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Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

JANUARY 1983

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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 88

JANUARY 1983

No. 1

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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यम् ।
उतामृतत्वस्येशानो यदन्नेनातिरोहति ॥

Puruṣa is verily all this [visible world], all that was and all that will be.¹ He is also the Lord of immortality, for he transcends matter (*annam*).²

Ṛg-Veda 10.90.2

* The *Puruṣa-sūkta* begun last month is continued here. According to Sāyaṇa, Puruṣa here stands for Virāj, the Divine as the manifested physical universe of whom all bodies are parts. It is perhaps more correct to take Puruṣa as Hiraṇyagarbha, the Cosmic Self of whom all individual selves (Jīvātman) are parts.

1. That is, the Supreme Spirit is the unchanging substratum of all that exists, existed and will exist. Since Sāyaṇa takes Puruṣa to be Virāt, he interprets this line as: 'Just as during the present *kalpa* all beings are parts of the Virāt, so were they during the past *kalpas* and will be in the future *kalpas*.'

2. *Yad-annena-atirohati* literally means, 'since he rises beyond by food'. The word *anna* everywhere in the Upaniṣads means 'matter'. Here *annena* should be understood as the accusative *annam*. The meaning is that Puruṣa as Spirit transcends (*atirohati*) matter. This apparently simple clause has given rise to a dozen interpretations, including some meaningless ones by some Western scholars. Sāyaṇa says that it means: 'The Virāt (in the beginning of *śṛṣṭi*) emerges from its causal state (in which it was during *pralaya*), and becomes the visible world so that living beings may obtain the fruits of their actions; but this manifestation is not his true nature.' Colebrook: 'He is that which grows by nourishment, and he is the distributor of immortality.' Muir: 'He is also the Lord of immortality, since by food he expands.' MacDonnell: 'He is the Lord of immortality which he grows beyond through food.' Griffith: 'The Lord of all immortality which waxes greater still by food.'

TO OUR READERS

With this issue *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India* enters the eighty-eighth year of its publication. On this happy occasion we send our greetings and best wishes to our subscribers, readers, contributors, reviewers, publishers of books, friends and sympathizers, and thank them for their continued support. May the new year bring them peace, prosperity and spiritual fulfilment!

Prabuddha Bharata was first started in 1896 at Madras under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda who was then preaching Vedanta in the West. After the untimely death of its gifted editor B. R. Rajam Iyer in May 1898, the journal was taken over by Swami Vivekananda in August and published from a rented house at Almora with Swami Swarupananda as its editor and Captain Sevier as its manager—both disciples of Swamiji. The very next

year *Prabuddha Bharata* found its permanent home when the Advaita Ashrama was founded on 19 March 1899 at Mayavati. The journal has ever since remained the official organ of the Ramakrishna Order and the chief courier of the Vedanta movement.

The main purpose of Swami Vivekananda in publishing this journal was to spread the message of Vedanta as a universal religion and a unified philosophy all over the world. Vedanta stands for Truth in all its living phases. In a poem contributed to the first issue of the revived journal Swamiji exhorted it to march on, awakening the masses, 'till Truth and Truth alone, in all its glory shines'.

This is the heritage that comes to you, our dear readers, through the columns of this journal. We hope you will make *Prabuddha Bharata* more widely known among your acquaintances.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the three types of space a knowledge of which is important in meditation.

In the first instalment of his article SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE TO THE WEST, Robert P. Utter gives a memorable vignette of Swamiji and then, as an introduction to Swamiji's message, discusses the socio-cultural scene that prevailed in America at the time of Swamiji's visit to that country. The author is a retired teacher of English and philosophy at the City College of San Francisco.

Swami Mukhyananda, the author of the poem LAGHU-VIVEKANANDAM, is an Acharya at the Probationers' Training Centre, Belur Math.

Swami Muktinathananda of Belur Math presents a beautiful account of the inspiring life of SWAMI ATMANANDA, one of the foremost disciples of Swami Vivekananda.

VEDANTA IN GERMANY by Kurt Friedrichs, who has been actively associated with the Ramakrishna Movement in West Germany for over three decades, is a brief survey of Vedantic influences in Germany.

SEEKING GOD THROUGH MEDITATION

(EDITORIAL)

Three kinds of space

The supreme Self is to be sought, *anveṣṭavyam*, says the Upaniṣad.¹ 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God', says Christ.² The main purpose of monastic life is seeking God, *quaerere Deum*, says St. Benedict, the founder of monasticism in the West. The question naturally arises, where is God to be sought?

Everything exists somewhere in space. Where there is an object there must be space too. In school textbooks matter is defined as that which has mass and occupies space. The space that physical objects occupy is called *sthūlakāśa* or *bāhyākāśa*, the gross or external space. Along with time, space has become a concept of fundamental importance in modern physics. One of the great achievements of Einstein was to relate the laws governing the motion of matter and energy to the intrinsic properties of space-time. This shows that physical space is not mere vacuity but is something dynamic.³ According to Vedānta space, known as *ākāśa*, is one of the five elements that constitute the whole universe. It is the first manifestation of the Supreme Self, it is the primordial element from which the other four elements evolve one after another.⁴

1. Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 8.7.1

2. Matthew 6:33.

3. Several theories have been propounded to account for the dynamic nature of physical space. The theory that space is filled with ether has been discarded after the Morley-Michelson experiment. The famous British physicist Paul Dirac has suggested that space is filled with electrons.

4. Cf. तस्माद् वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः संभूतः ।

आकाशाद् वायुः ... । *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.1.1.

This *ākāśa* is a subtle element. The gross *ākāśa* is actually a combination of all the five elements with the subtle *ākāśa* preponderating over the other four elements.

Thoughts are also objects and need space to exist. The space they occupy is the mind which is therefore called *cittākāśa* or *sūkṣmākāśa*, mental or subtle space. Ideas and images constantly arise in this space, remain there for a short time, and then disappear. Like the physical space the mental space too is not mere emptiness but is something dynamic.⁵

Subtler than this is pure consciousness which constitutes the *cidākāśa*, the space of consciousness. It is the infinite Reality which pervades and supports the other two *ākāśas*. About these three types of space Swami Vivekananda says :

Everything that we see or imagine or dream, we have to perceive in space. This is the ordinary space called *Mahākāśa* or elemental space. When a Yogi reads the thoughts of other men or perceives supersensuous objects, he sees them in another sort of space called *Chittākāśa*, the mental space. When perception has become objectless, and the soul shines in its own nature, it is called *Chidākāśa* or knowledge space.⁶

A spiritual aspirant must have a clear understanding of these three kinds of space. The knowledge of the gross or external space enables him to see the actions of men and women, the whole drama of life, in a cosmic perspective. In the astronomical vastness of the universe how insignificant human achievements and follies appear!

5. According to another view (supported by *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 3.8.4) the subtle space is pervaded and supported by a causal space (*kāraṇākāśa* or *mahākāraṇa*) which is identified with *Maya* or cosmic ignorance. From this standpoint, *Atman* or *Brahman* as pure consciousness (*cit*) is beyond all notions of space. This view is known as *vyomātīta-vāda*.

6. 'Rāja Yoga', ch. 4, in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) vol. 1, p. 162.

Knowledge of the mental space is necessary to understand the way thoughts influence us.

Sūkṣamākāśa

What we call mind is only a part of the vast cosmic mind known as Mahat. The space of the individual mind is called *cittākāśa* and that of the universal mind is called *mahadākāśa*. They are in dynamic contact with each other, and together constitute the subtle space, *sūkṣmākāśa*. All the great ideas—the laws of science, the concepts of philosophy, the principles of morality and the archetypes of religion—as well as the evil and destructive ideas (personified as the Devil in Semitic religions) exist in the Mahat. They enter our minds and influence us when we open the *cittākāśa* to them which we constantly do. Says Swami Vivekananda :

It is quite possible therefore that this atmosphere of ours is full of such thought pulsations, both good and evil. Every thought projected from every brain goes on pulsating, as it were, until it meets a fit object that will receive it. Any mind which is open to receive some of these impulses will take them immediately. So when a man is doing evil actions he has brought his mind to a certain state of tension and all the waves which correspond to that state of tension, and which may be said to be already in the atmosphere, will struggle to enter into his mind. That is why an evil doer generally goes on doing more and more evil. Such also will be the case with the doer of good ; he will open himself to all the good waves that are in the atmosphere and his good actions will also become intensified.⁷

How does the *cittākāśa* open to the Mahat? Two factors are involved in this process. One is the action of *samskāras* the residues of past experiences. A *samskāra* is not just an 'impression'; it is rather a small whirlpool or 'field' in Prāṇa and acts as a

magnetic field does. Thoughts are nothing but vibrations of Prāṇa. Just as countless radio waves are moving around us, so Prāṇa waves from all directions are constantly striking us. When a particular *samskāra* rises in the mind (we then call it a 'desire') it disturbs the Prāṇa in the *cittākāśa* and the whole mind starts vibrating in a certain frequency. Then the mind becomes receptive to any external Prāṇa wave (thought) that corresponds to this internal frequency. This phenomenon is quite similar to what physicists call resonance.'

The second process is the activity of the *cakras*, the centres of consciousness connected with the three Prāṇa-channels *idā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā*. Each *cakra* is the point at which a certain level of the individual mind and the corresponding level of the cosmic mind (Mahat) meet. Each *cakra* acts as a valve regulating the exchange of material between these two minds. The first three lower centres—*mūlādhāra*, *svādhiṣṭhāna* and *maṇipūra*—control the vital functions of the body and the lower mind. As a radio set can be tuned to any broadcasting station by operating a knob (connected to the thermionic valves inside), so the lower *cakras* can be operated to receive good or bad thought waves. As a matter of fact, this is what everyone is constantly doing. Since both the action of the *samskāras* and the action of the *cakras* go on in the unconscious, most people are seldom aware of all these processes. It is good to remember that behind every good or bad thought there is a mental mechanism operated by us. Good and bad thoughts disturb us only because we allow it consciously or unconsciously.

We are not only receiving Prāṇa waves from outside but are also constantly generating our own thought waves and broadcasting them into the Mahat or cosmic mind. It is not possible to meditate unless these two processes are stopped. The influx of

7. 'Karma Yoga', ch. 6, in *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 82.

external thought currents must be checked first, and then the rise of *samskāras* must be prevented. An advanced yogi can perceive an incoming thought wave and reject it. He can close the lower *cakras* and make his mind as still as a block of solid glass, or he can withdraw his Self completely from all contact with the world. Then his mind ceases to receive or emit thought waves. There is an interesting Zen story which illustrates this capacity.

Hui Chung, who was Zen Master to the emperor Su Tsung of the Tang dynasty, was highly respected by the emperor, as well as by all the Zen Buddhists of China. One day a famous Indian monk named 'Great Ear Tripitaka' arrived at the capital. This monk was said to be able to read other people's minds without the slightest difficulty or hesitation. Word of his accomplishment having reached the emperor, the Indian monk was summoned to the royal palace to demonstrate his powers before the Zen master... The following dialogue took place.

Hui Chung: 'Tell me where does my mind go now?'

Tripitaka: 'Your reverence is the Zen master of a nation; how can you go to West Ssu Chuan to watch the boat races?'

Hui Chung: 'Tell me, where does my mind go now?'

Tripitaka: 'Your reverence is the Zen master of a nation; how can you go to the bridge of Tien Ching to watch the monkeys at play?'

After a moment's silence Hui Chung asked him, 'Now, where does my mind go?' This time Tripitaka concentrated with intense effort for a long time, but could not detect any thought of the Zen master. Whereupon Hui Chung retorted, 'You ghost of a wild fox! Where is your telepathic power now?'⁸

What the Zen master did was to close the doors of his *cittākāśa* and make it *vṛtti-śūnya*, devoid of thought waves. During the early stages of spiritual life it is not possible to shut out all thoughts and attain stillness of mind. During this period what

the aspirant has to do is to learn to open himself more and more to spiritual thought currents. There are three disciplines which are of great help in this task. One is the company of holy men. Spiritual vibrations emanating from holy men purify and elevate our minds without any effort on our part.

The second discipline is Karma Yoga. Bad *samskāras* are to be controlled by good *samskāras*, and good *samskāras* can be produced only through good Karma. However, Karma Yoga is much more than mere doing good work. Hindu scriptures describe Karma Yoga as having four limbs: sacrifice or worship (*yajña*), charity (*dāna*), austerity (*tapas*) and the study of scriptures (*vedānuvacana* or *svādhyāya*).⁹ Sacrifice or worship is the surrender of *kartā*, *karma* and *karma-phala* (the ego, the work and the fruit of work) to the Cosmic Person known as Virāt; it gives a Godward turn to one's whole life. The root cause of all evil is attachment which means the enslavement of the will to sense objects; charity loosens the will. The purpose of austerity is to reduce the power of the lower instincts. The three main forms of austerity are: control of sex, control of food and control of speech; through these the three lower *cakras*—*mūlādhāra*, *svādhiṣṭhāna* and *maṇipūra* respectively—get controlled. Lastly, the study of scriptures removes ignorance from the mind and implants higher ideas in it. Thus Karma Yoga helps to control the mind in three ways: (1) it produces good *samskāras* which check the rise of bad *samskāras*; (2) it detaches the will and directs it Godward; (3) it controls the action of the lower centres.

⁹. Cf. तमेतं वेदानुवचनेन ब्राह्मणा विविदिषन्ति यज्ञेन दानेन तपसाऽनाशकेन ।

Bṛhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad 4.4.22.

तपस्-स्वाध्याय-ईश्वरप्रणिधानानि क्रियायोगः ।

Patañjali, Yoga-Sūtra 2.1,

⁸. Chang Chen-Chi *The Practice of Zen* (London; Rider and Co., 1960) pp. 41-42.

The third discipline is prayer. Prayer helps the aspirant in three ways. In the first place, by making him depend on God alone, prayer turns his mind away from external influences. We open ourselves to the evil influences of our environment only when we depend upon persons and things for our support. Secondly, prayer activates the heart-centre known as *anāhata cakra* which automatically de-activates the lower centres. Thirdly, prayer opens the mind not only to divine grace but also to the spiritual thought currents of saints. Illumined souls of the past and the present are continually sending forth their good wishes and blessings in the form of prayers directed towards the Divine. God acts as a great reflector reflecting these holy thoughts into the hearts of all those who pray to Him. Every deity and Avatara acts as a lens for focusing these spiritual thought waves. When you pray to Kṛṣṇa or Christ or Buddha, your mind becomes consonant with the minds of all those saints and devotees who worship Kṛṣṇa or Christ or Buddha, and receives their thoughts. Their pure thoughts purify your mind and strengthen your spiritual aspiration.

As prayer deepens, it transforms itself into meditation when all the doors of the mind get closed except the door to the heart through which a single stream of thought flows in silence like a beam of light.

Cidākāśa

We have seen that both the gross external space and the subtle mental space are material (*bhautika*), being made up of the elemental *ākāśa*. Transcending these two types of space, but supporting and pervading them, is the pure consciousness of the ultimate Reality known as *cidākāśa*.

Just as the mental space has two dimensions, the individual and the cosmic, so also the *cidākāśa* has two dimensions, the individual and the infinite. The individual

cidākāśa is called *daharākāśa* in the Upaniṣads. It is consciousness limited by the *buddhi*, the faculty of intelligence and intuition in man. It is identified with the cavity (*daharaḥ*) of the heart, not the physical heart but the spiritual heart. It is in this space that the Jīvātman or individual Self dwells. In fact, *daharākāśa* itself is the individual Self.

The infinite dimension of *cidākāśa* is known in the Upaniṣads as *parama-vyoman*;¹⁰ we may call it *paramākāśa* the Supreme Space. It is not a mere extension of the heart-space, for it permeates and supports the heart-space as the *antaryāmin* or Inner Controller. It is the consciousness of Hiraṇyagarbha, the Cosmic Soul. It is where the Yogi seeks to unite the individual spirit with the Supreme Spirit. It is where the Jñāni tries to merge his individuality. It corresponds to the *dharma-kāya* (transcendental body of Buddha) of the Mahāyāna devotional schools and the *śūnya* of Mādhyamika Buddhism. It is in this supreme *cidākāśa* that the Bhakta seeks the beloved of his heart, the Lord. It is out of this infinite consciousness that the great Gods and Avataras emerge; only the highest type of devotee in his most advanced stage of experience realizes this truth. The Upaniṣad says: 'Verily, what is called *ākāśa* is the revealer of Name and Form; that within which they are, is Brahman; that is immortal, that is Atman.'¹¹ A well-known devotional hymn of the Pāñcarātra Saṁhita says: 'Thou hast no colour, no form, no weapons, no particular abode. Yet Thou revealest Thyself unto Thy devotees

10. यो वेद निहितं गुहायां परमे व्योमन् ।

Taittirīya-Upaniṣad 2.1.1.

11. आकाशो वै नाम नामरूपयोर्निर्वहिता ते
यदन्तरा तद् ब्रह्म तदमृतं स आत्मा ।

Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 8.14.1.

in a personal form.’¹² Sri Ramakrishna explains this profound truth of mystical experience in a simple way :

Think of Brahman, Existence—Knowledge—Bliss Absolute as a shoreless ocean. Through the cooling influence, as it were, of the Bhakta’s love, the water has frozen at places into blocks of ice. In other words, God now and then assumes various forms for His lovers and reveals Himself to them as a Person. But with the rising of the Sun of knowledge, the blocks of ice melt. Then one doesn’t feel anymore that God is a Person, nor does one see God’s forms.¹³

Since the *paramākāśa* is self-luminous (for it is nothing but pure consciousness which is self-luminous) it is also called the Supreme Light, *param-jyoti*.¹⁴

The relation between the individual (*dahara*) and cosmic (*parama*) aspects of *cidākāśa* becomes important in the advanced stages of meditation. The fact that Bādarāyaṇa in his *Brahma-Sūtra* has devoted eight aphorisms to this topic shows how important it is.¹⁵ In the Upaniṣads it forms a separate path of meditation under the name *dahara-vidyā*. Most meditations practised in modern times are based on this ancient technique. We shall discuss it later on.

Doors of perception and power

We have seen that there are three kinds of space. Before proceeding further it is necessary to digress a little in order to discuss the properties of these spaces through which the soul has to pass. Each space is connected to the next one through certain

‘door’. The five sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin—are the doors which connect the external gross space (*sthūlākāśa*) with the inner subtle space (*sūkṣmākāśa*); through them we communicate with the external world. The inner space is divided into that of the individual mind (*cittākāśa*) and that of the cosmic mind (*mahadākāśa*); the three lower *cakras* are the doors which inter-connect these two compartments ; through them our thoughts stream out to other people and their thoughts enter our minds. This mental space is connected to the third type of space called *cidākāśa* through the *buddhi* or spiritual heart which corresponds to the *anāhata cakra* of the Tantras. The *cidākāśa* itself is divided into two : the space in the heart known as *daharākāśa*, and the infinite realm of divine consciousness known as *parama-vyoman*. The spiritual heart acts as a chamber with two doors : one door connecting the mental space with the space in the heart, and the other door opening the heart into the realm of infinite consciousness.

Two points are to be noted in this context. One is that each ‘door’ represents a certain threshold or transitional point where man’s consciousness undergoes a sudden change. Each door leads to a new world of experience. Secondly, there are two types of doors : *ūrdhva-mukha*, that which opens vertically ; and *pārśva-mukha*, that which opens sideways. The former type leads to higher and higher experiences, while the latter leads to varieties of experience in each plane.

Each *ākāśa* is a plane of consciousness which holds in its vastness a limitless store of experiences. Look at the outer physical space. From the atoms and grains of sand to the stars and galaxies, how many objects it contains, everything governed by the great laws of nature which are indeed the properties of the physical space. Humanity has not been able to exhaust the experiences of the physical world nor will ever be.

12. न ते रूपं न चाकारो नायुधानि न चास्पदम् ।

तथाऽपि पुरुषाकारो भक्तानां त्वं प्रकाशसे ॥

Jitem-te Stotra 1.5.

13. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1974) p. 78.

14. Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 8.3.4 and 8.12.3.

15. Cf. *Brahma-Sūtra* 1.3.14-21.

When we come to the mental space we meet with a similar phenomenon—a limitless number of ideas, images, symbols and experiences constantly bombarding our minds. Most people know nothing beyond these. But the mental space is the realm of Prāṇa, and by controlling Prāṇa it is possible to open oneself to the subtler regions of the cosmic mind and acquire different kinds of psychic powers. The ancient yogic term for these subtle planes is *madhumati* or *madhu-bhūmi*, 'the plane of honey'. The psychic powers that come from this region are called *madhu-pratīka*, 'honeyed images'. According to Patañjali these powers are of two types. One group consists of the eight supernatural powers and physical strength obtained through the practice of concentration on the five elements.¹⁶ The other group consists of three psychic powers acquired through concentration on the five sense-organs.¹⁷

When a yogi transcends the ordinary mind and reaches the plane of *cidākāśa* certain higher spiritual powers (like omniscience) come to him unsought, in accordance with the laws of the spiritual world. The ancient technical term for these spiritual powers is *viśoka* or 'sorrowless'.¹⁸ Unlike the psychic powers called *madhupratīkas*, these higher spiritual powers (*viśoka*) are not meant for enjoyment and cannot be misused. Only a few very advanced saints and yogis ever

attain them, and they use these powers with great caution and only for the spiritual progress of others. They are the great awakener of mankind.

A person who has acquired the capacity to transcend even these spiritual powers reaches the highest state of perfection known in Vedānta as *jīvanmukti*, and in ancient Yoga as *param-prasaṅkhyāna*. In Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures this state is called *dharma-megha* or 'cloud of virtue' which is the last and highest of the ten stages on the way to Buddhahood.¹⁹ It is only when a person attains this tenth stage that he will become a *Bodhisattva*. At this stage he has two options before him : either to give up his body and attain final liberation (*kaivalya* or *pari-nirvāṇa*), or to return to the world in order to help others to find spiritual enlightenment. All the great religious teachers of mankind chose the latter alternative. Sri Ramakrishna has spoken of them as *īśvarakoṭis*.

In his commentary on Patañjali's Yoga Aphorisms, Vyāsa divides spiritual aspirants into four categories depending on the planes of experience they have attained. 1. *Prathama-kalpika* : includes those who are struggling in meditation. 2. *Madhu-bhūmika* : includes those who have got some awakening and are passing through the plane of psychic powers (known as *madhu-pratīka*). 3. *Prajñā-jyotis* : includes those illumined souls who are advancing in the *cidākāśa* and find higher spiritual powers (called *viśoka*) coming to them. 4. *Ati-krānta bhāvanīya* : includes the few fully illumined Jīvanmuktas, who are freed from all bonds, who have risen above even the desire to use spiritual powers, and are waiting for the final dissolution of the body and the mind.²⁰

16. These eight supernatural powers (*aṣṭa-aiśvarya*) are: *anīmā* (capacity to become very small in size) *laghimā* (to become very light) *mahimā* (to assume an immense size) *prāpti* (the power which brings all objects within his reach) *prākāmya* (unobstructed willpower) *vasitvam* (to bring people and things under one's control) *īśitvam* (lordship) *yatra-kāma-avasāyitvam* (materialization of one's wishes). Cf. Patañjali, *Yoga-Sūtra* 3. 45.

17. These three powers are: *manojavitvam* (to travel faster than thought) *vikaraṇa-bhāva* (telepathy and clairvoyance) and *pradhāna-jaya* (control over Nature). Cf. *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.48 and Vyāsa's commentary on it.

18. Cf. Vyāsa's commentary on *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.49.

19. *Yoga-Sūtra* 4.28. Also see Vyāsa's commentary on *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.2. Evidently, Patañjali has borrowed the term 'Dharma-megha' from Buddhist sources.

20. Vyāsa's commentary on *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.51.

The purpose of the above digression is to make our discussion comprehensive enough to include the full range of man's mental powers and possibilities. Seeking God, however, is a straight path. Any deviation from this path in the form of seeking psychic powers, etc. is a waste of time and energy and an obstacle to the attainment of the highest goal of life, as Patañjali himself has clearly pointed out.²¹ Now to return to our main topic, meditation is not doing something extraordinary. It is only an attempt to extend the natural states of awareness to the highest dimension and realize one's real divine identity.

The three ākāśas and three avasthās

From the Advaitic standpoint nothing exists except Brahman, and so *cidākāśa* is the only real space, the other two spaces being unreal. In the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* the three types of space are described as follows: 'That space which is outside the body is indeed Brahman. The same space is indeed the space inside the body. The same space is the space of the heart. This Brahman is all-filling and unchanging.'²²

Commenting on the above passage, Śaṅkarācārya points out that the three types of space correspond to the three *avasthās* or states through which the daily life of a man passes. In the *jāgrat* or waking state he remains mostly in the external, gross space. In the *svapna* or dream state his 'I' moves in the mental, subtle space. In the *suṣupti* or deep-sleep state his I-consciousness is withdrawn into the *daharākāśa* in the heart. But, owing to the covering of ignorance, it does not come into touch with

the *parama-vyoman*, the infinite dimension of *cidākāśa*. That is why nobody gets up from sleep with the feeling that he is the Infinite.

In meditation we move from one space to another consciously. When we sit for meditation, our first struggle is to detach the *cittākāśa* from the external space. We need an inner space to install our Chosen Deity or some other object of meditation, but the distractions of the outside world constantly intrude into it so much so that we are unable to find any space inside at all. But through long practice as we succeed in eliminating the distractions, we will gain a clear understanding of the mental space, and then we will be able to maintain a steady stream of a single thought consciously. Whereas in the dream state thoughts occur at random without voluntary control, in meditation the whole thought production is under the control of the will which chooses and maintains only a single thought current called *dhyāna-pratyaya*. This marks the second stage in meditation.

In the next stage the I-consciousness moves into the *daharākāśa* in the heart, and there shines in its own intrinsic effulgence as the Jīvātman. During deep sleep the soul being enveloped in ignorance does not gain this knowledge. Moreover, in deep sleep there is no further progress and the soul returns to the dream and waking states. But in the third stage of meditation the soul becomes aware of a vaster state of existence and of its real nature as a part of the Paramātman, the Supreme Self that fills all space with His luminous presence. The struggle of the Jīvātman to transcend its limitations and attain union with the Paramātman marks the fourth stage of meditation.

Thus meditation takes us through different types of space—from the gross to the subtle and from the subtle to the transcendental. And as we move from one space to another, our consciousness undergoes transformation. Each type of space stands for a

21. ते समाधावुपसर्गा व्युत्थाने सिद्धयः ।

Yoga-Sūtra 3.37.

22. यद्वै तद् ब्रह्मेतीदं वाव तद्योऽयं बहिर्धा
पुरुषादाकाशो ... पूर्णमप्रवर्ति ... ।

Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 3.12.7-9.

particular level of consciousness, and each 'door' marks the threshold at which the self or I-consciousness assumes a higher dimension. Seeking God through meditation is not like seeking somebody in the outside

world. It is continual process of transformation of the self, beginning with the ego and ending in the Supreme Self.

(To be concluded)

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE TO THE WEST

ROBERT P. UTTER

In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, 'Whenever virtue declines and evil increases, I incarnate Myself to rescue the holy, to destroy evil and to establish righteousness.'¹ History shows that from time to time world teachers have arisen who have done just this. Swami Vivekananda was such a world teacher. He travelled all over the world and taught in both the East and the West. He always taught what was needed by the country and culture he was in. His teachings in the West were formulated to meet the special needs of the West, just as his teachings in the East were formulated for the East.

He admired the West for its energy, its enterprise, its enthusiasm, its accomplishments in practical affairs. But he was not deceived by the fact that the accomplishments of the modern West were mostly in the realm of wealth and physical comforts. He saw that beneath its mask of easy optimism the West had desperate need of something more than material prosperity and efficiency. He knew that this need was neither physical nor intellectual, but spiritual.

He admired and loved the Orient also, especially India, for it was the land of his birth and he was always a great patriot but was based on spiritual perception. He loved the Orient for its age-old tradition of renunciation and its whole-souled pursuit

of spiritual realization. He knew of its vast accomplishments in that area, of its long line of ṛṣis from time immemorial down to the present who have immersed themselves in the Infinite and turned their backs on the finite. But he saw that this too needed correction, for to turn one's back on the finite completely is to forget the vow of the world teachers, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Rāmas and the Kṛṣṇas, and the Śamkarācāryas and the Caitanyas, and all the sung and unsung sages who have vowed to help all beings attain enlightenment. He knew that India needed some of the practicality of the West, and that the West needed the spirituality of the East.

As a world teacher of both East and West Swami Vivekananda knew that meditation and realization must be put to practical use for the relief of the sufferings of the world, and that Buddha's basic pronouncement that all relative experience is suffering would be of no avail without the opening of the gates to liberation or nirvana for as many illusion-bound souls as possible. He knew that Buddha's last temptation under the Bo tree had been to refrain from teaching anyone what he had realized, for the Swami himself had felt the pull of that very same temptation. He had asked his Master, Ramakrishna, to grant him the boon of staying in samadhi for many days at a time. Ramakrishna knew that this desire, worthy as it might be in itself, was not the destiny

1. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 4.7-8.

of the world teacher Swami Vivekananda was to become, and that this desire must be given an even higher direction and turned into the desire to help mankind achieve illumination. When the future Swami Vivekananda finally achieved *nirvikalpa samādhi*, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Now you know all. But this knowledge will be locked in a chest, and I will have the key. Not till you have done my work will you have it again.'² All of Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings must be studied in this light: he was doing his Master's work. Jesus said, 'I am about my Father's business.'³ Swami Vivekananda once said he felt as though divine hands were holding him and guiding him in everything he did,⁴ and when he was at a loss to find new material to lecture on while in the United States, he often would hear the voice of Sri Ramakrishna telling him at great length what to say.⁵ This means that Swami Vivekananda was a world teacher who was rooted in another world teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, and that he cannot be understood apart from his Master. It also means that his world-wide work was never merely abstract and theoretical, but was always the intensely practical job of bringing God to man and awakening man to God.

We can see, then, that Swamiji's teachings cannot be studied casually, as isolated lectures, as mere speculative theory, or as something occurring in a vacuum but rather must be understood and related to his whole teachings and to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, as part of the world-teachings of the triple world-teacher incarnation we can only call the Ramakrishna-Holy Mother-Vivekananda constellation phenomenon, a phenomenon of incarnated divinity unique

so far as we know in the whole history of mankind. Nothing that Swamiji said is a casual remark; everything has the deepest significance, for it is God's voice speaking to our age.

What, then, does he say to us in the West that we urgently need to know, and to act upon and to take to heart so completely that we change the fabric of our lives by ingesting it into our deepest being?

Before we can appreciate the significance of his message we must consider what kind of a man he was, and what the needs of the West were and still are, for the quality of his being was as much a part of his message as the content, and the needs of his hearers were equally much a part of his message, so that in his case the man, the needs of the hearers, and the message were one.

The man

To try to describe Swamiji is impossible, for unlike ordinary man he was not a single kind of man but was the totality of mankind in one, the potential of mankind realized in human flesh. Ordinary men realize in their lives only a few qualities of the universal man, but Swamiji realized all possible qualities to the maximum degree. Ordinary men with their single-track minds can be compared to flashlights, or, at most, searchlights, that send out a single beam in one direction. But Swamiji was like the sun shining in all directions at once. To our single-track minds he may appear contradictory, but in him these contradictions are only seeming contradictions, complementary qualities and meanings, not outright logical contradictions. Thus he lived and taught not one path or yoga exclusively, not even one path predominately, but all paths in one. He did not slight one path for another; he was not lacking in reason, nor in emotion, nor in action, nor in meditation, but he taught to both East

² *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) p. 145.

³ Luke, 2:49.

⁴ *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* p. 595.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 332.

and West the equal practice of all four paths as far as such practice is possible for each individual, and in him this practice became the absolute fusion of the four paths into one. Reason without love is dry; reason without action is impractical; reason without meditation is ineffectual. And so one could go through each path, showing how each lacks something essential if the others are missing. Thus like a four-faced divinity he looked in all directions at once and was a whole man and taught others to be whole.

There was indeed an air of divinity about him. Everyone who saw him felt it. No one near him could avoid feeling the force of his divine power almost like a shock-wave. Yet through all this extraordinary nimbus of vibrant power that seemed to envelop him in a cloud of fire, there hovered an infinite gentleness too, like the sleeping sea, like the sunlight, like moonlight on snowy peaks. He was a poised thunderbolt forever humming an immortal song like a murmuring stream. He radiated this singing power as the sun shines. It made his abstract, intellectual teachings visible, almost palpable. When he spoke of the soul and of God, the superconscious experience behind these words could be felt by everyone, and everyone's mind became permanently expanded and changed. Only a divine incarnation could do this as completely as he did.

He was a divine incarnation, as were Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother, but he was a divine incarnation in his own right, not just moon shining by a borrowed light. Every day and every moment he proved this to his companions, his friends, his hearers, and his disciples. One example will suffice to illustrate his divine powers which he used only for the good of mankind.

One day in Chicago in March of 1894 the French opera singer Emma Calve went to see Swami Vivekananda. It was an extraordinary meeting in every way. She was in a state of extreme desperation over several

personal tragedies, the most recent being the sudden and untimely accidental death of her daughter by fire. A friend suggested she see Swami Vivekananda, for his fame as a healer of souls had spread, but all that Calve wanted to do was to commit suicide. Several times she tried to drown herself in the lake, but some unseen power seemed to turn her steps toward the house where Swamiji was staying. Each time, however, she went away without ringing the bell. Finally one time she did ring, and in terrible agitation entered the room where Swamiji was sitting at his desk. Without raising his eyes he said, 'Come in, my child. Don't be afraid. What a troubled atmosphere you have about you. Be calm. It is essential.' He told her things about herself which only she knew, although, as she says, he didn't even know her name. When she expressed amazement at this, he only smiled as though she were a child asking a foolish question. Jesus did the same thing with the Samaritan woman at the well. Swamiji's advice to Calve was to be cheerful, not to brood on sorrow, to build up her health, and to transmute her emotions into 'some form of eternal expression'. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that whoever drank of the water he gave would never thirst again. We do not know if the Samaritan woman was permanently changed by her meeting with Jesus, though we naturally surmise that she was. But we know from Calve's own account that she was changed, and that she was changed immediately and permanently, for she left him cheered, and she soon became peaceful, vivacious, and happy.⁶ Note that Swamiji did not find fault with her, or call her a sinner, or tell her to give up her operatic career. Instead, he told her to

6. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1966) pp. 120-2; and *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, pp. 350-1.

spiritualize her art, and, besides seeing deeply into her life and character by super-normal means, he managed to staunch the bleeding wound of her grief and suffering and to lift her mind upward into joyfulness, not by words of consolation or by abstract philosophy, but simply by the power of his overwhelming spirituality. He put out the raging storm of her grief as water puts out fire. He did not lecture; he gave.

Swamiji gave the vision of God to all who could take it, as much as the small vessels of finite minds could hold. He poured out God in abundance, as a person pours out tea from a pot into cups. Swamiji poured God all over the world on everyone's head. Words were the smallest part of his message.

The needs of the West

But there was a message in words for the West as well as a superverb one. It was a message hand-crafted to meet the special needs of the West. It can be better understood when we understand those special needs in the light of the time, the end of the 19th century.

To begin with, the West was ignorant of the vast spiritual and cultural history and heritage of India. The West regarded all Orientals as so-called 'heathens' who worshipped 'idols', and who followed either a godless religion or one with many gods, both of which were high crimes to Westerners, who did not realize that many in the West were godless, and many were polytheists without knowing it. For polytheism takes many forms other than the worship of images in temples; the more common form is that of according the status of reality to the apparent world of multiple sense objects. According to that definition Western man is just as polytheistic as anyone else. The West, however, did not realize that human beings are essentially the same the world

over, for they knew practically nothing about Oriental culture. Among the majority of Westerners at that time there seemed to be very little interest in any Oriental culture beyond the fad of collecting Oriental rugs, dishes, furniture, and art.

But there were, of course, some beginnings of knowledge seeping in among a few scholars. Translations of Chinese and Indian literature were beginning to trickle in slowly, in small quantities. Max Mueller and Paul Deussen were German Indologists who made translations and wrote erudite studies of the Upanishads and the Gita. Edwin Arnold also was a Sanskrit scholar who wrote the life of Buddha in English poetry and made a poetic translation of the Gita. Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman knew the Gita and other works of Hindu religion and some Chinese philosophy as translated into English or other Western languages. All these men were introducing Hinduism to the West, but without a living guru to teach it, the ideas remained ideas only. None of these men brought the problem out in the open or seemed even vaguely aware of it. For centuries the West had taken the word 'mystic' literally and had hidden their mystics away out of sight. The West had forgotten what mystics the world over always taught, that God is to be seen, tasted, eaten, and enjoyed, not just talked about abstractly. So even these six men, sincere as they were, remained essentially sleepers unaware of the need to awaken or of the means of awakening. Only Thoreau stirred uneasily in his sleep. Whitman and Emerson were too optimistic to feel the uneasiness of the problem. Thoreau went to Walden Pond to try to live an ascetic, withdrawn and spiritual life. How well he succeeded may be judged from his book *Walden*. He wrote with great insight as well as poetry about his experiences, outward experiences, that is, only vaguely hinting about possible inward ones. Yet

one feels that he yearned for something he could not quite find. He recognized Chinese and Hindu religion as revealing unsurpassed heights of sublime wisdom, but his longing was undirected, and it remained largely unaware and subliminal. The peace of spirit which he longed for he could not find, not even at Walden Pond. Thoreau longed for more than he knew; what he really longed for, knowingly or unknowingly, was a guru to make the word of God flesh, to bring the living fire from heaven to mankind, to teach him and the world to find true peace. The whole Western world was deep-sunk in its dogmatic slumbers, and it needed a dynamic and heroic prince to awaken it and rescue it from its prison of isolationism. Swami Vivekananda was that prince, and he was sorely needed. But he was not yet born in the flesh at the time Thoreau lived at Walden Pond.

There was, of course, more to it than this. The history of Western ideas shows that mysticism always took a back seat to empiricism and rationalism in the West. This is not to say that mysticism was not always present in the West, but it was never emphasized. Many a little village church in Europe and in the Americas is to this day vibrant with a spiritual presence that has been invoked by the prayers and meditations of the devout over the centuries. And many a Western saint has realized God without worrying in the least about abstract philosophical problems. But the dominant mood of Western culture has been one of materialism and scepticism, a mood that has prevailed since Western civilization began with the Greeks. From Plato and Aristotle on, reason has dominated Western man's efforts to solve the riddles of life, and sense experience was emphasized by the Greek and Roman materialists, Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius, but reason was important for them too. There was much controversy as to which was more important, reason or sense experience. In

the Middle Ages, though the battle between sense experience and reason went on in the scholastic struggle between 'nominalism' and 'realism', faith replaced reason as the main method or instrument for reaching truth, not a living faith based on mystic experience but a static faith that led nowhere because it was dictated by the rigid orthodoxy of a dogmatic church. After the Renaissance and the Reformation threw off that yoke to some extent, reason and sense experience again took up their age-old battle for supremacy. Neither won. The battle only produced a sterile scepticism that resulted in the strange attempt at compromise by Kant.

I call Kant's compromise 'strange' because Kant himself was completely ambivalent about the whole problem, and he produced monster with two heads pulling in opposite ways from each other. He wanted to construct something positive, but he ended up with something completely negative. What he set out to do was to establish a firm basis for modern science; what he actually did was to cast doubt not only on science but on morality and religion as well. In his search for certainty in all fields he pulled the rug out from under all certainty. Like a blind man groping for a path in a primeval jungle he found nothing. In spite of the growing scepticism in philosophy, confidence exuded from every pore of the 18th century Western man. It was the age of reason, and of budding science and industry. Kant wanted to produce a philosophy that would justify this optimism in the face of the growing philosophical scepticism. But he couldn't produce it. Scepticism won in Kant's system, but not completely. Reason and sense experience also won limited victories. It was compromise all the way around. And like all compromises, no one was very happy with it.

What Kant finally drew up, like an arbitration agreement among opposing parties,

was that sense experience and reason, both, tell us all we know of the external world, but they do not tell us the ultimate truth, since all they reveal to us is moulded by the forms of the senses and reason, like cookie cutters that cut the dough into shapes before we ever see it, so that all we know of the dough is the shapes of the cookie cutters. The dough as it is in itself we can never know. This is a faint reflection of the Taoist, Sāṃkhyan, Buddhist, and Vedantic views, but Kant says that not only matter or the 'thing-in-itself' is in principle unknowable, but also the soul-in-itself (the 'transcendental unity of apperception') and God were also unknowable. The transcendental soul we can *postulate* as the unity of the individual knower, and God we can *postulate* as the ultimate ground for all existences and the ground for the moral order as well, that is, as the rewarder and punisher of good and evil deeds after death, but neither the soul-in-itself nor God can be proved or known by reason or experience at all. This view of Kant's left the arrogance of both the empiricists and the rationalists in shambles, as well as the arrogance of Western man.

Kant shocked and changed the Western world, but that world found ways of forgetting him because his picture of human life was too painful to contemplate. The 19th century was born into this world of Kant, but already the scene was changing. What Kant's view amounted to was that what cannot in principle be known is only a kind of maya, a vague 'beyond' that can make no conceivable difference to us. If we postulate this unknowable something as reality, then what we do 'know' through the senses and reason is itself only maya and we have no knowledge of anything at all. And if not only matter is in principle unknowable but also the soul and God, then we are indeed reduced to a limbo of total unknowing than which there could be no

greater hell. Kant is like one who tries to reach the stars in a spaceship, and voyages into space until his fuel is burnt out, where he drifts forever, a Flying Dutchman of the modern West lost in the outer darkness. Fortunately, perhaps, most man never heard of Kant, and probably could not have understood him if they had. Among intellectuals Kant was soon forgotten, though his effect lingered long. Every philosopher since Kant has tried to answer him and each one thought he had, but no one succeeded until Swamiji. Science and industry created enough new practical problems to bury him in oblivion. The romantic movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries created a diversion by trying to answer the Kantian problem in a new way: by urging emotion as the primary instrument of knowledge. Through emotion, the romantics said, we could find truth better than by reason or the senses by themselves. They went far beyond Kant and pointed up the burning question: how can we pierce the veil of nature by the love of beauty and reach God, the indwelling spirit of nature? Shelley's poem 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', and Keats' poem 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' express the romantic yearning for the truth which is beauty, and the despair at not ever being able to attain more than fleeting glimpses of it. It would take a bigger man than any of them to answer that problem, and that man was to be Swamiji, and answer it he did. But what the romantic movement did was to change the rules and play a new game entirely. Kant was thus left behind, 'an old man in a dry month, ... waiting for rain', as the poet T. S. Eliot was later to epitomize the modern age.⁷ Modern man has forgotten about Kant, but he carries Kantianism to its

7. T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 'Gerontion' (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952) p. 21.

logical conclusion by finding God to be not needed any more.

But there was much more to the needs of the West in Swamiji's day than this. The God that many in the West felt was no longer needed was not so much Kant's abstract postulate for the possibility of morality, nor the loving Father as taught by Jesus, but the harsh lawgiver, judge, and condemner of souls that has dominated Western religions from ancient times. The religions of the West have always been dualistic religions, not only in the sense of teaching a dualism between God and the individual soul, but in a much deeper sense. All Western religions have always taught the terrifying dualism of both God and the Devil, both Heaven and Hell, both the Holy and the unholy, both white and black magic, and, most terrifying of all, the exclusive alternative of either salvation or damnation, a damnation which lasts—*forever*. No spiritual prospect could be more horrifying. For those who are damned, hell is an eternity of regrets and remorse, to say nothing of unmitigated torture, with no hope of redemption—ever. For the damned and doomed, the Redeemer does not live at all. Thus for centuries and centuries Western cultures laboured and agonized under this lifelong threat held over them by the various ecclesiastical authorities, lifelong because it was held over each penitent's head from birth to death. Since the human condition is what it is, that is, we are universally vulnerable to temptations of all sorts, who could ever be certain of salvation under the inextricably intricate rules set up by the various ecclesiastical bodies? And without the hope of salvation, what life is worth living? For the whole history of Western civilization the threat of damnation has yawned its earthquake chasms beneath everyone's feet without exception, and no one has felt safe from it. This religious terrorism was above all what the West needed to be saved from.

On the American scene we have the Western preoccupation with sin and damnation exemplified in two writers, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Mark Twain. Hawthorne was obsessed with the Puritanical obsession with sin, particularly that of adultery. He saw no way out of the tangled maze of brooding on sin until the very brooding becomes the worst sin of all. He expresses man's inextricable involvement in sin in his story 'The Birthmark', in which the attempt to remove a symbolic birthmark from an otherwise blemishless face results in the patient's death. Twain, though outwardly antireligious, was inwardly just as religious as Hawthorne, and just as obsessed with sin. But for him sin was mostly man's inhumanity to man. His vituperative castigations of the whole human race on the cruelty shown by all men to each other is as bitter and obsessive as any of Hawthorne's morbid broodings. His satires on all Western religions reveal that the West taught a cruel Devil and a still more cruel God. Like Hawthorne he saw no way out. Each writer was self-condemned to his own private hell from which he never escaped, for each saw humanity as universally condemned to suffering. Both writers express the total sense of the blindness of the 'lost generations' of the 19th century who groped in the dark without a ray of light to guide them. Light was badly needed in the West, a genuine spiritual sunrise, not a false, phosphorescent marshglow.

Yes, there was a real need, an agonizing need for something. But before Swamiji came, no one seemed to know just what was needed. Many felt nothing was needed, didn't we have everything, such as science and industry, a new continent we Americans had conquered, and conquests and colonies for England and Europe all over the rest of the world? The world-wide picture of the 'white man's burden' was complete—except for just one thing: the West, for all its busybodying around on a world-wide scale,

knew not one thing about the cultures and religions of any of the peoples it so cavalierly dominated. Towards the end of the 19th century the culture of the West was drifting in a shoreless void and did not even know that it drifted. But drift it did, lost, eyeless, and apparently forsaken.

There are two famous statues in the world. They are famous not only as great works of art but also as highly significant symbols. One is the great Buddha of Kamakura, Japan; the other is Rodin's 'The Thinker'. The Buddha statue expresses the infinite serenity and exalted wisdom and compassion not only of the Buddha but of all Oriental religion. The Rodin statue of 'The Thinker' epitomizes the Western manner of life and philosophy. The Buddha statue represents the Buddha in meditation, but it is the serene, super-conscious meditation taught in the East. Rodin's statue, on the other hand, is very expressive of what meditation means to the West: a strenuous, active kind of discursive thinking, a battleground of ideas. The Buddha is sitting upright, balanced, poised, seemingly floating in the infinite peace of nirvana. The Thinker of Rodin is also seated, but is leaning forward, elbow on knee, chin on a clenched hand, with furrowed brow, eyes staring forward fiercely into space. He is muscular like an athlete, and his attitude of puzzlement suggests the restlessness and the struggle of wrestling with mental problems that perhaps never will be solved. He is a contender, a debater, a fighter, not a man of peace. Buddha represents the ultimate fulfilment, the peace that passeth understanding.

I do not mean to say that the East has not had its share of active warriors—look at Arjuna, and all his friends and relations. But the warriors and kings of the East often had the advantage of the close friendship and wise counselling of some incarnation of God such as Arjuna had in Kṛṣṇa, or some illumined sage such as King Janaka had in Yājñavalkya. That is the difference: in the East warriors and kings were often guided by illumined seers and sometimes were themselves illumined, as was King Janaka, or sometimes, even, were incarnations of God, as was King Rāma. Whether these stories are myths or not makes no difference. They have flown high as the exalted ideals of the East for countless centuries.

Kipling said, 'East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,' and perhaps he was right, up to a certain point of time—but they met, during Kipling's lifetime, in 1893, when Swami Vivekananda came to speak at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The Buddha of the East met the Thinker of the West—and what a fateful meeting that was, at least for the West! His coming changed the course of human history, for it revealed that the West was no longer forsaken by hope.⁸

(To be concluded)

8. For a more detailed and scholarly discussion of the general climate of opinion in the West preceding Swami's visit, see Gargi (Marie Louise Burke), 'Science, Religion, and Swami Vivekananda', *Prabuddha Bharata*, March, 1979, pp. 95-102, and April, pp. 169-182. For a general history of Western philosophy see B.A.G. Fuller, *A History of Philosophy*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1952).

॥ लघुविवेकानन्दम् ॥

VIVEKANANDA—A BRIEF PROFILE

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

(१)

I

रामायणमहाकाव्ये रघुवंशगतामपि ।
विवेकानन्दसादृश्यां दृष्ट्वा राघववर्णनाम् ॥१॥

तादृशाजन्मशुद्धस्य चाफलोदयकर्मिणः ।
आसमुद्रपरिव्राजश्चाविश्वचरितार्थिनः ॥२॥

सद्गुणैः सुमनाभूत्वा चापलाय प्रचोदितः ।
स्वान्तःसुखाय तु स्तोत्रं लघुमेतत् करोमि वै ॥३॥

मन्दः स्फूर्तिवशोभूत्वा स्तोतुकामो महात्मनः ।
महल्लभ्यां क्रियासिद्धौ करिष्याम्यतिसाहसम् ॥४॥

अथवा कृतवाग्द्वारे स्वकाव्ये पूर्वसूरिभिः ।
पुष्पेषुप्रोतसूत्रस्य सादृश्येनास्ति मे कृतिः ॥५॥
वाल्मीकि-कालिदासाभ्यां श्लोकान्-शब्दान्-समाहृतान् ।
ग्रथित्वात्र च मालायामर्पयामि तयोः कृते ॥६॥

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II

दत्ताख्यवंशसंभूतो विश्वनाथ इति श्रुतः ।
श्रीभुवनेश्वरीख्याता भार्या तस्य पतिव्रता ॥७॥

तस्या विशुद्धचित्तायाः प्रसूतः शुद्धिमत्तरः ।
नरेन्द्रनाथबालार्को दीप्यन् सर्वा महीमिव ॥८॥

1. In the great epic poem *Rāmāyaṇa* (by Vālmīki) and in the *Raghuvamśa* (of Kālidāsa) (both in Sanskrit) finding some descriptions of Śrī Rāma (Rāghava) fittingly applicable to Vivekananda ;—

2. Who, like Śrī Rāma, was pure from birth and always strove till all work bore fruit, and, like him, wandered the earth and crossed the seas to accomplish his world-mission ;—

3. Thrilled by (these and other of) his great qualities and impelled by fancy, for my own inner delight do I compose this brief hymn.

4. Though I am no scholar, inspired with the thought of singing the glories of the Great One, I am entering on this task rashly, a task which only the accomplished ones can achieve.

5. However, my work is simply like the string that threads the wordy-blossoms from the works of the great poets of old.

6. Gathering the beautiful verses and words (applicable to Vivekananda) from the works of Vālmīki and Kālidāsa, I am fastening this poetic wreath and dedicate it in their name.

7. In the family line of the Dattas was born the esteemed Vishwanath, who had a chaste and devoted wife in Sri Bhuvaneswari Devi.

8. To her of pure and noble heart was born Narendranath, who was purer still, as if he were the morning sun lighting up the whole world.

कालिकानगरीजातो रामकृष्णपदाश्रितः ।
स्वलीलया जगत्त्रातुमाविर्भूतमहेश्वरः ॥६॥

बाल्यैवाधिगतो विद्या यौवने साधनारतः ।
प्रौढे लोकहितेमग्नः स्वेच्छयान्ते दिवंगतः ॥१०॥

विवेकानन्दनाम्नासौ रघुनाथ इवापरः ।
उत्तीर्य सलिलं सिन्धोः धर्मसंस्थापने रतः ॥११॥

(३)

नातिदीर्घसुगात्रश्च दृढग्रीवो महाहनुः ।
सुशिरा सुविशालाक्षः सुललाटः सुविक्रमः ॥१२॥

महोरस्को वृषस्कन्धः शालप्रांशुर्महाभुजः ।
आत्मकर्मक्षमं देहं विश्वधर्म इवाश्रितः ॥१३॥

समः समविभक्तांगः स्निग्धवर्णः प्रतापवान् ।
सर्वलक्षणसंपन्नश्चाष्टादशविभूतिमान् ॥१४॥

संगीत-वाद्य-निष्णातो मनोज्ञस्तत्त्वचिन्तकः ।
आर्यः सर्वसमश्चैव सदैव प्रियदर्शनः ॥१५॥

नियतात्मा महावीर्यो द्युतिमान् धृतिमान् वशी ।
बुद्धिमान् नीतिमान् वाग्मी सत्यान्वेषी बृहद्व्रतः ॥१६॥

9. Born and brought up in the city of Kālī (Kālī-ghātā—Kālī-kātā—Cal-cutta), and taking recourse to the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, he was verily the great Śiva (cf. his first name was Vireswara, which is an epithet of Śiva) manifested to save the world by his sportive activities.

10. In the boyhood itself he acquired all the learning, and in youth he practised all the spiritual disciplines. As an adult he engaged himself in the welfare of the world, and in the end he gave up his body by self-will.

11. Donning the name of Vivekananda, like a second Śrī Rāma (Raghunātha) he crossed the oceans and engaged himself in the establishment of *dharma* (ethical and religio-spiritual life based on Supreme Truth).

III

12. Of a medium stature, he was handsome in limbs, with a firm neck, big jaws, comely head, large eyes, broad forehead, and an impressive gait.

13. He had a broad chest, powerful shoulders, long and mighty arms, as if his world-mission had found in his frame a fitting shelter.

14. Proportionate with well-matched limbs, he was glossy in complexion and mighty. He was endowed with all the good characteristics and the eighteen Powers of Glory (*vibhūti*).

15. An expert both in vocal and instrumental music, he was charming in manners and a profound thinker. He was noble and same-sighted towards all, and always pleasing to behold.

16. He was self-controlled, great in vigour, brilliant, and persevering. He was masterly, wise, tactful, an impressive orator, and a Truth seeker vowed to lifelong celibacy.

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IV

स च सर्वगुणोपेतो गुरोः प्रीतिविवर्धनः ।
नरावतार एवासौ नारायणसखास्मृतः ॥१७॥

आकारसदृशप्रज्ञः प्रज्ञयासदृशागमः ।
आगमैः सदृशारंभश्चारंभसदृशोदयः ॥१८॥

धर्मज्ञः सत्यसन्धश्च सर्वभूतहिते रतः ।
यशस्वी ज्ञानसंपन्नः शुचिर्दक्षः समाधिमान् ॥१९॥

भक्तिमान् ध्यानयोगी च कर्मयोगपरायणः ।
अद्वैतानुभवे तिष्ठन् सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥२०॥

वेदविज्ञानसंपन्न आत्मतत्त्वविशारदः ।
सर्वशास्त्रार्थतत्त्वज्ञः स्मृतिमान् प्रतिभानवान् ॥२१॥

सारग्राही कृतज्ञश्च नाभिमानी दृढव्रतः ।
चारित्र्येण च संयुक्तः समर्थोऽनभ्यसूयकः ॥२२॥

सर्वलोकप्रियः साधुरदीनात्मा विचक्षणः ।
सर्वदाभिगतः सद्भिः समुद्र इव सिन्धुभिः ॥२३॥

17. Endowed with all such virtues endearing to his Guru (Sri Ramakrishna); he was verily looked upon as the incarnation of Nara (the ideal man or sage Nara—cf. his name Narendranath means Supreme Lord of men) the (inseparable) companion of Nārāyaṇa (the Supreme Being).

18. His wisdom matched his form, and his learning matched his wisdom; his deeds matched his learning, and the results matched his deeds.

19. He had insight into *dharma* and was devoted to Truth. He always engaged himself in the good of all beings. He was illustrious, full of spiritual wisdom, pure, dexterous, and his mind was always attuned to the Divine Reality (*samādhimān*).

20. He was full of Bhakti (devotion to the Supreme Divine), perfect in meditation, and a great Karma Yogi; and being established in the Advaitic (Oneness of all Existence) realization, he looked upon all with an equal vision.

21. Well-versed in both Vedic (spiritual) knowledge and (secular) science, he was a true knower of the science of the Self (Atman). He was also a knower of the essence, of all the sciences (*śāstras*), keen in memory, and was full of brilliance.

22. He was appreciative of essential beauty or goodness (*sāra*) wherever found and was ever grateful, without self-conceit, firm of vow and character, highly capable, and without the least envy.

23. Being saintly, high-minded, perspicacious, he was loved by all, and was ever approached by the good like the rivers flowing towards the sea.

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V

हनुमत्सदृशो भक्त्यां ज्ञाने शंकरसन्निभः ।
भावे तु स्वगुरोर्मूर्तिकारुण्ये बुद्ध एव च ॥२४॥

सदाशिवसमो मन्यौ क्षमया पृथिवीसमः ।
रन्तिदेव इव त्यागे सत्ये धर्म इवापरः ॥२५॥

समुद्र इव गांभीर्ये धैर्येण हिमवानिव ।
वैशाल्ये नभसंकाशः सदा सत्यपराक्रमः ॥२६॥

रक्षिता सत्यधर्मस्य भारतस्य च रक्षिता ।
रक्षिता जीवलोकस्य विश्वधर्मस्य रक्षिता ॥२७॥

वेदान्तकेसरी साक्षादटन् सर्वत्रमेदिनीम् ।
अगर्जदुत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ लोका जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥२८॥

24. He was like unto Hanumān in devotion, like (Ācārya) Śaṅkara in knowledge, in divine sentiments he was a replica of his Guru, and in compassion he was like the very Buddha.

25. In righteous indignation he was like unto Sadāśiva (the ever auspicious one), in forbearance like the earth, in self-sacrifice like Rantideva (of the Bhāgavatam) and in devotion to Truth like Dharma-incarnate.

26. In profundity he was like the ocean, in firmness like the Himālayas, in breadth of vision like the sky, and was ever unfailing in his prowess.

27. He was the protector of Truth and Dharma, and the saviour of holy Bhārat (India); he was the saviour of all beings and protector of world-religion (*viśva-dharma*).

28. He was a veritable lion of Vedānta, who, wandering the world over, gave the clarion call to all (to assert the divine Self within) roaring repeatedly : 'Awake, Arise' (and stop not till the goal is reached).

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VI

अमृतस्य पुत्राः शृण्वन्त्वित्थं संबोधयन्नपि ।
अश्रावयद्वेदवाणीं परां श्रेयस्करां शुभाम् ॥२९॥

ज्ञान-विज्ञान-संयुक्तां सर्वाभयप्रदायिनीम् ।
तमसः पारमात्मानं महान्तं प्राप्यकारिणीम् ॥३०॥

तत्त्वमसि महावाक्यं जीवस्य शिवरूपताम् ।
आत्मनोऽपापविद्धत्वमित्यादीन्युपदिष्टवान् ॥३१॥

29. 'Hear, Ye children of immortal bliss', addressing them thus he poured out into their ears the auspicious words of the Vedas, conducive to the Highest Good (and which are)—

30. Imbued with secular and spiritual science, and which, assuring fearlessness to all, lead all to the Supreme Self beyond all darkness of ignorance.

31. He taught them the great Vedic dictum (*mahā-vākya*) 'That thou art', that 'Jīva is Śiva' (the soul is the Supreme Spirit) in essence, the Self (Atman) is ever untouched by sin and evil, and many other profound ideas :—

निर्गुणं सगुणं चैव ब्रह्मतत्त्वमशेषतः ।

मायां च सृष्टितत्त्वं च वैज्ञानिकमतानुगम् ॥३२॥

कर्मतत्त्वाखिलं चैव पुनर्जन्मादिकं च वै ।

बन्धं मोक्षं च जीवानामीश्वरानुग्रहं तथा ॥३३॥

निसर्गस्यापि वैचित्त्यं अखण्डाद्वैतवस्तुनि ।

अविभक्तं च सर्वेषु यद्विभक्तमिव स्थितम् ॥३४॥

एकमेव हि सद्वस्तु विप्रैस्तु सुविशारदैः ।

किमर्थं हि समुक्तं स्यात् बहुधानामरूपतः ॥३५॥

नानात्वेस्थितमेकत्वं धर्मं च सार्वभौमिकम् ।

परमेशस्य चैकत्वं सर्वधर्मसमन्वयम् ॥३६॥

ईशावतारतत्त्वं च सर्वमुक्त्वा सविस्तरम् ।

ईशसंदर्शनार्थं तु चतुर्योगान् प्रदिष्टवान् ॥३७॥

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योगं विज्ञानसंयुक्तं भक्तियोगं सुधान्वितम् ।

दिव्यात्मभावसंपन्नं ज्ञानयोगं दिवाकरम् ॥३८॥

कर्मयोगं विशेषेण जीवसेवादिसंयुतम् ।

सानुष्ठानिकवेदान्तं सर्वशक्तिप्रदं शिवम् ॥३९॥

सर्वत्रसमताभावमाचंडालजनेष्वपि ।

दरिद्रेषु च मूर्खेषु नारायणमतिस्तथा ॥४०॥

समुत्थानं च नारीणां जनताभ्युदयं परम् ।

भारताभ्युदयं सम्यङ्-नवविश्वोदयं शुभम् ॥४१॥

32. All about the science of Brahman (the Supreme Infinite spiritual reality) both in its personal and impersonal aspects, about (its imponderable power) maya, the science of (Vedic) cosmology, which is in harmony with modern science;—

33. The science of Karma in its entirety along with the doctrine of rebirth, the bondage and liberation of Jivas (souls) and the grace of God;—

34. The manifestation of the diversified nature on the substratum of the indivisible non-dual Reality which, though undivided, exists in all as if divided;—

35. Why the Supreme Reality, which is verily one, is described by the great learned sages under many different names and forms;—

36. The ever-present unity in diversity, universal religion, oneness of the Supreme Being, and the harmony of religions;—

37. And the doctrine of the divine incarnation (Avatāra) etc.—. Having expounded all these topics elaborately, he showed them the four main Yogic paths for the realization of the divine.

VII

38. He taught them the Rāja-Yoga which is highly scientific, Bhakti-Yoga which is nectarean in its practice, Jñāna-Yoga which illumines the mind and reveals the divinity of the Self;—

39. And particularly Karma-Yoga which inculcates the service to Jīvas as Śiva (Divine Spirit). Further he taught the practical Vedānta which leads to the good of all and endows one with all strength;—

40. Equality of attitude towards all down to the lowest outcaste (caṇḍāla) and seeing Nārāyaṇa (God) in the poor and the foolish too;—

41. The thorough uplift of women and the elevation of the masses; the all-round raising up of India and the ushering in of a happy New World.

एवं देशविदेशेषु जातिलिंगाद्यभेदतः ।
बोधयामास सद्धर्ममुच्चावचजनेष्वपि ॥४२॥

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धर्मदिग्विजयी वीरो यतिवर्यो महामतिः ।
पूजितः सुष्ठु सर्वत्र पंडितैरपि पामरैः ॥४३॥

भारते पुनरावर्त्य अग्निमन्त्रैः प्रचोदयन् ।
प्रसुप्तलोकमुद्बोध्य देशोत्थाने न्ययोजयत् ॥४४॥

भारतस्य च माहात्म्यं तस्य स्वर्णयुगानि च ।
ईश्वरादिष्टकार्यं यदात्मज्योतिप्रकाशनम् ॥४५॥

तस्य दिव्यभविष्यं च सर्वं वै समुदीरयन् ।
कृत्वा सर्वान् समुत्साहान् रेमे युगप्रवर्तकः ॥४६॥

हृत्थमुपदिश्य सर्वत्र कृतार्थः स जनप्रियः ।
श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य निर्देशं निरवर्तयत् ॥४७॥

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प्राच्य-पाश्चात्यदेशस्थैः सच्छिष्यैः सुसमावृतः ।
स्वगुरुभ्रातृभिर्युक्तो गुरुभक्तैश्च संयुतः ॥४८॥

स्थापयामास गंगायां विश्वधर्मप्रचारकम् ।
बेलूडे यतिसंस्थानं रामकृष्णमठाभिधम् ॥४९॥

तस्य शाखा-प्रशाखाश्च भूमण्डलसमावृताः ।
श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्तु मठानावृत्य राजते ॥५०॥

42. Thus in all the lands near and far, irrespective of caste, creed, or sex, etc., he taught the beneficent Dharma (Sad-Dharma) to all the people high or low.

VIII

43. A hero of spiritual conquest of the world, he, the best of monks with a mighty mind, was highly honoured everywhere both by the scholars and the laity.

44. Returning to India he roused up the people with fiery words and inspired them to work for the uplift of the country.

45. He pictured before them the greatness of India and its past golden ages, and pointed to the God-given historic mission of India to shed the divine light of the Atman on the world.

46. And he painted before them the luminous future awaiting the country. Further, depicting everything (for the all-round regeneration of India) and enthusing all immensely, he, the New-Age-Maker (Yuga-pravartaka), rejoiced.

47. Thus teaching everywhere, he, the beloved of the people, felt a sense of fulfilment having accomplished the commission of Sri Ramakrishna Deva (to work for the spiritual regeneration of mankind).

IX

48. Surrounded by his worthy disciples from the East and the West, and in conjunction with his brother-disciples (Guru-bhrātr̥s) and the devotees of his Guru (Sri Ramakrishna)—

49. He established at the Belur village on the bank of the Ganga (the Headquarters of) the great monastic institution called the Ramakrishna Math, devoted to the propagation of universal religion (Viśva-Dharma).

50. The branches and sub-branches of this great institution have spread all over the globe, and Sri Ramakrishna Deva adorns these Maths as the Presiding Deity.

यतिसंघस्य चोद्देश्यं स्वामिना विशदीकृतः ।
आत्मनोऽपि च मोक्षार्थं जगतश्च हिताय वै ॥५१॥

एतन्मठस्य चिह्नं तु चतुर्योगसमन्वितम् ।
तस्य मध्यगतो हंसः द्योतकः परमात्मनः ॥५२॥

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श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य शक्तिः श्रीसारदामणिः ।
विवेकादियतिवृन्दः तयोः षोडशपार्षदाः ॥५३॥

विश्वधर्मोपमाकाशे सूर्याचन्द्रमसाविव ।
शोभतस्तौ सभक्तैश्च शिष्यतारागणावृतौ ॥५४॥

सारदां मातरं चापि रामकृष्णं जगद्गुरुम् ।
आश्रितान् च तयोः सर्वान् प्रणमामि मुहुर्मुहुः ॥५५॥

सर्वधर्मस्वरूपाय ज्ञानानन्दसुवर्षिणे ।
सर्वावितारयुक्ताय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥५६॥

विश्वमातृस्वरूपिण्यै सर्वदोषापहारिण्यै ।
करुणारसपूर्णयै सारदायै नमो नमः ॥५७॥

विवेकानन्दयोगीन्द्रं सर्वलोकशुभंकरम् ।
प्रणमामि सदा भक्त्या मुख्यानन्दार्थसिद्धये ॥५८॥

51. The ideal of this monastic Order, the Swami (Vivekananda) has made clear in the motto, '*For one's own spiritual liberation and the good of the world.*'

52. The symbol of this Math depicts the harmonious union of the four Yogas and the Swan in their midst denotes the divine Supreme Atman (to be realized through the Yogas).

X

53. Sri Saradamani is the Divine-Power (Śaktī-consort) of Sri Ramakrishna Deva and the group of monks consisting of Vivekananda and others form their sixteen eternal companions (Pārsadas).

54. In the firmament of universal religion, they two (Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi) shine like the sun and the moon, surrounded by their disciples and devotees like unto stars.

55. I bow down repeatedly to Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, and Sri Ramakrishna, the world-teacher and to all those who have taken refuge in them.

56. To Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of all religions, who showers on all Supreme Knowledge and bliss, and who combines in Himself all the previous incarnations, I offer my salutations.

57. To Sri Sarada Devi, the form of the Universal Mother, who removes all imperfections, whose heart is filled with the milk of compassion for all beings, I offer my salutations repeatedly.

58. I always bow down with devotion to Vivekananda, the Lord of the Yogis, who brings good to all mankind, for the attainment of the objective of Supreme Bliss (*Mukhya-Ānanda*).

आषाढमासे गुरुपूर्णिमायां

शताब्दन्यूने द्विसहस्रवर्षे ।

शकाब्दगण्ये गुरुपूजनार्थं

कृतं च स्तोत्रं तु विवेकानन्दम् ॥५६॥

ये पठन्ति त्विदं स्तोत्रं भक्त्या च श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

त्यक्त्वा हृदयदौर्बल्यं लभन्ते जयमंगलम् ॥६०॥

॥ ॐ श्रीसारदारामकृष्णसमेतविवेकानन्दार्पणमस्तु ॥

59. In the month of Āṣāḍha on the Guru-Pūrṇimā day (the full-moon day dedicated to the Guru), in the Śaka-year nineteen hundred (20th July 1978), this brief hymn on Vivekananda (*Laghu-Vivekanandam* in Sanskrit) was composed as a homage to my worthy Guru (Swami Virajananda, an eminent disciple of Vivekananda).

60. Those who recite this hymn full of faith and devotion will ever attain success (in spiritual life) and welfare, giving up all faint-heartedness.

Let this hymn be an offering unto Vivekananda ever conjoined with Sri Sarada-Ramakrishna.

The Lamps that Vivekananda Lighted

SWAMI ATMANANDA

SWAMI MUKTINATHANANDA

Srimat Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj once told one of his disciples, 'It is a rare good fortune to serve and be in the company of great soul like Atmananda.'¹ Swami Bobhananda, an eminent disciple of Swami Vivekananda, wrote from New York in 1950 :

Swami Atmananda was one among the chief sannyasin disciples of Swami Vivekananda. It will not be improper to say that he was the foremost in renunciation, forbearance and dispassion. He had a sweet tongue and a quiet nature.... His holy life remains as a glowing example before us. It is like the polestar to those who tread the path of religion. On going

through the biography of Swami Atmananda the reader will feel blessed and gratified...²

Let us, then, study the life of such an illustrious personage and see for ourselves the truth of the above statements.

Swami Atmananda's earlier name was Govinda Chandra Shukul. He was born in a pious Brahmin family around 1868. His ancestral home was in the district of Purnea in Bihar. Perhaps the family's original surname was 'Shukla' which later on became modified into Shukul. His grandfather, Sri Yugal Kishore Shukul, moved to the district of Malda in North Bengal and settled there. Yugal Kishore had two sons : Guruprasad and Durgaprasad. Govinda was the eldest

1. Karunananda, Swami, 'Brahmalin Swami Atmananda', *Udbodhan*, Agrahāyaṇ, 1330 B.S., p. 642.

2. Bodhananda, Swami, 'Swami Atmananda', *Udbodhan*, Āṣāḍ, 1357 B.S., p. 320-21.

son of Durgaprasad. Durgaprasad built a house in Devipur³ village of Malda district where Govinda was born.

Govinda was brought up under the care of his uncle, Guruprasad, a devout Brahmin who was the chief priest in the temple of the king of Chanchal in Malda district. Daily worship of the Goddess Annapūrṇā and Govindaji was performed in the temple. Guruprasad kept his nephew Govinda near him and took charge of his training and education. Hindi was his mother tongue but he could speak Bengali fluently, though with a Hindi accent. Govinda used to assist his uncle in worship; Guruprasad taught him religious rites and encouraged him to study holy books. Under the able guidance of his pious uncle, Govinda grew up acquiring all-round distinction. He was possessed of a sharp intellect, sweet behaviour and a contemplative temperament. The king of Chanchal became fascinated by this bright young boy, and came forward to bear all his educational expenses. Govinda passed the Entrance Examination in 1890 from the local high school. He was awarded a Government scholarship for his brilliant success. In accordance with the then prevalent custom of child-marriage, Govinda was married at an early age.

Govinda moved to Calcutta for higher studies and got admitted into Ripon College. It was here that he came into close contact with a group of fellow students who later on became the disciples of Swami Vivekananda. They were Sudhir Chandra Chakravarty, Kalikrishna Bose, Khagendra Nath Chatterjee, Haripada Chatterjee, and Sushil Chandra Chakravarty, who later on took

holy orders to become Swamis Shuddhananda, Virajananda, Vimalananda, Bodhananda and Prakashananda respectively.⁴ All except Sudhir were students of Ripon College where Sri Mahendra Nath Gupta or 'M', the celebrated recorder of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, was a professor at that time. Thus the group came to know about the wonderful life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and in addition, became acquainted with his lay as well as monastic disciples. Sometimes they would make a trip to Dakshineswar and spend long hours in meditation there. At other times they would visit Kankurgachhi and hear about Sri Ramakrishna from Rama Chandra Dutta, a prominent householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. They also met Manmohan Mitra, Girish Chandra Ghosh and other lay devotees of the Master. But it was 'M' who directed them to visit Baranagore monastery, meet the Sannyasin disciples of the Master and imbibe their blazing spirit of renunciation. As the group started frequenting the Baranagore Math, they were amazed to see the austere life led by the Master's disciples and their intense longing for God realization.

In the meantime Govinda passed the F.A. (First Arts) Examination with distinction and joined the B.A. course of the same college. However his mind was becoming more and more restless for realizing God in this very life. He met the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, at Jayrambati and prayed to her with a sincere heart. The Holy Mother blessed him with initiation which opened a new chapter in his spiritual life. He would spend most of his time in japa, meditation and holy discussions. Around this time he moved to the house of one of his dear friends, Khagen (later Swami Vimalananda). He also started coaching a few school students free of charge. In

3. Abjajananda, Swami, *Swamijīr Padaprānte* (Bengali) (Belur Math: Saradapitha, 1964) p. 142.

However, according to Swami Jagadiswarananda, Govinda's parental village was Harischandrapur in Malda district. Vide: *Udbodhan*, Bhādra, 1356 B. S., p. 426.

4. Gambhirananda, Swami, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957) p. 68.

order to intensify his spiritual quest he used to go to Dakshineswar temple and stay there for a few days, as advised by Swami Trigunatitananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He would beg his food from the Kali Temple and spend the whole day in divine contemplation. At this time the Math at Baranagore was shifted to Alambazar. Govinda would occasionally visit the Alambazar Math for spiritual guidance and inspiration. Swami Ramakrishnananda encouraged him very much and finally instructed him to permanently stay in the Math. Accordingly, Govinda joined the Alambazar Math in 1896.

This news soon reached Govinda's home. His relations tried their best to bring him back home, but to no avail. At last they approached the rajah of Chanchal and sought his help. The rajah sent a letter to Govinda at Alambazar Math requesting him to come immediately to Chanchal at least for a couple of days to help him out of some urgent personal problem concerning his estate. Since Govinda had had his education with the financial assistance provided by the rajah, he was ever grateful to the latter. So he at once responded to the rajah's call and rushed to his help without suspecting anything. But the rajah did not even mention anything about his personal problems. Instead he started advising him not to renounce the world. He reminded Govinda of his duties towards his family, and elaborated the sad consequences if he failed to perform them. Govinda soon understood the whole trick. Filled as he was with an intense longing to realize God, he was not in a position to appreciate all these counsels. Then his weeping young wife, Brahmamayi Devi, was brought to his presence, but he remained unaffected. At last the rajah became very angry, and using harsh words he threatened to imprison him. Fearless as he always was, Govinda did not enter into any quarrel but quietly fled from the palace at the dead of night and returned

straight to the Alambazar Math. Nevertheless, he arranged to get his wife initiated by the Holy Mother. Brahmamayi Devi lived long and led a pure life devoted to prayer, worship and other devotional practices.

Govinda had a weak physique from his childhood, and used to suffer now and then from dyspepsia. This made him think that his body was unfit for intense spiritual practices. He therefore resolved to dedicate his 'worthless body' to a great cause so that he might be endowed with a better body in the future birth. Thus at Alambazar Math Govinda zealously participated in the various activities of the monastery besides his regular spiritual practices. Since most of the inmates were senior to him he had to obey the orders of all; on the other hand, he had none to command. He thus learned self-reliance which became so deep-rooted that he never allowed anybody to do any personal service to him throughout his life. Swami Ramakrishnananda used to manage all the affairs of the Math at that time. He was specially affectionate to young Govinda who in turn was very eager to assist him. In later years Govinda would speak about the rigorous training given by Swami Ramakrishnananda: 'We did not wear our clothes loose as you do nowadays. We had to tie our clothes tightly and remain alert from early morning till 12 noon. We knew not when the orders would come. When he (Ramakrishnananda) issued orders, we had to carry them out immediately. If there was the slightest delay or imperfection, he would not spare us.'⁵ It was owing to this training under Swami Ramakrishnananda that Govinda attained precision in every action.

It was the year 1897. After preaching Vedanta in the West Swamiji returned to Calcutta and stayed at the Alambazar Math. This created a great stir among the inmates

5. Jagadiswarananda, Swami, 'Swami Atmananda-II', *Udbodhan*, Kārtik, 1356 B.S., p. 533.

of the Math. In those days Govinda used to be addressed by others as 'Shukul Mahashay' or simply 'Shukul'. One day Swamiji called him and suddenly asked, 'Hallo, Shukul, have you come here to become a monk?' Govinda replied at once, 'Sir, I have neither a strong body nor a fit mind to become a monk. If I can sacrifice this rotten body and mind in your service then, I believe, I shall obtain a better body and mind in the next birth. I have come here only with this faith.'⁶ Highly pleased with this frank answer, Swamiji exclaimed, 'That's right.' Later Shukul Maharaj used to narrate this incident saying, 'So emphatically did Swamiji utter the words "that's right" a couple of times that they still ring in my ears.' Shortly after this Swamiji blessed Govinda and another Brahmacharin with sannyasa initiation. Govinda's new name was Swami Atmananda while the other person was named Swami Kalyanananda.

Atmananda now had the blessed privilege to be with his Guru. He learnt from Swamiji not only the secrets of the spiritual world but also the details of conduct—how to walk, talk, dress and so on. One day Swamiji was singing devotional songs. Suddenly he told Atmananda, 'Shukul, play on the *tabla*.' Shukul nervously replied, 'I do not know how to play on the *tabla*.' Swamiji admonished him lovingly: 'Strange, you don't know! Come, I shall teach you.'⁷ Atmananda started taking lessons on the *tabla* from his Guru and soon became an expert *tabla* player. Later on when Swamiji sang, he accompanied him at the *tabla* on several occasions. He learnt to play the *pakhoaj* also. He could not sing very well but loved to hear devotional songs.

Swami Atmananda had an unflinching devotion towards Swamiji for whom he was

prepared to sacrifice everything. Swami Shuddhananda has related an interesting incident: 'He (Atmananda) was a vegetarian from his boyhood. One day in order to test his firmness in this principle, Swamiji gave him a fish curry to eat. As he had a profound respect for his Guru he was about to eat it, notwithstanding his inborn aversion to it, when he was dissuaded from doing so by Swamiji himself.'⁸ Another day Swamiji laid some imaginary charges against himself and asked Atmananda, 'Will you still regard me as your guru?' The disciple replied without hesitation, 'You may say or do whatever you like, but you will remain for ever my all in all.' In his later life Atmananda used to say, 'The most precious treasure of a monk's life is his faith in the words of his guru and the scriptures. Again, out of the two, faith in the guru's words is more important.' Regarding Swamiji he used to remark, 'Such a great *ācārya* (teacher) was never born before.'

Swamiji won the hearts of his disciples through his infinite love. An anecdote revealing Swamiji's deep concern for their welfare was told by Atmananda:

Swamiji made a rule that the monks should have no personal belongings. Therefore we used to give everything we had or received to the Math. After returning from Rishikesh I had with me only a water pot and a blanket which also I handed over to the Math cellarer... Soon after this I fell ill. I had no warm clothing to cover myself. Nobody noticed this except Swamiji. He said with regret, 'I made the rule, that is why they have handed over to the Math whatever they had. Now nobody is looking after them. How strange!' Then Swamiji himself brought a good blanket and a pillow and spread them on my bed with his own hands. Since then he forbade us to give away the essential articles.⁹

Once Swamiji asked his young disciples, 'Out of devotion, knowledge, work and

6. *Swamijir Padaprānte*, p. 147.

7. *ibid*, p. 150.

8. 'The Late Srimat Swami Atmananda', *Prabuddha Bharata*, November 1923, p. 434.

9. *Padaprānte*, p. 168.

meditation, in which subject will you take honours?' Somebody selected devotion, another wanted double honours in knowledge and devotion, a third preferred triple honours in devotion, knowledge and action. Thus it went on while Shukul Maharaj kept quiet with his characteristic gravity. When a brother disciple repeated the question to him, Swamiji himself answered on his behalf, 'He is good in all the four.'¹⁰ How appropriate this epithet was will be clear if we analyze the various aspects of Atmananda's life.

It has already been mentioned that Atmananda had a contemplative temperament and hence meditation had a natural attraction for him. He went to Vrindavan for a few days and lived a life of solitude and contemplation, going out only to beg his food. During this period Swami Turiyananda, then staying in Almora, wrote many encouraging letters to 'Shukul Mahashay' as he addressed Atmananda. A glimpse of his meditative mood may be obtained from the following incident. Once he performed *cāturmāsya*¹¹ in Bhuvaneswar. Swami Karunananda was then attending on him. The present Math there had not yet been established. They used to stay in a cottage in the garden-house of a devotee. One day when Atmananda was absorbed in meditation a huge snake entered the room. Karunananda became frightened and shouted to him repeatedly. Atmananda just opened his eyes only to return to his meditation. The snake quietly went out of the room through the window. A similar occurrence illustrating his extraordinary absorption will be presented later.

Atmananda was very efficient in the field of work as well, and whenever a situation demanded it he plunged into action with-

out the least hesitation. For some time he helped Trigunatitanandaji in the publication of the Bengali journal, *Udbodhan*. In 1899, when the whole city of Calcutta was reeling under the plague epidemic, Atmananda rendered memorable service in the relief work organized by Swamiji himself. Along with Sister Nivedita, Atmananda very ably assisted Swami Sadananda who was in charge of the relief operation. Again towards the end of 1900 or in the beginning of 1901, Atmananda was sent to Kishengarh to help Swami Kalyanananda in the work of drought relief. Atmananda would very lovingly perform all these kinds of work in the spirit of service of God in man as preached by Swamiji. He never shrank from any work entrusted to him even if it involved a lot of manual labour. For instance, in his early days at the Belur Math he would knead several kilos of wheat flour single-handed and prepare chapatis for all the inmates.

His devotion to God was of the highest order. He would actually feel the living presence of God in the image of worship. Besides, he was quite an adept in ritualistic worship also. For a long time he performed worship in the main shrine of Belur Math. He was specially trained for this by Swami Premananda himself. His worship was worth seeing, but he remained as humble as ever. If someone praised his mode of worship, he would at once reply, 'What do I know about the worship of the Master? One of his direct disciples dragged me here and made me sit on this seat. That is why I am carrying on the worship. It is extremely difficult to perform the worship of the Master.' On days of special festivals Atmananda used to be the *pūjāri* (worshipper) and Shuddhananda the *tantradhārak* (reader). People used to flock to witness the worship performed by such a wonderful pair. But Atmananda would jocularly say, 'What do we know of worship? The *pūjāri* is lame and the *tantradhārak* is blind.

10. 'Swami Atmananda-I', *Udbodhan*, Bhādra, 1356 B. S., p. 432.

11. Leading a contemplative life in one place for four consecutive months usually during the rainy season.

It was a grand sight when Shashi Maharaj or Baburam Maharaj performed the worship. Those who used to witness their worship would be filled with devotion. Ah, it is so beneficial to witness such worship.¹² He used to consider the worship of the Master to be a very sacred work. If a monk or Brahmachari engaged in the worship of the Master came to offer salutation to him, he would forbid him saying, 'How fortunate you are! You have got the privilege of serving the Master. The hands with which you worship and serve the Master should not touch the feet of human beings.' Once being asked how to do the ritualistic worship he explained, 'Worship means service. It is to bathe, feed and adorn the Deity with flowers, garlands etc., knowing for certain that He or She is really present.' Shukul Maharaj would be extremely angry if he found anyone chatting while performing the worship or while doing any other work in the shrine. He remonstrated against making any noise near the shrine after the Deity is put to bed at night.

Atmananda was a master in the path of knowledge as well. He realized the truth of the scriptures in his own life. Besides, he had a profound knowledge in Sanskrit grammar and Bengali literature. His exposition of the Gītā, the *Vedānta-Sūtras* and the Upaniṣads would be not only scholarly but also inspiring. That was why he was asked by Swamiji himself to take scriptural classes for the inmates of the Math.

Thus we find that Atmananda's life was a true reflection of that of his guru—a harmonious combination of knowledge, devotion, work and contemplation. This was crowned with his deep love towards his guru. When Swamiji passed away on the fourth July 1902, Atmananda became overwhelmed with grief. About the condition of his mind at that time he later said : 'After the demise

of Swamiji I lost the desire to remain in this world. Let the body remain or perish—with this resolve I used to wander about hither and thither without caring for food or sleep. I would not enter my room, nor did I feel like talking to anyone. The question of food etc. did not rise in my mind at all.'¹³ Swami Shuddhananda has described Atmananda's life during this period as follows : 'After the *mahāsamādhi* of Swamiji he, with another monk of the Order, used to besmear his body with ashes and pass his time mostly in contemplation and meditation in a thatched shed, got up somewhere close to the present memorial temple of his master. Even the night he used to pass there, only coming to the Math to take his midday meal and also to attend the Vedānta class conducted by Swami Saradananda. As for his supper, someone of us would carry a few chapatis for him and leave them at his place.'¹⁴ Afterwards at the request of several monks of the Order he agreed to stay in the Math building. But it took a long time before he could resume his normal activities.

Even after the decease of Swamiji Atmananda felt his presence. One day he disclosed, '... I directly perceived Swamiji the other day. He who is the creator, preserver and destroyer was standing before me ...' He would always keep his bed clean and tidy with a nice sheet spread on it throughout the day, although he used it only at night. On being asked the reason for this he said, 'Occasionally Swamiji used to lie down on my bed at Belur Math. After his passing away one day I saw in a dream that he was laying in my bed. Since then I always keep the bed ready, for I know not when he would come again.'¹⁵

On the 7th of May 1903 Atmananda was

12. *Padaprānte*, p. 158.

13. *ibid*, p. 151-52.

14. *Prabuddha Bharata*, November 1923, p. 434.

15. *Padaprānte*, p. 149.

elected a Trustee of the Belur Math.¹⁶ In 1904 he went to Madras at the urgent request of Shashi Maharaj (Swami Ramakrishnananda) who was then spreading the message of the Master and Swamiji not only in Madras but also in many other parts of South India. Under the guidance of Shashi Maharaj an Ashrama had been established by a group of sincere and enthusiastic devotees at Bangalore. But it was becoming difficult for him to manage the activities of both Madras and Bangalore Centres. Now he asked Atmananda to take charge of the work in Bangalore. Thus Atmananda became the first resident Swami of the Bangalore Ashrama.

He conducted regular classes in a rented building and was for a time assisted by Swamis Vimalananda and Bodhananda. He was at Bangalore for nearly six years and kept going the work of the centre against many odds. He built the present handsome Ashrama by collecting subscriptions. He spoke little in public, but yet exerted a tremendous influence by the life he lived. He is still remembered there for his childlike simplicity, unobtrusive piety, stern renunciation and overflowing love for the rich and the poor alike.¹⁷

His speeches, though small in number, were simple in language, direct in approach and rich in spiritual content, as the following extract from a speech of his on 'How to Realize God' will show :

As the rays of the sun converged into a focus through a lens reveals everything when projected into the darkest corner, so the mind of man when collected and gathered together becomes so powerful that in whatever direction we may throw it, everything will reveal its secrets by its illumining power. ... With such a concentrated mind we can realize the highest truth, God Himself. It is true God is in everything but still we do not see Him or feel His presence. Why, because we have not realized Him within ourselves, we have not taken the proper channel

to reach Him. There are so many lanterns, some made of stone, some of wood, some of mud, some of coloured glass. Though a flame is burning in everyone of them we do not see it, because the light is so obscured and coloured in coming through thick material covers. The proper way will be to take advantage of the natural aperture and have a peep at the light within, and this aperture is one's own self, wherein we find the highest manifestation of intelligence. ... We can easily find out the source of the light which shines within by introspection by throwing our mind inward and searching it out.¹⁸

Swami Saradananda, the then General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order requested Atmananda to go to the United States to preach Vedanta. He even sent a telegram to Bangalore in this regard. Atmananda came to Belur Math in obedience to it, but he humbly expressed his unwillingness to go to any foreign country. He was then sent back to Bangalore where he intensified his work. His exalted life and luminous expositions created a great enthusiasm in and around the city. Unfortunately his health, which was never very good, broke down under the strain of six years of pioneering work. He was forced to take rest, and so left Bangalore in the year 1909. The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi paid a visit to Rameswaram and two or three other holy places in South India in 1910 for which all arrangements were made by Shashi Maharaj. Atmananda had the privilege of travelling with the Holy Mother, and returned to Belur Math along with her.

The life of Atmananda at the Belur Math was a model for the young inmates. Even the senior monks used to encourage the novices to associate themselves with Atmananda and imbibe his noble qualities. One day a few Brahmacharins who had recently joined the Order were gossiping and mak-

16. *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, p. 180.

17. *Prabuddha Bharata*, November 1923, p. 435.

18. Atmananda, Swami, 'How to Realize God' in *Brahmavādin* (Madras) June 1904, p. 431, 436-7.

ing merry when Premanandaji arrived there. He affectionately rebuked them. 'When you have joined the Math you should seek the company of Shukul Mahashay and talk to him. You will be immensely benefited. Don't waste time in vain.' Once Prem-anandaji was absent from the Math for a few days. During that period Atmananda was made to take charge of the Math. He was a very strict disciplinarian. Nothing escaped his alert eyes. One day several lady devotees entered the monks' quarters. Shukul Maharaj became extremely annoyed and scolded the person who had let them in, 'You have done a grievous offence today, you have violated a Math rule.'

Atmananda used to take every care to guide the lives of his young brethren. Once he told the young monks, 'Forget the past life completely. Think as if you are born anew in the Math. Read the Sannyāsa *mantras* repeatedly and keep its meaning alive in your minds. Why should a Sannyāsin go home? Though there is a custom that a Sannyāsin should visit his home once after twelve years, it is not applicable to all. Look at Hari Maharaj. The health of a continent monk may break down but his will never gets distorted. It is only due to the lack of self-control that the eyes get sunk.'¹⁹

In order to keep the spirit of renunciation ablaze among the novices, he used to instruct them, 'Don't write letters home. If you receive any letter from there, tear it up without reading. However, if your mother is alive, you may write to her and read her letters.' He used to stress that everyone should read the Rule of the Math (framed by Swami Vivekananda) everyday. Once he told a monk, 'Memorize the Math rules and, wherever you are, read them now and then together with all the inmates of the Ashrama.'²⁰ On being asked to sug-

gest the most essential books to be read by members of the Order, he answered, 'At least the Math rules, the two *ārātrika* hymns (sung at the vesper service), the *East and the West* (a small book written by Swami Vivekananda) and the Gita.'²¹

Shukul Maharaj used to urge the young monks to take special care of the monastic buildings and land, which were mostly acquired through the personal labour of Swami Vivekananda. He used to narrate the following touching incident :

One day some one was recklessly driving a nail into the wall of the newly erected Math building. Swamiji remarked, 'He is as it were hitting the nail on my person. I had to give an ounce of blood from my body for every brick of this house.'²²

Atmananda cherished a very high regard for all the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. If anyone passed a derogatory remark about them, he would become so excited that he could not control himself for quite sometime. He used to tell the monks of the Order, 'They are a part and parcel of the Master. To criticize them is to criticize the Master himself.'²³

He was ready to give up even his life at the behest of Swami Brahmananda whom he considered no other than Sri Ramakrishna himself. Once he said, 'One cannot understand Maharaj (Brahmanandaji) unless one is highly spiritual. That is, Maharaj dwells at such a high level of the spiritual realm that ordinary minds cannot grasp him.'²⁴ Maharaj once presented him a *chaddar* (shawl) which he never used but very carefully kept with him throughout his life.

He showed equal respect to Swami Saradananda, the first General Secretary of the Order. Once while Swami Saradananda

19. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B. S., p. 430.

20. *ibid*, p. 529.

21. *ibid*, p. 432.

22. *ibid*, p. 531.

23. *ibid*, p.433.

24. *ibid*, p. 529.

was staying at the Banaras Advaita Ashrama, a few Brahmacharins approached him with a prayer for Sannyasa initiation. Several monks including Atmananda were also present there. Saradanandaji advised them to seek permission from Shukul Maharaj, and told them that if the latter permitted, he would have no objection. As soon as Atmananda heard this he stood up and addressed Swami Saradananda with folded palms, 'Maharaj, if you only touch their heads they will be liberated. Do kindly initiate them into Sannyasa according to your wish; we have no voice in this matter. If they receive your grace they will be fortunate. Their lives will be blessed through your grace. What shall we say in this matter?' With these words he fell flat at the feet of Swami Saradananda and then quickly left the place.²⁵

Atmananda considered the words of Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples to be infallible. Once a young man asked him, 'Swami Vivekananda said that there would be a separate Math for women. Where is it?' Shukul Maharaj firmly replied, 'Not even a single word of Śiva will prove false. Whatever has been said by him will come true in due course. Swamiji has not used a single word in vain. Not even a comma can be deleted from his sayings.'²⁶ Regarding the tremendous power of Swami Vivekananda's message, he wrote: 'His message was the message of awakening—a message to shatter the sleep of delusion. On hearing his words he who is lying down will get up; he who is sitting will like to stand up, and he who is standing will feel like running.'²⁷

Atmananda was never tired of taking classes on the teachings of Swamiji. He himself went through the *Complete Works*

of Swami Vivekananda twenty-four times!²⁸ Moreover, it was no casual reading. He regarded the words of Swamiji as *mantras*, and would meditate on them in order to realize their inner meaning. One day someone was rapidly reading a book of Swamiji. Atmananda remarked with repugnance, 'Can anyone comprehend the meaning of Swamiji's words by reading so much at a time? As for myself, I sometimes cogitated for fifteen days to understand the meaning of a single word of Swamiji.' On another occasion he said, 'Many people take pride in saying that he has finished reading one of Swamiji's books in a day. But I used to meditate on some portions of his books for three days. Then only his real message would be revealed. What will people understand by reading the whole book at one sitting?' He further added, 'The words of the scriptures and the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji mostly deal with the deep truths of the subtle worlds beyond the reach of the senses; they are meant for meditation and realization, and are not to be taken lightly.'²⁹

Shukul Maharaj's presence at the Belur Math created a great enthusiasm among the younger members. The senior monks of the Order, however, became alarmed at his indifferent health which showed no sign of improvement. They therefore advised Atmananda to go to Sambalpur for a change. Swami Shuddhananda made the necessary arrangements for his travel. A well-known devotee of the Math gladly came forward to look after the Swami and keep him in his own house at Sambalpur. Accordingly Atmananda left the Math after the Durgā pūjā festival in 1916. At this time his digestion was so poor that he had to go to the toilet frequently, and his diet consisted of only barley water. Fortunately, however, the

25. *Padaprānte*, p. 179-80.

26. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B. S., p. 529. The Sarada Math for women came into being in 1954.

27. 'Swamijir Sannidhāne: Swami Atmananda', *Udbodhan*, Kārtik 1370 B. S., p. 567.

28. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B. S., p. 431.

29. *Padaprānte*, p. 159.

climate and water of Sambalpur suited his health which soon recuperated under the loving care of the devotee.

The news of the improvement in Atmananda's health brought joy to one and all. He also started going for a long walk everyday to the wooded hills nearby. During these walks he would visit a Śiva temple which stood hidden in the woods, and meditate there for sometime. One evening while he was thus seated, a big tiger suddenly came in front of him. The devotee who was accompanying him was sitting on a stone at some distance. At this the devotee was frightened while Atmananda remained deeply absorbed in meditation. The tiger stared at the Swami, then lowered its head and quietly went away. The devotee now came to his senses. He ran to the Swami and requested him to leave the place immediately. Atmananda was so oblivious of his surroundings that he did not even respond for a long time.

The devotees of Sambalpur soon became charmed with the sweet and amiable personality of Atmananda. They were so impressed that they came forward with the proposal of starting a permanent

Ashrama there. However, the plan did not materialize on account of various reasons. Atmananda's exemplary life not only created a lasting impression on the minds of the devotees but also reformed several lost souls. Some persons who were leading immoral lives turned over a new leaf and became pure and honest after coming into contact with him. For all this he became an object of affectionate praise of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Once the devotee who was Atmananda's host in Sambalpur went to Calcutta to pay obeisance to Swami Premananda who was then on his death-bed at Balaram Mandir. The great Swami lovingly enquired, 'How is Shukul Mahashay?' and added, 'Please convey my salutations to him.' When this was communicated to Atmananda at Sambalpur, he became overwhelmed with emotion. With tears in his eyes he repeatedly offered salutations to Premanandaji by touching his forehead with folded palms and exclaiming, 'Jai Prabhu, Jai Ma, Jai Gurudev.'³⁰

(To be concluded)

^{30.} *ibid*, p. 163.

VEDANTA IN GERMANY

KURT FRIEDRICH

If a German devotee asks himself when Vedanta in Germany began, he will come to realize, that it started with the Christian mystics. These men and women were a strange fold. They were neither theologians nor philosophers, for what they did was not speculating about the why and wherefore of this phenomenal world but recording their direct experiences of the 'Istheit' (Pure Being).

At the time when Caitanya was kindl-

ing the flame of supreme Bhakti in India, and when Sufi mysticism was rising to its peak, a group of monastic and lay men and women in Germany were seeking God through their intense love and prayer. Such was their burning desire that some of them attained a vision of Him, 'Visio Dei'. In beautiful, poetical language they described their experiences. One among them was the great woman saint of Germany Mechthild of Magdeburg (1209-1299). In

her work 'The Flowing Light of the Godhead' she speaks about her vision of paradise, where all souls meet, united with God day and night. The saints are dancing, and God asks the soul to join them, but she refuses, and says to the Lord:

I don't like to dance unless You lead me.
If you want me to dance,
You must sing Yourself.
Then I will jump into love,
From love into devotion,
From devotion into realization,
From realization into all human hearts.

If our modern readers think that her emotions had overpowered her intellect, and her statements lack depth, they will be surprised to hear Mechthild say with aphoristic precision:

Love without knowledge,
is for the soul real darkness.
Knowledge without realization,
seems to her like torments of hell.

All the mystics from Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) to Mechthild of Magdeburg and from Meister Eckhart (1260-1329) to Jakob Boehme (1575-1624), all saw God, talked to Him and were happy in His presence. In a dualistic religion like Christianity this seems to be the purpose and goal of life, but the mystics did not stop there. They realized that there are still higher levels, and the dualism of subject and object gets obliterated in the advanced stages of mystic union with God 'Unio Mystica'.

It is interesting to note that not only their experiences, but also their terminology was similar to that of the Vedic seers and Hindu saints. The Upaniṣad says: 'He who knows Brahman, becomes Brahman.' Meister Eckhart said: 'To see God means, to see as God sees.' Vedanta declares: 'If you want the Absolute, you have to

transcend maya.' Meister Eckhart: 'If you want the kernel of a nut, you have to destroy the shell. If you want the Pure Being, you have to destroy all forms.'

This beautiful blossoming of spirituality did not, however, last long. The influence of clerical dogmatism and intellectual theology was much stronger than that of the small group of enlightened souls. The Dark Age began with endless wars in the name of religion, and Jakob Boehme, who fought a lifelong battle with the theologians, warned them in a prophetic manner: 'If you go on with your encrusted dogma and give people stones instead of bread, they will sooner or later look for other sources of advice and spiritual wisdom.'

In the middle of the 18th century, French orientalists translated from the Persian language fragments of Hindu philosophy under the title 'Oupanikhat'. These scriptures became known also in Germany, and two poets of the romantic period, Schlegel and Tieck, made German translations. Both of them were well suited for this purpose, because they had already translated Cervantes and Shakespeare with great success. The German texts circulated among the intellectuals and in the universities. Thus Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) came to know of the Upaniṣads and through them came into contact with Indian philosophy. In his main work *The World as Will and Idea* the influence of Vedanta is tangible. Schopenhauer later said about the Upaniṣads: 'They have been the consolation of my life and will be the consolation at the time of my death.'

His great admirer was Paul Deussen, another great teacher of philosophy. Paul Deussen (1845-1919) like Schopenhauer was fascinated by the large treasures lying in Indian scriptures. He studied Sanskrit, became an indologist and an important exponent of Indian philosophy in Germany

and in the West. In 1882 he published a book *Representation of the Vedanta*. 1884 the university of Kiel, where he was lecturing, published a series, *History of Philosophy in Respect to Religions*, to which Deussen contributed a volume treating the philosophy of the Vedas up to the Upaniṣads. Then he became very busy with translations, and in 1897 appeared his important book *Sixty Upaniṣads of the Veda*. In the winter of 1892/1893 he travelled throughout India giving lectures in many places in English as well as in Sanskrit on the Vedanta and the other systems. His impressions of this tour he later described in a book *Memories of India*.

In 1896 Paul Deussen learned that Swami Vivekananda had come to England, and invited him to visit Kiel. After a short stay at this university town, he accompanied the Swami back to London. We do not know much about the meeting of these two souls, but we may be sure that from Vivekananda's dynamic personality Deussen got a lot of inspiration, spiritually as well as philosophically. 1908 he published a volume *The Post-Vedic Philosophy of the Indians*, containing a detailed exposition of the six *darśanas*, especially Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedanta. 1911 Deussen founded the Schopenhauer-Society and at the same time started giving lectures on 'Elements of Metaphysics', in which he tried to produce a counterweight against the materialistic attitude of the natural sciences of his days.

From Deussen up to Professor Helmuth von Glasenapp, German indologists did a wonderful work in translation and exposition, so that most of the Hindu scriptures including the *Bhagavad-Gītā* became available to German readers. However, all these achievements were on the intellectual side and were restricted to academic circles. The bread of life contained in

Vedanta was not available to the common people. There was none to give spiritual guidance in the actual living of Vedantic truths.

Wolfram Koch was living in Wiesbaden. He was well versed in several languages and had studied mysticism. He was also a writer and was much interested in Hindu philosophy. The intellectual talks of the professors at the universities on theology and indology did not satisfy him. He wanted to see a living example of realization, a teacher who could harmonize daily life and spirituality. Accordingly, he wrote to Belur Math to send a Swami to Germany. He had read about Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and was convinced that the time was ripe to spread the message of Vedanta in Germany. Belur Math agreed, and the choice fell on Swami Yatiswarananda who was then serving as the president of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

In October 1933 Swami Yatiswarananda arrived by ship at Genoa, where Mr. Koch was waiting for him, and they drove up by car to Wiesbaden. Mr. Koch had rented a house where the Swami could live by himself, prepare his own food and create his own atmosphere. The Swami started his work immediately, and his first classes were on M's *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Later followed classes on Swami Brahmananda's *Spiritual Teachings* and readings from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. From the beginning of 1934 Swami Yatiswarananda gave a long series of talks on 'The Spiritual Path', and in between continued his classes for small groups on Hindu scriptures. Besides these talks, Swami Yatiswarananda gave interviews and spiritual instruction to a number of sincere spiritual aspirants.

This work went on without interruption for two years. But by 1935 the Hitler regime had established itself firmly, and

now turned against all religious sects and movements. Meetings had to be notified, and spirituality became suspect. Therefore Wolfram Koch decided to move to St. Moritz in Switzerland, where he had a house, 'Crusaida'. There a new Vedanta study-group was founded, and devotees from different parts of Europe started gathering there. But in the meantime the message had spread, and Swami Yatiswarananda had to travel a lot to see his old disciples in Germany and Vedanta students in France, Holland, Denmark and Sweden. He lectured at the Sorbonne in Paris on Vedanta, and arranged for Swami Siddheswarananda's coming to Paris in 1937, who established the 'Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna' there. From 1937 a journal *Vedanta* was published every three months in St. Moritz, in which not only the wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures, but also the teachings of Christian and Sufi mystics found their place. The journal was published in English, but Mr. Koch and his friends also made a German translation, which was sent to all devotees who did not understand enough English. Swami Yatiswarananda had said from the beginning: 'I have not enough time to learn German, so you all had better learn some English.' All the lectures, readings and class talks were preserved by some devotees, and they are still a treasury of spiritual inspiration. Through the influence of the Swami, publishers in Switzerland and Germany became interested, and during 1936 and 1937—partly with the financial help of Josephine Macleod—Swami Vivekananda's four Yogas were published in German and also *The Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* and Romain Rolland's two books *The Life of Ramakrishna* and *The Life of Vivekananda*.

The political situation in Europe became worse and, finding that the war was imminent, Swami Yatiswarananda left

Germany and Switzerland under his British passport. He stayed during the summer of 1939 in Sweden with devotees in Stockholm, and sailed from Bergen for New York just a few days before World War II broke out.

The German Vedantins, being without a Swami now, continued the work, led by the artist Otto Ritschl. Ritschl was an abstract painter, but the Nazis had forbidden him to paint, and so he had to take a job with the tax-office to survive. Meetings and classes were going on, but the group became small, some dropping away, some killed by bombs. Nevertheless, during the whole War period the work never completely stopped. When the War was over in 1945, most devotees had lost all their property. Ritschl's studio was destroyed, but his library and all the records of Swami Yatiswarananda's teachings were undamaged. So the small group in Wiesbaden started to work again under very difficult conditions. There was no heating, no food, no transport. But it was a time when spirituality had its biggest chance to get hold of the people. As soon as the mail-service started working again, Swami Yatiswarananda, who had opened a Vedanta Centre at Philadelphia in the United States got into touch with his disciples in Wiesbaden. He arranged with his American friends and devotees to send food parcels and other gifts to ease the situation of his German followers. He even sent paint and brushes to Otto Ritschl so that he could paint again.

In the summer of 1949 the news spread, that Swami Yatiswarananda on his way back to India would come to Wiesbaden to meet his old friends and disciples. They all gathered there and were happy to sit again at the feet of their guru. Hopes were growing that he might continue the work in Germany, but after travelling for a few months in Europe, meeting devotees

in Switzerland, France, Holland and Sweden, it became clear to him that his future activities should be in India. As he himself put it, 'I have to water the tree at its roots.' On his way to Sweden he had stopped twice in Hamburg to establish a Vedanta study group there. Before leaving for India he stayed for sometime with his Gurubhai Swami Siddheswarananda at the Vedanta Centre of Gretz near Paris, and advised his German devotees to go to Gretz as often as they could. Specially the Hamburg group remained in close contact with Swami Siddheswarananda and also with Swami Ghanananda of the London Vedanta Centre. When Swami Siddheswarananda passed away in April 1957, it was a big loss for the German Vedanta students, and for several years they had to work all by themselves.

The favourable turn came in 1961, when Swami Ritajananda took charge of the Gretz Centre and started rebuilding it against many obstacles. He was invited by the German Vedanta groups, and the German devotees were again streaming to Gretz for spiritual advice and inspiration. In 1965 the Vedanta Centre of Wiesbaden was re-opened with its own rooms and a library, and Swami Ritajananda came regularly there to give lectures and interviews. As the publishers were still reluctant to take up Vedanta literature, the Centre brought out photo-copies of the German translations of the lectures of Swami Ritajananda, Swami Siddheswarananda's *Meditation according to Yoga-Vedanta*, several pamphlets of different Swamis, the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, Sister Devamata's *Days in an Indian Monastery* and the abridged

volume of the *Gospel* under the German title *Ramakrishna's Eternal Message*. In 1978 a magazine *Vedanta* was started, which followed the example of Swami Yatiswarananda's publication. There are now Vedanta study groups in different German cities, all working in the traditional line, and guided by Swami Yatiswarananda's advice: never pull down the ideal to a lower level, but struggle hard to reach that ideal, even if it cannot be obtained at the moment.

In the meantime the German publishers have realized, that there is a demand for genuine spiritual literature, and that occult humbug and psychic trash are not enough to satisfy spiritual seekers. One of the biggest of them published in 1981 the abridged *Gospel* under the German title *Ramakrishna, His Heritage*, then a revised edition of Śaṅkara's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, and *Ātma-Bodha* and a tract *Vedanta and the German Speaking World*. In the same year a German devotee was happy to find a publisher for his new biography on Ramakrishna, which came out as pocket edition under the German title *Ramakrishna, the Actor of the Lord*.

The work that Swami Yatiswarananda started in 1933 is growing and bearing fruit, and in these times of restlessness and anxiety there is an increasing demand for spiritual wisdom. Many people have realized that Vedanta makes them better Christians, and they are slowly learning to distinguish between the pseudo-teachers and the real teachers of mankind. Vedanta has become an important factor in Germany for all sincere lovers of Truth and spiritual aspirants.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

BE PROUD YOU ARE A HINDU : BY G. M. JAGTIANI. Published by G. M. Jagtiani, D/22, Self-Help Housing Society, St. Francis Road, Vile Parle (W), Bombay-400 056. 1982 (Third Edition). Pp. 22. Rs. 3.

This booklet is intended to arouse and awaken Hindus and create in them a legitimate pride in their culture and heritage. The value of the book would have been greater if the author had clearly listed the basic principles of Hindu spirituality and the foundation-stones of Hindu culture. For a Hindu should know what he ought to be proud

of, and what he ought not to be. But the aim of Jagtiani is to inspire more than to inform, and he does it with irresistible force. In a message to the author, Swami Ranganathanandaji states, 'I know that your intentions are pure and lofty and your actions proceed from a deep devotion to the universal personality and teachings of Swami Vivekananda.' These qualities of the author probably explain the remarkable success that this little book has achieved in a short time.

S.B.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAM, LUCKNOW

Report: for 1979-1981

Religious and cultural: Daily puja and aratrika were held in the Ashrama shrine; Ramanam and Shyamanam sankirtans were held on Ekadasi and on fullmoon and newmoon days. Discourses and lectures on Gita were held on Sundays. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated with special worship, prasada distribution and feeding of the poor. Durgā pūjā was performed in the image and other religious festivals were fittingly observed.

Educational: The Sevashrama conducts a 16,538 books. The textbook section of the library public library and a free readingroom which received 11 dailies and 82 periodicals. It had proved helpful to the students, and the children's section continued to provide needed service to youngsters.

Scholarships and pecuniary help given to deserving students and needy people amounted to Rs. 29,772/- during the period under review.

Medical: The Vivekananda Polyclinic, opened in 1970, has become a prominent medical centre of its kind in the whole state of U.P. It has given a new lead in placing emphasis on domiciliary treatment in the outpatient departments, a system more suited to the Indian economy. The outpatient departments remain open for eight hours on all working days, providing facilities for radiological, pathological and other tests. Treatment by specialists is also available for outpatients and even detailed medical records are maintained. This system has reduced the pressure for indoor beds, of which there are 100 for those who really need hospitalization.

Private practice by medical and other per-

sonnel of the Polyclinic is strictly prohibited. Medicines are supplied to the patients at minimal rates, and charges for pathological, X-ray and other tests are also minimal. Free treatment is given to the needy and the poor and at subsidized rates for the people who can afford to pay. Well-to-do indoor patients desiring private wards have to pay somewhat higher charges. Anti-T.B. and medicines and injections for leprosy were supplied free to the patients concerned.

The following sections were functioning in the Polyclinic during the period: Tubercular Chest Diseases; Non-Tubercular Chest Diseases; General Medicines, including Gastro-Intestinal Diseases; Paediatrics; General Surgery; Ear Nose Throat; Orthopaedics; Pathology including Biochemistry; Radiology; Physical Medicines, including Physiotherapy and Medical Gymnastic; Gynaecology; Maternity; Dentistry including Dental Prosthesis; Ophthalmology; Homeopathy; Leprosy; Social Welfare and Patient Guide; Medical Records; Blood Transfusion Unit; Ayurvedic.

The total number of outpatients treated was 20,40,187; total number of admission in the indoor department was 9,187.

Future Plans: The Polyclinic is greatly handicapped on account of the acute shortage of trained nursing personnel. The proposal to start a General Nursing Training Centre in the Polyclinic has been under consideration. A round-the-clock Emergency Service Unit and an Intensive Coronary care Unit are proposed to be started at an early date for treating cardiac cases.

It has been decided to shift the present monastery, shrine and library to an adjacent site and convert the vacated building into polyclinic staff quarters. Donations to the Ashrama and the hospital will be thankfully accepted.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

The Rishi of Bhoodan-yajña

The passing away of Vinoba Bhave marks the end of an epoch in the history of India that began with Gandhiji's entry into politics and culminated in the attainment of freedom by the nation through non-violent means. Gandhiji had several followers and countless admirers. Among them the only person who tried to live the Gandhian philosophy of life to perfection was Vinobaji.

What is the Gandhian philosophy of life? Gandhiji had set himself two practical goals : the termination of the British Raj and the welfare of all (Sarvodaya). Many of those who followed Gandhiji were interested only in the freedom struggle. A few of course gave at least equal importance to Sarvodaya, but understood it as a socio-economic problem which could be solved by applying what is nowadays called Gandhian economics in politics. What most people overlooked was the fact that Gandhiji's practical ideals were based on one foundational philosophy of life, namely, Self-realization through service to one's fellowmen. This is nothing but a modern version of the ancient Indian ideal of Karma Yoga. It is, however, a difficult ideal to put into practice, for it calls for extraordinary purity of character, dedication and spiritual aspiration. These were precisely the qualities that Vinobaji had been naturally endowed with. Hence he could not only recognize the spiritual vision that lay beneath Gandhiji's greatness, but could himself actualize it to a high degree of perfection in his own life.

Sarvodaya is a concept which Gandhiji defined in 1908 and developed all through his life. Vinobaji's own life and work were limited to this large Gandhian framework. Nevertheless, he did make three original contributions in the socio-political and cultural fields. The most important and well-known of these is the Bhoodan-Gramdan movement that he launched first in 1951 at Telengana and later on all over the country. He covered 36,000 miles on foot and collected 4.4 million acres of land as free gift, out of which 1.3 million acres were distributed among landless farm workers. The failure of the movement has been attributed to several reasons like reliance on Government support, impracticability of the trusteeship ideal, and the failure of his followers to measure up. But it is to be admitted that Vinobaji lacked the mighty will that Gandhiji possessed to sustain a great movement.

The second contribution of Vinobaji was in the modification of the Satyagraha ideal. According to him the goal of Satyagraha which was a negative one in the freedom struggle, namely to oust the British, should give way to a positive one after attaining freedom. In a true democracy the role of Satyagraha should be to help the Government to bring to fruition the ideal of Sarvodaya. This noble premise, however, did not work for the simple reason that Indian democracy is not built entirely on the Gandhian model.

His third contribution was his own holy life. A true Brahmacharin, a great scholar and a perfect Karma Yogi, he stood as the vindication of the ideal of the ancient *rishi* who had exercised a moderating influence in kings' courts. Contemporaries are usually unable to judge the extent to which a sage exerts his influence on the world around him. The death of the sage of Paunar has left a void in the life of modern India which may not be filled up for a long time to come.
