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"उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।"

"Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached."

TRUE HAPPINESS

By Swami Turiyananda

I

One can have everything in the world; but it is rare to have devotion to the feet of the Lord. Without it everything else is vain, for nothing is of any profit. Everybody can know and understand this. Life becomes sweetened if love for Him is developed. Otherwise it becomes a burden. But the Lord has also given you the treasure of love, which makes us very happy. Life becomes fruitful if the time can be spent remembering Him and serving or associating with men of God. It is no mean luck that your inclinations have been so, thanks to the grace of the Master. The great devotee Tulasidas has said that power and influence fall to the lot of sinners even, but only the really fortunate ones gain devotion to God and the company of devotees. It is no wonder that all the Swamis love and care for you, for those who have taken refuge in the Master are the most dear and near ones. Their relations are based on God and are not of this world. I have already had the report of the celebration of Swamiji's birthday at the Math. From now on it will be always on the increase everywhere. They will be preached more and more among the people as days pass. The more the people will know and understand them the more will they realize the real truth, being liberated from the grip of ignorance and being blessed by becoming heirs to pure bliss.

Whatever be the Lord's will, it is for good. There remains no more cause for fear or anxiety if one can remember His lotus feet. Our sincere prayer to Him is that He may graciously allow our minds to dwell on His feet.

II

The fruits of tendencies in process of realization cannot be escaped, but there is no doubt that wisdom lies in thinking of God without much attention to the body. I have heard the Master say, 'Let the pain and the body take care of each other; but thou, O my mind, be happy.' That is to say, 'O my mind, do not be upset if the body suffers from disease, etc.; the body cannot escape

the experiences in store for it. But be thou happy, that is, fix thy mind on God, the Existence-Intelligence-Bliss, and do not worry about the body.' Let whatever happen to the body, but let it not make you forget God. Our earnest prayer to Him is that we may be blessed by following the path shown by Him.

CONVERSATION WITH SWAMI SHIVANANDA

BELUR MATH, NOVEMBER 1920

At about 8-30 p.m. the Mahapurusha (literally, the great person, i.e., Swami Shivananda) returned to his room (from the shrine). A song in a suppressed tone expressed the joy in his heart. The voice was very sweet and tender. Some monks and devotees had already been waiting for him. When the Mahapurusha sat in his room all prostrated before him one by one and sat down. The room was almost silent; one felt as though none wanted to break the silence. Gradually the conversation developed, and it turned to the topic of spiritual practice. The Mahapurusha said in a self-absorbed tone: 'Night is the time best suited for practice. One should very devoutly meditate and repeat God's name every day; this purifies the mind. If one meditates and repeats the Lord's name devoutly for some time, a godliness persists for ever in the heart, and one gets a foretaste of Bliss. One should not leave one's seat just after meditation, for that prevents the deepening of any mood. On the contrary, one should continue sitting there for some time and thinking of the meditation, after which one should chant some of the most excellent hymns, etc., which are helpful to the meditation. This further intensifies and prolongs the mood and pleasure of meditation. Even after leaving the seat one should not talk with others for a time, but should continue thinking and ruminating mentally. This not only makes the heart very cheerful, it also greatly helps one to continue in a very lofy mood.'

A monk: 'Sir, should we not now and then go out for *tapasyâ* (i.e., spiritual practice accompanied with hardship)? Moreover, are not pilgrimage and mendicancy in various places congenial to the life of a monk?'

Mahapurusha: 'My son, there is the proverb, "A rolling stone gathers no moss." Can one become spiritual or realize God simply by travelling hither and thither? But, of course, it is good now and then to resort to begging from door to door, or to live in solitude or travel a little without resources with a view to eliminating pride and egotism and practising complete dependence on God. There is no doubt that this results in spiritual well-being. But there is no need for persisting in these things continually for years together. Latu Maharaj (i.e., Swami Adbhutananda) would often say, "Where shouldst thou roam about? If thou art a child of Shri Ramakrishna, get thyself fixed in one place." This is perfectly true. "He who has it here, has it there too." Moreover, where will you travel about and for what? He is already in us. That is why the Master sang this song almost daily:

Stay thou in thyself, O my mind, and don't go to others' houses,
Seek in thy inner compartments and thou shalt find whatever thou wantest.
That Philosopher's Stone is a transcendental possession, which can vouchsafe whatever thou seekest;
What innumerable gems lie scattered at the backdoor of that Lord!

The Mahapurusha repeated charmingly this song several times, and then after a little silence said, 'The highest lesson is imparted at the end of the song: "What innumerable gems lie scattered

at the backdoor of that Lord!" At His door lies everything—enjoyment, emancipation, and even everything up to realization of Brahman. But, my son, one must search, one must eagerly seek for Him. This craving indeed is what is meant by spiritual endeavour. If anyone sincerely wants Him, He becomes gracious. And if through mercy He opens the door a little—awakens *Kulakundalini* (i.e., the coiled up spiritual energy)—you will see that everything is within. But there can be no success unless *Kulakundalini* is awakened through His mercy.'

A devotee: 'Yes, for this reason, Maharaj (i.e., Swami Brahmananda) also said that the door to the realization of Brahman opens when *Kulakundalini* awakes and rises up from the *Mulâdhâra* (lit., the primary receptacle) through the *Sushumnâ*[1] passage.'

Mahapurusha: 'Yes, perfectly true: nothing is possible unless *Kulakundalini* awakes. It is because of this that the Master solicited the Mother with tears thus: "Awake, Mother, arise—wake up, O Mother *Kulakundalini!*" '

Quoting thus the first line, the Mahapurushaji, began singing the song:

Wake up, Mother *Kulakundalini*!
Thou art Bliss Absolute, Thou art Brahman Absolute,
Thou like a sleeping snake residest in the lotus that holds Thee.
On the triangle burns a fire which scorches the body—
Leave Thou the *Mulâdhâra*, Thou wife of Shiva coiling round Him,
Proceed Thou along the *Sushumnâ* passage and reach the *Svâdhishthâna* (lotus),
And pass (gradually) through *Manipura*, *Anâhata*, *Vishuddhâ*, and *Âjnâ* (lotuses).[2]
At the thousand-petalled lotus in the head, do Thou unite with Shiva,
And disport with Him at will imparting bliss.

Ah! How can we express the absorption? The Mahapurusha repeated the song thrice and then stopped. A serene beauty lighted up his face; the whole room seemed to be surcharged with the spirit of the song. Thus passed a long time, when the Mahapurusha repeated with great pathos: 'Mother, Mother, Thou Mother of the Universe!' It was not unlike the wail of a motherless child. After a while, regaining somewhat his natural composure, he continued slowly: 'Ah! I cannot recount how often I heard this song from the Master. Some day he would sing this song when fanning the Mother (Kâli) with *Chowri*.[3] Ah, what an ecstatic mood he would be in when singing this song! We would all be dumbfounded. He would have no outward consciousness. The *Chowri* moved slowly, and he sang self-absorbed. What a sweet voice he had! I cannot express in words that deep pathos. Every heart would melt. Could the Mother help not waking up at that pathetic call? And that Mother is *Brahma-Kundalini*.[4] Swamiji used to say, "Do you realize that this time *Brahma-Kundalini* Herself has waked up? This time, at the Master's call, has awoke great *Kundalini* who is *Mahâmâyâ* and through whose will creation, preservation, and destruction take place. No wonder that the individual *Kundalinis* will wake up as a matter of course." It is as a consequence of this that the whole world is responding to this call for a mighty awakening. And that Primal Energy manifested Herself through the body of the Master for the good of this world. Now there is no cause for worry.'

[1] *Canal centralis* in the backbone through which, according to Yogis, the psychic energy passes in its progress upwards, till it unites with cosmic energy at the top.

[2] *Svâdhishthâna*, etc. are nervous centres in the backbone which are energized by the rising *Kundalini*.

[3] The bunch of hairs from a yak's tail used for fanning deities, etc.

[4] i.e., *Kundalini* in Her cosmic aspect, as opposed to *Kundalini* in individuals.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

By the Editor

I

Tagore in one of his poems presents a mad man searching for a philosopher's stone oblivious of personal comforts and natural duties, the 'human faces Divine' and the natural beauties all around, and the little bits of bliss and touches of reality making importunities for acceptance. He runs after an ideal of which he lacks even an intellectual foretaste, so that even though the ideal is very often within his reach, he passes by unconcerned, or grasps it unknowingly to throw it away the very next moment. He wants the whole of his ideal, though he lacks the proper mood of receptivity; and the ideal, though present before him in all its multiplicity, escapes his notice. He is so much engrossed in his search that the real object of search has gone out of his purview. A search—a search—it is all a mad search for the philosopher's stone!

Planning is in the air—planning in all fields of human activity. There are plans for industrialization, plans for rehabilitation of re-occupied territories, plans for stability of exchange, plans for international peace, and even plans for systematization of outlooks which go by the name of systems of philosophy and religion. But bewildered we ask, What are these for? There does not seem to be any well defined and universally acceptable goal in all these plannings. The world may be well charted and laid out with roads, railways, steamship lines, air routes, factories, banks, leagues of nations, and international police organizations; and systems of philosophy may drill or 'condition' all human minds in accordance with the needs of a vaguely defined future. But the unsophisticated mind still asks, What are all these for? The mind unimposed by all the marshalling of facts and figures cries out in agony, **'येनाहं नामृता स्यां किमहं तेन कुर्याम्** —what shall I do with all this that cannot make me immortal?' The modern search for a better order of things has thus ended in a fiasco—it is all a mad running after the philosopher's stone. The modern age boasts of its realism, empiricism, pragmatism, and materialism; and yet, paradoxically enough, it is the most unrealistic of all ages, because it accepts madness as sanity, and plans as goals; it overlooks facts and human possibilities as they are and the universal goals towards which they should be guided; and it builds castles in the air, which satisfy only the planners and propagandists but leave humanity cold and uninspired. Besides, its ill-defined goal is forgotten sooner than adumbrated, and society is left with mere institutions, schemes, and quests.

The modern age is supposed to have achieved a universality of view unattained by any former age, and yet how parochial and full of mistrust it is! The colonies are supposed to be the domestic concerns of the ruling nations, and even allies must not be too inquisitive about their internal affairs lest the ruling races should be embarrassed and should in retaliation poke their noses into the affairs of the critics themselves. The daily papers are full of such threats and counter-threats. Thus Senator Chandler of Kentucky declared in the U.S.A. Senate on 28 August, 1944, 'I believe in co-operating with our Allies; but only by knowing the truth of the situation in other countries can we hope for a genuine co-operative peace.' The same paper which printed this news also gave the British reaction to such an attitude thus: 'A spokesman asserted, that as

the British press "refrains from commenting on American domestic affairs, the same thing is expected of the Americans" to maintain Anglo-American solidarity' (*The Hindusthan Standard*, 3 September, 1944). In other words truth must not be too obtrusive; it must fit into the existing order of things so that peace, i.e., the assured supremacy of the ruling races, may not be jeopardized. This may be a pragmatic point of view; but is it realistic in any sense? Does the *public* truth here correspond with actual facts or with the demands of universal justice and equity?

Nor are politicians alone subject to such myopic visions of truth due to their pre-occupation with mere selfish ends. We are pained to see that even religious leaders often talk in a way which is not above criticism. *The Hindusthan Standard* of 2 September reported thus the Pope's speech, delivered on 1 September:

> At the end of this war . . . a violent struggle will begin between various currents of thought. Among these tendencies *Christian ideals* must assure the social future. . . . There is nothing we desire more than that peace, security, and prosperity should be given to the greater part of *Christian humanity*. (Italics are ours).

His Holiness displayed some breadth of outlook in referring to *Christian ideals* and *Christian humanity* and did not confine His benedictions to His *Catholic ideals* and *Catholic humanity*. We are thankful to His Holiness for that small mercy. But what about Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, and other *ideals* and *humanities*? His Holiness did of course speak of 'mankind' and 'humanity'; but the universe of discourse leaves little doubt in our minds as to the real implications of those words. The War has produced many memorable words and phrases and *Christian humanity* is not a very unwelcome intruder. Nay, we welcome it, since it exposes the real state of things. We note that when universality is being planned, one of the greatest leaders of thought disdains to speak in terms of religion and spirituality pure and simple! Evidently, in his views Semitic exclusiveness is the highest achievement of modern civilization!

II

Turning to India, our attention is drawn to what Mr. Edward Thompson writes in the *Spectator* regarding the demand for Pakistan:

> Never have we got into a worse spin even in India than by making all political progress depend upon an arrangement which, if made, would be a piece of 'damnable cheek' and would not be worth the paper on which it is written.

And yet some people's hearts are set on this 'damnable cheek,' since they are out not really for Hindu-Muslim unity but for a temporary make-shift to get certain self-interests assured. A disinterested outlook is entirely lacking.

As for the lop-sided industrial development of the world, it is aptly summarized by Mr. N. R. Sarkar thus:

> The entire world's production of economic goods and services, averaged over the decade 1925-34, was 254 milliard I. U. (International Units) per year: As much as 119 milliards or nearly 50 p.c. of this was produced in the four largest economic units, viz. U. S. A., Great Britain, Germany, and France containing between them only 13 p.c. of the world's population . . . . while the returns reaped by the mother countries have been considerable, the people of the colonies and dependencies were doomed to a life of semi-starvation with a hopelessly low standard of living.

The race problem was brought to the forefront by Sir S. Radhakrishnan in a speech at Darbhanga.

> When the principle of race equality was raised at the Versailles Treaty it was negatived. If we do not accept it at this peace, it only means that we agree with Hitler in believing in superior and inferior races. . . . The present war is a conflict between two great passions, namely, passion for freedom and passion for domination.

III

Thus our plans almost always overshoot or undershoot the mark; and failure is our lot, since we do not take into cognizance all the factors involved.

And as for the mark itself, oftener than not, we have at most a hazy picture of it; or if our hearts are set on things which we cannot openly avow, our plans serve ends other than those which they are advertised for. A Divine pull does of course underlie all our endeavours for transcending our present limitations, for it is God alone who is the source of all creative efforts and intellectual flights. But the modern world lacks the detached view which alone can give a vision of the Divinity at work. To put the matter more realistically, the Hindus believe that all human efforts are partial manifestations of Divine energy on the mundane plane; but these manifestations themselves may not appear to be so, due to the pre-occupations of the actors and the observers. Passing through our spectacles the Divine light gets blurred and coloured. To get a truer view of the Divinity informing all our efforts we must cultivate a more detached view of things and not be swayed by selfish considerations. Humanity searches unconsciously for an ultimate goal, but in the absence of this non-attachment, this supra-mundane poise, that goal appears as a philosopher's stone—a magical thing that will turn everything into gold or things of mundane value; and lucre hides the face of truth—**'हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्'**. The *Ishopanishad* realized this tendency to which humanity is heir to, and hence it advised thus :

> Cover with Divinity all these transient things of this evanescent world. By such a non-attachment do thou enjoy. Off with this greed, for does wealth really belong to anyone?

One illustration will suffice to show what fools we make of ourselves when the true goals are pushed out of view by greed. Let us turn to nationalism. It is supposed to stand for certain well defined ideas and ideals and certain geographical boundaries and racial traits. But on closer scrutiny it reveals nothing more than organized selfishness; the idealism that persists, does so in spite of this nationalism and not because of it. For instance, a section of humanity calls itself a nation; but through colonization, immigration, emigration, invasion, conquest, trade, commerce, and education, it soon loses its racial homogeneity. Its ideas and ideals, too, undergo constant changes till they lose any distinctiveness. None the less, as days roll by, unity through outer conformity is insisted on so that the nation may be a strong instrument of offence and defence for acquiring and retaining more and more of the comforts of this world.

It is no exaggeration, then, to say that human society is at present drifting aimlessly down the stream of self-seeking. It has its arts, sciences, philosophies, and religions—but they are not in touch with the real core of life since they are not in touch with Reality either in Its immanence or transcendence. By denying Reality which is the origin, basis, and goal of life, humanity is engaged in a mad pursuit of building systems which crush under their own weight and smother their creators. All our learning, all our civilization, all our culture avail nothing against the dead weight of this inert unreality. All the wealth hoarded and all the natural beauties vouchsafed cannot remove the poverty of our souls. All the education imparted and all the poetic inspiration granted cannot fill our imagination with a sense of bliss and freedom.

The present ailment of the world reminds us of the story of Nârada and Sanatkumâra as told in the *Chhândogya Upanishad*, and the solution, too, is found there. Nârada approaches Sanatkumâra with a view to getting rid of his mental dissatisfaction which haunts him in spite of his high culture. Says he,

'Sir, I have read the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Sâmaveda, the Atharvaveda which is the fourth, histories and mythologies which are the fifth, grammar, the modes of satisfying the manes,

mathematics, the science of natural phenomena, economics, logic, politics, the ancillary Vedic literature, physics, the science of war, astronomy, the science of snakes, and music. But, sir, learned though I am, I am simply a trader in words; I do not know what I really am. But I have heard, sir, from people like you, that Self-knowledge removes sorrow. Such as I am, I am deep in misery. Sir, kindly lead me across this ocean of misery.'

Sanatkumâra leads his disciple step by step to the highest knowledge where the latter realizes that his puny self is none other than the cosmic Self. He is also taught that partial views always lead to misery—it is the universal view that makes one happy: 'That which is Infinity, is indeed bliss; there can be no happiness in limited things, Infinity indeed is happiness' (*Chhândogya Upanishad*, VII. i—xxvi).

This mad world must now be weaned from its vain search for the philosopher's stone, which has given it only a false philosophy of searching for sordid ends and left it with a stone—mere machines and plans which can give neither life nor light but can only smother them and cover the Light. The world must now retrace its steps to where the quest started from—the quest for immortality, the quest for that by 'getting which all other gains look smaller, and being established in which one is not perturbed even by the greatest calamity' (Gita, VI. 22).

People are chary of talking and thinking about fundamentals, and yet in everyday talk and deed how invariably we spin round fundamentals! Do we not make 'sweeping generalizations'? Do we not insist on 'principles'? Do we not take for granted certain 'axioms'? Do we not accept certain things as 'brute facts'? May be, we do so unknowingly. All that is required for a better order of things is to do so knowingly. And this is what is meant by saying that we must be acquainted with basic truths or that we must define our goals more clearly. For it is to this goallessness that all the modern ailments can be traced. And, as we have shown, the real goal, the lasting goal can be nothing short of Infinity or Reality that should inform all the partial adumbrations, for partial views we shall continue to have so long as humanity does not progress spiritually. The difference between the old, halting, and goalless progress and the future intelligently directed progress will be that in future we shall readily acknowledge our drawbacks and not have recourse to sophistry and self-hypnotism. There can be no peace on earth till the goal is visualized as the progress of humanity as a whole and not of mere *Christian humanity*, or Western humanity. And the progress should have a direction—a direction towards Infinity and Reality and not towards self-aggrandizement and planned propaganda for hypnotizing the proletariat and the backward races.

IV

These two ideas are important-Infinity and Reality. We have dealt with the former idea to some extent. Our main concern here is with the second. Our goal is Ultimate Reality which is also Infinity. But both Reality and Infinity admit of degrees of manifestation in the phenomenal plane, and a realistic outlook is that which never neglects the modicum of Truth manifested in each stage. All individuals and societies are evolving in their own way towards the fullest manifestation of the Divinity in them. And each manifestation is a partial revelation of the Ultimate, all-comprehensive, and all-transcending truth which is Infinity. Thus in the matter-of-fact world we talk of the genius of a people, of cultural levels, racial bias, and national goals. Any true plan must take into consideration not only these partial manifestations, tendencies, and possibilities, but it must also relate these with the ultimate universal goal. Besides, development must be from within, for freedom

alone can lead to freedom while slavery perpetuates slavery. Each group must forge its own destiny in consonance with universality. This does not, however, mean that all outside help and co-operation should be eschewed; on the contrary it presupposes contact with the outside at all possible points; only that help or co-operation should not be a subterfuge for domination—economic, political, cultural, moral, or spiritual; and the acceptance must not be mere imitation, but conscious assimilation according to need and capacity.

In India, for instance, we seldom take a realistic outlook. As is natural with a downtrodden nation, we either run after foreign ideas and institutions with the self-abandon of an upstart or reject them with the flourish of an aristocrat who has nothing left but the memory of a bygone prosperity. And foreigners, too, think that what is good for London or New York is equally good for Calcutta or Bombay, and they curse us when we either do not accept their plans or cannot use them to any advantage. Thus all our talks about the future seem to be carried on in a very unreal atmosphere.

Then there is the absence of a true appreciation of the possibilities of a race. If a race has fallen down or if it has not evolved to the extent that other more fortunate races have done, it is inferred that the race is doomed to be always so. How often we forget that it is hardly possible to apply the same standard of judgement everywhere! One race may produce military geniuses, others may bring out men of sterling worth in art, science, philosophy, or religion. The only standard of judgement that should be applied in such cases is the goal towards which these races are progressing. If they stagnate where they are, if they refuse to look beyond their national and cultural borders, if they do not evolve consciously towards Infinity and help others to do so, they must be pronounced as having failed in their mission and sooner or later they are bound to come to grief and bring misery on others. This is true of the aggressive nations as well as the submissive ones; for if the aggressors prostitute their national gifts for exploiting others, the oppressed people are no less guilty in so far as they tempt others to do so. And so the whole world suffers from a want of realism and idealism—a lack of proper appraisal of the world as it is and an ignorance of the true goal towards which each human group should advance.

And thus we return to the point from where we started: The modern world is mad after the philosopher's stone, though it does not know what it actually is; and its mad search for it continues interminably, though it has it in part already. In the absence of a clearly recognized and universally accepted goal to guide the way and proper acquaintance with the nature of the problems it has to deal with, modern society is like a lurching boat without a compass in a stormy sea and with heavy goods arranged haphazardly and jostling against one another. The irrationality and discomfort of the situation often compell some leaders to accept any goal that appeals for the moment to make for any bit of solid land, rocky or arid though it be, that looms in the horizon; some begin planning and philosophizing like idle dreamers, while others, in their frenzy, do not care so much for the distant land but turn everything in the boat topsyturvy with the slogan 'make it or mar it'.

In fact, modern society suffers from what may be called a split of personality. It is either too idealistic or too realistic. Thus our leaders of thought and action either specialize in forging empty systems of philosophy—the creations of frenzied imagination or inflated intellect which have no touch with either spiritual fundamentals or mundane actualities; or they make scientific discoveries and achieve wonderful feats of engineering without knowing how to correlate them to life's goal. For systems cannot surely inspire men to higher

achievements, and discoveries cannot remove the poverty of souls. The result is that through a search for the philosopher's stone, the philosophers come across philosophies—empty and misguiding plans and systems, and the men of action get only stones—lifeless institutions and missiles of death! The remedy lies not in a more intensified aimless search, but self-collected meditation, not in a hankering for achieving something, but prayer for a higher light.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA: THE SAVIOUR OF THE FUTURE

By Swami Nikhilananda

Everywhere in the universe one sees unceasing activity. All objects, animate and inanimate, are active. Even such apparently inert things as stones and rocks are in reality arenas of activity. Space itself, according to science, is vibrating.

Man is restless. Whether awake or asleep, he is never inactive. The action of the heart and lungs does not stop in sleep. The mind functions in dreams. The restless mind of man is always on the trail of new discoveries. Constant research is going on in the fields of art, science, medicine, religion, politics, and all branches of knowledge. A belief in progress sustains the workers in their fields of research. We flatter ourselves with the notion that we are creating a better and newer civilization. It is our objective to eliminate evil and multiply good. Some imaginative minds foresee a future when evil will be entirely eliminated and nothing but good will remain. We are told of the immense progress made in medicine. Surgery and drugs have minimized the chances of death, and men who a few years ago had no chance of survival are now given the joy of prolonging useless lives. The war hospitals are being filled with 'basket' cases. An idiot living in a backwoods district suffers from a brain ailment. He is flown to a big city and attended by the best surgeon. A brain tumor is located. By a successful operation he is saved from the jaws of death. We feel so proud of science. But with the help of the same science a bomb is dropped on a college campus and dozens of promising young men are blown to bits. Man is bewildered and asks himself whether the clock of progress really moves forward or backward.

Sometimes we wonder whether what is called progress is not, after all, like the figures one sees in the rotation of a kaleidoscope. To be sure, there is a change. The pattern produced may be new. But the number of glass pieces is fixed. Some thoughtful people believe that all the major improvements in human society in the fields of art, literature, ethics, music, mysticism, and even in what is known as the scientific method of thinking, were made twenty-five hundred years ago. Since then nothing of fundamental value has been added to human knowledge. Paul Deussen remarked that the last word in religion and philosophy had been uttered when the Hindu sages proclaimed, '*Tat tvam asi*' or 'That thou art', and that the efforts of subsequent philosophers and mystics had been confined to the restatement of that eternal truth in the language of their own times.

Eastern sages tell us that the sum total of the world's suffering and happiness always remains constant, though they may change positions. One thousand years ago Asia held high the torch of light and culture. Five hundred years ago the leadership changed hands and it was taken up by Europe. Now, again, it is changing position. Darkness seems to be settling over the once illumined countries of Europe.

Some of the great scientists of the nineteenth century gave a mechanistic interpretation of the universe and thought that there was no purpose behind evolution or the cosmic process. Lifeless particles of matter, operated by non-intelligent force or energy, created the various objects of the world. A Christ or an Alexander, a Beethoven or a gangster, a Plato or a common man, were only chance productions of atoms by the action and reaction of energy. To try to find out a purpose or goal of evolution was wishful thinking. It was a projection of our pet fancies. If that is so, then life is meaningless, and so also is all human effort. If everything passes away, leaving nothing behind, if the universe itself will one day explode and disappear into a vast nothingness, then all our talk of culture, philosophy, science, and civilization is no more meaningful and significant than the braying of a donkey, and the Creator, if there be any, is the most cruel jester.

Yet the professed goal of science is the discovery of truth; of ethics, happiness; of aesthetics, beauty; and of religion, life everlasting. The actions of thoughtful men everywhere are characterized by the desire to promote brotherhood, fellowship, freedom, and the all-round happiness of all. Without such incentives life remains meaningless. The contemplation of these ideals and the striving to realize them, distinguish rational men from animals who are guided by instinct.

Frequent wars and other manifestations of man's greed, passion, selfishness, and cruelty make one feel that the average man of today is no nearer to the realization of high ideals than his forbears of three thousand years ago. The sum total of good and evil seems to remain a fixed quantity; so also the sum total of happiness and unhappiness. Evil has aptly been compared to chronic rheumatism, which only shifts its position in a patient's body, but never leaves the victim.

Plato often spoke of an ideal world, in contrast to this sense-perceived one, which he described as a world of shadows. He gave the vivid illustration of a cave in which a man is seated with his back to the door. His hands, feet, and the rest of his body are firmly fastened with chains, and he cannot move even in the slightest manner. A fire burns behind him outside the cave. The prisoner is constrained to keep looking ahead at a blank wall on which constantly flit the shadows cast by moving objects on the high-road passing by his subterranean room. He sees only the shadows, and never the real objects on the road. This is his fate from birth to death. Naturally he regards shadows alone to be real and never suspects the existence of the real things. It is the only world he lives in, and he has no way of knowing of the existence of any other world as long as he remains shackled to his seat and cannot turn around. Plato pointed out that our life on earth may be compared to that of the man imprisoned in the cave. The beauty, peace, freedom, love, happiness, and truth that we cherish in this phenomenal world are only so many shadows. We are shackled to the earth by the chains of ignorance. We are constrained to look only in one direction. The true counterparts of these shadows exist only in an ideal world which remains unknown to us as long as we dwell enchained in the cave. They can be realized in that ideal world alone.

Christ preached the kingdom of heaven, which alone is the abode of true happiness, peace, and blessedness. He contrasted this kingdom with the kingdom of Rome, the only kingdom that seemed real to the people of that time. He further pointed out that the kingdom of heaven is within every man. He was as sure of its existence as we are of our sense-perceived world.

The Hindu philosophers speak of Satchidânanda as the goal of human life. But that Absolute Reality, Knowledge, and Bliss cannot be related to our universe of time, space, and causation.

It is a supra-conscious experience attainable by man while living in a physical body. The Upanishads say that if a man knows this Reality here in this life, then alone does he abide in the saving Truth. Otherwise there awaits him great destruction. Further, we learn from the Upanishads that whatever is here is there also, and whatever is there is here also. He who sees a difference between here and there goes from death to death. The Hindu philosopher emphatically declares that the Ultimate Reality, which is of the nature of peace, blessedness, and infinity, is the inmost essence of man and can be attained through a mind endowed with self-control and contemplation. The calm soul is blessed with the supersensuous vision of this Reality.

In spite of all our frustrations and disappointments, we refuse to give up these ideals. They form an integral part of our very life and being. Is the realization of these ideals a mere speculation, or can it be verified by direct experience? Has the attainment of perfect peace, freedom, and blessedness been realized in actual life?

In the course of evolution, a few souls, it seems, have gone ahead of the rest of humanity. They seem to have attained the goal of evolution. They are our elder brothers and our pathfinders. Through their lives and actions they have demonstrated the realization of truth and the possession of life everlasting. They have reached the goal which we, too, shall certainly reach as the consummation of our evolution.

When men attain the state of perfection, they see this world in quite a different light through their new eye of wisdom. Compared to these great souls, we are like caterpillars, ugly in appearance, crawling on the earth, nibbling at the leaf, and leading a drab and uninteresting life. And they are the butterflies, radiant with all the colours of the rainbow, lighting on the flowers and sipping honey. We are like timid fledglings living in the dark prison of the nest and fed from the mouth of the mother bird. These blessed souls are like full-grown eagles, joyous and free, and challenging with their strong wings the roof of heaven. They are moths that fly in the light, whereas we still flutter in darkness.

They form the vanguard of evolution. They have blazed trails for us. Their lives are pointers to the rest of mankind as to its destination. To us, weary and confused travellers, they shine like the pillar of smoke by day and the column of fire by night. Theirs is the steady light of the pole-star, and if we follow in their footsteps we shall never become disoriented. We learn from their experience that freedom, blessedness, and immortality are self-evident truths and the common heritage of man.

Their lives are the actual demonstration of religion. In their steep ascent through the strait and narrow path they leave behind all the unnecessary burdens of worldly desires and possessions. In order to walk through the rarefied air of high altitudes, they strip themselves of all unnecessary things and carry with them only their naked souls. Their lives illustrate the reality of God and the illusoriness of the world.

These souls, rare though they are, have been born in all countries and societies. They have been nourished by all religions. No faith or society can lay exclusive claim to them. The very nature of their transcendental experience lifts them above the forms and rituals of organized religions. They have been worshipped from time out of mind as Prophets, Saviours, Incarnations, and God-men. Whenever virtue declines and wickedness rules society, we see the advent of such a soul, whom God uses as His instrument for the vindication of truth and the chastisement of unrighteousness.

Krishna, Buddha, Moses, Christ, and Mohammed—to mention only a few of them have been recognized as representing the goal of man's evolutionary process. Though living far apart from

one another in time and space, they have prescribed in essential matters the same disciplines for the unfoldment of man's higher life. They bear a striking family resemblance. Having realized for themselves peace and blessedness, they have shown us the way to the realization of these ideals. History teaches us that the society which produces such souls enriches human culture and possesses an enduring value. But the society that is not conducive to the birth of such souls perishes.

More than any other country, India has given birth to these pillars of spiritual culture. The firmament of India has always been lighted by such luminous orbs. The latest one to vindicate India's time-honoured spiritual heritage was born slightly over a hundred years ago. Within fifty years of his passing away, his influence has spread to all the civilized countries of the world, and his life has become a source of inspiration to tens of thousands outside the land of his birth. The spiritual culture of India for the last three thousand years has been incarnated through him, and the spiritual aspiration of the three hundred millions of Hindus has found expression through his experiences and words. Shri Ramakrishna is indeed the Saviour of our time and serves as the beacon light for the next onward movement of man's evolution.

WHAT CAN VEDANTA MEAN TO AMERICANS ?*

By Denver Lindley

The subject of this talk is: 'What can Vedanta mean to Americans?' And the answer I propose to give is that Vedanta can help us to understand, increasingly, the meaning of life. I should like to begin by considering what we mean by 'the meaning of life'. It is not something that can be expressed in a sentence or wrapped up neatly in a formula. It is and must be, as the teachers of Vedanta have always insisted, something learned through first-hand experience. It has to be realized. And so the search for meaning must begin as a process of training for the individual.

Let us be quite clear about this. What we can know depends on what we are. This can be seen easily enough in the case of creatures more limited than we are For instance, it is no good discussing a sunset with an oyster. There are no sunsets in an oyster's world. It is no good, really, discussing a sunset with a dog. A dog, as Pavlov's experiments proved, cannot see colours. He lives in a world of blacks and whites and greys, and so your enthusiasm for the beauties of Nature would simply seem foolish to him. All this we can understand without difficulty; but it is hard for us to believe that *we* may suffer from similar limitations. If, in this world in which there is so much suffering and evil and in which the future looks so dark, we find persons who retain their serenity and even cheerfulness, we leap to the conclusion that they can do so only by ignoring facts that are clear to us. It does not easily occur to us that they may be in contact with a force of such transcendent loving-kindness that in it all suffering is neutralized and all evil underspanned. Just as the dog might say to us, 'Where is this thing you call colour? I don't see it,' we are tempted to say, 'Where is this force? I have eyes, and I don't see it.'

And so, if we are interested in meaning, Vedanta directs us to look first at ourselves, to begin our search with our own minute-to-minute experience. Let me use a figure of speech. And I should

* Digest of a talk given at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York.

like to point out parenthetically why figures of speech are so important when we are dealing with ultimates. A figure of speech is a sort of warning sign: it advertises the fact that what is said must not be taken literally. If one uses abstract philosophical language, there is the temptation to believe that what is said may be precisely accurate. But anything that we can say about ultimates is not more than an approximation. And so all statements, all philosophies, all religious creeds are only figures of speech in disguise. To get back to our figure of speech, this attempt is like an enormously complex chess game. At first we are not sure that the game has any rules. The moves we make are random moves and we play lethargically and inattentively. We fail to see the connection between what we do and what happens in and to us. Later, when our play has become more apt and rapid, we gain an understanding of some aspect of the rules (what we have come to call the moral law) and we think that now we can easily win. But as the play continues and we find each move of ours matched by the perfect counter-move, we realize that winning is not the sense or point of this game. The point, we begin dimly to perceive, is growth. And later still, we come to realize that the enormous and infinitely patient intelligence opposite us has our development at heart, that the Living Law is a law of love.

This fact was very beautifully expressed by Swami Turiyananda when he said that in spiritual development there is a kind of watershed or dividing line, and until one reaches that line, everything seems to happen by law; after one has passed it, everything is seen to have happened through Grace—and the two things are the same. Interestingly enough, Arthur Eddington expressed the same thought. He said that he believed that the era of natural law might be a short one. This statement puzzled many people. It need not have. Eddington did not mean that natural law would turn out to be invalid; he simply meant that the total process would in time be seen to be teleological—that is, purposive in all its aspects.

If, then, we are subject to a law of growth, what practical consequences can we draw for our own behaviour? The first obvious one is that making ourselves comfortable is not the point of life, nor can we afford to devote our best energies to it. The second point is that we cannot escape the consequences of the game by refusing to play. If it is our move and we do nothing, just as in a chess game, the hands of the clock move on, and at the end of the allotted period we are assumed to have played. The game goes on, but our position is compromised.

There is another and most important implication of this discovery. Our present experience is not all; it is a cross-section of a far larger reality, which we as yet are unable to perceive. In the words of Heraclitus: 'Here we are as in an egg.'

Meaning, we may be sure, can be found if we really want to find it. The universe will precisely meet our powers of intelligent interest—and this is true whether the quality of mind brought to bear be that of a Newton or that of the village idiot. But it is important for us to pause and inquire how much meaning we want and how much we can stand. Somewhere beneath the conscious level we know that the apprehension of meaning spells the end of irresponsibility and we spend much time and ingenuity in blinding ourselves to meaning and in fleeing from it. We cannot have it both ways: we cannot sedulously disregard significance nine-tenths of the time and then have it available on those occasions when we need reassurance, though this in fact is what we should like to do.

We live in a world in which there is no doubt, no chance, no accident. The full meaning of this is more than staggering, it is unbearable to creatures at our level. The pressure of full meaning is far more than we could

stand. Only by patient training can we learn to apprehend the partial insights that are open to us. But of this we may be assured: there is no shortage of meaning—and no ending to it.

Vedanta does not demand that anyone should begin with a full set of beliefs or a confession of faith. If you come saying, 'I don't believe in God,' or if you say, as most of us have done at one time or another, 'I don't know whether God exists,' no one will shake his head at you. The teacher of Vedanta will say, 'This is something you must find out for yourself. The only thing that matters is that you should be interested in finding out.' Allow me to use another figure of speech. We are like children born in an inland town. We have never seen the ocean. Our parents, perhaps, have never seen the ocean. In this town there is argument and dispute as to whether such a thing as the ocean exists. Some say that the stream that flows through the town empties eventually into the ocean. Others say that it runs out into the desert and disappears into the ground. And those who occasionally come to the town, those who have seen the ocean with their own eyes, have the strangeness of far places about them, and we do not know whether to believe what they say. But these travellers do not ask us to accept their word alone. They say that we, too, can see the ocean if we choose. It is, they report, a long and arduous journey. It will require all the strength we have all we have, but no more than that. And they say, if we make the journey resolutely, before we come in sight of the ocean, we shall encounter many proofs of its existence. The river will move beneath us in response to the ocean tides. Salt air will come to our nostrils, and we shall hear the distant thunder of the surf.

'Very well,' we may say, 'this interests me. I am willing to take the first step or two and see how it goes. But I need help. Where can I find it?' And here, if what we say is true, if we really want help, we learn an important part of the rules of the game—that there is a spiritual law of supply and demand. It works with unfailing, mathematical precision. Demand, a genuine demand for help, whether outwardly expressed or not, is always met. We may not recognize or like the answer when it comes, but come it will. We may expect a sage to knock at our door, whereas help may be offered by Samuel Hall, the man who lives next door. And we say, 'Surely I deserved a more distinguished messenger than this.' Needless to say, the thing to do is to accept the help and see what happens then. For to the degree to which we are able to avail ourselves of assistance when it is offered, to just that degree more help will be given.

Now all this that we have been talking about is what is commonly and properly known as a philosophy of life, and one may ask, 'Why not choose a philosophy of life from our own Western tradition? Then if it needs additional illustration, turn if you like to the East for ancillary support.' The answer to this question is that no such comprehensive philosophy of life can be found at present in the West. Philosophy, in the academic meaning of the word, abdicated after Aristotle. It has become more and more divorced from life—and the philosophy that is not constantly illustrated in the lives of its followers is valueless. More and more, academic philosophy has become doubtful of itself. It is obsessed with epistemology—the problem of knowledge. It stands in a corner wringing its hands and saying, 'I can never know reality.' Vedanta has never suffered from this failure of nerve. Its answer has always been: 'Get rid of the self that cannot know Reality; your true Self can know Reality because it *is* Reality.'

The churches have been scarcely more helpful. And here I must emphasize that I am speaking simply for myself. An Eastern Vadantist with his beautiful

charity and perfect courtesy towards our Western institutions, would not say this. But I have been brought up in the Christian tradition and so probably have most of you, and we know its limitations. On one hand, the attitude of most churches is cringing. They say, 'Give us your material support and a few minutes of your time on an occasional Sunday, and we will make no further demands on your busy and important lives.' This is neither religion nor philosophy. I hesitate to say what it is. On the other hand, the church in which spiritual training is still a living tradition, though a feeble one, makes such demands upon the credulity of its members that it is becoming increasingly difficult for intelligent persons to belong to it.

Let us look more closely at our terms. The statement of meaning that we are now approaching is not *a* philosophy of life, it is *the* philosophy of life. It is what has been called the *Philosophia Perennis*, the Eternal Doctrine. It is important to realize that this doctrine is called 'eternal' not because it is very old, but because it may be and is being constantly rediscovered. Statements of it are to be found in every age and among many nations. First, and perhaps most clearly, in Vedanta, then in the Tao Teh Ching in China, the Platonic Dialogues, the Book of St. John, Plotinus, Dionysius the Areopagite, the Persian Sufis, and the Medieval and modern mystics, East and West.

This Eternal Doctrine can be known in its pure form only in the act of contemplation. Formulation of it by the intellect is at best a pale indication of one of its aspects. For purposes of reference, however, I shall give a simple formulation, with the warning that it bears somewhat the same relation to the *Philosophia Perennis* itself that an X-ray photograph bears to a living being:

1. There is a divine ground in which the phenomenal world inheres and without which this world of names and forms would not exist.

2. It is possible to know this divine ground, not simply through hearsay and conjecture, but directly.

3. There are two aspects of man's nature: one is transient, not wholly real; through the other, man participates in the eternal ground.

4. The purpose of life is to achieve identification with the eternal aspect of one's nature—thus realizing what is called in the East liberation and enlightenment and in the West the unitive knowledge of God.

To some, this Eternal Doctrine seems the hope of the world. It is highly unlikely that any of the established religions can gain acceptance by people everywhere. The obstacles are too great. But anyone who has glimpsed the *Philosophia Perennis* within the framework of any religion will realize kinship with those who have seen it within the framework of any other.

Most people, but not all, find they need in addition to this simple statement, this 'minimum working hypothesis' as Aldous Huxley has called it, a more complete cosmology, a more detailed frame of reference. This really serves as a sort of master map which will show just how our special interests and experiences are related to one another. If it is any good, this map will have a place for everything. If you have a special interest in embroidery or gardening or non-Euclidian geometry, or a special affection for your husband or son or humanity, you can take this to your master map and see just how the special interest can be related to all other interests. Such a master map or frame of reference is supplied by the Vedantic cosmology.

It gives a clear and comprehensive picture of the majestic drama in which each of us has a part to play. Nor are our parts those of supernumeraries. Each is vital to the whole. By how much you go forward or regress, by just so much does the universal scheme

advance or halt. There is no private salvation.

We can, however, each one of us, win assurance in this life. We can, if we choose, know Reality—the timeless, the eternal. We can do this because Reality lies within us as well as without. The Âtman is Brahman. It is possible to reach the point at which the spirit, rising from its base of immanence to its apex of transcendence, becomes a clear flame.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE PRACTICAL REASON ACCORDING TO THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

By Prof. S. N. L. Shrivastava, M.A.

In the second chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita we read that Bhagavan Shri Krishna, after having spoken to Arjuna the quintessence of the metaphysical knowledge (*sânkhya*), proceeds to teach him the Yoga of the Intelligent Will (*buddhi-yoga*). From the *Critique of the Pure Reason*, we may say, adopting the Kantian phraseology, he proceeds to discourse on the *Critique of the Practical Reason*. Spiritual life is not simply the intellectual assimilation of ideas, but a direction or habit of the Will. a Discipline of the Practical Reason.

From the fortieth verse onwards in the second chapter of the Gita, Shri Krishna outlines the cardinal principles or 'imperatives' of his Critique of the Practical Reason. The following are the three most important imperatives :

(1) The very first thing that Shri Krishna emphasizes is to make oneself strong in the consciousness that 'no effort in spiritual life is ever lost, nor will it ever bring an undesired result. Even if one's spiritual effort is not considerable, it will not be without significance and will save him from much disaster.' Without such a strong conviction, nobody could ever make, or would ever have the inclination to make, any spiritual progress. When life holds all around the spectacle of right worsted and wrong triumphant, of the cruel happy and the righteous unhappy, it needs a heroic heart to have the robust faith

> that somehow good
> shall be the final goal of ill.

Shri Krishna realizes the danger of 'the good Will' being paralysed by the bleak pessimism which the seemingly adverse circumstances of life are ever apt to engender in man. Once the 'good will' is paralysed, the prospects of the ascent to a higher life are marred for ever. The first cardinal principle in Shri Krishna's Critique of the Practical Reason is to strengthen the Will always by the thought

> नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
> स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥*

If the essence of the above principle be expressed in a somewhat Kantianized language, it would take some such form as this : *Will always the right and the good, so that the maxim of thy actions shall always be thy unassailable conviction that a good deed is never lost, but remains a permanent spiritual gain.*

(2) The second principle of discipline is the practice of keeping the Will always one-pointed, riveted to the pure spiritual Ideal alone, and not allow it to be 'many-branched'. Shri Krishna exhorts us to save ourselves from the subtle seductions of the several false or pseudo-spiritual ideals, such as (*a*) the tendency to be too much scripture-minded or Veda-minded as the Gita puts

* The translation is given above, within quotations, under (1).—Ed., P.B.

it; (*b*) the desire for heaven; and (*c*) the longing for enjoyment and love of power. Such ideals are antagonistic to the true spiritual ideal. The full import of Shri Krishna's condemnation of the 'Vedist pedant' (*veda-vâda-ratah*) is, I believe, oftener missed than grasped by the readers of the Bhagavad-Gita. None the less, it is of such an importance that in speaking about the seductive distractions, Shri Krishna mentions it first. Shri Ramakrishna sought to convey the same idea when he said that the *granthas* (books) are *granthis* (knots). 'Cease from an inordinate desire of knowing,' says St. Thomas a Kempis, 'for therein is much distraction and deceipt.' The need for guarding against the 'distractions' of unduly occupying oneself with scripture-learning and scriptural text-torturing has been emphasized by all teachers of the spiritual path, and Shri Krishna is no exception. Says he, 'It is only when thy scripture-tossed mind (*shruti-vipratipannâ buddhih*) tranquillizes and gets immovably fixed in *samâdhi* that thou can'st attain Yoga' (Gita, II. 53). How we forget that the scripture was made for man, not man for the scripture! The knowledge of the Vedas, says Shri Krishna, pertains to the realm of the three *gunas*, but the Goal of the spiritual aspirant is to go beyond this realm. 'To the wise man of Self-realization, the whole bulk of the Vedas is of as little significance as a small pool of water is to a region filled with water all around' (Gita, II. 46). Not a few are there in whose minds the knowledge of the Vedas creates a subtle pride in their spiritual superiority. The self-complacent religiosity of these persons is most pitiable.

The desire for heaven and the desire for power and pelf are other distractions of the mind which detract men from the path of true spirituality.

Shri Krishna's second maxim of the Practical Reason may thus be expressed: *Will always and solely the realization of the* Âtman, *and be not distracted by the desire for pleasures, heavenly or earthly.*

(3) The third principle of *buddhi-yoga* is action without the desire of the fruit thereof, action in the spirit of dedication to God. This is the ideal of *nishkâma karma*, the most notable doctrine of the Bhagavad-Gita. To dedicate all one's actions to God is tantamount to dedicating one's entire life to Him and is the high-water mark of a consecrated life. Nothing for personal gain, everything as an offering unto Him. Thus can one have 'inaction in action'. Thus can one act and not be bound by the consequences of the act. Here is the maxim in Shri Krishna's own words: '*Let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached. Perform action, O Dhananjaya, dwelling in union with the Divine, renouncing attachments, and balanced evenly in success and failure*' (Gita. II. 47-48).

Shri Krishna exhorts us here to avoid the two extremes, the one of attachment to inactivity and the other of action with the motive of a personal gain. Inactivity is a moral and a spiritual failure inasmuch as it means non-participation in and non-furtherance of the cosmic plan of the Creator; action motived by personal gain is foredoomed to failure and frustration, for the world-process is designed to work out the cosmic plan and purpose of the Divine.

Unto His measure moveth the whole.

The individual is only the *nimitta-mâtram*. No one in this world could ever do great things or rise to great heights by making personal gain the motive of one's actions. The best minds only care to do the best things in the best manner they can. Bosanquet has rightly observed:

> What a man really cares about—so it seems to me—may be described as making the most of the trust he has received. He does not value himself as a detached and purely self-identical subject. He values himself as the inheritor of the gifts and surroundings which are focussed in him, and which it is his business to raise to their highest power. The attitude of a true noble, one in whom *noble*

sse oblige is a simple example of what *mutatis mutandis* all men feel. The man is a representative, a trustee for the world, of certain powers and circumstances. And this cannot fail to be so. For suffering and privation are also opportunities. The question for him is how much he can make of them. This is the simple and primary point of view, and also, in the main, the true and fundamental one. It is not the bare personality or the separate destiny that occupies a healthy mind. It is the thing to be done, known, and felt; in a word, the completeness of experience, his contribution to it, and his participation in it.[1]

It is often objected that the ideal of 'desireless action is an impossible and impractical ideal, for it is not possible in the nature of things to act without any desire whatsoever. Now, what the Gita insists upon is that *desire for personal gain* should not be the motive of our actions. It should be substituted by the 'desire for the welfare of the community' (*chikirshur lokasangraham*). It is the lower egoistic desires which have to be abandoned, not the higher benevolent ones. All right activity is marked by unselfishness and self-abnegation. It is a sad mistake to think, as many people do, that mere activism, mere 'getting on in the world' as they say, is Karma-Yoga. *Karma* it is, but not *Karma-Yoga*. The Gita is not an exponent of mere activism as such, but of self-abnegating and consecrated activism (*yogasthah kuru karmâni*). The Gita is primarily and essentially a *Yoga-shâstra*, a Gospel which teaches union with the Divine; and its teachings are of use only to those who are serious about this spiritual purpose in life. The whole philosophy of action of the Bhagavad-Gita has meaning and significance only for him whose fundamental aim in life is God-realization, whether he is a householder or a *sannyâsin*. Some students of the Gita think that its teachings do not permit anyone to become a *sannyâsin* and insist on everybody remaining in the world. Such an inference, however, is hardly warranted by the texts of the Gita. All that the Gita says is that the essence of real *sannyâsa* is not mere *karma-sannyâsa* or mere cessation of activity but *karma-phala-tyâga* or inwardly abandoning the desire for the fruits of actions. This is a lesson as much for the *sannyâsin* as for the householder. Here is no injunction against the order of *sannyâsa* as such. The insistence of the Gita on activity for *loka-sangraha* is also as much binding on the *sannyâsin* as on the householder. History bears witness to the fact that every great *sannyâsin* has done this. Whether one should become a *sannyâsin* or a householder depends on what he is better fitted to be to the maximum advantage to himself and to humanity. 'Each is great in his own place,' as Swami Vivekananda said. The whole question of what one has to be and one has to do must be viewed from the standpoint of one's *swadharma*. *Swadharma* is the central category in the ethics of the Bhagavad-Gita. Work becomes worship and action a consecration when one engages himself in performing his *swadharma* with no other consideration but this that it is his *swadharma* which he is commissioned by the Divine to perform for Him and for humanity, regardless of all consequences to himself. This is the cardinal principle of the Gita's philosophy of action. The important question, then, is, What is one's *swadharma*? *Swadharma* is one's supreme vocation in life determined by one's dispositional make-up (*swabhâva-niyatam karma*) and congenital endowments. It is action in the line of one's individual genius, so to say. To pursue one's *swadharma* selflessly and as an offering unto God and humanity is the *Karma-Yogic* path of union with the Divine.

[1] *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, p. 21.

DEMOCRACY IN CRISIS

By Pran Nath Bhatnagar, M.A.

Democracy is today faced with the gravest of crises it has ever known. Both as a form of Government and as a method of ordering society, democracy is challenged by alternatives which seem to threaten its very existence as a political and social creed. The crisis is thus twofold. As a form of Government it has to meet the growing menace of dictatorship, and as a method of ordering society it has to repel the furious onslaughts of communism. In the pages that follow an attempt is made to study the problem of democracy vis-a-vis dictatorship and communism.

Parliamentary democracy of the individualistic sort with its universal franchises was established in Europe soon after the first World War. But some ten years after in south-eastern Europe, in Italy, and Germany and throughout the progressively Europeanized world—in Japan and China, in Persia and Turkey, and in most of Latin America, dictatorship became the political order of the day. Dictatorship might be communistic as in the Russian Union of the Soviet Republics, or be nominally corporate as in Italy and Germany; but in either case it is clearly not democratic in the conventional meaning of the word. It is more akin to the Cæsarism of the ancient Roman Empire, or to the benevolent despotism which preceded the advent of political democracy. But it is more extensive and efficient than any of these earlier precedents. Unlike these, it has never associated itself with titled aristocracy and only exceptionally with royalty. Dictatorship is established in our own day by men of low origin, men who are adepts at swaying the multitude emotionally and at organizing fanatically devoted bands of supporters. Such a band by espousing a popular cause and employing violence acquires a privileged position in the State and then uses it to monopolize all the latest machinery for the manufacture of public opinion and thus ensuring a continuing pseudo-democratic acquiescence of the masses, civilian and military, for the actions of the dictator. All Government is in a way a subtle combination of the forces of fear and love. What the dictators do is that they increase the dynamics of this process. It is true that a spirit of democracy may still be manifest, but it is embodied in a disciplined minority party and not in the majority of free individuals. Thus it differs radically from the form of democracy which had been developed in the nineteenth century and which was universally adopted at the end of the first World War.

Everywhere the dictators have put suffrage on a class and occupational basis. Popular voting has been limited to occasional plebiscites as in Germany. Parliaments have been done away with and the broadened governmental powers have been assumed and arbitrarily exercised by one man and one party. That reaction should ensue so widely and so suddenly was indeed surprising. It seems that individualistic democracy has been but an unsuccessful attempt in the political history of mankind. The disillusionment and distrust in the principles and ideals which had characterized the enlightenment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been complete. Indeed, the very existence of political democracy as a political ideology is at stake. The phenomenal rise of dictatorship within ten years is nothing short of a revolution. One wonders as to how man's belief in his cultural inheritance came to be

shaken in so short a time. What are after all the causes of this somersault?

Individualism which had been the keynote of the enlightenment for two centuries was now eclipsed by both material developments and changing habits of mind. With the growth of industrialization and the multiplication of big machines, the individual lost his separate entity. He became a mere cog in mechanized agriculture or industry, performing a minor function in mass production. In his daily life he increasingly worked and lived and travelled about with crowds of fellows. Mass education and mass journalism and mass sport shaped and determined his mental make-up. Again being a social animal the individual could not resist the influence of social pressure and propaganda. And propaganda in the new age was directed towards enlisting as many individuals as possible in some sort of mass movement, socialistic or materialistic or both. The World War itself was a great factor in sounding the deathknell of individualism. It was a mass war far more than any previous war. It was a war which was won not by the genius of any single general but by superior production and co-ordination of military machines and popular propaganda. The World War singularly demonstrated the progress of industrialization, and shook the faith of the new age in the belief that technology would supplement and even augment the individualism of the enlightened.

Apart from the passing of individualism the first World War left a world economically and socially disintegrated. The new democracies which sprang up with the termination of hostilities, were handicapped by social and economic issues of the utmost gravity. And for the solution of these problems the new democracies had to rely upon parliaments whose members were not only inexperienced in the practical conduct of public affairs but were more often than not split up among mutually antagonistic political parties owing allegiance to programmes swinging from extreme feudalism to extreme socialism. Their failure to adapt democratic political procedure to new conditions convinced them that democratic principles involved anarchy incompatible with the vigorous organization required by the State. With this has grown a conviction that these principles destroy the unity of the State and the energy needed for action is dissipated in futile discussion. They declare that parliaments are overwhelmed with work so that rapidity of action is impossible for them. The average man is too incompetent and uninterested in the issues which face the world today, to have an effective opinion about them; whereas the technicality of modern problems means Government by the expert, and democratic methods are held to be irrelevant to his decisions. The failure of the new democracies may be due to the fact that they have not given political democracy a fair trial. It may also be due to differences in racial temperament and genius. Small wonder that enthusiasm for democratic Government waned so quickly and was succeeded by enthusiasm for some kind of strong-man rules. The protagonists of democracy believe that ultimately political democracy will prevail. Their sincere belief is that man cannot brook interference and restraints on his liberty for long, and sooner or later he will rise in revolt against this curtailment of his freedom. It might be that political democracy wins the day in the long run, but at present reaction against it is in full swing.

The other danger that stares democracy in the face is from communism, which is nothing more than extreme socialism. Communism means the dictatorship of the proletariat and the seizure and control of the means of production and distribution by the State in the interests of the masses. Democracy to the communists is an ideal incapable of realization until the power of property is overthrown. The ideal of democracy on the other hand, implies

private gain. Some hold that democracy and socialism are identical. This is rather true. Democracy is compatible with socialism in all its forms except those which like the communistic totally eclipse the individual by denying his self-regarding impulse and his desire to possess something of his own. In fact, if democracy is to remain and mean anything, individualism must survive.

The fact that modern democracy is confronted with the problem of property above all else is no cause for surprise. The problem is not merely a demand for their rights on the part of the unfavoured classes who at long last have become suddenly aware of their deprivation and suffering. It is not so simple as that. The crux of the problem is that the unfavoured classes have come to hold that democracy means the control by the middle classes of the population. How has this come about?

The middle classes were brought into power by the Industrial Revolution. They evolved a new form of State organization—capitalist democracy—most suited to afford them security in their new position. The basis of the industrial system, thus established, was the liberty of contract, a doctrine which could not be upheld for long. The capitalist held the reins of economic power in his hands, while the poor worker had nothing to fall back upon. On the other hand the capitalist had no idea of any obligation to those who worked for him. He was too much concerned with the attainment of his own profit. In his adherence to it he looked upon the State as the guardian of his interests and even maintained that any interference on its part would destroy civic rights.

The achievements of democratic Government during the nineteenth century were the grant of religious freedom and the extension of political equality. Yet these in no way provided a clue to the solution of the major social and economic issues, the results of purblind industrialism. The masses still remained poor, and power remained in the hands of a few rich men. The extension of the franchise, however, gave rise to a movement towards social and economic equality, a movement which received great impetus by the spread of doctrines like that of Karl Marx, the organization of the working classes into trade unions, and the anxiety of the political parties to enlist the goodwill of the worker who by virtue of his newly acquired right to vote was fast becoming a factor to be reckoned with in politics. In the early part of the twentieth century the fulfilment of the economic wants of the worker by the State was the central theme of debate. The minimum wage, the regulation of hours of work, legislations about health, unemployment, education, housing, and public utilities all represented the efforts of the State in this direction. But these efforts in no way gave equality to the worker, but only mitigated the worst consequences of unhampered industrialism. At best these efforts may be called the concessions made by capitalist democracy to the worker without in any way compromising its own economic supremacy.

The dilemma of parliamentary democracy was due to the fact that the class which dominated it could not meet the demands made upon it. The germs of future trouble were sown when capitalist democracy offered a share in political authority to all citizens on the assumption that equality involved in the democratic ideal did not mean economic equality. But this assumption was altogether untenable. The demand for equality in the economic sphere was a logical outcome of universal suffrage. The socialist creed thus grew out of democratic theory. The demand for economic equality struck at the roots of capitalist democracy, in that it meant the denial of the right of private profit, which the capitalist, who dominated it, was in no mood to forgo. The new class, the proletariat, sought to re-

organize the State in its own interests. In fact, the rise of a new class to political power meant social revolution and a re-orientation of economic power. This phase of the crisis is indeed very grave, because it strikes at the very foundations of democratic theory. A new society is emerging out of the confines of the old; but it finds the bounds of the old too tight to admit of easy outlet.

In the establishment of the communist regime in Russia the new class has secured a signal victory against representative democracy. Indeed the theory of the Russian experiment is the most complete challenge to the democratic principle. The Russian experiment has, however, produced its antithesis in various forms, the most striking of which is the fascist dictatorship in Italy. The underlying principle of fascism is the defence of the power of the middle classes against the onslaughts of the masses. It is the outcome of the realization that the trend of democracy is to fasten an increasingly heavy burden on the rich and the well-to-do. Thus the dictatorship it establishes is a deliberate attempt to mitigate this condition. There are, however, some who look upon dictatorship as the last resort of capitalism in its fight against communism.

In the Western democracies—in England and France—socialist legislation has been enacted, a fact which clearly shows that, despite his obsession for profit-making motive, the capitalist is fully alive to the gravity and magnitude of the attack from this quarter. The success of communism in the Western democracies and the dictatorship, in fact, in all capitalist countries would depend upon the wholesale conversion of the masses to the new ideology. It would depend upon a complete change of heart. And the Russian experiment is still only twenty years old while capitalist democracy has a long tradition of remarkable achievements at its back. Besides, communism is but a novel experiment and human nature is especially chary of novelties and is essentially conservative. Still, in spite of its infancy, the Russian experiment has given a new momentum to the agitation for social and economic equality not only in the Western democracies but also all over the world.

Whether democracy will emerge triumphant from the crisis is hard to say. The reason is not far to seek. The general temper of the world is one of profound distrust. The faith of the present age in the beliefs and standards of the nineteenth century has been completely shaken. Man's social and political and cultural ideas are in the melting pot. Disillusionment is discernible in art, literature, science, and religion. It does not end there. In the post-war period the contagion has spread to political and social spheres. In the political sphere, there is a strong reaction against parliamentary democracy as a form of Government. In the social sphere, an intermittent fight is going on between communism and capitalism. In Russia communism seems to be entrenched for ever and its success there has considerably strengthened communistic forces all over the world. In Germany and Austria communism failed after a precarious existence. Nationalist success in Spain has meant another defeat for it. Besides, the awakening of the democracies to the danger from communism is making the possibilities of a communistic revolution, as visualized by Karl Marx, remoter and remoter. As a result of the enactment of socialist legislation, the lot of the worker has now greatly improved; he is better fed and better housed than in Marx's time.

At present the deadliest war in the whole of human history is being fought out with the professed aim of making the world safe for democracy. But will force really decide an issue which lies in the world of the spirit, a conflict which is one of two opposite ways of living, a crisis which, in the ultimate

analysis, resolves into a struggle—virtual tug-of-war—between exaggerated individualism and an equally exaggerated cult of socialism? Annihilation and destruction threaten the human species from both sides. Over-emphasis on either is bound to lead to disaster, especially when it has been demonstrated that the democratic ideas and values of advancing industrialism have failed to cure the ills of the modern world. The solution of the human situation thus demands a synthesis between these two antithetical ideas, a just *milieu*, a middle path between these two extremes, in fine, a review and a restatement of the relations of the individual vis-a-vis society and *vice versa;* for it is only in a new awareness of the inter-dependence of personality and community, of individuality and sociality that mankind can feel its way forward.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA'S LIGHT

By Mrs. Earl H. Brewster

In May 1926 the sun blazed over the green lawns and trees where the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission were assembled at the Belur Math. The golden robes of Swamijis among white Brahmacharins moved over the lawns, among trees by the side of the swift river dotted with bright-sailed boats. White cows walked freely among the crowds assembled there, eating from anyone's hand. A spirit of joy and generosity reigned over the scene. Noble, dignified elders sat in state, around the abbot, Shivanandaji, dispensing courtesy and hospitality. Thousands were fed after *puja* at the temples of their teachers: Thâkur, Holy Mother (Ramakrishna's wife), Brahmananda, and Vivekananda. It was a living centre of good deeds, welcoming the needy. Among them moved savants and saints. M. who had recorded the words of Ramakrishna was there, his quiet reserve and direct knowledge were authority in themselves. In his white robes, with his long beard, his deep eyes of a teacher, he was a calm and benign figure.

The stars shining by night reflected in the river. People sat by its margin; Swamis whose lives had been spent in Himalayan solitude in research at Mayavati joined seekers from the West with quiet welcome, Virajananda among them; pilgrims who had wandered through Tibet, Akhandananda, among others, shared their experiences; teachers who had known wide travel, in other lands, Saradananda, and devotees joined the strangers.

On the roof, with the moon-light pouring down through the balmy night, young Swamis gathered with *esrâj* or *vinâ* singing *râgas* and hymns: the songs of Mira Bai, songs praising the Mother, the verses of Ram Prasad, hymns loved by Shri Ramakrishna. Their voices were young and sweet.

Pre-eminent among them was Miss Josephine MacLeod, a devoted friend of Vivekananda who with her sister, Mrs. Leggett, had been donor of many gifts. The generous spirit of Vivekananda descended on all those, who were touched by his love. It shone in calm splendour in Sister Christine and in the courageous strength of Sister Nivedita, years after her death.

The wide-reaching words of loving kindness are found among scholars patiently studying, translating, enriching life. The Madras Swamis have established schools that seem ideal, full of beauty, where those who thirst for knowledge may find it.

Out of one tiny coin the love in one Swami's heart has created the Ramakrishna Mission hospital in Benares whose good works are unending. Thus Ramakrishna's light shines on.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

To our Readers

Conversation with Swami Shivananda is a translation of a chapter of the Bengali book *Shivananda-vâni* . . . . Swami Nikhilananda is the President of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York and Mr. Denver Lindley is its Vice-president . . . . Prof. S. N. L. Shrivastava of Jubbulpore is already known to our readers . . . . M. Pran Nath Bhatnagar is a very welcome new contributor.

Higher Value of Science

Speaking to the members of the Science Association of a College in Madras, on the cultural value of science, Sir C. V. Raman made some very pertinent and thought-provoking observations. He regretted the misuse of scientific knowledge, and emphasized that science was essentially a cultural pursuit which could not be divorced from human values. He expressed his embarrassment at seeing scientific research being turned to the production of all types of wicked things at the present moment. We take the report as it appears in the *Hindu* :

> Sir C. V. Raman said that it was one of the fundamental duties of men of science all over the world to remember human values and refuse to allow their talents to be exploited for wicked purposes. . . . He personally believed that all the present troubles had arisen simply because of the 'misdirection of the fundamental activities of science'.

A more glaring instance of the unrighteous purposes for which science is used than the present war cannot be found. It is encouraging to find that a celebrated scientist has expressed himself against scientific cant and hypocrisy. Men of science joining hands with greedy politicians have made scientific knowledge responsible for a tremendous amount of human misery and suffering. But scientists are seldom willing to own this responsibility, and, instead, attempt to justify their action on grounds of wartime expediency and national self-defence.

> If science went on simply helping to multiply the weapons of destruction, men of science were to be held responsible. The time had come when thoughtful people should ask themselves as to what was going to happen to this world, and how they were going to pay more attention to cultural values.

Sir C. V. Raman has placed a higher ideal before the votaries of science. Scientists should change their 'exclusive' attitude. They should not remain content with technical research, but see that their discoveries are not misused. If the future generation of scientists would use their energy positively against the misapplication of science, that would bring back to science its lost glory and make the face of the earth brighter.

Science has done immense benefit to humanity. It has encouraged a spirit of modernism and a rational outlook in religion which has been shorn of fanatical orthodoxy. Science has a spiritual aspect too, in addition to its intellectual and material aspects. The well-known English scientist, Prof. A. V. Hill, observed that the pursuit of scientific knowledge, like the pursuit of virtue, should be regarded as an adventure of the human spirit. He also felt that science had a higher purpose in view than merely the achievement of material progress. The latter may be comparatively easier to attain, but is, no doubt, disastrous in its effect. Emphasis has to be laid on the spiritual aspect of science.

Less of Religion

That by reason of her religion, an excess of it, India had fallen upon a period of decline was the opinion expressed by the distinguished Chinese visitor to India, Dr. Lin Yutang, in an address

delivered at the Calcutta University. He is reported to have observed :

> Talking about religion, I think India has got too much of religion and can well afford to do with less of it. Religion is a part of your national genius. It is the one theme that runs uninterruptedly in Indian thought from the poets of the Rigveda and the teachings of the Buddha . . . . I admire these traits, yet I say India has got too much of religion and is suffering from an overdoze of spirituality.

We wish the learned Doctor had made his point more clear by showing in what respects India had suffered from an excess of religion and spirituality. He has, no doubt, expressed his considerable admiration for the religious life of Indians, and for their saints and seers. Those who think religion to be the cause of our weakness and suffering have always held a view of religion other than what it ought to be. Perhaps when the meaning of the word 'religion' is well defined, then we shall see that India has not suffered from but owes her survival to her religion. The popular notion of religion identifies it with local customs and social conventions. But these do not mean true religion which is the realization of the Divinity that is already in every man and woman. It is not right to revile religion associating it ignorantly with priestcraft, superstition, and dogmatism. Ethical theories, moral attitudes, and all that is good and great in human nature find their basis in the higher ideal of religion. A highly moralized society can alone produce the greatest saints. Holiness requires renunciation. Character is spirituality. Renunciation is not equivalent to laziness and defeatism; it is the voluntary determination to renounce the lower for the sake of the higher, the easy in favour of the difficult.

Ever since Western thought began to flow to India through Western thinkers and missionaries, our educated intelligentzia have persuaded themselves to assume a sneering attitude towards religion. Admirers of Russia have gone to the extent of thinking that that country has prospered because there is no religion there, and they prescribe a similar course for India. Communal bitterness and caste prejudices in India are invoked and exaggerated to show that religion is at fault. The point to be considered is what our friends are pleased to mean by religion. By all means an excess of a mere formal religion is bad. But no society has been known to suffer from an excess of virtue which is rare indeed. Christian nations are not said to have suffered from their religion, nor the Chinese from theirs, in spite of internecine wars. Is this because they have just the 'sufficient amount' of religion, while Indians suffer from 'too much' of it? In India social life is predominated by the religious outlook more than in other countries. This has been the saving factor of India, by keeping Indian civilization intact. Christian nations have little hesitation in subordinating their religion of self-denial and brotherly love to political or commercial expediency as the last War and the present one clearly show. It is clear that unless a nation is *saturated* with true spirituality, it is inclined, when the occasion comes, to throw it away in favour of self-interest.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE STARVING MILLIONS. By SANTOSH KUMAR CHATTERJEE. *Published by Asoka Library, 15, Shyamacharan Dey Street, Calcutta. Pp. 94. Price Re. 1-8 As.*

The recent famine in Bengal, of unprecedented severity, was, unlike other famines, due to causes other than failure or destruction of crops. This has led many persons to investigate the real causes of famine, and the Central Government have appointed a Commission of Enquiry. The book under review is a thought-provoking study of the causes of famines in India in former times, and the main causes of the Bengal famine

of 1943. The author seeks to arrive at his conclusions in a dispassionate way taking his stand on facts. A historical survey of famine conditions, as they occurred at various times since the time of Warren Hastings, and the measures taken by the Government lends an appropriate background to the study of the Bengal situation. The course of events in the administrative life of the province which finally led to the tragedy in Bengal are clearly narrated. The author quotes extensively from the statements of Government spokesmen and other leading public men in order to show the inconsistency involved and the unfortunate way in which the food situation in the province was handled. He thinks that the immediate cause of the Bengal famine has been export of food from the province when the provincial stock was below its requirements. As a remedy against a recurrence of such a famine he suggests a revision of the land-system regarding settlement and the way of crop production. The author's work is commendable.

TO THE HEIGHTS. By Nolini Kanta Gupta. *Published by the Culture Publishers, 63. College Street (1st Floor), Calcutta. Pp. 58. Price Re. 1-8 As.*

This clearly printed book is a collection of what may be called 'prose poems', poetic thought arranged in prose order. There are forty-six such pieces, the *leit-motiv* of each bearing upon one or other aspect of the sincere devotee's relation to the Supreme. The author has penned his stirring thoughts in sparkling language expressing a variety of spiritual moods. These were written at different times as the dates given show, and two of them have been translated from the original Bengali. His views on religious experience are liberal, and he offers his spontaneous prayers to the Divinity in its different manifestations as the Supreme Lord of the Universe, and as Mother in Her 'Gracious' as well as 'Terrible' forms.

ALLAHABAD UNIVERSITY STUDIES. *Published by Senate House, Allahabad.*

The book-let brought out by the Philosophy Section of the Allahabad University for the year 1943 contains a learned contribution by Prof. P. S. Naidu entitled 'On Regression'. It is a comparative and critical study of the theories of McDougall and Freud with the writer's original suggestions for the synthesis of the two.

The Education Section of the University has published a booklet containing a paper on 'Tests of Educability' by Dr. Bansi Dhar, treating of the modern methods of intelligence testing.

VISÂKHA-DATTA'S MUDRÂ-RÂKSHASA OR THE SIGNET-RING. *Translated into English by R. S. Pandit. Published by New Book Company, Bombay. Pp. xv+277.*

Mudrâ-Râkshasa or the Signet-Ring is a drama of seven acts written and staged for the first time about 400 A.C., i.e., during the reign of the Imperial Guptas. Chanakya is its hero and he fills practically the whole canvas of the picture presented by it. It is a story of how, by superior cunning and diplomacy, Chanakya baffled all efforts of Rakshasa, minister of the Nandas, to overthrow Chandragupta, and eventually won him over to the service of Chandragupta. It gives an idea of how the shrewd and resourceful mind of Chanakya worked, and also of his great mastery of the art of statecraft. Stripped of the Indian setting, it is a picture of what happens in most Western States under cover of diplomacy—spying, baiting, spreading false rumours, fostering fifth-columnism, and practising all manner of fraud and knavery. It is pertinent to note that the story of this drama is largely a practical application of Chanakya's theories of politics as enunciated in his famous treatise *Artha-shâstra.*

The translation has been happy and has not materially affected the basic character of the original. The atmosphere of a Sanskrit drama remains intact. The preface, the introductory note, and the postscript—all these have been a useful addition, for they provide a clue to the understanding of the Sanskrit drama and give the readers a wealth of relevant information.

The late Mr. R. S. Pandit, Congress leader, had the reputation of being a deep Sanskrit scholar. This book, coming after his earlier translation of *Râjatarangini*, enhances that reputation.