incomprehensible till the last piece falls into place. And that last piece is the regaining of our spiritual nature and the realization that we are essentially identical with the Lord who is omnipotent, transcendent and also immanent, and that all existence is spiritually one. Without this culmination we are similar to an elephant. So.... □

*Truth, purity and unselfishness—
wherever these are present, there is no power
below or above the sun to crush the possessor
thereof. Equipped with these one individual is
able to face the whole universe in opposi-
tion.—Swami Vivekananda*