



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 86

OCTOBER 1981

No. 10

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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

अहं रुद्रेभिर्वसुभिश्चरा-

म्यहमादित्यैरुत विश्वदेवैः ।

अहं मित्रावरुणोभा बिभर्-

म्यहमिन्द्राग्नी अहमश्विनोभा ॥

1. I move with the Rudras, with the Vasus, with the Ādityas and all the gods. I support Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, Agni and the two Aśvins.

Rg-Veda 10.125.1

अहं सोममाहनसं बिभर्-

म्यहं त्वष्टारमुत पूषणं भगं ।

अहं दधामि द्रविणं हविष्मते

सुप्राव्ये यजमानाय सुन्वते ॥

2. I support Soma, the destroyer of foes. I also support Tvaṣṭar and Pūṣan. I bestow wealth upon him who offers sacrifice and pours oblation.

Rg-Veda 10.125.2

* Given here are the opening verses of one of the most important and beautiful hymns in the whole of *Rg-Veda*. The *Caṇḍī* (*Devīmāhātmya*) refers to it as the *Devī-Sūktam* by which name it has become famous. Thousands of people recite it every day as a hymn dear to the Divine Mother.

The hymn is remarkable for several reasons. One is that its seer or author is a woman, named here Vāk and supposed to be the daughter of the Ṛṣi Ambhr̥ṇa. The deity of the hymn is also Vāk, the Word, the Divine Mother in the form of speech. Another unique feature is that, as Sāyaṇa believes, the seer of the hymn speaks of herself as divine. Some other commentators believe that the 'I' in the hymn refers not to the daughter of the Ṛṣi but to goddess Vāk who reveals herself through her. In the *Atharva-Veda* (4.70) where also this hymn occurs, the goddess Vāk is understood as speaking on herself, and names the Ṛṣi as Atharva. A third feature of the hymn is that it is yet another expression of the idea of unity in diversity. The deity is here regarded as the supreme Power which supports all creation. The roots of Śakti worship are very clearly indicated here. Sāyaṇa, however, takes the hymn to be a glorification of Brahman and Māyā.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the importance of heart as a spiritual centre in meditation.

Swami Prabhananda, former Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia, presents in FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA a revealing study of Kalipada Ghosh, a bohemian who was, like his friend Girish Chandra Ghosh, transformed by Sri Ramakrishna into a staunch devotee and spiritual personality.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICA by Sumitora Noma, Secretary, Nippon Vedanta Kyokai (Vedanta Society of Japan) is a brief study of Swamiji's influence on Western thought.

We are happy to bring to our readers a beautiful article THE MESSAGE OF DIVALI by

Dr. Donald Szantho Harrington, Minister in the Community Church of New York. Originally preached at a Sunday service on October 12, 1980, this article is remarkable not only for its breath of religious sympathy, but also for its depth of insight into the meaning of the myths and festivals of Hinduism, and reveals a mind of a very high order.

In SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VISION OF MAN Dr. Tulsi Ram, B.A. (Hons.), M.A., Ph. D. (London), tries to show the similarity between the West's re-interpretation of Christianity during the Renaissance and Swami Vivekananda's re-interpretation of Hinduism in modern times. The author is Professor of English at Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, Rajasthan.

THE INNER SHRINE

(EDITORIAL)

The living temple

An interesting story is told about Pūsala Nāyanār, one of the sixty-three canonical Śaiva saints of the Tamil country. He was very poor but cherished an intense desire to build a huge temple for his beloved Lord Śiva. One day the Lord asked him in a vision to build the temple in his own soul. So with great care and concentration he started building the interior temple brick by brick. To him it was not imagination or fantasy. His great faith and devotion made it real to him. Day after day he 'worked' hard, meticulously planning and constructing the *gopura*, the outer walls, the main shrine, the *vimāna*, the flagstaff, the tank, even the sacred bull Nandi, one after the other. He was absorbed in the task for several years.

At last the mental temple was complete. It so happened that the king of the country too had started more or less at the same time to build an actual magnificent temple with stone and mortar. After its completion he fixed a date for its *kumbhābhiṣeka* (consecration). But Lord Śiva appeared to him in a dream and asked him to postpone the ceremony as on the very same day He had to attend the *kumbhābhiṣeka* of another temple built by His beloved devotee. The king at once sent out his men to search for that great devotee. Pūsala Nāyanār was at last discovered and was persuaded to become the priest in the actual temple built by the king.

This beautiful story illustrates two important points. One is that the essence of worship is love. As a well-known Sanskrit saying puts it, 'God accepts only the spirit

of worship.¹ It is not the quantity of flowers and food that is offered to God that matters but the degree of love and sincerity behind the act. It is this idea that forms the basis of *mānasa-pūjā* (mental worship). In all forms of Hindu ritualistic worship known as a *pūjā*, external worship is invariably preceded by internal worship in which all the items of external worship are offered to the Deity mentally.² This is not mere pious imagination. Rather, it is an attempt to internalize the aspirant's feelings so that they may be disciplined and integrated into meditation. If *mānasa-pūjā* is done with concentration, it becomes a form of meditation.

The second point in the story of Pūsala Nāyanār is the divinity of the human soul. All the schools of Vedānta agree that the human personality consists of three parts—body, mind and spirit—and that the individual spirit (Jīvātman) is a real or illusory part of the Supreme Spirit (Paramātman or Brahman). Every man and woman carries in his or her soul the immortal light of the Spirit. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'You may invent an image through which to worship God, but a better image already exists, the living man. You may build a temple in which to worship God, and that may be good, but a better one, a much higher one, already exists, the human body.'³

One of the minor Upaniṣads says, 'The body is the temple of Śiva; all human desires are fulfilled there.'⁴ Another

Upaniṣad states, 'The body is the temple of God, and the individual Self is Śiva, the Absolute.'⁵ A similar idea is found in the Tantras.⁶ In Vedānta God is regarded as the Paramātman or Puruṣottama, the Supreme Self, who dwells in all souls as the *antaryāmī*, the Inner Controller. Great importance is attached to the knowledge of this eternal, spiritual relationship between God and the soul. The Upaniṣads even go to the extent of saying that anyone who performs worship without this knowledge is an ignorant person and will be treated as cattle by the gods.⁷

The position is slightly different in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. St. Paul declared, 'Ye are the temple of the living God.'⁸ St. Augustine taught the divine origin and unique character of the human soul and its immortal destiny. Some of the early Christian mystics and gnostics believed in the divinity of the human soul. But later theologians emphasized man's fall and the tainting of the soul by sin. However, Catholic theologians hold that God as the Holy Spirit becomes an 'Indwelling' in the souls of Christian believers through baptism.

The eternal, intrinsic and inalienable divinity of all human souls is thus a unique doctrine of Vedānta. The lay-out of the Hindu temple closely resembles the structure of the human personality. The outer wall, the main shrine and the sanctum of the temple correspond to the body, mind and the heart respectively. As the sanctum is the most important part of the temple, so is the heart the most vital part of the human personality.

1. भावग्राही जनार्दनः ।

2. According to Hindu tradition when a priest or a monk does *pūjā* in a temple, the external part of the worship becomes *parārtha*, that is, he will not get its benefit which will go to the devotees. Only the mental worship (*mānasa-pūjā*) will be *ātmartha*, that is, its benefit will be his own.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976), vol. 2, p. 313.

4. देहं शिवालयं प्रोक्तं सिद्धिदं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।

Yoga-Sikhopaniṣad 1.168

5. देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तः स जीवः केवलः शिवः ।

Maitreyī-Upaniṣad 2.1

6. देहो देवालयो देवि जीवो देवः सदाशिवः ।

Kulārṇava Tantra 9.41

7. न स वेद, यथा पशुरेवं स देवानाम् ।

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.10

8. 2 Corinthians 6.16.

The spiritual heart

The word 'heart' is used to mean three different things having a common locale : the anatomical heart, the emotional heart and the spiritual heart. Of these the first one is known to all. The second one is the emotional centre in us about which poets speak. It is the point where the two psychic channels *idā* and *piṅgalā* unite to form a 'knot', the *viṣṇu granthi*.⁹ It is the seat of higher feelings and sentiments. The third heart, the spiritual heart, is the centre of higher consciousness. It is the seat of the Ātman, true Self. It is also the centre where the devotee meditates on the form of his *iṣṭa devatā*, Chosen Deity.

The true spiritual heart is not known to all. It is something to be discovered or awakened. Most aspirants when asked to meditate in the heart succeed in concentrating only at the emotional heart. Devotional exercises like prayer and worship at first activate the emotional heart, and then gradually awaken the spiritual heart. But in the path of knowledge the aspirant goes straight to the spiritual heart through self-analysis. This is an important difference between the two paths. The true spiritual heart is beyond emotions. It is the real centre of meditation for both the Bhakta and the Jñāni.

Meditation is consciously directing a single stream of thought towards a higher spiritual centre—usually the heart. For this the mind must first of all be fixed at that centre. This process of 'tying the mind down at a particular centre' is called *dhāraṇā*.¹⁰ But this becomes possible only when the real spiritual heart is discovered. The main

reason why many people find their mind wandering during meditation is that they have not found the real spiritual heart. The mind cannot be fixed at an imaginary place.

Why is the real spiritual heart difficult to discover? According to the Yogis, this is so because it exists in a dormant state in the majority of people. According to Vedānta the heart is not seen because it is covered by ignorance, past impressions, desires and other impurities. Says the Upaniṣad, 'The Ātman is difficult to see because it is lodged inaccessibly deep in the cave of the heart which is itself situated in the midst of misery.'¹¹ that is, in the body and the senses which are the source of many miseries, explains Śaṅkara. As the mind gets purified, the true heart emerges to the surface of consciousness.

Discovering the spiritual heart

The awareness of the spiritual heart comes as an inner experience. When a beginner sits for meditation, he normally feels everything 'solid' within him. But as he advances in the spiritual path, he begins to feel a space in the region of the heart which may later on appear luminous. He then finds that this new spiritual centre holds his meditative thought firmly without allowing it to get dispersed, as a magnet holds iron filings. But for this the impurities covering the heart must be at least partially removed and the waste of psychic energy through lust and anger must be checked. Along with this the aspirant must have intense aspiration. When psychic energy is conserved and concentrated and is brought to a certain degree of tension through aspiration, it gradually awakens the spiritual heart, and through the purified mind one perceives it.

9. The two channels unite again near the eyebrows to form another knot, the *śiva-granthi* which is the seat of higher intellectual life. See November '80 Editorial, p. 444.

10. देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा ।

Patañjali, *Yoga-Sūtra* 31

11. तं दुर्दृशं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं

गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम् ।

Katha-Upaniṣad 2.12

There are certain spiritual disciplines which either quicken the process of awakening or enable the aspirant to feel the heart-centre even before the awakening has taken place. One of these is prayer. For many people prayer is only a passive expression of some wish or desire. Such casual, weak, unconscious prayers cannot be called a spiritual discipline. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'By prayer one's subtle powers are easily roused, and if consciously done, all desires may be fulfilled by it; but done unconsciously, one perhaps in ten is fulfilled.'¹² Prayer becomes a spiritual discipline only when it becomes an exercise of will and is consciously cultivated for a long time. Intense prayer quickens the emotional heart which then guides the meditative thought unerringly to the spiritual heart.

The emotions of most people are invested on various external objects, and so remain scattered without any centralized control. Prayer brings emotional energy to a focus in the heart-centre. All the important sense organs are situated in the region of the head, and the brain which is the seat of all thinking and intellectual activities is also situated there. Many people therefore find it easier and more natural to practise concentration at the brain-centre, and find it rather difficult to bring the mind to the heart-centre. Prayer overcomes this difficulty.

Among the well-known traditional prayers, the Gāyatrī is specifically meant for the awakening of the spiritual heart which was known in Vedic times as *dhī*. In this prayer the aspirant looks upon the sun as a symbol of Brahman and prays for the awakening of the *dhī*. When repeated with intense devotion, the mystic cadences of this prayer reverberate in the heart and produce great changes there. It is said of Sri Ramakrishna's father Khudiram that every morning and evening during the Sandhyā prayers

he would repeat the Gāyatrī with so much devotion and concentration that his chest became flushed and from his closed eyes flowed tears of love.¹³ Prayer will reveal its transforming power only when it is done with such intense aspiration.

Another method which helps in locating the spiritual heart is to find out the locus of the witness (*sākṣin*) in us. There are two ways of doing this. One is to try to eliminate all other thoughts except the 'I' and then to follow the trail of 'I' to its source by a backward focussing of consciousness. One may think this is like putting a car in the reverse gear and backing it into the garage. The inner process is however not as easy as that. Rather, it is like diving into a strong whirlpool and trying to find out its bottom. In the second technique thoughts are not eliminated but are allowed to rise freely. A little introspection will reveal that thoughts are always rising within us from some mysterious source and that, at a certain point, we become aware of them. What is that point? Through a process of internal listening we can detect it; this point marks the spiritual heart. The internal listening is easier to do while repeating a *mantra* mentally.

Even those who do not try these methods will also in due course come to know of the spiritual heart if they practise spiritual disciplines sincerely. For all spiritual paths lead to the door of the heart.

The real nature of the spiritual heart

What is this spiritual heart we have been speaking about? It is the higher intuitive faculty called *buddhi* through which spiritual knowledge comes.¹⁴ According to Yoga-

12. *Complete Works*, vol. 5 (1973), p. 325.

13. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1970), p. 25.

14. तत्रोपलभ्यमानत्वात् ।

Śamkara, Commentary on *Katha Upaniṣad* 2.12

Vedānta psychology human mind has two dimensions or layers: a higher one called *buddhi* and a lower one called *manas*. The main function of *manas* is to classify information received through the senses and also to detect internal sensations like pain and pleasure. The *buddhi* is the determining faculty which plays an important function in decision-making and judgement. While *manas* analyses facts, *buddhi* synthesizes them. In ordinary life only a small part of *buddhi* comes into operation; the rest remains hidden or dormant. As the mind gets purified, the *buddhi* manifests itself more and more. It is the awakening of the dormant *buddhi* that produces supersensuous perception, commonly known as spiritual experience. Therefore the *buddhi* is not merely the 'intellect' but also the faculty of higher intuition. In the Vedic Mantras it is called *dhī*. The Upaniṣads describe it as the 'heart', 'the lotus of the heart', the 'cave of the heart', etc.¹⁵

The *Taittirīyopaniṣad* speaks of the pure Ātman or Brahman as being covered by five *kośas* or sheaths: the sheath of physical body, the sheath of *prāṇa*, the sheath of *manas*, the sheath of *viññāna* and the sheath of bliss. Of these it is the fourth sheath known as *viññānamaya-kośa* that constitutes the *buddhi* or the heart. Within this sheath dwells the Ātman which is self-luminous.¹⁶ The *buddhi* being made of pure *sattva* elements transmits the light of Ātman freely, just as in an electric bulb the glass transmits the light produced by the filament which it encloses. In his masterly commen-

tary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* Śrī Śaṅkara explains the way the *buddhi* functions: 'The *buddhi* is the instrument that helps us in perceiving everything, like a lamp placed in front amidst darkness. It has been said, "It is through the mind that one sees and hears." Every object is perceived only with the help of the light of the *buddhi*, as objects in the dark are lighted up by a lamp placed in front. The other organs are but channels for the *buddhi*.... The *buddhi* being transparent and nearest to the Ātman instantly reflects the radiance of the Ātman. Therefore even wise men identify themselves with the *buddhi* first. Next to that is the *manas* which catches the reflection of the Ātman coming through the *buddhi*; next come the sense organs which receive the reflection through the *manas*; and lastly comes the body which gets the reflection through the sense organs. Thus the Ātman successively illumines with its own consciousness the entire aggregate of body and organs.'¹⁷

The inner shrine

We have seen that the heart is the locus of the Ātman. The Advaitins hold that Ātman and Brahman are one and the same. According to them the Jīvātman or individual self is nothing but the all-pervading Brahman limited by the *viññānamaya-kośa* or *buddhi*. But the dualists hold that the Jīvātman and Brahman are distinct realities, though Brahman indwells in all souls as the Paramātman or Supreme Self. Thus the heart becomes not only the abode of the Jīvātman but also the inner shrine, the sanctum, of God. As Sri Ramakrishna puts it, 'A landlord may at one time or another visit all parts of his estate, but people say he is generally to be found in a particular drawing room. The

15. The *Buddhi* is commonly translated as the 'intellect' but it is perhaps more correct to translate it as the 'heart', for what is popularly called intellect is only a higher aspect of *manas*.

16. कतम आत्मेति ? योऽयं विज्ञानमयः प्राणेषु
हृद्यन्तर्ज्योतिः ।

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.7

17. Śrī Śaṅkara, Commentary on *ibid*.

heart of the devotee is the drawing-room of God.¹⁸

The Bhakta looks upon God as the Supreme Person, and worships one particular aspect of His known as the devotee's *iṣṭa-devatā* or Chosen Deity. He installs the image of the Chosen Deity in the inner shrine (heart) and regards his own higher Self (Ātman or Jīvātman) as the altar-light constantly burning before the deity. And his lower self or ego offers unceasing worship at this interior shrine. A true devotee converts every action and every thought into internal worship. The attitude of such a devotee has been beautifully described by Śrī Śaṅkara in one of his hymns as follows: 'O Lord, Thou art my Self and the Divine Mother is my *buddhi*. My vital airs are Thy attendants, my body is Thy temple, my enjoyment of different objects is Thy *pūjā*, my sleep is my meditation on Thee, my walking is a circumambulation and the words I utter are all hymns to Thee. O beneficent Lord, whatsoever I do is all worship offered to Thee.'¹⁹

For a true devotee meditation is only an intensification of worship. During meditation the deity may be visualized in two ways. One is to imagine that the deity is seated in front of you facing you; the other is to imagine that the deity is seated within you facing the same direction as you are.

18. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974), p. 62.

19. आत्मा त्वं गिरिजा मतिः सहचराः प्राणाः

शरीरं गृहं

पूजा ते विषयोपभोगरचना निद्रा

समाधिस्थितिः ।

सञ्चारः पदयोः प्रदक्षिणविधिः स्तोत्राणि

सर्वा गिरा

यद्यत्कर्म करोमि तत्तदखिलं शंभो तवाराधनम् ॥

Śivamānas-pūjā 4

The former method is followed by the aspirant who follows the path of knowledge or tries to combine it with the path of devotion. He gives more importance to his Self. He merges his ego in the light of the Ātman. He looks upon the deity in front of him only as a symbol of Brahman. Even while meditating on the deity, he constantly maintains Self-awareness. It is Spirit worshipping Spirit. This awareness of the Self eliminates the aspirant's ego-consciousness.

The second method of visualization is practised by those who follow the path of devotion as taught in the Tantras. Here both the deity and the devotee face the same direction. In this method more importance is given to the image of the deity than to the aspirant's higher Self. The emphasis is more on devotion than on Self-awareness. This kind of visualization is more difficult than the first but it has certain advantages over the other. One is that it externalizes the ego. (In the first method the ego is merged in the higher Self, whereas in the second method the ego is simply pushed out). The ego, as it were, vacates its throne in the heart and comes out of the inner shrine as a humble worshipper. The deity is installed on the altar-throne in the heart which had earlier been usurped by the ego. The second advantage of this kind of visualization is that it imparts a greater sense of depth or interiority to meditation. A third advantage is that it enables the aspirant to mentally turn his back upon the external world. In ordinary life we usually sit or stand facing the world. Therefore if, during meditation, we visualize the deity as sitting in front of us facing us, then our natural tendency will be to look beyond the deity at the world outside. This is avoided in the second type of visualization where the deity is made to face the world. In order to look at the deity the aspirant (ego) has to turn his back upon the world. Of course all this is done mentally through imagination. But the psychological effects it produces are real

and so it has a deep spiritual significance.

These two types of visualization are meant for aspirants of two different temperaments. Both are equally effective if practised with intensity of fervour and purity of mind. What really matters is not what method of visualization you follow but how you practise it. Meditation becomes effective only when you instal a living Image in the inner shrine. For this the true spiritual heart must be discovered through inner purification and intense aspiration, and the light of the Spirit must be kept burning there. Otherwise meditation will only remain an exercise of imagination, often creating a falsely spiritual ego.

Sri Ramakrishna illustrates this point with an interesting parable.

There lived in a village a young man named Padmalochan. People used to call him 'Podo', for short. In this village there was a temple in a very dilapidated condition. It contained no image of God. Aswattha and other plants sprang up on the ruins of the walls. Bats lived inside, and the floor was covered with dust and the droppings of the bats. The people of the village had stopped visiting the temple. One day after dark the villagers heard the sound of a conch-shell from the direction of the temple. They thought perhaps someone had installed an image in the shrine and was performing the evening worship. One of them softly opened the door and saw Padmalochan standing in a corner, blowing the conch. No image had been set up. The temple hadn't been swept or washed. And filth and dirt lay everywhere. Then he shouted to Podo :

You have set up no image here,
Within the shrine, O fool !
Blowing the conch, you simply make
Confusion worse confounded,
Day and night eleven bats
Scream there incessantly ...

There is no use in merely making a noise if you want to establish the Deity in the shrine of your heart, if you want to realize God. First of all purify the mind. In the pure heart God takes His seat. One cannot bring the holy image into the temple if the droppings of bats are all around. The eleven bats are our eleven

organs : five of action, five of perception and the mind.²⁰

Opening the inner shrine

The discovery of the inner shrine is only the first step in spiritual life. The discovery that beyond the jungles and gorges of passions, memories, dreams and thoughts, man carries within him a golden temple filled with the radiance of divine Presence is a very significant event in the aspirant's life. It gives goal-orientation to his efforts, faith in the truth of the scriptures, courage to face the difficulties of life and hope in a brighter future. But it does not give him fulfilment until the inner shrine opens. How does the inner shrine open ?

We have seen that according to Śrī Śaṅkara the light of the Ātman is reflected successively through the *buddhi*, the *manas*, the senses and the body. In ordinary life this inner light (and power) is all projected outward. It is with this light that we see the various objects of the external world. If we want to realize the Ātman or God, we must turn this light inward. How to do this ? We have to reverse the process described by Śaṅkara. First the senses are to be turned inward. Then the *manas* (ordinary mind) has to be turned inward by focussing it at the heart ; this is what we try to do during meditation. This can be properly done only when we begin to feel at least vaguely the true spiritual heart deep within us. When the heart holds the mind steady, the image of the deity meditated upon becomes vivid, other thoughts are hushed and we experience some peace and joy. Ordinary aspirants usually do not try to go beyond this stage. Satisfied with the illusory peace of meditation, there they stay put—often for many years—until the mind is purified, the resistance of the ego is over-

²⁰. *The Gospel*, p. 53.

come and the *granthi* (knot) of the heart is loosened.

The next step is to turn the *buddhi* inward. As the light and power (Will) of the *buddhi* are focussed inward at their true source, the door of the inner shrine opens revealing the ethereal effulgence of the Ātman. This is a spontaneous and overwhelming experience which Bhaktas believe is possible only by the grace of God. That is why the Upaniṣads describe God as the Prime Mover 'who turns the light [reflected by] the *buddhi* back upon the Ātman.'²¹

Sri Ramakrishna elucidates this ancient truth in his simple way as follows : 'But God can be seen the moment His grace descends. He is the Sun of Knowledge. On single ray of His has illumined the world with the light of knowledge. That is how we are able to see one another and acquire varied knowledge. One can see God only if He turns His light toward His own face. The police sergeant goes his rounds in the dark of night with a lantern [the bull's-eye lantern which is dark on three sides] in his hand. No one sees his face ; but with the help of that light the sergeant sees everybody's face, and others too can see one another. If you want to see the sergeant, you must pray to him, "Sir, please turn the light on your own face. Let me see you." In the same way one must pray to God : "O Lord, be gracious

and turn the light of knowledge on Thyself, that I may see Thy face."'²²

Everywhere in the Upaniṣads the heart is described as filled with the light of Ātman. When the inner shrine opens, the aspirant sees the image (of the deity he had been meditating upon) illumined by this 'un-created light'. This experience has been described with extraordinary felicity by the great poet Shelley in a remarkably beautiful poem.

Within a cavern of man's trackless Spirit
Is throned an Image so intensely fair
That the adventurous thoughts that wander near it
Worship ; and as they kneel, tremble and wear
The splendour of its presence. And the light
Penetrates their dream-like frame
Till they become charged with the strength of
flame.

The Ātman or the Spirit is trackless as it is beyond all names and forms. But limited by the *buddhi*, it appears as a cave. The divine Image that appears in this cave is illumined by the light of the Ātman. Overwhelmed by this experience the mind remains motionless, bathed in the inner effulgence. Paraphrased thus, this verse provides an astonishingly accurate description of the inner shrine.

It is in imitation of the inner shrine that man raises temples of stone and brick in the outer world. God can be worshipped in different ways. But the best form of worship is offered at the inner shrine through meditation.

²¹. तं ह देवम् आत्मबुद्धिप्रकाशं . . .

Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad 6.18

²². *The Gospel*, p. 107.

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : KALIPADA GHOSH*

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Smt. Krishnapriyngini had become embittered and cynical, for in spite of all efforts, she had not been able to rectify the ways of her husband Kalipada Ghosh. In desperation she came one day with some other women to offer *pūjā* to Mother Kālī at Dakshineswar. There she met Sri Ramakrishna and, finding in him a sympathetic listener, unburdened her tale of woe. Her husband had fallen into evil company and was bringing ruin on the family. She prayed to Sri Ramakrishna for some remedy. Loathe to make use of occult power, particularly for alleviating material afflictions, Sri Ramakrishna refused to give her a charm. However, out of deep sympathy—tinged with his irrepressible sense of humour—he also did not dismiss her outright. He advised her to go to the music tower saying, ‘There lives a woman. She knows such *mantras* and charms, and in this matter her power is superior to mine.’

Sri Sarada Devi was then at worship. She gave a patient hearing to the woman, but persuaded her to approach Sri Ramakrishna again for some help. Sri Ramakrishna was happy that the fun had worked. Again he sent her to Sarada Devi. Thus tossed back and forth thrice the poor Krishnapriya was much confused. This time Sarada Devi took pity and consoled her. Giving her a *bilva* leaf out of the offerings made to the deity she said, ‘Take this with you, my child; this will fulfil your desire.’¹ Sri

Ramakrishna too assured her, saying, ‘Kalipada belongs to this place. Don’t worry at all. He will come back here in the near future.’² Amazingly, Kalipada began to change for the better. In course of time he even became a prominent devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and his wife too realized that the world was no place of mirth, but neither was it the place of continuous sorrow she had once thought it to be.

Kalipada was born on a new moon day in 1849 to the Ghosh family of Shyampur, Calcutta. His father Gurudas Ghosh, a petty trader in jute, was very much a man of the world but was also well known for his piety and devotion to Mother Kālī. His mother Menakabala was dutiful, pious, kind-hearted and generous. She exerted considerable influence in moulding the character of the boy. As for the lad Kalipada, he was so unusually lively that he could hardly keep himself confined within the walls of a classroom. His interests were wide-ranging: music, composition of songs, dramatics, cooking, etc. Since early childhood he was stubborn, which proved in time to be a dominant trait of his character. But there was another side to him which was ready to submit and adore.

Too poor to allow his son to continue his education beyond class eight, Gurudas found a job for the boy as shop-assistant with Messrs. John Dickinson Co. It seemed at first that he was fated to continue his unpromising lot. But he was a man of driving energy. His dedication and enthusiasm won him the respect of his superiors, and his intelligence, diligence and above all his per-

* The author wishes to express his gratitude to Sri Jitendranath Ghosh, grandson of Kalipada Ghosh, for helping him in the collection of material for this article.

¹ Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2nd edition), pp. 124-25.

² Akshay Kumar Sen, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 9th edition), p. 377.

severance helped him to improve his lot steadily. In time he joined the administrative staff of the company, earned a fortune and built a three-storey residential building at 30 Shyampukur Street, Calcutta. He became so prominent a figure in the establishment that a watermark of his bust was imprinted on sheets of paper manufactured by the company.³

Kalipada now became close to Girish Chandra Ghosh, though the great dramatist was five years his senior. They developed a deep friendship mellowed on Kalipada's side by reverence and on Girish's side by an elder-brotherly feeling for his well-being. But they were so close to each other, even in many character-traits, that they were often called 'Jagai-Madhai' after the two ruffian devotees of Śrī Caitanya. As with Girish, talent and debauchery co-existed in Kalipada's character; but unlike the former, the latter had a devout urge for spiritual guidance and did not care much for reason and argument. Tempted by his own dark and irrational impulses he had plunged into a life of dissipation, overriding his basic devout nature and the strings of his conscience. His desperate need to soothe his guilty conscience led him on occasion to participate in religious rituals and festivities. The continuous endeavours of his pious wife for correcting his ways also brought him occasional pangs of misgiving. He began to feel that the only way he could survive was through faith in a higher power, and he occasionally felt an urge to seek shelter in some spiritual master.

Late in 1884, the incredible happened.⁴

3. Originally an agent of the renowned book publisher, Messrs. MacMillan Co., Messrs. John Dickinson Co. later established an independent firm of manufacturing paper of various kinds. Kalipada Ghosh's contribution in this respect was highly acclaimed in the journal of the company.

4. It was early in 1884, according to Swami Gambhirananda (see *Sri Ramakrishna Bhakta-*

One afternoon Kalipada accompanied Girish Chandra to meet the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar. Persuasion by Girish apart, it was nothing more than curiosity which brought Kalipada to Rasmani's temple garden at Dakshineswar. He came just to see the Paramahansa, the Guru of his friend and guide, Girish.

At first glance the temple garden looked like any other well-maintained temple compound. As Kalipada strode forward to enter the room of Sri Ramakrishna, his tall, hefty frame, light brown complexion, large eyes and smiling countenance all bespoke his self-confidence and jolly temperament. He noticed the frail person of Sri Ramakrishna. The latter's peculiarly attractive look strangely stirred Kalipada. He gazed entranced at Sri Ramakrishna's radiant face. Following Girish Chandra he saluted Sri Ramakrishna.⁵ Girish must have introduced Kalipada to the Master.

Exceptionally gifted in the art of judging a person through natural and spiritual means, Sri Ramakrishna could immediately recognize him as the wayward person about whom a lady had approached him quite some time ago. As was his wont, he estimated Kalipada's spiritual worthiness also, and foresaw that Kalipada was destined to take part in his divine play. In the course of conversation Sri Ramakrishna casually mentioned that Rakhal's father, being a wealthy man of the world, was always involved in litigation. He had come to

malika [Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 4th edition], p. 407). Girish Chandra Ghosh's first encounter with Sri Ramakrishna took place in early September 1884, and the next encounter on September 21, 1884, at the Star Theatre. Girish Chandra took Kalipada to Sri Ramakrishna only when he was convinced of the greatness of the saint. Thus the time of Kalipada's first visit to Sri Ramakrishna is probably November 1884 at the earliest.

5. According to the *Punthi*, p. 477, Kalipada went to Dakshineswar alone. He made no salutation to Sri Ramakrishna on this occasion.

believe that because of Sri Ramakrishna's protection of Rakhal, he had won three law suits, every one of them beyond his expectations. On that very day Kalipada too was facing three law suits. Being almost sure of defeat in all the cases he had not ventured to present himself in the court.

Though not recorded, it can be safely guessed that Sri Ramakrishna bade him farewell with his familiar words. 'Please come again'. After leaving Dakshineswar, Kalipada was astonished to discover that the saint had mysteriously bound his heart.⁶ And strangely enough, on his return home Kalipada was surprised to learn that he had won all three law suits which had appeared hopeless. This forced him to believe in the power of Sri Ramakrishna's grace. He then began to regret his haughtiness which had prevented him from even saluting the saint.⁷ A flood of devotion overwhelmed him.

Kalipada felt an ever-growing urge to visit the saint again. Soon he did so, going by a hired boat. Having risen from his midday nap, Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on his cot and welcomed Kalipada as one of his own. Sri Ramakrishna expressed his desire of going to Calcutta. This proposal from the reclusive Paramahansa was mystifying to Kalipada. Nonetheless he greeted the

suggestion and offered him a free boat ride. A hired boat was waiting for them. Sri Ramakrishna in the company of his attendant Latu boarded the boat with Kalipada and left for Calcutta.

In the course of conversation Sri Ramakrishna learnt from Kalipada that he was devoted to Kālī, the Divine Mother, but that he had never received spiritual initiation for he had no faith in ordinary Gurus; and that he was looking for an illumined master. In an ecstatic mood Sri Ramakrishna asked Kalipada to stretch out his tongue. As Kalipada obeyed, Sri Ramakrishna scribbled something on it with his finger and asked him to repeat the holy *mantra*. Kalipada felt something heaving up within his chest. Though ebullient, he could hardly realize then the import of this unusual favour.⁸ The inexplicable joy he experienced was something previously unknown to him. Now he discovered that Sri Ramakrishna intended to visit his house. Overwhelmed by this kind gesture Kalipada tenderly took him and Latu to his house at 30 Shyampukur Street in a hired carriage.

It was November. The room where Sri Ramakrishna was seated had a number of large oil paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses on the wall. The paintings gladdened Sri Ramakrishna, who soon plunged into an ecstatic mood. He began chanting some beautiful verses. Then a silence descended. By some strange miracle the images in the paintings appeared living to those present in the room.⁹ This unique incident made a tremendous impression on Kalipada.

No endeavour is as coldly real as the attempt to live the worldly life with a spirit of detachment; however, Kalipada now began reordering his life. As with the great majority who take up the religious life, Kalipada's renunciation wavered. He would

6. In his reminiscences of Dakshineswar days Latu Maharaj gives a different version of Kalipada's first meeting with the Master. According to Latu Maharaj, the Master then asked Kalipada, 'What do you want?' Kalipada asked shamelessly, 'Can you give me a little wine?' The Master smiled and said, 'Yes, I can. But the wine I have is so intoxicating that you will not be able to bear it.' For a moment Kalipada was thoughtful and then said, 'Please give me that wine which will make me intoxicated my entire life.' The Master touched him, and Kalipada started to weep. The other devotees tried to calm him, but he went on weeping for a long time. *Vide* Swami Chetanananda, *Swami Adbhutananda* (St. Louis: Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1980), p. 44.

7. *Tattvamanjari* (Bengali monthly), vol. 9, no. 4, p. 91.

8. *Punthi*, pp. 477-78, and *Tattvamanjari*, vol. 9, no. 4, p. 92.

9. *Ramakrishna Bhaktamalika*, vol. 2, p. 407.

drop his ill habits and then pick them up again, again drop them, until his renunciation became firm by force of repetition. Many thought that all this was too good to last; in fact, it lasted for the rest of his life. Subtly and surely, Sri Ramakrishna led him out of worldly life into the circle of devotees.

It seems Sri Ramakrishna, an exquisitely subtle moulder of character, did not impose strict conditions on Kalipada but showered love on him unconditionally. And Kalipada made steady progress. So liberal was Sri Ramakrishna that Kalipada one day smilingly told the devotees, 'Ours is a grand teacher! We are not asked to practise meditation and other disciplines.'¹⁰ Yet his mind quite naturally began to dwell on Sri Ramakrishna whose silent influence worked miracles in the transformation of his life.

In time Kalipada became a staunch follower of the Master, so much so that he didn't keep even a picture of Sri Sarada Devi in his parlour. When questioned he saluted the picture of Sri Ramakrishna with folded hands and said, 'He is indeed our father, and he is our mother.' As days rolled by, love and devotion blossomed in his heart side by side with an undeniable wilting of licentiousness and worldly ambition. He used to declare openly in later life, 'Though I indulged in revelry like Jagai and Madhai, the Master blessed me of his own.'¹¹ Almost as in the case of Girish, Sri Ramakrishna allowed him many liberties denied to others. Though there were many—and justifiable—complaints against him, Sri Ramakrishna wasted no time in negative 'thou shalt not' moralizing. Rather he coaxed into prominence the good, holy and beautiful traits of character already lying

dormant within him. Elevated by this positive method, it was easy for Kalipada to correct himself. Sri Ramakrishna remarked on October 18, 1885, 'Kalipada told me that he had altogether given up drinking.'¹²

Endowed with exceptional qualities of head and heart, Kalipada soon endeared himself to the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. Efficient as he was in managing affairs, he would gladly take on all sorts of difficult situations. Sri Ramakrishna would often address him as 'Manager'. He was also an exquisite cook, and the devotees sometimes addressed him jokingly as 'housewife'.

Among his artistic qualities his musical talent, both vocal and instrumental, is worth mentioning. One day the melodious tune he played on his flute threw Sri Ramakrishna into ecstasy. Another day in Balaram Bose's house in Baghbazar, Girish Chandra and Kalipada began singing fervently:

Today my heart feels an unknown sensation,
as it were.

Hold me, O Nitai!

I am now being carried away by the waves
That rose in the river of love.¹³

The hall of the first floor was packed to capacity. The Master went into deep ecstasy, seated in the western extremity of the room facing the east.

When Sri Ramakrishna was moved to Shyampukur for treatment of his throat, Kalipada took great pains in tidily arranging the rented house. He procured articles necessary for the household and even hung pictures of gods and goddesses on the walls, for he wanted to make the Master's stay there as comfortable as possible. But the same Kalipada took compassion when Binodini Dasi, whose acting in the role of Caitanya was highly praised and who had

¹⁰. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974), p. 879.

¹¹. Vaikunthanath Sanyal, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilamrita*, 2nd edition, p. 333.

¹². *Gospel*, p. 850.

¹³. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 4th edition), p. 838.

been blessed by Sri Ramakrishna, wanted very much to see the ailing holy man. To dupe the attendant Kalipada dressed the actress up as a man in European clothes and brought her thus disguised to the Shyampukur house. They succeeded in entering and saw Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna laughed heartily on discovering the identity of his guest and gave her some spiritual instruction.

Faith begets grace. It was the Kālī Pūjā day in 1885. On the Master's instruction the devotees, particularly Kalipada, made arrangements for the worship of Mother Kālī in Sri Ramakrishna's room. Flowers, sandal-paste, *bilva* leaves, red hibiscus, rice pudding and various sweets and other articles of worship were placed in front of the Master. About thirty devotees gathered there. The Master offered all the articles to the Divine Mother. On the advice of the Master the devotees sat quietly in front of him and tried to meditate. Then it struck Girish Chandra that the Master was perhaps giving them an opportunity to worship the Divine Mother within his own body. Never slow to carry into action his slightest impulse, Girish offered a garland of flowers at Sri Ramakrishna's feet. Others, including Kalipada, followed suit. A thrill passed through Sri Ramakrishna's body, and he entered *samādhi*. 'His face shines with a heavenly light. His two hands are raised in the posture one sees in the images of the Divine Mother.'¹⁴ It was an exhilarating experience for Kalipada. Speechless with wonder, he like the others felt in his heart that Sri Ramakrishna as the embodiment of the Divine Mother was blessing him. This special worship of the Mother was followed by ecstatic songs and dancing by the devotees.¹⁵

The Master showered blessings on him individually, too. On December 23, 1885,

at the Cossipore Garden, Sri Ramakrishna gave unrestrained expression to his love for the devotees. He touched Kalipada's chest and said, 'May your inner spirit be awakened!' Affectionately he stroked Kalipada's chin and said in an exalted mood, 'Whoever has sincerely called on God or performed his daily religious devotions will certainly come here.'¹⁶ Overwhelmed by this rare gift of grace Kalipada had an experience of bliss beyond anything he had ever imagined.

Kalipada belonged to that group of the Master's devotees who looked on him as a divine Incarnation and who therefore thought that his illness was just a pretext serving some deeper purpose; he would himself get rid of the fatal disease as soon as that purpose was served. Swami Saradananda comments, 'Kalipada was a follower of Girish in all matters and did not believe that the Master's illness would increase if an evil-doer became repentant and touched his holy feet, as Kalipada was convinced that the Master was the Incarnation of the age' and therefore beyond the law of Karma.¹⁷

But Sri Ramakrishna was not to recover, and when he passed away in August 1886, Kalipada felt the pang of separation unbearable. The raft which he had depended upon to carry him across the ocean of the world had disappeared, and Kalipada was afraid of sinking once more. Instead of succumbing to this despair, however, he clung to the rich inheritance of hope and assurance left by the Master. Sitting in front of a picture of Sri Ramakrishna, he prayed long with deep yearning: 'O Thakur, please reveal thyself!'¹⁸

His deep love and adoration for Sri

¹⁴. *Gospel*, p. 928.

¹⁵. *Udbodhan*, vol. 75, no. 7 (Śrāvaṇ, 1380 B.S.).

¹⁶. *Gospel*, p. 932.

¹⁷. *Great Master*, p. 867.

¹⁸. It is said that Kalipada kept himself locked for a few days in a room on the second floor of 30 Shyampukur Street. It seems he was blessed with a spiritual vision.

Ramakrishna found expression in the innumerable songs he composed. The publications *Ramakrishna Sangit* by Yogodyan Math in 1893 and *Thākurer Nāmāmṛta* by Yogabinod Ashrama, Simultala, amply testify to his literary talent, musical sense and above all his deep devotion to Sri Ramakrishna. Instead of the back-sliding he had feared, he moved forward in his pilgrimage to God, and people marvelled to notice the transformation wrought in him.

Kalipada was among the pioneers who organized the celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday even during the latter's lifetime.¹⁹ Devotees like Manomohan Mitra and Kalipada Ghosh lent all assistance to Ramchandra Dutta in his efforts to spread the name of Sri Ramakrishna.²⁰ Most of the songs sung before and after the lectures of Ram Babu were those composed by Kalipada. At Bombay, too, Kalipada celebrated Sri Ramakrishna's birthday on a grand scale.²¹ The success of these celebrations was largely due to the earnestness and unwearied labour of Kalipada.

In the early days of the Ramakrishna monastery at Baranagore he helped the monastics as much as he could. Even when he was transferred to Bombay, serving the same British Company in a higher post, he continued his support. The itinerant monks of the Ramakrishna Order who travelled in Western India paid visits to this dear devotee of their Master.

A typical manifestation of his rapturous love for the Master was the time when

Kalipada participated in the annual celebration held at Navagopal Ghosh's. The devotees of the Kankurgachhi Yogodyan were singing *kīrtan* to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals, while Kalipada sat quietly among them. As soon as Girish Chandra appeared on the scene the devotees began to beat the drums enthusiastically. This inspired Girish and Kalipada to join them. The devotees began to sing and dance around the two known affectionately as 'Jagai and Madhai'. Swept away by the infectious rhythm Kalipada and Girish, with the upper part of their bodies bare, suddenly began to dance, their portly frames swaying back and forth to the rhythmic beat. Navagopal garlanded them. After a while the two stood still with their hands locked together and eyes shut, chanting 'Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna,' their countenance beaming with the light of Sri Ramakrishna's benediction. The congregation of devotees sang fervently and swayed with the rhythm. It was indeed a rare sight.

Kalipada would never accept personal services from others; rather he made himself available for the service of all. One could take the dust of his feet only at the cost of his being very annoyed. Anger and egotism were almost obliterated in him. One day when a rogue slapped him on the cheek, the stout Kalipada didn't even protest. When his friends advised him to take revenge Kalipada said mildly: 'Has that ruffian struck me? I being a servant of Sri Ramakrishna, who can beat me? It is Ramakrishna who hit me that day.'²² He had the fervent conviction that Sri Ramakrishna had taken full charge of him.

Named 'Dāna Kālī' by Narendra because of his courage and generosity, Kalipada was very large-hearted and well known for his liberal charities and lack of wavering. Being

19. Ramchandra Dutta, *Sri Sri Paramahansa Ramakrishnadever Jivanbrittanta*, 3rd edition, p. 130.

20. *Bhakta Manomohan* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1351 B.S.), p. 178.

21. Sankariprasad Basu, *Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatvarsha* (Calcutta: Mandal Book House), vol. 2, p. 173.

22. *Tattvamanjari*, vol. 9, no. 4, p. 93.

so appropriate, the name given by Narendra struck.²³

After Ramchandra Dutta's death on January 17, 1899, Kalipada took upon himself the management of the Sri Ramakrishna Yogodyan, Kankurgachhi, where the holy remains of Sri Ramakrishna's mortal body were worshipped.

His love and adoration of Sri Ramakrishna found expression in his household as well as at his job. His sister Mahamaya Mitra²⁴ was a well-known devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. Among his three sons and two daughters,²⁵ the most celebrated was his eldest son, Barendrakrishna, who died at the early age of forty-seven, but who is remembered for his dedication to the principles of his father.²⁶ Through all his activities and achievements Kalipada could perceive the grace of Sri Ramakrishna working, and in recognition of this he displayed Sri Ramakrishna's picture in his house as well as in the head office and branch offices of the British firm he was serving.

Kalipada told his friends, 'I never asked Sri Ramakrishna any question as such.

Once I secured an assurance from him, and I stayed satisfied. I requested him to assure me that upon my death he would kindly lead me holding my hand in his and carrying a lantern in the other. Sri Ramakrishna readily said, "Well, your wish will be fulfilled." ' Kalipada's death on the night of June 28, 1905, at 9.30 p.m. with his hands outstretched and face radiant suggested to many, including Swami Premanandaji,²⁷ that Sri Ramakrishna had fulfilled his promise to the letter. This was in a second-floor room of the three-storeyed building at 30 Shyampukur Street.

His life is a glowing testimony of what wonders could be accomplished by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna. As the philosopher's stone transforms base metal into gold, so the touch of Sri Ramakrishna transformed Kalipada Ghosh—a worldly man addicted to drink and pleasure—into a man of saintly character who lived in faith and died in the embrace of Sri Ramakrishna. The light which shone in his face at his death can even now enkindle faith and hope in the hearts of all householder devotees.

²³. Mahendranath Dutta, *Srimat Vivekananda Swamijir Jivaner Ghatanavali*, vol. 1 (3rd edition), p. 142.

²⁴. Kalipada had one brother Tarapada, and two sisters, Mahamaya Mitra and Jogamaya Basu.

²⁵. Kalipada had two daughters, and of his three sons Barendra was the eldest while Harendra and Dharendra were twin brothers.

²⁶. Considering the significant contribution made by Barendrakrishna, *Udbodhan*, the monthly Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order, published a long obituary in its vol. 29, no. 12, pp. 754-62. Among his many achievements worth mentioning is his organizing of Sri Ramakrishna Mills in 1908 and Sri Vivekananda Mill in 1919, both cloth mills at Ahmedabad.

²⁷. According to Swami Adbhutananda, Sri Ramakrishna of his own had asked Kalipada of his innermost desire, and as soon as he expressed it Sri Ramakrishna granted it. On hearing from Swami Premananda, who had been at the death bed of Kalipada, Swami Adbhutananda said later, 'Look! Sri Ramakrishna visited Kalipada at the last moment of his life and led the way for him. Baburam Bhai [Swami Premananda] clearly perceived it. All the pledges made by the Master are being fulfilled in letter and spirit.' (Chandrasekhar Chattopadhyay, *Sri Sri Latu Maharajer Smriti Katha* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 3rd edition), p. 325; also see *Tattvamanjari*, vol. 9, no. 4, p. 94.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICA

SUMITORA NOMA

The title I have chosen may seem rather restricted in its meaning because, as the following lines will indicate, what I have to say on the subject will have necessarily to extend in scope beyond the frontiers of America and, in that respect, a more appropriate title might have been : 'Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to the Thought of the West'.

To my mind, Swami Vivekananda's contributions to America are four : (1) He 'brought' Vedānta ; (2) he introduced Sri Ramakrishna ; (3) he was also instrumental in bringing the Ramakrishna Order of monks ; and (4) as a corollary to the above, there is the impact that all of this has had on religion(s). Let me now briefly take up these points in order.

(1) Saying that Swami Vivekananda brought Vedānta to America, does not mean that I am not cognizant of—or that I even underestimate—the contributions of others before him like Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, as has been ably presented by Romain Rolland in his classic book *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* (chapter on 'America at the Time of Vivekananda'). However, it cannot be denied that it is to the lasting credit of Swami Vivekananda that he was the first modern and authoritative interpreter of Vedānta to America. Until he burst like an avalanche upon the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, becoming an overnight celebrity, and gave his subsequent lectures throughout the United States to consolidate his work there, the American people at large had not been properly informed on Vedānta. He made Vedānta 'stick'.

(2) The Americans also came to know, practically for the first time, about Sri Ramakrishna, although it must be remembered that the great Swami was not overly

keen or interested in introducing his own Master but rather—very rightly—his teachings, which were the best commentary on India's ancient spiritual literature. True, the German savant Max Müller, had presented a study of Sri Ramakrishna earlier under the title 'A Real Mahatman' in the *Nineteenth Century*, but it cannot be said that Ramakrishna was known to the public at large.

(3) As a result of his stay in America and the success that attended his lectures and talks to groups of people, Swami Vivekananda soon realized that the American people were receptive to the universal appeal of the teachings of Vedānta and, therefore, he wished to put the Vedānta work there on a solid foundation. For this purpose, at the earnest request of his American disciples and friends, he brought some of his brother-monks from India to help him in consolidating and continuing the Vedānta work in America. In due course this led to the founding of Vedanta Societies in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, etc.

At this point, perhaps a digression is permissible, because it is important to remember that this was something quite *unique* in the history of the religions of the world.

It is true that Swami Vivekananda came to America uninvited. It was mainly his Madras disciples who persuaded him to go to America to represent Hinduism (mark you, not Vedānta, as this was practically unrecognized at that time) at the Parliament of Religions. The American people did not 'send for' him. But then, Vivekananda was an exception. He was a man with a world mission. It was divinely ordained that he, an unknown monk even in his own country, should cross the seas and go to a strange land as the spokesman for Vedānta.

After Vivekananda the tradition has always been to send monastic teachers of

Vedānta only in response to the appeal of the local people. As far as I know, no monk of the Ramakrishna Order is sent abroad from India unless at the specific request of the devotees concerned.¹

Now, to return to our point. The monks of the Ramakrishna Order who followed Swami Vivekananda, further popularized and spread the message of Vedānta amongst Americans and, by their dedicated work in ministering to the spiritual needs of people, have done great service to America. Many of them worked in America for very long years, and some—as is well known—even died in harness. The names of Trigunatita, Bodhananda, Ashokananda, Prabhavananda, Gnaneswarananda, Nikhilananda, Satprakashananda and Vividishananda are unforgettable ones in the annals of the Vedānta movement in America.

(4) There are very cogent reasons for the impact of Vedānta on religions in general and, for the purpose of this article, on Christianity in particular.

Forgetting the words of Christ—'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal'—America went all out in the quest of material prosperity, and succeeded in becoming the richest country in the world. Riding on a wave of prosperity, the American people generally also succeeded, however, in creating a vacuum in their lives. Instead of finding material riches to be the be-all and end-all of existence as they had

expected, they discovered very much to their chagrin and frustration that all of this still did not satisfy them fully, that there was something still lacking. How to fill the void in their lives? Christianity, as it was understood and preached, they found sorely wanting. And this is not surprising at all, considering the dogmatic form it took.²

It was about this time that Swami Vivekananda appeared on the American scene, and he brought with him a message which was an antithesis of what they had been accustomed to.

Vedānta appeals to the modern man—Eastern or Western—because it is scientific, absolutely rational in its approach to life's problems, all-comprehensive in its sweep, and non-sectarian and non-denominational. It does not disturb the beliefs and faith of anyone (being universal in its teachings, Vedānta not only tolerates but *accepts* all faiths). In short, it does not proselytize. No one is asked to give up his or her religion; on the contrary, Vedānta tells you to hold fast to your religion—and this it does because Vedānta asserts that all religions are but different paths which men take to reach God, who is One though called by various names. As a result, more and more Westerners are becoming better Christians through a study of Vedānta. According to Vedānta, all roads are royal roads, provided one journeys with steadfast zeal and sincerity. The *iṣṭa devatā* ('chosen ideal') principle of Vedānta gives man freedom of

1. Although examples are unnecessary in this regard, I am tempted to cite the case of Nippon Vedānta Kyōkai here in Japan. The Society here still has no monk of the Ramakrishna Order to guide its spiritual activities and this in spite of over twenty years of persistent requests, appeals, and joint representations to the authorities in India. Examples like this can be multiplied.

2. History tends to repeat itself, for much the same situation is likely to prevail in Japan too. Japan is one of the most prosperous nations in the world today but, like America, the Japanese will one day wake up to the fact that mere material abundance will not do, and we may hope that they would then be forced to retrace their steps. Already there are signs of this, especially among the younger generation. One of these is the widely prevalent dissatisfaction with the present religious decline and the growing interest evinced in Vedāntic thought, particularly in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature.

worship, which makes it very acceptable. To top it all, the teachings of Vedānta are in accord with the conclusions of modern science, a fact which is acknowledged by many scientifically-minded persons.³

Neo-Vedāntic thought, that is Vedānta interpreted by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and taught and lived by monks of the Ramakrishna Order, makes its own irresistible appeal. This therefore explains the extraordinary phenomenon that the Vedanta Societies of the Ramakrishna Mission functioning in various parts of the world, including the USA (where they have the largest number of centres apart from India), counts among its admirers, students and followers men and women of different faiths, in all walks of life.

Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and the monks of the Ramakrishna Order 'revolutionized' religion as it was known in the West by putting emphasis on the essentials of *practical* religion, thereby laying the foundation for a universal religion. These essential principles of the universal religion are three. One is that each soul is potentially divine and the goal of life is to manifest this divinity through work, worship, meditation and knowledge. Second, the ultimate Reality is one but known by different names in different religions, and this Reality can be directly experienced. Third, all the great teachers of different religions are to be respected as path-finders in the realm of the Spirit.

Nowadays it is becoming rather common—and one may even say 'fashionable'—to speak of universal brotherhood, universality

of Truth, respect and acceptance of other faiths, harmony of religions, and so on, but people generally tend to forget—sometimes conveniently—that Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and the monks of the Order, who are the modern and *authoritative* interpreters of Vedānta, played a major part in bringing this about in their own unobtrusive way, without publicizing themselves.⁴

I say 'authoritative' deliberately because anyone can talk glibly in these terms, but *living* preceptors are few and far between. It is therefore natural that when one comes in close contact with someone who lives by his words, the impact generated is far greater than otherwise. And I venture to suggest that the monks of the Ramakrishna Order, following in the footsteps of their illustrious masters, have been exemplars in this respect, and that therefore they have exerted tremendous influence in intellectual and religious circles and also among the liberal clergy, directly or indirectly.

More and more people—both among the public and the clergy—having read Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and the expositions of Vedānta by Swami Vivekananda and other monks of the Order, are becoming more liberal in their religious outlook. Some of them acknowledge their source, but many do not—and it does not matter. The monks of the Ramakrishna Order have taken to

3. 'Vedanta and the Trend of Modern Physics', by the Staff of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, in the March-April 1954 issue of *Vedanta and the West* published by the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood; also 'Is Science Relevant to Religion?' by Michael Fell in the July-August 1958 issue of the same magazine.

4. In this connection, what Swami Vivekananda had said in another context comes to mind: 'The one characteristic of Indian thought is its silence, its calmness. At the same time the tremendous power that is behind it is never expressed by violence. It is always the silent mesmerism of Indian thought... Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world. Silent, unperceived, yet omnipotent in its effect, it has revolutionized the thought of the world.' The monks of the Ramakrishna Order in the West fit these words admirably. (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* [Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973], vol. 3, p. 274.)

heart, and are following, the spirit of Sri Sarada Devi's (Holy Mother's) advice : 'Learn to make the whole world your own. Nobody is a stranger, my child, the whole world is your own,' and it is to be expected that this is finding ready response from earnest seekers.

It is my firm belief that we are yet to witness the full impact of the personalities and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and his brotherhood of monks, for it takes man time to accept and imbibe new thoughts, ingrained as he is with tendencies and habits of thought acquired from childhood through upbringing, environment, education, etc.—and this is especially so in the case of religion where people are generally prone to cling to their own beliefs with almost fanatical zeal. No man, however, can stop the tide of Time, and there is no doubt whatever that, as the decades roll by, larger and yet larger numbers of people will come to realize and appreciate the contributions of these messengers of Vedānta, and thus have their lives enriched.

All of this is not meant to suggest that others did not help in bringing about this new 'mood of the times'. The Unitarian Movement, the Quakers and such other liberal organizations also certainly played their great part; but it cannot be denied that the Ramakrishna Movement was the

'pace-setter' in this respect. Nor should we overlook the contributions of other representatives from India, a notable example being the inimitable Dr. S. Radhakrishnan; however, these other genuine representatives have been few and they do not constitute a significant movement.

Let me conclude this brief discussion by drawing the attention of the readers to Christopher Isherwood's estimate of the Ramakrishna Movement :

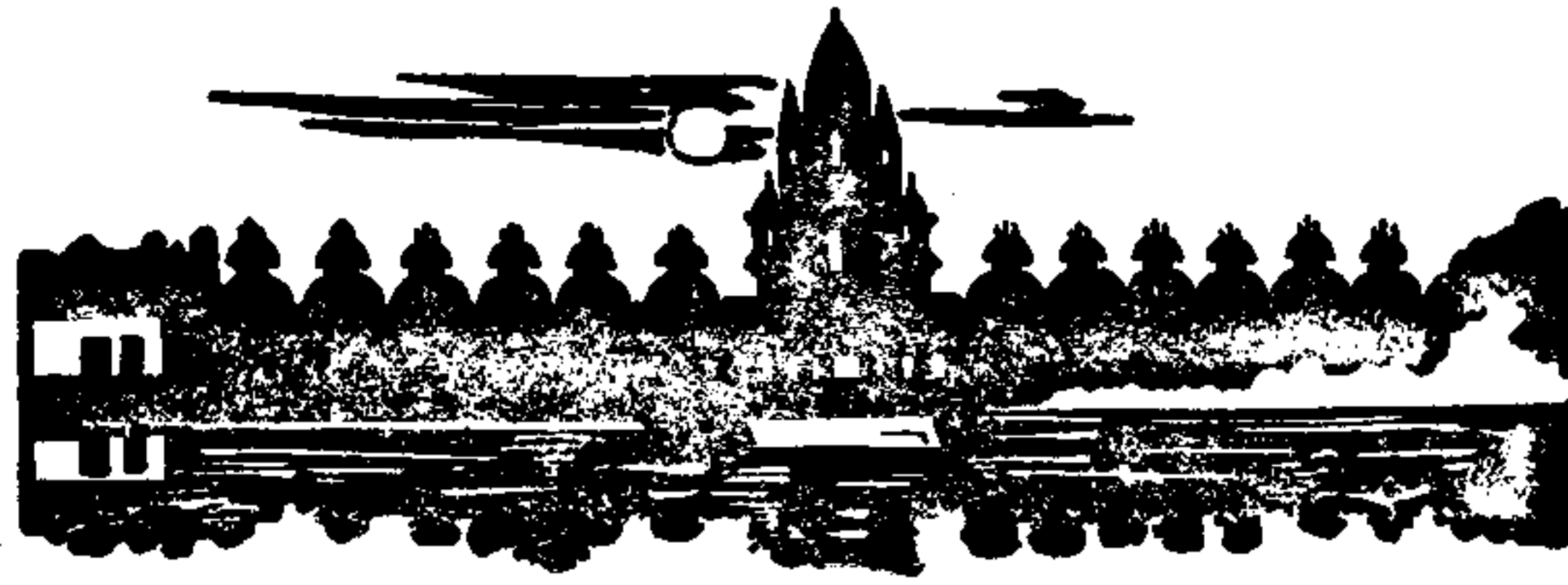
Spiritual truth is eternal, but it has to be restated and redemonstrated in a human life in order that it may solve the varying problems of each succeeding epoch. Ramakrishna's teaching is our modern gospel. He lived and taught for us, not for the men of 2,000 years ago; and the Ramakrishna Movement is responsible for the spreading of his gospel among us, here and now. For this reason alone, the Movement must be regarded as the most important of all existing religious movements, no matter how large or influential or venerable the others may be. This statement may sound startling, as of today. It is always hard to recognize the power and magnitude of a new spiritual force; and the Ramakrishna Movement is *very new*, historically speaking. The growth of such a force can only be traced in retrospect, after centuries have passed.⁵

5. Christopher Isherwood's Foreword to *The History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission* by Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957), p. ix.

A CORRECTION

Abhaya Dasgupta, as has been mentioned on page 398 of the September 1981 number of *Prabuddha Bharata*, is not the compiler of the two books, Swami Vivekananda on Himself in English and *Sri Ramakrishna on Himself* in Bengali.

—Editor.



THE MESSAGE OF DIVALI*

DR. DONALD S. HARRINGTON

Diwali, the festival of lights in India, is actually a combination of many festivals, and the festivities continue for over a week. Starting on the first night of the new moon in October, there are oil lamps and coloured lights in the windows and along the parapets of every house, dazzling fireworks every night with skyrockets zooming up from every street corner, gay-coloured greeting cards like ours of Hannukah and Christmas, and much family visiting. Brothers go to sisters on one night, and sisters to brothers on the next. Gifts are given and received, and joy is rife abroad on every side. On Diwali Eve, the goddess of Wealth and Fortune, beautiful Lakṣmī, is said to ride across the land at dusk astride a giant owl, scattering her gifts to the deserving, almost as Santa Claus does here in America.

There are parades featuring brightly-coloured costumes, and clowns and dancing girls, and solemn elephants painted in gaily-coloured traditional patterns from head to foot.

The theme of Diwali, of course, is the ultimate triumph of light over darkness and good over evil, of beauty over ugliness, and reality over illusion. But the Hindus have a more subtle grasp of the mixed nature of these things than have we here in the West. We tend to see things—and people—in absolute dichotomies—you are good or evil, bright or stupid, and everything is deemed

to be either literally, that is factually, true or it is false. The Hindus have always recognized the mixed nature of good and evil, and hope that the good might predominate. They recognize that reality and illusion are intricately inter-woven, and that our aim must be continually to correct our inevitable illusions with progressively greater infusions of reality, so that they progressively point to truth, even when neither they nor science itself can fully describe or represent it.

Now, this is all reflected in the myth of Narakāśura on whose birthday Diwali is celebrated. Narakāśura, in the Indian mythology was an evil demon, but a son of the great Preserver God, Viṣṇu, who was, in his turn, a reincarnation of the original One God of all, Brahma.

Narakāśura did much good in his life, but, according to the myth, he became increasingly undisciplined and evil, and eventually the evil in him began to predominate. It was then that his father, Viṣṇu, decreed that by the law of Karma, cause and effect, he must die. But Narakāśura put up an argument. He was a casuist, and a logician. 'Don't the scriptures say', he asked his father, 'that good must follow good as evil must follow evil?' 'You are right,'

* Preached at the Community Church of New York on October 12, 1980.

his father replied. 'Then what', asked Narakāśura, 'do I get for the good I did in my life?' 'What do you think you should get?' asked Viṣṇu. 'I think that when you *celebrate* the triumph of good over evil, you should do so on *my* birthday,' said Narakāśura. And this is how it came about that the festival of the triumph of good over evil falls on the birthday of an evil demon. Among other things it emphasized the existence of evil as an integral part of reality, though those who follow that evil follow an illusion, in this case an evil one in the Hindu view.

Hinduism as a religion is fantastically rich in imaginative myths and rituals, which are clearly understood to be myths and mythologically-based rituals, but also, simultaneously, to be deeply true, truer perhaps than factual truth. The Hindu world swarms with gods; there are said to be some three hundred and thirty million Hindu gods and goddesses, not to mention countless evil demons, ghosts, heroes and divine dancing girls. The intricately carved Hindu temples are covered with representations of them. But they are all considered to be aspects or attributes of the One Spirit, the Ultimate and Absolute, the Brahman, or Brahma-at-the-heart-of-the-Universe, which is believed to penetrate into every particle of it. As the Vedas put it very simply: 'Reality is one; the sages call it by different names.' The manifestations of the divine One are illusions, that is, over-simplifications, personifications of more complex realities, but none-the-less accurate or true representations of one or another *aspect* of reality, and in that sense more accessible to human apprehension than what we tend to call historical or scientific facts, for they catch more of the vision of the whole to which they belong than do most so-called historical or scientific data that we in Western civilization prize so highly.

We can understand these things fully only when we have a clear understanding of the

purpose and goal of the Hindu religion.

Its goal is very simple—to help each individual human being to achieve a complete *yoga*, or union, with the Brahma, the one Spirit, Creator-of-all-that-is, that is the Source and the End of life, the Alpha and Omega, while simultaneously permeating every part. Each individual is destined by the law of Karma, cause and effect, to undergo progressive spiritual purification through successive, evolutionary incarnations and reincarnations until he is pure enough to blend once again in Brahman, who is pure Spirit and no longer material at all.

The way to achieve this is through meditation and ethical living. Hindu ethics include: purity of life, self-control and self-discipline, truth-striving, non-violence, and charity and compassion towards all living creatures. In following such principles of moral behaviour one's life advances with occasional retrogressions when evil predominates towards Brahmanic perfection.

For the devout Hindu, the goal of life is to achieve, through meditation and self-discipline, this God-realization, which is true self-realization. As it is achieved, we progressively lose our egos, our selfishness and self-centredness, and become pure love, flowing back into the Brahman even as rivers flow into and finally blend with the Sea.

The Hindu looks at our wordly experience of life as a mysterious paradox. It is permeated with Brahman, the power of life. It is God's joyous creation, and thus it should be enjoyed. Yet, in this world, we see the Brahman at best as through a veil. (St. Paul described it as in a glass darkly.) What we see and experience is not the reality itself, but its illusion, what the Hindu calls, *Māyā*. *Māyā* is our *human projection* of the real, but it is not *the real*, which lies somewhere behind and beyond the appearances of things. Our goal is gradually to outgrow our illusions and blend into the divine reality, Brahma, when we can experience its power directly.

Now, dear friends, I find this mixture of reality and illusion intriguing for we have a counterpart in our Western way of looking at things, and I suspect that we Judeo-Christian Westerners and the Oriental Hindus may have more in common through our common humanity than is always reflected in our quite different cultures and religions.

For example, we like to think of ourselves as living above illusion, as scientifically oriented, as bound to the facts and facts alone. Yet, we actually deal with ultimate reality through words, which are generalizations, which are symbols, black marks on a white page, which represent reality to us. These words are, in a sense, illusions. They are not the reality. They reduce a reality too complex for us to comprehend in its fullness to something simple enough to be both understood and experienced. Without these oversimplified word-symbols, we could not deal with reality successfully at all.

Similarly, we describe social realities through paradigms, and physical and chemical elements with models, and great religious relationships with myths. All of these are over-simplified representations of that which is either too mysterious or complex for us otherwise to grasp. They are all illusions, illusions which serve the purpose of helping us to grasp the realities they represent with our whole beings.

Joseph Campbell, cultural anthropologist and authority in the field of comparative religions, author of *The Masks of God* and other books, puts it like this: 'Whenever men have looked for something solid on which to found their lives, they have chosen, not the facts in which the world abounds, but the myths of an immemorial imagination.'

Somewhat more negatively, Bernard Berleson and Gary A. Steiner, in their interesting book entitled: *Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings*, put it this way:

Man is a creature ... who needs to simplify reality in order to cope with it effectively; a creature subject to the influence of composite 'forces,' whether from the outside or the inside, such that almost nothing is caused by any other single thing; ... to whom everything is *natural that he is familiar with* and most other things unnatural; who can, however, adapt to a variety of experience, if given time and social support....

He is a creature who adapts reality to his own ends, who transforms reality into a congenial form, who makes his own reality....

But ... he adjusts his social perception to fit not only the objective reality but also what suits his wishes and needs; ... his need for psychological protection is so great that he has become expert in the 'defense mechanisms; ... he will misinterpret rather than face up to an opposing set of facts or point of view; ... private fantasies can lighten his load, ... he finds a way to escape to a less uncongenial world....

Man is not just a seeker of truth, but of deceptions....

No matter how successful man becomes in dealing with his real problems, he still finds it hard to live in the real world, undiluted.... Animals adjust to their environment more or less on its terms; man manoeuvres his world to suit himself....

Thus, we can see how our inevitable myth-making, our creating and use of symbols and simplifying models, can be both good and evil. They may help us to deal with a reality otherwise too complex to grasp whole, and with the whole being. But on the other hand, they may shield us from reality, and project us into a never-never land of dreams which has no grounding in reality at all, and from which we shall someday experience a rude awakening.

The people who today cultivate the idea that somehow we can get world peace by maintaining absolute superiority in weaponry over the Soviet Union, live, I believe, in a world of such illusion. Parity, yes; superiority, no; stand-off, yes; domination, no. No great power will any longer permit such superiority, and to nurture such a hope is to cultivate an evil illusion.

Joni Mitchell, in the song sung for us this

morning dramatized both aspects of life's illusions, the good and the evil. We prefer the hopeful illusions, but we'd better not do so at price of ignoring life's realities.

Goes and floes of angel hair
and ice cream castles in the air
and feathered canyons everywhere;
I've looked at clouds that way.
But now they only block the sun
They rain and snow on everyone,
So many things I would have done,
but clouds got in my way.

I've looked at clouds from both sides now,
from up and down, and still somehow,
it's clouds illusions I recall,
I really don't know clouds at all.

Moons and Junes and ferris wheels
The dizzy, dancing way you feel;
When every fairy tale comes real,
I've looked at love that way.
But now it's just another show
You leave 'em laughing when you go;
And if you care, don't let them know,
Don't give yourself away.

I've looked at love from both sides now,
From win and lose, and still somehow,
It's love's illusion I recall.
I really don't know love at all.

Tears and fears and feeling proud,
To say, 'I love you,' right out loud;
Dreams and schemes and circus crowds,
I've looked at life that way.
But now old friends are acting strange,
They shake their heads, they say I've changed;
Well, something's lost and something's gained
In living every day.

I've looked at life from both sides now,
From win and lose, and still somehow,
It's life's illusions I recall,
I really don't know life at all.

In a sense, it really is that way, isn't it?

Somewhat more creatively, the great seer, Sri Ramakrishna found a development aspect in our use of myths and symbols—as illusions, yes, but steps towards reality's truth. He put it like this, in a commonsense, earthly illustration :

We see little girls with their dolls. How long do they play with them? Only so long as they are not married.... Similarly, one needs images and symbols so long as God is not realized in his true form. It is God himself who has provided thus various forms of worship ... to suit ... different stages of spiritual growth and knowledge.

So we see life's illusions as serving a developmental purpose, helping us to grow gradually into new realizations of an ever-enlarging Truth.

Now, similarly, in the mixing of good and evil—the evils of nature, such as the volcanic eruptions at Mt. St. Helen, the evils of society such as the irrational and mutually destructive war between Iraq and Iran, and the evils of individual selfishness, greed and exploitation of the weak by the strong among us.

It is interesting that in each of these types of evil, the elemental or natural, the social and the individual, it is hard to say whether the total experience is good or evil because there is so much good in every evil situation. Is there good in the cataclysms of volcanic eruption? We have to say that at least it gave the human heart a chance to respond to a cry of need, and the human heart did respond. It also made us all more deeply aware of the sensitive balances of Nature, and our dependence upon their being maintained. I can't forget Toynbee's reiteration in his *Study of History* that the human spirit has thrived, not in the areas of benign climate where life was, but along the storm tracks of the world. Somehow there is a challenge in nature without which man's spirit languishes.

I have spoken of the new Middle-Eastern War. Maybe the dire possibilities in that situation will drive the world into coming to terms with the problem of an overall settlement there, and a realization that others' problems that seem far away can become *our* problems overnight.

There may be some good come out of

the exploitation of people by giant corporations, such as took place at the 'Love Canal'. (And, incidentally, it must have taken some real public-relations genius to have coined that name for his corporation's tax-deductible gift to its community. 'Love Canal!' The name of the corporation was appropriate also: Hooker Chemical!) At least it drives home in our minds how society must be sensitive to the consequences of its actions upon each individual.

But evil is real in our day and in our lives. We are not often tempted to declaim Browning's lines: 'God's in his heaven. All's right with the world.'

It is far from clear just how we are to deal with evil. Often good and evil seem cruelly and brutally entwined one with the other. War is evil but freedom must be defended. Pain is evil, but we must have warning of disease. Death is evil, but necessary for the progress of the race. We would be good, but getting rid of evil is a little like trying to lose one's shadow on a sunny day. Only the gods, it is said, cast no shadow, and I am beginning to wonder if this old saying may not proclaim a deep truth concerning man.

Is there any way that we can clarify the relation between good and evil in human experience? Is there any way that we can clarify and understand the relationship between God and evil in the larger life of the universe?

First of all, we have to understand that the dividing lines are never sharp, and that therefore our choices will have to be tailored to fit the situation, that anyone who oversimplifies this matter does violence to the reality of life. Somehow the task must be to analyze, understand and commit ourselves, not to the good as contrasted with the evil, but to the better as contrasted with the worse. Sometimes the balance, as in the case of Narakāśura, is precarious and close.

There are three possible views about this

universe that can help us to understand this struggle in which we are all involved. One might be called the traditional viewpoint of the West, the orthodox Judeo-Christian outlook. In this we have a dualism between God on the one hand and the devil on the other, the devil having captured the heart of man. In this dualism, God is good, and the devil and man are bad. God created the earth perfect; he created man perfect. Everything was good, but he created man capable of making choices. The devil tempted man to use his new-born power of choice to disobey God and to become capable of the knowledge of good and evil. Knowledge of evil gave the capability of evil and the inclination to use it. With self-consciousness there came both self-centredness and conscience. But self-centredness was the stronger and more immediate force. Man, suffering from this taint, in this view, stands doomed until he is redeemed by the power of God, a power which he may assimilate in Judaism through the Torah—the great law of God, and in Christianity, through the example and saving power of Christ who gave his life for man's redemption.

All men are divided into two classes according to how they respond to the opportunity presented by the Torah or by the Redeemer. They are either sheep or goats, good or evil, saved or damned. Dualism compels a complete division between them.

Now there is a second view from which we may look at this problem. This might be called the atheist existential view. In this we have a dualism that is the opposite of the one I have explained. Instead of God good, the devil and man bad, we have, so to speak, the universe or God bad, and man good. In this we see nature as a harsh, malevolent force, sometimes neutral but often very destructive, a force in which the individual is pitted against the individual,

kinds are pitted against kinds, man against man, man preying upon all the rest of creation, and Nature at war with man. This view sees man as rising in his basic character and goodness above the universe in which he is set. He cannot understand it, but he is better than it when he is at his best. This is dualism in reverse, a man-good—god-bad dualism.

There is a third view possible. It is a view which is different from either of these dualisms and which, to my mind, holds more promise for man's understanding of good and evil than either of the other two. This view is a monistic view. It refuses to separate man from the rest of the universe. It refuses to divide him from the universe which produced him, from the lower forms of life which were the ladder upon which he climbed to his present place. This monistic view has much in common with the Hindu religious outlook. In this view, the Over-life of God contains within itself elements of both good and evil in a kind of dynamic interrelationship with each other. There is an unending wrestling, taking place within the life of God that is inevitable and part and parcel of its nature. It is the struggle between the constructive and the destructive forces, the creative and disintegrative, the divine and the demonic. There is a kind of vast drama being played out on a universal scale. It is like the cacophony of sound before a well-disciplined symphony orchestra starts to play, when suddenly order appears out of chaos, an order which was there potentially all the time. We live in a chaos becoming a cosmos, a cacophonous hullabaloo becoming a concert of harmony and hope. Minute step by minute step, God is wrestling with his creation to bring life out of non-life, order out of disorder, love out of hate, good out of evil. God has been doing this since the beginning of creation, and will continue to do so for as long as man can foresee.

There is a hint of this in what science has revealed about the universe, for science records a dynamic interrelationship between the two giant forces which seem to run in opposite directions, the physical force known as *entropy* and the biological force known as *evolution*. While all non-living things tend to come apart and go back to their original elements, all living things tend to build-up, construct, create more and more complex, more and more highly integrated, more and more cooperative forms, until life stands today with a conscious creature, man at its pinnacle, able by choice to cooperate with nature and his fellowmen in the further advance of life, and to build a cooperative world and society.

As between entropy on the one hand, and evolution on the other, evolution appears to be the dominant, and uses the results of entropy for its constructive endeavours. But we cannot forget that the physical sciences seem to indicate that in the end entropy will have the victory, according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics. But that implies a closed system, and no one has yet been able to prove that this is so. Furthermore, it is totally unable to explain how the vast evolving, building-up process could ever have gotten started. So I have a faith that the evolutionary endeavours of life will come to more than nothingness in the end. This is a faith, but it is a reasonable one.

History records the same constructive effort towards larger and larger unities, more and more inclusive societies of men, from family, to tribe, to city-state, to province, to nation-state, and now we stand on the threshold of the unity of the whole world, the entire human race and the coordination of all human effort!

Religion records this, in the evolution of the redemptive man, the man who has overcome the separateness of himself and thus gained the power by goodness to overcome

the will to evil and separation in others. Religion records it in the Mahatma Gandhis, and today we celebrate Mahatma Gandhi's one hundred and eleventh birthday as we have for so many years in this place, the Jesuses, the Albert Schweitzers, the Chief Luthulis (of South Africa), the Danilo Dolcis (Sicily), the Sister Therasas (India) of history, the men and women who, out of the fiercest kind of inner struggle, have somehow managed to conquer the tendency to separation and selfishness, in themselves, and to make their whole lives weapons of love to pit against the dark demonic forces that range our lives within and without. All men have this good potential within them. Thus man plays his part in the overlife of God, sometimes enmeshed in evil, sometimes lifted up and lifting others with his goodness, for he has the power of choice.

We are co-creators with God of an emerging future; co-creators of a universe eternally unfinished, eternally in process, eternally confronted with the threat of disaster on the one hand, but eternally confronted with the hope of progress and greater harmony on the other. This whole, vast Process, this Larger Life, has come to consciousness of itself in man. Man, an infinitesimal part of the larger whole, yet conscious guide of its future, man at its growing edge gropes forward toward an ever greater good, a more harmonious whole. The creative and destructive forces vie within us; the divine and demonic wrestle around us for supremacy, to decide whether the creative, divine force shall go forward or fall back in our time. In a large measure this does depend upon what we choose to be and do.

Now, it is this third view that seems to me to tell us more about the character of good and evil in this universe. There will be competition in their coexistence. The universe is a single entity, mingled and

mixed of diverse and conflicting elements, wrestling within itself to turn hostility into harmony, conflict into cooperation, chaos into cosmos. We have the challenge to participate, as we are able to overcome the sense of separateness in us, in that great Cooperation which is the immediate challenge on every level to whatever evil presents itself.

If this sometimes seems hard to us, think what it means to God! This is the kind of thing that it is very hard to state in literal language, the language of history or the language of science. Here we need to use the simplification, the personalization, the illusion, if you will, of poetry. Howard Thurman caught it all in his beautiful, searching poem entitled 'But, God, it won't come right!'

But God, it won't come right! It won't come right!

I've worked it over till my brain is numb.

The first flash came so bright,

Then more ideas after it—flash! flash!

I thought it some

New constellation men would wonder at.

Perhaps it's just a firework—flash! fizz! spat!

Then darker darkness and scorched pasteboard
and sour smoke.

But, God, the thought was great,

The scheme, the dream—why, till the last
charm broke

The thing just built itself while I, elated,

Laughed and admired it. Then it stuck,

Half done—the lesser half, worse luck!

You see, it's dead as yet—a frame, a body—
a heart,

The soul, the fiery vital part

To give it life is what I cannot get, I've tried—

You know it! tried to snatch live fire

And pawed cold ashes! Every spark has died.

It won't come right. I'd drop the thing entire—

Only—I can't I love my job

You who ride the thunder—

Do you know what it is to dream and drudge
and throb?

I wonder.

Did it come at you with a rush, your dream,
your plan?

If so, I know how you began.
 Yes, with rapt face and sparkling eyes.
 Swinging the hot globe out between the skies,
 Marking the new seas with their white beach
 lines,
 Sowing the hills with pines.
 Wreathing a rim of purple round the plains !
 I know you laughed then, as you caught and
 wrought
 The first swift, rapturous outlines of your
 thought,
 And then—
 Men !

I see it now.
 O God, forgive my pettish row !
 I see your job. While ages crawl
 Your lips take laboring lines, your eyes a
 sadder light.
 For man the fire and flower and center of it all—
 Man won't come right !
 After your patient centuries,
 Fresh starts, recastings, tired Gethsemanes
 And tense Golgothas, he, your central theme,

Is just a jangling echo of your dream.
 Grand as the rest may be, he ruins it.

Why don't you quit?
 Crumple it all and dream again ! But no ;
 Flaw after flaw you work out, revise, refine—
 Bondage, brutality, and war and woe,
 Dear God, how you must love your job !
 Help me, as I love mine.

May we learn from this Divali Festival
 and its myths, and from the great monistic
 Hindu philosophy that sees life as one, that
 the struggle somehow always must stay with-
 in the circle. May we learn how to struggle
 too and to make the best choices we can
 in the complex confrontations which a life
 that is strangely mingled, and sweetly mixed
 presents to us.

And so, step by step, may we lift our-
 selves and our fellow humans upward to-
 ward God's Light.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VISION OF MAN

DR. TULSI RAM

'Go and play football. Mokṣa is attained
 not by reading the *Gītā*, but by playing
 football.' This is how a child renders the
 philosophy of Swami Vivekananda to me.
 I smile and observe : Yes, only add the
 word 'merely' before 'reading', and please
 don't sell away your copy of the *Gītā* to
 buy a football. It is the *Gītā* that tells you
 how to play football. And unless you know
 the rules of the game, you can't play well.

Swami Vivekananda gave us a dynamic
 interpretation of the ancient philosophy of
 Indian humanism. He was a poetic
 visionary, a revolutionary thinker, and a
 practising philosopher. He revitalised our
 tradition, spoke a new language and in-
 spired the young and the old alike. You
 have slumbered long enough, he proclaimed,

it is now time to wake up. Hence the
 clarion call: Awake, arise, and stop not
 till the goal is reached.

The greatest sin is weakness, he declared :
 Weakness is the sole cause of suffering.
 We are miserable only because we are weak.
 We lie, steal, kill and commit other crimes
 only because we are weak. We die because
 we are weak. Where there is no weakness,
 there is no death, no sorrow. The panacea?
 Strength, and strength alone ! Strength is
 the medicine for the world's disease.
 Strength against ignorance, exploitation,
 oppression, and against the tyranny of
 other sinners. Hence he exhorted: Stand
 up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole
 responsibility on your own shoulders, and
 know that you are the creator of your own

destiny. Fear, brooding, self-pity, is degradation, which is the offspring of the sin of our own making.

The source of this strength? Nothing mysterious, supernatural or unpredictable. All the strength and power lies in man himself: Summon up your all-powerful nature, oh mighty one, and this whole universe will lie at your feet. It is the Self that dominates, and not matter. In the Self is infinite energy, infinite zeal, infinite courage, and infinite patience; all the great things are achieved by the Self alone. The Self must expand, go forward and dominate over the world of matter.

In the twentieth-century world of freedom, initiative, assertion and aggression, it is easy to accept the relevance of these thoughts and words without much excitement. But in the nineteenth-century India of British colonialism, it was a new gospel indeed, and many people simply gaped in awe at this revelation of their own potential. Swamiji gave a dynamic turn to the interpretation of man and his nature. There is no parallel in history to this dynamic re-interpretation outside India except in the humanistic interpretation of man and nature in the Renaissance which, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of European thought, revolutionized the total history of the Western world.

A comparison of Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of the Vedānta and the Renaissance interpretation of Christianity will be interesting.

The Christian myth tells us that man was created in the image of God in the original integrity of knowledge, emotion and action. He had direct experience of God and His will, and he loved this childlike knowledge as good and beautiful simultaneously. Hence all his actions were in conformity with the will of God, and this was original virtue. He was in a state of innocence and

naturally he was placed in Paradise. His innocence had not yet been tried and tested under the stress and strain of temptation. Man was immortal because he was not yet subject to sin and death.

Then came temptation in the form of the devil. He seduced woman, and she seduced man, to disobey God. So man fell from his original state of innocence and lost the integrity of knowledge, emotion and action. Sin and death entered man's world, the poles of the earth were distorted, and paradise changed into a living hell, an earth groaning under the weight of sin and crime committed by this fallen biped called the human being. When Darwin declared in the nineteenth century that man had descended from the ape through the process of evolution, Christian theologians should not have felt disturbed. Our greatest grandfather when he was expelled from Paradise was nothing more than a human animal. No chance of survival for him, personal or social, no chance of redemption except through the grace of God. And woman certainly was worse than man. For a whole millennium, this view of man and his world prevailed, until the Renaissance struck and broke through the dark ages into enlightenment.

This is how it happened: When man fell, all was not lost. God allowed him to retain 'some remnants of the divine image', 'notions in the understanding', and 'motions of the imagination', which are the principles of arts and sciences, philosophy and religion. In the words of St. Augustine, the Divine Grace uses this 'dim glimmering of light unput-out in men' as an instrument of virtue and the fulfilment of its eternal purpose.

The Renaissance concentrated on this potential illumination hidden somewhere in the labyrinthine caverns of the human mind. It proclaimed this potential divinity of man through the poetry of Marlowe,

Spencer and Shakespeare. Here is Shakespeare's Hamlet musing over man's divinity:

What a piece of work is man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in form and moving, how express and admirable ! in action, how like an angel ! in apprehension, how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals !

The last words remind us of Prajāpati's presentation of the human form to the Devas for a dwelling as described in the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*. The post-Renaissance achievements of the Western world are a testimony to this new realization of the infinite power of man.

Swami Vivekananda's was a similar feat of interpretation so far as the Vedānta tradition of Indian philosophy is concerned.

Vedānta means the end or final aim of the Veda. From the fortieth and last chapter of the *Yajur-Veda* which forms the text of the *Īsopaniṣad*, through the other Upaniṣads to the *Brahma-Sūtra* and the commentaries thereon, the tradition is faced with the problem: What is the Ultimate Reality, the Brahman? Is it one or many? Are the individual souls and the All-Soul numerically, qualitatively and essentially identical or different? If they are the same, why do they appear to be many? Of all the commentaries on the Vedānta, the most important is that of Śaṅkara.

The fundamental proposition of the Vedānta as enunciated by Śaṅkara is that the Ātman or soul of man is identical with the Brahman. Since the infinite and eternal cannot consist of parts, nor be subject to change, it follows that everyone of the many is essentially Brahman, entire and indivisible. Nothing really exists besides Brahman. 'There is only one, without a second.' The experience of the manifold world of perception is born of ignorance, *avidyā*, which prevents the self from knowing that

the empirical world of phenomena is illusion, *Māyā*, or delusion. It disappears on closer examination, or evaporates like a dream image which seems real to the sleeper but vanishes in waking hours.

Śaṅkara maintained the concept of the two levels of truth, the higher truth which represented the mystical experience of release and identity with Brahman, and the ordinary level of common-sense experience which affirmed the multiplicity of phenomena. The Upaniṣad itself had proclaimed the truth of the one, constant, ultimate Reality as also truth of the facts, the flux, the world of change, the plurality of the forms of the manifestation of the One. It had also declared that the knowledge of the One was *vidyā*, and the perception of the many was *avidyā*. It had enjoined that one who pursued both *vidyā* and *avidyā*, *sambhūti* and *vināśa*, really knew ; the rest were in the dark. Thus one could arrive at the one ultimate Reality through the intermediate and the many.

Then came the dark ages of our history. Pseudo-divines flourished and distorted the right perspective. Without having practically experienced the one and only one, they announced their supposed identity with it. *Darśana*, the experience of philosophy, was replaced by intellectual gymnastics. In theory they reviled the phenomenal world as illusion, while in actual practice they revelled in the exploitation of the simple folk. Intellectual pretension, hypocrisy and bigotry were accompanied by an ethics of inaction, nihilism and fatalism, all leading to laziness, self-pity, and, lastly, slavery. When the British established their rule over this land, they described it as a 'decomposed society', 'a race debased by three thousand years of despotism and priestcraft', and one that believed not in God but in 'monsters of wood and stone'. This was the state of society in India comparable

to the Europe of the Dark Ages, fifth to fifteenth century.

Swami Vivekananda appeared on this scene of despair and proclaimed his gospel of the Indian Renaissance.

Swamiji was a hard realist, an uncompromising practical man. First he accepted the social realities with the religious practices of the time; idolatry, for instance. But he challenged the foreigner who had no business and no justification to opine on our practices for political advantage. He demanded a reason for what the foreigner said, and dismissed it summarily as bullying tactics.

Yet idolatry is condemned! Why? Nobody knows. Because some hundreds of years ago some man of Jewish blood happened to condemn it! That is, he happened to condemn everybody else's idols except his own. If God is represented in any beautiful form, or any symbolic form, said the Jew, it is awfully bad; it is sin. But if He is represented in the form of a chest, with two angels sitting on each side, and a cloud hanging over it, it is holy of holies. If God comes in the form of a dove, it is holy. But if He comes in the form of a cow, it is heathen superstition; condemn it! That is how the world goes.¹

And the world shall not go on like this, he declared. He rejected the idea of sin:

Vedānta recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error. And the greatest error, says the Vedānta, is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature, and that you have no power and you cannot do this and that. Every time you think in that way you, as it were, rivet one more link in the chain that binds you down, you add one more layer of hypnotism on your own soul. Therefore, whoever thinks he is weak is wrong, whoever thinks he is impure is wrong and is throwing a bad thought into the world.²

His words on the ideal were simple, positive, unmistakable:

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.³

The romantic is one, says Hume, who does not believe in the fall of man, and in this sense, Swamiji was a romantic. In the history of Indian literature he occupies a place similar to the place of Milton, Blake and Rousseau in Western literature.

The rest of his message follows from his declaration of the divinity of man: Pray for strength, of the body as well as mind, work for social reconstruction, go out and serve man as God, and sacrifice your all for the nation and mankind, for therein you shall find your true Self.

Sitting in a luxurious home, surrounded with all comforts of life and doling out a little amateur religion may be good for other lands, but India has a truer instinct. It instinctively detects the mask. You must give up. Be great. No great work can be done without sacrifice.

Thus, he called for a renewal of religion, rejuvenation of society and regeneration of the whole nation—man-making philosophy and theories, man-making education, and above all, the will to act and achieve:

What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic will, which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the universe and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going to the bottom of the ocean and meeting Death face to face.⁴

Here is an expression of the invincible will of the Greeks, the vaulting aspirations

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), vol. 3, p. 218.

2. *Complete Works*, vol. 2 (1976), p. 295.

3. *Complete Works*, vol. 7 (1972), p. 501.

4. *Complete Works*, vol. 3, p. 190.

of the Elizabethans, the romantic revolution of the nineteenth century and, above all, a call for the gigantic structures of modern science and technology.

Control-room? The sanctum sanctorum, the soul of the Man-God, wherein the Master plays the hectic game with perfect equanimity, in perfect joy.

INDIA'S LINGUISTIC WEALTH

(A Review Article)

[THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA, VOLUME V : LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES: EDITED BY DR. SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI. Published by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Golpark, Calcutta 700 029. 1978. Pp. xxv+839. Rs. 120.]

The Cultural Heritage of India series is planned and acclaimed to be an encyclopaedia of Indian culture. The picture that emerges out of the five volumes published so far is remarkable indeed. Volume V alone, dealing with Indian languages and literatures, has such a vast canvas of such amazing variety in its colours and contours that one is at once reminded of what Dryden wrote of Chaucer: 'Here is God's plenty!' The series will certainly be, when it is completed, an encyclopaedia indeed.

'Encyclopaedia' is a term which has been derived from the Greek *enkuklios paideia* meaning 'circular education'. Originally it meant an entire group of studies which every Greek young man was expected to complete as preparation for his active career. Finally, the term 'encyclopaedia' came to mean a course of education which was balanced, circular and complete, a curriculum of liberal education. This classical conception of the encyclopaedia was modified and adjusted according to the changing aims and requirements of later times but the central principles remained unaltered, still working in countless encyclopaedias of various kinds all over the world.

An encyclopaedia is the result of a balanced and planned organizational effort

on a large scale, when the plan is executed particularly by a body of highly trained, scrupulous and yet liberal scholars. *The Cultural Heritage of India* in all its volumes fulfils all these requirements and is unquestionably a major achievement in the field of modern Indian research and scholarship. It gives us a connected series of well-directed and well-developed studies in Indian culture from ancient to present times. The emphasis is, on the whole, on ancient culture, particularly Sanskritic. As Nehru pointed out, 'Ancient India, like ancient China, was a world in itself, a culture and a civilization which gave shape to all things. Foreign influences poured in and often influenced that culture and were absorbed. Disruptive tendencies gave rise immediately to an attempt to find a synthesis.'

In 1831 John Stuart Mill wrote *The Spirit of the Age* in which he explained the character of the age of transition. He wrote: 'In all other conditions of mankind the uninstructed have faith in the instructed. In an age of transition the divisions among the instructed nullify their authority, and the uninstructed lose their faith in them.' Thus an age of transition may well lead to an age of chaos.

When we think of this remark of Mill, we are at once convinced that the publication of *The Cultural Heritage of India* as a series is timely and much-awaited for more than one reason, especially in the context of various disruptive, misleading and corruptive forces which are working not only in India but also all over the world today. Writing in 1869, in the age of the Victorian crisis and anarchy, Matthew Arnold recommended culture as the great help out of 'present difficulties'. He characterized culture as a pursuit of total perfection, and this is an inward operation that seeks to guide our external action. India today is standing at the crossroads of history, facing problems which a true conception of our culture and aspiration may yet solve, and the solution may yet save us and others in the other parts of the world. Culture is necessary for our fight against anarchy and barbarism, wherever civilization is in peril. The Renaissance in modern India is very largely the discovery of our true self, the discovery of our spiritual and cultural past and of our potentialities to contribute to the solution of the problems of the modern world. India must take her rightful place in the assembly of nations. Anarchy or crisis of any kind rises out of the absence of any centre of taste and authority, of the great discipline which India has always avowed. The present volume is one of the many presentations of that great culture-complex which the entire series will seek to interpret and explain.

This culture, as it expresses itself through our languages and literatures, tries to attain the totality of perfection by trying to make itself free from what the modern European scholars call the 'provinciality' of civilization. Indian literature at its best is a significant presentation of this conception of culture. It has its roots deep into the Indian soil and thrives in a climate which is essentially Indian but it is also liberal

enough to absorb all that is best in the other parts of the world. This culture, true to its Indian character, seeks to see things as in reality they are and forces us to realize what a worthy thing is the spiritual and religious side in man. True culture is not the product of mere curiosity or passion for knowledge; it also grows out of the social and moral passion for doing good. In its totality it is the study of perfection as a whole, a synthesis of the ideal and the real. The five volumes of the *Cultural Heritage* are a unified interpretation of Indian culture and civilization, with the fifth volume revealing to us the vast panorama of Indian languages and literatures in ancient, medieval and modern times.

In comparison with the earlier volumes, Volume V presents assessments from many fresh points of view. Still one finds that there is much common matter scattered and interspersed in the five volumes if we take them together for the purpose of analysis. Volume V has certainly its entirety and independent value, and the success achieved here is as much due to the editorial planning as to the individual treatment of the topics by the different scholars.

The aim of the Editor of this volume, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, is to plan the work in such a way that the cultural unity and integrity of India may well emerge clear and sharp out of the linguistic diversity which characterizes the cultural scene of India. The stress is therefore laid deliberately on a body of writings, composed mainly of the Upaniṣads, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the Purāṇas, etc.—a corpus which has exercised great fascination and influence on the Indian mind and therefore on nearly all significant writings for about 2,000 years. This matter forms what may be called the 'bedrock' of our languages and literatures. The 'matter' of the Sanskrit world is present, although to a

limited extent, even in Kashmiri, Sindhi, Tamil and Urdu. The contribution of Jaina and Buddhist elements is extremely important, no doubt, but the dominant matter is unquestionably 'Brahmanical', and all these three together constitute the main body of Indian writings. The purely Islamic element, independent of Indian life, is very rare even in Urdu literature, while the European impact came to be felt almost entirely in modern times, especially from the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

A very important characteristic of the development of Indian languages and literatures is that they follow, as the editor states, more or less the same pattern in the process of their growth. 'Thus it may be said that if one passes from one modern Indian literature into another, there will be no sense of entering into a different climate. And this will be more true if one passes from Sanskrit literature into that of any modern Indian language.' A close study of the ancient, medieval and modern Indian literatures will also reveal that in their thought-content as also in the social life depicted therein the unity of Indian culture is strongly felt, and this unity of culture is at least the one unchallenged basis of Indian unified life which has been recognized and acknowledged even by those scholars who emphasize the diversity of India and deny the importance of the claim of India as 'one people'.

As it is not possible for us to survey and review the details of the work within the limited scope at our disposal, we mention only the principal heads which will give an idea about the large variety of material contained in the volume concerned. Part I deals with the religious literature of ancient India; Part II with Sanskrit and Sanskritic literature; Part III with the major languages and literatures of modern India; Part IV with Adivasi and Folk literatures of India;

and Part V with Indian literature abroad. The Bibliography and the Index are excellent.

An analysis shows that although Part I ('Religious Literature of Ancient India') has points of contact with the materials of the earlier volumes, it can reasonably claim to be regarded as a series of significant supplementaries in various respects. How careful the organizers are on the whole will also be clear from the inclusion of a sketch, a brief, illuminating and delightful article on 'Gāṇapatya, Kaumāra and Saurya Literature' in Part I. The Parsis will certainly find in it references to fire-worship and sun-worship as their link with their Hindu friends in certain communities which exist even in modern India.

Part II ('Sanskrit and Sanskritic Literature') has a compactness and a uniformity of presentation. Although the materials presented here are not really very original, the compilation is very careful and the organization excellent. To those who are not duly 'initiated' so far as Sanskritic literature is concerned Dr. Prabhat Chandra Chakravarti's article, 'The Spiritual Outlook of Sanskrit Grammar', will come as a revelation. That philology has its philosophy is not known to many!

Parts III, IV and V are indeed priceless compressions of enormous matter. In Part III ('Major Languages and Literatures of Modern India') only 236 pages (419-655) have been devoted to the study of fifteen major languages of India and their literatures. Most of the Indian vernacular literatures for a long time had Sanskritic inspiration and this tendency continues to a limited extent even in modern times. In the medieval period these literatures had intimate contact with Vaiṣṇavism, Śākta doctrines and various other local cults. Although earlier help came from Jainism and Buddhism, the Bhakti cult which tried to absorb something of Sufism during the

Muslim period, acted as a dynamic literary force all over the country.

Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati and many of the other regional literatures flourished, particularly after the Muslim occupation, partly due to the decline of Sanskrit and partly due to Muslim patronage in certain cases. Although the secular element is found in religious literature, strictly secular literature in general appeared only after A.D. 1800. Hindi has, however, the credit of developing the earliest secular literature, while Urdu sought to satisfy the common requirements of the Hindus and the Muslims and grew out of a compromise between Hindi and Arabic-Persian. It was after the introduction of English education that the modern phase of vernacular literatures with a vastly expanded horizon began, indicating the possibilities of the sea-mark of 'an utmost sail'.

True to the central theme of the whole series, namely, the *Cultural Heritage*, the classification of the languages and literatures is into four principal language-culture groups. In spite of their genetic diversity these languages today show trends which have a predominantly Indian character with a strong influence of English. Obviously, limited space did not permit the scholars to deal with the details of the linguistic diversity and affinity of the Indian languages. Still, a comparative study of the matter presented by them shows that intimate contact for a long time and common origin in many cases have contributed to the cultural unity of India in the sphere of the languages. It may be mentioned that Hindi, Urdu, Assamese, Bengali and Oriya, covering large parts of northern, central and eastern India, indicate much that is common in their vocabulary, grammar, linguistic developments and literary inspiration. And what is true of them is also true of the languages in the rest of the country.

The section on English in Part III, which deals with Indo-Anglian literature as an essential part of modern Indian literature, is a bold and thoughtful inclusion. It does not, however, deal with the problems which English presents in the context of modern Indian education and culture. Still, in the limited space, Dr. Iyengar has succeeded in giving us a balanced picture of Indo-Anglian writings which have played an important role in the life of modern India and have become a significant part of our cultural heritage.

The entire Part IV, containing studies in Adivasi languages and literatures of India and Folk Literatures of India, is an extremely interesting part of the volume. It is both highly informative and original in approach and treatment; it also shows how effectively the forces of diversity and unity operate in distinctive ways in the history of our life and culture. The Adivasi and Folk literatures are entirely 'native' in origin, being the products of the soil, and they completely identify themselves with their regions, free from any foreign influence. They represent, therefore, a very significant aspect of our Indian culture, although they are not directly connected with the philosophical and religious thought-streams peculiar to Indian Sanskritic or Jain-Buddhistic culture.

Part V ('Indian Literature Abroad') is a highly interesting account of what may rightly be regarded as a kind of India's cultural conquest. To us it is like the story of a series of great adventures, because it implies and suggests the thrilling romance of many voyages and journeys, missions, dangers and discoveries for the establishment of a great culture in many foreign lands, not enforced by arms but introduced by love for the sake of enlightenment.

Nearly every article in the fifth volume of *The Cultural Heritage of India* is a treasure indeed, and so rich and varied is the treasury that there are moments when a

reader may well exclaim in joy and despair, 'I cannot see the wood for the trees!' We have no doubt whatsoever that the success will be repeated in the much-awaited concluding volumes of the series.

PROF. PRABODH CHANDRA GHOSH
*Sometime Secretary, University Colleges
 of Arts and Commerce, Calcutta, and
 Sometime Head of the Department of
 English, Calcutta University*

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

WORLD PEACE THROUGH NATIONAL PLANS: BY S. D. JOSHI. Published by Somaiya Publications, 172, Mumbai Marathi Granthasangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay 400 014. 1980. Pp. ix+293. Rs. 32/-.

Dr. S. D. Joshi seeks to justify the title of his book *World Peace through National Plans* by prefacing the book with the unassailable statement that the purpose of all human endeavours should be to create a better and happier world for the entire mankind. Divided into thirteen brief chapters running to some 120 pages, the book represents Dr. Joshi's idea of the world as it could be made through national plans. The author's basic thesis is that we must revise our concepts of planning as well as the methodology to be adopted for the purpose of implementation of plans. Why? Because it is not the monetary value of the G.N.P. that brings happiness and order in society. "The economic growth and approach towards plans so far have been on the basis of taking monetary values and standards of living as the only criteria of the measure of happiness of the people, but this is an erroneous notion. There should be a radical change of outlook in planning for growth with the ultimate objectives of achieving prosperity and happiness for men and nations, with mutual harmony." (P. 17).

The author is not enamoured of any particular political dogma or system. Nor does he have any faith in the transplantation of an alien culture. He looks at the totality of the problem and stresses the need for an integrated planning approach without any bias or political ideology. How to achieve this total integrated approach and what are its essential features? To begin with, the planners must understand that humanity is one and indivisible. This would mean governmental planning at two different levels: providing the common people with the basic minimum necessities of life, and then removing the dis-

parities between the rich and the poor. After tackling the problem on these two fronts, the governments should think on a global scale: the standard of living of all the people of the world could be improved to a great extent once the nations sincerely determine that they should by all means avoid wasting energies, talents and resources in arms race and the like (In 1970 the world military expenditure was \$ 200 billion. Needless to say that diversion of even 25% of this amount to developmental work would have given a tremendous boost to the stabilization of the world's economic conditions.) In other words, the planners must have a total conception of the world's life processes and a humane approach to the people to be served. Secondly, the planners must have a total understanding of the problem in all its dimensions, especially of the sociological and ethical aspects of development. They should not allow themselves to be carried away by the technical angle, by the statistical or economical figures and data.

Having recommended such a conceptual frame of mind for the planners, the author stresses that for the execution of plans there is an absolute necessity to create a separate executive machinery consisting of people whose task is to implement, follow up and generate enthusiasm in the people participating in the fulfilment of plan targets in various fields.

The ultimate success or failure of a plan depends upon the people involved in planning, whether at the conceptual level or at the implementation level, and upon the people whom the plan is meant to serve. They have to think in the perspective of totality and understand that man has a link with God and that he is a part and parcel of nature. They have to imbibe this basic philosophy of life and look at human activity from ethical and metaphysical points of view.

Piecemeal approach to planning, so to say, will not do. Planning has to be a three-dimensional exercise: physical, social and meta-

physical, and the chief concern of planners should be the gross national happiness (eventually leading to happiness of humanity as a whole) and not the gross national product.

The author has effectively drawn our attention to the prevailing pitfalls of purely economic planning. He has done a good job in emphasizing the sociological and ethical aspects of development. His concern for the total humanity is also clearly in evidence in the pages of the book. No one for certain can have any quarrel with the substantive insight that he has presented in the book. Unfortunately, the world being what it is, the problem lies in motivating people and their governments to sincerely follow the lines of his thinking. No doubt, a certain re-orientation of thinking on the part of all concerned is necessary and hopefully, this could be achieved by suitable education.

DR. ANIL BARAN RAY, M.A., PH.D.
Reader, Department of Political Science
, University of Burdwan

THE HEALING BUDDHA: BY RAOUL BIRNBAUM. Published by Rider and Company, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6JD. 1980. Pp. xviii+253. £ 4.50.

Modern medical science seems to be making remarkable progress in the prevention, detection, treatment and cure of disease. Think of the miracles performed by plastic surgeons and neurosurgeons, the fantastic skill involved in organ transplants, the mind-boggling armoury found in hospitals for battling disease, to name just a very few of the innumerable wonders of modern medical science! Never before has the world seen so much manpower, wealth, time and interest dedicated to medical research.

Why is it, then, that now of all times there is an unprecedented public reaction against modern medicine? Why is it that today one can find an unbelievable diversity of alternative healing systems in any major Western city?—various forms of herbal treatment, chiropractic, acupuncture, yoga therapy, diet therapies and fasting therapies, Chinese medicine, various types of massage, to name just a very few. Well, the answer rising on all sides is that in spite of its phenomenal success in many fields, modern medicine has failed in certain fundamental respects: it neglects the *whole* man in its preoccupation with individual physical parts, it treats symptoms rather than causes, it neglects the importance of motivation in the doctor and the patient, and so on.

We hear much today about the concept of holism, especially in relation to healing. Holistic medicine seeks to treat the whole man rather than his individual physical organs. In *The Healing Buddha* Raoul Birnbaum presents us with yet another healing system, practised for almost two millenia in the Far East, which may rightly claim to be holistic in the fullest sense, for it treats not only the whole physical and psychic man, but the *spiritual* man as well.

The book is divided into two parts, the first being a study of the 'Healing Buddha', known as the Lapis Lazuli Radiance Buddha, Master of Healing ('Bhaiṣajya-guru vaidūrya-prabhā tathāgata'). Birnbaum begins Part One with a study of the historical roots of the Healing Buddha cult as found in early Buddhism. He shows that in early Buddhism there was deep and widespread concern with disease and healing: the physical treatment of bodily disease, the spiritual treatment of bodily disease, and the treatment of 'inner disease', that is, of spiritual sickness or delusion. Sakyamuni Buddha himself was often referred to as the Supreme Physician and his dharma as King of Medicines, for they cured the ultimate disease of this world—spiritual delusion. Thus it is shown that all the essentials of the later, elaborate Healing Buddha cult were present in Buddhism from the beginning.

Next the author studies the two Bodhisattvas of Healing—the brothers Bhaiṣajya Rāja and Bhaiṣajya Samudgata, the first Buddhist deities to appear whose major function was the healing of disease. This leads into a chapter on the origins of the Lapis Lazuli Radiance Buddha, Master of Healing, and of his Buddha brothers connected with healing, including a discussion on the contents of the *Bhaiṣajya Guru Sūtra*. With this chapter the focus of interest turns to China and Central Asia, for with the translation of the *Bhaiṣajya Guru Sūtra* into Chinese around the fourth century A.D., those areas became the centre of an immensely popular cult devoted to the Buddha of Healing, lasting until the communist takeover. The author ends Part One with a sensitive discussion on the importance and use of images, meditations and ritual worship in the cult of Bhaiṣajya Guru.

Part Two, comprising a little less than half the book, contains translations of four texts from the Chinese Buddhist canon which relate to the Bodhisattvas of Healing, to Bhaiṣajya Guru, and to the seven Buddha Brothers of Healing. The book also contains a foreword by John Blofeld,

sixteen black-and-white plates illustrating Part One of the text, and four useful appendices.

The Healing Buddha is not a do-it-yourself manual on the Chinese Buddhist art of curing diseases; it is a scholarly introduction to this vast, interesting, and highly valuable subject. But let not the word 'scholarly' scare away the ordinary devotee of Buddhism. For Birnbaum belongs to that new breed of orientalist who believes in what he studies. Hence his account, though meeting high academic standards, is written with sympathy and understanding.

Although the cult's rituals may seem too elaborate and time-consuming to be practicable in the modern world, the underlying principles are of undying value, and it is this that makes the book not only interesting but also of practical worth. As Birnbaum points out, 'what is essential is that, by recitation of sacred syllables and by conscious evocation and invocation of deities, the world is transformed. The *maṇḍala* becomes a center of sacred space, charged with vibrant energy, and the participants, merging with the Lords invoked, are spiritually transformed.... When one's own body becomes the Tathāgata's body, and when one's own mind merges with the Divine Mind, then the most profound healing can take place.' This 'most profound healing' is precisely the realization of one's own Buddhahood, an experience which spiritualizes the whole being—physical, mental and spiritual. Disease is thus used as an occasion for spiritual illumination, in tune with the beautiful Mahayana principle of *upāya kausala*, skillfulness of means.

In view of the immense popular interest in alternative healing arts today and the ever-growing popularity of Buddhism, *The Healing Buddha* is sure to be widely read and appreciated.

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA
Mayavati

THE TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD WITH THE COMMENTARIES OF SRI SANKARACHARYA, SRI SURESVARACHARYA, SRI VIDYARANYA : TRANSLATED BY ALLADI MAHADEVA SASTRY. Published by Samata Books, 10 Kamaraj Bhavan, 573 Mount Road, Madras 600 006. 1980. Pp. 70+791+94. Rs. 100.

It is said that the first great commentary written by Śrī Śaṅkara was on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* and so was Śrī Suresvara's *Vārtika* on this *Bhāṣya*. These two texts have been the classics of Advaita Vedānta. The next great landmark in the history of this Upaniṣad was the commentary by Śrī Vidyāraṇya, the versatile scholar,

dialectician and yogi of the fourteenth century.

The present text is a translation of these three commentaries which have to be reckoned with by every student of Indian philosophy. These are preceded by a lucid rendering of Śrī Vidyāraṇya's Introduction to the study of the Upaniṣads. At the end we have the *Amṛta Bindu* and *Kaivalya Upaniṣads*. The Upaniṣad texts are given in the original followed by translation. All these were first published separately in 1898, 1899 and 1903. Long out of print, these are brought together in one volume by Mr. V. Sadanand of Samata Books.

The value of this volume cannot be over-emphasized. Śrī Vidyāraṇya dialectically summarizes the Advaitic interpretation of the Upaniṣads. The sage makes a remarkable statement at the end of the introduction: 'because Consciousness is the thing before unknown, it is the thing to be known by all organs of perception, which operating, the thing ceases to be unknown.' We draw attention to the words 'by all organs of perception'; and for a clarification of this point of view the reader has to go through the introduction by the saint carefully.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* is the only text that treats the five *kosas* exhaustively. This is a pivotal doctrine of the theory and practice of Advaita. Suresvara supplemented and expanded the master's teaching. To make the Advaitic exposition thorough in all ways, Vidyāraṇya wrote his commentary. Vidyāraṇya reinforced his exposition with passages from Śaṅkara and Suresvara. The translator has done a commendable job. His notes are suggestive and helpful. Even if one has studied the original texts, one would do well to consult this highly valuable rendering. This volume must be the companion of every serious student of philosophy.

DR. P. S. SASTRI, M.A., PH.D.
Professor of English (Rtd)
Nagpur University

LITERARY HERITAGE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA : BY PROFESSOR H. B. SARKAR. Published by Firma KLM, 257-B, B. B. Ganguly Street, Calcutta 700 012. 1980. Pp. 280. Rs. 40.

There is valuable literature in many countries of Southeast Asia. Historical surveys of the literature of each country are available. But Prof. H. B. Sarkar has brought the literary heritage of all these countries into a single handy volume. Divided into fifteen chapters, the book offers a study of the literature of Funan,

Kambuja, Campa, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, and Indonesia. In the first part covering seven chapters the author provides a valuable introduction to the social, political, and cultural background of these countries. The remaining chapters are devoted to a survey of the literature concerned.

The author rightly emphasizes the continuity of the Indian stream in the ancient and medieval literatures of these countries. The Islamic impact in Malay and Indonesia brought a difference and hence the study of the literature of these two lands is confined to the pre-Islamic period. In the present times when Asian nations are awakening to their common cultural identity, a good linguistic introduction to the literature of these

countries has considerable value. Here comes the importance of this monograph.

Going through the succinct account of the literatures of this area, one is struck by the vitality and adaptability of the culture of ancient India which found a fertile soil in these countries leading to the evolution of a significant Indian culture adapted to the local conditions.

This book is necessarily to be studied by all those interested in the cultural heritage of India and of Greater India.

DR. P. S. SASTRI, M.A., PH.D.
Professor of English (Rtd)
Nagpur University

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA KANKHAL

REPORT FOR APRIL 1979 TO MARCH 1980

Medical : The Sevashrama runs an Indoor Hospital with 65 beds, which treated 1,875 patients during the period. Major operations numbered 185 and minor, 535. The average number of beds occupied daily was 51. The Outdoor Dispensary treated 1,24,738 cases, of which 33,192 were new; surgical cases numbered 10,842. The Pathological Department investigated 37,852 specimens. X-rays taken by the Radiological Department numbered 7,557.

Two Mobile Dispensaries covered a radius of 25 kms from the base hospital, serving the rural populace. Both the units visited each centre twice a week, treating and dispensing drugs for three days at a time. Unit I treated 46,030 cases, of which 24,497 were new. Unit II treated 15,264 cases (8,324 new).

From its inception in 1901, the Sevashrama has admitted and served only male patients, because until a decade ago the monks themselves did the nursing. Now, however, the hospital has a professional nursing staff, so the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission has decided to

start a Female Ward consisting of 50 beds. On 20 December 1979 Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President-General of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, laid the foundation stone for the Female Ward and new Out-Patients' Department.

Religious and Cultural : The Sevashrama has a temple where regular worship services and special celebrations are held. There are also a small library and reading room, and a guest house for the convenience of the Sevashrama's friends, sympathizers and donors.

Needs : (1) The fiscal position of the Sevashrama is very bad. During the period there was a deficit of Rs. 75,985.73. The generous public is requested to give liberally so that the deficit may be made good. (2) Construction of the Female Ward and new Out-Patients' Department : Rs. 32,00,000. (3) Construction of family quarters for the paramedical staff and technicians : Rs. 3,00,000. (4) New monastic quarters : Rs. 1,50,000. (5) Replacement of old and out-dated hospital equipments : Rs. 2,00,000. (6) Endowment of hospital beds : Rs. 10,000 per bed.

Donations may be sent to The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, P.O. Kankhal 249 408, Dist. Saharanpur, U.P.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

The Year of the Disabled

With a view to focussing the attention of the public on the problems of the disabled, the United Nations has declared the year 1981 the 'International Year of Disabled Persons'. According to estimates made by the U.N. there are at present around 400 million people in the world with physical, mental or emotional disabilities. India with the second largest population has not less than 50 million handicapped persons. Some 9 million of them are blind.

In developing countries like India debilitating diseases and undernourishment disable a large number of people belonging to the weaker sections of society. Through improved nutrition and better medical care a sizeable percentage of disabled persons, especially children, could be reclaimed to normal life. This is essentially a responsibility of the Government, though voluntary organizations too can do much.

But the main problem of the disabled is not their physical handicaps which most of them have come to accept with courage. Rather, it is the psychological damage caused by social rejection that is the real problem. Says Ernst Klee, an eminent social education specialist of West Germany, 'People are born with disability, but they become "disabled" later on. Traits considered typical of the disabled—introversion, perceptive disturbance, anxiety, etc.—are observable in all people. The disabled are not born with a specific mentality. It is imposed upon them by their environment.' What is important is that the disabled persons should feel they are accepted by the society as its essential part and be allowed to live like normal persons.

What the handicapped people need is not sympathy, not to be reduced to objects of pity, but the dignity of an individual enshrining in his heart the immortal flame of the Spirit, the Ātman, which the defects of the body and mind can never tarnish. The non-disabled should overcome their fear of the disabled, and the disabled should be made to overcome their sense of isolation. This work of social integration is mainly the responsibility of the society and opens an important field of work for voluntary organizations.

Even in Europe for centuries the disabled were regarded as a curse. Parents were ashamed to have a 'handicapped child'. It was only after the Thalidomide shock of the early 1960s that the general public began to show more understanding. In India there exists a strong prejudice against the handicapped. There are some people who believe that blindness and other congenital disabilities are the result of the individual's past Karma. But, as Swami Vivekananda said, if it is their Karma to suffer it is our Karma to serve them. Karma is not a single individual's concern; it involves a chain of relationships. It is the national Karma of Indians to work for the uplift of the poor and the rehabilitation of the disabled in India.
