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

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## THE INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

*'The One Being the sages call by many names'*

अतो देवा अवंतु नो  
यतो विष्णुर्विचक्रमे ।  
पृथिव्याः सप्त धामभिः ॥

1. May the Gods protect us from the sins of the earth, where Viṣṇu walks through its seven regions.

*R̥g-Veda*, 1.22.16

इदं विष्णुर्वि चक्रमे  
त्रेधा नि दधे पदं ।  
समूढमस्य पांसुरे ॥

2. Viṣṇu set his foot three times, and lo ! the whole world was covered with the dust of his feet.<sup>1</sup>

*R̥g-Veda*, 1.22.17

त्रीणि पदा वि चक्रमे  
विष्णुर्गोपा अदाभ्यः ।  
अतो धर्माणि धारयन् ॥

3. Viṣṇu, the Guardian, whom nobody can deceive, made three steps, and established the Dharma<sup>2</sup> (i.e. the universal laws which govern life and existence).

*R̥g-Veda*, 1.22.18

विष्णोः कर्माणि पश्यत  
यतो व्रतानि पस्पशे ।  
इंद्रस्य युज्यः सखा ॥

4. Behold the works of Viṣṇu, the close friend (*yujyah sakhā*) of Indra, through which he has revealed the rules of life (*vratāni*).

*R̥g-Veda*, 1.22.19

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\* No God is so beloved and important to the Hindus, none so popular and influential, as Viṣṇu, also known as Nārāyaṇa. Though in glory and splendour he outshines all other Gods, his chief characteristic is imperturbable calmness. All the Avatāras are his emanations. Strangely enough, in *R̥g-Veda* only five or six hymns are dedicated to him, though he is mentioned about a hundred times. But as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, the importance of a deity should not be judged by the number of hymns dedicated to him. These selections form part of *Viṣṇu Sūktam*. This is a new interpretative translation done in the light of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna—Ed.

1. According to Sāyana, this is an allusion to the Vāmana Avatāra of Viṣṇu. The line may also mean that the three worlds were produced by the dust of Viṣṇu's feet.

2. This is the first reference to the word 'Dharma' in *R̥g-Veda*.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

It is not enough to be a good person. We must also have the freedom to turn within and seek higher spiritual fulfilment. This freedom comes through detachment, the subject of this month's EDITORIAL.

One of the major problems of human life is the contradiction between obligation or duty, on the one hand, and the natural inclination of the mind and senses towards pleasure, on the other. Philosophers in the East and the West have pondered deeply over this existential antinomy. To make a comparative analysis of their views and bring them together on a common platform is an admittedly difficult task. Yet Dr. S. P. Dubey, M.A., M.A., Ph.D., has achieved brilliant success in it in his article OBLIGATION AND INCLINATION : AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE. The author shows how the views of eminent Western thinkers like Kant, Bradley and others were anticipated much earlier by Indian philosophers. His conclusion is that a satisfactory way to resolve the conflict between obligation and inclination may be found in the *Gītā* and the *Upaniṣads*. This article, a product of mature thinking and scholarship, was originally presented as a paper in a seminar conducted by Kanpur University. The author, who regularly reviews books in the columns of this journal, is of the Department of Postgraduate Studies and Research in Philosophy, University of Jabalpur.

Though science and technology have given modern man material comforts, they have not made him happy. The main cause for his unhappiness is that he has lost the meaning of life. Where and how can he find this meaning? He can discover this only in the joy of those who have attained spiritual illumination, says Swami Budhananda in his thought-provoking article JOY OF THE

ILLUMINED. Life becomes meaningful only when it is transformed into a means for the attainment of everlasting spiritual bliss. The relentless demands that religion makes on man are all justifiable in the context of the supreme promise that it holds forth. This is the first instalment of a new serial on the subject from the experienced pen of the author who is now the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, and is well-known to our readers. The serial brings together gems from the spiritual treasury of mankind with a luminous commentary of the author stringing them all into a new pattern of beauty and meaning.

In the second instalment of his article INDIAN HISTORY IN ITS RIGHT PERSPECTIVE, Swami Sakhyananda of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trichur, arrays astronomical data in support of his main thesis that India was the cradle of civilization. We hope our readers will find the author's lucid account of the basic principles of Indian Astronomy and the ingenious diagram of the wheel of Time interesting and useful.

With this issue we are starting a new serial *How They Walked on the Razor's Edge* with a view to giving to our readers an idea of the immensity of the spiritual struggles that the great saints of world religions had to undergo. The first article of the series entitled ST. FRANCIS, MIRROR OF THE WORLD gives a moving account of the life of one of the greatest and most lovable saints the world has ever seen. He was undoubtedly the most famous and charismatic figure in Christendom after Christ and his apostles. The author of the article, Swami Atmarupananda, who joined the Order in its Vedanta Centre in Chicago, is now a member of the editorial staff of this journal.

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# DETACHMENT

(EDITORIAL)

It is said that, when fire broke out in his famous industrial laboratory, Edison sent for his wife saying, 'She will never see such a fire in her life.' And when the building with its costly equipment and years of hard labour had been reduced to ashes, Edison coolly told one of his executives to look for finances, and then went and slept soundly !

When the great negro sage and scientist, George Washington Carver, was told that he had lost his lifetime's savings of seventy thousand dollars in the crash of an Alabama bank, he calmly remarked : 'I guess somebody found a use for it. I was not using it myself.'

These phenomenal feats of detachment cannot fail to impress us. We wish we too had a bit of it, for we know that life is full of difficulties and disappointments and, without a certain degree of detachment, it is difficult to lead a sane, peaceful life. Even to enjoy art, sports or entertainments we need what is called aesthetic detachment. When a man goes to a theatre or a stadium and buys a ticket, what he actually pays for is one or two hours' detachment. Comfortably ensconced in his seat, he can watch the most horrendous murder scene on the silver screen, or an exciting football match, with deep satisfaction. How different would be his condition if he were actually involved in real incidents of this kind !

Though detachment is an important psychological factor in normal social life, it is difficult to practise. The problem of detachment can be understood only at the deeper levels of personality, for the roots of attachment lie deep within us. It is only spiritual life that studies man in depth and it is as a spiritual discipline that we are dealing with detachment here. In this sense it is known

as *vairāgya*, which is usually translated as 'renunciation'. Since this word is suggestive of giving up the world and taking up monasticism, we have chosen the more comprehensive term 'detachment'.

## *Discrimination and detachment*

Both discrimination and detachment are important preparatory disciplines. Both must go together. Detachment completes the process of discrimination. Discrimination without detachment is lame ; it does not lead the soul forward. Detachment without discrimination is blind ; it leads the soul astray. When co-ordinated, these two disciplines cut the soul's bonds, and turn it away from the futile struggles of the ego for existence in the mundane world.

Discrimination gives us understanding and direction, but these are of little use unless they move the will and make us act in the right way. A well-known verse put in the mouth of Duryodhana, the redoubtable villain of *Mahābhārata*, brings out clearly the difference between the two disciplines : 'I know what virtue is, but I am unable to practise it. I know what vice is, but I am unable to desist from it.'<sup>1</sup> This statement can as well be taken as a poignant expression of the dilemma of modern man. His knowledge and discrimination far exceed his power of detachment. The result is an intensification of his sorrow and suffering.

## *Freedom and detachment*

Very often we hear people speaking about spiritual life, especially monastic life : 'Well,

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1. जानामि धर्मं न च मे प्रवृत्ति-

जानाम्यधर्मं न च मे निवृत्तिः ।

it is no doubt a good life. But there is no freedom in it.' What do they mean by freedom? Freedom to go to a movie, to read novels, to enjoy the pleasures of life—in other words, freedom for the senses, freedom for attachment. They have attachment to certain objects or experiences. It is freedom for this attachment that is generally known as 'freedom'.

But real freedom lies not in attachment but in detachment. It is only when we try to detach ourselves from certain habits and experiences that we realize how little free we are. A story popular in north India illustrates our condition. A man saw something like a blanket floating in the river and swam to it. But then he began to shout for help. The people on the bank told him to leave it and swim back. The man shouted back, 'I have left it, but it does not leave me!' What he had mistaken for a blanket was a bear! It is easy to get attached to persons and objects but difficult to detach ourselves from them.

We generally think that we have the freedom to act as we like. But modern psychology has shown that a good deal of our actions are unconsciously motivated. What we take to be a free action may be found to have a hidden desire behind it. Almost all our actions are prompted by various kinds of desires. And it is this action with desire that we often mistake for a free action.

Nor are we free to think as we like. A little introspection is enough to prove that thoughts do not come from nowhere. When we look at the sky and see clouds moving across it, we are likely to think that they are drifting aimlessly. Actually, however, their movements are governed by meteorological laws. In the same way, every thought that arises in our mind has a cause behind it. Thoughts are produced by *samskāras* (latent impressions of past experiences), and their sprouting follows certain laws of the mental world. Under a given

set of mental conditions a particular type of thoughts alone can rise in the mind. Apart from this, so many unknown forces, especially thought-currents emanating from other people, are influencing our mind. Where then is our freedom to think as we please?

In order to practise *dhyāna* or meditation, we must have the freedom to think spiritual thoughts and the freedom to direct their course to a particular centre of consciousness. This inner freedom comes only by detaching ourselves from distracting lower thoughts. It is only by attempting this that we understand how much we are controlled by past *samskāras*. True freedom lies in detachment from the hold of *samskāras*. Unless we gain a certain degree of this freedom it is difficult to practise meditation. Detachment is thus an unavoidable preparatory discipline in meditative life.

### *Virtue and detachment*

How does a spiritual man differ from a merely moral man?

In the first place, a merely moral person is not free to seek a higher form of existence, a higher degree of consciousness. He seems to be contented with a good life. But in truth he is attached to his own good thoughts and actions far more than he is aware of or is prepared to admit. 'What are you but mere machines until you are free?' asks Swami Vivekananda. 'Should you be proud because you are good? Certainly not. You are good because you cannot help it. Another is bad because he cannot help it.'<sup>2</sup> Goodness and badness depend upon *samskāras*. A good man is one who is controlled by good *samskāras*. A wicked man is one who is controlled by bad *samskāras*.

A life which is controlled solely by

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta; Advaita Ashrama, 1976), vol. 2, p. 34.



*samskāras*, even if they are good, is not free. It is not free to seek higher fulfilment. Consciousness has different dimensions, and a life that remains at a lower level of consciousness is undeveloped and incomplete. Such a life has missed the joy of spiritual adventure and the joy of rendering spiritual service to one's fellow beings.

Secondly, the merely virtuous person is not free from sorrow and fear. A person who remains at a lower plane of consciousness is not, in the first place, free from desires—even if these are good ones. In the second place, not having access to the spiritual joy associated with higher consciousness, he has to depend exclusively on his psycho-social milieu for the satisfaction of his desires. Since this environment is constantly changing and he has no control over it, many of his desires must needs remain unfulfilled. He cannot therefore remain unaffected by frustration and sorrow. As a matter of fact, good people, being softer and more sensitive, suffer far more than bad people.

Nor does conventional morality guarantee freedom from fear. A well-known Sanskrit verse says: 'In enjoyment there is the fear of disease; in social position, the fear of falling; in wealth, the fear of hostile kings; in honour, the fear of humiliation; in power, the fear of enemies; in beauty, the fear of old age; in scholarship, the fear of opponents; in virtue, the fear of scandal-mongers; in body, the fear of death. Everything in this world is followed by fear. Renunciation [detachment] alone [leads to] fearlessness.'<sup>3</sup>

The cause of fear is clinging to the self

3. भोगे रोगभयं कुले च्युतिभयं वित्ते नृपालाद् भयं  
माने दैन्यभयं बले रिपुभयं रूपे जराया भयम् ।  
शास्त्रे वादिभयं गुणे खलभयं काये कृतान्ताद् भयं  
सर्वं वस्तु भयान्वितं भुवि नृणां वैराग्यमेवाभयम् ॥

Bhartrhari, *Vairāgya Śatakam*, 31.

which Patañjali says is found even in the learned and the wise.<sup>4</sup> The cause of this clinging is ignorance. Ignorance cannot be removed by virtuous conduct alone. Only true knowledge resulting from the realization of the higher Self can free a man from fear. When King Janaka attained the highest knowledge, his teacher Yājñavalkya told him, 'Verily, Janaka, you have attained fearlessness.'<sup>5</sup>

It is now clear that morality is not an end in itself. The value of a good and virtuous life is that it provides a firm foundation to build one's spiritual life on. Virtue and goodness detach a person from the hold of vice and lower tendencies. But sometimes, especially in advanced stages of spiritual life, too much adherence to conventional social etiquette, and a prudish and priggish attitude become obstacles to progress. That is why Sri Ramakrishna used to say that good conduct was also one of the eight fetters that bound the soul.

A spiritual aspirant must learn to detach himself even from good conduct and good and harmless thoughts because he aims at higher freedom which is beyond virtue and vice. But it often happens that virtuous people are more attached to their virtue than wicked people are attached to their wickedness. Buddha and Christ found it easier to turn social outcasts, sinners and fallen women towards God than Pharisees, Sadducees and Pundits. Sri Ramakrishna found it easier to transform Girish than some of the orthodox people who regarded him as mad.

### *Love and detachment*

Voltaire's famous statement, 'God save me from my friends! I will take care of

4. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtra*, 2.9.

5. अभयं वै जनकं प्राप्तोऽसि

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.2.4.

my enemies myself', though intended as a joke, contains an element of truth. A good deal of our troubles and sufferings are caused by our attachment to our friends and relatives. For their sake we undergo no end of hardship, sacrifice and suffering. When they take liberties with us we are unable to protest, and when they neglect us we feel deeply hurt and miserable. Our difficulties increase when our love for others conflicts with our sense of duty, as happened to Arjuna before the great battle started.

What, then, is the way for us? How to resolve the conflict between love and attachment? The *Bhagavad-Gītā* suggests two solutions to the above problem: *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*. *Sannyāsa* is the total renunciation of all external relationships and duties. It means becoming a monk by cutting asunder human relationships and going beyond the pale of all social obligations. Evidently, this is an extreme step which can be taken only by a small number of people. For the others the *Gītā* suggests another method, namely, *tyāga*, which means *karma-phala tyāga*, giving up the fruits of one's actions. Though this may appear to be easy to practise, it can be successfully practised only by those mature persons who have understood the meaning of true love.

Love is one of the noblest of virtues. Jesus Christ identifies it with God Himself. It is indeed a universal unifying principle which governs the rhythms of life. At the human level it sanctifies all relationships, and sustains the harmony and solidarity of social life. It enriches and ennobles an individual's life, and gives meaning and purpose to his activities. So noble and essential a principle of life cannot and should not be neglected in any scheme for the solution to the problems of life at any stage. Says Swami Vivekananda: 'There are men who are never attracted by anything. They can never love, they are hard-hearted and apathetic; they escape most of the miseries of life. But

the wall never feels misery, the wall never loves, is never hurt; but it is the wall, after all. Surely it is better to be attached and caught than to be a wall.... We do not want that. That is weakness, that is death.'<sup>6</sup>

If love is the noblest of virtues, how can it at the same time be the cause of misery? The answer is, what we generally call love is not true love. It is usually an alloy of love, selfishness, greed and sense-pleasure. 'We get caught. How?' asks Swami Vivekananda, and proceeds to answer: 'Not by what we give but by what we expect. We get misery in return for our love; not from the fact that we love, but from the fact that we want love in return. There is no misery where there is no want. Desire, want, is the father of all misery.'<sup>7</sup> True love does not expect anything in return and frees the person from selfishness.

Sri Ramakrishna used to call impure love *māyā*, and pure love *dayā*. According to him, 'There is a great deal of difference between *dayā*, compassion, and *māyā*, attachment. *Dayā* is good, but not *māyā*. *Māyā* is love for one's relatives—one's wife, children, brother, sister, nephew, father and mother. But *dayā* is the same love for all created beings without any distinction.'<sup>8</sup> Again, '*Māyā* entangles man and turns him away from God. But through *dayā* one realizes God.'<sup>9</sup>

We should clearly know the true meaning of detachment. True detachment means detachment from one's lower self. In the name of detachment it is possible to remain callous and insensitive to the feelings of others. Such people, though detached from others, are deeply attached to their own

6. *Complete Works*, vol. 2, p.3.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

8. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974), p. 207.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 410.



lower selves. In the name of detachment it is also possible to cultivate dislike and hatred for others. But hatred is only the negative expression of attachment. Where there is hatred there is no detachment. A truly detached person feels neither hatred nor infatuation.

True detachment does not exclude pure unselfish love and compassion. As a matter of fact, it is only men of detachment, spiritual men, who can truly love others. All the rest only love themselves. The attitude of a detached person towards others does not depend upon their attitude towards him. His sole concern is the welfare and happiness of others. Furthermore, he sees to it that nobody gets attached to him, and turns the minds of all towards God or their higher goals of life.

### *The psychology of detachment*

The practice of detachment becomes easier if we know the mental processes involved in it. When we speak of attachment or detachment, to which aspect of our personality does it apply? It cannot be the physical body, as it is always an independent entity which cannot be attached to anything. Could it be the mind? But 'mind' is a nebulous term used to cover several aspects of mental life. If we analyse our thoughts and actions carefully, we will find that attachment and detachment refer to the will. It is the will that is bound and it is the will that has to be detached.

Popular notions about will are vague and varied. The great German experimental psychologist Wundt came to the conclusion after conducting a large number of experiments that what was generally called Will was nothing but instinct. A man decides to get up very early in the morning and sets his alarm-clock accordingly. When the alarm goes he finds it difficult to get up. If this happens day after day, he comes to the conclusion that he lacks the 'Will' to

get up. But suppose he has to catch the early morning train, or to appear for an examination. He gets up even without the help of the alarm, perhaps earlier than necessary. What has happened in this case is that one instinct (fear) has conquered another instinct (laziness). Most of our actions are controlled by instincts, which roughly correspond to the *samskāras* of Hindu psychology. True Will rarely comes into operation.

What is true Will? The Sanskrit term commonly used to denote Will is *icchā*; the *Gītā* uses another word, *dhṛti*. According to Hindu psychology Will is not a separate faculty. It is inseparable from 'I'-consciousness. As Śaṅkarācārya says, 'Will is another function of *buddhi*',<sup>10</sup> the intuitive faculty in us. 'I'-consciousness is the static aspect, and Will is the dynamic aspect, of *buddhi*. Will may be said to be a focussing or movement of 'I'-consciousness. Just as pure consciousness is distinct from thoughts and senses, so also is Will intrinsically separate from them. But in most of our ordinary desires and actions, Will is so closely identified with them that it is very difficult to distinguish between Will and instinct.

How comes this identification? Prāṇa or cosmic energy is constantly activating the *samskāras* (latent impressions of past experiences) in our mind, and what we call desires are the sprouting of some of these. That is why the *Gītā* says, 'This lust, this anger, originate from *rajas*',<sup>11</sup> where *rajas* refers to cosmic energy. In this way hundreds of desires arise in us, but we are aware of only a few at a time. Mere rising of a desire is not troublesome. It becomes troublesome only when the Will goes and hooks it. Only then does a desire get connected to the 'I'. Then the desire becomes

10. धृतिरपि वृत्तिविशेष एव बुद्धः

Śaṅkara, on *Gītā*, 18.30.

11. *Gītā*, 3.37.

a *samkalpa* (intention). Behind every action, physical or mental, there is a *samkalpa*. If the Will is not connected to it, the desire cannot affect us. It remains in the field of consciousness for a short time and then disappears. An oft-quoted passage in *Mahābhārata* says: 'O desire! I have understood your root-cause. You are caused by *samkalpa* (intention). If I don't make any *samkalpa*, then you will be destroyed with your roots.'<sup>12</sup> The *Gītā* also speaks of 'desires produced by *samkalpa*'.<sup>13</sup>

Every day we make so many *samkalpas* and strive to fulfil them, and this is the main cause for our attachment and connected problems. In order to stop making *samkalpas* we have to detach the Will from desires which are produced by the stored up *samskāras*. This is what detachment really means. When this takes place, we remain a witness of our thoughts, desires and actions without being affected by them.

Since the sprouting of *samskāras* into desires is caused by the movement of *Prāṇa*, the rise of desires can be checked for the time being by the practice of *prāṇāyāma*. *Prāṇāyāma* makes *samskāras* inactive. A similar effect is produced by certain drugs which inactivate some centres in the brain, the physical medium of mind, resulting in a kind of euphoria. But neither *prāṇāyāma* nor drugs affect the Will, and as long as the Will remains perverse, untrained, attached, man can never free himself from desires. For, when the effect of *prāṇāyāma* or drugs wears off, the *samskāras* sprout again, perhaps with redoubled force. *Samskāras* can be destroyed completely only by the light of higher spiritual experience. Till this takes place, the Will has to be detached from

*samskāras* through discrimination and intense aspiration or love of God. When the *samskāras* do not get any support from the Will, they gradually become inactive, and are reduced to what yogis call the *tanu* (attenuated) state. Only then will desires stop haunting us.

### *Yoga and Viyoga*

Śrī Śaṅkara says, 'Yoga [union] is really Viyoga [disunion], for in this state the yogi is disconnected from all troubles.'<sup>14</sup> In other words, yoga always presupposes detachment. Meditation is not ordinary thinking. It is a fully conscious focussing of the Will on an object at a definite spiritual centre. For this the Will must first of all be detached from desires and ideas. Next, the scattered powers of the Will are to be unified. And then, the unified Will must be directed onto the spiritual centre.

Of these steps, the first one is the most difficult. Once the Will is detached, it can be directed towards any object. A Will enslaved by desires and the senses has no power. But when it is detached and concentrated, it acquires tremendous power like a laser beam. It is this free and powerful Will that is the wealth of the yogi. As long as the Will is attached to desires, any attempt to increase Will-power will only result in the strengthening of desires and instincts. True Will-power comes only through detachment.

Detachment is an unavoidable preparatory discipline in the practice of all forms of yoga. Karma yoga is detachment and work; Bhakti yoga is detachment and love; Jñāna yoga is detachment and knowledge. Detachment cannot be practised by imagination. It has to be actively worked out and

12. काम जानामि ते मूलं संकल्पात् किल जायसे ।  
न त्वां संकल्पयिष्यामि समूलस्त्वं विनङ्क्ष्यसि ।।  
*Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparvan, 177.25.

13. संकल्पप्रभवान् कामान्  
*Gītā*, 6.24.

14. योगमिति मन्यन्ते वियोगमेव सन्तम् । सर्वानर्थ-  
संयोगवियोगलक्षणा हीयमवस्था योगिनः ।  
Śaṅkara, commentary on *Katha Upaniṣad*, 2.3.11.



tested in day to day life. Hence karma yoga is the first yoga to be practised before other yogas are taken up. The difference between love for human beings and love for God is that the former is based on attachment whereas the latter is based on detachment. Bhakti is nothing but a purified Will directed towards a Personal God.

### *Stages in detachment*

Detachment is not like making a broad jump; it takes place in stages. It is true that in the lives of a few people a sudden 'conversion' wrenches the soul away from the hold of the world in one jerk, but even in such cases the process takes some time to complete itself. As we progress in spiritual life, we find that our concept of detachment also is changing. There are stages in the progress of detachment, and they give an indication of the degree of unfolding of our consciousness.

According to yogis, *vairāgya* or detachment takes place in four stages. The first stage, called *yatamāna* (based on effort), represents the beginner's attempt to get rid of desires by the practice of discrimination, austerity and self-surrender to God. In the second stage called *vyatireki* (based on difference), the aspirant gains the understanding, 'So many of my past *samskāras* have been destroyed, and now only these few are left'. In the third stage called *ekendriya* (based on one sense-organ), all the external sense-organs have been brought under control, only the internal sense-organ (the mind) is now active. There remains only a memory of past experiences. The Will is no longer a slave of desires, but it is still not fully turned to the higher spiritual

centre. This is a state of restraint in which the aspirant, free from sense-pleasure, experiences the joy of self-control (*śama-sukham*). Meditation now becomes steady and effortless. In the fourth stage called *vaśīkāra* (based on conquest) the Will is fully detached and has free mobility. It can now be deployed by the yogi in any way he likes. It is at this stage that meditation matures into *samādhi*.<sup>15</sup>

Being psychological states, these stages are common to all the yogas, all spiritual paths. In these days when meditation is becoming popular not only as a spiritual technique but also as a therapy, these stages are likely to be ignored. But unless they are gone through, it is difficult to maintain a steady meditative life and attain any real spiritual experience and fulfilment.

With the enormous multiplication of distractions and objects of temptation in the world around him, modern man has greater need to practise detachment than his forefathers who lived a century ago. Modern life is becoming so complex and full of stress that without a certain degree of detachment it is now difficult to lead even a normal, peaceful secular life. And for spiritual aspirants detachment should become a way of life. His guiding principle should be that set by the *Gītā*: 'As ignorant men act attached to work, O Bhārata, so should the wise man act untached—for the welfare of the world.'<sup>16</sup>

15. See Vācaspati's gloss on *Yoga Sūtra*, 1.15. Śrī Rāmānuja also describes similar stages in his commentary on the *Gītā*, 2.55-58; and Vedānta Desika in his gloss identifies them with the four stages mentioned above.

16. *Gītā*, 3.25.

# OBLIGATION AND INCLINATION : AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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The problem of obligation versus inclination occupies an important position in ethical studies throughout human history from the very beginnings of civilization. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1.2.1) depicts it in the dialogue between Yama, the Master of Death, and Naciketas, where two different paths for mankind—the *śreyas* (good) and the *preyas* (pleasant)—are delineated. The Greek tradition tells us, through Socrates in *Meno*, that no man wills or chooses anything evil knowing it to be so. In the ancient religion of Persia, the great prophet Zarathustra (sixth century B. C. ?) showed the path of freedom to man—the freedom of moral choice—and invited mankind to help the cause of good in the warfare against evil. In the Biblical world the problem originates in the very beginning, with the story of Genesis. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve tasted the forbidden fruit as advised by the serpent, and their eyes were opened and they knew good and evil like gods. The Christian doctrine holds that it is on account of this Original Sin that the rest of humanity, beginning with their children Cain, Abel and Seth, suffers and is made responsible for the suffering.

The linguistic and theoretical formulation of the problem of obligation versus inclination in various religio-philosophical traditions might appear different. But they all face, in some form or the other, the moral tension between an 'ought' and an 'is'. Man is a rational and moral being. He is a self-conscious and self-determined being. By his very nature he is a law unto himself. And it is this moral law or *dharma* that distinguishes him from other animals.<sup>1</sup> The

animality in man drives him to passions, impulses, immediate gains and pleasures. It represents his lower or empirical self which is tainted by subjective imperfections. Had these animal tendencies not been in man, he would never have been moral. In the presence of these lower aspects of our nature our reason, *dharma*, or moral consciousness arises which tells us that we are not mere victims of our inclinations. We are the children of Immortality (*amṛtasya putrāḥ*), and our real nature is not to be confused with our lower tendencies. We ought to realize our true form and act accordingly. Thus the struggle begins between the two aspects of our nature, the ideal and the actual, the higher and the lower, which the *Gītā* has described as the *daivī* (divine) and the *āsurī* (demonic) tendencies of man, and the Zoroastrian religion as the fight between the principle of good (Ahura Mazda) and that of evil (Ahriman). Our inclinations of the lower nature are mostly due to psycho-physical needs and are said to be natural. A non-discriminating mind is also said to be inclined towards physical pleasure and self-interest. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* tells us that we do things for happiness, and do not do what does not give us pleasure.<sup>2</sup> And the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* tells us that it is for the sake of the Self that everything is dear to us.<sup>3</sup> But

धर्मो हि तेषामधिको विशेषो धर्मेण हीनः

पशुभिः समानः ॥

*Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparvan, 294.29.

2. यदा वै सुखं लभतेऽथ करोति नासुखं लब्ध्वा

करोति ।

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.22.

3. आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति ।

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.5.6.

1. आहारनिद्राभयमैश्वर्यं सामान्यमेतद्

पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।



the question arises as to what is the real nature of our pleasure and of the Self. Idealists and perfectionists on the one hand, and realists and hedonists on the other, represent two opposite standpoints on these questions. The Indian and Western approaches towards understanding the problem and attempts to provide solutions also substantially vary. It will be our endeavour in the present paper to briefly review the problem as treated in the East and in the West and to show that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* provides the best solution or approach to it.

In Indian tradition the two terms, morality and religion, or *nīti* and *dharma*, are quite often used synonymously. *Nīti* is that which carries forward,<sup>4</sup> and *dharma* is that which holds us fast.<sup>5</sup> *Nīti*, further, is the basis of all the four human ends (*puruṣārthas*);<sup>6</sup> and those who are degraded ethically or morally cannot be purified even by the Vedas.<sup>7</sup> As *nīti* is the same as *dharma*, *anīti* is identical with *adharma*. Kundakunda, in his *Pravacanasāra*, identifies conduct with *dharma* (*cāritryam khalu dharmo*). Obligation and inclination, as understood in the Western sense, correspond to *dharma* and *adharma* (or *dharma* and *kāma*) in the Indian tradition. We can find several other words that might correspond to the Western concepts. When used in various fields—such as the social, legal, personal and natural—the term obligation can be equated with words like *karma* (rite), *vidhi* (injunction), *codanā* (commandment), *niyama* (prescrip-

tion), *vrata* (observance), *pratijñā* (vow), *samaya* (established rules of conduct, as in Jainism), *ṛṇa* (debt), and *bandha* (binding). Inclination, on the other hand, symbolizes what is opposed to obligation. The term '*pravṛtti*', as used in the sense of attachment and as opposed to *nivṛtti*, is a synonym of inclination. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* brings together the lower tendencies under three words, namely, *kāma* (lust), *krodha* (anger), and *lobha* (greed).<sup>8</sup> Likewise, virtues or qualities leading to *nivṛtti* have been brought together under three heads by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (5. 2. 3), namely, *dama* (self-restraint), *dāna* (self-sacrifice), and *dayā* (compassion).

In Vedic texts, social or moral order or obligation finds its base in the cosmic order represented by the concept of *ṛta*. There Varuṇa (the king, *rājā*) is the presiding deity of morality who punishes (like Yahweh in Judaism) those who disobey the law and makes them ill. Those who are able to please him through prayer and expiation are consequently cured.<sup>9</sup> The external control on the moral behaviour of man, either by religious, social, legal or natural authorities, is marked in the early phases of human history in almost all cultures (except, perhaps, in Greece). But, as cultures advanced, attempts were made to find out the basis of morality in inner consciousness and it was realized that the intention of the doer was to be judged rather than the external act. It was discovered that the mental plane was the place of origin of human activity, be it moral or not moral.

In Indian psychology the *citta* (mind) includes the psyche, the intellect and the ego.<sup>10</sup> This *citta* is affected by the three

4. नयनाक्षीतिरुच्यते

—Kāmandaka Nītisāra.

5. धारणात् धर्ममित्याहुः

—Mahābhārata, Kāṇḍaparvan, 69, 50.

6. सर्वोपजीवकं लोकस्थितिकृत्नीतिशास्त्रकम् ।

धर्मार्थकाममूलं हि स्मृतं मोक्षप्रदं यतः ॥

Sukranītisāra, 1.

7. आचारहीनं न पुनन्ति वेदाः ।

—Vasiṣṭha-dharmasāstra, 6.3.

8. Bhagavad-Gītā, 16.21.

9. Rg-Veda, 7.86. 5-6 ; 1.105.6.

10. चित्तशब्देन अन्तःकरणं बुद्धिमुपलक्षयति ।

Vācaspati Misra on Yoga-Sūtras, 1.1.

*guṇas* (as found in the Sāṃkhya system). Our mental dispositions change as one of these *guṇas* dominates over the others. For example, we are activated to do good work when the *sattva guṇa* is associated with *rajas* (the principle of activity), and perform bad deeds when *rajas* joins hands with *tamas*. The external impressions on our consciousness arouse desire, passion and inclination. The discrimination or the true knowledge of the various principles (the *vidyā* of Śaṃkara) makes us free from these inclinations. Śaṃkara, while commenting on the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* passage already referred to (1.2.1), notes that the two principles of good and pleasant, although associated with the four *puruṣārthas*, are opposed to each other, being of the nature of *vidyā* and *avidyā* or light and darkness. And although human beings have the option to choose between the two, people usually opt for the pleasant because the two are intermingled in such a way that for the ordinary intellect it becomes difficult to discriminate; only wise people can discriminate between them as the swan does between milk and water.<sup>11</sup>

Praśastapāda (fifth century A.D.), in his commentary on the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras* (*Padārtha-dharma-saṃgraha*), has made notable distinctions between motor activities (*jīvana-pūrvaka*) done for the maintenance of the body and volitional activities (*icchād-veṣa-pūrvaka*) done with a desire to gain or get rid of something. The former, roughly, correspond to actions done due to self-interest in Kant and the latter to immediate actions. The Mīmāṃsā notion of

*bhāvanā*,<sup>12</sup> which means that by hearing the Vedic commandments the person is inspired to perform respective rituals, corresponds to the moral imperative of Kant. The *niṣkāma-karma* (dispassionate activity), of course, is well known as an Indian counterpart of Kantian imperative. The contribution of Praśastapāda in the present context is further notable when he distinguishes between the *sāmānya dharmas* (duties obligatory to persons of all categories, e.g. truthfulness, celibacy, etc.—fourteen in all) and the *viśeṣa dharmas* (special duties to be performed according to one's station, e.g. the *pañca-yajñas*, etc.). He clearly seems to have used the term *dharma* in the sense of obligation. Further, he has emphasized the intention of the doer rather than his external action. He says that all acts are to be performed with pure intention (*abhi-prāya*) and not for a selfish reason.<sup>13</sup> When Joseph Butler (1692-1752) tells us that 'your consciousness approves of and attests to such a course of action (done according to the law of man's nature), is itself alone an obligation,'<sup>14</sup> he is explicating Praśastapāda. Is not Praśastapāda anticipating both Kant and Bradley in his twin classification of *sāmānya* and *viśeṣa dharmas*? One may point towards the Mīmāṃsā classification of *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* (obligatory daily and occasional rites). But we can observe that though the *nitya karmas* no doubt correspond to Kantian imperatives, the *naimittika karmas* do not correspond to Bradleyan duties according to one's station. The *varṇāśrama dharmas* (duties according

11. दूरं दूरेण महताऽन्तरेणैते विपरीते अन्योन्य  
व्यावृत्तरूपे विवेकाविवेकात्मकत्वात्तमः प्रका-  
शाविव । अतो हंस इवांभसः पयः, तौ श्रेयः प्रेयः  
पदाथौ संपरीत्य प्रथक्करोति धीरो धीमान् ।

Śaṃkara-Bhāṣya on *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.4, 1.2.2.

12. भवितुर्भावनानुकूलः भावकव्यापारविशेषः भावना ।

Apadeva in *Mīmāṃsā-nyāya-prakāśa*.

13. विशुद्धेन अभिप्रायेण कृतानां कर्मणां

धर्मसाधनत्वात् ।

14. Joseph Butler, *Sermons*, III.



to caste and stage of life), of course, present a parallel to Bradley's theory.

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Let us come now to a little more direct apprehension of the problem of obligation versus inclination in the Western realm before reaching even a half-considered conclusion. We can find in Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) one of the best formulations of the concept of obligation in the moral sense. Ordinarily we are under an obligation whenever a necessity of any kind is laid upon us to do something. But our action is obligatory in the moral sense, according to Kant, if, and only if, it is subordinated to an end which we cannot refuse to recognize as binding upon us, and which we cannot approve or disapprove at will. An inclination, on the other hand, is the tendency of a wish to issue in action. For Kant an inclination gives rise to a will, and accords only with a person's own 'actual or imagined welfare'.

Kant has admitted freedom of will to be an essential postulate of moral obligation. For him freedom is, in itself, a power of acting or refraining from acting independently of empirical grounds. He also admits that although freedom is implied in all our moral acts and obligations, the same cannot be proved inductively; it is based on faith in our free will. According to him, 'moral precepts are valid for every rational and free being, be his inclinations what they may. The obligation too is the same, with all degrees of inclinations to the contrary'.<sup>15</sup>

Kant belongs to the group of moral perfectionists (like Plato and Bradley) and has distinguished between perfect and imperfect obligations. Perfect or necessary obligations hold unconditionally. A duty of perfect obligation is that which can be clearly expressed in the form of a definite law, such as 'thou shalt not kill', or '*brāhmaṇo na hantavyaḥ*' ('a brahmin should not be

killed') in Mīmāṃsā. A duty which cannot be expressed in such a form, however, represents an imperfect obligation, such as the giving of alms or scholarships. They are hypothetical or contingent obligations. According to Kant, we are under obligation to make ourselves perfect, and when freed from inclinations we can be like the *sthītaprajña* of the *Gītā* (2.55-6). But Kant feels that our lower nature of sensibility is always a hindrance to this perfection. So he recommends elimination of inclinations and impulses so that we can reach (at least theoretically) the highest state. Here we may mark the difference between Kantian and Platonic approaches on the one hand and between Kantian and the Indian approaches on the other. Plato (in the *Republic*) recommends training of our impulses and appetites by reason in order to realize the ideal (although it remains always an ideal) and prescribes a programme for the same. Kant recommends their elimination (and for him also it remains only an ideal) without any programme. The Indian tradition, on the other hand, while corresponding to the training aspect rather than elimination of our lower nature, does not treat the end to be a mere ideal. In the *sthītaprajña* (man of steady wisdom) and the *jīvanmukta* (liberated man) the ideal is actualized. Of course the Upaniṣadic and Vedantic tradition of India can be said to subscribe to the perfect obligation theory (with some added perfections), as is clear from the Upaniṣadic *śānti-pāṭha*: 'That is full, this is full. The full comes out of the full. Taking the full from the full, the full itself remains.'<sup>16</sup>

The utilitarians, the intuitionists, the hedonists, and even some of the perfectionists,

16. पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ।

15. Immanuel Kant, *Reflections*, 6698.

*Isa Upaniṣad.*



find difficulties with the Kantian principle. The English churchman William Paley (1743-1805), who was Kant's junior contemporary, developed theological utilitarianism (initiated by John Gay) where he maintained that it was a beneficial tendency that made an action right. According to him, 'we are obliged to nothing but what we ourselves are to gain or lose something by'.<sup>17</sup> Earlier, Gay (1669-1745), having distinguished four types of sanctions (viz. natural, social, legal and religious), had pointed out that complete obligation to virtue could come from God only, for He alone could make the coincidence between my happiness and general happiness perfect.<sup>18</sup> The Mīmāṃsā approach to obligation might be called partly utilitarian, from sentences like '*svarga-kāmo yajeta*' ('one should sacrifice with the desire for heaven'). But we find categorical imperative also in this system, and no place for a God.

The intuitionist schools hold that the rightness or wrongness of an action is known by intuition directly. The Indian parallel to this position might be expressed in a sentence like '*mana eva manuṣyāṇāṃ kāraṇam bandha-mokṣayoh*' ('the mind alone is the cause of men's bondage and liberation'). The deontic logic (or the logic of obligation), as advanced by E. Mally, Kurt Grelling, K. Reach and G. H. von Wright, says that nothing can be both obligatory and forbidden at once. The basis of obligatory actions, for them, is intuition underrivative and *a priori*.

The hedonists (ethical) and the Cārvākas also do not subscribe to perfectionism. And neither do the psycho-analysts led by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Vātsyāyana (in India, centuries ago).

17. William Paley, *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, 1846, II.

18. John Gay, *Preliminary Dissertation Concerning the Fundamental Principles of Virtue and Morality*, 1931,

But the most interesting opposition to Kant's theory of the categorical imperative (and perfect obligation) can be seen as lodged by another perfectionist, namely, F. H. Bradley (1846-1924). This British idealist develops, in his *Ethical Studies*, the idea of self-realization based on the theory of 'my station and its duties' and finds several defects in Kant's doctrine of 'duty for duty's sake'. Bradley's theory is closer to the *varṇāśrama dharma* as developed in the *Gītā*. For him self-realization means realizing oneself as a self-conscious member of an infinite whole (*viśva-rūpa*). This realization is possible through doing the duties prescribed for one's station which one chooses once for all.

According to Bradley the universal in Kantian principle suffers from three major defects.<sup>19</sup> It is (1) abstract, (2) subjective, and (3) contradictory. In an abstract or contentless Absolute, either nothing could be willed, or what was willed was willed not because of the universal but capriciously. And the Absolute is not real in the world although it is treated as independent of this or that person. Further, the universal leaves a part of ourselves outside it. The 'duty for duty's sake' is an unsolved contradiction; the 'is to be', because it *is* to be, is *not*: and hence it is unrealized and unsatisfying. The doctrine of 'my station and its duties', on the other hand, according to Bradley, treats the universal as concrete, objective and non-contradictory. The polarity between the private and the ideal self is resolved here when the private self dies and 'by faith', somehow, is made one with the ideal whole.

The charges against Kantian theory have been met and it has been shown that Bradley's theory is also not free from defects, although Bradley thinks that he has mended the Kantian principle and that there is

19. F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 176,



nothing better than 'my station and its duties' nor anything higher or more truly beautiful. The Kantian universal, since it has thought-content, cannot be called purely abstract or contentless. Bradley's theory, on the other hand, is infected with vagueness and ambiguity. It suggests that one should be concerned with the realization of one's own soul only. Further, as a standard of moral life, it is not very determinate and clear in its implications.

The first objection to Bradley's theory can be met by noting the fact that Bradley treats the individual self not as an end but as a part in the organic whole. The individual realizes itself through the whole and vice versa. Apart from the whole, the individual self is merely an appearance, and not reality. The second objection is more difficult to meet. This finds a satisfactory answer in the *Gītā*-ideal of *sthitaprajña*.

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When we come to examine the Indian standpoints, especially in the context of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, we find that here the positions of both Kant and Bradley have been anticipated and a more satisfactory solution is provided to the problem of obligation and inclination. The *varṇāśrama-dharma* concept amply fulfils the requirements of Bradley, and is complemented with a concrete ideal of a *sthitaprajña*. The doctrine of *niṣkāma-karma* is a parallel to Kant's categorical imperative without being abstract, subjective or contradictory. The end here being God, the person is inspired to perform actions without any concern for the result. The ideas of *lokasaṃgraha* (welfare of the world), identity between soul and God, and the ideal of *sthitaprajña* make the *Gītā*-approach more satisfactory.

To take up the principle of the *varṇāśrama-dharmas* first, we find that although both the *varṇa* and the *āśrama* divisions are based on division of labour and responsibility, the *āśrama* theory has not created con-

troversy as the *varṇa* theory has done. The reason for this is the association of *varṇa* with *jāti* (birth) in course of time. *Varṇa* is, in fact, the selection (*varaṇa*) of one's own profession in the Bradleyan sense. It also indicates our mental colour (or the *guṇas*). It is not associated with birth; and when associated, it becomes controversial. In the *Mahābhārata* we find Dronācārya (born of brahmin parents) to have opted for the job of a warrior; and Kṛṣṇa, born of Kṣatriya parents, decides to act as a driver only. In the *Ajagaraparvan*<sup>20</sup> Yudhiṣṭhira tells Sarpa that due to considerable intermingling amongst various *varṇas*, the *jāti* of an individual cannot be easily determined. Hence it is the mental disposition which has to be taken as important. The *Gītā* emphasizes that we have to stick to the duties as prescribed for one's *varṇa*. Once we decide to act according to our station, there is no going back from it. The *Gītā* goes to the extent of saying that one should prefer death while doing one's duty to a change of profession or duty.<sup>21</sup> It is only after performing our duty according to the *varṇas* and the *āśramas* that we can aspire for salvation.

The *Gītā* determines the obligation of man on the basis of spiritual grounds of morality. It has distinguished *karmas* into three forms: *svabhāva-karma* (one's own nature), *svadharma* (one's own duty), and *svakarma* (one's own action). These are to be done in accordance with the Upaniṣadic commandment: 'Know thyself' (*ātmanam viddhi*). Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna

20. जातिरत्र महासर्प मनुष्यत्वे महामते  
संकरात् सर्ववर्णानां दुष्परीक्ष्येति मे मतिः ।  
सर्वे सर्वास्वपत्यानि जनयन्ति सदा नराः  
तस्माच्छीलं प्रधानेष्टं विदुर्ये तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

*Mahābhārata*, Vana, 180, 31-33.

21. स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā*, 3.35.

(*Gītā*, chap. 2) that the Self is unborn, deathless and eternal. After knowing the true nature of the Self, man dispassionately performs his social obligations. For Arjuna, the warrior, nothing is more obligatory than fighting a just war (*Gita*, 2.31). The individual is not concerned with the result of his action. Dispassionately he performs deeds and does not incur consequent virtue or sin (2.39).

Thus the *Gītā* expounds the theory of self-realization through the performance of duties according to our station in the society (*varṇa*) and in our own stage of life (*āśrama*). But the prescription laid down here is not vague nor individualistic. Lord Kṛṣṇa tells that He Himself has created the four *varṇas* according to the aptitude and action of man.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, we do these activities not for our individual purposes but for maintaining the social order or for *lokasamgraha*.<sup>23</sup> It is obligatory to see that the world does not go wrong. Śāṅkara tells us that *lokasamgraha* is to stop people from going in the wrong direction.<sup>24</sup> Further, Balagangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) observes that the doctrine of *lokasamgraha* emphasizes social obligations and it is in many ways superior to the Western as well as other Indian ethical theories.<sup>25</sup> The Western paths of surrender to God and practising altruistic hedonism are incomplete, while the Indian paths of exclusive knowledge and exclusive devotion have ignored social obligations.

The doctrine of *niṣkāma-karma* in the *Gītā* is perhaps the most notable contribu-

tion of that great scripture. It tells us that our concern should be limited to action only and not to the result.<sup>26</sup> Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to perform the duty of his position without caring for victory or defeat. A similar theme is present in the discourse between Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadi (in the *Vanaparvan* of the epic) where the former tells his wife that he does not desire the fruit of his duty (*dharma*). He does it because it is to be done. Those who trade in *dharma* do not get the result and cannot be said to be dutiful.<sup>27</sup> Outside the epic we find the Prabhākara school of Mīmāṃsā to have treated duty as unconditionally obligatory. But because of its atheistic basis it could not be accepted by many. Even the Mīmāṃsakas admit that the dull minds also do not get activated without any purpose (*prayojanam anuddiśya na mando' pi pravartate*). The *Gītā* promises that the doer of *niṣkāma karma* (or the *sthītaprajña*) will realize God.<sup>28</sup> The ideal here, moreover, is not contentless. It is God Himself who is present everywhere, as was shown in the *viśva-rūpa*. The individual, along with the whole of society (and the universe), is included in the Lord. *Niṣkāma*, in a way, takes the form of *bhagavatkāma* and *ātmakāma*.

26. कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā*, 2.47.

27. नाहं धर्मफलाकाङ्क्षी राजपुत्रि चराभ्युत  
ददामि देयमित्येव यजे यष्टव्यमित्युत ।  
धर्मं चरामि सुश्रोणि न धर्मफलकारणात्  
आगमाननतिक्रम्य सतां वृत्तमवेक्ष्य च ॥  
धर्म एव मनः कृष्णे स्वभावाच्चैव मे धृतं  
धर्मवाणिज्यको हीनो जघन्यो धर्मवादिनाम् ।  
न धर्मफलमाप्नोति यो धर्मः दोग्धुमिच्छति ।  
*Mahābhārata*, *Vanaparvan*, 31.2-6.

28. एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति ।  
स्थित्वास्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति ॥

*Bhagavad-Gītā*, 2.72.

22. चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।

तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्वच्चर्तारमव्ययम् ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā*, 4.13.

23. लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā*, 3.20.

24. लोकस्य उन्मार्गप्रवृत्ति निवारणं लोकसंग्रहः ।

Śāṅkara-Bhāṣya on *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 3.20.

25. B. G. Tilak, *Gītā-Rahasya*, 15.502-04 ; 11.343-45.



To conclude the brief observations made on the Indian and Western standpoints in connection with the problem of obligation versus inclination, it may be said that the approach of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in particular, and the Upaniṣadic tradition in general, is more satisfactory. Here we find a synthesis between the ideal and the actual, the individual and the social, the subjective and the objective, and the higher and the lower. *Niṣkāma karma* associated with the *varṇāśrama-dharma* and *lokasaṁgraha* integrates the best of the Kantian and Bradleyan doctrines of categorical imperative and self-realization through 'my station and its duty'. The identity between soul and God solves the problem between the individual and the universal. Both are ultimately one. And, since God is of the nature of bliss, the soul

finds bliss only when it realizes its own nature as being identical with the Absolute. When the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* tells us that it is for the sake of the self that everything is dear to us, it is having this absolute Self in mind, and not the individual soul plunged in *avidyā*. And when the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.22-23) declares that happiness lies not in the finite (because it is destructible) but in the infinite, it is revealing the truth that since the Self is identical with the Infinite (*bhūmā*), one can realize happiness only by realizing one's own true Self. Both these Upaniṣadic passages when read together—along with the exposition of the nature of the Self in relation to society, as found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*—provide a satisfactory solution to the ethical problem that man faces in the form of obligation versus inclination.

## JOY OF THE ILLUMINED—I

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

### Introduction

Has not the distraught modern man been wandering for quite a while in the meandering wilderness of frustration of his own making? Life's 'meaning' lost; the apotheosis of 'the absurd' gone awry; even fashionable 'alienation' — that 'post-intellectual luxury'—gone inane; it would appear that he has been perilously hovering on the brink of disaster, which, by grace, can be rendered unreal.

What the modern man needs is the sturdy and irrefutable affirmation of something attainable here and now, the revealing meaning and purpose of which have reference to the unattended ultimate questions. He needs the experience of the emergence of the

saviour that is within himself — the joy of spiritual illumination.

This monograph presents an ensemble of some of those supernal facts of experience which should make sense to everyone who is not totally devoid of rationality and goodness of heart.

The challenge implicit in attainable spiritual joy should knock every self-respecting human being hard on the head and touch him deep within the heart. It should quicken his higher creative impulses. He should be able to come out in God's open and see that the sun shines in and through him and that flowers blossom even today.

If we are seeking the meaning of life, obviously we cannot have it from those who do not know it, though they may be frighten-

ing scholars. We can discover this meaning only in the joy of those who have attained spiritual illumination. Why seek we in the wrong place the thing that is elsewhere and declare till hoarse that it is not there?

The modern man can have all chances of a more glorious future than the present if only he does not deny the recorded facts of experience, the joy of spiritual illumination.

Destiny's hearty invitation has gone forth to all who have cried for a satisfying answer in the desolate nights of agonizing asking. Only we have not had the humility to listen to the message.

It is time we behaved towards ourselves as if we were our friends!

### *Remorseless demands of the true life of the spirit*

The demands that are made on man by the true life of the spirit are, to say the least, remorseless and staggering. This becomes obvious to us as soon as we step into the inner precincts of the spiritual life. And the more one advances in inwardness, the greater is the intensity of such demands.

Are we devotees of the Lord? Then we are told point-blank: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.'<sup>1</sup> Furthermore: 'Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.'<sup>2</sup> What a cruel command! The cross means not only the burden but also the bleeding. While carrying the burden, and while bleeding, we have to follow the Lord whose face we have not seen. What does following the Lord mean? We have to love Him alone, with all our heart, soul and strength; none else and nothing else. Moreover, to be told to let the dead bury the dead is nothing less than to be told to become dead to the world.

There is none so jealous as God. To be accepted, one has to give oneself and one's all entirely to Him alone. This beautiful world, coveted human relations, hard-earned wealth and possessions, sweetness of dear ones—everything will have to be dissolved in that one all-devouring love which knows no sighing or casting of longing, lingering looks behind. And then alone one has a chance of being accepted.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa makes the demand very clear in the *Gītā*:

Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me... Having thus disciplined yourself, and regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, you will come to me.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, and whatever you practise in the form of austerities, O Son of Kuntī—do it as an offering to Me.<sup>4</sup>

Thus shall you be free from the bondage of actions which bear good or evil results. With your mind firmly set on the yoga of renunciation, you shall become free and come to Me.<sup>5</sup>

The demand in these verses of the *Gītā* is as exacting as in the quoted saying of Christ.

We have an interpretation of the meaning of the demand in this saying of Sri Ramakrishna: 'God cannot be realized if there is the slightest attachment to the things of the world. A thread cannot pass through the eye of a needle if the tiniest fibre sticks out.'<sup>6</sup> Imagine the absoluteness of this demand, though we may be devotees!

Are we followers of the path of knowledge? Then the demand is all the more severe. We have then not only to deny this world, but the body, the senses, and the mind. We have, as it were, to pluck out

1. Luke, 9:23.

2. Matthew, 8:22.

3. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 9.34.

4. *Ibid.*, 9.27.

5. *Ibid.*, 9.28.

6. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1942), p. 178.



our heart with our own hand. We may 'fall on the thorns of life and bleed', but we must not say 'ugh!' or 'ah!', for we are verily the Atman. We have to negate everything. Atman is 'not this', 'not this'. What a dreary demand for any sensitive person to have to consider this entire phenomenal world no more real than the mirage in the desert!

Usually we attain something by doing something. But as far as the attainment of immortality is concerned, there is no way of proceeding towards it through doing anything. The Upaniṣad says: 'Not through work, not through progeny, not through wealth, but through renunciation alone some have attained immortality.'<sup>7</sup> Notice the absoluteness of this demand!

If we are followers of the path of karma, or selfless action, we are told: 'To work you have the right and not to the fruits of the work.'<sup>8</sup> Again: 'Take refuge in pure reason; pitiable are they who work for fruit.'<sup>9</sup>

Is it not the most cruel demand on man that he should have only the right to work and not to its fruits? What would be the incentive of man to work at all?

*Why do aspirants accept the frightening demands of spiritual life?*

But the wonder of it all is that even such staggering, impossible, and remorseless demands are for the most part willingly and submissively accepted by aspirants.

To the extent that we are spiritual seekers, to that extent we all have accepted these demands. Those who are spiritual seekers to the fullest extent have accepted all these demands fully and have most willingly submitted themselves to their implications.

Why do the spiritual seekers willingly undergo such frightening hardship?

It is the beacon of the joy of spiritual illumination that makes them do so. Of course, there are many people who do not accept any of these demands; but they are not spiritual seekers. For the moment we are not concerned with them.

There is such a thing as the time factor in life. There was a time when many of us flouted the very things we would give our lives for today. The process of inward growth in man may come about in a variety of unnoticed ways. There are millions of people who are not bothered about anything spiritual. But those who care for spiritual life have a reason for doing so, and a pull that drags them on and on into ever greater sacrifices, hardship and sufferings.

It is the prospective joy of enlightenment that sustains these pilgrims through the valley of endless labour, suspense and agony. There cannot be any victory for one who is not prepared to go to battle. One cannot have the joy of spiritual life without going through its long and laborious struggles. Without receiving bruises, one will not be whole. Without going through the agony of spiritual life, one cannot have the ecstasy of illumination. This is the law.

Believe not those who promise you quick *samādhi*. Dare to look right into the eye of truth. Spurn the homilies that pander to your weaknesses. Hold fast to him as your truest friend who strikes you hard, if necessary, to show you what matters, the source of your own strength.

The intimations of this inevitable joy which breaks forth within the aspirant at the end of his strenuous inner journey, come to us from the scriptures of all the religions of the world. It is at this point that the differing religions attain a supreme unity.

In the ultimate analysis, the one unique thing that only the religions of the world can offer—as nothing else can—is this joy of

7. *Kaivalya Upaniṣad*, verse 2 (second line).

8. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 2.47.

9. *Ibid.*, 2.49.

illumination. If it were only one religion promising this joy, it could have been deemed a freak. When all the religions, in unequivocal terms amidst all their diversities, make the same affirmation, it attains a special significance. It is simply this: the only proof positive of the fact that one has not been worsted by life and the world, but on the contrary has triumphed over them, is the experience of, and graduation into, this joyous state of being, which nothing in the universe can overpower or destroy. On attaining this joy, a man goes beyond all fear, want, and all other limitations of temporal existence. He becomes a self-ruler, and participates in the power of God. Religion alone promises us this joy.

*Joy of spiritual illumination :  
intimations in religious literature*

In the Upaniṣads we have quite a few intimations of the joy of illumination.

What actually happens to the person who realizes his Self, or Atman?

The first effect of the realization of Atman is that the person is lifted above the need of feverish bodily activity, for all physical desires vanish immediately. The Upaniṣad asks, 'One who knows his identity with the Self and comes to realize that he is the Atman—for what reason should such a man enter into any feverish bodily activity?'<sup>10</sup> Is it a small joy not to have to slave for this body all the time?

In the second place, the Upaniṣad says: '... the knots of the heart are broken, all the doubts are solved, and effects of action are annihilated, when once he has seen God, higher than the Highest.'<sup>11</sup> What causes us all the travail of life, all our sufferings and miseries, are these knots of the heart, these doubts and misgivings that we cannot get

away from, and also the binding necessity of suffering the consequences of our own actions.

And what a joyous relief it is when, in the flash of a second, all the causes of suffering are destroyed! Think of the joy of one who has no doubts at all, in whose pure heart there is not the slightest trace of twist or craving, and who is guileless.

Then the joy of the mystic is not a soft, hesitant, timid, twilight joy, but a joy of tremendous power which nothing can destroy, a joy which rather destroys everything which is anti-joy. The Upaniṣad unequivocally declares:

Though the individual soul was residing so long with the Universal Soul on the same tree, he was yet infatuated and was grieving on account of his complete ineffectiveness, but when he has once become attuned with the Highest who is the source of all power, his grief vanishes immediately, and he begins to participate in the other's infinite power.<sup>12</sup>

When we hear about the bliss of Self-realization, we, being a calculating lot, are apt to wonder how much does this bliss actually amount to?

The Upaniṣad gives an analytical measurement, as it were, of the bliss of the realization of Brahman in a famous passage:

Suppose there is a young man—a noble young man of great learning, the best of rulers, strong in body and mind, and suppose the whole world full of wealth is his: that is one measure of human bliss.

A hundred times such bliss is the bliss of the human genii.

A hundred times the bliss of the human genii is the bliss of the divine genii.

A hundred times the bliss of the divine genii is the bliss of the Manes.

A hundred times the bliss of the Manes is the bliss of the gods, who are born gods.

A hundred times the bliss of the born gods is the bliss of those who have become gods by their action.

10. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.4.12.

11. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2.8.

12. *Ibid.*, 3.1.2.



A hundred times the bliss of such gods is the bliss of the highest gods.

A hundred times the bliss of the highest gods is the bliss of Indra, the sovereign of gods.

A hundred times the bliss of Indra is the bliss of Bṛhaspati, the teacher of Indra.

A hundred times the bliss of Bṛhaspati is the bliss of Prajāpati, the Creator God.

A hundred times the bliss of Prajāpati is the bliss of the realization of Brahman.<sup>13</sup>

And each time we are told that all the blisses, severally and progressively, belong to the sage who is free from all desires.

From this we can have an idea of the immensity, profundity, and intensity of the bliss of the knower of Brahman. Elsewhere it is said in the Upaniṣad : 'He who knows the bliss of Brahman whence words together with the mind turn away, unable to reach It—he is not afraid of anything whatsoever.'<sup>14</sup>

As long as one has fear of anything seen or unseen, imagined or real, of death or an enemy, of losing things one has, or of the failure of one's efforts, one can never be truly happy. The happiness of unillumined persons, however great it may be, is always shadowed by the fear of the loss of that happiness.

But not so is the case with the knower of Brahman. His fearlessness is absolute and indestructible. As the Upaniṣad says :

He becomes fearless because he has obtained a lodgement in that invincible, incorporate, indefinable, fearless, supportless support of all.<sup>15</sup>

He does not distress himself with the thought : Why did I not do what is good? Why did I

do what is evil? Whosoever knows this, regards both these [good and evil] as Atman.<sup>16</sup>

Obviously such a person cannot have any worry. And he is never in a hurry, for he has nothing to gain or lose or fear.

A man may not be particularly interested in spiritual life. He may only seek the greatest good or greatest gain out of life. If he will, however, follow his search to the logical conclusion, he will have to become a seeker of the experiential knowledge of the Self, for :

The Atman is sinless, without age, death, fear, any hunger or thirst. It has all its desires and ends fulfilled. This Atman should be known. He who realizes the Atman in this way after having sought after it, for him all the worlds are gained, all desires fulfilled.<sup>17</sup>

The Upaniṣad goes on to say that :

A man can have all his desires fulfilled, and obtain any world he may seek, even if he only waits upon and worships a mystic who has realized the Self.<sup>18</sup>

Thus we find that the realization of Brahman instantly brings forth these results in the life of the mystic :

- 1) Cessation of all physical excitement ;
- 2) Dissolution of all doubts ;
- 3) Obtainment of infinite power ;
- 4) Enjoyment of illimitable joy ;
- 5) Destruction of all fears ; and
- 6) Fulfillment of any end that may be contemplated by the mystic.

(To be continued)

13. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.8.1-4.

14. *Ibid.*, 2.9.1.

15. *Ibid.*, 2.7.

16. *Ibid.*, 2.9.1.

17. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 8.7.1.

18. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3.1.10.

# INDIAN HISTORY IN ITS RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

SWAMI SAKHYANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

## *Ārṣa-bhārata-pāramparyam and Bhārata-caritra-darśanam*

Following this national method of research given by Swami Vivekananda, the author of this paper has prepared two theses in Malayalam, the regional language of Kerala, on the traditional history and culture of India. They are : *Ārṣa-bhārata-pāramparyam* and *Bhārata-caritra-darśanam*.

The first book, *Ārṣa-bhārata-pāramparyam* which has already been published, is a history of the traditional line of those great Ṛṣi-teachers who built up the Aryan system of education and culture. The line starts from Sadāśiva-Mahādeva, the Teacher of all Ṛṣi-teachers. Passing through a succession of disciples like Brahma, Manu, the Saptarṣis, Vyāsa, Pārśvanātha, Mahāvīra, Buddha, Gorakṣanātha, Śuka, Govinda, Śaṁkara, and other great sages in the march of time, it has come down to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the present age.

The second thesis, *Bhārata-caritra-darśanam* which is yet to be printed, is comparatively bigger than the first. It deals with the timely changes effected in the socio-political and religio-philosophical life of the nation through the ages, more or less in chronological order. In this thesis, historical validity is given to the genealogies of traditional Manukula kings (Rājaraṣis) recorded in the Hindu epics and Purāṇas. Astronomical principles and all available data have been made use of in ascertaining the dates of important epochs in the history of ancient India.

## *Origin of Aryans*

The term 'Ārya' is applied to mean men

of high attainments in knowledge and wisdom, in culture and civilization. The word 'Ārṣa' also has the same sense, as it refers to the line of enlightened, cultured Ṛṣis. Both the words are derived from the same Sanskrit root 'ṛ', meaning to go, to attain, to know. Hence they are used more or less synonymously in Hindu scriptures. At the dawn of civilization great sages and seers called Ṛṣis who had climbed the pinnacles of knowledge, culture and spiritual intuition were born in India. So the people of India came to be known as Aryans.

In course of time, the meaning of the word 'Ārya' became confined to the higher classes of teachers and rulers (Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas) who were naturally superior in learning and culture to the common people who were engaged in trade and manual labour. The inferior or junior classes, the Vaiśyas and Śūdras, who formed the bulk of the society, were then considered Śiṣyas, meaning thereby the people under training to become Aryanized by the higher classes of teachers and rulers.

Apart from these Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas in India, no other Aryan race has ever entered this country from anywhere outside, at any time. Nowhere in the vast lore of ancient Sanskrit literature could we find mention of such an Aryan invasion. On the contrary it was from India that the Ārya Kṣatriyas and Brāhmaṇas moved to distant lands for Aryanization.

Other than the Aryan community of Ṛṣi-teachers, kings, and the people who followed different professions of agriculture, trade, cattle-breeding, horse-breeding, navigation, arts, crafts and physical labour—the Vaiśyas and Śūdras—there was never a non-Aryan



race of 'Dravidians' existing anywhere at any time in India's history. The division of the people of India into two arbitrary races, the Aryans and Dravidians, is a myth, deliberately made by the mischievous foreign scholars who came here in the nineteenth century to distort and discolour our history. If at all the word 'Draviḍa' has any historical or racial significance, it is with reference to the local name of a particular tribe of Somakula Kṣatriyas (Pañcajanas) who colonized South India long before the beginning of the Kaliyuga. They were Aryans of a high order.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Aryanization of the world by Manukula Kṣatriyas*

According to traditional chronological accounts of the *Rājataranginī*<sup>10</sup> and the Vedic astronomical calendar, Śraddhadeva Vaivasvata was crowned Manu,<sup>11</sup> the first king of human society in this age (*manvantara-mahāyuga*), by the Saptarṣis (seven great sages) in the year 8576 B.C. on *māgha śukla prathamā*, when the vernal equinox was in the first quarter of the star *maghā nakṣatra*, 120° on the Indian standard ecliptic.<sup>12</sup> The race of illustrious rulers descended from Manu is known by the name Manukula Kṣatriyas, or Ārya-Kṣatriyas. They were a class of men of the highest order, the cream of mankind, endowed with supreme wisdom (hence called Rājārṣis), prowess and

heroism. These Manukula Kṣatriyas branched off into two great lines: the Sūryakula (the Solar Dynasty) and the Somakula (the Lunar Dynasty). They, in course of time, multiplied into thousands of clans and tribes, and spread over the earth for the Aryanization of the world—'*kṛṇvanto viśvam āryam*' as the *R̥g-Veda* refers to them. Aryanization means the process of educating and civilizing the world of men by *mānava-dharma*—the law of righteous life enjoined by Manu. Impelled by this great motive of Aryanizing the earth, these illustrious Kṣatriyas, assisted by their Brahmarṣi-teachers, moved to different parts of the world by land and sea, mixed with the common people of those parts, imparted to them their blood, lineage, education and culture, and slowly raised them to their own level of Āryas—Kṣatriyas and Brāhmaṇas. This process of Aryanization of the world under the Manukula-Kṣatriyas and Brahmarṣis continued for nearly 5,400 years following the age of Manu, during which they reached every nook and corner of the globe, and established the traditions of Manu and the Aryan way of life, thought and culture everywhere. Otherwise, how should we account for the imprints of Indian traditions and culture, some of which are six to seven thousand years old, found even now in far-off lands like Indo-China, Indonesia, Mexico, Central America, Peru, Scandinavia, England and other places outside India? There is no civilization on earth, ancient or modern, without the tradition of Manu, the forefather of Aryan civilization. Names of Brahmarṣis and Rājārṣis like Viśvāmitra, Agastya, Turvasus, Yadu, Sagara, Rāma, etc. are still remembered in these far-off lands, though in corrupted forms.<sup>13</sup> There are references in the *Mahābhārata* and *Hari-varṇsa* to show how and when some of these

9. Vide *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), vol. 3, p. 292; vol. 4, p. 301; vol. 5, p. 343.

10. A famous twelfth-century work by Kalhaṇa, a history of the kings of Kashmir from the times of Manu to the Middle Ages.

11. In the *Mahābhārata* Manu is said to have had his seat on the bank of the river Sarasvatī which dried up in course of time. The city of Ayodhyā is said to have been built by Manu, and given to *Ikṣvāku*, his eldest son, from whom descended the Sūryakula Kṣatriyas.

12. Vide K. Srinivasa Raghavan, *Saptarshi Era*, Madras, 1974.

13. Chaman Lal, *Hindu America* (Bombay: New Book Company, 1941).

Rājarṣi descendants of Manu went to distant lands for the Aryanization of the world.

*Part II : APPLICATION OF ASTRONOMICAL DATA  
IN INDIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH*

*Prologue*

Astronomy is an exact science—that is, accurate knowledge gained by correct perception and inference with mathematical precision—about the motion of heavenly bodies in the universe of space, governed by the laws of time, or *kālaniyati*. This science of time-reckoning was developed in ancient India as a *vedāṅga* (part of the Vedas) to form the *pramāṇa* (correct means of knowledge) for measuring time. For, in the vision of the Ṛṣis who developed this science, time was the governing principle of life. We come into being in time, live in time and die in time. All our actions, good and bad, proceed from time-consciousness. Our aim of life is to attain the highest good by eschewing all bad actions that bring misery as their inevitable result. In order to achieve this end, the ancient sages wanted to control and regulate all human activities, religious and secular, in accordance with the law of time (*kāla-niyati* or *-dharma*), and so developed this science of astronomy in India. Calendars were set up for the guidance of people in all walks of life in order to control and regulate them by the law of time.

A nation or a race of people is said to be civilized when it becomes enlightened enough to be guided by the laws of time. And those laws are indicated by astronomical calendars. So, in a way, calendars may be said to be a symbol of civilization. All civilized nations, ancient and modern, have developed the science of astronomy and have set up calendars for guidance in all walks of life. Ancient nations like India, China, Persia, Chaldea, Syria, Egypt and

Greece had their own calendars, which now speak of the standard of life lived, and the height of civilization attained by those nations in olden days. They are our astronomical records of ancient historical epochs through which the nation has passed in the march of time. Ancient Indian calendars especially, in this respect, furnish the necessary astronomical data with regard to the positions of the stars, planets and equinoxes at particular epochs, enabling us to work out the dates of those bygone historical events. Dates of ancient historical events thus ascertained with the help of reliable astronomical data are far more valid than the fantastic theoretical evidences produced by speculation in the so-called sciences of anthropology, archaeology, ethnology and comparative philology, which are full of mutually contradictory, unscientific theories; and it is a pity that modern historical research is leaning more and more towards these pseudo-sciences for support of their speculations.

*Astronomical data in support of ancient Indian history*

India is the oldest of all civilized nations on earth. Knowledge and culture had their first dawn here in this ancient land of Bharata, and it is from here that civilized human races migrated to other lands for the diffusion of education and culture. Swami Vivekananda says, 'When the real history of India will be unearthed, it will be proved that, as in matters of religion, so in fine arts and sciences, India is the primal Guru of the whole world.'<sup>14</sup> India has the oldest of all well-developed human languages, preserved in her Vedic lore. Here alone is kept in record, though in the poetical, flowery language of the Itihāsa-Purāṇas, the traditional historical accounts, not only of this nation, but of the whole world as well. It

<sup>14</sup>. *Complete Works*, v. 5, p. 421.



is again this ancient land of Bharata that preserves the oldest system of astronomical science and national calendar in her *vedāṅga jyotiṣa*. It is said that this first calendar of the world was introduced by the Saptarṣis, the great seven Vedic sages, during the days of Vaivasvata Manu (8576 B.C.), the first king of the world. In this calendar, which was revised and modified from time to time, and in the Samhitās and Brāhmanas of Vedic lore, we find reliable astronomical data of many important historical events of those remote ages following the advent of Vaivasvata Manu. *Mahābhārata*, the great Itihāsa (epic) of India, gives chronological accounts of ancient India with valuable astronomical data relating to the Dvāpara-Kaliyuga Sandhi (the junction of the two Ages, Dvāpara and Kali)—between 3200 and 2800 B. C. Memorable events of this period like the birth of the Pāṇḍava brothers, Yudhiṣṭhira's *rāja-sūya* sacrifice, exile of the Pāṇḍavas, the Mahābhārata War, Bhīṣma's death, accession of Parikṣit to the throne, Kaliyuga beginning, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa's departure are truly historical, being corroborated by astronomical evidence. Purāṇas like *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* also give detailed chronological accounts with astronomical references relating to the early centuries of Kaliyuga—between 3067 B.C. and A.D. 300. Apart from the accounts given in the Itihāsas and Purāṇas of Vedic origin, we have valuable references in the recorded traditions preserved by the non-Vedic Jains and Buddhists. When we have so much valuable material for historical research, it is but intellectual slavery on the part of our modern research students to neglect them and hold on to the spurious theories advanced by the European indologists, whose only aim it was to distort our history and glorious cultural heritage, and depict our nation as a primitive race of people wanting to be dominated and civilized by the West.

In this context let us remember with gratitude the earnest and sincere efforts of Indian scholars like B. G. Tilak and T. S. Narayana Sastri, whose vast and deep researches on astronomical grounds into the Vedic lore have brought to light many important historical facts about Vedic India, which had been declared by the European scholars as mythical and unhistorical. The researches of Indian scholars like B. G. Tilak were done between 1860 and 1920 during the British rule. There was nobody after them for some time to continue the work they had started. It is, however, gratifying to note that recently a learned Professor, K. Srinivasa Raghavan of the Aurobindo Study Circle, Madras, has come forward to undertake the research work on national lines as envisioned by Swami Vivekananda and B. G. Tilak, and has brought to light further historical facts about ancient India. His valuable thesis, entitled *The Chronology of Ancient Bharata*, published from Madras in 1974, is worthy of study by students of Indian history. The following observations have been culled from 'The First Almanac' and Tilak's Vedic Calendar.

#### *Kālacakram or cyclic motion of time*

Time is rolling in cycles of days and nights, months and years. Hence this phenomenon is called *kālacakram* or the 'wheel of time'. The apparent annual movement of the sun through the zodiac (*rāśicakram*) around the earth (actually, the revolution of the earth around the sun) is called the ecliptic, or '*krānti-cakram*' in Sanskrit. The ecliptic is a technical term applied to the path of the sun among the fixed stars in the celestial sphere (*jyotiścakram*). Here the earth is supposed to be stationery at the centre (C) with the sun moving round it in cycles, according to the geocentric system of astronomical calculations. (See the appended diagram.) The term '*cakram*'

suggests that the ecliptic is a circle of 360 degrees (*bhāgas* in Sanskrit) in geometrical terms. It is divided into twelve parts, each part corresponding to a *rāśi* or constellation, the twelve *rāśis* together forming the zodiac or *rāśi-cakram*. The ecliptic is further divided into twenty-seven equal parts called

*nakṣatras*, or segments of constellations, each segment occupying 13.33 degrees of the ecliptic. This division into *rāśis* and *nakṣatras* makes calculations easier, by counting  $2\frac{1}{4}$  *nakṣatra* segments as constituting one *rāśi*. The relationship between *rāśis* and *nakṣatras* is shown in the following table :

<i>Rāśis</i> (constellations)	<i>Nakṣatras</i> (stars)	Starting Point on the Ecliptic
(1) Meṣa	Aśvinī	1
	Bharanī	1
	Kṛttikā	1
(2) Vṛṣabha	Kṛttikā	$\frac{3}{4}$
	Rohiṇī	1
	Mṛgaśīras	$\frac{1}{2}$
(3) Mithunan	Mṛgaśīras	$\frac{1}{2}$
	Ārdrā	1
	Punarvasu	$\frac{3}{4}$
(4) Karkāṭa	Punarvasu	$\frac{1}{4}$
	Puṣya	1
	Aśleṣā	1
(5) Simha	Maghā	1
	Pūrvā Phalgunī	1
	Uttarā Phalgunī	$\frac{1}{4}$
(6) Kanyā	Uttarā Phalgunī	$\frac{3}{4}$
	Hasta	1
	Citrā	$\frac{1}{2}$
(7) Tulā	Citrā	$\frac{1}{2}$
	Svātī	1
	Viśākhā	$\frac{3}{4}$
(8) Vṛścika	Viśākhā	$\frac{1}{4}$
	Anurādhā	1
	Jyeṣṭhā	1
(9) Dhanus	Mūla	1
	Pūrvā Āṣādhā	1
	Uttarā Āṣādhā	$\frac{1}{4}$
(10) Makara	Uttarā Āṣādhā	$\frac{3}{4}$
	Sravaṇā	1
	Śraviṣṭhā	$\frac{1}{2}$



(11) Kumbha

Śraviṣṭhā

 $\frac{1}{2}$ 

Śata-Bhiṣag

1

300°

Pūrvā Bhādrapadā

 $\frac{3}{4}$ 

(12) Mīna

Pūrvā Bhādrapadā

 $\frac{1}{4}$ 

330°

Uttarā Bhādrapadā

1

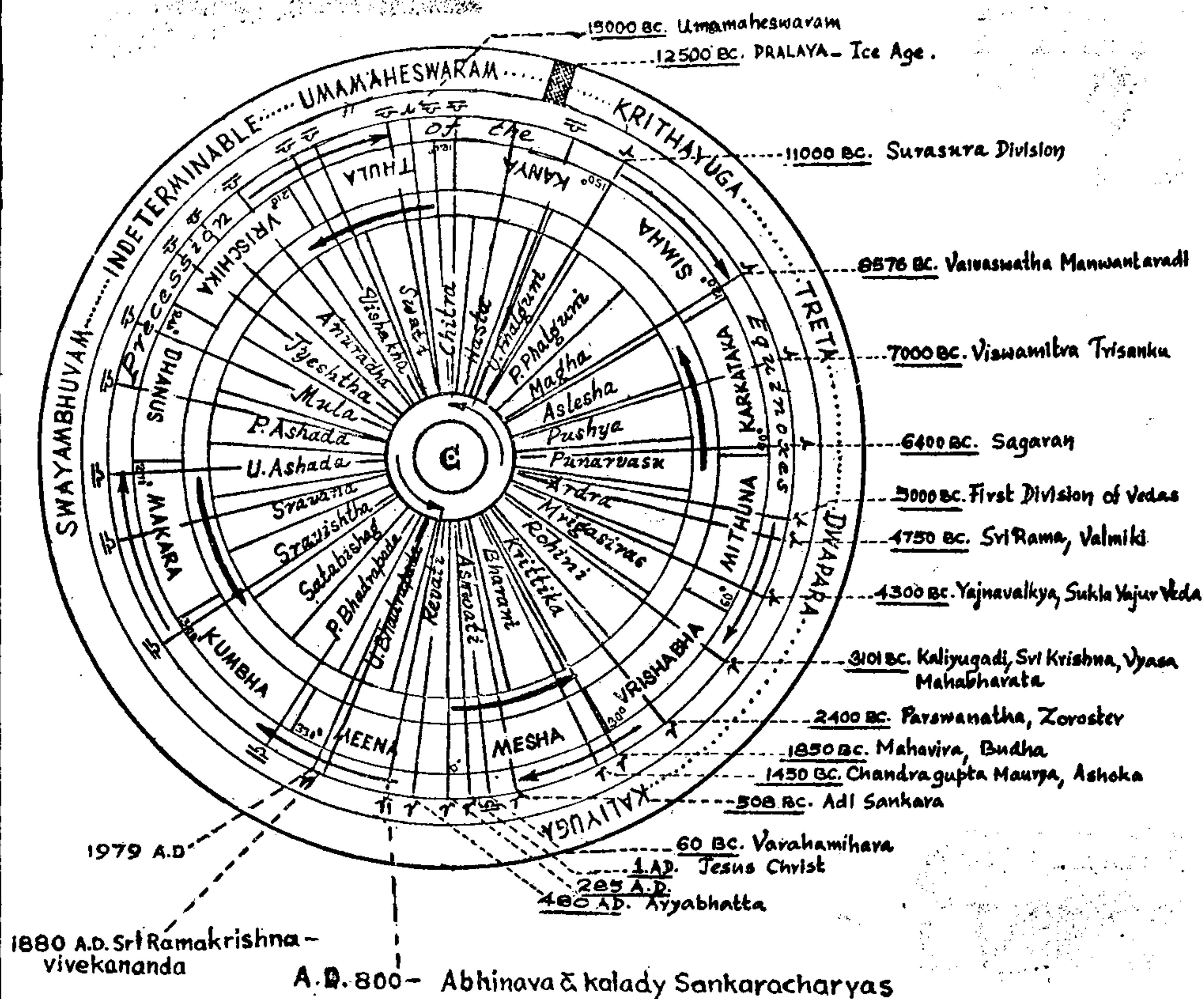
to

Revatī

1

360°

## KALACHAKRAM



ECLIPTIC:

Vernal Equinox -  $\gamma$ 

Indian Astronomical Standard

Autumnal Equinox -  $\omega$ 

DIAGRAM SHOWING PRECESSION OF EQUINOXES

### *Time-reckoning based on the diagram of the ecliptic*

The diagram of the ecliptic is drawn here in accordance with the standard adopted by the Government of India Calendar Reform Committee in 1957. According to this calendar, the zero point ( $0^\circ$ ) of the ecliptic is at the beginning of *āśvinī nakṣatra* and *meṣa rāśi*. Starting from this zero point, the sun moves in the right-hand direction on the ecliptic and completes one round (cycle) in one year. This annual revolution of the sun from  $0^\circ$  to  $0^\circ = 360^\circ$  is called a sidereal year with reference to the round of twenty-seven *nakṣatras* on the ecliptic of  $360^\circ$ . It is equal to 365.25 days. This period is divided into twenty-seven *sūrya velās* (sidereal periods of the sun) of 13.5 days each, and named after the *nakṣatra* segments: *āśvinī sūrya velā*, *bharanī sūrya velā*, etc. This division is specially made for the guidance of agriculturists.

A year is again divided into twelve months for civil purposes in general, and they are named and counted differently in different systems of calendars. In the Kerala system, calendar months are named and counted according to the *rāśis*: *simha*, *kanyā*, etc. They are called solar months as they are based on the sun's movement through the twelve *rāśis*. But according to the ancient systems of Indian calendars, months are reckoned and named in terms of luni-solar cycles. That means the period of the sun's movement from one conjunction of the sun

and moon on *amāvāsya* or the new moon day to the next *amāvāsya* is counted as one lunation, or a luni-solar month. It is a constant period of 29.53 days and is divided into two *pakṣas* or fortnights: *śukla* and *kṛṣṇa*. Each fortnight has fifteen days, called *tithis*: *prathama*, *dviṭīya*, etc. There are twelve such luni-solar months in a year, each beginning with the first day of *śukla pakṣa* and ending with the last day of *kṛṣṇa pakṣa*. The twelve months are named after the *nakṣatras* at which the full moon of the month occurs. They are: (1) *caitra*, (2) *vaiśākha*, (3) *jyeṣṭhā*, (4) *āṣāḍha*, (5) *śrāvaṇa*, (6) *bhādrapada*, (7) *āśvina*, (8) *kārtika*, (9) *mārgaśīrṣa*, (10) *pauṣya*, (11) *māgha*, and (12) *phālguna*.

This order was not, however, constant: it was subject to variation at different periods, in accordance with the beginning of the new year. During Manu's time, the new year and the first month used to be counted from *māgha*. After some millennia, the first month of the new year began to be counted from *śrāvaṇa*. For some millennia before and after the Mahābhārata period, the first month of the year was *mārgaśīrṣa*. Then it was shifted to *kārtika* and then to *caitra* as we see in the extant calendar which was fixed some 2,000 years ago during the time of Varāhamihira, the great Indian astronomer.

### *Change of ṛtus and āyanas*

A year is again divided into six *ṛtus* (seasons), each lasting for two months:

#### *Rtus*

- (1) Vasanta (spring)
- (2) Grīṣma (hot)
- (3) Varṣa (rainy)
- (4) Śarad (clear sky)
- (5) Hemanta (cold)
- (6) Śiśira (extreme cold)

#### *Months*

- Caitra and Vaiśākha  
Jyeṣṭha and Āṣāḍha  
Śrāvaṇa and Bhādrapada  
Āśvina and Kārtika  
Mārgaśīrṣa and Pouṣya  
Māgha and Phālguna



This division is subject to variation in accordance with the change of seasons at different periods, caused by change of *āyanas*.

During the annual round of the sun, two different *āyanas* or courses are noticed : one, the northward course called *uttarāyana*, and the other, the southward course called *dakṣiṇāyana*. In the northward course, the sun reaches the extreme solstitial point in summer, and hence it is called summer solstice. Nowadays it occurs some time about June 21. In the southward course, the sun reaches the extreme solstitial point in winter. Hence it is called winter solstice, which nowadays occurs some time about December 21. *Uttarāyana* begins with the end of *dakṣiṇāyana* and *dakṣiṇāyana* begins with the end of *uttarāyana* solstitial points.

Now, during each of these two *āyanas*, there comes a time when the sun enters the celestial equator, making day and night equal. (At other times either the day is longer than the night or the night is longer than the day.) This particular day when day and night become equal is called *viṣuvam* or equinox. According to ancient calendars, the equinox of *uttarāyana* used to occur in *vasanta ṛtu*. Hence it is called *vasanta-viṣuvam* or vernal equinox. The equinox of *dakṣiṇāyana* used to occur in

*śarad ṛtu*, and hence it is called *śarad viṣuvam* or autumnal equinox. Nowadays the vernal equinox occurs on March 21, and the autumnal equinox on September 23. It is quite clear from this account that the positions of the two equinoctial points are always at 180° on the ecliptic. For example, when the vernal equinox is on 0°, *aśvinī nakṣatra*, the autumnal equinox is at 180° *citrā nakṣatra*; when the vernal equinox is at 120° *maghā nakṣatra*, the autumnal equinox is at 300° *śraviṣṭhā nakṣatra*. Same is the case with solstitial points. When summer solstice is in *mṛgaśīras*, 56°, winter solstice will be in *jyeṣṭhā*, 236°. (It may be noted that in ancient calendars, the equinoctial points and solstitial points are mentioned with reference to their position in the *nakṣatra-padas* and not in terms of degrees.) The *āyanas* and seasons change in course of time, due to precession of the equinoxes, and this change necessitates revision and readjustments in calendars. Indian Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa Pañcāṅga (calendar), first instituted by the Saptarṣis (ancient seven sages), has been subjected to not less than six revisions and adjustments during the last 10,000 years, as we know from tradition—that is, the succession of Guru-disciples by which the knowledge is transmitted through the ages.

(To be continued)

*How They Walked on the Razor's Edge*

## ST. FRANCIS, MIRROR OF THE WORLD

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

It was a splendid palace, filled with armour bearing the cross of Christ as its coat-of-arms.

'To whom does this belong?', asked Francis.

'To you and your warriors,' a voice answered.

Suddenly Francis woke up and realized that he had been dreaming. Wonderful! he thought. In the morning he was to leave

for Apulia to seek his fortune as a soldier in the Pope's army. This dream certainly seemed a good omen, foretelling success in battle.

The next morning he set out as planned from Assisi, but with a heart made confident by this auspicious dream. He reached as far as Spoleto when he was attacked by fever. As he lay in bed half waking and half sleeping, he heard someone asking him : 'Francis, who can do more for you, a lord or his servant, a rich man or a beggar ?'

'A lord or a rich man, certainly !'

'Then why are you abandoning the Lord to devote yourself to a servant ? Why are you choosing a beggar instead of God who is infinitely rich ?'

'Lord, what will you have me do ?'

'Go back to Assisi, and you will be told what to do. You must interpret your vision in a different sense. The arms and palace you saw are intended for other knights than those you had in mind ; and your principality too will be of another order.'

Francis sat up in his bed in joyous amazement. Had the Lord really been speaking with His servant ? But what did He mean by saying that the vision he had had—the dream in which he had seen a palace filled with armour—was to be interpreted differently ? The only sure and unambiguous instruction given by the Lord was to return to Assisi ; and so Francis proceeded in the morning to do just that, in spite of knowing the teasing which awaited him if he were to return to Assisi never having reached Apulia, much less having fought and won battle-honours. For when the Lord Himself commands, what can man do but obey ?

\* \* \* \*

As he turned homeward he couldn't but wonder that the Lord had chosen him. Born in Assisi, a village in central Italy southeast of Florence, of Pietro di Bernardone, a great and wealthy cloth merchant,

the child was given the name 'John', presumably by his mother Pica. The child's father had been to France on business at the time of his birth, so on returning he insisted that the child's name be changed to Francesco (in English, 'Francis'), which means 'Frenchman'.

But though the name was changed to Francis, signifying his father's desire that he become a cultured man of the world, his later life accorded more with that of John—that is, John the Baptist, who lived a life of austerity, preparing the way for the coming of the Lord.

A pious legend tells that when the time came for Pica to deliver Francis, the child could not be born. Just then a pilgrim came to the door and said that the child would not be born in the elegant bedroom, but that if Madonna Pica would go to the stable and lay on the straw, the child would be delivered. No sooner had she done so than the child was born. Even now in Assisi this stable stands, converted into a chapel wherein an inscription reads : 'This oratory was the stable of ox and ass in which Francis the mirror of the world was born.'

As the boy grew, he was taught French and Latin by the priests at a neighbouring church. He began even as a young boy to assist his father in the cloth shop ; and he showed himself very skilled at business, except in one trait : he was very extravagant and wasteful. For at this time he showed signs of living up to his name 'Frenchman' : he was swept from his feet by the ideals of chivalry and the knight which took birth in the courts of love in Provence and with the Norman kings in Sicily. The boy was not satisfied, as his father was, with merely earning and saving money ; he wanted to turn money into enjoyment. Being the son of the richest merchant in Assisi, and having the capacity to earn money quickly and give it away just as



quickly, Francis naturally became the leading social figure among the town youth.

But we should not get carried away in describing the boy's dissipations. He no doubt spent his money lavishly on food and drink for himself and his friends, and they indeed used to go arm in arm through the streets at night singing songs of valour and romance at the top of their voices, disturbing the town's slumber. But chivalry carried with it a high, albeit worldly, code of honour, which exerted a strong influence on Francis. He was very modest regarding the opposite sex, and no one dared to utter an evil word in his presence. He would not reply if anyone addressed him with obscenities, rather his countenance would harden to harshness. Moreover, he had a heart which melted for the poor, and his extravagance extended even to them. For he was thoroughly imbued with the medieval faith in the words of Christ: 'As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.' He knew that the most he could expect in return for his generosity to friends was a useless word of thanks; but in return for the least gift given to the poor, God promised a hundredfold reward in heaven.

One day as he was busy selling cloth in the shop, a beggar came asking alms *per amor di Dio*, 'for the love of God'. But Francis was so busy that he gave nothing, and the beggar walked away empty-handed.

Then Francis woke from his absorption in business and was stung to the quick by the thought: 'If that beggar had made his request in the name of some great prince, you would surely have given him what he asked; how much more so you should have done it when he begged in the name of the King of kings and Lord of all!' He resolved never again to refuse anyone who begged in the name of God, and ran to find the beggar and give him what he asked.

Francis was endowed with the poet's passion for nature, and in this too he seem-

ed to be living up to his name 'Frenchman'. The district of Umbria, in which lay Assisi, was rich food to his eye and heart: the mountains and valleys, the vineyards, everything spoke of beauty. But soon there was to be a purging of this passion, and then a transformation of it. As a German mystic has said, 'No one has a true love for created things unless he has first forsaken it for love of God, so that it has been dead for him and he dead for it.'

In his twenty-third year Francis fell seriously ill, so ill that for some weeks his life was despaired of. His convalescence lasted months; and by the time his cure had been effected, the sweetness was off life. The youthful fervour, the passion for life, the love of nature, all seemed dead. Though his body was cured of the disease, something within his heart had withered. The young Francis didn't quite understand what was wrong, nor did he realize that this was the grace of God preparing his heart for the entry of His Son, Jesus. For as long as the heart is full of created things, there is no room for the holy Child of the Creator, who loves nothing so much as poverty of spirit, which is emptiness of 'things', which is purity. Not understanding the ways of the spirit, Francis tried to revive that old passion by surrendering ever more completely to the urge for a life of chivalric honour.

And soon his chance came. At this time there was a war being waged in southern Italy between the Germans and the Pope over the throne of emperor. A surge of national inspiration brought the Italians under the banner of the Pope in order to throw out the foreign forces. One of the noblemen of Assisi armed himself to go with a small band to aid the Pope's army in Apulia. Francis jumped at this opportunity and made ready to go. Being a wealthy merchant's son, no expense was spared in outfitting him for war. But just before starting, Francis, whose heart always melted



at the sight of another's need, saw a nobleman, a fellow-traveller, who could not clothe himself properly due to poverty. Francis removed his own costly garments and gave them to the poor nobleman in exchange for his poor things. That night, some say as a divine reward for this generosity, Francis had the dream of the palace filled with armour bearing the cross of Christ as its coat-of-arms, the dream in which a voice told him that all this was to be his and his warriors'. And it was the next day that he started out expectantly for Apulia, stopped on reaching Spoleto with fever, and heard the voice of God calling him during his sleep, telling him to return to Assisi, for the vision he had had was to be interpreted differently.

\* \* \* \*

Now, as Francis re-entered Assisi, still wondering at the mysterious ways of God, the town's people were at first surprised and apprehensive; and then, when they discovered that Francis had merely given up his enterprise for no apparent reason, they jeered at him. But soon he was forgiven this eccentricity, just as he had been forgiven so many before.

Once home, Francis soon fell back into the old life, unable to resist the momentum of old habits and the fellowship of old companions. He tried to appear jovial as ever, but a conflict had arisen in his heart: at times he unconsciously followed the call of the world, and at times he awakened to the call of God, the call he had heard in Spoleto: 'Why are you abandoning the Lord to devote yourself to a servant?' And when this call came, he felt urged to go into solitude and listen more until further instruction might come from God. Gradually, as this conflict grew in intensity, he lost interest in his friends; but they didn't lose interest in him. So to avoid appearing singular, Francis continued to play the luxurious host.

Then, one summer evening in 1205 invitations were sent out for a feast more lavish than ever, at which Francis was to be king. After dinner the party as usual went singing through the streets, Francis following at a distance, holding his wand of office. But instead of singing he was listening, when suddenly the Lord touched his heart with such heavenly sweetness that he could neither speak nor move. He lost all external consciousness and, as he later said, even if he had been chopped into pieces on the spot he would have known nothing of it. When the companions saw that he was missing, they turned around and went back and found him a transformed man. They asked him tauntingly, 'What were you thinking of? Why didn't you follow us? Were you thinking of getting married?'

He answered with new-found purpose, 'You are right: I was thinking of wooing the noblest, richest and most beautiful bride ever seen.' His friends merely laughed at him, not knowing that he had vowed to wed Lady Poverty, the beloved handmaid of Christ, rich in spiritual virtue, the bride of all who seek to serve the great King. But Francis hardly heard their laughter, for his heart was stung with remorse at the thought that his whole life had been wasted in childish folly. From that moment he began to think little of himself and to think greatly of God who had chosen him in spite of his weaknesses.

The urge to know clearly the will of God now became insistent. He continued outwardly to live much the same life as he had before, except that, in place of his friends, he now sought out the poor, and to them he gave feasts. He turned no beggar away; if he was far from home when approached by a beggar, he would remove his shirt or belt or whatever he could give. And often while walking through the streets he would suddenly and unexpectedly go off to a church to pray.



Francis could not remain satisfied, however, with merely feasting the poor. So he set out one day on a pilgrimage to Rome, a place where none knew him and where he therefore hoped to fulfil his heart's desire unseen by friends. There, in front of the church of St. Peter, he saw his chance: standing at the church entrance were a number of beggars asking alms. Quietly Francis borrowed the clothes of one of them and himself stood for alms before the church. The fulness of his heart was betrayed by the fact that he begged in French, the language he used whenever his heart was too filled with joy to find expression in Italian, the language which was to him poetry itself, the language of joy, of love, of romance and adventure. So long Francis had worshipped poverty from a distance, but now he had tasted for himself the wonderful freedom of holy poverty, poverty assumed wilfully and joyfully for the love of God. After a while he put on once again his own garments and returned to Assisi, praying that God give him guidance.

Back in Assisi, Francis was praying one day when suddenly the Lord answered: 'O Francis, if you want to know My will, you must hate and despise all that which hitherto your body has loved and desired to possess. Once you begin to do this all that formerly seemed sweet and pleasant to you will become bitter and unbearable; and instead, the things that formerly made you shudder will bring you great sweetness and content.' At last, the Lord had told His

servant what He wanted of him! Finally he had some definite instruction to follow!

Francis began to ponder long over the meaning of these words. Then one day as he was riding his horse he was shocked to suddenly notice a leper a few steps distant. His first instinct was to flee, for there was nothing more repugnant to him than the decayed shape and sickening smell of lepers. But the words of God still echoed in his heart: 'the things that formerly made you shudder will bring you great sweetness'. Here was his chance to apply the instruction he had received! In a valiant act of self-conquest he jumped from his horse in joy, put his alms in the leper's hand, bent down and kissed the rotting fingers with their nauseating stench. He mounted the horse again with an unknown sweetness welling up in his soul, flooding and overflowing it in an ever-increasing purity. Francis had fulfilled the command of God, and God now fulfilled His promise, so much so that the next day Francis voluntarily came to the lepers' hospital in Assisi, which previously he had always avoided as hell on earth. When he reached the hospital all the lepers gathered round him with their half-rotted faces, crumbling fingers, corrupted arms, and blind inflamed eyes. Francis opened his purse, gave a coin to each, and kissed each of their hands. Now he had won the greatest battle—the battle of self-conquest. And the consolations received from God overwhelmed him with joy.

*(To be continued)*

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI  
VIVEKANANDA\*—XVIII

*To Mrs. G. W. Hale*

11

[ c/o ] Miss [ Florence ] Guernsey  
528 Fifth Avenue  
New York  
4 May 1894

Dear Mother,

Herewith I send over \$ 125 in a cheque upon the 5th Avenue Bank to be deposited at your leisure.

I am going to Boston on Sunday, day after tomorrow, and write to you from Boston. With my love to all the family.

I remain yours truly,  
VIVEKANANDA.

12

Hotel Bellevue, European Plan  
Beacon Street, Boston  
11 May 1894

Dear Mother,

I have been since 7th lecturing here every afternoon or evening. At Mrs. Fairchild's I met the niece of Mrs. Howe.<sup>28</sup> She was here today to invite me to dinner with her today. I have not seen Mr. Volkinen as yet. Of course, the pay for lecture is here the poorest, and everybody has an axe to grind. I got a long letter full of the prattles of the babies. Your city, i.e. New York, pays far better than Boston, so I am trying to go back there. But here one can get work almost every day.

I think I want some rest. I feel as if I am very much tired, and these constant journeyings to and fro have shaken my nerves a little, but hope to recoup soon. Last few days I have been suffering from cold and slight fever and lecturing for all that ; hope to get rid of it in a day or two.

I have got a very nice gown at \$30. The colour is not exactly that of the

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\* © The President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math.

28. 'Mrs. Howe' probably refers to Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, then one of the most prominent women in America, author of the famous 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' and upholder of innumerable liberal causes, such as peace, universal suffrage, etc. She had been at the Parliament of Religions, and Swamiji renewed his acquaintance with her now in Boston.



old one but cardinal, with more of yellow—could not get the exact old colour even in New York.

I have not much to write, for it is the repetition of the old story: talking, talking, talking. I long to fly to Chicago and shut up my mouth and give a long rest to mouth and lungs and mind. If I am not called for in New York, I am coming soon to Chicago.

Yours obediently,  
VIVEKANANDA.

13

Hotel Bellevue, European Plan  
Beacon Street, Boston  
14 May 1894

Dear Mother,

Your letter was so, so pleasing instead of being long; I enjoyed every bit of it.

I have received a letter from Mrs. Potter Palmer<sup>29</sup> asking me to write to some of my countrywomen about their society, etc. I will see her when I come to Chicago personally; in the meanwhile I will write her all I know. Perhaps you have received \$125 sent over from New York. Tomorrow I will send another \$100 from here. The Bostonians want to grind their own axes!!

Oh, they are so, so dry—even girls talk dry metaphysics. Here is like our *Benaras* where all is dry, dry metaphysics!! Nobody here understands 'my Beloved'. Religion to these people is reason, and horribly stony at that. I do not care for anybody who cannot love my 'Beloved'. Do not tell it to Miss Howe, she may be offended.

The pamphlet I did not send over because I do not like the quotations from the Indian newspapers—especially, they give a haul over coal to somebody. Our people so much dislike the Brahmo Samaj that they only want an opportunity to show it to them. I dislike it. Any amount of enmity to certain persons cannot efface the good works of a life. And then they [Brahmo Samaj] were only children in Religion. They never were much of religious men—i.e. they only wanted to talk and reason, did not struggle to see the Beloved; and until one does that I do not say that he has any religion. He may have books, forms, doctrines, words, reasons, etc., etc., but not religion; for that begins when the soul feels the necessity, the want, the yearning after the 'Beloved', and never before. And therefore our society has no right to expect from them anything more than from an ordinary 'householder'.

I hope to come to Chicago before the end of this month. Oh, I am so tired.

Yours affectionately,  
VIVEKANANDA.

<sup>29</sup>. Social queen of Chicago who had made Swamiji's acquaintance at the Parliament of Religion, in which she had been active.

541 Dearborn Avenue  
Chicago  
6 June 1894

Dear Mother,<sup>30</sup>

We are all doing very well here. Last night the sisters<sup>31</sup> invited me and Mrs. Norton and Miss Howe and Mr. Frank Low. We had a grand dinner and softshell crab and many other things, and a very nice time. Miss Howe left this morning.

The sisters and Mother Temple are taking very good care of me. Just now I am going to see my 'oh my dear' Gandhi.<sup>32</sup> Narasimha was here yesterday; he wanted to go to Cincinnati where he says he has more chances of success than anywhere else in the world. I gave him the passage and so I hope I have got the white elephant out of my hands for the time being. How is father Pope<sup>33</sup> doing now? Hope he has been much benefited by the mud-fish business.

I had a very beautiful letter from Miss Guernsey of New York, giving you her regards. I am going downtown to buy a new pair of shoes as well [as] to get some money, my purse having been made empty by Narasimha.

Nothing more to write. Yes, we went to see the 'Charley's Aunt'. I nearly killed myself with laughing. Father Pope will enjoy it extremely. I had never seen anything so funny.

Yours affectionately,  
VIVEKANANDA.

New York  
28 June 1894

Dear Mother,

Arrived safely two weeks ago. Landsberg<sup>34</sup> was waiting at the station. Came to Dr. Guernsey's house. Nobody was there except a servant. I took a bath and strolled with Landsberg to some restaurant where I had a good meal. Then I have just now returned to Landsberg's rooms (room) in the Theosophical Society and writing you this letter.

I haven't been to see my other friends yet. After a good and long rest through the night I hope to see most of them tomorrow. My Love to you all.

20. Swamiji was now staying at the Hales' house in Chicago; his letter was addressed to Mrs. G. W. Hale, Indiana Mineral Springs, Warren County, Indiana.

31. The daughters of Mrs. Hale: Mary and Harriet.

32. Probably Virchand Gandhi, who had represented Jainism at the Parliament of Religions and afterwards remained in America for many months to enlighten the American public on India and Jainism.

33. Mr. George W. Hale.

34. Leon Landsberg, who was later initiated by Swamiji into Sannyasa at Thousand Island Park and became known as Swami Kripananda.



By the by, somebody stepped on my umbrella on board the train and broke its nose off.

Your affectionate son,  
VIVEKANANDA.

PS—I have not settled myself. So as to direct letters to me, they can be directed c/o Leon Landsberg, 144 Madison Ave., New York.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**SECULAR MORALITY—A SOLVENT OF CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUAL CRISIS:** BY PREM NATH BAZAZ. Publishers : Vantage Press, 516 West 34th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001. 1979. Pp. 172. Price : \$ 6.95.

There can be no doubt about the fact that morality is facing a crisis in the contemporary world. And that to a large extent religio-philosophical efforts have failed to re-establish moral values in the present-day society is also indubitable. In one sense, philosophy can be made free from the responsibility of revitalizing the ethical spirit in the minds of people because it claims to involve itself with problems that are mainly amoral. But religion cannot rid itself of moral obligations. In a way, religion is the source as well as the end of morality. It is well-established that religious consciousness has peeped into man's mind from the very beginning of his social life. As the rational aspect has developed in him, his moral sense also has grown apace. But whereas the sphere of morality is confined only to this world through family and society, religion ventures to embrace the other world as well. What is half accomplished in morality is supposed to be fully realized in religion. If morality is seeking man's potential infinitude in family and society, religion seeks to realize his identity with the Infinite Spirit. Thus morality is an intermediary rational state between the beginning and the end of man's spiritual life.

The author of the book under review is correct in making an assessment of the contemporary spiritual crisis. But he fails in the diagnosis of the disease as well as in prescribing a remedy for it. He treats religion as the cause of the present-day moral crisis, and regards the secularism provided by the Western socio-scientific world as the proper cure for it. He

is critical of the Vedic socio-religious tradition which, according to him (Mr. Bazaz), has kept our people backward, ignorant and superstitious. As against this, he claims that the British rulers provided scientific and social enlightenment to India and, had they been continuously ruling our country even now, such a moral degradation of our society would probably not have taken place. He notes : 'India steadily trod the trail of progress blazed by foreign rulers.... In the struggle for freedom against British imperialism, no force has played such an important and decisive role as ignorance.'

Secular morality, according to the author, holds that every human being has an equal right to develop his potentialities, and to that end he or she has equal right of access to the inherited knowledge and culture of the community and of the human society. This is obviously the essence of the humanist manifesto, and no one would controvert it. But the author's identification of secularism with science and technology on the one hand, and his condemnation of the Indian tradition (except the Hinayana school of Buddhism) as anti-secular on the other, seem to be misconceived.

Without going into the merits or demerits of the idea of secularism, it can right away be submitted that neither can secularism be so identified with science nor can traditional religion be pronounced as altogether anti-secular. Further, it can be confidently stated that the author has neither tried to look into the basic traditional texts for understanding them before coming to his conclusions nor has he visualised the misfortunate out-puts of the scientific age. Although he is not unaware of the atomic disasters, he confines himself more to the luxuries provided by science and technology. He is also, perhaps, not conscious of the antimoral effects of the scientific age. It is doubtful whether the U.N. Charter will

be able to inject moral sense into young minds once the religious institutions are withdrawn or demolished. Even the members of the highly educated class are only vaguely aware of the humanist manifesto. If we have to talk meaningfully about morality in a society which is yet illiterate in bulk, we have to make use of the traditional means for promoting morality. Of course, some reforms in the old machinery, where required, cannot be avoided. But the attempt to destroy the older establishment without having even sufficient bricks to lay down the foundation of the new structure cannot be commended.

The book, nonetheless, poses a challenge to the

modern man to think about the problem of morality, and it also indicates a solution which may or may not be acceptable to him.

Except a couple of printing mistakes (of Sanskrit terms, e.g. *trantras*, *Kashatriya*), which could be corrected in the next edition, the printing of the book is praiseworthy. The author deserves our congratulations for focussing our attention on the seriousness of the problem and for suggesting a way out of it.

DR. S. P. DUBEY

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, NEW DELHI

#### REPORT FOR APRIL 1977 TO MARCH 1978

The New Delhi Centre started functioning on a very humble scale in 1927 and was finally established in its present premises in 1935. Since then it has continued to grow and to expand its services to the religious, cultural and medical needs of the local people. Below is given an abstract of the Centre's activities for the year.

**Religious Work :** During the year the Centre endeavoured to broadcast the ideas of Vedanta and the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda through regular discourses and classes. A religious discourse was given in English every Sunday evening at the Mission Auditorium, and on Saturday evenings a discourse on *Sri Ramacharit-Manas* was held in Hindi. Wednesday evenings a scriptural class in Bengali was conducted. The *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita* was expounded in a Wednesday-morning class for the benefit of the Sarada Mahila Samiti (a registered organization of Delhi women devoted to the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda), although other earnest devotees could also attend by permission.

Large numbers of people participated in the birthday celebrations held in honour of various Great Teachers and Incarnations. The Temple provided for meditation, daily worship and bhajans, and for Rama-Nama Sankirtanam on Ekadasi days.

**Cultural and Educational :** The free Library and Reading Room have been growing each year. The daily average number of visitors dur-

ing the year was 441. Books issued totalled 14,794; 885 new books were added, bringing the total number of books to 29,344. The Reading Room received 16 newspapers and 120 periodicals.

A University Students' Section Library was opened in 1962 and is maintained with the financial assistance of the University of Delhi. During the year 548 students (273 boys and 275 girls) were admitted as members. On an average 125 students used the Library daily, borrowing on an average 501 books. The Library had 5,323 textbooks at the end of the year.

In 1958 the Centre started a moral and cultural programme called Sarada Mandir which imparts cultural and moral education to children six to fourteen years old. Classes consisting of bhajan, story-telling, etc. are run with the help of the Sarada Mahila Samiti. During the year the Sarada Mandir was open on Sundays from 9 to 10 a.m., and the average attendance was 35.

**Medical :** The Centre's Free Tuberculosis Clinic has a sixfold function : (1) to diagnose individual cases ; (2) to treat cases fit for treatment at the Clinic ; (3) to select suitable cases for admission and treatment—surgical and medical—for short periods in its observation wards ; (4) to get admitted in other hospitals cases requiring prolonged hospitalization or very special surgical interference ; (5) to treat patients at home under the Domiciliary Service Scheme prior to admission and after discharge from the Clinic ; and (6) to examine contacts of patients with a view to detecting early cases as a preventive measure. In the observation ward of the Clinic there are 28 beds, which are equally



divided between male and female patients. The Clinic has full facilities for diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis in all its aspects including surgery. The number of outdoor cases treated during the year was 18,124 (2,34,264 repeated cases), of which 2,703 were new. In addition, 237 indoor cases were treated in the observation wards.

The Outdoor Free Homoeopathic Dispensary, founded in 1929, treated 67,042 cases (5,873 were new) during the year.

**Charity and Relief :** On March 19, 1978, about 350 children whose parents suffer from leprosy were served with sumptuous meals at the Children's Home for Boys in Delhi as part of the Centre's annual Narayana Seva. The children participated in bhajans and a Swami of the Centre spoke to them in Hindi. On the same day about 100 inmates of the National Institute for Blind were also served with cooked food.

During the year the Centre endeavoured to render whatever possible help it could afford by giving charitable monetary assistance, land or articles of personal need to poor and deserving men and women. Occasional help was given to school and college students for educational and vocational studies; also towards medical relief, cremation expenses, and other essential needs. The total expenditure on such charitable service was Rs. 10,230.70.

The Delhi Centre undertook relief work during the year for serving the flood-affected people in the Jahangirpuri area of Delhi. The work, which consisted of distributing food packets, continued for twenty days in August 1977. The Centre adopted 676 flood-affected families, and each member of the family received one food packet every day. During the relief period 50,282 food packets were served, Rs. 55,500/- being spent.

**Needs :** For social and cultural work : (1) needed improvements in the acoustics and the public address system of the Auditorium, Rs. 15,000; (2) 16 mm movie film projector, Rs. 10,000; (3) slide projector, Rs. 3,000. For the Free Tuberculosis Clinic : (1) endowment for the maintenance of each free bed, Rs. 30,000; (2) laboratory instruments, Rs. 10,000. For the Ashrama : (1) materials for an urgently needed additional water supply, Rs. 25,000; (2) steel almirahs for storage, Rs. 6,000; (3) renovation of the electrical system, Rs. 10,000. All donations to the Ramakrishna Mission (Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg, New Delhi 110 055) are exempt from Income-tax and will be thankfully received and acknowledged.

## RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, PURI

### REPORT FOR APRIL 1976 TO MARCH 1978

**Spiritual and Cultural :** In the Ashrama Shrine there were daily morning and evening prayer and fortnightly Ram-Nam Sankirtan. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated, as well as the birthdays of Sri Krishna, Buddha and Shankara. Special Puja was performed on Snana Yatra, the Car-festival, Durga Mahastami, Ganesh Puja and Saraswati Puja.

Weekly Gita classes were conducted by the Secretary in the shrine hall on Sunday evenings; and on the first Wednesday of every month he gave a discourse on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. In addition, cultural meetings were arranged at the Ashrama on various occasions.

**Educational :** The Students' Home accommodated 65 students. Out of these, 46 belonged to Scheduled Tribes and 14 to Scheduled Castes. Board, clothing, bedding, textbooks and stationery were free for all students. The home featured an interdining system designed to reduce caste-prejudice, and students helped in the kitchen for the same reason.

The Ashrama library had a daily average attendance of 125. By the end of the period under review, it had 13,629 books and the reading room received 13 newspapers and 97 periodicals. Membership was open to all for a fee of Re. 1/- per month, though for students there was concessional rate of 25 paise.

The Book Sales Centre made available literature of the Ramakrishna Order in English, Oriya, Hindi and Bengali. During the year 1975-77 sales totalled Rs. 19,273.93, and during 1977-78, Rs. 26,262.35.

**Immediate Needs :** (1) To accommodate the ever-increasing number of people using the library, an estimated Rs. 75,000 is required for building an extension to the present building. (2) Also for the library, a permanent fund of Rs. 1 lakh is needed. (3) For the Students' Home a permanent fund of Rs. 1 lakh is required, the interest of which will support ten poor students. (4) An annual contribution of Rs. 1,200 will enable the Ashrama to maintain a poor student throughout a year. (5) An annual subscription to a magazine or newspaper will help improve the reading room.

All donations to the Ashrama are exempt from Income-tax, and may be sent to : The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri-752 001, Orissa.

## LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

### *The Land of Tolstoy*

The World Buddhist Conference hosted by the Soviet Union a few months ago, which was attended among others by the Dalai Lama, might have been a political stunt. But nobody can deny the fact that Russia, geographically sandwiched between India and China on the one hand and Europe on the other, is more advantageously placed than any other nation to bridge the gulf separating Eastern and Western cultures. The Russian people combine in them the calm imaginative mind of the East and the practical rational mind of the West. The Christian religion that was introduced into that country during the Middle Ages was more mystical and oriental than ecclesiastical and occidental. Many people are not aware that Russia once produced some great saints and mystics.

The influence of Tolstoy on Mahatma Gandhi is well-known. It is not, however, widely known that Tolstoy was one of the earliest in Russia to read Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He was much influenced by them during the last few years of his life. It is said that he regarded Sri Ramakrishna as one among the great teachers of mankind like Socrates, Buddha, Lao Tzu and Christ. He personally selected some parables and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna for constant reference, and there is no doubt that these profoundly influenced his later thinking. A copy of Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* with notes in Tolstoy's hand on the margins is still to be seen in his collection of books. Tolstoy cherished a desire to translate selections from Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and popularize them in Russia, but his wish was not fulfilled during his lifetime.

Another noted Russian, Pitrim Sorokin, the famous Harvard sociologist, studied Vivekananda as a student in Moscow. His sociological ideas, especially the importance he gives to yoga and superconscious experience in human life, reveal the influence of the patriot-saint of modern India. It is significant that the Soviet Government has allowed a place for Sorokin's works in academic circles.

Russian society, like societies everywhere else in the world, is in a state of transition. The most important tasks before it, according to an official Soviet publication, are : technological improvement, social integration, and the 'moulding of the new man'. In the moulding of the new man the need for spiritual development is bound to be felt one day or the other, and in this field yoga and some aspects of Indian philosophy may be found to be of great value by the Russian people. The discovery of Kirlian photography and the impressive progress in the study of psychic phenomena behind the Iron Curtain may be a step in that direction.

A veteran American journalist who had lived in Russia for thirty years once stated that the Soviet people were in search of a new philosophy of life. But will they be able to develop one themselves, or will they eventually accept one from another culture? One thing, however, is clear : no civilization based on materialism ever survived the destructive power of history in the past, nor will in the future.

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