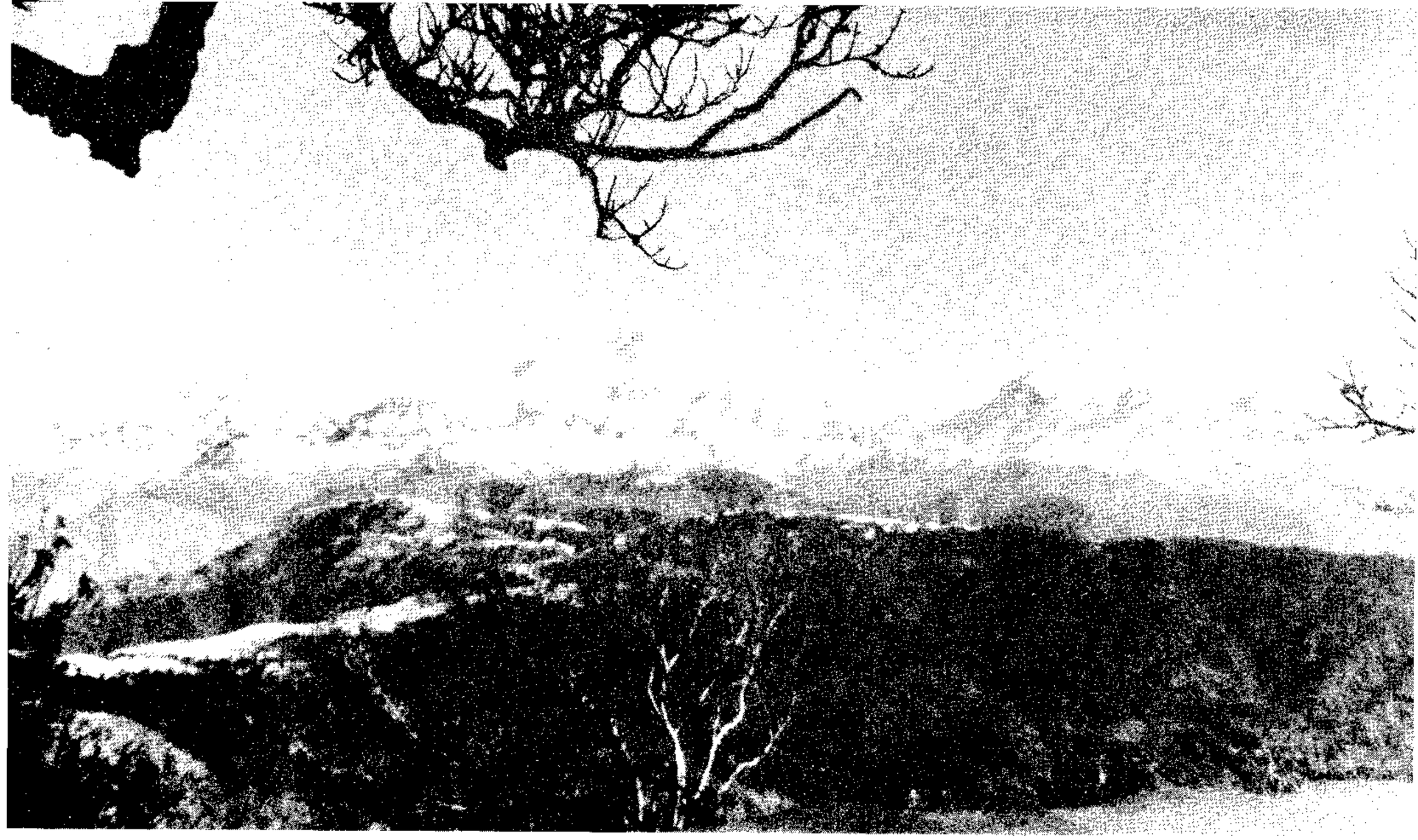


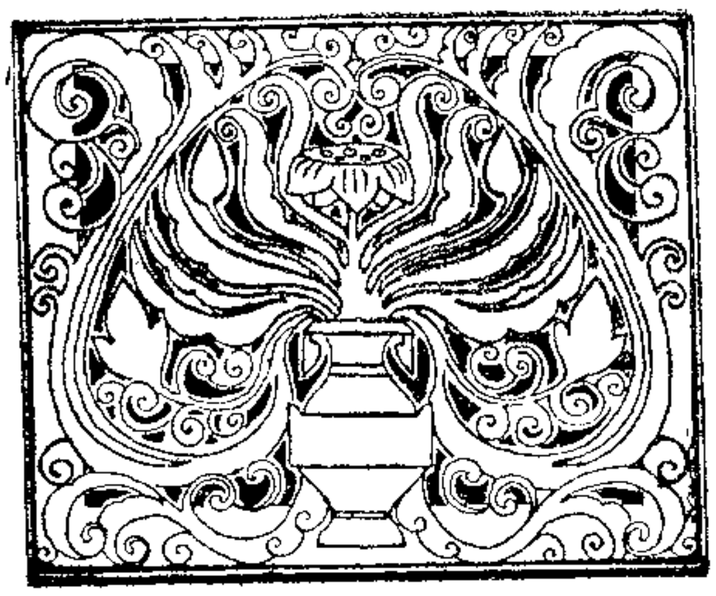
VOL. LXXX JULY 1975

# Prabuddha Bharata

*OR*

## AWAKENED INDIA

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI
HIMALAYAS



*Editorial Office*

P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh 262-524, U.P.

*Publication Office*

5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700-014
Phone: 44-2898

*Annual Subscription*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| India, Nepal & Bangladesh | Rs. | 10.00 |
| Sri Lanka | Rs. | 12.00 |
| U. S. A. | $ | 5.00 |
| Other Countries | £ | 1.20 |

*Life Subscription*

Rs. 180 $ 120 £ 24

*Single Copy*

Rs. 1 40 cents 12 P.

*Information for subscribers, contributors and publishers overleaf.*

# Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

JULY 1975

## CONTENTS



*Cover*:

Kanchenjanga from Sandakphu

*Photo*: Bimal Dey

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXX JULY 1975 No. 7

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

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'I too passed through that state. [Referring to the inner feeling of Dr. Sarkar.] It is called dasya, the attitude of the servant toward his master. I used to weep so bitterly with the name of the Divine Mother on my lips that people would stand in a row watching me. When I was passing through that state, someone, in order to test me and also to cure my madness, brought a prostitute into my room. She was beautiful to look at, with pretty eyes. I cried, "O Mother! O Mother!" and rushed out of the room. I ran to Haladhari and said to him, "Brother, come and see who has entered my room!" I told Haladhari and everyone else about this woman. While in that state I used to weep with the name of the Mother on my lips. Weeping, I said to Her: "O Mother, protect me! Please make me stainless. Please see that my mind is not diverted from the Real to the unreal."'

*

(Replying to the question, 'How can one be freed from lust?') 'Ah, lust does not vanish till God is realized. So long as the body lasts, a little of it continues even after that realization; but then it cannot raise its head. Do you think I myself am altogether free from it? At one time, I thought I had conquered lust. When I was sitting under the Panchavati such an onrush of lust came that it seemed to be beyond my power of control. I then wept rubbing my face against the dust on the ground and said to the Mother, "I have done a great wrong, Mother, I shall never again harbour the idea that I have conquered lust." It was then only that it vanished.'

■

'Sin begets its own result. This is God's law. Won't you burn your tongue if you chew a chilli? In his youth Mathur led a rather fast life; so he suffered from various diseases before his death.'

*

'Once I said to Mathur Babu: "Don't think that I have achieved my desired end because you, a rich man, show me respect. It matters very little to me whether you obey me or not." Of course you must remember that mere

man can do nothing. It is God alone who makes one person obey another. Man is straw and dust before the power of God.'

*

'Once I went to a certain place with Mathur Babu. Many pundits came forward to argue with me. And you all know that I am a fool. The pundits saw that strange mood of mine. When the conversation was over, they said to me: "Sir, after hearing your words, all that we have studied before, our knowledge and scholarship, has proved to be mere spittle. Now we realize that a man does not lack wisdom if he has the grace of God. The fool becomes wise and the mute eloquent." Therefore I say that a man does not become a scholar by the mere study of books.'

*

'I don't like these discussions. I used to weep and pray to the Divine Mother, saying: "O Mother, one man says it is this, while another says it is that. Do Thou tell me, O Mother, what is the truth."'

*

'Once Mathur Babu said to me: "Father, there is nothing inside you but God. Your body is like an empty shell. It may look from outside like a pumpkin, but inside there is nothing—neither flesh nor seed. Once I saw you as someone moving with a veil on."'

*

[Mathur Babu, having from his own room been watching Sri Ramakrishna pacing the verandah of his room in a spiritual mood, ran to the Master and clasped his feet.] 'I asked: "What is this you are doing? You are a Babu, the son-in-law of the Rani, what will people think if they see you act like this? Be calm and get up." But did he give ear to it? Afterwards when he became collected, he narrated everything without any reserve. He had had a strange vision. He said, "Father, you were walking, and I saw distinctly that it was not you but my Mother in the temple over there as you were coming forward in this direction, and that it was Mahadeva Himself immediately when you turned about. I thought at first that it was an optical illusion; I rubbed my eyes well and looked, but saw the same thing. This happened as often as I looked." He repeatedly said this and wept. I said, "Why, as a matter of fact, I know nothing." But would he listen? I was afraid lest some one should come to know of it and tell the Rani of it. What would she think? She might perhaps say that I put a spell on him. He became calm when I consoled him in various ways. Was it for nothing that Mathur did so much for me and loved me so much? Mother gave him many visions and experiences about "here" (meaning himself). It was in fact written in Mathur's horoscope that his chosen Ideal, the divine Mother, would be so very compassionate to him that She would assume a body, accompany and protect him wherever he went.'

## *ONWARD FOR EVER!*

*Large numbers of people will tell you, 'I have tried to be religious all my life, but there is nothing in it.' At the same time you will find this phenomenon: Suppose a man is a chemist, a great scientific man. He comes and tells you this. If you say to him, 'I do not believe anything about chemistry because I have all my life tried to become a chemist and do not find anything in it', he will ask, 'When did you try?' 'When I went to bed, I repeated, "O chemistry, come to me", and it never came.' That is the very same thing. The chemist laughs at you and says, 'Oh, that is not the way. Why did you not go to the laboratory and get all the acids and alkalis and burn your hands from time to time? That alone would have taught you.' Do you take the same trouble with religion? Every science has its own method of learning, and religion is to be learnt the same way. It has its own methods, and here is something we can learn, and must learn, from all the ancient prophets of the world, every one who has found something, who has realized religion. ...To become religious, to perceive religion, feel it, to become a prophet, we have to take these methods and practise them; and then if we find nothing, we shall have the right to say, 'There is nothing in religion, for I have tried and failed.'*

Vivekananda

# REFLECTIONS ON VIVEKANANDA'S LAST DAY ON EARTH

EDITORIAL

## I

As readers of Swami Vivekananda's biography are likely to know, the Swami's health suffered frequent setbacks for nearly the last four years of his life. His extraordinary labours—in preaching Vedānta in the West and rousing his own countrymen, organizing the work both in India and the West, and constant teaching, writing, and training of disciples—had greatly worn him out. Besides, the hardships of the austere spiritual life he had lived at Baranagore monastery and during his wandering days in India, coupled with the privations suffered all through this period, had already greatly undermined his iron constitution. Yet despite this broken body and impaired health, Swamiji continued working day and night to give a shape to the works he had initiated and to guide and inspire spiritual aspirants everywhere. It is a never-ending wonder to study the volume of spiritual, organizational, preaching and literary work that Swamiji did during those culminating eventful four years. For instance, we generally hear that he undertook his second visit to the West—lasting for nearly eighteen months in 1899 and 1900—primarily for recouping his broken and failing health. But how hard it was for him to carry out this intention and what an enormous amount of work he proceeded to do, will be clear to anyone dipping into the pages of the recent definitive study by a dedicated Western devotee-author.[1] Residing at the monastery or out on pilgrimage, convalescing from a bout of illness or resting in a hill resort, Swamiji was intensely active and

---

[1] Marie Louise Burke: *Swami Vivekananda His Second Visit to the West—New Discoveries* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P. 1973)

alert—physically, intellectually and spiritually.

Surprisingly, Swamiji appeared and felt the healthiest for many months, on the last day of his earthly life, 4 July 1902. Despite the many hints given by him about the approaching end, none about him could even vaguely guess that he was going to leave them physically that day. He rose early, as was his wont. With Swami Premananda, a dear brother-disciple, he had lots of talks concerning old days, and great fun. After the morning tea, he entered the shrine for an unusually long meditation. Of the three hours of that morning meditation, he spent two in the bed-room[2] of Sri Ramakrishna, with its doors and windows shut. For Swamiji who was accustomed to meditate in a well-ventilated room, this day's choice of the privacy of a closed room was definitely unusual. To be sure, no one ventured to ask him about it, nor did he himself explain it. At the end of this prolonged meditation, he broke into a song on the Divine Mother, Kālī, in which the highest *bhakti* (devotion) mingled with the highest *jñāna* (knowledge). Those who heard the strains of this song in Swamiji's sweet voice, were greatly thrilled. Coming down from the shrine, he was walking thoughtfully in the courtyard. Suddenly he spoke to himself in a half-audible tone: 'If there were another Vivekananda, he would have understood what Vivekananda has done! And yet,—how many Vivekanandas shall be born in time ! !'[3] Swami Premananda, who was near by, could hear this and was startled by its deep and sombre implications.

Thereafter Swamiji called Swami Suddhananda, a disciple who later became the General Secretary and then the fifth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, and asked him to bring the *Śukla-yajur-veda* from the library and read a particular verse with Mahīdhara's commentary on it. Swamiji expressed dissatisfaction with the commentator's explanation, and urged the disciple to do some independent thinking on the implications of the Vedic *mantras*. He said:

> 'This interpretation of the passage does not appeal to my mind. Whatever may be the commentator's interpretation of the word *susumnah*, the seed or the basis of what the Tantras, in the later ages, speak of as the *susumnā* nerve channel in the body is contained here, in this Vedic mantra. You my disciples, should try to discover the true import of these *ślokas* (verses) and make original reflections and commentaries on the *śāstras* (scriptures).'[4]

When the gong sounded for lunch soon thereafter, Swamiji went into the refectory and sat down with all to eat. This was also an unusual action, since owing to his ill health he was wont to take his meals in his own room. Today he ate with great relish a full meal, and remarked humorously: 'Owing to my fast on the *ekādaśī*-day, my hunger has greatly increased. I have left the pots and plates [without eating them up] with great difficulty !' Two days before, on Wednesday, he had kept the traditional *ekādaśī*-fast strictly, even eschewing water.

After a short rest, Swamiji assembled all the novices for a class on Sanskrit grammar, and held them spellbound for nearly three hours. Those who are acquainted even slightly with this subject know how dry and uninteresting it often is. How superb must have been the Swami's powers of pedagogy to make even such a subject as Sanskrit grammar so interesting as to hold the atten-

---

[2] The small Shrine at Belur Math was arranged as 'bedroom' for Sri Ramakrishna.

[3] His Eastern and Western Disciples: *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, 1949), p. 763

[4] ibid., pp. 763-4

tion of this young group for three long hours, so that no one felt any monotony ! And this on the very last day of his life ! He appeared only a little fatigued after this class.

Some time later, he went out on a fairly long walk, accompanied by Premananda. Swamiji talked to his brother on various themes and specially on the founding of a Vedic college at the Belur Math. With a view to ascertaining what Swami felt on this matter, Premananda asked, 'What, Swamiji, will be the good of studying the Vedas ?' To this Swamiji replied, 'It will kill out superstitions [perverted ideas and prejudices] !'

Returning to the Math from the walk, Swamiji talked with the monks, enquiring lovingly about their welfare. When the bell for vespers rang, he retired to his own room and sat down for meditation, instructing the attending novice to come in only when called. After about an hour's meditation and *japa* (repetition of *mantra*), he called the novice in and, asking him to fan his head, lay down on the bed with the rosary in his hand. After another hour or so, the novice noticed that Swamiji's hand shook slightly ; then followed two deep breaths ; the gaze became fixed at the eyebrows and the face lit up by an extraordinary radiance and smile. His head rolled to one side and then all was silent. The attendant, thinking Swamiji had fallen into samādhi, went downstairs to call the other Swamis. When they came, they could find neither respiration nor pulse. And when all efforts to revive him in the physiological and yogic ways had failed, they understood that Swamiji had entered *mahāsamādhi*, from which there was no return to the mortal body again.

The next morning it was found that the eyes were bloodshot and that a little bleeding had occurred through the mouth and nostrils. Whatever the doctors may have remarked, the monks knew that in the process of *japa* and meditation, Swamiji had relinquished the mortal body in a voluntary yogic act. Describing him in his eternal sleep, Swami Premananda wrote to Swami Abhedananda who was then in the U.S.A.:

> 'I saw how luminous Swamiji's face was. His eyes were open and they had a heavenly expression emanating spiritual power. He was clad only in a loin cloth, and I noticed how effulgent and beautiful his body was.' [5]

## II

One of the dominant notes of Swamiji's life and message is strength—physical, mental and spiritual. He was an embodiment of this threefold strength, and in his presence all fear and weakness tended to vanish from the hearts of others. Swamiji's body suffered from various ailments towards the end. But physical ailments never could cloud his mind, nor was there any fear of death in him. 'That will be a great death', he had once declared to Sister Nivedita, 'that I shall die, saying "Hara, Hara, Hara!" '[6] He had conquered all fear of death when he had given up, as a monk, all love of life. He once described the vow of *sannyāsa* as *the love of death.* To the young Duke of Richelieu, in Paris, who asked what he could gain by renouncing the world, the Swami replied, 'I shall give you the desire for death', adding that this would mean the strength of mind to laugh at death when it came.[7]

Death is a terror to the worldly-minded, as they are identified with their bodies. But to one like Swamiji who had conquered

---

5 *Swami Premananda: Teachings and Reminiscences* (ed. by Swami Prabhavananda, pub. by Advaita Ashrama, 1970), p. 191

6 Sister Nivedita, 'On the Passing Away of Swami Vivekananda', *Prabuddha Bharata*, July, 1948, p. 258

7 Swami Nikhilananda: *Vivekananda—A Biography* (Advaita Ashrama, 1964), p. 306

ego and body-consciousness, who had disciplined the body into complete submission, death holds no dreads and hides no secrets. Even a couple of months before his passing for instance, Swamiji agreed to undergo an indigenous form of medical treatment which demanded of him complete abstention from drinking water. Though all about him wondered as to how he could follow that rule in the heat of Calcutta and with his habit of drinking cold water almost hourly he cheerfully proceeded with the treatment. His will was so powerful that the body immediately responded, and later he found even while rinsing the mouth that the throat muscles automatically would contract against the flow of even a drop of water into the gullet ! In appreciation of this aspect of the Swami's personality, Sister Nivedita wrote:

> 'Like a practised rider, touching the reins, or a great musician, running his fingers over the keys, he loved to feel again the response of the body to the will rejoiced to realize afresh his own command of his instrument.' [8]

Swamiji had conquered physical death when he had mastered the body's responses to extreme heat and cold, and the fundamental physical urges of hunger, thirst, and sleep. He once spoke about his conquest of the body and its basic needs thus:

> 'A man who has met starvation face to face for fourteen years of his life, who has not known where he will get a meal the next day and where to sleep, cannot be intimidated so easily. A man almost without clothes, who dared to live where the thermometer registered thirty degrees below zero, without knowing where the next meal was to come from, cannot be so easily intimidated . . .' [9]

In another context Swamiji revealed the secret of the subjugation of the body and the conquest of physical needs. He had asserted his immortal and infinite spiritual nature, reminded himself of the omnipotence of the Ātman, to pull himself out of physical exhaustion. Even death was defied thus by him. In an American lecture he said:

> 'Many times I have been in the jaws of death, starving, footsore, and weary; for days and days I had had no food, and often could walk no farther. I would sink down under a tree, and life would seem ebbing away. I could not speak. I could hardly think, but at last the mind reverted to the idea: "I have no fear nor death; I never hunger nor thirst. I am It ! I am It ! The whole of nature cannot crush me; it is my servant. Assert thy strength, thou Lord of lords and God of gods ! Regain thy lost empire! Arise and walk and stop not!" And I would rise up, reinvigorated, and here am I, living, today.' [10]

Even from his boyhood, moreover, Swamiji seems to have acquired great control over sleep. In his youth he would spend most of the night in deep states of meditation in which he seemed to have found the needed rest. Sister Nivedita reports that at one time he spent twenty-five days, allowing himself only half-an-hour's sleep out of every twenty-four hours. 'And from this half-hour, he awoke himself! Sleep never afterwards, probably, was a very insistent or enduring guest with him.' [11] More than this sleep-conquering discipline, it was his experience of high states of ecstatic spiritual consciousness which had conferred on him an enduring mastery over sleep. A man who experiences samādhi conquers sleep for ever.

Besides the conquest of the body and nervous system, which frees a man greatly from fear of death, Swamiji had attained complete freedom from death's grip by con-

---

[8] Sister Nivedita: *The Complete Works* (Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 5 Nivedita Lane, Calcutta 3, 1967), Vol. I, p. 252

[9] Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama), Vol. III (1960), pp. 212-3

[10] ibid., Vol. II (1963), p. 403

[11] Sister Nivedita: op. cit., p. 253

quering his ego wholly. Though he preached faith in oneself and the need to assert the higher self, he had already triumphed over his ego by dissolving it in the unbounded Ātman. A knower of the Ātman can never be egotistic. Even the seeming attachment of Swamiji to the great work he had inaugurated was not because of any ego-sense. He felt that his Master had entrusted the work to him and that sacred commission had to be fulfilled. Furthermore, he knew that this new message he taught and the practical paths he laid out would be for the spiritual upliftment of humanity. Though he was free from the sense of ego, he had the welfare of humanity in view, and that made him 'worry' a bit if he sensed any danger to his movement. Still in his heart of hearts he knew that the work belonged to the Master and that the Divine Mother's power was behind all; and hence the movement started by him could not fail.

Towards the end, Swamiji was often repeating the following verse from the Upanisad, which reflected his own attitude towards the body:

> 'If a man knows the Self as *I am this*, then desiring what and for whose sake will he suffer in the wake of the body?'[12]

He had known the Self as 'a fruit in the palm of one's hand', and so life in the body, whether healthy or ill, had no hold whatever on him.

## III

It is commonly observed that whatever a person does with intensity all through life, that will occupy his whole mind when death approaches. In the life of Swamiji, from boyhood onwards, we find austerity and meditation to be the dominant aspects. Thus naturally he became very much absorbed in them as his earthly end neared. I feel that I am drawing near to death', he had told Sister Nivedita eight days before he did die, 'and a great austerity and meditation are coming upon me. I spend hours every day in the chapel.' Swamiji, we may infer from this, was incidentally setting an example to others as to how to face death calmly and boldly.

Swamiji was a master-yogī,[13] and on that final day he was almost certainly contemplating the intricacies of rousing the *kuṇḍalinī* (the coiled-up spiritual power at the sacral plexus), and by making it pierce through the mystic centres in the spinal column and the head, giving up the physical body like a 'worn-out garment'. His discussion on the Vedic mantra, the song he sang about Kālī, and the bleeding in the eyes, nose and mouth, (noticed after his death) all seem to point to this great fact. He gave up the body in the fashion of the '*sannyāsins* (monks) who are self-controlled and freed from attachment'. About such ideal yogīs, the *Gītā* says:

> 'He who, at the time of passing away, steady in mind, filled with love, and armed with the strength of yoga, well fixes his *prāṇa* (vital force) between his brows and meditates on the omniscient and primal Being, the Ruler, the Dispenser of all, who is subtler than an atom, whose form is beyond comprehension, and who, like the glorious sun, is beyond all darkness—he who thus meditates reaches the resplendent Supreme Person.'[14]

We know that at the end Swamiji's gaze was fixed at his brows, which indicates that

---

12 *Brhadāranyaka-upanisad*, IV. iv. 12

13 Further, on his pilgrimage to Amarnath, almost five years earlier, he had received the boon from Śiva (Lord of Amarnāth or immortality), not to die until he himself should choose to do so. And years before, Sri Ramakrishna had said of Vivekananda—then Narendranath—that 'when he realizes who and what he is, he will no longer remain in the body'. (cf. *Life*, p. 603)

14 *Bhagavad-gītā*, VIII. 9-10

he was following the recognized yogic way of leaving the body. And he was surely 'armed with the strength of yoga'. Śaṅkara very insightfully points out that this is 'of the nature of the steadiness of mind born of an abundance of the impressions resulting from the practice of samādhi'. Various incidents in Swamiji's life, and some self-revealing utterances, go to show that he was armed with such yogic strength of mind.

## IV

From his lectures and writings, it will be apparent to all that Swamiji had an intimate acquaintance with the Vedas. He had grown to manhood during a period when the invaluable works of eminent indologists were being avidly studied by patriotic Indian intellectuals. Though he considered the Upanisads alone as the very essence of the Vedas, and though he often condemned the ritualistic Karma-kāṇḍa of the Vedas, yet Swamiji spoke even on this last day, of his desire to found a Vedic college in the Belur monastery. For, as he put it, the study of the Vedas would destroy superstitions, perverted ideas, prejudices. He was well aware, on the one hand, of the high standards prevailing in the Vedic society, its vigorous life, the general elevation in the status of women, an all-pervading optimism and *joie de vivre,* and on the other hand, of a general decline of all these aspects in the Hindu society of his time. His purpose in advocating the founding of a Vedic college was to popularize Vedic study in India and especially in Bengal and thereby to infuse a fresh vigour into Hindu national life.

That Swamiji should, further, hold a class in Sanskrit grammar for three hours on the last day of his life, seems to us to have immense significance. We know that he was a deep scholar in Sanskrit and had studied during his Indian wanderings the grammar of Pānini with the commentary of Patañjali on it. He was a great admirer of the style and diction of this commentary. He wanted a general revival of Sanskrit study in India and particularly exhorted his followers to keep ablaze the study of Sanskrit and scriptural study which can only and regulations he framed for the guidance of the Ramakrishna Order, he had laid great stress on the cultivation of scriptural wisdom for which a good knowledge of Sanskrit is essential Through his marathon class on Sanskrit grammar on the last day of his life, Swamiji laid an emphasis on Sanskrit and scriptural study which can only be disregarded to the detriment of the intellectual and spiritual life of the nation and especially its monastic community.

## V

Death as we usually encounter it in this world has a heavy association with sadness, inauspiciousness, bereavement, and fear. But the death of a god-man has few of these associations. On the contrary, it is an event scattering joy, auspiciousness, fulfilment, hope, and strength. The passing of Swamiji was such a divine event. He was a preacher of strength, fearlessness, and freedom. It was probably to emphasize this fact that he had chosen to leave his earthly body on the 4th of July, the day of American Independance—of great national rejoicing for the land to which he had given half his life's work—a day reminding so many millions of the gospel of liberty. Even two years before the actual event, Swamiji is said to have announced this date to a western woman devotee.[15] During those final days and especially on the last, Swamiji emanated great joy and radiance. There was nothing sad or grave about him. Sister Nivedita records that during those last days 'one was conscious [all] the while of a luminous presence' about him. 'Never

---

15 Marie Louise Burke: op. cit., pp. 751-2

had one felt so strongly as now, before him, that one stood on the threshold of an infinite light.' 'And that wonderful divine light never ceased to grow brighter and brighter....'

In his own words, long before, Swamiji had made it clear that death for him would mean only a getting out of the physical body. But as a spiritual force and personality he would continue to 'live' and 'work', and 'inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God'.

Once in Kashmir, after recovering from an attack of illness, he had picked up two pebbles in his hands, and had said to Sister Nivedita: 'Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as that'—and the stones struck one another in his hand—'for I *have* touched the feet of God.'

Thus the fourth of July is a day of great sanctity, joy, hope, and strength to all followers of Swamiji in both the East and West when they are reminded of the wonderful triumph of this man of God, over death, limitation, fear, and weakness. Seeing his body even on the day following his passing, Swami Premananda remarked that 'It was as if Lord Shiva were lying there. Swamiji's body retained its lifelike appearance. Of his own free will he had given up his body.'[16]

[16] *Swami Premananda,* loc. cit.

# LETTERS OF A SAINT

The Math. Belur P.O.
Howrah
6-3-17

My dear Doctor,

Your kind letter of the 1st inst. has delighted me. I am very very glad to see that you are now in Almora again and living in the Ramakrishna Cottage with Brahmacharins there. How nice. How grand! Yes it would have been nicer if I could be there just now. But it is all right. The Mother will see to everything you need, I feel sure of that.

Why do you welcome miseries and troubles? They are over now. Now you think of Mother and Mother alone. You need not search for Mother anywhere else but in your own self. She is the Self of all. While you cannot doubt about your own existence, how can you doubt about the existence of Mother? She is the Existence of all existences. She is the basis of all. *'Tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam, tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti.'*[1] She shining everything shines; through Her splendour all else is illumined. First Mother, then everything else. Nobody can know Her but through Her mercy. Wait and

[1] तमेव भान्तं अनुभाति सर्वं, तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ।
'He shining everything shines after Him; by His effulgence all this is illumined.' *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad,* II. ii. 10. [Here the Swami is identifying the Divine Mother with Brahman, the Ultimate Reality.—*Ed.*]

watch and in Her good time the light dawns on you, driving away the darkness that intervenes, to see Her face within your own heart. Abide by Her. Don't you see Her hand that is drawing you nigh to Her? You are now only to look up to Her in patience. It is not that you have no belief in Her. But you want to be convinced, and that you are going to be presently. You have come a long way, and there is not much delay. Have patience and work on diligently and the success is yours....

May Mother give you success here and now in temporal as well as in spiritual things, and may She make you fit to be Her instrument in carrying success to others by all means in your power, is the fervent prayer of your ever well-wishing and everloving Turiyananda.

My best wishes and love to Br. Nobochaitanya and Br. Rama. I am doing tolerably well. Hoping to hear from you soon again,

Yours in the Lord,
TURIYANANDA

---

The Math. Belur P.O.
Howrah
18-3-17

My dear Doctor,

I thank you for your kind letter of the 13th inst. just to hand....

You need not be so anxious for your mental condition in these days. Go on calling upon Mother's Grace fervently and the light shall dawn on you in good time as the Mother would think it right and proper for you. You throw yourself heart and soul at the feet of the Mother, and She will take care of you, and you shall feel free. I am glad you all are doing well there. The Swamis and Brahmacharins here are doing nicely also. My best wishes and love to you as ever.

Yours in the Lord,
TURIYANANDA

---

The Math. Belur P.O.
Howrah
2-4-17

My dear Doctor,

...You are right; the best way to forget the past is not to think of those events again. Better think of Mother if you are to think anything. That way by Her Grace one may become lost in Her thought entirely....

Why not address me as 'Dear Swami' instead of Guru Maharaj. That will please most. Our Master used to hate being called 'Guru' and 'Father'....

With my best wishes and love to you all as ever.

Yours in the Lord,
TURIYANANDA

---

The Math. Belur P.O.
Howrah
15-4-17

My dear Doctor,

...You need not be anxious for the ups and downs in your devotional attitude of mind. For that way it goes not only with you but with everyone before it takes any firm hold and gets settled. You go on with your devotion and prayer, and be sure Mother will grant you your wishes in Her own good time....

With my best wishes and love to you as ever and with prayer to Mother for your real prosperity.

Yours in the Lord,
TURIYANANDA

---

# GOD AND THE OTHER GOD

SWAMI ASHOKANANDA

I think I should tell you how I happened to choose this subject, as the title is no doubt a little puzzling. These words, 'the other God', are taken from a lecture given by Swami Vivekananda in 1900 in San Francisco, entitled 'Buddha's Message to the World'. Let me read the passage in which this expression 'the other God' occurs:

> 'Man was loving God and had forgotten all about his brother man. The man who in the name of God can give up his very life, can also turn around and kill his brother man in the name of God. That was the state of the world. They would sacrifice the son for the glory of God, would rob nations for the glory of God, would kill thousands of beings for the glory of God, would drench the earth with blood for the glory of God. This was the first time they turned to the other God—man. It is man that is to be loved. It [Buddhism] was the first wave of intense love for all men—the first wave of true unadulterated wisdom—that, starting from India, gradually inundated country after country, north, south, east, west.'[1]

Now this expression, 'the other God', as it occurs in the Swami's lecture, does not seem to provoke much philosophical thinking. Apparently the term is used to draw our attention to the importance of loving man. Before Buddha appeared, the different peoples of the world had worshipped God, had made many sacrifices to Him, and thinking that they were loving Him, had made many mistakes. The Swami said that Buddha gave a new turn to their devotion: he directed the attention of man to man himself and said that it was man we should love. Those who have studied the history of Buddhism know how far it has spread, and that wherever it has gone it has produced wonderful moral and spiritual results. Buddha was certainly a unique phenomenon in the history of religion. There is not a single religion which has not

---

[1] *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. VIII (1959), p. 100.

been profoundly influenced by his message. Without the influence of Buddha and his teachings, man's achievements would have been retarded by at least two thousand years.

Although Buddha's teaching which drew the attention of man to his brother man was a philosophical doctrine, its psychological and moral effect was profound. I am referring here to his teaching of *anātmā*—which postulates that there is no soul, no god, no essence to anything; everything is just momentary. If we would think of so many qualities, properties, and functions gathered together without a common centre, that would represent the whole of reality. Buddha just abolished the idea that any material object or living thing has an essence or soul.

As a philosophical teaching this was very startling and almost bleak, but the effect of its psychological and ethical aspect was that it made men unselfish. If I am convinced that I have no soul or self, that there is no such thing at all, I can't worry about my soul. Then what shall I do? If I am motivated by goodwill, I shall at once think of others. Of course you will say, if no one has a soul why bother about anyone? But, you know, we are not logical. The forces working in us must have some expression, and when they do not pander to the ego, they at once become unselfish. So the result was that people began to think of others. They were happier because others were happier. More or less unconsciously all of us are practising this in one form or another. Self-denial, self-sacrifice, all such things speak of our unconcern about our own self or soul. Buddha only put it very pointedly.

Swami Vivekananda once said that he had come to fulfil the same function in the West as Buddha had in the East. On the face of it, that might sound a bit egotistic, but the ego of Swami Vivekananda had no similarity to the petty ego of an average man. He was an immense, vast being. His consciousness partook naturally of the consciousness of infinite being, and thus it is no wonder that he had such an extraordinary historical conception of his own self and his own mission.

He did not however take up this doctrine of Buddha that all things are *anātmā*, that there is no soul. He put it the other way; he taught the divinity of man. Being a Hindu, he preached the supreme philosophy of the Hindus, Vedānta. And of Vedānta he preached the highest interpretation, monism, in which it is clearly maintained that there is no difference, not even any distinction, between the so-called individual and the Universal Being, between man and God. Since human understanding is not uniform and not equally developed in all, it is capable of grasping the same truth in many different forms and aspects; therefore Swami Vivekananda preached this cardinal teaching of Advaita Vedānta in many different ways. Sometimes he presented it in its stark nature, without any compromise of its awesomeness. At other times he coated it with the sentiment of love, softening it, as it were; sometimes he gave it a dualistic colour. Nevertheless he returned again and again to this supreme truth—the divinity of man.

In the paragraph I have read to you, the expression 'the other God—man' is startling in many ways. And some of you may think that in going farther and choosing as the title of my lecture 'God and the Other God' I have gone too far: I have brought God and man so close together that it seems almost blasphemous. Yet Vedānta has continually emphasized the divinity of man. And its fundamental teaching in this respect is that it is our *forgetfulness* of our true, divine nature which makes us feel and act as we are doing. In one moment we could throw off this paralyzing forget-

fulness, and at once become aware of our sovereign being, in which there is no obstruction, no bondage, and no lack of knowledge of our own true goodness, power, and perfection.

You see, these monists continually tell us that all we have to do is to remember. If a man has inherited great wealth but has buried it somewhere in his home and behaves like a pauper, all he has to do is remember where he buried this treasure. Then in a moment he can uncover it and become an immensely rich man. We have buried our own immense inheritance, our divine nature, and forgotten where we have buried it. If we could remember that we are God Himself, our whole outlook on life would change in a single moment and we would begin to think and act differently. This self-recollection has been the fundamental teaching of Vedānta, and it is this that Swami Vivekananda placed before mankind. Buddha through his teaching of no-soul released the tremendous selflessness of man. He freed man from his preoccupation with the petty ego, and thereby flooded the Eastern world with the forces of goodness. Swami Vivekananda wanted to do the same thing in both the East and the West. And he did do the same thing in preaching this doctrine of the divinity of man.

## II

I shall try to show you two things: one, the philosophical basis of this teaching; and the other, the psychological effect it has.

As regards the philosophical side, when Vedāntins speak about the creation of the world, they do not use the word *creation* in the same sense Christians do. Vedāntins say this creation is not the original state, it is just a manifestation of something which is subtler something which is hidden. This creation is the *kārya*, the effect, of that *kāraṇa*, or cause. The cause is hidden; it is unmanifest; it is subtle. We try to trace the effect back to a finer and yet finer cause until we have reached the first great Cause, the causeless Cause. Conversely, we trace the different steps by which this original Cause or Essence has become, as it were, this gross form. This, of course, is called cosmology.

I should say here that in explaining anything causally our philosophers think of several kinds of cause. First, there has to be a substance of which a thing is a transformation; then there has to be an agent to transform the substance into this form or forms. Since there is an agent, it must be endowed with a purpose and an intelligent plan according to which it has transformed the substance into its present form. Besides the intelligent agent and a purpose, there must be an instrument and also a method or process. Now these various causes have been reduced to three kinds of cause (or sometimes two): material cause, efficient cause, and instrumental cause. The material cause is the substance out of which things are formed. The efficient cause is the intelligence, the purpose, and the agent. And the instrumental cause is the means by which things are formed. In regard to creation, the instrumental cause, is often identified with the efficient cause, as there are no separate instruments to use. If God creates, He does not need instruments as though He were a carpenter making a chair or a desk; the instrument is His own will. And, for reasons I need not go into here, there is virtually no process. So let us just remember that before creation can take place there has to be a material cause, or substance, and an efficient cause, or intelligence.

In the Vedāntic theory of creation, the original substance is Brahman, the Absolute Divinity. The Absolute is conceived to be without any attributes and without

any functions. Nothing can be said of It. It is the Self, which is indescribable; that is to say, It cannot be qualified. Whatever your mind might suggest about It, you have to say: 'No, this cannot be said of Absolute Divinity. *Neti, neti,* not this, not this.' It is the ultimate and It is also the Creator. It is not that God was at one time absolute and indescribable and then lost His unqualified nature when He became engaged in creation; no, He is always That, the Absolute is the fundamental nature of God.

According to Vedāntins, when you think rightly of creation, the question will occur to you: Has there been any creation at all? You will say: 'Of course there has been creation! I see this world around me; I am trying to explain it.' But does God agree that there has been a creation? Is there a creation from His standpoint? At first such a question may seem fantastic. 'What!' you will say, 'God does not know He has created?' Well, are you *sure* there has been a creation to be explained by Him, or a creation in respect to Him? That has been a very important point in philosophy. For all I know, what I am saying here and trying to explain as the creation of God, may be an illusion of my own. If I were logical, I would first determine whether or not this world is my own illusion before I ascribe it to God, the Absolute, and ask an explanation of Him.

There is a Sanskrit term, *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda,* which means that our perception is itself creation. That is to say, I perceive the Absolute in a mistaken way, and by that very process I create this manifold world. Actually, it would not exist if I ceased to perceive it in the way I am doing. Behind this perception there are all kinds of desires, which are more or less responsible for it. This combination of desires and erroneous perception makes us perceive the Real as we do. If we would get rid of all this rubbish in ourselves and purify our perception, the creation, the manifold, would disappear. This is the view of Vedānta philosophers. They maintain that creation is our mistake. However, they never use the plural; they say '*my* mistake'. I cannot blame you; you are God Himself. I am mistaking you in thinking you are a man. I have the fantasy that some are inferior to me and some are superior; in my own world I have all these distinctions, differences, and so on. Therefore I should not use the plural; the mistake is mine. All that exists is God Himself, Absolute Divinity; if I fail to perceive it, I should try to correct my own vision. I should not go to God and ask, 'Why did You have to create this miserable world?'

However, to purify our vision is rather a long process; so philosophical inquiry cannot stop so short. Intellect continually pushes forward, and we have to follow its drive, always remembering, however, that it is only from *our* standpoint that we are forced to draw certain conclusions; from the standpoint of God, these cosmological queries and speculations may have no basis in truth.

Now let us proceed from our standpoint. In order to explain anything, one process usually followed by a thinking man is analysis. He analyses things and reduces them to their irreducible factors; he then explains where they came from and how they became joined together. If you take the whole universe, such analysis will show that it is the indefinable, irreducible Divine Substance that has, as it were, been covered over by form. Whether you take the universe, visible and invisible, as an aggregate, or whether you study its separate units—both are capable of being reduced to irreducible substance and form.

Some will say that form by itself does not exist; it has to be accompanied by significance or meaning. That meaning they call 'name'. We have a name for everything;

it distinguishes a certain object, action, or experience from others, and a name is always connected with a form. We cannot understand a form without a name; and a name without a form would have no existence. The name is not merely the word, for the concept and name are identical. So form, word, and concept or idea are bound up together and inhere in every object. That is one side; the substance is the other side.

Now take anything—the chair on which you are sitting. Here is a definite form with a definite name. Then you have ideas connected with that name—how it looks, what it is made of, its behaviour now, in the past, or in the future. So you have the form, the name, and the ideas. Now suppose you dissociate this form, along with all these ideas, from this thing you call 'chair'. What remains? Indefinable substance. It is indefinable because the moment you give it a definition you are mixing up form and name with it; and, by supposition, we have already divested it of name and form. Could you say it is matter? No, the moment you call the substance matter, you are again ascribing name and form to it. You cannot say anything about it except that it is indefinable being.

Now, with everything—one thing after the other—follow the same process. What have you got? You have an infinite number of indefinable beings. Can there be an infinite number of indefinable beings? No, there cannot be. If each is indefinable and unlimited, there is nothing to separate one from another; they will all blend together. So what you arrive at is this: there is one indefinable Being, and there are an infinite number of forms and names; and these two contradictory things—Being and form-and-name—are mixed up together.

So to a Vedāntin the problem of the creation of the world reduces itself to this: from where did all this infinite number of forms and names come? As regards the substance, there has always been but one infinite Substance: God. So great is that infinite Substance that we won't worry about it. It is the forms with which we are concerned. The troublesome part is that forms are so contrary to our idea of God; most forms are of dead matter, material; whereas God is all consciousness, all intelligence. How could these forms, which almost deny the existence of God, come from God? And if not from God, from where did they come?

The peculiarity of forms—physical or mental—is that one can never trace where they come from or where they go. Take clay and model it: originally the clay had a lump form, and now you have a beautiful image, perhaps the form of a baby. You break it up, and this baby-form disappears. Where does this image go? Then you make the form of a horse. The horse-form comes from nowhere, and when you break it up it goes nowhere.

Similarly of qualities. Water flows, it is liquid; then water is frozen. Where is the attribute of liquidness then? From where did the frozen form come? From where did its white colour come? Think of mental qualities. Where do they come from, and where do they go? Everything you can think of, mental or physical, suffers from this mystery—we do not know where it comes from and where it goes. We cannot trace it anywhere. This is the real problem of the world, according to the Vedāntins.

Having analysed this whole creation into these component elements—name-and-form on one side and Substance on the other—we find that name-and-form is something so mysterious that we do not know its origin. Name-and-form has no existence except in relation to the Substance, and yet it is separable from the Substance. If name-and-form were something, it would be traceable; but since name-and-form is not traceable, it has no substance, and you cannot call it a true thing. Yet you perceive it, and since it

is an object of your perception, from that standpoint you have to speak of it as at least existing. This peculiar thing—which exists and yet does not exist, which is there and yet is not there, which comes from nowhere and disappears, which becomes an object of perception and yet has no reality—this mysterious something which is nothing, is called Māyā.

So when Vedāntic cosmologists trace everything to its cause, they come to this: Brahman and Māyā. When I say Brahman and Māyā, at once I become dualistic, admitting two things. I shall remind you, however, that so far as Brahman is concerned, He is probably not aware of Māyā at all; so there is only one thing left—Brahman. But so far as *I* am concerned, I am forced as a student of philosophy to trace the origin of this manifold universe to Māyā, of which all the infinite forms, subtle and gross, are so many amplifications. According to my understanding, Māyā has no permanent existence; yet, because it is a mysterious something, I have to admit that it exists. If you say this is contradictory, all I can say is: that is our ill luck. Why should we think this world is harmonious and rational? That this is a rational world is refuted by our own experience. We would like to make it rational, but we find a good many irrational elements in it. If you admit this irrationality of the world, you cannot deny the truth of what I say as to form and attributes: they exist and are at the same time nonexistent; they are real and at the same time unreal.

Now, here the practical aspect comes in. You might say, 'All right, let us accept the theory that you can separate the form from an object. But is it practically possible?' Some philosophers say that the separation of form from substance is a fantastic analysis because it is unrealistic. They say no substance can be separated from its form or attributes; the substance itself would be nothing without quality. Can you perceive a substance of which the colour is white, without at the same time perceiving its whiteness? It is only for our intellectual convenience that we say 'attribues' and 'substance'. They are not separate from one another at all. So you wonder, can there be one without the other?

I myself do not think substance and attributes are to be considered as one. *That* would be fantastic—again because it is unrealistic. We know the qualities of an object can be changed. At one time you find one quality in an object, and then that quality disappears. When water freezes it is no longer liquid; the quality of liquidness has disappeared, and that which was not there, frozen hardness, has appeared. So you cannot say that qualities are essential to an object. They come and go. Yet according to our present experience, we cannot deny that qualities are inherent in an object, nor can we perceive an object without some qualities.

Vedāntins have accepted the challenge of this practical question, can you really perceive substance divested of qualities? This is the answer they give: Whatever qualities you perceive outside yourself are within your own thought, and if you could separate substance and qualities within your own thought, they would also be separated outside. For example, say you are looking at what you call a man. Let us accept the Vedāntic view that man is divine Spirit. But his mind and body, his mental and physical activities largely deny his divine nature. What can be done about it? Here is the Vedāntic answer: In your own thought about man you must separate substance and form. Do not think of man as physical or as mental. Of course, you cannot always do this at once, but it is not impossible; you have to learn how to do it. Then, when you look at a man you will actually see this separation. Your thought is the

clue. This is the claim of the Vedāntins.

The external is nothing but a reflection of the internal. What you have within yourself, you see on the outside. For instance, whenever you look at a man you find him a psycho-physical being, but if by analysis, reason, and sheer will, you change your thought and seperate this indefinable being called man, the real substance, from his mental qualities and appearances, you will perceive that the separation has actually taken place.

Yes, you can really do it. But this separation within is not so superficial as it might sound on first hearing. Separating within is a job. Why do you think that your idea of man has become a mixup of body and mind? What is the original cause of this trouble? It has happened because you like to see Reality in this form. You *like* to see it. In the long run the responsibility is yours. If someone should say you will never again have to see man as body and mind, you will be the first to cry out: 'Stop! Stop! Don't be too serious. I would like to think in the present way a little longer. Give me a little time!' We do not attain a higher state for the simple reason that we do not want the knowledge that would enable us to attain it. If we wanted that knowledge, the separation between substance and attributes would take place. But somehow we want to perceive things the way we do.

Just ask yourself: If suddenly all around you, you saw human beings as God Himself, would you like it? What would you do with the pettiness you want to indulge in from time to time? Are you really truthful in saying you want this knowledge? If you had it, how could you hate people and love them? How could you spite yourself upon them? Are you willing to give up this little game called 'life' you are indulging in? What would you do if suddenly the whole thing dropped away? In imagination ask yourself this question. I am afraid most of us would say 'It would be awfully monotonous. All fun would go out of life.' I am afraid that would be the answer. If on the other hand someone answers, 'I would not mind; that is just what I want', then he does not have to ask the question; he is already realizing Divinity. But the ordinary person likes to think of this one Reality, this Divine Substance, as inseparable from form. He *likes* it. That is why in his mind he has mixed them up, and that is why on the outside he is seeing them mixed up. This one Divine Substance appears to him as manifold, and each individual person or thing appears to him as limited; and nowhere does he see the face of God shining.

This strange state of things in which that which is not there is perceived and that which is there is not perceived, is not necessary. There is no real reason why we should perceive the world in the way we do. Yet we do it.

(*to be concluded*)

*ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION*

# HOW TO TEST OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

## I

Many of us have perhaps noticed that after years of religious life, we at times do not know whither we are going. We cannot even ascertain whether we are going forward or backward, or remaining stranded.

Fuzzy-headedness unfortunately gets easily associated with religious life. Over and above that, dreams and hallucinations, taking the colours of spiritual experiences, delude uncritical aspirants. Amorphous, inchoate, uncritical thinking often goes with religious endeavour.

Some appear to think they are progressing spiritually because they have travelled from a church downtown to one uptown. Others again, feel thus because while previously they thought that only one religion was true, now they think all are true—even though this can very well be the outcome of their equal indifference to all religions! All cases, however, need not be so. A clear analytical mind is as much needed for a truly religious life as it is for scientific investigation. It is unnecessary for us to be in doubt in regard to our spiritual progress, true though it is that one cannot measure spiritual growth in the manner one can one's body-temperature.

There are definite tests by which, if one wishes, one can ascertain whether or not one is progressing spiritually. In one of his sermons the Buddha—like many other great teachers—by implication points out methods of testing our spiritual progress. In these teachings we can find certain foolproof universally applicable tests for ascertaining the extent of such progress.

The Buddha teaches that[1] the tests of *dhamma* (the teaching—that ideal to which our spiritual growth will lead us) are the development of:

(1) Dispassion and not passion;
(2) Detachment and not bondage;
(3) Decrease of worldly possessions and not their increase;
(4) Abstention and not greed;
(5) Content and not discontent;
(6) Seeking of solitude and not of company;
(7) Energy and not slothfulness;
(8) Delight in good and not delight in evil.

We shall elaborate on these eight tests in terms of our inner life.

(1) Spiritual progress will lead us to dispassion and not to passion.

If we feel on examination of our inner situation, that our passions are coming under greater control, we are growing in dispassion, then it is a sign of spiritual growth.

There are no greater enemies of spiritual life than the uncontrolled passions. No matter what we do by way of spiritual practices, if passions are not controlled, and finally conquered, we have not yet become spiritual beings: we are still animal men. To be sure it is a hard struggle. And it is said that so long as

---

[1] Sudhakar Dikshit: *Sermons and Sayings of the Buddha* (pub. by Chetana, Bombay, for the Buddha Jayanti Charities Society, Bombay—no date), p. 78: chapter 32—'The Test of Dhamma'

the body lasts, passions such as lust cannot be totally destroyed. But they can be so subdued that they cannot do any harm.

Now if we judge from our inner situations, in regard to passions most of us may not find it easy to discern if at all we are making spiritual progress. This may make it hard to keep up the basic optimism needed in all spiritual life.

Thus here the point to remember is that even if we have not conquered lust or other passions, still if we are resolutely and sincerely fighting our lower nature—if we are rising after every fall, if we are not giving ourselves away to our lower nature —then we are making spiritual progress.

Inner struggle is not a sign of backsliding or stagnation, but of inner awakening. Dissatisfaction with our present state, and relentless struggle for self-improvement are signs of spiritual growth. If the idea that we must attain dispassion has become the motive power for renewed spiritual efforts, then we are progressing spiritually in spite of our temporary failures. If passions have become our agonies and not our pleasures, then we are progressing spiritually.

Yet always in this struggle, we must remember that complacency will prove disastrous. Great alertness is needed. Only when a person reaches that state when desires and temptations do not ruffle him any more, may he be sure that dispassion has been attained. Describing this state of attained inner excellence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

> 'Not the desirer of desires attains peace, but he into whom all desires enter as the waters enter the ocean, which is full to the brim and grounded in stillness.' [2]

The ocean is not at all affected by the waters flowing into it from all sides. Similarly, that man alone finds true peace beyond all struggle in whom no reaction of desire is produced by the objects of enjoyment which he happens to come across.

(2) Spiritual progress will lead us to detachment and not to bondage.

One of the most dependable tests of spiritual growth is one's degree of detachment. An unregenerate man is inordinately attached to his body, his relatives, his possessions. 'This is I', 'This is mine'—is his language. He delights in possession and possessiveness. When his attachments are catered to, he becomes highly elated. But when the things of his attachment are for some reason kept from him, he becomes utterly miserable. For such a person effective spiritual practices are impossible because, having given his mind away to all these things, he cannot at all concentrate that mind on God. And concentration of mind is the way to spiritual progress.

The roots of all attachment are in false identification. Essentially we are pure spirit—and that which is known as the Ātman. The Ātman is unborn and undying and of the nature of divine bliss itself. It is ever-perfect and ever-illumined. But due to ignorance we somehow get identified with our body and mind. After this identification has occurred the wants of the body and mind become *our* wants, though truly speaking, as the Ātman *we* can have no wants. When the wants of the body and mind have become our wants, whatever satisfies those wants, to that we become attached. 'This is I and this is mine' —thus we then cry.

Impurity of mind is nothing but a series of manifestations of this false identification, from which originate desires. Desires, when they are fed, grow and multiply. Thus increase our attachments too.

With the growth of spirituality our desires become fewer and fewer; hence our hankering for things, and the resulting bondage too, decrease. One who desires noth-

---

[2] *Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 70

ing but God, what will bind such a one?

In the ultimate analysis the test of spirituality is here: are we loving God more and more? If so, then we will necessarily love this world less and less. Ultimately when God-absorption is complete, one becomes totally oblivious of the world, in samādhi. After realization of God one may love the world, through God, but then he will never again be attached to this world.

(3) Spiritual growth will lead us to decrease of worldly possessions and not to their increase.

When an aspirant grows in detachment, things drop away from him. He does not long to clasp them. This happens most spontaneously. Therefore we find that the most highly evolved spiritual souls have no possessions at all. The Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head. The Buddha did not know where his next meal would come from. After his attainment of illumination, at the most earnest entreaty of his father who had grown very old, the Buddha once visited the capital, Kapilavastu, where in his early days he was nurtured as a prince. During this visit, the Buddha as is the practice with monks in India went about begging for food. When the report reached his father, it was too much for the old king to take. He came riding and protested that never had anyone in his royal line begged his food. 'But', replied the Buddha, 'everyone in *my* lineage has always begged his food', thereby indicating that he belonged to the lineage of the all-renouncing monks. So thoroughgoing and complete was his detachment and non-possessiveness.

Whatever we value, we possess. Whatever we possess, those things in their turn possess us too, and thus chain our mind. That is to say, we cannot give our mind completely to God, without which giving, spiritual growth is very difficult. Thus it is clear that non-possession is a mark of spiritual growth—but only that which is spontaneous, resulting from wholehearted seeking of higher things.

In the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

> 'The objects of the senses fall away from a man practising abstinence, but not the taste for them. But even the taste falls away when the Supreme is seen.'[3]

A profound test of spiritual growth, therefore, is the decrease of longing for things and the dropping away of the taste thereof—or desirelessness.

(4) Spiritual growth will be marked by abstinence and not by greed.

When we have our life in perspective, when we know for certain that this body and mind are our instruments for the purpose of attaining spiritual liberation, then we do not live to eat, but eat to live. Then we begin to practise abstinence—that is, moderation in eating, sleeping and recreation. Whatever is needed for keeping body and mind in proper shape for life's struggles, is done; but abstinence marks our every effort. We do not waste a grain of food. Our fare is very simple.

Gluttony is the vulgarity of the tongue. One may be practising physical purity, yet be a slave to the palate. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* that even one of the senses, if uncontrolled, can bring our spiritual ruin.[4]

One of the signs of making spiritual progress is that we incline to practise spiritual disciplines. Such practice requires a lot of energy; and this is to be obtained more by conservation than by excess intake of food. Unnecessary eating is a way not of getting more energy but of wasting what we have. If our stomach is too heavy we cannot think high thoughts, because more blood then circulates through the stomach than the brain. Therefore many of those who devote themselves exclusively to spiritual

---

3 ibid., II. 59

4 ibid., II. 67 and 63

practices eat only once a day, and practise occasional fasting. And fasts should always be accompanied by prayers.

But those who have to work hard in the world require to take proper food in adequate quantities. If they are sincere spiritual aspirants they will not indulge in overeating.

The self-control of a person who is making spiritual progress, manifests itself in his every effort. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa indicates in the *Gītā,* he becomes moderate in his eating. His words, mind and body bear the marked impress of self-restraint.

(5) Spiritual growth will lead us to content and not to discontent.

Spiritual practices open our understanding. They purify our mind, quench our desires. They rouse within us longing for God. Thus we learn to be at peace with the world. For we know that whatever may be our situation in life, it has come to us as a result of our deserving it by our karma. Hence it is wisdom to accept the situation, and not waste the mind all the time complaining.

Contentment does not mean that we do not do what is necessary for sane existence. The only thing is that we try to do so in a sane way. After doing our best, we leave the rest to the Lord. Anxiety, repentance and worry take leave of the person who is contented. Such a one does not covet things for their own sake.

Contentment, which is an undefinable satisfaction, does not depend on learning or possessions, but on attained inner purity and understanding. Moreover, contentment with one's outer situation can very well go hand in hand with great dissatisfaction with one's inner situation. St. Anthony, for instance, was contented with a little dry bread each day, but not with his spiritual progress. In fact, outer contentment is to be practised just so that we may really work for creating a spiritual dissatisfaction within ourselves.

The secret of contentment is that one does not desire to possess and accumulate things of the world, but one desires and longs only for God. One functions in the world without being tied by its bondages. Hence the degree of attained contentment is a mark of spiritual growth.

What really is the basis of contentment? When the aspirant practises spiritual disciplines, his mind gradually gets purified, and as a result his egotism is destroyed. Then he learns to depend on God's will: then he says, 'Not my will, but Thy will be done.' He actually sees that he lives in God's world and not God in his world. Then he finds a new coherence and justice in whatever happens, because the law of karma, like its Maker, never fails. This awareness supplies him with the spiritual and intellectual basis for contentment.

(6) Spiritual growth leads us to seek solitude and not company.

In the words of Plotinus, true spiritual life is the flight of the alone to the alone. Down the ages we have seen that seekers of God have always loved the solitude of caves and forests. In India the great spiritual heritage of the Hindus was largely the contribution of forest retreats.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā,* 'Through meditation the Ātman is realized.'[5] Meditation holds the key to all forms of spiritual experiences whatever may be one's religion or spiritual approach. But meditation is impossible without concentration of mind. Concentration of mind presupposes the removal of all distractions of mind. In a place full of noise or in the company of many people, encounter with one's inner Self or God is hardly possible. In the *Gītā,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses an epithet for the true aspirant: he is called one who delights in loneliness. In the traditional

---

[5] ibid., XIII. 24

spiritual practises of India, meditation in the solitude of forests, in caves or in cremation grounds at dead of night, has been widely resorted to.

We have however to remember that after the attainment of illumination, many saints may be seen to return to society, even hankering for human association. This they do and feel purely for helping people needing spiritual guidance. And one who is established in illumination always experiences the solitude of the cave even when he is in the market-place, because he is now grounded in detachment. He moves about as a witness.

Hence when we develop a longing for solitude, for diving deep within ourselves, for losing ourselves in meditation, or for practising intensive prayer—we may conclude that we are growing spiritually. From the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* we will remember how often the Master asked the disciples to go into solitude, to cry to God like a child.

Thus it is clear not only that love for solitude is a mark of spiritual progress, but also that if we practise the discipline of going into solitude, it will help our spiritual growth.[6]

(7) Spiritual growth will lead us to energy and not to slothfulness.

Patañjali, the great teacher of yoga, says in his Yoga-aphorisms that success in yoga is speedy for the extremely energetic.[7]

With spiritual growth, again, one does manifest energy.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* that such a person becomes endowed with great fortitude and enthusiasm for all that is good and conducive to welfare.

A basic reason why spiritual growth leads to the manifestation of energy is this: Practice of spiritual disciplines leads to the control of mind and attainment of purity. Purity leads to continence. Continence stops much wastage of physical energy. The more continent one is, the greater his spiritual growth. A perfectly continent person alone can realize the Absolute.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of a spiritually grown up person as established in the vow of continence. The foundation of spiritual life cannot be properly laid without the practice of continence. Even those who are married and yet want to lead a spiritual life, are advised by all the great religions to practise restraint, though they have not chosen to live absolutely continent lives. Sri Ramakrishna says that after the birth of two or three children, married people should live together more like spiritual comrades than as husband and wife.

A truly spiritual person is an embodiment of energy. There is no end to his energy supply. Spiritual growth does not lead one to slothfulness. Sloth is *tamas* (inertia). It is not spirituality.

Until and unless we transcend body-consciousness, we cannot have spiritual experience. Without practising continence we cannot transcend body-consciousness. That is why the practice of continence is emphasized.

(8) Spiritual growth leads to delight in good and not to delight in evil.

Who delights in the evil? Who delights in that which causes injury to other beings? Obviously not he who is trying to progress spiritually. He who has awakened spiritually constantly prays to the Lord that he may see with his eyes what is good, hear with his ears what is good. He prays that he and all beings may be activated by noble thoughts and saved from all forms of evil.

When consummation of spiritual life is

---

[6] *Cf. Prabuddha Bharata,* Vol. 79 (1974), p. 459: '...what are signs of progress in those who have attained, can be looked upon as spiritual disciplines for attaining...'

[7] *Yoga-sūtras,* I. 21

attained one sees all in the Self and the Self in all. Hence whatever is evil, whatever causes suffering in the world, he cannot delight in. But whatever is good and conducive to welfare delights his heart. Therefore, when we find ourselves delighting in whatever is good and avoiding spontaneously whatever is evil, we may conclude that we are growing spiritually.

## II

In the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches that when one grows spiritually one comes to manifest what He calls divine qualities. In the sixteenth chapter He gives a definitive list of these qualities:

(1) fearlessness, (2) purity of heart, (3) steadfastness in the yoga of wisdom, (4) charity, (5) self-restraint, (6) sacrifice, (7) study of the scriptures, (8) austerity, (9) straightforwardness, (10) non-injury, (11) truthfulness, (12) absence of anger, (13) renunciation, (14) peacefulness, (15) aversion to slander, (16) compassion to living beings, (17) non-covetousness, (18) gentleness, (19) modesty, (20) absence of fickleness, (21) courage, (22) forgiveness, (23) fortitude, (24) purity, (25) absence of malice and pride.

The more we manifest these qualities in ourselves, the more we may be said to have grown spiritually.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa next teaches that another sign of spiritual growth is that the demoniac qualities will leave us altogether. Hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, wrath, harshness and ignorance—these are the demoniac qualities.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa further teaches[8] that when a person is truly established in spirituality he is not shaken by the gravest of miseries. Thus life's pairs of opposites—pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, gain or loss—do not disturb his balance.

[8] *Gītā*, VI. 22

## III

Sri Ramakrishna directly or by implication teaches that there are various signs by which we can test our spiritual growth:

(1) A man of spirituality has no doubts in regard to the goal of life. He wholeheartedly believes that God-realization is the ultimate objective of life.

(2) Having known this he does not waste any time. He has an abiding sense of the essential. Hence he gives up all vain disputations and plunges headlong in search of God.

(3) He has certainty of faith: he believes that God *is*. Only because of his own impurities is he not able to see Him.

(4) Though he may not have yet seen God, he loves God. He longs for Him. He prays to Him for love and devotion and nothing else. He sheds tears for God.

(5) He loves to repeat God's name, and sing His glories.

(6) He loves to associate with those who love God.

(7) He is never dismayed by any difficulties. He shuns despondency.

(8) He discriminates between the real and the unreal and renounces the unreal.

(9) If living in the world, he does not consider his household to be his permanent place. Though loving his family and friends, he cultivates an inner detachment.

(10) Yet his love spreads out to all. He is moved to pity wherever he sees misery or injury. He is happy wherever there is happiness.

## IV

Swami Vivekananda teaches that one of the marks of spiritual growth is the attainment of inner strength. Growing spiritually will make a person progressively stronger. Weakness and true spirituality cannot coexist.

This strength comes from the awareness of the divinity and immortality of the

Ātman—or of one's inalienable relationship with God.

One's spiritual growth will also be commensurate with one's growth in purity, fearlessness, and selflessness.

According to Swami Vivekananda, as also taught in the *Gītā,* a spiritually grown person may well engage himself lovingly in what Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls the beneficent services to mankind.

V

Such are some of the surest tests of spiritual growth.

If by such tests we find ourselves lacking, we must closely examine our inner situation. Maybe we shall somehow think ourselves growing in spirituality. But it is a terrible thing to be complacent in spiritual life.

For every struggling soul there is a special need to be vigilant and prayerful.

To be sure that we are not fooling ourselves, we all will do well to practise the following teaching of Swami Brahmananda, one of the great disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and the prayer taught therein. It can very well take care of our entire need in this regard:

> 'Surrender yourself whole-heartedly to God. Pray constantly with a pure sincere heart: "O Lord, I do not know what is good and what is bad for me. I am entirely dependent on you. Grant me what I most need for the spiritual life. Take me along the path which will lead me to the greatest good. Give me the faith and strength constantly to remember you and meditate on you."'[9]

This is an important prayer and teaching, which can do us great good when sincerely practised.

In the ultimate analysis, however, the truest test of spiritual growth is that we are just not bothered by any idea of testing our own spirituality. That amount of mind and energy which we would have to give for testing, we would rather give to thinking of God. When we really love God, we are not in the least worried as to what that love will make of us. We love God and we want to love Him more. We get immersed in that love and do not think of testing our spiritual growth.

Not I, the growing one, but God, the one towards whom I am growing, becomes our focal point of concern when we are really growing spiritually.

This then is the test to end all tests: complete consecration, plunging in without count or stint and with total love. That is what all the saints have taught.

---

[9] Swami Prabhavananda: *The Eternal Companion* (Vedanta Press, Hollywood California, 1947), p. 123

# GLIMPSES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

'Do you see a light when you fall asleep ?' asked the holy man.

'Yes, I do. Doesn't everyone ? ' replied the boy in a voice filled with wonder.

It was soon after they had first met that Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra this question, and his reply provided the Master with a deep insight into the past, the nature, and the destiny of this remarkable youngster who would later become Swami Vivekananda. In his later years he himself described this supernormal faculty:

> 'From the earliest times that I can remember, I used to see a marvellous point of light between my eyebrows as soon as I shut my eyes to go to sleep, and I used to watch its various changes with great attention.... That marvellous point of light would change colours and get bigger and bigger until it took the form of a ball; finally it would burst and cover my body from head to foot with white liquid light. As soon as that happened, I would lose outer consciousness and fall asleep. I used to believe that was the way everybody went to sleep. Then, when I grew older and began to practise meditation, that point of light would appear to me as soon as I closed my eyes, and I'd concentrate upon it....'[1]

Sri Ramakrishna knew that this sort of vision indicated a remarkable spiritual past —especially a habit of meditation derived from previous lives. It further confirmed his original intuitive recognition of Narendra's potential greatness and power.

Swami Vivekananda's life story is that of a phenomenon. He was an ideal yogi and monk, teacher and leader, mystic and ascetic, worker and philosopher. He was capable of the most exalted devotion, possessed of the highest knowledge, and a dedicated humanist. He was a musician and orator *par excellence*, and an accomplished athlete. In Vivekananda one catches a glimpse of the perfect man. His guru Sri Ramakrishna said about him: 'Naren is a [great soul] Nityasiddha, perfect in realization... an adept in meditation.... He is always cutting to pieces the veils of Maya by the sword of knowledge. The inscrutable Maya can never bring him under Her control.'[2]

The true nature of his exceptional disciple had already been revealed to Sri Ramakrishna in several visions, and one of them he described thus:

> '"One day I found that my mind was soaring high in Samadhi along a luminous path.... As it ascended higher and higher I found on both sides of the way ideal forms of gods and goddesses. The mind then reached the outer limits of that region, where a luminous barrier separated the sphere of relative existence from that of the Absolute. Crossing that barrier, the mind entered the transcendental realm, where no corporeal being was visible ... but ... the next moment I found seven venerable sages seated there in Samadhi. It occurred to me that these sages must have surpassed not only men but even the gods in knowledge and holiness, in renunciation and love. Lost in admiration I was reflecting on their greatness, when I saw a portion of that undifferentiated luminous region condense into the form of a divine child. The child came to one of the sages, tenderly clasped his neck with his lovely little arms, and addressing him in sweet voice attempted to drag his mind down from the state of Samadhi. The magic touch roused the

---

1 Christopher Isherwood: *Ramakrishna And His Disciples* (Methuen & Co., 11 New Fetter Lane, London E.C.4, 1965), p. 188

2 His Eastern and Western Disciples: *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1949), p. 62

> sage from his superconscious state, and he fixed his unmoving, half-open gaze upon that wonderful child.... In great joy the strange child said to him, 'I am going down. You too must go with me.' The sage remained mute but his tender look expressed his assent.... No sooner had I seen Naren than I recognized him to be that sage." Subsequent inquiry elicited from Sri Ramakrisnna the fact that the divine child was none other than himself.'[3]

Only Sri Ramakrishna, the god-man, could bring that eternal sage immersed in samādhi, down for a time to this world to destroy narrowness and ignorance and raise man back towards God.

Vivekananda had been born on 12 January 1863, in Calcutta. From the beginning he was a precocious boy of exceptional energy. Beyond his hearty enthusiasm for all the ordinary games and sports of childhood, he was one of those rare children whose favourite play is meditation. So as early morning indicates the coming day, Vivekananda's earliest years point towards the glory of his later life.

Once he was meditating with his playmates when a cobra appeared. The other boys were frightened and, shouting a warning to him, ran away. But Narendra remained motionless, and the cobra after lingering about for a while crawled away. Later Naren told his parents: 'I knew nothing of the snake or anything else. I was feeling inexpressible joy.'

At the age of fifteen he experienced spiritual ecstasy. He was journeying with his family to Raipur in Central India, and part of the trip had to be made in a bullock cart. On that particular day the air was crisp and clear; the trees and creepers were covered with green leaves and many-coloured blossoms; birds of brilliant plumage warbled in the woods. The cart was moving along a narrow pass where the lofty peaks rising on the two sides almost touched each other. Narendra's eyes spied a large beehive in the cleft of a giant cliff. It must have been there a very long time. Suddenly his mind was filled with awe and reverence for the Divine Providence and he lost outer consciousness.[4] Perhaps this was the first time that his powerful imagination had helped him to ascend into the realm of the superconscious.

Vivekananda was tremendously attracted to the Buddha. 'Such a fearless search for truth and such love for every living being the world has never seen,' he said once.[5] And again, 'And he did not merely talk; he was ready to give up his own life for the world ... the service not only of all men but of all living things—a love which did not care for anything except to find a way of release from suffering for all beings.'[6]

Once during his days as a student, Vivekananda had a vision of the Buddha which he related thus:

> 'While at school one night I was meditating within closed doors and had a fairly deep concentration of mind. How long I meditated in that way, I cannot say. It was over, and I still kept my seat, when from the southern wall of that room a luminous figure stepped out and stood in front of me.... It was the figure of a Sannyasin absolutely calm, shaven-headed, and staff and kamandalu (water-bowl) in hand. He gazed at me for some time, and seemed as if he would address me. I too gazed at him in speechless wonder. Then a kind of fright seized me, I opened the door and hurried out of the room. Then it struck me that it was foolish of me to run away like that, that perhaps he might say something to me. But I have never met that figure since....

---

[3] ibid., p. 50

[4] *vide* Swami Nikhilananda: *Vivekananda—A Biography* (Advaita Ashrama, 1964), p. 9; also *Life*, pp. 20-1

[5] *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama), Vol. VII (1958), p. 59

[6] ibid., Vol. VIII (1959), pp. 98, 100

I now think it was the Lord Buddha whom I saw.'[7]

But Sri Ramakrishna by his wonderful touch, at one of their first meetings, gave Narendra a taste of transcendental consciousness, banishing duality from his mind. Generally the guru helps his disciple to attain samādhi, as the goal of life; but when Naren asked to remain immersed in samādhi for three or four days at a stretch, breaking it only for food, Sri Ramakrishna actually scolded him: 'Shame on you! You are asking for such an insignificant thing. I thought you would be like a big banyan tree, and that thousands of people would rest in your shade. But now I see that you are seeking your own liberation.' Thus scolded Narendra shed profuse tears. He realized the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna's heart.[8]

At the Cossipore garden house Vivekananda did however experience *nirvikalpa-samādhi*—the supreme realization of Vedānta as well as of Yoga. One evening while he was meditating with the elder Gopal, a brother-disciple, he felt as if a light had been placed behind his head. This light became more and more intense, and then he passed beyond all relativity and was lost in the Absolute. When he regained a little consciousness of the world, he was aware only of his head, but not his body. He cried out, 'Gopal-Da, where is my body?' 'Here it is, Naren,' answered Gopal, trying to reassure him. But when that failed to convince him, Gopal was terrified and hastened to inform Sri Ramakrishna, who only said: 'Let him stay in that state for a while! He has teased me long enough for it.'

After a long time Vivekananda returned to normal consciousness. An ineffable peace and joy filled his heart and mind. He came to the Master, who told him: 'Now the Divine Mother has shown you all. But this realization of yours shall be locked up for the present, and the key will remain with me. When you have finished doing Mother's work, this treasure will again be yours.'

Another interesting episode of this period was told by Girish Chandra Ghosh, a householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. One day Vivekananda and Girish sat under a tree to meditate. There were mosquitoes without number, which disturbed Girish so much that he became restless. On opening his eyes he was amazed to see that Vivekananda's body was covered as if with a dark blanket, so great was the number of mosquitoes on him. But he was quite unconscious of their presence and had no recollection of them when he returned to normal consciousness.

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda travelled all over India as an itinerant monk. He wanted to find a secluded place where he could live alone, absorbed in the contemplation of god. At this time the great words of the Buddha were guiding him: 'Even as the lion not trembling at noises even as the wind, not caught in a net: even as the lotus-leaf untouched by the water—so do thou wander alone like the rhinoceros!' But the Divine Providence had further plans for him, and he could not escape his destiny. As he was to write later: 'Nothing in my whole life ever so filled me with the sense of work to be done. It was as if I were *thrown out* from that life in caves to wander to and fro in the plains below.'

One day during his travels in the Himalayas he sat to meditate under a peepul tree by the side of a stream. There he realized the oneness of the universe and man; man is a universe in miniature. He realized that all that exists in the universe also exists in the body and further, that the whole universe can be found contained in a single

---

[7] ibid., Vol. VII, p. 123
[8] Nikhilananda, op. cit., pp. 58-9

atom. He jotted down this experience in a notebook and told his brother-disciple and companion Swami Akhandananda: 'Today I solved a difficult problem of human life. It was revealed to me that the macrocosm and the microcosm are guided by the same principle.' [9]

The consciousness of his world-mission was always urging him forward; and on 31 May 1893 Vivekananda began his journey to Chicago to take part in the Parliament of Religions as a representative of Hinduism. But his message was so universal that one eye-witness commented, 'Vivekananda was the representative of all the religions of the world.' He proclaimed the supreme message of Vedānta: 'Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature.'

For the next three years he travelled extensively in the United States and in many European countries too. Yet the active life of the West could not disturb his meditation. In Vivekananda we find the two divergent currents of action and meditation flowing harmoniously, never interfering with each other.

Having become nearly exhausted by the uninterrupted work of public lecturing and classes, in the beginning of June 1895 the Swami accepted an invitation from Mr. Francis Leggett to go to Percy, New Hampshire, for a period of rest in the silence of the pine woods. Here also he experienced *nirvikalpa-samādhi.* And in a letter from Percy dated 7 June 1895 he wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull:

> 'This is one of the most beautiful spots I have ever seen. Imagine a lake, surrounded with hills covered with a huge forest, with nobody but ourselves. So lovely, so quiet, so restful! And you may imagine how glad I am to be here after the bustle of cities.
> 'It gives me a new lease of life to be here. I go into the forest alone and read my Gita and am quite happy. I will leave this place in about ten days and go to the Thousand Island Park. I will meditate by the hour there and be all alone to myself. The very idea is ennobling.' [10]

In Indian art and architecture the Buddha, the Enlightened One, has been depicted as the embodiment of meditation. Buddhahood is a state of realization, of supreme enlightenment. This same lofty ideal can be glimpsed in Swami Vivekananda, among many other instances, in the account by Mrs. Mary Funke, one of his disciples:

> 'The last day [at Thousand Island Park] has been a very wonderful and precious one. This morning...he asked Christine and me to take a walk, as he wished to be alone with us. We went up a hill about half a mile away. All was woods and solitude. Finally he selected a low-branched tree, and we sat under the low-spreading branches. Instead of the expected talk, he suddenly said, "Now we will meditate. We shall be like Buddha under the Bo-tree." He seemed to turn to bronze, so still was he. Then a thunderstorm came up and it poured. He never noticed it. I raised my umbrella and protected him as much as possible. Completely absorbed in his meditation, he was oblivious of everything. Soon we heard shouts in the distance. The others had come out after us with rain-coats and umbrellas. Swamiji looked around regretfully, for we *had* to go, and said, "Once more am I in Calcutta in the rains."' [11]

One must not forget that Vivekananda, as Sri Ramakrishna had said, was not an ordinary man, but *nitya-siddha,* one who is perfect even before birth; an Īśvarakoti or special messenger of God, born on earth

---

9 *vide* ibid., p. 86

10 *The Complete Works,* Vol. VI (1963), p. 309

11 *Life,* p. 368

to fulfil a divine mission. Vivekananda himself said, 'I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God.'

All through his life he practised concentration so much that it became a part of him. In the West he had often to control this precious habit. Sister Nivedita tells us:

> 'On one occasion, teaching a New York class to meditate, it was found at the end that he could not be brought back to consciousness, and one by one, his students stole quietly away. But he was deeply mortified when he knew what had happened, and never risked its repetition. Meditating in private, with one or two, he would give a word, by which he could be recalled.' [12]

While staying at Camp Irving in Northern California, one morning Swamiji found Shanti (Mrs. Hansbrough) in the kitchen preparing food when it was time for his morning class. 'Aren't you coming in to meditate?' he asked. Shanti replied that she had neglected to plan her work properly, so now she had to stay in the kitchen. Swamiji said: 'Well, never mind. Our Master said you could leave meditation for service. All right, I will meditate for you.' Shanti said later, 'All through the class I felt he really was meditating for me.' [13]

With the approaching end of his mission and his early life, Vivekananda realized more clearly how like a stage this world is. His eyes were now looking more than ever at the light of another world. Most vividly and touchingly did he express his glimpses of that world and his longing to return there, in his letter of 18 April 1900 from California to Miss Josephine MacLeod:

> 'Work is always difficult; pray for me, Joe, that my works stop for ever and my whole soul be absorbed in Mother. Her works, She knows....
> 'I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won. I have bundled my things and am waiting for the great deliverer.
> '"Shiva, O Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore!"
> 'After all, Joe, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works and activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions. Now I again hear his voice, the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking —love dying, work becoming tasteless —the glamour is off life. Only the voice of the Master calling. —"I come Lord, I come,"— "Let the dead bury the dead, follow thou Me." "I come, my beloved Lord, I come."
> 'Yes, I come. Nirvana is before me. I feel it at times—the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath....
> 'Oh, it is so calm!' [14]

Sri Ramakrishna had prophesied that Narendra would merge in *nirvikalpa-samādhi* at the end of his work, when he realized who and what he really was. One day at Belur Math shortly before the end when a brother-disciple asked him casually, 'Do you know yet who you are, Swamiji?' he was awed into silence by the unexpected reply, 'Yes, I know now.'

Vivekananda's exit from the world was as wonderful as his entry into it. After consulting an almanac, he chose an auspicious day, the fourth of July 1902, to end his earthly play. He meditated for three hours that morning, and in the afternoon conducted a class on Sanskrit grammar and Vedanta philosophy for the young monks, after which he had a long walk with one of his brother-disciples, while telling him of plans for the work of the Order.

---

12 *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 5 Nivedita Lane, Calcutta 3, 1967), Vol. I, p. 254

13 *vide* Marie Louise Burke: *Swami Vivekananda—His Second Visit to the West: New Discoveries* (Advaita Ashrama, 1973), p. 378

14 *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI, pp. 431-3

Of his life's final moments, Sister Nivedita has left this account: 'On his return from this walk, the bell was ringing for even-song, and he went to his own room, and sat down facing towards the Ganges, to meditate. It was the last time. Then on the wings of that meditation, his spirit soared whence there could be no return, and the body was left, like a folded vesture, on the earth.' [15]

Swami Vivekananda's last words, spoken to a monastic disciple who was attending him, were: 'Wait and meditate till I call you.'

# SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—IV

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

There is a great difference between theory and realization. Advaita may appeal to us as a philosophy; the path of *jñāna* (knowledge) may appear attractive. But they are extremely difficult when we actually take up the practice. Beautiful ideas and magnificent speculations do not transform our life.

*

Find out where you stand. The vast majority need the help of symbols, routine prayer, and other concrete forms of discipline. They need a personal God to centre their feelings on. But even here we should maintain the higher attitude. Stress the point we have in common with the Divine. Is God a Christian, a Hindu, or a Buddhist? God is everywhere and can never be limited to any religion or doctrine or church—whatever fanatics and bigots may say. Creeds and dogmas are props, crutches. They should be understood as such. We should accept them as long as we need them. As Sri Ramakrishna has said: The sapling needs to be protected with a fence but when it grows into a tree, fencing becomes unnecessary. We should not for ever remain stuck to our initial position. Slowly rise above these limitations. The advanced aspirant should be able to establish direct contact with the Divine without the help of creeds and rituals

The great religious prophets are to be looked upon as supreme manifestations of the Divine. They stand for certain spiritual principles. But God is the Principle of all principles, the Ultimate Reality. If God is the ocean, these prophets are waves. They always retain ocean consciousness. We are only bubbles. For our little selves it may not be easy to attain ocean-consciousness. So let us realize our identity with the waves. And then, through these waves, let us realize our oneness with the ocean. The bubbles, the waves, and the ocean are all different in appearance, but as water they are all one.

*

Different creeds, dogmas, and religions must continue for a long time, as long as there are people who cannot do without them. But they should not be the cause of rivalry and division which sadly bedevil the various religions of the world. Let religious men of all communities and creeds realize that they are fellow travellers. There is no use quarrelling about whose path is correct. Infinite are the pathways to God. But they can be broadly classified, according to individual temperament, into four groups:

---

[15] Nivedita, op. cit., p. 266

1. The path of *bhakti*—of divine love and self-surrender
2. The path of *karma*—of service and self-sacrifice
3. The path of *yoga*—of meditation and self-control
4. The path of *jñāna*—of knowledge and self-analysis

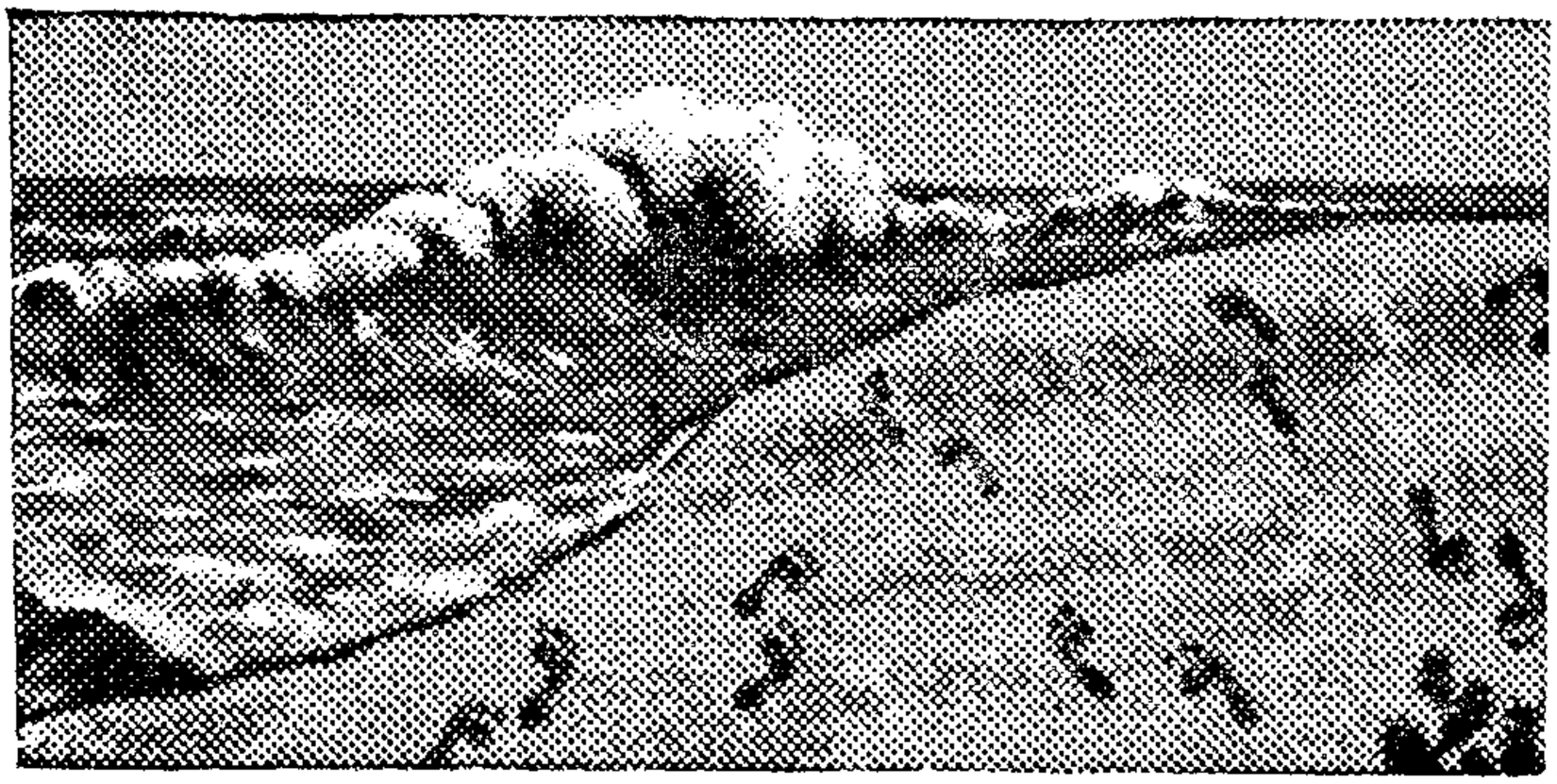
All religions contain some elements of all the four paths though there may be differences in the importance given to one or the other. All that the real aspirant has to do is to know where he stands, and how to reach the goal. In religious life there is room enough for all temperaments. One type cannot be changed into the other. Everyone must follow the law of his own being. A narrow religious view creates trouble and takes people away from the Truth. It is a serious mistake to force all individuals into one path. What is most important is reaching the goal, realization of God, whatever the path followed. Everything else is secondary. As Swami Vivekananda has repeatedly said: religion is realization. One should experience God. In fact, this is one of the main teachings of Vedānta.

*

The human mind is a synthetic whole. Thinking, feeling, and willing are its different functions. People vary according to the predominance of one or the other of these functions in them. Some people are intellectuals, comparatively unruffled by emotions. Others are highly mercurial, highly emotional. Still others are dynamic—always busy with this or that work. The ideal man is one who is equally well developed in intellect, emotions and will-power. Every man must try to approximate to this ideal. Individual differences in temperament may be difficult at first to overcome, and each man should follow the path best suited to his temperament. But it is important that every man should be able to co-ordinate the functions of all the faculties—intellect, emotions, and will—even though they are found in different proportions. This is the first important step in spiritual life—the ability to co-ordinate the different faculties of one's mind. Without it, spiritual life is futile. A perfect balance among all the faculties fully developed is the ideal for all. But even if one falls short of this ideal, one should at least try to co-ordinate the various functions of one's mind and establish a certain amount of harmony within. There should be no conflict between reasoning and feeling, or between either of these and one's actions.

*

Turn to the inner Light with your whole mind. Intensify your spiritual life. When there is a strong demand, aspiration, the supply will come. There is always a Divine Guide. When we come in touch with His light, our false conceptions will disappear; when we feel the touch of His love, our false emotions die down; when our will comes in touch with His Will, we become channels for the flow of His power. Then our pettiness and fanaticism will vanish leaving the radiance of supreme peace in us. The ego is the greatest barrier between the soul and God. It clouds the vision of the Truth and creates division and bigotry in religion. We must somehow bring the ego in touch with the Divine and dissolve it. Or, at least, make the Divine its centre. When at last, after sincere striving, we reach the Divine, all our previous attempts to limit God to some special creed or religion will appear as they really are: expressions of our ignorance and spiritual blindness.



# HUMAN TRENDS

## BRAZIL'S UNIVERSITIES GO TO THE PEOPLE

In most developing countries, perhaps including India, university students are considered an elite group, being trained for positions of leadership, and traditionally far removed from the poverty, ignorance and disease that afflict many of their countrymen. But Brazil has broken with this tradition. Since 1966, two training-and-work programs have found intense popular appeal, in sending final-year university students into two of the most notably depressed areas of the country, to learn of the vast economic and social problems of the land, while offering professional manpower in the effort to overcome these.

The first of the two programs, launched in 1966 by the University of Rio Grande do Norte, in Natal, is known as CRUTAC, the acronym for its Brazilian name, translated as Rural Centre for University Training and Community Action. It was planned on a long-term basis, to serve a large poverty-stricken area immediately adjoining the city; and in 1969 a second CRUTAC was started by the University of Pernambuco; four other northeastern universities were recently organizing programs. These serve mainly areas where repeated droughts have made life precarious and harsh; here the young future professionals must test their abilities under primitive conditions, and try to build up community services on a permanent basis. At the Natal University, at least, these training periods have become part of the final-year's program, and for medical students count as part of their internship. Through practical necessity, many of the working-groups have organized into 'teams' representing the most needed professions: doctors, dentists, social workers, engineers, teachers, and lawyers.

Begun in 1967, 'Projeto Rondon', named after the noted Brazilian explorer Candido Mariano Da Silva Rondon, has showed a different pattern: bringing the resources and skills of universities in the richer areas of Southeast Brazil, to communities in the disease-infested Rain Forests of the vast Amazon River valley to the West and North. Originally this was a rather spontaneous series of air-flights with groups of about 25 students, staying only for one month each during vacation-periods. Their most rewarding work was at first medical, with dramatic results among the malaria-victims especially; but engineers and agriculturalists began farther-reaching works, and geologists, topographists, etc. began basic studies of the land and its resources. From the start, the students' enthusiasm and satisfaction in the work was infectious; and for the many who were hostile to the military regime, the *projeto* offered possibilities of

cooperative effort where differences could be at least temporarily minimized. Soon, two programs (one month each) were organized during the annual summer-vacations (Jan.-Feb.) and during the first six years, nearly 40,000 volunteers have worked in Projeto Rondon.

Moreover it soon became clear that the original intermittent, (sporadic ?) series of programs was not enough. Student projects and research had to be dropped after thirty days ; and aside from the acute medical treatments given, they were usually unfinished. And naturally, the local people who so eagerly welcomed the help, felt greatly let down when the brief months were over. Thus a steadily-growing number of '*campi avancados*' has been set up—permanent, university-directed campus outposts, some of them over 2,000 miles from the parent-university. These are manned year round by rotating groups of faculty and students who stay for thirty days and receive academic credit for the experience. Usually less than 25 in number, the groups tend to be made up of small 'teams' (e.g., one professor and two students) in each of several fields. All students are volunteers ; faculty members are 'invited' to join. Interest in the plan continues so high that, on last information, the number of volunteers is usually four times that of the places available. Careful selection is therefore made, partly on basis of the students' showing during the Basic Training period (minimum of 32 hours, up to 90 hours !) before leaving the University precincts. As further indication of the appeal of the Projeto, it is noteworthy that five of the more recent centres have been set up in the impoverished areas in the North-east, even though the major effort still is directed to the Amazon valley to the West.

A typical *campus avancado* is that of Porto Velho, the first site to be tackled in 1967, and although a small township, is the capital of the territory of Rondonia, whose population of 120,000, largely nomadic, is scattered over an area of tropical rain-forest which is approximately that of West Germany. This *campus* is fostered by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, 1900 miles to the southeast. Its task is presently to raise the schooling of the children ; to demonstrate the strength-giving value of easily-available nutritious foods (fish, vegetables, fruits) when added to the local traditional diet of black beans and rice ; and to train in all other aspects of health promotion. A typical group at the *campus* included the Director, twelve senior students of medicine, dentistry, nursing, teaching, veterinary medicine and agronomy, one professor in each of these fields, and a penologist sent at request of the territorial government to survey the local penal systems. The six 'teams' worked at different spots in the township, such as Childcare Centre, Normal School, small Dental Centre, etc. ; while the veterinarians and agronomists offered much-needed advice and training in their fields, since this is a fine cattle-breeding area to which large herds are being sent from outside.

Another *campus avancado* for which more recent data are available to us is that of Cruzeiro Do Sul—the furthest west of all, in the State of Acre, which borders on Peru. Begun in February, 1971, sponsored by the Campinas State University (Catholic), it serves an area of over 31,000 sq. km. with 45,000 inhabitants of whom 12,000 live in the town. It is still reached only by boat or airplane, though highways are under construction. The *campus* has its own house, 4 km. from the town, with facilities for 15 men and 15 women students. Planning of projects and selection of volunteers is handled by a 'University Task Group' of teachers from Campinas State University plus the Catholic University of Campinas. Besides the fields of work noted previously,

projects have already included Economists, Domestic Scientists, Biologists, Physical Educationists, and Highways Engineers. Within its first five years it has received 45 groups of students, at approximately monthly intervals, averaging 20 students each. Activities to date include: (1) *Health*: Physical examination of 249 school children; emergency attendance on 150 patients in the local Hospital; data-taking as to existing health resources. (2) *Nursing*: courses to train women to work as assistants in the Hospital; courses for teachers of Nursing; teaching hygiene and sanitation to Primary School children; teaching mothers about care of babies; distribution of relevant literature. (3) *Education*: Group-discussions with local teachers about recent methods of teaching, administration, planning, etc. (4) *Agronomy*: data-taking about regional plants; collection of samples of soils and water for study elsewhere; similar collection of seeds of important crops; planning of an Experimental Station. (5) *Food Technology*: data-taking about regional fruit trees; courses in nutrition, making of bread, processing of cold drinks, etc. (6) *Economy and Sociology*: collecting data on the municipality's budgets and debts, vital statistics on the inhabitants; planning of investments. *Social Work*; collecting data on the local organizations, about landowners, commercial establishments, hotels, etc., and about conditions of employees; helping villagers to prepare civil documents; organizing community activities and meetings; courses for mothers in childcare and care of pregnancy. (7) *Engineering*: collecting data on electric power-distribution, on lay-out of streets of the town, and surveying of properties; training of workers from the Electric Station .... of the town

Although all the *campi avancados* have followed the basic principles of voluntary work by senior university students in impoverished areas, with minimal if any political motivations, with practical observation and learning themselves as integral part of their education,—still the individual *campi* necessarily focus on different local problems. For instance, one of them brings in teaching teams who give an eighteen-month university-level course for secondary school teachers from all over Amazonas State. Another runs a model farm in the northernmost part of Brazil.

Again, though CRUTAC and Projeto Rondon began so close in time and with such similar motivation, obvious differences are above-suggested: the former was conceived as a long-range university project in its own 'back-yard', building rural community services in a continuing system. As mentioned, these work-periods have become integral parts of the university program in at least one of the Centres. Projeto Rondon began spontaneously, with little formal planning; and has only gradually—though on a more dramatically large scale—worked out a long-range program. In this process it has almost inevitably been offered Government help, and in several areas this is notable. In June 1968, the Federal Government set up the 'Grupo de Trabalho Projeto Rondon', with other related bodies later on, in the Ministries of Education and Culture, of the Interior, especially related to vocational training, employment markets, etc. Recently, government helped set up a plan for the students to earn a small income from the Rondon project's work—presumably for 'overtime' work. So far, 13,000 students have been thus helped, in the last two years. Other recent developments include provision for settlement of some of the students as permanent citizens of the community which they had served long enough to be attracted to the site; again in the Universities themselves, special attention is being given to students coming from the underdeveloped areas.

# NOTES AND COMMENTS

## IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947), and Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras, 1956). References: *Gospel*: No. 1, p. 884; No. 3, p. 22; No. 4, p. 881; No. 5, p. 879; No. 6, p. 690; No. 7, p. 305. *Great Master*:. No. 2, pp. 341-2; No. 8, pp. 433-4.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works,* Vol. VI (1963), pp. 14-15.

When Swami Vivekananda passed away in the evening of 4 July 1902, his age was thirty-nine years, five months, and twenty-four days. His Master used to say that Swamiji would be short-lived, and Swamiji himself would often say that he would never live to see forty. But he had given his message and accomplished his mission even during this short span of life. His manner of passing away was as glorious and significant as his life, which was full of events. The Editorial of the month is an attempt to unravel the deep implications of the events of the last day of Swamiji's earthly life. We hope that our readers will welcome these 'Reflections' this month, when Swamiji's followers will be contemplating the holy event of his *mahāsamādhi*.

It is rather a hard task to expound and interpret in clear and simple language the fundamental concepts of Advaita Vedānta, especially to foreign audiences. Among those exceptional persons who have had such a facility, Swami Ashokananda is notable. Those of our readers who have cared to go through his articles already published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* in recent years, will probably agree with us. In 'God and the Other God' we get a beautiful exposition of the concept of Māyā which in other words has been summarized as 'name and form'. The second part of this article will be published in our next issue.

The text of this article was originally delivered as a lecture on 16 April 1950 at the Old Temple, Vedanta Society of Northern California, in San Francisco.

In his Essay on Applied Religion, this month Swami Budhananda discusses the very important subject—from the standpoint of spiritual aspirants—of the tests by which one can check whether one is progressing spiritually or not. Though mainly based on a saying of the Buddha, the discussion incorporates the opinions of other saints and prophets. Our readers may also consult with further benefit a similar essay by the Author in our issue of December 1974: 'Signs of Spiritual Progress and Fulfilment', which was the concluding essay of the series 'On Making Spiritual Progress'.

People who look upon Swami Vivekananda only as a great leader, worker, or organizer, miss much of his deeper aspects—his mystical nature. He was as great a contemplative as a worker. In fact, his activities and immensely powerful influence, issued directly from his deep meditations and realizations. In 'Glimpses of Swami Vivekananda', Swami Chetanananda while recounting many incidents of Swamiji's life, tries to show how the apparently contradictory streams of action and contemplation blended harmoniously in him. The author is an Assistant Minister at the Vedanta Society of Southern California (U.S.A.)

We are accustomed to hear phrases such as 'youth power', 'labour power', 'black power', and so forth. Oft-times these 'powers' tend to be more destructive than constructive. But the Brazilian Universities, by projecting the youth power for rural reconstruction and uplift, have shown how such powers can be made creative and constructive. 'Brazilian Universities Go to the People' is a write-up based on 'Brazil's Domestic Peace Corps', appearing in the *Saturday Review/World* dated 9 October, 1973, plus on ample data on the Rondon Project supplied by our Brazilian friends, Dr. and Mrs. Quivo Tahin, who are also devoted members of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Buenos Aires, Argentina. We hope that this coverage will supply some useful clues to political leaders and University heads in Asian and African countries where the resources of youth power are almost limitless and the need for rural service and amelioration is staggeringly acute.

---

# REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE UNITED NATIONS AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY—A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: By Dr. Krishan Prasad Saksena, Pub. by D. K. Publishing House, 73-B, Anand Nagar, Delhi-110035, 1974, pp. xii + 450, Price Rs. 75/- ($ 15.00)

Dr. K. P. Saksena, Smith-Mundt/Fulbright grantee (Ph.D. from New York University), was Adviser, Permanent Mission of India to the U.N.O. (1964-66, 1968-71). He was also a member of the Indian Delegation to six sessions of the U.N. General Assembly; Consultant, Division of Human Rights, U.N. Secretariat in 1967-68; and is presently Assoc. Professor, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

It seems quite possible that, as the blurb for the book states, 'this is probably the first time that the whole range of the U.N.'s political and security activity has been examined in depth in one book'. The most outstanding international case-histories have been discussed with reference to the all-important question of collective security, and we may agree with what the author seems to feel—that even though the establishment of collective security is by no means near at hand, there is still no alternative to it.

The book is most thoroughly documented and the author has usefully enriched it by his personal knowledge and experience of the actual operations at the U.N. The book has nine chapters, three appendices, an extensive 'select bibliography', and a useful index. The get-up and printing are good.

The volume is a solid contribution in this field of knowledge and is extremely readable because of its lucid exposition of the subject-matter. We recommend it to the scholarly world and lay readers alike.

Dr. Paresh Nath Mukherjee
*Head, History Department,*
*D. A. V. College,*
*Dehra Dun, U.P.*

SRI GITA SARAH (ESSENCE OF THE GITA): By M. S. Deshpande, pub. by Gramaseva Pratisthan, Manipal 576-119, 2nd edition 1974, pp. 1xxii + 49, Price not mentioned.

This pocket-edition of a selection from the *Bhagavad-gita* contains the 'essence' of this great book. The issue of a second edition itself proves its popularity and its usefulness to many spiritual aspirants. It is divided into (1) A General Introduction, and (2) the selected Texts with translations. The third chapter of Part I, entitled 'The Rationale', is excellent, and skilfully expounds the synthesis of all the yogas, which is the special contribution of the *Gita*. The translation of the verses into English in Part II is simple and lucid.

As regards the 'scale of values' (among the various yogas) mentioned on page xxix of Chapter One, the writer's analysis—like his selection of verses in Part II—is from the devotional point of view. In this view it seems not clearly shown that the path of complete self-surrender to the Lord, alone, can culminate in the realization of Brahman, the Supreme Self.

Again, the author cannot admit that the yoga of knowledge—repeatedly extolled in the *Gita*—though a very difficult path, leads also to the Supreme State.

On the whole this little book is well written. As Sri Ramakrishna says, 'You may eat a cake with icing either straight or sidewise, it will taste sweet either way'—so also, we are sure this new edition of the book will in general continue to be appreciated by readers.

SWAMI JYOTIRUPANANDA

A THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS: BY ARNOLD SCHULTZ, pub. by Philosophical Library, Inc., New York, 1973, pp. 527, Price $ 12.50.

The nature of consciousness has come to be of permanent interest to the thinkers of East and West alike. In India the Vedantic thinkers take consciousness as the very nature of the Reality (Atman and Brahman). The 'realistic' system of Nyaya on the other hand regards consciousness as an accidental attribute of the soul. In Europe, Descartes took thinking or consciousness as an indispensable condition of knowledge; Locke and Hume similarly admitted it to be a condition of experience; Kant's doctrine of *a priori* categories makes experience begin with a conscious application of categories. In the present century Gilbert Ryle, rejecting the long-accepted theory of Descartes, has developed a 'logical behaviourism'.

In the present book, Arnold Schultz breaks with the tradition of pure sensation, seeking a 'neurophysiological' interpretation of consciousness. Earlier, John Watson attempted to interpret consciousness as physiological rather than 'mental'; Schultz reaffirms that position and 'adds' what Watson seems to have refrained from discussing. He discusses the auditory and visual sensations in reflective consciousness, with a neurophysiological interpretation: he tries to see the world through vocalized sound and a concrete time. This audio-visual interpretation of consciousness seems to be the outcome of the piano-teacher in Schultz, making him to see consciousness as primarily a motor discharge. He defines it in terms of the brain and nervous system.

In Part One the author sets forth his theory of consciousness which he claims to be a spontaneous insight neglected by other writers. Proceeding to give logical support to his theory, he analyses in Part Two various nervous conditions that underlie the modes of thought. Part Three presents some notes towards a psychology of ethics, trying to show that the very mechanisms of consciousness provide the moral dualism of human behaviour.

The book seems the result of much study and reflection, presented in well-organised fashion.

DR. S. P. DUBEY,
*Reader, Dept. of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Philosophy, University of Jabalpur (M.P.)*

THE HOLY TRINITY: BY DR. G. T. GOPALAKRISHNA NAIDU, Published by Mercury Book Company, Coimbatore 1, 1974, pp. viii + 58, Price Rs. 2/-

The author gives brief accounts of the life and message of three women saints, namely, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, Mirabai, and Andal. He traces their common traits of dedication for the Divine, compassion for the suffering and distressed, and a total disregard of personal considerations. The pages where he discusses the spiritual austerities of Mother Sarada Devi and the revealing incidents in her life, after the departure of the Master, when she was guided by his Voice and Vision, are specially interesting for the student of mysticism.

SRI M. P. PANDIT
*Sri Aurobindo Ashrama, Pondicherry*

GOD IN AFRICA: BY MALCOLM J. MCVEIGH, pub. by Claude Stark, Inc., Cape Cod., Mass., 02670, 1974, pp. xix + 235, Price not stated.

In this exhaustive study of Dr Edwin Smith's understanding of the religion or religions among the various tribes in Africa and the contribution of Christianity to the evolution of the concept of God in that part of the world, the author sets right some of the wrong notions entertained by the earlier anthropologist (Dr. Smith). He analyses the faith of the tribes in an impersonal (or personal?) Power that is active in the universe, a Supreme God far above —'remote and absentee'—and a world of spirits, petty gods, in between. Their belief in reincarnation, communication between the physical world and the kingdom of the spirits, and ancestor-worship is presented with abundant illustrations. He concludes: 'That the Christian message has an appeal in Africa is apparent from its past and present success. But there are also danger signs on the horizon. Some years ago Roland Oliver warned of the possibility that Christianity might disintegrate at the centre while expanding at the circumference. That danger is still a reality. Much depends on the Church's willingness to assess the present

position of God in African Christianity and its ability to reorient its message; so that the God who revealed Himself fully in Jesus Christ will be able to speak in a new way to the deepest needs of the African heart.' (p. 182)

SRI M. P. PANDIT

THE CUP OF JAMSHID: BY MUHAMMAD DAUD RAHBAR, Translated from the author's original Urdu text by Claude Stark, Inc., Cape Cod, Mass. 02670, 1974, pp. xiv. + 199, Price $ 7.00.

Muhammad Daud Rahbar has written Ghazals in Urdu and here translated ninety of them into English. The Ghazal tradition is not unknown to India, as well as to Iran and Turkey. The Ghazal expresses despair, hope, and delight, and it is also the poetry of riddles. The Ghazals in this work deal with an ancient Persian Emperor called Jamshid, who had a cup in which he could find a reflection of the whole world. The translation is unmetrical and without rhymes. Yet the passages are eminently readable. The Ghazals in this volume reveal an insight into the trends of modern Urdu poetry. Yet, in Ghazal you never assert but exclaim.

DR. P. S. SASTRI, M.A., Ph.D.
*Professor and Head, Dept. of English, Nagpur University.*

## TAMIL—ENGLISH

GODA'S THE GARLAND OF SONGS: BY V. RAJAGOPALAN, Published by the Rajalakshmi Pathippakam, 3 Kondi Chetti Street, Madras 1, Pages viii + 84, Price Rs. 7.50.

These songs of *Thiruppavai,* imbued with deep devotion to God, are the verbal outpourings of mystical experiences of their author, Goda or Andal, a woman devotee of Lord Vishnu. The Sri-Vaishnavites of South India revere her as one among the twelve Alwars. An Alwar is one who plumbs God, or dives deep in God or godliness. In South India, especially in Tamil Nadu, these songs of Goda are the precious possessions of Vaishnava devotees. Every year during the month of Margazhi (Dec.-Jan.) the devotees sing these songs early in the morning to offer their prayers, and for warding off evil and acquiring virtue.

The translator has done a great service by rendering these songs into English verses of free style. Every verse in English is preceded by the text in Tamil. Elaborate notes and quotations to explain difficult words and phrases, are also given.

This book will prove to be of great use to the English-knowing people who have little or no opportunity to read *Thiruppavai* in the original.

SWAMI TANMAYANANDA

## SANSKRIT

GAYATRI MANTRA KOSA: COMPILED BY SADHU BRAHMANYAM, pub. by Sri Vaishnavi Trust, Madras 600062, 1974, pp. xiv + 103, Price Rs. 3.75.

This beautiful small book, with a fine cover-illustration of the goddess Vaishnavi appearing as Gayatri, and a brief Preface in Tamil, contains 333 *gayatri-mantras*, printed in bold Devanagari type. These *mantras* are grouped under different headings according to the deities invoked by them. These deities are Ganapati, Subrahmanya, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Devi, Deva, and Navagraha (the nine planets). Besides, some special *gayatri-mantras* are also included. In the Appendix, *Gayatri-sapa-vimochana* and *Gayatri-ashtottara-satanamavali* are given. The compiler has taken much pains to collect these *mantras* from various sources such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Tantras, Puranas, Puja-kalpa, and hymnal literature.

For the devotees, especially the worshippers of the Divine Mother, this book will be found to be much use.

SWAMI TANMAYANANDA

# NEWS AND REPORTS

## THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS, U. S. A.

REPORT: APRIL 1973—MARCH 1974

*Services*: Swami Satprakashananda conducted weekly services on Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings in the Society's chapel. Sundays he spoke on various religious and philosophical topics; Tuesdays he conducted meditation and expounded the *Bhagavad-gita*, questions being invited at the end. On special occasions devotional songs were sung; slides and coloured films were shown at times. The meetings were open to all. Groups from various churches as well as schools, colleges and universities, were often present. After services the Swami often met the students and visitors, and answered their questions. During *Summer recess*, the regular meetings were continued, with tape recordings of the appropriate discourses by the Swami. These recordings were also used by indivdual devotees, either in their homes or in the Chapel. *Monthly Discourses* were given by the Swami on the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, drawing on his personal knowledge of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples; and questions from the audience were answered.

*Anniversaries:* Birthdays of Sri Krishna, Buddha, Sankara, Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, and Swamis Brahmananda, Premananda and Sivananda, were observed with morning devotions in the shrine and special service in the Chapel. Special services were also held on Christmas, Good Friday, and at the time of Durga-puja.

*Guest Swamis:* On June 24th, Swamis Bhavyananda, head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, London, and Bhashyananda, head of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, spoke at the Sunday service. Swami Bhavyananda stayed at the Centre for a three-day visit. From June 26th to 28th, Swami Rudrananda, of Fiji visited the Centre, and spoke at the Tuesday service, on Sri Ramakrishna; he later answered questions about his work in Fiji. From August 20th to 26th, Swami Swahananda, head of the Vedanta Society of Berkeley, Calif., was guest of the Centre, and again briefly on the 31st. He spoke at the Tuesday service, August 21st, about the monastic life. Swami Aseshananda, head of the Vedanta Society of Portland, Oregon, visited the Centre from Sept. 5th to 8th, giving a special talk to the devotees on the 6th.

*Special Meetings:* Six groups came to the Chapel during this year, for special sessions during which the Swami answered their questions —usually written out—and on two occasions also gave a formal talk. Five were groups of students from High Schools or colleges, the sixth was a group of adults from Christian Life Community. At least five other groups of college students attended one or other of the regular services, usually after previous arrangement with the Swami. A significant proportion of visitors was of Roman Catholic persuasion.

*Interviews and Visitors:* Throughout the year the Swami received guests and visitors and gave interviews. Approximately 140 interviews were given, both to earnest aspirants and to some who came for solution of personal problems. Many guests were received and entertained, often from distant places, notably India.

*Other Activities:* A Vedanta Book-shop was formally opened on June 28th, with a definitive catalogue of books and other items available. A morning Sunday School for children was held regularly; and on September 30th a new Sunday Class for young people was begun. Two senior members of the Society took charge of this, endeavouring to impart moral and spiritual lessons from the great religious scriptures of the world. A Short Account of the Basic Scriptures of the World in the Original, compiled by the Swami, was published, as also a booklet of his lecture on 'World Peace, How?' The Society's Library was well utilized.

*The Vedanta Society of Kansas City:* An unofficial branch of the St. Louis Society, this group continued to conduct weekly and fortnightly meetings with the tapes of the Swami's lectures and discourses.

# SWAMI CHIDATMANANDA

## AN OBITUARY

We record with deep sorrow the passing away of Swami Chidatmananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 17 June 1975, at 1310 hours at the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, due to cardio-respiratory failure caused by acute myocardial infarction. Admitted in the hospital on 7 June the Swami was responding to treatment for heart ailment; but the end came suddenly despite all medical and human endeavour to save a precious life.

Swami Chidatmananda, popularly addressed as Alopi Maharaj in the circle of monks and devotees, joined the Order at Kanpur in June 1936 and was initiated into spiritual life by Swami Vijnanananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He received his vows of Brahmacharya and Sannyasa in 1944 and 1948 respectively from Swami Virajananda, then President of the Order.

In his monastic life the Swami served the organization at Kanpur in various capacities, ultimately taking charge as its Secretary. In 1962 he was posted at Mayavati where for two years he was Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata.* He was then appointed President of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, from October 1963. He was elected a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and a Member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission in November 1965. Finally he was appointed one of the Assistant Secretaries of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission in January 1969, in which post he served till he breathed his last.

The duties of his office took him to almost all the States of India. As a preacher, who could speak with equal facility and effectiveness in Hindi, Bengali and English, he travelled in Burma, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Hongkong, Cambodia, Philippines and Japan.

His simple, lively, helpful and loving nature, endeared him to monastics and devotees alike. For this and for his dutiful services to the Order he will be remembered for long with love and esteem.