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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।”

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

ON THE PASSING AWAY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY SISTER NIVEDITA

I

28 August 1902

Dear Mrs H.,

Swamiji had been, as you have doubtless heard, very ill all winter. When we saw him here, after his return from Benares, I was shocked. Still one never thought that he would have died. There was so much for him to do. In that first meeting, he said he was going away, but he and we thought it would be to Japan, because a great man's tendency was to prepare his workers and then crush them by not (?) looking after them. Afterwards he went for a very severe cure, in which for the three hottest months, he was allowed to drink no water, and made to live only on milk. He became radiant looking, just as he used to be in London. All these months he was very insistent on getting the men up at half-past three or four for their plunge in the Ganges and meditation in the Chapel before dawn. But his nerves were utterly worn, and the improvement was mainly of the body. That and the wonderful divine light, which somehow never ceased to grow brighter and brighter, whatever might be the state of mind or nerves. The change began about ten days before the end. I came back eight days before, and he told me, 'I feel that I am drawing near to death, and a great austerity and meditation are coming upon me. I spend hours every day in the Chapel.'

As he spoke, a gecko, a sort of lizard, cried. People here have a superstition that whatever the gecko answers comes true, but I was so sure Swami had three or four years more at least, that I never dreamt of it. This was Sunday, and on Friday night he left us.

On Wednesday morning I went again, and stayed three hours. I think now that he knew I would never see him again. Such blessings! I cannot tell you. If I had only known! As it was, well as he looked, I was so full of the idea of the care he required that I introduced no topic lest it might agitate him, and I dreaded overstaying lest I should make him tired.

If I had only known, how precious every moment would have been, but oh, how unbearable ! And so I came away. On Friday, he sent word to Calcutta that he had never felt better. He was in the Chapel till noon, and then he gave a Sanskrit lesson to the boys for three hours, and talked to many people all the afternoon. At half-past four, his message reached Calcutta, he drank a cup of hot milk and water and set out on a two-mile walk. Coming home, he sent everyone away, that he might meditate alone, the evening meditation at sunset. And strange to say, quite contrary to our usual custom, he sat through that meditation facing the north-west. After an hour or so, he turned round and lay down, calling a boy to massage and fan him. Then he slept quietly.

Suddenly there was a trembling, a crying, as if in sleep, a heavy breath, then a long pause, another breath, and that was all. Our beloved Master was gone from us for ever. Life's even-song was over, earth's silence and freedom's dawn. How I long to serve him in some essential way, regardless of what comes of it. Glad if it be some terrible length that waits before us. Pray that I may have strength and faithfulness and knowledge, to do this, and ask no other blessing for me. I want no other. He is not dead, dear one, he is with us always. I cannot even grieve, I only want to work.

Lovingly yours,
N.

I

Calcutta
14 September 1902

Dear Miss M.,

On the Friday that he died, Swami seems to have been talking with old Calcutta friends, in that sweet way the people often do. He said to the boys, that very afternoon, 'If any man ever imitates me, kick him out. Do not imitate me.' But your real message came at the burning pyre itself. At two o'clock we stood there, and I said to Swami S., seeing a certain cloth covering the bed top, 'Is this going to be burnt ? It is the last thing I ever saw him wear.' And he offered it to me there, but I would not take it, only I thought 'If I could only cut a corner of the border for you.' But I had neither knife nor scissors, and the seemliness of the act would have been doubtful. So I did nothing. At six o'clock, as if I were twitched by the sleeve, I looked down, and there, safe out of all that burning and blackness there blew to my feet the very two or three inches I had desired out of the border of the cloth.

N.

III

Calcutta
16 July 1902

Dear Miss M.,

People suggest that I should write a life of Swami, but I think time must pass first. It must be so simple and so great, so full of the throb of India, and yet so unmistakably the story of an *Avatar*. But if you will tell me that you want it, I will begin any time. Do you understand how ideally great the last scene has been ? How even Swamis catch their breath and worship. Quietly to put the body down as a worn-out garment at the end of an evening meditation ! 'That will be a great death that I shall die, saying "Hara, Hara, Hara !"' I

remember his saying long ago. And it has come true. With the laurels green, with all things in order, with the shield undimmed, he went.

I think, don't you, that one of the marks which distinguishes great discipleship from poor, must probably be always the power of interpreting the impersonal, rather than the personal, side of the Master.

Everything is so different from what it was meant to be, and the monks are so sure that I ought to act differently, and yet I cannot do differently from this. How I wish I had direct guidance!

The Math is absorbed these days in weeping and worship and everyone intends to slip back under the hypnotism of things said in illness, don't you know? I feel enslaved and terrorized by the thought of it, but they will work out their own way for themselves.

Swami Saradananda wants all the money I can get to give a house on a piece of land to the Holy Mother. So, of course, I would like to hand over every penny I could. I think I must reserve something over my yearly allowance, because I still have so much to do to the house, and it would be unwise to leave this undone. I feel too that I must keep small sums for the women's work back for that purpose, even while I am cut off from the possibility of having women under my roof. And then I shall have to provide for travelling expenses, which must arise if I am to do anything at all.

I go next Saturday to Jessore for a few days lecturing.

Get well, for all our sakes, and the work's most of all. Keep our faith alive that this, and no other, is for us, that there is no unfaithfulness in doing the greatest right, and never can be.

Yours always.

N.

THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN CULTURE

BY THE EDITOR

After a long winter of centuries Indian consciousness is once more awake and is seeking to organize appropriate political and social forces to realize the dream of her seers, the dream, namely, of a civilization fully embodying in practice the vedantic principles of the divinity of man and unity of life. Freedom and equality slept for centuries on the social and political planes. They slept not really because of any lack of a liberal aim or spiritual idealism, but because India lay continually exposed to risks which threatened at times the very basis of her life and because racial and cultural problems of

every complexity and magnitude flung repeated challenges to her capacity for assimilation and synthesis. Above all they had to wait for lack of necessary conditions and suitable opportunities. Science and material means have now brought within our grasp the long-looked-for opportunity to fashion the image of a society in accordance with the historical aim of our culture. The hour for which India had been waiting has struck. It will be a tragic irony if the grand opportunity is converted into a terrible menace fatal to its fulfilment.

Yet it is easy to let the hour pass and

change the opportunity into a menace, for many who are to use the means in the service of the national aim do not seem to have clear views as regards the basic issues involved in a programme of national reconstruction. There is evidence, in many quarters, of intellectual confusion and, consequently, of vacillation in action. All manner of problems face the people, but the lack of an authoritative and universal principle informing plans and co-ordinating actions in the different spheres makes just and forthright decisions difficult. It is true that in the long run no attempt at national reconstruction will succeed which runs counter to the national genius and its historical development. But it does not mean that short-sightedness may not momentarily lead us into blind alleys and cost us bitter experiences. An impossible aim betrays itself in a series of failures and unworkable compromises. Vigorous walking up and down closed paths may create the illusion of a profitable enterprise, but a nation cannot afford the pointless luxury of such Sisyphean labour. It is better to learn by intelligent reflection than by the costly method of trial and error.

The spectacle of prevailing misery has energized the urge for material prosperity. But materialism often disguises itself as humanism and lures people into its snares by soft-spoken sentimentalism. There is a strong tendency today among many who count to go for a kind of technological, vocational, and naturalistically sentimental civilization, a variant of what has today robbed the West of peace and happiness, and emptied life of all meaningful content. And be it noted that thoughtful people even there are daily coming to emphasize the need to relate aims immediate to ends fundamental, so that their society may be saved from disintegration and individual life may be given a value of which no knowledge of the outer world informs us. And the irony of it lies in the fact that this type of sentimental moral

idealism of the present-day Western society, which is stuck on to its industrial and technical culture like a mustard plaster, hiding its unhappiness and disquiet, conflicts and brutalities, is pointed out as the true and essential feature of our civilization from the earliest times.

Our readers, many of them at least, must have noticed some time back a controversy among a few distinguished men noted for service and scholarship as to the meaning of Indian culture. They seem to have declared to their satisfaction that ethical idealism constitutes the essence of our civilization and that God or religion never formed any essential feature of it in its long history. To prove their contention, some of them have pointed out that God is nowhere mentioned in the *Vedas*, that the Sankhya and the Yoga systems practically ignore the idea, and that the Buddhists and the Mimamsakas had no use for such a being. The *Vedas* are declared to have extolled *rita*, the moral order of the universe, as the highest and ultimate principle. For the reasons mentioned above, and we have given nearly all their arguments, God cannot be said to have ever formed an integral part of our heritage. This is rather a clever lawyer's way of removing God and religion from the present-day Indian society by disposing of God's claim to have enjoyed permanent tenure in Indian life and thought in the past. A temporary and occasional tenant of rather doubtful character, poisoning minds by communal virus, cannot be allowed to occupy any room in our social structure to deprive us of the larger spaces we require for a healthy expansion of our natural existence.

The characterization seems a little strange, coming, as it does, from persons whose minds have been steeped in the rationalism of the West and who judge and measure things by standards which it provides. For, have we not been repeatedly informed by the high intellectuals of the West that Hindu culture is world-denying and non-ethical? The

fashion is not yet dead, and we keep on hearing now and then that Hinduism is otherworldly and apathetic to moral problems, concentrating all its effort and energy in an attempt to evade and escape the responsibilities of life in order to depart into some kind of blissful void. What can be more selfish than such an aim? The rather radically different version of our past offered by the votaries of ethical idealism is, however, far from being inspired by any independence of thought. On the contrary, it reveals plainly enough the extent of our spiritual slavery. It shows how we have lost sight of our true values and seek to justify in Western eyes our culture by forcing on it an interpretation which it will not bear. We are trying to ape a West that is spiritually dead and politically distraught, and ingurgitating shibboleths which no longer strike any deep chord within men faced with life's ultimate queries.

If what the ethical idealists of our day are saying regarding India contain even a grain of truth, we must be living in a world of dreams. For we do not know how to explain away the temples and holy places, the rites and ceremonies, saints and scriptures, which form and have formed for countless ages the warp and woof of India's visible life. Are they expressions of just moral idealism? Was Mahatma Gandhi untrue to India's past when he approached politics through religion and God? This is only by the way, for we shall take up a detailed examination of the question later on.

It is, however, a healthy sign and a significant one, too, that our politicians today have begun to look at India's past and to seek nourishment from it for their ideals. They find the necessity for relating their aims and endeavours to it. This is the compulsion of history, and this compulsion to act in the service of the national idea, unalterably fixed by the historical evolution of thousands of years, will finally make them see what it is in fact and how best it can be realized in practice.

II

Political freedom has not necessarily broken the fetters of our mind which still chain it to current superstitions. We continue to regard the Indian civilization as a failure in fact, though we occasionally have a few good words to say about it. It is because we have not ceased to look at it through the historical eye-glasses of the West, and so we misjudge her aims and ideals. We must strip our minds of the narrow historical notions and cheap values derived from a study of the political and social facts which lie on the surface of the state-histories of Europe, before we can approach Indian history in a true objective spirit and so grasp the fundamental principles of its evolution, the scheme of life which formed the rallying-point of the Indian national consciousness, the peculiar problems which challenged India's strength and wisdom, and the amount of success or failure she has had in her task.

At this stage we may be faced with a query of this nature, namely, Is there no universal philosophy of history applicable to the evolution of societies and cultures all over the world? Comparative studies in this line, as in others, have proved that certain general laws operate in all the particular fields of human civilization. India cannot claim to be outside the operation of such universal forces. Indian history cannot claim any speciality or peculiarity. What we are in the habit of pointing out as India's distinctive feature is an irrational phase through which peoples in the West have passed in the middle ages. It is a stage which we shall leave behind as surely as we have left behind our childhood. We are on the threshold of the modern era, and our past ideals are no more true and valuable than were the conceptions of man and universe which ruled thought in medieval Europe. There is no doubt that the course of our future development will be along lines already familiar,

subject, of course, to minor variation in details and non-essentials dictated by the local factors of time and space.

Far from denying such a contention we welcome it. But before we can philosophize to arrive at certain general principles we must be in possession of sufficient data supplied by an intensive study of the entire field of history. So far the experience supplied by a reading of European history has been the sole guide to the understanding and judgment of other civilizations. The material success of the West has given to this method a kind of inviolable validity. But material success is not everything and may not last long, or give all that a people hungers for. Material success and failure have alternated like sunshine and shadows in the histories of various peoples. There is no ground to regard it, or even the sense of political responsibility, as the highest mark of a civilized community. No people attached greater value to the latter than the Athenians of the age of Pericles. Yet how quickly it and the people who prided itself on their democracy disappeared! They disappeared because the people had forgotten something deeper and more valuable, some inner truth that lies at the core of things and of which democracy is a political expression.

No universal laws of history can be formulated without a deep study of a civilization so ancient and stable as the Indian. The histories of the racially more or less homogeneous and politically organized states of Europe and their fleeting material success and efficiency afford no guidance to the understanding of the secrets of Indian civilization. On the contrary when Indian history will be studied objectively, with sympathy and a clear realization of its peculiar factors, we feel no doubt that it will yield principles and concepts on which a true universal philosophy of history will be built. Prof. A. J. Toynbee has broken, in his monumental work, fresh ground and made a new and promising approach to the study of general history. It

is almost a revolutionary departure from the limited objectives and narrow categories prevalent for so long. He is a pioneer in the path at the end of which lie revealed the secrets of civilizations. He is coming nearer to the spiritual idea as the basic, vital, and dynamic factor of civilizations, though he has yet to grasp it in its purity. India will yield the secret to those who will be assiduous in seeking it from her.

III

We have still a tendency to view our history in borrowed lights and so keep clear of its fundamental ideas. So whenever we express a regard for our past we interpret it in a way acceptable to Western eyes and pleasing to their sentiments and hasten immediately to clear ourselves of the taint of other-worldliness that might otherwise attach to us by reason of such appreciation as ours. Modernism demands that we must make life and society the pivot and aim of our culture. Before we can be expected to listen to talks of religion and spirituality, the ego and its separatist impulses must be accorded an unimpeachable sovereign status. Any view which will take away from their importance and refuse to attach to them anything more than provisional validity is regarded as irrational. It is on such a structure that moral idealism rests. But science does not countenance such notions of romantic spirituality. It tells us that in this vast universe whose dimensions have been immeasurably expanded by modern astronomy and geology, life and society are in the nature of brief and irrelevant point-instants. One day the curtain will drop even on this breath-taking pageant of *prakriti* when everything will dissipate into a featureless mass of tenuous radiation. And long before this happens the cold hand of death will crush the fragile plant that is life. The wand of reason dissolves the magic of the universe into an

insubstantial void, but the ego somehow persists like the 'grin of the Cheshire cat.'

The ego finds itself forlorn in such a hostile universe and recoils in dread from the contemplation of this awesome possibility. So we write ponderous tomes to clothe our blind urges as rational aims. We have acquired the art of expressing the simple in a learned way, and so can produce bombastic lucubrations for justifying simple prejudices in high-flaunting phraseology. But not so the Indian spirit which welcomes the full, free play of reason. It envisages the repeated dissolution and manifestation of the sense-world. Nor does it limit existence within the bounds of sensation. A new drama begins when the curtain drops on this world. Experience, like the vibgyor of common perception. It requires boldness and detachment of an extraordinary character to understand and appreciate Vedanta, for it lies at the summit of our development.

Our rationalism functions within the limits prescribed by the West. Things and ideas are what it defines them to be. Geology and the theory of evolution banished God and religion from England and the West in general in the nineteenth century, for they confuted the account of creation given in the *Genesis*. The English people, like many others, became converted from a Christian to a pagan nation, because the fundamental tenets on which Christianity hang, namely, the fall of man, the original sin, and the necessity for redemption, were all demonstrated to be historically untrue. It is with such notions of God and religion taught by the West that we evaluate our culture, for modern education has kept us ignorant of the marvellous truths of our spiritual heritage. This dropping of the true spiritual content of our culture is the result of superstition masquerading as reason.

The history of India is the history of a scheme of life which began with the vedic civilization. Here life has been viewed in the

perspective of the Eternal. It is not something which is full and complete in its range and significance as it is given, but it is a mystery and a riddle from which a meaning has to be wrung out by adventurous thought and disciplined living. Life is a pilgrimage into the heart of the Eternal. It is on this basis that individual life as well as a communal consciousness have been sought to be organized. Here no attempt was made to base national unity upon interests that lie on the surface, namely, political considerations or economic factors.

The Indian consciousness, the consciousness of the possession of a common Indian humanity, which makes it possible for us to talk of India or the Indian nation is no creation of political or social factors. It is the unity of a common spiritual and moral aim. The spiritual scheme of life, a life and world-view, spiritual and universal, has formed the rallying point of the Indian masses, so diverse in race and language and religion. The one aim of our civilization from the vedic times has been clearly and aptly summed up in the vedic formula, *krinvantu vishvam aryam*, 'Aryanize the whole world.'

This has found repeated expression in Indian history as *dharmavijaya* (moral and spiritual conquest), or the conquest by love or by truth. The Indian aim is to accept and assimilate the diversities of life as aspects of an integral truth. The conflict of races and cultures in other parts of the world has been sought to be resolved by the sword. The trail of Western civilization is dotted with the graves of coloured peoples; the advance of Indian culture is marked by the blossoming forth of new civilizations.

Politics can never be divorced from an organic view of life. Nor has the Indian scheme ignored it, but it had no place for a self-sufficient politics seeking to impose the political aim as the governing end of society upon the people. It is easy to point to eruptions of men from outside and the breakdown of the political power from time to time. But a long

view of things will never support the charge of political inbecility against her. For whenever necessity arose in the face of threats to her life-principle, India was able to organize sufficient political force to meet the challenge. Shortly after Alexander had overrun parts of India, the Indians mustered sufficient political power to hurl back the Greeks across her borders. In the days of Buddhist decadence when a negative outlook sought to strangle vedic culture, it found fresh expression. Appropriate political response came once more when Islamic fanaticism aimed blows at the heart of the nation; and Islam as a political power waned. It was from the hands of a people slowly awakening from their political slumber that the sceptre of Indian sovereignty was snatched away by the British. Once more the resurgent Indian consciousness has organized sufficient force to compel the British to quit. And in every case the inspiration for such activity and organization has been drawn from the Indian ideal. Our loyalties have ever been awakened in the name of our *rishis* and our Mother. Our culture has never lacked a virile political sense. Outlooks which sought to curb or neglect it could not strike firm roots in the Indian soil, and will never do.

Our history is long, and we have passed through repeated periods of trial. At times they appeared as sure signs of decadence. We know now that decadence does not mean temporary loss of military power or low consumption of goods. Decadence comes when a people loses faith in itself. A people which has faith in itself, in the value of its traditions, will always find out the appropriate means to live the life to which it is dedicated.

We have found it necessary to refer to the sense of failure that lurks at the back of our minds when many of us try to detach India from her ancient roots and force her into the mould of a new civilization. Let us be clear what our attempts in this direction mean. It means that we are trying to take over the end-products of Western culture, the technical

and mental habits of the West, without the climate of Western tradition in which such developments arose. Which means that these developments have enriched men's life there because they served certain dispositions developed by the Western tradition. Now that the tradition seems to be lost to the West, the developments serve no longer to enrich life but have become destructive. The Indian ideal does not stand in the way of modernization of her institutions. It has always maintained a distinction between the eternality of spiritual truths (*shruti*) and the changing codes of personal and impersonal relations (*smriti*) governed by the fundamental principles of spiritual progression. The achievement of science lies in a mastery of means; it gains value from our cherished ends which it can serve. Science is the truth of means, and this truth can never invalidate the inherent truth of our being.

The technical advance and material prosperity of the West with which we are prone to contrast the facts of Indian life are phenomena of recent years, at best a little over two hundred years old. Nor are they the result of a secular philosophy, but the outcome of an objective study of natural facts. It is obvious India has not kept pace with these advances in recent times. But this cannot convict her of failure. Because a child can make more clever gadgets than his grandfather is able to produce, such cleverness does not negate the mature wisdom of the latter. Even this time-lag is fast disappearing and India is going to take rapid strides in all directions. Perhaps because she is a little late in the field, she can avoid the mistakes of the technical West. The essential problem is how to integrate our old tradition with the new knowledge and to create a pattern of civilization which will not only fill our stomachs with consumable goods but fill our hearts and heads as well with ideals and ideas necessary to live with dignity and purpose.

India has achieved a wonderful measure

of success in her historical task of organizing a common consciousness among diverse peoples. The Indian society is a fluid, loose confluence of many peoples and cultures within a spiritual and moral unity. The principle of unity is in the God who transcends the world while He manifests Himself in it. Therefore we could have a common culture without uniformity of government, economic pattern, or social custom, or even religious beliefs. India has shown a diversity in unity which is unique in history. The structure of a fully developed Indian society remains to be completed—a society which will not only provide for the satisfaction of the physical needs of an individual but also create the moral and spiritual conditions necessary for the appreciation and

cultivation of the highest aim of life. There is no doubt, however, that the foundations have been truly laid. To neglect this spiritual basis will be to strike at the foundation, and it will work against the very unity we seek in outward life.

In our brief attempt to show that we have to widen our perspective vastly if we are to understand India aright, we have been led away from the specific issue with which we started, namely, the precise character of our culture and its underlying ideas. This we propose to take up in our next issue, and as we shall delineate the diagram of Indian life, we shall see that to characterize Indian culture as a culture of good behaviour, mere live or let live, or tolerance, is to miss its inner core.

PURNA CHANDRA GHOSH

BY SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

Sri Ramakrishna once said about Purna Chandra Ghosh, who was then very young: 'Purna belongs to the special class of devotees known as *Ishwarakotis*. A little effort brings out their latent spirituality. A devotee of this order is like the vine of gourd or pumpkin, which bears fruit first and flower afterwards. First they realize God, and spiritual discipline comes afterwards.'

On another occasion the Master said, 'Purna has some of the attributes of the Lord Narayana. He is full of *sattva*. In this respect his place is next to that of Narendra (Swami Vivekananda). He is the last of that series of brilliant devotees who, I saw in a trance, would come to me for spiritual illumination.' Purna occupied a unique position amongst the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. He was held in great respect by all, though because of his innate humility, he felt very embarrassed at that. When he would come

to the monastery at Belur, even the most senior monks paid great value to his words and would not like to contradict him in any way.

Sri Ramakrishna predicted many things about his spiritual future. But circumstances forced him to live a worldly life. To this he could not reconcile himself till the last moment. But he lived such an ideal life that he was the source of inspiration to many. By nature grave, he was extremely uncommunicative about the Master and the Holy Mother. But many young men, who afterwards took to the monastic life, would flock to him to hear about them. He was all humility. He was not the least conscious that the Master was doing great work through him.

Purna Chandra was born in a very respectable family of North Calcutta in about 1871. His father Rai Bahadur Dina Nath Ghosh was a high official under the India Govern-

ment. His mother belonged to a well-known *Vaishnava* family. From his early days Purna was of a religious turn of mind. He joined the Metropolitan (Shyambazar Branch) School, started by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, where M., the celebrated author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, was the headmaster. Purna had a very striking appearance, with his well-built body and bright eyes, and above all he had a very sweet and courteous nature. These attracted the notice of the headmaster, though Purna was very young and then reading in a junior class. On talking with Purna, M. found that the boy had spiritual potentialities. M. had the reputation of being a 'boy-catching' teacher. That is, whenever he found a good boy, he helped to develop his religious nature and put him in touch with Sri Ramakrishna. In this way some of his students found opportunities to come to know of the Master, and afterwards became his important disciples. M. asked young Purna to read *Chaitanya Charitamrita*—a classical Bengali biography of Sri Chaitanya. Now and then he would call him in private and give instructions about religious matters. Once M. said to Purna: 'If you want to see a saint similar to Sri Chaitanya, come along with me, I shall take you to him.' With great alacrity Purna welcomed the idea, which made M. extremely glad. One day M. took him to Dakshineswar—where Sri Ramakrishna lived. Purna was thrilled with the very prospect of meeting a great saint—as great as his boyish imagination pictured Sri Chaitanya to be, who is the object of worship to a very large circle of devotees in Bengal as well as in other parts of India. Purna was overpowered with emotion when the carriage reached the wide gate of the temple-garden of Dakshineswar. Mutely did the boy follow M., and soon found himself in the presence of that mighty soul who was afterwards to water and inundate his spiritual life. With feelings of awe and devotion the boy prostrated before Sri Ramakrishna. When

he got up the Master looked at him with fixed gaze. Well, he was one of the devotees who was destined to come to him! And he was the last one to complete his intimate circle of devotees. The Master treated him with the utmost love and affection which, Purna felt, far outweighed any earthly love. He was so charmed that the idea of leaving the place did not occur to him. M. had to remind him that it was high time for them to start for home.

This very first visit impressed Purna greatly, and the memory of it began to haunt him even after he had reached home. He felt a restlessness to meet the Master again. But there was one impediment: Purna's guardians were strict and would not allow him to mix with any stranger, much less with the 'mad man' of Dakshineswar. So he had to wait for a favourable chance or opportunity. It is said that God attracts devotees, but no less do devotees attract God. If Purna longed to see the Master, the Master was much more eager to see the boy. So when he would come to Calcutta, he would send for Purna. At times he would come to Calcutta, prompted solely by the desire of meeting Purna. Purna was at that time only 13 or 14 years of age! Such was the spiritual potentiality of Purna. Swami Saradananda, one of the foremost disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, writes in his biography of the Master: 'We have seen flowing tears in the eyes of the Master in his intense longing to meet Purna, so much so that we would be bewildered.'

Purna met the Master for the second time perhaps at the house of Balaram or some other devotee in North Calcutta, where the latter had come and sent for Purna. When Purna thus got an opportunity to meet the Master again, which he so eagerly longed for, he became overwhelmed with emotion. The Master also treated him like a deeply affectionate mother, feeding him with his own hands and caressing him in various ways. At this meeting the Master asked Purna, 'What

is your opinion about me?' The young boy replied with great devotion, 'You are God Himself, incarnated in flesh and blood!' The Master was extremely glad at the reply. For he would judge the spiritual level of his disciples from the measure of their estimation about him. Is it not a fact that the more evolved a soul, the more can he appreciate a spiritual genius? Sri Ramakrishna blessed the boy with heart and soul and initiated him into the mystery of *Shakti* worship.

Swami Saradananda writes in his famous biography of Sri Ramakrishna: 'After returning to Dakshineswar from Calcutta, the Master was saying to us again and again that day: "Purna is a mere boy, his mind is immature. How could he have that opinion about me! Could you explain this? Of course, there are some other persons also who because of their innate high spiritual nature have given me such a reply. Certainly that is due to the psychic refinement resulting from the good works of their past lives. Their pure mind naturally reflects the full Truth."'

Pathetic indeed were the attempts Purna sometimes made to meet Sri Ramakrishna. As stated before, he lived under great restrictions from his guardians. He would very carefully keep the fact hidden from them that he had visited Sri Ramakrishna. So, if he knew that Sri Ramakrishna had come to Calcutta, physically he was in the house, but all his thoughts ran to the place where the Master was. Sometimes he would be eagerly standing at the door of his house, waiting for some opportunity or excuse to go to the Master. At times he would be waiting long in a street corner to meet Sri Ramakrishna after he had heard that the latter would pass that way.

So much devotion and love on the part of the boy did not go in vain. He occupied a great place in the mind of the Master—so much so that he would sometimes have a mystic vision of Purna. About one such vision Sri Ramakrishna himself thus said:

'Do you know what I saw just now in my ecstatic state? There was a meadow covering an area of seven or eight miles....I was alone in that meadow. A mist of bliss lay all around. Out of it emerged a boy thirteen or fourteen years old. I saw his face. He looked like Purna.' On another occasion he said: 'Purna was born with an element of Vishnu. I worshipped him mentally with *bel* leaves; but the offering was not accepted. Then I worshipped him with *tulsi* leaves and sandal paste (which are used in offerings to Vishnu). That proved to be all right. God reveals Himself in many ways: sometimes as man, sometimes in other divine forms made of Spirit.'

'It seems he (Purna) is a part (of Divine Incarnation). How amazing! Not a mere particle, but a part.'

'He has a divine nature—the traits of a god. It makes a person less fearful of men. If you put a garland of flowers round his neck or smear his body with sandal paste or burn incense before him, he will go into *samadhi*; for then he will know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Narayana Himself dwells in his body, that it is Narayana who has assumed the body. I have come to know about it.'

On another occasion the Master said to M. with regard to Purna: 'A great soul! Or how could he make me do *japa* for his sake? But Purna does not know anything about it.' M. and other devotees were amazed at these words.

Though Sri Ramakrishna could not meet Purna as often as he liked to, now and then he enquired of M. about Purna and watched how he was progressing in his spiritual life. On one of such inquiries, M. said, 'Purna has been telling me for the last four or five days that whenever he thinks of God or repeats His name, tears flow from his eyes and the hairs of his body stand on end—such is his joy.' Sri Ramakrishna was glad beyond measure at this and remarked, 'Indeed that is all he needs.'

Purna could not hide for long the fact from his parents that he secretly went to Dakshineswar to see Sri Ramakrishna. Gradually they came to know of it. They thought that M., the headmaster of the school where Purna read, was really responsible for it. So they transferred Purna to another school. But things had already gone too far. They could no longer be retraced. The influence of the Master on the life of Purna was by now very deep. His love for the Master was increasing from day to day, and it could not be stopped; it would only thrive under opposition. Purna would now go to the Master in spite of rebuke and opposition from his parents, though normally he was an obedient boy.

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, young Purna, about fifteen years old, felt very forlorn. By nature taciturn and reserve, not given to any display of emotion, Purna felt the separation of the Master too heavily. So he would be found moody, absent-minded, and indifferent to things around him. In order to relax the burden of his mind he would sometimes go to his monastic brother-disciples. Purna's father observed all these and got alarmed lest the son would become a monk. As a safeguard he got Purna married, though against the serious opposition of the latter. But that did not bring over any change in the mind of Purna. The spiritual fire that was burning within him made it impossible for him to have any worldly interest. His whole attention in life centred round the Master and his intimate circle of devotees.

Through the influence of his official position, Dina Nath secured a post for Purna in the finance department of the Government of India. For this Purna had to live mainly in Delhi and Simla, though he came sometimes to Calcutta. Purna worked in the office, but his interest there was limited only to what his duties and responsibilities demanded. After the office-hours when he came home,

hardly would he mention anything about his official life. A devotee says, 'I have passed many mornings and evenings with him. The only topic of conversation would be religious. Nothing worldly would enter his conversation. Very often he remained silent and indrawn—simply a listener to the conversation. The few words dropped from his lips at intervals would only heighten the charm and value of the discussion to us. And those who paid friendly visits to his house were mostly the devotees and disciples of the Master.'

II

While in Simla, after having done office work, he would often repair to some solitary place in the hills and spend the time in meditation. Sometimes it would be far in the night before he returned home. During his stay in Simla, attracted by his personality and urged by his warm invitation, *sadhus* and *brahmacharis* of the Ramakrishna Order would go to his house and profit by his companionship. His spiritual nature had left such an impression upon the minds of some of them that they can never forget the days spent with him. The very memory of it gives them joy and inspiration.

In 1907 the members of the Vivekananda Society, Calcutta, elected him their Secretary. When he came to Calcutta, he would at his leisure come to the Society in the evenings and meditate for some time in the shrine room. He encouraged also other members of the Society to practise spiritual discipline. His arrival and presence at the Society premises would create great enthusiasm among all the members, but the strange part of the thing was that he had not the least sense of conscious leadership in him. He was all humility and extremely loving and friendly.

But at the same time he was greatly spiritual and could brook no injustice or oppression of the weak. Once in the Simla hills he came to blows with some English

soldiers, as a result of his protest against some conduct of the latter. He was quite equal to the task. He had a very strong physique—the result of taking physical exercise for a long time.

His patriotism and love of the country were deep and spontaneous. How much did he appreciate the actions of those who in the early days of the *Swadeshi* movement readily faced jail and even gallows for the cause of the Motherland! He would say, 'I consider these people as great souls. They are the embodiments of self-sacrifice. They are of the same stuff as great monks are made of.' At the same time he held the view that the wave of love for service and sacrifice that has come over the country is the direct and indirect result of the clarion call sounded by Swami Vivekananda. His influence, he said, was pervading the whole of national life in the country.

Purna's love for Swami Vivekananda and other *sanyasi* disciples of the Master was very, very deep. When he stayed in Calcutta, some of them would pay visits to his house. Ah, how glad would he be at that! Even with so much control over his feelings and emotion, Purna Chandra on such occasions betrayed the exuberance of his joy.

With reference to Purna, Sri Ramakrishna once said that if he was tied to the life of a householder, he would not live long. The prophetic words of the Master came true. Purna Chandra passed away at the age of forty-two or so. For about a year he had been suffering from fever. He was brought down from Simla to Calcutta for better medical aid. No less than six months he was confined to bed. But though he had been suffering for such a

long time, never for a moment was he found depressed in spirit or given to any anxiety. It is said that during the period of his illness he once said to his wife who was worrying for him, 'Are we like ordinary men? We belong wholly to the Lord. Even before my birth you were under His protecting care, and after my death also He will look after your welfare. So be at rest.' Having complete self-surrender to the Lord, Purna Chandra stood the suffering of his prolonged illness in perfect calmness—the rhythm of his inner joy was never disturbed. He would say that he felt the living presence of the Master in his bedside. Once during his severe illness, when the body became very frail and weak, he fell down from the bed. The incident created great alarm and stir in the household. But Purna Chandra said that he did not feel the least hurt, for the Lord gave him protection.

Even at the last moment no one could perceive any indication of suffering in him. At ten o'clock in the night his doctor examined him and declared he had breathing difficulty and that the dying moment had come. When the physician went away, his relatives came to his bedside and found him sleeping. They did not disturb him in his sleep. After an hour or so, the physician again came but found that his spirit had long left the body. It was 16 November 1913.

Not many outside the circle of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna knew that Purna Chandra lived such a wonderful life and that he was such a great soul. He could keep his inner life so much hidden. But is it not enough that he lived amongst us? For the influence of such a great soul works imperceptibly.

'Knowledge relating to God keeps pace with faith. Where there is little faith it is idle to look for much knowledge.'

—SRI RAMAKRISHNA

SHELLEY AND TAGORE

BY DAYAMOY MITRA

(Continued from the May issue)

An element of languishing pain for the Ideal, which is a sort of mingled pleasure-pain attitude, since even separation from the beloved has a sweetness of its own, is markedly evident in the writings of both. In Tagore, however, the mood of languishing pain never rises into a heart-rending wail. His notes are centered on a triumphant experience which speaks to us of the pure delight of soul, *anandam*. It was with a taste of this that he had started his life, and it became to him an abiding sense of joy which held him up even in the darkest moments of life. With Shelley, what should have been a perfect note of joy is always subdued by an undertone of sorrow, of the sense of deprivation and loss in which he complains how the object of his quest is always eluding his grasp or beckoning him farther into the Beyond. There can be no doubt that he gazed at it with tremor, with a kind of strange fearfulness when the sense of it took possession of him—for that also is another face of the Reality, whose other name is Love. Shelley felt an overwhelming fascination for that 'awful loveliness,' *Mahatbhayam, vajramudyatam*, which made him a 'God-doomed' man. This in itself is the great charm of his poetry for those who hanker for the vision beatific with tears in their eyes, with tremor and trepidation, with nervous alertness and many breakdowns, and yet seeking, for they cannot get away from it. As a matter of fact it is not 'they who are seeking' as that they themselves are the sought, for the 'Hound of Heaven' is after them and will not let them rest. This also explains Francis Thomson's fascination for Shelley, for the former himself was haunted by this 'awful

loveliness.' Tagore developed another aspect, mostly a kind of inner control within, which never made him lose his vision of this *Anandarupam*, the Joy of the Divine. On a superficial view one might seem to fancy that the wail of despair that rose from Shelley's heart had its echo also in Tagore, but on closer examination we find that Tagore had an infinite fund of hope and joy in his heart induced by his meditative habits, which increased with age. This explains his perfect balance even in the midst of extreme provocation from alien misdeeds. Some people have mistaken this as lukewarmness, but they were wrong. Tagore was emotionally as strong as Shelley, and yet he could reason almost as cogently as Plato could, who, it is well known, had a strong emotional and aesthetic temperament as well. In his self-possession Tagore is sometimes like the later Wordsworth, but without his spirit of compromise. On pure emotional grounds, he had, without Shelley's precipitancy, his love for the spirit that moves, the spirit that wants to achieve and does not care what it loses in the process. The philosophy of life for both was self-realization through complete self-abnegation. Both were wayfarers on the path that led towards the Infinite One, though the objective manifestations of their poetic impulse sometimes varied. They pressed on towards the greatest truths of life by the process which Tagore very significantly calls 'creative unity.' Shelley did not live to accomplish the longer journey and to the very end of his life was liable to be disturbed by factors that stood in the way of a perfect self-possessed enjoyment of the sense of the Beyond. But he was true to his pursuit—it

possessed him in a way that it could not even Wordsworth, great idealist though the latter was. There is a kind of static restfulness in Wordsworth's idealism which may indicate balance and poise, but it implies also an atrophy of the higher vision and induration of sensibilities, about which he himself has complained in his poetry. We know Tagore was not attracted so much by Wordsworth as he was by Shelley, and the reason is obvious. Wordsworth made his compromise with the goal rather early in life; within its own sphere it was sound; but he did not want to proceed further. In the region of spirit, passiveness once induced, by whatever reason, acts like a chilling frost. Seekers of another kind are always on their mettle. It has been said, 'Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty', and this holds good both in politics and religion. We have to pay for every inch of the progress we make with our heart's blood. In Shelley's case, his path in life was like that of a burning meteor—a 'power girt round with weakness', but the phenomenon was so dazzling that its radiated rays still persist to charm the beholder. One may even feel thankful to the higher powers that Shelley had a short life so that the fire in him did not have time to grow cold as it did in the case of many other poets, who started with 'high instincts before which our mortal nature doth tremble like guilty things.'

Shelley has been misunderstood sometimes by Western critics when they have tried to take his measure only on a strict Platonic standard. No less a critic than Dr Bradley talks in an accusing strain of Shelley's 'spurious Platonism.'¹ To our mind a right view of the visionary Shelley or the mystic Tagore can never be had if we check them up on a plan of our own derived from philosophy. We should not judge Shelley on grounds of Platonism only, nor should we

judge Tagore on grounds of vedantic mysticism only. We should judge them as they were. As they were, so they gave themselves. It is true they had intellectual affiliations with certain schools of thought, but that does not explain the whole of them. Parts of their intellectual make-up enter into their poetry, no doubt, but they were above these elements. Poetry¹ was the very language of their souls. What they learnt in suffering and experience they taught in song. Though he had a keen philosophic grasp, a speculative vent of mind, and wide intellectual interests,² Shelley had no time or inclination like a philosopher to mark gradations or degrees of reality or unreality in his poetry. His vision of Reality he has recorded in the *Ode to Intellectual Beauty*. Tagore followed in his life the wake of the vision which he had early in his career. Shelley, born with a genius for the unseen and always dreaming his Alastor-dreams, rejected all nice calculations of time or duration or philosophic explanations of evil. Plato had to make nice distinctions, his

² Matthew Arnold, the apostle of culture in Victorian England, failed to notice the range of Shelley's intellectual interests. His spiritual interests, of course, were beyond Arnold's comprehension. The easily-noticeable elements in Shelley's thought are this Berkeleyan and Platonic Idealism, Spinozism and intellectualism, Voltairean as well as Nihilistic scepticism, Hellenism and modern socialism, Goethe's Wertherian pessimism and philosophic anarchism, Italian art and chemical experiments, Spanish romance and Calderonian mysticism, pathology, psychology, and the morbid rule of life, Irish and neo-Hellenic politics, German metaphysics, Goethe's universalism with something of Kant, and last, but not least, Hindu mysticism to which he was attracted by Sir William Jones's translation of a series of 'Hymns to the Hindu Deities', which one critic remarks 'broke entirely new ground in English literature.' Though Shelley's *Ode to Intellectual Beauty*—a misleading name—is positively charged with an individual vision of his own, one can easily see that one source of Shelley's inspiration in that *Ode* was Jones's 'Hymn to Narayana' (Narayana). To fix on only one strand in this multiple-coloured intellectual fabric, without trying to interrelate the different elements to the highest principle to which his mind paid homage, will be an act of critical vandalism,

¹ A. C. Bradley: 'Oxford Lectures'

logic and philosophy necessitated it. Shelley went beyond it, for he was a soul all afire with the living impulse to realize what Plato had but rationally conceived. Everywhere we find his ideas are symbolic, and very often he dreams of a kind of unity which Plato and his followers would have boggled at, as Bradley has done in later times. His imaginative speculations reveal how gradually he was turning to the path of oriental mystics—we find him mentioning in one of his prose fragments³ that he was afraid to state explicitly the nature of his ideal for fear of being misunderstood. His mood of rapt ecstasy in the temple of The One for which his soul aspired obliterated the world of appearances for him altogether. This is more than Western nerves can usually bear. What differentiates the Western mind from the Eastern—barring certain mystics, of course—precisely lies in this: the Western mind stresses the historic point of view and somehow must find support for the reality of the world of senses, of appearances, of personality as it is usually understood, while the Eastern is boldly speculative and will always press forward from the seen to the unseen. Shelley's poetry shows that his realization of truth in an ecstatic mood took him far to the 'Beyond which is within.' He gave up the idea of explaining evil; in fact, he later said: 'Evil is not organic with the ideal for which we have to strive.' It is only the incompleteness of our human knowledge to which the aberrations of evil are due. The East calls this nescience or *avidya*. Shelley sang of a perfect order of existence right to the end, but his eyes were focussed on the sense of unity that dispels the variations we call 'life'. Poetry, when it reaches its noblest height,

³ In 1811 he wrote to Elizabeth Hitchner: 'Southy agrees in my ideas of Deity—one mass of infinite intelligence.' In one of his prose fragments, we read: 'I am not bold enough to give unqualified utterance to my belief' (R. H. Shepherd's edition of *Prose Works of Shelley*).

merges into the religion of the Absolute. In Tagore's case, too, we find the same thing happening.

III

For both our poets women held a special charm as typifying a revelation of love and beauty at the heart of the universe, guiding and protecting man, thrilling and inspiring, and serving and ennobling him. She is the person who wins for us the kingdom of light and love. Women, in our *shastras*, embody the latent and manifest power of the godhead inherent in Nature, *Shakti* or Force or Energy. Worshipped in the right spirit she opens the doors of the Temple of Reality to the aspiring soul of man. A whole system of rituals is connected with the worship of woman as the primordial energy of the universe. The power she wields on individual life can, however, be exerted in two opposite directions according to her nature. Tagore worshipped the deluding type, the Venus Pandemos, from a distance, in imagination, never allowing himself to be caught in the coils of the adverse power represented in Shelley's poetry as one whose voice was 'envenomed melody.' He worshipped the power in woman that saves and ennobles, she who rose from the waves as Lakshmi. The other one he carefully passed by, though one cannot say without his proper meed of reverence for her, for she also has power, and poets generally are among her choice adorers. In that most wonderful of poems, *Urvashi*, Tagore has depicted her power and charm as perhaps no other poet, before him or after, has been able to do; but in life he paid his reverence most to the Mother Spirit that helps, the protecting, guiding, beneficial energy that works always for man's regeneration. Shelley has been considered by some critics to be 'sexually obsessed', and I am not sure, at one time, this charge was not levelled against Tagore even. The truth is, all poets are more or less suscep-

tible to the charm of woman, but it is an entire misreading of the characters of some of the finest of them to say that they were sex-maniacs. More than in ordinary men we find in them an urge to sublimate this aspect of the human life. And they succeed in doing so, each according to the measure of his idealism. In most of them, the rougher ore could be but partially refined or not at all. In Shelley's case we find he admits he hurt himself repeatedly in placing his best hopes in them. He wrote:

'I measure the world of fancies
Seeking one like thee
And find alas! mine own infirmity.'

This was a habitual cry with him. This is where one might consider Shelley to have failed in his venture, but the ideal for him was always there, and in moments of clear vision he understood that surpassing love which told him always to go beyond without concentrating his hopes on the clay-imprisoned soul. The expansion of heart that is connected with the realization of the pervasive 'unity' he was after, made him feel all division to be weakness and made him love more than one. This was not done in the spirit of 'Don Juan-like flitting from one liaison to another', but in following the spiritual dynamics of the soul which gives it an ability for expansion or extension. Here multiplicity is no bar to the enjoyment of unity; rather, it is a test of the true apprehension of unity, if only the body-idea is non-existent. In such realization everything that leads to limited individuation is at once felt to be selfish, love becomes an all-embracing union and a fit symbol of the divine. As Shelley wrote it: 'True love grows bright here by gazing on many truths.' It grows bright by surpassing itself and giving up all its narrowness. This is also the core of Tagore's philosophy of love. In Shelley's exact words:

'Narrow the heart that loves,
the brain that

Contemplates, the life that wears, the
Spirit that creates one object one form
And builds thereby a sepulchre
for its eternity.'

These are bold words and have not been properly understood therefore, or understood in a hazy way that does little credit to Shelley's power of spiritual vision. These four lines might very well have served as the motto of Tagore's *Shah Jahan*. The highest ideal never circumscribes itself, though it may begin in a personal way, and all through nature we find an attempt is going on to realize the greatness of love which makes the divided, one, the small, great, the insignificant, significant. In the same poem we read, therefore,

'That love makes all things equal.
I have heard
By mine own heart,
this joyous truth averred.
The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
In love and worship blends
itself with God.'

As critics of poetry, both Shelley and Tagore have a recognized place in literature, though Shelley's output is very small, and what little he did, he left unfinished. From Shelley's point of view poetic communication is mysterious. It has a way of working up the minds of men with mystery and wonder, veil after veil may be withdrawn by its help and yet the inmost naked beauty of it never exposed. A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, the one. By the power of his magic even familiar objects are made to appear as if unfamiliar. Imagination pictures for us ideal truths, and therefore it is an essential instrument in the growth of a personality. A man to be greatly good must imagine intensively and comprehensively. The distinction between poetry and prose is vulgar. To the poets Shelley gives wider and vaster potentialities than is ordinarily attributed to them. For him they are 'the institutors of law, founders of civil society,

inventors of the arts of life, and teachers who bring men into close touch with truths expressed in religion.' Poetry does not teach us morals in a direct, narrow, scholastic manner, but it disciplines the moral nature of man. Shelley pronounces obscenity as a blasphemy against the divine beauty of life. The ideal utility of poetry, as distinguished from a narrow conception of it, is particularly stressed in his idea that it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change, and makes us feel sorrow, terror, anguish, despair, as the expression of an approximation to the highest good. Even tragedy forms a part of that supreme whole of delight which is the real pleasure of poetry, though the highest species of pleasure is not to be associated with pain. It will be easily seen that much of this 'organistic' conception of poetry and the *vates sacer* part of it, can easily be matched by our Eastern conception of poetics. The Hindu theory admits a good deal of this and even goes beyond in its consideration of emotive pleasures or *rasas* as akin to the highest realization. Though it does not allow tragedies, it allows the tragic pathos, the *kāruna rasa*, as an auxiliary to the best type of *rasa* which poetry is expected to generate in our minds. The reconciliation of opposites through proper expression of them is also a basic theory in the Hindu metaphysics and aesthetics of transcendental vision. Rabindranath is in fundamental accord with all these opinions as carefully expounded by him in his Bengali and English critical writings, though his opinions differ here and there from the classical school of rhetoricians—a subject into which we need not enter here. At the same time both Shelley and Tagore formulate critical opinions of a kind for which we can claim them as pragmatists of aesthetic theory. They combine the work of creative faculty, i.e., the work of imagination with the generous impulse to act, so that poetry is thereby directly connected with life and the problem of personality. They belong

to that order of poets for whom the life of imagination and the life of world's activity form a synthesis—in fact, form a test by which we can sound the wholesomeness or otherwise of the visionary soul that speaks through their writings. Poetry for Shelley was no idle vision, though the critic who have been hostile to him from Arnold downwards have always made him out to be an 'ineffectual angel.' An element of youthful impatience is there in him, but Shelley was in many ways in advance of his generation and, after all, we find what was impractical yesterday is considered practical today. Shelley wanted imagination to be fostered in every scheme of education, because imagination he considered to be the bed-rock of a larger and better personality. Edmund Blunden in the latest study of Shelley's life (1946) has pointed out how Shelley was 'gaining in increasing command of himself' and in his 'valuation of friendship and active life which serious affairs required' (p. 288). Even if Shelley gave nothing else beyond an impulse to live the higher life, his work in poetry on grounds of higher utility would have been fully justified.⁴

Tagore also felt, as Shelley did, that the inspiration and discipline of poetry was a necessary factor in all educational schemes, and he lived actually to work this out in his school. Both of them have made it clear how our undue insistence on the material aspects of life has made us increasingly the poorer in imagination, without which human life becomes a cripple. For both of them, the great truth lay in this that man in the act of imagining that which is good and noble and superb was by that very fact itself redeemed from whatever is low and ignoble. 'So to feel is to act' is the truth which Shelley had got hold of, and in this sense what he said is perfectly true that 'poetry redeems

⁴ Dr John Dewey in his famous book, *Art and Experience* (pp. 348 et seq.), explaining art from a pragmatic standpoint emphasizes the value of Shelley's theory of poetry in this respect.

from decay the visitations of Divinity in man.'

Finally we have once more to point out that both Shelley and Tagore belong to that order of poets that bring to us the message of unity, the message of that one great Reality which the sages and mystics seek to realize in their lives. Tagore makes this clear in his book on *Creative Unity*, in which he has passed a few remarks also on Shelley's poetry. All great poets have been the bearers of this message of unity. Tagore's analysis of this unity idea starts from the basic facts of life. The world, he says, appeals to us only in detachable parts, not in its unity. We are driven to distraction by our pursuit of the fragmentary. We are hemmed in by the finite. But our hearts are hungry for the Illimitable and the Infinite. Our imagination gives us this desired liberty which is creative of unity, which again, looked at from another standpoint, is a kind of revelation. The poet's dreams are no mere shadow-plays of the mind. This dreaming or music-making is not a function of the lotus-eaters. It is the creative impulse which makes songs not only with words and tunes, lines and colours, but with stones and metal, with ideas and men :

'With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire's glory.'

In Shelley's poetry we find this emphasis on unitary consciousness; for him it is the same whether we call it poetry or painting or sculpture—always seeking to realize the oneness in all. Shelley sometimes regrets the inconstancy or evanescence of the manifestation of this oneness, but it is all the same his ideal. The negative in his imagination confirms only the positive existence of that which he was after, the oneness that pervades the many. He did not want to be guided by priests and prophets in finding out this

truth. His heart was his own guide and he created symbols one upon another for the better realization of this unity till his poetry became a religion. In Tagore's own words: 'Religion in Shelley grew with his life; it was not given to him in fixed, ready-made doctrines, he rebelled against them. He had the creative mind which could only approach truth through its joy in creative effort. For true creation is realization of truth through the translation of it into our own symbols.' This applies as much to him as to Shelley. Shelley started his poetic life with most of the elements that we find later in Tagore also—a sylph-like tenuity, softness, and delicacy of perception, subtle gossamer-like weaving of imaginative threads, a love going out to embrace the universe, the symbols of which at first were the striking phenomena of Nature, a susceptibility to the charm that is found in women, music,⁵ rapture, and a touch of the light from another world. Tagore gradually acquired a more positive content of thought, and the shaping of his imagination was throughout moulded by his faith in religion, which was partly inherited and partly temperamental. Shelley had to formulate a poet's faith and creed of his own, for he believed in nothing that came to him by way of tradition. He loved to follow the direction that Plato gave in many ways in his search for the Ideal, but it cannot be said that he has always followed him. Tagore lived long enough to mature his first golden impulse till he came gradually to bask in the full ray of a 'unitive' consciousness; but Shelley had quick ups and downs and his visionary glimpses filled his mind with a deep unrest and a desire to quit this life as quickly as possible. Meditation and *sadhana* deepened Tagore's poetic vision, and in this respect we

⁵ Shelley comes nearer to music than any other poet, not merely in beauty of sound, but in the sense of another world freed from the limitations of this one.' Clutton Brock: *Essays on Literature and Life*, This is exactly true of Tagore.

find in him a much fuller development than that of any other purely poetic mind of any age of which we have details. He lived to fulfil very nearly what Shelley's ideal of a poet was, as he delineated it in his poetry and criticism. The abstract ideal of Shelley became concrete in Tagore, who was the 'hierophant of a new order', a great apostle of liberty, a great social reformer, a great organizer, a great educationist, a great poet, and yet a painter, a humanist, living in his own life many lives, and thus realizing for

once a poet's ideal of what a poet ought to be.

It is thus that Shelley and Tagore, one a poet of the West and the other of the East, shake their hands across a rather narrow gulf of time, and what one dreamed and what one longed for passed into the dream and the longing of the other like sunset smiling on sunrise—their hearts beating in unison in one vibrant chord of harmony to the glory of the Infinite One, which was the only inspiration of their song.

Concluded

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

BY N. K. SIDHANTA

'What is culture?' said the modern jesting Pilate and would not stay for an answer. He probably expected no definite answer, for he had been told too many things about the connotation of culture. Its motive has been described as mere exclusiveness and variety—at best curiosity in the better sense of the term. Its outward manifestation has been too often taken to be a smattering of ancient learning which becomes an instrument of social and class distinction. But we must say with Matthew Arnold that culture has its origin in a love of perfection. 'It is a study of perfection: it moves by the force not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral or social passion for doing good.' It attempts not only to make an intelligent man more intelligent, but it can also have as its motto the words of Bishop Wilson: 'To make reason and the will of God prevail!'

Culture, then, is the system of ideas by which an age lives. Each human being conducting himself through life has frequently to indulge in self-justification: this implies ideas relating to the world and to one's own

place in it. There are different levels of these ideas: those at a lower level characterize the so-called backward people living a life which is difficult and toilsome; the live ideas at a superior level constitute the culture of the age. In the present age such ideas come at least partly from science, but culture is *not* to be identified with science any more than it is to be identified with the so-called Humanities. A liberal scheme of education must comprehend the following cultural disciplines:

1. The historical process of the human species (generally described as History).
2. The structure and functioning of social life (designated as Sociology).
3. The plan of the Universe (Philosophy).
4. The physical scheme of the world (Physics).
5. The fundamental themes of organic life (Biology).
6. The emotional reaction to the world (Literature and other arts).

As a means of inculcating this six-fold disci-

pline the value of linguistic studies has also to be emphasized. Vital ideas cannot be stagnant: their life depends on agitation and movement, in flowing from one set of minds to another through one language of this Tower of Babel. Through the freak of circumstances some languages have been repositories of vital ideas to a greater extent than others, and training in them is as necessary for cultural discipline as in any of the six avenues mentioned above.

No country has been more alive to the value of culture—*samskriti* or *tamadun*—than India, and a constant complaint is that the preoccupation with culture has been responsible for the material backwardness of the country. We know that education has a three-fold purpose:

1. The transmission of culture.
2. The training for the professions.
3. The training of scientific workers and scientific research.

We are told that for sometime to come we have got to emphasize the second and third purposes, that at least for the immediate future our higher education has to forget the objective of the transmission of culture. The arguments of the advocates of this point of view are something like this: so far India as a dependent country could not take her proper place in the country of nations, and the objective of her educational institutions was to provide servants of the foreign government, and not of the nation. Now India has to stand on her own and to compete with the greatest nations of the world in the sphere of industry and commerce in order to establish her economic independence. This can only be assured with the recruitment of scientific workers, with the supply of adequate personnel trained in the various branches of technology, with the manning of the professions by fully equipped individuals. So it is argued that for the next decade or two Indian Universities and other centres of learning should only have faculties of professional

education, science, and technology, and work at full pressure for the supply of the necessary man-power.

We do not deny the need for industrial workers or technologists: we are fully conscious of the necessity for advanced scientific work, even for atomic research to be used for the destruction of men in a misguided world. But this necessity should not preclude that of training workers for making reason and the will of God prevail. 'What distinguishes culture is that it is possessed by the scientific passion as well as by the passion of doing good; that it demands worthy notions of reason and the will of God, and does not readily suffer its own crude conceptions to substitute themselves for them.' The cultured individual has one objective in life, that of diminishing human error and misery, and in order to achieve this he seeks to convey to his fellow-men the knowledge of human nature, of the structure of society, of the evolution of the human species, and attempts to excite the finer sensibilities which too often lie dormant under the pressure of physical propensities and material interests. From our short experience of the era of freedom can we say that India does not need this training as much as other countries do? For decades we have talked glibly of our precious heritage, of the legacy we have derived from the Buddha and the *Upanishads*, of the spirituality which has been ever-present in us. We have now to show to the world that this intellectual and spiritual possession can find expression for the good of humanity, particularly for the good of *all* our countrymen and not for limited sections of them.

It will be idle to pretend that this is possible without proper education of the masses under the guidance of teachers whose cultural education has been comprehensive. One object of education may be to increase the material wealth of the country; but greater than that is the building up of character on a basis of toleration and

sympathy, of a realization of one world and the brotherhood of man. The highest education is not that which trains men for the fights of life, for the struggle for existence, but that which prepares them for the goal of peace and the means to achieve that goal through love and charity. The cynic will come and tell us that it is no use burying our heads in the sand or being pinnacled dim in the intense inane; we have got to face the realities of this harsh world where we draw our breath with pain, the world of selfishness and suspicion, of mutual hatred and jealousy. We recognize the truth of this contention: we understand that we have to equip ourselves in the arts of war and struggle. Hence the emphasis on scientific training, in the basic as also in the applied sciences. But this training must be supplemented by the other one which will try to widen the horizons of this limited world, which will dissolve the adhesion to old routine, social, political, and religious.

Now to take up the stark reality for a moment we have to face these facts: (1) that nearly 90 per cent of our people are illiterate, (2) that only one in 2,500 receives the benefit of university education, (3) that the quality of education at the primary, secondary, and university stages leaves a good deal to be desired, and (4) that the wastage at all these stages is colossal. In other words educationally we are one of the most backward nations of the world, if not the most backward and the leeway we have to make up would make the most optimistic nation-builder nervous. It is therefore being argued in some quarters that we have immediately to think of quantity rather than quality and we have to plan for the extension of education as speedily as possible. If however we pause for a while and reflect we shall find insuperable difficulties in the way of rapid expansion: it is not only a question of finances but also of the dearth of properly equipped teachers. We do not want mere literacy: we want education for all.

Next we want secondary and university education for the select few according to their aptitudes. We cannot feel happy about the nature of higher education which has been imparted by our colleges and universities during the last hundred years, but we explain it by saying that these institutions were required by our rulers for producing clerks and civil servants. In a free India institutions of higher education will be required to produce leaders of men, and hence must be radically altered. We, therefore, do not regret the paucity of these institutions, as it always is easier to work on a clean slate than to erase and rewrite. Vested interests are hard to dislodge, and even these which have been created by an alien government may resist efforts for reconstruction. A national government will, however, be strong enough to remodel and rebuild provided they have a definite plan of the structure they want. This plan has to start from general principles and has to adapt them to the peculiar conditions of our country. In the general scheme of higher education transmission of culture must come as the first objective, and we have now to consider how this objective may be attained in our institutions.

For achieving this end the requisite training will embrace an advance of our intellectual powers and a kindling of our imagination. For professional training and scientific work we have to depend entirely on the material supplied by Europe and America, but for knowledge of man and his relationship with society we may explore our own heritage from the dim past. For stimulating our emotions we have again to look to the artistic treasures of the West, to the great literary products of Europe and America as also to their painting, music, and sculpture. Yet there are inherent difficulties in the way of absorbing the best of these and deriving genuine stimulation from them. Words, the medium of literature, do not have a universal appeal; the appreciation of painting and sculpture depends at

least partly on familiarity with their themes; the harmonies of western music may leave our countrymen cold. Should we therefore reject these and depend entirely on what Indian artists—poets, painters, and musicians—can give us? There will be few to accept this position for apart from the question of the quality of Indian art—the intensity of the emotions expressed and the adequacy of the expression—much of the poetry would present the same difficulties as the products of the West: the Tower of Babel has left its legacy in India as in any continent. The study of Indian painting and music will have to be re-oriented—occidented would perhaps be a better word—before it can adequately awaken our finer senses.

Poetry and painting cannot be produced to order, but we can rediscover our intellectual treasures; we can familiarize ourselves with

our classical language which will unlock this storehouse; we can bring our old philosophers from the seclusion of the museum and the library to the college lecture-room, if not to the market place. To do this we require the help of the State which must realize the importance of this work. 'Culture is an indispensable element of life, a dimension of our existence, as much a part of man as his hands. True, there is such a thing as man without hands; but that is no longer simple man; it is man crippled. The same is to be said of life without culture, only in a much more fundamental sense. It is a life crippled, wrecked, false. The man who fails to live at the height of his time is living beneath what would constitute his right life; or in other words he is swindling himself out of his own life.'

ART AND METAPHYSICS

BY YVES DUPLESSIS

'If there were no prophetic or poetic spirit, the philosophic and experimental sense . . . would not have progressed, being incapable by itself of doing anything but going along the same monotonous routine. . . .' This remark of William Blake is particularly applicable to those who in their passionate pursuit of truth yield themselves to the grand inspiration that transcends them. Revelation is granted only to those who can raise themselves above their limited horizon. According to the romanticists, art and poetry have no other goal than to free the mind from its preoccupations so as to make it listen to that voice which continues to preach from the verge of death and from above the storms.

Tormented by the thirst for the Absolute which cannot be satisfied by religion, some poets like Rimbaud 'await the unnameable

visitation. . . . As soon as they are "informed" in the philosophic sense of the term, they are found to work with even more of zeal and tenacity than their elders to evoke unknown beings and coax the spectres which wander all through the confines of the mind.'

We are still far away from literature and art. The question here is not to express or transfigure the reality, but to transcend it and reach a region invisible to fleshly eyes. In his work *Les Marginales*, E. Poe has described certain types of visions which obtruded upon him from a point between the worlds of waking and the dream, and occasionally landed him in a strange third world of absolute novelty.

In this sense, poetry is opposed to 'the dynamic subjectivism of the romanticists as well as to the contemporary passive subject-

ivism of the impressionists,' since we have to efface personality in order that we may be impregnated by that other universe; the ego being but a 'place of transition.'¹

The dictum of Lautreamont that 'poetry should be created by all' becomes clear in this light since all should unite to merge in the great 'All'. Individuality is more easily dissolved by contact of minds with one another. Poems can be written by collaboration as in the case of the *Ralentir Travaux* of Breton, Eluard, and Char. The aim of poetry has been defined by R. D. Reneville as being 'the enfranchisement of personality for the sake of a cosmic consciousness.... The sheet of blank paper will be the meeting ground of multiple minds which are the different aspects of the one single.'² Inspiration wells forth in full freedom when we free ourselves from the clogs of our limited ego. 'Poetry is the return to the immense voice which resounds for all.'³ The characteristic of surrealism is in its declaration of the total equality of all normal human beings with regard to the subliminal message.

The works of these poets have an infinitely transcendent range. They serve as mere springboards to enable us to bound to the infinite. To reach that, we have to give up all critical spirit; we should go beyond our habitual ego-consciousness to apprehend the message thus revealed. Otherwise, we cannot catch the novel revelations which will deeply shock all that is in us of the conventionally reasonable and balanced, though limited, consciousness. For some persons, that universe has a reality which they do not see in this world which is only a screen about to disappear.

The artist feels that he has a mission to fulfil; he feels that he has been chosen to ex-

press the Absolute of which he has a prescience. What we know is only what we have been endowed with in a certain measure by the word which tends imperiously to express through us something of the grand and the obscure. Each of us has been chosen and designed to formulate what has to be formulated by us in our lifetime. It is a command which we have received once for all and which cannot bear discussion.⁴

Contradictions are but aspects of the multiplicity, and appear as such only to the mind that is incapable of seizing the original unity. Our narrow and limited reason cannot comprehend them. It is only through intuition that we can get illumination. 'It appears that as soon as thought is left to its own course, it musters with frantic haste the apprehensible relations between things so as to reveal the unity, which is the goal the human consciousness tends to in all ways.'⁵ What seems to be mere coincidence or chance to a superficial observer becomes intelligible when it is viewed from a comprehensive aspect. We should 'apprehend the being before it has yielded to compatibility, overtaking it in its incoherence or rather in its primitive coherence even before the idea of contradiction could appear and force it to vanish, substituting its natural original unity by a forcibly acquired logical unity.'⁶

A deep and thorough investigation thus enables us to see that contradictions are but multiple faces of the unity. As J. Riviere remarks, 'the being is the sufficient reason of all that it expresses. From the moment they emerge from the Self every word and movement have their necessity, explanation, and justice. Logical unity is but superficial, and is due to our limited reasoning. We should apprehend the being as it is'. Have not philo-

¹ J. Riviere: *Crise du Concept de Litterature: The Nouvelle Revue Francaise*, February 1932

² R. de Reneville: *The Nouvelle Revue Francaise*, February 1932

³ A. Breton: *Point du Jour*

⁴ A. Breton: *Point du Jour*

⁵ R. de Reneville: *L'Experience Poetique*, p.13

⁶ J. Riviere: *Reconnaissance a Dada: The Nouvelle: Revue Francaise*, August 1920

sophers shown that all appearances of multiplicity emanate from the one and only God? It is just because they reflect this idea that such poetical movements attract sympathy, as it removes us from the factitious reality in which our reason is limited in its human desire of repose and equilibrium. The artists who consider themselves to be the messengers of a universal consciousness have given us glimpses of a profound reality.

The practice of automatism, that is, the abandonment to spontaneity which leads the individual to give up the notion of his limited ego, should therefore turn our minds to oriental thought. The latter is contrary to western civilization which is predominantly utilitarian; it dares actually to kill the ego and free it from all egoistic feeling so as to lead to its merging in a unity that is neither mind nor matter. 'Everything emerges from the Atman, and is reabsorbed into the Atman; in the interval, too, the Atman sustains and penetrates all the aspects of the manifestation. Nothing can be perceived outside the Atman. Everything that we see is the Atman.'⁷ Such is the Hindu metaphysics. A. Breton cites the definition thereof given by Count Hermann de Keyserling. 'It does not speak of anything but the one being where God, soul, and world rejoin; that one is the profoundest essence of all multiplicity. This metaphysics is absolute, seeing nothing but the one life, the non-objective from which all objects emerge as incidents.'

All ways—those of the flesh as well as those of renunciation—can lead us to that one which is above good and evil. Some persons walk through the strait and narrow path of mysticism, while others plunge into the interdicted zone. The way followed may be any one of these and the nature attributed to God may be either material or spiritual; but it is the same *elan* which leads them on.

Thus, according to certain poets a man

can, by following a given mystical method, attain to the immediate perception of another universe beyond his limited senses and understanding; the knowledge of that universe marks an intermediate step between individual and universal consciousness. It belongs in common to all those who at any period of their life wish desperately to transcend the possibilities inherent in their species. In this sense all philosophies and esoteric thought, transmitted and enriched by a very venerable tradition may be regarded as practically being in accord with surrealism. The feeling of another surreal universe which can absorb in itself the internal and the external, the subjective and the objective, and the idea that it will be possible to receive its messages from that world by dying to the sensible world seem to be the normal consequences of the initial refusal of the surrealists and their latent mysticism.⁸

How attractive for rebels is the adventure to seek to slake in hells their thirst for the Infinite. But the blasphemies of the proclaimed atheists do not really express so much the negation of God as their dissatisfaction with the ideas of God held by their contemporaries. Their need for the absolute is so imperious that they revolt against all traditional conceptions and seek by themselves to live in an existence encompassed by the fire that devours them and cannot be quenched. R. Desnos writes: 'I do not believe in God; but I have the sense of the Infinite. No one has a more religious spirit than myself. Insoluble questions ceaselessly torment me. The problems that I care for are all insoluble.'

It is not a paradise lost that man seeks to regain, but a kingdom of unchained passions and instincts freed from all fetters by an infinite expansion of all his being. From the duplicity of human nature, half way between spirituality and animality, there are two ways by which those who wish to go beyond human

⁷ Shankara

⁸ M. Raymond: *De Baudelaire au Surrealisme*, p.341

limits can travel. 'If man were an angel or a beast' writes Kierkegaard, he would not have felt anguish. Being a synthesis, he feels it.' The aspiration to the divine, like the descent to hell, comes from the same feeling of the fall of the being who knows himself to be superior to his miserable human condition and cannot be satisfied with the data of his experience. The existence of a reality other than the world of ideas or instincts is proved by the same mental process, and the Platonic argument of reminiscences can apply to both of these worlds. A. Breton writes : 'It happens that I have to employ in a surreal sense some words whose meaning I had forgotten. I have been able to verify later that the sense in which I had employed those words perfectly corresponded with their definition. That has made me believe that we are not learning anything new but that we are always merely relearning what we already know.'

The characteristic of disturbed and stormy periods is that the reflection on the place of man in the universe will not be theoretical, but will be lived tragically by some beings whose life will be a perpetual struggle to fill up the abyss between the existence their thought leads to and that to which they tend.

Some of these beings escape from the norms of society in their attempts to attain the ineffable. They feel the call which, according to Bergson, is the inundation in consciousness of the *elan vital* which carries the soul out of its limits. Life strains after some inaccessible thing to which the great mystics aspire.⁹ Artists who have felt that great aspiration seek like heroes to dive into themselves so that they may communicate with that total life they feel.

Like mystics, poets begin by turning away from the external life and dying to this world. Those who yield to inspiration let themselves glide in the darkness being fascinated by the light of revelation hovering above them.

Is it not through the shadows of sleep that G. de Nerval hoped to communicate with the veritable reality and is it not a dark unity that Baudelaire aspired to?

The being then dies to himself by becoming one with the ineffable. 'Plunged in the universal soul, both the poet and the mystic equally lose the sense of their personality.'¹⁰

Thus Rimbaud felt his ego annihilated before the grandeur of his vision. 'The poet abandons himself to the double flood of images; some of these come to him from the surrounding spectacle, by a sort of vertigo, overthrowing the reality in the external world, rendering it transparent, and assimilating it to a system of symbols which signify much more than themselves, while others satisfy the depths of the Being and concur finally with these symbols, forming with them a song which speaks from above the real. They evoke the paradise of primitive union and report to the soul its mysterious appurtenances.'¹¹

Poets and mystics have many points of resemblances which may be summarized as follows : the call to unity, a descent to the regions where the ego renounces itself in favour of the one presence seen in it and the efficacious action of images.

Wherefrom, then, proceeds the feeling of malediction experienced by the poet when he approaches too near to the celestial fire? The mystic knows in advance whereto he goes, while the poet quits the known for launching himself on the unknown. The mystic is even different from the player who employs a cipher whose key he is ignorant of. He works for his salvation, and to know is, in his case, synonymous with to be and to be saved. But, it is only through much groping and many recoils and disappointments that the poet gradually gets a glimpse of a light which

¹⁰ R. de Reneville: *L'expérience Poétique*, p.102

¹¹ A.Beguin: *G. de Nerval suivi de Poesie et Mystique*, p. 110

⁹ *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion*, p.228

he cannot define and where he feels that he is 'a thief of fire.'

The mystic who walks a way traced in advance is not torn by conflicts which beset those who seek by themselves to get out of human conditions and limitations. We also see that those who are not satisfied with the religion of their age which cannot respond to their desire for the infinite sink into the depths of evil to manifest their contempt of a sweetened morality.

The *Songs of Maldoror* by the Count of Lautreamont proceed from the selfsame hatred which, like love, pushed to the extreme, ends by destroying itself. Again, it was for opposing popular morality that Baudelaire celebrated the beauty of evil and Rimbaud, aspiring after a lost paradise, scandalized it by his blasphemies.

The infinity of the aspects of *maya* makes it possible for the individual to transcend by descent as well as by ascent. By means of mysterious forces he unites with all the parts of the animal in his being, which cannot therefore be bad for him. On the other hand he also joins the forces of nature recognized as superior. 'It is not merely God who is a paradox by descending to the earth; we ourselves are also paradoxes in being the union and contradiction of the finite and the infinite', in the words of Kierkegaard. He who discovers in himself these unfathomable depths does not know whether he is face to face with a beneficent or maleficent transcendence, with God or a demoniac force, and whether the movement he accomplishes is a movement of 'transcending or transdescending.' In that state he experiences anguish till the realization of the absolute in which his personality melts and where what is subjective from the highest point becomes related as corresponding to that which is at the highest point objective.

It may be admitted that we can arrive at the experience of the infinite by enjoyment as is the case with certain Tibetan sects, because all paths lead to realization. But if it

be the case that we shall be freed from desires by being satiated with them, then it is much more often true that one will lose oneself therein without attaining ecstasy. In the epoch of demoralization between the two wars, a crisis of the will is not surprising, and we understand why certain minds have sought the essence of being by abandoning themselves to spontaneity, that is, to the vital. Thus in the *Sueurs de Sang* of P.J. Jouve, we find 'a glossary or key of dreams in which a series of equivocal aspirations seem to be delimited where the access to divine love will be procured by prolongation of physical ordure; this is the case with certain mystics of Islam.'¹²

G. Monnerot finds points of resemblance between this period and that of the first centuries of Christianity. 'In both the cases, a world advancing towards universal civilization is in the very active stage of decomposition or recomposition; it is a prey to a general and multiform subversion, of which we can contest the sense but not the existence. The ideas of legitimacy suffered an eclipse. Social bonds were dissolved or relaxed, customs and manners tottered and in all domains where pure constraint did not replace the lost legitimacy, the let go became the rule. Of such periods is born the union of scepticism and the desire for all sorts of mysticism.'

The surrealists emphasize the licentious because 'mysticism does not exclude sensuality as such, as is testified by the most ancient mysteries.' Like the gnostics, they take 'the reverse of creation. Like Lautreamont, they defy the creator, braving him on all planes.

... The Alexandrian age and our own are syncretic times, and gnosticism and surrealism are the typical products of such an epoch.'

The squabble on the roads towards God or towards Satan and the revolt in its destructive fury, cannot but make one yield oneself up to infernal powers. A. Artaud has written: 'I have to inspect the sense of the flesh which should give me a metaphysics of

¹² *The Nouvelle Revue Francaise*, October 1933

the Being and the definitive knowledge of Life.' So also by the intermediary of profound activities, we descend to the world of true realities, that is, surrealities which contrary to the Platonic hypothesis are not ideas and still less, as in Descartes, clear ideas, but the contrary.

It is Kierkegaard who has expressed all the anguish of those who plunge in their subjectivity and strike against the transcendence of the other being in them since 'the passion which makes us touch the bottom of our internal being puts us in contact with the external thing.'¹³

The revolt against the world isolates the being who shuts himself up in his anguish and strikes at that absolute which he cannot comprehend and which engenders in him the contradictions that torture him.

The tortures which put to the proof a person who engages himself in the narrow defile of anguish give him the feeling of being culpable and he accuses God for having abandoned him. 'He will be in a state of desperate revolt, that is, in a state of perpetual paradox. He will desperately be himself, not like a feeble person escaping from himself, but be so fully himself that he will make of himself a horrible god. In demoniac fury, the man wishes, by hatred of existence, by hatred of himself, to be himself in all his horror and to protest by torment against all the being.'¹⁴

But this revolt remains so ripe in its anguish that he will resist the fusion with the *other* being which enables the mystic to free himself completely from all attachment to the ego. 'In Kierkegaard, there is neither the confluence of souls in God (Plotinus) nor the expansion, the overflowing of God in souls. Instead, there is the force of a very strong negation, an opposition of very irreducible individualities. This is one of the reasons of the Kierkegaardian

anguish.'¹⁵ It cannot be surmounted unless the being forced to plunge into evil arrives thereby at the negation of his ego-consciousness.

On the other hand, the mystic is borne towards God by a movement of love which makes him renounce all egoistic consciousness; at the end of the ascetic path, he experiences the supreme peace from which beatitude flows. The kind of obscure knowledge or of affective experience which is characteristic of poetry does not touch the fountain of all existence in the same manner as the mystic experience.¹⁶

The ways of holiness lead to the knowledge of God, for loving and contemplating Him in silence and meditation, while in the poetic path the obscure experience, if it attains to a high degree of intensity, tends to fructify as objects.¹⁷

Certain poets think that poetry can give them magical powers which will make them the rivals of a creator-God. Taking up the traditions of the Cabbala, Mallarme has sought to act on beings and things by the grouping of words.

In contrast with the frenzy of power which makes the poet debase the very character of his art which is essentially disinterested, the *elan* which inspires him can also lead him to transcend it. The poet can rise from a poetic contemplation, the source of images and forms, to the mystic slumber, where images and forms are lost and absorbed by the silence of the soul like the rain by the sea. The poet may perhaps have his poem; but in the absolute of values, this experience is the inestimable gain.¹⁸

The poet can therefore tend to the beatitude above all expression, just as the mystic can make the poet in him work when his exaltation is such that it makes him give vent to that fact in words. The silence of

¹³ J. Wahl: *Recherches Philosophiques*, 1933-4. *Sur Quelques Categories Kierkegaardiennes*

¹⁴ Kierkegaard: *L'Angoisse et l'Instant*

¹⁵ Kierkegaard: *L'Angoisse et l'Instant*

¹⁶ J. et R. Maritain: *Situation de la Poesie*, p.38

¹⁷ J. et R. Maritain: *Situation de la Poesie*

¹⁸ J. et R. Maritain: *Situation de la Poesie*, p.41

Rimbaud, the ascetic life of G. Nouveau, and the poems of St. Jean of Lacroix prove that poetry and mysticism draw from the same source.

Though poetic experience can become tainted by the quest after magic powers, just as it can rise to mysticism, it remains none the less true that mysticism tends to silence while the poet proceeds to speak. 'It is for him the plenitude of joy to realize inspiration by the creation of a novel form. But for him who transcends the surface of life from the depths of mystic union, it is an affliction to find once more distinct images and forms.'¹⁹

Some lives like those of Rimbaud, Van Gogh, and Nietzsche who 'have very clearly both the feelings of subjectivity and transcendence' raise the question whether they were or were not philosophers. According to G. Marcel, there is no philosophy without profound reflection on oneself. The lives of Rimbaud, Nietzsche, or Holderlin are not in themselves philosophic or otherwise. They represent these ambiguous characteristics only as the functions of 'a philosophy of existence.' Marcel considers that 'a single being or a single soul in whom we truly discover that experience where the feeling reaches a certain degree of intensity and clearness, counts much more than millions of beings who have no kind of internal life.'²⁰ But J. Wahl objects and says that an artist can make us feel much more that which he has of the depths in the being than a purely philosophical exposition, and philosophy cannot but be exalted when we admit that it exists as well among the 'non-philosophers as among the philosophers.' He who builds a theory is, properly speaking, a philosopher, but he who lives it intensely

attains more profoundly to the depths of the being. If it be true that certain persons allow themselves to be completely absorbed by their internal life by detaching themselves from the world and others, like philosophers, content themselves with mere speculations on the universe, building theories in seeking to comprehend it—it would seem that an intermediate place should be reserved to artists who, while living these problems, analyse their experiences. There is 'no less of profound reflection in a Rimbaud than in a Heidegger.'²¹ The philosopher, not being troubled by these conflicts, can explain them with more of impartiality and objectivity; but these lives raise questions which he should try to solve. Without solving them, he can only construct theories devoid of foundation. Philosophy is a living experience for these tormented beings and not a theoretic construction; it is only thus that it will have a value since it then ceases to be a play of the mind.

We cannot discuss that which is felt and experienced, though we can always criticize theories which are often merely verbal. A system, to have its full significance, should be applied and practised by its author. Jesus and Socrates have not written anything and yet their lives have an infinite import. Furthermore, even at the present time, many individuals in the West turn to Hindu doctrines supported by lives like those of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in whom philosophy and life blend and become one. A. Breton also recognizes the supremacy of oriental mentality when he declares: 'Why should we not continue to turn to the Orient to which surrealism cannot but acknowledge its homage just as the eye turns to the pearl.'²²

¹⁹ J. et R. Maritain: *Situation de la Poesie*, p.40

²⁰ G. Marcel: *Subjectivite et Transcendance*, *Bull de la Ste Frce de Philosophie*, October-December 1937

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² A. Breton: *Point du Jour*

THE QUESTION OF FOOD

BY SWAMI TURIYANANDA

You have asked about the eating of fish, flesh, etc. There are so many different opinions in regard to it. Practices vary in different countries. Apart from that one has to recognize differences in constitutions. For example, such food as meat etc. is wholesome to some and injurious to others. Again, the problem assumes a different character if the discussion turns upon the question of diet for patients. It is found to be prescribed by medical science. Not that it is also not forbidden by it. In this way the prescription varies according to different conditions. In short, the proper food is that which keeps the body and the mind healthy and does not upset it in any way. It is very clearly seen that what is a *sattvika* food for one is non-*sattvika* for another. Milk is such an ideal and nourishing food and gives radiant health to nearly all; but if it is taken by a snake, it serves only to increase its poison.

Phani pitva kshiram vamati garalam duhsahataram : 'The snake ejects deadly poison by drinking milk.'

The counsel of the Master gives the essence of the matter, namely, what serves to keep the mind steadily pointed to God is the best food. This is the test for deciding what is *sattvika* food and what is not. For the highest *sattvika* state of the mind is for it to turn to God. Swami Vivekananda also has specially discussed the question of food in his *Bhakti Yoga*. You should eat that food which keeps the mind and the body fit. The ultimate aim is to keep the mind directed towards God. The regulation and the do's and don'ts really apply to those whose aim is to make the body healthy in order to have sense-enjoyment. Both the utility or otherwise of such regulations seem useless for those whose aim is to call on God. For, their only aim is to call on God. Remembrance of God is dependent on

maintaining health; so the right food is that which keeps the body fit and makes remembrance of God possible.

All discrimination and regulations about food are for the beginners. Nothing whatever can affect them whose minds are set on the Lord. The real thing is to fix the mind on Him. Perhaps you may remember the words of Swamiji which you might have read in some of his books: 'What is the use of worshipping a God, the ocean of whose mercy dries up by the eating of a piece of meat or some other food forbidden in the scriptures?' It means that it does not matter much what food one takes or not. The feelings have to be purified. Pork is as good as *havishyanna* (self-cooked food of rice and *ghee*), if after eating it the mind thinks of God. What is the use of *havishyanna*, if, even after taking it, the low impulses like hate and spite rule the mind? Only, the pseudo-religious pride that 'I am a pure *havishyanna*-eater' will still further degrade a person.

It should not, however, be understood from this that no discrimination as regards to what should be eaten and what not is necessary. You must have realized that what is being sought to be conveyed is that the mind should not be entirely occupied by such questions. The entire mind should be devoted to God alone; everything else comes after. We should see that we don't tie up the corner of the cloth we are wearing leaving out the piece of gold. The tying is meant only for securing the gold in it. What is the use of tying if the gold is not there? In the same way all rules and spiritual practices are for the realization of God. What meaning can rules etc. have if they do not help one to realize God or to turn the mind towards him? Everything becomes vain in that case.

JOHN TAULER

BY WOLFRAM H. KOCH

(Continued)

III

The Similitude of the Ship

'He who has been wounded by love acts just like a merchant who wishes to send out a ship for the sake of gain: his heart is absolutely wounded by the desire to collect many things. He scratches and scrapes together here and there, so that his ship may become well filled. So does the love-wounded man. He collects and draws together all pictures and thoughts and exercises as many as he can for the sake of his Beloved whom he loves. Then, after the ship is fully laden, he puts off from shore. He is still thoroughly master of the ship, navigating it against the storm. Thus it happens to wounded love. It throws its ship into the storm of the Godhead and sails splendidly along and plays with it according to its desire and will, and throws its oars into the sea which is unfathomable; and the more Divine outpourings it sees in itself, the wider it becomes, and He fills its receptiveness completely. This filling creates new wideness and works miracles of love.'

'Then the Lord cuts asunder the rope of the ship and lets it sail into the storm. Then there is neither paddle nor oar that can stop the ship. Thus man is no longer master of himself. This is imprisoned love. Then it happens to him as to a knight who is heavily wounded in a fight, but who in spite of that, escapes with violence. But if he is taken prisoner, he is no longer master of himself. Thus he is master neither of thoughts nor of actions. For he must abandon himself wholly to his Beloved and Love.'

The Similitude of the Cap

'The saints and masters say that prayer is

a merging of the mind into God. Now reading and praying with the mouth sometimes serve in this, and may in so far be praiseworthy,—just as my cap and my clothes. I am not they, but they serve me. Thus all prayer of the mouth serves somewhat true prayer. But it is not it, for in true prayer the spirit and the mind must enter God without mediation. This alone is the nature and essence of true prayer and nothing else.'

The Similitude of Church-building

'All prayer is truly like chaff and straw compared with this noble wheat as Christ says, "The true worshippers worship in spirit, and in truth." Thus all exercises are accomplished, all words and modes that have been offered since the times of Adam and will be offered unto the Day of Judgment. All is accomplished in an instant in a true, essential turning inward.'

'Take for instance this church and the manifoldness that belongs to it—such as the foundation, the walls, the stones that in their turn support the walls, furthermore consider that all this had to be brought to the spot—all this took place for the sake of prayer, for in prayer everything bears its own true fruit and is laid at the feet of God for whose sake it has all come into being. But in an instant all these things are borne away into the love-laden ground that flows out into all eternity, where they are present eternally and exist now and are wholly perfect.'

'Of this Christ said, "I have done all things Thou gavest me to do." Had he meant this in a temporal sense, it would certainly not have been the case, for there

was much undone as yet. He was still to suffer and to rise from the dead. He rather meant this in the sense of eternity. There all things are as they have been eternally and shall be eternally: and thus they are now in this very instant. Likewise people who act rightly in this, perform their works from beyond time in eternity. They pray in the spirit of God and live and work in it, and they have died to themselves. For no one can become something else, unless he puts off what he is. So they pray and work in the spirit. Where the Father gives birth to His son, there they are gradually born again in Him.'

'Such a spirit again penetrates into the ground, denuded and deprived of its own form, and thereby reaches the supra-essential state. In such a prayer these people attain all things. In it they pray to the Father for His only begotten son, as hitherto the son had prayed for them.'

The Similitude of the Serpent

'So that we may become wise, our dear Lord had added to the teaching St. Peter gives us, a well-ordered way of life, and instructs us as to the nature of this way. He says, "You shall be wise as the serpent." Now see, how the eternal son of God, the Wisdom of the Father, always hides the unutterable clarity of his wisdom under gross, simple similitudes. Because he was so wholly humble, therefore his teaching is also always humble and simple. Know now, such is the wisdom of the serpent that when it perceives itself to begin to age and to shrink and smell bad, it looks round for a place where there are two stones lying next to each other, and between these it squeezes itself, so that the old slough comes off completely, and under it a new skin has grown. Likewise shall man do with the old skin, that is with all that he has from nature, however great or good it be, for it is surely outworn and certainly has defects. Therefore it must be squeezed bet-

ween the two stones which lie very close to each other.'

'Which are the two stones? The one stone is the eternal Godhead that is Truth, the other stone is the lovable humanity of Christ that is the essential way. Between these two stones man must squeeze and carry his whole life, being and working, if there is anything growing old, be it natural or moral virtue.'

The Hart and the Hounds

'The holy David says in the Psalter, "As the hart panteth for the well of water, so O Lord, my soul panteth for Thee, O God." When the hart is hunted violently by the hounds through woods and hills, a great thirst is produced in it by the heat, much more so than in other animals. As the hart is hunted by the hounds, the beginner among men is hunted by temptations. First, when he turns himself away from the world, and especially by his strong, great, gross sins, man is hunted violently. There are the seven principal sins that hunt him down with great temptations, much more so than at the time when he was still in the world, for then he was taken by surprise by temptation, but now he becomes aware of its persecution. So Solomon says, "My son, when thou beginnest to serve God, prepare forthwith thy heart against temptations." Now the stronger and the more vehement this hunting is, the stronger should also be the thirst that we have for God, and the burning desire. Now it sometimes so happens that one of the hounds reaches the hart and gets its teeth into its belly. If then the hart cannot rid itself of the hound, it drags it along to a tree and then dashes it violently against the tree and breaks its head. Thus it frees itself from it. The same should be done by man. If he cannot overcome his hounds, his temptations, he should run in great haste to the tree of the Cross and suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, and there break in two the head of his hound, *i. e.*, his temptation; which means that he overcomes

all temptation there and becomes wholly free from it.'

'But when the hart has thus kept off the great hounds, the little dogs come and run under the hart and pinch it on all sides, and against this the hart is not sufficiently on its guard. So they maul it so terribly that the hart must die of it. The same happens to man. When he defends himself against his great sins and overcomes them, the little dogs come, be they playfellows or jewels of company or pastimes of human goodness, and these tear out a little piece of him here and there, *i.e.*, they pull asunder his heart and his inwardness, so that he is bound to die to all pious life, to grace and devotion, like the hart, and with that also all pious earnestness, all feeling of God and holy devotion must dwindle away. Thus they very often are much more harmful for him than the greatest temptations, for against these he guards himself and he thinks them wrong, but to the others he does not pay enough attention. Thus all things that one does not recognize are much more harmful than those that one recognizes, as for instance the company to which one does not want to pay attention, the playfellows or the clothes, the dresses, the jewels.'

'Now as after each chase the hart is more heated and its thirst grows and becomes stronger, thus also should man be heated more and more by each temptation, be attracted to God in true thirst, and thus allured and driven by every temptation to God, where he would find nothing but Truth and Peace and Justice and Consolation.'

'Now the hunters sometimes act in this way: When the hart is too much exhausted by thirst and too tired, they feed the hounds a little in order to keep them away from the hart, if they are sure of it within the stockade, and allow it to get back its breath for an hour or so. Thereby it is very much strengthened and so can stand the chase much better the second time. Likewise does our

Lord act: When he sees that the hunting and temptation become too great and heavy for man, he stops a little, and man receives a drop of comfort into the open mouth of his heart, a taste of sweetness of Divine things. This strengthens him so much that he no longer likes any other thing that is not God, and it then seems to him that he has overcome all his trouble. But it is only a little strength given to withstand a new attack. And when he thinks of it least of all, the hounds are once more at his heels and pursue him much more violently than the first time. But he, too, is now strengthened and has much greater power than before.'

'This God does from marvellous faithfulness and great love that He allows such persecution to happen to all men, for by this, man, the hart, is driven to God at little cost and acquires a taste for that which is truly all peace and truth and full of consolation. And He does it so that the draught after which he is thirsting, becomes all the sweeter and more delightful and delicious to man, here in time, and later in eternity, where one shall drink from the sweetest well with a full mouth and from the heart of the Father in such consolation that all things shall become small to one, easily to be borne for the sake of God.'

'When the hart has thus defeated all the hounds and comes to the water, it puts its whole mouth into the water and drinks with delight as much as it can. Likewise does man when he has freed himself with the help of God from the whole pack of great hounds and little dogs and comes faithfully to God with his thirst. He shall suck up so much and drink with his full, entire mouth, that he may become intoxicated and full of God, and forget himself in delight and fullness completely, so that it seems to him that he can perform miracles, nay, walk unscathed and hale and gladly through fire, through water, through a thousand swords, nay, through the very point of a sword. He then fears neither life nor death, neither pleasure

nor pain. And this comes by his being intoxicated. And this is called jubilation.'

IV

These similes and pictures are only a few of those Tauler uses in his sermons, highly characteristic of his way of clothing certain spiritual truths in forms that may be understood and retained by all. They are simple and homely and yet deeper than many scholarly expositions and metaphysical subtleties.

The following quotations are also taken from different sermons and may contribute their share in helping the reader to form an idea of the thoughts that were the very centre of Tauler's spiritual teaching on the practical side.

'Everyone should see with open, inward eyes which is his path. At present you do not come to yourselves, not to your own ground, and you do not recognize your call. So today you begin this and tomorrow that, which you hear or see from outside, and just as your senses desire. This is nothing for you. Nothing will ever become of it. It is all at random. Turn towards yourselves and discover with what you associate, and never neglect yourselves.'

'Man is made and stands between two ends: between time and eternity. Now time should never be more to us than a passage to the end, and eternity should be our dwelling, our end.'

'All wherein man seeks his rest and that is not purely God, that is all worm-eaten. For know: however good and again good it may be or appear to be, be it pictureless, formless, modeless, be it supersensual or full of delight, everything whereon man rests himself in pleasure and that he possesses except the pure, simple merging into the pure, simple, unknowable, unnamable, hidden good that is God, in perfect denial of oneself and of all that which may reveal itself in one, is all worm-eaten.'

"Arise, shine, Jerusalem, for thy light is come" (*Surge, illuminare, Jerusalem*). God neither desires nor needs anything in all the world except one thing, but this one thing He desires so exceptionally strongly as if all His striving went out to it. This one thing is this: to find the noble ground that He has put in the noble spirit of man, empty and ready, so that He may work His Divine work therein. For God has all power in heaven and on earth. Only this does He lack that He cannot work His most delightful work in man.'

'Now, what must man contribute that God may shine and work in this lovable ground? He must rise, "surge", says the word: arise! This sounds as if man must contribute something. He must arise from all that is not God, from himself and all creatures. And through his arising the ground is touched with a quick desire, a denudation of and a parting with all inequality, and the stronger this is or the longer it lasts, the more does the desire grow, and the more does it rise above itself. And it often pierces flesh and blood and marrow by touching the naked ground.'

'This ground God wishes to possess and He does not wish that at any time any creature may enter it. But what God works in the ground thus directly touched, of this no one may speak, no man tell the other of it, he who knows it, has alone felt it, but he cannot tell it to thee. But when God has truly taken possession of this ground, all works drop off from man wholly, but the inward beholding of God increases in him very greatly. And when man comes to the very highest to which he can come with great striving and through grace, he must have great self-denial. As our Lord said, "If you do all you can, you must say that you have been useless servants." So man must never become so perfect that he should not always stand in fear. But at the highest point he shall continually say and mean:

"*Fiat voluntas tua.* Thy will be done, O Lord!" And he must also watch himself very closely whether he cleaves unto anything, and whether God finds anything that resists His working His noble direct work in this ground.'

'However much man may have averted his face and gone astray, he yet feels an eternal enticement and has an eternal inclination and cannot find rest anywhere, greatly as he may shrink from it, for no other thing except this one can suffice him. This carries and draws him without his knowledge completely into the innermost. For this is his goal. Just as all things rest in their place, as the stone on the earth and fire in the air, so the soul rests in God.'

'The soul truly stands halfway between time and eternity. If it turns itself towards time, it forgets eternity. If things become distant and far removed, they are small as that which is seen from far off appears small, and that which is close, big, for there is little to obstruct its view.'

'The third enemy is the enemy who tempts thee with guile, with bitter thoughts, with suspicion, with condemnation, hatred and vengeance. "Thus has someone done to me, and thus has someone spoken to me!" —and then thou showest a gloomy face, gloomy gestures and hard words, and wishest to pay it back to them with words and deeds. If thou ever wishest to become perfect, thou must flee all this.'

'Man should in all his works and outgoings perceive his ground and look into it with great earnestness. Would he work from this ground, he would remain in true peace in all his activities. But through unreasonably going out and following the movements of the senses and outward accidents, and not the Divine impulse and warnings, he has no peace in his works and outgoings.'

We will take leave of Tauler with his own words in which he speaks of the highest

attainment of God-realization in terms that echo, as it were, the deepest truths discovered by the great sons of India.

'Whoever attains the highest goal finds what he has been seeking in distant and round-about ways. There the spirit is drawn above all the powers into a desert waste of which no one can speak, into the hidden darkness of the modeless good. There the spirit is led so close into the oneness of the simple undifferentiated, modeless unity that it loses all difference without objectivity and inner feeling. For in the oneness is lost all manifoldness, and the unity unites all manifoldness. When these men return again to themselves, they have a more beautiful and delightful discrimination in all things than anybody else can have. They possess a clear, true discrimination of all the articles of pure faith, how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are one God, and further also of all truth, which is born in simplicity and oneness. No, one understands true discrimination better than those who have entered unity. It is called and is an unutterable darkness, and yet is the essential light. And it is and is called an incomprehensible wild desert where no one finds way or mode, for it is beyond all modes.'

'This darkness must be understood thus: it is a light that cannot be reached by any created understanding, nor be understood by nature. And it is wild, because there is no access to it. In it the spirit is led beyond itself, beyond all grasping and beyond all understanding.'

'I tell you one thing: turn truly away from thyself and from all created things and fix thy heart completely on God above all creatures in the deep abyss. There merge thy spirit in the spirit of God in a true union with God inwardly in the ground.'

This surely must remind the careful reader of the descriptions of the higher forms of *samadhi* given by the great Indian mystics, for is it not the same goal India has proclaim-

ed through the centuries through the mouth of her greatest seers and sages, the goal the *Upanishads* so beautifully express in the following words ?

As the flowing rivers, having relinquished their names and forms, emerge into the ocean, so the wise being free from name and form attains the Supreme Being.

‘However precious and pure the pictures may be, they all push themselves to the fore as obstacles standing between man and the undisfigured picture which is God. The soul in which the sun is to reflect itself, must be empty and free of all pictures, for if but one single additional picture shows itself in the mirror, it is prevented from the realization of the true picture. All who do not strive after such emptiness that the hidden ground cannot possibly reveal itself nor represent itself in pictures, are like kitchen-maids. And to him who has never even looked into this ground or felt it, it is a clear sign that he will neither taste nor enjoy it, as Origen says.’

‘To all who ever tasted of it, this world is bitter like gall. For where this precious ground has once been felt, there it presses and draws so much that the marrow is drawn from the bones and the blood from the veins. And where this picture has formed itself in truth, there all harmful pictures are extinguished.’

‘A holy father is known to have been so pictureless that no image impressed itself on him. Now, a person knocked at his door and asked him for something. But when this holy father came into his room again, he had completely forgotten what it was. The other person knocked again. The father came out and said. “What is it that you want ?” So he asked a second time. Again the holy father replied he would fetch it for him, but again he forgot it. When the other person knocked for the third time, the father said, “Come in and take it thyself. I cannot keep the picture in my mind, so empty am I of all images.”’

‘The Divine Sun shines into such pictureless people. They are drawn out of themselves and all things so magnificently. They have surrendered their will, themselves, and all things to the Divine Will, wherein they are interwoven. They are drawn so delightfully into the yoke of God that they forget worldly things, so small do they appear to them. Eternal things, however, are close to them. They are inward. They appear great owing to their closeness. They are immediate. Thereby they come to sweetness.’

‘Thou shalt bear the judgments and decrees of God where and how they may come upon thee, be it from God or from man. Thy friends may die or thou lovest property and honour, consolation, outwardly or inwardly, from God or from creatures. This burden thou shalt bear lightly and also thine own defects of which thou art weary and which thou canst not overcome or dost not want to overcome. Place thyself under this burden to suffer according to the Divine Will, and abandon thyself to God. Thy horse fills the stable with dung, and although this dung possesses filth and stink, the horse drags it to the field with great exertion. And there delicious wheat and noble, sweet wine grow from it, which would never grow but for the dung. Carry thus thine own dung, the defects of which thou canst not rid thyself, by trouble or diligence to the field of the lovable will of God in true self-abandonment. Spread thy manure on the excellent field. Without doubt there in this humble abandonment delicious fruit will grow from it.’

‘He who would bend himself under this burden and under all the judgments and dispensations of God in humble self-abandonment and would bear with himself in the Divine Will, in having and not having, with a steady earnestness and humble hope, and would take all things from God and carry them back again upto Him in true self-abiding and solitude and would get merged into the eternal Will of God in absolute denial of

himself and of all creatures; whoever would do this and continue therein, to him the burden of God would truly be light, nay, very light! If on such a man all the burdens were placed which the whole world bears, they would become so light to him that it would be to him a mere nothing. Nay, it would be to him a delight, an enjoying, a pleasure, a kingdom of God, for God would bear the burden, and man would be wholly free and have gone wholly out of himself, and at the same time God would enter in all manner of ways into all the activities and ways of man.'

'The world disturbs thee with spiritual pride. Thou wishest to be seen, esteemed and praised, and wishest to please through dresses, through conduct, through high words,

through thy manners, through wisdom, friends, relations, property, honours, and such things.'

'Thy other enemy is thine own flesh. This tempts thee with mental unchastity as all who stand in sin, who in some way enjoy sensual pleasures. Let everyone watch with great care where sin touches him, in his senses, and with sensual things, whereby he becomes unchaste, also with love for creatures, no matter of what kind, which is borne day and night with self-will in the heart. And as bodily nature drags bodily matter into unchastity, inner unchastity truly drags away the mind. And as much nobler as the spirit is than the flesh, so much more harmful is the one than the other.'

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

A short account of the life of *Purna Chandra Ghosh*, whom Sri Ramakrishna regarded as one of the six eternally perfect souls among his disciples, is given in the article under the same heading. ...

The second and concluding part of S. J. Dayamoy Mitra's highly interesting article *Shelley and Tagore* reveals the vedantic strands in the poetry of both. ...

N. K. Sidhanta, Professor of English and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Lucknow University, is well known for his special study of the problems of Indian education. In his article on *Education and Culture* he emphasizes the need for cultural education in our universities. The present tendency in education in India, he points out, is to lay almost exclusive stress on those aspects of it, which train boys for professions and for scientific research work. The cultural aspect of it, which is in truth the most vital element in a civilized and progressive community, has for long been steadily ignored. It is, however,

idle to pretend that the masses can come to the intellectual and spiritual possession of our noble heritage without proper education 'under the guidance of teachers whose cultural education has been comprehensive.' ...

The Question of Food by Swami Turiyananda, taken from two of his letters, deals with the problem of food so far as it concerns spirituality. ...

John Tauler is the concluding portion of the article, the first of which appeared in the January issue. ...

MAULANA AZAD ON RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Minister for Education in the Indian Dominion Government, is not only a statesman but a man of deep culture with insight into the realities of the cultural life of India. More than that he has the courage of his convictions. It has given us great pleasure to read the following observation which he made at the Educational Conference held some time back in Delhi: 'Religious education cannot be altogether

dispensed with....To mould the growing mind of the nation on right lines is its primary duty. In India we cannot have an intellectual mould without religion.'

It required not only deep understanding of life's values and the genius of our people but also a certain amount of boldness to have declared so at a conference where this was obviously listened to with a certain amount of discomfort by not a few. We cannot have any mould in India apart from religion. There is a lot of ethical screaming today in India. There are ethical idealists who see in good behaviour the supreme interest of mankind and the absolute pivot of civilization. They do not have any use for God, and they declare that belief in God was no essential part of the cultural structure of India which has come down to us from the past. It will not be worth powder and shot to subject a view of this kind to any detailed criticism. Presumably they who propound such theses have learnt about God from nursery tales.

Morality divorced from religion is a set of rules to play fair the game of the world. That is to say, its interest is in the rules and not in the person which is the interest of religion. Ethical idealism is earthbound and thinks only of the security and prosperity of our daily lives. It is hedonism or materialism. For it, the individual is a mere abstraction and the community or the group the only reality. Such a view is repugnant to the higher aspirations of man. India has never valued ethics or society except as a means for the realization of a transcendental aim. Our ethical princi-

ples are grounded on the spiritual truths discovered by the *rishis* or seers. Ethics, apart from a supernatural aim, is unable to guide conduct in times of crises and conflicts.

Education in India cannot remain blind to the wider and truer aspects of the life of its people. It must take note of its cultural consciousness, for to build anything in ignorance of it will be to injure its organic growth and unity which has continued through thousands of years. The different doctrines and dogmas of the different sects must not be viewed through Western spectacles. Indians know in their hearts the fields within which they work and their pragmatic validity in the sphere of spiritual striving. So it should not be difficult to incorporate into the school curriculum the fundamental teachings of religion, which harmonize the different beliefs and hold them in unity as aspects of the same Truth viewed from different levels of mental and spiritual evolution. We should have the ability to perceive the essential truth to which conflicting beliefs point in the light of Vedanta. We have known this all along. Only the temporary domination of an alien culture and the degradation of masses of our own men due to decadence of true spirituality have made many of our intellectuals lose sight of the great truths of heritage.

The Maulana has given voice to the feelings of many who cannot or do not know how to speak, but whose views will finally prevail. He will be doing a great service if he can work out in practice the sound and obvious truth he has so boldly given expression to.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

JOURNEY WITHIN. BY ROMAIN ROLLAND. *Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y.* Pp. 171. Price Three Dollars.

The earliest autobiographical fragment coming from Romain Rolland dates from his college days (1887)—*Credo Quia Verum*, which was composed sixty years before the publication of *Journey Within*. The author never allowed his *Credo* to be printed (because of its

so-called immaturity); but he kindly permitted me to publish my translation of it in Bengali, which I got printed in the twenty-fifth jubilee number of the *Pravasi* under the title *Atma-darshan*. Rolland completed his first *Heroic Life* from Indian history—Mahatma Gandhi—in 1922-3 and plunged, almost immediately after, into the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. No wonder, then, that he suddenly turned the light

inward and began reviewing his own life in a novel manner, as we see reflected from the pages of his *Journey Within*. It is not a biography of incidents but of 'Intimation' as Wordsworth would have called it. Born in 1866, very close to Swami Vivekananda, Rolland remembered the first visitation of death in the family—sudden death of a little sister in 1871. Rolland himself was almost a condemned child with weak chest, and the mother took the boy for a change to Switzerland where, in 1882, he had his first vision of Voltaire, the spirit of constructive negation.

In 1884, Rolland was surprised by Spinoza, the only light of Eastern Advaitism, shining in the pantheon of Western philosophy. Through the Oriental veins of Spinoza there flowed into Rolland by blood the vedantic truth: 'Everything that is, exists in God' (Spinoza, *Ethics* I. 29). 'I too am in God,' added Rolland at the age of 18 and repeated to himself, 'the Being singular and infinite, the Being that is all-being and besides which there is nothing.'

In 1886-8, during the last years of his college life in the *Ecole Normale*, Rolland turned to Tolstoy, that eagle-eyed genius who surveyed the universe of souls 'from which a thousand streams flow towards the mighty ocean.'

These *Three Revelations* of Voltaire, Spinoza, and Tolstoy (which I translated in the *Modern Review*), will supply the keynote to most of the literary and artistic creations of Rolland. He gives in his *Journey Within* an interesting delineation of his 'Family tree' also (pp. 37-102), both on the paternal and on the maternal side, since the days of the French Revolution. What a great role the mother played in his life was first revealed by Rolland in this chapter. Mother was the *guru* initiating Rolland into the divine mysteries of music and he rose to be one of the leading musical critics of Europe and the outstanding biographer of Beethoven.

As a scholar attached to the French School of Rome, Rolland realized his character and potentialities as an artist and he confides to us how on the hillside of Janiculum of the Eternal City, he created, in spirit, if not in letter, his masterpiece *John Christopher*.

'Life is the bow whose string is the dream. Where is the Archer?' (pp. 103-138). 'The target was not the outside universe (if there is an universe outside!); it was the inner world that the great Ocean of the Self-universe surrounds!' (p. 138).

Thus Rolland almost recapitulates, phrase by phrase, the Vedanta philosophy of India although innocent of the original Sanskrit texts and ever writing in his mother tongue, French!

He paid a most touching tribute (pp. 138-171) to his spiritual mother Malwida von Maysenbug, friend of Mazzini and Wagner. She nursed the youthful writer Rolland into maturity; and he began creating great books of life, not mere printed tomes of conventional rhetoric. Rolland had to brave two world wars, and

the savagery of the second sapped his vitality. He warned the West, with his last breath, and left to the East the legacies of his thoughts, for he re-discovered the East and specially India, with his penetrating vision and profound sympathy. This strand in his spiritual consciousness is not only not understood by his Western critics, but even suspected by them as a passing phase of 'exotism'! But we know that he touched the Flame of Truth, and that transfigured his mind and his muse. His writings and revelations, therefore, will serve, for years as the great causeway of collaboration and understanding between the Orient and the Occident.

So we recommend his *Journey Within* and other significant writings to all earnest students of comparative philosophy and synthetic thought. The book is nicely printed with the latest photo of the renowned internationalist.

DR KALIDAS NAG

BENGALI

SRI SRI CHANDRATATVA SUBODHINI. By DEVENDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA. Published by Ajitkumar Jyotishkehar, 4A, Sahanagar Road, Kalighat, Calcutta. Pp. 168. Price Rs. 1-8.

The author has attempted within a short compass a lucid interpretation of the *Saptashati*. A certain amount of confusion has been created in trying to explain spiritually every small detail of the allegory of the original without allowing any margin for the poetical effusions generally found in such works. In spite of this, the author writes 'with faith and conviction and has succeeded in making the book a stimulating reading on the whole. A.

GITA O' HINDUDHARMA (VOL. I). By YAJNESHWAR GHOSE. General Printers and Publishers Ltd. Calcutta. Pp. 285. Price Rs 4.

The book is a welcome addition to the existing *Gita* literature. In the present volume which forms an introduction to the whole the author has instituted a comparison between the main thoughts of the *Gita* and the *upanishadic* and the Sankhya systems of thought. He has made a rationalistic approach to the task of harmonizing the apparently divergent tenets of the various scriptures and by his terse style and incisive method of argumentation has given a well-knit and a fairly impartial presentation of his theme. A strictly rational assessment of matters spiritual may at times fail in its objective by tempting the supra-rational. This seems to have been the case in his refutation of the Theory of Incarnation towards the end of the book. The seed of the theory lies in the very fact which he denies (p. 258), namely, that the ascent of *jiva* is also the descent of *Ishvara*, and in the Theory of Incarnation it is this universally attested spiritual experience of the individual that has been given a cosmic aspect. The

author has done well in criticizing the popular misconception about this theory, but his attempt to throw it completely overboard has been rather too hasty and inconclusive. A.

NEWS AND REPORTS

PRESIDENT, ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI

Swami Pavitrananda, President of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, retired from the presidentship on the 28th June 1948 after a successful term of over ten years. We are sure he is destined to do more brilliant work in wider fields. May he achieve greater success in all his future activities!

Swami Yogeshwarananda, till recently Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, has been elected President of the Advaita Ashrama in place of Swami Pavitrananda.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, BANARAS

The activities during the year 1946 were as follows:

1. *Indoor Work*: There are 190 beds in the Home: 115 in the Indoor Hospital, 16 in the Surgical Ward, 25 for men invalids, and 50 for women. The Indoor General Hospital admitted during the year 2,395 cases. The daily average attendance was 106.2. The total number of surgical cases was 395, of which 288 were major cases; the total number of *chat* and road-side cases was 242.

The refuge for the aged and invalid is meant for poor invalids stranded in the city of Banaras. For want of funds it could not keep more than 3 permanent inmates during the year. In the Women's section there were 15 inmates, and many had to be refused admittance for want of funds. Under the Lachmi Narain Trust Fund 7 paralytic cases were treated, and under the Chandri Bibi Dharmasala Fund 483 men and women were given food and shelter.

2. *Outdoor Work*: The Outdoor dispensary treated 97,766 new and 2,21,461 repeated cases in the year, including the patients treated at the branch dispensary at Shivala. The daily average attendance was 874, and the total number of surgical cases was 1,467.

Besides, 170 persons received monthly outdoor relief to the total tune of Rs. 3,059-12, and about 12½ mds of rice and flour, besides blankets and clothing. The recipients were helpless men and women of respectable families. Again, 576 persons were given help in the shape of books for students, food for stranded travellers.

The total receipts for the year were Rs 69,065 and the expenditure Rs 73,963-9-4, thus showing a deficit of about Rs. 5,000.

A great many of the beds are not endowed, Donors may endow them in the name of their dear ones. A

separate building for the outdoor dispensary and another for septic surgical cases are indispensable; the estimated cost being Rs 60,000 and Rs 40,000 respectively.

All contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the Assistant Secretary.

THE RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

REPORT FOR 1946-47

On the whole, the year (from 1 October 1946 to 30 September 1947) has been one of steady progress, and there has been an appreciable increase in membership and attendance on Sundays.

All indebtedness has been paid off on the property and repairs and improvements are being made.

During the year Swami Vividishananda gave a lecture every Sunday morning on general topics, explaining the theory and practice of Vedanta. On Tuesday evening he conducted classes on the *Bhagavad Gita* and on Friday evening a meditation class followed by a discourse on Patanjali's Aphorisms and Shankara's *Vivekachudamani*. The Tuesday classes were open to the public, but the Friday classes were held for members and students.

The usual celebrations were held throughout the year, the important ones being the worship of the Divine Mother Durga and the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda, Lord Buddha, as well as the celebration of Christmas and Easter.

During the past year the Swami was invited to speak before different groups. He spoke at the Young Women's Christian Association on two occasions, to business women studying a course in comparative religion, in which addresses he discussed some of the fundamentals of Vedanta. A few months later he was invited by the Young People's Group of the Chinese Methodist Church to speak on the philosophy and religion of the Hindus.

During the last fiscal year the Centre was visited by two other Swamis. Swami Devatmananda of Portland came at the time of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday celebration and spoke on the life and teachings of the Master at the public dinner, Swami Satprakashananda of the St. Louis Centre came in June and spoke on the spiritual message of India.