



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXIV

OCTOBER 1979

No. 10

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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं
सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः ।
दिवीव चक्षुराततम् ॥

1. Great seers constantly behold the supreme abode of Viṣṇu, as if they had eyes as vast as the sky.¹

Rg-Veda, 1.22.20

तद्विप्रासो विपन्यवो
जागृवांसः समिधते ।
विष्णोर्यत्परमं पदम् ॥

2. These great sages who love hymns and who are awakened (*jāgrvāmsaḥ*) illumine (*samimdhate*), as it were, the abode of Viṣṇu.²

Rg-Veda, 1.22.21

विष्णोर्नु कं वीर्याणि प्र वोचं यः ।
पार्थिवानि विममे रजांसि ।
यो अस्कभायदुत्तरं सधस्थं
विचक्रमाणस्त्रेधोरुगायः ॥

3. Let me proclaim the divine powers of the Lord who measured the worlds with his three great steps and supported the heavens.

Rg-Veda, 1.154.1

प्र तद्विष्णुः स्तवते वीर्येण मृगो
न भीमः कुचरो गिरिष्ठाः ।
यस्योरुषु त्रिषु विक्रमणेष्व-
धिक्षियन्ति भुवनानि विश्वा ॥

4. For his divine power is Viṣṇu praised, who is free like a mighty elephant roaming on the mountains, and within whose three steps exist all the worlds.

Rg-Veda, 1.154.2

* This month's *mantras* about the glories of Viṣṇu are widely used for chanting, prayer and meditation. To the Vedic seers the sun was the symbol of consciousness, and by identifying Viṣṇu with it, they made him the Supreme Deity illuminating and supporting the three worlds.

1. This is one of the most famous lines in the whole *Rg-Veda*. It clearly shows that the Vedic seers knew that the Deity whom they worshipped was the all-pervading Supreme Spirit. That is why it is stated that, in order to behold his abode, the sages had eyes as wide as the sky. The word *pasyanti* (behold) evidently means direct intuitive realisation.

2. That is, by the light of their consciousness.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

Discrimination, detachment and aspiration are the three preliminary qualifications necessary for all spiritual aspirants; and unless these have to some extent become natural to the personality, it is difficult to follow any spiritual path successfully. Discrimination and detachment were dealt with in the editorials of two previous issues. This month's EDITORIAL discusses aspiration.

In the second instalment of JOY OF THE ILLUMINED Swami Budhananda, Secretary of New Delhi Ramakrishna Mission, shows 'how the religions of the world, while differing in many ways among themselves, unanimously promise joy to all true followers who strive unto the last.'

The contribution of Śrī Rāmānuja to the philosophy, religion and culture of India is great and manifold, not the least of which is the establishment of a new system of Sādhana (spiritual discipline) in which Karma, Jñāna and Bhakti form a graded

series. In the article SADHANA IN THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMANUJA, Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, former Head of the Department of Philosophy, Mysore University, introduces the subject by giving a brief sketch of the life of the great Ācārya.

In the third and concluding instalment of his article INDIAN HISTORY IN ITS RIGHT PERSPECTIVE, Swami Sakhyananda of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trichur, presents a synoptic vision of the great epochs of Indian history. This is only a tabular extract of a massive work of the author in Malayalam.

Sri S. H. Venkatramani, a promising young writer from Calcutta, treats the subject THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION IN THE GITA in a novel and lucid way.

Swami Atmarupananda of *Prabuddha Bharata* editorial staff continues his gripping account of the life of St. Francis of Assisi in our new serial HOW THEY WALKED ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE.

ASPIRATION

(EDITORIAL)

Nature of spiritual aspiration

What is the motive force in Sādhana? What impels the soul Godward? What is the power that accelerates the soul's evolutionary progression? Aspiration—the intrinsic, teleological urge of the soul for development, expansion and freedom from bondage. In the language of devotion, it is the yearning of the individual spirit (Jīvātman) for the Supreme Spirit (Paramātmā). Either way, aspiration is an undeniable higher drive, an inextinguishable inner fire that at first galvanizes and later on illumines the whole life of the spiritual seeker. As

the body feels hungry for food and the mind thirsts for knowledge, so does the soul long for God and freedom.

In the life of every man there comes a time when his soul, lying deep in the cavern of his mind and wrapt in immemorial slumber, wakes up at the call of the divine Awakener. Neither the noise of the external world nor the tumult of the senses can hush that unmistakable call. And when that call comes clear and ringing, the soul cannot but listen to it. It struggles to break through the walls of ignorance and past habits, and attain freedom. Aspiration

is the only sign of the beginning of a person's spiritual life.

Even in normal secular life we find that it is desires that impel and sustain our daily activities. We eat because we are hungry and desire food. We study because we are curious and desire knowledge. Desire always goes at the vanguard of our actions. This truth gained philosophical recognition in the writings of Aristotle. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, he holds the view that the end or aim of our actions is always set by our desires, and the function of reason is only to decide the means, not ends. Aristotle's idea that 'thought by itself moves nothing' was later on more strongly upheld by the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher Hume. According to him, 'reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions'. Though all people may not agree with Hume's statement that 'reason is perfectly inert', no one can deny the fact that desire, hope or aspiration plays an important part in our daily life. For every undertaking we need motivation. A labourer does not do extra work when there is no hope of extra wages. It is difficult to persuade a student to study law if his heart's desire is to become an engineer.

Man has a hierarchy of needs—physical, intellectual, emotional, social—and accordingly he has innumerable desires. But every man has a central or dominant need or desire depending upon his nature and stage of growth. The temper and tenor of his life are determined by that need or desire that dominates his life. It is only when his actions become an expression of this dominant desire that he can find satisfaction in them. Only then does his life become creative and harmonious. When the dominant desire is denied expression, it creates conflicts. But when a person's dominant desire remains vague or undiscovered, he loses the zest for life, and life appears meaningless to him.

This is all the more true regarding spiri-

tual life, with which we are chiefly concerned here. Leading a tolerably moral life, following certain rituals and customs, and studying the scriptures are enough to make a person religious or pious in the popular sense of these terms. But if spiritual aspiration plays only a minor role in his life which is dominated by other desires and strivings, he has not entered the spiritual path. True spiritual life begins only when intense aspiration starts dominating one's life and all other desires and wishes are subordinated to it.

By spiritual aspiration we mean not just a pious wish or a good intention. In spiritual life, aspiration means an intense soul-hunger. It is this throbbing passion that Sri Ramakrishna calls *vyākulatā*, an intense yearning or restlessness for the vision of God. He describes its nature: 'This yearning is like the state of mind of a man who has someone ill in the family. His mind is in a state of perpetual restlessness, thinking how the sick person may be cured. Or again, one should feel yearning for God like the yearning of a man who has lost his job and is wandering from one office to another in search of work. If he is rejected at a certain place which has no vacancy, he goes there again the next day and enquires, "Is there any vacancy today?"'¹

Śaṅkarācārya and all other teachers of Advaita have listed *mumukṣutva* (desire for liberation) as one of the four essential qualifications for a follower of the path of knowledge. The disciple is advised to hurry to his Guru as a man whose hair has caught fire rushes towards a lake!² But *mumukṣutva* is only the negative aspect of aspiration. It should be followed by the positive aspect called *jijñāsā* or *vividiṣā*, the intense

1. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilānanda (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974), p. 21.

2. See *Vedānta Sāra*, 1.30.

desire to know Brahman. Those who try to follow the path of nondualism without this intense twofold aspiration will have to remain contented with mere book knowledge.

Importance of aspiration

Take the life of any great saint or sage. Its keynote is invariably found to be one-pointed, intense aspiration. It is this that distinguishes the spiritual aspirant from others. True yearning is the forerunner of spiritual fulfilment. Sri Ramakrishna says, 'At the approach of the dawn the eastern horizon becomes red. Then one knows it will soon be sunrise. Likewise, if you see a person restless for God, you can be pretty certain that he hasn't long to wait for His vision.'³

The difference between one spiritual aspirant and another is to a great extent determined by the degree of yearning they possess. The greater the intensity of yearning, the quicker the spiritual progress. Patañjali classifies yogis into three groups: *mṛdu* (mild), *madhyama* (middling) and *adhimātra* (extreme), and says that for those having intense *saṁvega* (yearning) attainment of the goal is very close.⁴ The Upaniṣads state that the Atman is attained only by those who long for it.⁵ Jesus Christ too gives the assurance: 'Seek, and ye shall find.' Here seeking means seeking through yearning. It is on the wings of aspiration

that the 'flight of the alone to the Alone' takes place.

According to Sri Ramakrishna, this yearning is all that matters in *Sādhana*; one is bound to succeed through any path if one has intense aspiration. He used to say, 'That restlessness is the whole thing. Whatever path you follow—whether you are a Hindu, a Mussalman, a Christian, a Śākta, a Vaiṣṇava or a Brahmo—the vital point is restlessness. God is our Inner Guide. It doesn't matter if you take a wrong path—only you must be restless for Him. He Himself will put you on the right path.'⁶

This promise of the Master based on his own experience should once for all set at rest all controversies regarding the superiority of one yoga or path over the others. It is not enough to work like a robot. Even a Karma Yogin must have intense desire for liberation or yearning for God. Otherwise, his good actions will only earn for him some merit or admittance into some kind of heaven spoken of in Hindu scriptures. But if he performs work with the fire of intense aspiration burning in his heart, if in the midst of his manifold duties his heart pants for God as 'the stranded fish pants for water' (Tukaram), then he is sure to attain spiritual progress faster than the person who spends all his time repeating a *mantra* like a parrot. If a person does meditation or *japa* without intense yearning for God, then these become a kind of Karma, and he is in no way superior to the person who does physical work. What makes Karma, meditation and *japa* spiritual disciplines is their connection with the spirit. Doing anything with one's body and mind is only just plain work, which is a part of the movement of the unconscious stream of life. In order to make it a spiritual discipline, the spirit, the Jīvātman, must come

3. *The Gospel*, p. 644.

4. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras*, 1.22, 21. The word 'saṁvega' has been interpreted differently by various commentators. Hariharananda Aranya in his Bengali notes on the above *sūtras* says, 'Just as a traveller going through a forest becomes anxious at the approach of dusk and moves faster, so also yogis become eager to cross this transmigratory existence quickly. This eagerness is *saṁvega*.'

5. यमेवैष वृणते तेन लभ्यः

Katha Upaniṣad, 1.2.23, *Muṇḍaka*, 3.2.3.

6. *The Gospel*, p. 644.

forward and take charge of it. Yearning for God is the only sign of the emergence of the spirit. True yearning is the only sign of the awakening of the spiritualizing power in us. It is only when social service or meditation is connected to yearning that it becomes a yoga, a spiritualizing discipline.

Functions of aspiration

What part does aspiration play in spiritual life? How does aspiration act on the mind and help us in attaining spiritual progress?

In the first place, aspiration provides the motive power in *Sādhana*. Some years ago it was not uncommon to find a vintage car conking down to a halt right in the middle of the road. Its occupants had to come out and push it. Then the car would start with a promising sputter, only to go and conk down again after a short distance! Similar is the nature of spiritual practice attempted without true aspiration. In spiritual life mere 'pushing' is not enough; there must also be 'pulling'. It is yearning for God that overcomes the inertia natural to body and mind, and hauls the soul Godward. Intense aspiration is like a mighty locomotive pulling a huge train.

Secondly, it is aspiration that gives a higher direction to mental energies. Normally most of our life goes on in an unconscious way. Being controlled by automatisms and reflexes, our actions and thoughts become mechanical, repetitive, atavistic. In fact, each individual is only a small whirlpool in the vast unconscious stream of life. When one tries to meditate, meditation itself becomes a part of this whirlpool. Nor is it enough to remain as an inert spectator of one's thoughts and practise 'choiceless awareness' advocated by some modern spiritual teachers, for even the so-called witness is only a part of the whirlpool. It is intense aspiration alone that breaks this whirlpool and lifts the soul

above the stream of unconsciousness. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'Worship of God, worship of the holy ones, concentration and meditation and unselfish work, these are the ways of breaking away from *Māyā's* net; but we must first have the strong desire to get free.'⁷

The third function of aspiration is that it makes the practice of detachment easy. We have already seen⁸ that detachment really means detachment of the Will. One way of gaining it is to practise it repeatedly with the help of discrimination. A much easier way is through intense yearning for God. As Sri Ramakrishna says, when a person moves towards the east, he naturally moves away from the west. In the same way, when the soul moves towards God through intense aspiration, attachments drop off by themselves.

Another function of aspiration is to unite the scattered powers of the Will. Life must have a unifying focus; then only conservation of energy and its utilization for creative purposes are possible. If a person's work, studies, social contracts and spiritual practice have no relation to one another, he cannot achieve creative excellence in any field. Spiritual life involves the whole personality, and if this is not properly integrated, the person cannot put forth intense spiritual effort. It is higher aspiration that brings the energies of life to a common focus and effects integration of personality.

Yet another function of intense aspiration is that it reduces time. What matters in spiritual life is not the amount of time that one devotes to meditation and *japa*, but the intensity with which these are practised. The greater the intensity of aspiration, the quicker one progresses. Swami Abhedananda once stated that in the present life

7. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, in 8 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), vol. 7, p. 92.

8. See the September editorial.

he had passed through the experiences of ten lives.

One day Sri Ramakrishna entered into Bhāva Samādhi while sitting in his room at Dakshineswar in the company of his devotees, among whom was the father of Balaram Basu, the great householder-disciple of the Master. What then happened has been recorded by M. as follows: 'Coming down to partial consciousness of the world, the Master said to Balaram's father, "Are you the father of Balaram?" All sat in silence. Balaram's aged father was silently telling his beads. Master (to M. and others), "Well, these people practise so much *japa* and go to so many sacred places, but why are they like this? Why do they make no progress? In their case it seems as if the year consists of eighteen months! ... Why do they not realize anything? It is because they have no longing for God."⁹

Lastly, spiritual aspiration has one more important function to perform; it pulls up the Kuṇḍalinī. Japa and meditation, as Sri Sarada Devi has pointed out, only remove the obstacles, but it is the intense yearning that awakens the dormant spiritual power.¹⁰ Says one noted authority: 'This [superconscious] state is never reached by merely reading books. One must pray to God, out of great restlessness and longing for liberation, for it is out of this restlessness for God that the Kuṇḍalinī is first roused. This restlessness, the real soul-hunger, this yearning—not artificially stimulated emotional outbursts—is to be intensified through systematic moral purification, prayer, meditation and other spiritual exercises.'¹¹

9. *The Gospel*, p. 249.

10. Swami Tapasyananda and Swami Nikhilananda, *Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1969), p. 332.

11. Swami Yatiswarananda, *The Adventures in Religious Life* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1962), p. 242.

Tests of true spiritual aspiration

The human mind is so complex and is influenced by so many factors that it is difficult for a person to know where exactly his interest lies. If he feels spiritual aspiration, how can he be sure whether it is genuine or not? For suffering and frustration often create false spiritual aspiration. Or it may have been induced by somebody's advice or example. What are the tests of true spiritual aspiration?

One day a disciple of Sri Sarada Devi asked her, 'How can one yearn for God without seeing the manifestation of His love?' The Holy Mother replied, 'Yes, you can do so. There lies the grace of God.'¹² What she meant was that aspiration is spontaneously produced in the depth of one's heart. It is a little spark of divine grace that inflames the soul and starts the longing. True aspiration does not depend upon external circumstances. It is a self-starting, self-sustaining movement of the soul. It is not teachable. Says Swami Shivananda, one of the great disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, 'As for yearning, my son, nobody can teach it to another. It comes of itself when the time is ripe. The more you feel the want of the Lord within you, the more intense will be the yearning in the heart. If it does not come, you should know that the hour has not struck as yet.'¹³ Spontaneity, then, is the first test of true spiritual aspiration.

Another test is ultimacy. True spiritual aspiration towers over all other desires. It becomes one's ultimate concern. Every other desire is subordinated to it. A third test is integration. It integrates all experiences. Every experience, good or bad, has a meaning for the aspiring soul and serves to intensify its longing.

12. *Sri Sarada Devi*, p. 333.

13. *For Seekers of God*, trans. Swami Vividishananda and Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1975), p. 152.

A more decisive test is strength. True spiritual aspiration produces tremendous grit in the person. He does not care for peace of mind, nor is he deterred by obstacles and struggles unavoidable in spiritual combat. He is not afraid of loneliness and monotony but goes at the goal hammer and tongs. No power on earth can hold back one who carries the flame of divine aspiration in his heart.

Another equally important test is that true aspiration always produces an intense longing and struggle for purity of mind. It is only when the fire of aspiration starts burning in the inner altar that the aspirant feels the real need to keep the altar spotlessly clean. In one of his parables Sri Ramakrishna says that the state of a servant's house indicates that his master has decided to visit it. The jungle all around has been cleared and the premises are swept clean. Finally, the landlord himself sends his carpet, hubble-bubble, etc. In the same way, when discrimination, dispassion, compassion for living beings, serving holy men, telling the truth and other glories of true longing for God are manifested in a devotee, then you can say that for him the vision of God is not far to seek.¹⁴ Any form of aspiration that does not at the same time produce a strong desire for purity and holiness cannot be genuine. It should be watched with suspicion.

Obstacles to aspiration

The question is often asked why all people do not feel longing for God. Sri Ramakrishna's answer is: 'A man does not feel restless for God until all his wordly desires are satisfied. He does not remember the Mother of the Universe until his share of the enjoyment of "woman and gold" is completed. A child absorbed in play does not seek his mother. Hriday's son was

playing with pigeons calling to them, "Come! Ti, ti!" When he had enough of play, he began to cry. Then a stranger came and said, "Come with me. I will take you to your mother."¹⁵

Says Swami Vivekananda, 'So long as our needs are confined within the narrow limits of this physical universe, we cannot have any need for God. It is only when we have become satisfied with everything here that we look beyond for a supply.'¹⁶

Even those who feel true longing for God find that it is not easy to keep it steady and constant. The fire of aspiration has to be constantly stoked and kept bright. There are many forces operating in our life which tend to cool down this inner fire. The first of these is the company of atheistic or immoral people. Immorality and atheism are spreading like a virulent, contagious disease in modern society all over the world. It is difficult to avoid the presence of such people in public places, offices, industrial establishments, etc. But 'he that sups with the devil must have a long spoon'.

The second obstacle to aspiration is surrender to the collective. The unit of society we live or work with—family, office, club, monastery—has a tendency to pull its members to the level of the average. Therefore, unless the seeker is alert, there is every chance of his aspiration getting steam-rollered even by the company of good people he keeps. This does not mean that he should become a misanthrope or a lone wolf. He should not develop a holier-than-thou attitude, but neither should he surrender his aspiration to the collective. Rather, he should intensify it and become a divine centre radiating purity, love and spirituality all around him. One such person in a social unit can by his very life lift the minds of the people around him and become a source

¹⁴. *The Gospel*, p. 137.

¹⁵. *Ibid.*, p. 335.

¹⁶. *Complete Works*, vol. 4 (1978), p. 19.

of inspiration and support to many more, and thus render a form of social service much needed in modern times.

It was once thought by many psychologists that living in conformity with the codes of conduct of a society was the test of sanity. But eminent modern psychologists like Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Eysenck, Eric Fromm and others have pointed out the fallacy of this belief. Who were more neurotic, asks Abraham Maslow, the Nazi soldiers and doctors who committed in cold blood diabolical atrocities on Jews, or these unfortunate victims, many of whom as a result became mentally deranged?¹⁷ Even in normal social life it is a mistake to think that conformity to the code of the majority is the only sign of sanity. Says Eric Fromm: 'On the contrary, the vast majority of people in our culture are well adjusted because they have given up the battle for independence sooner and more radically than the neurotic person. They accepted the judgment of the majority so completely that they have been spared the sharp pain of conflict which a neurotic person goes through. While they are healthy from the standpoint of "adjustments", they are more sick than the neurotic person from the standpoint of the realization of their aims as human beings. ...If he [the adjusted person] is not engrossed in work, he has to use the many avenues of escape which our culture offers in order to be protected from the frightening experience of being alone with himself and looking into the abyss of his own impotence and human impoverishment.'¹⁸

Autonomy of the self is an important test of a person's maturity and a primary condition for the pursuit of any kind of excel-

lence. Society has a tendency to force everyone into its Procrustean bed. But if anyone wants to achieve anything higher or creative in any field, the first thing he has to do is to keep out of that bed of death and stop following the mob. Speaking about his great master Sri Ramakrishna, whom many of his contemporaries regarded as mad, Swami Vivekananda says, 'If a man throws aside the vanities of the world, we hear him called mad. But out of such madness have come the powers that have moved this world of ours, and out of such madness alone will come the powers of the future that are going to move the world.'¹⁹

This does not, of course, mean that the spiritual aspirant should waste his time and energy in fighting the people around him. But he should not waste his time and energy in trying to prove his sanity to one and all, and surrender his aspiration to the collective. He should rather live a sane and harmonious life, and utilize the freedom thus acquired at the physical and mental levels, for raising his soul to the lotus feet of the Lord. Perhaps, in all matters of social intercourse, the advice given by Swami Turiyananda to Ida Ansel, 'Regarding opinions, swim with the current; but regarding principles, stand firm as a rock', should serve as a rule of thumb.

Another manifestation of the surrender to the collective is our inability to rise above trifles. What prevents a large number of people from intensifying their spiritual life is not gross immorality or wickedness, but their preoccupation with trifling things of day-to-day life which crowd out aspiration from the heart. Every man has in him tremendous power and spiritual potential. But, just as an elephant is held back by a small goad, a large number of people are prevented from going up in spiritual life by their endless interest in trifles. The daily

17. Abraham Maslow, 'Personality Problems and Personality Growth', in *The Self*, ed. Clark E. Moustakas (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956).

18. Eric Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), p. 80.

19. *Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 171.

routine of life absorbs all their attention, while their imprisoned souls watch tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow moving away from them never to return.

A third obstacle to spiritual aspiration is self-delusion. A spiritual aspirant who, right from the beginning of his Sādhana, thinks that wonderful visions and experiences are reaching him, is only neutralizing his aspiration with false fulfilment. Such exaggerated self-esteem, for which there is no specific remedy, may even end in a premature spiritual death.

The dialectic of spiritual aspiration

Spiritual aspiration is a part of the law of human development. In all beings there is a teleological urge to reach a higher level of existence. In man, at the level of psycho-social evolution, this urge manifests itself as spiritual aspiration.

A desire produces a tension in the mind which we try to reduce by physical or mental means. In a way, it may be said that all our ordinary actions are aimed at tension reduction. It is only when the lower tensions are to some extent overcome that spiritual aspiration can manifest itself fully. But spiritual aspiration also produces a higher type of tension in us which no lower kind of effort can reduce. Only true spiritual experience can neutralize this tension. Spiritual life is a relentless struggle to get true spiritual experience, which means higher consciousness and bliss.

That struggle by its very nature takes a spiral course. After going up for some time the aspirant seems to be going down. But this is usually only an apparent movement, for aspiration spirals up again. Spiritual aspiration does not, however, always remain the same. It changes its nature as it moves higher and higher. There are three stages in this upward movement.

St. Paul in one of his famous epistles says, 'And now abideth faith, hope, charity,

these three : but the greatest of these is charity.'²⁰ Here the word 'charity' means pure love for God. In Christian spirituality faith, hope and charity are called theological virtues and are regarded as superior to all other virtues. At first sight, all these three may look alike ; but when we understand their real nature we find that they represent three distinct stages of spiritual aspiration in the ascending order.

Faith is the lowest stage of aspiration, which is the condition of the beginner in spiritual life. He has not had any direct experience of higher Reality (or God), though, in a mysterious way, he feels a firm conviction about its truth, and feels a tremendous fascination for it. But various contrary thoughts and feelings constantly assail his mind, and he struggles hard to rise above them. This is a most difficult period in the life of an aspirant. Though this is the state of a beginner, it may continue for several years. During this period study of scriptures and the company of holy men alone can give him the needed support.

When the aspirant gets the first one or two 'glimpses' of the higher Reality, perhaps after years of sincere struggles, aspiration takes the form of *hope*. This higher, 'spiritual' hope is not an if-wishes-were-horses type. It is based on direct experience and is the result of a transmutation of faith. Though the early experience may not last long, it leaves behind a deep spiritual certitude. The aspirant now gains the firm conviction that his efforts will not be in vain, that his spiritual destiny is going to be fulfilled sooner or later. He gains a clear insight into the self-luminous nature of his own soul. The real search for God begins only at this stage.

In the third stage, aspiration changes into true love for God. This pure *love* is not an emotion ; it is the unveiling of the inextin-

²⁰. 1 Corinthians, 13:13.

guishable light of higher consciousness. It is only when a person has acquired this highest type of aspiration called *parā bhakti* that he becomes fit to receive a direct vision of God.

These three stages—faith, hope, love—may not be found clearly marked in all people. But every sincere spiritual seeker finds that as he progresses in spiritual life, his aspiration becomes purer, brighter and stronger until at last it is illuminated by the light of the Divine.

Finally, let every spiritual aspirant remember this. All people do not feel spiritual aspiration. Only one in a thousand feels it. It is perhaps after ages of trans-migratory existence that true aspiration

dawns in the human heart. If you feel intense aspiration within you, you should know that you are standing on the threshold of the unfoldment of your real Self, and that your future growth, your true happiness, your life's fulfilment depends upon how you deal with this new longing. If you hear the call of the Divine in the depth of your heart, you should rejoice, for your hour has struck. You are about to view Eternity's Sunrise. You may turn your back upon this new dawn, and walk back into the darkness—to mingle with its shadows and join the hideous dance of death. Or, you may face the Sun of Knowledge and walk along the luminous path paved with the golden dust of immortality!

JOY OF THE ILLUMINED—II

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

In Śrī Kṛṣṇa's teachings the Upaniṣadic promise of supreme joy is reaffirmed, and ways of attaining it also are clearly indicated. The Lord says :

He whose self is not attached to external objects attains the joy that is in the Self. With the heart devoted to the meditation on the Supreme Spirit he enjoys happiness that is imperishable.¹⁹

When the mind, absolutely restrained by the practice of concentration, attains quietude, and when seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in his own Self; when he feels that infinite bliss—which is perceived by the pure intellect and which transcends the senses, and established wherein he never departs from his real state; and having obtained which, regards no other acquisition superior to that, and where established, he is not moved even by heavy sorrow;—let that be known as the state called by the name of yoga : a state of severance from the contact of pain.²⁰

Supreme bliss comes to the yogi whose mind is completely tranquil and whose passions are quieted, who is free from stain and who has become one with Brahman.²¹

* * *

Intimations of the joy of the illumined come to us through the *Dhammapada*, the well-known Buddhist scripture, in unambiguous language :

Earnestness is the path of immortality (Nirvāṇa), thoughtlessness the path of death. Those who are in earnest do not die, those who are thoughtless are as if dead already.

Having understood this clearly, those who are advanced in earnestness delight in earnestness, and rejoice in the knowledge of the Ariyas (the elect)....

Follow not after vanity, nor after enjoyment of love and lust ! He who is earnest and meditative, obtains ample joy.²²

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.27.

²² *Dhammapada*, trans. F. Max Muller, The Sacred Books of the East, vol. X (Oxford : The Clarendon Press, 1898), 2.21, 22, 27.

¹⁹ *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 5.12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.20-24.

It is good to tame the mind, which is difficult to hold in and flighty, rushing wherever it listeth; a tamed mind brings happiness.

Let the wise man guard his thoughts, for they are difficult to perceive, very artful, and they rush wherever they list: thoughts well-guarded bring happiness.²³

We live happily indeed, not hating those who hate us! Among men who hate us we dwell free from hatred!

We live happily indeed, free from ailments among the ailing! Among men who are ailing let us dwell free from ailments!

We live happily indeed, free from greed among the greedy! Among men who are greedy, let us dwell free from greed!

We live happily indeed, though we call nothing our own! We shall be like the bright gods, feeding on happiness!

Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy. He who has given up both victory and defeat, he, the contented, is happy.

There is no fire like passion; there is no losing throw like hatred; there is no pain like this body; there is no happiness higher than rest.

Hunger is the worst of diseases; the elements of the body the greatest evil; if one knows this truly, that is Nirvāṇa, the highest happiness.

Health is the greatest of gifts, contentedness the best riches; trust is the best of relationships, Nirvāṇa the highest happiness.²⁴

A Bhikṣu who has entered his empty house, and whose mind is tranquil, feels a more than human delight when he sees the law clearly.

As soon as he has considered the origin and destruction of the elements (*khandha*) of the body, he finds happiness and joy which belong to those who know the immortal (Nirvāṇa)....

Rouse thyself by thyself, examine thyself by thyself, thus self-protected and attentive wilt thou live happily, O Bhikṣu!²⁵

* * *

In Taoism the laws of happiness and blessedness are taught in the simplest of terms:

To be in accord with men, is human happiness.

To be in accord with God, is the happiness of God.²⁶

Blessed is the man who speaketh what is good, who thinketh what is good, who practiseth what is good.²⁷

* * *

In Confucianism the cause-effect relationship of attained spirituality and long-enduring happiness is taught as the fundamental principle of existence:

Heaven protects, establishes thee with the greatest security,

Makes thee entirely virtuous

That thou mayest enjoy every happiness.

It grants thee all excellence,

It sends down to thee long-enduring happiness,

Which the days are not sufficient to enjoy.²⁸

* * *

The sacred formula most frequently recited by the Zoroastrians is known as 'Ashem-vohu', which consists of twelve Avesta words:

*Ashem vohu vahistem asti
usta asti; ustu ahmai
hyad ashai vahistai ashem.*²⁹

This formula, which is more like a declaratory utterance in praise of righteousness than a prayer of solicitation, is a statement of the most fundamental spiritual fact according to Zoroastrianism. The formula is translated as:

²⁶ Kwang Tze, 13.12 (Sacred Books of the East, XXXIX.332), (H. A. Giles, *Chuang Tzu, Mystic, Moralizer and Reformer*, Quaritch, 1926, p. 159).

²⁷ D. T. Suzuki and Paul Carus, *Tai Shang Kan-Ying Pien, Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution, Chinese Text and English Translation* (Chicago: Open Court, 1906), p. 66.

²⁸ Shi King, II.1.6.1.1-4; II.1.6.2.2, 5, 6, in James Legge, *The Chinese Classics Translated into English* (London: Oxford University Press, 1871).

²⁹ Vide *Pahlavi Texts*, trans. E. W. West, Part 1, I.75, in *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1880), vol. V.

²³ *Ibid.*, 3.35, 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.197-203.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.373, 374, 379.

Holiness is good; it is the best of all good.
Holiness is happiness. Happiness is due to
him who is best in holiness.³⁰

The highest aim of life, which is the attainment of everlasting happiness, according to *Zend-Avesta*, can be attained through perfect holiness, which consists in knowing God's will and acting according to it. God's will is to be known from the revealed scriptures. *Asha*, which signifies holiness, includes in it principles of morality. Holiness is the keynote of Zoroastrianism. It teaches that holiness is happiness.

One requires grace to be able to live a life of holiness, for the Forces of evil are many and powerful. Hence the prayer goes forth :

I cry unto Thee, O Lord ! behold my condition, I ask of Thee help and grace as a friend asks of his friend. Reveal unto me through righteousness, the Good Mind's wealth.³¹

It is only when the Divine Spirit permeates our life and world that it is all light, blessing, bounty and joy; otherwise, it is all sin, darkness, falsehood and sadness. The spirit of Zoroastrianism finds beautiful expression in this hymn :

We worship the Spirit Divine

All wisdom and goodness possessing,
Surrounded by Holy Immortals,

The givers of bounty and blessing,
We joy in the works of His hands,
His truth and His powers confessing.

We praise all the things that are pure,
For these are His only Creation;
The thoughts that are true, and the words
And deeds that have won approbation;
These are supported by Him
And for these we make adoration.

Hear us, O Mazda ! Thou liveth
In Truth and in heavenly gladness ;

Cleanse us from falsehood, and keep us
From evil and bondage to badness;
Pour out the light and joy of Thy life
On our darkness and sadness.

Shine on our gardens and fields,
Shine on our working and weaving;
Shine on the whole race of man,
Believing and unbelieving;
Shine on us through the night,
Shine on us now in Thy might,
The flame of our holy love
And the song of our worship receiving.³²

* * *

If the Psalmist in the Old Testament truly reveals the spirit of Judaism, then we have in the following passages the quintessence of the Jewish faith :

I have set the Lord always before me :
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth : my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.³³

Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication. The Lord is my strength and my shield ; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped : therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth ; and with my song will I praise him. The Lord is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance : feed them also, and lift them up for ever.³⁴

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts : and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean : wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness ; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence ; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free spirit.³⁵

30. Quoted by Swami Abhedananda, *Great Saviours of the World* (New York : The Vedanta Society, 1911), vol. I, p. 135.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 139-40.

33. Psalms, 16:8-11.

34. *Ibid.*, 28:6-9.

35. *Ibid.*, 51:6-12.

The bold, affirmative, simple truth that we receive from these Psalms is: God is the centre of the world, religion, and life. In Him alone is sanity, safety, joy, and salvation.

The same idea is emphasized in Isaiah, in language of tremendous optimism and assurance:

Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: They shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.³⁶

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.³⁷

* * *

In the beatitudes Christ expounds the laws that govern the spiritual realm. But if we are looking for the heart of his teachings, we shall not find it there, but here:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.³⁸

³⁶. Isaiah, 51:11.

³⁷. *Ibid.*, 65:13, 14.

³⁸. John, 15:4-11.

Christ's religion is a charter of triumphant joy—a joy which no man can take away—through abiding in God. Through experiencing this joy, one, though otherwise fragile and inconsequential like the young branch of a vine, becomes indestructible.

* * *

The message of Islam is also the assurance of this inevitable, all-compensating joy, through earnestly walking on the path of God as shown by the Prophet Muhammad.

Clearly it is announced in the *Koran*:

O ye who believe! Fear God. Desire union with Him. Contend earnestly on His path, that you may attain to happiness.³⁹

No soul knoweth what joy of the eyes is reserved for the good in recompense of their works.⁴⁰

Even from these very scanty citations, it will have been clear how the religions of the world, while differing in many ways among themselves, unanimously promise joy to all true followers who strive unto the last, and stake their all on religion. This joy is not the opposite of misery, but a state beyond pleasure and misery. When a religious person attains this joy, pleasure is no longer pleasure to him, pain is no longer pain, profit is no profit, loss is no loss; he has developed an entirely new faculty by which he can take everything as the movement of grace, or the revelation of the Self, a song infinite in truth, knowledge and bliss. Ignorance has vanished; what has remained is existence, pure and simple. In that ultimate simplicity there is no clash, no loss, no hunger, no fear. It is a state of absolute fearlessness, of sweet unconcern, a state of divine irresponsibility, where there is nothing to plan for, hide, grab, or defend. It is a living in the open of God, laughing and playing in the manner of God.

(To be continued)

³⁹. *The Koran*, trans. J. M. Rodwell, (London: J. M. Dent & Son Ltd., 1953), V. 39, p. 490.

⁴⁰. *Ibid.*, XXXII.17, p. 191.

SADHANA IN THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMANUJA

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

1

Philosophy as conceived in Vedanta consists in general of three areas of investigation. In the first place it should formulate, through a reasoned consideration of all relevant evidence, the nature of the fundamental reality. That reality is named Brahman in the Upaniṣads, and Puruṣottama in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the two basal classics of Vedanta. The exact significance of the concept of Brahman must be discerned, and such a discernment is the focal subject-matter of Badarāyaṇa's *Brahma-Sūtras*, which form the theoretical foundation of Vedanta.

The second sphere of inquiry relates to the ultimate goal or value of life that man should legitimately aspire after. It is the nature of reality that determines what constitutes the fulfilment and perfection of life for man. What man seeks in defiance of reality may lure him for the moment, but at the point of fulfilment it hurls him down to the abyss of frustration, if not disaster. Hence, founded on a knowledge of the nature of the Real, man should conceptually fashion for himself his ultimate *puruṣārtha* or value of life, which according to our spiritual literature is Mokṣa or Kai- valya (liberation), wherein man reaches life eternal and life abundant. All Schools of Vedanta maintain that this life-consummation consists in man's reaching Brahman, in the rough language of common sense; in the realization of Brahman, in the language of mysticism; and in the attainment of Supreme Ānanda in Brahman, Brahma-Nirvāṇa, in the language of the *Gītā*. Brahman, the objective and macrocosmic ultimate, must be realized as the subjective and microcosmic centre of one's own life, heart and soul. This state of perfect attune-

ment to the Real is the final value in life.

The third realm of philosophical concern is the mobilization of all the resources of our personality in a sustained and systematic endeavour to achieve this experiential integration with and in Brahman. This process of total endeavour to seek life in the divine centre of existence is what can be termed Sādhana. To discuss the importance of this last item of philosophical inquiry in the life and teachings of Śrī Rāmānuja is the subject-matter of this article. My task here is twofold: to go over the biography of Rāmānuja and trace his own practice of personal Sādhana; and secondly, to outline the scheme of Sādhana as he propounded it in his philosophy.

2

In the first part of the required treatment, exhibiting the Sādhana in Rāmānuja's own personal life, I face the greatest difficulty. Anyone who attempts a similar treatment of other great sages and saints is sure to find himself in the same predicament. The interior endeavour of a saint's life cannot be brought out in the comparatively external accounts of the existing biographies. Further, many of them are unreliable, being produced very much later by pious followers with the intent of glorifying the great teacher. Very often the biographers hardly rise to the height of their theme. They display false standards of historical estimate and cover their heroes with imaginary glories, which to a sober judge of later times may seem hardly complimentary. Miracle-mongering and an insensitivity to historical authenticity mar many a biography. On the same philosopher and saint, it is not uncommon to come across biographies giving

divergent and conflicting accounts on even major points. The truth is that in Indian culture the great ones rarely project their own personalities in their works. They are least autobiographical. We have nothing comparable to St. Augustine's *Confessions*. Only Lord Buddha is depicted in some fragments of Sūtras as narrating some landmarks in his pilgrimage to enlightenment. But the *Tripitaka* is itself a very much later compilation subject to controversy among the several sects of Buddhism.

The common practice among the great Ācāryas is to efface all traces of their private and interior progress to realization and to state firmly and clearly only the final fruits of their realization. Autobiographical elements are suppressed, and only the vision of truth eternal and infinite, as they had it, is propagated in splendid and finished lucidity. It is also a sacred sentiment that what transpires between a devotee and his God must be kept a secret and should not be vulgarized by publicity. Truth alone matters and not the story of its discovery. One may dispute the merit of this impersonality, but it is a fact of India's spiritual history. It may also be conjectured that whatever is of universal and timeless validity in the Sādhana-career of the masters stands incorporated in the philosophy of Sādhana they propound. It is for this reason that *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, though intensely biographical and autobiographical, forms the substance of his perennial message.

With this weakening preamble, we may go over the leading and fairly authentic details of the life of Rāmānuja that pertain to his Sādhana.

Rāmānuja was the son of an orthodox and learned father, Keśava Somayaji, and a devout mother, Kāntimati. His maternal uncle, devoted to the God of Tirumalai, and a master of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, named

him Rāmānuja, a name that remained throughout and seemed to indicate the type of spirituality he was to develop. Rāmānuja in his mature years studied under his inspired uncle the *Rāmāyaṇa* for the duration of a whole year on the sacred seven hills. The boy's early years were spent in his native town, Perambudur, adorned by the temple of Ādikeśava, and he acquired all the traditional Vedic and Śāstric learning of the times. As the place seemed to offer no prospects for further advancement in learning, he moved to the then great centre of philosophical culture, Kanchi. In all this we see his intellectual zeal and competence. By this time he seems to have lost his father and also appears to have been married. At Kanchipuram he attached himself to a celebrated teacher of Vedānta by name Yādavaprakāśa, who propagated Vedānta on Advaitic lines. This makes it evident that Rāmānuja was seized by an eager zest for Vedantic knowledge. This is the traditionally recognized stage of Sādhana described as *śravaṇa*.

But Rāmānuja was no passive recipient of information. His cast of mind was reflective and critical. It soon became clear both to himself and his teacher, that he could not accept all the interpretations of the Upaniṣads that were imparted to him. In all politeness, but with logical firmness, he objected to several of them; and when challenged to give his own exegesis, he put forward very disturbingly cogent alternative explanations. The teacher-pupil relation broke down after several such differences. In this, Rāmānuja was exercising the second stage of Vedantic knowledge called *manana*. This critical independence of judgement was an abiding trait of the Ācārya. Later on we see him deviating in a similar fashion from some disciples of even Yāmunācārya, whom he venerated highly.

At this juncture at Kanchi, his philosophical learning from preceptors being ter-

minated, he was in a frustrated mood. On his mother's advice, he attached himself to Kāñcipūrṇa, a great non-brahmin devotee of Lord Varada Rāja, and engaged himself actively in assisting the worship of the Deity. This was a fruitful advance in his personal life and, through the company of Kāñcipūrṇa and ardent dedication to the service of Varada Rāja, he gained both illumination and answers to his fundamental questions. By this time differences arose between him and his wife on the ground of his unconventional reverence to the non-brahmin saint. The differences grew wider and wider on questions of this nature. He finally resolved to renounce the life of the householder, and embraced Sannyāsa before his chosen Deity, Varada Rāja. His formula of resignation is recorded: 'With no desire for any other enjoyment, I seek Varada as my refuge.'¹ This phase of life synchronizes well with what is described in the Upaniṣads as *nididhyāsana*, which in later literature comes to be called Bhakti. The final surrender to Lord Varada is what is called Prapatti in the *Gītā* and devotional literature in general.

From this point onwards the range of the Ācārya's activity grows wider and wider. He had to migrate at the behest of his God to Sri Rangam, and there had to assume the role of a leader of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava community as the successor of the great Yāmunācārya, who had unfortunately passed away before Rāmānuja could meet him. He met all the great disciples of Yāmuna and gathered the salient teachings of the Ācārya. He mastered the great compositions of the Ālvārs. He organized the worship at the great Sri Rangam temple. In fact his genius for the rejuvenation of temple-worship vitalized several places of pilgrim-

age in South India, such as Venkatadri, Kanchi and Melkote.

By now he was fully equipped to fulfil the great desire and hope of Yāmunācārya. He gave shape to the distinctive philosophical system of Vedānta called Viśiṣṭādvaita in his great works, particularly *Vedārtha Saṁgraha*, *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, and his magnum opus, *Śrī Bhāṣya*. He travelled widely ministering to the spiritual needs of the learned as well as of the masses. His compassion to the latter set an example for the later Bhakti movement to emulate. He spread his vision of truth by dialectical victories and inspiring expositions of Vedānta and the songs of the Ālvārs (Vaiṣṇava saints of the South). Exceptionally competent disciples gathered round him to propagate his message. After a long and rich life of spiritual achievement and manifold service of lasting consequence to his God and His creatures, he attained at Sri Rangam the ultimate peace of the blessed, 'that passeth understanding'. Such is the Sādhana and Siddhi as we find it in the life of Rāmānuja.

Summing up the greatness of his guru, the greatest disciple of Rāmānuja, Kureśa, singles out three outstanding traits. In the first place, he was infatuated with his Lord, Acyuta. The word used is *vyāmoḥa*, and we may recall that in the entire Bhakti literature of the Purāṇas, this word gets used only in connection with Prahlāda. It is no mild interest or one love among other loves, but an absorbing and all-consuming intoxication. This intensity of divine madness is itself a fruition or maturation of all that goes under the name of spiritual life. The second trait mentioned is a total lack of interest in every other value, as an utter triviality. He was so awake to the beauty of Acyuta that he was asleep to other objects of mundane interest, nay, practically dead to them. From this double perfection of love and renunciation followed

1. निरस्तेतर भोगाशः वरदं शरणं गतः ।

the third trait, namely *dayā*, of which the Ācārya is said to have been an ocean. This is no conventional and meaningless compliment. The entire life of Rāmānuja as a Guru bears abundant proof of this trait. It is proudly recorded by the disciples that the age of largeheartedness in the spiritual world was inaugurated by Rāmānuja.

(To be continued)

INDIAN HISTORY IN ITS RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

SWAMI SAKHYANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

*Āyana-calanam or precession of the equinoxes**

'Precession' is a technical term meaning the unique phenomenon of retrograde motion, or falling back of the equinoxes and solstices in the march of time, creating changes in the seasons and conduct of life on earth. It is a subject which requires careful study.

We have seen that the equinoxes occur nowadays on March 21 (vernal) and September 23 (autumnal), and that the solstices occur on June 21 (summer) and December 21 (winter). But this was not the situation in bygone ages, and will not be the same in the future. It has been ever changing, the cause of which stands unexplained even now.¹⁵ During the Vedic age of Manu and the Saptarṣis (8576 B.C.) the vernal equinox was in *maghā nakṣatra*, 120°, and used to occur sometime in the middle of August, instead of March 21 of the modern Western calendar. Summer solstice was then in *viśākhā*, 210°, and used to occur some-

time in November instead of June of the Western calendar. After a lapse of 5,475 years (in 3101 B.C.), during the age of Mahābhārata and Kaliyugādi, the vernal equinox was in the third quarter of *rohiṇī nakṣatra*, 46°; and the summer solstice was in *pūrvā phalgunī*, 136°. From this it is clear that, from the days of Manu to Kaliyugādi, through a passage of 5,475 years, the equinoxes and solstices have fallen back by about 74° on the ecliptic. That means, the precession was taking place at an average rate of seventy-four years per degree during these five and a half millenia.

Since 3101 B.C. Kaliyugādi, 5,078 years have rolled on to reach the present times of A.D. 1979. Now the vernal equinox is in *uttarā bhādrapadā*, 336°, that is, 24° behind the zero point. That means, the equinoxes and solstices have been preceding at an average rate of 72.5 years per degree during these five millennia. Modern astronomers, with the aid of scientifically developed instruments, have observed that nowadays the sun is crossing the celestial equator fifty-one seconds earlier every year. In other words, the equinoxes are preceding at the rate of seventy years per degree at present.

From the above observations it is quite evident that the rate of precession is not fixed; it has been constantly changing. And this change is due to the advancement,

* In order to appreciate fully the following discussion, the reader is requested to refer to the author's ingenious diagram of the Wheel of Time (*kālacakram*) published in last month's issue.—Ed.

¹⁵. According to modern astronomers, precession is caused by the gravitational pull of the sun and the moon on the earth. This was first pointed out in 1687 by Isaac Newton.—Ed.

or earlier occurrence, of the equinoctial points every year by a few seconds—say forty to fifty seconds. Our ancient Ṛṣi-astronomers minutely observed this unique phenomenon of precession of the solstices and equinoxes—they called it '*āyana-calanam*'—and came to certain conclusions regarding the march of time. The Ṛṣi who studied the phenomenon during the precessional motion of the equinoxes through *punarvasu*, *ārdrā* and *mṛgaśiras* *nakṣatras* (roughly between 6350 and 3350 B.C.), found the rate of precession to be seventy-five years per degree. At this rate, 1,000 years will be required for precession through a *nakṣatra* of 13.33° , 2,250 years for a *rāśi* of 30° , and 27,000 years for one cycle of precession on the ecliptic of 360° . We have clear references to these facts in the Āgama Śāstras.

During the periods of equinoctial precession through *maghā*, *aśleṣā* and *puṣya* *nakṣatras* (roughly between 9350 and 6350 B.C.) the rate might have been seventy-five to eighty years per degree. There is a passage in *Ṛg-Veda* (8.2.41) giving some hints about *āyana-calanam*. It reveals that a quarter of the ecliptic (right angle of 90°) is equal to seventy-two '*śatakas*' (7,200 years); that means, one full cyclic precession would require 28,800 years at a rate of eighty years per degree. From this hint we may infer that this particular *mantra* was revealed at a time when the rate was eighty years per degree—probably between 8500 and 8000 B.C. This does not,

however, mean that all the *mantras* of the *Ṛg-Veda* were revealed during this period. They have come down to us through tradition, transmitted through a continuous line of teachers and disciples from time immemorial. In this process of transmission through the ages, many new *mantras* might have been revealed at different periods, and many might have been lost. That is the real history of the Vedas, and not as modern philological historians tell us. (They say that the Vedas were 'written' between 1000 and 500 B.C.).

These findings based on astronomical data, though empirical, reveal at least one fact with certainty : the world was not dark and dead before the advent of Christ or the dawn of Greek civilization, as the European Indologists want to teach us through their spurious historical theories ; our human world was actively moving with life, and civilized human society was present in India millennia before the rise of the Greeks. It was the thought and culture of Ārṣa-Bhārata that went forth to enlighten and civilize the rest of the world in the remote past where the modern European scholars dare not peep.

Kālacakram explained

The chronology of important historical epochs known through Purāṇic records and astronomical data noted in the diagram '*Kālacakram*',¹⁶ may be explained in the following manner :

Important epochs :	Nakṣatra position of the vernal equinox :	Approximate date :
1. Advent of Vaivasvata Śraddhādeva Manu	Maghā	8576 B.C.
2. Yayāti, sixth in descent from Manu (Somakula)	Aśleṣā	8300 B.C.

16. See the second instalment of this article published in *P.B.* September 1979.

Important epochs :	Nakṣatra position of the vernal equinox :	Approximate date :
3. Origin of the Pañcajanas (Yadus, Turvasus, Druhyus, Anudruhyus and Pauravas)	Aśleṣā	8300 B.C.
4. Triśaṅku of Sūryakula and Viśvāmitra ¹⁷	Aśleṣā Puṣya	7000 B.C.
5. Sagara of Sūryakula ¹⁸	Puṣya	6400 B.C.
6. First division of the Vedic literature into four books— <i>R̥k</i> , <i>Yajus</i> , <i>Sāma</i> and <i>Atharva</i> by earlier Vyāsa	Punarvasu	5000 B.C.
7. Advent of Śrī Rāma, Vālmīki Muni	Ārdrā fourth <i>pada</i>	4750 B.C.
8. Rise of Yadu-Haihaya power in Āryāvarta and their occupation of lands in the south, central and western regions of India	Mṛgaśīras	Between 4350 and 3350 B.C.
9. Rise of the Varuṇa- Bhārgava (naval) power in Bhṛgu Kacha and the occupation of the West coast of South India by Pañcajanas under the Bhṛgus	Mṛgaśīras	Between 4350 and 3350 B.C.
10. Occupation of Dakṣiṇa Khaṇḍa by Yadu-Haihayas under the leadership of Agastya Muni	Mṛgaśīras	Between 4350 and 3350 B.C.
11. Ṛṣi Yājñavalkya and the discovery of <i>Śukla</i> <i>Yajur-Veda</i>	Mṛgaśīras fourth <i>pada</i>	About 4300 B.C.
12. Rise of Paraśurāma, causing the fall of Bhārgava power in Kacha	Rohiṇī fourth <i>pada</i>	Between 3300 and 3150 B.C.

17. Navigation of the South Seas began during this period.

18. Śakas, Yāvanas, Kambojas and other clans

of Somakula Kṣatriyas started migrating from Aryavarta to distant western regions of Jambudvīpa during this period.

Important epochs :	Nakṣatra position of the vernal equinox :	Approximate date :
13. Advent of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Bhīṣma, Yudhiṣṭhira and Vyāsa	Rohiṇī fourth <i>pada</i>	Between 3200 and 3050 B.C.
14. Mahābhārata War and destruction of Manukula Kṣatriyas	Rohiṇī fourth <i>pada</i>	About 3067 B.C.
15. Destruction of the Indus Valley Civilization built up by Pañcajanas due to internecine war and cataclysms ¹⁹	Rohiṇī third <i>pada</i>	Between 3100 and 2850 B.C.
16. Domination over the Aryan society by Vaidika Brāhmaṇas and revival of Vedic Śāstras	Rohiṇī first <i>pada</i>	Between 2850 and 2400 B.C.
17. Advent of Parśvanātha Tīrthaṅkara in Āryāvarta and Zara Tvaṣṭra in Āryāna (modern Iran)	Kṛttikā first <i>pada</i>	About 2400 B.C.
18. Emanation of Nakulīśa Śiva Yogins from Madhyadeśa	Kṛttikā third <i>pada</i>	Between 2400 and 2100 B.C.
19. Advent of Mahāvīra Jina and Gautama Buddha and foundation of Ārya Rājarṣi Dharma	Kṛttikā third <i>pada</i>	Between 1900 and 1800 B.C.
20. Rise of Kṣatriya power in Magadha under Mahāpadma Nanda	Kṛttikā first <i>pada</i>	Between 1600 and 1480 B.C.
21. Rise of imperial Magadha power under Candragupta Maurya and his successors	Bharaṇī fourth <i>pada</i>	Between 1480 and 1160 B.C.
22. Aśoka in Magadha and spread of Buddhism all over the world	Bharaṇī fourth <i>pada</i>	Between 1400 and 1350 B.C.
23. Brahma-Kṣatra power in Magadha under Suṅgas and Kaṇvas	Bharaṇī third <i>pada</i>	Between 1160 and 800 B.C.

19. See the next section.

Important epochs :	Nakṣatra position of the vernal equinox :	Approximate date :
24. Andhra-Kṣatriya power in Magadha	Bharaṇī second and first <i>pada</i>	Between 800 and 325 B.C.
25. Rise of Agnikula-Kṣatriya power under Vikramāditya, Rājarsi of Candrapura	Aśvinī fourth <i>pada</i>	556 B.C.
26. Advent of Ādi-Śaṅkara (Draviḍa Muni) who wrote the great commentaries (Bhāṣyakāra)	Aśvinī fourth <i>pada</i>	508 B.C.
27. Gupta Empire in Magadha founded by Candragupta I, and Alexander's invasion	Aśvinī third <i>pada</i>	326 B.C.
28. Decline of Gupta Empire and rise of Agnikula (Śakari) power in Ujjain; Vikramāditya the Great	Aśvinī third <i>pada</i>	About 80 B.C.; Vikrama Era, 57 B.C.
29. Rise of Śālivāhana after Vikrama Varṇa	Aśvinī fourth <i>pada</i>	Śaka Era, A.D. 78
30. Buddhist movement on the decline in India	Aśvinī fourth <i>pada</i>	A.D. beginning
31. Invasion of Hūṇas, Turuṣkas, Kṣitipas, and chaos in Āryāvarta	Revatī first <i>pada</i>	Between A.D. 280 and 450
32. Visit of Fahien, the Chinese pilgrim	Revatī fourth <i>pada</i>	A.D. 410
33. Rise of nascent Agnikula Kṣatriya power under Harṣa of Kanyākubja	Revatī third <i>pada</i>	Between A.D. 606 and 646
34. Pratihara Rājaputras in power	Revatī second <i>pada</i>	Between A.D. 720 and 950
35. Abhinava Śaṅkara and Kaladi Śaṅkarācāryas in South India	Revatī second <i>pada</i>	Between A.D. 780 and 840
36. Absorption of non-Vaidika Buddhist and Jain sects to form the present-day Hindu society	Revatī first <i>pada</i>	Between A.D. 840 and 1200
37. Mohammedan invasion and decline of Agnikula Rajput power	Revatī first <i>pada</i>	A.D. 1000

*The Destruction of Indus Valley
Civilization (Explanatory note on 15)*

Following the departure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in 3031 B.C., Dvāraka and other islands of the Southern (Arabian) Sea were submerged, and the great civilizations that grew in previous ages all over the western and south-western regions of India were destroyed by violent earthquakes, huge tidal waves, sandstorms and hot winds that ravaged the land for over a century. The South Sea which, in ancient ages, extended far into the interior and helped the growth of port-cities on either side, was dried up by seismic upheavals; the cities were washed away by tidal floods and buried underground by sandstorms and hot winds. The whole area was turned into a desert, now known under the names of Rann of Kutch, Sind desert and Thar desert. They are called 'Vināśanam' in our Purāṇas. The river Sarasvatī, which in ancient days was flowing into the sea (mentioned in the *R̥g-Veda*), dried up and disappeared in the newly formed desert of 'Vināśanam'.

Ruins of some of those ancient cities have been recently unearthed. The excavated sites are now known by the names of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa (in Pakistan at present). It is a mystery to modern historians and archaeologists as to who built up these civilizations and when and how they were destroyed. Vain speculations are still going on to solve the mystery. Some scholarly interpretations also have been given by archaeological experts and modern historians on the subject. They are, to speak the truth, puerile, funny and more often fallacious. What, then, is the real history of these ancient civilizations?

As we know from our traditional history, these civilizations were built up by the different branches of Somakula Kṣatriyas, called Pañcajanas, the heroic people descended from Yayāti, the sixth king in the

line of Manu. They are known to us by their Purāṇic names of Haihayas, Yādavas, Saindhavas, Sauvīras, Śālvas, Turvasus, Anus, Druhyus, etc. They were a mixed race speaking different dialects of Paisāci language,²⁰ the Prakrit form of Vedic Sanskrit; and the script, now found on seals and tablets, was some old form of Brāhmī which also has become obsolete. The civilization of Mohenjo-Daro belonged to the Saindhavas and that of Harappa (Harayupia) to the Śālvas. They were all destroyed by the almighty destroyer, Time (Kāla), whose inscrutable workings were the Mahābhārata War and the subsequent catastrophe of this memorable period, the Dvāpara-Kali Yuga Sandhi (3100-2900 B.C.). When so much can be definitely known about these ancient civilizations from our traditional records, why do our modern excavators not look into them and find a satisfactory solution?

In this connection we may note that the civilizations which grew in those days on the Persian Gulf coast and Tigris-Euphrates valley were also of the same race of Somakula Kṣatriyas as those who built up the civilizations of the Sindhu valley. And they too shared the same fate of destruction as their kindred in India at the same time. As we read in world history, it was after a thousand years that civilized life began to pulsate in these devastated regions. It is in this context that we see the emergence of new races of people like the Sumerians, Akads, Phoenicians and Hebrews in these West Asian regions, and the rise of new nations. They were none but the descendants of ancient

20. Paisāci was the language of the people not only of western India, but also of the whole of India and West Asia. All later Prakrit dialects like Pāli, Māgadhi, Mahārāṣṭri, Suraseni, Gāndhāri, Pahlāvi, etc., have developed from the different forms of Paisāci. (Ref: *Prakrit Grammar* by Pischel and the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali).

Indian Somakula Kṣatriyas, newly emerged from the ashes of the dead, like the legendary phoenix. No doubt, their language and culture changed very much in course of time. But still we can discern their Indian origin and kinship from the surviving remains. Investigation along the right lines will reveal the truth.

(Concluded)

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION IN THE GITA

S. H. VENKATRAMANI

The *Gītā* teaches a distinct way of living which, far from being obsolete or too idealistic, is certainly practicable, and in fact the only sensible way for the modern man. But to determine what exactly is the *Gītā* way of life is a ticklish job because different commentators have given different, widely varying, even mutually incompatible interpretations of the *Gītā*. To get at the true meaning of the *Gītā* we have to always remember, as Bal Gangadhar Tilak has so correctly pointed out, that the *Gītā*, preached by Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna to induce the latter to fight, is basically a gospel of action or a doctrine of Karma-yoga.

The basis of the operative part of any gospel or philosophy is the theoretical groundwork of its outlook on the universe. And a philosophical theory of the universe has always to begin with a view of God. The *Gītā* views God as 'Vasudeva', which literally means 'the Divine who dwells in all created beings'. Lord Kṛṣṇa says: 'I [am] the father, mother, supporter [support], grandfather of this world; I am also all that which is holy, or which is knowable; I am the Omkāra, the *R̥g-Veda*, the *Sāma-Veda*, and the *Yajur-Veda*; I [am] the Ultimate State [of all], the Maintainer [of all], the Overlord, the Witness, the Rest, the Refuge, the Friend, the Origin, the Destruction, the Existence, the Repository, and the Imperishable Seed.' (Chapter

9),¹ To Śaṅkarācārya the problem of the existence of God did not arise at all because God was existence. In the *Gītā* also, there is no doubt as to whether God exists or not because there is nothing other than God. God in the *Gītā* is the unitive indivisible Reality.

If we think in a sustained and logical manner, we can see that this is the only possible view of God, because all the arguments to prove the existence of God listed in standard textbooks of philosophy can be seen to suffer from serious logical defects.

Let us first take the Aristotelian argument of the First Cause. It is the fundamental assumption of science that every event is a caused event. Therefore all the events taking place in the universe at any time can be arranged in a temporal cause-effect sequence. This temporal sequence of events must have a beginning, the uncaused event, and that is God. The fallacy in this argument is that it starts off by saying that every event is caused, but subsequently asserts that the First Cause was uncaused. Furthermore, a sequence of events need not necessarily be finite, and therefore need not imply a beginning.

The second argument that is usually advanced is the argument of Grand Design. There seems to be a pattern, a purpose in

1. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Srimad Bhagavad Gita Rahasya*, trans. B. S. Sukthankar (Poona: Lokamanya Tilak Mandir, 1936), p. 1050.

nature in the way living beings have been endowed. The gills of fishes make it possible for them to sustain themselves in water, and there is an environmental complementarity in the respiratory habits of human beings and plants. All these imply a Grand Design in nature, and the existence of a Grand Design automatically implies the existence of a Designer, who is, of course, God. The trouble with this argument is that its approach itself is wrong. If fishes have gills, it is not because they were designed for aquatic habitation. It is the other way round. Fishes developed gills by virtue of living in water. Therefore this argument is *ab initio* unsustainable.

The third argument is the Ontological argument of St. Anselm. It says that since a being perfect in a particular attribute or activity is thinkable, and therefore exists, a being perfect in everything is also thinkable and therefore also exists. Such an all-perfect being is God. This argument is unsatisfactory because, in trying to define God, it has brought another indefinable term into the picture, that is, 'perfection'!

The fourth argument is the Moral one. This has some appeal for Christians because of the Biblical belief in absolute distinctions between the holy and the sinful. According to this argument, God is the 'Supreme Moral Good', morality being absolute because certain acts, committed at whichever place and whatever time, arouse pangs of guilt in the doer. The fault in this argument is in the premise. Pangs of conscience arise only because of ingrained habits of thought and feeling, and not because there are absolute moral laws.

So we can see that the customary ways of defining God, consistent with the requirements of Omnipresence, Omnipotence, and Omniscience, are all defective. There is only one other possible way of defining God, agreeing with the above-mentioned attributes and suggested by what Lord

Kṛṣṇa says illustratively in the *Gītā*: 'I cause the sun to shine, I restrain and let loose the rain' (Chapter 9);² and, 'I am the Atman which exists in the heart of all created beings; and I am also the origin, the middle, and the end of [all] created beings.' (Chapter 10).³ We may, therefore define God as the system of Natural Laws which governs the behaviour of the universe.

Let us go a little deep into the implication of this definition. God, defined as the System of Natural Laws, certainly exists, because in nature the same causes always have the same effects. But are Laws of Nature many, or are they all expressible in terms of a single Universal Law? Though science is still left with a lot of laws in its different fields of study, it can be seen that what is ultimately responsible for the generation and functioning of the universe is Causality. Causality is what makes one event follow another. This relationship of implication cannot be broken down into something more fundamental, because it will then become a case of begging the question or of giving a reason for the validity of reason. The laws of science appear many because language has been used to state them. They are basically not laws, but definitions, definitions of the different abstract concepts used to study relationships in nature. For example, Newton's Second Law of Motion is not so much a law as a definition of 'force'. There is only one Law, Causality, God. Causality is the creative and sustaining principle of the universe.

The immediate consequence of defining God as Causality is a deterministic view of the universe. Since every event is caused, every event is predetermined. Naturally, human life also has to run a predestined

2. *Ibid.*, p. 1051.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 1071.

course. That is why the *Gītā* says : 'Even the Jñānin acts according to the natural tendency of his *prakṛti* ; all created beings act according to the inclination of [their respective] *prakṛtis* ; [in these circumstances] what can restraint [that is, pressure] do?' (Chapter 3).⁴ Wisdom, therefore, lies in realizing that man is subject to the forces of nature.

Realizing that the universe is deterministic does not mean that one should not exercise one's seeming power of free-will. For though the future behaviour of the universe would be thoroughly predictable to a being who is able to obtain all the data pertaining to the course of the universe at a particular instant, it is certainly not so to us human beings with all our limitations, because we cannot obtain a complete and exact picture of the universe at a particular point of time. The reasons for this, of course, are the sheer magnitude of the data involved, and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, which states, in effect, that as far as minute particles in nature are concerned, the very act of measuring appreciably disturbs the thing measured. Therefore, though the universe in reality is a series of causes and effects, for our practical purposes we have to assume a certain amount of free-will. That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa exhorts : 'Man should himself bring about his own emancipation ; one should not [at any time] discourage oneself ; because [every man] himself is [said to be] his own *bandhu* [helper] or his own enemy.' (Chapter 6).⁵

The second implication of the *Gītā* view of the universe is that action is ineluctable. Since everything in the universe, at any point of time, is subject to a set of forces which point to a resultant effect, human life also, as a caused event, has at every

instant to respond to the impressed forces operating on it, in terms of a particular act. Further, since in logic action is defined as doing something or refraining from doing something else, one cannot, by definition, be inactive. It is these deductions that Lord Kṛṣṇa makes when he points out to Arjuna that 'whoever he may be, he does not remain even for a moment without performing [some or other] action. The constituents of *prakṛti* compel every being, that has become dependent, to [always] perform [some or other] action.' (Chapter 3).⁶

Since it is now clear that a human being has to do something willy-nilly at every moment of his life, only two further questions remain to be answered for the *Gītā* to show itself as a comprehensive philosophy of life. The two questions are, what to do, and how to do? What is the action that should be performed at each moment, and how should it be performed?

The answer to the first question is given in Chapter 3 where Lord Kṛṣṇa says : 'Perform the action which has been *niyata* [prescribed according to your dharma] ; because it is better to perform action than not to perform action ; besides, if you do not perform action, [you will not get even food to eat, so] even the body will not be maintained.'⁷ This is logically derivable from the world-view we have so far been developing. The reason for performing action being that you cannot avoid it, the best thing to do at any time is your duty, that is, what is due from you, what according to your inclination, attitudes, the need of the moment, etc., you feel most like doing. The word 'dharma' is often wrongly interpreted to mean an externally prescribed code of conduct. But according to its Sanskrit etymology (*dhāraṇat dharma ityāhuh*), whatever supports you is your

4. *Ibid.*, p. 933.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 988.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 911.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 914.

'dharma'. Therefore, whatever supports you in the sense of helping you minister to your needs—primarily physical (food, clothes, shelter, etc.) and secondarily mental—is your 'dharma'. So the best course of action is to do whatever is necessary to cater to your needs. This, of course, hardly needs saying (because your needs will automatically make you find ways and means of satisfying them) but for the fact that there has been a lot of mistaken moralizing in the history of human thought.

The answer to the second question (how to perform action) is given clearly by Lord Kṛṣṇa in Chapter 2: 'Your authority extends only to the performance of action; [obtaining or not obtaining] the fruit, is never within your authority [that is, never within your control]; [therefore] do not be one who performs action with the [avaricious] motive [in the mind] that a particular fruit should be obtained; nor should you insist on not performing action.'⁸ This is the only sensible disposition in which one can perform one's actions, because the only inducement to action is that it is compulsory, and, logically, the consequences of one's actions depend not only upon one's own input but also upon other natural forces outside one's control. Even allowing for a certain degree of probability in consequences because data are not accurately ascertainable, man can be the architect of his own fate only to a very small extent. So action should not be with a view to achieving a particular result, though a need might have been, as an antecedent cause, the impetus for the action. Furthermore, if one doesn't act because of an

overwhelming desire to achieve something, one doesn't run the risk of disappointment, surely a great advantage over desire-motivated action.

In sum, therefore, the *Gītā* philosophy is simply an enlightened common-sense way of life, reducible to a series of five logical steps: (1) God is the all-governing power of causality; (2) the universe is completely deterministic; (3) action is inevitable because the set of physical and mental forces acting on an individual at any point of time will have an effect in terms of action; (4) that action should be performed which would minister to one's needs, and, in that sense, would be one's support or dharma; and (5) action should be performed in a spirit of desirelessness though a need is its motivation, because the fruit of action is not under one's control. Needs are useful and to be considered only in so far as they enable one to choose a particular course of action.

The *Gītā* way of living is certainly not obsolete, because, as we have seen, it is a logical derivative of a scientific outlook on life. It is also not too idealistic, because all of us at certain moments in our lives act fully and desirelessly, in spite of ourselves, as it were. To become entirely *niṣkāma* (desireless) may not be possible all at once; but one can certainly become more and more desireless in one's attitude to action by *abhyāsa*, or 'continued practice'. Gradualness of progress should not detract from the worthiness of the ideal. In fact, once a wholesome goal is fixed, it is progress that matters, not the rate of progress. In any case, the basic soundness of a 'do your best; hope for the best; but be prepared for the worst' philosophy can not be doubted by any reasonable person.

⁸. *Ibid.*, p. 895.

ST. FRANCIS, MIRROR OF THE WORLD

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

One day not long after his service to the lepers, Francis was at the dilapidated chapel of San Damiano, praying before the crucifix: 'Great and glorious God, my Lord Jesus Christ! I implore Thee to enlighten me and to disperse the darkness of my soul! Give me true faith and firm hope and a perfect charity! Grant me, O Lord, to know Thee so well that in all things I may act by Thy light, and in accordance with Thy holy will!' As he uttered this prayer, all the love and longing, all the joy and sorrow, all the fervency and struggle of the past year became concentrated into one intense cry of the heart for light; and Christ heard, and He gave answer, which Francis heard coming as a sweet whisper from his heart: 'Now go hence, Francis, and build up My house, for it is nearly falling down!' Francis replied in amazement: 'Gladly will I do so, O Lord!' Being simple and humble, Francis thought that Christ meant the little church of San Damiano, which indeed was falling down; he didn't yet realize that Christ was asking him to repair the Christian Church, the Mystical Body of Christian believers, which was straying from the narrow path of renunciation, of evangelical poverty, of prayer and divine communion.

So in his simple and literal faith, Francis went to the priest of the church, who was sunning himself outside, and gave a handful of money, saying: 'I beg you, sir, to buy oil and keep the lamp before this image of Christ constantly alight. When

this is spent, I will give you as much as you need.' From this hour till the end of his life, Francis carried in his heart the wounds of Christ's passion, and often would his heart melt in love and compassion for the sufferings of Christ on earth. So much so that he would forget food and drink and his eyes would overflow with tears at the slightest suggestion of Jesus' or Mary's earthly sufferings—tears of the sorrow which is joy and blessedness because so utterly unselfish and pure; the sorrow which is transmuted into ecstasy by virtue of its intensity and its foundation in pure love of the Divine.

Francis had not with him enough money to rebuild the church, so he hurried home, took some rolls of fine cloth from his father's shop, loaded them on a pack-horse, and took them to a neighbouring market-town. There he sold cloth and horse for a large sum, returned to San Damiano's, found the priest and gave him the money saying that it was for the church's restoration. The priest refused the money, however, thinking the young man to be offering it in a whimsy and fearing the possible reaction of Pietro di Bernardone, Francis' father.

Pietro di Bernardone had been gone for a long time on business. But soon after Francis sold the cloth and horse, he returned and heard about the recent exploits of his son. He went in anger to San Damiano's, where Francis had been staying since the day the crucifix had spoken. But Francis hid himself in a nearby cave. The

priest showed Pietro where Francis had kept the money earned on the cloth, and Pietro returned home somewhat mollified. For many days Francis remained in hiding at the cave out of fear of his father's wrath, receiving food sent secretly by his mother. But through his unceasing prayers, fasting, and trust in God, his heart was filled with such an ineffable joy and radiant light that he eventually overcame all fear and left the cave, prepared to face his father.

As he entered Assisi, his changed countenance and ragged appearance made everyone take him to be mad. They began mocking him, throwing stones and mud, shouting and kicking at him till he reached his father's residence; but the inner radiance and beatitude welling in his heart made him oblivious to the commotion all around him. His father heard the noise and ran out to find his son in the midst of a jeering crowd, covered with mud and bleeding from the stones cast at him. Overcome with anger and humiliation he grabbed Francis, beat him, and threw him into a dark cellar of the house, locking the door behind him. A few days later Pica found that her son was undeterred from his resolve to leave all for Christ, so she secretly released him, and he fled to San Damiano's.

Pietro was enraged to learn of his son's escape, and had him called before the Bishop in order to retrieve whatever money Francis still had in his keeping. The Bishop knew and admired the sincerity of Francis, so he asked Francis before the court to return to Pietro whatever money he had in order that he could serve God single-mindedly without further interference from his father. Overjoyed at this sympathetic demand from the Bishop, Francis declared: 'My Lord Bishop, not only will I gladly give back the money which is my father's, but also my clothes.' And going into the Bishop's room he stripped himself of his garments

and placed them along with all his money before his father, stood naked and said before all: 'Listen all of you, and mark my words. Hitherto I have called Pietro di Bernardone my father; but because I am resolved to serve God I return to him the money on account of which he was so perturbed, and also the clothes I wore which are his; and from now on I will say "Our Father who art in heaven", and not Father Pietro di Bernardone.' The Bishop and all present except Pietro (who was afire with rage) wept to see the young man's guilelessness. The Bishop then clothed Francis with his own cloak. From this time forward the world could hold no claim over Francis, for he had released his hold on it for the love of Christ his King. This renunciation of family and wealth took place in 1206.

Now Francis was free to do what he had so longed for during the past months: to follow Christ in poverty and in joy, seeking nothing but to please Him, wanting nothing but what He wished to give, and being bound to no man but the Son of Man.

In the exuberance of his newfound freedom he set forth from Assisi and walked out into the world, possessing nothing but a poor robe on his back and the radiance of Christ in his heart, singing in French the praises of God. In the evening he was still walking through the forested mountains when a band of robbers ambushed him and cried threateningly. 'Who's there? Undisturbed, Francis replied, 'I am the herald of the great King. But what is it that you desire?' Seeing his shabby dress the robbers figured him to be a madman. They flung him into a deep bank of snow, saying, 'Lie there, you fool, who wants to play at being herald!' And they departed. The incident was a rude test of the new life upon which Francis had entered. It taught him that a true knight of the spirit must be prepared to meet misadventures. So he

picked himself up gaily from the snow-bank and went on his way singing joyfully the glory of God.

But after some days Francis returned to Assisi to rebuild the church of San Damiano. A new problem confronted him now, however; for he had neither money of his own nor access to family money. So he availed himself of what he had learned from the troubadours during his youth: he went into the streets of Assisi (wearing a hermit's robe acquired in a neighbouring village) and sang like a wandering minstrel. When he ended his song he went among those who had gathered to hear him and begged from them stone and mortar for the restoration of the church. If people laughed, Francis laughed back, for now he was secure in the love of Christ. Others wept to see how such a worldling had been transformed through the love of God.

Gathering the stones and mortar in this way, he would carry them on his own back to the church, where he did the masonry himself, his heart overflowing into blissful song at the thought that he was doing God's work. He began to meet his physical needs by begging food from door to door at noontime. On the first day of begging thus, he returned with such an odd assortment of food-scrap, all mixed together, that the very sight turned his stomach. But when he put the first bite to his lips, it was just as when he had kissed the leper!—his heart was filled with holy joy and he felt that never before had such ambrosia-like food passed over his tongue.

Thus Francis spent his days in begging and labour, and his nights in solitary prayer. When San Damiano's was restored, he restored two other dilapidated chapels in Assisi.

One early morning in February 1208, Francis was attending Mass in the little chapel of Portiuncula, which also he had restored. He heard a passage read from

the Gospel of St. Matthew (10 : 7-13) which pierced his heart and showed him the way of life he must lead thenceforward: 'At that time Jesus said to his disciples. "And going, preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely have you received, freely give. Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money, in your purses: nor script for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff; for the labourer is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till you go thence. And when you come into the house, salute it, saying: Peace be to this house. And if that house be worthy, your peace shall come upon it; but if it be not worthy, your peace shall return to you."' This passage reverberated in Francis' heart from then until his death and became the very foundation of his life. He regarded the hearing of this passage that day as no mere chance but as divine revelation.

On that first day after his renunciation when Francis had been accosted by robbers in the forest, he had proclaimed to them triumphantly, 'I am the herald of the great King!' Now, after hearing the reading from the Gospel he knew how to proceed in his vocation as Christ's messenger. And so, like John the Baptist, he began to prepare the way for the Lord, opening people's hearts for Him to enter. In accordance with the words of Christ he heard that day, never again did he wear shoes, nor carry a staff, nor keep a second garment. He began to appear in the streets of Assisi clad in a peasant's garment of grey, undyed wool, tied at the waste with a rope, and would greet all whom he met with the words, 'The Lord give you peace!' Where he saw a crowd assemble he would go there, stand barefoot and pray. And the words he spoke spontaneously before all in the streets pos-

sessed a strange appeal; for though his words were artless and unordered, behind them was the power possessed by spiritual men who speak only of that whereof they have knowledge, who advise only that which they have practised.

Such was the gradual conversion of Francis, the mirror of the world. In him we see reflected the gradual transformation of creature man into divine man, the fulfilment of the highest possibilities latent in a human being. In him is reflected the nature of the world and the nature of God, and the path leading from one to the other. That is why his life has continued to inspire people through all the following centuries in whatever land his name has been heard. For in him man sees fulfilled his own highest aspirations.

* * *

The laughter which had greeted Francis previously in the streets of Assisi was now silenced; people began to look on him with reverence, for the power of his sincerity was irresistible. Some of the life-bearing seeds that he now began spreading broadcast to all who would listen found fertile soil and sprouted into flower-laden trees of great spiritual beauty. The first seed to so sprout found lodging in the heart of Bernard of Quintavalle. Bernard was also a merchant as Francis had been, though he had not been one of Francis' boisterous friends. From a distance he had watched how Francis had changed from a merry, adventure-seeking youth into a gallant knight of Christ, how he had renounced home and friends to win the fair hand of Lady Poverty. Bernard looked on in wonder at this transformation worked by God's grace; his wonder became admiration, and his admiration stirred in him the desire to follow Francis.

Bernard began to ask Francis to sleep at his house, an invitation which Francis

gladly accepted, as he hardly had any fixed abode at this time. Now, after living close to the holy man for a few days, the desire to renounce all and follow Francis became more and more insistent; so in order to rid himself of the last vestige of doubt about Francis' character, Bernard asked his guest to sleep in his own room one April night in 1208. Francis agreed, and when he entered his host's room, he went straight to the bed as though he were very tired, and began to feign sleep. Bernard also lay down and pretended to fall asleep. Then, when Francis heard Bernard's snoring, he got up from his bed and began to pray with great fervour, saying, 'My God and my All'. Thus he remained the whole night, weeping and praying 'My God and my All', and nothing more, while Bernard watched from his bed in amazement.

The next morning there was no more doubt in the mind of Bernard. He approached Francis with his desire to join him, and asked what he should do with his wealth. In order to know God's will, Francis took him into the church of San Niccolo, together with a man named Peter who also wished to join them. There, after praying for guidance, Francis went to the altar and opened the missal three times (in honour of the Holy Trinity) and found the following words which Christ had spoken to his disciples: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven' (Matthew 19 : 21); 'Take nothing with you for your journey' (Luke 9 : 3); and lastly, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me' (Matthew 16 : 24). Francis then turned to Bernard and Peter, saying, 'This is our life and rule, and the life and rule of all those who may wish to join us. Go, therefore, and act on what you have heard.'

The renunciation of the wealthy Bernard and the promising young lawyer Peter

naturally aroused the greatest excitement in Assisi. One cold April night eight days after this event, a simple and uneducated young man named Giles was sitting round a fire with his family when he heard from his parents about Francis and his companions. The next morning Giles woke up early, troubled about the emptiness and aimlessness of his life. After attending Mass, he took the road to Portiuncula; for he had heard that Francis and his companions were staying there near the chapel in a small hut they had made of boughs and mud. At one point along the way the road forks, and Giles didn't know which side to take. So he prayed to God for guidance; and his prayer was heard, for after wandering a while he saw Francis coming out from a wood. He cast himself at the feet of Francis and begged to be accepted into the brotherhood. Francis raised him up, took him to Portiuncula and announced to the other brothers: 'The Lord our God has sent us a new good brother. Let us therefore rejoice in the Lord and eat together in charity.' And indeed, though he was illiterate and of most ordinary birth, he became a legend in his own lifetime, revered by all for his powers of contemplation and his angelic purity. Similarly Bernard, the first Franciscan, attained in time to such spiritual heights that sometimes he would remain absorbed in contemplation on the mountaintops for twenty or thirty days at a time; and his understanding was so illuminated by divine light that even great scholars of the Church would approach him for solving difficult questions. And Peter was so respected by Francis for his wisdom that a few years later Francis made him the first Minister-General of the Order.

Soon others came to join the small band at Portiuncula until their number increased to six. The brothers, or friars as they were called, were united in immense spiritual joy and love. But in order to further their

work, Francis divided them up and sent them to wander as missionaries through the villages of the Italian countryside. They did not discourse so much as exhort others to reverence God, to love God, and to convert themselves from bad to good. As he went from village to village, Francis would sing in a loud and clear voice the praises of God in French. In fact, the hearts of them all 'overflowed with joy, as though they had found the greatest treasure in the evangelical field of Holy Poverty; and for her sake they gladly and freely considered all temporal things as dung,' says the *Legend of the Three Companions*.

One day at this time Francis sought out a lonely cave high in a mountain, where he began to weep over the years of his youth which he had wasted in folly. He implored God's grace for himself and for his companions, in order that they might be made worthy of Him. Suddenly his whole being was bathed in an excess of bliss, and God assured him that all his sins were 'completely forgiven—to the last farthing'. He was rapt in ecstasy and absorbed in a divine light. Previously he had felt guilt at the thought that he who was himself full of weakness, presumed to lead and exhort others. But now through prayer he was freed of all guilt, the feeling of sinfulness which springs from passion; he was freed from slavery to his own past, and could henceforth speak and admonish without hesitation.

During these early days of the brotherhood, the friars were able to rejoice much because they had renounced so much. As poverty was their only treasure, they were open-handed with anything that came to them. They freely gave to the poor the alms they received. And if anyone begged of them when they had nothing whatsoever, then they would tear off part of their own garment and give it as alms for the love of Christ, who Himself had been poor and had loved the poor.

Indeed, Francis, out of his chaste love for the Eternal, would court no passing thing. Especially did he despise money; and he advised his friars to do likewise. One day a man left money before the crucifix in the Portiuncula chapel. One of the friars picked it up and placed it on the window sill. When Francis heard from this friar how he had touched the money, he ordered him to take it in his mouth, carry it outside the chapel and drop it on the nearest dung heap he could find.

The friars actually cared for one another as a mother cares for her children; for, as they had given up self-love, they thought only of serving each other. Once two brothers were walking when a madman began to throw stones at them. Each, seeing the stones flying towards his brother, tried to jump in front to intercept them with his own body; and thus they continually shifted places till the imbecile left them.

* * *

By spring 1209, the brotherhood numbered twelve—the number of Christ's apostles—and Francis decided to take them all to Rome to have their rule of life approved by the Pope. Before their arrival, the Pope had a dream in which he was standing in the Lateran palace looking out over the Lateran church, known as 'the head and mother of all churches'. He looked on in dread as he saw the church trembling, cracking, and about to fall in ruins. Then he saw a small, plain-looking man walking across the piazza, dressed in peasant garb, with a rope tied round his waist and his feet bare. Looking neither to the left nor to the right, the little man walked straight to the falling church, set his shoulder to the wall and straightened the whole edifice!

When Francis had his audience with the Pope (then Innocent III) and gave him the simple rule of life which he and his friars wished to follow, the Pontiff ques-

tioned the wisdom of trying to live in absolute poverty, for he was a man of great discretion and knew human weaknesses. He asked Francis to reconsider, and to pray to Christ for guidance. This Francis ^{about} ~~from~~ and while asleep he was visited in ^{by} ~~from~~ Christ, who told him what to say to the Pope. When Francis was again given audience, he repeated what Christ had told him; and the Pope knew his words to be the words of Jesus. Then the Holy Father remembered the dream in which the Lateran church had been falling, and he recognized Francis as the small, insignificant man who had come and supported it. He thus realized that Francis was to save the Christian Church from destruction by his preaching and by his Christ-like example in poverty and spirituality. Therefore he gladly approved his rule of life. Furthermore, he gave to Francis and his followers the authority to preach. Soon thereafter they were tonsured. After returning to Assisi, Francis gave to his community the name 'Order of the Friars Minor', which means 'Order of the Minor Brothers', signifying the humility they were to embody.

Due to their increased numbers, they left the hut at Portiuncula and settled in a slightly larger shed at Rivo Torto soon after returning from Rome. Even here they were cramped for space, so much so that if they were not careful how they lay, there was not room for all twelve! Seeing the brothers' predicament, Francis laughed. Taking a stick he drew lines on the ground separating one brother's space from another's; then he wrote with chalk the names of the brothers on the beams above their respective places. After staying here for a few months, they were one day sitting at silent prayer before the crude wooden crucifix in their hut when a peasant came along driving his donkey with the intention of moving in. Without a word to the friars he drove the donkey straight in through

the door, saying, 'In with you, in with you ; these knights of Christ quit Rivo Torto in this place will just do for us.' Seeing this, laughter and found shelter again at Portiuncula, which was now given to them by the Francis turned to the brothers and said, Benedictines. By the side of the chapel the 'Dear brothers, I know that God has not called me to keep an inn for donkeys and brothers built a hut of boughs and mud, live in the company of men, but to pray and thatched with leaves. The bare earth to show men the way to salvation.' So served as table and chair, sacks of straw chaste was their love for Lady Poverty that for beds, and a hedge for convent walls.

(To be continued)

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*—XIX

To Mrs. G. W. Hale

16

C/o Leon Landsberg
144 Madison Avenue
New York
1 July 1894

Dear Mother,

Hope you are settled down in peace by this time. The babies are doing well in Mudville—in their nunnery I am sure. It is very hot here, but now and then a breeze comes up which cools it down. I am now with Miss Phillips. Will move off from here on Tuesday to another place.

Here I find a quotation from a speech by Sir Monier Williams, professor of Sanskrit in the Oxford University. It is very strange as coming from one who every day expects to see the whole of India converted to Christianity. 'And yet it is a remarkable characteristic of Hinduism that it neither requires nor attempts to make converts. Nor is it at present by any means decreasing in numbers, nor is it being driven out of the field by two such proselytizing religions as Mahomedanism and Christianity. On the contrary, it is at present rapidly increasing. And far more remarkable than this is that, it is all-receptive, all-embracing and all-comprehensive. It claims to be the one religion of humanity, of human nature, of the entire world. It cares not to oppose the progress of Christianity nor of any other religion. For it has no difficulty in including all other religions within its all-embracing arms and ever-widening fold. And in real fact Hinduism has something to offer which is suited to all minds. Its very strength lies in its infinite adaptability to the infinite diversity of human characters and human tendencies. It has its highly spiritual and

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

abstract side suited to the philosophical higher classes. Its practical and concrete side suited to the man of affairs and the man of the world. Its aesthetic and ceremonial side suited to the man of poetic feeling and imagination. Its quiescent and contemplative side suited to the man of peace and lover of seclusion.

'Indeed, the Hindus were Spinozists 2,000 years before the birth of Spinoza, Darwinians centuries before the birth of Darwin, and evolutionists centuries before the doctrine of evolution had been accepted by the Huxleys of our time, and before any word like evolution existed in any language of the world.'

This, as coming from one of the staunchest defenders of Christianity, is wonderful indeed. But he seems to have got the idea quite correct.

Now I am going to send up the orange coat today; as for the books that came to me from Philadelphia, I do not think they are worthy of being sent at all. I do not know what I am going to do next. Patiently wait and resign myself unto His guidance—that is my motto. My love to you all.

Your affectionate son,
VIVEKANANDA

17

C/o Dr. E. Guernsey
Cedar Lawn
Fishkill on the Hudson
19 July 1894

Dear Mother

Your kind note reached me here yesterday evening. I am so glad to hear the babies are enjoying. I got the *Interior* and am very glad to see my friend Mazoomdar's³⁵ book spoken of so highly. Mazoomdar is a great and a good man and has done much for his fellow beings.

It is a lovely summer place, this Cedar Lawn of the Guernsey's. Miss Guernsey has gone on a visit to Swampscot. I had also an invitation there, but I thought [it] better to stay here in the calm and silent place full of trees and with the beautiful Hudson flowing by and mountain in the background.

I am very thankful for Miss Howe's suggestion, and I am also thinking of it. Most probably I will go to England very soon. But between you and me, I am a sort of mystic and cannot move without *orders*, and that has not come yet. Mr. Higgins, a rich young lawyer and inventor of Brooklyn, is arranging some lectures for me. I have not settled whether I will stop for them or not.

My eternal thanks to you for your kindness. My whole life cannot repay your debt. You may see from the letter from Madras that there is not a word about Narasimha. What can I do more? I did not get the check cashed yet,

35. Pratap Chandra Mazoomdar, a leader of the New Dispensation Brahmo Samaj.

for there was no necessity. Miss Phillips was very kind to me. She is an old lady about 50 or more. You need not feel any worry about my being taken care of. The Lord always takes care of His servants; and so long [as] I am really His servant and not the world's, I am very confident of getting everything that would be good for me. The Guernseys love me very much, and there are many families in New York and Brooklyn who would take the best care of me.

I had a beautiful letter from Mr. Snell³⁶ saying that a sudden change for the better has taken place in his fortunes and offering me thrice the money I lent him, as a contribution to my work. And he also has beautiful letters from Dharmapala and others from India. But, of course, I politely refused his repayment.

So far so good. I have seen Mr. Page, the editor of the *Forum* here. He was so sorry not to get the article on missionaries. But I have promised to write on other interesting subjects. Hope I will have patience to do so.

I had a letter yesterday from Miss Harriet,³⁷ from which I learn that they are enjoying Kenosha³⁸ very much. Lord bless you and yours Mother Church for ever and ever. I cannot even express my gratitude to you.

As for me, you need not be troubled the least. My whole life is that of a *vagabond*—homeless, roving tramp; any fare, good or bad, in any country, is good enough for me.

Yours ever in love and obedience,
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

18

Swampscott, Massachusetts
23 July 1894

Dear Mother,

I think I have all your questions answered and you are in good humour again.

I am enjoying this place very much; going to Greenacre today or tomorrow and on our way back I intend to go to Annisquam to Mrs. Bagley—I have written to her. Mrs. Breed³⁹ says, 'You are very sensitive.'

Now, I fortunately did not cash your check in New York. I wanted to cash it here, when lo! you have not signed your name on it. The Hindu is a dreamer no doubt, but when the Christian dreams he dreams with a vengeance.

Do not be distressed. Somebody gave me plenty of money to move about. I would be taken care of right along. I send herewith the cheque back to you. I had a very beautiful letter from Miss Mary. My love to them.

What is Father Pope doing? Is it very hot in Chicago? I do not care for the heat of this country. It is nothing compared to our India heat. I am doing splendidly. The other day I had the summer cholera, and cramp, etc.

³⁶. Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell had been the President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago and had invited Swamiji to speak before that assembly on several occasions during the Parliament. Afterwards he remained a staunch admirer of the Swami.

³⁷. Either Mrs. Hale's daughter, or her niece Harriet McKindly.

³⁸. A port in southwest Wisconsin on Lake Michigan.

³⁹. Mrs. Francis W. Breed of Lynn, Massachusetts.

came to pay their calls to me. We had several hours nice talk and groans and then they departed.

I am on the whole doing very well. Has the meerschau pipe reached Chicago? I had nice yachting, nice sea bathing, and enjoying myself like a duck. Miss Guernsey went home just now. I do not know what more to write.

Lord bless you all.

Yours affectionately,
VIVEKANANDA

19

Greenacre Inn
Eliot, Maine
5 August 1894

Dear Mother,

I have received your letter and am very much ashamed at my bad memory. I unfortunately forgot all about the cheque. Perhaps you have come to know by this time of my being in Greenacre. I had very nice time here and am enjoying it immensely. In the fall I am going to lecture in Brooklyn, New York. Yesterday I got news that they have completed all the advertising there. I have an invitation today from a friend in New York to go with him to some mountains north of this state of Maine. I do not know whether I will go or not. I am doing pretty well. Between lecturing, teaching, picnicking and other excitements the time is flying rapidly. I hope you are doing very well and that Father Pope is in good trim. It is a very beautiful spot this Greenacre, and have very nice company from *Boston* : Dr. Everett Hale⁴⁰ you know of Boston, and Mrs. Ole Bull of Cambridge. I do not know whether I will accept the invitation of my friend of New York or not.

So far only this is sure, that I will go to lecture in New York coming fall. And Boston of course is a good field. The people here are mostly from Boston and they all like me very much. Are you having good time, and Father Pope? Has your house-painting been finished? The Babies I am sure are enjoying their Mudville.

I am in no difficulty for money. I have plenty to eat and drink.

With my best love and gratitude to you and Father Pope and the Babies.

Yours affectionately,
VIVEKANANDA

Excuse this hasty scrawl. The pen is very bad.

V.

The Harrison people sent me two 'nasty standing' photos—that is all I have out of them, when they ought to give me 40 minus the 10 or 15 I have got already !!!

V.

40. Edward Everette Hale (1822-1909), a famous clergyman and author.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

VEDIC METAPHYSICS : BY JAGADGURU SANKARACHARYA SRI BHARATI KRISHNA TIRTHA. Publishers : Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Road, Jawaharnagar, Delhi-7. 1978. Pp. xxiv+350. Price : Rs. 60/-.

This book consists of some selected interviews, talks, and lectures given by Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Govardhan Math, Puri, His Holiness Sri Bharati Krishna Tirthaji Maharaj of revered memory (who attained Mahasamadhi in Bombay on February 2, 1960, at the age of seventy-six), during his three-month tour of the U.S.A. from February 4 to April 29, 1958. As the biographical note says, the 'Guruji' was a good linguist and was well-versed in philosophy, mathematics, history, and science, besides being a profound Vedic scholar and the spiritual head of one of the four cardinal Maths established by Adi Shankaracharya in the seventh century. The Guruji was not only a man of vast learning, but also a person of deep spiritual experience. He had a practical bent of mind and an inner urge to apply sublime spiritual truths and principles to compose the calamitous distractions of the modern world.

With this end in view, Guruji made a reverential study of the great religions of the world, and found their inner harmony and common purpose—to elevate humanity to Divinity by means of moral and ethical culture. Their seeming differences were only on the surface, in the externals, due to the exigencies of the circumstances of their origin and the prevailing social environment. He also discovered by his comparative studies of science, religion, and philosophy that under the aegis of the highest Vedic metaphysics of Advaita—which teaches the divinity of the soul and the oneness of all existence on the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual levels; which harmonizes the claims of all aspects of life, secular as well as spiritual, religious as well as scientific; which emphasizes the solidarity of humanity and the universe; and which looks upon all religions as different manifestations of the one spiritual Reality to lead mankind towards that Reality or God by suitable methods,—the reconstruction of the world can be achieved on the basis of love and peace, by removing the causes of conflict and barriers to mutual co-operation and service. To give a practical shape to these noble ideas, Guruji founded in 1953 at Nagpur the Vishwa Punarnirmana Sangha (World Reconstruction Association). And

in furtherance of this objective, he undertook a tour of the U.S.A. in 1958 on a World Peace Mission, sponsored and organized by the Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles.

As Appendix II shows, Guruji had about sixty engagements in all during this tour, mainly consisting of radio and TV interviews, press conferences, parlour talks, and lectures at colleges and universities, in which he explained the nature and scope of his mission and how world peace and solidarity of humanity could be promoted 'by going to the roots of the question, and examining the root causes that lead to individual clashes, international clashes, etc.' He averred, 'There is no conflict between individual and individual, nation and nation, and even between what they call the spiritual and temporal aspects of life and a harmonious and felicitous combination of all the seemingly conflicting elements in life—that is the most important truth to be realized' (pp. 1-2). This main theme runs through and is elaborated in the different lectures and discussions, either on religious topics or on the practical or spiritual approach to world peace.

The present work, containing a selection of eighteen of these speeches, is sponsored by the Vishwa Punarnirmana Sangha, Nagpur, in the name of the Jagadguru, posthumously, so that the deeply thoughtful and lucid ideas presented therein in a broad spirit of concord by this sage and savant may reach a wide circle of readers all over the world, as they are of topical interest. The subjects covered are some aspects of Hindu religion and philosophy, in the comparative context of other religions and the scientific attitudes, and the means and methods of achieving world peace. In one of the discussions on world peace, the great historian Arnold Toynbee is an active participant. India's role in world peace is also emphasized and delineated on the basis of its cultural history. One demonstration lecture on ancient 'Vedic Mathematics', which is a momentous new discovery by the Jagadguru himself and which evoked wonder, is also included, though not relevant to the topic, to show that the Vedas harmonized secular and spiritual sciences. There is only one lecture in the whole book dealing directly with Vedic metaphysics (and Advaita). Hence the title of the book 'Vedic Metaphysics' may be justified only on the ground that the treatment of the various topics is mostly in the light of the Vedic metaphysical and spiritual

thought, which is rational, scientific and universal, and—being in accord with the deeper thoughts of other religions as well—makes for peace and harmony, as shown by the Guruji with apt quotations from different scriptures. However, the title is somewhat misleading. It could as well have been entitled 'World Peace in the Light of Vedic Spiritual Thought'.

A few salient excerpts may give an inkling of Guruji's broad approach :

1. 'Bharata is the name [for India]. *Bha* means light and knowledge; and *rata* means devoted : *Bharata*, means devoted to light, as against darkness.... So, Bharata is not the name of a mere geographical entity placed in some corner of the world and having its own geographical, topographical, and other limitations. Bharata stands for every individual soul that has this ideal of light, the dedication to the light, as against immersion in darkness.' (Pp. 54-55).

2. 'The scientific spirit of inquiry is one which takes all possible doubts and difficulties into account and provides for their being satisfactorily dealt with. Not exclusion by dogmatic assertion, but intellectual satisfaction is what is necessary. In the Upanishads we are told of three steps in the process—"*Srotavyo, mantavyo, nididhyasitavyah*" [*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.4.5]. These are the three words from Vedanta. They mean, as I translate each one with an adverb and a predicate, "*srotavyah*"—investigate carefully; "*mantavyah*"—decide correctly; and "*nididhyasitavyah*"—follow faithfully. This is the threefold process....' (P. 28)

3. 'I have no quarrel with any religion, any denomination, any sect or subsect. My only quarrel is with quarrelling; and that too in the name of religion. Religion ought to be a unifying factor. Religion means sincerity. It means purity. It means renunciation. It means benevolence. These are common to all. The religion of humanity should be before us. Our own particular religion is a matter of individual temperament and of individual allegiance to God, whom we sincerely believe in, and whom we adore.' (P. 146)

4. 'The religion of humanity—is the true religion. Other things are the externals; they are rites, rituals, external forms, and so on which may and do have their own parts to play as collateral aids for achieving the purpose.' (P. 131)

5. 'I frequently give the example of a tree and of the human body to indicate how we should co-ordinate and co-operate with one another.... Behind all the diversity is this unity.... The human body ... possesses many parts, many

limbs and organs, having different locations, sizes, shapes, colours, and functions. But they are not, therefore, antagonistic to one another. They form one beautiful and harmonious whole.' (P. 320)

6. 'As a step towards the ideal which I am placing before you, brotherhood is very good. But it is only a preliminary step.... But have as your goal, as your final objective, not merely brotherhood, but unity and solidarity, the oneness, just as you have unity of the whole physical body....' (Pp. 149-50)

7. 'But there is something greater than that. Indian citizenship and American citizenship are good enough in their own way, but nothing like world citizenship. Let us come to that. That is India's message to the world—"vasudhaiva kutumbakam" [the whole world is the family]. We emphasize the unity and the solidarity not merely of man and man, but of man and the whole universe.' (P. 134)

8. 'I suggest that a positive and constructive method for promoting of peace, is to bring about one world-state, with the various states, the present countries in the world, taking their positions as autonomous units with sufficient autonomy to look after local affairs for themselves.' (P. 301)

The visit to the West for the first time by one of the saintly Heads of the hoary and orthodox Shankaracharya Order on a spiritual mission of world peace is a good augury for further efforts in the fulfilment of the great worldwide movement initiated by the illustrious Swami Vivekananda at the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 for the spiritualization of the human race by Vedantic thought.

The book will be of great help to all those who desire to work for a new world order on the basis of universal spiritual ideas and ideals. The printing and get-up of the book are excellent.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA
Acharya, Probationers' Training Centre
Belur Math, W.B.

HUMAN VALUES : BY DR. SAMPOORAN SINGH, M.Sc., Ph.D., D.Sc. Publishers : Faith Publishers, Bungalow No. 56, Ratanada Palace, Jodhpur-342 001. Pp. xv+39. Rs. 10/-.

As a part of the worldwide phenomenon of desacralization, values of life are getting steadily devalued, and there is at present a great confusion in the minds of people regarding essential human values and the exact meaning of the term 'value'. The author of this booklet does not explain what the word 'value' means, but it

is clear from the forcefully written Introduction that he means by it the pursuit of truth. Under the blanket term 'truth', he has attempted a synthesis of almost every branch of human experience—physics, biology, psychology, education, art, karma, religion and mysticism. His goal is to help the educated modern man to find meaning and fulfilment in life, and with this end he has formulated a set of ideas and ideals which are in harmony with the universal principles of religion but do not contradict reason and science. He sees life and consciousness as two aspects of one ultimate Reality, and science and religion as two stages of one basic seeking. Society being an aggregate of individuals, the solution to the problems of society are to be sought at the deepest levels of individuals.

The booklet is divided into two parts. The first part is a charter of basic human values which the author thinks should be universally accepted by all nations. The second part is a manifesto for the implementation of these basic values, in which he pleads for the setting up at the international level of an Advisory Committee

on Human Values. All this may sound utopian in the face of the harshness, selfishness, competition and exploitation of the modern world and the danger of its destruction in a nuclear holocaust. But nobody can deny the need for fixing universal standards of conduct and endeavour. Great ideas always start with small groups of people. If the transparent sincerity and noble intention of the author succeed in awakening the consciousness of a few thinking individuals, the author may congratulate himself on having made a good beginning in the right direction.

The book is replete with fine sentiments. But in a book of this kind what is equally important is cogency—precision of definitions, consistency in the formulation of principles and sequential development of thought. All ideas must be connected to a central philosophical framework. We hope that the author will pay special attention to this aspect in the next edition. The printing and get-up of the book are neat but the price seems to be a bit too high.

P.B. Editorial Staff

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA BARANAGORE

REPORT FOR APRIL 1977 TO MARCH 1978

Religious and Cultural : Weekly religious classes were held on Saturdays. There was Ram Nam Sankirtan and Bhajan every Ekadasi day. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated, as were the birthdays of various Incarnations and Prophets of the world. The Secretary delivered religious discourses about sixteen times a month outside the Ashrama.

Medical : The Homoeopathic Charitable Outdoor Dispensary treated 51,508 patients.

Educational : The Centre runs a Higher Secondary Multipurpose School having as its feeder institutions a Primary School, two Junior Basic School units and two Junior High School units. During the year the number of students stood as follows : Madhyamik School, 1,036 boys ;

two Junior Basic Schools, 428 boys and 28 girls ; Primary School, 260 boys and 20 girls. Various extracurricular activities were provided for the students, such as drills and military-style parade, physical exercises, seasonal open-air sports, an Annual Sports Competition, and educational tours of West Bengal.

There is a library which contained 4,399 books during the year. The audio-visual unit had seven films—Trailanga Swami, Rani Rasmani, Bharater Sadhak, Sadhak Ramprasad, Sri Ramakrishna, Vama-Kshepa, and Sri Krishna Chaitanya—which were screened at the Centre and in remote villages, for which purpose there is a motor van and other accessories. Ninety-two showings were given during the year, with an average attendance of 646.

Contributions, which are exempt from Income-tax, may be sent to The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, 37 Gopallal Tagore Road, Calcutta-700 036.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

Our Duty to Animals

Thanks to Acharya Vinoba Bhave's intercession, a legal ban on cow slaughter has become a reality in India. However, this should be the beginning, and not the end, of a comprehensive national programme for the protection and development of the cattle wealth of the country. In India where cattle number about one-third of the human population, a better appreciation of the role of domestic animals in the socio-economic life of the masses is an imperative necessity. Regarding this, there are three points which merit our immediate attention.

One is the welfare of the surviving animals. It is not enough to save the cow from the butcher. Cows, bullocks, buffaloes and other domestic animals are to be well fed and looked after properly. In a country where a large section of the population lives in utter poverty and ill-health, this move may at first appear unwise and ill-timed. But two wrongs do not make one right. Cattle which provide milk, manure, fuel and draught, are the only wealth for millions of people in India, and when these animals are well taken care of, it is their owners who get the benefit.

Farmers and other people who own cattle are to be given basic education in animal husbandry and veterinary aid. It is possible that, like Ayurveda for human beings, an indigenous system of medicine for animals exists in the old manuscripts in private possession. We are glad to know that at least one voluntary organization, Akhil Bharat Krishi-Go Seva Sangh (K. M. Munshi Marg, Bombay-7) has come forward to collect information on this important subject.

The second point that should engage the immediate attention of the public is painless killing of animals. The barbarous and revolting way animals are slaughtered has been graphically described in a series of illustrated articles published in the June-August issues of *Bhavan's Journal*. The eminent author concludes his pathos filled article with the plea : 'The stark reality is that we have to kill for meat or because we cannot maintain non-productive cattle for lack of land or money. Let us at least kill them in a scientific and humane way.' When there exist painless ways of killing animals, the only reason why they are allowed to be tortured to death is the ignorance and indifference of the public.

The third point to note is the prevention of cruelty towards animals in general. There are existing laws for this, but, for want of active public support, these are seldom enforced. The worst sufferer in the cruel hands of man is the bullock. Apart from overloading of bullock-carts, the animal is mercilessly beaten, and its tail, which the Creator intended to be used as a fly-whisk, is used by the cart driver as an accelerator, gear and brake, and is usually found twisted or broken. Cruelty to animals is partly due to lack of refinement in culture, and partly due to the lack of understanding about the place of animals in the ecosystem of man. Kindness to animals must be learnt in childhood, and should form a part of the liberal education of the children of this country. All religions teach kindness to animals, but Hinduism enjoins *service* to animals as one of the five great duties (*pañca mahā yajña*) of a Hindu.
