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Cover :

Kanchenjunga from Sandakphu

Photo: Bimal Dey



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No. 4

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'I was twenty-two or twenty-three when the Divine Mother one day asked me in the Kali temple, "Do you want to be *Akshara*?" I didn't know what the word meant. I asked Haladhari about it. He said, "*Kshara* means jiva, living being; *Akshara* means *Paramatman*, the Supreme Soul.'"

'Haladhari became charmed to see me at the time of worship in the temple and said on many occasions, "Ramakrishna, I have recognized your real nature." To that I often replied jokingly, "Beware lest you should get confused once more." He said, "You can by no means throw dust in my eyes again; there is surely a charge of divinity in you; I have understood it thoroughly this time." I heard his words and said, "Very well, let me see how long the conviction lasts." When, however, Haladhari, after finishing the service in the temple, took a pinch of snuff and started a discussion on the *Bhagavata*, the *Gita*, the *Adhyatma-Ramayana* or some other books, he became immediately a different man on account of egoism. I then went there and said, "I have realized all the states of which you read in the scriptures; I can understand all these." No sooner had he heard it than he said, "Indeed! You are a big fool. Is it for you to understand all these things?" I said "I say in truth, One who is within this (showing his own body) explains everything regarding the One of whom you spoke just now." Hearing this Haladhari got irritated and said, "Hence! queer, big fool! Which scripture speaks of an incarnation of God except Kalki, in the Kaliyuga? You have become insane and so you think as you do." I laughed and said, "Did you not say just now that there would be no confusion again?" But who would give ear to all that then? This happened not once or twice but on many occasions. One day he saw me sitting naked on a branch of the banyan tree of the Panchavati and passing water. He became thenceforward absolutely certain that I was possessed by a ghost who had been a Brahmin in his mortal life.'

'Haladhari used to say that God is beyond both Being and Non-being. I told the Divine Mother about it and asked Her, "Then is the divine form an illusion?"' 'I thought that all the divine forms I saw and the divine words I heard during Bhavasamadhi were then all a delusion. Mother, I saw, had indeed deceived me. Extremely anxious, I cried with the feeling of wounded love and

said to Mother, "Shouldst Thou, O mother, deceive me so, because I am unlettered and ignorant?" That cry and agony would not stop. I sat and wept in the "mansion". What I saw some time afterwards was a fog-like smoke rising suddenly from the floor and filling some space in front of me. I saw later in that smoke a beautiful living face of golden complexion, with beard reaching to the breast! That figure looked steadfastly at me and said with a profound voice, "My child, remain in Bhavamukha."¹ That figure repeated those words thrice and immediately dissolved in the fog, and the fog-like smoke also vanished into the void. When I had that vision I got back my peace of mind.'

[The Master said that the same doubt arose in his mind once again when he remembered those words of Haladhari.] 'Sitting for worship I cried and pressed Mother importunately for a solution of the problem; Mother then appeared near the worship-jar in the guise of a woman named "Rati's mother" and said, "Do remain in Bhavamukha."'

'After attaining samadhi, I once went to the Ganges to perform tarpan.² But as I took water in the palm of my hand, it trickled down through my fingers. Weeping, I said to Haladhari, "Cousin, what is this?" Haladhari replied, "It is called galitahasta³ in the holy books." After the vision of God such duties as the performance of tarpan drop away.'

'On a full-moon night I said to Haladhari, "Brother, is it the night of the new moon?"... Yes, it is true. Once I was told that a characteristic of a man of Perfect Knowledge is that he cannot distinguish between the full moon and the new moon. But how could one convince Haladhari of that? He said: "This is certainly the dark Kaliyuga. He cannot distinguish the full moon from the new moon! And people respect him!"'

¹ *Bhavamukha*: lit. the source of all beings (and thoughts and ideas). An exalted state of experience in which the mind is kept on the borderline between Absolute and Relative, enabling both the contemplation of the attributeless Brahman and participation in activities of the relative world, seeing in it the manifestation of God alone.

² A ceremony in which a libation of water is made to dead relatives.

³ Literally, 'inert and benumbed hand'.

ONWARD FOR EVER!

Life is but momentary, whether you have the knowledge of an angel or the ignorance of an animal. Life is but momentary, whether you have the poverty of the poorest man in rags or the wealth of the richest living person. Life is but momentary, whether you are a downtrodden man living in one of the big cities of the West or a crowned emperor ruling over millions. Life is but momentary, whether you have the best of health or the worst. Life is but momentary, whether you have the most poetical temperament or the most cruel. There is but one solution of life, says the Hindu, and that solution is what they call God and religion. If these be true, life becomes explained, life becomes bearable, becomes enjoyable. Otherwise, life is but a useless burden. That is our idea, but no amount of reasoning can demonstrate it; it can only make it probable, and there it rests. The highest demonstration of reasoning that we have in any branch of knowledge can only make a fact probable, and nothing further. The most demonstrable facts of physical science are only probabilities, not facts yet. Facts are only in the senses. Facts have to be perceived, and we have to perceive religion to demonstrate it to ourselves. We have to sense God to be convinced that there is a God.

Vivekananda

THE *DHĪRA* IN THE UPANIṢADS

EDITORIAL

Everlasting is the glory of the Upaniṣads for discovering the immortal and infinite Ātman, the spiritual essence in each individual being, and for declaring in bold, uncompromising terms Its identity with Brahman, the ultimate Reality. This has proved the greatest spiritual and philosophical discovery by the ancient sages of the Upaniṣads. And ever since earnest seekers in India down the ages have been walking on the trails to perfection blazed by the sages in the inner terrain. Even seekers outside India have been directly or indirectly benefited by this spiritual discovery, because the Upaniṣadic influence has penetrated again and again, overtly and covertly, other civilizations and cultures. For all such seekers the prototype of the successful spiritual hero is found in the *dhīra* of the Upaniṣads—the wise man, the man of spiritual discrimination (*viveka*).

Undoubtedly, there are other names by which the Upaniṣads have designated the perfected man or the man of complete knowledge and freedom. *Brāhmaṇa* (the seeker or knower of Brahman), *vidwān* (the enlightened man), *prājña* (the wise man), *brahmavid* (knower of Brahman), *ātmaavid* (knower of the Ātman), for instance, are some of the others. Nevertheless, of this imposing repertoire of terms, *dhīra* seems to us to be the most expressive and perhaps the most frequently used. Śaṅkara in his commentaries has almost always explained *dhīra* as *dhīmān*, the 'wise man', the 'intelligent man', and as *vivekī*, the 'man of discrimination'. In this he seems to conform to the etymological meaning of *dhīra* as given by Yaska's *Nirukta* (Etymology). The Sanskrit dictionary gives for this word other fine meanings and connotations: *dhīra* is one who is 'bold', 'courageous', 'steadfast', 'self-possessed', or

'resolute'. If we study carefully the profile of the *dhīra* as found in the Upaniṣads we will see that he possesses all these qualities in addition to his phenomenal powers of discrimination.

Man in fact is the Ātman which is infinite, blissful, and immortal. Never does the Ātman lack anything, never is It miserable, never bound. All the same, man sees that he is bound, miserable and mortal. What is the reason? Why is this strange paradox? The explanation offered by the Upaniṣads is simple but profound in its implication. Man's essential spiritual awareness is covered over by a thick veil of ignorance. Owing to this, man goes out through his senses, perceives multiplicity, seeks fulfilment from the shadowy world of objects, becomes a slave of endless desires and passions, and finally falls a victim to death. Yet all the time, however thick the veil of ignorance and however involved he may be in his sense-pursuits, the infinite nature of the Ātman in him exercises a fascination and an inward pull on him. He cannot fail to feel this, though in the majority it is felt very faintly. Endless unhappy experiences and repeated deaths and reincarnations slowly make the mind inwardly oriented. There is a keen hankering for rest, for unmixed happiness, and for deathlessness. This is nothing but the inward attraction of the light of the Ātman glimpsed more powerfully than ever before through a few holes in the veil of ignorance. But the return journey to the Ātman is not at all easy. The *dhīra*, the spiritual pioneer in the unmapped territory of the inner continent, is a hero of indomitable will, endowed with a burning aspiration for immortality, and possessing the subtlest power of discrimination.¹

Man is enslaved by the alluring, pleas-

ant, but fleeting and deadly, sense-objects. Spiritual discrimination is that special faculty by which the pleasant (*preyas*) is rejected in favour of the enduringly good (*śreyas*).² Sense-contacts and the happiness born of them are impermanent and bring slavery, certain misery, and ultimately death. The journey back to the Ātman demands the reversal of the current of psychical energy flowing out through the extroverted mind and senses. As Śaṅkara puts it, it is 'like turning back the river against its natural current'. This is possible only when the aspiration for immortality becomes as strong, in fact stronger than the outward flow towards the transitory. The *dhīra* represents the ideal *mumukṣu*, liberation-seeker, in whom the current back to the Ātman has become more powerful than the natural outward flow. Control of the senses—both external and internal—is therefore urged by the Upaniṣads as also moral and ethical values which are great aids in this control. Thus aspiration for immortality, discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral, self-control, and withdrawal of the mind from sense-objects are demonstrated by the *dhīra*, the spiritual pioneer, as qualifications indispensable for a pilgrim on the razor's-edge path.

Of the many such spiritual heroes presented by the Upaniṣads, Naciketas, the boy-wonder of the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* is indeed fascinating and inspiring. When he asks his third boon from Yama regarding the mystery of death, the latter tries to put him off through various temptations such as a long life with children and grandchildren, kingdom and enjoyment, wealth and sex-pleasure, music, horses and elephants, and many things besides. But Naciketas was not tempted; he remained unmoved. In his spirited reply which ends

¹ *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, II. i. 1

² *ibid.*, I. ii. 2

with the declaration, 'Naciketas will surely not opt for any other boon but the one so wrapped in mystery', he revealed flashing power of discrimination (*viveka*), amazing spirit of self-control, and unshakeable resolution for gaining immortality. Yama was disarmed by this mere slip of a boy, a blazing embodiment of the *dhīra's* qualities, and graciously agreed to teach Naciketas the mystery of death and the secret of immortality. Recognizing Naciketas as a *dhīra*, Yama said to him:

'The fulfilment of desires, the foundation of the Universe, the endless rewards of sacrifices, the shore where there is no fear, that which is adorable and great, the wide abode, and the goal—all this you have seen; and being wise (*dhīrah*), you have with firm resolve discarded everything'.³

If the qualities of discrimination, self-control, and determination characterize the *dhīra* at the very beginning of his heroic adventure, these qualities become even more evident when he is actually striving to reach his sublime and formidable goal. The Upaniṣads make this fact clear in many places. The *Kena-upaniṣad*,⁴ for instance, declares that the Self is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the Life of life, and the Eye of the eye. 'Having detached the self [from the sense-organs] and renounced the world, the wise (*dhīrāḥ*) attain to immortality.' This statement about the *dhīras* sounds simple enough, but its implications are beyond the comprehension of an ordinary man. How does the *dhīra* detach the Self from the sense-organs? Through the power of dispassion, concentration, and discriminative meditation. Those who have tried to practise this type of inner discipline know how difficult it is to curb the activities of the mind and remain identified

with the objectless awareness of the Ātman. It is the attempt 'to see the Seer'! Śaṅkara in his commentary on this verse brings out the glory and power of the *dhīra* who has succeeded in attaining the vision of the Self. He says:

'And immortality indeed is attained through realization. From the fact that a man becomes free after attaining realization, it follows (that he becomes immortal) by giving up, (through the strength of knowledge), the group of organs beginning with the ear. A man, by identifying the Self with the ear etc., becomes conditioned by these and thus takes birth, dies, and transmigrates. Therefore having realized, as their own Self, the Brahman that is defined as the "Ear of the ear" etc., and giving up self-identification with the ear etc.,—(they become immortal). Those who give up self-identification with the ear etc., are the intelligent (*dhīras*), because the self-identification with the ear etc., cannot be given up unless one is endowed with uncommon intellect.' (Italics ours)

What Śaṅkara here means by 'uncommon intellect' is the power of discrimination between the Self, the Seer, and the mental modifications, which are the seen. And not the possession of a high I.Q.

The extreme difficulty of realizing the Self is brought home to us in the teachings of Yama given to Naciketas. Yama says that the Self is effulgent and is to be sought in the cave of the intellect only. But, then, the Self is 'hidden'. How? 'It is hidden', says Śaṅkara while explaining this verse, 'behind various forms of phenomenal knowledge caused by contact of the mind with material objects'.⁵ But the *dhīra*, realizing It, gives up all joy and sorrows. How does he achieve this realization? By *adhyātmayogādhigamah*, 'by means of concentration on the Self'. With his sage-like insight, Śaṅkara explains this technique thus, 'Concentration of the mind on the

³ *ibid.*, I. ii. 11

⁴ I. 2

⁵ Śaṅkara's com. on *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, I. ii. 12

Self after withdrawing it from the outer objects is *adhyātmayoga*'.⁶

Discrimination between the real Self and the unreal non-Self that the *dhīra* has to practise has its more advanced stages, as Yama tells Naciketas in the penultimate verse of the *Kāṭha-upaniṣad*. This discrimination is, as it were, the disrobing of the Self—the five 'robes' or sheaths of food, vital air, mind, intelligence, and bliss. Yama says:

'The Puruṣa, not larger than a thumb, the inner Self, always dwells in the hearts of men. Let a man separate Him from his body with steadiness (*dhairya*), as one separates the tender stalk from a blade of grass. Let him know that Self as the Bright, as the Immortal—yea, as the Bright, as the Immortal.'

Though Yama here speaks of 'body' and not 'bodies', still the implication is that the Self has to be separated from all the five 'bodies' or 'sheaths'. Other Upaniṣads and Vedāntic teachers too point out this fact. Furthermore, one's own efforts at discrimination are likely to reveal it as well. The use of the word *dhairya*—with the quality of the *dhīra*, which Śaṅkara explains as *apramāda*, 'heedfulness'—again hints that the task is for the *dhīra* alone—the spiritual hero with unshakeable resolve; with the sharp discriminating intellect; who is steadfast, firm, and self-possessed.

The Upaniṣads portray in brilliant colours the exalted state that the *dhīras* attain when they complete their journey on the razor's-edge path:

६ विषयेभ्यः प्रतिसंहृत्य चेतसः आत्मनि समाधानं
अध्यात्मयोगः ।

'Having realized the Ātman, the seers become satisfied with that knowledge. Their souls are established in the Supreme Self, they are free from passions, and they are tranquil in mind. Such persons of discrimination (*dhīrāḥ*), ever devoted to the Self, behold everywhere the omnipresent Brahman and in the end enter into It, which is all this.'⁷ 'If a man knows the Ātman here, he then attains the true goal of life. If he does not know It here, a great destruction awaits him. Having realized the Self in all beings, moving and non-moving, the wise (*dhīrāḥ*) relinquish the world and become immortal.'⁸

'The subtle, ancient path stretching far away has been touched (reached) by me; nay, I have realized it myself. By this path the wise (*dhīrāḥ*), the knowers of Brahman, move on to the celestial sphere (Liberation) after the fall of this body, having been freed [even while living].'⁹

The tradition of spiritual expedition and conquest, thus begun by the *dhīras*, the pioneering Upaniṣadic sages, has been continued down the ages through an unbroken succession of heroic souls among whom are such distinguished luminaries as Vyāsa, Śuka, Gauḍapāda, and Śaṅkara, and in the present age—to mention only two—Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. May the inspiring example and teachings of the Upaniṣadic *dhīras* inspire our lives and guide our footsteps. 'Salutation to the great sages! Salutation to the great sages!'¹⁰

⁷ *Mundaka-upaniṣad*, III. ii. 5

⁸ *Kena-upaniṣad*, II. 5

⁹ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, IV. iv. 8

¹⁰ नमः परमऋषिभ्यो नमः परमऋषिभ्यः ।

Mund.-up., III. ii. 11

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora

29/9/15

Dear.....,

I am glad to receive yours of 21st instant. Your kindness towards me is very great; for that I am offering you my sincere thanks. My health at present is somewhat better. But there is no certainty at all. Tomorrow it may again become as bad as before. I see it happening so often. Let it be as the Lord pleases; what else can I do? From many days past my doctor-friends have been advising me to take opium. In this my old age I do not wish to come under the control of any addiction. Therefore I had to reject the advice of these friends. Now I depend on what the Lord ordains. The body is not everlasting. Some day it will surely come to its end. Hence for its sake what is the use of coming under the sway of a nasty habit? The only thing to be prayed for now is to have one-pointedness of mind at the Lord's feet. If this only happens through His grace, I shall be blessed. There remains no other particular desire.

I do not throw Vedānta overboard. Is it a thing to be thrown away? Vedānta indeed is our life. But then what is that Vedānta?—that is the question. You have discussed it well indeed. I don't find anything more to say on this. However, no worshipper, to be sure, adores the inert. The embodiment of *Sat-cit-ānanda* (Existence-knowledge-bliss) alone is the Chosen Deity and the object of all worshippers—this much only is what I have got to say. Those alone who work with desires pray for such objects of enjoyment as heaven, etc.—

'Having enjoyed the vast heavenly world, they come back to the world of mortals when their merit is exhausted. Thus abiding by the injunctions of the three Vedas and desiring desires, they are subject to death and rebirth.'¹

This is for those who perform actions such as sacrifices etc. Therefore, heaven and so forth are not the goal of the worshipper, much less so of the *jñānī* (seeker of knowledge). Now the topic of discussion is the Ātman—the condensation of *Sat-cit-ānanda*, full of consciousness. According to each one's inherited tendencies the worshippers regard this Ātman or Brahman alone, in different attitudes, as the object of adoration. Someone will regard Him as the Whole and himself as a part; someone again will find himself as one with Him. Still another will think of Him as the great Lord and of himself as separate from Him. Nonetheless, even he does not think of himself as inert but considers himself to be consciousness only. Therefore it is seen that with respect to a worshipper the question of inertness does not exist anywhere. The worshipper and the worshipped are both consciousness, only their [worshippers'] attitudes differ according to inherited tendencies. There is a fine story in regard to Śrī Rāmacandra and Hanumān, and

its recounting here will not be irrelevant. It is this: Once Śrī Rāmacandra, seeing Hanumān before Him in the midst of his royal assembly where sages and seers were also present, and wishing to please His devotees of all types, asked this question, 'Hanumān, in which attitude do you look upon Me?' Hanuman, who is the greatest among the wise, thought within himself, thus: The Lord is certainly the inner controller of all; though aware of everything, yet He has put this question; then surely there must be some noble motive in this. Thinking thus, Hanumān said:

'When I have the feeling that I am the body, then I am Your servant. When I know that I am a soul (indwelling the body), then I am a part of You. When I realize that I am the Ātman, then I am You—such is my firm conviction.'²

Through this, Hanumān has expressed the attitudes of all worshippers. This indeed is the conclusion of all schools of Vedānta. In this, no one is disappointed. On the contrary, all have been given their own proper places. Those who have not been able to rise higher than the feeling of 'I am the body', for them is the attitude of a servant: You are the Master, I am Your servant. Those who look upon themselves as the *jīva* (individual soul)—who have been able to climb above the body-idea but have not yet mastered the infinite-idea—for them the attitude is of the whole-and-part—You are the Whole, I am a part of You. Furthermore, those who have realized their identity with the Ātman, theirs is the attitude of non-difference—'I am verily You'—You and I are one; there no more remains any difference. These are the three attitudes—dualism (*dvaita*), qualified non-dualism (*viśiṣṭādvaita*) and nondualism (*advaita*). Śrī Rāmacandra, with a view to satisfying the devotees of all attitudes, present in His assembly, brought out the truths of these three attitudes through the mouth of Hanumān, the crest-jewel of devotees. This, to be sure, is the ultimate exposition of the Vedāntic truth.

There is no need for anyone to despair. In whatsoever stage they may remain, all are indeed worshipping that One alone and connected with Him only.

'And I am seated in the hearts of all; from Me are memory and knowledge, and their loss as well. It is I alone who am to be known through all the Vedas; I am indeed the Author of Vedānta and the Knower of the Vedas'.³

That one conscious Reality, the all-encompassing Supreme Being, exists pervading everyone, like the warp and the weft. He alone is to be known through all the Vedas, He is the Author of the Vedānta, He is the Knower of the Vedas. Knowing this only, one understands Vedānta. If, on the other hand, this is not realized, then even if one dissolve all the Vedāntic scriptures and gulp the solution down, even then not a bit of the real truth of Vedānta will have been realized. I have understood it this way only. Sri Ramakrishna's

² देहबुद्ध्या दासोऽस्मि ते जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः ।

आत्मबुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहं इति मे निश्चिता मतिः ॥

³ सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टो मत्तः स्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनञ्च ।

वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यो वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहं । *Bhagavad-gītā*, XV. 15

statement that 'I am and my Mother is'—the meaning of this also I have grasped thus: he hasn't spoken of the inert and the conscious. He has spoken of everything as conscious only: 'The worshipped is conscious, the worshipper is also conscious. The child's attitude. The child knows nothing besides the mother—unwavering *bhakti* (devotion)'. He is all.

'But what need is there of your acquiring this detailed knowledge, O Arjuna? With a single fragment of Myself I stand supporting the whole universe'.⁴

He by His one quarter only pervades the whole cosmos and His other three quarters remain ever-free and transcendent. The Vedas also have sung: 'All beings together are only one quarter of Him; the remaining three quarters dwell in the immortal heaven.'⁵

This much regarding Brahman. And about the *jīva*: if the body-idea persists with the *jīva*, then He is the Lord and 'I' am the servant. If it is the soul-idea, then He is the whole and I am a part. And when the *jīva* attains this knowledge, that 'I am the Ātman'—attaining which there no more remains the idea of difference—, then it becomes one with the Paramātmān and says 'I am verily You': in Him alone the soul reaches its ultimate end. This is verily the unanimously accepted truth of Vedānta. He indeed is all. The proof, the provable, and the prover—nothing remains apart from Him. The Ātman, the *jīva*, the universe—all is He. There is nothing else besides Him. He who says that there is something besides Him, his delusion has not gone. He is a 'babbler as if in sleep': in the drowsiness of sleep he does not know what he is saying; it is similar to that.

'By superimposition and de-superimposition, Brahman, which has not the least touch with the world, is experienced as if It is the world.'⁶ In this sense only, the Upaniṣad says, 'From this Ātman is born the *ākāśa* (ether)' etc.⁷—not for indicating a real creation.

'There is neither dissolution nor creation, none in bondage and none practising disciplines. There is none seeking Liberation and none liberated. This is the absolute truth.'⁸

This surely is the conclusion of the Vedānta. What after all can Śaṅkara say about *sālokya* and *sāmīpya* (two of the modes of salvation acknowledged by the dualistic school, meaning, respectively, 'attaining the realm of God', and 'attaining His proximity')? You surely know how the Lord proclaims the attitude of desirelessness of his devotee by saying, '... they won't accept... [boons... even including salvation]... even if offered ...'⁹

4 अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवाजुन ।

विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥ *ibid.*, X. 42

5 पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि । *Rg-veda*, X. 7. 90. 3

6 अध्यारोपापवादाभ्यां निष्प्रपञ्चं प्रपञ्च्यते ।

7 एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः संभूतः । *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, II. 1

8 न निरोधो न चोत्पत्तिर्न बद्धो न च साधकः ।

न मुमुक्षुर्न वै मुक्त इत्येषा परमार्थता ॥ *Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā*, II. 32

9 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, III. vi. 15

Nobody, to be sure, speaks of scriptural study, *japa*, austerity, meditation, concentration, or *samādhi* as the goal.

‘Of what use are the Vedas to him who does not know that indestructible Substance, that *ākāśa*-like Brahman, which is greater than the unmanifest and wherein the Vedas and all the gods are sheltered? Only those who know It attain bliss.’¹⁰

This is the declaration of the Upaniṣad. Further, the Lord has spoken through the *Gītā*:

‘The dwellers in all the worlds, from the realm of Brahma downward, are subject to rebirth, O Arjuna; but for those who reach Me, O son of Kuntī, there is no further return to embodiment.’

‘I am the Self, O Guḍākeśa, seated in the hearts of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all beings.’

‘I am the Goal and the Support, the Lord and the Witness; the Abode, the Refuge, and the Friend. I am the origin and the dissolution; the ground, the storehouse, and the Imperishable Seed.’¹¹

Therefore it is not any more necessary to elaborate that He is the all-in-all of the *jīva*. Having come to eat mangoes, it is indeed good to eat mangoes. What great need for other information? Those to whom the Lord will entrust the duty of the teacher, they alone will think thus about others, ‘Through which religion is one harmed or benefited?’ If we can eat mangoes, we will become blessed. May the Lord introduce you to the ‘Owner of the Garden’—this is my importunate prayer to Him.

SRI TURIYANANDA

10 तमेव विदित्वातिमृत्युमेति ।

नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय । *Svetāsvatara-upaniṣad*, III. 8

11 आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत् ।

प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजमव्ययम् ॥ *Bhagavad-gītā*, VIII. 16; X. 20; IX. 18

SWAMI RAMA TIRTHA: MAN OF SELF-RELIANCE AND UNIVERSAL LOVE

SWAMI RASAJNANANDA

'It is one,' replied Prof. Tirtha Rama Goswami—that was the pre-monastic name of Swami Rama Tirtha—when asked about the time. 'That's the message,' said the illustrious Monk in a solemn tone. It opened for the professor a vista of profound meaning. Glowing with the health of a Punjabi, shining as a scholar of distinction, and thirsting after the Truth of truth (*satyasya satyam*), Tirtha Rama was fit to hear and ponder over the Vedāntic doctrine of unity. His heart was lifted up in joy in the company of the monk who was none other than Swami Vivekananda. Tirtha Rama spared no pains to serve him and to lead a batch of college students for organizing public lectures which the Swami gave in Lahore. Short as the Swami's stay was, yet there grew a close relation between the two. Vivekananda's solicitude for the spiritual welfare of this brilliant professor, an ardent devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and a potential Advaitin, could be seen in the song he sang—where Rāma (God-consciousness) is, there is no desire; where desire is, there is no Rāma—in an enthralling manner, emphasizing the essential need of total renunciation in religious life. As the time of parting approached, Tirtha Rama presented the Swami a gold watch. As an illustration of his Advaitic teaching, Swami Vivekananda took it but put it back in the professor's pocket with the words, 'Very well, friend, I shall wear it *here* in this pocket.' Vivekananda's visit to Lahore was of special significance to Tirtha Rama. 'This visit of Swami Vivekananda, no doubt, strengthened the silent ambitions of the young Swami Rama of leading the life of a monk,' writes his biographer Puran Singh, 'and to go round the world, preach-

ing Vedanta like Vivekananda.... And it was after meeting with Swami Vivekananda that Swami Rama made up his mind definitely. He had found an exemplar and an interpreter of the comprehensive kind of Advaita Vedanta that he was already evolving within himself.'¹ Another holy person who during his sojourn in Lahore, helped clinch his decision to renounce and orient himself to the Advaitic way of life was Sankaracharya of Dwaraka.

RELIGIOUS DISPOSITION AND POWER OF CONCENTRATION

Born on 22 October 1873 at Muraliwala (a village in the Gujranwala district, now in Pakistan) in a brāhmaṇa family of Gosāins, who were descended from Tulasī-dāsa, Tirtha Rama had inherited a religious propensity. At a tender age he loved to listen to the recitations from the Purāṇas, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Bhāgavatam*, and to ask intelligent questions on them. Taught early in life in the traditional Moslem way by the Maulvis, Islam had a share in his affection. A student of Mission High School and Forman Christian College in Lahore, he imbibed Christ's teachings, too. This acquaintance with three of the major faiths at an impressionable age brought to his view the common ground and sowed the seeds of synthesis, oneness of God, and harmony of religions. What marked him further were cheerful spirit, precocious mind, contemplative nature, and love of solitude. 'In his student life Swami Rama was growing inwardly.'² Whichever

¹ Puran Singh, *The Story of Swami Rama* (Ganesh & Co. Madras, 1924), p. 96.

² *The Complete Works of Swami Tirtha, M.A.* (S. Chand & Bros., Delhi, 1920), 'Preface', p. ix.

he set his hand to, he went into it with his whole heart and soul. For instance, as he began to study the Persian poet Hafiz under Maulvi Ahmad Ali, he would not allow the Maulvi to proceed to the second verse before he was able to understand the first one thoroughly. The Maulvi had to spend three months for the purpose. While at school, Tirtha Rama could master the Persian classics—*Bostan* and *Gulistan*—in a very short time to the amazement of all. In his B.A. class he took up Sanskrit, quite new to him, as his second language in the place of Persian which had been his subject right from the school to the Entrance Examination. Even so he surprised the pandit with a fluent recitation of passages from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* which he could con in a couple of weeks. Later in life his favourite verses in Urdu, Persian, or Sanskrit—or simply the holy syllable *Om*—he would repeat with concentration and become absorbed in any of them, oblivious of his body and surroundings. An illumined poet that he was, he 'was seen losing himself in poetry for hours together'.³

HIS GUIDE AND GUARDIAN

In his boyhood Tirtha Rama was attracted to one Bhagat Dhanna Ram, a saintly person with a spiritual aura about him. Their relationship came about in this wise. After completion of primary school education in his village, the boy had to be sent to Gujranwala for his high school education. It was there that Dhanna Ram was residing; besides he was a trusted friend of Tirtha Rama's father. So the boy was placed under the care of this wise man. The latter's spirituality can be inferred from the fact that no sooner was he initiated by his guru than he went into a trance and did not come to until after about four

hours. Though not a monk, he led a pure life and remained a lifelong bachelor, working as a copper-smith. Lacking in education beyond the primary level, he could yet expound *Yogavāsistha* with insight of understanding. He had the power of reading thoughts, too. Small wonder that the boy Tirtha Rama imagined this awe-inspiring person to be God Himself. Such was the guardian who fostered our hero from the age of ten and whom he looked upon as his friend, philosopher, and guide. Even after going to Lahore for his college education, Tirtha Rama sought his guidance by regular correspondence.

'POVERTY IS BLESSED'

That poverty is not necessarily a curse and an evil, but can become an incentive for bringing out the inner fire, steeling the will, and deepening the love of God is borne out in the case of Tirtha Rama. An entry in his notebook reads: 'Poverty is blessed: it constructs the ladder of tear-drops to the throne of God.'⁴ He had to struggle against heavy odds. To begin with, his conservative father was violently opposed to his college education, so much opposed that he not only ceased helping him but forced on him the maintenance of his (Tirtha Rama's) wife also. (He had betrothed his son at the age of two to an infant; the ceremonial marriage took place eight years later.) Tirtha Rama had no mother to comfort him in his plight, for she had breathed her last within a few days of his birth. There was hardly a prospect of aid or scholarship from any quarter. It was dark: darker still appeared the future. These calamities and uncertainties, however, did not deter him from joining the Forman Christian College, Lahore, in 1888. His condition in collegiate days can be imagin-

³ Puran Singh, op. cit., p. 7.

⁴ S. R. Sharma, *Swami Rama Tirtha* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1961), pp. 3-4.

ed from a report that there were occasions when he did not have a pice even to buy a postcard. But all through he depended on God and God alone. To quote his own words: 'Tears streamed in a torrent and I prayed, "O Lord, now Rama [referring to himself] is entirely Thine and Thou art Rama's. My only duty is to pray continuously and remain contented with whatever comes; and Thine is to protect him in every way. Even the body of Rama is no longer his; it is Thine, Thine, Thine! Now save him or kill him, just as it pleases Thee!"'⁵ He was also endowed with a strong will, as is evident in his conviction that fate bows to him who defies it.

WINNING LAURELS

With a happy blending of such dependence on God and indomitable will-power, our hero braved the difficulties, prosecuted his studies, and managed to maintain his family and even to help poor students. His life is a triumphant example of man becoming the architect of himself from childhood to manhood. In the Entrance Examination he came out first for the university. 'As our Mathematics professor took ill', he reported to Dhanna Ram, 'I have to teach one hour daily in his stead.'⁶ He was then only seventeen! As the results of the B.A. examination of 1893 came out, he found to his joy that he stood first in the province; and what is more, he had answered all the thirteen questions in the Mathematics paper against the examiner's instruction to attempt any nine. If he bore intellectual strain in straitened circumstances, it was because he maintained his health by a daily bout of physical exercise or long walk. As relating to his physical fitness it may be mentioned that he came off with flying colours in two competitions in America where he went as a monk later.

Starting with many American competitors, he was the first to climb the peak (14,161 ft.) of Shasta Mount: the magazine which published an account of his ascent boomed with a phenomenal sale. The other event was a marathon thirty-mile running race in which he won the first place.

To take up the thread of the narrative, his college life was marked, not only by intellectual enrichment, but by expansion of heart, too. Indigent as he himself was, in between his studies, 'he also gave private tuition (often free) or otherwise helped poor students with books, etc.'⁷ By virtue of standing first in the University at the B.A., he had the right that year to secure the State Scholarship and go to Cambridge for the Blue Ribbon in Mathematics. Destined for a greater mission in another line than mere senior wranglership, he did not exercise the right to go to Cambridge despite the encouragement and support of Principal Bell and the Assistant Registrar of the University; eventually another young man got the scholarship. Tirtha Rama then studied for M.A. and passed with distinction in Mathematics from the Government College, Lahore. To crown all his struggles, he joined the Forman Christian College in May 1896, this time as Professor of Mathematics on a handsome monthly salary.

KRSNA-BHAKTI (DEVOTION TO KRSNA)

What was his reaction? The line of his thinking is revealed in a letter he wrote to Dhanna Ram. It reads: 'The peace I get by my work for God is enough salary for me. I let this college salary alone, do what you may like with it. I neither increase nor decrease by the addition or the subtraction of such things. I am joy Absolute.'⁸ 'It is no joy to me', he penned in the earlier part of the letter, 'to gather the

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸ Puran Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

wealth of this world.... For me, the shade of a tree for a house, ashes for my wear, the bare earth for my bed, and the bread begged from a few doors for my food—if I get these I feel very happy.’⁹ Odd as it was on the part of a professor of promise—in fact he became the idol of other teachers—to entertain this queer desire, it denoted his discrimination between the ephemeral and the eternal and his quest for ‘that joy which nothing of the outside world can give me’.¹⁰ It was Kṛṣṇa who loomed real, more real than the world, and captivated his heart. He would walk on the banks of the river Ravi, lost in the love of the Lord. ‘The mere mention of the name of Krishna’, said Swami Narayana, a disciple of his, ‘sent him into a trance.’¹¹ He once said:

O eyes! what use have I of ye,
If ye see not Krishna, close, close
forever.

O hands! if ye touch not His feet, of
what avail are ye to me? Wither up.
Be palsied!

O Lord! if by giving life, thou comest
here, I give it to thee.¹²

Crying thus, he fainted away. When he came to himself, he saw a cobra darting at him. Undaunted, he leapt towards it with the words: ‘O Lord, come. Thou comest to me in the shape of a serpent. O Lord, I wish to see Thee in that beauty to which the Gopis came attracted like poor moths.’ Even as a student he had started spending his vacations in Mathura and Vrindaban, associated with the *līlās* (sports) of Kṛṣṇa. His devotion to Him was manifest in the enthralling lectures he delivered later on in various places under the auspices of the Sanatana or Sadharana Dharma Sabhas.

FULFILMENT IN ADVAITA VEDANTA

However, after coming in contact with Swami Vivekananda and Sankaracharya of Dwaraka, Tirtha Rama began to veer round to the Advaita Vedānta. Instead of Vrindaban, he now frequented Hardwar and Rishikesh, celebrated for monks of Advaitic school. Free thinking tempered by rigorous reasoning led him to the irreducible unity which alone can account for the world of multiplicity. The undivided Reality which is ever free and which is the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute was the crown and consummation of his ecstatic devotion to Kṛṣṇa. ‘There is but one, that is Truth, nothing else’¹³—this was his conclusion. He now loved to read and hear books on pure monism. Nothing delighted him as much as discussions on the Advaita philosophy, on enlightening thoughts such as: ‘In all these apparently different manifestations there is one indivisible, unchangeable, eternal, constant reality. Know that and free yourself. Know that and shake off all sorrow’.¹⁴ He founded the ‘Advaitamritavarshini Sabha’ (i.e., an assembly for propagating Advaita) at Lahore in his own house where *sādhus* and *mahātmas* (holy men and monks) regularly met and carried on discussions and discourses to his heart’s content. Besides, an Urdu periodical named *Aliph* was started by him. Aliph is the first letter of the Persian alphabet—suggesting one. It is the elevating ideas which he expounded in the magazine that were later amplified in his American lectures. The contents thereof included choice quotations from Urdu, Persian, Sanskrit, and English poets and prophets. As a sample we give below the English rendering of a Persian quotation, advocating Advaita:

The drop wept and said: ‘We are all so different from the sea.’

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁰ *loc. cit.*

¹¹ S. R. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹² Purau Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁴ *The Works*, Vol. I, p. 47.

But the sea laughed at the drop and said:
 'We are all water.'¹⁵
 Likewise the infinite, eternal One gives
 the glad tidings to the sorrowing soul:
 'We are but the blissful Brahman.'

SANNYASA AND SELF-REALIZATION

Vedānta is not some speculation or a sort of intellectual exercise, but a fact of experience, palpable as a fruit in one's palm. It has its own method and discipline, like any other science. 'Without paying the price,' averred Tirtha Rama, 'you cannot reach God, you cannot regain your birthright. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Purity of heart means making yourself free of all clings to the objects of the world. Renunciation, nothing short of it. Gain this purity and you see God.'¹⁶ If the non-dual Truth is real and everything else unreal, then the latter should be ruthlessly relinquished. Fired by the ideal of renunciation, Tirtha Rama gave up his job, renounced his family, friends, and his pet subject Mathematics, and, leaving Lahore for good, went to the Himalayas in July 1900. His life there was a life of freedom, unfettered by anything worldly, fulfilling his earlier desire of having 'the shade of a tree for a house,....and the bread begged from a few doors for my food' and preparing himself for his noble mission. When urged to return and work among the people, he replied:

'I am here making a thorough study of the Shastras [scriptures] and of the highest Western thought and am at the same time pursuing my own independent researches. I have not to spend my lifetime over this work. I shall soon be imparting or rather carrying into the business and bosom of humanity what I have been acquiring at the cost of incessant labour.... I have a conscience; and for no personal glory, no gain, no threats, no imminent danger,

not for fear of death even, shall I preach what I have not realized to be the Truth.'¹⁷

Early in 1901 he approached Swami Ramashramaji of Uttara Kashi for initiation into *sannyāsa*, but was told that the Swami took no formal disciples. 'Thereupon Tirtha Rama cut off his own hair, and became a *sannyāsi* "without any formal ceremony, and named himself Rama Tirtha".'¹⁸ His ambitions found fulfilment in *sannyāsa*, the great resolve to renounce, renounce and renounce, to be dead to the world and be born anew in the world of Brahman. That, however, was not his goal. To the question why he renounced his family, he was to reply later in Japan: 'Only to seek a larger one and share my joy with the whole world.'¹⁹ This means expanding himself to unbounded proportions in order to feel the wide world as his own family and acquiring a joy, infinite in its dimension—what is known as *param-ānanda* (supreme bliss) in Vedāntic parlance. Yes, it needed to be won first before it could be distributed. The inner, higher struggles, adventures and experiences which he had for this purpose, only he knew. A letter of his, however, reflects his *neti, neti* (not this, not this) attitude:

'Neither praise nor blame,
 Neither friends nor foes,
 Neither loves, nor hatred,
 Neither body, nor its relations,
 Neither home, nor strange land,
 No! Nothing of this world is important.
 God is! God is real, God is the only reality. Let everything go. God, God alone is the all in all.'²⁰

At long last the Self was realized in the Brahmapuri forest: his dictum that realization is religion was thus vindicated.

'It was in the forests of Brahmapuri, near Hrishikesh, that Swami Rama rea-

¹⁵ Puran Singh, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁸ S. R. Sharma, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁹ Puran Singh, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁰ *The Complete Works*, Part VII, p. 530.

lized his object—the *Atman*, the Self. It was there that he attained to that fearless, blissful *one-ness* state of mind where there is no more delusion or repentance. Here he collected the facts for the enunciation of his great law that the whole Universe serves one as his

body, when he feels the Universal Soul as his very Self.’²¹

(To be concluded)

²¹ Puran Singh, ‘Life Sketch of Swami Tirtha’, *The Complete Works*, Part IV, pp. xi-xii.

THE SUPRA-RATIONAL ELEMENT IN SOME EUROPEAN THINKERS

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

‘Human reason is feeble and may be deceived, but true Faith cannot be deceived.’ ‘All reason and natural search ought to follow Faith, not to go before it, nor to break in upon it.’

—*Imitation of Christ*

Thirty-five years back there was a discussion in these pages¹ on the role of reason in Indian philosophic thought. Certain learned pundits had denounced Indian philosophy as unworthy of being ranked alongside European. They declared that pure philosophies, rational philosophies, and scientific philosophies existed only in the West, and that ‘Indian philosophy’ should go into hiding. Outrageous as this statement was, it did not deserve any comment from serious scholars. After the outstanding contributions to Indology made by a brilliant galaxy of scholars, eastern as well as western, it was deemed superfluous to plead for recognition of Indian philosophy as pure, rational, or scientific philosophy. Hence, the author thought it best to strike at the very roots of the pundits’ arguments and expose the hollowness of the claims of ‘reason’ to reveal the real nature of *truth*. This he did on the basis of the latest advances in western science and mathematics. After examining the available evidence, he

concluded that reason is an utterly untrustworthy guide, and only serves to mislead man in his search for truth.

Be that as it may, there is another aspect to the controversy about reason which was hinted at in the article under reference, but which was not elaborated; and it is this aspect, namely, *the mystical² element in western philosophy*, which we now propose to discuss. To a surprising extent, this supra-rational element has penetrated into European thought, right from the time of Thales down to the present day. It has however been sedulously minimized by professors of philosophy and also by most text-book writers. Now if one goes on suppressing what is true and putting forward what is untrue, then gradually the public tends to believe in the untruth as truth—nay, what is worse, you yourself tend to fall into the same delusion. This is what has

² ‘Mysticism’ may be defined as the doctrine or belief that through contemplation and love, man can achieve a direct and immediate consciousness of God or of Divine Truth, without the use of reason or of the ordinary senses.

¹ *Prabuddha Bharata*, April 1940, pp. 178-82

happened to much of European philosophy and the teachers of that philosophy.

The development of European thought, many tell us, proceeds in a wave-like form, with great crests and deep troughs: the crests representing the creative periods of striking originality; the troughs, the comparatively sterile periods marked by the absence of original thinking. Thus, beginning with the Milesian School, it is held that the level of European thought rises till the great crests are reached in Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Thereafter, decline sets in. With Plotinus and Neo-Platonism we come down the slopes till we fall into the deep trough of Medieval Scholasticism and its sterile speculations. Then comes the Renaissance, lifting us to the philosophic heights of Rationalism and Empiricism, till the Kantian and Hegelian crests are reached. And we are told that on will go European philosophy thus, rising and falling. To be sure, this is a very nice picture and it has hypnotized many of us.

But for us, it seems more practical to study the same set of phenomena from the standpoint of the supra-rational element—of the mystics, many of whom were also great philosophers. We then tend to perceive a pattern with more frequent crests and hollows—the divine impulses being of course never really absent—some of which will coalesce with those of the conventional wave-pattern. When we change our view-point from that of philosophy as pure speculation to that of philosophy as *darśana* (lit., 'sight'; applied to Hindu philosophy as it affords the vision of truth), then the mystical elements in European thought, so long discarded by traditional teachers of philosophy, acquire supreme importance. And after all, the world has produced no worth-while system of philosophy which has not had its origin first in mystic intuition, developed later by reason into a coherent system of thought. And

European philosophy is no exception to this general principle.

What has reason achieved of lasting importance in the realm of the inner life of the spirit? Very little, as we shall see.

In the chapter on 'Methods of Vedantic Knowledge' in his *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo defines the respective roles of reason and intuition:

'We shall find that intuition is our first teacher.... Intuition brings to man those brilliant messages from the Unknown which are the beginning of his higher knowledge. Reason only comes in afterwards to see what profit it can have of the shining harvest.'

'The sages of the Veda and Vedanta relied entirely upon intuition and spiritual experience. It is by an error that scholars sometimes speak of great debates and discussions in the Upanishad. Wherever there is the appearance of a controversy, it is not by discussion, by dialectics or the use of logical reasoning that it proceeds, but by a comparison of intuitions and experiences in which the less luminous gives place to the more luminous.... *Nowhere in the Upanishads do we find any trace of logical reasoning urged in support of the truths of Vedanta.*³ (italics not the author's)

In much of European philosophy also, intuition plays this dominant role, but the European thinker is not consciously aware of this fact in most cases. Intuition seems to be concealed in the deep unconscious, while at the conscious level reason in many of its aspects seems present as a deceptive illusion.

What is reason after all? Reduced to its basic components, it resolves itself into either reasoning down from a set of assumed premises to their inevitable conclusions, or reasoning up from a set of so-called 'facts', provided by the senses, to some sort of generalization linking up the 'facts'. And

³ *The Life Divine* (Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1939) Vol. I, pp. 102-5

what is more, the premises for the first type of reasoning are provided by the 'generalizations' of the second type. Ultimately, the data from the sense organs are the basic foundations for reason. Hence reason is saturated through and through with sense-perception. The reason on which the European thinker wants to ride to security has feet of clay, and is likely to drown him in the ocean of sense-ignorance and its products.

Why then do men so cling to reason? Because all men can reason. This consideration offers reassurance to the ego. Dependence on reason, further, caters to self-indulgence; it discourages self-discipline. As contact with the material world is the basis for such reasoning, the outflow of mental energy into the external environment is continuously encouraged. Dependence on reason is inimical to every requirement for treading the path prescribed for seekers after truth. It is like the proverbial fairy with an alluring exterior but an empty shell behind.

No wonder, Bhagavan Ramakrishna warned 'M' and other devotees against too much reasoning, along the path of God-realization!

Let us now turn our attention to ancient European philosophy, to see the extent of the role which mystical intuition played therein. Right at the beginning of his *Greek Philosophy*, John Burnet points to Plato's belief 'that no philosophical truth could be communicated in writing at all; it was only by *some sort of immediate contact that one soul could kindle the flame in another*'.⁴ We may go even further and aver that it is only by immediate contact (*darśana* or *sākṣāt-kāra*) that the seeker after ultimate truth realizes it and becomes one with it. Such immediate contact or something very similar to it we find in the

lives of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Plotinus, some of the Medieval philosophers, and in our own day, Bergson among others; and also in such avowed rationalists and empiricists as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, and Bradley. Let us select a few from each of these groups for examination.

Pythagoras, the brilliant mathematician who had the courage of his convictions and founded a fraternity of *sādhakas* (spiritual aspirants) for realizing truth, was undeniably a mystic. He had direct intuitive perception of truth in its mathematical aspect. The union of mathematical genius and mysticism has always been relatively common. In the seventeenth century, for instance, we have strong evidence of this union in both Isaac Newton and Johann Kepler, the latter of whom believed firmly in the 'harmony of the spheres' and in planets with souls. Burnet⁵ after studying the available data, admits the existence of the mystical element, but asserts that it was a carry-over from 'Minoan' times and that there is no need to bring in Egypt or India to account for the mystic forces. The denial of Indian influence is significant as it shows the fear or antipathy or both, on the part of this western thinker—among many such—towards Indian mystical influences. Whether or not this influence actually 'came from' India, still ample evidence—the purificatory rites in Pythagoreanism, the function of music in heightening human consciousness, belief in rebirth and transmigration—these and much besides undoubtedly point to the universal prevalence of mystical tendencies which India has developed to the fullest.

From Pythagoras let us pass on to Socrates, the master of Plato whose disciple was Aristotle. These three men have set, among them, the pattern for the development of European culture. Socrates, it is

⁴ *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato* (Macmillan Co., London, 1950), p. 4

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 40-42

said, was odd in many ways. Of course he was odd in the eyes of those who are blind to the exalted planes of superconscious experience, which transcend the senses. From his boyhood he had the unique experience of hearing the 'voice of the unseen' which was constantly guiding him. This unseen and suprasensory entity, comprehended only by mystic intuition, was a very real force in his life, and was admitted to be such by all who knew him. Besides, Socrates was remarkable in another respect. He had frequent trances, the nature of which was a puzzle to his contemporaries and a source of annoyance to most modern teachers and writers on western philosophy. That he experienced *samādhi* (superconscious state) goes without saying. Once on the eve of battle, in a military camp, he stood in what we would call *samādhi* for a whole day and night; and when it ended he uttered a prayer and came down to the level of ordinary consciousness of the material world. And yet he has been held by many later philosophers to be a typical man of reason who swore by the omnipotence of the intellect!

Again, he who runs may read, in Plato's doctrine of ideas, the dominating presence of the mystic and intuitive elements. Does he not speak eloquently of the existence of the supersensuous world in which all of us lived and moved before we were born on this earth? Even Bertrand Russell admits that 'Philosophy, for Plato is a kind of vision, the "vision of Truth".'⁶ Russell also points out that the mystical elements in Orphism were inherited by Pythagoras who in turn passed them on to Plato.⁷

We are now bypassing Plotinus and the medieval philosophers, as these are avowedly mystical, as agreed by western textbook writers. Our concern is with European thinkers who are claimed as adherents

of pure reason, but in the hidden recesses of whose minds mystical elements have taken firm lodging. Of these, René Descartes is the most remarkable example. In his *Discours de la Methode*, he writes that during the winter of 1619-20 while serving in the Bavarian Army, he would get into a 'stove' in the early morning and meditate throughout the day. When he came out of his meditation, he declared he had solved intricate philosophical problems. We know that his principle, *cogito ergo sum*, was not a deduction, nor was it mere immediate inference. It was in fact a direct perception of truth during one of his periods of meditation. Apart from this, there is the notable observation of Descartes that the 'pineal gland' occupies the central place in the human constitution. This apparently naive statement has puzzled many European thinkers, and they have taken pleasure in ridiculing it as something absurd. But as we in our country are aware that the pineal gland has a significant role to play in certain stages of yogic practice, we can see what Descartes meant by ascribing to it such importance.

Spinoza, the successor of Descartes, inherited by birth the mystic background of the Jewish race. In life he was a strict ascetic and ridiculed material wealth. In the spirit of a true *karma-yogin* he earned his livelihood by grinding lenses. It is therefore a matter of small wonder that his conceptions of God are puzzling to the western thinkers. That God can be without form and also with form, that He can have innumerable auspicious attributes and also be without any attributes, are views beyond ordinary comprehension. Only a mystic can understand them, as they are the expressions of deep mystical experiences.

And on goes the story, revealing to us the mystic foundations of all the rationalistic philosophies of the West. Even Kant is no

⁶ *History of Western Philosophy* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1954), p. 144

⁷ *vide ibid.*, p. 37

exception. Bertrand Russell gracefully admits that the mystical element existed in Kant, as evidenced in his admiration for Swedenborg and his works, but it did not much manifest itself in his writings.⁸ Traces of this element can be seen in his *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Our contention is this: the mystical element is present in all creative thinkers. It lifts their thinking to certain heights, and left to itself it would raise it to sublime spiritual levels. But most western thinkers choose to stay below, as they cannot stand the vision of sublimity. They forcibly suppress such thoughts and stay near the earth.

Let us now skip another period, from Descartes through Bradley and Bosanquet, and come to fairly modern times. The present is the age of science, with the strong tendencies towards Godlessness, scepticism, egotism, materialism, and hedonism which this discipline brings with it. We are reminded of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's description of the demoniac nature.⁹ Yet in the midst of these material forces, we especially note one philosophical system according the highest place to mysticism and mystical experiences. It is that of Dean W. R. Inge. In an age of positivistic and mechanistic determinism in physical sciences and of the biological doctrine of evolution, it is refreshing to find Dean Inge's resuscitation of mystic elements of Plotinus especially and fusion of them with prevalent philosophical speculations. He found in Plotinus a guide both philosophical and practical, sustaining the earnest seeker even today. He showed that the Christian Church—the

foundation of Western civilization—had imbibed the wisdom of the ancients through Plotinus, who thus appears as a major factor in modern European civilization.

But Inge is careful to note that the true mystical experience does not nullify reason: it only transcends 'shallow rationalism which is based on formal logic.' This experience is unique in that it comprises all the factors of thinking, feeling, willing—in fact the whole personality must be involved in the search for God if the mystic is to finally achieve union with Him. As Inge well says, though the mystical experience is individual and concrete, yet it is a true revelation of a universal and eternal truth. One easily becomes convinced that the author had genuine mystical experiences himself; but yet he was a busy clergyman, giving his message in the present century, from a most distinguished Anglican pulpit.

We have chosen to discuss Dean Inge, as he speaks explicitly of mystic experience and its influence on philosophic thinking. Others there are of the modern period who are touched by the mystic influence and whose philosophy bears its stamp. Bradley is one of these. Students of philosophy are familiar with his *Appearance and Reality*, but not, perhaps, with those remarkable passages in it which reveal the deep mystic strain of his nature, hidden in the recesses of his mind.¹⁰ With deep emotion, Bradley seeks for the Absolute *in order to get merged in it*. More than this, it is when he speaks of the ultimate nature of pain, evil and error in relation to the Absolute, that we get evidence of the powerful influence of this mystical element over his mind. He speaks of a supra-moral sphere of Being, in which contradictions of the lower level are dissolved.

With Bradley we bring our survey to a close. It is the same story all through.

⁸ *vide* *ibid.*, pp. 732, 735

⁹ 'Men of demoniac nature know not what to do and what to refrain from doing. Purity is not in them, nor good conduct, nor truth. They say: "The world is devoid of truth, without a moral basis, and without a God. It is brought about by the union of male and female, and lust alone is its cause: what else?"'—*Bhagavad-gītā*, XVI. 7-8

¹⁰ *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 172, 202

As for German thought, we may point out that mysticism is an invariable ingredient in the German mind. We need not single out the great mystics like Eckhart for our purpose. Every German thinker—not excluding Hegel—is mystically inspired, as we briefly noted in the case of Kant. And France—this great country has the distinction of having given birth to Henri Bergson, to name but one of the latest and most distinguished.

The point is this—it required a Freud to open the eyes of westerners to the solid reality of the Unconscious. They were aware of it, but like Nelson at the battle of Tra-

falgar they turned their blind eye (or deaf ear) toward the unconscious. It was to their apparent, short-term advantage to ignore it. Just so, the westerners and their admirers still mostly choose to turn their blind eye to the deep mystic roots in their own minds. If they shed all prejudice and face the reality of the situation, they will find that the mystic vein in them is the strong bed-rock on which all their philosophic thinking is founded. Now that the West is coming under the influence of Indian thought, we feel certain that it will awaken to the reality of the mystical and the supra-rational element.

THE ACTIVATION OF HUMAN ENERGY: FAITH IN THE FUTURE: ZEST FOR LIFE

DR. BEATRICE BRUTEAU

Teilhard's great vision of the pan-Christic union of human persons, as we saw in my previous contribution to this Journal, will become actualized only if the human persons involved, freely and eagerly enter into that union. We human beings are a unique compound of cosmic energies, Teilhard believes, unifying in ourselves all the energies below us, but the further evolution of this energy now depends on how it moves in our human consciousness. How can human energy be activated so that the unique and incomparably precious individual persons will draw together, 'center to center', living as it were by 'one soul', and forming the 'Super-Person' of the 'ever greater Christ'?¹ Teilhard answers that we must consciously cultivate these human energies, the energies of human consciousness; that we must ap-

preciate ourselves, have confidence in ourselves, in Nature, and in God; have confidence in the *process* of evolution.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN ACTION

What we do with our human energy is of the utmost importance, Teilhard holds. Humanity is (in our corner of the universe) the summary and recapitulation of all that Nature has produced (so far as we know). Our actions, therefore, are Nature's actions; our disposition of the energy of which we are made is a disposition of the cosmic reality. The human being, Teilhard says, has 'the possibility and power of forming in the heart of space and time, *a single point of universalization* for the very stuff of the world'.²

Our responsibility for the future of cosmic evolution cannot be put too strongly

¹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: *Letters from a Traveller* (Harper & Row, New York, 1962), pp. 133, 305.

² Teilhard: *The Appearance of Man* (Harper & Row, New York, 1956), p. 269.

for Teilhard. The human vocation, he claims, is to create an eternal work which cannot exist without us.³

'If man is to come up to his full measure, he must become conscious of his infinite capacity for carrying himself still further; he must realize the duties it involves, and he must feel its intoxicating wonder. He must abandon all the illusions of narrow individualism and extend himself, intellectually and emotionally, to the dimensions of the universe: and this even though, his mind reeling at the prospect of his new greatness, he should think that he is already in possession of the divine, is God himself, or is himself the artisan of Godhead.'⁴

How are we to go about it? We must cultivate our peculiarly human energies: certain 'psychic tendencies' expressive of our 'fundamental aspiration to know and act'.⁵

I think we can identify some of these human energies as faith, the desire to know, love, the will to create, and contemplative delight in goodness and beauty. We may notice that of these five, four are oriented, at least in part, to the future. (Love is both a future oriented will that all shall be well with the beloved and a present or eternal contemplative delight in the perfection of the beloved.) The fifth, contemplative joy, is actually the completion and fulfilment of all the others. Because we are always somehow aware of this, that the exercise of our energies has a goal, and therefore is itself of value only if the goal is reached,

we also know that the first of these energies, faith, must be the foundation on which all the rest of them are expressed.

FAITH IN THE FUTURE

Faith, in this context, means the expectation that our efforts will be rewarded. As we pointed out when discussing Evolution toward Omega, human energies cannot be activated when the person knows that his work will fail. But what do we mean by success? What kind of reward do we expect? Teilhard is quite bold in setting forth the terms under which we will consent to take up the work of evolution. We require the 'final completion of everything around us'.⁶ We will not move except toward that which is endlessly new.⁷ We insist that we and the fruit of our labours in the structuring and refining of the human energy-stuff of which we are composed shall be preserved in immortality.⁸

Can we really expect such a huge reward for our human action? We must, says Teilhard, or we will find it impossible to rouse ourselves to the needed action, and humanity will perish. As we adjust our minds to the awesome realization that evolution moves now in us, in our freedom and conscious actions, we are forced to recognize that what we need 'before anything else...is to be quite certain... that the sort of temporal-spatial...cone into which [our] destiny is leading [us] is not a blind alley'.⁹ It suddenly becomes overwhelmingly clear to us that to survive we must believe.

³ Cf. Teilhard: *Hymn of the Universe* (Harper & Row, New York, 1965), p. 114. Cf. his *The Making of a Mind* (Harper & Row, New York, 1965), p. 126. where he says that it would be tempting God simply to let the world go its own way. We are not excused from the work of creation.

⁴ Teilhard: *Writings in Time of War* (Harper & Row, New York, 1968), p. 16.

⁵ Teilhard: *The Vision of the Past* (Harper & Row, New York, 1966), pp. 72-3.

⁶ Teilhard: *Human Energy* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, New York, 1969), p. 139.

⁷ Cf. Teilhard: *The Phenomenon of Man* (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1961), p. 230.

⁸ Cf. Teilhard: *Science and Christ* (Harper & Row, New York, 1968), p. 42; *The Future of Man* (Harper & Row, New York, 1964), pp. 207, 296; *Letters from a Traveller*, p. 45.

⁹ Teilhard: *Man's Place in Nature* (Harper & Row, New York, 1966), pp. 103-4.

'Faith in the future', as Teilhard says, is what 'must save us'.¹⁰

And happily we have grounds for this faith. The Nature that now is moving in us is the same Nature that 'has hitherto been successful in the unlikely task of bringing human thought to birth in what seems to us an unimaginable tangle of chances and mishaps'.¹¹ Our own appearance certainly would have seemed impossible, if viewed from the original state of the universe; yet here we are. Shall we not believe that Nature will continue her programme with comparable success?

'Some hundreds of thousands of years ago, upon the first emergence of reflective consciousness, the Universe was surely and beyond question transformed in the very laws of its internal development. Why then, should we suppose that nothing new will appear under the sun of tomorrow, when the rebounding of Evolution is in full flood?'¹²

We are justified in trusting this cosmogenesis, Teilhard says. 'The world...has from the beginning juggled miraculously with too many improbables for there to be any risk whatever in committing ourselves further and following it right to the end'.¹³

Besides, as Teilhard feels he has exhaustively shown, the cosmogenesis is ultimately and essentially a Christogenesis. The Evolver is, in the last analysis, God, and God cannot fail. Divine grace, in the end, is the real guarantee of evolution, the sure ground of our faith, and thus the Liberator and Activator of our human energies. The promise of our eventual success, though given in large part through the world's own recurrent and cumulative patterns, is a promise given by God, who is Himself the beginning, the movement, and the end of the evolutionary process.

On the foundation of this faith, then, we may freely and joyfully cultivate the other psychic energies. Teilhard lays great stress on the development of our thirst for knowledge, our scientific curiosity. We are 'drawn to science as a source of life', he says; 'to fulfil ourselves we must know'.¹⁴ Indeed, 'a constant *spirit of inquiry* directed towards the world and truth is *an absolute duty*'.¹⁵ Asked 'along what lines of advance' we are 'destined to proceed from the planetary level of psychic totalization and evolutionary upsurge we are now approaching', Teilhard replies that he 'can distinguish three principal ones:...the organization of research, the concentration of research upon the subject of man, and the conjunction of science and religion'.¹⁶ Research itself is one aspect of this conjunction of science and religion, for Teilhard, for he does not hesitate to call research 'the highest form of adoration'.¹⁷

When research does concentrate on humanity, it will find that 'an inquiry of much more importance to the future' than 'the mysteries concealed in matter' is 'the study of psychic currents and attractions, a science of spiritual energy'.¹⁸ Then one of the great things it will discover will be the significance of love, the psychic energy which has good claim to being the most essential of all our human energies. We saw in the previous article on 'Pan-Christism...' the central position which love holds in the evolutionary synthesis, as Teilhard envisions it, and the urgency with which he preaches that we cultivate it if we wish to survive. Morality and self-forgetful holiness are not curious and admirable luxuries

¹⁴ *The Future of Man*, p. 19.

¹⁵ *Writings in Time of War*, p. 220.

¹⁶ *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 278.

¹⁷ Teilhard: *Building the Earth* (Dimension Books, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., 1965), p. 56.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁰ *The Future of Man*, p. 81.

¹¹ *Science and Christ*, p. 41.

¹² *The Future of Man*, p. 212.

¹³ *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 232.

for us and for the personalizing universe, but are, as it were, biological necessities, prerequisites for the cosmic unification of the future.¹⁹ Both science and religion, Teilhard would say, thus teach us the same truth—religion as aspiration (it may have seemed to us) but science as fact.

CULTIVATION OF THE TASTE FOR LIFE

Supported by our faith in the future, in evolution by which we come into the future, and in God who is both our guide and our goal, we may, Teilhard says, freely and fully savour our life. He would go further: it is not only a permission, it is an obligation. Zest for life is the motive power that sustains us and carries us forward. We dare not lose it or diminish it, for it is our very existence. If science pursues its research on the nature of humanity, as Teilhard recommends, it will find that the most forceful of all the energies is the will to go further, to be more, to know more, to create more.²⁰ It is a matter of conscience with us that we 'strive to extract from the world all that this world can hold of truth and energy.... *There must be nothing* in the direction of more-being that remains *unattempted*'.²¹

As we are co-evolvers with God, so we are co-creators. God makes us make ourselves,²² and now that 'we are evolution', we have the maximum responsibility for making ourselves and everything else *yet further*. Creation is the communication of being, of form, of life. It is the most tremendous concentration and exercise of energy that we can imagine. Our will to create—to create particular things within

the world, but above all to create ourselves, our human lives, our communities, our spiritual world—is the focal point of the evolutionary energy now, and this will appears subjectively in us as our *taste for life*.

This is why, in Teilhard's view, the greatest danger to the world today is the loss of the appetite for living. Worse even than famine or plague—which are only external threats, dreadful though they are—the spiritual sickness of a loss of faith in, and savour for, life itself would be fundamentally catastrophic, because it would be the most directly *antihuman* attack we could suffer.²³

We are in the position now, Teilhard tells us bluntly, to realize that it is a question of everything or nothing. 'To be or not to be' never posed the option more succinctly. By our existence we are engaged, willy-nilly, 'in a vast system of activities that demand a perpetual effort.... What does this compulsion mean? Are we chosen or are we dupes? Is life a road or a blind alley? This is the question, scarcely formulated a few centuries ago, which is now explicit and on all men's lips'.²⁴

One thing is sure. If we do *not* believe in life as a road that goes to its goal, we will indeed go down to destruction. And if we do believe, we must eventually go to God. For all being is a going, a becoming, a transformation; all effort is directed toward the perfection of the being which is becoming; and the perfection of all being is God.²⁵ We cannot escape: it is 'a choice between suicide and adoration'.²⁶

And so Teilhard prays:

'O God, whose call precedes the very first of our movements, grant me the

¹⁹ Cf. *The Making of a Mind*, p. 160; and *The Vision of the Past*, p. 173.

²⁰ *The Appearance of Man*, p. 262.

²¹ *The Making of a Mind*, p. 116.

²² Cf. *The Vision of the Past*, pp. 25, 154; Teilhard: *The Divine Milieu*, rev. tr. (Harper & Row, New York, 1965), p. 70.

²³ Cf. *The Vision of the Past*, p. 171.

²⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 171-2.

²⁵ Cf. *The Future of Man*, p. 41; *Letters from a Traveller*, pp. 70-71.

²⁶ *The Divine Milieu*, p. 41.

desire to desire being—that, by means of this divine thirst which is your gift, the access to the great waters may open wide within me. Do not deprive me of the sacred taste for being, that primordial energy....’²⁷

THE MYSTICISM OF THE FUTURE

All the forms of the taste for life, without which life cannot go on, are, says Teilhard, variations on the fundamental desire for God:

‘Whatever appetite we may experience ...we must have within us a much more fundamental appetite: that for feeling God grow within us through the universal and dominating action of his providence. And I really do believe that this appetite can ultimately replace all others, by which I mean that it can make us find life passionately interesting even in the most commonplace and tedious setting. The real substance of even such circumstances is divine.’²⁸

This ‘finding God in all things’—a Jesuit life-motto—is the form that Teilhard expects our contemplative joy to take. God in all things, all things in God, God as the Creative Unity of all things, the Supreme Goodness and Beauty.²⁹ God felt and tasted and loved not only as a Person but as a World.³⁰ Teilhard himself said that he could not tell which was ‘the more radiant bliss’, to love God as the world or the world as God.³¹ The whole universe had become, for him, the temple of the living God. Everything that exists is sacred and everything that happens is adorable.³²

Therefore there is joy in God as known through science. Without knowledge and research, says Teilhard, there is for us no mystical life. The ‘mystical vibration’ is

inseparable from the ‘scientific vibration’.³³ True science, Teilhard believes, that which discloses the growth of the universe, inevitably becomes ‘tinged with mysticism’, not only in its inspiration but even in its construction, because its research leads to the projection of a culminating union centred on the Divine Person.³⁴ Through science Teilhard is convinced he can see the rhythms of Nature as the movement of the Lord; the idea of the Incarnate God evolving has divinized his whole perception of the world.³⁵

But above all, we are to find our joy in God as *participated in* through our own intentions, choices, and actions, through our creativity. Our happiness is the feeling that God is within us, ‘at the beginning and end of every desire and every action’.³⁶ If we really understand ‘the inexpressibly wonderful work’ that is being carried out by us as our share in the divine action of evolution, we cannot fail to be excited and delighted by it, and we will attain a deeper appreciation for the sacred value of life.³⁷

‘The more we believe in life, the more the universe is able to build itself around us in its *mystical reality*—of which all that has already taken shape makes itself manifest...to our *vision in faith*...inseparable from our *action in faith*.’³⁸

This is the outlook we must have toward life in order to activate our human energy. Many of our generation have already understood the profound significance of our situation, Teilhard felt. ‘In and around us, almost beneath our eyes, a psychological phenomenon of great magnitude is developing...: *the awakening of the sense*

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 79.

²⁸ *The Making of a Mind*, p. 263.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 190; *Hymn of the Universe*, p. 124; cf. *Writings in Time of War*, p. 198.

³⁰ Cf. *Hymn of the Universe*, pp. 152-3.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 27.

³² Cf. *Letters from a Traveller*, p. 288.

³³ *ibid.*, pp. 152-3.

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 102; and *The Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 283-4.

³⁵ Cf. *Letters from a Traveller*, p. 288.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 191.

³⁷ *Writings in Time of War*, p. 17.

³⁸ *The Making of a Mind*, p. 236.

of humanity. In a positive sense, men begin to feel themselves bound together, all united in a great task, and captivated, in an almost religious sense, by its progress.³⁹ Those who have faith in the world—that is, in God in the world—know that they must follow the evolution to the end. They realize that this implies continuous transformation of any attained stage of growth, implies sacrifice and self-

abandonment for the sake of something greater beyond. Thus all their human actions, their very secular commitments, enter into their worship of God, into their mystical life.⁴⁰ Whoever is conscious of the world as the Cosmic Body of God, has entered into 'the mystical Milieu' and 'made his way to the very heart of everything'.⁴¹

³⁹ *The Vision of the Past*, p. 172.

⁴⁰ Cf. *The Future of Man*, p. 266.

⁴¹ *Writings in Time of War*, p. 175.

SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—II

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

Be careful about small things. Sometimes the smallest things are of the greatest help to live higher life effectively. Always use discrimination. Analyse your thoughts and feelings constantly until a habit of being alert is created. Then nothing vulgar can enter or come out of the unconscious parts of the mind.

*

Next to the highest ideal, which must never be lowered but which we cannot attain all of a sudden, we must have working ideals that represent the stages or stepping-stones by which we reach the highest ideal. When we are passing through a certain stage we can see ahead the next one or two stages in our path. We should clearly know all the intermediate steps leading to the highest goal. The immediate next step must be the prime concern of every aspirant.

From the point of view of practical spirituality, the life of the ordinary aspirant is a sort of compromise. But we should always know that compromise to be a compromise and learn to outgrow these com-

promises one by one. The ultimate goal must be very clear and definite to us; so also the steps leading to it. We should never make the mistake of giving the working ideals the place of the highest ideal. The compromise should be temporary and never final.

The great ideals of spiritual life create more and more conflicts in us. But this is good because they goad us on in the spiritual path and we attain greater knowledge, harmony, and peace.

*

Religious-minded people are of two types. Some are eager for practical spiritual experience. The others are the theoreticians who seek only intellectual knowledge. A true aspirant, however, must know that it is not possible to gain experience of the entire realm of spiritual life all of a sudden and that a good deal of it must remain as theory to him for a long time to come. But those who seek only intellectual stimulation in spiritual life should know that without practical experience the theoretical edifices they raise have no foundations at

all. All such will topple down at any time leaving them empty and homeless.

Theory and practice—both are necessary. Deep studies and clear thinking are necessary. But we should also practise the spiritual disciplines methodically. Everybody must follow a definite path, his own path. The task of the teacher is only to guide the aspirant along that path.

*

When we live an intensive spiritual life, our minds come in contact with the cosmic mind and there will be an inrush of energy. Wonderful ideas start bubbling up. It is a problem to control even the good thoughts. We should learn to connect all the ideas that come to us with our main central aspiration. The soul should be attuned to the Infinite always. No idea however brilliant or good should distract us from this attunement.

*

How can we come in touch with the Supreme Spirit? First of all, the obstructions on the path should be removed. This means strict moral culture, deep thinking, and prayer. Past memories and wrong impulses are to be swept out. And we should remain alert to prevent further dirt from entering the path. Then comes the practice of *japa* (repetition of the holy name or *mantra*) and meditation.

True meditation is an unbroken current, like oil flowing from one vessel into another. The mind does not stop, but thoughts flow towards a particular object without distraction. But this is difficult to maintain in the early stages. So in the beginning one should practise concentration with breaks, with the help of *japa*. *Japa* means repeating the name of the Divine. The sound should evoke the object it symbolizes. When practised regularly this leads to the maintenance of concentration for longer periods.

Minimize your unconscious automatic movements. Avoid drifting. Rise from the

subconscious to the conscious plane. You should be wide awake and be aware of every thought or impulse that crosses your mind. Then life becomes normal, mind control becomes easy. The dawn of the superconscious is then only a question of time.

*

In sleep our conscious bodily activities are all suspended, our little mind gets lost in the Cosmic Mind and the soul comes in touch with its foundational or causal state.

Some people say that *samādhi* is like deep sleep. But this is not true. These states are similar only in the absence of cognitive knowledge, but they entirely differ in their positive contents and consequences. *Samādhi* is a superconscious state which illumines the whole mind. The person who comes out of it feels he is a totally changed personality with the awareness of a new state of existence. On the contrary, in deep sleep the ignorance covering the Reality persists; there is no illumination; it is only that the person comes out of such sleep with the feeling of being refreshed in body and mind.

The superconscious cannot be reached through ignorance. The way to the superconscious lies through the conscious. The soul must first get rid of the shackles of unconsciousness, become wide awake, and then come gradually in touch with the Divine in a conscious way. First comes an intensification of the conscious state. Then a new light comes from a higher plane, that is, the superconscious.

Cases of sudden illumination are rare. Spiritual awakening is the result of long and systematic practice. Our aspiration for God should not be like the numerous impulses rising from the vast unconscious ocean that surrounds us. Spiritual struggle should be a purposeful, conscious process. Move towards God in a conscious, intelligent way.

'Arise, awake, and stop not till the Goal is reached.'

*

Where then comes the need for divine grace? Divine grace is not something new or strange. We all have contact with the Divine in an unconscious way and Its grace is shaping our spiritual destiny all the while. Only we do not realize it. Spiritual striving and hunger of the soul are themselves marks of divine grace. Human birth itself is not accidental. We should have a wider concept of divine grace if we wish to avoid the conflict between grace and self-effort. All forms of spiritual striving and longing for the higher life are the result of an impulse that comes straight from the Divine, which passes through the human being and goes back to the Divine, completing a circle.

Ordinarily this natural flow of grace seems to be slow. But if the aspirant is ready or strives with tremendous earnestness, sudden and powerful ingresses of grace can take place. Such sudden upsur-

ges are, however, rare. Self-surrender is an essential pre-condition for the inflow of grace. But real surrender is not possible for one who is full of worldly desires, whose body and mind are impure. Only when we have done our utmost, when in the end we find that our own striving alone is not enough, comes true self-surrender. We should not hope to become saints overnight!

*

There is a great danger in limiting the Divine. So glimpses, flashes of higher experience, can be dangerous, can bring complacency. The aspirant may try to evaluate the Divine by those experiences. These little peeps into the superconscious should not be regarded as the finale but only as the beginning. There are far higher experiences than these. In fact, there are no limits to spiritual experience.

Our contact with the Divine should be a conscious one, an expression of the superconscious. Make the Infinite the centre of your consciousness.

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Sri Ramakrishna had come to the house of Dinanath Basu, an attorney of the Calcutta High Court.¹ It was sometime in the first part of 1876. Keshab Chandra Sen

¹ Dinanath's youngest brother Kalinath Basu, Police Superintendent, was devotedly attached to Keshab Chandra Sen and at the latter's instance had invited Sri Ramakrishna to his house. Sri Ramakrishna's visit became an occasion of festivity. From there Sri Ramakrishna visited the house of Dinanath Basu with Hriday, in the company of Keshab and other Brahmo devotees.

and some other Brahmo devotees were sitting in front of him. In the course of conversation the Paramahansa, as Sri Ramakrishna was called, sang the song, 'O Śyāmā, please throw away Thy sword and dance with Thy flute in hand' etc. Suddenly he went into deep *samādhi*.² He sat still, his eyes fixed, his face beaming. Regaining his consciousness he resumed his religious

² Swami Akhandananda, 'Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa-smṛti', *Udbhṛāṇ*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 145 fn.

discourse interrupted by occasional states of ecstasy. Keshab and others were listening to his words with rapt attention. A neighbour, Girish Chandra Ghosh, then entered the parlour. It was dusk, and lamps were lit and placed in front of the Paramahansa. He was thin to the point of emaciation, and aged about forty. Girish heard him making repeated enquiries, 'Is it evening? Is it evening?' Girish had come there out of curiosity and to verify the genuineness of the claim of the Brahmos about the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar. Some days earlier he had read about the Paramahansa in the *Indian Mirror*. When Girish saw the unimpressive man asking, 'Is it evening?', while the lamps burned right in front of him he could not but become sceptical and contemptuous. 'What pretension! It is dusk. Lights are burning in front of him. Yet he cannot tell whether it is evening or not!'—thinking thus, Girish left the house.

*

28 February 1844 is the date of Girish's birth. He was the eighth child of Nilkamal Ghosh. He had lost his father when he was fourteen and his mother when he was only eleven. His sole guardian, his elder sister, Krishnakishori, could hardly control him. He passed his days in gaiety, joking, and youthful ebullience. Krishnakishori arranged for his marriage soon afterward in expectation that Girish would be disciplined thereby. Her expectations were ill founded. His rebellious spirit made him break loose from all moral restraint. He began to earn his living by doing some routine jobs in a mercantile firm. He acted in various capacities for fifteen years, then became head clerk in the office of the Indian League in 1876. But the major portion of his time and energy was devoted to amateur acting, composing songs and writing: and also various kinds of debauchery. In his thirties he had already begun to be re-

cognized as a promising dramatist and an actor *par excellence*. He trained other actors and actresses, and through his leadership the Bengali stage was popularized as a national institution. In 1883 the Star Theatre was started under his initiative. Though he was honoured as a pioneer of modern drama in Bengal, the conservative Hindu society of Calcutta was agog with scandals of the sensual conduct of the Bohemian that was Girish.

While talent and debauchery coexisted, scepticism alternating with an occasional urge for devotional practices lurked in his heart. Such ambivalence manifested in him sometimes in peculiar ways. Just before one Durgā-pūjā some of his neighbours played a trick on him. They placed early in the morning an image of the goddess Durgā in the outer compound of his house, to see how Girish would react. Girish reacted violently. Enraged, he got hold of an axe, cut the clay image into pieces, and finally buried them in a pit made in the kitchen garden. His family members as well as neighbours were shocked. At the insistence of his friend Kalinath Basu, he attended the Brahmo Samaj for some days but then discontinued. For some days he became devoted to Mother Kālī, during which period, just after one of his stage performances, he had a vision of the Mother who cursed him that he would lose eminence as an actor.³ Subsequently, he became more renowned as a playwright. He wrote social, historical and religious plays numbering about eighty. Truly has it been said that his life-story was a narrative of conflicts between truth and falsehood, drunkenness and abstinence, imagination and realization, faith and doubt, temptation to sensuality and attraction for higher life, head and heart, and atheism

³ Srishchandra Matilal, 'Bhakta Giriscandra' *Udbodhan*, Vol. XV, No. 4.

and belief.⁴

Girish had lost his first wife in 1874. When working at the Indian League he was married a second time to Suratkumari Mitra of Simulia. Six months had scarcely passed when he was attacked with a virulent type of cholera. Physicians gave up all hope of his recovery. While lying semi-conscious Girish saw a vision of a divine form clad in a red-bordered sari.⁵ On her advice he partook of *mahāprasāda* (offering made to Lord Jagannath of Puri) and immediately showed signs of improvement. He recovered his health but subsequent family mishaps, a series of bereavements, consequently his indulgent life, and his search for a solution to the mystery of life and death, led him through vaults of spiritual crises. He was smitten with grief and remorse; he felt intensely restless. Days rolled on till in early September 1884, Girish saw Sri Ramakrishna for the second time at the house of Balaram Bose. Balaram had invited his neighbours, including Girish, to meet the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar who was to visit his house. It became an occasion of festivity. Girish went but was rather disappointed to find Sri Ramakrishna somewhat different from the conventional idea he had about a Paramahansa. The Paramahansa repeatedly bowed his head to the ground to greet his visitors. A singing girl, Bidhu, was seated near to him, waiting to sing devotional songs. While Girish was carefully observing the Paramahansa, one of his old acquaintances came up to him and whispered sarcastically, 'Bidhu has a

previous intimacy with him. That is why he is laughing and joking with her.' Such insinuation displeased Girish. Soon after, Sisir Kumar Ghosh, the editor of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, arrived. He seemed not to have been much impressed by Sri Ramakrishna and said to Girish, 'Let us go; enough of him.' Girish wanted to stay a little more but was embarrassed to admit this. Sisir Ghosh insisted and Girish went with him.

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Girish saw Sri Ramakrishna next at the Star Theatre. Before we describe the incident let us take a look at Girish's mental state at this time which he himself has painted in a masterly fashion in an article published in the *Janmabhumi*: (Vol, XXVII, No. 3)

'Whether God existed or not I was doubtful. If he existed, which religion should I follow? I argued much, deliberated much, but could not find any solution. This made me uneasy I thought: "All the necessities of material life, such as air, water, light are abundantly supplied by nature and available for man to enjoy. Why should not religion, so essential for eternal life, be equally available? To me, it seems neither natural, nor within my reach, and therefore false...." Thus I passed fourteen long years in a fog of gloom.

'Then came evil days which allowed me no rest. There was darkness within, there was darkness without—darkness everywhere. I thought, "Is there any escape?" I made an honest attempt to resign myself to the will of the Lord (Tāraknāth Śiva). My attempt was successful. A network of danger was pierced through in no time. Firm conviction arose that God was not unreal.... But they said that no liberation is possible without a guru. Furthermore, I was told that one must look upon the guru as God. My reason found this hard to accept. The very idea was revolting to me, for nothing seemed more blasphem-

⁴ Devendranath Basu: *Giriscandra* (Bengali) (Calcutta University, 1939), pp. 13-15.

⁵ Regarding this divine form Girish told his brother-disciples long after, 'Sixteen years later (i.e., in 1891) when I first visited Jayrambati to see the Holy Mother, I found to my surprise and delight that the lady who saved my life with the *mahāprasāda* was none other than the Holy Mother herself.'

ous than to think of man as God. I must trudge on alone without a human guru. I would pray to Tāraknāth....

'At this time I became acquainted with a painter who was a Vaiṣṇava. I don't know if it was true or not, but he said to me one day: "I offer food to the deity every day and I am convinced by certain signs that he accepts it. Until one is initiated by a guru such a rare privilege will not come in one's life." My mind became restless. I took leave of him, went to my room, closed all the doors and began to weep.'

It was evident that his heart now yearned for a spiritual guide.

All this happened on 21 Sept. 1884, perhaps sometime in the morning. That evening Sri Ramakrishna visited the Star Theatre at 68 Beadon Street, Calcutta. Girish Chandra's play *Caitanyalīlā* (The early life of Caitanya) was being enacted there. The drama was a great success and had created a stir⁶ in and around Calcutta. Mahendranath Gupta ('M'), Mahendranath Mukhopadhyaya, Balaram Bose, and two or three other devotees accompanied Sri Ramakrishna. Girish was strolling in the courtyard of the theatre when Mahendranath Mukhopadhyaya approached him and said: 'The Master has come to see your play. If you grant him free entrance, well and good. Otherwise, we will buy a ticket for him.' 'He will not have to buy his ticket. But others will have to', saying this Girish went to greet Sri Ramakrishna who was alighting from the carriage. It was about half-past eight in the evening. Before Girish could greet Sri Ramakrishna, the latter bowed to him. Girish returned his salutation, but he bowed again. This little drama continued and Girish thought it might continue all evening. So he bowed mentally and conducted Sri Ramakrishna and others upstairs to a box, and arranged

for an attendant to fan Sri Ramakrishna. As Girish was not feeling well he left for home. It seems he found hardly anything impressive about Sri Ramakrishna on this occasion too. Mahendranath Gupta sat next to Sri Ramakrishna and Baburam and others sat behind him. The drama began. The devotional fervour of the theme of the play made Sri Ramakrishna excited. Apprehending his mood he warned Baburam, 'Don't make a fuss if I fall into an ecstatic mood or go into *samādhi*. Then the worldly people will take me for a cheat.' But he could hardly control himself. He shed tears of love, sometimes got overpowered with divine ecstasy and sometimes dived deep into *samādhi*. The performance over, Sri Ramakrishna observed, 'I found the representation the same as the real.'⁷

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As was his wont Sri Ramakrishna had made an assessment of Girish on this occasion, if not earlier. He recognized that behind a rough exterior Girish was tender, faithful and sincere. Recollecting one of his visions, he himself had once said:

'In the temple of Kali I was one day engaged in meditation. I found that a naked boy came tripping there with a tuft of hair on the crown of his head and a flask of wine under his left armpit and a vessel of nectar in the right hand. "Who are you?" I asked. "I am a Bhairava", replied he. On my asking the reason of his coming, he answered, "To do your work." When Girish in mature years came to me, I recognized that Bhairava in him.'⁸

In this connection, very significant are several remarks of Sri Ramakrishna. After a visit to the theatre of his great disciple,

⁷ 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1947), p. 649.

⁸ *The Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1943), p. 404.

⁶ *Caitanyalīlā* was first staged at the Star Theatre on 2 August, 1884.

the Master remarked that '.... if others were possessed of wonderful intelligence, the intelligence of Girish was one hundred and fifty in the per cent, meaning thereby that he eclipsed all.'⁹ Again the Master was heard to say: 'Girish has more than a hundred per cent faith. People will hereafter be surprised to see his spiritual progress.'¹⁰ Still again he had said, household devotees like Girish form a class by themselves. They desire *yoga* and *bhoga*. Their attitude is that of Ravana, who wanted to enjoy the maidens of heaven and at the same time realize Rama.' Thus making an estimate of the spiritual potential of Girish, Sri Ramakrishna waited for an opportune moment to give it a suitable turn.

On the other hand whatever might be the image that Girish had formed of Sri Ramakrishna he could not avoid a direct encounter with the latter. This encounter, the first effective one between the two, proved to be momentous and gave a new turn to the life of the truculent Girish. (The previous three 'meetings' had been brief and apparently by chance.) It happened on 24 September 1884, three days after Girish had seen Sri Ramakrishna at the Star Theatre. Before we narrate the encounter we should reproduce another aspect of his mental condition, movingly recounted by himself in a Bengali article:

'Terrible conflicts pierced my heart through and through. That condition can better be imagined than described. Suppose a man, all of a sudden, is forcibly dragged to a dark, solitary room with his eyes covered and kept confined there with no food drink. What will be the state of his mind? If you can picture his mental condition, you will be able to understand something of my own. There were moments when I was breathless with emotion. Thoughts of

despair cut through me like a saw. At other times the memory of the past was revived and the darkness of my heart knew no bounds. Just at that time, I saw Sri Ramakrishna passing by our land to the house of Balaram Bose, the great devotee, and for the first time I felt irresistibly drawn to him.'¹¹

Girish was sitting on the veranda of a crossing of two roads when he saw Sri Ramakrishna accompanied by Narayan and a couple of other devotees slowly approaching him. Girish noticed that Narayan, pointing to him whispered something to Sri Ramakrishna, and the latter saluted Girish. Girish returned the salute. Sri Ramakrishna walked past him towards the near-by house of Balaram Bose. For no accountable reason Girish felt that something was pulling him towards Sri Ramakrishna. He longed to run and join him. In his own words:

'I felt as if someone were attracting me. I could not keep calm. No words could describe that mental state of mine. It was not comparable to the keen attachment one feels towards some near relation. It was something unique. I hadn't had any such experience before. I was hesitating whether I should go or not.'¹²

Just then a devotee came with a message from Sri Ramakrishna and said, 'Paramahamsadev is calling you.' Girish followed him with alacrity.

His pride and vanity had prevented him from looking beyond the walls of his preconceived ideas about a holy man. However, time after time the humility of the holy man of Dakshineswar forced him to look inward. Meeting him at the theatre it was the holy man who had saluted him first. Now again it was the holy man who

¹¹ *Tattvamañjarī*, 'Paramahamsadever śiṣyasneha', Vol. IX, Nos. 3 & 4. This is a reproduction of an article read by Girish Ghosh on the occasion of a birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna at the Belur Math.

¹² *Tattvamañjarī*, Vol. IX, p. 69.

⁹ *Prabuddha Bharata*, Vol. XVII, p. 58.

¹⁰ Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Madras, 1956), p. 392.

had greeted him first. The holy man's humility entered deep into Girish's heart and the hard crust of his pride began to crumble, as it were.

Sri Ramakrishna went on to Balaram's and entered his parlour. Balaram was lying on a couch, perhaps being unwell. As soon as he saw Sri Ramakrishna he got up and with due reverence prostrated himself before him. Following exchange of a few words with Balaram, Sri Ramakrishna exclaimed, 'Well, I am all right, I am all right.' So saying, he underwent a transformation which seemed rather strange to Girish. Later he learnt that the holy man was seized by divine fervour, which had robbed him of external consciousness. Soon after Sri Ramakrishna remarked: 'No, this is not pretense! this is not pretense!' He continued in this state for sometime, after which he regained his normal state of mind and took his seat.

Girish, in the heart of his hearts, was longing to find a guru, although his vanity refused to place any human being in that place of honour. Presently he asked, 'Sir, what is a guru?' Sri Ramakrishna answered, 'Do you know what the guru is? He is like a match-maker.¹³ He prepares for the meeting of God-seeker with God.' After a while he said again, 'Your guru has already been chosen.' Girish's heart was filled with unspeakable joy. Quite unhesitatingly he accepted the words of Sri Ramakrishna. The latter's statement that the guru was already selected for him gave him great relief.

Next Girish asked, 'What is a *mantra*?'

'The name of God.' To cite an illustration Sri Ramakrishna narrated a story. Rāmānanda used to take his bath in the Gaṅgā early every morning. One day a

weaver, Kabīr by name, was lying on one of the steps of the bathing ghat. While going down the steps Rāmānanda uttered the holy name of Rāma. Kabīr took it to be his *mantra* and by repeating it, eventually realized God.

Girish was impressed by Sri Ramakrishna's sensitivity and deep understanding of him and his problems. The Saint's sympathy and affection for him were clearly evident. Girish felt more and more drawn towards Sri Ramakrishna.

The conversation went on. Sri Ramakrishna's mode of talking made Girish feel that he was an old acquaintance, as it were. The conversation drifted to the theatre. Sri Ramakrishna said: 'I liked your play very much. The sun of knowledge has begun to shine upon you. All the blemishes of your heart will be washed away. Very soon devotion will arise to sweeten your life with profuse joy and peace.'¹⁴ Girish could not accept such praise for he considered he did not deserve it. He submitted that he had written plays with the idea of making money. Sri Ramakrishna brushed aside this reply. He asked, 'Could you take me to the theatre and show me another of your plays?'

'Very well, any day you like.'

'You must charge me something.'

'All right; you can pay eight annas.'

'That's the price of a damned seat in the balcony.'

'Oh no, you won't have to sit there. You shall sit in the same place where you sat last time.'

'Then you must accept one rupee.'

'Well, as you please.'

Balaram brought some sweetmeats and offered them to Sri Ramakrishna. The latter broke a small piece from one and took it. Those present partook of the rest

¹³ A match-maker arranges for the union of the bride with the bridegroom. In fact he used not the word match-maker, but a slang expression which was perhaps more pointed.

¹⁴ Abinash Chandra Gangopadhyaya: *Giriscandra* (Bengali); p. 342.

as *prasāda* (consecrated food). Girish too felt like taking a portion, but resisted, lest others should gossip about it.

Soon after this, Haripada, a young devotee, and Girish saluted Sri Ramakrishna and took leave of him. On the way Haripada asked, 'What do you think of him?' 'He is a great devotee, no doubt,' answered Girish. He was now happy that he had no longer to trouble himself with the search for a guru.

After this meeting Girish began to wonder, 'Who is this man who speaks to me with such intimacy and makes me feel that he is my very own?' Something had happened in him which he could hardly explain. From that day life had a different import for him. More such encounters followed in quick succession. He felt more and more drawn to the Master, although he often heaped insults on him, drank in his presence, and took liberties which astounded the other devotees. 'Thakur, mere advice won't do,' he once told Ramakrishna. 'I know enough of advice. It does not help me. I want action. Do something to transform my life.'¹⁵ Sri Ramakrishna knew all this even before Girish said it and he treated the latter with motherly affection. Not merely advice but the influence of the deep love of the Master worked wonders; it chastened the turbulence in Girish and silently brought about a miraculous change in him. Girish himself experienced something of this change soon. He wrote about himself:

'My heart was filled with joy. I felt as if I was born anew. I was a totally changed man. There was no more doubt or conflict in my mind. "God is real. God is my sanctuary; I have found my refuge in this god-man. Now I can easily realize God." Thoughts like these cast their spell on me night and day. In waking or in dreaming, the same mood per-

sisted. "Fearless am I! I have found my very own. The world can no longer bind me, for even the greatest fear, the fear of death, is gone."'¹⁶

It was the divine, unselfish love of the Master, that gradually took full possession of his heart. Girish used to say in his later life:

'Sri Ramakrishna has full sway over my heart—he has it by the right of his love. Lust, anger, and all the terrible passions vanish if one feels this transcendental love of his—no other spiritual practice is required.'

As Ramakrishna's influence was steadily gaining its hold upon Girish, the latter wondered if he should give up his work in the theatre. Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Do what you are now doing, much will be achieved by it. This will educate the people.' Ramakrishna's influence, deeply ingrained in Girish, manifested itself as rich religious and moral sentiments in his dramas—*Vilwamaṅgal*, *Kālāpahār*, *Rūp-Sanātan*, *Pūrṇacandra*, *Viṣād*, *Nashiram*, etc. And quite justifiably has Hemendranath Dasgupta observed, 'We may thus conclude that the turning-point in Girish's life, and therefore in the history of the Bengali drama, was the sacred influence of Ramakrishna Paramahamsadeva over the mind and heart of Girish Chandra Ghosh, the greatest of the Bengali dramatists—past and present.'¹⁷ And Sri Ramakrishna remains to this day the patron saint of all public theatres in the city of Calcutta.

Fully understanding the attitude of Girish, the Master, one day, in an exalted mood offered to assume all responsibility for Girish and asked him to give him his 'power of attorney'. Girish happily consented.

¹⁶ *Vedanta and the West*, Mar.-Apr. 1953, 'Memories of Sri Ramakrishna' by Girish Chandra Ghosh, Tr. by Swami Aseshananda, p. 54.

¹⁷ Hemendranath Das Gupta: 'The Influence of Ramakrishna Paramahansa on Girish Chandra's Drama', P.B., 1933, April, p. 196.

¹⁵ Ramchandra Dutta: *Śrī-Śrī-Paramahamsadever Jīvanvṛttānta* (Bengali), 7th ed., p. 144.

'But he did not then realize that he had put voluntarily round his neck a noose of love a hundred times stronger than the bondage of the rules, which, he thought, was so unbearable. . . . And while eating, drinking, or being engaged in any other activity, he had but one thought, namely, Sri Ramakrishna had taken upon himself all his responsibility, a soothing thought, a balm to his mind, which through its deepening impression was gradually gaining mastery over his whole being and involuntarily making him meditate on the Master, thus bringing about a revolution in him, in all his thoughts and actions.'¹⁸

Honest and sincere to himself and devoted to the cause he held as dear, Girish responded to the loving treatment of the Master. As days rolled on the noose of the Master's love drew closer around Girish. The latter finally surrendered to God's will, and people heard him whisper more and more often, 'Let his will be done.' Truly did Swami Vivekananda remark: 'In G. C. (Swamiji lovingly called him so) alone I have seen that true resignation—that true spirit of a servant of the Lord. . . . What a unique spirit of resignation to the Lord! I have not met his parallel. From him have I learned the lesson of self-surrender.'¹⁹

The Master's prophecy, 'You will be purer day by day. You will improve very

much day by day. People will marvel at you',²⁰ proved to be true in letter and spirit. He became fully possessed of the Master. He lived, moved and had his being in him. And it was no wonder that people heard him say: 'It is not difficult to accept him (Sri Ramakrishna), love him, nay worship him, but it is difficult to forget him.'²¹ Outsiders knew him only as a poet, littérateur, an actor, and a playwright, a patriot, and above all a 'fallen' man, but those who lived in close touch with him noticed with wonder the transformation of a sinner into a saint. Such was this transformation that Sri Ramakrishna chose him as one of his select spokesmen for preaching his message. His brilliantly chequered career came to an end on February 8, 1912.

²⁰ M': *The Gospel*, p. 718. The change in Girish has been affectionately painted by Swami Premananda in a letter of 1910. Girishbabu is in Banaras. He has recovered his health to some extent Ah! What a wonderful change in his attitude do we find! The Master had prophesied, "People will marvel at you." The prophecy has been fulfilled in the true spirit We do not know many monks as saintly as he is.'

²¹ *Proceedings* of the meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission (17th session) held on 15.8.1897. At the 14th Session (25.7.97) Girish had spoken almost in the same strain. He said: 'I do not know what the scriptures say about God but I cherished the idea that he who is God must love me as I do myself. He (Sri Ramakrishna) used to love me as I do myself. I never had a real friend but he (Sri Ramakrishna) who transformed my vices into virtues. He loved me more than I could myself.'

¹⁸ Swami Saradananda, op. cit., p. 330.

¹⁹ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama), Vol. VII (1958), p. 271.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1956), and 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras, 1947). References: *Great Master*—No. 2 p. 162; No. 3, pp. 163-4, (plus two introductory sentences from *Gospel*, p. 107). *Gospel*—No. 1, p. 924; No. 4, p. 81; No. 5, p. 627.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Volume IV (1962), pp. 166-7.

Profound of course are the Upaniṣads metaphysically. Nevertheless they are deeply mystical and practical. It is only through perfection in practice that the metaphysical depths of the Upaniṣads can be plumbed. The sages and seers have bequeathed to humanity their own superb examples and the ways and means of attaining that supernal vision. The *Editorial* this month is an attempt to study and understand the ideal of the *dhīra*, the man of wisdom, as presented by the Upaniṣads.

Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Rama Tirtha are the two foremost monks from the Punjab who have contributed greatly to the modern religious renaissance in India. While Dayananda founded the Arya Samaj and lived a fairly long life to lay firm and deep foundations for it, Rama Tirtha rose and moved across the Indian religious sky like a meteor and blazed away his short life in an activity-packed span of thirty-three years. It is well known that Rama Tirtha, then a professor of mathematics at Lahore College, was greatly influenced and inspired by Swami Vivekananda in his renunciation and Vedāntic

preaching mission. The year 1974-75 is being observed as his birth centenary year in many parts of India and the world. We are glad to offer our readers in this issue the first part of a learned and informative article, 'Swami Rama Tirtha: Man of Self-Reliance and Universal Love', by Swami Rasajnananda, the previous Joint-Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. The second part of this article will appear in our next number.

'The Supra-rational Element in Some European Thinkers' is a learned and thought-provoking essay on a theme which receives very little attention in Western academic circles. Of course, an uncompromising rational thinker will always try to keep his thought-system free of 'mystical germs'. If he is consistent in his rational approach, he cannot escape the mystical element—it somehow breaks into the 'sanctuary' of reason. Or, rather it is reason which passes unawares into the sanctuary of the mystical! From the early Greek thinkers and Plato through Plotinus and Pascal to Bradley and Whitehead, the mystical element shows its presence unmistakably in Western philosophy.

Prof. P. S. Naidu, Hon. Professor of Education, Dayalbagh Women's Training College, Agra, is well known to our readers through his numerous contributions to our Journal over many years.

In Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, scientific spirit blended happily with religious temperament. For him, therefore, there was hardly any conflict between the modern biological and cosmological theories on the one hand and theological beliefs and truths on the other. Vedānta too is not

antagonistic to the modern physical and biological sciences. Hence there is nothing surprising if some of Teilhard's salient ideas seem familiar and acceptable to Vedāntic students. However, there are many other notions and thoughts in de Chardin which are bound to appear naive and superficial when looked at from the Vedāntic stand-point. Nevertheless, it stands to his eternal glory that he rigorously pursued his scientific quest for truth while remaining staunchly devoted to Christ and faithful to the Catholic Church and its monastic tradition.

Dr. Beatrice Bruteau, Director of Philosophers' Exchange, Winston-Salem, N.C., U.S.A., and an authority on Teilhard, has presented in a masterly way de Chardin's leading ideas on 'The Activation of Human Energy' in this month's article—'Faith in The Future...' and the two preceding articles, in the January and March issues.

Spiritual life, lived intensely, becomes a perpetual adventure of inner combats and triumphs, of new 'discoveries' unknown and unknowable by the senses and the ordinary mind. An aspirant, however, would do well to have some intellectual understanding of

the nature of the inner life. In this month's 'Sermonettes At St. Moritz', Swami Yatiswarananda offers some revealing, observations on certain aspects of the inner life. For details about the 'Sermonettes' we refer the reader to our introduction to them, in this column last month.

God, says the *Bhagavad-gītā*, incarnates Himself in this mortal world 'to protect the virtuous and to destroy the evil-doers'. But in the case of Sri Ramakrishna, who is regarded as one of the greatest manifestations of God in this age, the virtuous were no doubt protected but the 'evil-doers' were not destroyed—it was only their evil that he destroyed. Girish Chandra Ghosh was the most outstanding instance of this. What was the 'weapon' that Sri Ramakrishna used in his strange method of tackling evil-doers? Love—a love before whose purifying, saving deluge all of Girish's drunkenness, debauchery, and other deadly weaknesses were washed away, leaving him a transformed man, a saint. An inspiring and informative account of Girish's initial meeting with Sri Ramakrishna is contributed to our columns this month by Swami Prabhanda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

WISDOM OF THE VEDAS: BY SATYAKAM VIDYALANKAR, Publishers: Hind Pocket Books (P) Ltd., G. T. Road, Delhi 110032, 1974, pp. 130. Price: Rs. 4/-

A selection of 108 hymns from the Vedas (all the four of them) rendered into English with a view to introducing the reader to the rich thought of these scriptures. These paraphrased translations bring to the fore the main theme of the Vedas which embraces all the four *arthas*, objectives, of Aryan life. The text in Sanskrit is appended to the volume. Captions to each selection would have enhanced the utility and appeal of the book.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

*Sri Aurobindo Ashrama
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GEMS FROM THE VEDA: BY M. P. PANDIT, Published by Ganesh & Co., Madras-17, 1973, pp. 102, Price Rs. 6/-.

In this book the author has collected and translated into English 102 Vedic mantras. All the mantras, except one from the *Yajur-veda*, are from the *Rig-veda*. The original texts are printed in bold and clear *devanagari* script and the English translations are followed by the author's own short commentaries. The English renderings are felicitous and the comments illuminating.

The book has a fine get-up.

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BENGALI

LILAYANA: BY NISHIKANTA, Published by Sri Nirmalendu Bagchi, Distributed by Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 45 Benetola Lane, Calcutta-9, 1973, pp. 80, Price Rs. 12/-

An excellent production by any standard of publication, this book of poems on the theme of the eternal *lila* or play of Sri Krishna (Murali Manohara), will be a proud possession for a man of taste as well as an earnest devotee. The poet Nishikanta was one of the brightest literary talents among the followers of Sri Aurobindo. With a style and rhythmic quality all his own, this poet went along the path of devotion in his life; and here is a book of apparently long narrative and autobiographical poems, which is actually a garland of lyrics—reminding one of the *Gita-govinda* of Jayadeva. The thread running through the garland is *Lilayana*, that is, various manifestations of the Lord's plays and pastimes. The intensity of devotion has brought out the poet's ever-dedicated soul in these poems, although the autobiographical element sometimes causes distraction. The book's charm lies in its music of words, carrying the mind towards the eternal beauty personified in the image of Sri Krishna of Vrindavana and in his various manifestations as avatars, including Sri Ramakrishna.

Indra Dugar, one of the best representatives of the contemporary Indian art movement, has done an excellent job in painting the various themes, in Rajput style. One of the best publications of recent times, this book deserves to be translated into various other languages of India.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION (CEYLON BRANCH)

REPORT: APRIL, 1971 To MARCH, 1973

The *Colombo Centre*, the Headquarters of the Ceylon Branch, has the following activities:

Religious: Regular *puja* in the Ashrama Shrine, with *bhajan* programmes weekly; classes by Swami Virupakshananda, on *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* Saturdays and the *Gita* Sundays. This Swami also conducts twice-weekly classes on Sanskrit Grammar, and weekly on the Nyaya-Vaisheshika, as well as various lectures outside the Ashrama, and one special Series of talks on 'ritualism...'. A series of classes on 'Essentials of Hinduism' was given for a group of Bhikkhus from Vidyodaya University; and from October 1972 monthly on Maha Poya days, spiritual Retreats have been held. Sunday religious classes for children were continued as for 20 years now; and religious classes at a Training School for Juvenile delinquents, 30 miles distant. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji were celebrated with great éclat. Maha Sivaratri was observed with solemnity: special *puja*, *homa*, and *bhajan* during the whole night, and hundreds of devotees kept vigil. Wesak was celebrated annually with large public meetings; the last three days of Navaratri were observed with special *puja* and *bhajan*. Christmas Eve was celebrated with talks by a noted Christian clergyman and carols by his choir. The Ramakrishna Mission Madam (same as 'Math' or Monastic Centre) serving the pilgrims to the noted shrine of Kataragama, continued as for 30 years to provide food, other help, and also periodic lectures, discourses, and *bhajans*. During the annual festival at that Shrine, for 17 days meals were served to about 10,000 pilgrims daily.

Cultural and Educational: Library and Free Reading Room were continued: currently 2,775 books are on hand; 29 magazines and 12 daily newspapers are received. The Book Sales department continued active. The International Cultural Centre has accommodations for students and facilities for religious and cultural training; also accommodation for guests. The Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Hall—one of the largest halls in the city, was being furnished and is nearly complete.

Social: The Home for Disabled Labourers, Ampitiya, Kandy, which has been managed by the Mission since 1969 (at the request of Govern-

ment which still meets its expenses) is being continued.

The *Batticaloa Centre* activities are chiefly as follows:

Religio-Cultural: Regular Pujas in the Shrine were continued, plus morning and evening singing (Sivapuranam and Devaram) and scriptural recitation. Weekly classes (5 p.m. Mondays) for ladies of the locality, including readings from Sri Ramakrishna, and prayers. For the inmates of the Shivananda Hostel and the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, weekly *bhajans* were held followed by readings from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and related discussions. Occasional lectures and appropriate film shows were also provided for these groups. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swamiji were duly celebrated both in Batticaloa and at the sub-centre in Kalladi Uppodai; and in 1972, essay competitions and elocution contests were organized in the schools of Batticaloa, on the lives and teachings of these three great ones. The inmates of the Boys' Home (see below) with the resident Swami participated in several temple festivals in the locality, conducted congregational prayers and held religious talks. The inmates of both Girls' Homes went on pilgrimage to some places of worship. At the Mantivu Leprosy Hospital, weekly classes, temple worship and *bhajans* were conducted for the inmates; visits to wards were organised; magazines distributed; feedings on holy-days were organized, and the annual festival in the Hospital's 'Temple' was conducted. Sunday School, in the Vipulananda Memorial Hall, for neighbouring school-children of Hindu faith for over eleven years now, included lately over 500 children, with 21 volunteer teachers. A Library and Reading Room was continued and enlarged, currently containing 1,153 books, many of them Text-books, and 453 of them in a special Children's library.

Humanitarian Activities: A Home for Boys at Kaladdi-Uppodai, and two Homes for Girls (one at Batticaloa) total 142 inmates, of whom 52 are girls. These provide free board, lodging and educational supplements, primarily for orphans or deserted or destitute children. Government contributes generously towards expenses for orphans, but the major part of expenses comes from the Ashrama. The inmates help much in managing their own affairs and domestic work; and are trained for all-round character-building as well as religious life. Besides their school studies, the boys have received considerable agri-

cultural and gardening training, with conspicuous results; the girls receive varied domestic-skills training. Government has allocated considerable land to the Mission for farming, 26 acres of which are already under cultivation, and is now constructing an Anicut and 'Kulam' (a tank) at a cost of Rs. 37,000. These aids will go far towards the Mission's self-sufficiency in food. A NEW SHRINE of Sri Ramakrishna and new building for Boys' Home were consecrated on 27th May, 1972, the cost of the building having been Rs. 2,35,000. A large celebration lasted all day, including *homa*, special *puja*, feeding of many friends, *akhandanama-bhajan*, lectures and musical recitals.

Immediate needs: 1) Permanent fund for maintenance of Ashrama and Temple at Colombo: Rs. 1,00,000/-. 2) Permanent fund for the Orphanages ('Homes') at Batticaloa: Rs. 2,50,000/-. 3) Kataragama Madam Reserve Fund: Rs. 2,00,000/-.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION—SINGAPORE

REPORT FOR 1973

Started in 1928, this Centre has been growing slowly and steadily. At first concerned only with cultural and educational activities, its outer activities extended during World War II to relief-work on a small scale; after the War a Boys' Home was started, acquiring a permanent building by 1959; meanwhile the Sri Ramakrishna Temple was built in 1952. Two Primary Schools have been added, and a Library and Reading Room which are now housed in the Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Building which also houses Boys' Home personnel and senior students. The Centre's activities are as follows:

(1) *Religious and Cultural.* Weekly *scriptural classes*, as well as many lectures both in the Mission auditorium and more distant sites. *Interviews* by Swami Siddhatmananda (Secretary of the Mission). *Sanskrit classes* in the Boys' Home. A *Spiritual Retreat*, in the Temple, 29th and 30th December 1973. *Birthdays* of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda were observed with special pro-

grammes (*puja*, discourses devotional songs, etc.). *Celebrations* of Sivaratri, Ram Navami, Krishna Jayanti, Navaratri, Durga Puja, Christmas Eve, Mohammed's birthday, and Vesak Day were also appropriately done. *Ram-nam-kirtan* was held every Ekadasi.

(2) *Educational:* In addition to the above, *Library and Reading Room* (Children's section separately) were continued. Available were 5,284 books, 26 journals, and 6 daily newspapers. In conjunction with Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, and Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, the Mission took part in a *book exhibition* organized by the International Book Fair. The *Saradadevi Tamil School* (formed this year by amalgamating two schools both run by the Mission) included 160 pupils; the *Kalaimagal School*, at some distance, served 74 pupils, with both Tamil and English stream classes. Athletics and other extra-curricular activities were encouraged as well as regular classroom studies. *Night Classes* for Adults in English and Tamil were run at each of the school-sites: at the former, 62 pupils and at the latter, 49—most of the pupils take examinations conducted by Municipal authorities, which also help with financial support. The two Schools likewise receive aid from Singapore municipality. The *Boy's Home*, in its beautiful natural setting, stresses all-round character building: the boys attend morning and evening prayers in the Temple and the other religious and cultural functions; they learn devotional songs, and receive moral and religious instruction from monastic members of the Order. This year there were 50 boys, aged 7 to 17, all studying in Primary or Secondary schools; the Children's Library is near at hand, as well as a Playground, where sports are vigorously practised.

Immediate Needs: For completion of Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Cultural Centre: debt outstanding is \$ 40,000. To complete the other Memorial, an Outdoor Dispensary, an estimated \$ 1,75,000. To continue maintenance of Boys' Home: recurrent expenses of \$ 5,500 per month (current Government grant is about \$ 750 per month only).