

**VOL. LXX**

**OCTOBER 1965**

# **Prabuddha Bharata**

**OR  
AWAKENED INDIA**



**By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or  
all of these the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.**

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

OCTOBER 1965

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXX

OCTOBER 1965

No. 10



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:0:—

आत्मार्पणस्तुतिः

THE HYMN OF SELF-OBLATION

ŚRĪ APPAYYA DIKSITA

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI VIMALANANDA

ब्रह्मोपेन्द्रप्रभृतिभिरपि स्वेप्सितप्रार्थनाय

स्वामिन्नग्रे चिरमवसरस्तोषयद्भिः प्रतीक्ष्यः ।

द्रागेव त्वां यदिह शरणं प्रार्थये कीटकल्प-

स्तद्विद्वाधीश्वर तव कृपामेव विश्वस्य दीने ॥२१॥

21. O Master, with the intention of making applications for what they desire to have, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and others of their eminence, not to mention about the rest, are obliged to gratify You and wait expectantly for a long time in front of You for an opportunity. I am almost insignificant and contemptible as a worm. O paramount Lord of the universe, I am supplicating You all of a sudden to grant me refuge ; this is because I trust in Your commiseration for the distressed, and not because of any other consideration.

कर्मज्ञानप्रचयमक्षिलं दुष्करं वाथ पश्य-

न्यापासक्तं हृदयमपि चापाख्यन्संनिरोद्धुम् ।

संसाराख्ये पुरहर महत्यन्धकूपे विषीद-

न्हस्तालम्बं प्रपदवमिदं प्राप्य ते निर्मयोऽस्मि ॥२२॥

22. O Master, I am finding the whole lot—Vedic performances, Vedic knowledge, and the rest—extremely difficult to work out ; and I am not able to turn back in full measure my heart set on what is vicious. I am miserable, O Destroyer of the Citadel of Demons, in this abysmal pit called *samsāra*, the bottom of which is not seen ; now finding this only to be the helping hand, viz taking refuge in You, I am reassured.



त्वामैवैकं हतजनिपथे पान्थमस्मिन्प्रपञ्चे  
 मत्वा जन्मप्रलयजलधेर्बिभ्यतः पारशून्यात् ।  
 यत्ते धन्याः सुरवर मुह्यं दक्षिणं संश्रयन्ति  
 क्लिष्टं घोरे चिरमिह भवे तेऽहं मां पाहि नित्यम् ॥२३॥

23. O Best of Gods, in this spread out universe, considering You as the only companion in the wretched road of rebirth, noble souls, frightened from the shoreless ocean of origination and resorption, resort only to You (Dakṣiṇāmūrti) facing the south. Therefore, protect me for ever through that aspect of yours, for I am miserable for very long in this terrible place !

एकोऽसि त्वं शिव जनिमतामीश्वरो बन्धमुक्त्योः  
 क्लेशाङ्गारावलिषु लुठतः का गतिस्त्वां विना मे ।  
 तस्मादस्मिन्निह पशुपते घोरजन्मप्रवाहे  
 खिन्नं दैन्याकरमतिभयं मां भजस्व प्रपन्नम् ॥२४॥

24. O Śiva, You are the sole Lord who dispenses release and bondage to every being born. I am weltering in a heap of live embers—my own woes and torments. That being my case, what other stay have I excepting You ? Therefore, O Lord of Created Beings, be of easy access to me ; for I am exceedingly terrified—I have become an accumulation of unhappiness afflicted by the torrent of vexatious births and deaths.

यो देवानां प्रथममशुभद्रावको भक्तिभाजां  
 पूर्वं विश्वाधिक शतधृतिं जायमानं महर्षिः ।  
 दृष्ट्यापश्यत्सकलजगतीसृष्टिसामर्थ्यदात्र्या  
 स त्वं ग्रन्थिप्रविलयकृते विद्यया योजयास्मान् ॥२५॥

25. Pray join us with liberating knowledge so that the knot of our ignorance may be dissolved ; for You are the first to liquidate all that is wrong and hurtful to heavenly beings filled with devotion to You, and You, O paramount Master of the world, as the master seer, have also regarded the First Born (Śatadhṛti—Hiranyagarbha) with the glance that has conferred upon him the competence to bring into being the entire universe.

यद्याकाशं शुभदं मनुजाश्चर्मवद्वेष्टयेयु-  
 दुःखस्यान्तं तदपि पुरुषस्त्वामविज्ञाय नैति ।  
 विज्ञानं च त्वयि शिव ऋते त्वत्प्रसादान् लभ्यं  
 तद्दुःखार्तः कमिह शरणं यामि देवं त्वदन्यम् ॥२६॥

26. O Conferrer of Merits and Excellences, even if it will be possible for men to roll up the vault of heaven like a sheet of animal's skin, no man will reach the end of sorrow without realizing You fully ; and, O Śiva, that knowledge cannot come without Your grace. Therefore, to what God excepting You shall I approach, sinking in sorrow ?

किं गूढार्थैरकृतकवचोगुम्भनैः किं पुराणै-  
 स्तन्त्राद्यैर्वा पुरुषमतिभिर्दुर्निरूप्यैकमत्यैः ।  
 किं वा शास्त्रैरलककहोलासमात्रप्रधानै-  
 विद्या विद्येश्वर कृतधियां केवलं त्वत्प्रसादात् ॥२७॥

27. Of what avail are mystic poems composed on natural themes? Of what use are the Purāṇas? Of what profit are the class of works like the Tantras, wherefrom it is hard to arrive at a harmonious conclusion by the human mind? Admitting the importance of the Śāstras, they, too, serve no purpose save the pleasure of fruitless contentions. O Master of the Sciences, true knowledge which belongs to master minds is purely a gift of Your grace.

पापिष्ठोऽहं विषयचपलः सन्ततद्रोहशाली  
 कार्पण्यैकस्थिरनिवसतिः पुण्यगन्धानभिज्ञः ।  
 यद्यप्येवं तदपि शरणं त्वत्पदाब्जं प्रपन्नं  
 नैनं दीनं स्मरहरं तवोपेक्षितुं नाथ युक्तम् ॥२८॥

28. I am a supreme sinner, given to sensuous pleasures, I am in changeable moods; I am a perpetual traitor to myself; the permanent settlement of avarice is in me; I am a stranger to religious merits. Though this be the condition, yet, O Master, O Extinguisher of Lust, it does not befit You to reject me, as I am in distress and I have sought refuge in You.

आलोच्यैवं यदि मयि भवान्नाथ दोषाननन्ता-  
 नस्मत्पादाश्रयणपदवीं नार्हतीति क्षिपेन्माम् ।  
 अद्यैवेमं शरणविरहाद्विद्धि भीत्यैव नष्टं  
 ग्रामो गृह्णात्यहिततनयं किं नु मात्रा विरस्तम् ॥२९॥

29. In the above manner, if You, O Master, perceive in me innumerable faults and spurn me saying, 'He does not deserve Me as his asylum', please note then that I have gone to rack and ruin this very day only because of the shock received from the thought that I am bereft of Your shelter. Will the community take up the wicked son rejected by the mother?

क्षन्तव्यं वा निखिलमपि मे भूतभावि व्यलीकं  
 दुर्व्यापारप्रवणमथवा शिक्षणीयं मनो मे ।  
 न त्वेवात्यर्था निरतिशयया त्वत्पदाब्जं प्रपन्नं  
 त्वद्विन्यस्ताखिलभरममुं युक्तमीश प्रहातुम् ॥३०॥

30. Either You must forgive me all my past and future wrong-doings, or You must tutor my mind prone to misconduct. I have resorted to Your lotus feet because of maximum misery, and I have laid down my entire burden on You. It is not right and proper, O paramount Sovereign, for You to reject me.

(To be continued)



## LETTERS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

( 76 )

Math, P.O. Belur  
7 September 1917

Dear —,

I received your letter. You are the devotee of the Lord, you have taken refuge under the Master. Depend upon his mercy always, think of and meditate on him according to your capacity. He will grant you knowledge and devotion in full. Trailanga Swami and other great souls are spiritual seekers following a different path; if you attempt to compare your course of life with theirs, you will get yourself drowned in deep waters. Some of them are *hatha-yogins*, some *aṣṭāṅga-yogins*, and some *jñāna-yogins*. Their life and spiritual path are completely different from yours. You are, by the grace of the Master, his devotee; resignation is your main spiritual practice. Constant remembrance of him and, whenever you find time, meditation on him, the repetition of his name, prayers, and singing his glories—these are all your duties. He will in time make you a perfect devotee and perfect man of realization.

The meaning of to be liberated in life and to be merged in Brahman after the dissolution of the body is : To be liberated in life is just like standing on the threshold of the house, with one foot inside and the other outside, in which position the inside of the house also can be seen and the outside too; and entering the house once for all is being merged in Brahman after the dissolution of the body—then there will be no consciousness of the outside. Could you follow ? ...

Your well-wisher,  
Shivananda

( 77 )

Math, P.O. Belur  
28 November 1917

Dear —,

I am extremely delighted to get your affectionate letter. ... May the Master make this motiveless love between you and us deeper and deeper—this is my innermost prayer at his holy feet. He has assumed the form of human body for the sake of the supreme welfare of the world, and love alone is the form in which this welfare manifests itself. This love will be established in the whole universe; all the signs of it are now visible. These conflicts and controversies are merely for establishing this universal love and nothing else. What has never happened before is going to take place now. This modern age is a wonderful age. ...

Your well-wisher,  
Shivananda

---

# TO OUR MOTHERS AND SISTERS

[ EDITORIAL ]

If family is the hub of society, woman is the hub of the family; and a home is no home at all, but worse than a dreary forest in the absence of the wife. That was the ancient Indian view, and the ideals of womanhood that Hinduism upheld were based on that fundamental point of view. That position has been shaken a bit now. True, by and large, Indian women have not substantially deviated from the old ways of life; modernity has not yet completely overwhelmed them, except in big cities and towns. But the spirit is catching up, we can clearly see. Facility of higher education, influx of western ideas of justice and reason, rights and privileges, and pleasure and progress, as well as the new trend in political and social set-up and ideology and, in addition, the economic pressure, have inevitably affected the even tenor of the women's life, too, as everything else in the country. With the widening of the frontiers of knowledge whose gates were closed to them hitherto, there is a marked change in the outlook of women on life and its problems, in their mode of thinking and, consequently, in their mode of living. The most significant feature of this change is the emergence of women from the confines of the home to public life, seeking fresh avenues for the expression of their talents. The freedom struggle found them in the forefront, fighting side by side with men, and now they have thrown themselves with greater zeal and vigour in the work of national reconstruction, in resuscitating the glory of the motherland and of themselves in a wider perspective. With the women coming out of the seclusion of the home, which was their special preserve, the demarcation in the matter of duties between

men and women is slowly disappearing. Drawn by the vision of a brighter future and full of hope in their own destiny, women are making their mark in every department of life: they are there scaling the mountains with men, taking part in every form of sport and pastime, working in laboratories, factories, schools, and offices, and are occupying eminent positions in public life, not to speak of their contributions in the social, cultural, academic, and philosophical fields.

And why should they not? It should, indeed, be a matter of pride for all concerned. Why should women be shut up within the four corners of the family if they can be of better service outside and enrich the world thereby? They are also endowed with intellectual and spiritual faculties, as much as men, which always do not find sufficient scope for expression within the domestic circle, or even if they did, will leave the world poorer if confined therein. Women are also human beings; why should they not act like men in the outside world? Why this invidious distinction between men and women in the sphere of activity? Has not modern Russia, and also the other western countries, shattered the myth of the superiority of men over women in all affairs, even in those requiring sheer physical strength? Or even nearer home, was it the unexceptional rule that women never stepped beyond the limits of the home to find self-expression? Do we not have our Gārgīs and Maitreyīs who were head and shoulders above many men in their intellectual acumen, and do we not have our Rajput women and the Queen of Jhansi, whose heroism puts to shame the bravest in any part of the world? Why should women



be always dependent and subservient to men? They have suffered in the past at the hands of men because of this helpless dependence, and why should they not now stand on their own legs and be rid of their suffering? Or at a higher level, why should it always be that so many restrictions are placed on the movement and behaviour of women in the name of chastity and holiness and spirituality, while men move freely as they like and have the best of things in this life? Why should men have all the comfort and pleasure, and women drudge away their lives cooped up in the kitchen? Why should not the relation between husbands and wives be on a reciprocal basis? Why only insist on women's looking upon their husbands as Divine and be exacting on the preservation of loyalty and devotion in their case, and not vice versa? Freedom is their birthright, too, and why should they not exercise it?

Yes, why should they not? We do not find anything unreasonable or unjust in these aspirations, as far as reason and justice go. However, there are other aspects of the question than purely the one of reason and justice—the question of ideals, the question of happiness, the question of practical difficulties and problems—before which these questions of equality and freedom in the matter of work and duty, of rights and privileges, appear as minor ones, which are decided more by the force of circumstances, in the natural course, than by arguments and discussions as to their rightness or wrongness. If enjoyment and material prosperity be the goal of the society and civilization, if that is what men are after, women, too, should rightfully have their full share of it. None can deny it to them. The ideal cannot be different for men and women—if it is material enjoyment, it is so for both; if it is spiritual illumination, it is so for

both—though the path to its realization may be different. And so, whether anybody wants it or not, whether anybody likes it or not, whether anybody thinks it justified or not, women are going to work alongside of men in all walks of life, with their rights and privileges fully recognized, and they are bound to do so in an increasing measure in future. Their participation in public life abreast of men is inevitable in the present context. The economic pressure of an industrial civilization is itself irresistibly drawing more and more women out of the seclusion of the home to supplement the family income, where it is not a case of some higher calling such as the love of a particular profession or occupation for which one has a special aptitude and has got the needed training. This is, however, a secondary thing. It matters little where one works—whether in the kitchen or in the office or in the battlefield or somewhere else. This world being what it is, a network of activity as the *Gītā* (III. 5, 16, XVIII. 11) strikingly points out, everyone is sure to find his place in the harmony of events; only the modern scientific culture calls upon us to find it by a diligent search and intelligent application and not be forced into it by extraneous factors. The more important issue is: what are we going to make of the situation in which we find ourselves, whether by our own sweet will and choice or by the fortuitous combination of events? In other words, what ideals, what motives, stir us in our action? Is it merely the sense of comfort, ease, and a pleasurable life, or something nobler? If it is the former, it has not much to commend in itself. Thus, women may take to any profession, they may become teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, scientists, or whatever else they like according to individual tastes, capacities, and needs, but if they prefer it only as an escape from what is considered as the



drudgery of the home and not from any sense of high idealism, it counts for nothing. Moreover, it breeds an outlook which is injurious to society as a whole in the long run. For instance, look at this interesting portrayal of a modern sophisticated girl as compared with the women of the older generation, made years ago by a delegate to the All India Women's Conference: 'The independent, self-confident girls who jump on and off buses and trams and elbow their way alone through crowds are a great contrast to their grandmothers who, with stumbling awkward steps, followed in the wake of their husbands on railway platforms, and had to be almost lifted in and out of the railway compartment (and perhaps even counted) with the pieces of luggage taken. But as we enter into the home, the picture changes. See the active, patient, smiling women of a previous age, rearing a large family on limited means, first to rise and latest to retire, full of a quiet self-surrender, and compare her with the modern girl rolling in bed with a novel, ordering servants, sons, husbands, or, better still, mothers and aunts, whoever are willing or can be forced into her slavery; and after the birth of a couple of children, pale, anaemic, and neurotic, always restless and not seldom discontented.'

Not that this is a universal phenomenon and invariably true—there are very many honourable exceptions, and we believe they are the majority—but still it sums up the situation and the problem more or less precisely. It warns us against an attitude of mind that makes our women seek solace in occupations outside the home simply because of its novelty, simply because of the ease and comfort that it is expected to bring, simply because western women do so and have derived some superficial advantages thereby. No great nation or individual is built up by a life of ease and

comfort; and no woman can grow great or do lasting good by neglecting her responsibilities at home in a vain search of free and easy life outside in imitation of man. No woman in the past looked upon the work at home as a drudgery or a tyrannical imposition of man. For her it was worship. Now can we, can our women bring this sense of dedication and worship into all the activities that they are called upon to take up these days? If not, all this hurry-scurry about education, progress, etc. is just so much waste of energy and labour. Intellectual achievements in themselves are nothing without the cultivation of the heart, without the control of emotions and subjugation of selfish impulses, without the training of the will, without noble sentiments and efficiency in action in furtherance of it. For it is these latter that make up our character, that determine how we act and behave, that constitute real education. A girl—this applies, of course, equally well to the boy—who has learnt to read and write, but utilizes her newly acquired faculty for nothing more than poring over exciting novels or spurious literature cannot be said to be truly educated. She has not benefited from her education; she has not learnt to choose her material for reading; she has not availed herself of her learning for the culture of the spirit which would enable her to face the problems of life boldly and would develop her love and sympathy for the people around and her disposition and ability to serve them. Without the cultivation of these virtues, of what worth is mere intellectual education, mere picking up a few scraps of information about this and that without the power of integrating them into one's life? Education implies the power to survey a situation and put ourselves in a right relation to it. And this power results from self-control. When ancient India placed before our women



the ideal of Sītā and Sāvitrī or of Anasūyā and Ahalyā, it was not asking us to subject women to untold suffering or keep them in ignorance and bondage, but was laying stress on this aspect of education. The highest function of education is the purification of emotions, and this, ancient India sought to achieve for women through unselfish and patient service, loving kindness, and the glorious traditions of consecrated wifehood and motherhood. It is the emphasis on this ideal that has kept the nation alive through the centuries. No doubt, there is much abuse of the emphasis on this aspect of woman's life, and this has in course of time led to the neglect of the intellectual side of her education, without which the mind would run only in narrow ruts and the vision become circumscribed. That defect is being remedied now by the higher education of women; but this added knowledge should not be the cause of their frivolity and sense-indulgence. They must develop, side by side, the ideals of self-control, self-abnegation, and self-sacrifice, and desist from the western craze for competing with men in every walk of life for its own sake.

Modesty is a virtue in women, nay, it is divinity itself as the *Caṇḍā* or *Devī Māhātmya* (IV. 5) says, and the women who aspire after masculine pursuits as their ideal are only dishonouring themselves. It is not in these that they can prove the excellence of womanhood; these do not bring forth the best that womanhood is capable of. 'The differences existing between man and woman', as Alexis Carrel, the well-known scientist and a Nobel Prize winner in medical science, aptly remarks, '... are caused by the very structure of the tissues and by the impregnation of the entire organism with specific chemical substances secreted by the ovary. Ignorance of these fundamental facts has led promoters of feminism to believe that both

sexes should have the same education, the same powers, and the same responsibilities. In reality, woman differs profoundly from man. Every one of the cells of her body bears the mark of her sex. The same is true of her organs and, above all, of her nervous system. Physiological laws are as inexorable as those of the sidereal world. They cannot be replaced by human wishes. We are obliged to accept them just as they are. Women should develop their aptitudes in accordance with their own nature, without trying to imitate the males. Their part in the progress of civilisation is higher than that of men. They should not abandon their specific functions. ... The same intellectual and physical training, and the same ambitions, should not be given to young girls as to boys. Educators should pay very close attention to the organic and mental peculiarities of the male and the female, and to their natural functions. Between the two sexes there are irrevocable differences. And it is imperative to take them into account in constructing the civilised world.' (*Man, the Unknown*, Hamish Hamilton, London, pp. 93, 95)

When everything is said and done, home and the family are singularly the province of woman. She is the centre and foundation of the family and the home, and there she is the unrivalled queen. When the bride is about to depart to her husband's home after marriage, the parents bless her so that she may grow into such a one, and counsel her to act accordingly (*R̥g-Veda*, X. lxxxv. 46):

*Samrājñī śvaśure bhava samrājñī*

*śvaśruvām bhava;*

*Nanāndari samrājñī bhava samrājñī*

*adhi devr̥ṣu—*

'Be thou a loving queen at home to the father-in-law, a loving queen to the mother-in-law, a loving queen to the sister-



in-law, a loving queen to the brother-in-law.'

And the bridegroom tells her on the occasion :

*Mūrdhānam patyurāroha prajayā ca  
vināt bhava—*

'Adorn the head of your husband like an ornament to light up his life.'

The two exalted positions the woman holds in the family are those of the wife and the mother. And she will be judged by how she acquits herself in these two pre-eminent positions of hers. It is there that she will exhibit her excellences and graces. Man is busy all the time in earning a livelihood and maintaining the family, and his spiritual stability and even material prosperity depend on how she maintains the home. Home is the sanctuary of ethical and spiritual ideals; and woman is the guardian of it. That is the deep significance of the epithet *sahadharminī* (partner in religious pursuits) by which the wife is designated in Indian languages. Man cannot replace her there, and the bringing up of the children, it goes without saying, depends to a great extent, if not wholly, on the mother. 'So long as children cannot be shaken from heaven, but have to be built within their mothers' bodies, so long will there be a specific function for women.' And 'human offspring are the most helpless of all living creatures. In the absence of parental care, their chances of survival are little. The tending will have to be continued for a long period, till the child reaches the status of man. The higher the cultural level, the longer is the period required for education.' (Radhakrishnan : *The Hindu View of Life*, 1927, p. 89 ; *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 1940, p. 379)

Modern women do not seem to recognize their importance in this regard, nor the

significance of this special role of theirs in the home. What need is there, they appear to say, for them to be busy with these trivial, irksome affairs? Are there not expert nurses trained for the job who can look after the health and upbringing of their children better than themselves? Are there not schools, with hostels attached to them, where the children can receive their education and training in every department of life, under the care and guidance of men proficient in doing so? Are there not nursing homes and hospitals where they can be looked after when they fall sick? Are there not restaurants and cafés where they can get well-cooked and nourishing food? Then, why bother about all these things at the home? Why should not the women divert themselves in some recreation and amusement outside? True, all that the home can provide materially can be had easily outside; the communal bodies and social organizations are making them available. But one thing cannot be had outside: that is the soothing touch of the mother which means so much to the child and which leaves its indelible impression on the character of the child. What world of emotions, feelings, thoughts, love, kindness, and sweetness are transferred into the child on the lap of the mother when *she* nurses it, when *she* feeds and clothes it, and looks after its other interests! What an education is imparted therein, nobody can tell. Can any school, any hostel, any restaurant produce that holy influence on the child? Look at the great teachers of the world—Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Christ, Śaṅkara, and Caitanya? Where would they have been but for the noble mothers they had? We remember their greatness and pay homage to their wonderful character, but what an amount of silent tears, how much of unostentatious sacrifice, love, and austerity of their mothers has gone into their making!



These simple souls lived their pious life quietly within the precincts of the home. Unassuming and contented, they carried on their life of intense devotion and prayer and worship amidst their daily chores, with no more ambition than to be perfect and proud of their religious avocation and spiritual bearing, which created a celestial atmosphere in the home conducive to the moulding of such remarkable souls as their sons were. They subordinated themselves to everyone, every moment they effaced their personality, in order that their sons might become great, and their sons did become great; and with their sons, they, too, stand uplifted and immortal. The example of such mothers surely tells on the children, on the husband, and on everyone else in the family and the community, too. It is the woman that can preserve holiness and spiritual strength and transmit it to children and men. If India lives today, it is not a little because of the women who held aloft their ideal and retained their faith undimmed in the eternal values cherished by India, when men had practically failed to do so, when they were remiss in their duties and obligations to women, straining their patience to the utmost, and when society had degenerated and conditions were most exasperating for them.

We are not holding brief for the women's going back under the *purdah* once again—that is, of course, injudicious on our part to do and impossible even if we wished it—but are drawing the attention of our women to a particular situation that has arisen from their taking part in public life, viz the danger of the break-up of the family and with it the traditions and ideals which are the prop of an enduring civilization. It is for women to give thought to this aspect of the problem and to find out if there is anything they can do to avert the danger and act in a manner which is not prejudi-

cial to their own welfare, the welfare of their children, the welfare of the society, and the welfare of the country. One thing is obvious. With the women put to the necessity of becoming the earning members of the family, on the one hand, and with their position and, with it, their mentality becoming equated with that of men, on the other, the foundations of the family *are* getting shaky; the family ties *are* becoming loose and formal. There is great maladjustment as a result, and the grave problem is how to maintain the integrity of the family. For, without it, the whole fabric of society would fall to pieces. When husband and wife are no longer complementary to each other but competitors, naturally the relations between them cannot but be strained, leading to a large number of divorce cases, as we see in the West today and may see it in India a few years later. Woman today has lost her stability, poise, and peace. She is restless and unhappy. She is no longer the ideal wife or the mother. She has lost the art of building a home where noble citizens can be brought up, and she has not the inclination to revive it. And we are seeing its effect all around. To refer to one such effect, which is rather a serious one: We complain of the indiscipline of the students and their bad behaviour. But who is responsible? How can they help acting that way if the home does not inculcate in them the veneration for higher ideals and the value of respect and reverence to elders, devotion, etc.? They do not receive at home the warmth of affection and loving ministration they sorely need from the mother and the father; for either the mother herself is, like the father, out all day in work or busy with her social engagements or the children themselves are away in the hostels and boarding homes. Thus, they miss the sweet, peaceful, sanctified atmosphere of the home, which alone can

be a suitable training ground for life in its early stages. And how can a nation be built up in such an uncongenial atmosphere, inimical to all noble aspirations, and how can we expect our children to rise to great heights of human excellence?

The main question before our women, as before men, is one of being clear about the objectives and goal of life; when we are sure about it, the rest is but a matter of adjustment. What is it our women want? Is it Indian spirituality or western materialism? If the latter, then of course, we have nothing to say against their seeking

enjoyment, comfort, ease, and a free life with all their attendant evils, but let them remember in that case animality will be the order of the day and *India dies*. If the former, then they must be prepared to welcome patient suffering, sacrifice, renunciation, and self-denial, but they will have peace, blessedness, joy, happiness, and everlasting life and glory, and *India lives*. 'If you have it, you don't have to have anything else; and if you don't have it, it does not matter what else you have.' (Barry: *What Every Woman Knows*) Let our women make their choice!

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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BRAHMACARYA

SWAMI VIMALANANDA

Vedic civilization had an ideal theory and a specific programme for strengthening its cultural core and harmonizing its constituent elements. The doctrine of *puruṣārtha* or the pursuit of the four life-values is a direct expression of this feature. The religion derived from the Vedas is fundamentally based on the belief that God is the ultimate reality; that all spiritual and non-spiritual entities proceed from Him; that man wanders in the corridors of time because he has forgotten his own spiritual essence which is really divine; and that he will get release from *samsāra* when he realizes the eternal relation with God as a result of his own efforts, made during several ascending births in spiritually graded classes and stations of life. A man's endeavour should be, therefore, to get out of life the best he can. Sojourn in *samsāra* is welcome as it affords a succession of opportunities for moral and spiritual progress. Man is not the slave of any capricious power that would catch him by the

throat and make him do things by force or give him awards and punishments at pleasure. His tendencies, springing from his own previous births, manifest themselves in each birth as joy and sorrow in suitable circumstances. The law of consequences operates logically through the round of rebirth. Just as one would merit a divine birth through his higher aspirations, so he may also sink into a subhuman birth by dark deeds and thoughts. Thus discriminating the problem, the ṛṣis came to the conclusion that every moment of human life must be devoted to the pursuit of the *puruṣārthas*. A man should not remain without an *āśrama* even for a moment.

Of the four *puruṣārthas*, *dharma* (righteousness) and *artha* (earning wealth) are to be pursued either for the fulfilment of *kāma* or *mokṣa*. Pursuit of pleasure is confined to the *gṛhasthya* stage, and it should never degenerate into mere titillation of the nerves. The *gṛhasthāśrama* implies a



planned, controlled, and refined enjoyment of the sensations presented and actions undertaken after long training and discipline. The true art of living is the outcome of a proper cultivation of intellectual powers and physical skills, with the ultimate aim of securing release from *samsāra*. The pursuit of *kāma* and *artha* is possible only when a suitable environment is created for it. Right social efforts are necessary to create wealth without mutual discord and destruction, and so economic efforts are to be organized under the guidance of moral and spiritual laws. *Dharma* implies the practice of moral and spiritual laws for making life a source of happiness here and a way to ultimate bliss. Since a man enjoys the fruit of *kāma* in the second stage of his life, the responsibility of creating its means also belongs to the same stage. A *grhastha* has to grow into the full stature of a true citizen possessing competence for spiritual, moral, political, economic, and social leadership, so that he becomes the source, support, and security of all the other remaining orders. There is no way to achieve this except through careful and long training in the first stage of life leading to it. Based on this ideal theory of a religiously ordained society, the sages marked off with appropriate discipline the life of a regenerate person into four *āśramas*—*brahmacarya*, *gārhasthya*, *vānaprasthya*, and *sannyāsa*.

#### THE BRAHMACARYASRAMA AND MODERN TRENDS

According to the Vedic scheme, one enters the *āśramas* through *samskāras* or purificatory rites, *upanayana*, *vivāha*, and the like. Each *samskāra* is meant to give a not-as-yet-known excellence to the candidate and to make him fit for the following *samskāra*. The place of *brahmacarya* in this scheme can hardly be

exaggerated, for it is the intellectual and moral feeder and nourisher of the remaining stages. The strength of *brahmacarya* determines the efficacy of the *grhastha*'s life. Keśava, in his *Śabdakalpadrūkośa* (G.O.S.,\* No. LII, p. 70), mentions that the term *mukhyāśramin* is a synonym of *brahmacārin*. In the parlance of traditional codes, the term *brahmacarya* is widely used to denote the first *āśrama*, which is an indispensable stage of preparation for entering the subsequent *āśramas*. In the philosophical and mystical works, chastity, continence, and celibacy are denoted by *brahmacarya*. These two senses of the word are not disconnected or divergent as we shall see. Words gain currency when a number of people constantly employ them. As a consequence of it, they are sometimes elevated or depressed. Thus, in vulgar parlance, the word *brahmacārin* has come to mean just an unmarried person, a meaning far removed from the original sense. In examining the expression, we should never forget the original sense in this context. The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, at VI. 14 and VIII. 11, uses the word *brahmacarya* as referring to the course of the discipline to be followed by one who practises *yoga* for the attainment of the highest aim of life, and at XVII. 14, uses it as denoting a form of bodily *tapas*.

The scientific and industrial civilization of today has almost replaced this inherited cultural scheme which was slowly seeping for centuries through Indian society. It is well known that but for the discoveries and inventions of science we would not have advanced in economic and commercial life. Industry would not have advanced from the state of primitive handicrafts to what it is today, if it had not harnessed science to its technique of production and distribution. Interdependence between science

\* Abbreviation in the article: G.O.S.: Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Oriental Institute, Baroda.



and industry has also transformed our outlook enormously. In the India of nineteen-sixties, social changes of an unprecedented magnitude are in evidence. An ancient culture that was built by slow personal contact among a scattered population across vast areas of time and space is slowly crumbling under the blast of great innovations coming through every channel of communication and emotional influence with the greatest speed. Thoughtful people have not failed to take note of this. They long for a spiritual order to correct some of the devastating influences brought upon the new generation. Right knowledge and flawless activity issuing from untainted motives have always strength to oppose, if not to fully avert, moral degradation in society. An understanding of the significance of *brahmacarya* today has become a crying need.

In the Vedic literature, we find the earliest usage of the term *brahmacarya* in connexion with the *āśrama*. Aṣṭāvakra, in his commentary on the *Mānavagrhya-Sūtra* of the *Maitrāyaṇīya Śākhā* (G.O.S., No. XXXV, p. 4), says: '*Brahmaṇo vedasya caryam caranam adhyayanam ... Brahma vedah, tadadhyayanāṅgāni vratāni api brahma ucyate, caryam anuṣṭhānam.*' Here, the term stands for *Veda-brahmacarya*, which is explained in two ways: *adhyayanapradhānapakṣa* and *anuṣṭhānapradhānapakṣa*. In the first, the correct, methodical, and sequential acquisition of the syllables of the Vedas from a competent teacher is what is implied; in the second, the disciplinary vows that are undertaken by the candidate who undergoes the course of study.

#### INITIATION INTO VEDA-BRAHMACARYA

*Brahmacaryāśrama* came into existence for the purpose of treasuring and transmitting Vedic knowledge and laying the foundation for the spiritual unfoldment of

man and fruition of his life through the *varṇa* and *āśrama* scheme. A religious order implies a code of behaviour and continuity in the devolution of the discipline. *Dharma Śāstras* lay down elaborate rules for *brahmacarya*. They are based on the practice of the elders and traditions, and they are many and varied. First, the order of *brahmacarya* is open only for those who come under a religiously ordained class (*traivarṇika*), and not the common man living at the dictates of his whim and impulses. Even among the *traivarṇika* candidates, emblems of different groups vary in details. *Smṛtikāras* prescribe for respective groups clothes to be worn, the composition and length of the thread and girdle, the tree from which the staff is to be cut, and its length and qualities. But service to the teacher, Vedic study, and code of conduct are common for all. A Brāhmaṇa parent may initiate the boy at the age of five, if he wished the child should become endowed with *brahmavarca*s or energy and strength born of holy learning. A Kṣatriya may initiate at the age of six, and a Vaiśya at the age of eight. Normally, *upanayana* is done at the age of eight, eleven, and twelve respectively for the three *varṇas*, reckoning from conception. An adult who remains uninitiated even after the upper limit of time prescribed for *upanayana* becomes a *vrātya*, who has no right to marry in the group of the *élites*. Blind, dumb, unchaste, and insane candidates were disqualified for *upanayana*.

*Upanayana* (now mostly a mockery, bereft of any real content) was considered as the gateway to a young person's spiritual rebirth through ascetic discipline and dedicated Vedic study. One of the ceremonies connected with it is called *medhājanana*, or creation of spiritual intelligence. In ancient times, Vedic and secular education proceeded concurrently, the first



usually undertaken in the forenoon of specified days and the second in the afternoon. Formal initiation of a child in letters, called *vidyārambha*, from which none was debarred, was not treated as a *samskāra* by the *ṛṣis*. This was done before *upanayana*. But the commencement of the study of the Vedas, or *Brahma-vidyārambha*, was not possible unless *upanayana* was done. Without entering *brahmacaryāśrama*, no twice-born person could enter married or other stages of life. This made *brahmacarya* a matter of vital importance.

Often parents have not the competence of an *ācārya* to induct their children into Vedic knowledge. It is also common that their fondness and attachment for the child stands in the way of training the *mānavaka* (literally, the tender, little human being) with necessary rigour. So, the boy is sent to the house of another *guru* who looks after his training without inflicting corporeal punishments as far as possible (*śiṣyaśiṣṭir āvadhena*—Gautama). The central part of the *upanayana* ceremony is the *guru* sitting near the boy facing each other and making the boy repeat the *Sāvitrī* verse, quarter by quarter and then together. This is the seed of spirituality planted in the mind of the child, which is to grow into the tree of spiritual life, affording him fruit and shelter. The petted and fondled child who was free to move, talk, and eat at pleasure (*kāmacārah*, *kāma-vādaḥ*, *kāmabhakṣaḥ*) becomes now a part of the society, temporarily separated from his parents. He finds the means of his subsistence by alms begged from other homes in a prescribed manner. Whatever he receives is submitted to the *guru*, and with his permission, he eats after having dedicated it to God, silently, with pleasure and without gusto, keeping by his side a water-pot. The sacred thread, girdle (*mekhalā*), and the staff (*daṇḍa*) formed

in ancient times the emblem of the *brahmacārin*. By these he was recognized and treated with respect and sympathy.

*Śauca*, or corporeal and ritualistic purity, was taught quite early to the boy. The regulations of *śauca* are based on sanitary considerations. Unless the *brahmacārin* is externally clean and internally pure, he is not fit for the performance of daily prayers (*sandhyā*), maintenance of the sacred fire (*agnyādhāna*), and the study of the Vedas. A *brahmacārin* should not offensively hawk and spit, should not yawn without covering the mouth, make noise by crackling the limbs, laugh vociferously, and talk garrulously. He should not enter into argumentation, and must avoid dancing and music. It must be the endeavour of an acolyte to control his speech, hands, and belly. He should not be a spectator of gambling with dice or with fighting animals, and should desist from giving pain to other creatures. Meat-eating, self-embellishment, and aesthetic bath are forbidden for the *āśrama* of *brahmacarya*. A *brahmacārin* should restrain greed, anger, and delusion, and should never tell falsehood or calumniate others. He should not give himself to excessive joy and depression, and should attend to duties without prompting. He should not appropriate anything that is not given away to him. Intoxicants and gluttony are forbidden for him. He should not answer the *guru* standing out of sight, but come near him and make communications in his presence. It is his duty to sit on a lower seat in front of him, to follow him in company, to get up before him, to do what is to be done after bringing to his notice, and to report what is already done without delay. The *brahmacārin* should not use the seats and bedding of the *guru*, and should maintain proper demeanour under all circumstances. The Vedic usage condemns sleeping when the sun has risen and at the setting of the



sun. The two words, *abhyudita* and *abhinirmukta*, are used in a condemnatory sense to denote one who sleeps at sunrise and sunset respectively. A *brahmacārin* who violates this regulation has to expiate for it.

The life of a *brahmacārin* is one of obedience and responsibility. It is not enough that he observes an ascetic discipline for his own good. He has to impress upon his mind that reverence given to those to whom honour is due never goes in vain. So he is taught *abhivādana* or salutation quite early. He prostrates before the person saluted reciting his name and *gotra* and ending with *pādopasaṅgrahaṇa* or claspings the feet. *Pratyutthāna*, or standing up in honour of a person, and uttering *nama-skāra* are ways of expressing honour. *Abhivādana* is classified as obligatory, occasional, and optional. If an employee salutes his master, it is undertaken for a desire, and so it is called *kāmya* or optional. Salutation to a *guru* is *nitya* (obligatory), and to an elder who returns from a journey is *naimittika* (occasional). Parents, elder brothers, elder sisters, their husbands, father's contemporary friends, paternal and maternal uncles, and neighbours had their own relative positions of honour in the social group. The *brahmacārin* is taught to wait to be spoken to, and he makes them offerings as occasion demands. Veneration of the teacher is the most important feature, because he gives the *brahmacārin* his second birth through knowledge; and therefore all other persons the *brahmacārin* has to honour are measured to him against the *guru*. Respecting the seniors in age, serving the wise, and practising austerities open the door to the acquisition of wisdom, wealth, and well-being. The *Smṛtis* do not fail to make it clear that obedience demands also responsibilities and qualities on the part of those to whom it is due. A teacher should

not refuse to teach when he is requested to do so. A student is not bound to obey the words of the teacher if they contravene *dharma*. A *brahmacārin* is bound to give up a teacher whose conduct is tainted and who neither studies himself nor teaches others. Learning, age, wealth, relationship, and conduct entitle a person to honour. Vasiṣṭha places learning above the rest. Manu gives to wealth a place lower than the rest. *Viṣṇusmṛti* states that a *brahmacārin* should consider that person who prevents him from committing an unrighteous act as his *guru*.

A *brahmacārin* stays in the *gurukula* for a period calculated at twelve years for each Veda. Usually, a student studies only the Veda of the *śākhā* to which he belongs, and so, many do not stay at the *gurukula* for the full period of forty-eight years. At the age of sixteen, the *brahmacārin* undergoes a ceremony called *godāna* or *keśānta*, and shaves off his hair and beard. Till then, according to some of the authorities, his hair and beard are suffered to grow. When the study is completed, he returns home after having paid *gurudakṣiṇā*, and becomes a *snātaka* or graduated person preparing for marriage. Manu lays down the rule that a person who has been practising strict continence—*avipluta-brahmacarya*—must enter *gārhasthya*. All the compilers of the *Dharma Śāstras* condemn pre-nuptial licence. Though we may find in the *Itihāsas* and the *Purāṇas* mention of *kānīna*, *apadhvasta*, and other types of irregular progeny, with the exception of few, the rest are condemned indirectly by the legendary anecdotes that have gathered around them. The law-givers have always presented as the eugenically approved ideal birth within a socially sanctioned and religiously sanctified marriage. Higher cultural values could not be preserved in any other way. The bulk of men and women in any society choose a married



life, and so the importance of *upakurvāna brahmacarya* for society at large is variously stressed by the sages.

### THE LIFE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER

A *gārhasthya* that is well grounded in the training received during the period of *brahmacaryāśrama* affords an opportunity for enjoying all legitimate pleasures for purifying the senses thereby, for strengthening the mind, for rearing worthy progeny, for supporting and ensuring the proper functioning of the other three *āśramas*, and for finding release from *samsāra* through the proper discharge of scripturally ordained duties. Vedic literature contains apparently contradictory statements, presenting a debatable proposition elaborately discussed in later ages. *Rg-Veda* (V. iv. 10) declares : 'O Agni, may we attain immortality through progeny (*prajābhir-agne amṛtatvam aśyām*)', and the *Mahā-nārāyaṇa* (VIII. 14) of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* authoritatively asserts : 'Some attained immortality not by progeny, not by wealth, but by renunciation (*na prajāyādhanena tyāgenaike amṛtatvam ānaśuh*)'. Neither the first statement can be discredited by the second nor the second one invalidated by the force of the first. Perhaps, a *modus vivinde* is found in the word 'eke' in the quoted *Āraṇyaka* passage itself. The last two *āśramas*, undertaken by those who have an exceptional urge for spirituality, are scripturally ordained. Those who take a synoptic view of the two *Mīmāṃsās* hold to the supremacy of the *grhasthāśrama* in all respects, and the last two *āśramas* as a concession ; while those who consider that *Śrīraka-Mīmāṃsā* is an independent *śāstra* consider the last *āśrama* supreme as *mokṣāśrama*.

The *grhasthāśrama* as conceived by the *ṛṣis* is not merely a successful marital life. Marriage, as Westermarck has put it, is rooted in the family and not family in mar-

riage. *Vivāha-saṁskāra*, according to the *Dharma Śāstras*, combines the solemnity of a *yajña* and the highest type of *dāna*. It leads to a life of *tapas* in the form of undergoing austerities for fulfilling the duties enjoined upon this particular stage of life. Therefore, in order to ensure the right type of *gārhasthya*, first of all, marriage within a definite circle drawn by consanguinity (*sāpindya*) is prohibited. The bride and the bridegroom must be from outside the prohibited degree of blood relations. This implies a correct understanding of their ancestry. Endogamy is avoided, and cross cousin marriages are sanctioned only in regions where it is established by custom. Lads and lasses are selected for their health, character, and right disposition, so that transmission of harmful mental, moral, and physical traits are prevented as far as possible. A family in which there is no Vedic study or in which male members are few cannot supply the right brides and bridegrooms. Families in which licentiousness prevails do not supply right type of men and women who are fit to preserve *Āryadharma*. The bride that is selected must be *dharmacārīnī* and *asprṣṭa-maithuna* and younger than the bridegroom ; she should also be possessed of *buddhi*, *śīla*, and *lakṣaṇa*. The bridegroom must be above any talk of scandal in the neighbourhood and one not abandoned by the relatives. Congenitally dumb, deaf, or epileptic, or those suffering from consumption, leprosy, and other chronic diseases, are debarred from the purpose. One who is a slave, a sex-invert, a saddist, a criminal, and one out of his mind cannot be eligible. The *Kātyāyana Śrauta-Sūtra* lays down that before the marriage arrangement, knowledge, austerity, and meritorious works prevailing among the forbears of the bridegroom and bride for ten generations must be examined. *Kanyādāna* may be cancelled



even after *vāgdāna* on grounds of impotence and other defects discovered before the actual marriage. An original marriage between two persons belonging to the same *varṇa* was considered conducive to religious merit, wealth, offspring, and good relations. Such a marriage is unworldly, uncarnal, and gives excellent offsprings. Monogamous marriage is the ideal, and the *dharmapatnī*, who is called *sadṛśī*, is entitled to officiate with the husband in all his religious acts and also to make gifts and observe vigils on his behalf. The debt with which a person is born towards the *pitṛs* is discharged by begetting proper progeny; the debt to the gods, by the performance of sacrifices; and to the *ṛṣis*, by the study of the Vedas. *Brahmacarya* of a householder consists in *paradāravarjāna*, *ṛtau svadārābhigamana*, *parvavratādidinavarjāna*, and *ūrdhvaretasatva* within marriage. Extra-marital sex thoughts that may be occasioned by the sight of a *pratimā* of even a celestial woman is forbidden for him.

*Yajña*, or sacrificial worship, is the corner-stone of a householder's life in the Vedic religion. During the period of the *brahmacaryāśrama*, the *brahmacārī* has been worshipping the sacred fire; the same fire may be used for worship even after *samāvartana* and for fulfilling the *samāvartana* ritual. During the wedding ceremony, fresh fire may be kindled for the purpose or the same fire may be used. One may also continue the same fire kept by his father after his death. A *grhastha* worships in the *smārtāgni* or the *śrautāgni*, which is also called *tretā*, that is, *āhavanīya*, *gārhapatya*, and *dakṣiṇāgni*. The *tretāgni* is not kindled immediately after the marriage. The marriage couple maintain a *sabhyāgni* for removing cold, and a *pacānāgni* for cooking purposes. These are for *laukika* purposes, and have no religious value. The fire that is lighted for the mar-

riage is called *grhyāgni* or *aupāsanāgni*. A person who lights *pañcāgni* (the three *śrautāgnis*, *grhyāgni*, and *sabhyāgni*) is praised as one who purifies others, *pañkti-pāvana*. Until the *tretāgni* is instituted, *agnihotra*, which a *grhastha* has to perform from the commencement of the *āśrama*, is done in the *vaiivāhikāgni* and afterwards only in the *tretāgni*. *Agnihotra* is extolled as the holiest form of worship and as a lifelong *sattra*. The wherewithals for the performance of it must be pure, and wealth got by gambling, stealing, usury, trade, and service of others cannot be used. Only what is earned by learning, austerity, fees received from pupils, can be used for it. When a *grhastha* has to go on journey, he should not depute an incompetent person to tend the *agnihotra* fire.

When a householder finds his hair is still black and a son is just born, he establishes the *śrautāgni* and performs in it the seven *pākayajñas*, seven *haviryajñas*, and the seven *somasamsthas*. The *pākayajñas* are performed in the *grhyāgni* along with the wife. The sacrifices offered in the *śrautāgni* are *naimittika* or *kāmya*. Gautama includes them under the forty *samskāras* a *Brāhmaṇa* should undergo, and Manu states that, a real *Brāhmaṇa* body is created by *yajñas* and *mahāyajñas*. The *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā* lay down that when the *naimittika* and *kāmya karmas* are performed without attachment, without desire for their fruit, and as dedication to God, they give soul-purity and fitness for Self-realization, *pratyak-tattvādhigama*. The *yajamāna* and his wife must prepare for these rituals by religious seriousness, prescribed continence, and strict self-control. Avoidance of laughter, observance of silence, punctuality, not partaking of other people's food, abstaining from talking with other women than one's own wife, and sleeping on the ground are some of the restrictions that hedge the behaviour of



the sacrificer, *yajña-dāksita*. For the flawless completion of a sacrifice, numberless details are to be followed with meticulous care and willed attention. Only very competent persons can succeed perfectly. But every *grhastha* is obliged to perform the *pañcamahāyajña*: *viśvadeva* or offerings made to gods in the *aupāsana*; *bhūta-yajña* or offerings to the elements; *pitryajña* or libation to departed ancestors with water; *manuṣyayajña* or hospitality to unknown and unexpected travellers; and *brahmayaajña*, consisting of teaching and learning.

All the *āśramas* are guarded by *yamas* (inhibitions) and *niyamas* (observations), and any relaxation is permitted only for the second. Besides performing the religious duties described above, a *grhastha* has to strive for other excellences so that he may become endowed with *śrī* or prosperity. He should perform all appointed duties zealously, help his fellow men, maintain conjugal fidelity, have business austerity, keep privacy in discharging natural functions, practise rectitude in behaviour, and learn from the experience of ancestors. *Grhasthāśrama* shines with virtues such as devotion to parents, consideration for dependents, freedom from cruelty, steadfastness in keeping vows, performance of austerities, abhorring falsehood of every kind, straightforward conduct, preservation of the family and its reputation, and keeping the purity of oneself and the things one has to handle. A *grhastha* should avoid associations that are likely to degrade him and should live in a place that provides him with the environment and the ingredients necessary for a regulated life. Misers, mean revengeful persons, liars, scamps, suspects, spend-thrifts, and also those who run down the scriptures, sages, and their words must be avoided. He should not join the group of idle talkers or enter into quarrels or revile

women or criticize unmarried girls. Slandering chaste women, teachers, and good men, or speaking sarcastically of deformed persons, brings only grievous demerit. He should avoid blasphemy and desist from self-praise and speaking ill of food taken in another's home. It is the duty of a *grhastha* to maintain harmonious social intercourse by being contented, unenvious, patient, suave, kindly, forgiving, and modest, and by practising a grateful disposition, restraint, and undecitfulness. A *grhastha* of the first *varṇa* has to maintain his life by *ṛta* (means ordained by the Vedas) or *amṛta* (gift from pupils) or *mṛta* (alms), and in difficulty, by *pramṛta* (cultivation). But he should never take to *satyānṛta* (trade) or *śvavṛtti* (paid service under an employer) except in calamity. Accumulation of wealth is a danger for Brāhmaṇa (*anartho brāhmaṇasyaiśa yad arthanicaḥ mahān*), and though he has the capacity to receive gifts, he should not be an addict to it (*pratigrahasamartho'pi prasāṅgam tatra varjayet*). These are the dicta of the *Mahābhārata* and *Manu* respectively. Those who conform to this code were considered *mahābrāhmaṇa* and *mahāśrotriya*. *Dharma* governed the life of a ruling Kṣatriya too; he also had similar training in *Veda-dharma*; even when his emissaries miscarried justice and got punishment, the *rājā* was not exonerated from his liability. According to the *Āryadharma*, a ruling *rājā* is not a mere symbol of regal absolutism, but a tool of *dharma*. This harmony between the Brāhmaṇa and the Kṣatriya went a long way in maintaining *dharma* even in personal life and preventing a cleavage between *sacerdotium* and *imperium*.

#### BRAHMACARYA AS CONTINENCE AND CELIBACY

From the above paragraphs it is evident that the right type of *grhasthāśrama*, pro-



ceeding from true *brahmacaryāśrama*, leads one to the highest goal. There is no room for doubt that devotion to the *āśrama* duties as described above leads to *amṛtatva*, as it is declared so in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VIII.5) and *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (III.205). *Brahmacarya* in the sense of continence, as associated with the first *āśrama*; in the sense of chastity and restraint, as connected with the second *āśrama*; and as celibacy in the last *āśrama*, deserves some attention. At a time when the spirit of *brahmacarya* is getting slack, this reiteration is not useless. A teenager in the *gurukula*, under the constant supervision, guidance, and control of a kind and dutiful *ācārya* who practises and teaches virtue, can hardly have promptings for incontinence. The main concern of *gurukula* life is to build up physical, intellectual, and moral strength. Labour rendered as service to the *guru* in instituting the worship and helping in domestic needs was suitable to develop not only inner qualities, but also physical aptitudes. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII. 8) says: 'When there is strength, he becomes active and approaches the *guru*; and when he approaches, he sees what is shown and listens to the words, and thereby understands, discriminates, and decides.' This constant apprenticeship kept the pupil out of all wrong promptings. The complexion of the *gurukula* kept him above temptation, and regulations always guided action. The unshaven or completely shaven head afforded no aesthetic attraction, and his thoughts hardly turned to the opposite sex. The *Mānavagrhya-Sūtra* laid down for the student; 'Sarvāni sāmśparśikāni strībhyo varjayet'; and in interpreting it, Aṣṭāvakra included eyeing and listening to sexy descriptions.

The term *upakurvāṇa* implies that the *brahmacarya* qualified thereby is undertaken for a special purpose, namely, marriage. But the *gurukula* harboured

*naiṣṭhika brahmacārins* also, who had the capacity to marry, but voluntarily renounced it and vowed themselves to celibacy till death (*niṣṭhā*). These do not come under the category of the decrepit and unfit whom Jaimini and Śabara thought of weeding out by making marriage out of bounds for them. Ancient *Smṛtis* sanction *naiṣṭhika-brahmacarya*, and Yājñavalkya makes honourable mention about it. Absolute celibacy is considered in India as the highest form of *tapas*. As one climbs the ladder of spiritual evolution, the degree of self-denial correspondingly increases. Only those who feel they have a special call take to voluntary celibacy. Complete control of the senses and preservation of sexual energy in the utmost measure by absorbing oneself in intellectual pursuit and spiritual worship formed the central discipline of the *naiṣṭhika brahmacārin*. His austerities are therefore more than that of an *upakurvāṇa*. He is entirely dedicated to *vidyā* and *tapas*, which are interdependent and which do not brook other distractions. He becomes a *gurukula-niṣṭha*, helping the *guru* as before, or devoting time to *Ātma-niṣṭhā*. He is free to become a *sannyāsin* when he chooses to do so. He bathes thrice, performs prescribed religious rites, and forswears every kind of intimacy with the opposite sex enumerated in the *Brahmacārikāṇḍa* of *Kṛtyakalpataru* (G.O.S., No. CVI, p. 272) as thirteen: 'Strīmadya-nivāsapraveśā-ṅga-saṅga - sparśa - drṣṭimelana - sandarśana - tīryagālokana - saṅkathana - praśna - tadvacanā - karṇana - dūrāvekṣaṇa - nikāṭabhramāna-tajjanapriyavacanam ca.'

Only a *grhastha* can enter the *vānaprasthāśrama*, and that having spent half his life as a *grhastha*, discharging all the normal religious, domestic, and social duties pertaining to it. He may be accompanied by his wife if she is past menopause. Otherwise, she may be left behind with the



eldest son. The *vānaprastha* wears braided hair, maintains silence except when he repeats the Veda, practises austerity with increasing rigour, and continues his fire-rites, eating only hermit's food. It may be seen that his life is only a reduced extension of the previous *āśrama*, cut away from home.

### SANNYASASRAMA

*Sannyāsa* is the period of *brahmacarya par excellence*. All the systems of Indian philosophic thought, excepting the Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka and the Cārvāka schools, encouraged asceticism as a method of self-discipline. The early Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems were, perhaps, the pioneers in it. Buddhism and Jainism developed it with special emphasis. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Vedānta pressed the method for their need in their own way. All recognized the value of it for enabling one to gain *tattva-sākṣāt-kāra*. When they took over the Vedic discipline, the philosophic schools found that this particular aspect of *brahmacarya* needed a new stress. Patāñjali declared that vigour in achieving the goal of *yoga* can be got only through *brahmacarya-pratīṣṭhā* or firm continence. Vyāsa, in his commentary, explained *brahmacarya* as full restraint of the power of generation. The Vedānta as propounded by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya reinforced the idea by stressing that *brahmacarya* consisted of eight ascending steps, achieved through the avoidance of visible attraction, contact, sporting with, glorification, hidden talk, revolving in mind about the desirability, mental resolution, and factual act. Jainism considers *brahmacarya* as one of the four disciplinary vows to be practised by householders as an *anuvrata* and by monks as a *mahāvratā*. The *Tattvārthadhigama-Sūtra* prescribes :  
 "Strīnāga-kathāśravaṇa-tanmanoharāṅganirīkṣaṇa - pūrvaratānusmarana - vrsyestaraśāsava-śarīrasaṁskāratyāgāḥ pañca. At

the close of the *sūtra*, the effect of food and dress on *brahmacarya* is referred to.

One may enter *sannyāsāśrama* in the *anulomakrama* or from any of the previous *āśramas* directly, if one has no attachment for all that the world can yield for him. A person who takes to *sannyāsa* even after a period of married life, after complete abstinence from the married relation, is looked upon as a celibate. A discerning householder who has been following the rules of continence prescribed in the previous *āśrama* has already prepared himself for the life of the *sannyāsin*. He looks forward to the ideals of the *vānaprastha* and the *sannyāsin* for the fulfilment of *dharma* and strives for the highest spiritual values. The ambition of organizing monasticism for embracing all mankind in a single society never occurred to the Vedic seers, as it happened in the West, resulting in the production of good and bad, proud and humble, rich and poor, arrogant and gentle monks in legions. A missionary organization struggling to establish itself by philanthropic activities, undertaken in an ever increasing measure, will find more freedom in its work in the absence of wife and children. Religion as an inner quest is very different. Buddhism which enlisted innumerable *bhikkhus* in the pre-Christian era reminds of a pluralistic organization, consisting of small autonomous groups in separate limited geographical areas, mutually unconnected, as the early Carthusians were in Europe. The Vedic religion had no illusion of a coming millenium or establishing a Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Though the Vedic and auxiliary literatures have praise for voluntary celibacy of the exceptionally few, the general trend of the past has been always to recognize the supreme value of a rightly lived *grhastha* life, as that alone is responsible for the purity and stability of society. Even the few exceptional cases of those brilliant



souls who embraced voluntary celibacy from the first *āśrama* did *lokasaṅgraha* more by their spotless example and spiritual prestige than by external aids and co-operation. The *Dharma Śāstras* condemn a *mithyāśramin* in words stronger than those used for rebuking an *anāśramin*. The absurdity of an enforced celibacy was exposed by introducing the term *turaga-brahmacarya* (*Śabdaratnasamanvaya-kośa*, G.O.S., No. LIX, p. 249), which has received lexical currency. When signs of degeneration were visible, later *Smṛtis* tried to close the circle by interdicting *vānaprasthya* and *sannyāsa* by including them among *kali-varjyas*.

But the ascetic impulse is inherent in human nature, and it must assert itself. There is, on the part of every being, a natural striving for fulfilment when necessary conditions are present. Spiritual aspiration, which is a hunger to be whole or *pūrṇa*, is thus a tropistic tendency which commences with a divine discontent and an unwillingness to be satisfied with the purely animal or social level of consciousness. Those few who have sufficient religious seriousness, love of whole-hearted contemplation, and a persistent inclination towards solitude alone seek celibacy as suitable for the purpose. Such aspirants naturally see a prison in a town and a paradise in solitude. Śrī Śaṅkara explains the urge behind the *sannyāsa* citing the analogy of a thirsty person starting for drinking water in a mirage and not persisting in the attempt after knowing that really there is no water in it: 'Na hi mrgatṛṣṇikāyām udakabuddhyā pānāya pravṛttaḥ udakābhāvaḥpi tatraiva pravartate.' (*Gītā*, V. 9, commentary) Maturity for realizing the real behind the apparent may come to a person who had previous preparation at any stage of life, and the logical result must follow. This is the inducement for *sannyāsa*, and not

fear for the labours and toils of the householder's life. Rareness of such competent persons does not discredit the principle behind the doctrine.

#### SOME WESTERN IDEAS ON BRAHMACARYA

The above description has presented in outline an ideal scheme devised by the sages to make *dharma* the fulcrum of elevating man, through the orders and stations of life, to the supreme goal. These ideals have been held aloft for centuries for guiding the multitudes of people struggling towards the higher life. We are almost at the antipodes today, when we think of the loftiness of this scheme. That the old system will be revived is beyond all dream. At a time when social and economic influences have brought about such a condition, almost sapping the bottom of the ancient faith, it is worth while if we could at least find some inspiration in the ancient *dharma*. Science and technology may give us power to evade the physical consequences of unrestrained life for a time or novel ways of enjoyment; but they cannot guarantee the moral welfare of a nation. All outward prosperity vanishes like clouds, if inward corruption is not stopped. The West that gave us the gift of science and social organization is not unconscious of the shadow that stalks a soulless materialism, though many of us who marvel at western achievements are not aware of it. To illustrate this point, some extracts may be supplied. The following is from *A Presentation of Modern Methods of Health Building* by Bernarr Macfadden and other health authorities (New York, Macfadden Foundation, Inc.):

'Whether continence is harmful or not—a question which has been very widely discussed with much difference of opinion—depends almost entirely upon whether or not one can live a life comparatively free from sexual excitement. But if one has



very strong sexual instincts, then continuous abstinence would not only be difficult, but unsatisfactory in its influence upon the general health. To avoid sexual excitement, it is not alone necessary to avoid the physical intimacies. Erotic thoughts will do just as much harm, and after the habit of stimulating the sexual centres mentally has once been formed, it is likely to be very persistent and insidious in its influence. This sensual state of mind keeps the sex centres in a state of constant excitement and the organs concerned in a state of congestion. This habit can best be described by the term "mental masturbation", and the fact is that after a time, as a result of its weakening effect, it becomes possible for the victim to induce an emission merely through his thoughts. The general bodily influences which tend to destroy virility may be said to include almost everything that lowers vitality and weakens the body as a whole, and particularly anything that acts as a poison to the system. Alcohol is regarded by many men as sexual stimulant, but there is nothing more destructive of reproductive integrity in the long run. Without doubt, its stimulating quality is only apparent, the result of a lessening of the moral sense or the natural restraint which would be exercised in a moral and sober condition. Any sense of delicacy in behaviour which one may possess is blunted through the influence of alcohol, and without doubt, its reputation as a sensual stimulant is due largely to this fact. ... "Sowing wild oats" is a phrase referring to immoralities of the vilest sort. This "sowing" process usually begins with secret habits, continues with the help of prostitutes, during which diseases of the most loathsome character are acquired, and is said to end with marriage. But it is well to remember that in many instances marriage is not the end. It is frequently only

the beginning, for penalties often follow the "wild oats" programme. A young man has no more right to the perilous privileges indicated by this phrase than his sister or mother. There is no reason why the mind of a boy cannot be imbued with principles of decency. The most destructive result of this youthful dissipation is found, of course, in several venereal diseases that almost inevitably follow. Very few young men can go through this experience of "sowing wild oats" without being defiled or tainted with one or more of these complaints. Here is perhaps one of the gravest problems that confront this age. We can teach young men the horrors associated with the penalties that follow such dissipation, but no matter how plainly these frightful consequences are presented, until conventional law has been so changed that they can find the associations that they crave among the opposite sex, our efforts will be unavailing. You cannot keep men away from women. If they cannot find good women to associate with, then they will acquire the company of bad women. There is one other phase of the social evil that is especially important from the preventive standpoint, and that is the intimate relation of sexual laxity to the habits of drinking and smoking. The average young man, in the beginning, does not realize where or what these influences will lead to. It is true that so far as smoking and drinking are concerned, alcoholism is by far the greater evil and the more directly responsible for the young man's first misstep in the direction of sexual licence. At the same time, tobacco is also a factor, for it is usually the beginning and helps to blunt his intelligence and moral sense. And as a general thing, the boy or the man who smokes will also drink. If he does not drink in the beginning, it will not be long before he is induced to do so, usually with the feeling, probably, that only one of two



drinks cannot hurt anybody. Almost without exception, just as soon as the young man goes out and drinks much, the fast women will be included in the programme. And he thinks he is smart in this too. Thinks he is really a man now. All these things go together.' (op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 1059 ff.)

Dr. Alexis Carrel, of the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research, New York, and a Nobel Prize winner in medical science, offers the following observations: 'It is well known that sexual excesses impede intellectual activity. In order to reach its full power, intelligence seems to require both the presence of well-developed sexual glands and the temporary repression of the sexual appetite. Freud has rightly emphasized the capital importance of sexual impulses in the activities of consciousness. However, his observations refer chiefly to sick people. His conclusions should not be generalized to include normal individuals, especially those who are endowed with a strong nervous system and mastery over themselves. While the weak, the nervous, and the imbalanced become more abnormal when their sexual appetites are repressed, the strong are rendered still stronger by practising such a form of asceticism.' (*Man, the Unknown*, Pelican Books, pp. 137-8)

### CONCLUSION

Whether judged by ancient standards or modern, absolute chastity of life and purity of thought alone can give happiness to man. The question of health and physical soundness is supremely important for the individual and the nation. A reformed rake does not make a good husband, and a woman has every right to expect the same purity of life which the man whom she marries demands of her. The consequences of sowing wild oats which husbands had in their youth have brought sufferings to

many children and wives. The children's inheritance comes from both the parents, and both have to accept the responsibility for what blights the helpless little ones whom they send into the world burdened with physical handicaps from which they can never escape. The consequences of sexual immorality are patent to all, but few take the courage to stem the tide by taking steps to prevent the causative factors. In order to raise the instinct to perpetuate the life of the race to a sublimolevel and to immunize the life of the growing generation against the moral poison, a deeper awareness is necessary. The ideal has to be presented every now and then in better light, and competent workers will have to strive with enlightened sympathy. Unless all agencies to educate the rising generation and public opinion come to exercise right influence on the thoughts of the youths and the country in general, this is beyond achievement. And for this obstacles are many.

First of all, our educational institutions usually do not give any clear conception of the ethical ideal or the meaning of human life. Often their environment, and the atmosphere prevailing in them, blunt the moral sense of the youngsters that pass through them. Most of the youths do not think that they have to do anything beyond passing some examinations and finding a lucrative profession for earning as much money as they can for increasing their enjoyments or pushing up the social standards which have, generally speaking, only a value of display. Thirst for lust and luxury has been flamed up by ubiquitous cinema houses as well as superficial and fickle political leadership. A wide area of affective literature has been poisoned by commercial writers, and as a consequence, moral and spiritual conceptions preserved in old writings, tested by generations and found useful for human

guidance, have been swamped or made suspect in the minds of youths. Widespread propaganda about conception-control in all details, with audio-visual aids and unrestrained display of advertisements, have banished from the minds of young people even a sense of the possibility or need of sexual reticence. The spirit of levity, or *asraddhā*, which openly ridicules and makes light of matters that are to be treated seriously and with reverence, resulting from commercialized education, lack of home care and school discipline, contaminated recreation, and demoralizing amusements, has become the bane of modern society. The unhampered publication of pornographic literature, either in the blessed name of art or masqueraded as 'scientific' literature, have only added fuel to the fire. This has in no small degree contributed to a dislike for established methods, to taking pleasure in lethargy, and to an unwillingness to persevere for

any end that does not yield immediate pleasure or money to purchase it. The modern teaching that asceticism, even the mildest form of it, is anti-social and that it is an imperfect, perverse, and erroneous ideal of life, by persons who are incompetent by outlook, training, and individual taste—though they may be applauded as experts in some particular branch of knowledge—also has done great harm. These are signs of a social distemper. It is the bounden duty of all who are interested in the moral and spiritual welfare of the country to protest against the canker that is eating into the nation and to reinforce healthy ideas constantly. The literature of strength, of individual and national purity, and of moral courage alone can do this. It will be a pity if India that boasts of leading mankind to peace and light, at times even causing offence to others, failed to set up a standard of incorruptible purity to herself.

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## OUR FINE ARTS EDUCATION

DR. S. K. NANDI

Foolish sentimentalism and gross utilitarianism have landed many people in formulating a pattern of education not quite suited to the genius of the people for whom it is primarily intended. Irving Babbitt notices the wane in the standard of education and sorrowfully tells us that the standards of a genuinely liberal education as they have been understood more or less from the time of Aristotle are being progressively undermined by the utilitarians and the sentimentalists. Education has largely degenerated because of these utilitarians and sentimentalists, and so the pitiable plight in which we find it often.

Either education has been asked to cater to our practical needs pertaining to the material environment or to the demands of our pleasure-seeking propensities. Thus prostituted, education loses its meaning or significance both individually and collectively. It has been found of late that there is a rethinking going on, and the aim and objectives of education have been sought to be re-fixed and reaffirmed. In this context, we will do well to remember the five tests of the evidence of education laid down by Nicholas Murray Butler: (1) correctness and precision in the use of the mother tongue; (2) refined and gentle



manners—the result of fixed habits of thought and action; (3) sound standards of appreciation of beauty and of worth, and a character based on those standards; (4) the power and habit of reflection; and (5) efficiency or the power to do. In a total scheme of education, the development of aesthetic faculty cannot possibly be overlooked. Butler rightly insisted on the fine arts education as an integral part of the whole.

The necessity of considering this aspect of education stems from the concept of the 'whole man' and 'man-making education'. An average educated individual of the present generation does not feel shy to say that he or she does not understand music or the significance of modern painting and sculpture. The ear and eyes were neither trained in nor initiated into the secrets of these forms of creative activity. Their senses were not trained, and as such their passions were not educated. The training of the passions is the essence of true education. This training of passions means and presupposes the training of the senses. The senses must be selective and appreciative, and for that they need training. This training must be positive in character. Mere negative injunctions will not help us to formulate a sound scheme for the training of the senses. Beauty in art and nature should be made accessible to our senses. The senses should be trained to respond to the sensuous appeal thrown up by our environment.

To attend to such appeals and to respond properly, one has got to be endowed with a value-sense, which needs cultivation and culture at different levels. This value-sense is the bed-rock on which the edifice of art-appreciation in man has got to be reared up. Appreciation of arts is no easy task, and philosophers of a particular school have taken appreciation to be a new form of creation. For them, appreciation and crea-

tion are identical. To make man responsive to the aesthetic appeal, we should look for an all-round system which provides for the training of the intelligence and of senses as well. The different faculties in man, though distinguishable, cannot be completely separated and considered as such for purposes of training and education. So we must think of the 'whole man', and this will inevitably lead us to the concept of Swami Vivekananda's 'man-making education'. Truth lies in the whole, as was pointed out by Aristotle, and the Swami thought of an all-comprehensive education comprising the training of the body and the mind by accepting this cardinal principle. That is why the Spartan system of education was unacceptable to him.

The *gestalt* theory, if applied to the field of education, will naturally lead us to the concept of education in its widest possible meaning and denotation. The pattern could take a final shape only when we take into consideration man in his thinking, feeling, and willing functions. Art as such is not divorced from cognitional and volitional activities. In fact, art-creations may be considered to be the product of volitional activity, when we consider the actual process of execution on paper, stone, or canvas. As for the cognitional and feeling aspects, they are equally important. In fact, when we respond to an object of beauty, our no one faculty responds: we respond as 'whole men'. So all our educational planning should take into account this 'whole man'. Our art education should assume this principle of 'indivisible individuality' at the very outset.

#### AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

Fine arts and crafts may be taken as one for the primary stage. The ever vanishing line of demarcation between art and craft makes the problem easier for us. We may introduce compulsory crafts up to class V.



All the five forms of fine arts, viz poetry, painting, architecture, sculpture, and music may be taught in the primary classes. So far as poetry, painting, sculpture, and music are concerned, the problem is not difficult. Elementary lessons in all these four forms may be given, with special stress on practice. With regard to lesson on architecture, suitable blocks may be used to make the students acquainted with different architectural patterns, both ancient and modern.

The ancient architectural models, as found in different parts of the globe, may be used in the drawing class. Anatomy of different architectural patterns may be taught in the higher classes. Students possessing some knowledge of geometry could easily understand these patterns. What I suggest is to introduce gradually lessons on the anatomy of sculptural and architectural models in classes where the students are expected to have some knowledge of geometry. Such lessons may start from class VII and end in class VIII. Grammar of music in elementary form may also be introduced from class VI and may continue up to class VIII. Elementary discourses on the art of painting may also be introduced concurrently with the grammar of music. These elementary lessons on the nature, structure, and function of all these forms of fine arts will help the students to understand the nature of the specific problems as involved in the particular branch. At the primary stage, i.e. up to class V, we shall lay stress on practice. The students should learn to draw, to paint, to sing, to dance, and to do sculptural models. Lessons on rhyme would help them build up a poetry-sense. That is already included in our syllabus of studies. All that we need in this regard is to select different varieties of poems illustrating the different rhyme-patterns for introduction in the lower classes of the school, so that the

students might get their ears tuned to the different intrinsic appeals of the varying rhyme-patterns.

#### AT THE HIGHER SECONDARY STAGE

At the higher secondary stage, fine arts could be offered as one of the optional subjects. The syllabus will include discourses, both historical and analytic, on all the five branches, with provisions for practical work. Students' practical skill may be tested in one of the branches of fine arts and appropriate credit given at the higher secondary stage. After completing the higher secondary course, students intending to be painters, sculptors, or musicians should join the school of painting, sculpture, or music, as the case may be. In order to implement this new pattern of fine arts education proposals, we must establish a network of schools of music, painting, sculpture, and architecture throughout the country. Such schools will train the specialists of the future and the artists of tomorrow. These schools will aim at boosting creative activity, and we will have the future generations of artists trained in these schools. The syllabi for crafts schools to be established in the country should be suitably amended to give the craftsmen a theoretical background of the trade they are expected to practise. Along the lines suggested on which the different schools of painting, music, and sculpture are to be established, some crafts schools which will gradually help our cottage and small scale industries may be set up. I have already pointed out that the line of demarcation between art and craft has been vanishing under the impact of the art in-industry movement. But this cannot be denied that all students may not have a flare for creative activities. Some of them might harness their talents to the services of the crafts, and as such crafts schools will have to be established. These crafts



schools will have research centres to explore the possibilities of newer cottage industries. Coir or conch-shell industry in the southern or eastern India, for example, will have a boost from the fruits of researches to be conducted in the crafts schools in the country. The clay modellers of Bengal might derive similar benefit from the researches conducted in such schools. The crafts-school products will be better craftsmen with a sound grounding in the fundamentals of fine arts.

As for students going in for general education, there should be provision for 'area fine arts gallery', where models and miniatures of classical fine arts are to be preserved. The students belonging to the area should visit these galleries at least once in every month. These galleries should have sections on modern art as well.

Latest specimens or innovations in the field of different branches of fine arts should be displayed there. Lecturers would be expected to lecture with charts, models, and illustrations on the different aspects of fine arts development in the country and elsewhere. Moving exhibition vans may be provided for the rural people, if suitable 'area fine arts gallery' could not be provided for to start with. Television, if and when introduced, will greatly boost the cause of the visual arts, and I propose its introduction in the 'area fine arts gallery'. Students joining the different schools of music, painting, or sculpture would also be expected to attend the 'area fine arts gallery' lectures.

#### AT THE COLLEGIATE LEVEL

From the collegiate level, fine arts or aesthetics may be offered as one of the subjects of study. Students at this level may be given the option of a practical test. Students not going in for practical test may be allowed to take up some other

theoretical paper on aesthetics. Aesthetics as taught now in some of the Indian universities at the graduate level may have some emphasis on practice as well. Students taking up aesthetics as one of the subjects of study may be allowed to offer a practical paper comprising 50 marks. A rationalization of the existing syllabus is immediately called for. For students of aesthetics and fine arts, ample provision should be made for giving them access to the classical works on the different branches of fine arts. Library of musical records, of good photographs of classical painting, architecture, and sculpture, and galleries of architectural and sculptural models should have to be built up in course of, say, next ten years, i.e. during the fourth and fifth plan periods.

#### AT THE POST-GRADUATE LEVEL

It is evident that the suggestions in the foregoing lines propose to make our education fine-arts-oriented. In India, the sixty-four types of fine arts were vigorously practised in the past, and as a result they flourished wonderfully. Our students must know of this great achievement. I have already laid down the broad principles to be followed in drawing up the post-graduate syllabus for art and aesthetics. To be more precise, at the post-graduate level we would be incorporating in the syllabus a historical development of the different schools of Indian art. A survey of Indian aesthetics in general should also form a part of the syllabus. A study of Indian religions would be necessary for a proper appreciation of some forms of temple sculpture, architecture, music, and dancing. The advanced students at the post-graduate level would be expected to know something of the ancient occidental art, specially the Greco-Roman art traditions. A study of the Egyptian art traditions is also recommended. A



brief survey of Japanese and Chinese art traditions and techniques is further recommended for the advanced students. The aesthetic theories underlying these different art movements in different countries at different periods of history should be studied at the post-graduate level. Some of the great aesthetic thinkers of the West might be studied in their fundamentals. A detailed study of at least one great Indian aesthetic thinker like Bharata, Ānandavardhana, or Abhinavagupta is recommended along with a general survey of the development of aesthetic thought in India. A study of contemporary art movement, along with a detailed study of the development in contemporary aesthetic ideas, should also be undertaken by the post-graduate students. These studies will make it clear how the contemporary art movement influenced the contemporary aesthetic ideas. The vexed question whether aesthetic ideas developed from considerations other than aesthetic (as we find in the case of Platonic condemnation of the poets) could be settled if we undertook studies of this nature.

This reorientation of the fine arts education would need quite a large number of teachers of fine arts. We must establish quite a number of central institutes for training such teachers. These teachers will be expected to know something of psychology, history, and aesthetics. They may be given specialized training here in India and abroad.

The services of career masters and cumulative record-keepers may be utilized in order to ascertain the competence and aptitude of pupils who would become craftsmen and of pupils who would join the different schools of music, painting, architecture, or sculpture, after finishing their higher secondary course. The rest would move up for collegiate education, and pro-

posals for making collegiate education fine-arts-oriented have been offered above. What is intended by this is to make man develop in all his aspects. Ears are not meant merely for ordinary hearing, nor eyes for merely ordinary seeing. The inner meaning and significance of a thing seen or a sound heard are to be understood with the help of training and education that is proposed to be introduced.

Right from the primary level to the post-graduate level, students should pay occasional visits to the museum and art galleries, and submit reports on such visits with a critical appreciation. Attendance at music conferences, art exhibitions, extension lectures on art and aesthetics should be considered as co-curricular activities. Excursions to the temples and monuments which are considered to be exquisite specimens of architecture and which contain wonderful pieces of painting and sculpture should be encouraged. The services of radio, television, and other allied accessories should be properly utilized to generate a comprehensive art-sense in the students. Refresher courses should be introduced specially for the craftsmen. They should be acquainted with the latest technique and know-how of their respective trades. Artists should occasionally meet at seminars to exchange ideas, and they should be arranged for 'mixed' exhibitions. What I suggest by 'mixed' exhibition is this : Suppose x of the United Kingdom and y of India virtually show similar traits and qualities as artists. The only difference between them was attributable to the geographic conditions and to their different cultural environments. A fine arts student would profit much by a close scrutiny of the works of x and y and would learn that aesthetic creations were not only inspired from within, but also from without. This will give them a correct idea of the genesis of art-creations.



# THE BIRTH OF THE RĀMĀYANA

SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA

Before the introduction of English in India, by *sāhitya* or literature was commonly meant the poetical compositions of great poets. As the Indian languages came into contact with English, the prose works in various languages grew in bulk and importance, and in course of time, all knowledge gained through the written word came to be considered as *sāhitya*. How far is this justified? There are various claimants to the title of *sāhitya*, such as *vaidika-sāhitya*, *laukikasāhitya*, *padyasāhitya*, *gadyasāhitya*, and so on. Are they all entitled to be called so? What is *sāhitya*? It is *sahita-bhāva*, together-ness. Together-ness implies the simultaneous presence of two things in one and the same thing. Now, what are these two things that are present simultaneously in *sāhitya* and are bound together? The most well-known and the only thing that does not stand in need of anybody else's certification is one's own self or the *jīva*. And who is the *jīva*'s companion? True friendship is possible only between equals. Who is *jīva*'s equal and friend? God. And where do they meet? In the heart of every being (*sarvabhūtānām hr̥ddeśe—Gītā*, XVIII. 61). The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VIII. iii. 3) says that the *hr̥dayam* (heart) is so called because the Lord or the Ātman dwells there (*hr̥di ayam iti*). So *sāhitya* means the meeting of the *jīva* and God.

A person who understands and appreciates *sāhitya* is called a *sahr̥daya*. Because the heart is the nidus, the dwelling-place of the swans of golden plumage, the soul and the Over-soul. What does a man attain from the enjoyment of *sāhitya*? *Tanmayatā*, 'at-one-ment' with 'That', that is, with Brahman. 'Tat' (That) is a

pronoun which stands for Brahman, according to the *Gītā* (XVII. 23): 'Om tat sad iti nirdeśo Brahmanas-trivīdhaḥ smṛtaḥ.' But it should not be a complete merger; for, then, there will be none to enjoy. Brahman is Sat-cit-ānanda. Of this triad, the *jīva*, the 'Sat', realizes his 'cit' aspect through 'ānanda'. Then he becomes 'at one' with Brahman, and that 'at-one-ment' is *sāhitya par excellence*.

Heart is the seat of love. And love is bliss. One derives bliss from a true work of art. This bliss is the essence of the ever-blissful Lord. *Rasa*, the enjoyment of this bliss, is the essence of poetry. We enjoy not only the gladdening *rasas* such as *śṛṅgāra*, *hāsyā*, and *adbhuta*, but also the saddening ones such as *karuṇa*, *raudra*, and *bhayaṅkara* in *sāhitya*.

A great literary work makes the reader forget his surroundings, time, and place. He transcends space-time entanglement. Time and space are the constituents of *Māyā*. A real work of art makes one transcend the shackles of *Māyā*. That is to say, the best literature is that which confers on the student freedom from the mundane bondage and makes him realize his 'at-one-ment' with his own true self.

Emerson has said somewhere that a work that cannot stand a second reading is not worth reading. If one were to judge the worth of books with this criterion, how many books are there which may be considered readable? Very few, indeed. The *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhāgavata*, the *Rāmāyana*, the *Dhammapada*, the Bible, and the Koran, and a few other similar books which treat of the glory and greatness of God alone are worthy of study. Other works



are worthy of attention only in so far as they reflect these godly virtues. Those books which deal with ephemeral matters will be put aside as soon as the ephemeral needs are fulfilled. The immortal scriptures that speak of the eternal verity are an invaluable treasure until we realize the eternal Truth. The eternal and the external are always at loggerheads. The external is fatal to the truth-seeker. Sense enjoyments carry their own revulsion. Revelry repels. The supra-sensual will always attract the soul; for that is the soul's true nature. The life in the senses is soaked in the brine from the cradle to the grave. Yet it is bearable only because there is the dim glow of the ever blissful even in the midst of this procession of tears, euphemistically called life. The sense-objects seem attractive because in them also there is a reflection, distorted though, of the ever blissful Self.

Judged by this standard, only those works are worthy of being called *sāhitya* which speak of the Lord or those that show us the way to the Lord. In this sense, the *Rāmāyana*, the *magnum opus* of the sage Vālmīki, will shine in the forefront of the best literature. If there is anyone who can be considered an equal to Vālmīki, it is only Vyāsa. None has yet been born, and it is highly improbable that anyone will ever be born, who can rank with these two immortal bards of India.

What makes the *Rāmāyana* the best poetry? What are the conditions that are essential for the production of poetry nonpareil? Let us have a look at the circumstances that gave birth to the first poetic muse to find out the answer.

The author of the *Rāmāyana*, the great sage Vālmīki, is described as a great *tapasvin*, man of self-control and concentration, in the opening verse of the *Rāmāyana*, which gives a picturesque description of the visit of the itinerant divine

minstrel, Nārada, to the hermitage of Vālmīki on the Tamasā river. When the minstrel arrives, the verse narrates, Vālmīki greets him respectfully and questions him about the best of men then living :

*Tapassvādhyāyaniratam tapasvī vāgvidām varam;*

*Nāradam paripapraccha Vālmīkirmuni-puṅgavam—*

'The self-composed Vālmīki respectfully asked the most saintly Nārada, who was devoted to discipline and study and who was a master of the art of speaking, about the best of men then living.'

Swami Vivekananda says that the first requisite for proper education is concentration. The greatest *tapas* is the control and concentration of the senses and the mind (*manasaśca indriyānām ca aikāgryam paramam tapaḥ*). And Vālmīki was endowed with this prerequisite abundantly, as is evident by the use of the adjunct '*tapasvī*' in the verse quoted above. The story goes that the poet was a robber in his early days, who, on the advice of some sages who fell victim to his villainy, performed severe austerities for such a long period that he was covered over with *valmīka*, white ants' mound. When he came out of the mound, he was a changed man: he had turned out to be a sage. Since he had a resurrection through the *valmīka*, he came to be known as Vālmīki. So his very name is indicative of very severe *tapas*. *Tapas* makes one a *ṛṣi*, a *mantra-drastā*, a seer of the saving truths about God. The *Rāmāyana* is the result of Vālmīki's spiritual vision; it is a garland of *mantras*. The poet promises an honourable place at the feet of the Lord for the man who devoutly listens to the *Rāmāyana* in full or even in part :

*Śruṇvan Rāmāyaṇam bhaktyā yah  
pādam padameva va;*



*Sa yāti Brahmanah sthānam Brahmanā  
pūjyate sadā.*

(Uttarakāṇḍa, CXI. 24)

This is the reward the poet offers to the student of his sacred book.

Thus far we have spoken of one-pointedness and transcendental vision. But these alone are not enough to make one a great poet. One has to acquire knowledge from a noble teacher. How can one gain knowledge from another? Humility, earnestness, and obedient service are the essential pre-conditions to acquire wisdom from others. An enlightened teacher will most gladly transmit his knowledge to such an earnest student. How did Vālmīki approach his teacher Nārada? The opening verse says, *paripadpraccha*, humbly and earnestly did he inquire.

It is not sufficient if the student alone is properly equipped; the teacher also must be well equipped, endowed with wisdom and enlightenment. Vālmīki got as his master the saintly Nārada, who is described as *tapassvādhyāyanirata*, *muni-puṅgava*, and *vāgvidām vara*; that is, he was devoted to study and self-control, was a great seer, and master of the art of speaking. Knowledge of the Self alone will do to attain liberation for oneself. But to be a teacher of humanity, a thorough knowledge of the great scriptures is necessary, in addition to Self-knowledge. Nārada, who was a teacher of Vālmīki and Vyāsa, was a student of the eternally perfect Sanatkumāra. Nārada was well versed in all the branches of secular and spiritual lore. He had pored and pondered over them for long and deeply, and had imparted his mature wisdom to many a worthy seeker. He was a master of the art of speaking and teaching. And that is very essential for a teacher. The word 'Nārada' means one who makes man realize his real nature by imparting to him

spiritual knowledge: *Naram paramātma-  
viṣayakam jñānam dadāti iti Nāradaḥ.*

Thus, Vālmīki's teacher was one who was well versed in the scriptures and endowed with spiritual insight and attainments, one who had a tender heart for his fellow beings and who expressed his fellow feeling by devoting himself heart and soul to the enlightenment of mankind about God.

What will a discerning disciple want to learn from such a great soul, if he were lucky enough to meet one? A good man will speak only of things which are beneficial to the world at large as well as to himself. And what did Vālmīki ask of Nārada? About a man then alive who was the best of men, the most virtuous, honest, grateful, self-controlled, sympathetic, beautiful, non-jealous, fearless, and a terror to the wicked. A man endowed with these virtues is verily God Himself. In reply to Vālmīki's question, Nārada narrates the history of Rāma of the Ikṣvāku dynasty, and assures that the noble *Rāmāyana*, which is as sacred as the very Vedas, washes away all stains of man:

*Idam pavitraṁ pāpaghnam puṇyam  
vedaiśca sammitam;*

*Yaḥ paṭhed Rāmacaritaṁ sarvapāpaiḥ  
pramūcyate.*

(Bālakāṇḍa, I. 98)

Concentration, instruction from a master, the blessings of the great ones, and transcendental vision alone will not make one a poet. Something more is necessary. The gift of the muse must be inborn in oneself. That, too, is not enough. There must be favourable situations that will invoke and provoke the innate gift. All these were happily combined in Vālmīki.

Vālmīki, so the story goes, one day went to the river Tamasā to take bath, accompanied by a disciple. While he was enjoying the natural scenery, his eyes lighted on



a pair of doves on a tree. As he was looking at the doves, an arrow brought down the male dove. The female dove cried its heart out seeing her mate rolling on the ground soaked in blood. The scene touched the heart of Vālmīki. His heart melted in sorrow and sympathy. Overpowered by the sorrowful sight, he turned on the cruel hunter in rage and spake :

*Mā niṣāda pratiṣṭhām tvamagamaḥ  
śāśvatīḥ samāḥ ;  
Yat kraunca-mithunād ekam avadhīḥ  
kāmamohitam—*

‘O thou cruel man, as thou hast shot dead this love-stricken dove, thou shalt not live long.’ (*Bālakāṇḍa*, II. 15)

As this curse in the form of a couplet fell from his mouth, Vālmīki was surprised. ‘What is this ? What is this that has fallen from my mouth ?’ he asked himself. He told his disciple, Bharadvāja : ‘These words, musical and metrical, that have flowed from my grief-stricken heart must be a *śloka* ; it cannot be anything else.’ *Kāvya* flowed from *karuṇa*. *Śloka* expressed itself in *śloka*. From grief grew poetry. Vālmīki had a heart which could reflect the surroundings and which could reverberate in sympathy with them. Yes, Vālmīki was a born poet.

However much may be one’s acquisition and endowment, one does not gain self-confidence unless the experts in the line approve and appreciate. Vālmīki returned to his cottage after his bath. There came to his cottage Brahmā, the Creator. Vālmīki welcomed the venerable guest. Vālmīki’s mind was still hovering over the scene he had espied and the words that had fallen from his mouth. Brahmā, the inspirer of the Eternal Wisdom, consoled Vālmīki, saying : ‘Please don’t worry about it. What you uttered was a *śloka*, and it sprang from you because of my wish.

You please write the life story of Śrī Rāmacandra in mellifluous poetry in this form. You have heard his life from Nārada. Whatever else you require will occur to you as you go on writing.’

Brahmā went away. The disciples of Vālmīki recited the stanza again and again, and they were charmed and surprised. According to the command of Brahmā, Vālmīki wrote the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Thus the essential condition for the birth of the best *sāhitya* is a happy combination of self-control, supra-sensuous vision, humility, acquisition of facts, innate inclination, blessings of the teachers, appreciation by the good, divine inspiration, purity of character, and a passion to do good to others. When the heart is rent in grief, when the mind melts in sympathy, when the soul dissolves in devotion, when the heart expands in exhilaration, when the mind burns with righteous indignation towards wrong-doing, when the soul softens and sweetens with the love of the Lord, when the milk of mercy overflows, out of the fullness of such a heart flows poetry, pure and perfect.

The *Rāmāyaṇa*, the first and best poem, contains all the *rasas*. It is the life story of Rāma and Sītā. Rāma is God, and Sītā is the world. The world, in and through God, is grand and glorious ; without Him, it is nothing by itself. The world as an end in itself spells man’s doom. Rāvaṇa kidnapped Sītā and despised Rāma. And he met with his inevitable doom. Human life is a glorious opportunity if it instals Rāma in its heart. Then life becomes beautiful and fruitful. Then there will be the kingdom of God both within and without.

*Kūjantam Rāma Rāmeti madhuraṁ  
madhurākṣaram ;  
Āruhya kavitaśākhām vande  
Vālmīkikokilam—*



'Salutations unto that sweet-singing Vālmīkikokila, who pours forth in melodious tunes the sweet name of Rāma incessantly, sitting on the tree of poetry !'

## SOME THOUGHTS ON RELIGION

BRAHMACHARI AMAL

The phenomenon of religion appears to be as old as man, and it is still one of the major forces at work in the world. It has sometimes been vigorous and sometimes weak, sometimes pure and idealistic and sometimes corrupt. One may find the greatest possible variety in the teachings of the different religions, and new ideas and practices are still being introduced.

Today, many changes are taking place in the religious world as the religions attempt to adjust to modern conditions. But the plain fact is that almost everywhere religion holds a place of secondary interest. The world religions are still strong, of course, but there is also hostility towards religion, and most people are more interested in material advancement, scientific discoveries, and art and culture. They have not formally rejected religion; they are simply more interested in other things.

This is not particularly surprising; for, if we look to the past, we will often find that periods of intense religious interest have been followed by periods of decline, corruption, and scepticism, and vice versa. Where there have been prolonged periods of cultural continuity, we may even study several religious revivals. The characteristic features of any culture are the expression and product of a central idea, or a complex of ideas. Sometimes the central idea may be religious and sometimes anti-religious, while at other times religion may be peripheral. But the important thing is

that, whatever it may be, the central idea appears to lose its vitality after a sufficient length of time has elapsed. Eventually, a new set of ideas emerges, often after much conflict, and the cultural and intellectual development of the people takes a new turn.

One may wonder whether any religion can be true, seeing that they vary and change so much and pass through such vicissitudes. Many such religious problems become simpler if we distinguish the different aspects and levels of religion. In this connexion, it is common to speak of two types of religion—the personal and mystical, on the one hand, and the institutional, on the other. These two, of course, are often interrelated, and it is sometimes difficult to draw a clear line between them. But the distinction is valid and important.

### PERSONAL AND MYSTICAL RELIGION

Many thinking and idealistic men make an adjustment to life which can be described as spiritual in the broadest sense. When this is the case, three basic elements are involved. First, there is the acceptance of an ideal beyond and greater than the empirical self. Second, there is the acceptance of means for reaching the ideal, means which usually involve some degree of self-sacrifice or which lead away from self-interest and self-indulgence. Finally, there is a sincere struggle both against external obstacles and the weakness of body and mind which drags one from the

professed ideal.

We need not dwell on the innumerable ways in which the mind can deceive itself, one of the most vicious in this connexion being the illusion that one is entitled to injure others for the sake of the ideal. In spiritual life, however, sincerity is enough, at least in the long run, and discrimination will gradually be developed.

Some men, as they gain experience, are not satisfied by ordinary life in the world, nor even by the commonly accepted ideals. They feel that somewhere there is something more, something deeper. Thus begins a search for meaning and truth, however it may be expressed. The culmination of this is mystical religion, the search for God, the ultimate reality, the divinity behind all phenomena. Nor is the search barren, for all religions testify to an experience of the highest good. As Christ said, 'Seek and ye shall find'. The search may be long and arduous, but there is an end to it, a culmination in a supreme spiritual intuition. This, it is said, cuts the knots of desire in the heart, satisfies all doubts, and is of the essence of existence, knowledge, and bliss. Nor is it a vague, sentimental feeling. The teachers of Vedānta say that the intuition or perception of God is as definite and immediate an experience as the physical perception of a fruit held in the palm of the hand. The nature of the experience, however, cannot be expressed in words. Even those who have experienced it in its fullness are helpless; they cannot tell others what it is like except that it is bliss. Yet, out of their love and compassion for struggling men, they try to do so. Usually, they do not speculate much. They are more concerned to help others to achieve the same spiritual experience.

Theologians and scholars, however, have produced many theories, speculations, and doctrines, some helpful to a degree, some

sceptical. But the experience itself is not a theory, not a philosophy, not a doctrine—it is simply a fact. As such, it remains unaffected by the changing fashions of philosophical and religious opinion. All the religious theories, theologies, and doctrines are at best but feeble attempts to explain and build on this intuition. Any of them can become out-dated and obsolete as conditions in the world change. But the intuition itself is eternal and eternally significant.

The nearest analogy to the spiritual intuition is perhaps that of the aesthetic intuition, though the points of resemblance should not be pushed too far. The aesthetic intuition is also a direct and immediate experience which cannot be communicated in words. The attempt must be made, however, and we then have a second level of experience, the descriptions and criticisms of a work of art. These have great value if made by persons who possess deep aesthetic feeling and understanding, artistic 'saints', as it were. The value of discourse on this second level lies in its capacity to help others appreciate the work of art in question. There is also a third level—the philosophies of art, theories of aesthetic experience, psycho-analyses of artists, and comparisons of various schools of art. This third level, being almost entirely intellectual, may often be indulged in even by those who are devoid of artistic feeling.

Analogous levels are to be found in religion. But since the primary intuitive experience is intangible and cannot be studied objectively, unlike a painting or a poem, it is easy to overlook or deny it, even for people who are formally religious. Religion is too often identified with the second and third levels—the scriptures, theologies, and scholarly studies. The saints warn against this tendency, and Sri Ramakrishna often told his disciples to



eat the mangoes and give up counting the leaves.

Another reason why true religion is neglected lies in the terrible demands which it makes. The spiritual intuition is the heart of religion, but it is to be had only by one who has totally denied himself, who has renounced all self-interest, all desire for pleasure, and all lesser values for the sake of an all-consuming spiritual ideal. This cannot be done suddenly, but comes as the result of long practice. It is necessary to follow one of the paths of spiritual discipline which lead to the spiritual goal.

We have discussed the goal and the way. The third point is the saint. The saint is one who has attained, who has reached the goal, and who has experienced the spiritual intuition in the fullest measure. It is a transforming experience. The contradictions, pains, uncertainties, selfishness, and meanness of ordinary life vanish. The saint radiates peace, calmness, and love for all men.

We conclude that at the heart of religion is something which is independent of external circumstances, which abides the same in all conditions, and which remains true regardless of the state of institutional religion.

#### INSTITUTIONAL AND DOGMATIC RELIGION

The situation is otherwise if we consider personal and mystical religion in its setting, as related to one or the other of the great world religions in their institutional or orthodox forms. Sects and religions begin with a prophet or a saint. At first, there is a movement inspired by the saint and his disciples, informal in nature and characterized by enthusiasm and spontaneous growth. As generations pass, however, forms are created, which gradually harden, and all the apparatus of an institutional religion comes into being. The devotees and adherents of the sect are at

all levels and stages of spiritual development, and require different methods of spiritual practice. Children and converts have to be instructed in the faith. Intellectuals develop elaborate systems of theology and philosophy, partly for their own intellectual satisfaction and partly to answer critics. After some time has passed, there will be scriptures, commentaries, theology, rituals, and an administrative organization with teachers, preachers, and central authorities.

With the passage of time, it tends to become conservative, the practices and teachings become fixed, and growth largely ceases. Eventually it may degenerate and decline, though the great world religions have also shown a capacity for self-renewal as new prophets and saints arise. In any case, the development of sects and religions appears to follow the wave-pattern of growth, maturity, and decline.

Institutional religion has both advantages and defects. The defects, which are particularly obvious during a time of religious decline, need not be dealt with. All human institutions appear to pass through phases of stagnation, rigidity, and decline; it is certainly not something peculiar to religious institutions. Nations, and even whole civilizations, follow the same pattern. An institutional religion may be helpful in many ways. However, as stated earlier, intuitive experience of spiritual truth is at the heart of religion, and therefore the primary value of a religious institution is its role in leading men towards this experience. Most people require spiritual guidance from someone, and they get solace and encouragement from the company of other devotees. The scriptures, doctrines, rituals, and sacraments serve to guide and develop the mind and heart of the devotee along helpful lines. Spiritual progress comes from consecration and intensity of purpose, and this develops

easily and naturally when every aspect of life is given a halo of religious significance. The institutional religions can easily do this.

At the same time, however, the scriptures, doctrines, rituals, and sacraments develop under particular conditions at a particular time, and serve the needs of particular groups of people. However uncompromising and absolutistic the teachings may be, they cannot express religious truth once for all, or organize a sect or institution which will serve for all time. A religion or sect may be renewed, as I said, but it then becomes a new thing. These differences should not be exaggerated; for there are some basic similarities among the fundamental teachings of the various religions, and some elements, such as ethics, may be almost the same for all religions. The phenomenon of external religion is nonetheless temporal and dynamic, ever taking new forms.

We may well find, therefore, that a great deal of the ritual, organization, creed, and philosophy of one age becomes unacceptable to a later age. If such external forms have been long established, then this rejection may appear to many to be a rejection of religion itself. In some cases, it may indeed lead to a comparative neglect of religious topics, while the dominant interests of the age turn towards other fields. But, as I have already pointed out, religion should not be too easily identified with its forms. The rejection of obsolete and empty forms may well be a sign of spiritual vitality rather than irreligion, for it is indicative of sincerity and a genuine search for truth.

## CONCLUSION

We need not be too much perturbed by the present materialistic tendencies in the world. The wave rises and falls, and our view of this process should not be too narrow. It is more important to try to determine what is fundamental in religion.

In the first place, it is clear that spiritual experience is primary and basic. Religion has little substance without it. At the same time, all attempts to express and describe it are bound to be imperfect. No religious philosophy can be either finished or perfect, therefore, and each age will have to develop its own approach and its own conclusions.

It follows also that any religious revival must be based on spiritual experience. This is doubly true in an age which has largely rejected the old forms, for attempts to revise and reform the externals of religion, or to devise purely intellectual substitutes, are bound to be ineffective. It is necessary to go to the source.

We must also conclude that all religions are true. They are true, because they have their source in Truth, in a spiritual intuition of the highest good, in realization of God. They are true, because they point to Truth and lead to Truth. They are, at the same time, equally imperfect in their attempts to embody that Truth in words and forms.

We may conclude, finally, that the religions will be renewed and will once more become deep and vigorous. How or when this will take place we cannot say. But since religion is based on spiritual experience, which is open and possible for all men, it can come at any time.



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Swami Vimalananda, of the Ramakrishna Order, deals with 'The Significance of Brahmacharya' in all its bearings, with particular reference to modern conditions. The importance of the subject cannot be over-emphasized, specially at a time like ours when the ancient moral values and standards of chastity are being openly decried and ridiculed by an influential section of the press and the public under a false notion of modernity.

Dr. S. K. Nandi, M.A., LL.B., D.Phil, (Cal.), Sahityabharati (Visvabharati), Head of the Department of Philosophy, Krishnagar Government College, and a noted student of art, makes some valuable suggestions for the reorientation of 'Our Fine Arts Education', so as to help our

children develop their personality fully in all its aspects.

While recounting the well-known story of 'The Birth of the Rāmāyaṇa' in his own sweet way, Swami Siddhinathananda, of the Ramakrishna Order, beautifully delineates what makes for good poetry worth its name.

In his lucid article on 'Some Thoughts on Religion', Brahmachari Amal, of the Ramakrishna Order, assures us that religion in itself, grounded as it is in the intuitive experience of our own true being, is eternal and undying, and that we need not get unduly perturbed by the modern materialistic tendencies, which appear to swamp religion out of existence, but which are no new phenomena of just recent origin and are bound in turn to be submerged by a new wave of religious revival.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE: ESSAYS IN CONTEMPORARY REALISM.** BY CHARLES S. SEELY. Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. 1964. Pages 140. Price \$3.75.

Mr. Charles S. Seely visited sixty-five countries, saw life in the major cities of the world, saw at close range fifty million people, and sought a basis for materialism, which he calls realism. The ancient materialists were evidently wiser. The bias of the author makes him glorify materialism at the expense of idealism. We are told that 'Idealism is guided mainly by reason and beliefs'. While materialism is taken to aid civilization in all aspects of its advance, idealism is said to have prevented or delayed changes. There can be no greater falsehood. Socrates died as an idealist for having sought to

bring about the progress of the Athenians. The Renaissance Platonists were idealists who had to struggle against the church and against the materialists to bring about human progress. The revolutionaries in France and America were no materialists, but they were activated by the idealistic visions. There is something in man which prevents him from accepting materialism as the creed; and there are many examples to show that it was materialism which came in the way of human development. Evidently, the wars of the present century were inspired more by practical and materialistic claims. Mr. Seely ignores this aspect of the problem. The claims he advances in favour of realism are, to say the least, fantastic. It is not realism which has helped man in his onward march.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

**RELATIONS AMONG RELIGIONS TODAY.** EDITED BY MOSES JUNG, SWAMI NIKHILANANDA, AND HERBERT W. SCHNEIDER. E. J. Brill, Leiden, Netherlands. 1963. Pages 178. Price not mentioned.

This humane document relates to the sincere endeavours of the wise men of the East and the West, like S. Radhakrishnan, Francis Younghusband, Professor Floyd, H. Ross, Swami Nikhilananda, etc., to develop better understanding among the various religions of the world and thereby pave the way for permanent peace. The book is divided into three parts: the first deals with the 'Official Formulations of Norms by Christian Bodies'; while the other two deal with the statements and general principles from the representatives of religious bodies, like P. N. Maha Thera, Ohtani, D. T. Suzuki, P. Chen-chiah, Swami Sankarananda, Swami Madhavananda, H. H. Swami Chandrasekhara Bharati, Rabbi Leo Jung, Professor Syed Vahiduddin, Professor M. Hafiz Syed, etc. Various religious beliefs pertaining to Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Shintoism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, etc. have been discussed threadbare by these savants and representatives of the various religions in the light of the relationship of the individual to the Supreme and to the social and political groups as well as to one another, so as to bring out their common features and meeting-points. This endeavour, as Edmond Privat beautifully puts it, is a bridge from the empirical to the empyrean. Personal and sectarian faiths have been sought to be replaced by direct and fundamental relationships based on charity, goodwill, truth, and beauty. The Bulletin is illuminating and inspiring. The appendix, dealing with a 'Directory of International Organizations Concerned with Inter-religious Relations' such as the 'The World Congress of Faiths' etc., and the bibliography, containing a list of about 200 authoritative works on the various religions, add to the value of the work. The get-up is attractive.

P. SAMA RAO

**LANGUAGE, MYTH AND MAN.** BY JOSEPH REISS. Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y. 1963. Pages 134. Price \$ 4.50.

This work is an interesting study of the interrelations between man's earliest mythological background and etymology. That etymological derivation of words has something to do with man's early history and thought is not disputed. What is less certain and more difficult to accept is the particular interpretations given to the etymological significance of particular words. And it is bound to be so always. Thus, 'Sanskrit' is said to be derived from two words 'shamas' and 'krit'. 'Shamas' was the sun, and the

sun God, and a ruling system. And *krit* represents the Hebrew word "*crs* or *crth*" which means cut, grave, write, etc., and this word is the source of the words Crete, Krishna and Christ.' (p. 95) Thus, the word 'Sanskrit' should mean 'The Sun God Krishna or Christ or Crete', which is not free from objection. Similarly, 'Gaya is the word *og*, sex' (p. 100) is not free from objection.

However, we must realize that a work of this type where interpretation of words is the most important factor can never be free from objection. But the value of the work is enhanced for that very reason. The book is highly interesting and thought-provoking and suggests a new approach to solve some of the most difficult riddles in man's early history and development. The author has collected evidences from Sumer, Accad, Elam, Babylon, Egypt, the Hebrews, Yezdis, Devil Worshipers, Phoenicia, India, Crete, the Romans, Cambodia, the New World, Caribs, Haiti, and Peru.

DR. P. N. MUKHERJEE

**DESPOTISM: A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF TYRANNY.** BY DAGOBERT D. RUNES. Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y. 1963. Pages 269. Price \$ 12.50.

This important and useful work, consisting of 364 photographs, 24 sketches, and a photographic reproduction of the Declaration of Human Rights (1789), represents the Satan in human nature working throughout human history. Thirty-four classifications of tyranny reveal the depth of human depravity in all ages. The most highly placed and respectable in society, the guardians of law and of the church, were not free from this canker. Millions of innocent men, women, and children from the first dawn of history to the present day have been helpless victims of conventional society. People have been burnt, their limbs torn, and women have been systematically raped with the sanction of the church and the law (*Jus Primae Noctis*), and sold to slavery in thousands. These truths ordinarily suppressed in history textbooks have been graphically depicted with photographs and notes by Mr. Runes. It reminds us of the famous remark of the Swedish statesman, Oxenstierna, who, on observing the devastation and human misery following the Thirty Years' War, said: 'With what a little amount of wisdom is the world really governed!' Or, we may ponder with the poet: 'Much it grieved my heart to think, What man has made of man!' To my mind, the value of this invaluable work will be immensely increased if a few illustrations of the worst tyrannies from medieval Indian history, such as those of Nadir Shah or Aurangzeb, are added in this book,



This book should adorn the shelves of all libraries and colleges.

DR. P. N. MUKHERJEE

**THE MAN-LION (ŚRĪ NARASIMHA).** By BINDIGANAVALE NARAYANA AYYANGAR. PREFACE BY SWĀMI ADIDĒVANANDA, ŚRĪ RAMAKRISHNA AŚHRAMA, MANGALORE. Sri Lakshminarasimha Bhakta Mandali, Bangalore. 1964. Pages 27. Price not mentioned.

This monograph, which is a reprint of a chapter of the author's *Essays on Indo-Aryan Mythology* (1901), gives an allegorical interpretation of Narasimhāvatāra of Lord Viṣṇu as described in the Vedas and the Purāṇas. In the process, it educes a consistent account of the Hiraṇyakaśipu-Prāhlāda story from out of the many contradictory versions found in the Vedas and the various Purāṇas. The language is lucid and simple.

P. SAMA RAO

## SANSKRIT

**NANDACARITAM.** 1964. Pages 31. Price Re. 1.

**BHARTRDĀNAM.** 1964. Pages 55. Price Rs. 2.

By SIROMANI SANNIDHANAM SURYANARAYANA-SASTRI, Retired Sanskrit Lecturer, 44 Jheera, Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

The author, who is well known for his great erudition in Sanskrit and Telugu in Andhra Pradesh, retells in mellifluous, racy Sanskrit the stories of Nanda and Kṛṣṇa-tulābhāram in these two booklets.

P. SAMA RAO

## SANSKRIT-ENGLISH

**ŚRĪ RĀMADĀSA-GĪTA.** By PROFESSOR M. RAMAKRISHNA BHAT. Anandashram, via Kanhangad (Kerala). 1964. Pages 160. Price Rs. 2.

This is a comprehensive digest of Saint Ramadas's teachings in the form of the *Bhagavad-Gītā-samvāda*. It is, indeed, a novel attempt, and the religious ardour of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* informs this, too. Apart from the sublimity of the contents, the author's simple and mellifluous lines run alongside the lines of the *Gītā*, and the saint's spiritual message is magnificently set out here. The author identifies his *guru*, Sri Ramadas, with Śrī Rāmacandra, and the opening lines of his invocation, 'Śrī Rāmacandram

*karuṇāsamudram*' etc., are full of great religious fervour. This is a must for every spiritual aspirant. The price is modest, the format beautiful, and the content sublime.

P. SAMA RAO

## KANNADA

**ĀNANDAGRĀMA.** By PRABHUDASI NIVEDITA. TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL MARATHI BY SRI VINEETA RAMACHANDRA RAO. Pradeepa Karyalaya, Dharwar, Mysore State. 1963. Pages 207. Price Rs. 2.

The book under review contains eight allegorical stories dealing with spiritual experience on various planes of existence. They are mystical, too, like Francis Thomson's *Hound of Heaven*, and relate to the striving of the soul for union with the supreme Soul. They have been woven out of the normal incidents of everyday life against the sensuous background of Nature, with the unwavering faith that all righteous life on earth is a spring-board to jump into higher existence. As the author hints, in her choice of the title, *Ānandagrāma*, the finite point, in the act of realizing itself, spreads itself out to enclose all humanity in its loving fold, and finally effaces itself in the Infinite, leaving no trace of itself. This is melodiously emphasized in many songs of the author appended to the stories.

The translator, Sri Vineeta Ramachandra Rao, has done his job well, though here and there his Kannada has a tinge of Marathi.

P. SAMA RAO

## HINDI

**ŚRĪ ŚANKARĀCĀRYA KĀ MĀYĀVĀD.** By Dr. B. L. ATREYA. Darshana Printers, Moradabad. 1962. Pages 56. Price Re. 1.

What exactly is the Māyāvāda that was popularized by Ācārya Śaṅkara? Is there Māyāvāda in the *Brahma-Sutra* of Bādarāyaṇa? How far do the Upaniṣads support this doctrine? What was the occasion that called forth such a powerful advocacy as the Ācārya provided for Māyāvāda, a line of tradition that surely pre-dates Śaṅkara? These are the important questions raised by the learned author and answered at length in this fine essay.

M. P. PANDIT

# NEWS AND REPORTS

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION CEYLON BRANCH

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 1962 TO MARCH 1964

*The Colombo Centre:* The Colombo Centre, which is the headquarters of the Ceylon branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, carried on, in addition to the administrative activities, varied cultural and religious activities during the years under review. Besides the regular *pūjā* in the Ashrama shrine, religious classes were conducted on Sundays in the Ashrama, and special lectures by eminent persons on various cultural and religious subjects were arranged. Classes in Sanskrit and discourses on the Upaniṣads, the *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa* were also held on Saturday and Sunday evenings. The Sunday religious class for children, started in 1952, has on its rolls at present 425 children. The Sunday religious classes at the Training School for the Juvenile Delinquents at Watupitiwela, a distance of 30 miles from Colombo, were continued during the period under review. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, as well as *Śivarātri*, Wesak Day, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī*, *Vijaya Daśamī*, and Christmas Eve were celebrated with due solemnity. The library has 2,340 books, and the free reading room receives 20 monthly and 4 weekly magazines and 2 bi-weekly and 9 daily newspapers. The international cultural centre, opened by Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, the late Prime Minister of India, in October 1962, provides at present accommodation for deserving students with facilities for religious and cultural training, for guests, and for conducting classes on cultural and religious subjects. During the period under review, the following books were published by the centre: (1) A short life of Swami Vivekananda in Sinhala; (2) *Vivekananda: Prophet of the New Age, of India and the World* in English; and *Ilaṅgail Swāmī Vivekānanda* in Tamil, on the occasion of the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda. The

birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated with due éclat in different parts of the Island, with processions, lectures, the feeding of the poor, publication of books and pamphlets, *kathāprasāṅgam*, and essay and elocution contests among students.

*Kataragama Madam:* On an average 300 pilgrims on week days and nearly 700 on week-ends stayed at the Madam, which provides board and lodging facilities to pilgrims visiting the holy shrine at Kataragama. During the annual festival held in July-August, free meals were supplied to about 9,000 pilgrims daily for 16 days, and buttermilk and lime juice were supplied to about 30,000 pilgrims daily. Religious lectures, discourses, and *bhajanās* were held at the Madam during the festival and on other occasions.

*Batticaloa Ashrama:* Weekly religious classes, temple worship, and *bhajanās* were conducted at the Batticaloa jail and the Mantivu leper asylum. Religious classes were held on Sundays at the Vipulananda Memorial Hall, Kalladi-Uppodai, and *bhajanās* were arranged on Fridays. The Mission conducted a boys' home at Kalladi-Uppodai and two girls' homes at Anaipanthi and Karativu. The total strength was 120, of which 50 were girls. These homes provide all amenities to poor orphans and destitute children to enable them to get an all-round education up to the higher school certificate and university entrance examinations. The birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, and other festivals like *Śivarātri*, *Navarātri*, *Dīpāvalī*, Wesak Day, and Christmas Eve were celebrated in a fitting manner.

### Needs of the Centre:

	Rs.
1. Swami Vivekananda Centenary Hall ..	3,00,000
2. A permanent fund for the maintenance of the Ashrama and Temple at Colombo	1,00,000
3. A permanent fund for the orphanages at Batticaloa .. .. .	1,50,000
4. Kataragama Madam Reserve Fund ..	2,50,000