



Prabuddha Bharata

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

THE UNIQUE AND THE UNIVERSAL

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

ओमासश्चर्षणीधृतो
विश्वे देवास आ गत ।
दाश्वांसो दाशुषः सुतम् ॥

1. May all the Gods who protect, reward and cherish men, come hither for this offering of the worshipper !

Rg-Veda 1.3.7

पावका नः सरस्वती
वाजेभिर्वाजिनीवती ।
यज्ञं वष्टु धिया वसु ॥

2. May Sarasvatī, the purifier and giver of sustenance, who has wisdom as her treasure (*dhiyā vasu*), desire¹ our sacrifice !

Rg-Veda 1.3.10

चोदयित्री सूनृतानां
चेतन्ती सुमतीनां ।
यज्ञं दधे सरस्वती ।

3. May Sarasvatī, who inspires truthful people and directs the minds of the virtuous, accept this sacrifice !

Rg-Veda 1.3.11

महो अर्णः सरस्वती
प्रचेतयति केतुना ।
धियो विश्वा वि राजति ॥

4. Sarasvatī, who illumines all higher thoughts, reveals the great ocean (of Reality).

Rg-Veda 1.3.12

* These selections are meant for use in prayer and meditation. At the very dawn of Hindu religion, the great Vedic seers understood that all words and ideas were only different manifestations of one single primordial Word, the Vāk. Goddess Sarasvatī was identified with this Vāk and was regarded as the inspirer of noble thoughts and giver of spiritual wisdom.

1. The Divine Mother should desire our sacrifice because all actions become fruitful only if they are inspired by Her and are acceptable to Her.

The interpretative translation is ours.—Ed.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

The birthday of the great sage Vyāsa which falls on the 9th of this month (July) is known as Vyāsa Pūrṇimā. It is, however, celebrated all over India as the Day of the Guru (Guru Pūrṇimā). On this day disciples show special reverence to their Guru if he is alive, or pay homage to his memory if he is not. This month's EDITORIAL discusses the important role that the Guru plays in the life of a spiritual aspirant.

The power and validity of a scripture lie not in its survival, mummy-like, in the sarcophagus of sacerdotal customs and traditions, but in its dynamic influence on the perpetually evolving culture of its adherents. Historical forces are continually changing religious, social and political institutions, and every religion has to contend with these forces in order to ensure its stability and, on the other hand, has to adapt itself to their demands. The success which Hinduism achieved in both these tasks has been primarily due to its firm foundation of eternal truths, and also due to the genius of a number of illumined interpreters of its basic scriptures. In the article INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURES IN CONTEMPORARY HINDUISM you read how this interpretative tradition has been kept alive even in modern times. Its author Prof. S. S. Raghavachar is a former Head of the Department of Philosophy in the

University of Mysore, an author of several scholarly works and a creative thinker.

In the second and concluding instalment of the article HINDUISM AND ARNOLD TOYNBEE, Prof. Debiprasad Bhattacharya of Jadavpur University continues his searching analysis of Toynbee's prejudices against Indian culture. While concluding the discussion, the author notes with satisfaction the favourable change in the views of the great historian during his later years.

Sri G. S. Sridhar, an official in the International Airports Authority of India, presents an interesting example of the Socratic method applied to Vedanta in an imaginary dialogue entitled FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

With this issue we are starting a new serial, HINTS TO SEEKERS OF GOD. The current instalment contains a number of instructions on practical spiritual life given on different occasions by Revered Shivanandaji (Mahapurush) Maharaj, a direct disciple of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

After an interval of four months we are introducing again the UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA. The three letters included in this number were addressed to Mrs. G. W. Hale who befriended Swamiji on the eve of the Chicago Parliament of Religions and acted as his host in Chicago ever afterwards.

THE GURU OR SPIRITUAL TEACHER

(EDITORIAL)

Salutations to the Guru! Next to its great metaphysical doctrines, the most distinctive feature of Hinduism is the central place that the institution of Guru occupies in it. No other religion or culture venerates the teacher as Hinduism does. Every

Hindu religious ceremony, study, prayer, meditation, ritualistic worship, begins only after paying due respect to the Guru. In the spiritual path the first step that an aspirant takes is to seek a competent Guru. This practice is at least as old as the

Upanisads.¹ In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins his discourse only after Arjuna has surrendered himself to him as a student and requested him to teach him.

The Guru-śiṣya relationship in India is not a temporary teacher-student contact. It is a sacred spiritual relationship based on the total involvement, commitment and obligation of two persons who are bound to each other forever. Deeper than any other human relationship, it is the purest and most sublime relationship known to man. The disciple does not merely ask questions and listen; he serves and worships his Guru, who in turn assumes the responsibility of the all-round growth and spiritual progress of the disciple. The *Gītā's* injunction, 'Know the Truth by prostrating before the Guru, and by questioning and serving him,'² has set the guideline for the Guru-śiṣya relationship in Hindu religion. So great was the reverence for the Guru in this tradition that even kings and noblemen considered it an honour to sit at the feet of the Guru even if the latter happened to be a tatterdemalion. The *Mahābhārata* story of Ekalavya who attained proficiency in archery by practising before an effigy of his Guru to whom he finally surrendered his thumb as teacher's fee, illustrates to what extent this institution of the Guru inspired faith and loyalty in the hearts of the people. A man may defy or disobey anybody but never his Guru.

In the devotional sects the Guru occupies a place next only to the Personal God. The Advaitic tradition, which looks upon the world as unreal or illusory, suspends that judgement in the case of the Guru. As the well-known verse 'Guru is Brahmā, Guru is Viṣṇu, Guru is Śiva, Guru is verily the

Supreme Brahman'³ testifies, in this tradition the Guru is identified with the highest Reality. A sannyasin may not worship any Deity but he is permitted to worship his own Guru. Indeed, devotion to Guru is for a man what chastity is for a woman.

This reverence for the spiritual preceptor is not an adventitious social expedient. It rose out of the spiritual evolution of the race and has its roots in the metaphysical doctrines of God and the soul. Hindu scriptures recognize three kinds of Gurus: the Divine Guru, the inner Guru and the human Guru.

The Divine Guru

God in Hinduism is not only the cause of life and existence, but is also the source of all knowledge. According to Vedānta consciousness is self-luminous and is the nature of Atman. An object is known only when the light of Atman falls upon it and illumines it. What is true of external cognition is true also of internal cognition or spiritual experience. Since, according to all schools of Vedānta, the individual self is either a part or a reflection of the Supreme Brahman, all knowledge ultimately originates in Brahman. That is what Sri Ramakrishna means when he says Saccidānanda is the only Guru.⁴ In all beings an immanent aspect of this supreme Divine Guru exists as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmī*).

The Yoga school of Patañjali holds a different view of God. According to this school, God is a unique kind of Puruṣa who is omniscient because he is never restricted by ignorance, experience and karma. Since he is not bound by time, he never loses his

1. See *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.12.

2. तद् विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।

Gītā 4.34.

3. गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुर्गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।

गुरुरेव परंब्रह्मा तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः ॥

4. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974), pp. 24, 117, 152.

omniscience and is therefore the primordial Teacher of mankind.⁵ Swami Vivekananda explains this Yogic concept as follows : 'It is true that all knowledge is within ourselves, but this has to be called forth by another knowledge. Although the capacity to know is inside us, it must be called out, and that calling out of knowledge can only be done, the yogi maintains, through another knowledge. Dead inanimate matter never calls out knowledge ; it is the action of knowledge that brings knowledge. Knowing beings must be with us to call forth what is in us, so these teachers were always necessary. The world was never without them, and no knowledge can come without them. God is the Teacher of all teachers because these teachers, however great they may have been—gods or angels—are all bound and limited by time, while God is not.'⁶

In the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* is found a synthesis of the Yogic and Vedantic views of God as the Supreme Teacher. A well-known verse in it says : 'He who at the beginning of creation projected Brahmā (Hiraṇyagarbha or the creator) and who revealed the Vedas to him—seeking liberation, I take refuge with that Effulgent One whose light turns the intellect towards the Atman.'⁷ This idea later on became a central one in the Purāṇas and an important tenet of Hindu theology. God is not the creator of the Universe, creation being a

lower function carried on by Brahmā or Hiraṇyagarbha (who is the real 'creator'). God is the Creator of all creators. He is also the Teacher of all teachers. During cosmic dissolution (*pralaya*) all the universes with their creators get resolved back into God, who alone then exists without a second, embodying all knowledge. When a new Kalpa is about to begin, God first projects Hiraṇyagarbha and communicates knowledge to him. From him the great Ṛṣis (seers) gain spiritual knowledge by practising austerity. This spiritual knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation by a succession (*paramparā*) of illumined teachers. In a well-known verse popular in Advaitic tradition the source of the knowledge of non-dualism is traced from one's own Guru through Śaṅkara to God Himself. 'I constantly salute the Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa, Brahmā, Vasiṣṭha, his son Śakti, his son Parāśara, his son Vyāsa, his son Śuka, his disciple the great Gauḍapāda, his disciple Govinda who is a prince among Yogis, his disciple Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, his four disciples Padmapāda, Hastāmalaka, Troṭaka and Sureśvara, and also my own revered preceptor.'⁸

There is a third tradition in which God is regarded as the Guru in another sense, namely, God as *Vāk*, the Word. All human knowledge is connected with sound symbols, and without words thinking is impossible. Hindu tradition holds that all words are only different manifestations of one primor-

5. स पूर्वेषामपि गुरुः कालेनानवच्छेदात् ॥

Yoga-Sūtra 1.26.

6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, in 8 vols. (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1977), vol. I, pp. 216-17.

7. यो ब्रह्माणं विदधाति पूर्वं यो वै वेदांश्च
प्रहिणोति तस्मै ।

तं ह देवमात्मबुद्धिप्रकाशं मुमुक्षुर्वै शरणमहं
प्रपद्ये ॥

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.18.

8. नारायणं पद्मभुवं वसिष्ठं

शक्तिं च तत् पुत्रं पराशरं च ।

व्यासं शुक्रं गौडपदं महान्तं

गोविन्दयोगीन्द्रमथास्य शिष्यम् ॥

श्री शंकराचार्यमथास्य पद्म-

पादं च हस्तामलकं च शिष्यं ।

तं त्रोटकं वार्तिककारमन्या-

नस्मद्गुरुन् सन्ततमानतोऽस्मि ॥

dial word—the *Vāk*—the first manifestation or utterance of divine wisdom. The Veda says : ‘In the beginning was Prajāpati, the Supreme Lord and *Vāk* (the Word) was his second.’⁹ This is so very similar to the famous opening line in St. John’s Gospel : ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Christian theology identified the Word with a male principle, namely, Christ. The word ‘*Vāk*’ on the other hand is in feminine gender, and was identified in the *Rg-Veda* with the Divine Mother Sarasvatī, who is still being worshipped as the Goddess of wisdom by millions of Hindus. This is not surprising. For who is the first teacher of man? The mother. It is the mother who communicates to the baby the first knowledge, and it is at her knees that the child picks up the primeval vocabulary of the race. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* identifies the Word with Gāyatrī (personified into a female deity) and says that the entire creation is a manifestation of Gāyatrī.¹⁰ The Tantras later on developed this doctrine of the Word into the metaphysical principle of the Logos (*nāda brahman*) and identified it with the Divine Mother of the Universe.

A fourth tradition of looking upon God as the Teacher is that which identifies the Avatara with the supreme Godhead. One of the important functions of the Avatara according to the *Gītā* is to re-establish dharma. How does he do it? By starting a new spiritual tradition. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that yoga was first taught by Him to the Sun-god who in turn taught it to Manu, the first human being, from whom the knowledge was handed down to posterity by a succession of teachers and was gradually lost. The Avatara’s mission on earth is to rejuvenate dharma by resuscitat-

ing this divine wisdom, and for this he starts a new spiritual tradition (*sampradāya*) of which he becomes the highest teacher (*parameṣṭhi guru*). It is in this sense that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Christ, Śaṅkara, Sri Ramakrishna and others are regarded as world teachers.

The inner Guru

Swami Brahmananda says : ‘But know this: There is no greater Guru than your own mind. When the mind has been purified by prayer and contemplation it will direct you from within. Even in your daily duties, this inner Guru will guide you and will continue to help you until the goal is reached.’¹¹ Though knowledge may come from the Divine Guru or the human Guru, it is ultimately the aspirant’s own mind that has to receive and assimilate it. The ordinary mind can know only physical objects and sensations. Even if this mind receives religious instruction, it cannot experience the Truth or Reality. In order to know spiritual truths one needs a ‘divine eye’ or ‘inner eye’, about which Swami Brahmananda says: ‘Behind this mind of ours there is a subtle, spiritual mind, existing in seed form. Through the practice of contemplation, prayer, and Japam, this mind is developed, and with this development a new vision opens up and the aspirant realizes many spiritual truths.’¹²

What is meant here is the Buddhi or intuitive faculty which lies dormant in ordinary people. Through purification and prayer it awakens. The well-known *Gāyatrī* is a powerful prayer for the awakening of this dormant intuition. The *Gītā* calls this awakened faculty *sāttvika buddhi* and describes its marks as follows : ‘That which clearly distinguishes between action

9. प्रजापतिर्वा इदमासीत् । तस्य वाग् द्वितीयासीत् ।

Kāthaka Samhitā 12.5, 27.1.

10. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.12.1.

11. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Eternal Companion* (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1971), p. 251.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

and inaction, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what leads to bondage and what leads to liberation—that intellect is *sāttvika*, O Pārtha.¹³ Once this is awakened, it acts as the inner Guru and guides the aspirant.

However, this awakening takes a long time, and till then the aspirant has to be very cautious about the workings of his own mind. There are two dangers involved in the concept of 'inner Guru'. One is to confuse it with reason. Reading and analysis are functions of the ordinary mind. Knowledge derived through it need not always be true, for reasoning when practised by an ignorant or impure mind can lead one astray. The second danger is to mistake one's own unconscious desires and fantasies for the 'divine voice' or 'divine command'. A good deal of misery to humanity has been caused by religious fanatics who mistook the promptings of their impure and confounded minds for divine inspiration. It is not so easy to hear the 'divine voice', and the awakening of the inner Guru is usually not possible without intense practice of purification and prayer. Therefore for the vast majority of spiritual aspirants it is safer during the early stages to depend on the guidance of an external human Guru than on one's own impure mind.

The human Guru

The human Guru is the agent who awakens the inner Guru and brings about the union of the Jivātmā (individual spirit) with the Paramātmā (the Supreme Spirit). Though this is the main work of the Guru, he actually performs several functions in the life of the disciple. The first is to instruct the aspirant about his spiritual ideal and the means of attaining it. In the path of devotion this means helping the aspirant

to fix his mind on his Iṣṭa Devatā through a technique of meditation which he himself had practised and tested in his own life. To the beginner spiritual life is a wholly unknown territory, and before he attempts to travel he needs the guidance of one who has already traversed it. The Guru removes the darkness of ignorance about the path from the mind of the disciple. It is even claimed that the word Guru comes from the two syllables *gu* meaning darkness and *ru* meaning removal.¹⁴

Is it not enough if the aspirant himself chooses an ideal and learns a technique of meditation from books? The disadvantage of such an endeavour is that it does not generate faith in the reality of the goal and the possibility of attaining it. The Guru does not merely inform, he instils faith in the disciple. Faith is not just a simple belief. It is the orientation of the soul towards an ultimate goal. It is the awakening of the soul from its sleep of ignorance. This orientation, this awakening, comes only when the burning words issuing from the lips of an experienced preceptor touch and inflame the heart of the aspirant. The faith of a beginner in spiritual life is seldom stable; it ebbs and flows. The continuity of aspiration and practice is broken by periods of accidia, dejection, dryness and despair. This happens only to those who do not have close contact with a proper Guru. Those who maintain a living contact with their Guru find a perennial fountain of faith and aspiration constantly flowing within them.

It is quite possible that at least a part of the excessive sufferings, struggles and the so-called 'Dark Nights of the Soul' which many of the Western Christian mystics experienced in their life, might have been

13. गुह्यारोऽन्धकारस्तु हकारस्तन्निवर्तकः ।

अन्धकारनिवर्त्या तु गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥

caused by the absence of a competent Guru's guidance and support. It is significant that even in those religious traditions outside the fold of Hinduism which have the institution of the spiritual preceptor, such 'dark nights' are rare or unknown; for instance, in Sufism and the Greek Orthodox Church. A perceptive and powerful Guru could have certainly saved many of the Christian mystics from needless torture and agony by removing the obstacles standing on their path.

The need of a competent Guru is more necessary after the aspirant has acquired the preliminary virtues, and when he finds himself grappling with the unknown forces of the spiritual world. Most of the aspirants are too inexperienced to understand the workings of their own minds and the pitfalls on the path of striving. Intense practice often releases forces which many aspirants may not know how to manipulate. To monkey with the hidden powers of the mind and the psychic high-tension wires is as risky as playing with fire.

The second function of the Guru is to awaken the power of spiritual intuition in the disciple. The well-known hymn to the Guru speaks of the preceptor as one who opens the eye of the disciple blinded by ignorance, by applying the collyrium of knowledge.¹⁵ We ourselves open our outer eyes. The ordinary teacher opens the ordinary mind. The spiritual preceptor opens the 'inner eye' or the 'divine eye', the power of intuition lying dormant in all people. This inner eye cannot be opened without spiritual power, 'the quickening impulse', as Swami Vivekananda calls it. In his talks on bhakti yoga Swamiji explains it as follows: 'This quickening impulse cannot be derived from books. The soul

can only receive impulses from another soul, and from nothing else. We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectual, but in the end we find that we have not developed at all spiritually.... The person from whose soul such impulse comes is called the Guru—the teacher.'¹⁶

How does the Guru transmit this quickening impulse to the disciple? He does it through a process called *dīkṣā* or initiation. According to *Tejobindu Upaniṣad* initiation is of three types: *āṇava*, *śākta* and *śāmbhava*. The first is the ordinary mode in which the Guru communicates a *mantra* to the disciple; and if the disciple repeats it with faith and purity of mind, this leads to the gradual unfoldment of his spiritual potential. In the second type the Guru transmits power directly by a touch or a fixed gaze. The last one is that rare form of initiation by which the Guru gives the highest illumination by his mere wish (*saṁkalpa*). According to Hindu scriptures, every man has three kinds of powers: the power of knowledge (*jñāna śakti*), the power of action (*kriyā śakti*) and the power of will (*icchā śakti*). The three types of initiation mentioned above refer to the transmission of these three powers of the Guru respectively. Most commonly, only the first one, the *āṇava* type of initiation, is done. The Guru having himself attained perfection by the repetition of a *mantra*, communicates that *mantra* to the disciple and guides him in attaining perfection by the same means. The other two types of initiation are less common nowadays. The transmission of the spiritual impulse or power through a *mantra* is, thus, the second function of the Guru.

The Guru has a third function to perform. One of the grave defects of a spiritual aspirant and a persistent obstacle to spiritual progress is egoism. Egoism leads to care-

15. अज्ञानतिमिरान्धस्य ज्ञानाञ्जनशलाकया ।
चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः ॥

16. *Complete Works*, vol. III (1975), p. 45.

lessness which leads to a fall. Obedience to the will of an enlightened master is perhaps the best safeguard against all this. Service rendered to the Guru brings to light the inherent defects in the character of the disciple. The Guru notices these and removes them by giving a few raps on the knuckles. He subdues the serpent of egoism of the disciple. So pure and elevated and strong is the Guru-śiṣya relationship that the disciple looks upon all the scoldings and punishments meted out to him by his Guru as blessings, which indeed they are, and cherishes them as treasures throughout his life. In Hinduism humility as a virtue and obedience as a vow have never been imposed as in Christian religious disciplines because the Guru-disciple relationship takes ample care of them. No man who has served an enlightened teacher properly can be misled by vanity and arrogance.

The fourth function of the Guru is to connect the disciple to a spiritual tradition (*sainpradāya*) or a line of Gurus (*Guru paramparā*). A spiritual tradition is started by an Avatara or an illumined Seer whose spiritual knowledge and power are preserved through a succession of Gurus. When a person receives initiation from a Guru, he also gets a share of the knowledge and power circulating in that corporate mystical body. His own individual endeavour gets a tremendous boost from the collective good will and aspiration. To live as a lone wolf without the support of a religious community is most unfortunate.

The Guru cult—its basis

In Hinduism the spiritual preceptor is not merely respected as a guide or a director, but is an object of adoration and worship as much as the deity is. According to an oft-quoted Upaniṣadic verse, 'These spiritual truths shine forth only in those high-souled ones who have as much supreme devotion

for the Guru as for God.'¹⁷ The fundamental basis of this Guru cult is the well-known Upaniṣadic dictum: 'A knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman itself.'¹⁸ An illumined Guru is for the disciple not only a symbol of Brahman but is non-different from the highest Reality. Apart from this, there are other considerations that form the foundation of the Guru cult.

One of these is the belief that the relationship between the Guru and the disciple is an eternal one. Death may put an end to the relationship between husband and wife, between parent and child, between brother and sister and between friends, but not to the relationship between the Guru and the disciple. Even after the Guru has left his mortal body, he continues to remain in a subtle body and guide the disciple. It is believed that once the Guru has accepted the responsibility of the disciple, he cannot get liberation until the disciple too attains it.

There is also a strong belief in the vicarious suffering of the Guru for the sake of the disciple. It is believed that the sins of the disciple go to the Guru who has to suffer for them. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* says: 'The blemish of the minister affects the king and the blemish of the wife, the husband. Similarly the sins of the disciple undoubtedly affect the Guru.'¹⁹ The Guru seeks nothing from his disciple; he accepts his spiritual responsibility and suffers for him out of compassion.

17. यस्य देवे परा भक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।

तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥

Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad 6.23.

18. ब्रह्मवेद ब्रह्मैव भवति ।

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.2.9.

19. मन्त्रिदोषश्च राजानां जाया दोषः पतिं यथा ।

तथा प्राप्नोत्यसन्देहं शिष्यपापं गुरुं प्रिये ॥

Kulārṇava Tantra 11.109.

The Guru also acts as a channel for the flow of divine grace. All people are not equally open to God. In many people the ego and sinful tendencies of the past offer resistance to grace which has therefore to find a channel in holy illumined souls. When through dedicated service and devotion to the Guru the disciple opens his soul to the Guru, he receives divine grace by the blessings of the Guru. What would have taken years of struggle to attain, the disciple gets in a short time by the blessings of his Guru.

Is it any wonder, then, that an aspirant feels eternally indebted to his Guru who saves him from sorrow, bondage and fear forever, and suffers for his sake? It is attitudes and beliefs of this kind, handed down from generation to generation, that form the basis of the Guru cult and have given it a sacred and incommutable status in the time-honoured socio-religious traditions of India.

Drawbacks of the Guru cult

When a principle, however noble and great, gets institutionalized, it cannot avoid a certain degree of warping and contortion in the hands of unworthy people. No institution can escape the taint of human weakness and the Guru cult is no exception to this rule. In modern times it has been misused by unscrupulous persons to exploit the credulous and the unwary.

Even when the Guru cult has not been so grossly distorted, it has its own few inherent drawbacks. If the Guru is not himself an enlightened soul it becomes a case of the blind leading the blind. Secondly, even if the Guru is an enlightened soul, he may become the centre of a personality cult with the disciple frantically clinging to the external human form of the Guru disregarding the divine Principle behind it. The disciple loses the spiritual perspective and his relationship with the Guru becomes an ordinary human one. This

leads to what psychologists call 'father-fixation'. Instead of trying to acquire the Guru's spiritual realizations and moral qualities, the disciples may try to imitate his external conduct or mannerisms. In order to understand the real spiritual greatness of the Guru, the disciple must himself have some spiritual intuition, and this cannot be got without intense spiritual practice. Where this is lacking the disciple may not get much spiritual benefit by his association with the Guru.

A third danger in the Guru cult is that it may take away the spiritual initiative of the disciple. He banks too much on the blessings of the Guru and neglects regular spiritual practice in the hope of getting spiritual progress by proxy. The attitude of the disciple then becomes that of a parasite who always thinks of what one of our senior Swamis called 'pick-pocketing the Guru'!

A fourth drawback inherent in the Guru cult is that it leads to the multiplication of religious groups, factions and sects which destroy communal harmony and integrity of religion. The disorganized condition of Hinduism and the inability of its followers to work in co-operation for the common cause of their religion can at least to some extent be traced to the prevalence of the Guru cult.

Advantages of the Guru cult

It should, however, be remembered that the defects of the Guru cult mentioned above do not pertain to its pure form but only to its extravagant manifestations. Moreover, its advantages far outweigh its defects. In the first place, it makes transmission of spiritual truths practical. It has enabled Hinduism to maintain even the highest forms of spiritual experience in a living tradition through thousands of years. In the absence of the Guru-disciple relationship, the apostolic succession claimed by

Christian Churches lacks a real experiential basis and remains a matter of faith and ritual.

If the Guru cult has prevented Hindu religion from developing into a universal church, it has also enabled it to survive the ravages of history. One of the main reasons for the disappearance of Buddhism from India has been found to be the destruction of the foundation of the Buddhist Saṅgha by invading Islamic hordes. But in spite of continual invasions and a thousand years of slavery under foreign powers, Hinduism has survived in India because of the thorough decentralization of religious authority in it. Little groups rallying around pure and selfless men of God can give greater strength and stability to religion than a ponderous organization held together by sheer administrative efficiency.

At the individual level, the Guru cult can be a great help to the beginner in spiritual life. Apart from the practical instructions that the Guru gives, his personality gives the neophyte the much-needed support to his soul. To love an intangible spiritual Reality, an unknown God, is really difficult for a beginner. By loving a living spiritual personality in whom are manifested some of the attributes of the Chosen Ideal, the disciple progresses quickly in the path of devotion. By surrendering his will to the will of the Guru, by serving him and undergoing sacrifices for his sake, the disciple learns to practise true self-surrender to God, which may otherwise remain only as a ritual or an exercise of imagination without any real content or value. It is, moreover, easier to concentrate on a person of flesh and blood whom one has seen, and so meditation on the Guru is a great aid to concentration. On the path of knowledge the aspirant has practically no other support than the Guru.

Thus, at the individual and social levels, the Guru cult has more advantages than disadvantages, and has justifiably occupied a pre-eminent position in the Hindu religious tradition. An institution which traces its origin to the primeval altar, and which has for its votaries such brilliant historical personalities as Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, Dayananda Saraswati and Vivekananda, cannot be set at nought so easily. If not allowed to exceed its legitimate bounds, it is sure to continue to mould the souls and shape the destinies of spiritual people in India generation after generation.

Only those who have had the good fortune to serve and remain in close contact with an illumined preceptor can know what the Guru's blessing really means. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says that the blessing of the Guru is *niṣkraya*,²⁰ there is no recompense for it; it cannot be paid back. There is no substitute for it on earth. The *Prasna Upaniṣad* speaks of six young seekers of Truth going to the hermitage of the great sage Pippalāda. After living with him for a year practising continence and austerities, they approached the Guru with their questions. Pippalāda answered all their questions most satisfactorily. Overwhelmed with gratitude, the disciples worshipped the feet of their Guru, and exclaimed with deep devotion: 'You are indeed our father who have ferried us across this ocean of ignorance to the other shore.'²¹ No one who has sat at the feet of an illumined Guru can help echoing these words, as countless grateful people have done down the centuries. Salutations to the great Guru! Salutations to the great Guru!

20. *Commentary on Prasna Upaniṣad* 6.8.

21. त्वं हि नः पिता योऽस्माकमविद्यायाः
परं पारं तारयसीति ।

Prasna Upaniṣad, 6.8.

VIVEKANANDA

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

For god's sake do not call him back.
He is just gone, gone to rest
On the pyre that he lit for himself.

Had he any job?
Did he come to pay any debt?
Was he sent by the desires of this hell?

He came out of a passion for you, the burnt leaves.
He gave what he had to give.
He gave like a child
Casting pearls before us
Who are not fit to receive them.

For god's sake do not call him back.
Let him sleep in peace.
For long he wandered in the wilderness of this alien land.
Now he has the key from his master.

Do you weep for him?
Do you ask him to come back
To set in order your dishevelled house?

Remember, he is too bright a pearl to be sought in exchange of mud.
He is too soft a flower to stand the scorching sun.
He is a colossal iceberg that melts at the slightest cry of pain.

For god's sake do not call him back.
He listens before your parched lips could
speak out the prayers.
He will come of his own at your moth-eaten door
Drifting on tempestuous tide,
In leonine majesty of love.

INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURES IN CONTEMPORARY HINDUISM

S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

1

The story of the interpretation of Hindu scriptures on the part of the believer must legitimately start with the question as to why the truth-claim of revelation must be admitted. The standard answer to this consists of two propositions.

(a) Observation by way of sense, and reasoning based upon it, do not exhaust our ways of knowing. Testimony or *śabda* also contributes to our understanding of truth. It can have an autonomous sphere of information to communicate. When it is not a simple reiteration of, and does not contradict, empirical knowledge, there is no rational basis for rejecting it. It can embody spiritual knowledge gained through mystic experience.

(b) All experience inclusive of the empirical and secular, stands on the principle of epistemological compulsiveness, provided it is free from internal contradiction and unintelligibility. This is what is termed the logic of *svataḥ-prāmāṇya*. If scriptural revelation does transcend the other ways of knowing and does not conflict with the unimpeachable deliverances of them and enjoys internal coherence and intelligibility, it is logical error and perversity to reject it. This transcendence of the empirical and all-round coherence is the basic criterion of truth.

Śaṅkara, the Vedantin of a later age, formulates the principle in clear terms. If scripture is simply confirmatory of secular knowledge, it is playing only a secondary role, as it is quite dispensable. If it violates it, maybe it has a figurative or symbolic import and is not to be taken as serious and literal truth. But if it propounds what

is neither reiterative nor contradictory of mundane knowledge it has the status of authentic illumination, provided it lends itself to a coherent interpretation.

2

What are we to look for in scriptures? There are two lines of answer to this question.

(a) A school of Vedic scholastics named Mīmāṃsakas contend that scripture has its sole revelatory power in the matter of conduct. The imperatives and ideals of conduct are incapable of derivation from empirical knowledge tied to 'what is'. 'What ought to be' can be ascertained only from scripture. This answer denies scripture metaphysical or ontological truth. This is a severe limitation. The ethical norms, in the long run, must have a metaphysical basis. Reality must furnish the foundation for the formulation of the ultimate goals of life. So both the scope of scriptures and the roots of ethical life suffer in the hands of the Mīmāṃsaka interpreters.

(b) The Vedantic commentators on the Vedic revelation maintain that it has a metaphysical import as its central substance and that the ethical aspect flows from its conception of reality. Reality determines values. This is the view that ultimately prevailed in the Hindu tradition of exegesis.

3

These preliminary considerations govern the entire scriptural interpretation of Hindu thought. Let us have some idea of the body of the scriptures so presented for investigation and acceptance. The need for inter-

pretation arises from the necessity to demonstrate the coherence and intelligibility, so indispensable for purposes of affirmation in thought and commitment in the sphere of conduct.

(i) The earliest scripture of Hinduism is the Veda, more particularly the *R̥g-Veda*, in view of its greatest antiquity. This has called forth a long line of interpretative effort from the earliest times. The later strata of the Vedas themselves contain clues to the interpretation of the earlier ones. Yāska, the great Vedic etymologist, works out the principles of interpretation. He is followed by the grammarians, Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali, in the Vedic section of their grammatical treatises. Following these, commentaries on the Vedas have arisen. The last and the fullest commentary on the Vedas is from Sāyaṇa and a group of scholars who worked under his guidance during the great days of the Hindu Vijayanagar empire. Sāyaṇa gives the completest interpretation of the Vedas, using all the resources of traditional scholarship. That he could not always succeed in capturing the burden of the original in accuracy and fullness is understandable. Modern Western scholars have produced a vast body of interpretation and translation following other principles. In recent times Hindu interpreters of the Vedas such as Dayananda Saraswati and Sri Aurobindo have added their own commentaries, claiming to go beyond both Sāyaṇa and Western Indologists in the reconstruction of the wisdom of the Vedas. Dayananda sees in the Vedas an exalted monotheism and a social gospel, not to be confused with the apparent polytheism of nature-worship and mechanical ritualism and caste-system lacking the larger and deeper ethics of a spiritual humanism. Sri Aurobindo approaches the Vedas with a pronounced mystic spirit, and sees in them not the beginnings of Indian spirituality but the very summit.

(ii) The second great body of Hindu revelation consists of the principal Upaniṣads, described as Vedānta, the culminating wisdom of the Vedas. These contain philosophical discourses, and not hymns to be used in rituals. The ritualistic element is drastically subdued and a monism taking the supreme Reality as absolute Spirit or Brahman is promulgated in a lofty strain. Luckily, the best intellectuals of Indian culture, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva, devote themselves to an exhaustive and definitive interpretation of them. They claim to find in the *Brahma-Sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa, a book which weaves together the philosophical ideas of the Upaniṣads, authoritative guidance for the understanding of scripture. These masters violently differ from each other and the result is a rich body of philosophical literature offering alternative schools of far-reaching importance.

It is worth noting that not much of significance is added to this Vedantic heritage by modern scholars, Indian and Western. Even Deussen, the great German interpreter of Vedānta, gives only a forceful exposition of Śaṅkara in the idiom of modern thought. Perhaps the very greatness of the achievements of these classical commentators has rendered meaningful innovations impossible. But it must be said that all the recent movements of Hinduism have enshrined the Upaniṣads in the heart of their respective religio-philosophical constructions. The Brahma Samaj in general has tried to back itself with the Upaniṣads, particularly under the leadership of Devendranath Tagore. Rabindranath's great work *Sadhana* is a magnificent restatement of Upaniṣadic thought. The Theosophical movement has brought out very perceptive translations of the Upaniṣads. Mahatma Gandhi paid the unique tribute to the *Īśa-Upaniṣad* that even if the rest of the scriptures of Hinduism were to

perish and if only the first two verses of this Upaniṣad were to survive, they would invest Hinduism with immortality. He has seen in them, by his very insightful interpretation, the entire metaphysical and moral vision of Hindu thought. Following him Vinoba Bhave has produced a fine exposition of it. To this class of Upaniṣadic interpretation belong the works of Rajagopalachari. The Ramakrishna Mission, honouring Swami Vivekananda's enthusiastic glorification of the Upaniṣads, has brought out readable and accurate translations of them and also most of Śaṅkara's commentaries. Leaving out other minor performances, we may mention Sri Aurobindo's brilliant translations and commentaries. Sri Radhakrishnan has presented the principal Upaniṣads in a bright and lucid translation with copious notes, utilizing practically all the previous interpretations. To him we owe the great pronouncement that the whole march of Indian philosophical thought is an 'unconscious commentary' on the Upaniṣads.

(iii) The third great scripture of Hinduism is the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which, though forming a part of the epic *Mahābhārata* (a work not placed so high in the hierarchy of scriptures as the Vedas or Upaniṣads), is practically the central book of Hinduism, purporting to condense the entire Vedic philosophy. Its dramatic setting, the divinity of its teacher, the absolute weight of its content, the poetic sublimity of its style and the admirable brevity of its size justify the value it has acquired in the spiritual history of Hinduism. No wonder that all sects of Hinduism pay homage to it as the fundamental and all-inclusive book of divine verities. The non-sectarian Vedantins, Vaiṣṇavas of all schools, and even Śaivism of the highly philosophical school of Abhinava Gupta, have produced great commentaries in the past. The giants of the renaissance of Hinduism and the socio-

political fathers of modern India have found inspiration and guidance in the work for their particular ideals of life. Swami Vivekananda hailed it as the best commentary in principle on the Vedas. His stirring lectures on karma-yoga focus on the gospel of work promulgated in it. Balagangadhar Tilak has produced a great commentary on it, with his stupendous Indological scholarship and philosophical intellect, bringing out the ethics of activism as its pivotal doctrine. Mahatma Gandhi has his own simple but penetrating interpretation, drawing from the work his ethics of non-violence. Sri Aurobindo has a masterly and invigorating exposition incorporating every single item of its doctrinal framework. We have works of a lesser dimension from Rajagopalachari, Vinoba Bhave, and Radhakrishnan.

The *Gītā* seems to be a work of unending inspiration affording scope for all these fresh approaches in interpretation. It may be said that the work is unique as propounding a philosophy of the Supreme, not in impersonal terms, as the Upaniṣads often seem to do, but in intensely personal terms, naming the Brahman of the older texts as *Puruṣottama*, the Supreme Divine Personality, characterized not merely by metaphysical eminence but by the radiant perfections of love and compassion, commanding worship, adoration and surrender, with the promise of unfailing redemption. It is also a scripture that works out a complete philosophy of spiritual life with the components of work (karma), understanding (jñāna), and rapturous love (bhakti), in sublime fusion. Modern Hinduism is progressively rising to the altitude of this great scripture. Tagore is no commentator, but his specifically philosophical writings carry in abundance the message of the *Gītā*.

Hinduism that emerges out of this modernized interpretation of it. Such interpretation, it is obvious, should subserve two purposes. In the first place it has to present before the modern believer the essentials of his creed which he is to accept and live by. In the second place, it has to make the creed intellectually satisfying in the context of modern experience with its strong ingredients of science and technology, its democratic, nay, socialistic ideals of total human welfare and the phenomenon of the plurality of religious traditions.

How does Hinduism, crystallized by the process of interpretation (inclusive of the latest phase), stand the test of these requirements, and what is its emergent philosophical bearing or direction? Whether it is the Arya Samaj or Brahmo Samaj or Sri Aurobindo interpreting the earliest Hindu revelation-books, it is no longer a point to be proved that Hinduism, even in its earliest phase, is monotheistic. The plurality of deities is just a display of the one single power in its multitude of manifestations. This is not a conclusion just forged in self-defence against external criticism, but the abundance of declarations to this effect in those primeval documents make a contrary construction absurd. The Purāṇas of later Hinduism abound in apparently sectarian mythologies. But they are handled in two ways by interpreters. Both Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj simply reject them. More conservative Hindus of recent times see through the mythologies great symbolic and allegorical representations of spiritual truths. This is not an innovation in the service of expediency but a fact already present in the greater scriptures of later Hinduism such as the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. The demythologizing of Hinduism is a well-sanctioned procedure in the tradition itself. To this category of inner reformation belongs the attitude to image-worship. It is a well-recognized

principle explicitly stated in ancient texts that image-worship is the beginning of religion and is a passing phase suited to the spiritually unenlightened. In social matters the caste-system associated with Hinduism is given a higher interpretation, such that it does not exclude humanitarian ideals of conduct. The ethics of compassion sponsored by Jainism and Buddhism, the egalitarian gospel of the bhakti movement and the concept of the solidarity of mankind suggested by the Christian and Islamic traditions determine the standard modern Hindu attitude in social ethics. One has to listen to the inspiring exhortations of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindus of Hindus, to see this aspect of modern Hinduism.

The Vedānta as affirmed in recent Hinduism has a marked characteristic. It no longer indulges in the categorical denial of the world-process as an illusion or a deceptive appearance of the transcendent world-ground, but holds it to be an authentic self-disclosure of the Divine. Even so staunch an advocate of Śaṅkara's Advaita as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan struggles to advance an interpretation of Advaita without the hypothesis of cosmic illusionism. The interpretations of the older classics such as the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* hardly need such a struggle. For them the Absolute is both transcendent and immanent and the cosmos is a dimension, though finite and temporal, of the divine plenitude.

Swami Vivekananda used to repeat that Vedānta is a rational or scientific religion. The dictum has to be properly understood. It does not mean that Vedānta just reiterates the findings of science and is nothing more. That would go against the autonomy of religious experience and also the important idea that it has a realm of significance beyond empirical science. All that it could mean validly is that spiritual truths do not stand in contradiction to

scientific truth. Modern writers on Vedanta try to point out that the relativity theory of modern physics is in consonance with Sāṅkara's view of time and space. The abandonment of the strictly deterministic view of causation as signified in the 'uncertainty principle' in physics goes well again with the handling of the law of causation in Advaita Vedanta as not being ultimately objective. The great scientific theory of evolution is somewhat foreshadowed in Sāṅkhya-Yoga. Biological evolution is taken up and expanded in the great evolutionary metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo. Psychoanalysis, bereft of its early excesses in the hands of Freud, is present in essentials in the yoga-theory of mind concerning its open and hidden workings. A number of great modern writers on yoga work it up so as to incorporate the significant aspects of the modern theory. One can mention the great psychological philosopher Bhagavan Das and the Swami Akhilananda in this connection, in addition to the Theosophical writers in general. It is a tribute to Indian psychology that so great a psychologist as Jung almost swings towards the Indian point of view. Hence, it is obvious that reconciliation with the major conclusions of modern science presents no insuperable difficulty to the religio-philosophical heritage of Hinduism.

On the plurality of religions, we have older authorities as well as the *Gītā* for holding that all religions are approaches to the same consummation, though they have initial differences conditioned by historical circumstances. The striking unanimity of the greater mystics of all religious pathways offers a powerful support to the doctrine of unity. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the

greatest mystic of recent Hinduism, asserts this through a personal experimentation in all religious ways, particularly in Christianity and Islam, in addition to all varieties of Hinduism. This principle is propagated with wonderful clarity and force by Swami Vivekananda. This was a fundamental spiritual axiom of Mahatma Gandhi as well.

In the sphere of social ethics, the activism propounded by Tilak stands invulnerable. Mahatma Gandhi adds to it his doctrine of the kinship of all life and the non-violent struggle for justice. It is a touching testimony to his gospel that Martin Luther King adopted it, more ardently perhaps than any contemporary disciple of Gandhi, and practised it in an entirely different social content. No wonder that he gave his life to the cause and means, as his master had done before him. The two are inseparably united in their lives and deaths.

What of the fantastically advancing technology that is transforming human society everywhere? True to the general spirit of Hinduism, it must be seen to that the tools of progress are strictly subordinated to the values to be realized if man is to attain the perfection that he has in him to attain. The principle is clear, though the application bristles with problems, rendered acute by the insufficient acceptance of the values. That an ideology can masterfully control technology is brilliantly illustrated in the Communist experiments all over the world. Why should spiritual ideals be regarded as incurably weak in the situation? Perhaps Plato's statement that philosophers must be kings or kings must become philosophers is the last word on the matter. This is the hope of the new world.

HINDUISM AND ARNOLD TOYNBEE—II

DEBIPRASAD BHATTACHARYA

5

Toynbee's most formidable indictment of Hinduism is to be found in an important annex to the seventh volume of *A Study of History* entitled 'Religion and Psychological types'. In the course of a brief but illuminating analysis of a profoundly interesting subject, he has inevitably had an encounter with the Indic *Weltanschauung*. The encounter has not been, as might perhaps have been expected, a pleasant one.

His target this time—and not the only time—is what he calls 'the classical Indic exposition of the inhuman philosophy of detachment': the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The description itself indicates an unmistakable antipathy to this 'famous' Indic masterpiece. He begins by quoting several well-known verses—in English translation of course—from the second chapter of the *Gītā* in which Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna 'to fight and slay his fellow human beings without pity or compunction on the metaphysical ground that the Atman is neither the slayer nor the slain'. This is followed by a somewhat sarcastic remark: 'To non-Hindu observers, whose approach to religion was not essentially an intellectual one, Kṛṣṇa's academic exposition ... might be suspect of being deliberately evasive.'²²

And this brings us immediately to what Toynbee is trying to demonstrate: the cold, almost inhumanly cold, intellectualism which dominates Hinduism. 'An apparent absence of love and absence of zeal for righteousness', Toynbee declares, 'were the

negative aspects of Hinduism that are apt to strike non-Hindu observers the most painfully.'²³ This fatal flaw in Hinduism is due, he explains, to the fact that in this religion the dominant faculty is the 'intellect'—a fact which, according to him, is an unmitigated misfortune. In order to understand why this is so we must turn for a moment to what Toynbee has to say on the relation between religion and 'psychological types'.

Toynbee fully accepts Jung's—a modern Western psychologist whom he holds in the highest esteem—classification of the human psyche into two antithetical and fundamental 'attitudes', namely, introversion and extraversion, and the four fundamental 'faculties', namely, thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition. Of these four, thinking and feeling are, according to Jung, 'rational', while the other two, sensation and intuition, are 'irrational'. Once this scheme is accepted, the psychological type to which a human being belongs can be determined first by his or her dominant 'attitude'—introversion or extraversion—and secondly, by the predominance of one of the four diverse mental 'faculties'. Usually, however, the dominating faculty is served by two auxiliary ones.

Now this same scheme holds good, according to Jung, of the four higher religions of the world: Christianity; Islam, Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism. Of these, the first two (both of Judaic origin) are predominantly extraverted in their attitude to life, while the two others (both of Indian origin) share a markedly introverted character. If we attempt now to classify them according to their funda-

²². Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 7:727. Hereafter cited as *Study*.

²³. *Ibid*.

mental 'attitudes' and dominant 'faculties', the picture that will emerge is briefly as follows :

In Christianity the dominant faculty is feeling, served by two auxiliaries, intuition and the intellect; in Islam it is sensation served by two auxiliaries, thinking and feeling; in the Mahayana it is intuition served by the same pair (thinking and feeling); and in Hinduism finally, it is the intellect which turns out, on this analysis, to be the predominating faculty, assisted by the two auxiliaries, intuition and sensation.

The mainspring of Hinduism is, according to Toynbee, 'an introverted intellectual comprehension of the impersonal underworld underlying a Human Consciousness'. Now, an introverted intellect, we are told, is a highly dubious instrument, for religion as well for science. Why? The answer is : being intellectual, it is unsuitable for religion, for the religious faculty *par excellence* is not intellect but *feeling*, which is conspicuous by its absence in Hinduism; it is equally useless for science, which demands an *extraverted* intellect. 'Let the intellect', says Toynbee, 'occupy itself in begetting Science which is generated by a union of "extraverted" thought with sensation which is the faculty that apprehends matters of fact, and in begetting philosophy, which is generated by a union of "extraverted" thought with intuition.'²⁴

Hinduism in consequence is seriously handicapped by the dominance of the intellect and the absence of feeling. The intellect, Toynbee admits, is unquestionably 'the distinctive organ of *Homo sapiens*', but it is not the psychic faculty that is called into play in the realm of the spirit where 'feeling' reigns, and must reign, supreme. Feeling therefore is the 'master-faculty' in religion. And the reason is this : 'Man enters into communion with God through

the faculty of feeling which Homo Peccator sed Capax Dei (Man who is a sinner and yet capable of seeing God) shares with other living creatures. On this showing, the most valuable instruments in the orchestra of Religion would be those that played the music of Love.'²⁵

We have got then, at last, the supreme criterion for the excellence of a religion; it remains now to arrange 'on an order of merit determined by that criterion' the four extant higher religions of the world; and this can easily be done as follows.

Christianity, once we accept this criterion, 'heads the list', because in Christianity 'feeling was the predominant faculty'. The second and the third places go to the Shiah (Islam) and the Mahayana respectively; they would be 'next to Christianity in glory because, in each of them, feeling was the predominant faculty's auxiliary'.

'What about Hinduism?' we may ask at this point with considerable trepidation. To our inexpressible relief we learn that it has not been disqualified after all, which is more than one should have expected of a candidate that might have been dismissed on the fatal charge of an hypertrophy of the intellect. 'On this ground', comes the final and irrevocable verdict, 'Hinduism would stand at the bottom of the list.' But the place hardly matters when the number of successful candidates is only four and the candidate who has stood fourth in order of merit might have done worse and missed his name altogether on the list.

Immensely relieved to find the name of his own religion on the list—no matter if it appears at the bottom—a Hindu cannot help wondering, with a feeling of pleasurable bewilderment, why a religion that suffers from this double disadvantage of being saddled with an unwanted intellect and—which is still more serious—lacking

24. *Ibid.*, 7:735.

25. *Ibid.*

lamentably the one faculty that is indispensable in religion, namely, 'feeling', should yet be considered eligible for the title of a 'higher religion'. To this Toynbee's answer would be : Hinduism has deserved this distinction through the saving grace of *bhakti* (devotion), that intimate, human relationship with a personal God which raises it above its older and somewhat colder Indic predecessor.

But this gratifying explanation would make confusion worse confounded. 'How can *bhakti*', a puzzled Hindu would be driven to ask, 'constitute the distinctive feature in a religion in which—as we have been told a moment ago—the "intellect" is dominant and "feeling" virtually nowhere?' Again Toynbee is ready with a clear reply. It is this. Hinduism has been forced, happily, by the imperative demand of human nature itself, to yield to it by introducing 'the worship of Viṣṇu in his innumerable avatars in human form'. The lesson is simple : 'feeling', being a fundamental human faculty, could not be 'completely and permanently banished'; it would 'force its way up from the subconscious'. Hence the worship of Śiva and Viṣṇu.

But this forced and somewhat reluctant concession to human nature by Hinduism had to be paid for 'by doing some violence to its own genius', which is predominantly intellectual. *Bhakti*, in consequence, has remained something of a *tour de force* and its forced entry something of an anomaly.

Now, of these two grave charges against Hinduism, namely, the absence of feeling and the dominance of the intellect, the first will be dealt with later on when we proceed to discuss Toynbee's strictures on the *Gītā*. Let us, therefore, take up the second first.

To do this we shall have to answer two questions : first, whether it is true that in Hinduism the dominant faculty is the intellect ; secondly, whether, if it turns out

to be really the case, it is to be regarded as a misfortune.

Let us take up the second question first. Now, whether or not Toynbee is right in accusing Hinduism of preponderance of the intellect, he is undoubtedly right in deprecating the supremacy of the thinking faculty in the realm of the spirit, for though this faculty is of inestimable value in the domain of secular knowledge, it is, if allowed to dominate in the more ethereal realm of the spirit, apt to be more of a hindrance than a help. On this point therefore Toynbee, who is himself endowed with a magnificent intellect and hence has an indisputable title to pronounce on the matter, is entirely in the right.

Let us turn now to our first question, namely : is it true after all, that Hinduism is predominantly intellectual? It would be better, I think, that the answer to this should come not from a Hindu, who can hardly be expected to look at the matter dispassionately, but from a foreigner brought up, like Toynbee himself, in an entirely different spiritual climate. I have chosen for this purpose a distinguished Dutch Indologist, Jan Gonda, who, in a brilliant book written in German, *Die Religionen Indiens*, has dealt with this very question.

After examining thoroughly the Indian vision of liberation (*Erlösung*) and pointing out emphatically that it is essentially an 'experience' (*Erfahrung*) and not 'a matter of dogmatic belief', the author finely observes : 'From this higher point of view every intellectual activity, every discursive thought, is *avidyā* (*Nichtwissen*—'ignorance'). . . . The assertion that Hindu religiosity is intellectualistic rests therefore on a misconception (*Missverständnis*). There is intellectual activity and speculation, and they are necessary on a certain level ; they give rise to diversity and differences of views. . . . But these are concerned with logical and dialectical details. . . . They

are not for those who see the One (*das Eine*) in the midst of a changing Universe.²⁶

But this supreme realization, the author goes on to remind his readers, cannot be achieved at a bound. Man has to pass, in order to achieve this, through a long series of intermediate stages at which moral discrimination and the exercise of discursive reason are absolutely necessary. 'Hell and heaven, good and evil, death and rebirth, beliefs and rites, art and science, social and political institutions'—all are present in Hinduism. Only they are not, as this brilliant Dutch scholar points out, 'ends in themselves'. Nevertheless, he immediately adds, all these are not, for Hinduism, just mundane phenomena. 'All these', he profoundly observes, 'are, in the light of the liberation-idea (*im Lichte des Erlösungsgedanken*), not just things that belong to this world and this life, but the first steps, the means towards that supreme consummation—*mokṣa*.'²⁷

The same, says our author, is true of all Hindu religious rites (like 'image-worship'), moral ideas and visions of another world. 'This recognition of diverse stages of religious experience (*Diese Anerkennung verschiedener religiöser Erfahrungen*)', he affirms, 'each of which has its justification and all of which exist in the midst of a spirit of mutual toleration, is one of the most characteristic features of Hinduism (*einer der bezeichnendsten Züge des Hinduismus*).'²⁸

6

In the sixth volume of the *Study*, Toynbee, after a searching (and crushing) analysis of the Stoics' and the Epicureans' ideal of 'invulnerability' (*apatheia*) and

imperturbability (*ataraxia*), turns to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 'this famous work of Indic literature' as he calls it. One is almost tempted to suspect a faint suggestion of irony in the epithet 'famous' since what he has to say about the object it qualifies may well make one doubt whether, if what he says is really the case, the book deserves the fame it still enjoys.

To begin with, in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* 'detachment' has been carried to a point from which even the stoics appear, in comparison, moderate and almost human. For in the *Gītā*, 'detachment' is not only the salient feature of a spiritually advanced human individual; it constitutes one of the essential attributes of Divinity. To demonstrate this latter point Toynbee quotes a verse—actually, and significantly, a half-verse—from the *Gītā* in which the Divine Teacher declares: 'I am indifferent to all things; there is none whom I hate, none whom I love.' (9.29)

'These words', Toynbee pointedly remarks, 'are placed in the mouth of a god, but it is a human ideal that they express.... And the same poem elsewhere extols the same inhumanly complete detachment as the hallmark, not of divinity, but of perfection in the soul of a human being.' A number of verses follow.

But before I proceed to them I would like to say a word or two on the verse just quoted. Here as elsewhere, Toynbee uses Barnett's translation of the *Gītā*, and the translation, though excellent in many ways, is not always wholly reliable, and sometimes somewhat misleading. In the verse in question (9.29) for instance, 'indifferent' is certainly not the meaning of '*samaḥ*' which occurs in the original. The original runs thus: '*Samo'ham sarva-bhūteṣu na me dvesyo'sti na priyaḥ*.' '*Samaḥ*' here clearly means 'equal', not 'indifferent'. The accurate rendering therefore should be: 'I am equally present in

26. Jan Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1960), 1:352.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, 1:353.

all beings, there is none hateful or dear to me.' This rendering has the further merit of being in perfect consonance with the spirit of Vedanta; for the *Gītā*, as is well known in India, is one of the three supreme sources of Vedanta. Now according to Vedanta, everything is in the Divine, and the Divine is in everything. Hence, equal 'in' and not equal 'to' would be the right rendering of '*samah*'.

This is made perfectly clear in the next line: 'Those who worship me with devotion (feel that they) abide in me and I in them.' Why Toynbee leaves out this second half of the verse is not clear; the omission, which almost seems intentional, may serve his purpose well. Not so the readers', who are apt to miss entirely the intention of the Divine Speaker; and the intention is most assuredly not, as I have tried to show, to attribute to the Divine an 'inhumanly complete detachment' but—which is a very different thing altogether—to affirm, in the true spirit of Vedanta, the immanence of the Divine in everything, for He is everything, and there is nothing else. To 'love' or to 'hate' on this Vedantic view of the nature of things—a view which receives its supreme and the clearest formulation in the *Gītā*—becomes equally meaningless, for even to 'love' presupposes an 'otherness' which, from the point of view of 'the One without a second' (though not from *our* point of view), is utterly illusory.

Let us turn now to the other verses quoted by Toynbee in the sixth volume of his *Study*. The purpose, again, is to demonstrate that the same dubious virtue of detachment constitutes the central feature of the spiritual perfection contemplated by the *Gītā*. They are verses 2.56, 2.57, 4.19, and 2.11.

And here is the comment: 'To the Indic sage's mind this heartlessness is the adamant core of philosophy.' For a writer who chooses his words with as great

caution and restraint—not to mention the accuracy and the astonishing felicity—as Toynbee, this is indeed strong language; it expresses the natural and noble indignation of a great soul confronted with the spectacle of something cold and inhuman. The warmth therefore is refreshing, even impressive; and yet it is painful and surprising to find in a man as transcendently endowed with spiritual perception as Arnold Toynbee this total inability to see anything better in the *Gītā* than a peculiarly cold and hardened version of the stoical vision of life.

It is necessary at this point to quote the verses from the *Gītā* which Toynbee adduces to demonstrate the adamant hardness and the 'heartlessness' of the philosophy expressed by them. I give below Radhakrishnan's English translation, which has the merit of reproducing faithfully—and with as much accuracy as is possible in an alien language—the sense of the original.

'He whose mind is untroubled in the midst of sorrows and is free from eager desire amid pleasures, he from whom passion, fear, and rage have passed away, he is called a sage of settled intelligence.' (2.56)

'He who is without affection on any side, who does not rejoice or loathe as he obtains good or evil, his intelligence is firmly set (in wisdom).' (2.57)

'He whose undertakings are all free from the will of desire, whose works are burned up in the fire of wisdom, him the wise call a man of learning.' (4.19)

'Wise men do not grieve for the dead or for the living.' (2.11)

We are to note first that the verses quoted here to bring out the 'heartlessness' of the 'Indic sage' have been chosen in a manner calculated to support Toynbee's thesis. Of the four verses he has quoted, three are from Chapter II and one from Chapter IV; that is, from chapters which deal

specifically with the path of knowledge, *jñānamārga*. Now this selection is highly misleading when it purports to express the central teaching of the *Gītā*. The truth is that if a reader goes through all the verses in the first six chapters of the book and stops there, he will hardly have an inkling of what constitutes the central theme of the remaining two-thirds : *bhakti*, which makes its first unmistakable entry at the beginning of Chapter VII and culminates in the grand finale of the closing lines of the last (eighteenth) chapter.

The strange thing is that Toynbee, whose Argus eye misses nothing, shouldn't have a word to say about the all-important role of love and devotion in this 'famous work of Indic literature'. Ignorance, surely, cannot account for this mysterious silence ; it can only be an inveterate antipathy towards the Indic *Weltanschauung* which is patently too cold and too intellectual for his taste.

Yet, had he approached the subject with an open mind—a difficult intellectual feat which he achieves on a great many occasions with an astonishing degree of success—Toynbee would have paused before condemning the 'Indic doctrine' that 'Pity and Love are vices', and noticed that the famous description of the *bhakta* (devotee) in the twelfth chapter begins with '*adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca*' ('he who has no ill will towards any being, who is friendly and compassionate'). If a further proof is required I would like to call attention to an amazing verse from the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*. 'He, O Arjuna, who sees with equality everything, in the image of his own self (*ātmaupamyena*), whether in pleasure or in pain, he is considered a perfect yogi.' (6.32) And this, it should be noted, is said not about a *bhakta* but about a yogi, for the chapter in which this occurs deals with yoga in the original and technical sense of the term. As a third proof I would mention the fact, in case it escaped

Toynbee's notice, that twice in the *Gītā* the sages—and not *bhaktas* alone—have been described as '*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*' ('rejoicing in the welfare of all creatures').

But it is no use multiplying examples from the *Gītā* to prove that it is not as inhumanly cold as Toynbee would have us believe ; it would not, it could not disturb his adamant conviction of the stony-heartedness of the 'Indic sage'. For benevolence, even disinterested benevolence, can, we are told, perfectly well accord with a total absence of love and pity. If we are inclined to be sceptical of the possibility of such a thing Toynbee, following Bevan, the author of *Stoics and Sceptics*, would tell us that what is wrong with the stoics or their Indic counterparts is not any lack of *bona fides*, but an indifference to the results of their charitable efforts to help their fellow creatures, and the consequent inability to be pained or perturbed by failure and this inability, combined with a singular unconcern for the actual outcome of their well-meant attempts to help others, indicates 'heartlessness'.

Now if *that* is a sign of heartlessness, as we are told it is, Toynbee is surely right in his severe indictment of the Indic doctrine of 'detachment' ; and this indictment receives, perhaps without his knowledge, an illegitimate corroboration from a mistranslation. In the third verse quoted above from the *Gītā* (4.19) there is a serious mistake : the word '*kāma*' (in '*Kāmasaṅkalpavarjitah*') has been rendered in Barnett's translation as 'love'. This is strange, for '*kāma*' in the *Gītā* (as also elsewhere) almost always means 'desire' ; it may also mean 'lust', as it does once or twice in the *Gītā*, but never 'love'. Toynbee, who late in his life started learning Arabic, might as well have turned his attention and his splendid gift for languages to Sanskrit, which would have been, for an accomplished classical scholar like him, a much easier

job. There is little evidence in his writings that he ever did this, else he would have checked up the original and detected the error. Ignorance, however, didn't do him any harm; quite the contrary; for it helped him to prove his thesis by substituting in an inadvertently convenient manner 'love' for 'desire'.

Throughout Toynbee's critical observations on the *Gītā* runs an implicit assumption which clearly and repeatedly comes out in the very tone in which he uses the phrase 'the Indic sage'; a careful reader can hardly fail to notice a slightly derogatory ring in it. This is not surprising when one remembers Toynbee's distaste for philosophy when it comes to the life of the spirit. This becomes quite clear in the way in which he distinguishes between a 'sage' and a 'saint'. The sage, in this view, is on a spiritual level which is far below that of the saint.

Now this distinction is unknown in the Indic *Weltanschauung*. In the *Gītā*, for instance, the way of knowledge and discrimination—which is the Sāṃkhya-yoga *par excellence*—is quite as legitimate (though not as satisfactory, because more difficult) as the way of bhakti; for both lead at the end to an identical goal, namely, *mokṣa* (liberation). But this way of knowledge (*jñānamārga*) is something very different from metaphysical speculation; it has no more to do with *that* than bhakti does.

The alpha and the omega of Indian spirituality is experience, spiritual experience which leads in the end to the direct apprehension, the 'unitive knowledge' as Aldous Huxley aptly calls it, of the Ultimate Reality. Even bhakti must lead to this supreme 'knowledge'. If it is objected that the *bhakta* aims at union with the Divine, not knowledge of any kind, including the supreme knowledge of Brahman, the answer from the Hindu point of view would be

that union is impossible without knowledge; or rather, the two at this supreme stage mean the same thing. This is what is really meant by the famous Upaniṣadic *mantra*: *brahmaveda brahmaiva bhavati*—'the knower of Brahman becomes (one with) Brahman'. When it comes to an encounter with the Ultimate Reality, the distinction between 'knowing' and 'being' is completely obliterated, for the only way of knowing the Unknowable is to 'be' it. And when a human soul has reached this summit of spiritual experience he has already left behind both the sages and the saints, as we understand these two terms in their ordinary connotation.

7

More than a quarter of a century has passed since all this was written: the unsatisfactoriness of Hinduism as a religion and of the *Gītā* as its classical scriptural expression. Twenty years later we find Toynbee declare his religious credo in his profoundly interesting autobiographical work: *Experiences* (published in 1969 when he was eighty). There we notice an unmistakable change in his attitude towards the Indic *Weltanschauung*.

Before I come to that, I would like to point out that even in his earlier analysis of Hinduism Toynbee ended his indictment of that religion with a tribute which is so warm and sincere that one almost forgets—and forgives, if one happens to be a fanatical Hindu, which is almost a contradiction in terms—his previous and somewhat severe strictures upon it.

'Meanwhile, at the time of writing,' Toynbee declares at the end of the same stimulating annex to the seventh volume of the *Study*, 'midway through the twentieth century of the Christian Era, Hinduism was to be found, not at the rear of the procession of living higher religions, but in its van, in

virtue of a characteristically Hindu spirit of spontaneous charity towards all revelations—past, present and to come—which was the first spiritual requirement in an age in which the whole of Mankind had been united in a single Great Society through “the annihilation of distance” by a Western technology.²⁹

Twenty years later, in the autobiographical work mentioned above, Toynbee refers, not once but several times, to the famous Upaniṣdic *mantra*, *tat tvam asi* (“That art Thou”). He mentions it at first as an interesting hypothesis put forward by an ancient Indian school of thinkers whom the Buddha knew but opposed. This is how he formulates it: ‘If and when a human being’s inward-turned contemplation penetrates to the innermost recess of his self, he finds there a spiritual presence which he will also find in and beyond the Universe as a whole. Indian thinkers of this school summed up this intuition of theirs in the aphorism *Tat tvam asi* (“Thou art That”).’³⁰

Toynbee finds this ancient Indian thesis interesting because it was in line with one of the fundamental postulates of modern science, namely, the uniformity of Nature. For, ‘if this is the truth, “matter” and “spirit” may each be infinite in its own dimension; and every human being will be a point at which these two perhaps infinite entities intersect each other.’³¹ Now this hypothesis, if true, has a tremendous cosmic significance, for it suggests ‘that the Universe is all of a piece, and that the ultimate spiritual reality behind the Universe is of one substance with the spirit in the psyche of a human being. . . .’³²

And this ‘thesis’ or ‘report’ is based, Toynbee goes on to remark, on an ‘intui-

tion’, an intuition which was the result of ‘the Indic practice of contemplation’. Naturally he cannot vouch for the truth of this; and yet one feels that he would be happy if he could. Nevertheless, it would not be fanciful, I think, to suspect that by the time Toynbee wrote these lines he was powerfully drawn by this ancient Indian thesis or intuition. That this is not a mere fancy of mine or ‘wishful thinking’, is demonstrated in a remarkable passage in which Toynbee discusses ‘prayer’ as a spiritual activity.

‘Prayer’, he writes, ‘as commonly practised, is not the only or the ultimate form of communion between a human being and the spiritual presence behind the universe that is higher than we are. When prayer has been raised to its highest degree of spiritual intensity it is transmuted into another kind of experience. At this higher level, personality is transcended, and with it the separateness that is personality’s limitation. At this supra-personal spiritual height, the experience is unitive. At this height, they are identical. *Tat tvam asi*. The supra-personal ground of a human being’s existence is the supra-personal ground of ultimate spiritual reality.’³³

And this, he affirms, has been reported to us by ‘human beings who have exercised their human spiritual faculties to the highest degree’. Does he mean to say that the ancient Indian seers of the Upaniṣads are among these rare human beings? From the context, it certainly appears that he does. In that case, one may very well be justified in believing that by this time—that is, when he was nearing eighty in 1969—the great Vedantic utterance (*mahāvākya*) came to be for him something much more than an interesting hypothesis.

‘I believe’, he declares at the end of the book from which we are quoting, ‘in the

29. *Study*, 7:735.

30. Arnold Toynbee, *Experiences*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 159.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

truth of the Indian intuition *tat tvam asi*. . . . I believe that the dweller in the inner spiritual presence behind and beyond the Universe, and I believe that this ultimate spiritual reality is love.³⁴ And if in

this memorable passage we substitute 'ānanda' (bliss) for 'love'—and the substitution, from the Indian point of view, is perfectly legitimate—what we get is an authentic statement of a vision of Reality that is essentially Vedantic.

³⁴. *Ibid.*, p. 369.

(Concluded)

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

(A Dialogue)

G. S. SRIDHAR

(Two men, one young and another old, meet. While the young man is an agnostic, the old man is a man of wisdom. Their topic of discussion turns to religion.)

Young man : It looks really funny that in our country, still there are men who believe in God. Even in this electronic age people foolishly cling to tradition. See, everywhere, there is so much corruption. People want to become rich by hook or by crook. Money has become the sole motive force. What good have religious principles brought about in this world of corruption, dishonesty and competition? As days go on and on, life is becoming more complicated, there is utter chaos everywhere. This country is really going to the dogs. Unless there is a bloody revolution, our country is not going to change.

Old man : Your feelings are quite understandable. Undoubtedly there is so much corruption in our public life. Nobody seems to follow any principles. But if right principles are not followed by people, I don't think we can thereby conclude that the principles are wrong. It is the people who are to blame for having lost all sense of right and wrong. I am sure that if right principles were inculcated in the minds of children, they would not behave so recklessly later on. Protected by a proper fence,

plants would not be destroyed. Similarly, if the noble thoughts of the sages of our religion were put in the minds of children, they would grow to become responsible citizens of the country.

Y : I cannot appreciate your view that it is only by religion that people can be made moral. I should say it is because of religion that much harm has been done to the world. Since the birth of Christianity and Islam, imagine how many wars have been fought. Look at the magnitude of the loss suffered by children and widows, and by incapacitated soldiers on account of religious intolerance ! I should say, religion has created more disharmony than harmony. Even in our own country, clashes due to caste distinctions have become the order of the day. This is not all. Hindu religion has made people very lazy. We are so fatalistic that even in this scientific age we have superstitious ideas. All the Western countries are progressing rapidly in science and technology, whereas the major chunk of the Indian population remains ignorant of the scientific developments of the West because of their clinging

to religion and traditional methods of living. To make matters worse, some men in the garb of practising religion retire into solitude, renouncing all activities. So many parasites in the name of religion ! Shame ! It is disgraceful. It is time that our Government at the Centre took some concrete steps to stop this nonsense.

O : Your contention is not entirely without an element of truth, though the sentiments you have expressed are lopsided. It is incorrect to think that if people are provided with food, clothing and shelter, their life purpose would be fulfilled. In modern times we find various leaders in political, social and economic fields offering numerous suggestions which, they believe, would solve the problems of man. But what they fail to recognize is the fact that man's problems cannot be solved merely by any number of reforms in the fields just mentioned. There is no denying the fact that these reforms do achieve great results and are quite useful to the society. But to contend that these alone will be sufficient to take a man a bit nearer to Truth is unmitigated nonsense. The problem with man is basically spiritual. For example, look at the great men India has produced, like Lord Buddha. What did Buddha lack? Did he lack tasty food, fabulous clothing and opulently-furnished palaces? Yet, he could not remain contented. With all the material wants available at fingers' reach, he felt incomplete and therefore took to the life of a mendicant monk, in search of something higher.

Y : Please tell me, what is the necessity of one's renouncing this life in anticipation of something that would accrue after some time? I think I can easily carry on my life without any love of God or such humbug. What is the necessity of religion, when I can carry on my life without courting any religious ideas, but by always using my discriminative power?

O : Well said. You can carry on your life using your intellectual understanding in a rational way. But it has got some pitfalls. Man's intellectual power is limited. When he faces a situation in his life, it is quite possible that his judgement, and consequently his actions, may go wrong, bringing troubles to him and others. In fact, half the misery of this world is caused by people who think that this intellect is infallible and that there is no need to be guided by a higher spiritual principle. This is called temptation. Moreover, man seeks something in his life : he wants to be happy. Happiness is the goal of man. No one courts unhappiness willingly. All actions of man are to get rid of unhappiness and attain happiness. Who would refuse to have continuous happiness, if only it could be had? But unfortunately man does not know where to seek this happiness. He thinks that worldly objects can give him complete satisfaction. Hence, he runs after them. But ere long, he realizes that it is foolish to seek happiness in external objects. He understands that finite objects cannot give Infinite Happiness. With a little discrimination, he can understand that there is no joy-content in the objects. Happiness is not inherent in the objects.

Y : Can you elaborate your statement that 'happiness is not inherent in the objects'?

O : Certainly. An object which gives happiness to one man at one period of time, gives him unhappiness at another period. Again, an object which gives happiness to one person can give unhappiness to another person at the same time. From this it should be clear that happiness is not a quality of the objects, though man ignorantly thinks so.

Y : If, as you say, happiness is not in the objects of the world, where should it be sought? What does your religion say?

O : Religion holds a different view. Our

ancient men of wisdom had studied the world outside and discovered many scientific facts. But they understood that to seek the secret of the universe and the solution to the problems of life in the external world was a hopeless task. You must understand that man's lifespan is very small. Within this short period he cannot learn everything. A person may be a doctor but not know anything about law. One may be a good politician, yet be completely ignorant of medicine. Is it possible for the human mind to study all branches of knowledge in one life? And then there is the vastness of the universe. No one can dream of going to the stars and galaxies because of the tremendous distance involved. You can understand the immensity of the task that a human mind would have to face if it attempted to know the whole secret of the universe by studying the limitless objective world. It is next to impossible. It may take years and years to know even a fraction of the world. How then can a human being study the whole objective phenomenon and arrive at a satisfactory conclusion? This understanding made the ancient seers of this country probe what is called the subjective world. They went deep within themselves. They ultimately found that the study of mind was intensely more practical and efficient for knowing the secret of the universe.

Y : What did the ancient seers arrive at by making a search within themselves?

O : Now you seem to follow the foregoing arguments. If you read our ancient books called 'Upaniṣads' you will find questions asked by students to teachers: 'What is that knowing which everything else is known? What is that by getting which nothing further is to be got?' And you find invariably that the great Upaniṣadic teachers used to tell the students to direct their attention within and find what lay in the deepest core of their personality. They

ultimately discovered that the essence of their existence was the essence of existence of everything in the objective world. In other words, by going deep within they found themselves to be immortal and passed beyond all the limitations imposed by time and space.

Y : Man is immortal ! What a fantastic conclusion ! A hundred years ago I was not. A hundred years afterwards also I won't be. It's tomfoolery to say that man is immortal. Such a theory should be cast away at once.

O : You must admit that your conclusion is rather superficial. I'll tell you now, how man can discover his immortal nature. The pity is that he doesn't know the truth owing to ignorance. His mind, intellect and senses are ever after sense-objects. One time he is happy, another time he is unhappy. Pushed from within and without, pummelled between the pairs of opposites like love and hate, happiness and unhappiness and joy and sorrow, poor man almost loses his balance and finds a task like attaining immortality almost an impossibility. The way to Truth, on the contrary, is simple. Truly, it's because of ignorance that man suffers. The word ignorance here has a different, but deep, meaning. It does not mean ignorance of any objective knowledge like ignorance of mathematics, physics, etc. What is meant is the ignorance of the Ultimate Reality behind the changing phenomena we call the world, and which is the cause of all delusions. When an object's pure nature is not seen but in its place something else is seen, it is ignorance. Questions of 'how did this ignorance arise?' and 'why did this ignorance arise' are not tenable because the questioning medium, the intellect, is itself a product of ignorance. This ignorance, which is beginningless, will end as soon as the light of true Knowledge is lit. Till the realization of the truth that the individual self is not different from the

universal Self and that the limitations experienced by the former are purely imaginary, one cannot experience absolute happiness. This knowledge is obtained through listening to an illumined teacher's words, meditating upon the truth heard and lastly discovering within oneself the source of happiness. This discovery certainly demands one-pointed concentration of the mind. Freedom, of course, isn't for the indolent. It requires an ever-vigilant, enquiring mind to analyse one's experiences from moment to moment and know subjectively that the much-desired happiness doesn't lie outside oneself. Now I'm going to tell you the process of attaining it.

Y : Quickly please. I'm eager to know it.

O : Supposing you are sitting in a dark room and I, coming from outside, call you by name. Will you respond to me?

Y : Certainly ; I know I am existing and hence would be able to reply to you.

O : Was there any light inside the room?

Y : No, there was no light in the room. Neither was there any sunlight nor any other form of light.

O : When there is no light in the room, how do you know you are existing in a dark room?

Y : What a funny question? I know I am existing. My existence is a fact of experience. It is beyond any doubt.

O : Incidentally, it may be of interest for you to know that the famous European philosopher Descartes also doubted everything—God, world, etc. But he could not doubt himself. Why he alone? No one can doubt one's own existence. But let us proceed further. I'll ask you another question. Look at this table standing here. Are you the table?

Y : Do you think I'm a fool? When I see the table, I'm different from it. That which I see, I am not.

O : In other words, you're the subject,

seeing the objects outside. The entire panorama of changes taking place outside is seen by you. Am I right?

Y : Yes, you're right. Go ahead.

O : You say the table is different from you because it is seen by you. It's an object of experience. Then, in that case, are you the physical body through which you are transacting with the world?

Y : Strictly speaking, in the light of the arguments just exchanged, my body should be different from 'I'.

O : Certainly. 'I' is different from the body. But everyone takes himself to be the body and undergoes limitless sufferings in the world. In the physical body, there are five organs of perception for seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching ; and also five organs of action : the hands, legs, vocal organ, organ of generation and organ of evacuation. To know that one is different from all these looks very simple. Yet no one is able to comprehend this truth and therefore people suffer tremendously.

Y : I have a doubt now. If 'I' should be different from the body, cannot 'I' be the mind or intellect?

O : No. You say, 'my mind' and 'my intellect'. When your mind is agitated, you say, 'my mind' is agitated, implying thereby that there is a 'knower' of the mental agitations. The knowing Principle, called Consciousness in the language of Vedanta, illumines the agitations of the mind. Similarly, 'I' cannot denote intellect. When you are cheerful or dull, you say, 'I am cheerful', 'I am dull', etc. Does this not show that there is a knower of the dullness and cheerfulness of your intellect? Hence it should be understood that there is an unchanging Knower or Principle of Awareness, witnessing the changes taking place in the body, mind and intellect. This is the underlying Reality of all men and women, young and old, and also of all creatures.

But it is possible only for the human mind to grasp this truth. Now certain conclusions can be drawn. Not being the body, are you subject to hunger, thirst, etc.?

Y : No. The real 'I', which is my true nature, is not subject to hunger, thirst, etc.

O : Not being the body, do you have any sex?

Y : No. I am beyond all ideas of sex.

O : Not being the body, do you do any action?

Y : No, I do not perform any action. Sense-organs act on the sense-objects, while I remain as the Pure Witness.

O : Not being the sense-organs, do you see, hear, smell, etc.?

Y : No, I am beyond all the senses and their functions.

O : Not being the mind, do you think, doubt, will, etc.?

Y : No, I am beyond all mental modifications.

O : Not being the intellect, are you a mathematician, philosopher, etc.?

Y : No, I am beyond all intellectual conceptions.

O : Then who are you?

Y : After negating all the above as not-I, that Awareness which alone remains—that I am.

O : What is your nature, then?

Y : My nature is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss.

O : Are you, then, within the limitations of time and space?

Y : No, I am beyond time and space. I am not in them, they are in me.

O : Are you immortal or mortal now?

Y : It is a sin to call me mortal. I am Immortal, Eternal, All-pervading Existence. Your words are true, now I understand.

HINTS TO SEEKERS OF GOD

SWAMI SHIVANANDA (MAHAPURUSH MAHARAJ)

1. Do not forget the main ideal in the midst of your many duties. The primary object of life is to realize God ; it will not do to waste your leisure in seeking little comforts and following others blindly like sheep. I tell you my firm belief. Japa and meditation, love for God and faith in Him are absolutely necessary. And considering that the mind is false and time unyielding what else can man do?

2. It is a bit difficult to have concentration in the initial stages. Meditation becomes more natural when one gets love for God as a result of His grace and one's constant prayer and Japa. Instead of starting with meditation, it is much better, in the first stage, to sit before the portrait of Sri Ramakrishna like a tearful child with a persistent demand, and pray with earnestness to him.

3. During my second or third visit, as I was serving him, the Master in an ecstatic mood touched my chest. As a result of the touch everything became revealed to me. I realized that I was the Soul, eternal and free ; I realized that the Master was the Lord born as man for the good of mankind ; and that I was on earth to serve him.

4. Practice constant recollection and contemplation of God. One has to form the habit. Remember and think of Him continually, while walking, eating, lying down and even when you are busy in various activities. Let it be as if an undercurrent is all the time flowing.

5. Prayer, earnest prayer is what is necessary. Cry to Him as you pray. Then He will be gracious and respond.

6. It is easy to take the vow of monasticism, but a person cannot have supreme devotion and knowledge without God's grace.

7. We shall have to court sorrows also as blessings from God, our Beloved. Unless a person is wholly resigned to God he cannot endure these sorrows and griefs undisturbed.

8. None in this world is really your own whom you think to be so. Only God is truly your own. He keeps company in life and death; He is the Soul of one's soul. The relationship with Him is eternal.

9. 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.

10. Live a very pure life. God reveals himself to those hearts that are sincere and pure. Purity is the only basis of spiritual life.

11. Through spiritual practices, one must make oneself fit to receive God's grace. All else He does out of His own mercy.

12. Remain occupied with your own spiritual practices and duties. Why should you worry about what others do?

13. Spiritual efforts without sincere love for God are fruitless. Of course, without the grace of God one cannot have such love overnight, and that is why regular practice is necessary.

14. The only way to lasting peace is complete surrender to the will of God. Restlessness destroys all peace of mind. When the mind becomes restless one should pray earnestly to God, for He alone is the abode of peace.

15. Constant recollection of God will bring an overflowing blessedness.

16. The only real purpose of human life is to know the Reality. To know the Reality we must meditate. Therefore, the spiritual aspirant should make the practice of meditation a regular habit.

17. The early morning is the best time for spiritual practices. The sacred hours before sunrise are better than any other time for the practice of inwardness.

18. The tribulations of the world indirectly drive the mind toward God. The more you are troubled and tortured in the world, the more you will think of God, and know it for certain that loving remembrance of God severs all our attachment to the world.

19. As long as man remains satisfied with earthly enjoyments and attainments, he has not started on the spiritual path; and when the pangs of separation from God pierce the mind, the time for God-vision is at hand.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*—XVI

To Mrs. G. W. Hale

(Continued from the January issue)

Detroit,
20 February 1894.

45

Dear Mother,

My lectures here are over. I have made some very good friends here, amongst them Mr. Palmer,⁶ President of the late World's Fair. I am thoroughly disgusted with this Slayton⁷ business and am trying hard to break loose. I have lost at least \$ 5,000 by joining this man. Hope you are all well. Mrs. Bagley and her daughters are very kind to me. I hope to do some private lecturing here and then go to Ada and then back to Chicago. It is snowing here this morning. They are very nice people here, and the different clubs took a good deal of interest in me.

It is rather wearisome, these constant receptions and dinners; and their horrible dinners—hundred dinners concentrated into one, and when in a man's club, why, smoking on between the courses and then begin afresh. I thought the Chinese alone make a dinner run through half a day with intervals of smoking!!

However, they are very gentlemanly men and, strange to say, an episcopal clergyman⁸ and a Jewish rabbi⁹ take great interest in me and eulogize me.

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

5. Narasimhacharya of Madras was a delegate to the Parliament of Religions, held at Chicago in 1893, where he became acquainted with Swami Vivekananda. After the Parliament was over he stayed for some months in the United States; and due to shortage of funds he could neither pay the hotel bills, nor could he return to India. So he wrote a letter to Swamiji requesting his help, and Swamiji sent the same to Mrs. G. W. Hale with a line: 'What do you advise Mother? Vivekananda.' Narasimhacharya's letter, written from the Nicholson Hotel, Nashville, Tenn., reads: 'Dear Swami, I have come here, and without being able to get out am stopping; and I would be very much obliged if you would kindly send me \$ 50, so that I can fix the whole thing and come over to Chicago, from which place, I shall go back home. Please do so at once as I am in trouble. Hoping to hear from you soon, I remain, Yours sincerely, Narasimhacharya.' Swamiji mailed this letter to Mrs. G. W. Hale on February 14, 1894, from Detroit. This reveals that Mrs. Hale played a very vital role in Swamiji's life in those days.

6. Mr. Thomas W. Palmer of Detroit was a rich businessman and a politician. In 1883 he was elected to the United States Senate, and later became Minister to Spain. When the World's Columbian Exposition was organized at Chicago in the 1890s, he was chosen President of the World's Fair Commission. In all probability, it was at the Parliament of Religions that he first came to know and admire Swamiji.

7. The Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau of Chicago. On the cover of this letter someone, perhaps Mrs. Hale, had written: 'Feb. 22 President Palmer breaks the Slayton contract.'

8. Reverend Reed Stuart of the Unitarian Church, who was an admirer of the Swami. In his Sunday sermon of February 18, 1894, he spoke on 'The Gate Opening toward the East', giving vent to his liberal views.

9. Rabbi Grossman of the Temple Beth El. He spoke in his Temple on Sunday, February 18, 1894, on 'What Swami Vivekananda Has Taught Us'. He became a devoted friend of Swamiji; and Swamiji, during his visit to Detroit in 1896, lectured at the Rabbi's Temple.

Now the man who got up the lectures here got at least a thousand dollars. So in every place. And this is Slayton's duty to do for me. Instead, he the liar had told me often that he has agents everywhere and would advertise and do all that for me. And this is what he is doing. His will be done. I am going home. Seeing the liking the American people have for me I could have by this time got a pretty large sum. But Jimmy Mills¹⁰ and Slayton were sent by the Lord to stand in the way. His ways are inscrutable.

However, this is a secret. President Palmer has gone to Chicago to try to get me loose from this liar of a Slayton. Pray that he may succeed. Several judges here have seen my contract, and they say it is a shameful fraud and can be broken any moment; but I am a monk, no self defence. Therefore, I had better throw up the whole thing and go to India.

My love to Harriets, Mary, Isabelle, Mother Temple, Mr. Matthews, Father Pope and you all.¹¹

Yours obediently,
VIVEKANANDA.

5

[Detroit,
22 February 1894.]

Dear Mother,

I have got the \$ 200 for the engagements, \$ 175 and \$ 117 by private lectures¹² and \$ 100 as a present from a lady.

This sum will be sent to you tomorrow in checks by Mrs. Bagley. Today the banks being closed we could not do it.

I am going tomorrow to lecture at Ada, Ohio. I do not know whether I would go to Chicago from Ada or not. However, kindly let not Slayton know anything about the rest of the money, as I am going to separate myself from him.

Yours obediently,
VIVEKANANDA.

6

Detroit,
10 March 1894.

Dear Mother,

Reached Detroit safely yesterday evening.¹³ The two younger daughters were waiting for me with a carriage. So everything was all right. I hope the

10. Jimmy Mills might have been either an individual lecture agent or an agent of the Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau.

11. Here 'Harriets' refers to Harriet McKindley and Harriet Hale; Harriet and Isabelle McKindley were the daughters of Mrs. Hale's sister. Harriet and Mary Hale were her own daughters. Swamiji used to address Mr. G. W. Hale as 'Father Pope' and Mrs. G. W. Hale as 'Mother Church'.

12. When Swamiji came to know that the Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau was cheating him, he himself arranged lectures privately. He did not know yet that Mr. T. W. Palmer, who had gone to Chicago on his behalf, had broken the contract on the very day that he wrote this letter.

13. On Friday, February 23, 1894, Swamiji left Detroit for Ada, Ohio. It is not

lecture will be a success, as one of the girls said the tickets are selling like hot cakes. Here I found a letter from Mr. Palmer waiting me with a request that I shall come over to his house and be his guest.

Could not go last night. He will come in the course of the day to take me over. As I am going over to Mr. Palmer I have not opened the awfully packed bag. The very idea of repacking seems to me to be hopeless. So I could not shave this morning. However, I hope to shave during the course of the day. I am thinking of going over to Boston and New York just now, as the Michigan cities I can come and take over in summer; but the fashionables of New York and Boston will fly off. Lord will show the way.

Mrs. Bagley and all the family are heartily glad at my return and people are again coming in to see me.

The photographer here has sent me some of the pictures he made. They are positively *villainous*—Mrs. Bagley does not like them at all. The real fact is that between the two photos my face has become so fat and heavy—what can the poor photographers do?

Kindly send over four copies of photographs. Not yet made any arrangement with Holden.¹⁴ Everything promises to be very nice. 'Ssenator Ppalmer'¹⁵ is a very nice gentleman and very kind to me. He has got a French chef—Lord bless his stomach! I am trying to starve and the whole world is against me!! He used to give the best dinners of all Washington! Hopeless! I am resigned!

I will write more from Mr. Palmer's house.

If the Himalayas become the inkpot, the ocean ink, if the heavenly eternal Devadaroo (angels)¹⁶ become pen, and if the sky itself becomes paper, still I would not be able to write a drop of the debt of gratitude I owe to you and yours. Kindly convey my love to the four full notes and the four half notes of the Hale gamut.¹⁷

May the blessings of the Lord be upon you and yours ever and ever.

Ever yours in grateful affection,
VIVEKANANDA.

definitely known, however, whether he returned from there to Chicago. It appears that Swamiji's Detroit admirers called him back to fight the Christian onslaught, which had been launched against him.

14. A lecture agent at Detroit.

15. Mr. T. W. Palmer was a stammerer; so Swamiji has spelled his name this way and written it under quotation marks.

16. Deodar, a sub-species of cedar (*Cedrus deodara*). In Sanskrit *Deva* means god or angel, and *daroo* means tree or timber; so a tree of angels.

17. The four full notes of the Hale family were Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Hale, Mother Temple and Mr. Matthews, and the half notes were Harriet and Mary Hale and Harriet and Isabelle McKindley, respectively the daughters and nieces of Mrs. G. W. Hale.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

BAHA'U'LLAH AND THE BAB CONFRONT MODERN THINKERS. BOOK II—SPINOZA CONCERNING GOD : BY RUHI MUHSEN AFNAN. Publishers : Philosophical Library, 15 East 40 Street, New York, N.Y. 10016, U.S.A. 1977. Pp. xiv+172. \$ 7.50.

The Baha'i religion, founded by Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), a disciple of the Bab (Sayyid Ali Muhammad of Shiraz, 1819-50) and authoritatively developed and interpreted by Abd al-Baha' (1844-1920), while it claims to be 'scientific' and opposed to dogma, has more clearly defined theological, philosophical, and social doctrines than some scholars have thought.

God, for the Baha'is, is a completely transcendent and unknowable entity. The Baha'is are opposed to mystic pantheism.

The unknowable essence of God makes itself manifest and creates that which is not God. The Baha'i idea of the beginning of things falls between that of creation and that of emanation. They conceive of 'creation' as being 'eternal'. There has never been a time when the world did not exist. The world is eternal.

There are prophets. They are a special form of the manifestation of God. The status of a prophet is radically different from that of man. It falls between the status of man and of God. The manifestation of God through the prophets never ceases. The manifestations of the divine are successive. The first prophet is Adam, then come the traditional prophets of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Zoroaster is also considered a true prophet, though the Buddha and Confucius are seen rather as great masters of the spiritual life. After Muhammad come the Bab and Baha'u'llah. Other prophets better adapted to advanced stages of human progress may come after them, but 'not before a thousand years'.

As to man, Abd al-Baha' distinguishes five types of 'spirit': animal spirit, vegetable spirit, human spirit, the spirit of faith and the Holy Spirit. The spirit of faith is given by God. 'Faith' is essential to Baha'i spiritual life. It alone confers immortality on the believer who continues in the worlds beyond on his eternal journey toward the unknowable Essence of God. Paradise and Hell are symbols. Prayer for the dead is recommended. The idea of reincarnation in this world is firmly rejected.

Viewed from such an angle, Baruch Spinoza's (1632-1677) metaphysical thinking stands in

sharp contrast. As the author puts it: 'Spinoza's conception of God was an attempt to justify the importance of monism as ground for ethical life. Through him that basic conception permeated European thought and acquired a lasting significance.... Even William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, tends to identify psychological with spiritual, or religious phenomena and thereby approach the immanent conception of God.' (Pp. xiii-xiv)

In the introduction the author contrasts the new-platonic, purely emanational (and therefore finally monistic) world-view with that of 'revealed religion' properly understood. This is not only and primarily of theoretical interest. The safeguarding of the moral development of man is at stake. It cannot be safeguarded, served, and promoted, unless a clear distinction is made between the principle of emanation, applicable to the spiritual and divine element in the prophets, and the principle of creation which comprises all other things.

Chapter One deals with Spinoza's geometrical method of reasoning. Afnan holds that since Spinoza's postulates on which he based all his reasoning were borrowed from ancient neo-platonism and pagan thought, his conclusions could not but be of the same nature and lead to similar predicaments and cultural consequences. Chapter Two deals critically with Spinoza's definitions. Here the Baha'i concept of prophethood and creation is lucidly contrasted with Spinoza's concept of reason, causation, substance, creation, freedom and necessity, etc. The Baha'i positions on these points become clear, not by any stringent philosophical proofs but rather by a simple positive positioning of the relevant Baha'i revealed doctrines.

The same holds true of Chapter Three, the central part of the book. It deals one by one with the basic propositions of Spinoza's 'ethics'. Put into contrast, the relevant Baha'i positions are elucidated, especially the Baha'i teaching on the nature of prophethood. Yet the author fails to clearly distinguish and to keep separate the theological and philosophical approach and method. The Baha'i conception of faith as compared to reason and consequently the concept of theology as compared to philosophy is nowhere developed.

The Appendix returns to what the author, with some justification, considers to be the crucial point in the confrontation between Spinoza

monism and Baha'i thought : the difference between the principle of monistic emanation and that of creation as defined by the Bab. Spinoza considers all things as emanations of God, and projections of his substance and essence, that is, mere modes of his being. Baha'i doctrine on this point (as enounced first by the Bab), in contrast, holds that 'God ... absolutely transcends all things. His substance cannot be considered in anything, or end in anything. All things, like mirrors of different dimensions, capacity and purity, merely reflect His essence and attributes. Such forms as we observe are located in His Primal Purpose as their source, not in the glass of which the mirror is made. The latter has merely the capacity to reflect that light and image.... Man has to seek, attain, contemplate and acquire those infinite perfections, to fulfil the purpose for which he has been created.' (P. 171)

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SANSKRIT

THE BRAHMA-SUTRAS AND THEIR PRINCIPAL COMMENTARIES (A CRITICAL EXPOSITION), VOL. III, BY DR. B. N. K. SHARMA. Publishers : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kulapati K. M. Munshi Marg, Bombay-400 007. 1978. Pp. xlviii+836. Price : Rs. 80/-.

The *Vedanta-sutras* of Badarayana enjoy a unique reputation within the *prasthanatrayi* of Vedantic schools. The Acharya of a particular Vedantic system has to establish that his doctrine is in conformity with the *sutras*, or that the *sutras* teach only what he is propounding and nothing else. Thus all the commentators on the *sutras* try to stretch the meanings of the words contained therein. Shankara (A.D. 788-820) happens to be the first whose commentary is available to us ; earlier ones like Bodhayana's (first or second century) and Upavarsha's are lost. Shankara's absolutism (and *mayavada*) was opposed by Ramanuja (1017-1137) who tried to make room for Bhakti in his qualified monism. He distinguished between the Lord and the Jiva internally.

Love or Bhakti presupposes some kind of dualism. If one has to adopt the path of devotion to God, one cannot advocate absolute Advaitism. Love and Bhakti require at least two—an 'I' and a 'Thou', and the relation between the two has to be at least 'I-thou', as in Martin

Buber. It was Madhvacharya (1199-1293), who, in his Dvaita philosophy, clearly recognized the separateness between the individual and the Lord. He can be said to be the foremost theistic commentator on the *Brahma-sutras*. He was the first to designate the second section of the third chapter of the *sutras* as Bhakti-pada and interpret the section consistently so that Bhakti is recognized as an important means to the realization of the Lord ; whereas Ramanuja finds only one aphorism (III.ii.23) wherein Bhakti can be pinpointed.

Dr. B. N. K. Sharma (b. 1909), earlier of Ruparel College, Bombay, needs no introduction to students of Dvaita philosophy. His well-recognized scholarship in this field gets unexpectedly boosted by his *magnum opus* on the *Brahma-sutras*, which has been published in three volumes (the earlier two published in 1971 and 1974 respectively). Dr. Sharma compares the *bhashyas* of Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhva and their sub-commentaries (which remain untranslated into English), and demonstrates, obviously, the superiority of Madhva's interpretation. The volume under review (III) covers the commentaries on the *sutras* from III.ii to the end of Chapter IV. This study is based on Raghunatha Tirtha's *Shesha-Tatparya-Chandrika* (a sub-commentary on Jayatirtha's *Tattva-prakashika*, Chapters III-IV only, which in its turn is the sub-commentary on the *bhashya* of Madhva on the *Brahma-sutras*). This important work of Raghunatha remains mostly unpublished (only the III.ii, *adhikaranas* 1-12 are published ; for the remaining portion the author used manuscripts at the Oriental Library, Mysore).

While translating the *sutra-bhashyas* of Shankara and Ramanuja (published under the *Sacred Books of the East* series in 1890 and 1904) George Thibaut realized that Ramanuja's interpretation of the *sutras* is closer to their original spirit, whereas the Upanishad-bhashyas of Shankara are truer to the Upanishadic spirit. Thibaut did not translate Madhva's Commentary, hence he was silent about him. Prof. S. N. Dasgupta, amongst modern scholars, was the first who paid attention to Madhva-school thinkers like Jayatirtha and Vyasa-tirtha (see his *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. IV). But his limited purpose and scope left out several salient features of Madhivism.

Dr. B. N. K. Sharma takes up not only the three principal commentaries on the *Brahma-sutras* for his study, but concentrates considerably on the important sub-commentaries like the *Bhamati* of Vachaspati, *Kalpataru* of Amalananda (a commentator on *Bhamati*), and *Shrutaprakasha* (commentary on Ramanuja-bhashya by Sudarshana

Suri). His exclusive toil for about ten years for producing the three volumes will remain a landmark in the history of Indian philosophy and of comparative studies in philosophy. Dr. Sharma's exposition can be challenged at several points from non-Madhva standpoints, but as an interpreter and expounder of the dualism of Madhva he cannot be questioned. According to him Madhva's commentary on the *sutras* introduces us to an entirely new line of thought and interpretation of the *sutras* which is distinctive in method and outlook and has not much in common with any of the other commentaries. He claims that Madhva's contentions are directly based on the internal dynamics of the *sutras*. But if the *sutras* are the *nirnayaka-shastras* (deciding instruments) for the Upanishadic texts (which are *nirneya-granthas*), obviously the spirit of the Upanishads should be Bhakti and they should propound dualism. However, the identity-statements of the *mahavakyas* cannot be interpreted in a dualistic manner. Duality is visible in this phenomenal world. To establish this, the scriptures are not required. If the scriptures are authoritative, they are so in the super-phenomenal realm. Identity-statements prove ultimately the identity between the individual and Brahman, where ultimately Bhakti does not find a place. But Bhakti can be provided for at earlier stages.

The philosophical standpoints can always be disputed, but not the utility of Dr. Sharma's volumes for clarifying our views. It is amazing to see such a scholarly feat. It will serve as a text and reference-work for studies in Vedantism for all time to come. The publishers and printers have presented the volumes in a very pleasant manner. They deserve our gratitude.

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THE BHAGAVAD GITA—WITH THE COMMENTARY OF SRI SANKARACARYA, TRANSLATED BY ALLADI MAHADEVA SASTRY. Publishers: Samata Books, 10 Kamaraj Bhavan, 111 Mount Road, Madras-600 006. 1977 (seventh edition). Pp. xv+522. Price: Rs. 35/-.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* is a universal book of religion. It records the divine conversation which took place centuries ago on the battlefield of the Mahabharata War. The text of seven hundred stanzas has come down to us through the ages and is considered as an epitome of Hindu religious thought. Together with the Upanishads and the *Brahma-sutras*, it forms the *prasthan-trayi*—the strong pedestal on which stands the structure of

the ever new Vedantic religion. The efficacy of the *prasthan-trayi* is enhanced manifold on account of the commentary by Acharya Shankara.

There are a number of commentaries on the *Bhagavad-Gita* by various learned Acharyas. The one by Acharya Shankara is known for its spiritual excellence and clarity of thought. In its original Sanskrit, it has its own beauty of expression. This commentary would have remained a closed book for a majority of spiritual aspirants from the East and the West, but for its translation into English, the credit for which goes to Shri A. Mahadeva Sastry. Towards the turn of the last century, he translated this great work into chaste and lucid English, which was first published in 1897. Successive editions emerged in 1901, 1918, 1947, 1961 and in 1972. The present one is the seventh edition and has been brought out beautifully.

Shri A. Mahadeva Sastry was the Director of the Oriental Section of Adyar Library, and later Curator of the Government Oriental Library, Mysore. His scholarship has stood him in good stead in this endeavour.

There is a growing hunger among Westerners in recent years for the religious literature of the East. Books of doubtful authenticity and efficacy are in plenty. The present volume, however, is most precious, as it contains the real message of the *Gita* as interpreted by Acharya Shankara. The translator has been faithful throughout and has refrained from adding anything of his own. He has, however, added a few footnotes to elucidate certain points, and this has added to the utility of the book. The printing and get-up are pleasant.

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SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNOPADESA-SAHASRI: BY PROFESSOR TRYAMBAKA SARMA BHANDARKAR, COMPILED BY SWAMI APURVANANDA. Publishers: Ramakrishna-Shivananda Ashrama, Barasat, 24 Parganas. 1977. Pp. 13+296. Rs. 9/- (Bengali script and translation), Rs. 10/- (Hindi script and translation).

The book contains the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna versified in the form of a little more than one thousand Sanskrit *slokas* with their Bengali (Hindi) translation. The teachings have been compiled from the original Bengali by Swami Apurvananda. The Sanskrit verses have been composed by Professor Tryambaka Sarma Bhandarkar and edited by Pandit Ananda Jha. The material is divided into eighteen chapters according to different themes like 'God with and

without Form', 'Scriptures and Scholarship', 'Incarnations and Their Secret', 'Renunciation', etc. At the end there is an invaluable twenty-three page appendix reproducing some Sanskrit verses on the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna composed by Swami Ramakrishnananda, the illustrious direct disciple of the Master. These originally appeared in a (now defunct) Sanskrit journal named *Vidyodaya* during the years 1896-97, but never appeared in print in their entirety thereafter.

The sayings of Sri Ramakrishna are of immortal value and have a universal appeal. Therefore, embodying them in Sanskrit verses in the tradition of ancient scriptures is a noble task. Spiritual aspirants and serious students of spiritual thoughts, who have a little acquaintance with Sanskrit, will be grateful to the author and compiler of this work for having performed that task so admirably. It is a purifying experience to go through and ruminate on these compositions. Regular recitation of parts of it would conduce to the spiritual upbringing of an aspirant. The original sayings of the Master are in colloquial Bengali. Their simplicity often conceals their immense depth. Further, at times these are interspersed with terms, ideas and illustrations pertaining to late nineteenth-century city life. The ease with which they have been rendered into flowing Sanskrit verses, avoiding the risk of misrepresentation, fills the reader's mind with admiration. What is more, the verse-form often lights up new facets of familiar sayings.

The Hindi and Bengali translations are competent and faithful to the Sanskrit text. For a future edition, the reviewer would suggest that the language of the translation be brought more in conformity with the original Bengali sayings. This may be achieved by putting, wherever necessary, the words of the Master within parentheses.

S. K. CHATTERJEE

BENGALI

ANUDHYAN O NANA CHINTA : BY SANTOSH KUMAR CHATTOPADHYAYA, Publishers : General Printers and Publishers, 119 Lenin Sarani, Calcutta-700 013. 1978. Pp. 16+132. Rs. 5/-.

We have heard the well-known saying about the reflection of the infinite sky in the print of the cow's hoof. Sometimes we may have even had the same experience in our personal lives. Anyway, one is sure to have a similar feeling on reading *Anudhyan O Nana Chinta* ('Reflections and Various Thought').

There are eighteen articles collected in this book. Only one article is written by Sri Prabodh Chandra Sen, and the rest are by Sri S. K. Chattopadhyaya. In his writing Sri Chattopadhyaya has touched on all the suffocating conditions of our society, our educational institutions and environment, and has suggested solutions in brief which, however, appear like a dazzle of lightning in the depth of the new-moon darkness.

But through his reflections on Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and a few other great men, the real path to getting rid of this present social stagnation and putrefaction is also well described.

This is a most satisfying book that will help in building character. It will no doubt be well received by the educated and cultured.

DR. J. K. SAHA, M.B.B.S.
Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta

DAHLIA : BY BHIKSHU BUDDHADEV AND SRI JAGADISH SENGUPTA. Publishers : General Printers and Publishers, 119 Lenin Sarani, Calcutta-700 013. B.S. 1384. Pp. 11+128. Rs. 12/-.

The flower dahlia is quite familiar to all, but few indeed really know the art of its cultivation. Here is a book which deals exhaustively with the dahlia's culture. The book surely has the distinction of being one of the rare books written on this subject in any of the Indian languages.

It is not merely with bookish knowledge that the authors venture to write this volume; rather it is the practical knowledge that they have gathered from their own experiments that inspires them to present their experience in book form. Almost every detail about the well-developed art of nurturing this flower has been dealt with, and also many new facts have been included to make the account interesting and helpful both to a new hand and an experienced one. The authors have mostly dealt with the cultivation of this flower in the plains of Bengal, and they are quite optimistic about its bright prospects in the future. They also say that dahlias can be made to bloom in Bengal for as many as four months of the year, and that there is no dearth of variety and colour.

The get-up of the book is quite attractive, and the incorporation of a few pictures makes it all the more so.

It is hoped that the book will command much respect from flower growers, and also rouse an interest in this noble art among the common people.

BRAHMACHARI MANAVENDRA
Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION HOME OF SERVICE, VARANASI

REPORT : APRIL 1977—MARCH 1978

The Home was started in 1900 as an independent institution under the name 'Poor Men's Relief Association' by a few young men who were inspired by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. The work was begun with only four annas capital. These young men used to take care of the poor and diseased, sometimes collecting them from the roadside. Swami Vivekananda was delighted to see their dedicated service and renamed the institution the 'Home of Service'; it was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission in 1902. From this modest inception, the Home of Service has now grown into a fully equipped modern hospital, but with a difference: instead of the mechanical and impersonal administration of an ordinary hospital, here the spirit of dedicated service prevails. The monastic members as well as the lay workers strive to look upon the poor and suffering as living manifestations of God, and to offer them their utmost attention and care.

The activities for the year under review are outlined below :

Indoor General Hospital : The total number of cases admitted during the year was 3,559; of these, 1,464 cases were relieved, 1,339 cases were cured, 352 were discharged otherwise, 245 died and 157 remained at the end of the year. Surgical cases totalled 1,330. From the roadside 94 patients were picked up. An average of 144 beds were occupied daily. A minimum of 28.5% (sometimes more) of the 186 beds were treated free.

Outpatient Department : The number of patients treated, including those of the Shivala branch, was 2,42,539 (new cases 57,745 and repeated cases 1,84,794). Daily attendance averaged 780. Surgical cases numbered 3,068.

Homoeopathy : The homoeopathic sections at Luxa and at Shivala were attended by 8 homoeopaths and served 13,439 new cases and 29,461 repeated cases.

Clinical and Pathological Laboratory : The Laboratory conducted many and varied tests under the general headings of clinical pathology, serology, chemical pathology, L.F.T., and bacteriology.

X-Ray and Electro-Therapy Department : A total of 2,245 X-ray exposures were taken during the year.

Invalids' Homes : Two separate invalid homes maintained 19 men and 27 women. The men mostly comprised old retired monks of the Ramakrishna Order who, having served the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission for long years, had come to spend their last days in holy Varanasi. The women were helpless, poor widows who had none to look after them.

Outdoor Relief to the Poor : Monthly pecuniary help was given to 44 poor invalids and helpless ladies, and occasional pecuniary help was given to 13 persons. The total expenditure was Rs. 3,064.86. Besides, 35 cotton blankets worth Rs. 500/-, and old blankets and garments were distributed to needy persons. Textbooks were distributed to poor students. The institution could serve a very small number of the poorer section of Varanasi due to the paucity of such funds.

Immediate Needs : As the Home's existence depends mainly on the generosity and support of sympathetic donors, the public is earnestly requested to come forward and donate generously to the following needs : (1) Funds are required for maintenance of the 186 hospital beds. (2) Only a few of the 186 beds have been endowed; the cost of endowment of a single bed is Rs. 30,000/-, but donors may perpetuate the memories of their loved ones by making partial endowments of Rs. 10,000/- or Rs. 5,000/-. (3) To help the institution maintain the old and invalid men and women, similar endowments are essential for the invalids' homes. (4) Donations are needed to meet the accumulated deficit of Rs. 3,04,446.89. (5) The proper growth of the institution has necessitated the appointment of more qualified doctors, nurses and other staff, for whom residential quarters have to be provided; for this a sum of Rs. 5,00,000/- will be necessary. (6) The present dairy requires immediate improvement to serve the patients with sufficient milk. For this, funds are required in order to purchase more high-yielding cows.

Contributions, large or small, in cash or kind, will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Varanasi-221 001. Donations are exempted from Income-tax.

OBSERVATIONS

The International Year of the Child

The United Nations has designated the year 1979 as the International Year of the Child. The purpose of this declaration is to focus the attention of grown-up people all over the world on the needs and problems of children. The UN already has a separate body, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), working for children, but its activities are mostly confined to underdeveloped countries and restricted to the fields of nutrition and health. The present move is more general in scope and is intended to cover children of all countries.

As far as the developing countries are concerned, the main stress of the celebration of the International Year of the Child will be on the physical health of the child. In India more than half the population is said to be below the poverty line. Under scarcity conditions it is children who suffer most. The conditions under which children live in city slums and villages are so appalling that the survival of so many of them is a natural miracle. What millions of children in India and other underdeveloped countries urgently need is nutritious food and medical aid. We hope that the UN's gesture will create widespread interest and induce a number of voluntary organisations to come forward and work for the welfare of poor children.

In a sense, 'child is father of the man', and it is today's children who become tomorrow's citizens. But a child's future is not determined solely by food and medicine. If man does not live by bread alone, neither does the child. Especially in middle-class and upper-class societies, the cultural element assumes greater importance in the growth of the child. One of the important discoveries of Freud was the tremendous influence of childhood on later adult life. Traumatic experiences of childhood could lead to serious personality problems including neurosis in grownups.

Karen Horney and many other psychologists have shown that the whole attitude of a man towards life is determined by the social environment of his childhood. The great Russian physicist and Nobel Prize winner Prof. Landau has pointed out that Einstein's Theory of Relativity is difficult to understand because we have learnt to look at the world around us from a non-relativistic and static point of view of time and space from childhood. If children were taught the basic relativity principle, they would develop the relativistic perspective easily in adult life, and would be able to live in a more real and natural world.

This is all the more true of spiritual and moral life. The well-known Jesuit maxim, 'Give me a child for the first seven years, and you may do what you like with him after,' is basically sound as everyone who has something to do with youngsters knows. The roots of morality and spirituality lie in the childhood psyche. And if these roots are not sufficiently deep, moral conflicts

and crises of faith in adulthood are inevitable. If proper moral instincts and reflexes are created in childhood, they will act as spontaneous inner restraints in adult life which will then become less turbulent and more peaceful. The celebrated American pediatrician Benjamin Spock, the author of several popular books on child care, admitted a few years ago that he had been wrong in advocating the Freudian method in bringing up children. He said that children needed some healthy forms of restraint and they expected the adults to correct them when they erred. But by the time this confession came out, enough damage had been done and Spock had earned a few million dollars.

Karen Horney has shown how helplessly dependent on the parent the child is during the early years. But adults seldom realize this. The child looks to its parents not only for nourishment and protection but also for basic attitudes and emotions which are necessary for him to face the complex society later on. Without parental help and guidance the child cannot develop properly its intellectual and emotional faculties. The intuitive faculty is also, strangely enough, more active in childhood than in adult life. 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy' says Wordsworth, and according to Blake a child has an inborn capacity 'to hold infinity in the palm of his hand and eternity in an hour'. But 'shades of the prison-house begin to close upon the growing boy' (Wordsworth).

If we want to prevent the infant soul from getting choked within the prison walls of body and mind, spiritual training should begin from childhood. Faith in the spirit and a spiritual perspective have to be implanted in the nascent mind of the child. This can be done successfully only by parents. The Hindu *samskāras* and regulations of daily life were all originally designed to cultivate the spiritual perspective from birth to death. In the ancient manual of domestic rituals called *Rgvidhāna* (4.96) the lawgiver says that when the baby is suckled or is fed with pap, the parent should recite the *MedhāSuktam* (a hymn in praise of intelligence).

Swami Vivekananda was fond of the Purāṇic story of Queen Mādālasā who taught spiritual knowledge to her children from their infancy. Even while rocking the babies in the cradle, she used to sing to them as lullaby *tvam śuddho asi, tvam mukto asi, tvam buddho asi* ('you are absolutely pure, you are eternally free, you are ever awakened'). All her children except the last one renounced the world and attained highest illumination. The last son was trained to rule, and when the parents retired to the forest in their old age, he became king. But he never allowed himself to be caught in the snares of worldly pleasures.

Parents have a responsibility to live a moral and spiritual life themselves at least for the sake of their children. To provide a congenial spiritual atmosphere at home for the integral development of the child and give him the much-needed moral and spiritual support are the two duties that devolve upon parenthood. One of the aims of celebrating the International Year of the Child should be to remind parents of this sacred responsibility.
