उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 85 JUNE 1980 No. 6

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

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

इमा रुद्राय तवसे कपर्दिने
क्षयद्वीराय प्र भरामहे मतीः ।
यथा शमसद्द्विपदे चतुष्पदे
विश्वं पुष्टं ग्रामे अस्मिन्ननातुरम् ॥

1. To the ever prosperous (*tavase*) Rudra[1] with matted hair (*kapardin*), the Lord of heroes, we offer praises for the welfare of all human beings and domestic animals. May our village be free from calamities and may the whole world attain prosperity !

*Ṛg-Veda* 1.114.1

मृडा नो रुद्रोत नो मयस्कृधि
क्षयद्वीराय नमसा विधेम ते ।
यच्छं च योश्च मनुरायेजे पिता
तदश्याम तव रुद्र प्रणीतिषु ॥

2. O Rudra, be gracious (*mṛḍā*) unto us and grant us happiness (*mayah*). O Lord of heroes, we offer salutations to Thee. Through your help may we attain the happiness and blessedness that our ancestor Manu obtained through sacrifice.

*Ṛg-Veda* 1.114.2

मा नो महांतमुत मा नो अर्भकं
मा न उक्षंतमुत मा न उक्षितं
मा नो वधीः पितरं मोत मातरं
मा नः प्रियास्तन्वो रुद्ररीरिषः ॥

3. O Rudra, do not harm old people, children, youths or embryos. Harm not our fathers, mothers and dear ones.

*Ṛg-Veda* 1.114.7

---

* The hymn to Rudra given here from the *Ṛg-Veda* is more famous as forming a part of *Rudra Prasna* of *Yajur-Veda Samhitā* which is commonly chanted in connection with daily devotions and temple rituals. The worship of Rudra, identified with Śiva, is as old as the worship of Viṣṇu, perhaps older still.

1. Sāyaṇa gives as many as six etymological meanings for the word Rudra ; (*a*) One who destroys everything in the end, (*b*) *Rut* means sorrow (of transmigratory existence): he who removes (*drāvayati*) it is Rudra. (*c*) *Rutah* means the Upaniṣads ; he who is attained (*drūyate*) through them is Rudra. (*d*) *Rut* means *vāk* or the Word or knowledge; he who gives (*rāti*) it to the worshippers is Rudra. (*e*) *Rut* means darkness (anything that covers) ; he who removes it (*dṛṇāti*) is Rudra. (*f*) *Rud* means to weep ; he who makes others weep is Rudra. Sāyaṇa here gives a story from *Taittirīya Samhitā* according to which Rudra once made the gods weep.

# ABOUT THIS NUMBER

The month's EDITORIAL discusses the various forms of worship practised in Hinduism.

Meditation is a pilgrimage to the inmost shrine of the soul and needs certain preparations. This is the theme of the second instalment of PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOURS OF MEDITATION by Swami Budhananda.

One of the greatest men India produced in recent years, Sri Aurobindo was a unique blend of the ancient Vedic Ṛṣi and the modern philosopher. Among his many contributions to modern thought, the most important is the formulation of his own great experiences and all that is best in Indian thought in a scheme of practical philosophy which he called Integral Yoga. Sri M. P. Pandit, a distinguished scholar, writer and a senior member of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, has prepared at our request a succinct account of INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO, the first instalment of which appears in this issue.

An American Swami of the Ramakrishna Order speaks about his own personal experiences of Japa in the article PURASCARANA which spiritual aspirants will find to be a source of encouragement and inspiration.

In the fourth instalment of IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE Dr. Vinita Wanchoo continues her profound study of the causes and fundamental premises of escapist thought.

There is a saying, 'Philosophy bakes no bread.' To this Existentialism, a modern philosophical movement, answers, 'Well, even baking bread needs a philosophy of life.' In MAN AND HIS DESTINY, Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee of Ramakrishna Mahavidyalaya, Kailashahar, North Tripura, gives a lucid summary and a brilliant analysis of the essential ideas of Existentialism.

Swami Atmarupananda continues his vivid narration of the almost super-human spiritual struggles of a great Spanish saint in the second instalment of ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN.

---

# WORSHIP AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE —II

(EDITORIAL)

*Worship in the Vedic period*

Worship plays an important part in a spiritual aspirant's life. It reduces his selfishness, gives a higher direction to his energies and takes his soul nearer to God. We have already seen that worship is a special form of I-Thou relationship between the soul and God, characterized by adoration, surrender, sacredness and cult.[1] Worship in Hinduism has a long history going back to the very beginning of Vedic culture. During this period so many changes took place in the theory and practice of worship that the present modes of worship bear little resemblance to those of the Vedic period.

In Vedic times worship was known as *yajña* or sacrifice. In order to live well and long, man needed the help of gods. These gods had to be propitiated by offering them milk, clarified butter, cakes, etc. It was at first thought that Fire was the mediator or priest who conveyed the offerings to gods. In fact, the very first line of *Ṛg-Veda* praises Agni as the priest (*agnimīle puro-*

1. See May Editorial.

*hitam*) for man who could not approach the gods directly. It was believed that this kind of sacrifice secured for the sacrificer material prosperity here, and a place in heaven hereafter.

This is the popular understanding of Vedic sacrifice and the one propagated by Western scholars. Perhaps this view might have prevailed even during the Vedic period among the unenlightened masses. But innumerable passages in the Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa portions of the Vedas clearly indicate that even in those primeval times a higher, mystic meaning of *yajña* was known to at least an elite class of enlightened sages. In fact it was this mystical interpretation of sacrifice that later on led to the development of various contemplative techniques called *upāsanās* or *vidyās*.

The various changes that took place in the interpretation of sacrifice can be traced in the Brāhmaṇas (the part of Veda dealing with rituals). Even at a very early stage the idea of substitution entered sacrifice. It came to be believed that material offerings (like milk, etc.) were offered as substitutes for one's own self. And it was thought that along with the burnt offering, the human body of the sacrificer was mystically consumed, and a new divine body prepared to serve him in heaven. In some of the elaborate fire sacrifices of a later period, a human idol made of solid gold was placed at the bottom of the fire altar, and over it were placed one above the other three perforated bricks. The gold man represented the divine body and the three perforated bricks stood for the three worlds (*bhuḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ*) through which the soul had to pass on its way to the fourth, the realm of immortal life.

In the meantime, philosophical speculation was going along three lines. One was the search for the common source of the power of all gods, and this led to the realization of a supreme, primordial Being known as *Hiraṇyagarbha, Viśvakarman* or *Prajāpati*. The second line of speculation was about the nature of the world. Life was found to consist of continually self-renewing cycles, and this led to the understanding that the world was governed by a moral order which constituted a basic harmony or rhythm called *ṛtam*. The third line of speculation was about the nature of man. The human personality was found to consist of various faculties like the mind, the sense-organs, *vāk* (speech), *dhī* (intuition), *Prāṇa* (vital air), and behind all these stood the Atman supporting and illumining them.

The practical effect of these speculations about the nature of God, world and soul was the identification of *yajña* with the cosmos. Each individual sacrifice came to be looked upon as a miniature replica of the vast cosmic phenomena. Just as an architect or a ship-builder first makes a model of the house or ship, the ancient Vedic sages used sacrifices as a model to study the mysteries of creation and participate in them. The well-known hymn called *Puruṣa Sūkta* conceives the creation of the whole universe as the result of a grand sacrifice in which the Puruṣa or Cosmic Soul (identified with the Hiraṇyagarbha) offers himself as an oblation. As a result of this self-immolation, the Puruṣa becomes dismembered, and all his separated limbs and organs become the various objects of the universe. The creation of the Virāṭ or the universe by the self-sacrifice of the Hiraṇyagarbha was thought to be eternally going on. This view led to the belief (found in the *Agnicayana* portion of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*) that the actual *yajña* or fire ritual was a symbolic repetition of the ancient archetypal cosmic sacrifice.[2]

2. Cf. Julius Eggling, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Part IV, Introduction; in *The Sacred Books of the East* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), vol. 43.

The last stage in the evolution of the idea of sacrifice was the identification of the individual worshipper with Prajāpati (Hiraṇyagarbha). The fire itself was identified with Prajāpati, and *yajña* became a symbolic act of uniting one's self with the Cosmic Self. Gradually, this idea of the unity of the worshipper and the Supreme Spirit took the form of a meditation. Later on, the two—ritual and meditation—got completely separated, and meditation became an independent discipline.

The attempt to approximate *yajña* to cosmic sacrifice led to the designing of very large and complex altars, and sacrifice began to assume gigantic proportions. However, this did not endure for long. In the books composed during the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. echoes of protest against Vedic ritualism are heard, and in another century or two the entire Vedic sacrificial system vanished from India.

*Worship in the post-Vedic period*

The total disappearance of Vedic religion, especially the sacrificial system, is one of the unsolved puzzles of India's cultural history. Whatever be the reasons for this, two events had a decisive influence on it. One was the development of the path of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*) as a direct path to realization of Brahman. Even in the Brāhmaṇas, and more definitely in the Āraṇyakas, we find mental sacrifices replacing external rituals. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the mental activities of a human life lasting for a hundred years are conceived as 36,000 fires, each fire standing for a day's activities.[3] A similar idea appears in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, where man himself is called a sacrifice.[4] Śrī Śaṁkara finally established on a philosophical basis the earlier belief that these mental sacrifices were as effective as external rituals. The Upaniṣads further developed new contemplative techniques called *upāsanās* or *vidyās* (based on the method of *iti* or affirmation), and *nididhyāsana* (based on the method of *neti* or negation). All this made external rituals unnecessary. The rise of Buddhism and the popularization of Patañjali's Yoga and, at a later stage, the emergence of the Tantras also contributed to the downfall of Vedic sacrifices.

The second event was the growth of the *Bhāgavata* cult and the writing of the *Gītā*. The tremendous influence exerted on Hinduism by Śrī Kṛṣṇa through his teachings has perhaps not yet been adequately assessed. The doctrine of Bhakti that he taught opened the way for a direct I-Thou relationship between man and God, and converted all life-activities, including secular work, into worship. These changes along with the ideas of the Tantras which were gaining ground in the Middle Ages led to the structuring of a new system of ritualistic worship called *pūjā* which almost completely replaced the old Vedic *yajña*.

*Doctrinal basis of pūjā*

*Pūjā* differs from *yajña* not only in its external form but also in its basic philosophy. The first basic doctrine behind *pūjā* is the priesthood of man. In Vedic sacrifice Agni (Fire) was the priest who mediated between man and gods. Man could not directly approach the gods with offerings. What was needed was a divine assurance that God accepted offerings directly from His devotees. This was given by Śrī Kṣṛṇa in the *Gītā* : 'When a pure-hearted devotee offers with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I accept that loving offering.'[5] This divine promise made

3. *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 10.4.3.

4. पुरुषो वाव यज्ञः ।

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.16.1

5. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 9.26.

the fire ritual unnecessary. Everyman became a priest of God.

The second fundamental presupposition behind *pūjā* is that the Deity could be invoked in an image. During the Vedic period certain *pratīkas* (symbols) were used for mental concentration but never used for external worship. But in the post-Vedic *pūjā*, a three dimensional idol or *vigraha* (literally, that which enables the mind to 'grasp' Reality) is used. This may be a *sāligrāma* or *liñga* or an anthropomorphic image called *pratimā*. In Vedic rituals only an invitation (*āhvāna*) was extended to gods. But in *pūjā* there is an invocation (*āvāhana*) of the presence of the Deity in the image. That the all-pervading divine power could be 'infused' in an image is an important belief in post-Vedic Hinduism. Such divine images are not merely aids to concentration but are repositories of power. According to Śrī Rāmānuja, in the properly consecrated images God manifests Himself in His special aspect called *arcā*.

Image worship led to temple worship. The temple completely replaced the Vedic altar in post-Vedic Hinduism, though scholars have pointed out the close similarity between the temple and the sacrificial hall (*yāgaśālā*) in their basic design. Temples have given a social dimension to worship in Hinduism. Though Hinduism did not develop a universal 'church', temples have served to foster the notion that worship is not only an individual's private affair, but an act of public adoration in which every member of the community gets an opportunity to participate directly or indirectly.

The third philosophic concept which distinguishes *pūjā* from Vedic *yajña* is the doctrine of divinization of the worshipper. In the Vedic period the popular belief was that through sacrifice man could reach the world of gods. But gradually this gave way to the belief that man could acquire an element of divinity in this life, and only then could he become eligible for worship. True love, and hence true worship, are possible only when there exists a close similarity in the nature of the worshipper and of the worshipped. The Vedantic doctrine of the Ātman as the real self which is pure, self-luminous and blissful makes man potentially divine. An important function of worship is to bring out this hidden divinity. This is symbolically done through certain rituals called *bhūta śuddhi* and *nyāsa*. Though to a beginner all this is nothing but imagination, to an advanced *Sādhaka* divinization of the subtle body is a matter of actual experience.

The fourth basic concept on which *pūjā* is based is the doctrine of service and self-surrender to God. In Vedic *yajña* the main idea was sacrifice. In *pūjā* the idea of service (*upacāra* or *kaiṅkarya*) takes its place. Here again, the influence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is clearly seen. In the *Gītā*, he identifies sacrifice with all life activities and advises Arjuna to do all work as worship : 'O son of Kunti, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation, whatever you give in charity, whatever austerity you practise—do all that as an offering to Me.'[6] In *pūjā*, service (*upacāra*) of the Deity is done with five, ten, sixteen, or more articles like water, flowers, leaves, incense, light, food, etc.

Priesthood of man, invocation of divine Presence in an image, divinization of the worshipper and service—these are the fundamental principles on which *pūjā* is based and which distinguish it from Vedic *yajña*. An important point to note here is the role of *mantras* and *mudrās* (gestures) in worship. The whole system of *pūjā* is based on the implicit belief that these have an intrinsic power to produce changes in the worshipper's consciousness and in the objects around him.

---

6. *Ibid.*, 9.27.

*Pūjā rituals*

The principles of *pūjā* mentioned above which developed during the post-Vedic period were incorporated into a new set of scriptures known as the Āgamas. All the major sects—the Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava —have their own Āgamas. Though the actual rites show minor variations from sect to sect, and even from region to region, there is a common basic pattern. Hindu rituals were perfected by the Tantras, and the most systematic form of worship was developed in Bengal. In other parts of India too the influence of Tantra is seen in rituals but there greater use of hymns and Vedic *mantras* is made.

The normal daily *pūjā* consists of six steps: preparations, purifications, divinization of the worshipper, invocation in the image, service to the Deity and conclusion. Every ritual act is followed or preceded by the utterance of a *mantra*.

*Preparations*

Before the *pūjā* proper begins certain preparations are made. The ground is washed or wiped clean and the vessels including a lighted lamp are arranged on it. The various articles of worship like water, sandal paste, flowers, etc., are kept ready for use near the worshipper who squats on the ground facing east or north.

The very first ritual is *ācamana* or purification of the mouth, without which the sacred *mantras* should not be uttered.

Then the worshipper makes the *saṁkalpa* or sacramental intention. This is a declaration of the purpose of the worship which may be worldly prosperity or liberation. This connects the will to the act of worship which thus becomes a conscious, self-directed, goal-oriented discipline.

The next step is the consecration of the water to be used in worship by invoking in it the presence of the seven holy rivers of India from the solar orb. This consecrated water, called *sāmānya arghya,* is used for all the remaining rituals.

The worshipper then salutes the various deities and the line of teachers.

*Purification*

Everything relating to the Deity is sacred and every object connected with *pūjā* must be separately sanctified by ritual purification. The removal of various psychic obstacles and the expulsion of evil spirits are also parts of the purificatory process.

*Divinization of the worshipper*

The worshipper must symbolically destroy his *pāpa puruṣa* (sinful self) and let his pure, self-luminous, true self shine forth. For this the worshipper first does *prāṇāyāma* to purify his subtle body. Then follows an important ritual called *bhūta śuddhi.* In this the worshipper meditates on the *kuṇḍalinī* power as rising from the base of the spine to the head where it gets united with the light of the Supreme Spirit. He now imagines that his impure gross and subtle bodies are dried up and burnt by this mystic fire. Then he thinks that he is putting on a new divine body, free from all taints of sin, created out of his luminous true self.

After *bhūta śuddhi* the worshipper invokes the divine Presence in the heart of the new ethereal body. The Deity thus invoked inside is then worshipped mentally.

*Invocation in the image*

The worshipper has now acquired a divine body and feels the divine Presence in his heart. He has now to infuse divine power into all his limbs and organs. This is done by a process called *nyāsa* which literally means 'laying hands on'. The worshipper, chanting certain mystic syllables,

touches various parts of his body. This gives him the necessary power and fitness to do the next ritual called *āvāhana* or invocation of the Deity in a metal image or a stone emblem or a flower. In this process the worshipper imagines that the Deity who is seated in his heart comes out through his breath onto the flower in his hand which is then laid on the head of the image. This is followed by the infusion of power called *prāṇa pratiṣṭhā* in the image through special invocatory *mudrās* (gestures).

Thus, *pūjā* involves double invocation—first in the heart of the worshipper and then in the image.

*Upacāra or service*

Then follows the worship proper in which ten or more articles like water, sandal paste, etc. are offered to the Deity who is treated as an honoured guest.

*Concluding rituals*

The conclusion of *pūjā* is marked by a special offering of handfuls of flowers called *puṣpāñjali*, after which the worshipper surrenders himself and the fruit of his worship at the feet of the Deity. In temples this special offering of flowers may be repeated at other times also by the priest at the request of devotees.

In private worship the final ritual act is *visarjana* or *udvāsana* in which the Deity is requested to return to his or her celestial abode, or back to the worshipper's heart.

No *pūjā* becomes complete without the joyful sharing of *prasāda*, the offered sacramental food, by the devotees. It is held that worship without distribution of *prasāda* becomes ineffectual. *Prasāda* is considered so sacred that it should be treated with respect, and holding it in hand one is not expected to salute another person. Partaking of *prasāda* is done not merely to gain a psychological sense of participation in worship. Its main purpose is to purify the body and mind, as the root-meaning of the word indicates. The word also means Grace, and so partaking of *prasāda* is an act of accepting divine blessings.

It is believed that when food materials are offered to the Deity, some changes take place in the subtle elements constituting them. How this takes place is a mystery. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says : 'The gods do not eat or drink ; just by seeing this nectar they become satisfied.'[7] Sri Sarada Devi used to say that when she offered food to the Lord, she saw a ray of light coming from the eyes of the Deity and touching the offered materials. The observation of the Holy Mother accords well with the accepted tradition.

*Pūjā* is not the only form of worship practised in modern Hinduism. There are other forms of worship like the *homa*, the *saṁdhyā*, the *ārātrikam*, etc.

*The homa*

At present a few orthodox people here and there in India still faithfully follow the ancient Vedic rituals like the *agnihotra* and one or two other types of sacrifice. But in the mainstream of Hinduism Vedic *yajña* is no longer in vogue. The only fire ritual which is still widely performed on special occasion is the *homa*. Śabarasvāmin defines *homa* as a fire sacrifice in which there is an abundance of oblation.[8] *Homa* rites now prevalent have been influenced by Tantricism and are associated with the worship of Gaṇeśa, Rudra, Caṇḍī and other Deities. The Deity to be worshipped is first identified with fire and the oblations are then offered to the fire.

7. न वै देवा अश्नन्ति न पिबन्त्येतदेवामृतं दृष्ट्वा तृप्यन्ति ॥

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.6.1-3.9.1.

8. इष्टिर्यागः । स एवासेचनाधिको होमः ।

Śabara on *Mīmāmsā Sūtra*, 6.8.7.

*The saṁdhyā*

Another form of Vedic worship which is still surviving though modified by the theistic ideas of a later age, is the *saṁdhyā*. It was once regarded as the unavoidable daily obligatory duty of every twice-born. But at present not many among them practise it. The busyness of the modern man is often pointed out as the cause of this neglect, but the real cause seems to be that this ancient rite has lost its meaning and relevance for the modern man. We may say that there is now a need for a simplified and possibly modified *saṁdhyā* in modern Hinduism which could be practised by all Hindus.

Traditional *saṁdhyā* consists of four main steps : purification, oblation, Gāyatrī and salutations. Purification consists of four ritual acts : purification of the mouth (*ācamana*), purification of the vital airs (*prāṇāyāma*), purification of body (*mārjana*) and sin eradication. Of these the last one is the most important ; it is often called *agha marṣaṇa* or *prāśana* (sometimes these terms denote separate acts and *mantras*). It is an autosuggestive prayer in which the worshipper tells himself that the sins he had committed till then have left him, and whatever impurity still lingering within is being offered into the light of the Ātman. The worshipper thus renews his self—replaces the old sinful self with a new radiant self. This self-renewal enables him to face the day-to-day problems of life with a clear and fresh mind.

The second step in *saṁdhyā* is *arghya pradāna*, the offering of an oblation of water to the Sun, the highest visible symbol of the Supreme Spirit, the creator and sustainer of life. The third step is the repetition of the Gāyatrī *mantra* at least twelve times. The Gāyatrī has been given different interpretations by Śaṁkara, Sāyaṇa, Uvvaṭa, Bhattabhāskara and others. But all are agreed that it is a prayer for the awakening of the dormant faculty of intuition (*dhī*) in man. When repeated with intense faith, concentration and perfect continence, this sacred prayer reveals its power by illuming the heart of the aspirant. The fourth and last step in *saṁdhyā* is to offer salutations to all the gods and goddesses and to surrender oneself to the Supreme Spirit. If non-essential details are omitted, the whole *saṁdhyā* rite will not take more than fifteen minutes, but its purifying, relaxing, uplifting effects last for hours.

*The ārātrikam*

Popularly known as *ārati*, this is at present a very common form of worship . A simple ritual of waving a lighted lamp before the Deity, it is a symbolic act of the soul's self-surrender to God. Often five articles are waved in *ārati*, namely, light, water, cloth, flower and *cāmara* (fan) which are said to symbolize the five elements—fire, water, ether, earth and air, respectively. Of these, the waving of light is the most solemn act. Devotees believe that it is when this waving of light is performed that there takes place a special manifestation of divine Presence in the image. The pious feel a sort of direct communion with the Divine at this time.

Though the *pūjā* rite includes the waving of light, the *ārātrikam* or *ārati* is an independent rite performed mainly at dawn and dusk and, in temples, at other times also. It is the only ritual in which there is collective participation. *Pūjā* is conducted as a private act of devotion. But the *ārati* is essentially meant as an act of public adoration and participation.

*Vocal worship*

God can be worshipped not only through rituals but also through hymns and songs. These were popular even during Vedic times. The *Sāma-Veda* was meant to be

chanted in adoration and praise. Later on great teachers like Śrī Śaṁkara composed hymns called *stotra* or *stava*; these are now recited by millions of people as a form of worship. Whole books have been written—the *Caṇḍī*, the *Bhāgavatam* and several books in the local languages—the recitation of which is regarded as a form of worship. To the same group belongs the class of devotional literature called *Sahasranāma* (thousand names of God). *Japa* or the repetition of a single *mantra* belongs to the field of meditation or contemplation, but the basic attitude behind it is one of worship.

*Saṁkīrtana* and *bhajan* are two most popular forms of vocal worship in modern times. In *saṁkīrtana* a group of people loudly chant the names of God or *mantras* in chorus. *Bhajan* is the singing of devotional songs either by one person or by a group of people. These songs composed by great saints may express different ideas but are sung in front of the deity as a form of worship.

*Work as worship*

An account of Hindu worship cannot be concluded without mentioning the concept of work as worship. The Upaniṣads speak of the whole universe as projected and sustained by Brahman. The *Gītā* teaches that God is the Prime Mover, the immovable cause of all movements. Individual karma is only a part of this cosmic movement. When work is done with this understanding and the surrendering of its fruit to the Divine, it becomes worship. And through this worship, says the *Gītā*, man may attain perfection.[9] This great teaching, which for centuries had only limited application, was revived in modern times by Swami Vivekananda who transformed it into a powerful tool for accelerating social change.

Work becomes worship only when the worker realizes that God is immanent in creation. Though the Advaita Vedanta speaks about the illusoriness of the world what is implied by this is that everything in the world derives its being by the irradiation of Brahman : *tasya bhāsā sarvaṁ idaṁ vibhāti* ('by its light all this shines').[10] This makes the basic attitude of the Hindu towards the world one of worship. But, as Sri Ramakrishna says, though God is in all beings, there are differences in the manifestation of His glory in different beings. Ancient Hinduism, recognizing these differences, made certain mountains, rivers, trees, animals and, of course, holy men as special manifestations and made them objects of worship.

What Swami Vivekananda did was to change the whole perspective. Ancient Hinduism stressed objective difference. Swamiji stressed subjective unity. Whatever be the differences in the objective world, the enlightened sage sees the same Supreme Spirit shining through all—the rich and the poor, the saint and the sinner, man and woman. This view of life which for centuries remained restricted only to a small number of illumined souls was made the common philosophy of ordinary people by Swamiji.

However, Swami Vivekananda gave special emphasis on service to the poor. Why did he do this? Not because there is a greater manifestation of God in the poor and the downtrodden, but because their needs are greater, and also because it is a more unselfish form of service. 'He who has more of this unselfishness,' says Swamiji, 'is more spiritual and nearer to Śiva.... And if a man is selfish, even though he has visited all the temples, seen all the places of pilgrimage, and painted himself like a leopard, he is still further off

9. *Gītā*, 18.46.
10. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2.10.

from Śiva.'[11] The main obstacle to spiritual progress is selfishness. As long as millions of people live in utter poverty and ignorance, it is selfishness to neglect them.

Spiritual life is a larger life; it means participation in the mystery and joy of divine life. Work done as worship enlarges the self and converts life into yoga. In the rapidly changing modern Hindu society this idea is fast gaining ground as an individual spiritual technique and a social philosophy.

This does not, however, mean that the other forms of worship are superstitions and are to be discarded. To do all work as worship is not easy. Asks Swami Vivekananda: 'Ordinary mankind driven everywhere by false desire, what do they know of work? The man propelled by his own feelings and his own senses, what does he know about work?'[12] In order to convert work into worship a worshipful attitude must be created first. Without a transcendental focus for the will, without a higher direction given to one's feelings and energies, work may increase a person's bondage and delusion and may even drag him to the level of the animal. The nearer we approach God, the farther we move from animal instincts and the more human our actions and reactions become. As a means of leading the worshipper closer to God by divinizing him and sublimating his feelings, rituals and image worship have a significant place in the life of every spiritual aspirant including those who give greater importance to work as worship.

Swami Vivekananda himself did not condemn ritualistic worship—rather he supported it—but he pointed out that purity and unselfishness were the foundations of spiritual life, and these are difficult to acquire without some form of social service. What he did was to enlarge the scope of worship. Spiritual life is the transformation of the total life of the aspirant. If worship is restricted only to rituals and certain devotional exercises, its transforming power will remain limited. It is only when even normal secular work is also converted into worship that the whole life gets transformed into divine life.

Finally, it should be remembered that the main purpose of worship is to reduce egoism and establish an everlasting relationship with God. This may be done through any one or more (it does not matter which) of the techniques mentioned above. Once this is accomplished, the whole life of the aspirant becomes unbroken worship.

*(Concluded)*

11. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), vol. 3, p. 143.
12. *Complete Works*, vol. 2 (1976), p. 149.

---

One reason for the decadence of our country is that, in the name of religion, people put forward harmful theories, as a result of which, people lose their faith in religion itself. Simplicity, faithfulness and purity of heart are called for. Jesus Christ had no weapons to fight with and suffered crucifixion for the sake of truth. We also have to do likewise, and then only will rise again the sun of India's glory.

— *Swami Vivekananda*

# PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOURS OF MEDITATION

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

**4**

In a place of pilgrimage there may be many distractions, but the true pilgrim does not notice them. He straight goes to the shrine to see the deity. Likewise, the hour of meditation may offer us many distractions or enjoyments, but the true aspirant refuses to notice any of them. He only seeks to dive deep in meditation and the practice of other spiritual disciplines.

By way of general preparation for being able to live a meditative life, we shall have to educate our mind in a new way, specially for this purpose : life will have to be regulated by a well-devised routine with a will to meditate ; mind must be trained to renounce all vain pursuits, struggles, egoism, pride and prejudices and accept the inevitables of life.

For moulding a mind suitable for meditation the Buddha advised householders and monks to contemplate on these five inevitables of life : (*i*) Old age will come upon me some day and I cannot avoid it. (*ii*) Disease can come upon me some day and I cannot avoid it. (*iii*) Death will come upon me some day and I cannot avoid it. (*iv*) All things I hold dear are subject to change and decay and separation, and I cannot avoid it. (*v*) I am the outcome of my own deeds and whatever my deeds, good or bad, I become their heir.

Explaining why one should contemplate on these five things the Buddha said : (*i*) By contemplating on old age the pride of youth can be curbed, at least reduced. (*ii*) By contemplating disease the pride of health can be curbed, or at least reduced. (*iii*) By contemplating death, the pride of life can be curbed, or at least reduced. (*iv*) By contemplating change and separation of the things held dear, the passionate desire for possessions is curbed or at least reduced. (*v*) By contemplating that one is the result of one's own deeds, the evil propensities of thought and deed are curbed or at least reduced.[6]

One who contemplates these five things can curb or at least reduce his pride and passion, and thus be able to tread the path of Nirvāṇa. With ego and passions attenuated we have a new mind, a new understanding. It is this reconstructed and cultivated mind that is helpful for meditation. Those five inevitables should constitute a basic philosophy of life for all who want to meditate. Otherwise meditation will be impossible.

In another sermon the Buddha says that to become fit for meditation one must get rid of six things : craving for pleasures of the senses ; ill-will ; sloth ; flurry ; worry ; suspicion.[7] Why should these six things be got rid of? Because they make concentration of mind well-nigh impossible. And without concentration of mind, meditation simply cannot be done ; for meditation is nothing but prolonged concentration.

How these six make concentration well-nigh impossible should be clearly understood. Clear understanding of their harmful nature in reference to concentration will by itself help us to get rid of them.

We will have known it from our ex-

---

6. See *Sermons and Sayings of the Buddha*, comp. Sudhakar Dikshit (Bombay : Chetana Ltd.), pp. 49-50

7. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

perience that craving for sense pleasures : keeps our minds in a flutter ; makes us nervous ; involves us with other minds and their complexities and cross-currents ; and exhausts our physical energy. Whereas for practising meditation we require a non-nervous, calm and tranquil state of mind. We require to be free of involvements with the cravings of other minds. Above all, we require the conservation of physical and mental energy, for meditation requires, if we may say so, a lot of 'fuel'.

If anyone wants to stand stoutly for sense-pleasures, he is free to do so. But the point that is to be clearly remembered is that meditation and craving for sense-pleasures cannot go together, as light cannot walk arm in arm with darkness. Now one may choose.

Ill-will creates whirlpools in the mind and stirs up the mud and silt of the baser passions from the subconscious, and thus dostroys tranquillity altogether. Without tranquillity of mind, how can one meditate? You may be in a perfect posture of prayer. But if you are bursting with animosity or anger what sense do folded hands make? Therefore Christ admonishes :

> Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave then thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.[8]

For meditation, it is not a question of removing individual cases of ill-will or friction, but it is a question of losing the capacity to cherish ill-will for anyone, and of cultivating the attitude of positive and unqualified goodwill towards everyone and everything in the universe. Therefore, before we commence meditation, we are advised to send thoughts of goodwill, peace and harmony in all directions in the universe. In the famous *Metta-sutta* Buddha advises that this attitude should be cultivated not only when we try to meditate but always, while walking, sitting, lying down, eating or conducting business. One who does so train his mind, for him meditation becomes a spontaneous joy of his heart.

Good human relationship is an aid to all spiritual strivings. In order to make a successful pilgrimage to the hour of meditation, in the course of the day, through our transactions, we shall have to so conduct ourselves that we may not cause unconscionable frictions in our human relationships. If we wound anyone's feelings or make anyone angry by our wrong conduct, the vibrations of his disturbed mind are likely to activate adverse thinking processes in our minds when we try to meditate. Most of us must have observed this in our own experience.

General goodwill, right and pleasing conduct, fulfilment of our basic duties to others, and good speech can largely help us in keeping our human relationships in order. But we must remember that in human relationship there are two sides. Suppose you come up against some aggressively overbearing, unreasonable and incorrigible person, what will you do then? The answer to this question will be found in principle in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. One day Bhavanath, a devotee, said to Sri Ramakrishna : 'I feel disturbed if I have a misunderstanding with someone. I feel that in that case I am not able to love all.'

> Sri Ramakrishna : Try at the outset to talk to him and establish a friendly relationship with him. If you fail in spite of your efforts, then don't give it another thought. Take refuge in God. Meditate on Him. There is no use giving up God and feeling depressed from thinking about others.
>
> Bhavanath : Great souls such as Christ and Caitanya have admonished us to love all beings.
>
> Sri Ramakrishna : Love you must because God dwells in all beings. But salute a wicked

---

8. Matthew, 5.23-24.

person from a distance. You speak of Caitanya? He also used to restrain his spiritual feelings in the presence of unsympathetic people. At Srivas' house, he put Srivas' mother-in-law out of the room, dragging her out by the hair.

Bhavanath : It was not he but others who did it.

Sri Ramakrishna : Could the others have done it without his approval? What can be done? Suppose a man cannot make another love him; must he worry about it day and night? Must I waste my mind, which should be given to God, on useless things? I say: 'O Mother, I don't want Narendra, Bhavanath, Rakhal or anybody. I seek thee alone.' What shall I do with men? When I attain God I shall attain everything.[9]

Spiritual life cannot be built up without great self-exertion. Seekers of ease and comfort cannot master the wrong forces within themselves that will have to be subdued and conquered before they can really meditate. Unless one eschews idleness altogether, one cannot even develop a proper frame of mind for meditation.

Worry creates eddies in the mind, and destroys the power of concentration. Therefore one should carefully remove the causes of worry. Worry may arise from guilt-sense; sense of insecurity; vital wants; and some other causes. Guilt-sense can be removed by sincere repentence, firm resolution not to repeat sins, and prayers. Want and insecurity may be removed through intelligent self-exertion in a practical manner.

Suspicion is a disease of the mind. It opens the mind to endless distractions and contamination, and one cannot meditate with a distracted and contaminated mind. One should fervently pray that one may be saved from such a terrible mental disease as suspicion.

The pilgrim to the hour of meditation should live his daily life in such a way as may be helpful in getting rid of these six obstacles to meditation, namely, craving for sense-pleasures, ill-will, sloth, flurry, worry and suspicion. Moreover, the aspirant must stop all wastage of mental energy. An exhausted mind is no good for meditation. Mental energy is wasted by gossip, inconsequential controversy, fault-finding, emotional kite-flying, dabbling in other's affairs, useless work, and senseless fantasies.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* teaches : 'Give up all vain talks.'[10] In other words, remember God constantly. Constant remembrance of God is one of the most effective methods of saving mental energy.

Positively speaking, the pilgrim to the hour of meditation must live a strictly moral, balanced and consecrated life. He should fulfil his duties and obligations to family and society. His moral life must be based entirely on truthfulness in thought, word and deed. He should put into practice the ten commandments or their equivalents as taught in his religion.

Even a moral man may be unbalanced. But unbalanced living is unhelpful for meditation. According to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Buddha the middle path is most efficacious for the contemplative life.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches in the *Gītā* :

> Yoga or meditation is not for him who eats too much, nor for him who eats too little. It is not for him who sleeps too much, nor for him who sleeps too little.
>
> For him who is temperate in his food and recreation, temperate in his exertion and work, temperate in his sleep and waking, yoga puts an end to all sorrows.[11]

---

9. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1969), p. 534.

10. . . . अन्या वाचो विमुञ्चथ . . .

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* 2.2.5.

11. नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः ।
न चाति स्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन ॥
युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā,* 6.16, 17.

No fruitful pilgrimage to the hour of meditation is possible for those who do not follow this teaching of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to the extent of making the spirit of it their very second nature.

In this regard Buddha brought the lesson home from his own personal experiments and experiences. He taught :

> Bhikkhus, those who are in search of truth must always avoid the two extremes. The first extreme to be avoided is the life of luxury and passion, as it enslaves man to gross needs and debases his human qualities. The second extreme to be avoided is the life of self-torture through penance, because it is not only painful, but useless. The middle path is the best ; it produces insight and mental calm, which ultimately lead to Nirvāṇa.[12]

The analogy is given of a stringed instrument. When the strings are slack they make a drab sound if struck ; when they are too tight they snap. It is only when the strings are neither too slack nor too tight, but properly tuned, that one can have music. Those who are too high-strung, and those who are not wound up at all, neither of them can properly meditate. For effective meditation, we need physical fitness, mental calmness and emotional balance.

*(To be continued)*

12. *Sermons and Sayings*, pp. 1-2.

# INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO—I

SRI M. P. PANDIT

*Introduction*

Most of the sources of Sri Aurobindo's thought are to be traced to the Veda, the Upaniṣads, the authentic Tantras and the high traditions of the Epics. Speaking of the main conditions for Yoga Siddhi, fulfilment in Yoga, he cites the famous passage from the *Sanatsujātīyam* which enumerates them as *Śāstra, Utsāha, Guru, Kāla.*

Before one sets out on the Path, one must know what the goal is, what the process is and what the principles underlying the practice. This Knowledge of God, Nature and Man as realized by the Wise is the Śāstra. And this Knowledge, the *Veda*, lies in the heart of each one like the bud of an unopened lotus. All experience, all stimulation in life acts upon this source evocatively and the Knowledge reveals itself by and by. Though there are rare cases of individuals to whom this inner Knowledge is self-revealing, usually an external agency is required to awaken the Source. This instrumentation is the *Word*, the potent word of the Śāstra. It is based upon supernal revelations vouchsafed to the Seer and verified in his life-experience. A Śāstra may also be a system erected by a Teacher based upon his own research and realization of a truth or truths of life. The Sādhaka (aspirant) of the Integral Yoga depends essentially upon the Veda in his heart but he also takes the benefit of existing Śāstras. In doing so he takes care not to bind himself to the strict letter of the written Śāstra (*śabdabrahmātivartate*). He is not narrow in his range of knowledge ; he keeps his mind and heart open to the winds of Knowledge from all sides, and organizes the knowledge so obtained around his inner core. He keeps growing in Knowledge as it develops in the world without shutting out new formulations of Truth on the plea that

everything has been said in 'my Śāstra'. He is ever resilient and open to all possibilities in the Knowledge of the Infinite.

What is learnt, known from the Śāstra, has to be lived. Unless the knowledge is translated into practice it remains a dry mental acquisition, becomes sterile. The Sādhaka proceeds to render his knowledge in practical terms, to utilize it for his growth and advancement towards the Divinity, which is his immediate goal. He makes an earnest effort, pours his energies into the chosen task, on the lines indicated in the Śāstra. The first step in this application is to change his orientation from outwards to inwards. He changes his values and priorities. He discourages those movements in his nature that tie him down to the life of ignorance and promotes those that help him to enter the higher or inner life and naturalize its movements in his day-to-day life. He controls his desires and egoistic impulses, rejects them and centres his life-activity around his truer self. He widens his interests, enlarges the horizons of his mind, extends the range of his heart and in all ways breaks across the narrowing walls of his self-centred existence. The sincerity with which he transcends his lower existence and elevates himself into the higher determines the pace of his progress. He increases the intensity of his aspiration by ceaseless rejection of what is contrary to his seeking and constant acceptance of challenges that present themselves when he seeks to go beyond the reign of Ignorance, individual and cosmic.

The Sādhaka of this yoga realizes that his own effort, while it has its own role to play, cannot by itself take him across the frontier. He invokes the aid of the Higher Power, the Divine Grace, by prayer and concentration. And when the Power or Śakti responds—as it always does in answer to earnest human aspiration—he holds himself open and receptive to its descent and working in himself. His effort now is to support the action of the descending Power, to assimilate it in the several tiers of his being. The ascending force of the human call and the descending Force of the responding Divine establish a nexus in his being and his consciousness undergoes a radical change. His nature gets spiritualized. The fulcrum of his life is firmly fixed in his inner self and he is now ready for the next stage of the yoga. He begins to radiate the inner change in the world around him. He transmits the divine energies that course in his being to the world on different levels and thus helps in the furtherance of the advancement of humanity Godwards. He becomes a centre for the change of the human into the divine among those who are ready for such a step.

It is difficult, however, for the Sādhaka normally to work out this reversal of consciousness, interiorization and fusion all on his own. He feels the need of a Guide. Here too, as with the eternal Veda, the eternal Guide is there in the secret chamber of the heart of each individual. But only a rare few succeed in awaking to this Presence within themselves and dynamizing it in their life. Most need some Power or Personality outside themselves. Religion provides for this need in the conception of the Deity of one's choice, *Iṣṭa Devatā*. If such a supernormal Entity is too distant to man, there is the provision of the Avatār, Incarnation of the Divine. The Divine assumes a human form and appears before man for his salvation and that of the world, periodically. Such are Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Christ, Buddha—human embodiments of the Divine Consciousness. They hew a path, give a teaching and many follow them with great benefit. But these do not appear often, and the passage of time tends to obscure their Teaching. More frequent are revelations through Prophets, messengers of God.

recorded in human history. The average seeker, however, may need a more living Teaching, a more accessible Guide, and spiritual tradition provides for the institution of the human Guru.

The Guru, in this context, is one who has realized the truth of the path the seeker treads, or at any rate, he is in contact and communion with it. He has not merely realized the truth but has also the capacity to communicate his realization to the disciple. He reaches the disciple through his teaching, influence and example. His teaching is born of his realization, enlivened by his *tapasyā.* It is a living wisdom which grows naturally in the being of the disciple, allowing him full freedom to grow at his own pace and manner. The Guru does not enforce his teaching as a system but offers it as a way of life. He is a veritable dynamo of the spiritual consciousness and power of the Truth he embodies and there is a constant radiation of that dynamis from his being. This dynamic influence surrounds the disciple, enters into his being and works to recast his existence in its own mould. It is a continuing *śaktipāta,* transmission of spiritual energy. And lastly, the Guru sets an example. In fact his life itself is a standing example of the reality of the Truth of the Path, the possibility of its actualization in life. The way his whole life is governed by the realized Truth inspires the community of disciples to follow his example.

Such a Guru, says Sri Aurobindo, does not arrogate to himself a superior position, does not seek to dominate the lives of those who follow him. He is a Child leading children, a Light kindling other lights.

And last is *kāla,* the instrumentality of time. In all things there is a movement of time, a period of preparation, a period of exertion, a period of incubation, the hour of fruition. The seeker learns to wait upon the exigencies of time and sheds his immature impatience. He also learns how as long as the effort is egoistic, time fronts itself as a barrier and when one is surrendered, time becomes an instrument and a medium for the realization.

(*To be continued*)

---

# PURASCHARANA

A MONASTIC DEVOTEE

This is not an article so much as a case history. In an article you can speculate, can rove over a subject, emphasizing certain aspects, suppressing others, artistically making your point. But what I wish to do here is to recount in a straightforward, open fashion my experiences having to do with the discipline known as *purascaraṇa.* The reader may rest assured that what is reported here is true, but as in the case of published clinical reports, actual names and places have been disguised or left blank.

I joined the Vedanta Society of—as a monastic probationer in 1950. Born and brought up a Protestant Christian, it had never occurred to me that the essence of spiritual life is meditation. (Remember, this was thirty years ago, well before the quietist revolution of the 1960s had broken out in America, which was to honour Zen, Yoga and other disciplines teaching the need for going within.) The leader of our Centre, a senior Swami, had established it as a rule that his disciples should go to the

chapel for meditation at least two times every day. And so I went.

But five years passed and I felt I had gained very little spiritually. I was still a dabbler, was still the same rank amateur in relation to any kind of inner life that I had been the day I entered—a spiritual outsider.

It had been determined that I was soon to take the vow of Brahmacarya. I began to fear that I would be entering upon this engagement under false pretenses if something didn't change. I told my Guru so. 'Can't you take some urgent measures?' I asked. 'This is serious. Don't you have some intensive remedy to apply, to cure a bad case of spiritual backwardness?'

'All right,' he replied. 'Do a year's *purascarana.*'

My heart contracted. I knew what this meant from having read *The Eternal Companion.* Great masses of *japa,* whose quantity was to increase or diminish by one thousand repetitions per day according to the phase of the moon, to reach a hefty fifteen thousand once a month, on full-moon day. A half-hour or so of *japa* in dark phases, but four to six hours of it as the moon moved toward full zenith.

I was aware of Swami Brahmananda's confidence in the efficacy of *japa.* Our Swami-in-charge had often told us about something he had witnessed as a young novice at Belur Math around 1920. At that period several monastics were required to share the same dormitory rooms. One of the occupants of the room where the then young Swami lodged was an older man who had been given permission to enter after some years of worldly life, much beyond the normal age limit. 'What an intense struggle he had to make to gain purification,' our leader would explain. 'Maharaj's prescription for him was *japa* in large doses. I used to wake up in the night, and there he'd be, seated on his bed with his *mālā* in his hand, by the hour. And it did work. I tell you, my child, it did work; it does work.'

'Well, I did it. For twelve months my whole life centred on *japa.* I rejoiced in the moon's dark phases and struggled through its climaxes. I never failed in what was required for that day, although at times I did not get the final hundreds done till late in the evening, half asleep; and once they went over into the early minutes of the following day.

I took the vow of Brahmacarya in the summer of 1955. Our leader had selected a full-moon day, which was also the birthday of Swami Niranjanananda, as an auspicious date for administering our vows. But what did that choice signal for me and my *japa*? I was living at—at that time, overseeing the construction of a new temple, lodged in a caravan on the temple site. The ceremony was to be performed at the —monastery, some 200 kilometres distant. I felt I could not be absent from the temple work for more than twenty-four hours. I would drive to the monastery the afternoon before, prepare for and participate in the ceremony the following morning, and drive back the same day. Then how could I do my fourteen thousand/fifteen thousand repetitions of the *mantra*? On this red-letter day of my life, surely I would be justified in putting aside my rosary and giving relief to the thumb and calloused middle finger of my right hand.

'No!' replied our leader, in response to my eager suggestion. 'Make some other adjustment. Don't baby the mind. The essence of *purascarana* is no exception. You've taken up the commitment; now fulfil it.' Of course he was right, and I managed the required repetitions by rearranging my intended schedule.

That *purascarana* produces an effect, for me there can be no doubt. Let me try

to describe it in as clinical a fashion as possible.

First of all, you feel virtuous. There is an expression used in Christianity : State of Grace. A state of grace enfolds you when you feel you are making an effort to do what you should be doing and to avoid doing what you should not be doing. Grace comes as we make a positive response to His request : 'If you love me, keep My commandments.' It might be said that enjoying a state of grace is the same thing as attaining a clear conscience. Or is equivalent, I should think, to what Indian teachers refer to as gaining the grace of your own mind. You feel inwardly strong and right an enthusiastic. That is definitely what I felt during the year of *purascarana*.

Or one could say that this effect is simply a case of God rewarding our effort to please Him. Or that by sacrifice we gain His sympathetic attention. The rising smoke of our burning offering is pleasant to His nostrils. I don't believe such explanations ; they are too anthropomorphic. I would rather call achieving a state of grace the lawful psychological consequence of discipline. How often we have heard that the mind is like an unruly youngster. Doing *purascarana* tells that child with steady insistence : I mean business. So it responds. Instead of continuing to behave like a spoilt baby, it becomes co-operative, helpful, charming.

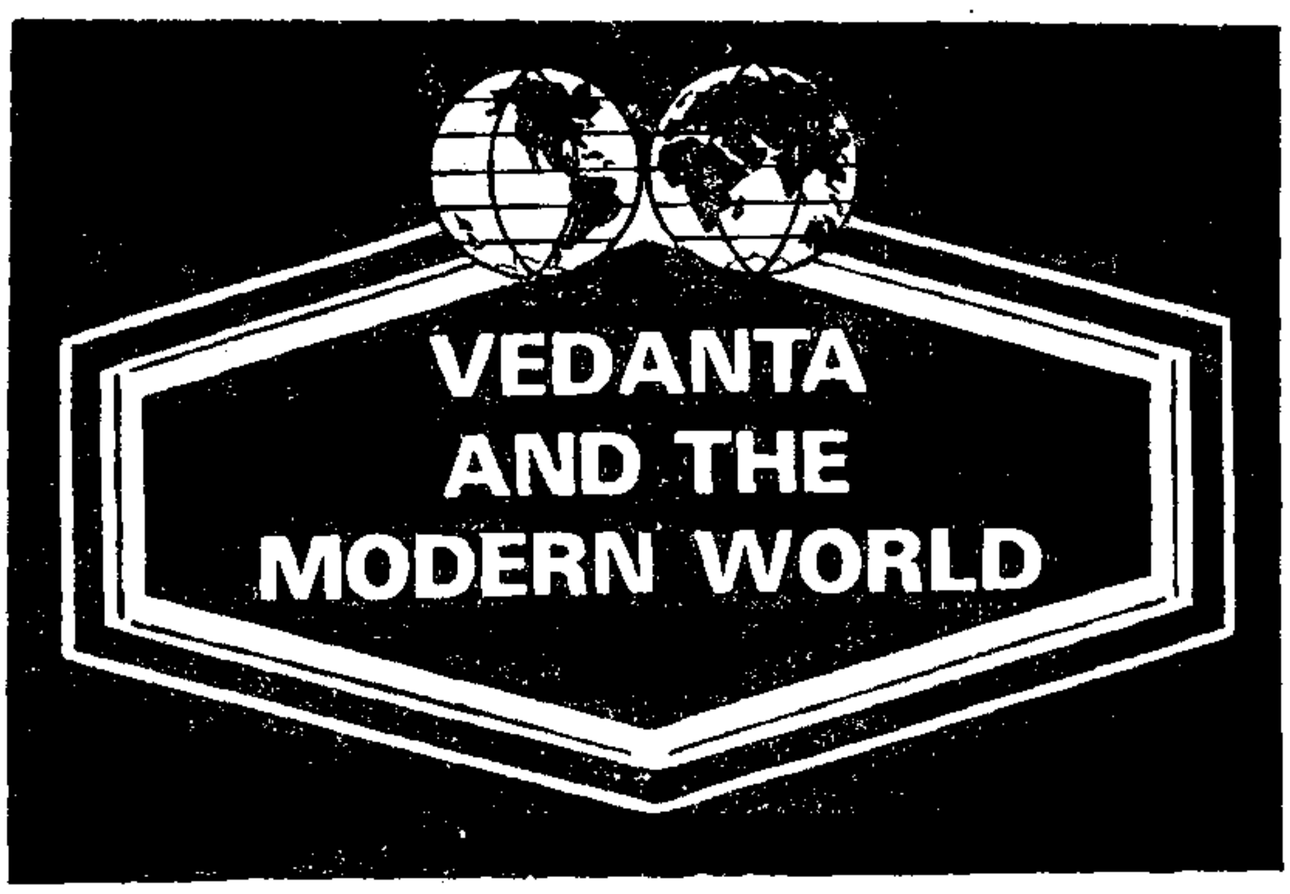
Without doubt it would be better to be infused with longing, ardent longing. Passionate thirst for God is what characterizes the true mystic. But in the absence of longing, there remains : *effort*.

As the mind finds itself brought to heel, it begins its reform. Its whole attitude becomes refashioned, remodeled. The pressure of the Holy Name, strenuously applied, as the Russian monk in *The Way of the Pilgrim* explains it, reorients the mind's way of looking at things. Or to use a homely simile, here is an inkwell fixed to a desk. To clean it, pour in water. Bit by bit the dirty, dried residue will be dislodged and will flow away. In religious terms we can say that *japa* causes some light to shine out from the Paramātman. In psychological terms it may be supposed that the sheath of Ānanda is rendered a little less opaque through the vigorous rubbing it gets from the Holy Name.

Another effect I noticed—my clinical report would not be complete without my mentioning this side-effect—was an increase in psychic energy. Or stated in layman's terms, intensive *japa* seems to have an aphrodisiac effect. (It is well known, of course, that yogic techniques can be used, or mis-used, by those who are sense-minded, to increase sensual powers, and I could see how this could be.) For the continent, this sensation transmutes itself into happiness and enthusiasm—'delight' is the word the Pilgrim often uses. One may describe this euphoria as the emotional consequence of obtaining the grace of one's own mind.

The clinical technique of shock therapy is used as a treatment for mental disorders in extreme cases. No one knows exactly how this technique works, but it is sometimes explained figuratively that the passage of a charge of electricity through the body causes the molecules of the disturbed mind to be, as it were, thrown up in the air, to fall back in a different and healthier pattern. Or that the unconscious, fearing it is going to be killed, defends itself by behaving in a more rational manner. A similar realignment of 'molecules', or rather a better balance of the mind's chemistry, is now claimed as a result of the introduction of so-called mind-bending drugs. Something similar happens in ordinary life, to normal people, also. A normal person, let it be noted, experiences a

(*Continued on Page* 275)




# IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE ?—IV

DR. VINITA WANCHOO

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

CAUSES OF ESCAPISM (*continued*)

*Pantheism*

According to critics, Vedanta has been drawn towards forms of pantheism[1] which have had pernicious results in the field of religion and morals.[2] The popular mind finds it easier to accept the immanental forms of mysticism,[3] while the intellectualists find pantheism congenial because of its protean nature and its vagueness of character.

'Pantheism means God created the world by transforming Himself into the universe . . . the terms God and universe become synonymous and the idea of God is retained not to break the tradition.'[4] The pantheistic formula is : All is God and God is All. The first phase makes God all-pervasive, meaning all that exists is divine, which is no better than naturalism. The second phase denies the existence of anything which is not the Deity : the search for the principle of unity ends in idealistic monism. While the Upaniṣads show both phases—the acosmic phase being subjective, emphasizing unity alone, and the cosmic phase being objective, deifying the totality—the critics find the prevailing tendency to be an idealism in which the intellectualistic position of negating the finite is adopted.

Pantheism as an intellectual doctrine existed from the very birth of religion and ethics in India, being coextensive with social and national life. India is the home of pantheism and has been radically pantheistic from its cradle onwards. The critic judges Vedic polytheism and pantheism to be the lower and higher forms of one worldview. Indian henotheism sometimes verges on monotheism and at other times on pantheism.[5] The *Ṛg-Veda* declares, 'He is himself the very universe. He is whatever has been and shall be.'[6] By empiric distinction between the First Being as cause and the world as its effect, the Vedas came to the pantheistic standpoint.[7]

---

1. Cf. G. W. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, p. 147.

2. Cf. G. A. Jacob, *Manual of Pantheism*, p. 5, where he quotes Cowell.

3. See *Rāmacarita-Mānas, Bāla Kāṇḍa, Doha* 7

जड़ चेतन जग जीव जत सकल राम मय जानि ।
बंदऊँ सबके पद कमल सदा जोरि जुग पानि ।।

4. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 160.

5. Cf. A. Barth, *The Religions of India*, p. 28 ; also Samuel Johnson, *Oriental Religions and Their Relation to Universal Religion*, p. 107.

6. *Ṛg-Veda*, 10.90.

7. L. D. Barnett, *Brahma Knowledge*, p. 20.

In the Upaniṣads the idealistic conception unites the self with the universe and gives control of all things from that source.[8] No other doctrine ever seriously challenged this pantheism which was able to maintain its primacy against other doctrines and to colour them as well as popular beliefs. Theistic sects giving devotion to a personal deity as the creator and saviour—hence a transcendental God—cannot accept the identity doctrine theoretically; but, inconsistently, pantheistic ideas colour their ideas from the very base.[9]

Such pantheism merely serves to enhance pessimism and world negation in Vedanta. Emotionally, the pantheistic devotion of the saints produced a dreamy, unpractical mood in which there was negation of all particulars because God was all. It became a refuge from the glaring inequalities of political and social life when moral effort of the people was weak, a metaphysical justification of withdrawal from social responsibility, a flight rather than a victory.[10] Unlike normal philosophy which explains the whole of life, pantheism declares life's difficulties to be dreams; but since these nightmares cannot be escaped, the gloom deepens.[11] With loss of interest in the world, life becomes worthless and miserable, and human ideals valueless. Pantheism may be universally attractive; but its fascination is unhealthy, the symptom of a disease, because it offers freedom from the ills of life by running away from them and declaring them to be unreal.[12] Moreover, the conviction that evils and pains are inherent in the world-process uproots confidence in the possibility of realizing higher values or overcoming evil by good effort. Thus pessimism is deepened, there is increase of vacuity and excessive naturalism.

Absolutistic pantheism leads to God as the last product of abstraction, psychological and cosmical. God is without parts, passions or positive attributes. Such an empty, characterless real makes the world process meaningless and interest in the actual impossible;[13] for knowledge of Ātman does not make the meaning of the world clear to man, but frees him from phenomenal attachments. It deprives religion, faith, love, and hope of all concrete objects and gives rise to a cold, passionless and resigned type of worship. Promise of absorption in some unknowable reality creates intellectual discouragement. 'What a prospect dark and void, this supreme spirit before which all human endeavour, all noble ambitions, all hope, all love is blighted.'[14] Pantheistic reality is a cause of depression to the common man.

The pantheistic goal of obliterating the distinction of subject and object in gnosis, ending the intellectual and moral separation of the soul, can only lead in actual practice to a philosophy of renunciation. In the path of pantheistic mysticism there is little mention of positive duties; there is even a positive under-rating, if not scorn, of all religious cults and rituals. All categories, even that of personality, being inapplicable to reality because all are too limiting, there is a serious disvaluation of these categories. The unity and impersonality of the whole calls for the surrender an belittling of everything that is human. The rejection of

8. See *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.14.1; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.1.20: सत्यस्य सत्यम् ।

9. Cf. M. A. Macauliffe, *Sikh Religion*, vol. 1, p. lxii; Nicol Macnicol, *Indian Theism from Vedic to Muhammadan Period*, p. 1.

10. W. S. Urquhart, *Pantheism and the Value of Life*, p. 21.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 587.

12. Cf. G. A. Jacob, *Manual of Hindu Pantheism*, p. 4.

13. Cf. E. Caird, *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, I, pp. 108-09.

14. Lanman, *Beginnings of Hindu Pantheism*, p. 24.

all human motivations, good and bad, is productive of indifference and neglect of all active powers.[15] The pantheistic emphasis on the perfection and majesty of the divine whole prevents particularistic activity of will. Pantheistic seeking after freedom from action means denial of human responsibility, and moral reformation becomes a mere 'moral and religious gymnasium.'[16] The Vedantic call for action in the pantheistic setting of the *Gītā* loses much of its ethical force.

Pantheism makes the 'All' a mode of the Infinite and Eternal, and progress does not mean that there is any change for the better by individual effort, here and now; there can only be recognition of that which is already real. Progress requires the background of space, time, multiplicity, causality and moral principles; but all categories being denied to pantheistic reality, there is impossibility of progress. Pantheism is equal to determinism and the fatalism consequent upon it.[17] Vedanta stands for the transcendental freedom of Ātman; but in the physico-moral world, whether real or unreal, all is predestined by the nature of God. Even transcendental freedom is minimized since the individual who is to attain it must put away all his individuality. A creed of determinism and deification of the actual also involves pessimism, since the actual has a mingling of good and evil, and the absence of conviction that good must increase also adds to the hopelessness in man.

The critic expresses great indignation at the pernicious effect of pantheistic Vedanta on moral life and activity. The abstract reality obliterates all distinctions, hence all moral distinctions. When a man believes his final rest to be in such a reality, all moral obligations are bound to be relaxed.[18] In theistic Vedanta God is the highest repository of moral perfections, but so untouched by the world that the conception has no inspiration for moral activity. In monism the personal conception of Divinity is a mere myth, while reality is devoid of all qualities and activities. From this follows the consequence that 'Vedantic authorities have asserted that they are not subject to law, rule, virtue or vice, injunction or prohibition.'[19] If reality is all-inclusive, it is an empty category. If God is in all things He is equally absent in all things, and pantheism does not differ from atheism.[20] The blurring of distinctions easily passes into pessimism, for if all is equally divine it makes no difference whether we call everything nothing, good or bad. Pantheism strikes at the root of morality by taking away the sense of free agency and making sin and self both unreal. This is a comfortless and paralyzing view, destroying the personality of God and the moral personality of man.

*Mysticism*

Mysticism as an earnest search for God and great longing for Him through direct and immediate experience, appeared in Indian thought at the very beginning and culminated in the Upaniṣads. Mysticism and pantheism tend to strengthen each other in Vedanta. The vision of the Cosmic Being[21] inspired the pantheistic conception of immanence and led to the nature-mysticism of theism, while spiritual mysticism culminated in the identity of Ātman and

---

15. G. A. Jacob, *Manual of Hindu Pantheism*, p. 123.
16. W. S. Urquhart, *Pantheism and the Value of Life*, p. 395.
17. Cf. Robert Flint, *Anti-Theistic Theories*, p. 336.
18. Cf. Alfred Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, II, p. 33, where he quotes Vamadeva Sastri.
19. Bannerjee, *Hindu Philosophy*, p. 381.
20. W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, p. 156.
21. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.18.

Brahman. Divinity has different connotations, so that the relationship to God and even to nature is different among mystics. Advaita does not deny firsthand, direct experience of a personal God and unity of fellowship through devotion, but this is subordinated to a direct realization which is 'pure, unspotted ... in a cool stillness beyond the emotional stimulus of theistic or believing piety, in an ice-cold clarity of pure being and knowing.'[22] The doctrine that mystical consciousness is present in all is the central teaching of the Upaniṣads. Self and God have always been identical and in the state of mystical enlightenment this hidden fact will be manifested. Reason may fail to discover the nature of Ultimate Reality, but the Vedantic mystic is driven by the need of the soul to the conviction in and realization of unity with the highest.

Mystics as a class, and Indian mystics specially, are accused of turning away from the active duties of life into an ecstasy of bliss, selfishly enjoyed for its own sake. In fact, the structure of Indian society was so arranged as to allow this flight from life and its duties, for the cultivation of mystical ecstasy. Vedantic mysticism is concerned with the idea of being exalted above the world.[23] The search for the sublimation of the individual entity into immortal timelessness (*amṛtatva*) destroys the mystic's feeling for past and present. The recovery of transcendent being involves effect to overcome all obstacles in the shape of the pairs of opposites (*dvandvātīta*), and thus the value of contradiction in life and thought is denied. The search being carried on in the innermost hidden self, the mystic path involves negation of all activity in the outer world. The sole reality of the self makes the world inexplicable appearance, an unhappy anomaly, a cosmic mistake of Avidya.[24] In Vedanta neither the pure path of gnosis nor the path of gnosis combined with devotion explains the world in scientific terms. Both are charged with the tendency to 'explain it away', but the world remains painful and miserable, unreconciled with mystical reality.

The mystic reality of Vedanta is spiritual and contrasted with the natural, but it is not active or loving, not infinitely rich in life and experience for the individual self. It is a unity discovered by the device of reflective self-consciousness, ending in a state whose nearest analogy is dreamless sleep. Empirical consciousness and its attendant duality being overcome in that ineffable experience, the mystic Absolute of Vedanta gets its perfection from its content to the finite; whatever contrast is found in it is felt to be an impurity due to finite consciousness, and man must approach unconsciousness in order to possess it.[25] It is an aberration of mysticism which Vedanta does not escape that God is called the Infinite while actually being nothing but the indefinite, dissolving all distinctions into the abyss of bare indeterminism.

The result of such aspiration after such a reality is complete loss of selfhood. The mystic passion for oneness and deliverance from the pangs of separation due to ignorance, not only destroys false parts of the self but its very nature, though theistic Vedanta seeks to retain separate individuality to make devotion to the will of the Supreme Person possible. Mysticism is, by definition, non-individualistic and abolishes the 'I', 'me' and 'mine'. It involves realization of the finiteness and imperfection of self, and purgation and purification of it

22. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism, East and West*, p. 151.
23. Cf. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 3.
24. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism, East and West*, p. 170.
25. Cf. Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual*, p. 193.

by self-denial, ending in union ; but Vedantic mysticism insists on a further stage of absorption into the Infinite, which is the logical corollary of the pantheism of all oriental mysticism.[26] Critics point out two undesirable results of this. Firstly, since there is substitution of divine for human nature, there is danger of spiritual arrogance. Identification of individual self with the universal self is conducive to pride in the Vedantic mystic, for in his own being he carries the Infinite. The Nietzschean superman is a miserable creature compared to the Brahmanic superman, in terms of arrogance.[27] Secondly, mystic denial of the impulse of life and personality, springing from world weariness, produces passive, quietist, resigned and contemplative natures.[28] In Advaita, the *mukta* (liberated one) leaves all activity and reposes in oneness. Śaṁkara uses all his dialectic to cloud and twist the clear meaning of the *Gītā*, which praises deeds dedicated to Īśvara.[29] Even theistic Vedantins receive no inspiration for voluntary activity from mystic experience of the actionless God. In either case the goal is rest and contentment (*śānti*) and not perfect activity of the perfected and unified soul (*āpta*).[30]

The mystical experience derives its emotional content from two values. Subjectively, its value lies in giving joy to the mystic ; objectively, its value lies in its beneficial effects on the outer world, regardless of its emotional value to the mystic, painful or pleasurable.[31] Vedantic mysticism is found to be too deeply impressed by the first aim, and the second is scarcely noticed by it. It searches for a good which is outside the world, but the evils it seeks to escape are sickness, old age, pains, etc., and Experience of the impersonal Ātman-Brahman or even the Personal Brahman is not a 'hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Thus Indian mysticism has no ethic, as mystical identity is non-ethical and ethical nature is not attributed to reality.[32] From this experience here is no message for man and society. The Vedantic mystic knows the unity of Being from which flows experience of bliss ; but no mystical 'love' for man results, nor any zeal for service of others.[33]

---

26. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, pp. 170-71.

27. Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, p. 33.

28. Cf. Nicol Macincol, *The Making of Modern India*, p. 99.

29. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism, East and West*, p. 207.

30. Cf. *ibid.*

31. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 188 ; the difference is expressed in the question that the mystic might ask himself : 'How can I win perpetual happiness?' or 'How can I become righteous in the eyes of God?'

32. Cf. Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, p. 43.

33. Cf. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism, East and West*, p. 215.

# MAN AND HIS DESTINY : EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE

PROF. RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

Existentialism is the name given to a modern philosophical movement which during the pre-War and post-War periods achieved tremendous popularity in Europe, particularly in France. In recent years, its wave has reached to different parts of the globe, and has pervaded wide fields of cultural activity, literature, political thought, popular philosophy and religious thought.

Existentialism, as it is well-known, is a protest against naturalism, rationalism and rationalistic idealism. Its crusade is also against traditional religiosity in the form of supernationalism, pessimism and other-worldliness. In short, it is a revolt against the time-honoured classical tradition of Western philosophy. In fact, it seeks to assert that not only rationalism and idealism but the whole traditional philosophy has been essentialistic in approach.

An important modern trend of philosophical activity in the West is concern for man and his problems, as is evidenced in such movements as pragmatism and the dialectical materialism of Marx, which have brought philosophy from heaven to earth. Existentialism is the characteristic manifestation of this tendency which concerns itself with all aspects of man in this world, his feelings, his freedom, his moral behaviour, his possibilities. In so far as man is regarded as the central theme of philosophic enterprise, existentialism shares a common philosophic outlook with pragmatism and Marxism in particular. Existentialism asserts that essentialism in all its remifications reduces man to a complex of essences (qualities or attributes) or a tissue of bloodless categories. But the mystery of man and the unfathomable inwardness of his being cannot be deciphered by objectified knowledge. Hence man should be viewed from an altogether radical angle of vision.

Notwithstanding some significant differences among the important leaders of Existentialism such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Paul Tillich, they all assert the priority of human existence over essence as well as man's freedom and responsibility for what he is. The existentialists in general dislike the rigour of extreme intellectualism and tyranny of abstract all-engulfing system. They unitedly attack the formalistic habit of mind, and try to reverse the tide of traditional thought by denouncing abstract philosophizing.

Another significant feature is the missionary and practical aim of existentialism. It exhorts its readers not only to accept the views but also to absorb them in order to transform their way of seeing the world and their view of life. Existentialism therefore suggests some sort of emotional conversion and not intellectual comprehension. 'Existentialism is concerned with man's freedom, and because it aims to change its readers, to free them from illusion and to convert them, it follows that it has always been thought of, with justice, as a committed and practical philosophy.'[1]

Sören Kierkegaard (1813-55), a Danish thinker, may in a significant sense be regarded as the most original thinker, in whose important work *Either/Or* the basic structure of existentialism has been outlined. rightly regarded as the parent of existentialism. The philosophy of existence is sometimes regarded as a later development

---

1. Mary Warnock, *Existentialism* (London : Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 2.

of the phenomenological school founded by Husserl. As a matter of fact, both Heidegger and Sartre owe much to Husserl. Fragments of existential thoughts are not infrequent in the works of mystics like Pascal, novelists like Chekhov, Dostoievsky and Kafka, and philosophers like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bergson. However, contemporary existentialism derives its main inspiration from the works of Kierkegaard which have been recently translated into English and made known to the world. Kierkegaard wants to make men renounce their identification with the state, society, church and to free themselves from the baneful influence of speculative metaphysics, for it takes man away from exercising his basic freedom. 'But most threatening to the uniqueness of man, according to Kierkegaard, is the penchant of philosophers for employing abstract reasoning in building grandiose metaphysical systems in which the nature of man is viewed as irrevocably fixed; man is shown in pre-established relationships to cosmos. Such speculative philosophers offer men the narcotic of self-delusion that inhibits them from gaining self-knowledge.'[2]

The cardinal principle emphasized by Kierkegaard, and subsequently accepted by the existentialist thinkers, is the subjectivity of truth. He appeals to humanity to free themselves from the illusion of objectivity. Objectivity is a tendency which impels man to accept certain general rules and principles governing both his behaviour and intellectual life. It is a tendency which seeks to generalize human behaviour and thought through an abstracting activity of the intellect. But Kierkegaard argues that by submitting to universal laws and categories, man loses the spontaneity and inwardness of his life and therefore fails to recognize that 'the knower is an existing individual.' Man's own immediate and inward subjective experience makes one immediately conscious of his own inward existence. Kierkegaard takes Socrates as his model. 'My task is a Socratic task,' he was fond of saying. Like the Socratic dictum 'know thyself' he advises us to move inward by withdrawing our attention from nature to man, from the objective to the subjective, from barren intellectual exercises to a 'complete human life'. This inward-looking makes man aware of his existence, and this subjective, inward existence is the only indubitable truth. 'Only in subjectivity is there decisiveness; to seek objectivity is to be in error.'[3] In this subjectivity, an individual comes to perceive his concrete existence inwardly and immediately much before he starts rational reflection. Hence existence is prior to essence. Heidegger holds that essence does not necessarily involve existence. 'When we ask about a thing as to what it is, we are asking about its essence. Having known what it is, we may still ask whether it exists. This shows that essence does not include existence.' Kierkegaard subjected the Cartesian dictum *Cogito ergo sum* ('I think, so I exist') to severe criticism and exhibited the illegitimacy of the conclusion. In other words, existence is the precondition of thought and hence it cannot be derived from thought.

Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) has examined the problem of existence from a different point of view which reminds us of the Upanisadic quest of the real identity of self. Jaspers says, 'As being, I am radically different from all being of things, because I can say "I am".' But this 'I' should not be confused with the totality of all mental

2. Peterfreund and Denise, *Contemporary Philosophy and Its Origins* (New Delhi : Affiliated East-West Press, 1968), p. 190.

3. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. D. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1941). p. 181.

states which constitute the contents of consciousness. This 'I' is not ego. It is being or individual as such. Man is, therefore, more than his empirical being, more than consciousness in general, more than reason or spirit. Man is a potential existence and he fulfils his inherent potentiality of existence by transcending himself in communication with others. In *Being and Time* Martin Heidegger (born 1889) examines what he means by existence. Human being or *Dasein*, according to Heidegger, does not signify an abstract general concept possessing certain common characters ; on the contrary, it means absolute concreteness of existence. Each existential being realizes himself not only in what he is but in terms of what he can be. He understands himself in terms of his possibilities, that is, his ability to become what he is not. 'Each human being is characterized by *Jemeinkeit*, or individuality. This individuality is not a static quality of a person, but is a potentiality, a set of possibilities for every individual. Any human being is perpetually oriented towards his own possibilities.'[4]

There are two possibilities open before man, these are, either to live authentically or to embrace inauthentic existence. An authentic existence can only be realized when a man experiences his own existence itself and encounters the world in all its particularity and concreteness. In other words, authentic existence is grasped in indeterminate givenness of subjective experience. In inauthentic existence, man fails to experience his individuality and to distinguish himself from the impersonal mass of mankind at large. He lives his life as if he were a person-in-general. Heidegger illustrates this way of life by reference to the wearing of ready-made garments or the using of public bus-shelters.

Sartre, with whose name the existentialist movement is more intimately associated than anyone else, gives an interesting account of consciousness (*cogito*) which for him is the 'pre-reflective *cogito*' prior to the emergence of the subject-object dichotomy. In his great existentialist book *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre examines the notion of being from a purely human position ; he is primarily interested in human existence. He makes a distinction between being-in-itself (*en-soi*) and being-for-itself (*pour-soi*). By the former, he means self-identical being, having no reference beyond itself ; being-for-itself, however, means what we generally understand by consciousness. Man, as a conscious being, is distinguished as a 'being-for-itself' from unconscious objects which are 'being-in-themselves'. Since human reality is not a finished product determined by definable laws, man is always becoming or making or reshaping himself. It is a question of continuous effort and it proceeds from his inner passion for freedom. Existential freedom brooks no limitation from any quarter, and it transcends all bonds of determinism ; social, economic, political and theological. 'For if indeed existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given and specific human nature ; in other words, there is no determinism—man is free, man is freedom.'[5] Sartre further tells us, 'Man is condemned to be free.' Condemned because he has not created himself, yet he enjoys absolute freedom. From the very moment he is 'thrown into this world, he is responsible for everything he does.'[6]

Sartre's main concern is freedom, both inner and outer. His consuming passion for human freedom, it should be noted, does not originate from mere philosophic contemplation but from his sincere desire to

---

4. Warnock, *Existentialism*, p. 54.

5. Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London : Methuen and Co., 1960), p. 34.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

bring about a radical change in man's conception of himself as well as of the world in which he is thrown. Sartre, it seems, speaks of unconditional freedom enjoyed by an individual being. He is critical of all types of determinism and in his earlier works, he attacks both economic determinism of the Marxists and psychological determinism of the psycho-analysists. He denounces determinism as bourgeois philosophy. But in his later works he shifted from his earlier position.

Heidegger holds that human freedom is not abstract but is limited because the individual who is thrown in a particular situation on earth is burdened with certain inborn tendencies of character and intelligence. The determining factor in an existential being is what Heidegger calls fate (*Schicksal*). So according to him, man enjoys limited freedom conditioned by fate.

By declaring the indeterminacy and independence of the individual existence, existentialism has bestowed on man a lot of responsibilities. Man is the maker of his own destiny—the architect of his fortune. He is responsible for what he is and what he will be. 'The first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders.'[7] Life is a continuous struggle against all sorts of irrational forces and uncertainties. So it is the destiny of man to fight against them with dogged determination. Since existential being enjoys full freedom, it follows that choice and decision rest on him ; and in the presence of innumerable alternatives, he finds himself in uncertainty. He, however, takes risks and decides. To live authentically, according to Heidegger, is to deal with other human beings in unique situations with an unlimited range of possible courses of action with no guidance from any quarter. Nevertheless, the situation calls for decision and he chooses one of the possible courses and thus accepts the burdensome responsibility for that choice. The entire issue of choice and decision, though purely personal, is grave and far-reaching in implication for, as Sartre points out, 'in choosing for himself he chooses for all men' and his 'action is, in consequence, a commitment on behalf of all mankind.'[8] The human being can choose what is better for himself as well as everybody in the world ; he is a 'legislator deciding for whole of mankind.' He creates not only himself but also creates his environment which ought to be favourable for others to exercise freedom. This heavy load of responsibility cannot but make man sad.

Freedom and the profound responsibility involved in it produce anxiety—the fear that we may abuse our freedom. Anxiety in turn brings about despair—despair due to utter helplessness of man in the multitude of uncertainties which surround his existence. But Kierkegaard thinks that this despair is momentary and it disappears as soon as man enters into an aesthetic life and feels the 'passion of the infinite'. Gradually man enters a higher level of subjectivity and thus attains eternal happiness. Heidegger draws our attention to an important aspect of human experience, which he calls anguish (*Angst*). It is something different from fear. Fear makes us aware of death, and all anguish is properly speaking the anguish of death. It is the dread of death which induces people towards inauthentic rather than authentic existence. Death, however, is not anything determinate ; it is the end, the nothing, the great annihilation of life. All men are doomed to die ; there is no option or choice before us in this matter.

---

7. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

This brings us to the threshold of a difficult notion in Heidegger's philosophy, the notion of nothing (*Nichts*) which has been exposed to various interpretations. Man is thrown into the state of existence in the world at a certain point of time and space for which he is not responsible. Since his birth, man finds himself in the midst of 'uncertainty and flux, pushed from one extremity to another' without knowing wherefrom he comes and to which destination he moves. In his painful experience he discovers that achievement is a mere illusion and happiness is a distant cry. 'Man finds that he stands on the obscure ground of a mysterious nothing which is not a mere mathematical zero but something more positive than that. When man experiences this nothingness in all its existential weight, he suffers from a feeling of profound unrest and care, a radical insecurity of being.'[9] Heidegger goes to the extent of identifying nothing with Absolute Being. This reminds us of the Buddhistic conception of Void (*śunya*). How this nothing can be positively conceived is something beyond our ordinary comprehension. Anguish of death and the notion of nothing, however, suggest the utter solitariness and helplessness of our inner being.

Heidegger's message is not entirely negative; it inspires us to live authentically, for human dignity lies in the heroic acknowledgement of this dreadful truth. Sartre also speaks of the feeling of anguish which results from man's responsibility involved in decision-making on behalf of the whole of mankind in the face of the plurality of possibilities. Notwithstanding apparent pessimistic tone, Sartre encourages us to 'confront the brute reality without recourse to the illusion provided by reason and thereby enter into authentic existence.'

Existentialism is said to represent the spiritual climate of the present age. It is a philosophy of crisis. Man in the present age has lost faith in established certainties and values. He has lost faith in the optimistic worldview of the Renaissance after the two ghastly world wars. There is a feeling of homelessness and spiritual insecurity. A phenomenon of decadence has overtaken the world today. In his *Man in the Modern Age*, Jaspers closely analyses the 'different determinants of the modern age—namely, science, technology, industrialization, mass organization under economic, political and military projects and also nihilistic, humanistic and positivistic thought-currents—how the individual has been reduced by these forces to a despiritualized tool incapable of turning his attention within himself to realize his inner dignity, freedom and potentialities; nay, how he is even afraid of withdrawing into his inner existence, his own self, lest he should lose the outer world and its attractions.'[10]

In modern times, Kierkegaard first initiated a new mode of philosophical reflection and drew our attention to individual subjectivity—a new area of philosophical exploration. Thereafter all the existentialist thinkers generally accepted this cardinal maxim, notwithstanding their disagreement in certain important matters. It is mainly a way of thought and not a set of doctrines, and this makes a systematic presentation of the philosophy of existence a bit difficult.

Existentialism is often decried as a merely transitory outbreak of irrationalism or romanticism. Obviously this type of

9. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, 'Concluding Survey' in *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), vol. 2, p. 444.

10. Dr. D. M. Datta, *The Chief Currents of Contemporary Philosophy* (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1961), pp. 528-29.

sweeping observation is an unhealthy attempt to underestimate the importance of this philosophic movement. Further, existentialism is stigmatized as pessimistic. Though the existential thinkers make manifest the dark and gloomy aspects of life, yet in the long run it professes an optimistic outlook by pointing out that man can build his fortune by his personal effort and endeavour. So it seems that with the existentialists there is no pessimism, rather there is sternness of optimism. It is a philosophy of action meant for the brave and the bold. Sartre also says, 'It cannot be regarded as a philosophy of quietism since it defines man by his action, nor as a pessimistic description of man, for no doctrine is more optimistic, the destiny of man is placed within himself.'[11] Sartre further regards existentialism as a form of humanism. He criticized Comtean humanism as an attempt of man to 'pronounce judgement upon man'. Existentialism is humanism because it advocates that 'there is no universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity.' It reminds 'man that there is no legislator but himself' and 'that it is not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking beyond himself... that man can realize himself as truly human.'[12]

Like every protest movement, existentialism while exposing the cosmological pretensions of essentialism goes to another extreme and commits some grievous mistakes. It cannot be denied that in human experience, there are both regularities and contingencies, necessary and accidental occurrences, and that thought contains both certainty and probability, both reasoning and rationalization. Hence a man who overemphasizes the non-rational components of human existence is no better than a subjective participant in this world. Apart from some familiar objections raised against the philosophy of existence, it is involved in an inescapable dilemma, either of conceptualizing that which, according to it, cannot be conceptualized or of failing altogether to communicate. Moreover, its mode of communcation 'is more like that of an artist than that of the scientist.' Mary Warnock further points out that 'the existentialists have given us many particular insights, especially in their discussions of persons, and of perception, but, if philosophy is to continue to exist, then it is necessary to reject the subjective anti-scientific dogmatism of their attempt to reveal the ultimate meaning of existence.'[13]

Admittedly, existentialism like all other philosophies has its shortcomings and blindspots; but it will be remembered for its vital and lasting contribution to man's understanding of himself and his relation to the world he lives in. 'In spite of the real or seeming inconsequences, the great emphasis laid by the existentialists on the unique dignity of human personality is to be welcomed as a corrective to the dehumanizing tendencies of the present-day mechanical and materialistic civilization. When a man is being regarded as a tool, as an item in the objective world and is often called upon to sacrifice himself for a class or the state, it is good to be reminded that in our real existence we enjoy an inner subjective being which in its depth cannot be reached or represented by generality.'[14]

11. Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 44.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

13. Warnock, *Existentialism*, p. 140.

14. Dr. R. V. Das, 'Existentialism' in *History of Philosophy : Eastern and Western*, vol. 2, p. 438.

# ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

When the news reached Don Alonso that his daughter Teresa and, under her influence, his son Antonio had both entered the monastic life, he didn't know at first what to say. Now he was confronting not only Teresa, but God. Going to the Convent of the Incarnation and then to the Dominican friary, he swallowed his fatherly love and gave his consent and blessings.

A few days later Teresa received the habit. From the time she entered the convent, she began to experience a new and strange joy, a joy which remained with her throughout the rest of her life. Everything connected with the religious life she loved. Even while sweeping the convent floors, she who was accustomed to servants was overjoyed to think that now she was free of her adolescent vanities. And she came to understand the great value of using force on oneself to do something for God, even though it be as painful as her leaving home had been.

Yet sanctity didn't come easily. She was often blamed unjustly by her seniors for various things, a humiliation which she was not used to bearing silently. Nor did she like to admit her ignorance by asking other sisters about things she didn't know : how to behave in certain situations or what to do in choir. Furthermore, singing was conspicuously not one of her many talents ; embarrassment at this made her perform even worse in choir than she need have ; for this young lady, so punctilious, had never hated anything as much as ridicule. Only her joy at being a nun sustained her, until she learned to humble herself and admit her ignorance. Soon she reached a point where she got pleasure in asking her sisters' advice if she had even the slightest doubt about something, and thus actually gained their love and respect.

In her childhood she had sought martyrdom for the sake of reward. As an adolescent she had been inspired to enter a convent with the fear of hell. Now Teresa determined to rise above all self-centredness. There was a nun in the convent infirmary who was dying a most miserable death. All the other nuns were afraid to approach her because of the utter loathsomeness of her condition ; except Teresa. She marvelled at this nun's patience, and took upon herself the task of nursing the poor woman. As she dressed the nun's ulcerous stomach, the stench was so terrible that she had to run out of the room with nausea. But repugnance was changed to compassion, and she would return smiling to continue her service of love. Now Teresa prayed that God give her any illness He pleased, if only He would give her such saintly patience as this nun displayed. For she had not forgotten her childhood stories of the martyr-saints who earned heaven so easily and quickly. Her desire, however, was no longer for a self-gratifying reward ; rather she was so anxious to rise above her limited existence and attain that which lasts 'for ever' that she was willing to accept any means possible, even sickness unto death.

A year after taking the habit, Teresa was professed. While making her vows she was full of determination and enthusiasm. But soon she was to discover just how difficult a task it was that she had set herself to.

Even before entering the Incarnation, she had been plagued with fainting fits. Now they became more severe and frequent. She also suffered often from fever, heart trouble and many other ailments. Had her prayer for illness been granted, or was it the result of the new way of life, less nourishing food, and excessive austerities she was indulging in to gain self-control? Whatever it was, before passing two years at the Incarnation her condition became so serious that she was almost never fully conscious, and sometimes lost consciousness altogether.

Don Alonso was alarmed; his doctors said that she should be taken home where she would get better food and care. He arranged for her treatment, however, with a medicine-woman in the town of Becedas, as she had not been faring well under the quaint but potentially dangerous professional medical care of those days. So she got leave from the convent to stay some months with her sister Maria in the countryside in order to gain some strength before proceeding to Becedas.

On the way to Doña Maria's, Teresa once again stopped to visit her Uncle Pedro. This good man was waiting only for his son to grow up before himself becoming a monk. He talked long with her about her spiritual progress and her aspirations. She told him that the only means she had found for fixing her attention was vocal prayer, which she practised much of daily. Don Pedro told her that prayer was all-important; but by prayer, mental prayer was to be understood.—Mental prayer! How miserably she had failed to practise it! And she had received no proper spiritual guidance at the lax convent of the Incarnation.—He took a book from the library shelf, *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* by Francisco de Osuna, a Spanish Franciscan priest.

'Read this, Teresita, you will find here the instruction you want.'

As she thumbed through the book, her heart throbbed with excitement to find every page speaking directly to her needs, in that typical Franciscan language of intimacy and love.

> ... Vocal prayer, as you have seen, is a petition we make to God to ask Him for what is necessary for us.... The second form of prayer, that is without pronouncing the words with the lips, leaves us free so that our heart alone speaks to Our Lord.... The third, which may be termed mental or spiritual, is that in which the highest point of the soul, sustained by love, soars upward to God in the purest and most loving way possible on the wings of desire....
>
> ... in the first we kiss His feet. In the second we kiss His hands. In the third we give Him a kiss on the lips.

'You like it? It's your's, Teresa.'

Saying goodbye to Uncle Pedro, her heart filled with gratitude, she proceeded to her sister's, and in the spring of 1539 went on to Becedas for treatment. The treatment lasted several months. In the meantime she was practising assiduously the instructions given by Osuna in his book. She began to progress quickly, and was soon raised to the Prayer of Quiet. She sometimes even glimpsed the Prayer of Union.* The effect of this were so great that, though she was only in her early twenties, it seemed that she trampled the whole world underfoot in supreme detachment.

But the treatment given by the medicine-

* The Prayer of Quiet is a mystical state of detachment from the senses and their objects, stillness of mind, and awareness of God's presence. The Prayer or Union is a higher state in which the soul is completely oblivious to the world, and the understanding, memory and will are completely occupied—though not yet fully united—with God; the mind returns from this state luminous and full of wisdom.

woman, which had begun gently enough, was becoming unbearably severe. Teresa was given so many purgatives over such a prolonged period that her body shrivelled up, and she could only take liquids. The pain in her heart, which she had come to get cured, became so much worse that she felt as though her heart were always clamped between sharp teeth. People feared that she would go mad, so her father had her brought home in July. The doctors in Avila gave up all hope for her life.

Her pain was so terrible that all wondered at the patience with which she bore it. Indeed, both points of her earlier prayer seemed to have been granted: sickness and ideal patience. But how much can the human frame endure? On August 15, after three months of the most excruciating pain, she said that she wanted to make confession and receive communion. Don Alonso thought this desire was a sign that she despaired of life, for every devout Catholic wishes to make a last confession and receive absolution and the sacrament of Communion from a priest before departing from this world. So, blinded by love and trying to bolster her courage, he refused to call a priest, saying that when she recovered her strength somewhat, everything would be arranged.

But that night a priest had to be called, for Teresa was found lifeless on her bed.

On arriving, the priest was promptly ushered into Teresa's candlelit room, where she lay in corpselike stillness. Don Alonso could hardly speak to greet him ; he shook with grief as he motioned the priest towards his beloved daughter's bed.

The Father was to perform the sacrament of Extreme Unction, the last rite performed by the Catholic Church over the dying soul. But now as he examined her, he found that she was no longer dying.

'Dead? Impossible !' cried Don Alonso in disbelief at the priest's words. Not my Teresa. Please, God, no ! Since the death of his second wife, he had lived in perpetual mourning, wearing nothing but black. The only light remaining in his life came from his religion and his children. And now his favourite child lay dead. His groans filled the house as the priest went ahead with the last sacrament ; the rest of the family waited in speechless sorrow.

The next day Teresa showed no sign of life. On the second day the doctors held a mirror before her nostrils, but it remained unclouded by breath. Yes, she was dead. As someone was examining her face with a candle in hand, a few drops of molten wax fell onto her eyelids and hardened there. The third day a grave was dug for her at the Incarnation, her body was washed and wrapped in a funeral shroud. In a Carmelite monastery the rites for the dead were performed. On the fourth day the nuns came from the Incarnation to take her body for burial. Don Alonso, however, refused to surrender the corpse. In the madness of his grief he claimed to be able to hear her pulse ; besides, rigor mortis had not set in, nor was her body as cold as a dead body should be, even four days after her death. No, he insisted, she was not dead. The nuns couldn't reason with him, crazed as he was, so they knelt besides Teresa's bed in prayer.

But what was this?—suddenly Teresa opened her eyes, breaking the wax that had long since hardened over them ! Her first words were to ask once again for the sacrament. Her 'death' had been but a syncope lasting for four days—something sixteenth-century medicine was utterly incapable of handling.

For four days nothing had passed between her lips ; as a result, her throat was now so constricted that she choked even on water. Her tongue had been bitten to pieces. All her bones seemed to be out of joint and, except for one finger of her

right hand, she was completely paralyzed from the neck down. Terrible confusion reigned in her head. So miserable was her condition that she cried out in pain if anyone so much as touched her, and she had to be moved about in a sheet—one person taking one end and another the other.

After continuing in this pitiable state for about eight months, she desired only to return to her convent; so she was carried there, an invalid at the age of twenty-five. She who had nursed the nun dying from an ulcerous stomach, was now nursed by her sisters; and her pain was not a whit less than that nun's had been, nor did she display any less marvellous patience, so that all who saw her were amazed. God had indeed heard her prayer.

But He wasn't content to let her life end in such a senseless martyrdom. After returning to the convent, she slowly began to improve. Slowly indeed: 'When I began to get about on my hands and knees, I praised God,' she wrote later. 'All this I bore with great resignation, and, except at the beginning, with great joy ... I was quite resigned to the will of God, even if He had left me in this condition for ever.... [I] talked a great deal about God, in such a way that all were edified and astonished at the patience which the Lord gave me ...'

At this time she scrupulously avoided all evil-speaking, and determined especially not to speak ill of anyone in the slightest degree. 'I must not wish or say anything about anyone which I should not like to be said of me,' she resolved. And so perfect did she become in this austerity of speech that people knew they could turn their backs on her and yet be quite safe, they could unburden their hearts before her without fear. Those around her were so struck by this quality of innocence that they also made it a habit never to speak ill of anyone.

The rapid progress she had made in prayer at Becedas had given her a taste of divine love. It was this which had given her such fortitude in her sufferings, and it was this which she now wished to intensify. She began to yearn for health so that she could be alone when she prayed, for the infirmary offered no solitude.

As earthly doctors could do nothing for her, she turned to 'heavenly doctors'—the saints of the Church, to whom Catholics have always turned when they have had some special need to be fulfilled. Teresa chose St. Joseph, the father of Jesus, as her advocate before Christ. Her reasoning was this: just as Jesus in His earthly incarnation was a most obedient and loving son to Joseph, so now He listens to St. Joseph in the spiritual world, and most eagerly grants whatever St. Joseph asks of Him. She began to commend herself to this saint with deep devotion, and kept his yearly feast with the greatest solemnity. She also began to have masses said for her benefit. And St. Joseph, the lowly carpenter, accomplished what learned doctors had completely failed to do.

One day as she was crawling on all fours, she felt within herself the power to rise up. Slowly and carefully she raised herself onto her feet: after three years as an invalid, she could walk! Teresa was overwhelmed with joy. Now she would be allowed to return to her room where she could immerse herself in solitary prayer, now she could once again engage herself in God's service!

The other nuns were amazed at this miracle worked by St. Joseph. She for whom they had once dug a grave, was now attending choir again. Talk of the miracle filled the convent and spilled over into Avila. The towns people began to visit the convent to see for themselves.

'Doña Teresa de Ahumada is wanted in the parlour.' Teresa was sad to be called from her cell to meet the curious visitors. She had sought health only to be alone with God. But now she had to satisfy her

superiors, who were trying to capitalize on the miracle which had been worked in her. She was embarrassed to be the centre of so much attention.

But the more she was called to the parlour, the more she took interest in her visitors, for she had always had an inordinate desire to please people. Her grateful heart was warmed by the least show of kindness from others, and she began to give more and more of her time, attention, sympathy, and charm to her visitors. Soon she was happy to leave the solitude of her cell when called to the parlour.

During the last few years Don Alonso had grown closer to his daughter. Though always austere and deeply pious, there had been something missing in his religious life : genuine spirituality. This Teresa supplied, first by giving him Osuna's *Third Spiritual Alphabet* to read. Then, when she found that he was responsive, she began to teach him indirectly and tactfully what she had learned and experienced of mental prayer. He came often to the convent to talk with Teresa about God, and he began to progress in the contemplative life.

After Teresa's 'miracle', however, she herself began to fear mental prayer. Having been paralyzed for three years, and seriously ill for an even longer time, she felt such joy in her renewed vitality that she began to engage in vanities like most of the other nuns in the lax Convent of the Incarnation. She began to take more joy in meeting visitors than in thinking of God. This made her feel so guilty—for her ideals were still the highest—that she couldn't bear to face in prayer the God who had showered her with so many favours. So she punished herself with mediocrity : 'How can I presume to pray, I who have been so faithless and unkind to God? Am I better than these other nuns, that I should practise mental prayer while they who are so much more virtuous practise only the prescribed vocal prayers? She thus stopped practising mental prayer. A year after stopping, she told her father about it, though she gave as an excuse her bad health. (The effects of her paralysis continued intermittently until her fortieth year, and she was more or less ill all the rest of her life. Don Alonso, himself austerely truthful, accepted his daughter's words as the whole of the truth. But since Teresa had always had a horror of lies, she felt all the more guilty for using her illness as an alibi. Then, on Christmas Eve, 1543, Don Alonso de Cepeda died, leaving Teresa grief-stricken.

Teresa talked with her father's confessor about her spiritual problems. He told her not to give up mental prayer under any circumstances. Once again she began to pray, but for the next twelve years she was like a tiny boat tossed helplessly on a stormy sea. Her allegiance was divided between God and the world: when she was with God in prayer, she waited anxiously for the bell signalling the end of prayer time ; when she was engaged in vanities in the parlour or with the other nuns, she felt guilty for not thinking of God. Sometimes for months at a time she would regain her spiritual perspective, then again would be absorbed into the collective mediocrity which prevailed at the Incarnation.

Her spiritual directors understood neither her nor the mystical life ; they tried to persuade her that there was nothing wrong in joining in with the frivolities of the other nuns. The effect of this anti-contemplative advice was to reinforce in Teresa the false humility which said : 'Don't be so egoistic as to think that you can be a contemplative.' On the other hand, her deep sense of discrimination told her that she was wasting her life. Thus she was in danger of being torn in two by these conflicting tendencies.

Her misery was made worse by the fact that the nuns thought highly of her. They saw in her an unusual degree of sincerity,

selflessness, charity and sympathetic understanding. Yet her ideals were so high that even her virtue appeared, in her own eyes, vain and hypocritical. Thus, with her deep insight into her own failings and revulsion for hypocrisy, every word of praise from her sister-nuns seemed to lacerate her heart.

In this way days passed into weeks, weeks into months, months into years, but Teresa couldn't rise above her environment. She whose childhood had been so auspicious and who as an adolescent had been so spirited, she who at Becedas had progressed so rapidly in mental prayer and who even now was praised by all the nuns at the convent for her extraordinary virtue, feared that her life was doomed to failure.

*(To be continued)*

---

(*Contiuned from page* 258)

kind of shock therapy as a result of being involved in a grave accident, a desperate illness, or upon hearing some fatal news. 'From that day on,' he will say, 'I saw things differently.' Or, 'After that my outlook was no longer the same.' One may guess that massive injections of *japa* may work in a manner analogous, to produce a like effect : shaking or shocking or bending the mind toward a new orientation.

This case history would not be complete if I failed to mention a permanent consequence of that year's *purascaraṇa*. I find that I repeat the *mantra*, or rather that the *mantra* repeats itself, when the mind is 'in neutral'—when I am walking alone, when doing manual tasks, when preparing to sleep, when lying drowsily half-conscious before fully waking. We speak of such an ingrained habit as something that has become second nature. One may quip that in the case of *japa*, what has become second nature goes a long way toward prying open the sought-after first, or primary, nature.

But to conclude. I closed the years' *purascaraṇa* with the assurance that I was on the inside track at last. When the molecules blown up by *japa* had settled down, I found that I had become committed, that I had become an insider, a devotee.

---

(*Contiuned from page* 280)

is South Africa. But the fallout of the Rhodesian event is bound to have its disturbing effect in that country which even Gandhiji and the recent ostracism of international community could not change. Exploitation and oppression practised under whatever name are against the law of dharma and ultimately turn out to be self-defeating and self-destructive.

# REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE COSMIC WORSHIP: BY KUNDAN SINGH BHINDER. Published by Veekay Weekly, A-7 Giriraj Estate, Mahakali Road, Andheri (East), Bombay-400 093. 1977. Pp. ix+122. Rs. 10/-.

In India Indo-Anglian literature is not as rich as the indigenous literature. In the nineteenth century Miss Taru Datta (or Toru Dutt), who hailed from the same family as Swami Vivekananda, received high appreciation from the British readers for her poetical talent in English; and though Madhusudan Datta and others tried to follow suit in English, we cannot rate them as first-class poets compared with those who wrote in Indian languages. In the present century more Indian writers appeared in the sphere of Indo-anglian literature, but their modes of expression, romanticism and imagery were more Western than Indian. During the last twenty-five years they have changed their course and have been trying more and more to manifest the Indian elements in their images and expressions, though not at the expense of style. This consciousness has made Indo-anglian literature maturer, and more writers are coming up under the inspiration of Dr. P. Lal who is now running his literary workshop in Calcutta with many young writers. Ashok Mahajan, Nissim Ezikiel, Kamala Das, G. Patel, Ramanujam, K. Dharuwalla and other modern writers and poets are conscious that though they write in English they are Indians themselves, writing not only for the English-speaking Western people but for the English-knowing Eastern people as well. Mr. Kundan Singh Bhinder is one of the poets of this class. His philosophy is GOD whom he *feels* everywhere —in a sea-beach, at the Taj-Mahal, in a violin, in bees, in a farmer, and even in a doll-seller. And this is his worship—the cosmic worship.

In the book under review there are 159 poems which reveal the poet's simplicity of language, exalted romanticism, and a mystic mind. In some of the poems he is inclined to use abstract imagery whereas in others he is more a son-of-the-soil. As dates of composition are not mentioned, we are unable to trace the gradual evolution of his poet-spirit—from concrete to abstract, or otherwise. Here we present some of his characteristics.

He is not an escapist, rather he sees life as it is. He is conscious of human limitation, its lower self—'Many a time I welcome to map my desire/ And mark its frontier with many a red pin, (in *Desire*). or 'Where for an eagle I am known/ Eyes fleshy in a worldly desire' (in *The Spiritual Blind*); but he does not stop there as his heart yearns for the 'fragrance of a silence complete,. He wants something higher something sublime; he feels that 'there is another kind of joy very rare/ That which elevates us like a thing of air' (*Spiritual Joy*). The journey on the spiritual path seems hard for him—'It's like walking on a sharp edge of sword/ For how precarious it's for a trembling rope,/ To walk high above attractions of the world/ And fixing attention only on God for hope!' (*The Tight Rope Walker*). Ultimately he sees the signs of *His* coming 'to make a Temple of you and home!' And thus he becomes overwhelmed with joy; he cries out: 'I am all flower, flower!' This joy, this realization changes him completely; he is no more attracted by worldly glamour, he can now see the real beauty—the beauty of Light: 'What she sold out calling so sweet/ Was so nicely dressed for for [sic] a doll,/ But in her tattered clothes and bare feet/ The girl was more lovely than the doll!' (*The Doll Seller*).

In many a place the poet uses images which show his unique insight—'darkness comes like an unseen magic man', 'it is good to have a mountain blue' or 'Could I get me the photo-snaps/ Nothing of that kind I've seen here'—these are unique; but he excels in drawing small canvas-paintings in just two or three lines. On the Taj-Mahal when he writes—'It is a wondrous stone so soft and smooth/ ... It's snowy bosom holds for a frozen song/ A song that only knows how to wait and long!—we are simply charmed. Some more of such expressions may be presented here: 'today I'll ride to my death as a bride-groom/ Does to the house of his bride ...' (*Last Days of Guru Gobind Singh Ji*); 'I saw a child in his cot asleep/ ... And a mother in her love deep/ Looking at her child in fond delight/ ... For love in mother's eye I saw a tear' (*Mother and the Child*).

In Kundan Singh Bhinder's poems we do not find Mrs. Kamala Das's bold frankness, or Dharuwalla's reportage, or Ezikiel's confessions. He has not even experimented much with either words or rhythm like Shakti Chatterji in Bengali. Yet he is unique in his own way. Like Ashok Mahajan and Kamala Das, Bhinder has his philosophy. And his simplicity charms us most.

His poems are more of the nature of a soliloquy.

Get-up and printing of the book are good. There is a coloured picture of the famous Golden Temple, Amritsar, on the cover. The book is well designed for presentation to a dear one.

SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA
*Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta*

THE FIRE AND FLAME OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA : BY G. M. JAGTIANI, Published by the Author, D/22 Self-Help Housing Society, St. Francis Road, Vile Parle (West), Bombay-400 056. 1978. Pp. iv+75. Rs. 5/-.

Mary C. Funke described Swami Vivekananda as a 'man of fire and flame'. The author of the book under review has adopted those words to name his new book which describes how Vivekananda lived and inspired people to live the life of a Vedantist. Vedanta as a philosophy is very bold and speaks of the Truth frankly. Unlike other philosophies, it is based on practical application; it asks us to change ourselves first and then to change the world for a 'bright future'. Swamiji used to say : the Advaita must become living, poetic in everyday life. A man, however weak he is at first sight, is potentially divine and is a powerhouse of all strength. Swamiji was a paramount preacher of this philosophy. He said: 'My ideal indeed can be put into a few words, and that is to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.'

The author's aim is to inspire people to rise against all weakness, tyranny, privileges, superstition, and make their own journey to a New Life, which will combine both wisdom and strength. As an illustration, he speaks of Swami Vivekananda as an ideal man following whom all can proceed. Mr. Jagtiani narrates many incidents from Swamiji's life in a lucid and interesting style which will inspire the readers at the very first reading. He has also included some comments of some eminent writers and thinkers to show Swamiji's uniqueness.

The author also shows the right way to approach God. We should love, not fear, God. And if one loves God he can face both prosperity and adversity calmly. That is why Swamiji liked to worship both the benevolent and the malevolent aspects of God. We should also accept both the aspects, not a one-sided view of God.

In the last part of the book, 'Gems from the Gita', the author deals with some passages from the Gita and find, in them a corroboration of Swamiji's words. This a good attempt on the part of the author to show that in the modern age Swamiji made the Gita more acceptable to the people.

The first two parts where the author has expressed his love and offered his salutations to Swamiji will charm the readers.

There are some minor mistakes which should be corrected in the next edition of this book. On page 9 the author has written, 'Nobody is alive today who heard Swamiji face to face . . .' In Calcutta Mr. Hemchandra Ghosh is still alive who as a student met Swamiji in Dacca, now in Bangladesh. Inspired by Swamiji Mr. Ghosh became a revolutionary. It was to him that Swamiji said: 'Take it from me, the rising of Sudras will take place first in Russia, and then in China.' On page 20 the author has mentioned a book *Swami Vivekananda in America* by Sister Shivani. In fact, the book is *Swami Abhedananda in America.* The incident about the Bastille Fort which the author has narrated on page 25 does not tally with recorded history. That incident took place before the storming of the Bastille. And it was not the King but Queen Marie Antoinette who said : 'The people have no bread to eat? So what ! they can take cake instead.' At page 4 and also in the contents the author spelt the word *premopaharah* as *premo-paharah.* Except these minor mistakes the book is well written.

The book is worth-reading and the style is lucid. This should be kept by all students as a constant companion, to whom we say along with the author—'If you are not deaf, listen to him [Swami Vivekananda]. If you are not mute, spread the message to others.'

SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA
*Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta*

SATSANG NOTES OF SWAMI AMAR JYOTI : BY KESSLER FREY. Published by Anand Niketan Trust, 87-91 Lullanagar, Pune-411 001. India. 1978. Distributed by India Book House. Pp. iv+102. Rs. 10/-.

Few books on spiritual life do as much justice to the subject as this one does. Most of the books in the market today are just flippant and verbose or so highflown as to leave a fledgling seeker stuffed with generalized statements about the spiritual goal, suggesting nothing about the basic problems and solutions.

Kessler Frey has done a service to his Guru,

Swami Amar Jyoti, as well as to spiritual seekers in general by publishing these Satsang Notes. The notes were taken during a week's spiritual retreat at Sacred Mountain Ashram. Boulder. Colorado, in May 1976.

Swami Amar Jyoti teaches Jnana, more or less, as understood in Advaita Vedanta. One must possess some knowledge of this path and have struggled a little on it to be able to appreciate these notes. Beginning with the 'mental clouds which come out from the sub-conscious as we withdraw our attention from the outer stage of superfluous involvements ... and begin to go deeper within ... in meditation', the Swami has dealt with the 'cleansing process' of removing 'ego-blocks' until one attains to the highest knowledge of the Self.

The notes taken on each day of the retreat are arranged accordingly, day-wise, so that there is no particular arrangement of the topic discnssed, though Frey has given a lead-title to the notes of each day's discourse. The book is sectioned thus: Introdutory Preface; Preliminary Focus; Mental Clouds and the Childlike Simplicity; Levels of Life and Divine Life; Questions and Answers: Healing and Deserving Capacity; Bliss and Freedom of our Innate Perfection; Questions and Answers; Vibration, Angels, Liberated Souls, Karma; Ego and Elimination of Ego; Questions and Answers; Purpose of Marriage, Types of Egos, Levels of Growth or Evolution; Sincerity and Devotion; Morning Reflection; Looking Back, Looking Forward; The Cosmic Dream and Its Dreamer; Reflection on Knowledge and Devotion; Last Session of Retreat.

Regarding self-surrender to the Divine, like that of a child to its parents, the Swami says that it is based upon a deep bond of trust and love, and is without even a trace of weakness and dependence. Surrender means coming in tune with God or (Divine) Nature which is egolessness. 'Humility can vanish negativity in a flash....' Concerning one's day-to-day activities and attitudes, he says: 'As long as the results of what you do are peace, joy, and harmony, what you are doing is right. In the deeper Human relationships ... based on a spiritual outlook there is no insecurity, jealousy or possessiveness to pollute the inner atmosphere.... Divine life is a transformation of life, not a renunciation. If we occupy ourselves thinking about how good we are or how bad we are, etc., then we separate our consciousness from living contact with the deeper reality of joy within....' In contrast to the trend in contemporary society to assert and glorify the mundane and sensate ego, the Swami rightly points out that 'the essential thing in any religious life is to eliminate ego. Yet egolessness is a common trap of self-deception and subtle pride on the spiritual path.'

Being retreat-notes, as much ground as possible has been covered, keeping in mind the audience. Readers need not be unduly disturbed by certain phrases not usually found in standard books on Vedanta: mental clouds, ego-blocks, negativity, energy-tank , energy-leaks, vacuum cave of meditation in the brain, etc. It is just old wine in a new bottle. Sections are interleaved with sketches by Ronnye Russel, suggestive of some teachings of Swami Amar Jyoti.

The Swami's teachings are quite safe to be recommended for useful reading.

SWAMI ATMARAMANANDA
*Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta*

AT THE FEET OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA: BY SWAMI VIJNANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mangaladevi Road, Mangalore-575 001. 1978. Pp. 66. Rs. 3/-.

The book is a collection of articles elucidating mainly the lives and immortal message of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda in an easily intelligible style. The author has made a fruitful effort to bring to light the many facets of the teachings of these great spiritual leaders of mankind. He has shown the relevance and the immense importance of the application of these sayings in our modern technological, restless life. 'What is religion' is a splendid article in which we find the depth of the author's thinking. He clarifies the essential features of a true religion in a logical and convincing way. In the last article there is an unambiguous presentation of Ramanuja's philosophy.

This small book may not give a depth study of the topics dealt with, but it surely kindles a spark of interest to study and understand more.

SWAMI MUKTIRUPANANDA
*Narendrapur, W.B.*

# NEWS AND REPORTS

## RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA VRINDABAN

### REPORT FOR APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979

Begun in 1907 as a small homoeopathic dispensary, the Sevashrama has grown into a well-equipped, 121-bed allopathic hospital serving the needs of the large indigenous as well as floating population of Vrindaban and its neighbouring districts. The hospital has departments of General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Dentistry, General Medicine, and a Homoeopathic Out-patient Clinic. The General Surgery Department performed wide variety of operations including E.N.T., orthopaedic, cancer and gynaecology; a neuro-surgeon has recently joined the faculty. Facilities exist for conducting electrocardiography, radiography, physiotherapy and basic laboratory tests. Also worthy of mention are the Ophthalmic Out-patient Department and the 8-bed Cancer-Ward. In order to make available the services of the Ophthalmic Department to the rural population, a fortnightly out-patient eye clinic is conducted at Kosi-kalan, a small town 38 km. from Vrindaban, for patients from the surrounding villages. An eye camp is also organized there once a year.

During the year the In-patient Department treated 4,451 patients, the total patient-days being 29,414. Operations of various types in the department numbered 1,343. Free and part-free treatment was given to 28% and 8% respectively of the in-patients.

The total attendance at the Out-patient Department was 2,76,374, new cases numbering 55,507 and operations 507. All out-patients receive free consultation and medicines. A large number also get the benefit of free investigations.

The Homoeopathic Clinic treated 5,004 cases, the Radiology Department handled 4,341 tests and the Clinical Laboratory made 20,251 examinations of various kinds.

*Future Plans*: (*a*) Being located in a rural area, it is difficult to attract a sufficient staff of nurses. To overcome this perennial problem, the Sevashrama hopes to establish a nursing school of its own. (*b*) In order to achieve diagnostic excellence and deliver quality health care, equipment is necessary for a modern laboratory in which a wide spectrum of tests may be conducted. (*c*) In order to achieve excellence in diagnostic radiology, specialized X-ray equipment is needed which can detect diseases involving arteries, veins, brain, kidneys and other vital organs. (*d*) An 8-bed intensive care unit with monitoring facilities is needed to help the Sevashrama save more lives. (*e*) India ranks third in the world in the number of head injuries. Yet with a population of 660 million, 528 million of whom live in villages, there are only about 100 neurosurgeons, most of whom are in big neurosurgical centres in cities. In order to overcome this gross imbalance, in health-care delivery, the Sevashrama wishes to establish a Neurosurgical Unit. (*f*) A large percentage of the illnesses that are prevalent in India are directly related to poverty, ignorance and lack of sanitation. The Sevashrama wishes to participate in the eradication of communicable diseases through education of the community, training of health workers, and adoption of some nearby villages whose total health care would be covered by the institution. (*g*) An incinerator is needed for the scientific disposal of wastes in order to prevent the possibility of disease transmission.

*Immediate Needs*: (*a*) The financial position of the institution is not very good. The ever-increasing cost of foodstuffs, medicines, appliances, etc. has taken the expenditure beyond the slender resources of the Sevashrama. In view of this, the generous public is requested to contribute liberally to the Hospital Maintenance Fund. (b) Persons desirous of endowing beds in memory of their loved ones may do so by donating Rs. 30,000 per bed. (*c*) Donations may also be made for any of the items listed under 'Future Plans' above.

All donations may kindly be sent to the following address, specifying the purpose: The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, Dist. Mathura (U.P.) 281 121.

# LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

## *The Rhodesian Event*

One of the most significant events in the history of Africa took place recently in what was till then known as Rhodesia and now called Zimbabwe. After pursuing, ostrich-like, unrealistic policies for years, the white rulers saw the writing on the wall and decided to give the country back to the people to whom it really belonged.

A land-locked plateau with a moderate climate, Zimbabwe is a little bigger in size than the State of Madhya Pradesh in India. Out of its population of 6.5 millions, Europeans make up only 4.5 per cent, and yet they not only own half the agricultural land but also ruled the country as a British colony for nearly a century. When the wave of African awakening hit Rhodesia in the fifties, Ian Smith, the Prime Minister of the white government, made a unilateral declaration of independence and broke away from Britain in order to avoid sharing of power with the blacks. Most nations condemned the racial discrimination, and through the U.N. applied economic sanctions against that country. However, what finally shattered the futile dreams of racial chauvinism was the bloody seven-year guerilla war waged by militant blacks under the leadership of Mugabe and Nkoma—both avowed Marxists.

The general election which swept the blacks into power was unique for more than one reason. It has demonstrated that there is no socio-political problem which cannot be peacefully solved through the non-violent democratic process. It has disproved the unwarranted thesis of white people that the blacks still retain the tribal mentality and are not ready for nationhood. The astounding 93 per cent turn out of Bantu-speaking black voters is an index of the social awareness and self-determining commitment of the people. It has also shown that, when the scale of prejudice fall from the eyes of white people, they will recognize the same qualities of which they are proud in the black people also. Credit must also be given to the British Government for its timely and impartial intervention and its generous acceptance of the right of black people to determine their own future.

Robert Mugabe, the new Prime Minister, whose party won 57 of the 80 black seats in the 100 member House of Assembly, revealed the innate goodness of the African race by his conciliatory and liberal policies and actions. His broad-based cabinet includes several whites, and he has retained whites in key government posts. Though the willingness of several whites to work in co-operation with the blacks for the common good of the new nation is commendable, this may only be a temporary phase. For the indications are that many whites may leave that country very soon. Human vanity does not so easily surrender itself to reality.

The only country still defiantly holding out in the name of racial chauvinism

*(Contiuned on page 275)*