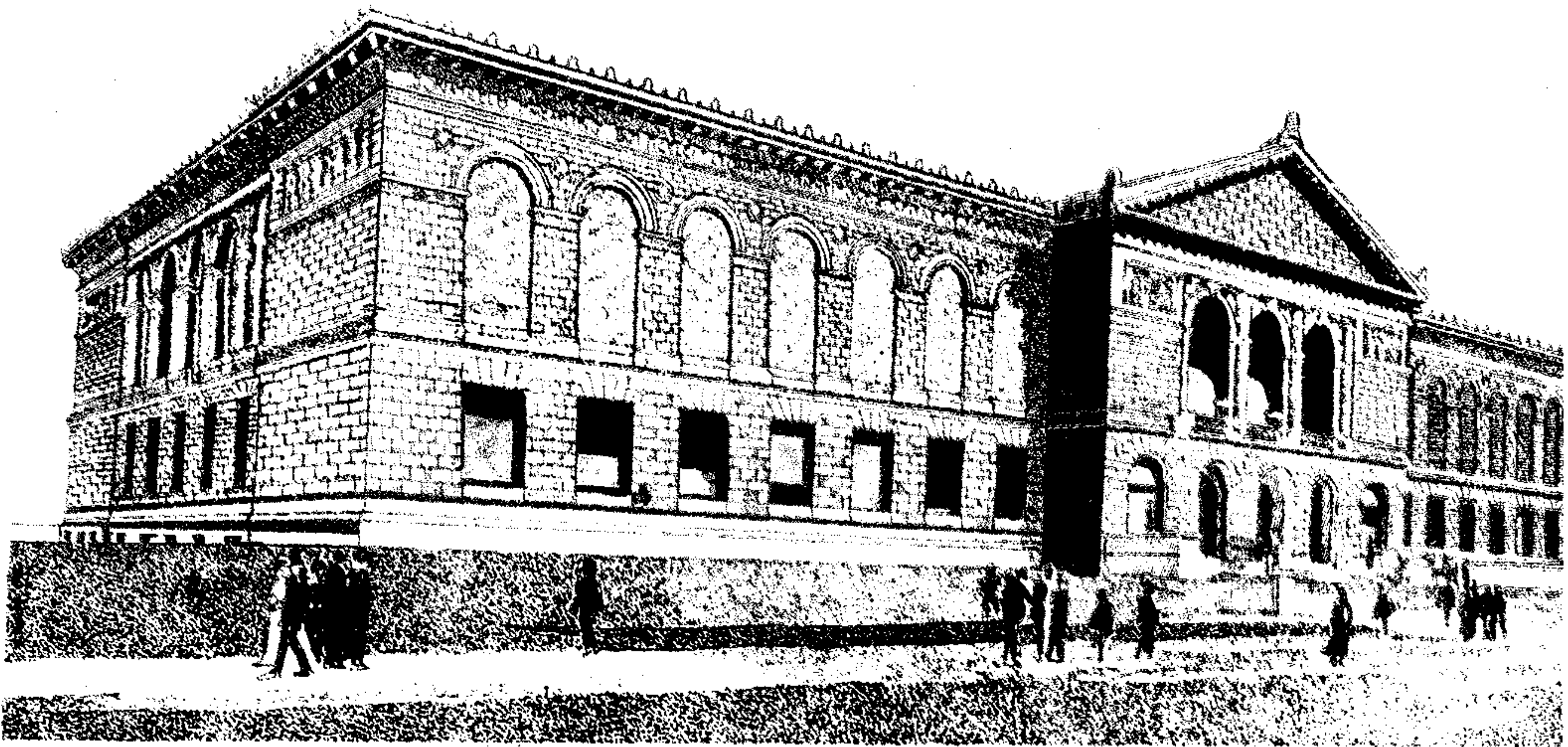




Prabuddha Bharata

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

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 98

MAY 1993

No. 5

Divine Wisdom

Six Stanzas on Nirvana

न पुण्यं न पापं न सौख्यं न दुःखं
न मन्त्रो न तीर्थं न वेदा न यज्ञाः ।
अहं भोजनं नैव भोज्यं न भोक्ता
चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥

No father, no mother, no birth ;
no friend or relation, no master or
disciple.
I am the soul of Knowledge and Bliss—
I am Śiva, I am Śiva.

I am not virtue or vice, not pleasure or pain ;
Not sacred word or pilgrimage,
not Veda or sacrifice ;
I am not enjoying, enjoyable, or enjoyer.
I am the soul of Knowledge and Bliss—
I am Śiva, I am Śiva.

अहं निर्विकल्पो निराकाररूपो
विभुत्वाच्च सर्वत्र सर्वेन्द्रियाणाम् ।
न चासङ्गतं नैव मुक्तिर्न मेय-
श्चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ।

न मृत्युर्न शङ्का न मे जातिभेदः
पिता नैव मे नैव माता न जन्म ।
न बन्धुर्न मित्रं गुरुर्नैव शिष्य-
श्चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥

I am changeless, formless, and through
all-pervadingness omnipresent ;
I am not touched by attachment of senses ;
I am not freedom nor knowable.
I am the soul of Knowledge and Bliss—
I am Śiva, I am Śiva.

I have no death or fear, no distinction of
caste ;

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya

Do Not Rely on Your Mind

The mind is the nearest and most vital of all. It is everything. It is through which we know the world and feel things and people are dear to us or otherwise. Our depression, elation, joys and sorrows, likes and dislikes, ideas and concepts, all depend on this, sometimes called sixth sense-organ, the mind. Our awareness of purity and impurity, that we have done something debasing or ennobling is in the mind. From early dawn to nightfall the mind is active and dictates the fate of all our waking hours. Only during deep sleep, and that too for only a few hours, it stops and allows us to rest. The brief respite of sleep is peaceful and revitalizing. That heavenly quietude again disappears the moment the mind wakes up and takes the reins and whip in its hands. With it the routine of drudgery begins. To a great many, even that brief spell of rest at night is rare and they have to resort to strong potions and draughts to force the mind into oblivion. Sound natural sleep becomes so difficult because of the incessantly active mind. The increasing dependence on tranquilizers by people to relax the tense body and to quieten the hyperactive brain is now a worldwide affliction. The tranquilizers, coming in different forms and under different names, fill medicine cabinets of stores and homes. Professor Steven Rose, commenting on this widespread pill-grabbing, writes: "With drugs to sleep and to wake, to sedate and alert, to ease pain and generate joy, we have already arrived at one form of *Brave New World*."¹ We don't have to seek far in the outside world for the source of most

of our personal, social and political ills, but only examine our own minds a little closely.

Mind is the centre from which spring our activities, emotions, thoughts, feelings and judgements. The physical body otherwise, most of the time is forgotten or its presence is not noticed. Only when it falls sick does it clamour for immediate attention. Otherwise it is the powerful mind that stays in the forefront, dominating. It is not an exaggeration to say that man is his mind. Only in animals and savages it can be noticed the cravings and demands of the physical bodies holding sway over their undeveloped minds. In civilized man, it is the mind which has the first and final say in all matters. Thoughts, emotions and feelings determine one's activities, attitudes and human relationships.

Everyone wholly depends on his mind and surrenders to its nagging demands, whether right or wrong, its dictates and gyrations. We never question the mind's authority or feel suspicious about its motives and movements. We have implicit faith in its workings and place unflinching trust in its guidance. The mind enjoys this full liberty and unhindered freedom. It assumes formidable power. Having tasted freedom, it rebels forcefully at the slightest hint of attempt to curtail its liberty and impose restriction on its movements. Well did Sankara compare it to a huge tiger.² People in general bow down to the whims

1. Steven Rose, *The Conscious Brain* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) page 373.

2. *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, sloka 176.

मनो नाम महाव्याघ्रो विषयारण्यभूमिषु ।
चरत्यत्र न गच्छन्तु साधवो ये मुमुक्षवः ॥

and caprices of the mind and become its slave. Our troubled lives are proof of it. Whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate, powerful or weak, everyone is under its magical spell. Its hypnotic power is so great that it cannot be easily shaken off. Ironically, most of us do not even know that we are under a spell! Our familiar and normal lives do not seem to us in need of any change or different direction. We are content and comfortable in our sure and familiar ways of living. To follow the path trodden by the multitude, to be one among the vast mass of humanity, to go on cherishing the same social values as the general run, is not only reassuring but also safe. Safety lies in the non-involvement of the risk of treading an entirely new path or daring to walk alone in unmarked territory.

Everyone tries to accept and compromise with the ways of the world. Enveloped by the mass influence, all minds function and react more or less in the same known pattern. Every mind is soaked deep with the identical ambitions, hankerings, desires and weaknesses of the mass mind. Greeds, hatreds, fears, and anxieties are all alike, bearing only different names from place to place. Dissection of one mind shows the inward structure and hidden blueprint of all individual minds. Languages and cultural backgrounds and the physical colour of people may seem a bewildering diversity to the superficial observer, but the motives and drives of the human mind are the same in every place. The mind has inherited some past impressions and the rest it has learned being handed down by society from tradition, or acquired from observation of other people. Everything it learns, good or bad, creates a groove of habit and is clung to with obduracy.

On the surface, the states and interests of the mind change very quickly. None can

say with confidence that his state of mind (whatever it is) will not change in a few days. In the morning the mind may have one mood, and in the evening one quite opposite to the first. In the morning one determines to do something, and after a few hours that determination is weakened or evaporates. When we are tired of a monotonous rigour in our lives, we seek a change of work or place. Hardly we enjoy that change for a few hours or days, than the mind interferes and says, "Enough!". It is already bored. People often go to a quiet and beautiful place to rest and relax. The charm and beauty of the scenery captivates them and they wish to continue as many days as possible in such a place. But it is seen that after only a few days the place loses its attraction and the mind says to move on to a still lovelier place. Anything fascinating is only for the time being; later it becomes an irritant. The mind makes everything lose its freshness in no time. It wants always something new and novel to drink in. We have no eye to perceive beauty for any length of time. Most of our relationships with other persons do not last for long on affectionate and cordial terms for the same reason. Friendship's ties are soon snapped because of the ever-changing mind.

We cannot sit quietly and relax even for a few minutes, though we absolutely need rest. Physical rest is fairly within our reach. But mental rest? We don't know really what it is. We are working under such a tyrannous master, who can work twenty-four hours of the day. He can drop unconscious, but will never stop work. Try to sit a few minutes quietly without the movement of the mind, see what happens. The mind will never allow such a luxury to its slave. It immediately goads one to get up and do something. Such is the miserable life of everyone.

Look at our proposed and wished-for thoughts, beliefs and resolutions. They are so tenuous that any remark or passing event can break them to pieces. We are intellectually convinced about something, but an argument pulverizes it. And we hold on to a new idea, till it too is replaced by another argument. Our opinions also change in quick succession. Our views about life and the world are undergoing dramatic changes. Life sometimes appears like a rose garden, the next moment that dream is shattered and life is threatened with forebodings. In the world sometimes we see bright sunshine and at other times dark clouds. No permanent viewpoint is long retained. Like clouds they come and go. Everything depends on the grace and mercy of the mind. We do not know exactly what we are and what we want. Our goals and our things of importance are constantly shifting. Our own impressions and ideas about ourselves are unstable. Sometimes we feel tremendous confidence and think we can achieve anything, but at other times we are at low ebb and experience utter helplessness.

Our assessment of ourselves depends on the flippant remarks made by others, and by passing events. When others praise us, we get elated and think we are somebody, and when we hear adverse things, then depression and self-condemnation set in. We always look to others for their approval and favourable judgements. But the opinions and reactions of others are as fragile as our own. We measure our worth according to the evaluation and verdict of the world. With mind always filled with others' thoughts, we are like a sere leaf tossed in the storm. At no time one can say he knows what he is. It is like sitting on somebody's shoulders and wishing to roam freely. When we walk independently we can move in any direction we like. "We are all," said Vivek-

ananda, "slaves to our own and to everybody else's mind; whether we are good or bad, that makes no difference. We are led here and there because we cannot help ourselves. We say we think, we do, etc. It is not so. We think because we have to think. We act because we have to. We are slaves to ourselves and to others."³

What we think and see as real are the projections and imaginations of our own minds. The mind projects what it knows. What it knows is not only limited, but deceptive. Society stuffs the mind of a child with other deceptions. "One must have ruthless ambition," "one should rise higher and higher in the world, pursue one's desires", and so on—one hears a constant chorus of it. The ceaseless thinking and hearing of such things from childhood convinces one to believe they are real. The mind which is fed with illusions and phantasies places its implicit faith in its own creations. It does not even for a moment suspect that its world is self-created largely. People suffer on and on depending on the phantasies of the mind. The mind which is full of such stuff is untrustworthy and an unreliable guide. None can please such a darkened and insatiable mind and quench its thirst. People, however, try in various ways, struggle day and night to appease the ever fretting and fuming mind. They cannot relax. The mandates of the mind are endless. The whole life of the man who is under the tyranny of the mind is a tragic breathless race, without pause or rest. We naively trust the betrayer as our good friend and land ourselves in deep troubles. Therefore Vivekananda said about the mind, "We cannot serve a traitor and yet be saved."⁴

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 1, page 343.

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, page 122.

If the mind is untrustworthy, then what about the knowledge—the ‘know-how’ it contains? Knowledge of facts tells us a great deal about science, engineering, mathematics, the humanities, and how things work in nature. It is useful in dealing with things. Knowledge of something is not imagination, but is based on facts. A surgeon, an engineer, a technician or a typist, having acquired the specified knowledge in a particular field, knows with certitude what to do. He uses that know-how when it is required. It is under his control. He can by his will either switch on or switch off that fund of knowledge. That knowledge is mechanical and it does not educate us about interpersonal relationships or inform us how to live a free and joyous life, or how to deal with an unruly mind. The mind boasts of that knowledge and exploits it to fulfil its wants. The cunning mind cheats us at every step; its trickery is subtle and not easily detectable.

The impure mind—the mind which is inextricably enmeshed in the world and is full of worldly things, is a satan. There is no other satan or cunning devil than one’s own mind. Till we learn to distrust its mandates, unquenchable cravings, wants and ambitions, the portals to joyful and blissful life will not open. Vivekananda called the mind a prison-house.⁵ Ironically, we all think we are okay, nothing wrong with us. “A man possessed by a ghost”, remarked Sri Ramakrishna, “does not know he is under the ghost’s control. He thinks he is quite normal.”⁶ It is a universal phenomenon. Therefore we do not feel much troubled or discontented with our lives. The more intellectual the mind seems, the worse the betrayal. The intellectual

man is stubborn and hard. He doubts and argues about everything except what is dear to him in his own mind. “Free!” exclaimed Swami Vivekananda. “We who cannot for a moment govern our own minds, nay, cannot hold our minds on a subject, focus it on a point to the exclusion of everything else for a moment! Yet we call ourselves free.”⁷

The question before us is: how can we free ourselves from being tortured by the wayward mind and lessen its evil influence on our everyday action, and how can we become spontaneous in life without the interference of the troublesome mind?

1. *Mind is an object.* One of the characteristics of the mind is that it can observe itself. Just as body is an instrument in the hand of the mind, so mind is an instrument in the hand of consciousness or the person, the self. We are not our minds. Mind is an object and we are the subject. It is separate from us. Patanjali clearly states in the “*Yoga-Sūtras*” that mind is also an object like the body, because it too can be perceived. It is knowable. In an aphorism he says: *Na tat svābhāsam dṛśyatvāt*—“The mind is not self-luminous, being an object.”⁸ The illumination comes from the consciousness. Swamiji, giving a practical suggestion, says: “Hold to the idea, ‘I am not the mind, I see that I am thinking, I am watching my mind act,’ and each day the identification of yourself with thought and feeling will grow less, until at last you can entirely separate yourself from the mind and actually know it to be apart from yourself.”⁹ We can watch the endless

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, page 129.

6. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) page 439.

7. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 6, page 30.

8. *Sūtra* 4:18—

न तत् स्वाभासम् दृश्यत्वात् ।

9. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 8, page 48.

stream of thoughts, the rise of desires and the disturbed state of the mind due to anger, hatred and greed. It is not difficult. As one watches on a TV screen the changing scenario, one can see the changes occurring in one's mind. Our trouble is, with the strong habit of identifying ourselves with thoughts and feelings, we forget to objectify the mind. We forget to watch it. We think by mistake that we also change with all the varying states and moods of our minds. The first step is to know that mind is an object and it can be observed and examined.

2. *Watching the mind.* Sitting quietly every day for a few minutes and dispassionately look on the mind—what goes on in it, not only slows its feverish activity, but calms it. It is not a tiresome exercise, but fun and rather pleasant to observe the jumping and dancing mind, how one thought leads to another, that one to still another. And so on it goes without rhyme and reason. It is fun to observe all these things. Some people keep a diary and note down all their thoughts, one after another, and strangely after some time the mind stops its mischief. It is like observing closely a thief who cannot do his stealing before watching eyes. Sri Ramakrishna therefore advised a little solitude now and then for all.

3. *Say "No" to the mind.* We have, now and then, to say "no" to the mind. It is not possible for anyone to satisfy all the desires and eccentric whims of the mind. We have inadvertently given too much freedom to it to manipulate us. Whenever the mind nags and insists, "get this," "become like that," "dislike this person," "do this," "go there," "weep now" and do its innumerable demands, we have to say firmly "no" to it and disobey and ignore its whims. Whenever it raises its ugly head one has to ask it to keep quiet

and not interfere. Sri Ramakrishna drives home this idea through an instructive story: There was a man who had a pet dog. He used to caress it, carry it about in his arms, play with it and kiss it. A wise man seeing this foolish behaviour of his, warned him not to lavish such affection on a dog. For it was, after all, an irrational brute and might one day bite him. The owner took the warning to heart and putting the dog on the ground, resolved never again to fondle it or caress it. But the animal first could not understand the change in his master and would run to him frequently to be taken up and caressed. Beaten several times, the dog at last ceased to trouble his master anymore.¹⁰ We have fondled the mind for long, now we have to give it a good beating to get free from its importunities.

4. *Do not keep the mind always busy.* Everyone knows that the mind is ever busy spinning castles in the air or conjuring up gory pictures or fanciful dreams. It is hardly quiet and never knows any rest. It is always on the move, chattering to itself on something or the other. It is noisy all the time. Mind is material, therefore the constant use of it makes it decay. It needs rest to function with clarity, energy and enthusiasm. As it does not rest, it soon becomes incapable of anything worthwhile. The practice of keeping the mind quiet and silent is of utmost necessity. Without this there is no joy.¹¹ We have to look at its chattering, or ceaseless thinking and stop it with determination.

10. *Tales & Parable of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1974) page 237.

11. *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, sloka 335.

बाह्ये निरुद्धे मनसः प्रसन्नता
मनः प्रसादे परात्मदर्शनम् ।
तस्मिन्सुदृष्टे भवबन्धनाशो,
बहिर्निरोधः पदवी विमुक्तेः ।

5. *Mind's activities are mere imaginations.* Whatever the mind presents before us in the forms of pleasure, insecurity, fear, anxiety, worry, sorrow, be watchful. Imagination sometimes plays false tricks and leads us wrongly. It is our indiscriminate thinking that invites all troubles. Swami Yatiswarananda said, "It is not usually what we do but what we think that is more troublesome." The mind makes mountains out of molehills. It exaggerates, twists and distorts simple facts. "The mind," observed Swamiji, "brings before us all our delusions—body, sex, creed, caste, bondage; so we have to tell the truth to the mind incessantly until it is made to realize it."¹² One should treat with suspicion or ignore these temptations and imaginations of the mind. Try to keep the mind always on the present and do not allow it to dwell either on the past or future.

6. *Less talk.* Too much talking and gossiping on all subjects of the world not only disturbs the mind, but agitates it to a great extent. It also dissipates our energy. It is neither necessary to know all the subjects nor pertinent to express our opinions on them. What is necessary should be spoken in a few precise words. Experience has taught us that hours of idle gossip or frivolous talk brings more restlessness and saps our energy. Buddha laid great emphasis on *samma vācā*, right speech. It consists in abstention from lying, slandering, using unkind words, and useless talk. After talking loosely, we have regretted many times saying things we should not have.

7. *Association.* Having association with some persons, or thinking on some subjects disturbs the peace of one's mind. We have to detach ourselves and scrupulously avoid

all that throws the mind into a state of uncontrol or turbulence. Though we know it, yet we succumb often to our weaknesses. Disassociating oneself from debasing thoughts, and keeping in touch with spiritual people, in spite of the attractions and revulsions of the untamed mind is necessary. In the beginning spiritual subjects may be distasteful to the mind.¹³ It is because trying for spiritual life, or re-training the mind towards higher life asks us to investigate the mystery of mind and curb its wily ways, and starve it from unhealthy food. The mind fights back with all the fury and tricks in its bag. It is happy in its dreamland, in its illusory world. Spiritual practice aims at reducing the influence of the mind, nay, in wiping out its so-called independent existence. In no way it allows its non-existence. Therefore spiritual life appears so difficult and austere.

8. *Mind and the world.* Our attention, or the mind's eyes are always turned towards the world, for joy, peace and happiness, and for that matter, for everything we look to with greedy eyes. But the world does not have peace and happiness. What it does not have, it cannot give. It is futile to expect these things from the world. Yet we hope one day all our wants will be satisfied by the world and then we shall be peaceful and content. Such a thing will never happen. The world is in our minds. When we think about it, it is present; when we stop thinking about it, it is absent. So the mind has the key to the secret, but not the world. It is constant thinking about the world that has created

¹². *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 8, page 7.

¹³. *Katha Upaniṣad*, I. 2.1—

अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यद् उत्तैव प्रेयस्ते उभे नानार्थे

पुरुषम् सिनीतः ।

तयोः श्रेयः आददानस्य साधु भवति

हीयतेऽर्थाद् य उ प्रेयो वृणीते ॥

our attachment to it. Remove the world from the mind—what remains? Nothing. That ‘nothingness’—unlimited awareness, witness consciousness, is our real nature. That limitless consciousness is bliss and peace.

9. *Japa and meditation.* Repeating a sacred *mantra* or holy name of God keeps the restless mind in abeyance. As long as *japa* is going on, it holds in check the rush and chaos of innumerable unwanted thoughts. Constant refusal to harbour thoughts, to keep the mind free from thoughts, is meditation. It is awareness without the interference of the mind. In Hindu and Buddhist tradition, beginners are instructed to watch or count their incoming and outgoing breaths. The attention focused on breathing stops the exhausting activities of the mind. *Japa* and meditation are even better. But without this medicine there is no cure for the enduring and persistent disease. Another fact to remember is, do not say, “I am worried,” “I am anxious,” or “I am frightened”—instead say to yourself, “the mind or ‘it’ is worried; ‘it’ is anxious.” That much of detachment put into practice reminds us

that we (the Self) are separate from the mind.

10. *Practice.* No great things are accomplished in a day or by the mere wishing. Patience, perseverance and self-effort are the *sine-qua-non* for success in any field. There is, however, no failure in spiritual life. Every little effort clears the cobwebs and pushes us forward towards the Supreme Light—to our own real nature. It purifies the mind. The pure and transparent mind—in reality we are That. To a devotee’s question, Sri Ramakrishna answers—

PRIYANATH: “But the mind is not under my control.”

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: “How is that? There is such a thing as *abhyāsa yoga*, yoga through practice. Keep up the practice and you will find that your mind will follow in whatever direction you will lead it. The mind is like a white cloth just returned from the laundry. It will be red if you dip it in red dye and blue if you dip it in blue. It will have whatever colour you dip it in.”¹⁴

14. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, page 539.

Make thy body the field, good works the seed, irrigate it with God’s name;
make thy heart the cultivator, God will germinate in thy heart, and thou
shalt thus obtain the dignity of Nirvana.

Guru Nanak

God Lived with Them

Swami Niranjanananda

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

The author, Spiritual Head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, presents an interesting biography of another of the direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

The account of an eyewitness is often interesting and convincing. It can portray an event in such vivid detail that it enkindles human imagination to experience the past as the living present. Swami Adbhutananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, narrated the following incident: "One day the Master touched brother Niranjan, and for three days and three nights Niranjan did not get one wink of sleep. He had the continuous vision of a mysterious light and kept repeating the Lord's name. His tongue could not stop saying japam for three days. Prior to meeting the Master, Niranjan was employed by spiritualists as a medium for contacting spirits. So one day the Master humourously said: 'Now, my boy, another ghost—the Holy Ghost—is upon you. However much you try, you will not be able to dismiss him.' "

God acts in mysterious ways. In the early part of 1882, a group of spiritualists from Calcutta heard about Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual power. Spiritualists generally strive for psychic powers and enjoy their play. As it would be an achievement to influence Sri Ramakrishna, they went to the Dakshineswar temple garden to see him. They were told that Sri Ramakrishna had gone for an evening walk to Jadu Mallik's garden house nearby. When they reached Jadu's drawing room and met Sri Ramakrishna, Dr. Pearychand Mitra, the leader of the group, introduced himself and the others, including Niranjan, as spiritualists.

Sri Ramakrishna had the power to see inside a person as one sees an object inside a glass case. As soon as he saw Niranjan, the Master remarked, "This boy is very good—extremely guileless." Immediately Pearychand said: "Sir, He is a wonderful medium."

The spiritualists expressed a desire to use Sri Ramakrishna as a medium. The childlike Master regarded this as a mere amusement. He sat on a chair and the spiritualists, began to wave their hands about him. The Master observed their ritual and smiled from time to time. After trying hard for an hour, Pearychand said: "Sir, you are a great soul with a strong mind. We are incapable of mesmerizing you." Then the Master got up and said privately to Niranjan, "Come here often."

Niranjan, who later became Swami Niranjanananda, was born in 1862 (probably in August) at Rajarhat-Vishnupur, district 24-Parganas, a few miles from Calcutta. His father's name was Ambika Charan Ghosh and he was called Nityaniranjan Ghosh, Niranjan for short. [*Nitya*, ever; *nir*, not; *anjan*, stain: that is, "the ever-stainless one."] He was tall and handsome, and endowed with a broad chest and beautiful bright eyes. He had a strong, energetic, and athletic-like physique. His nature was equally fearless and heroic. In his childhood he was fond of playing with a bow and arrows like the great heroes of the Hindu epics. He had a consummate

passion for truth and compassion for the poor.

When Niranjan was in his teens, he was sent to his uncle's house at Ahiritola, West Calcutta, for higher education. There he was attracted by the group of spiritualists. They made Niranjan their medium and he enjoyed the experience as one enjoys an adventurous game. Just as his physique was strong, Niranjan's mind was powerful. He developed psychic powers that enabled him to cure illnesses. Once a wealthy man of Calcutta who had suffered from insomnia for eighteen years sought Niranjan's help. The compassionate Niranjan used his miraculous power to cure the gentleman. Later he said: I do not know whether that person got any real help from me. But finding him suffering so much in spite of all his riches and wealth, I was seized with a feeling of the emptiness of all worldly things."

The human mind grieves when empty; it always desires to behold an object. Dispassion for the world turns to passion for God. Disillusioned with spiritualism, Niranjan again returned to Dakshineswar in the quest of spirituality.

He found Sri Ramakrishna in his room, surrounded by devotees. The Master was talking about God and how to realize him, and the devotees were spellbound. It was evening. When all the devotees had left for home, the Master approached Niranjan and expressed his joy at seeing him again. They talked freely for some time. Then the Master said: "My boy, if you allow your mind to dwell on ghosts, you will become a ghost yourself. If you fix your mind on God, your life will be filled with God. Now, which of these are you going to choose?" "Well, of course, the latter," replied Niranjan. Sri Ramakrishna thus advised him to sever all of his connection

with spiritualists, and to this Niranjan agreed.

The Master also said to Niranjan: "Look here, my boy, if you do ninety-nine good deeds for a person and one bad, he will remember the bad one and won't care for you anymore. On the other hand, if you commit sins ninety-nine times but do one thing to God's satisfaction, He will forgive all your wrongdoing. This is the difference between the love of man and the love of God. Remember this." As it was getting dark, the Master invited him to spend the night at Dakshineswar, rather than walk the long distance home. Niranjan said his uncle would be anxious and took leave of the Master, promising to come another day.

Niranjan's feet moved towards Calcutta but his mind remained at Dakshineswar. Even at home Sri Ramakrishna occupied all of his thoughts: he felt that the Master himself possessed him, thus replacing the spirits. So within two or three days he returned to Dakshineswar. The Master was filled with joy at seeing him. He rushed to Niranjan, and grasping his arms, exclaimed: "O Niranjan, my boy, the days are flitting away. When will you realize God? This life will be in vain if you do not realize him. When will you devote your mind wholly to God? Oh, how anxious I am for you!" Niranjan was dumbfounded. "What a strange man this is," he thought. "Why is he so concerned about my spiritual welfare?"

Most people of this world are unaware of the gift of unselfish and unconditional love. So whenever a person encounters such pure love, he attempts to comprehend the motive behind it. Niranjan also questioned the Master's concern for him. In any case, the Master's words appealed to Niranjan more forcibly than any he had ever heard. He spent the night there and the two

following days. When he returned home, his uncle, who had been extremely anxious about him, scolded him and forbade him to visit Dakshineswar. Niranjan felt much aggrieved. Later on, however, his uncle relented and granted him the freedom to visit Sri Ramakrishna whenever he liked.

Sri Ramakrishna recognized Niranjan as one of his inner circle, an Iswarkoti—a soul who is perfect from his very birth and is never trapped by maya. Once in a vision he saw the luminous form of Niranjan. As a boy Niranjan loved to play with a bow and arrows. Later Sri Ramakrishna remarked that Niranjan was born as a partial incarnation of Ramachandra.

The Training of Niranjan

As a good shepherd knows his sheep, so Sri Ramakrishna recognized the intimate disciples who had been born to carry his message. As soon as he met one of them, he would lovingly say, "You are a person belonging to this place." He would treat each of them as would a most loving father. Swami Saradananda writes:

Shortly after the arrival of such a devotee the Master would call him aside, ask him to meditate, and then under the influence of divine inspiration he would touch certain parts of his body like the chest or the tongue. By that potent touch the devotee's mind would become indrawn and sense objects would vanish from its perception. His accumulated impressions of the past would be activated and produce spiritual realization in him.... Besides touching the devotees in that way, the Master initiated some of them with mantras.

Niranjan was initiated by the Master with a mantram. He later described this experience:

I was then working in an office. One day I went to visit Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. He wrote a mantram on my tongue and asked me to repeat it. My goodness, what an experience! After returning home, even when my eyes were closed, I began to see innumerable fireflies in my room. The mantram was vibrating in my head and in every limb of my body. I wanted to sleep, but I could not stop the repetition of japam. I had previously been unaware of this phenomenon. I became scared and thought that I would go out of my mind. After three days I returned to Dakshineswar and said to the Master, "Sir, what have you done to me?" After listening to my story, he laughed and withdrew the power of the mantram. He then said, "It is called *ajapā japam* or the repetition of japam effortlessly and unceasingly."

Sri Ramakrishna's teaching varied from person to person. For instance, he scolded the mild-tempered Yogananda because he did not protest the false accusations made against Sri Ramakrishna; but he instructed Niranjan differently.

Niranjan was habitually good natured, but he had a violent temper. One day, when he was coming to Dakshineswar on the public ferryboat, he overheard some of the other passengers speaking sneeringly of Sri Ramakrishna, saying that he was not a true man of renunciation but a hypocrite who enjoyed good food and every comfort, and whose disciples were gullible schoolboys. Niranjan protested strongly, but the speakers ignored him. At this, Niranjan became enraged, jumped to his feet, and began to rock the boat, threatening to capsize it in midstream. Niranjan was a powerful swimmer; he could easily have swam ashore after carrying out his threat. The passengers

were frightened and they begged to be forgiven.

When Sri Ramakrishna heard about this incident, he rebuked Niranjan severely. "Anger is a deadly sin," he said. "You ought never to let it carry you away. The seeming anger of a good man is something different. It's no more than a mark made on water. It vanishes as soon as it's made. As for those mean-minded people who talked against me, they weren't worth getting into a quarrel with—you could waste your whole life in such quarreling. Think of them as being no more than insects. Be indifferent to what they say. See what a great crime you were about to commit, under the influence of this anger! Think of the poor helmsman and the oarsmen in that boat—you were ready to drown them too, and they had done nothing!"

At one time Niranjan was compelled to accept a job with an indigo planter at Murshidabad, more than a hundred miles north of Calcutta. Sri Ramakrishna was aggrieved at the news and remarked, "I would not have been more pained had I heard of his death." A few days later, when he met Niranjan, he learned that he had to accept the job to maintain his aged mother. With a sigh of relief, the Master told Niranjan: "Ah, then it is all right. It won't contaminate your mind. But I tell you, if you had done so for your own sake, I could not have touched you. Really, it was unthinkable that you would stoop to so much humiliation. Didn't I know that my Niranjan had not the least trace of impurity in him?"

Upon hearing this remark, a member of the audience questioned the Master: "Sir, you are condemning service; but how can we maintain our families without earning money?" The Master replied: "Let him

who likes do so. I don't forbid everyone. I say this only to these young aspirants [*pointing to Niranjan and others*] who form a class by themselves." Sri Ramakrishna did not want for his intimate disciples to be slaves to the maya of lust and gold.

On June 15, 1884, M. recorded the feelings the Master had for Niranjan in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*:

After the music the Master sat with the devotees. Just then Niranjan arrived and prostrated himself before him. At the very sight of this beloved disciple the Master stood up, with beaming eyes and smiling face, and said: "You have come too! (*to M.*) You see, this boy is absolutely guileless. One cannot be guileless without a great deal of spiritual discipline in previous births. A hypocritical and calculating mind can never attain God.

(*To Niranjan*) "I feel as if a dark veil has covered your face. It is because you have accepted a job in an office. One must keep accounts there. Besides, one must attend to many other things, and that always keeps the mind in a state of worry. You are serving in an office like other worldly people; but there is a slight difference in that you are earning money for the sake of your mother. One must show the highest respect to one's mother for she is the very embodiment of the Blissful Mother of the Universe. If you had accepted the job for the sake of wife and children, I should have said: 'Fie upon you! A thousand shames!'"

Sri Ramakrishna had two types of teaching. One was for the householders, who are obliged to take care of their families and at the same time practise spiritual disciplines. He reminded them constantly: "First God and then the world." Again, he established the monastic ideal for his would-be

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Metaphysics in Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound'

DR. RAMA NAIR

Writing on one of P. B. Shelley's best known works, the learned author, a reader of English in Osmania University, Hyderabad, illuminates on the hidden symbolism and spiritual significance of Shelley's poem.

It is interesting to note that one of the ways in which man sought to reconcile himself with the complex nature of reality was through the medium of language. The Romantics, through the instrument of language, attempted to arrive at a 'truer' vision of reality. Their concept of an intuitive perception of reality was based upon the free creative spirit of the imagination. In the metaphysical sense, they believed that the world could be understood only through the ideas which the mind had of it. Through intuition the imagination realized the divine pattern of the Absolute, i.e., the True, the Good, and the Beautiful (what Shelley refers to as Intellectual Beauty). This in turn impelled the individual will to emulate it and use its power to either destroy existing forms or create new ones. To the Romantics the hope of realizing ideal beauty lay through the medium of poetry. Consequently the language that is to be found in poetry, in myth, and religion can be termed as 'depth language' or 'expressive language'. The Romantics exploited the infinite possibilities that lay in 'depth language' to embody their perception of reality.

Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound,"¹ a

lyrical drama in four acts, is one such attempt. Here poetry and metaphysics blend to engender a heightened awareness of the concept of 'reality'. Shelley utilises the myth of Prometheus in his own unique way to project his vision of a regenerate world. Prometheus in fact is Shelley's epitome of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

The theme of suffering in "Prometheus Unbound" is elevated to the level of the cosmic and the universal. The symbolic language which the myth provided gave Shelley the opportunity to express his own thoughts and emotions without being bound to the finite particulars of any creed, history, or place. He could integrate in it the spiritual and social content of his thought. Prometheus, to Shelley, was a poetical abstraction, who symbolized the basic concept of freedom when the shackles of the mind in the form of hatred, vice, and violence were loosened to set free the creative imagination of the individual. Prometheus is Shelley's magnificent symbol of spiritual regeneration through suffering and a realization of Love as the motivating and

1. Prometheus in Greek mythology was the son of the Titan Iapetus and Clymene, and brother of Epimetheus and Atlas. He is represented as the great benefactor of men in spite of Zeus, King of the Gods. Prometheus stole fire from heaven in a hollow tube, and taught mortals all useful arts. In order to punish

men Zeus gave Pandora as a present to Epimetheus, in consequence of which diseases and suffering of every kind befell mortals. He also chained Prometheus to a mountain and caused him endless torment. This was the subject of the great tragic drama, "Prometheus Bound", by Aeschylus.

binding force of a social revolution. Social regeneration should begin from within the individual self. Spiritual purgation is a necessary evil. Without the self being purged of ego, selfishness and personal desire, there can be no triumph of individual or social perfection. Though the struggle is in the individual mind, the impact of the regeneration that follows is universal. "Prometheus Unbound" is thus a symbolic drama about the origin of evil and its elimination.

In the Orphic² tradition, the Titans³ were the 'Over-reachers'. In their war against the Olympians they suffered total defeat and were banished into Tartarus. Of all these Titans, Prometheus, the 'foresighted' or 'prophetic', or 'provident one', initially supported Jupiter⁴ against the Titans. It was Prometheus who gave wisdom to Jupiter to enable him to rule justly and wisely. But when Jupiter became omnipotent, he used his power to rule his empire tyrannically. Prometheus had not foreseen that wisdom without love, and strength without compassion can degenerate into despotism. Prometheus himself had no such knowledge. Jupiter's advance in divinity is coupled with his increasing harshness towards humanity. The *hubris* of the mythic Prometheus was his inordinate desire for all knowledge. He flouted divine

restraint and decorum in his quest for knowledge that was forbidden to him. It is symbolized by the theft of fire, the archetypal image emblematic of man's aspiring quest for divinity (through an expansion of consciousness, thought and knowledge). Prometheus stole fire for the benefit of mankind, but when the play opens, Prometheus is a flawed character.

Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound" opens in Act-I with Prometheus bound to a precipice in a ravine of icy rocks in the Indian Caucasus.⁵ It is night, but significantly enough, morning slowly breaks. Prometheus hurls defiance and contempt at the 'Monarch of Gods and Daemons,' drawing his attention to "...this Earth/Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou,/Requiest for knee-worship, prayer and praise." (P.U., I, 5-6) The existence of the 'monarch' was dependent on the supplications of this wretched lot of humanity. The monarch's reward to these abject creatures was "fear and selfcontempt, and barren hope." (P.U. I, 8) But Prometheus exults in his pain. Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours, endless years of torture and solitude, scorn and despair were Prometheus's empire over which he reigned unrepentant, undefeated and undaunted. He had not yielded to his oppressor. But Prometheus, the benefactor of mankind, continued to suffer. He had acted according to the highest ideals, but his soul was still corrupted with hate and scorn.

Now "nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain/Black, Wintry, Dead, Unmeasured..." (P.U. I, 20-21), self-realization slowly

2. Orpheus, a mythical personage, was regarded by the Greeks as the most celebrated of the poets who lived before the time of Homer, 800 B.C.

3. Titans in the mythology were the original inhabitants of heaven, sons and daughters of Uranus (Heaven) and Gē (Earth). After a feud they revolted against the powers of heaven, Zeus and the Olympians, and were banished to live forever in the nether world of Tartarus, under the earth as far below Hades as heaven is above earth.

4. Jupiter (*Dyaus-pater*) is identified by the later Romans with the earlier Zeus of the Greeks.

5. When the soldiers of Alexander advanced to the great range of mountains forming the boundary of the ancient Persian empire (Ariana), they applied to the mountains the name of Caucasus; afterwards to distinguish them from the western Caucasus, they were called *Caucasus Indicus*.

dawns. His hatred for the "Cruel King" changes to pity for him, for "...I speak in grief,/Not exultation, for I hate no more,/As then are misery made the wise. The Curse/Once breathed on thee I would recall." (P.U. I, 56-59) The phantasm of Jupiter is summoned from the world of shadows to repeat the curse, and Prometheus sees in the phantasm himself when he had abused the creator, and cursed him with "...a sufferer's curse/...Till thine Infinity shall be/A robe of envenomed agony" "...And thy omnipotence a crown of pain,/To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain." (P.U. I, 286-91).

Prometheus learns self-control through suffering. Consequently, he is impervious to Mercury's threats and temptation. He is undisturbed at the horrors that the Furies inflict on him with a graphic and terrible illustration of the grim and pitiable plight of mankind where the wise want love, and those who love want wisdom. Prometheus' response is to pity these misguided creatures. With pity comes compassion and an all-encompassing love which proclaims to the fierce king that these sights of horror only fill his soul with new endurance.

Prometheus is not deceived by the false picture of the world which Jupiter sends his way through the Furies. These phantasms can be interpreted as the creations of a mind too limited to realize its own higher ideal. John Drew observes that "...Prometheus stakes his whole defiance of Jupiter on the belief that he has within himself the 'One only Being...which is said not only to comprise through mystical love all creation, but to be apprehensible in the absorbed soul'"⁶ And on account of it "...he refuses

the advances of Heaven he knows has no ultimate reality, in order to stay on Earth where alone the Permanent Paradise may be realized."⁷

When Prometheus discards hate and destroys his ego, he is in effect identifying himself with Love which is the ruling power of the Universe. Prometheus is unchained and released by Hercules. He is united with Asia, his creative self. With this union Earth and Nature rejoice. With the fall of Jupiter at the hands of Demogorgon in Act-III, there is a complete transformation in the presentation of reality. The Spirit of the Hour is entrusted with the solemn task of proclaiming through a conch the new age of man's regeneration and freedom. Earth is freed from the tyranny of Jupiter, and "...man remains/Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed,"/Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the King/Over himself..." (P.U. III, 193-97)

In Prometheus the totality of the human and the divine, the secular and the sacred is kept in creative tension. In "Prometheus Unbound," the Romantic concept of individualism is realized through suffering and self-realization. Suffering and evil split the unified consciousness into conflicting opposites. Social chaos is related to man's inner division and moral disorder which stifles his nobler self. In "Prometheus Unbound" there is the humanization of divinity and the divinization of humanity. Divinity as represented in Jupiter is sterile because it is unconcerned with the suffering of its creation. Jupiter represents the system of domination that asserts its authority through fear and force, the system which sets up Gods, Kings and Priests, denying man his freedom to develop spiritually through a positive realization of his own creative energies.

6. Drew, John, *India and the Romantic Imagination* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987) page 261.

7. *Ibid.*, page 261.

When Prometheus is unbound, it is a symbolic casting off of those repressive constraints that divide the individual psyche into the concepts of 'I' and 'Thou'. The inhospitable mountain terrain on which Prometheus was held captive represent the vast forces of creation and destruction present in the natural world. The individual mind of Prometheus is alienated from this world as it is still caught in the excruciating world of suffering and experience. He is divided within himself, estranged as he is from his higher self, symbolized by Asia, the female ideal of harmony and beauty.

Metaphysically, there is no difference between what is called the *world* and what is called *suffering*. In the Advaita Vedanta, both have an existence of a type that is not the Real.⁸ In Advaita, the nature of Reality is described as an undivided state of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Advaita invite us to get behind the facts of life, of which suffering is one, and "to existentially evaluate it by participating in the dynamics of the foundational principle whose expression is life."⁹ This would imply that one has to reach beyond the relativity of life to a transcendence which illumines and elevates the whole sphere of existence. From this perspective, such a revelation would lead to a state of an indivisible undivided existence characterized by tranquillity and peace. When Prometheus attains this state of spiritual illumination, his alienation is replaced by a harmonious integration with the world which leads to the divinization of humanity. As K. B. Ramakrishna Rao states, *Real* existence is "...unattenuated and undivided, and so when one discovers

oneself established in the Self, one not only receives all suffering, but also recognizes a transcendent state, in the light of which all contingents are relatives and seen in their proper form."¹⁰ The Advaita states that the world as a dual entity separate from the Self is a false imagination. But the Infinite Self is self-existing and self-fulfilled. Prometheus' vision of a transformed world bestows it with the sanctity of a spiritual divinity. Therefore, suffering when viewed above its relative aesthetic valuation, loses its capacity to alienate and destroy. The spiritually realized man is freed from the illusion of the dualistic nature of this world, and attains a unified being. In this context, suffering is the agent which refines and elevates the self.

Prometheus descends into this mortal world as far as an immortal God can. This concept of divine descent is central in Indian thought. The concept of a Supreme Being descending upon the earth in human form, as an *avatār*, is explicated in Indian philosophy in the *Gītā*. The basic principle of the *Gītā* is that God or Divinity dwells in the heart of all beings as their innermost Self. To know the innermost self is to become one with God. Since God exists in every man, "every being in a sense represents a descent from God into the finiteness of name and form, and only the veil of ignorance hides from him his essentially divine nature; and when a being is born with the full knowledge of the Self, and with the divine consciousness not veiled by ignorance, that being is a full embodiment of the Godhead. Such a man is known as an *avatār*."¹¹ Prometheus is, of course, not an *avatār* in the Indian sense of the term, but he is the immortal

8. Jones, H. M., *Revolution and Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1974) page 248.

9. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1977) page 118.

10. Ramakrishna Rao, K. B., "Suffering in Advaita Vedanta" in *Suffering: The Indian Perspective*, Editor: Kapil N. Tiwari (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986) page 186.

11. *Ibid.*, page 187.

one who rebelled against God for the welfare of humanity. To the Romantics, Prometheus was "...a secular saviour, the incarnation of a will to resist, a believer in the overthrow of despotism, and a proponent of the idea that mankind under sunnier circumstances is capable of indefinite progress without the need of Christian revelation."¹² This faith in secular progress was an extension of Shelley's passionate affirmation that man can free himself from tyranny through a belief in the brotherhood of man. Prometheus establishes the universal principle that when righteousness is eclipsed by evil, divine intervention is needed to restore order.

¹². *Ibid.*, page 188.

"Prometheus Unbound" is rooted in the reality of the Post-Revolution era. There is no idle contemplation on the nature of God or man. Neither is there an exaltation of rationalist radicalism. In "Prometheus Unbound" Shelley suggested that the regeneration of the mind is as important for freedom and happiness as the regeneration of society. The way of wisdom lies in realizing the value of love and compassion. It is the truth of the Vedanta that can integrate reality, man, and society into a constructive whole.

¹³. P. B. Shelley, "Prometheus Unbound", *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2 (New York: W. Norton & Co., 1962).

SWAMI NIRANJANANANDA

(Continued from page 212)

monastic disciples: "The sannyasi must renounce 'woman and gold' for his own welfare... The sannyasi, the man of renunciation, is a world teacher. It is his example that awakens the spiritual consciousness of men." Sri Ramakrishna was very happy when he learned that Niranjan was not attached to women and that he would not marry. Niranjan told him, "A woman never enters my thoughts." On July 15, 1885, like a proud father, the Master eulogized Niranjan to the devotees: "Look at Niranjan. He is not attached to anything. He spends money from his own pocket to take poor patients to the hospital. At the proposal of marriage he says, 'Goodness!

That is the whirlpool of the Vishalakshi [presiding goddess of a stream]. I see him seated on a light."

On that same day, while sitting in his room at Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna was chanting the names of gods and goddesses. "Then he repeated, 'Alekh Niranjana,' which is a name of God. Saying 'Niranjana,' he wept. The devotees wept too. With tears in his eyes the Master said: 'O Niranjan! O my child! Come! Eat this! Take this! When shall I make my life blessed by feeding you? You have assumed this human form for my sake.'"

(To be continued).

Human Development Through Work

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

Karma Yoga is also a path that leads to God realization. Ordinary action is transformed into a powerful means for spiritual growth in this Yoga. The author, who is the spiritual leader of the Vedanta Society of New York, lucidly explains the profundity of Karma.

The desire for happiness is a universal one, but the conception of happiness is not. The so-called prosperity of outer life does not hide our emptiness and depression. We have improved many things but not the mind that really enjoys them. We work very hard and work has become an addiction to us. We are workaholics. Our daily preoccupation with work does not give us any time for thoughts of spiritual interest. A thousand thoughts throng in our mind and make us very unhappy. The practical advantages derived from our work no longer are available to serve our purpose but to tyrannize over us. "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind."

Acharya Shankara, an Indian mystic of the 9th century, compared the frothy and superficially learned people to men who get lost in a forest of long and flourishing verbiage. T.S. Elliot echoes the same sentiment in this famous quotation: "Knowledge of speech, but not of silence; knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word." Hamlet gave eloquent expression in his three word answer to Polonius' question as to what he was reading: "Words, words, words." As we are lost in the wake of words, so we are equally confused in the midst of enervating and irritating work.

Work, only if done in a spirit of yoga, does give an insight about our inner natures. Work, like an X-ray machine, provides us with an X-ray report of our hidden mind.

Goethe's famous saying is worth remembering here: "Genius develops in solitude, character in struggling with the world." Work renders service to society. Desire stands behind thought, thought leads to action. Desire is the root of all activities. Laws relating to desire, thought and action, taken together, make up the law of *karma*.

Swami Vivekananda said in this context, "All the actions that we see in the world, all the movements in human society, all the works that we have around us, are simply the display of thought, the manifestation of the will of man. Machines or instruments, cities, ships or men-of-war, all these are simply the manifestation of the will of man; and this will is caused by character, and character is manufactured by Karma. As is karma so is the manifestation of the will."¹ The individual soul consists of will, knowledge and action. The entire superstructure of modern civilization has been developed by the people who envisioned it, willed it and worked for it. We are the product of our own karma.

We read in the Upaniṣad, "One becomes noble through righteous work and ignoble through unrighteous work."² We, being the chief architects of our fate, are assured of

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) Vol. I, p. 30.

2. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.2.13.

our highest success, realization of truth, through our own work geared to achieve this goal. In this short essay, we shall discuss the impact of work on the formation of excellence in human character.

The two words, *karma* and work, are not synonymous. Mechanical work done by inanimate objects is not *karma*. *Karma* is strictly volitional action. Work done by a living agent with the expectation of enjoying the fruits of labour is *karma*. *Karma* is ever associated with self-determination. No volitional action is ever done without having self-consciousness.

The word "karma" has a double meaning: action, and its effects. Swamiji said, "All action is Karma. Technically, this word also means the effects of actions. In connection with metaphysics, it sometimes means the effects, of which our past actions were the causes."³ Each karma produces a two-fold result; one is immediate, the other is remote. Apart from that, each karma—physical, verbal, or mental—be it good or evil, leaves on the mind an impression. The character of such impression depends on the nature of the *karma*; one's character is determined by the impression acquired by his own *karma*. Each person is responsible for his own *karma*. It may be remembered that the human being has the freedom of selecting his course of *karma*. One's future absolutely depends on this. As we sow, so we reap. This is the exacting law of *karma*. With regard to human life, this law is universally valid. Each cause has its corresponding effect. Nature guides the destiny of the sub-human species, whereas the progress of human life is entirely dependent on the strength of righteous life. Hence merit-producing *karma* is so very important. The main struggle in

spiritual development is to overcome the obstacles of unrighteous *karma* done in the past.

Karma-yoga is the path of action by which the seeker of God gets fulfillment. When the seeker earnestly follows the path of karma-yoga, God-vision comes. Therefore, every sincere seeker is aware of the consequences of his *karma* and this strong conviction about the inviolable moral law of *karma* guides his conduct. This is explained by Swami Vivekananda, "Every thought that we think, every deed that we do....This is law of karma."⁴

Karma-yoga converts our work into a powerful means for our spiritual growth. Swamiji said that every karma—physical, verbal or mental—leaves an indelible mark on one's character. Man is responsible for his own *karma*. This law rules out fatalism in human life. Work or duty by itself is neither good nor bad, it is the attitude of the mind that determines the effect of *karma* on our character. Hence mind is the source of all bliss as well as the root of all evils. To elucidate this idea, Swamiji said, "If I tell a lie, or cause another to tell one, or approve of another doing so, it is equally sinful. If it is a very mild lie, still it is a lie. Every vicious thought will rebound, every thought of hatred which you may have thought, in a cave even, is stored up, and will one day come back to you with tremendous power in the form of some misery here. If you project hatred and jealousy, they will rebound on you with compound interest. No power can avert them; when once you have put them in motion, you will have to bear them. Remembering this will prevent you from doing wicked things."⁵

3. *Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 27.

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 34.

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 262.

"We are what our thoughts have made us, so take care of what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live, they travel far. Each thought we think is tinged with our own character...."⁶

Yoga, according to the *Gita* (II/50) is the art or skill in the performance of an action. The fruits of action, which are inevitable, can be avoided through yoga. The law of *karma* is the counterpart, in the moral world, of the law of cause and effect and the law of conservation of energy in the physical world. This law of *karma* rules out fatalism, accidentalism and madness in nature. We are conditioned by our past *karma*. This conscious activity of today becomes the unconscious habit of the future. In this way, our entire life-style, habits, character and mode of thinking, is determined by our actions. Every action produces two kinds of effect. One is the remorse effect that visits us as the fruit of action after a long period and shapes our destiny; the other effect produces a tendency (*Samskara*) in our mind. Through good living, it is quite possible to root out the evil ideas from our mind, but the fruits of action do visit us. "For every man shall bear his own burden," said St. Paul.⁷

Swami Vivekananda in his famous *Karma-Yoga* gave us a very rational interpretation of this law. He said, "When persons do evil actions, they become more and more evil, and when they begin to do good, they become stronger and stronger and learn to do good at all times."⁸ In the same section, after having given a very rational exposition of this law, Swamiji said further, "...just as light waves may travel for millions of years before they reach any object, so thought waves may also travel

hundreds of years before they meet an object with which they vibrate in unison. It is quite possible, therefore, that this atmosphere of ours is full of such thought pulsations, both good and evil. Every thought projected from every brain goes on pulsating, as it were, until it meets a fit object that will receive it. Any mind which is open to receive some of these impulses will take them immediately. So, when a man is doing evil actions, he has brought his mind to a certain state of tension and all the waves which correspond to that state of tension, and which may be said to be already in the atmosphere, will struggle to enter into his mind. That is why an evil-doer generally goes on doing more and more evil. His actions become intensified. Such also will be the case with the doer of good; he will open himself to all the good waves that are in the atmosphere, and his good actions also will become intensified. We run, therefore, a twofold danger in doing evil: first, we open ourselves to all the evil influences surrounding us; secondly, we create evil which affects others, may be hundreds of years hence. In doing evil we injure ourselves and others also. In doing good we do good to ourselves and to others as well; and, like all other forces in man, these forces of good and evil also gather strength from outside."⁹

Here we may mention that Hindnism, unlike Buddhism and Jainism, does acknowledge the intervention of a gracious God, who is never bound by any law. God is "what makes impossible possible." Devotees do rely upon the redemptive power of God and get themselves relieved of the painful effects of the past *karma*.

To keep our mind from non-spiritual thought, we are to be ever vigilant. "Enjoy-

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 14.

7. Gal, 6:5.

8. *Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 81.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

ment is the million-headed serpent that we tread underfoot," said Swamiji. Due to our impulsive nature, we very often indulge in sense enjoyments. Even if they are subtle enjoyments, still they are very dangerous. Hence Swamiji said, "Think of the power of words! They are a great force in higher philosophy as well as in common life. Day and night we manipulate this force without thought and without inquiry. To know the nature of this force and to use it well is also a part of karmayoga."¹⁰

Karma-yoga, thus, encompasses the whole of life. Therefore, moral character plays a vital role in the forces of this yoga. *Karma* is ever associated with self-determination. Our moral action produces certain modifications in our moral life. *Karma* does not bind us exclusively. We have full freedom to enjoy our divine life by following the spirit of karma-yoga. Swamiji said, "The only way to come out of bondage is to go beyond the limitations of law, to go beyond where causation prevails."

The human being is a conscious agent of his destiny. Hence the doctrine of karma is not fatalistic. Swami Vivekananda was one of the greatest champions of the soul-force. He invariably extolled the beauty, majesty, dignity, mystery and potentiality of the Soul lying dormant in all of us. About the sole responsibility of the individual, Swamiji said, "Each one of us is the maker of his own fate. This law knocks on the head at once all doctrines of predestination and fate and gives us the only reconciliation between God and man. We, we, and none else, are responsible for what we suffer. We are the effects, and we are the causes. We are free therefore. If I am unhappy, it has been of my own making,

that very thing shows that I can be happy if I will. If I am impure, that is also of my own making, and that very thing shows that I can be pure if I will. The human will stands beyond all circumstance. Before it—the strong, gigantic, infinite will and freedom in man—all the powers, even of nature, must bow down, succumb, and become its servants. This is the result of the law of Karma."¹¹

Virtue purifies our mind and brightens our intellect. Therefore, a virtuous person is able to practise discrimination. Due to his sound judgment and contemplative life, Swamiji gave us an inspiring idealism and practical suggestions to develop our potentiality, work efficiency and moral temperament. He said, "Karma in its effects on character is the most tremendous power that man has to deal with. Man is, as it were, a centre, and is attracting all the powers of the universe towards himself, and in this centre is fusing them all and again sending them off in a big current."¹² Society is highly benefited by those people who are pure, loving, unselfish and persons of strong character. Swamiji was never tired of telling us that work held the golden key for our success in life.

Following the precepts of the *Bhagavad Gita*, he told us that life and work always go together. One cannot exist without the other. He further made it crystal clear that every action of an individual would leave a deep mark on one's character: In this manner our actions influence our character and vice-versa. This observation impelled him to warn us against carelessness and its disastrous consequences. Every action produces two kinds of result, one cosmic and another individual. The *Samskara*; i.e., the impression left in the mind, fashions

10. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

11. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 125.

12. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 29-30.

our character. This was Swamiji's opinion, "As pleasure and pain pass before his soul they leave upon it different pictures, and the result of these combined impressions is what is called man's 'character.' If you take the character of any man, it really is but the aggregate of tendencies, the sum total of the bent of his mind ; you will find that misery and happiness are equal factors in the formation of that character. Good and evil have an equal share in moulding character, and in some instances misery is a greater teacher than happiness."¹³ Hence our future entirely depends on the quality of the mind that does good work and enables us to have strong character. Swamiji wanted us to cultivate a good moral character through our ceaseless work directed to achieve grand success in spiritual life.

Swamiji gave us a rational and scientific analysis of mind. "Samskara can be translated very nearly by 'inherent tendency.' Using the simile of a lake for the mind, every ripple, every wave that rises in the mind, when it subsides, does not die out entirely, but leaves a mark and a future possibility of that wave coming out again. This mark, with the possibility of the wave reappearing, is what is called samskara. Every work that we do, every movement of the body, every thought that we think, leaves such an impression on the mind-stuff and even when such impressions are not obvious on the surface, they are sufficiently strong to work beneath the surface, subconsciously. What we are every moment is determined by the sum total of these impressions on the mind. What I am just at this moment is the effect of the sum total of all the impressions of my past life. This is really what is meant by character ; each man's character is determined by the sum total of these impressions."¹⁴

13. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

Work or *karma* by itself is a neutral power. Our inner attitude, our motive and purpose do play a great role in shaping the destiny of our life. Good work elevates our soul, and the bad denigrates its image. Good impulses impel us to involve ourselves in creative activities leading to spiritual development. Therefore, to break the sinister influence of unhealthy impulses, we are required to generate a strong will to counteract the evils of lower tendencies of the mind.

The old Adam in us remains subdued to a great extent when we engage ourselves ceaselessly to keep it under control. Swamiji observed that, "When a man has done so much good work and thought so many good thoughts that there is an irresistible tendency in him to do good, in spite of himself and even if he wishes to do evil, his mind, as the sum total of his tendencies, will not allow him to do so ; the tendencies will turn him back ; he is completely under the influence of the good tendencies. When such is the case, a man's good character is established."¹⁵

Eternal vigilance being the price of high success in spiritual life, we are to be alert. Knowledge helps us in our daily living. Knowledge about our inner nature can save us from misery and unhappiness. In this context, Swamiji said, "If good impressions prevail, the character becomes good ; if bad, it becomes bad. If a man continuously hears bad words, thinks bad thoughts, does bad actions, his mind will be full of bad impressions ; and they will influence his thought and work without his being conscious of the fact. In fact, these bad impressions are always working and their resultant must be evil, and that man will be a bad man ; he cannot help it. The sum

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

total of these impressions in him will create the strong motive power for doing bad actions. He will be like a machine in the hands of his impressions, and they will force him to do evil. Similarly, if a man thinks good thoughts and does good works, the sum total of these impressions will be good ; and they, in a similar manner, will force him to do good even in spite of himself."¹⁶ This is the fundamental law of our inner nature and that law shapes our destiny. Hence good living is so imperative. To enable us to follow the rugged path of spiritual disciplines we are to follow Swamiji's guidelines. He said, "The mind, to have non-attachment must be clear, good, and rational. Why should we practise ? Because each action is like the pulsations quivering over the surface of the lake. The vibration dies out, and what is left ? The Samskaras, the impressions. When a large number of these impressions are left on the mind, they coalesce and become a habit. It is said, 'Habit is second nature,' it is first nature also, and the whole nature of man ; everything that we are is the result of habit. That gives us consolation, because if it is only habit, we can make and unmake it at any time. The Samskaras are left by these vibrations passing out of our mind, each one of them leaving its result. Our character is the sum total of these marks, and according as some particular wave prevails one takes that tone. If good prevails, one becomes good ; if wickedness, one becomes wicked ; if joyfulness, one becomes happy. The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits ; all the bad habits that have left their impressions are to be controlled by good habits. Go on doing good, thinking good thoughts continuously ; that is the only way to suppress base impressions. Never say any man is hopeless, because he only represents a character,

a bundle of habits, which can be checked by new and better ones. Character is repeated habits, and repeated habits alone can reform character."¹⁷

Swamiji coined a phrase, "secret of work." One of the secrets of work consists in non-attachment to the work itself. Another secret is self-restraint. Swamiji put tremendous emphasis on this self-restraint as a very important factor in the development of human growth. With reference to the effect of such restraint, Swamiji said, "Unselfishness is more paying, only people have not the patience to practise it. It is more paying from the point of view of health also. Love, truth, and unselfishness are not merely moral figures of speech, but they form our highest ideal, because in them lies such a manifestation of power. In the first place, a man who can work for five days, or even for five minutes, without any selfish motive whatever, without thinking of future, of heaven, of punishment, or anything of the kind, has in him the capacity to become a powerful moral giant. It is hard to do it, but in the heart of our hearts we know its value, and the good it brings. It is the greatest manifestation of power—this tremendous restraint ; self-restraint is a manifestation of greater power than all outgoing action. A carriage with four horses may rush down a hill unrestrained, or the coachman may curb the horses. Which is the greater manifestation of power, to let them go or to hold them ? A cannon-ball flying through the air goes a long distance and falls. Another is cut short in its flight by striking against a wall, and the impact generates intense heat. All outgoing energy following a selfish motive is frittered away ; it will not result in development of power. This self-control will tend to produce a mighty will, a character which makes a

16. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.

Christ or a Buddha. Foolish men do not know this secret ; they nevertheless want to rule mankind. Even a fool may rule the whole world if he works and waits. Let him wait a few years, restrain that foolish idea of governing ; and when that idea is wholly gone, he will be a power in the world. The majority of us cannot see beyond a few years, just as some animals cannot see beyond a few steps. Just a little narrow circle—that is our world. We have not the patience to look beyond, and thus become immoral and wicked. This is our weakness, our powerlessness.”¹⁸ Hence, Swamiji firmly believed that through the path of work or karma-yoga one can gradually and systematically harness his potential energy and attain a high degree of character development. Work, education and religion are the avenues of character development. Like education and religion, work, too, is a method of gaining spiritual knowledge by gradually removing the obstacles of the mind. How can one gain this knowledge through work ? Swamiji threw light on this point, “Now this knowledge, again, is inherent in man. No knowledge comes from outside ; it is all inside. What we say a man ‘knows,’ should, in strict psychological language, be what he ‘discovers’ or ‘unveils’ ; what a man ‘learns’ is really what he ‘discovers,’ by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge.

“All knowledge, therefore, secular or spiritual, is in the human mind. In many cases it is not discovered, but remains covered, and when the covering is being slowly taken off, we say, “We are learning,” and the advance of knowledge is made by the advance of this process of uncovering. The man from whom this veil is being lifted is the more knowing man, the man upon

whom it lies thick is ignorant, and the man from whom it has entirely gone is all-knowing, omniscient. There have been omniscient men, and, I believe there will be yet ; and that there will be myriads of them in the cycles to come. Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind ; suggestion is the friction which brings it out. So with all our feelings and our laughter, our curses and our blessings, our praises and our blames—every one of these we may find, if we calmly study our own selves, to have been brought out from within ourselves by so many blows. The result is what we are. All these blows taken together are called Karma—work, action. Every mental and physical blow that is given to the soul, by which, as it were, fire is struck from it, and by which its own power and knowledge are discovered, is Karma, this word being used in its widest sense. Thus we are all doing Karma all the time. I am talking to you : that is Karma....We walk : Karma. Everything we do, physical or mental, is Karma, and it leaves its marks on us.”¹⁹

The development of a strong moral character, however important it may be, cannot be the end of life. It lays the foundation, but one has to go beyond the realm of morality. Swamiji said, “There is still a higher stage to attain after one has reached the aforesaid condition of an unalterable good tendencies of the mind, and that is to be had with an ardent desire for liberation.” Swami Vivekananda claimed that even total mukti or freedom can be achieved through unselfish work without having faith in God. He remarked, “By work alone men may get to where Buddha got largely by meditation or Christ by prayer.”²⁰ Swamiji said, “The karma-yogi need not believe even in God,

(Continued on page 232)

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Turning Towards Swami Vivekananda for Health—I

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

In the movement towards globalism a new concept 'holistic health' has come to replace earlier ideas of health and medicine. The new concept embraces very wide range of human concerns. The author, who is a physician himself, discusses these many aspects of modern health and medicine in this thoughtful paper.

“My ideal can indeed be put into a few words and that is to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.”¹ Swami Vivekananda wrote to Sister Nivedita. For he knew that the knowledge of one's divinity would make a teacher a better teacher, a student a better student; indeed, it would make an individual a better individual in every way. It is certain that Swamiji's message would make a doctor a better doctor, and even a patient, a better, more calm and cooperative patient. But that is not all. Swamiji has a message for not only the doctor, the patient and the nurse, but for the medical world as a whole.

We are passing through an age of rapidly changing concepts in every branch of knowledge. In the sphere of applied sciences there is constant search for appropriate or alternative technology. Like so many institutions of contemporary society, modern medicine too has come under the fire of criticism and the goal and the practice of medicine today are being questioned. At such turning point it will be wise to pause and look towards Swami Vivekananda for guidance. However, before we study the implications of Swamiji's message for the

medical science, let us first have a clear idea of what health and medicine are, and what the situation at present is.

Health, a neglected entity:

Health had always remained one of the most neglected aspects of life. On the individual level it is subordinated to other so-called more important needs like wealth, power, prestige, knowledge, security, etc. Health is often taken for granted and one becomes conscious of its value only when it is lost. One of the reasons for its neglect is that the human system has a number of adaptive mechanisms which come into play during periods of stress and prevent the body from breakdown. At the international level health was overlooked—“forgotten”—when the covenant of the League of Nations was drafted after the first world war. World Health Organization (WHO) was founded in 1945² while the charter of the UNO was being drafted. During the past few decades there has been a re-awakening of interest in health and it has been recognized as a fundamental human right and a worldwide social goal, which is called “Health for All”. At the national level too,

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 7, page 501.

2. Park, J.E. & Park, K., *Textbook of Preventive and Social Medicine*, 12th edition. (Jabalpur, M/S Banarasidas Bhanot, 1989) page 11.

health remained neglected. Only 2% of the national outlay for the seventh 5-year-plan was allotted for health.³ The total budget for health is less than one percent of India's gross national product—a level that compares unfavourably with Zambia, Jordan or Tunisia, Chile or Mexico, Kenya or Ethiopia—leave alone China or Brazil.⁴

What is Health?

Like all abstract terms, "health" is difficult to define. Neither the determinants of health are clear, nor is there a single yardstick for measuring it. Besides, there are many levels of health and sickness between positive health and death, and many people live at the level of unrecognized sickness or mild sickness, which does not force them to become inactive:

Positive health
Better health
Freedom from sickness

Unrecognized sickness
Mild sickness
Severe sickness

Death

(Health-Sickness Spectrum)⁵

The Sanskrit word for health is *swāsthya*, which means etymologically, to be established in one's natural state. Traditionally, health is defined as absence of disease, and disease as deviation from biological norms. According to this bio-medical concept, the body is looked upon as a machine and

disease means its breakdown. The doctor's task is to repair this biological machine. This working model is accepted by most practising doctors. However this concept of physical health is inadequate to explain and solve some major problems of health: e.g., malnutrition, accidents, drug-abuse, mental illness, etc. which point at social and psychological dimensions.

Ecology of health is the study of the relation between variations in man's environment and his state of health, and from this standpoint health is defined as a state of dynamic equilibrium between man and his environment. When this balance between the virulence of the causative agent and the resistance of the human host is disturbed in favour of the former, disease occurs. It has been recognized that the control of diseases by environmental manipulation is much cheaper, safer, effective and rational, than the treatment of individual cases. Thus, there are social, cultural, and psychological factors related to health. It is not possible to raise the level of people's health without changing their social environment, living habits, and culturally acquired unhealthy practices. This concept has given rise to a very important branch called "social medicine".

The above concepts are embodied in the WHO definition of health: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity."⁶ This definition, however, considers health a state, while health is more a process of continuous adjustment to the changing demands of living. In this context health is defined as "a state of relative equilibrium of body—form and function, which results from its successful dynamic adjustment to forces

3. *Ibid.*, page 15.

4. Bidwai, P., "Public Hospitals Turning Into Illness Factories," *The Times of India*, August 3, 1992, page 1.

5. Park and Park, page 15.

6. *Ibid.*, page 12.

tending to disturb it.”⁷ Positive health implies “the perfect functioning of the body and mind in a given social milieu.” It is the ideal, the goal, towards which people should strive.

In recent years a newer, holistic concept of health has been evolved. This concept recognizes the strength of social, economic, environmental, and even political influences on health. Health is now recognized as a multidimensional and an intersectorial process. It is now an integral part of development and is the essence of productive life. It involves individual, group, state, and international responsibility. That health is a worldwide social goal has been highlighted by the launching of the WHO movement, called “*Health for All by the Year 2000*”. The World assembly referred to it as “the attainment by all the people of the world of a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life.”⁸

There is a difference between “Health care service for all” and “Health for all”. Health services can be available to all but neither be relevant to the needs of all, nor used by all. Hence one of the important themes of the “Health for all” programme is, “Universal coverage with primary health care, that is relevant, effective, acceptable and affordable in terms of the needs, cultural interests and resources of each community.” “Health for all” has posed new challenges before the medical world as well as the governments of various countries. Now even conscientious citizen cannot remain content with taking care of his own health and observing his own rules of health and hygiene, nor can a doctor restrict his

sphere of activity to his patients only. He may act locally but must at least think globally.

Changing concepts of medicine:

Like the concepts of health, medicine too had been evolving and changing. Conceived in sympathy and born out of necessity, medicine is as old as man himself. It began as religion and art and gradually evolved into a science. In prehistoric times (circa 5000 B.C.) medicine was intermingled with religion, superstition, magic and witchcraft.

Modern medicine got a boost during the Renaissance (14th-16th centuries A.D.). Progress since then had been rapid with discoveries of circulation (by Harvey in 1628), the microscope (1670), vaccination against smallpox (1796), etc. By the close of the 19th century the dicotomy of medicine into two major branches, namely curative and preventive medicine (or public health), was evident.

Curative medicine:

The aim of curative medicine is the elimination of disease from an individual patient rather than from the community. Over the years curative medicine has advanced phenomenally and has accumulated vast scientific knowledge, technical skills, medicaments and highly sophisticated instruments and apparatuses for diagnosis and treatment.

During the last few decades there has been a tremendous growth in specializations. Some specializations are based on skills, such as surgery, medicine, radiology, anaesthesiology; some are based on the part of body, e.g., ENT, ophthalmology, etc. Other specialities are based on particular age or sex; e.g., paediatrics, geriatrics,

7. *Ibid.*, page 12.

8. WHO (1978), *Health for All*, Sr. No. 1. quoted by Park & Park, page 9.

obstetrics, etc. Again there are sub-specialities within each speciality, for example, neonatology (dealing with disease of the new-born), paediatric-surgery, paediatric-neurology—all in paediatrics. One wonders if such micro or super-specialization is really needed. Specialization has raised the standard of medical care but it has escalated the cost of medical care tremendously, placing it beyond the means of an average citizen.

Preventive medicine:

As the name indicates the primary objective of preventive medicine is prevention of diseases and promotion of health. Hence it applies mainly to healthy people. Early advances in preventive medicine were in the field of bacterial vaccines and sera which led to the conquest of a number of diseases. The eradication of smallpox was its greatest achievement. Discoveries in nutrition helped in the prevention of diseases like nutritional blindness and iodine deficiency goitre. The discovery of synthetic insecticides like DDT, melathion, etc. has brought about a fundamental change in the strategy of combating vector-borne diseases, like plague, malaria, leishmaniasis Chemoprophylaxis (prevention by use of chemical agents or drugs), and mass drug treatment are other tools for control of infectious diseases.

In modern times preventive medicine is faced with another kind of problem i.e., population explosion which has stimulated research in human fertility, contraceptive technology and genetics. Also the so-called modern diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart diseases, accidents, AIDS, etc. have now come under the purview of preventive medicine. Indeed as medical science advances it will become more and more preventive medical practice, of which

three levels are recognized. Primary prevention intends to prevent disease among healthy people; secondary is directed towards those in whom disease is already developed, and tertiary aims at restricting the chronic disability consequent upon disease.

Social medicine:

With the advancement of medicine the cost of medical care increased and two types of medicare came into existence: one for the rich and the other for the poor. The gap was, and is, bridged to a small extent by charitable and voluntary agencies providing free medical care to the poor. In Germany 'Socialization of medicine' was tried by compulsory sickness insurance in 1883, followed by England and France. However Russia was the first to socialize medicine completely and to give to its citizens constitutional rights to all health services. Since then this has been tried in many countries including India (ESIS). Social medicine considers medicine as a social science and covers almost every subject in the field of health and welfare, medical needs and medical care of Society.

Family medicine:

This is the branch of medicine which is neither disease-oriented nor organ-oriented, but which is oriented to the health care of a family as a unit—from first contact to the ongoing care of chronic problems and from prevention to rehabilitation. Specialization in medicine has caused fragmentation of the medical care delivery and produced cleavage in the doctor-patient relationship. Hence now a great need is felt for a general practitioner who could provide such a family oriented medical care.

Palliative and placebo medicine:

This is not a scientific branch of medicine but the name given to the practice which aims only at relieving symptoms without curing the disease. Not all patients who approach a doctor suffer from specific diseases. According to one estimate 40% of all patients seeking medical help from dispensaries, outpatient departments and health centres, have no obvious organic disorder.⁹ These patients are prescribed non-specific drugs for relief of their symptoms only.

Placebo effect is a well known phenomenon in the medical circles. It is observed that dummy pills when used as control while trying a new drug give a positive response in a third of cases.¹⁰ Making use of this fact, doctors often use so-called tonics and other drugs without having much medicinal value, simply to satisfy or to cheer up the patients. And for various reasons, mostly psychological, such drugs do prove effective in alleviating symptoms. Patients do not bother about the pharmaceutical properties of drugs, or how they act. They want relief and this need is exploited by the drug companies and the doctors.

Commercial medicine:

This again is not a subsection of medicine, but a phrase coined to express business trends in a profession which must fulfil a being and not a selfish purpose, which must be protective and not exploitative and which cannot have any analogy with business.

9. King, M.H. "Medicine in An Unjust World" in *The Oxford Textbook of Medicine* (London: ELBS, Oxford University Press, 1985) pp. 3-5.

10. Vyas, B.K., & Nene, D.V., *Towards Holistic Health* (Baroda: Academy of Holistic Health, 1990) page 120.

Yet it is unfortunate that medical world is taking the shape of a big industry and profit earning business. Medical research involves huge expenses and when a new drug or a diagnostic procedure or instrument—a product of such research, is launched in the market, the manufacturers are naturally anxious to create a good market for it. Hence the drug etc. is launched with great publicity and advertising as the best product ever produced. The benefits are over-emphasized and the limitations not even mentioned. The manufacturing firms are motivated purely by profit and all possible methods are used to induce the doctors to prescribe the drug. The whole network involves monetary interests of influential and powerful groups. "The present day structure of medicare acts like a huge industrial empire. The lucrative gains are such as to attract investors in a big way to commercially exploit the market. Even in the sale of a single drug, many master-minds get motivated through machiavellian methods."¹¹

Although everyone is a consumer of health services, consumerism has produced a cleavage in the doctor-patient relationship where trust and sympathy were once fundamental. Now-a-days this relationship has degraded into a commercial transaction where both parties are suspicious of the other's intentions. This leads not only to loss of precious human dimensions but also to substandard care. Endless investigations are ordered and a long list of drugs prescribed—which might otherwise be superfluous—simply to protect the doctor or to satisfy the patient or worse still, to obtain the commission offered by a laboratory or pharmaceutical firm. The present day open market economy has made the situation worse. Even otherwise modern medical

11. *Ibid.*, page 122.

care has become extremely expensive and a cause for grave concern, even in an affluent country like the U.S.A. where falling sick is one of the major causes of bankruptcy.¹²

Success and failure of medicine:

It cannot be denied that modern medicine has made spectacular advances. It has moved from organism to organ, from organ to cell, from cell to the molecular properties. Marvellous discoveries of nucleic acid and genetic code have paved the way to genetic counselling, genetic engineering, prenatal diagnosis of sex, etc. Organ transplantation, artificial heart and kidneys, psycho-surgery, etc. are amazing marvels of modern medicine.

However, there is a dark side too. Despite spectacular advancements and massive expenditure, death rates and life-expectancy even in developed countries have remained unchanged. Whatever improvement in longevity has occurred, it has been due to improved sanitation and food supply and not due to high technology. With increasing medical costs have not come increased benefits, and some believe that the limit of health impact of modern medical care and research have been reached.

The threat posed by major diseases like malaria, amebiasis, filaria, leprosy have not lessened, or have even increased. Infant and child mortality rates in developing countries continue to remain high. There is no equality in distribution of health services, resulting in limited access to health care for a large segment of the population. 80% of health expenditure is spent on 20% of urban population and 20% for the 80% rural population.¹³ Having an elitistic

orientation and under the pressure of high technology, medical care systems are going away from health promotion for many towards expensive treatment for the few. Unfortunately in developing countries there is a tendency to follow the western model of medical education and favour the high-cost, low-coverage, elite oriented health service. Even the efficacy of modern medicine is fundamentally questioned and some critics have described modern medicine as a threat to health. Such a state is labelled as "failure of success".¹⁴

Alternative systems of medicine:

This failure of medicine to promote health for all has stimulated search for other systems of medicine. Most societies and cultures have their own medical systems and beliefs. Apart from folk medicine and folk healing, Indian, Chinese, and Persian medicines 'having written traditions are based on empirical knowledge and are practised by professional elite. Then there is the so-called popular medicine, consisting of beliefs and practices within a family and a community which are passed by word of mouth and mostly the prerogative of the women folk.¹⁵

So far modern medicine had claimed to be the only true medicine and alternatives were labelled as quackery. This stance is changing. Interest in alternatives is growing in the West. Ayurveda is being studied deeply. Homoeopathy is already being widely practised and at times by doctors trained in allopathic medicine. Psychotherapy is already well established, while hypnotism is being increasingly practised with dramatic results. Parallel to an emerg-

12. "Medicine in An Unjust World", pp. 3-6.

13. *Ibid.*, page 3.

14. Park & Park, page 8.

15. Capra, Fritjof, *The Turning Point* (New York: Flamingo, 1989) page 121.

ing concept of holistic health, there is a trend towards holistic medicine, although the concept is not yet clear.

For a medicine to be holistic, it must not only be universally applicable but must also cover all aspects of health—physical, mental, social and spiritual. Such a medicine alone can achieve the goal of “health for all by the year 2000”. Some Indian doctors have attempted to evolve a concept of holistic medicine on the basis of the Vedantic concept of the five *kosa*-s.¹⁶

The Hospitals:

Since hospitals play very important role in the health care system, it will be pertinent here to study their evolution and functions. A hospital is not a static organization. It is subject to change in structure and function according to the change in the needs of the community. A century ago a hospital was something like a place of refuge for the sick and the homeless. It was a charitable institution where old people approaching death got shelter. The appeal written by Swami Vivekananda for the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Varanasi, in February 1902 relates to this very function of a hospital.¹⁷

In contrast, the hospitals today are concerned with active medical treatment utilizing all the latest knowledge of medical science and technology. Earlier they were occupied by the old and the poor. Now they are occupied by all classes of people, as is evident from the free-bed, paying-beds, semi-private and private rooms. Earlier a single doctor could provide single handed all the skills needed for treatment. Now

there is an increasing demand for specialists in each department.

Teaching, both medical and nursing, and research are the other functions of a modern hospital. Rural and district hospitals, however, concentrate on patient care. It is said that each hospital has a personality of its own—a tempo of work and an emotional atmosphere, its traditions and its community of staff and patients. All these together create specific atmospheres of different hospitals. Some have a good name and some have a bad one.

The hospital system also is not without fault and of late, has come under the fire of criticism. The hospital medical practice has progressively become depersonalized if not dehumanized. Hospitals have grown into professional institutions emphasizing technology and scientific competence rather than contact with patients as human beings. They exist in splendid isolation from the broader health problems of the community, acquiring the euphemism “ivory tower of disease”. The treatment is expensive and the hospitals absorb vast proportion of the health budget—50% to 80%.¹⁸ Some 30% to 50% of present hospitalization is unnecessary medically, but alternative services that could be therapeutically effective and economical are disappearing.

In 1957 an expert committee of WHO emphasized that the hospital cannot work in isolation. It must be a part of a system that provides complete health care to the population. Subsequent years witnessed efforts of WHO, UNICEF and non-government agencies to involve hospitals in providing basic and referral services. The establishment of primary health centres was a step towards integration of curative and preventive medicine.

16. Vyas & Nene, page 1.

17. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, page 436.

18. Park & Park, page 41.

Dr. Rene Sand has said that "the right patient should receive the right care at the right time in the right place and at the right cost."¹⁹ The medicare system with the hospital at the centre must be such a flexible system capable of adapting itself to the total health care needs of the community.

This overview of health, concepts of medicine and the hospitals is meant not only for information but to prepare a ground for the better understanding of the implications of Swami Vivekananda's message for

the medical world. Scholars and thinkers in every field of knowledge have realized that the deep significance of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda can be grasped only after having a thorough theoretical knowledge and practical experience of that subject. Hence this long introductory note.

(to be continued)

19. Rene Sand, *The Advance to Social Medicine* (London: Staples Press, 1952) quoted by Park & Park, page 41.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH WORK

(Continued from page 224)

may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realizing selflessness; and he has to work it out himself."²¹

Swamiji advocated the philosophy of "work for work's sake." It is an independent and direct path of final liberation. In his opinion, loving service, selfless love expressed through work for the welfare of the children of God, was an admirable form of Divine worship. Swamiji earnestly believed that work was worship, if done properly. Swamiji always emphasized that spiritual practices and selfless service are complementary ideals of the Vedanta and the worshipful attitude of work was equated with Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga. His categorical statement was, "...spiritual ideal is for life and this must be lived in all spheres, private, social and international."

Swamiji further said, "Build up your character and manifest your real nature, the Effulgent, the Resplendent, the Ever-Pure and call It up in every one you see."²²

Swamiji added new dimensions to this yoga. He widened the scope of this yoga by incorporating the ideal devotion to serve God in man. This attitude of a matured devotee, this excellent social expression of Divine love was a unique feature of his bhakti-yoga. For the first time, he showed that genuine devotion and loving service are complementary ideals of the Vedanta. It is for this magnificent universal ideal that Swamiji offered his dedicated life at the feet of God, who appears as man, and in reality, Vivekananda himself was a new incarnation of his model of devotion and an illustrious exemplar of such bhakti yoga.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

22. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 357.

The Lord's Vibhuti Yoga

P. V. NARAYANSWAMY

(Continued from the previous issue)

Sloka 29.

*Anantaścāsmi nāgānām varuṇo
yādasāmaham
pitṛnāmaryamā cāsmi yamaḥ
samyamatāmaham.*

"Among serpents I am Ananta. Of the dwellers in water I am Varuṇa. Of the manes I am Aryamā, and among disciplinarians I am Yama."

Nāga is na plus aga. Sanskrit aga means a tree or mountain. In the present context it also denotes the tree of saṁsāra. Some cut asunder the tree of saṁsāra by the sword of detachment. Among them, the Lord says, "I am Ananta," i.e., the endless absolute Essence after elimination of all vāsanā-s (desires). Yādasām can mean sea monsters too. Varuṇa has its root in vr, meaning to choose consciously for peace in the face of life's vicissitudes. Pitṛnām can indicate universal parenthood. Ārya is one who seeks liberation with diligence. The term is synonymous with Nara, i.e., a person with continuous flow of spirituality. Yama stands for yati, i.e., one who is spiritually evolved. To sum up, Bhagavān seems to say, "Among those qualified with sādhanā catuṣṭaya, the qualities needed for spiritual life, like self-control, contentedness, etc., I am Yati who shines. Emulate Me."

Sloka 30.

*Prahlādaścāsmi daityānām kālāḥ
kalayatāmaham
mṛgāṇām ca mrgendro'haṁ vainateyaśca
pakṣiṇām.*

'Of the Daityas I am Prahlada, and of measurers I am Time. Of beasts I am the lion, and of birds I am Garuḍa.

All negative vāsanās or desires are the offspring of Diti (i.e. Daitya). They have to be countered with an attitude of unalloyed joy,—Pra plus hlāda, a joyous outlook. Mārgayati iti mṛga: Mṛga is one who seeks. Bhagavān says, "Among seekers I am Garuḍa, the king of birds. Birds have two wings. Man has, in an allegorical sense, two wings: Viveka and Vairāgya, discrimination and dispassion. One should exercise these 'wings' properly. Vainateya indicates "Be humble and humane."

Sloka 31.

*Pavanaḥ pavatāmasmi rāmaḥ
śastrabhṛtāmaham
jhaṣāṇām makaraścāsmi srotasāmasmi
jāhnavī.*

"Among purifiers I am the wind god; among wielders of weapons I am Rāma; among aquatic creatures I am the crocodile, and of rivers I am the Jāhnavī, the Gaṅgā."

Wind is the greatest of purifiers. One maintains one's physical body with breath. Rāma is the pure Self, the ātmārām in each seeker. Rama has no peace without Sita, who was abducted by Ravana the tenheaded Rakṣasa. The ten heads symbolize the organs of sense and action. Ravana's head, once fallen, again rises. So our egoism appears and disappears. Rama in rescuing Sita was helped by Hanuman. Hanuman typifies buddhi, the intellect—Buddhi matām

variṣṭah, wisest among the wise. Just as Sita was purified by fire, one should endeavour to get purified by the fire of Knowledge. Waters in the ocean conceal aquatic beings. So is the Lord hidden in all beings. One should merit His grace. The crocodile in the Gajendra mokṣa episode had not only a vision of the Lord, but also met with death (deliverance) at His hands. The śloka is a dramatic version of a sublime message of inestimable import, pithily conveyed.

Sloka 32.

*Sargāṇāmādirantaśca madhyaṃ
caivāhamarjuna
adhyātmavidyā vidyānāṃ vādaḥ
pravadatāmaham.*

"Among all the objects of creation I am the beginning, middle and the end; among Sciences I am the science of the spirit. Of conversations I stand for healthy reasoning as opposed to pedestrian argumentations."

Vidyā (knowledge) is applicable only to humans since they are endowed with *ūhāpohavicakṣaṇa* (discriminative faculty). The Lord pervades in all *vidyā*-s, but specially abides in *adhyātma vidyā*, the Science of the spirit, the crest jewel of all sciences. This is His *vibhūti* aspect.

Sloka 33.

*Akṣarāṇāmākāro'smi dvandvaḥ
sāmāsikasya ca
ahamevākṣayaḥ kālo dhātāhaṃ
viśvatomukhaḥ.*

"Of letters of the alphabet I am the letter A. Of compound words I am the *dvandva* (the copulative). I am verily the infinite time, and I am the all-seeing coordinator everywhere.

Our work-a-day world is linked with the alphabet all the time, because without it

there are no words. Without words there is no literature or communication. *Akṣara* (letter) also means 'the Changeless', the eternal Brahman. 'A' in Sanskrit also signifies non-attachment. Thus 'A' stands for a special manifestation of the Lord. The *dvandva*, or compound in Sanskrit grammar, is comprised of two or more words of equal importance. It conveys the idea: "You may be in the world but be not of it." The *vibhūti* aspect of Time is: "Identify yourself with the Self (*Ātman*) each and every moment." *Viśvatomukhaḥ*, lit., facing everywhere, brings out the idea that He watches every being as the Indwelling Spirit of all.

Sloka 34.

*Mṛtyuḥ sarvaharaścāham udbhavaśca
bhaviṣyatām
kīrtiḥ śrīvāk ca nārīnāṃ smṛtirmedhā
dhṛitiḥ kṣamā.*

"I am all-devouring Death. I am the prosperity of those who are or would be prosperous. Of the feminine qualities I am Glory, Fortune, Speech, Intelligence, Patience and Forbearance."

The 'feminine' qualities enumerated are very important in one's spiritual pursuit. They enable one to judge one's own progress. Introspection is a *sine-qua-non* for spiritual evolution.

Sloka 35.

*Bṛhatsāma tathā sāmnam gāyatrī
chhandasāmaham
Māsānām mārḡasīrṣo'ham ṛtūnām
kusumākarah.*

"Of hymns (of the Sama Veda) I am the *Bṛhatsāma*; of Vedic metres I am the *Gāyatrī*; of months I am *Mārḡasīrṣa* (November-December), and of seasons I am the flowery spring.

Sāma Veda contains the *mahā vākya* (great utterance): "*Tat tvam asi*"—"That thou art." The *br̥hat-sāma* is a metre of four quarters and nine letters each. The number nine is changeless (on multiplying); it represents *mahat*, the all-pervading Brahman. *Gāyan-tam trāyate iti* is that which protects one who recites. It has three lines, denoting the three bodies—physical, subtle and causal, and eight letters each (—the Lord has eight phases, *prakṛtirastadhām*). Sanskrit *ma* plus *asa* (*māsa*), connotes where goddess Lakṣmī (wealth of spirituality) abides; also *mārga* (path) and *śīrṣā* (leading). It thus means the leader of the path. Spring season (*ṛtu*) gives inspiration and happiness to all.

Sloka 36.

Dyūtam chhalayatāmasmi

tejastejasvināmaham

jayo'smi vyavasāyo'smi sattvaṃ

sattvavatāmaham.

"I am the gambling of the deceitful; I am the power of the powerful. I am victory and effort. I am the goodness of the good."

Dyūtam involves intellect—correct discrimination. The Lord says He is the quality of vigour in the strong and powerful. *Jaya* is victory, and *vyavasāya*, productivity or effort. Success in any activity requires effort. Victory underlines the vibhūti aspect of the Lord. He abides in the goodness of good people.

Sloka 37.

Vṛṣṇīnām vāsudevo'smi pāṇḍavānām

dhananjayaḥ

munīnāmapyahaṃ vyāsaḥ

kavīnāmuśanā kavīḥ.

"Of the Vṛṣṇis I am Vāsudeva; of the Pāṇḍavas I am Dhananjaya; of the Sages I am Vyāsa; and among the Seers I am Uśanas."

Vṛṣṇi means to shower. The family trait of the Vṛṣṇis is to shower. Vāsudeva means the all-pervading Lord, the Light of all lights. The Pāṇḍavas belong to the Lunar Dynasty. *Pāṇḍu* means 'white', symbolic of purity. *Dhananjaya* means 'acquisition of wealth (of spirituality)'. Muni is *mananasīlavān*, 'one who practises what he preaches. So one should remove 'non-self' to become 'Self'.

Vyāsa has another significance. It is the diameter of a circle. It symbolizes the Lord, because a diameter extends from a point on the circumference to another point. It just does not transgress the circumference. In like manner, one should be a measurer of the omnipotent Lord's greatness through one's thoughts strictly within the circle that is the Lord.

Kavi, ordinarily is a poet. Here it stands for a Seer of the transcendental vision. Uśanas is Sukrācārya, who taught the Rākṣasās. In quoting him, Bhagavān Sri Kṛṣṇa extols the dictum that Vedānta is based not so much on personalities as on principles. *Kavi* can also mean *krānta darśī*, one who sees beyond. *Uśanas* can mean 'fulfillment of all desires. *Uśanas Kavi* thus connotes one who transcends desires.

Sloka 38.

Danḍo damayatāmasmi nītirasmi

jīgīṣatām

maunaṃ caivāsmi guhyānām jñānam

jñānavatāmaham.

"I am the sceptre of the punishers. Among those who seek victory I am righteousness; among secrets I am silence; and in the wise I am the wisdom."

Jīgīṣatām means intense desire to know. *Nītiḥ* is wise policy. *Ni* means 'to lead'. Thus the context denotes leading to the pursuit in thought, word and deed. *Guhyā-*

nām, concealing or any thing subtle, indicates the Lord's subtle role in our day-to-day activity. *Mauna* is silence—in silence He is revealed. *Maunam* can also mean what is not objectifiable, that is, the *vibhūti* aspect of the Lord's Knowledge (*jñānavatām*).

Sloka 39.

*Yacchāpi sarvabhūtānām bījaṃ
tadahamarjuna
na tadasti vinā yatsyānmayā bhūtaṃ
carācaram.*

"O Arjuna, whatever is the seed (cause) of anything—That I am. Nothing exists in the world (moving or non-moving) of which I am not the cause, or seed."

Everything in the universe is founded on the bedrock of *bījamaham*—'I am the seed' relationship. The words *bījaṃ-tat aham*—"The cause I am" succinctly brings out epigrammatically the profound implication of a sublime truth.

Sloka 40.

*Nānto'sti mama divyānām vibhūtīnām
parantapa
eṣa tūddeśataḥ prokto
vibhūtervistaro mayā.*

"My divine manifestations are endless, O Scorcher of Foes, The examples given are only illustrative, but by no means are they exhaustive."

Sloka 41.

*Yadyadvibhūtimatsattvaṃ
śrīmadūrjitameva vā
tattadevāvagachha tvaṃ mama
tejo'mśa sambhavam.*

"Whatever being there is that is glorious, prosperous and powerful, know that to come from a micro-part of my macro-splendour."

Sloka 42.

*Athavā bahunaitena kiṃ jñātena tavārjuna
viṣṭabhyāhamidaṃ kṛtsnamekāṃśena
stīto jagat.*

"But what is the use of your knowing many an example, O Arjuna? A single fragment of my Self pervades the whole universe."

Bhagavān as a parting shot emphasizes there is absolutely no use of merely knowing His manifestations and glories. One should rather try to contemplate and take the next step, as explained in chapter eleven, in which the Blessed Lord enjoins us to visualize His universal form with our 'eye of wisdom' against the background of instances, quoted in chapter ten.

Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary on the *Praśna Upaniṣad* cautions, we should not be carried away by the story-content of Vedantic literature—the history of persons or the geography of places. Our undivided attention should be focused on the core of Vedantic truth. Many true seekers have derived inspiration by repeating the slokas of chapter ten and recapitulating the Lord's universal form. To quote an example, Swami Vivekananda went into ecstatic samadhi on contemplating the Lord's form elaborated in chapter eleven.

Bhagavān, thus through Arjuna, gives a *carte blanche* to humanity to contemplate. Whatever there is in the universe, moving or non-moving, living or non-living, the cause for it can be traced to Him. Thus man, wherever he is and whatever he does, is surrounded by some aspect or other of His Glory.

(Concluded)

Review & Notices

GITA SAAR (in Hindi), by O. P. Ghai. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., L-10 Green Park Extension, New Delhi, 110-016; 1990, Rs. 50/-

Of all the Hindu scriptures the *Gītā*, one of the world's shortest, containing only seven hundred verses, is most popular due to its lucid exposition of high spiritual truths in a most simple and pragmatic way. It is a scripture of perennial interest, and so has been favoured by many commentators and commentaries.

In the present work, the author, who has steeped himself in the *Gītā* for forty-five years, attempts to give the gist of all the eighteen chapters in an objective fashion, presenting contemporary relevance of the eternal universal truths enshrined in it. For, the author ardently believes that there can be no better source of inspiration than the *Gītā's*, which teaches humanity the art of living a peaceful happy life in this world full of strife and conflict. It prepares us to face existential problems bravely. The author is successful in his attempt to a great extent.

In this book, with an attractive get-up, the profound ideas of the *Gītā* are presented chapter wise, in simple, clear and comprehensive manner. The style is non-formal and language praiseworthy. The gist of the entire book is encompassed in a brief 103 pages. The events and preaching are so beautifully narrated that it generates in the heart of the reader a desire to study the original scripture in detail. The chief merit of this elegantly printed book is that it readily commends itself to the layman. It will be a welcome addition to the *Gītā* literature.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Rajkot

SELECTED WORKS OF ACHARYA
SATISH CHANDRA MUKHERJEE
(Compiled from his letters on spiritual matters), compiled and published by the

National Council of Education (Bangiya Jatiya Siksha Parishad), West Bengal, Calcutta, 700-032, Pp. 388; Rs. 65/-.

Among the galaxy of saints and sages that India has produced, some have attained national or international renown, while many have remained less known. Acharya Satish Chandra Mukherjee, born in 1865 and a college-mate of Swami Vivekananda, belongs to the latter category. An initiated disciple of Sri Vijaya Krishna Goswami, he was commanded to follow '*Ākāśa Vṛitti*' by his venerable guru. One who takes up this vow, has to remain a celibate, but live otherwise like a householder with a house and servants, but earn nothing himself nor beg. He has to maintain his household and entertain guests entirely on what chance may bring. Acharya Mukherjee followed this vow strictly, staying in Varanasi, with total self-surrender to his guru, for fifty years till his death in 1948. Earlier he was trained to be a lawyer, but gave it up when he realised that in the very first law suit he took up, he had to support, though unknowingly, a falsehood.

Acharya Mukherjee helped found the National Council of Education, in protest against the education policy of the British rulers. He also started the Dawn Society with which Sister Nivedita was associated.

The present book is a compilation of his letters, most of them to Prof. K.P.S. Malani of the Banaras Hindu University, who knew Sri Mukherjee very intimately for nearly two decades. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Rajendra Prasad were some of the eminent people who sought his advice on spiritual matters.

The letters (more than 70 are included in this book) were written in response to various doubts and queries raised by Sri Malani, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and others. They naturally cover a wide gamut of spiritual matters, including *sādhana*, Bhakti, Karma, Japa, etc. The entire collection of letters preserved by Prof. Malani were

handed over to the National Council of Education, Bengal and the Council needs to be congratulated on bringing to light the life and philosophy of a great son of India.

Dr. Kamala Jaya Rao
Hyderabad

ANCIENT VEDIC MATHEMATICS,
(booklets) by Dr. Narinder Puri, University
campus of Roorkee, 247667, U.P.

I have gone through the books written by Dr. Puri. The books have dealt with mainly the four basic operations of Arithmetic, namely, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The language is simple and the presentation is lucid. Through examples the author has attempted to make the subject matter very easy to understand. For each operation several alternative approaches have been offered from which one can choose one according to his or her choice. In our present system we have a fixed method for each of the operations of addition, subtraction etc., and as such there is no freedom of choice. Whenever the question of addition, for example, arises a student has to follow the fixed method, and if for some reason or other the prescribed method appears to be difficult or uninteresting to the student, he starts losing interest in Mathematics. Vedic Mathematics (VM) offers the chance to save the children from this disaster. The author has taken much pains in explaining the different approaches step by step with suitable examples.

When there is a unique way of solving a problem, we have the advantage of learning the method in a shorter time, but this fixity often leads to monotony. In VM, as we find in the books, always there are multiple ways of solving any problem.

The fact that in VM it is possible to carry out the entire computation process using only the smaller digits 1, 2, etc. (and thus avoiding the bigger digits 6, 7, 8, 9) by the use of Vinculum numbers, has been nicely explained. In our present method, the only way of checking the correctness of any operation is to repeat the process. This approach is time-consuming, besides being

uninteresting. In VM the checking methods are much faster and easier. The author deserves all praise for bringing this aspect of VM to light.

We fervently believe these books will help much in popularising VM, which, we think, is the sole objective of Dr. Puri.

Dr. P. K. Giri
R. K. Mission Residential College
Narendrapur

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD, Vol. II ;
Published by the Ramakrishna Mission
Ashrama, Ramakrishna Avenue, Patna,
800-004 ; paperbound Souvenir.

The Secretary of the Mission Ashrama, Patna, writes in the Foreword to the first volume of *Religions of the World*:

"The greatest discovery of spiritual science is that *Religion is one, religions are many*, in the sense that they are but the varied expressions of *the Religion* which is oneness. Each religion, called by a particular name, expresses a particular aspect of the Universal Spirit. As each religion has its own basic idea which represents a particular aspect of the universal spirit and is expressed through a particular form, it is to that extent one-sided. Therefore it is absolutely necessary for the various religions to complement each other with their distinctive realizations, and by doing so develop themselves. There would be continuous *give and take* between religions for their mutual enrichment : this will lead them to the final goal of spiritual unity." (italics by the reviewer).

The first Volume of the projected two-volume series giving brief but concise essays on Hinduism, Buddhism, the religious tenets of the six systems of Indian Philosophy, Jainism, the Tantras as ways of Realization, Saivism, Vaisnavism, Sikhism, and other religious movements, was released in Dec. 1990. Volume II, published in Oct. 1991, starts with essays on the religious thoughts of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and the Mayan people of Central America. Though these last few are no longer extant, and all but forgotten cultures, they are of

some interest as they help us to understand the past. But the essays on Confucianism, Taoism, Zen Buddhism and Shintoism are really very absorbing studies. They are very much alive in today's world. The essay on Zoroastrianism is too, as the Parsis in India form an important part of the cultural scene.

Since Volume II could not be expanded to include essays on Judaism, Christianity and Islam, a planned third volume will be published later this year. Each Volume is Souvenir size (about 7" × 10"). Each devotes about sixty pages to essays. The remaining pages given to advertisements for patrons are attractive. Each Vol. Rs. 10/- plus 2/- for postage.

S.S.

CHINESE BUDDHIST APOCRYPHA,
 Edited by Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Published
 by the University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.
 1990 ; Pp. 342.

The Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha is a body of Chinese scriptures evolved in course of centuries, out of the original Indian Sanskrit and Pali texts. These texts were carried to China by various Chinese travellers and were got translated in their own language. Although the word apocryphon means something that is 'hidden away' or 'secret', the word is used here to refer to Chinese Buddhist Texts composed on the model of Buddhist scriptures in India but intermixed with local religious myths and traditions. There is a vast range of literature in China and East Asian countries which closely followed the core-Indian traditions but added unto itself layers of local or indigenous philosophical and religious thought. This literature is the subject matter of this book and the study is presented by various experts from the Universities in the U.S.A. and elsewhere, in a most disciplined way.

The volume opens with a scholarly introduction by Robert E. Buswell (Jr.) of the University of California, Los Angeles and is followed by eight long articles on various facets of this apocryphal literature. Thus Kyoko Tokuno of the University of California, Berkeley presents a comprehensive chronological study of various scriptural catalogues by Tao-an, Seng-yu, Fa-

ching, Fei-chang fang and a few others. She has also critically examined the style and contents of the works included, and has presented her conclusions regarding their scriptural authenticity.

Michel Strickmann, formerly a fellow at Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin, in his article on the Conservation Sutra states that this text throws considerable light on the evolution of the indigenous religion in China and helps in understanding the growth of Buddhism there. He also gives a critical evaluation of Dharani Sutra which is of considerable importance in the study of Tantric Buddhism in China.

Stephen R. Brokencamp of Indiana University while writing about the *Bhumi* concept in Taoist scriptures has traced the conceptual matrix into which variations of this theme are fitted. The Buddhist *Bhumi* scheme has its basis in the Mahaprajñā-paramita-sutra and the Bodhisattva *bhumi* sutra, but both these describe only the four and the seven *bhumis* respectively. Brokencamp also describes the stages of transcendence mentioned in later Taoist scriptures.

Kotatsu Fujita of Hokkaido University in Sapporo, Japan has dwelt on the Textual Origins of the Kuan Wu-liang-shou-ching: a canonical scripture of Pure Land Buddhism. This title reads in English as "Book in the contemplation of the Buddha of immeasurable life". The present article is a translation of the original Japanese by Kenneth K. Tanaka. There are forty commentaries on this work and most of them date prior to 800 A.D. The author has traced the origins of this compilation and has critically examined the contents.

Whalen Lai, Professor at the University of California, Davis, has contributed a chapter on Chan-ch'a ching: Religion and Magic in Medieval China. This article is important, both from the point of view of philosophy and also from folk literature. This is a sixth century work and as the title implies, is a scripture giving elaborate procedure by which the *Karmic* retribution due from past good and evil deeds could be divined. The article discusses the Southern and the Northern variations in the text. The text reflects the medieval Chinese

AN APPEAL

We are glad to announce that an Archives is already functioning; also a Museum is going to be set up in the building which housed earlier the Headquarters Office of the Math and Mission. The Museum will be declared open to the public in the near future.

Clothes, garments, watches, shoes, etc. used by Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and also their letters, manuscripts of articles, personal diaries, books and public addresses given to them will be preserved. We would also like to have footprints of the Holy Mother and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

Devotees and friends who happen to possess any of the above type of articles are earnestly requested to hand them over to the Belur Math authorities so that they can be preserved scientifically and displayed for the benefit of the devotees and the public in general of the present generation and of generations to come for centuries.

26.1.1994

Ramakrishna Math
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Swami Atmasthananda
General Secretary

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