



# Prabuddha Bharata

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

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## THUS SPEAK THE JAINAS

'The soul is the maker and the non-maker, and itself makes happiness and misery, is its own friend and its own foe, decides its own condition good or evil, is its own river Veyarani. My soul is my Kudasamali. The soul is the cow from which all desires can be milked, the soul is my heavenly garden.'

'As a man blind from birth is not able to say what is ugly and what is beautiful, a man on the *Mithyatya gunasthanaka* cannot determine what is real and what is false.'

'These are the four parts of karma: its nature, that is, its character; its condition, that is, the time it will last; its constitution, that is called its essence; scope, or the whole of its content.'

'To hold the truth as truth, and untruth as untruth, this is true faith.'

'You I salute at various times, the Lord Arihanta. What kind of a Lord is He? He knows what is passing in your mind and

my mind. He knows what is passing in the mind of every man. He knows what is going on at various times. He sees all the fourteen worlds as though they were in his hands. He is endowed with these six qualities; boundless knowledge, insight, righteousness, austerity, patience, strength.'

'The true Ashoka, the shower of celestial flowers, the singing of heavenly songs, the waving of fly whisks, the lionshaped throne, the shining of the halo, the beating of celestial kettle-drums, the umbrella, all these things attend the Tirthankara.'

'It is the Tirthankara, the man at this thirteenth stage, that the people worship, for once he passes to the next step, he loses all interest in people, besides parting with his own body.'

'Omniscience, boundless vision, illimitable righteousness, infinite strength, perfect bliss, indestructibility, existence without form, a body that is neither light nor heavy, such are the characteristics of the Siddha.'

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is on MAHAVIRA AND HIS RELIGION OF JAINISM.

SWAMI ATULANANDA by Swami Vidyatmananda is a continuation article from the previous issue.

HARMONY OF RELIGIONS is a lecture delivered by Dr. Huston Smith, eminent western writer and Emeritus Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Syracuse University, U.S.A., in Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston, U.S.A., in April, 1989.

FRIEDRICH MAXIMILLIAN MULLER, a well-documented article on the life and works of the great orientalist Max Muller, is contributed by Swami Tathagatananda, Head of Vedanta Society, New York.

RELIGION AND LITERARY CRITICISM is a scholarly treatise seeking to drive home the basic idea that literature in the true sense of the term must be based on the eternal values of religion. The author, Smt. Tutun Mukherji, is teaching English at the post-graduate level in Osmania University, Hyderabad.

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## MAHAVIRA AND HIS RELIGION OF JAINISM

(EDITORIAL)

Jainism is one of the oldest surviving religions of the world, which still leads thousands to peace and divine life. Next to Hinduism, it is, in fact, the oldest surviving religion which had its birth more than two thousand five hundred years ago. Its greatest leader and path-finder, Mahavira, was born fifty years earlier than Lord Buddha. Mahavira was the second son of a Kshatriya chieftain Siddhartha in Magadha (the modern Bihar), then the most powerful state in India. According to Jaina tradition, he lived between 599 B.C. and 527 B.C. Absolute certainty about the facts of Mahavira's life, however, is not there with us now. His life is today half-legend and half-history. Even these historical and legendary aspects are not accepted equally by all Jainas. Half of them is accepted by Shvetambaras, and equally half is rejected by Digambaras.

According to Jaina tradition, before Mahavira's birth there came a great prosperity and fame to his father for which the newborn child was later known as Vardhamana. Prior to the birth of the child, his mother Trishala had many auspicious dreams symbolising the birth of a superman to her. All these dreams, according to tradition, foretold the birth of a spiritual conqueror (*Jina*), and the founder of a new faith. Some Jainas believe that Trishala did not actually see all these dreams, but that they symbolised an universal desire for some spiritual path-finder to be born and lead the non-brahmins to true religious life free from the clutches of priestly exploitations.

All Jainas believe in Mahavira's boyish prowess and tell how easily he excelled all his companions in strength, physical beauty, and meditation. The legends also tell that as a child he defeated a god and was, there-

fore, called Mahavira by the other gods. He was also known by such names as 'Videha' (*Kalpasutra*-110), 'Vaishalika' (*Sutra Kritanga* commentary) and 'Sanmati'. Bauddha writers have also termed him as 'Nigantha Nataputta'.<sup>1</sup> But the name Mahavira became the permanent epithet of Vardhamana, just as Buddha became the universal name of Siddhartha-Gautama.

In the Jaina tradition Mahavira, the human being, has emerged as a legendary figure with superhuman dimensions. Not only in the present birth, but in earlier births also Mahavira is believed to have enjoyed like a supreme ruler and then made the severest of penances to free himself from the effects of his own Karma. He had 'golden yellow colour', extremely strong bones, (*Vajrarishabhanaracha*), square-shaped body neither too long nor too short, of seven arm-length. The distinguishing mark of his head was that the centre-top was a bit elevated.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Shvetambara tradition Mahavira married a lady called Yashoda (belonging to the *Kaundinya gotra*), and a daughter was born to them named Anuja (Anojja) or Priyadarshana. The Digambara accounts differ widely on this. According to them, even when only a child of eight, Mahavira took the twelve vows which a Jaina layman may take. He always longed to renounce the world, and never married. Other Digambara accounts say that in his thirtieth year while meditating on his 'Self', he felt inspired to become a monk, and realized that he would live only seventy-two years in this life. It is at this stage that Mahavira was initiated into monastic life at the fourth *prahara* (dusk period) of the day in a forest near Kundagrama. This initiat-

ion, all sects agree, took place when Mahavira was about thirty years of age, some time between 570 and 569 B.C. The Nyaya clan of monks to which he first belonged were followers of Parshvanatha, an ascetic who had lived some two hundred and fifty years before Mahavira. While the followers of Parshvanatha, despite all austerity, had accepted a little clothing to cover their body, Mahavira after thirteen months of initiation, renounced this last possession, gave up all clothing, plucked off his hair using the fist five times (*panchalosthi*), and went out in absolute nudity. It was under the shade of an Ashoka tree that he made the great renunciation and entered upon the ascetic life. The Jaina legends say that in his later life an Ashoka tree grew wherever Mahavira had preached.

The Jainas speak of five degrees of knowledge that lead to Omniscience. Mahavira, they say, was born with the first three, *Mati jnana* (Knowledge by cogitation), *Shruta jnana* (Knowledge by hearing), and *Avadhi jnana* (Knowledge by feeling). Immediately after initiation he gained the fourth kind of knowledge, *Manahparyaya jnana*, by which he knew the thoughts of all sentient beings of five senses in the two-and-a-half continents and it only remained for him to obtain the fifth degree of knowledge, that of *Kevala jnana* or Omniscience, for which Mahavira now embarked on a life of intense ascetic practices for twelve years and a half.

During this period Mahavira meditated always on the Self, the Atman, and walked sinless, self-controlled and determined in thought, word and deed. According to Jaina tradition during this period he fasted for 4166 days, ate only for 349 days, and slept for 48 minutes. He took secret vows of austerity (*Abhigraha*) which were miraculously fulfilled. During this period, he was beaten mercilessly. Nails were driven through his ears<sup>3</sup>. He was even hanged but the rope

1. *Tirthakara Bhagawan Mahavira* (Illustrated); composed by Munishri Yashovijoyji, Jain Chitrakala Nidarshan, Bombay-20, 1976, Appendices, p. 15.

2. *Ibid.*, Appendices, p. 23.

3. *Ibid.*, Appendices, p. 10-17.

broke loose.<sup>4</sup> He was tempted, and honoured. Mostly he lived like a wandering ascetic, only spending the monsoons in a particular place. Eleven such monsoons he spent at Rajagriha, and other rainy seasons at Nalanda, Shravasti, Vaishali and Mithila. But tortures or temptations equally failed to break his determination for the attainment of Omniscience in this very life. Centuries later the *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* wrote of Mahavira saying, "A wise man who knows that women are a slough, as it were, will get no harm from them, but will wander searching the Self".<sup>5</sup> The Jaina scripture *Kalpa Sutra* writes about this period of his life:

As water does not adhere to a copper vessel, or collyrium to mother of pearl (so sins found no place in him); his course was unobstructed like that of life; like the firmament he wanted no support; like the wind he knew no obstacles, his heart was pure like the water (of rivers or tanks) in autumn; nothing could soil him like the leaf of a lotus; his senses were well-protected like those of a tortoise; he was single and alone like the horn of a rhinoceros; he was free like a bird; he was always like the fabulous bird Bharunda, valorous like an elephant, strong like a bull, difficult to attack like a lion, steady and firm like Mount Mandara, deep like the ocean, mild like the moon, effulgent like the sun, pure like excellent gold; like the earth he patiently bore everything; like a well-kindled fire he shone in his splendour.<sup>6</sup>

After twelve years of wanderings, and spiritual struggles one evening when he was meditating in the *Godohika* posture (like one milking a cow), Mahavira attained *Kevala jnana* or Omniscience. It happened

under a *Shala* Tree near the Rijuvalika river in Bihar. Thenceforward, he was known as *Jina* (or conqueror of the effects of all accumulated karmas, the great enemies), from which Jainism derives its name. He was also known as *Arhata* or being worthy of veneration, *Arihanta* or destroyer of enemies and *Aruhanta* or one who has killed even the roots of karma.

After enlightenment he felt inspired to preach. His first disciple was Gautama Indrabhuti who in turn became a perfected soul. After instructing Gautama, Mahavira went on his preaching tours and taught his Rule with great acceptance to all his warrior kinsfolk. Like Buddha, he preached first to the rich and the aristocratic. His earliest supporters seem to have been rulers and petty kings. A year after gaining Omniscience, Mahavira became a *Tirthankara*. According to Jaina tradition, *Tirthankara* or *Tirthakara* is one who shows the true way across the troubled ocean of life to his followers. These followers must become a member of one of the four Tirthas: (a) a monk (*muni*), (b) a nun (*sadhvi*), (c) a devout layman (*Shravaka*), or (d) a devout lay woman (*Shravika*). The first monk follower was Indrabhuti. The first nun follower was Chandana. The first *Shravaka* follower was Shankhaji, and the first *Shravika* was Sulasa.

The Digambaras claim that in thirty years he converted to Jainism Magadha (Bihar), Prayaga, Kausambi, Champapuri and many other powerful States in North India. They believe that he did not travel alone, but that wherever he went, he was accompanied by all the monks and nuns who had entered his order. Eventually these monks amounted to fourteen thousand in number, and the nuns to thirty-six thousand. Magnificent halls of audience were erected by the royal people wherever he went to preach. Mahavira preached in a language called *an-akshari*, but later on he preached in *Ardha-*

4. Shree Ratan Muni; *Life Sketch of Mahavira*, Har Kishore Jain and Sons Private Limited, Bombay-3, 1974, p. 11.

5. Mrs. Rhys Davis; *Vardhamana Mahavira*, (*Great men of India*, Ed. by E. R. Williams, the Home Library Club, Statesman, Ceylone), p. 430.

6. Sinclair Stevenson; *Heart of Jainism*, (Oxford University Press), 2nd Edition, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi; 1984, p. 37.

*magadhi Prakrit* which was the language of the masses.

The *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* records a sermon entitled *The Leaf of the Tree*, which the Jainas say Mahavira preached to his first disciple Gautama to help him reach *Kevala jnana*, 'You have crossed the great ocean, why do you halt so near the shore? Make haste to get on the other side and reach that world of perfection (*nirvana*) where there is safety and perfect happiness.' Next to Mahavira, Gautama was the great leader of Jaina ascetics. He was the leader of fourteen thousand monks initiated by Mahavira. He survived Mahavira for twelve years, and finally obtained *nirvana* at Rajagriha at the age of ninety-two, having lived fifty years as a monk. Only two of the eleven chief disciples, Gautama and Sudharma, survived Mahavira; the others attained perfection and died of voluntary starvation at Rajagriha before their Master's death.

There were ten other chief disciples or Ganadharas who also led these monks. The twelfth renegade disciple Gosala distorted the teachings of Mahavira and had a terrible end after leading a life of absolute fatalism which degenerated to a life without morals.

The leading disciples were in-charge of a large number of monks. Gautama was at the head of a school of five hundred, and so were his brothers Agnibhuti and Vayubhuti. His other brother Amampita was at the head of three hundred scholars. Sudharma was at the head of another school of five hundred monks. At the head of thirty-six thousand nuns, according to the Shvetambara tradition, was Chandana, a first cousin of Mahavira or as other accounts have it, his aunt.

The genius and foresight for organization which Mahavira possessed is shown in his formation of the order of laymen and laywomen, a step which Buddha did not take. The laymen, Shravaka or hearers as they

were called, numbered during Mahavira's lifetime one hundred and fiftynine thousand. At the head of their order were Sankhaji and Shatakaji. These hearers had amongst their ranks many nobles of high rank and even kings who were strengthened thus to proclaim their opposition to the priestly authorities of the Brahmins. The fourth and last order consisted of devout laywomen or Shravikas who could not accept a nun's life but served the great ascetic and his monastic followers in many ways. They numbered some three hundred and fifty eight thousand and at their head were two women Sulasa and Revati. Sulasa is considered the ideal of the purely domestic woman, the faithful wife or sati.

Mahavira's last rainy season was spent in Papa, the modern Pavapuri, a small village in Bihar which is a sacred pilgrimage to all Jainas. There Mahavira entered into mahasamadhi, the meditation for final departure from life. One dark night Mahavira was preaching in a large hall to monks, nuns, and lay devotees who had come from various quarters to listen to the Great Master. Mahavira preached all night, and towards the dawn when his hearers fell asleep, he realised that his end was drawing near. He then sat in his final meditation with clasped hands and crossed knees (the *Samparyanka* position). When the morning dawned, he attained Nirvana and the people awakened only to find that the great deliverer was ultimately freed from the body.

The royal devotees who were present on the auspicious night made an illumination to commemorate him. They said, 'Since the light of intelligence is gone, let us make an illumination of material matter'. This, according to Jainas, is the origin of the yearly festival of lamps, Dipavali, which they observe as the day of remembrance of the great hero, the Mahavira. To this day the Jainas prefer to see their Great Master Mahavira in that blessed position of final

meditation with crossed knees and a calm transcendent face of a Jina, the conqueror.

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Jainism never demonstrated the active missionary spirit of later Buddhism. It had been so long content to remain within India. Only in the twentieth century Jaina preachers have gone abroad to propagate their faith. Today in Western India the Jainas have not only prosperous temples and monastic establishments, but also lay communities who are wealthy and influential. While Buddhism later disappeared from the land because of its total dependance on monastic organisations which were helplessly assaulted by other faiths, the survival of the Jainas has been possible due to their acceptance of the lay devotees like Shravakas and Shravikas as respectable members in their religious fold. Ironically enough, Jainism was uprooted from its land of birth Bihar, and with the process of years, migrated westwards and northwards. In the West of India, Jainism was accepted with honour, even as court religion. Siddharaja Jayasimha, a king of Gujarat who died in A.D. 1125, became the first royal patron of Jaina ascetic Hemachandra who often went on pilgrimage to Girnar. His successor Kumarapala (A.D. 1125-59) whom the Jainas claim to have been converted to their faith, was said to have established Jainism as the state religion. Today the caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri in Orissa bear witness to its popularity in these areas of greater Bengal in the early centuries. But the great pilgrimages of Parshvanatha Hills, Rajagir monasteries, or Pavapuri temples draw thousands of Jainas each year even today.

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In its origin, Jainism was a protest on the part of the Kshatriyas, or warrior caste, against the exclusiveness of priests who restricted the ordination of monkhood to persons of the Brahmin caste alone. Maha-

vira established the superiority of Kshatriya status which is evident in the legend of Mahavira's birth. Jainas believe that the child Mahavira was originally conceived in the womb of a Brahmin mother Devananda ; but due to her lack of good karma, the embryo was later on placed in the Kshatriya mother, Trisala. Gradually history turned its tide. The Jaina religion, born in military caste, became later on the chief exponent and an unusual exaggeration of the principle of *ahimsa*, or non-injury to any living being. Today it is a faith primarily followed by businessmen, middle class bankers and shopkeepers and others believing in non-violence and vegetarianism. Yet the power of Mahavira's historic austerities persists, and Jaina men and women are renouncing everything even today in order to attain perfection in the way of their Great Master.

Both Buddhism and Jainism were born out of Hinduism as a sort of reaction against the excesses of Brahminic priestcraft, but neither of these sprang in the Central India, or *Majjhima Desha* which was and still is the seat of Brahminism. Both of them arose in the Eastern part where Vedic teachings got deformed and needed reformation. That is why, although Jainism denied the authority of the Vedas, it nevertheless accepted the central Vedic idea of the Immortality of the Self, and the need of realising the Self as the panacea for all sufferings of life. Only Jainism laid special emphasis of physical austerity and non-violence as the surest means of spending the accumulated karma due to whose weight an individual is thrown, out of desires, into the cycles of births and deaths and their consequential sufferings. The term Tirthakara, or Tirthankara, would seem originally to have denoted the man who has 'made the passage' across the ocean of worldly illusion (*samsara*), who has reached that further shore where he is, and will for ever be, free from action and desire. Later on the mean-

ings of Tirthankara was changed. It meant one who is the founder of the four 'Orders' that collectively constitute the communion or *Sangha*.

The Schism in the original Jaina faith, and the birth of two mutually contradictory sects, the Shvetambaras and the Digambaras, according to tradition, happened due to an unfortunate situation. Some two centuries after Mahavira's death, according to the legend, a terrible famine forced half the community, under the leadership of Bhadrabahu, to move off towards the South and settle in Mysore. As the famine lasted for twelve years, they stayed in Mysore and established their faith in the region. These monks, according to tradition, were accompanied to Mysore by Chandragupta, the first Emperor of India, and founder of the Maurya dynasty, whom the Jainas claim as a co-religionist. If the tradition is trustworthy, the date of the migration must be placed between 298 or 296 B.C., for Bindusara succeeded Chandragupta about that time.

Tradition says that all the monks did not migrate to the South. Some, under the leadership of Sthulabhadra, preferred to cling at any risk to the hallowed scenes of the holy land of Mahavira's birth. When at last the famine was over after twelve years and the real head of the order, Bhadrabahu or his successor could bring some of his mendicants back from the South to the original home of their order, he found that the home-keeping minority had all adopted some form of clothing. The final separation of the white-clad (*Shvetambara*) and sky-clad (*Digambara*), however, took place after two more centuries had passed. Since this schism the unity of the order was lost for ever. The death of many of their members through famine made their leaders realise on how precarious a footing the unwritten laws and knowledge of their sacred order stood. Sthulabhadra summoned a council

of monks early in the third century B.C. at Pataliputta, the modern Patna, at that time the capital of the Maurya Empire. This council fixed the canon of the Jaina sacred literature, consisting of the eleven *Anga* and the fourteen *Purva*. But a whole-hearted agreement on the canons of their scriptures was never again possible. There was another great council in 454 A.D. at Vallabhi to affirm the faith, but the Digambara canon differs so entirely from the Shvetambara that it seems that the sect was either not represented at the great council of A.D. 454, or that they stood radically opposed to the canons affirmed by the other group.

In fact, the Digambara sect stands directly opposed to many of the basic tenets and beliefs of the Shvetambara sect. The five main tenets of the Digambara in which they oppose the Shvetambara views are: that the Tirthankara must be represented as nude and unadorned, and with downcast eyes; that women cannot obtain moksha, that Mahavira never married; that once a saint had obtained *Kevala jnana* he needed no food, but could sustain life without eating; and finally the great point over which the split occurred, that ascetics must be entirely nude, a tenet which forces the Digambara ascetics now existing to live in the strict seclusion from society.

It is not known when idols were introduced in Jaina religion but it was probably in the second or first century B.C. The religion thenceforward expanded its area and the Jaina prosperity continued from the council of Vallabhi down to the thirteenth century.

But Jainism got more divided as centuries rolled on. About A.D. 1474 a third sect arose in Jainism, known as Sthanakavasi Jainas who do not worship any idols whatsoever.

Then came the historic devastation of Jaina temples by the Mohammedans, under the iconoclastic Alauddin who conquered

Gujarat in A.D. 1297-98. But Jainism had always been more adaptive. Unlike Buddhism it had never cut itself off from the Hindu faith that surrounded it. The Jainas had even employed Brahmins as domestic priests who presided at their birth rites, marriage ceremonies and temple worship. Mahavira's genius for organisation also stood Jainism in good stead now, for he had made the laity an integral part of the community, whereas in Buddhism they had never enjoyed this privilege. So when storms of persecution swept over the land, Jainism could save itself by taking refuge under the broad wings of Hinduism, with the active assistance of its lay members.

The Jainas, like the Buddhists, denied the authority of the Vedas. But they incorporated into their faith the Hindu doctrines of Self, transmigration, and karma. Only the doctrine of non-killing (*ahimsa*) which they also borrowed from Hinduism was exalted to supreme importance.

A Jaina follower wrote, 'Hindus were not those who originally lived on the banks of the river Indus. Hindus were those from whom *himsa* was away. Let us not misunderstand words. Let us interpret them correctly. It is those men who are the slaves of taste who say that Hindus were those who lived on the banks of the Indus. We, Jainas, call Hindus those from whom *him* or *himsa* is *du* or *dur*, i.e. away!'<sup>7</sup>

Mahavira is certainly the greatest and the most powerful of all Jaina Tirthankaras. But he is only the last of the twenty-four Tirthankaras or Jinas, on whose lives and teachings virtually the entire edifice of Jainism stands. In fact, Mahavira is considered a reformer who carried still further the work that Parshvanatha, the 23rd Tirthankara, had begun. Parshvanatha made four vows binding on the members of his community; not to take life, not to lie, not

to steal and not to own property. He doubtless felt that the vow of chastity and celibacy was included under the last two heads, but in the two hundred and fifty years that elapsed between his death and the coming of Mahavira, Parshvanatha's doctrine degenerated, and Mahavira was forced to add another vow—that of chastity.

In the Jaina system all importance is given on practising the hardest of austerities in order to be freed from the effects of accumulated karma and sins of many past births. The Hindu mendicants cut or shave off their hair, but the Jaina ascetics, as a proof of their power of endurance, must tear out their hair by the roots. Mahavira himself had set the trend by uprooting his own hair. The nudity of the Digambara sect, fasting after sunset, practising non-violence at all costs even by covering the lips with cloth so that not even a microbe is killed while talking, and finally religious suicide by fasting—all these are various Jaina methods to free oneself from the eighteen kinds of sins, and the eighty two results of those sins described in the fourth category of the nine major categories on which Jaina faith stands. Similarly the charities, gifts of service to holy men, and pilgrimages are only ways to achieve nine kinds of merits (*Punya*) and the forty-two kinds of effects thereof.

One of the historic contributions of Mahavira is the profound respect offered to the spiritual potentialities of women.

Mahavira accepted thirty six thousand women as nuns and made some of them leaders in spiritual matters also. Chandana, the daughter of Dadhivahana, king of Champa, and a relation of Mahavira also entered the order and became the head of the nuns. It is somewhat puzzling that despite Mahavira's own example the Digambara sect denies that any woman can attain liberation without rebirth as a man. They even deny that Mallinatha, the 19th Tir-

7. Ibid., p. 118.

thankara, could have been a woman. According to them, it is due to deceitfulness in a previous life that this saint was born as a woman.

Jainism never turned into a fatalistic faith. Like Hindus, they believe that all karma must bring their effect (*Nikachita karma*). But they also believe that with extra-ordinary efforts an individual can nullify the past karmas (*Shithila karma*). Utmost importance is, therefore, laid on the individual's struggle for willing acceptance of sufferings and austerities as a way out of the karmic vicissitudes. Through these conscious spiritual efforts which the Hindus call 'tapas' (the power to stand suffering), an individual gradually climbs up the fourteen steps to liberation (*Chauda Gunasthanaka*). By the time one reaches the seventh step (*Apramatta Gunasthanaka*), passion, anger, pride, and lethargy are completely controlled and the power of meditation increases. In the eighth step (*Apurva-karana*), one experiences unspeakable joy. Digambara sect believes that woman can climb only upto this stage. In the ninth step (*Aniyatibadara Gunasthanaka*), a man rises above body consciousness of sex. In the thirteenth step (*Sayogikevali Gunasthanaka*), one is established in pure contemplation (*Shukladhyana*). He then preaches and forms a community or Tirtha, and becomes a Tirthankara. In the last step (*Ayogikevali Gunasthanaka*),

even this desire of becoming a Tirthankara, the desire for leading a sect, is purged away. His soul is finally freed from the last bondage of doing good to the world. Then he attains liberation, (*moksha*) or desirelessness (*Nirvana*), from where there is no returning to life.<sup>8</sup>

In the Jaina philosophy there is no place for God. Indeed it seems probable that the first Jainas did not acknowledge God at all. The early teaching of the Tirthankaras says that one should not say 'God rains', but just 'the cloud rains'.<sup>9</sup> Thus one of their fundamental principles that there is no power higher than man, was an acceptance of the fundamental Vedantic principle that in man, the limited being, there is the potentiality of a Jina, an Arhat, to attain the Infinite Knowledge, Existence and Bliss of Godhead. That is why, the objects of Jaina worship are not gods or goddesses. They worship living gods like Mahavira, Parshvanatha, and other Jinas who by super-human austerities attained liberation, the Arhats who are worthy of universal veneration, and the Tirthankaras who discovered in the tumultuous sea of life the way to liberation, and opened the same way for all, householders or monks, men or women, to reach the shore of Bliss beyond the least touch of existential sufferings.

8. Ibid., Pp. 185-191.

9. Ibid., p. XIV.

SWAMI ATULANANDA  
(GURUDAS MAHARAJ)

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

I asked Gurudas Maharaj if one can meditate as well sitting in a chair as in lotus position. "Yes, theoretically", was his answer. To the question whether he had ever been able to sit in a full lotus posture, he nodded his head ; but I did not feel sure that he had understood the question. A certain gentleman who was staying at the guesthouse nearby and visiting the Swami told me that when he had come to him in 1953 for darshan and some instruction, the Swami had given him the book "The Way of the Pilgrim" and told him to read it.

"Have you come to appreciate Indian music after this long time, Maharaj?" I queried one day. "Yes," said the Swami, "but not the voice." His attendant explained, "Instrumental music only."

I made him an apple pie of sorts, using the materials available there, and had the privilege of feeding him a few spoonfulls myself. I asked him about the direct disciples of the Master, and he said he had seen all of them except Swami Niranjanananda and Swami Yogananda.

The first day I was there at the ashrama he asked, while sitting up in the morning, where I was. The attendant replied that I was sitting in my room. "But he did not come here to sit in his room," Gurudas Maharaj remarked. Therefore, I felt emboldened to spend more time with him.

His attendant told him that I could speak a little Bengali. "Very little, Maharaj," I

demurred. His eyes twinkled as so often they did. "Just enough," he commented, "to put me to shame." All laughed. Then the attendant reminded him that he used to speak a little Hindi. Last year, he said, when a certain visitor had come, the Swami had spoken to him in Hindi. His answer was, "Last year has gone ; so has the Hindi."

The fact that he was regarded as a celebrity was a source of amusement to Gurudas Maharaj. He had become a spectator of the passing show—or as he called it, this dream that we are all dreaming—and observed the character he himself was required to play with a mild mocking detachment. He took neither the world seriously nor himself. This characteristic humour and frankness come through in the conversations which make up "Atman Alone Abides". Indeed, I as editor found it necessary to soft-pedal certain remarks, and the publishers considered it necessary to add numerous "explanatory" footnotes. At times this quality might appear to the ordinary observer to be somewhat "putting-off" ; there seemed to be something ironic in Gurudas Maharaj's tone. He himself says he was inclined to be critical. Well, he was a realist in the Vedantic sense, and this attitude occasionally made him appear to be a harsh iconoclast.

When Ujjvala died she left, as I have related, many mementoes. Among these was a collection of letters which Gurudas Maharaj had written to her for forty or fifty

years, most of them from India. I kept these safely after Ujjvala's death, hoping to look through them when I had the leisure. But it did not seem right that I should remove them from the Southern California center when I moved to France. I was thus pleased to hear that the collection was confided to one of the nuns at Santa Barbara, who typed copies of them all—not an easy task, as the writing was minute to begin with, and faded. That personality I have described above, and which is visible throughout "Atman Alone Abides" comes out forcefully in the letters. I cannot resist quoting portions from several. I begin with one dated September 5, 1925—about the time of the famous Scopes Monkey Trial:

I used to be somewhat annoyed at Shri Ramakrishna's attitude and replies to questions. His "I don't know." "Mother knows." "Mother can do anything." I see the wonderful wisdom of it now. Who knows anything in this mass of mystery? Certain things may have happened for a million years, and we call it a law of nature. But what is a million years with God? It is less than a second. If the human mind should change ever so little a new universe with different laws would reveal itself. I used to fight tooth and nail the idea that anything could happen not in accordance with established natural law. The old story (in Ramakrishna's life) of the white flower on a bush of red species of flower. Today I believe all things possible. I believe in miracles. As Swami Saradananda once told me, we don't know the subtler laws of nature. The bhakta comes in contact with these subtler laws. Hence they appear as mysterious miracles to others. All Ramakrishna's experiences are opposed to the science of today. Science says, "impossible" and rejects. "Mother, you know everything; you can do everything. I want to love you and be your child." This to me seems to be wisdom. And let the scientists fight, and let the fundamentalists fight; good for

them. We have all been fighters. Now let us have a little peace. Now let us retire from the arena and become onlookers and enjoy it.

If only we could look upon all life as fun instead of taking things so seriously. "Meet life merrily," says Nivedita, "and know that it is all Mother's play." There is the secret! Mother laughs because she is not attached. We weep because we are attached. She involves herself and evolves again. And she thinks it is great fun. We involve and entangle ourselves and then we weep and moan and indulge in self-pity during the process of evolving and disentangling. "Know the Atman and be free." And then play at anything you like. That is what life should be. And then all life becomes beautiful. It is only a question of angle of vision. With the right vision there is no evil, no ugliness, no sadness. It is all part of a wonderful drama or dream. How different everything looks when we stand apart as witness.

...All these words mean the same in the Shanti state. I have gone beyond that. But I never wanted Truth for truth's sake but because it brings happiness. I know that true happiness consists in knowing myself, my Atman. I do not find happiness in the world. Therefore I try to realise the Atman. And the Jnana path appeals to me because that leads to Self-knowledge, and seems more reasonable to me.

By the way, do you know that Christian saints warn against the sensuous in religion? But we have to pass through it. It is only when we realise our Atman that we rise above sensuousness. Then it is pure bliss. That is super or beyond ordinary sensuousness, just as knowing the Self is super or beyond selfishness. It is an absolute state where ordinary feelings cease. So worldly beauty is one thing, spiritual beauty another. And I do not confound the two. But in the end it is all beauty. Turiyananda

was appreciative of beauty. I saw that on our pilgrimages. He loved beautiful scenery. Still he told me then to my surprise, "I don't care for external beauty. I want the internal beauty." I understand it now, but did not then. He loved external beauty but it did not suffice. He found another and greater beauty of the spiritual realm. I love beauty but it is just a fleeting sensation. Spiritual beauty (that comes with spiritual realisation) has a lasting effect. It changes the person for the better, while external beauty has not that effect on me. It leaves me as I am now.

Here is the Swami speaking in another voice, on 13 October of the same year:

Personally I prefer Mother's calmer aspects. I love our little river way down the valley, and miles and miles of hills, tier after tier, ending in snow-capped mountains, and the rosy clouds drifting along below my verandah, and giant eagles floating on their wings; circling in the air they look like tiny dark spots against the heavens. And the bird singing in the pines, and the monkeys stealing our apples, and cowherds playing their flutes, and the villagers working their little fields—all this is a joy to me that I can enjoy from my room window or verandah. Then, no noise, no confusion, everyone quietly going about his business, each one of us in our own way, without criticizing or interfering with the others. Still all are friendly. This is my life here. And I only wish you could enjoy it with me. But who knows? Perhaps you would find it dull, inane, a stupid life. You might see only laziness, dirt, inefficiency, and other evils of India.

I love nature, insect life, animal life, flowers, the peasants. I can understand St. Francis of Assisi singing in the hills, talking to the birds, the wolf and the flowers. Glorious St. Francis! And his sweet, pure, clean relationship with St. Clare, who mothered him, loved him, understood him.

It is a question of temperament. I like the outdoor life, open country, a few friends. So I did not get much at your Pentacostal meetings, crowded with converted and half-converted, and temporarily converted drunkards and gamblers and brothel-keepers. I have just read the life of Mrs. White, Seventh Day Adventist. Marvellous in a way, living in visions and doing the Lord's work. But it gave me the creeps. Sickly from her childhood, all her life, still marrying and bringing weaklings into the world, having to leave her children in the care of others (in order to go out) to do the Lord's work. My nature revolts against it. Compare that with the pure, clean life of the Swamis, though they don't have visions and go into trances. And what did she get in her samadhis? That Sabbath must be kept on Saturday, that the world would soon come to an end, that she must convert people. I prefer the old Catholic saints who did not have a brood of children. Who cares for speaking in tongues when one can read the Gita, Upanishads, Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna, Swamiji's works. Certainly we are fortunate. Think of the "Crest Jewel of Wisdom" and then turn to Pentacostal literature. You fall from the mountain peak into the gutter. I know you don't approve of my aristocratic taste, but as Vedantists we have a right to be fastidious. There is no sense in cultivating bad taste.

You understand, I don't condemn the Pentacostals. They are doing a wonderful work that I could not do. But we belong to another constellation; we have another sun to illumine us. Our orbit is free from smut. It is always toward greater purity. ...Is it accident that brought me to India for the third time? No! I could not be satisfied with anything but the very best. I could not swallow molasses after having tasted nectar.

Here is Gurudas Maharaj again writing to Ujjvala, the 29th March, 1928:

Life is a mystery ; we are not sure of anything, cannot predict anything, are usually wrong in our judgement of others, cannot believe anything—not even our senses—cannot disbelieve anything. Maya indeed! But there is a way out, a path leading beyond Maya. This is our consolation. I seem to be looking at life in a more impersonal way. The faults of others do not distress me at all.

“Mother India” (a sensational book of the 1920’s criticising India) was simply an interesting phenomenon, a curious working of the human mind. Nivedita went to the other extreme—just as interesting. Some of our swamis are saintly, some others have to be sent out of the Mission. All are equally interesting, all are studies, all Mother’s play. No one to praise, no one to blame—all Mother’s children. A right step, a false step—all part of the play. That is why it always amuses me when you hide things, when you want to protect people’s reputations....I neither believe nor disbelieve. I see and hear, and then it is gone. Let others form opinions, judge, criticize. To me, life is a moving picture. See it and forget it. Don’t close your eyes ; don’t take sides. What I want now is to be able to include myself in the picture, to be the mere witness to myself also—in pain, in pleasure, in health and sickness, in good deeds and bad deeds. Look over, stand aside, see what this funny creature Gurudasa is doing. And know that I am not this—that I am free, the Atman—that all are free, the Atman.

What we see are the actors on the stage—today beggar, tomorrow king ; today sinner, tomorrow saint. It is always the same person playing different parts. So it is difficult to shock me or make me feel different towards persons, even if they make a mistake.

Take M. I am now convinced that he plays the part of an irresponsible creature.

So I protect myself. But my feeling towards him is not changed. I will receive him if he comes, just as before. It is an interesting study of human behaviour. What more ? What less ? If you ask me, “Can you trust him ?” I don’t try to hide or to protect him from you. I say, “Be careful. He may fool you.” But that does not mean that I wish him ill or that I am not ready to stand by him. Only, I know that if I or you lend him money, there is a good chance of never seeing your money again. But if I can spare it, I may give it to him. Why not ? Let him have his fun, get his experience. Mother’s child, Mother’s play.

And I am glad to meet all characters, just as I am glad to read about them. I am as interested in Dempsey (Jack Dempsey, prizefighter) and Barnum (circus-master) etc. as in the saints. I would be just as much interested to meet them, or to see them in action. Books for India, books against India—they are equally interesting to me, if they are written equally well.

Let the play go on. Turiyananda once told me that when he read that when Krishna made the designs for his capital, he designed one part of the city for prostitutes to live. Swami was horrified. Why did he allow prostitutes in his ideal city ? Then, later he understood. They also have a right to live—they fill their place in the picture, they do their share in the play. Without them the play would not be complete. Let each choose his own part ; let him play it well. And when he wants to change his part—all right—others may take it. Each part brings its own results, its own pay.

No Swami claims to be perfect. Many will say, “It is only through Mother’s grace that I am not worse than I am.” This is wisdom, knowledge of life. But only old, tried, experienced souls know this. Why do people feel attracted to a rascal and run away from a saint ? Because a rascal is

true ; an all-saint is a myth. If he is held up as an all-saint by his so-called friends and protectors, we know we are being humbugged. It is namby-pamby silliness. Swamiji did not care a snap whether a person was good or bad, but he hated hidings—covering sores with flowers. And you know how Sw. Turiyananda used to wrinkle up his nose at “good” people. Jesus said: “Why callest thou me good ? No one is good, but my Father who is in Heaven.”

On his sixty-first birthday, 7 February, 1931, Gurudas Maharaj wrote to Ujjvala:

I remember once I saw or experienced, or what you may call realized beyond a doubt, that we are all Atman, souls, and our earthly individualities are only like reflections of the souls. And with it came the knowledge that this life is unreal, and what fools we are to take it seriously, to hate, and to be jealous and quarrel, and all that. I saw it as absolute lunacy, for in reality we are all equal-spirit, blissful, beyond love and hatred, all equally free, perfect, beyond all desires. Think of what a heaven life would be for me if I could have retained that consciousness. There would have been only love, love for all and everything, for all life is only a reflection of our blissful Self—the reflection distorted by our ignorant mind. No good, no bad—life is only a shadow play to enjoy if we realise it as such. I am the soul immortal ; life, my own shadow on this world of Maya. This is Truth, for I have experienced it also in other forms. And this is really my religion, the one thing in religion of which I am certain. I have known moments that you might have cut my body to pieces and I would have laughed while it was going on. I would have been the Witness, detached from the body, enjoying the fun. And now, when I have a toothache or a headache I am undone. This world has become real again. Still, I know that this world-reality is relative, while the spirit-reality is absolute. Religion means

only the attempt to attain the spirit-consciousness, and to retain it. All else in religion is 90 per cent bunk, or as Swamiji says, “lower truth”.

From a historical standpoint Gurudas Maharaj is significant as the first occidental sannyasin of the Ramakrishna Order. This is not quite accurate. In 1895 Swami Vivekananda initiated two American men and one American woman into sannyasa, but the men did not maintain their engagement, and the woman did not continue in rapport with the Ramakrishna Order. But Gurudas Maharaj was faithful from 1898 onwards, even though for long periods he was forced to live outside Vedanta institutions. With the development of an extensive monastic programme among Ramakrishna centers in the West, Gurudas Maharaj assumes the character of forerunner and patron. He was Our First Success, and thus is seen as hero and admired as example. At the present time it is relatively easy for a European or American to ally himself with the Ramakrishna movement and advance in it, either at home or in India—there are at least a half-dozen western centers sponsoring monastic programs which have up to now produced around a score of sannyasins ; but for Gurudas Maharaj it was a case of hardship and fidelity.

Now that there is a large Vedanta following in Holland, Gurudas Maharaj becomes a hero in another sort of way. National pride cherishes the idea that this modern western holy man was born in that country.

But of course the most interesting thing about Gurudas Maharaj is that he was a knower of God. That this is a fact can be established in two ways: on the basis of internal evidence, and on the basis of external evidence.

The internal evidence is frequently encountered in “Atman Alone Abides”. One can look, for example, at the entry of March 15, 1958. Gurudas Maharaj says that he exper-

perienced, as he describes it, a perception of the Atman as pervading all. He sensed the Truth and felt himself to be essentially one with that Truth, entirely distinct from the world of dreams. To his old friend Ujjvala he spoke even more clearly, in his letters, as we have seen.

The external evidence resides in the regard which other members of the Order had for him. Anyone living in a religious community for decades is bound to be thoroughly known by its other members for what he is. If Gurudas Maharaj was considered to be highly advanced by his colleagues, we may be sure that he was so. In 1963 I was discussing Gurudas Maharaj with Swami Vireswarananda, then the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order. He later became President, in which post he remained until his death in 1985. We were talking of Swami Vivekananda's dream that eastern monastics should go to teach in the West and the western monastics should go to live in India, there to do practical work for the Order and nation. That the first part of the proposition had been carried out there could be no doubt. But not the second part. I

remarked to Swami Vireswarananda, that it seemed to me that Gurudas Maharaj in his many years in India had not accomplished much beyond the writing of one small book and a few articles. (In those days I thought practical work to mean active endeavour such as publishing, teaching, doctoring, construction, and the like. I didn't think of self-development and inspiration of others as work!) To which Swami Vireswarananda responded, with a touch of heat: "But Gurudas Maharaj became spiritual."

As I said in the introduction written for "Atman Alone Abides", "Here the reader is allowed to observe the thinking processes of a jnani. Jnana is an austere way; it has not much truck with the vanities, the whimsicalities, of everyday life. One may be put off in places, by what seems like cynicism, even hilarity, as regards the concerns of men. But this would be the likely result if one had known the Atman and seen the world of appearance, with its sweet and sour, its lighting both clear and obverse, its good and bad, to be perfectly unreal. Atman alone abides; all the rest is too ephemeral to be taken seriously."

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## HARMONY OF RELIGIONS

HUSTON SMITH

I am very grateful to you, Swami, for the opportunity to be here this morning.

Being here awakens a host of happy memories—my years at M.I.T., when I could bring my students to this Center, and on Friday afternoons, go to the M.I.T. chapel and hear you speak. You have been very gracious to credit me with certain things; but I must pass the credit on to my teachers, chief among whom was Swami Satprakashananda of the St. Louis Vedanta Center, who for ten years introduced me to the glories

of Vedanta. I hate to think what my life would have been if that profound exposure had been lacking. As for *The Religions of Man* and the contributions it may have made, that book is animated throughout by the 'spirit of Vedanta, which I was simply trying to transmit. I think, for example, of the wonderful image (this is coming to our morning's topic, the Harmony of Religions) that Shri Ramakrishna gave us when he pictured the great wisdom traditions of the world as so many paths to the same summit.

I often think of his counsels toward religious harmony, as when he said: "Bow down and kneel where others pray; for where so many have given adoration, the kind Lord must manifest Himself, for He is all mercy." This spirit of harmony which Vedanta and the Ramakrishna Order breathe, has been a great contribution, not only to America but also to the world.

As the Swami pointed out in his opening remarks, religious harmony is a desperate need of our time. We are still a long way from that goal, and yet, as I say, it encourages me to look back and see the progress we have made. When I learned this was the topic on which I was to speak, I reached for an item which my wife found, when a few years back, she was going through the papers of her deceased grandmother. It is a diagram of the world—you perhaps cannot see it clearly (he holds it up); but still you can see that the diagram is round to represent the world, and that there is a horizontal line right through its middle. The bottom half of the circle is black, and that represents the *heathens* of the world (laughter). Then there is a stratum above that which is fairly dark gray; this stratum represents the Jews and Mohamedans (laughter); you see, they're not totally black because they at least believe in one God—monotheism. And then above them is another layer—this one getting a little closer to the light—this represents the Roman Catholics. (Much laughter); and they are closer to the light because they have not only one God but also Jesus Christ. Then above that, the next layer represents the Greek Orthodox—still closer to the light because at least they don't have the Pope (more laughter). And then at the absolute summit, lilywhite (wouldn't you know it?)—the Protestants! (All laugh, including Dr. Smith). Well, we laughed, and it's good that we laughed, because it shows us the distance that we have come. And from this we can gather encourage-

ment to go forward into the future of religious harmony that our hearts are set on.

Now I thought I would approach the theme, not by repeating anything from *The Religions of Man*, where, as those of you who know that book recall, my effort was to paint profiles of the various traditions seen in their individuality and distinctiveness. Instead I thought this morning I would run through those religions to lift out certain deep-lying points that they share in common. And I will do this in three strokes. First I will speak of certain *ethical* similarities that recur in these traditions. I will then move on to call attention to certain common *virtues* they extol. Then finally I shall point out the common *vision* that underlies the world's great religions, or wisdom traditions, as I like to think of them. What we *do* concerns ethics; what we *are* concerns the virtues that animate us; and what we *see* relates to vision.

I begin first with ethics, or what we should do. There are four aspects of life which, if not kept under control, can wreck ruin and havoc. These four areas are Force, Possession, the Spoken Word, and Sex. All four are important, but they also harbour dangers. In the lower species these are controlled by instinct. With regard to force, e.g., there is, to be sure, violence in the animal kingdom, but instinct restricts it to actual need, for the preservation of the life of the predator. There are only two species other than the human, for example, that wage war. Typically there will be violence when one creature kills to eat another creature to sustain its own life; but when it is satiated that's the end of the matter. But with human beings, border disputes can flare into raids and counter-raids; and these can escalate into blood-feuds. We humans have very few instincts. This allows us freedom, but because our passions aren't checked by instinct, religion must move in to say, "Thou shalt do no murder." The

tradition of India goes even further, counselling *ahimsa* or non-violence, to replace the controls that instinct provides in the lower species.

The same thing happens in the second area, which is that of possessions. The lower animals do not hoard. A lion will kill an antelope, but when it has satiated its hunger it moves away and lets the other creatures come in to partake. It is we human beings who can get absolutely obsessed with not only satiating our immediate needs, but going on to make our heap bigger and bigger—to engage in “conspicuous consumption”. So again, the religious traditions all move in to monitor our acquisitiveness, counselling moderation and more specifically, non-stealing, or not taking that which has not been given. “Thou shalt not steal” is the way the Ten Commandments put the matter.

The third area is that of the spoken word. All species can communicate, but only ours can lie. And lying, too, can engender passions that can rip a community apart. Therefore, “Thou shalt not bear false witness”, the injunction to truth-telling is universal in the world’s religions. We can all recall moving accounts of fidelity to truth in the Upanishads and elsewhere in the Indian tradition.

Finally, the fourth passion or capacity within us that can get out of hand, is sex. It is a glorious power, but like language it can be misused. It is a gateway to love and fulfilment, but as we know, if it gets out of control it can be absolutely devastating in its effects. Therefore, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” with echoing sentiments in the other traditions.

So at these four important points where human beings intersect—force, possessions, the spoken word, and sex—the world’s great religions introduce strikingly similar counsels.

Now, let me run through the religions again, this time turning from what we should

do to who we should *be*. And this is a way of introducing the *virtues*, the human virtues. In the area of ethics, the emphasis tends to be on “Thou shalt nots,” which is to say, danger points that must be respected. But when we come to the virtues, the theme becomes very positive: virtues should be cultivated. Unfortunately even the word “virtue” has now come to have a moralistic ring. But that is a mistake. The real meaning of virtue—the original meaning—was much closer to “power” than it was to morality. In English that meaning still lingers, as in a phrase like “the virtue of a drug”. That sounds quaint today, but we know what it means. It doesn’t mean that the drug is moral, but that the drug has power. That too was the way the virtues were traditionally conceived. We have toys of anatomical men and women that we give our children. They are like jig-saw puzzles. You can take a heart (e.g.) out of the body and put it back in. I have toyed with the thought of a comparable human anatomy, in which the block would consist of the *virtues* of which we are composed. If I were to go into production with that idea the chest area of my jig-saw puzzle model of a human being would consist of three pieces, these being the three virtues that recur in all the religions. In the West they are usually referred to as humility, charity, and veracity, but again these words have picked up baggage that distorts their original meaning.

To begin with humility, unfortunately this tends now to conjure up the grovelling image of Dickens’ Uriah Heep, with his cringing, hand-wringing, “I am so humble” attitude. That is a far cry from the wonderful original meaning of humility where it connoted strict impartiality. I should count as one, but no more than one. Usually we are not content to settle for that. We want to stand out. We exaggerate our importance in our own eyes and want our interests to count for more than our neighbours’.

The meaning of charity, the second virtue, has become equally debased. We now think of charity as placing quarters in a blind man's cup, or contributing to the Salvation Army or United Way. That is all to the good, but the true meaning of charity—*caritas* in its all Latin root—runs deeper than that. It is the counterpart of humility when we are thinking of others. If humility is to regard oneself as one but not more than one, charity is to look on one's neighbour as fully one's own. His or her hopes and fears should count for as much on one's accounting as do one's own. The third virtue, veracity, underlies this sublime objectivity that rules true humility and charity, for veracity is the capacity to see things objectively, exactly as they are.

When we turn to Asia we find these same three virtues, but interestingly and illuminatingly, Asia tends to speak of them inversely. That is to say, Asia tends to focus more on the barriers that block the virtues than on the virtues themselves. Asians see an advantage in coming at the matter through the back door, so to speak. For if we are realistic, we must admit that the virtues that we wish to cultivate are, for the most part, ideals. This means that in relation to where we currently are, they are largely abstract. Vices, on the other hand, the barriers that block us from the virtues, are unquestionably concrete. They are fully with us here and now. So the religions of Asia talk more about "the three poisons" that work against the virtues in our lives. Greed counteracts humility. Hatred or aversion counteracts charity. And delusion counteracts veracity—our seeing things as they truly are. Whether we speak, though, of trying to rid our lives of the poisons that work against the virtues, or of cultivating the virtues themselves, it is clear that the goal is the same in both East and West.

I turn, now, to move through the great religions for a third time, this time to ask

what they have in common with respect to vision. What do they see? I intend this to mean here: what do they see regarding Reality in its ultimate nature. Again the answer has three parts.

They all affirm that Ultimate Reality is a unity; it is one. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is one" is a classic proclamation of this point in the West, but all the great religions make the point in one way or another. From the outside, the myriad gods of Hinduism make it look like polytheism, but we know that behind them all lies the sole existent: the one ineffable Brahman.

Second, the religions all declare that Reality is "more". Science has shown us that nature is incredibly more than our naked senses show it to be, and religion makes the same point regarding the world's value—its meaning and worth. Whatever your "peak experience" has been, it cannot have begun to plumb Reality's full and final worth. Rudyard Kipling's poem, "The Explorer", catches effectively this sense of the more-to-life than we have yet fathomed.

There's no sense in going farther, it's the  
end of cultivation,  
So they said, and I believed them,  
Built by barns and strung my fences,  
In that little border station, tucked away  
among the foothills,  
Where the trails run out and stop.

Till a voice as bad as conscience,  
Rang interminable changes,  
On one everlasting whisper, night and  
day repeating so:  
"Something hidden, go and find it,  
Go and look behind the ranges,  
Something lost behind the ranges,  
Lost and waiting for you, go!"

Finally, all the religions say that God, or Reality, remains for us to the very end a mystery. Here again we need to recover the

meaning of a profound word, which in this case the "murder mystery" has cheapened. A detective mystery isn't a mystery in the true sense at all. It's only a problem that the detective is trying to solve.

There are three things—puzzle, problem, and mystery—that are alike in that they all involve something we do not know. But they are also importantly different from one another. A puzzle usually has a trick to it. Once the trick is pointed out, you can solve the puzzle instantly from then on. A problem doesn't have a trick to it. Your car breaks down on the freeway. You have a problem on your hands. But though problems do not turn on tricks, they can be solved. Your car can be repaired.

A mystery is that special kind of problem wherein the more you learn about it, the more you see how much there is about it that you do not know. In other words,

knowledge and ignorance advance, in our awareness, in lockstep. Examples of genuine mysteries are: life, one's own self in its totality, the world in its totality, and above all else, God.

These commonalities in the world's great religions—in the ethics and virtues that they advocate, and in their visions—augur well for their harmony in the long run. It is true, of course, that on certain points religions say different things. But as Shri Ramakrishna was fond of pointing out, these differences add lustre to the global religious scene in something of the way the colours in the spectrum of light lend colour to the physical world. As we work at our task of furthering the harmony of religions, we need only keep in mind that, though colours do indeed differ from one another as colours, they are alike in being, all of them, instances of light. That light is the Light of the world.

## FRIEDREICH MAXIMILLIAN MULLER (1823-1900)

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

### HIS LIFE AND STUDIES

For centuries Indian thought and idealism, her great treasures of Sanskrit literature, her spiritual insights and wisdom, and her peace-loving life have attracted the hearts and minds of other nations. Her silent contributions to the cultural, moral and spiritual life of the world were more than those of the great rulers and conquerors. Her mysticism, her love for divine life, her passion for the quest of Truth, and her idealism of renunciation as expressed through Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Shankara and a host of other illumined souls, have helped to direct this pattern of contemplative life in her people. These

values of life inspired the people and urged them to develop their divine life. Thanks to the spiritual temperament of her people and the wisdom of her great men and women, it was possible to preserve the sacred trust of her most valuable treasures acquired through centuries of hardship and renunciation, in spite of the ravages of time.

Lured by her fabulous wealth, the daring seafarers of Spain and Portugal undertook adventures for reaching India. The Portuguese sailor, Vasco da Gama, landed in Calicut on May 20, 1498. Host of Christian missionaries, travellers and others who came in the wake of this discovery, were deeply fascinated by her profound, unfathomable wisdom and thus a revelation of "real India"

was made by the dedicated scholarship of some of them. In a letter to Gladstone (January 18, 1883) Max Muller wrote: "The discovery of that real India, of that new intellectual hemispheres, is to my mind a far greater discovery than that of Vasco da Gama's". Between 1820 and 1850 Europe gained more information about India, both ancient and modern, than it had obtained in twenty-one centuries since Alexander the Great.

Among the hosts of brilliant and noble-minded men who devoted themselves to the study of India, her Sanskrit literature and culture, Max Muller (1823-1900) was the most popular in the West. Acharya Ramendra Sundar Trivedi, a distinguished and saintly scholar of Bengal, wrote that "Max Muller was a real lover of India, the most admiring and sympathetic orientalist, whereas others were lovers of Indian wisdom showing a good deal of inquisitiveness in having new knowledge about her glorious past". To understand the real greatness of Max Muller, we quote Swami Vivekananda who visited him on May 28, 1896, on special invitation.

The visit was really a revelation to me. That nice little house in its setting of a beautiful garden, the silverheaded sage, with a face calm and benign, and forehead smooth as a child's in spite of seventy winters, and every line in that face speaking of a deep-seated mine of spirituality somewhere behind; that noble wife, the helpmate of his life through his long and arduous task of exciting interest, overriding opposition and contempt, and at last creating a respect for the thoughts of the sages of ancient India—the trees, the flowers, the calmness, and the clear sky—all these sent me back in imagination to the glorious days of Ancient India, the days of our Brahmarshis and Rajarshis, the days of the great Vanaprasthas, the days of Arundhatis and Vasishtas. It was neither the philologist nor the scholar that I saw, but a soul that is every day realising its oneness with the Brahman, a heart that is every moment expanding to reach oneness with the Universal. Where others lose themselves in the desert of dry details, he has struck the well-

spring of life. Indeed his heartbeats have caught the rhythm of the Upanishads... —Know the Atman alone, and leave off all other talk.

Although a world-moving scholar and philosopher, his learning and philosophy have only led him higher and higher to the realisation of the Spirit, his...(lower knowledge) has indeed helped him to reach the...(higher knowledge) This is real learning...—"Knowledge gives humility." Of what use is knowledge if it does not show us the way to the Highest?

And what love he bears towards India! I wish I had a hundredth part of that love for my own motherland! Endued with an extraordinary, and at the same time intensely active mind, he has lived and moved in the world of Indian thought for fifty years or more, and watched the sharp interchange of light and shade in the interminable forest of Sanskrit literature with deep interest and heartfelt love, till they have all sunk into his very soul and coloured his whole being. Max Muller is a Vedantist of Vedantists. (*Complete Works (C.W.) of Swami Vivekananda*, vol 4, p. 280-81).

Friedrich Maxmillian Muller was born on December 6, 1823 in Dassau, Germany. His father, W. Muller (1794-1827) was a distinguished poet who supported the Greek's liberation movement by composing Greek songs (hence known as "Greek Muller"). It may be interesting to know that he was so enamoured of the soul and mind of Greece that he was able to understand its people's aspirations through his sheer love for them without ever having visited the country. His other poems which were set to music have become a part of national heritage. His mother, Adelheide von Basedow (1799-1883) was a highly cultured woman and acquired proficiency in English, French and Italian. Her husband's sudden death and their lack of economic security made her life miserable, but she was so devoted to him that she decided not to marry again. "With great difficulty" she raised her children, a boy and a girl, with the support of her father. It may not be out of place to mention here that a deep love existed between mother and son, and

that this affectionate link continued throughout their lives. Since the age of 12, Max Muller had to leave his mother for the purpose of higher studies and this separation which continued for some forty-seven years, was agonizing for both. Max Muller regularly wrote letters to his mother, and each one was carefully preserved by her. All these letters bound in five volumes, are kept now in the Bodleian library.

He lived in Leipzig for eight years and obtained a doctorate in philosophy degree from Leipzig University in 1843. The study of language and philosophy were his favourites. He studied the ancient European languages, Greek and Latin, and also classical philology. He also studied Sanskrit at the special request of Prof. Hermann Brockhaus (1806-77). In 1844 he published in Germany, *Hitopadesha*; that year he also started his studies of Sanskrit in Berlin, under Franz Bopp and philosophy under Friedrich von Schelling (1775-1854). After some time, he moved to Paris and attended the lectures delivered by Burnouf on the first book of the *Rig-Veda*. It was Burnouf who inspired him to publish his English version of the *Rig-Veda* with Sayanacharya's commentary. Having spent some time in his research work in Paris, in 1846 he went to London for the first time planning to stay only a few weeks to pursue his research, but was destined to spend there the rest of his life. To quote Max Muller, "My real love for Sanskrit literature was first kindled by the Upanishads. It was in the year 1844 while attending Von Schelling's lectures in Berlin, that my attention was drawn to those ancient theosophic treatises..." (*The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. I, Introduction, p. xiv). Max Muller actually translated a portion of one of the Upanishads for him.

In this work on the *Rig-Veda*, he received good support from H.H. Wilson (1786-1860) and especially from Bunsen (1791-1860), a Prussian minister based in London. Bunsen

was a remarkable man of his time, a genuine scholar and seeker into the origins of religion and spiritual dimensions, a diplomat and a loving person, a successful social elite. Max Muller found in him a genuine well-wisher and this connection paved the way for his success in life for which he remained ever grateful to him. Bunsen, the great lover of the Vedas that he was, actually planned to go to India to do research work on these sacred books when he was only 25. Max Muller's love for the Vedas attracted Bunsen's attention who had already abandoned the project due to his many commitments and busy schedule, while Max Muller had engaged himself in copying and collating the manuscript of the *Rig-Veda* in the hope of finding an interested publisher. At this time, Bunsen persuaded the Board of Directors of East India Company to undertake the publication of this project which was agreed upon and eventually became a success.

In 1850 Max Muller was nominated Deputy Taylorian Professor of European Language at Oxford University and, in 1854, was granted Full Professorship. He applied for the Boden Professorship of Sanskrit Chair in 1860 and although he was the most brilliant candidate, famous as he already was as comparative linguist and Indologist, the nominating committee selected Monier Williams for the position. Oxford University consoled him to some extent by creating for him a Chair of Comparative Philology in 1868, which he occupied till 1875.

He married an English lady, by the name of Georgina Grenfell (1834-1916) in 1859 and had four children, a son and three daughters. His wife was a very accomplished woman, who helped him greatly in all possible ways. After his voluntary retirement in 1875, he embarked upon a massive project of the publication of *The Sacred Books of the East*. One can see his scholarly

output by going through the selected bibliography of his works. One is amazed to notice his scholarly enthusiasm, hard labour, sharp intellect and love for Indian wisdom. When Max Muller passed away after a brief illness on October 28, 1900, at Oxford, homage poured on him from all over the world, especially India.

It is a fact that like his father he never visited the country of his love but throughout his long life kept the great vision of Indian culture before his gaze. While carrying conversation with Keshab Chandra Sen who paid a visit to him at Oxford, he said: "I feel I am always in Benares. I do not desire to see the geographical Benares with my physical eyes. My idea of that city is so high that I cannot risk a disillusionment."

By his scholarship, he exerted great influence on the minds of the leading Indian intellectuals of his time. This has been attested to by celebrated Indians. We would like to mention here a few words representing such statement from Behenraji M. Malabari, "Hindu politicians regard Maximillian Muller as one of their wisest and safest guides. Hindu reformers consider him their final court of appeals." With the arrival of Max Muller's *Rig-Veda* in India at first, some orthodox people raised protests against it. But it was seen that at a meeting held by the Brahmanas at Poona, one non-Brahmana read out loudly from the printed book, and all the Brahmanas began to correct their respective manuscripts, validating thereby Max Muller's work as authoritative. Max Muller proved himself to be recognized as an expert and authority on the Vedas and the Indians lovingly accepted him as the true custodian of their sacred source of spiritual wisdom. They bestowed on him the title Moksha Mulara with a note: "He who gave *ra* (the root), *mula* (the foundation), the knowledge of final beatitude, Moksha, he is called Moksha Mulara."

Lokamanya Tilak wrote in his paper *The Mahratta*, November 4, 1900:

This general benefactor of the world had claimed India especially as his own, and no ordinary reasons would be enough to wholly account for the love he bore for this country.... In him India has lost the warmest friend, the wisest lover, and the most enthusiastic admirer whose place, alas, will be filled we know not when!

### HIS WORK AND ITS IMPACT

*The Life and Letters of Max Muller*, edited by Georgina Muller Grenfell (2 vols, London, 1902), can give us a glimpse of his versatile scholarship, wide range of study and the humane aspect of his great life.

Sanskrit cast a spell on his life and his serious study of the Sanskrit language gave him an insight about the oriental wisdom in philology, metaphysics, anthropology, comparative religion and mysticism.

The shift of his studies from comparative philology to that of comparative religions, enlarged his vision, broadened his outlook and enriched his personality by his exposures to religious ideas other than Christianity in his later life. The serious student of his works will find this truth by comparing his attitudes articulated in the first volume of *The Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford, 1849) with *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, published in 1899. At first, Max Muller did not share the well-known view of Schopenhauer that, "...in the whole world there is no study except that of the original (of the Upanishads), so beneficial and so elevating or that of the Upenwhat (Persian translation of the Upanishads). It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death...." However, a year before his death, he accepted this view heartily and called the Vedanta philosophy "a system in which human speculation seems to have reached its very acme". Again, he said, "I share his (Schopenhauer's) enthusiasm for the Vedanta, and feel indebted to it for much that has been helpful to me in my passage

through life." (Max Muller: *The man and his ideas*, J.H. Voigt, 1967, p. 32).

We can get a glimpse of his mind from this excerpt taken from *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, where Max Muller says (p. 182):

It is surely astounding that such a system as the Vedanta should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy, as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of a Gothic cathedral. None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel, has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightnings. Stone follows on stone after regular succession after once the first step has been made, after once it has been clearly seen that in the beginning there can have been but one, as there will be but one in the end, whether we call it Atman or Brahman.

Max Muller's writings have been preserved for posterity in his numerous books like *Rig-Veda* (6 vols, 1849-74), *Chips from a German workshop* (Collected Essays, 4 vols, 1865-75), *A Sanskrit Grammar* (London, 1866), *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (London, 1869), *Ramakrishna: His life and Sayings* (1898), *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* (1899), *Three Lectures on the Indian Philosophy*, *An Introduction to the Science of Religion*, *The Sacred Books of the East* (51 vols), *India: What Can It Teach Us?* (Funk and Wagnalis, New York) and so many others.

His scholarly enthusiasm, indomitable courage, untiring energy, massive intellect and vast erudition, can be seen in his works. The publication of the *Rig-Veda* made him famous throughout the world. In the field of philology he had few equals, while in early Sanskrit learning he was almost an innovator. Sanskrit was, in his mature opinion, the pivot of culture, so therefore, he urged talented scholars and interested parties in the serious study of Sanskrit Grammar, literature and thought, in order

to enter the field of Indian wisdom, which he considered the most ideal. "In that study of the history of human mind, in that study of ourselves, our true selves, India occupies a place which is second to no other country. ..." (*India: What Can It Teach Us?* p. xv).

The complete edition of the *Rig-Veda* which appeared in six volumes from 1849-74, as already mentioned, was a most valuable publication and offered an extensive scope to everyone interested in a serious study of religion, mythology and language of the oldest known sacred book in the world. The scientific analysis of the language used in the *Rig-Veda* was of great importance in finding the fundamental affinity between the members of the Indo-European language group. Max Muller was convinced of the practical importance of Sanskrit for British administrators as well as for the educated Indians.

After having completed the last volume at the end of 1874, he wrote in the preface: "When I had written the last line of the *Rig-Veda* and Sayana's commentary, and put down my pen, I felt as if I had parted with an old, old friend."

Swami Vivekananda commented in 1899:

The *Rig-Veda Samhita*, the whole of which no one could even get at before, is now very neatly printed and made accessible to the public, thanks to the munificent generosity of the East India Company and to the Professor's prodigious labours extending over years. The alphabetical characters of most of the manuscripts, collected from different parts of India, are of various forms, and many words in them are inaccurate. We cannot easily comprehend how difficult it is for a foreigner, however learned he may be, to find out the accuracy or inaccuracy of these Sanskrit characters, and more especially to make out clearly the meaning of an extremely condensed and complicated commentary. In the life of Professor Max Muller, the publication of the *Rig-Veda* is a great event. Besides this, he has been dwelling, as it were, and spending his whole lifetime amidst ancient Sanskrit literature;... (C.W., 4:409).

While paying homage to Max Muller, Ramesh Chandra Dutta, who was president of the Indian National Congress in 1899, said:

The publication of the *Rig-Veda*...opened a new epoch in historic and religious studies in India and helped us to turn to the past for inspiration and for guidance in solving the great religious and social problems which lie before us in the path of our future progress...Max Muller's numerous contributions to the elucidation of the literature, religion and philosophy of ancient India have helped us in this progress; and his sympathetic works on modern India have inspired us with courage, with confidence and with hope.

(R.C. Dutta, "His Speeches and Papers on Indian Question—1897-1900," Calcutta, p. 272).

His preoccupation with the Vedic texts gave him a valuable insight about the richness of the Sanskrit language, the significance of which he discussed in his lectures on the "Science of Language". The serious study of this ancient language, he emphatically said: "...will open before you larger layers of literature, as yet almost unknown and unexplored and allow an insight into the strata of thought, deeper than any of you has known before and rich in lessons that appeal to the deepest sympathies of the human heart."

Through his writings, like the *History of Sanskrit Language and Sanskrit Grammar*, he took the credit of inspiring the younger generation to study the Sanskrit language with the genuine interest of an explorer. He championed the cause of this study from a practical point. The ruling class in India will be benefited if it is exposed to the culture of its people. On the other hand, he was sure of rendering a positive benefit to the Indians themselves. After having known about their glorious past and its brilliant achievement, the Indians will feel proud of their heritage. He expressed it as follows: "A people that can feel no pride in the past,

in its history and literature, loses the mainstay of its national character."

Lastly, he opened the eyes of the rulers about the richness of Indian wisdom and thereby persuaded them to enrich their own lives through such healthy contact. In this way, he was responsible in creating a healthy, wise and new awareness among the English in developing an increasing interest and love for this type of study. Due to his untiring labour and love for such discussions, Britain became the principal seat of Sanskrit study in the Western world.

The British had a very poor opinion about the Indian people, tradition and culture. The famous statement of Macaulay made in 1835 is given herewith:

I have never found one among them (Orientalists) who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

People having no idea about the history of Indo-British personal relations will not be able to appreciate the ceaseless work of Max Muller in creating a happy relationship between them. By the end of the last century, the English had formulated their "Thirty-nine Articles of Dogma" concerning the Indians, the first and second articles being the habit of lying and dishonesty of all Indians. Max Muller tried his best to fight against this misunderstanding. He formed his opinion about the general truthfulness of the Hindus from his personal contact with a large number of eminent Englishmen having intimate knowledge with Indian natives. He was emboldened by the statements of Colonel Sleeman who became immortal as the eradicator of the notorious gangs of the Thugs. Max Muller delivered a series of lectures at Cambridge in 1882, and was bold enough to title them: "India: What Can It Teach Us?" In his second lecture he quoted one of Sleeman's statements: "I have had before me hundreds of

cases in which a man's property, liberty and life has depended upon his telling a lie, and he has refused to tell it" (*Max Muller*, N. Chowdhuri, p. 308).

These lectures were mainly given to create a better, unprejudiced understanding of India among the Indian civil service candidates. In the first lectures he expressed his highest admiration for India, thus:

If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India. (*India: What Can It Teach Us?*, New York, p. 24).

"The time has come," he said, "when the study of the ancient religions of mankind must be approached in a different, less enthusiastic, more discriminating, more scholar-like in spirit." Max Muller embarked upon a gigantic project of publishing *The Sacred Books of the East*, from 1875 onwards in not less than fifty-one volumes. A team of nineteen outstanding scholars of different nationalities were engaged for this massive research work, Max Muller being the editor-in-chief. He himself contributed the translation of the Upanishads and the Dhammapada. Forty-eight volumes were published during his lifetime and three thereafter, two of the latter ones being index volumes. Of the forty-nine volumes, twenty-

one refer to Hinduism, ten to Buddhism and two to Jainism; the rest are devoted to the religions of the Persians, Muhammedans and Chinese.

On October 29, 1900, the *Times* published inter alia: "What a superb service he rendered to the East and the West by the series of *The Sacred Books of the East*!... and if Professor Max Muller had done nothing else but conceive and plan this undertaking, the cultivated world would have been his debtor." This edition made him the authority on comparative religious studies, a new discipline which he had introduced into the university curriculum in 1867.

The Indian people looked upon Max Muller as their genuine friend, sane philosopher and real guide. He was not an intellectual confining himself to an ivory tower of scholarship. His study of the Vedic literature did create an impact on his inner life and his emotional life was distinctly coloured by his spiritual insight. The letters he wrote in his later life did give indication of his spiritual outlook. In one of them he tells:

All I care for is to make others understand how my heart was caught and what I was in my Indian love, not only in her Vedantic dreams and aspirations, but in the simplicity of her earliest utterances of trust in powers invisible, yet present behind what was visible, and in her faith in a law that rules both the natural and the supernatural worlds.

Quite often he was accused for his bias towards Indian cultures, but Max Muller said, "I have always held the people of India are not strangers, but are exactly like ourselves, if we only would treat them as such. It may be said that I know the best specimens of Hindu society only, but the best specimens show what a nation is capable of." For the commendable role he took upon himself as a spokesman of Indian culture and civilization, Indians loved him. One of his Indian friends articulated his

gratitude thus: "He has done more than any living man to spread the knowledge of English in India....We all want to be able to read our sacred books. We now widely study English in order to read Max Muller." Being a real lover of India, Max Muller kept his eyes open to her affairs and movements. He read P.C. Mazumdar's article on Ramakrishna that appeared in October 1879 in the *Theistic Quarterly Review* and also the ones which appeared in N.N. Sen's *Mirror*.

Ever since Swamiji's appearance in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, in 1893, Max Muller had shown interest in Ramakrishna. He was also a regular reader of the *Brahmavadin*. He envisioned the picture of Ramakrishna. He even presented one of his books to Alambazar Math. He wrote an article, "A Real Mahatman," which appeared in the celebrated journal, *Nineteenth Century*, in the August 1896 edition. During the visit Swamiji paid to Max Muller at his residence on May 28, 1896, the latter told Swamiji that "he would be very glad to write a larger and fuller account...if sufficient materials were forthcoming." Max Muller conveyed his intensity of feeling about Ramakrishna in a letter to Swamiji, as follows:

As for your beloved master of blessed memory, Bhagaban Sri Ramakrishna, how can I ever tell you what he is to me, I love and worship him with my whole heart. To think of him makes my eyes fill with tears of gladness that I was permitted to hear of him. His sayings, published in the *Brahmavadin*, are my greatest delight. How wonderful that his teachings should have been borne to this far-off land where we had never even known of his existence! If I might only have known him, while he was yet with us! My greatest desire is to one day visit the spot which (was) sanctified by his presence, while he lived, and I may be so fortunate as to fulfil the wish.

(*Swami Vivekananda in the West: New discoveries*, Marie Louise Burke, vol. 4, p. 170).

Swamiji sent him a full description of his master's life and this formed the basis of his book, *The Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna*, published in November 1898. After the publication of his earlier article, "The Real Mahatman," Max Muller had to face "Unintermittent volleys of fierce attack" from the Christian missionaries and certain members of the Brahmo Samaj. But he accepted the heaps of vituperation with a calmness that befitted his dignity. He published the book by way of rejoinder. Max Muller's book was reviewed in the *Udbodhan* by Swamiji himself in March 14, 1899 (see *Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 416-17). Needless to point out, this book created a great impact in India and in the West. It may be interpreted as a second glorious triumph of this Movement, after Swamiji's success in Chicago in 1893 (*Vishwa Chetanay Shri Ramakrishna*, S.P. Basu, *Udbodhan*, p. 792).

Swamiji once made a remark in this vein,

Well, do you know, my impression is that it is Sayana who is born again as Max Muller to revive his commentary on the Vedas? I have had this notion for long. It became confirmed in my mind, it seems, after I had seen Max Muller. Even here in this country, you don't find a scholar so persevering, and so firmly grounded in the Vedas and the Vedanta. Over and above this, what a deep, unfathomable respect for Shri Ramakrishna! Do you know, he believes in his Divine Incarnation!

(*Complete Works*, vol. VI, p. 495).

## CONCLUSION

Max Muller being very dear to India, all the branches of the Goethe Institute in India are designated even to this day, as Max Muller Bhavans. They are spread out in major cities of India like Bombay, Bangalore, Madras, Poona, New Delhi, Calcutta and Hyderabad. *The Sacred Books of the East* have been re-published by Motilal Banarsidass (1965) with a brief note from

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, ex-President of India. It may be mentioned that his library, consisting of some 13,000 volumes, was taken over by Tokyo University as many scholars of Japan were intimately related to him.

Swami Vivekananda considered his visit to Max Muller's residence "as a pilgrimage". Max Muller was very hospitable to Swamiji and Mr. Sturdy, inviting them to lunch with him, showing them part of the Oxford University campus and the Bodleian library, and accompanying them to the railway station. And all this was done with great reverence because, as he said, "It is not every day one meets a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa." (*Complete Works*, vol. IV, p. 280).

"The jeweller alone can understand the worth of jewels; this is an old proverb. Is

it a wonder that this Western sage does study and appreciate every new star in the firmament of Indian thought, before even the Indians themselves realise its magnitude?

"When are you coming to India? Every heart there would welcome one who has done so much to place the thoughts of their ancestors in the true light", I said. The face of the aged sage brightened up—there was almost a tear in his eyes, a gentle nodding of the head, and slowly the words came out: I would not return then; you would have to cremate me there. Further questions seemed an unwarrantable intrusion into realms wherein are stored the holy secrets of man's heart....His life has been a blessing to the world...." (*Complete Works*, v. 4, p. 281).

## RELIGION AND LITERARY CRITICISM

TUTUN MUKHERJEE

Lead me from the unreal to the Real  
Lead me from darkness to Light  
Lead me from death to Immortality.  
(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*)

A very large amount of literary activity in the twentieth century has been devoted to the interpretation and the explication of literature from differing, often divergent, points-of-view to have acquired the recognition of an independent genre of study. The last decade of the century is advantageously poised to assess the basic way in which this vast body of writing has furthered man's knowledge.

### I

First let us briefly examine what is the present concept of man and what is the kind

of knowledge that is generally sought.

Today's man prides himself in the infallibility of his scientific knowledge of the physical world with the help of which he wields greater control over his environment. He has perpetuated, with his knowledge, an efficient and pervasively secular society designed to last longer than any individual's lifetime.

The kind of information that caters to and satisfies the needs of the member of the social state and is aimed at making the performance of the implicit tasks more controlled and skilled is considered valuable knowledge. In the process, man has willingly made himself subservient to the social order, a replaceable spare part in the great machine of the materialist society in which all of his temporal desires and aspirations

may be realised, at the expense of his deeper nature. Man has "evolved" as the cleverest and the most complex primate with increasing control over nature.

Yet the world has never been more ugly and dangerous than the world created by an ideology that proclaims its primacy over everything; nor has man been more vulnerable and his knowledge more inadequate than in his present preoccupation with the physical and material existence, disorienting himself from the spiritual. Knowledge in such a situation can only be and often is of the limited utilitarian kind. The incredible materialistic success of such knowledge is undeniable, but it is equally true that it tells nothing about the essence of man's being, his consciousness. So overwhelming is the specialised information about man's natural evolution, his physical and behavioural conditions, explanations concerning his psyche, and so on, that one tends to forget that man is not merely a clever mammal; that the brain is not the mind; that the consciousness is not a quantifiable property of the sense organs. Man is human and as such a spiritual being, immaterial, immeasurable, who is never born and who never dies because the spirit is not bound by nor contained within the categories of the material world of time and space, duration and extension.

Yet of this immortal eternal boundless inner world modern man knows very little. His lifestyle makes such knowledge inessential and promotes a sense of complacency rather like Plato's dwellers in the cave turning away from the light.

Therefore, valuable knowledge is that which leads towards the invisible kingdom of man's mind, the boundless interior regions of his consciousness, the unguessed, undiscerned realms of his self. Self-knowledge alone is the ultimate reality and this can be, and has been in the past, learned, transmitted, and communicated through

religion and art. Religion, through theology and rites, recalls to the forgetful mind the archetype of the *anthropos*: that man is made in the image of God which he can recover. The arts "of the visual (kind), of music, of poetry, of literature, of architecture, of dance, of philosophy...show in their style both the encounter with non-being and the strength which can stand this encounter and shape it creatively."<sup>1</sup>

The dividing line between religion and art is very thin. Ultimately both religion and art are profound personal experiences; both derive from culture; and both consist of revealed tradition. Religion offers the philosophy of myths, sacred stories and rites as the preserved embodiments of human races in search for self knowledge. Art springs from the attempt to transmute and immortalise this rich heritage in tangible forms as did the goldsmiths of Byzantium, the builders of Chartres, the painters of Florence, the poets of the Renaissance. David Jones said, "...the activity called art is, at bottom and inescapably a religious activity, for it deals with realities, and the real is sacred and religious."<sup>2</sup>

In the words of T.S. Eliot, "No culture has appeared or developed except together with religion...."<sup>3</sup> The recovery of the inheritance of culture is not easy because much of it is irrevocably lost with civilizations atrophied or broken under the impact of institutional, doctrinaire, ideologies, or in the name of original self expression.

The confusion is no less evident in the literature of the modern time. Reality is to

1. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball, (N.Y. Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 12.

2. David Jones, "Art and Sacrament", quoted by Kathleen Raine, *The Inner Journey of the Poet*, (London: George Allen Unwin, 1982), p. 59.

3. T.S. Eliot, "Definition of Culture," *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (London: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 246.

Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you"—be with me and for me in your own home, right where you used to be, then without realizing how holy that environment could be.

*St. John's Gospel* [20.11-18] tells us that after Jesus' death, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb in order to stay by the body. She meets the Risen Lord, but he seems so human, so ordinary that she thinks that he is the gardener—even in resurrection he looks like anybody else. She wants to cling to him, but he tells her to return to the city, to tell the disciples that he is risen. Again, the command given to Ramakrishna finds an echo here: "Don't dwell in the pure ecstasy of divine immediacy, but rather go back into the world for the sake of the human race, to illuminate their lives."

Likewise St. Paul, who so intensely experienced the Risen Lord and was so successful in sharing that experience with others, was the kind of person he was because he could live with the basic tension: he was totally "in Christ", and yet "in the world, for others." As he recounts in *Philippians*:

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. [1:21-24].

What Paul is saying is what we might now be able to name "the mission to remain in the state of *bhāvamukha*."

I am a Jesuit, and it was an essential part of the experience of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order, that God is to be found in the world. In creating the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, Ignatius defined a new way of being a religious, of living the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He chose not to be a traditional monk living in isolation from the everyday

world, but rather to nurture that "holy indifference" which made him able to see all things as coming from God and returning to God. His mysticism was simply to find God in all things, as he indicates in the directives stated at the end of his great text, *The Spiritual Exercises*:

Now I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees...[Then I will reflect] how God dwells in creatures: in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in man, bestowing understanding. So He dwells in me and gives me life, sensation, intelligence; and makes me a temple, since I am created in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty... [Then I should] consider how God works and labors for me in all creatures on the face of the earth, that is, He conducts Himself as one who labors. Thus, in the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, the cattle, etc., He gives Being, conserves them, confers life and sensation, etc... [I should] consider all blessings and gifts as descending from above. Thus, my limited power comes from the supreme and infinite power above, and so, too, justice, goodness, mercy; etc., descend from above as the rays of light descend from the sun, and as the waters flow from their fountains, etc. [*Spiritual Exercises* 234-7, Puhl translation.]

If the Jesuit cannot find God in all things, then he cannot find God at all: this too resonates with Ramakrishna's *bhāva-mukha*: to live out one's precious experience of God here in a world illumined with God's presence. In fact, this point might well be added: a very interesting comparison can be undertaken at some point between the Jesuit Order and the Ramakrishna Order and the ways they have gone about defining religious life, the visions they have articulated, the works they have undertaken, and the ways in which they have learned from each other the years.

I would like to conclude with a couple



the basically dialectical character of the relationship between the literary work and the reader-critic. Literature is not a neutral object to be dissected and manipulated. Though it has its own rhythm and dynamics, its own structure and authentic autonomy, its appeal lies in ordering of experience that it offers. The interpreter is encouraged to submit himself to the dialectics of the text which gradually illumines, enlarges, and completes his own understanding. It prompts him to discover his own answers for his "seeking self".

### III

A movement of resistance against the conception of literature as something autogenous and self-contained is discernible. However, here it is not my intention to explore how far literary criticism has moved towards humanism. I wish to emphasize that the scope of investigation in the existing critical systems is limited when they do not attempt to make manifest these determinative values and root beliefs on which an artist's vision is reared. Just as all works of literature cannot sustain a "depth" enquiry, in the same way the existing body of literary criticism remains functionally successful methodologies providing basic explicatory expertise for initiates.

Literature is the language of the self and its proper function is to create images of an inner order, of an eternal pattern, that all share: "to open into...those secret doors, those ways in; to consecrate and redeem for every generation some parcel of the surrounding waste."<sup>17</sup> When such a critical yardstick is applied to literature, it becomes evident that though some work may succeed as art, it often fails as a product of culture—a vehicle for enduring values. Such, for instance, is the difference between T.S. Eliot and Auden as poets. Though both use the

modern urban scene in sharply defined images of contemporary situations and therefore are often compared, they really ought to be contrasted. While Auden's poetry remains pleasingly photographed documentary, Eliot's is the journey, rather like Dante's journey and every soul's journey, into the recesses of the consciousness in search of the cosmic order that upholds the world.

Man is governed by certain values that never change. Conventions change because they are governed by time and space. The classical philosophers, Plotinus and Plato, located these values in art when they said that art was beautiful and holy when it embodied the eternal forms inherent in the consciousness. It remains for literary theorists to use this concept in its entirety. I.A. Richards is responsible for dichotomising "beauty" from "holy" or "truth" and maintaining that the evaluation of literature depended not upon the kind of truth it offered (it consisted of "pseudo statements" anyway) but upon the number of appeals satisfied by its synaesthetic pleasure.<sup>18</sup> The Richardian view locates the end of literature in the refinement of emotions but does not explain the purpose that is served by this refinement. This is rather like stopping with Aristotle's statement about therapeutic catharsis to be found in art and not moving further with him to see the harmony, the order and the rhythm that becomes apparent once the "subliminal" emotions are purged.

C.G. Jung explains the four functions of the psyche: reason, feelings, sensation, intuition. The ideal condition reflects the harmonised balance of the four. The Hindu Philosophy lists the basic energies or *purusharthas*: dharma, artha, kama, moksha. Literature not only stimulates but also teaches to channelise them.

17. Kathleen Raine, p. 88.

18. I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1924).

So to define the ultimate focus and the rewarding direction of literary study is to involve the enterprise of criticism in that direction of thought which has always been suspect. If religion is "more than a system of special symbols, rites, and emotions directed towards a highest being,"<sup>19</sup> if it does not pertain exclusively to a specific cognitive function but is directed towards the education of the human spirit in all spheres of life and culture, then invariably religion is the orientation that criticism requires. I do not mean religion as a particular system with its freight of special symbols or metaphysics, but a religious consciousness in its concern to understand this world in relation to issues of the ultimate foundations of all valuing and acting and thinking and not merely with particular aspects of moral, ethical, political, or intellectual experience. Literary imagination, in envisaging a broad perspective of human experience, dramatizes issues of human conduct, raises questions, encourages apprehension of the realities of the human world, therein lies its success over theology. J. Hillis Miller offers brilliant examination of the "religious consciousness" of Conrad, Yeats, Eliot, Stevens, and Carlos Williams but comes to a strange conclusion that literary motifs take on "a properly religious meaning" only if some "supernatural reality" is present.<sup>20</sup> To suppose that religious consciousness must depend upon a *deus ex machina* or certain iconology is not entirely valid. Instead, it helps in the discovery of the profound realm of meaning and mystery where faith and art merge as images and ideas reach out in mutual recognition of the sacred through the ordinary or the profane.

## IV

Religious interpretation does not mean looking at literature through the eyes of religion and it is not compulsorily a part of theological studies. In my opinion, this is the test that resolves whether a literary work succeeds or fails as a classic. But what constitutes religious interpretation? What are its assumption and methods? How does it help the critic to assess the work of such nonreligious (in the conventional sense) writers like Sartre, Camus, O'Neill, and Beckett?

There can be no set assumptions or methods for religious interpretation but sensitivity and self-transcendence on the part of the critic. He must maintain an open relationship with the text and the human condition. He must never approach the text with an *a priori* religious presumption nor look for only theses and symbols that represent a particular system of faith, say Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu. He must not hawk his own beliefs in the manner of a sectarian zealot. Just as science has its *gnosis* within its own terms, there is also *gnosis* of the mind. This *gnosis* is the basis of all products of human imagination. Ananda Coomaraswamy has said that all theologies, mythologies, and arts are dialectical variations of a universal language of human consciousness.<sup>21</sup> Writers may or may not be religious men but all literature comprises a language of *search* for intuitive or spiritual knowledge. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. says of Eugene O'Neill, for instance, that O'Neill "was antireligious only so far as the object of the quest itself."<sup>22</sup> The same can be said of Camus, Sartre, and Beckett if religion is taken to be what con-

19. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* trans. J.L. Adams (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 59.

20. J. Hillis Miller, *Poets of Reality*, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), ch. I.

21. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1934).

22. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. *The Broken Center*, (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1965), p. ix.

cerns everybody ultimately. It is not the solution that matters, and, in fact, in such writers like Camus, Sartre, Beckett, Joyce, Kafka, Durrenmatt there are no solutions but "...Silence, an Absence, a Threatening Emptiness at the centre...dominant metaphors are still of death and privation...",<sup>23</sup> of no explicit rapport with the sacred. It is the seriousness and persistence of their quest for the ultimate truth, meaning, and reality of human existence that makes their work religious. In a profane world life is

<sup>23</sup>. Scott, p. 78-79.

as meaningless as death, but the history of imaginative literature assures a continuous renewal of life or the rejuvenation of the dying hero or god like Milton's Satan or Shelley's Prometheus. All writers intuitively reach out towards this spring of life. It is the responsibility of the literary critic to undertake the journey of discovery of this quest in the text and thus fulfil the Arnoldian prophecy that "the great books save us!"<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup>. Matthew Arnold, "Study of Poetry," *Essays in Criticism*, 2 series (London: Macmillan, 1896), p. 1-55.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**BUDDHA AND BODHISATTWA—A HINDU VIEW** by Dr. A. K. Bishwas. Pp. 164, Price not mentioned. Cosmo Publication, 1987, New Delhi

*Buddha and Bodhisattwa—A Hindu View* is one of the latest books on Buddhism which deserves attention of Buddhist scholars of today. The author Dr. A. K. Bishwas, well-acquainted with the history of Buddhism, makes a fresh interpretation of Buddha's greatness in the light of Buddha's own message, and also the fundamental ideas of Vedanta philosophy.

The seven chapters of the book give a clear idea on the main lines in which the scholarly author builds up and interprets the personality of Buddha. They are *Gautama-Buddha—A Condensed Biography*, *The Key Message of the Buddha*, *Controversies on the Buddha's Teaching* and *A Hindu View Point*, *The Human Buddha* and *Bodhisattwa Anecdotes*, *Bodhisattwa Through the Ages*, *Vivekananda Jataka*, *Buddha and Bodhisattwa—A Total Appraisal*. An important part of the book is the Appendix which tells in lucid English stories of ten Bodhisattwa incarnations of Buddha.

The special importance of the book lies, however, in the frequent references to the Jataka stories. A whole chapter delineating in faithful language and translation a number of salient Jataka stories, makes the reader understand how the gigantic Buddha mind developed through

the incredible sacrifices of property, relatives, and even life for the sake of helping a single individual in the various past incarnations of Buddha. The stories of Bodhisattwa's (Buddha-to-be) lives which are nearest to his final birth as Buddha, clearly shows that this transmigrating soul will ultimately emerge as a gigantic human being of world-conquering knowledge and power which is the accumulated treasure of the merits of five hundred births. The author, a scholar in Vivekananda literature, and a devotee of Vivekananda, devotes the sixth chapter for discussing the historic similarities between the lives and ideas of these two Buddha-minds. Finally the author adds a new dimension to the book by establishing a basic similarity of Buddha's teaching and the fundamental tenets of the Vedanta philosophy of Hindu religion which considers Buddha as one of the incarnations of God in Hindu tradition.

**BHAVAN'S JOURNAL: Annual Number, 15 August 1989.** Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

Entering into the 36th year, this special number carries on the old tradition of this prestigious journal of India. It opens with the messages of Tagore and Gandhi, and three articles on the Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism by Dr. Karan Singh, Cardinal Pimenta and C.N.S.K. Murthy. The long illustrated series of writing on the eleven living religious leaders of India and preachers of outstanding merit, is illuminating. Two writings

on the political system in India, by Subhas Kasyap, Secretary General, Lok Sabha, and Sravan Kumar (I.A.S. Retd) highlight on the present political condition in India. The illustrated article on the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama by Swami Jitatmananda is informative. The illustrated sketch on the Jnanpith Laureates is an added attraction of this issue. Rt. Honble V.S. Srinivasa Sastri's inspiring writing on the great books that influenced his life bring a new dimension. Besides, there are two other short sketches on Kulapati Balakrishna Joshi, and Vishnu Vaman Shirwadkar. The article on Yoga practice by B.K.S. Iyengar and the illustrated one-act play on Kisa Gotami have contributed to the enrichment of this special issue of *Bhavan's Journal*.

Four books (in English) for children from Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4. (All published in 1988; Prices not mentioned).

1. Ramayana for Children (Illustrated)—Swami Raghaveshananda, Art by Padmavasan.
2. The Story of Sri Sankara for children.
3. Pictorial Stories for children.
4. Gods and Goddesses (see and paint).

The four books mentioned above are new publications to acquaint the Indian children with the gods and goddesses of Hindu pantheon, and with the epic of the Ramayana. The language of the stories is simple, meant for school children. The four-colour illustrations in every page are impressive. The first two books, on the Ramayana and Sankaracharya, deserve especial credit for easy, lucid writing, excellent printing, and attractive art designs which drive home the theme of the books much quicker than the words in print.

S.J.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA PRADHANA SISHYAVARGAMU (TELUGU) By Dr. P. Shyamsundara Murthy, published by Shri Ramakrishna Seva Samiti, Maruteru (W. Godavari, A. P.)—534 122, p. 122 + xi, Rs. 5/-

Much of the vast Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature is yet to be translated into Telugu. While the gospel of Shri Ramakrishna has been translated only recently, the *magnum opus*—The Great Master, still remains a hidden treasure. Under the circumstances, any book on Shri Ramakrishna in Telugu would be welcome and the book under review, dealing with the lives of direct disciples of Shri Ramakrishna will be widely welcomed.

The book is based on the Apostles of Shri Ramakrishna, compiled in English by Swami Gambhiranandaji, the past president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. It is not a literal translation and is a highly abridged version of the original. Unfortunately, many of the important incidents in these lives have been sacrificed due to the brevity of the life-sketches. The last fifteen pages of the book have been devoted to *namavalis* and *hymns*. This space could have been better utilised for giving some more details of the lives of at least a few of these monks.

Nevertheless, the Telugu readers who have had no opportunity to read these biographies will surely welcome the book, which is written in simple and chaste Telugu.

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THE WISHING TREE by Christopher Isherwood. Published by Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1988, p. 208 Price, \$ 9.95.

We now have in the present book a stimulating and sumptuous collection of most of the articles Isherwood wrote for the magazine of the Hollywood centre *Vedanta and the West* between 1943-1975. (I still remember the breathless excitement with which I used to wait for the arrival of these issues from, roughly 1962 onwards, far, far away from Hollywood to a remote place in Andhra where I was then based, and I still have those copies which I fondly think are collectors' items!)

Arranged under five heads, these essays range from personal statements, synoptic essays on Vedanta and the Western condition, the intersecting points between the writer and the Vedanta to portraits of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Sarah Bernhardt, Swami Shivananda and Girish Ghosh. It also includes selections from his Gita translation, some prefaces he wrote, and, as a culmination, an entrancingly beautiful fable after which the book is named: *The Wishing Tree*.

This wide range of contents, however, has one central concern which is, as it were, the animating impulse of Isherwood's life and writing, ever since he came in touch with Vedanta (and its modern exemplar Ramakrishna) through Prabhavananda: the intense desire to actualize the real nature which is "divine". This manifestation seizes every activity whether it is creative or analytical. In Isherwood's memorable words, this

is a "question of approach" rooted in the awareness that "religion is not taught by one intelligence to another but caught through the influence of one personality upon another."

With reservations, one can still speak of the great value of the book. In effect, as the sensitive introduction by Gavin Lambert puts it, "the articles in this book provide a glimpse behind the scenes of disciplines not easily won or maintained, of a gradual journey toward a state of mysterious, dynamic peace..." As such, it is an invaluable addition to the literature of Perennial Philosophy.

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**THE QUINTESSENCE OF YOGAVASISHTHA**  
by Prof. B. Kuppuswamy, Published by  
C. S. Gupta, Satsangha Seva Samithi,  
Gandhi Bazar, Bangalore-4, 1988 p. 4+174.  
Price Rs. 15, U.S.A., \$ 3.00.

*Yogavasishtha* is one of the greatest epics of Indian philosophy. It is a very ancient book on Advaita Vedanta which was written, probably in the sixth century A.D.

The book under review is a brief summary of this great epic of Vedanta philosophy containing 32,000 verses. The purpose of this book is 'to enable the layman to understand the ideas of Vasishtha' and to present before the readers, as the author has stated in his introduction, 'a comparative study of Vasishtha's thought in relation to other Advaitins and idealists'. The dominant theme of *Yogavasishtha* is the analysis of the state of bondage and delusion and how to attain freedom from these and become a *jivanmukta*, the liberated person while living in the body.

The author, Prof. B. Kuppuswamy, has given the gist of many stories and illustrations told by the sage Vasishtha to Rama to explore and explain in depth the nature of mind, egoism, subtle bodies, transmigration of the deluded soul and finally, the behaviour of the liberated person who realizes his *atman* as the self of all.

There are four chapters in this book. In the first three chapters a free rendering of the original Sanskrit work of six parts is given in a condensed form, with a scholarly introduction in the beginning. In the fourth chapter, the author discusses the relevance of Vasishtha's thought to contemporary life and its problems. He pinpoints for major defects, as shown by Vasishtha in Indian

social behaviour which prevail even today in our society.

This book will surely help the readers to change their outlook of life and inspire them towards leading a spiritual life.

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**THE EPILOGUE** by Dr. Harendra Chandra Paul. Published by S. Paul, M.I.G. Housing Estate, Block C/2, B.T. Road, Calcutta-2, 1988 pp. 740.

The work under review is a continuation of the author's studies in the science of the Self with special reference to the great Sufi mystic Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-73 A.D). He himself treats this as Second Volume, the first being his earlier work entitled *Rumi and His Sufism*, widely acknowledged as a lexical work of great importance.

Dr. H. C. Paul (b. 1914) begins this work with a narrative found in Rumi's great work *Mathnavi* (spiritual poems), as available in the text edited and translated (in Urdu) by Qazi Sajjad Hussain (published by Kitab Ghar, Delhi), and not in the one edited by Dr. R. A. Nicholson. While taking of the nature of a perfect man (at the end of the Sixth part of the text) Rumi left the account incomplete. He simply notes that the knowers of God (arifan) are really the most lazy in the worlds material and spiritual (*Mathnavi*, 4886-8).

Rumi talks of the story of three brothers approaching the king of China after seeing the picture of his beautiful daughter. They represent the sensual (*nafs*), the intellectual (*agl*) and the spiritual (*ruh*) faculties of man. The eldest and the second brothers fail to get the favour of the king because of their impatience and egoism, respectively. The youngest brother was inactive. He did not even attend the funeral of his brother, as he was bed-ridden owing to affliction. But it was he who earned the pleasure of the king. He possessed the princess and sovereignty. Rumi does not elaborate his nature any further.

The author presents the account of another epilogue, the *Ikhtitam* by Mufti Ilahi Baksh (1742-1825) of India in his (Mufti's) copy of the *Mathnavi*. The Mufti relates the story of three shepherds in order to explain the nature of the lazy or the perfect man. Here also the third and the youngest one is most lazy (*Kahiltarin*). He

is also ignorant (Jahil). He does not care for the benefits of both the material and the spiritual worlds but wholly depends on God and wastes the whole day in the forest with his cows. He thinks of any service for the sake of God as disgraceful. And as such he gets the inheritance of his father.

The author of the work under review adds his own epilogue of about 325 pages. He designates this section as *Epilogue (of the Self)*. Being an authority on the Sufi philosophy he compares the basic tenets of Sufism with those of the Indian tradition as found in the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, the Astavakra-Samhita, the writings of Acharya Shankara, Vidyaranya and Shri Aurobindo. In fact, any realization cannot be expressed frankly. When one tries to express the same, one must be in error.

The author concludes his account of the Self with the last verse of the Astavakra-Samhita which states: "Where is existence, where is non-existence, where is unity, where is duality? What need is there to say any more? Nothing emanates from me."

*kva chasti kva cha va nasti kva asti chaikam  
kva cha dvayam bahunatra kimuktena  
kinchinnottisthate mama.*

This work of Dr. Paul is an important contribution in the study of philosophical discipline. Its comparisons and illustrations are apt and revealing. It had fulfilled a great need in the study of Sufism, its mystical and spiritual texts

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**PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRIES:** by Margaret Chatterjee, Published by Motilal Banarasi-dass, Bungalow Road, Jawaharnagar, Delhi-110 007, 1988, p. x+204, Price. Rs. 90/- (Cloth).

The book under review is not a new addition to the current philosophical literature of the country, but is a second edition of the work bearing identical title published by the New Age Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta in 1968. In all there are seventeen chapters in the book which are distributed in four sections, namely (i) General (ii) The nature of knowledge (iii) Man and Nature (iv) God, man, and Value. The book is an introductory work on philosophy which covers the

entire syllabus of the degree examination of Indian Universities.

In the present work, the topics discussed cover almost all the main problems of philosophy, such as, theories of knowledge and truth, matter, space and time, causation, Mind-body relation, evolution, self, freedom and necessity, the proofs for the existence of God, the problems of evil and nature of Values, but instead of presenting them in abstraction from their historical context, the learned author had delineated their historical perspective and the author herself admitted in the preface that her treatment of the topics has been brief. Admittedly the present work represents a new approach to the study of western philosophical tradition. It is however not suggested that all the views expressed in the book will find general acceptance, for philosophical stand-points can always be disputed. But this has not taken away the worth of the book so laboriously undertaken by one of the outstanding academic philosophers of our country. The author has carried out her task very methodically which requires a good grounding in both the traditions as well as a firsthand acquaintance with the sources. The book deserves wide attention and the publishers M/s Motilal Banarasi-dass should be congratulated for presenting us a book in such beautiful format and neat printing.

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**UPANISHADIC STORIES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCES** by Swami Tattwananda; Published by Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady; Third Print; June 1988 p. 5+32; Price Rs. 12/-.

The book under review is a highly illuminating study of the significance of select upanishadic stories. The author has selected, from among the considerable number of anecdotes nineteen stories from the principal Upanishads: The *Kena*, *Katha*, *Prashna*, *Taittiriya*, *Chandogya* and *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishads. As the author puts it in his valuable introduction, the ideal society harmonizes knowledge and religion. This is the reason why the pursuit of *Brahma-Vidya* was regarded as the common, the highest, goal of all—men and women, of all classes and castes. The author has presented the ancient stories in a racy, modern style and explained their hidden signi-

ificance in an illuminating way. The Swami dedicated this book, appropriately, to the memory of his spiritual guide Srimat Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj as a mark of respect and devotion.

In effect, this book is sure to inspire readers to seek the eternal life of freedom. As such it is a valuable addition to existing studies on the *Upanishads*.

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**THE SECRET OF SELF-TRANSFORMATION**  
(*A Synthesis of Tantra and Yoga*) by Rohit Mehta. Published by: Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1987, p. 174, Rs. 60/-

Dr. Rohit Mehta, being intimately associated with the movement of the Theosophical Society of India for long years is well acquainted with the psychological conflicts and crisis of the modern society in the midst of immense material progress provided by modern science and technology. He has dealt in this book with the cause of the ailments and the means of recovery therefrom by the practice of Tantra and Yoga. Spiritual poverty in material prosperity is the sickness of the modern world. To recover and regain the personal and social health, according to Dr. Mehta,

is to transform one's own self by practice of Tantra + Yoga. The author, in short twenty chapters, has discussed the methods prescribed by Tantra and Yoga for self-realisation.

Both Tantra and Yoga, like other topics of mysticism, are popular and fashionable subjects of study by modern elites who suffer from an ailment of mental depression and physical fatigue. As such, the book will have its reception from many corners. Keeping in view the ultimate aim of self-realisation and following the methods of *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*—as prescribed by *Patanjali* one can get rid of all ailments—mental and physical. The author has described these methods in the book; and to such seekers of remedy, Dr. Mehta's book is a good company. But one is to be sharply cautioned to start with the practice of Tantra and Yoga to seek a worthy 'guru'—the true guide. The book is silent about the 'guru' which is the most essential factor in Tantra and Yoga practice,—in which, the author claims, "lies the secret of the transformation of the individual, and, of the world as well" (p. vi).

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### INAUGURATION OF THE NEW GUEST HOUSE AT MAYAVATI ADVAITA ASHRAMA ON 29 SEPTEMBER 1989

A new Guest House was inaugurated at the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama on 29 September 1989, by Swami Gahananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. The occasion was a joyous re-union for many senior swamis of the Ramakrishna Order at this Himalayan monastery established in 1899 under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda. Since old guest house had become dilapidated and

found inadequate to accommodate an increasing number of pilgrims and visitors, this new one had to be built. Messers Peerless General Finance & Investment Co. Ltd., Calcutta, had made a generous donation for the purpose. The Advaita Ashrama offers its heartfelt thanks to them.

The ceremony of inauguration was held at 10 a.m. on 29 September. Swami Gahananandaji performed the opening ceremony by switching on the lights. The function began with vedic chanting and an opening song by Swamis and Brahmacharins. Swami Swananda, President of the Ashrama, welcomed the monks and guests present on the occasion and thanked various individuals and friends who had offered their spontane-

ous help for this construction. Sri A. K. Chatterjee, Director, Peerless General Finance & Investment Co. Ltd. spoke on behalf of them, expressing their joy in being able to make their contribution.

Swami Ananyanandaji, President of the Advaita Ashrama, from 1978 to 1988 and the chief-guest on the occasion, gave a beautiful speech reminiscing on the past history of the Advaita Ashrama and telling about the genesis of this Himalayan retreat and its subsequent growth. Sacrifices made by its early founders like Capt. Sevier, Mrs. Sevier and later dedicated workers like Mohanlal Sahji and others who sacrificed their lives for this ashrama, were also mentioned. The Swami described the Ashrama as the home of *Prabuddha Bharata*, the monthly journal started and guided by Swamiji himself in 1896. He also spoke about the present development of the Ashrama and its increasing activities like publication of books etc. through the branch Centre of the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama at Calcutta.

Swami Gahananandaji in his presidential speech spoke on the spiritual significance of this Himalayan Math established and sanctified by Swami Vivekananda. In the course of speech, he said:

"Every Indian loves and adores the Himalayas. For Sadhus the whole Uttarakhand is a sacred place. Every Sadhu wants to spend at least a few days in *tapasya* in Uttarakhand. Therefore Swami Vivekananda wanted to start an Ashrama in these parts. He also wanted to have a cool place where his Western disciples could live in India.

But the main reason why Swami Vivekananda started this Ashrama was entirely different. He was guided by a vision of the future. There was a new idea of ideal working in his mind. What was that? He wanted to make Advaita practical. He wanted to create an environment where people could practise Advaita. He said—I am quoting

his words—"The Advaita is the only system which gives unto men complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain Absolute Freedom."...

It is mainly for the sake of solitude and peace that people come to Mayavati from different parts of India. This Ashrama has been serving as a retreat right from the beginning. It is also a centre of pilgrimage for the followers and admirers of Swami Vivekananda. Besides Swami Vivekananda, several direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna also sanctified this place by their stay. Many distinguished men and women like Sister Nivedita, Sister Christine, Josephine Macleod, Dr. J. C. Bose and his wife Abala Bose, C. R. Das and others visited Mayavati during the pre-independence days. In recent years the number of pilgrims and truth seekers visiting Mayavati has increased very much. I hope the newly built guest house will solve the problem of accommodation to a great extent. I greatly appreciate the generous gesture made by the Peerless General Finance & Investment Co. Ltd."

Swami Jitatmananda, Jt. Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, offered the vote of thanks to the guests and all helpers in the construction works. All guests were then offered lunch on this occasion.

### SHRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION IN BRAZIL AND THE RELEASE OF THE FIRST VEDANTA MAGAZINE FROM BRAZIL

This year the birthday of Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna was celebrated in a befitting manner by the Brazilian devotees. People from every Brazilian centre (viz. Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo) flocked to Sao Paulo to pay their homage to Shri Thakur. On 9th March the

programme was limited to the usual morning meditation and chanting of hymns, a beautiful puja at 11 a.m. and the evening Arati. The magazine "*Vedanta*"—the first one in Brazil concerning the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature—was released and distributed among devotees and to the general public. It was, however, on 12th March, Sunday, that the public celebration was duly performed with grandeur at the retreat Ashrama of Sao Paulo. This retreat is located in the rural area in a lovely spot surrounded by trees, a very propitious place for seclusion and spiritual practices. It has a large shrine room and accommodation for many devotees. Under the loving guidance of Swami Ritajananda, then visiting Brazil, the ceremony began at early morning with meditation and hymns. At 11 a.m. a wonderful puja was performed in honour of Shri Ramakrishna, followed by sumptuous lunch with consecrated food. At 3.30 p.m. the commemoration proceeded with Mr. Marcicano, a noted Sitarist, playing an inspired concert. In sequence we had a

dramatized performance on the life of Shri Ramakrishna. The first meeting of "M" with the saint of Dakshineswar was read by a group of devotees. Jose Tolentino from Belo Horizonte played the role of Shri Thakur. Even though a blue-eyed man Mr. Tolentino's interpretation was so convincing and he acted with such a fervour that sometimes the spellbound audience could feel, as it were, that Shri Ramakrishna himself was there alive. Next we had the reading of a brief biography of Shri Ramakrishna very well written by Arual Costa, a devotee from Sao Paulo. A superb guitar concert was the following surprise. Mr. Hermes from Curitiba played guitar and interpreted spiritual songs composed by himself. A couple of admirers of Shri Thakur—Surendra and Janaka, disciples of the late Swami Tilak, sang some beautiful hymns in Sanskrit. Swami Ritajananda concluded the celebration with sweet and touching words just before the evening Arati which was performed in an atmosphere of bliss and peaceful joy.

## PRACTICAL HINTS FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

### SELF-CONTROL

Mere suppression of passions helps little. There must be a high ideal along with self-restraint. Without a high ideal the passions will find another outlet. You must give them a new direction; then you will automatically be rid of them.

—Swami Turiyananda

Diversion of the mind to higher things is the easiest way to conquer lust. Forget the lapses totally. Nobody remembers if he satisfies the calls of nature. ... Give a higher direction to the mental energies. Energy is creative, so transform the sexual energy into spiritual energy. If you fail to do so, kama (lust) will do havoc in the physical plane.

—Swami Saradananda

The more your love towards God is increased, the less your lustfulness will be. Always try to walk along the proper path. Be truthful and good and have no sensual desires. Let this be your end and aim. Struggle hard and if in the course of that struggle your foot slips, and you have to fall several times, what does that matter? Rise up again and go on struggling. Rest assured, you will conquer in the end.

—Swami Ramakrishnananda

... It is difficult, even impossible, to practise absolute purity without love and faith in God, ... and without continence realisation is impossible. ... it is not possible to practise continence without devoting yourself to the practice of Japam.

—Swami Brahmananda

The main thing is one-pointedness of mind.... It is hard to control the mind, but it must be done. There is no other way. The more you think of the Lord, the more will other thoughts decrease. There must be a continuous flow of one thought—the thought of God—during the period of wakefulness. Then, at the time of meditation or in sleep, unbecoming thoughts will not find any loophole to enter.

—Swami Saradananda

You say that *samsara* (the world), the round of births and deaths, is a place of great temptation. ... That is indeed true! But, do you know that strong adverse winds serve but to confirm the roots of a weak tree? Therefore, you must struggle hard to resist the temptations that still assail you. This struggle will strengthen the good moral principles which as yet are not strongly established in you. Just as constant struggle and exercise will strengthen the body, so will it also strengthen the mind.

—Swami Ramakrishnananda

### PRABUDDHA BHARATA: 90 YEARS AGO

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

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### GLIMPSES

A WELL-KNOWN Sadhu who was not much given to talking, was one afternoon found to be very warmly and eloquently dwelling upon the past glories of India. Among his visitors on that occasion were several highly educated and spiritually inclined gentlemen of Calcutta. One of them, a man holding a very high office under the Government, asked that if India was so great and so good in the past, what was the reason of her falling so low and what time did the slip downwards begin.

The Sadhu replied. The hour that Draupadi in the Court of Dhritarashtra, before Bhishma, Drona, Karna and the assembled flower of the land, stood helpless, yes, utterly helpless, though as I have said the wisdom and valour of whole India were arrayed there and watching her, and sought in vain with streaming eyes protection from the beastly attack of Duhsasana—that hour did the downfall of India begin, and those drops of tear were the cause of it. Till woman in India was made again what she was before that occur-

rence, our Motherland shall never rise on her feet; no, not till then.

THE maid of Seneca's wife had nearly lost her eyesight, but she knew not that she was blind; she used to say the house was dark.

SOCRATES in his apology before the Court of Helioea said, "Perhaps, however, some one will say, can you not, Socrates, live in exile silently and quietly?" (For by so doing he might have lawfully escaped the sentence of death passed upon him by the judges). "But it is the most difficult of all things to persuade some among you that this cannot take place. For if I say that in so doing I should disobey Divinity, and that on this account it is impossible for me to live a life of leisure and quiet, you would not believe me.... And if, again, I should say that this is the greatest good to man, to discourse every day concerning virtue, and other things which you have heard me discussing, exploring both myself and others; and if I should also assert that a life without investigation is not worthy for a man to live, much less, were I thus to speak, would you believe me."