उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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'

त्राता नो बोधि ददृशान आपि-
रभिख्याता मडिता सोम्यानां ।
सखा पिता पितृतमः पितृणां
कर्तेमु लोकमुशते वयोधाः ।।

1. Be our Saviour. Reveal yourself as our own, protecting us and showing mercy to us. You are our Friend, Father, Fatherliest of fathers, who give freedom and strength to those who worship you with love.

Rg-Veda 4.17.17

मन्ये त्वा यज्ञियं यज्ञियानां
मन्ये त्वा च्यवनमच्युतानां ।
मन्ये त्वा सत्वनामिन्द्र केतुं
मन्ये त्वा वृषभं चर्षणीनाम् ।।

2. I regard you as the Holiest of the holy. I regard you as the Shaker of the unshaken. I regard you, O Lord, as the banner of the heroes. I regard you as the Leader of all people.

Rg-Veda 8.96.4

त्वं हि नः पिता वसो त्वं माता शतक्रतो
बभूविथ ।
अधा ते सुम्नमीमहे ।।

3. O gracious Lord, you have ever been our Father and Mother. We now pray to you for bliss.

Rg-Veda 8.98.11

अग्निं मन्ये पितरमग्निमापि-
मग्निं भ्रातरं सदमित्सखायं ।
अग्नेरनीकं बृहतः सपर्यं
दिवि शुक्रं यजतं सूर्यस्य ।।

4. I regard the Lord as my Father, my Brother and my eternal Friend. I look upon the brilliant, holy sun in the sky as the face of my Lord.

Rg-Veda 10.7.3

* Swami Vivekananda has pointed out that one of the distinguishing features of devotion in Hinduism is the absence of fear. God is not looked upon as a fearful chastiser but as one's nearest and dearest. Here are a few Vedic Mantras which illustrate this noble, loving relationship. The first three are addressed to Indra while the last one is addressed to Agni.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the basic principles involved in the conversion of meditation into direct experience.

Swami Shraddhanandaji, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and head of the Vedanta Society of Sacramento, U.S.A., points out in THE DIVINE PRESENCE the importance of feeling the divine Presence within us and in everything around us, and how this can be made a part of our everyday life. A mature product of years of experience and illumined by the light of certitude, this article brings to the seeker a new message of deified life.

The Vedic seers discovered the Ātman by the power of their intuition. But in the article DISCOVERY OF THE ATMAN IN THE UPANISADS Prof. Ramakrishna Rao Vetury, Professor of Applied Physics, Andhra University College of Science and Technology, Waltair, shows that an empirical method of knowing the Ātman is also traceable in the Upaniṣads.

In ARJUNA'S DILEMMA Dr. B. C. Bera, M.Sc., Ph.D., a Senior Scientific Officer (Rtd.) from Kanpur, makes some original observations on the circumstances that caused an acute moral conflict in the mind of Arjuna just before the commencement of the Mahābhārata War.

A STUDY OF SUFISM by Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee of the department of philosophy, Ramakrishna Mahavidyalaya, North Tripura, is a lucid summary of the main tenets of Islamic mysticism and a brief survey of its historical development.

UPASANA AND TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS—II

(EDITORIAL)

Memory and experience

We have described three stages in *pratīkopāsanā* or meditation on Form : *rūpa dhyāna, guṇa dhyāna* and *svarūpa dhyāna*. These are really stages in the intensification of memory. In the first stage the memory of the divine Form gets fixed in the mind. In the second stage this memory becomes a strong force which penetrates into the depths of the mind and purifies it. In the third stage the memory gets illuminated by the light of the Ātman. As a result, in this last stage the Image appears to be luminous, real and living. Nevertheless, it is still only an image, a product of the aspirant's mind, and the light which he sees is the light of his own higher Self.

He is yet to see the real Deity in all His luminous splendour. Does such a real Deity exist apart from the aspirant's mind? Is there an objective reality behind the divine Image he is meditating on, or is it all only a figment of his imagination? This was the problem that confronted young Sri Ramakrishna (then known as Gadadhar) when he took up the worship of Mother Kālī at Dakshineswar. He had already practised intense meditation for some months under an Amalaka tree and, after going very deep in it, could no longer remain satisfied with images. Day after day he would weep and pray : 'Mother, is it

true that thou existest, or is it all poetry? Is the Blissful Mother an imagination of poets and misguided people, or is there such a Reality?'[1] His intense aspiration finally rent the veil of ignorance and Sri Ramakrishna directly perceived the *real* Divine Mother in all Her luminous glory, an experience which remained with him all through his life. He had similar direct experience of other divinities.

It is this kind of true vision of the Deity as He really is that the Bhakta seeks to attain. As we have already shown, the spiritual path bifurcates after the awakening of the Self. The Jñāni follows the trail of his higher Self and tries to expand his consciousness more and more until he attains the infinitude of consciousness of Brahman. The Bhakta on the other hand, sacrifices Self-knowledge for the sake of God-knowledge. The Jñāni never loses his hold on the Self and does not care for the visions of gods and goddesses. He has nothing to seek or lose, and so does not suffer the pangs of separation from God. But Self-knowledge does not satisfy the Bhakta. He does not care for the subjective experience of expansion of consciousness. What he seeks is an objective experience of the Personal Deity as the embodiment of love and beauty. In order to seek his Beloved the Bhakta gives up his hold on his Self. As a result, he feels stranded and forlorn until he attains his goal.

However, a true experience of the real Deity as He really is in all His supreme glory is extremely rare, for it needs stupendous spiritual effort. When we study the lives of saints and mystics, we find that such a mighty, transcendent theophany was attained only by a few among them. The vast majority of aspirants have to remain satisfied with the feeling of divine Presence in their hearts or with mystic experiences of luminous Images at best. According to Catholic theologians the experience of God as He really is, known as *lumen gloriae*, is possible for ordinary mortals only after death. While living in this world man can attain, through spiritual practice, only intellectual visions known as *lumen sapientiae*. Says St. Paul, 'For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.'[2] Theologians of the Greek Orthodox Church hold that in spiritual experiences the soul comes into touch only with 'uncreated divine energies', the real 'essence' of God being transcendent ever remains unavailable to human experience. But according to Vedānta, the essential reality of God can be directly experienced but only very few people ever succeed in it.[3]

Meditation and realization

The important question is: how is *upāsanā* or meditation related to this true experience of the real Deity? Can intense visualization of a divine image lead to a direct realization of the true nature of the Deity? Teachers of Vedānta give different answers to this question.

According to Rāmānujācārya, *upāsanā* (meditation) and *sākṣātkāra* (realization) differ only in the vividness and intensity of experience. As *upāsanā* progresses, the Image meditated upon becomes more and more vivid and real until at last it becomes direct perception itself. Rāmānuja defines Bhakti as unbroken memory.[4] He believes

1. Swami Vivekananda, 'My Master' in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978), vol. 4, p. 167.

2. 1 Corinthians 13.12.

3. Cf. मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु . . . मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ॥
Bhagavad-Gītā 7.3

4. एवं रूपा ध्रुवानुस्मृतिरेव भक्तिशब्देनाभिधीयते ।
Śrī Bhāṣya 1.1.1

that in the advanced stages of meditation memory becomes 'equal to direct perception',[5] 'owing to the intensity of visualization'.[6]

The Ācārya's explanation of his theory, cited by Swami Vivekananda in his *Bhakti Yoga*, is as follows. 'He who is near can be seen, but he who is far can only be remembered. Nevertheless the scripture says that we have to see Him who is near as well as Him who is far, thereby indicating to us that the above kind of *remembering* is as good as *seeing*. This remembrance when exalted assumes the same form as seeing.... Worship is constant remembering as may be seen from the essential texts of scriptures. Knowing, which is the same as repeated worship, has been described as constant remembering.... Thus memory, which has attained to the height of what is as good as direct perception, is spoken of in the Śruti as a means of liberation."[7]

What does Madhvācārya, the great founder of the Dvaita system of Vedānta, say about this point? He completely rejects Rāmānuja's theory that realization is only a continuation of meditative remembrance. Madhvācārya holds that (1) the image visualized by the meditator is only his own mental construct; (2) it is only mediate knowledge; and (3) the actual nature of Brahman which is known only through immediate perception (*aparokṣa jñāna*) is something new and different from all that the meditator had imagined.

The Ācārya's contention is based on his two philosophical presuppositions. First, the attributes of Brahman (by Brahman he means the personal God) are transcendental (*alaukika*) and so can neither be seen by the ordinary eye nor known by the ordinary mind, just as the bliss of Brahman is vastly different from ordinary wordly pleasures.[8] But out of His own grace and by virtue of His mysterious divine power (*acintyādbhuta śakti*) He reveals Himself to a few highly qualified aspirants. Second, Brahman alone is the sole Reality; all beings, including souls (*cetana*) and non-living matter (*acetana*), are only emanations of Brahman.

According to the school of Madhva the image that is visualized in meditation is only a reflection (*pratibimba*) of the real Deity who is the true source (*bimba*) of it. This mental image is not false but is only a poor substitute for the supreme splendour of the true Deity. Śrī Rāghavendra Svāmin, a great exponent of this school (and a celebrated saint of Karnataka) explains that the image seen in meditation is produced by the past impressions (*vāsanā*) in the mind generated by the aspirant's study of scriptures. A *vāsanā*-oriented object of meditation is imperfect and distorted. Even the most intense meditation on such an image can never be equal to the transcendental experience of the true Deity as He really is.[9] This, however, does not mean that *upāsanā* is unnecessary. The object of meditation is no doubt a *pratibimba* (reflection) but the *bimba* (original source, that is, Brahman) contained in the reflection bestows His grace on the aspirant and gives him a direct vision of the *bimba* form of the Lord. The effect is the same

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5. सा च स्मृतिः दर्शनसमानाकारा
Ibid.

6. भवति च स्मृतेः भावनाप्रकर्षात् दर्शनरूपता
Ibid.

7. *Complete Works*, vol. 3 (1973), pp. 34-35.

8. यथा जीवानन्दादेरन्यत् ब्रह्म, तथोपासाकृतादपि
Madhvācārya, *Brahmasūtra-Bhāṣya* 3.2.37

9. श्रवणमननोत्पन्ननिर्णयजन्य वासनामयस्य वस्तुनोऽविच्छिन्नमानसालोकनस्य ध्यानत्वात्, तद्विषयस्य वासनापरिणामत्वात्
(अब्रह्मत्वमिति भावः)
Rāghavendra Svāmin, *Tattvaprakāsikā-Bhavadīpa* 3.2.37

as that produced by the ritualistic worship of idols in temples.[10]

The view of the Mādhva school that the direct realization (*aparokṣa jñāna*) of God is something startlingly new and different from the image of meditation, seems to be in conformity with the widely prevalent Hindu view.[11] This, however, does not mean that the view of Rāmānuja is wrong. Clearly, what he means by *upāsanā* is something different from ordinary imagination. Moreover, his emphasis is on the meditative process rather than on its content and result.

Let ns now turn to the Advaita school of Vedānta. Śrī Śaṁkara has discussed the effects of meditation in his commentaries on the *Brahma-Sūtra* and the Upaniṣads. These effects are said to be attainment of worldly prosperity, gradual liberation, supernatural powers, etc.[12] But since the chief concern of the Advaitin is the realization of the oneness of the soul with Brahman, not much light has been thrown on the meditative processes which lead to the direct experience of the Deity. However, it is to be noted that this school does not deny the possibility of the vision of gods and goddesses. These divinities are all regarded as aspects of one supreme Deity known as the lower (*apara*) or conditioned (*saguṇa*) Brahman. But since the supreme (*para*) or unconditioned (*nirguṇa*) Brahman alone is absolutely real, the experiences resulting from meditations have been given only relative validity in the Advaita system. These experiences do not remove ignorance completely or give full knowledge of the Reality. Therefore they cannot be said to be absolutely real, though they have some pragmatic spiritual value.

The Advaita system recognizes four states of existence: the waking, the dream, the deep-sleep. and the *turīya* (fourth). In which state does the vision of the Deity occur? A separate state has not been assigned to spiritual experiences of the *saguṇa* variety. The state of higher consciousness which meditation leads to is apparently different from all the four states. We may therefore infer that meditation leads to an intermediate state which is at the junction between the waking state and the *turīya,* just as the dream state is regarded as the junction between the waking and deep-sleep states.

There is indeed some similarity between dreaming and *saguṇa* spiritual experience (as there is between deep sleep and *nirvikalpa samādhi*). The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says that in the dream state the self withdraws from the physical body and, shining in its own light, experiences luminous objects.[13] In higher mystic experience also the self separates itself from the body, shines in its own light and sees the brilliant

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10. पश्यन्ति परमं ब्रह्म चित्ते यत्प्रतिबिम्बितम् ।
ब्रह्मैव प्रतिबिम्बे यदतस्तेषां फलप्रदम् ॥
तदुपासनं च भवति प्रतिमोपासनं यथा ।
दृश्यते त्वपरोक्षेण ज्ञानेनैव परं पदम् ।
उपासना त्वापरोक्ष्यं गमयेत् तत् प्रसादतः ॥
इति ब्रह्मतर्के ।

Quoted by Madhva in his *Brahmasūtra-Bhāsya* 3.2.37

11. For a detailed discussion on meditation in the Mādhva school see B. N. K. Sharma, *The Brahma-Sutras and Their Principal Commentaries* (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, 1978), vol. 2.

12. तत्र कानिचित् ब्रह्मणः उपासनानि
अभ्युदयार्थानि, कानिचित् क्रममुक्त्यर्थानि,
कानिचित् कर्मसमृद्ध्यर्थानि । तेषां
गुणविशेषोपाधिभेदेन भेदः ।

Śrī Śamkara, Commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra* 1.1.11

13. . . . स्वेन भासा, स्वेन ज्योतिषा प्रस्वपिति,
अत्रायं पुरुषः स्वयं ज्योतिर्भवति ।

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.9

see Śamkara's illuminating commentary on this.

form of the Deity. However, there are fundamental differences between dreams and mystic experiences. First, dreams are produced from past impressions (*saṁskāra*) by the creativity of the mind. But the divinities seen in meditation exist independent of the aspirant's mind. Secondly, dreaming is an unconscious state which occurs naturally in all people. But in mystic experience there is full self-awareness and it is the result of long and strenuous practice. Thirdly, dreams do not alter the basic nature of man, whereas higher spiritual experiences bring about a great transformation in consciousness and character. In other words, spiritual experiences occur at a level of consciousness different from that at which dreams occur.

Through meditation the aspirant cuts across the first three states and reaches somewhere near the threshold of *turīya*. It is at this borderland that the direct perception of the real Deity takes place. Beyond that lies the realm of the impersonal Absolute. Sri Ramakrishna had to go beyond the blissful form of the Divine Mother in order to realize the impersonal Absolute. The Advaitins look upon meditation (*upāsanā*) only as a preparation for the attainment of the state of *turīya*.

Three factors of transformation of consciousness

We have seen that meditation begins with the visualization of a divine form in a specific centre of consciousness like the heart. As concentration deepens, the centre of consciousness awakens, making the image vivid and luminous. Gradually, the aspirant feels the divine Presence in the image more and more. Finally imagination gives way to a real vision in which the aspirant perceives the subtle spiritual essence of the actual Deity. This last stage —called *parajñāna* by Rāmānuja and *parokṣajñāna* by Madhva—is the ultimate goal of *upāsanā*. All Bhakti teachers agree that this direct vision of the Deity is possible only by His grace. Madhvācārya says that even if a person is otherwise qualified for the vision, he cannot have it unless the Lord reveals Himself out of His mercy.[14] Without His grace no amount of purification, austerity and discipline can give us a true vision of God in His personal aspect.

The importance of divine grace as the ultimate means of getting direct experience of the personal God can hardly be overemphasized. But our study here is restricted to human effort. What are the mental conditions necessary for the transformation of memory and indirect knowledge into direct experience? What are the psychological principles involved in such a change?

One is the principle of *khyāti*. According to Kapila, the legendary founder of Sāṁkhya philosophy, all knowledge is gained through mental modifications called *vṛttis*. An objective is known only when the mind takes the form of that object and the light of Puruṣa or Ātman falls on this mental modification or *vṛtti*. The Self is only pure consciousness. To know anything, a *vṛtti* must intervene between the object and the Self. In the terminology of Yoga, *vṛtti-jñāna* is known as *khyāti*. Pañcaśikha, the most ancient authority on Yoga known, says, 'The (means of) seeing is only one; *khyāti* alone is seeing.'[15] This cryptic statement

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14. परमात्मापरोक्ष्यं च तत् प्रसादादेव,
न जीवशक्त्या ।
Madhvācārya, *Brahmasūtra-Bhāṣya*,3.2.23
जीवो ज्ञानयोग्योऽपि, श्रवणादिमानपि,
न स्वशक्त्या भगवन्तं पश्यति किन्तु तत्
प्रसादादेव ।
Trivikrama Paṇḍita, *Tattvapradīpa* on *ibid.*

15. एकमेव दर्शनं, ख्यातिरेव दर्शनम् ।
Pañcasikha, quoted by Vyāsa in his commentary on Yoga-Sūtra 1.4.

contains one of the foundational principles of Sāmkhya-Yoga and Advaita psychologies.

To understand the importance of the theory of *khyāti* we must compare Hindu thought with Western thought. According to Aristotle, all knowledge comes from outside in the form of sense impressions called *species impressae* (which in the mind change into ideas called *species expressae*). St. Thomas Aquinas has made this theory of Aristotle the basis of Catholic psychology. A spiritual experience is the result of a pure *species impressa* produced in the mind by God. In normal life various other images (*phantasmata*) cloud the mind and so it does not see the divine light. If these sensuous images are removed, it will be possible to receive the pure divine impression. This is what happens in contemplation. Thus in Catholic spirituality, higher meditation (more properly called contemplation) is a process of removing all mental images and making the mind passive so that God's Image may be 'infused' into it.

The Yoga-Vedānta theory of meditation is different. According to it all knowledge originates in the Ātman or the Self which is like a searchlight, but a *vṛtti* is necessary to reflect this light. Even to know God, a *vṛtti* is necessary.[16] The ordinary gross mind can take the form of only ordinary gross objects. It cannot take the forms of gods and goddesses whose bodies are made of highly *sāttvik* subtle elements. For this the higher intuitive mind known as *buddhi* or *dhī* is necessary. We often think that we do not see the Deity because He is sitting somewhere else and, if only He came and stood before us, we would see Him. Arjuna perhaps had some such notion when he asked Kṛṣṇa, 'O Lord of Yogins, if you think it would be possible for me to see your immutable form, then please reveal it to me.' The Lord then told him, 'You cannot see Me with these physical eyes of yours. But I give you the divine eye. Now behold My divine yoga.'[17]

Here by 'divine eye' is meant the *buddhi*, the intuitive faculty, lying dormant in ordinary people. It has to be opened or awakened through purification of mind and intense aspiration. In order to have a true vision of God the right type of *buddhi-vṛtti* has to be awakened. For this the aspirant has to dive into the deeper layers of his mind and discover very subtle and pure *vṛttis*. When the right type of *vṛtti* is awakened, it reveals the subtle spiritual essence of the Deity as He really is. Swami Vivekananda says, 'The higher the being you want to get, the harder is the practice.'[18] Higher means more *sāttvik*. To realize more *sāttvik* gods and goddesses it is necessary to awaken purer and subtler *vṛttis*. This necessitates more purification and deeper concentration which means more time and effort.

The second principle involved in the transformation of meditation into direct perception is the *yathā kratu* principle. A person's future is shaped by what he wills. Every wish, whim and fancy may not get fulfilled. But beneath all these desires there is the will of man known as *kratu*, *manyu*, etc. in the Vedas. It is the basic motive, urge or aspiration behind all human activities. The will may be regarded as the dynamic, creative aspect of the self, the real soul-force. In the average person the will is bound and impure, being enslaved by desires and instincts, and lacks

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The original teachings of Kapila are lost. His disciple was Asuri whose disciple was Pañcasikha. A few fragments of Pañcasikha's aphoristic statements have been preserved in Vyāsa's commentary on the *Yoga-Sūtra* of Patañjali.

16. Some Vedānta teachers like Rāmānuja and Madhva deny this.

17. *Gītā* 11.4, 8.

18. *Complete Works*, vol. 1 (1977), p. 265.

power. But the pure will, detached from lower entanglements, has great power. When the purified will is fixed on any goal, that goal will be attained sooner or later. This is known as the *yathā kratu* principle. There are a number of passages in Hindu scriptures where this theory is enunciated or exemplified.

In a famous passage in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* containing the dictum *sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ brahma* ('All this is verily Brahman'), the aspirant is asked to meditate on Brahman as the immutable substratum of this ever-changing universe. How to do this? The Upaniṣad says, 'By fixing your will (*kratu*). A person is what he wills. What he wills here, he will attain in the next world.'[19] Explaining this, Prof. Hiriyanna remarks, 'According to the *yathā kratu nyāya* admitted by all Vedāntins alike, a person who knows the form of a deity only mediately can render that knowledge immediate through continued meditation upon it. Such meditation, it is also believed, when persevered in till the end of life, will result in a union of the *upāsaka* with the deity in question.'[20]

Meditation becomes effective only when it is supported by a proper *kratu*. Otherwise meditation becomes a futile exercise often ending up in sleep. Will power is necessary even for work, prayer, worship, etc. But it is during meditation that the will finally gets detached from all emotions and images, and is unified and concentrated. The will then becomes like a power drill cutting through veils of ignorance and penetrating into the luminous realm of the Spirit. It is such a powerful will that transforms *upāsanā* into direct supersensuous perception.

The third principle involved in this transformation of consciousness is the power of words. Words have two kinds of power. One is the power to convey meaning. All words are intended to convey some meaning or other. The words of the scriptures give us knowledge of spiritual truths. The second power of words is a mystic potency to induce certain changes in consciousness. All words do not have this potency. Only special words or verbal formulas called *mantras* have it. Constant repetition of such *mantras* gradually awakens the *buddhi* and reveals one's Chosen Deity. Says Patañjali, 'By the repetition of the *mantra* comes the vision of the *iṣṭa devatā*.'[21]

(*Concluded*)

19. अथ खलु क्रतुमयः पुरुषो यथाक्रतुरस्मिँल्लोके पुरुषो भवति तथेतः प्रेत्य भवति, स क्रतुं कुर्वीत॥
Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.14.1

20. M. Hiriyanna, *Indian Philosophical Studies* (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishing House, 1972), Part 2, p. 24.

21. स्वाध्यायाद्-इष्टदेवता संप्रयोगः।
Patañjali, *Yoga-Sūtra* 2.44

THE DIVINE PRESENCE

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

The goal of spiritual life is to experience God and to have the divine vision in all that we encounter. The experience must come to us some day in which we feel the presence of God in the heavens, in the air, in the oceans, in the mountains, in the rivers, in the flowers, in all living beings, including ourselves. We must be able to feel the presence of God in our bodies, in our minds, in our egos and in all phenomena.

The Vedāntic scriptures tell us that this is possible. When man lives in ignorance, there is a wall which hides God from him. This wall has to be broken, bit by bit, but we should keep our aim pure. When we have come to spiritual life, we need not calculate how far we have progressed. We should go on practising the means by which the ultimate goal can be reached and then, if we are earnest and if we do not lose patience, surely by God's grace we shall be able to feel the Divine Presence in all situations. Then into our lives will come the truth, the peace, the knowledge and the joy that we are seeking.

To experience the Divine Presence, through and through, is a difficult task entailing many years, perhaps many lives, but we must not give up hope. If we believe in the theory of reincarnation, we know we have lived many past lives in ignorance. Therefore, what does it matter if three or four more lives are required? It is said that if we are sincere we need not have long to wait. God-realization can come by divine grace in *this* life. So, with hope, courage and determination we should increase our spiritual efforts.

Great seers tell us that all we see and experience is God—*saccidānanda*, the immortal Reality, the light of pure Consciousness, the infinite Bliss. Most of us, however, cannot see God in this way. This material universe, this ever-changing world, full of contradictions and sufferings, is to us so different from God. But spiritual experience is a question of the growth of the mind. When the mind is freed from desires and passions, we can understand what Divine Presence is. We begin to see that all is God—God who is looking through all eyes, manipulating all egos, listening through all ears, thinking through all minds and residing in all hearts. This is the experience of the Divine Presence. It does not evolve in one day, but we must not lose faith in the possibility of this vision. We have to begin from the place where we are standing.

In the beginning God to us is ultra-cosmic. We think that He is the Creator and Ruler, abiding in some distant heaven, and by remote control He is managing everything. That position in philosophy is called *dualism*. Pursuing such a philosophy we do not care to inquire so much into the nature of God. We take for granted that God is eternal, all powerful, all compassionate, omniscient. In this dualistic thinking the devotee feels, 'God is different from me; I am bound, small, limited, mortal, and the world is ever changing. But God is immortal, omniscient, free. He exists and I am praying to Him to fulfil my life, to grant me His vision.' In this way, with a dualistic attitude, we can carry on our prayers and meditations. If we persist, God will gradually begin to reveal His higher nature. He will draw closer and closer and no longer seem a distant ultra-cosmic God. He will become an immanent God.

Various views of the immanent God are described in Vedāntic scriptures. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says :

> That which is the subtle Essence—in It all that exists has its Self. That is the truth. That is the Supreme Self.[1]

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says :

> He created all this—whatever there is. Having created all this, He entered into everything.[2]

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1. स य एषोऽणिमैतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं
तत् सत्यं स आत्मा . . .
Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.8.7

2. इदं सर्वमसृजत । यदिदं किंच ।
तत् सृष्ट्वा । तदेवानुप्राविशत् ।
Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.6.1

The immanent God is thus present in every part of creation. God is not merely in one's own body but in all human bodies, in the plants, in the animals and also in inanimate objects. Nature is not separate from Him. Such a position in Indian philosophy is called *qualified monism.* The one is qualified by the many; everything exists in God and is filled with God. This contemplation brings God nearer to us and our awareness of the Divine Presence is intensified.

Normally we look upon a mountain as a material mass of stone; this is the usual, ignorant outlook. Now we must bring a spiritual element into our contemplation: True, the outer appearance is a material mountain, but in the core of the mountain there is God. God in the language of the Upanisads is *sat,* infinite Reality. When the mountain is felt to be something actually existing, that existence is God. In all that exists, the principle of existence is God. If we break the mountain into a million parts, each part will still exist; if we break the mountain into atoms, each atom will still have to exist. Not a single fragment can escape the presence of God as *sat,* existence. The meditator can include in this contemplation not only the mountain but any other object in nature. Any material object is 'material' on the surface, but metaphysically it is permeated through and through by God as *sat.* Thus, thinking of the mountain in the context of God as existence can throw the mind into deep meditation. The mind will grow calm and the inner reality of the mountain will become apparent, not only as existence (*sat*) but also as consciousness (*cit*), for consciousness (knowledge) is involved in all existence. All that we experience comes to us as something existing and shining as knowledge.

Then a third element has to be added, which may not be clear to us in the beginning. This is *ānanda,* joy. In everything there is the basic joy of God. Because we are ignorant, our experience of joy is selective. We find joy and blessedness only in certain persons or things, not in everything. But we must enlarge our vision. We have to know that joy or blessedness, like existence and knowledge, is inherent in everything and in every experience. The mountain is a real object but the source of that reality is God. The mountain is a piece of knowledge and that knowledge is coming from God. The mountain also is a mass of joy and that joy is coming from God. In this perspective we must look at nature. We will have to alter our mode of thinking. Normally the mind does not see God; it sees only the material form of the universe. But in meditation the spiritual seeker has to touch the core of reality. This is not a poetical fancy. These are the actual experiences of sages who have beheld God and who have felt the Divine Presence everywhere. Following their experience, as we contemplate the mountain, the ocean, the forest, the river, the sun, the moon, all that we see around us, we must try to see that God is existing there and radiating bliss, for He has entered into all these objects.

In the Upaniṣads one finds many exercises for meditation on external things: Meditate on Savitā (the sun) as Brahman.[3] Without the sun, all life would have stopped. What power, what potentialities exist in the sun! The spiritual aspirant contemplates the fact that all the brilliance, the heat, all the life-giving powers in the sun are emanating from Brahman. In the core of the sun is that spiritual reality (*saccidānanda*), which is God. Using the sun as a symbol, the aspirant meditates on God. Similarly, he

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3. आदित्यो ब्रह्मेत्यादेश:

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.19.1

can meditate on Candra (the moon): Everyone sees the moon's sweetness, its beauty, its calmness, its gentleness, but the spiritual seeker must also associate the moon with God. The devotee should try to feel that all objects in nature are emanations of Brahman; their very existence comes from God. In this way the mind prepares itself for higher and higher contemplations, and it becomes more and more ready to feel the Divine Presence.

Another meditation is on Uṣā (the morning). No matter how tired a person may be in the evening, when he awakes refreshed, he often thinks, 'Oh, what a wonderful morning!' All of us think in this fashion, but a spiritual seeker must realize that it is God who is manifested in the morning and meditate on this. He can also meditate on Sandhyā (the evening): Evening is the scene of quietness; all the turmoil of the day is gone. At that time the mind is naturally in a calm mood. The meditator should think that the evening's power of tranquillity is coming from God. In the *Ṛg-Veda* there are superb hymns dedicated to the goddess of morning and to the goddess of evening —but all gods and goddesses are nothing more than manifestations of the one universal God, Sat-cit-ānanda.

In another meditation the meditator looks inside himself. He sees within him a miniature universe; there also are mountains, rivers, deserts, for all nature has its counterpart in the human body. In these preparatory meditations the devotee may concentrate on the presence of God in his eyes or ears or heart or any other organ. Next he tries to feel the presence of God in the various modifications of his mind. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.4.1) directs us to meditate on *saṁkalpa* as Brahman. *Saṁkalpa* is that function of the mind which is continuously creating resolutions—some of which are effective, some futile. With the help of this contemplation, the mind will gain a quality of serenity and will not be disturbed by trivial resolutions. Another exercise is prescribed: Meditate on the mind as a whole as Brahman. Brahman has entered into the mind and that is why all the functions of the mind are possible. If the devotee can meditate on the mind (*manas*) as Brahman, after a time he will see that this brings a remarkable transformation in his mind. The mind will realize that it is being watched, and will comprehend that it is connected with God. As it is watched, the mind will be ashamed to play tricks; all thoughts and emotions that come will be controlled, calm and rational.

In a similar way the meditator can try to associate Brahman, the Divine Presence, with other elements of his personality. Take the case of ego. Normally we take our egos for granted—but our egos can deceive us. At one moment the ego becomes angry; the next moment it becomes sad; in another moment it is kind, and then violent. Soon it becomes a saint and a minute later is a devil. That is because we have not objectively observed our egos. We think the ego is an independent power, but this is not so. The 'I am' consciousness is really grounded in that universal Reality, God. In the Old Testament of the Bible we read that Moses asked God, 'Who are you?' He did not actually see God, but he heard God's voice. Then the voice of God answered, 'I am that I am,' which means, 'I am the Fundamental Reality; no one can describe Me.' God's 'I am' does not change, but our 'I am' is false. If someone asks, 'Who are you?' today, one of us may say, 'I am a scholar,' but tomorrow he may say, 'I am a fool.' In the morning he may say, 'I am happy,' but by evening he may declare, 'I am miserable.' Actually we are nonentities. God alone can truly say, 'I am,' because He remains eternally the same. If a spiritual seeker remembers that his own small ego is based in the

infinite reality of God, his ego will be less changeable ; it will be steady and serene. He will be able to feel the Divine Presence in his own ego.

We must try to feel God's presence in as many ways as possible. This does not come to us in one day but through practice of contemplation these ideas will become increasingly real. More and more we will be able to feel the presence of God inside and outside. Even when we are working, our minds should be tinged with the Divine Presence. The spiritual seeker should know that God is the real Doer. Our bodies and minds are His instruments. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* says :

> From whom originate all the activities of beings, by whom all this is pervaded, worshipping Him with his own duty, a man attains perfection.[4]

All actions are actually proceeding from God. In breathing, sleeping, eating and in everything, the power for each action comes from God. If the devotee remembers this as he works in the house, the office or the shop, his ego becomes quiet and he feels the presence of God.

Emotions also emanate from God. If an emotion of love for someone comes, the aspirant should feel that it is from God. The universal love of God is manifested in all our little loves for persons and things. Normally our love is tinged with selfishness, but if we can feel the Divine Presence even in our human love, it will be a means for our liberation. A mother loves her child, but if she remembers that the sweetness, the beauty and the charm of the child are coming from God, feeding and caressing the child become spiritual practices. We have many opportunities to feel the presence of God in this world, but sometimes we forget that. Often we think, 'It is *my* child, *my* child,' but if the child suddenly dies, we cry, 'Where is my child? O God, why did You take away my child?' With the practice of Divine Presence we shall not suffer. Even if the child dies, we will say, 'It is God's will. God brought me this child and made me love the child. It is all the play of God in order that I may find God.'

If we are really earnest, we must find time to realize that it is God who is operating the universe—that wherever there is power, wherever there is beauty, wherever there is bliss, it is God. 'It is He. It is He.' We must touch this reality in our contemplations, and the memory of this will prevail in all the activities of our lives. Spiritual life is a total life—a life that exists not only during the meditation but at all times. In whatever we do, God-consciousness must be there. Trying to feel the presence of God throughout the universe, knowing that God has penetrated every atom of this cosmos, brings us great strength, courage and peace.

In Vedānta the final philosophic position for experiencing the Divine Presence is *monism*, the practice of unity. At this stage we have to know that there is nothing else but God as Supreme Consciousness. In the dream state, even though there seems to be a solid or tangible universe, yet on waking we know that the seemingly real universe was mental—entirely created by the mind. Similarly, the waking world is a projection of consciousness. In the monistic vision the material world is nothing but consciousness. Space, time, matter, energy, life, mind, and all that we encounter and experience are forms of consciousness. It is all one consciousness.

At this stage the meditator will try to concentrate on the ultimate Reality as con-

(*Continued on page* 379)

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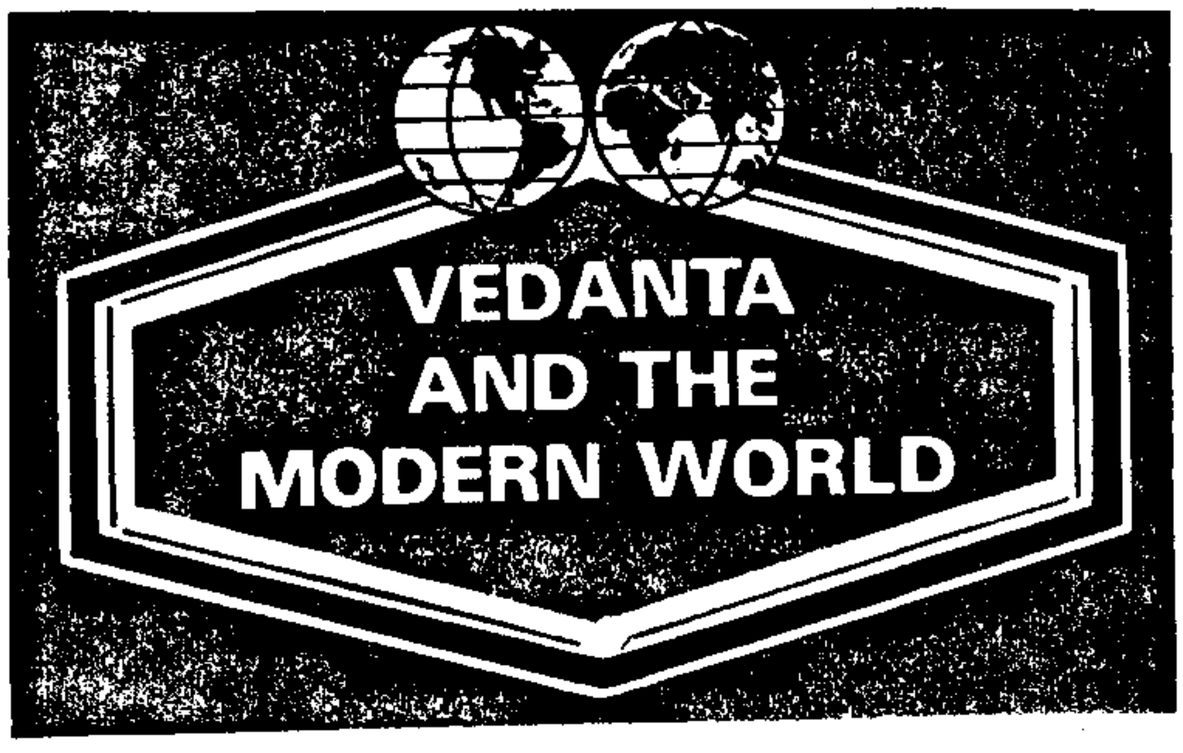
4. यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥
Bhagavad-Gītā 18.46



THE DISCOVERY OF ATMAN IN THE UPANISADS

PROF. RAMAKRISHNA RAO VETURY

Introduction

The opinion is gradually gaining ground that modern scientific thought (both physics and biology) is tending more and more towards the Upaniṣadic thought. Leading scientists like Schrödinger are extremely enthusiastic about this trend. The methods are patently different but the conclusions are intriguingly similar. Generations differ in their methods of acquiring valid knowledge. If we want to understand any ancient thought with which we are out of touch, it is necessary to examine it in terms of the more familiar current trends in thought. The process is quite similar to a translation from one language to another. The following is an effort in that direction: to analyse the Upaniṣadic thought in terms of modern science and philosophy.

In the Upaniṣadic quest for truth, we notice two efforts: (1) an understanding of the phenomenal world around man and a seeking of its basic principle, and (2) an understanding of man in all aspects and a seeking of the basic principle. The aim was to arrive at the connection between the two, and this led to the final discovery that Brahman is Ātman and Ātman is Brahman; *tat tvam asi*, 'That art thou.'[1] Bertrand Russell writes in his introduction to the *History of Western Philosophy*: 'Ever since men became capable of free speculation, their actions, in innumerable important respects, have depended upon their theory as to the *world and human life*, as to what is good and what is evil.'[2] (Italics mine.) The Upaniṣads also show the same effort.

The question is whether the final result has been arrived at by revelation or reasoning. It is generally accepted that the method followed in the Upaniṣads is philosophical enquiry. If so, what are the steps in this process of enquiry? In this article we shall discuss only the discovery of the Ātman.

Man

Understanding man involves understanding everything about him; his body, mind and faculties, that is all his activities: physical, mental and emotional. The more obvious of these being the physical, it naturally forms the first step. Similarly a number of other steps have to be taken. Whitehead states: 'Philosophy can exclude nothing. Thus it should never start from systematization. Its primary stage can be termed assemblage.'[3] It is this assemblage that we

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1. The Upaniṣadic quotations are all from *The Thirteen Principal Upanisads*, trans. Robert E. Hume (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931).

2. Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), p. 14.

3. Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 2.

find mostly in the earlier Upaniṣads like *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya*, followed by systematization. We shall try therefore to identify such assemblages.

Stage I

The first step is to identify the physical functions and the corresponding organs accounting for what is called sense perception. This is given in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.1-9) and the results can be tabulated as below :

Grahāh (Apprehenders or Organs) :	*Atigrahāh* (Over-apprehenders or functions or faculties) :
1. breath (nose, mouth)	*apāna* (smelling)
2. speech (mouth, tongue)	name
3. tongue	taste
4. eye	sight
5. ear	hearing
6. mind	desire
7. hands	action
8. skin	touch

With our hindsight, we might wonder whether the above analysis is necessary. The items look self-evident. But it is quite necessary. Even now in young children's books we find lessons like: 'We see with our eyes, we hear with our ears,' and so on. The child is not aware of its sense-organs though these carry on their functions. A philosopher facing a new problem is almost like a child: only he is self-tutored. He has to assemble his experiences: the simplest to start with. As Whitehead remarks: 'The first chapter in philosophic approach should consist in a free examination of some ultimate notions, as they occur naturally in daily life.'[4] It is the same in science as well. Observational data are first collected before interrelations are sought. Earnest Nagel writes : 'Biology also analyses organisms as structures of interrelated parts and seeks to discover what each part contributes to the maintenance of the organism as a whole.'[5]

The same correlation is given in *Kauṣitaki-Upaniṣad* (1.7) where four more organs are included. The additions are (1) body for pleasure and pain, (2) generative organ for delight and procreation, (3) feet for locomotion, and (4) intelligence (*prajñā*) for thoughts, understanding and desires.

The faculties of human beings are called the vital breaths (*prāṇa*). They account for all human activity from birth to death. Most of them are common with animal life; like breath, ear, etc. The others like intelligence are probably special to man.

Stage II : Life and vital breaths

It is common knowledge that on death all the human faculties cease. It is also a simple observation that blind men, deaf men and other such, live an otherwise normal life until death. So the question arises whether all these faculties are equally essential or is there one or more among them that make for the real difference between life and death. This is the second stage in understanding human faculties in relation to life. Such an effort towards finding these interrelations with a view to arriving at the most important faculty for life is described in various stages.

In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.3.1-7) is described how the gods tried to overcome the devils by trying one faculty after another like speech, eye, ear and mind, and failed. Finally they tried with 'breath in the mouth' and succeeded. So breath must be the most important support of life. In *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* the story is repeated

4. Ibid., p. 1.

5. Earnest Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (New York : Harcourt Brace & World, 1961), p. 399.

(1.2.1-9) with slight modification and refinement. But the philosophers were not satisfied with this approach using Vedic stories for arriving at conclusions. They tried another which is more realistic and is based upon the direct observation of aged people. As a man advances in age the sharpness of each one of the faculties diminishes. His eye-sight becomes poor. He becomes hard of hearing. His mental faculties get fagged out. All this is described as 'death, appearing as weariness' in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.5.21). In spite of this, the old man is still alive. It is only when he stops breathing that he dies. Therefore it is hreath that is most important for life.

They made yet another effort to prove the supremacy of breath over other bodily functions. It is described in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (6.1.7-13), *Chāndogya* (5.1.6-12) and *Kauśitaki* (2.14 and 3.3.). The method followed is experimental, and it closely resembles the 'theoretical experiment' followed by Maxwell, a renowned physicist. This has been discussed in detail by the author elsewhere.[6] This clearly shows how rigorously the Upamiṣadic philosophers developed their thought, without rushing to conclusions.

However, all this appears self-evident. And we might ask: is all this effort necessary to prove that breath is the final deciding factor between life and death?

Again the answer is in the affirmative. Writing in 1938, Whitehead states: 'An animal body exhibits a limited domination of at least one of the component activities of expression. If the dominant activity be severed from the rest of the body, the whole coordination collapses and the animal dies.... a foot can be severed with slight damage ...; the heart is essential.'[7] He further states: 'We can shut our eyes or be permanently blind. Nonetheless we are alive. We can be deaf and yet we are alive.'[8] Right out of the Upaniṣads![9] Whitehead identified the heart as fundamental with the aid of modern science; the Upaniṣads identified breath (*prāṇa*) with their proto-science. These are self-evident facts now but Whitehead found it necessary to assemble them in a proper sequence for systematization. This is exactly what the Upaniṣads did in the above account. The progress of human thought is possible only if the realm of self-evident truths expands, subsuming more and more matter; and that is the aim of science as well as philosophy. One who has to prove the value of $(a + b)^2$ as a part of his work does not have much time for advanced work. Whitehead illustrates this point by comparing himself with Ramanujam, 'the great Indian mathematician, whose early death was a loss to science analogous to that of Galois. It was said of him that each of the first hundred integers was his personal friend. In other words, his insights of self-evidence, and his delight in such insights, were of the same character as most of us feel for the integers up to number five. Personally, I [Whitehead] cannot claim intimate friendship beyong that group....'[10] And Whitehead himself was a mathematician of no mean order. He further states: 'Succession of details of self-evidence is termed proof... The sense of completion ... arises from the self-evidence in our understanding.

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6. Prof. Ramakrishna Rao Vetury, 'Maxwell's Demon in the Upaniṣads', *Bharatiya Vidya*, vol. 34, no. 4. pp. 15-19.

7. *Modes of Thought*, pp. 24-25.

8. Ibid., p. 112.

9. See *Kausitaki Upaniṣad* 3.3.: 'One lives with speech gone, for we see the dumb; one lives with the eye gone, for we see the blind; one lives with the ear gone, for we see the deaf; one lives with mind gone, for we see the childish; one lives with the arms cut off; one lives with the legs cut off, for thus we see. But now it is the breathing spirit ... that seizes hold of and animates this body.'

10. *Modes of Thought*, p. 47.

In fact, self-evidence is understanding.' (Italics mine.) The Upaniṣads strenuously try to make things self-evident. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya* are replete with statements like 'one who knows this, gains this and this.' Here the emphasis on knowing arises out of the self-confidence of philosophers in their capacity to make a proposition self-evident to the audience.

In building the house of knowledge, as more of the bricks take on a completed form (self-evidence) the more easily the system is completed. If today we ask 'Is all this necessary?', it is because we have more self-evident things at our disposal than our ancestors had, and we have tucked them away under the category of common sense.

Stage III

The above two stages in the identification of the most important function and organ of the body that draws a line between life and death, are almost elementary physiology in modern terms. Even breath (*prāṇa*) here only means breathing. Now there are other observations that have to be accounted for. The question is: how is the function related to an organ? Does the presence of an organ necessarily mean it is functioning? The experience is to the contrary. The deaf man has an ear but no hearing. An old man may lose the eye-sight but not the eye itself. A paralytic man cannot move his legs though he has them. How do we explain this nonfunctioning of organs? To answer this question the Upaniṣadic philosophers had to study man in relation to various states of his existence.

Some of these states of existence are (1) the absentmindedness of a preoccupied man, (2) sleep, (3) fasting.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.5.3) says: 'People say, "My mind was elsewhere, I did not see. My mind was elsewhere, I did not hear." It is with the mind, truly, that one sees. It is with the mind that one hears. Desire, imagination, doubt, faith, lack of faith, steadfastness, lack of steadfastness, shame, fear—all this is truly mind. Therefore, even if one is touched on his back, he discerns it with the mind.'

Now this is a most important development in the analysis of man. Of all the organs considered earlier the mind is the only intangible one. We cannot cut it from a human body, pick it up and say 'this is mind', as we do with a leg or an eye. It represents the psychological side of human life. Desire, imagination, faith, etc., are not tangible, concrete things but are an integral part of human life and experience. This is not all. Apart from this, the mind seems to have a control over the simple physiological functions like seeing and hearing. These are matters of direct observation and experience. So the conclusion is legitimate: that all simple biological functions are considerably controlled by a non-organ like the mind. An organ is essential for a function no doubt, but it does not guarantee the function. It is the mind that coordinates all the bodily functions into a proper system. The importance of this point consists in this: in their attempt to understand man the philosophers are thrown into the area of the intangible, and that too on the basis of very simple observations in day-to-day life.

The fact seems to be that all human faculties are tied up with mind. It appears to be the hearer of hearing, the seer of seeing, the speaker of speech, etc. (Sir Charles Sherrington, a famous biologist, uses similar language.) The individual faculty requires some vague activating agency—let us call it the energy principle—and it is in coordination with mind that its full function is obtained, not by itself. Now mind itself needs activation. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.9.1) states: '... food (*anna*) assuredly is

more than strength (*bala*). Therefore, if one should not eat for ten days, even though he might live, yet verily he becomes a non-seer, a non-hearer, a non-thinker, a non-perceiver, a non-doer and a non-understander. But on the entrance of food he becomes a seer, hearer, thinker, perceiver, doer and understander.' Food is the supplier of strength (*bala*) or what we can call energy. The above list includes mental activities like thinking and understanding, and so even the mental activities require energy. This conclusion follows from a study of fasting people who progressively deteriorate in their faculties. Modern science agrees with this. In biology, also, some believe that the coordinated, adaptive behaviour of living organisms can be explained only by assuming a special vitalist agent.[11] So at this stage what we find is the energy principle behind all human faculties.

Let us suppose that the total energy principle in man is 100 units. This can be distributed as follows between the various faculties in a normal man :

Breath	Eye	Ear	Speech	Mind	Total of Man
5	+10	+10	+15	+60	=100 units

Only typical faculties are shown here. The numbers are arbitrarily but illustratively chosen. The mind has many functions as shown earlier. Besides, it controls the functions of the other faculties: hence the large number. A perfect functioning of any faculty is possible only when it coordinates with the mind. The mind is capable of withdrawing some units from others so that while the mind is preoccupied, the other functions suffer. We shall call the total energy the *élan vital*.[12]

This *élan vital* must be of one single nature as an energy principle. (Modern science also says all forms of energy like heat, light, etc. are the same). Otherwise it cannot be distributed among the various faculties from which mind can commandeer some or all. Once it is considered different it becomes impossible to explain the observational data on absentminded actions. It is also necessary that it should be all-pervasive in the framework of the human body to allow for its free travel and the simultaneous functioning of faculties: somewhat like the 'fields' in modern science. It must also be the quintessence of man in his totality ; otherwise one has to look for a deeper principle and the process becomes endless. It must be the only thing in man that survives him after being released from the body after breath ceases or heart stops, because energy cannot be destroyed: it can only disappear from a given location. As a principle of energy it cannot have any material shape, size, colour or other attributes. Electrical energy does not have any such attributes. It cannot be identified with any one aspect of man because it includes all. (Modern biology has already established the existence of minute electric potentials in the brain and the neural transmission of electric impulses.)

Sleep and dreams

Sleep is another state of human existence studied for understanding man. Interestingly, we find even now a good amount of work is going on in psychology departments all over the world in trying to understand sleep and dreams.

In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (2.1.15-20) King Ajātaśatru explains the experience of sleep to *Dṛptabālāki Gārgya*. He demon-

11. Nagel, *Structure of Science*, p. 401.

12. I prefer to borrow Bergson's *élan vital* to describe this total energy principle, or life-force. It is sufficiently vague to describe the not-so-obvious energy principle and yet is suggestive enough to indicate a vital force. The word *prāṇa* in the Upaniṣads and its translation 'breath' are somewhat confusing as they are variously used in the texts.

strates how a sleeping man does not easily wake up until he is shaken. He explains how all the *prāṇa* of the senses is gathered into a space in the heart of the man. In that condition all the man's senses, voice, mind and breath are restrained. 'When that person restrains the senses, that person is said to be asleep.' He makes a distinction between sleep and sound sleep. In the latter condition the vital breaths all take rest in the pericardium travelling through 72,000 channels (nerves called *hita*) from the heart.[13] The description is picturesque ; the large number of channels mentioned is indicative of the extensive distribution system. This confirms only that the Upaniṣadic philosophers even in speculation never left the solid ground of observation and devised suitable steps logically connecting the operations visualized. The idea of these channels for energy flow is not as absurd as it looks to us now. There is a similar situation in modern physics. In nineteenth-century physics, ether was postulated to provide the necessary material medium for propagation of energy by waves. Philosophically, this is attributed to the extreme preoccupation of science with matter at that time. Ether was given fantastic properties. After Michelson-Morley's work, ether has been thrown out of the framework of modern science, and physics is not a loser for it: the loser is the philosophy of scientific materialism. By analogy, we can say that Ajātaśatru was constrained by his observations to postulate the channels for the movement of the vital energies. It only proves the rational approach of the Upaniṣads.

To return to sleep : Ajātaśatru sums up that all these vital energies have a common source (the Real), and that they 'verily are the real'.

The other discussion on sleep and dreams deals with the explanations describing the postulate of soul, and will be taken up later.

Death is described (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4.4.1-2) as withdrawal of all vital breaths progressively into the heart, and a final escape of the *élan vital* from the physical body. This progressive gathering in the heart as a first step is aptly described as a merging into one. 'He is becoming one ; he does not see. He is becoming one ; he does not hear,' etc. for all faculties. The differentiated many are first brought together into a central spot to regroup into a single totality from which the differentiated faculties originated. Finally the 'one' (*élan vital*) leaves the concrete body : and that is death of the mortal body. The *élan vital* itself is immortal.

Ātman

Starting from the physical body, its organs and its functions, the quintessence of man has been shown to be an energy principle. Modern science has no quarrel with this. 'Consciousness' is being forced on modern scientific thought, both in physics and in biology. J. B. S. Haldane writes:

> But to my mind the teaching of science is very emphatic that such a great being may be a fact as the individual consciousness.... And it seems to me that everywhere ethical experience testifies to a super individual reality of some kind.[14]

It is this single principle of energy, the *élan vital*, that can be called the Ātman, or the soul of man. It is this principle that

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13. In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.3.17 the *hita* are described as being so fine as a hair subdivided a thousandfold. The translation of *hita* as nerves is probably wrong. Channels is a more correct translation. There is no evidence of knowledge about brain and the nervous system in the Upaniṣads. They thought intellect was located in the heart. At best the *hita* can be identified with blood vessels.

14. J. B. S. Haldane, *Inequality of Man and Other Essays* (London : Chatto & Windus, 1932), p. 114.

elicits the answer '*neti, neti*' in trying to identify it with any single human faculty, because it includes all. The Upaniṣads do not give any divine attributes to this Ātman. They only state that it is immortal, all-pervasive in the living human body like salt in a salt solution, and cannot be identified with any known physical faculty because it is the quintessence of all. We can call the above account the theory of man.

Usually any systematic theory based on experience is tested by further experience. This is done in the case of the human soul by studies on sleep and dreams of men. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.9) mentions three planes of existence for the soul. One is the existence in this world in a human body, and the other is existence in the other world. An intermediary third state is sleep. In sleep the soul is said to exist in both the worlds, through dreams, where he sees both the evils of this world and the joys of the other world. In dreams he creates for himself all joys by himself. Says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.13) : 'In the state of sleep the effulgent entity [the Ātman] going aloft and low, makes many forms for himself: now, as it were, enjoying pleasure with women, now, as it were, laughing, and even beholding fearful sights.' This is a common experience. The soul keeps travelling between the waking and sleeping conditions, gathering experience of all varieties.

In this manner the behaviour of the human soul is connected to the various conditions of human existence. At this stage, the Ātman, as the true human soul behind the mind becomes a discovery rather than a hypothesis.

(*Continued from page* 372)

sciousness and he does not need to wander here and there to discover that consciousness. He discovers it within himself. He sees the light of his own consciousness and knows that this light of consciousness is one with the Universal Consciousness (God). They are the same. Then the meditator tries to concentrate on the Universal Consciousness as his own true Self. Every experience that comes to him he at once merges into the Universal Consciousness. If a thought of the body comes, he at once merges it into the source of all thoughts—his higher Self. From the outside the body appears to be made up of many components—bones, flesh, nerves and so on—but it is all projections of his true Self. Slowly he realizes that the entire universe, including time and space, is within himself. In this way the experience of the Divine Presence comes to its culmination—in which man's true Self includes all things: the universe, the past, the present, the future, animate and inanimate objects, life, death. All these are one indefinable, indescribable unity—the unity of the universal Self.

Thus, the Divine Presence has varying degrees or levels of comprehension. We must start from where we stand and practise the Presence as much as possible, knowing, in the language of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* : 'All this is certainly God.'[5] 'All this is the true Self of man.'[6]

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5. सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.14.1

6. आत्मैवेदं सर्वम्

Ibid., 7.25.2

ARJUNA'S DILEMMA

DR. B. C. BERA

Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā, generally known as the Gītā, has been commented on by many. All the commentators, however, disagree on its exact message. It may be noted that the commentators have attached little or no importance to the first chapter of the Gītā. Some of them have not commented on it at all, while others have done so only scantily. In this respect the great Ācārya Śaṁkara is no exception.

In my search for the exact contents and message of the Gītā, I have observed that the first chapter and the first ten *ślokas* of the second chapter are in fact very significant. These fifty-seven *ślokas* contain the clue to the correct understanding of the Gītā. They introduce the subject-matter of the Gītā completely and ably. If these *ślokas* are analysed and understood correctly, it will be less difficult to understand the Gītā than otherwise. (That the Gītā is very difficult to understand is accepted by all.)

In order to understand the first fifty-seven *ślokas* of the Gītā, it is necessary to recollect certain earlier facts which led to the Kurukṣetra War. The facts are briefly given below. References given in support are not exhaustive but only illustrative.

(1) Arjuna as a warrior had no equal. He was the incarnation of the ancient Ṛṣi Nara.[1] Kṛṣṇa, his friend and guide, was the incarnation of the ancient Ṛṣi Nārāyaṇa. Arjuna could defeat and kill anybody he wanted to, but nobody could defeat him. In fact, with Kṛṣṇa's guidance and help he could conquer all the worlds.[2] Still, to ensure success in the present war he had propitiated Śiva, Yama, Varuṇa, Kubera and Indra and obtained heavenly weapons from them together with the training necessary to use them.[3] He was aware that while he was on his chariot with his bow Gāṇḍīva in hand and posed to fight, nobody could face him.[4] Finally, just before the start of the war he prayed to goddess Durgā and she granted him the boon of victory over his enemies.[5]

(2) Bhīṣma and Droṇa were great heroes. They were well-wishers of Duryodhana and were prepared to fight for him without any reservation. But they pleaded their inability to defeat the five Pāṇḍavas, particularly Arjuna.[6] As to Arjuna, they were also sure nobody on earth or in heaven could defeat him.

(3) Karṇa was a great hero. He was a bosom friend of Duryodhana and was always ready to do anything for him, even at the cost of his own life.[7] Duryodhana valued his friendship highly and relied fully on his faithfulness, courage and sincerity.[8] But Karṇa had one glaring fault—he was very boastful. For this reason Bhīṣma disliked him very much. Karṇa assured Duryodhana that he could and would kill Arjuna and all his brothers in the impending war and crown him with victory.[9] Duryodhana had full faith in his words and therefore did not in fact depend on Bhīṣma or Droṇa or anybody else.[10]

(4) Duryodhana's army consisted of eleven

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1. *Mahābhārata* 3.12.45-47; 5.49.19-20. Hereafter, *M.B.*
2. *M.B.* 1.219.16; 5.60.12-20; 5.162.42, 44; 5.194. 10-11.
3. *M.B.* 3.41.13-19; 3.42.23-32.
4. *M.B.* 4.45.9, 36-41.
5. *M.B.* 6.23.18.
6. *M.B.* 5.139.4-6, 19; 5.156.21; 5.165.10-11; 5.167.14-17; 5.172.21.
7. *M.B.* 5.141.17.
8. *M.B.* 3.254.25-27; 3.255.4-5; 3.257.10-19; 5.55.53, 56.
9. *M.B.* 5.49.31-32; 5.168.22-23, 27, 29.
10. *M.B.* 5.58.10-15; 5.63.4-5.

akṣauhiṇīs, each *akṣauhiṇī* being led by a commander. Karṇa was one of the commanders. Duryodhana and his warriors chose Bhīṣma as the Supreme Commander. Bhīṣma and Karṇa had widely different views about the war, and Duryodhana could not bring about a compromise between them. Just before the war Bhīṣma proposed that first either Karṇa should fight without him or he should fight without Karṇa, but both could not fight simultaneously [11] Bhīṣma's proposal precipitated a crisis for Duryodhana. Karṇa averted the crisis by readily agreeing to step aside, enabling Bhīṣma to fight first.[12] At the same time he assured Duryodhana that he would surely undertake fighting as soon as Bhīṣma was disabled or killed.[13] Thus Duryodhana's army was fielded without Karṇa and his followers, although Karṇa was absolutely indispensable to him.[14] Duryodhana now became very anxious about the defence of Bhīṣma, as it had been weakened very much by the withdrawal of Karṇa. Arjuna and Śikhaṇḍin had promised to kill Bhīṣma[15] whereas Bhīṣma had vowed not to fight with Śikhaṇḍin even if attacked by him.[16] Duryodhana was confident that Karṇa was capable of acting on both the offensive and the defensive.[17] But though Bhīṣma was defended and shielded very efficiently, Duryodhana's worry persisted due to Karṇa's absence.

(5) All the warriors of the land except Balarāma and King Rukmin joined the war.[18] Thus practically all the Kṣatriya families were involved. War preparations of both sides were on a formidable scale, and a terrible carnage was feared. In fact, at the end of the war it was to be seen that in all only ten people—seven on the Pāṇḍava side and three on the Kaurava side—survived, besides Kṛṣṇa and Saṁjaya.

(6) The two sides framed certain rules and agreed to follow them during the war.[19] One of the rules was that any warrior who wished to attack an opponent should first caution him and be sure that he had accepted the challenge. Another rule was that no unwilling or fleeing opponent should be attacked or chased.

With the above facts in mind, let us study the first chapter of the Gītā and try to understand the real problem of Arjuna.

Both the Kaurava and the Pāṇḍava armies had assembled on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. First the Kauravas drew up their army in battle array. The Pāṇḍavas followed suit. Seeing the Pāṇḍava army arrayed for battle, Duryodhana approached Droṇa and pointed out to him the prominent warriors of both the armies. His purpose was to lay stress on the need for adequate defence of Bhīṣma and to point out the fact that his army was incomplete (*aparyāptam*), being truncated by the absence of Karṇa, whereas the Pāṇḍavas had fielded all their generals and so their army was complete (*paryāptam*). He therefore entreated Droṇa to take necessary measures for the full protection of Bhīṣma. Bhīṣma realized Duryodhana's anxiety and, by way of pleasing him, made a lion-like roar and blew his conch loudly. Others on the Kaurava side at once followed him. Then on the Pāṇḍava side Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna and others blew their conchs one by one. Duryodhana was now back in his place. When Arjuna saw that Duryodhana and his brothers were ready, he felt the urge to fight. So he raised his bow and arrows ready for the fight. But before releasing

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11. *M.B.* 5.156.24.
12. *M.B.* 5.156.25.
13. *M.B.* 5.168.29.
14. *M.B.* 6.17.13-14.
15. *M.B.* 5.163.8-13, 44.
16. *M.B.* 5.172.16.
17. *M.B.* 5.168.22-23.
18. *M.B.* 5.158.38.
19. *M.B.* 6.1.26-32.

his arrows, Arjuna first wanted to ascertain, in compliance with the rules to be followed during the war, which of the warriors were eager to fight. So he asked Kṛṣṇa to take his chariot to the battle-ground between the two armies. Accordingly Kṛṣṇa drove the chariot in front of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and all the kings of both the armies and told him that all these warriors were eager to fight. Arjuna saw that they were fathers, grandfathers, sons, grandsons, brothers, uncles, fathers-in-law, comrades and friends, and were related to him and to one another. Arjuna now foresaw the serious consequences of the war. He realized that if the war was not prevented, there would be a terrible carnage and all the Kṣatriya families would be destroyed. He lost all his zeal to fight and was gripped by an extreme weakness which urged him to shun the battle. He told Kṛṣṇa that he had no longer the desire to fight, because his limbs were quailing and his mouth dry, his body was shaking, his bow was slipping from his hand, his skin was burning all over and he was unable to remain steady. His mind was getting confused and he began to believe that these physical and mental symptoms were evil omens indicating that his urge to fight was wrong. He began to wonder how he could attain *śreyas* (the highest good) by killing his own people as enemies.

Arjuna placed before Kṛśṇa further reasons for his unwillingness to fight. He said :

> We wanted to get back our kingdom from the sons of Dhṛtarāṣtra, but they refused to return even an inch of the kindom without fight. So we decided to fight and kill them. Now we find that they are defended and supported by many great and high-souled warriors who are closely related to themselves and to us also. I find that they are bent upon defending the sons of Dhṛtarāṣtra at any cost. So we have first to kill them before we can fight Dhṛtarāṣtra's sons. On our side also there are many good warriors, most of whom are likely to be killed. Thus there will be a general slaughter of the Kṣatriyas and almost all the Kṣatriya families of the land will be annihilated. We wanted our kingdom back not for ourselves, but for these very warriors who are our own people, and we wanted to make them rich and happy. But here I find that they are not interested in riches and happiness. They have given up their own riches and even the very interest in their own lives. They are bent upon dying in the battle for the sake of Dhṛtarāṣtra's sons. I can easily conquer the entire earth, even all the three worlds, but I do not desire such a conquest, because it will cause destruction to countless families. The women of these hapless families will become immoral and bring about curse and miseries to their ancestors and offspring. And the persons who will be responsible for bringing about the destruction of the families will be forced to go to hell and suffer there for ever. Though the sons of Dhṛtarāṣtra are aggressors and we are furiously angry with them, yet we should not kill them, because they are being defended by the very warriors whom I do not want to kill even for the sake of the three worlds. The responsibility of avoiding the carnage has devolved upon us because we clearly see that the carnage is a deadly sin, but the sons of Dhṛtarṣātra are not able to see it because their conscience is dead due to their greed. Now that we see the serious consequences, is it not our duty to turn away from this sin? It is our responsibility to find a way out.[20]

And he found out a way ! Arjuna was sure that if he fought on, carnage was inevitable because he could kill everybody ; but if he himself was somehow or other killed, the battle would cease. Nobody, however, could kill him, so long as he was on his chariot in a fighting posture with his bow Gāṇḍīva in hand. So in order to avoid the carnage he decided to become unresisting and to encourage and allow the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra to kill him. He thought that that way he would attain greater good. With this decision he threw away his bow and arrows which he had made ready to fight, gave up his fighting pose and sat

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20. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 1.30-46.

down on the seat of his chariot preparing himself for death at the hands of his enemies. However, he was still sorrowful.

The Kurukṣetra War had threatened Arjuna with the mortal sin of wholesale slaughter of his own clan. His problem was how to avoid incurring the sin. He hit upon a solution—to allow himself to be killed first. He was still sorrowful because he had not foreseen the serious consequences of his striving to recover the kingdom by use of force and had landed himself in such a difficult situation.

Now we turn to the second chapter of the *Gītā*. The first ten *ślokas* of this chapter are very important. They contain Arjuna's problem and his own clarification. The central point of his problem is the question of *śreyas*. The seventh, eighth and ninth *ślokas* are particularly noteworthy as they throw light on the real state of his mind. So we give below a free translation of the first ten verses, retaining all their essential features.

Arjuna was overpowered by sorrow. His eyes became tearful and agitated. He was in confusion. Seeing him in that condition Kṛṣṇa said : 'How has such a plight, which occurs only in one who is unpoised, come upon you? Do not adopt a neutral attitude as if you had not been wronged, a posture that is nursed by the unenlightened and is ungodly and disgraceful. It does not suit you. It is a crippling weakness of the heart. Shake it off and arise.'

Arjuna said : 'How shall I fight with arrows in a battle against the venerable Bhīṣma and Droṇa? In this world, instead of killing high-souled gurus, it is better to take to begging which leads to *sreyas* (the supreme good). But if out of greed I should kill the Gurus I would enjoy only the booty stained with their blood. Moreover, we do not know which is better for us, victory to us or victory to them. Standing ready before us are the very sons of Dhṛtarāṣtra, after killing whom we shall not desire to live. My selfhood is struck dead by *karpaṇya* (absence of *sreyas*) and my mind is confused regarding dharma or the meaning of life. I become your disciple. Please teach me. I am asking you: how can I attain *sreyas*. I do not see how by winning an unrivalled and prosperous empire on earth or even by gaining the sovereignty over the gods we can attain that *sreyas* which can drive away the anguish of my heart.'

Having spoken thus to Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna said 'I will not fight,' and became silent. To him who was between the two armies and was in grief, Kṛṣṇa with a seeming smile spoke these words.[21]

We have seen that at the end of the first chapter Arjuna wanted to avoid fighting and offered his life to his enemies. His reasoning, both explicit and implicit, was as follows. If he fought, there would be a great carnage and he would be responsible for it. He would then incur a deadly sin and have to undergo sorrows and sufferings in hell, because *śreyas* was not within his reach. So his problem was how to avert the sin. He thought that if he left the battlefield, there would be no serious fighting, the Kauravas would get an easy victory and the threatened carnage would not take place. But it was not easy for him to leave the battlefield without fighting, since in that case nobody would attack or kill him on account of the mutually accepted rule that no unwilling or fleeing soldier should be attacked. Again, as a Kṣatriya hero he could not leave the battlefield alive without victory. So the best way for him, he thought, was to assume such a posture as would embolden and enable his enemies to kill him in the battlefield.

Kṛṣṇa saw that Arjuna's approach to the war was wrong. So he told him to give up his neutral posture and to get up and fight. 'I will not fight,' said Arjuna, and he explained his answer with reasons followed by an earnest request for guidance. He said that his mundane victory, gained by killing Gurus and kith and kin and wiping out the entire Kṣatriya clan, would bring not *śreyas* but only unending sorrows and sufferings to him. On the contrary, if he

(*Continued on page* 394)

21. *Gītā* 2.1-10.

धर्म समन्वय
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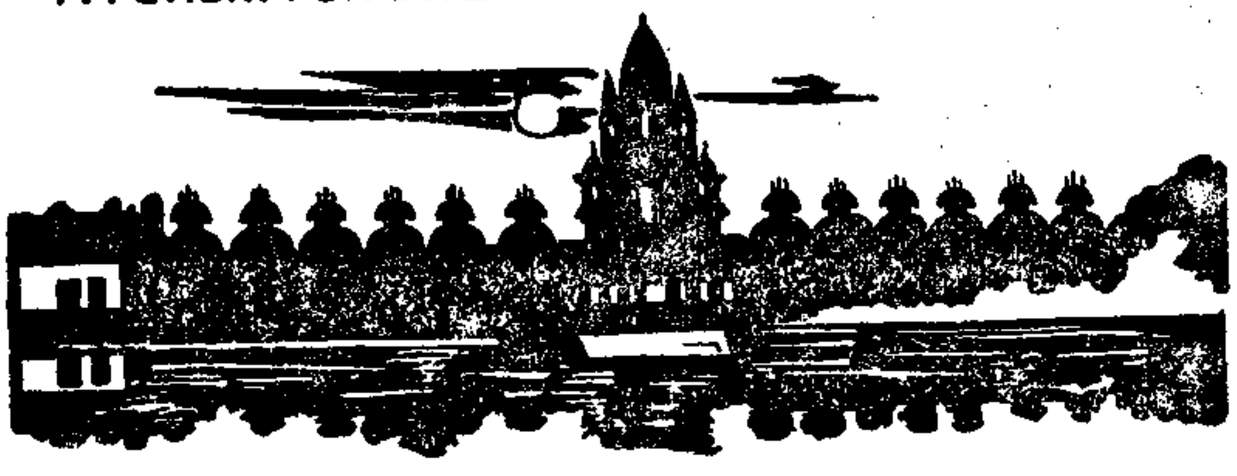

A STUDY OF SUFISM

PROF. RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

The origins

Islamic mysticism is known as *taṣawwuf* in Arabic, but it is more popularly known as Sufism. The Sufis are known as *faqīr* in Arabic and *darvīsh* in Persian, both words meaning 'the poor'. A great deal of controversy centres round the origin of the Arabic word *sufī*. Its etymological meaning may be very important to a lexicographer, but not so vital and indispensable for the study of Sufism as a practical spiritual discipline. Most scholars seek to trace the genesis of Sufism to Islam itself, though recognizing at the same time the unmistakable influence of Christianity, Neo-Platonism, Buddhism and Vedānta on it. It is held that 'germs of Sufi Pantheism are to be found in the Quran: "Everything is perishing except the face (reality) of Allah." "Everyone on earth is passing away but the glories and honoured face of the Lord abideth for ever." "Wherever ye turn, there is the face of Allah." '[1] However, a dispassionate and unbiased study of these Quranic maxims, keeping in view the Islamic conception of transcendent and omnipotent God, makes one feel that perhaps such a conclusion is not wholly legitimate. Dr. Galloway, while outlining the main features of Islam as a universal religion, remarks: 'But it is just on the inward and spiritual side, so important in a religion which aspires to be universal, that Islam is weak. Its conception of piety is in the end external and stress is laid on unquestioning submission and mechanical obedience.'[2] In the Quran very great emphasis has been laid on the absolute omnipotence of God, and His will is regarded as the all-determining power within and without the universe. Again, nowhere is He clearly depicted as the Beloved with whom an intimate, mystic communion may be possible in religious life. This makes one doubt the theory that the germs of mysticism were really latent in Islam itself from the very beginning.

It is more probable that Sufism appeared as an expression of pious Muslims' dissatisfaction with conventional religion and their quest for a direct experience of ultimate Reality. Islam enjoins upon its followers the unconditional observance of some specific religious acts, like the profession of faith (*shāhādā*), the performance of prayer (*sālāt*), payment of religious tax (*zākāt*), fasting (*sawm*) in the month of Ramadān, and pilgrimage to holy Mecca (*Hajj*). But the routine observance of these rituals did not satisfy many people who

1. *Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 12 (on Sufism).

2. *Philosophy of Religion* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), p. 140.

yearned for a direct communion with God regarded as a loving Being. This paved the way for the Sufi conception of God as the soul's eternal Beloved who is at the same time immanent in creation. It is however true that once such a mystic conception of God was developed, conventional religion was utilized to support it, though this involved considerable opposition from the conservative theologians.

It is a historical fact that India exerted a deep influence upon the thought and culture of the world through the ages even before the invasion of Alexander (327-325 B.C.), and the contact which was established after his invasion was never entirely lost since then. Indian religion, both Brahmanical and Buddhist, spread to different countries of Western Asia. Emperor Asoka sent missionaries to Middle-East countries like Khurasan, Persia, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, etc.[3] Balkh, the capital of Khurasan and an important centre of Islamic culture and Sufism, was once an ancient Buddhist capital. Against this backdrop, it will not perhaps be an idle speculation if we conclude that Indian religion, both Brahmanical and Buddhist, apart from Neo-Platonism and Christianity, made a positive contribution to the genesis of Sufism. Incidentally, some eminent historians like Dr. R. C. Mazumdar are of opinion that Neo-Platonism itself bears the 'unmistakable influence of Indian philosophy and religion'.[4] Further, Sufism at a later stage developed speculative principles like the immanence of God and the oneness of the soul with God, which come very close to the Vedāntic conception of Reality and the mode of its realization. This invites the inference that Vedānta had some influence on the development of Sufism, though the original impulse might have come from Islam itself. As Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji points out, 'The more we would study the matter closely, the greater would appear to be the points of contact between Indian religion and sufistic Islam. Sufism was deeply influenced by the Vedānta in its formative period, but as a system, with its philosophy, its monastic organization, and its devotional exercises through singing and dancing, it also impressed Indian religious life iu later medieval times.'[5]

Historical outlines

Sufism as a form of mysticism aims at emotional communion with God through the purification of the self, love and contemplation, rather than through the performance of outward religious practices and rituals. It began as an all-inclusive mystic movement but in course of its development took a baffling variety of forms. This makes a systematic and coherent presentation of the basic principles of this mystic school difficult. Sufism was originally a practical religion a profound spiritual discipline and not a speculative system of thought. In its initial stage, it was mainly an ascetic movement for which some political, social and intellectual factors were principally responsible. Devastating civil wars, ruthless military despotism, excesses and extravagances of the upper classes of society, mechanical observance of rituals, spread of free thinking and rationalism—all these factors induced many pious Muslims to seek solace in seclusion, and contemplation by renouncing all worldly vanities and luxuries, pleasure and power. Thus earlier Sufis were mainly ascetics who courted seclusion and poverty for living a life wholly devoted to God. One of the most

3. Dr. R. C. Majumdar, 'India's Influence on World Thought and Culture', *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume* (Vivekananda Centenary Committee, 1963).

4. Ibid.

5. *Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta : Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956) vol. 4, Preface, p. xviii.

famous of these early ascetics was Hasan al-Basri (A.D. 728) renowned for his piety and asceticism. He was acclaimed by the Sufis as 'one of their first and most distinguished partisans.' He is regarded as the patriarch of Muslim mysticism. The Sufis of the ascetic school 'took up and emphasized certain Koranic ideas, such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God) consisting of the recitation of the Koran, the repetition of the divine Name and the like, and *tawakkul* (trust in God) now defined as renunciation of all personal initiative and volition, leaving one's self in God's hands.'[6]

In course of time, however, a significant change of attitude became evident when the ascetics took to contemplation and meditation resulting in vision and ecstasy—asceticism being considered by them only a means to the realization of that end. Renunciation also meant to them not only the renunciation of earthly possession, worldly goods, wealth and physical abstention from enjoyment, sensuality, anger, malice, arrogance and pride, but also freedom from desires. In short, renunciation meant to them inner purification and self-discipline. One of the most outstanding and celebrated mystics of the early period was Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (A.D. 777), the legend of whose conversion to austerity has often been compared with the story of Gautama Buddha. In his famous prayer, he says : 'O God, Thou knowest, that Paradise weighs not with me so much as the wing of a gnat. If thou befriendest me by Thy recollection, and sustainest me with Thy love and makest it easy for me to obey Thee, then give Thou Paradise to whomsoever Thou wilt.' This fascinating prayer of Ibrāhīm clearly indicates a turning point in the history of Sufism inasmuch as it portrays God as Beloved, friend and guide.

But the person who introduced selfless love into the austere teachings of early Sufism and made love the central core of Islamic mysticism was Rabia of Basra (A.D. 801), the great woman saint who played an important role in the history of Sufism. This extraordinary woman was overwhelmed by the consciousness of the near presence of God and was wholly intoxicated with the love of God. Rabia was a slave girl, set free by her master, and she lived the life of a pure virgin. Her great contributions to Sufi mysticism were the conception of prayer as means of intimate intercourse with God and the doctrine of love for love's sake. Her most celebrated prayer is 'O God! if I worship Thee in fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship Thee in the hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise, but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold not Thine Everlasting Beauty.'[7]

By the end of the ninth century A.D. asceticism for its own sake came to be recognized as rather a joyless job and associated with a negative attitude to life and the universe. Sufism then entered decisively on a new course. It adopted the positive path (*tarīqa*) of ecstatic love with God for attaining gnosis (*marifa*). The Islamic conception of the transcendent God was being interpreted by the Sufis as immanent and indwelling in man. Sufis had also begun to believe in man's ascent to God by purification of self through love and meditation. But this development did not go unchallenged and soon came in conflict with the orthodox ulema.

Some of the well-known mystical leaders of the late ninth century who came after Rabia were: Dhūn-Nūn (born 859) of Egypt, Abū Yazīd (Bāyezid) Bistami (died 874) of northwestern Iran, Junayd (d. 910) of Baghdad and Mansur al-Hallāj

6. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1973 edn.), vol. 21.

7. R. A. Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam* (Cambridge University, 1956), p. 115.

(858-922) of Iraq. Of these the Egyptian mystic Dhūn-Nūn was, according to tradition, the first to introduce *marifa* (gnosis or intuitive knowledge of God) into the path of Sufism and distinguish it from *ilm* (discursive learning and knowledge) gained from books. Abū Yazīd was one of the earliest to teach the doctrine of the annihilation of the self (*fanā*). He is said to have exclaimed, 'Praise be to me, how great is my majesty.' Junayd held that annihilation of the self was not the highest stage but *baqā*, 'remaining'—a life of union with God. The greatest of them all was of course al-Hallāj, famous for his statement *ana'l-Haqq*, 'I am the Truth'. He visited India and on his return to Baghdad was tortured and executed. During these early centuries Sufi thought was transmitted in small circles.

In the tenth century Sufi mysticism became an organized system with definite rules of discipline and devotion. Thereafter some eminent Sufis made earnest endeavour to furnish Sufism with a solid philosophical foundation. The greatest among them was Abū Hāmid al-Ghazzālī (1058-1111) who united mystical theology with orthodox Islam (*sunna*). In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Sufi movement got crystallized into definite *tarīqas* or orders, some of them partially monastic. The most famous of these orders were the Suhravardiyya founded by as-Suhrawardi (d. 1168) and the Qādiriyya founded by Abdul-Qādir al-Gīlānī (1088-1166) considered to be the greatest of Muslim saints. Later on came the Maulaviyya (whirling dervishes), Shadhiliyya, Naqshbandiyya and Chishtiyya (founded by Sheik Moīnuddhin Chishtī of Ajmer and prevalent only in India and Pakistan) orders. There are now about 70 Sufi orders in the world of which the Shadhili order with its three suborders (Darqawi, Isawi and Alawi) is the most numerous.

Sufism reached its zenith in the thirteenth century A.D. which is considered the golden age of Sufism. The Spanish-born Ibn al-Arabī (d. 1240) created a comprehensive theosophical system (concerning the relation of God and the world) that later on became the cornerstone of Sufi thought. According to this theory all existence is one, a manifestation of the underlying divine Reality. His Egyptian contemporary Ibn al-Farid (d. 1235) was a solitary mystic who wrote the finest mystical poems in Arabic. Two famous mystics, Farīduddīn Attār (d. 1220) and Jalāluddīn Rūmi (1207-73) became the greatest poets in the Persian language. Attār is famous for his allegorical book 'The Conference of Birds', while Rūmi's *Masnavī* is considered the greatest mystical work in Islam. Among the several concepts of Rumī, the soul's progress from the mineral state through the vegetable, animal, human and angelic states to non-existence is famous.

In the subsequent centuries Sufism spread to the Indian subcontinent and came into closer contact with Vedānta and yoga. In the Middle East Sufism gradually declined. It still continues there as a living tradition but is overshadowed by the secular and fanatical tendencies of the people. We now turn to a brief discussion of the main doctrines and practices of Sufism.

Sufi doctrine and practice

Sufis regard God as pure Beauty, one real Being (*al-Haqq*) and absolute Beauty. Most of the Sufis were fond of describing God as their Beloved and themselves as lovers. Again there were others, like the Egyptian mystic Dhūn-Nūn (A.D. 861) and the great Spanish mystic Ibn al-Arabī (d. 1240) whose mode of thought was marked by distinctly pantheistic tendencies. Even the

description of God as the immanent and indwelling spirit of everything that is, is not altogether absent in Sufi literature. Eminent Sufis like al-Junaid speak of Divine Unity (*tauhid*) which implies that God is one and that all apparent multiplicity is a mode of unity and that the world of appearance is the external manifestation of the real. The world is not illusory; it really exists as the self-revelation of God. It expresses God's idea of Himself. Our existence is merely an objectification of His existence. This doctrine contains the essence of Sufism and seems to have been derived from sources other than Islam. God is necessary for our very existence while at the same time we are necessary to Him so that He may be manifested to Himself. 'Man's separate existence in the universe, according to al-Junaid, is the consequence of a deliberate act of God's will who at the same time desires to "overcome" man's existence by the outpouring of His own Being.'[8] To Sufis, therefore, man is potentially divine and the entire movement of man's history is an attempt 'to return to the state in which he was before he was.' And this implies that man's destiny lies in reunion with God, the Beloved. Sufis think that this reunion with the Beloved can only be possible through divine love (*mahabba*).

Love is the gateway from ascetic and contemplative stages to the unitive stage. Love is light which opens the floodgate of ecstatic experiences—the realization of oneness with God. And for this, 'the lover and the beloved have to identify themselves with each other, the lover is to become the beloved and the beloved the lover, thus forging a complete fusion of the two into one'.[9] Divine love, no doubt, is different from human love in texture and quality. Sri Aurobindo rightly says: 'Divine love is not merely a sublimation of human emotion, it is different consciousness, with a different quality, movement and substance.'[10] Certainly 'favours reach unto the hearts of those who love Him.' And the only favour that the Sufi seeks from God is ecstasy of union with Him. The Sufi theory of ecstasy recognizes two aspects of the experience of oneness with God. These aspects are symbolized by such negative terms as *fanā* (passing away from individuality), *faqd* (self-loss), *sukr* (intoxication) with their positive counterparts *baqā* (abiding in God), *wajd* (finding in God), and *sahw* (sobriety).

The conception of *fanā* occupies a prominent position in Sufi metaphysics and the contribution of al-Junaid to the articulation of this conception is well-recognized now. *Fanā* is the annihilation of the narrow individuality of ego-consciousness. According to many mystics *fanā* is followed by *baqā*, 'life-in-Him'—a communion or reunion with God. The death of the lower self means the birth of the real Self, God. Professor Nicholson writes, 'The whole Sufism rests on the belief that when the individual self is lost, the universal soul is found and that ecstasy affords the only means by which the soul can directly communicate and become unified with God.'

The actual spiritual techniques employed by Sufis include *duā* ('free prayer' as distinguished from 'ritual prayer' or *namāz* which all Muslims do), *murāqaba* (contemplation or meditation or awareness of divine presence in the soul) and *dhikr* (remembrance). Of these the most important is *dhikr* which usually takes the form of repeating 'Allah' or 'Ali' or some special formula. A rosary of ninety-nine or thirty-three beads is often used for this. In this connection, the role played by the *murshid, pir, shaikh* or spiritual leader in the life of the Sufi should be borne in mind. An aspirant (*murid*)

8. A. J. Arberry, *Sufism* (London : George Allen & Unwin, 1956), p. 58.

9. *Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. 4, p. 596.

10. *Beyond Emotion—Letters of Sri Aurobindo.*

must be guided by the instructions imparted by the *murshid*, and a Sufi whose spiritual practices are not guided by a *murshid* is viewed with suspicion. A sincere devotion to the teacher ensures speedy realization of Truth.

A Sufi in his journey along the path of mystic realization must pass through the different ascending stages of spiritual attainment (*maqām*, 'station') to be achieved through his personal effort and endeavour. Corresponding to these stations, there are different 'states' or spiritual moods (*hāl*) which spring from the grace of God. All the Sufis are not unanimous as regards the stations and states ; in fact, they vary in the number and order of stations they give to the path. According to popular tradition, the spiritual path includes the following seven stages or stations : (1) Conversion (*tauba*) or conscious determination to devote himself to the service of God, or turning away from sin towards God. (2) Abstinence (*wara*) from those activities which distract him from the path of spiritual progress. (3) Renunciation (*zuhd*) of all earthly possessions, wealth, power, position, name and fame, and also of all permitted pleasures and evil habits. (4) Poverty (*faqr*), though not an essential precondition, is conducive to spiritual progress. (5) Patience (*sabr*). (6) Trust in God (*tawakkul*). (7) Gratitude (*shukr*). This is connected to contentment (*riḍā*) which means acquiescence in the will of God, total and absolute self-surrender to the will of God. The way culminates in *marifa* (gnosis or realization of God).

But a different order ignoring the distinction of stations and states of intuitive realization leading to union has been given by another group of Sufis which includes the following : (1) *ubudiyyat*, awakening, (2) *ishq*, love and devotion to God which will attract the love of God, (3) *zuhd*, renunciation, (4) *marifa*, gnosis—constant meditation on the nature and attributes of God, (5) *wajd*, ecstasy—abundance of joy due to the close proximity of God, (6) *haqiqat*, reality, (7) *wasl*, union—feeling of identity with God till the final experience of annihilation (*fanā*) and subsistence (*baqā*) which marks the culmination, of the Sufi's spiritual enterprise.

After the 'stations' comes a parallel scale of 'states' of spiritual feeling. According to a recognized tradition there are ten states and they are meditation, nearness to God, love, fear, hope, longing, intimacy, tranquillity, contemplation and certainty.[11] In this scheme of the pilgrim's progress three main divisions are recognized. These are *sharīa* (tradition), *tarīqa* (the path), and *haqīqa* (realization of Truth). These correspond to three stages of Christian mysticism, namely, the purgative stage, illuminative stage, and unitive stage, which must, according to Evelyn Underhill, characterize every mystic discipline.

The ethical ideals of Sufism follow from its metaphysics and practical religion. These ideals are: unselfishness, whether it takes the form of renouncing earthly possessions and desires ; sincerity in word and deed without regard for the good opinion of others ; patience ; humility ; trust in God ; and sincere and single-hearted devotion to God.

It is very interesting to note in this connection the striking resemblances which exist between Sufi mysticism and the Bhakti cult enunciated in the *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra*, *Pañcarātra* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Vaiṣṇavism in its various ramifications contains unmistakable marks of mysticism, namely, attainment of unity, dissolution of personality, emotional communion with the loving God through love and devotion. Almost all the important Vaiṣṇava texts unequivocally describe God as one full of

11. Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam*, pp. 28-29.

beauty, bliss and mercy. *Ānanda* (supreme bliss) seems to be the very essence of God, who comprises in Himself all the varieties of bliss with all the shades of sweetness. In the *Nārada Sūtra,* Nārada repeatedly stresses constant remembrance, self-surrender and intense, selfless love as necessary disciplines. He regards love as higher than action and knowledge. According to the school of Caitanya, devotion gradually develops into Prema (most concentrated love for God), and this culminates in *mahābhāva,* the most developed form of divine love, in which the lover is lost in the Beloved. Almost a similar idea is conveyed in the Sufi doctrine of *mahabba* (reciprocal love between God and His spiritual creation) enunciated by Rabia and passionately practised and preached by many subsequent Sufi saints.

However, there is a point of difference between Sufism and later Vaiṣṇavism. According to Vaiṣṇava literature, there are five kinds of personal relationship with God, namely, *śānta* (quietude), *dāsya* (servitude), *sakhya* (friendship), *vātsalya* (parental affection), and *mādhurya* (sweet love). Of these five, the Sufi prefers only the last one and consequently describes God as the Divine Beloved who can only be approached through *mādhurya-bhakti* or devotion springing from love of God's infinite sweetness. But the communion (*wasl*) is not possible by personal endeavour alone. The vision of God and His all-pervading presence can only be realized by the grace of God. So the Sufis say that spiritual states (*hāl*) are the gifts of God for which trust in God (*tawakkul*) and acquiescence in the will of God are essential. The same idea is conveyed in the Vaiṣṇava conception of *prapatti* or *śaraṇāgati.* The *Bhagavad-Gītā*[12] says, 'Relinquishing all religious rites and actions [yielding merits and demerits], take refuge in Me alone. I shall deliver thee from all sins. Sorrow not.'.

Again, in its notion of reality, Sufism is akin to Advaita Vedānta. Sufism, like the latter, 'believes in the non-dual Absolute, looks upon the world as the reflection of God who is conceived as light'. The Sufi doctrine of *fanā* is very similar to the Buddhist conception of *nirvāṇa* or the *samādhi* of yoga and Vedānta systems inasmuch as *marifa* (gnosis) or revealed knowledge of spiritual truth and ecstasy (*wajd*) can come into the heart from God only when the mystic has suspended all the motions of his heart. And the idea of 'living in God' (*baqā*) is akin to the Vedāntic conception of the soul's merger in Brahman (*brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati,* 'the knower of Brahman himself becomes Brahman').

As a mystic movement Sufism represents the efflorescence of Islamic spirituality and one of the glorious contributions of Islam to human civilization. Mysticism is the essential core of every religion. To whichever religion it may belong, mysticism teaches the imperative necessity of purifying oneself and loving all beings as the living temples of God. A comparative study of mysticism in different religions is a great help to the attainment of peace and harmony in the world and the establishment of universal brotherhood.

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12. *Gītā,* 18.6.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*

To Mrs. Ole Bull[77]

1123 Saint Paul Street
[Baltimore, Maryland
17 October 1894]

Dear Mrs. Bull,

I could not find time earlier to write you, I was so incessantly knocking about. We had a nice meeting last Sunday at Baltimore and going to have one more next Sunday. Of course, they do not financially help me a bit; but as I promised to help them and like the idea, I speak for them.

The letters you sent over from India were an address sent over to me from Calcutta by my fellow citizens for my work here and a number of newspaper cuttings. I will send them on to you later.

Yesterday I went to see Washington and met Mrs. Colville and Miss Young who were very kind to me.

I am going to speak at Washington again and then will go over to Philadelphia and from there to New York.

Your affectionate Son,
VIVEKANANDA

[With the exception of the two letters to Josephine MacLeod, the following letters are not properly 'unpublished', for they have appeared in print previously. However, as they have not been included in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* nor published previously in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, we give them here for the benefit of our readers.—*Ed.*]

To Mr. Giridharidas Mangaldas Viharidas Desai[78]

228 West 39th Street
New York
2 March 1896

Dear friend,

Excuse my delay in replying to your beautiful note.

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77. Since August 1977 a series of unpublished letters written by Swami Vivekananda to different people has been appearing from time to time in the *Prabuddha Bharata*. These letters were made available to us through the kindness of Mrs. Boshi Sen of Almora. This letter represents the last that will be published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* from the Mrs. Boshi Sen Collection. The others have been reserved for Marie Louise Burke, to be used in her forthcoming *New Discoveries* volumes on Swami Vivekananda's life in the West during 1895-96. (The volumes are to be published by the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati.)

Enclosed in the envelope with this letter was a calling card of Mrs. Ole Bull, bearing the message: 'My dearest child [i.e. Swamiji], This is a prosaic gift, but the handselled purse will complete in a pair of brown gloves the smartness of the brown costume. May you have many days of happy use of this outfit [which] it has been such a pleasure and privilege to bring together. Lovingly, M.I.L. ["Mother In the Lord", i.e. Mrs. Bull].'

78. This letter was published in the *Udbodhan*, September 1973.

Your uncle[79] was a great soul, and his whole life was given to doing good to his country. Hope you will all follow his footsteps.

I am coming to India this winter, and cannot express my sorrow that I will not see Haridasbhai once more. He was a strong, noble friend, and India has lost a good deal in losing him.

I am going to England very soon where I intend to pass the summer, and in winter next come to India.

Recommend me to your uncles and friends.

Ever always the wellwisher of your family,
VIVEKANANDA

PS : My English address is : C/o E. T. Sturdy, Esq., High View, Caversham, Reading, England.

To Ishwar Chandra Ghosh[80]

The original English letter is printed in Udbodhan, 52 yr, 8 th issue, p 415

Belur Math, Howrah
6 March 1899

Dear Sir,

I am very much thankful to you for your kind invitation.[81] I am sorry for the delay in replying to your letter. I was then seriously ill and the person who was expected to reply on my behalf perhaps did not do so. Just now I came to know about it.

Even now I am not physically fit enough to accept your kind invitation. I had thought of visiting that part (East Bengal) during last winter. But my Karma did not allow it. I have yet to wait to enjoy seeing the centre of ancient Bengali culture.[82]

I thank you again for your cordiality.

With best wishes,
VIVEKANANDA

To Swami Abhedananda[83]

102 E. 68th Street
[New York, N.Y.]
24 July 1900

Dear Abhedananda,

I would have gladly remained here but *sastay kisti mat*.[84] Got a fine berth.

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79. Sri Haridas Viharidas Desai, the deceased Dewan of Junagadh who had been a loyal friend and supporter of the Swami.

80. This letter is here translated into English from *Svāmī Vivekānander Vāṇī O Racanā*, the Bengali complete works of the Swami.

81. The letter was written in reply to an invitation sent by the citizens of Dacca.

82. The Swami visited Dacca in March 1901.

83. This letter has appeared in *The Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1970), vol. 10, p. 101.

84. A Bengali phrase meaning literally 'Checkmate when cheap,' that is, get while the getting is good.

one room all to myself, on a fine vessel.[85] As soon as August comes it will be terrible *vir*[86] as the companies are reducing price.

Things are going quite all right. Mr. Johnson has returned to their house, and all the rooms are full except two. You write to Mrs. Crane, whether you want to get them or not.

You need not feel the least anxiety about the N.Y. work, it will go as a marriage bull next season. Give my love to Mrs. Coulston and explain to her the circumstances.

With all love,
VIVEKANANDA

To Miss Josephine MacLeod

1

Gopal Lal Villa
Benaras Cantonment
7 February 1902

My dear Joe,

We have safely reached Benaras, and Mr. Okakura[87] has already done Benaras. He goes to see Sarnath (the old Buddhistic place) today and starts on his tour tomorrow. He has asked Niranjan[88] to accompany him and he has consented.

Kanay [?] has supplied him with everything he asked for, and he asks me also to send you the amounts. This on the other page.

I hope Nivedita and Mrs. Bull safely arrived. I am rather better than at Buddha Gaya. This house is nice and well furnished, and has a good many rooms and parlours. There is a big garden all round and beautiful roses and gigantic trees. It is rather cooler here than at Gaya. There was no hitch to our friends being admitted into the chief temple or to touching the Sign of Siva, and worship. The Buddhists, it seems, are always admitted.

With all love and welcome to Mrs. Bull and Nivedita if they have arrived and all to you,

VIVEKANANDA

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85. On July 26, 1900, Swamiji was to board the S.S. *Champagne*, bound for Le Havre, France, and thence by train to Paris.

86 *Vir* or *bhīḍ* means 'crowd' in Bengali.

87. Mr. Okakura Kakuzo, founder of the Bijutsuin or Fine Arts Academy of Japan and author of several famous books such as *The Book of Tea* and *The Ideals of the East*, came to India with Josephine MacLeod to invite the Swami to attend a contemplated Congress of Religions in Japan.

88. Swami Niranjanananda.

2

The Math
2 April 1902

My dear Joe,

The telegraph is already gone and I expect you will fill all arrangements there.

The Dak bungalows en route to Mayavati provide no food, nor have they cooks. Provisions have to be taken at Kathgodam and arrangements made. If you find any difficulty go straight to Almora and make your arrangements at leisure. The Dak bungalows on the way to Almora provide food and in Almora there is a nice Dak bungalow.

Hoping everything will come your way as they always do (except Swamiji's health).

Yours,
VIVEKANANDA

I like Mr. Oda[89] much—he means business.

(Concluded)

89. Mr. Oda, or Rev. Oda, was abbot of a Buddhist monastery in Japan who had come with Okakura to invite Swamiji to Japan for the Congress of Religions.

(Continued from page 383)

was killed by the enemies in the battlefield even before the carnage began, it would bring *śreyas*. Again, in the absence of *śreyas* his mundane victory would really be a spiritual defeat to him, whereas to the enemies it would be spiritual victory as they would go to heaven on account of their death in the battlefield. Thus he was unwilling to fight because after the carnage *śreyas* would be beyond his reach. If *śreyas* was guaranteed to him at the end of the carnage, he would plunge into the battle without hesitation. He knew that though killing would invariably inflict sorrows and sufferings on him during the battle, they would completely disappear and in their place only heavenly bliss would prevail as soon as he attained *śreyas*. Since Kṛṣṇa advised him to undertake the fight and not shun it, he was sure that Kṛṣṇa could help him out of the dilemma. He therefore entreated Kṛṣṇa to tell him the way by which he could attain *śreyas* at the end of his fight and the inevitable carnage.

Arjuna's problem was now clear to Kṛṣṇa. It was essentially a spiritual problem. He saw that veritably Arjuna was trapped between two armies, the army of *pravṛtti* and that of *nivṛtti*, his urge to fight and his urge not to fight. Arjuna could not see through the problem to a correct solution. Kṛṣṇa knew that only a spiritual solution could save Arjuna from the crisis created by him. His face beaming with a smile of satisfaction, Kṛṣṇa now proceeded to tell Arjuna how to fight, kill, avert sin and attain *śreyas*.[22]

22. The word *sreyas* here (*Gītā* 1.31 ; 2.5, 7) and that in the Upaniṣads (e.g. *Katha* 1.2.1, 2 ; *Muṇḍaka* 1.2.7, 10) have the same meaning. The word is akin to *dharma* and *satya* (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4.14) and to *brahman* (*Chāndogya* 8.3.4 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 5.4.1).

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

A GRADUAL AWAKENING : BY STEPHEN LEVINE. Published by Rider and Company 3 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6JD. 1980. Pp. xv+173. £ 3.50.

'Twenty years ago I sat in great confusion before a plaster dime-store Buddha and asked to be taught how to meditate.' Thus began the odyssey of Stephen Levine's spiritual life, and thus begins his practical encouraging, warm and beautiful book on meditation which has resulted from his twenty years of practice. Nothing could give you more faith in the hidden power of dime-store Buddhas than a reading of *A Gradual Awakening*, because Stephen Levine obviously learned not only how to meditate but has become a masterful teacher in his own right. Of course, he had more help on the way than a plaster image: he studied and practised with several meditation teachers, and was carried forward by his own strong aspiration.

The way taught by Stephen Levine is the way of insight known as Vipassana, and more specifically the Satipatthana method of directing attention to the breathing process as taught in Burma and other Theravada Buddhist countries. But he also teaches the Buddhist practice of meditation on friendliness to all beings, known as Metta (Skt. *maitri*) first among the four *brahma-viharas* or sublime states. In fact, there is a wonderful blending of the way of the mind—Vipassana or insight meditation—and the way of the heart, the way of social concern. Towards the end there are a couple of chapters on death, including a meditation on death, which lead you to accept death as an opportunity to awaken.

Though influenced largely by the Theravada, there is nothing sectarian or dogmatic in Levine's teachings. The whole book carries a delightful breeze of liberality, openness to experience and truth rather than passive acceptance of orthodox canon. This effect springs from his own full assimilation of the teachings he transmits. All spiritual aspirants, whether they follow the particular path of insight meditation or not, will find here truths of universal appeal and application.

Though dealing with highly subtle psychological truths this is a book of lucid simplicity. It is a book of authenticity, of honesty : 'For me, this writing is part of my practice, and I have to make sure that I'm being honest myself. It's easy when our mouths are open to fall asleep. That's the time we most often are out cold : we are projecting who we think we are ... ' Though teaching the difficult subject of meditation, Levine knows how to encourage and give faith, and also how to be humorously frank: 'When we're watching the breath and thinking occurs, we can note "thinking, thinking" and come back to noting the breath. But the pull of mental objects can be very strong and subtle and the mind skates off into "Oh, I'm doing pretty well—ah, caught myself—thinking, thinking—rising, falling, rising, falling—well, caught it that time, didn't I?—oh oh, blew it again—!—thinking, thinking—rising, falling, rising, falling—Well, so far, so good —wow, there I go again, can't I stay on the breath even a minute! What a clod I am—oops, there's judging again—hey, I'm lost, which way to the breath?" Just note "thinking, thinking" and come back to the breath again. Stay simple and easy.'

Stephen Levine is not only a man with something very valuable to say, but also one who knows how to say it.

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA
Mayavati

SURE WAYS TO SELF-REALIZATION: BY SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI ; COMPILED BY SWAMI GOURISHANKARA SARASWATI. Published by Bihar School of Yoga, Lal Darwaja, Monghyr, Bihar 811 201. 1980. Pp. 385. Rs. 40.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati is the well-known founder of Bihar School of Yoga, and is not only a great adept in the methods of Yoga and Tantra, but has also tried to modify ancient yogic techniques and evolve new methods of concentration and meditation to suit present-day men and women. Though based on the traditionally accepted principles of yoga and meditation, the book provides a strikingly original and integrated approach to Self-realization. Swami Gourishankara, an Australian disciple of the Swami, has put in her best to arrange his teachings into a meaningful order. This book is an 'attempt to offer alienated mankind a suitable path back to his own sources' with modified techniques from the Tantra.

Meditation is the means of discovering oneself, one's whole self. In this work the word Self is not used in the sense of the absolute Self or the Atman, but also with regard to various 'states' of the ego (cf. Part 2, pp. 55-57). With

due care the subject matter has been arranged into eight parts: (1) Tools of Meditation (*mantra, mālā,* psychic symbols, *yantras* and *maṇḍalas,* etc.); (2) Mechanical Aids to Meditation (chemicals, bio-feedback, biorhythms, etc.); (3) The Yogic Way of Meditation (*dhyāna, japa, mauna, prāṇa-vidyā,* tantric meditation, etc.); (4) Meditation—a Worldwide Culture (meditation in the ancient world, in Egypt, in the Essene Community, in Hinduism, in Christianity, etc.); (5) Moving Meditation (in Yoga, travel, Zen, dance, sports, etc.); (6) Supplementary Meditation Techniques (nature-meditations, with colour and light, for children, for the dying; (7) The Goal of Meditation; (8) Appendix (glossary and bibliography.

Each part with its sections dealing with techniques of concentration is complete in itself and is not intended to lead to the next. Consequently they often end abruptly, without indicating what is to be done next, and give an impression that the book is more concerned with mind culture and concentration to satisfy the modern (especially Western) man's quest for achieving peace of mind. The real purpose of meditation is given only in the Introduction and in Part 7. Part 2 is very candid and deals with recent studies in the psycho-physical aspects of meditation in order to substantiate claims of Yoga and disparage the use of LSD and psychedelic drugs to alter states of human consciousness. Part 3 gives detailed instructions regarding the adapted methods of Yoga and Tantra to touch the deeper levels of our being. Part 5 will be read with deep interest by most readers. It shows how normal bodily activities like walking, working, etc. could be done with meditative awareness—'moving meditation'.

On p. 370 Swami Gourishankara writes: '*Dhyāna* and *samādhi* should always be seen as something that can be attained by all people.' It is more or less on this conviction, and the conviction that all world-culture possess living and forgotten methods of meditation, that the whole plan and purpose of this book rest. The various techniques of mind control which for centuries had remained guarded secrets in esoteric circles are boldly presented here for all people to learn. A lot of interesting information has been packed in the 385 pages of the book.

The matter-of-fact style of the compiler intentionally avoids the esoteric and mysterious tone. And the excellent introduction, setting readers in the right attitude towards Yoga, makes it unnecessary to remind and warn readers that in spite of the seemingly simple techniques available in this book, they must enter into its practices only with true aspiration for a higher life.

SWAMI ATMARAMANANDA
Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi

WEALTH AND WISDOM OF INDIA: BY SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA. Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, K. M. Munshi Marg, Chowpatty, Bombay 400 007. 1980. Pp. 271. Rs. 20.

The spiritual wealth and wisdom of India is unsurpassed in several respects. The land has the rare privilege of retaining one of the most advanced and ancient civilizations of the world. The glorious past still continues in the not-too-bad present and may continue into what looks like a promising future. Great seers and sages from the days of the Upaniṣads up to the modern age have tried to dig out the most precious jewels from the unknown realms of the Spirit and have made that spiritual treasure available to the whole human race.

A distinguished scholar, thinker and religious teacher, Swami Siddhinathananda of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Puranattukara, Trichur, has presented in the book under review the fruit of about four decades of his monastic life devoted to the study of scriptures and spirituality. The work is a collection of fifteen of his articles and speeches, most of which have been published earlier in various periodicals. The collection begins with a lucid article on Hinduism and ends with one on 'A Hundred Year Plan' of a Hindu, enumerating the four *āsramas* (stages) of life. In between these two are the essays on Śamkara, Vivekananda, *bhakti* and the like. In a fairly long article the author has made a remarkable study of the character of Kuntī to whom, according to him, the victory and defeat, profit and loss, good and bad name resulting from the great war of the *Mahābhārata* belong to a large extent. The two prominent warriors of the war, Karṇa and Arjuna, are the two sons of Kuntī and are fighting against each other. At one place she incites the Pāṇḍavas to avenge Draupadī's humiliation at the hands of the Kauravas. At another place revealing the secret of her motherhood to Karṇa she wants the safety of the Pāṇḍavas. Although rebuked by Karṇa as a woman of selfishness (*kevalātmahitaiṣiṇī*) she gets a promise from him not to kill his brothers except Arjuna. The message of Kuntī's life, according to the author, is that a life of rectitude and devotion is essential for one and all and it is possible for even women to lead such a life.

The author has rendered a notable service to the Indian tradition by presenting the great treasure of our spiritual heritage in a very simple and lucid style so that even a layman can fully profit himself by going through the articles. There is not a dull page in it. It is delightful reading all through.

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FOUR UPANISADS: TRANSLATED BY SWAMI PARAMANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, 16 Ramakrishna Math Road, Madras 600 004. First Indian edition, 1980. Pp. 148. Rs. 9.

Swami Paramananda a direct disciple of Swami Vivekananda, was one of the most successful Vedanta teachers ever in the West. Even now, forty years after his demise, his books are in great demand. *Four Upanishads* contains the Swami's translation of *Isa, Katha, Kena* and *Mundaka Upanishads* with brief commentaries on each. These four were undoubtedly chosen for translation because they are the most popular and most easily understood of the ten major Upaniṣhads. The Sanskrit text is not given.

The Swami was an accomplished poet, and though the Sanskrit verses of the Upanishads are here translated into English prose, the Swami's poetic genius shines through to make this translation a true work of art. The language is stirring in its simplicity and directness.

The paper and get-up of the present edition—a photo offset from the American edition—are also very good. All in all, if one wishes to have a readable English translation of these four most popular Upanishads, one could not do better than this new edition of Swami Paramananda's *Four Upanishads.*

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA
Mayavati

VISISTADVAITA : BY PROFESSOR. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR. Published by The Dr. Radhakrishnan Institute of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, Madras 600 005. 1977. Pp. 63+x. Rs. 7/-.

This volume contains the lectures on the Visistadvaita school of Vedanta delivered at the University of Madras by Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, one of the few outstanding authorities on the subject. It has been brought out as one of the Golden Jubilee Publications, commemorating the completion of fifty years of the University's Department of Philosophy, known since 1976 as the Dr. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy.

Within its brief compass, this study of Visistadvaita covers extensive ground. It is also full of fresh insights, for the author has not attempted to copy the existing expositions of Ramanuja in English but has tried to have a fresh and independent look at this great system of philosophy through a direct contact with the works of the original masters unconditioned by secondary sources.

The five lectures delivered fall naturally into an equal number of chapters. The first one called 'Orientation' has three subsections, dealing with the epistemological and metaphysical direction of Visistadvaita and its literary history.

Successive chapters then take up Ramanuja's critical review of other philosophical schools, and the metaphysics Puruṣārtha and Sādhana according to Visistadvaita. It will thus be seen that the plan of the work is comprehensive, leaving out no important aspect of Ramanuja's teaching. The treatment, though necessarily brief, does not omit any relevant or material point. In fact, it reveals refreshing insights the further elaboration of which in a comprehensive volume will be a fitting crown to Prof. Raghavachar's labours in the field.

Instances of such insights are not rare. Ramanuja's theory of error at which some philisophical eyebrows continue to be raised, is brilliantly and lucidly explained, and attention is drawn to the fact that it is an innovation in Indian epistemology. Similarly, on Ramanuja's positing aesthetic attributes to Brahman, the author comments, 'This is a striking novelty'. Nature, according to Ramanuja is described as 'a teleological order produced, sustained and periodically withdrawn by God, forming His sportive splendour, *lilā-vibhūti*', and as 'designed for the perfection of the finite souls still struggling for the attainment of God. The essential features of the body-soul relationship which lies at the heart of Visistadvaita, are brought out and its implications set out. In laying stress on this, Ramanuja may be said to have made 'a unique contribution' in that it dispenses with the problem of the finite limiting the Infinite by making the finite 'a constitutive factor in the totality of the Infinite in all its glory and dimensions.' The problem of evil is

not neglected. God's transcendence, and the freedom from evil of Nature and emancipated and finally free individual souls are factors to be considered. As for the problem of God's omnipotence and benevolence and the freedom of will of the bound self, 'God is no inactive background, as He sustains the individual in his creative initiative and envelops him with corrective pressures and persuasive inducements', in order to enable the self to make 'the right choice by his own individual initiative and experimental wisdom.'

The discussion on *mokṣa*, though tantalisingly brief, points out the fallacies underlying the objection that in the state of final release according to Visistadvaita, the individual subject experiences the Absolute Subject as an object. 'There is no bifurcation of subject and object, though the individuality of the percipient and the eminence of the perceived are fully maintained. This unique unification is achieved through the inclusion of the individual in the expanse of the being of God.' The discussion on Sādhana is not content with expounding Bhakti (which is merely of academic interest to later teachers of Visistadvaita) but devotes attention to *prapatti* also (on which they lay stress).

Incidentally, many widely prevalent erroneous beliefs about Ramanuja's system are shattered. For example, the sedulously circulated myth that Ramanuja's God satisfies the heart while Sankara's Absolute meets the demands of reason is shown to be 'a piece of historical nonsense'. The 'characterization of Sankara's Absolute as the logical highest and Ramanuja's God as the intuitional highest' is pointed out as fallacious.

In a work of this scope, everything that needs to be said about Visistadvaita cannot be expected to have been said. That so much has been accomplished within the limits of five lectures testifies to Professor Raghavachar's clear comprehension of all the nuances of the subject. Nevertheless, one may say that readers of the book would have been grateful for some more light on the contribution of Tamil mystics to Ramanuja's views on *tattva, hita* and *puruṣārtha*. Perhaps some attention could also have been devoted to ill-informed criticisms of Ramanuja's concept of *mokṣa* as a materialistic heaven about which he tells fairy stories like a tourist who has visited it and returned home.

Prof. Raghavachar's book is an introduction as well as a manual, intended both for the philosopher and the layman. It is unbiased and non-partisan in treating an important school of philosophy which has profoundly influenced Indian thought, belief and ethics, but which has so far been the victim largely of the supercilious prejudice of modern writers.

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BENGALI

SRI SRI SARADA DEVI : ATMAKATHA : COMPILED BY ABHOYA DASGUPTA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700 029. 1979. Pp. viii+178. Rs. 7.

Abhoya Dasgupta is well known as the compiler of two books, *Swami Vivekananda on Himself* in English and *Sri Ramakrishna on Himself* in Bengali. Now Miss Dasgupta has presented another handy little volume, *Holy Mother on Herself* in Bengali. She has compiled Mother's sayings from various sources and knit them into a coherent autobiographical narrative. It consists of three parts: Mother's birth and childhood days are described in the first part; her spiritual practice and life with Sri Ramakrishna are narrated in the second; and in the concluding part we find her as a spiritual guide. Miss Dasgupta's planning of the book is unique. She has included twenty-three sub-titles in the three parts which give a somewhat complete picture of Mother's life. The compiler has added a few notes here and there to explain the context of Mother's sayings. At the end of the book she has included a chronology of Mother's life.

Those who are well acquainted with Bengali literature will be charmed by the beauty and grace of Mother's sayings. Whether one judges this book from the literary or from the religious standpoint, it is unique. Mother was not highly educated in the ordinary sense, but when she spoke she gave new power to the Bengali language. What a tremendous force the colloquial language can have, what an elastic and adaptable medium for the expression of profound spiritual thought it is, has been shown by Mother. *'Thākur ār kothāy? Tini bhakter nikate. Jemon phul nārtecārte ghrān ber hoy, temni bhagavat-tattva ālocanā korte korte tattvajnāner udoy hoy. Nirvāsanā jodi hote pāro, ekkhuni hoy'* : 'Where else will you search for God? He is in the hearts of the devotees. As you get the fragrance when you handle flowers, similarly the Supreme Knowledge is revealed when you discuss God. If you could become desireless, you would get it at this very moment.'

Mother often uses charming allegorical expressions which have undoubtedly made the

language rich. She speaks of Swami Vivekananda as *khāpkholā tarowāl* (an unsheathed sword), and of Swami Saradananda as her *Vāsuki* (the mythological serpent which bears the universe). Besides, her sense of humour and the use of interesting parables make her a captivating conversationalist. Her language is simple and clear. In Calcutta she had to speak in the Calcutta dialect, whereas at Jayrambati she generally used to speak in the Bankura dialect; she was fluent in both.

We thank the compiler for the wonderful job she has done. The book portrays Mother as she was. Miss Dasgupta has taken all care to maintain continuity among different topics. We would like to request her to mention in the next edition of this book the sources of Mother's sayings, and if possible an index too. Printing and get-up deserve appreciation. Ramananda Bandyopadhyay has designed the cover which looks simple but elegant. It would be a good idea to translate the book into English.

SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA
Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME MADRAS

REPORT FOR APRIL 1980 TO MARCH 1981

Started by Swami Ramakrishnananda on 17 February 1905, the institution celebrated its Platinum Jubilee from 13 to 16 February 1981, the most important event of the year. Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President-General of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, graced the occasion with his presence, as did Srimat Swami Abhayanandaji Maharaj, at present the senior-most monk of the Ramakrishna Order and one who had served Swami Ramakrishnananda. The other activities of the Home and its branches are briefly described below.

The *Hostel* at Mylapore, which is the heart of the institution, had 192 inmates in the junior section which accommodates boys of the Residential High School run by the Home, and 138 students in the senior section which accommodates boys of the Home's Technical Institute and also some poor boys of the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College which is adjacent to the Home. Admissions to the Home are made at the beginning of the academic year on the basis of (1) the performance of the students at the School Annual Examination or the Public Examination, and (2) the means of the parents, orphans being given first preference. The number of books in the General Library of the Senior Hostel was 2,653, and a number of periodicals were received for the reading room.

The *Residential High School*, with standards VI to X, had 192 students at the end of the year. The medium of instruction was Tamil. Scholarships from endowments were awarded to 43 boys, and the Harijan Welfare Department and Backward Classes Welfare Department awarded scholarships to 40 S.C. and B.C. boys.

The *Residential Technical Institute* offered the Diploma Course of three-years' duration in Mechanical Engineering, the electives being Automobile Technology, Machineshop Technology and Agricultural Farm Equipment Technology. There was a total of 128 students in the Diploma Course. Almost all the students obtained scholarships from various sources. Twenty-five day-scholars were admitted in March 1981 to the Post-Diploma Course in Automobile Engineering, a part-time evening course.

The *Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Primary School* in Mylapore, with standards I to V, had 425 pupils at the end of the year, of whom 236 were boys and 189 girls. The forty-fifth anniversary of the school was held on 30 April 1980.

The *Ramakrishna Mission Middle School* in Malliankaranai (Chingleput District), with standards I to VIII, had a strength of 227 at the end of the year, of which 162 were boys and 65 girls. The thirty-fifth anniversary of the school was celebrated on 28 April 1980. Daily midday meals were served to 100 children. In the hostel attached to the school there were 30 boarders, of whom 20 belonged to scheduled castes and the other 10 to backward classes.

Donations may be sent to The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Mylapore, Madras-600 004.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

Student Power

A significant phenomenon found all over the world after the War is the rise of a new socio-political power—the student power. The early sixties saw large-scale campus disturbances in France, Japan, the U.S.A. and some other countries. In all developing countries student power has become a formidable political force as recent events in China, Thailand and Iran have shown. In India student unrest has become a chronic problem for the nation.

Being a part of democratic polity, students have every right to seek redress for their grievances through social protest. The only question is whether students' organizations should have political affiliation. At present every political party in India has its student wing, and political conflicts find violent echoes in campuses. This was one of the main topics discussed in the vice-chancellors' conference held in New Delhi on 31 May. The 110 distinguished participants unanimously decided that students and teachers should not take part in political activities. They also decided that the academic year should be extended from the present average of 180 days to at least 210 days, and that efforts should be made to utilize the present facilities to the maximum extent in order to achieve academic excellence. However, apart from framing a 'code of conduct' for students and teachers no concrete steps for the actual implementation of these laudable decisions were taken or indicated.

The root cause of student unrest in India lies in the present system of education itself which is geared to the needs of a non-existent industrialized society. The atmosphere prevailing in Indian universities is not much different from that of a factory which indeed they are, mass-producing diploma holders. In Western countries education developed in response to the intellectual Renaissance, and was carefully modulated to the needs of the Industrial Revolution. India has not experienced an intellectual renaissance. It has had only a political awakening which itself came in wake of the religious awakening of the nineteenth century. Hence for the vast majority of Indian students, love of knowledge has not become the chief motivation for seeking higher education. The education that the students get is not rooted in the indigenous socio-cultural milieu nor in the realities of the country's predominantly agricultural economy. Nor has the growth of industrialization been rapid enough to absorb the enormous increase in educational potential.

As a result of all this, there is now a great loss and misuse of student power in this country.