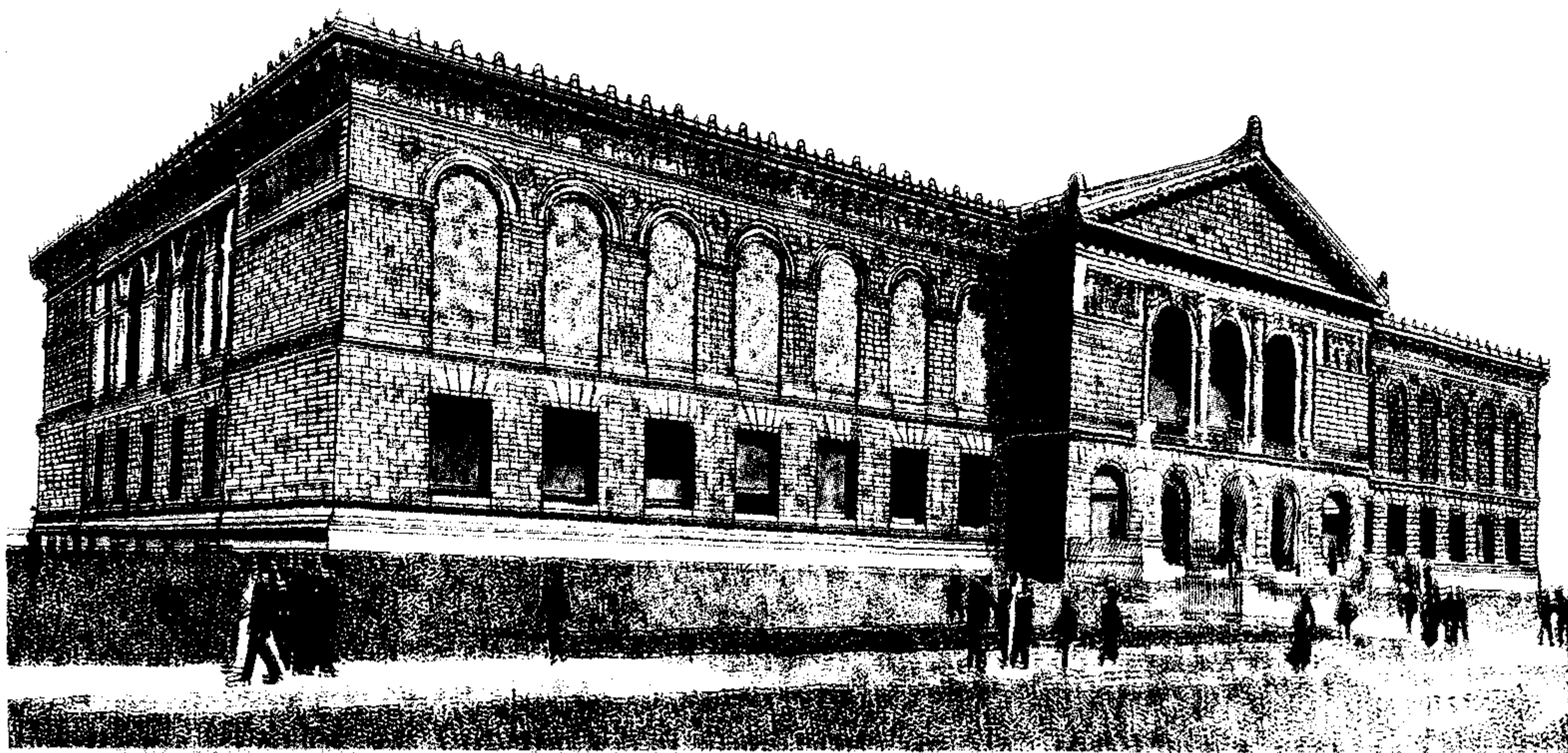




Prabuddha Bharata

or Awakened India



*"Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance:
'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,'
'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'"*

*Closing Address by Swami Vivekananda,
Chicago Parliament of Religions, September 1893*



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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

Publication Office
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014
Phone (91)(33)244 0898
Fax (91)(33)245 0050



Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage)

	Annual	Life (30 Years)
India	Rs. 30	Rs. 500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs. 120	Rs. 2000
U.S.A. & Canada		
Surface Mail	\$ 20	\$ 300
Air Mail	\$ 35	\$ 600
Other Countries		
Surface Mail	£ 15	£ 225
Air Mail	£ 25	£ 375

Cover: The Art Institute of Chicago.

OCTOBER 1993

CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	441
The Vanity of Self-Importance Editorial	442
Swami Vivekananda's Impact on the West: Some Dimensions Dr. Satish K. Kapoor	447
Artistic Excellence of the Chicago Addresses Pranabananda Bandopadhyay	451
Death Experience Dr. B.P. Bajpey	460
Journey towards Excellence Biprodas Bhattacharjee	463
What Sri Ramakrishna Did Robert P. Utter	466
The Concept of Maya and Dr. Radhakrishnan Sanghamitra Dasgupta	473
Ode to Swamiji (Poem) Asim Chaudhuari	477
Review and Notices	478

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED.

VOL. 98

OCTOBER 1993

No. 10

DIVINE WISDOM

A Hymn to the Goddess

त्वयैव धार्यते सर्वं त्वयैतत् सृज्यते जगत्। सौम्यासौम्यतराशेषसौम्येभ्यस्त्वतिसुन्दरी।
त्वयैतत् पाल्यते देवि त्वमत्स्यन्ते च सर्वदा॥ परापराणां परमा त्वमेव परमेश्वरी॥

O Devi, by Thee always is everything supported, by Thee always is this world created, sustained, and at end destroyed.

Thou art charming, yea more charming than all the charming things and exceedingly beautiful. Thou art indeed the supreme Goddess, beyond the high and low.

विसृष्टौ सृष्टिरूपा त्वं स्थितिरूपा च पालने। यच्च किञ्चित्कचिद्वस्तु सदसद्वाखिलात्मिके।
तथा संहतिरूपान्ते जगतोऽस्य जगन्मये॥ तस्य सर्वस्य या शक्तिः सा त्वं किं स्तूयसे तदा॥

At the time of creation Thou art both the created thing as also the act of creation, and so art Thou during the existence of the world the thing sustained and act of sustenance, and at the end of the cycle Thou art the thing destroyed as also the act of destruction.

O Thou Self of everything, of whatever thing existing at whatever place or time, whether cause or effect, Thou art the power behind that; how canst Thou be praised?

Brahmā's prayer in the Durgā Saptasāfi

The Vanity of Self-Importance

Every person has his own self-image. This personal idea we have of our ourselves is gradually built up in us by all our past memories, achievements, failures, and the opinions of others in our society. Formation of the self-image starts from one's early age and continues throughout life. It is the foundation from which all our interpersonal relationships are motivated. When we think of others, the images and the impressions we carry about them flash in our minds. If someone has humiliated or badly treated us in the past, according to our psychological tendency, our impulse will be to react in a repulsive or hostile manner. On the other hand, if another has shown us love and consideration, when his image comes to mind we experience good feelings. Without images we cannot think; it would not be an exaggeration to say that we are attached to images only, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. We do not directly get in touch with others except through the medium of self-images superimposed on our carefully nurtured egos. Our intimacy never deepens with others beyond topics of shallow conversations, or by the means we make use of to get satisfaction from them for our selfish ends. A powerless individual sometimes cannot express his anger when he is insulted by a wealthy person or one who has considerable power. Privately he may bring before his mind the image of the person and vent his anger against it, or unconsciously he may even misdirect it to his own helpless wife and children. The act gives a bit of satisfaction to his bruised ego. Where we are afraid to show our anger outwardly, we express it in our minds. When we are unable to own things we enjoy them in our imaginations. Our thinking centres round the images of persons or objects we

perceive, so we live mostly in imaginary worlds, and now and then wake up to face a different reality.

How is this concept of oneself, the self-image, formed? Or how does knowledge about oneself, being *this* or *that*, come into existence? A child has only the sense of being alive, or just the feeling of "I am." It does not think in terms of "I am 'this' or 'that'," or "I possess such and such things." It has no knowledge of acquisition or possession; but it has the experience of just "being" and not of "having" anything. There is only untainted subjectivity, without the burden of self-concept. The "I-thought" in the child is not coloured or shackled by any other thoughts. That is why a child cannot tell much about itself. It only enjoys the indescribable feeling of its aliveness. People may say that it is beautiful or not so beautiful, healthy or sickly, but the child has no such knowledge to tell about itself. Whereas a grown up person is ready to tell something about himself, the child has to first gather knowledge about itself as it grows and develops in society. Given a name and hearing many things from elders, gradually it learns. He or she picks up things about the family, country and society he belongs to, about the family-religion, culture and so on. In school and at home he is told that "you should be like 'this' or 'that'." The information starts pouring in. The "I-thought" identifies with the knowledge that has been gathered. When a boy or girl is about six or eight years old he or she knows vaguely something about oneself. Social values, the opinions of others, and the surroundings start influencing and moulding the minds of the young. The self-concept of "I am so-and-so," with unique traits and qualities

begins to be formed. This is the self-image that experienced in babyhood simply as "being," now starts to think that "I am what I have."

Our modern acquisitive society gives importance to status, power, and money. These are the pillars of our existence. Those who possess any one of these are admired as very superior and important persons, whatever their integrity may be. Young persons brought up in such atmosphere and nurtured in such socially accepted thought-patterns feel that their worth depends on the possession of power, position and wealth. Bereft of these, they feel insignificant and unworthy. A few, failing to acquire things, face the abyss of non-identity. None likes the idea that he is a nothing. "I am important because of what I have" has been the guiding principle of modern man. If I have nothing then I am nobody. So everyone's anxious concern, it appears, is to show that he is somebody to be recognized and given due importance. The prevailing unhealthy custom of dowry, or the cruel (fortunately almost extinct) custom of *sati* of Indian society are meant to vindicate male hegemony over women. A man who has nothing, and is not even able to feed his wife, demands an exorbitant dowry to demonstrate his importance. It is not only the syndrome of patriarchal society, but also of man's greed for money and things. Why are we so anxious to own something and show ourselves off? Is it because my importance becomes more, the more I have? Or, left to ourselves we are empty—nothing, and afraid to face that nothingness? When people don't recognize, do not appreciate us, we feel frustrated and a sense of despair steals into our life. Erich Fromm rightly observed, "The alternative of having versus being does not appeal to common sense. To have, so it would seem, is a normal function of our life: in order to live we must have things. Moreover, we

must have things in order to enjoy them. In a culture in which the supreme goal is to have—and to have more and more—and in which one can speak of someone as 'being worth a million dollars,' how can there be an alternative between having and being? On the contrary, it would seem that the very essence of being is having; that if one has nothing, one is nothing."¹ Therefore we do not question why we have to depend on external things to prove our worth. Our education and social values have taught us to possess more and more, whether it is knowledge, property or power. There is nothing wrong, we think, with a rapacious attitude.

Owning external objects and thereby feeling important, seems to be the be-all and end-all of our existence. One's self-concept feeds on all these and its craving is never satiated. But it is we who give value to external things and not vice-versa. Swami Vivekananda said, "Ay, whoever saw money make the man? It is man that always makes money".² We bestow value on position, wealth and power. In turn they give us nothing except illusory importance. We forget what we are, but think only of what we have. We see every day in modern life prime ministers, presidents and despots coming on the stage for a few days and disappearing without a trace. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Some people pride themselves on their riches and power—their wealth, honour, and social position. But these are only transitory."³ Only men of shining character, of love and compassion, remain in the minds of the human race.

1. Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be* (New York, Bantam Books, 1988) page 3.

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) vol. 3, page 319.

3. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) page 316.

Men like Buddha, Christ, Nanak, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Sri Ramana and Gandhiji, who did not possess anything in this world—nay, they were beggars—left a deep mark on human history. They found blessedness in being themselves. That “being” is limitless. The experience of being is much more vital than having external objects. “Things are dead in themselves,” said Vivekananda, “only we give them life, and then like fools, we turn round and are afraid of them or enjoy them!”⁴ There are people in this world whom we remember for their selfless deeds, love, and humility. We do not enquire about their social status, nor about their wealth. The good deeds done by them for their fellow beings outshine everything else. It is not having or grabbing, but sharing and giving that gives meaning and depth to life. Self-effacement and not self-assertion is the fountain of joy and bliss. Ironically, we always strive to decorate and keep on the high pedestal that petty and oppressive self or ego. With a little power and money we think we are above everybody and everyone should honour us. One who thinks he is very important is a vain person.

The possession of money and power makes such a difference in man! He is no longer the same person and his mind undergoes a dramatic change. Sri Ramakrishna brings home this truth through an anecdote: “A frog had a rupee, which he kept in his hole. One day an elephant was going over the hole, and the frog coming out in a fit of anger, raised his foot, as if to kick the elephant, and said, ‘How dare you walk over my head?’ Such is the pride that money begets!”⁵ Bureaucrats in high posts imagine they are special and mighty. They

preside over the destinies of millions. They misuse the power invested in their office to impress upon one and all their importance, to humble and humiliate others. The moment they are divested of power none cares to look at them. Misery awaits such temporarily puffed up and arrogant persons. Wealthy and power-drunk folk are unable to transcend their egocentricity. Power, status and money are wine; intoxicated by it a man loses wisdom and forgets what he really is. To Spinoza, the great philosopher, greediness, ambition for name and fame, egoistic behaviour and so forth are forms of mental illness. A superstar of American basketball said to his listeners, “No one will remember how well you played. All they will remember is whether or not you were a good person.”

Mushiari is a small town in the Himalayan region of Uttar Pradesh. From this town one gets a spectacular view of the lofty Himalayan peaks. There is a government rest house and on the wall of that building is a thought-provoking inscription in Hindi. The English translation of it runs like this: “It is good that you are an important person; but it is more important to be a good person.”⁶ How difficult it is to expect in our sick society gentleness, humility and sweet behaviour from people! There is ruthless competition to install oneself above others. There are good people, but they are a minority. A good and noble person by his virtues and humane qualities, whatever may be his status in society, wins the hearts of others and commands respect. He does not have to depend on the external props to bolster his self-image. When goodness and kindness are innate they do not need recognition or appreciation from the world. Money and power do not bestow

4. *Swami Vivekananda: The Complete Works*, Vol. 8, page 30.

5. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, page 169.

6. *Acchā hai āp mahatvapūrṇa vyakti hai, kintu acchā vyakti bannā sarvadā mahatvapūrṇa hai.* (In Hindi)

nobility on anyone. They are noble persons to whom the ideals of equality and human dignity are much more dear than their own petty self-importance. Every living being deserves our attention and respect. To avaricious members of our society, even if the emperor is naked, they believe he wears beautiful clothes. People have seen stupid kings and in our times thick-brained ministers.

Most of us feel what we own is precious, what we do is very important, and above all that we are indispensable to the world. Each one of us has an idea that "the world rests on my shoulders"; "my presence is essential and my death will cause untold misery to the world." A bureaucrat thinks without him the government machinery will grind to a halt; a wealthy man imagines in his absence the world will be poorer; a householder thinks with his departure his family will starve to death; a preacher dreams after his death the world will become irreligious. How small is our mental world! In that tiny world how great is my presence and self-importance! We know the world; does the world know us? Advising his disciple Haripada Mitra, Swamiji said, "...as regards death—what does it matter if people like you and me die? That will not make the earth deviate from its axis! We should never consider ourselves so important as to think that the world cannot go on without us!"⁷

On the contrary, we all think the world cannot go on without us. We have created our own mental world in accordance with our limited knowledge. We think we know the whole world, but we do not. In that small world we possess a few external things and assign ourselves a big role and

consider everything hinges around it. It is staggering to think that millions and millions of human beings come and depart everyday quietly without our knowing. Unmindful of everything the world goes on. Innumerable planets and stars come into existence and are dissolved every minute. It does not even create a semblance of ripple in the limitless universe. We are tiny bubbles in this vast ocean. Yet, to man his mental phantasy appears real. One blow is enough to shatter his phantasies and remind him of how evanescent is one's existence on this earth. Amidst this impermanence, how ridiculous it is to think of one's importance! Power, wealth and status are much more transitory than our tenuous lives.

In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* there is a wonderful dialogue between Yama, the god of Death, and Naciketa, a young spiritual aspirant. Naciketa wanted to know from this matchless teacher the great spiritual truth of what man really is. Is he merely a bundle of senses, a body, or within the depths of his being, is there something infinite? Yama refuses to disclose the secret immediately and instead, he offers Naciketa long life, sons and grandsons, herds of cattle, chariots, elephants and gold, a wide kingdom on earth, fair damsels and so forth to weaken his determination. Naciketa is great however, and is not tempted. He replies; "Transient are these and they wear out, O Yama, the vigour of all the senses of men. Moreover, all lives are short. So keep thy chariots, dance and song for thyself."⁸ Modern greedy man has neither patience nor leisure to enquire about the spiritual truths. He is solely concerned with his acquisitions, with his

7. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by His Eastern & Western Disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) Vol. 1, page 313.

8. *Śvobhāvā martyasya yad antakaitat
sarvendriyānām jarayanti tejah
Apī sarvaṃ jīvitam alpameva
tavaiva vāhastava nṛtyagīte* —*Kaṭha Up.* I.i.26

private affairs so that he pays little attention to all that transcends the personal realm. Man does not understand that he is chained to what he owns.

Greatness lies in human beings and not in power, money and position. That greatness is inward growth, the blossoming of divine personality. People may pose that they are greatly important, but their words and deeds expose their shallowness and selfishness. We need wisdom to control and make proper use of wealth for the welfare of others. Otherwise we become miserable slaves to material things. A fool, wielding enormous power, not only destroys himself but inflicts much injury on people. In the Hindu *Purāṇas*, we find many instructive stories of demons who wrought havoc in the world to establish the supremacy of their colossal egos. In our times too such tyrants appear from time to time like bubbles, causing much misery to the world. "Acceptance of the fact," Erich Fromm rightly observes, "that nobody and nothing outside oneself gives meaning to life, but this radical independence and nothingness can become the condition for the fullest activity devoted to caring and sharing."⁹

Self-confidence—faith in oneself, and self-importance, are entirely different. We know only the surface self, but the deeper layers of that self we do not know. Faith in oneself does not depend on external authority or things. That faith lies in one's independence and freedom—faith in the fact that behind me is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness. Knowing that no power in this world can bind me without my permission, and that my nature is freedom, is the sign of true faith. It is not selfish faith, exclusively meant for oneself. If it applies to a single human being, the same principle holds good in respect of all

human beings. "Wherever there is life," explains Swamiji, "the storehouse of infinite energy is behind it. Starting as a fungus, some microscopic bubble, and all the time drawing from that storehouse of energy, a form is changed slowly and steadily until it becomes a plant, then an animal, then man, ultimately God."¹⁰

Love for oneself means love and respect for all beings as manifestations of divinity. Not dead matter, but human life is valuable. It is the doctrine of oneness of Vedanta. Forgetting this oneness, we have created divisions—the privileged and the unprivileged, the superior and the inferior. Self-importance, the outcome of ignorance, is a selfish feeling that I am someone special. Nature does not make any differentiation. We in India only preach this Vedantic idea, but maybe people in the West practise it more. In Western countries they have faith in man. That practice has put them on the top of the world. The rousing call of Vivekananda to Indians centred round faith and strength. He thundered:

"If a man, day and night thinks he is miserable, low and nothing, nothing he becomes.; If you say yea, yea, 'I am, I am,' so shall you be; and if you say 'I am not,' think you are not, and day and night meditate upon the fact you are nothing, ay, nothing you shall be. . . . We are the children of the Almighty, we are the sparks of the infinite divine fire. How can we be nothings? We are everything, ready to do everything, we can do everything, and man must do everything."

Swamiji tells that none is inferior to us. We are all equal in spiritual potential:

(Continued on page 450)

9. *To Have or To Be*, page 156.

10. *Swami Vivekananda: The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, page 156.

Swami Vivekananda's Impact on the West : Some Dimensions

DR. SATISH K. KAPOOR

(Continued from the previous issue)

The challenges from science to Christianity in the West during the 19th century made the intellectual a skeptic and left the common man in bewilderment. The common reaction of sensitive people to the prevailing religious intellectual dilemmas was threefold: some clung to their religion, though finding fault with it, but did not forsake it for fear of losing their identity; others retained their empathy towards popular Christianity, but maintained a low religious profile and groped for an alternative; and others, dubbing religion as 'redundant and unnecessary', simply ignored it, or found an intellectual substitute for it in the Epicurean agnosticism of Ingersoll. Swami Vivekananda's influence was far-reaching and helpful to people in the second category, consoling for those in the third category, but hardly affecting those in the first. The common man was fascinated by his oriental aura, his eloquence, and the gospel of Vedanta, but not converted. Liberal Christians who thanked Swamiji for his meaningful criticism, continued to adhere to the church. Bigots faltered on the ground of orthodox beliefs, but did not fall. The only effect was that those who had all along been offensive now learnt to be defensive as well. Henceforth, the missionaries' zeal for work was blended with caution. Though the demand for oriental literature immensely increased, the Bible remained the most saleable holy book in the West.

Swami Vivekananda may not have "set the Mississippi on fire" or "shaken the West

to its foundations", but he did give a staggering blow to some Christian presumptions, stemmed the tide of missionary activity, and filled an emotional void caused by the "sledgehammer blows" of scientific research on the Western religion. It would be wrong to say with J.N. Farquhar that he personified a conservative and reactionary force "trying to bring back the vanished past," though it may be admitted that he virtually initiated what the late Dr. C.E.M. Joad once called "the counter-attack from the East."²⁹

The fact that Swami Vivekananda was determined to leave a lasting impression on the West is evident from a letter he wrote to the Hale sisters in the summer of 1894. "I am not going to leave this country without throwing one more apple of discord into this already roaring, fighting, kicking, mad whirlpool of American religion."³⁰ Swamiji intended "to create a new order of humanity" who were sincere believers in God and did not care for the world.³¹ He was not satisfied merely "with newspaper blazoning."³² In a subsequent letter to

29. A.L. Basham, "Swami Vivekananda: A Moulder of the Modern World" in *Vedanta for East & West*, Vol. XII, no.6; Vol. XIII, no. 1, 1963, page 226.

30. July 26, 1894, in *The Complete Works*, Vol. 8, page 317.

31. Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga, May 6, 1895 in *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 82-83.

32. Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga, May 14, 1895, *ibid.*, page 83.

Alasinga he wrote that he ought to be able to leave a permanent mark behind him. He was hopeful that he would succeed with the blessings of the Almighty.³³

At times Swami Vivekananda knew that some people were trying to damage his cause by spreading false rumours, but he remained undeterred and firm. He assured Kidi that his mission would succeed.

"I am not (given) to failures, and here I have planted a seed, and it is going to become a tree, and it must. Only I am afraid it will hurt its growth if I give it up too soon. . . .Rome was not built in a day."³⁴

By the middle of 1895, Swami Vivekananda had consolidated his work, with the help of some influential and dynamic followers. This is evident from contemporary accounts, reminiscences of devotees, and the press reports on his mission in the West. Although Vivekananda yearned for his old simple life—his rags and begging bowl—he was happy that his message was being well received. In a letter to the Maharaja of Khetri dated July 9, 1895, he wrote that he had a few hundred admirers and disciples. "I shall make several sannyasins and then I go to India, leaving the work to them."³⁵

The establishment of the Vedanta Society in New York in November 1894, set the work on organized lines. To begin with, the Society managed his financial affairs, arranged his lectures and classes, and sometimes carried out work in his absence. It also printed Swamiji's pamphlets and books for distribution. Although the Society had officebearers, it did not enroll

members until 1900. Swami Saradananda and Swami Abhedananda, who had joined Swami Vivekananda in England at his instance in 1896, now moved to America—the former in June 1896 to take charge of the Society in his *gurubhai's* absence, and the latter in 1897, after finishing his lecture engagements. Together they got the Vedanta Society registered in New York in 1898.³⁶ Gradually the Society gained strength and spearheaded the growth of the Ramakrishna Movement. Swami Saradananda, who returned to India in 1898 to serve the newly-founded Ramakrishna Math and Mission, was replaced by another erudite monk, Swami Turiyananda, who accompanied Swami Vivekananda during his second visit to the West in 1899.³⁷ He made a mark in the New York centre while Swami Vivekananda was away to Southern California, and delivered lectures and held classes in Raja-yoga at Montclair, Cambridge, and San Francisco.³⁸ The Retreat, famous as Shanti Ashrama, in the San Antone Valley, 18 miles south-east of Mt. Hamilton, California, which had been donated to Swami Vivekananda by Miss Minnie C. Boock, was used by Swami Turiyananda to provide a dozen Americans with the taste of true monastic life in true Indian tradition.³⁹ Strenuous work, however, so exhausted Swami Turiyananda that

36. Based on information supplied by Swami Bodhananda to Wendell Thomas, *Hinduism Invades America*, page 85. Cf Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West, New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) page 637.

37. Swami Gambhirananda (ed.), *The Apostles of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982) page 312.

38. Wendell Thomas, page 85; Burke, *Second Visit*, pp. 140, 142-43, 601.

39. Swami Gambhirananda, pp. 313-14; Burke, *Second Visit*, pp. 663-64, 670. Wendell Thomas, page 86.

33. *Ibid.*, page 84.

34. June 22, 1895, *ibid.*, page 85.

35. *Ibid.*, page 91.

he had to leave America after only three years to go back to India in June 1901 never to return.⁴⁰ Swami Trigunatitananda's place in San Francisco, broadened his area of activity to Los Angeles, and was instrumental in procuring a plot of land for the Vedanta Society there. The building started coming up in 1905 and was "dedicated to the cause of humanity" on January 7, 1906. Trigunatitananda also established a monastery and a convent, and frequently took his disciples to the Shanti Ashrama to give them practical lessons in the art of meditation. Unfortunately, he became the victim of a bomb attack in December 1914 and left the mortal coil early in January 1915.⁴¹

Apart from New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, Vedanta centres also came up in Pittsburgh (under Swami Abhedananda who was holding the fort in New York, followed by Swami Bodhananda), and in Oakland and Alameda, with the active support of one Mr. C.F. Petersen.⁴² Abhedananda made a great impression in New York by his winsome personality, intellectual powers and oratorical skill. The series of ninety lectures he delivered in the Mott Memorial Hall, New York, established him as a great exponent of Vedanta, and brought him into contact with such renowned persons as Prof. William James, Prof. Lanman, and Dr. Janes, the Chairman of the Cambridge Philosophical Conferences. Apart from making frequent trips to Europe, he lectured extensively in almost all important cities of America, Mexico and Alaska, and impressed even Max Muller and Paul Deussen during his first visit to England (1896-97). He moved to a hermitage of 370

acres at West Cornwall, Connecticut, in the foothills of the Berkshires, in 1912, and remained there for about nine years before returning to India where he died "in harness" on September 8, 1939.⁴³

Among other monks of the Ramakrishna Order who came to America in the early stages of the growth of Vedanta Societies, were Swami Sacchidananda, who arrived in Los Angeles in 1904, Swami Nirmalananda, who remained in New York from 1903 to 1906, and Swami Prakashananda, who joined the San Francisco Centre in 1906. Swami Paramananda established a Vedanta Centre each in Boston and Washington in 1909; and during his sojourn in Europe a few years later, one in Geneva.⁴⁴

In the years to come, Vedanta societies were formed at Portland (Oregon) in 1925, in Providence (Rhode Island) in 1928, in Chicago (Illinois), and in Hollywood (Calif.) in 1930, in New York City—the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, in 1933, in Seattle (Washington), in St. Louis (Missouri) in 1938, in Berkeley (Calif.) in 1939, in Boston (Mass.) in 1941, and in Sacramento (Calif.) in 1949, followed by many more. The chapters of the Mission were also started⁴⁵ in countries other than America—in Argentina, Bangladesh, England, Fiji, France, Japan, Mauritius, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the

40. Swami Gambhirananda, page 316; Burke, *Second Visit*, page 670.

41. Swami Gambhirananda, pp. 334-45.

42. Wendell Thomas, pp. 85-86, 103.

43. Swami Gambhirananda, pp. 258-65. For an assessment of Swami Abhedananda and how his mode of working differed from that of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Paramananda, and Swami Bodhananda, see Wendell Thomas, pp. 111-13.

44. Wendell Thomas, pp. 103-4.

45. *The General Report of the Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission* (Belur Math, 1985) pp. 69-83.

* established after 1985.

Netherlands*, Canada*, and Russia*. The names of monks like Swami Prabhavananda, Swami Raghavananda, Swami Dayananda, Madhavananda, Nikhilananda, Ashokananda, Jnaneshwarananda, Ghanananda, Vividishananda, Vishwananda and Vijoyananda may specifically be mentioned for spreading the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda across the Indian shores.

The rapid growth of the Ramakrishna Mission centres and Vedanta societies after Swami Vivekananda's premature death in 1902, clearly shows that he had not carved his work in sand, but upon granite. Contemporary journals like the "Hampton Columbian Magazine", "Current Literature", "Arena", "Literary Digest", "Missionary Review", and "Overland", which felt alarmed at the invasion of saffron-clad Swamis, least realized that Swami Vivekananda or his fellow monks were no proselytizers—they were rather the catalysts of transformation at the level of being. What came under attack was not Jesus the Christ, but the 'Bible-belt mentality' or the 'passion of the hot gospel' (to borrow Mencken's well-known

phrases), promoting religious conformism and intolerance; the belief in Original Sin—a legacy of the ancient Hebrew society; the neurotic pursuit of happiness, the growing atheistic and agnostic strains in society (sometimes a tilt towards the abnormal or the supernatural in the light of the works of Agrippa, Cagliostro and Nostradamus), the gross discrimination against Negroes and other black or brown emigrants, and similar evils. In the vast and inchoate sea of religious denominations, splitting off from each other like an amoeba, confining themselves to the narrow interpretation of the 'Word' facing the onslaught of science and rational views, sometimes digressing into the world of witchcraft and raw prophecies, Swami Vivekananda's Practical Vedanta provided an oasis of hope. Its rational and optimistic outlook, non-sectarian approach, morally-elevating precepts, and man-making ideals, captivated such eminent persons as Dr. Paul Carus, Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard and Christopher Isherwood.

Swami Vivekananda thus proved to be India's ablest cultural ambassador to the West in modern times. The fragrance of his *gospel* remains.



Vanity of Self-importance

(Continued from 446)

"...I may be a little bubble of water and you may be a mountain-high wave. Never mind! The infinite ocean is the background of me as well as of you. Mine also is that infinite ocean of life, of power, of spirituality, as well as yours."¹¹

In reality we are all one. The same purity and divinity works in all of us. The

difference is only in manifestation. Water-tight compartments such as "superior" and "inferior" are myths. In the cosmic Order, all are important. It is the shallow and ignorant mind which tries to keep separate everything from itself and thereby suffers. Jesus rightly said, "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself and be cast away." (Luke)

11. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, page 376.



Artistic Excellence of the Chicago Addresses

PRANABANANDA BANDOPADHYAY

Swamiji's memorable impromptu speeches at the Parliament of Religions are not only surcharged with divine wisdom, but have the musical quality. The author in his thoughtful essay highlights some of these facets. He is of West Bengal.

The *Chicago Addresses* are not voluminous, but then, they speak a volume. The words are dinned into the ears of the audience as the issues are driven home by the anodyne of the overflowing love of Swami Vivekananda. His speeches begin and end in a musical harmony. For was not Swamiji himself a symbol of harmony? Was he not a symbol of Unity, the science of all sciences, as said by him in one of those Chicago addresses?

In "Response to Welcome" of the *Addresses*, Swamiji makes it quite clear that he belongs to a religion which has taught the whole world toleration and universal acceptance. The tremendous catholicity of temper with which he practically swayed the whole audience has been nurtured in him, as he says, by the rich heritage of his religion. It is this enlarged vision and unstinted sympathy towards the religiously persecuted people of the earth which marked off the benign religion of which Swamiji waxes eloquent right at the beginning. He fervently hopes that the convention will fling down all the barriers imposed by religious fanaticism and dispel all clouds of sectarianism and bigotry.

Swami Vivekananda always scathingly criticized orthodoxy in religion, and its outgrowths, because according to him, these had again and again thrust human civilization into utter peril down the generations. Men have clutched and clung tenaciously onto their individual religious dogmas so much so that they became utterly irreverent

and hostile to other religious faiths. This gave rise to feuds and barbarous exploits which were certainly abominable and heinous. But, as Swamiji's heart throbbed with the very pulsations of sympathy of all life, he was naturally optimistic that the day of gloom was over, that the dawn of confidence and celestial radiance was beginning to break, that the days of violence and hatred and destruction were coming to an end, and that the assimilation of ideas noble and pure and simple was in the offing.

In the next lecture Swamiji dwells on the root cause of the disagreement among different religious notions or ideals. It is, according to him, due to the cabined and cribbed "maintain the status quo" attitude of every religious sect. We, Swamiji vehemently protested, have become severely bound in by our parochial and limited notions about our own distinctive religious faiths, not to mention the unity of purpose underlying all the world religions. We are like frogs living in a well, incapable of sympathizing with or understanding what is not in front of us, bogged down into the quagmire of stupor and stagnation of ideas. We think that our imagined world is the only world fit to live in and our religion is the only religion capable of sustaining and nurturing. This is the angularity of vision which Swamiji denounced. Therefore he gave a beckoning call to all the world to come out of these small "wells" and have a dip in the great ocean of infinite and universal spiritual ideas.

And, this all-embracing universal sympathy is to be found in Hinduism. Historically, it has been Hinduism which more than any other world religion has been able to "live and let live" with others. There have been different religions all the world over from prehistoric times, viz. Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and others. Zoroastrianism and Judaism failed to cast indelible imprint upon the minds of all the people of the world. But the vitality and richness of the Vedic religions—those which grew out of the ancient Indian culture, have been considered the lifeblood of humanity at large because of their tremendous catholicity of outlook and sympathetic tone and temper. In Hinduism in particular, there was a universal sympathy and tolerant spirit which enabled it to embrace within its folds both the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, and the simple ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythologies.¹

Swami Vivekananda then delves into the very fountainhead of all this spiritual energy, wherein all the concatenating forces converged—nay, where the common basis of Unity of purpose melts all divergent notions and oozes out the sweet flavour of essential harmony in all things. Swamiji lays down the idea before the Parliament that the Hindus received their religion through the revelations of the Vedas. With a logical insight and critical acumen he exhorted the great Assembly that the Vedas have the claim of being the most universal of the world's scriptures, because they are not subject to beginning or end, and because they are timeless, that by them *no books* are meant, but that they are

the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by all spiritual men in all climes and times.² The spiritual truths found in them are perennially significant. No ephemeralism will stain them. They will stay, with or without our knowing it, just as the law of gravitation will forever be with us, whether we are conscious of it or not. After speaking about the meaning of the Vedas, Swamiji makes it quite clear that the eternality of the moral, ethical and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits is beyond all doubts. Those relationships are imperishable and unchanging and unending, the same for all souls, whatever may be the religious system, whether we know of them or not.

Who then discovered these eternal truths or laws? Swamiji asks. They were R̥sis—the perfected beings on whom the truths dawned. And with a profound reverence Swamiji declared that "some of the very greatest of them were women."³ With a scientific sagacity and intellectual fervour, Swamiji proves before the audience that "there never was a time when there was no creation."⁴ In an age of intellectual advancement when the discoveries of science were holding sway over the minds of men, Swamiji's endeavour in the Parliament was to establish everything scientifically and logically. The inherent worth and beauty of Hinduism was, therefore, being gradually unfolded before them with adroitness suffused with Vivekananda's spiritual vision. The perplexities were being resolved. The question where the sum total of cosmic energy remained *before creation* was answered with tremendous perspicacity and in a language perspicuous enough. The Swami removes

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 1, page 6.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

3. *Ibid.*, page 7.

4. *Ibid.*

all complexities of consideration and clearly shows that creation and Creator are just like two parallel lines, both without beginning and without end. The "unceasing activeness of God" is brought home by him—that ever-flowing, bustling and propelling energy and power which helped in the evolution of systems galore out of chaos, only to be submerged into Itself time and again. Thus the destructibility of matter and the indestructibility of that cosmic energy are scientifically brought to limelight by the intense spiritual vision of Swami Vivekananda. He was quite aware of the great discoveries of 19th century science.

But if it is true that the propelling force of God is ever operative in all creations down the aeons of ages, what then is the nature of the "I", or the nature of the soul? The question, "Who am I?" is probed now by Swamiji. I am not composed of a "combination of material substances....I am a spirit living in a body."⁵ In one of his marvelous poetic verses, "An Interesting Correspondence", Swamiji has said,

"Nor angel, I, nor man, nor brute,
Nor body, mind, nor he nor she,
The books do stop in wonder mute
To tell my nature; I am He."⁶

And the soul was never created—for the simple scientific reason that creation leads to future dissolution. Moreover, "I", the soul, was never created, as such, in an ever-changing world where one is born happy and another miserable. The all-merciful and just God could never have been so parochial and nepotistic. Swamiji here 'pooh-poohs', blows off at a breath—nay, sets at rest, all the deductive reasonings.

5. *Ibid.*, page 8.

6. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 8, page 163.

But the fact of the discrepancies here in worldly phenomena cannot be set at naught. What precisely is the cause of this discrepancy? A man, Swamiji affirms, is responsible for his existence here—miserable or otherwise. "There must have been causes, then before his birth, to make a man miserable or happy, and those were his past actions."⁷ So the idea of previous existence is brought in. The cycle of birth, death and rebirth is adumbrated here. One is quickly reminded of Wordsworth's immortal lines in "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood":

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home."

But what Plato could not conceive of, even as he framed the doctrine of prenatal existence, Swamiji's translucent vision and realization could spotlight. On how a man is reborn and with what aptitudes, Swamiji deals with rare and wonderful skill. It is the "inherited aptitude"⁸ which is responsible for all the tendencies of the body and the mind. This present life of an individual cannot account for all the tendencies one possesses in body and mind. Here also, Swamiji proceeds in a scientific manner to establish the idea that the soul fits itself in with a suitable corporeal frame by "the laws of affinity,"⁹ in order to recur its own earthly sojourn by means of habits. For, "habit is got through repetitions."¹⁰ So it boils down to

7. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, page 8.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, page 9.

10. *Ibid.*,

this, that "repetitions are necessary to explain the natural habits of a new-born soul."¹¹

There is another argument in favour of the existence of previous lives. The recollection of the previous existences are possible, according to Swami Vivekananda. The memory of past lives is called for and it rushes in. Therefore, our consciousness constitutes only the surface of a mental ocean, underneath which all our experiences are garnered, as it were. Swamiji brought home to the great Parliament the unerring capability of the great *r̥sis* of India to plumb the deepest depths of the ocean of memory and to cull the gems of experience. With profoundest regard for the insights of these saints of yore, Swamiji exhorted that they had been in no way less scientific than the modern intellectual man. He said elsewhere: "One ounce of the practice of righteousness and of spiritual Self-realization outweighs tons and tons of frothy talk and nonsensical sentiments. Show us one, but one gigantic spiritual genius growing out of all this dry dust of ignorance and fanaticism; and if you cannot, close your mouths, open the windows of your hearts to the clear light of truth, and sit like children at the feet of those who know what they are talking about—the sages of India."¹² This is no mere explication, no mere assortment of ideas, but the very truth welling up from the spiritual depths of Swamiji's heart.

The indestructibility of the soul is set forth with super-abundant clarity and certainty. The nature of the soul is pure, blissful Existence. Its range is limitless. Though to our darkened consciousness, it seems so, It is not bound by space or time, but is immeasurably vast. Its centre may

change apparently from body to body, but Its circumference is everywhere—vast, deep and immense. Confined in a particular body the soul thinks of Itself as matter.

But immediately the question arises: how can this "free, unbounded, holy, pure and perfect"¹³ soul think of Itself as under the thralldom of matter? This also is a question which is elucidated by Swamiji, who says with candour that this metaphysical problem is insolvable; no one knows how the perfect soul 'becomes imperfect', seemingly joined to and conditioned by matter.¹⁴

Swamiji next dwells on the most vital question: Is there no hope for man to get out of the prison-house of the actual? Is there no hope for him to resolve the great conundrum of mystery? Is he bound forever by the unassailable bond of Time? Is he eternally tethered by the law of causation? Is he so tiny, so infinitesimal as to be tossed hither and thither on the boundless ocean of Time? Swamiji pulls up the doubting soul out of the slough of despair and despondency by his galvanizing utterances. With words backed by the power of Spirit, he sounds the joyful and ardent call to man to shake off the slumbering state and rise to consciousness of his own strength and realize his true Divine Nature. He induced the great Assembly that man could be free from the cycle of death and rebirth by knowing God! With enormous vivacity and veracity Swamiji infused in the minds of his audience this renascent idea of the infinite potentiality of man. For, it was not merely the exuberant sannysin who was, like a great orator, persuading men into his own creed. For creed he had none, save the creed of delivering mankind from the shackles of

11. *Ibid.*

12. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 8, page 44.

13. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, page 9.

14. *Ibid.*, page 10.

reveal the divine nature of the soul, which is only apparently held in the bondage of matter; it will free us from all the bonds of imperfection, from death and misery. It is then, precisely speaking, that the realization dawns on man that he is no more a freak of the terrible law of causation. "This is the very centre, the very vital conception of Hinduism."²³ The Hindu religion does not propagate any doctrine or dogma, nor does it force one to hold on to a particular faith or creed; it consists in being and becoming closer in touch with the Divine essence in our Human Nature. So this was something new, something quite unthought-of to most people in that large audience. Hinduism spoke through Swami Vivekananda of an infinite potential in every man and woman to realize and become one with the Divine ground of the universe. It proclaimed the possibility of reducing human imperfections through sincere practice of philosophical and yogic disciplines to ward off such imperfections and become one with the "unspotted essence" at long last.²⁴ This is the realization of the Absolute—the Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute. To become one with Life—Knowledge and love of God will naturally extirpate death, misery and errors. To merge the individual consciousness into the universal Consciousness will mean the reaching of the ultimate happiness and Goal of human existence. Swamiji conclusively proves that the physical individuality as well as the individual soul always yearns for its immersion into the Universal, for attaining unity with the unbroken ocean of Soul or *Ātman*. This is attuned in harmony with the very spirit of all scientific endeavours. Thus Swamiji establishes the underlying unity of science and religion, the discovery and experience of subtler and subtler truths and ultimate

unity behind duality. "Religion can go no farther. This is the goal of all science."²⁵

So the unity of religion and science can be established by logical analysis. To truly follow religion (or science) however, entails a vast amount of human striving. Religion is realization and experience through manifestation. The realization of God is concomitant with the manifestation of the spirit of holiness and purity. The highest stage of worship is, as Vivekananda said, the realization of God. He pointed out that the spirit of Hinduism is different from most popular religion in practice because it is not just "an intellectual assent to certain doctrines and doing good to...fellows."²⁶ Swamiji lays down the importance of image-worship only in so far as it "calls up the mental idea,"²⁷ in so far as it is construed as a help or gateway to higher and higher, and finally the highest realization of God of Truth. As Swamiji said in "An Interesting Correspondence":

"Before the sun, the moon, the earth,
Before the stars or comets free,
Before e'en time had had its birth,
I was, I am, and I will be."²⁸

This is to be known through one's own direct experience.

So this becoming nearer to the perfection that is our "own true divine nature" is the cynosure of religion, as Swamiji proclaims. The idea of sin or error has got no room in this upward flight. These are insignificant and must be taken as unprepossessing. What is important is to travel "from truth to truth, from lower to

23. *Ibid.*, page 13.

24. *A Defence of Poetry*, page 59.

25. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, page 15.

26. *Ibid.*, page 16.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 8, page 163.

higher truth."²⁹ In one of his illuminating utterances, in the *Addresses*, Swamiji drives it home: "Every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength, till it reaches the Glorious Sun."³⁰

This achievement of realizing harmony in the midst of disharmony, the ringing concordance in the midst of all the dissonances of life, is the *tour de force* of the Hindu religious endeavour. The uniqueness of the Hindu religion lies in this discovery of the Absolute through the myriad channels, and "the images, crosses, and crescents are simply so many symbols—so many pegs to hang the spiritual ideas on."³¹ Swamiji threw open the floodgates of religion, as it were, before the European mind. His was a message novel and outstanding. It was a tone solemn and simple as well to the great audience. Even when he speaks of the idolatrous habits of the Hindus, their practising physical austerities and doing penance, he exudes a rare amount of sympathy and considerateness. The introvertive tendency of the Hindu mind and its ascetic spirit are with a view to the realization of the Absolute, the One who remains for ever. The *summum bonum* of existence here on earth is only "a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal."³² It is the aim of every religion to help manifest the dormant divinity in man, to evolve "a God out of the material man."³³

Swami Vivekananda showed dramatically how the Vedanta Philosophy, the bedrock of modern Hinduism, is the most

practical of religious philosophies. Its great advantage as a lever to raise the spiritual condition of humanity is its disdain for mixing worldly, or materialistic values, with the spiritual ideals. It regards man not from an organized religion's point of view, but regards him only on an individual basis as a purely psychological and spiritual being. For this reason, Vedanta has much to offer to fill up the modern world's spiritual vacuity. Nineteenth century attitudes of powerful conquering Christian nations, with their large missionary organizations had done more harm than good in India, he said. Through Vedanta, the jarring notes of persecution and intolerance could be transmuted into sweet universal harmony. Vedanta as a universal religion, Swamiji said, "will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these and still have infinite space for development."³⁴ On another occasion Swamiji said, "We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran."³⁵

Proud as he was of the integrity and grandeur of the Hindu religion, Swamiji lashed some of the Christians for their hypocrisy in sending missionaries to India to exploit her people for material and political gains. His words were carping enough on one occasion: "You Christians, who are so fond of sending out missionaries to save the soul of the heathen—why do you not try to save their bodies from starvation?"³⁶ Swamiji's avowed aim was to seek aid for his impoverished countrymen, and he fully realized "how difficult it was to get help for heathens from Christians in a Christian

29. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, page 17.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, page 18.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, page 19.

35. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 6, page 416.

36. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, page 20.

land."³⁷

Having spoken about Hinduism, by which he meant "the religion of the Vedas,"³⁸ Swamiji traces the genesis of Buddhism to Shakyamuni, who, according to him, "was the first being in the world who brought missionarising into practice,"... "the first to conceive the idea of proselytizing."³⁹ Shakyamuni was "the fulfilment, the logical conclusion, the logical development of the religion of the Hindus."⁴⁰ But why Buddhism died out a natural death in India is accounted for by the fact that there was cleavage between the Buddhists and the Brahmins in India. According to Swami Vivekananda, if Hinduism is to survive, there must be the wedding of "the wonderful intellect of the Brahmins with the heart, the noble soul, the wonderful humanising power of the Great Master."⁴¹

At the final session of the *Addresses*, Swamiji paid glowing tributes to "those noble souls whose large hearts and love of truth first dreamed this wonderful dream [of the Parliament of Religions] and then realised it."⁴² Swamiji vehemently opposed all kinds of militancy in religious fervour. But each believer should be free to assimilate the spirit of the other believers and "yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."⁴³ With rare candidness and ardour, he goaded the whole Parliament into the firm belief that the day was not far-off when 'upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight,"

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, page 21.

39. *Ibid.*, page 22.

40. *Ibid.*, page 21.

41. *Ibid.*, page 23.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*, page 24.

"Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension." "⁴⁴

In an age of spiritual impoverishment arising out of the clashes and collisions of various religious creeds, Swamiji hushed into silence all the clamours of the staunch warring groups and opened the vast and deep vistas of the essence of religion before them. His was a delivering attitude without an iota of attitudinizing; his was a yearning for the emancipation of myriad human souls trudging along different tracks. It was for him, as it were, to rejuvenate the whole of mankind with renewed zeal and endeavour for the attainment of perfection.

Thomas Carlyle inferred that sincerity and intensity of feeling must be the cardinal principles for the uplift of the individual soul, and the appearance of a hero in a particular period bespeaks his searching and sincere self-introspection, as against the fussy, divergent tendencies of the modern intellectual man. In his "The Hero as a Man of Letters," he says beautifully, 'Literature, so far as it is Literature, is an "apocalypse of Nature," a revealing of the "open secret," a "continuous revelation" of the Godlike in the Terrestrial and Common.'⁴⁵ Swamiji's *Chicago Addresses* thus form the highest kind of spiritual literature because they unravel the riddle of the world and of the soul, invested as they are both with celestial radiance, with supra-mundane glory. They truly testify to Carlyle's considered opinion that "nothing so endures as a truly spoken word."⁴⁶ They constitute a composite whole, as they turn out to be the "musical Thought."⁴⁷ Swamiji plunged headlong

44. *Ibid.*

45. Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (New York: 1910), page 218.

46. *Ibid.*, page 132.

47. *Ibid.*, page 111.

into the Fountain-Spring of Truth and came out flushed with divine splendour, to rouse the whole world with his sweeping realizations and vision. The *Addresses*, therefore, constitute a deep song. There is no rift which has not been filled with ore. It is romanticism replete with intensity of feeling and extensity of vision. Sincerity and depth of feeling mark off the *Addresses*. The sharpened sensibility of the great seer had combined in itself the razor-like reasoning faculty. The *Addresses* speak volumes for the emotional reality of the poetic realization of the meaning and significance and ultimate end of life, the glows and the glories of life have their own place. Swamiji's prose has "rapture of holiness."⁴⁸ It is a kind of prose fraught with the potency of poetry. The virtuosic brilliance is coupled with geniality and openness. The pungency of attack is attenuated by the kindness of emotion. Swamiji is a genuine poet who is "emotional in a reverential

way."⁴⁹ The *Addresses* are conceived and saturated with the three cardinal principles of *integritas*, *consonantia* and *claritas*,⁵⁰ integrity, coherence and radiance. From start to finish they speak of the principle of unity in diversity in the multifold facets of existence. They deal *prima facie* with religion, but they extol the possibility of emancipation of mankind at large. They breathe out the soft suavity of grace and benediction to the smothered and mortified souls of men. In this elation all feelings of animosity and acrimoniousness are melted and transfused into spiritual exultation of divine love, which is the bond amongst the different races of mankind. Humanity gets a scope of enlightenment by the emboldening utterances of Swami Vivekananda. The awakening of consciousness is made possible. Humanity surcharged with divinity makes its reflux upon the fiendish nature of man. The *Chicago Addresses* ring out a solemn and harmonious song.

48. A.C. Benson's remark in his essay, "The Art of the Essayist", in *Several Essays*, ed., G.F.J. Cumberlege (Oxford, 1927) page 4.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Hough, Graham, *An Essay on Criticism* (Great Britain, 1966) pp. 16-19.



If you have seen a certain country, and a man forces you to say that you have not seen it, still in your heart of hearts you know you have. So, when you see religion and God in a more intense sense than you see this external world, nothing will be able to shake your belief. Then you have real faith. That is what is meant by the words in your Gospel, "He who has faith even as a grain of mustard seed." Then you will know the Truth because you have become the Truth.

This is the watchword of the Vedanta—realize religion, no talking will do. But it is done with great difficulty. He has hidden Himself inside the atom, this Ancient One who resides in the inmost recesses of every human heart. The sages realized Him through the power of introspection, and got beyond both joy and misery, beyond what we call virtue and vice, beyond good and bad deeds, beyond being and non-being; he who has seen Him has seen the Reality.

—*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2, p. 165.

Death Experience

DR. B.P. BAJPAI

Life and death, good and evil, appear opposed to each other due to our fragmentary view. In Ultimate Reality or God all such distinctions disappear, writes the author in this short article. He is a retired professor of Philosophy and of Kanpur.

About the polarity of fear and death are all the tensions of life created which keep our energies flowing. And then comes eventually the final experience of death that tells us that knowledge is relevant to the world, but life is much vaster than all the knowledge and experience of the total human race. The death of the physical is not the end of eternity of life. And someday when we would live without the centre of "I", the ego, we would be tasting the stream of that eternal life. This has indeed been the living experience of Maharshi Ramana, an Indian mystic of this century.

Ramana had in his early boyhood a sudden "death experience" which brought a change in his outlook and drove him further to meditate on his Self. He narrates his first experience in this way: "The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: 'Now death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies. . . . It will be carried stiff to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body am I dead? Is the body I? It is silent and inert but I feel the full force of my personality and even the force of "I" within me, apart from it. So I am Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit.' All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly, almost without thought-process. "I" was

something very real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with my body was centred on that "I". From that moment onwards the "I" or Self focussed attention on itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death has vanished once and for all. Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time on. . . . Previous to that crisis I had no clear perception of my Self and was not consciously attracted to it."¹

To Ramana God is verily the Self, therefore love of the Self is love of God and that is devotion. If one even prays to God or seeks His help, God guides him as a Master in answer to his prayer. God is everywhere, but not everywhere to us. There is but one point where He communicates with us, and that is what may be called the inner chamber of our own soul. There He waits for us, there He meets us. To seek Him, therefore, we must enter our own interior.

Because, in the words of the ancient Greek mystic, Heraclitus, "You could not discover the limits of the soul even if you travelled every road to do so—such is the depth of its meaning....Although intimately connected with the Logos (God), men keep setting themselves against it."² For such profound statements Heraclitus, the enlightened person known to us of the early Greek civilization, was ignored as "Heraclitus the Obscure". The Greek soil

1. *The Collected Works*, Preface, pp. viii-ix.

2. *Heraclitus: "Fragments"*.

did not seem to be suitable for him. Had he been in the East he would have been a great tree, like Lao Tzu or Buddha; millions would have profited and found the way through him. But the father of Western thought, Aristotle, thought that he was no philosopher at all. According to him, Heraclitus was a little eccentric, and hence obscure.

Aristotle is clear because he is very logical. But whatever is logical need not be true in deep analysis. That is why Aristotle is like an inert photograph which does not move with life, while Heraclitus is like a mirror to show us what we are. Life is not logical, it is full of contradiction, everything lives: "Opposition brings concord. It is in changing that things find repose. People do not understand how that which is at variance with itself, agrees with itself. It is by disease that health is pleasant; by evil that good is pleasant; by hunger, satiety; by weariness, rest."³

Heraclitus is right; there is a hidden harmony in opposites, in health and disease, in starvation and satiety. The day one attains enlightenment, one understands it. If Heraclitus' insight is to be understood, it means: there are no individuals, there are no islands; we are part of one whole. Existence is just like a spider's web. We may touch the web from anywhere and the whole vibrates. Whenever one does something, it is not only him alone but the whole is affected and gets involved. Everyone's responsibility is great. One is therefore not alone, one is the destiny also of the whole. Each fragment gives such a deep insight into ourself that if we contemplate the fragments properly we can attain higher levels of being.

"It would not be better if things

happened to men just as they wish. Nature loves to hide. This universe which is the same for all, has not been made by any god or man, but it has always been, is, and will be—an ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and going out by regular measures. The phases of fire are craving and satiety."⁴

What he means to say is that existence is and God is not separate from it. God is its energy. "God is war and peace, satiety and want. It is one and the same thing to be living or dead." "It throws apart and then brings together again." "In the circle the beginning and the end are common." This is a rare insight. If one becomes a total whole, in him will truly meet the beginning and the end. He will be the source of the world and the very climax or end of the world. For it is God who desires world in us and it is God who becomes desireless and the end of the world in us. It is God who is passion in us and it is God who becomes enlightenment in us. Therefore, God is both war and peace, day and night, man and woman.

Knowing God is not like knowing a flower and possessing it; infinity can never be known. It is something spread out from one eternity to another. We can just taste it at any point. The vast, the endless, the beginningless cannot be comprehended by the part. How can a wave comprehend the whole ocean? What to speak of God, Heraclitus says that even "you could not discover the limits of the soul," because it is such an infinite depth that one never comes to the bottom of it.

That is why, a man who knows himself even a little is never bigoted, he never claims any finality of his knowing. He can never say—"Only my truth." Even long

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

before Christianity and Islam, Heraclitus averred, "Bigotry is the sacred disease, and those who will be affected by it will do nothing but kill one another. And if this disease spreads all over the earth, the whole earth would become ugly and stink of blood."

A man of true knowing is always hesitant to utter even a few words about the Infinite Reality. He is not so sure because he sees his fragmentary vision and feels the total cannot be expressed by anyone's keyhole vision. But a man of borrowed knowledge never hesitates. To him a few words acquire complete finality. And he becomes so fanatical about those words that if circumstances demand he may sacrifice even his life to justify those beliefs. Whereas the sages say that he should have instead sacrificed his life to discover the truth.

To a mystic, life is bigger than any fixed frame. When the whole Truth is available, why be satisfied with a fragment? The whole earth is his church and temple, and

all the scriptures are, for him, man's history of religious experience.

Boehme, a German mystic, also wanted to resolve the question of opposites. How God could create the world, foreseeing evil and suffering—that was a question which tormented him greatly until, as he says, "heaven has revealed itself within my spirit in such a way that I there recognize the divine works and creations."⁵ He made a discovery that a thing can be revealed only through another thing that resists it. Light cannot reveal itself without darkness, nor good without evil, nor the spirit without the resistance of matter: "Whatever is hard and impressing, as bones, wood, herbs, metals, fire, earth, stones, and the like material things—therein is the image of the divine power and motion, and shuts itself up with its separator against the coarseness, as a noble jewel or sparkle of divine power."⁶

5. Jacob Boehme: *Six Theosophic Points & Other Writings*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press) page 204.

6. *Ibid.*



Free thyself from the mighty attraction—
The maddening wine of love, the charm of sex.
Break the harp! Forward, with the ocean's cry!
Drink tears, pledge even life—let the body fall.
Awake, O hero! Shake off thy vain dreams,
Death stands at thy head—does fear become thee?
A load of misery, true though it is—
This Becoming—know this to be thy God!
His temple—the *shmashana* among corpses
And funeral pyres; unending battle—
That verily is His sacred worship;
Constant defeat—let that not unnerve thee;
Shattered be little self, hope, name and fame;
Set up a pyre of them, and make thy heart
A burning ground.
And let *Shyama* dance there.

from "And Let Shyama Dance There" by Swami Vivekananda.

Journey towards Excellence

BIPRODAS BHATTACHARJEE

Ramakrishna Mission at Narendrapur, West Bengal, a premier educational institution in India, has completed its fruitful, praiseworthy existence of fifty years. In many fields it has been doing pioneering and exemplary work. Seeing the multifarious activities of this centre of learning itself is an enriching experience. The author, who is a teacher at Narendrapur, describes in this brief paper some of the achievements of the Institution.

Many are the great dreams in the noble minds, but few are translated into reality. Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama started at Pathuriaghata in North Calcutta immediately after the Bengal Famine as a students' Home with only three boys on its roll. Soon the usefulness and popularity of the establishment increased and the number of boarders increased with it. With the shifting of the Home in 1956 to the cottage-like structures at a jackal-infested place near Ukhila Paikpara, the door was opened specially for the refugee boys. Then it sheltered as many as 160 students. But the founders of the fledgling institution always had a great vision before them—a vision of a large residential school where students of all communities would live and learn and build their character in a pristine atmosphere. For it is not enough that students should stuff their minds with dry information only. They must imbibe the heritage of our country, the rich heritage of a great nation, and shape their lives according to its tenets. The experiment that started in 1943 of inculcating in boys the respect for and knowledge of Indian culture while exposing them to all the modern developments in science, technology, and art, is now a reality. The seed once planted by Swami Visuddhanandaji has now grown into a mighty tree.

Thanks to the able guidance and entrepreneurship of Swami Lokeswar-

anandaji, the entire scenario of the Ashrama took a lively shape. Ensconced in the most picturesque setting of Narendrapur, and spread over an area of 150 acres between Kamalgazi and Rajpur, the new Ashrama presents a look of *Tapovana*. A home away from home for its residents, the Ashrama is devoted to the building of body, mind and soul. It offers the placid groves of an academy and opportunities for multifarious activities. At present, it has 1819 students in residence. The vision of Vivekananda's India is kept before their eyes. The principles of self-help, of a healthy co-existence, diligence and discipline are imparted to them.

Students hailing from different parts of India, and even abroad, give a good glimpse of the cosmopolitan but composite culture of our country. Some of them belong to scheduled castes and tribes. The talk of integration is on every lip. It is to be found in reality at Narendrapur. Students of diverse backgrounds stay here as equals, as brothers.

Narendrapur abounds in rich flora. Ever green fields, luxuriant varieties of trees, the placid ponds, the superb play of colours in the flowers of the gardens under the canopy of the sapphire-blue sky can always inspire a poet or a painter. Cradled in the lush green world with warbling birds, frolicking squirrels, students develop an

unbreakable nexus with nature. As a contrast to the dusty and noisy surroundings of the city, Narendrapur looks indeed like a paradise.

The Ashrama is now, by and large, a philanthropic and charitable institution with the professed ideal of serving God in man. From 1943 to 1993 a good many programmes were taken up and executed. Useful years have given it an exalted rank. It is now a class in itself. The inmates are pretty proud of the 50-year-old noble institution, but complacency has no place in the life here.

The Ashrama has got rid of many of its initial constraints, but the way ahead is still fraught with financial straits. It is a definite pointer to the tested truth that in every challenging effort the road straightens after a series of bends.

Now the Ashrama gets all set for its Golden Jubilee, from *Akṣaya Trītiyā* (the auspicious 3rd day of the bright lunar fortnight) 1993, to *Akṣaya Trītiyā*, 1994. Centenary celebrations of the Chicago Parliament of Religions will also be observed in the running year.

Modelled on the ideas of Swami Vivekananda, it has spent every ounce of its energy for the benefit and uplift of the destitute and underprivileged persons. It has always regarded services to the Harijans as a foremost duty, and over the years it has helped a large number of promising Harijan boys to get through the University by providing them whatever incentive they needed.

The Blind Boys' Academy imparts education to the visually handicapped boys. The major activities of the Academy are to teach advanced music to really talented boys, to train them as drill and

press operators, capstan operators, turners and other craftsmen requiring skill and to teach modern farming, specially poultry-keeping, dairy-science, horticulture, floriculture, and so forth. The other important activities of the Academy include placement and rehabilitation of the blind, sub-contract workshop for the blind workers, self-employment, Braille Library, a Regional Braille press, a Talking-Book Library, etc. The Academy received the National Award from the Government of India for its outstanding contribution for the welfare of the disabled persons in India for the year 1983.

Ramakrishna Mission Lokasiksha Parishad, another institute of social welfare and integrated rural development, follows the words of Swami Vivekananda—"The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion." The Rural Development Project was started on July 1, 1972 particularly to help the small and marginal farmers of the two adjacent villages, Ukhila Paikpara and Jagunnathpur. The Lokasiksha Parishad imparts job-oriented training programmes in such fields as carpentry, poultry-keeping, dairy management, bee-keeping, tailoring, pisciculture, commercial sign-board painting, skill formation in machine-knitting, basic computer operating, home decorating, basic photography and others. Intensive sanitation project facilities are being provided. Health services are rendered. Book Bank facilities are given to the needy students. The Parishad has everything to interest people—vocational training in forty-six trades. Instituted in 1956, the Parishad has by now grown into an organization of repute with its activities spread all over the Eastern Region of the country. The Parishad makes concerted effort to know the village and get the village to know it. People now regard it as a friend,

a guide, and also as a philosopher.

Technical and vocational education is imparted through the Junior Technical School, Commercial Institute, Automobile Training Centre and the Motor Mechanics Training Centre.

Started in April 1958, the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya at Narendrapur, a residential secondary school for boys, has completed thirty-five years of its fruitful existence.

Started in July 1960, the Residential College endeavours hard to fare forward. This College was adjudged the best educational institution, winning the maximum number of scholarships at the JBNSTS competition for three years. Both at the school and college levels, Narendrapur has earned distinction.

Narendrapur can pride itself on its libraries. The Central Library has a good number of books open to all and fulfils a long-felt need of the locality, specially

among its student population. It has 58,626 books, 452 rare books, 5 manuscripts, 74 journals, and 2001 periodicals. The total number of books in the college library and its seven Honours Departments is 48,992. The school libraries are well-equipped.

The boys also have use of a stadium, a gymnasium and the gigantic, magnificent Ashrama Auditorium. The massive complex of the Ashrama fills everybody with awe.

Thus indeed, with the passage of time it has grown to be a noble institution. The aim of the Ashrama for the individual student is to help him eliminate the need in his life for the institution; the task is to help him become a self-educated man. Education here helps to integrate not only thinking brains but dexterous fingers. Students are taught the lesson of self-dependence and self-help as an inseparable aspect of education for life. The aroma of excellence comes out of it. The Ashrama is a window to the world for all its residents and adherents.



"This Self is first to be heard and then to be thought upon, and then meditated upon." Everyone can see the sky, even the very worm crawling upon the earth sees the blue sky, but how far away it is! So it is with our ideal. It is far away, no doubt, but at the same time, we know that we must have it. We must even have the highest ideal. Unfortunately in this life, the vast majority of persons are groping through this dark life without any ideal at all. If a man with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, I am sure that the man without an ideal makes fifty thousand. Therefore, it is better to have an ideal. And this ideal we must hear about as much as we can, till it enters into our hearts, into our brains, into our very veins, until it tingles in every drop of our blood and permeates every pore in our body. We must meditate upon it. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and out of the fullness of the heart the hand works too.

—Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 2, p. 152.

What Sri Ramakrishna Did

ROBERT P. UTTER

The visit of Sri Ramakrishna to this earth is full of cosmic significance. Saturated with God, his very presence filled everyone with transcendental bliss. Thousands of earnest souls have found in the message of this Godman a bridge to eternity. A follower of Vedanta, the writer of this deeply absorbing paper is of Pleasanton, California.

1

A few days before Sri Ramakrishna left the body, Naren, the future Swami Vivekananda, thought, as he sat beside the Master's bedside, "If he would declare himself to be the incarnation of God now, I would believe him." Although Naren had not said a word, the Master immediately answered the unspoken question, saying, "He who was Rama and Krishna is now Ramakrishna in this body—but not in your Vedantic sense."¹ Thus was Naren assured by the Master's very words that he was a true and special divine incarnation. "Not in your Vedantic sense" refers to Naren's non-dualistic leanings and his difficulty in accepting the idea of a personal God. Anyone can claim to be an incarnation of the Divine Absolute in the general philosophical sense that God is in every finite being, but to be able to say with total assurance that one is the same personal God Who was incarnated as Rama and as Krishna would be impossible without the full self-knowledge of such an incarnation. We thus have Sri Ramakrishna's word to Naren that he actually was in a very special personal sense both Rama and Krishna reborn in the modern age as Ramakrishna.

Such a divine person does not come casually or lightly. Such a divine birth, or rebirth, happens only rarely and as a result of great need and suffering on the part of

mankind. At the time, it escapes the notice of many people, but later more and more begin to appreciate the cosmic significance of such a coming. It is up to us to understand as much as possible what such an auspicious divine visit means to the world. Coming as it did at a time of greatly expanding knowledge of the world geographically, socially, and scientifically, and at a time of hatred, prejudice, and warfare, we can say that the advent of Sri Ramakrishna gave meaning to the growing intellectual knowledge, gave love to a world dominated by conflict, and gave experiential verification of spiritual theories to a world that accepted only empirical verification of truth. All this was centred on Sri Ramakrishna's unique message: the truth of the unity of all religions, or the spiritual verification of the idea that all religions are equally valid paths by which man can reach the experience of and the union with God.

Sri Ramakrishna was realist and was also an idealist. He did not believe in sacrificing spiritual truth for false ego-based "ideals." Is it following an ideal to seek riches, fame, popularity, power, and sense pleasure? Or is it following a true ideal to practise sacrificial love, perform selfless actions, and pursue impersonal knowledge? Should I sacrifice my ideals to my ego, or sacrifice my ego to my true ideals? Sri Ramakrishna taught that God alone is the true ideal which all beings should seek, but he also taught that we can find Him in sense objects, for all sense

1. *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, 3rd ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1929) page 669.

objects are made of God's very substance. He did not teach that the apparent forms of sense objects are real and independent substances. It is their divine substance only that is real; their forms are transitory and unreal. Behind and within all sense objects is the one true ideal of the universe—God. This alone is what we should pursue by learning to see the Eternal Divine masked in the ephemeral forms. A gold ornament in the form of a donkey is just as golden as a gold ornament in the form of a cow. For Sri Ramakrishna the ideal formless Godhead and the phenomenal forms made of the Divine Substance are equally real because both are made of nothing but God, but the forms are not real in themselves. Thus he never idealized the forms into independent realities and pursued them as such. The forms are transitory; God is eternal. The forms depend on the Divine Substance for their value; God derives His value from nowhere but Himself. But Sri Ramakrishna did not depend on arguments to prove anything. He actually *saw* sense objects as Divine, directly and immediately without any logical proof, and he gave that power of divine vision to others.

Today many scholars parrot Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, saying that all religions are one in the sense that they all lead to the same goal. But it was Sri Ramakrishna who brought that teaching within the grasp of all and made it seem palpable and real and attainable. He did not teach this as mere theory; when he taught it, it became alive, he made it burst into fire. He said everyone can realize God without regard to intellectual attainments, social position, wealth, or any other special abilities. He brought the living God to man in a way no scholar could do, for he could awaken spiritual devotion and vision by a glance, a touch, a word, a thought, or just his presence. He did not teach verbal formulas; he gave God Himself. Once Sri

Ramakrishna asked M., the recorder of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, "Why do people come here? I don't know much of reading and writing." M. replied, "God's power is in you. That is why there is such power of attraction."² Sri Ramakrishna was so saturated with God that he was always dripping with the actual presence of God Himself as a honeycomb drips honey. He always poured divine love and knowledge upon all who were in his presence because he was overflowing with it. He was a divine source upwelling illimitable vision upon all around him, and all could palpably drink of God at his fountain.

Sri Ramakrishna himself had little use for mere intellectual knowledge. He would say, "What need is there of your counting the number of trees and branches in an orchard? You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Do that and be happy."³ He saw the ego as unreal; it is that salt doll he loved to talk about, which set out to measure the fathomless sea, but quickly dissolved into the sea in the attempt. The ego and its desires are unreal—yet—the sense world is real because it is wholly divine in substance. See—already the logical mind is melted in the shoreless sea of divine knowledge when we try to talk about Sri Ramakrishna! If we could only understand that salt doll's dissolving into the sea, we might be able to understand Sri Ramakrishna. But how does night's impenetrable darkness dissolve into day?

2

When M. first visited Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna asked him if his wife was spiritually inclined. M. replied, "She is all right. But I'm afraid she is ignorant."

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1942) page 553.

3. *Ibid.*, page 463.

Sri Ramakrishna replied sharply, "And you are a man of knowledge?"⁴ This remark punctured M.'s balloon of pride in intellectual knowledge and for the first time introduced him to the idea that there was knowledge beyond that of the senses and the intellect. His logical mind was equally shocked when Sri Ramakrishna asked him if he preferred to worship God with form or God without form. M. could not see how God could be both at once. Another time, as recorded in the *Gospel* entry for January 1, 1883, Sri Ramakrishna was eating sweetmeats and said, "You see, I chant the name of the Divine Mother; so I get all these good things to eat. (*Laughter*) But She doesn't give such fruits as gourd or pumpkin. She bestows the fruit of Amrita, Immortality—knowledge, love, discrimination, renunciation, and so forth."⁵ These were the divine fruits that the Mother bestowed on mankind through Her Divine Child, Sri Ramakrishna, who himself showered them upon all. And he gave freely, not holding himself aloof from anyone. On that first visit M. was amazed to find that even though the door of Sri Ramakrishna's room might be closed, it was still always open to visitors.⁶ Sri Ramakrishna was never a recluse; he lived only to bestow God upon anyone and everyone who sought him out.

The whole matter of intellectual theory vs. direct vision is illustrated by another part of the same conversation as that above in which the Master said, "My Divine Mother is not only formless, She has forms as well. . . . Haladhari used to say that God is beyond both Being and Non-being. I told the Mother about it and asked Her, 'Then is the divine form an illusion?' The Divine Mother...said, 'Do thou remain in *bhāvamukha*.'" A footnote here explains that

bhāvamukha means the borderline between the Absolute and the Relative from which point of view both appear as real.⁷ Thus we see that what Sri Ramakrishna was taught by the Mother and taught in turn to the world was a yoga in which one does not retire from the world and live immersed in *samādhi*, but rather stays in the world and works among men for the good of mankind, seeing God in everyone.

We should also note that the Divine Mother did not directly answer Sri Ramakrishna's question about Haladhari's abstract, theological statement that God is "beyond both Being and Non-being"; rather, She simply told Sri Ramakrishna to remain on the borderline between time and eternity and see both the Relative and the Absolute as equally real. Abstract theology is far from actual God-vision, and the Mother wanted Sri Ramakrishna to teach and exemplify, not a self-consistent logical system of ideas, but the actual realization of God. To do this, one must have, not a logic-chopping mind, but an overwhelming love of God.

Thus we can see that the worship of God with form does not mean for Sri Ramakrishna merely regarding God as just another sense object but plunging wholeheartedly into the love of God. No statement about God is either true or false; it is simply irrelevant. Intellectual knowledge without the love of God is nothing according to Sri Ramakrishna. Dryness of heart resulting from too much emphasis on intellectual learning is the unfortunate fate of many scholars, so much so that it has become a perennial human condition, which today's facility of communication via the printed word has exacerbated into universal prominence. We call it by many names such as alienation, depression,

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

5. *Ibid.*, page 175.

6. *Ibid.*, page 78.

7. *Ibid.*, page 175.

loneliness, dementia, paranoia, obsession, and so forth. We emphasize book-learning above all else, and explode our minds and lives into a thousand fragments which we cannot put together again. We kill our love for God by too much scholarship for scholarship's sake, instead of using our learning to make ourselves whole by developing love for God.

Swami Ashokananda puts his finger on the problem in one of his published lectures in which he says that for spiritual realization a very special attitude must be cultivated, which he calls the sense of the Holy. He says:

"You can well understand that the moment you believe that God has form you take a human attitude towards Him. So it came about that the worship of the Personal God consisted in entertaining Him as you would entertain someone for whom you have great love and also great reverence. Without reverence you would not have the element of holiness, which should always be present in any form of worship. It is not enough to say, 'Oh, I love God!' Unless you have the sense of holiness, your love will not be spiritual, because it is in holiness that we become aware of the transcendental being or reality of the object of our worship."⁸

It was this sense of reverence and holiness that Sri Ramakrishna taught above all else, whether he was teaching the worship of God with form or God without form.

Sri Ramakrishna's attitude towards intellectual knowledge can be understood only if one studies the smallest details of his spiritual practices. There is one detail so

strange and unusual that we may well miss its full significance, but it is worth thinking deeply about. We have to consider this truth: man is apparently finite, but God is infinite. For man to realize God he must become infinite, that is, he must fully realize his true infinite nature. The drama of spiritual practice is the apparent transformation of the finite into the infinite, an impossibility by the standards of finite logic. Yet the Upaniṣads say, "That art thou." The infinite is beyond human logic, and all the practices by which the seemingly finite seems to become the infinite are also beyond logic. The illogical logic of God-realization has to be forced on the unwilling finite mind, which will never willingly leap into the super-logic of the infinite.

One of Sri Ramakrishna's heroic efforts to overcome the barrier between the finite and the infinite he tells about. "Sometimes I would open my mouth—the jaws touching as it were the heavens and the nether worlds—and earnestly cry, 'Mother!'—thinking I must pull Her like a fisherman hauling fish with a drag-net."⁹ Here we have a spontaneous enactment of a ritual symbolizing the forceful transformation of the finite into the infinite in order to swallow the infinite into the yearning jaws of the finite, that is, to eat God as in communion, or the taking of prasād. Sri Ramakrishna thus spontaneously invented his own ritual of communion in which the finite physical food is transformed, by offering it to God, into God's very essence, His living spiritual flesh. Yet there is a fascinating difference here, for in this attempt actually to swallow God, we see that the trans-logic of God made flesh and blood consists in transforming the devotee's own flesh-and-blood jaws into the gateless gate by which he attempts to enter into communion with the Eternal

8. Swami Ashokananda, *Meditation, Ecstasy, and Illumination* (Calcutta: Advaita Āshrama, 1990) pp. 139-40.

9. *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (1929), pp. 119-20.

Spirit. Thus many of the rituals which Sri Ramakrishna enacted and taught, were spontaneous acts of self-transformation into the Divine. They were neither originated by nor expressed through the finite intellect.

3

The great Vedantic teaching is that man is one with God. If so, then man should experience eternal, immutable bliss as his inmost birthright. Yet most men do not experience any such bliss. Rather they experience grief and sorrow most of the time. Even their worldly joys are so fleeting that they are more sorrows than joys. The problem of grief and joy—what is grief and what is joy, and how to experience joy without grief—is our deepest human problem. For us who live in the relative world there is no joy without grief. In the Absolute there is no grief, only bliss. But Sri Ramakrishna lived on the borderline between time and eternity as the Mother commanded, and he saw both realms clearly, and he knew that true joy is the sense of God's presence and true grief is the sense of God's absence, and that there is no other truth. But when does the grief for God's absence become joy, and when does the joy in God's presence become grief? It is on the borderline between the human and the divine that this problem arises.

This problem is dramatized in Sri Ramakrishna's vision of Sita. This vision was the first vision he had after his vision of the Divine Mother. By assuming the attitude of Hanuman, devoted attendant of Rama and Sita, Sri Ramakrishna achieved a vision of Sita, not in trance but with his eyes wide open. He said, "Such a sublime countenance, expressive of love, sorrow, compassion, and fortitude, is not commonly met with even in goddesses." He was about to fall at her feet when she entered his own body, saying, in Sri Ramakrishna's

own words, "that the smile on her lips she bequeathed unto me." Then he added, "Is it because my first vision of Sita was of her grief-stricken aspect, that my subsequent life contained so much suffering? Who knows!"¹⁰

This statement produces an explosion in the mind of the reader that cannot be measured. It is not only because of the intensity of such a vision, and the uniqueness of it, but also because to most readers Sri Ramakrishna's life seems to be characterized by rapture, not suffering. Yet here is Sri Ramakrishna saying that his life contained much suffering, and he feels an affinity with Sita, who spent many years grieving for Rama, her Divine Lord, while she was imprisoned by the Demon King. Did Sri Ramakrishna suffer from great grief, or was he mostly in ecstasy and bliss? Herein lies the heart of the mystery of the Divine Incarnation. Here we come face to face with the heart-piercing arrow of Sri Ramakrishna's message to the world. To a true devotee the grief felt for God's absence must far exceed the grief ordinary people feel for worldly losses. Only when it does, is God's presence imminent. The more agonizing our grief for God's absence the closer God is to us. How can we grieve for anything unless we are intensely aware of the bliss of its presence that we are missing? Grief for God is a form of the awareness of God. Is the grief of such a devotee grief, or is it bliss? Isn't there a bliss in such a grief because in and through it we are entertaining an unbroken thought of God, a thought which is largely a sense of God's presence? Such grief for God's absence is an entirely different thing from ordinary human grief based on worldly attachments. There is no joy in ordinary grief and it is inconsolable because we see no farther than sense objects. We do not see the immortal soul of

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

a loved one who dies, and are devastated at the loss of the body. Sri Ramakrishna, however, could lift the mind of such a mourner simply by his overpowering moods of ecstasy. He could summon up the bliss of God and fill the room with it so that no grief would be possible to those present any more. The whole mood of mental depression would vanish as the night vanishes with the sunrise.¹¹ Such was Sri Ramakrishna's power of dispelling worldly grief with divine bliss. He could not have had such bliss without first feeling agonizing grief at God's absence.

Was Sri Ramakrishna's life full of grief or full of bliss, or were the two mixed? I think we can see that from the human standpoint the two were mixed, but from the divine standpoint there was only bliss. Sri Ramakrishna was both human and divine, human in appearance, divine in reality. He was a Master of spiritual experience, for whom there was but one value, God. For him, a cut finger or a broken leg was no barrier to spiritual bliss. Indeed, in Sri Ramakrishna's last days during which his body was dying of cancer of the throat, many who were constantly at his side felt that he did not suffer at all but seemed, rather, to be continuously immersed in divine bliss.¹² Did Christ suffer on the cross, or was he in rapture for the opportunity to immolate himself for the spiritual good of the world? We cannot say, but it is certainly possible that divine incarnations feel bliss even in pain and suffering if that pain is suffered for others. Self-sacrifice is the essence of the divine incarnation's life; he lives the Bodhisattva ideal, living not for himself alone but solely for the good of others. For him rapture and

agony are one, for life and death are one. He lives suspended on the cross of space and time, on the borderline between time and eternity, and he freely gives of himself for all to partake of in the blissful spiritual feast that his whole life provides. Unlike mere scholars who seek fame and wealth and power, Sri Ramakrishna sought nothing for himself but gave abundantly of himself to all. His whole life consisted in giving himself away. He thus revealed himself to be the World Guru, the Saviour of the age, the modern Teacher of everyone. He was the all-inclusive Ramakrishna, the Buddha-Christ, the Sankara-Gouranga, who taught all paths and all religions, who gave himself to the whole world to feast upon. To be devoured by all was his bliss.

4

But the riddle of grief and bliss cannot be solved unless we go beyond the question of grief and bliss. We have to understand what spiritual life is all about. Sri Ramakrishna taught about self-sacrifice, that is to say, renunciation. To be successful, that renunciation must be total; the ego must be completely subordinated to God. Scholars may mouth what Sri Ramakrishna taught, but they often do not practise it. Their pride in their learning prevents their bowing their egos before God. The totality of the self-sacrifice which Sri Ramakrishna taught must be absolute and complete. It cannot be giving with one hand and taking back with the other; it must be wholehearted. The highest bliss is the renunciation of all bliss for one's self in order to help others attain true bliss. The Bodhisattva is the true Buddha. The *Lankāvatāra* Scripture says:

"Supported by the sustaining power of the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas at this stage enter into the bliss of the Samadhi of perfect tranquilization. Owing to their original vows they are transported by emotions of love and compassion as they

11. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, 4th ed., (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1952) pp. 338-40.

12. *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (1929), page 665.

become aware of the part they are to perform in the carrying out of their vows for the emancipation of all beings. Thus they do not enter into Nirvana, but, in truth they are already in Nirvana because in their emotions of love and compassion there is no rising of discrimination [perception of differentiation]. . . . This is called the Bodhisattva's Nirvana—the bliss of perfect self-yielding."¹³

This higher destiny of the Bodhisattva, the World Saviour, is exactly what Sri Ramakrishna taught Naren, who begged the Master to give him samādhi that would last for three or four days. The Master reprimanded Naren for such a request, saying, "You are a fool. There is a state higher than that, even. . . . You shall realize a state even higher than samadhi."¹⁴ Thus did Ramakrishna proclaim to Naren his destiny: to bring God-knowledge to the whole world. Total self-sacrifice, that was his goal and his bliss which he taught to his

greatest disciple.

Sri Ramakrishna taught all that one should be a disciple and not set oneself up as a teacher, a guru. He never thought of himself as a guru; always he taught that God alone is the guru, and that if the disciple seems to teach, he is merely a channel for the true Guru of gurus. He taught everyone to become a vehicle for the Lord to use, and not to become swollen with pride thinking he is doing the teaching. The only true teacher is the humble disciple of the Lord, not the vainglorious, self-proclaimed "guru." Only when the ego becomes what Sri Ramakrishna called the "servant ego" and ceases to hide the Divine, can the Divine really shine forth.

Sri Ramakrishna taught by words and example that man's true bliss lies not in self-aggrandizement but in total self-sacrifice to God. That was Sri Ramakrishna's mission: to bring that message to the world. It is also the ultimate goal of every human being. If we postpone working for it, we only postpone achieving our own bliss, for only when we remove all the illusory limitations of the finite self can our birthright of infinite bliss be ours.

13. *A Buddhist Bible*, Dwight Goddard, ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1970) page 339.

14. *The Eastern & Western Disciples, The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 6th ed., (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) page 131.



"Jnana never comes without renunciation of lust and possessions. With the dawn of renunciation is destroyed all ignorance, all Avidya. Many things can be burnt by means of a lens held in such a manner that the rays of the sun fall on it directly, but you cannot use it so in the shade of a room. Even so with the mind. You must take it out of the dark cell of this world and expose it to the full blaze of self-effulgent Divinity. Then alone true renunciation will come, and with it all ignorance will be destroyed."

--Sri Ramakrishna

The Concept of Maya and Dr. Radhakrishnan

SANGHAMITRA DASGUPTA

The author, who is a lecturer in Philosophy at Vivekananda College, Alipurduar, West Bengal, discusses the doctrine of Maya as propounded by one of the great modern philosophers of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

History tells us that the quest for metaphysical knowledge is a common urge of a human being. Not only Western thought, but Eastern religio-philosophical literature has been immensely enriched by the metaphysical juice of thought. The prayer of the Upaniṣad—

“From the unreal lead me to the real;
From the darkness lead me to the light;
From death lead me to immortality.”¹

reveals this longing of the human mind. The thirst for higher, more real knowledge moves man towards the metaphysical query. He tries to find out a clear and unequivocal answer to the question: whether the phenomenal world is real or not. Or, is there anything which is unchanging, eternal, beyond the world of ‘becoming’?

The Upaniṣadic statement warns us not to find reality and certainty in the unrealities and mere vacuities of the universe. Śankara, an eighth-century sage, and commentator on the *Brahma Sūtras*, proclaims that beyond this changing world there is an Absolute which is the only Reality. The world, apart from It, is not real. The world is merely māyā, a creation of the magical power of Brahman.

Śankara was not the originator of the concept of māyā, however. In an article, “The Implication of the Doctrine of Maya,”

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.3.38.

P. Nagaraja Rao writes, “It has its dim origin and outlines in the pre-Śankara thought of Bādarāyaṇa, Bhartṛhari and Gauḍapāda.”² In the *R̥g Veda* we come across the concept of māyā where it is said that Indra is declared to have assumed many shapes by his māyā.³ The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* describes God as “Māyin.”⁴ So the idea which was hidden in the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads* and the early writings of pre-Śankara philosophical enterprise was developed as a fulfilled doctrine by Śankara to establish the Upaniṣadic philosophy of the Ultimate Reality of Brahman. As a monist, Śankara admits the ultimate reality of one category—*Brahman*. The other religio-philosophical categories—God, souls, and the world arise from Brahman. All the appearances are due to māyā which is positive and beginningless. Śankara states the nature of māyā in the following:

*Sannāpyasannāpyubhayātmikā no
bhinnāpyabhinnāpyubhayātmikā no
sāṅgāpyanaṅgā hyubhayātmikā no
mahādbhutā’ nirvacanīyarūpā.*

2. P. Nagaraja Rao, “The Implications of the Doctrine of Maya,” *Prabuddha Bharata*, April, 1944, page 153.

3. *Rūpam rūpam pratirūpo babhūva, tad asya rūpam praticakṣaṇāya; Indra māyābhiḥ pururūpa tyate yuktā hyasya harayaḥ sata daśa. . . . R̥g Veda*, vi.8.12.

4. *Māyām tu prakṛtim viddhi, māyinaṁ tu maheśvaram. . . . Śve. Upan.*, iv.10.10.

*"She (Māyā) is neither existent nor non-existent nor partaking of both characters; neither same nor different nor both; neither composed of parts nor an indivisible whole nor both. She is most wonderful and cannot be described in words."*⁵

So, according to Śankara, māyā is neither *sat* nor *asat*. If it is *sat* (real) it can never be removed by the supreme Knowledge. On the other hand, it is not *asat* (unreal) like a sky-lotus. Māyā is indeterminable, indescribable (*anirvacanīya*). Brahman is its locus as well as its object; but Brahman is untouched by it, just as the colourless sky (*ākāśa*) is untouched by the dark blue colour attributed to it. Māyā has a conditional and phenomenal character.

The concept of Māyā, which was developed from its earlier unelaborated, implicit meaning into a fulfilled doctrine by Śankara is extended to modern times in and through the philosophical writings of contemporary philosophers. Among the modern Indian philosophers, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, an advocate of Advaita of the 20th century, explains the multidimensional implications of māyā. Dr. Radhakrishnan on the one hand tries to interpret the traditional philosophy of the East to correct the current distractive trend of the Western tradition, and on the other, infuses the force and energy of Western philosophy to "vitalize the apathy" of its Eastern counterpart. And in this approach Radhakrishnan leaves no stone unturned to disinter characteristic Indian philosophical conceptions from "their antique setting" and to show their attractiveness and logical interest to people in our modern scientific age. His interpretation of māyā is a wonderful example of his synthetic approach in

philosophy. In this paper we shall try to survey Dr. Radhakrishnan's concept of māyā with an effort to find out whether his view is a reinterpretation of Śankara's view.

Dr. Radhakrishnan never believes that the world, which is a perpetual procession of phenomenal events, is merely an illusion. In his tireless and sometimes tiresome effort, it is evident that he refutes such an interpretation of māyā that negates the reality of the phenomenal world and affects the urgency of the ethical demand. Radhakrishnan admits that the sole reality is Brahman. According to him when we rise above the intellectual level and intuit the nature of reality, we see that there is nothing but the absolute. But he disagrees that it implies that everything else, including the world, is unreal. In many of his philosophical writings⁶ the doctrine of māyā has been interpreted with this new taste of presentation. He has explained the doctrine from different viewpoints, but it is remarkable that none of these concepts means that the world is an illusion. Donald Brauce⁷ in his essay on "Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's Interpretation of Māyā" has elaborately explained six different meanings of māyā. A close and careful study of different writings of Radhakrishnan shows that he accepts māyā as (1) inexplicable mystery, (2) as power of self-becoming, (3) as primal matter, (4) as concealment, (5) as duality, and (6) as one-sided dependence.

Regarding the relation between the appearance and reality, he points out that such a relation can never be understood, and every attempt of its explanation is

5. *Vivekacūḍamani*, Trans. Swami Madhavananda (Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1978) verse 109.

6. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol.2 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1989) page 565 (Centenary edition).

7. Donald A. Brauce, *Māyā in Radhakrishnan's Thought* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1984) page 101.

bound to fail since the world of plurality and the ultimate reality—these two are heterogeneous. The doctrine of *māyā*, he regards, is the only philosophical explanation that is possible and necessary to explain the relation between the two. Regarding such relation we can only say that it is a mystery, or *māyā*. Radhakrishnan, in his important paper, "The Doctrine of *Māyā*: Some Problems," opines that: "The most modest course for philosophers would be to admit a mystery at the centre of things—*Ko veda...kuta iyam viśṛṣṭih*—Who knows whence this creation was born? It is *māyā*, mystery."⁸

With regard to the status of the world, he states that it is a combination of "being" and "non-being," *sat* and *asat*. The world is not in the nature of being (*bhava*), but it is not in the nature of non-being (*abhava*) either. To see the world as it is is to see it as a synthesis of both being and becoming. All things in the world participate in the character of this duality. The complex universe is a progressive manifestation of the supreme Atman, "from matter to spiritual freedom, from *anna* to *ānanda*." He does believe that there is an intimate connection between God and the world of souls. The world in his view is not void or unreal.

He explains *māyā* as the primal matter, or *prakṛti*, which God uses for creation. Radhakrishnan approaches an emanation theory according to which the Absolute breaks up Its wholeness and develops the duality of self and not-self. But as a non-believer in non-dualistic view of the world, on the other hand, he never regards that all the existences that arise from the primal

matter are an illusion. The Upaniṣads make it clear that the basic reality is the One; but the depending reality is the many. Radhakrishnan says that Brahman is the mind of mind, the life of life, and that the Upaniṣads do not assert the unreality of mind and life.

In his introduction to *The Principal Upaniṣads* Radhakrishnan describes *māyā* as the power of *Īśvara*, and he denotes that the individual soul is bound down by the *māyā* of *Īśvara*; the world has the tendency to delude us into thinking that it is self-dependent and we are subject to *māyā* or delusion. As a result of this delusion we think that we are completely separate entities. So according to him, "*Māyā* is concerned not with the existence of the world but with its meaning, not with the faculty of the world but with the way in which we look upon it."⁹ To signify *māyā* as the beginningless cosmic principle which hides reality from the vision of man, he portrays it as "veiling, cloaking, or concealing."¹⁰

From the foregoing review it appears that he denies the doctrine of *māyā* in the sense of illusion. The world is a process of becoming, it is not unreal. He approaches the doctrine of *māyā* to save the world and to give to it a real being. To him the world is a "wonderful creation," a creation of the Absolute, the *līlā* of the Supreme Being.¹¹ He believes that the purpose of the cosmic evolution is to reveal the spirit underlying it. God's attributes—Knowledge, Beauty, and Love—are revealed in each of the finite beings. So the world which is full of values is not an illusion or unreal. In his view "it is

8. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Doctrine of *Māyā*—Some Problems" (In Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy) Ed. by E.S. Brightman, (New York: Longman Green, 1927)

9. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989 Centenary Edition) page 87.

10. *Ibid.*, page 89.

11. See S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* (Beatty Memorial Lectures Series No. 1.1956).

wrong to interpret the meaning of the doctrine of māyā in a way that affects the urgency of the ethical demand."¹² Now the question arises: Is Radhakrishnan's interpretation of māyā a radical departure from that of Śankara's? To such question our reply would run as follows:

We find that exposing the view embodied in the Upaniṣads, Śankara represents that the entire visible world which we believe to be there from the beginning of time, and running to an indefinite future, is an illusion; otherwise it creates conflict with the scriptural declaration that reality is absolutely non-dual. We do not formally understand how there can be an illusion. And that is why the "illusionism" is introduced by Śankara. Ranade in his *A Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy*,¹³ clearly points out that "Śankara is neither an epistemological idealist nor an epistemological nihilist. To Śankara the world is real, but only phenomenally, nominally it is unreal. Śankara admits three kinds of reality—*paramārthika sat*, *vyavahārika sat*, and *pratibhāsika sat*, and according to him only the *paramārthika sat* is absolute, in the sense that it is not denied by any other knowledge. Śankara admits that Brahman and the world have two grades of reality. The world is māyā or unreal as compared with the reality of Brahman. In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*(1.6.3), we find this idea—"This immortal entity is covered by

truth (these five elements). The vital force is the immortal entity and name and form are truths,—this vital force is covered by them." Name and form, (i.e., the world of experience), are called truth, but the reality of Brahman is of a different grade from the reality of the world.

In Radhakrishnan's view also the reality of the world and the reality of the Absolute are radically different. The reality of the world is not absolute. He contends that the world is conditional, contingent, created, dependent, empirical, finite, manifested and relative.

Now it appears as an outcome of the whole bulk of previous discourse that the divergence between these two interpreters rests on the presentation of the view from two different picks of life. It may be noted that of these two thinkers, one—being an Advaitin of the 8th century who led the life of a sannyāsin, presents his doctrine of māyā through the theory of illusion as pure metaphysics. He is a monk and a *jñāni*, so it will be better to take the view of the world as an illusion. But the other, being a fulfilled active person, presents the theory for the masses in such a manner so that it is more suitable to the mental framework of the present society and does not affect the ethical urge of modern people. In conformity with the traditional Vedānta, his philosophical outlook is to a large extent dominated by the spiritual idealism¹⁴ of the Upaniṣadic sages which he reinterprets so as to adjust it to the dynamic social outlook and world situation.

12. "Religion in Transition," page 22. (as quoted by Donald A. Brauce in his book: *Māyā in Radhakrishnan's Thought*, page 13.)

13. As quoted by V. Madhusudan Reddy in his article "Māyā and Māyāvāda: A Critical Retrospect" (*Vedanta Kesari*, Vol. 51, 1964).

14. By "idealism" Radhakrishnan does not mean "idea-ism", but "ideal-ism."

"If you must be mad, be it not for the things of the world. Be mad with the love of God.

—Sri Ramakrishna.

Ode To Swamiji

ASIM CHAUDHARI

You left the land where Ganga flows,
In eighteen ninety-three;
West you came to the home of the brave,
And to the land of the free.

The family of George and Mary Hale
Then took you as their own;
You could count on them as dearest friends,
And you were not alone.

Art Institute of the Windy City
Was where you gave your speech;
You told them of your eastern faith,
And touched the heart of each.

You told them of how the rivers flow,
And finally reach the sea;
Each river follows its unique path
To a similar destiny.

People of different religious faiths
Likewise—you did say,
Try to reach the Almighty One
Each in his unique way.

Fanatic bigots and hateful sects
All through the course of history
Drenched the earth with human blood,
In crazed and violent spree.

But the time had come you said to them
To rise above hate and fear;
To end all kinds of persecution
Caused by pen and spear.

You spoke to people of tolerance and love,
But now it's a grievous shame;
In spite of all your lifelong work,
The world's still in need of change.



Review & Notices

SPIRITUAL TREASURES, Letters of Swami Turiyananda, translated and edited by Swami Chetanananda, Vedanta Society of St. Louis, MO, U.S.A., 1992, 288 pages; \$ 11.50

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) in his discussions with disciples and devotees used to exhort them to keep in mind that the aim of human life is to attain love of God. Without that, in the end everything becomes meaningless. The boy, Harinath Chattopadhyay, known later by his monastic name, Swami Turiyananda, was one of the fortunate youngsters who took this teaching of the Master to his inmost heart. He attained ecstatic love of God. In after years he once said, "I have done what one being born a man should do. My aim was to make my life pure." Again, he used to say: "A cloud obscures the sun. We say, 'There is no sun.' But the sun always shines. So the cloud of ignorance, and the *Ātman* will reveal itself in your heart. When you realize that, then you are a man." Swami Chetanananda writes that when Turiyananda was asked how this can be realized, he answered: "Through meditation. Meditation is the key that opens the door to Truth."

Swami Turiyananda was an awakened soul. Therefore he led his entire life in the joy of spiritual practices. When the call came to come over to America in 1899, he at first objected vehemently, he wanted to continue with his disciplined and regulated life of mental purity and meditation in the holy places of India. But Swami Vivekananda's entreaties won him over in the end and he at last agreed to put on the mantle of a guru, or spiritual teacher. For three years he stayed in the U.S.A., mostly at the Shanti Ashrama "Peace Retreat" he founded in northern California. When at last his health broke down he returned to India where he remained for the rest of his life. In these latter years he was constantly occupied with his meditation and other spiritual practices. Yet he kept up a good correspondence with many disciples and devotees in India and

America. As he used to teach, so he would write: "Trusting in God (he used to call God 'Mother') does not mean idleness. Try to know her will, and then be up and doing like a man. Don't you see? I am never idle. The mind must be occupied in some way or another. If you don't do physical work you must use your mind— read, study, or meditate. And don't spend your time in idle gossip. Gossip breeds mischief. if you talk, talk of the Lord."

Happily, here for the first time is a volume in English of Swami Turiyananda's letters. A hundred and thirty-eight letters have been selected from the Bengali collection by Swami Chetanananda which are valuable for their instructiveness in religious matters and for the Swami's personal reminiscences of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and their teachings. Forty-one additional letters are included, which Swami Turiyananda wrote in English. The book has an interesting biographical introduction to the life of Swami Turiyananda, and also a glossary and index. It is a welcome and valuable addition to Vedanta literature.

S.S.
Mayavati

SWAMI VIRAJANANDA, by Dr. Hirendra Narayan Sarkar, Jagacha P.O. G.I.P. Colony, Howrah, W.B., 711 321.

This little book gives a short life sketch of one of the famous presidents of the Ramakrishna Math & Mission, Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj. It includes a number of interesting anecdotes and also illustrations which give glimpses of the greatness of the revered Swami even when he was a young aspirant. The author conveys in the book what goes to make a man great in spiritual life and helps him attain great heights. Difficulties come in battalions to such men, but they march forward undaunted like expert racers. The great virtues of this revered Sannyasi are worth emulating by serious spiritual aspirants. The book also gives in a

nutshell the ideal of sannyasa, and the quintessence of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Virajananda, and also gives a brief account of the organizational set up of the Ramakrishna Order.

*Swami Muktidananda
Mysore*

THE WISDOM OF VEDANTA—A memorial volume on the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's visit to Trichur. Translated and compiled by Swami Gabhirananda, 1992. Issued by the Vivekananda Vijnana Bhavanam, Ponkunnam, Trichur, 680 002, Kerala. Rs. 50/-

The ennobling philosophy of Vedanta puts stress on 1) the essential infinitude and divinity of man, and 2) the solidarity of the universe and all life. This expression of oneness is the fountainhead of love, compassion and sympathy. Today, we are badly in need of these Vedantic values to fight against deadly viruses of fragmentation leading mankind to destruction. A very admirable attempt has been made by Swami Gabhirananda and the Vijnana Bhavan, by putting in our hand lifesaving truths of Vedanta in this Souvenir "Wisdom of Vedanta". It is an anthology from the foundational texts of Vedanta.

In this handy volume with beautiful cover-page, some of the important passages are selected from the eleven principal *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Bhagavata*, and the *Adhyatmaramayana*. To bring out the essence of the above shastras, the passages translated from Sanskrit to English are arranged in various chapters with appropriate titles like "The Nature of Man and the Way to His Perfection", "The Goal and its Achievement", "Knowledge Removes Fear and Ignorance", etc. Explanatory notes follow each chapter.

The last section of the book contains Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. As a prelude to this section, the relevance of Sri Ramakrishna to Vedanta, as explained by Swami Vivekananda, is given. The section comprises excerpts from many books on Sri

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. This is probably the best word-picture of the wisdom of Vedanta, as Sri Ramakrishna lived Vedanta and Swami Vivekananda reinterpreted it for the present age.

Wisdom of Vedanta shows the path leading man to happiness and blessedness. It incisively and persuasively teaches that the spiritual and eternal is to be prized above the material and transitory, a valuable and fitting publication indeed to mark the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's visit to Trichur.

*Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Rajkot*

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—His Condensed Lectures, Discourses, Sermons, Exhortations, etc. by J.K. Saxena. Published by J.K. Saxena, U.P. P.W.D., Suite No. 2, Bank House, Mall Road, Nainital. 1991; Rs 9/-

This is a compilation of Swami Vivekananda's writings on selected subjects like Hindu Religion, Other Religions, Yoga, Pranayama, Meditation, the Universe, etc. It is a novel publication like other compilations already brought out by the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta and the Ramakrishna Math, Madras. Swami Vivekananda's thoughts are like glittering gems scattered in the extensive literature of the *Complete Works*. When collected, selected, and woven they always attract. This is a good attempt to present Swami Vivekananda's thoughts, picked up from his lectures, discourses and writings in condensed form. Priced reasonably, admirers of Swami Vivekananda will surely like this book.

*Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Rajkot*

HISTORICAL DATES, by V.G. Ramachandran, General Editor, Dr. N. Mahalingam, Published by the International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilisations, 102 Mount Road, Guindy, Madras 600 032. First edition 1991; Rs. 30/-

Chronology forms the basis of history. If

it is false, history gets distorted in the process. The Western historians, impelled by imperialistic considerations or due to sheer ignorance provided an erroneous chronology of India's historical past. The same is being followed by a large number of Indian historians despite the new findings based on astronomical data in the Epics.

The learned author is convinced that the Carbon-14 test cannot be used to measure the gigantic chronology of 10,000 years. His observation stands corroborated in an essay (by Bruno Hamelin and Edouard Bard) published recently in *The World Scientist* (August 1992). It says: "The radiochronological method of Carbon-14 (^{14}C), well known for its application in archaeology, has recently undergone an important adjustment. . . . Beyond 9000 years, the ages determined by this method were indeed systematically younger than in reality. (pp. 46-48)

It is regretted that many Indian and foreign scholars regard Chaitra Shukla Prathama as the correct starting point of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. They are oblivious of the fact that the Vedic sages used to start the Zero point from the Dhanishtha nakshatra itself. Varahamihira changed it to the fourth pada of Revati nakshatra minus $1^{\circ} 20$ minutes from the actual zero point of the Ashvini star. Astronomically speaking, five planets were placed in the Dhanishtha nakshatra when the Kali Yuga started. The supposition that it began from Lord Krishna's death proves erroneous when one reads the *Vishnu Purana* (4th Amsha, Ch. 24), which says that the Kali Era (112th year) was running in Parikshit's time, and that "the meeting of two points of the Sapta Rishis ended within the Magha star on the ecliptic."

The dates of the Mahabharata war and that of King Ashoka have been regarded by the author as pivotal for the chronology of Indian history. If the Mahabharata war is accepted as historical and not mythical, as argued by Sri William Jones and Vincent Smith, Indian history would go back to the 3rd or 4th millennium B.C. and upset the

prevalent world chronology based on the biblical tradition.

The Puranic and astronomical evidence clearly fix the Mahabharata war (3138 B.C., Kali Saka) in 3102 B.C., and the Sapta Rishi Era as from 3076 B.C. Although it was ignored by Sri William Jones, other Western scholars, such as Count Bjornstjerna and Bailey, certified to the accuracy of Hindu astronomy.

By rejecting the authenticity of the Epics and the Puranas, Sri William Jones demoted the date of Ashoka to 268 B.C. to put it in line with Alexander's invasion. In a similar vein, Max Mueller brought down Indian chronology to 1500 B.C., i.e., the date of the alleged invasion of the Aryans. In the process, the dates of the Rig Veda (6000 B.C.), the Buddha (1887 B.C.), Ashoka (1472 B.C.) and Shankara (509 B.C.) were set further back.

It is further argued that the names of Ashoka and the Buddha are nowhere to be found in Greek chronicles; that Ashokan pillars and the inscriptions of Samudragupta give no dates; that Dr. Fleet's attempt to co-relate Vallabhi Era with the Gupta Era is mischievous; that the real Gupta inscriptions which relate to the period of the Mahabharata war have been ignored by Western scholars and that the Janamejaya Copper Plate and the Aihole inscriptions reckon the time from the Mahabharata war; that Megasthenese's contact, if any, was not with the Maurya king but possibly with Chandra Gupta of the Gupta dynasty; that Kaladi Shankara, born in A.D. 805, is not to be confused with Adi Shankara, born in 509 B.C. And so on.

Though repetitious at places, the book makes scholarly reading. Much of what it contains needs to be incorporated into history textbooks to generate further interest in the vital aspects of Indian historical chronology.

Dr. Satish K. Kapoor
Dept. of History
Lyallpur Khalsa College
Jalandhar City.

