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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

## SWAMI VIRAJANANDA

It is with a heavy heart that we have to record the passing away of Swami Virajananda Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission on 30th May, 1951 at 6-56 a.m. at the Belur Math at the age of seventy-eight. For the past few years the Swami was keeping indifferent health. He was the last of the surviving Sannyasin disciples of Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Virajananda, known as Kalikrishna Basu in his pre-monastic life, was born of a respectable Kayastha family of Calcutta, on the 10th June, 1873, the holy Snan Purnima day. His father, Sri Trailokyanath Basu, was a well-established physician of Calcutta. Kalikrishna had his education first at the Training Academy and later at the Ripon College where Sri Mahendranath Gupta or M., the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* was a professor.

Even at an early age Kalikrishna evinced a keen interest in spiritual matters and he used to spend much of his time in the study of the scriptures and in singing Bhajan and Kirtan in the company of young boys of similar spiritual disposition. This spiritual inclination led him to Sri Ramachandra Datta, a householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna from whom he used to hear about the wonderful life of Sri Ramakrishna. It was Mahendranath Gupta or M., however, who discerned his aspirations and directed him to the Sannyasin disciples of the Master who were then living in the newly started Baranagore Math in Calcutta.

This was a turning point in the life of Kalikrishna. The austerity, the spiritual atmosphere of the monastery and, above all, the sincere spiritual love of the Master's disciples, especially that of Swami Ramakrishnananda, left an abiding impression on the mind of young Kalikrishna, who used to visit the monastery often and even on occasions spend a few days there. As days passed by, the attraction for the life of a monk grew in intensity until in 1891 at the age of 17, Kalikrishna renounced the world and joined the brotherhood at Baranagore. In taking this step, he was fortunate enough to obtain the sincere blessings of his parents. At that time Swami Vivekananda was wandering as a Parivrajaka and Kalikrishna came into contact with him only after his return from the West in 1897. Indeed those days at Baranagore monastery were full of inspiration to Kalikrishna, for here the young disciples of the Master developed, in a great measure, their strength and holiness. The hard life of Tapasya could not deter him the least and he threw himself heart and soul into the work in the monastery; and he got the unique privilege of serving the



direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who lovingly moulded his spiritual life. The other companions with whom he used to visit the Baranagore Math also joined the Order one by one and later became known to the world as Swamis Vimalananda, Suddhananda, Prakashananda, Bodhananda, Atmananda and Nirbhayananda. After being blessed with initiation by the Holy Mother in 1892, Kalikrishna spent some time in spiritual practices in the company of Swami Premananda at Vrindaban.

Swami Vivekananda, after his return from the West in 1897, initiated Kalikrishna into the monastic life in that very year under the name of Swami Virajananda. Shortly after, under Swami Vivekananda's special instructions, he went to Dacca and a few other places in East Bengal for preaching work and organized with success famine relief work at Deoghar. Swami Virajananda also had the privilege of rendering personal service to Swami Vivekananda, who, in turn, was specially pleased with his one-pointed devotion and service.

In the middle of 1899, Swami Vivekananda started on his second visit to the West. Under Swamiji's instructions, Swami Virajananda went as a worker to the newly started Advaita Ashrama in the heart of the Himalayas at Mayavati. Then the Ashrama was in its beginning and his help was invaluable to the Seviers in organizing it. In the meanwhile the Ashrama had to suffer a great loss due to the passing away of Mr. J. H. Sevier, one of the most beloved Western disciples of Swami Vivekananda, on 28th October, 1900. Shortly after his return from the second visit to America, Swami Vivekananda wanted to pay a special visit to Mayavati to comfort Mrs. Sevier in her bereavement. It was winter and the road to Mayavati was impassable, the difficulties being all the more due to the want of proper facilities for travel. The journey from the railway station to Mayavati—a distance of sixty-five miles—was by no means pleasant. The task of bringing Swamiji safely to Mayavati from Kathgodam along with the whole party fell on Swami Virajananda. Undaunted by the severe winter, the Swami started from Mayavati, covered that distance only in two days, walking day and night, and was ready at Kathgodam in time to arrange for escorting the party. Swami Vivekananda was highly pleased at this and remarked, 'He is indeed a fit disciple of mine!' He again escorted Swami Vivekananda on his way back as far as Pilibhit and alas, this was to be their last meeting. Swami Virajananda was at Ahmedabad on a tour, when Swami Vivekananda passed away at the Belur Math in 1902.

A deep grief at not having been able to be present beside Swamiji in his last days filled Swami Virajananda whose devotion to his Guru was intense. He therefore retired from active life to spend three years in study and meditation, and in serving Swamis Brahmananda and Turiyananda. In 1904 there was a proposal to send him to America, but it fell through as the Swami finally wanted to remain in India and practise Tapasya.

After the passing away of Swami Swarupananda in 1906, Swami Virajananda was appointed President instead, and given the onerous task of building up the institution. For eight years he continued to bear the burden of responsibility. This can be considered as one of the most creative periods of his life.

His work at Mayavati was many-sided. In addition to being the Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, the Organ of the Ramakrishna Order, he had to edit the monumental life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western disciples in four volumes. The collection, edition and publication of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* are also permanent tributes to his energy and intellectual abilities.

Swami Virajananda gave up the presidentship of the Advaita Ashrama on the 15th December, 1913, but continued to stay there for one more year to complete the editing of *The Complete Works*. Sorely in need of a peace retreat where he can spend his days alone, the Swami started a new Ashrama at Shyamalatal in the Himalayas in the year 1915. He spent ten years in this retreat, in solitude, study, and long hours of meditation. His life at Shyamalatal was an example of the simplest living, of severe self-discipline and austerity. He had a special affection for this Ashrama, for here he had spent some of his best years in contemplation and meditation. In 1926 a Sevashrama was started as ancillary to the work of the Ashrama, as Swami Virajananda was touched by the great need of medical help to the needy and illiterate people of the villages around his retreat. Indeed from 1926 onwards, his desire for service of Man grew and he took an increasingly keen interest in the



activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. In 1934 he was elected the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission; from now on he entered into a period of intense activity. In May, 1938 he became the Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and at the end of the year, on the demise of Swami Suddhananda, he became the President.

Swami Virajananda's period of presidency witnessed a phenomenal expansion of the Ramakrishna Mission in extent and activity. The spiritual influence he radiated, his serene temperament, along with the joyful simplicity of a child, attracted to him thousands of devotees, young and old, men and women, and moulded the lives of the many young men who joined the Ramakrishna Order. More than once the Swami went on extensive tours to different parts of India and thousands of men and women had their spiritual life awakened and strengthened through his advice and personal influence. Indeed we find in the Swami a wonderful example of the ideal of Swami Vivekananda—intense activity coupled with intense meditation.

His advice to disciples, a valuable spiritual legacy, has been published under the title 'Paramartha Prasanga' in original Bengali. The book has been translated into English and Hindi and published in India. An American edition of the same in English, entitled 'Towards the Goal Supreme', was published only last year.

The last few days of the Swami were one of great illness. The complications in his system multiplied. But he bore all sufferings with extreme patience and stoicism and few could understand that he was feeling any pain. On the morning of the 30th, at about four, the condition became very grave. All the Sannyasins and Brahmacharins gathered and started chanting the name of Sri Ramakrishna. The end came peacefully at about fifty-six minutes past six. Floral offerings were made by the thousands of devotees who had gathered there. By about six in the evening the mortal remains of the Swami were, after cremation, consigned to the sacred waters of the Ganges. The Belur Math resounded with the cries of 'Jai Guru Maharajjiki Jai' from the devotees who felt that in the passing away of Swami Virajananda they had lost an invaluable guide and the world a great spiritual personality.

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## THE IDEAL OF SERVICE

BY THE EDITOR

*Etāvat-janma-sāphalyam yat-dehinām iha dehiṣu  
Prānairarthairdhiyā vācā śreya eva ācāret sadā*

'This is the *summum bonum* of an embodied life—to dedicate one's wealth, speech, vital and mental energies, and intellect to securing the welfare of all embodied beings.'

—*Bhāgavatā*

Philosophers hold that man, in his natural state, is dominated by individual passions and prejudices which lead him on to a 'war of all against all'. But, unlike animals, he is capable of using reason which, in the course of time, made him, for self-protection and self-fulfilment, choose a social form of existence.

Man is essentially a social being, and human society is, therefore, the sphere of action in which man lives and moves and strives to realize his own ethical and spiritual perfection. Individuals, groups, and even nations are mutually interdependent, and human intercourse or, in other words, the brotherhood of

man, is the most vital factor that makes for the stability of civilized society. A reverence for human life and personality, springing from stintless love, charity, and compassion is all important for the achievement of the goal of civilized humanity.

The nature and destiny of man and his relation to society, though variously understood and interpreted in different systems of civilization, it is more or less universally true that he who is able to rise beyond selfishness, who has the power to feel for others, who has a philanthropic turn of mind and has the milk of human kindness in him in profusion excels infinitely over all others. Such a man is called a man of great charity and generosity, and is often regarded by the multitude as a veritable god on earth. And that man, in his turn, never lives for himself and his love does not remain confined to his own kith and kin but embraces the whole of humanity. The sufferings of others make him more miserable than his own sufferings. He loves and serves even lower animals, seeing in them the same God whom he sees and worships in every man and woman of the world. The whole world looks upon such a lover of humanity with reverence and regards him as an extraordinary person.

Man's progress and well-being involves moral and spiritual regeneration no less than physical and psychological amelioration. Every religion and every form of ethics enjoin that the primary duty of man is to do good to the world on the basis of the teaching, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. Altruism, brotherly love, and such other expressions of the fellowship of man constitute an integral part of every scheme of the reconstruction of humanity. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* we find that Prajāpati instructs the gods, the men, and the Asuras, telling them respectively to learn self-control, charity, and compassion. Shankara, in his commentary, observes that it is men who should learn and practise all the three instructions, for Prajāpati meant his advice for them alone.

The spirit of charity and compassion has been one of the dominating ideas of Hinduism from the earliest times. The Upanishadic sages have declared, 'There are three branches of Dharma. The group of sacrifice, study, and charity forms the first'; 'One should learn the triad—control of the senses, charity, and compassion'. Service to suffering humanity, service to fellow beings, is considered a great and noble ideal not only by mystics and religious leaders but also by those who swear by scientific humanism or dialectical materialism. Notwithstanding the evidence of blood-curdling inhumanity throughout the course of world history, which makes one exclaim in despair, 'What man has made of man!', a selfish and egotistic person who indulges in his own enjoyment, without being of any service to his fellow beings, invites natural and legitimate social disapprobation.

The path of service is inwards and not outwards. Service comes out of the fullness of heart, out of overflowing love, sympathy, and unselfishness. One cannot properly serve others unless and until one has been able to rise above the limitations of body, senses, and mind. So long as a man thinks himself a finite being, he continues to serve only those whom he regards as 'his own', through a sense of '*meum* and *tuum*' born of ignorance (*avidyā*). Such duty or service, proceeding from selfish attachment, brings a painful reaction and leads to greater bondage and delusion. As Sri Ramakrishna has said, there is a great deal of difference between disinterested love and compassion (*dayā*) and morbid affection due to personal or other attachment (*māyā*). To love and serve the members of one's own family, community, or country is *māyā*. But to render service to people of all countries and members of all religions, out of the same love for all created beings without any distinction, is *dayā*. The ideal of service can be realized through *dayā*, not *māyā* which entangles a man and turns him away from God. *Dayā* results from love of God and the realization of the inherent divinity of man. Sages and saints, who are great lovers of



humanity, like Shukadeva, Buddha, and Jesus Christ were moved by *dayā* in their hearts. As Shankara points out, 'The great souls, calm and magnanimous, do good to others as does the spring (*vasantavat lokahitam carantah*), and having themselves crossed the dreadful ocean of birth and death help others also to cross the same without any motive whatsoever.' The advent of such God-men into this world is solely for the welfare of mankind.

There are two things which guide the conduct of men: might and mercy. The exercise of might is invariably circumscribed by selfishness and greed, and all men and women try to make the most of whatever power or advantage they have over others. Service rendered with the ulterior motive of obtaining some return hinders spiritual progress and brings unhappiness in the end. Charity and social service, in themselves, are no doubt noble and spiritually elevating, even when undertaken with some desire for results that are not contrary to Dharma (*dharma aviruddha kāma*). But then the motive for name and fame, or for gaining wealth, children, and heaven seldom brings satisfactory results. Mercy and kindness, the practice of which makes man look upon service as equivalent to worship, are all that this sad world is urgently in need of. The quality of mercy is not strained, as Shakespeare says, 'It blesseth him that gives and him that takes'. Even justice and right should stand on mercy in order that they may bring peace and blessedness to man. Compassion to all beings, uncontaminated by any thought of physical attachment or quid pro quo, is a divine attribute and one of the most noble characteristics of spiritual life.

The fulfilment of spiritual life lies in the direct realization of Brahman, the all-knowing, all-pervading, and all-powerful ultimate Reality from which the entire universe, with its beings—animate and inanimate,—proceeds, on which it rests, and into which it dissolves. This unitary vision of Reality and the universe, when it truly and fully permeates a man, finds dual expression on the noumenal and phenomenal

planes. On the transcendental plane, it is unity with the One Supreme Being (*śāntam, śivam, advaitam*). In the phenomenal, it takes the dual form of harmony and service as applied to the variegated forms in which the Godhead manifests Himself. Religious harmony and selfless service to humanity come out of this monistic consciousness of the Divine in man. The motive of service, of love and sympathy, purged of all earthly taint, can be discovered in this realization of the divinity of man, in this new attitude towards man which seeks to convert service into a potent means of God-realization. We have to learn to look upon those whom we wish to serve as the manifestation of God,—as 'Narayana' in different forms, assumed by Him in order to offer us opportunity to serve Him. This supreme ideal of service, aiming to enable man to discover the divinity that is already in him, has been proclaimed and expounded in a most practical form by Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda stands as the unique messenger of this sublime gospel of service to which he passionately gave expression and which he carried to the doors of all, for the regeneration of India in particular and the world in general. He welded together into a single purpose the great ideals of renunciation and service, of work and worship, and laid down the most effective and practical programme for achieving 'the emancipation of the Self and the well-being of the world' (*ātmano mokṣārtham jagad-hitāya ca*). His clarion call to those who are devoted to the service of humanity at large is to look upon human beings as images of God, nay as God Himself, and regard service of man as worship of the Divine in man. The Swami declared, with all the passion of his soul, 'Blessed are we that we are given the privilege of working for Him, not helping Him. Cut out this word "help" from your mind. You *worship*. Stand in this reverent attitude to the whole universe.' 'May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls. And above all, my God the



wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.' Appealing to the youth of the country, the Swami said, 'The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion.'

Thus God has to be worshipped not only in the temple or the deity, but more than that in the temple of flesh and blood, in the tabernacle of the human body. What is most desirable is that service should be undertaken in the spirit of perfect unselfishness by idealizing not only the act itself but the men and women also, with whom one comes in contact in the course of its performance and for whom it is meant, as the veritable representations of the Divinity. The scriptures teach us to be fully aware of this idea that the universe and every bit of it is God and nothing but God and endeavour to attune ourselves to this cosmic life through service of man, knowing him to be the manifestation of God. Thus one can but do good to oneself by doing good to others. The real effect of all true service is nothing but internal. To quote Sri Ramakrishna's own words: 'If one gives away anything in charity, with the spirit of non-attachment, he does it for his own good and not simply for doing good to others. He thereby serves God who resides in all beings. Service unto God means helping one's own self. If a person serves God manifest in all beings—not only in man but also in other creatures—without craving for name and fame, or for going to heaven after death, and expects no return from those whom he serves, such service is really the highest and best, and it benefits him alone.' Service, thus performed in the right spirit of Karma Yoga, becomes worship of Shiva in *jīva* and is one of the most efficient means of self-purification and God-realization.

This ideal and spirit of service was implied in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna from whom Swami Vivekananda got the direct impulse and inspiration and thereafter proclaimed it to the entire world in clear, ringing tones. Once Sri Ramakrishna was explaining

the three cardinal principles of Vaishnavism, viz. delight in uttering the name of God, kindness (*dayā*) to living beings (*jīva*), and service (*sevā*) to devotees. When he began speaking of 'kindness to all beings', he stressed these words and passed into a state of deep ecstasy (*samādhi*). On coming back to a state of partial external consciousness, Sri Ramakrishna said, with great fervour, 'Kindness to living beings! Who art thou, an insignificant creature, to show kindness to them? No, no, not *kindness* but *service* to all living beings, looking upon them (*jīva*) as God (*Śiva*).' Swami Vivekananda (then Narendranath) was present and heard these inspiring words. He immediately understood the deep significance of the words of the Master and found in them an immortal and unique ideal of service for the welfare and benefit of mankind. In them he discovered the *raison d'être* of the Vedantic ideal of what the world calls altruistic and philanthropic service. Years later, the Swami proclaimed to the world this significant and central truth of the ideal of service—service spiritualized—an ideal which our modern age so urgently needs. All persons, high and low, irrespective of caste or creed, race or nationality, are to be viewed as the manifestations of the Divine and served according to their needs—physical, intellectual, or spiritual. We can perform all our acts of charity—whether physical relief (*anna-dāna*) or secular education (*vidyā-dāna*) or spiritual ministration (*jñāna-dāna*)—in the spirit of service and worship to the Lord whom the Upanishads speak of as 'Thou art man, Thou art woman, Thou art the youth, Thou art the maiden, Thou art an old man totterest along with a staff, Thou art born everywhere (*viśvatomukha*)'.

This great and ancient ideal of love and compassion, this creative aspect of Vedanta in practice ('Practical Vedanta', as Swami Vivekananda called it) can be traced to the Upanishads and has been handed down to us, without break, through our various ideals, institutions, and daily duties. In the Hindu's spiritual life, service is regarded as a noble



sacrifice (*yajñā*) on the part of the individual, and the five forms of daily sacrifice (*pañca-mahāyajñā*) are enjoined on every person: the study and teaching of the scriptures (*brahma-yajñā*), offering sacrifices to the gods (*deva-yajñā*), offering libations to departed ancestors (*pitṛ-yajñā*), offering food and help to human beings (*nṛ-yajñā*), and offering food to lower animals (*bhūta-yajñā*). The last two—*nṛ-yajñā* and *bhūta-yajñā*—especially, are the spiritualized forms of service (*sevā*) manifesting themselves in acts of charity (*dāna*). The Upanishadic teaching is that a guest or visitor should be looked upon and served as God (*atithi-devo bhava*) and that whatever gifts of love and charity are given should be given with due reverence (*śraddhā*), modesty, and compassion. As a matter of fact, the Puranas declare that doing good to others is true practice of religion, while doing harm to people is a great sin.

Service that results from compassion or rather love for all creatures is a special mark of spiritual greatness. Those who do good to others, without caring for their personal comforts, even when at the point of death, have indeed realized the highest ideal of service, and 'to them belongs eternal peace and to none else'. The great devotee Prahlāda prayed for the well-being of even those who had tormented him, and refusing to accept any boon from the Lord, declared, 'What I want is the cessation of the affliction of all beings tormented by the miseries of life'. The joy of such noble souls consists in the well-being of others in the service of whom they consider no sacrifice impossible. The sage Dadhīchi, who laid down his life gladly for the welfare of the gods, says, 'Even inanimate objects feel sorry for him who does not earn Dharma and fame with the help of his perishable human body by showing compassion to all beings'. These lovers of humanity, whose life's mission is to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of the world, stand as glowing examples of perfect unselfishness and universal love. Following their example, if men look upon the world and all beings as embodiments of the

Divine and behave with them as such in their daily life as well as in the course of their services to others, they are sure to reach the highest goal of unselfishness and eventually realize themselves as non-different from those around them. When this spiritual attitude towards life and the world permeates through not only thought but also action, from day to day, then only will service, love, and charity assume a new meaning and carry a vital, penetrating force that will enable both the person who renders service and the person served to become divine, realizing the Divine more and more, in an endless progress.

Some persons doubt whether or not this ideal of service is essentially Indian in origin. Some think it to be inspired by Christianity, forgetting the great fact that it existed in India long before the advent of Christ. Others think it took birth only after the coming of Buddha on the Indian scene. Buddha laid great stress on the practical application of the grand truths of the Vedic religion and preached with a new power and meaning the ancient, perennial ideals of India. But the Vedantic ideal of service as worship differs essentially from the concepts of Christian charity or Buddhist humanitarianism, though, when objectively looked at, it resembles both these. All extol the importance of acts of service for the redress of human suffering. Humanitarian service, as commonly understood in the West, is only a part of an ethical programme for the amelioration of sorrow and suffering in society. It does not emphasize worshipping God in any form through service or charity. There is no spiritual urge to the realization of the divinity of man, but service of fellow beings as a mere auxiliary course of moral training. It is argued that devotion to ethical principles and international morality, without any reference to spiritual Reality, is all sufficient. To many, humanism is a religion by itself, without any metaphysical background. But a barren humanism is, in truth, only a shade from being pure arrogance and vanity. It could never save man, nor help him progress towards the true ideal of service. 'Reliance on

God, the "will to do His will", is of the essence of humility. And that is the quality that can save man—says a learned professor of religious education. (*Learning and World Peace*).

In India, as elsewhere, the need of such a lofty ideal of service is the chief desideratum today. Much of the prevailing clash and conflict in society can be traced to the lamentable lack of intelligent understanding of the cosmic purpose of life, of the lack of awareness of the Reality behind all realities. Every individual is destined to realize his divinity by serving the world through his own avocations of life. The good of one is bound up with the good of the rest of mankind, and the actions or thought of a single person, virtuous or not, in any

part of the universe, cannot but produce their repercussion on others. Swami Vivekananda feelingly expressed the ideal of service in the following lines of one of his poems (originally in Bengali):

From highest Brahman to the yonder worm,  
And to the very minutest atom,  
Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love;  
Friend, offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.

These are His manifold forms before thee,  
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?  
Who loves all beings, without distinction,  
He indeed is worshipping best his God.

In these pregnant words lie the inspiration and strength equipped with which every selfless and sincere person can dedicate himself, with whole-souled devotion, to the worship of God and the service of humanity.

## THE VEDIC RELIGION: A TWOFOLD WAY

### THE WAY OF PROSPERITY AND THE WAY OF SUPREME GOOD: HOW THEY MEET

BY SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA

(Continued from the May issue)

IX. THE YEARNING FOR SUPREME GOOD SHOULD GROW FROM WITHIN THROUGH PROGRESSIVE TRAINING. AN INDIVIDUAL'S DEVELOPMENT MUST BE IN CONFORMITY WITH HIS PSYCHO-PHYSICAL NATURE.

Man is born with a natural tendency for sense-enjoyment. Until his desires are fulfilled to a certain extent, until he has some experience of sense-pleasures he cannot see through their vanity, their delusiveness, their blinding and binding snare. To turn away from the sense-life to the spiritual, a man has to be disillusioned of its charms by repeated enjoyment and suffering until he develops a longing for the Real, for liberation from all bondages. Spiritual life is not for the multitude. Only

certain individuals find real interest in it. It is said in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 'The self-existent One injured the senses by making them outward. Hence they perceive the external objects and not the Self within. Rare is the wise person who, desirous of immortality, turns his eyes inward and realizes the innermost Self.'<sup>68</sup> The point is, to follow the way of renunciation man has to outgrow the sense-desires. The spirit of renunciation should develop from within in natural course through a progressive training. It cannot be imposed upon him. This is why the Vedic religion encourages men and women with worldly tendencies to seek material welfare. Yet at the

<sup>68</sup> II. i. 1.



same time it enjoins on them certain moral and religious disciplines, which not only conduce to material well-being but also facilitate the growth of the spiritual sense. For the worldly-minded it has even prescribed prayers and worship for the fulfilment of material desires. Though this is a low form of religion, this gives them a chance to turn their thoughts to God. Without adequate preparation in worldly life a man cannot, as a rule, overcome worldliness, even though he may renounce the world. One of the causes of the decline of Buddhism is considered to be undue emphasis on renunciation, that is, indiscriminate admission of its followers into the monastic life. Neither the laudation of renunciation nor the condemnation of worldly enjoyments is the way to make man spiritual. Denunciation of secular interests without direction to regulate them for spiritual unfoldment may be regarded as the chief drawback of medieval Christianity that is accountable considerably for the revolt against religion in the modern age.

The highest is not the best for all at the same time. The vast majority of human beings cannot seek Supreme Good directly, yet they can proceed towards it indirectly along the line of least resistance. They can climb to the highest step by step through a gradation of ideals. The capacities of men differ. Different ideals suit different persons, according to their levels of development. 'Take man where he stands and from there give him a lift', says Swami Vivekananda.<sup>69</sup> Even in moral life a man has to rise by stages. Gradual growth is the law of life. One distinctive feature of the Vedic religion is that, in prescribing ethical and religious disciplines, it has taken into consideration the difference in the tendencies and the capacities of the individuals (*adhikāri-bheda*). In the cultivation of moral virtues as well as in spiritual practice, the Vedic seers have recognized the necessity of gradation of ideals. It is better to pursue with fervour an ideal within

one's capacity than to be overawed by too high an ideal or to adopt it half-heartedly. Every individual has his own line of development in conformity with his psycho-physical nature. The practice of virtue or the performance of duties should therefore be in accordance with his inborn disposition and aptitude. This is his normal way of growth. It leads to an ordered expression of his potentialities.

The following story in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* demonstrates how different moral disciplines suit different grades of people:<sup>70</sup>

Gods, men, and Asuras (demons)—all three descendants of Prajapati—lived with him for a time as students. Then the gods said, 'Teach us, sir.' In reply Prajapati uttered one syllable 'Da'. Then he said, 'Have you understood?' They answered, 'Yes, we have understood. You said to us, "Dāmyata—be self-controlled".' 'Yes', agreed Prajapati, 'you have understood'.

Then the men said, 'Teach us, sir'. Prajapati uttered the same syllable 'Da'. Then he said, 'Have you understood?' They answered, 'Yes, we have understood. You said to us, "Datta—be charitable".' 'Yes', agreed Prajapati, 'You have understood'.

Then the Asuras said, 'Teach us, sir'. Prajapati uttered the same syllable 'Da'. Then he said, 'Have you understood?' They said, 'Yes, we have understood. You told us, "Dayadhvam—be compassionate".' 'Yes', agreed Prajapati, 'you have understood'.

The storm cloud thunders: 'Da! Da! Da! —Be self-controlled; Be charitable; Be compassionate'.<sup>71</sup>

The three moral ideals of self-control, charity, and compassion are intended for three different types of men. They are all to be practised by human beings according to their inner development. The cruel should practise

<sup>70</sup> V. ii. 1-3.

<sup>69</sup> 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion', *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, p. 382.

<sup>71</sup> *The Upanishads* (Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, Vedanta Press, Hollywood, California, 1947).



non-injury and strive to be compassionate; the avaricious should overcome greediness by charity; and those who are free from other vices, but still have sense-desires, should particularly practise inner control. In this context Shankaracharya remarks: 'Those among men who, though lacking in self-control, are possessed of other good qualities are the gods; those in whom greed prevails are men; while those who are cruel and violent are the Asuras. So the same human species, according to the three faults—lack of self-control, greediness, and cruelty—as well as according to the three gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas,<sup>72</sup>—are entitled gods, men, and Asuras. Therefore it is men who should learn all the three lessons.'

As a matter of fact, the man in whom Tamas (i.e. indolence, delusion, and the like) prevails cannot lift himself directly to the level of Sattva (i.e. serenity, enlightenment, and so forth). He has to overcome first Tamas by Rajas (i.e. activity, achievement, and so on) and then Rajas by Sattva. A coward must become a hero before he can be a saint. He should have the courage to uphold justice before practising forgiveness. Otherwise, he will only make a pretence of forgiveness with vindictiveness lurking within. When he has the power to vindicate justice, then he can practise forgiveness. When forgiveness becomes natural to him then it is possible for him to practise the supreme moral ideal—'Resist not evil', which means the returning of good for evil, of love for hatred, of blessing for curse,

as taught by great spiritual leaders of the world, e.g. Krishna, Buddha, Lao-tze, Christ. Many do not even have the power to resist evil. Before they can have the power of non-resistance let them acquire the power of resistance. When they have gained the power to resist evil then non-resistance will be a virtue, otherwise they will make a virtue of weakness. Swami Vivekananda rightly observes: 'We must first take care to understand whether we have the power of resistance or not. Then, having the power, if we renounce it and do not resist, we are doing a grand act of love; but if we cannot resist, and yet, at the same time, try to deceive ourselves into the belief that we are actuated by motives of the highest love, we are doing the exact opposite.'<sup>73</sup> Truly speaking, only certain individuals develop the power of non-resistance; societies have to depend on the principle of justice in internal and external affairs. Indeed, he who is free from the feelings of 'I' and 'mine', who sees the one Self in all, can actually practise non-resistance, 'being friendly and compassionate to all beings'. So Sri Krishna says, 'Because he sees the Lord equally present everywhere, he injures not Self by self, and thus reaches the highest goal'.<sup>74</sup> In Hindu scheme of life, non-resistance is the creed of a Sannyasin,<sup>75</sup> who gives the assurance of fearlessness to all beings when he takes the monastic vow.<sup>76</sup>

(To be continued)

<sup>73</sup> *Karma Yoga*, Chapter II.

<sup>74</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, XIII. 28.

<sup>75</sup> The subject will be discussed at length later under Section XI.

<sup>76</sup> *Vide Taittiriya Aranyaka*.

<sup>72</sup> See note 48, p. 166, *Prabuddha Bharata*, April, 1951.

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. . . The mango grows and ripens on account of the covering skin. You throw away the skin when the mango is fully ripe and ready to be eaten. It is possible for a man to attain gradually to the Knowledge of Brahman because of the covering skin of maya. Maya in its aspects of Vidya and Avidya may be likened to the skin of the mango. Both are necessary.'

—Sri Ramakrishna



# MYSTICISM AND THE LANGUAGE OF PARADOX

By C. T. K. CHARI

At all times and in all places mysticism has been a paradox both to its defenders and attackers. Its admirers have been often thrown into consternation and its critics confounded into terminological inexactitudes. As readers of religious literature are aware, the mystical Absolute is an Ineffable Light, a Bottomless Abyss, an Unfathomable Ocean, a Soundless Void, an 'Existence Uncreate'. But mystics of every age and clime have been untiring in their efforts to express the Inexpressible; their silence has been copiously eloquent; and their descriptions of the Ultimate have savoured of some breach of the most fundamental laws of thought. The Absolute is pronounced to be inexhaustibly beyond being and non-being, the personal and the non-personal, the temporal and the non-temporal, whatever meaning we assign or do not assign to the terms being, personality, and time. The transcendence of logical opposites is signalized in mystical teaching by a curious inversion: a *coincidentia oppositorum* or a piling up of contrary images together. The Divine Light is described as dwelling in an Unapproachable Gloom. The Absolute is hid in a 'Cloud of Unknowing'; and yet it is the Open Secret of the world. Such a concatenation of phrases, if taken quite literally, threatens to arrest the very machinery by which human thought moves.

The sheer contrariness of mystical intuition, which makes it an outlaw or a suspect in the eyes of orthodox rationalists, has led some sympathetic exponents to stress the emotional content of the experience. Rudolf Otto advanced the view that the 'Holy' (*Das Heilige* or *le sacré*) is a category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to religion. Religion involves a unique emotional apprehension which resists any reduction to rational or intellectual 'knowing' with its apparatus of

concepts and propositions. The hidden non-rational or 'numinous' content of religious experience receives special emphasis in mysticism.<sup>1</sup> Max Scheler revived Pascal's 'logic of the heart' (*logique du coeur*). The emotions are as independent of the senses as they are of the intellect and have a right to a hearing of their own. Being is presented to knowledge; Value reveals itself to feeling. In feeling, and not in reason, as Kant insisted, lies the *a priori* content of Value.<sup>2</sup> We cannot argue about or define any Value. The bearer of the highest—'Holiness'—is God. Scheler maintains that 'Personality' in the distinctive philosophical sense—a striving to actualize over-human Values—begins with religious experience.<sup>3</sup>

No one can deny that Otto and Scheler have made notable contributions to the study of religion. But the emphasis they have laid on the emotional uniqueness of religion has tended to perpetuate the antithesis between intellect and intuition, cognition and valuation. To regard religious experience as an obscure enchantment, independent of reason, is a surrender to the most ominous contemporary doubts. Logical positivists and empiricists in the West are only too anxious to concede that value-predicates are emotional and not cognitional. The insinuation seems to be that no Value can have 'objective significance'. Valuation has no part to play in cognition whose office it is to make explicit what objects

<sup>1</sup> R. Otto: *Mysticism: East and West*, esp. 'Transition from Part A to Part B'.

<sup>2</sup> Max Scheler: *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die Materiale Wertethik*, I. Teil II, A and B. Scheler counters Kant's *A priori und Formal überhaupt* with *Das a priori Materiale in der Ethik*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, Teil VI, *Formalismus und person*, 3b; also Teil IV, *Relativität der Werte auf den Menschen*.



are apart from our emotional interests and attitudes. Is mystical religion then to be dismissed as a dumb conviction of a 'Value' that cannot be validated at the bar of reason? Are the paradoxes about the Godhead symptomatic only of an emotional exuberance that merits the attention of psycho-pathologists? The story about St. Francis of Assisi—the 'Troubadour of Christ'—kneeling awestruck and repeating throughout the night the single prayer 'My God! My God! What art Thou? And what am I?'<sup>4</sup> reminds us that the quest on which one of the most devotional of mystics embarked was cognitive or nothing. Two of the greatest mystics of all times, Spinoza and Shankara, were characterized by an excess of logical clear-headedness and not from any lack of it. Neither could be caught out in any mood of mawkish sentimentality.

I submit that the emotional *a priori* is not the whole case for mysticism. Rightly understood, mystical teaching provides the epistemological foundations of any inquiry into experience, human or otherwise; it is a unique metaphysical approach to the problem of consciousness at all levels. The point can be elucidated with reference to current denials. It has been argued by some European thinkers that the entire branch of philosophy, calling itself the 'Metaphysics of the Self', is a web of pseudo-problems that cannot withstand the scalpel of modern analysis. We hear that the elementary fact of 'being aware' is nothing apart from a grouping or juxtaposition of *objects*. The subject is a linguistic convenience and is apparently demanded by grammar, but it is, for all that, a logical fiction. Bertrand Russell, Ian Gallie, and Whately Carington have suggested that minds and material bodies can be constructed out of entities (christened 'data', 'sensibilia', 'cognita') that are neither mental nor material. We are told that consciousness is a 'cross-section' of a world of 'neutral particulars'. It is just here, in my opinion, that the mystical

dialectic about the Subject of all awareness—witness the conversations between Prajapati, and Indra and Virochana in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*<sup>5</sup> and Shankara's deductions<sup>6</sup> about 'that person who is seen in the eye'—asserts its imperious claims. I report the occurrence of sense-experience by saying that *I am* seeing or hearing or touching. The conclusion is inescapable that in all such situations there is something absolutely specific: a unique asymmetrical relation between empirical 'data' and *some* referent designated by the 'I'. One can attempt to explain consciousness as a grouping of 'neutral particulars' only by assuming that certain of these entities acquire a peculiar mark, a unique 'presentedness' or 'point of view' for which there is no justification in the scheme. The 'point of view' metaphor, which is, of course, Leibnitzian, destroys the whole fabric of the theory; but without the metaphor the theory has no verisimilitude whatever and is a non-starter in the competition. Even if the empirical subject of awareness is labelled a 'fiction'—no responsible metaphysician has ever claimed that, by right of its own worth, it is ultimate—awareness itself remains an irreducible and ineluctable feature of a world such as ours. There must be some sense of the term 'reality' which makes awareness commensurate with it. Not only mysticism but all idealism takes its stand here.

We can now see why any supposed line of demarcation between cognition and valuation must prove chimerical. Let us consider the *selectivity* implied by a universe a 'cross-section' of which 'comes to light' or acquires a unique 'presentedness'. The selectivity must be a function of *interested attention* at however rudimentary a level. Objects can be 'given' only in an appreciative perception; they must have some importance or *value*, no matter how

<sup>5</sup> VIII. 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Shankara's Commentary on the Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (Eng. Tr. by Ganganath Jha) (Madras, 1899), Part II, pp. 314-365; cf. *Shankara's Commentary on the Vedānta-Sūtras* (Eng. Tr. by Thibaut), I. iii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Evelyn Underhill: *The Mystics of the Church*. Ch. V, p. 91.



crude, before they can be noticed at all. The cognitive enterprise in the explicit sense, as it occurs at the human level of consciousness, is impossible without the cognitive *ideal* of truth. The *nature* of truth must not be confounded with the *tests* of it. Various criteria such as correspondence with facts, verifiability, and coherence or comprehensiveness have been employed by philosophers with more or less success. But we cannot propose a test of truth and a theory of knowledge without assuming both truth and knowledge. A purely subjective theory of truth has no feet on which to stand. Plato's query addressed to the sceptical sophist in *Theaetetus* is unanswerable: if mere belief is the measure of truth and I believe that is not so, do I not believe truly? He who tries to solve the problem '*Quid est veritas?*' cannot rest content with any description of consciousness as a phenomenal fact; he must strive after a reality which alone furnishes all standards of cognitive valuation and for that very reason cannot be ranked as a standard or value; it must be infinitely more.

It should be obvious from the argument sketched above that the kinship between mysticism and agnosticism, about which we hear so much in popular literature, is on the surface. It is said that the agnostic makes a philosophy of what he does not know and the mystic a religion of what nobody knows; the agnostic can believe nothing he can state and the mystic can state nothing he believes. It is not always realized that agnosticism can spring from too little love of truth but mysticism never. That all predicates and descriptions stand in need of correction is not the creed of mystical coteries alone; it is the crux of knowledge. The typically scientific attitude to truth both illustrates and illumines the paradox. Who does not realize in these days that the scientist has no truck with unchangeable truths and that his premises are but working hypotheses which may be outmoded before we have succeeded in understanding them? Not long ago, Professor Max Born wrote: 'I believe that there is no philosophic highroad

in science with epistemological signposts. No, we are in a jungle and finding our way by trial and error, building our road *behind* as we proceed. We do not *find* signposts at cross roads, but our own scouts *erect* them to help the rest.'<sup>7</sup> True; there are no *ready-built* roads and signposts in the forest of existence. But Professor Max Born, with a bland cocksureness that takes our breath away, credits us with a flair for *making* roads and *erecting* signposts. The very notion that knowledge is indefinitely perfectible or corrigible implies that *some* knowledge is ultimate. Unless in some way we already grasp Reality when we set forth on the journey, we cannot even conceive of approaching it by a never-ending series of successive approximations. In an inscrutable sense, consciousness is everywhere at its goal. It has depths which cannot be plumbed by current psychological theories about 'unconscious', 'sub-conscious', and 'sub-liminal' processes. The modern research into 'extra-sensorial' modes of cognition has revealed but a few of its startling possibilities.<sup>8</sup>

We grasp something of the subtlety of mystical dialectics when we realize that the Ultimate Subject of awareness is nowhere, in any state of consciousness, 'given' as an *object*. 'I know that I know' adds nothing to the mystery of 'I know that'. 'I know', as Eddington pointed out,<sup>9</sup> is like the 'idempotent' symbol of modern mathematical physics the square of which is equal to itself ( $J^2 = J$ ). The Self escapes objectification in its own hands. J. W. Dunne and others have spun various plausible and implausible theories round the paradox without noticing its mystical implications. By what means indeed can the Knower be known? Mystical philosophy is empiricism, but in the highest and widest sense of the term: a scrutiny of awareness with all

<sup>7</sup> *Experiment and Theory in Physics* (Cambridge University Press, 1943), p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> *Vide* my article in *Prabuddha Bharata*, November 1950.

<sup>9</sup> *The Philosophy of Physical Science* (Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 162 and p. 202.



that it implies. In Vedantic mysticism, consciousness is not predicated of God; it would be far truer to say that God is predicated of the supreme, blissful Consciousness, necessarily presupposed by all phenomenal levels of consciousness. The mystical Absolute is not only an 'Ultimate' but an 'Intimate'. The profound conviction is enshrined in Swami Vivekananda's well-known saying: 'Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in Man'.

There still remains the paradox of the transcendence of logical opposites. Is it one of the chicaneries of incomprehensibility affected by mysticism? The retort that seems to be called for is that any logic which claims too much and insists that its laws are sacrosanct is refuted from within. Modern non-Aristotelian logic has broken into sanctuaries that were formerly regarded as inviolable. To go no further, it has questioned the unlimited validity of the traditional Law of Excluded Middle—the *tertium non datur*—which prescribes that either a statement (A is B) or its logical contradictory (A is Non-B) must in principle be true in any significant universe of discourse. As early as 1913, Brouwer pointed out that the classification of all mathematical propositions into 'true' and 'false' is neither cogent nor necessary. He contended that Aristotelian logic with its 'Either-Or' abstracts form the class of finite terms; it has been erroneously generalized and applied to the class of trans-finite terms. We know that David Hilbert set out to argue against Brouwer that in principle there are no undecidable formulae in mathematics. We know too that this ambitious 'Formalist programme' had to be abandoned in 1931 when Kurt Gödel showed that in any system of mathematics in which there are definitive conditions for proof there are also undecidable formulae. Every attempt to prove, with the aid of the prescribed definitive conditions, that these formulae are either 'true' or 'false' in principle leads to a contradiction. This remarkable result of Gödel's, disturbing to the complacency of older logicians, is the apogee of a rigorous piece of

mathematical reasoning involving forty-six cumulative definitions.<sup>10</sup> In traditional logic, every proposition is, in principle, though not in practice, either 'true' or 'false', there is a strict dichotomy of propositions. But a system of logic can be constructed in which there is a trichotomy of values: 'true', 'false', and 'indeterminable'. The third value—'indeterminable'—is not sheer meaninglessness; nor is it simple ignorance. It is something which, in principle, is irreducible to either 'true' or 'false' in the given universe of discourse, with its logical operators. Professor Hans Reichenbach of the University of California, U.S.A., has recently attempted to show<sup>11</sup> that this queer trichotomous logic, with a *quantum non datur* instead of a *tertium non datur*, finds an interesting and important application in the new quantum physics.

I make bold to suggest that at the higher levels of experience we have metaphysical analogues of the modern denial of 'Either-Or'. The bizarre possibility, which is suggested by the language of mystics, would forbid our taking up proprietary attitudes to them. There may be realities which can never become 'assertables' in the usual sense, about which no assertion, whether positive or negative, can be made in the language of any ordinary logic. They may, nevertheless, be presupposed by all attempts to specify the most general conditions of 'intelligibility'. We read in the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*<sup>12</sup> that speech falls back, mind falls back, both exhausted, having failed to reach the Brahman. Descriptions of It tend to become clusters of negatives. 'God is a pure Nothing' (*Gott ist ein lauter Nichts*), Silesius said, and Eckhart spoke of the 'silent desert of the Godhead' (*stille Wüste der Gottheit*). The denial or the negation here

<sup>10</sup> For a not very technical account of these advances in mathematical logic, see Max Black: *The Nature of Mathematics* (Kegan Paul, London), pp. 167-8 (Note on Gödel's Theorem) and pp. 186-200.

<sup>11</sup> *The Philosophic Foundations of Quantum Mechanics* (Univ. of California, 1946).

<sup>12</sup> II. 9.



must not be taken as an affirmation of the opposite in the usual sense. The *via negationis* is, paradoxically enough, the *via eminentiae*. Zero, as Sri Aurobindo has remarked,<sup>13</sup> is a convenient mystical symbol of something beyond all our positive constructions. Mere nullity is not ineffable; there is nothing awesome about it; it is not the *mysterium tremendum et fascinum*. What must be envisaged is not the negation of the intellect but its transfiguration and fulfilment. The 'inscrutable' of the mystic is not the vague, misty, or cloudy; it is most decisively *known* in mystical intuition as inexhaustible by any intellectual process. The mystical equation or *mahā-vākya*, which asserts the identity of the Self and the Absolute, does not refer to a numerical or logical identity in the ordinary sense. It is the assertion of meta-logical identity. According to Eckhart, 'so noble is the Soul at her highest and her best, the doctors cannot find her any name'.<sup>14</sup> Sri Ramakrishna said of God: 'His name is Silence'. 'The name that can be named is not the Eternal Name' was Lao-tsze's verdict.<sup>15</sup> This is not simple ignorance, but the 'instructed ignorance' (*docta ignorantia*) of Nicholas of Cusa and Pascal. Sören Kierkegaard cites Hugo St. Victor's remark that, although faith is above reason, 'there is something here as a result of which reason is determined, or which determines reason to honour faith'. And the great Dane adds: 'The effect of reason is in fact to know the paradox negatively'.<sup>16</sup> The

*parā vidyā* (Higher Knowledge) of the Upanishads transcends and yet absorbs *aparā vidyā* (Lower Knowledge).

Mystical experiences are not the delusions of an overwrought fancy or finely spun webs of airy nothing. They are incontestable certainties underlying all our incertitudes. The mystical *a priori* overarches the intellectual and the emotional *a priori*. The language of mystics is to be admired not for its dreamy, luxurious quality but for its vast content towering above our little systems that have their day and then cease to be. The tranquillity and the power of mystics spring from a source elevated above philosophical and theological controversies. Great mystics do not forget—as philosophers and theologians are apt to do—the real dimensions of experience in a minor solace. The deep valleys of gloom and uncertainty are known to them. They are not content with limp exhortations to virtue. They are the custodians of all that is most precious in human culture and civilization. Have they not settled the question of questions and settled it on the right side? Have they not set their singularly venturesome feet on the shining bastions of Olympus? Their lives are dedicated lives. 'So to conduct oneself as to realize oneself—this seems to me the highest attainment'—Ibsen wrote to Bjornson. The goal of all our restless striving has been described by Swami Vivekananda in the exquisite language of paradox:

'Behold, it comes in might,  
The power that is not power,  
The light that is in darkness,  
The shade in dazzling light.

'It is joy that never spoke,  
And grief unfelt, profound,  
Immortal life unlived,  
Eternal death unmourned. . . .

<sup>13</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. I ('Omnipresent Reality and the Universe'), pp. 42-3.

<sup>14</sup> *Meister Eckhart*, adapted from Pfeiffer's translation by C. De B. Evans, (Watkins, London, 1924). Vol. I, xxv, p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> Cited by W. E. Hocking, *Types of Philosophy* (Scribner, N. Y., 1926), pp. 382 *et seq.*

<sup>16</sup> *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, translated and edited by Alexander Dru, Entry 1033. Modern 'existentialists' have claimed Kierkegaard, but his kinship with the mystics is patent. See, for instance, the two curious Entries (*op. cit.* 1308 and 1384) 'The Night of the Absolute' and 'The Relation to God-Silence' and the recurring image of the Deep (*op. cit.* Entry 1065; *Stages on Life's Way*, Oxford

University Press, 1940, p. 402). I shall not attempt to write here the much-needed chapter on Kierkegaard's mysticism.



'It is beauty never seen,  
And love that stands alone,  
It is song that lives unsung,  
And knowledge never known. . . .

'To it the tear-drop goes,  
To spread the smiling form.  
It is the Goal of Life,  
And Peace—its only home!'

## SAINT RAVIDAS

BY SWAMI TEJASANANDA

Saint Ravidas was one of the great luminaries that appeared in the spiritual firmament of India in the fourteenth century. He was a disciple of Swami Ramananda, the celebrated saint of the Middle Ages, and was contemporaneous with Kabir and Dadu, the other illustrious saints of the time. The advent of Ravidas was not merely an accident but was an historical necessity to fulfil some great purpose of the age. The Hindu religion, as is well known to all, was greatly jeopardized owing to the aggressive advance of the proselytizing Islamic faith. Many Hindus, especially of the oppressed and suppressed classes, were absorbed into the fold of Islam, and the very foundation of the cultural life of the Hindus was rudely shaken by the silent infiltration of the alien religion and culture into the texture of Indian thought. Apprehending the danger of ultimate extinction, the upper classes formulated stringent rules and regulations for the preservation of the integrity of Hindu social life. But too much of blind orthodoxy and ultra-conservatism produced its inevitable results. It all the more widened the gulf between the high and the low and brought into ugly prominence the distinction between the Brahmins and the Shudras. Those belonging to the lowest strata of society were gradually deprived of all social privileges and even religion became a mockery in the hands of a privileged few. The grinding rigour of the new principles (though formed with the best of motives) began to eat into the vitals of Hindu society and alienated the sympathy and

loyalty of the Shudras who were at that time treated as no better than serfs, outcastes, and untouchables. But the muffled cry of oppressed humanity could hardly be suppressed. It took the form of a Reform Movement and ushered into the arena of Indian life a brilliant galaxy of saints and sages who turned the tide altogether and threw wide open the portals of Hindu religion for all. We need hardly point out that Mahatma Ravidas was one of such great souls whose spiritual genius blossomed forth to impart new life and vigour into the crumbling fabric of Hindu social order at that critical juncture.

The glory of India lies in the fact that whenever there is any set-back in her religious and cultural life under certain exigent circumstances, saints and prophets spring into being as vehicles for the expression of her latent spiritual forces and hold before all the lofty idealism for which she stands. From time immemorial our cultural ideas have thus travelled down the corridor of time and received added momentum through these spiritual personalities from time to time. As already stated, Ravidas was one of such shining lights. Though born of a cobbler family, Ravidas has ever received unstinted homage from all for his deep devotion to God, intense renunciation, liberal outlook, and profound spiritual realization. In fact his life is a glowing example of how Indian culture has ever taught humanity to pay respect to the Highest Truth, whatever be the medium for its manifestation. For,



India worships the Ideal and not the man as such. Ravidas was an inhabitant of Banaras, the then stronghold of orthodoxy and great centre of culture; but, though innocent of the three R's his life and teachings brought about a phenomenal change in the social outlook of the time. Thus his birth remained no longer a barrier to the spontaneous spread and diffusion of the sweet aroma of Truth which transcends all man-made laws and forms. So says Shankaracharya in the *Vivekacūḍāmani*:

जातिनीतिकुलगोत्रदूरगं,

नामरूपगुणदोषवर्जितं ।

देशकालविषयातिवर्त्ति यत्,

ब्रह्म तत्त्वमसि भावयात्मनि ॥ २५४ ॥

'That which is beyond caste and creed, family and lineage; devoid of name and form, merit and demerit; transcending space, time, and sense-objects—that Brahman art thou, meditate on this in thy mind.' In fact, Ravidas himself also echoes the same truth when he says with the force of his conviction:

जाति पाति पुछै नहि कोई ।

हरिको भजे सो हरिको होई ॥

This realization invested him with a halo of glory and power that compelled homage from all quarters.

Our scriptures declare that a person does not become a Brahmin simply because of his birth in a Brahmin family. One is called a true Brahmin only when he has realized Brahman—the Ultimate Reality—in this very life. It has been said in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III. viii. 10):

अथ व एतदक्षरं गार्गि विदित्वा अस्माह्लोकात्

प्रेति स ब्राह्मणः ।

'O Gārgi, one that has attained to the state of realization of Brahman before his death is the real Brahmin'. This has also been emphasized in the *Manu Samhitā*:

जन्मना जायते शूद्रः संस्कारात् द्विज उच्यते ।

वेदाभ्यासात् भवेत् विप्रो ब्रह्म जानाति ब्राह्मणः ॥

'One is born as a Shudra; but through the thread investiture ceremony he becomes a "twice-born". By the study of the Vedas, he becomes a Vipra; but by the realization of Brahman (the Ultimate Reality) he becomes a Brahmin.' In fact, Saint Ravidas, though born a Shudra, became the real Brahmin, for he realized the Highest Truth—the Brahman of the Vedas—in this very life, and thus rightly became worthy of the worship and respect of all for all ages.

But this blessed state of illumination did not come to him all of a sudden: he had to apply himself heart and soul for this noble end. So intense was his hankering for God-realization that he did neither sleep at night nor enjoy any rest in the day-time; but day and night he remained absorbed in the contemplation of the Lord, ignoring all criticism and brushing aside all sordid concerns of life. So says Ravidas:

रदास राति न सोइये दिवस न करिये स्वाद ।

अह-निसि हरिजो समिरिये छाड़ि सकल प्रतिवाद ॥

For he knew in his heart of hearts that without spiritual discipline and constant meditation on the Lord, the mind-stuff will never be purified and the gate of Truth will also not be opened unto him. Ravidas says:

राम विन संसय गाँठि न छुटे ।

पढ़े गुने कछु समुझि न परई, जौँ लोँ भाव न दरस ।

लोहा हिरन होई धौँ कसे, जौँ पारस नहिँ परसं ॥

'The knots of doubts will not be dissolved without the vision of Sri Rama. Mere study of the scripture, without the proper realization of the true import thereof in the inmost core of one's being, is of no avail. An iron piece, however much it is washed, can never turn into gold unless it is touched by the philosophers' stone.' So also a man can never transcend the limitations of earthly life unless and until he is able to see the light of Truth. It is only in that state of realization that all desire for fruits of action is annihilated and



one attains to Nirvāna—the state of Jivan-mukti. So says Ravidas:

फल कारन फुल बनराई ।  
 उपजे फल तव पुहप चिलाई ॥  
 ज्ञान हि कारन करम कराई ।  
 उपजे ज्ञान न करम नसाई ॥  
 घृत कारन दधि मथ सयान ।  
 जीवन्मुक्ति सदा निरवान ॥  
 कहे रैदास यह परम वैराग ।  
 राम नाम किन जपह सभाग ॥

‘Flower plants are reared for fruits; but when fruits grow, flowers disappear. Works are done for spiritual illumination; but when Knowledge dawns, there remains no need for works. Curd is churned by the wise to produce butter, so Jivanmukti is attained when desires are burnt to ashes. So says Ravidas: “Why dost thou not take the name of the Lord? For, that is the highest form of renunciation”.’

So deep was his devotion to the Lord that even the most precious things of the earth had no attraction for him. Though a realized soul, he did not give up his vocation as a cobbler but stuck to it to the end of his life as a true servant of the Lord. It is narrated in the *Bhaktamālā* that God Himself, being deeply moved to see His own devotee (Ravidas) labour so much for his livelihood from sunrise to sunset, came in the guise of a monk, and offered a philosophers’ stone wherewith to turn base metals into gold. But Ravidas’s mind was so greedless and free from the tentacles of desire that he refused to accept even such a tempting gift. However, due to the insistence of the monk, Ravidas asked him to put it somewhere on the roof. But after a year when the said monk came again to enquire about Ravidas’s fortune, he found the devotee deeply engaged in his own cobbler’s profession, as before, without in the least utilizing the philosophers’ stone for the acquisition of wealth. This must be an object-lesson to all. His life demonstrates that no work is mean if it is done in a spirit of worship of the Lord and God Himself takes care of His devotee if he

depends entirely upon Him. It is wrong to assume that birth determines the actual worth of a man in human society. A tree is known by the fruits it bears and a man is likewise judged by his qualities of head and heart and not by the trade, vocation, or the family to which he is born. That is why Ravidas is still an idol of human society and is the recipient of unstinted love and reverence from all, irrespective of caste, creed, or colour.

We are passing through a period of momentous changes and the atmosphere is thick with immense possibilities. The age of exclusive privileges is gone—gone for ever, and a new era is being ushered into existence with the achievement of independence in India. We can, with confidence, now look forward to the day when those who have so long been trodden under feet by the privileged few would rise to the full flame of life and wrest from the hands of destiny the powers and privileges which they are equally entitled to enjoy. But it must not also be forgotten that treasures placed in the hands of unworthy persons are more often than not misused. Similar is the case with powers and privileges. An individual, bereft of all culture and education, can hardly have the intellectual eligibility to retain and utilize the privileges when they are given unto him. It is therefore the bounden duty of those who call themselves leaders of the country to educate the illiterate masses—the downtrodden brethren of our land—so that they can get over their age-long inferiority complex and rise to the full stature of manhood, and work and forge ahead along with others with their head held aloft, for the well-being of the country. To neglect this primary duty is to cut at the very root of our organic life and create conditions for the release of disruptive forces to the greatest detriment of our social order. When properly educated, these masses themselves will prove to be the impregnable citadel of strength for the nation.

But along with secular education, they must also be admitted to the treasure-house of our spiritual culture that is imbedded in the



lofty gospels of the *Gita* and the Upanishads. They must be taught that all religions are but so many paths leading to the same goal and that everyone from the highest to the lowest is the embodiment of infinite potentiality. Swami Vivekananda, one of the most rational exponents of Hindu thought and culture, rightly said, 'Our poor people, these down-trodden masses of India, require to hear and to know what they really are. Aye, let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness or strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind everyone, there is that Infinite Soul, assuring the infinite possibility and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good.' Today the voice of our Rishis,—which is the voice of India—is coming to us with a message of hope for the oppressed and the downtrodden—the real backbone of the country. 'Forget not', said the great Swami, 'that thy social order is but the

reflex of the Infinite universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers'. This realization led Swami Vivekananda to lay down his life at the altar of the service of humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, or colour; this love for the low and the lowly made our beloved Mahatma Gandhi sacrifice his all in the recent years. And this consciousness of the one universal Soul existing in the rich and the poor, in the high and the low, has also secured for Saint Ravidas an abiding place of love and honour in the hearts of his countrymen. Let us follow in the footsteps of such a spiritual genius and remember his inspiring words:

पथ अकेला वराड हेला, किसको देद सनेह बे ।  
हरिजन हरिहि और ना जाने तजे आन तन त्यागो ।  
कहे रैदास सोइ जन निर्मल निसि दिन जो अनुरागी ॥

## THE SANĀTANA AND OTHER RELIGIOUS OUTLOOKS

BY JATINDRA MOHAN GANGULI

If I am asked what particular characteristics of the Hindu religious philosophy strike me most I would almost instinctively say its wide catholicity and its unlimited, all-embracing liberality. Instinctively because I have so often felt and thought of it.

There is nothing like a halt, a hesitation, a doubtful discrimination or a vain presumption anywhere, at any time, in its sweep and survey of all things, whether physical or spiritual. Its restful eternal pose is ever unruffled; its depthless gaze is ever unblurred; and its infinite perspective is ever unobstructed. For, it has never sought to thread-weave through this incident and that, this peculiarity and that variety, this miracle and that revelation. All

those have been ridiculously insignificant to its penetrating vision which goes down to the fundamental unifying level of them all.

Differences, discriminations, doubts, and fears—all spring from haziness of vision and confusion of thoughts. Not looking through and beyond we catch at every little thing, every common as well as queer manifestation of Nature, and get stumbled at their strange diversities which we cannot connect and understand. We try to reason up from step to step, but come back after a round to where we had started from, or lose the chain somewhere on the way. And when we so reason and postulate from trifles and insignificances we tend to become assertive of our own selves and critical



of others. This because the view-points from different mole-hills are bound to vary and the experiences out of changing and shifting circumstances must disagree, and so our approaches and presumptions become conflicting and dogmatic.

But the Hindu approach was different. The great Hindu thinkers and Rishis observed, and observed deeply too, the springing and tossing up of things, their mingling and interaction, but they realized them all to be mere passing 'surface actions' on the one and the same depthless sea, to get at the bottom of which they meditated, retiring into the seclusion of rock-caves to be undisturbed by storms or tremors, noise or echoes.

It is the physical senses which cause diversions and create illusions and confusions. Nature's book is over there wide open without the many inscrutable mysteries which seem to cover its every page. The cloak of mystery is not Nature's own, but it is the creation of our own senses which keep our inner self, that can really see and read, stupefied. This realization comes more as we curb and master those senses. The pricks of our conscience and the impulses caused at times even by our suppressed instincts, which are suprasensuous perceptions,—all these point to one thing, namely, that truer and clearer knowledge comes when our subtler self is relieved of the pressure of images and projections superposed on it by our roving, fickle senses.

The modern way is different. It proceeds from the externals, from one layer to another, from an elevation here to a depression there. In this way, as one goes along watching and scrutinizing them with one's excited senses, one loses the all-embracing perspective and the zigzag interlinking between the various things and objects which do not seem to correlate. Different view-points are thus naturally developed; different angularities in judging things are formed, and vanity, obstinacy, and narrowness follow. 'I am right in my conclusion; my way leads on to the goal and not any other; and so follow me, otherwise you will fall and will go no farther'. Such assertion

comes, and it leads to all sorts of pettiness, jealousy, confusion, rivalry, and even strife and quarrels. In the whirlwind of each side's propaganda, people's instinctive impulses are suppressed, and the chord of inherited tradition, which could keep them steady on their track, is broken. Their concentration is lost, their steadfastness to faith in their destiny is shaken, and swaying this side and that and tossing about in changing currents they make little progress. That is not the way of a philosophy which requires quietness, coolness, and steadiness in its pursuit. But that is what is found all around these days, in religion, in politics, in social relationship, in individual conduct, and in every interrelation between man and man. Different associations and societies, different religious organizations, and different governments,—each pretending and presuming too much, and each finding fault with the other, are every day coming into existence,—not to simplify life, but rather to complicate matters by pushing what each one calls its 'culture propagation' for general welfare.

But what can the wrong be in Man in whom dwells the omniscient Soul, the all-pervading Spirit? His awakening comes when he is left to himself, when his externals distract him less. To impose a culture on him, to ask and teach him to dress like this, to pray like that, to throw away his old fold and come into a new one, is to put him out of place with himself. The blind assertiveness of the present ways of 'culture propaganda' overlooks the great truth that man, as any other creature, has a great indelible tradition of his Karma behind him. He has been coming through it life after life, one Karma causing the tendency to another corresponding Karma. To break away from the natural sequence of one's Karma and its fruits (*karma-phala*) is perhaps hardly possible. But short-sighted reformists and missionaries, by weight of their propaganda, try to break the steel link of this sequence and of past tradition, and pull away an individual from the grooved orbit along which he has been moving and evolving.



But taking the fuller perspective of a man's past, present, and his future, the Hindu realized that whatever his individual evolutionary path may be, however it may differ from another's, like all streams flowing into the depthless sea, each one's path is inevitably threading towards the great fundamental Oneness, from which all have emerged and into which all will finally merge. 'That is your *māyā*', said he, as he smiled philosophically and sat lost in his meditation. 'It is You all through and all over, diversely manifested in your own *līlā*.'

That little and simple, though all-covering, realization dispels the Hindu's fears and doubts, and keeps him steady in storms and gales, in cross-currents and whirlwinds of clashing dogmas, of violent fanaticism, and of misery-creating missionary zeal. He lets things easy; lets them move undisturbed in their respective channels. When a stranger comes, he addresses him as 'His *mūrti*', which means an incarnate of Him. Everyone he looks upon as His *mūrti*, His incarnate. When the revenge-mad, blood-thirsty alien rulers in India pursued the sepoys, after the Mutiny, and struck with a bayonet a Sadhu, sitting with closed eyes under a tree, taking him for a sepoy in disguise, the latter opened his eyes and just said, 'Thou also art He'. He only saw another *mūrti* of the *same* that he was in his thoughts communing with.

That is the characteristic Hindu spirit, the spirit which keeps him self-possessed. It is this which makes a 'culture-imposing' on another or a 'religion-pushing' in different lands appear meaningless and even harmful to him. 'Leave your path and come with me', he says to none. 'Look at the uniform, encircling horizon yonder, and go your own way, which must be easy and natural to you. The faith and tradition in which you are born are best for you.' The great emphasis which the Hindu has given to that has been due to his deep realization of the Absolute Oneness that is behind the interplay and illusions of matter and of matter-bound physical senses. I often wonder who he was who called, and how

he was led to call, this philosophy Sanātana Dharma—a religion, a philosophy, for all time. How deep his insight had been, how supreme his realization!

Indeen it is when a distinction is made between things and things, objects and objects that trifles and insignificances get the importance which makes us lose sight of the entire whole which contains them. 'By space the universe encompasses me as an atom; by thought I encompass it', so said Pascal; and truly by concentration and meditation on the subtler and ultrasensuous perceptions we can transgress all limitations, widen all narrowness in our judgment and appraisal of values, and dissolve all disagreements on petty interpretations of things and happenings and silly and obstinate presumptions over different hypotheses. A devout Christian, when speaking to me, one day, about God-finding, told me of a convert to Christianity going to the missionary who had converted him and telling him that in spite of his embracing Christianity he felt himself no nearer to God. The missionary enquired if he had thrown away all the idols which he formerly used to worship, to make sure, obviously, that he had cut himself completely from his former ties, traditions, and devotional inclinations.

That would not be the Hindu way. He would never ask you to drift away from the ties and traditions in which you are born, or to discard your manner of worship and prayer. Far from it. He would instead say, 'You are as well placed as any one else on the great pilgrimage route; and your destination is the same as mine. Stick to and hold up the traditional faith of your family and that will surely take you to the journey's end. Pray mutely or in whatever language your lips can speak. Worship the "stone", the "tree", the "river", the beloved idol,—whatever you have been worshipping. Have no doubts in any of them. Discard nothing. Deviate not from the long path that you have been following in the many lives that you have left behind.'

How sweet and reassuring such message is to the distressed and the wavering weakling!



To tell a *kafir* that his way to heaven is barred unless he embraces a different faith and to intimidate him with the sword if he does not listen, or to ask a heathen to throw away his long-worshipped idol and jump into a new mode of life and to start praying and worshipping in a new style over again is not to give him peace of mind, or to steady his faltering steps, or to strengthen his faith in his God-made destiny. It is rather to make his doubts deeper, his unsteadiness unsteadier, his confusion worse confounded. Today he changes over to this; tomorrow he is impatient to change to another faith; and thereafter he seeks another short cut, not understanding the great truth that short cuts have no meaning or significance in what he is really after, and that in the eternity of time men have been going through all the same to their destiny long before this prophet was born or that religion was revealed. Realization, the ultimate realization, comes from within when the mind is left serene and undiverted by thoughts about short cuts, and is less attacked and influenced by cross-

propaganda. How many of the ills and miseries, sufferings and cruelties which the human as well as the animal world has suffered have not been due to the short-sighted, fanatic as well as selfish religious and other forms of propaganda by individuals, organized bodies, and State governments! World peace, international stability, and individual steadiness, which are so miserably wanting today, will come when there will be less of such tearing, harmful, and interested propaganda, and when the whole thing is observed in its widest perspective. And then the great underlying teaching of the Sanatana (Dharma) philosophy, which has come through unknown ages, which has withstood so many violent attacks and so much vandalic propaganda in memorable history, and which will live through to eternity after all ripples and eddies in 'culture propaganda' have died down and after the politico-religious missionaries are exhausted, will be better and more universally perceived and accepted.

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## THE ETHICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF BUDDHISM

BY DR. N. V. BANERJI

*(Continued from the May issue)*

It is, however, certain that the division of the Sangha, itself a product of freedom, marked the beginning of the prevalence of a spirit of freedom in the Buddhist world, the like of which never existed so long as Buddha presided over the density of Buddhism, backed by the support of the ruling class of his time. Yet there is no gainsaying the fact that the various shapes which Buddhism took under the protection of freedom sank from the excellence of Buddha's own faith. Hence the paradox inherent in the actual development of Buddhism. This, in conjunction with the fact noted

above, viz. that the Order of the monks stood between Buddhism and the laity, indeed, shows how historical Buddhism is a travesty of the true faith of Buddha himself. For a sympathetic student of Buddhism there is, therefore, no consolation except the belief that the religion of the Master is what Buddhism would have been without the shackles of the Order of monks and the patronage of the ruling class and men in power, a religion which could produce a better India and a better world, free from many of the evils of individual and social



life that have persisted through the centuries.

We need not go far to seek for an explanation of the deviation from the true spirit of Buddha's own faith which is the key-note of the historical development of Buddhism. It is to be found in the rare combination of the shrewdest realism with the boldest and the most profound idealism in the personality that was Gautama the Buddha, a combination which neither Socrates nor Jesus exemplified in their life and conduct. As a man of exceptionally far-sighted vision, Buddha was possessed of a new faith. But in his endeavours to build up a social order on the foundation of the truths newly discovered by him, he compromised his idealism with actual facts. Besides his creation of the Order of monks and his alliance with the ruling class in the fulfilment of his own mission, his position with regard to the admission of women to the Order reveals clearly the conflict between the realist and the idealist in him and the nature of the compromise between the two.

There is perhaps no evidence either for proving or disproving that there were non-Buddhist female ascetics in Buddha's time, though it is a fact that Jainism which originated about the same time as Buddhism had an Order of nuns with an old history. But it is probable that the question of the creation of an Order of female ascetics arose for the first time in the case of Buddhism and as early as Buddha had hardly completed the fifth year of his preaching.<sup>1</sup> Hence the realist in Buddha, naturally apprehensive of the introduction of an unusual change in the prevailing social customs, stubbornly refused to grant the request of Mahāpajāpati, his aunt and foster-mother, as well as that made by Ananda on her behalf, for her admission to the monastic Order. But the idealist in him saw no difference between men and women in the moral and religious spheres of life. In conse-

quence, he not only had as his disciples females alongside of males, but acquainted Ananda with his definite view that women are as capable of reaping the fruits of conversion and attaining to Arhatship as men.<sup>2</sup> Yet when he created the Order of nuns by first ordaining Mahapajapati, it was his realism that induced him to impose on her and all future nuns eight strict rules (*garudhamma*), condemning them, thereby, to a status inferior to that of the monks. The rules are: (1) A nun even of a hundred years' standing should salute, and rise up before a monk even if he is just ordained; (2) A nun shall not spend Retreat in a place where there is no monk; (3) Twice a month a nun shall ascertain from the Order of monks the time for the fortnightly meeting (Upostha) and for the coming of a monk to give admonition; (4) The nuns shall hold Pavarana, the final ceremony after Retreat, in the assembly of the monks as well as in that of the nuns; (5) Certain offences committed by the nuns shall be dealt with by both the assembly of monks and of nuns; (6) A nun who has been in apprenticeship and trained in the six rules for two years will ask for ordination from both assemblies; (7) A nun shall not rebuke or abuse a monk on any account; (8) A nun is forbidden to make official statements to a monk, but the latter is not forbidden to do the same to the former.

After the Order of nuns became an accomplished fact it was again the realist in Buddha that fulminated: 'If, Ananda, women had not retired from household life to the homeless one, under the doctrine and discipline announced by the Tathāgata, religion, Ananda, would long endure; a thousand years would the Good Doctrine abide. But since, Ananda, women have now retired from household life to the homeless one, under the doctrine and discipline announced by the Tathagata, not long, Ananda, will religion endure; but five hundred years, Ananda, will the Good Doctrine abide.' But even then it is not wholly correct to hold, as Warren does, that

<sup>1</sup> According to A. Schiefner, the institution of the Order of nuns came into existence in the seventh year of Buddha's preaching.

<sup>2</sup> *Cullavagga*, X.



the 'nuns seem never to have played an influential role in the history of Buddhism'. It appears that the progressive outlook of the idealist in Buddha did not altogether fail to sustain the nuns in playing a prominent part in the Buddhist society. If the records in the *Therigātha* are of any historical value, then it might be believed on their authority that of the eighty great disciples of Buddha as many as twelve including Mahapajapati were women. Of these women those who deserve special mention are: Khema, wife of Bimbisara, who, as previously mentioned, gave instructions to King Pasenadi; Dhammadinna ('Chief of those who discourse on the doctrine') to whom the whole *Cullavedala-Sutta* in the *Majjhima-Nikāya* is attributed; and Kisa Gotami (Gotami the Lean) who, according to one account, attained Arhatship and became 'the first of those who wear rough robes'. According to *Therigātha*, however, Kisa Gotami was a young Kshatriya maiden whose utterance of a verse in praise of Buddha made the latter meditative and led him to decide to leave the world in search of the peace of Nirvāṇa. But the *Mahāvastu* records that this lady was Mrgi, the mother of Ananda. Hence the plausibility of the account in the commentaries that Kisa Gotami was born and married at Savatthi, and that the death of her son brought her in contact with Buddha and ultimately led to her ordination and attainment of Arhatship.

Another evidence for the respect and esteem which women once commanded in the Buddhist society is provided by the tradition which says that Ananda, who was, undoubtedly, one of the most progressive of Buddha's disciples and to whose efforts the ordination of Mahapajapati and the creation of the Order of nuns were, in fact, due, allowed women to salute the body of the departed Master first. But there is no doubt that the situation changed after the death of Buddha. Even at the First Council at Rajagaha, which was held immediately after the death of Buddha, the mental atmosphere was so reactionary that Ananda was compelled to confess that it was a fault on his part to have

allowed the body of Buddha to be saluted first by women and to have striven for the admission of Mahapajapati to the monastic Order. It is, therefore, no wonder that in the subsequent ages the spirit of the realist Buddha prevailed over that of the idealist in him and the former's aversion to the admission of women as nuns came to be shared by the Buddhist church and produced its effect in the Buddhist world at large.

It was again between the progressive outlook of the idealist and the conservative disposition of the realist in Buddha that his whole attitude towards the Brahminical institution of caste took its definite form. Failure to realize this is responsible for either of two extreme views: (1) that the Buddhist Sangha was aristocratic in the beginning and was made up of members belonging to the two higher castes, Brahmana and Kshatriya; (2) that it was particularly sympathetic to the depressed and the downtrodden and specially conveyed a message of salvation to them. We have, however, no means at our disposal for ascertaining with certainty how far Brahminical customs were established in the east of India or in the original home of Buddhism in the sixth century B.C. But it is certain that the Brahminical view of the functions of the various divisions of society reached this region about that age and met with protests including those of Buddha and the Brotherhood established by him. Yet there is hardly any evidence to show that Buddha tried or even contemplated to abolish caste as a social institution. He rather proceeded in many matters on the tacit acceptance of the view of castes as functional divisions of society. But of the castes understood in this sense he recognized the Kshatriyas as the best and the highest as against the Brahminical view which assigned this position to the Brahmanas. Buddha was never tired of criticizing and rejecting the claims of the Brahmanas as enunciated by Brahminism. At the same time he proclaimed that the Kshatriya caste came into existence earlier than the other castes, and that too in fulfilment of the moral demand



for the eradication of the evils in primitive society. Thus the *Agganna-Sutta* in the *Digha-Nikāya* states that the primitive human beings, originally of a spiritual bent of mind, gradually became materialized and began to indulge in evil practices whereupon they assembled and elected the ablest among them as their controlling authority who became their first king and originator of the Kshatriya caste. The *Visuddhi-Magga* also puts forward a similar theory of the origin of the Kshatriya caste thus: The future Buddha was elected by the people of this world cycle as their chief. Hence he was called the Great Elect. As he was also the lord of the fields (Khetta) he was called the Khattiya (or Kshatriya); and as he pleased the people by his even justice he was called Rāja (king). Thus a community of Kshatriyas was formed with the future Buddha as its head, and by degrees the Brahmanas and the other castes arose.

It is in the light of this theory of the origin of caste that a satisfactory explanation can be had of the well-known claim of the Shakyas, a Kshatriya clan of which Buddha was born, to belong to the best caste. In the same manner we have also to explain the legend of future Buddha's choice to be born of a Kshatriya family. In the introduction to the Jataka, which gives a continuous legendary account of the birth of Buddha, it is obviously on the basis of the theory of the superiority of the Kshatriya caste that the future Buddha is represented as speaking thus about his choice of the family of which he is to be born: 'The Buddhas are never born into a family of the peasant caste, or of the servile caste; but into one of the warrior (Kshatriya) caste or of the Brahmana caste, whichever at the time is the higher in public estimation. The warrior caste is now the higher in public estimation. I will be born into a warrior family.'

Nevertheless, in his discourses, Buddha treated the Brahmanas with respect and even admitted their superiority, of course, understanding the word 'Brahmana' in the sense of a man of virtue and wisdom or, sometimes, as an enlightened person whose 'fettters are

destroyed', that is, an Arhat, but never as a member belonging by birth to the caste bearing that name. The *Sonadanda-Sutta* in the *Digha-Nikāya*, for example, states that the Brahmana Sonadanda is convinced by Buddha that the essential qualities of a Brahmana are not noble birth, the repeating of the Vedas and allied branches of knowledge, and physical beauty but virtue and wisdom. Moreover, 'monks and Brahmanas' and 'monks or Brahmanas' are expressions which, as the scriptures reveal, Buddha used very frequently—which shows that in his estimation the monks and the Brahmanas either stood on an equal plane or were identical. More clear on this point is the following reply of Buddha to the question put to him by a monk of Brahmana origin as to the characteristic marks of a Brahmana: 'They that have expelled evil thoughts, and in conduct are mindful; the enlightened, whose fetters are destroyed, they truly in the world are Brahmanas'. The *Tevijja-Sutta* in the *Digha-Nikāya*, having first refuted the Brahminical conception of the Brahmana by proclaiming the vanity of the knowledge of the three Vedas, proceeds to teach, likewise, that the 'three knowledges' (that is, knowledge of the three Vedas) are, really, the three Brahma-vihāras which an Arhat attains on enlightenment.

It does not, of course, stand to reason to suppose that Buddha proclaimed the superiority of the Kshatriyas simply because he himself belonged to that caste. Why he had, then, done so is sufficiently explained by the fact that he was not an uncompromising idealist but a realist also, and as such he thought of following the path of least resistance in the fulfilment of his mission, by enlisting the support of the kings of his time who invariably belonged to the Kshatriya caste. In this is expressed the same spirit of the realist in him which prevented him from undertaking any social reform that would be revolutionary under the circumstances. Nevertheless, the idealist in Buddha was not wholly inactive in this respect. It is not by proclaiming the superiority of the Kshatriya caste but



by offering the new definition of the Brahmana that Buddha really entered his protest against the Brahminical theory of caste. In this he had definitely in view a new social order as based upon the sole foundation of virtue and wisdom and unaffected by the distinctions of caste and colour. It is precisely a social order of this description that Buddha felt the urgency of establishing at least on a small scale, and as a result of his endeavours in this direction there came into existence for the first time in the history of India the Order of monks. The Buddhist Order was, in fact, a casteless society. Its membership was not confined to the higher castes but was open to all including persons of low caste. Buddha is said to have taught:

'Just as, O monks, the great rivers such as the Ganga, Jumna, Achirāvati, Sarabhu, and Mahi, when they fall into the ocean lose their former names and Gotras, and are known as the ocean, even so do the four castes of Kshatriyas, Brahmanas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, when they have gone forth in the doctrine and discipline taught by the Tathagata from a house to a homeless life, lose their former names and Gotras, and are known as ascetics, sons of the Shākyan'.

Thus, in the deeper vision of the idealist in Buddha, ancestry and caste appeared as only superficial features of human nature and wisdom and virtue as the bonds of the unity and solidarity of mankind.

(Concluded)

## THE CONCEPTION OF THE SPORTIVE ABSOLUTE

BY PROF. AKSHAYA KUMAR BANERJEA

(Continued from the May issue)

### VII. ABSOLUTE SPIRIT AND ABSOLUTE POWER —THE PROBLEM OF THEIR RELATION

The human consciousness is thus led by the necessity of its own essential nature to two ultimate concepts for the rational comprehension of its own unbroken conscious life and of the objective cosmic order. As the consciousness and the objective universe are essentially correlated, their ultimate ground must be the same Absolute Reality. This demands that the Absolute Spirit and the 'absolute power' must be identical. That is to say, they must be so conceived that either of them involves the other.

The human reason, however, finds some difficulty in uniting or equating logically the concepts of Spirit and power. The Spirit is conceived as transcendent, self-luminous, above time and space, above all changes and

diversities, above all relations and imperfections, while the power is conceived as essentially active, dynamic, self-modifying, manifesting itself in time and space in the forms of relative diversities and again destroying these diversities and transforming them into unity. The power is active, but not self-luminous, while the Spirit is self-luminous, but not active. How can they be identified?

#### (a) *Dualism*

Failure to equate Spirit and power or to reduce the one into the other has sometimes led the human reason to conceive them as two self-existent independent realities, eternally, but *unaccountably*, associated with each other. The one 'absolute power' naturally transforms itself from the state of absolute non-manifestation and homogeneous unity into diverse forms of manifested realities, subtle and gross, mental



and material, stage by stage, and evolves itself into the cosmic system. The Spirit associated with it witnesses and illumines all the stages of its self-manifestations and presents the finer manifestations of it as themselves self-conscious. The phenomenal consciousness is itself regarded as a transformation of the essentially unconscious power, but converted into consciousness by the light of the Spirit. In order to account for the individualities of the phenomenal egos consistently with the oneness of the 'absolute power', 'Spirits' are sometimes reckoned as many, each being beginninglessly associated with the power. This association is regarded as of the nature of *indiscrimination*, which does not produce any kind of real change in the essential character of the Spirit or the 'Spirits'.

The human reason cannot however rest satisfied with such suppositions. If they are eternally associated, is it not more reasonable to conceive the *Absolute Spirit as associated with the 'absolute power' or the 'absolute power' as illumined by the Absolute Spirit* to be the real Absolute? This would mean that the Absolute Reality is self-active Spirit or self-conscious power, and not mutually independent Spirit and power mysteriously associated together. There is no undeniable ground for holding that Spirit and power are two independent realities associated *ab extra*. Association or conjunction or indiscrimination or whatever it may be called is a phenomenon in time, since, though it may not have any absolute beginning at any definite point of time, it is supposed to have an end in time. Such a phenomenon would logically demand the presence of a higher Reality, which can be regarded as a ground of unity of Spirit and power or which can hold them together. If such a Reality is unthinkable, it is more reasonable to conceive the Spirit as essentially endowed with power and the power as pertaining to the essential nature of the Spirit. To think of innumerable 'Spirits', each above time and space, above number and relation, above individuality and egohood, above causality and change, is altogether useless and illogical. The

supposition of a kingdom of countless 'Spirits' would necessitate a modification of the conception of the 'Spirits' and would also demand the existence of one Supreme Spirit which would be the ground of their unity or of which they would be finite and relative self-expressions.

Accordingly, the human reason is led to the conclusion that the conception of *one Absolute Spirit with 'absolute power' pertaining to its essential nature* is the true conception of the Absolute Reality, which the consciousness eternally longs for. The power is then thought of as the body or the means of self-expression of the Spirit. It exists eternally in, by, and for the Spirit. The power apart from the Spirit is an abstraction, and the Spirit apart from the power is also an abstraction. The *Spirit with the power* is conceived as the divine personality.

#### (b) *Non-Dualism*

Sometimes the consciousness is so deeply impressed by the truth of the absolutely changeless, differenceless, powerless, actionless, self-luminous, transcendent character of the Spirit that it refuses to make any compromise with regard to this question and becomes ready to make any sacrifice on this account. If this Absolute Spirit, so conceived, fails by itself to furnish any adequate logical ground for the causal explanation of the great world order, the reality of the world order may be sacrificed for the sake of the purity of the Spirit; but still the power, the existence of which has to be admitted for the causal explanation of this cosmic system, cannot be accepted as pertaining to the essential nature of the Spirit. Accordingly, the world system is conceived by it as an illusory entity—something falsely appearing as real—and the power which manifests itself in the form of this world is conceived as of the nature of positive ignorance creating the illusion. The Absolute Spirit is, according to this view, the sole Reality; it is not the real cause of any real effect; it has no self-manifestation in time and space, in the forms of changing finite diversities; it has no real power, either pertaining to its nature or



associated with it, to create or to appear as or to manifest itself into a plurality of real entities. It eternally exists all alone in its self-shining nature. It is on account of the mysterious operation of the mysterious ignorance that the world of countless orders of spatial and temporal existences illusorily appears on the Absolute Spirit which eternally exists by itself as its substratum. The existence of the world is sustained and revealed by the self-luminous existence of the Spirit. But what it actually or phenomenally is, is only an illusory *appearance* of the Spirit, due to the inexplicable presence of ignorance. The cosmic power or energy—the Mother of the universe—is here equated with cosmic ignorance, which, however, cannot be described as either real or unreal or as anybody's ignorance.

This view-point is supported by various kinds of subtle logical arguments. But in plain terms it means that the Absolute Spirit unaccountably appears as a system of conscious individuals and unconscious objects. The world system remains really unexplained. The Absolute Spirit, being not essentially a dynamic cause or power, cannot adequately account for the existence or appearance of this world system. The ideas of *illusion* and *dream* and *ignorance* are obtained from our finite and imperfect experiences. Illusion and ignorance become altogether meaningless without reference to already existent imperfect minds, which are liable to illusion and error, which have the capacity for knowing, but whose knowledge is confined within limits. Dreams also are possible only to such imperfect finite minds. As all finite individual consciousnesses are here supposed to owe their apparent existence to such ignorance, illusion, and dream, how can these be explained? The Absolute Spirit, being without any process of knowledge and liability to error cannot be conceived as a victim of ignorance and illusion with regard to its own character. When the process of ignorance and illusion remains logically inexplicable consistently with the sole reality of the Absolute Spirit, the assertion or supposition that the process is eternal in time is of

no help. It is difficult to conceive rationally how ignorance exists (without of course really existing) eternally without or independent of any finite and imperfect mind, how it can operate upon or stand in eternal relation to the Absolute Spirit, how it can be of the nature of a magnificent power capable of creating from within itself such a well ordered world and eternally maintaining its unity in the midst of ever new diversities.

Again, can the human consciousness rest satisfied with thinking that the wonderful order and harmony of the objective universe, the unerring mathematical precision and regularity with which all the diverse kinds of phenomena occur, the amazing adaptation of remote antecedents to remote consequents, of particular facts to entire departments of nature and of every department of experience to every other department, and the progressive realization of lofty ideals in and through all the complicated courses of phenomena, are nothing but the creation of an inexplicable ignorance or an illusory power? It is for the adequate rational conception and explanation of the world order that the human consciousness is impelled from within to seek for the Absolute Reality. But if the Absolute Reality is so conceived that it fails to account for the world order and necessitates the denial of the reality of this world of relativity and its dynamic cause, can the consciousness feel that it has truly attained the ultimate object of its quest?

### (c) *Efficient and Material Cause*

Attempts have sometimes been made to reconcile the Absolute Spirit and the 'absolute power' by conceiving the former as the efficient cause and the latter as the material cause of the cosmic order. This view does not of course require the sacrifice of either of them for the sake of the other. But if the Spirit and the power are independent realities, how can they come into a suitable relation and co-operate with each other for the creation of the universe? If they are two necessary elements of the cosmic process, it is more reasonable to suppose the ultimate cause of this world order as some



reality which is superior to both the Spirit and the power and of which they should be regarded as two factors or two aspects or two forms of self-expression. The human consciousness demands that the ultimate cause of the universe

must be one, and must be efficient as well as material cause. It cannot rest contented with dualism in any form.

(To be continued)

## STUDIES IN THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

BY DR. NALINI KANTA BRAHMA

(Continued from the May issue)

### V

#### UPANISHAD AS ĀTMA-VIDYĀ

The Upanishads have primarily preached the Ātma-vidyā or the science of the Self and have dealt with Agni-vidyā or Prāṇa-vidyā only secondarily. The Atman or the Self is the fundamental Reality and is identical with the Absolute or Brahman;— this is the central teaching of the Upanishads and is to be found nowhere else in this unambiguous form. Brahman or the Absolute is to be worshipped as the Self—*ātma ityeva upāsita*. The difference that is noticed between the *jīva* (individual) and Brahman (Absolute) is all due to adjuncts (*upādhi*) and has no basis in reality. The same identical, indivisible *cit* is present everywhere, same in the smallest as well as in the largest, same, verily the same, in the *jīva* as well as in Brahman. The talk of any division or variety, any manifoldness, in the pure *cit*, which is the one fundamental Reality, is not only unintelligible but absurd as well.

baffled and is still baffling commentators both in the East and the West. Where the description is all-absorbing, it applies to the Prāṇa or the Creative Energy which we have dealt with in the preceding chapter. Where the descriptions evidently refer to the transcendental principle of which every category falls short, it must have to be supposed to be intended for the Absolute, the Atman or Brahman. The Prāṇa is not anything different from the Atman and has no reality apart from it and is only a step towards the Absolute; and so there is no inconsistency in the twofold description found in the Upanishads.

The Atman or Brahman is the one indivisible Reality and hence it allows no division or difference. The distinction between agent (*kartā*), forms of action (*kāraka*), and the result of action (*phala*) has no place in the indivisible and homogeneous Atman. In the realization of the Atman, there is no room for any action, not even for worship implying the distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped. The manifoldness of the universe, the entire variety and multiplicity, cannot have any place in the *ekarasa* (homogeneous) Brahman. They must be non-existent, must be something like magical appearance, viewed in relation to the Atman or Brahman. They have their place in the universe when the Absolute, without departing in any way from

The Upanishads abound in puzzling descriptions of the Reality. Sometimes it is described as full with all details, as all smell, all taste, as the lord of all, as everything of this universe; at other times it is described as 'neti, neti', not this, not this, thus denying all characteristics belonging to this universe. The solution seems to be easy though it has



its unchanging absoluteness, creates the world of duality and difference. As no departure from the unchanging nature of the Absolute can be conceived and as the Absolute has repeatedly been described as *cidekarasa* and *prajñānaghana*, as pure *cit* and *cit* alone, as Pure Consciousness, there is no other way but to regard the world of duality and difference as creation (*vivarta sṛṣṭi*), as self-imposed appearance (*āhārya adhyāsa*). This is the difference between transformation (*vikāśa*) and creation (*vivarta*). It is not a mere passing or transition from the cause to the effect, not a mere change of form, not transformation (*vikāśa*), but it is genuine creation, a *vivarta sṛṣṭi*, the producing of an appearance which is no mere change of form or transformation. It is an appearance, not an effect; a superimposition, not a manifestation; a creation, not a transformation. The Upanishads have clearly drawn the distinction between the Agni-vidyā and the Brahma-vidyā, between the science of collection or aggregation or gradual bridging over the gulf between the elements broken up into infinite multiplicity on the one hand and the science of the realization of the transcendent One that knows no division and multiplicity. This transcendent One cannot by its very nature be divided into the Many. Innumerable finites or fractions can never make up the One, the Full, the Perfect. The possibility of any finite attaining the Infinite also becomes lost for ever inasmuch as the Infinite, if it be conceived to be actually divided into many finites, no longer remains the Infinite which is Full and Perfect. It has been the endeavour of the Vedānta never to miss this point and it has always maintained that the Absolute never departs from its indivisible and unchanging Fullness and that the appearance of the multiplicity is therefore a creation, not a manifestation, a magical show as it were and not an actual transformation or division. Even when the Virāṭ creates the world of duality, it is clearly stated that He retains His own nature and the creation is due to His *satya-sankalpa*, the firmness and truth of His resolution.

The world of multiplicity has been intended as a step towards the One. But for this world of the Many, it would not have been possible to grasp the One. Innumerable methods have been prescribed whereby the Many may be gradually resolved into the One. The purpose of all *karma*, all *yajña* or sacrifice, is to make the seeker realize that the subject and the object have a common basis and they are ultimately one. The apparent Many cannot be dismissed as unreal and should not be so dismissed. It is interesting to note that the Vedānta is not at all guilty of the charge that has so often been levelled against it. The Agni-vidyā, the *yajñas*, that have been prescribed as the indispensable preliminary to Brahma-vidyā, show that the Many have been accepted as *prima facie* real and that attempts have been made to trace the Many to their source. The Agni-vidyā reveals the complementary character of the component elements and unmistakably points out that the differences of the various elements are only apparent and not real. The purpose of Agni-vidyā is achieved when the Many are genuinely resolved into the one Prāṇa, the Creative Energy, and are found to be expressions and elaborations of the One. It is for this realization, the finding of the Many in the One, that the Absolute, the *parama*, entered into all created things. In the region of the Many, the Many are accepted as real and there is the attempt to go to the root of the Many through difficult and tiresome methods and processes. It is not explaining away the Many; it genuinely explains the Many by tracing them to their source through elaborate processes. The Vedānta has dealt with the empirical reality in the method suitable to it; but when it reaches the transcendent Reality, the reality where there is no scope for any division or multiplicity, it naturally speaks in a different vein. Those who still desire to find empirical methods of treatment even when the transcendent Reality has been reached do not know what they mean and demand impossible things.

The world of plurality is grounded in the



Absolute. It can have no other ground inasmuch as there is nothing other than the Absolute. There is no quarrel over this part of the doctrine. All the theories admit that the Absolute is the source of this universe. The Vedanta unambiguously states that it is the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe, the *upādāna* as well as the *nimitta kāraṇa*. The universe has appeared out of the Absolute. There is nothing else to which it may be traced. But how has the universe appeared? Is it like ordinary causation, transition from the cause to the effect? Differences in the various theories arise here. The Vedanta holds that it is very different from ordinary causation. The Absolute is not the cause in the sense in which it is ordinarily understood. The universe derives all its reality from the Absolute but the Absolute is not at all touched by it. There is no passing of any energy from the cause to the effect, no transformation of the cause in the effect, no causation at all. It is an appearance, a magical appearance, where the ground or substratum is not at all disturbed by the appearance. The *asangatva* or detachment is the main point that is stressed by the Upanishads. There is not the least heterogeneity, not even a trace of it, in the *ekarasa* (homogeneous) Atman. The *cit* as *cit* admits of no difference. The differences are all due to adjuncts (*upādhi*) and have no basis in the pure *cit*. Magic, Maya, *adhyāsa*, etc.—all have been utilized in order to describe this fact, this appearance of the Many, of the multiplicity and heterogeneity out of the One, the absolutely homogeneous *ekarasa* Reality. The basis of the heterogeneity and multiplicity can be traced up to the Prāṇa or the Creative Energy, up to *saguṇa* Brahman; but as soon as the transcendental, the *turiya*, the *nirguṇa*, or the *guṇātīta* is reached, there is no trace of it. If the multiplicity be traced to the transcendental Reality, a relation of part and the whole in some sense or other has to be admitted and then the Vedantic Absolute loses its absoluteness and *mokṣa* becomes *anitya* (non-eternal). A relation of causation has,

therefore, been admitted up to the Prāṇa or *Īśvara* and the Absolute has been retained untouched. '*Asango hi sa puruṣah*' is the real description of the Absolute. The Atman is the whole, the *kṛtsna*, the indivisible Infinite, and therefore, so long as there is realization of any particular or special manifestation, it is the realization of a part and therefore imperfect and as such it is not the realization of the Atman. It is to be remembered that it is because of this that the Vedanta cannot admit of any division, not even the subject-object division in the realization of the Atman. If the subject realizes the Atman as object, the subject remaining separate from the object, the Atman becomes limited. If there is even the slightest gap between the seer and the seen, between the perceiver and the perceived, it is not the realization of the Perfect, the Whole, or the All. Therefore, the Vedanta makes it clear that the threefold division of subject, object, and process must disappear and be merged in the supreme realization where there is no longer any division. The individual (*jīva*) is identical with the Absolute (Brahman) and the Absolute is not the subject that realizes itself, but it is *dṛṣimātram*, *anubhavarūpam*, is *vijñānam*, *prajñānam*, realization itself. This fact should never be forgotten while attempting to understand the Vedantic doctrine. The Absolute or Brahman is not something to be realized, not an object of realization, not even the subject that realizes itself, but is the fundamental fact of consciousness that is present in all realizations. To attempt to make it an object or even to attempt to take a series of side-glances as is advised in introspection is to miss the reality and to mistake the shadow for the essence. If there is elimination of all adjuncts (*upādhi*), if everything that has gathered round the Pure Consciousness (*cit*) is removed, what remains is the pure *cit* shining in its own glory and no means or method has to be adopted for its realization. It is the ever-present All, the indivisible Whole, that accompanies everything and is not to be found as any object or subject or as any relation between the subject and the



object. The attempt to realize *cit* or realization, i.e. to make it an object of realization, baffles its purpose and is based on an entire misunderstanding of the Vedantic position. The identity that is preached between the *jīva* (individual) and Brahman (Absolute) is not an identity between *jīva* as subject and Brahman as object or identity between two subjects—*jīva* and Brahman, but an identity between (*jīva* as) pure *cit* and (Brahman as) pure *cit*, which is neither subject nor object. The whole *sādhana* in Ātma-vidyā, the entire process in the scheme of the realization of the Atman, lies in removing the obstacles or the impurities, the superimpositions that have collected round the pure *cit*. There is no process whereby the Atman may be realized over and above the purification.

The Vedantic ontology cannot be understood at all except through the conception of *adhyāropa* and *apavāda*, of imposition and withdrawal. If *jīva* is Brahman, it is urged, how can the *jīva* realize Brahman and become Brahman (*Brahma-veda Brahmaiva bhavati*)? If it already is, if it always is Brahman, how can it become Brahman? If Brahman is *ekamevādvītiyam*, if it is without any division, *akhaṇḍaikarasam*, what meaning and sense can there be in innumerable multiplicity implying division of agent, action, and result of action? The answer is simple. The division and multiplicity are all due to Avidyā (nescience) and are not essentially real. If *jīva-bhāva*, i.e. finitude, had been real, it would have never disappeared. The fact that *jīva* becomes Brahman proves that the *jīva-bhāva*, the finitude, was apparent and not real. It was due to Avidyā and on the removal of the Avidyā, it disappears. But the most difficult question that arises here is: whose Avidyā is it? If *jīva-bhāva* is due to Avidyā, it must be after it and therefore the *jīva* cannot be the cause of Avidyā. As there is nothing but Brahman, Avidyā or for the matter of that, everything whatsoever, must have to be attributed to it. But how can the self-luminous Brahman, the pure *cit*, be supposed to have the darkness of ignorance in it? 'Na hi

*sarvajñe prakāśaikarase Brahmani ajñānam āditye tamovad upapannam*'. But this argument cannot be maintained. It is seen that as soon as ignorance disappears, identity reveals itself. No amount of argument can overthrow facts—*na hi dṛṣṭe anupapannam nāma*. It is seen that there has been a division and that the division disappears as soon as knowledge results. The inevitable conclusion is that the division is only apparent and not real. Had it been real, it would never have disappeared. It is true Brahman can never be subject to ignorance, can never be under the influence of darkness. It is to be admitted therefore that in the case of Brahman, this ignorance is self-assumption, an *āhārya adhyāsa*, a division that is created by His self-will which does not touch Him at all. Unless this *adhyāropa*, this assumption or imposition is understood, the relation of the universe to Brahman cannot be comprehended. *Adhyāropa* implies a corresponding *apavāda*; what is imposed superficially does not touch the Reality and is withdrawable at all times. As soon as it is understood that multiplicity or division is an *adhyāropa*, it becomes easy to see that the *ekatva* or oneness is the Reality that remains after withdrawal or *apavāda* of the *adhyāropa*. The difficulties that torment so often and seem to be almost puzzling disappear completely as soon as the Vedantic method of *adhyāropa* and *apavāda* is remembered. The Avidyā belongs to Brahman, but only as *adhyāropa*. The multiplicity and variety—all are Brahman, but only as *adhyāropa*. No, the multiplicity is unreal—there is nothing, no manifestation in reality. Yes, this is *apavāda*. The entire universe, all adjuncts (*upādhi*) have to be traced to Brahman. It is to be seen that there is nothing other than Brahman. Next, it is to be realized that all these were attributed to Brahman through *adhyāropa* and they all disappear after *apavāda*. This purification through *adhyāropa* and *apavāda* is the highest and it prepares the seeker for the realization of the highest, the Brahman.

The assumption of names and forms, the



will to create is with a view to make His own nameless and formless essence known to His creatures. He assumed all forms and names in order to reveal His own essence (*rūpam rūpam prativūpo babhūva, tadasya rūpam praticakṣanāya*). The division is with a view to show the unity behind. This famous Mantra also shows that the division was apparent and not real. It cannot be that Brahman wanted to reveal His manifold nature, because that would be in direct contradiction with the teachings of the other Mantras. The *ekaratva* has been taught so often and the seeing of the oneness (*nānātva*) and difference (*bheda*) has been condemned with such repetition that it does not behove now to say that this Mantra wants to describe the manifold essence of Brahman. In the world of the Many, *karma*, implying division between agent, process, and result, is indispensably necessary. The gap that has been created can only be bridged over through *karma* or action. The whole purpose of action is to show the complementary character of the divided elements and to lead to the underlying unity. There are the various desires—the desire for riches, for fame, and for progeny. These are at the root of the world of the Many and they keep up the whole show. When, however, these desires become extinguished, their objects being all realized to be vain and transitory and worthless, there is hankering after the One, the One without any variety and multiplicity, the Eternal and the Permanent that is identical with liberation. We shall see later that this is *sannyāsa* (renunciation), which is not very different from transcendental Knowledge. As soon as it is seen that Brahman is the All, that He is everywhere, as soon as the Unlimited, the Infinite comes within the vision of the seeker and is realized, the thought of all partiality arising out of the conception of the limited self disappears. There is the one Infinite pervading all, where the self and the not-self, the limited self and other all disappear. The world becomes the abode of the Unlimited, the Infinite, and the Absolute and everything becomes *madhumaya*, as sweet as

honey. There is no thought of any 'other', anything different from one's own Self, and therefore *abhaya*, complete fearlessness, pervades, which is identical with *amṛtam* or deathlessness. This is the teaching of the Madhu-vidyā which was prized so highly that this was taught by the Rishi, the Seer, even at the risk of his life. That the vision of the Unlimited, that the apprehension of the Infinite that pervades all, is the one thing that is necessary for reaching the transcendental view and that this Infinite is to be reached through the finite is the essence of the teaching of the Madhu-vidyā. The touch of the Infinite, of the *aparicchinna*, washes all sins away and the limited becomes lifted to the level of the Infinite. All purification is ultimately traceable to contact with the Infinite, for that alone is pure absolutely. There is no impurity in the *avyaya* Brahman, the Brahman that knows no diminution, and contact with it alone is the ultimate means of purification. This is shown throughout the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, first, in the Aśvamedha sacrifice in referring to the unlimited *samudra* (ocean) or *Paramātma* (Absolute) as the origin of the *aśva*; secondly, in the conception of the *mukhya-prāṇa* as the purifier of all the Devatas because of its unlimitedness (*aparicchinnavatva*), and lastly, in the Madhu-vidyā where it is shown that the finite and the limited also become as sweet as honey when it is seen to have the Infinite as their substratum.

The Atman is the dearest of all things and is the goal and the *summum bonum*. All other things are desired for the sake of the Atman and are therefore dear not for their own sake but for the Atman. It is only the Atman that is dear for its own sake and is not desired for the sake of any other thing. It is direct and primary and its value is not to be established by means of anything intervening between that thing and itself. As the Atman is *svayam-jyoti*, so also is it *parama-puruṣārtha*. As it does not require anything else for its revelation, as it is revelation or *prakāśa* itself, so also it is the *summum bonum*, the highest end that is desired for its



own sake and does not require anything else to prove its value. It is of the nature of bliss (*paramānanda*) and establishes its finality and fundamentality because it is absolutely for itself. As the *svayam-prakāśatva* establishes that it is absolutely by itself, so its *paramānandarūpatva* establishes that it alone is genuinely for itself, and these two combined show that such a reality has the undisputed claim to fundamentality and absoluteness. There is no gap (*vyavadhāna*) between the desirer and the desired, the seeker and the sought, because, in essence, the desired, the sought, the goal is identical with the Self of the seeker. If normally the seeker desires other things because they are thought or perceived to be identified with or belonging to the Self, it is only natural that when the Self reveals itself to be very different from the other things with which it was identified earlier, there would be no attraction towards the not-Self and the Self would be desired exclusively. The Vedantic doctrine, holding that the Self or Atman is *svayam-prakāśa* and *paramānandarūpa*, establishes *a priori* that the Atman must be identical with the Absolute (Brahman). The reality which it establishes has to be accepted *ex hypothesi* as the highest, because nothing higher than the *svayam-prakāśa* or the *ānanda* can be conceived. It is to be remembered that the Vedantic Absolute is not that which has *prakāśa* or *ānanda*, but is *prakāśa* or *ānanda* itself. If it is supposed to have *prakāśa* or *ānanda*, then it becomes something different from *prakāśa* or *ānanda*. It is all *prakāśa*, it is *prajñāna-ghana*, it is *prakāśa* or *prajñāna* all through, and there is nothing but *prakāśa*. The Atman is what persists everywhere, what cannot be eliminated in any way in any circumstance, what establishes itself even when it is attempted to be eliminated. It is what reveals itself or is revelation or *prakāśa* itself and it establishes itself even when all objects are eliminated, and there is neither any revealed nor any revealer. It is what is independent of all objects and of all subjects and is desired for its own sake, that is, is bliss itself. It has got to be

admitted that this is the consummation, the highest that can be conceived and the highest that can be achieved—this is the *kāṣṭhā* (goal), this is *parāgaṭi* (the highest achievement).

It can be easily seen that such a reality cannot be established by anything else. The Vedanta proclaims that it is *svasamvedya*, it is realized and realizable only by itself. If anything 'other' than the Absolute is admitted, the all-pervading character and fullness of the Absolute is gone, and any conception which admits realization of the Absolute by anything short of the Absolute or by anything other than the Absolute does not fully understand what it says and has got to be cancelled. A thoroughly consistent absolutism cannot but take the form that Śankara gives to it. To pause or halt before the absolute identity of the *jīva* and Brahman is to give up absolutism and to attempt to keep up the show, giving up the substance, is deliberate self-deception.

The sage Yājñavalkya proclaims, '*anuvitta mayaiva*'—'I have verily known it and have reaped the fruits of this knowledge'. He first says that the great knowledge, the great revelation proclaimed in the Śruti, has touched him (*mām sprṣṭa*). Although the path is very difficult and very narrow, he has been able to tread it and reach the goal. He next says that the revelation has not only touched him (*sprṣṭa*) but he has also reached the consummation that comes after knowledge. The '*eva*' does not indicate that he alone has acquired this knowledge and there is not the least implication of any pride or vanity in the utterance; it only shows that the Self alone is the witness to this highest revelation. At this stage where there is neither the knower nor the known, where everything of the world of duality and division has been left behind, there is no possibility of any other witness, and in this 'flight of the Alone to the Alone', the Self is the only witness, it alone remains. It is interesting to note the difference between this description of Yājñavalkya and that of Plotinus. For Plotinus, it is a 'flight', a 'transport', a passing from one stage to another; but for Yājñavalkya, it is only the realization of one's Self,



a realization which means a mere awakening, a remembrance (*pratibuddha*). The revelation touches him (*spṛṣṭa*). There is no passing from one stage to another, as flight or transport. It is a mere realization as one's own Self, a thorough understanding of one's essence.

The Śruti proclaims that such a realization happens and that the seeker has the feeling of complete satisfaction and fullness at this stage. It is felt that nothing further has to be known,

nothing else has to be done, and nothing further has to be achieved. There is the feeling of *Kṛtakṛtyatā*, attaining the completion of all one's duties and of the attainment of consummation. When the seeker attains this feeling and has the realization, he finds that his experience is in complete accord with that learnt from Śruti. This is all the evidence that is available and this is all that is necessary.

(To be continued)

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

The term 'Mysticism' covers a very wide ground and it is as rich and varied as life itself. In trying to understand and express That which has been referred to by the Seers as the Unknowable and the Inexpressible, human thought and speech reach their furthest limit without much success. A new approach to the study of mystical philosophy is ably indicated and well elucidated by Sri C. T. K. Chari, M.A., in the course of his learned article, *Mysticism and the Language of Paradox*. He critically examines the various modern approaches to philosophy and religion, alongside of some parallel theories in Western science and psychology, and conclusively establishes that Vedantic mysticism can not only co-ordinate these various modern approaches but invest them with a profound significance which, apart from it, they obviously lack. . . .

The glory of India lies in the fact that throughout her political vicissitudes the stream of her spiritual and cultural life has flowed on unbroken, enriched and immortalized by a succession of saints and mystics, some of whom have sprung from even the lowest strata of

society. *Saint Ravidas* is one of the great luminaries that appeared in the spiritual firmament of India in the fourteenth century, who, though engaged in his own family profession of a cobbler, is the recipient of love and reverence from all, irrespective of caste or creed. . . .

In India, religion and spirituality were never shackled, and they grew up as they did nowhere else. For liberty is the only condition of growth. Writing on *The Sanātana and Other Religious Outlooks*, Sri Jatindra Mohan Ganguli points out the striking contrast between the catholicity and liberality that characterize ancient Hindu thought and the parochial and dogmatic outlooks that are seen to hold sway over individuals and groups in many parts of the world.

### ENDING THE 'COLD WAR' IN RELIGION

How may it be possible for every religion to cherish and preserve its essential spiritual content in its own revelations, without needing also to hold to any increasingly untenable position of fanatical exclusiveness? It is imperative that a satisfactory answer be found to this critical question if the world is to be saved



from the chaos and confusion of a 'cold war' in religion. Philosophers and mystics, both in the East and West, have been convinced that any metaphysic capable of bringing to the dawning world age an ideological unity, without detriment to the individual's native integrity, must proceed from some synthesis of Eastern and Western spiritual wisdom. It is becoming increasingly evident that if the religions of the world are not to be pronounced guilty of making a shipwreck of the highest hopes of humanity, they should hasten to steer clear of sectarianism and bigotry and offer to every religious aspirant a useful formula enabling him to continue his own faith and practice in that aspect of Truth Eternal he feels at home in, while, at the same time, providing him with a basis for harmony with that of every tradition other than his.

In a most suggestive article entitled 'The Yoga of St. John of the Cross', contributed to *Vedanta and the West*—the popular bi-monthly of Hollywood, published by the Vedanta Society of Southern California—Swami Siddheswarananda of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in France points out that in an age of respect for individual differences, the usefulness of religion to man's progress can be made most effective by the followers of each faith endeavouring to understand the language and spirit of those of other faiths and also by ceasing to limit God's adaptability to different historical and cultural happenstances. For, every faith is the language that God speaks in different countries and different epochs. It is lack of understanding of that language that creates want of comprehension. It is not so much unbelief in or irreverence towards spiritual revelation, but rather ignorant misconception of it, which is the cause of deviation from the path of righteousness. How else could it be that what one considers to be the very negation of religion and tolerance *appears* for another as the very corner-stone of his faith and practice? As Swami Siddheswarananda says: 'The cultural background of the spiritual experiences of saints varies in different countries. Faiths

and dogmas have multiple expressions. Yet it cannot be denied that in the transformation of human life brought about by spiritual experience there are common points. It is the theological sources of faith that may be different from one another.'

In his learned comparative study of Hindu and Christian mysticism, the Swami shows how St. John of the Cross, one of Christendom's great mystics, reached high spiritual achievements identical to those experienced by Indian saints, while adhering to strict Christian faith and practice. Explaining how this is not incompatible from the standpoint of Vedanta, he observes:

'The impersonal is not a negation of the personal. It is to see in the personal, the divine, and to know that everything is the Lord; it is the attainment of this vision that is the experience of the mystics. . . . When the boundaries of the personal individual view are crossed, the presentation of reality takes the aspect of reality as it is. That reality as it is sensed and experienced by the mystic can be with form or without form. The experience of the impersonal does not restrict itself to the realization of the formless. Yet the same reality is also experienced by the mystics as formless. The impersonal as formless is realized in the experience of union with cosmic consciousness. In Christian theology the experience of the formless in the life of the mystics is considered as an experience of the transcendental aspect of reality. In the dualistic traditions of India there are parallels to the Christian notion of transcendence and immanence. In Advaita Vedanta and the spiritual experience associated with it, transcendence does not appertain to reality. Reality does not undergo any modification. Nothing can be predicated of reality. Any definition of reality is to bring it within limitations. If it is said that reality is *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda* (existence, knowledge, and bliss)—or in other words, being, light and love—the Vedantic implication is that it is not non-existence, it is not absence of light, and it is not devoid of bliss. Shankara has repeatedly said that the aim of the Upanishads is to instruct us that any conceptualization of Brahman leads to error. To say that the Supreme Reality is transcendent is in a way to limit it. Reality remains self-revealed when ignorance goes. If the word transcendence has to be applied in any sense, it can be an application only to the level of vision coloured by the ignorance of the aspirant after truth. It is this vision that changes, and reality remains ever as it is.'



Stating the traditional Indian attitude towards other religions, Swami Siddheswarananda says:

'... if the Hindu accepts the possibility of revelations other than his own, he must find a way to reconcile his faith in his Vedas with that of another revelation whose truths are in contradiction with his. The Hindu approach is to take for the moment the vision of the other and see as the other would see, holding in abeyance his own belief in his own doctrines. It is this technique of taking different outlooks that enables the Hindu to arrive at his vast synthesis. His is no sterile syncretism or cheap eclecticism composed of borrowed elements that happen to complement each other. A civilization and culture that is not habituated to this spirit of enormous toleration has difficulty in appreciating it.'

The seed of religious disharmony and consequent irreligious 'crusades' and 'jihads' lies in theological isolationism which seeks to dismiss the spiritual revelations and attainments of all religious groups except a particular one which claims exclusive monopoly of God and Truth. Man must be the highest of many forms of consciousness forcing its way upward, with God coming down in human form to give him a hand from time to time and place to place, appropriate to his stage and need. What the Hindu, the Christian, or the Mohammedan believes God did once—i.e. took an earthly body, or caused his Messiah or Prophet to appear on earth—he needs only to accept that He could have done more than once. Such acceptance would then make it possible for him to accredit any sincere approach to God. And rather than act as a devaluation of divine compassion, the belief in numerous incarnations would actually enhance it. Like a master teacher, God could then be seen as revealing Himself to each of His children differently, *according to his need*, and, at the same time, not exhibiting any incongruous divergence. As is well known, in India we accept many incarnations; neverthe-

less we consider the personality of all incarnations as one unique Person. Referring to this, the Swami writes:

'The promise of the Indian scriptures is that the Divine will take human form to re-establish the scale of spiritual values. The Divine works this mission, not centring on one single event in His life—like the passion of Jesus or the resurrection—but by infusing into a decadent world a mass of spiritual power that radiates to all who are blessed to receive it; in individual lives the level of consciousness is heightened in varying degree.'

Religion is realization, a 'being and becoming'—far from hair-splitting intellectual manipulation or unthinking and dogmatic formalism. The mystics and men of God of all lands never quarrel. Rather, they strike a single spiritual note of ultimate unison in the Divinity. Emphasizing the need for realizing such a synthesis in the spiritual lives of religious aspirants, Swami Siddheswarananda says:

'We must be able to understand the foundations of faith of another who does not belong to our religion, and then only we can arrive at a vast synthesis, which is the harmony of faiths taught by Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna did not trouble himself to understand the various theological differences in faith. He exemplified the truth of faith by his various explorations into the spiritual realities of religion by making religion a matter of realization. . . . The synthesis that we speak of is the synthesis of all Dharmas, of all ways of righteousness. But this term becomes an empty verbalism unless one refers it directly to the visions and realizations of the Rishis, the ancient seers of Truth. Here is demanded of us faith in the great ones. Until we develop their vision ourselves, all that we see and know are only partial aspects of Truth. To have a global view with depth and profundity, one has to gain a new focus of adjusting the different perspectives. As in a stereoscopic view where two images appertaining to the two eyes are brought to a focal point that gives depth—a third dimension,—in the vision of the Rishis there is an integration of multiple perspectives; one who has realized Brahman has become Brahman.'



## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

HINDU DHARMA. BY M. K. GANDHI. *Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Kalupur, Ahmedabad. Pages 463. Price Rs. 4.*

Here is a collection of essays written by and notes of conversation with Mahatma Gandhi on the various aspects of Hinduism, classified under the following headings:—Section One: Hinduism (General); Section Two: God; Section Three: Temple-worship; Section Four: Fasts and Prayer; Section Five: Brahmacharya; Section Six: The *Gita*; Section Seven: Non-violence; Section Eight: Ashram Vows; Section Nine: Equality of Religions; Section Ten: Religious Education; Section Eleven: Cow Protection; Section Twelve: Untouchability; Section Thirteen: Varṇa Dharma; Section Fourteen: Brāhmaṇa-Non-Brāhmaṇa; Section Fifteen: Widowhood, Marriage, and Women. One great characteristic of Mahatma Gandhi was that he lived what he preached and he preached only what he practised. In the whole history of humanity there are not more than a few personalities who were so sincere in their practice and profession as he. As such whatever he speaks has a special significance. His words carry with them a conviction and give strength and inspiration to those who hear and read them. The opinions and attitude expressed in these writings may be at places different from those of a section of the orthodox Hindus, but nevertheless they express in a very moving way what represent the essentials of Hinduism. In these writings there are no elaborate quotations from the Scriptures to scare away the ordinary minds or to create confusion even amongst the learned but are found the truths that Mahatma Gandhi felt or discovered in his severely earnest attempt to live a real Hindu. On occasions, when his opinions went against vested interests, orthodox people were up against him, but what doubt is there that Mahatma Gandhi intensely practised what he considered to be the essential teachings of Hinduism as different from its encrustations. The book should be read more for its practical and moving appeal than for any hair-splitting discussion on Hindu philosophy. We are sure this book will make many people better Hindus or more religious-minded, for Hinduism embraces all faiths and rejects none.

The Editor, while trying to give helpful directions in the Preface, has touched some points which had better been left unsaid. In that case the effect would have been much greater. According to the Editor, 'When religion has thus degenerated, and righteousness has consequently given place to unrighteousness, a great prophet appears, even as the *Gita* tells us, to call people back to true religion.

This is what appears to have happened in Hinduism in the person Gandhiji.' (p. viii). But in the body of the book, on the topic 'My Mission', Gandhiji himself says, 'I do not consider myself worthy to be mentioned in the same breath with the race of prophets. I am a humble seeker after truth. I am impatient to realize myself, to attain *mokṣa* in this very existence. My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh. Thus considered, my service may be regarded as purely selfish. I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the Kingdom of Heaven which is *mokṣa*.' (p. 14). Mahatma Gandhi, by the unique sincerity of his struggle for the realization of Truth, has commanded love, admiration, and respect from one and all. But prophets like Buddha and Christ are different from seekers after Truth, however great the latter may be.

This is a minor point which the reviewer has raised because he cherishes great and genuine love for Mahatmaji to whom much injustice is sometimes done by such exaggerated statements.

S. P.

THE SCIENCE OF YOGA (Vol. I). BY APRABUDDHA. *Published by V. K. Palekar, Yamuna Niwas, Dakshinamurti Road, Mahal, Nagpur. Pages 236. Price Rs. 11-8.*

This book contains the first two chapters of the 'Yoga Sutras' of Patanjali, together with a running commentary on each of the Sutras; a short prologue; and a long introduction. The 'Yoga Sutras' of Patanjali is the oldest text-book of the Yoga school of Indian philosophy, and the only commentary on the work is that of Vyasa. Other writers have written basing on Vyasa's commentary. The volume under review claims to be an absolutely *new* commentary, independent of Vyasa or any other writer on the subject. The central thesis which the author wants to establish is that Yoga is a positive science, cultivated and developed by the ancient Indians; that it is not only not opposed to modern sciences such as physics, but is in perfect harmony with them; and that it is the only practical science which can be successfully applied by the modern man to solve the riddle of human life more logically than any of the present inductive sciences. The author's knowledge of the findings and significance of the latest scientific experiments and investigations, and the skill with which he applies it to the interpretation of the 'Yoga Sutras' are commendably amazing.

There are many who look down upon 'Yoga' as something 'mysterious' like magic or physical feats,



practised by the ancient Indians. They have neither the intelligence nor the necessary training to understand it as a science. A careful study of this book, we feel, will go a long way in dispelling such deplorable ignorance. Some of the very important concepts and terms of the Sutras have been interpreted by the learned author in a new light, and Yoga, as a whole, acquires thereby an aspect which combines in itself both the sublime spirituality of the ancient seers and the practical scientific methodology of the moderns. The result is what we may call 'Experiment with Truth'. It challenges our attention, and deservingly takes its place amongst the modern scientific studies on Yoga philosophy. It is a thought-provoking publication in simple, easy, and readable style, pointing out the meaning and significance of Yoga. Aprabuddha's exposition of Yoga is that of an ardent and sincere aspirant, but at the same time critical and scientific.

A. K. BANERJI

SYNOPSIS OF PHILOSOPHY OF DAYANANDA. Pages 125. Price Rs. 4.

COMPENDIUM OF BHAGAVAD GITA (PART II). Pages 222. Price Rs. 4.

BOTH BY SWAMI NARENDRA ANANDA SARASWATI. Published by The Hindu Vijnana Prachara Samiti, 18/223, Buckinghampet, Vijayawada 2.

*Synopsis of Philosophy of Dayananda* contains a short account of the philosophy of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the illustrious founder of the Arya Samaj. It is an interpretative study, with copious quotations from Dayananda's works, mainly the *R̥g-Vedādi Bhāṣya*, and *Satyārtha Prakāśa*. The author also makes a comparative study of the philosophy of Swami Dayananda with those of other Indian and Western luminaries. The book will be useful as a short introduction to the study of Swami Dayananda's philosophy.

Part I of the *Compendium of Bhagavad Gita*, published earlier, gave a summary of the teachings

of the *Gita* as the author visualized it, with special stress on Nishkāma-Karma as an integral part of spiritual Sādhana. In this second part, the author convincingly presents the view that the *Gita* is a Samanvaya-Shāstra (a scripture of synthesis) which treats of the various paths to God realization and harmonizes the seemingly conflicting elements in them. He also rightly maintains that there is no inherent contradiction between jñāna and Karma. The book clearly bears the impress of thorough scholarship in the *Gita* and also vast erudition in Hindu religious and philosophical lore, on the part of the learned author.

KALYAN—SANKSHIPTA SKANDA-PURANA ANKA. Published by the Gita Press, Gorakhpur (U.P.). Pages 840. Price Rs. 7-8.

*Skanda-Purāṇa* is one of the eighteen Mahā-purāṇas and is the biggest of them all, containing 81,100 Shlokas, almost approaching the *Mahābhārata* in volume. It is a mine of information on Hindu religious thought, rites, and observances and it throws much useful light on the significance of a large number of places of pilgrimage and worship throughout India. This special Number of *Kalyan* (for January 1951) is an abridged edition of the Sanskrit original freely translated into beautiful and simple Hindi prose. The original being very voluminous, this abridgment, for the purpose of a special Number of a monthly magazine like the *Kalyan*, has been commendably accomplished by the learned Editors. The difficult task of selection of suitable material has been well done in a manner that no important matter has been left out. The Number contains 175 illustrations, a good number of which are multi-coloured. The Number has been well got up with all the thoroughness characteristic of the publications of the Gita Press. The issue for February 1951 of the *Kalyan* has been brought out as the *Parisiṣṭāṅka* (Residual Number) for this special Number and contains some more material from the *Skanda-Purāṇa*.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### CONSECRATION OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA TEMPLE AT KAMARPUKUR

Kamarpukur, the place hallowed by Sri Ramakrishna's birth, was the scene of great festivity when it witnessed the consecration of the Ramakrishna Temple erected on the exact spot where the Master was born. The consecration came off on the 11th May, 1951.

The temple has been built entirely of sand stone and marble. Its architectural style is simple and elegant and its modest dimensions fits in with the general rural setting. The design of the temple was

drawn by the famous artist Sri Nandalal Bose of Santiniketan. Among the two noteworthy features of the shrine, one is the marble inscription of the husking machine and the oven on the pedestal symbolising the husking room in which the Master was born. The other is the Siva Linga which surmounts the temple, unlike all traditional temple designs, referring to the great Divine Effulgence from the adjacent Siva Temple, that engulfed Chandra Devi, the mother of Sri Ramakrishna, before conception. The temple enshrines a marble image of the Master, two feet six inches in height, set on the very spot where he first saw the light of



day. The image is acknowledged to be remarkably close in resemblance to the original photo of the Master.

For months ahead brisk preparations were going on for the great occasion at Kamarpukur under the directions of senior monks of the Order. Devotees from far and near, including Bombay and Madras, were pouring into Kamarpukur and by the 10th May all the camps were nearly full.

The preliminary Puja at Kamarpukur started on the 10th itself, with the assistance of three pandits from Banaras who were present there specially for the function. The crowded programme for the 11th, the day of consecration, began quite early in the morning when all the Sadhus, Brahmacharins, and devotees gathered at the temple punctually at five. It was an inspiring sight indeed to see, at that early morning hour, the solemn and eager faces of the devotees assembled there to witness the momentous event. The gathering formed itself into a procession carrying the holy waters of the Ganga first. Swami Sankarananda, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, who formally opened the temple, carried the 'Atmaram Kauta' containing the relics of Sri Ramakrishna. He was followed by Swami Vishuddhananda, Swami Yatiswarananda and Swami Atmaprakashananda, carrying the pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, mounted on decorated thrones. Ahead of this procession were Kirtan and Bhajan parties and a conspicuous Baul party. The procession which reminded one of the great Kirtan parties of Sri Chaitanya, circumambulated the temple thrice, amidst shouts of 'Jai Sri Guru Maharajjiki Jai', 'Jai Mahamayiki Jai', 'Jai Sri Swamiji Maharajjiki Jai', and the relics of the Master along with the pictures were solemnly installed in the temple. Shortly after commenced the regular Puja of Sri Ramakrishna in the new marble image and Puja and Homa in the specially constructed Yajnasala adjacent to the temple.

One of the highlights of the function on the 11th was the mile-long procession that started from Kamarpukur soon after the consecration, towards Manik Raja's mango orchard, where Sri Ramakrishna and his young companions used to resort for their amateur theatrical performances. In spite of the sizzling heat the enthusiasm of the people was unique. Composed of Sadhus and a huge number of devotees lining both sides of the narrow road, the procession carried decorated pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamiji. The Bhajan and Kirtan parties dancing to the tune of their music, the shouts of 'Sri Guru Maharajjiki Jai' that reverberated through the village, the crowd of devotees joining the Bhajan and dancing, and above all, the utter simplicity of the whole setting so powerfully recalling the boyhood days of Sri Ramakrishna, moved one

to the very depths. In the meanwhile a similar procession had started from Jayarambati in the early hours of the morning and was wending its way towards Kamarpukur. A feature of this procession was the advance party of Santals, brandishing their sticks and dancing to the accompaniment of huge drums. Both the processions mingled at the mango orchard and arrived at the temple of Sri Ramakrishna after circumambulating the village of Kamarpukur. The whole scene looked like a huge Mela by itself.

The distribution of prasad to the devotees started by about one in the afternoon and went on till four in the evening. Over the microphone Vedic chanting, readings from the Ramakrishna Puthi, Bhajan and other programmes were broadcast. Towards evening the pilgrims visited all the important places in Kamarpukur associated with the life of the Master. By about nine at night, the whole Ashrama area was crowded by pilgrims eager to attend the *Jatra* depicting incidents from Sri Chaitanya's life. People were packed to capacity in the big pandal erected for the purpose in front of the temple and even all approaches to it and roads were blocked. The *Jatra* lasted upto nearly half past two at night. On the 12th May, concluding Pujas were performed and as on the previous day, there was a *Jatra* of *Nimai Sannyas* at night. This brought the three day celebrations at Kamarpukur to a close. The devotees who had assembled there left the same day or the next, but all carried the unforgettable and inspiring memories of the holy occasion.

It may not be out of place to mention the general arrangements that were made to cope with so large a number of guests and visitors. Twelve thatched sheds—six big ones to accommodate 100 persons and six smaller ones to accommodate 60 persons each were put up to house the Sadhus and devotees. A vast open ground with shamiana above was got ready for feeding more than a thousand people at a time. More than a dozen tube wells were sunk for providing water supply, in addition to an oil pump and hand pump specially meant for the kitchen. A dynamo brought electricity—perhaps for the first time in its history—to Kamarpukur which worked the lighting arrangements near the temple and also the microphone, so useful throughout the day. The arrangements for feeding the guests and visitors went on punctually. It is a great credit to the organizers of the function to have managed such a huge crowd in that remote village in an orderly and systematic manner. It is estimated that in all a little over a thousand guests were accommodated—of which 200 were Sadhus and the rest devotees. On the 11th May, 7,500 persons were fed at the Ashrama. The gathering, mainly of people from the neighbouring villages rose to about 15,000 at the peak hour, at the most conservative estimate.