



Prabuddha Bharata

or

Awakened India

VOL 93 SEPTEMBER 1988



Editorial Office

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

Publication Office

5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014
Phone: 29-0898



Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage)

	Annual	Life (30 years)
India, Nepal & Bangladesh	Rs. 20	Rs. 300
U.S.A. & Canada		
Surface Mail	\$ 14	\$ 200
Air Mail	\$ 28	\$ 450
Other Countries		
Surface Mail	£ 10	£ 150
Air Mail	£ 15	£ 250

Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

SEPTEMBER 1988

CONTENTS

Visions of Divinity	...	...	...	321
About this Issue	...	...	...	322
Resurrection of Mother Power				
—(Editorial)	...	...	...	322
Jnana and Bhakti				
—Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj				329
Pilgrimage to Holy Narmada				
—Swami Amareshananda	...	...	...	331
Panchastavi of Kashmir				
—Shri Lal Kaul	...	...	...	336
Youth: Today and Twenty First Century I				
—Shri Sanjay Mukherji	...	...	...	340
Seva Pratishthan: A Modern Temple for Ailing Gods				
—Swami Tattwabodhananda	...	...	...	344
Yogin-Ma				
—Swami Chetanananda	...	...	...	347
Reviews and Notices	...	...	...	355
Practical Hints for Spiritual Life			...	359
Prabuddha Bharata: 90 Years ago			...	360



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 93

SEPTEMBER 1988

No. 9

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

VISIONS OF DIVINITY

THE DIVINE MOTHER

The Rishi said: When the great lord of asuras was slain there by the Devi, Indra and other devas led by Agni, with their object fulfilled and their cheerful faces illumining the quarters, praised her, Katyayani:

O Devi, you who remove the sufferings of your suppliants, be gracious. Be propitious, O Mother of the whole world. Be gracious, O Mother of the universe. Protect the universe. You are, O Devi, the ruler of all that is moving and unmoving.

You are the sole substratum of world, because you subsist in the form of the earth. By you, who exist in the shape of water, all this (universe) is gratified, O Devi of inviolable valour!

You are the power of Vishnu, the endless valour. You are the primaeval maya,

which is the source of the universe; by you all this (universe) has been thrown into an illusion, O Devi. If you become gracious, you become the cause of final emancipation in this world.

All branches of knowledge are your aspects, O Devi; so are all women in the world, endowed with various attributes. By you alone, the Mother, this world is filled. What praise can there be for you who are of the nature of primary and secondary expression regarding (objects) worthy of praise.

Salutation be to you, O Devi Narayani, O you who abide as intelligence in the hearts of all creatures, and bestow enjoyment and liberation.

(Shri Shri Chandi: 11 Chapter)

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is on the resurrection of the spirit of the Motherhood of God and the awakening of the same Mother-power in all women that Shri Ramakrishna had brought in modern times through the life of the Holy Mother Sarada Devi.

JNANA AND BHAKTI by Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj is an address delivered by him at Belur Math in December 1987.

PILGRIMAGE TO HOLY NARMADA by Swami Amareshananda of the Ramakrishna Order, is based on the Swami's own experiences of the circumambulation of the holy river, which he completed during the period of a year and a few months.

PANCHASTAVI OF KASHMIR by Shri Lal

Kaul of Kashmir, is on the Kundalini-yoga described in this age-old hymn of Kashmir.

In part one of YOUTH: TODAY AND TWENTY FIRST CENTURY, Shri Sanjay Mukherji, a young graduate of the Calcutta University, writes on the general trend of the youth movements in modern times.

In SEVA PRATISHTHAN: A TEMPLE FOR AILING GODS Swami Tattwabodhananda, secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, writes on the birth and growth of this well-known institution.

YOGIN-MA by Swami Chetanananda of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, is on the women saint Yogin-ma, a house-wife transfigured into a realised soul by the divine grace of Sri Ramakrishna.

RESURRECTION OF MOTHER-POWER

(EDITORIAL)

In the last year of his life Swami Vivekananda, along with his brother monks, worshipped the Divine Mother Durga ceremonially at the Ramakrishna Math at Belur. For this worship he took the blessings of the Holy Mother Sarada Devi in whom his master Shri Ramakrishna himself worshipped the Divine Mother of the universe. He was, in fact, making no new tradition, but reviving the old idea embedded in India's culture and tradition. "Every incarnation worshipped Mother in public or in secret, or how could he have got energy?", he said.¹ Shri Rama worshipped the Divine

Mother Durga by offering his eyes at Her lotus feet. Shankaracharya, the apostle of Vedanta, too, worshipped the Divine Mother in her various forms and aspects.

When someone in the West asked Vivekananda why he became a monk, he replied, "Why should I marry when in every woman I see only the Divine Mother?"² Elsewhere in the West, someone who heard him, wrote, "The Mother is holy. The Motherhood of God is more in his mind than Fatherhood".³ Vivekananda made them realise that their destiny, as that of

1. Sankari Prasad Basu, *Letters Of Sister Nivedita*, (Nababharat Publishers, 1982) 72, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Calcutta, 9, p. 221.

2. *Complete Works Of Swami Vivekananda*, (Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, Mayavati Memorial Edition); p. 3: 470.

3. *Ibid*, p. 510.

the world, rests not on law-makers of today, but on the women. "The salvation of your country depends upon women", he reminded them. "The worship of even one spark of Mother in our earthly mother leads to greatness. Worship Her if you want love and wisdom",⁴ he told his Western disciples.

Mother worship has been practised in different cultures in different ways. In India it has got a continued history from distant past to modern times. Even in pre-Aryan civilisations like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, female figurines have been found, which are supposed to be idols of Earth-Goddess. Ancient societies, especially the matriarchal ones, brought the worship of God as Mother. The Vedas mention the Goddess Aditi as the mother of gods (*deva-mata*), and the mother of the universe. *Rig Veda* (1.168.33) speaks of the Goddess Prithvi, "Great is our Mother Earth". *Atharva Veda* (12.1.1-18) says, "Earth is Mother, I am Earth's son". In the *Aitareya Brahmana* (8.5) and in some Upanishads this Earth is identified with Shri, the goddess of harvest and fertility. In the Puranas, this Shri is respected as Shri-Devi and Bhu-Devi, the Shakti of Vishnu, Shri and Bhu symbolising prosperity and productivity.

Durga, the most important Mother-Goddess of Indian tradition, is also known as *Dhanya-rupa*, symbolic of rice, the most staple food of the subcontinent. She again is also known as *Shakambhari* (the herb-nourishing goddess), *Annada* or *Annapurna* (the repository of food, the sustainer of the universe), and *Bhramari*, the Cosmic female bee giving honey to life. This same Divine Mother later on appears as Saraswati, the goddess of all knowledge which flows from the Logos, the *Vak*. She is also the goddess of all fine arts. Her lyre stands for all arts and music, and her white swan stands for

immaculate purity which is the source of all knowledge. Later on Gayatri, the foremost mantra of Indian culture, is also worshipped as Mother. Saraswati as goddess of learning, entered into Buddhism and Jainism, too. This mother-power which was so long represented by earth and various goddesses, was for the first time manifested through an inspired woman in the *Rig Veda*. The hundred and twenty-fifth hymn of the tenth Mandala (book) of *Rig-Veda*, more known as *Devi-Sukta*, is an inspired utterance of *Vak*, the daughter of the sage Ambhrina. She speaks after her complete identification with the primal-Energy, the Maha-Shakti, which creates, sustains and destroys universes. "It is I who move in the form of the Rudras, the Vasus, the Adityas and all the other gods.... I Myself speak this truth which is respected by gods and men. Whomever I choose, I make him great, the creator, the seer, and genius. I am the power behind the bow of Rudra when he goes to destroy enemies of seers and saints. I wage war to protect the good. I pervade heaven and earth."

This cosmic power protecting the universe has been most magnificently portrayed as Chandi or Durga in *Chandi Saptashati*. Durga is also mentioned in an appendix to *Rig-Veda* (khila 10.127) and also in *Taittiriya Aranyaka* (10.1.2). *Kena-Upanishad* speaks of Uma-Haimavati, of golden colour, or the virgin daughter of the mountain Himavat or the Himalayas. Uma has been interpreted as the Power or measure (*ma* means measure) of Shiva (*U* means Shiva). Later esoteric interpretations have explained Uma (U.M.A.) as the Variant of Brahman (OM. or A.U.M). The *Taittiriya Aranyaka* praises Mother as virgin, "We meditate on Kanya-Kumari; may the Goddess Durga direct us."

In the Ramayana (First canto) Uma has been described as the daughter of the Himalayas, and the consort of Mahadeva. The

4. Ibid, vol, 7: 27.

Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad (1.4.1.3) describes how the one undivided Reality became two pairs of all species. This Vedic idea has filtered into the Puranas, and Indians have virtually a Shakti or consort with every deity, like Radha and Krishna, Sita and Rama, Vishnu and Lakshmi, or Brahman and Maya of Vedanta. The *Chandi* first introduces the Divine Mother as Mahamaya, the principle of delusion which hides the Reality by binding us down to sense-life with all its miseries and afflictions. This Mahamaya, when honoured and propitiated, turns into Mahavidya or Mahashakti, opening for us the higher and diviner aspects of life, and fulfilling us with divine strength both in internal and external life.

This Divine Mother-Power which the Indians began worshipping as various goddesses, slowly got manifested in the mother-aspect, and the knowledge-aspect of all women. Right from the Vedic times great women have come up embodying the higher powers of knowledge and purity symbolised in the various deities representing the Divine Mother. The Vedic concept that God became male and female, brought the later concept that God is half-man and half-woman—Ardhanarishwara. While men were looked upon as “sons of Immortality”, women were respected as symbols of Divine Mother.

The *Rig-Veda* says, “The wife and husband being the equal halves of one substance are equal in every respect. Therefore both should join and take equal parts in all work, religious and secular.”⁵ In the Vedic period, girls, like boys, were given upanayana or initiation into Gayatri and the vow of brahmacharya (celebacy, study, and independent spiritual life). India has thus offered, since ancient times, the highest

possible respect and opportunity to women which are inconceivable in many other religions of the world.

Manu, the ancient law-giver, accepted the Vedic idea and held up the fundamental equality of men and women, “Before the creation of the phenomenal universe, the first born lord of all creatures divided his own self into two halves, so that one half should be male and the other half female.”⁶

This opportunity and respect made of Vedic women not only educated wives (Sadyodwaha), but also realised seers and preachers of highest spiritual truth, who were known as brahmavadinis. As many as twenty seven women seers or brahmavadinis, have composed inspiring hymns or Suktas in the *Rig-Veda*. Vedic wisdom was revealed by great women seers like Romasa, Lopamudra, Vishwavara, Shashwati, Apala, Ghosa, Aditi and Vak, the author of the celebrated Devi-Sukta.

The philosopher-saint Gargi's discussions on the highest philosophical topics with the seer Yajnavalkya in the *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*, are well known. Similarly immortal is the answer of his enlightened wife Maitreyi who rejected the wealth and comfort of worldly life, choosing immortality as the goal.

“Then what shall I do with that by which I cannot become immortal? Tell me, Venerable Sir, of that alone which you know to be the only means to immortality.”⁷

Much later in history, Shankaracharya offered respect to Bharati, the enlightened wife of Mandana Mishra, for her knowledge. Probably Bharati, the name of one of his monastic orders, is derived from this incident. The *Mahabharata* gives the account of Sulabha, a wandering nun, and great Yogini. The daughter of sage Shan-

5. Swami Ghanananda, (Edited), *Women Saints Of East and West*, London, The Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, 1955, p. 1.

6. Ibid, p. 1.

7. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.4.3

dilya became a brahmacharini, a wandering nun, and practised Yoga. In the age of the Buddha, royal princesses, queen mothers, and even ordinary women embraced the life of brahmavadinis, and some of them reached great spiritual heights. Mahavira himself opened the door to high spiritual life for 5,000 women and ladies from distinguished houses. Women became teachers of society and ideals of spiritual knowledge.

It is from the Smriti-Purana period that the freedom offered to women in Vedic times began to be curtailed. Upanayana or spiritual initiation ceremonies for girls was stopped. The wandering life of nuns was also stopped from A.D. 600 to 1800. Those who wanted spiritual life and emancipation from the slavery of a family life, had to go to the Puranas and the Mahabharata or the Ramayana for inspiration. Bhakti cult came and produced a few great women figures like Andal, Akka Mahadevi of the South; Mirabai; and Lalla Yogishwari of Kashmir. With the corruption in Tantric Buddhism, Hindus lost faith in female monasticism. Muslim rule and exploitation made it even compulsory to offer girls in early marriage for the sake of protection and safety. Indian women passed through a long dark spell of nearly one thousand years when women were degenerated, as Vivekananda said, to mere "child-producing machines". One wing of the great Indian society, was left undeveloped. Many of them remained unhonoured and virtually exploited, until with the coming of Shri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, women were again installed to their pristine Vedic eminence. If the West had learnt to offer the highest respect to women as lover, mistress, or wife, Indians had learnt to respect the great power (Maha-shakti) in all women by honouring them as Divine Mother. Of this Indian vision Vivekananda spoke in the West, "The highest of all feminine types in India

is mother, higher than wife,... mother represents the colourless love that knows no barter, love that never dies. Who can have such love?—only the mother, not son, nor daughter nor wife."⁸ In his Karma Yoga lectures in the West, Vivekananda said, "Blessed indeed is the man who is able to look upon woman as the representative of the motherhood of God. Blessed, indeed, is the woman to whom man represents the fatherhood of God."⁹

In his master Shri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda witnessed an epoch-making manifestation of the mother aspect of God. To his brother-disciples he wrote, "...The Motherhood of God is prominent in this Incarnation. He used to dress himself as a woman. He was, as it were, our Mother, and we must likewise look upon all women as reflections of the Mother. In India there are two great evils, trampling on the women, and grinding the poor through caste restrictions. He was the Saviour of women, Saviour of the masses, Saviour of all, high and low."¹⁰ Shri Ramakrishna's life inspired him to write to an Indian disciple, "Do you know who is the real Shakti-worshipper? It is he who knows that God is the omnipresent force in the universe, and sees in women manifestation of that force."

"The Divine Mother has become everything", Shri Ramakrishna used to say, and he saw Her everywhere. To Holy Mother Sarada Devi, Sri Ramakrishna once said, "I look upon you as the same embodiment of Divine Mother Kali who is in the temple, and my own mother (Chandramani) who lives in the music-tower." From that day onwards the twin aspects of the Divine Mother and the human mother of saints and sinners, got intermingled in the life of Sarada Devi. The fallen and rejected ones

8. *Complete Works*, p. 6: 149

9. *Ibid*, p. 1:68

10. *Ibid*, p. 6:335

like the drunkard Padmalochan and Ramani, used to see their own human mother in her. Nivedita saw in her Mary, the mother of Christ. Vivekananda with his prophetic vision, saw in her the resurrection of the epoch-making Mother-Power which was destined to purify and elevate a sensate civilisation.

In Holy Mother Sarada Devi, Vivekananda saw the embodiment of the highest ideal of Indian womanhood. In her the dutifulness of Katyayani, the faithfulness, infinite purity, and suffering of Sita and Savitri were combined with Mira's devotion, Maitreyi's renunciation, Gargi's knowledge, and the spiritual eminence attainable only by incarnations of God. With the severest asceticism of Sati for Shiva, she combined the broad catholicity and practical spirituality of a most modern mind. Even without the least touch of wordliness, she was the perfect house-wife and mother of a large household. Without being an ordinary mother, she manifested the all-conquering and all-purifying power of love of a universal Mother for her countless children all over the globe. From the West, Vivekananda first revealed his vision of the Holy Mother to his brother-disciples, "You have not yet understood the wonderful significance of Mother's life—none of you. But gradually you will know; without Shakti (Power) there is no regeneration for the world. Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries? Because Shakti is held in dishonour there. Mother has been born to revive the wonderful Shakti in India, and making her the nucleus, once more Gargis and Maitreyis will be born into the world.... Hence it is her Math that I want first... without the grace of Shakti nothing is to be accomplished."¹¹ Vivekananda saw that centering round the personality of Holy

Mother, the new generation of great women would arise. But who will be the first to follow her footsteps and give Vivekananda's dream an articulate shape? India frustrated him, and finally it was the 'Irish Lioness' Nivedita who came forward to sacrifice her life for realising this epoch-making dream of her master. Vivekananda brought her to be empowered and blessed by Sarada Devi. She called this day of first meeting with the Holy Mother, as "Day of days". Within a few days she, like her master, could realise, that this simple Hindu Lady was "the greatest woman in today's world."¹² In her she saw a new vision of great womanhood which far transcended the visions of lofty womanhood in Shakespeare, Sophocles or Aeschylus.¹³ She was "Ramakrishna's last word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood", Nivedita soon realised. Apparently an uneducated and a village woman, she was "the noblest and most powerful woman" Nivedita could ever imagine. And the secret of this power was her life of constant communion with God in a world of utmost silence, solitude, and austerity. "A tremendous dynamic power emanated from Sarada Devi, while she remained completely absorbed within herself. She touched upon the very heart of life," wrote Nivedita. "When will silence bring a blessing for me?" She prayed during her first few days with the Holy Mother.¹⁴

Her prayer was granted. Holy Mother accepted Nivedita as her "own daughter". In Nivedita, she saw the "embodiment of the everblissful Mother". Later on, when Nivedita sent her prayers for Holy Mother during her illness, she said, "May the prayer

11. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, (Advaita Ashrama), 1964, p. 181

12. Sankari Prasad Basu, *Lokamata Nivedita*, (Ananda Publishers, Calcutta, 9). 1968, p. 187

13. *Letters of Nivedita*, p. 227

14. Lizabeth Raymonds *The Dedicated* (A Biography of Nivedita) Samata Books, Madras, 1985, p. 138-40

that has risen in your pure brahmacharini heart be fulfilled."¹⁵

Her master Vivekananda dedicated this pure life at the feet of Shiva and Buddha. "Brahmacharya should burn like the fire of God within the veins," with these words Vivekananda blessed her daughter-disciple.¹⁶ True to her master's wish, she emerged as the symbol of ancient brahmavadinis and the torch-bearer in the resurrection of Mother-Power in India for modern times. Indians saw in her 'Lokamata' (the mother of the people) and 'Shikhamayi naree' (the woman with the flame of knowledge). Her master blessed her, "Be thou to Indian's future son/The mistress, servant, friend in one."¹⁷

An orthodox Hindu Brahmin Brahmacharini was Vivekananda's ideal for the woman of character, who must also combine the spirit of broad catholicity and "Universalism".¹⁸ This spirit of universalism Vivekananda saw in the Holy Mother, when she threw away the age-old barrier of caste-orthodoxy and received the three Western ladies Mrs. Bull, Miss Macleod, and Nivedita with the words, "my daughters". It was this "deep foresight" and "kindness" with which Vivekananda wanted to make Hinduism expansive and even "aggressive". Like the Mother-church Hinduism, the Holy Mother accepted people of different races as her own children within her broad, universal wings. Vivekananda dreamt of such a race of 'Super-women' who would successfully combine "perfect freedom with perfect authority", the Western spirit of freedom and dynamism with the Eastern spirit of orthodoxy, solitude, self-denial and ascetic drive for inner

purification. Of this combination he said, "Two different races mix and fuse, and out of them rises one strong distinct type."¹⁹

The spirit of universalism is the most difficult to bring. But Vivekananda was insistent on this. He said, "There must be room for sects, as well as rising above sects." And this could be established more easily through the spirit of worshipping God in man. "This idea of humanitarian man-worship exists in nucleus in India, but it has never been sufficiently practised", he said. And he wanted Nivedita to keep this as compulsory part of her new education for women. Worshipping the feet of beggars, or worshipping the school girls as Uma Kumari must be practised, as "a wonderful practical training of heart and hand together."²⁰ "It is the worship of the Shakti not in mere thought, not in imagination, but in actual visible form",²¹ he wrote of the Western respect offered to women as wife or mistress. His mission was to turn this western attitude into a worship of Divine Mother in all women.

The ideal of perfect chastity in marriage practised in India developed in due course into the ideal of the brahmacharins and the brahmacharinis. Vivekananda showed the deepest respect to the Indian idea of faithfulness in marriage which had been glorified in the episode of Sita, Savitri or Uma. Such a concept of marriage helps one to rise above marriage. Nivedita saw that in Ramakrishna's historic life, marriage was perfected by the man's acceptance of his wife as the Mother. "It was a moment of the mergence of the human in the divine", she wrote. Even in house-holder's life, Vivekananda asserted, the monastic purity

15. *Lokamata Nivedita*, p. 201

16. *Letters of Nivedita*, p. 223

17. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search Of God and Other Poems*, (Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta) 1968, p. 33

18. *Complete Works*, Nivedita, p. 1:221

19. *Ibid*, p. 221

20. *Ibid*, p. 215

21. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 5:506

must be held high, for monasticism is the highest ideal attainable by humanity.²²

Of woman's education in India he had high dreams. "We must turn out the greatest intellects in India," he said of them. Yet none felt better that this intellectual education must be combined with "eternal self-mastery and inner freedom". The Western ideal of the greatness of physical womanhood was, to his eyes, "hiding a corpse beneath flowers". True to her master, Nivedita shed her life-blood for laying the foundation of this education for India's future womanhood. That education has just started taking shape. "Indian educators have to extend and fulfil the vision of Vivekananda", wrote Nivedita. "And when this is done,... the time will not be far distant to see the Indian woman take her rightful place amongst the womanhood of the world."²³

When Nivedita was going to plunge into this historic action, of starting the first girls' school in the name of Shri Ramakrishna, she went to Holy Mother for her blessings, and her blessings were showered upon the first school for girls started by Nivedita with the assurance that "the girls it should train be ideal girls". Nivedita wrote "I cannot imagine a grander omen than her blessings spoken over the educated Hindu womanhood of the future".²⁴

* * * *

Exploitation of woman in all possible ways has been the common phenomenon of all male-dominated societies all over the globe. An ILO statement reads, "Women constitute half the world's population, account for three quarters of the work and possess one percent of world's property."²⁵

It is a travesty of justice.

By virtue of the Section 94 of the Trust Act of the Govt. of India, the wife will be regarded as the constructive trustee for the husband in respect of property. In the West, property acquired after marriage is treated as co-property, and divided equally in case of dissolution of marriage. In India today, after divorce the wife has to beg for maintenance from patronising courts and former husbands through a "dehumanising legal procedure".²⁶ Indian law-givers would do well to remember and revive the Vedic tradition of equal respect and opportunity offered to both men and women. And this could be done not by legislation alone, but by offering intellectual, social, and spiritual education to women, and making them conscious of the great Mother-Power seeking to manifest itself through each one of them. If women turned into enchantress of the Hellenic tradition, it is because they were 'exploited' and left uneducated, wrote Sister Christine, another disciple of Vivekananda, who gave her service for the regeneration of Indian women.

In the Semitic societies, women are restricted behind purdah. In the permissive Western societies women are fighting for equal rights and 'liberation', sometimes with the slogan, "No Motherhood for me".²⁷ Swamiji had a much loftier dream. Sister Christine wrote, "Some of us believe that if Swami Vivekananda's ideas regarding the education of women are carried out in true spirit, a being will be evolved who will be unique in the history of the world. As the woman of ancient Greece was almost perfect physically, this one will be her complement intellectually and spiritually—a woman, gracious, loving, tender, long-suffering, great in heart and intellect, but

22. *Complete Works*, Nivedita, p. 1:225

23. *Ibid*, p. 1:216

24. *Ibid*, p. 1:112

25. *The Times of India*, (Daily), New Delhi, March 30, 1988, p. 3

26. *Ibid*.

27. *PHP*, (Japan; PHP Institute International Inc.) Nov. 1976, p. 19

greatest of all in spirituality.”²⁸ And it is women, and not men, who will translate the great vision into reality. This was the idea of Vivekananda.

Once long ago, in Thousand Island Park, Vivekananda prophesied that in future women will come up and preach the highest ideas of the Vedanta to the masses.²⁹ He had the life of Holy Mother before his

28. Eastern and Western Disciples, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, (Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta,) 1964, p. 227

29. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 7:95

vision. The law of morphic resonance assures that if one single individual can, by superhuman effort, realise an ideal, or bring a transfiguration in life, the rest of the species can do it as a matter of course.³⁰ The glorious awakening of Mother-Power that happened in the life of Sarada Devi, has found successful echo, since then, in many more women both of the East and the West. History is waiting to see a resurrection of this Mother-Power all over the globe.

30. Rupert Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life*, (Paladin Grafton Books, London, 1985) p. 98

JNANA AND BHAKTI*

Rev. SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDAJI MAHARAJ

Swamiji, Swami Vivekananda, once declared at Almora that outwardly Shri Ramakrishna had Bhakti (devotion), but inwardly he was full of Knowledge, whereas he himself had Knowledge outwardly, but devotion inside, and that was why he was mild and tender at times like women. I do not know what Swamiji meant by this contrast, but it is clear that he had no difficulty in juxtaposing Knowledge and devotion in the same person. This we have seen in the life of Mahapurush Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj. In a letter to Romain Rolland, published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, he said that he had Nirvikalpa Samadhi thrice during the lifetime of Shri Ramakrishna. But we found him in his old age full of devotion towards Shri Ramakrishna and tenderness towards the monks and the devotees.

* Rev. Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj's address at the Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission held on 13.12.1987 at Belur Math.

The same was the case with Shankaracharya. He was a devotee and a man of Knowledge rolled into one. He is known best for his non-dualistic philosophy, his conquest of the enemies of the Sanatana Dharma, and his sharp logic forged at the anvil of non-dualism. But people overlook that he visited the Hindu shrines all over India, established temples and monasteries, and installed images of gods and goddesses in them. He also wrote a number of hymns and songs in honour of various gods and goddesses. Shankaracharya flourished between 780 and 812 A.D. Ramanuja became famous about two centuries later. For all these two hundred years non-dualism ruled over entire India. But as days rolled on, the emphasis on “*Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma: All this is Brahman indeed*”, as declared in the *Chandogya Upanishad* tended to be eclipsed by the ‘*Neti neti: Not this, not this*’ of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. The masses of India found to their dismay that their Personal God was being dethroned and devotion eroded. The non-dualists tended

more and more towards *maya-vada* which gives the *raison d'être* for the existence of the phenomenal world, though in reality it is non-entity. Such a philosophy could not satisfy the ordinary mind. Hence, Ramanuja and a host of dualistic philosophers who followed gained in power more and more. All the same, the non-dualists followed their own path of negativism, and the *Panchadashi* declared clearly that Maya the Cow had two calves, one of which was God and the other the individual soul. Such a trend offended the pundits, and they declared, '*Mayavadam asacchastram pracchannam bauddham eva ca*: The theory of maya is bad as a scripture, and it is Buddhism in disguise'.

Shankaracharya, though speaking of maya, was not a *mayavadin* but a *Brahmavadin* who posited Brahman against the absolute nihilism of the Buddhists. Maya, of course, he accepted, but to him maya was a *shakti*, power of Brahman, which deserved honour and was not simply to be brushed away as a convenient theory for the justification of the phenomenal world. His famous couplet in the *Vishnu-shatpadi* runs thus:

O Lord, even when duality vanishes I am yours and not you mine. For the waves belong to the sea, and never the sea to the waves.

The Upanishads also support the view that Bhakti is necessary for Jnana. The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* says:

'These things get revealed when spoken to a great-souled one who has supreme devotion for God, and as high a devotion for the guru as for God.

And the Upanishad also speaks of maya as '*Devatma-Shaktih*: God's own power'. Since power and the person possessing the power are identical, maya which is a power of God is not to be spurned but honoured as God Himself.

This was the attitude of Shri Ramakrishna as well. By mixing with him, a staunch non-dualist like Totapuri turned into a devotee of Mother Kali and chanted hymns in Her presence at Dakshineswar.

Though Shri Ramakrishna was a little indulgent towards suitable aspirants of monism and often tolerated their boastful declaration that they did not believe in a Personal God, still in the long run he never liked Knowledge to be alienated from devotion. This becomes clear from the way he trained Narendranath who at first revolted against monism saying that it was little different from atheism. But gradually he fell so much in love with it that he avoided dualistic songs and hymns, and sang and chanted non-dualistic ones. Shri Ramakrishna corrected him by saying that Knowledge was dry and could not stir up a man as a whole which devotion could do. This view was supported by Madhusudana Saraswati who at the beginning of his annotation on the 13th Chapter of the Gita wrote the Couplet:

If the yogis, with their minds which have been brought under control through the practice of meditation, see some such transcendental Light that is without qualities and action, let them see!

But for filling *our* eyes with astonishment, let there be forever that indescribable Blue (Light) alone which runs about hither and thither on the sands of the Kalindi.

The *Bhagavata* also finds no difficulty in the co-existence of devotion and Knowledge; rather it declares that devotion comes automatically to the man of the highest enlightenment, in the verse:

Hari is possessed of such excellent qualities that even sages who delight in their Self and are free from all bondages entertain selfless love for Him!

The *Bhagavadgita* admits the interaction of devotion and Knowledge in as much as

any one of these two can lead to the other, and then continue, side by side. It says:

Through devotion he knows Me in reality, as to what and who I am. Then, having known Me in truth, he enters (into Me) immediately after that (Knowledge).

This verse shows that devotion leads to Knowledge. Shri Ramakrishna also said that if one becomes devoted to the Mother of the Universe, She opens the door for him to Knowledge as well. Patanjali also writes that *samadhi* can be attained not only through the Eight-fold Yoga but also through devotion to God as well, in his aphorism, '*Ishvara-pranidhanad va: Or through special devotion to God.*'

There is another verse in the *Gita* which says that Knowledge leads to devotion:

O scion of the Bharata dynasty, he who, being free from delusion, knows Me the supreme Person thus, he is all-knowing and adores Me with his whole being.

The *Gita* goes even to the extent of declaring a man of Knowledge as the highest devotee:

Of them (the afflicted, the seeker of Knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and the man of Knowledge) the man of Knowledge, endowed with constant steadfastness and one-pointed devotion, excels.

Thus we see that Shri Ramakrishna was quite correct in his emphasis on devotion when he said that the Bhakti as taught by Narada is the best for this age of *Kali*.

PILGRIMAGE TO HOLY NARMADA

SWAMI AMARESHANANDA

"Om, obeisance to Goddess Narmada in the morning and evening. Please save me from the wallow of transmigration".¹

The ultimate goal of life, both according to the path of knowledge (Jnana) and the path of devotion (Bhakti) is cessation from the cycle of birth and death. The path of knowledge denotes it as liberation and the path of devotion calls it the journey to Eternal Abode. Hence prayer is offered to Holy Narmada, keeping this ultimate goal in view.

Holy NARMADA is one among the seven great rivers mentioned in the *tirtha avahana mantra*—invoking the presence of holy rivers—in the daily ritualistic worship

of the Hindus.² Our ancient seers, besides invoking the presence of holy waters, had integration and unity of the country and people in their view. Adi Shankaracharya, who established four seats of learning in four quarters of India, had the same unifying vision. Among these seven great rivers, Ganga and Yamuna originate in the Himalayan range, and flow through Upper and Eastern India. Godavari originates in Sahyadri range at Nasik-Tryambakeshwara in Maharashtra. Saraswati, according to one version, is 'guptavahini', 'guptagami' or invisible. According to another version She flows near Kurukshetra and parts of Rajasthan and conjoins with Ganga and Yamuna at Prayag. Narmada originates in Vindhya range known as 'Mekalaparvata'

1. *Narmada Kalpavalli*, 10th edition, Narmada Satsang Bhavan, Hosangabad, M.P., p. 37.

2. *Shri Ramakrishna Puja Paddhati*, 2nd edition, Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur, p. 12

at Amarkantak, in Shahdol District, Madhya Pradesh. Sindhu, now mainly flows in the area under Pakistan. Kaveri originates at Bagamandala in erstwhile Coorg State, now part of Karnataka and flows through Karnataka and Tamilnadu.

'Revakhanda' of *Vayu Purana* and 'Avantikakhanda' of *Skanda Purana* contain detailed descriptions about Narmada. 'Avantikakhanda' which is popularly known as NARMADA PURANA contains 240 chapters. It is often read and discoursed by inhabitants on the banks of Narmada, particularly during *Chaturmas*—four-months of rainy season, when 'sadhakas' or spiritual aspirants, come together. In this Purana the questioner is King Yudhisthira and the narrator is Sage Markandeya, who is counted one among the eternally living or 'Chiranjivi'. Like other Puranas, this Purana also mentions various royal dynasties, glorifies sacred spots of 'tirthas' and speaks about their origin. It also tells about the sages who performed austerities there. It mentions auspicious dates and tithis (astrological dates) for propitiating the local deity with details about the mode of worship and so on. In the course of narration, Markandeya, who is believed to have been in existence over seven cycles or 'kalpa', mentions that during all these seven cycles when other water sources dried up, only Narmada continued to flow catering to the needs of people.³ Also when there was severe drought in the country, sage Markandeya advised teachers with their pupils, and Brahmins with their families, to resort to the banks of Narmada for peaceful living.⁴

Origin

According to mythological tradition, various gods approached Lord Vishnu for

ways of expiation of their sins. Vishnu in turn entreated the Great God Shiva, who was seated in composure on Mount Mekala after destruction of Andhakasura, to create Narmada for this purpose.⁵ Narmada has been described as 'Shivakanya'—daughter of Shiva, and maiden.⁶ Hence feeding of maidens or '*kanya bhojana*' is most popular and considered a meritorious act on the banks of Narmada. The feeding of brahmins falls next to it. About the date and time of appearance of Narmada on earth, Sage Vashistha gives details to Rama.⁷ At present its origin is traced to a spring at Amarkantak.

Circumambulation—'*parikrama*'

Among the seven great rivers, at present the circumambulation of Narmada is considered a severe form of penance (*tapasya*). There are strict codes of conduct to observe. It is similar to circumambulating a deity in a temple. To mention a few, the pilgrim has to be barefooted and take one meal a day, which should not have pungent and excitable spices. He is not to store either cooked or raw food. He should have only minimum talk and should always think of the Divine. He should not swim or cross the river and always Narmada is to be kept to the right, and traverse, as far as possible, along the course of the river. Each day before commencing the journey and after making a halt, he should prostrate before Narmada, and so on. Nowadays a certificate is issued by the Village Panchayat which is to be obtained before commencing the journey. There is an unwritten rule that one has to complete '*pradakshina*' in three years three months and thirteen days by observing three *Chaturmasas* and three

3. *Brihat Narmada Mahatmya*, verse 6.

4. *Skanda Purana*, Reva Khanda, 4. 20.

5. *Narmada Kalpavalli*, p. 8.

6. *Skanda Purana*, Revakhanda, 4. 20.

7. *Narmada Kalpavalli*, p. 9.

Shivaratri celebrations on the banks of Narmada.

In early days only mendicants used to undertake '*pradakshina*'. It is said that Sri Gouri Shankar Maharaj used to do '*pradakshina*' with a batch of 200 Sadhus and 20-30 cows. The forest was still dense and wild animals could be seen moving during day time. It is with the conviction that Divine Grace and Divine Power is flowing in the form of Narmada that one circumambulates it without fear. Also one can test how far one has been able to live up to the idea of a true devotee of God. If one is earnest, one is sure to feel the grace of Narmada in abundance.

Right from its source at Amarkantak, Narmada flows in between the Vindhya and the Satpura range of hills, finally joining the Arabian Sea in Bharuch District. Keeping the Vindhya hills as the northern bank and the Satpura hills as the Southern bank, the river flows from east to west, passing through fourteen Districts of Madhya Pradesh—Indore, Debas, Sehor, Raisena, Narasimhpur, Jabalpur, Mandala, Shahdol, Sivani, Hoshangabad, Khandwa, West-Nimad (Khargaoan), Jhabva & Dhar. Then Narmada flows through the Dhule Dist. of Maharashtra, and Bharuch (Broach) and Vadodara Districts of Gujarat, covering a distance of about 900 miles through the forest, most of which is dense and strewn with various types of thorns and rubbles, involving climbing up of high ascents and getting down. Between Premghad and Pamakhedi one has to cross a rivulet 13 times in different places. In some places there is no habitation for 8-10 miles. One cannot even notice birds in the sky and has to totally depend on intuitive knowledge for guidance. There is an eighty-miles stretch of dense forest termed as '*Sulpaneshwar Jhari*' (between Rajghat and Sulpaneshwar) on either banks, where forest-dwellers known as '*mankar nayak*'

belonging to Bhil Tribal community, relieve the pilgrims of their belongings except the loin cloth and torn gunny (tat) which is used to cover the body. They won't spare even the ochre (gerua) cloth of the monk. It is extremely difficult to get food-stuff. Only those who are keen to adhere to traditional ways pass through this strip. The rest take up road from Rajghat to Rajpipla. But, the real form and enchanting beauty of Narmada lies in this stretch in the background of 2-3 hill ranges, coniferous trees, Sal, and Teak of great height, and ranches. Sometimes the river rushes down big boulders into pieces as if to challenge and prove her might and prowess. Here are situated some beautiful temples like Sulpaneshwar, Ranchodji and Hapeshwar Mahadeo.

For completing one circumambulation one has to traverse about 1800 miles and change-over from Southern bank to Northern bank is undertaken at a point called Bimaleshwar Mahadeo (where Narmada merges and becomes one with the sea), by means of country boat which takes about a minimum of 6/7 hours, and sometimes 10/12 hours, depending upon the roughness of the sea and direction of the wind, and reaches a point called '*Mitital ashrama*' on the northern bank. This journey also involves walking through marshy land on either side, which in some places is knee-deep.

In general, inhabitants on Narmada banks are polite, gentle and kind, but poverty holds them back from giving. Even then they try to offer whatever they can, mainly '*berra*' (flour made of wheat and Bengalgram), maize, javar, kudai & kutki (a variety of barley grown on mounds with scanty rainfall) and in some places '*coka*' (rice and pulse mixed together). Sincere aspirant derives inner joy through all these, and hardship becomes part of life.

In Sanskrit '*narma*' means '*sukha*' and '*da*' means bestower. '*Narmada*' means '*best-*

ower of happiness'. She is bestowing succour and solace to millions for ages. Waters of Narmada are crystal-clear and bluish-green in appearance. Even at present a number of spiritual aspirants has found fulfilment in a life lived on her banks, and most of them live on what chance might bring; but they offer and share with visiting pilgrims whatever they possess and some of them even forego their meals. It is literally true that the banks of Narmada are best suited for austerity in the real sense, and for congenial living.⁸ As there are no industrial units and townships situated on Her banks, water is not polluted like that of the Ganga after Hardwar.

In the course of narration Sage Markandeya mentions that there were six crores of sacred spots or 'tirthas' on the banks of Narmada in the Golden age or Satya Yuga. Almost all gods, sages, demi-gods, and men, besides the Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara, during different periods, came to the banks of Narmada for penance in order to atone for their sins like killing, or to seek boons. There is an old saying, "Reva tire tapah kuryat, maranam Jahnavi tire." (One Should practise austerities on the banks of Narmada, and die near Ganga.) Today there are many sacred spots like six Surya-Kundas, eight Markandeshwar Mahadeo temples, three Bhrigu kshetras, three Nageshwar temples, two Mangaleshwar temples, and the Maheshwar temple built by Holkars. The foremost among the Holkars was Rani Ahalyabai who had erected many temples, built many bathing ghats, and rest-houses for pilgrims in many pilgrim centres all over the country.

Omkareshwar, one of the twelve "Jyotirlinga" Shiva temples of India stands on the holy bank of Narmada. Omkareshwar, situated on the northern bank of Narmada,

is an island which is formed by a small river Kaverica joining Narmada at two points. Tradition goes that Adi Shankaracharya met his guru Govindabhagavadpada in a cave adjacent to the Omkareshwar temple, and took the monastic vows of sannyasa there.

One has to cross the river in order to reach Omkareshwar temple. Now there is a bridge for pedestrians only. People circumambulate the small island on which the temple stands. Remnants of a fort and water-ducts built by king Mandhata of ancient times, can be seen even today. There is a small township and many monasteries on the southern bank. For "pradakshina", whichever may be the starting point, one has finally to pay homage to Omkareshwar Shiva, after reaching the starting point.

For devotees of Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, Omkareshwar is an important place of pilgrimage, where five monastic disciples of Shri Ramakrishna, Swamis Brahmananda, Yogananda, Shivananda, Turiyananda, and Subodhananda lived a life of tapasya during varying periods. When Swami Brahmananda came here for the first time he lived alone, and on his second visit Swami Subodhananda accompanied him. Swami Vivekananda, too, visited this place during his 'parivrajaka' days while he had stayed either at Khandwa or at Indore. Omkareshwar, a sacred and secluded spot inhabited by Sadhus, is equidistant (75 Kms) from both. Now there is a small shrine dedicated to Shri Ramakrishna, named Shri Ramakrishna Sadhana Kutir, on the holy island of Omkareshwar.

Some of the experiences during my circumambulation of Narmada are unforgettable.

In Bharuch Dist., Gujarat, on the basin of Narmada, about 35/40 miles from the sea, there are over 200 oil wells drilled by

8. Ibid, p. 28.

the Oil & Natural Gas Commission, known as Ankleshwar Project. At a place called Bul-bul kund, about 6 miles away from Narmada (now the course of Narmada has changed), when Drilling Project started over two decades ago, technicians tried to drill in Bul-bul kund inspite of warning from the local inhabitants—'This is a sacred spot. Ages ago it was a seat of "tapasya". Do not try here', whole Drilling Rig with men caved in and went down to such a depth that neither they could locate nor extract it. This was reported by workmen at site.

At a place called Mohod (also Muhu) Ghat on the southern bank, in a small 'kuti' (hut) called as 'mounibaba kuti', a young-man during his talk mentioned that he had passed M.A. examination in I class (in Indian History) and for dissertation he had submitted thesis on the subject-'Bringing mass awareness through Vivekananda media'. He was now studying in a Law College in the Second Year. He had not come in touch with any of the Swamis of Ramakrishna Ideal or with any Centre of the Ramakrishna Movement. His only contact was through Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature and Vivekananda impressed him deeply.

In one place where the ascent is rather high and steep, an aged sadhu lived in his 'kuti' situated about a furlong from the river. A strange visitor seeing the old sadhu, pleaded that he be allowed to dig a tube-well there. The Sadhu said, 'Helping a needy person is good, and if a larger number of persons can be benefitted, such help is better. If the tube-wells are erected here, of course, I shall be benefitted ; but if you dig a tube-well in the nearby hamlet about 30 families will get the facility and

their hardship will be reduced to a great extent as the hamlet is about 6 furlongs from here and there is no other water source. Be good enough to dig a tube-well there.' In another instance, a textile dealer had brought sufficient cloth to make about 100 pairs of shirts and shorts, and offered it to a Sadhu for giving to the local or needy people, or to whomsoever he liked. Sadhu said to the dealer—'Look here, these are of no use to sadhus, and the local people are so poor that they cannot afford to pay for stitching. If you want to serve them, get the cloth stitched and then give them ; so please remove the materials from here.' In the third case a 'vairagi' (a wandering monk) devoted to Rama, said that he had been living there for thirteen years on 'akasa vritti' which means what food 'chance might bring'. And when there was nothing to eat, he collected a variety of roots called 'lakshmankand' from the forest. He had grown some papaya around his 'kuti' and said that was meant for the local urchins who were playing on the mound nearby where their parents toiled. In the noon he actually called those urchins and gave them papaya pieces (half-ripe ones as there was no fully ripe ones) saying, 'These people live on gruel for six months a year when their grain stock becomes thin.' After crossing the 'Sulpaneshwar Jhari', I saw a young Sannyasin collecting old and torn gunny from merchants in a nearby shopping centre, and make them into covering sheets, and give them to pilgrims whose belongings had been taken away by Bhils. For feeding these pilgrims, he cultivated others' lands on share-crops basis.

It was Tuesday, December 23, 1986, being the birth Anniversary of our Holy Mother. I just prayed in the early morning telling Her that this was all my way of celebrating the event. While bathing at 4 a.m., the water-pot (of gourd) slipped and broke into pieces. I thought of this as

9. *Stava Kavachamala*, Basumati Corporation Ltd, Cal-12, Dwadasa-Jyotirlingam Stotra.

an ill omen on an auspicious day. However, I continued along the course of the river and at about 9 a.m., came to a point called Bhimpur, where the ascent was steep and high. Being curious I climbed up, and after walking a distance, saw an ochre-cloth-wearing person standing in front of a storeyed building. He greeted me. On asking if it was a monastery or temple, he just took me to their prayer hall on the second floor. What I saw was simply amazing and breath-taking. There were marble Statues of Shri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother Sarada Devi in sitting posture. Mother was clad in traditional silk saree with red border and the Master, with thin white 'dhoti' and chudder hanging from

the shoulder as we see in the photograph we worship. Incense was burning and about 30-40 people were silently praying. There was no sign of any ritualistic worship. Some 10/15 people were reading in the library downstairs. Everything was neat and clean, and there was no noise even in their cooking place. In the course of talking, the Sadhu said that he has not taken formal 'Sannyasa', and he was there for over six years.

Adi Shankaracharya had immortalised the glory and beauty of this holy river in his well-known poem Narmadashtaka. Any one who circumambulates Narmada will find the truth of this hymn even today.

PANCHASTAVI OF KASHMIR

SHRI LAL KAUL

The valley of Kashmir has been worshipping the Divine Mother as the Supreme Reality of this life and universe since time immemorial. Panchastavi, the well-known hymn of Kashmir, describes how a seeker can realise this Supreme Reality through the process of Kundalini-yoga. According to the Indian tradition, Kundalini is the coiled-up serpent power, the Infinite Energy, which is lying dormant in every human being. The cosmic energy of the universe, known in the Upanishads as Prana or the primal life-force, generally works in our human body through the two nerve-currents, Ida and Pingala, which flow along the two sides of the spinal column. Panchastavi, the hymn in five stanzas, describes how this Kundalini can be made to flow through the middle-path, the path of Sushumna, and lead the seeker ultimately to Self-realisation.

In the language of Panchastavi, (verse 5), the body of the Sadhaka, or the spiritual seeker is the universe itself. Within the body is the Ishta or the chosen deity to be sought. The Self-power or kundalini which remains coiled-up like a sleeping serpent has to be raised by the systematic spiritual process or sadhana, and to be united with the Supreme Consciousness.

The question of the authorship of Panchastavi is shrouded in mystery. According to Puranic evidence, one Dharmacharya was its author. The local tradition which goes ten centuries back, however, believes that it was composed by Abhinava Gupta, an unique personality among the Kashmir saints. He was also a great commentator of the Bhagavad-Gita, and was known as "Bhairava" or the close attendant of Shiva reborn in Kashmir in order to preach the

ideas of Kashmir Shaivism. Story goes that when Adi Shankaracharya visited Kashmir, he went to visit Acharya Vasu Gupta to whom Shiva-sutras were revealed. Adi Shankara was staying on a hill which is known today as Shankaracharya hill. On a certain day, Shankara, the apostle of Vedanta, went to Shri Vasu Gupta and at his door saw Mahadeva (the great lord) Himself. Inside, Vasu Gupta was found absorbed in meditation. A lady with a boy was also seen there. The boy had been brought for the "Vidya-Arambha" ceremony, when the first lesson in reading and writing is given to the beginner. When Shri Vasu Gupta finished his meditation, the great Shankara asked him who the lady was. Gupta answered that she was the mother of the boy who was brought to have the first lesson from him. "Is he learned now?", asked Shankara. The answer was in the affirmative. Shri Vasu Gupta then placed his hand on the boy who began to recite the first hymn of Panchastavi. Amazed, Shankara said, "This is all sorcery. Let this woman chant verses." Shri Vasu Gupta then sprinkled some water on the face of the lady who thereupon recited another hymn. More astonished at this, Shri Shankara demanded that inanimate objects like the *Astra Kalasha* (an article used in the worship) and the door-latch should recite the praise of Shakti. And each of them did recite a hymn. The recitation of the fifth hymn, known in Kashmiri tradition as *Shukla Janani Stava*, it is said, came from heaven. This is the authorship of Panchastavi, according to Kashmiri tradition. It is said that in Kashmir Shankara began to believe in the powers of Shakti, the Cosmic Energy which creates, nourishes, and finally destroys the universe.

For practical purposes, the hymn represents the authoritative exposition of the ancient philosophy of Shakti-worship in Kashmir which has an important place in

the culture and development of the distinct type of Shakta and Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir.

Panchastavi is more a scientific discovery than a philosophic revelation. It affords a practical proof and shows the pattern in which unity and multiplicity co-exist. It upholds both dualism and monism, and the means by which the contradiction between the two is resolved and harmonised. This system enables the individual to reach the monistic truth through the dualistic world by dissolving the sadhaka in the current of divine bliss and again making him emerge out from it. Panchastavi is the religio-ethical history of the ancient Kashmir.

The phenomenal world is taken as Lila (Play) of the Supreme Shakti or the spouse of the Parama-Shiva, who is the author of the glorious play bringing consciousness (Chaitanya), mind, and matter within its own embrace. This hymn elaborates the process by which is attained the union of the Jivatman and the Paramatman or the Supreme Reality which already exists in us. This is realised by the Sadhanas prescribed. There is no room for speculation. The sadhaka or seeker has to rely on his own Sadhana and, of course, in a greater measure, on the Divine Grace more than on anything else.

The worship of Shakti has been an universal feature in India from the ancient times. The various forms, that of Kali, Durga, Saraswati, Gayatri, Lalita, have swayed the minds of Indians at all times, be they of high intellect or ordinary men. Even apostles of Absolute monism who do not advocate the worship of personalistic deity are no exception. Shankaracharya, the propounder of the Maya-Vada School of Vedanta, was himself an ardent devotee of the Divine Mother Sarada, and his famous Saundarya-Lahari is one song of praise and adoration of the Mother Tripurasundari.

Devotees belonging to all religions have

attained divine realisation through the path of worshipping Mother as the beloved God. Since the Absolute is "Nirguna" (without qualities), and "Achintya" (inconceivable), human thinking has personalised It as the universal Mother. In Hindu religion, Jagat-Mata or the Divine Mother of the World has various names like, Kali, Durga, Parvati, Uma, Chandi, Gauri, and Sati, in order to signify the various distinguishing functions of God or Shiva, the Supreme Reality in Its transcendent or uncreative aspect. Shiva himself does not create. This power is delegated to Shakti (Power or Energy), the consort of Shiva, who is productive or the female power that makes possible the infinite varieties of creation in the cosmos. Scientists today are finding that the material atom is only a form of energy, and that the hard world of matter-energy is only a projection of the One Consciousness which is the ultimate background of everything.

In the *Atharva Veda*, the bridegroom says to the bride, "I am what you are; you are what I am. I am the Heaven, you are the Earth." Since the Vedic times, Indians had learnt to equate the ultimate Reality with a feminine Being. In the *Devi-Sukta* of the *Rig-Veda*, the Divine Mother proclaims. *Aham rashtri sangamani vasunam*, (I am the sovereign who rules all the moving worlds). This power, the dynamic aspect of the ultimate Reality, is also known as Maya. The opening lines of *Saundarya-Lahari* says that Shiva can do nothing without Shakti, which is energy or Maya. This cosmic female-power or Shakti is symbolised by the goddesses like Durga and Kali. Kali also represents the all-destroying Time, the terrible who dances the dance of destruction on the body of Shiva. We cannot but pay homage to such a power.

The Tantras precisely do this.

The special value of Panchastavi lies in

its description of the processes by which the union of Purusha and Prakriti, the Supreme Consciousness with the Cosmic Energy is possible. The entire sadhana consists of rousing the forces within the body, and guiding them upward for establishing oneself permanently in divine life, where the individual rises finally above the desires and temptations of the bio-physical body. Kundalini, the Primal energy, is first aroused in the Muladhara, (pelvic-plexus) which is the lowest centre of consciousness situated at the base of the spinal column. Then Kundalini is led successively through the path of Sushumna, step by step, through the various psychic levels or Chakras, to her real abode in the Sahasrara (crown lotus) which is situated at the top of the spinal column. The Kundalini-yoga is both a science and a philosophy. It is also an art which can lead the yogi to siddhis or success in performing miracles.

The verse 35 is the acme of Panchastavi. The Shakti is finally identified with Shiva, Time, Atman, from which evolves the three "gunas" of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, in whose various permutations and combinations, all the knowledge, ignorance, siddhis, etc., come into existence. The concept of creation is over-ruled, because according to Panchastavi, God has not created the world. HE has become the world. "He became whatever that is," says the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. (1:6).

The Panchastavi says that it is due to avidya or ignorance, that we see diversity instead of unity. A realised soul will not live for himself, or for perpetuating his ego. He will feel himself one with the universe, and identify himself with it (verse 20, stanza V). His will will conform to the Divine Will. He will develop unchanging consciousness, and realise that sensitivity to heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc., is all due to delusive suggestions of the senses, and man's habit of catering to the senses.

He then acquires wisdom, rises above these contradictions.

As Kundalini moves upwards, each lotus or chakra or the various steps of the psychic world, opens up due to the vivifying intensity of Her presence, and its petals open upwards. Each lotus closes and resumes its former position, the moment Kundalini leaves that chakra. All the elements and the presiding deities of that particular chakra, are dissolved into the body of the Kundalini till in Her last stage She is united with the Supreme or the Parama Shiva. Then the yogi experiences the Infinite Bliss of ultimate God-head. He then realises that this world of human passions is only a gross reflection on the physical plane, of the subtle and super-conscious activities and the supreme bliss of the highest spiritual plane. Physical delights are only reflections of the bliss of Brahman. Kundalini Herself manifests in different ways when She ascends each plane. In the Muladhara, She is the gross, physical power expressed by all living beings and animals. In the higher stage known as Ajna chakra, She manifests as the subtle, mental, or psychic powers. Lastly, in the region of the crown lotus or the Sahasrara she manifests Herself as the Supreme Power and the highest bliss. At this stage the Kundalini contains within Herself all the lower planes in a concealed and potential state.

This very Kundalini Shakti is also equated to Shabda, the primal Logos, or the Word as God from which the universe has sprung (verse 2, stanza I). The Muladhara is the seat of the subtle sound which is called Para. It is causal, but motionless or unexpressed. It is the unmanifest state of the Kundalini Herself. When the Shabda begins to move upward, and remains in an undifferentiated condition, it is called Pashyanti, and has its region in the human body between the Muladhara and Manipura. When the Shabda reaches the region

between the stages of Manipura and the Anahata, the subtle Shabda attains a subtle Artha (meaning), and it takes a distinct name and form. Mind then comes into play as the cogniser and the cognised. At this stage the Shabda is called Madhyama. The Shabda then slowly moves upwards, and reaches the region above the heart. Then through the throat the Shabda becomes gross and is known as Vaikhari (speech in gross physical form). At this stage the Shabda or sound is heard by us. Thus the first three manifestations of the power of the Shabda-Brahman or the Word as God, are subtle and unheard. Only the fourth is gross and can be heard. The subtle stage of the Shabda is the inner thought-movements and constitutes the internal operations of the Chit-Shakti (the Power of Consciousness). In short, the subtle is the fundamental idea-power and projects subsequently as the uttered speech.

Recent discoveries of modern science prove that in this universe there is a static background behind every form of activity. The coiled-up or dormant and infinite Power of Kundalini, is the static background or source, from which all power, sound or energy evolves. Kundalini has both the static and kinetic aspect.

The final goal of this Kundalini-yoga is neither the attainment of miraculous powers nor worldly eminence, but the realisation that the individual soul is one with the Universal soul. The seeker then realises his absolute oneness with the entire universe.

This is also the goal of the idealistic Shaivism of Kashmir, which accepts the Advaita (monistic) philosophy of the Vedanta and takes the monistic dictum "I am He" as the goal of all spiritual seeking. This monistic and Shakta tradition of Kashmir, is beautifully illustrated in the great life of the woman saint of Kashmir, Lalleswari or Lalla Yogeshwari. Her own experiences in the breathing processes by

which the dormant power of Kundalini is awakened, and the internal "light" becomes visible, are described in her own words,

With every breath I bellowed,
Lo, the flame burst forth, I perceived the essence
the internal light I diffused out,
Caught him in darkness, and gripped him tight,
What acid of sorrow have I not drunk,
Countless my rounds of birth and death
Lo, nought but nectar in my cup,
Quaffed by the art of breath.

Her scorn of miracles which tempt a
yogi in this process of spiritual practice,
is, again, expressed in her poems,

Why cool the flames, Yogi ? Stay the stream ?
Why dost walk feet upward in the sky ?
Why milk a bullock ? Why magic dream ?
Why these base feats of the juggler try ?

And finally her realisation of the Absolute
as the Pure Consciousness when the world
appears as a dream, when neither Shiva
nor Shakti remains before the vision of the
seeker, is described in her inspired
utterance,

There nor even Shiva reigns supreme,
Nor his wedded Energy hath sway.
Only is Somewhat, like a dream,
There pursuing an elusive way.

YOUTH : TODAY AND TWENTY FIRST CENTURY—I

SANJAY MUKHERJI

Forecasting about youth can be based on two interrelated themes. The first is how a society develops, and the second is how the process of social development shapes the lives, thoughts and activities of youth. Organisation, developments and dissolution of a social order go on in a trend which is spiral and continued. History affirms it. Structure of young generations and the nature and direction of their changes with the passing of time within a particular social system are determined by some mutually reinforcing factors like demography, economics, and social psychology. All these trends run through the length and breadth of a society. Considerations of these factors are the main offsprings for perceiving the future.

Capitalist Countries:

Youths in capitalist countries, are living in affluence relatively than their counterparts in the other parts of the world. They

are well-informed about modern life in other societies, and about the world as a whole. This is due to a high level of education provided in these societies. But today many of them suffer from a feeling of social vacuum despite a remarkable advance in science and technology. Unemployment among them is increasing. Many of them are suffering from a nihilistic despair due to absence of an acceptable philosophical, spiritual, or pragmatic approach towards a truly meaningful development in their future lives. As a result, a mentality of opportunism and cynicism together with political pragmatism, is growing within the minds of these youngsters. The well-known Western thinker H. Marcuse writes, "The industrial society which makes technology and science its own goal is organised for the ever-more effective domination of man and nature.... Life is, as an end, qualitatively different from life as a means." Liberty is made into a powerful instrument of domination in these societies. As a

result, many among the youth are trying to be liberated from everything even from the promise of a comfortable or a rewarding home. In all the modern Euro-American countries where society has become, in the words of Herbert Marcuse, "one dimensional"¹, and intolerably repressive, new thoughts have arisen regarding status, attainment of personal aspiration, and values. Individual egoism in some of them has touched warning heights, resulting in desperate actions. Families are breaking up. Divorce rate is increasing. Child-free culture is cropping up. Sensual way of life has become almost normal. A Western writer terms it as the "Coming of Age on City Streets", and she writes, "Sex, drug, and poverty cross paths that lead from inner cities all across America."² Rise of non-traditional, colourful, and a little iconoclastic groups like hippies, skin-heads, and teddy-boys, suggest a lack of social adjustments on the part of these youth groups. The new technoculture tends to produce a feeling that human life is accidental, useless, and meaningless. Aggressive anti-social conduct of teenagers has become a problem in all countries which are heading towards what Alvin Toffler calls "the super-industrial civilisation". Juvenile delinquency, vandalism, and drug-addiction have become the headlines of many major dailies and other journals in Western countries today.

Alvin Toffler writes in his well-known book, *The Third Wave*, which is a critical enquiry into the present and future trends of today's super-industrial societies, "It is precisely the collapse of the industrial structure, its growing irrelevance in the face of the new technological, social, and politi-

cal realities, that gives today facile search for old answers, and to the pseudo-intellectual fads that pop up, flash and consume themselves at high speed."³

Socialist Countries:

Youths in socialist countries project a different picture. With a planned economic structure, youth-orientation is, more or less, a compulsory state-programme. Most of them are economically secured. "Komsomol", the latest youth organisation in U.S.S.R., has a multipurpose programme. So long it was teaching the younger generations to live, work, and struggle for the state with a Marxist-Leninist outlook. The youths did so long take part in the various developing schemes like industrialisation, collectivisation of agriculture, and in other socialistic schemes sponsored by the state. But problems slowly cropped up when their personal expectations and state-orientations came into clash. Though the Soviet youths are getting a fairly good education due to compulsory education upto the secondary level, they face problems in choosing their careers for the future. According to some Soviet scholars their political consciousness and social activities sometimes go ahead of other factors in life. But slowly the situation is changing. Many of them are today searching for higher values of life beyond a mere socioeconomic comfort, or the slogan, "greatest good of the greatest number". One among these seekers of higher values wrote to the authorities, "But what if I have not found myself? What if I don't yet know my calling? There are many like me. We get together in groups in the evenings and argue. But then, you adults also get together in groups. You talk about the meaning of money, while we talk about the meaning of life."

1. Marcuse H., *One Dimensional Man*, ARK edition, U.K., 1986 p. 37.

2. Hersch Patricia, "Coming of Age on City Streets", *Psychology Today*, (monthly), New York, U.S.A. Jan. 1988, p. 28

3. Toffler A., *The Third Wave*, William Marrow and Co, New York 1980, p. 327

Youths in the East-European countries are following more or less the same trend. East Germany, Poland and most of the other East-European countries are suffering from economic backwardness. Czechoslovakia is struggling to emerge from the doldrums of nineteen years of anti-reformist movements and an increasing economic pressure on the country. Yugoslov youths are facing many similar complex and politically sensitive issues. Hungarian youths are suffering economically. A high rate of alcoholism, divorce, suicide, abortion, and increasing cases of heart-attack are present in today's Hungarian society. In spite of all these difficulties, spreading of higher education among the youths of these countries has resulted in an increased political consciousness among the younger generation.

Youth in communist China is passing through a period of sharp transition. Since the beginning of this century China has passed through a number of revolutions like the Xinhai revolution, the cultural revolution of Mao Tse Tung, and the present, new politico-economic phase of the open-door economic and cultural policy of Deng. The over-all impact of the terrible process of purging, political eliminations, and destructions of many old monuments, and outright rejection of many old traditions, can only be properly estimated by historians of the future. But the wanton destructions of many important things of the ancient Chinese culture, and the untimely death of many young lives, which all happened during the cultural revolution, had a frustrating effect on many of the youths during those days. Many of them, in fact, are unable to forget that they were used as "tools". In Maoist China they were taught co-operation instead of competition. The slogan they were taught was "Serve the People". But collectivisation failed and ended in a fall in national productivity. However, the present policy of liberalisation

and westernisation which began since 1979 has brought new thoughts all over the Chinese society. The new open-door policy of decollectivisation, craze for Western technology and a liberal cultural policy, have created its new set of values. The sudden onrush of these new values has overwhelmed many of the younger generation. A recent survey conducted by the *Society Magazine* published from Beijing, reveals the fact that their values, and their attitude towards life, family, and society have changed. Only 12% of total respondents covered expressed that they should devote exclusively to society in contrast to 85.2% who give themselves and their family the first priority. In fact, a craze for individual success has become the new norm. At the same time, frequencies of juvenile crimes, robberies, and theft have reached such a warning height that the immediate authorities are expressing grave concern. Ideological trainings of the youth have become tales of the past. Recent survey of Beijing Middle school students reveals that 95% of the students have voted for Politics as their "least favourable course". Today's Chinese youths are suspicious of the words like "revolution", "class-struggle", "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the rest of the revolutionary jargons on which they have been fed since the triumph of the revolution. In fact, this phase of the Chinese history is China's passing phase from the ultra-leftist era to an ultra-rightist direction under the new leadership. The recent students' agitation in China in support of multiparty democracy is of great significance in this context. Two huge statues of Mao have been recently removed from the Beijing University campus, and his name is being removed from the school texts.

Non-socialist Third world countries:

Youths in the third world countries have an enormous variety of widely differing

concepts, ideologies, beliefs and traditions. But all of them are suffering from a set of common socio-economic problems like accumulated poverty, illiteracy, knotty unemployment, wide disparity between the rich and the poor, and inequality of distribution of national income. Most of the countries of the third world have an immense debt which is increasing steadily. Political instability is another common factor in the life of these countries. Most of them have recently been freed from long years of colonial exploitation, and many are still being exploited.

Since the Second World War, poverty and insecurity of unemployment combined with accelerated population growth are fast spreading in these countries. Societies of the third world countries are traditional. Widespread illiteracy makes the youth groups superstitious in many areas of their everyday living. They are loyal to their family solidarity and prefer to live in an extended family. The spirit of independent living among the youth varies from country to country.

Due to introduction of modernisation and market economy in some of these agrarian countries, youths, especially African youths, are facing complex problems. Some governments in these countries have tried to solve their unemployment problems by strengthening their educational policies, but with little success. Many of these youths are migrating to more advanced countries in search of better prospects, even by breaking social and traditional ties.

The brain-drain of the more intelligent youths of these countries to capitalist countries, is a common phenomenon. Boubaker Ly in his book, *African Youth Between Tradition and Modernity Prospect*, writes that many governments are not sure how to bring up their children for the modern times, without its concomitant vices. Youths in these countries revolt more than those of other countries. Often they lead agitations against the socio-political order in different ways and on different issues. In countries where political liberty has already been gained, they mostly work for the economic and social liberation of the exploited labour classes both in the agricultural and industrial areas. In those countries where colonial exploitation still goes on, they struggle for the national liberation movement.

Youths in Latin-American countries are today perhaps the most politically active and powerful group in the world. The success of the famous "Grito Insurreccional de Corboda" (rebel cry of Corboda) movement for university reform, democratised the academic and educational structures and developed strong political consciousness among the youth in the continent. In some of these countries dictatorial governments are trying to suppress all youth movements. Sometimes military governments are coming with a heavy hand on the members of the youth groups. They are now in search of a new form of society.

(To be continued)

SEVAPRATISHTHAN : A MODERN TEMPLE FOR AILING GODS

SWAMI TATTWABODHANANDA

In the year 1926 Swami Dayananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, was preaching the message of Vedanta in U.S.A. While touring from place to place, the Swami was deeply impressed by the excellent standard of medical and nursing care extended to the expectant mothers in America. Fully appreciative of these services offered to the mothers in America, he began to think of the sad plight of such mothers in his home-country, and how to make available such services to women in India. With that aim in view he returned to India in 1931.

In July 1932, the Swami's vision started taking a concrete shape when a small Maternity-cum-Child-Welfare centre was started in a rented house in Bakulbagan, Calcutta. He named it Shishumangal Pratishthan. Single-handed, the Swami tilled the ground and planted the seed. Then he began to rear it up with all his love and dedication so that it could grow up into a mighty tree for serving many more in the future.

For safeguarding the health of the newborn babies the Shishumangal started clinics, and experts' services were made available to the expectant mothers during home-confinements. They were also provided with methodical care after the child-birth. For assuring post-natal care, the Shishumangal started training women in midwifery and child-care.

Within a short period the institution drew the attention of the public. National leaders like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and many other distinguished persons visited the hospital in course of time and commended its quality of service.

In June 1939, the Shishumangal was shifted

to its present site at Sarat Bose Road, with 50 beds for mothers and 50 beds for babies. In 1950 the number of beds rose to 150.

Before the completion of 25 years of its commendable service to the people, in 1956, the Shishumangal got converted into a General Hospital and was given a new name: The Seva Pratishthan. Addition of beds and departments followed in phases, contributing to the steady progress it has made today. Labour of love of the founder Swami Dayananda and his band of dedicated workers, and the hardships they endured, speak silently through every nook and corner of the Seva Pratishthan. Next to him came Swami Gahanananda, who assisted Swami Dayananda quite ably and subsequently succeeded him.

Today in July, 1988, on the 57th year, the Seva Pratishthan remains the largest medical centre of the Ramakrishna Mission. With a bed-strength of only seven in the beginning, the Seva Pratishthan went on adding to its number of beds over the years in phases. The number of beds at present is 550 (besides 120 beds for new-born babies) of which a little more than one-fifth is maintained exclusively for free treatment of poor patients. It is now catering to 4.2 lakhs (approx) of sick people annually.

A panoramic view of the present:

A brief cross-sectional analysis of the Pratishthan's major activities can be grouped under four heads: Viz., (1) The General Hospital, (2) The School of Nursing, (3) The Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences, and (4) The Community Health Service.

(1) *The General Hospital*: Its 11 indoor and 18 outdoor departments served about

18,000 and 4 lakhs of patients respectively last year. The following are the departments: (1) Medicine, (2) General Surgery (3) Obstetrics & Gynaecology (4) Orthopaedics (7) Urology (8) Ophthalmology (9) Otorhinolaryngology (10) Dermatology (11) Dentistry and Maxillo-facial Surgery.

It has also special clinics for Anaesthesiology, Heart, Diabetes, Neurology, Nephrology, Psychiatry, Retinee, Gastroenterology, Hearing and Speech Therapy, Physiotherapy, Postpartum (Family Welfare) Unit, Club-Foot, Glaucoma, Contact Lens, Immunization and 'Well baby Clinic'.

The special needs of the departments are met by the department of Radiology and Radio-therapy, Blood Bank, Pathology, Biochemistry, Human Genetics and Infusion production. A Brain-Scanning Unit has been installed recently.

All the departments are well equipped. Worth mentioning are the hospital's nine air-conditioned operation theatres, seven X-ray Plants, a deep X-ray unit, two Image Intensifiers, Eight Cardiac Monitors, two Dialysers, five ECG machines, four Temporary Pace-makers, two Surgical Microscopes, one each EMG and EEG machine. It also has an upto-date Autoclave and Steam-cum-Electrically operated Laundry Units. The Seva Pratishthan maintains its own Medical-cum-Surgical Stores, Dispensary for supply of medicines and other items to the outdoor and indoor patients. The indoor patients are provided with usual diet from the Pratishthan's General Kitchen.

(2) *The School of Nursing*: Recognized in 1944 by the state Nursing Council and now acclaimed as one of the best schools in the State, the school has the capacity to train about 300 students in an atmosphere in tune with India's cultural tradition.

It offers the General Nursing-cum-midwifery course. Auxilliary Nursing Midwifery

course was also conducted from 1956 to 1988. During training, utmost care is taken to ensure all round development—physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual—of the trainees.

(3) *The Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences*

Organised in 1963, affiliated to the Calcutta University and recognised by the Medical council of India, the Institute conducts rotatory training of fresh medical graduates for post-graduate diploma as well as degree courses. Research work in different fields is also done. The specialists working on different projects have published a good number of papers based on work in this hospital. A medical biannual journal of its own has been brought out since January 1985.

(4) *The Community Health Services*:

This scheme is a part of the nurses' training course. The trainee nurses, under the guidance of the trained staff, serve people in an urban area with a population of about 50,000 close to the Pratishthan. Similarly it serves a rural area (about 40Km. from the hospital) with a population of over 21,000.

Besides, the Mobile Medical unit visits an area of 10 Villages and 12 semi-urban localities, twice a week providing treatment to about 400 patients daily. The critically ill patients of those areas are brought to this hospital for treatment as and when necessary. At Sarisha (Dt. South 24 parganas) a school Health programme, covering 3,000 students is also implemented. A mother craft class is also held there once a week.

Face of the Future:

The growing need of the Pratishthan's services is being felt more keenly day by day. To meet the increasing demands of the public and render more efficient service to the patients, some essential develop-

mental projects have been taken up. These can be classified into two broad divisions:

First: A Six-storeyed building for the Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences with necessary ancilliary units. This will include (1) Class Rooms, (2) Library, (3) Museum, (4) Seminar Hall, (5) Laboratories, (6) Operation Theatres (7) Research Beds (8) Medical Records Dept. It will also provide accommodation for (1) Outdoor clinics, (2) an Administrative Wing (3) A hostel for Research Scholars.

Second:

- (1) A Paediatric Hospital for 150 beds.
- (2) An Emergency Ward of 20 beds.
- (3) An Isolation Ward of 10 beds.
- (4) A Post-operative Ward of 10 beds.
- (5) A Plastic Surgery-cum-Burn Unit of 15 beds.
- (6) A Physiotherapy Department.
- (7) A building for the School of Nursing with a Playground and staff quarters.

The total estimated cost of both the projects will be about Rs. 7 crores. Of the first project, first three floors and parts of the fourth are already completed. The construction of the remaining two floors and the second project are awaiting for want of funds.

Appreciating the problems due to dearth of space, the West Bengal Government has made possible the acquisition of a few adjacent plots. It is obviously not possible either to expand the existing department or to create new units contemplated under the developmental plan, until and unless all the remaining plots are acquired.

The immediate need, however, is to find funds for replacing many of the medical equipments which were installed many years ago, and which have become worn-out. An estimated Rs. 30 lakhs will be required to replace some equipments, as well as to go in for new equipments such as various endoscopes.

The development of the Seva Pratishthan into a large and modern well-equipped medical centre of treatment and research, and its maintenance, have been possible because of the generous help and active cooperation and sympathy, not only of the Corporation of Calcutta, the State and the Central Governments, but also of numerous friends and benefactors, who have donated sums, large and small, and of countless other friends who have helped it in various ways.

However, with the phenomenal increase in the cost of all goods and services during the last few years and with the steady increase in the number of patients receiving free and concessional treatment, the gap between income and expenditure has been widening.

Total annual revenue and capital expenditure has soared to Rs. 2 crores. Only 70 per cent of the revenue income of Rs. 160 lakhs is derived by way of fees and charges, and interest income from permanent funds, investments, etc.

For the rest and for its various developmental projects, the Pratishthan depends entirely on the help and support from the public, various organisations, and the Government. Many have come forward to help.

The oft-repeated mantras of Swami Vivekananda, "Work is worship", "All work is sacred", have inspired many to whom the Seva Pratishthan is a temple for serving God in the ailing. In their eyes, the service offered by everyone in this hospital's team of workers, from the specialist down to the sweeper, is nothing but a holy offering to the Lord. Modern India badly needs such service-minded people, who will carry the legacy of service to God in humanity, as preached and practised by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, for their own betterment and that of the world at large.

YOGIN-MA

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Yogin-ma's life is a glowing example of the ancient Indian ideal of womanhood and austerity. She combined in her personality great poise and sweetness with a spirit of service and rare spiritual wisdom. She was one of Sri Ramakrishna's prominent women disciples. Once the Master said about her: "She is a gopi, perfected by God's grace."

Yogindra Mohini Mittra, or Yogin-ma for short, was born on January 16, 1851, at Baghbazar, in North Calcutta. Her family's home was very close to that of Balaram Bose, a householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Prasanna Kumar Mittra, Yogin-ma's father, was a well-known physician and specialist in midwifery. Besides his regular practice, he also lectured at the Calcutta Medical College on that subject. Prasanna was quite wealthy and owned a large house with a garden, on one side of which there was a Shiva temple. Yogin-ma was his second daughter by his second marriage.

When Yogin-ma was seven she was married to Ambika Charan Biswas, who was an adopted son of a rich and prominent family of Khardah, a village twelve miles north of Calcutta. The Biswas family was noted for its piety and philanthropy, and some of its members were well versed in Tantric rites. One of their ancestors, Prankrishna Biswas, had compiled the *Prantoshini Tantra*, a famous treatise on Tantra scriptures.

Yogin-ma's parents were very happy that their daughter had been married into a pious and wealthy family. Although child marriage was then the custom of society, Yogin-ma did not go to live with her husband at the time of their marriage. Only

after she had grown up did she go with great hope and expectation to Khardah to join Ambika Charan. But to her dismay she very soon discovered that this rich young man was a drunkard and libertine. Although Ambika Charan had inherited much property and wealth from his father, he squandered it in a very short time. He was so extravagant that one day he asked a servant to light the tobacco in his hubble-bubble with five hundred rupees in bills. He soon became virtually a beggar. Yogin-ma lived with him for a few years and tried in vain to change his life. She bore him one daughter named Ganu, and a son, who lived only six months. But patience has its limits. Disgusted with her husband's immoral life, she at last severed her relationship with him and returned to her parental home, bringing with her their daughter. By then Yogin-ma's father had died, but her mother welcomed them warmly. When Ganu grew up Yogin-ma arranged her marriage.

The romantic picture of a peaceful, happy, married life had been shattered, and Yogin-ma felt a great void in her mind. Tormented now by anxiety and restlessness, she agonized over how she would spend the rest of her life. Just when she was passing through this mental storm, divine grace opened up a new life for her.

In 1882, Yogin-ma met Shri Ramakrishna for the first time at Balaram Bose's house. As she said in her memoirs: "Balaram Babu was related to me, being my husband's maternal uncle. One day Shri Ramakrishna came to his house and we went to see him. It was the first time I saw him. The master was standing at one side

of the hall in deep samadhi. He had no outer consciousness. Since no one dared touch him, people bowed down to him from a distance. We also did the same. At that time I had no idea what samadhi was. I at first thought that he was a drunken devotee of Kali. I could not understand the Master at my first meeting. Moreover, it immediately came to my mind that my married life had been ruined by a drunken husband, and again should I undo my spiritual life through the influence of this seemingly drunken person? But gradually I became acquainted with the master."

Balaram would often go to Dakshineswar by boat and would invite other devotees to go along with him. Yogin-ma went with him a few times, and then she started to visit the Master with some other devotees. In her memoirs she said: "Gradually I began to feel an attraction for the Master. Just the thought of visiting him would make my mind dance with joy. On the day that I planned to go there I would get up early and finish my household duties as quickly as possible. My longing to see him knew no bounds. After arriving at his room I would forget everything, sitting in his presence. The Master used to experience samadhi off and on, and at that time we would look at his face with wonder. He was so compassionate! Whenever I brought him some ordinary preparations he would relish them like a young boy, saying joyfully, 'Very tasty! Delicious!' And always at the time of our departure he would say, 'Come back again.'

"When I returned home after my visit with the Master, I would spend the whole week in an intoxicated mood. This established a strong relationship. I cannot express the joy I felt. Even while I was engaged in cooking or other household activities, my mind was with the Master. After some days, When I would feel my intoxication diminishing, my mind would again long to see him."

Yogin-ma had been initiated into a Devi mantram (a name of the Divine Mother) by her husband's family guru, and she used to repeat it twice daily. When Shri Ramakrishna heard about it he confirmed her mantram and told her to continue repeating it. Then he said to her: "Look, your Chosen Deity is in this place (Pointing to his body). If you think of me, that will bring recollectedness of your Chosen Deity." Later, whenever Yogin-ma sat for meditation, she would feel the Master's presence. Shri Ramakrishna also taught her how to practise japam, showing how the four fingers of the right hand must be kept tightly together. "The result of japam goes away," said the Master, "If there is any gap between the fingers." Another time he said, "In this Kali Yuga a Gopala mantram (a name of Baby Krishna) or a Kali mantram produces quick results."

After some time Yogin-ma also met Holy Mother, and the two were immediately drawn to one another. They were about the same age. Holy Mother once said, "Yogin is my Jaya (an attendant of the goddess Durga)—my friend, companion, and attendant." Yogin-ma described her relation with Holy Mother at Dakshineswar: "Whenever I went there Holy Mother would take me into her confidence, tell me her secrets, and seek my counsel. I used to visit Dakshineswar every seven or eight days, sometimes spending the night there. Then Holy Mother would not let me sleep anywhere else, but would ask me to sleep in her room at the nahabat (music tower)."

"Some time after my first visit Holy Mother left for her country home. I stood on the bank of the Ganga and watched her departure, waiting until the boat was no longer visible. After that I returned to the nahabat and wept bitterly. The Master, on his way back from the panchavati, noticed me crying, and after returning to his room he sent for me. 'Her leaving caused a great deal of pain for you', he said tenderly.

He then began to console me by recounting the marvellous spiritual experiences he had during his days of Tantric sadhana. When Holy Mother returned after about a year and a half, he told her: 'That girl with nice large eyes, who comes here frequently, loves you very much. She wept a lot at the nahabat when you left for home.' Mother replied: 'Yes, I know her very well. Her name is Yogin.'

Whenever Yogin-ma came to Dakshineswar she would serve the Master and Holy Mother. Holy Mother was so fond of the way that Yogin-ma braided her hair that she would not undo it even at the time of taking her bath, but would wait for yogin-ma to come again so that she could rebraid it. Holy Mother was extremely shy and would not visit or talk to the Master publicly.

One day she said to Yogin-ma: "All of you have attained *Bhava samadhi*, but nothing has happened to me. Would you tell the Master about it?" Yogin-ma did as she was told, but when the Master heard what she had to say, he remained silent. Yogin-ma returned to Holy Mother and found her seated on her *asana* (prayer carpet), performing worship. She was in an ecstatic mood. One moment she was laughing, another moment she was crying, and again another moment she was sitting motionless. Yogin-ma was surprised to see her in ecstasy. When Holy Mother came down to the normal plane of consciousness, Yogin-ma asked her, "You complained that you do not experience samadhi, but what is all this?" Holy Mother smiled.

Yogin-ma's association with the God-intoxicated lives of Shri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother created a spiritual hunger in her mind. She now diverted most of her energy to spiritual pursuits, spending the greater part of her day in worship, study, japam, and meditation. Although the Master discouraged her from reading too many books, he did suggest that she study

the devotional scriptures. She had had very little education when she was young, but she now began to read every afternoon the main puranas, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, some Tantric scripture, or the life of Chaitanya.

Once Yogin-ma was passing through a dry period and decided to complain about it to Shri Ramakrishna. She left for Dakshineswar on foot very early in the morning, but as soon as she saw the Master she forgot everything. After a little while she went to the garden, picked some flowers, and carried them in the corner of her cloth. Shri Ramakrishna was at that time standing on the northern verandah of his room and saw Yogin-ma coming with something. He asked her, "What are you carrying?"

Yogin-ma showed him the flowers and then bowed down and offered them at his feet. Immediately the Master went into an ecstatic mood and blessed her, touching his foot to her head.

Once Yogin-ma said: "Several times I noticed that whenever a question arose in my mind, someone else would ask the Master the same question. Thus, in answering that person's question, the Master would remove the doubts in my mind also. He was all-knowing."

Yogin-ma one day brought her aged mother and her daughter to the Master. They were both very happy to hear his inspiring words. Through Yogin-ma's influence her husband, Ambika Charan, also began trying to change his way of life and to associate with holy people. On November 15, 1882, Balaram brought Ambika Charan to his house to meet Shri Ramakrishna and be blessed by him. But the Master knew how he had ill-treated his wife, and after Ambika Charan had left he said: "He is an unfortunate wretch. A householder has his duties to discharge, his debts to pay: his debt to the gods, his debt to his ancestors, his debt to the rishis, and his debt to his wife and children. If a wife is chaste, then

her husband should support her ; he should also bring up their children until they are of age."

Yogin-ma did not give up, however. She persuaded her husband to associate with the Master, so he met Shri Ramakrishna again, this time at Dakshineswar. This meeting seemed to make a deep impression on him. Unfortunately, not long after this Ambika Charan was bitten by a dog and became bedridden with a fever. When Shri Ramakrishna heard about it he told Yogin-ma to take care of him. He said that as a wife she had a duty towards her husband, even if he had been immoral. Accordingly, Yogin-ma brought her husband to her parental home during his last days and carefully nursed him until his death.

Pleased with Yogin-ma's devotion, Shri Ramakrishna visited her home on July 28, 1885, along with a few devotees. Some musicians entertained them in her parlour, and then the Master was asked to go to Yogin-ma's room in the inner apartment for some refreshments. Golap-ma, Yogin-ma's neighbour, said to Shri Ramakrishna: "Ganu's mother (Yogin-ma) requests you to bless the room with the dust of your feet. Then the room will be turned into Banares, and anyone dying in it will have no trouble hereafter."

In the middle of 1885, Yogin-ma and a few other women devotees went by boat with the Master to attend a Vaishnava festival at Panihati, a few miles north of Calcutta. They watched the Master as he sang and danced among the huge crowd. A few days later they again enjoyed his holy company during the Jagannath Car Festival at Balaram Bose's house. The Master spent that night at Balaram's house, and the next morning he returned to Dakshineswar. Before he left, the women devotees saluted him and bade him farewell, but Yogin-ma, feeling an irresistible attraction for the Master, followed him. Seeing her behind him, the Master said in an ecstatic

mood, "Blissful Mother ; Blissful Mother!," and saluted her. Yogin-ma bowed down to him. Then the Master said to her, "Why don't you come, O Mother, why don't you come with me?"

While the Master went to the boat that had been hired for him, Yogin-ma hurried back to Balaram's house and informed Balaram's wife that she was going to Dakshineswar with the Master. Another woman asked to accompany her, and they both ran through the street so they could reach earlier. On the way to Dakshineswar, Yogin-ma said to the Master, "I want to call on God more and put my mind wholly on Him but it is hard to control the mind. What shall I do?" Shri Ramakrishna replied in a sweet voice, "Why don't you surrender to Him? Be like a cast-off leaf in a gale. Do you know what that is like? A cast-off leaf lies on the ground and flies away as the wind carries it. Similarly, one should depend on God. Let the mind move as the power of divine consciousness moves it. That's all."

One day at Dakshineswar, Yogin-ma and her companion went to the nahabat to see Holy Mother, and the Master went to bow down to the Divine Mother in the temple. After returning to his room he learned from Holy Mother that there were no vegetables for their meal. The Master asked Yogin-ma and the other woman, "Could you go to the Market?" They immediately agreed. At that time in India aristocratic women did not go out for shopping. If they went anywhere they would be carried in a palanquin or driven in a carriage, their faces covered by a veil. But because Shri Ramakrishna had asked them, they walked to the market and bought some vegetables, which Holy Mother cooked for the Master and the devotees. In the evening Yogin-ma and her companion returned home on foot. Shri Ramakrishna used to say, "A person cannot be perfect as long as he is subject to shame, hatred,

and fear." In this way the Master freed his women devotees from such feelings.

Yogin-ma associated very closely with the Master, and one day she talked about the Master's relationship with the women devotees: "Sometimes when I was with him, I would feel that he was not a man but one of us (women). Although it is natural for us to feel a certain shyness before men, we had no such feeling in the Master's presence. If perchance that feeling would arise, it would disappear immediately, and we would be free to open our hearts to him. We used to speak to him about very intimate things without any scruple or hesitation. And how kind, how affectionate, the Master was to us! When strangers, casually reading the life of Shri Ramakrishna, jump to the conclusion that he did not like women, we simply laugh."

Once Yogin-ma asked the Master, "What will happen to us?" "What more do you want?", replied Shri Ramakrishna. "You have seen me, fed me, and served me. What else do you need? Don't worry. The thousand-petalled lotus of your seventh plane (sahasrara) will bloom at the time of your death." He further said, "At the devotees' last moment I shall have to appear before them. Otherwise, how will they get liberation?"

After practising spiritual disciplines for some time according to the Master's instructions, she decided that Calcutta was not a suitable place for such practices. The sacred atmosphere of Vrindaban, she thought, would be better. Shri Ramakrishna was then staying at the Cossipore garden house for his cancer treatment. When Yogin-ma asked his permission to go to Vrindaban he readily agreed, but he asked her if she had talked to Holy Mother about it. Holy Mother was present then and said, "Whatever was to be said has been said by you already. What is there to add?" Nevertheless, the Master said to Yogin-ma, "My dear child, go, after obtaining her

consent. You will get everything."

The next day Yogin-ma came back to Cossipore to take leave of the Master and Holy Mother. She and Golap-ma had brought some food for Shri Ramakrishna, but since there were some young boy disciples in his room they waited downstairs. When the Master heard that they were there, he sent for them and told them that those boys were like his sons. Shri Ramakrishna blessed them, touching their heads, and then asked them to go to Holy Mother. Yogin-ma waited, however, and Swami Brahmananda said to the Master, "She always salutes you by placing her head on your feet, so she is waiting." Immediately the Master, out of compassion, took his feet from underneath the cover of his bed, and Yogin-ma bowed down as she used to. This was her last meeting with him. Yogin-ma then went to bow down to Holy Mother. As a blessing, Holy Mother put her hand on Yogin-ma's head and silently repeated her mantram, counting it on her fingers.

When Shri Ramakrishna passed away in August 1886, Yogin-ma was staying at Kala Babu's Kunja, a retreat house in Vrindaban, belonging to Balaram's family. Hearing of the Master's death, she was overwhelmed with grief for not having seen him again. Holy Mother joined her there soon after. Yogin-ma said, "The moment Holy Mother saw me she hugged me and began to shed profuse tears over her separation from the Master. Both of us became so disconsolate that our days passed in lamentation, and we could hardly attend to our daily needs. One night the Master appeared to us in a vision and said, 'Why are you crying so much? Here I am. Where have I gone? It is just a change from one room to another, isn't that so?' These words reassured us and lessened the intensity of our grief to a considerable extent."

Yogin-ma spent most of her time at Vrindaban in japam and meditation. One evening, while meditating at Lala Babu's

temple, she became so absorbed that she went into samadhi. Long after the evening service was over, she still sat there motionless like a statue. The temple attendants tried to bring her back to normal consciousness, since it was time to close the temple gate, but all their efforts were in vain. In the meantime Holy Mother sent Swami Yogananda to find Yogin-ma. Since he knew where she usually went for meditation, he came with a lantern to that temple and found her in samadhi. He began to repeat the Master's name in her ear, and after some time she came down from her exalted state. Later Yogin-ma described her experience, "I was then in such a high spiritual mood that I even forgot whether the world existed or not." Holy mother once said that in Vrindaban Yogin-ma would become so absorbed in meditation that she would not notice when flies sat on her eyes and caused sores in them.

After spending a few months with Holy Mother in Vrindaban, Yogin-ma returned Calcutta to look after her aged mother. In her room, which had been sanctified by Shri Ramakrishna, she installed a shrine with an image of Baby Krishna. The four walls of the room were full of pictures of gods, goddesses, and saints. She would perform ritualistic worship every day with great devotion, as a result of which she had many divine visions. Later she spoke of them. "Once I was in such a high spiritual attitude," she said, "that wherever I turned my eyes, I would see my Ishta (Chosen Deity). That state lasted for three days."

The disciples of Shri Ramakrishna had great love and regard for Yogin-ma. In 1896, Swami Vivekananda wrote from America to his brother disciples to start a convent for women with the help of Yogin-ma, Gauri-ma, and other women disciples of the Master. After Swamiji returned to India, he learned one day that Yogin-ma had experienced samadhi in her Calcutta

residence. He said to her: "Yogin-ma, you will pass away in samadhi. Once a person experiences samadhi, the memory of it is revived at the time of death."

Yogin-ma looked on the monastic disciples as her own children, and they in turn were very free with her. One day Swamiji saw her in Calcutta and said: "I want to have lunch with you. Please cook a curry for me." On another occasion he said. "Today is my birthday. Please feed me well. Prepare some rice pudding for me."

In 1893, Holy Mother and Yogin-ma performed the *Panchatapa*, the austerity of five fires, at Nilambar Babu's garden house near what is now Belur Math. According to the custom, one sits and repeats one's mantram from sunrise to sunset surrounded by four blazing fires, which are placed six feet apart. The fifth fire is the scorching sun above. They practised this austerity for seven consecutive days.

One winter Yogin-ma lived on the bank of the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna at Allahabad and observed *Kalpa-vasa*, a spiritual vow. On another occasion she gave up drinking water for six months, taking milk instead. Her whole life was full of fasts and vigils.

Although Yogin-ma apparently was a householder, actually she was a nun. On November 20, 1900, she was initiated along with Swami Saradananda into *Purna-abhisheka*, a special Tantric rite, by Ishwar Chandra Chakrabarty. She learned from him the secrets of Tantric sadhana. Later, at Puri, she was initiated into Vedic sannyasa by Swami Saradananda in the presence of Swami Premananda. She was too modest to make a show of her renunciation, however, and wore the ochre cloth only at the time of worship. At other times she wore the usual white cloth.

Yogin-ma had a deep respect for the monastic ideal. One day Swami Saradananda was dictating some letters to a young monk in his room when Yogin-ma entered.

Her foot accidentally touched the monk's cloth, and she immediately put her hands together and saluted him. The monk said "The touch of your foot is a blessing, Yogin-ma. Please don't feel embarrassed." Yogin-ma replied: "You are a monk. Your ochre robe is a symbol of renunciation. It is this renunciation that made Sri Ramakrishna great, and you are following in his footsteps. A little cobra is as poisonous as a big cobra."

Holy Mother used to tell the women devotees, "Yogin and Golap have practised so much spiritual discipline. It will do you good to talk about it amongst yourselves."

An American devotee, Sister Devamata, also gave her reminiscences of Yogin-ma:

Yogin-ma always seemed to me one of the noblest of Shri Ramakrishna's disciples. She did not abandon her householder life, but no nun in a cloister was more rigid in her spiritual observance than she. Her householder life was lived with her aging mother in a modest home within walking distance of Holy Mother's quarters. She was punctiliously faithful in fulfilling her duty to her mother.

Her day was too well organized to permit of conflict. She rose before night had lifted and at four went for her bath in the Ganga. She never failed. Sometimes when she was not well Swami Saradananda would remonstrate with her and beg her to consider her health, but she remained firm. The early bath in the Ganga, with its prayer and sacred chanting was a religious duty and should not be put aside.

The hour of prayer in that upper chamber where the shrine was, counted among the most precious in the day for me. Yogin-ma and I were alone—she before the altar, I beside an inner window opening on the court. Holy Mother came and went. Others entered the room. It was all essentially informal, but Yogin-ma's thought remained fixed on the Puja.

Yogin-ma was most loving to me always. It troubled her apparently that I was born in America instead of India. Often she would say to me "Devamata, I wonder why Thakur sent you so far away to be born. You belong here. You are one of us."

Yogin-ma had two images of baby Krishna, which she served and worshipped

with much love and affection. "One day", she said, "while meditating at the time of worship, I saw two incomparably handsome boys. They came, smiling and hugging me and stroking my back, and said, 'Do you know who we are?' I replied 'Yes, I know you quite well. You are the heroic Balarama, and you are Shri Krishna.' The younger one (Krishna) then said, 'you won't remember us.' 'Why?' 'No, You won't on account of them' and he pointed to my grandchildren." Soon after, his words were fulfilled. Yogin-ma became very much preoccupied with her grandsons after her daughter's death, and her mind came down to the normal plane from that high spiritual mood.

Yogin-ma's daughter, Ganu, passed away in 1909 at Varanasi. Ganu's husband had died three years earlier in 1906, and some of their children died while still young. But with Swami Saradananda's help, Yogin-ma raised three orphan grandsons, one of whom eventually became a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

She visited almost all of the important holy places of India, from Kedarnath and Badrinath in the North to Kanyakumari in the South, from Dwaraka in the West to Kamakhya in the East. Wherever she went she would give a little money to the poor; she never refused anyone. On Yogin-ma's visits to Jayrambati or Kamarpukur, the birthplaces of Holy Mother and Shri Ramakrishna, she would give some money to their relatives. Even in Calcutta, if any beggars came to the Udbodhan Office, Yogin-ma always gave them something. At this Golap-ma would say, "Beggars who come to us demand pice and won't go without getting it. Yogin is at the root of all this."

In 1909, Swami Saradananda started to write *Shri Shri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga* (*Shri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*), and he asked Yogin-ma to give him her reminiscences of the Master. Accordingly, she re-

counted all the incidents that she knew about. She also greatly helped Sister Nivedita in her *Cradle Tales of Hinduism*, as Nivedita acknowledged in the introduction. Yogin-ma had a wonderful memory and could faithfully relate stories from the Puranas, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Chaitanya Charitamrita*.

Although Yogin-ma was an intimate companion of Holy Mother, she at one time doubted her divinity. She said to herself, "Shri Ramakrishna was the embodiment of renunciation, and Mother is engrossed in the world, preoccupied day and night with the thought of her brothers, sisters-in-law, nephews, and nieces." Soon after this she was one day seated on the bank of the Ganga, meditating, when Shri Ramakrishna appeared to her in a vision and said, "Do you see what is being carried by the water of the Ganga?" Yogin-ma looked and saw the corpse of a newborn baby. She also saw many people offering worship to Mother Ganga. The Master then said: "Can anything make the Ganga impure? Regard her (Holy Mother) in the same way. Never doubt her. Remember, she is not different from this (meaning himself)." Yogin-ma immediately rushed to Holy Mother and, after telling her the whole story, apologized. Holy Mother smiled and consoled her.

Holy Mother's passing away in 1920 created a tremendous void in Yogin-ma's mind. Yogin-ma longed to join her and the Master.

Then in 1922 Swamis Brahmananda and Turiyananda passed away, bringing Yogin-ma more grief. But in spite of her failing health, she went with Swami Saradananda in 1923 to Jayrambati for the dedication of Holy Mother's temple on the site of her birthplace.

During the last two years of Yogin-ma's life she suffered from diabetes. She would often go into bhava Samadhi, sweetly uttering the words, "Ha Gopala! Ha Gopala!" For two or three days before she passed away, she lay speechless and refused to take even a little liquid. Swami Saradananda asked the doctor who was attending on her to examine her to see if she was in a coma, as is common when there is diabetes. The doctor checked carefully, but could not find any symptoms of coma. The Swami was then assured that the Master's words had come true—that Yogin-ma would give up her body in a state of jnana, that is, she would merge into Brahman.

On Wednesday, June 4, 1924, at 10:25 p.m., when all the activities of the monastery were over, Yogin-ma passed away at the Udbodhan house, next to the room where Holy Mother had lived. Swami Saradananda sat near her head at the time of her death and repeated Shri Ramakrishna's name, while a monk recited from the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Yogin-ma's body was then cremated on the bank of the Ganga according to the Hindu custom, with the chanting of Vedic mantrams.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY: By Swami Lokeswarananda. Published by Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700 029. Pp. 300. Rs. 15.

Practical Spirituality is a collection of editorials which Swami Lokeswaranandaji wrote for *The Bulletin* of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of culture, Calcutta. The book is symbolic of the global ideas of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Vedanta which the Swami is now disseminating as the head of the prestigious institute.

This book of 258 pages contains 127 essays, each only of two pages. The topics cover a wide variety of subjects like 'Self-criticism', 'Beware of the Great', 'The mess called education', 'How to commit suicide', 'Jesus Christ', 'Sri Ramakrishna', 'Holy Mother', 'Looking for an excuse', 'Arnold Toynbee', 'Poverty and Crime', 'Self vs self', 'The price of being a mahatma', 'Body filled and vacant mind', 'Beware of Praise', 'Politics with religion or without', etc.

Each subject is exposed with a rare simplicity and clarity which can come of the pen of an individual who has lived a life based on these values. Individuals who, in the midst of the present day materialistic life, seek to live a purposeful life based on these values will find direct and clear suggestions for such a living. Religion is basically simple. We build round it barriers of philosophical jargons, theological myths, and metaphysical concepts. This book shows from a simple commonsense point of view how spiritual values can be applied always in practice as an anodyne to the malaise of modern man.

Diagnosing this contemporary malaise with luminous clarity, the Swami says: 'Man is an alien to himself in the present age. He finds chaos within and chaos without, he has lost his sense of direction, he does not know where he is heading.

He achieved much, but he finds what he has achieved can very well be his doom. He wants to love and be loved, but something has gone wrong somewhere that instead of loving and being loved, he hates and is hated.'

If what has gone wrong, as the Swami notes, is clear, we have to recover the holistic awareness, the integral rhythms of practical living so that economic, social and political questions are not dissociated from ethical and spiritual quest.

Explicating his inclusive vision the Swami rightly says: 'even the most trivial thing that you do should be treated as an act of worship, as a service rendered to God with humility and reverence.' This involves, in turn, 'accepting every system, every institution, as a phenomenon of life which, despite its bizarreness, expresses the great mystery which man represents.'

The highest expression, the unifying focus, of this 'great mystery' is spirituality but this is no quietistic, static piety but dynamic resilient, *pragmatic* spirituality. While it involves negation of 'partial views' and the realization that the 'source of joy is within yourself, that you are by nature free, full and self-sufficient', it is 'commitment, commitment to the principles of human conduct. It is a justification for self-discipline, for the practice of compassion, goodness and high morality.' It is, in essence, *practical* spirituality.

The basic paradigms of this practical spirituality, as the Swami rightly says, are character and its ally: self-mastery. In his sense all meditative spiritual techniques are 'character formation techniques' and prayer itself constitutes the 'concentrated use of all the faculties that man possesses.' Not to develop these faculties is 'the least conspicuous because not so violent way of committing suicide.'

The author says that it is the duty of

society to protect the individual 'from evil', and educate and guide him so that he realizes the final aim of life: that 'he is a true child of God.'

But, then, character and self-discipline have to be tested in the crucible of interpersonal relations determined in our century largely by political forces. With disarming candour the author says that for political leaders 'the essential requisite is... to have a character that will command respect from all including those who disagree with him', and 'political astuteness' is only 'an additional qualification.' Indeed, political figures aspiring for 'world leadership' should 'have to have something of the moral stature that characterized Buddha and Christ.'

The quintessential conviction—the contention—of the book is that spirituality is practical. The implicit truths are demonstrated in the lives of Buddha and Christ and other religious leaders. In our own century, as the Swami's insightful portraits show, we have Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda who contemporized the truths of eternal religion in terms of its practicality. In Swami's view, they constitute irrefutable proof of the practicality and comprehensiveness of spiritual life. They made us realize, as the Swami puts it, 'that God was not merely to be talked about, but talked to, communed with', and what is more significant, they 'reduced (these) highest truths of religion to matters of daily practice.'

Embodying as Professor A. L. Basham in his invaluable introduction to the book says, 'Some of the finest ethical thought of the twentieth century', the book is, as such, indispensable companion to all those who wish to live with the enduring values of spirituality.

M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA
Professor of English
Osmania University
Hyderabad

SIXTH GURU PRASAD CHATTERJEE
MEMORIAL LECTURE ON IS
VEDANTA CONTRADICTIONARY TO
SCIENCE: BY SWAMI MUKHYANANDA
Published by Bengal Engineering College,
Howrah, 711 103. 1985. Pp. 46. Price not
mentioned.

'Is Vedanta Contradictory to Science?' is the sixth Guru Prasad Chatterji Memorial Lecture delivered by Swami Mukhyanandaji Maharaj of Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur Math on 30 August 1985 at Bengal Engineering College, Howrah. This Memorial lecture presents to the scholars and scientists in the East and West the importance of a harmonious combination of Vedanta and Science for the great benefit to mankind for secular advancement and spiritual fulfilment. The author says, 'to understand and realize Vedantic truths, it requires thorough study, proper disciplining and training, and persevering practice under competent teachers. It is so to some extent even in the case of science which is empirical in nature, then how much more it must be so in the case of Vedanta which deals with subtler inner realities'. So 'the contradiction is seen only due to misunderstanding or lack of proper presentation of Vedanta and Science in their true spirit and perspective'. Science investigates only a part of the universe—the external universe—as an object. On the other hand while Vedanta giving science a due place in life, reveals that the true nature of man is divine and helps him to realize it and manifest it in life through the path of Yoga. Again Vedanta is deeply concerned with human values. Thus one finds that Vedanta and Science are complementary and not contradictory and this has been pointed out again and again in recent years by Swami Vivekananda.

Therefore, man must try to be both spiritual and scientific in one. This is the new demand of human civilization on man.

How do we meet this demand? Where do we get the guidance for building life in a new way? These and several other questions have been answered in the course of this Memorial Lecture. The publication of such scholarly talks on Vedanta and Science, we hope, will inspire thoughtful readers to search for a harmony of the two.

D. SRI RAMA RAO. M.A., M. Sc., Ph.D., FICS
*Head of the Department of Chemistry,
 Pachiappa's College, Madras.*

THE BUDDHIST HAND BOOK: By JOHN SNELLING Publishers: Century Hutchinson Ltd., Brook mount house, 62-65 Chandos place, Covent garden, London. Pp: 373 Price: £ 6.95.

Buddha is one of those rare heroes of humanity, who enrich the thought and life of the human race with their genius, profound spiritual insight and boundless compassion. The impact of the immortal teachings of the Blessed One on the rational minds of both east and west has been tremendous. His appeal is irresistible. Because his teachings are non-dogmatic, they do not demand blind faith or trust. The liberal spirit of free enquiry, the absence of oppressive authority either of the book or person, the special emphasis laid on self-reliance are some of the striking features of Buddhism. The mature minds, naturally, have been attracted by this scientific attitude in religion.

The volume under review gives a succinct account of the life of Buddha and the basic teachings and practices of Buddhism. The major portion of the book is devoted to the vivid description of the development and decline of Buddhism in India as well as in different parts of the globe. In addition to this, the author has made commendable efforts to trace the early impact of Buddhism upon the Western consciousness. Buddhism made its tangible appearance in

Europe during the 19th century when serious scholars like Sir William James, Eugene Burnouf, Max Muller, Rhys Davids, Oldenberg, Sir Edwin Arnold and others threw open the treasures of lofty spiritual ideas of Buddha. People who were in search of real spiritual solace were enthralled by the majesty of Buddha and the immense depth of his wisdom. Since then Buddhism has penetrated the best and developed minds of the west.

In recent years the study of Zen, Tibetan and Eastern mysticism have opened new dimensions in the fields of Western psychology and Science. There is an interesting chapter at the end of the book which gives an idea about the researches that are being conducted to inter-relate Buddhism and psycho therapy. With regard to the Buddhist literature that is being produced in the west the author says—'the volume of Buddhist books currently being produced in the west both original works, translations and editions, has reached the proportions of a major industry'. Yet the present volume is a laudable addition to the already existing literature. The easy and the charming style, and the author's depth of understanding have made the book a fascinating one. The additional information on the addresses of the Buddhist centres in Europe, and who's who in Buddhism have enhanced the value of the book.

The printing, get up and few illustrations are excellent.

THE GOSPEL OF BUDDHA: *Told by* PAUL CARUS Publishers: Samata Books, 10 Kamaraj Bhavan, 573 Mount Road, Madras-600 006. Pp: 275 Price: Rs. 50/-.

This edition contains comments by Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ranganathananda and Sri Aurobindo on the Buddha.

So popular did the book become soon after its first publication in 1894 that it

came to be translated into Japanese, Chinese, French, German, Spanish and Dutch languages within the next two years. It was found so appealing because the bulk of its contents is derived from the old Buddhist canon. Another reason for its wide popularity, especially in the Western world, may also be due to the parallelism the author finds between Buddhism and Christianity. The 'Table of Reference', given at the end of the book traces some of the ideas common to both religions to their sacred texts. What we unfortunately miss are the illustrations by Olga Kopetzky, which appeared in this book from the 13th edition onwards. Beautiful and evocative, they would have been an asset to the book.

One source of strength of this book is its style. Chaste and unpretentious, the translation often becomes Biblical in its simplicity. The Blessed one replied: "A word spoken in wrath is the sharpest sword ; covetousness is the deadliest poison ; passion is the fiercest fire ; ignorance is the darkest night". (LVIII The Buddha replies to the Deva—page 147).

"Blessing! Neither fire, nor moisture, nor wind can destroy the blessing of a good deed, and it will reform the whole world" (LVIII-page 148).

From "Prince Siddhartha becomes Buddha" to "The last days" the material collected from various Buddhist sources has been made into an enactment of the story of Buddha and his ideas. The book will continue to be read for being a chronicle of the Buddha's life and a good presentation of his thought.

FACETS OF VIVEKANANDA Publishers: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-600 004. Pp: 300 Price: Rs. 20/-

To commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, the *Vedanta Kesari* of Madras brought out a special issue in 1987. The articles published on that occasion have been compiled in the form of above book. Swamiji's home was cosmic consciousness. Even a little glimpse of that limitlessness and immeasurability, is staggering. Any attempt to identify or catch Swamiji in the narrow net of our intellect is an exercise in futility. It is mistaking the ocean for its waves, however gigantic the wave may be.

The book contains sixteen absorbing articles on Swamiji each contributing its own note to the grand symphony. Some articles throw fresh light on the hitherto unknown sides of him. The subject matter of the volume is such that it is bound to have some inevitable repetitions. For example the divine plan behind Swamiji's birth, his encounter with Sri Ramakrishna and his work in the west have been repeated in some articles.

The book has succeeded in its attempt to reveal the divine personality of the prophet. The article on 'Who was Vivekananda' is an excellent introduction. Those who want to know more about Swamiji should not miss this book.

SWAMI MUKTIRUPANANDA
R. K. Mission Institute of Moral and
Spiritual Education, Mysore.

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Woman as Mother

Q. How can we conquer lust ?

A. Look upon all women as your own mother ; never look at the face of a woman, but look towards her feet. All evil thoughts will then fly away.

A disciple: How ought we to look upon women ?

Shri Ramakrishna: He who is face to face with Reality, who is blessed with the vision of God, does not regard them with any fear. He sees them as they really are, images of the Divine Mother of the universe. So he not only pays to womankind honour and respect, but actually worships them as a son does a mother.

Kartikeya, leader of the heavenly hosts, once gave a scratch to a cat. Returning home, he saw the mark of a scratch on his mother's face. "How in the world, mother," he asked, "came that ugly scratch on your cheek ?"

"Why, child," replied the Divine Durga, "it is your own handiwork, the mark of your nail."

"But how can that be ?" said the astonished Kartikeya, "I never remember scratching you."

"No," said his mother, "but think what you did this morning to the cat!" "Why, yes," said her son. "Still how could that touch you ?" "Dear child," said his mother, "nothing exists in this world but Myself. I am the whole creation. Whatever you hurt, I suffer."

Kartikeya was deeply impressed by this, and determined henceforward never to marry. For every woman was mother to him.

In the same way, I look upon every woman as my Divine Mother.

All women are portions of that Blessed One and should be looked upon as mothers.

Women whether naturally good or not, whether chaste or unchaste, should always be regarded as images of the Blissful Divine Mother.

Shri Ramakrishna

Arise! awake! and stop not till the goal is reached! Katha. Upa. I. iii, 14,

Vol. III No. 2

ALMORA, SEPTEMBER 1898

Published Monthly

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Arise! awake! and stop not till the goal is reached! Katha. Upa. I. iii, 14.

INTERVIEW WITH SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

In an interview which a representative of "Prabuddha Bharata" had recently with Swami Vivekananda, that great teacher was asked: "What do you consider the distinguishing feature of your movement, Swamiji?"

"Aggression", said the Swami promptly, "aggression in a religious sense only. Other sects and parties have carried spirituality all over India, but since the days of Buddha we have been the first to break bounds and try to flood the world with missionary zeal".

"And what do you consider to be the function of your movement as regards India?"

"To find the common bases of Hinduism and awaken the national consciousness in them".

"But India has always had her deep inner life. Are you not afraid, Swamiji, that in attempting to make her active you may take from her, her one great treasure?"

"Not at all. The history of the past has gone to develop the inner life of India and the activity (i. e. the outer life) of the West. Hitherto these have been divergent. The time has now come for them to unite. Ramakrishna Param-

hansa was alive to the depths of his being, yet on the outer plane who was more active? That is the secret. Let your life be as deep as the ocean, but let it also be as wide as the sky."

"Your last remarks, Swami, raise another question. In what sense is Sri Ramakrishna a part of this awakened Hinduism?"

"That is not for me to determine," said the Swami. "I have never preached personalities. My own life is guided by the enthusiasm of this great soul; but others will decide for themselves how far they share in this attitude. Inspiration is not filtered out to the world through one channel, however great. Each generation should be inspired afresh. Are we not all God?"

"Could you in the same way characterize your methods of action as a whole?"

"Our method," said the Swami, "is very easily described. It simply consists in reasserting the national life. Buddha preached renunciation. India heard, and yet in six centuries, she reached her greatest height. The secret lies there. The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself. The banner of the spiritual cannot be raised too high in this country. In it alone is salvation."