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MARCH 1965

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA



**By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or
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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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Vol. LXX

MARCH 1965

No. 3



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:o:—

LETTERS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

(60)

Chilkapeta
Almora, U.P.
27 October 1915

Dear —,

I am very happy to receive your letter. I am all the more happy to learn that you have returned home during the *Pūjā* vacation and are seeing for yourself how the Master is being firmly installed in those parts. How many more things you will still witness in times to come!

The answer is : Firstly, all such ideas as whether we will have to come back to this world or not arise from ignorance—the devotees never indulge in such thoughts. Those who have offered their life at the feet of the Lord depend entirely on the Lord's will. He alone knows everything—the return or non-return (to this world). It is to Him that we go, it is with Him that we remain, and, if we have to come back, it is with Him again that we do so. He is our companion, in life as well as in death.

Secondly, all the divine moods belong to the Lord Himself. Whatever mood arises at a particular time, it is best to be immersed in that mood for the time being. Everything has been fulfilled by the mood you are steeped in now. Therefore it is that the attitude of the mother is appealing (to you now). No attitude towards the Lord is bad; everything is good—this is Lord Sri Ramakrishna's view. Sri Ramakrishna is the crystallized essence of all attitudes. It is a matter of immense joy that the number of devotees in those

parts is on the increase. May it increase in abundance! This is the way in which the incarnation of the age spreads his own glory. The awakening of love in the hearts of the devotees and the wonderful sympathy and co-operation among them—all this is happening by the force of the Lord's inscrutable power (*yogamāyā*). Very nice it is! I am especially delighted to hear that you have secured an image of the Holy Mother (Sri Sarada Devi) and are worshipping it. Your lives are reaching towards the state of blessedness. It is hopeful news and a matter of great joy that the library is growing—there is a special need for it.

My heartfelt blessings and love to you on the occasion of the Vijaya. Write now and then for your welfare.

Your well-wisher,
Shivananda

PS. My health is all right in a sense. Good and bad are both inevitable when there is a body. So long as one can remember the Lord and think of Him, everything is good; otherwise, everything is bad.

(61)

Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama
Luxa, Kasi

6 November 1915, Time: 11.30 a.m.

Dear Hari Maharaj,

I reached here safely yesterday, through the will of the Lord, even before the evening had set in, that is, at about 5 p.m. Things are getting ready for the *Śyāmā-pūjā*. Suresh also has arrived from Calcutta today. He has brought many of the accessories of worship. His mother could not come; but the *pūjā* is being arranged because of her special desire and the earnest wish of Shyam. Maharaj has gone to Puri. Nirod is in Madras; his health is not at all good, otherwise he would have surely come.

... Nepal will perform the *pūjā*; Prakash is the *tantradhāraka* (the assistant to the worshipper who reads out the *mantras* from the book). The latter is doing the ceremonial reading of the *Caṇḍī* (*caṇḍīpāṭha*). ... Charubabu, Kalibabu, Kedar Baba, and the other inmates of both the Ashramas (Advaita Ashrama and the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama) are all keeping fairly well, by the grace of the Lord. Sukul Maharaj is slightly better. Everyone is feeling sorry because you have not come. ... In the morning, at about 9 a.m., I had been to the Holy Viśvanātha and Mother Annapūrṇā with Shyam, and had the holy touch and sight of Mother Gaṅgā.

Accept my heartfelt love and salutations. The others here convey their *pranāmas* to you. Convey my blessings and love to Kanai and Sitapati.

Servant—Tarak

BLESSED INWARDNESS!

[EDITORIAL]

Inertia in any form, physical or mental, is reprehensible and is to be avoided. It is conducive to happiness and prosperity neither here nor hereafter. Hindu scriptures emphasize this fact when they call upon mankind to 'wish to live for a hundred years engaged in ceaseless activity'. 'May we live a hundred years—a life in full possession of the powers of vision, hearing, and speech, a life free from dependence! May we live such a life even longer than a hundred years!' is the prayer of the Vedic sage. But there is a great danger of mistaking such exhortations. While these exhortations are appreciated fairly well in our times, the other exhortation to see God in everything that subsists, leading a life of renunciation and unselfishness, is not so much appreciated. Ceaseless activity in itself is not a virtue. It becomes meaningful and gains in value only when inspired by a purpose and a goal. The story is told of a madman who would go round and round a pillar the whole day, and would exclaim at the end of the day, with sweat streaming from his face, how hard he had worked and how much work he had turned out. Today, many of us lead a hectic life, often bordering on such frenzy. We are awfully busy: we toil from dawn to dusk, madly rushing about hither and thither. What for? We know not, and few of us care to know. We go through the round of activities mechanically, repeating the process tirelessly day after day, year after year, only to disappear at last like bubbles on the surface of water. We carry on our life listlessly—the helpless victims that we are of the forces of nature over which we have no control. We are often moved by our impulses and instincts rather than our

reason and better sense. If at all we discern or are conscious of any purpose in our activities, it is to make sure that 'My cattle are housed, and the fire burns bright; my wife is safe, and my babes sleep sweet! Therefore ye may rain if ye will, O clouds, tonight!' or that 'The fields are reaped and the hay is all fast in the barn. The stream is full, and the roads are firm. Therefore ye may rain, if ye will, O clouds, tonight!' in the manner of the complacent cowherd who jestingly taunts the Buddha, when he is forced to seek shelter under the cowherd's eaves on a cold wet night, with rain pouring down and the winds howling all around. Or maybe we are carried away by ideals of fighting for political, economic, or social causes, but very often even they, when unmasked of the veneer of high-sounding slogans and phrases, boil down to making our life secure here for ourselves and our own. Thus far are our activities purposive, but is life nothing more than bread and raiment—a little eating, drinking, and merriment?

'Whoever, O Gārgī,' declare the Upaniṣads, 'departs from this world without knowing this Imperishable is miserable and is to be pitied; on the other hand, whoever departs from this world having known the Imperishable is a Brāhmin'; 'If we know Him here, then is life fruitful; if we do not know Him here, great is the calamity.' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, III. viii. 10; *Kena*, II. 5) 'What shall it profit a man,' cries Jesus, 'if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' An unquenchable yearning for contact with the Eternal, for a vision of the Supreme, is the sauce of human life. If life is not inspired by it, it loses its meaning and savour by that much

and remains incomplete. Transcending the exterior of the body or the vital organs or the mind or the intellect is a vaster, profounder, and truer dimension in us, of which this relative world of ours is just a manifestation, a reflection. The simile of the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* (III. i. 1) expresses this truth beautifully: 'Upon the same tree are two birds of beautiful plumage, most friendly to each other, one eating the fruits, the other sitting there calm and silent without eating; the one on the lower branch eating sweet and bitter fruits in turn and becoming happy and unhappy, but the other one on the top, calm and majestic; he eats neither sweet nor bitter fruits, cares neither for happiness nor misery, immersed in his own glory. The lower bird goes nearer and nearer to the higher bird as blows after blows are received; and as he approaches him, he finds that the light from the higher bird is playing round his own plumage; and as he comes nearer and nearer, lo! the transformation is going on. The nearer and nearer he comes, he finds himself melting away, as it were, until he has entirely disappeared. He did not really exist; it was but the reflection of the other bird who was there calm and majestic amidst the moving leaves. It was all his glory, that upper bird's.'

Deep within us, behind this empirical self of ours, is the eternal reality, the mystery of our own being, the pure spirit, the basis of our existence, the support and background of this universe. It is this spirit that animates all life and existence. Wherever we see the manifestation of extraordinary glory, prosperity, brilliance, there is a special manifestation of this spirit, as the *Gītā* (X. 41) points out, unaware though we are of it. 'When the supreme light in us inspires the intellect, we have genius; when it stirs the will, we have heroism; when it flows through the heart,

we have love; and when it transforms our being, the son of man becomes the son of God.' A glimpse, a touch of that Reality makes all that is heard and seen small and insignificant. In great works of art, science, or literature, we have faint traces of the stirring of this inner spirit—limited and blurred visions of it. Our appreciation of beauty, our desire to pursue high and great ideals, the scientist's search after truth, the moments of exhilaration and joy we feel occasionally, or even the primitive man's awe, fear, and adoration of the unknown—all are expressions in different degrees of the human spirit thirsting for the beyond.

In the rush and clamour of our ordinary life, in the competition and struggle for existence, in the race for the satisfaction of our physical and biological needs, we lose sight of this eternal reality that is nearest to us. Absorbed in the normal vocations of life that exact our immediate attention, we are not aware of its presence, nor do we feel any need for it. But there are moments in our life, rare though they are, when these ordinary concerns of life no longer satisfy us, and we long for something more abiding. Maybe the death of a near and dear one, maybe a national calamity, maybe a dire distress, throws us off our feet, when we feel things slipping through our fingers, and the veil is lifted a little and we are drawn to the Eternal. The fit of renunciation that comes on us in such moments is, however, fleeting and passes away in most cases with the flow of time. But there are occasions when we are suddenly awakened to the awareness and need of the Eternal, in spite of the joys and pleasures of life. On such occasions, even the greatest pleasure on earth appears trivial and not worth striving for, and we are seized with the questions of the why and wherefore of our origin and existence. What am I? Where do I come from?

Where do I go? Is death the finale of everything? The very thought is abhorring to us. For if that were so, what is the meaning of all our hopes and struggles, our desires and aspirations? What good is it striving after moral perfection or anything else? Why not make hay while the sun shines? No, we are not satisfied with the answer. Our heart craves for a more satisfactory answer; it craves for immortality, for the freedom of the spirit.

This extreme dissatisfaction with the ephemeral and the thirst for the Immortal marks the beginning of spiritual life. The weariness of the soul that accompanies such dissatisfaction is of a positive kind, and is to be distinguished from the momentary paroxysms of frustration caused by the setbacks in life. The soul that has heard the call of the Higher and has got a taste of Its sweetness, in howsoever small a measure, hankers for more of it, and gives up the lower as smoothly and easily as a snake its slough. Then does worldly life seem so insignificant, superficial, and valueless in comparison with the life in God. What is there in this humdrum life of the family, children, relatives, earning money, and struggling for a morsel of food and a few yards of cloth? Nay, what is there even in intellectual pursuits? or even in service of humanity and high-sounding ideals? Everything earthly looks hollow and empty. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you!' The soul turns inward in self-introspection and wants to lose itself in meditation on the Supreme. It no longer delights in the hustle and bustle of life. It withdraws itself from the affairs of the world to commune with its own pure being, and finds peace and solace there. To such a soul, the only reality on earth is God, and the only worth-while thing is God-realization. To it realization of God is the one consuming passion of life, and all its

efforts are directed towards that end. The worldly-wise may condemn it as a selfish quest, may pooh-pooh it as escapism and cowardice, but these men whose mind has turned towards God are not deterred by these idle talks from pursuing their supreme quest. They know that except God the rest is all vanity of vanities, mere play, a little titillation of nerves, a bit of excitement—yea, even this talk of service, nationalism, internationalism, and so on is mere babies' prattle. 'Renounce,' declare they with authority, with conviction, in unequivocal language, 'renounce, give up the idea of sex and possessions; as these fall off, the eyes open to spiritual vision. The soul regains its own infinite power, and then you will know what selfishness or unselfishness is, what service is, what nationalism is, what internationalism and the unity of the world is.'

We are apt to judge these men of God who have turned away from the world and delight in God with our own yardstick and from our own level of understanding and think that they must also act as we do. It is wrong to think that these men of God are bound by the laws of society, that they owe a duty to it, that they must work for it. 'They have no *work*', as Swami Vivekananda points out, 'under or beyond the sun. Liberty, *mukti*, is all their religion, and they will avoid by flight or fight everything that tries to curb it.' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 72, 7th edition) We of the present generation are prone to eulogize mere external activity in the cause of society and decry inward meditation. To such of us who feel that way, their only answer would be: 'Come out if you can of this network of foolishness they call this *world*. If you cannot, cheer those that dare dash this false God, society, to the ground and trample on its unmitigated hypocrisy; if you cannot cheer them, pray, be silent, but do not try to drag them down again

into the mire with such false nonsense as compromise and becoming nice and sweet. ... The duty of the ordinary man is to obey the commands of his "God", society; but the children of light never do so. ... The one accommodates himself to surroundings and social opinion and gets all good things from society, the giver of all good to such. The other stands alone and draws society up towards him. The accommodating man finds a path of roses; the non-accommodating, one of thorns. But the worshippers of "*vox populi*" go to annihilation in a moment; the children of truth *live for ever*. ... Youth and beauty vanish, life and wealth vanish, name and fame vanish, even the mountains crumble into dust. Friendship and love vanish. Truth alone abides. God of Truth, be Thou alone my guide. ... Life is nothing! Death is a delusion! All this is not. God alone is!' (ibid., Vol. V, pp. 71, 72)

Yet, strangely, it is these men of God who spurn the dictates of society, that work best for the good of humanity; they are its greatest benefactors, not for one generation but for generations to come. They work intensely, though not always visibly and consciously, for the regeneration of mankind, even more than those who are most vociferous about it. Unlike those who are lost in the world, they work calmly, silently. And because they work calmly and silently, their work is more effective and far-reaching in its results. Further, their vision is clear and their work impregnated with a singleness of purpose.

The final solution of all our problems—individual, social, national, international—lies in our reaching that state of blessed serenity which is living in God; until then, all our efforts are merely patching up a festering sore. Yet, history is replete with instances of great spiritual personalities who not only gave their all to building up purely religious institutions, but also to caring for

the sick and tending the poor. They felt the suffering of humanity as none else did, and their extension of love knew no barriers of patriotism, for their identification was with the entire universe, springing out of their communion with the all-pervading God. In fact, only when we lose ourselves in the thought of God can we really love and serve the world. Then alone can we work for the good of others, when we are free from selfish desires. How can persons who are themselves slaves of their passions, with a hundred and one desires bubbling within their hearts, really serve others? Besides, what good can they who are themselves a mass of conflicts within bring about in others? or even what idea of good can they have? It is the men of God who have pierced through the veil of *Māyā*, the mystery of this universe, whose minds are free from greed, ambition, selfishness, and jealousy, who are calm and serene, and who have touched the feet of God, that can work for the welfare of the world truly. That is the significance of the advice of Swami Brahmananda, the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the first president of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission: Give seventy-five per cent of your mind to God; for the work you have to do in the world, the rest of twenty-five per cent is enough. Of course, he was not suggesting the compartmentalization of mind. The meaning of what he said was: the more we give our mind over to God, the better we can work and more effectively too.

Those who believe in mere incessant work without communion with the Eternal, even if they do some temporary good to the world, can bring about no lasting influence. On the other hand, there is a greater probability of their doing harm to society, instead of good; for a faulty vision cannot but lead to faulty action. But in the case of those who have truly given themselves over to the Lord, no such conse-

quence is possible, because it is not they who work but the Lord through them. Even in their case, though they are never really away from the presence of God, we often find them resorting to meditation to replenish their flagging spirits. How much more so is it necessary in the case of us ordinary people?

We have to observe a thing with a detached vision to understand the value and significance of it. When we are mixed up in the fray, we can rarely reflect on the pros and cons of a thing; we behave more like animals, instinctively, than like rational beings. Ordinarily, our mind is an arena of conflicting forces; our intellect, emotion, and will are at war with each

other. They all need to be integrated and subordinated into a unity if they are to lead us to the highest goal of life. Therefore it is that all the religions emphasize the need of inward meditation and concentration on the unity, which is God. No doubt, in our present state, we cannot forgo activities, internal or external. But we must not lose sight of the ultimate truth, and we must try to combine both meditation and work in a harmonious manner. Activity in itself, without the spirit of worship and dedication to God, without the consciousness that God alone is real and everything else is false without Him, is only superficial and will not help us to attain our goal.

'THOU ART THAT'

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

I have taken for my subject one of the great sayings of the Upaniṣads. We call them *mahāvākyas*, and these *mahāvākyas* have power behind them. The *guru* (teacher), during initiation into the monastic life, utters one of these *mahāvākyas*, according to the particular sect to which he may belong. There are four such *mahāvākyas*. They have the same meaning, only the words are different: *Tat tvam asi* (Thou art That); *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman); *Prajñānam Brahma* (Consciousness is Brahman); *Ayam Ātmā Brahma* (This Self is Brahman). So they all convey the one supreme truth: Thou art That—the Ātman, the Self, is one with Brahman.

This truth is very hard to grasp, for it is something that has to be realized and experienced within our own consciousness. In this present age, it was Sri Ramakrishna

who laid emphasis upon the truth of religion, the substance of all religions, which is: 'Not by learning, not by subtle arguments, not by study of the scriptures, can this truth be known. This truth goes beyond scriptures, beyond any expression.' And Sri Ramakrishna declared again and again: 'You can see God, you can see Him more intimately than I see you before me; you can talk to God, you can converse with Him; and you can become one with Him.' To experience union with Him, to realize 'thou art That', is the supreme realization, the supreme truth, the experience of total reality.

I quoted Sri Ramakrishna as saying, 'God can be seen; you can talk to Him'. This is not the same attitude as 'thou art That'. There are different approaches to the Reality, which can be classified under three broad divisions: dualism, qualified

monism, and non-dualism. A great devotee, Hanumān (or Mahāvīra), was once asked by Rāma : 'How do you look upon me?' Hanumān answered : 'As long as I have this physical consciousness, Thou art the Master, I am thy servant; when I consider myself as an individual being (*jīva*), Thou art the whole, I am thy part; but when I realize the Ātman, then I am one with Thee.' Jesus also spoke of these three steps, as it were. For instance, he prayed to the Father in Heaven : 'Our Father which art in Heaven.' Then, another time, he said : 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' And then again, he stated : 'I and my Father are One.'

But there is a misunderstanding that arises when you hear this truth, 'I and my Father are One'. Just as when we say that the Vedānta believes in oneness with God, it is asked : 'How can I claim to be one with God who is the creator of this universe, the sustainer of this universe? I may realize the Ātman, but does that mean I am one with God the creator? It is not possible.' The answer is that I may realize my Ātman as Brahman, the ultimate Reality, but I would not be one with the personal God, for God as a personal Being and I as an individual being are separate. When I realize my Ātman as Brahman, the universe disappears, there is no world, there are no separate beings.

Let me explain this further. Brahman is the Spirit, pure Consciousness. When we consider Brahman as Brahman, or the Absolute, the Impersonal, then there is no creation, no universe. Nobody has the ability to conceive that Brahman. It can be experienced, but to describe that experience is impossible. It is just like a dumb man trying to express how ice-cream tastes.

Now if Brahman is absolute and inexpressible, how did this universe come about? By Brahman associated with its

power. We call that power Prakṛti, or Māyā, or Śakti; and when it becomes manifest, there is creation. Brahman, associated with Māyā we call Īśvara, or God, meaning personal God. When I talk about a personal God, I cannot be one with that personal God, the Creator. Then what am I in relation to the personal God? I am a *jīva*, an individual being. What is such an individual being? Brahman associated with power is Īśvara; Brahman associated with a part of that power is *jīva*—you and I and every form of being. In other words, you are Brahman, but associated and identified with this part of Māyā, you are *jīva*. Brahman as Īśvara has control over Māyā, but you and I, as *jīva*, are under the control of Māyā, for we are in ignorance; we are deluded. And to realize the supreme Truth, we have to rise above and beyond the part of Māyā with which we are identified.

As long as I have physical consciousness and consider myself an individual man, weighing so many pounds or feeling not so well, as long as I am so identified, I am separate from God. This is the dualistic comprehension. Swami Vivekananda used to say in fun, 'When I am feeling very well, I am Brahman; and when I have a stomach ache I say, O Mother!' Then there is qualified non-dualism, or qualified monism, when we realize 'I am an individual being, a part of that universal being'. By this we mean a part of Īśvara, not Brahman. Brahman, the Absolute, the Impersonal, cannot have parts, for the Infinite cannot be divided into parts. Only when I have the supreme experience, I transcend the body and the mind and the senses and arrive at the purified mind, where I am one with the infinite Being. This is called non-dualism; it is, of course, a realization. In any kind of knowledge, you have to have duality : subject and object, and also the process of

knowledge. 'I see something; that something and I are separate.' The western philosopher Kant pointed out that as long as we have separateness, the thing in itself is not known; it is entirely dependent on the sensation which the object brings into mind, and that sensation we read as the object.

The experience of Reality, therefore, is not a subject and object relationship but what Śaṅkara describes as *tripuṭibheda*, the untying of the three knots of knowledge, in which the subject, object, and the process of knowledge become unified. In English, this is expressed as unitary consciousness, but that inadequate terminology is all the expression we can give to it.

Now this question may arise: Why do we have to realize and experience God? Why not let us believe in God and be good, do good, and then, when we die, go and live with the saints in heaven? Is not that a more comfortable religion? But that is not Christianity, nor is it Hinduism or Buddhism or anything. It is no religion at all, but a misreading of religion. Take, for instance, an intellectual man such as Matthew Arnold defining religion as 'ethical life with a tinge of emotionalism'. That is why Sri Ramakrishna had to come, that is why God had to incarnate, to remind us again that *truth has to be realized and experienced*. That is religion. Throw away all your dogmas, doctrines, theologies, and establish your relationship with God. Think of God, love God, worship God, meditate upon Him, be united with Him. That is the whole of religion. It has been defined beautifully by Swami Vivekananda: 'Religion is the unfoldment of the divinity already within man.'

Some organized religions want you to consider yourselves as weak and sinners. Yet, if you go to the scriptures, for instance, the Bible, what do they say? In the Psalms, you read: 'Ye are Gods.' In

the Romans, you read: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.' And if Christ realized 'I and my Father are One', that is the experience you and I also must have.

So I have already pointed out that truth is a matter of experience, and it would be foolish and blasphemous to say in my normal consciousness that I, an individual, am God. In my normal consciousness, I am identified with the body, mind, and senses. In that realm, how can I claim to be one with Brahman? The Upaniṣads, which teach the path of God-realization, also try to illustrate how the truth can be misunderstood. Here is a story from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*:

It was said of old: The Self, which is free from impurities, from old age and death, from grief, from hunger and thirst, which desires nothing but what it ought to desire, and resolves nothing but what it ought to resolve, is to be sought after, is to be inquired about, is to be realized. He who learns about the Self and realizes it obtains all the worlds and all desires.

The gods and demons both heard of this truth, and they thought to themselves, 'Let us seek after and realize this Self, so that we may obtain all the worlds and all desires'.

Thereupon Indra from the gods, and Virocana from the demons, went to Prajāpati, the renowned teacher. For thirty-two years, they lived with him as pupils. Then, Prajāpati asked them why they had both lived with him so long.

'We have heard', they replied, 'that one who realizes the Self obtains all the worlds and all desires. We have lived here because we want to learn of this Self.'

Then said Prajāpati: 'That which is seen in the eye—that is the Self. That is

immortal, that is fearless, and that is Brahman.'

'Sir,' inquired the disciples, 'is that the Self which is seen reflected in the water, or in a mirror?'

'The Self is indeed seen reflected in these', was the reply. Then Prajāpati added: 'Look at yourselves in the water, and whatever you do not understand, come and tell me about it.'

Indra and Virocana gazed on their reflections in the water, and returning to the sage, they said: 'Sir, we have seen the Self; we have seen even the hair and the nails.'

Then Prajāpati bade them don their finest clothes and look again in the water. This they did, and returning to the sage, they said: 'We have seen the Self, exactly like ourselves, well adorned and in our finest clothes.'

To which Prajāpati rejoined: 'The Self is indeed seen in these. The Self is immortal and fearless, and it is Brahman.' And the pupils went away well pleased.

But Prajāpati, looking after them, lamented thus: 'Both of them departed without analysing or discriminating, and without truly comprehending the Self. Whosoever follows a false doctrine of the Self will perish.'

Now Virocana, satisfied for his part that he had found out the Self, returned to the demons and began to teach them that the body alone is to be worshipped, that the body alone is to be served, and that he who worships the body and serves the body gains both worlds, this and the next. Such doctrine is, in very truth, the doctrine of the demons!

But Indra, on his way back to the gods, realized the uselessness of this knowledge. 'As this Self', he reasoned, 'seems to be well adorned when the body is well adorned, well dressed when the body is well dressed, so will it be blind when the body

is blind, lame when the body is lame, deformed when the body is deformed. When the body dies, this same Self will also die! In such knowledge, I can see no good.'

Thus, he returned to the teacher again and again, until at long last he was taught this truth:

'This body is mortal, always gripped by death, but within it dwells the immortal Self. This Self, when associated in our consciousness with the body, is subject to pleasure and pain; and so long as this association continues, freedom from pleasure and pain can no man find. But as this association ceases, there cease also the pleasure and the pain.'

'Rising above physical consciousness, knowing the Self to be distinct from the senses and the mind—knowing it in its true light—one rejoices and is free.'

The gods, the luminous ones, meditate on the Self, and by so doing obtain all the worlds and all desires. In like manner, whosoever among mortals knows the Self, meditates upon it, and realizes it—he too obtains all the worlds and all desires.

In another Upaniṣad, *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, a beautiful picture is given: 'Like two birds of golden plumage, inseparable companions, the individual self, and the immortal Self are perched on the branches of the self-same tree. The former tastes of the sweet and bitter fruits of the tree. The latter, tasting of neither, calmly observes. The individual self, deluded by forgetfulness of his identity with the divine Self, bewildered by his ego, grieves and is sad.' You see, it is the individual who is tasting the sweet and bitter fruits of the tree of life and, as such, is grieved. But when he recognizes the worshipful Lord as his own true Self, and beholds its glory, he grieves no more.

There is a further analysis in the Upaniṣads. The Ātman, which is one with Brahman, is covered with five sheaths.

One sheath is made up of food—this physical body, called *annamaya-kośa*. Then we have *prāṇamaya-kośa*, the subtle or vital sheath, which gives us the power to breathe and live. The sheath of the mind, that which receives impressions from the outer world, is called *manomaya-kośa*. Next there is *vijñānamaya-kośa*, the sheath of the intellect, the faculty of discrimination. And, finally, there is *ānandamaya-kośa*, the sheath of bliss (referring to the ego or causal body, which is nearest to the Ātman). These are the five sheaths covering the Ātman. In our three states of consciousness, which we are familiar with—waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep—we are identifying with one or the other of the sheaths, or all of them. For instance, when we are awake, we are identifying ourselves with all of the sheaths. When we are dreaming, we are identifying ourselves with some of them. When we are in deep sleep, we are identifying ourselves with the sheath of ego—the causal or blissful sheath. Here some who do not have true understanding get confused. One writer points out that the state the Hindus call *samādhi* is only deep sleep. But the ego sheath, though nearest to the Ātman, remains a sheath of ignorance, the cause of delusion. Beyond is the Ātman.

So within these three states—waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep—nobody can see God. However, if you have attained the supreme Truth, then, when you come back, your vision is changed. For it is not only in *samādhi*, and while you are in *samādhi*, that you can see God; if you attain it, from then on you have the eye of the Spirit, as it were, and your vision has changed for ever. Then you see God in every state. I have myself observed that my master, Swami Brahmananda, would be absorbed all the time, absorbed inwardly, but externally he would be teaching or talking to us. One time I was engaged in

a discussion with a brother disciple, and I said, 'One can only see God in *samādhi*', and the other experiences of Sri Ramakrishna and of some of his disciples I tried to explain away by saying that they were in *bhāva-mukha* (a high state of spiritual awareness). My master happened to listen to that from his room. So he came out and stood by the door and said, 'So you have become omniscient!' And I asked him, 'But, sir, do you mean to say that with these physical eyes one could see God, and talk to Him?' Then he said, in English, 'Show me the line of demarcation where matter ends and spirit begins'.

As long as we have not the eye of knowledge, as long as we are in ignorance, we may talk about spirit and God and all that, but we only see matter. When our eyes change, the divine sight opens up, then we see no matter; spirit alone is, God alone is.

In order that we can have this experience, we have to practise what we call *sādhana*, spiritual disciplines. Sri Ramakrishna used to give the illustration that there is fire in the fuel, but you may say, 'Fire is here, there is fire here, there is fire here', but it does not come out. You have to light that fire. Then only can you cook and satisfy your hunger. And Śaṅkara said: 'A buried treasure is not uncovered by merely uttering the words, "Come forth!" You must follow the right directions, dig, remove the stones and earth from above it, and then make it your own. In the same way, the pure truth of the Ātman, which is buried under *Māyā* and the effects of *Māyā*, can be reached by meditation, contemplation, and by the spiritual disciplines such as a knower of Brahman may prescribe—but never by subtle arguments.'

Therefore, the main principle in spiritual discipline is meditation, contemplation. You have to learn to go within. The senses

are going outward, the mind is travelling; the senses have to be controlled; the mind has to be turned inward. You cannot find God by gazing at the sky; you have to find Him within yourself first, and after that you can see Him everywhere. I have often repeated that truth which I learned from my master: 'He who has it here (pointing to his own heart) has it everywhere; if he does not have it here, he has it nowhere.'

We are living, moving, and having our being in God all the time, every moment, because a living being is a conscious being, and what is that consciousness? It is of the Ātman, the Self, one with Brahman—the pure consciousness of God. We can do good deeds or bad deeds or whatever we want with that consciousness. But we can do nothing without it. And how do we become really aware of it? This illustration is given by Sri Ramakrishna: The policeman in the darkness with his bull's-eye lantern sees everybody, but nobody can see him. So in order that he can be seen, we have to pray to him, 'Mister Policeman, please turn your bull's-eye lantern upon your own face'. With that power of light, reflected in the mind, we go on experiencing things and objects of the world. We have to pray, 'Pure mind, please turn inward; don't be distracted'.

Once you turn inward, what then? How can you think, how can you meditate, how can you contemplate upon God? You have to focus the mind on something definite. The great seers and sages, the devotees of God, who have realized God, give us instructions like this: 'Light can

be taken as a symbol of God. Or sound, such as the word *Om*, can be taken as a symbol of God. Also, a saint or an *avatāra* (divine incarnation) can be taken as a symbol of God.' We read in the Upaniṣads: 'A knower of Brahman becomes Brahman.' Thus, Christ is Brahman, Ramakrishna is Brahman, any person who attains the realization of Brahman becomes Brahman, and if you are devoted to one of these illumined souls, you are worshipping Brahman. In the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* we read: 'The sage knows Brahman, the support of all, the pure effulgent being in whom is contained the universe. They who worship the sage, and do so without thought of self, cross the boundary of birth and death.'

The sage, or *avatāra*, is like a mirror, perfectly clear, upon which is reflected the Ātman, the Self. When a Christ or Kṛṣṇa, or Ramakrishna says, 'I am the life, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the sanctuary, be devoted to Me', that 'Me', that 'I', is not any individual; it is Brahman. One time, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Turiyananda, told us, 'When Swami Vivekananda used the word "I", he was united with the universal Self'.

I will conclude by describing the state of the knower of Brahman as told in one of the Upaniṣads: 'The Lord is the one light shining forth from every creature. Seeing Him present in all, the wise man is humble, puts not himself forward. His delight is in the Ātman, his joy is in the Ātman, he serves the Lord in all. Such as he, indeed, are the knowers of Brahman.'

GOD IS GREAT

SWAMI VIMALANANDA

The subject of this paper is an internal examination of the deservedly well-known Sanskrit hymn, entitled *Śivamahimnah Stotram*, cited here as *Ś.* Cadences of this charming hymn resound even today in the twilight air of many temple corridors, pious homes, and hermitages; not only in the Gangetic valley, but also in places far removed from it. This poem is cherished equally by scholars of the systems of orthodox Indian philosophy, by worshippers in the temples, and by monks who teach and learn in *maṭhas* and *āśramas*. Some references in a commentary of *Ś.* published in Madras ascribe the poem to the illustrious Mīmāṃsaka Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, who is described as an incarnation of God Subrahmanya. The style and imagery of these stanzas do not go against fixing an early date for them. The philosophic background of the hymn is Upaniṣadic non-dualism, and yet there is no express mention of Māyā or Śakti to explain how the changeless One became the changeful many. This fact may be taken as a corroborative hint to support the assignment of an early date for it, and even Kumārila's authorship of it. The sixteenth-century savant and saint, Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, has written an erudite commentary on *Ś.*; and it may be noted also that similar poems composed on the greatness of Devī, Viṣṇu, and Gaṇeśa are definitely modelled on it. *Ś.* proper contains thirty *śikharinī* stanzas. About a dozen stanzas following the body of the hymn glorify the author and the composition. Some of them are evidently later additions. Arthur Avalon, who gave an English translation of *Ś.* in 1916, rendered the title as *Greatness of Shiva*.

ORIGIN OF THE POEM ACCORDING TO TRADITION

The rare excellence of this devotional poem has induced popular imagination to give currency to the following miraculous setting explaining its origin: The author of the poem was Puṣpadanta, a noted *gandharva*. Purāṇic descriptions make out *gandharvas* to be celestial artists who feast the ears and eyes of gods with music and dance. They wield the power of transporting themselves in the sky undetected by others. Relying on this merit, Puṣpadanta, the *gandharva*, was for some time in the habit of alighting in the private garden of the king of Varanasi, unnoticed by the watchmen, and filching flowers for his use. In order to mitigate this mischief, the custodians of the garden scattered at the gate of the lawn garlands and flowers sanctified by using them in the worship of Viśvanātha, the presiding deity of Varanasi. This trap laid by the watchmen proved effective. The *gandharva* thief entered the garden in darkness, walked over the sacramental flowers unawares, and presently lost his power of levitation and invisibility. Transgressions of holy commands destroy merit. Flowers offered at the feet of the Lord are adored by the head and never trampled under foot even unwittingly. Puṣpadanta the culprit was easily apprehended and brought into the presence of Viśvanātha, so that he might get divine pardon for his sins. No earthly monarch can sentence a celestial spirit; he must himself repent and recant before the Lord of creation.

In the divine presence, Puṣpadanta was

transformed. The petty thief felt that his mind was undeveloped (*krśāparināti cetah*) even though he was a celestial artist, and he was now filled with fear of God (*cakitam*). (Ś. 31) But genuine devotion soon dispelled his fear and diffidence, giving him courage to sing the glory of God. The miscreant, shorn of virtue (*mahimabhraṣṭa*), was reassured in the sanctuary dedicated to the Almighty (*dhṛtamahiman*). By singing the glory of God, he was convinced that he could purify his power of speech (*vāṇīm guṇakathana-puṇyena punāmi iti—Ś. 3^{cd}*). The first degree of *tapas*, or mortification, is subjecting the body to strict discipline. The second degree of it consists in making one's speech pure. When the faculty of speech is made worthy and clean, the mind is made spotless, and an impeccable mind is the last degree of spiritual striving. Purity of speech is attained through discriminate silence, wholesome and deliberate speech, as well as the utterance of the glory of God. The last one degree of virtue leads to the preceding two, and singing the glory of God is made relatively easy. So Puṣpa-danta preferred that, in the circumstance in which he found himself. When the poem was completed, he was looked upon by others as *sarvagandharvarājah* and *sakalaganavarīṣṭhaḥ*. Apart from this inspiring story, the merits of the poem itself has made it celebrated.

THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE GREAT GOD ŚIVA

God is great. The adjective 'great' usually expresses what is above the average in size, quantity, and degree. When applied to God, it applies to all His magnitudes and all His attributes and all His qualities by which He is regarded as the Most High. The term '*mahimnah*' has an awe-inspiring expansiveness which is not noticed in the adjective 'great'. The author

of Ś. must have taken his inspiration from the *Puruṣa-sūkta* of the Vedas, where we find the words '*etāvān asya mahimā ato jyāyāṁśca pūruṣaḥ*'. The opening word of this canticle is *mahimān*, and Ś. 20^b stresses the importance of *Puruṣārādhana*. The supreme Reality revealed in the scriptures is the subject of Ś., and so it is not a narrowly sectarian hymn. Descriptive synonyms like Bhava, Śiva, Mr̥ḍa, Paśupati, Puramathana, Tripurahara, and Smarahara appearing in Ś. do not make it the text of a post-Vedic cult. Outstanding doctrines stated and restated in the Saṁhitās and Upaniṣads, such as *dyāvābhūmī janayan deva ekah, sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ Brahma, athāta ādeśo neti neti, Om ityetaḍ akṣaram idaṁ sarvaṁ*, and *śāntaṁ śivam advaitaṁ caturtham*, are poetically clothed and penetratively expressed in Ś. 17, 26, 29^a, 27, and 30^a respectively. The author expressly states in Ś. 3^b that the hymn is addressed to Brahman, and Ś. 7^a sums up the last word of Vedānta that all religions, without exception, take men to that one Goal directly or indirectly. That God is immanent and at the same time transcendent is expressed by denoting Him as *sarva* and *atisarva* (Ś. 29^a). As the object of fervent meditation and devout service (*anuvṛtti—Ś. 10^a*), God's visualized concrete forms (*arvācīna pada—Ś. 2^a*) are described in Ś. at length; and the Reality to be realized as one's own innermost being, i.e. *jñeyabrahma*, is described in the inimitable stanza Ś. 25 as well as in the description of the acosmic *tūrīya* (Ś. 27).

THE COSMIC DANCE OF ŚIVA: ITS MEANING FOR US TODAY

The Greek concept of tragedy and comedy, presenting life in two sharply marked phases, was almost alien to Vedic thought in its evolution. Humorous and amusing activities and events in life and nature have nothing special to be preferred

to the sad, solemn, and serious events that scatter throughout the existence of man. Real man is the immortal Self equally witnessing both the tragic and the comic simultaneously or in succession. The lower expressions of Reality do not make Reality itself lower or inferior. It is not the symbol that is important but what is symbolized. Humorous and solemn descriptions of the divine Reality are often found intermingled in our hymns, because their referent is what is beyond both. Those who are convinced of the immortality of the soul do not shudder at tragedies or frown at levity. Ripples on the surface do not affect the ocean.

The *vibhūtvā* or sovereignty of God described in Ś. 16 strikes us with a solemn immensity and a direct sense of the 'numinous'; side by side with it, we find almost a disrelishable description of Śiva in Ś. 8 and 24. Ś. 16 describes the dance of Śiva. There is a charming story behind this cosmic dance: Brahmā as the sire of gods and demons is proverbial for his weakness of granting boons to all those who please him by mortifications. It was the pleasure of a demon to choose from Brahmā the boon of at once destroying the whole world. It is not unusual that parents grant what children ask for and later repent. Though Brahmā agreed to concede what the demon desired, he soon discovered that fondness for one should not spell the ruin of the rest. In the meanwhile, other gods ran up to Śiva, seeking protection from the imminent total devastation. Naṭarāja, seeing the predicament commenced his own dance. This distracted the frightened demon from asking for the boon he wished, and deterred Brahmā from giving any further thought over the question. The rhythmic fall of Śiva's feet brought the world to the verge of sudden peril; dance poses of his hands, strong like iron rods, scattered the stars everywhere in the firmament; the heavens

trembled, lashed by his loosened locks of hair. Thus a negative act produced a positive result: the world brought to the verge of destruction by the dancing God was really protected from the suspected destruction contemplated by the demon.

May we not find a hint at our own present position in this mythic allusion to the demon? Perhaps, technical science is a creator that grants all the boons progressive man hankers after. If science is wooed for the destruction of the world, it would yield secrets and weapons suitable for that; if means of protection and safety are sought from it, these would be granted. Demons inebriate with arrogance seek the first. They can be deterred from their nefarious designs only if divine energy danced in the blood of the divinely endowed section of mankind continuously, so that all powers of peace against those of peacelessness may be brought together in order that man may become spiritual, tender, and mutually cherishing.

TO THE MILL OF DEVOTION ALL THAT COMES IS GRIST

Ś. 24 states that Smarahara has the burning ground for his field of play. Unclean spirits are his companions. Ashes of the funeral pyre supply the ingredient to grace his body. A string of skulls embellish him as his garland. Of the ever auspicious, such an inauspicious appearance suggests only extraordinary greatness; for He confers on those who remember Him whatever is supremely auspicious. Stanza 29 is a catalogue of opposites harmonized in the supreme Reality. Triṇayana is nearest and yet farthest; He is minutest of the minute and yet the greatest of the great; He is ancient, yet youthful; He is all things and beyond all things. The unenlightened controversy whether God is with form or without form is given silence to in a resounding stanza (Ś. 26). Learned men of the

past have declared that Īśvara is sun, moon, air, fire, water, earth, ether, and the Self; but the author says: This statement only defines and limits Him; we do not know *that essence which He is not*.

All understanding implies measuring with the mind. The measuring rod we use may be the mind, speech, or an external standard. Reason and imagination we employ when we are confronted with the inscrutable Reality and we desire to sing the glory of It. Then we rely upon our power of speech to portray divine qualities and attributes. When the attempts made by speech and reason are found inadequate, we turn to mythology. To the mill of devotion, all this comes as grist, and they all give the benefit desired. This is what is illustrated in the course of this divine song.

THE GOAL OF GOD'S GLORIFICATION

Why should we sing the glory of God? God, who is eternally perfect and finished, needs no compliments and acclamations from men. Our benedictions and laudations of God are for our self-purification. He who sings the glory of God attains the merit of it (*guṇakathanapunya*). Even the sweet-flowing words of Brhaspati, who can compose laudatory stanzas of unsurpassed excellence, causes no feeling of wonder in God (§. 3^b). There is another reason why man is naturally prone to praise God when he attains the mental maturity for it. In the *Gītā* (XI. 36), Arjuna declares that motive pregnantly: 'O Hṛṣīkeśa, by singing Thy glory, the world will have great joy and also develop intense love for Thee.' God-receptive minds naturally find it delightful to sing His glory; and will want to love Him with all heart and all soul and all strength. Śiva, the ever auspicious, is always favourably disposed even to the halting and the failed. Therefore, when man gets the necessary spiritual ripeness, he feels the need of turn-

ing to God with a humble mind, and, consequently, he delights in being *devadevasya dāsaḥ* (§. 33^b).

A competent literary author often tries to give a comprehensive and planned treatment of his subject, paying all attention to the matter and manner of expression. In a finite theme, with painstaking labour and genius, this is successful. But when God Himself is the theme of a composition, no poet can do justice. Sarasvatī is the embodiment of all speech-spoken, literary, classical, and coded-of all time and all places. Let us suppose that She fancied Herself to devote all Her wit and energy, for all time, to write down Herself the greatness of God. Snowy Himalayas is an immense mountain of dazzling white. Shall we suppose that it is a black mountain of dye-stuff convertible to a solution of ink? Let that stuff be mixed in the entire ocean to prepare a coloured liquid to write with. A twig of the wish-fulfilling tree is fashioned to serve as the quill. Dipping Her quill in the ink-well just mentioned, let us fancy that Sarasvatī writes eternally on the entire surface of our planet, using it as paper for Her manuscript. Still God's qualities and attributes will not be recorded exhaustively. (§. 32) Nor can Brahmā, the revealer of the sacred scriptures, accomplish this feat of completely describing the greatness of God. (§. 1) The arrow shot into the sky returns to the earth not because the sky is limited, but because the propelling force of the arrow is exhausted. And yet, everybody has the right to feel that he or she is in perfect order when an attempt is made to sing the glory of God according to one's own reach and capacity.

If speech is helpless in describing God, what about reasoning? The author is not much interested in the question. He asserts thus in stanza 4: The denial of God and His power may be pleasing to the ill-fated (*abhavya*) fool whose mind is

completely occupied with dull matter; but disavowal of God is hateful to the good in this world. The creationistic controversy is, however, set out by him in stanzas 5, 6, and 9: Many are the impious questions raised to repudiate God and His power—What is God's purpose in creating the world? What forms does He assume to fashion the world? What are His tools to build the universe? Where was He standing when He built the world? What were the ingredients He used in its construction? All these questions of the garrulous serve no purpose except that of deluding mankind. One may confute them by other counter questions. The universe being an aggregate of parts, is it without an origin? Can there be a composition without an author? And who but the one God possessing supreme power would create this immense universe?

THE NATURE OF REALITY

God fervently sung in this hymn is the fundamental Reality, the root as well as the manifestation. He is Sat-cid-ānanda—Existence-Intelligence-Bliss or pure existence which is intelligence and also joy. In appearing as the universe, He never became other than what He really is. There are many theories explaining how the one Reality became the manifold universe—how the *samasta* became the *vyasta* (Ś. 27^a). What is significant in all the hypotheses is that none of them recognizes a parallel reality to the world or a lesser degree of truth to the highest Reality. The syllable *Om* denotes both *samasta* and *vyasta* (Ś. 27^a). What is presented to our experience is a conjoint real and unreal comprising existence, appearance, joy, species, and names, and also which is at the same time perfect, perpetual, universal, undecaying, entire, and uniform. This nature itself is the greatness and glory of God.

God's relation with the creation is denoted by a number of Sanskrit words like *aśvarya*, *mahimān*, *līlā*, *vibhūti*, *svabhāva*, *śakti*, and *māyā*. These words are not synonymous, but in sense they belong to the same species. All theistic religions accept that the universe is God's creation or play or appearance or an aspect of His nature or an expression of His capacity. Ś. 4^{ab} announces that the power of God is portrayed in the Vedas according to the three modes of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, which creates, maintains, and destroys the universe. Ś. 30 closes the canticle by affirming thus: 'Salutations to Bhava who with *rajas* creates the universe. Salutations to Mr̥da, who with *sattva* preserves and gives happiness to men. Salutations to Hara, who with the quality of *tamas* destroys the universe. And salutations to Śiva, beyond all qualities in His shining abode.' Thus, in the vastness and richness of the world which we confront, God is adumbrated; the *Hiranyagarbha-sūkta* has declared in memorable words: *Yasyeme himavanto mahitvā yasya samudraṁ rasayā sahāhuḥ*. God is no respecter of persons, the puny and the powerful equally fail to comprehend Him fully; yet either have the joy of knowing Him to the limit of his capacity.

THE PICTURESQUE GOD OF MYTHOLOGY

ŚIVA THE BENEVOLENT

Let us see now how the limited intellect comprehends Him through the power of imagination and mythology. The child's knowledge of the parent is almost confined to the power the parents have to satisfy him, to protect him, and to give pleasure to him. This *stotra*, which is by no means a long one, apostrophizes to God six times *varada* in stanzas 4^c, 8^b, 13^a, 23^a, 24^a, and 31^a, and once each *nātha* and *śaraṇada* in 22^a and 27^a respectively. These words,

which may be rendered in order as 'O bestower of bliss', 'O master', and 'O giver of safety', strongly express the filial attitude of the devotee which arises when intimate love supersedes the sense of majesty and awe. Reason is then suspended and imagination has free play in an affective atmosphere of faith and submission. Some of the outstanding qualities of the Deity which then hover in the mental horizon of the hymnodist settle into an appropriate mythological setting. Some examples are reproduced below :

Rāvaṇa was the monarch of the *rākṣasas*, and Bāṇa was the sovereign of the *asuras*. Both worshipped Īśvara with incomparable austerities. The first one had ten heads, and the second a thousand arms. Rāvaṇa subjugated Indra and made him his slave ; that dictator of the *rākṣasas* destroyed his enemies and still itched for war to conquer fresh worlds. Such unlimited power he acquired by the worship of Tripurahara ; as an act of piety, he made an offering of his nine heads as if they were themselves a row of lotuses placed at the feet of God. Though he cut out nine of his heads in his ecstasy of devotion, still he felt it troublesome to make a journey to Kailāsa daily to worship Śiva ! So he thought he would uproot Kailāsa and transplant it in Laṅkā. He put forth all the force of his twenty arms, gained through the worship of his chosen deity to pluck out Kailāsa. The wicked naturally get infatuated by an access of inordinate power. But when Īśvara slightly moved the tip of His toe, the goblin fell and fell, and could not be stopped even when he reached the nether worlds. Rāvaṇa forgot the benefits he received from God. But Bāṇa was not arrogant in spite of his unparalleled prowess. What prosperity is not there for him who has bowed his head before the Lord ? (Ś. 11-13) Śiva is ever favourable, but merits and demerits of the recipient alone are responsible for drawing

His grace for the succour or distress of that suppliant.

ŚIVA THE ALMIGHTY

Another allusion to a Purāṇic story presents to our imagination the supremacy of Maheśvara. Some people who originate or institute something new arrogantly claim to themselves prominence and weight for the act ; others who repair and maintain it assert that, but for their services in preserving what was brought about, it would not have lasted a day. Like men, the gods Prajāpati and Viṣṇu were also once disputing which of them was of greater consequence. In order to humble their pride, Īśvara appeared in the form of a blazing *liṅga* which they set out to measure ; the one flew upward assuming the form of a bird and the other went downward as an animal. But neither the one nor the other could measure the limits of Īśvara. Humbled thereby, they praised Him with all strength of faith and devotion ; and to them He appeared revealing His true nature. *Śraddhā* and *bhakti*, attitude and expression of sincere worship, never goes futile. (Ś. 10)

God has no limits ; though limitless, yet He reveals Himself to His loving devotee who yearns and thirsts for Him with deep humility and unbroken devotion. He being immeasurable, His power, too, is endless. Yet, in His cosmic play, He chooses tools at His sweet pleasure to secure His ends, large or small. An *asura* leader gave battle to gods from three fortresses, made of gold, silver, and iron respectively. So he was called Tripura. Gods, who were defeated by him, supplicated to Īśvara to come to their succour. He complied with their request. As the patron and ally of gods, Īśvara used the earth as His chariot, attaching to it the sun and moon as the chariot wheels. Indra, the leader of gods, who prayed for rescue, was made the charioteer, and Meru, the largest mountain,

was bent as the bow. Viṣṇu, the protector of all, was used as the arrow. What is the use of such mighty equipment for destroying Tripura who was as petty as a blade of grass before Him? When the Almighty plays with His creatures, nothing can put a limit to His imaginations.

God is God because of His absolute power and freedom. We experience daily that human beings often turn corrupt in the measure in which their power and freedom increases. If this principle is applied to God, an absolutely powerful and free God must be supremely cruel and entirely capricious. But this never is so. The reason is not far to seek. God is *īśa*, the ruler, and the creature is *anīśa*, the ruled. God is *amaravara* (§. 6^d), the foremost among gods. What to speak of the place of man? Man is a beggar before every godlet. God is *svātmārāma* (§. 8^d), while man is *kleśavaśya* (§. 31^a). God is ceaselessly active for the protection of the universe, *jagadrakṣā* (§. 16^d, 19^d); man is parochial and self-centred. God is the guaranty for the results of good deeds and sacrificial acts; man is too lazy to keep even small promises. But for God's sponsorship, none would perform *yajñas*, which are complete and done with as soon as the fuel piled in the rite is reduced to ashes (§. 20). Nay, God is anxious that every creature gets results according to the merit of his or her deeds (*kratuphala-vidhānavyasanin*—§. 21^c). Thus, God being merciful and just, possession of infinite power and freedom is an ornament to Him and not a stain.

ŚIVA THE PARAGON OF RENUNCIATION AND SELF-CONTROL

The particular relevance of this canticle's being selected for chanting in many monasteries in the Gangetic plains and elsewhere lies in the fact that here *Īśvara* is present-

ed as *bhikṣu* (§. 8, 24) and *yamaniyata* (§. 23^c). The simplicity of *amaravara* (§. 6^d), the God of gods, is portrayed thus: Among His chief possessions and ornaments are a great bull, a wooden staff, an axe, a tiger skin, some ashes, and a garland of skulls. His habitat is the burning ground and companions unclean spirits. This is a picture of complete renunciation of all that the world holds dear and an indication of the utmost denial of the pleasures of the senses. Yet, those who meditate on such a self-denying deity, apparently uncanny and inauspicious, become supremely auspicious, and the mirage of worldly things does not delude them. The Lord, who cares not for the wealth in which other celestials revel, bestows on them, by a turn of His eyes, all the boons they seek.

This is but one aspect of self-denial which the all-renouncing monks attempt to copy from Śiva. There is something higher indicated in another anecdote. Gods and demons churned the ocean of milk for taking out ambrosia from it. Contrary to their expectations, what emerged first was an enormous quantity of lethal poison, imperilling the existence of the world. Nīlakaṇṭha was at once moved by compassion for the creation and drank up the whole venom. Though He is the deity presiding over the final deluge of the universe, He did not like to see the untimely end of anyone. Umā did not permit Him to ingest the morsel, and Viṣṇu remonstrated, saying He should not spit it out. So, the poison remained as a blue stain on Śiva's throat as an ornament for Him; He became Nīlakaṇṭha, the blue-throated. The all-renouncing monk, too, courts mortifications and self-denying behaviour to remove the poison of ignorance and suffering which hinder mankind from knowing God.

ŚIVA THE IDEAL OF ABSOLUTE CHASTITY

Stanzas 15, 22, and 23 present Śiva as

the ideal of absolute chastity. This representation makes the *stotra*, more than everything else, dearer to religious exercitants of the highest intensity. Smara or Kāma in the Purāṇas more or less corresponds to Cupid in Greek mythology. His world-conquering arrows have never missed their mark whenever he made anyone a target- gods, demons, or men. Taking Śiva to be just one among the gods, Kāma, in his mighty adventure, met with his end. With the self-controlled, Kāma is not successful. Smarahara is not only a paragon of self-mastery, but also the sponsor and patron of it, as it is made clear in the following allegory (Ś. 22). Prajāpati was overcome by sudden desire for his daughter and hastened to possess her, changing himself into a stag; she got frightened and fled from him in the form of a hind. Īśvara, seeing this shame, bent His bow to punish the delinquent. When the stag was pierced by the arrow, it was transformed into stars, which are even today pointed out in the sky as the bow and arrow of the archer and the fixed stag. That this story is an allegory was pointed out in the *Tantra-vārtika* over thirteen hundred years ago. There it is stated that Prajāpati means the sun; towards the end of night, the sun touches the dawn; dawn is brought about by the sun, and so they have the daughter and father relation. The following of the sun after dawn is described as Prajāpati's running after the daughter. Further, it is written in works on *alaṅkāra* that the producer of a literary work is the father of that composition (*apāre kāvya-saṁsāre kavir ekaḥ prajāpatiḥ*). When an author is enamoured of his own poem or production, he seeks avenues of glory from it and seeks enjoyment from his own offspring, without applying his genius to the production of better works. This, too, is running after one's own daughter, which great poets have never done. Incest deserves strong dis-

approval and condign punishment as hinted in the stanza mentioned.

How can the androgynous representation of the deity be an ideal of absolute self-mastery? To this question, Ś. 23 gives the reply : At the command of Indra, Kāma designed to get Śiva united with Pārvatī for the birth of Kārtikeya, who was to destroy the demon Tāraka. Kāma foolishly thought he was tempting Śiva with Girijā's womanly beauty, and he experienced the outcome. In foolish adolescence, one may think that Śiva is uxorious, because He has a spouse, forgetting that He is perpetually *yamanīyata* (Ś. 23°), self-controlled, and that Pārvatīdevī is none other than Himself seen from the left side. Thus the affective atmosphere worked out by the mythical anecdotes point out to the greatness of the deity as almighty, all-merciful, and self-masterful.

MERIT ALONE IS WORTHY OF ONE'S PURSUIT

Hardly there is another hymn which presents the *jñeya*, *dhyeya*, and *ārādhya* aspects of God so concisely and charmingly. God is to be realized as one's own self, *jñeya*, by diving deep into one's own innermost being, as if into a reservoir of ambrosia (Ś. 25); He is to be meditated upon with strong faith and ardent devotion (Ś. 10); and He is to be worshipped with unswerving belief, for if the worshipper has not the correct attitude of mind (Ś. 21), a religious act of great promise brings down only destruction, as it happened in the case of Dakṣa, one unparalleled in his power of instituting a religious act. Merit alone is worthy of constantly striving after and worth while for anyone to pursue.

None would resist the temptation of gleaning the following gnomes when he or she has studied this hymn in several revisions :

1. *Smartṛṇām varada paramam ma-*

ṅalam asi: To them who meditate on Thee, Thy conduct is supremely auspicious. (Ś. 24^d)

2. *Mandāstvām pratyamaravara sam-śerata ime*: The witless are in doubt regarding the existence of God. (Ś. 6^d)

3. *Nṛṇām eko gamyas tvam asi payasām arṇava iva*: Thou art the one and ultimate goal and destiny of mankind. (Ś. 7^d)

4. *Na vidmas-tat tattvaṁ vayam iha hi yat tvam na bhavasi*: We do not understand that being which Thou art not. (Ś. 26^d)

5. *Na kasyā unnatyai bhavati śīrasas tvayyavanatiḥ*: Who will not be elevated by bowing down to Thee? (Ś. 13^d)

6. *Tava kim anuvṛttir-na phalati?*: Will Thy devout service fail to bear fruit? (Ś. 10^d)

7. *Vikāro'pi ślāghyo bhuvana-bhaya-bhaṅga-vyasaninaḥ*: Even a malady that befalls one who is ever anxious to remove the fear of the living world is worthy of praise. (Ś. 14^d)

8. *Jagad-rakṣāyai tvam naṭasi nanu vāmaiva vibhutā*: You dance violently for saving the world; has not God's almightiness an element of contradiction in it? (Ś. 16^d)

9. *Vidheyaiḥ krīḍantyo na khalu para-*

tantrāḥ prabhudhiyaḥ: Certainly, the opinions of a master amusing with his agents is not subjected to another's will. (Ś. 18^d)

10. *Na hi svātmārāmam viṣaya-mṛga-trṣṇā bhramayati*: Not, indeed, one who delights in his own divine Self is led astray by tantalizing sense pleasures. (Ś. 8^d)

11. *Dhruvamupacito muhyati khalah*: The wicked in prosperity take the shadow for the substance. (Ś. 12^d)

12. *Na hi vaśīṣu pathyaḥ paribhavaḥ*: It is not wholesome to be discourteous to those who have mastered their senses. (Ś. 15^d)

13. *Na khalu nanu dhṛṣṭā mukharatā?*: Is not talkativeness the outcome of insolence? (Ś. 9^d)

14. *Dhruvam kartuḥ śraddhā-vidhuram abhicārāya hi makhāḥ*: Bereft of active faith and strict observance on the part of the performer, worship will produce only contrary results. (Ś. 21^d)

15. *Addhā bata varada mugdhā yuvata-yaḥ*: Young women certainly are easily misled. (Ś. 23^d)

16. *Cetaḥ kleśavaśyam kva cedam kva ca tava guṇasīmollaṅghanī śaśvad ṛddhiḥ*: What a great disparity between a corrupt mind and the transcendent quality of God! (Ś. 31^{ab})

THE CONCEPT OF REALITY IN THE ṚG-VEDA

VEDANTA VIDWAN DR. N. S. ANANTHA RANGACHAR

Is there any philosophy in the *Ṛg-Veda Samhitā*? The question is often asked and answered in the negative. It is commonly believed that the *Ṛg-Veda Samhitā*, just like all other *Samhitās*, is only needed for the performance of certain sacrifices and that the *Upaniṣads* alone enshrine the finest flower of philosophical thought, for

which they are accredited as the authoritative texts of Indian philosophy.

This point of view is nothing new. Even the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I.i.5) declares that the *Ṛg-Veda* and all other *Vedas*, along with the *Vedāṅgas*, form the lower knowledge or *aparā vidyā*. The *Upaniṣad* alone is acclaimed there as

the *parā vidyā*, or the superior knowledge, since the Immutable is to be attained only through it. This kind of classification of *vidyās* probably ensued in accordance with the use to which the different Vedic texts were then put. The hymns of the *Rg-Veda* and other Vedas were originally used in various sacrifices to invoke the different deities, and naturally they gained only sacrificial importance. Nevertheless, these hymns contain a true knowledge of Reality; for the Vedic seers never lost sight of the cosmic Reality, though they were engaged in the performance of various sacrifices with the help of those soul-stirring hymns.

As time passed on, posterity could not very well follow the supreme sense of the hymns, though it used them on various occasions as before. So there was a need for clarification, verification, and consolidation. This was very ably done by the Upaniṣadic sages in their wonderful, lucid expositions of the Vedic truths to their students. These expositions are based on the solid bed-rock of the deep spiritual wisdom of the *Samhitās*. From the Upaniṣadic period onwards, the emphasis was noticeably shifted from the mere performance of various sacrifices to the attainment of the knowledge of the Reality. The knowledge of the supreme Brahman hidden in the hymns was marvellously expounded to hosts of deserving devotees who thirsted for it. Thus we find that the gold of the Upaniṣads is verily drawn from the rich mines of the *Samhitās*. When viewed from this angle, we realize that the *Rg-Veda Samhitā* is of supreme importance to all students of philosophy.

IMPORTANT FINDINGS OF THE RG-VEDA SAMHITA

The most important findings of the *Rg-Veda Samhitā* may be noted as follows:

1. The soul is an eternal principle

different and distinct from the body. It has a life hereafter, and the life here is a prelude to it.

2. Life here is a gift from God, and it must be lived well with gratitude and unshakable faith in the saving grace of the Lord.

3. Evanescent earthly benefits as well as immortality can be obtained only from God, through undivided devotion towards Him.

4. The obstruction for our spiritual upliftment is our sin. This cannot be destroyed without divine grace. So we must pray to Him alone for saving us.

5. Attainment of immortality or *amṛtatva* is to be the highest goal of humanity, and for this, individual effort is necessary. A conscious effort must be made to cultivate the virtues of life and His grace is to be sought for becoming successful in this effort.

The thought process of the *Rg-Veda Samhitā* is thus deeply rooted in fervent God-consciousness. The helplessness and littleness of man, on the one hand, and the greatness of God, on the other, are stressed throughout. The relationship between man and God is also affirmed as that of an utterly dependent and an all-powerful but benevolent master. A study of the concept of Reality as expounded in the *Rg-Veda Samhitā* is interesting, as almost all the Upaniṣadic doctrines are adumbrated in it.

UNSHAKABLE FAITH IN GOD

It must be said at the very outset that unshakable faith in God is the most remarkable feature of the *Rg-Veda Samhitā*. Here and there comes a rare reference to those that had no faith in God, and it is immediately followed by a strong assertion of belief in the reality of His existence. So much so that such references are made to reaffirm in very strong terms the glory

of the supreme Being. The following *mantras* reveal this truth.

'O people, the Terrible, about whom they ask where He is, and about whom some said, "He is not", is Indra.' (*R.V.*, II. xii. 5)

'O ye desirous of valour, If He truly exists, offer Him, that Indra, a great hymn. But here and there one speaks, "There is no Indra; who has seen Him? Whom should we pray?"' (ibid., VIII. lxxxix. 3)

'Place faith in Indra.' (ibid., I. ciii. 5)

'Does He not deprive the non-believers of their wealth?' (ibid., II. xii. 5)

'Behold all this wealth of Indra. Place faith in His valour. He is the obtainer of all cows, horses, trees, rivers, and oceans and vast forests.' (ibid., I. ciii. 5)

'Which person can ever overpower Him who has Thee alone as his wealth? The valiant can gain victory in the decisive battle only by placing faith in Thee.' (ibid., VII. xxxii. 14)

'The seven rivers carry the glory of this Lord. The earth and the heaven show their beautiful form on account of Him. The sun and the moon revolve seen by us in rotation on account of Him, so that we may profess our faith in Him.' (ibid., I. cii. 2)

'That Lord Himself, by His unsurpassable might, causes great wars between nations. Only then do people gain faith in the mighty Indra, who wields the deadly weapon, the thunderbolt.' (I. lv. 5)

'Without Him, people cannot gain victory. They invoke Him before they battle. He is the model of which this universe is a copy. He shakes the unshakable. He, O people, is Indra.' (ibid., II. xii. 9)

'He has smitten again and again with His deadly weapon the grievous sinners and the unbelievers. He does not give encouragement to the arrogant. He is

verily the killer of the impious. He is Indra, O people.' (ibid., II. xii. 10)

'O seer, I am here. See me here. By My might am I overlording the entire universe. The order of *ṛta* strengthens Me. I, with a will to destroy, shall smite these worlds into pieces.' (ibid., VIII. lxxxix. 4)

The more one ponders over the wonders of this universe and the rule of the Lord, the more one understands the inscrutable power of the Lord.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

The essential characteristics of the Godhead according to the *R̥g-Veda* may be summarized as follows:

1. The supreme Reality is one without a second.
2. It is transcendent and at the same time immanent.
3. It is the most supreme and at the same time easily accessible to one and all.
4. It is the sole redeemer of humanity.

ONE WITHOUT A SECOND

The *R̥g-Vedic* seers fully realized that the supreme Lord of the universe is only *one* and not many. They exhorted all to pray unto that one.

'O Agni, Thou art Varuṇa whilst Thou art born; Thou becomest Mitra when Thou flourishest. All gods are in Thee, O Son of strength, Thou art verily Indra to the worshipper.' (*R. V.*, V. iii. 1)

'The Lord is only one. Pray unto Him with all your heart. He is really the master of the universe.' (ibid., VI. xlv. 16)

'He is one though He appears to be many.' (ibid., VI. xxii. 1)

In the *R̥g-Veda Samhitā*, there are hymns to various deities. There are also significant passages affirming the unity of Reality. It is on account of this that scholars have come to different conclusions as to the concept of the Godhead in the *R̥g-Veda*. This appears like a paradox.

But the *Rg-Veda* itself contains the master-key to solve this paradox. It is the firm conviction of the celebrated Yāska that Reality is one and indivisible. According to him, the one God is praised through all these hymns that characterize His innumerable auspicious attributes. The plurality of deities is only on account of the different functional aspects of the One without a second (*Eka eva Ātmā bahudhā stūyate; tasya aṅga-pratyāṅgāni itarāṇi bhavanti*—*Nirukta*, VII. iv. 8). Even Sāyaṇa affirms that the one Paramātmā is praised through all these different deities (*Tasmāt sarvairāpi Paramēśvara eva hūyate*—*Sāyaṇa-bhāṣya*). The Samhitā itself declares this truth in the following *mantras*:

‘*Ekaḥ viśvasya bhuvanasya rājā.*’ (*R. V.*, VI. xxxvi. 4)

‘*Abhūrekaḥ rayipate rayāṇām.*’ (*ibid.*, VI. xxxi. 1)

‘*Ekam sat; viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti.*’ (*ibid.*, I. clxiv. 46)

‘*Ekam santam bahudhā kalpayanti.*’ (*ibid.*, X. cxiv. 5)

Thus the *Rg-Veda* affirms that it is the same one secondless Ātman that is praised through all the various names such as Indra, Agni, Varuṇa, Yama, Aśvins, Maruts, Viṣṇu, Rudra, and others. This master-key binds all plurality into a universal unity. The analogy of the conclusions of the first chapter of the *Brahma-Sūtra* may be followed here also. There all terms such as Ākāśa, Prāṇa, Sat, Ātman, Jyotis, etc. are taken to signify the supreme Brahman by virtue of their reference to the exclusive functions of Brahman. Likewise, all names of deities in the *Rg-Veda* are taken to imply the supreme Deity, who is the sole master of the universe. It is relevant to note in this context that the exposition of the great Yāska justifies the plurality, trinity, and unity of the deities, which, according to him, relate to the

several stages in the capacities and perfections of the aspirants. Thus the *Rg-Veda* affirms the unity of the supreme Reality.

TRANSCENDENT AS WELL AS IMMANENT

The supreme Reality, according to the *Rg-Vedic* seers, is the Lord of both the realms of the mortals and the immortals. It transcends this universe, but at the same time is also immanent in it. This unique combination is Its essential characteristic, as the following *mantras* attest to:

‘O lustrous One, Thou becomest the Lord of the people of heaven and likewise of the people on earth. O Indra, Thou destroyest all āsuric ignorance with Thy thunderbolt.’ (*R. V.*, VI. xxii. 9)

‘Thou hast become the monarch of the moving and the non-moving.’ (*ibid.*, VI. xxx. 5)

‘He is the sole ruler of everything in this universe.’ (*ibid.*, VI. xlv. 20)

SOLE CAUSE OF THE UNIVERSE

This supreme Being is described as the sole cause of this universe, as for example, in the following *mantras*:

‘From matter He produced energy. From “*jada*” He became “*jīva*”. All pray unto Him and attain immortality by His grace.’ (*R. V.*, I. lxviii. 2)

‘He spread the heavens above the tree-tops. He has verily put strength in horses, milk in cows, sense of duty in our hearts, fire in water, the sun in the heavens, and the *soma* on the mountains.’ (*ibid.*, V. lxxxv. 2)

‘All this universe engulfed in darkness came to light the moment Agni came into being. In the fellowship of that great Vaiśvānarāgni, the earth, the heaven, the waters, and the plants got delighted.’ (*ibid.*, X. lxxxviii. 2)

‘He alone knows the warp and the woof of this world. He alone speaks out exactly what is to be taught. He is the Lord of

salvation. He brightens the worlds with His light. He is above nescience and full of majestic qualities. He alone moves as the inner controller of all.' (ibid., VI. ix. 3)

CREATOR, SUSTAINER, AND DESTROYER OF THE UNIVERSE

The *Rg-Veda* declares that the secret of the creation of this universe is a mystery, and is known only to Him. This universe existed in Him in a subtle form even before it was made explicit, and who else can know that primordial state of it than Himself? The Upaniṣads also declare accordingly that He is the 'Light of lights' and that He brightens all this universe. The *Rg-Veda Samhitā* further declares that the supreme Lord is the creator, sustainer, and the destroyer of this universe :

'He is the cause of the subtle stage of this universe (*asat*) bereft of names and forms as well as the gross stage of it (*sat*) characterized by names and forms. Is not Agni first born before ourselves? Then was He both the *vr̥ṣabha* and the *dhenu* (the bull and the cow).' (R. V. X. v. 7)

THE GREATEST AND THE MIGHTIEST

This creator of the universe is the greatest and the mightiest as described in the following verses :

'He is like a high mountain vast on all sides.' (ibid., VIII. lxxxvii. 4)

'He stirs people to action. He is the ground of the earth and the heaven. He is everywhere beholding all people with unwinking eyes.' (ibid., III. lix. 1)

'None that is born or is being born hath reached the utmost limit of Thy grandeur. Thou hast supported the vast high vault of heaven. Thou hast fixed the eastern pinnacle of the earth.' (ibid., VII. ic. 2)

'The pinnacles of the celestial region were created by the energy of that great Vaiśvānara. All the hosts of entities line in Him.

The seven rivers also sprung from Him as branches of trees.' (ibid., VI. vii. 6)

'He has set in motion the high and mighty sky and the double system of stars, and He has spread out the vast path.' (ibid., IV. xi. 3)

'Thou art the mightiest of the mightiest. Can anyone of limited knowledge and ability offer Thee a praise worthy of Thee? No-one can offer Thee a service which is worthy of Thy greatness.' (ibid., II. xxix. 3)

THE RULER AND THE INNER CONTROLLER

God is the sole ruler of this universe, the leader (*netā*) and the inner controller of the entire universe. His will is irresistible, and all the people act according to it. So say the following verses :

'Even as the wheels of the chariot roll according to the will of the charioteer, all people in this universe follow His will.' (ibid., IV. xxx. 2)

'None can transgress the commandment and inherent sway of the Lord.' (ibid., VIII. xciii. 11)

OMNISCIENT AND OMNIPOTENT

In another verse, it is said that the Lord is omniscient and omnipotent :

'The great Sūrya knows verily the three worlds and the three kinds of Gods, along with even their birth. He knows the straightforwardness and the crookedness in men. Seeing everything as an eyewitness, He brightens the world around. Being the sole master of all, He reveals to us the ends of life.' (ibid., VI. li. 52)

LORD IS WITHIN OUR OWN HEARTS

Though the supreme Reality is transcendent, yet It is immanent and nearer to us than ourselves, as pointed out earlier. The Lord is within our own hearts leading us on through the path of Truth ; He need not come to our rescue from some far-off

place. God, in this immanent aspect, is accessible to one and all.

'That eternal Light, swifter than the mind resides hidden in the hearts of men so that It may be realized by them. All the energetic *indriyas* (sense-organs) with the mind rush towards Him, the Creator, for attaining Him.' (ibid., VI. ix. 5)

This universe is the living temple of God. It is because of the divine presence within it that it gains in worth. The great Lord is designated as 'Viśvarūpa'. This entire universe is His form :

'I invoke Lord Agni who is the most supreme, who is well known as Tvaṣṭr, and who has the universe as His form.' (ibid., I. xiii. 10)

'His crest is in the hearts of men. His eyes are outside in the form of the sun and the moon. One should raise one's arms in honour of Him.' (ibid., X. lxxix. 2)

THE INCOMPARABLE

And none is equal or like unto Him either on earth or in heaven. He alone is comparable with Himself, as the following verses make out :

'None equal to Him was born or is born or will be born at any future time.' (ibid., VII. xxxii. 33)

'O Indra, the killer of Vṛtra, none is there superior to Thee ; none greater than Thee. There is none like Thee.' (ibid., IV. xxx. 1)

FULL OF INFINITE AUSPICIOUS QUALITIES

This supreme Lord is full of infinite auspicious qualities. The immensity of His noble traits baffles our ability to know and speak about Him :

'The Lord is above all praises. He cannot be verily praised or worshipped as befits Him.' (ibid., VI. xlvii. 15)

'The ears, eyes, and the light hidden in the heart rush towards Him. My mind also runs towards Him. But what to say ? what to know ?' (ibid., VI. ix. 6)

FRIEND, BELOVED, RELATIVE, AND SAVIOUR

The supreme Being is a seer among seers. By His magic wisdom, He stirs us to knowledge. He is the most youthful. He is the master of time and the saviour of humanity :

'O Agni, great as Thou art, Thou art also the relative of all. Thou art a lover and a friend. Thou art the nearest friend of those that love Thee most.' (ibid., I. lxxv. 4)

It is this aspect of the Supreme that fills us with hope and courage. We are intimately related to Him as His lieges. Helpless as we are, we are blessed with His friendship and guidance. Our interests are safer in the hands of God :

'O Agni, Thou hast willed to protect us. Thou art our father ; Thou nourishest our lives. We are Thy relatives.' (ibid., I. xxxi. 10)

'I consider Agni my father, brother, well-disposed friend and relative.' (ibid., X. vii. 3)

This mighty Lord is the sole guardian of the welfare of all. He alone is capable of rendering protection to all. He bestows upon His devotees whatever is prayed of Him by virtue of His being the sole Lord and possessor of all wealth in this universe :

'O Indra, this universe, with all its vast wealth, conducive to the good of all animals and human beings is only Thine. Thou art watching it through the lustrous eye of Sūrya. Thou alone art the master of all kine. So do we distribute among ourselves the wealth given to us by Thee.' (ibid., VII. iic. 6)

He being the owner of all wealth in this universe, everyone has to worship Him alone to be blessed with wealth. And God chooses him who chooses God with all his heart. The *Rg-Veda* gives three beautiful similes to emphasize this :

'O Agni, Thou art like a *spring* in the midst of a desert.' (ibid., X. iv. 1)

'May we board on the well-oared, defectless, non-leaky *heavenly ship* for attaining safety.' (ibid., X. lxiii. 10)

'O Lord of strength, even as old people hold on to their *staves* we also take support in you.' (ibid., VIII. xlv. 20)

Just as the spring in a desert removes the thirst of only those who reach it; just as the well-oared, non-leaky boat carries to safety only those who board on it; just

as the strong staff is a sure support to the old and the feeble only if they hold on to it, even so does the Lord become our saviour only if He is sought by us. The wisdom of man, therefore, lies in recognizing Him and choosing Him as his redeemer. For true prosperity of man lies in communion with Him, realizing that He is ours and we are His. (R. V., VIII. xcii. 32) This is the quintessence of all knowledge. Attaining this, one will never miss eternal happiness.

SOME CONCEPTS UNDERLYING INSTRUCTION IN THE UPANIṢADS

DR. G. K. BHAT

The Upaniṣads are a treasure-house of esoteric knowledge. On reading and studying them, one inevitably feels that there is not only a certain method in the presentation of this knowledge, but there are also certain concepts that govern the actual instruction (*upadeśa*) by the philosophers in the Upaniṣads. These concepts relate, I think, to the social psychology and to the moral values and educational principles accepted by the society of those times. The object of this paper is to examine these concepts and interpret them in the light of such values as they appear to reveal.

These concepts are best studied in the context of the anecdotes and stories which the Upaniṣads present and which are an integral part of their teaching.

LOVE OF TRUTH

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (IV. 4-9) contains the story of Satyakāma Jābāla, who wanted to take instruction in higher knowledge and who, therefore, asked his mother about his parentage, so that he

could approach a teacher and present himself as a pupil. The mother replied: 'My child, I do not know what family you belong to. Serving as a maid, I was moving about a good deal and I obtained you in my youth. However, it is a fact that I am Jābālā by name; your name is Satyakāma; so, you can truly say that you are Satyakāma Jābāla.' The boy announced himself accordingly. His teacher Hāridrumata Gautama said: 'One who is not a Brāhmaṇa will not be able to say this. Boy, fetch the sacred wood. I will instruct you. You did not depart from truth.'

Here is a test case of a boy born in dubious circumstances approaching the teacher in search of the highest knowledge, and the teacher blessing him with it. Satyakāma, it is plain from the narrative, was an illegitimate child of a young maid-of-all-work. And yet the teacher accepts him without hesitation. Why? Not because the teacher thought him to be a Brāhmaṇa by birth. Had the boy's father been a caste Brāhmaṇa, there is no reason

why the mother could not remember this fact; she would be expected to mention it with pride. The detail must be explained, therefore, in a different way.

The general rule, of course, is that 'a pupil of known parentage and family is to be given instruction (*viññāta-kula-gotraḥ śiṣyaḥ upanetavyaḥ*)'. But the Upaniṣadic society does not appear to have been ridden with caste taboos, as the later Hindu society has been. The Kṣatriyas especially, for example Janaka, have made an invaluable contribution to metaphysical investigation and philosophical knowledge in the Upaniṣadic period. The catholicity of the Upaniṣadic times becomes manifestly clear when one recalls the story of Karna recorded in the *Mahābhārata*, and the frustration and shame that he had to suffer on account of his supposed low birth. Karna had to disguise his origin and tell a falsehood that he was a Brāhmaṇa when he approached Paraśurāma to learn from him the science of missiles. And when Paraśurāma discovered later, through an accident, that Karna could not be a Brāhmaṇa, he cursed Karna that what he had learnt would come to naught when he would put it to use. This incident is typical of the prohibitions and taboos that later governed the instruction in sacred knowledge and sciences. Viewed against this background, the incident in the Upaniṣad appears to breathe a real atmosphere of intellectual freedom that governed the teacher-pupil relation.

I am inclined to think, therefore, that the word '*Brāhmaṇa*' used by the teacher Gautama has a *yaugika* sense, denoting 'one who belongs to the (knowledge of) metaphysical reality (*Brahmaṇaḥ ayaṁ Brāhmaṇaḥ*)', one who can be rightly admitted to the study of philosophy. And the truth (*satya*) that the teacher refers to is the unostentatious courage with which the boy announced, without shame or per-

version, the simple fact of his origin. It certainly requires moral courage to state the truth, especially when it happens to be unflattering and demeaning to oneself. This courage of the boy impressed Gautama, as did his love of truth.

Truth, it must be remembered, is one of the highest moral virtues, and a philosophical principle too, that the Upaniṣads proclaim (cf. '*Satyameva jayate nānṛtam*' and '*Satyam jñānam anantaṁ Brahma*'). Luckily, the social and the intellectual atmosphere of the Upaniṣadic period was so free as not to need the suppression of unpleasant or inconvenient truths. This, I think, is the value of the Satyakāma incident.

THE FREE SPIRIT OF ENQUIRY AND SINCERITY OF PURPOSE

Another story in the *Chāndogya* (IV. 1-3) refers to Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa, who had acquired considerable fame as a liberal donor and as one who fed many. When he learnt from the talk of two flying swans that one Raikva, 'with a cart', had divined the final philosophical principle, Jānaśruti made an extensive search for him and eventually discovered the philosopher seated under a cart, scratching the itch on his body. Jānaśruti offered Raikva gold and wealth and expressed his desire to know the Deity whom he worshipped. Raikva showed complete indifference to the offer, whereupon Jānaśruti offered him a pearl necklace, a chariot, and innumerable cows in exchange for the knowledge desired. Raikva defied him still and called him a 'Śūdra' for making such an offer. Finally, Jānaśruti offered his own daughter to the philosopher, along with the wealth and a piece of land. Raikva touched the face of the girl and said, 'You could have made me talk with this face alone'. Raikva then instructed Jāna-

śruti in the lore which is known as *samvarga vidyā*.

Two things in this anecdote demand our attention and explanation. Why did Raikva address Jānaśruti as 'Śūdra'? And what did he mean when he said that the girl's face would have made him talk?

It is obvious that Jānaśruti was not a Śūdra. He appears to be a Kṣatriya, perhaps a king. The possession of a palatial residence with a lofty terrace, mentioned in the anecdote, is one indication. Another is the ability of Jānaśruti to make a gift of villages to Raikva, which he did.

It is well known that the period of the Vedic literature (from the Samhitās to the Upaniṣads) is generally characterized by a freedom of social relations and social positions. A person's caste or social position was not determined in this period by the accident of his birth. The social classes were, more or less, based on occupational differences and on variations of individual ability (cf. the words of the *Gītā*, IV. 13: *Cāturvarṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ*). To this flexibility of social life, there was one exception only: the conquered non-Aryans were outside the pale of social life and were called 'Śūdra' as a group. To an Aryan, therefore, 'Śūdra' would be the most contemptuous term that anyone could apply, a term or an abuse which could easily provoke the blue blood of an Aryan. I am inclined to think that the philosopher, knowing as he did that Jānaśruti was a Kṣatriya, used the term deliberately; and the object of this calculated provocation was to test the depth of inquisitiveness and the sincerity of the inquirer. Had Jānaśruti approached Raikva out of pride of his wealth and power, or in a spirit of rivalry, resenting competition with his own established fame, or out of idle curiosity, Raikva's address would certainly have provoked him and he would have turned his back on the arro-

gant and unworldly philosopher. It is to put to a severe test the real psychological motive of the inquirer that the abusive vocative has been deliberately used.

This explanation links up nicely with the second question posed by the story. How was Raikva persuaded to reveal the mystic knowledge by the face of the girl? It is not possible to assume that the philosopher really coveted either a bride or wealth, though he apparently accepted both. To my mind, the offer of the girl is linked up with the sincerity of Jānaśruti. Jānaśruti was rich and could easily offer any amount of wealth or property. But who would offer one's own dear child as a bride to an apparently arrogant and a beggarly person, especially when he was not even healthy in body, the skin of which was covered with itch? That was the final test of Jānaśruti's sincerity and of his deepest desire to learn the mystic knowledge. It was this aspect, I think, that pleased Raikva, and so he affectionately touched the face of the girl and remarked that it would have made him talk easily. The governing note of this incident is, thus, the teacher's test of the pupil's sincerity and of the real depth of his inquisitiveness, without which a teacher refused to accept a pupil.

The other implications are easily deduced from this story. It is obvious that the initiation into true knowledge was not confined to Brāhmins only. In fact, any Aryan could be admitted to such a study provided he satisfied his teacher about his bona fides. It also appears that knowledge was really regarded as sacred, as mentioned in the *Gītā* (*na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitramiha vidyate*—IV. 38), so that even an apparently repulsive man of learning claimed the attention and respect of the wealthy and the powerful.

A similar spirit of uninhibited inquiry is seen in the story of the boy Naciketas, who

provoked the anger of his father and refused to be tempted by the sympathetic worldly offers of Yama, the god of death. (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*) It was the persistence and fearlessness of the boy that ultimately won for him the mystic knowledge from the god of death. This story is further characterized by a child-like innocence and fearlessness that accompany the irrepressible spirit of inquiry.

PROGRESSIVE INTEGRATION OF THE PERSONALITY OF THE STUDENT

If Yama tried to tempt his pupil away from the rigour incumbent on esoteric study, Prajāpati appears to have deliberately subjected his pupil Indra to the rigour of studentship. (*Chāndogya*, VIII. 7-12) And the object, again, appears to be to test the sincerity and the depth of inquisitiveness of the learner. Virocana, in this story, the representative of the *asuras*, was satisfied with the first phase of knowledge, which really touched the surface, and he did not bother to inquire into its veracity. But Indra, the representative of the gods, was worried by what he learnt from Prajāpati in the first instance, and was drawn more and more to the core of the knowledge that he imbibed. Yet, Prajāpati made him go through the vows of studentship for a total of one hundred and one years before he gave him the final instruction. This was certainly a test of the pupil's patience and perseverance. But there is also an educational principle in the story, namely, that of gradualness, which ensures that the individual phases of learning become graded and integrated. Besides, it deserves to be noted that Prajāpati did not volunteer any information, but led his pupil to it by graded inquiry forced from the pupil himself. This is perfectly in keeping with the Upaniṣadic precept about Ātmic learning: 'The Self

should be realized—should be heard of, reflected on, and meditated upon (*Ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ—śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ*).’ (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV. v. 6) Hearing the words of the *guru* is the initial step of admission into true knowledge. But the pupil must look inward. He must, of his own, question, inquire, and examine the piece of knowledge given to him. He must deeply ponder over it. He must be obsessed by it. It is only by such introspection and rigour of thinking that the knowledge becomes real and convincing to the pupil and informs his conduct and outlook on life. Mere mastery of the text is mechanical labour. The disciplinary training through which Indra goes reveals these aspects of the educative process, as I understand the anecdote.

THE HALLMARK OF TRUE EDUCATION

The story of Śvetaketu and his philosopher father Aruṇi (*Chāndogya*, VI. 1-3) reveals a different psychological approach. The boy was exhorted by his father to go to a *guru* and do his course of study, because 'in our family, my boy, one does not claim to be related to the Brāhmin unless one has learnt the traditional knowledge'. Śvetaketu then went and lived with a *guru* for a term of twelve years. And when he returned after the completion of his course (like a present-day university graduate), he returned riding a high horse, considering himself to be learned, and stiff with the pride of his learning. The father asked him whether he had studied that core of knowledge which was the key to knowledge of all kinds, which, in other words, was the fount and the universe of all knowledge. The boy smugly replied: 'My teachers did not know this kind of knowledge. How else did they fail to teach it to me?'

Śaṅkarācārya comments on this passage to say that the slur on the teachers, which is really beneath expression, the boy was prompted to cast for fear of being sent away for a further term of study. This may be so. But it is also true that the boy was eager to learn; and he urged his father to teach him this central knowledge which he absorbed with full attention. There is, therefore, something more than fear in the mind of the boy.

Considered as a reflection on how the mind works, the boy's remark is a true revelation of the psychology of a student. Acquisition of a degree (being a *snātaka*) is enough to make a student conceited beyond measure; and, at the same time, he is quite ready to put the blame for his own ignorance on the teachers. This is what Śvetaketu did. As a matter of fact, he had only lapped up the fare presented to him and failed to show any curiosity or interest. How could a teacher go deeper if the pupils did not ask searching questions? Aruṇi must have been amused. Of course, he was the father of the boy; but as an older, experienced man of the world, he could easily understand the psychology of the young who are only book-learned and inevitably extroverts. If some of the stories mentioned earlier reveal the psychology of the teacher, this one sheds interesting light on the unchanging psychology of young learners. Aruṇi must have been persuaded to take up the boy for instruction both out of personal affection and because of the eagerness to learn on the part of the boy.

If there is any unconscious slur in this story, it is, I think, on the traditional learning of the Vedas, probably by rote, which made a section of people proud, but which did not touch the core of knowledge and which, for this reason, could not be a mark of learning in the eyes of the Upaniṣadic teacher.

HIGHEST KNOWLEDGE NOT A MATTER OF INTELLECTUAL SPECULATION

The story of Yājñavalkya and Gārgī Vācaknavī (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III. 6) emphasizes a different point. Gārgī persisted in asking questions after questions. So the philosopher was obliged to stop her with a threat that, if she overstepped the limits of enquiry, her head would fall off.

Śaṅkarācārya explains that Gārgī's question related to (the concept of) the ultimate Deity, which question could be decided only on the testimony of scriptures and not by inferential reasoning. Hence, Yājñavalkya had to stop her.

Others explain that 'Gārgī is intellectually so forward that Yājñavalkya is obliged to check her intellectual impudence with what we might call philosophical rudeness'. (Ranade and Belwalkar : *Creative Period of the Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 197)

Both these explanations can be accepted. The authority of the scriptures and the inevitable limitation of inductive inference in an inquiry into the metaphysical Ultimate are well-known principles in the Upaniṣads and in their interpretation. Similarly, intellectual impudence, too, has to be checked, at least sometimes.

Yet, while the Upaniṣads foster and encourage a spirit of inquiry, this story appears to threaten the questioning inquirer into an awed silence. Why? It may be that Gārgī's name 'Vācaknavī' is a partial pointer to a probable answer. It means 'the daughter of Vacaknu'. And Vacaknu signifies a 'talkative person'. The point is: Can metaphysical truths be learnt by mere talk? Or, is it by less talk and more meditation that one can enter into the domain of inward light? Yājñavalkya's exhortation to the thinkers assembled for the symposium which Janaka had

arranged to learn the truth about the highest Person by a negative process of exclusion (*neti, neti*) is a significant piece of advice in this connexion.

Besides, an inquiry has to rest on certain axioms. When you reach this axiomatic limit, you have either to stop or to give up the entire position. Axioms are self-evident truths. If they cannot be accepted, there is no further inquiry possible. Gārgī had reached this point. And if she were irrepressible, threat alone could have silenced her. Yājñavalkya's statement, therefore, is a revelation of the fundamental, axiomatic position, on the one hand, and, on the other, it displays an in-

sight into the psychology of a nagging inquirer.

These, therefore, are the lights that the Upaniṣadic stories reveal. After all, the highest knowledge is to be imbibed by going near a *guru* (*upa*) and sitting down (*ni śad*) at his feet, in a spirit of keen inquiry but with unassumed humility. Considered in this way, the passages examined so far would appear illuminating, I hope, to students of individual and social psychology, to those who are interested in principles of education, and to those who esteem ethical and moral values governing the social, intellectual, and religious life of man.

VIṢṆU: STORY IN STONE

SRI C. SIVARAMAMURTI

Viṣṇu is the Lord conceived as the protector. The trinity in Hindu thought is just the supreme Being in three aspects as the creator, the protector, and the destroyer. Viṣṇu protects.

The creator Brahmā issues from the navel lotus of Viṣṇu, the protector. Thus He is Padmanābha, the lotus-navelled one; and the seat of Kamalāsana, the lotus-throned Brahmā, is this magnificent flower. It thus makes Padmanābha also Prapitāmaha, the father of the grandfather of gods, Brahmā, the venerable Lord of Vedic learning who is conceived old and hoary in the sacred lore, bearded as the grandfather of the gods. But strange as it may appear, the father of this grandfather, called Purāṇapurusa or the primeval man, is conceived as the most youthful (*nava*).

He is Puruṣottama, the most splendid example of perfection and charm, the majestic, powerful, compassionate Lord Supreme.

Unborn and eternal, He takes several forms; and there is a regular illusion of several forms of His for establishing right and destroying evil. The Lord, free from desires, is ever ready to satisfy the desires of those who tread the path of virtue; and that is the only reason for His punishing evil and rewarding merit. Awake even in sleep, he functions; and the punishment of Madhu and Kaitābha as they approached with evil intention, even as He lay in slumber on His serpent couch in the milky ocean, is an excellent example.

The seven musical modes compose His sweet form, and He is of the very essence of the highest divine music. The seven *sāmans* sing His glory as He slumbers on the collected waters of the seven oceans. He is the great refuge of the seven worlds from whose mouth issues the all-consuming and purifying seven-flamed fire.

He was the support of the great Mandāra

mountain as it served the purpose of churn-staff, when the milky ocean was churned by the *devas* and *asuras* for the immortal elixir.

The real connotation of Viṣṇu as the all-pervasive One is proved by Him in His magical growth as the titanic fish.

From under the waters, the Lord rescued the earth on the tusks of His Varāha form, a glorious feat which has made successive dynasties of kings emulate, in trying to do their best for ameliorating the misery in the world and establishing their own royal glory.

The form of Narasimha depicts the Lord as Puruṣasimha, the most majestic, the Lord who, with the dignity of the royal beast, put down defiant spirit even in the parent of His most beloved devotee.

Most astonishing is that aspect of the Lord, who, free from all desires and encompassing the entire universe, assumed the guise of a dwarf, to beg of the mighty king Bali a three-foot area, a very humble request to make from such a great donor, and in such a miserable diminutive form. But lo! the great king could not entirely provide what he promised except by supplicating himself to the all-encompassing feet of the Lord, who soared up mightier than the universe in height and grandeur.

The Lord as the sage with the axe, the prince with the bow, the cowherd boy with the flute, the compassionate Lord of Dharmacakra, and the form yet to present itself as the establisher of justice are other expressions of the glory of Viṣṇu.

If literature abounds in beautiful description in prose and verse of the sublime concept of Viṣṇu in these aspects, art has not lagged behind in the least.

Sculptures and paintings have glorious examples of visions of Viṣṇu.

There is no greater representation of

Viṣṇu in art than that of Śeṣaśāyin, the Lord in slumber on the serpent couch with Brahmā issuing from the navel, at Deogarh near Jhansi, wrought by a great master of the Gupta period. (Frontispiece)

The Varāha at Udayagiri near Bhilsa is probably the most powerful representation in sculpture, and has inspired successive schools of art all over the country and specially at Badami, Mogulrajapuram, and Mahabalipuram. (Picture II, facing p. 112)

The destruction of Madhu and Kaiṭabha by Viṣṇu in slumber shown at Deogarh is presented at Ellora and Mahabalipuram.

The Lord amidst cowherds lifting Govardhana, a noble theme, has inspired successive bands of sculptors, and has glorious examples at Mandor, Banaras, Mogulrajapuram, Badami, Mahabalipuram, Ellora, and other places.

The Lord as Virāṭpuruṣa, who had opened wide His mouth to show Yaśodā that He was eating no mud, and had terrified even the Nara aspect of Nārāyaṇa, the great Arjuna himself on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, has inspired both the Gupta and Medieval sculptors; and the theme of Virāṭpuruṣa has survived during the centuries, and even today lingers on in different folk drawings of the popular theme. (Picture I, facing p. 112)

Too numerous are the representations of the scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhāgavata* in our land, with a still more elaborate disquisition in stone from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* in far-off Cambodia and Java. The panels at Prambanam at the last place are a marvel.

The abiding influence of the word Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu, whose utterance is believed to destroy all sins and to purify one without even the physical bath—even more than the utterance of the name of Gaṅgā herself, as even that stream flows from the

foot of the Lord as Viṣṇupadī—is the theme of Śuka's contemplation of the Lord in the *Bhāgavata*, which sings the glory of Bhagavān; and so Kālidāsa has rightly put it that as by just remembering Him one gets purified, so the effect of the other

senses when applied to Him is thereby amply suggested :

*Kevalam smaraṇenaiva punāsi puruṣam
yataḥ ;*

*Anena vṛttayas śeṣā niveditaphalās
tvayi.*

ILLUSTRATING A NEW BIOGRAPHY OF RAMAKRISHNA

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

Since the death of Sri Ramakrishna nearly eighty years ago, two major biographies of him by westerners have been published. The first is *Ramakrishna : His Life and Sayings* by the famous Oxford orientalist, Max Müller. Written in English, this book was published in 1898. The second is *The Life of Ramakrishna* by the celebrated French author, Romain Rolland. This work was published in 1929 in French; the English translation came out a year later.

Now, after a long lapse of time, a new major biography of Sri Ramakrishna by a westerner has been completed. Authored by Christopher Isherwood, the well-known British-American writer and translator, it is entitled *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*. The book is scheduled to be published in the spring of 1965 in three editions : in the United States by Simon and Schuster; in England by Methuen & Co.; and in India by the Advaita Ashrama.

This new biography has certain features which neither the Müller nor the Rolland has, which add to its value.

In the first place, the complete texts of two basic source books on Ramakrishna were available to the author. The first, of course, is Swami Saradananda's *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Līlāprasāṅga*. The second source is M.'s *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathā-*

mrta, generally referred to as Ramakrishna's Gospel. Neither of these was available to Müller; and only portions of the two were at the disposal of Rolland. A complete English text of the Saradananda biography was published in 1952, under the title *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*. The complete Gospel in English was issued in 1942.

Second, Isherwood had the advantage of being acquainted with the Ramakrishna story over a long period of time in a very intimate way. This was not true of Müller or Rolland. Isherwood has visited India twice. He has been a student of Vedānta for twenty-five years. He has translated a number of Hindu scriptures and edited several books for the Ramakrishna Order.

Third, the author of *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* had the advantage of having his work read and corrected as written, chapter by chapter, by two senior Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order, Swamis Madhavananda and Prabhavananda. While Müller and Rolland consulted members of the Order during the writing of their books, they did not enjoy the advantages of such detailed assistance.

Isherwood may be said to be very much like Müller and Rolland in one respect. Like them, he tried to approach Ramakrishna as a witness—that is, in the scien-

tific spirit of an impartial investigator. Isherwood commences and ends his book by saying that he is telling the true story of a phenomenon. 'I am interested in recording facts, not in advancing theories or making claims' is the way he puts it.

In one regard the new Isherwood biography differs totally from all previous biographies of Ramakrishna, whether written by westerners or Indians. This is in its effort at illustration. From the very commencement of the project, several years ago, Isherwood said that he felt the book must be well illustrated. This was not only for the usual reason that a text is made more real and meaningful when supplemented visually. It is for another and more significant purpose. The Isherwood biography is to some extent meant for unconvinced western people who are not only not religious but who may not believe that spirituality is even possible. Such persons must be shown that Ramakrishna did exist and that what the author says about him is true. There is no better way to accomplish this aim than to make good use of that important device of the twentieth century, the camera. The Ramakrishna story is not legend. It is not pious fiction. Ramakrishna did live and he did do the things the author says he did. Photographs of him are available. Witnesses saw him, and we have photos of the witnesses. The places where the Master lived and taught are still in existence and can be shown in pictures. In other words, Isherwood wanted his biography to be well and realistically illustrated as a means of reinforcing the scientific spirit of his work.

These illustrations—what they consist of, the uses to which they are being put, and the adventures we had in obtaining them—form the subject of this paper.

What were the illustrations for *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* to consist of? There must be, of course, photos of Rama-

krishna and the people with whom he was most closely associated. In addition, Isherwood wanted to show the settings of Ramakrishna's life: Gadadhar's village, Dakshineswar, Calcutta in the latter 1800's. Ramakrishna is timeless, a being of all seasons and all lands; yet, again, he is peculiarly an Indian, a Bengali, and a Bengali of the nineteenth century. To know him well one must also know something of his time and place. Also Ramakrishna's *sādhana*—his spiritual struggles and realizations—must be indicated pictorially. Finally, it is Ramakrishna's message that interests us most. That message was the product of what Ramakrishna became, coloured by the environment in which he lived. We must somehow try to demonstrate pictorially the Master's message.

In contemplating what pictures we needed, Isherwood said we ought to have at least a hundred, but certainly no less than fifty. He made a list of what he called the minimum requirements. Some of the pictures existed. Some of them we suspected existed. Some could not exist and would have to be taken specially. Since I was coming to India, it seemed feasible that I should search out what illustrations were available and take new photographs as required. That job has now been completed. When finally assembled, the illustrations totalled fifty-six.

SIX PHOTOS OF RAMAKRISHNA

Concerning photos of Ramakrishna himself, one would think these could be obtained and identified with ease. But such proved to be surprisingly difficult. How many poses of Ramakrishna are there? The answer would seem to be three. There is the well-known photo of the Master at Keshab Sen's house; the studio portrait of him standing with his hand on a column; and the most famous of all, the so-called 'worshipped' pose, in which Ramakrishna

is seated in *samādhi* at Dakshineswar. But what were the circumstances of these photos? How could I prepare adequate captions without possessing complete facts about each pose? I was certain that full identifications did not exist anywhere in English.

In addition, it seemed apparent that the Master had been photographed after his death. This would make not three but four photos. A picture of a number of devotees standing in front of the Cossipore Garden House on 16 August 1886 had appeared in books about Ramakrishna. The people in the picture are shown looking down sorrowfully. But if the Master had been shown in the picture originally, he was shown no more. The illustration includes only the devotees. Had Ramakrishna's figure been there originally? And, if so, why had it been eliminated? Finally, had any other pictures of the Master been taken?

I consulted available references and talked with seniors of the Ramakrishna Order. I was able, as a result, to collect the principal facts concerning all the photographs of the Master. These facts are as follows. In all, not three but six photos of Ramakrishna were taken. In addition to what may be called 'Ramakrishna at Keshab's House', the 'Studio Portrait of Ramakrishna', and 'Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar', two exposures were made of the Master's body, together with some fifty devotees, at Cossipore, on the afternoon of the Master's death. A comparison of the two exposures reveals some differences between them. Finally, Swami Nirvananda reports that he heard from Swami Akhandananda that Ram Chandra Datta took Ramakrishna's photograph; but Ramakrishna was displeased with the result, and Ram Chandra threw the negative and print into the Ganges. Devotees of today must applaud Ram Chandra's obe-

dience to his *guru's* attitude, while at the same time wishing they could see what the photo looked like.

Descriptions of Ramakrishna's appearance at death, together with statements that a picture of his body was taken, appear in the English version of the Gospel, in the official *Life* published by the Advaita Ashrama, and in other books sponsored by the Ramakrishna Order. Isherwood included in his own book the same information. Yet he, like so many others, had never seen the complete photograph. At last, when Isherwood was in Calcutta for the Vivekananda Centenary Parliament of Religions in December 1963, we obtained a print through an old Calcutta resident. Yes, Ramakrishna's appearance in death is pathetic. Yet he looks only as anyone would naturally look at the end of a harrowing illness. Isherwood's view was that if we go on censoring out the most important part of the picture, people will come to think there must be something unmentionable about Ramakrishna's appearance in death. 'In the interest of historical honesty I am absolutely for showing the entire picture' is what Isherwood said. The authorities of the Ramakrishna Order agreed with Isherwood; and the complete photograph is to be published in *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*.*

Hence four portraits of Ramakrishna appear in the new biography, all of them now identified as to time, place, and other relevant circumstances.

One or two general remarks about the photos. In the three pictures taken when he was alive, Ramakrishna was in *samādhi*. The Master did not pose knowingly for any picture. In fact, in the state of normal physical consciousness, he opposed efforts

* The entire picture is being published only in the British and American editions of the book; and of the other pictures referred to in the article, it has been found possible to include in the book only a select thirty-three.—Ed,

to take his photograph. Concerning the fact that Ramakrishna was photographed at all, there is a charming and characteristic remark by Sri Sarada Devi to the effect that people of the present day are very intelligent indeed. For thousands of years Incarnations have been visiting the earth; but only the people of this age have been clever enough to devise a means for accurately preserving their likenesses, through photography. The Holy Mother also said that there is no difference between the shadow and the body. Ramakrishna himself is in his photograph.

PHOTOGRAPHING THE HOLY MOTHER

Isherwood wanted, of course, to include in the book a portrait of the Holy Mother. It was decided that we should use the one of her which it might be said corresponded to the Dakshineswar pose of the Master, namely, the so-called 'worshipped' pose at forty-five. In attempting to identify this picture, I found out some interesting facts. This pose is one of three taken at the same time and place, in November of 1898, at Sister Nivedita's house in Calcutta. This was, twelve years after the passing away of the Master, the first time the Holy Mother's picture had been taken. Mrs. Ole Bull, wanting to have a likeness of the Mother to take back to America with her, made the arrangements. It is said that the photographer she engaged was an Englishman. A fur *āsana* was spread, and some potted plants were placed in the foreground. Sri Sarada Devi took her seat, Nivedita and Mrs. Bull helping to arrange her *sāri*. The Holy Mother was very shy in front of the photographer and would not face the camera. She looked down and went into a kind of *samādhi*. Though not satisfied with his subject's position, the cameraman made the first exposure, the so-called 'looking down' pose at forty-five. Then the Holy Mother glanced up, inquiring, 'Is it

finished?' The photographer took the second, the 'worshipped' pose, which is so familiar and which we are using in the Isherwood book.

I have some personal knowledge about the third photo taken on the same occasion. This is the picture showing Holy Mother and Nivedita seated facing each other. I have heard several times in India that this is a faked picture. Holy Mother and Nivedita, it is claimed, never actually were photographed together; someone simply pasted together separate likenesses of each, then re-photographed the composite. Such is not the case. Until twelve years ago, this third pose was unknown. In coming to India in 1952 I passed through England, staying while there at the home of the Earl of Sandwich, whose first wife was related to Swami Vivekananda's American friends, the Leggetts. In Lord Sandwich's house, the second Lady Sandwich found an old, original print of this Holy Mother-Nivedita picture. She gave it to me to take to India, saying she, at least, had not seen it before and perhaps it was not well known. It proved to be more than merely not well known. When I reached Belur Math, I handed the print to Swami Sankarananda. He was amazed and delighted. 'This has never been seen before', he exclaimed. 'We had no idea of the existence of any such photo.' All the prints now in existence are descendants of this original, brought directly from Lord Sandwich's house to Swami Sankarananda.

THE DISCIPLES

Isherwood wanted to present individual portraits of certain of the monastic disciples of the Master. Swami Brahmananda and Swami Vivekananda must be pictured, of course. Isherwood felt Swami Saradananda should be shown because, along with other reasons, the new biography was based to a considerable extent on his *Līlāprasāṅga*.

Pictures should be included of Latu and Jogindra; also of Swamis Turiyananda, Premananda, Shivananda, Ramakrishnananda, and Trigunatitananda. The choice was a somewhat arbitrary one on Isherwood's part. These disciples especially interested him, and he thought that for one reason or another they would interest the readers of the book.

The decision as to what picture of Swami Brahmananda should be used was left to Swami Prabhavananda, Maharaj's disciple and biographer. He chose that beautiful picture of Maharaj standing, dressed in silk and wearing a garland, taken in Madras in 1921, just before he went to open the Students' Home. What Swami Prabhavananda likes particularly about this portrait is that Maharaj's hands are against his breast, showing, we may assume, that he is feeling God's presence in his heart.

As for Swami Vivekananda, Isherwood wanted to use two pictures, one contrasting the other. In one of them, as he described it to me, the Swami was to look young and 'square'; in the other, mature and 'fun'. What Isherwood wanted to illustrate was the intense young Hindu monk, Naren; and then, in comparison, the capable world-figure he became a few years later. 'Square' is an American colloquial term meaning extremely un-worldly-wise. For the first picture we chose the portrait of Naren in 1892 in Belgaum. He is sitting on a deer-skin, attired in monastic garb. A staff leans beside him. He wears a typical Swami's few days' growth of beard. He looks very young and extremely austere. The contrasting picture is the formal studio portrait made in San Francisco in 1900. In this he is sitting in a great carved armchair, wearing the kind of clothing Congressmen, orators, and Christian ministers in America wore in those days. He is every bit the man of distinction. But the amused expression on his face tells us he does not

take his fine clothes or his position as a world figure in the least seriously.

One interesting problem concerning how to picture Ramakrishna's disciples was whether to try to show them young, as they had been during Ramakrishna's lifetime, or mature, as they were when doing the Master's work. Of course, twelve of the monastic disciples are shown in the death picture as very young men, although not particularly clearly. Our uncertainty was resolved by the actual facts of what portraits were available. In the cases of Swami Vivekananda and Maharaj, there were numerous photographs of all ages to choose from. In the case of Latu and Jogindra there was hardly any choice at all. Only one picture of Jogindra exists, later than the Cossipore picture. In this he is shown standing next to Latu in a group photo taken at the Baranagore Math in 1896 on the occasion of Swami Abhedananda's departure for the West. We were forced to use this picture. Only two pictures later than the Cossipore group photo seem to exist for Latu, the 1896 photo and another as an older man. We selected the 1896 pose.

In the case of Swami Saradananda, we used a portrait of him sitting on the floor in the small entrance room of the *Udbodhan* office where he wrote the *Līlāprasaṅga*. The tiny desk behind which he sat appears in the picture.

Isherwood wanted if possible to use pictures of the disciples which had not been seen over and over again. We were able to meet this request in the case of Swamis Turiyananda and Premananda. In the negative file of the Advaita Ashrama, we found a picture of the two of them sitting together on a bench, probably taken in 1910 or 1911.

For Swami Shivananda, there were many poses to choose from. We decided on one taken in Madras, probably in 1924, in

which the face is particularly serene and and the expression indrawn.

For Swami Ramakrishnananda and Swami Trigunatitananda, there were hardly any choices. Very few pictures of either appear to exist. The best portrait available of Swami Ramakrishnananda seemed to be an old-fashioned studio pose taken in Madras. Swami Trigunatitananda seems to have been photographed only twice—once as a very young man and once in San Francisco. We settled on the latter pose. In this picture Trigunatitananda is shown wearing a turban and a robe of modified clerical cut such as some of the Swamis used to wear in America.

Of the Master's non-monastic associates, Isherwood wanted to picture four: Mathur Babu, Keshab Sen, Girish Ghosh, and M. It would seem that we should have an easy time finding pictures of these; but again the assignment proved to be a challenging one.

The only picture of Mathur we knew of was the familiar likeness taken from what appears to be an old oil painting. Mathur is shown as a rich zemindar, wearing a brimmed hat and a rich coat. He is sitting in a chair, holding a walking-stick. Since Isherwood wanted to avoid using conventional illustrations when possible, I spent a good deal of time trying to find a new portrait of Mathur. Inquiries were made at the Victoria Memorial, the Asiatic Society, and the Indian National Library. Descendants of Rani Rashmani's family who live in the Rani's old house in Janbazar were consulted. At the National Library, we discovered a Bengali book on the zemindar families of Bengal, published some years ago. In it is an actual photograph of Mathur; but, sad to say, the likeness is so extremely blurred as to make the picture unusable. We had no option but to reproduce the well-known painting. I was not able to discover anything as to its

circumstances—who the artist was or when it had been painted.

It is interesting, incidentally, to realize that apparently the date of Mathur's birth is not known. Members of the Rani's family do not know it, nor does the Manager of the Dakshineswar temple. None of the books I consulted gave the date. A librarian at the National Library searched for Mathur's birth date among Bengali books, without result. We can establish an approximate birth date through the fact that Mathur was a classmate, at the Hindu College, of Devendra Nath Tagore. Tagore was born in 1817. This would have made Mathur most likely between thirty-five and forty when he first came in contact with Ramakrishna in 1855, and between fifty and fifty-five when he died in 1871.

Pictures of Keshab Sen are not particularly difficult to find. There is the well-known portrait of Keshab standing at a table, wearing clerical garb; and another with hands folded, in an attitude of prayer. Two paintings of Keshab hang in the Victoria Memorial. But Isherwood wanted to show Keshab, not as the mighty moralist he had been, but as the gentle devotee he became. In the Ramakrishna story, Keshab represents transformation of character quite as much as does Girish. Although it might be presumed that the Adi Brahma Samaj and the Nava Vidhan Brahma Samaj would possess picture collections dealing with Keshab, requests made to these organizations did not result in the discovery of any suitable picture. Eventually, at the National Library, we found in a biography of Keshab a photograph of the Brahma leader surrounded by followers. Keshab is sitting on the floor, wearing his usual nose-glasses, and holding one of those one-stringed musical instruments with which the Brahmos used to accompany themselves when singing.

Keshab looks, as Isherwood wanted him to look, altogether lovable. In the background is a banner on which Bengali characters spell out : New Dispensation.

As for Girish Ghosh, one would assume many pictures of him should be available. As a celebrated writer and famous actor, he must have been photographed frequently. In so far as I was able to determine, this was not the case. I consulted the director of the museum recently established in Girish's old house in Baghbazar and was told no picture collection was housed there. Personnel at the Star and Vishwarupa Theatres were not able to supply anything beyond a few pictures of Girish in later life in the costumes of certain roles he played. There are two well-known portraits available of Girish as a serene old man; but the Girish we wanted to show was the bohemian, not the saint. Finally we discovered a Bengali biography of Girish in which there is a picture of Girish in his prime, looking quite worldly. He is sitting in a chair, resting his chin on one fist. No identification could be found as to the time or place of the portrait; but we had this photo copied and are using it in the Isherwood book with the rather hedging caption: 'Probably as he looked at about the time he met Sri Ramakrishna.'

For a portrait of M. we did not make any search at all. The conventional pose of him as an elderly man, kneeling on the ground at the base of a tree, is so expressive and so beautiful, how could we hope to find anything better? Upon investigating the circumstances of this picture, we found that it had been taken in 1928, when M. was seventy-four years old. The tree is the *bel* tree at the north end of the Dakshineswar temple property. One remembers from the Gospel the touching scenes between Ramakrishna and M. which occurred there at the *bel* tree. One can imagine the emotion that flooded the heart of

this man, who had spent his whole lifetime dealing with the Master's Gospel, when he was about to have his picture taken at this holy spot, and why he chose to have it taken kneeling.

AT KAMARPUKUR

Some twenty pictures, thus, were devoted to people; they were in existence and could be had through more or less diligent searching. The final thirty-old illustrations must convey views of actual scenes of Ramakrishna's life and give the reader, if possible, a concept of Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences and his message. It was apparent that very few pictures of this type could exist; most would have to be taken specially.

But how can photos be made today, in 1964, which will show places as they were a hundred years ago and evoke the atmosphere of that time? Here was a difficulty we had to solve. I shall tell you as we go along how we managed to meet this demand. Of course, the fact that India changes slowly was an aid to us.

That Ramakrishna came from a poor but pious village family is important. Swami Saradananda makes much of this. Hence we must, at the outset, have pictures of Kamarpukur. We should try to show life there as it was during Gadadhar's childhood. As we know, the Master's teachings overflow with references to life in the Bengal village.

I spent three weeks photographing in Kamarpukur. There is now a cinema on the Puri Road, and buses service the village daily. A Government *de luxe* bus, crowded to capacity, brings tourists from Calcutta every Sunday during the dry season. Yet even so, the atmosphere of Kamarpukur must be today something like it was in Ramakrishna's time. But still there are problems in obtaining good pictures of the holy spots there.

Khudiram's house and the Jugis' Śiva temple across the lane are intact. But the rough shed where the Master was born has been replaced by a modern stone temple. And the entire site has been enclosed on one side by a high brick wall, and on the other by the dormitories of the Ramakrishna Math. Nearby guest houses and spaces for parking automobiles lessen the rural atmosphere. Hence, to portray Ramakrishna's birthplace as it looked in Gadadhar's time, we had no choice but to go back to an old photo taken before the new constructions were commenced.

I was able to make a good close-up of the three deities which Khudiram and Gadadhar revered: namely, Raghuvīra, Rameśvara, and Śītalā. (Picture I, facing p. 113) They are still worshipped daily in a little temple in the courtyard of Khudiram's house, by Kanai Ghosal, a greatgrandson of Ramakrishna's brother, Rameswar.

Haldarpukur seems to be much as it was in Gadadhar's day, with its simple ghats, one for men and one for women. It was an easy matter to take an attractive picture of Haldarpukur.

Kamarpukur's streets appear to be not much modernized, although one must be careful when taking photographs to aim away from electric wires and bicycle rickshaws. We are using a street scene showing a cow, an ancient palanquin, and some old Laha buildings.

We had hoped somehow to recreate the boy Gadadhar as he must have looked playing in the lanes of Kamarpukur. Perhaps we could find some lad who resembled the boy Ramakrishna and pose him against old backgrounds. I observed the boys of the village, but none seemed fully suitable. Finally I took a number of photos of Kanai Ghosal's young half-brother, Swapan, wearing a *dhoti* and *chaddar*. But no-one could be like the magical Gadadhar, and we are not using any picture of this kind. We

contented ourselves with a photo of a nice group of village children—some of them Pynes and Lahas, descended from Gadadhar's old playmates—standing in the village school which Gadadhar had attended.

It had been planned that we should include a picture of Viśālākṣī, the goddess who dwells in the fields at Anur, two or three miles from Kamarpukur. Gadadhar, as we know, had one of his first religious experiences as a youngster while he was on the way to visit this deity. I naturally expected to see and photograph a female figure, probably carved of stone, of the order of Pārvatī or Lakṣmī. Viśālākṣī proved, however, to be a simple mound of earth, perhaps two feet wide by four feet long, painted red at one end. I decided that the caption to explain this very unusual-looking goddess would run to such a length that any picture of the Anur deity had better be omitted.

As for the cremation grounds, Dhani's house, Manik Raja's mango orchard, and certain village temples connected with Ramakrishna's younger days, everything going back to Ramakrishna's time has nearly vanished or grown so dilapidated as to be unsightly.

DEPICTING BRITISH TIMES

Ramakrishna came to Calcutta when he was sixteen years old. From then on till the day he died, the presence of the English had a bearing on his life. Indeed, what they represented challenged the very bases of the old Hinduism Ramakrishna was to sustain and the new Hinduism he was to foster. The English represented materialism and self-expression; while what Ramakrishna taught was renunciation and the centring of one's life entirely upon God. Isherwood, therefore, wanted in *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* to recognize pictorially the presence of the British.

One would think it would be easy to find pictures of Viceroys in procession, or of great balls at the Calcutta homes of English people, to illustrate the glamorous life of India's masters. This proved in 1964 to be unexpectedly difficult. Strong traces of the British remain in the classic houses and public buildings one still sees today in and around Calcutta. But what use is served by merely reproducing likenesses of nineteenth-century architecture? The cemeteries recall the story of foreign occupancy very clearly, with their epitaphs telling of many Britishers dying young, from war or shipwreck or tropical diseases. I took a few pictures of English tombs and graves; but how were we to demonstrate the western challenge to India's religion by showing relics of the western dead?

Research at the Victoria Memorial and the Indian National Library revealed a very surprising fact. Many British artists had travelled to India and recorded scenes of life there, but they had come mostly in the late 1700's and early 1800's. At that time India was deemed unknown and exotic. Numerous fascinating paintings of this period are to be seen, such as those by Thomas Daniel; and fine books of etchings about India were published in London. By the mid-1800's the novelty seems to have worn off. The British apparently no longer portrayed their daily life to any extent. And Indian artists had not yet begun to concern themselves much with recording actual scenes of the day.

To introduce visually in the Isherwood book the influence of the British, we finally had to resort to the use of two rather far-fetched pictures. The first shows the Ochterloney Monument. (Picture IV, facing p. 120) I was able to take a handsome photo of the Monument in late December of 1963, just after it had been painted; Greek-revival buildings on Esplanade are to be seen be-

hind it. The picture suited our purpose fairly well. The architectural style is what one might call imperialistic. It is supposed to be a combination of Egyptian, Syrian, and Turkish themes. And the cause of its erection in 1828 is equally imperialistic—to commemorate the British conquest of Nepal.

The second picture concerning the British is a sketch showing the pomp and circumstance which attended a tour of India made by the Prince of Wales in 1875. This, it will be remembered, is the year Ramakrishna met Keshab Sen, who had already been to England and met Queen Victoria. The etching shows the future Edward VII, together with a big retinue, leaving the princely state of Jammu. We had the picture copied from a travel diary of the Prince's tour, published in London in 1877. It was written by the fashionable travel writer of that period, William Howard Russell. The text explaining the picture reads as follows, its tone revealing the self-confidence of the British at that time: 'Soon after 8 a.m. the Prince left Jummoo, in all the splendour of a state procession of elephants with magnificent trappings. There were bands of music with kettledrums six or seven feet long. The Maharaja took leave of the Prince, and expressed his deep sense of the obligation under which he was laid by the visit of the eldest son of the Queen. The return was pleasant, if dusty. The Prince opened a grand bridge over the Chenab, which he named "Alexandra" after the Princess of Wales.'

AT DAKSHINESWAR

Next, of course, we must have a good picture coverage of Dakshineswar. Dakshineswar, the northern section of Calcutta, and the Ganges bordering the two formed the stage on which Ramakrishna *kālā* was mainly enacted.

To find pictures of Dakshineswar as it

was in Ramakrishna's time proved to be impossible; and to try to take new pictures of the Dakshineswar of today—so deteriorated, so modified—and imply it had that appearance when the Master lived there, was equally difficult. To do anything at all pictorially concerning Dakshineswar presented very serious problems.

The Dakshineswar designed and built under the sponsorship of Rani Rashmani was a handsomely conceived, very grand establishment. From the design of its entrance gate to the craftsmanship of the jewels worn by the deities—everything seems originally to have been executed in the best possible taste.

Isherwood felt we must picture the Kālī image, the Rādhākānta shrine, and a *lingam*. He also wanted to show Rāma, Sītā, and Hanumān. Although the latter deities are not housed at Dakshineswar, Ramakrishna, it will be remembered, deeply identified himself during one period with Hanumān; and he was for a time blessed with the gift of Sītā's smile.

I photographed Rādhākānta (Picture II, facing p. 113) and one of the twelve *lingams*. These seem to be much as they had been a hundred years ago. I did not attempt to photograph the Kālī figure. To do so is very difficult technically. Also some changes have been made in the Kālī shrine so that it is not quite the same now as it was in Ramakrishna's day. We contented ourselves with using an old photo from the files of the Advaita Ashrama. For Rāma, Sītā, and Hanumān, we used, after a long search for a tasteful picture, a drawing from a sandalwood carving, published as part of a calendar put out by Ashoka Marketing Ltd., several years ago.

As to other Dakshineswar scenes, by carefully controlling where the camera stood and what appeared before its lens, I managed to get some pictures which met Isherwood's requirements and which did not re-

cord too many alterations or evidences of decay.

To show where the Bhairavi landed, and also to portray a country boat such as Ramakrishna and his devotees travelled in so often, we took from the river a picture of the landing ghat and *cāndnā*. Here also Ramakrishna first met Totapuri. We managed to avoid showing the souvenir shops and big signboards which disfigure this spot today.

The *nāṭmandir* where the meetings took place at which Ramakrishna was declared an Incarnation has remained largely intact. A successful photo was made showing the dim interior of the *nāṭmandir* in contrast to the bright sunlight outside, and people crowding into the tiny entryway, seven feet square, of the main shrine to view the Kālī image. (Picture III, facing p. 120)

By going up on a roof-top and using a telephoto lens, I obtained a good picture of the situation of Ramakrishna's room, with the Ganges behind. Inside the Master's room I was able to photograph the two beds and also the door on to the semi-circular porch through which Narendra made his first entrance at Dakshineswar. It was not possible to avoid recording the hectic design of the modern tiling with which the Master's room has recently been paved.

As for the important Panchavati, as is well known, the condition now is very sad-denning. Within a few feet from where Ramakrishna was for three days in non-dual *samādhi*, a machine for pressing out juice from sugarcane now operates. And almost under the historic banyan tree a Blue Boy ice-cream vendor now does a rushing business from his brightly-coloured wagon. M. spoke of the Panchavati as dark and mysterious; indeed, he said that when one was in the Panchavati nothing could be seen or heard to show that the temple buildings were near. How to convey that idea today? We had no alter-

native but to use once again the conventional old photo of the Panchavati which has been seen so often.

One of the aspects of the Ramakrishna story which interests us very much is the unobtrusiveness of the Holy Mother. She lived in the *nahabat* almost unseen, in the tiny interior room having only one small door and no windows, and on the *nahabat's* narrow veranda. Here, in this extremely confined space, barely bigger than a closet, dwelt Śakti, the mammoth Power of the Universe. To emphasize the divine incongruity of this situation, Isherwood wanted to have a picture showing how the interior room looked in the Holy Mother's time, demonstrating its inconvenience and tinyness. To my dismay, I found that to show this is no longer possible. The entrance door, which was originally only two feet wide by four feet high—meaning that, whenever she entered the chamber, the occupant had at the same time to stoop over and step up—has now been enlarged to full height. Furthermore, a second door has now been opened through in the rear. We had to content ourselves with a general view of the *nahabat* taken from the roof of Ramakrishna's room.

Isherwood's list called for a picture of the sword of the Kālī temple, and a *kīrtan* such as Ramakrishna had often participated in. The sword with which the Master had started to end his life is today kept in a case, locked in the Manager's office. The Manager brought it out and I made a close-up. The knife's original use was for sacrificing animals. Is it not symbolic of the Master's tremendous intensity that he was willing to offer up his own life unless he could know the Truth? Obtaining a suitable picture of a *kīrtan* involved us in several experiences. A friend who is a native of Calcutta conducted me around the city on several evenings, hoping to find a *kīrtan* party in progress which we could

photograph. We did come upon such parties, but the participants looked too modern to illustrate *kīrtans* of Ramakrishna's time. Our difficulty was resolved by the discovery of an old painting. In it waves of people, led by Śrī Caitanya, are pictured playing drums and cymbals, and singing and dancing with hands raised. The *kīrtan* parties Ramakrishna inspired and participated in must have been very much like this. (Picture VI, facing p. 121)

Thus some of Ramakrishna's religious experiences at Dakshineswar were pictorially represented. The aspects of Hinduism he realized and trifled within his own experience were illustrated by pictures representing Śāktism, Śaivism, and Vaiṣṇavism. The Panchavati could be said to stand for his practices of *tantra* and *advaita*. The sword symbolized intensity, and the *kīrtan*, joy.

We must also represent Ramakrishna's universal aspect. Hence the familiar drawing of the Madonna and Child that the Master saw at Jadu Mallick's house is reproduced. As a result of seeing this, Ramakrishna, as we know, took up the practice of Christianity. And Surendranath Mitra's famous painting of the harmony of religions, portraying Hindus of different sects, together with Buddha, Mohammed, and other prophets, is also included. In this picture, Jesus is shown dancing with Caitanya.

RAMAKRISHNA ON PILGRIMAGE

Ramakrishna's five-month pilgrimage with Mathur in 1868 took the Master on his one and only trip away from Bengal. Most of the time was spent in Banaras and Vrindaban, with a short stop in Deoghar.

To illustrate the Master's Banaras stay, I made a picture of the Banaras water front, taken from a boat. In the illustration the city is behind, with the boat and boatman prominent in the foreground. Rama-

krishna first entered Banaras by boat and must have seen it for the first time gleaming, as in this picture, behind the figure of the boatman.

It was difficult to decide what else to picture in Banaras. I took several photos of the house near Kedarghat, where Mathur and Ramakrishna and their big party stayed during the Banaras visit. But the place has become too ramshackle to yield any idea of how comfortable and attractive it must have been in 1868. Photographs were obtained of the Manikarnika Ghat, the confluence of the Asi and the Ganges, and the Viśvanātha shrine and deity. Eventually we decided to use for the second picture representing Banaras a photo of the reception room of Trailanga Swami's *āśrama* where, it is believed, the well-known interview between Ramakrishna and Trailanga Swami took place. In this spot there now sits a life-size statue of Trailanga Swami which is life-like and interesting photographically and meets our objective of trying to show today approximately how something looked a hundred years ago.

To represent Vrindaban, we are using pictures of the Kaliyadaman Ghat, a Vaiṣṇava *sādhū*, and a performance of a *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*. The Kaliyadaman Ghat, of course, marks the place where the youthful Kṛṣṇa is supposed to have triumphed over the serpent Kāliya; but it is more significant to us because it was the place where Ramakrishna used to go for his baths. 'Hriday used to bathe me there like a small child', he said. And here, beside the Yamunā, Ramakrishna used to weep because although everything else was just like it had been in the days of yore—the ghats, the fields, the cows—Kṛṣṇa was absent. (Picture V, facing p. 121) The *sādhū* of our picture is one of several residing in a lonely place near Vrindaban. Ramakrishna saw and later spoke about the

holy men who stayed near Vrindaban, with their backs to the road lest their eyes should fall on men, living lives of spiritual discipline. The *sādhū* we photographed is most picturesque. With matted locks and bare body, he is shown sitting on a tiger skin, with his *kamaṇḍalu* at his side. A *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* is performed daily in Vrindaban. It is held in an outdoor theatre and is open to the public without charge. Local boys take the parts of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. This illustration gives the reader of the Isherwood biography a picture of Kṛṣṇa in Vrindaban. It serves the added purpose of showing what a *yātrā* performance looks like, of the kind which Gadadhar and his friends produced in their childhood days in Kamarpukur.

There did not seem to be enough space to include any picture of Deoghar. I am sorry about this, because it was at a village near Deoghar that Ramakrishna may be said to have instituted the humanitarian work later to be taken up in his name by the Ramakrishna Mission, by his gift of clothing to the destitute occupants of an entire village. Incidentally, an interesting research question arises concerning the identity of this village. Its name and even approximate location are unknown today.

PRECISE PARABLES

I now come to the closing group of illustrations, pictures which attempted to portray the teachings of Ramakrishna. Obtaining these proved to be one of the most absorbing parts of our assignment.

All great religious leaders have taught spiritual truths in a simple way, relying on parables and examples from everyday life to clarify their points. Ramakrishna taught in the same manner. A thorny bush is just like the world; a man can walk over thorns if he covers his feet with shoes of spirituality. The divinity in man is like precious things kept in a glass case. A child

holding a pole and whirling round without falling down shows us how a person may live in the world if his mind is settled in God. Don't make a survey of mango orchards; eat mangoes and get mango juice on your face. That is, don't talk empty theology; experience God. The Master's references are mostly taken from Kamarpukur and the Ganges area of north Calcutta. Many of the situations he referred to remain today unchanged.

My adoration for Ramakrishna increased as I tried to photograph what he had used as examples. Nearly everything he saw he connected up with God. He was the keenest of observers. And the precision of his illustrations is extraordinary.

The first teaching pictured in *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* shows a woman squatting beside a tank, scrubbing a big cooking vessel. The photograph was made at Kamarpukur. Ramakrishna used this example to illustrate the teaching that perseverance is essential; one must purify the mind with meditation and *japa* regularly. It was only after the pictures were all finished that I learned Ramakrishna had not meant this kind of vessel at all. The word he used was *ghaṭi*, meaning a brass water jar which, because it tarnishes in the air so easily, must be kept shiny by means of a daily polishing.

This illustrates something which I learned as I worked with these teachings. Ramakrishna was far more exact and pointed in his illustrations—and this gives them the greatest impact—than one at first sees. I saw I was at a disadvantage, of course, in not knowing Bengali. Much is lost in translation from the Bengali to English. Also, not everything can be translated literally because some of the allusions may refer to things the western reader has never seen. For example, in the English *Gospel* we read that the holy man is utterly surrendered to God's will, 'like a leaf blown by

the wind'. I found that the word Ramakrishna used was *ento pātā*, 'leaf plate'. How much more significance this has than the mere word 'leaf', for it brings in the idea that people may use a holy man, may in a sense defile him, and may then, if they choose, even abandon him. They are benefited, while it is all the same to him. Yet to say 'leaf plate' in an English version might necessitate a long footnote.

The second of the teachings illustrated is about an English boy on the Calcutta *maidān*. This picture tells something about Ramakrishna himself, as well as illustrating something he taught, namely, the importance of constant recollection. The sight of an English boy leaning against a tree in the *tribhaṅga* (three bends) stance of Govinda threw the Master's mind into ecstasy. We had a very interesting time with this photo. Through an American friend associated with the Institute of Culture, we located an English boy about eight years old. But what about the clothing? He had to be wearing clothes characteristic of the Victorian period. Eventually a sailor suit was found, which is a rather timeless costume and thoroughly British. Dressed in the sailor suit and wearing white stockings and shoes, the boy went with us to the *maidān*, where he posed against a tree in, if not three, then in at least two Govinda-like bends. The result is charming. (Picture VIII, facing p. 128)

The third illustration of a teaching was taken in Kamarpukur. It displays Ramakrishna's stress upon earnestness. He alluded to the shopkeeper who does not go to bed until he has totalled the day's business and balanced his books. A spiritual aspirant should have the same sense of urgency. Shopkeepers working late can be observed to this day in Kamarpukur. Often in the evening when there I would see the owner of a business sitting on the earthen porch outside his shop, a kerosene

lantern at his side, finishing his book-keeping. It was easy to make a suitable photo. Sometimes the children of the family are to be seen sitting beside the father, doing school work in the light from the same lamp.

The fourth illustration has to do with the familiar example of the *dhenki*, the husking machine. The Master's point in using this example was that one may be busy with many things, yet a part of one's mind may be trained to be on something else continually. In the case of the woman feeding the husking machine, some of her attention is directed toward not getting her hand crushed by the falling hammer. In the same manner, a spiritual aspirant must live his life with a portion of his thoughts fixed on God. We found it very difficult to take a really good picture of a *dhenki* in operation. Seventeen exposures in four different villages were made before we obtained an illustration which looked natural and truly illustrated Ramakrishna's point. How western devotees will thank us for showing what a husking machine looks like! From the descriptions it is unimaginable. Even South Indians, I am told, will appreciate the information. (Picture VII, facing p. 128)

The fifth illustration is of an old hackney carriage such as one still sees in Calcutta. Many old coaches still cruising the streets are ones Ramakrishna conceivably could have actually ridden in. We could have used a hackney carriage to illustrate Ramakrishna's teaching that one should look upon oneself as merely a machine, God being the operator. However, we are using the picture we took near Sealdah Station to illumine a different teaching. If one recalls all the times Ramakrishna went into Calcutta, to Balaram Bose's home and to other houses, to make himself conveniently available to devotees, one can see what an effort the Master put

forth to make it easy for spiritual seekers to come in contact with him. I was told an Indian researcher has calculated that Ramakrishna went more than a hundred times to Balaram's house alone. On many of these occasions, he made the trip from Dakshineswar by horse-drawn coach. Hence we used the picture of the hackney carriage to illustrate Ramakrishna's reassuring and wonderful teaching: 'If a man takes one step towards God, God takes ten steps towards him.' This surely proved to be the fact in Ramakrishna's case.

PRESERVATION AND RESEARCH

I should like to conclude by addressing some very serious words to this audience.

Everything connected with Ramakrishna, his associates, his times, and the scenes of his life, is of the greatest significance to the inhabitants of India and the rest of the world. Spending all your days close to these matters, you may be less conscious of this than a visitor is. But what may seem commonplace to you may have the greatest value for people elsewhere. Let me illustrate. I sent to some American friends a few leaves I picked from the mango tree at Kamarpukur planted in his youth by Sri Ramakrishna. You cannot imagine the joy these devotees felt in receiving these leaves. Some placed them on their shrines; some had frames made for them. All gave them places of honour. As the years pass, such detailed interest in Ramakrishna will increase. Books will be written, films made, researches done, on every aspect of the Master's life and teachings. Floods of pilgrims from all over India and every foreign land will come to Bengal to gain the *darśana* of the holy places of this area. It is the duty and privilege of the people of Bengal to show their thankfulness for having been born Ramakrishna's neighbours, to find, preserve, and restore where necessary every

trace and evidence connected with the Master.

The little work I have done here in India in the past eight months, in trying to illustrate a new biography of Ramakrishna, has revealed many gaps in our knowledge of the life and times of the Master. It is already late. Before any more years elapse, before any more of the past falls into dust, bold efforts must be made to gather and preserve whatever still remains concerning Ramakrishna.

In the first place, I believe research projects should be undertaken to find and record those many facts presently unknown, having to do with the Ramakrishna story. A hundred, a thousand, significant research questions could be listed, as to things we do not know but should know and can still find out. I have indicated a few such in this paper. To make my point clear I shall cite one more example. An old print of the portrait of Ramakrishna at Keshab's house in the possession of the Vedanta Society of Southern California is stamped on the back: 'The Bengal Photographers, Est. 1862, 19½ Bow Bazar St., Calcutta'. I went to this address. No Bengal Photographers' studio is located there now. Is this firm still in existence? If so, or even if not, what has happened to its old photographic plates? It is possible that they may still be in existence somewhere, for glass plates do not readily deteriorate. It is conceivable that by locating the plates and searching through them one might uncover the original negative of the photo of Ramakrishna at Keshab's house, taken in 1879, as well as the negative of the studio portrait taken in 1881. It is even possible that, as happened in the case of the lost photograph of Holy Mother and Sister Nivedita, a totally unknown picture of Ramakrishna might be discovered. What a find that would be! Such things do happen. We now and again read of un-

known Shakespearean manuscripts or letters from Napoleon coming to light in unexpected places. Certainly this sort of research is worth doing. There is a constant demand on the part of candidates for the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees for worthwhile research topics for theses. How useful it would be to encourage them to work on matters of this sort. Editors of magazines are always in need of articles dealing with significant themes. Numerous good articles could be developed, based on such research work. They would possess all the excitement of detective stories, with real present and future value.

The second effort that seems important to me is that more should be done to preserve, and, when necessary, expertly restore, buildings and sites connected with Ramakrishna. The Ramakrishna Mission has done and is doing a great deal of this, as for example, having at large expense acquired and restored the Cossipore Garden House. But many places still remain where alterations are going on unchecked. Conscientious people should oppose this; and an enthusiastic and generous public should support efforts to preserve historic relics and restore them to their original condition. You have heard, I think, of Williamsburg in the U.S.A. This village was the capital, some 250 years ago, of the colony of Virginia. After a time, the inhabitants mostly moved away and the town fell into ruin. But, through the aid of public-spirited citizens, Williamsburg in recent years has been rebuilt. It is now as it was in the colonial period. It is a place all Americans try to visit, because it is an inspiring, life-size museum of the American past. By visiting Williamsburg an American can see how his ancestors lived; he can learn about his own heritage. To preserve any site where Ramakrishna placed his feet is far more important than this.

Third, I should like to suggest that what cannot be preserved should be carefully photographed. A small effort in this direction was made in 1937 when a souvenir volume of photographs was produced by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture to commemorate Ramakrishna's centenary. This kind of work should be done systematically and completely, by expert photographers who know Bengali. Many places cannot be preserved. But detailed photographic records of them could be made.

But not only places. Also photographic records should be made of those specifically Bengali objects, processes, and human types which figure in Ramakrishna's teachings and which are in danger of disappearing. I shall cite examples. Ramakrishna compared *avatāras* to Bāuls. What he said is that a group of Bāuls mysteriously appear, sing and dance, and then vanish. Few people see them and when they leave no one knows where they go. Such is the case of the Incarnation and his associates. The Bāuls are wandering minstrels, no doubt; but they are also nomadic. They not only wander; they have no home. Besides, they are considered to be somewhat mad. Ramakrishna was always precise in his use of examples. Think, then, what this allusion tells us—from one who knew what he was talking about—about

Incarnations of God! A whole study of the Bāuls should be made and their customs, habits, and appearance photographed, before they modernize or blend themselves in with other peoples of India. Special kinds of fish traps Ramakrishna mentioned should be recorded pictorially before they all disappear. Equally, old blacksmiths' forges, Ganges steamers, *yātrā* performances, *kīrtans* of the old-fashioned kind, and all the traditional processes having to do with rice. The list could be added to endlessly. Some objects can be set up in museums as well as photographed. When Bengal is all modern and these objects, processes, and peoples are gone, how will devotees be able to understand the subtlety, precision, and deep significance of Ramakrishna's teachings, if something of this sort is not done?

I quite admit that, from the highest standpoint, much I have talked about this evening can be considered superficial. Our essential concern should be to try to know the Incarnation, not as mediated through relics, photographs, or biographies, however adequate, but as he is. True. Yet we cannot meet the king in the inner chamber without going through the halls of the palace. Reaching the king is important, but going there is important, too. It is all part and parcel of the same absorbing, challenging process.

NIHILISM IN MODERN INDIAN PAINTING

PROFESSOR O. C. GANGOLY

The new school of Indian painting founded at the beginning of the present century by Acharyya Abanindranath Tagore (under the inspiration of the late Mr. E. B. Havell, the champion of the spiritual forms of Indian art, which he, by

his seer's vision, discovered and placed before the whole world) has contributed richly to the culture of modern India, by creating a series of masterpieces of pictorial art, painted by the leader of the movement and his talented disciples—Nandalal Bose,

Surendranath Ganguly, Samarendranath Gupta, Asitkumar Halder, Kshitindranath Mazumdar, Deviprosad Roy Chowdhury—and a number of talented artists who were trained by the direct disciples. It is impossible to recount or refer to all the masterpieces that have illuminated the art-thoughts of these modern masters. Tagore's range of subject was surprisingly extensive: it ranged from Hindu and Buddhist mythology to Mogul history and the illustrations of the poems of the Persian mystic-poet, Omar Khayyam. Nandalal Bose specialized in depicting topics of the mystic mythology of Śaivism, and his great paintings on this subject have been praised by the best critics of the world. Surendranath Ganguly, who died very young, has left several shining pieces—notably, his presentation of Bhoja Rāja, Rṣi Nārada, and of the war-God Kārtikeya—which earned wide appreciation, being broadcast through Japanese process of colour reproduction. Kshitindranath Mazumdar, sometime professor in the Allahabad University, specialized in depicting the life of Caitanya, which is living in his pictures in a new glory and a new form of idealism. Another disciple, Asitkumar Halder, sometime principal in Lucknow School of Art, specialized in imaginative themes borrowed from Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, and later specialized in the illustrations of the poems of Rabindranath. His 'Flame of Music' is a dazzling flame that burns in the hearts of all thoughtful picture-lovers. Samarendranath Gupta did not specialize in particular themes, but helped the movement by contribution on a variety of topics. Deviprosad Roy Chowdhury, now praised as the best living sculptor of India, is a talented painter, who, besides painting wonderful landscapes, has been one of our best portrait painters of modern India.

During the last few years, a group of modern Indian painters in Calcutta,

Bombay, and New Delhi has been repudiating the national language of Indian painting, having a long historical tradition beginning from Mohenjo-daro paintings dating back to 3000 B.C. These painters are not only neglecting the national pictorial idiom, developed by Acharyya Abanindranath Tagore and his disciples referred to above, but are also turning their faces against the rich stores of Indian legends and stories recorded in our Indian epics and in the romantic classical Sanskrit literature. Generally, their pictures have no manner of subjects, topics, or motifs—Indian or otherwise—and their pictorial techniques consist of a bravado in brush-work, 'full of sound and fury signifying nothing'. These techniques are borrowed *not* from the masterpieces of Indian tradition, illustrated in the Buddhist, Gujarat, and Rajput schools, but from the practices of the 'Ism'-painters of Europe.

They justify their productions by claiming that the appeal of our Indian sagas—the brilliant legends of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*—have lost their appeal to the people of the present age, faced with numerous social, industrial, and economic problems, and the workers and labourers of modern India can derive no manner of inspiration from the legends and myths of ancient India. Besides, the ancient legendary motifs have exhausted their pictorial possibilities, just as the Christian motifs and subjects—once popular during the renaissance schools in Europe—have now failed to inspire the modernistic painters of the present age, whose technique and mannerism our Indian painters are blindly imitating, on the allegation that they are making new 'progress' in artistic conception and expression in which the old Indian traditions have no place.

By repudiating all manner of subject-matters—mythical, religious, or romantic—they have pushed pictorial art to non-rep-

representative forms, which deny the familiar forms of nature, and are resorting to meaningless distortions, abstractions, and negations of all aesthetic forms, which deny all manner of recognizable likenesses, thus developing an artistic *nihilism*.

Is it possible to justify this aesthetic nihilism—this creed of negation of forms, in the name of progress, which a section of our modern artists are practising to surprise and terrify the average person with normal visions who seeks in art beautiful and attractive forms? Some of our scriptures and cosmic theories preach that, when in an age evils predominate and familiar old conventions and social norms become distorted and useless for the good of society, our gods of destruction—Śiva as Naṭarāja, Kālī as the Angel of Destruction—step in with their dances of destruction and put an end to the old forms of life and stamp out the evils and old ideas which have encumbered our daily existence in *tāmasika* elements and which resist the functioning of *rājasika* and *sāttvika* elements. In such a state of tragedy, the only salvation lies in destroying the old order of things and to create new forms and new worlds. The gods then destroy in order to create a new system of values with proper *rājasika* and *sāttvika* potentialities. On this eternal cosmic principle, the modernists might claim that they are repudiating and destroying old and worn-out artistic conventions—forms, formulas, and techniques, subject-matters and motifs—in order to make way for a new order of aesthetic production. It has been well said: 'Death is the gateway to higher forms of life.' Our poet Tagore has said: 'I have dived into the sea of forms in order to achieve formlessness (*Rūp-sāgare dūb diyechi arūp-ratan āśā kari*).'

The end certainly justifies the means.

If the modernistic artists have an ambitious plan to create a new world of beauty, we could excuse their present mad activities to destroy old and respected artistic traditions, but as yet there is no indication—in this present career of destruction and terror—of a future creation of a new order of beauty.

Notes on the Illustrations

Rāga Dīpaka: Song of Flame (Picture I, facing p. 129): This illustration is a modern artist's attempt to visualize an ancient and well-known Indian melody of this name. The artist has not studied the examples of old Indian masterpieces interpreting the essence or *ethos* of this melody. He has not also studied the *sonal* values of the structural frame of the same. So that the picture does not succeed as an independent interpretation. It merely despises and repudiates the respectfully old and authoritative pattern of the picture. The great merit of this picture is that it is *not traditional*, that this is only a *negative* virtue, a mere negation!

Violinist: Player on violin (Picture II, facing p. 129): A man of normal vision will only recognize a violin, the instrument, but *not* the player on the instrument. The technique adopted is for the purpose of exemplifying the principle of 'simultaneity' (*yauga-patya*). The violin and the violinist are jumbled together, but not unified. It is merely a puzzle-picture to confuse an average lover of pictures. It is mere cleverness with *no* attempt to elevate the beholder to a high plane. This formula has been known in many modern French paintings, of which it is a mere imitation. James Joyce had applied the doctrine of 'simultaneity' in literary compositions, but it cannot be used in the composition of pictures with any notable aesthetic effect.

THE CONCEPT OF DUTY IN UTILITARIANISM, KANT, AND THE GĪTĀ

SRI R. D. MISRA

Duty means a debt required of a man by the moral law. It signifies whatever one is morally obliged to do, as opposed to what one may be pleased or inclined to do. Duty comes to us with a claim; it is a thing laid upon us to do whether we like it or not. Sometimes it also means the moral obligation itself and the law or principle in which it is expressed. Duty and moral obligation, therefore, commonly imply the possibility of temptations to go wrong. To do one's duty is to prefer the higher good to the lower, as determined by the ethical scale; it means action in accordance with what is best, in so far as this is possible and can be ascertained by the agent. In ethics, duty is commonly associated with conscience, reason, rightness, moral law, and virtue.

THE UTILITARIAN STANDARD OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

When a common man begins to reflect, the utilitarian standard of judging actions naturally appeals at first. Utilitarianism occupies, therefore, the first stage in the history of ethical speculation. It is the doctrine that the greatest happiness of the greatest number provides the ultimate ethical standard. It attempts to combine the theory that pleasure is the final good with the law of impartiality, according to which all persons have an equal right to a share of pleasure available. Accordingly, actions are good if they increase the happiness or diminish the pains of mankind. However, duty is regarded as applying, not to everything which is in accordance with ethical standard, but only to that portion of right conduct which is protected by an adequate sanction—politi-

cal, social, religious, or conscientious. The presence of the sense of duty in the individual consciousness is explained as due to the pressure of these sanctions demanding obedience; so that with the moralization of human nature, the feeling of duty or obligation may be expected to disappear.

Jeremy Bentham was the first to give a definite shape to the principle of utility as an ethical system. For him, an action that ought to be done is one conforming to the principle of utility, and moral obligation has no other meaning. The moral problem for every individual consists in the way in which he seeks to obtain his own happiness. If he seeks it through means contrary to happiness of other persons, his actions are not good. It is by working for the happiness of people in general that he finds the greatest happiness for himself and thus achieves the only life that can be called good. The principle of utility is the tendency on the part of the individual to increase the amount of happiness which may be experienced by the members of the society as a whole. The two essential factors worth consideration are the number of persons who experience the pleasure and the effects which any given pleasure will have on the rest of life's activities.

Mill holds that actions are right in proportion to the happiness they tend to produce, wrong if they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. But to him the utilitarian standard of goodness is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned. In choosing between his own pleasures and that of others, each individual must be as strictly impartial as 'a benevolent and disinterested spectator'. In order to overcome the conflict which frequently arises

when someone's pleasures are not in harmony with the greatest amount of happiness for other people, Mill appeals to two principles: first, the external sanctions provided by the forces of law, public opinion, and religious belief; secondly, the internal sanctions from which arises the primal source of altruistic conduct, namely, the feeling of unity with our fellow creatures. Because man is a sympathetic creature, he cannot experience the full measure of happiness for himself until he has identified his own pleasure with the happiness of all his fellow men. Unlike Bentham, Mill accepts qualitative differences in pleasure.

Sidgwick tried to provide a more rationalistic basis to utilitarianism than was done by his predecessors. To him, just as there are certain axioms or self-evident truths in mathematics, so there are maxims that have to do with moral conduct; and while these serve as the foundation of a science of right and wrong, their application to specific problems must be worked out in the course of human experience. His three moral axioms are: the maxims of 'Justice', 'Prudence', and 'Benevolence'. By the first he means that whatever action anyone of us judges to be right for himself, he implicitly judges to be right for all similar persons in similar circumstances. By the second is meant that a smaller present good is not to be preferred to a greater future good, because each part of life has equal worth. And by the third he means that each one is morally bound to regard the good of every other individual as much as his own.

To all utilitarian moralists, therefore, all that is meant by saying we ought to do an action is that, if we do not do it, we shall suffer. A desire to obtain happiness and to avoid pain is the only possible motive to action. The reason, and the only reason, why we should perform virtuous action is

that, on the whole, such a course will bring us the greatest amount of happiness. So if we ask them what constitutes virtuous and what vicious actions, we are told that the first are those which increase the happiness or diminish the pains of mankind; and the second are those which have the opposite effect. And if we ask what is the motive to virtue, we are told that it is an enlightened self-interest. In our Indian thought, an echo of such utilitarian principle is found in the *Raghuvamśa* (Canto II), where the lion asks the king not to offer himself to the former as the king's life will benefit many, while his death will only save the cow, one living being alone. Again, in *Udyogaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, we find such a view held as that smaller end should be given up in preference to the higher and higher interests.

THE INADEQUACY OF THE UTILITARIAN PRINCIPLE

But if carried to its logical conclusions, utilitarian principle of conduct would prove subversive of all morality, and specially unfavourable to self-denial and heroism. It is a complete though common mistake to suppose that the business of the moralist is merely to explain the genesis of certain feelings we possess. At the root of all morals lies an intellectual judgement which is clearly distinct from liking or disliking, pleasure or pain. A man who has injured his position by some perfectly foolish but innocent act may experience an emotion of self-reproach or of shame quite as acute as if he had committed a crime. But he is at the same time clearly conscious that this conduct is not the fit subject for moral reprobation, that the grounds on which it may be condemned are of a different and lower kind. The utilitarian standard of duty is therefore subject to the following points of criticism:

1. It is a self-evident truth that rewards

and punishments, though necessary to enforce, are not yet necessary to constitute duty.

2. Even when the conflict between strong passions and a strong sense of duty does not exist, it is impossible to measure the degrees of virtue by the scale of enjoyment. The highest nature is rarely the happiest.

3. The sense of duty and the sense of utility remain perfectly distinct and separable in the apprehensions of mankind; to say that a certain course of conduct is pleasing is plainly different from what men mean when they say we ought to pursue it.

4. Human beings are after all rational beings, and by the virtue of his rationality, man is capable of far higher and greater pursuits than pleasure alone. Knowledge, beauty, truth, goodness, etc. are not merely means to something beyond but are ends in themselves, and must be aimed at for their own sake.

5. Obviously enough, we could never have known it our duty to seek the happiness of mankind when it diverged from our own, without natural moral concepts.

6. Lastly, the notion of pure disinterestedness is presupposed in our estimation of virtue. It is the root of all the motions with which we contemplate acts of heroism. We feel that man is capable of pursuing what he believes to be right although pain and disaster, mental suffering and an earthly death, be the consequence, and although no prospect of future reward lightens his tomb.

KANT'S CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

The utilitarian account of right conduct being found utterly inadequate, let us pass on to Kant, who, in an attempt to make absolutely clear its objectivity, presses the logic of duty to its final conclusions. He thinks that what is right is right whether

we like it or not, and were it not that the right thus stands out as something objective and authoritative over and against our private inclinations, the notion of duty would have no meaning. Morality does not begin to exist until this contrast is felt and takes effect. For him an action has no moral worth unless it is done from a sense of duty. An action that expresses nothing but the present inclination of the agent tells us nothing about his character. What he does from inclination today, he may likewise from inclination refuse to do tomorrow. The commands of duty, therefore, do not wait upon our inclination and the imperative of duty is a 'Categorical Imperative'.

For him, the morality of an action lies in the principle with which the will consciously identifies itself, in other words, in the motive. The only good motive is a consciousness of duty. A man may act honestly in order to flourish in his profession by securing other's confidence. But if the consciousness of duty is not the ruling motive, such actions are merely prudent and have no moral worth. Even a lie told with the intention of preventing a murder is unconditionally wrong, because the effects of the lie have nothing to say to its morality. All the motives, except duty, are morally worthless since they are forms of inclination; they are desires for pleasures or private happiness. We have thus a sharp contrast between motive and effect, and within the sphere of motives, another sharp contrast between duty and inclination. The characteristic of the moral motive is that it has its worth in itself; whereas all other motives derive their worth from the effects that follow.

Kant holds that duty is the action to which a person is bound. The moral law is not dependent upon the special characteristics of the individual or even of the race. It is the law that ought to be obeyed

by all rational beings, under all circumstances, and for its own sake. Its form is therefore universal, and this fact makes it binding on rational beings only, since they alone are capable of conceiving universal laws, and ~~not~~ accordingly. From these considerations, he deduces the formula of the Categorical Imperative: Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.

The notion of duty, thus, stands in immediate relation to a law, as is shown by the formal principle of duty, the Categorical Imperative. In ethics, however, it is conceived as the law of thy own will, not of will in general, which might be that of others; for, in the latter case, it would give rise to a juridical duty. All duties involve a notion of necessitation by the law, and ethical duties, unlike juridical ones, involve a necessitation for which only an internal legislation is possible. Hence, the main distinction between moral and pragmatic law is that while the former requires a disposition, only action is required in the latter. Governments ordain not dispositions but only actions. They do not have any power to control our dispositions. Therefore, none—not even God—can be the author of the law of morality, since they have no origin in our will. We ourselves are obliged to be moral, for morality implies a natural promise; otherwise, it could not impose any obligation upon us. We owe obedience only to those who can protect us, and for that, morality alone is capable.

Accordingly, an act is done from a sense of duty and has moral worth only: (1) when the direct inclination is temporarily suppressed, as the love of life is suppressed when our life is a very wretched one; or (2) when in a particular person, the inclination is entirely lacking, as natural sympathy is in some people; or (3) when natural inclination, though not absent, is

weaker than some other inclination, as a gouty man's desire for his happiness in general may be weaker than his desire for the momentary pleasure of the table. Here Kant insists that there is no opposition between sense of duty and inclination, but that there is a complete difference between the two. It results, then, that an action done from a sense of duty derives its moral worth, not from its ensuing benefits, but from the maxim by which it is determined. Our respect for the moral law is only the subjective ground of duty; the objective ground is the law itself.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST KANT'S VIEW

Kant's historic success over the utilitarian view lies in his intuition that the worth of an action consists in what it is meant to produce rather than what it in fact, and perhaps by mere accident, produces. He is perfectly right in holding that the sense of duty is the highest motive, and his intuition will ever remain as one of the landmarks in the history of moral speculation. But when worked out in detail, following objections can be raised against his view:

1. Kant's maxim that man should always act so that the rule of his conduct might be adopted as a law by all rational beings may be very useful as a guide in life; but in order that it would acquire moral weight, it is necessary to presuppose the sense of moral obligation, the consciousness that duty, when discovered, has a legitimate claim to be the guiding principle of our lives. And it is this element which, in the eye of reason, the mere association of ideas can never furnish.

2. Kant thinks that when we act from a sense of duty, our will is determined by its formal principle alone. But a true account of moral act must include both elements—good action done with a sense of duty and good action done with a pur-

pose. He himself admits that seeking of an end is one aspect of the nature of good action. In fact, rightness of an action springs from its specific nature, because the ground of rightness of all right acts is not the same.

3. Sometimes there is a conflict between two alike strong duties prompting us, and for this problem, Kant offers no solution. His view is that we have simply to grasp the general principle under which the case falls, and act accordingly; but the case may fall under more than one general principle, and we have still to consider which is to guide our choice.

4. Kant admits that respect is a feeling, but tells that it is a feeling raised in us directly by a rational concept, not received through external influence. But while the awareness of duty is sometimes accompanied only by respect, we never do our duty unless desire to do it is also present.

5. Lastly, with Mill, it may be objected that Kant neither attempts to make out a list of the *a priori* principles which are to serve as the premises of the science, nor makes any effort to reduce those various principles to one first principle or common ground of obligation.

THE CONSUMMATE IDEAL OF THE GĪTĀ

But in spite of all these shortcomings, Kant's notion has both theoretical and practical value, and comes very close to the one yet to be considered, namely, the view of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. It may be remarked in passing, however, that one of the facts most obvious to the present-day moralists about duty, viz its social origin, does not figure with quite the same prominence in Kant's abstract analysis. What Kant is concerned to show is that the consciousness of duty is the consciousness of an objective law of conduct, which, of course, is a social law, because it is equally binding upon all men, and pays no regard to

the private inclinations of the individual.

The *Gītā* deals with the natural queries that face a man at critical moments of life, when he does not realize which is the proper line of action to follow and feels confused with conflicting emotions and ideas. All through Śrī Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to perform his duty on the battlefield, since the latter was confused regarding the nature of duty. Must a man cling to his worldly duties even if they bring suffering and pain to himself and others? Is it not our duty to cast off duties and follow the line of least resistance, viz a life of non-activity? This was Arjuna's dilemma, and this is the dilemma we often face in our everyday life. Arjuna's confusion was due to his attachment and egoism. Lord Kṛṣṇa points out to him the imperative nature of duty and its usefulness as a spiritual discipline. However, it is not the stoic ideal of duty for duty's sake that Lord Kṛṣṇa preaches, rather it is the spiritual idea of duty for God's sake. Duty must be performed to please God alone; brooding over the results has nothing to do with the performance of duty. God is immanent in the universe. He is the indwelling soul of all beings. So every duty is an act of worship. Duty performed in this spirit confers joy upon the doer, irrespective of success and failure. Indeed, there is a joy in being made an instrument of God, there is a joy in being used by Him, and there is a joy in being set aside when the instrument is broken or has served its purpose.

Men suffer because they regard themselves as doers. When once they realize that Lord alone is the doer, then their duty, whatever its nature may be, will bring them joy and satisfaction. It will bring them spiritual success. As ordinary individuals, we have our respective duties to perform; we cannot neglect them. We have to be alive fully to the demands of our

practical life, domestic as well as social. But as human mind is a complex one, one cannot be sure as to whether one's actual course of conduct is good or otherwise. Naturally, therefore, the question arises, what is good and what is bad? Now all the Indian systems of thought agree in that the Self is the highest reality and Self-realization the greatest good. Accordingly, the type of action and mental attitude that lead to Self-realization are good, and those which take us away from that are bad. But in order to keep one's heart pure, one has to cultivate certain virtues. But the problem is how to keep pure while placed in hard situations of life. The most important and profound teaching of the *Gītā* concerns with the solution of this problem, and the solution offered by the *Gītā* is the famous doctrine of *karma-yoga*, of doing one's duty clear of all consequences, without any hope of reward and fear of punishment.

On the one hand, therefore, one should desist from a desire for the results of one's actions and, on the other, from any desire to avoid the duties. With a detached spirit and pure heart, one should continue in one's daily life of responsibilities and activity. The true *yoga* which should inspire *karma* is the equanimity of mind in success and failure. When one gives up all desire for the results of one's actions, one is emancipated from the bondage of birth, and transcends the sphere of all spiritual duties. Such a man may be said to have gained true enlightenment and wisdom. So he who has his senses under proper control and is always attuned to God is always in a state of peace. The *Gītā*, thus, repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of performing duties remaining absolutely unattached to the consequences. But mere cessation of work is not renouncement. One may give up physical actions, but still be mentally attached to the sense-objects.

It is therefore desirable that one should always continue one's proper duties and attain inactivity only by ceasing to desire the fruits of one's actions. Even the wise who have renounced all fruits of actions and have nothing to seek for themselves will continue their duties, if only to set an example to others. They should carry on their duties for the good of all. Therefore, the caste-duties and the duties of *āśrama* are obligatory.

Quite in harmony with our cultural tradition, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* thus propounds the principle of caste-duties. A man should regard his caste-duties as *dharma* and perform them without any idea of fulfilment of any of his desires. The *dharma* of a man is determined by his past experiences and tendencies. Education and environment only help a man to manifest what he has inherited from his own past. Heredity supplies him with the physical means of working out his *dharma*. So a man's *dharma* is the basis of mental actions, and he cannot get rid of it any more than a dreaming person can get rid of his dream. To try to act against one's *dharma* is to do violence to one's nature. The duty determined by a man's *dharma* is his natural duty. That is the only real thing for him; all other duties are alien to his nature, imposed from outside, and, therefore, sources of confusion. No sin can come to a man who performs his own caste-duties. Even if one's caste-duties are sinful and wrong, it would not be wrong for a man to perform them. So Lord Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to cling to his own *Kṣatriya-dharma*, and to fight his enemies in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. If he did not engage himself in that fight, which was his duty, he would not only lose his reputation, but would also transgress his own *dharma*, since better is one's own *dharma* imperfectly performed than the *dharma* of another well performed.

The *Gītā* undertakes a detailed description of the virtues of the four castes and their duties. The hierarchy in the caste-system is determined by the degree of voluntary renunciation, poverty, self-control, and spiritual attainments. A Brāhmin has to suppress many impulses for physical enjoyment. A Kṣatriya no doubt may enjoy power and pelf, but must be ready in times of need to lay down his life for protecting his country and humanity at large. The moral code of a Vaiśya is not so high as those of the other two castes. He amasses wealth for his own welfare as well as that of the society. It is only from a Śudra that not much of moral perfection is expected.

Apart from the above duties, there are some common duties that must be performed by all persons regardless of their caste differences, though these are in force only when they do not conflict with the former. The *Gītā* itself is an example of it. In spite of the fact that Arjuna was extremely unwilling to take the lives of his near and dear kinsmen in the battle, Lord Kṛṣṇa persuades him and points out that it was his clear duty as a Kṣatriya to fight. Above all the caste and common duties, the *Gītā* repeatedly speaks of sacrifices, *tapas*, and gifts as duties which cannot be ignored at any stage of our spiritual development. However, their performance, either for the attainment of selfish ends or for making a display of pomp and pride, is badly deplored. It is merely from a sense of duty and public good that the sacrifices are to be performed and gifts made.

This profound teaching of the *Gītā* implies, first, that the higher is one's position in the caste-system, the greater is one's obligation to members of the lower caste, and more stern is the renunciation of personal comforts. Its design of the caste system is meant to promote the harmoni-

ous working of society, the weak being assured of protection from the strong. Mahatma Gandhi has rightly remarked that the caste system has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority, but 'is a law of spiritual discipline'. When a person belonging to a lower caste becomes a saint, he is honoured even by the Brāhmins. The disciplines for spiritual development are not, indeed, withheld from anyone. Secondly, the *Gītā* encourages the performance of duties and exhorts men to perform them not from a sense of compulsion, as Kant did, but through love of God. It is quite practical, indeed; for, unless a man is inspired by love, he cannot cheerfully perform his duty at home, in the office, in the factory, or on the battle field. However, this love is not sentimentality, but springs from perception of God in all living beings. Work done under the impulsion of duty deepens a man's attachment to the world, but when performed through love, it brings him nearer to God. And lastly, it is the ideal of *svadharma*, determined by one's own inner nature and not imposed from outside, which, as the philosophical basis of Indian caste-system, is mainly responsible for the cohesion and integrity of the Hindu society during the past several thousand years.

It is generally thought that there is an obvious point of agreement between the views of Kant and the *Gītā*, as both enunciate that duty must be done with a sheer sense of duty, regardless of consequences. But as this paper has tried to make it evident, this consequence does not hold the same place in both these systems, because the premises from which they start are quite different. However, an account of the vast differences between the two systems is not being undertaken here. It may justifiably be remarked in conclusion that, whereas the utilitarian notion of right conduct seems too narrow and superfluous

as happiness alone is not the sole and actual end of human life, Kant's view is too rigorous and least practicable for the modern materialistic world. It is only the *Gītā* view that presents a most compromising and practicable prospect before human beings, since the path of duty prescribed in it, if properly followed, can enable one to get rid of this miserable life and achieve the highest hidden therein.

FAITH: AN APPROACH TO REALITY

DR. DEBABRATA SINHA

The widely used term 'faith' may be understood in a *philosophical* context, as distinguished from the religious and the practical. Defined philosophically, faith seems to have a unique bearing, essentially in respect of *knowledge*, upon the approach to ultimate Reality, essentially marking a fulfilment in the knowledge of the ultimate ground of existence. In this light, the typical orientation of philosophical faith in Advaita Vedānta will be reviewed in this essay.

PHILOSOPHIC FAITH AND EXISTENTIALISM

Faith in the philosophical sense has to be distinguished from at least two other uses of the concept: (1) religious or theological and (2) common sense. What is meant in religious faith is a special organ of accepting certain spiritual (allegedly supersensuous) truths, in a way quite different from the process of intellectual knowing. Such supposedly *non-intellectual* mode of belief usually implies the authority of relevant scriptures in communicating spiritual truths. In common use, however, faith does not refer to any supersensuous truth, but to *empirical* facts. Here also there is a belief in authority, but rather a *working* belief as to certain empirical truths.

If philosophic faith should bear any special meaning, it is to be marked by its *theoretic* motive. It is a faith that is grounded in itself, a faith which is theoreti-

cally justified. Moreover, such faith should not necessarily involve authority of any kind as organic to philosophic consciousness. Even if such authority be at all implied, it may be understood *philosophically*, and not as arbitrarily religious.

Primarily, philosophic faith should imply mere assurance or certitude as to a truth that is yet unperceived, though supposed. Besides, it may also mean substantiating the object (*ideal* as it may be), to which faith is directed. And there seems to be hardly any necessary incompatibility between these two steps—ideationally grasping the real as *possible* and *concretely* realizing the same. Faith may find its ideal fulfilment in combining both the aspects, the latter standing for the fruition of the former. This is indeed conveyed by the more concrete expression 'to realize'.

To be more exact, philosophical faith indicates, at the first instance, *ontological possibility*, i.e., the possible self-subsistence of ontic entities or idealities, not as mere abstractions but as metaphysically real. However, in order to comprehend the full meaning of possibility as concrete reality, the *cognitive* context of possibility has to be taken into consideration. The ontological possibility does imply, in philosophical faith, the ultimate realizability, too, of the ontic idealities as *real*.

Such *cognitive* possibility should come out in sharp contrast to the volitional or moral aspect of faith, particularly in the religious context. It concerns affirmation of truth, and not a volitional surrender to the truth affirmed; it is belief, not trust. Consequently, any sense of moral valuation is also excluded from such belief in the ontological ground as capable of being ultimately realized. Such realizability may be regarded as being grounded in the essential nature of Being, rather than in the *moral* urge of human nature. To borrow the expression of Nicolai Hartmann, the German philosopher, it is a case of 'ought-to-be' rather than one of 'ought-to-do'. (cf. Hartmann: *Ethics*, Vol. I, Ch. IV) The 'ought' here does not imply moral obligation; it rather implies the *ideal* modality, characterizing idealities as subsisting independent of the order of actuality.

In most of the western philosophies, we find the philosophic search after Being, or the ultimate condition of existents, as proceeding primarily in *conceptual* terms, in terms of general essences. But there have been philosophies too, which do not seem to rest with the mere ideational comprehension of Reality, but seem further to be interested in the fuller comprehension of Reality *in concrete*. In this connexion, one may as well mention existentialism, at least so far as the issue of *actuality* over possibility, of reality over ideality, is concerned. Existentialism, a relatively recent movement in European thought and culture, has certainly brought into forefront the issue of *existence* as concrete and actual.

For the existentialist, *existence* presents no problem, to be comprehended *intellectually*. Reality is not considered to be a concept, which is definable and analysable. Existence is neither conceived as the character of the objectively accomplished

real, nor is it grounded in 'essence'; rather, it is fundamentally *prior* to essence. Indeed, existence is taken to be ever in the process of subjectively oriented becoming and not as an accomplished fact. And the different existentialist thinkers are chiefly concerned with the subjective mode of encountering existence, rather than with the general nature (or essence) of existence as such. For the existentialist, subjectivity is the home of concrete being, to which we have access in a way other than the intellectual. Hence, his characteristic emphasis on the *non-intellectual*, though not necessarily supra-intellectual, approach through volitional-emotive phases of individual consciousness.

METAPHYSICAL FAITH IN THE CONTEXT OF ADVAITA VEDANTA

Coming now to the role of metaphysical faith in the context of Advaita Vedānta, we have first to take into account the general standpoint of the Advaita metaphysics, formulated in its doctrine of Being (Sat) as of the nature of pure consciousness (*cit*). On the one hand, *cit* may be understood as the ultimate essence of subjectivity, and as such may be referred to as *pure* consciousness. But such *cit*, so far as it is viewed in the light of *essence* (which comes out in reflection as autonomous), stands, after all, as *possible* rather than as actual. So the question remains: How to obtain the possibly self-subsisting underlying essence of consciousness as ontologically *real*, and not merely as *possible* for the reflective mind? It is a question in the long run about the actualization of the possible.

It can hardly be denied that the Advaita would, indeed, be the last philosophy to confine itself within the bounds of mere ideal possibility, rather than gaining the ontological standpoint of Being as absolute reality. And such ontological principle is

not simply knowable—conceptually or logically—but is also essentially realizable. Thus, Śaṅkarācārya, in his commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra* (I. i. 1), refers to the highest knowledge of Self or Being as but culminating in the fullest and concrete comprehension—*avagatiparyantam jñānam*. Such complete comprehension or realization is enabled through the enlightened faith alone—a point to be discussed in this essay.

What is spoken of in the context of the Vedāntic thought and culture is faith in the knowability of the highest essence (i.e. *cit*) as reality *par excellence*. As pertaining to knowing (of a fuller type), such faith should not indicate a surrender of the reflective process to the demand of moral consciousness—what Kant would call ‘practical reason’, as distinguished from ‘pure reason’. Moreover, the said enlightened faith should not be taken for any premature emotive-volitional attitude, as may well be found in the case of existentialism, to which I have already referred. Rather, it signifies a fulfilment of the *cognitive* demand in the pathway of a reflective critique of experience itself.

Now, in the context of the Vedāntic analysis of experience, such faith-approach may bear twofold implications: (1) There is reference to the authority of the revealed scriptures (*Śruti*) as the repository of the highest spiritual truths and insights, and the consequent acceptance of verbal testimony—(*Śruti-prāmāṇya*); (2) On ultimate analysis, faith would mean the very realization of Being.

SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

The tradition of the scriptural source of spiritual truths has a significant bearing upon the Vedāntic search for Reality. The statements from the scriptures carry a special claim for the aspirant after the highest enlightenment, primarily by virtue

of their traditional sanctity. A scriptural statement (*āptavākya*) is recognized to be uniquely distinct from an ordinary statement in matters of ultimate truth.

In this connexion, it may occur to the modern philosophic mind that to anchor a philosophy on such traditional authority would be the very antithesis of the truly philosophic spirit. The Vedāntic appeal to verbal testimony (*śabda*), however, should be viewed in the proper perspective. It is, after all, a truism that even the philosopher has to participate in the concrete life-blood of an underlying cultural tradition. As such, an *alogical* acceptance of the reality of such tradition may as well precede a reflective and rational appreciation of the same, thus implying what may be in a sense characterized as an *existentialistic* attitude at the root.

This metaphysical assurance, derived from scriptural testimony rather existentially, may also correspond to our common experience with regard to objective facts and events. While any spoken word as such conveys nothing more than a bare tentative possibility as regards the reality of that which is meant, such *prima facie* belief varies at the same time according to the hearer’s faith in the speaker concerned. When, for instance, a fact is narrated by one in whom I may have faith (in the ordinary sense of reliability), I tend to believe the fact to be actual, even though it happens to be beyond the scope of my present experience. The case would, however, be different, if I have scarcely any faith in the narrator.

Scriptural faith would differ from the ordinary faith through words in two important ways. Firstly, unlike ordinary verbal faith, scriptural faith does not offer any possibility of *empirical* verification, as the truth-content here is non-empirical in character. Secondly, what is conveyed by ordinary speech is, after all, *bare* possibil-

ity, which in any case would fall short of *valid* possibility. But the verbal testimony of the scriptures—usually represented by the preceptor (*guru*), in whom the aspirant hearer has necessary faith (*śraddhā*)—should yield valid possibility. Thus, what such scriptural testimony guarantees is the absolute reality of the supreme essence, on the one hand, and the ultimate realizability of Reality in concrete, on the other.

However, it has to be noted that even the verbal testimony of the scriptures could yield only mediate (*parokṣa*) knowledge, and not immediate. A distant, though valid, possibility that the Real exists and that it can ultimately be known in concrete immediacy, is obtained through *śabda-prāmāṇya*. However mediate such knowledge, born of *śabda*, may be, it has nevertheless a validity of its own, by virtue of being revealed knowledge. That the import of mediate knowledge is capable of being realized in its immediacy is assured through scriptural authority itself. Within the field of empirical knowledge, inference can indeed give us some sort of possibility on the basis of the data available, and such possibility rests on its being verifiable (in the empirical sense). But in the case of *śruti-prāmāṇya*, the transcendent non-empirical reality is meant, and there is hardly any scope for empirical verification. What it misses in the shape of verification seems to be more than gained, thanks to scriptural testimony.

VEDĀNTIC SEARCH FOR REALITY

The Vedāntic search after Reality would not stop with the mere assurance of *realizability* born of verbal testimony. It proposes to pass on to the final phase of *realization* itself—to the complete actualization of the *possible* ultimate essence, that is Cit. The search after the supreme Essence by way of knowledge, issued from

scriptural words, is ultimately to mature into the concrete immediacy of Being itself—Being that is of the nature of pure consciousness. The admission of immediate knowledge born of scriptural texts (*śabdayanyajñāna*) marks the typical Advaitic approach to the issue of Self-knowledge, or the knowledge of Reality.

Such cardinal scriptural texts as 'Thou art That' (*Tat tvam asi*) have a direct bearing upon the Vedāntic discipline, not as merely theoretical statements, but as the point of departure for the enlightenment, through integral comprehension, of Reality. The latter alone marks the final aim of Vedānta. The primary knowledge of Reality, with the certainty as may be derived from scriptural texts, does not by itself imply the fullest comprehension. Scriptural texts, however, are not, for the matter of that, without any efficacy for bringing about final enlightenment. In common experience, we do find words serving as useful agents for bringing home direct to the wandering mind the truth it had been searching without success. The analogy of 'the tenth man' (*daśamas-tvam-asi*), a homely example in Advaita literature, strikes on this very point.

Cognition through verbal testimony has to be analysed further in the light of Vedāntic realization. Firstly, there should arise from scriptural texts *indirect* knowledge concerning the *existence* of the supreme Being. There are texts declaring the latter as real (*sat*), as existing (*asti*). All that such existential statements yield is the assured, but still indirect, knowledge of Reality. In its lack of directness, verbal knowledge is *prima facie* no less mediate (*parokṣa*) than inferential cognition, as already pointed out.

In order that the instructions in scriptural texts may yield its intended result, viz the fullest comprehension of Self, the import of the texts referring to the essen-

tial Self has to be understood. Intermediate stages of gradual apprehension of the ultimate essence, finally meant by the scriptures, are thus necessitated. Through repeated guidance from relevant scriptural texts, the gradual apprehension of the Essence, that is Consciousness pure, is effected in progressive approximation. As, on the one hand, the inessential associations (*upādhi*) of Cit are dissociated, so the essence-content as such gets more and more purified. For the ultimate essence that stands behind all intermediate contents remains involved within the manifold associations of body, sense-organs, mental factors, and so on.

So far as the steps of reflection are prompted by scriptural instructions, the immediacy of knowledge, resulting from scriptural statements, if admitted, should hardly be taken without qualification. Indeed, the Bhāmatī school of Advaita stresses on the *mediacy* of knowledge as effected through verbal testimony (*śabdaparokṣa-vāda*) rather than its *immediacy* (*śabdāparokṣa*) as the Vivaraṇa school would prefer to hold. However, apart from the external difference between the two schools, often more exaggerated than not, the essential agreement bearing upon the funda-

mental *knowing* approach should not be overlooked. While the Vivaraṇa school advocates the immediate character of scriptural knowledge, it maintains at the same time subsequent reflection and meditation to be necessary in order to yield immediate revelation of Reality. The purification of the mind is thus insisted upon. As Śaṅkara remarks, the realization of Self may be attained by the mind, purified through proper discipline and aided by scriptural instructions from the teacher (who should enjoy the fullest reliance of the student).

Thus, with the final integral mode of consciousness (*akhaṇḍa-dhī*), which takes the self-accomplished Being as its object, the concrete real being of the ultimate essence of consciousness, comes to be realized. The ontological ground, the existential context of which alone was so far cognized in the form of 'That' behind the ultimate essence of consciousness, would stand comprehended in its concreteness, thanks to the verbal testimony of Śruti. So, the apparently *dogmatic* step of accepting metaphysical possibility on the ground of faith in the scriptural testimony should obtain its fulfilment in, and in the path of, perfect *knowledge*.

THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

In Vedāntic literature, the goal of man's spiritual search, Brahman, has been described in different terms under different contexts. Thus, we have '*satyam*' (truth), '*sat*' (being), '*ānandam*' or '*rasa*' (bliss), and '*amṛtam*' (immortality). The word 'Īśvara', supreme Ruler, is common from the viewpoint of theism. The non-dualistic standpoint, on the other hand, equates Brahman with Ātman, the Self.

However, the most interesting and meaningful epithets to indicate the highest reality are *jñānam*, *cit*, *saṁvit*, and *prajñānam*, all of which can be translated as consciousness. To designate the foremost spiritual objective as consciousness is to put our metaphysical inquiry on a very simple basis, because consciousness is a matter of familiar experience. Everybody is aware of his own consciousness, which is

needed continually for thinking and action. Now, if we are told that this well-known component of our thoughts and activities is in some way the ultimate reality, we may be perplexed; but surely we are bound to feel a kind of closeness to the Highest and a resulting assurance. Brahman may not then be the mystery of mysteries, for is not our own consciousness as clear as daylight?

THE TWO APPROACHES TO STUDY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Western philosophers, psychologists, and physiologists have tried to examine and formulate the nature of consciousness from different viewpoints, and as a result of this, we have a wide variety of opinions about the origin and functioning of consciousness. Many of these theories oppose one another, and a conclusion about consciousness acceptable to all seems to be a very remote possibility. However, on the following points, these theories appear to have no disagreement:

(1) Consciousness is a mental phenomenon intimately related to our brain and nervous system;

(2) It has no independent existence. Its birth, growth, and waking depend upon several factors, namely, our sense organs, external stimuli, and many physiological functions of our body;

(3) Consciousness is a sort of guiding light for the biological organism. It is essential for purposive behaviour.

Modern thinkers seem to have been more interested in how consciousness originates and functions than in what consciousness is. Again, it is difficult for them to look upon consciousness as an entity independent of the object one is conscious of. We are always conscious of *something*—a wall, a flying bird, a sound, a touch, some odour, a thought or emotion within our mind, and so on. Objectless

consciousness, according to western thought, is an absurdity. However, we should not miss noticing one important point in this connexion. In the objective study of consciousness outside ourselves, we actually do not perceive consciousness as such, but phenomena associated with consciousness. A man shows his fist in anger, a woman smiles in happiness, an insect crawls in search of food—these are purposive phenomena. From these phenomena, we infer that the man, the woman, and the insect are conscious beings. We never come into direct contact with their consciousness. Direct perception is possible only with regard to our own consciousness. For ourselves, consciousness is self-revealed. Is it not proper, then, that in the study of consciousness we give an important place to self-introspection?

Objective study of purposive behaviour can never give us any clue to the nature of consciousness. Probably, it is not necessary for science to dive into the nature of consciousness by self-introspection. It can well afford to remain satisfied with observing the phenomena of consciousness objectively outside. But western psychological science should not be dogmatic in asserting that the domain of consciousness extends thus far and no farther.

In fact, the sphere of consciousness is infinitely vast. We can study it on different levels. On each of these levels, our approach can be objective as well as subjective. The objective approach gives us what consciousness on a particular level *does*. The subjective approach is necessary to determine what consciousness on that level *is*.

THE INTUITIVE METHOD

If we take recourse to self-introspection and try to think about our own consciousness, it may not be difficult to observe that our consciousness is like a territory where

all our experiences take place. Just as all objects have to be in space and all events have to occur in time, so all experiences have to be associated with awareness. When we perceive our body or anything outside the body, we are 'aware' of it. When we watch a thought or an emotion within ourselves, the process has to be accompanied by consciousness. When we are reading a book, listening to music, making an experiment in the laboratory or when we are walking or playing, consciousness must be present in the background of our mind. Even to perceive time and space, we need consciousness first. Thought is no thought unless we are conscious of it. We cannot speak of life if we dissociate it from our consciousness. Our very existence is a conscious existence. Consciousness surrounds us at every phase of our life. We cannot approach a single point of the universe without our awareness. So long as we are awake, we cannot run away from our consciousness. Is it then unreasonable to view consciousness as a fundamental reality like time and space?

This all-embracing characteristic of consciousness can be understood only when we approach it through our own intuition. Viewed objectively in another subject like a dog or a worm or even a man, consciousness is merely inferred as some unique quality of the biological organism, strictly limited within the organism, functioning under certain circumstances, and subsiding when its function is over. It has no more intrinsic value than our hunger or thirst. In this objective view, there is no continuity of consciousness. It is strictly a psychobiological phenomenon within the organism. It comes and goes with the impulse producing it. However, when we approach consciousness through our own intuition, it no longer remains a matter of inference. We are right in the midst of the glow of our own awareness. There is no break in that

glow. Objects, internal (thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc.) and external (houses, gardens, men, animals, etc.), pass before that glow in continuous succession and are instantly 'known' to us. These objects are the forms, the ideas, characterized by mobility and change. But that which links these objects with knowledge is the immutable consciousness in us, vast, immeasurable, self-existent. It is the core of our personality. It is also the core of the universe of our experience. All existence rests in that consciousness.

Though the true nature of our consciousness has to be grasped by our own intuition, it does not mean that any and every person could have that knowledge without paying any price. The intuition that reveals Brahman as Consciousness is, in fact, a rare acquisition. It has to be developed by years of patient inquiry and discipline. The *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* (I. ii. 24) makes it plain that what prevents the ever-existent Self from being comprehended is our own foolishness: 'He who has not first turned away from wickedness, who is not tranquil and subdued, and whose mind is not at peace cannot attain the Ātman.'

CONSCIOUSNESS: BOUND AND FREE

As a convenient approach to the understanding of the true nature of consciousness, we can classify consciousness under two broad heads, free and bound. In its true nature, consciousness is always free. It has no birth or death. It undergoes no change under any circumstance. It is not bound by time or space or by causal laws. It is the highest immortal reality, Brahman. We, as conscious human beings, are always sharing that reality.

Consciousness becomes 'bound' when it enters into subject-object relationship. Thus, all the thinking and knowing of our empirical life are manifestations of consciousness in bondage. Vedānta would

say that this bondage is only apparent. The true nature of consciousness as Brahman can never undergo any modification or blemish. The apparent transitoriness of consciousness has to be ascribed to the mind with which consciousness is associated. Mental modifications (*vr̥ttis*) come and go, but not the consciousness which illumines them. But, in our practical life, this immobility of consciousness is not detectable. As a rule, we mix it up with the *vr̥ttis* of the mind, and so, for us, consciousness is transient, fragmentary, and variable. No wonder that some western scientists would equate consciousness with vibrations in the brain.

Consciousness in bondage characterized by subject-object relationship shows itself on many levels besides our familiar waking experience. Dream is one such. In the dream state, we have a perfectly valid world with its manifold objects and happenings in its own time-space-causality frame. Only when the dream breaks do we realize the absurdities and falsities of its events. In deep sleep again, we find another level of consciousness quite different from that in waking or dream. Here the object is not manifold, but a unified mass of cognition. Sense experiences like sight, sound, smell, etc. and mental modifications like thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc.—all have conglomerrated, as it were, into a formless whole, without any specific content. This experience is bound to give us great peace, since the movement of our mind and senses has stopped. The peace in deep sleep should not be interpreted as a negative perception. Sleep is not unconsciousness from the point of view of the total personality of man. It is unconsciousness, of course, in relation to the waking man. In religious and mystical experiences, consciousness functions on yet another level. Here the mind, by prolonged practice of self-control, contemplation, faith, and de-

votion, becomes so subtle and pure that, when consciousness is reflected in that mind, the experience may assume the form of diverse supersensuous perceptions, depending upon one's spiritual notions. Thus, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa may have a vision of Kṛṣṇa or hear His divine flute. A devotee of Christ may see the beatific form of Jesus or that of Mary, Mother of God. A mystic who does not believe in forms may have an experience of peace and blessedness springing from a vivid revelation of an impersonal spiritual idea. An ardent devotee, while listening to religious music, can some day experience an ecstasy where the mind is lifted to a level of unusual calmness and joy.

Since these experiences imply subject-object relationship (subject—the devotee, and object—the forms and ideas of the Deity), the experiencing consciousness still belongs to the category of the 'bound'. Spiritual visions do have the power of bringing remarkable transformation in our senses and mind. Great calmness, purity, peace and a feeling of freedom, security and joy, invariably accompany those experiences. And yet Vedānta would not admit consciousness to have reached its highest level there. These experiences are rather significant stages to the Highest.

THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The highest level of consciousness is reached when it is realized as the eternal infinite support of all experience and yet never attached to any objective content. That is the Ātman, our true Self. And the Ātman is Brahman, the ultimate goal of our spiritual search. Vedānta hesitates to use the word 'reach' with respect to the Ātman. The Ātman, in fact, is always with us, since it is our true nature. Never for a moment have we been separated from it. We are always that. The tragedy is that we have somehow forgotten this

eternal heritage of ours. This forgetfulness is called *Māyā* in Vedānta. All spiritual practices are for the purpose of removing this *Māyā*, the basic ignorance of life, so that the ever-existent Truth of the Self can be revealed to us more and more.

Truly speaking, there cannot be any 'levels' in consciousness. Its shining nature is retained under all conditions. What gives the idea of levels in consciousness is the *upādhi*, the adjunct with which consciousness is apparently linked. Thus, we distinguish waking from dream, dream from sleep, mystical consciousness from empirical consciousness, and even in waking, we classify our experiences under various categories. However, from the standpoint of Truth, our Self, the essence of Consciousness, remains unchanged in all these situations. It neither increases nor decreases, is neither glorified nor debased. It is always pure, free, immortal.

Supreme wisdom is to know that our conscious life is at every moment illumined

by the Light of all lights, the Truth of all truths, the Value of all values—our own Self. Rightly does the *Kena Upaniṣad* declare (II. 4): 'Brahman is known when It is realized in every state of mind; for by such knowledge one attains immortality.' And the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II. i. 3) says: 'It is through the Ātman that one knows form, taste, smell, sounds, touches, and carnal pleasures. Is there anything that remains unknown to the Ātman?'

The consciousness which surrounds us at all times inside and outside like time and space and is available to us without any effort on our part is indeed the highest reality, when we can understand its nature by freeing it from objective ideas which give it an appearance of transience. Consciousness is our own Self. All the epithets describing Brahman, like Being, Bliss, Immortality, and so on really belong to the same reality. The simplest way to approach this reality is through our own consciousness.

RĀMĀNUJA AND VIVEKANANDA ON KARMA-YOGA

SWAMI BHAKTANANDA

Karma-yoga, the *yoga* of work, is one of the paths advocated by Hinduism for the manifestation of one's own potential divinity and the attainment of freedom. According to this *yoga* or method, work done in a proper spirit, without any selfish motive and with detachment, leads to spiritual illumination. Hindu scriptures mention many instances of persons who attained spiritual illumination through the proper performance of work. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (IV. iv. 6), for example, relates how Satyakāma Jābāla got Self-realization by tending the cows of his *guru*,

and the *Padma Purāṇa* (*Sṛṣṭi Khaṇḍa*, Ch. 47) speaks of how a woman, an untouchable, and a merchant reached the goal of spiritual perfection by the sheer performance of the duties pertaining to their station in life in an unselfish spirit. The *Mahābhārata* (*Ādiparvan*, 3) and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (III. 20) cite the examples of Janaka and many others as having become perfect by following this *yoga*.

Rāmānuja, the well-known philosopher of medieval India, whose name is associated with the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of Vedānta, gives an important place to *karma-yoga* as

a means of spiritual unfoldment. Though he agrees with his teacher Yāmunācārya that both *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are means to supreme devotion (*parama bhakti*),¹ yet he regards *karma-yoga* as an independent means for attaining the Self.² *Karma-yoga*, according to him, removes all the miseries of the world and bestows the highest spiritual freedom.³ In his writings, especially in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, he very often upholds the path of work as a means for attaining spiritual illumination. In this connexion, he specifies three conditions: (1) Work should be done as worship of the Lord (*paramapurusa-rādhana-rūpam*); (2) it should be done in a detached spirit (*asaṅga-pūrvakam*); and (3) there should be no seeking after the fruits of the work (*anabhisamhitaphalam*). That is, actions done with an eye to fruits thereof bind a man, while those done as worship of the Lord, without attachment to the results, lead one to spiritual freedom.⁴

These three specifications in regard to *karma-yoga* follow directly as a corollary from Rāmānuja's philosophy of devotion and his conception of God. The ultimate Reality, according to him, is an integral whole comprising of *cit* (sentient beings) and *acit* (insentient matter); and both together constitute the body of the supreme Lord and depend on Him for their exist-

ence.⁵ He is the inner ruler, the *antaryāmin*, and He pervades everything. He is the Self of all, rules over all, and has all beings, animate and inanimate, as His body.⁶

The Lord being thus all-pervasive, every type of duty is His worship, and should be performed in that spirit. Worshipping Him in this spirit, man attains perfection. (*Gītā-bhāṣya*, XVIII. 45, 46) To a warrior, fighting his enemies is his duty; and if this is done as a worship of the Lord, without seeking the results, it becomes a means to the achievement of the highest human goal.⁷ Rāmānuja says in his *Śrībhāṣya* (IV. iv. 22): 'The supreme Lord, when pleased by the faithful worship of His devotees—which worship consists in daily repeated meditation on Him, assisted by the performance of all the practices prescribed for each caste and *āśrama*—frees them from the influence of nescience ... (and) allows them to attain to that supreme bliss which consists in the direct intuition of His own true nature.'⁸ Thus, Rāmānuja's view of *karma-yoga*, viz work as worship of the Lord (*Īśvarārādhanā*), or as an offering to the Lord (*Gītā*, IX. 27), has an intimate bearing on his conception of God as all-pervading.

Now all these actions that devolve upon one by the antecedents of birth and station in life should be performed in a detached way, with the feeling that it is the Lord,

¹ (a) *Taduktam parama-gurubhiḥ bhagavad-yāmunācāryapādaiḥ ubhayaparikarmīta-svāntasya aikāntikāntyāntika bhakti-yoga-labhyam iti. Jñānayoga-karmayoga-saṁskṛtāntahkaraṇasya ityarthah. (Vedārtha Saṅgraha)*

(b) *Jñānakarmānugrahitaṁ bhaktiyogam avatārayāmāsa. (Gītā-bhāṣya, Introduction)*

² *Jñānayoga-karmayogayor-ātmaprāptisādhanaabhāve'nyonya nairapekṣyam. (Gītā-bhāṣya, V. 4)*

³ *Uktabuddhiyogayuktam karma nikhilasāṁsārika-duḥkham vinivartya paramapurusa-rthalakṣaṇam ca mokṣam prāpayati. (ibid., II. 49)*

⁴ *Saphalasya bandharūpatvāt phalarahitasya kevalasya madārādhana-rūpasya mokṣahetutvāt ca. (ibid., II. 47)*

⁵ *Samasta-cidacidvastu śarīrāyākhilātmane. (Vedāntasāra, Invocation)*

⁶ *Parasyaiva Brahmanah sarvātmatvam sarvaśarīratvam sarvasya niyantrtvaṁ ca pratipādyate. (Śrībhāṣya, II. ii. 19)*

⁷ (a) *Dehairbandhanivṛttaye sāstrīyam svavarṇocitaṁ yuddhādikam anabhisamhitaphalam karma. (Gītā-bhāṣya, II. 13)*

(b) *Anabhisamhitaphalasya yuddhākhyaṣya dharmasya parama-niḥśreyasopāyatatvāt. (ibid., II. 37)*

⁸ *Aharaharanuṣṭhīyamāna - varṇāśrama-dharmānugrahita tadupāsana-rūpa-tatsamārādhana prītaḥ etc. (Śrībhāṣya, IV. iv. 22)*

and not oneself, is the doer.⁹ This is possible because the Lord is the inner ruler of all (*antaryāmin*). The scriptures declare that the body, the organs, the vital force, and the individual soul are only instruments of the Supreme, and He is the only doer.¹⁰ So all action should be performed without any attachment (*saṅgārahitam*), dedicating its fruits to the Lord.

This dedication of the fruits to the Supreme is the logical consequence of the absence of the feeling of doership. For work without attachment automatically implies non-attachment to the results of action, since the performer of action in a spirit of detachment is free from the sense of agentship and, consequently, from the feeling of I-ness with regard to the work or its results.¹¹ Therefore, he does not seek for the results, but offers them all to the Lord, who is the real agent. The point to be noted here is that it is not the giving up of actions themselves that constitutes real renunciation, but the giving up of attachment to the fruits of actions and the idea of agentship. So declare the scriptures also.¹²

Karma or action binds when done with attachment to results, and brings on endless misery in its train. But the same action done without attachment to results and as worship of the all-pervading Lord becomes a means of liberation and spiritual illumination. It is like using one thorn to remove another that has got stuck to the

foot. And this performance of action without attachment to results becomes easier when we regard the supreme Lord, the inner ruler within (*antaryāmin*) controlling everything, as the doer of all actions, as in fact He is.¹³ It is the Lord Himself who gets everything done by the individual soul, through the instruments of the body and the vital force, for the purposes of His own *līlā* or sport.¹⁴ This, in substance, is the concept of *karma-yoga* according to Rāmānuja.

This view of *karma-yoga* finds its parallel in our times in the exposition of the same by Swami Vivekananda, who makes a masterly analysis of it in his book *Karma Yoga*, examining it from every point of view. Like Rāmānuja, Swami Vivekananda also bases his views on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

Swami Vivekananda gives a very wide definition of the word '*karma*' so as to include the whole range of human activity, not merely those prescribed by the scriptural injunctions or determined by the accident of our birth and station in life. Everything we do, according to him, whether physical or mental, is *karma*. All of us, whether we will it or not, are always engaged in some activity or other, and so are performing *karma* every moment of our life. Except those very few who are perfect, who are satisfied with the Self, whose desires do not go beyond the Self, and to whom the Self is all in all, everyone else has to work. As Sri Ramakrishna says: 'It is not possible for you to give up work altogether. Your very nature will lead you to it whether you like it or not.' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 378, 1st edition) But much of our energy is wasted

⁹ *Paramapurusa-kartṛtvānusandhānena.* (*Gītā-bhāṣya*, XVIII. 17).

¹⁰ *Vaidikī hi buddhiḥ śarīrendriya-prāṇa-jīvātmo-pakaraṇaṁ paramātmānameva kartāramavadhārayati.* (*Gītā-bhāṣya*, XVIII. 13; *Brahma-Sūtra*, II. iii. 41; *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, III. xi. 3; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III. vii. 22)

¹¹ *Asmīn karmaṇi mama kartṛtvābhāvāt etaḥ phalaṁ na mayā sambadhyate, na ca madīyaṁ karma.* (*Gītā-bhāṣya*, XVIII. 17)

¹² *Ataḥ karmaṇi kartṛtva-saṅga-phalānāṁ tyāgaḥ śāstrīya-tyāgaḥ, na karma svarūpa tyāgaḥ.* (*ibid.*, XVIII. 10, 12)

¹³ *Tata eva phala-karmayorapi mamatā parityāgo bhavati.* (*ibid.*, XVIII. 13)

¹⁴ *Paramapuruso hi svakīyena jīvātmanā svakīyaisca karaṇa-kalevaraprāṇaiḥ svalīlāprayojanāya karmāṇyārabhate.* (*ibid.*, XVIII. 13)

as we do not know how to work; consequently, we fail to reap the best results from the performance of the work. *Karma-yoga* teaches us the secret of work, by which we can work to the maximum advantage so as to bring out the best that is in us.

Now this secret of work, as stressed by Rāmānuja and reiterated by Swami Vivekananda, is non-attachment to action and its results. No action is in itself either entirely good or bad. It is the way in which we do it, as also the motive that prompts us to do it, that makes it either good or bad. If it is the result of our selfishness and, in its effect, rivets one more chain on us, then it is bad; if it is the result of unselfishness and helps us to break our bondage, it is good. So *karma-yoga* calls upon us to be unselfish and non-attached to actions; for it is selfishness and attachment that bind us. Now how to attain this non-attachment?

There are two ways of doing it. One is the way of the *jñāna-yogins*, those who do not believe in a personal God but depend on their own wills to reach this supreme state of non-attachment. By the exercise of their will and with the power of their mind and determination, they dismiss all notion of 'I and mine' and snap their bondages. But such men of strong determination are few and far-between. For the rest, there is a simpler and easier way. Those who believe in a personal God have not to tear themselves away forcibly from action. They give up the fruits of their actions to God; they consider all action as the worship of the Lord. They perform all the duties in the world that fall to their lot by virtue of their birth and position in life without caring for the results, just as a duty, always offering the fruits that accrue in the performance of such duty, whether good or bad, at the feet of the Lord. In

other words; they work for work's sake, and do not worry about the nature of the duty that has come their way. Duties are bound to vary from man to man, because all men are not endowed with the same ability and capacity—physically, mentally, and intellectually, and these duties are largely determined by our deserts. But, for the real *karma-yogin*, every duty is holy, and is an instrument to break his bondage. So he performs it as the highest form of worship. For it is not the actual work that matters, but the manner and spirit in which it is performed that is important. When we thus perform our duties with detachment, in an unselfish spirit, and as worship of the Lord who resides in everybody, in course of time, we reach the same stage of perfection reached by the *jñāna-yogin* through the path of knowledge, by the *bhakti-yogin* through the path of love, and by the *rāja-yogin* through the path of psychic control. As Sister Nivedita beautifully puts it, in that stage, it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization; for the many and the One are the same Reality. 'No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid. This is the realization which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of *karma*, not as divorced from, but as expressing *jñāna* and *bhakti*. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality.' (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Introduction)

Thus, in the view of Swami Vivekananda, the service of the family, the country, and the world can all be conveniently turned to be fit instruments for raising ourselves to the highest stage of spiritual perfection, provided we do it as worship of the Lord Himself. Nay, that is real worship—the service of our fellow beings seeing in them the very manifestation of God, as he pro-

claimed fervently: 'May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls, and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, is the special object of my worship.' (ibid., Vol. V, p. 136, 7th edition)

GIUSEPPE VERDI: A MIRACLE OF OLD AGE

MR. ERNEST BRIGGS

It is sometimes asked: At what age is a distinctive creative artist, such as a great poet or an eminent composer, at his best? A just assessment is dependent upon many factors, not the least of which is the man himself. Some composers, such as Mascagni, who lived for decades after his peak success of 'Cavalleria Rusticana', which he wrote at the age of 20, never matched their initial success of youth; some, like Jan Sibelius, who attained revered old age, added nothing to their creative achievement after the age of 30; others, marvelously gifted, have died young, to haunt the imagination and the hearts of men, as old sad legends told on fireside eves.

It is conventional to mourn the early death of such distinctive creative artists as the young English poets Thomas Chatterton, John Keats, and Rupert Brooke, and others, such as the young Austrian poet Otto Braun, and composers, sculptors, and painters who went as quickly from the world of time, leaving a few but noble works as a testament of worth. It is idle to speculate as to what they might have produced had their span been extended to the sixth or seventh decade, or even beyond. But even the seventh decade need

not necessarily mark the close of mental and spiritual productivity, where the spontaneity of genius is unabated; for had some of the greatest men of genius passed from the world at 70, their best work would never have been accomplished.

The names of such would make an impressive list, but a few will suffice to illustrate the point. In art, one thinks of Michelangelo, that indomitable old man who, with death dragging at his mantle, still sent the sound of a mallet on a chisel echoing through the stillness of long winter nights with quenchless courage and undiminished skill, as he worked on and on in a relentless race against time, sculpturing the perfect contours of his last masterpiece, the 'Pieta Rondanini', laying down the mallet and chisel for ever only six days before he died in his ninetieth year.

In literature, one thinks of Goethe, that marvellously gifted German boy who entered the University of Leipzig at the age of 16, and who, after becoming Germany's greatest poet, crowned his span of 83 years with the completion of the dramatic epic *Faust*, into which he poured the full grandeur of his mellowed wisdom. One thinks of Thomas Hardy, in his own time

the living head of English letters, who as an elderly novelist forsook fiction at the age of 60 to win a new reputation as a poet that rivalled that as a novelist, and who, even in his eighty-eighth year added to the distinction of his life's achievement. More recently, there was the noted Irish poet William Butler Yeats, whose talent became even richer after 70; and still more recently, the American poet Robert Frost published at '88 a new and important collection *In the Clearing*, regarded as so outstanding that the first edition ran to 50,000 copies. In the field of science, one recalls Sir Oliver Lodge actively lecturing and experimenting at 80; and the assiduity of Thomas Alva Edison, who, among many other achievements such as electric light, the typewriter, and the phonograph, was still working intensively at '83, when he patented a process for extracting synthetic rubber from golden-rod.

Among the distinctive attainments of aged personal friends, I cherish the memory of Dr. Oliver St. John Gogarty, who capped a long list of witty and genial volumes with his inimitable *It Isn't This Time of Year at All!* when he was nearing 80; our beloved Australian feminist and social reformer Margaret Ann Ogg, who in her eighty-eighth year brought me as a new year's gift her latest poem 'What Place Is There for Children Where There Are No Trees?', a vigorous protest against the danger of 'superior slums' creating 'slum mentalities'; also Dr. Elizabeth Hazelton Haight, Emeritus Professor of Latin at Vassar College, who, when she was an octogenarian, caused a sensation in scholastic circles by her superb translation of *The Life of Alexander of Macedon*, by Pseudo-Callisthenes, the first full, faithful translation. I think, too, of dear old Dr. Edgar Bainton, walking steadfastly to the podium at the age of 80 to direct the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, in a

memorable performance of a Beethoven symphony. Often I consider the unparalleled achievement of the veteran English baritone Sir Charles Santley, a renowned pupil of Garcia, in making, at the age of 88, gramophone records for posterity with all the gusto of his earlier years: 'Father O'Flynn', 'To Anthea', 'Simon, the Cellarer', 'Irish Pipes', and then, in tenderly reflective mood, 'The Rosary'. Other aged giants of music also come to mind such as the consummate Lieder-singer Sir George Henschel, singing to his own flawless pianoforte accompaniment, in recordings made in his eightieth year; Clara Schumann's pupils Madame Fanny Davies and Madame Adeline de Lara, both recording when approaching 80; and, in a later time, the redoubtable Madame Elly Ney, a pupil of Liszt's pupil Emil von Sauer, making unsurpassed recordings of Beethoven sonatas; not to forget Vladimir de Pachmann, 'The Poet of the Pianoforte', who was still active on the concert platform at 82.

In the field of composition, one recalls the unique attainments of Giuseppe Verdi, who at 73, with the production of 'Otello', which is for many the greatest opera ever written, was generally regarded as 'finished', a composer who had 'written himself out' in twenty-five operas, which from 'Oberto' and 'Nabucco' to 'Aida' and 'Otello' had all been in the dramatic vein. Years went by, and Verdi composed no new opera. But the soul has seasons that far surpass the turning seasons of the year; the dews and silences of the spirit are but the presaging of new resurgence, for presently the old tree was to blossom with unprecedented luxuriance, and in 'Falstaff' the aged maestro was to astound the world by a miraculous burgeoning of mind and spirit that was as zestful as though he had been in the prime of youth—'Falstaff', that magnificently ebullient comic opera,

which in its sparkling humour, its infinite variety, its serene originality, and its subtlety of rich musical resource is as young as springtime and unsurpassed by any comic opera ever written. Pondering this astounding fruition of age, one shudders to think that the amazing talent of Verdi might lamentably have been lost to the world in his infancy. In 1814, the horror of war swept upon the little village of Le Roncole where Carlo Verdi kept an inn at the cross-roads. Among the folk who sought sanctuary in the village church was his wife with a year-old baby in her arms—the infant Verdi, a musical genius to be, out of stolid peasant stock and nurtured in the lowland of the river Po. Raging through the village, the drunken soldiery soon battered down the door of the church, putting all whom they encountered to the sword. But the mother and her baby were saved, because the woman remembered a secret stairway to the belfry, where she crouched in terror until night had fallen and the soldiery had gone.

Giuseppe Verdi was born on 10th October 1813. There was nothing in his immediate ancestry or his environment to indicate the fabulous musical talent inherent in the child, but when he was still a child a vagabond fiddler, a beggar named Bagasset, told Carlo Verdi that his child would become a great musician. Verdi never forgot the beggar, and years afterward, when the composer had become world-famous and wealthy—the owner of a thousand-acre estate at Santa Agata, near his birthplace—he would often seek out the old beggar and give him food and money. In gratitude, the old man would cry, ‘Ah, maestro, I saw the music all around you then!’

Verdi's father was sufficiently affluent to buy the boy a second-hand spinet, and the lad was soon practising intensively with the idea of becoming a professional pianist.

His pianistic talent was not so notable as his flair for composition. In fact, there was so much discrepancy between Verdi's two musical expressions that Rossini, who dearly loved to joke, would in later years tease Verdi, opening one of his letters with the amusing phrase, ‘Maestro Verdi, pianist of the fifth class!’ Verdi's old spinet may still be seen, for it is now in the Museum of the Scala Theatre, in Milan, still in playable condition. It has been so well cared for that it is evident that at least one of his countrymen had a better appreciation of Verdi as a pianist than had others, for an inscription on the spinet reads:

‘By me, Stefano Cavaletti, were made anew and re-leathered, the jacks of this instrument, to which I have adapted a pedal. I made these jacks for nothing because of the talent which young Giuseppe Verdi shows in learning to play the instrument, which is quite sufficient to satisfy me—Anno Domini 1821.’

Verdi was soon playing the organ in the local church, but his first real chance came when a wine-merchant, named Barezzi, secured a good teacher for him, and later helped him to go to Milan for further study. Verdi applied for entrance to the famous Conservatoire of Milan, but was refused on the ground that he did not have sufficient musical talent. Not long afterward, Verdi justified himself when Bazily, who had refused to admit him, complained to Verdi's teacher Lavigna, that not one of his twenty-eight pupils at the Conservatoire could construct a satisfactory fugue on a subject that he had given them. Lavigna asked him to write out the subject; then, calling Verdi from another room, he said, ‘Work this out as a fugue!’ When Verdi had finished, Bazily said in amazement, ‘This boy had written not only a fugue, but a double-canon on my subject’.

Verdi had doubled the difficulty of the task.

The stupendous intensity of mind and spirit that was revealed in Verdi's 'Otello' and 'Falstaff' was another double achievement so awe-inspiring that one might wonder how a composer could come to so rich an ultimate flowering. The answer is that Verdi, through a lifetime of discipline and dedication, had learned to concentrate all his powers upon the development of his art; he had learned that it is as necessary for a great creative artist to constantly and richly nourish his mind and spirit as well as his body, in order that the three factors of his being should work in notable unanimity. Verdi appreciated that it is not so much the labour of creative work that stultifies and kills, but inertia, vacillation, and the fret of minor things. Most people do not wear out, they rust out; and it has been truly observed that the epitaph of the majority of men should be: 'Dead at 30; buried at 60.' But to creative artists such as Verdi, true life consists of a freely flowing, yet strictly disciplined spontaneity of mind and spirit that, reflected by the physical, keeps all the powers alert and flexible. Every great talent that has been markedly productive into what is provisionally called 'old age' has progressed through clear and cumulative cycles—first, the virile expression of the exuberance of youth, mellowing to maturity, and then, an exalted, more perceptive, and more richly productive fruition of balanced wisdom and genius; for renewed elevation of mind and spirit will always bring a corresponding resurgence of both expression and bodily vigour. The key to increasingly exalted achievement is ever and always increasing amplitude and elevation of vision. It is transcendental apprehension conserved and directed by ever mellowing wisdom that is the real revivifying force. Sir William

Mulloch, Chief Justice of Ontario, said nearly thirty years ago, in his eighty-sixth year:

'My face is still to the future. The shadows of evening lengthen about me, but morning is in my heart. . . . The testimony that I bear is this: that the Castle of Enchantment is not yet behind me, it is before me still, and daily I catch glimpses of its battlements and towers. . . . The best of life is always farther on, for its real lure is far beyond the Hills of Time.'

Looking upon a man or woman of extreme old age, one might be impelled to repeat lines of that tireless hymn-smith Isaac Watts:

Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!

but where there is great spirituality, it is not strange; for great spirituality confers abundant life on man. Many considerable talents fail, not because the talent is not good enough, but simply because the person is not good enough; so many people think in terms of limitation and old age, rather than in terms of limitless spirituality and ever widening and ever ascendant activity. Although baptized a Christian, to me it has always seemed paradoxical that the Christian tradition regards the termination of the physical span as the beginning of perpetual rest, rather than as a natural and fortunate entrance to richer opportunity. The envisaging of a static and uniformly complacent heaven is not for me to whom indolence, even celestial indolence, would be anathema. Living to have any meaning at all must be ever onward, ever upward. Old sages who have pondered life have seen it as a pilgrimage in time; a pilgrimage in which way leads ever to wider way, and ascent leads ever to a new ascent. As James G. Clark has it:

I saw the mountains stand,
Silent, wonderful, and grand,

Looking out across the land
 When the golden light was falling
 On distant dome and spire;
 And I heard a low voice calling:
 'Come up higher! . . . Come up higher!'

Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet, would readily have understood the resurgent power of Verdi's creativeness in his later years:

'The pain was great when the strings were being tuned, my Master. Begin Your music, and let me feel in Beauty what You had in Your mind in those pitiless days! . . . Pour Your Heart into my life-strings, my Master, in tunes that descend from the stars!'

Inversely, these lines by Tagore would have readily been appreciated by Verdi, for the greatest spiritual experiences of man are one. The pain was great when the strings of Italy's greatest composer of opera were being tuned for his greatest and ultimate singing. When Verdi was only 26, tragedy all but overwhelmed him. His little daughter Virginia died, and in the year of his removal to Milan, his baby son Icilio died also. Then, when he was on the threshold of success, he was again bereaved by the death of his wife. But with Verdi, everything, even the desolation of personal tragedy, but served to exalt and purify; everything that caused him to suffer but intensified his dedication to his art. The English poet Robert Browning, was spiritual kin to Verdi, as is attested by his lines in 'Rabbi Ben Ezra':

Grow old along with me!
 The best is yet to be!
 The last of life for which the first was
 made;

Our times are in His hand
 Who saith, 'A whole I planned;
 Youth shows but half, trust God; see all,
 nor be afraid!' . . .

And again in his lines from 'Abt Vogler':

God has a few of us to whom
 He whispers in the ear—
 The rest may reason and welcome;
 'Tis we musicians *know*!

The gifted man becomes a greater power among his contemporaries, paradoxically, by growing ever more lonely among his kind, and again, paradoxically, the more lonely he grows among his fellows, the more surely is he friended by the World Invisible. Verdi, who knew human solitude to its profundity of desolation, ironically, during the War for Italian Independence, found that his very name 'Verdi' had received an intense and popular political and national significance upon the lips and in the hearts of all his fellow patriots, for 'Viva V.E.R.D.I.' scribbled in capitals on walls throughout the countryside, in cities and in towns and villages, conveyed to all patriots not only his own name, but the phrase 'Viva Vittorio Emanuele, Re D'Italia' (Long live Vittorio Emanuele, King of Italy).

But ever, as his name was taken up by popular shouting, the soul of Verdi aspired to greater transcendence, an exaltation in perfect accord with the aspiration evidenced by lines of Oliver Wendell Holmes:

Build thee more stately mansions,
 O my soul,
 As the swift seasons roll!
 Leave thy low vaulted past!
 Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
 Shut thee from heaven with a dome
 more vast,
 Till thou at length art free,
 Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's
 unresting sea!

And so it was, magnificently so. He who had been known at the outset of his career as 'Il Giovane Verdi'—The Young Verdi—was moved by Time's miracle of age to be 'The Aged Verdi', pre-eminent and un-

challengeable in his own specific field. If I may be permitted to make a pun, and you will bear with me, I would say: 'The word 'Verdi' in Italian means 'green', and with regard to the work and the life of this composer I would say not merely 'Verdi', but rather '*sempre Verdi*', *Evergreen* !

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

In his article on 'Thou Art That', Swami Prabhavananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, U.S.A., explains the meaning and significance of the great Vedāntic saying (*mahāvākya*) '*Tat tvam asi*' from the practical point of view of the spiritual aspirant. All rights to reprint this article rest with the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

An internal examination of the spiritual content of the well-known Sanskrit hymn, *Sivamahimnah Stotram*, by Puṣpadanta, forms the subject-matter of the paper 'God Is Great', by Swami Vimalananda, of the Ramakrishna Order.

Vedanta Vidwan Dr. N. S. Anantha Rangachar, of the Mysore Educational Service, gives a pen-picture of 'The Concept of Reality in the Rg-Veda', in his article on the subject, with suitable quotations from that ancient text in support of his view.

In his article on 'Some Concepts Underlying Instruction in the Upaniṣads', Dr. G. K. Bhat, M.A., Ph.D., of Elphinstone College, Bombay, examines some of the stories of the Upaniṣads and draws our attention to certain educational principles implicit therein, which are as useful today as in the days of the Upaniṣads.

In his short illustrated article on 'Viṣṇu : Story in Stone', Sri C. Sivaramamurti, Assistant Director, National Museum, New Delhi, briefly deals with the sculptural representations of Lord Viṣṇu, the protector God of the Hindu trinity, at Deogarh (Jhansi), Udayagiri, Ellora, Mahabalipuram, and other places in and outside India.

'Swami Vidyatmananda became associated with the Ramakrishna movement in 1950, when he joined the Mission's Hollywood branch, the Vedanta Society of Southern California. Since that time, he has served as one of the editors of the Society's magazine *Vedanta and the West*. After a trip to India in 1952-53, he wrote a book describing India's holy places and the work of the Ramakrishna Maths, entitled *A Yankee and the Swamis*. Later he edited *What Vedanta Means to Me* and *What Religion Is : In the Words of Swami Vivekananda*. These books are published under the Swami's pre-monastic name, John Yale. In the autumn of 1963, he came to India on a second tour, partly for the purpose of assembling a collection of illustrations for a new biography of Sri Ramakrishna by Christopher Isherwood. Swami Vidyatmananda's experiences in gathering these illustrations are related in his paper' on 'Illustrating a New Biography of Ramakrishna', published in this number. The paper was originally read at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Cul-

ture, Calcutta, on 20 May 1964, and is reproduced here from the *Bulletin* of the Institute, August 1964 number.

Presidency College, Calcutta, reviews the 'typical orientation of philosophical faith in Advaita Vedānta'.

Professor O. C. Gangoly, the reputed authority on Indian art, needs no introduction to students of art. We are deeply grateful to him for contributing the brief illustrated article on 'Nihilism in Modern Indian Painting' to this special number, in spite of his advanced age (he is now 83) and failing health.

Swami Shraddhananda, of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, U.S.A., presents in his article the Vedāntic view of 'The Different Levels of Consciousness'.

Sri R. D. Misra, M.A., U.G.C. Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, Lucknow University, makes a lucid exposition of 'The Concept of Duty in Utilitarianism, Kant, and the Gītā' in his article on the subject, and points out how philosophically the *Gītā* view is the most satisfying from both the theoretical and the practical points of view.

In his article on 'Rāmānuja and Vivekananda on Karma-yoga', Swami Bhaktananda, of Ramakrishna Order, makes a brief survey of the views of these two great spiritual personalities on the subject of *karma-yoga*.

In his article on 'Faith: An Approach to Reality', Dr. Debabrata Sinha, M.A., D.Phil., Assistant Professor of Philosophy,

'At what age is a distinctive creative artist, such as a great poet or an eminent composer, at his best?', asks Mr. Ernest Briggs, poet and music critic, Sydney, Australia, in his article on 'Giuseppe Verdi', and answers the question through an interesting portrayal of the life of that great Italian composer.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN SOUVENIR VOLUME. The Darshana International, Moradabad. 1964. Pages 600. Price Rs. 30.

Brought out on the 77th birthday of the President, this volume contains seventy-six articles on the different facets of philosophy, psychology, political and social science, by eminent writers from all over the world.

David Baumgardt is very informative on the authentic views of the little-known German mystic, Hildegard Von Bingen (1098-1178), on the nature of mystical experience. To her, this experience is not confined only to relations with the Divine, but with all possible phenomena of life and nature. 'Fix your regard on the eagle who scars up to the clouds on both his wings', she writes, drawing attention to the

necessity of comprehending both the good and the evil in the world.

The paper on Dr. Bucke and his story of sudden widening into the cosmic Consciousness, by Bladwen Davies, is particularly interesting. There are discussions on art, E.S.P., painted women and women in paintings, interpretations of Biblical passages in the light of modern thought, etc. Most of them are in line with the progressive thought of the day. But it is not possible to commend the views embodied in the *Paramartha Darsana* of Sri Ramavatara Sarma (as presented by Sri H. M. Jha). To Sri Sarma, there is no soul and, consequently, 'all talk about Karma and Moksha becomes unmitigated nonsense'.

One of the most weighty articles in the collection

is by Dr. K. C. Varadachariar, who, writing on the philosophical studies in India during the period of crisis, dwells on the nature of the contributions during the last fifty years, and underlines the role of Radhakrishnan in the popularization of humanistic idealism and in the promotion of studies in comparative philosophy.

A substantial addition to current literature on philosophy.

M. P. PANDIT

THE PHILOSOPHY OF VIVEKANANDA AND THE FUTURE OF MAN. BY DR. G. C. DEV. Ramakrishna Mission, Dacca. 1963. Pages 106. Price Rs. 2.50.

The book under review presents a survey of the philosophy of the stormy Hindu monk, whose centenary celebrations have just been held all over the world. The author has attempted to bring out in the most lucid way Swami Vivekananda's universalism and humanism and his all-pervasive love for the entire world as the expression of Śiva. The Swami, in his insistence on the necessity of recognizing human values, gave Vedānta a practical twist. His philosophy provided a meeting-point for materialism and spiritualism, as they are commonly understood.

The Swami stood for a middle-course method, and it has been rightly said that he was an 'inveterate advocate' of this Aristotelian theory of 'golden means'. The welding principle was synthesis, and his practical Vedānta exhorted the young men of his time to play football in preference to the reading of the *Gītā*. This speaks of his profound love for his countrymen and spells one of the fundamental tenets of his philosophy, which comprehended matter and spirit, this world and the world beyond.

The Swami's epistemology was a meeting-ground for intellect and intuition. They are two moments in Vivekananda's approach to the study of microcosm and macrocosm. His intuition of oneness was rational, if not supra-rational. The philosophical aspect of the question has been discussed in detail by the author with appropriate references to such outstanding metaphysicians as Kant, Hegel, Spinoza, and Bradley. Intuition in Vivekananda's philosophy, according to the author, came very close to that in Śāṅkara Vedānta, and I wholly agree with the author's observation in point. This synthesis of intuition and intellect in Vivekananda gave him a wonderful synthesis of unity and plurality, each respecting the claim of the other to exist. He gave a new orientation to the concept of Māyā when he described it as a 'statement of fact' and not merely an act of theorizing. We may not agree with him

on all counts, but it must be said that his polemics bore evidence of a rare courage of conviction, and the book is a rationale of this conviction laboriously built up through a long and arduous study of the life and works of the Swami.

Dr. Dev tells us that, according to Vivekananda, the greatest possible incentive for collective emancipation could be derived from the Vedāntic concept of the spiritual identity of the universe as a veritable mine of strength. He emphatically asserts that if we pin our faith on this concept of universal self, omnipotent and ever perfect in character, the difference between 'I, the bubble' and 'you, the sea' will be no cause of despair, for behind both lies the universal storehouse of energy from which we can draw as much strength and succour as we need. That is why Vivekananda finds the future of suffering humanity in a practical application of this concept of faith in the potentialities of the spirit in man. For the same reason, he is so much enamoured of the Upaniṣads, that great storehouse of spiritual truths, whose unwearied zeal in giving out the glory of the spirit is almost unparalleled. The mistake of the past has been, according to him, to utilize this almost omnipotent faith in a purely spiritual sphere, for the attainment of individual liberation or *nirvāṇa*. But the scheme of the future ought to be to apply it, on the widest possible scale, in all the walks of life, so that the weak and the down-trodden all the world over may be animated by a new courage and a new faith in their own self, nay, stand erect on their own feet, being knit together with the bond of universal love. Faith in self and strength are for him synonymous terms, of which universal love is the highest expression. And this, according to the author of the book under review, sums up Vivekananda's philosophy for the common man. The author needs to be congratulated for writing this monograph, divided into five chapters, with an introductory chapter preceding. I recommend the book specially to the serious students of philosophy seeking a correct appraisal of the Swami's position against a wider background of Indian and western metaphysics and epistemology.

DR. S. K. NANDI

RELIGION FOR TOMORROW. BY THERON D. WILSON. Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. 1963. Pages 138. Price \$ 4.75.

The book is a clear and lucid exposition of the orthodox Christian Faith. In the course of the exposition, the author deals with the topics of 'Faith and Doubt', 'The Light of the World', 'Heaven and Hell', 'The Kingdom of Heaven', and 'Christianity

and Communism', and pleads for balanced thinking and a religion that 'discloses' truth rather than 'obscures' it. The value of the book is enhanced by the inclusion of copious quotations from the scriptures and famous scholars. Some of the statements, written from a purely orthodox Christian angle, may not be acceptable to the non-Christian readers.

DR. P. N. MUKHERJEE

HINDI

HINDI KE JANPAD SANT'. EDITED BY KAKA-SAHEB KALELKAR AND OTHERS. Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Road, Jawaharnagar, Delhi 6. 1963. Pages 436. Price Rs. 20.

In his preface to this volume, Kaka Kalelkar recalls an incident in the life of Buddha. When the Master started propagating the Teaching in the popular language of the period, one of his main disciples, a learned *vaidika* Brāhmin, approached him and said: 'The teaching of the Tathāgata is indeed beneficial, but it has not been able to get a standing as it is given in a common language. May I render it in Sanskrit for its acceptance?' Bhagavan Buddha was not very much pleased. He replied: 'Those who believe only in what is in Sanskrit will not receive the Teaching. I am for the large masses. Do not therefore translate my words in Sanskrit. But I ask you to render my speech in other popular languages so that my words reach the common people.'

That may be said to be the beginning of the movement of the turn from Sanskrit to popular languages by the saints of this land. Saints from various parts of the country—Punjab, Bihar, Assam, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajaputana, etc.—have poured out the message in the simple Hindi tongue of the times. The present volume is a collection of some selected outpourings of these men of God—Kabīr, Nānak, Dādu, Rāidās, Nāmdev etc.—forty-eight of them. The selections are preceded by a brief account of the lives of saints in the different traditions of the world by Sri Bhagwat Saran Upadhyaya, and a very helpful Introduction by Srimati Sachirani Gurtu on the life and work of all the saints whose writings figure in this collection. She makes it possible for the modern Hindi reader to follow what is expressed in the older forms of the language in differing styles.

An uplifting book bringing to life a whole panorama of the spiritual history of India.

M. P. PANDIT

BENGALI

VIVEKANANDER SAMAJADARŚANA. BY PROFESSOR SANTWANA DAS GUPTA. General Printers & Publishers Private Ltd., 119 Dharamtolla Street, Calcutta 13. 1963. Pages 220. Price Rs. 5.

To deal with the social philosophy of Swami Vivekananda is not an easy task, because the Swami's ideas

and concepts need to be gathered from his scattered writings on various subjects. But it is good to see that the author has made a scholarly treatment of the subject. She has worked hard to analyse and critically examine all the social concepts and ideas of Swami Vivekananda. And the result has been that she has made a thorough and systematic attempt to prove that the social philosophy of the Swami is intimately linked with the Advaitic thought. She quotes passages from the writings of eminent western thinkers to prove that the Advaitic thought agrees with the findings of modern science.

Swami Vivekananda was a staunch believer in Advaita Vedānta. And from out of that deep belief, he gives a new shape and orientation to the philosophy of communism. According to him, all must enjoy the same fundamental right to have full scope for awakening all the human and spiritual excellences, and the society should be moulded so as to enable a person to manifest his highest human and divine perfection. From the highest Advaitic point of view, all are manifestations of the same one divine fundamental principle. That is why the Swami was against the idea of special privilege in any form, which was, in his opinion, 'the bane of human life'.

The author has also shown that social end and justice and the reforms suggested by the great Swami are the outcome of his view that the Advaita Vedānta as a religion must be intensely practical. We must be able to carry it out in every part of our life, including our social life. The ideals of Advaita Vedānta must cover the whole field of human activity.

The book is a valuable addition to Vivekananda literature.

DR. ANIMA SEN GUPTA

ENGLISH-SANSKRIT

ĀTMABODHAPRAKARAṆA OF ŚĀNKARĀ-CĀRYA, WITH A COMMENTARY ASCRIBED TO MADHUSUDANA SARASVATĪ. EDITED BY DINESHCHANDRA BHATTACHARYA. Sanskrit College, Calcutta 12. 1961. Pages 20. Price Rs. 5.

Ātmabodha is one of the numerous minor works of Śrī Śāṅkara, the author of the great commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtra*. It has the unmistakable style of the master, and has been commented upon by great Advaitins. In a short span of sixty-eight verses, Śāṅkara offers in a nutshell the basic tenets of Advaita. The emphasis is on Self-realization, and hence a lucid account is given of the means of this realization.

The new commentary published here is attributed to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. But, as the editor rightly says, the ascription is not acceptable.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SINGAPORE

REPORT FOR 1962

The activities of this branch of the Ramakrishna Mission during the year under review were as follows :

Cultural : Weekly religious classes were conducted by the Swamis, and several lectures were delivered by them in Singapore and Malaya. Interviews were given to spiritual aspirants. At the invitation of some friends, Swami Siddhatmananda, the President of the Mission, visited Thailand, Hongkong, Japan, Philippines, and North Borneo, and delivered 42 lectures on religion and philosophy under the auspices of various institutions. During this visit, he organized the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda at many places. A religious class for children was conducted every Sunday at the Mission premises. The birthday celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī*, *Buddha Jayantī*, *Navarātrī*, Christmas Eve, and other sacred occasions were observed with due solemnity. Regular daily prayers, *pūjā*, and meditation were conducted at the shrine, and *Rāmanāma Saṅkīrtana* on Ekādaśī.

Educational : The Mission conducts two schools at 38 Norris Road : The Vivekananda Tamil School in the morning and the Saradadevi Tamil School in the afternoon. The total strength at the former school : 94 boys and 42 girls ; at the latter : 160 girls.

Night Class for Adults : There were three classes, one English and the other two Tamil, with a total strength of 62 pupils. Majority of them prepare for the examinations conducted by the Adult Education Board and the Ministry of Education.

Boys' Home : The home is situated at 179 Bartley Road in exquisitely beautiful natural surroundings. During the year under review, there were 52 boys in the home, of the age-group 6 to 17 years. The boys study in primary or secondary schools. Two of them sat for the school certificate examination, and one for the higher school certificate examination.

The boys are brought up in a spiritual atmosphere. They take part in the morning and evening prayers at the temple and in all the religious and cultural functions. They are taught devotional songs, and a monastic member imparts moral and religious instructions. A children's library, a tailoring section in which the boys sew their own clothes, football, hockey, badminton, table tennis, and other sports, are among the facilities provided to the boys for recreation and development of their personality. The boys are occasionally taken on excursions.

Library and Reading Room : These are situated at 9 Norris Road. Total number of books in the library : 4,268 ; new books added : 865 ; number of books issued : 895 ; number of persons who made use of the library and reading room : 825. Periodicals received in the reading room : journals : 62 ; daily newspapers : 6.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH MYLAPORE, MADRAS 4 CHARITABLE DISPENSARY

REPORT FOR 1963-64

Total Number of cases treated in its allopathic and homoeopathic departments : 1,47,957.

Eye Department : Number of cases treated : 14,030 (old : 9,908 ; new : 4,122) ; number of extra-ocular operations done : 134 ; number of refractions done : 208.

E.N.T. Department : Number of patients treated : 11,894 (old : 7,214 ; new : 4,680).

X-ray Department : Number of patients X-rayed : 536 ; screened : 28.

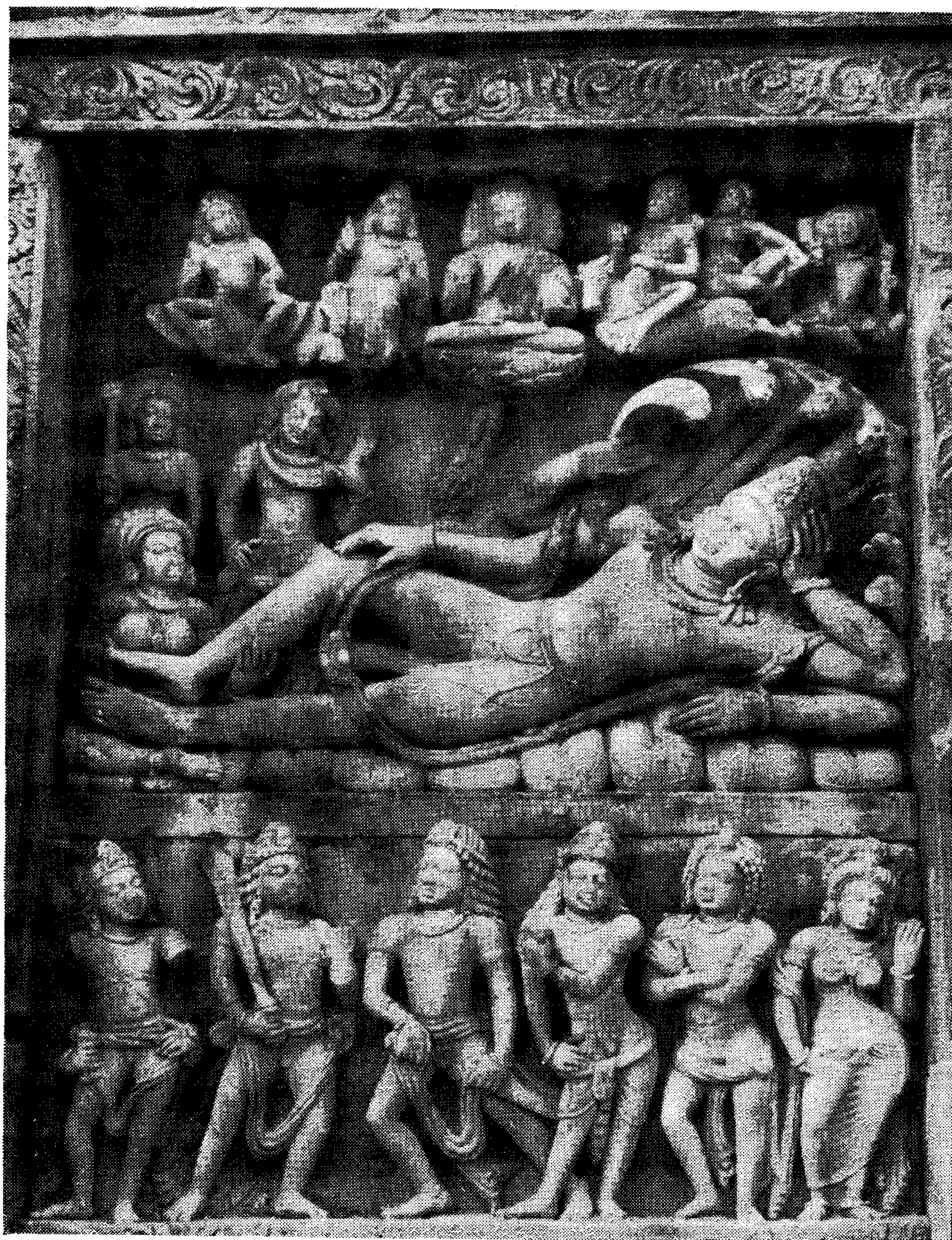
Dental Section : extractions : 2,859 ; caries : 2,026 ; pyorrhoea : 2,260.

Laboratory : Total number of specimens examined : 1,189.

Children's Special Treatment : Number of children given fundamental treatment by way of medicated milk distribution : 4,688. Milk was also regularly distributed to 3,758 under-nourished children.

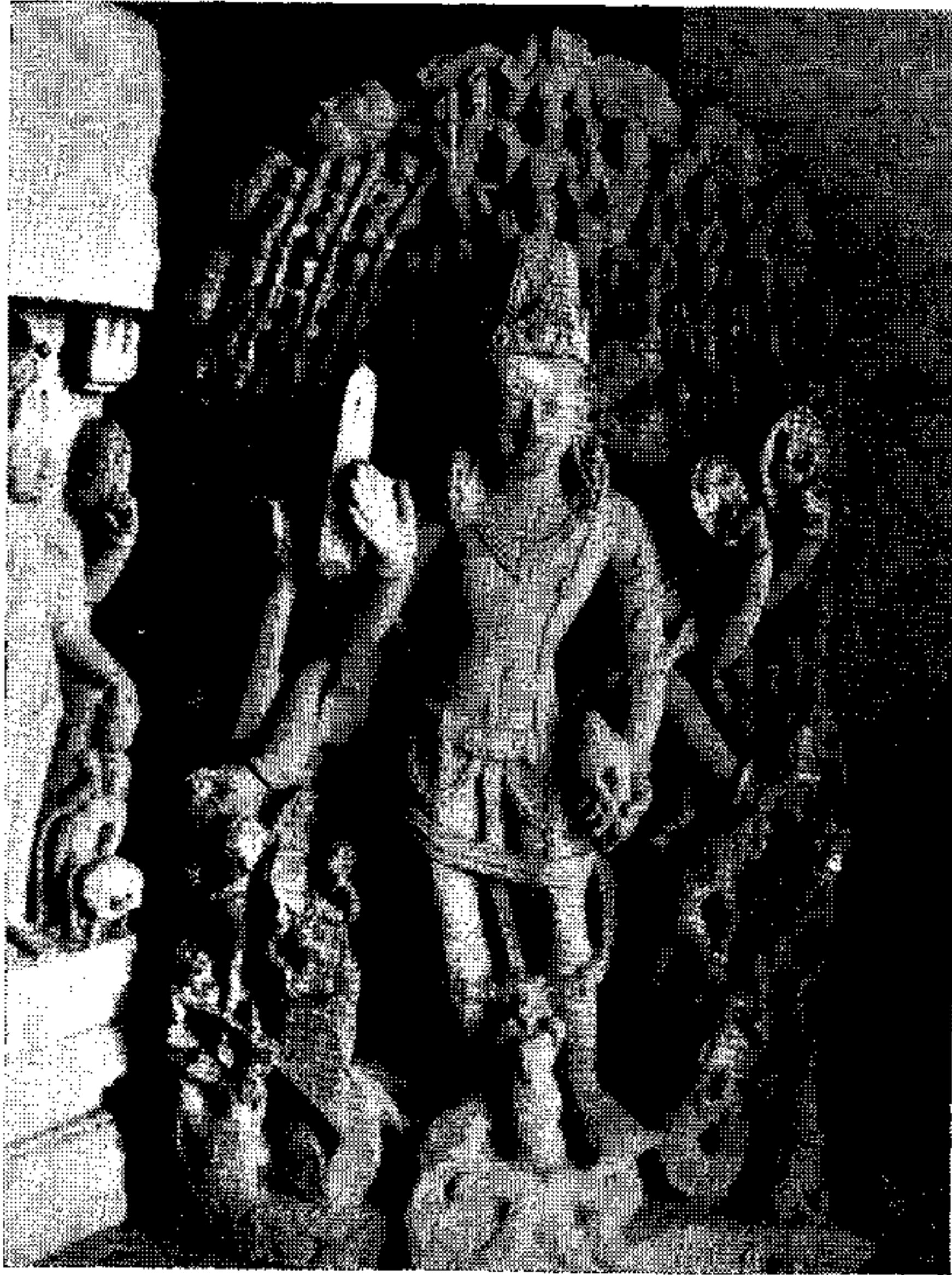
SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY

The 130th birthday of Sri Ramakrishna falls on Friday, the 5th March 1965.

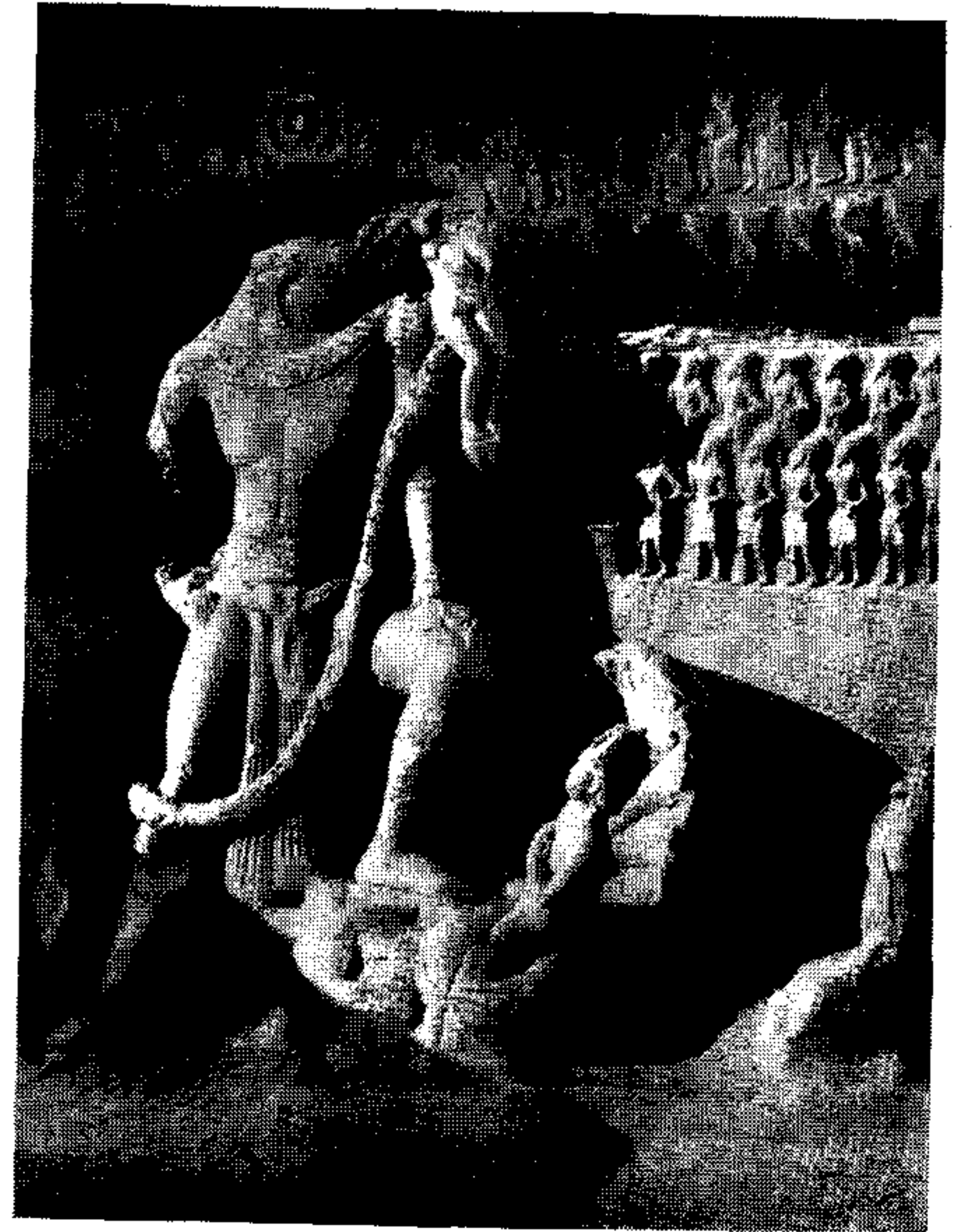


Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu

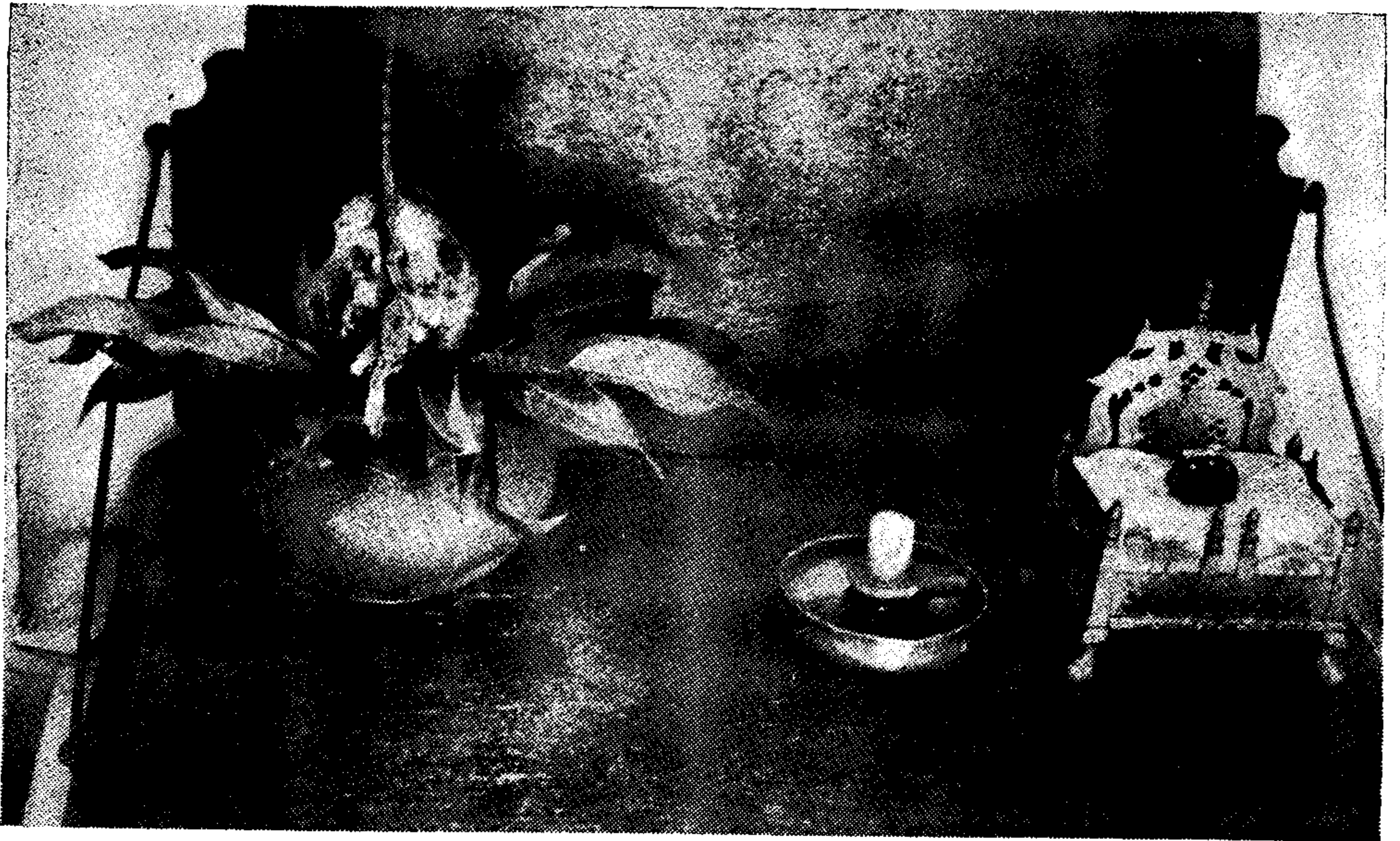
Copyright : Archaeological Survey of India



I. Viṣṇu on Nāgas (Viśvarūpa), Kanauj

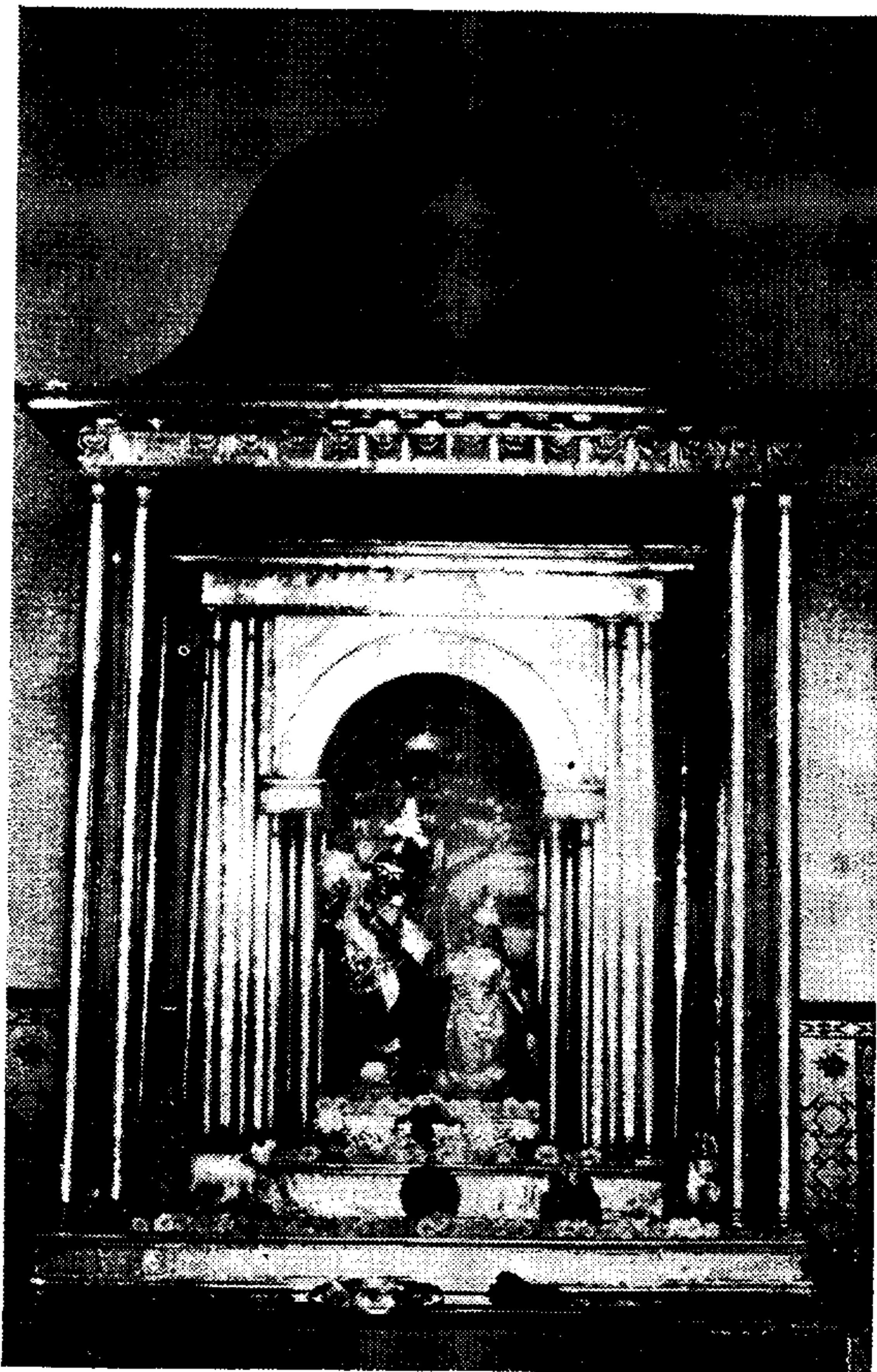


II. Varāha, Udayagiri



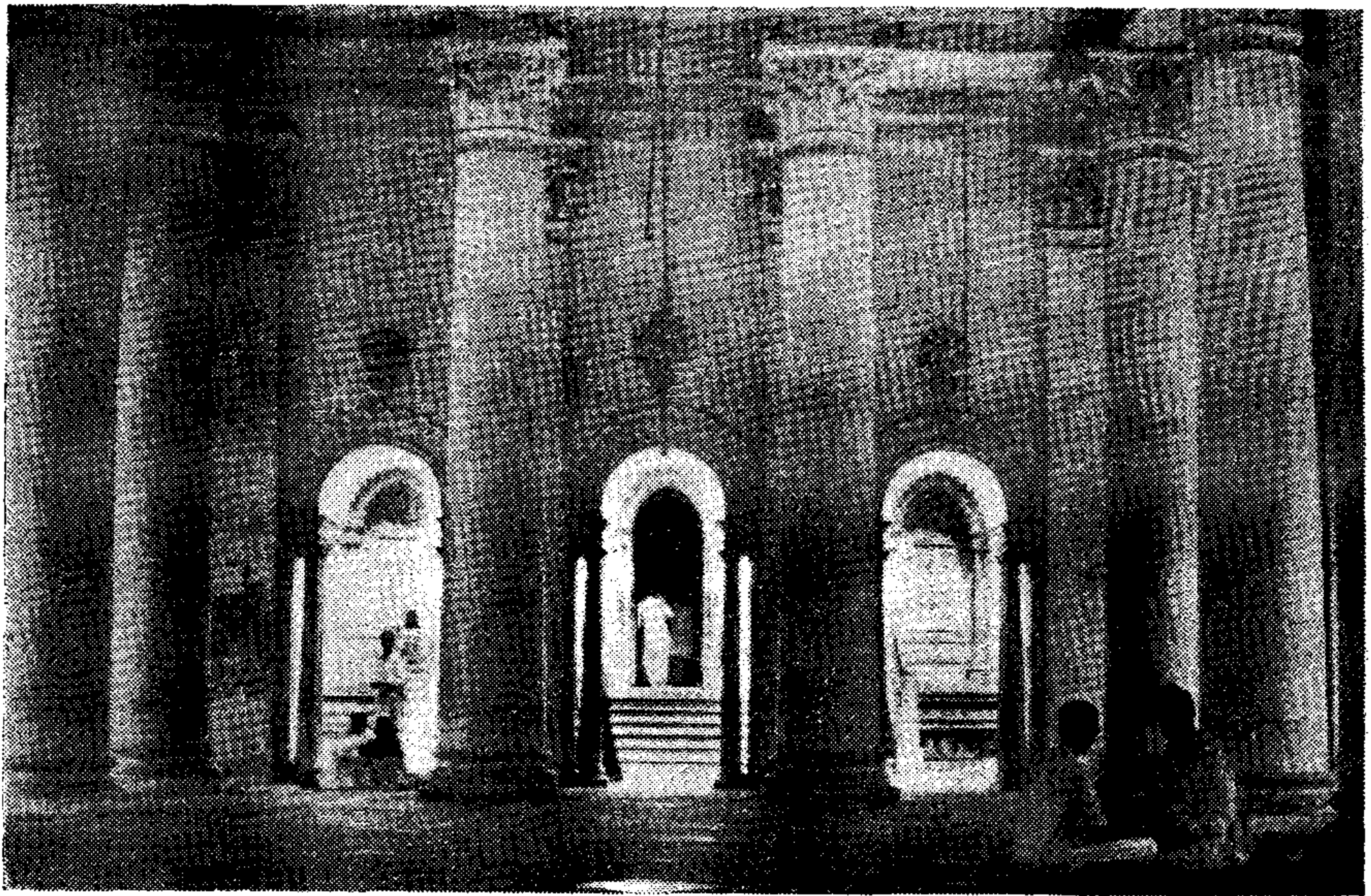
I. Family Deities of Khudiram

Courtesy : Vedanta Society of Southern California

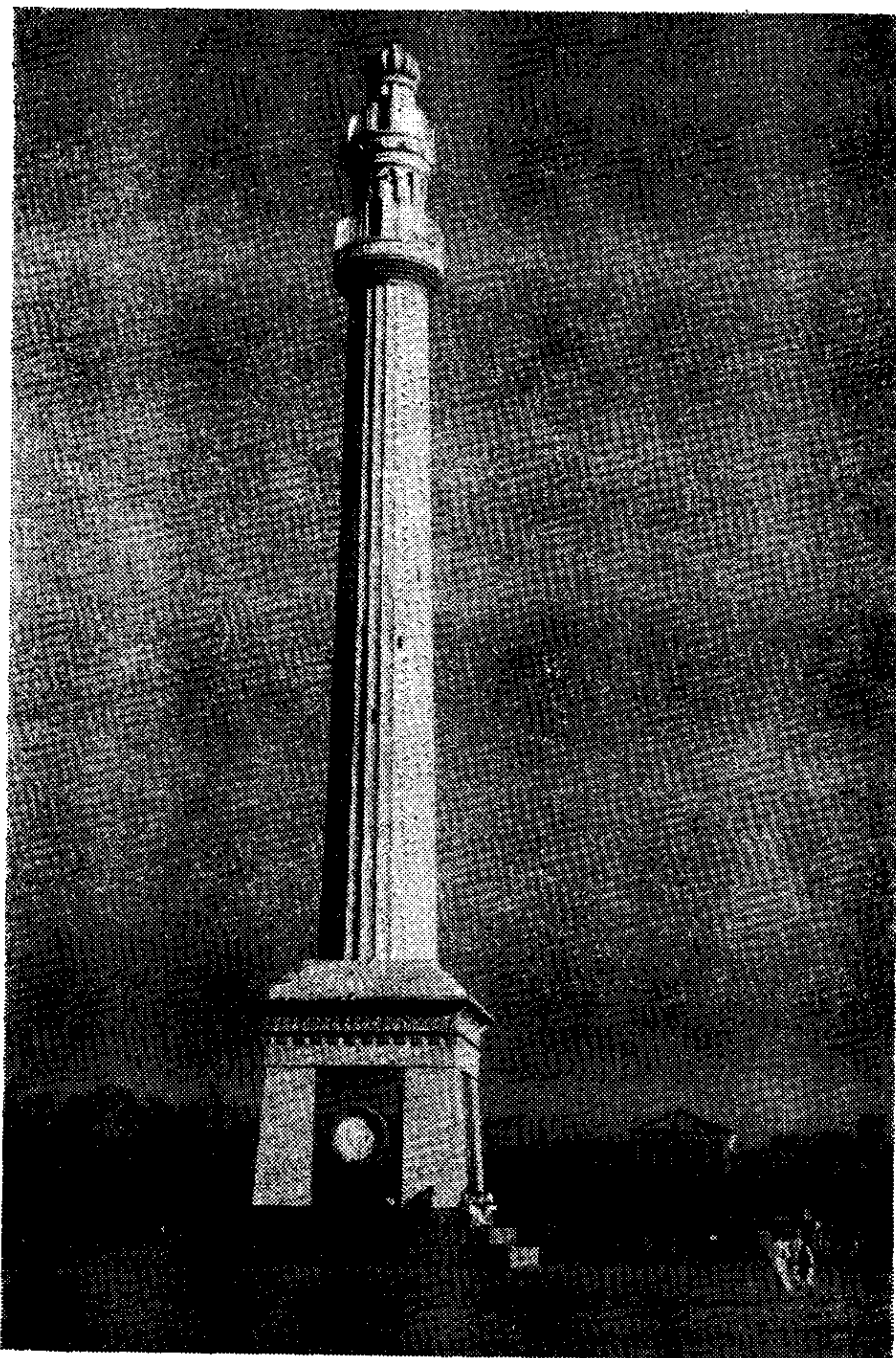


II. Radhakanta Shrine, Dakshineswar

Courtesy : Vedanta Society of Southern California



III. Interior of Nāṭmandir, Dakshineswar
Courtesy : Vedanta Society of Southern California

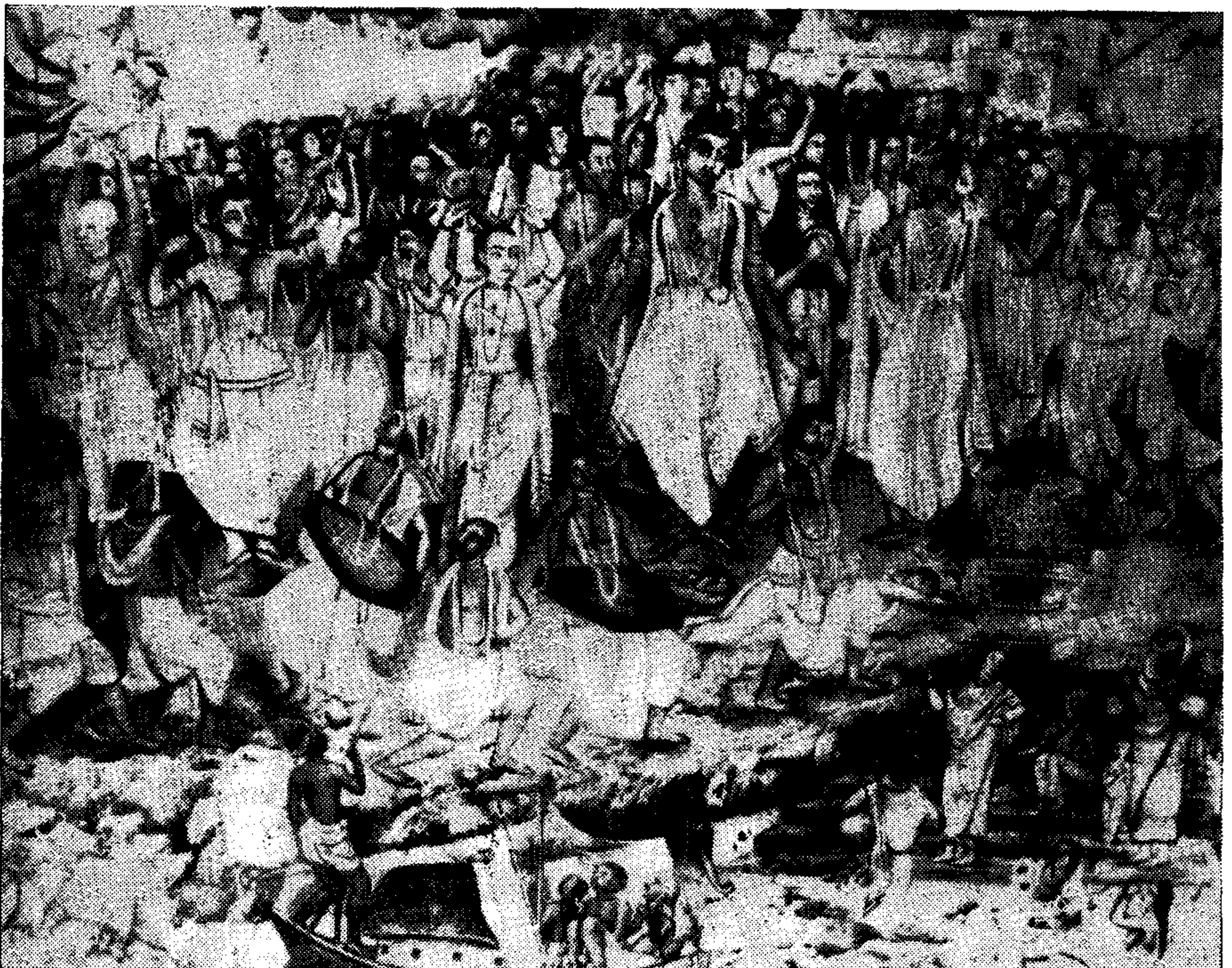


IV. Ochterloney Monument
Courtesy : Vedanta Society of Southern California



V. Kaliyadaman Ghat, Vrindaban

Courtesy : Vedanta Society of Southern California



VI. Kirtan Party led by Śrī Caitanya

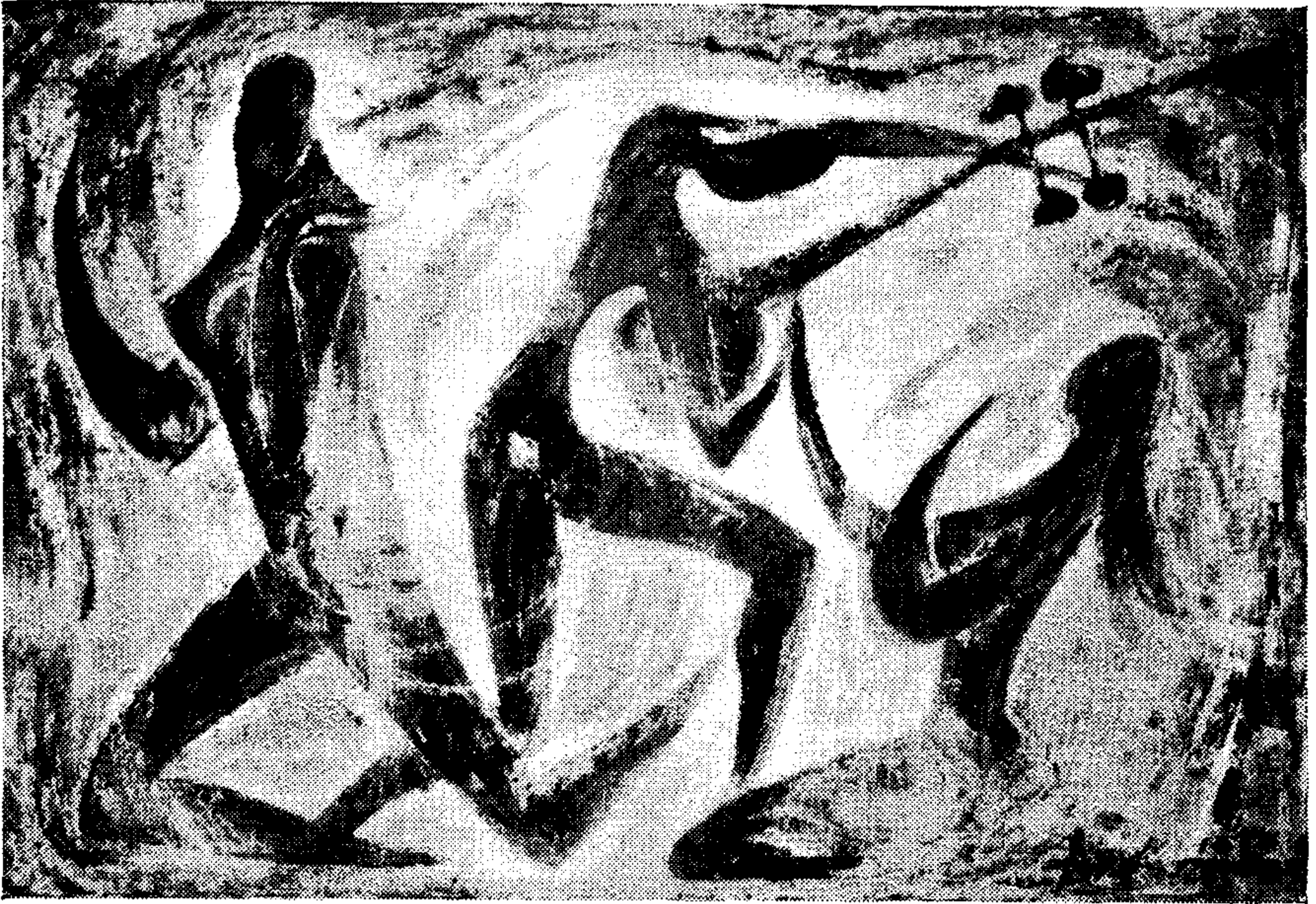
Courtesy : Vedanta Society of Southern California



VII. Husking Machine in Operation
Courtesy : Vedanta Society of Southern California



VIII. English Boy in Calcutta Maidan
Courtesy : Vedanta Society of Southern California



I. Rāga Dīpaka : Song of Flame

By Arundhati Roy Chowdhury

Courtesy : O. C. Gangoly



II. Violinist : Player on Violin

By Ajitkeshary Roy

Courtesy : O. C. Gangoly