Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

APRIL 1983

Editorial Office

P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh 262 524, U.P.

Publication Office

5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014
Phone : 44-2898

[*Rates inclusive of postage*]

Annual Subscription

India, Nepal & Bangladesn	Rs. 15.00
U.S.A. & Canada	$ 10.00
Other Countries	£ 4.00

Life Subscription (30 *years*)

Rs. 300	$ 200	£ 60

Single Copy

Rs. 1.50	$ 1.00	50 P.

Information for contributors, publishers, subscribers, and advertisers overleaf.

CONTENTS

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 88 APRIL 1983 No. 4

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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

यत् पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यज्ञमतन्वत ।
बसंतो अस्यासीदाज्यं ग्रीष्म इध्मः शरद्धविः ।।

Ṛg-Veda 10.90.6.

When the gods performed the sacrifice with Puruṣa as the oblation, then spring was used as the ghee, summer as the fuel and autumn as the (cooked-food) offering.

* *Puruṣa-Sūkta* continued. The whole existence is in a state of flux. Its most dynamic and complex expression is Life which is a self-sustaining, ever-renewing, cyclic movement and transformation of Prāṇa or vital energy. The Vedic seers conceived this ceaseless cosmic rhythm as *yajña*. The word *yajña* does not mean only 'sacrifice', for it is a two-way process: giving and receiving. There is a cosmic *yajña* as well as an individual one. The whole creation, the evolution of the Supreme Spirit into the manifested universe, regarded as a divine Self-sacrifice and dismemberment, is the cosmic *yajña*. Every action of man regarded as a participation in this cosmic process becomes the individual *yajña*. The whole *Puruṣa-Sūkta* is a symbolic dramatization of this cosmo-theanthropic process.

According to Sāyaṇa two types of creation are mentioned in this hymn: a *pūrva sṛṣti* or Primary Creation in which the Supreme Puruṣa embodies Himself as the Virāt Puruṣa and manifests Himself as all the various beings; and a *uttara sṛṣti* or Secondary Creation in which food and other materials needed for sustaining life are created. His interpretation of the stanza is as follows. When gods came into existence through the Primary Creation (mentioned in the previous stanza) there were no sacrificial materials. So they performed a mental sacrifice using the Supreme Puruṣa as the oblation. In that mental sacrifice (or meditation) spring was imagined as the ghee, summer as the fuel and autumn as the cooked-food offering.

It should be noted that *grīṣma* (summer) does not occur in any other hymn in the *Ṛg-Veda*, while *vasanta* (spring) occurs only in one other hymn.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL is a comparative study of the three main meditation highways developed by the Indian tradition: Samyama, Upāsanā and Bhāvanā.

Swami Chetanananda, head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A., gives a vivid account of the early life and spiritual practice of GOPALER MA one of the great woman-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

In the brilliant study AN APPROACH TO VEDIC INTERPRETATION Dr. A. Ramamurty, Reader in the Department of Philosophy and Religion, Visvabharati University, Santiniketan, exposes the inadequacies of the existing interpretations of the Vedas and suggests a more integral approach. The author's observation that later Hinduism overemphasized the *ādhyātmika* aspect of the Divine is noteworthy.

THE MARVELLOUS BRAIN OF BUDDHA is an interpretative analysis of some of the rare traits of Buddha's character which Swami Vivekananda admired very much. The author Swami Brahmeshananda is a highly qualified doctor at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Varanasi.

Swami Atmarupananda of the Vedanta Society of Southern California concludes the account of his visit to Dharamsala in the second instalment of A NEW ALTAR FOR THE FLAME OF TEBETAN BUDDHISM.

THREE HIGHWAYS OF MEDITATION

(EDITORIAL)

Without his knowledge, every person's life is determined by his view or understanding of reality. And understanding comes from experience. Our earliest experiences in childhood give us our first view or understanding of reality, and this shapes our subsequent thoughts and actions. As we grow and gain more experience, our view of reality changes, and this change alters the course of our thoughts and actions. Thus experience determines our view of reality, which determines our actions and thoughts, which in their turn lead to further experiences.

In ordinary secular life most people are not aware of this cyclic course of their lives and how it is influenced by their view of reality. But in spiritual life one's view and understanding of reality assumes great importance. Spiritual life itself begins only when man wakes up to reality at certain critical moments in his life. Spiritual life is a search for the ultimate Reality, and the whole life of an aspirant is a constant orientation to this ultimate goal.

The goal determines the means. Every spiritual path or technique is based on a definite view of the ultimate Reality. World religions have opened a number of different spiritual paths. Nowadays books on Yoga, Zen, Kuṇḍalinī, choiceless awareness, etc. are freely available, and there is a widespread tendency to make Sādhanā a hotchpotch of diverse techniques. There is of course nothing wrong in assimilating the best points of different paths in one's life. But it should be remembered that Sādhanā is a goal-oriented process, and before we attempt to follow a particular path we must gain a clear idea of the *tattva* or nature of the goal on which it is based.

In Indian thought there are three major views regarding the nature of the ultimate Reality. One is the Sāṁkhya-Yoga view which regards Prakṛti as the ultimate but ever-changing cause of the whole universe, including individual minds, with the selves (Puruṣas) forming an independent immutable reality unaffected by the evolution and changes of Prakṛti. The second view, held by Vedanta, regards Brahman as the ultimate and unchanging cause of the universe, and the individual selves (Atman) as parts or reflections of Brahman. According to the third view, held by Buddhism, everything is in a state of flux and what appears as the ultimate reality or cause is nothing but emptiness, void, Śūnya. Based on these three views of reality, the different types of meditation techniques developed by Indian religions may be grouped under three categories: *Prakṛtyāśraya* (Nature-oriented), *brahmā-śraya* (Brahman-oriented) and *śūnyāśraya* (Void-oriented). All the meditation paths are only lanes, tracks and by-roads of these three main highways.

Prakṛtyāśraya meditation

The Nature-oriented meditation technique is fully developed in the Yoga Aphorisms of Patañjali. In this method the ultimate goal is the realization of the self as completely different and separate from Prakṛti ; but this self-realization is attained indirectly by gaining direct knowledge of the different levels of Prakṛti through a series of stages of meditation. In Patañjali's Yoga meditation begins without any preconceived notions regarding the self. Attention is at first paid only to the mind and its functions, and the realization of the true nature of the self is postponed till the end. The fundamental idea behind the *prakṛtyāśraya* meditation of Patañjali is that the main cause of human suffering is ignorance of the true nature of Prakṛti. It is this ignorance that binds the soul and, as soon as the real nature of Prakṛti is discovered, she herself of her own accord will leave the Puruṣa alone.

The first step in this meditation is Dhāraṇā which means fixing the mind at some point either in the body or outside it. The next step is Dhyāna which means the maintenance of a single *pratyaya* or concept in the mind. The mind functions as three parts or modes or aspects: as the object (called *grāhya*, 'the thing grasped'); as the self or the subject (called *grahītṛ*, 'the grasper'); and as the meditative act (called *grahaṇa*, 'grasping') which is really the will connecting the subject with the object.[1] Dhyāna is practised on these three aspects of the mind one after the other. As Dhyāna gets intensified, all the three—subject, object and will—move closer and closer to one another, until at last they get fused together. In this unitive experience the object alone shines, spontaneously without the exercise of will-power, and the subject (the self) appears *as if* (not actually) it had lost its separate identity.[2] This experience marks the third step in meditation known as Samādhi.

The three stages of Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi together constitute meditation in Patañjali's Yoga. He calls it *saṁyama* (literally 'total control'); another term, borrowed from Buddhist sources, used by him is *samāpatti* ('absorption').[3] A few important points are to be noted regarding *saṁyama*.

In the first place, *saṁyama* is a purely objective technique. Every category from gross physical things to the self is objectified, treated as an object for focussing conciousness upon.

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1. Cf. Patañjali, *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.41.
2. These three characteristics distinguish Samādhi from Dhyāna. Cf. *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.43 and 3.3.
3. Cf. *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.4 and 1.42.

Secondly, *saṁyama* is the maintenance of a single *pratyaya* or thought-wave in the mind. When the mind gets purified and concentration becomes deeper, this *pratyaya* becomes clear like crystal and begins to reflect the light of the Puruṣa. This reflected light of pure consciousness is called *prajñā* or *pratibhā*; it is the yogi's power of intuition which reveals to him the secrets of Prakṛti. It is also a kind of inner yoga fire (*yogāgni*) which de-activates the *saṁskāras* (seeds of past experience) by reducing them to the 'burnt-seed' state (*dagdha-bīja avasthā*) so that they will not sprout again into thoughts and emotions.

The third point is that *saṁyama* can be practised on any object or at any place. And, though Patañjali mentions self-surrender to God as an alternative method, no devotional attitude or faith in God is necessary for the practice of *saṁyama*. There are, however, four planes or levels of consciousness for the practice of *saṁyama*.[4] The first level called *vitarka* is the external world; here concentration is practised on a gross physical object with open eyes.[5] The second is the level of *vicāra*, the mental world; here concentration is practised on a mental image or concept or feeling. The third one is the level of *ānanda* (joy)[6] where the will—that is, the mind itself as the grasping (*grahaṇa*) instrument—becomes the object of concentration. At the fourth level called *asmitā* the subject itself is objectified, the focus of consiousness is turned back upon the reflection of the Puruṣa on the *buddhi* or the intellect. Here concentration is practised on the experience of 'I'-ness separated from every other mental or physical object.[7]

Prajñā, illumination, is possible at all the four levels mentioned above, but its nature and intensity vary from level to level. At the highest level of *asmitā*, illumination becomes an experience of the total liberation of the Puruṣa from Prakṛti. Yogis call it *viveka-khyāti* or *prasaṁkhyāna*. According to Patañjali this experience itself consists of seven grades (*prānta-bhūmis*)[8] of freedom. It corresponds to what is called 'liberation-in-life' (*jīvan-mukti*) in Vedanta.

Till now we have been discussing only one type of meditation—that in which an object, in the form of a single *pratyaya* or thought, is maintained in the mind. This kind of meditation-with-object belongs to one of the two divisions of Yoga known as *samprajñāta*. Patañjali also mentions an objectless type of meditation in which even the single *pratyaya* is suppressed and the mind becomes completely 'closed'. This

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4. *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.17.

5. External concentration is of different types including the *kasina* meditation of Southern Buddhism. In later Yoga books is described a kind of external concentration known as *trataka* practised by fixing one's unwinking gaze on a physical object or point. Crystal gazing is a form of *trataka*. Speaking about his own experience of this kind of concentration, Swami Vivekananda says, 'Once I used to concentrate my mind on some black point. Ultimately, during those days, I could not see the point anymore, nor notice the point was before me at all—the mind used to be no more—no wave of functioning would rise, as if it were all an ocean without any breath of air. In that state I used to experience glimpses of supersensuous truths. So I think, the practice of meditation even with some trifling external object leads to mental concentration.' *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) vol. 6, p. 486.

6. In Vedanta the plane (sheath) of *ānanda* (known as *ānandamaya-kosa*) is considered the highest, but in Yoga the plane of *asmitā* or 'I'-ness (which corresponds to the *vijñānamaya-kosa* in Vedanta) is considered the highest.

7. For this technique see, Vyāsa's commentary on the *Yoga-Sūtra* (1.36)

विशोका वा ज्योतिष्मती ।

8. तस्य सप्तधा प्रान्तभूमिः प्रज्ञा ।

Yoga-Sūtra 2.27.

is actually not a form of meditation but an object-free state of the mind and is called *asaṁprajñāta yoga*. The exact nature of this state, its attainment and effects are matters of controversy among commentators and writers on Yoga. According to some, it is the last and ultimate stage of yoga which is to be attempted only after scaling the highest experience of *viveka-khyāti* in *saṁprajñāta yoga*. According to others, it may be practised at any of the four levels of *saṁyama* discussed earlier. After practising concentration and getting *prajñā* at one plane, a Yogi may get stuck there and find himself unable to move to higher planes. In order to overcome this obstacle he suppresses the experience he had gained at that plane. Then for a short period his mind remains closed, free from all thoughts and experiences—the *asṁprajñāta* state. When he emerges from this state, he will find himself at a higher plane. It is like diving deep into a river at one point, allowing the river to carry you forward a short distance, and then rising to the surface at another point.

According to this second view, *asaṁprajñāta yoga* is of two types: 'with-seed' (*sabīja*) and 'without-seed' (*nirbīja*). After attaining some *saṁprajñāta* experience at the lower planes, a trained yogi can by the use of his will-power make his mind completely thought-free. But this does not mean that his mind will then cease to function. For in the depths of the unconscious there remain the *saṁskāra* 'seeds' undergoing unknown changes. This kind of *asaṁprajñāta yoga* is called *sabīja*. It does not last long, as the suppressed *saṁskāras* break forth into thought waves once again. When, however, after all the 'seeds' have been destroyed through repeated practice and experience, and after the yogi has crossed the seven grades of *viveka-khyāti*, he makes his mind completely thought free, his mind will get closed permanently. All activities, conscious and unconscious, will cease and the mind will get resolved into its elements and merge into Prakṛti. This is the *nirbīja* form of *asaṁprajñāta yoga*. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the body of an ordinary yogi who has attained this highest state will not survive more than twenty-one days, and he will attain final liberation, *kaivalya*. Whether *sabīja* or *nirbīja*, true *asaṁprajñāta* is not an inert (*jaḍa*) state of suspended animation as some people consider it to be, but is rather a state of intense awareness. In it the mind is only free from objective experience, but is nevertheless filled with the power of consciousness.

This takes us to the important concept of *nirodha* or suppression which forms the fourth point in our discussion of the yogic way of meditation. Yogic suppression is of three types: *pratyaya-nirodha*, *vṛtti-nirodha* and *saṁskāra-nirodha*. A *pratyaya* is a complete thought or concept. It is the form assumed by consciousness at any given time. In ordinary thinking a number of thoughts and emotions crowd into the mind constantly. During Dhyāna only a single thought is maintained, the rest are suppressed. So Dhyāna is a state of *pratyaya-nirodha*, though the suppression is not total. *Vṛttis* are the actual expressions or manifestations of *pratyayas*. A *pratyaya* normally consists of three parts or *vṛttis*. These are: word (*śabda*), its object or referent (*artha*) and knowledge (*jñāna*). Of these the first two pertain to the object, and the last one, to the subject or the self.[9] In ordinary thinking all these three *vṛttis* are mixed up, but in Dhyāna they become distinct and separable. In Samādhi, word-*vṛtti* and knowledge-*vṛtti* merge, as it were, into the object-*vṛtti* which alone remains shining in the mind. Thus Samādhi is a state of *vṛtti-nirodha*. As long as

9. Emotions are also *vṛttis*, which are, however, eliminated before meditation.

there remain *saṁskāras* in the depths of the mind *nirodha* or suppression cannot be complete or permanent. Complete *saṁskāra-nirodha* results in the total suppression of all *pratyayas* and *vṛttis* and leads to the highest superconscious state called *nirbīja-asaṁprajñāta Yoga*. *Nirodha* is the very foundation of Yoga, and a clear knowledge of these three types of *nirodha* is essential for a proper understanding of the yogic way of meditation.

Brahmāśraya meditation

We have seen that the technique of meditation taught in Patañjali's Yoga is called Saṁyama. Vedantic meditation is called Upāsanā. It has two dimensions. The macrocosmic dimension known as *samaṣṭi-upāsanā* is the worship of God as the all-pervading Presence. This proceeds in two stages: *virāḍupāsanā* or worship of God as the Virāṭ by serving all living beings through Karma Yoga; and *antaryāmi-upāsanā* or worship of God as the Supreme Self of the universe, either through direct intuitive experience or with the help of certain Vedic conceptual frames called *vidyās*. The microcosmic dimension of Vedantic meditation, known as *vyaṣṭi-upāsanā*, is worship of a limited aspect of God through physical or mental symbols. Depending upon the nature of the symbol used, it is of three types: meditation through an image or form (*pratīkopāsanā*), through a *mantra* or name (*nāmopāsanā*) and through self-identity (*ahaṁgrahopāsanā*). These *upāsanās* were discussed in some of the earlier Editorials. Our intention here is therefore restricted to comparing Upāsanā with Saṁyama.

First of all it should be remembered that Saṁyama is mostly centred on Prakṛti, a *jaḍa* or unconscious principle, and gives more importance to the structure and function of the mind than to the principle of consciousness. But in Upāsanā consciousness is a fundamental principle from the beginning to the end. According to Vedanta, consciousness is not restricted to the individual soul alone but is the basic substratum or Self of the whole cosmos. All living and non-living beings are only manifestations of the one Supreme Self called Brahman which supports, controls and illumines them all. Upāsanā is centred on, and oriented to, Brahman.

Secondly, Saṁyama is a purely objective technique. The different stages in this meditation stand for different types of objects on which the mind is concentrated. Yogic samādhi is defined simply as a state in which the 'object alone shines'. The knowledge of the self enters the field of Saṁyama only at the advanced stages. But Upāsanā begins with an enquiry into the nature of the self and goes straight to the centre of one's Consciousness. In Upāsanā the main concern is the transformation of the self and not the various mental processes. Vedanta accepts different dimensions of the self like *viśva*, *taijasa* and *prājña* which are not mentioned in Patañjali's Yoga. The different stages in Upāsanā represent the different degrees of transformation of the self. In the Upāsanā-Samādhi what is important is not the object but the Self or Atman by whose light the object shines. It should be noted that although Patañjali describes different meditations and experiences, he does not describe the nature of the direct experience of the Self. But in Vedantic treatises Atman experience is clearly described. The Gītā, for instance, says: 'When the mind restrained by Yoga becomes calm, and when seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in his own Self.'[10] In a word, Upāsanā is a subjective-objective technique.

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10. यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया ।
यत्र चैवात्मनाऽऽत्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति ॥
Bhagavad-Gītā 6.20.

The ultimate goal of Saṁyama is the total separation of the self from Prakṛti. This is regarded as a matter of direct experience which is gained only at the highest stage of Samādhi. The ultimate goal of Upāsanā is the union of the individual self with the Supreme Self. Separation from Prakṛti, from the hold of Māyā, is only an early step to this union; and it can be attained by the mental process of *viveka* or discrimination between the self and the not-self or between the permanent and the impermanent. It is surprising that Patañjali does not include *viveka* in any of the preliminary disciplines as Vedanta teachers do.

Another difference is that Saṁyama covers only a limited field of human life—the individual's own experience of concentration. It is essentially an act of withdrawal and, with some unenlightened persons, it may degenerate into a form of spiritual narcissism. Upāsanā, on the contrary, is a process of expansion of consciousness. It is not a withdrawal bnt an active participation in the divine drama of life. Unlike yogic meditation which is restricted to a particular time and place, Vedantic Upāsanā is practised as an undercurrent at all times in all places. It is feeling the presence of God constantly even in the midst of all activities. It thus influences all aspects of life and integrates all experiences of life.

Furthermore, the relationship between the individual and the Infinite that Upāsanā brings about is characterized by a feeling of deep devotion. It is not mere concentration as Saṁyama is, but is a form of worship. In other words, a personal element enters Upāsanā which is lacking in yogic meditation.

Another difference lies in the object chosen for meditation. In saṁyama any concrete form or idea or feeling is good enough for the practice of concentration which is not governed by a rigid conceptual framework. But Upāsanā is done only on some difinite aspect of *saguṇa* Brahman, usually a god, goddess or Avatār, known as the meditator's Chosen Deity (*iṣṭa-devatā*). And the procedure is based on definite metaphysical ideas regarding the nature of the deity, of the soul, and of their inter-relationship.

A striking feature of yogic meditation is the absence of the experience of bliss. Though Patañjali casually mentions *ānanda-samāpatti* as a lower form of Samādhi, *ānanda* or bliss as a spiritual experience does not enter the realm of Saṁyama. Yogic experience is serenity and absence of *duḥkha* or sorrow. On the contrary, the experience of Upāsanā is not a mere absence of sorrow but a positive sense of joy. Progress in Upāsanā is marked by the attainment of higher and greater degrees of bliss. In the Gītā the experience of meditation is described as both 'disunion of union with sorrow' and 'boundless bliss'.[11]

We have seen that in yogic meditation concentration is essentially a process of *nirodha* or suppression, and the highest stage of Yoga called *asaṁprajñāta* is a state of complete suppression of all *vṛttis* and their seeds. It is a wholly negative approach. But in Vedantic meditation concentration is effected through a transformation of consciousness. It is not mere suppression of thoughts, but understanding their underlying causes and sublimating them into higher spiritual urges by stressing the purity and divinity of the Atman.[12]

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11. दुःखसंयोगवियोगं, सुखमात्यन्तिकं

Gītā 6.23,21.

12. Cf 'There are two ways of destroying the mind: Yoga and Jñāna. Yoga is suppression of all thoughts; Jñāna is right insight.'

द्वौ क्रमौ चित्तनाशस्य योगो ज्ञानश्च राघव ।
योगो वृत्तिनिरोधश्च ज्ञानं सम्यगवेक्षणम् ॥

Yoga-Vāsiṣtha

It is a positive approach. Furthermore, at no stage in Upāsanā is the mind allowed to remain a vacuum (*vṛtti-śūnya*), for a higher spiritual *vṛtti* is always maintained. The highest stage known as *nirvikalpa samādhi* is itself the result of the rise of an 'unbroken thought wave' (*akhaṇḍākāra vṛtti*). It is a state of highest illumination and bliss, and not a state devoid of all experience as *asaṁprajñāta* Yoga is.[13]

Like the Nature-oriented meditation (*Saṁyama*), the Brahman-oriented meditation (Upāsanā) too has different stages and results in different types of experience. These will be discussed in their proper context at some future time when we take up the study of the paths of Bhakti and Jñāna.

Śūnyāśraya meditation

The general term for meditation in Buddhism is Bhāvanā. In the Eight-fold Middle Path of Buddha's original teaching the seventh and eighth steps deal with meditation. Originally the seventh step known as Right Mindfulness or Insight (*samyak smṛti* or in Pali *Sati-paṭṭana*) was intended to serve as a preparation for the eighth step known as Right Concentration or Tranquility (*samyak samādhi* or in Pali *samatha*). But gradually these two steps were treated as independent techniques, and later on many schools began to consider the seventh step (Mindfulness) superior to the eighth step (Concentration).

The technique of Mindfulness (*sati*) is elaborately dealt with in the *Satipaṭṭāna* discourse of the *Sutta Piṭaka*, one of the three main Pali scriptures. It is a technique of maintaining constant awareness by watching (*vipaśyana* or in Pali *vipassana*) every movement of the body and mind at all times of the day. In the above-mentioned discourse of Buddha four types of this 'self-remembrance' technique are described. These are: Mindfulness of the body and its movements, especially breathing (*kāyānupassana*); mindfulness of feelings (*vedanānupassana*); of consciousness (*cittānupassana*); and mindfulness of mental objectes (*dhammānupassana*): This practice gradually leads to the state of enlightenment in which the mind disappears and the whole universe appears as emptiness, Śūnya. Under the term 'Vipassana' or Insight, this has become the chief method of meditation practised by Southern Buddhists in modern times.

The techinque of Tranquility or Concentration (*samatha*), nowadays treated as an auxiliary discipline, requires sitting quietly in one place and fixing the mind on some physical or mental object. Buddhaghoṣa in his *Visuddhimagga* lists a total of forty subjects for meditation. The most common method is to think intensely of either the dark side of life (*anitya* or impermanence, *duḥkha* or sorrow and *anātma* or emptiness of the self) or the bright side of life (*maitri* or love and *karuṇā* or compassion). Concentration on specially prepared clay discs called 'Kasina' is also prescribed and is now becoming popular. The practice of *samatha* (*samādhi*) leads to a state of supersensuous experience known as *jhāna* in Pali (*dhyāna* in Sanskrit)[14] of which there are four (or eight) stages.

There are two major divisions of Buddhism, the Theravada (or Hinayana) and the Mahayana. The meditation techniques described above (which seem to be nearer to the original method taught by Gautama Buddha) belong to

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13. It is therefore a mistake to identify or equate *nirvikalpa samādhi* with *asamprajñāta yoga*, as some people do.

14. It should be noted that Dhyāna and Samādhi in Hinduism correspond to *samatha* (Samādhi) and *jhāna* (Dhyāna) in Buddhism, respectively.

Theravada, the dominant religion in Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. Mahayana Buddhism has a number of schools and sects the most important of which are Vajrayana which is the main religion of Tibet, and Zen which is popular in China, Korea and Japan. Vajrayana makes much use of rituals and is a form of Tantric Buddhism. Zen is a unique system of philosophy and practice which originated in China out of a synthesis of Buddhist Yoga and some aspects of Taoism and Confucianism. It is beyond the scope of the present article to discuss the different meditation technique practised in all these schools.

What is important for our present purpose is to note one point which is common to all forms of Buddhist meditation and which lies at the very foundation of the Buddhist way of life. It is the doctrine of Sunya. This doctrine was originally restricted to the self or soul. It holds that the human personality is nothing but a combination of various elements and that there is no permanent self or soul which undergoes repeated birth, suffering and death. Nāgārjuna extended this doctrine to the whole universe. There are three main philosophical schools in Buddhism. The Southern or Theravada school holds that the world is real; the Yogācāra school holds that the external world is unreal, being a projection of the mind which is real; the Mādhyamika school holds that both the external and internal worlds are unreal, and that everything is a void, non-existence. These three schools differ from one another only in their views about the nature of the world, but they are all agreed on one point—that the self of man is Sunya or void. It is this doctrine of *anātma*, non-selfhood, that is the most distinctive feature of Buddhist thought. Every spiritual discipline in every school of Buddhism is based on this doctrine. The ultimate purpose of Buddhist meditation is to realize the emptiness of the self. All forms of Buddhist meditation may therefore be characterized as *śūnyāśraya*, Void-oriented.

The above discussion, being restricted to Indian religious systems, has not included Christian and Islamic ways of meditation. Shorn of symbols, myths and theological dogmas which obscure their true nature, these meditation techniques will be found to come under the category of *brahmāśraya*-meditation.

We may now conclude our discussion by stating three points to which it leads. (1) Spiritual experience is produced by a *vṛtti*, and the type of *vṛtti* that rises in the mind depends upon the person's view of Reality and the type of mental training that he undergoes. Hence each technique of meditation leads to a different type of experience. Says Śrī Śaṁkara: 'Through the *bhāva* (feeling) *vṛtti* one gets the experience of devotional ecstasy; through *śūnya-vṛtti* one gets the experience of the Void; and through *brahma-vṛtti* one gets the experience of Fullness or the Infinite. Therefore one should strive to attain Fullness.'[15]

(2) Mere control of mind, suppression of disturbing *vṛttis*, does not by itself lead to true knowledge, which comes only from the Guru—visible or invisible, human or divine. In every age God incarnates Himself as the Avatār to teach mankind the right path to the ultimate goal suited to that age.

(3) Though the different paths lead to different types of experience, it is of course true that all these experiences are only different aspects of one supreme experience of the one Supreme Reality. But this

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15. भाववृत्त्या हि भावत्वं शून्यवृत्त्या हि शून्यता।
ब्रह्मवृत्त्या हि पूर्णत्वं तथा पूर्णत्वमभ्यसेत्।
Aparokṣānubhūti, 129.

truth cannot be understood by comparing the various scriptures. It is a matter of direct experience which can be attained only by a person who actually practises all the techniques. In the history of mankind this has so far been actualized only by Sri Ramakrishna. It is a new discovery, a new revelation, and he was born for it.

They Lived with God

GOPALER-MA

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

It is hard to believe how the infinite God actually assumes a finite human form and plays with human beings. But this play was actually enacted in the life of a woman devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. She was known as Gopaler-ma, or 'Gopala's mother'. Gopāla, or cowherd boy, is an epithet of the Child Kṛṣṇa. Gopaler-ma's given name was Aghoramani Devi, but she came to be called Gopaler-ma because of her fervent devotion to the infant Kṛṣṇa, which culminated in Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearing before her as a child of seemingly solid physical form. Aghoramani attained this high mystic experience by living a life of austerity and renunciation, and through her steadfast love for her chosen ideal, Gapāla.

One way to approach God, according to traditional Hinduism, is by practising any one of five dualistic attitudes, or moods. These attitudes, or moods, are manifested in the relationship between the devotee and God, and they are: *śānta bhāva*, the peace and stillness felt in the presence of God ; *dāsya bhāva*, the attitude of a servant toward his Master ; *sakhya bhāva*, the attitude of a friend toward a Friend ; *vātsalya bhāva*, the attitude of a parent toward a Child ; *madhura bhāva*, the attitude of a lover toward the Beloved. The idea behind this classification is to help the spiritual aspirant intensify his relationship with God according to his own inner nature. This is a natural path to God-realization. Gopaler-ma attained her vision of God through the practice of *vātsalya bhāva*, the attitude of a mother toward her Child.

Aghoramani Devi was born of a Brahmin family about the year 1822 at Kamarhati, a northern suburb of Calcutta. Following the social custom of child marriage, she was married at the age of nine. Her wedding was the first and last time she saw her husband, for he died before the marriage was consummated, leaving her a widow of fourteen years of age. However, she was initiated into spiritual life by her husband's family guru and, with the child Kṛṣṇa as her Chosen Ideal, she was given the 'Gopāla *mantra*'. Since a Hindu Brahmin widow does not remarry, the love and energy that Aghoramani would have given her husband and children were diverted toward her beloved Gopāla. It was Divine Porvidence that her one-pointed devotion was to make of her a saint instead of a faithful housewife.

After the death of her parents she went to live at the temple-garden of Govinda Datta at Kamarhati, where her brother was the priest of the Radha-Krishna

Temple. It was a large estate, located on the bank of the Ganga. Govinda's widow, the owner and manager of the temple, was a very pious woman who lived like a nun. She practised severe austerity, such as sleeping on the floor, bathing three times and eating one meal a day, and observing religious vows, daily worship, Japa, and meditation. She was looking for a companion, and, through her priest, she found Aghoramani, who was of similar nature and spiritual inclination. Aghoramani was also happy to have the opportunity to live in a solitary, holy place on the bank of the Ganga.

Aghoramani was short but well-built, with a tawny complexion and a face that shone with the glow of purity. It is an ancient custom in India for monastics and orthodox widows to shave their heads because they do not care for external beauty, and, following their example, Aghoramani shaved her head. In later years she donned the ochre cloth, the traditional garb of the renunciant.

By selling her jewelry and husband's property, Aghoramani received about five hundred rupees which she invested in securities and left in her landlady's care. With the three or four repees a month earned as interest on the investment, she had to manage her living. Sometimes the landlady helped her, but from time to time Aghoramani was forced to draw on her capital.

Spiritual life is not a matter of show. The more hidden it is, the stronger and more fruitful it becomes; the more it is expressed, the weaker and more superficial it becomes. For this reason mystics like to remain hidden. Aghoramani, like other mystices, was a person of few words, and she led a quiet, contemplative life in the temple-garden of Kamarhati. Many years later Sister Nivedita described her surroundings:

How beautiful was the Ganges, as the little boat crept on and on! And how beautiful seemed the long flight of steps rising out of the water, and leading up, through its lofty bathing-ghat, past the terraced lawn, to the cloister-like verandah on the right, where, in a little room, built probably in the first place for some servant of the great house at its side, Gopaler-ma had lived and told her beads for many a year.... Her own little room was absolutely without comforts. Her bed was of stone, and her floor of stone, and the piece of matting she offered her guests to sit on, had to be taken down from a shelf and unrolled. The handful of parched rice and sugar candy that formed her only store, and were all that she could give in hospitality, were taken from an earthen pot that hung from the roof by a few cords. But the place was spotlessly clean, washed constantly by Ganges-water of her own sturdy carrying. And in a niche near her hand lay an old copy of the Ramayana, and her great horn spectacles, and the little white bag containing her beads. On those beads, Gopaler-ma had become a saint! Hour after hour, day after day, for how many years, had she sat day and night absorbed in them![1]

The tiny room, where Gopaler-ma spent the greater portion of her life, was at the southwest corner of the building. It had three windows on the southern side through which she could see the Ganga. Inside the room were large earthen pots containing rice, lentils, spices, and other things, which she purchased in quantities to last for six months. Fresh vegetables were bought once a week at the local market. She kept her few articles of clothing in a tin trunk, and her cooking pots and pans were neatly stacked in one corner. Both her inner life and her outer life were well organized. This is a sign of a yogi.

The scriptures say that the practices of an illumined soul are meant for spiritual aspirants to emulate. Gopaler-ma's life, devoid of comfort and luxury; and filled

1. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta; Advaita Ashrama, 1982) vol. 1. p. 109.

with intense longing for Gopāla demonstrates how essential austerity and concentration are to realization. Thus it is both important and helpful for seekers of God to know such details as the daily routine, behaviour, habits, and mode of life of an illumined soul.

Gopaler-ma rose at two o'clock in the morning, washed her face and hands, then started her Japa, which continued until eight o'clock. Next, she cleaned the Radha-Krishna Temple, washed the worship vessels, picked flowers, and made garlands and sandal paste. She was neat, clean, and meticulous. She would bathe twice a day, mornings in the Ganga and evenings in the pond. After bathing in the Ganga, she meditated for sometime under a Vilva (Bel) tree in the temple-garden. Next, she collected dry wood and leaves for her cooking fire. She usually cooked rice, dal, bitter squash, and potato. Her food offering to Baby Gopāla was worth seeing. She would place a wooden seat on the floor for Gopāla and offer cooked food on a banana leaf-plate which she set before him. Afterward she would partake of the *prasād* and then rest for a while. She practised Japa again, then, until evening when she would attend the vesper service of Radha-Krishna and listen to devotional singing. Her supper was always very simple, usually consisting of a few offered coconut balls and a little milk. Again she would start her Japa, which continued until midnight. With rare exception, she followed this routine daily for over thirty years—from 1852 to 1883. Perhaps the only break of any consequence in her routine came when she went on a pilgrimage with her landlady to Gaya, Varanasi, Allahabad, Mathura, and Vrindaban.

Swami Ramakrishnananda mentioned an incident which happened shortly before Gopaler-ma met Sri Ramakrishna:

One day she was cooking as usual, but the fire would not burn, the wood was heavy with moisture, and there was an adverse wind which blew the smoke into her eyes. Finally when the bit of rice and curry was done and she was about to pour it out on the leaf, the same adverse wind blew away the leaf. Then she began to scold God for making everything so bad for Gopala. As she was talking, a little boy brought back the leaf, held it out flat on the ground until she had put the food on it and then disappeared. She began to feed her Gopala; but suddenly she began to ask herself who that little boy was and she realized that it was Gopala himself. From that moment she became mad. All day and night she kept crying, 'Where is my Gopala? where is my Gopala?' She could not sleep or eat. Only at night would she prepare a little food for Gapala, and everyone thought that she had really become mad.[2]

By the 1880's Sri Ramakrishna's name had begun to spread, and it was in the fall of 1884 that Gopaler-ma first went to Dakshineswar, along with her landlady and another woman, to seek an audience with the holy man. As Kamarhati and Dakshineswar are both on the Ganga, they went the three miles by boat. Sri Ramakrishna received them cordially, gave them some advice on devotion, and sang a few songs. He asked them to come again, and graciously, in turn, the landlady invited Sri Ramakrishna to visit her temple-garden at Kamarhati. He accepted the invitation.

Only a jeweller understands the value of a jewel. Sri Ramakrishna recognized the spiritual magnitude of both Gopaler-ma and the landlady, and praising them in his sweet manner, he said: 'Ah! What a beautiful expression on their faces! They are floating in the ocean of bliss and devotion. Their eyes are soaked with divine love.' On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna commented about Gopaler-ma, 'During Krishna's incarnation she was a

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2. *Message of the East*, vol 9, 1920, p. 163.

fruit-seller of Vrindaban, and she would feed Gopala the sweet fruits.'[3]

After her first visit Gopaler-ma felt an irresistible attraction for Sri Ramakrishna, and she noticed a change in her life. Off and on she would think about Sri Ramakrishna, 'He is a nice man and a real devotee.' She decided to see him again soon.

A few days later, while she was practising Japa, her desire to see him became so intense that she immediately left for Dakshineswar by herself. It is an ancient custom that one should not visit God or a holy person empty-handed, so on her way she bought two pennies' worth of stale sweets, which was all that she could afford. She was confident that he would not eat them, since so many people brought better offerings everyday. But no sooner had she arrived at Dakshineswar than Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Oh, you have come! Give me what you have brought for me.' She was embarrassed, but she reluctantly handed over the stale sweets to him. Like a hungry boy he started to eat them with great relish and said to her: 'Why do you spend money for sweets? Prepare some sweet coconut balls, and when you visit this place bring one or two of them with you. Or you may bring a little of the ordinary dishes which you cook yourself. I want to eat your cooking.'

That day Sri Ramakrishna did not talk about God or religion. He only inquired about this food or that food. As Gopaler-ma later related:

> I thought: 'What a strange monk. He talks only about food. I am a poor widow. Where shall I get so may delicacies for him? Enough! I shall not come back again.' But as soon as I crossed the gate of Dakshineswar garden, I felt he was, as it were, pnlling me back. I could not proceed further. I had a hard time persuading the mind, and at last I returned to Kamarhati.

A few days later she came to Dakshineswar on foot, carrying some ordinary curry that she had cooked for Sri Ramakrishna. He relished it and said, 'What a delicacy! It is like nectar.' Tears rolled down Gopaler-ma's cheeks. She thought the Master appreciated her humble offering only because she was poor.

During the next three or four months Gopaler-ma visited Dakshineswar several times, always carrying some plain food for the Master. Invariably he asked her to bring some new food on her next visit. Sometimes she would think in disgust: 'O Gopala, is this the outcome of my prayer? You have brought me to a holy man who only asks for food. I shall not come back again.' But as soon as she returned to Kamarhati, she would again feel that irresistible attraction, and her mind would long to see the Master.

At the invitation of Govinda Datta's widow, Sri Ramakrishna went to visit the temple-garden of Kamarhati. He attended the worship service of Radha-Krishna and sang many devotional songs. The landlady and others there were very much impressed, seeing the Master's ecstasy during the *kīrtan*. After taking some *prasād*, he returned to Dakshineswar.

It was the spring of 1885. One morning at three o'clock, Gopaler-ma, as usual, started to practise her Japa. After finishing the Japa she began Prānāyāma and was about to offer the result of the Japa to her Chosen Ideal when she noticed that Sri Ramakrishna was seated at her left with his right fist clenched. Startled, she wondered, 'What is this? How did he come here at this odd hour?' As she later described:

> I looked at him in amazement and thought, 'How did he come here?' Meanwhile Gopala

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3. Brahmachari Prakash Chandra, *Swami Saradananda* (Bengali) p. 267.

(as she called Sri Ramakrishna) kept on smiling sweetly. As I took courage and grasped his left hand, Sri Ramakrishna's form disappeared and in place of it appeared the real Gopala—a big child of ten months old. His beauty and look beggar description! He crawled toward me and, raising one hand, said, 'Mother, give me butter.' This overwhelming experience bewildered me. I cried out so loudly that if there had been men around they would have assembled there. With tearful eyes I said, 'My son, I am a poor helpless widow. What shall I feed you? Where shall I get butter and cream, my child?' But Gopala did not listen to me. 'Give me something to eat', he kept on saying. What could I do? Sobbing, I got up and brought some dry coconut balls from the hanging basket. Placing them in his hand, I said, 'Gopala, my darling, I offer you this wretched thing, but don't give me such a poor thing in return.'

I could not perform Japa at all that day. Gopala sat on my lap, snatched away my rosary, jumped on my shoulders. and moved around the room. At daybreak I rushed to Dakshineswar like a crazy woman. Gopala also accompanied me, resting his head on my shoulder. I distinctly saw Gopala's two tiny, rosy feet hanging over my bosom.[4]

When Gopaler-ma arrived at Dakshineswar, a woman devotee was present. Her words vividly describe that meeting with the Master.

I was then cleaning the Master's room. It was seven or half past seven in the morning. In the meantime I heard somebody calling, 'Gopala, Gopala' from outside. The voice was familiar to me. I looked and it was Gopaler-ma. She entered through the eastern door like an intoxicated person, with dishevelled hair, staring eyes, and the end of her cloth trailing on the ground. She was completely oblivious of her surroundings. Sri Ramakrishna was then seated on his small cot. I was dumbfounded seeing Gopaler-ma in that condition. The Master, in the meantime, entered into an ecstatic mood. Gopaler-ma sat beside him and he, like a child, sat on her lap. Tears were flowing profusely from her eyes. She fed the Master with cream, butter, and sweets which she had brought with her. I was astounded, for never before had I seen the Master touching a woman in a state of ecstasy... After sometime the Master regained his normal consciousness and went back to his cot. But Gopaler-ma could not control her exuberant emotion. In a rapturous mood she began to dance around the room, repeating, 'Brahma is dancing and Vishnu is dancing.' Watching her ecstasy the Master said to me with a smile, 'Look, she is engulfed in bliss. Her mind is now in the abode of Gopala.'[5]

Gopaler-ma's ecstasy was boundless. Her vision, conversation, and play with her beloved Gopāla continued: 'Here is Gopala in my arms.... Now he enters into you (pointing to Sri Ramakrishna).... There, he comes out again.... Come, my child, come to your wretched mother.' Thus she became convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was none other than her Gopāla.

Only a mystic understands the language and behaviour of another mystic. Sri Ramakrishna was happy to see her ecstasy, but then, in order to calm her, he began to stroke her chest and feed her with delicacies. Even while eating, Gopaler-ma said in an ecstatic mood: 'Gopala, my darling, your wretched mother has led a life of dire poverty. She had to make her living by spinning and selling sacred thread. Is that why you are taking special care of her today?' From this time on Aghoramani Devi was known as Gopaler-ma.

Gopaler-ma stayed the whole day at Dakshineswar, and then, before evening, Sri Ramakrishna sent her back to Kamarhati. The same baby Gopāla went with her, nestled in her arms. When she reached her room, she started to tell her beads as before, but it became impossible. Her Chosen Ideal, for whom she had

4. Swami Saradananda, *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Līlāprasanga,* in Bengali (Calcutta: Udbodhan Karyalaya, Chaitra-1337) 'Gurubhāv-Uttarārdha' Ch. 6, p. 266-7.

5. *Līlāprasanga,* p. 268-9.

practised Japa and meditation all her life, was now pestering her, demanding this and that, as he played in front of her. When she went to bed, Gopāla was by her side. She had a hard bed without a pillow and he began to grumble. At last she cradled his head on her left arm and said: 'My child, sleep tonight in this way. Tomorrow I shall go to Calcutta and ask the daughter of the landlady to make a soft pillow for you.'

The next morning she went to the garden to collect dry wood for cooking. Gopāla also accompanied her and helped her. Then, as she was cooking, the naughty child began to play tricks on her. She tried to control him, sometimes with sweet words, and sometimes through scoldings.

Modern man, inclined to be sceptical and scientific, has great difficulty in accepting as real such experiences as Gopaler-ma's. However, from the traditional Hindu point of view, there are much finer states of consciousness than the one in which we experience the sense world, and this has been substantiated again and again by the experiences of saints and seers. When the mind is pure and saturated with spirit, such high states of consciousness are possible. Gopaler-ma meditated on her beloved Gopāla so much that her mind became very pure. As a result, she entered the superconscious realm, and wherever her eyes fell, she saw Gopāla. In this realm of mystical experience, verbal expression, mental cognition, and intellectual reasoning do not function. The only consciousness is the direct consciousness of God.

A few days later Gopaler-ma went to Dakshineswar to visit the Master. After greeting him she went to the nahabat, or concert room, where Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual consort, known as the Holy Mother, lived. It was Gopaler-ma's habit to practise Japa whenever she had time and opportunity. While she was doing Japa in the concert room, Sri Ramakrishna came there and said: 'Why do you practise so much Japa now? You have plenty of visions!'

Gopaler-ma replied: 'Shall I not practise Japa any more? Have I attained everything?'

'Yes, you have attained everything.'

'Everything?'

'Yes everything.'

'What do you say? Have I really accomplished everything?'

'Yes, you have. It is no longer necessary for you to practise Japa and austerity for yourself, but if you wish, you may continue those disciplines (pointing to himself) for the welfare of this body.'

Thus assured by Sri Ramakrishna three times, she said, 'All right. Whatever I do henceforth will be for you.'

(To be concluded)

AN APPROACH TO VEDIC INTERPRETATION

DR. A. RAMAMURTY

Traditional neglect

From the period of the Brāhmaṇas down to the present times several attempts have been made, within the Hindu tradition and outside it, to interpret the Vedic Saṁhitās. Each school of thought has evolved its own method of interpretation, and historically we come across several such mothods. The different schools of thought have adopted distinct standpoints of their own, not only with regard to the nature and validity of Vedic revelation, but also in respect of its meaning. However, although the revealed character and authority of the Veda are admitted by all the schools of tradition, the continuous attention paid to the study and interpretation of the Vedanta texts has not been shown to the study and interpretation of the Vedic Saṁhitās. Certain schools of Hindu thought have developed and maintained the theory of mutual antagonism between the Saṁhitās and the Upaniṣads in terms of ritualism and knowledge. The theory which regards the Saṁhitās as standing for ritualism, which is mainly due to the view adopted by these schools that the significance of the Saṁhitās is tied up with the ritualistic literature of the Brāhmaṇas, has led to the relegation of Saṁhitās to a secondary position in relation to the Upaniṣads, both in importance and significance.

The meaning of the Saṁhitās is generally sought to be understood and explained mainly with reference to their relevance in the performance of various religious rites as developed in the Brāhmaṇas. Because of their predominant concern with the notion of Dharma which, according to them, consists chiefly in the proper performance of religious rites and duties and, as the Veda is viewed by them as the ultimate source of all religious actions, the scholars of the Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā school have not tried to understand the meaning of the Saṁhitās independently of their ritualistic relevance and significance. The scholars belonging to the different schools of Vedanta have shown little or no interest either in interpreting the Saṁhitās, or in explaining the positive relation between the Saṁhitās and the Upaniṣads. Their concern for the Saṁhitās has been limited to those Saṁhitā passages which fit in well with their interpretation of the Vedanta texts according to their respective standpoints; and in that they have tried to derive the authority of the Saṁhitās for their respective positions. Indeed, no systematic attempt was made till the emergence of Sāyaṇa to interpret the Saṁhitās comprehensively. Most of the other traditional works on the Veda have limited their scope to some of the technical aspects of it, like the nature of its origin and its general validity; and in those cases wherein attempts to explain the meaning of the Saṁhitās have been made, they are not systematic and comprehensive. Thus in general the concern traditionally shown to the Saṁhitās has been nothing more than paying them formal and sentimental homage. Beyond this the basic vision informing the Saṁhitās has not been an object of comprehensive study.

The Vedas and the three realms of experience

Though the Brāhmaṇas form an integral part of the corpus of Vedic literature, they are the earliest historically known attempts at interpreting the Vedic

Saṁhitās. However, the peculiarity of the interpretation available in them is that it is not an interpretation for the sake of interpretation. It is chiefly by way of adopting the Vedic *mantras* for religious or ritualistic purposes, which is done with a view to consecrating the life of man in the light of Vedic revelation. The Brāhmaṇas evolved, though not in a systematic manner, several methods of interpreting the Saṁhitās which were later developed individually and systematically. One such approach is to explain the meaning of the Saṁhitās by means of analyzing the meaning of the key Vedic words etymologically. They have also adopted the method of explaining the significance of some of the *mantras* in terms of their mythico-historical content.

But the most significant and enduring contribution of the Brāhmaṇas towards Vedic interpretation is by way of providing a general framework and direction. This they have done by introducing the concepts of *ādhidaivika, ādhibhautika* and *ādhyātmika.* Though these concepts are to be found in the Vedic literature in general, they are systematically developed and employed in the Brāhmaṇas. The broad purpose of these concepts is to guide and help our understanding of the meaning of the Veda, as well as to explain the significance and justification of the broad division of the Veda into Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. Their significance lies in the help they render in seeing the sense in which each constituent of the Veda is a revelation of the Divine, or how in its totality the Veda stands to reveal the infinite richness and integral unity of the Divine as it reveals itself in and through its varied manifestations. According to this scheme of interpretation, these concepts, or rather the categories of interpretation, are meant to interpret the nature and meaning of divine revelation at all the levels of human experience which is broadly categorized into three realms: the realm of deities, who as the primary self-manifestations of the Divine are the inner principles or powers that manifest themselves within the phenomena of nature and govern them; the realm of nature in all its diverse aspects; and finally the realm of human reality.

Now the manner in which the divine revelation is apprehended by man, which also depends upon the form of divine manifestation, is distinct from realm to realm. Nevertheless, the nature of divine revelation remains the same although its apprehension at one level of human experience is distinct from its apprehension at the other two levels. It reveals itself in its infinite richness within all the realms or at all the levels of human experience. The basic approach of the Veda to the problem of man's knowledge of the Divine is not that of speculative understanding whereby its nature is conceived in abstract terms. But to see or realize its presence in all its manifestations which equally reveal its nature. Thus when the basic vision of a tradition is to relate integrally the whole of human experience to its ultimate source, or to see in all that man experiences the presence of the same reality, the attempts at interpreting every area of human experience in terms of the ultimate source will be of supreme significance and value. No sphere of human experience will then be devoid of revelatory value. On the other hand, every aspect of human life, as well as the various areas of his experience gain their true significance in their relation to the Divine.

Now, according to this approach, the Vedic Saṁhitās may be seen primarily as an interpretation of the Divine or an attempt to reveal the nature of the Divine in the realm of deities (*ādhidaivika*), while the Brāhmanas are an interpretation

of the same in the realm of nature (*ādhibhautika*), and the Upaniṣads present the nature of the Divine as revealed within the reality of man (*ādhyātmika*). We can thus understand and appreciate the attempts made in the Brāhmaṇas to interpret the nature divinely by way of finding out the identities and correspondences, either real or symbolic, between the Divine in the form of deities and the various elements of nature. And the process of integrating nature with the Divine is sought to be accomplished with the help of the concept of *yajña*. *Yajña*, as representing the process of self-manifestation of the Divine at the phenomenal realm, is Vedic man's endeavour to integrate nature with the Divine, and to consecrate it thereby. The chief object of the Veda as thus conceived by the Brāhmaṇas is to integrate into divine unity what is diversified in the process of the Divine self-manifestation. Each aspect of nature is to be related and integrated with the Divine, so that what is diversified is seen in its inner divine unity. As every experience of man reveals the nature of the Divine, though in its own peculiar manner, no area of experience is divinely insignificant. The appeal of the Upaniṣads, and their immediate spiritual significance to man are however mainly because of their being an interpretation of divine revelation at the level of his own reality. Whereas the revelation of the Divine at the other two levels of his experience may not be as clearly intelligible and immediately significant to man as it is at the level of his experience of his own reality.

Thus the Veda in all its constituents seeks to reveal the nature of the Divine as it is mediated to man in and through distinct realms of his experience. One's inability to see therefore in any of the realms of his experience the presence of the Divine is to miss its infinite richness and integral unity. Consequently the different areas of human experience remain unintegrated, and one area of experience may assume supreme or exclusive importance and significance over other areas of experiences. It is thus in later Hindu tradition one category of interpretation, the *ādhyātmika* one, and one area of human experience, the inner life of man, have gained supreme importance and significance over others. This has given rise to several types of misconception regarding the significance of the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas, as well as to unwarranted attacks on their spiritual worth. It has also resulted in the exclusive concern with the thought of the Upaniṣads, claiming thereby supreme importance to Self-realization, to the neglect, at times with contempt, of the study of the other two realms of human experience; and the general adaptation of a spiritual or subjective approach to philosophical and religious problems. The meaning of Hindu spirituality has thus been narrowed down or reduced to a single dimension and perspective which is decidedly not the case with the Veda. However, by adopting all the three above-mentioned categories of interpretation we not only will be able to understand and appreciate fully the meaning of Vedic revelation, but can also understand the real significance of Vedic deities and their revelatory value.

The Upaniṣads are not an interpretation of the Saṁhitās, but a continuation of the same revelation; only the form of its presentation is distinct. They express the nature of the Divine as it reveals itself within the being of man. We also find in the Upaniṣads attempts at presenting the nature of the Divine in its abstract nature or in itself through generalized concepts which however presuppose its revelation in concrete living situations. Because of this, much of the symbolism that is peculiar

to Vedic expression is now shed, and the conceptual mode of expression is resorted to. Nevertheless, the Upaniṣads are known more for their *ādhyātmika* interpretation of the Divine. In the Saṁhitās though speculation regarding the nature of the Divine in itself is present, it generally tends towards scepticism. Apart from these differences, which do not concern us here directly, both the Saṁhitās and the Upaniṣads belong to the saine genre of literature. Both form the Śruti tradition.

After the Upaniṣadic literatnre and with the emergence of Smṛti literature, we find different schools of thought evolving their own methods of Vedic interpretation. What is however common to all these schools, which are from within the tradition and are orthodox in character, is that they all have ungrudgingly accepted the revealed character of the Veda, and its infallibility.

Interpretation of grammarians

The major concern of the school of grammarians vis-a-vis Veda has been to show or establish the general validity and eternality of the Veda by means of explaining the nature and origin of words and their relation to meaning; and in that they made a significant contribution toward understanding the Vedic concept of Vāk. Beyond this they have not gone in explaining the meaning of the Saṁhitās.

Method of etymologists

The method developed by the school of etymologists (*nirukta*) in interpreting the Saṁhitās is that of analyzing the meaning of individual Vedic words, especially those that are peculiarly Vedic in usage, in terms of their basic roots. They have also tried to formulate the rules that govern such etymological derivations. This method has its limitations. Though Sanskrit language is older than the Veda, the Veda is the first known literature in Sanskrit. What the words used in the Veda mean, therefore, can best be known only by referring to the Veda. It is the first record of their usage. What the words must have meant in the context of the Veda, or the Vedic intention of their usage, is not so easy to determine independently of their Vedic framework. Whereas the rules of the Sanskrit language and the regulative principles about its usage were formulated much later. In this process the current usage of the language must have been the main guiding principle. Therefore these rules, which are generally helpful in defining the words, cannot, strictly speaking, determine their Vedic meaning. For instance, some of the key Vedic words like, *deva, kavi, kāvya, kratu, ṛṣi, vāk, go* etc., the proper grasp of whose meaning will be of invaluable help in comprehending the meaning of the Saṁhitās, do not carry with them the same meaning in their Vedic and non-Vedic usages. Much of their Vedic connotation is lost in later usage, and new meanings or shades of meaning are acquired by these words.

This is not however to deny the help the etymological definition of words can render in understanding the meaning of the Saṁhitās, as the language in its growth retains to a large extent its basic structure. Only the usage need not be a determining factor in understanding the Vedic usage. Further, the possible meanings a word can have cannot all be derived from a single root. On the other hand, the various meanings a word can have can best be known in the light of its usage in different contexts, as well as in the total context of the thought. Besides, how a word stands to mean different things cannot be explained satisfactorily in terms of a single root. To avoid this, if we adopt

different roots to derive different meanings of a word, the attempt to explain the meaning of words etymologically will not be of much significance. All the meanings of a word cannot be explained on the basis of the same root. This difficulty has been recognized by the etymologists themselves, and therein lies their significant contribution.

Moreover, the etymologists cannot be regarded as free from their own doctrinal presuppositions in analyzing the meaning of words etymologically. Most of the key Vedic words are used symbolically to communicate the truths of revelation, whereas in their ordinary usage they are meant to convey their plain sense. Thus in both the cases the intention of their usage and their referent need not be the same. Most of the words are used in the Veda to convey a sense which they are not supposed to do ordinarily. The words of ordinary usage are employed in the Veda, not with the intention of communicating ordinary experiences of mankind, but with their help to communicate an experience which is uncommon. Therefore the Vedic usage of most of the words is symbolic. The attempts either at paraphrasing the Saṁhitās into current idiom of Sanskrit, or in translating them into a foreign language involve, therefore, an element of interpretation which is practically unavoidable as the Saṁhitās are not simply a piece of Sanskrit literature in which some empirically known and verifiable reality is described.

People have often tried to derive the meaning of a word from different roots giving rise to the impression that the process of such analysis is pre-determined in terms of what one is trying to derive. Often thinkers with distinct standpoints of their own have tried to derive different meanings from the same word by tracing it to different roots. This makes the problem more complicated, and at times confused. Instead of trying therefore to determine the meaning of a word solely in terms of uncertain roots, or in terms of its later usage, its Vedic meaning can be grasped by observing how each word behaves in all the contexts of its Vedic usage, as well as in the total context of Vedic thought or vision. The meaning of the words or concepts cannot be understood individually or in isolation of total thought. What the individual words can mean is also largely determined by the totality of the context. Words help to understand the thought, and equally the thought helps to determine the meaning of words. Although the words retain their basic meaning structure which can be known either by looking into their actual usage or in terms of their root difinitions, they also acquire a special sense, especially when they stand to communicate non-empirical experiences, in terms of the total context of thought. Understanding a language is not the same as comprehending the thought expressed through that language, though understanding of language is a necessary condition for understanding the thought. Of course, it is true that only with the help of the meaning of the individual words we can arrive at the total picture of thought; but the latter, when it is grasped, which involves more than knowing the meaning of individual words, also helps in determining the meaning of individual words. Thus with the help of the same words different thinkers with different perspectives try to communicate their basic vision, and in doing so they give their own sense to the words or concepts. This is true with every philosophical thinker. And this is more so when the language is used to communicate revealed experiences. Thus the meaning of a word is also to be determined in terms of the total context of thought.

In determining the meaning of some of the Vedic words, some of the Western interpreters of the Veda sought to find help in the cognate languages of Sanskrit. How far can these cognate languages shed light on the meaning of Vedic words? There are words common to these languages, but as their number is so insignificant their value in illuminating the meaning of Vedic language is negligible. The presence of common words in more than one language need not necessarily imply their common origin. Moreover, the general orientation of thought, and the direction it has followed in the course of its development of which Sanskrit language is the vehicle of expression are not the same elsewhere or with those who think and express themselves in terms of cognate languages. For example, what is there either in the root meaning of the word Agni, or in its ordinary Sanskrit usage, or as it is used in other cognate languages to indicate its divine nature? How are we to explain on the basis of these principles of interpretation the various epithets that are attributed to Agni, both adjectively and substantively, such as *kavi, vipra, ṛṣi, pracetasa, jātavedasa, īśvara* or *ina* etc., which stand to reveal its divine nature? Only the phenomenal aspect of Agni, as the principle of heat or an element of nature is all that can be known by this process, but not the divine nature of Agni which is the primary concern of the Veda.

Pūrva Mīmāmsā interpretation

Ritualistic or rather religious (Yājñika) approach to Vedic interpretation, or interpretation of the Saṁhitās to serve the practical religious needs of man, initiated in the Brāhmaṇas was later developed systematically and fully by the Pūrva-Mīmāmsā school. Basic to this approach is the view that the primary object or intention of the Veda is religious action. Accordingly the meaning of the Saṁhitās is viewed and explained in relation to the performance of religious rites and duties. Even though a distinction is made by the school of Pūrva-Mīmāmsā between descriptive and injunctive statements, the Saṁhitās comprising the former type of statements (the descriptive statements) are, however, meaningful, according to it, only in so far as they lead to or inspire action directly or indirectly. This is based on its general understanding of the nature of language, according to which, a statement to be meaningful should intend some action. Thus according to this school of interpretation, the meaning of the Saṁhitās is secondary to or dependent upon religious action. Now the problem whether the intention of the Vedic *mantras* is primarily to help perform various religious rites and duties, or to communicate the nature of the Divine as revealed, is of basic importance in deciding the issue whether the meaning of the *mantras* is secondary to or dependent upon the performance of religious rites, or they have a meaning of their own which can be known independently of religious action.

It is one thing to adapt the Vedic mantras to ritualistic or religious purposes, and quite another to think that they are intended primarily for that purpose. Apprehension of truth and man's response to it are two distinct things, though they may go together. Now if we view the object of the Veda as primarily to communicate the nature of the Divine as revealed, then in understanding its meaning we need not necessarily view it in relation to the practical religious needs of man. In other words, the religious action need not necessarily be the primary intention of the Veda Then instead of the Saṁhitās gaining their significance in terms of the religious life of man, it is the religious life of man

that obtains its meaning in the light of Vedic revelation. Thus how man responds to divine revelation, or how he plans and organizes his religious life in its light, is a different problem, and has no logical relation to the understanding of the meaning of revelation. While religious action is a means to an end, apprehension of truth is an end in itself. Thus when faced with the problem of explaining the divine nature of the dieties, or why the various deities are seen as divine, though representing the various phenomena of nature, the school of Pūrva-Mīmāmsā has no satisfactory explanation, and has resorted to various sorts of naturalistic interpretation.

Sāyaṇa who mostly followed this method of interpretation has however made an attempt to understand the meaning of certain *mantras* independently of their ritualistic significance. He has tried to understand the meaning of those distinct *mantras* in the light of the Upaniṣads. But thereby he has not achieved much, for interpretation of only a few of the *mantras* according to the Upaniṣadic thought does not fit in well with the general trend of his interpretation. And he has not done anything to reconcile and integrate those exceptional *mantras* with the general thought of the Veda as interpreted by him. Such an approach would naturally give rise to the view that the Veda has no unity of thought or vision to which he himself would not have subscribed.

Historical method

The school of historical interpretation which is the one that has been followed in modern times by Tilak and some other scholars, both Indian and Western, and which in its wake has given rise to the 'Aryan-Dravidian' controversy, is an attempt to interpret the Veda as a historical account of a struggle, either between primitive people and their hostile environment over which they had no means of control or mastery, or a racial hostility and conflict between powerful migrating invaders and the natives. Though there are some historical elements here and there in the Veda, they cannot be construed as the primary object of the Veda. Its spiritual significance and philosophic worth are totally overlooked by this kind of interpretation. This method of interpretation which is present within the Brāhmaṇas was later fully made use of in the Purāṇic literature. However the Purāṇas have not lost sight of the symbolic character of the events described in the Veda, most of which do not occur in empirical space and time, or in concrete historical situations.

These traditional schools of Vedic interpretation have kept in view, though partly, the tradition developed subsequent to that of the Veda. They have not completely overlooked the help the later Hindu tradition, especially the Upaniṣads, can render in understanding the meaning of the Saṁhitās. However, they have made no systematic and significant attempts to see and appreciate clearly the organic or logical continuity between the Saṁhitās and the later tradition, either philosophical or religious, in respect of both content and direction. Failure to recognize the integral unity and logical continuity of Hindu tradition, which has its foundational beginnings in the Saṁhitās, has given rise to the antagonism between the two schools of Mīmāmsā (the Pūrva and the Uttara or Vedanta) and has continued to influence the Hindu tradition.

Modern interpreters

Most of the modern approaches to Vedic interpretation are laden heavily

kindled a small flickering flame within us. We do hope that time will draw near when we shall feel more confident to quote their names in articles of this kind meant for business people. But at the moment let only the principles be examined, without names which might cause a mental block to some of them. We are sure there must be quite a few managers who might be practising many of the ideas discussed here. But there must be many more who are just unaware that such a world of thought and practice exists as an alternative to what they are now accustomed to. Amongst them many would be the souls far more courageous than ours to make a throbbing reality of these principles. The struggle to achieve a measure of stability and certitude in even one of them would be enormous. But even a small bit of success will boost one's spirits. Then the whole effort, as someone put it so aptly, would be a delicious torment! Because the joy of that small victory will be far in excess of the loss one may suffer from the viewpoint of the usual yardsticks applied to one's managerial actions and decisions.

Our readers may also have noticed that this paper does not have the undertone of a scholarly piece of writing. For, one often feels a sense of dry intellectual exercise in many of the scholarly writings bearing on such themes as discussed here. To mention one recent work in this area which is a product of profound and sustained scholarship, the author states:

> a psychological revolutionary situation in India can only come about if large sections of Hindu society question the usefulness, if not the existence, of 'ultimate reality', bring up to awareness its parameters in Hindu infancy and firmly reject many of its social and cultural manifestations as vestiges of an archaic, personal and historical past.[22]

[22]. Kakar, S., *The Inner World* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978) p. 187.

This in a way is a rather dangerous call for destructive normlessness. We are witnessing the consequences of such rejection and revolution around us all the time. Rejection and revolution have become self-deluding cloaks for indiscipline and selfishness because nothing then has any sanctity—except one's own self-centred motives. Our intellectual efforts for the past thirty-five years have not produced one single authentic substitute or replacement for our much-maligned archaic heritage (although in all fairness to the author of the above book, he does accept that Hindu heritage has much to conserve and capitalize on). In questioning the concept of 'ultimate reality' the author demonstrates once again a characteristic common amongst all of us: to reject anything which our intellect cannot grasp, assuming that this faculty is the highest a human being possesses. Indian psychology is a standing challenge to this standpoint. As to its utility, the message of Indian psychology and philosophy is that the nearer people are to comprehending the 'ultimate reality' the better they resolve their *own* conflicts first, and consequently thereafter of others. Human history provides any number of examples to prove this. Mere rejection is, therefore, an entirely negative approach, and no fundamental and enduring change can be built on it. So our plea is: if we possess a sound heritage of psychological insights for conducting secular life—including management—from men of lofty altruism and deep realization, and not from careerist frothy intellectuals like us, we had better utilize them. Such higher ideas and formulations are bound to be far more infallible and enduring. The real task at hand is to put them into practice through cases, games, role-plays, exercises, and so on. They should become our very own training and management development packages. It is also our moral duty to pass on such noble ideas, tested and

immensely helpful in knowing the workings of the primitive mind, especially in the sphere of religion. Thus their concern for the Veda is primarily for its historical importance. Also they tried to find in it a direct literary evidence or rather confirmation of some of the pet theories of modern man about the origin of religious beliefs and philosophic speculation. The presence of philosophic insights of a higher order in the Veda which they have recognized, are however, according to them, an exception in a literature which is otherwise primitive. Thus in general the Western scholars have failed to see any continuity and unity between the Veda and the highly evolved later Hindu tradition, and hence tried to understand and interpret the Veda in isolation. They viewed the Veda by itself. To study and interpret the Veda independently of tradition means that the Hindu tradition subsequent to the Saṁhitās, which is a continuous and living one, has not much to do with the Saṁhitās either in thought content or in general direction. This line of thinking has led some to think in terms of borrowig to explain the supposed gap between the Veda and the tradition. Though the Indian thinkers in general have not committed this error, yet they have not tried to explain how the Upaniṣads and the tradition later to them are a continuation of the Vedic thought and vision.

Two traditional standpoints

Now with regard to the general meaning of the Saṁhitās we find two broad views. According to one the Vedic deities are but a deification of the natural phenomena done by the poetic imagination of the Vedic seers. The various Vedic deities, when stripped of their divine attributes poetically superimposed on them, can be identified as standing for the different aspects of nature. This has been the general conclusion about the meaning of the Saṁhitās, according to one view, both in the past and in the present. This naturalistic interpretation of the Vedic thought also fits in well with the modern theories about the origin of religious beliefs and concepts.

The other view aims at giving a wholly mystical or spiritual meaning to the Vedic deities. The spiritual or *ādhyātmika* interpretation, which originally meant seeing the Divine within a particular realm of human experience, that is within the reality of man, which is equally revealed within the reality other than that of man, and is equally mystical and spiritually fulfilling and significant, is now reduced to mean seeing the Divine solely within the inner life of man. This, as stated earlier, is due to the antagonism developed between the Veda and the Vedanta, and the general preference or bias of later Hinduism for the Upaniṣadic vision of Reality which it has come to regard as the highest attainment of man's spirituality. As thus the divine life has been taken to mean the spiritual unfoldment of man, attempts have been made constantly in later Hindu tradition to interpret every experience spiritually or from the *ādhyātmika* standpoint. The meaning of the Divine is now restricted to the inner spiritual life of man. Consequently every experience of man is sought to be reduced to the spiritual level, or interpreted spiritually to have any higher significance for man, or else is given up. Hence the attempts to explain the Vedic thought in terms of inner or spiritual phenomenon of man.

It is thus that, in both the types of interpretation, those *mantras* and the epithets of the deities which are not favourable to either type of interpretation are either conveniently overlooked or are

distorted to mean and support their respective interpretations. While the naturalistic interpreters lay exclusive emphasis on the phenomenal description of the deities, the mystical interpreters are completely oblivious of the phenomenal character of the deities. Whereas in the Saṁhitās no deity is described exclusively in terms of either type of characteristics. A deity is an abode or centre equally of both the types of epithets. We do not find a *mantra* concerning a deity in which it is described either exclusively in terms of its phenomenal character or in terms of its divine nature. Both the aspects are intrinsic to the nature of a deity, and are hence integrally related in the nature of a deity. By overlooking therefore either of the two aspects of a deity it will not be possible to grasp the real meaning of a deity as well as the true meaning of Vedic revelation.

One more peculiarity of the Vedic Saṁhitās is their general lack of concern for speculative ideas about the nature of the Divine in itself or in its abstract nature. In all the contexts in which the nature of the Divine in itself is talked about or speculated, such speculation tended towards scepticism. This is generally the tone of speculative *mantras* present in the Saṁhitās. Whereas when the Divine is addressed in the form of various deities, either individually or collectively, utmost reverence and devotion are shown, and the felt presence of the Divine is never doubted. Such descriptions are vivid and their tone is highly devotional and the felt certainty of the poet is fully reflected in the *mantras*.

The integral view

How to explain this as well as the double nature of a deity? To explain these satisfactorily, keeping in view at the same-time the general spirit of the Veda, as well as that of Hindu tradition, we have to adopt a philosophical position distinct from the above two with regard to the meaning of the Veda, and accordingly adopt a new approach. Here we have to consider a basic problem. How is divinity revealed to man, or how does man come to know its presence? Is it revealed to man as it is in itself, or in its abstract nature directly, as if in a vacuum, so that man comes to know the nature of the Divine independently of his experiences either of his own reality or that of the world? Or is it known to man as it gets revealed in and through its varied forms of self-expression? Is it the case that man abstracts the nature of the Divine from what it is as revealed to him in and through his lived experiences and thus forms a general concept of it?

Now the basic approach of the Veda in this regard, as of Hindu tradition in general, which is wonderfully expressed in the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* ('Vibhūti Yoga') is to see the Divine presence in and through nature of which man is a self-conscious expression. And accordingly the various phenomena of nature are seen as different forms of the Divine self-expression. Thus revelation of the Divine is not limited to the reality of man alone. It reveals itself in and through all that a man experiences as all are equally its manifestations, though the manner of revelation varies from realm to realm, which also depends upon the way in which man apprehends it. On the other hand, those who talk of the Divine in itself, which is more a matter of speculative understanding than of direct seeing, do not see its presence anywhere. It is like seeing humanity without man.

Thus each Vedic deity, as a form of self-expression of the Divine has two aspects. (1) That which is peculiar to each deity, and in terms of which its individual identity is known, and is seen as distinct from other deities; and (2) that which it has in common with all. In the Saṁhitās

the divine attributes are common to all the deities, while the phenomenal attributes are peculiar to each deity. The phenomenal attributes of a deity give it its individual identity. While the divine attributes, which are common to all the deities, tend to negate their individuality. In other words, in terms of its divine attributes, the individual identity of each deity tends to merge itself in that of other deities. Hence the Vedic concept of Visvadeva ('all-gods' or All-God) according to which a deity is conceived as being one with all other deities, as well as the process of identifying each individual deity with other deities. In the Samhitās, as well as in the Brāhmanas, almost all the deities are identified with all other deities.

Now to explain satisfactorily the significance of the double nature of a deity, we have to adopt the position that the deities in their phenomenal aspect represent or reveal the different forms of the Divine self-expression; and as in all these forms the presence of the same reality is revealed, all the deities, in so far as they stand to reveal the felt presence of the Divine, share in common the divine nature. As each form of self-expression of the Divine is distinct from other forms, a deity representing a particular form of expression, is distinct in its phenomenal character from other deities. Thus while there is difference in forms of expression, what is expressed or revealed thereby is the same. Therefore a deity as revelation of divine nature as well as a form of its expression is known as the abode of both. Since the double nature of a deity as well as other problems raised here cannot be explained either in terms of naturalistic interpretation or in terms of spiritual interpretation, they are to be rejected. Moreover, according to these interpretations the nature of the Divine remains a mere idea having no basis or support in human experience.

Finally, since the basic source of Hindu tradition, which is continuous and living, its interpretation should be consistent with the basic spirit of Hindu tradition. Here again we should not assume the position that the Veda as the beginning of the Hindu tradition need not necessarily contain within itself what has been developed and formulated later. Some scholars consider that as the starting point of evolution, the Vedic Saṁhitās contain, if at all, only the rudimentary beginnings of Hindu tradition waiting for development or even fulfilment. Some even think that the later Hindu tradition stands for the rejection of the Veda. According to this line of thinking, there is a gap doctrinally between the Saṁhitās and later Hindu tradition which cannot be explained without looking for other sources. Is it then meaningful to think of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as a development or fulfilment of the Upaniṣads, and the latter as the fulfilment of the Vedic Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas? If we admit this, then we not only have to compromise with the revealed character of the Veda as traditionally held, but will also have to explain the traditional view that the Upaniṣads belong to the Veda integrally. Moreover they themselves proclaim that they continue to represent the same revelation though expressed differently. Unless we have strong reasons against the validity of the traditional standpoint in this regard, and whatever reasons that are offered against it are in the final analysis due to a particular type of interpretation of the Veda, we have to accept the validity of the traditional standpoint.

Therefore the Veda is to be viewed and interpreted in relation to or in line with Hindu tradition, as the same vision and spirit permeate the whole tradition of which the Veda is the fountain-head. As the Veda is to be viewed in relation to

tradition to understand its meaning, so also the tradition is to be viewed in relation to the Veda to understand its significance. The true significance of both can be obtained by understanding each in relation to the other. On the other hand, by trying to understand them in isolation or independently of each other, we may not be able to understand and appreciate the significance of either.

THE MARVELLOUS BRAIN OF BUDDHA

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

Among the various prophets and divine incarnations of the world, Lord Buddha was Swami Vivekananda's favourite. Swamiji delivered a large number of lectures and talks on the Buddha. Whether dealing with the historical aspect of Buddhism, or its philosophy, or the life of Buddha, Swamiji never failed to highlight the exemplary character of Buddha which he considered 'the greatest the world has ever seen.'[1]

In his talk, 'Buddha's Message to the World' he says, 'And consider his marvellous brain! No emotionalism. That great brain never was superstitious.'[2] Elsewhere he uses an uncommon word, 'Sanity'. 'See the sanity of the man. No gods, no angels, no demons—nobody. Nothing of the kind. Stern, sane, every brain-cell perfect and complete, even at the moment of death. ... Oh, If I had only one drop of that strength! The sanest philosopher the world ever saw. Its best and its sanest teacher.'[3]

The word 'sanity' appears more often in its negative counterpart—'insanity', which means madness. Therefore the use of this word here has greater significance in stressing the negative aspect of character, and therefore to appreciate the brilliance of the Buddha's character, we must clearly know the meaning of insanity and what a diseased brain is.

The minds of most of us are almost all the time in a reverie of disconnected thoughts, sense-impressions, irrelevant memories and physical sensations. If we could taperecord the working of the average human mind, it would sound something like this: 'The article. Oh, it's hot today. He is a nice man. I must pay the bill tomorrow. This mosquito nuisance...' Luckily, this thought reverie does not get expressed except in states of maniac psychosis or delirium. It is kept under control by the intellect and the will. Out of this mass of disconnected thoughts, the intellect selects a few and decides to discard the rest, and the will coordinates these into logical systematic thinking. Thus mental reverie is neither expressed, nor allowed to direct the body and the senses into uncontrolled action.

The intellect and the will in turn are influenced by our conscious and unconscious desires and ambitions, emotions and past impressions. Normally all these faculties work harmoniously, being regulated by the intellect and the will. But sometimes the balance is disturbed and, depending upon the duration and severity of this imbalance, there are various grades of insanity. Some people

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1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972) vol. 7, p. 22
2. *The Complete Works* (1977) vol 8, p. 104.
3. *The Complete Works* (1973) vol. 3, p. 528-9.

are imbecile by birth, born with poor intellect and weak will. They are driven helplessly by their emotions and subconscious urges. Others lose their balance later in life owing to stress and strain and become permanently mad. Persons falling under these categories of congenital or acquired permanent mental disability are not many. But there is a much larger group of people who sometime or other suffer from insanity for months or years. It is estimated that in the U.S.A. alone, one out of every twenty persons goes to the mental hospital sooner or later in life. And the number is on the increase.

Individuals not falling under these two categories of temporary or permanent madness are sufficiently well adjusted to their environment, and they pass as 'normal healthy individuals'. But are they really so? Some psychologists go to the extent of saying that there is nothing like a normal man, and that everyone has some or the other mental aberrations. And there is some truth in this statement. Arjuna's example is an excellent illustration of this. On seeing his own kith and kin ready to kill and be killed on the battlefield, this great hero of the Mahābhārata, the best amongst men, showed signs of neurosis. He started trembling and sweating, his mouth went dry and his bow slipped out of his hand. He started babbling irrelevant words, not befitting his status or the occasion.

Thus, the truly sane person is he who maintains his intellectual clarity and exercises his will-power even under extremes of stress, even at the moment of death. The Buddha, according to Swamiji, was such a perfectly healthy prophet.

The first characteristic of a sane mind, according to Swamiji, is absence of emotionalism. Our approach to problems of life is more often emotional than rational. Criticizing Arjuna's emotionalism, Swamiji says, 'There is a conflict in Arjuna's heart between his emotionalism and his duty. The nearer we are to [beasts and] birds, the more we are in the hells of emotion. We call it love. It is self-hypnotization... It is not the blind, birdlike emotion that leads to perfection... Now, Arjuna is under the control of this emotionalism. He is not what he should be—a great self-controlled, enlightened sage working through the eternal light of reason.'[4]

The reaction of the Buddha under similar or even more trying situations was quite different. He did not lament or become nervous when two of his foremost disciples, the pillars of his new religious movement, died. Instead, he took the opportunity to teach his disciples the transitoriness of life. He remained unruffled even when confronted with murderers or defamed by opponents.

And yet the Buddha was not without feeling. A clear line of demarcation must be drawn between emotionalism and what is called the quality of the heart which Buddha had in abundance. His large heart felt the pain of every suffering creature. Though both Arjuna's reaction and the Buddha's feeling for suffering creatures can be qualified as *kṛpā* or compassion,[5] they are poles apart. One is a condemnable weakness, the other the noblest of virtues.

There is a type of emotionalism seen in religion. While genuine emotion is one of the paths (Bhakti Yoga) for God-realization, temporary sentimentalism, bereft of austere renunciation and self-control is dangerous and leads away from spirituality. The emotionalism that does not produce a permanent change in life and give strength to overcome lust, greed and anger, must be discarded. The Buddha was fully aware

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4. *The Complete Works* (1977) vol. 1, p. 460.
5. Cf. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 1-28 : 2-1.

of this. Once a disciple praised him, saying that he was the greatest Buddha ever born. The Buddha asked him whether he knew all about all the Buddhas yet to be born or everything about the present Buddha. The disciple confessed that he did not. At this the Buddha rebuked him, saying that his statement was prompted by blind sentiments and hence foolish. A devotee was often found gazing at the Buddha as if he saw some light on his face. The Buddha did not like it and sent him away.

The second characteristic of a sane mind is absence of superstition. Fear of punishment, hope of reward in this world or in heaven after death, and lack of faith in one's strength and blissful nature lead to misdirected reverence for supernatural beings. While religious superstitions are known, there are also 'scientific' superstitions. Many so-called rational people will blindly accept a statement if it could be ascribed to Einstein, Pasteur or some other renowned scientist. The Buddha would have none of these. He did not want his disciples to accept blindly even what he himself preached. Every prophet is a revolutionary. He demolishes those old faiths and beliefs which become obsolete, but in the process, he himself becomes an idol of worship. The Buddha warned against this. On his death-bed, he told the waiting Ananda, 'Weep not for me. Think not for me. I am gone. Work out diligently your own salvation. Each one of you is just what I am. I am nothing but one of you.'[6] 'Buddha is the name of infinite knowledge, infinite as the sky. I, Gautama, have reached that state; you will all reach that too if you struggle for it.'[7]

The next requirement of a sane mind is the light of clear reason. Swamiji considered the Buddha 'the sanest philosopher the world has ever seen.' This implies that not only emotional people have aberrations, but rational people may also have eccentricities. Indeed, philosophy has its problems. It often gets reduced to dry intellectualism, a bundle of arguments and counter-arguments which confuse the mind. An impractical philosophy having no bearing on the day-to day problems of life, according to the Buddha and Swamiji, is unhealthy. Hence the Buddha refused to discuss impractical and unanswerable questions concerning the soul, God, etc. Instead, he based his philosophy on the practical everyday problems of sorrow, its cause and remedy.

The fourth mark of sanity is the strength of will, and this the Buddha had in abundance. But like other faculties of the mind, the will also should be rightly directed. Spiritual practice demands the exercise of great will-power. But if misdirected, it may lead to extremes of self-morification. The Buddha himself had practised several asceticism and realized that it was abnormal. Hence he preached the saner middle path.

Another way in which the will can function is in doing good to others. But this often gets vitiated by ulterior motives like name and fame, reward in heaven etc. The Buddha had no motives. He was ready to give up his life to save animals by stopping a sacrifice, and yet he had no motives. 'Do good because it is good to do good', this was the Buddha's watchword.

The Buddha was a yogi par excellence. His portraits depict him in a yoga posture, meditating. This path of concentration, too has pitfalls. It may get reduced to a few *āsanas* and breathing exercises or the aspirant may get lured by psychic powers. The Buddha was severe on those credulous monks who displayed or gave importance to occult powers. The Buddha laid great

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6. *The Complete Works* (1975) vol. 3, p. 528.
7. *The Complete Works* (1972) vol. 4, p. 136.

stress on meditation, but at the same time warned that to sit in meditation neglecting the nursing of a sick brother was unpardonable.

Thus the sanity of Lord Buddha lies in avoiding all the eccentricities and perversions possible in the various paths to liberation. He was compassionate but not sentimental, rational but not a dry logician, yogi but not a credulous displayer of occult powers. Above all, he was intensely practical and worked incessantly for the good of others, without any motive.

Rarely does one find a truly sane devotee, sane philosopher, sane yogi or sane worker. And to find the head, heart and hand fully and harmoniously developed in a single person is rarer still. The Buddha was such a person. Not only was every cell of his marvellous brain fully developed, it also worked perfectly. That is why Swami Vivekananda has paid him the highest tribute, by characterizing him as the greatest character the world has ever seen.

A NEW ALTAR FOR THE FLAME OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

A bit before noon I went to the massive iron gate leading into the Dalai Lama's estate. This gate was always guarded and no one was allowed to enter without special permission. After filling out a form for security purposes, I entered with about forty others. Once inside we presented our forms and passports at different tables, depending upon our nationality. Then we were frisked and finally lined up for the audience. Most of us were from the West, and most of the Westerners were European. There were also a few Indians, and some Tibetans that looked like they had settled in the West. The Tibetans stood first, then the foreigners, and finally the Hindus.

When word was given, the Tibetans—though dressed in the clothes of Western businessmen—bent over low in humility and ran to a cirular drive, at one end of which stood the Dalai Lama. Here they threw themselves flat on the ground in salutation, an action which they repeated three times, I believe. Then they quickly went to where he stood, handed an assisting lama the traditional scarf which is given when greeting any respected person in Tibet, and passed on by as the now-blessed scarf was put over their bent necks by another assisting lama. All of this was done with such grace and sincere devotion that it would have to impress even those who think it degrading to bow before another human being.

Then the Westerners walked round the circular drive to where the Dalai Lama stood. Out of respect for the ways of another people and in perfect style he shook hands with each of us, asking each, 'American?' As it turned out, only two of us were. The Hindus then paid respect in their traditional way by 'taking the dust of his feet' as he blessed each of them. Now I understood why the visitors had been divided into three cultural groups, because he responed to each group according to their custom.

We stood at a little distance and watched as the remainder of the crowd paid their respects to the Dalai Lama. He was quite a tall man, slightly stoop

shouldered, with a surprisingly deep but attractive voice and a wonderful look of mingled innocence and wisdom, reserve and kindly openness, bearing his ever-ready smile.

After all had paid their respect and received his blessing, he saluted with folded hands the bowed Tibetans and Hindus and waved his hand in perfect American fashion at the Westerners. Thus ended the public audience. Though it was a brief meeting indeed, the impression of the Dalai Lama which I carried away was that of a man of unusual openness, broad sympathy and tolerance, and the rare ability to identify with the feelings of others. I wasn't surprised to learn later that these are the qualities that strike most who meet him, for they had been so evident.

After lunch at Om, I went to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. A day or two previously I had seen a Westerner in the robes of a Tibetan monk. On approaching him to ask where the Library was, I had been nonplussed to hear him reply in a female voice—'he' was actually a Western nun, but because the nuns wear robes similar to the monks and keep their hair close-cropped, it hadn't been immediately evident. Anyway, with her directions I now made my way to the Library, which was a twenty to thirty minute walk from the village.

The Library itself is a large impressive stone building, a blend of Tibetan and modern architectural styles, and painted in the traditional colours: whitewashed, with the doors, windows and decorative trim in rich red, blue and gold. Here they have a public library-reading room with a large collection of books and periodicals on Buddhism from all over the world. A museum houses over five hundred priceless statues and thangkas from the Dalai Lama's personal collection, among other objects of worship and art, some dating back to the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. The Tibetan Books, Documents and Archives Department holds about 44,000 Tibetan literary treasures, philosophical and psychological treatises, historical works and valuable government documents, including the original sealed documents of Nyari Chogyal, King of Tibet in the tenth century.

Lectures and seminars are arranged and conducted by the Library. And there are courses in Buddhist dharma and Tibetan language which the public may enroll in. A five-year thangka painting course is open to those ready to dedicate themselves to this demanding study. The Library publishes numerous books on Tibetan Buddhism in an effort to preserve their heritage which the Chinese occupation has endangered. Since 1975 it has also published a magazine, *The Tibet Journal*. Many rare Tibetan manuscripts are being reprinted. The Library is thus becoming quite a centre for research, and an effective force in the fight to preserve the Tibetan heritage.

The day before I left Dharamsala I discovered the Tibetan Children's Village, a delightful place founded over twenty years ago for the care of Tibetan refugee children, located quite a long walk through the forest from Macleodganj. From the beginning of his exile the Dalai Lama has been deeply concerned over the plight of Tibetan children. So among his first acts after reaching India was to establish institutions for their care and education. In 1960 his elder sister, the late Tsering Dolma, founded a nursery that was to grow into the present Tibetan Children's Village. After her death in 1964 she was

succeeded by the Dalai Lama's younger sister, Mrs. Pema Gyaltso.

There was a time when 120 children slept in a room twenty feet by thirty feet. Now the institution has a campus of forty-three acres, a number of buildings, and projects in other Tibetan settlements in India as well. As of 1980 the Village had helped 4,326 resident children, and 1,938 more who had been helped under one of its many projects elsewhere in India. When I visited, the Village had about 1,050 children in residence.

Infants are looked after in a 'Baby Home'. Boys and girls between four to fifteen are divided into about thirty 'homes' of thirty children each. Foster parents look after each of these homes, efforts being made to create as far as limitations allow the atmosphere of a normal Tibetan home. This provides the children with as natural and humanly warm a life as possible. Older children are divided between a boys' hostel and a girls' hostel, each accomodating sixty youngsters.

The Village has its own school, with classes from pre-primary stages to Class X, most of the teachers being Tibetan. Qualified children are sent elsewhere for their further education and training.

The Village also has various longterm projects to help people both there and in other settlements in India. It has started nurseries and day schools, care for old people, an Educational Reserve Fund for scholarships, and various health care projects.

Since 1974 the Village has had a Handicraft-cum-Vocational Training Centre, which was begun with three basic objectives:

> (1) to offer job training and employment facilities for those children who could not continue with normal school education, (2) to serve as an instrument for preserving and propagating the traditional arts and crafts of Tibet by training young people in these fields, and (3) to contribute financially towards the upkeep [of the Tibetan Children's Village] so that it would be less dependent on outside help.[12]

As I walked around the campus I came upon the carpet-weaving section of the Training Centre, housed in a large building where a number of girls and young women were busy at work on various patterns and sizes of rugs. They were all very open, friendly and inquisitive. Seeing my monastic robes they asked in Hindi the inevitable question which had followed me all over India for seven years: 'Are you with Hare Krishna?'

'No, I'm with the Ramakrishna Order founded by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda,' which demanded more explanation. I think that I could have been anything and pleased them as long as I had promised to buy a carpet. And the carpets were beautiful. Luckily someone had given me money to buy just such a gift, so I gained immediate popularity.

Another fascinating department was that of thangka painting: the sacred art of Tibetan scroll painting. Here I found several men—young adults—who were apparently apprentices to an older man. They were quite willing, almost eager, to show me the paintings they were working on, so I was able to see the various stages of production in the art, from the early sketches to the final touch up.

Poor Tibetan art can be very poor—especially portraiture, which sometimes seems more like caricature. But when good, it is not only beautiful but spiritually moving. And the thangkas of these men were excellent—the colours seemed almost alive they were so brilliant, and even the highly detailed paintings had a light and

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12. Information Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, ed., *Tibetans in Exile* (Dharamsala: Information Office, Central Tibetan Secretariat, 1981), p. 59.

airy feel to them. They told me that they paint only on order: you give them the subject which may be of varying degrees of complexity and size, and they execute it, abiding by the traditional canons of the art, which are quite specific. For thangka painting is a sacred art and not a free, imaginative art. At added expense the thangkas are mounted on silk brocade. They are sent all over the world on request.

As I returned through the forest to Macleodganj, I realized that my stay among the Tibetans was almost over. It had been so easy to get here to the Dalai Lama's Lhasa-in-exile; and, for those who had the time, it was so easy to stay and study under highly regarded lamas. Only three decades earlier, however, this would have been next to impossible. Lhasa had then been the Forbidden City. The few Westerners who had succeeded in reaching it had done so with greatest difficulty. Even fewer had succeeded in living in Tibet and studying its religion: great pioneers like Mme Alexandra David-Neel and Anagarika Lama Govinda.

In his memoirs the Dalai Lama writes:

> Perhaps the best-known quality of Tibet in the recent past was its deliberate isolation. In the world outside, Lhasa was often called the Forbidden City. There were two reasons for this withdrawal from the world. The first, of course, was that the country is naturally isolated. Until the last decade, the route from the borders of India or Nepal to Lhasa was a journey of two months across high Himalayan passes which were blocked for a large part of the year.... Isolation was therefore in our blood. We increased our natural isolation by allowing the fewest possible foreigners into our country, simply because we had had experience of strife, especially with China, and had no ambition whatever except to live in peace and pursue our own culture and religion, and we thought that to hold ourselves entirely aloof from the world was the best way of ensuring peace. I must say at once that I think this policy was always a mistake, and my hope and intention is that in the future the gates of Tibet will be kept wide open to welcome visitors from every part of the world.[13]

Until the Dalai Lama can return to Tibet and open its doors to the world, he is doing all he can to share the wisdom of Tibet with the world. Swami Vivekananda once said that the age of the esoteric in religion is at an end—not that the spiritual knowledge which has been kept secret will be lost, but that all knowledge will be made available to the world. And with the Tibetan diaspora the last great treasure of esoteric wisdom has been opened to mankind. The Dalai Lama has sent teachers of Tibetan dharma all over the world to share their wisdom, for he has learned the bitter lesson that the world has grown too small for any people to live in harmless isolation.'[14]

America alone has numerous Tibetan meditation centres, a wide variety of publications, Tibetan Studies programmes at several universities, monasteries and convents, societies for the preservation of Tibetan culture and for aiding Tibetan refugee settlements in India, and groups for keeping alive the question of Tibetan political autonomy. Some Western authorities on Buddhism have even predicted that Tibetan Buddhism will be to America in the 80s what Zen was in the 60s and 70s.

Fortunately, some of the lamas in the West are aware that intercultural exchange should proceed by a process of discreet assimilation and not imitation. Imitation is always a dangerous process. Asia is presently copying some of the worst aspects of Western culture, and there seems to be little reason to assume that the West will

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13. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), p. 59.
14. Ibid., p. 87.

necessarily do better if it imitates the East. It is unfortunate that morality is at a low ebb in the West right now when this meeting with Tibet is taking place, because many Westerners are currently jumping to learn tantrik Buddhism for all the wrong reasons. Some Western writers on Tibetan Buddhism even speak of the 'subtle ego of morality' and how tantra destroys it by disregrading all social codes of morality. It is no doubt true that a point comes in spiritual life when relative good and evil both have to be transcended in order to attain freedom, and the subtle age of conventional morality can indeed serve as a bondage—this can be learned from the lives and teachings of a number of saints and sages. The solution, however, is not immorality but transcendence. It is wise to remember Swami Vivekananda's warning: 'When God is worshipped... in the "left-handed" way... eventually it leads to degeneration and the obliteration of the race that practises it.'[15] Swami Vivekananda never tired of reiterating that purity of character is the only sure basis of spirituality, and that chastity is the only sure foundation for society.

Tibetans are not only giving out their wisdom to the world: they are also learning much in exchange. Though isolation no doubt fostered intensity and depth of faith, it also inevitably bred a narrowness of vision which translated sometimes as bigotry in the broad context of the world. Even now there are many lamas who hold Buddhism to be the only true religion, and Tibetan Buddhism to be the highest form of Buddhism. There are even a few lamas who hold that full enlightenment can be had only by those born into the Tibetan race. (Presumably they exclude Indians—members of the Buddha's own race—only because India rejected Buddhism and returned to Hinduism.) Furthermore, though the differences among the four major sects of Tibetan Buddhism are not fundamental but accidental, there is a great deal of animosity among them at times. Certainly, contact with other ways of thinking in the world will expand their sympathy for other paths to truth.

It is important for every people to have the capacity to look critically at themselves, at their beliefs and institutions. This frees them to some extent from blind subservience to the forces of history and cultural evolution and gives them a measure of power to control and direct their further evolution. This critical faculty has evolved somewhat in the West, in India, Japan and other countries that have had to face the attack of alien creeds and cultures—most especially the attack of modern science. In time Tibetans will undoubtedly develop the same capacity. The rigorous mental training undergone by Tibetan monks gives them a solid foundation for such development. This will help them to universalize their teachings by distinguishing the principles from the cultural expression of those principles. And it will open their eyes to the beauty of other systems of thought, making them more effective because more understanding.

On returning to Macleodganj from the Children's Village I went again to the Dalai Lama's temple. There, beyond the temple lay the estate of the Dalai Lama. I couldn't help thinking that he, in some ways, represented the wonderful possibilities latent within the Tibetan race and culture. And I still feel that way. Not that there aren't many other highly evolved men and women among the Tibetans, but he displays certain qualities, certain virtues, certain insights which seem especially important to survival in the modern world.

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15. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), vol. 7, p. 26.

For one thing, he is universal in his outlook. In his memoirs he writes:

> Just as a particular disease in the world is treated by various medical methods, so there are many religions to bring happiness to human beings and others. Different doctrines have been introduced by different exponents at different periods and in different ways. But I believe they all fundamentally aim at the same noble goal... Unity among religions... is possible, and in the present state of the world, it is especially important. Mutual respect would be helpful to all believers; and unity between them would also bring benefit to unbelievers, for the unanimous flood of light would show them the way out of their ignorance.... To this end, the followers of each religion should know something of other religions...[16]

The Dalai Lama has also called for unity among the different sects of Tibetan Buddhism, stressing the need for tolerance and understanding based on recognition of the common foundation and goal of the various sects.

Time and again he has demonstrated a most unusual degree of honesty in stepping out of his situation—his position and cultural background— to look at it objectively and critically. In spite of all that his people have suffered, he is able to say in all sincerity that 'we Tibetans still have no feeling of hatred for the great Chinese people.'[17] He is even willing to return to Tibet as a private citizen if he receives sufficient assurance that his people will be left free to pursue their religion and maintain their cultural values.

He is aware of the democratic urge of modern man and has drawn up a new democratized constitution for his government. This change has not been forced out of him by the spirit of the times but is based on genuine sympathy for the poor and oppressed, on respect for the dignity of every man and woman.

While striving to preserve Tibet's cultural heritage, he at the same time is preparing to meet the future effectively. As an example, his monks now study not only the traditional learning but also English, science, mathematics, and other fields of modern learning.

Again, these qualities and insights are not found only in the Dalai Lama and absent in other Tibetans; rather he conveniently symbolizes the vitality of the race and its great possibilities. Taking all of these facts into consideration, there seems to be much hope for the Tibetan people, in spite of the fact that they cannot yet return to their homeland.

That night was my last at the Rainbow Hotel. In the morning I paid my bill and checked out. I went once more to the temple, and at noon I had my last meal at Om. The bus left Macleodganj in the mid afternoon, winding its way down the mountain to Dharamsala, then out onto the plains, pointed towards Delhi. I strained my neck as long as I could to see the mountain which held the heart of the Tibetan people in exile. Then we went round a bend and it passed into memory.

16. *My Land*, p. 237.
17. Ibid., p. 6.

(Concluded)

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

CONSCIOUSNESS IN ADVAITA VEDANTA: BY DR. WILLIAM M. INDICH. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 40 U.A., Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-110 007. 1980. Pp. 131. Rs. 50.

This is an admirably produced work bringing credit to the author and the publishers.

The author commands an austere philosophical style, expresses himself with great clarity and covers his theme with rare concentration, achieving a surprising economy of treatment. He bases himself on texts of great authority mostly. The book is a real contribution to the understanding of Advaita Vedanta.

The work consists of five compact chapters. The introduction gives the gist of the system of thought under study and presents its focal theme, viz., consciousness. The second chapter—by far the best one—expounds the nature of absolute or transcendental consciousness as argued out in Advaita. The third chapter deals with what is described as 'modified' consciousness, meaning consciousness 'conditioned' by phenomenal misidentification and the hierarchical gradation of levels in it in terms of proximity to the absolute level. The fourth chapter treats of the four states of cosciousness, waking, dream, and deep sleep, in their ascending order and concludes with *turīya,* the fourth state in which phenomenal consciousness culminates and loses itself in transcendental or absolute consciousness. The last chapter is a critical evaluation of the basic thesis.

A few critical comments arise naturally. (1) The idea of absolute consciousness as self-revealing or self-luminous is a fundamental one. It needs more clarification than what we are given. That it is self-luminous because it illumines all objects is making a 'transcendental use' of the 'empirical phenomenon' of a subject knowing an external object. That it cannot negate itself can only establish the indubitable existence of 'modified' consciousness, which only can exercise the functions of affirmation and negation. That it reveals itself to itself or knows itself by itself would amount to importing to the totally nondual self *svagata-bheda,* duality of aspects. The author permits himself to make the rather careless statements that 'it is known solely by itself' and that it is 'eternally conscious of itself' (pp. 37, 39). Śamkara explicitly controverts that position in his interpretation of Jñāna in the Taittirīya definition *satyam jñānam anantam brahma,* and also in his explanation of the *bhūman* of Chāndogya. The Citsukhi definition of self-luminosity hardly rise to the requirement of the problem. Śamkara's criticism of Vijñānavāda and the Cārvāka position reitreates the criticism that the self or consciousness cannot know itself (*Br.* Sū, 2.2.5.28 and 3.3.30.54).

(2) The account in the third chapter of Pratibimba-vāda, Avacheda-vāda and Abhasavāda which figure in the internal polemics of post-Śamkara Advaita could have been easily dropped, as they are not so basic to the discussion on hand and cannot receive full elaboration either. The question whether *manas* is an *indriya* is another such issue, as it pertains to a controversy of later-day Advaita concerned with the exact and ultimate source of liberating knowledge, a topic that does not come up much in the treatise. It could have been conveniently kept out.

(3) Whatever be the mechanics of perception, that it involves knowledge of the identity of the subject and the object is a fundamental proposition of Advaita. Our learned author seems to have been somewhat misled by Prof. Devaraja (p. 73) into thinking that Śamkara does not maintain the position. One solid pronouncement from among others of Śamkara can be cited in support of that transfusion of the subject into the object. The *Taittirīya-Bhāṣya* of Śamkara has it (ch. 2, section 1) *Buddherupādhilakṣaṇayā cakṣurādidvāraih viṣayākāreṇa pariṇāminyā ye sabdadyakaravabhasah te ātmavijñānena vyaptah utpadyante.* What Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra and others set forth is outlined in this statement of Śamkara himself.

(4) The more important theme of 'sublatability' as the criterion of the unreal should have been subjected to more consideration, in view of the manifest distinction between variation and contradiction between the creativity of the real and the epistemological nullification of the unreal.

In the fourth chapter a good exposition of the three states of 'modified' consciousness interspersed with parallel ideas in Western thought is offered. The fourth state of *turīya* is well brought out, and it is proper that the idea of *mokṣa* receives adequate consideration in the context.

(5) The last chapter holds forth the greatest surprise to the reader. We are told that the

principal drawback of the entire Advaitic theory is the sharp bifurcation between absolute consciousness and 'modified' consciousness. Two types of monistic thought free from that supposedly disabling tenet, the Hegelian Idealism and the Spiritnal Evolutionism of Sri Aurobindo, are brought in as better philosophical alternatives. The criticism is rather brief, and the entire structure of Advaitic thought, built up meticulously in the four preceding chapters, needs to be examined, and that in detail, to enable the comparative estimate to stand. Why select only these two types of modified monism? All the Bhedābheda schools of Vedanta, Kashmir Śaivism, not to speak of Visiṣṭādvaita, represent such a philosophical reconciliation between appearance and reality. The last critical chapter is, thns, in need of at least as thorongh and solid a formulation as the preceding exposition of Advaita which it is suggested to be snperceding. We hopefully look forward to a complete working out of this line of thought from the gifted and conscientious author.

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CLASSICAL SAMKHYA (An interpretation of its History and meaning): BY DR. GERAI D JAMES LARSON. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 40 U.A., Bnngalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-110 007. 1980. Pp. xv+315. Rs. 60.

Dr. Larson has a strong historical predilection and he gives us a second edition of his work on Classical Sāmkhya with a long account of how modern scholars in Indology, both non-Indian and Indian, have laboriously reconstructed the Sāmkhya with varying degrees of merit and also an equally heavy tracing of the system from the dim Vedic beginnings down to the crystallization in the definitive Sāmkhya Kārika of Iswara-Krishna. That final treatise is condensed once in the beginning, elucidated in the middle and its text and translation are added as an appendix. So mnch is more or less the old matter of the first edition with a number of helpful alterations and improvements.

The distinguishing feature of the second edition is that it drops the chapter on 'Sartre and Samkhya' of the first edition. and replaces it with a chapter on Śamkara's critique of Sāmkhya and a conjectural rebuttal of that critique by the Sāmhya philosopher. This addition calls for mauy comments. If Indian criticism of Sāmkhya was to be introduced, there was no justification for ignoring the equally powerful efforts in that direction, such as those of Buddhism and Nyāya-Vaiseṣika. The critique presented is not that of Śamkara but of Bādarāyaṇa. If the critique was extracted from Śamkara's commentaries on the Gita and Upaniṣads, there would be some meaning in attributing them to Śamkara, for those texts do not concern t'iemselves with any attack on Sāmkhya. The present critique follows the Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa in close verbal proximity and argues that the primordial physical principle of *pradhāna* could not be the creative source of the cosmos. The rebuttal framed on behalf of Sāmkhya is curious. The Sāmkhya is made to protest that his *pradhāna* is no merely physical principle, as it bears within its modifications psychical items snch as *buddhi, manas*, nay, the entire complex of empirical selfhood. The problem is to account for the moving out of *pradhāna* from its cansal state to the manifest world of effects. The psychical complex obtains in the realm of effects. How could what constitutes an effect free the posited cause of its non-productivity of effects including itself? A strange and patently implausible defence is advanced on behalf of Sāmkhya.

This work bears the imprint of a thorongh and analytical investigation, its expository task is admirably performed and its format is fine.

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

AURA: *How to read and understand it.* BY HOWARD ADELMAN and JANET FINE. Published by Somaiya Publications, 172 Mumbai Marathi Grantha Samgrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay-400 001. 1980. Pp. xi+93. Rs. 25.

The author of this book, Howard Adelman, says in his introduction that the book is intended to make it possible for everyone to visualize auras. True to his intention, much effort has been made in this direction in the present writing. The author gives us his own insights into the auric phenomena gained by personal experiences and experiments conducted by him.

Aura is understood here as the 'astral or spiritual body' of a living being. According to the author, impressions received by observing and studying the changing auric vibrations that

emanate from people give us clear hints and information regarding a person's education, family background, ability, health conditions and past and future lives etc. At the outset it may seem to be too tall a claim but the author, a practising lawyer, bases his conclusions on the sound ground of verified experiences. Here is an example. Once a patient in a hospital had severe physical pain which could not be diagnosed. In spite of many tests, no answer was found. An auric impression revealed a liver problem and an intensive probe in that area proved a success much to the patient's joy and the doctors' surprise. In this case the author saw the colour of red emanating from this particular part of the patient's body. At a university of Miami Medical School class the author demonstrated auric readings and healings. One study in the university of Wisconsin concluded that with psychic diagnosis, one can get close to a 98% accuracy with no X-ray, dye or other hazards! The author claims to have saved many people from various troubles by correctly reading their auras and suggesting appropriate path of action to follow so that they might avoid the impending pitfalls.

Many attempts have been made to read and understand auras since ancient times. In India two thousand years before Christ the experts in this field had arrived at a definite idea and understanding of auric revelation. Caraka and Susruta, the great teachers of Ayurveda, speak of *chāyā* and *prabhā* that is, shadowy content and colour emanations from living human bodies. According to them each colour in its changing intensity indicates the differing conditions of mind and body and also gives us an insight into the deeper aspects of the personality of man. The colours which emanate from living being are made of five subtle elements and they have their own characteristic qualities. Of course colours do not exhaust the contents of auras. The eminent American psychist of world-wide fame late Edgar Cayce's opinion in this matter is worth mentioning. He says, 'over a period of years I have built up a system which from time to time I have checked with other persons who see auras. It is interesting to note that in almost all interpretations these. other people and I agree. Nature's laws are universal.' Cayce's views are more in conformity with the findings of Kirlian instrument. According to Cayce the aura refiects the vibrations of the soul. The author says that while reading an aura (p. 21) certain messages came through to communicate about the subject. This sounds a little occult which is beyond the reach of analysis.

A detailed programme has been charted out in the present book to help those who want to learn reading auras. Howard Adelman is all the time optimistic in assuming that 'all can read auras'. As necessary qualification for this he recommends a calm mind, an intense faith that one can visualize auras, and meditation. (The author has not felt the necessity of prayer or prayful mood in developing this faculty.) Using the above mentioned techniques, one can really see and read auras and utilize the inherent ability to cure many illnesses.

The book under review is a useful addition to the vast subject on E. S. P. Significant cover design by Dr. Ramakanta Kini enhances the value of the book.

SWAMI JAGADATMANANDA
Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, VRINDABAN

Report: for April 1981—March 1982

Begun in 1907 as a small homeopathic dispensary, the Sevashrama has now grown into a 121-bed allopathic hospital and an important monastic centre. The hospital has departments of General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Dentistry, General Medicine, and a Homeopathic Outpatient Clinic. The General Surgery Department performed a wide variety of operations; a neuro-surgeon is also in the faculty. Facilities exist for conducting electrocardiography, radiography, physiotheraphy and laboratory tests. An 8-bed ward is provided for cancer patients. The Emergency Department is a boon to the public, conducting medical and surgical services round the clock. A well equipped Eye Department is a special feature of this hospital. The Pallimangal (integrated rural development) scheme recently introduced started serving poor people free of charge covering 150 villages in Mathura district.

The Nursing School, recently started to meet the acute shortage of nurses in the hospital offers a three-year course in nursing. The first batch of 9 students came out successfully in 1981.

During the period, the Sevashrama treated 2,10,238 outpatients (new: 42,179). All outpatients received free consultation and medicines. It treated 3,242 inpatients and conducted 542 surgical operations. The homeopathic clinic treated 968 cases.

Future plans: (a) A modern laboratory to conduct a wide spectrum of tests. (b) An 8-bed intensive care unit with electronic monitor facilities. (c) A 700MA X-ray plant to detect diseases in vital organs. (d) A neurosurgical unit to treat diseases of nervous system like head injuries, brain tumours etc. (e) An incinerator for the scientific disposal of wastes and prevent the possibility of disease transmission. (f) A modern laundry for quick and hygienic wash.

Immediate needs: It should be noted that the Sevashrama does not ask for or receive any Government grant. It depends solely on financial help from the generous public for the maintainance of hospital. Persons desirous of endowing beds in memory of their loved ones may do so by donating Rs. 50,000/- per bed. Or donations may be made for any of the items mentioned in the *future plans* or *pallimangal* activities. The immediate need is to buy certain essential equipments and also to wipe out the accumulated deficit of Rs. 1, 89,889.

UNITED CULTURAL INSTITUTE (RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA SOCIETY) HARARE, ZIMBABWE

Report from: 14.9.1981 to 5.9.1982

Swami Nisreyasananda, head of the two centres at Lusaka (in Zambia) and at Harare (in Zimbabwe), delivered a number of religious lectures in all the important cities in Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were duly celebrated. Prizes were distributed to the winners in elocution competition held among the children of different age-groups in Lusaka. The bulletin *Atmanivedanam* was sent out from Johannesburg Vedanta Society six times a year. Copies of the life of the Holy Mother published free of charge by Roshan Press were distributed among the earnest devotees. The library of the Harare centre was thoroughly re-organized. The centre during the period received a number of gifts in kind like, slide projector, taperecorder, cassettes. clothes etc. from friends and devotees. Plans are being prepared to improve the work in Zambia.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Internal Colonialism

More than thirty years have passed since Britain left India bag and baggage. But has the country been rid of colonialism? In a thought-provoking article 'On Alien Political Categories' contributed to the *Gandhi Marg* (No. 47, February 1983) Sri Sunil Sahasrabudhey argues that there exists in Indian society an 'internal colonialism' which is completely indigenous.

According to the author there are two types of exploitation: one, in which a single society is divided into two parts, one exploiting the other; and another, in which a whole society is exploited by a different society. The first type is found in Western societies. There the society is divided into two classes which do not fundamentally differ from each other in language or culture, and they share a common sphere of production. The basis of exploitation lies in the control of the means of production. Owners of the means of production constitute the exploiting class, while the workers constitute the exploited class. In this form of exploitation the economic aspect is basic and decisive.

The other type of exploitation, which is the one that characterizes the Indian society, is a form of internal colonialism. Here the exploiters and the exploited belong to two different societies which differ from each other in culture, language, right to property and human relationship; in fact everything is different. And in every sphere the victims of colonial oppression serve the society of exploiters in a way which is not much different from slavery. In India that part of the people which is Westernized, and which has found a place in the system based on Western values and big industry and whose economic condition is improving in this system, constitutes the society of exploiters. It may justly be called *paschimikrit samaj*. Those who are outside this system—who include the depressed classes, the tribals, the uneducated poor who live in villages and all those groups which are outside the national cultural stream—are the oppressed; they constitute the colonized society. They may justly be called the *bahishkrit samaj*. The wealth, culture and 'progress' of the *paschimikrit samaj* are based on the neglect, poverty and systematic subjugation of the *bahishkrit samaj*.

'Thus', states Sri Sahasrabudhey, 'we can say that today in India the colonial oppression has taken the form of *paschimikrit-bahishkrit* divide.' The concept of class struggle, he observes, applies only to the Western society, and not to Indian society. For class struggle in India would not affect the internal colonialism and the socio-cultural division of society.

Another important observation Sri Sahasrabudhey makes is that the Western-style democracy is based on an atomistic world view, individualism and competition. It should be remembered that parliamentary democracy did not prevent Britain or other European countries from colonizing and subjugating other peoples. By the same token, Western-style democracy in India is not by itself adequate to get rid of its own internal colonialism.