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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

"Truth is one : sages call It by various names"

आ कृष्णेन रजसा वर्तमानो
निवेशयन्नमृतं मर्त्यं च ।
हिरण्ययेन सविता रथेना देवो
याति भुवनानि पश्यन् ॥

उदु त्यं जातवेदसं देवं वहन्ति केतवः ।
दृशे विश्वाय सूर्यम् ॥

उद्वयं तमसस्परि ज्योतिष्पश्यन्त उत्तरम् ।
देवं देवत्रा सूर्यमगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तमम् ॥

चित्रं देवानामुदगादनीकं
चक्षुर्मित्रस्य वरुणस्याग्नेः ।
आप्रा द्यावापृथिवी अन्तरिक्षं
सूर्य आत्मा जगत्स्तस्थुषश्च ॥

1. In his golden chariot the luminous Savitā¹ moves across the dark sky, watching the worlds and controlling gods and men.²

Rg-Veda, 1.35.2

2. The rays draw upward the famous and omniscient (*jātavedas*) Sūrya, so that all may behold him.

Rg-Veda, 1.50.1

3. (Through meditation and prayer) we see the supreme Light beyond the darkness of ignorance. May we attain union with the unsurpassed brilliance of Sūrya, the God of all gods.

Rg-Veda, 1.50.10

4. The Sun who is the embodiment of dazzling rays and the eye of Mitra, Varuṇa (and other gods) has risen, and illumines the earth, the air and the sky. He is indeed the soul of all the moving and the un-moving.³

Rg-Veda, 1.115.1

* The well-known Mantras about the sun given here form a part of *sandhyā vandana*, the daily devotions of an orthodox Hindu, and usually chanted at midday. To the Vedic sages the sun symbolized the Hiraṇyagarbha, the Cosmic Soul, the creator and sustainer of the whole universe, and the awakener of spiritual consciousness in men.

1. Derived from the root *sū* (to stimulate), the word Savitr means the awakener or inspirer.

2. According to Sāyana *amṛtam* and *martyam* may also mean *prāṇa* (vital force) and the body. This would make the sun a symbol of indwelling consciousness.

3. Sāyana unhesitatingly declares that 'Sun' here stands for the Paramātmān, the Supreme Self, the Cause of all creation.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

The world is now in need of a philosophy of work which will relate work meaningfully to life and spiritual aspiration. This month's EDITORIAL discusses the views of Swami Vivekananda and ancient teachers like Śaṅkara on this important existential problem.

In the fourth instalment of the JOY OF THE ILLUMINED, Swami Budhananda places before us the experience of joy in the lives and teachings of the great Western mystics, Plotinus, St. Paul and St. Augustine.

The lamp of Vedanta was lit in the West for the first time by Swami Vivekananda. In REMOTE CONTACT Sri K. P. Hati gives an engaging account of how that light, which has been shedding its lustre in the hearts of hundreds of sincere seekers of God, is being kept burning by the dedicated work of a number of Western monks, nuns and

novices under the spiritual guidance of the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order.

Like Latu Maharaj, the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Brother Giles, faithful follower of St. Francis of Assisi, too was an illiterate peasant who attained the highest degree of spiritual illumination. In HOW THEY WALKED ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE, Swami Atmarupananda gives a fascinating picture of this saint's inspiring life.

Sri Aroop Chakravarti, a bright research student of Lucknow University, brings back to us memories of Bipin Chandra Pal, the great orator, patriot and one of the founding fathers of Indian nationalism, in our feature PROFILES IN GREATNESS.

Some more teachings of Swami Brahmananda, the great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, compiled by the late Sr. P. Seshadri, are given in HINTS TO SEEKERS OF GOD.

WORK AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE—I

EDITORIAL

The perennial labour of Sisyphus

Greek mythology has an interesting character, Sisyphus, the king of Corinth and the son of Aeolus. He was such a cunning trickster that he cheated the gods again and again, and once even chained up Death himself. The gods finally succeeded in despatching him to Hades where, as a punishment for his wicked deeds, he was made to roll a huge stone up a hill, the stone always escaping him near the top and rolling down. He is supposed to be still there trying in vain to roll the stone onto the top of the hill.

Do we not often feel that our life is nothing but a chain of never-ending work as

futile as Sisyphean labour? Day after day we work, and yet do not seem to reach anywhere. Our heart hungers for everlasting peace, security and happiness, and we work hard for the attainment of these. But fulfilment always seems to elude us, and we constantly need new types of recreation in order to escape the monotony and boredom that inevitably go with work. We thus work with the sole idea of escaping work, to earn leisure. However, we soon realize that diversions and recreations are only a poor substitute for true fulfilment. Normally, work itself should have led us to fulfilment; but, more often than not, it only leaves us empty and staring at meaninglessness.

What is the cause of this typically human situation which has assumed the nature of a crisis in modern times? The answer is that every cultured man has higher, non-biological needs, often called 'values', and work, or the way work is done, fails to satisfy these needs. There is an inborn aspiration in us to experience Truth, Goodness and Beauty, and we feel a creative urge to express these experiences in knowledge, love and art. Work can become meaningful only when it becomes a means for higher experience and an act of self-expression.

A factory worker who spends all his time fixing nuts and bolts on the assembly line looks upon his work only as a means of earning money and leisure. His work is not really his; it is his master's. When he does work he is alienated from himself and longs only for leisure to do something he likes, something which is an expression of his own creative urge, something by which he can reunite his own divided self. Quite different is the case of a true artist or a great scientist engaged in research. Work for them is not only a means of livelihood, but also an expression of their higher creative urge. Work does not divide the self, and so such people need less leisure and recreation. Work itself leads them on to fulfilment.

This problem of work and self-alienation assumes greater importance in spiritual life. Spiritual life is a total response of the aspirant to Reality, and if a part of his life is cut off from the whole and is engaged in some activity which has no connection with the rest, his response cannot be total. The main struggle in spiritual life is to attain higher consciousness. This becomes fruitful only when the whole personality is thoroughly integrated and every effort is directly linked to the struggle for consciousness. It is only when one's physical and mental energies are harnessed and geared to the spiritual quest that the soul can

batter down the obstacles and storm the citadels of higher consciousness.

In other words, work, whatever be its nature, must become a spiritual discipline: otherwise, it will become a drag on the soul and a drain on one's spiritual resources. Especially in modern times when work has become an unavoidable social necessity, success in spiritual quest is to a large extent determined by one's ability to integrate work into it. The goal of a spiritual aspirant is higher than that of an artist or a scientist. Can work become an expression of spiritual aspiration and a means for transcendental experience? On the one hand the aspirant has to do work to fulfil his bodily needs and social obligations; on the other he has to transcend his physical and social limitations. Can these two strivings be reconciled? These are questions which every aspirant has to solve for himself. These had, however, engaged the attention of some of the best minds in India for centuries, and it is profitable to study their views first. Later on, we shall return to these questions and have a fresh look at them.

Pravṛtti and nivṛtti; Karma and Karma-yoga

Right from very early times, Hindu culture has recognized two ways of life; the path of Dharma or virtue called *pravṛtti mārga*, and the path of Mukti or liberation called *nivṛtti mārga*. One may follow either of these according to one's temperament and fitness. The main difference between these two paths lies in their goals: heavenly enjoyment in the first, and realization of God and Mukti or liberation from birth and suffering, in the second. Work has a place in both the paths. But whereas work dominates the first path, it is relegated to the lowest place in the second path.

Work done in *pravṛtti mārga* is just plain

virtuous Karma which is of two types : *iṣṭā* (obligatory Vedic rituals) and *pūrtam* (charitable acts like digging wells, etc.). Both types of work are done with a definite motive ; namely, attainment of heaven after death and a better life now and during the next birth. Work done in the *nivṛtti mārga* is without any such selfish motive, and it alone is called Karma-yoga, the ultimate goal of which is Mukti or absolute freedom. This distinction between Karma and Karma-yoga is the first important point to be noted in our study of work. As Swami Vivekananda has pointed out, 'All work is a struggle for freedom but all Karmas do not necessarily lead to it'.

Selflessness or detachment is the characteristic feature of not only Karma-yoga but the whole of *nivṛtti mārga*, which also includes Jñāna-yoga and Bhakti-yoga. Here an important question arises which has gained much importance in modern times : does Karma-yoga directly lead to Mukti? With the exception of a few Mīmāṃsaka philosophers, almost all the great Hindu religious teachers have unanimously held that it does not. Karma-yoga, according to them, is only a preparatory discipline, the lowest of the three yogas, and it can at best only bring about purification of the mind (*citta śuddhi*). Against this traditional view it is often held that Swami Vivekananda believed that Karma-yoga could lead directly to Mukti. We have to examine these views.

Śrī Śaṅkara and Karma-yoga

Śrī Śaṅkara had a twofold mission in life. One was to establish the supremacy of Advaita over all other philosophical systems. According to Advaita, Brahman is the only reality and it is infinite, immutable, without any division or distinction. It is the realization of Brahman, which is the only means of attaining Mukti, that Śaṅkara

calls Jñāna or knowledge. Since work deals with finite objects, involves change and movement, it cannot evidently have any connection with Brahman. Further, work involves the distinctions of subject, object, action, result, etc., which are absent in non-dual knowledge. According to Śrī Śaṅkara, work is only a product of primal ignorance (*Māyā* or *Ajñāna*) and so it cannot lead to Jñāna which is Brahman's self-revelation and is absolutely independent of all other factors.

The main obstacle in the way of establishing the supremacy of non-dualism is the Mīmāṃsaka view that knowledge cannot lead to Mokṣa. Prabhākara defines Mokṣa (liberation) as the absolute extinction of the body due to the total exhaustion of all merit and demerit.¹ Kumārila holds the view that knowledge can at the most destroy only the gross aspect of Karma (*sthūlāvasthā*), but not its latent or potential state (*śaktyavasthā*).² The accumulated result of Karma done in past births is lying in a subtle state, and this entire mass has to be slowly exhausted by doing Karma without attachment, even though this may take several births. Selfless work according to him is not for purification of mind ; its sole purpose is to prevent the accumulation of fresh Karma. Since knowledge and devotion have no effect on Karma, the Mīmāṃsaka theory would reduce man to the position of a living robot.

All Vedantic teachers have condemned this strange doctrine which makes God otiose and Jñāna and Bhakti meaningless. According to Śaṅkara, all Karma has its root cause in primal ignorance (*Māyā*),

1. आत्यन्तिकस्तु देहोच्छेदो निःशेष धर्मा-
धर्मपरिक्षयनिबन्धनो मोक्षः ।

Prakaranapañcikā, Tattvāloka

2. Cf. *Śloka-vārtika, Sambandhākṣepaparihāra* verses 94, 95, 96 and 101.

and when this ignorance is destroyed by higher knowledge, all Karma (gross and subtle) disappears, and the person attains liberation. That is the main reason why he emphatically denies the coexistence of Karma and Jñāna. The Bhakti schools maintain that destruction of the roots of Karma is achieved by God's grace.

Śrī Śaṅkara's second mission was to create a band of monks within the ranks of the orthodox who, free from social obligations, would devote themselves whole-heartedly to the realization and propagation of non-dual knowledge. Here too he had to face the opposition of the Mīmāṃsaka ritualists who claimed that the injunctions of the Vedas regarding rituals and sacrifices were binding on all, and neglect of them meant incurring of sin. Had this doctrine gained the upper hand in India, atheism and religious bigotry would have choked the soul of the nation and the Dark Ages would have descended upon this country also. But the great teacher dealt such a crushing blow on the inanities of the Mīmāṃsaka doctrine that it never gained prominence. By freeing sannyasins from the obligation of religious duties Śrī Śaṅkara ensured the survival of philosophical enquiry in a spirit of freedom, and also helped the expansion of monasticism in India.

Judged by modern socio-economic standards, Śaṅkara's depreciation of the importance of work may appear to be unrealistic and narrow. But it should be remembered that he did this with the sole purpose of establishing the absoluteness of Brahman. He has dealt a blow to the pretensions of the ego to comprehend the transcendental vastness of Brahman. It has made the ego stand in humility before the self-luminous brilliance and infinitude of God or Brahman. Spiritual experience is possible only if God (Brahman) reveals Himself.

We should also remember that in Śaṅkara's view not only Karma but even

upāsanā (meditation) is incapable of revealing Brahman. Though he always makes a distinction between ritualistic Karma and meditation and regards the latter as superior to the former, yet to him even meditation is a kind of activity. When a person who has not realized Brahman sits down without doing any work and thinks, 'Well, I am not doing any work now; I am still and quiet', he is wrong because he is attributing inactivity to the body and mind and not to the Self. Being composed of the three *guṇas*, body and mind are incessantly undergoing subtle changes. Brahman alone is utterly free from change and activity. In other words, as long as Brahman is not realized any state of existence in which there is the awareness of *kartā* (agent) or *bhoktā* (enjoyer) should be regarded as falling within the field of Karma. By the same token, any activity of the knower of Brahman who is free from such a dualistic awareness is not to be regarded as Karma.³

Swami Vivekananda and Karma

Śaṅkara's doctrine—all other Vedantic teachers are agreed in this—that the highest spiritual realization is the result of Brahman's self-revelation, was re-interpreted by Swami Vivekananda as 'the manifestation of potential divinity' and converted into a philosophy of life.

Śaṅkara's main effort was to establish the absoluteness of Brahman. But in order to solve the problem of the multiplicity and mutability of the phenomenal world, he posited a mysterious indefinable principle known as *Māyā* or *Ajñāna*, though he never gave much importance to it. However, the post-Śaṅkara dialecticians made *Māyā* more important and powerful than Brahman itself. This wrong emphasis on a negative

3. Cf. Śaṅkara's commentary on *Bhagavad-Gītā* 4.18 and 2.10.

principle has had a crippling effect on the minds of the people for the last thousand years which this nation is now trying to shake off.

One of the great tasks that Swami Vivekananda had to face at the end of the last century was to convert Advaita Vedanta into an integrating, comprehensive, dynamic and practical philosophy which would enable the people to solve not only their day-to-day problems of life but also the socio-economic and political problems of the nation. What he did in the first place was to play down *Māyā*. Secondly, he pointed out that if Brahman was the only reality, then not only the highest superconscious realization but also every activity was a self-revelation of Brahman, *for those who understand it*. It is Brahman that is manifesting itself through all our thoughts and actions, through every stream of life, though few people are aware of all this. For Swamiji, life itself was religion and living was a progressive self-revelation of Brahman. His doctrine of Karma-yoga is based on this integral vision of life. However, being more a religious leader concerned with the practical problems of life than a philosopher, Swamiji has not left behind a systematic and well-developed philosophy of work.

Work, education and religion are the three pillars of culture. Swami Vivekananda has given us clear definitions of education and religion but not of work. However, since his definition of education as 'the manifestation of perfection already in man' and his definition of religion as 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man' are very similar to each other, it is reasonable to suppose that his definition of work would not have been much different had he defined it. That is to say, like education and religion, work too is a process of removing the covering of the soul. In his famous lectures on 'Karma-Yoga' Swamiji says: 'The East-

ern philosophy speaks of that knowledge, again, as inherent in man.... Therefore what we say a man "knows" should, in strict psychological language, be what he "discovers" or "unveils"; what a man "learns" is really what he "discovers", by taking the cover off his soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge.... Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind; suggestion is the friction which brings it out. So with all our feelings and action—our tears and our smiles, our joys and our griefs, our weeping and our laughter, our curses and our blessings, our praises and our blames—every one of these we may find, if we calmly study our own selves, to have been brought out from within ourselves by so many blows. The result is what we are. All these blows taken together are called Karma—work, action. Every mental and physical blow that is given to the world by which, as it were, fire is struck from it, and by which its own power and knowledge are discovered, is Karma, this word being used in its widest sense. Thus we are doing Karma all the time.'⁴

For Swami Vivekananda work too, like religion and education, is a means of experience. If education is cognitive experience and religion is supersensuous experience, then work is conative experience. In Western thought (with the exception of the view of Brentano), experience is a passive phenomenon; knowledge enters the mind from outside as light enters a camera. But according to Sāṃkhya-Vedānta psychology, cognition is an intentional act. It is a movement from within towards the external world. In every experience the self issues forth and strikes the object; it is the light of the self that reveals the object. So every experience is actually a kind of self-revel-

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, in 8 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972-77), vol. 1, pp. 28-29.

ation. Most people, however, are seldom aware of this wonderful truth because of their identification, not with the self, but with the mind and its modifications. A person who identifies himself with the higher self, who constantly practises *dr̥g-dr̥śya viveka* (discrimination between the seer and seen) sees that every experience, every act, intensifies his awareness of the higher self.

It is this idea that every activity involves experience, and every experience is a process of self-revelation, that lies at the foundation of Swami Vivekananda's doctrine of Karma-yoga. But in order to know the truth of this doctrine one must always be alert and wide awake, must practise constant discrimination and be ever calm and reflective. For those who are unable to practise alertness and introspection, whose minds are tempestuous and restless, good work will act only as a means of acquiring good *samskāras* and a good character.

Karma and character

Though Swami Vivekananda was primarily a spiritual teacher, he was also a preacher of Dharma to the common people. He was as much interested in the material welfare of the masses as in the spiritual illumination of a few qualified aspirants. Since for the majority of people it is not possible to attain spiritual illumination all at once, he taught them the essentials of a moral and useful life. His massive *Complete Works* contain exhortations to follow the path of renunciation and spirituality and also exhortations to develop character, work efficiency and excellence. We should not confuse these two sets of teachings.

A society can prosper and attain a high degree of culture only if it can produce men of pure, unselfish character and strong will. Swamiji has again and again pointed out that it is through Karma, work, that man develops noble character and will-

power.⁵ We may remember here Goethe's famous statement, 'Genius develops in solitude, character in struggling with the world.' Every action leaves in the mind an impression called *samskāra*; and character, according to Swamiji is the sum-total of all these impressions. Development of good character is possible, not by sitting idle or reading books, but by actively engaging oneself in noble work, service and charity. This was what he meant when he said that he wanted to infuse tremendous *rajas* into people and rouse them from *tamas*, inertia. He wanted people to develop strength in order to do good deeds and develop pure character, and not to quarrel and fight and break one another's heads. Conscious, purposeful pursuit of virtue and excellence, and development of pure and unselfish character are an ever-recurring theme in the writings and speeches of Swami Vivekananda.

But he also spoke of a higher purpose of life. Development of character is not an end in itself. Good *samskāras* in the mind guide the will along good channels. But spiritual life is the attainment of higher consciousness which means transcending the level of ordinary mind. This is possible only if the will is freed even from good *samskāras*. A good character is useful to the spiritual aspirant as a foundation, but he should not stop with that. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'There is a still higher stage to attain after one has reached the afore-said condition of an unalterable good tendency of the mind, and that is to be had with an ardent desire for liberation.'⁶

This liberation or Mokṣa can be attained according to Swamiji through Karma-yoga. In his characteristically emphatic way he points out, 'Just by work men may reach that state of development that Buddha had

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

attained by meditation or Christ by prayer.⁷ The important point to note here is that the aim of Karma-yoga is not development of character or doing material good to the world, for that is the path of *pravṛtti*. Karma-yoga, on the contrary, belongs to the path of *nivṛtti*; it is a spiritual discipline and its goal is attainment of Mukti or liberation. The first qualification for the practice of Karma-yoga is intense aspiration for liberation. If this fire of aspiration is not burning within, one should do plain good karma, acts of charity and service, keep the company of holy men, study scriptures, practise discrimination or pray to God.

Two types of Karma-yoga according to Swamiji

In his lectures on 'Karma-Yoga' Swami Vivekananda speaks of two types of Karma-yoga : 'Here are the two ways of giving up all attachment. The one is for those who do not believe in God, or in any outside help. They are left to their own devices; they have simply to work with their own will, with the powers of their mind and discrimination, saying, "I must be non-attached". For those who believe in God there is another way, which is much less difficult. They give up the fruits of work unto the Lord.... Let us stand aside and think we are only servants obeying the Lord, our Master, and that every impulse for action comes from Him every moment.'⁸

One well-known authority on this subject has pointed out that the second type of Karma-yoga mentioned above is really a form of Bhakti-yoga. Says he, 'I consider that the way Swami Vivekananda has advised us to worship God in man, or to worship man as God, is Bhakti-yoga. As

soon as you have the idea of worship, it remains no longer confined to the sphere of Karma, not even Karma-yoga, and we can call it Bhakti-yoga.'⁹

The first type of Karma-yoga is what Swami Vivekananda refers to as 'work for work's sake'. It is this type of Karma-yoga that is generally pointed out as a new method of attaining liberation through work. What this really means is that this type of Karma-yoga does not need belief in a Personal God, divine grace, etc. This does not, however, mean, as is popularly believed, that any kind of work done in any way will automatically lead to liberation. Such a wrong notion is based on ignorance about the real meaning of the term 'Karma'. We shall discuss this point in detail later on. Here it is enough to point out that Karma does not mean only the movement of muscles. Body and mind are integrally related and every kind of voluntary activity involves the operation of mind. The mind is constantly influencing work. In the same way, it is reasonable to suppose that work too is influencing the mind.

When we claim that Swami Vivekananda has taught that Karma-yoga as 'work for work's sake' is an independent and direct path to Mukti, we must remember that it is something quite different from the Mīmāṃsaka doctrine of physical exhaustion of the effects of Karma. As already explained, according to some later Mīmāṃsaka philosophers like Kumārila and Prabhākara, knowledge can affect only the gross form of Karma. The unseen potency or result of Karma cannot be destroyed by Jñāna and must inevitably return to the doer. One has to wait until the accumulated effects of all past Karma are

⁷. *Ibid.*

⁸. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁹. Swami Madhavananda (late President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission), 'Work, Discipline and Prayer' in *Vedanta Kesari*, June 1957.

exhausted ; in the meantime, one should do selfless or detached work so as not to gather fresh fruit of Karma. Swami Vivekananda never accepted such a theory of mechanical exhaustion of Karma. Like Śaṅkara he too held that the effects of Karma can all be destroyed by Jñāna or knowledge. Swamiji further agrees with Śaṅkara in holding that Vedic rituals are not obligatory for all people. The Mīmāṃsaka doctrine was 'duty for duty's sake'. Duty means obligation, compulsion, bondage for the ever-free self. Swamiji's idea of Karma-yoga is the work of a free agent. He used to exhort his followers to work without being burdened with the sense of duty, to work as a master and not as a slave. About duty he says, 'It catches hold of us and makes our whole life miserable. It is the bane of life.... Duty is good to the extent it checks brutality. To the lowest kinds of men, who cannot have any other ideal, it is of some good ; but those who want to be Karma-yogis must throw this idea of duty overboard.... Everything that you do under compulsion goes to build up attachment.'¹⁰

The Karma-yoga that Swami Vivekananda taught was a technique for the development and transformation of mind. We should not mistake Karma for movement of matter and think that such mechanical movements of the body will lead to liberation, nor should we impute such a theory to a great prophet who was never tired of repeating, 'If matter is powerful, Spirit is omnipotent.' We have already shown how every kind of activity can serve as a process of self-revelation to an awakened person. This type of 'work for work's sake' should actually be included under Jñāna-yoga, for it is based on self-knowledge and leads to liberation through knowledge. It is a technique of removing the veils that cover the

Ātman. This point Swamiji explains in a conversation with his disciple Sarat Chandra Chakravarty as follows : 'The obstacles to the manifestation of the Ātman are overcome by practices as laid down in the scriptures ; but work has not power of directly manifesting the Ātman ; it is only effective in removing some veils that cover knowledge. Then the Ātman manifests by Its own effulgence.'¹¹

In other words, the end of this kind of Karma-yoga is purification of mind—a point on which Śrī Śaṅkara is agreed. But whereas Śaṅkara holds that total renunciation of work and study of scriptures (especially, hearing the sacred formulas from an illumined Guru) must follow purification of mind, Swamiji does not seem to insist on such conditions. According to Swamiji, when the mind is sufficiently purified, the light of Ātman will spontaneously shine forth. However, the vital point to note here is that by Karma-yoga Swamiji means not a Mīmāṃsaka type of exhaustion of past Karma but the attainment of knowledge of the Ātman through purification, through work. In other words, he teaches a kind of *practical* Jñāna-yoga. Therefore, when we say that Swami Vivekananda has taught us a new method of attaining liberation through work, we should mean that he has taught us a new type of Jñāna-yoga which does not necessitate the renunciation of work. It falls within the domain of Jñāna-yoga and, as such, does not contradict the scriptures or the age-old tradition of this country.

The end and the means

In his luminous lecture on 'Work and Its Secret', Swami Vivekananda says, 'One of the greatest lessons I have learnt in my life is to pay as much attention to the means of work as to its end.'¹² What does this

10. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, pp. 103-104.

11. *Complete Works*, vol. 7, p. 178.

12. *Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 1.

mean? It means that Karma is only a means, and not an end in itself. 'Working for work's sake' only means that work should be done without any selfish motives. It is here that Karma differs from Jñāna and Bhakti. The followers of Jñāna claim that Jñāna is not only the means but also the goal. Similarly the followers of Bhakti claim that Bhakti is the means as well as the goal. But the goal of Karma is not Karma but

naiṣkarmya, worklessness, for liberation means that. Mukti or liberation is a state in which the soul is freed from all bondage and realizes its true nature. Work has no place in it, though work may lead to it. Even if death does not put an end to our activities, liberation will. All work must have a final stop. Even the perpetual labour of Sisyphus must come to an end some day.

(To be continued)

JOY OF THE ILLUMINED—IV

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

In the rich mystical literature of the Western world there is eloquent and overwhelming testimony of the boundless joy that spiritual illumination brings. In details the description of the experience may vary from one mystic to another, but there remains no doubt in our minds that the experience itself is substantially the same—of supreme joy.

Plotinus, the foremost Neo-Platonic philosopher-mystic, being born in Egypt, was, as it were, a bridge between the Orient and the Occident on the one hand, and between Hellenism and Christianity on the other. Among the non-Christian mystics of the Christian era, he was completely free from Christian influence, yet he influenced Christian mysticism profoundly.

Porphry, in his biographical sketch of Plotinus, says :

Good and kindly, singularly gentle and engaging : thus the oracle presents him and so in fact we found him. Sleeplessly alert—Apollo tells [Apollo, who uttered of Socrates that great praise, 'of all men Socrates the wisest']—pure of soul, ever striving toward the divine which he loved with all his being, he laboured strenuously to free himself and rise above the bitter waves

of this blood-drenched life : and this is why to Plotinus—God-like and lifting himself often, by the ways of meditation and by the methods of Plato teaches in the Banquet, to the first and all transcendent God—that God appeared, the God who has neither shape nor form but sits enthroned above the Intellectual-Principle and all the Intellectual-Sphere.⁵⁷

In *The City of God* St. Augustine says of Plotinus and mystic experience :

For that vision of God is the beauty of a vision so great, and so infinitely desirable, that Plotinus does not hesitate to say that, failing this, he who enjoys all other blessings in abundance, and has not this, is supremely miserable.⁵⁸

Mystic experience does not lend itself completely to portrayal by words. Narada, in his *Aphorisms of Divine Love*, says about the experience of supreme divine love :

The intrinsic nature of devotion defies exact and precise analysis, definition or description. It

⁵⁷. Vide Plotinus, *The Ennead*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London : Faber and Faber, 2nd edition), p. 17.

⁵⁸. Vide Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, X.16 (New York : The Modern Library, 1950), p. 320.

is like the experience of joy which a dumb man has when he tastes something sweet.⁵⁹

Yet it is surprising how greatly some mystics have succeeded in conveying in words, if not the specific nature of the experience, at least a vivid impression of it.

Plotinus says, obviously referring to his own experience :

Any that have seen know what I have in mind: the soul takes another life as it approaches God; thus restored it feels that the dispenser of true life is There to see, that now we have nothing to look for but, far otherwise, that we must put aside all else and rest in This alone, This become, This alone, all the earthly environment done away, in haste to be free, impatient of any bond holding us to the baser, so that with our being entire we may cling about This, no part in us remaining but through it we have touch with God.

Thus we have all the vision that may be of Him and of ourselves; but it is of a self wrought to splendour, brimmed with the Intellectual light, become that very light, pure, buoyant, unburdened, raised to Godhood or, better, knowing its Godhood, all aflame then—but crushed out once more if it should take up the discarded burden.⁶⁰

Plotinus takes us to the very heart of the mystery in one of his most marvellous descriptions of his great mystic experience :

This is the purport of that rule of our Mysteries : Nothing Divulged to the Uninitiate: the Supreme is not to be made a common story, the holy things may not be uncovered to the stranger, to any that has not himself attained to see. There were not two; beholder was one with beheld; it was not a vision compassed but a unity apprehended. The man formed by this mingling with the Supreme must—if he only remember—carry its image impressed upon him: he is become the Unity, nothing within him or without inducing any diversity; no movement now, no passion, no outlooking desire, once this ascent is achieved; reasoning is in abeyance and

all Intellection and even, to dare the word, the very self: caught away, filled with God, he has in perfect stillness attained isolation; all the being calmed, he turns neither to this side nor to that, not even inwards to himself; utterly resting he has become very rest. He belongs no longer to the order of the beautiful, he has risen beyond beauty; he has overpassed even the choir of the virtues; he is like one who, having penetrated the inner sanctuary, leaves the temple images behind him—though these become once more first objects of regard when he leaves the holies; for There his converse was not with image, not with trace, but with the very Truth in the view of which all the rest is but of secondary concern.

There, indeed, it was scarcely vision, unless of a mode unknown; it was a going forth from the self, a simplifying, a renunciation, a reach towards contact and at the same time a repose, a meditation towards adjustment. This is the only seeing of what lies within the holies: to look otherwise is to fail.

Things here are signs; they show therefore to the wiser teachers how the Supreme God is known; the instructed priest reading the sign may enter the holy place and make real the vision of the inaccessible.

Even those that have never found entry must admit the existence of that invisible; they will know their source and Principle since by principle they see principle and are linked with it, by like they have contact with like and so they grasp all of the divine that lies within the scope of mind. Until the seeing comes they are still craving something, that which only the vision can give; this Term, attained only by those that have overpassed all, is the All-Transcending.

It is not in the soul's nature to touch utter nothingness; the lowest descent is into evil and, so far, into non-being: but to utter nothing, never. When the soul begins again to mount, it comes not to something alien but to its very self; thus detached, it is not in nothingness but in itself; self-gathered it is no longer in the order of being; it is in the Supreme.

There is thus a converse in virtue of which the essential man outgrows Being, becomes identical with the Transcendent of Being. The self thus lifted, we are in the likeness of the Supreme: if from that heightened self we pass still higher—image to archetype—we have won the Term of all our journeying. Fallen back again, we waken the virtue within until we know ourselves all order once more; once more we

59. *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*, 51-52.

60. *Enneads of Plotinus*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (Boston: Charles T. Branford Company, 1916), vol. 2, p. 250.

are lightened of the burden and move by virtue towards Intellectual-Principle and through the Wisdom in That to the Supreme.

This is the life of gods and of the godlike and blessed among men, liberation from the alien that besets us here, a life taking no pleasure in the things of earth, the passing of solitary to solitary.⁶¹

* * * *

There is an Indian saying : 'If a man first gets a bellyful, then he may take a few beatings on the back !' This explains how it was possible for many mystics and saints of the world to go through all kinds of sufferings that came on them mercilessly wave upon wave, a fraction of which would be enough to shatter a common man, and yet come out of them as if they had been through a coveted bonanza-producing experience.

Of his own tribulations, at one point St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians :

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. . . .

In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me ; and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.⁶²

Yet St. Paul was one of the most buoyant men that ever lived. The more he suffered, the more buoyant he grew. What was the secret of his power reserve ? It has been rightly said :

The success of Paul's life is in the joy that he could draw upon at any hour, the unfailing

Presence from which he could take courage. He made the Christian religion, not a hope, but a way of living, a salvation accomplished. He knew the Christ in the heart by experience. He had vision, too ; but it was the continuous realization of the Divine One within that seemed to him central. Because one possessed Christ, one possessed Sonship, one was with God, one was sustained from within by a fountain of joy that nullified every tribulation, every affliction.⁶³

Paul gives sufficient hint in regard to what he himself thought was his source of strength. He says :

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell ; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth) ; such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth) ; how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory : yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.⁶⁴

St. Paul says further, in regard to his constant communion with the Lord :

Now the Lord is that Spirit : and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.⁶⁵

His own ministry Paul took as Christ's outpouring of himself into the world through him. And this amazing experience made him triumphant in all situations, even when he was beheaded. He says :

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and ourselves your servants for Jesus'

⁶¹. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-53.

⁶². II Corinthians, 11:24-33.

⁶³. Sheldon Cheney, *Men Who Have Walked with God* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), p. 155.

⁶⁴. II Corinthians, 12:1-5.

⁶⁵. *Ibid.*, 3:17-18.

sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body of the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. . . . For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.⁶⁶

* * * *

About the testimony of the joy of illumination coming from those who 'have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake' early in life and did not seek sense pleasure at all, the crass skeptic may reasonably say: how do they know what they have missed!

But this surely cannot be said about St. Augustine's testimony. He knew sense-pleasure to its dregs. Hence his testimony is of special value. In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine lays himself bare before the God of his heart, and says:

'What shall I render unto the Lord,' that whilst my memory recalls these things my soul is not appalled at them? I will love Thee, O Lord, and thank Thee, and confess unto Thy name, because Thou hast put away from me these so wicked and nefarious acts of mine. To Thy grace I attribute it, and to Thy mercy, that Thou has melted away my sin as it were ice. To Thy grace also I attribute whatsoever of evil I have not committed; for what might I not have committed, loving as I did the sin for the sin's sake? Yea, all I confess to have been pardoned me, both those which I committed by my own

perverseness, and those which, by Thy guidance, I committed not.⁶⁷

When grace clarified his understanding, St. Augustine learned to see life and the world in an altogether new perspective, and discovered many fundamental truths and especially what true joy was:

And what does ambition seek but honours, and renown, whereas Thou alone art to be honoured above all, and renowned for evermore? The cruelty of the powerful wishes to be feared; but who is to be feared but God only, out of whose power what can be forced away or withdrawn—when, or where, or whither, or by whom? The enticements of the wanton would fain be deemed love; and yet is naught more enticing than Thy charity, nor is aught loved more healthfully than that, Thy truth, bright and beautiful above all. Curiosity affects a desire for knowledge, whereas it is Thou who supremely knowest all things. Yea, ignorance and foolishness themselves are concealed under the names of ingenuousness and harmlessness, because nothing can be found more ingenuous than Thou; and what is more harmless, since it is a sinner's own words by which he is harmed? And sloth seems to long for rest; but what sure rest is there besides the Lord? Luxury would fain be called plenty and abundance; but Thou art the fullness and unfailing plenteousness of unfading joys. Prodigality presents a shadow of liberality; but Thou art the most lavish giver of all good. Covetousness desires to possess much; and Thou art the Possessor of all things. Envy contends for excellence; but what is so excellent as Thou? Anger seeks revenge; who avenges more justly than Thou? Fear starts at unwonted and sudden chances which threaten things beloved, and is wary for their security; but what can happen that is unwonted or sudden to Thee? or who can deprive Thee of what Thou lovest? or where is there unshaken security save with Thee? Grief languishes for things lost in which desire had delighted itself, even because it would have nothing taken from it, as nothing can be from Thee.⁶⁸

Being able to make a comparative evaluation of sense-pleasure and spiritual joy, St. Augustine could emphatically say:

⁶⁷. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. J. G. Pilkington (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1943), pp. 37-38.

⁶⁸. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁶. *Ibid.*, 4:5-10, 16-18.

Let it be far, O Lord,—let it be far from the heart of Thy servant who confesseth unto Thee; let it be far from me to think myself happy, be the joy what it may. For there is a joy which is not granted to the 'wicked', but to those who worship Thee thankfully, whose joy Thou Thyself art. And the happy life is this,—to rejoice unto Thee, in Thee, and for Thee; this it is, and there is no other. But those who think there is another follow after another joy, and that not the true one. Their will, however, is not turned away from some shadow of joy....

It is not, then, certain that all men wish to be happy, since those who wish not, to rejoice in Thee, which is the only happy life, do not verily desire the happy life. Or do all desire this, but because 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,' so that they 'cannot do the things that they would,' they fall upon that which they are able to do, and with that are content; because that which they are not able to do, they do not so will as to make them able? For I ask of every man, whether he would rather rejoice in truth or in falsehood. They will no more hesitate to say, 'in truth' than to say, 'that they wish to be happy'. For a happy life is joy in the truth. For this is joy in Thee, who art 'the truth,' O God, 'my light', 'the health of my countenance, and my God'. All wish for this happy life; this life do all wish for, which is the only happy one; joy in the truth do all wish for. I have had experience of many who wished to deceive, but not one who wished to be deceived.⁶⁹

To his mother, Monica, Augustine owed largely his recovery from a dissipated life. Before his mother died Augustine, now a salvaged soul, discussed with her life's experiences and the joy of spiritual living. Augustine wrote :

And when our conversation had arrived at that point, that the very highest pleasure of the carnal senses, and that in the very brightest material light, seemed by reason of the sweetness of that life not only, not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention, we, lifting ourselves with a more ardent affection towards 'the Self-same', did gradually pass through all corporeal things, and even the heaven itself, whence sun, and moon, and stars shine upon the earth; yea, we

soared higher yet by inward musing, and discoursing, and admiring Thy works; and we came to our own minds, and went beyond them, that we might advance as high as that region of unfailing plenty, where Thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth, and where life is that Wisdom by whom all these things are made....

We were saying, then, if to any man the tumult of the flesh were silenced,—silenced the phantasies of earth, waters, and air,—silenced, too, the poles; yea, the very soul be silenced to herself, and go beyond herself by not thinking of herself,—silenced fancies and imaginary revelations, every tongue, and every sign, and whatsoever exists by passing away, since, if any could hearken, all these say, 'We created not ourselves, but were created by Him who abideth for ever.' If, having uttered this, they now should be silenced, having only quickened our ears to Him who created them, and He alone speak not by them, but by Himself, that we may hear His word, not by fleshly tongue, nor angelic voice, nor sound of thunder, nor the obscurity of a similitude, but might hear Him—Him whom in these we love—without these, like as we two now strained ourselves, and with rapid thought touched on that Eternal Wisdom which remaineth over all. If this could be sustained, and other visions of a far different kind be withdrawn, and this one ravish, and absorb, and envelope its beholder amid these inward joys, so that his life might be eternally like that one moment of knowledge which we now sighed after, were not this 'Enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord'? And when shall that be? When we shall all rise again; but all shall not be changed.

Such things was I saying; and if not after this manner, and in these words, yet, Lord, Thou knowest, that in that day when we were talking thus, this world with all its delights grew contemptible to us, even while we spake. Then said my mother, 'Son, for myself, I have no longer any pleasure in aught in this life. What I want here further, and why I am here, I know not, now that my hopes in this world are satisfied. There was indeed one thing for which I wished to tarry a little in this life, and that was that I might see thee a Catholic Christian before I died. My God has exceeded this abundantly, so that I see thee despising all earthly felicity, made His servant,—what do I here?'⁷⁰

(To be continued)

⁶⁹. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁷⁰. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

REMOTE CONTACT

K. P. HATI

A common law in the spiritual world is : the more unnoticed the growth of spiritual faith, the stronger is its foundation. Religion, it is said, is not to be practised with a placard, for much of the holiness of Vedanta is lost if it is paraded in public. More emphasis is on drawing the mind inward. Sri Ramakrishna, the latest apostle of Vedanta, has repeatedly observed that spiritual discipline is best practised unnoticed in *man* (the mind), *ban* (the forest), and *kon* (a corner of the house). But the glamour of modern technology, money and power is so seductive that few can resist its efforts to make the mind extrovert.

In keeping with the present-day demand for immediate returns, people are anxious to get quick results for their little efforts in religious matters also. Hence, various religious bodies trumpet their 'magical powers' to give good health and happiness by means of simple Haṭha-yoga exercises and cheap devotional excitements. These shysters profess quick returns and attract adherents to their cults with promises of venal gains. Many such religious groups and associations are proliferating in the name of yoga, and God-realization centres are springing up all over. Sometimes they seem to obscure the pristine lustre of Vedanta. India has seen many such threats but has been able to withstand them because the roots of Vedanta are deep and strong. Now the challenge has gone to foreign lands. The authorities of the Ramakrishna Order are having to face this challenge in their foreign work. It will be interesting to glance at how they are upholding the ancient spiritual traditions of India while at the same time interpreting them for the modern West.

The Vedanta movement in the West was started by Swami Vivekananda in the clos-

ing years of the last century. He went as an uninvited delegate to the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, without resources or any introduction to the New World. But the thundering voice of the wandering monk 'echoing the strength of that old India' drew the admiration of the people there. After the Parliament a few devoted followers gathered round the monk and helped him to open the first Vedanta Centre in New York in 1894. In the course of time, many centres came up in different parts of the world, and at present there are thirty-one centres (with many subcentres) of the Ramakrishna Order outside the borders of India (including Bangladesh). Of these, the following twelve centres are located in various parts of the United States of America : (1) Vedanta Society, New York—est. 1894 ; (2) Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco—1900 (with later retreat centres); (3) Vedanta Society, Portland (Oregon)—1922 ; (4) Vedanta Society, Providence (Rhode Island)—1928 ; (5) Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago—1930 (with a later retreat at Ganges, Michigan); (6) Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood—1930 (with later branch centres at Santa Barbara and Trabuco); (7) Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York—1933 ; (8) Vedanta Society, St. Louis (Missouri)—1938 ; (9) Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Seattle (Washington)—1938 ; (10) Vedanta Society, Berkeley (California)—1939 ; (11) Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston—1941 ; (12) Vedanta Society, Sacramento (California)—1949-52.

A study of the working of these centres may indicate how the remote contact is maintained in spite of the challenge of the age.

Each of these centres is under a Swami of the Ramakrishna Order of India; and each is an autonomous non-profit religious corporation, instituted to promote the study of Vedanta philosophy, to promote harmony between Western and Eastern thought, and to promote interreligious understanding through recognition of the common truths taught in all the great religions of the world. Each centre is financially self-supporting but spiritually affiliated to the Ramakrishna Order of India. In a country where social services are nationalized and are being effectively looked after by the State and other agencies, there is little scope for philanthropic social activities by the 'Vedanta Societies', which were started primarily for spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, spiritual services are given at the personal level when sought for, and not through the famous 'Mission activities' as in India.

In all these centres, there are chapels of universal worship and harmony in which photographs of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, and of Christ, Buddha and other spiritual personalities are kept and worshipped. At Ārati (vesper service) the Ārati songs used by the Ramakrishna Order in India are sung (sometimes with English rendering); it is enchanting to hear Americans singing these songs in the Indian style. Usually, Sunday talks are given by the Swamis, the objective being to explain Vedantic teachings to all, irrespective of the religions to which they belong, so as to promote better understanding and appreciation among followers of different religions and to help them develop spiritually. Special emphasis is placed on showing the principles common to all religions. The Swamis do not preach dogmas or creeds, and they seek no converts; rather, inspired by Swami Vivekananda, they strive to make a Hindu a better Hindu, a Christian a better Christian. Everyone who chooses to accept the basic principles

of Vedanta can become a member of a centre with the approval of the Swami-in-charge. A nominal fee has, of course, to be paid; and, as is done in Christian churches, an offering plate is passed among the gathering at the end of the Sunday lectures in which one may place whatever money one wishes to contribute. This is for the centre's upkeep. Many attend the lectures though they are not members officially, and it is heartening to see the interest they show in Vedanta in spite of a lack of emotional exhibitionism.

The Swamis are available for interview, and they give advice on meditation, spiritual discipline and personal problems. This is an exacting and important function of Swamis working in Western centres. They have to proceed in a cautious way to introduce Vedanta to these people who have different traditions, sentiments and ways of life. As Swami Turiyananda said at Shanti Ashrama in California during the early days of Vedanta teaching, 'Lectures are meant to reach the public—the real work is to reach individuals through close personal contact; just live the life and be an example.' In the public lectures given by the Swamis, the listeners are introduced to the new thoughts and ideas of Vedanta. Then there is the follow-up, when ardent spiritual aspirants seek interviews with the Swami-in-charge, in private meetings and discussions.

Though Vedanta does not believe in conversion, it does have faith in spiritual initiation. Initiation does not mean conversion to a new faith but introduction to a new way of life. There are three components in spiritual initiation—a competent teacher who can inspire, a sincere aspirant who seeks such inspiration, and a holy name (*mantra*) that establishes a contact between the two (or in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, the chain under the water which, without being seen, enables the aspirant to reach the Supreme Being). In the Ramakrishna

Order, Sri Ramakrishna is the fountainhead of inspiration; and this inspiration is being conveyed through the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Order who alone have the authority to initiate the aspiring devotees. As the President or the Vice-Presidents cannot leave India for long to visit foreign centres, where there is an ever-increasing demand for spiritual initiation by ardent spiritual aspirants, Swamis in charge of centres in the West have the authority to initiate. This is an important delegation to competent spiritual teachers working as heads of foreign centres, and now the number of initiated devotees is swelling rapidly with the growth of activity in the different Western centres.

In a secular society like the United States, dogmatic religious institutions with dogmatic names and functions cannot gain popularity. Vedanta is therefore taught as a non-denominational philosophy and religion serving only spiritual ends. Swami Vivekananda also had to introduce Advaita Vedanta in the Western world in this way. As it is observed by some, non-denominational religion is a new American form of Indian Advaita. The first few centres—at New York, San Francisco, Portland and Providence—were known simply as Vedanta Societies. Later on, the names of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda were added to centres and subcentres, and worship of religious teachers with some ritualism was begun publicly.

A closer study of the progress made in the spread of Vedanta in the West can be had on review of the working of the Vedanta Society of Southern California at Los Angeles, popularly known as the 'Hollywood Vedanta Centre', where I spent some time.

Inspiration and organization are the common constituents of any movement. It may rightly be said that the inspiration in this part of the world was provided when

Swami Vivekananda arrived in Los Angeles on December 3, 1899. Initially, he was taken to the house of a Miss Spencer in Los Angeles. During his stay there for about a week, two public meetings were arranged at Blanchard Hall and Unity Church Hall, Los Angeles, where he spoke about Vedanta philosophy and Hinduism in general. Many more lectures and classes were subsequently arranged in the city and its surroundings, after he had moved to a Mrs. Blodgett's in Los Angeles, and later on to South Pasadena, a suburb of Los Angeles, to the home of the Mead sisters, as Mrs. Carrie Mead Wycoff and her two sisters were called. He used to meet people almost daily in intimate groups at the Mead house. The inspiration seems to have gathered strength, and Miss MacLeod wrote to Sister Nivedita on December 15, 'He [Swamiji] really seems to feel and act as if a new era were open to him.'

The Mead house, which now belongs to the Vedanta Society of Southern California, is one of the few houses where the great Swami stayed for some weeks which seems to have captured and retained the glow of his spirituality in its atmosphere. The original structure still stands, with a few fittings, furniture and redwood woodwork of his days. Nestled almost at the foot of a wooded ridge, the little house contains Swamiji's bedroom, today used as a shrine. He had lived, moved and meditated there; and one can still feel his inspiration vibrating when one sits quietly for awhile.

During Swamiji's stay, the impact of his tremendous spiritual power was so great that these Mead sisters felt, one of them said, as if Christ himself were with them. A few years later, Swami Turiyananda and Swami Trigunatitananda, direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, came to continue the work started by Swami Vivekananda. Swami Trigunatitananda gave Mrs. Wycoff the name 'Lalita'. About thirty years later,

Swami Prabhavananda, a disciple of Swami Brahmananda, came from Portland, Oregon, to deliver a series of lectures on Vedanta in Los Angeles, where he met Sister Lalita. She offered her home at Los Angeles and all she owned for the continuance of Swami Vivekananda's work, so dear to her. The organization was formally started in 1930 in Sister Lalita's home at 1946 Ivar Avenue. Thus the Hollywood Centre began in a residential section of the Hollywood foothills close to Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street, about half way between Los Angeles and the beach.

Swami Prabhavananda's lectures were given in his sitting room. There were financial difficulties, and the Swami had to do the cooking. Then in 1936 some funds were raised and a temple erected. The dedication of the temple on Swami Vivekananda's birthday in January 1938 was a memorable occasion in the progress of the Vedanta work in this part of the country. A number of distinguished thinkers, including Gerald Heard, Christopher Isherwood, Aldous Huxley, John Van Druten and Joseph Kaplan, were introduced to the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna at the new temple and became involved in the Vedanta movement in the United States.

The temple is surprising in its simplicity. The lecture hall is tastefully decorated in light gray, with comfortable rows of seats facing a pulpit on a platform. On the walls, the photographs of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamis Vivekananda and Brahmananda, and pictures of an image of Buddha and of the alleged head of Christ on the Turin shroud are hung. It has the appearance of a temple when the curtains at the far end are drawn apart. On the pedestal of two steps stands the shrine itself, containing holy relics of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and their disciples. Decked with garlands and bouquets of flowers and lit by candles in glass, it has a magic beauty

and charm. Under the dome of the shrine, a photograph of Sri Ramakrishna occupies the central position. To the right of him is a photograph of Holy Mother, to the left are images of Buddha, Krishna and a Russian icon of Christ. Photographs of Vivekananda and Brahmananda stand on the lower level with a Śivalingam and images of other Hindu deities. The exterior of the temple is white, with three domes; and a broad flight of steps, flanked by cypress trees, leads into the main door. The roar of passing traffic on the nearby State Freeway is terrific, but the temple has been largely soundproofed.

A new convent building was built next to the Hollywood temple in 1974; and in 1976 the monks, who had been living in a former private home, exchanged facilities with the nuns. The Hollywood complex presently includes a temple, library, monastery, convent, guest quarters, bookshop, administrative offices and warehouse space. About fifteen houses with gardens, belonging to the Society, are clustered round the centre in the Hollywood Hills and are occupied by devotees on rental.

Twelve acres in Montecito, near Santa Barbara (eighty miles north of Los Angeles on the coast), were donated to the Vedanta Society by a devotee in 1944, to which another eighteen acres were added the following year. Sri Sarada Math Convent was formally dedicated there in 1947. It is under the overall supervision of the Hollywood Centre. Twelve nuns are carrying on their spiritual work in a silent way there, amid wooded hills overlooking the great Pacific Ocean. The evening vesper songs, sung meticulously to the tune of the original Bengali and Sanskrit compositions, give additional atmosphere to the faintly lighted huge wooden shrine. In the 60s an adjacent property was donated for use as quarters for the Swamis when they visit. A temple, based on traditional South Indian

architectural design, was built in 1955 and dedicated on July 13, 1956. The quiet atmosphere in the shrine, which contains Holy Mother's relics, seems to vibrate with her spiritual presence.

The convent life at Hollywood and Santa Barbara is having a strong hold on women devotees. Swami Vivekananda had seen and profusely praised the great role of women in American life. The nuns have maintained this spirit of ingenuity and initiative of American womanhood, and are influencing the activities of the Society in a great way. There were certain sacrifices entailed in leaving a family life; but that is being adequately compensated for by the new spiritual awakening in them.

At Trabuco Canyon (about sixty miles south of Hollywood), a religious college was built by Gerald Heard and others in the early 1940s, but was soon donated to the Vedanta Society of Southern California. It was then dedicated as a monastery and has been under the supervision of the Hollywood Centre since September 1947. Retreat facilities are available for male members of the Society, and a shrine trail is open to visitors at certain hours of the day.

The mile-long shrine trail running through the monastery's forty-one acres of land—around the temple containing the holy relics and portrait of Sri Ramakrishna—is a wonderful presentation of harmony among the different religions of the world. Small pieces of land have been allotted along the trail—amid woods, hills and gorges—to the different faiths: Vedantism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and American Indian religion as it is still practised by the Plains Indians. Each site is marked by the symbols of the particular faith, and by an image of Buddha in the Buddhist shrine. There is a Pañcavatī with a massive old California Oak surrounded by a circular pedestal.

Every religion has its appeal to univer-

sality, but dogmatism sometimes seems to overshadow it. Vedanta helps to promote the universal aspect in each. The shrine trail has presented the idea in a picturesque setting with great imagination. It may be considered as a nucleus, for the possibility of expanding it exists, depending on the availability of men and materials.

The Vedanta Society of Southern California has been headed by Swami Swahananda since the passing away of Swami Prabhavananda in 1976 at Hollywood. The Society has more than seven hundred active members and initiated devotees, and about forty monastics and probationers who are children of the soil. The congregation, which consists of a good number from the general public, represents a cross-section of American society, drawn by an inner vitality based on spirituality rather than by dogma or purely humanistic and secular activities.

In a lecture delivered in London, Swami Vivekananda said that in order to establish any religion on a strong foundation, philosophy, mythology and ritual were all necessary; and Swamiji is known to have written in one of his letters, 'I will flood your Yankee land with ritualistic Swamis.' So daily ritual worship or Pūjā was introduced in the Hollywood temple from January 1, 1940, the birthday anniversary of the Holy Mother. All Swamis, however, were not sure at first whether Hindu ritual worship would be accepted in the West. But it has become so helpful in building up spiritual discipline, that not only in the temple but also in the homes of many devotees it has become popular. In the Hollywood temple one of the monastic members performs the traditional Hindu Pūjā and Ārati. The noon ritual concludes with a food offering from both the monastery and the convent kitchens. Food is prepared as a form of worship and handled with purity and care. Menus include traditional Indian cooking and Western dishes—offered dishes are mixed with

the rest of the food and taken by the inmates as Prasād (consecrated food) with the purpose of increasing their devotion. The person in charge of daily worship in the shrine picks flowers from the gardens (which are carefully maintained in the complex round the shrine), polishes the worship vessels, grinds sandalwood and keeps the shrine clean.

Men and women can meditate in the temple, which is open daily from 6.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. Except during lectures and classes, people entering the shrine remove shoes and sit on the floor or on chairs and pews. Special Pūjās are held on the birth anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda. The birthdays of the other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna are marked by special offerings. Rām Nām is held each month in the same way as it is sung in the Order's shrines in India. Vigil or Japa-yajña is held once a month in which the name of the Lord is continuously repeated for twenty-four hours, devotees chanting for an hour at a time. Besides these special occasions, a number of religious festivals are celebrated, such as Durgā Pūjā, Kālī Pūjā, Śivarātri and Christmas. On these occasions the participants decorate the shrine and prepare a feast. Kālī Pūjā and Śivarātri are celebrated at night with all details possible in a foreign land.

The business affairs of the Society are under the control of a Board of Trustees, consisting of the resident Indian Swamis and fifteen members elected by the Society members and monastics. Officers are elected by the Board and each establishment is comparatively free to manage its own enterprises within the limits of the budget, while the general financial concerns are handled by the treasurer. Income is derived from membership pledges, contributions, endowments, rental receipts, sale of books, etc. Assets are owned by the Society, not by

Swamis or the Order in India. Contributions are occasionally sent to the branches of the Order in India which are in need of financial aid, subject to the funds available, though sometimes beyond the limits too! The Vedanta Press is the publishing branch of the Society. Besides publishing a few select titles on various phases of Vedanta, the Press also distributes to bookshops and libraries, at discount rate, many books imported from India. Both Hollywood and Sarada Convents have bookshops and giftshops. Book titles are carefully selected to reflect the principles of Vedanta and other religious traditions. A mail-order department is maintained for both retail and wholesale business, for which catalogues are available. From 1938 to 1970, *Vedanta and the West*, a bimonthly magazine, was published by the centre. For various reasons it was decided not to continue it.

Life in the centre consists of the routine work, meditation, study and worship. Jobs include household chores—cooking, cleaning, gardening, maintenance, and business affairs. Jobs are allotted to the various inmates, and many jobs are alternated weekly or monthly for giving a variety of experiences. A spirit of freedom prevails, but freedom never means license, for discipline is best established when it is not forced but voluntary. All are guided by a minimum of rules with an emphasis on self-discipline and inner growth—inspired by the Swami-in-charge.

Community life calls for continual adjustment and willing co-operation among people of widely differing temperaments and backgrounds in order to maintain a harmonious atmosphere. Spiritual growth is a gradual process of character-building leading to less selfishness, less body-consciousness, and increasing love for all. The advantage of living in community under the care of a spiritual teacher is the more intimate association with him and the

presence of others dedicated to a common ideal. The sacrifice of a certain degree of personal freedom is amply compensated for by relative freedom from distractions and by a group spirit which encourages exchange and growth. The Vedanta Society of Southern California seems to have achieved a happy combination of freedom and discipline, of community sharing and respect for individual differences, thereby creating an atmosphere of harmony which is to the physical, mental and spiritual benefit of all.

* * * *

The success of Vedanta in the West is not to be judged by the number of Western adherents or the number of Indians living in the Western world who are influenced by Vedantic ideas. For Vedanta cannot make a violent inroad in a foreign land—specially where an absence of political strength and economic backwardness of the mother country have had a backward pull. The approach of Vedanta is more through the intellect than through mass-media propaganda or emotional excitement. Popular display of miracles and mystic experiences, which are common methods of preaching new faiths, have no place here. This rational approach of Vedanta appeals first to leaders of thought who are held in esteem; and through them, it reaches the people in general. As such, the impact of the movement cannot be spectacular and may seem discouraging. The steadiness of this slow growth in the West has been maintained by the spiritual giants dedicated to the ideals of Vedanta—a few of whom have spent their

best period of active life there, and quite a good number of whom have breathed their last there, after lifelong dedication to the cause. And the untiring efforts of the Swamis during the decades since the days of Swami Vivekananda's sojourn in the West are beginning to show definite results. Is it not true that what develops slowly sustains, unlike that which has quick growth and a rapid decay?

Sri Ramakrishna lived the life of Vedanta with his disciples and associates the other day in the ancient land of Vedanta. His life is an eloquent testimony to the abiding strength of Indian spirituality. Every year increasing numbers of devotees from Western countries feel an urge to visit his place of birth with the zeal of religious pilgrims. His message is gaining more and more appreciation in the West where the notion of progress is no longer taken for granted, where the whole array of modern values is undergoing an agonizing reappraisal, where greater numbers of spiritual seekers are becoming aware of the emptiness of a mere materialistic existence and are in search of a more meaningful life.

In Cossipur garden house, where Sri Ramakrishna was lying sick, a group of intimate companions and spiritual seekers gathered round him for his inspiring message on the New Year's Day of 1886. He came out in the open yard and blessed them all saying, 'Let the sense of Reality—the consciousness glow in you all.' That was his parting message to the world, and thus the glow continues to spread.

THE ANGELIC BROTHER GILES

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

April nights are normally cold in Assisi, and so it was on the evening of April 22, 1208. Giles, who was then about eighteen years old, sat round the fire with his family. Though he was an uneducated peasant and most ordinary, the flame of spiritual longing was already burning within him, brighter in fact than the fire before him; so when the conversation this evening turned to Francis of Assisi, Giles listened with eagerness. He had of course heard previously about Francis, the wealthy merchant's son, how he had renounced home and wealth two years before in order to seek the fair hand of Lady Poverty and enter the service of the great King, Christ. But Giles now heard from his relatives about the wealthy young merchant Bernard and the cultured lawyer Peter Catanii, who only eight days ago had given all their belongings to the poor and joined Francis for the love of Christ and the perfection of their souls.

When he retired for the night, Giles was still profoundly affected by what his relatives had said about Francis and his companions. The flame of holy aspiration leapt within him at the thought of their renunciation, love for God, and spiritual joy.

In the morning he rose very early and, it being the feast of the martyr St. George, he went to the Church of St. George to hear mass. Then he went towards the Portiuncula chapel outside the walls of Assisi, where Francis and his two companions were staying. Coming to a fork in the road at the leprosarium, Giles stopped, for he didn't know the way to Portiuncula. Not seeing anyone to ask, he turned to God and sought His guidance. The Lord evidently heard

his supplication, for after a while Giles saw Francis coming out from a wood where he had been praying. The young man was overcome with gladness and fell at the feet of Francis.

'What do you want, my dear brother?' asked Francis.

'I want to be with you, for the love of God,' replied Giles.

At this Francis rejoiced and said, 'The Lord has given you a great gift. Suppose the Emperor came to Assisi and wanted someone of the town to be his knight or chamberlain; there would be many who would seek that honour. How much greater should you consider this gift, that the Lord has chosen you from among all of them and called you to his court!'

Then taking him by the hand and raising him to his feet, Francis took him to Portiuncula. There Francis called Bernard and Peter and said, 'The Lord has sent us a good brother. Let us therefore rejoice in the Lord and eat together in charity.'

After their repast, Francis took Giles to Assisi to get for him a habit. As they were walking, a poor beggarwoman stopped them and asked alms of Francis 'for the love of Christ'. Seeing that Francis had nothing to give her, Giles was anxiously waiting for Francis to ask him to give something—due to his awe of the Saint he hadn't the courage to suggest it himself. After the beggarwoman repeated 'for the love of Christ' the third time, Francis turned to Giles with an angelic smile and said, 'Let us give her your cloak, for the love of Jesus Christ!' Giles was overjoyed, and as he handed her the coat he felt as if it were being accepted by Christ Himself, who had

said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren ye have done it unto Me' (Matthew 25 : 40).

Francis soon developed a special love for the innocent Giles, whom he called his 'knight of the Round Table'. In the spring of 1208 Francis started out for the Marches of Ancona on the first mission journey, and he chose Giles as his companion. These two made a wonderful team. Francis would speak in artless words, totally devoid of theological subtleties and rhetorical niceties, which were imprinted deep in the hearts of his hearers through the power of his inspired personality. And when Francis finished speaking, the simple-hearted Giles would add, 'What he says is true! Listen to him and do as he says!'

On their return to Portiuncula, there were three new brothers. Francis now sent all the friars out on mission tours. Brother Giles went on pilgrimage to Compostella. He had only his one habit—the one procured by Francis on the day of his conversion. But during his pilgrimage he met a beggar; and as he had nothing else to give the poor man, he removed the cowl from his habit and gave it, though he had to continue for twenty-one days with no covering for his head. Perhaps it was on this journey that, as he was walking one day, he felt so exhausted with hunger that he lay down by the roadside and fell asleep. When he woke up, he found by his head half a loaf of bread; he didn't know who had brought it, but he did know that the giver was God, who does not abandon those who take refuge in Him.

Everywhere he went he urged people in his simple way to love God. And whenever he came upon a church or a cross, or even saw a church tower in the distance, he would bow down in the dust and repeat a prayer taught him by Francis: 'I adore Thee, O Christ, here and in all Thy churches over the whole world, and I bless Thee

because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.'

Besides his pilgrimage to Compostella, Giles went on several other pilgrimages during the lifetime of Francis. On these journeys he had to suffer much from hunger, cold and tribulations; but the spiritual consolations he had been receiving from the very day of his conversion raised him above anxieties.

Francis taught a reverence not only for begging one's food, but also for manual labour done in exchange for one's food and other necessities (never for money!). And Giles demonstrated in his day-to-day life this love for manual labour. On his way to the Holy Land he had to stop at Brindisi for some days while waiting for a ship. So he begged an old cart, filled it with water at the fountain outside the city, and dragged it through the streets crying *Chi vuole dell' acqua?* 'Who wants water?' In exchange for the water, he accepted bread and other such things as were needed by him and his companions. On the way back from the Holy Land he was put ashore at Ancona. Here he cut osiers for baskets and rushes for covering bottles, which he plaited and exchanged for bread. He also carried dead bodies to the cemetery, and thereby earned garments for himself and for his companions. He used to say that these acts of service done for his companions would pray for him while he slept.

Apparently it was during this stay in Ancona that a priest who saw him carrying a bundle of rushes into the town muttered 'hypocrite' as Giles passed him. Hearing this, the simple-hearted friar broke down in tears. When one of his companions saw him weeping and asked the cause, Giles said, 'Because I am a hypocrite, as a priest told me today.' 'And does that make you believe that you are one?' asked the brother. 'Yes', replied Giles, 'a priest cannot lie!' Then the brother had to explain to the childlike

friar minor that, just as there are differences among men, so there are differences among priests, and that even a priest can do wrong.

During his pilgrimage to Rome he would hear mass early in the morning and then go to the forest to gather wood, which he would bring back and sell in the city for bread. Once when a lady who saw he was a religious man wanted to give him more for the wood than he had asked, Giles refused to take more than half of what he had originally asked, saying, 'I won't yield to greed.'

While staying with Cardinal Nicholas, Bishop of Tuscoli, Giles went daily to harvest olives. He was given bread for this labour, which he would bring back to eat at the Cardinal's house. When the Cardinal protested that as a poor mendicant he should eat the Cardinal's bread, Giles replied with the saying of the Psalms: 'Thou shalt eat of the labour of thy hands' (128:2). For Francis had taught that to him from the very beginning of his life in the brotherhood. One day it rained in torrents, and the Cardinal was rejoicing that Giles would have to eat at his table, as he couldn't go out to pick olives. Meanwhile Giles went to the cook and offered to clean the kitchen in return for two loaves of bread. The cook accepted the offer, and the Cardinal's pious desire was thwarted. As the rain continued the next day, Giles polished all the knives in the house in exchange for two more loaves.

Francis was delighted to see Giles' exceptional qualities of goodness; so when this disciple returned from one of his pilgrimages, seven years after his conversion, Francis told him to go wherever he pleased. But Giles said that he didn't want such freedom. Francis therefore sent him to the hermitage of Favarone, near Perugia. Here he received great spiritual graces. One night as he was praying, he was so filled with divine joy that he seemed to be leaving the body. He

felt as though the body were dying, beginning with the feet and passing upwards until he actually lost body-consciousness. While gazing at his awakened soul he rejoiced because of the beauty of his luminous and subtle nature; and as he himself declared later, it was beyond all concept and description. While in that awakened state some divine mysteries were revealed to him, which, however, he would never speak of because of their sacredness. In after years he said, 'Oh, what a great and rare spiritual grace has he to whom the knowledge of his own soul has been given! Only God knows it, and he to whom He wishes to show it.'

In Christendom, to be martyred in the name of Christ has always been considered a great blessing, opening the very gates of heaven to the martyred soul. Among the early Franciscans, several were martyred by the Muslims in Spain and the Holy Land, and by the barbarians in northern Europe. Francis himself had sought martyrdom while preaching to the Muslims, but had been left unharmed. Giles also sought martyrdom in 1219, when he went to Tunis. But he too was spared. Afterwards, when he had climbed the heights of contemplation, he used to say, 'I am glad I didn't die then as a martyr. I want to die no better death than that of contemplation.'

* * * *

St. Francis entered eternity in 1226. Even during the Saint's lifetime there had been a large sector within the Brotherhood who rebelled against the austere simplicity and evangelical freedom of the first Franciscans. Now these friars got the upper hand in the organization and began to work many changes in the Order which were contrary to the spirit and teachings of their founder. Francis had opposed the owning of all property, even by the organization itself. But now the friars began to build huge con-

vents and cathedrals. He had been against the formal study of theology and church law within the Order, but now there were great Franciscan seminaries in the European centres of learning—Bologna, Paris, Oxford.

There were several reasons for Francis' opposition to formal learning within the Brotherhood. For one thing, it necessitated the acquisition and storage of books, which meant building convents to house libraries—an act of unchastity for one wedded to Lady Poverty. It also tended to create a gulf between the learned friars and the illiterate peasantry. And it meant the creation of an intellectual elite within the Order itself. As Francis once told a friar who wanted a psalter, 'My son, once you have a psalter you will ask for a breviary. When you have a breviary you will want to sit in a high seat like a prelate and order your brothers, "*Bring me my breviary!*"' Learning also meant preaching ideas rather than preaching life, speaking from books rather than speaking from knowledge gained in prayer. And it meant separating the friars from nature by a seminary wall, thus putting an end to the poetic vision of God's being and love present in the cosmos. Whether St. Francis was totally justified in his fear of learning has been a much debated question for centuries; but it is clear that he wished it to have little place in Franciscan spiritual life.

Brother Giles, who was in total harmony with the ideals of Francis, was pained to see these new developments; and he didn't hesitate to use his sharp wit against those who were unfaithful to the founder's teachings. Once he said, 'There is a great difference between a sheep which bleats and one which grazes. For braying does no one any good, but grazing does itself good. It is so with a friar minor who preaches, and one who prays and works. A thousand and a thousand times better it is to teach oneself than to teach the whole world.'

A brother came one day to Giles and

asked his blessing for a preaching mission. 'Yes,' said Giles, 'provided you limit your preaching to saying, "A great cry and little wool is what I give!"'

* * * *

Soon after the passing away of St. Francis, Giles went to the hermitage of Cetona to spend the forty days' fast of St. Martin. After persevering there in prayer, one night three days before Christmas Jesus appeared to him in front of his very eyes. Giles was so overwhelmed with bliss that he felt as though he were dying, and he began to cry loudly under the influence of that unbearable sweetness. The other friars were alarmed to hear his cries and they came running to his cell. One of the friars, Giles' closest companion whom he had trained in the holy life since his youth, asked him, 'What is the matter, Father?' And Giles answered, 'Come, my son, for I have been wanting to see you.' Then he explained to the young friar the great graces which had been granted to him.

The next day the same friar came to Giles' cell and found him weeping. Giles felt that he had undergone a profound change and renewal after the previous night's experience, and he said to the young friar, 'Until now I have gone where I wished and done what I wanted, labouring with my own hands. But from now on I can't do as I used to, but I must do as I feel guided from within. Therefore I fear very much lest others should ask what I cannot give them.'

He continued to enjoy that ineffable sweetness at intervals both day and night from the third day before Christmas until Epiphany; for so intense was his ecstasy that had it remained continuous he could not have survived it, as he himself said.

After this experience at Cetona, Giles used to preserve with the greatest care the grace which God had vouchsafed him. For

he was wont to say that through the slightest carelessness one might lose great spiritual treasures, which perhaps might never be offered again in this life. Therefore, he began to remain alone in his cell, watching, praying, fasting, and keeping away from every bad influence. And if anyone told him about the bad actions of another, he would say, 'I don't want to know about another's sin. Be careful, Brother, not to see anything bad which does not concern you.' He withdrew not only from lay people, but even from other friars, for he used to say that God is the soul's only friend.

Finding this angelic friar such a fit recipient of grace, the Lord began to shower so many blessings on him that he could no longer conceal his blessed state from others. If anyone spoke with him about God or spiritual truths, Giles would immediately be plunged into ecstasy, and would remain speechless and motionless on the spot for a whole day and night. The friars therefore became cautious in speaking with him, lest he should be carried away from them in ecstatic union.

In 1234 Giles settled at a hermitage named Monte Ripido in Perugia, which he made his home until passing into eternity twenty-eight years later. Here he passed his last days in a state of paradisaical innocence. Sometimes he would speak with the doves in his convent garden. One day he heard a dove cooing and said, 'O Sister Dove, I will learn from you how to serve the Lord! For yon always say *Qua, Qua*, not *La, La*—here, here on earth, and not there, there in heaven, are we to serve God. O Sister, how beautifully yon coo! O men, why don't you learn of Sister Dove!' Sometimes for sheer uncontrollable joy he would take up two sticks, and, as if playing a violin, he would scrape one across the other, singing the praises of God as he walked or danced in the garden.

Once when two cardinals were leaving

after a visit, they asked Giles to pray for them. 'It is surely not necessary for me to pray for you, my lords, he said with a twinkle in his eye, 'for you obviously have more faith and hope than I do.' 'How is that?' asked the two cardinals, somewhat taken aback. 'Because you who have so much honour and power and glory of this world hope to be saved, while I who live so poorly and wretchedly am yet afraid that I will be damned!'

St. Bonaventure, the Minister General of the Order, visited him in 1260. He was a great theologian known for his wisdom, holiness and charity. But Giles didn't spare him. The first question he asked his distinguished visitor was 'Father, can we ignorant and unlearned men be saved?'

'Certainly,' replied Bonaventure kindly.

'Can one who is not book-learned love God as much as one who is?' asked Giles again.

'An old woman is better able to love God than a master of theology,' answered the theologian.

Then Giles went to the wall of his garden and cried out to the wide world: 'Hear this, all of you, an old woman who has learned nothing and cannot read can love God more than Brother Bonaventure!'

Giles had once said that he wanted nothing better than to die in contemplation. And so it happened. Towards the end he had high fever; and due to a cough and pains in the head and chest, he could neither eat nor sleep. So the friars used to carry him about the convent on his bed so that he could get rest. On the night of the vigil of St. George the Martyr in 1262, exactly fifty-four years after the day of his conversion, the friars carried him on his bed to the chapel for the service; and there he quietly closed his eyes and mouth and laid down his head, never again to be dragged away from ecstatic union with the Beloved.

* * * *

Giles and the early Franciscans founded their lives on the three traditional pillars of Christian monasticism: poverty, chastity and obedience. But they also gave a revolutionary new turn to Christian tradition by their original expression of freedom, poverty and joy.

Contrary to the highly structured and formalized nature of traditional Christian monasticism, the early Franciscan life combined a wonderful freedom and flexibility with the disciplines of poverty, chastity and obedience. They were not separated from the society of men by a fortress-like convent wall. And though they did enter solitude from time to time, there was nothing formalized about it. It was the natural flow of the tide from high to ebb: when their spiritual life demanded it, they went into solitude; and when through solitude they had gained something worth giving to others, they just as naturally passed back into the world to distribute the fruits of their contemplation. Furthermore, they were not forced into an ascetic mould shaped by a hundred and one monastic regulations—vows of silence, formalized rules of fasting, and so on. Their ascetic life was integrated and harmonious, being governed by a single principle—fidelity to Lady Poverty. Rather than shattering the unity of their spiritual life by externally controlling it with numerous disconnected rules of asceticism, their lives were harmonized around this single comprehensive principle of fidelity to Lady Poverty, which included for them poverty, chastity and obedience and much else besides. This penetrated and coloured their whole spiritual life in a natural and organic way, from the inside out instead of outside in; thus they were able to maintain an unusual degree of freedom within the monastic community.

And contrary to the individual poverty but communal opulence of most medieval monks, the first Franciscans led a life of total poverty—no individual property nor dependence on institutional property. The friars minor gave a new dignity to poverty and mendicancy. Instead of grating under renunciation they exulted in it, sang about it, praised it, for it gave them a wonderful freedom from earthly bondage and care. Thus it was to them a source of holy freedom and joy.

And contrary to the prevalent spiritual attitude of the age was the joy of the early Franciscans—joy in prayer and contemplation, joy in labour, joy in poverty, joy in teaching others the love of God, and joy in communion with nature, with God-in-nature. Their joy was a product of the harmonious spiritual life that they led, which allowed them to seek and to find God at all times and in all places.

The unlettered peasant Giles, through his complete fidelity to this Franciscan ideal, has left an example in spiritual perfection which even now has not lost its power to inspire and instruct those who are allured by the beauty of Lady Poverty, heiress to God's Kingdom. His love, his renunciation, and most of all his angelic innocence opened to him the way to immediate knowledge of vast and wonderful divine mysteries which theologians are contented to merely speak of. In spite of his outward humility and egolessness, this gave him a surety and confidence and security which lifted him high above the learned and eloquent. Speaking about himself as if referring to someone else he used to say: 'St. Paul says that he was rapt in God twice, whether in the body or out of the body, adding "I don't know. God knows"'. But what if God should give someone perfect certainty about it!



BIPIN CHANDRA PAL AND THE EXTREMIST CHALLENGE

AROOP CHAKRAVARTI

Bipin Chandra Pal, through his extremist political views, gave a dynamic emphasis to Indian politics in the first two decades of this century, like his more illustrious contemporary and distinguished colleague Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He has rightly been described as 'a born rebel' by an academic historian.¹ His contribution to the building up of Indian nationalism was freely acknowledged by all his contemporaries. Aurobindo Ghose, for instance, referred to him as 'one of the mightiest prophets of nationalism', and Benoy Kumar Sarkar regarded him as 'the father of revolutionary thought in Bengal'. Though this great son of India began his chequered political career first as a moderate leader, eventually he became a champion extremist.

The stormy petrel of Indian politics first saw the light of day on November 7, 1858, when the Great Revolt of 1857 was mellowing into a softer glow. The hometown of Bipin Chandra Pal was the village Poil in the Sylhet District of what is now Bangla Desh. His father Ram Chandra Pal, a member of the Sylhet Bar, was well-versed in

Islamic and Hindu theology and known for his strong likes and dislikes. Bipin Chandra's mother Narayani Devi had no formal education, but she was reserved, self-reliant and a strict disciplinarian. Bipin Chandra was the only son of his parents, though he had a sister named Kripa. The boy did not attend any Bengali Pāṭhaśālā as was the practice in those days. He learnt the three R's from his father and Persian from a Maulvi before entering an English school in the town of Sylhet in the year 1866. In 1874 he passed the entrance examination of the Calcutta University from the Sylhet Government High School and in 1875 (the year that his mother died) joined the Presidency College, Calcutta; but he failed twice in the first Arts Examination (1877-78).

The rebellious spirit in Bipin showed itself when he was reading in the Presidency College. In the autumn of 1877 he was ceremoniously initiated by Shivrath Shastri as a member of the Brahmo Samaj, much to the displeasure of his father. Soon Bipin Chandra, who became an earnest and eloquent preacher in the Brahmo Samaj, was regarded by many as a true successor to

1. T. V. Parvate, *Portraits of Greatness* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1975), p. 116.

Keshav Chandra Sen. In December 1881 he married his first wife, Nityakali Devi—a brahmin widow in Bombay at the Prarthana Samaj. But his association with the Brahmo Samaj led to his complete alienation from his father. Not only did his father stop sending remittances to him, but he even disinherited him by a will. He was also excommunicated by his society. Pal struggled hard to continue his studies but eventually had to give them up and seek employment. From this time began his life of poverty which lasted almost till his end. Ram Chandra Pal, however, sent for Bipin, and the two were reconciled before Ram Chandra's death in 1886. Ram Chandra made a new will on his deathbed, giving all his property to his son. To those present he remarked, 'For ten years I did not see Bipin's face. By a previous will I disinherited him absolutely.... There is no one except Bipin, whatever may be his religious principles, who would after my death protect with all his life the honour of my wife and my daughter. That is why I called him back.'

Bipin Chandra married again in 1891 after the death of his first wife, this time Brijmohini Devi, also a brahmin widow who happened to be a distant cousin of Surendra Nath Banerjee. He had by his two wives three sons and five daughters.

Bipin Chandra started his career as the headmaster of a high school in Cuttack—the Cuttack Academy—in the beginning of 1879. But he did not stick to any job for long. He worked as headmaster in several schools in successions: in Sylhet (1880), in Bangalore (1881), etc. He was a journalist all his life, starting on that career in 1880 at the young age of twenty-two. His first adventure was a Bengali weekly journal, *Paridarśak*, which he ran from Sylhet; he edited the *Tribune* in 1887-88, started *New India* in 1901, *Bande Mātaram* in 1906, published the fortnightly journal *Swaraj* in

London in 1909, and founded the monthly *Hindu Review* in Calcutta in 1912. Furthermore, he edited the daily *Independent* and the weekly *Democratic* in Allahabad in 1919-20, and the *Bengalee* in 1924-25. He was, besides, a regular contributor to the *Modern Review*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Englishman*, the *Statesman*, and many other journals. In the words of Mr. N. C. Kelkar, who was an equally prolific writer, Bipin Chandra Pal wrote words in torrents. For a year and a half he acted as the librarian and secretary of the Calcutta Public Library (1890-91). His literary activities, which had actually started in his school days, continued throughout this period, and he published a biography of Queen Victoria in Bengali (1887) and a work on Keshav Chandra Sen in English (1893). Commenting on his contribution to Indian Journalism, Lord Ronaldshay has said in his book *Heart of Aryavarta*, 'His pen played a not inconsiderable part in the social and political ferments that have stirred the waters of Indian life.'

It is a paradox that an extremist like Bipin Chandra accepted Surendra Nath Banerjee, a moderate, as his first 'Guru' in his political career. Under his influence and guidance Bipin Chandra made his first appearance on the platform of the Indian National Congress at the Madras Session in the year 1886. Politics from Bipin Chandra's point of view was a spiritual movement. 'It has its application in social, in economic, in political life of the sublime philosophy of the Vedanta. It means the desire to carry the message of freedom... and we are to carry the message to realize that ideal in the social, economic and the political life. What is the message of the Vedanta? The message of the Vedanta is this: that every man has within himself, in his own soul, as the very root and realization of his being, the spirit of God; as God is eternally free, self-realized, so is

every man eternally free and self-realized. Freedom is man's birthright.²

In his Uttarpara Library speech Pal reiterated the same view of nationalism: 'The ideal is that of humanity in God, of God in humanity, the ancient ideal of the Sanātana Dharma, but applied as it has never been applied before to the problem of politics and the work of national revival. To realize that ideal, to impart it to the world is the mission of India.'³

In 1898 Bipin Chandra went to England for theological studies on a scholarship granted by the British and Foreign Unitarian Associations. But he gave up his scholarship after a year and utilized his stay in England to preach Hindu theism and carry on political propaganda for his country. He also visited the U.S.A. and returned to India in 1900. On return Bipin Chandra infused into Indian politics great patriotic fervour and advocated complete political freedom to be achieved through courage, self-help and self-sacrifice. Being a member of the Brahmo Samaj, Pal could not easily accept the concept of Hindu nationalism propounded by Tilak and coined a new term, 'composite patriotism', appropriate to a nation composed of various races, cultures and creeds.⁴

But he, too, admitted that Hinduism was 'the original stock and staple of it'. Besides his extremist challenge, this was the most outstanding contribution of Bipin Chandra to India's struggle for freedom. Pal's nationalist propaganda made the opponents of India's freedom very uneasy. The *Times* paid him the left-handed compliment of

being the most outspoken of extremists in 1906, and remarked that in enunciating the doctrine of Swaraj at the Calcutta Congress in 1906, Dadabhai Naroji 'had taken a leaf out of the book of the extremists, and he had practically followed the mischievous propaganda of Bipin Chandra Pal'. *The Historian's History of the World* spoke of him as 'the Chief Purveyor of seditious ideas who promulgated the doctrine of Swaraj or complete political independence'. Sir Valentine Chirol extensively quoted from his Madras speeches in his book *Indian Unrest* characterizing them as 'the most authoritative programme of advanced political thought in India.'

Bipin Chandra, however, did not preach sedition. He simply expressed the will of an enslaved and emasculated people to be free. What he wrote in *Bande Mātaram* of September 8, 1906, would be very typical of what he spoke and wrote in those days: 'The time has come when, in the interest of truth and civic advancement and the freedom of the people, our British friends should be distinctly told that while appreciating the things they have done for us already, the sacrifices they have made to make our lot easy and their yoke light, we cannot any longer suffer ourselves to be guided by them in our attempt at political progress and emancipation. Their point of view is not ours: the desire to make the Government of India popular without ceasing in any sense to be essentially British. We desire to make it autonomous, absolutely free of British control.'

Bipin Chandra also advocated the philosophy of passive resistance. In one of his Madras speeches he outlined the method to be followed to achieve salvation, what is known in political science as the method of passive resistance. It means not resistance that is not active, but non-aggressive resistance. That resistance was also to be within the limits of the law which still

2. B. C. Pal, 'The New Movement Lecture', Madras, 1907; see Amalesh Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge in India* (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1967), p. 29.

3. See *The Extremist Challenge*, p. 29.

4. B. C. Pal, 'Composite Patriotism', *New India*, 27 May 1905; see *The Extremist Challenge*, p. 61.

existed in the country. He further maintained that the law of the country should be respected so long as the primary rights of the citizens were also given due weight and respect. In short, Pal maintained that 'passive resistance means resistance offered by a people from within the limits of such law'. Pal's views were clear and unequivocal. However, Lord Minto, the then Viceroy, wrote in April 1907 to Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India: 'I do not think we should allow Bipin Chandra Pal to stump the country, preaching sedition as he has been doing.' However, Bipin could not be legally trapped for the said reason. Lord Minto advocated his deportation. But the Advocate General of Madras opined that, though Pal's speeches were highly inflammatory, they were not seditious. For Pal even left the editorial staff of the *Bande Mātaram* after condemning the use of violent methods in the Golden Bengal Seane (*Bande Mātaram*, 3 October 1906). The difference of views between Pal and Aurobindo were on the issue of violence. Pal advocated non-violence, but to Aurobindo violence was acceptable if necessary.

Bipin Chandra's voluntary exile in England from 1908 to 1911 saw a transformation in his thought and outlook. This is well embodied by him in his book *Nationality and Empire*. 'The new political thought which he visualized was the Empire-Idea.' He became an advocate of a new type of internationalism—a co-operative partnership with Great Britain, her colonies and protectorates on the one side and India on the other, based on perfect equality of status for all—a partnership in which, he emphasized, India would have to be given the freest scope for self-fulfilment. He had unusual opportunities of seeing and appreciating the working of world forces, and he visualized the evolution of the British Empire into a commonwealth as a logical necessity. Such a large association on the

basis of equal partnership, if and when possible, would be preferable, he solemnly declared, to an isolated independent India for which he had previously been preaching. Looking at the present Constitution of the British Commonwealth, it must be said that he has proved a prophet and precursor of Jawaharlal and Rajgopalachari. Regarding India itself, Pal maintained that it should have a federal structure, and in her future national government the different regions should have freedom consistent with the unity and integrity of India as a whole. As early as 1914 he sounded a stern and sound note of warning against the dangers of Pan-Islamism to Indian unity and nationalism, and there too he proved a prophet.

Bipin Chandra rejoined the Indian National Congress in 1916 at Lucknow with Tilak and other nationalist friends and continued making speeches in his stentorian voice till 1920. Pal believed that Gandhiji was attempting to turn the Congress into something of a religious cult with himself as the preceptor of the religion of Ahimsā like another Buddha. He looked upon the programme of Gandhiji as an attempt to take the country back to the stagnation of medieval days.

Bipin Chandra's religious views underwent a process of evolution. As we have seen, he became a Brahmo in his youth, but in his later life he was greatly influenced by the Vedanta philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya and finally by Bijoy Krishna Goswami of the Śrī Caitanya cult. His universalism was, according to one of his biographers, enriched by his own experience of higher Vaiṣṇavite realizations, whose meaning was revealed to him by the inspired teachings of his Guru Bijoy Krishna'.

Bipin Chandra found himself isolated from his friends and adherents in the evening of his life. He courageously put up with this situation of splendid isolation which continued till his death. During these years

he was a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly. One of the architects of Bengal's renaissance, he strode the country like a giant in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. His oratory was not mere command over words. As Aurobindo Ghose said : 'He spoke under an inspiration which he himself was unable to resist.' Srinivas Shastri, himself an orator of no mean order, remarked with reference to Bipin Chandra Pal's Madras speeches of 1907 : 'Oratory had never dreamt of such triumphs in India. The power of the spoken word had never been demonstrated on such a large scale.' There is a saying that those who push the pen powerfully are shy of the platform. This is not at all axiomatic, because numer-

ous examples of those who wielded their tongue and pen with equal power can be easily cited. In the case of Bipin Chandra, his tongue was perhaps more effective and sharper than his pen. But this difference is hardly significant.

To conclude, Bipin Chandra Pal, through the written and the spoken word, through a long life of suffering and sacrifice, through unrelenting adherence to the principles he professed, awakened the country with a rare clarity of vision to a consciousness of its inner strength. He was a publicist par excellence. This great son of India, after his splendid seventy-four years of sojourn in this world, took to eternity on the 20th day of May 1932.

HINTS TO SEEKERS OF GOD

SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

The nature of the mind is such that it is very hard to keep it under control. When we are engaged in some work or when we are in the company of others, the mind seems to be quiet and restrained. But as soon as we close our eyes and seek to concentrate on God, the mind begins to stray and wander all over the world. The ramblings of the mind are so subtle that in many cases we do not know when it has strayed away from our control, wandering madly in the train of vain thoughts. The only course left for us is to draw back and fix it again on the contemplation of God. This has to be practised whenever the mind strays.

With the lessening of evil thoughts and tendencies, the mind can be easily brought

over to the contemplation of the Lord. The sovereign means to drive away evil thoughts and tendencies is to fill the mind with good thoughts. The reverent study of the lives and teachings of great souls who have realized God will keep the mind in a pure atmosphere; then there are powerful aids to steady the mind—the study of good and holy books, the contemplation on good topics and the company of pure, high souls.

The more we think good thoughts, the greater will be our concentration on God. If we keep up a continuous train of good thoughts, evil tendencies will gradually leave us for ever. There is no other means to check the mad course of the mind. Malice, deceit, and crookedness should be utterly given up. Without purity and sincerity, one

cannot realize God. There is no use in following external observances if the mind has not been thoroughly cleansed. Internal purity is essential.

If the mind does not become steady when you sit for meditation, recite exalting prayers and cry to Him with a yearning heart. Keep a large picture of your chosen Deity [Iṣṭa-Devatā] in front of you, and fixing your eyes thereon pour forth your heart in prayer. In the beginning, the mind is likely to be unsteady. Hence, prayer, Japa and meditation with the eyes fixed on the Iṣṭa-devatā will be easy, as the mind will not have to endure much tension. Continuous practice in this manner for a long time will steady the mind.

No Sādhana is of any avail without chastity [Brahmacarya], purity and renunciation. There can be no progress without self-control, devotion to truth and purity.

In the early stages of Sādhana, the rules and observances thereof should be adhered to. Do you think that Brahmajñāna will dawn upon you by practising Japa for two or three days? Gossip, speaking ill of others, interference in matters not pertaining to oneself, the seeking of acquaintances and wasting time idly in the company of others, are very injurious to a Sādhaka. All these things distract the mind and drag it to the external world. It is only those who

do not take to Sādhana seriously that indulge themselves in the above manner. Without practising restraint in food, sleep and talk, the mind will never become steady. It will not be difficult to concentrate the mind if one resorts to solitude and the contemplation of good thoughts from one's early years.

Japa does not mean the mere mechanical repetition of the name of your chosen Deity. You must fix your mind on the meaning of the Mantra. You recite and see with your mind's eye the blessed form of that Deity; otherwise the mind's eye will not be concentrated.

Distractions and discomfitures are inevitable in the early stages. The mind cannot be brought under control in a day. It is only a few months since you began this practice. Can anything be accomplished in such a short time? You have to continue the practice unflaggingly with all your energy, year in and year out. If you have the true spirit of renunciation, your perseverance will win and the mind will attain to concentration. Then there will be no break in the contemplation of your chosen Deity. The Sādhana of those who have faith, devotion and ardent yearning towards the Lord and who are not under the thralldom of evil thoughts and tendencies will never be in vain.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE VARIETIES OF THE MEDITATIVE EXPERIENCE : BY DANIEL GOLEMAN. Publishers : Rider & Company, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6JD. 1978. Pp. xxv+130. £2.50.

Today there is an ever-growing interest in meditation the world over. Though this interest was first directed to and nourished by the Eastern religions, it has had a very wholesome impact on Western mystical traditions also : many almost forgotten practices of Christian and Jewish mysticism have been revived in response to the public interest. In fact, so much has been pub-

lished in recent years on so many different traditions, that the mere quantity of expository material has created confusion. People who are looking for some suitable entry into the study and practice of meditation find themselves quagmired by indecision when confronted with so many choices. And many people are afraid of losing something themselves to one path, so they try to follow all paths at once !

Thus, what is now needed is a study of meditation itself, in its broadest sense ; that is, an effort to discover the common factor(s) among all the various techniques through which the

diversity can be made comprehensible. And Daniel Goleman's book is a praiseworthy attempt in this direction.

It should be stated at the beginning that the book will hold the interest mainly of beginners who want to enter the field of meditation but who are confused by the diverse variety of disciplines; and for such the book is very useful. Scholars, however, will find the treatment a bit simplistic, as will spiritual aspirants who have already entered deeply into the study and practice of meditation.

Goleman has chosen the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosa (fifth century A.D.) as the source of his theoretical framework. The advantages of this choice are obvious. Being a text of Theravada Buddhism, its treatment of meditation is non-emotional and non-metaphorical. But the choice has its disadvantages as well, as Goleman frankly admits. Most of the territory traversed by the meditating mind is still uncharted by any tradition; hence, all maps of the terrain are somewhat arbitrary: different cartographers will emphasize different aspects of the mental regions. The *Visuddhimagga*, though it is not a theological text (which is a distinct advantage for the author's purpose), does have a clearly defined philosophical standpoint, which prevents it from being perfectly free of value judgements: it grades states as high or low partly by its philosophy-based value system. And it emphasizes those aspects of meditative experience which it finds philosophically significant.

Coming to the author's treatment of the subject, Part One skillfully delineates the typology provided by the *Visuddhimagga*. The description of the parallel paths of meditation (*jhana*) and insight (*vipassana*) is very lucid.

Part Two is a survey of various meditation paths. The author has chosen to treat only one representative discipline out of the many found in each path, such as in Hindu Bhakti. This is a limitation that was necessitated by the vast variety of techniques, all of which could never be handled in one volume. Each path he treats independently and within its own philosophical and terminological context, thus avoiding a superficial syncretism. But one hardly sees mention of the well-developed map of Part One, which is rather disappointing. And in some places where the map is used, one begins to question the very value of maps; for instance, one wonders whether the constant remembrance of God (the fruit of Japa and a relatively advanced state according to Bhakti Shastra) can be equated with 'access concentration', a state which has no reference to

the content of concentration, and may be acquired through meditation on a *kasina* (coloured disc). Except for this disappointing use of the map, however, the treatment is good, sensible and sympathetic.

Part Three describes the essential unity of the various paths. This part ties together Parts One and Two in a thoughtful and well-written conclusion, which will be helpful to the would-be meditator.

Overall, the book is quite sane, which is refreshing these days when people make so many false claims about meditation, promising quick results without any sacrifice. Goleman doesn't gloss over the fact that a true altered state of consciousness is rare and the fruit of much, much training. The distinctive feature of the book, however, is its open-minded approach to various religious traditions. As Ram Das aptly states in his introduction to the book, 'Apparently each of us, in our insecurity, must feel that his or her way is *the* best way. A more mature perception is that one method is the best way for me, but other paths suit other people. This book exemplifies that open attitude.'

The book is a good introduction to the study of meditation which will give to the prospective aspirant a tentative framework wherewith he can understand the diversity among meditative traditions and choose his point of entry.

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

Mayavati

SILVER JUBILEE SOUVENIR: Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, Belgaum, Karnataka-590011, 1978. Pp. xvi+394. Price: Rs. 32/-.

This *Souvenir* fulfils a great need of contemporary society, the majority of which having quaintly misconceived religious orientation of human life to mean a life of ascetic renunciation, as that of a monk, have become Self-alienated and therefore from each other. Little has it been realized that from time immemorial India has produced and perfected both the philosophical details for a vigorous life 'in the world though not of it', as also holy persons embodying this ideal.

However, the sheer number of these religious camps, their tenets, their practices, has completely obscured the common source of inspiration for these movements, the Upanishads. Variety has led to bewilderment, confusion to disbelief and indifference and casualness.

This disastrous casualness in religion, *asraddhā*,

to which greater and greater numbers of educated men and women are becoming a prey, in spite of a deep-rooted longing for self-fulfilment, self-betterment, and self-understanding, for which they now are seeking elsewhere in fraudulent mysticism, or instant yogas, or drugs, can be cured only by reawakening their interest in religion. That again is possible only after answering the disturbing question regarding the basic unity underlying the variety of religious sects, and further, if religion is compatible with a normal life in the world without being nagged to dogmatism, asceticism, or monasticism. The most convincing answers to this valid fear is to be found not in the anachronistic lives of sages and kings of the Upaniṣads and the epics, but in those saints of recent times, who were definitely not recluses, but exemplified an intensely spiritual life in harmony with normal social responsibilities. The Nimbārgi saints, who have the following of the Vīrasaiva community of Karnataka, are one such of the many others in India.

The Nimbārgi Sampradāya (Sect), named after its illustrious spiritual founder Nimbārgi, is little known beyond its following. Much less is it known that the late Dr. R. D. Ranade, the famous philosopher-professor, was also the recent spiritual leader of this movement. The Nimbārgis trace their origin to one Kāḍa Siddha, or more definitely to one Revaṇa Siddha of Satara District, Maharashtra. He is said to have assimilated the universal aspects of both the more ancient mystical tradition of Nātha and Siddha sects.

This *Souvenir* is an eloquent tribute and survey of the Nimbārgis. The inspiring life-sketches and teachings of Śrī Nimbārgi Maharaj, Śrī Bhausaheb Maharaj, Śrī Amburao Maharaj, Śrīmatī Śivalingavva, and that of Dr. Ranade (Śrī Gurudev Rambhau Maharaj) are vividly narrated in it.

These great personalities came from different strata of society and, except for Dr. Ranade, had no modern education. Yet, the available record of their lives and teachings leaves no doubt about their spiritual eminence and authority. None of them gathered their following through miracles but through their exalted lives.

The entire mystical wisdom of this Sampradāya has been gathered in the five aphorisms of Śrī Bhausaheb Maharaj: (i) Remembrance of the divine name is Brahman; (ii) Non-remembrance of the divine name is worldly illusion or worldliness; (iii) Fire, (i.e. devotion) is the source of

Knowledge; (iv) Dispassion is the source of devotion; and (v) Mind is the source of ego. Therefore, one must begin with the cultivation of dispassion in the mind, dissipating the ego by constant repetition of the divine name.

The goal of all spiritual struggle is the realization of the absolute identity of the individual soul with Brahman, as in the Advaitic tradition. Significantly, however, to achieve this, one need not renounce the world to become a monk. The intense practice of *japa* is itself enough to lead to that Knowledge. The divine name must be acquired from a Sadguru who has himself realized the Atman.

Though formal renunciation is not essential, an immaculate moral life, centred in God, is essential. What are to be renounced are *para-dhana* and *parastrī* (i.e. other's wealth and lust). Without this renunciation, *japa* is useless, like driving a nail into butter.

In all other matters regarding spiritual life, the teachings of the Nimbārgis accord with the general Upaniṣadic tradition. With this foundation the aspirant is left free to order his life according to his own temperament and social background.

The Nimbārgis are quite liberal in their religious and social outlook, and in the teachings of their saints, who undoubtedly rose to Advaitic realizations of the unity underlying all diversity, we have a universal appeal sadly lacking in many other sects. The harmonious blending of devotion, *yoga*, and *jñāna* is very clearly evident in the teachings of the Nimbārgis.

Dr. R. D. Ranade, who was chiefly responsible for bringing this sect into prominence, is very well known for his candid writings: 'The Pathways to God', as he discovered in the lives of many saints of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and North India, are available in English, published from the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. 'Bhagavad-Gita, a philosophy of God-realization', and 'Vedanta as the culmination of Indian thought', bear the stamp of his vast erudition and spiritual realization.

The *Souvenir* has rightly appropriated the greater portion of its pages to this great scholar-saint. The Academy deserves to be congratulated for having so ably carried on its work since its inception. We eagerly look forward to the second volume of the *Souvenir* and hope something would also be done to improve the get-up.

BRAHMACHARI APURVACHAITANYA, Calcutta

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION FROM APRIL 1977 TO MARCH 1978

[We are presenting here a brief summary of the latest report of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, which will give our readers some information about the activities of these twin organizations. The report was issued by the General Secretary in August 1979 from the Headquarters at Belur Math, Dist. Howrah, West Bengal 711 202, India.—*Ed.*]

Though the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math, with their respective branches, are distinct legal entities, they are closely related, inasmuch as the Governing Body of the Mission is made up of the Trustees of the Math; the administrative work of the Mission is mostly in the hands of the monks of Ramakrishna Math; and both have their Headquarters at Belur Math. The Math organization is constituted under a Trust with well-defined rules of procedure. The Mission is a registered society. Though both the organizations take up charitable and philanthropic activities, the former lays emphasis on religion and preaching, while the latter is wedded mainly to welfare service of various kinds. This distinction should be borne in mind, though 'Ramakrishna Mission' is loosely associated by people with Math activities also. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that the appropriation of the name of Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda by any institution does not necessarily imply that it is affiliated either to the Ramakrishna Math or to the Ramakrishna Mission.

The Math and the Mission own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them. Though both the Math and the Mission receive grants from the Central and State Governments and public bodies for their social welfare activities, the other activities of the Math are financed from offerings, publications, etc., and the Mission is supported by fees from students, public donations, etc. Both the Math and the Mission funds are annually audited by qualified auditors.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

In spite of some obstacles, hindrances, and intimidations faced by the organization, the following notable developments took place during the year under report :

A new building for the Primary School was opened at Griffith Road, Madras. At Bombay Ashrama the newly constructed Library and Lecture Hall were declared open. In Madras, again, a new block of the Vivekananda College

Hostel, and the first floor of the dormitory of the Boys' Schools were dedicated. The Shrine Room of Asansol Ashrama was extended. Buildings for Monks' Quarters were dedicated at Ramharipur and Midnapore. At Purulia Vidyapith, the waiting hall of the Charitable Dispensary was opened along with the extension of the indoor medical ward for the inmates. In Bangladesh, a Library-cum-Auditorium was dedicated at Dacca Ashrama. Foundations were laid for Arogya Bhavan (a home for sick, aged, and invalid monastic members at Belur Math), the new multistoreyed extension project of Seva Pratishthan in Calcutta, a building for the Showroom-cum-Information Centre of Saradapitha at Belur, and the new project of the Blind Boys' Academy at Narendrapur. The office of the Calcutta Estates was brought over to the headquarters for administrative facilities. Foundations were laid for the new buildings of the Hyderabad Math at the Domalguda area of the city. The ground floor of the new building of the Training Centre at Belur Math was put to use. The London centre moved to a commodious building in Buckinghamshire.

CENTRES

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March 1978, 117 branch centres in all, of which 53 were Mission centres, 21 combined Math and Mission centres, and 43 Math centres. These were regionally distributed as follows : two Mission centres, five combined Math and Mission centres and three Math centres in Bangladesh; one Mission centre each in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius and France; one Math centre each in Switzerland, England and Argentina; 12 Math centres in the United States of America; and the remaining 46 Mission centres, 16 combined Math and Mission centres and 25 Math centres (87 in all) in India. The Indian centres were distributed as follows : 28 in West Bengal, 11 in Uttar Pradesh, 12 in Tamil Nadu, seven in Bihar, five in Kerala, four in Karna-

taka, three each in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Assam, two each in Maharashtra, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, and one each in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh. Moreover, attached to the branch centres there were over twenty sub-centres where monastic workers resided more or less permanently.

TYPES OF WORK

Medical Service : The Math and the Mission institutions under this head served the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Prominent among these are the indoor hospitals in Calcutta, Varanasi, Vrindaban, Lucknow, Kankhal, Trivandrum and Ranchi. In 1977-78 there were altogether 13 Indoor Hospitals with 1,631 beds which accommodated 48,750 patients, and 77 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 43,39,954 cases including the old ones. Besides, some centres had provision for emergency or observation indoor wards attached to their dispensaries. The Veterinary section of the Shyamala Tal Sevashrama treated 261 cases. The Sanatorium at Ranchi and the Clinic at New Delhi treated T.B. cases alone, while large sections of Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the hospital at Trivandrum were devoted to maternity and child-welfare work. At Trivandrum there was also a department of Psychiatry. Research on different branches of Medical Science as also Post-graduate training in degree and diploma courses were conducted at Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta.

Educational Work : The twin organizations ran, during the period, five Degree Colleges of general education at Madras, Rahara (24 Parganas), Coimbatore, Belur (Howrah), and Narendrapur (24 Parganas) with 5,036 students on their rolls. The last two were wholly residential, and the colleges at Madras and Coimbatore had attached hostels for residing students. In addition, there were three B.Ed. Colleges at Belur, Coimbatore and Mysore with 293 students, one Basic Training School at Coimbatore with 22 students; one Postgraduate Basic Training College at Rahara with 101 students; four Junior Basic Training Institutes at Rahara, Sarisha and Sargachhi with 316 students; a College for Physical Education, another for Rural Higher Education, an Institute of Commerce and a School of Agriculture with 61, 19, 94 and 10 students respectively at Coimbatore; four Polytechnics at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Coimbatore with 1,346 students; 8 Junior Technical and Industrial Schools with 619 boys and 40 girls; seven Vocational Training Centres with 319

students; 95 students' Homes or Hostels, including some orphanages, with 10,030 boys and 618 girls; 42 Higher Secondary, Secondary and High Schools with 20,474 boys and 10,835 girls; 35 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 5,496 boys and 4,093 girls; 44 Junior Basic, U.P., and Elementary Schools with 6,745 boys and 4,231 girls; and 146 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 13,950 boys and 3,637 girls. Besides conducting an Institute of Medical Sciences with 38 students, the Seva Pratishthan of Calcutta as also the Math Hospital at Trivandrum trained nurses and midwives, the total number of trainees being 263. The Institute of Culture in Calcutta conducted a School of Languages for teaching different Indian and foreign languages and a School of World Religions with 2,430 and 29 students respectively. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy, an Institute of Commerce and a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre with 133, 46 and 50 students respectively. The centre at Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a training centre in farming (Divyayan) with 228 students. The centre at Rahara conducted a Rural Librarianship Training Centre (residential) with 23 students. Thus there were altogether 66,678 boys and 24,836 girls in all the educational institutions run by the Math and the Mission in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji and Mauritius.

Recreational activities : Some of the Math and the Mission centres have been providing scope for recreational, cultural and spiritual activities for youngsters at stated periods outside their school hours. The *Vivekananda Balaka Sangha* of the Bangalore Ashrama has a fine building of its own. At the Mysore Ashrama also a number of boys take advantage of the various kinds of facilities provided for them, and the youth section of the *Janashiksha Mandira*, Belur, is engaged in similar activities.

Work for Women : The organization has ever been conscious of its duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are the Maternity Sections of the Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the Hospital at Trivandrum; the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinics at Jalpaiguri and Khetri; the women's sections of the Hospitals at Varanasi and Vrindaban; the attached Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi; the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras; the Girls' High Schools at Jamshedpur; the Sarada Mandir at Sarisha and the two Training Schools for nurses in Trivandrum and Calcutta. Moreover, there are separate arrangements for women in other hospitals, dispensaries and schools; and some institutions are

conducted only for them. The Madras Math also conducts a High School and a Primary School for girls.

Rural Uplift and Work among the Labouring and Backward Classes. The twin organizations have all along tried their best to serve the unfortunate countrymen who have fallen back culturally or otherwise. In addition to the more prominent village Ashramas like those at Cherrapunji, Raipur, Sarisha, Ramharipur, Manasadwip, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Sargachhi, Along Narottam Nagar, Coimbatore, Kalady, Trichur and Nattarampalli, a number of rural sub-centres—both permanent and semi-permanent—are run under the branch centres at Belur, Rahara, Sarisha, Tiruvalla, Kankurgachhi (Calcutta), Malda, Ranchi, Narendrapur and Cherrapunji. Of these, special mention may be made of the numerous village sub-centres started for educating the hill tribes in Meghalaya and a farming centre at Ranchi, specially meant for Adivasis and Scheduled Castes. Welfare work of various kinds was done among the Kukis and Mizos by the Silchar Ashrama. Our educational and cultural activities in Arunachal Pradesh are also proving very useful and popular. During the year, the organization ran in the rural and backward areas 15 Secondary or High Schools, 49 Senior Basic, Junior Basic, M.E. and U.P. Schools, 48 Primary Schools, 77 Night Schools for adults, seven Vocational Training Centres, a Rural Librarianship Training Centre, a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre, a School of Agriculture, a College of Rural Higher Education and an institute for training village youths in farming—with a total of 20,809 students. The organization also conducted 21 Outdoor Dispensaries treating 4,19,040 patients and seven Mobile Dispensaries serving 1,24,537 patients, besides running 153 Milk distribution centres and a number of libraries with three mobile units—all located in the rural and backward areas. In addition to such varied activities, preaching and educative tours, screening movie-films and slides, and such other efforts were also undertaken frequently. For the labouring classes in the industrial areas, the Mission conducted several night schools, community centres, etc.

Mass Contact : From the foregoing account it will be evident that the organization's activities are not confined or concentrated in urban areas alone; they are spread over other fields as well. The message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is steadily spreading in all parts of India, which is evident from the participation of innumerable people during the annual celebrations. The

Ashramas and temples also draw thousands of people throughout the year. Over and above these, there are a number of medical institutions where lakhs of people get free medicines and thousands are treated in the indoor departments. In the educational institutions also a considerable number of poor students get free education, board, or lodging. The organization is also running a good number of free libraries in the rural areas. The publication centres sometimes sell booklets at a nominal price to suit the pocket of the masses.

Spiritual and Cultural Work : Both the Math and the Mission centres laid emphasis on the dissemination of the spiritual and cultural ideals of India, and through various types of activity tried to give a practical shape to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that all religions are true. The centres established real points of contact among people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. More than 115 Libraries containing a vast number of books and journals were conducted by them. Attached to the libraries, Reading Rooms were maintained in many places. One Sanskrit Chatushpathi too was run. At least ten centres published books on religious subjects and 12 journals in different languages. The Math centres at Mayavati, Baghbazar (Calcutta), Madras, Nagpur, Mysore, Rajkot, Trichur, and Bhubaneswar, in particular, have to their credit a considerable number of useful publications. Some of our foreign centres too are publishing valuable books. Special mention should be made of the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, which has been trying to bring together eminent men and women of India and other lands in cultural fellowship. It may not be out of place to tell here of the continuous preaching of Vedanta through classes and lectures for quite a few years now, being carried on by Swami Nihareyananda in South Africa (Rhodesia) and East Africa, with Salisbury (35, Rhodes Avenue) as his centre.

Relief and Rehabilitation Work : As usual the Mission undertook relief and rehabilitation work either directly through the Headquarters or in conjunction with some branch centres. Some work was also conducted by the branch centres themselves.

The *Bangladesh Relief* was carried on through the branch centres at Dacca, Narayanganj, Bagerhat and Dinajpur.

The following relief works were conducted in India :

A. Flood Relief—(1) at Ghatal, Jorhat, Khowang, and Hatikhal by the Headquarters;

(2) at Contai and Bhadia by Contai Sevashrama; (3) at Chandmari by Saradapitha; (4) at Panchthupi and Kandi by Sargachhi Ashrama; (5) at Jahangirpuri by Delhi Ashrama; (6) at Rangaduar by Gauhati Ashrama; and (7) at Rahara by Rahara Ashrama.

B. Cyclone Relief—(1) at Gollapalem, Dwaraka, Irali, Malakaylanka, Palakayatippa, etc. in Andhra Pradesh by the Headquarters and Rajahmundry Ashrama; (2) at Manapparai, Alangudi, etc. in Tamil Nadu by Madras Math and the Madras Mission centre; (3) at Bhaitgarh (Contai) by the Headquarters.

C. Fire Relief was conducted in Arunachal Pradesh by Along centre.

D. Drought Relief was conducted in Purulia by Purulia Vidyapith.

E. Medical Relief was conducted at Sagar Mela by Seva Pratishthan and Manasadwip Ashrama.

F. Rehabilitation Work—(1) The construction work of 40 pucca houses started by the Headquarters last year at Panisagar in Tripura has been completed; (2) construction of 1,000 pucca houses and 3 Community Halls was taken up in Andhra Pradesh by the Headquarters; and (3) the work of constructing 57 pucca houses and two Community Halls in Tamil Nadu was in progress.

Annual Celebrations : Most of the Math and

the Mission centres appropriately observe the days sanctified by the advent of great saints and prophets. The general features of the celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi (the Holy Mother) and Swami Vivekananda are : Special worship, *Homa* (making offerings in the sacred fire), chanting of scriptural texts, *Bhajan* and *Sankirtan* (often in chorus), distribution of *Prasad* (sacramental food) to the devotees, feeding of the poor in large numbers, and lectures by eminent speakers including the Swamis of the Order. Thus the message of Sri Ramakrishna and his direct associates is steadily spreading, and many young and ardent souls are coming into closer touch with the ideals of the Math and the Mission. In co-operation with the local public, a few centres celebrate some of the more popular Hindu festivals, accounts for these being maintained separately.

Donations : It is hoped that the generous public all over India and abroad will continue to help the Math and the Mission to respond to the cry of distress from whichever quarter it may come. All donations to the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission are exempt from Income-tax. Remittances may be addressed to: The General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math, P.O. Belur Math, Dist. Howrah, West Bengal 711 202, India; and cheques may be drawn in favour of either 'Ramakrishna Math' or 'Ramakrishna Mission', Belur.

'One must practice spiritual discipline such as worship and so forth. As one gets the fragrance of a flower by handling it, as one gets the smell of sandalwood by rubbing it against a stone, in the same way one gets spiritual awakening by constantly thinking of God. But you can realize Him right now, if you become desireless.

"In course of time one does not feel even the existence of God. After attaining wisdom one sees that gods and deities are all Maya. Everything comes into existence in time and also disappears in time. . . . God and such things really disappear at the dawn of Knowledge. The aspirant then realizes that the Mother alone pervades the entire Universe. All then becomes one. This is the simple truth."

— Sayings of the Holy Mother.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

Religion and Internationalism

Pope John Paul's historic speech in the U. N. in the first week of October was a memorable one for the relevance of its message and the power with which it was delivered. It was the second time that a Pope, the supreme pastor of the world's 700 million Catholics, was addressing the international representatives of the peoples of the world. It showed that even in the forum of shady international politics the voice of religion could still be listened to with the gravity, if not the faith, that it commanded.

Stressing the importance of international peace and solidarity, the Pope traced the cause of frequent recurrence of armed conflicts all over the world and the danger of nuclear holocaust to the attitude of mistrust and the will to destroy in the minds of people. 'The continual preparations for war...show that there is a desire to be ready for war, and being able to start it.' Referring to the concentration camps set up by the Nazis during the Second World War in his native land, Poland, the pontiff said the memory of those horrors should remind the people of the need to eradicate 'everything that is a continuation of those experiences under different forms, namely the various kinds of torture and oppression, either physical or moral, carried under any system in any land.

However, the major thrust of the Pope's speech was towards the need to reinstate spiritual values in human life. Modern civilization in the last hundred years has contributed as never before to the development of material goods, but it has also given rise to attitudes in which sensitivity to the spiritual dimension of human existence has diminished. In this connection he referred to the 'frightful disparities' between the rich and the poor both within individual societies and on the planet as a whole. One reason for this special reference may be the fact that, like Hindus in India, the major section of the world's Catholic population lives in the developing countries of Central and South America and in the not-so-rich countries of Europe like Italy, Spain and Poland. But another reason is the growing awareness among the Catholic clergy of the need to associate religion more and more with the liberation of people from all forms of socio-economic exploitation and tyranny.

The overall effect of the pontiff's speech on die-hard politicians might not have been much. It is nevertheless significant in that it was a sign of the growing recognition of the need for a spiritual dimension in international relationships. Every religion, whatever be its denomination, has global commitments and must always be awake to the dangers that threaten humanity. We hope the Pope's speech will serve to remind religious leaders all over the world of their international responsibilities.
