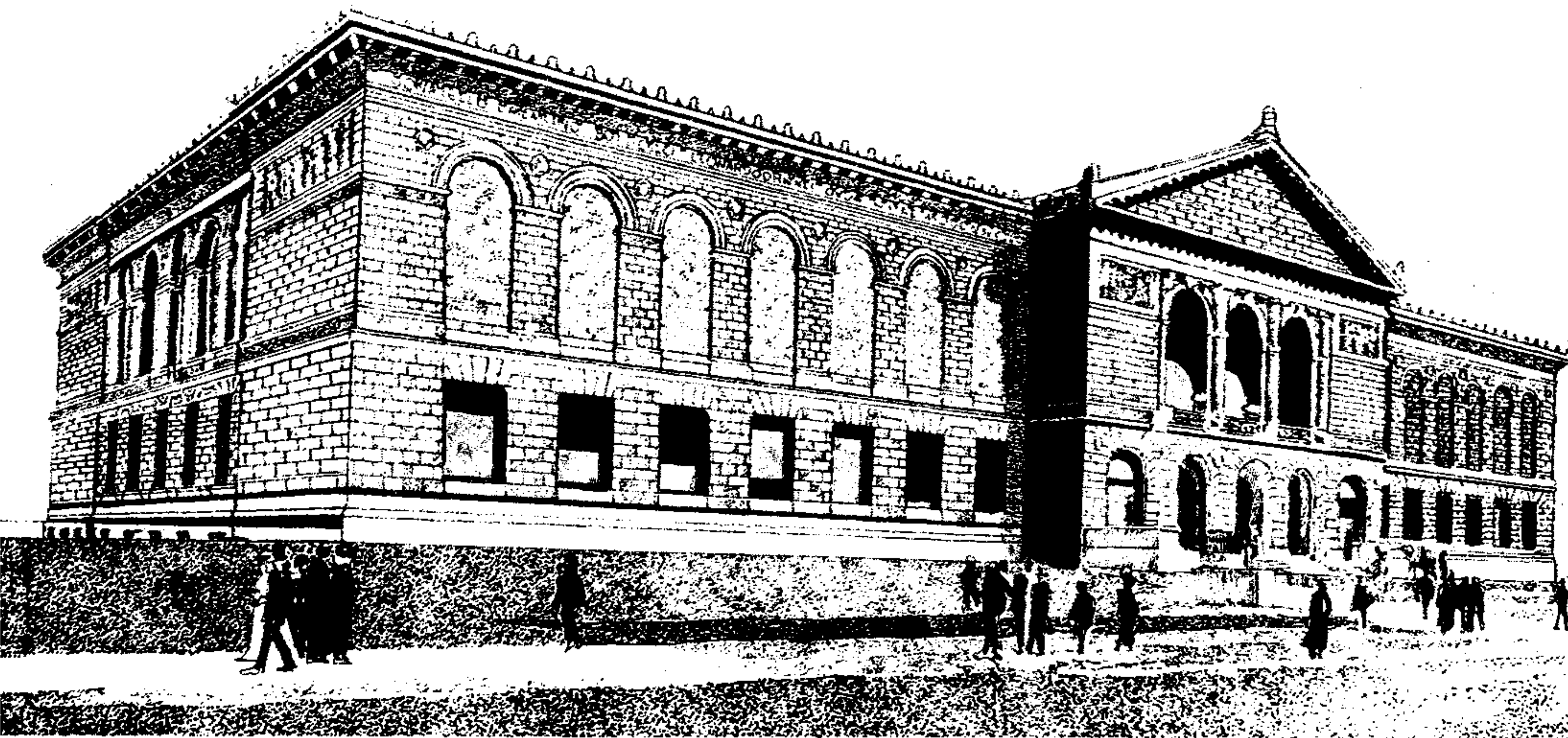




# Prabuddha Bharata

## 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*



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# Prabuddha Bharata

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Ramakrishna Order

*Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896*

APRIL 1993

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

# Prabuddha Bharata

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## Divine Wisdom

### निर्वाणषट्कम्

मनोबुद्धचहङ्कार चित्तानि नाहं  
न च श्रोत्रजिह्वे न च घ्राणनेत्रे ।  
न च व्योम भूमिर्न तेजो न वायु-  
श्चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥

I am not mind, intellect, thought, or ego ;  
Not hearing, taste, smelling or sight ;  
Not ether or earth, fire or air.  
I am the soul of Knowledge and Bliss—  
I am Siva, I am Siva.

न च प्राणसंज्ञो न वै पञ्चवायु-  
र्न वा सप्तधातुर्न वा पञ्चकोशः ।  
न वाक्पाणिपादं न चोपस्थपायू  
श्चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥

I am not that which is called Prana,  
nor the five vital airs ;  
Not the seven components of the body,

Nor the five sheaths ; nor the five organs  
of action.

I am the soul of Knowledge and Bliss—  
I am Siva, I am Siva.

न मे द्वेषरागो न मे लोभमोहो  
न मे वै मदो नैव मात्सर्यभावः ।  
न धर्मो न चार्थो न कामो न मोक्ष-  
श्चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥

I have no aversion or clinging,  
greed or delusion ;

No envy or pride, duty or purpose ;  
No desire, no freedom.

I am the soul of Knowledge and Bliss—  
I am Siva, I am Siva.

Śaṅkarācārya



## Youth and Religious Faith

Mankind is a great and massive river. That river is perennial. People as individuals come and go, but the uninterrupted flow in time of human society continues. The waters of a river change every moment but the river remains the same. In a body millions of cells die and new ones are produced every day, but the basic structure of the body registers no change. The successive generations modify the old traditions, retain some parts of it and add unthought of improvements of their own. There is nothing altogether new in the world, and youth are a permanent feature of human society. In the individual's life youth is a temporary phase, but in aggregate society the youth keep a permanent and prominent place. So young people too are like a river, they are always changing and getting transformed as individuals, but yet they remain the same. Every generation has to specially address itself to the needs of its young people. They can never be taken for granted as a mere quiet part of the landscape. Youth is a force and if left unharnessed, a formidable tumultuous energy. Neglected, it destroys; tamed and harnessed it showers blessings. Like fire, everything depends on the prudent handling of it. The fire of youth is the same all over the world.

The voice and authority of the youth may sound weak and uninformed, but there is immense power locked within. They are capable of wielding tacit authority. The outburst of that energy may, quite often, be reckless and heedless of consequences. But it is not always so. Behind that rebellious attitude, many times, a discerning eye can

detect genuine concerns. It should be remembered that young people are lovers of adventure and quick action and have no patience to sit and rationalize. They want quick results and for this we often see, they do not spare themselves. Lack of mellowed wisdom in them, or physical immaturity, does not mean they are ignorant; however, it is true, they do not see because of their age, the total perspective on things. Undoubtedly this is a major handicap with them which they do not accept. They are innocent and easily inflamed, but they are not hypocrites. Their incredulity is exploited by cunning, short-sighted and power-loving people in every country. Determination, grit and steadfastness are their characteristics. The prophets of the world left their homes, renouncing the pleasures of the world in the prime of their youth. So youth are capable of renouncing lower things for high ideals. At the same time it cannot be denied, they can act destructively towards what is holy and sacred. It can be said that they are a melting pot of many conflicting antipodes:—the creative and destructive forces, immaturity and wisdom, sacrifice and cruelty, the noble and the heinous, the heroic and the cowardly. They are fiercely jingoistic, and also display very liberal attitudes. Therefore they are often an enigma to older people. It is a puzzle that can neither be easily solved nor be left unsolved.

There has always been some kind of conflict between the younger and older generations down the ages. The youth always seem bent upon challenging and

overthrowing everything old, and determined elders seem always to want to force the youth to conform with their own ideas of the traditional values. Perhaps the growth lies in between the two extremes. Old people, because of their waning energy, preoccupation with their personal problems, and the habit of accepting things as they are, mutually compromise their principles with existing dishonesty, injustice, hypocrisy and smug conventional morality. On the contrary, young people, who are full of vitality and dash, do not tolerate such window-dressing and insist on immediate 'drastic surgery', instant change. Society cannot brush aside all the demands of the youth as irrational. Many of their demands are quite rational. The major infuriating factor is the hiatus between the precepts and the practices they see in the elders. Such conceit of wisdom and cloistered values set on fire the young spirit. It does not mean the older generation does not wish the well being of the young people. But their love, care and concern are not reassuring. It is an undeniable fact that none can vouch that our present society is just, impartial, uncorrupt and free from bigotry, poverty and suffering. The youth are not responsible for such sad spectacle. Therefore they rightly blame the older generation for such chaos and disorder. The tug-of-war between the young and old is perhaps as old as humanity. As far back as the fourth century B.C., Plato complained against the unsavoury behaviour of young people of his time. He spoke about their disrespect to their elders, disobedience to their parents, disregard for the laws, rioting in the streets, and ridiculing moral virtues. The great philosopher, like well-meaning elders of every generation, was grieved about the fate of the young people of his time. In the 19th century another great thinker, Emerson, advised young Americans: "I call upon you young men, to obey your heart, and be the nobility

of this land."<sup>1</sup> In the Upaniṣads also we find many passages exhorting young people.

Youth represent freshness, inquisitiveness, thirst for knowledge and vigour. Their vitality and dynamism, and fresh outlook, galvanizes all and pushes forward society. When they believe in a cause, good or bad, they unquestioningly give up their lives for it. Whether political leaders, or religious, or just reformist 'do-gooders', all first try to win over the young people. Winning the youth to them, these people have the capability of doing a lot of good in society, or causing a lot of harm. Youth followed the call of Buddha, Jesus, Socrates, Plato, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Gandhiji. They also marched unashamedly behind the world's notorious figures—the despots and fanatics, and wreaked havoc. It is a fact, youth are vulnerable to suggestion. If the present youth are going astray, becoming indisciplined, taking to drugs and alcohol, where shall we try to find the cause for all these ills? Do they learn all these on their own initiative or only by emulating the things they see around them? When something does not exist, people hardly are troubled to think about that non-existing thing. The cause lies in the polluted atmosphere of homes, educational institutions, the party-machinery in politics, avarice in government, and last but not least, power and political motivations in organized religions. The vulgar films they go to see, the sensuous literature they dip into, the inflammatory speeches they hear, the erotic advertisements and magazines they read, all mirror the decaying state of our environment. In addition to these are the host of other problems: mounting unemployment, lack of opportunities, nepotism, the unabashed

1. R. W. Emerson, *Essays*, (New York: J. M. Dent & Co.) page 371.



game of money-grabbing and enjoyment of social power and politics.

The problem of youth has its deep roots in the society and culture in which they are born and nourished. Their behaviour reflects the prevailing virtues or the absence of virtues. Elders cannot absolve themselves by throwing the entire blame on some external agency or by lame excuses. We must remember the part can never be well unless the whole is well. Purify the atmosphere and everything will be wholesome as well. A question put to Socrates by his disciple Adeimantus sheds light on the dominant refrain in man's thinking. He says,

"Socrates, I will ask you to consider another way of speaking about justice and injustice. The universal voice of mankind is always declaring that virtue and justice are honorable, but grievous and toilsome. The pleasures of vice and injustice, however, are easily attained, and censured only by law and opinion. This voice is also heard to say that honesty is for the most part less profitable than dishonesty. Furthermore, mankind generally is quite ready to call wicked men happy, and to honor them when they are influential. By contrast, they despise and overlook those who may be weak and poor, even though acknowledging that their justice makes them better than the others."

Further voicing his concern, Adeimantus says that if the young people hear all about this vice and virtue and the way in which men regard them, their minds would be greatly affected:

"Probably a youth will say to himself: 'If I am really just and am thought just, profit there is none, but the pain and

loss are unmistakable. But if, though unjust, I nevertheless acquire the reputation of justice, a heavenly life is promised to me.'"<sup>2</sup>

When power and pelf are the guiding principles of society, how can we expect purity and character in its younger generation?

It is not that human society lacks noble souls, men of shining character, men of good deeds and universal outlook. But their voice is feeble in the deafening noise, their influence is limited in the closed minds. Such illustrious ones are eulogized occasionally and forgotten soon. The same monotony continues. Our surface or ordinary consciousness is stuck up in this groove. People resist any temptation to raise it higher. Some daring individuals have broken this spell and have freed themselves from its grip. People in general are either frightened or unwilling to come out of the stupor. It is a strong addiction to feel satisfied with our normal life and way of thinking. To question it deeply is to invite disturbance, to venture on uncharted terrain. Therefore society tries to put everyone into the strait-jacket of this conditioning. Public opinion always functions within the circle of ordinary consciousness. New ideas are not only resisted, but they are ridiculed. We see the play of this mind which is convinced what it believes is right, and the supreme wisdom. What is familiar is not true. In a letter Vivekananda wrote, "Every new thought must create opposition—in the civilized, a polite sneer; in the savage, vulgar howls and filthy scandals."<sup>3</sup>

2. Henry L. Drake, *The Peoples' Plato* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958) page 198.

3. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda, by His Eastern & Western Disciples* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) Vol. II, page 270.

Youth are fresh, dreamers, less involved in the responsibilities of life and are relatively free of familiar way of thinking of society. "Youth is full of pleasance, age is full of care," said Shakespeare. Young people protest and resist anything imposed on them forcibly. It is not that they do it purposely, but their impulsive nature, strong urge to assert their freedom, and their youthful vigour compel them. These reactions of theirs manifest in many and sometimes bizarre ways. The short period of youth—the threshold between adolescence and adulthood, is full of idealism, promise, and rosy dreams. The youth, lovers of dynamism, revolutionary ideas, phantasy, and novelty, are hero-worshippers. They easily succumb to the pitfalls of their impulses, idealistic and otherwise. Usually they don't consider things carefully before taking a leap. Here lies the danger. History points out that new movements, good or evil, were spear-headed by the youth of the time. Lacking self-restraint, they cannot control their volatile emotional swings. Therefore elders are a bit wary of youth movements, and not unnaturally.

Youth should note that all their ideas are not thrown aside as impractical by elders. Such ideas should stand the test of time, must prove they are beneficial to mankind. It is a matter of patience, caution and wisdom. Socrates counselled the spirited youth of his time to show that it was not best for them to have their own way in all things until they have become wise. While they were young, they were restrained, but not because of their youth. This was not the determining factor; but the fact was that they were not yet wise. Discipline would restrain them in accomplishing this end. Then they would be allowed freedom of action and would be desired as friends by all, for then they would be useful and good.

Would religion teach them self-restraint and discipline, impart a sense of purpose and clarity of thought, give them overall perspective of things of this universe, and ultimately enlighten them on the goal of human existence? Do they have patience and interest to learn about God and about their relation to Him? Most of the youth, and not excluding elders, think that seriously engaging oneself in matters of spirituality and religion is a waste of time and energy. Because it does not ensure any worldly success. It is not a new phenomenon of our age. As far back as 2,400 years ago, Plato remarked:

"Men say we ought not to enquire into the Supreme Good and the nature of the universe, or busy ourselves in searching out the cause of things—that such enquiries are impious. Actually, the very opposite is the truth."<sup>4</sup>

Not knowing the purpose of one's life is a constant irritant. Living in ignorance is like living under a hypnotic spell. This absence of understanding finds its manifestation in so many destructive pastimes. Our fights for supremacy of a particular religion, or country, or race, and our selfishness, cruelty, fear and anxiety—all these will not disappear till the knowledge dawns, "Who are we?" and "Why are we here?" Ignorance is the cause of all misery and suffering—individual and collective. If a person is ignorant of current world affairs, or literature, or know-how in modern technology, it does not affect his life much. But spiritual illiteracy is a great curse. "The new world order," wrote Radhakrishnan, "must have a deep spiritual impulse to give it unity and drive. It alone can give rational basis to the social programme."<sup>5</sup>

4. *The Peoples' Plato*, page 497.

5. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society* (London: Geo. Allen & Unwin, 1947) page 42.



Why are young people averse to religion, and why are they skeptical? This skepticism is a passing phase, of course. Why religions fail to make deep impressions on their minds? The reasons may be: (1) They see people accept religious principles, but do not carry out those in practice. Religious teachings are not taken seriously enough, but are quoted endlessly without an iota of sincerity. In fact, religion is not mere theory, but practice and discipline. Sri Ramakrishna laid greater stress on the practice than on dry explanations and arguments. (2) Youth are discouraged from questioning deeply into theology, and why people adhere to what seem to them like non-essentials and observance of ceremonials. They are admonished to believe what they are told. This goes against the spirit of the youth. Mere belief, or intellectual conviction without the support of intuitive experience is fragile. (3) Young people think that religion has nothing to do with this world, its hopes, poverty, injustice and misery. The religion which promises peace and happiness in heaven and does not care about life in this world with its strifes and struggles is not worth pursuing. Religion should be applicable to the present, not to an unknown future. (4) They have witnessed that organized religions, instead of uniting, have divided the world into bitter camps. If religions do not usher in global peace, brotherhood, universality, what worth have they? They think that without such religions the world would be a much better place. (5) Young people are convinced that the startling discoveries of modern science have shattered the ideals of religions along with their theologies. 'Science is factual and religion is hypothetical.' The language of science is universal, whereas the languages of religion are various and meant each for the followers of the particular faiths. (6) Their consciousness is deeply attracted to enjoyments and the flash

of glammers of the world. Wealth, power, and fame or being popular are more fascinating than the spiritual pursuits—which asks them to give up attachment to these. The youth are enamoured of physical strength and intellectual prowess. They imagine that they can conquer everything and do anything. Such youthful over-confidence, based on under-experience, is naive and leads to arrogant deeds.

The *Times of India* (November 16, 1992) recently conducted a survey to feel out the pulse of a cross-section of urban college students with regard to faith-in or apathy-towards religion and God. The students interviewed were from all parts of India and they belonged to different religious denominations. Though many of them affirmed their faith in God, they expressed candidly their distrust in institutionalized religions. The report says that the generation that is emerging from educational institutions now is conservative and religious. Meditation and prayer have not lost their meaning. Many have said that faith in God gives them strength, solace and peace of mind. Religion to them is personal and they do not give much credence to the institutionalized religions. Many youth said that organized religions harp more on lifeless rituals and ceremonials than on laying emphasis on good deeds and altruism. In India, we know, religious festivals often mean ear-splitting noise, street-fights, disorder, and sleepless nights for innocent people. Young people feel, rightly so, that such extravaganzas are waste of energy and money. Another factor that emerged from this survey was that there is a great disillusionment among the students regarding the nexus between politics and religion. They feel this is dangerous, and think religion is being increasingly politicized.

Does human society need religion? Can it not go on with science and technology,



politics, and social and economic reforms? If religion is taken away from our life what happens?

(1) History shows that ever since man set foot on this earth he has never felt satisfied with anything. In him there has been a gnawing pain of dissatisfaction. He sets a goal and struggles hard to attain it, and then discovers that he is not satisfied with the attainment. Goals after goals have come and so have achievements, and yet the dissatisfaction persists. Man has been endeavouring endlessly to understand life, to find a meaning to his existence. In nature it cannot be found, as nature binds him down with its inexorable laws. Like nature, man's own sense organs impose their own strict limitations on what he can do. But the very thought that he is bound by limitations in anything of the physical world, makes him rebellious. All his struggles are directed to free himself from this bondage. Deep down in his soul something whispers ceaselessly "Be free, be free." Freedom is the goal that he is unconsciously moving towards. Freedom from the laws of nature, freedom from the limiting senses, and freedom from the heavy veil of ignorance. All life is struggling to find perfect freedom. Freedom from worries, anxieties, disease, and poverty are all parts of that Total Freedom. Life cannot move without the idea of freedom that is embedded in it. Even in the lower species, the lower consciousness is struggling to expand. Man's dissatisfaction with everything shows that he wants everlasting peace and bliss. Freedom alone fulfils that unceasing quest. This profound urge of the soul is religion.

(2) Freedom is the breath of life. As long as the idea of freedom remains, so long religion too, will be. It is religion which suggests the various means to break down the psychological obstructions opposing freedom. Religion shows the way. The

light of divinity in all beings is dim due to the thick veil of ignorance and impurities. Ignorance—not understanding the purpose of life, leads to all impurities—selfishness, cruelty, intolerance, and suffering. The sole aim of religion is to lead us to that goal, seeing God in our self and everything. What mankind is striving for unconsciously, religion helps them to do consciously, and so as to avoid pitfalls. Therefore the lofty ideal behind idol worship, good deeds, compassionate acts, adherence to moral virtues, visits to special places of worship—all are meant for the purification of the mind. Religion, like a kind mother, takes every person from where he is and gently shows the way to transform his lower nature into a higher one. These are all means to an end. Mistaking means for an end has often unleashed terrible hatred and destruction. Religion points the way to God, the Infinite Consciousness. God is above religion. We must make use of religion and religious tenets and not just identify and foolishly stagnate. To know God, and that He is our innermost being, is religion.

(3) Institutionalized religions and many sects are means suited to different minds to attain that coveted freedom or God-realization. They serve a noble purpose. They are offshoots, or different expressions of one Eternal Religion. Vivekananda succinctly explains:

"I learned from my Master...wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of One Eternal Religion. That One Eternal Religion is applied to different phases of existence, is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or your national religion, there never existed many religions, there is only one. One Infinite Religion existed through all eternity and will ever exist,

and this Religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways. Therefore, we must respect all religions and we must try to accept them as far as we can.”<sup>6</sup>

Organized religions therefore are particular and have the local colour and distinct expressions of their own. When human beings, particularly the youth, grasp this truth, it would open doors to peace and plenitude.

(4) Realization of God or Truth is far above the confines of intellectual conceptions, beliefs, and emotional or sentimental outbursts. Intuitive vision of Truth is real Knowing. Belief shows probability and direct vision certainty. The majority think that by just identifying themselves with a particular denomination and doctrine they would one day suddenly stumble onto a talisman to the Divine Bliss. In this they are deluded. Change of consciousness, or purification of mind, is an arduous task. Like any other discipline it requires patience, determination and unremitting attention. Young people are not drawn to spirituality because they do not see immediate tangible results coming. One has to touch the deeper layers of consciousness, and this is possible only through meditation and discrimination. Meditation opens vista after vista of the higher world. Those who are young can learn meditation quickly.

(5) Science and religion are not opposite forces, on the contrary, they are moving towards the same goal of oneness. Their language and methods are different. Religion is not afraid of science, in most cases it supports the findings of science.

6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 4, page 180.

“Is religion,” asked Vivekananda, “to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of Religion?” And he answered, “In my opinion this must be so....If a religion is destroyed by such investigation, ...the sooner it goes the better.”<sup>7</sup>

(6) Valuable advice to the younger generation comes from King Yayati in the *Mahābhārata*. (*Sāmbhava parva* of the *Ādiparva*) King Yayati, disillusioned by the never satiable desires, retired to a forest for tapas. He entrusted his kingdom to his young son, Puru, and advised him:

“If wronged, dear son, you should not wrong in return. He who does not yield to anger earns all the merits of him who displays it. Never should you hurt others by cruel words, nor defeat your foe by despicable means. He who utters harsh words to torture others carries demons in his mouth: prosperity and luck fly away from him. You should always keep the virtuous as a model for all your behaviour and should compare your acts respectively with theirs. You should ignore the hard words of the wicked. He who is wounded by the shafts of a cruel speech nurses his wounds by weeping day and night, which strikes at the very core of his being. The wise never fling such arrows as these. There is nothing in the three worlds which pleases the gods more than kindness, friendship, sympathy, charity and sweet speech. You should show regard to those who deserve it, and should always give but never beg.”

7. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, page 367.



# Sri Ramakrishna and Bhakti According to Narada

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA\*

*Sri Ramakrishna often referred to Nārādīya Bhakti. The different facets of this path of devotion are lucidly explained with apt examples by the eleventh President (April-1985 to December-1988) of the Ramakrishna Order.*

Those who have read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* know that in many places Sri Ramakrishna said that 'the path of devotion described by Nārada is best suited to the Kaliyuga, the present age.'<sup>1</sup> He had heard it from a monk who was a follower of Nānak and it left a deep impression on his mind. Though in the *Gospel*, nowhere he directly explained what he meant by *Nārādīya Bhakti*, still, after going through the whole book, somehow we can grasp the idea of bhakti, or devotion. By the statement 'Nārādīya-Bhakti,' we can take it as the way of bhakti as expounded by the sage Nārada in his *Bhakti-Sūtras*, and this is what Sri Ramakrishna meant.

Now what is bhakti in essence, what is devotion in reality? Nārada said: "*Sā tvasmin parama premarūpā*." *Sā* means 'that devotion,' *Asmin*, 'him or her'; he did not mention either Viṣṇu or Siva or Nārāyaṇa, or Lakṣmi, or Durgā, or any other particular name. He wanted to present it broadly—God may have different names and forms. *Asmin* indicates that. *Parama-prema-rūpā*, 'the highest love in human beings,' we understand. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna: "The love of the chaste wife for her husband, the love of a mother for

her child, and the attraction the miser feels for his wealth—if these three forces are put together then we can reach God."<sup>2</sup> We know what is love in human beings, but Nārada did not equate that love with bhakti, or love for God. It is something like this highest form of human love that people understand, but it is something still greater, something higher than that. This is the essence of devotion, according to Nārada.

Now what is the description, or spiritual aspect of bhakti? To understand that we have to know, who is a devotee and what kind of bhakti he possesses. Here Nārada first talked about Garga and Vyāsa. Garga said, "Delight in the name of God, in hearing and discussing and thinking about His divine sport—this love and longing for Him is called Bhakti."<sup>3</sup> Vyāsa said, "Worship such as the singing of hymns, the offering of prayers, oblations and so forth, is called Bhakti. Thus, love for Him, and the spontaneous liking for His worship—this is Bhakti."<sup>4</sup> Then he mentioned about Śāṇḍilya. Nārada said, "*Ātmaratyavirodheti śāṇḍilyah*," meaning 'that love towards God, without prejudice to the delight in the Self, is devotion, according to Śāṇḍilya.'<sup>5</sup> Thus Śāṇḍilya talked about Bhakti. It is love mixed with knowledge. How is that?

\* Translated by Ms. Sujata Sinha of Jamshedpur, from Swami Gambhirananda's Bengali article "*Kathāmṛta O Nārādīya Bhakti*" in *The Udbodhan*, Falgun 1389 (Feb. 1983).

1. Cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) page 485.

2. Cf. *Ibid.* page 83.

3. *Narada Bhakti Sutras*, tr. Swami Tyagishananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math Mylapore, 1943) Sūtra 17.

4. *Ibid.*, Su. 16.

5. *Ibid.*, Su. 18.

Those who are *jnāni*-s (knowers) consider that there is *Parabrahma—Param-Ātmā*—without qualities or attributes. When He wishes to create, preserve, or destroy, then He takes the form of the Personal God, *Īśvara*—with attributes. As Almighty God, He manifests His powers. Love for this Supreme God, or *Param-Īśvara*, is Bhakti. Sri Ramakrishna said, “As long as ‘I-consciousness’ exists, living beings and the universe must also exist, the individual being, the universe, and God—all exist. Everything is to be taken into consideration; this is to be done by the non-dualist (Advaitin) also. Until then we cannot do without Bhakti. We have to have Bhakti.”<sup>6</sup> Then he said about Self-knowledge, “Who am I?—I am not the body, not the mind, not the intellect; the real ‘I’ is beyond all these. How can I know that real ‘I’? By meditation on Brahman with attributes. When through meditation, we can go near Him, then He will unfold what His real nature is, and also our own.”<sup>7</sup> This is the way for a devotee having devotion mixed with knowledge. Nārada did not accept this path of *jnāna-miśrā-bhakti*. Setting this aside, he said: “*Nārada*stu...” (lit., “But Nārada,”) adding: “*tadarpitākhilācāratā tadvismarāṇe parama-vyākulateti (cā)*,” i.e., according to Nārada, “the essential characteristics of Bhakti are the consecration of all activities, by complete self-surrender to Him, and extreme anguish if He were to be forgotten.”<sup>8</sup> How could one understand this state of bhakti, this ‘*tadarpita-akhila-ācāratā*—in whatever we do’? It has been expounded in the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

*Yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yat juhoṣi  
dadāsi yat,*

*yat tapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva  
madarpaṇam.*

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, whatever austerities you undertake, do it all as an offering to Me. (IX. 27)

‘You offer it to Me’ means to offer Him the act as well as the result of the act. And work should be done, knowing that it is His Service—*tadarpita-akhila-ācāratā*—offering it to Him unconditionally, giving all to God. Offering not only the deed but also the result. There is an example given by Sri Ramakrishna in *The Gospel*:

There was a weaver who was a great devotee of God. He used to earn his livelihood by weaving and sang the name of God. He used to keep his mind fixed on God. When customers would come and ask the price of cloth, he used to say, “By the will of Rama the price of the yarn is one rupee and the labour four annas; by the will of Rama the profit is two annas. The price of the cloth, by the will of Rama, is one rupee and six annas.”<sup>9</sup> People knew that he was simple and speaking the truth. So they would give their money at once and take the cloth. One night it so happened that he was not feeling sleepy and did not retire to bed, but was meditating on God in the place of worship. At that very hour a gang of robbers were passing along the road. They were in need of a man to carry their goods so when they saw the weaver sitting, they caught him by his hand and took him along with them. After committing a robbery they put a load of the stolen goods on the weaver’s head for him to carry. They started walking. Just then the police came.

6. Cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 345, 652.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 559, 636.

8. *Nārada Bhakti Sutras*, Su. 19.

9. Cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, page 648.



The dacoits fled, only the weaver was caught with the bundle on his head. He was presented to the court. The villagers knew that such a simple and truthful person could not have committed the theft, so they came to the court and approached the judge, saying to him that this person could not be guilty, something must be wrong. The judge then asked him to narrate the story. The weaver said, "By the wish of Lord Rama I was not feeling sleepy at night. By Rama's will the dacoits were passing by. By Rama's will they robbed a house, and by the will of Rama they placed the stolen goods on my head, then by the will of Rama the police came. By Rama's will they caught me, by Rama's will they kept me in the lock-up at night and by the will of Rama they presented me in court this morning." The judge then thought that such a truthful person could never be a robber, so he set him free. At that, the weaver said, "By Rama's will I have been set free." Thus should one offer everything to God, all acts and their results.

It has been mentioned in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* about giving to God 'the power of attorney'.<sup>10</sup> Girish Ghosh, the great devotee, told Sri Ramakrishna: "I can't practise any austerity or *tapas*, so what will happen to me?"<sup>11</sup> Thakur\* said, "Twice a day, you should sit and practise japam." "Sir, where have I the time, I cannot do that. I have other works, my mind is always restless. I cannot give such a word that twice I will sit and do japam regularly," replied Girish. Thakur said, "Then twice in the day you clap and sing the name of Hari." Girish Ghosh then

said, "How can I do that even? I cannot give my word." After that Thakur said, "Think about God in your own mind at your own time." Girish Ghosh even then was sitting silently, saying nothing. Then Thakur said, "You will say, you cannot give your word regarding that even. Then you give me *vakalmā*, 'power of attorney'. I will do everything on your behalf. You don't have to do anything." Girish Ghosh then heaved a sigh of relief thinking, "This is an easy way. I had better accept this." He gave Sri Ramakrishna 'the power of attorney' and said, "Yes, my responsibility is now on you, you will do everything." After coming back home, he realized that it is difficult too, "Now I cannot regard anything to be mine or belonging to me. My job, my reward, all these things I can no more say, I have given everything to Thakur." This is '*tadarpita-akhila-ācārātā*'.

'*Tadvismaraṇe parama vyākulateti ca*'—the anguish at not being able to remember the Lord—this is an aspect of bhakti. In Thakur's life we find many examples of this. Intoxicated with love of God as he was, practising austerities, he used to rub his face against the ground by the side of the Ganga, murmuring in anguish, "Mother, another day has passed without my having Your vision." In course of time this yearning grew so intense that one day when he saw the hanging sword on the wall of the temple, he was about to seize it and end his life. Then the Divine Mother appeared before him. This is *tadvismaraṇe parama vyākulatā*, extreme anguish at feeling separated from the Lord.

In the *Bhāgavata*, there is mention of nine-fold expression of love of God. These have been discussed in the *Gospel* too, in several places. The *Bhāgavata* says: "Hearing, singing aloud, recalling the sacred memory of Viṣṇu, caressing the Lotus Feet,

10. Cf. *Ibid.*, page 369.

11. (Adapted) cf. Swami Saradananda, *The Great Master*, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1952) pp. 332-34.

\* Sri Ramakrishna

worshipping, reciting God's glories, serving Him, feeling friendship with Him, and self-surrender to Him—these are nine forms of Bhakti. There is the example in the story of Parīkṣit. (*Bhāgavata*, *Skandhas* I & II) King Parīkṣit came to know that he would die in a few days. Then he requested the holy sage Sukadeva to help him by recalling to him constantly the thought of God by singing, expounding, and answering questions. Sukadeva started narrating and Parīkṣit listened. Out of this, the *Bhāgavatam* came forth. This is *Sravaṇa* 'hearing about God.' Then *Kīrtana*—Nārada constantly sang the glory of God throughout the three worlds. His is the true example of 'singing the glories of God.' And God said to Nārada: "*Nāham tiṣṭami vaikunṭhe yoginām hṛdaye na ca madbhaktā yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭāmi nārada*—O Nārada, I neither live in Vaikuntha, nor in the hearts of the yogis. Where my devotees sing of Me, I am present there."

*Śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *Viṣṇu-smaraṇam*, *pāda-sevanam*—*Smaraṇa* is 'always thinking about God.' Just when Sri Rāmachandra and Lakṣmaṇa went to the Pampa lake, there they saw a crow flying near the water again and again, but each time going back without drinking. Lakṣmaṇa asked the reason for it. Sri Rāmachandra said, "Is the crow coming to drink but flying back without doing so? It is making japam with the name of *Rāma*. Lest it commit mistake, forgetting a single utterance of the name of *Rāma*, so it is not drinking water." This is called 'practising his continuous remembrance.' Next is *Pādasevanam*, or attending the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Thus keeping oneself engaged in the service of God's feet is an aspect of Bhakti. Then, *Arcanam*, *Vandanam*, *Dāsyam*—*Arcanā* is 'worshipping.' We heard that there was a king called Pṛthu who used to take delight in the worship of God and was

always engrossed in that. *Vandanam*—'proclaiming His glory', singing hymns, praying and so on. That we notice in the life of Garuḍa. Garuḍa is always seen in a posture of praise and humility before God. Next is *Dāsyam*—'the attitude of an attendant or servant.' This is found in Hanumān, in Mahāvīr's character. Hanumān is always working as a servant of Sri Rāmachandra. As Sri Rama requires, he is acting accordingly. Then, *Sakhyam*—'friendly gesture,' as Śrīdāma and Sudāma had it. By loving spontaneously, they achieved God. They did not reach Him by austerity or prayer, or singing hymns to Him. Through love alone they achieved Lord Sri Krishna. After this, there is *Ātmanivedanam* 'offering oneself at the Lotus Feet of God,' as did Prahlāda. He had to undergo torture, and his father tried in so many ways to prevent his taking the name of Nārāyaṇa. But Prahlāda did not give it up. He was always merged in God's name and did not mind anything—being in the midst of pain, being thrown in fire, being underneath the feet of the elephant. All these are means to attain devotion.

Thus, more or less, *Nārādīya-Bhakti* has been explained. But we will be mistaken if we consider that Thakur has excluded knowledge totally. Here 'knowledge' does not stand for that which we mentioned earlier as '*jñāna-miśrā-bhakti*', or knowledge together with bhakti. Thakur said that discrimination between what is real and what is unreal, between things permanent and transient, is to be observed. 'This is good and that is bad,' 'this is real and that is unreal,' 'what should be done and what should not be done,' this—always comparing and reasoning—should be there. He said, "Why would you be a fool for becoming a devotee?" Yogin Maharaj (Swami Yogananda), went to buy an iron frying pan in the market. He bought one and brought it



without having examined it carefully. There was a crack in it. Sri Ramakrishna said to him, "The shopkeeper is there for his making profit. Your duty is to look into your purchases carefully, then and there." In this context he said, "Do not be a fool, though you become a devotee."<sup>12</sup> So although the first and foremost duty is to remember the Lord devotedly, we should not forget to discriminate between things real and unreal. One thing more he talked about was simplicity. Regarding this he used to mention about Niranjan Maharaj: "He is very simple," he said, "and God loves him who is simple. Where there is simplicity, there God 'spreads His mat'." He spoke about faith also. Faith and *śraddhā*, faith arising from inner conviction of truth, with freedom from fear, is needed. On this, he mentioned the song: "If I go out of the house uttering the name of the Divine Mother Durgā, then no harm can befall me." This faith should be there, 'that I have taken the name of the Mother Kālī, therefore what is there to be afraid of? Do I care even for death?' "Mother, if I die calling 'Durga,' 'Durga,' then how can'st Thou do without saving me!" This kind of faith, faith with uprightness and self-respect, should be there along with devotion.

What is the outcome of this bhakti? Generally we say, we would attain God, thus we can reach salvation. But those who are devotees, they speak like Nārada—'Bhakti is the goal of bhakti.' There exists nothing distinctly as the aim of devotion. God is in our very heart. He is existence Itself, He is Bliss-Absolute; He is the embodiment of love in our heart. We would love Him, only for the sake of love, not out of any necessity. Now because of love,

if He bestows something on me, that is different. Thakur said, "He who does not want anything is the greatest devotee." The followers of bhakti say, "We like to taste sugar, do not like to be sugar!" They don't aspire for liberation, in spite of being provided with it. There are four classifications of *Mukti*—spiritual liberation: *Sāyujya*, *Sālokya*, *Sāmīpya*, and *Sārṣṭi*. *Sāyujya*—to be one with God, this is not for the devotees. *Sāmīpya*—to live with Him. *Sālokya*—God's Abode, *Viṣṇuloka* (heaven), 'I too would be in *Viṣṇuloka*.' What is meant by this *Sārṣṭi*?—'I will be enriched as a god if God with four arms, holding the conch (shell), chakra (discus), mace, and lotus appears to me.' I will inherit the same image. I will eternally be in His Abode. These are the attitude of the real devotees. Along with this, Thakur also said, that if God desires He can also give the Knowledge of *Para-Brahma*, which the *jñāni*-s aspire for. If we achieve God through devotion, and we seek liberation, He fulfils that too. He can bestow on us *Brahmā-jñāna*, or Absolute Knowledge. Thakur spoke thus. So we see he did not avoid knowledge totally, though he talked about Nārāyaṇa-Bhakti. By 'knowledge' here is meant the path, or constant exercise, of discrimination between the real and the unreal—the *nityānitya vicāra*. This path, or exercise, we should hold on to or keep up strongly. Along with it there will be Bhakti. You can not act as a fool.

Nārada as well as Thakur made it known to us that the path of Bhakti is an easier means. Why is it easy? Sri Ramakrishna said: "Karma-yoga is hard." By karma in Karma-yoga, he means ceremonials, yajñas, sacrifices, etc., as mentioned in the Veda. It is not possible for human beings in the present age to fulfil all these details. Perhaps the process has also been forgotten. So it is not possible. What is more, Karma-yoga

12. *Ibid*, page 566

is 'acting without attachment.' It is not easy for man to be totally desireless. Jñāna-yoga is also hard, because it is not at all easy to conceive 'that I am Brahman.' In this Kali-yuga, people live depending mainly upon food for their life.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, a human being loves a human being. It is natural in our heart. We have to turn it towards God only.<sup>14</sup> We love man, love our children, we love money and wealth. This love belongs to us normally, without effort. Only, turn it to God—that is Bhakti. Thus Thakur spoke about devotion. Further he said: "We have a Mother, so if we are to get angry, why not turn it to the Mother then?" "Mother, I am crying for you again and again, will you not appear before me?...or I will put the knife to my throat." If you are to mind, then get offended on God. If desire arises, then the desire should be 'that I want God, I must achieve Him, I would drag Him near.' etc. There is this aspect of Bhakti too,—the attitude of a gang of robbers—'kill,' 'cut,'

and 'rob,' thus have wrath on Mother. To get angry on Mother, to ask from Mother, to turn all the worldly emotions inside towards God, passion is needed. This is the way to achieve devotion. To speak the truth, devotion is the only means to have devotion. And devotion is the goal of devotion. To achieve devotion I have to abide by devotion. And what can be achieved by devotion? That is devotion indeed. To love God, to love Him truly—there can be nothing greater than this. And if true love arises, then God reveals Himself. If He wants to do so, He can bestow on you the knowledge of Brahman, or absolute knowledge. Thakur gave an example: There was a servant in the master's house. He used to work sincerely. He served the master properly. The master, being pleased, asked the servant one day, "Come, sit down by my side. Whatever you are, I am also the same." Thus, it seems, if love for God is achieved, then through bhakti, the highest ideal of Jñāna—to be one with Brahman—that can also be attained. Thus a few ideas on Bhakti have been discussed.

13. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 103, 170.

14. *Ibid.*, page 861.

If you meditate on an ideal you will acquire its nature. If you think of God day and night, you will acquire the nature of God.

—*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 657



# City of Brahman

## PRAVRAJIKA BRAHMAPRANA

(Continued from the previous issue)

What is the mysterious connection between the Master's touch and a recipient's unusual reaction? Illumined souls tell us that the mind dwells in the heart. Throughout *The Gospel*, Sri Ramakrishna reiterates this message to the careful listener. "When I first had my exalted state of mind," the Master said at one time, "my chest was always flushed."<sup>24</sup> Again, he commented, "There are certain characteristics of God-vision. One sees light, feels joy, and experiences the upsurge of a great current in one's chest, like the bursting of a rocket."<sup>25</sup> Such statements from a divine incarnation verify the fact: the mind—literally, and spiritually speaking—dwells in the heart.

According to Western psychology, consciousness is a property of the mind. However, according to Eastern psychology, consciousness is identical with the Atman. Consciousness is not a property of the mind; if it were, the mind would always be conscious. To quote Swami Vivekananda:

It is said of Socrates that while marching with the army, there was a beautiful sunrise, and that set in motion in his mind a train of thought; he stood there for two days in the sun quite unconscious. It was such moments that gave Socratic knowledge to the world.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 831.

<sup>25</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>26</sup>. Swami Vivekananda, "The Claims of Religion," *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advita Ashrama, 1972), Vol. IV, p. 212.

How does the mind dwell in the heart? Swami Hariharananda's commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras explains the process:

The brain is no doubt the centre of mental actions, but if mental fluctuations are stopped for a time, it can be felt that the "I-ness" is going down to the heart. When by meditation on the region of the heart, the subtle "I-feeling" is realised and it is pursued upward into the brain, then can the subtlest centre of "I" be located. The heart and brain become one and the same.<sup>27</sup>

Whenever yogis refer to the mind, they inevitably point to the heart—so attuned are they to the fact that this centre is an actual seat of consciousness.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "Mind is everything....Bondage is of the mind and freedom is also of the mind."<sup>28</sup> There are two minds, so to speak—the lower mind and the higher mind. Sri Ramakrishna used to give the analogy of the magnet and the needle to show the importance of spiritual disciplines in purifying the lower mind:

One cannot see God without purity of heart. Through attachment...the mind has become stained—covered with dirt, as it were. A magnet cannot attract a needle if the needle is covered with mud.

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<sup>27</sup>. Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1977), I. 28. 1.

<sup>28</sup>. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 138.

Wash away the mud and the magnet will draw it.<sup>29</sup>

In *The Eternal Companion*, Swami Brahmananda disclosed the purification process "Your mind is covered over by *rajas* and *tamas*," Maharaj explained

It must be made pure and subtle and raised to the state of *sattwa*, then you will find joy in your practices, and will want to devote more and more time to them. Later, when the mind has attained perfect purity, you will have but one desire—to devote yourself to contemplation always. Because the mind is gross it runs after gross things, but as it becomes pure and subtle it will run after God—the pure consciousness. When the mind grows subtle, its power increases and the aspirant is immediately able to grasp the truth of God.<sup>30</sup>

The lower mind comprises the three lower centres—the *Mūlādhāra*, *Svādhiṣṭhāna*, and *Manipūra*. The higher mind—the spiritually centred mind—is the off-spring of the four higher centres—the *Anāhata*, *Viśuddha*, *Ājñā*, and *Sahasrāra*. When the lower mind predominates, the knots of the heart are thick, dense, and twisted. However, when an aspirant possesses a *sattvic* temperament and is highly evolved, these knots have minimal strength to bind. Referring to Kedar, Sri Ramakrishna alluded to the gross knots of a worldly man. "I wanted to pass my hand over his [Kedar's] chest, but I could not," the Master remarked.

He has knots and twists inside. It was like a room smelling of filth, which I could not enter. His attachment to the

world is very deep; it is like a natural emblem of Siva, whose root spreads as far as Benares.<sup>31</sup>

Endowed as we are with our several hearts—our physical heart, our emotional heart, our spiritual heart—and our knots of the heart, how are they relevant to our spiritual life? The more we are informed of how a mechanism operates, whether an automobile or the human psyche, the greater control we have over our own lives. If the Vedic, Yogic, or Tantric schools of thought can give us the philosophical tools we need to rethink and analyze our true nature, they are of profound value. If they can help us to recognize and obliterate our fictitious self, they are of lasting value.

One practical manual is a small book entitled *The Spiritual Guide*, known as "one of the most despised, suppressed, and feared books in the history of Christian literature." Its heretical author Michael Molinos wrote

You have a strong castle (deep within you) that will make you triumphant over all enemies. Within it dwells the Divine comforter. Retreat there, for there all is quiet, peaceful, secure and calm.

How may you do this? The answer lies in that "deeper prayer" and in that love which is wholly concentrated on Him alone.<sup>32</sup>

As Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "Cry to Him with a longing heart, and you will surely see Him."

The way is simple, and is best travelled without fanfare. By over-dramatizing our

<sup>29</sup>. *Ibid.*, p 173

<sup>30</sup>. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Eternal Companion* (Hollywood Vedanta Press, 1970), pp 206-7

<sup>31</sup>. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p 812

<sup>32</sup>. Michael Molinos, *The Spiritual Guide* (Goleta Christian Books, 1982), p 50



struggle, we risk the danger of projecting our goal outside of ourselves. As Michael Molinos explained: "When a man sets out on a journey to a great city every step he takes is voluntary, he does not need to say, 'I wish to go to the great city.' That first step is an indication of his intention. He journeys without saying it, but he cannot journey without intending it"<sup>33</sup>

Molinos directed his readers: "We simply shall not find our God without"

Not shall we find Him by means of reasoning and logic and surface information. Each of us has Him present within us. There seems to be a blindness in believers who always seek God, cry for Him, long for Him, invoke His name, pray to Him daily, while never discovering that they themselves are a living Temple and His one true habitation. Their own spirit is the seat and throne of a God who continually rests within them.<sup>34</sup>

Swami Brahmananda said at one time: "There are times when it becomes impossible for me to teach anyone."

No matter where I look, I see only God, wearing many masks. Who am I, the teacher? Who is to be taught? How can God teach God? But when my mind comes down again, to a lower level, I see the ignorance in man and I try to remove it.<sup>35</sup>

We are all living temples to the divine and one day that indwelling divinity will be fully "awakened." Illumination can come in a flash. Sri Ramakrishna told his disciples:

<sup>33</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 89

<sup>34</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 56

<sup>35</sup>. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Eternal Companion*, p. 87

Fetters fall off in a moment by the grace of God. Do you know what it is like? Suppose a room has been kept dark a thousand years. The moment a man brings a light into it, the darkness vanishes. Not little by little. Haven't you seen the magician's feat. He takes a string with many knots, and ties one end to something, keeping the other in his hand. Then he shakes the string once or twice, and immediately all the knots come undone. But another man cannot untie the knots however he may try. All the knots of ignorance come undone in the twinkling of an eye, through the guru's grace.<sup>36</sup>

This same truth is found in the *Mundaka Upanisad*:

The knot of the heart, which is ignorance, is loosened, all doubts are dissolved, all evil effects of deeds are destroyed, when he who is both personal and impersonal is realized.<sup>37</sup>

An illumined guru is the only magician who can loosen the knots of the disciple's heart. He dissolves them through love, severs them through scoldings, or gently unfastens them by the power of his *yoga-māyā*, or divine attraction. This last method is called *śakti* initiation.

According to the school of Tantra, in ordinary perception, "[the mind] goes out like a ray to the object of perception, envelops it, and takes its form."<sup>38</sup> We can well imagine that in superconscious perception, the seer's mind—yoked to the Atman—

<sup>36</sup>. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 298

<sup>37</sup>. Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, trans., *The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal*, II 28

<sup>38</sup>. Sir John Woodroffe, *The World as Power: Power as Mind* (Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1922), pp. 23-24

goes out along this blazing ray of knowledge to the object of perception. Undeterred by name and form, the illumined teacher's divine sight pierces through the aspirant's persona—or mask of personality—and follows the functions of the mind backwards, from the channels of the buddhi (the body, and senses) to the pure *buddhi*, or Atman.

In God-vision, one perceives the Reality both within and without. Such a soul takes on a "love body," as Sri Ramakrishna said, "endowed with 'love eyes', 'love ears', and so on."<sup>39</sup> The wisdom eye becomes the "Eye of the eye," transforming one's physical eyes into mirrors that reflect and radiate the Self within and the Universal Self without.

Not everyone can see into these mirrors of the soul. Only an illumined soul can recognize another illumined soul. Once an aspirant claimed he had attained samadhi, and the news reached Swami Brahmananda. Maharaj exclaimed "Why, I saw him about ten days ago."

I looked into his eyes. He has not had samadhi. No doubt, he has had some kind of mystic vision—the vision of light, perhaps—and he mistakes that for samadhi.<sup>40</sup>

Knowledge is power. Power can be transmitted by a look from a man or woman of knowledge. Sometimes an aspirant may feel an actual physical sensation from such a look—a quickening of the heart, as the Self called forth from its slumber, slips loose from its age-old knots of innumerable lifetimes.

<sup>39</sup>. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 115.

<sup>40</sup>. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Eternal Companion*, p. 68.

In the Ramakrishna Incarnation, there is a beautiful story of a devotee who experienced this initiation. It was 1882, when Gauri Ma first heard about the Master's spiritual greatness. She was then staying at the home of Balaram Bose. Though in her mid-twenties, Gauri Ma was already an independent and self-inspired young woman. When Balaram urged her to visit the Master, she declined by saying, "I shall not go unless drawn by your holy man."

Since early childhood, it had been Gauri Ma's practice to worship the stone emblem of Sri Krishna, known as Damodara. One day as she was performing the worship, two feet suddenly appeared before her on the altar of her Chosen Ideal. She offered tulsi leaves to the stone image; and they fell on those living feet. She then lost outer consciousness. When the experience ended, she distinctly felt as though an invisible thread was pulling her heart. She then accompanied Balaram to Dakshineswar.

When Gauri Ma arrived, however, she was totally unprepared for what she found. Sri Ramakrishna was singing the praises of Sri Krishna and, at the same time, winding thread around a stick! The Master suddenly stopped, and so also the strange sensation in Gauri Ma's heart ceased. Prostrating herself before the Master, she was further astonished. The Master's feet were the same living feet she had seen in her vision!

Gauri Ma had been drawn to Sri Ramakrishna by the inscrutable power of his own divine attraction. Her life was destined for greatness.

But grace can come to all—even centuries after a divine incarnation's lifetime. By meditating on those World Teachers who have experienced the kingdom of heaven within—the City of Brahman—we also can

(Continued on page 181)



# Living Free

JANKINATH KAUL

*The author describes vividly the transcendental state of living free. Sri Kaul has been a frequent contributor to this Journal and is of Jammu.*

## Introduction

Living free is being in divine trance, without any human effort. Continuing, it leads to eternal bliss. If, therefore, life is to be lived, it must be lived in this freedom or *Jivanmukti*, that showers the nectar of peace everywhere, inside and outside.

## Living Free

Living free is the bliss of *Jivanmukti*.

The *Jivanmukta* is one who is liberated while living. His is the state of living at ease in all the three states of experience viz, waking, dream state, and deep sleep. *Jivanmukti* is feeling ever-yoked to the spirit, just as a ball of butter while churning proceeds, ever-floats and bobs to the surface in the pot. It is the complete radical change of the mind and the heart—though not a personal matter, a thing you personally enjoy. It is unification of *Jiva*, the individual soul, with *Paramātmā*, the Supreme Soul. It is to remain attuned to spirit ever and evermore. It is 'being established' in the super-sensuous consciousness of *Turiya*.

Living free is feeling alone in the immensity of the present. It is knowing the calm while in intense activity. It is quietness. It is spontaneous awareness, innocent of time. It is the mood of perfect meditation. It is a wonderful experience of purity and beauty.

*Jivanmukti* is passive attention or indirect alertness. Living free is having choiceless

constant awareness. It is the stage of *anuttara*, beyond all, which is *abhedabhūh*, the stage of non-difference or undifferentiated consciousness. It is through deliberation of the *Kaulika* state inherent in the spotless mirror of *anuttara*, that is the supreme *Bhairava*, known as *bimba*. The inner manifestation is the *bimba*, or origin of its *pratibimba* (reflection) in the external manifestation of the world. *Kaulika* means, that which is of the nature of *kula* and *akula*—*kulākulāmā*, Śiva and Śakti—fused into one. *Kaulikī* is one who though immanent in all manifestation (subjects and objects), is herself *akula*, i.e., transcending—'kule bhavā akularupā kaulikī'.

*Jivanmukti*, or Living Free, is living in *Mahāsṛṣṭi*—Creation from *anāśrita tattva* up to *śuddhavidyā*, called *śuddhādhya*. It is the state purified by firm conviction and one may rest contented with so much only, —*prārabdhapratibhāsanāśaparyanta*—till the fruit of all previous actions gets exhausted. There is no further birth then.

Living free is the firm conviction of *Aham*—'I'. In the process of *sṛṣṭi* or manifestation, *A-ham*—'a' symbolising Śiva, expands into 'ha', symbolising Śakti, and terminates into 'm', or the *anusvara*, or the dot over 'ha', [ḥ], which completes the process of the expansion or manifestation. The *bindu*, or *anusvara* over 'ha' represents the fact that though Śiva is manifested right up to the earth through *Śakti*, He is not divided thereby; He remains undivided; His expansion in the form of *Śakti* remains

identical with Him. This constitutes the universal *Aham* that covers the whole alphabet. The return movement (*samhāra*) is from 'm' to 'a' (i.e., *Aham* becomes 'm'-*ha*-'a'—*Nara*, *Śakti*, *Śiva*—'*Naraśakti-śivātmakamtrikam*'). That is Trika philosophy in practice. Living free is, therefore, being in spontaneous consciousness of *Prakāśa* and *Vimarśa*. It is a great feeling, nay, the very being of Self, the Supreme Reality or *Anuttara*. The very nature of *Anuttara*, or *Śiva-Śakti*, is *visarga*, or expansion, which has two aspects viz, *sr̥ṣṭi* (expansion in manifestation up to *nara* or phenomena), and *samhāra* (return movement from phenomena to *Śiva*). The whole cosmic play of *sr̥ṣṭi-samhāra* is of the nature of *visarga*.

*Jivanmukti* is being in *sāmānya-spanda*, universal creative pulsation in the nature of *Śiva* even while being in *viśeṣa-spanda*, creative pulsation of particulars in the nature of *Śakti*. It is '*sattāsāmānya*' according to *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*. Living free is like being on the pivot by which the wheel moves and itself does not appear moving—*saspaṇḍatve nispaṇḍatvam*. Living free is being ever in tune with the Infinite. It is like being fused to high-tension power of bliss. It is being constantly in I-consciousness that keeps throbbing without movement, just as the belly of the fish keeps throbbing inwardly without any external movement, *matsyodarī*. It is being in the first throb or the throbless throb. It is living beyond life. It is living at *Kailāsa Parvata*, the white-marbled seat of *Śiva*, the Bliss Absolute. It is complete surrender of ego, the little 'I'; rather mergence of all states into the Absolute. It is constant obeisance to and continued ablution of the idol of self.

*Jivanmukti* is being full in your own self, complete in all respects. For living free

you need not go anywhere; only accept any situation that may befall from the unknown. It is unrelated determination. It is allowing yourself in the body-boat to float in the pool of *prārabdha*, unaided by mental imagery. It is spontaneous serenity of spiritual purity. It is absence of any physical or mental need. It is perfect *svātantrya*, beyond body-consciousness.

Living free is the display of true wisdom and not merely that of empty breath. It is being alone, not isolated or drawn to some fanciful dream or vision. It is entering the incalculable measureless abode of the Supreme. It is constantly maintaining, as Tantra says, *Khecari samatā*, in which the aspirant feels divine presence every-where, in every object, in every state, even in passion and wrath. It is Divine Wonder. It is transcendence beyond any system of thought or method of yoga or ritual to follow. It is keeping comfortably aware of the supreme self. There is no motive in living free. Therefore it comes and is not sought. It is finding for oneself what cannot be obtained with external help. It is entering the unknown. It is merging of *Jivahood* into *Śivahood*, *ātmā* into *Paramātmā* just as white camphor loses its form on undergoing a metamorphosis on contact with fire. There remains no residue.

*Jivanmukti* is experiencing unlimited joy and enjoying supreme beauty of unalloyed bliss. It is only watching with passive attention. When you watch beauty in its inner source, you automatically become quiet. Total attention, without any internal distraction, brings complete silence. It is vigilance of the lover in waiting for and watching the beloved even while eating, drinking, sitting, standing, walking, talking, quarrelling, laughing and performing all little movements. There is no when, where, and how in living free. Practical knowledge



of the Reality persuades one to live free, just as full stomach induces sleep. When mind gets totally freed from knowledge of senses, living free becomes easy. It is being at ease—perfect ease of beingness.

Living free is entering the temple of your body and coming upon the sanctum sanctorum in the heart-cave. It is only to open the windows of your body temple and only to watch and wait. That is true *puruṣārtha*. This comes through *Jñāna-pratibhā* or *madhyavivra śaktipāta*, second of nine variations of grace.

Living free is being established in *prātibhā-jñāna*, i.e., knowledge born of spontaneous divine influx which ensures a knowledge of Śiva in every object. It is living in Supreme Beatitude. Living free is having no interruption in thought, word, or deed.

It is the infinite self.

It is helpless help.

It is unstruggled struggle.

It is uncompromising compromise.

It is indeterminate consciousness, *pratibhā*, which contains determinate consciousness in itself. It is unabated flow of life. Living free is being in eternal bliss.

It is *Jagadānanda* state. Only a *Jivan-mukta*, who knows the art of living free, can have this state. His living is a source of joy and power to all living beings at all levels. He radiates wisdom and life-giving strength. The food he takes is an offering to the universal Fire. This is the real meaning of 'fire ritual' suggested in the *Rg veda*.

One who lives free in such a way is full of beauty and elegance. He is the teacher who speaks through silence to his devotees.

One can live free only by God's Grace.

## CITY OF BRAHMAN

(Continued from page 178)

realize Brahman. Swami Vijnanananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, disclosed this open secret.

The Master was an extraordinary and rare personality. His is the picture of transcendence of all the six chakras. On looking at his picture which is suffused with a divine radiance, you feel as if he is immersed in an ocean of joy after

transcending those cakras. A wave of spiritual power constantly played over his entire body. In this picture of the Master, you will find everything. Gradually the Master himself will show you. He will help those who take refuge in him.<sup>41</sup>

41. Swami Apurvananda, comp., *Swami Vijnanananda*, pp. 95-96.

# Lord's Vibhuti Yoga

P. V. NARAYANSWAMY

*Wherever there is extraordinary majesty, power and glory, it stands for the Lord's special manifestation. The examples cited in the Gita are not random but chosen with ingenuity. The author is of Madras.*

In chapter nine of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Bhagavān gives a simple explanation of a subtle truth. Chapter ten helps us to identify this truth. Constant and continuous remembrance of the Lord through the multitudinous traits of His ineffable glory, is essential so that one's own mind is ever attuned to Him.

The Lord, for whose power nothing is too vast, for whose scrutiny nothing is too minute, exists everywhere and in everything. The crucial words, "*Tat aham*"—"That I am," brings this out dramatically. Taking the Vedantic example of the pot made of clay, we realise—minus clay, the pot cannot exist. Similarly, minus God the world does not exist. The laws of Cosmos can thus be epitomised:

1. There exists always a cause-effect relationship.
2. Cause is actually effect in a different form.
3. Minus the cause, naught remains.

A fundamental understanding of this basic fact is a positive aid to contemplation and signifies the 'Yoga' aspect of the Lord's glory. Wherever there is extraordinary majesty, power and glory it stands for His '*Vibhūti*' aspect. A number of striking examples—sixty-four in all—are drawn from Nature, day-to-day life and from the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and are described to bring to light His general all-pervasive Presence ('Yoga'), and special

manifestations (*Vibhūti*-s). The former marks the beginning of our vision in pursuit of bhakti, and the latter underscores the Lord's divine presence further. In the music of bhakti, if 'Yoga' represents '*Swara*' (musical note—the state of Supreme felicity), '*Vibhūti*' is the '*Pallavi*', (rhythmic expression—the Lord's power and glory). Recapitulating the slokas of chapter ten, and mentally delving into the Yoga and *Vibhūti* traits paves the way for one's steadiness in bhakti pursuit.

The examples quoted in the *Gītā*'s tenth chapter are not an ad-hoc jumble. They possess an orderliness and harmony all their own. For instance, the day begins with the sunrise and ends with moonrise. Bhagavān, in sloka 21, begins with the resplendent glory that is the sun and ends with the cool and tranquil magnificence that is the moon. The day for every Hindu starts with prayer. In sloka 22, Bhagavān mentions '*Sāma Veda*' which contains the basic truth "*Tat tvam asi*"—"That thou art." In fact, slokas 21, 22, and 23 constitute the bed-rock for remembering the Lord's general and special manifestations, each sloka containing four examples. Thereafter, Bhagavān continues with yet other examples which are *Paurāṇic* or mythological.

Critics are not wanting who erroneously attribute the descriptions of Bhagavān's glories as redundant, implying it is self-approbation. Facts, however are otherwise. When the topic is extremely subtle,—when



it cannot be effectively objectified in words or conceived in thoughts—where is the question of satiety in description? A true seeker revels in reciting and identifying his thoughts with His manifestations of Glory.

Bhagavān has a direct message for the ordinary seeker and a *hidden one for the advanced seeker*. We must try to abide by the deeper significance as explained in seriatim, in the analysis described below.

Sloka 21. *Ādityānāmahaṃ viṣṇur jyotiṣāṃ  
ravīrangśumān,  
marīcirmarutāmasmi  
nakṣatrāṇāmahaṃ śaśī.*

*“Among (the twelve) ādityas I am Viṣṇu.  
Among the luminaries I am the Sun.  
Among the wind-gods I am Marīci.  
Among the asterisms I am the Moon.”*<sup>1</sup>

‘Viṣṇu’ means also that which pervades. The day begins with the rise of the sun. The hidden import is, one should salute Him for the heat, light and life-energy He provides. *Ravi* means *ravayati iti*, One who beckons you with rays of light (Knowledge) to reach Him. Our daily activity is founded on breath. One should think of spiritual breath through *Marīci*, as the Lord’s special manifestation. While retiring for the day, one should recall to mind the mellow splendour and cool tranquillity of the moon as the Lord’s special aspect. The moon is also associated with mind.

Sloka 22. *Vedānām sāmavedo’smi  
devānāmasmi vāsavaḥ,  
indriyāṇām manaścāsmi  
bhūtānāmasmi cetanā.*

1. Among the twelve *Adityas* pertaining to the twelve months, *Viṣṇu* corresponding to January, is most universally liked because it marks in southern latitudes the welcome transition from biting cold of winter towards summer solstice. Among the forty-nine wind gods, *marīci* is the foremost.

*“Among the Vedas I am the Sāma Veda ;  
among the devas I am Indra ; among the  
senses I am the Mind ; and in living  
beings I am intelligence.*

The *Sāma Veda* contains the *mahā-vākya* “*Tat tvam asi*”—“That thou art,” which marks the Lord’s Vibhūti aspect. Further: “*Vedānām sāmavedaḥ* signifies *śravaṇa*, hearing of the Lord’s glories ; *Devānām vāsavaḥ* stands for *Manana*, meditation or reflection ; and *Indriyāṇām manaḥ* represents *Nididhyāsana*, samadhi or absorption in the meditation. As is well known, the triple entities, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* form the sheet-anchor of one’s pursuit of bhakti or devotion. Again, *ind* means to know, and *ra*, to protect. So the inner import is “mind and intellect integrated harmoniously.” *Vāsavaḥ vāti iti* is “one who gets convinced of the teaching.”

Sloka 23. *Rudrāṇām śaṅkaraścāsmi vittiśo  
yakṣarakṣasām,  
vasūnām pāvakaścāsmi meruḥ  
śikhariṇāmahaṃ.*

*“Of the eleven Rudrās I am Śaṅkara ; of  
the Yakṣās and Rakṣasās I am Kubera ;  
Of the eight Vasus I am Pāvaka, the  
god of fire. Of the mountain peaks I am  
Meru.*

The hidden import is explained thus: *Rodati iti rudraḥ*—Rudra is one who cries (for liberation). *Śaṃ karoti iti śaṅkaraḥ*—Śaṅkara brings auspiciousness (bliss). The degree of achievement of bliss is a measuring rod of one’s spiritual attainments. One should strive for absolute unalloyed bliss. In fact, ‘Divine Wealth’ of realisation should be the goal, rather than mundane wealth.

Sloka 24. *Purodhasām ca mukhyaṃ mām  
viddhi pārtha brhaspatim,  
senānīnāmahaṃ skandaḥ  
sarasāmasmi sāgaraḥ.*

*“Among royal priests I am Bṛhaspati ; among the generals I am Subrahmaṇya ; and among bodies of water I am the ocean.”<sup>2</sup>*

Royal priests work for kings. We work as Lord’s instruments. Our intellect gets blessed by Bṛhaspati for proper status in Samādhi Yoga. *Skandah* means what flows without obstruction and reaches the goal. One is reminded of Śaṅkara’s immortal words:

*Ājyadhārayā srotasā samam,  
saralacintanam viralataḥ param.*

*“The thought flow should be continuous—uninterrupted and silent like ghee flowing from one vessel to another.”*

*Sarasa* means what was dug by celestials, and *sāgara* (Ocean) means what was dug by sons of Sāgara. One should cultivate one’s own mind with divine power and fill it with divine grace through *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*.

Sloka 25. *Maharṣiṇām bhṛguraham  
girāmasmyekamakṣaram,  
yajñānām japayajno’smi  
sthāvarāṇām himālayah.*

*“Among the great Ṛṣis, I am Bhṛgu ; among words, I am the single syllable OM. Of sacrifices, I am the sacrifice of japa (repeating the Lord’s name) ; and among immovable things, I am the Himālaya.*

In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, Bhṛgu is quoted as an illustrious example of an ideal meditator. One can draw inspiration from this when thinking in terms of the Lord’s Vibhūti. In the *Maṇḍukya Upaniṣad* the

2. Bṛhaspati was the guru of the gods. The word, Bṛhaspati, conveys knowledge, conviction, and the faculty of the creative rhythm of expression.

significance of OM is elaborated upon. Among many other connotations, one is that Om (AUM) comprises the infinite universe, a manifestation of the Lord, because it begins with the first letter of the alphabet and is the first enunciated sound of all words, because it ends with the sound common to all sounds, and because in between A and M, all natural sounds are contained. Furthermore, it represents the three states of consciousness known to creatures: waking, dream and deep sleep.

*Yajño vai viṣṇuḥ*—“Yagña is Viṣṇu.” Viṣṇu means one who pervades everywhere and everything. Thus OM is Brahman. Japa is charged with spiritual power and so it is a special aspect of the Lord. Thus in chanting OM, one automatically recalls Brahman mentally and assimilates the truth of unity in diversity—*Aham brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman). ‘Ja’ (of Japa) also means ‘Change will not affect’, and ‘pa’ indicates ‘No sin will touch Japa’, thus giving rise to the image of an undisturbed mind, unaffected by external circumstances. Again, the Himālayas are associated with the great saints and sages, and the holy Gaṅgā and Yamuna flow from them. One should think in terms of the Jñāna-ganga as the flow of knowledge to be harmonised with the Yamuna of devotion and the Sarasvatī of memory.

Sloka 26. *Aśvatthaḥ sarvavṛkṣāṇām  
devarṣiṇām ca nāradaḥ,  
gandharvāṇām citrarathaḥ  
siddhāṇām kapilomuniḥ.*

*“Among trees, I am the Pipal tree (Aśvattha) ; among the divine ṛṣis, I am Nārada. Among the Gandharvas, I am Citraratha, and among perfected souls I am Kapila.”*

The *Aśvattha* finds mention in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and also in the fifteenth chapter of



the *Gītā*. It also finds a place in “*Kapilopa-khyāna*” in the *Bhāgavata*. The word is composed of ‘A’, ‘śva’, and ‘tha’, respectively, meaning ‘not’, ‘tomorrow or the next moment’, and ‘being’. It underlines the changing phase of *samsāra* and bespeaks “tomorrow or even the next moment is not in your hands (i.e., is transitory) because of the constant flux of time. Therefore, focus your undivided attention on what is changeless, namely Brahman!” The word *ṛish* means to know. Man in that sense is a potential *Rṣi*. *Nāradaḥ* means *naraṁ dadāti iti*, i.e., who enthuses us to spiritual pursuits for ultimate bliss. *Nara* or *nṛ* is to flow in bliss. The deeper significance is an exhortation to emulate Nārada. The *gandharvās* are celestial musicians and dancers. *Gandhaṁ vāti iti* means flavour (of spirituality) gets fulfilled. *Citraratha* was the king of the *gandharvās* and a friend of the *Pāṇḍavās*. *Ratha* (chariot) also refers to our gross physical body. ‘*Ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi*’, declares the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, “Think of your body as a chariot, the vehicle of the indwelling Soul.” *Citraratha* can also be interpreted as ‘memory expressed in a dedicated manner—(*citra vāti iti*). Kapila Mahārṣi has a special abidance of the Lord because he taught his own mother. Further, the word signifies one who controls the monkey (of a mind).

Sloka 27. *Ucchaiḥ śravasamaśvānāṁ viddhi  
māmamṛtodbhavam,  
airāvataṁ gajendrāṇāṁ narāṇāṁ  
ca narādhipam.*

“Among horses I am *Ucchaiśravas*, born of the *amṛta*. Among lordly elephants I am *Airāvata*. Among men I am the king.” *Ucchaiśravas* the horse was the outcome of the churning of the milky ocean. *Ucchaiḥ* means loud, and *śravas* means fame. It thus typifies the Lord’s special manifesta-

tions. The word *Indra* also means one’s own self. The gift of *Airāvata* was taken by Indra. So the secret import is that ‘let our *Indriya*-s (senses) be controlled by the self as a prelude to attaining immortality.’ Kings obey *dharma* and so the Lord specially abides in them. Yet another hidden message can also be brought out: Our mind, intellect and memory constitute a veritable ocean. In this ocean there are sharks, snakes, poisonous fishes and what not—things symbolic of evil. The ocean itself is a huge body of water (representing ignorance). Such an ocean is to be churned into a ‘milky one’. How? Through *bhakti*. To crown all, one should ever listen with devotion to ‘churn’ the Vedic and Upaniṣadic injunctions through *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*. Continuing the analogy further, it also reminds us not to be carried away by *siddhis* (the various psychic powers) that come in the course of spiritual pursuit. In fact, we should perforce surrender everything to Him, the Lord. *Deva*-s and *asura*-s (demons), contestants in the mythological lore for churning the ocean, are ever present in each one of us as good and evil. Again, *Indra* is synonymous with *Indriya*-s the strong senses. *Gaja* (elephant) can mean *guru*, and so *Gajendra* is ‘the best of the gurus’. *Nara* can mean to face challenges. Thus when one enters the portals of true realisation, he becomes a king among devotees.

Sloka 28. *Āyudhānāmahaṁ vajraṁ  
dhenūnāmasmi kāmadhuk,  
prajanaścāsmi kandarpah  
sarpāṇāmasmi vāsukih.*

“Among weapons I am the thunder bolt; among cows I am *Kāmadhenu*. I am *Kandarpa* the cause of offspring, and among serpents I am *Vāsuki*.”

(Continued on page 193)

# Mataji Ganga Bai

M. N. MAJUMDAR

*An illustrious life leaves behind a distinct bequeathal to posterity. An inspiring portrayal of one such relatively less-known dedicated soul is here reconstructed from scant available sources. The writer lives in Bhilai.*

History sometimes fails to mention in its annals enterprising personalities. The edifice of the enterprise remains, but the dedicated personality behind it passes into oblivion. The memory of such an ideal soul has then to be reconstructed from scattered facts and bits of hearsay only.

Such is the case with Mātāji Gaṅgā Bāi. A large part of her life is still in obscurity. The rest available is unattended. And now she is remembered only by the students and teachers of 'Mahākālī Pāṭhśālā', a higher secondary school for girls in Calcutta. Mātāji, lit., 'the Mother', founded this institution in the year 1893 to spread free education among the girls, in meticulous compliance with the traditional Indian ideal and culture.

To take up the idea of spreading female education on a national scale and committing oneself to it was a very progressive stance at that time, about a hundred years back. But this was only a fragment of the enterprising personality of Mataji. She held the banner of a trinity of ideals. An ascetic life with ardent devotion to God, the fight for freedom, and free education to women, constituted this trinity. How Ganga Bai translated these ideals into her life is revealed through a study.

Ganga Bai was born to the prince of an estate (Raja Narayana Rao) in the Arcot district of the then state of Maharashtra. The year of her birth is presumed to be in

the vicinity of 1835. Being the daughter of a prince, it would have been a natural thing for her to have been attached to luxuries and splendours. But she chose otherwise. She developed a spirit of renunciation very early, in the prime of her life.

During her childhood and in her teens, she chose mainly two pursuits: one was the intensive study of Sanskrit grammar and the Indian classics. It is said that by the age of seven she completed learning of the Sanskrit grammar, *Laghu Kaumudi Vyākaraṇa*. After this she read through the classics like '*Raghuvamśa*', and others. Since then, the scriptural texts and the Indian classics remained ever her companions throughout life. In after years she equipped herself with the knowledge of the Śāstras. The second pursuit was to build up sound health and learn weaponry. Through keen perseverance she learned the techniques of fighting with sword, spears and sticks from horseback. And she excelled in these in no time. The future patriotic fighter and complement to Lakṣhmi Bāi, Nānāsāheb, and Tāntiā Tope was born.

As she grew in years Ganga Bai became physically strong, and she felt attracted to the life of renunciation. Seeking spiritual truth and feeling its irresistible call it is said that she stealthily slipped away from her father's fortress one day at dead of night. She reached the bank of the river



Tamraparni in South India and started a life of rigorous tapas. It is said she performed the *Pañchāgni Tapa*, or *Pañcha Tapas*.<sup>1</sup> However, her father Raja Narayana Rao found her out and brought her back to the palace.

After the death of her father Ganga Bai devoted herself to the reorganization of the family estate and fort. She might have smelt something of an impending anarchy to be let loose by the English force. It was well in the air. The imperialistic and hostile attitude of the foreigners was goading them on to grab and annex as many estates and enclaves as possible. Ganga Bai was quietly making the fort stronger. The old cannons were repaired and things were put in order. But the suspicious British administration took it as a preparation for revolt and sent Ganga Bai to confinement in the hill fort of Tiruchirapalli.

Sometime after her release from confinement she went to the sacred forest 'Naimiṣāranya'.<sup>2</sup> It was presumably to engage herself again in penance. An interesting incident that took place there illustrates the spirit and courage of Ganga Bai. Once she went with offerings for a worship of the deity Gourishankar. But she was denied by a man who did the regular worship in the temple. It hurt her so she took a vow to build another temple for the deity, and it was built within a fortnight. The Commissioner of Rajputana and his wife rendered the necessary help. Thenceforward, Ganga Bai was known as 'Mātājī Tapaswinī,' Mātājī the ascetic.

In the meantime, there occurred the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and then followed freedom

fight. The wave reached the dense forest of Naimiṣāranya too. It stirred up the patriotic valour in Mataji. She came away from her practice of penance for the time being. Her urge for self-emancipation through religious austerity was merged in her zeal to help the struggle for India's political freedom. Here again we find Mataji in another form—an image of power and energy. Mataji was related to Rani Lakṣmi Bai of Jhansi and was imbued with the fearlessness, patriotism and valour of the Rani. On horseback with sword and spear the Rani used to lead her army against the aggressors. The Rani met a martyr's death in June, 1858. Mataji Ganga Bai had to flee to Nepal with Nanasaheb and others.

In Nepal for a long time she was active in propagating the true spirit of our Indian heritage and culture. She arranged to build a temple dedicated to the Mother Ganga by the side of Paśupatināth temple. The Rathayatra festival of Ganga Devi was initiated by her.

When and how Mataji came down from Nepal to Calcutta we are not able to say. No accounts of this period of her life are available. May be, she lived in a secluded place practising meditation and other spiritual disciplines in the Uttargiri Hills of Nepal far from the eyes of the people. But in the 1890s we find her in Calcutta, busy in another field of activity. She devoted herself to the spread of female education.

In the nineteenth century there was a general consensus of reformers to direct their attention to the expansion of women's education. But there was a flaw in the way they carried it out. Under the aegis of the foreign Government, education centres were established. In these centres teaching was conducted by Christian missionaries and

1. *Pañcāgni*—The five sacred sacrificial fires.

2. *Naimiṣāranya*—The sacred forest mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. At present, may have been named "Nimsar" (in U.P.).

some educated Indians who were mostly geared to Western ideas in everything. So the methods adopted were mostly copies of the western type, which did not fulfil the real needs of women in India. In this regard Swami Vivekananda pointed out: ...“But the truth is that some defect or other must creep into that learning or culture which is not founded on a religious basis. But now female education is to be spread with religion as its centre. All other training should be secondary to religion....In the female education which has obtained up till now in India, it is religion that has been made a secondary concern;...Reformers having proceeded to start female education without being Brahmacharins themselves have stumbled like that. Founders of all good undertakings, before they launch on their desired work, must attain to the knowledge of the Atman through rigorous self-discipline.”<sup>3</sup>

The way Mataji worked for female education was very much in conformity with the teachings of Swamiji. She herself was a *Tapasvinī*, a nun and *sannyāsinī*, well-grounded in the Indian scriptures. Also she had spent her early life in rigorous self-discipline. The ideal upon which Mataji established the institution of Mahakali Pathshala is mentioned in the Trust-document of the school. The school is for “imparting religious and moral education with intellectual and domestic training.”<sup>4</sup> Along with study of texts, worship (*Śivapūjā*), chanting of the *Veda*-s and hymns were introduced into the curriculum. The monogram of the school contains a dictum of Manu—“*Kanyā-pyevam pālānīyā sikṣanīyāti yatnataḥ*”,

(*Daughters should be well looked after and educated properly*). Mataji believed that a girls'-school founded on perfect national lines in the Capital—Calcutta at that time, would foster the growth of such institutions throughout India. In fact, several branches of the school were gradually started in different corners of Bengal and some other places in India.

Swamiji visited the school in May, 1897. Not only the school and curricula impressed him, but Mataji's words impressed him very much. Pointing to the little girls she said, “Swamiji! I have no help. But these blessed ones I worship, and they will take me to salvation!”<sup>5</sup> Swamiji expressed his pleasure in the visitor's book of the school and added, “The movement is in the right direction.”<sup>6</sup>

On another occasion Swamiji said, “What was it that Mataji said to me? ‘Swamiji! I have no help. But these blessed ones I worship, and they will take me to salvation!’ She feels, you see, that she is serving Uma in the Kumari, and that is a wonderful thought, with which to begin a school.”<sup>7</sup>

By this time, Mataji's efforts were highly appreciated by many dignitaries. Some donations and help came forth. Swami Saradananda handed over to her the entire receipt of a lecture delivered in America, being pleased with her institution. Sister Nivedita and some other disciples of Swamiji rendered help to Mataji. Some notable figures of Calcutta and other places also came forward to help. In spite of it, the funds received for the expansion of the institution were insufficient.

(Continued on page 193)

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* Abridged Edition (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985) page 448.

4. *Mataji Ganga Bai* (Bengali) (Calcutta: A. K. Ghosh, Adi Mahakali Pathshala, B.S. 1383) page 29.

5. *The Master As I Saw Him*, Sister Nivedita (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1991) page 245.

6. *Talks With Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) page 72.

7. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 8, page 275.



# A Review Article

DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

(1) SPIRITUAL QUEST: Questions & Answers, by Swami Tapasyananda. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600-004, 1992. pp. 284 ; Rs. 20/-.

(2) SRI RAMAKRISHNA, THE GREAT EDUCATOR, by Archana Bandyopadhyay. Published by Susobhan Prakashan, Calcutta 700-025, 1992. pp. 102 ; Rs. 25/-.

The *Spiritual Quest* is in the ancient tradition of satisfying the spiritual queries of earnest aspirants with *answers*. In transmitting spiritual truths by way of questions and answers, Swami Tapasyananda (1904-1991), a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and a profound scholar with many books to his credit, follows in the footsteps of the great Master, Sri Ramakrishna as recorded in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. The answers given by Swami Tapasyanandaji to devotees at different times and on different occasions have been compiled and published in a book form so that a wider circle of readers could benefit from the simple and yet profound explanation of spiritual truths by a monk who wore his scholarship so easily that it never became a burden either on himself or others who came in contact with him. The topics have been arranged under six chapters: "Life", "Spiritual Life", "God", "The Trinity", "Miscellaneous", and "Stray Counsels". (The last one is a selection from the letters written by him to devotees and disciples.) The following is an attempt to capture some of that wisdom which is represented in every page of the book.

According to the Hindu view of life, man has to come to this world because of his Karma. His repeated embodiments gradu-

ally lead him on to his highest goal, i.e., attaining *Oneness* with that One who is the creator of the universe. On attaining complete mergence in Him, the Supreme Being, man becomes free from that cyclic process which involves birth and death.

One may strive to realize the ultimate goal of human life through the paths of Jnana, Bhakti or Karma. The Jnani seeks to realize his oneness with the impersonal Brahman, who alone is real and who alone has become all the *jīvas* and the *jagat*. The Bhakta, on the other hand, seeks to realize the personal God through love and devotion. Apparently different, the paths of Jnana and Bhakti reveal ultimately the same Impersonal-Personal Being. Going at first exclusively along the discipline relating to the Impersonal, the Jnani comes "in the fullness of his knowledge, to the realization that Brahman is also Personal. In the case of the Bhakta, the Personal realization comes first and in the maturity of his love, he realizes the Impersonal non-duality also." (p. 66)

Karma Yoga, i.e. communion through work, implies detached or dedicated action which means to work with impersonal motives or with an attitude of detachment towards impersonal ends such as patriotism, social uplift, and human welfare. The Bhakti school which regards the devotion to God as the 'real' thing, looks upon detached action as part of the practice of devotion to God. The Śāṅkara school too, treats detached action as preparing the necessary psychological background for practising the discipline of jnana. In other words, both of these look upon 'karma' as

preparatory, and not as a self-sufficient path. "It was Swami Vivekananda who gave a new turn to the doctrine of Karma Yoga when he declared that it is in itself a self-sufficient path for the attainment of the spiritual goal." (p. 73) The key concept in Karma Yoga, it should be noted, is detachment which, of course, does not mean indifference but zeal without consideration of personal gain.

Whether it is by jnana or karma or bhakti, or by prayer, japa or meditation, the goal of life is to manifest the inherent divinity of man by controlling Nature within and without. This, as Swami Vivekananda observed, "is the essence of religion. Dogmas, rituals, churches, temples, etc., are only secondary details." (p. 228)

Man is not a mere body-mind. He is, in the ultimate analysis, in the central core of his being, in his basic nature, a *spirit*. In all the modern views about the nature of man, he is sought to be portrayed as either the biological man, or the bio-chemical man, or the political man. All these views of the nature of man are only half-truths about man. It is only the Vedanta which pronounced the basic truth of man that Man is a spirit. It is on this central message of the Vedanta that Swami Vivekananda built up his doctrine of the divinity of the spirit in man. Each soul is potentially divine. Being a spark of the Divine Power, man has within him infinite powers. If only man will learn to live up to his potential, learn to actualise his potentiality, there is nothing that can remain beyond his grasp, beyond his achievement. With this doctrine which he termed as 'Practical Vedanta', Swami Vivekananda sought to infuse into man a sense of infinite strength, fearlessness and self-confidence. He *inspired* man to put into practice the ideal of man's divinity.

In seeking to fortify man with the ideal of divinity or spirituality, Swami Vivekananda never wanted man to neglect the material side of his life. The pursuit of science and modern technology, for example, always had a proud place in his scheme of things. "What, however, he wanted, was that the spiritual ideal of man's divinity should inform all these efforts at material improvement." (p. 209)

Apart from giving a new outlook on Vedanta, Swami Vivekananda's other great contribution to India was to charge the people with a sense of nationality, with the idea that from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari, Indians are all one people. Swami Tapasyanandaji rightly observes that today when we are faced with the problem of threat to national integration and the problem of people of different parts of the country not having commonality of feeling, there can be no better panacea for such afflictions than a study of Swami Vivekananda's ideas.

Swami Vivekananda lived for too short a time to work out his ideas or to provide the details of work, methods of organization, etc. He gave us the broad outlines and ideas. His utterances on the need of regenerating our national life, uplifting the masses, eradicating casteism, untouchability, backwardness of women etc., convey a message that should serve as an inspiration to those who are in positions and have powers in India to take the national reconstruction along the right direction.

Swami Vivekananda's greatest gift to India, nay, to the whole world was what he called the Practical Vedanta. Whereas the great Sankara stood only for the Advaita Vedanta, Swamiji effected the synthesis of all the three schools of the Vedanta, namely, dualism, qualified monism and monism, by seeing in them a gradation suited to different



stages of man's growth ending with the experience of unity of existence.

It is hardly possible to bring into the scope of this brief review the numerous subjects on which Swami Tapasyanandaji has given us the benefit of his reflection. But even this brief review will remain incomplete without a reference to Tapasyanandaji's observations on Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master. To quote him: "His [Sri Ramakrishna's] uniqueness consists in his being an ideal for both sannyasins and householders.... Though as a Sannyasin he practised rigorous renunciation, he was also married, and, unlike the practice of orthodox Sannyasins, allowed his wife, as the first of his disciples, to serve him all through life. For Sannyasins he has set the highest example of the renunciation of what he calls '*kāminikānchana*', lust and greed." (pp. 170-71)

Swami Tapasyanandaji's whole life was a saga of spiritual endeavour and realization. The words he utters in the book under review came out from the *depths of truth* that *he must have realized himself*. These are the last and final words that one can say in making a review of a book of such depth and wisdom. Let this book be a constant companion of all who care in the least for spirituality.

\* \* \*

Of the second book, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Educator*, there are the words of the Master:

"What shall I do with a mere bread-earning education? I would rather acquire that wisdom which would illumine my heart and give me satisfaction for ever."

These words are reminiscent of the words of Nachiketa—"What shall I do with that which would not make me immortal?"—uttered in response to Yama's offer of all the wealth of the world only if Nachiketa would not ask for Brahmajnana and would agree to go back to the world. They contain the essence of the educational ideas of Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna despised mere book-learning. Mere scholarship, untempered by love of God, renunciation and compassion, were nothing to him. If the *grantha* (book) made the possessor of learning erect barriers between him and other men, if it turned him into an ego-centric, bound in the fetters of ego, then the *grantha* became, in effect, a *granthi*. Vultures, Sri Ramakrishna observed, soar very high in the sky, but their eyes are fixed on rotten carrion on the ground. Like vultures, the book-learned are in search of carrion in the form of woman and gold, and as such, though they might be enjoying the reputation of being wise, they are actually attached to the world of ignorance. Mere pandits devoid of God-consciousness were like diseased fruits, having neither the freshness of green fruits nor the flavour of the ripe ones.

Education, so to say, according to Sri Ramakrishna, should be not merely informative, but a positively *formative*, man-making, character-making process ensuring the progress of the individual as well as the society towards the greater world. Education should aim at the harmonious development of the body, mind and soul of the individual, leading him on to his highest goal, the realization of the real self within and the realization as well of that *unity in diversity* which is the eternal law of the world of noumena and phenomena.

In propounding such a concept of education, Sri Ramakrishna was an idealist, a

naturalist, and a pragmatist—all in one. He was an *idealist* in seeking to *transform* the materialist man into a spiritual man through education. He was a *naturalist* to the extent he advised men to follow their own *nature*, gradually making efforts towards sublimating and channelizing such nature in the direction of God. He was a *pragmatist* in emphasizing man's duty to his society. Jiva, the finite soul, being the manifestation of Siva, the Infinite soul, the Jiva's worth and utility to his fellow beings in the society is to be known by the *service* that he renders unto them, or the service that they render unto each other. By serving each other in society, they serve God that dwells within them. Thus, one may say that Sri Ramakrishna, through his electism, combined all the three schools of philosophical thought having relevance to education—*idealistic*, *naturalistic*, and *pragmatic*.

Sri Ramakrishna *individualized* his teaching. He gave each according to his nature, waiting for the right psychological moment of the taught to receive what he gave. "One should not tear off the green branch of a coconut tree. That injures the tree," he said. He taught through examples and always proceeded from 'known' to 'unknown', from concrete to abstract, to make intelligible what he wanted to convey.

The secret of the success of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings lay in his ability to put himself into another man's soul. According to Swami Vivekananda, "the only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, put his soul into his disciple's soul, see through his eyes, hear through his ears, and understand through his mind." Such a teacher was Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna's overall philosophy was expressed in such preachings as "Realize

God in everything," and "Serve Jiva as Siva." Religion, in its essence, meant to Sri Ramakrishna the realization of the existence of God in everything and as such the oneness of all creation. Man, as the spark of the Divine and as the highest manifestation of the Brahman, had infinite powers hidden in him and he had to realize his potential. He did not believe in the rivalry of creeds. There were as many ways of reaching the God as there were creeds. Thus, Sri Ramakrishna gave a new direction to the world by spreading the message of harmony and reconciliation, not separatism and discord.

The book under review is an analysis not only of the educational thought of Sri Ramakrishna, but also of his overall philosophy. Having discussed Sri Ramakrishna in the socio-economic and historical perspective, the author, a teacher of education in a Calcutta college, gives her observations as well on the significance of the great Master for the modern age. She believes that "in the context of the modern problems like, lack of faith among all, unrest and uncertainty among young people, illiteracy, ignorance of the poor man, superstition, orthodoxy, prides and prejudices prevailing all over the social atmosphere, economic imbalances, injustice, non-utilisation of human resources, acute problems of religious fundamentalism, lack of national and international amity, Sri Ramakrishna's teaching is to be followed not only today but also tomorrow if we want to save the world from the gallows of destruction." (p. 102)

The author draws her materials mainly from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the biographies of the great Master, the works on Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples, the works of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, the works on Sri Ramakrishna and



his contemporaries, and the works on Indian and Western philosophies.

The book is extremely informative and comparative as well, especially in the presentation of the educational ideas of Sri Ramakrishna in Chapter five. It is a

useful addition to the hagiographical writings on Sri Ramakrishna. The author's profound and overwhelming admiration for Sri Ramakrishna finds an expression in every line of the book. She has worked worthily for a great cause and in the process has enriched herself as well as the readers.

## LORD'S VIBHUTI YOGA

(Continued from page 185)

*Vajra*, being Indra's thunderbolt made of Dadhīci's bones, has a great spiritual significance. Dadhīci was a great ṛṣi typifying self-sacrifice. *Kāmadhuk* is a wish-fulfilling cow. *Mumukṣattva*, or desire for liberation is equitable with *Kāmadhuk*.

*Kandarpa* stands for love (of pursuit) as against carnal attraction. *Vāsuki* was instrumental in producing nectar and so is one of the Lords special repositories of power.

(to be continued)

## MATAJI GANGA BAI

(Continued from page 188)

Even then, Mataji was undaunted. She went on trying to collect money and she started a printing press (Mahākālī Press), where the text books of the school used to be printed. She arranged to market materials like Mahākālī Oil and other products.

Ganga Bai passed away in April 1907. But this dedicated spirit with her many-sided personality reminds us once more of the

great confidence of Swamiji in the potentiality of Indian women. He exclaimed with reverent pride: "Still on this sacred soil of India, this land of Sita and Savitri, among women may be found such character, such spirit of service, such affection, compassion, contentment and reverence, as I could not find anywhere else in the world."<sup>8</sup>

8. *Talks with Swami Vivekananda*, pp. 72-73.

# Truth of Life

DR. SUHAS RANJAN RAY

*The fulfilment of life lies in the realization of the truth that God lives in man, and man lives in God. The writer of this thoughtful essay is a teacher of Philosophy and is of Calcutta.*

Our life is a passing show. We know how it originates and how it terminates, but we do not like to know why it comes on the stage of the world to play the drama of tears and laughter for a short while. It shows a succession of unpredicted acts in which every scene runs with a variety of incidents, each dancing according to the rhythm of variable circumstances. All of them appear as self-evident truth in the vision of man and until the arrival of death he enjoys them at the cost of suffering, but in the end loses them altogether. When he is dead his soul leaves behind it the entire facts of his lost life as a fiction for the living generation. On a closer scrutiny life is not a tragedy, not a comedy, but a book of dreams. We visualize a series of dreams from childhood to old age. Our mind cannot live without dreaming hopes, because hope is the psychological refreshment to mental life which suffers suffocation from despondency. In childhood we dreamt of heaven behind the moon lit sky, in youth we dreamt it in wine and woman, power and pelf, and in wrinkled age we dream either God or darkness behind the screen of death. The riddle of life is the illusion of dreams. Man enters and leaves the world empty-handed. In his lifetime he enjoys power, property and family under the false idea that these belong to him alone and that he is the master of all that he possesses. But when death ends his life he is no more a man but a corpse, a foul matter for the graveyard, a useless

object for immediate disposal, an unwanted burden to the members of his family whom he once loved so dearly and took on simple trust as his permanent relations. A dead body is related to no one, and it teaches the lesson that man has nothing to call his own. This is the picture of our sonorous physical life—the seeming life at its face value! Reason may accept this dry fact as a matter of idle sentiment. But let our common sense feel it, and common sense is more useful in practical life than reason, as it is more alert to reality than to imagination. Reason is habituated to making arguments logically, but logical laws are only styles of thinking and not anything more.

The fundamental thought in the above statement is not pessimistic, but realistic. It unveils the crude fact of life which is as terrific as the skeleton within our body. That hideous figure is the replica of death in the frame of life, and it intimates our mortality, which is a horror to a human being. Everyone sees others' dead bodies, but never sincerely thinks about his future lifeless body. We do not dare to welcome the idea of death in our mind because it is frightful; we want to flee from it by dragging our attention to the apparent attractions of life, by keeping ourselves ever busy in pleasing the senses, on the plea that instead of taking this pessimistic issue seriously we should approach life practically with optimistic zeal—if we are to make it active, progressive and successful. It is the



argument of our ego. Man prefers to lead a life of self-oblivion within the bondage of his own ego. He establishes his family with wife, children and relations for the pleasure of ego; he earns money and amasses property for the satisfaction of ego. Under the influence of ego he becomes selfish and opportunistic. Under the impetus of egoism he always desires to extract as much personal gain as possible from every situation in life in the family, in the neighbourhood, in the state and society. He expects happiness from ephemeral sense-delights, and under the spell of ego runs after them. Ay, it is a chase after a mirage!

Hedonism is sugarcoated pessimism. It formulates the view that pleasure is the chief good in the life of humanity, and by preaching the gospel of the pleasure-principle it has earned much popularity in the house of commons. But it is a treacherous doctrine, since it leads us with sweet words to the den of unhappiness. Heart is not obedient to reason, it is under the dictatorship of desire, which always wills pleasure. And to accept pleasure is to accept pain; like the thorn of a rose, sorrow lives with pleasure. We die because we are born, we suffer because we enjoy. The joy of today may be the sorrow of tomorrow; the pleasure of the honeymoon is no doubt sweet, but it is the mother of future worries and miseries; the birth of a son in a family is a red-letter day, but this joy can end in a wail because death is unpredictable. We run after pleasures and this is one of the major causes of our mental unrest. Happiness does not consist in the experience of pleasure, nor does the denial of pleasure mean unhappiness. Poor children who do not enjoy the pleasure of cake and butter are not necessarily unhappy and unhealthy. Pleasure is not the guarantee of happiness. The enjoyment that we derive from the fulfilment of desires is called pleasure; but in the words of Swami Vivekananda, "Fulfilling any desire is like putting a stick into a hornet's nest."

The altruists advocate the ideal of doing good to others in the interest of social life. In more clear terms, anything profitable, comfortable and enjoyable is 'good' to them. The whole meaning ends there. Altruism enjoins on us to act in such a way that the maximum number of people may get maximum happiness from our actions. This altruistic attitude is a business mentality, in ethical makeup; it recalls the policy of give and take, since it considers happiness as a trade article.

Now we take up the explanations given by the optimist and the pessimist with regard to the problem of good and evil in human life. Pessimism is the song of a sad man and optimism is the song of a worldly man. Pessimism interprets life poorly and optimism takes it wrongly. The first evaluates life from the standpoint of evil. It says that the world is miserable, since it is under the rule of evil which commands all life. Optimism makes the opposite statement that in the battle of good and evil, good must ultimately win, and as a result therefrom the world would become well and beneficial. One must closely examine both the views before accepting either. In case evil conquers good and occupies the throne of sovereignty, the world itself becomes a place of horror for man, where good is bound to be a proxy of evil and our life a tragedy of harms, a tale of misfortunes and afflictions. A nightmare! If, on the other hand, good gains the goal, the world would turn all good, and in that fantastic land evil would become a dead serpent and man would lead an evil-free merry life. Pessimism is a delirious doctrine and optimism a dreamy theory in the encyclopedia of Western Philosophy.

The world is a blend of good and evil, and it is folly to think that their dual existence must cease one day. How can one prevail over the other when they are concurrent? Good exists with evil, weal with woe, and virtue with vice. Evil qualifies good, which disqualifies evil, and the two must remain to show their merits and demerits—without evil good is creditless. In this way they exchange their hearts. Moreover, the meaning of good or of bad takes shape according to the needs and desires of the individuals and is also altered by time and circumstance. What do we mean by good? If it refers to a thing of utility then it is objective and changeable; and if it is a matter of liking, then it is subjective and temporal. Next comes the question: what do we derive from good? If its fruit is happiness, then it is a sour grape. Earthly happiness is never sweet. It is also misleading.

A happy life is not necessarily a good life. A dishonest person enjoys a happy luxurious life. Is it a good life? Similarly, a just man suffers unhappiness in family and society, and on that account we cannot call his life bad. It is said that a friend is a good companion. But see the fun of it; we appreciate a person as a friend as long as he serves our interests, and the day he baffles us we start depreciating him as a foe. This is the keynote of material friendship. We serve our personal interests on the plea of goodwill and in the name of good we defend our desires and show our devotions to this transient body. That is our much adorable popular optimism.

Contradiction is the universal law of nature; it governs all life and all phenomena, and it is the ground of all relations. Nature in its wholeness is a panorama of opposites. No relation is possible where two things are completely non-different. Difference makes relations. When one thing

differs from another in substance, or in quality, or in appearance, they contradict one another, and this opposition, this difference, relates them together. The law of causation tells us that the same cause produces the same effect, and it is due to this reason that nature is uniform in all actions. A seed under the soil is a causal instance which brings forth a plant and not a baby, and the two differ in appearance. Nature cannot act whimsically because it is chained up by the principle of causation and causation means contradiction between cause and effect. Effect obviously contradicts the cause and it makes their correlation possible. Cause is concealed effect, and effect is revealed cause, and concealment is opposite to revelation. In a similar way, good contradicts evil, man contradicts woman, birth contradicts death and the rest, and this opposition makes their mutual relationship permanent, justifies their relativity and maintains the greenness of life. Life is lovable because it is a mixture of opposites, it is appreciable because it is changeable.

Thus good is not the negation of evil, nor is evil a negation of good. They form a set of opposites and the same is the case with other contradictions, in which the truth of one fact vindicates the truth of its opposite. Vice gives provocation to virtue, so it is not an object of derision, error improves experience, so it is welcome; sorrow adds salt to joy to make it palatable, so it is not to be ignored; death gives accommodation to life on earth, so it is not to be feared as a dreadful event. The way to self-improvement is not from virtue to virtue, but from vice to virtue, from sin to salvation, from struggle to bliss, from pangs to peace, from ignorance and imperfection to wisdom and perfection.

God is the omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent reality whose will works every-



where and in everything. If the Heaven-born couple hadn't appeared in the garden of Eden, there would have been no human world. The fall of the first man and the first woman has effected the advent of great saints and prophets, who visited the world as ambassadors of Paradise to proclaim the universal lordship of God, to pave the way for the restoration of lost perfection, to deliver the sermon that the divine in man shall defeat the devil in him, that anti-divine urge is pro-divine force in disguise. It also presents God as the All-merciful Father, whose mercy cannot remain confined to one son and one daughter. As He is infinite, He must have an infinite number of children to share His grace, to love Him, to adore Him, and to sing His Majesty till eternity.

We have to begin with the assumption that the human race is a genus in itself. No one knows when it appeared in the world, and its genesis is simply a matter of presumption to anthropologists. The period that precedes the early stone age is filled with impenetrable darkness, which is beyond the range of historical knowledge. Under the circumstances we cannot categorically affirm on mere simile that ape is the original father of man, and that human civilization has evolved from infra-human intelligence. Such supposition defames the dignity of humanity. Leaving this problem to its fate, man has taken life as a given fact for physical investigation and has found its material cause in the union of male and female cells that gradually develops itself as a living doll in the mother's womb by the power of maternal blood that effects the multiplication and specification of different kinds of cells in various ways. It is a valuable scientific statement which brings to our notice the functional process of biological data that make life. But it is not the final understanding of human

life ; it has a spiritual significance too. Man is not a miracle of matter.

The purpose behind the endless creation of life is a permanent puzzle to the scientists. Why is life needed at all ? And what is the causal reason that differentiates woman from man in face and voice and in body and mentality ? Moreover, why do we find multifarious differences in language, feature and complexion among the people in all nations ? Physical science stares at these questions in mute amazement. But spiritual science gives the answer. It asserts that life brings forth life through the medium of soul which is celestial super-consciousness. We switch on life and death puts it out. This game of life and death is going on from time immemorial. Individuals come and go, but the soul is ever present in life and with its help our predecessors had seen the same sun and stars, the same spring and shower, and had enjoyed the same pleasures and love, which we are now seeing and enjoying, and which our future descendents are yet to experience. The immortality of the soul sustains the continuity of life. Soul reveals life and life reveals God.

Religion has discovered the truth of life in the Godhood of man. The word "I" affirms the truth of my soul and because of its existence in every person, life is dear to life, man to woman and woman to man in various bonds of kinship. If we really believe that God is our common Father, then we have to accept the verdict that men and women of all countries are the sons and daughters of God, having a soul like that of their Father. He is the reality in me and I am the reality in Him. Son is in the father and father is in the son, and that is the relation between God and man.

*(Continued on page 200)*

## Review & Notices

**A DICTIONARY OF ADVAITA VEDANTA**, Written and published by Swami Harshananda, President of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bull Temple Road, Bangalore 560-019, Karnataka. 1990 ; pp. 95 ; Rs. 15/.

This dictionary is in three parts: an essay of the basic tenets of Advaita Vedānta, a dictionary of common terms of this *Darśana*, and several charts and tables explaining various aspects of the terminology.

The book presents the essential features of Vedānta Philosophy and is, as such, a compendium of this complex subject. In the first part the Indian philosophical systems are seen as *Darśana*-s, the direct intuitive, mystical experience of the Ultimate Reality. This is opposed to philosophy as mere intellectual speculation and, thus seen, it is the final goal of human life: liberation or *mokṣa*. The second and third parts explain the basic technical terms of Advaita Vedānta. These are interpreted on the basis of Vedāntasāra of Sadananda.

The book is a welcome addition to the existing Vedānta literature as a reliable reference volume.

Swami Brahmasthananda  
Hyderabad

**PHILOSOPHY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA**, by Swami Harshananda, President of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bull Temple Road, Bangalore 560-019, Karnataka. pp. 32 ; Rs. 5/-.

The Swami is a well-known writer and translator with several valuable books to his credit. In the present book he pinpoints the main features of Sri Ramakrishna's Philosophy. Though Sri Ramakrishna was not "a philosopher in the conventional sense of the term," as the Swami points out, "we cannot deny that the highest spiritual truths he taught do constitute a philosophy eminently suited to the present age."

The author makes a study of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna in a sequence of subject categories of common philosophical concern. The arrangement thus includes Sri Ramakrishna's views on *Brahman*, *Māyā*, Creation, *Īśvara* or God, the Immanence of God, God with Form and transcending forms, the *Jīva* or Individual Soul, the problem of Good and Evil, and so on.

Since Sri Ramakrishna's attitude was '*samanvaya*,' harmonizing, his teachings though conforming to traditional tenets of Vedānta, go beyond the rigidities and ambiguities of traditional interpretations. Thus, compared to Śaṅkara, Sri Ramakrishna reconciles the concept of God both with Forms and as the Formless Reality. He also taught an easy to grasp reconciliation of the ideas of the *Nitya* and the *Līlā* ; and of *Ātman* and *Brahman*. Indeed, by his unique insight into *Māyā* in both its *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* aspects, Sri Ramakrishna cautions against the temptation to dismiss the world as illusion and makes *sādhana* imperative for realization.

The book presents these truths of Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy in the form of memorable verses, like an Upaniṣad. Though brief, the *sūtra* form of the book sustains prolonged meditation on the part of the reader. As such this slender book is highly suggestive and indispensable reading for both scholars and the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna.

Swami Brahmasthananda  
Hyderabad

(1) **ALL ABOUT GITA**, Written and published by Swami Harshananda, President Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore. 1991 ; pp. 51 ; Subsidised Edition, Rs. 3/-.

(2) **ALL ABOUT KRSNA**, Swami Harshananda, Bangalore. pp. 55, 1991 ; Rs. 6/-.

The first title describes the essential aspects of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in such a way as to "rouse your curiosity to know more



or all about it," says the author in his Preface. This small book accordingly, gives a summary of all the eighteen chapters of the *Gītā* chapter-wise, and further reflects on its philosophy from the point of view of '*Brahma-Vidyā*', the Knowledge of Brahman. The author discusses the special contribution of the *Gītā* to Indian Philosophical Thought in a separate essay, and shows by giving chapter and sloka numbers how the concepts of the *Yogas* is much more clear and comprehensive in the *Gītā* than in any other comparable basic scripture of Vedānta.

In *All About Kṛṣṇa*, the author portrays the charismatic personality of Sri Krishna from different sources such as the *Mahābhārata*, *Harivams*, the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, and the *Bhāgavata*. The book though small is full of information and enlightenment on the life and teachings of Krishna.

Both the books are written in a very lucid language which inspires the reader to know more about *The Gītā* and its great teacher, Krishna.

Swami Brahmasthananda  
Hyderabad

VIVEKANANDA: Divinity on Earth,  
by R. S. Ramabadrān, Madras: VIVEKANANDA Library Society. Pp. 167; Rs. 25/-.

Swami Vivekananda identified man (even all *Jīvas*) with Divinity and inspired everyone to realise this. The conception of Divinity has been dealt with in the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, and in all the later religious literature of the world. The Divinity in respect of the personality of Swami Vivekananda was first declared by Sri Ramakrishna himself and in subsequent times by his associates and followers. Divinity, though an abstract concept, becomes easy to a common man when he sees the manifestation of some rare qualities in gifted individuals. Swami Vivekananda was one of such personalities who has demonstrated what Divinity is.

This book compares Swamiji with some twenty-five god-heads, *avatāras*, sages, and even with *Ātman* and *Brahman* and tries to establish that Swamiji was a full manifesta-

tion of all these Divinities. Some of the divine personalities with whom Swamiji is compared are Ganeśa, Sanat-Kumar, Nara-Narayana, Subrahmanya, Krishna, Rama, Hanuman, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Sankara, Ramanuja, Chaitanya, Guru Govind Singh, Ayyappa, Sakti, Siva, and others.

The author Ramabadrān's extensive study and painstaking research lead us to a hitherto unknown world of revelation of new possibilities unthought of by anyone before. The appendix "*Hanuman's Tail*" is the climax of the book where, in the concluding para, the author explains why and how Swami Vivekananda was a Divinity on Earth: "Ganeśa's proboscis, Hanuman's tail and Vivekananda's turban—all three visually symbolise 'Om', the Sound Brahman. ...The very sight of Vivekananda's majestic turbaned-head in photography and pictures reminds man that he is a Divinity on Earth."

The readers may find many such images of comparison throughout the book. The scholarship of the author in interpreting the ideas and events mentioned in the complete works of Vivekananda and other scriptures to prove his thesis, is unique and praiseworthy. Though we find it difficult to agree with him on all points, yet we cannot but continue reading his explanations with pleasure.

Dr. Satchidananda Dhar  
Calcutta

FACE TO FACE WITH THE SUPREME  
(Fresh Voice of the Odd, Unknown World Preceptor, Sadhu Gopal Swamy), edited and published by Bhaskaracharya, Trivandrum. Pp. 175; Rs. 50/-

The book is a collection of nearly nine hundred sayings of Sadhu Gopal Swamy of Trivandrum, who was "a born sage and preferred to remain unknown" according to the statement of the editor and publisher of the book. The editor informs about this "unknown" sage, that the "Swami was the born authentic sage...[who] though unmarried lived like any other house-holder in the heart of the city...[and] remained the least affected by the household affairs."

We are also informed that many of the teachings and "some of the wisdom which this writer (Bhaskaracharya) has acquired in camera from Swamiji have been included" in this book.

The sayings are classified in the four chapters: "*I Am All*"; "*Wisdom*"; "*Knowledge and Self-realisation*"; and "*Experience of Self-realisation*". Most of the utterances reveal a spiritual attitude found in the Upanisadic ideas of Advaitic wisdom. "*I am all*"—"Aham Brahmāsmi"—this is the main keynote of the sayings collected. The similes and metaphors found in the sayings of this "unknown sage" mostly resemble those of the sayings of the *Upaniṣad* and other 'well known' sages. The sayings, being universal in character, and having their root in the Advaita Vedanta, will inspire a seeker of truth.

Dr. Satchidananda Dhar  
Calcutta

RAMANAR SANNIDHIYALLI (in Kannada), translated by Dr. K. A. Narayanan. Published by Ramana Maharshi

Centre for Learning, Bangalore, 560-003 ; 1991, Pp. 160 ; Rs. 20/-.

The original volume in Telugu, by Suri Nagamma, has become quite famous. It describes in detail the intimate life of the Ramanashrama and unfolds before the readers many illuminating facets of the sage, Sri Ramana. His compassion, meticulousness in work, his simplicity coupled with severe austerity, and his superb Advaitic wisdom come alive through the vibrant pages of this book and leave an indelible impression on the mind. The book is not only worth reading, but should be kept in one's possession. The words issuing from the lips of the great souls like Sri Ramana inspire and guide spiritual seekers generation after generation. They leap beyond the confines of time and space.

The Kannada translation is lucid and its flow is smooth and unhindered. This translation has fulfilled the much felt need of Kannadigas. We hope the publishers will bring out many more works in Kannada, to satisfy the spiritual hunger of people.

S. M.

## TRUTH OF LIFE

(Continued from page 197)

Philosophy cannot fathom God and science cannot prove His being in the laboratory, because He is supra-mental, and supernatural truth that transcends and permeates all natural facts of the universe mysteriously designed by the Divine Will. The world is apparently physical but inherently metaphysical, Hegel says that "real is rational" but religion announces that real is spiritual. The perfection of life lies in God-realization. And for this reason Swami Vivekananda declares conclusively: "It is better to die seeking a God than as a dog seeking only carrion." Not death, but God is the goal of our life.