



# Prabuddha Bharata

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

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

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

प्र सु स्तोमं भरत वाजयंत

इंद्राय सत्यं यदि सत्यमस्ति ।

नेंद्रो अस्तीति नेम उ त्व आह

क ई ददर्श कमभि ष्टवाम ॥

1. Desiring strength bring forth a hymn of praise, a truthful hymn to Indra—if he really exists. Nema<sup>1</sup> says: 'There is no Indra. Who has seen him? Whom, then, shall we adore?'<sup>2</sup>

*Rg-Veda 8.100.3*

अयमस्मि जरितः पश्य मेह

विश्वा जातान्यभ्यस्मि मत्ना ।

ऋतस्य मा प्रदिशो वर्धयंत्या-

ददिरो भुवना दद्वरीमि ॥

2. 'O singer ! Behold me here. I exist. All that exists I surpass in glory. The eternal Law's (*ṛta*) commandments make me mighty. When I destroy, I destroy the world.'<sup>3</sup>

*Rg-Veda 8.100.4*

आ यन्मा वेना अरुहन्तृतस्यं

एकमासीनं हर्यतस्य पृष्ठे

मनश्चिन्मे हृद आ प्रत्यवोचद-

चिक्रदञ्छिशुमंतः सखायः ॥

3. 'As I sat alone at the summit of the sky,<sup>4</sup> the virtuous people (those who follow *ṛta*) approached me. Then my mind spoke to my heart, "My friends are crying to me with their children."<sup>5</sup>

*Rg-Veda 8.100.5*

\* Three remarkable verses on man's eternal quest and God's self-revelation: *ahamasmi* ('I exist').

1. According to Sāyaṇa, Nema refers to Bhārgava, the seer of this hymn.

2. Here the sage appears as a doubting Thomas ! However, his doubt is not that of an atheist but of a true seeker who is not satisfied with blind faith but longs for direct realization of God. And sure enough, the divine response comes to him—as the next verse shows.

3. These are the words of Indra who reveals himself in the heart of the devotee. Here Indra stands, not for a particular god, but the supreme Deity. The divine self-revelation continues in the next verse also.

4. Refers to the transcendent glory of the supreme Deity.

5. God cannot remain unmoved when his devotees cry to Him for help. The concepts of Grace and Avatāra are adumbrated here.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the three main types of *upāsanā* prevalent in modern times.

In SANNYASA SOUVENIRS the reader will get a glimpse into the mind of a spiritual aspirant who is about to take the great vows of Sannyāsa and go beyond the point of no return in life. This warm personal account was originally recorded as a memoir for private use by the author, Swami Vidyatmananda (of the Rama-krishna-Vedanta Centre, Gretz, France) who is well-known under his premonastic name John Yale for his eminently readable book *A Yankee with the Swamis*.

Dr. Sushanta Sen, M.A., Ph.D., Reader in Philosophy, Visva-Bharati University, leads the reader step by step to the HEART

OF HINDUISM. This refreshingly original presentation of the fundamentals of Hindu religion is based on a course of lectures delivered by the author at the University of Birmingham under the auspices of its Department of Theology during 1971-73.

In LALA LAJPAT RAI AND MAHATMA GANDHI Dr. Anil Baran Ray, M.A., Ph.D., Reader in the Department of Political Science, University of Burdwan, touches upon certain significant points of comparison between these two great leaders of India's freedom struggle.

In the fourteenth instalment of IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE Dr. Vinita Wanchoo, M.A., M.A., Ph.D., continues her brilliant analysis of the problem of ethics in Vedānta.

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## TYPES OF MEDITATION—II

(EDITORIAL)

### *Upāsanā and dhyāna*

Concentration can be practised on any object. In fact, in our daily life we are concentrating on something or other most of the time. This kind of concentration is more or less unconscious and is done under the compulsion of desires. True meditation differs from it in being a conscious process involving the detachment of the will from lower desires and its focussing at a higher centre of consciousness.

We have seen that meditation is a stage in concentration common to all spiritual paths. We have also seen that meditation is of two types : subjective and objective. Subjective meditation is of the nature of an enquiry into the Ātman, and is called *nididhyāsana*. Objective meditation is con-

centrating the mind on an object. Objective meditation is known under different names. Patañjali calls it *dhyāna*. In Vedānta a more common term is *upāsanā*. Both these terms are, however, met with in the Upaniṣads.

In ancient India meditation was a subject of deep study, research and experiment. The followers of the Sāṃkhya philosophy developed it into an independent science of mental life. When properly concentrated on an object, the mind undergoes certain changes. These changes are the same for a particular degree of concentration whatever be the object chosen. In other words, concentration follows certain universal laws. These laws were discovered by the great Yogis of ancient India. Patañjali codified and compiled them in his famous Yoga



Aphorisms. These laws form the basis of *upāsanā* also. So Śaṅkarācārya defines meditation as 'a process of unwavering application of the same thought on some object, such as a deity prescribed by the scriptures, without being interrupted by any alien thought.'<sup>1</sup> However, there are some important differences between Yogic meditation and Vedantic meditation.

The immediate aim of Yogic *dhyāna* is to discover the functions of mind at higher levels of consciousness. Its ultimate aim is the separation or isolation of Puruṣa from Prakṛti. As Bhoja points out, Yoga is really *viyoga*, disunion.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, *upāsanā* aims at union. Its immediate aim may be to unite the meditator with a deity. But its ultimate aim is to unite the individual self (Jivātman) with the Supreme Self (Paramātman).

Another difference is that in Yogic meditation the choice of God is optional. According to Patañjali meditation can be practised on any object one likes.<sup>3</sup> Bhoja in his commentary points out that in Yoga the object of meditation (*bhāvyam*) is of two types : God and the *tattvas*. The *tattvas* again are of two types : Puruṣa and the twenty-four categories of Prakṛti.<sup>4</sup> *Dhyāna* may be practised on any of the *tattvas*. But in *upāsanā* God alone is the object of meditation, and not the *tattvas*.

1. ध्यानं नाम शास्त्रोक्त देवताद्यालम्बनेषु अचलो  
भिन्नजातीयैरनन्तरितः प्रत्ययसन्तानः ॥

Śaṅkara, Commentary on *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.6.1

2. पतञ्जलमुनेरुक्तिः काप्यपूर्वात् जयत्यसौ ।  
पुं प्रकृत्योर्वियोगोऽपि योग इत्युदितो यया ॥
3. यथाऽभिमतध्यानाद् वा ।

*Yoga Sūtra* 1.39

4. भाव्यं च द्विविधम्—ईश्वरः तत्त्वानि च ।  
तान्यपि द्विविधानि जडाजडभेदात् ।  
जडानि चतुर्विंशतिः । अजडः पुरुषः ।

Bhoja, *Vṛtti* on *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.17

The third difference is that in order to practise yogic meditation it is not necessary to have any preconceived ideas about Reality. But *upāsanā* is based on the Vedāntic conception of Reality and operates within a definite conceptual framework. What *upāsanā* does is to convert the conceptual or indirect (*parokṣa*) knowledge into intuition or direct (*aparokṣa*) experience.

### *Development of upāsanā in the post-Vedic period*

These two types of meditation—Yogic *dhyāna* and Vedāntic *upāsanā*—got united in the post-Vedic period. It was shown last month how *upāsanā* evolved in the Vedic period from ritual-bound meditations (*aṅgāvabaddha*) into substitution meditations and finally into the *vidyās*. In the meantime the Yoga system was getting perfected. It was then that the Tantras arose, probably a few centuries after the Vedic period had ended.

The Tantras combined the monism of the Upaniṣads with the theism of the Purāṇas. Secondly, they united Yogic meditation with Vedāntic *upāsanā*. Apart from this, the Tantras made independent discoveries about Mantras, Kuṇḍalinī, etc. The all-round harmony and synthesis effected by the Tantras opened a new era in the history of spirituality in India. This continues to this day. The meditation techniques now prevalent show the strong influence of the Tantras.

### *Form, name and the self*

One of the important changes that the Tantras introduced was in the field of symbols. The images of different gods and goddesses have completely replaced the Vedic images of fire, sun, air, etc. In the Vedic period the approach to ultimate Reality was direct. The Tantras have made

it indirect : the aspirant first attains the vision of a god or goddess and then through him or her realizes the ultimate Reality. Again, in the Vedic period words were used primarily for their meaning (*abhidhāna*). The Tantras have, however, shown that certain mystic words have an intrinsic power to produce changes in consciousness.

Symbols play an important part in human life. Other than pure consciousness, all our thinking is based on symbols. These symbols can be divided into two groups: *rūpa* (form) and *nāma* (name). These, along with the self, constitute the knowing process. Emotions are also of course a part of mental life. But they are not essential to knowledge. In fact, they very often distort the knowing process. A person overcome by anger, envy, fear and other emotions has a distorted view of other people. That is why Patañjali regards emotions as 'false knowledge' (*viparyaya*).<sup>5</sup> They are great obstacles in spiritual life, and the aspirant is advised to rid himself of them before attempting real meditation. True knowledge arises only when the mind is freed from emotional disturbances. It is, however, important to note here that Bhakti, love of God, which is a great help in *upāsana*, is not an emotion and is therefore never regarded as an obstacle. True devotion is a property of the self, its longing for union with the Supreme Self.

When the mind is freed from the hold of instincts and emotions, there remain in it only three elements of pure cognition: form, name and the self. These are the only factors that constitute the meditative act. Spiritual aspirants show great variation in their ability to manipulate these three factors.

When we speak of differences among people we usually mean their emotional make-up. Some people are more loving and

kind, some cruel and harsh. Some are arrogant, some humble. And so on. One of the important tasks in spiritual life is to level up these differences and make every aspirant pure, virtuous, calm.

However, these are not the only differences among aspirants. The very structure of the mind and the way names, forms and the self influence it vary from person to person. Some people find visualization of images very easy but find it difficult to manipulate abstract ideas, especially mathematics. Their thinking is a kind of inner seeing and they have what is called 'photographic memory'. The minds of these people are form-oriented. Some others find it difficult or even impossible to visualize forms and do their thinking mostly through sound symbols. These are the people who benefit most from listening to talks and lectures. Their minds are name-oriented. There are yet others who find both names and forms a great botheration and prefer to hold on to the self without any visual or ideational support. Their minds are self-oriented.

To meet the needs of these three different mental types, three kinds of *upāsana* have been developed: *pratīkopāsana* (meditation on visual images), *nāmapāsana* (meditation on sound symbols) and *ahamgrahopāsana* (meditation on the self). Each aspirant should know which type of mind his is: form-oriented, name-oriented or self-oriented. This he can easily find out by a little self-analysis and practice in meditation. He must then choose that type of *upāsana* which suits him most.

It may be surprising to know that there are some people who are totally incapable of visualizing forms. Such people find it very difficult to meditate on the image of a deity. When they close their eyes they only feel a blank with various ideas moving somewhere inside. It is like listening to the gurgling of a stream in the dark. They, however, find repetition of a Mantra very

5. *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.8 and Vyāsa's commentary on it.



easy and producing great harmony in them. Whereas there are others who find such repetition difficult, distracting and unrelated to their basic spiritual urge.

Fortunately, however, most people have a mixed type of mind. They can make their minds form-oriented, name-oriented or self-oriented as they wish. So they can easily combine all the three types of *upāsanā*, in their practice. Nevertheless, during the early stages of spiritual life even they may find it easier and more beneficial to give more *emphasis* on one type of *upāsanā* according to their individual temperaments, while not neglecting the other two. Meditation is a difficult task for a beginner but he can make it a bit easier by following the line of least resistance, his own natural orientation of mind. Once the aspirant acquires proficiency in any one method, he will find it easy to practice all the other methods.

### *Pratīka-upāsanā*

*Pratīka* means a symbol—literally, ‘going towards’, something upon which the mind is focussed. Though words are also symbols, *pratīka* is generally used to mean visual symbols—images, pictures and natural objects used as symbols. During the Vedic period fire, sun, air, mind, etc. were treated as *pratīkas* to represent Brahman. How were the *pratīkas* related to Brahman? There were two ways of doing this, and accordingly Vedic *pratīkopāsanā* was of two types: *sāmpad* and *adhyāsa*.

In *sāmpad upāsanā* an inferior object is used as a symbol to represent superior Reality.<sup>6</sup> The symbol is unimportant, the attributes of the higher Reality dominate the meditative field. (To give a modern example, when a stone idol or *śālagrāma* is worshipped as Viṣṇu, the worshipper

forgets the stone and thinks only of the luminous splendour of Viṣṇu. This may be regarded as a modern form of *sāmpad upāsanā*.)

In *adhyāsa upāsanā* the symbol chosen is itself a superior object and dominates the meditative field. Upon this symbol the attributes of the Reality are superimposed, but the symbol is as important as the attributes. Meditation on the sun (one of the most beautiful meditations ever conceived) is an instance of this. The Upaniṣad teaches, ‘The sun is Brahman, this is the instruction.’<sup>7</sup> The sun with its dazzling brightness has a striking resemblance to Brahman and can itself be directly meditated upon as Brahman. All that one has to do is to superimpose upon the sun the attributes of Brahman like infinity, consciousness, bliss, ultimate causality, etc.<sup>8</sup>

With the disappearance of the Vedic tradition these ancient *pratīka* meditations are no longer in vogue. There is at present a great need to revive them.

In modern times the images of various deities and the symbols connected with them have almost wholly replaced the Vedic *pratīkas*. Not only that. The conception of the connection between the symbols and the Reality has also changed. Vedic symbols directly connect the meditator with the ultimate Reality. But in Tantric symbols this connection is indirect. First of all, the deity behind the symbol is to be realized, and then through the deity the ultimate Reality is to be attained.

*Pratīkas* used in modern times may be divided into two groups: aniconic and iconic. The former group includes *yantras* (mystic diagrams), *maṇḍalas* (psychic)

7. आदित्यो ब्रह्म इत्यादेशः ।

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.19.1

8. Cf. Swami Gambhirananda, ‘Upaniṣadic Meditation’ in *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta: the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 379-80,

6. Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.1.6 and Śaṅkara’s commentary on it,

diagrams), *śālagrāma*, *śivalinga*, water pot, etc. These are more used in ritualistic worship than in meditation. The lotus symbolizing a *cakra* or centre of consciousness, the flame symbolizing the self, the sky symbolizing space and similar impersonal symbols which are often used in meditation may also be included in this group.

The second group of *pratīkas* includes the anthropomorphic images of gods and goddesses which are called *pratimās*. A *pratimā* may be a picture drawn on paper or cloth (*paṭa*) or a three-dimensional idol (*vigraha*) made of stone or metal. The *Brahma-Sūtra* clearly teaches that the *pratīka* is to be looked upon only as a symbol of Brahman. God should not be lowered to symbols, but symbols are to be exalted to God.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the purpose of a *pratimā* is to serve only as a visual aid (*dr̥ṣṭi saukaryam*) to concentration. This may be true in the case of meditation but not necessarily so in the case of worship. The widely accepted belief is that a properly consecrated *pratimā* which is daily worshipped, acquires a special sanctity and power and becomes a centre of divine grace. According to Śrī Rāmānuja there is a special manifestation of God known as *arcā* in the idol.

In this context two points are to be kept in mind. The statement that *pratīkas* are only symbols of God does not imply that the gods and goddesses of Hinduism are only symbols. Hundreds of illumined souls have directly realized these divinities. Even the great Śaṅkarācārya has not denied their existence. Each deity represents, a particular aspect of Saguṇa Brahman, the Personal God, and is at least as real as man himself, if not more.

The other point to note is that though

*pratīkas* are mainly used as aids to concentration, the purpose of *upāsanā* is not mere concentration of mind, but the direct vision of the deity represented by the *pratīka*. The *pratīka* may be a picture or idol made by an artist. *Upāsanā* does not mean simply transferring the artist's imagination to our own minds. It is not merely an exercise in memory, trying to remember the picture we have seen outside. *Upāsanā* is an attempt to go beyond the symbol, and meet the real god or goddess in the depths of consciousness. It is a search for the soul's eternal Beloved. For this a *living image* must first of all be implanted deep inside the heart. It is the continuous interior gazing at this living image in the depths of consciousness that really deserves to be called *pratīkopāsanā*. As concentration deepens, the image sinks into consciousness drawing the mind with it deeper, deeper ... until it touches the undercurrent of pure consciousness and bursts into ethereal phosphorescence.

True *pratīkopāsanā*, then, is a process of converting imagination into Reality. It is a technique for the transformation of consciousness. How does this transformation take place? Three principles are involved in it: the principle of *khyāti*, the *yathākratu* principle and the theory of Mantra. These will be discussed later on.

### *Nāma-upāsanā*

If in *pratīkopāsanā* meditation is practised on a visual symbol, in *nāmapāsanā* it is done on a sound symbol—the name of a deity or a Mantra. This, however, is not the only difference between the two. There are much deeper differences based on certain basic properties of the human mind. Considering the importance of this form of *upāsanā*, we shall discuss it in greater detail later on.

Here we wish to mention only two or three points. The repetition of a Mantra

9. *Brahma-Sūtra* 4.1.4. and 5. See also Swami Vivekananda's comments in his 'Bhakti Yoga', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), vol. 3, pp. 59-61.



or a name of God is called *japa*. When the words used are many, it may take the form of *stuti* (hymnody), *bhajan* (singing of songs set to music) or *saṁkīrtana* (group singing). These are better regarded as forms of worship though, when properly done, they produce a meditative effect.

It should be kept in mind that mere mechanical repetition of a Mantra hardly deserves to be called *upāsanā*. As true *pratīkopāsanā* is visualizing a 'living image', so true *nāmopāsanā* is the repetition of an 'awakened Mantra'. The Mantra becomes awakened (*cetana*) when it gets connected to the basic rhythm of consciousness in the depths of the heart.

Another point should be noted here. In popular usage only *pratīkopāsanā* is known as meditation, while *nāmopāsanā* is known as *japa*. As a matter of fact, both come under meditation. To make the distinction between these two types of meditation more clear it is better to describe *pratīkopāsanā* as *bhāvanā* (visualization), a term more commonly used in the Tantras and Buddhist scriptures. As a general rule *japa* is accompanied by *bhāvanā* (visualization) of a god or goddess. But several sects in Hinduism and especially the Sikhs practise *japa* without visualizing the form of any deity. They are pure *nāmopāsakas*. In their case *japa* itself becomes meditation.

### *Ahaṁgraha-upāsanā*

*Ahaṁgraha* literally means 'self-grasping', that is 'self-identification'. Like the two types of meditation described above, *ahaṁgrahopāsanā* is also an objective meditation. It is a meditation on the self as the object. But it is not mere concentration of mind on the object, as the other two meditations are. It means the 'grasping' of a vaster Whole by the self. It is an attempt of the self to identify itself with the Supreme Self.

Since the pure Ātman cannot be an 'object' of meditation, various symbols are

used to enable the self to 'grasp' the Supreme Self. Thus like the other two *upāsanās* described above, *ahaṁgrahopāsanā* is also a kind of symbolic meditation.

Objectivity and the use of symbols, these are precisely the two points which distinguish *ahaṁgrahopāsanā* from *nididhyāsana* or subjective meditation. In *nididhyāsana* no symbols are used, nor is the self objectified. It is a negative process of *neti, neti* ('not this, not this') by which the self cuts asunder all identifications and withdraws into its own locus. The distinction between these two techniques is important though it may not be so obvious to an untrained mind.

The simplest form of *ahaṁgrahopāsanā* is to visualize the Ātman as a point of light and meditate on it thinking 'I am this light.' However, as the individual self is part of the infinite Supreme Self, *ahaṁgrahopāsanā* usually means meditation on the union of the individual self with the Supreme Self. Again, as the Supreme Self is all-pervading, this meditation necessarily involves an awareness of divine immanence in creation. Thus *ahaṁgrahopāsanā* actually takes the form of a double meditation: meditation on the self as a part of God and meditation on God as present in all beings.

It is now clear that some of the *vidyās*, if not all, discussed in the Upaniṣads are really *ahaṁgraha* meditations. In fact this is the only way modern man can understand and practise the *vidyās*, for their original esoteric tradition has been lost. One of the most famous of these meditations is the *antaryāmi vidyā*. Uddālaka, the son of Aruṇa, asks the sage Yājñavalkya about the Inner Controller. In reply the latter describes the immanence of Brahman in the earth, in the sky, in the sun, etc.

He who dwells in the earth, but is within it, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, and who controls the earth from within, is the Inner Ruler, your own immortal self.

He who dwells in water ...  
 He who dwells in fire ...  
 He who dwells in the sky ...  
 He who dwells in the sun ... etc.<sup>10</sup>

Another important meditation is *Śāṇḍilya Vidyā*, which runs as follows:

He who permeates the mind, who has *prāṇa* for his body, whose nature is consciousness, whose resolve is infallible, whose own form is like the ether, whose creation is all that exists ... who exists pervading all this ... is my Atman dwelling in the heart. He is smaller than a grain of paddy, than a barley corn, than a mustard seed, than a grain of millet, than the kernel of the millet. This my Atman dwelling in the heart is greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds.<sup>11</sup>

These passages are not meant to be understood theoretically. They are meant for actual practice. It is not possible to have the experience of Advaita all of a sudden. For this our consciousness must be gradually expanded. These meditations are meant to expand our consciousness. It is only when we try to practise them shall we understand how difficult they are. Those who have reduced Advaita to talking and writing will find these meditations a lesson in humility.

Apart from the *vidyās* there are many other splendid passages in the Upaniṣads which may be used in meditation. The four *mahāvākyas*, 'That thou art', 'I am Brahman', etc. (which are supposed to produce direct intuition of Brahman in the highly qualified aspirants) may also be used for this purpose. It should be noted that these *mahāvākyas* are not meant for repetition, for that would be a kind of *nāmopāsanā*. They are actually meant for the practice of *ahamgrahopāsanā*. Some of the great Sannyāsa Mantras into which Hindu monks are initiated also belong to this category.

Apart from these, some of the well-known verses of Śaṅkarācārya like the 'Morning Remembrance Hymn',<sup>12</sup> 'Six Stanzas on Nirvāṇa', etc. may also be used for the practice of *ahamgrahopāsanā* for which they are really intended.

#### Need for synthesis

The three types of *upāsanā* discussed above could be practised independently. But they are not contradictory to one another. Each stands for a particular aspect of cognition and develops a particular faculty of the mind. A combination of the three types of meditation will lead to all-round development of consciousness.

There is especially a great need to include *ahamgrahopāsanā* in our daily spiritual practice. It reminds us of our real nature as the Ātman. It is only when we understand that we are potentially divine can we establish a loving *spiritual* relationship with the Deity. Moreover, awareness of our higher self enables us to remain unaffected by the external influences and maintain constant remembrance of our chosen Deity and Mantra. Even a devotee who worships an idol can practise *ahamgrahopāsanā*. He may think that the Deity dwelling in the idol dwells also in his own self, and meditate on the union of the two. In fact, this kind of meditation is an essential part of Tantric worship.

To conclude: all preliminary spiritual disciplines end in some form of meditative awareness, and all meditation paths lead to spiritual illumination of some kind or other.

(Concluded)

12. प्रातः स्मरामि हृदि संस्फुरदात्मतत्त्वं  
 सच्चित्सुखं परमहंसगतिं तुरीयं ।

यत्स्वप्नजागरसुषुप्तिमवैति नित्यं

तद् ब्रह्म निष्कलमहं न च भूतसंघः ॥ etc.

Śaṅkara, *Prātaḥsmaraṇa Stotra*

10. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.7.1-23.

11. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.2-3.



# SANNYASA SOUVENIRS

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

January 7, 1964

This is the most important date of my life. In fact, as I review all that has taken place since my birth in 1913—the bad times, the good times, and the preponderant number of insipid times—I realize that what occurred on this day in 1964 far overshadows anything else that ever happened to me. On January 7, 1964, early in the morning in the main temple of Belur Math, I pronounced the vows of sannyāsa, and thus drew a dividing line between all that had gone before since my beginnings and all that would come till death. Call it an initiation into the mysteries, or a rebirth in Spirit, or an ordination. Whatever it was, it marked the end of what had been John Yale and created a new being, Swami Vidyatmananda, 'One who experiences intense bliss in the knowledge of God'.

But I would be dishonest to claim that the change was neat and abrupt. I believe that instantaneous conversions occur but rarely. Rather, think of two wedges set one atop the other, the one tapering off and the other growing from a point thicker. That is how it has been with me. Sannyāsa means complete dependence on God. An Indian scripture says that some take sannyāsa to confirm a state of God-centredness that they have already reached, and some take sannyāsa with the intention of reaching that state. The latter was the case with me. From today's vantage point I can see that the wedge of world-centredness has been nearly bypassed and the wedge of God-centredness has grown thicker.

I believe that the state of sannyāsa is the most elevated which anyone can attain. It capsulizes the highest, fantastically highest, spiritual ideal. I thought so before I took the vows, and I think so even more now

that I have lived as a sannyāsin for a number of years. I feel a new awe every time I look at myself clad in gerua.

In 1964 a Swami was a rare and precious being, at least in the West. Almost the only Swamis we knew were Indians, heads of centres and Gurus, and generally disciples of original disciples of Sri Ramakrishna or of Sri Sarada Devi. I was awe-struck by the idea that I might be permitted to join a company so august. In the intervening years there has been a change. Nowadays enrollment for a few months in a yoga school in India or a brief apprenticeship to an independent sannyāsin, may allow an American or a European to 'graduate' with the 'degree' of Swami. We of the Ramakrishna Order who are obliged to undergo a novitiate of nine or ten years (in my case it was nearly fourteen) may regard these sannyāsins—to use an expression current in World War II, describing officers who were turned out by the Army or Navy in three-months' courses—as the Ninety-Day Wonders of spiritual life. This is not to deny that some may be pious and useful. It's just that this process of reaching sannyāsa is something different from what we know.

I am the ninth Westerner to take sannyāsa in the Ramakrishna Order of monks. Swami Vivekananda approved initiating Western candidates into sannyāsa, as he reveals in his letters, by himself initiating Leon Landsberg into sannyāsa as Swami Krip-ananda in 1895 and a yoga teacher named Dr. Street, who became Swami Yogananda the following year. (Swamiji also gave sannyāsa to three, perhaps four, Western women. Madame Marie Louise became Swami Abhayananda in 1895. Sara Bull and Margaret Noble received sannyāsa in

1899, as documented by Marie Louise Burke in her *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West*, pages 120-22. Christina Greenstidel (Sister Christine) may have received sannyāsa from Swamiji, but the evidence on this is conflicting.)

According to information supplied by Swami Chidrupananda of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, a San Francisco resident named Pelican, known as Prashanta, preceded Gurudas Maharaj (see below) at Shanti Ashrama and also in India; he became Swami Yogeshananda and may be counted as the third Westerner to be initiated into sannyāsa in the Order. The fourth was Swami Atulananda (Gurudas Maharaj). Dutch by birth, he resided in the United States at the turn of the century. As he himself says in his published conversations, *Atman Alone Abides*, he was given brahmacharya by Swami Abhedananda in New York in 1899; he took sannyāsa at Belur Math in 1923.

The fifth is Swami Chidrupananda of San Francisco, who joined in 1933, took brahmacharya in 1935, and sannyāsa in 1962. These facts were supplied by the Swami himself. The sixth is Swami Atmaghanananda of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York. In a letter to me he states that he joined in 1939, took brahmacharya in 1949 and sannyāsa in 1959. He reassumed his former name of John Moffitt in 1963. The seventh is Swami Krishnananda of the Vedanta Society of Southern California. Krishnananda informs me that he joined in 1940, took brahmacharya in 1947 and sannyāsa in 1957.

Then follow Swami Anamananda and myself. We took sannyāsa on the same day (as will be recounted in the pages that follow), but I should be listed in second place since Anamananda joined as a novice a few months before my joining on 1 April 1950, and thus is senior to me. He took brahmacharya one year before I did.

In recent years there have been a number

of initiations of Westerners into sannyāsa, so that the total at this writing (October 1980) is something on the order of twenty. This represents about three per cent of the total membership, the remainder of the 650 or so members of the Ramakrishna Order being Indian. It does not seem to be likely that the proportion of Westerners to Indians will modify much in the near future, but the number of nationalities represented will increase, as there are now novices of German, French, Dutch, and Japanese birth training to be sannyāsins.

A very interesting question (I cannot go into it here) is: What will happen if there should be a strong expansion of Ramakrishna Vedanta outside India? Will the history of the Catholic Church be reenacted—with its effort to set standards centrally for its leaders and adherents and preserve a unified body before the world? Or the course that Buddhism took, which early on deviated from its origins and took on national characteristics wherever it went?

As in Catholic orders, members of the Ramakrishna Order must pass through stages before taking final vows. One joins initially as a probationer, for a period of a year. This should occur before one has reached the age of twenty-five. In cases of college graduates the acceptable age limit can be extended to thirty. Other requirements for candidates: graduation from high school, and the possession of spiritual tendencies, as outlined in a simple set of precepts. After a year one requests probationary status, which lasts on principle four years, two of which may be spent at the Training Centre, the Order's theological seminary at Belur Math. At the end of five years from first joining, one is eligible for the first vows, called brahmacharya. At every stage, it should be noted, the recommendation of the head of the centre where the candidate resides is required.

Trips to India being expensive, since 1947 brahmacharya has sometimes been given in



the West. Permission of Headquarters is necessary, as well as the consent of Swamis working in the West, who presumably know the candidate and will attest to his fitness and will perhaps attend the investiture ceremony.

I took brahmacharya on 3 August 1955 at the Ramakrishna Monastery, Trabuco Canyon, California. There was one other candidate, Philip Griggs, who became that day Brahmachari Buddha Chaitanya (eventually Swami Yogeshananda); I became Brahmachari Prema Chaitanya. Swami Prabhavananda performed the ceremony, and witnesses were Swami Pavitr-ananda, Swami Krishnananda and two Brahmacharis who had taken the vows the previous year. One of these, Ananta Chaitanya, did not continue in the Order. The other, Arupa Chaitanya, took sannyāsa with me nine years later and became Swami Anamananda.

The ceremony was done in the morning in the library before the fireplace. In the fireplace was placed the copper vessel in which was built the sacred fire, into which we thrust our sacrifices, symbolized by offerings of leaves and flowers.

I had already observed the difference between the manner of performing Catholic ritual and Hindu ritual. Catholic ritual unfolds with a finesse that leaves a profound impression on the observer. Perhaps it is largely theatre, but it is good theatre. But often Hindu ritual seems ill prepared, ill rehearsed, gauchly executed. The idea seems to be to get through it, reciting the correct *mantras*, making the correct *mudrās*, presenting the correct offerings; but because of whispered consultations that occur, and frantic gestures to supply some ingredient forgotten, the impact for the Westerner is often much reduced. I recall seeing a woman performing a *pūjā* in Hardwar when I first visited India in 1952. As the worship proceeded she kept crying for this item

or that, which helpers supplied with much scurrying. Phil and I had not been supplied with the text in advance, so we had no idea what we were engaging ourselves in. (When we took sannyāsa, the entire ceremony, except for three especially sacred *mantras*, was given to us for rehearsal in advance.)

Two blunders happened that day at Trabuco that I particularly remember. First, the dhotis that we wore had been received from India only a day or two before. They were perfectly new, as required, but they were also full of manufacturer's starch, which a hurried washing had failed to eliminate sufficiently, so that they stood out stiffly as if supported by stays—having the look of skirts worn by ladies going to a formal ball in the eighteenth century. This defect was especially disconcerting when we sat down or knelt. The other was Swami Prabhavananda's reading of the wrong line where the vows refer to celibacy. There are alternate lines, to be read depending on the circumstances, both for men and for women. Instead of his reading the line saying that we promised not to marry, but to live a celibate life, Swami Prabhavananda nearly had us promise, before stopping himself just before the 'I do', to renounce our husbands. This caused titters and for me undid the impact of what I had expected to be a moving experience.

Brahmacharya vows are provisional, are resolves to try. I could take these engagements fairly easily. But sannyāsa was a different matter. The normal wait between brahmacharya and sannyāsa is four years. In my case it was nearly nine, and even then up to the last months before taking sannyāsa I felt unsure.

My idea of the sannyāsin was and is very high. He is the one authentic being who is as true inside as he appears outside. In this world of religious sham, self-indulgent cult leaders, false preachers, priests with concubines, the Ramakrishna Mission



Swami must be the one example of perfect integrity. I could not break this ideal by taking sannyāsa and then not being able to measure up. I ran over in my mind the list of frauds I'd met in my life. Horrors! Not to end up being like one of them!

The year 1963 was celebrated in our Order as the Centenary of the birth of Swami Vivekananda. There would be a Parliament of Religions at Calcutta and other celebrations in all our centres to mark the closing of this jubilee year on 6 January 1964. Swami Prabhavananda was going to India for the occasion, and Christopher Isherwood had been invited to address the Parliament as honoured lecturer. It was an auspicious moment for me to take the plunge.

I believe that if you are really sincere you will be aided at critical moments. This happened to me. The wild cross-purposes that I had always known began to settle down. An inner solidity replaced my characteristic negativism. There was a conviction that all that meditation and *japa* I had done over the years with no apparent result and after all recomposed the molecules of my mind as promised. The sensation I had was of an inner healing after an illness full of fever and delirium. Tangible evidence came from my dreams, which became less frustrated and brighter, pleasanter.

The final evidence came from an experience that occurred after I had reached India, at Kamarpukur, on November 25, Swami Premananda's birthday. It seemed to me, as Plotinus phrased it, that He let me into a new realm. The effect was conviction. All at once I felt that sannyāsa was what I wanted and that it would be right for me to take it. With that assurance I went to Belur Math and spent the days before, during, and after the ceremony in a state of childlike joy.

I shall now tell what happened on these days. But rather than relating the events leading up to and concluding with the tak-

ing of sannyāsa, I shall reproduce entries from my journals, as I find these entries more vivid than any invented description.

*Belur Math, January 2, 1964. Thursday.*

Now I am growing really tense—a spaceman who has been in training for years for the rocket shot. Today the twenty-one candidates have assembled. Tomorrow we meet with the seniors to consider the meaning of the ceremony. Saturday further meetings, and shaving. Sunday is *srāddha*. Monday fasting all day and the ceremony that night—2.00 in the morning Tuesday, really.

I can say that I desire this grace with all my heart. At long last I feel no hesitancy; this is what I want above all else.

We are studying the *mantras* with Swami Gambhirananda [the then Assistant Secretary, who had the patience to write out the entire text in Sanskrit, with a translation in English, and drill us in the pronunciation].

*Friday, January 3, 1964.*

This morning as I got up and put on my trousers and sportshirt I thought, with relief, that this may be the last time I shall put on such clothes. Today our class of twenty-one meets with the seniors. Tomorrow we get shaved. Sunday we do *srāddha*. But Monday is the day. Each morning when I wake up my first thought is to test myself. Am I feeling OK—am I still physically capable? [The vows are not given if the candidate is sick—a serious matter for one who has come 10,000 miles for the ceremony.] But everyday I realize that yes, I am getting closer to the day in safety; like a bride at the end of a long engagement.

*January 4.*

Today begins the ordeal and glorious outcome.

Last night when Ramesh Maharaj brought in my beautiful gerua clothes neatly tied in a bundle and labelled with my brahmachari name, I was just thrilled. Again I test myself this early a.m. and find that I am still quite OK, still capable, it seems, of remaining alive and well for three more days, then, what matter?

*Newsweek* has a long article on Lyle Spencer and Science Research Associates—how IBM has merged SRA with itself and how Lyle's stock will be worth \$34,000,000. [I was a partner in



SRA from 1940-1948.] What would mine be worth today? Certainly several millions. Yet in the fifteen years since I left SRA so many changes have been worked in me, how can I even think of this? If I'd stayed I'd have been a suicide or drunkard or would have cracked up mentally. Lyle can't forgive me for getting out and for selling my stock. From a financial point of view this was the biggest mistake of my life. Of course it is foolish to think of what might have been. And especially now at this very juncture, when Lyle has grown big and I have grown small. I now step out on the faith that the Lord is my security, my all.

So Lyle's fulfilment and mine occur at the same time. His good for him, mine for me. We must respect each other.

January 6, 1964. *Swamiji's birthday.*

The day has finally come. I am alive and well and although my hour of joy is still nearly twenty-four hours away, I believe I shall actually know that hour—something I long despaired of.

Just returned from the *mangalārati* [the first service of the day]. Crowds of people already here at 4-30 and the bandstand sending out music, the kitchen busy. All the marvellous lights burning full force.

What kindness the Lord has shown me. I am here, Chris is here, Swami is here. The *srāddha* went successfully—although messily—yesterday. My head is beautifully scalped. On the shelf sits my gerua dhoti, chadar, begging napkin, all tied up in the kaupinam [loin-cloth].

The Sanskrit we have been studying sounds beautiful to the ear, if not easy to the tongue, and the meaning of the *mantras* has certainly not—as in the case of brahmacharya—disappointed me.

I see it is not a case of deserving sannyāsa so much as it is of wanting the state that sannyāsa aspires to. And I do want that: simplicity, purity, and a growing certainty that I am none other than Spirit.

Evening. A huge day here [a public feast day with speeches, concerts, and fireworks] but I have done little besides pranam seniors and fast. I am happy and contented. I want this thing. I know what it means and I intend to fulfil, as best I can, the significance.

I wonder about the nakedness part. Yes, I can and will do it, because I have perhaps nearly overcome shame. Oddly, the last time I came even close to group nudity was when I was try-

ing to join the Navy in 1941. Could two situations be more different?

Getting used to flapping about in flowing garments. A skirt, really, and a shawl. Surely it is a uniform which would be a strong impetus toward control and purity.

Night. 12-30 midnight.

The night wears on. In the temple Kālī Pūjā is being performed. The most beautiful song issued from the closed building as I walked by. Too tired and shakey to go in. The fast is utterly complete except for a cup or two of tea and an orange early this morning—some eighteen hours ago. These only so as to avoid the headache which came the day before when I had nothing at all. Some candidates perhaps are sleeping. I don't know. I took a slight nap in the afternoon but none tonight except for some mosquito-beset noddings, trying to do *japa*.

January 7, 1964.

Through the Lord's grace all was nicely done and I am Swami Vidyatmananda.

January 8, 1964. *Belur Math.*

The period of a week beginning with head shaving and ending tomorrow at the end of three days of *bhikṣā* [food begging] will never be forgotten.

There was the last startled feeling just before the first razor stroke: the gangplank is about to go up; this is your last chance to go ashore. And I tell my mind: No, I'm in this thing for keeps, and all the way. Pull up the gangplank; I'm sailing.

It has been a tense, physically exhausting week. The night of no sleep, the half day and then the full day of fasting, the walking about for three days on bare, sore feet to gather food here and there, like the bee, the sitting down anywhere to eat it.

The sannyāsa, like the *srāddha*, took about three and a half hours. The *srāddha* seemed like a meaningless eternity. The sannyāsa went by like a flash. 'I shall never forget how we shucked off our clothes at that last moment before the full-length prostration [before the President, Swami Madhavananda], when we were given our name. How quickly these Indian garments drop off. Suddenly a great pile of white [dhotis and chadars], and small brown bodies excitedly lining up at that moment when we got our name

and our staff. Then the breaking of the staff in the Ganges, and now in gerua, some again stripping for a full plunge. The feeling of camaraderie is quite extraordinary, not only among the members of our group, but with all the men. I think that stripping before everyone had that effect. The rooting out of shame.

When I put on the gerua and knew I was wearing it, I guess that was the greatest thrill of my life.

Although I am ten years older than the oldest of the group and twenty years older than several, I've felt like a free child again. We laugh constantly, and I treasure the hour when, bringing in our begging clothes, we sit down to eat together—these awful messes that people [householders living in the region] have dumped in. Strangely, the food tastes good and I've not had the revulsion I expected. And the devoted way in which they give it, with whole families prostrating, just makes one weep.

Yes, it has been all I had hoped and more. And the idea of sannyāsa is so great. It isn't taking a resolution; it is getting free.

Chris remained till the day of our glory and rushed up to prostrate when we issued from the temple resplendent in gerua about 6-00 in the morning. Bless his heart.

These lines from my journal convey the spirit of the experience, if not all the details.

The ceremony of *śrāddha* is a funeral service for one's ancestors. Since a sannyāsin is considered to be cut off from his lineage, he finalizes his obligations to his parents and other ancestors before taking sannyāsa, as—cut off from family ties—he will not be able to do so after. And since he will have no offspring to perform these rites for him, he does a funeral service for himself at the same time—in advance, as it were. Hence he is considered dead until the next day when he is reborn as a sannyāsin. This ceremony was performed by us together in a tent near the monk's quarters at Belur Math. The idea interested me, but the actual rites, which consisted mostly in making little balls of rice mixed with honey, water, and butter, and offering them to one's forbears (how startled mine would have been) impressed me as a messy

affairs. As usual, the ceremony, administered by brahmin priests called in from outside the Math, had a strangely amateurish, extemporaneous, haphazard air about it that provoked at times jeering remarks and laughter from the participants.

The ceremony of sannyāsa was performed in the main temple around a great bronze brazier in which burned a blazing fire. Its light revealed dimly the audience of two hundred or more gerua figures, all Swamis, our senior brothers come to witness the ceremony. My Guru was in that formidable audience. We addressed our prayers to the fire, which, according to the old ideas, bore them upwards to the heavenly spheres, and placed our sacrifices in the fire—leaves dipped in melted butter, the single lock of hair that had been left when our heads were shaved—symbolizing the renouncement of our virility—and our sacred cord (you become, if not one already, a brahmin at brahmacharya) to symbolize that having attained the highest caste, we now abandoned the whole concept of caste.

There is a whole folklore relating to the *kaupinam* or loin-cloth. The great Śaṅkara wrote a celebrated poem to it; rather, to the concept of sannyāsa. The *kaupinam* has the same significance for the sannyāsin as the tonsure has for the Catholic monk—a public announcement and private reminder of his vow of celibacy. Śaṅkara praised the *kaupinam* not as an inhibiting agent but as a liberating one, for the wearer can conduct his relations with all, devoid of restraints or potential flirtatiousness that incipient sensuality always produces. Here is an English rendering of Śaṅkara's 'Five Stanzas on the Kaupin', quoted from Swami Nikhilananda's translation of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*:

Roaming ever in the grove of Vedānta,  
Ever pleased with the beggar's morsel,  
Ever walking with heart free from sorrow,  
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth,



Sitting at the foot of a tree for shelter,  
Using the palms of his hands for eating,  
Wrapped in a garment fine or ngly,  
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth.

Satisfied fnlly by the Bliss within him,  
Curbing wholly the cravings of his senses,  
Contemplating day and night the Absolute  
Brahman,  
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth.

Witnessing the changes of mind and body,  
Naught but the Self within him beholding,  
Thinking not of outer, of inner, or of middle,  
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth.

Chanting 'Brahman', the Word of Redemption,  
Meditating only on 'I am Brahman',  
Living on alms and wandering freely,  
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth.

One of the kindly jokes of the whole proceeding concerned the name given to my Hollywood confrere. His brahmachari name, Arupa, meant 'formless'—an aspect of Brahman. The night before, when the President was choosing names for candidates, he conferred with Swami Prabhavananda concerning the names proposed for me and Arupa. For Arupa he suggested Anama, a second aspect of Brahman, 'nameless'. Hence, when during the name-giving ceremony the candidate already formless

was now also rendered nameless—Anamananda—titters naturally ensued.

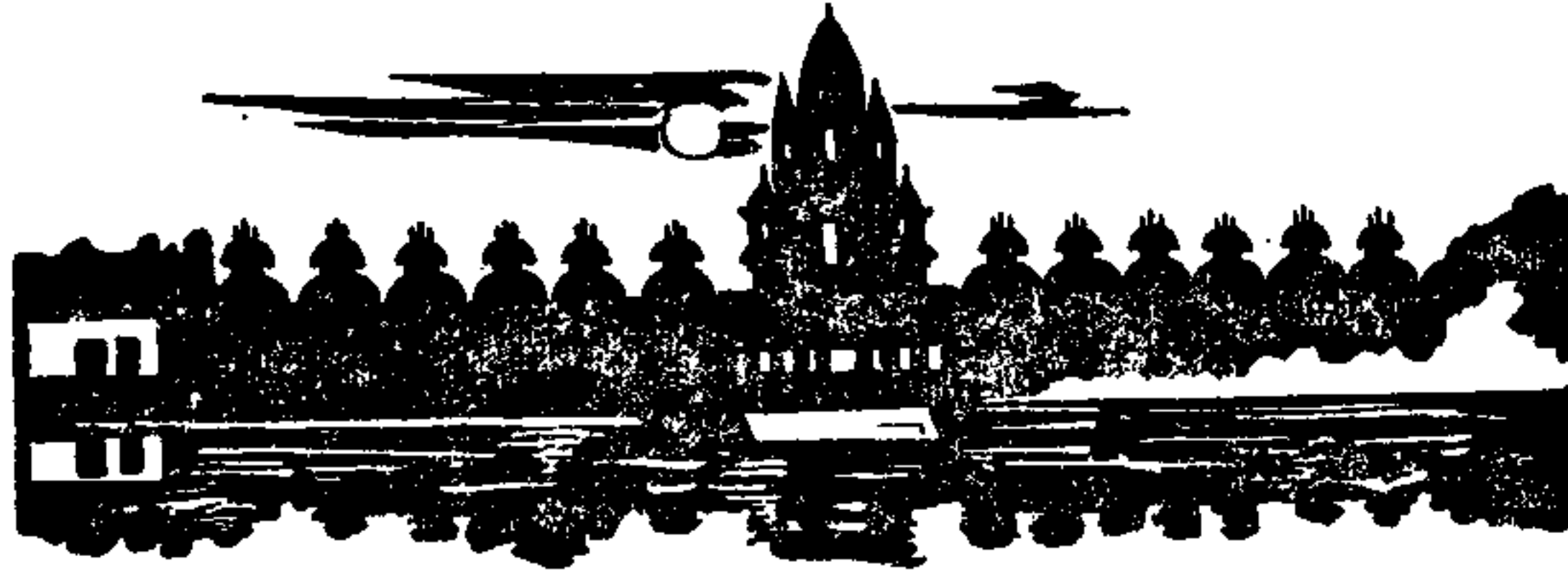
So with all these preparations and ceremonies and name-givings, what does sannyāsa mean? I once asked my Guru, and his reply was: It means living; moving, and having all one's being in God. On another occasion he said it means living in a state of utter reliance on God. Once he stressed its relation to everyday living: 'Whatever happens to you from now on, even if it's bad, no bad can ever come to you again. Even if it's bad, it won't be bad for you.'

As I study the affirmations we made that night I see the meaning as this: One has made a mighty declaration that one is none other than Brahman. You have resigned your position as a mortal. You have bypassed the sheaths of body, breath, mind, intellect and ego. Of course, most of the time, when life tugs at your sleeve with its little calls and annoyances, you wonder if this can be true. But then at others the immensity of the concept overwhelms you and you sense that such is the case. Your life is a little like the condition of drunkenness, in which you are in two states at once—bemused experiencer and analytic observer.

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The disciples of Jesus were, all Sannyasins. The direct recipients of the grace of Shankara, Ramanuja, Sri Chaitanya and Buddha were the all-renouncing Sannyasins. It is men of this stamp who have been through succession of disciples spreading the Brahma-Vidya in the world. . . . In the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Itihāsas and Purāṇas, you will find everywhere that the Sannyasins have been the teachers of religion in all ages and climes. History repeats itself. It will also be likewise now. The capable Sannyasin children of Sri Ramakrishna, the teacher of the great synthesis of religion, will be honoured everywhere as the teachers of men. The words of others will dissipate in the air like an empty sound. The self-sacrificing sannyasins of the Math will be the centre of the preservation and spread of religious ideas. Do you understand?

—Swami Vivekananda.



## THE HEART OF HINDUISM

DR. SUSHANTA SEN

1

A distinctive lifestyle based on a particular type of religious thought originally evolved by the ancient Aryan settlers in north-eastern India came to be known as Hinduism and its followers as Hindus in later times. One of the chief characteristics of Hinduism has always been its spirit of accommodation. Whenever it has come into contact with other religions and cultures it has integrated something of them into itself. The religion of the Hindus has never been a static religion. On the contrary it has been a developing process which went on enriching itself throughout the centuries by absorbing fresh elements into itself. Thus the stamp of the Dravidian civilization which existed in India before the Aryan settlement, the influence of Buddhism, which grew up out of Hinduism, and of Islam and Christianity which came from outside India, can be traced at the various stages of the development of Hindu practice and thought.<sup>1</sup> Its spirit of receptivity and catholicity has enabled Hinduism to

assimilate something from each of these diverse religio-cultural traditions.

All the same these various external influences did not modify the central core of Hinduism, which consists in an unshakable faith in the essential teachings of the Vedas. The Vedas are the foundational scriptures on which the entire superstructure of Hinduism rests. This, however, does not mean that Hinduism does not have scriptures other than the Vedas. As a matter of fact the scriptural testimony (*śabda pramāṇa*) in Hinduism is divided into two broad classes—*Śruti* and *Smṛti*, that which is 'heard' and that which is 'remembered'. The former class includes the entire bulk of Vedic literature, the contents of which purport to be the records of direct revelation of Truth received by the pure-hearted saints and seers of remote antiquity. The latter class, however, is composed of non-Vedic literature of diverse denominations, namely the *Dharma-śāstras*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas*, etc., all of which go under the omnibus name *Smṛti* ('memory'), because these are believed to have been handed down to posterity in the form of tradition based on memory. Among these two classes of scriptures, the Vedas alone are considered to be the independent and unconditional source of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*), whereas the validity of the *Smṛtis* is accepted under certain reserva-

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1. For how Hinduism was influenced by these various religio-cultural traditions see my paper, 'The Influence of Non-Hindu Traditions on the Development of Hinduism', *The Visva-Bharati Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 10, no. 8 (Santiniketan, February 1974).



tions. The Smṛtis are taken to be valid in so far as they agree with the contents of the Vedas; but to the extent they fail to conform to the Vedic texts they are rejected as unwarranted interpolation.<sup>2</sup> The probable reason behind this restricted authenticity of the Smṛti group of scriptures lies in the recognition of the fact that memory (*smṛti*), on the basis of which these are supposed to have been compiled, being an indirect and mediate source of knowledge (*parokṣa pramāṇa*), is susceptible to lapses and errors, for memory does not always truly represent the real nature of the object remembered. The Vedas, on the other hand, are claimed to be infallible on the basis of their having been *directly* derived from *immediate* spiritual experience.

This twofold classification of the Hindu scriptures in respect of their truth-claim suggests that the real spirit of Hinduism is to be primarily ascertained from the infallible Vedas rather than from the Smṛtis of conditional validity. This is borne out by the fact that, though Hinduism in course of time branched off into a bewildering variety of conflicting sects, none of them quarrel over the authority of the Vedas. Indeed, the very definition of Hindu orthodoxy (*āstikya*) which distinguishes it from other non-Hindu heterodox (*nāstika*) systems of Indian religions like Buddhism and Jainism affirms its unqualified faith in the revealed truths of the Vedas. A particular religious sect may very well share the Buddhist or Jain attitude of denying a Personal God who creates the universe, but still it remains a sect of Hinduism so long as it believes in the authority of the Vedas. Even the Āgamas, the scriptural texts of the Tāntrika sect, which are attributed by some scholars to the non-Aryan Dravidian origin, depict the ultimate destiny of man's spiritual life as a state of 'immediate non-

dual experience' (*aparokṣa advaitānubhūti*) as found in the latter parts of the Vedas, known as the Upaniṣads. That is why the Tantra also, despite its non-Aryan origin, is regarded as a branch of Hinduism. The point here is that in characterizing the true nature of the Hindu faith our primary resort should be the Vedas. The Smṛtis and other sectarian literature can be utilized only in so far as they do not contradict but corroborate the central teaching of the Vedas.

But the Vedas consist of enormous volumes with numerous divisions and subdivisions. It is, therefore, not a very easy task to distil the essence of the Vedic teaching out of their huge bulk and their rich diversity of themes, metaphors and allegories. However, we have it on the authority of the Vedas themselves as well as on the evidence of other Sanskrit writings that the Gāyatrī verse of the Vedas,<sup>3</sup> through the impartation of which a Hindu of the upper three castes is initiated for the first time into spiritual life, contains the quintessence of the entire mass of Vedic literature. In the *Atharva-Veda* the Gāyatrī has been described as 'the mother of the Vedas' (*veda-mātā*)<sup>4</sup> containing their essential spirit. In Gāyatrī it is said that there is one Universal Being who is self-luminous and manifests Himself in this and many other worlds; and this Being dwells in our heart as our Inner Ruler. It has been translated into English as follows:

We meditate on the most resplendent and adorable light of the self-luminous Spirit who dwells in the heart as its inner ruler and manifests Himself as the earth, and sky and the heavens; may He guide our thoughts along the right path.<sup>5</sup>

This Gāyatrī conception of a self-luminous Universal Spirit and of His residence in the

2. Cf. Śamkara's Commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra*, 2.1.1.

3. *Rg-Veda*, 3.62.10; *Śuklayajur-Veda*, 36.3.

4. *Atharva-Veda*, 19.7.12.

5. S. K. Chatterjee, *The Fundamentals of Hinduism* (University of Calcutta, 1970), p. 6.



human heart was later developed in the Upaniṣads, the concluding part of the Vedas, into the doctrine of an all-pervading Brahman (God) and His identity with the individual soul. This, therefore, is the heart or central creed of the Vedas, and indeed of Hinduism in general. The individual soul, however limited and imperfect it may appear, is in its final depths Divine in nature, because 'the most resplendent and adorable light of the self-luminous Spirit' dwells in it. Hinduism has never deviated from or abandoned this fundamental teaching of the Vedas. In contrast to this, such blots upon Hinduism as the *hereditary* caste-system, untouchability, childhood marriage and the burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands (all of which have either disappeared, or are in the course of disappearing) are nowhere to be found in the vast corpus of the Vedic literature. There were undesirable undergrowths and accretions arising at different times and in different places; and whenever they tended to overshadow the essential teachings of the Vedas, Hindu reformers have arisen to rescue essential Hinduism from these evils and to reveal again the light of the self-luminous Brahman. This persistent allegiance to the essential teachings of the Vedas explains as well as entitles Hinduism to be called *vaidika dharma* or the religion of the Vedas.

It has sometimes been said, as a criticism of Hinduism, that since it demands of its followers an uncritical acceptance of the authority of the Vedas it is opposed to reason and is dogmatic and authoritarian in character, denying any place to the free exercise of reason and critical enquiry.

However, a Hindu might point out that in the Vedic texts themselves the spirit of rational reflection and intellectual enquiry is not merely permitted but is positively encouraged. For example, the Upaniṣad declares: 'Verily, the Self (Ātman) is to be seen, to be heard, to be *reflected on*, to be

meditated upon.'<sup>6</sup> A proper understanding of this cryptic utterance requires a commentary, which will at the same time lead us into the heart of Hinduism.

The concept of Ātman or the Self is the pivot around which all the doctrines of the Upaniṣads revolve. 'What is that, Venerable Sir, which being known everything else is known?' an eager seeker asked Aṅgirā, the great sage of the Upaniṣadic period.<sup>7</sup> The Upaniṣads found the answer to this question in the knowledge of the true nature of the Self. The Self, according to the Upaniṣads, is in its essential nature identical with God—Brahman—who is the eternal, all-perfect and all-pervading essence of the universe. The Ātman has been defined as the transcendental principle in man which is free from the limitations of the body, the sense-organs, the mind and the intellect.<sup>8</sup> These latter are not parts of the Self itself but are its *kośas* or the sheaths within which it is wrapped. When the Ātman abstracts itself from these sheaths it shines forth in its pristine divine glory as identical with Brahman. But despite his essential identity with God, man under the spell of ignorance forgets his divine nature and wrongly identifies his inner self with its external sheaths, thinking of it as subject to all their imperfections and limitations. As a result of this he falls into the innumerable sufferings and sorrows of this life, making himself a part of the suffering animal kingdom.

But at the same time the fact that each individual wants to transcend his sufferings proves that this miserable and wretched existence is neither his essential nature nor his final destiny. For if some foreign element enters our body, such as a particle of dust in the eye or a thorn in the flesh, the body immediately reacts to it and tries to rid itself of it; likewise, every man wants

6. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.4.5.

7. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.1.3.

8. Cf. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 3.42.



to get rid of the sorrows and sufferings of human life, which shows that these do not belong to the essence of the self but are foreign elements which have become imposed upon it. This suggests again that the natural condition of the Self is a state of perfect and unalloyed peace or bliss (*ānanda*) absolutely free from all sufferings and imperfections. This perfect state of the Self has been variously termed in the Upaniṣads as *mukti*, *mokṣa*, *kaivalya*, *apavarga*, etc., and the attainment of this state is described as the supreme end of human life (*parama puruṣārtha*).

But how is man to attain this ideal state? Only by realizing the essential identity of the Self with Brahman: this is the invariable answer of the Upaniṣads. When a man realizes this identity he knows the truth that 'the Self is free from evil, free from old age, free from death, free from grief, free from hunger and thirst ...'<sup>9</sup>

This doctrine of the essential identity of the human Soul (Ātman) with God Brahman represents the central spiritual insight of the Upaniṣadic seers and gives Hinduism its distinctive character. The four 'great sayings' (*mahāvākyas*) of the Upaniṣads, like 'that thou art', 'I am Brahman', etc., as well as countless other passages point to this central doctrine. Since the Self and God are ultimately identical, enquiry into the nature of God resolves itself into an enquiry into the nature of the Self. It is interesting to note that this ancient Indian doctrine of the Ātman-Brahman identity finds a parallel expression in the mediaeval Christian mystic Eckhart: 'To gauge the Soul we must gauge it with God, for the Ground of God and the Ground of the Soul are one and the same.'<sup>10</sup> To know the Self, therefore, is to know God; and to

know God is to know everything, because everything in the universe is pervaded by God, 'all this is enveloped by God.'<sup>11</sup> Thus the strange question—what is that which, being known, everything else becomes known?—finds its answer in the human Self: *Ātmānam viddhi*, know your own self. It is for this reason that all the Upaniṣadic writings together go by the name, *ātmavidyā*, a study of the nature of the Self.

However, it is not easy to attain to a realization of the true nature of the Self. This requires a long and rigorous spiritual training under the guidance of a Guru or a spiritual guide. A Guru is one who has already realized the true nature of his Ātman by his own intense spiritual *sādhana* (practice). The Guru occupies a prime position in the religious practice of Hinduism. For without the help and guidance passed on from generation to generation through the Gurus no one would have any real access to the spiritual life. The spiritual training which is made available by the guidance of a Guru, according to the Upaniṣads, admits of three successive stages.

The first stage consists in hearing about the Ātman from one's Guru. This stage is known as *śravaṇa*, which means 'to hear'. We are advised here to listen to the instructions of the Guru with *śraddhā* or faith, because his words express direct experiential evidence of the true nature of the Self. As Professor Radhakrishnan says, 'We should have faith in the integrity of the seers whose selflessness has enabled them to know the nature of Ultimate Reality by direct acquaintance. The propositions they have formulated from out of their personal experience give us knowledge by description, as we do not yet have direct vision of the truth.'<sup>12</sup>

But simply to hear the words of a Guru

9. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 8.7.1.

10. Quoted in Aldous Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1974), p. 19.

11. *Isopaniṣad*, 1.

12. *The Principal Upaniṣads*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), p. 133.



is not enough. The disciple has to judge rationally what he has already learnt from the lips of his spiritual guide. This constitutes the second stage of the spiritual training, known as *manana* or rational reflection. The teachings which the disciple receives from his Guru are so remote from ordinary common-sense experience that his mind becomes perplexed and he becomes conscious of certain intellectual problems. At this stage he is advised to solve these problems by the free exercise of his own independent powers of reasoning. Nothing can take the place here of his own faculty of reason, and therefore there is a great insistence at this stage on the need for logical enquiry.

To help the student in this enquiry the ancient Indians developed a whole school of logic known as Nyāya. The Sanskrit name for logic is *tarkaśāstra*, which means 'the Science of Reasoning', and in the ancient logical treatises the rules of logical inference (*anumāna*) and other conditions of valid reasoning are dealt with in a masterly fashion which anticipates some of the techniques of modern formal logic.<sup>13</sup> The study of logic, however, was not intended

in ancient India to be a mere exercise in intellectual gymnastics. It was intended to give a rational basis for the acceptance of the inspired utterances of the scriptures and of the intuitional knowledge of the Guru. Without rational reflection, it was thought, faith in the scriptures and in the Guru would degenerate into mere credulity. Reason was thus not thought of as antagonistic to faith but as its essential complement. In the language of Śaṅkara (788-820 A.D.), the celebrated Vedānta philosopher, 'When the two, scripture and reasoning, demonstrate the unity of the Self it is seen clearly as the bael fruit in the palm of one's hand.'<sup>14</sup>

This, then, is the second stage—*manana* (rational reflection)—in the process of self-realization. After this comes the third and the most important stage, known as *nididhyāsana*, which means 'peaceful meditation'. When a man has finally resolved his intellectual difficulties by means of rational thought, aided by the study of logic, he is advised to meditate calmly on those rationally accepted truths, and if he is sincere enough at this stage he will receive a direct insight into the true nature of the Self as identical with God. The first two steps, *śravaṇa* and *manana*, give him an intellectual grasp of the nature of the Self. But the third stage, *nididhyāsana*, translates this intellectual understanding into a direct experiential awareness of reality. To use Bertrand Russell's terminology, what was previously 'knowledge by description' in the first two stages becomes 'knowledge by acquaintance' in the third stage.

Thus we find that in these three successive stages in the process of attaining Self-knowledge, the second stage, *manana* (rational reflection), gives an important place to intellectual enquiry within

<sup>13</sup>. From the thirteenth century a new school of logic known as Navya-nyāya developed in India out of the ancient logical school usually branded as Prācīna-nyāya. This new school thoroughly revised the ancient Nyāya method of inference and evolved a kind of logical technique which excels in some respect that of the Aristotelian logic. It also anticipates some important aspects of the modern mathematical logic. Professor Daniel H. H. Ingalls in his *Materials for the Study of Navya-Nyaya Logic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1951) observes, 'There are a number of points where Navya-nyāya appears definitely superior to Aristotelian logic. Among these are its understanding of conjunction, alternation, and their negates, and of the class corollary of De Morgan's law. Navya-nyāya never confuses the attribute of a class with the attribute of its members. In its concept of number it seems to anticipate mathematical logic by several centuries.' (p. 2).

<sup>14</sup>. Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.1.1,



Hinduism. It is thus an entire misunderstanding to think of Hinduism as an authoritarian religion which does not give adequate opportunity to its adherents for the free exercise of their reason.

Thus far we have discussed some of the characteristic features of Hinduism suggested by its name *vaidika dharma* or the religion of the Vedas. But Hinduism is also sometimes known as *sanātana dharma* or eternal religion, that is to say, religion which does not have any beginning or end in time, and the interpretation of this term '*sanātana*' (eternal) uncovers other important aspects of the Hindu tradition.

Hinduism is held to be eternal in the sense that it was not first propounded on earth by any historical individual, but was revealed by God Himself, who is Eternal Being. The other world religions owe their origin to some prophet or teacher who lived at a particular point in human history, and prior to the appearance of these prophets these religions did not exist. Buddhism, for example, was founded by Lord Buddha, and before he lived there was no religion called Buddhism. The same would be true of Christianity, which began with Jesus of Nazareth, and of Islam, which was founded by Mohammed. But Hinduism does not depend upon any such historical figure. No fixed date and no human founder can be cited as marking the beginning of Hinduism, for the Hindus believe that their religion was founded by God Himself. Thus Hinduism is coeval with God, and in this sense is said to be *sanātana dharma* or eternal religion.

It might be objected at this point that the spiritual truths of Hinduism, although eternal, were first discovered and announced by the ancient sages and seers, and that however long ago they lived they were nevertheless mortal human beings belonging to a particular period of human history. Thus although Hinduism does not have a

*single* prophet as its original founder, yet the ancient Hindu sages and seers taken *collectively* may be regarded as having founded Hinduism. Is it therefore correct to say that Hinduism did not have a beginning in time and that it is co-eternal with God?

This objection is answered by the Hindus in the following way. The spiritual truths of the Vedas are eternal in the sense that they were not invented by the ancient Hindu sages and seers but only *discovered* by them. This discovery may have taken place at a certain point in human history, but the truths themselves existed eternally with God before this discovery took place. The discovery of the truths is an historical event, but the truths so discovered are eternal and independent of human history. The Vedic sages were only means or channels by which the eternal truths were transmitted to men. It is in this sense that Hinduism is said to be an eternal religion, without any origin in human time.

From the fact of its being beginningless (*anādi*), its endlessness (*ānanta*) follows as a natural corollary. For 'whatever is born must necessarily die';<sup>15</sup> from which it is deduced that if there is anything which has no origin in time, that thing must continue to exist for ever; and this is held to be the case with Hinduism. Unlike the Semitic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Hinduism believes in the cyclical creation and destruction of the world. The world is being continually created, dissolved and then recreated by God; and this process has no beginning or end. During the period of temporary dissolution of the world, before its next recreation, the eternal truths of Hinduism do not die out but become absorbed in the infinite bosom of God to reappear in His next new creation. Hinduism is thus said to be an eternal religion

<sup>15</sup>. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 2.27,

(*sanātana dharma*), without beginning or end.

There is, however, another sense in which it is said to be an eternal religion. Hindus claim that those who follow the path laid down by the Hindu faith will themselves become eternal by realizing their own eternal nature, which consists in their essential identity with God. As has already been said, the identity of the human Soul (*Ātman*) with God is one of the supreme spiritual discoveries of the ancient Hindus. As a 'Divine Spark' (*sphuliṅga*),<sup>16</sup> the human soul shares the infinite knowledge, infinite existence and infinite bliss of Brahman. That is why in the Upaniṣads mankind is described as the 'sons of Immortality' (*amṛtasya putrāḥ*). But despite his essential identity with God, man under the spell of ignorance (*avidyā*) is unconscious of his Divine essence and behaves as a finite limited creature. As a result, he becomes a miserable victim of the distressing sense of finitude, imperfection, suffering and death. But these vanish like a 'midsummer night's dream' as soon as he breaks through the barrier of ignorance and realizes his own inner identity with God. The practice of the Hindu faith helps a man to realize this eternal nature, the potential Divinity within him, and in this sense also it is called the 'eternal religion'.

In studying Hinduism we should keep in mind that in ancient India religion was not sharply distinguished from philosophy. The religion of the Hindus is as much philosophical as their philosophy is religious. The systematic enquiry into the nature of Ultimate Reality, which is said to be the main task of philosophy, has been taken by the Hindus as one of the most effective means (*Jñāna-yoga*) of reaching the highest goal of religion, which consists in attaining to an absolute emancipation (*mokṣa*) from the sorrows and sufferings of life.

Thus in Hinduism philosophy merges into religion. In India philosophy has never been a merely theoretical study engaged in for the satisfaction of purely intellectual curiosity. It has always been a part of life, and the results of philosophical enquiry have been thought to be directly realized in one's personal intuitive experience and to be applied as regulative principles for living. Thus in Hinduism the intellectual 'apprehension of truth and enthusiasm of devotion inseparably blend.'<sup>17</sup>

## 2

To conclude this brief survey let us bring out a few basic points of difference between Hinduism on the one hand and the Judaeo-Christian tradition on the other. This will help us to appreciate the inner spirit of Hinduism and its distinctive individuality. In a sense all the great religions of the world attempt to solve the same fundamental problems and use the same basic concepts. Thus the problems of evil and creation, and the concepts of God and soul, figure in all the major religious traditions of the world, both Eastern and Western. But what distinguishes one religion from another and confers a distinctive individuality on it is its way of approach to these problems and its way of using these concepts. It may be helpful to illustrate this by a few examples.

The doctrine of *saṁsāra* in Hinduism is a clear case in point. Hindus believe that physical death does not end the drama of our existence. Man, according to Hinduism, has to be born again and again in this world to reap the fruits of his karmas, or the actions done in his past life, until eventually he realizes his essential identity with God. This repeated reincarnation of the individual soul is known as *saṁsāra*. This belief in man's continual rebirth on earth is so deeply

16. Cf. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1.

17. J. Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 1.



ingrained in the mind of the religious Hindu that he fails to understand why others should not accept it. But Christians, on the other hand, believe that 'it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement' (Hebrews 9.27). The idea of reincarnation is thus so remote from the Christian way of thinking that although some notable Western philosophers and Christian theologians like Lessing, Schopenhauer, Mactaggart, Nicholas Berdyaev, Paul Tillich, and others have either approved the idea or have shown a sympathetic interest in it, this doctrine has never taken root in the Western Christian world.

The concept of Self presents another difference. According to Hinduism, man is a complex phenomenon consisting of two opposite elements—body and soul. Of these two elements the body belongs to the temporal realm of transient appearances and becomes totally destroyed at physical death. But the soul (*Ātman*) as an eternal principle, a 'Divine Spark', is beyond destruction and incapable of death. It is said in the *Gītā* (2.22) that a man's soul leaves his body behind at death like a piece of tattered cloth and enters into a new body in a new incarnation. This absolute dualism between the mortal body and the immortal soul is characteristic of the Hindu view of man. But the Judaeo-Christian view of man, found in the Bible, sees man differently. He is seen as an indissoluble psycho-physical unity, within which no separation between soul and body is conceivable. H. Wheeler Robinson, summing up the Old Testament teaching concerning man, observes:

The idea of human nature implies a unity, not a dualism. There is no contrast between body and soul, such as the words instinctively suggest to us. The shades of the dead in Sheol . . . are not called 'souls' or 'spirits' in the Old Testament; nor does the Old Testament contain any distinctive word for body, as it surely would have

done, had this idea been sharply differentiated from that of the soul.<sup>18</sup>

Because of this inextricable unity of the body and the soul, man's physical nature plays an important part in the religious thought of the Hebrews. As Ryder Smith says, 'a man without a body is *not* a man for the Hebrews. . . . The Platonic belief in the "immortality of the soul" when it is once rid of the encumbrance of the body, is quite alien to the Hebrew mind.'<sup>19</sup>

The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body, both of Christ and of those who believe in Him, is a natural corollary of this unitary conception of man. It has of course been said that the resurrection body is not the earthly body that was laid in the grave, for 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God' (St. Paul), but a kind of spiritual body (*soma pneumaticon*) which has undergone a spiritual metamorphosis. In the language of Paul Tillich: 'A spiritual body then is a body which expresses the spiritually transformed total personality of man.'<sup>20</sup> Whatever may be the content of the concept of resurrection, life in the Kingdom of God is conceived in the Bible and in subsequent Christian theology as some kind of embodied life. The Bible speaks not merely of the salvation of the soul but of the salvation of man in his corporeal totality. In Hinduism, on the other hand, the concept of the body has been invested with such connotation of inevitable mortality that the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body appears to the Hindu as a perplexing enigma—somewhat as the Hindu doctrine of a disembodied soul merging in the infinite bliss and beatitude of Brahman appears to the Christians as an undecipherable mystery.

18. *Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1947), p. 83.

19. *The Bible Doctrine of the Hereafter* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), pp. 59.

20. *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (England: Nisbet, 1964), p. 440.





## PROFILES IN GREATNESS

### LALA LAJPAT RAI AND MAHATMA GANDHI: A NOTE ON SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

'Every blow they hurled at us drove one more nail into the coffin of the Empire,' said Lala Lajpat Rai, brutally assaulted by the police while leading a demonstration against the Simon Commission less than a month before his death on November 17, 1928. This was no vain proclamation, coming as it did from the mouth of a man who was one of the topmost leaders of Indian nationalism and who fought ceaselessly against the British for bringing freedom to his country. Among others who, like Lajpat Rai, drove nail after nail into the coffin of the British Empire, was Mahatma Gandhi. The present article dwells on the similarities and differences in the views of these two great freedom-fighters.

Lajpat Rai had a very modest family background. His father was a teacher of Urdu and Persian at a school on a very meagre monthly salary. Though a Hindu, Agarwal by caste, Lajpat's father was antagonistic to Hinduism and an admirer of Islamic culture. Lajpat Rai received his early education from his father and was profoundly influenced in his early years by the pro-Muslim views of his father. Lajpat's mother was exactly the opposite of his father. She was an orthodox Hindu

lady and used to observe all Hindu religious customs, sometimes thus incurring the displeasure of her husband. The mother's influence, however, proved to be more enduring on Lajpat Rai. The young Lajpat, during his study at the government college at Lahore, came into contact with the Arya Samaj and became deeply interested in the reform of orthodox Hinduism.

Lajpat Rai's entry into the Samaj was of prime importance in moulding his life. Speaking of this event in his autobiography he wrote, '... all that was good and creditable in me I owed to the Arya Samaj.' The training he received in social reform activities under the auspices of the Samaj stimulated his patriotic impulses and the spirit of selfless service and self-reliance, qualities which served him well subsequently in the service of his country.

Lajpat Rai was an extremist in Congress politics. He could not accept the early Congress policy of cautiously criticizing the policy of the government and demanding reforms by appealing to the conscience of the British rulers. That seemed to him too moderate. He was convinced that prayers, petitions and mild protests were inadequate for bringing freedom to the country. He believed in action. He therefore sympath-



ized with and joined the extremist section of the Congress headed by Tilak. In the 1905 Benares session of the Congress the extremists led by him and Tilak forced the Congress to approve resolutions on boycott and Swadeshi. Though in the 1907 Surat session of the Congress Lajpat Rai temporarily joined the moderates, his political sympathies were always with the extremists.

Lajpat Rai, like Gandhi, was a constructive nationalist. Like Gandhi, he wanted independence, but not at once. Both of them wanted to prepare the country for freedom by steady social, educational, and political development. They wanted to consolidate the nation, raise its intellectual and moral tone, increase its economic sufficiency, along with the struggle for political independence. Both of them believed that political freedom without social and economic regeneration of the country would be insignificant. They therefore strove for the realization of these aims. Yet they had differences too. Gandhi strove throughout his life, though unsuccessfully, for the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity. Lajpat Rai would not deny the necessity of such unity. But, in fact, his activities as an Arya Samajist, his support for proselytizing activities, aggravated Hindu-Muslim relations. He was a nationalist, but a Hindu nationalist.

Lajpat Rai, like Gandhi, did not approve of the activities of the Indian revolutionaries abroad who wanted to win freedom for India with the help of German funds and arms. He could not place his reliance on foreign help. He feared that it might result only in a change of masters. Nor did Lajpat Rai approve of the terrorist activities of the revolutionaries in India. 'Terrorism, too,' he declared, 'in my judgement, is not only futile but sinful.'<sup>1</sup> He, like Gandhi, believed that terrorism was morally wrong.

But while Gandhi wanted to fight not only the organized violence of the British government, but also what he called the unorganized violent force of the growing party of violence among the nationalists, Lajpat Rai held that 'secret propaganda and secret societies may have some justification in the government's desire to prohibit and penalize all kinds of open work.'<sup>2</sup>

With Gandhi, nonviolence was a creed, a principle and a conviction. With Lajpat Rai, it was just a policy. In the absence of a more suitable weapon, he accepted nonviolence as an expedient weapon to fight for India's freedom. Gandhi would not even accept the freedom of the country at the cost of nonviolence. Thus he called off in 1922 the nonviolent non-cooperation movement that he had initiated all over the country in 1920 because the violent happenings at Chauri Chaura (U.P.) convinced him that it was no longer possible to keep the movement nonviolent in character. Lajpat Rai had no such faith or conviction in nonviolence. He therefore vehemently protested against Gandhi's action which he described as a betrayal of the country.

Both leaders were, of course, unanimous in their opinion that the British rule in India was a curse. Both believed that the British rule impoverished India by a system of progressive exploitation and reduced Indians politically to serfdom. Both also believed that since Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interest by all forces at her command, 'India must consequently evolve a force enough to free herself from the embrace of death.'<sup>3</sup>

The force that Gandhi evolved was 'truth force' or Satyagraha, the two outward manifestations of which were nonviolent non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

2. Ibid.

3. John R. McLane, ed., *The Political Awakening in India*, p. 79.

1. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, p. 13.

Satyagraha, in its essence, implied 'non-aggressive, internalized courage, involving the capacity to suffer pain without retaliation, not to retreat but to stay and suffer more. It relies for its effectiveness on the moral sensibilities, or at least guilt capacity, of the aggressor, using his conscience as the weapon with which to "beat" him.'<sup>4</sup> It might be argued that Gandhi's method of self-suffering was also a technique of pressure on the opponent. It was therefore a coercive measure and therefore, in a sense, it was also violent. Be that as it may, Satyagraha was not something which Gandhi discovered himself. It had always been preached and practised by the ancient R̥sis of India. Susanne Rudolph observes that it was practised also in Indian homes. The members of the family, for example, expressed protest by abstaining from meals. But to Gandhi lies the credit of using it for the first time in politics. He made it an effective device of mass action, by involving millions in it.

'Gandhi 'will be remembered as one of the few who have set the stamp of an idea [of nonviolence] on an epoch,' but his role as a politician is not above criticism,<sup>5</sup> say two English historians. Charging Gandhi with 'egoism and inconsistencies', they criticize particularly his role in the second session of the Round Table Conference in London in 1931. They point out that the Conference ended in failure to produce an 'agreed communal settlement' because Gandhi claimed to represent the whole of India—all its communities and varied interests. 'He deliberately precluded any idea of cooperation, by attacking the credentials of other delegates, and threw all the minorities together by claiming to speak

both for the Muslims and the depressed classes.'<sup>6</sup>

In defence of Gandhi, it must be said that he acted the way he did because he believed that India was one nation and not, as the Muslim League claimed, two nations. He opposed the separate electorates for the Muslims and the depressed classes (untouchables) because to him the political and moral advance of the country was the most important thing and the interests of the country as a whole, therefore, must be placed above any narrow and sectional interests. He was particularly opposed to the award of separate electorates to the depressed classes because he believed that it would vivisect Hinduism by permanently dividing untouchables from other Hindus.

Yet when the British Government announced the award of separate electorates to the untouchables, Gandhi undertook a fast unto death in protest. To save Gandhi's life, the leaders of the Hindu community generally and of the depressed classes reached an agreement in which the latter accepted reserved seats in place of separate electorates. According to Thompson and Garratt, such use of fast by Gandhi 'established a dangerous precedent.'<sup>7</sup> This criticism is justified to the extent to which this use of fast by Gandhi involved coercion on others. But at the same time, it must be kept in mind that Gandhi was fighting for a cause—a cause for which he eventually sacrificed his life. So did Lajpat Rai: the cause was the freedom of his country and the sacrifice he made was nothing less than his life.

There is much scope for comparison in the life and views of these two great men. Indeed it would be instructive for a perceptive researcher to undertake this task in right earnest.

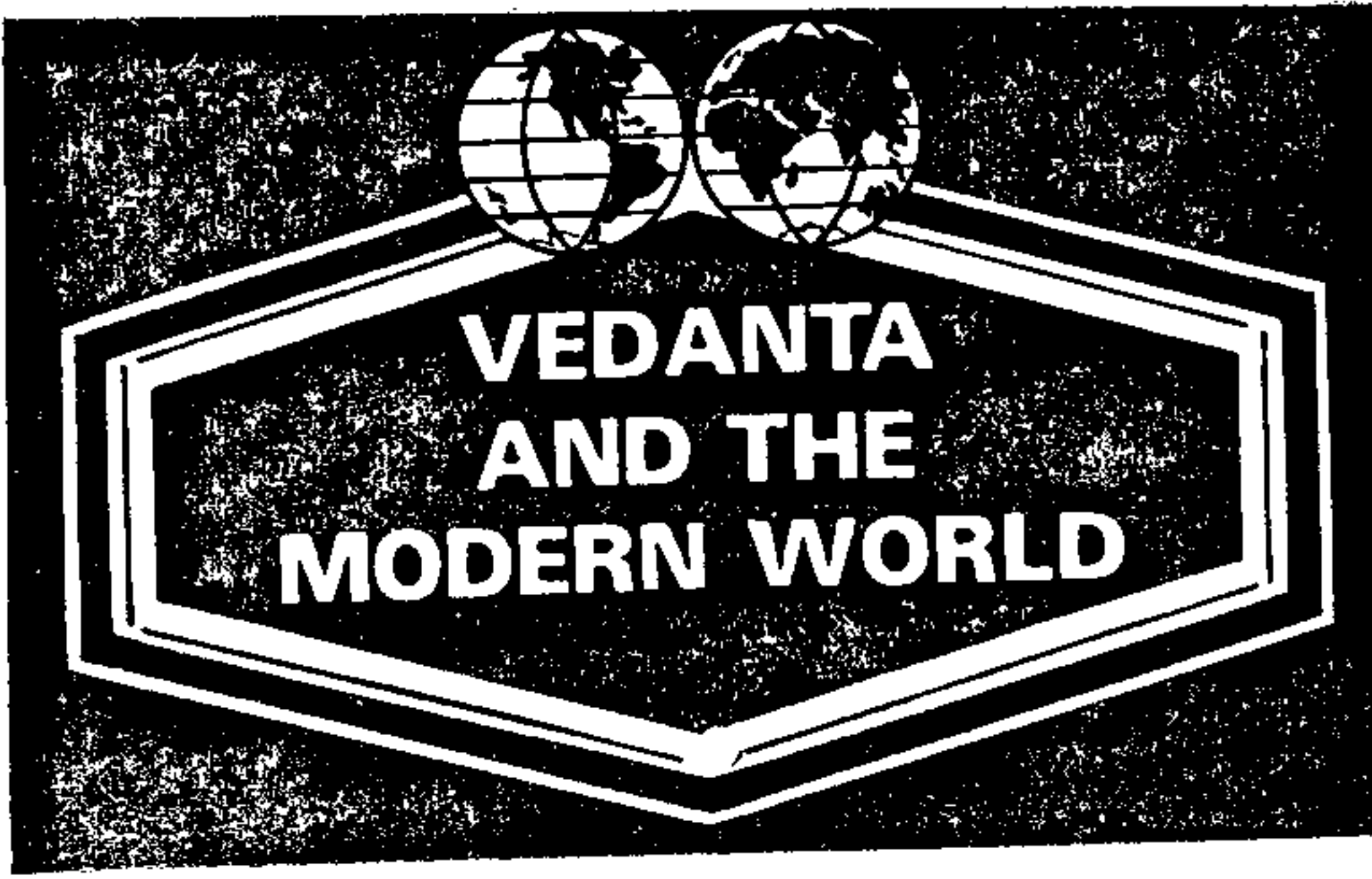
<sup>4</sup> Susanne H. Rudolph, 'The New Courage; An Essay on Gandhi's Psychology', *World Politics*, 16 (1963-64): 113.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 643.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 642.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 644.





## IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE?—XIV

DR. VINITA WANCHOO

(Continued from the previous issue)

### ABSENCE OF ETHICS AND ITS CAUSES (continued)\*

#### *Absence of ethics and supermoralism*

Vedānta definitely postulates struggle against evil in the ethical field, but such a struggle for self-improvement and moral victory proves that man is still in the field of imperfection. In the highest stage of perfection Vedānta envisages the disappearance of the moral struggle. Both the Advaitins and Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins hold enlightenment to be a rising above the ego or false self and the moral 'ought'.

This brings us to the very vexed question of transcendence of morality in Vedānta. The critic points out that there is a danger of the attitude. 'I am a conscious principle having nothing in common with the senses : I am their witness so let them rip.'<sup>1</sup> Antinomian conduct is thought to be the inevitable outcome of the ideal of *dvandvātīta* (transcendence of the pairs of opposites). But the position of Advaita

is that the ending of *mūla avidyā* (primal ignorance) is final and there can be no revival of it, while the Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins also hold that after *jñāna* arises there can be no reversion to the empirical state. The thought of immorality is impossible in that state which is 'ethics in the beginning, ethics in the middle, ethics in the end, to say nothing of the fact that minds so engrossed with divine things as the Vedānta philosophers are not likely to fall victim to the ordinary temptations of the world, the flesh and other powers.'<sup>2</sup> All texts require of the *sādhaka* purity, truth and discipline, nor can the intuitive experience of Ātman in yogic meditation arise unless he is free from passion and tranquil.<sup>3</sup> Such a mature soul whose only aim is removal of darkness and doubt, cannot in the nature of things do evil deeds; if he does, Vedānta does not consider him enlightened or even eligible for enlightenment.<sup>4</sup> The antinomian statements are but exaggerated expressions of this idea. We may admit that this doctrine is open to abuse, but not that it is impracticable or false.

Vedānta well understands the dangers involved in its doctrine but claims that

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\* In the previous two instalments Vedānta's 'pantheistic' mysticism, teachings on the loss of individuality, intellectualism, and doctrines of karma and *punarjanma* were discussed in relation to the charge by critics that Vedānta ignores or is opposed to sound ethics.

1. John Levy, *Nature of Man According to Vedanta*, p. 98.

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2. F. M. Müller, *The Vedanta Philosophy*, p. 90.

3. Cf. *Atmabodha*, 1 and 2.

4. Cf. Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. 2, 296.

genuine pursuit of truth obviates any danger of evil conduct. 'How can there be possibility of wrong conduct on the part of one on whom renunciation etc. are enjoined, and who is awakened on knowing the implied meaning of 'that thou art' and aspiring after comprehension of the meaning of the sentence?'<sup>5</sup> It is said<sup>6</sup> that if the jñāni argues that since knowledge cuts off rebirth he may retain passions and desires without harmful results, such an attitude will in fact lead to both harmful results and rebirth, nor is he actually an Ātma-jñāni who argues so. Moreover, if enjoyment even of heaven is not desired, what prevents the Jñāni from giving up faulty and worthless passions and desires? If after Brahma-jñāna such desires and passions persist and man follows his own whims in disregard of scriptural injunctions, then what is the difference between the Jñāni and the dog living on unclean food? 'Therefore a knower of Truth should not desire to follow the bent of his inclinations like swine and wild boar, but by abandoning passions and desires he must raise himself to the dignity of a deva and be an object of worship and reverence everywhere.'<sup>7</sup> The *Vedānta-Sūtra* also expressly forbids the doing of what one pleases.

Critics find the conception of *nirguṇa*, raised as it is above both logical and moral categories, to be most liable to antinomian interpretation. But in hundreds of places reality is declared to be pure, without blemish, supremely holy, spotless, stainless, good. The idea even of Brahman is coloured with ethical consciousness. Only God is above impurity and unpierced by evil, and man must cultivate the same purity and stainlessness.<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy

that nowhere is reality said to be contrary to the good. Vedānta would subscribe to Aristotle's conception, 'Whatever relates to moral action is petty and unworthy of the gods.'<sup>9</sup> Theists hold the Absolute to be a righteous personal God, and monists hold the Absolute to be above but not contradictory to human distinctions.

In the same spirit it is possible to understand one of the important dogmas of Vedānta that even good deeds have fruit, hence in the highest state actions, or karma, must end. All schools, while teaching a high practical morality, also teach that no degree of morality can lead to the final goal. In the light of the above we can follow Max Müller's remarks:<sup>10</sup> dangerous as the principle is that one who knows Brahman cannot sin, it is hardly more dangerous, if properly understood, than the saying that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not. This was never intended as freedom in the sense of license, but as the freedom that can never lapse into sinful acts nor claims any merit for good acts, being at rest and blessed in itself and Brahman.<sup>11</sup> The Jñāni rises above all karma, not in the sense of despising it, but in the sense of having so absorbed it as to overcome its externality and to fulfil it in the spirit of artistic spontaneity.<sup>12</sup> What is required as means for attaining the goal becomes second nature to the perfect man.<sup>13</sup>

Vedānta is convinced, in spite of the critics' protestations, that self-transcendence of morality is not immorality or antimorality but a higher morality. If the distinc-

5. *Upadesa Sāhasrī*, 18.229.

6. *Pañcadāsī*, 4.51-55.

7. *Ibid.*, 4.56.

8 Cf. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.1.2; 2.2.7; *Iśa*

*Upaniṣad* 8; *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad* 4.14 and 16; 5.15; 6.19 and 21; *Brahma-Sūtra* 1.1.20-21; 3.2.24-26.

9. *Ethics* 10.84-85.

10. *Collected Works*, p. 168.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

12. F. M. Müller, *The Vedānta Philosophy*, p. 90.

13. मुक्तलक्षणानि एव मुमुक्षोः साधनत्वेन विद्यन्ते ।



tion of natural and dynamic morality be accepted,<sup>14</sup> then the claim of Vedānta that its morality which establishes the relation between man and God is not opposed to ordinary morality, must be conceded, for in practice it does not allow anything immoral nor does it raise conflicts between man and man. The man who has a vision of truth will not cease to be moral, but will be moral in a more significant way. At any rate the insistence of Vedānta that a man who aspires to the state of Brahman must be perfected in the practice of lower or social morality may not be overlooked.

The negative appearance of higher morality in Vedānta is explicable by the fact that morality is so much incorporated into the nature of the Mukta as to be no longer felt to be in conflict with his instincts and desires.<sup>15</sup> The Kantian distinction of duties of perfect obligations which have a positive appearance and the duties of imperfect obligations which have a negative appearance, will help to throw some light on the conception of transcendent morality. All conflicts of practical life vanish in that state, and instead of the

rigidity of ordinary morality (dharma) there is the flexible freedom resulting from Ātmadarsana. Vedānta insists on distinguishing the preparatory ethics of the purgative way from the ethics of consummation and refuses to apply the principle of individuality in the latter state, which is devoid of the conceit of moral agency and responsibility. 'Its [liberation's] value lies as little in inducing a person to do what otherwise he would not have done, as in informing him of what he would otherwise not know. It consists essentially in making him what he was not before.'<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Vedānta talks of supermoralism only in the context of perfect identity with Ātman. Ranade<sup>17</sup> makes the interesting comparison between Nietzschean supermoralism which is only for the superman, Bradleyan supermoralism which is for the Absolute, and Vedāntic supermoralism which affects both the Absolute and the individual, but only so far as the individual has realized himself in the Absolute. The critics fail to do justice to Vedānta by overlooking the distinction of means and ends in that philosophy. As far as the process is concerned there is no lack of strictest morality, and if at the end there is talk of transcendence, that is so because, metaphysically, there is no further scope for growth.

If objection be raised against this ideal on the ground of its undesirable effects on the popular mind in the form of incitement to breaches of morality, it may be rejoined that as a matter of historical fact, even in its popular form Vedānta has given no support to vice. It has made it clear that no one can even approach it who has not previously passed through a course of discipline (*sattva-śuddhi*), as a *brahmachārin* or *grhastha*. Hence the transcendent ethics of the liberated yogi may be said to be a

14. See the instalment of this article in the January 1981 issue, p. 36.

15. Evelyn Underhill in *Mysticism*, p. 219, quotes *The Mirror of Simple Souls* as describing boldly the condition under which the soul is enabled to abandon the hard service of virtues which has absorbed it during the purgative way: 'Virtue, I take leave of you for ever more.... I wot well your service is too travaillous.... Oh, I was your servant but now I am delivered from your thralldom.' To this astounding utterance the commentator adds: 'First when a soul giveth herself to perfection she laboureth busily, day and night to get virtues by counsel of reason and striveth with vices at every thought.... Thus the virtues be mistress.... And when the soul hath deeply tasted this love, so that this love of God worketh and hath her usages in the soul, then the soul is wondrous light and gladsome within herself. And then this soul taketh leave of virtues as of the thralldom... of them that she had before, and she is lady and sovereign and they are subjects.'

16. M. Hiriyanna, *Popular Essays*, p. 21.

17. *A Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy*, p. 306.

source of inspiration to and even the determinant of the ethics of the ordinary man; not in the sense that imperfect humanity may start living according to its letter, but in the sense that it receives encouragement for progress by its spirit.

#### QUIETISM AND ITS CAUSES

The charge of quietism rests on an absolute divergence of ideals between Vedānta and its modern critics. Whereas self-expression in the modern outlook takes the form of satisfaction of instincts and ambitions through wealth and position, in the Vedānta it takes the form of search for *mokṣa* through detachment and discipline. Vedānta is not lacking in the type of effort and activity necessary for what it conceives as the highest goal. What the critic calls the quietistic life actually means much spiritual activism.

A new conception of activity which was unknown to the whole of the ancient world has grown in the past centuries. A positive valuation of routine activity in the world existed in the past also, but the valuation of the fulfilment of worldly duty as the highest form of moral activity in the individual is unquestionably new; according to this modern view, the only way of living acceptable to God is not by surpassing worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely by fulfilment of the obligations which a man's position in the world imposes upon him.<sup>18</sup> William James explains how this change has come about.<sup>19</sup> Science, idealism and democracy have led to a conception of social righteousness unknown to the catholicism of the eighteenth century, in which saving one's own soul while leaving the world to the devil was not accounted a discreditable scheme. Today,

rightly or wrongly, helpfulness in human affairs, in consequence of one of those secular mutations in moral sentiments, is deemed an essential element of worth in saintly character, and to be of public or private use is reckoned a species of divine service. Purity of theopathic character in which love of God is unmixed with other loves and in which all external relations interfering with awareness of spiritual things are broken off, is no longer admired.

The above change of outlook has resulted in a new emphasis in religion and spirituality. The modern rational temper, interested only in conduct, reacts against identification of religion with dogma and reduces it practically to an ethic. Religion is defined, therefore, as emotion touched with morality.<sup>20</sup> But Vedāntic spirituality based on mystic experience does not limit religion either to a system of belief or to a process of conduct. The moral content of religion is considered to be a means to, but distinct from, the spiritual goal.

#### *Quietism and mysticism*

A leading authority on mysticism lays down the criterion of the true mystic ecstasy in the form of the fruit the mystic brings back from his vision, which must be 'an ordered life in every state', more active, because more contemplative, than that of the ordinary man.<sup>21</sup> Now, fruits of mysticism are varied, temperamental differences being the determinant in this matter.<sup>22</sup> If it be

<sup>20</sup>. Nicol Macnicol in *Indian Theism from Vedic to Muhammedan Period*, p. 254, quotes the definition of Professor Howison.

<sup>21</sup>. Evelyn Underhill, *Studies in Mysticism*, p. 23.

<sup>22</sup>. Cf. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 404. Stupefaction, other worldliness, abstraction from practical life is peculiarly liable to befall mystics whose character is naturally passive and intellect feeble; but the naturally strong minds and characters are rendered more energetic along lines of their inspiration.

<sup>18</sup>. Max Weber, *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 80.

<sup>19</sup>. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 6.



accepted that true mysticism is active, practical and not passive, there is not logical or historical evidence for denying that many mystics have been realists.<sup>23</sup> After a necessary period of withdrawal into the spirit, there is an increased capacity for useful, unselfish, creative activity with reference to the very practical task of expressing the eternal spiritual order in the temporal and material life of man. 'The larger vitality is not kept to himself, but he infects all with whom he comes in contact, kindles the latent fire in them, for spiritual consciousness is caught, not taught.'<sup>24</sup> Even in contemplative mysticism the line of action is foreshadowed, in as much as the mystic coming out of his experience of unity feels it incumbent upon himself to teach mankind by setting an example and thus transforming it. 'The vivid spirituality of mystics adds immeasurably to human spirituality. If such contemplative lives were wasted then what is the merit of sanctity and power of great and loving spirits to infect more languid souls?'<sup>25</sup>

Applying the above criterion of true mysticism to the 'pantheistic' mysticism of Vedānta we find that the charge of absence of fruit in the shape of useful, creative, moral activity does not stand ground. Vedānta offers many ideals, from complete abandonment of action to acceptance of life and its activities with a new spirit elevating them. Having the fullest understanding of the innermost implications of action and inaction<sup>26</sup> it does not discourage what it considers true activism. The point has been made that the mystic's aims are purely transcendental or spiritual; though not neglecting his duty he brushes aside the world and fixes his attention on divine

unity. Vedantic mysticism was fully imbued with this spirit and attempted to keep the spiritual light burning by showing others the path to the good life through the system of *guruparamparā*. Since Vedānta puts an immeasurably higher value on spiritual helpfulness rather than on material aid or even on alleviation of physical suffering, the spiritual mission of the mystic was the highest altruistic activity. The Vedāntic ideal of the Jñāni or the Jīvanmukta is the representation of the mystic who seeks solitude for enlightenment, but later returns to teach men the path of true spirituality and is wholly activistic in that field. The following description of true mysticism is exactly applicable to Vedānta: 'From their ranks have come missionaries, preachers, prophets, social reformers, poets, founders of institutions, servants of the poor and sick, patient guides and instructors of souls.'<sup>27</sup>

However, in line with all mysticism which lacks a positive valuation of external activity in its relation to the world,<sup>28</sup> Advaita and Vaiṣṇava Vedānta also do not treat 'fruits of action' separately as an end, but only as means to mystic consciousness of unity. Or, seen from another angle, even theoretically the Vedāntic mystic does not repudiate energy, since the Jñāni is in possession of the energy of Brahman and no one but he can enjoy mystic peace while dwelling in activity. The *Gītā* gives the analogy of the lotus leaf. A distinction can be made, in passing, between the quietude or calm of Ātman and the quietening of naturalistic energies in the process of dynamic spirituality; Vedānta does not deny the latter but teaches the former.<sup>29</sup>

It is held that the moral force of Christian mysticism is more impressive than that of Indian mysticism, so much so that the

23. Cf. Max Weber, *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 113.

24. Evelyn Underhill, *Studies in Mysticism*, p. 40.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

26. See *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

27. Underhill, *Studies in Mysticism*, p. 39.

28. Weber, *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 113.

29. Mahendranath Sircar, *Hindu Mysticism According to the Upaniṣads*, p. 176.

latter is incomplete, only half mysticism, as compared to the 'complete' mysticism of Christianity which accomplished much in the field of action.<sup>30</sup> However, the critic also admits that even the latter's record of activity is not very striking since nearly all their superabundant energy was devoted to the spreading of the Christian faith and reform of monasteries etc., not having much social and moral value in terms of their fellow men. But this limitation of activity is excused on the ground that this activity was no doubt due to the medieval conception of Christian virtue.<sup>31</sup>

Should the critic be willing to grant the benefit of difference of values in the case of Vedānta also, then it may be pointed out that the whole history of India, after the Muslim conquest, is an attempt of its mystical leaders to create a social edifice on Vedāntic teaching. No mystic failed to lead a strenuous and influential creative life after his illumination: medieval mystics came down 'from the cloister to the marketplace' or, like Platonic philosophers, from the bright light of the sun into the dark cave, to play a role in the common life of humanity by setting the example of spirituality, which was much larger than that of the Christian mystics. Vedāntic mysticism did not shun the approach of philosophy<sup>32</sup> in explaining the mystical method and goal. Since it was able to draw on the profoundest philosophy of the Vedas it was able to colour Indian life and thought, while Western mysticism grew and faded like a wildflower with little influence on European life as a whole.<sup>33</sup> 'In the religious sphere, preaching, teaching and

organization, mysticism is intensely practical and the number of its successes is greater in Asia than in Europe.'<sup>34</sup>

Neither in the West nor in India is social and moral reformism a direct function of the mystic goal. It is remarked:

Once and for all ... it must be remembered that programmes of ethical reform never were the centre of interest for any of the religious reformers.... They were not founders of societies for ethical culture nor the proponents of humanitarian projects for social reform or cultural ideals. The salvation of the soul and that alone was the centre of their life and work. Their ethical ideals and the practical results of their doctrines were all based on that alone, and were the consequence of purely religious motives.<sup>35</sup>

While modern man thinks in terms of alleviating suffering through schemes of social reform, Vedānta holds suffering to be a consequence of finitude, to be alleviated by achieving mystic unity with the infinite good. Neither callousness nor lack of love, but a different philosophical approach prevented Vedāntic mysticism from putting its whole faith in reformism. Both Advaita and Vaiṣṇava Vedānta insist that the highest aim of philosophy and religion is *samyagdarśana* (realization) of Brahman and not discharge of moral and social obligations. Similarly the ideals of universalism and compassion are also expressed largely on the spiritual level.<sup>36</sup> Thus it is an unjustified procedure to compare ancient spiritual and ethical notions with the modern conception of materialistic reformism and to condemn the ancient thinkers for not working out a scheme of social service as a part of their ethics.

(To be concluded)

30. Henri Bergson, *Religion and Morality*, pp. 216 ff.

31. W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, p. 339.

32. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 337.

33. Sris Chandra Sen. *The Mystic Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 164.

34. Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. 1, p. 323.

35. Max Weber, *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 89.

36. Cf. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, p. 334.



## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**HARMONY IN CHAOS : BY BARBARA FOXE.**  
Published by Rider and Company, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6JD. 1980. Pp. 160. £3.95.  
Indian edition: B.I. Publications, 54 Janpath, New Delhi.

In 1975 there appeared a life and study of Sister Nivedita, *Long Journey Home*, which won acclaim on many counts, both in India and abroad. Its author, Barbara Foxe, had drawn upon her years of association with the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of England and her professional experience as a writer of drama and documentary for British radio. She now offers us an introduction to Vedanta, through the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, for those not familiar with it. In brief compass and clear tones is painted a canvas on which the Ramakrishna movement and its significance on the scene today are portrayed. The book has a Foreword by Swami Bhavyananda, present Head of the British centre.

The motif here, so to say, is the swan, and smoothly it rides, over the waves of paradox, as the title itself, *Harmony in Chaos*, suggests: East and West, the Personal and Impersonal, the ancient and the modern, householder and monk, grace and self-effort, fun and austerity—these and other apparent polarities are embraced and transcended in a compressive and comprehensive style. For example (speaking of the Master), 'He preached a harmony of all religions, philosophies, and approaches, in all nations, in an orchestra in which each, so to speak, plays his own instrument as perfectly as he can, but without enmity—or without even the slight condescension which is sometimes called tolerance—towards the other instruments and chords in the whole harmony. And certainly there must be no suggestion that, in the end, all must come to play exactly the same tune on exactly the same instrument.'

Again, in the section on 'Is God a Person?', this question is approached by delineating the path of the Impersonal.

If we may paraphrase Swami Vivekananda: To put the whole of Ramakrishna Vedanta into a form which will be at once brief, clear and simple to grasp, is a task truly appreciated only by those who have attempted it. Barbara Foxe's success in this work is to be congratulated. Economy of persons has been one of the means

of its accomplishment: only those figures essential to the telling of her story have been brought on the stage. Those of us long familiar with it will quite naturally be tempted to exclaim, 'Oh, why not bring in *this*; why was *that* left out?' But we must, seeing through others' eyes, follow the purpose of this book. Occasionally one may feel, as in the suddenness of both Sri Ramakrishna's suicide threat and the expression 'as he lay dying', that brevity has left us insufficient Psychological preparation.

The author begins her study with the lives of the Master and his Apostle. The transition from the account of Sri Ramakrishna's life to that of Swami Vivekananda's is delightful, and the story of Swamiji particularly gripping. Throughout the remainder of the book, the reader is unaware of basic difference, really, between these towering figures: he seems to read of a single being under two names and forms, whose teachings apply in different directions but interlock, and extend the example of the one into the message of the other. It is beautifully done. Again, in presenting Ramakrishna's life to Westerners, how to be candid and at the same time make it understandable and appealing, is not something which just falls into place. Barbara Foxe has managed it. But this is an unfolding map, for to see the full picture of the Master the entire book must be read. Hear her depiction of Swami Vivekananda :

'It may be said that, like some great mountain climbers, he came into the world better equipped than most of us (spiritually speaking) to climb life's highest peaks; he could cope with a spiritual Everest; we, perhaps, could not. But this fact illustrates a part of the whole Vedantic teaching; each one of us brings into the world the equipment he needs, and is going to use; Vivekananda may have been marvellously equipped, but he had higher mountains—and more of them—than most of us will have to face. His extreme gentleness with those he found struggling with burdens which might not have worried *him*, but which were almost more than their 'spiritual equipment' could carry, can be compared with his blast of energy, strength—or even anger—where it was needed by the spiritually well-equipped, from whom more could be expected. He spoke always to the lion within each one, and an American disciple wrote to him that this



had a tonic effect; something long dormant was awakened, and instinctively responded.'

There is an exquisite, tantalizingly brief, description of Holy Mother.

As regards the setting out of Vedantic ideas (which occupies most of the book), it has reported each approach, each yoga, as traditionally given, resisting any temptation to issue some sort of synthesis of its own. Here there is no argument, no hassle of rhetorical apologetics. Knowing fully the grip in which Western thinking has been held by 'psychological' explanations, the author wisely brings out by contrast, the experiential basis of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. Yet she is psychologist enough: at the outset, even before beginning her narration, she stirs up the pools of our philosophic curiosity. And the reader will find a freshness in the interpretation of Karma Yoga, that is, its application. The book appears comparable to a painting in water-colours. Describing doctrines without being doctrinal; without editorializing, setting out opinions, or *darshanas*; in narration, aiming for historical accuracy without pedantry—in a word, it suggests.

One could quibble that the reader might well have been told earlier what a guru is; or that putting the gunas into Western terminology is not so simple or unambiguous as is made out, for these ideas are really absent from Western culture.

We feel inclined to compare the book with *What Religion Is*, edited by John Yale many years ago, inasmuch as their purposes are related. But they are in quite different categories, the earlier book being a kind of digest in Swamiji's own words, whereas *Harmony in Chaos* is a cameo in today's idiom, supplemented by a glossary, by the way.

Its literary quality may be gauged by such passages as the following:

'...meditation is not an act totally separate from the rest of life. Our daily life, rightly lived, illuminates our meditation, our meditation is the flame which keeps the lamp of daily living burning, as we express our true identity in the development of character. The young man who told Vivekananda that he could not control and calm his mind when he shut his eyes in meditation was told to open his eyes and find someone who needed help; his reply—that service of others might so weaken his health that he could not meditate—showed only too clearly that he was still identifying himself with his ego, his body and a desire for comfort.'

'Harmony is the result of finding and playing perfectly one's own note, one's own theme; what

it is will become clear as meditation continues; for this is a lifetime's music.'

And this, which has almost a Kafka-esque quality :

'Obviously, the most vital question of all concerns the chaos within man himself. In playing a symphony, each player can only play his own instrument as perfectly as possible; he cannot play other people's instruments for them, or assert that his is the best, and they should all be playing *his* instrument, in his way. But if he does not trust the sense of harmony within himself, this will deepen his anxiety as to the whole orchestra, and his part in it. He may doubt if the symphony is worth playing, or indeed if it exists at all. Fury or even despair at the performance of the other players add to his own disharmony. And where, in heaven's name, is the conductor?'

Barbara Foxe's quotations are, every one, on target. It is to be hoped that in a second edition, one or two points may be corrected; for example, not only the Vedanta Society of New York was founded by Swami Vivekananda but also the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, as we know from Marie Louise Burke's second volume of *Swami Vivekananda : New Discoveries in America*; and the same writer, in her first volume, has demonstrated (conclusively, for the reviewer) that Swamiji's primary reasons for coming to the West did not include a 'longing to bring over the spiritual riches of India'.

*Harmony in Chaos* is capped with a detailed analysis of the Master's character and personality in a chapter called 'Harmony in Life' which is truly refreshing. Rider and Company, of the Hutchinson Publishing Group, London, are to be congratulated on bringing out a book which should have the widest possible circulation.

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PATHS OF MEDITATION. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600-004. 1980. Pp. 236. Rs. 6.50.

Mirabai was brought up by her grandparents, her own parents having passed away early in her life. The grandfather 'used to sing and dance in the name of God and lose himself in meditation. The little girl was fascinated and perplexed. She asked her grandpa why he was shouting and jumping at times and sitting like a stock at other



times. He replied that he was praying and meditating. What is praying and what is meditating, demanded Mira. Her grandpa said: "When we talk to God, it is prayer, and when God talks to us, it is meditation."

Narrating this pretty incident in the life of Saint Mirabai, Swami Siddhinathananda discusses the concept and practice of meditation according to the *Bhāgavatā*. He emphasizes the role of Bhakti in rendering it easier to meditate upon the Lord in love. There are other contributions in this volume approaching the subject of meditation from other starting points, namely knowledge, service, psychology.

The main guide-lines that are common to most of the presentations (seventeen of them) are from Patañjali and Swami Vivekananda. Meditation with form or without form, with the aid of *japa* when concentration is difficult, and the way to maintain an unbroken flow of attention are best described in the words of Vivekananda. His own experiences are related, the most striking of which is his vision of the *Idā* and *Pingalā nāḍis* is his own body (p. 11).

Prof. B. Kuppuswamy is brilliant, as usual, in his exposition of the standpoint of *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. According to this philosophy, mind is the cause of karma: 'Man is a free agent and it is for him to choose the course of action which contributes to his own good and the good of the group in which he lives.' To control and silence the mind is imperative and meditation with this purpose is imperative. Pranayama and right knowledge are the two means to arrest the movement of the *citta* and bring it to a standstill. The stages of ascent to the pure consciousness are seven: higher aspiration; enquiry into the nature of the self, world and Brahman; cultivation of detachment; annihilation of desires; complete detachment; realization of the unreality of the world; liberation.

Swami Vijnananda's treatment of *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna* is highly helpful: '*Dhāraṇā* matures into *dhyāna* or meditation. Meditation consists in an unbroken flow of thought towards the object of concentration. It is like pouring of oil from one vessel to another in a steady uninterrupted flow. In the process of meditation a succession of similar thoughts flow in the mind without any contrary or dissimilar thoughts interfering in the middle.'

In his paper on meditation in Christianity, Swami Nityabodhananda, the veteran monk, speaks of a vision of St. Francis of Assisi: 'During that prayer two lights were shown to me: in which I recognized God; and the other in which

I recognized myself. And when I asked God who I was in comparison with Him, I plunged deep in contemplation where I felt the infinite depth of God's bounty as also the said abyss of my spiritual misery' (p. 109).

In describing meditation according to the Spanish mystics, Swami Paratparananda speaks of 'mental prayer' helping to establish relation with God and 'vocal prayer' dulling outgoing tendencies. Swami Sastrananda draws attention to Patañjali's definition of Yoga as the stopping of thought-waves and the description of meditation by other teachers 'as a continual thought-current directed towards a particular worthy object and to the exclusion of all other thoughts.' Sri B. S. Surti, in his 'Meditation according to Mazdayasna (Zoroastrianism)' describes their meditation on Death which is interesting. Meditation in Sufism by Swami Prabhananda is highly informative.

And there are many more instructive articles on this important process of *Sādhana*.

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BLESSED DAYS OF ASSOCIATION WITH A SAINT: BY A DEVOTED ADMIRER. Published by L. Saraswathi Devi, Botany Dept., University of Madras, Madras 600 005. 1975. Pp. ix+102. Rs. 5.

This slender volume gives intimate glimpses into the personality of Swami Madhavanandaji who served the Ramakrishna Order for many years as its General Secretary and later on as its President-General. The author of the book, now a Swami of the Ramakrishna Order, desired and obtained the privilege of being the personal attendant of Madhavanandaji. The book is a collection of his own personal reminiscences, the letters he had received from the revered Swamiji and considerable material from other sources. The writing is smooth, enjoyable and in some places deeply moving. It vividly brings out the austere simplicity of Swami Madhavanandaji, his calm detachment, devotion to duty, kindness, forbearance, affection and above all his keen sense of humour.

However, the presentation has its own limitations. It creates in the reader a desire to know more about the great soul whom the author served during the years 1945-1952. The great Swamiji's wisdom and ability in administering the two institutions, Ramakrishna Order and Ramakrishna Mission, could have been discussed and illustrated. His intellectual service to the



cause of Indian philosophy by his exemplary translations of various books on Tarka, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, Advaita Vedānta and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* should have been mentioned. Perhaps the 'devoted admirer' will move out of his self-centred bounds and bring out an ampler account of the great personality of Madhavanandaji Maharaj in the near future.

The reviewer shares the two regrets of the author: that he had omitted to record his long discussion with the saint on the night of 18-10-1945, and that he had resolved to leave his service, in spite of 'touching' suggestions to the contrary, in March 1952. However, whatever has been presented in this book will not fail to inspire the reader.

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**THE DIVINE GRACE :** BY SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004. 1980. Pp. 84. Rs. 5.

In this lecture, delivered in Perth, Swami Ranganathanandaji covers a large ground relating to the growth of the human personality towards God : psychology, mysticism, the role of science, religious traditions of varying persuasions and, of course, the important question of effort vs. Grace. He rightly says that the conflict between the role of personal effort and Divine Grace is solely a mental conundrum and the moment one enters into the realm of experience the problem is no longer there. One then comes to realize that the effort itself is a result of the action of Grace and, in a sense, the culmination in Grace is the fruit of a long, sustained endeavour—seen and unseen..

Swamiji marks three clear stages in the progression of the seeker's spiritual evolution: effort, surrender, Grace. The effort consists in denuding oneself of all elements of animality, crudities of primitive man, thinning of the ego and the cultivation of godly qualities like purity, aspiration, devotion. When this movement reaches a certain stage of self-awareness, there is a strong impulsion from within to surrender. This surrender, he points out, does not mean annihilation of one's spirit but a self-giving to one's own higher Self which means, in effect, enhancing one's personality in terms of its higher values. As one surrenders more and more, the Divine Grace takes over the effort, even the

movement of surrender, and crowns the *sādhana* with its ultimate fruit. He cites from scriptures and from modern spiritual writings to illustrate how the final step is always taken by the Self: 'to him whom it chooses the Self bares its body' (*Katha Upaniṣad*).

Swamiji warns that the path is not easy. He makes a much-needed point in declaring that one must fulfil all *dharma*s before one can be in a position to give up all the *dharma*s to the Lord (p. 19).

The operations of Grace may well seem irrational, but they have a logic of their own. If there are cases of apparent 'sinners' becoming recipients of Grace, it only means that Grace does not act according to the requirements laid down by our little reason. There is a higher Reason and that can be fathomed only by going deeper than the surface which is all that the empirical mind can see.

He points out that the action of Grace is admitted in all traditions, personalistic as well as the impersonalistic; the terms may differ but the fact of a Higher Will intervening and leading man onwards cannot be missed. He analyses the limitations of logic and reasoning intellect and underlines the action of Intuition—an agent of Grace—in the lives of scientists. He emphasizes that this Intuition is not to be found in the subconscious or the unconscious, but on the higher levels of the mind, the Superconscious.

He concludes that even the turn to spiritual life is due to some action of Grace. He narrates the instance of Blaise Pascal, the mathematician-mystic of the seventeenth century, who felt the Lord speaking to him: 'I love thee more ardently than thou lovest thine abominations. Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou didst not possess Me' (pp. 77-78).

The exposition is replete with telling anecdotes from the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The index adds to the value of the book.

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**RELIGION, MAN, AND SOCIETY :** SELECTIONS FROM THE SPEECHES AND WRITINGS OF DR. C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR. Published by the C. P. R. Aiyar Foundation, Madras 600 018. Centenary Publication, 1979. Pp. 181. Rs. 25.

Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar's was a versatile and well-stocked, learned mind with vast administrative experience. He was also a percep-



tive thinker, an able statesman, and a dynamic person with active interest in human affairs. He had wide public contacts with eminent personalities and a large number of institutions devoted to socio-economic, political, educational, and religio-cultural purposes as the Dewan of Travancore State. His services to the country and society have been considerable in both the practical and literary fields. The C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, Madras, and other publishers have already brought out some of his writings and speeches in book form. The present volume is a selection from his speeches and writings bearing upon religion, man, and society, published in commemoration of Dr. Aiyar's birth centenary (November 1979). Some of the selections are contributions to books and journals, some are prefaces and reviews, and some are addresses delivered at functions in different institutions and on other occasions.

The volume contains writings and speeches on forty-two topics in 181 large-size pages. Naturally one can expect most of them to be brief and concise. But the perspective in which they are dealt is wide, liberal, and historical where necessary, and the finger is laid on the essentials with insight and understanding, and one comes across brilliant flashes of thought. Dr. Aiyar brings to bear his vast and wide learning in expounding the ideas and refers to eminent authorities from the East and the West. The language is crisp and direct, and one is saved from much unnecessary verbiage. He has an interesting and readable style of his own.

The volume begins well with 'One Thread of Unity' which runs through the world religions, from the ancient to modern times. The next traces the 'Evolution of National Culture' of India. Some ten topics deal with Hinduism in its various facets and India's cultural heritage, where the important features and universal aspects of Indian religion and culture are succinctly delineated. 'India and Religion' begins by saying, 'To a philosophy and a system, so all-embracing as the Indian, the actual form under which the Deity is contemplated matters little. The time, the occasion, the needs of the soul and the special evolution of personality—each of these—calls forth a prayer to Siva or Vishnu or the Devi, or other aspect of the Ultimate. Each soul, each mood of that soul, each moment of the life of that soul, may need a different solace and a different message' (p. 10). He points out: 'Hinduism may well be conceived as a reconciliation of bodily regimen with mental discipline and spiritual evolution, designed to produce an

intrinsic and essential harmony within the microcosm of human personality, whose objective is to reach and be absorbed in the macrocosm which is the Brahman or the Oversoul' (p. 11). He remarks 'I firmly believe that the world needs education, not in the outer manifestations but in the inner significance of the Hindu ideals. Such an education must comprise the active cultivation of Abhaya or freedom from fear and not the acceptance of any particular creed or rite' (p. 11).

The article on 'Puranas, an Epitome of Indian Culture' is a lucid and enlightening presentation, in contrast to the puerile ideas held by some people about them. The article on 'Monasticism—A New Orientation', in the light of the life and work of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, is illuminating and is relevant to the present times. 'The Legend and the Message' deals with the life and teachings of Sri Krishna, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Muhammad, and points to their great contribution to the uplift of mankind. Dealing with the 'Fundamentals of Hindu Faith', which accepts all religions as different but valid paths to the One God or Infinite Reality, and which expects everyone to progress along his own path and deepen his spiritual life, the author gives his very cogent views on conversion and reconversion from one religion to another (pp. 25-27), which are particularly germane to the present situation in the world in general and India in particular, where religion is viewed from the point of numbers, and is turned into an instrument to gain economic and political advantages rather than for deepening spiritual life.

There are also articles on 'Buddhism in India'; 'The Greatness of Islam'; 'The Sikh Gurus'; 'Li (of China) and Dharma'; some great personalities; 'Y.M.C.A. and the Gospel of Service'; 'The Salvation Army'; and reviews of some religio-philosophical works. There are also some articles of general interest to all mankind—like, 'The Meaning of Existence'; 'The Concept of One World'; 'Humanitarianism'; 'Social Security Schemes'; 'India and International Fellowship'; 'The Clash of Colour'; 'Religious Hospitality'; and other articles of great interest.

This is a very useful publication which enlightens the reader and widens his horizons of thought and culture. It can help in the cause of national emotional integration and contribute towards the evolution of a composite human culture.

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**SPIRIT OF HIMALAYA :** BY SWAMI AMAR JYOTI. Published by Truth Consciousness Inc., 3403 Sweetwater Drive, Tuscon, Arizona. (Also, Jyoti Ashram, 87-91 Lulla Nagar, Pune 411 001.) 1979. Pp. 123. \$ 7.95, and for India. Rs. 45.

Spiritual quest is a perennial feature of human life. This quest has led man to contemplation in solitude, to yogic Sadhana, to the awakening of the Kundalini and the like. It is the quest for self-realization (*ātmānubhūti*). Beginning with the Vedas down to the present, different ways have been shown by sages. Swami Amar Jyoti presents in this work the same quest, but in the form of a story. It is the story of a truth seeker who is called here Satyakama ('one who yearns for Truth'). The name is taken from the Upanishadic Satyakama Jabala. The Himalaya is the symbol of Eternal Wisdom, as Sister Nivedita expounded long ago. It is symbolic of Mother Nature, of the oneness of Shiva and Shakti. The author employs Himalaya and the pilgrimage thereto to 'unfold the spirit of Man in accordance with the Eternal Cosmic Reality.' The story is impressive. Satyakama passes through various experiences in life until at last he attains spiritual maturity, becomes an illumined sage and dedicates himself to the sacred mission of bringing spiritual peace to mankind. Powerful truths are communicated here as the author actualizes

the spirit. The book is full of impressive aphoristic statements.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GURUDEV R. D. RANADE :** BY V. C. KELKAR. Published by IPQ Publications, University of Poona, Poona. 1980. Pp. 74. Rs. 12. (Copies can also be had directly from the Author: V. C. Kelkar, 855 Khan-Bhag, Sangli 416 416, Maharashtra.)

The late Dr. R. D. Ranade was not only a distinguished professor of philosophy, but a devoted student and Sadhaka of mystic experience. His works on Kannada, Maharashtra, and Hindi mystics are valuable possessions. In the present book Mr. V. C. Kelkar has made a judicious selection of some important passages from Prof. Ranade's works to interpret, explain and elaborate some of the mystic experiences and insights of the Professor. The result is a spiritual autobiography, a map of the inner life of that philosopher-mystic. As Prof. Ranade remarks, to Kant's critiques we have to add a critique of intuition so that there can be a complete philosophy. The present work exemplifies this principle. This book is of value to all the students of mysticism. The emphasis on *nāma-japa* is of great interest.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVA PRATISHTHAN, CALCUTTA

#### REPORT FOR APRIL 1979 TO MARCH 1980

Begun in 1932 as a small antenatal and post-natal clinic with domiciliary maternity service and known then as the Ramakrishna Mission Shishumangal Pratishthan, the Seva Pratishthan is now a mammoth complex serving the public through the following four wings.

**General Hospital :** The hospital's bed-strength is 535, and it has the following departments : Medicine, General Surgery, Obstetrics, Gynaecology, Paediatric Medicine, Paediatric Surgery, Orthopaedics, Urology, Ophthalmology, ENT Surgery, Dentistry and Dermatology. There are special clinics for Anaesthesiology, Heart, Diabetes, Neurology, Psychiatry, Hearing and Speech

Therapy, Physiotherapy, Family Welfare, Immunization, and Well Baby. The special needs of the departments are met by the departments of Radiology and Radiotherapy, Blood Bank, Pathology, Biochemistry, Human Genetics and Anaesthesiology. All the departments are well-equipped.

The total number of patients treated in the different departments of the hospital during the year was: indoor, 17,502 (excluding 5,786 live births); outdoor, 1,41,997 (new) and 1,79,350 (old); operations, 3,38,849 outdoor and 7,315 indoor. In the outdoor, all patients were given free consultation facilities and a large number also got free treatment. In the indoor, free and partly free treatment was given to 27% and 21% of the cases respectively.

**School of Nursing :** This institution has two



courses. The General Nursing-cum-Midwifery Course lasts for three years and six months. Each student receives a stipend. After a course of three months, an examination is held and successful candidates take part in an impressive ceremony at which they take vows composed in Sanskrit of lifelong dedicated service to the sick and suffering. The Multipurpose Health Workers' Course lasts for 18 months and is a rural-oriented course. The students in this course, who also receive stipends, are selected from various Blocks in West Bengal, and after completing the course they go back to their respective Blocks to serve under the State Government. At the end of the year 272 students were on the roll for both courses.

**Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences:** This service-oriented Institute is recognized by the University of Calcutta for postgraduate teaching and research. The Medical Council of India has recognized the Institute for the purpose of compulsory rotating internship of fresh medical graduates. Moreover, senior doctors in various departments also conduct research in different branches of medical science and the results are published in the Institute's half-yearly journal. Sixteen diploma students were on the roll during the year and 9 doctors were doing their dissertations for postgraduate degrees.

**Community Health Service:** As community health training is included in the Nurses' Training Course, two areas, one urban and the other rural, were selected for training of nursing students. The students visited all the houses in the two selected areas, collected necessary data and advised the people on their health and medical problems. The people of these areas (1,724 urban and 3,069 rural) got free immunization, hospital facilities and domiciliary treatment, while the mothers were given antenatal and postnatal care.

**Development Scheme:** To meet the increasing demands of the public and to render more efficient service to the patients, it is urgently necessary to undertake the following additional construction work: (1) a multistorey building for the Vivek-

ananda Institute of Medical Sciences; (2) a paediatric hospital of 150 beds; (3) an emergency ward of 20 beds; (4) a post-operative ward of 10 beds; (5) an isolation ward of 10 beds; (6) a plastic surgery-cum-burn unit of 15 beds; (7) a physiotherapy department; and (8) a building for the school of nursing. The entire project is expected to cost nearly 4 crores of rupees.

**Donations:** The generous public is requested to donate liberally for the following needs: (1) Endowment for maintaining a bed throughout the year, for six months in the year, or for three months in the year: Rs. 1,20,000.00, Rs. 60,000, and Rs. 30,000 respectively. (2) Any item mentioned under 'Development Scheme' above.

Cheques may be drawn in favour of 'Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan'; for the Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences, cheques should be drawn in favour of 'Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, A/c V.I.M.S.' All donations may be sent to: The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, 99 Sarat Bose Road, Calcutta 700 026.

## RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

### 1978 Flood Rehabilitation Programme in West Bengal

Unprecedented floods of 1978 razed Bali Krishnabhamini Balika Vidyalaya (High School) to the ground, rendering its site also insecure.

The School Committee has now purchased beautiful plot of land on a higher level for the rebuilding of this school.

The Ramakrishna Mission has agreed to build the Girls' School on the new site out of its funds donated by the generous public. As decided by all, the School will henceforth be known as Saradamani Balika Vidyalaya.

Prof. Partha De, Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Government of West Bengal, laid the Foundation Stone for this Girls' School on Sunday, the 17th May, 1981 at village Dighra, Arambagh, Hooghly.

## LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

### *Needed : A National Wage Policy*

An ordinary plumber or mechanic in the U.S.A. or in some of the European countries can earn enough to own his own flat, car, TV set and even to go sight-seeing to Italy or India. The standard of living is kept high in these advanced countries by keeping the wages high. In India labour is cheap. The popular notion that low wages make for higher production, especially in the agricultural sector, is not correct. If the purchasing power of the people does not increase in proportion to increase in production, it will lead to serious economic disorders and social disparities. This is what is happening in this country.

Fortunately, there is an increasing awareness of this truth in Government and private forums. Labour being a State problem, the Central Government cannot take decisions about it without consulting State Governments. For this reason the International Labour Organization (ILO) convention on the extension of minimum wages to all jobs has not yet been ratified in this country. The situation was reviewed in a meeting of labour ministers at New Delhi a few months ago. As usual a committee of secretaries was formed and entrusted with the task of taking further steps in the matter.

There already exists a Minimum Wages Act. But few States have implemented it thoroughly. One cause for this is the opposition of vested interests. Another is the fear that increase in wages might lead to increase in the prices of commodities. Wage income and non-wage income are closely related, and both are price-determining and price-determined. Attempts made in the past to evolve an integrated wages-incomes-prices policy have not been successful.

A related problem is the wage differentiation—both horizontal and vertical—found in the present wage structure in the private and public sectors. Increase of wages in any one section will start a chain reaction. Another problem to be considered is the erosion of real wages caused by inflation.

All these factors only accentuate the need for a national wage policy. The conference of labour ministers suggested that the Government should enact legislation for the setting up of statutory wage boards for each major industry with a central advisory board to coordinate their functions. But without a coherent wage policy these boards will not be able to solve the basic problems. We also believe that the formulation of a national wage policy will prove effective only if it is based on a sound philosophy of work. There is at present a great need for evolving a non-Marxist philosophy of work for the masses, which incorporates in it some of the best elements of the purely economic aspects of Marxism that have gained universal credibility.

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